# *From* Satura *to* Satyre: *François Rabelais and the Renaissance Appropriation of a Genre**

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*Renaissance satire has long been a neglected field of study, which is most likely due to the difficulty decoding its targets, to its nonliterary utilitarian purpose, and to the menace of invective that always hovers over the satirical metagenre. This study aims at two objectives: to retrace the formal development of early modern satire by showing how the blending of four disparate traditions — Roman* satura, *Greek satyr play, Menippean satire, and medieval popular theater — created a form that not only dominated the period, but also laid the groundwork for the development of the modern variants of satire. This pivotal moment in the history of satire then gives way to the second objective: a concrete illustration of this theoretical development in the four authentic Pantagrueline chronicles of François Rabelais, an ideal case study that will considerably enhance the understanding of early modern satire in all its implications and intricacies.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Defining satire has always been an arduous, if not impossible, task. Its inherently mixed character is well reflected in its various realizations. In addition to being a classical genre (Roman *satura*), satire, at least since the late 1400s, is above all an attitude, a technique, and an ethical and moral code. It is precisely this development that enables it to infiltrate traditional literary genres. There is hardly a period of literary history where the difficulties in defining what could well be described as the satirical parasite are more obvious than in the early modern era, a period in which the notion of genre was still somewhat vague and whose satirical production is particularly rich.[1] It was at that moment that

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[1]See Könneker, 9: "I can justify my choice of the sixteenth century by underlining that satirical writing in its various realizations occupies a strikingly vast territory." See also Kernan; Brummack; *SATVRA*; Jones-Davies; Blanchard; Freudenburg; Knight; *A Companion to Satire*; and, specifically for French literature, Debailly 1993, 1994, 1995, 2001, 2009; *La Satire dans tous ses états*. Debailly, 2012, appeared too late for the present study. For the notion of the parasite, see also Duval and Martinez, 7–8.

different satirical traditions — erudite and popular; classical and medieval; Latin, Greek, and vernacular — came to the fore and often blended for the first time on a large scale. This study will focus on this largely neglected early modern mixture, especially its reflection in François Rabelais's four authentic novels, as it sets the period's satire apart from its previous incarnations and informs the modern understanding of the form.

Despite detailed comments on the Ship of Fools corpus and references to various European satirists, the main focus of these pages will thus be on the development of French vernacular satire, as it not only allows for a somewhat manageable corpus given the constraints of an article, but also helps to retrace an exemplary trajectory of the genre in early modern Europe.[2] However, vernacular letters in general and satire in particular cannot be seen in a strictly national context in an era that attached such great value to intercultural exchange and to the classical tradition, a renewed interest that was mainly due to the recent availability of new editions of Greek and Latin texts and the invention of the printing press, which facilitated their distribution.[3]

## 2. The First Modern Satire: Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools*

The inherently mixed character of satire favors its parasitical leanings and its massive expansion into prose literature, which started to gain importance in the sixteenth century. Moreover, as prose, profiting from its minor status, is generally considered less intimidating and less elitist than poetry (mostly due to the latter's venerable Greco-Latin models), it provides the possibility of rendering the classical masters and precepts more accessible; and thus it complemented popular satirical theater in its endeavor to reach a broader

[2]Italian satire was the other major vernacular tradition of the period, as seen in Ariosto, Folengo, and Lando. Its impact on French satire was demonstrated by Trtnik-Rossettini.

[3]Together with the rise of vernacular languages, these factors certainly set apart early modern satirical authors from their medieval predecessors, who had also read the classical models, but generally had to work with unreliable, often heavily annotated editions. The influx of new information had also changed the humanists' attitude toward their Greco-Latin models: they were no longer limiting themselves to re-creating and fitting into a tradition, but rather attempted to appropriate and digest it, illustrating what could be called creative imitation. Joachim Du Bellay popularized this process in his *Deffence* (1549). See also the comments in Könneker, 23: "For the humanists' rediscovery of antiquity did not entail a simple continuation of a tradition — neither for satire nor for many other domains . . . but a fresh appropriation of its heritage by avoiding tradition." For the importance of the classical tradition for early modern letters in general, see Curtius; Highet.

public and to achieve its wide-ranging moral objectives. Its accessibility was also an essential reason for its popularity in an era of monumental social, religious, and economic change that saw the increasing importance of the committed artist and the humanist thinker in the critical role of regulator, reformer, and spokesperson for progress and justice in all domains of life.

The verse and prose adaptations into Latin, French, and English (among others) of the first European best seller by a contemporary author, Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (*Ship of Fools*, 1494), illustrate these tendencies and cement the rising prestige of early modern satire at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[4] The complex *translatio studii* (transfer of knowledge) is especially well illustrated in this case, as the various vernacular adaptations are based on the Latin translation of Brant's masterpiece, the *Stultifera Navis* (1497), by the author's student Jakob Locher. Locher's adaptation underscores the prestige of the text and, by extension, of satire and the vernacular. He deemed the work worthy of distribution to other European nations, whose humanists then used the Latin version for their own vernacular adaptations to benefit the people: hence the rare occurrence of a Latin translation of a vernacular text.[5] It is significant that the term *satire* is first mentioned in Locher's Latin paratext (and not in Brant's original). The French, English, and Dutch adaptors of Locher's text then accounted for the first use of the term in the vernacular, as they mostly translated Locher's liminary texts quite faithfully.[6] The first French verse adaptation by Pierre Rivière (1497) was quickly followed by a prose version by Jean Drouyn (1498), whose translation of Locher's paratext contains the first application of the term *satire* to a prose text. Like Locher, Drouyn insists on the pragmatism of his undertaking as well as its moral usefulness, which justifies the equality of Latin and French and of verse and prose: "I thought that some take delight in Latin, others in French, some in verse, others in prose, which is why I did this. . . . I began to compose this translation to exhort the poor human beings who, out of idiocy and pusillanimity have followed the fools of this world in all their contemptible deeds and actions. And to enable

[4]See Metzger-Rambach; the introduction to Brant, 26–88; Quillet.

[5]See the partial edition of Locher's text in Hartl, 2:40: "Since *Narragonia* or *The Ship of Fools* (which we can rightfully call a satire) is of the utmost necessity for all peoples, I thought it would be worthwhile to render it in Latin verse so that it could be useful to foreign nations that do not master our language."

[6]One of the earliest original theoretical discussions of satire in the vernacular seems to have also taken place in German, tellingly in the paratext of the satires (1512–19) of one of Brant's earliest admirers and imitators, the fellow Alsatian Thomas Murner: see Könneker, 68–82.

them to avoid all shallow and foolish behavior I ask them to take a look at this book."[7]

The importance of this pivotal moment in the history of satire becomes even clearer when one considers that Brant's original officially falls into the category of the popular *schympff red*, a gently scolding harangue comparable in tone to popular theater.[8] Up to this point the term *satura* had been the exclusive domain of erudite humanist discourse in Latin, a privilege that Locher's Latin text therefore paradoxically undermines by applying the term to the German original and by calling implicitly for versions in other national languages. Consequently, his remarks strongly insinuate that satire will henceforth be defined by its objectives and its attitude, and no longer by its genre or by the language or style in which it is written.[9] The clear distinction between serious moralizing satire, which had to be written in Latin, and entertaining, harmless farce, the privilege of the vernacular, was thus in the process of becoming obsolete, largely thanks to an endeavor that Joachim Du Bellay explicitly promoted in France half a century later in his *Deffence*, and which was already so impressively illustrated by the *Narrenschiff* corpus: the aforementioned digestion of models, or "creative imitation," essential for Renaissance concepts of *translatio studii*.[10]

## 3. Classical and Medieval Models

As the *Narrenschiff* corpus has shown, the dominance of Latin, the humanist lingua franca, provides the basis for the pan-European character of early modern letters, a dominance from which the national languages were

[7]Drouyn, fol. aIIr°: "J'ay consideré que les ungz se delectent au latin / les aultres au françoys / les ungz en rime / les aultres en prose, à ceste cause ay ce fait. . . . J'ay commencé à faire ceste translation pour exorter les pouvres humains / lesquelz par imbecillités et pusillanimités ont ensuivy les folz de ce present monde en toutes operations et œuvres dampnables. Et affin qu'ils puissent eviter toutes mondanités et folies / je leur prie qu'ilz ayent regard à ce present livre."

[8]See Brant's prologue, 109: "For jest and seriousness and all sorts of entertainment, you shall find fools in abundance here." The German *schympff* still signified "joke," "prank," or even "entertainment" at the time, therefore situating Brant's text much closer to medieval farce than the more serious Latin adaptation, which resorts to the more dramatic *o mores, o tempora* topos in its prologue: see Hartl, 2:38.

[9]See Locher's "Epigram to the reader," Hartl, 28: "I can call it satire for it sings the glorious gifts of virtue and annihilates vice." In his *Sermonum Horatii familiaris explanatio* (1500), Josse Bade, who published two Latin adaptations of Brant's text (*Stultiferae naves*, 1500; *Stultifera navis*, 1505), links satire to ancient Greek comedy, just as Locher did in his prologue: "Ancient comedy was created mostly to reprimand people's vices": Hartl, 2:36–40. See Debailly, 2001.

[10]Du Bellay, 30–31 (*Deffence* [1549] bk. 1, chap. 7).

slow to emancipate themselves. This is all the more true for satire, whose main roots and models are precisely to be found in Greco-Roman antiquity. Nevertheless, most great satirical texts of the period were written in the vernacular, which is most likely a result of their moral aspirations.[11] As a "poetics of reprimand" dedicated to criticizing "the vices of your time," the main objective of satire,[12] the text has to be at least orally available to the largest possible public: hence the popularity of satirical farce and sottie plays, the most important satirical productions in the vernacular of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Such plays were initially conceived as comic relief during long-winded public performances that focused on morality and Passion plays.[13] Within the larger framework of the entertaining *satyra ludens*, theatrical representations of everyday topics interspersed with comical violence and aimed at a largely illiterate audience thus seem the most efficient way to convey a moral message on a large scale.[14]

The more complex allegorical sotties of the early sixteenth century, however, tackle issues of national or even European interest (the monarchy and the Catholic Church, respectively), and herald a more elaborate vernacular satire, one more akin to the tragic aspirations of its classical predecessors, particularly Juvenal. Their form often approaches the classical genre of the dialogue that, thanks notably to Lucian of Samosatus's *Dialogues of the Dead* and *Dialogues of the Gods*, became a major form of satirical expression by the mid-sixteenth century, mostly as an ideal platform for conflicting points of view.[15] Notable examples are Pierre Gringore's polemical texts in support of Louis XII's Italian campaigns — particularly *Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz et Mère Sotte* (1512) — or more general attacks on specific social groups, such as in the *Sotise à huit personnaiges* (ca. 1507).[16] After Brant's popularization of the theme of foolishness and its use for satirical ends, the fool's liberty of speech was often employed within the

[11]Notable counterexamples are Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae* (1510), Ulrich von Hutten's *Epistolarum virorum obscorum* (1515/17), and Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), rather complex didactical satires from the beginning of the period in question. In Hutten's text, however, the bad Latin is an integral part of the satire, announcing Rabelais's *écolier limousin* or Janotus de Bragmardo.

[12]Quotation from Du Bellay in Willett, 71. For the "poetics of reprimand," see Debailly, 2001; for the larger context, see Cornilliat, 44–59.

[13]For satire in those genres, see above all Arden; Aubailly; Duhl, 1994. For the farce, see Bowen, 1964; Rey-Flaud; Schoell; Beam.

[14]See Hess, 87–95, for the dichotomy "satyra ludens/satyra illudens," which corresponds fairly closely to the traditional juxtaposition of Horatian and Juvenalian satire.

[15]See Tahureau. For a critical assessment of the dialogue, see above all Godard; Kushner.

[16]See Duhl, 2005.

framework of ironic (self-)accusation.[17] At once agent and target of the satire, Erasmus's Moria and her rhetorical attack on rhetoric set the tone for this characteristic attitude of early modern satire.

This general development leads first to a fundamental observation that further underlines the considerable role of satirical letters at the time: as the prototype of militant writing, satire contributes significantly to the attack on the self-proclaimed elites. The classical erudition of the clergy and, even more so, of large parts of the aristocracy, was generally rudimentary at best, even though their power was largely based on their control of official knowledge, such as the interpretation of scripture; hence also the ecclesial condemnation of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples's translation of the Bible into French (1530 for the complete version). The rise of vernacular languages and literatures therefore constituted a democratization of knowledge that was bound to undermine the very basis of ecclesiastical power and privilege, as it unmasked abuse and misinterpretations of classical and biblical precepts and of letters in general: "Any peasant who knows how to read is superior to a bad priest."[18] Paradoxically, this often quite crude charge was led by the true cultural elite, humanist thinkers, who exploited the *mundus perversus* topos, an essential element of early modern satire.[19]

In addition to popular farce and sottie plays — the best-known French example is the famous *Farce de Maistre Pathelin* (ca. 1457) — medieval vernacular satire was mostly expressed in allegories such as *Les Quinze Joyes du Mariage*, as well as in novella collections such as the *Decamerone*, the *Canterbury Tales*, and the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*; the more daring tales of the *Fabliaux* small and the *Roman de renart*; and the straightforward narrative farces of the *Ulenspiegel*.[20] With the possible exception of allegories, the satire of such texts tended to be rather direct and univocal in order to transmit the intended moral and didactic messages without any potential for misunderstanding. Even if

[17]See two recent critical editions: Gringore; Duhl, 2005.

