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*The Language of the Marketplace in Rabelais*

*I want to understand you,  
I study your obscure language.*

(A. S. PUSHKIN, "POEM COMPOSED DURING  
A SLEEPLESS NIGHT")

We shall examine first of all those elements of Rabelais' language that, from the seventeenth century on, were a stumbling block for his admirers and readers, those that La Bruyère considered "filthy depravation" and Voltaire "impertinence." Let us call these components conditionally and metaphorically the marketplace and billingsgate elements of the novel. It was precisely this language that the Abbé Marsy and Abbé Perraud tried to expurgate in the eighteenth century and George Sand in the nineteenth. These elements still prevent public reading of Rabelais, although in other respects no author is better suited for such reading.

Even in our time the billingsgate in Rabelais makes him difficult for his readers and not merely for the average public. It is hard to weave these coarse words into the artistic texture of the novel. The specific meaning that many of these terms have acquired in modern times distorts a correct interpretation of Rabelais' writings; the terms were then universal and far removed from pornography. For this reason, connoisseurs and scholars have adopted an indulgent view concerning this inevitable heritage of the "naïve and coarse sixteenth century," stressing the innocent character of these old-fashioned improprieties. In the eighteenth century Abbé Galiani found a witty expression for this tolerance: "Rabelais' indecency," he wrote, "is naïve; it is like the backside of a poor man."

A similar tolerance concerning Rabelais' "cynicism" was shown by Veselovsky. He used, however, a less Rabelaisian image by saying: "If you like, Rabelais is cynical, but as a healthy village boy who has been let loose from a smoky hut into the spring air; he rushes madly on, across the puddles, besmirching passersby with mud and laughing merrily when lumps of clay cover his legs and face, ruddy with springlike, animal gaiety."<sup>1</sup>

Let us examine Veselovsky's statement; let us, for a brief moment, take seriously his image of the village boy and confront it with the peculiar traits of Rabelais' cynicism.

First of all, the image of the village boy is inadequate. Rabelais' cynicism belongs to the city marketplace, to the town fair and the carnival square of the late Middle Ages and of the Renaissance. Further, this is not the individual gaiety of a boy let loose from a smoky hut but the collective gaiety of the people gathered at the fair, not the naïve gaiety of a boy "rushing madly across puddles" but a popular, festive gaiety that was gradually formed during many centuries. However, the season is correctly chosen in Veselovsky's picture: this is a truly springlike carnivalesque, Paschal laughter. One might say that these forms of gay Shrovetide cynicism are transferred to a historic spring, to the new era.

<sup>1</sup> A. N. Veselovsky, "Collected Articles," Goslitizdat, Leningrad, 1939, p. 241.

The very image of the boy must be revised. He is the symbol of youth, of immaturity and incompleteness. Such an image holds good only superficially; Rabelais' youth is the youth of antiquity, the "playing boy" of Heraclitus. From the historic point of view, Rabelais' cynicism belongs to the most ancient stratum of his novel.

Let us pursue our critical remarks. Veselovsky's village boy besmirches the passersby with mud: a far too tame and modernized metaphor. To besmirch means to debase. But grotesque debasement always had in mind the material bodily lower stratum, the zone of the genital organs. Therefore debasement did not besmirch with mud but with excrement and urine. This is a very ancient gesture. The modern euphemism "mudslinging" is derived from it.

We know that defecation played a considerable role in the ritual of the "feast of fools." During the solemn service sung by the bishop-elect, excrement was used instead of incense. After the service the clergy rode in carts loaded with dung; they drove through the streets tossing it at the crowd.