[18]"Ein ietlicher pur, der lesen kan, / Der gwünnt eim schlechten pfaffen an": early German Reformers were at the forefront of this line of attack, as is illustrated by these verses from Niklaus Manuel, *Vom Papst und seiner Priesterschaft* (1523), quoted in Könneker, 177. See also Manuel's *Von Papsts und Christi Gegensatz* (1523) and *Der Ablaβkrämer* (1525), as well as Lukas Cranach's *Passional Christi und Antichristi* (1521).

[19]For the *mundus perversus*, see Curtius, 104–08. As for the lack of erudition, one could think of the aforementioned Hutten as well as of the parody of the theologians' bad Latin in Geoffroy Tory's *Champfleury* and in Rabelais — for example, *Pantagruel*, chapter 6, the Limousin student, and *Gargantua*, chapter 19, Janotus de Bragmardo's harangue: see Rabelais, 1994, 232–35; and ibid., 51–53.

[20]Even though the oldest-known printed copy of this text dates from 1515, there were certainly earlier written versions of these stories that had circulated orally, the historical figure Dil Ulenspiegel having died in 1350.

allegorical veils were in place, however, they were often easy to decode and usually added an amusing visual layer to their literal meaning, as in the case of the popular figure of Mère Sotte, who symbolized the Church in sottie plays.[21]

These vernacular variants then had to coexist with the ever more readily available classical satirical texts. Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Lucian (as well as, of late, Catullus and Martial) have been considered the most influential sources and models for the highly regarded classical verse satire (*satura*), the biting epigram (Catullus and Martial),[22] and, in Lucian's case, for the dialogue within the framework of Menippean satire, whose *varietas* and *imaginatio* proved to be welcome additions to the satirical spectrum. Some 330 editions of Lucian's works — in Greek, in Latin, and in vernacular translations — were published in Western Europe between 1470 and 1600.[23] One of the most famous Latin editions was a partial translation by Erasmus and Thomas More (1506), a version that strongly influenced their respective satirical masterpieces, *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*, all of which then had a considerable impact on Rabelais, who also owned a Greek Lucian that he read and translated from in the 1520s.

In order to complete this brief overview of the sources of early modern satire one must mention another tradition that originally had nothing to do with the above variants and that also came into focus in the 1500s: the Greek satyr play. This theatrical genre consisted of actors disguised as satyrs — half-goat, half-man demigods in the service of Bacchus — insulting the public vigorously from the stage. Even though there was no etymological link between this genre and Roman *satura*, it was incorporated into satire, thanks to its near homophony with the Latin genre and then most likely for its straightforward and blunt approach to social criticism (*rusticitas*), a general critical attitude that it has in common with satire and that, despite its crude and more violent bent, was reminiscent of the farce.[24] Although attempts to revive the satyr play as a distinct genre ultimately failed, the integration of the characteristic features of this genre into the early

[21]See Gringore, 237–322 (*Le Jeu du Prince des Sotz et Mère Sotte*). Mère Sotte is introduced without any ambiguity ("Mère Sotte clothed underneath as Mère Sotte and over those clothes like the Church," ibid., 271), and she identifies herself clearly in her first lines: "My name is Mother Holy Church. I want everyone to note that": ibid., 271–72 (lines 346–47).

[22]Clément Marot's famous imitations of Martial's epigrams popularized the genre in France and made it available for the satirical mixture: see Marot, 2:347–90.

[23]Lauvergnat-Gagnière, 25–57.

[24]Moreover, the satyr play provided a welcome generic link to ancient comedy and cemented the origins of satire in Greek theater. See the recent assessment of the role of the satyr in the Renaissance in Lavocat. Nicot tellingly distinguishes between a simple *sotise*, or *sotie*, that is defined as "fatuitas, ineptia, rusticitas, or temeritas" ("foolishness, absurdity, rustic manners, rashness"), whereas the subtle *sotie* is translated by "satyræ figuratæ" ("figurative satire").

modern satirical tradition contributes to satirical mixture and, more importantly, is pertinent to the formal rise of polemical and Juvenalian satire that dominated the genre in the final third of the sixteenth century.[25] Two attempts to revive this genre have survived from Renaissance France: Roger de Collerye's *Satyre pour les habitans d'Auxerre* (1530) and Barthélemy Aneau's *Lyon marchant, Satyre françoise* (performed 1541). The latter is the more interesting play, as it displays the typical mixture of early modern satire. It begins with a "cry," the traditional opening sequence of a sottie play, and an emphasis on monsters, especially the Cyclops, reminiscent of one of the few known satyr plays at the time, Euripides's *Cyclops*.[26] The text then settles into a curious structure that alternates between dramatic monologues and dialogues, two of the main genres of early modern satire, recounting the most-notable events from 1524 to 1541 in a non sequitur style that characterized satire at the time (according to the first French poetic treatise, Thomas Sébillet's *Art poétique français*).[27]

## 4. The Concept of Mixture

In fact, the confusion between *satura* and satyr play was initially based on partial readings and misinterpretations of Horace's *Ars poetica* and *Satires*, which seemed to endorse a link between the two genres.[28] In the fifth century CE, the grammarian Diomedes, in his *Artis Grammaticae*, failed to distinguish between what became three of the four main variants of early modern satire: Roman verse satire (by way of culinary *satura* and varying meters), Greek satyr play, and culinary farce.[29] Even Menippean satire, the

[25]The evolution of the term *schympff red*, from Brant's relatively innocuous "entertainment" to its more serious modern sense of "reproach" or "invective" (evocative of the satyr play), which has been shown in Murner's satires some twenty-five years after Brant's text, is a concrete example of the organic nature of this development. See Könneker, 71; Gruenter.

[26]See Aneau.

[27]Sébillet, *Art poétique français* (1548) in *Traités de poétique et de rhétorique de la Renaissance*, 135: "For in truth the satires of Juvenal, Persius, and Horace are Latin non sequitur, or, better, Marot's non sequitur are veritable French satires."

[28]For more details, see Lavocat, 234–42, who underlines Horace's awareness of the difference in Horace, 121 (*Satires* 1.10.64–66): "Grant, say I, that Lucilius was genial and witty: grant that he was also more polished than you would expect one to be who was creating a new style quite untouched by the Greeks."

[29]Quoted in Lavocat, 240: "Satire derives its name either from the satyrs, because these poems treat of ridiculous and shameful things as say and do satyrs; or from a dish filled with various fruits, which the ancients sacrificed to their gods and which was called satura for its abundance and variety . . . or, according to Varro, its name could come from a sausage filled with diverse ingredients. . . . Others think that satire gets its name from a mixed law, which includes several different articles, like satire includes several meters."

fourth variant, could be seen as implied by Diomedes's insistence on the mixed character of the form, which is but a logical extension of the mixture of culinary *satura* and the varied meters of Roman verse satire into the realm of style, content, and attitude. The Menippea is further linked to the satyr play via its predilection for fantasy and the grotesque. It was not until 1605 that Greek and Roman influences on satire were explicitly dissociated for the first time, in Isaac Casaubon's influential edition of Persius's *Works*, later taken up by John Dryden. This separation led to the revival of the dominance of Roman verse satire, as well as to the condemnation of "satyresque" satire that culminated in the legal process of one of its most prominent representatives, Théophile de Viau, in 1623.[30] The crude and outspoken current of satire would henceforth be relegated into the domain of libertine literature, which, in a way, enhanced its status as a counterweight to official, that is, institutionally regulated culture. This culture was now dominated by the principles of neoclassicism, which, however, did not rule out the creation of satirical masterpieces (Molière, Boileau), but the brutally outspoken, vulgar, and obscene variants had nonetheless been eliminated from the canon.

What is most significant for the evolution of satire is that the early modern confusion and mingling of the origins of the form was most likely intentional, as Françoise Lavocat has shown: "No lexicographer or commentator on Horace, Persius, or Juvenal, all in favor of the assimilation of the satyr and satire, neglected the serious indications of the derivation of satire from the term *satura*." Lavocat mentions especially Italian humanists in this context, such as G. Balbi, G. Tortelli, N. Perroti, D. Calderini, C. Landino, and F. Floridus, but confirms that their French counterparts' attitude was not any different — as is obvious in Robert Estienne's entries *satyra* and *satyrus* in his *Thesaurus linguae latinae* (1535).[31] Jacques Peletier du Mans's comment in his *Art poétique* (1555) is exemplary in this respect, even in the erroneous link between Horace and the satyr play: "Satire is a scathing poetic genre. As for its etymology, I do not worry much about it. . . . According to Horace, it seems to have been applied to satyrs, who were a type of Lybbic animal with a human, albeit horned, head. And

[30]For the revival of Roman verse satire, see Régnier; Boileau.

[31]Lavocat, 240–44, quotation from 240: "Aucun des lexicographes ou commentateurs d'Horace, de Perse ou de Juvénal, unanimement favorables à l'assimilation du satyre et de la satire, n'a negligé les indices sérieux d'une dérivation de la satire du mot 'satura.'" The theory of an intentional confusion of *satyr play* and *satura* seems reinforced by Estienne's having also been the author of an edition of Persius's and Juvenal's satires, the *Juvenalis et Persii satyrae* (1544).

because they were exuberant and lascivious, they were introduced in this type of poem. . . . For as the satirist says: 'Who prevents us from telling the truth while laughing?'"[32] Yet again, what counted were the attitude and the objective, not the poetic genre or etymological links to Roman verse satire, and the satyr play constituted a welcome added dimension to the form by providing the aggression capable of enriching what has been called "the burgeoning attempt to outline a literary space of subversion."[33]

Consequently, the most important discussions focused on the conflict between ad hominem and general satire (*divina satyra*), between the usefulness of attacking specific sinners versus the universal assault of sins. Such oppositions correspond quite well to the aforementioned dichotomies between destructive (polemical) and constructive (didactic) satire, between a pessimistic view of a human condition beyond hope in its current state and an optimistic belief in the healing powers of laughter, critical thinking, learning, and faith — or even between a preference for Juvenal or for Horace.[34] Renaissance humanists then seemed to have favored the creative potential inherent in the multitude of diverse models, which, moreover, corresponded marvelously to the form's characteristic heterogeneity. This intentionality underlined yet again the creative imitation of the ancients, this essential element of early modern letters that was indispensable in the process of developing prestigious vernacular literature. In addition, the integration of medieval comical theater — itself further legitimized by the role assigned to Greek comic theater in the development of satire — enabled at least a partial anchoring of satire in the vernacular literary tradition, an aspect of national pride that should not be neglected in the context of *translatio studii* and the rise of the vernacular. This approach seems particularly clear in the adaptations of Brant's *Narrenschiff*, which were

[32]Peletier du Mans, 300–01: "La Satire est un genre de Poème mordant. Quant à l'Étymologie du mot, je ne m'en travaillerai pas beaucoup. . . . À l'opinion d'Horace, elle semble avoir été dite des Satyres: qui était un genre d'animaux Lybiques, ayant figure humaine, excepté qu'ils étaient cornus. Et parce qu'ils étaient pétulents et lascifs: on les introduisait en cette façon de Poème. . . . Car comme dit le Satirique, Qui empêche qu'on ne dise vrai tout en riant?"

[33]Lavocat, 240: "la tentative naissante de cerner un espace littéraire de subversion."

[34]It is again Peletier du Mans, 301, who expressed this problem clearly. Only when the specific sinners are forgotten, the satirized sin could be a moral lesson for future generations: "I also believe that it is very ineffective, as those who are reprimanded are far from changing their ways, they become even more embittered, for there is nothing as odious as a personal reprimand made in public. Nonetheless, a well-written satire can be useful for future generations." For the *divina satyra* and its focus on blame and praise, see Könneker, 46–47. Such dichotomies evoke the definition by Schiller, 39, of the satirical as the conflict between the ideal and reality.

used by their respective adaptors to praise the original while at the same time to impose themselves as authors in their own right.[35]

It is precisely the blending of these various sources and traditions that enabled Renaissance humanists to create their own brand of satire, for example, by introducing prose variants, thus appropriating Quintilian's famous phrase "Satura tota nostra est" ("Satire is all ours"), and following early modern aspirations of ennobling vernacular languages and literatures. The satirical mixture is probably best documented in the "printer's discourse" to the second edition (1594) of the *Satyre Menippee*, the sophisticated anti–Catholic League pamphlet. The late publication date enables the printer to summarize quite effectively the various influences on this most important hybrid form throughout the sixteenth century. This important document for the history of Renaissance satire merits a lengthy quotation:

> This word Satyre, doth not only signifie a poesie, containing evil speech in it, for the reproofe, either of publike vices, or of particular faults of some certaine persons, of which sort are those of Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius: but also all sortes of writings, replenished with sundry matters, and divers arguments, having prose and verse intermixed or mingled therewithal, as if it were powdred [beef] tongues interlarded. Varro saith, that in ancient times, men called by this name, a certaine sorte of pie or of pudding, into which men put divers kindes of hearbes, and of meates. But I suppose that the word cometh from the Græcians, who at their publike and solemne feastes, did bring in upon their stages or scaffolds, certaine persons disguised, like unto Satyres, whom the people supposed to be halfe Gods, full of [lascives], & wantonnes in the woods. . . . And these men disguised after this manner, being naked and tattered, took a certaine kind of libertie unto themselves, to nippe and to floute at all the worlde, without punishment. In olde time, some made them to rehearse their injurious verses all alone, without any other matter in them, then railing and speaking evill of everyone, afterwards men mingled them with comedie players, who brought them into their acts, to make people laugh: at the last, the more grave and serious Romanes chased them altogether out of their Theaters. . . . But the more wise and wittie Poets used them, to content therewithal, their owne bad spirit of evill speaking. . . . And there are great numbers of them found in our countrie of Parresie, who love rather to lose a good friend, then a good word or a merrie jest, applied well to the purpose. Wherfore it is not without cause, that they have intituled this little discourse, by

[35]See Metzger-Rambach; Renner, 2010a. Other noteworthy examples include F. Bretin's translation of Lucian's *Works* into French with introductory paragraphs to each text that cater to the French-speaking public (see Lucian, 1582), and J. Fischart's famous German version of *Gargantua* (*Geschichtsklitterung*, 1575).

> the name *Satyre*, though that it be written in prose, being yet notwithstanding stuffed and stored with gallant Ironies, pricking notwithstanding and biting the very bottome of the consciences of them, that feele themselves nipped therewithall, concerning whom it speaketh nothing but trueth: but on the other side, making those to burst with laughter, that have innocent hearts. . . . As concerning the adjective *Menippized*, it is not new or unusuall, for it is more then sixteene hundred yeares agoe, that Varro . . . made Satyres of this name also, which Macrobius sayth were called Cyniquized, and Menippized: to which he gave that name because of Menippus the Cynicall Philosopher, who also had made the like before him, al ful of salted jestings, & poudred merie conceits of good words, to make men to laugh and to discover the vicious men of his time. And Varro imitating him, did the like in prose, as since his time there hath done the like . . . Lucian in the Greek tongue . . . and in our age that good fellow Rabelaiz, who has passed all other men in contradicting others, and pleasant conceits, if he would cut off from them some quodlibetarie speeches in taverns, and his salt and biting words in alehouses.[36]

This discourse triggers two essential observations about the nature of early modern satire: the confirmation of the highly productive confusion surrounding the origins and sources of satire, which considerably enhances early modern satire's trademark *varietas*; and the overall prominent role of the satyr, most likely due to the dominance of violent polemical satire in the decades prior to the publication of the *Satyre Menippee*. However, it also evokes a more subtle version of what became a satirical archetype at the time, incarnated most prominently by Dil Ulenspiegel and by Rabelais's most fascinating character, the trickster Panurge.[37] In addition to being better adapted to the violence of the period, the satyr also refreshes and diversifies traditional *satura* and helps incorporate more thoroughly the essential contemporary concepts of monstrosity and the grotesque into satirical discourse, underlining a vital link to Menippean satire. Besides, this grotesque figure is not only compatible with the strong Lucianesque current of early modern satire, but can also be anchored in Aristotelian criteria for a more authentic perception of reality in artistic expression,[38] as well as in the concept of *parrhesia*, the unconditional adherence to truth, however bluntly or crudely it might have to be expressed. After all, an ill has

[36]This quotation is only given in a contemporary English translation attributed to Thomas Wilcox, *A Pleasant Satyre or Poesie* (1595): see [Wilcox], 202–04. See the recent critical edition of the French original, *Satyre Menippee*; see the analysis of the translation and authorial attribution in Pauline Smith.

[37]The most recent and most complete study of Panurge is Marrache-Gouraud. For Panurge's satirical functions, see Renner, 2007, 232–94.

[38]Aristotle, 47–48 (*Poetics* 1448b).

to be diagnosed, that is, named and described even if this involves crude language, before it can be healed.

The passage quoted also highlights the status of Rabelais as a Menippean or Cynic satirist, which has often been neglected in Rabelais scholarship and which is explicitly distinguished from openly crude satire, what Northrop Frye called "low-norm satire."[39] In Rabelais, this variant reaches its peak as early as in *Pantagruel* 15,[40] before being increasingly marginalized — or rather euphemized — in the course of the four authentic books. The contrast between various types of satire reflected in this programmatic discourse echoes the tension between blunt satire, on the one hand — incarnated by satyrs or tricksters such as Panurge, and which frequently favors ad hominem attacks and Juvenalian aggression (*satyra illudens*) — and more playful, gentler scolding in the Horatian tradition (*satyra ludens*), on the other. The mention of the Roman intervention above hints at an acceptable solution to this dilemma, as serious satire (*divina satyra*) had the options of channeling the sublime tragic (such as Aubigné) or masking its crude tendencies by narrative irony, euphemisms, and double entendres (especially the late Rabelais) without sacrificing its power to cure or destroy despite the removal of supposedly "quodlibetarie speeches." This apparent purification, however, often resulted in a paradoxical highlighting of its veiled invective and obscenities as the focus shifted from literal to figurative meanings.[41]

## 5. French Satire between Horace and Juvenal

Following the combination of diverse satirical traditions as well as the eclectic tendencies of Roman *satura* itself — a term that denoted a mixture of diverse foods before it was applied to poetry in varying verse meters and then to *prosimetrum* texts — satire thus never ceased to integrate an ever increasing arsenal of genres, forms, and attitudes in order to accomplish more effectively its moral objective: the betterment of individuals and of society through a critical and more or less comical treatment of human

[39]Frye. Whereas Rabelais's "Lucianesque" traits were never in doubt — Maurice de la Porte called him the "Lucien françois" in his *Épithètes* as early as in 1571 — it is Clément, 2005, who has refocused critical attention on the early modern sense of the term in general, and on the "cynic Rabelais" in particular. For the Lucianic grotesque, see Bompaire.

[40]See Charpentier, 1992.

[41]On this point and for the complex subject of obscenity in general, see the two recent collective volumes: Birberick, Ganim, and Roberts; *Obscénités renaissantes*.

nature and institutions in all shapes and forms.[42] This attempt to mirror reality, epistemologically and rhetorically, in all its diversity in order to bring about change, accounts for its trademark *varietas*, a wide range of topics, styles, and registers. Despite the extraordinary importance of Lucian — especially for humanists such as Rabelais or Bonaventure Des Périers, the presumed author of the enigmatic dialogue *Cymbalum Mundi* — the Lucilian satires of Horace and Juvenal were the main theoretical references and models for the form in the sixteenth century. They were especially prized for their rhetorical approach to what was a clearly defined genre, the *satura*. As sketched above, their satirical attitudes are usually presented as polar opposites, with Horace's playful *utile dulci mixtum* (mixture of the useful and the pleasant) pitted against Juvenal's tragic *indignatio*.[43] Thanks most of all to viable fifteenth-century editions, Horace clearly overshadowed Juvenal until the latter was praised by Justus Lipsius and Julius Caesar Scaliger in the 1560s, followed by Pierre Pithou's reliable edition of his works (1585).[44] In France, the dominance of gentler Horatian satire in the first half of the century roughly coincided with the reign of Francis I, a period of general optimism, progress, and relative religious tolerance, despite episodes such as the famous Affaire des Placards of 1534. The choice of the most effective form of satire therefore largely depended on the extraliterary climate, and with a few exceptions — such as the controversial *Cymbalum mundi* or a number of contributions to the wide-ranging dispute between Clément Marot and the orthodox Catholic François Sagon — satire was mostly expressed in what has often been called, albeit somewhat restrictively, "humanist farce":[45]

[42]The dialogue, the paradox, and Cynicism would be examples of such genres, forms, and attitudes that became predominant in early modern satire and whose satirical origins can be found in Lucian.

[43]Both authors define their respective attitudes in their first satires: Horace, 7 (*Satires* 1.1.24–25): "and yet what is to prevent one from telling truth as he laughs"; Juvenal and Persius, 9 (Juvenal, *Satire* 1.79–80): "Though nature say me nay, indignation will prompt my verse, of whatever kind it be."

[44]See Debailly, 1993, 1995, and 2009. The fifteenth-century Horace editions available in France are by Landinus (1482) and Badius (1499).

[45]Farce is undeniably a part of the wide-ranging satirical spectrum, but it is somewhat closer to comedy than full-fledged satire, as the nature of its laughter usually has the entertaining, benevolent quality of comedic laughter rather than the mocking, chastising, didactic, and at times violent laughter of satire. More complex farces, such as *Pathelin*, underline, via a more moralizing laughter, the transition of the genre to genuine satire, a transition that is illustrated in the increasing complexity of Rabelais's satirical farces from the first two books (1532 and 1534) to the *Quart Livre* of 1552. Although it unfortunately fails to put farce into a larger literary and extraliterary context — thus largely sacrificing its complexity for an often-oversimplified and therefore quite debatable analysis of its functions — Hayes is the most complete and recent study of Rabelaisian farce.

Rabelais's first two books, the *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*; the novella collections of Bonaventure Des Périers and Noël du Fail; and even Barthélemy Aneau's *Lyon marchant*.

Erasing this optimistic outlook, the horrors of the Wars of Religion (1562–98) certainly contributed to the rising popularity of Juvenal's more aggressive style, as exemplified in his famous, scathing Satire 6, "The Ways of Women."[46] Closer to the tragic mode, the "stronger medicine" of his caustic *satyra illudens* was a most welcome means of raising the traditional low style of the genre that Horace proclaimed to a higher level that might ultimately help satire shed its traditional status of a minor form and therefore address more efficiently the religious and political turmoil that France was going through in the last third of the century. During this period, the range of more serious, punishing satire — often provoking grim laughter[47] — is reflected in a trajectory extending from extremely obscene polemical pamphlets, such as the anonymous *Satyres chrestiennes de la cuisine papale* (1560), to the sublime poetic heights of Juvenalian indignation, Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Tragiques*, initially composed in the late 1570s.[48] Whereas the *Satyres chrestiennes* favor the complete destruction of the allegorical papal kitchen and, by extension, the entire edifice of the Roman Catholic Church and its tyrannical reign as an end in itself,[49] the final section of Aubigné's

[46]Juvenal's explicit reference to Sophocles underlines the more serious bent of his satire, dealing with crimes, not mere folly: Juvenal and Persius, 135 (Juvenal, *Satire* 6.634–40): "Now think you that all this is a fancy tale, and that our Satire is taking to herself the high heels of tragedy? Think you that I have out-stepped the limits and the laws of those before me, and am mouthing in Sophoclean tones a grand theme unknown to the Rutulian hills and the skies of Latium? Would indeed that my words were idle! But here is Pontia proclaiming 'I did the deed; I gave aconite, I confess it, to my own children; the crime was detected, and is known to all; yes, with my own hands I did it.'"

[47]See Crouzet, 1:671: "Even in the domain of laughter, the conscience of the reformers is of a serious nature. Their laughter is austere, but one of the regulating functions of this laughter is to distance or remove its object from what it claims to be, from a reality that it does not reflect." For satirical laughter, see above all Debailly, 1994; Ménager.

[48]Other texts that have recently attracted attention are *La Comedie du pape malade*, the *Mappe-Monde nouvelle papistique*, Henri Estienne's *Apologie pour Herodote*, and the *Satyre Menippee*: see Angenot. Despite a lack of theoretical engagement with satire or polemics, Szabari provides an interesting overview of mostly French pamphlet literature throughout the sixteenth century.

[49]Author's "Préface au lecteur," in [Beza], 7: "I await His grace to devote myself soon to valiantly destroy everything, both the kitchen and the edifice. If this happens to help construct the house of God, you will then get to know my name." As for the culinary excesses, one of the crudest attacks is directed against the perversion of the Holy Communion. Not only does the author insist on the digestive fate of the Host, but he even dares to underline this fact graphically by implying one should drop the *g* from the chant *Agnus Dei* that accompanies Holy Communion: ibid., 107–08. See the observations on this passage in Crouzet, 1:679–81.

Huguenot epic, "Judgment," does convey a more optimistic outlook: "So come you blessed and triumph forever / In the eternal kingdom of victory and peace."[50] The contrast between the two approaches is striking, as the pamphlets' crude language translates the violence of the conflict, the contemptible excesses of the adversary, and a need for what Thomas Nashe would call "unsugred pills" through an aesthetics of the vulgar. Such elements, although rooted in Aristotelian poetics and its call for heightened realism, prevent these texts from reaching the level of sublime *movere* that Aubigné's equally explicit but more elegant tragedy strives for. Within Juvenalian satire, one therefore witnesses two ways of healing a society, two main approaches of blunt satire, and two literary aesthetics.

Both strategies of satirical dismantling of the enemy served the purpose of rebuilding, albeit from the outside of the Catholic Church, a reformative approach that was actually initiated by the evangelicals of the first half of the sixteenth century in a far less radical fashion, as they attempted to bring about change from within the Church, thus avoiding schism. In France, they were generally identified with the circle of Meaux, humanist theologians gathered around Guillaume Briçonnet and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples.[51] As different as the aesthetics of the two different approaches to satirical criticism during the Wars of Religion might have been, both display a more militant and tragic attitude than their predecessors. Such an attitude seems more suitable than what benevolent, playful, or unguided satire had to offer to the deadly ills that they endeavored to combat in an increasingly chaotic and dangerous era. This radical approach illustrates the difference from the playful, innocuous satire of farce, as Crouzet observes: "The reformers' struggle to take away the sacred aura of the practices and men of the old religion follows preestablished patterns of apprehension, deriving from the satire of the clergy: medieval traditions of derision of ecclesiastical authority, which in farce and morality plays took the brunt of the assault precisely because it was considered unshakeable. Reformation satire dives into this acknowledged or institutionalized critical space and refashions it in order to demonstrate the vileness of a Church that needs to be eradicated."[52]

[50]Aubigné, 782 (vv. 877–78): "Venez donc bien-heureux triompher à jamais / Au royaume eternel de victoire, et de paix."

[51]See Le Cadet.