This gesture was also part of the ritual of charivari. We have a description of a sixteenth-century charivari in the *Roman du Fauvel*, from which we learn that tossing of dung at passersby was accompanied by another ritualistic gesture: throwing salt into a well.<sup>2</sup> Scatological liberties (mostly verbal) played an important role during carnivals.<sup>3</sup>

In Rabelais' novel drenching or drowning in urine is commonly described. Let us recall the famous episode in the First Book in which Gargantua drenches in urine the curious Parisians who have thronged around him. Also in the First Book is the episode in which Gargantua's mare drowns part of Picrochole's army in her urine at the Gué de Vède, and the episode in which the pilgrims are immersed in Gargantua's urine. Finally, in the Second Book

<sup>2</sup> See *Roman du Fauvel* in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, 32:146. (Académie des inscriptions des belles lettres), Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1733-1819. L'un getoit le bren au visage . . . L'autre getoit le sel au puis. (One throws dung at the face, the other throws salt into the well.)

<sup>3</sup> In Hans Sachs, for instance, there is a carnivalesque "play of the dung."

## Chapter 1.XXXVIII.—How Gargantua did eat up six pilgrims in a salad.

The story requireth that we relate that which happened unto six pilgrims who came from Sebastian near to Nantes, and who for shelter that night, being afraid of the enemy, had hid themselves in the garden upon the chichling peas, among the cabbages and lettuces. Gargantua finding himself somewhat dry, asked whether they could get any lettuce to make him a salad; and hearing that there were the greatest and fairest in the country, for they were as great as plum-trees or as walnut-trees, he would go thither himself, and brought thence in his hand what he thought good, and withal carried away the six pilgrims, who were in so great fear that they did not dare to speak nor cough.

Washing them, therefore, first at the fountain, the pilgrims said one to another softly, What shall we do? We are almost drowned here amongst these lettuce, shall we speak? But if we speak, he will kill us for spies. And, as they were thus deliberating what to do, Gargantua put them with the lettuce into a platter of the house, as large as the huge tun of the White Friars of the Cistercian order; which done, with oil, vinegar, and salt, he ate them up, to refresh himself a little before supper, and had already swallowed up five of the pilgrims, the sixth being in the platter, totally hid under a lettuce, except his bourdon or staff that appeared, and nothing else. Which Grangousier seeing, said to Gargantua, I think that is the horn of a shell-snail, do not eat it. Why not? said Gargantua, they are good all this month: which he no sooner said, but, drawing up the staff, and therewith taking up the pilgrim, he ate him very well, then drank a terrible draught of excellent white wine. The pilgrims, thus devoured, made shift to save themselves as well as they could, by withdrawing their bodies out of the reach of the grinders of his teeth, but could not escape from thinking they had been put in the lowest dungeon of a prison. And when Gargantua whiffed the great draught, they thought to have been drowned in his mouth, and the flood of wine had almost carried them away into the gulf of his stomach. Nevertheless, skipping with their bourdons, as St. Michael's palmers use to do, they sheltered themselves from the danger of that inundation under the banks of his teeth. But one of them by chance, groping or sounding the country with his staff, to try whether they were in safety or no, struck hard against the cleft of a hollow tooth, and hit the mandibulary sinew or nerve of the jaw, which put Gargantua to very great pain, so that he began to cry for the rage that he felt. To ease himself therefore of his smarting ache, he called for his toothpicker, and rubbing towards a young walnut-tree, where they lay skulking, unnestled you my gentlemen pilgrims.