[52]Crouzet, 1:672, building on an argument developed in Bowen, 1964, 33: "La lutte réformée de désacralisation des pratiques et des hommes de la religion ancienne s'inscrit dans des schèmes d'appréhension préétablis, ceux de la satire du clergé. Tradition médiévale de dérision de l'autorité ecclésiastique, qui dans les farces et moralités recevait la plupart des coups, précisément parce que . . . elle était considérée comme inébranlable. La satire réformée s'engouffre dans cet espace critique reconnu ou institué, et le remodèle en un usage enseignant l'immondicité d'une Eglise qu'il faut éradiquer."

In this brutal political and religious conflict, vice and crime had replaced folly: hence the replacement of Erasmian narrative irony with the need for firm authorial guidance and clear messages, often expressed in a monologic, didactic style.[53] The authors were unwilling to leave the task of interpretation to the public, which always bears the risk of pedagogical inefficiency or of gross abuse, as Rabelais's prologue to *Gargantua* and his dedicatory letter to the cardinal de Châtillon in the front matter of the *Fourth Book* confirm.[54] The objective for both sides was thus similar: a fresh start from scratch, the uncorrupted beginnings of Christianity for the reformers, opposed to the total annihilation of the heretics and preservation of the status quo for the conservative Catholics. The evangelical middle ground, reform from within, no longer seemed a viable option in the midst of a brutal armed conflict. The more sober and openly erudite satire of Rabelais's *Third* and *Fourth Book*s (1546 and 1552, respectively) — especially the *Fourth Book*, whose increasing violence is marked by the Gallican crisis of midcentury — is a harbinger of this change.[55]

From an aesthetic point of view, it is not surprising that most early modern forms of satire, and especially radical pamphlets, have generally been considered inferior to more traditional verse satire.[56] Moreover, many popular satires favor an overly monologic, didactic approach and do indeed lack essential elements of the best satires such as Rabelais's chronicles, Des Périers's *Cymbalum mundi*, Marot's and Du Bellay's poetry, Henri Estienne's *Apologie pour Hérodote*, and the *Satyre Menipee*, which favor an open critical dialogue with an emancipated reader. Such openness is frequently achieved through polysemy and ambiguity,[57] which are often achieved through brilliant use of irony and stylistic elegance, as well as a certain refined playfulness vital to the preservation of the trademark

[53]For the dichotomy "folly/vice," see Brummack, 313–16.

[54]In the prologue to *Gargantua* in Rabelais, 1955, 37–39, the narrator famously warns his readers not to mistake their interpretations for authorial intent, and in the letter to the cardinal (ibid., 435–38), Rabelais complains about "slanders" against him due to falsely attributed texts or unauthorized versions of his chronicles. All English quotations from Rabelais are from this edition. For guided versus unguided satire, see Könneker, 64–66. For the use of irony, see Schwartz.

[55]See Defaux, 455–515. For the overall more somber sociopolitical situation that influenced Rabelais's more serious satire in 1546 and 1552, see Kaiser, 106–09.

[56]See Du Bellay, 54–56 (*Deffence* [1549] bk. 2, chap. 4), who, in accordance with his attempt to elevate French letters, calls for the imitation of Horace while denigrating Marot's *coq-à-l'âne* when it comes to the creation of satire in the vernacular. Even in the last century, Fleuret and Perceau list only traditional verse satires.

[57]See, among others, Cave; Jeanneret.

jocoserious approach of such complete satires that strike a balance between the Horatian and Juvenalian attitudes. The mere title of one of the most refined representatives of the playful or even divine satire, Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium*, possesses all these qualities in abundance. True to the ambiguous wording of the title, "folly" functions as both the agent and the recipient of the ironic praise, which adds to the text's complexity. As opposed to militant pamphlets or mere works of propaganda, playful satire in the vein of Lucian, Brant, and Erasmus could therefore no longer be considered as aesthetically or rhetorically inferior to its sterner, tragic counterpart. The effectiveness of such subtle strategies of subversion, marked by polysemy, erudition, and stylistic refinement, was, however, doubtful in a period of turmoil such as the Wars of Religion that called for more-direct criticism, usually of the ad hominem type. In the long run, it is the mixed nature of less straightforward, more general, and often-ironic variants of satire and their blend of various models, styles, and attitudes that the major representatives of early modern satire, Brant's and Erasmus's immediate imitators as well as Rabelais, Henri Estienne, Cervantes, or Dryden, preserved in their vernacular satires. In their pursuit of the ideals of the *divina satyra*, these timeless texts still have a public and an impact today, and therefore show the potential of the form.

A first rudimentary classification of early modern satirical variants thus derived from these observations, which focus on satire's main purpose, to cure the ills of society. In an attempt to save the patient, this cure could be elegant, constructive, and benevolent (medicinal) or, if the situation was deemed beyond hope, it could be violent and destructive. In retrospect, this essential distinction between the two principal variants of satire was elegantly drawn up by John Dryden in the seventeenth century: "There is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body, and leaves it standing in its place."[58] On a slightly different plane, one recognizes the conflict between Horatian and Juvenalian approaches to satire in these remarks. Whereas the former's *ridentem dicere verum* (to tell the truth in jest) was frequently associated with a gentler brand of satire directed at benign folly that dominated satire in the first half of the century, the latter's proverbial *indignatio*, reflected, for example, in Jonathan Swift's epitaph ("Here lies the body of Jonathan Swift where harsh indignation will continue to torment the soul"),[59] stood for a more ferocious approach to satirical criticism of vices and crimes.

[58]Quoted by Kinsley, 261.

[59]"HIC DEPOSITVM EST CORPVU JONATHAN SWIFT, S.T.P., VBI SAEVA INDIGNATIO VLTERIVS COR LACERARE NEQVIT": quoted in Highet, 649.

The aforementioned *Satyres chrestiennes de la cuisine papale* are an outstanding example of such a militant, polemical approach. With very few exceptions that only attained general recognition much later,[60] it is this type of destructive satire that dominated the final third of the sixteenth century in France. One has to wait for the end of the religious wars to see the reemergence of other, more elegant and subtle satiric variants that revalorized traditional *satura* and the trademark satiric mixture, beginning with the *Satyre Menippee*, Mathurin Régnier, and François Béroalde de Verville, before culminating in Boileau's elaborate verse satires.

## 6. Rabelais the Satirist: The Dominance of Farce in *Pantagruel*

The four authentic books of François Rabelais's Pantagrueline chronicles exemplify the evolution of early modern satire, as they offer the remarkable characteristic of covering the entire satirical spectrum without, however, falling prey to the temptation of pure, univocal invective that was particularly prevalent in many of the polemical treatises of the last third of the century and that radicalized, and at times even falsified the notion of satire.[61] Rabelais therefore demonstrates brilliantly what has been identified as a fundamental trait of early modern satire: the element of *varietas*, or heterogeneity (in form, style, language, and content), a cornucopian construct that informs not only the modern aesthetics of the genre, but even the origins of satire, as the "printer's discourse" to the *Satyre Menippee* documents so clearly.

The most-pronounced differences between the various levels of satirical expression can be observed in the early Rabelais, especially in the first two books, *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*. Those texts date from 1532 and 1534–35, respectively (with the definitive version in 1542), and are dominated by farcical satire that, despite the clearly comical violence, seems closer, at times, to Juvenalian indignation than to Horatian elegance. One only has to think of the crude threats directed at the potentially malevolent reader in the prologue to *Pantagruel*: "May St Anthony's fire burn you, the epilepsy throw you, the thunder-stroke and leg-ulcers rack you, dysentery seize you, and may the erysipelas, with its tiny cowhair rash, and quicksilver's pain on top, through your arse-hole enter up, and like Sodom and Gomorrah may you dissolve into sulphur, fire, and the

[60]For example, Henri Estienne, *Traité préparatif à l'Apologie pour Herodote* (1566); [Guillaume des Autels], *Mitistoire barragouyne de Fanfreluche et Gaudichon* (1574); and Estienne Tabourot, *Les Bigarrures du Seigneur des Accords (Premier livre)* (1588).

[61]See Ménager, 176–77: "In the Renaissance, invective constitutes an ever-present threat that weighs on the satirical genre." See also Duval, 2007.

bottomless pit, in case you do not firmly believe everything that I tell you in this present *Chronicle*!"[62] The satyr-like violence is mitigated, however, by the irony of the passage, which is a parody of Lucian's *True Story* — it actually reverses the Greek Cynic's premise[63] — and preserves the satirical character of a text that would otherwise risk slipping into pure invective. After all, the horrible ailments with which the narrator threatens rebellious or malevolent readers can be healed by the book itself, which is comically presented as a panacea in the same prologue, curing spiritual as well as physical aches. Annoyed hunters sought "refuge and comfort" rereading the "inestimable deeds of the said Gargantua," while toothaches were treated as follows: "There are others in the world . . . who, when greatly afflicted with toothache, after expending all their substance on doctors without any result, have found no readier remedy than to put the said Chronicles between two fine linen sheets, well warmed, and apply them to the seat of the pain, dusting them first with a little dry-dung powder."[64] Yet again, the benevolent satire of mediocre doctors and mediocre books,[65] almost Horatian in attitude, is accompanied by a descent into the Bakhtinian lower body symbolized by the "dry-dung powder," or excrement, that is part of the Rabelaisian cure. From the very start of the first book, then, a combination of diverse satirical traditions can be observed. Such traditions demand an interpretative effort by the reader and, even though quite straightforward when taken separately or literally, this development starts to showcase the beginnings of quite intricate intertextual rapports.

In general, however, low-norm satire, such as Panurge's crude method for constructing the walls of Paris, is not only firmly separated from more openly serious episodes dealing with education and war, but also seems to dominate the first two books. This antithetical structure clearly illustrates the indebtedness of early Renaissance satire to its medieval models, which hardly ever mixed popular, that is, entertaining, with erudite, that is, didactic, variants, such as farce, sottie, and fabliau on the one hand, and

[62]Rabelais, 1955, 168–69.

[63]Lucian, 1913, 1:253: "I shall at least be truthful in saying that I am a liar. I think I can escape the censure of the world by my own admission that I am not telling a word of truth. . . . Therefore my readers should on no account believe in [my stories]."

[64]Rabelais, 1955, 167.

[65]Even the Bible is not spared as it is compared unfavorably to the *Gargantuine Chronicle*, the popular scrapbook that inspired *Pantagruel*, which, in turn, is "more reasonable and credible" than its model: ibid., 168.

morality, mystery, and Passion plays on the other.[66] In Rabelais's case, the mere presence of such variants in one and the same text (and even episode) illustrates the tendency of early modern satire to stage a synthesis of its diverse influences, a true seriocomic mixture that accommodates the entire spectrum of the satirical expression and uses this eclectic mix — Nashe's aforementioned "sugred pills" — to address a larger public, to achieve its moral objectives more efficiently, and thus to enhance its impact considerably.

The best example of Rabelais's dominant satirical approach in the first two books is doubtlessly chapter 15 of *Pantagruel*, where Panurge teaches a new method of building the walls of Paris to his astonished and amused master during a leisurely walk in the Parisian outskirts. As the first sentence of the chapter says, the clearly stated purpose of Pantagruel's walk, "to refresh himself from his studies," underlines the orientation of a farcical satire in which amusement tops moral usefulness within the well-known Horatian framework. Panurge describes his cheaper and more durable method as follows:

> I notice that in this country the thing-o'-my-bobs of the ladies are cheaper than the stone. The walls ought to be built of them, arranged in good architectural symmetry with the biggest in front; and then sloping downwards, like the back of an ass. The middle-sized ones should be arranged next, and the little ones last of all. This done, there must be a fine little interlacing of them, in diamond points . . . with an equal number of stiff what-d'you-call-'ems, such as dwell in the claustral codpieces. What devil would be able to overthrow walls like that? There is no metal like that for resisting blows. So much so that if cannon-balls came to rub themselves against them you would immediately see a distillation of that blessed fruit of the great pox, as small as rain, but devilish dry. What is more, the lightning would never strike them. And why? They are all blessed and consecrated.[67]

[66]Only rare texts such as the complex late medieval *Farce de Maître Pathelin* (ca. 1457) seem to have blurred the boundaries considerably before the publication of the *Ship of Fools*. Even though, for example, the Latin comments of the protagonist, Maître Pathelin, were at the service of the burlesque nature of his pretended multilingual delirium, one has to remember that he was actually telling the truth in this erudite tongue, which his adversary was unable to understand, thus putting in place a subtle satire of the communicative functions of language that seems to be a main concern throughout this atypical farce, as it would be in Rabelais.

[67]Rabelais, 1955, 219; Rabelais, 1994, 268–69: "Je voy que les callibistrys des femmes de ce pays, sont à meilleur marché que les pierres, d'iceulx fauldroit bastir les murailles en les arrengeant par bonne symmeterye d'architecture, et mettant les plus grans au premiers rancz, et puis en taluant à doz d'asne arranger les moyens, et finablement les petitz. Puis faire un beau petit entrelardement à poinctes de diamans comme la grosse tour de Bourges de tant de bracquemars enroiddys qui habitent par les braguettes claustrales. Quel Diable defferoit telles murailles? Il n'y a metal qui tant resistast aux coups. Et puis que les couillevrines se y vinsent froter, vous en verriez (par dieu) incontinent distiller de ce benoist fruict de grosse verolle menu comme pluye. Sec au nom des diables. Dadvantaige la foudre ne tumberoit jamais dessus. Car pourquoy? ilz sont tous benists ou sacrez."

Many key ingredients of low-norm farcical satire can be located in this discourse, above all the typical vulgarity and obscenity of the satyr play, however playful it may be in Rabelais's text, that is prone to disturb modern sensibilities by its use of all the functions of the lower body, especially pertaining to scatology and sexuality, which are commonly absent from official discourse.[68] These elements are at the service of straightforward satirical attacks — in the present case directed at promiscuous Parisian women and clergymen — that are devoid of all subtlety but certainly not of fantasy, imagination, and verbal virtuosity. Such characteristics are reflected in the ambiguous architectural and military imagery ("entrelardement," "braquemars") or in the transformation, via *équivoque*, of actual contemporary artillery ("couleuvrines") into a highly suspect firing mechanism of a totally different category ("couillevrines") that ingeniously enhance Panurge's obscene construct. On the one hand, such developments are actually indicative of the farcical logic that lends coherence, power, and playfulness to the passage, as one element leads to the next once one accepts the absurd initial premise. On the other hand, such a verbal tour de force is reminiscent of Lucian's Menippean approach — narrative irony, mixture of styles and genres, a pronounced grotesque element — and thus underlines the fledgling synthetic status of Rabelaisian satire from the very first book, even if the popular elements dominate his early production. Panurge's central role in this chapter is no coincidence, as the trickster's changing status and prestige illustrate the development of the chronicles' satire better than any other single component of the text.

An essential factor linking the episode to medieval farce is its entertainment value, as stated in the chapter's first sentence. And indeed, the humanist prince Pantagruel reacts with frequent laughter and apparent interest to the farcical performance of his jester. Panurge's function is thus to provide the diversion that body and mind crave in order to prepare them for the more serious and arduous tasks ahead: on the literal level, the princely education and warfare; on the figurative level, a more subtle and problematic religious and social satire that flourishes in the subsequent books. In this respect, the chapter fulfills the common function that a farce or sottie play fulfills during theatrical outdoor performances of Passion plays and mysteries. Farcical interludes provided the comical stuffing that allowed the audience to refresh its mind during such performances. It is noteworthy that the morality play evoked the more serious content of what was to become high-norm satire, especially of the Juvenalian variant with its trademark moral objectives frequently conveyed in the tragic vein. Farce and

[68]In addition to Bakhtin and the two aforementioned volumes on Renaissance obscenity, see Persels and Ganim.

morality play thus illustrate the dominant antithetical structure of the seriocomic in medieval letters.

An example of the amusing tale's effect on Pantagruel, the model reader, is his reaction to Panurge's mention of one major problem that his satirical walls would face. The giant is eager to know the nature of the problem, and his friend does not need any more encouragement to continue his comical performance, asserting that flies would be "marvelously fond" of such constructions. He illustrates this assertion with the obscene tale of the lion, the fox, and the old woman, remarkable for its oral character, yet another main indicator of low-norm performance satire. At the sight of the fox, the woman had fainted in the woods and her dress had been blown up by the wind, revealing a large "wound" that the fox then urges the lion to wipe frantically with his tail to keep the flies away: "Wipe it hard, like this, my friend. Wipe it well. For this wound ought to be wiped often. Otherwise the creature will be uncomfortable. Now wipe it well, my little fellow, wipe away! God has provided you with a tail, a long one and correspondingly thick. Wipe hard, and don't get tired. A good wiper who wipes continuously, and keeps wiping with his wiper will never be visited by flies. Wipe away, my dear fellow. Wipe, my little darling, I won't be away a moment."[69] Similarly to the rhyme scheme that holds together a *fatrasie* or a *coq-à-l'âne*, the oral aspect takes center stage in this passage and imposes a frantic rhythm due to the anaphora-like repetition of the equivocal key word *(es)mouche* in all its variations. The sounds here seem to become almost autonomous and feed off of each other in what amounts to the verbal delirium of a self-generating text where sound prevails over sense, despite the quite obvious double entendre of the key term. Rabelais actually uses the rhetorical figure of the *polyptoton* (the repetition of a word in a different form), quite common at the time, as Joseph Harris has shown recently, to "turn obscenity into humor."[70] Such playful verbal inventiveness goes a long way toward mitigating the text's implicit and explicit obscenities and vulgarities. As Marcel de Grève has shown, it is nonetheless the crude side that dominated contemporary reactions to the text, which instigated Rabelais to add the famous liminary poem by Hugues Salel to the text's

[69]Rabelais, 1955, 220; Rabelais, 1994, 270: "Esmouche fort, ainsi mon amy, esmouche bien: car ceste playe veult estre esmouchée souvent, aultrement la personne ne peut estre à son aise. Or esmouche bien mon petit compere, esmouche, dieu t'a bien pourveu de quehue, tu l'as grande et grosse à l'advenent, esmouche fort et ne t'ennuye poinct, un bon esmoucheteur qui en esmouchetant continuellement esmouche de son mouchet par mousches jamais esmouché ne sera. Esmouche couillaud, esmouche mon petit bedaud: je n'arresteray gueres."

[70]Harris, 242. See also Duval, 1991, 95–102; and Rigolot, 1996, 116–19.

third edition (1534). Salel is the translator of Homer, a serious poet whose contribution underlines the importance of the Horatian *ridentem dicere verum* in the very first verse — "combining profit with delight"[71] — while preserving the antithetical structure.

These reactions indicate that the public clearly had difficulty identifying the new synthetic approach that Rabelais was in the process of creating, even more so as this technique is still evolving in *Pantagruel*, where Bakhtin's scatological lower body as well as Panurge's aforementioned satyr-like obscenities and farcical linguistic verve tend to overshadow even the most serious social, ethical, or moral concerns, such as the criticism of the pseudoerudition of the clergy (the Limousin student and the holdings of the St. Victor library in chapters 6 and 8), hypocrisy and class distinctions (the great Parisian lady and Epistemon's descent into hell in chapters 21–22 and 30), or, most prominently, the problematic status of the linguistic sign (the first encounter with Panurge, the Baisecul-Humevesne episode, and the debate with the English scholar Thaumaste in chapters 9, 10–13, and 18–20). These episodes underscore that language, abused by rhetorical manipulation, finds it increasingly difficult to fulfill its primary task of conveying truth or meaning clearly and assuring communication. Rabelais's famous "bone-and-marrow" image in the prologue to *Gargantua* seems to address this misconception on the public's part, but it paradoxically led to the opposite reaction: now it was the comic element of the new text that was largely underestimated, which prompted the author to add another liminary poem, this time to the second edition of the text, coining the famous phrase "laughter is man's proper lot."[72] Yet again Rabelais tries to counterbalance the lopsided reception of a text that expertly displays the *serio ludere* (play seriously) characteristic of early modern satire, a complex construct that requires what Montaigne later called a "sufficient reader."[73] It is this type of interlocutor that is called upon in the prologue to "carefully weigh up [the book's] contents" and to "interpret all [its] deeds and words in the most perfect sense."[74]

Panurge is the main representative of this Erasmian dichotomy, but his carefully constructed persona also facilitates the integration of two other aforementioned main influences on early modern satire: the medieval farce,

[71]Rabelais, 1955, 166. See also De Grève, 1961 and 2009. See also Rigolot, 1996, 15–26.

[72]Rabelais, 1955, 36; Rabelais, 1994, 3 (*Gargantua* prologue): "le rire est le propre de l'homme."

[73]Montaigne, 127 (bk. 1, essay 24).

[74]Rabelais, 1955, 38–39.

with its broad popular (and generally inoffensive) humor and its mise-en-scène of the figure of the fool, and the Greek satyr play and its crude tendencies. His integral position as narrator, protagonist, trickster, and fool is firmly established in the central episodes of *Pantagruel*. Following the logic of the dominant world of farce in the book, Panurge's undisputed authority is underscored time and again, for instance at the beginning and end of the walls of Paris episode. It is Panurge who instructs Pantagruel not to say a word about his "teaching" him the new way of building walls: "Don't say a word about it . . . and I'll tell you."[75] At the end of the episode the situation is similar, as the giant asks: "How do you know the women's pudenda are so cheap? For in this town there are many good women, chaste and virgins." The fool assures his master of the contrary, based on his "real certainty . . . I am not boasting of having filled 417 of them since I've been in this town — and that's only nine days."[76] The master-disciple relationship is therefore completely reversed in this Carnivalesque universe in which the fool is king.

The trickster's other farcical exploits, on which the central chapters of the book focus, are no less entertaining and display the breadth of early modern satire: for instance, the Lucianesque grotesque — Panurge's escape from the Turks covered in bacon in chapter 14 — or the obscenity of the satyr play. In addition to the tales from chapter 15, the latter influence is discernible in the tricks Panurge plays on the Parisian establishment, especially in the episode (chapters 21–22) devoted to a noble lady who will not give in to his sexual advances, and who pays an embarrassing price for a refusal that is frequently characterized as hypocritical: all the dogs of Paris — more than 614,014, in typical farcical hyperbole that stresses the innocuous nature of the episode — end up relieving themselves on her. The satire of her hypocrisy is pretty direct again — she is ready to lie to her husband, her mouth waters when she thinks Panurge is rich, she only halfheartedly cries for help — as her soiled outward appearance corresponds to her corrupted inner values and morals. Any nascent ambiguity (such as the victimization of women) is further mitigated by the episode's stage-like entertainment, which is particularly stressed in a short theatrical paragraph that follows the description of Pantagruel's amused reaction to what is clearly marked as a performance:[77] "Everyone stopped to see the show, gazing with admiration at the dogs, who leapt as high as her neck and spoiled

[75]Ibid., 219.

[76]Ibid., 221.

[77]Ibid., 244 (*Pantagruel* 22): "Pantagruel very gladly accepted this invitation and went to see the show, which he found very fine and original."

all her fine clothes. For this she could find no other remedy but to retire into her mansion. So she ran to hide, with the dogs after her and all the chambermaids laughing."[78]

Yet again the text rhetorically underscores the accelerating rhythm and the theatrical character of the scene by the quick succession of infinitives (in the French original) that also recall stage directions. Despite their strong ironic undertones, the technical terms *mystère* (mystery play) and *spectacle* stress that the scene is still firmly anchored in the universe of farce and the satyr play. The mention of the "mystery play" subtly enhances the satirical attack of religious hypocrisy by applying a term denoting religious theater to a vulgar farce, which, moreover, takes place during the procession honoring "the great feast of Corpus Christi."[79] However, it is still foolishness and arrogance, not outright crimes, that are being punished in an embarrassing but comically exaggerated — and therefore rather harmless, even entertaining — fashion.

## 7. *Gargantua*: Toward a More Balanced Satirical Mixture

Panurge's absence from the second book, *Gargantua* (1534–35), does not negate the influence of popular farce on Rabelais's satirical mixture. On the contrary, it seems more concentrated on its culinary connotations and another aspect of the Bakhtinian lower-bodily stratum, excrement. The examples are numerous: the anti-monk Friar John's pragmatic secular attitude and his table talk (*Gargantua*, chapters 27, 39–42), Gargantua's ingenious invention of an "Arse-wipe" — the aptly named "propos torcheculatifs" (chapter 13) — or the long *coq-à-l'âne* of the drunkards' conversation (chapter 5), which is a part of the episode of Gargantua's birth during a major banquet (chapters 4–7). Having eaten too many tripe sausages, pregnant Gargamelle experiences a violent bout of diarrhea, which is interpreted rather unconventionally by the present midwives, who, "feeling her underneath found some rather ill-smelling excrescences, which they thought were the child; but it was her fundament slipping out, because of the softening of her right intestine."[80] At first glance, the Carnivalesque valorization of all elements of the lower body — in this case,

[78]Ibid.; Rabelais, 1994, 297: "Tout le monde se arestoit à ce spectacle considerant les contenences de ces chiens qui luy montoyent jusques au col, et luy gasterent tous ces beaulx acoustremens, à quoy ne sceust trouver aulcun remede, sinon soy retirer en son hostel. Et chiens d'aller après, et elle de se cacher, et chamberieres de rire." See also the comments in Duval, 1991, 72–75, 139–43; Hayes, 129–38.

[79]Rabelais, 1955, 242.

[80]Ibid., 52 (*Gargantua* 6).

the cycle of decay and rebirth — seems to place this episode firmly in the realm of low-norm satire, which, yet again, is in juxtaposition with apparently serious episodes such as the young giant's education (chapters 14–15, 21–24), the Picrocholine War (chapters 25–37), or the chapters devoted to the abbey of Thelema (chapters 52–57).

*Gargantua* being in many respects a more subtle rewriting of *Pantagruel*, however, satire itself has also started to evolve from the largely antithetical structure that distinguished its model. Gargantua's strange nativity, which is ingeniously integrated into a culinary and scatological farce, serves as a prime example. Gargamelle's aforementioned diarrhea caused one of her servants to make "her an astringent, so horrible that all her sphincter muscles were stopped and constricted. Indeed, you could hardly have relaxed them with your teeth."[81] As the "cotyledons of the matrix were loosened at the top," however, the child had a clear upward path and exited his mother's body through her left ear. This fantastical nativity is not pure farce, as it reverses not only a similarly astonishing (but nonetheless rarely questioned) story, Mary's insemination by the Holy Spirit, but, in a further elaboration of Lucian's *True Story*, more generally satirizes human credulity, the ear being the organ enabling the absorption of biblical and secular knowledge, especially for the largely illiterate population of the time:

> I doubt whether you will truly believe this strange nativity. I don't care if you don't. But an honest man, a man of good sense, always believes what he is told and what he finds written down.[82] Is this a violation of our law or our faith? Is it against reason or against Holy Scripture? For my part I find nothing written in the Holy Bible that contradicts it. If this had been the will of God, would you say that he could not have performed it? . . . I say to you that to God nothing is impossible. If it had been His will women would have produced their children in that way, by the ear, for ever afterwards.
>
> Was not Bacchus begotten by Jupiter's thigh? Was not Rocquetaillade born from his mother's heel, and Crocquemouche from his nurse's slipper? Was not Minerva born from Jupiter's brain by way of his ear, and Adonis from the bark of a myrrh-tree, and Castor and Pollux from the shell of an egg laid and hatched by Leda?[83]

[81]Ibid.