For he caught one by the legs, another by the scrip, another by the pocket, another by the scarf, another by the band of the breeches, and the poor fellow that had hurt him with the bourdon, him he hooked to him by the codpiece, which snatch nevertheless did him a great deal of good, for it pierced unto him a pocky botch he had in the groin, which grievously tormented him ever since they were past Ancenis. The pilgrims, thus dislodged, ran away athwart the plain a pretty fast pace, and the pain ceased, even just at the time when by Eudemon he was called to supper, for all was ready. I will go then, said he, and piss away my misfortune; which he did do in such a copious measure, that the urine taking away the feet from the pilgrims, they were carried along with the stream unto the bank of a tuft of trees. Upon which, as soon as they had taken footing, and that for their self-preservation they had run a little out of the road, they on a sudden fell all six, except Fourniller, into a trap that had been made to take wolves by a train, out of which, nevertheless, they escaped by the industry of the said Fourniller, who broke all the snares and ropes. Being gone from thence, they lay all the rest of that night in a lodge near unto Coudray, where they were comforted in their miseries by the gracious words of one of their company, called Sweer-to-go, who showed them that this adventure had been foretold by the prophet David, Psalm. Quum exsurgerent homines in nos, forte vivos deglutissent nos; when we were eaten in the salad, with salt, oil, and vinegar. Quum irasceretur furor eorum in nos, forsitan aqua absorbuisset nos; when he drank the great draught. Torrentem pertransivit anima nostra; when the stream of his water carried us to the thicket. Forsitan pertransisset anima nostra aquam intolerabilem; that is, the water of his urine, the flood whereof, cutting our way, took our feet from us. Benedictus Dominus qui non dedit nos in captionem dentibus eorum. Anima nostra sicut passer erepta est de laqueo venantium; when we fell in the trap. Laqueus contritus est, by Fourniller, et nos liberati sumus. Adjutorium nostrum, &c.

Anarchus' camp is flooded in similar fashion. We shall return to these episodes; for the present we are merely concerned with unmasking one of the traditional debasing gestures lurking behind Veselovsky's euphemistic metaphor "besmirching with mud."

Tossing of excrement is also known from ancient literature. The fragments of Aeschylus' satyric drama "The Collector of Bones" contain an episode in which a "vile-smelling vessel," that is, a chamber pot, is thrown at the head of Odysseus. A similar episode is presented in a satyric drama by Sophocles, "The Feast of the Achaeans," which has been preserved. Other such episodes are related to the comic Heracles as pictured on antique vases, drunk and lying at the door of a hetaera while an old procuress empties a chamber pot on his head, or armed with this vessel and pursuing another figure. Finally, we have a fragment from the *Fabulae Atellanae* of Pomponius: "Thou Diomedes, hast drenched me in urine." (This play was probably a revised version of "The Feast of the Achaeans.")

These examples prove that the slinging of excrement and drenching in urine are traditional debasing gestures, familiar not only to grotesque realism but to antiquity as well. Their debasing meaning was generally known and understood. We can find probably in every language such expressions as "I shit on you." (Bowdlerized equivalents are: "I spit on you" or "I sneeze on you.") At the time of Rabelais the usual expression was *bren pour luy* (as used by Rabelais in the first book of his novel). This gesture and the words that accompany it are based on a literal debasement in terms of the topography of the body, that is, a reference to the bodily lower stratum, the zone of the genital organs. This signifies destruction, a grave for the one who is debased. But such debasing gestures and expressions are ambivalent, since the lower stratum is not only a bodily grave but also the area of the genital organs, the fertilizing and generating stratum. Therefore, in the images of urine and excrement is preserved the essential link with birth, fertility, renewal, welfare. This positive element was still fully alive and clearly realized in the time of Rabelais.

In the well-known episode of Panurge's flock in the Fourth Book,

the merchant Dingdong praises his sheep by saying that their urine is endowed with the magic power to increase the fertility of the earth, as does the urine of the gods. In the *briefve déclaration* added to the Fourth Book Rabelais himself (or in any case, a contemporary and a man belonging to the same cultural circle) gives the following explanation of this passage: "if God had urinated here" (*si Dieu y eust pissé*). This is a popular expression in Paris and in all France among the simple folk who consider blessed the place where Our Lord urinated or performed some other act of nature, as for instance the one related by Saint John, 9:6, ". . . he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle."<sup>4</sup>

This passage is characteristic. It proves that at the time of folk legends the language of excrement was closely linked with fertility and that Rabelais himself knew this link and made use of it in full awareness. Further, we see that Rabelais did not hesitate to combine the words "our Lord" and "the Lord's blessing" with the image of excrement. (These images were already combined in the popular expression he quotes.) He saw no sacrilege in doing so and did not anticipate the stylistic abyss that was to draw the line between the two terms for the men of the seventeenth century.