[82]Originally, the attack on the Sorbonne was quite explicit, as the following lines were cut after this sentence in the 1542 edition: "Does not Solomon say (Proverbs I), 'The simple believeth every word,' and Saint Paul (I Corinthians 13), 'Charity believeth all things.' So why should you not believe it? Because you say there is *no apparency*. And I tell you that, for that reason alone you ought to believe it in perfect faith, for the Sorbonnists say that faith is the evidence of things having no apparency": Rabelais, 2006, 226 (italics in original). See also Huchon's comment in Rabelais, 1994, 1078–79n20.

[83]Rabelais, 1955, 52–53 (*Gargantua* 6).

The elaborate comical description of the banquet and the miraculous birth thus serve both as a protective veil for and an indispensable preparation of the serious culmination of the episode. With subtle irony, these last two paragraphs of the chapter touch on the Church of Rome's — and, in the case of France, the Faculty of Theology's — proclaimed privilege of biblical interpretation, on the nature of truth in general, and on the difference between true faith and human credulity.[84] It is precisely this last quality — willfully exploited by the Sorbonne as the omitted lines from the first editions indicate — that renders humans prone to believing equally (or even more) fantastical stories than the birth of Gargantua, provided they are backed by the authority of religion or by the venerated Greco-Roman mythological tradition, whose well-known allegorical meanings, in turn, further incite the reader to search for the hidden meaning behind the fantastic narrative of the young giant's birth. Furthermore, the narrator's insertion of the popular, or even simply invented, legends of Rocquetaillade and Crocquemouche enhances not only the comical effect of the harangue, but also adds to the ironic tone that opens the passage by seemingly appealing to his readers' benevolence while at the same time putting such fantastical tales (and Gargantua's birth definitely falls into this category) at the same level as biblical or mythical accounts — a fine illustration of the narrator's way of challenging the readers' capacity for critical independent thinking.

One recognizes the beginning of a true satirical mixture combining the different norms and models of the form. The same can be ascertained in the book's final chapter, the prophetic riddle found in the abbey of Thelema. The reader observes a brilliant hierarchical reversal of the literal and the figurative sense: the latter ("persecution of Christians"), proffered by the serious humanist prince, Gargantua, seeming paradoxically more obvious than the former ("a game of tennis wrapped up in strange language"), defended by the down-to-earth anti-monk Friar John. The two meanings are also simply juxtaposed without any authoritative comment at the very end of the text as if to provoke the readers to make up their own minds or even to add their own alternative readings of the enigma. This lack of commentary is a prime example of unguided satire, in which the scene takes over from the narrator, and which requires an emancipated reader to distill meaning from an inevitably polysemic text. *Gargantua*'s capstone chapter is the true culmination of the book's numerous direct and indirect appeals to the reader, whether they are put in the form of an explicit exhortation expressed repeatedly in the prologue ("open this book, and carefully weigh up its

[84]See Screech, 10–15, for a detailed discussion of the episode's satire and its sources, the miraculous conceptions of sterile Sara (Genesis 18:14) and of Mary (Luke 1:37).

contents"[85]), implied in the ironic comments at the end of the nativity chapter, or illustrated in the juxtaposition of good and bad educational models in chapters 14–15 and 21–24 or in the liminary poem and prologue. The Horatian *docere* and *delectare* are therefore less and less separated in *Gargantua*, culminating in the unmediated mixture of the final chapter, which marks the gradual transition from the medieval antithetical structure to the more synthetic satire that will prove to be the trademark of the form in the early modern period.

## 8. The *Third Book*: A Rhetorical Satire of Rhetoric

The *Third Book* (1546) further refines the satiric synthesis, even though at first sight all the farcical elements seem to have been eliminated, creating a text that heavily favors erudition in the ostensible search for a solution to Panurge's marriage dilemma. This study will only briefly touch on two aspects in this book that best support the present approach. First of all, one observes that Panurge's formerly elevated position has been reduced to a more marginal status. Given the sexual exploits that he insists upon so boastfully in *Pantagruel*, it is surprising to see him agonizing over the question of whether or not to get married, and even more surprisingly, whether or not his future wife will beat and cuckold him. The trickster's appointment as Warden of Salmigundia is significant in this context. The post had initially been attributed to the now-absent narrator and putative author of the first two books, Alcofribas Nasier, and denoted his responsibility for the eclectic yet farcical mixture that characterizes the first two installments of the chronicles.[86] Now Panurge is in charge of this low-norm culinary mixture — *salmigondis* literally denotes a hodgepodge or ragout — but his first action as its new warden, the praise of debts, fails, for the first time, to convince Pantagruel.

On the literal level at least, such failure seems to indicate the loss of efficiency of the trickster's linguistic acrobatics, his trademark in the first book. The prologue to *Gargantua* has shown, however, that the Rabelaisian narrative cannot be restricted to the literal level, and this is all the more true for the complex genre of paradoxical praise. The trickster bases the functioning of the entire universe on mutual exchange and praises the health benefits of contracting debts (as the creditor will necessarily take good care of the debtor), but at the same time refuses to repay his debts, thus

[85]Rabelais, 1955, 38.
[86]See, for example, Renner, 2007, 226–32.

failing to participate in the exchange aspect of the cosmic and earthly events that his entire demonstration is based upon. This refusal consequently calls into question the intentionality of his harangue. Pantagruel's reaction is firm: "I understand. . . . You seem to me good at argument and an enthusiast for your cause. But if you preach and sermonize from now till Whitsun, you'll be astonished to find me finally unconvinced. With all your fine talk you will never make me a debtor. Owe no man anything says the holy Apostle, save love and mutual delight. You provide me with fine illustrations and figures which please me greatly."[87] Panurge has thus retained his entertainment value and his talent for farcical performance, but has lost his power to convince. One might argue that the rebuttal of the trickster's argumentation negates the irony, and therefore much of the impact of the traditional encomium, but the focus on rhetorical terms — *topicqueur*, *graphides*, *diatyposes* — in Pantagruel's response strongly indicates that the satire is explicitly directed against the often-abusive power of language. The rejected paradoxical praise is a perfect vehicle for this approach, all the more so as this episode opens the *Third Book* and sets the tone for the entire text. It is thus the rhetoric of the encomium itself that serves as a prime target of the episode's satirical attacks and that enables Rabelais to put his own spin on this popular form.

As an orator and debtor, Panurge therefore seems as much the agent as the target of the satire. His flawed demonstration provokes Pantagruel's rebuke and compensates for his alleged loss of power on the literal level, as the encomium is meant to fail — whether or not Panurge consciously designs it to that effect — in order to ensure the success of the satire of rhetorical manipulation. The trickster's behavior frequently suggests intentionality, however, and therefore the success of the hidden agenda of his speech: notably when he refers to the authority of the Sorbonne and the Parisian parliament in support of his argument, as those institutions are at the center of the chronicles' satire ("what you call a vice in me, I have imitated from the University and High Court of Paris"[88]), or when he spontaneously shows gratitude when Pantagruel absolves him of his debts,

[87]Rabelais, 1955, 302 (*Third Book* 5); Rabelais, 1994, 367–68: "J'entends (respondit Pantagruel) et me semblez bon topicqueur et affecté à vostre cause. Mais preschez et patrocinez d'ici à la Pentecoste, en fin vous serez esbahy, comment rien ne me aurez persuade, et par vostre beau parler, jà ne me ferez entrer en debtes. 'Rien (dict le sainct Envoyé) à personne ne doibvez, fors amour et dilection mutuelle.' Vous me usez icy de belles graphides et diatyposes, et me plaisent tresbien."

[88]Rabelais, 1955, 293 (*Third Book* 2).

which invalidates his entire demonstration.[89] Such indicators strongly support the claim of an overall shift in the satire's concentration away from farcical domination to a more erudite, subtle, and ambiguous orientation that better integrates all its variants and models, including medieval theater, as the trickster comically compares his alleged powers to the role of "playing God in the Saumur passion play."[90] This is yet another stab at religious hegemony and even at the trickster's own status, given the literal failure of the praise of debts.

Consequently, the mixture between the various levels of satire appears more mature, more complex, and more homogeneous, particularly if one takes into account that the heavy erudition that seems, at times, to burden the text is actually applied to a totally inappropriate topic. The ostensible theme of whether Panurge should get married and whether he would be cuckolded and beaten by a possible future wife solely depends on personal will, initiative, and determination, which Pantagruel stresses from the beginning of the book on, well before the start of the numerous futile outside consultations that constitute the apparent heart of the text: "Everyone is full of his own ideas"; "Aren't you certain of your own wishes? That's the principal point; all the rest is fortuitous and depends on the disposition of the heavenly fates."[91] Therefore, the entire premise of this seemingly highly serious question, especially in the context of the *querelle des femmes*, could be seen as subtly farcical, thus adding an essential facet to the elaborate satirical mixture. The various consultations demonstrate the malleability of language and the absence of the much-sought natural meaning embedded in any form of communication. As seen in the praise of debts, this issue constitutes the nucleus of the book's satirical construct and culminates in Rondibilis's provocative and perplexing advice, "neither the one nor the other, and both together."[92]

[89]Ibid., 302 (*Third Book* 5): "The least I can do in this matter . . . is to thank you. And if thanks should be proportionate to the benefactor's affection I must thank you infinitely and everlastingly." Panurge seems aware of the incongruity, however, as he implores his master to leave him some debts immediately after this show of gratitude. Coupled with his conjugal fears, the relative failure of the praise of debts constitutes an unconscious satirical self-portrait evoking the rhetorical figure of the *ethiopoia*, which illustrates the trickster's complex situation in the *Third Book*. For the complex nature of this satire of rhetoric, see also Renner, 2010b. For the paradoxical praise, see Losse; Tomarken.

[90]Rabelais, 1955, 296 (*Third Book* 3).

[91]Ibid., 306 (*Third Book* 7), 313 (*Third Book* 10).

[92]Ibid., 388 (*Third Book* 36); Rabelais, 1994, 465: "[N]i l'un ni l'autre et tous les deux à la fois." See Hoffmann for an analysis of the Scholastic logic satirized in the episode.

The question of the function of language, an early version of which was conveyed in the rhetorical attacks waged on rhetoric in the *Praise of Folly*, was of even greater interest in the decades that saw the poetic treatises of the late 1540s and 1550s by Sébillet, Du Bellay, Peletier du Mans, and Fouquelin: what is at stake is not only the prestige of being considered the legitimate successor to Greco-Roman antiquity, but also the superiority of one's own language over one's neighbors' national tongues.[93] It is again Pantagruel who illustrates this debate on language by insisting on the "ambiguities, equivocations, and obscurities in the words" of oracles, one of the most revered forms of "truthful communication." The giant concludes powerfully: "It's nonsense to say that we have a natural language; languages arise from arbitrary conventions and the needs of peoples. Words . . . have meanings not by nature, but at choice."[94]

In an age when language was a powerful and dangerous tool, it is hardly surprising that Rabelais chose this very tool and its implications as the main target of his most sophisticated book's satire. While criticizing the abusive use of rhetoric that can be manipulated to prove anything and its contrary — as the various opposing interpretations of the long series of consultations show so emphatically[95] — it is precisely the "ambiguities, equivocations, and obscurities in the words" that the satire uses brilliantly to its own advantage, not only to incite the "carefully weighing" reader to develop independent critical thinking, but also to protect itself from malevolent interpretations. In this respect, the purpose of the consultations consists in an elaborate mise-en-scène of the much-discussed prologue to *Gargantua*, which, one could argue, is the main rhetorical purpose of the *Third* and *Fourth Book*s. After all, more than a conscientious interpretation of the various authorities' statements, Panurge seeks a consensus that pleases himself and thus frees himself from any personal responsibility for his decision,[96] exposing the sophistry of cowardly authorities that hide behind obscure interpretations to suit their own interests. Hence the trickster's lack of trust in his own interpretations, his frequent perplexity, and his willingness to prolong the

[93]See Giacone, the recent volume devoted to the language of Rabelais and Montaigne; see especially Huchon's analysis of Rabelais's attempt to create an "illustrious vernacular."

[94]Rabelais, 1955, 339 (*Third Book* 19).

[95]Panurge's reaction to interpretations is frequently "à rebours" ("on the contrary"), which becomes his leitmotiv in the *Third Book*.

[96]His wording when presented to the Sybil of Panzoust seems exemplary in this respect: "Then in a few brief words he explained to her the purpose of his coming, begging her courteously to give him her advice and tell him what good fortune would come of his marriage enterprise": Rabelais, 1955, 334 (*Third Book* 17).

series of consultations quasi ad infinitum, thereby turning the process itself into an elaborate farce.

## 9. THE *FOURTH BOOK*: A HIGHLIGHT OF EARLY MODERN SATIRE

It is the *Fourth Book*, however, that merits the label of *summum* of Rabelaisian satire, as it illustrates satirical syncretism better than any other text of the period. Most notably, one observes the return of a more traditional farce in the early episodes of the arrogant sheep merchant Dindenault and the Seigneur de Basché, both of which see Panurge regain some of the authority that characterized his role in *Pantagruel*. At closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that both episodes substantially distinguish themselves from traditional farce. The most pertinent difference is the horrendous violence and death in these chapters, a deplorable novelty that is usually absent from the farcical genre as well as from Rabelais's previous treatment of farce. More significantly, Panurge's contributions to this new variation of the genre — he kills Dindenault, his men, and his sheep and he narrates the gruesome Basché tale — do not meet with approval from his companions. Pantagruel, Friar John, and Epistemon actually criticize the moral of the Dindenault episode, even the morals of Panurge himself.[97] The farce's entertainment value has thus diminished considerably.

The Basché episode exemplifies the hermeneutical subtlety with which Rabelais renews traditional low-norm satire. His innovative approach to farce is responsible for the form's tragic elevation and, consequently, its more thorough incorporation into early modern satire. The satire itself seems quite straightforward, as it criticizes the common ecclesiastical practice of assigning bailiffs to terrorize noblemen whom they try to provoke. If the noblemen end up beating the bailiffs, they will incur stiff penalties. Basché devises a theatrical performance, a farce, to counter this trick. His people are ready to stage a marriage ceremony each time a bailiff arrives. The ceremony is traditionally accompanied by good-natured mock beatings, which, in this episode, quickly degenerate into outright mauling (Basché's people are secretly armed with reinforced gauntlets), ostensibly started by the bailiffs. Although the latter achieve their initial objective of being beaten, they think of themselves as responsible for the escalation of what is usually an innocuous ritual and are thus unable to hold Basché accountable.

[97]Friar John's verdict is a representative example: "You're damning yourself like an old devil. . . . It is written mihi vindictam, etc. — Vengeance is mine": Ibid., 467 (*Fourth Book* 8).

The more refined nature of the satire is not only latent in this complex reversal, in the subtle mockery of the ceremony of holy matrimony, or in the reworking of the model for this episode — Lucian's account of a failed banquet, *The Carousel/Lapiths* — but also, or even more so, in the linguistic description of the wounds incurred. Whereas those of the bailiffs are described with medical accuracy — one bailiff "had his forearm wrenched out of its socket, and the other had his upper jaw so dislocated that it fell half over his chin, and exposed his uvula, with notable loss of incisors, molars, and canines"[98] — Basché's people's wounds are subject to verbal fantasy and exuberance — "deathanddamnationcrashandbashibulated . . . upper limbs"[99] — that remind the reader of the earlier books but also subtly connote Basché's successful ruse, reverse the social hierarchy in his favor, and thus add a second level to the satire.[100] As is often the case in Rabelais and in early modern satire in general, language and style carry meaning even if the words or insinuations themselves remain obscure.[101] Yet again, however, this success is mitigated by the reserved (or even outright negative) comments from Panurge's companions, which add another layer to the farce's meaning, conferring unto it the beginnings of the polysemy that characterizes high-norm satire in the period: "'That would seem a jolly tale,' said Pantagruel, 'if we weren't bidden never to let the fear of God out of our minds.'"[102] In losing its univocal clarity and replacing playful punishment with brutality and death, what is henceforth referred to as a "Tragicque comedie"[103] has definitely been relegated to a less exalted or dominant position (as compared to the first two books in particular), to the point where it seems destined to henceforth be a facet, albeit a significant one, of a more complex and multilayered satirical expression that takes into account an increasingly grim reality.

The narrative situation of this diptych of farce seems to reinforce the importance attached to the evolution of the form. It is noteworthy that the excessive punishment of arrogant Dindenault and his innocent men and livestock is a direct action, mostly told in dialogue form, whereas the Basché

[98]Ibid., 485 (*Fourth Book* 15).

[99]Ibid.

[100]See Rigolot, 1996, 126–30 ("Les deux niveaux de la farce").

[101]See Rigolot's recent assessment, 2009, 121: "This is precisely one of Rabelais's great strengths: his language tends to carry meaning even if the reader does not understand all the references conveyed by an astonishing erudition."

[102]Rabelais, 1955, 485 (*Fourth Book* 16).

[103]Ibid., 566 (*Fourth Book* 12); "Tragicque comedie" is glossed as "A farce that is pleasant at the beginning and sad at the end" in the *Briefve declaration* ("Farce plaisante au commencement, triste en la fin"): see Rabelais, 1994, 707.

episode is a tale within a tale, an exemplary narrative anecdote that is linguistically and structurally much more refined than the earlier farce and that indicates the greater potential of prose satire.[104] Panurge's play on homophony and Dindenault's onomatopoetic exclamations represent a fairly basic form of comedy,[105] all the more so compared to the complex use of language in the second farce: the exaggerated anatomical accuracy recalling Friar John's massacre of Picrochole's army at the abbey of Seuillé and the fantastical verbal monsters of Basché's people's imaginary injuries evoking Panurge's previous verbal tours de force, such as the "boutte poussenjambions" ("let's to and fro and at it"),[106] with which he ostensibly tries to win the Parisian lady's favors. It is precisely the pronounced nature of the tall tale, the productive juxtaposition and mixing of these approaches, and the multilayered use of language that end up mitigating the second episode's admittedly graphic violence by making it appear less gratuitous, even more playful, than the direct action from the previous episode: Basché's people mete out an exemplary seriocomic punishment of arrogant authority in the best satirical tradition.[107] The episode therefore is instrumental in integrating farce into a larger satirical narrative, of which cruelty seems to be a deplorable, but inevitable (and yet multifaceted) element.

The continuing nuanced description of Panurge, who seems increasingly passive and fearful after the two criticized farcical episodes from the beginning of the text, supports this development. Like the farce, the former trickster is still a vital part of the text, both literally as a member of the Pantagruelists and figuratively as a key element of the satirical mixture. However, he has lost his supremacy and behaves in a less than exemplary fashion during the tempest (chapters 18–23), where he prefers continuous lamenting to actually contributing to the rescue effort like everyone else. Friar John's response to his companion's long lament is unequivocal in this respect: " Come, you hangdog devil. . . . Come in the name of the thirty legions of hell, come and help us!"[108] Even gentle Pantagruel has some harsh

[104]For this multilayered structure, see Tournon, 1997.

[105]See, for example, Dindenault's designation of Panurge as the king's jester Robin Mutton, only able to express himself by "bah, bah, bah, bah," which unconsciously announces his and his sheep's fate as they drowned: Rabelais, 1955, 463 (*Fourth Book* 6).

[106]Rabelais, 1994, 293 (*Pantagruel* 21); Rabelais, 1955, 240.

[107]Another example of Rabelais's linguistic subtlety in this episode is the bailiff "à rouge muzeau," which denotes not only bloody injuries or the bailiffs' drinking, but also, in slang, their criminal bent, which would justify punishment: see Rabelais, 1994, 577 (*Fourth Book* 16); Clément, 2009, 166.

[108]Rabelais, 1955, 492–93 (*Fourth Book* 19).

words for his friend: "If he was afraid during that awful turmoil and in the perils of the storm . . . so long as he acted like a man otherwise I don't think a jot less of him."[109] The problem is, however, that Panurge acted in an irresponsible way that put the collaborative rescue effort in peril, which indicates the larger purpose of the satire of the trickster. It underlines the main cure that the Rabelaisian satire promotes: the importance of collaboration and *mediocritas* as well as, more generally, Christian charity and *agapè* (love of others).[110]

More pertinently for the present literary analysis, these aspects are integral to the task of interpretation and, consequently, the search for the proverbial higher meaning, an undertaking that has divided Rabelais scholarship for decades. Panurge's refusal to contribute during the tempest nicely completes the essential diptych of human interaction that is indicated in the title of the *Third* and *Fourth Book*s. Both announce the chronicling of the "heroic deeds and sayings of Pantagruel": the book of the sayings (the *Third Book*) is followed by the book of the deeds (the *Fourth Book*), which is illustrated brilliantly in those two books' shared satire of the trickster, who refuses to collaborate in either one, first intellectually (the *Third Book*: praise of debts, consultations) then by failing to act (the *Fourth Book*: tempest, monstrous spouting whale, tripe-sausage war). Furthermore, whereas Panurge's stubborn adversarial attitude in the *Third Book*, as much as it seems grounded in *philautia* (self-love), might still be justifiable given the inappropriate use of oracles and erudition to resolve a question pertaining to personal initiative, self-knowledge, and events to come, his passiveness and anguish in the *Fourth Book*'s confrontations appear clearly out of line. Consequently, it is only in the *Fourth Book* that he is condemned by his companions.

## 10. Key Episodes of the *Fourth Book*'s Satire

The development of a truly synthetic satire is advanced and perfected in numerous episodes of the *Fourth Book*, particularly the tripe-sausage war (chapters 35–42), the Papimaniacs (chapters 45–54), and the encounter with Messere Gaster (chapters 57–62). The first two episodes see the further refinement of the satirical mixture that goes hand in hand, yet again, with the degradation of traditional farce. In order to explain the misunderstanding at the basis of the sausage army's attack — the phallus-shaped female warriors

[109]Ibid., 500 (*Fourth Book* 22).

[110]These themes have been consistently associated with the satire of Panurge since the praise of debts: see Saulnier, 1:152–53; Tournon, 1992.

having mistaken Pantagruel for their archenemy Caresmeprenant — the Chitterlings' queen, Niphleseth, insists, quite appropriately for the purpose at hand, that her stuffed subjects, the farcical dish par excellence, contain "more shit than spite."[111] Food and excrement, on equal footing, are thus being held responsible for the violence. Furthermore, they are beaten by an army of aptly named cooks (led by captains Maul-Chitterling and Chop-Sausage) that Friar John had assembled as an appropriate force to fight what ultimately turns out, on the epistemological level, to be much more than the announced "puppet battle," not in the least thanks to Pantagruel's attempt at "snapping the Chitterlings over his knees."[112] This neologism was formed after the idiom "to snap eels over one's knees" ("rompre les anguilles au genou"), which not only adds to the confusion as to the meaning of the allegorical conflict between Carnival and Lent (Carnivalesque sausages replacing Lenten eels), between orthodox Catholics and Protestants, but also signifies "to attempt the impossible," a well-chosen motto for the plurality of meanings hidden in the text in general and in the satire in particular. Such multiple layers of meaning call for the much-demanded collaborative interpretation and the possibility of coexisting valid readings, even opposite ones, a *coincidentia oppositorum* that is a trademark of elaborate Renaissance satire. In line with the overarching call for *mediocritas*, it is no coincidence that the Pantagruelists find themselves between the two confessional fronts in this episode, as they shrank away from landing at monstrous Caresmeprenant's island and were then attacked by the Protestant Andouilles. The satire is an equal-opportunity offender, attacking both extremes of religious zealotry.

True to this hermeneutical setup, the episode far exceeds the quite obvious attack on religious fanaticism or the crude mockery of traditional farce. The satire is enhanced and elevated to a more complex level by the fallen sausages' miraculous resurrection thanks to mustard dropped from the sky by a monstrous flying swine, thus further confounding zealotry of all orientations by taking aim yet again at a number of religious rites: the mustard is referred to as the Chitterlings' "holy Grail and Celestial Balm."[113] The fine seasoning does not restore the sausages' literal purpose, as they never regain the alimentary function they had in the episode from the *Navigations de Panurge* (ca. 1538) that inspired these chapters of the *Fourth*

[111]Rabelais, 1955, 539 (*Fourth Book* 42). Niphleseth is Hebrew for "male member," as the *Brieve declaration* explains in a further illustration of the ingenious mix of registers that distinguishes Rabelaisian satire.

[112]Ibid., 532 (*Fourth Book* 39), 537 (*Fourth Book* 41, title).

[113]Ibid., 540 (*Fourth Book* 42). See Charpentier, 1980; Bowen, 1981.

*Book*. Even dead, the Chitterlings will merely be buried.[114] Furthermore, the resurrection, a symbolic negation of the effects of violence already insinuated literally in Friar John's announcement of a "puppet battle," conflicts with the previously criticized deadly farce of Dindenault. Rabelaisian satire has quickly moved beyond the shock value of a realistic depiction of violence after demonstrating its despicable nature at the beginning of the *Fourth Book*.[115] The increasingly homogeneous integration of various genres (farce, sottie, satyr play) as well as of the monstrous and other typical elements of Menippean and popular satire (hyperbole, comical violence, scatology) into the framework of high-norm satire that this episode demonstrates, constitutes an important step toward the complex metagenre, a *Gesamtsatire*, that ends up distinguishing the form in early modern Europe.

The satirical mixture has thus reached a peak, which will be confirmed in the Papimaniac episode, a scathing satire of Catholic tyranny that nonetheless distinguishes itself by its modern use of irony. It seems striking that the tyrannical Bishop Homenaz's parting gift of pears made to the Pantagruelists is described as "Good-Christian pears" by Pantagruel, without any further authorial comment and despite the univocal description of the ill effects of the Papimaniacs' abuse of power, their exploitation of naïve believers, and their intolerance that are at the center of the episode, as is underlined by the bishop's recommended treatment of "heretics": "Burn them, nip them with pincers, slash them, drown them, hang them, impale them, break them, dismember them, disembowel them."[116] As interpreted by the fanatical bishop, the tyranny of Catholic dogma, personified by the Decretals, negates independent critical thinking, the main concern of Rabelaisian satire, and inevitably ends up unmasking its proponents' hypocrisy, as their true motivation is the pursuit of wealth and glory in this world: "If you wish to be called good Christians and to have that reputation, I beseech you with clasped hands to believe no other thing, to have no other thought, to say, undertake, or do nothing, except what is contained in our sacred Decretals and their corollaries. . . . So you will be glorified, honoured, exalted, and rich in dignities and preferments in this world. You will be universally revered and dreaded, and preferred, chosen, and elected above all others."[117]

[114]Rabelais, 1955, 539 (*Fourth Book* 42).