For the correct understanding of these carnivalesque gestures and images we must take into consideration that all such gesticulations and verbal images are part of the carnival as a whole, infused with one single logic of imagery. This is the drama of laughter presenting at the same time the death of the old and the birth of the new world. Each image is subject to the meaning of the whole; each reflects a single concept of a contradictory world of becoming, even though the image may be separately presented. Through its participation in the whole, each of these images is deeply ambivalent, being intimately related to life-death-birth. This is why such images are devoid of cynicism and coarseness in our sense of the words. But these images, such as the tossing of excrement and drenching in urine, become coarse and cynical if they are seen

<sup>4</sup> See the Rabelais edited by L. Moland, *François Rabelais. Tout ce qui existe de ses oeuvres*, Paris, 1884, p. 478.

from the point of view of another ideology. If the positive and negative poles of becoming (death-birth) are torn apart and opposed to each other in various diffuse images, they lose their direct relation to the whole and are deprived of their ambivalence. They then retain the merely negative aspect, and that which they represent (defecation, urination) acquires a trivial meaning, our own contemporary meaning of these words. The images, or more correctly speaking, the verbal expressions, continue to live in popular colloquialisms but with a radically transformed aspect. True, they still preserve a distant echo of the old philosophy, a faint memory of billingsgate liberties. Only thus can their vitality and persistence be explained.

Rabelais scholars usually understand and evaluate the novel's billingsgate and marketplace elements in the spirit of modern interpretation, distinct from the carnival action as a whole. The deep ambivalence of these images is no longer understood.

Let us offer a few other examples proving that in the time of Rabelais the principle of regeneration, fertility, and renewal was still fully alive in these images.

Folengo's *Baldus*, a macaronic work, had a certain influence on Rabelais; we find in it an episode in hell in which Zingar resurrects a youth by drenching him in urine.

In the "Extraordinary Chronicle"<sup>5</sup> Gargantua urinates for three months, seven days, thirteen hours and forty-seven minutes, thus giving birth to the river Rhone and to seven hundred ships.

In Rabelais (Second Book) all the warm medicinal springs of France and Italy were generated by the hot urine of the sick Pantagruel.

In the Third Book (Chapter 17) we find an allusion to the antique myth in which the urine of Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury gave birth to Orion (from the Greek *ὀυροείν*, to urinate). Rabelais, drawing on Ovid's *Fasti*, presents this episode thus: Jupiter, Neptune and Mercury . . . *officiellement, forgèrent Orion*. The "offi-

<sup>5</sup> This is an extended edition of "The Great Chronicles." Some passages are borrowed from *Pantagruel*. The author is François Girault.



## Chapter 2.XXII.—How Panurge served a Parisian lady a trick that pleased her not very well.

Now you must note that the next day was the great festival of Corpus Christi, called the Sacre, wherein all women put on their best apparel, and on that day the said lady was clothed in a rich gown of crimson satin, under which she wore a very costly white velvet petticoat.

The day of the eve, called the vigil, Panurge searched so long of one side and another that he found a hot or salt bitch, which, when he had tied her with his girdle, he led to his chamber and fed her very well all that day and night. In the morning thereafter he killed her, and took that part of her which the Greek geomancers know, and cut it into several small pieces as small as he could. Then, carrying it away as close as might be, he went to the place where the lady was to come along to follow the procession, as the custom is upon the said holy day; and when she came in Panurge sprinkled some holy water on her, saluting her very courteously. Then, a little while after she had said her petty devotions, he sat down close by her upon the same bench, and gave her this roundelay in writing, in manner as followeth.

A Roundelay.

For this one time, that I to you my love  
Discovered, you did too cruel prove,  
To send me packing, hopeless, and so soon,  
Who never any wrong to you had done,  
In any kind of action, word, or thought:  
So that, if my suit liked you not, you ought  
T' have spoke more civilly, and to this sense,  
My friend, be pleased to depart from hence,  
For this one time.

What hurt do I, to wish you to remark,  
With favour and compassion, how a spark  
Of your great beauty hath inflamed my heart  
With deep affection, and that, for my part,  
I only ask that you with me would dance  
The brangle gay in feats of dalliance,  
For this one time?