[115]The aesthetic quality of the elaborate killing of the monstrous whale symbolized through a perfectly symmetrical arrangement of deadly arrows, "a jolly sight to see," falls into the same category: ibid., 524 (*Fourth Book* 34).

[116]Ibid., 565 (*Fourth Book* 54), 562 *(Fourth Book* 53).

[117]Ibid., 562–63 (*Fourth Book* 53).

Moreover, Homenaz's ridiculous interpretations of the Decretals causes Epistemon's diarrhea, who then plays on the culinary and the figurative senses of the term *farce*: "At this Epistemon got up and said quite clearly to Panurge: 'For want of a close stool I'm forced to retire. This stuffing has relaxed my bumgut.'"[118] And it is again Epistemon, as well as Friar John and Panurge, who mock Homenaz's orations by a farcical display of their own: "As they watched the doleful conclusion of [Homenaz's] oration, Epistemon, Friar John, and Panurge began to make mewing noises behind their napkins, while at the same time pretending to wipe their eyes, as if they had been moved to tears."[119]

It is this context that provides clues for a critical assessment of the would-be "Good-Christian pears," whose irony is enhanced by the giant's assuring his hosts that he has "never seen better Christians than these good Papimaniacs."[120] Pantagruel's comments therefore convey the satire of Church-sanctioned Christian behavior, far removed from the ideals of charity and dialogism that the text has been promoting.[121] It becomes clear yet again that the stakes are henceforth too high to rely solely on straightforward low-norm farce to fulfill the satirical purpose of curing the ills of society. More importantly, Rabelaisian verve, optimism, and prudence prevent him from adopting the destructive monologic variant of the form that would preclude any type of collaborative exchange and productive criticism. Indeed, a remedy still seems possible, but the medicine has to be more refined. Hence the remotivation of farce and its integration into a larger, more polished, but also more demanding satirical context — and, consequently, the continuing importance of the carefully weighing reader already at the center of the prologue to *Gargantua*. Although widespread in Rabelais's text, one of the cornerstones of this complex approach, the subtle use of narrative irony in the wake of Erasmus's *Praise of*

[118]Ibid., 557–58 (*Fourth Book* 51); Rabelais, 1994, 657: "À ces motz se leva Epistemon, et dist tout bellement à Panurge. 'Faulte de selle persée me constrainct d'icy partir. Ceste *farce* me a desbondé le boyau cullier.'"

[119]Rabelais, 1955, 565 (*Fourth Book* 54).

[120]Ibid.

[121]It seems opportune to recall the initial description of Caresmeprenant, calling him, among other things, "the dictator of Mustardland, a whipper of small children," fond of "pardons, indulgences, and solemn masses." It culminates in an ironic conclusion that the Papimaniac episode helps to decode: "a worthy man, a good Catholic, and thoroughly devout": Rabelais, 1955, 512 (*Fourth Book* 29). It is precisely the whipping of little children, a Papimaniac custom to celebrate important occasions, which greatly annoys Pantagruel when he arrives at the Isle of Papimania: ibid., 551–52 (*Fourth Book* 48).

*Folly*, is nowhere used more brilliantly than in this episode and its illustration of ambivalent language.

Aesthetically and epistemologically, the final episodes of the *Fourth Book* crown the Rabelaisian *Gesamtsatire*. The giant ventripotent stomach-god Messere Gaster personifies the movement toward a general *mediocritas* that completes the subtle and intricate blending of diverse traditions into an overarching polysemic satirical construct. On the one hand, the tyrannical nature of Gaster is apparently established beyond a doubt: "He is imperious and strict, blunt and stern, difficult and inflexible. One can convince him of nothing. One can neither remonstrate with him nor persuade him of anything. He does not hear a word. . . . He only speaks by signs. But these signs all the world obeys. . . . When he calls, he will not admit the slightest stay or delay. . . . I guarantee that at Messer Gaster's command the whole sky trembles, the whole earth shakes. The words of his command are — Make up your mind to obey immediately, or die."[122] Gaster appears to be a monster in the vein of Loup Garou from *Pantagruel*, devoid of any ambiguity, a clear demolition of any prestige that the lower body might still have at the end of the *Fourth Book*. On the other hand, several signs almost immediately contradict this univocal verdict. First of all, Gaster himself, as opposed to Anarche, Picrochole, or Homenaz, shows modesty, as he "confessed himself no god, but a poor, vile, pitiful creature."[123] Moreover, he seems to mock or even despise his idolatrous subjects, the Engastrimythes and the Gastrolatres, "obsequious apes" that Gaster refers to "his close-stool, to see, to examine and philosophically to consider what kind of god they could discover in his feces."[124] Such a descent into scatology was precisely the typical punishment of Panurge's victims in *Pantagruel*, most notably the hypocritical "great Parisian lady" who halfheartedly resisted the trickster's sexual advances. Henceforth, the punishment is inflicted by the object of adulation himself, which problematizes Gaster's status further.

Besides, Pantagruel's wrath is directed not at the personified stomach but at these very same idolatrous "apes," true targets of the satire: "When he saw this rabble of sacrificers and the multiplicity of their sacrifices, Pantagruel lost his temper, and would have returned to his ship if Epistemon had not begged him to see this farce to the end."[125] The reappearance of the term *farce* denotes yet again a violation of the principle of *mediocritas*, similar to its sense during the Papimaniacs' banquet, as it

[122]Rabelais, 1955, 571 (*Fourth Book* 57).
[123]Ibid., 579 (*Fourth Book* 60).
[124]Ibid.
[125]Ibid., 577 (*Fourth Book* 60).

triggers a violent reaction. Nevertheless, Epistemon's intervention indicates that it is not to be simply dismissed as useless, upsetting, or merely entertaining; it seems henceforth fully integrated into the overarching search for meaning. The overall success of this banquet after all the failed symposia of the *Third* and *Fourth Book*s underlines the successful integration of the culinary realm into the larger satirical construct. The appetizing array of food even includes "chitterlings, spattered with fine mustard," which set Gaster's feast apart from the previous tripe-sausage war and thereby illustrates the rehabilitation of the farce in its new role.[126] Similarly to its privileged position at the beginning of the chronicles, its complete elimination would not only have signaled a violation of *mediocritas*, but would also have imposed an artificial limitation on the open hermeneutic process and on the truthful depiction of a reality that satire can only attempt to influence positively if its existence is fully and graphically acknowledged. The lower body and all its implications are part of that reality.

By the same token, one has to take into consideration Gaster's multiple inventions, all beneficial to humankind, such as the "means of getting and preserving Corn" as well as the "ingenious method of being neither wounded nor touched by Cannon-balls."[127] He therefore resolved the two main areas of conflict, which are famine and warfare, hinting at a Rabelaisian utopia, created by means of a *divina satura*, that previous episodes (Thelema) had insinuated on a much smaller scale. Tyrant and healer at the same time, Gaster is thus yet another one of the major characters who embodies a nearly irresolvable ambiguity of the *Fourth Book*'s satire.

## 11. Conclusion

It has become clear that paradox, ambiguity, and *coincidentia oppositorum* are integral to the chronicles' objective of creating an open, dialogic text that entices the engaged (and perplexed) reader's collaboration in the infinite interpretative effort. Thanks to its Horatian and Juvenalian heritage in particular, and the general tendency to blend various traditions, models, and sources for moral, didactic, and entertaining purposes, Renaissance satire is one of the most appropriate means to convey such concepts. It is an ideal medium to express the mixture of praise and blame, of the serious and the comic, of the useful and the diverting, and of literal and figurative meanings in all major genres without establishing a hierarchical structure

[126]Ibid., 557 (*Fourth Book* 59).
[127]Ibid. (*Fourth Book* 61, title; *Fourth Book* 62, title).

between these elements.[128] The object here is to heal the ultimate ill: an uncritical mind.

As a consequence, this open, dialogic form is predestined for an attack on authoritative voices, such as dominating narrators, received truths and dogmata, and classical exempla. All these aspects are being called into question more or less explicitly throughout the Rabelaisian chronicles, but most notably in the *Third* and *Fourth Book*s, which allow a glimpse at what was called a "crisis of exemplarity" in the second half of the sixteenth century, a development that corresponds perfectly to the militant nature of satire.[129] More generally, these issues illustrate the problematic use and abuse of language and its power, especially as illustrated in the struggle of the fledgling national languages against Latin, in the humanist criticism of waning Scholasticism, and in the increasingly serious confrontation between Catholicism and Reformation. The long series of conflicting interpretations and the criticism of methods to predict the future had already put this issue at the center of the *Third Book*, albeit lacking the refined syncretic and ironic qualities of the *Fourth Book*'s satire.

In this perspective, it seems essential that even Panurge, the farce's ideal spokesman, becomes truly ambivalent at the very end of the *Fourth Book* after being discredited in the course of that text. While being scolded throughout the *Third* and *Fourth Book*s, the former trickster finally falls prey to a prank by Friar John that makes him defecate on himself, a punishment reserved for all the victims of his own earlier pranks, his persona thus coming full circle. Pantagruel gives him a chance for a fresh start immediately after that, however, symbolized by a cleaning up and a fresh white shirt, which has been read as a symbol of baptism, signaling the birth of a new Panurge.[130] The trickster, in turn, immediately proceeds to relativize that rebirth by compiling the final list of the book, which consists of various terms and euphemisms for excrement, meant to explain away any fear or shame commonly associated with his mishap: "Do you call it shit, turds, crots, ordure, deposit, fecal matter, excrement, droppings, fumets,

[128] *Meslange* is a synonym of satire at the time, after all, as documented in Jean Nicot's *Thresor de la langue francoise* (1606). One recognizes here the satirical realization of what Tournon, 1995, has so brilliantly described as the Rabelaisian chronicles' "sens agile" ("nimble sense").

[129] There is no more mention of Alcofribas, the putative author of the first two books, and his name has been replaced by the serious "Fran. Rabelais, docteur en medecine" on the title pages of the *Third* and *Fourth Book*s. Moreover, the voice of the narrator, whoever he may be, is much more discrete and neutral in the latter two books. For the "crisis of exemplarity," see the special issue of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59.4 (1998).

[130] See Paul Smith, 181–213; Berry, 1979, 116–21, and 2000, 79–80, 160–62.

motion, dung, stronts, scybale, or spyrathe. It's saffron from Ireland, that's what I think it is. Ho, ho, ho! Saffron from Ireland! It is indeed. Let's have a drink."[131] One final time Panurge tries to conjure up the power of language, the supremacy of the signifier over the signified, which can turn excrement into a valuable spice. Given that only oriental saffron was considered of good quality, one wonders, however — in an echo of the ambiguous rhetorical structure of the praise of debts — whether Panurge's linguistic tour de force has unconsciously backfired in a final demonstration of his unsuccessful attempts at manipulation, or whether he consciously and good-naturedly pokes fun at himself via this playful double entendre, having finally arrived at a measure of self-knowledge that Pantagruel had hoped he would gain since the beginning of the *Third Book*. At any rate, far from recalling the old Panurge, the book closes with this uncommented upon paradoxical praise, not only leaving any judgment or conclusion up to the sufficient (and henceforth emancipated) reader, but even creating a celebratory atmosphere with its final word, an invitation to drink that recalls the "vivite, bibite" at the end of the *Praise of Folly* and announces the famous word of the divine bottle at the end of the *Fifth Book*: "Trinch."[132]

Located most fittingly for the present argument in the realm of farce and the lower body, this ending is the ultimate valorization of ambiguity — yet another refusal to provide predetermined authoritative answers or meanings — and provides a paradoxical closure to the *Fourth Book*: hence the final reminder of the central role of language as a tool, target, and agent of satire. This higher sense of the Rabelaisian chronicles falls well into the cynical or skeptical tradition that characterizes the attitude of early modern high-norm satire. Characterized most notably by a brilliant blend of four disparate traditions, this complex construct remained a steady influence on satirical expression. The list of illustrious satirists in this vein is endless, and it is significant that the status of language itself continues to play a major role in modern satire. It is this timeless criticism of the mechanisms of linguistic manipulation that formally supplements the attack of concrete abuses and crimes, such as the devastating consequences of religious fanaticism and hypocrisy. In subsequent centuries in France, one could mention the Baroque satires of François Béroalde de Verville; the vast narratives of Cyrano de Bergerac, Charles Sorel, and Paul Scarron; and Antoine Furetière's eclectic mix of satires; but also Voltaire, Denis Diderot, Gustave Flaubert, and Alfred Jarry. Elsewhere, Johann Fischart, Cervantes, Thomas Nashe,

[131]Rabelais, 1955, 597 (*Fourth Book* 67).

[132]See Duval, 1998, 141–42, for an illuminating comment on the book's perfect (because paradoxical, one might add) closure.

John Dryden, Christoph von Grimmelshausen, Alexander Pope, Lawrence Sterne, Jonathan Swift, and Thomas Mann continue a satirical tradition that Rabelais was instrumental in refining. In this respect, the Chinonais has certainly not "failed," as Louis-Ferdinand Céline, another disciple of Rabelaisian rhetoric, claimed so famously and provocatively some eighty years ago.[133]

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[133]Céline.

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