And, as she was opening this paper to see what it was, Panurge very promptly and lightly scattered the drug that he had upon her in divers places, but especially in the plaits of her sleeves and of her gown. Then said he unto her, Madam, the poor lovers are not always at ease. As for me, I hope that those heavy nights, those pains and troubles, which I suffer for love of you, shall be a deduction to me of so much pain in purgatory; yet, at the least, pray to God to give me patience in my misery. Panurge had no sooner spoke this but all the dogs that were in the church came running to this lady with the smell of the drugs that he had strewed upon her, both small and great, big and little, all came, laying out their member, smelling to her, and pissing everywhere upon her —it was the greatest villainy in the world. Panurge made the fashion of driving them away; then took his leave of her and withdrew himself into some chapel or oratory of the said church to see the sport; for these villainous dogs did compass all her habiliments, and left none of her attire unbesprinkled with their staling; insomuch that a tall greyhound pissed upon her head, others in her sleeves, others on her crupper-piece, and the little ones pissed upon her pataines; so that all the women that were round about her had much ado to save her. Whereat Panurge very heartily laughing, he said to one of the lords of the city, I believe that same lady is hot, or else that some greyhound hath covered her lately. And when he saw that all the dogs were flocking about her, yarring at the retardment of their access to her, and every way keeping such a coil with her as they are wont to do about a proud or salt bitch, he forthwith departed from thence, and went to call Pantagruel, not forgetting in his way amongst the streets through which he went, where he found any dogs to give them a bang with his foot, saying, Will you not go with your fellows to the wedding? Away, hence, avant, avant, with a devil avant! And being come home, he said to Pantagruel, Master, I pray you come and see all the dogs of the country, how they are assembled about a lady, the fairest in the city, and would duffle and line her. Whereunto Pantagruel willingly condescended, and saw the mystery, which he found very pretty and strange. But the best was at the procession, in which were seen above six hundred thousand and fourteen dogs about her, which did very much trouble and molest her, and whithersoever she passed, those dogs that came afresh, tracing her footsteps, followed her at the heels, and pissed in the way where her gown had touched. All the world stood gazing at this spectacle, considering the countenance of those dogs, who, leaping up, got about her neck and spoiled all her gorgeous accoutrements, for the which she could find no remedy but to retire unto her house, which was a palace. Thither she went, and the dogs after her; she ran to hide herself, but the chambermaids could not abstain from laughing. When she was entered into the house and had shut the door upon herself, all the dogs came running of half a league round, and did so well bepiss the gate of her house that there they made a stream with their urine wherein a duck might have very well swimmied, and it is the same current that now runs at St. Victor, in which Gobelin dyeth scarlet, for the specifical virtue of these piss-dogs, as our master Doribus did heretofore preach publicly. So may God help you, a mill would have ground corn with it. Yet not so much as those of Basacle at Toulouse.



cial" was an officer of the Church police, but in the debasing spirit of familiar speech the word meant a chamber pot, and this meaning was already a part of fifteenth-century vocabulary. (We in Russia sometimes call a chamber pot "the general.") Rabelais, making an exceptionally free play on words, created *officialement*. The debasing and generating power of urine is fancifully combined in this image.

Another example can be found in the famous *Manneken-Pis* of the Brussels fountain. This is an ancient figure of a boy urinating with complete openness. The people of Brussels consider him their mascot.

There are many similar examples which we shall discuss later, but for the present we shall limit ourselves to those already described. The images of feces and urine are ambivalent, as are all the images of the material bodily lower stratum; they debase, destroy, regenerate, and renew simultaneously. They are blessing and humiliating at the same time. Death and death throes, labor, and childbirth are intimately interwoven.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, these images are closely linked to laughter. When death and birth are shown in their comic aspect, scatological images in various forms nearly always accompany the gay monsters created by laughter in order to replace the terror that has been defeated. For this reason, too, these images are indissolubly linked with the underworld. It

<sup>6</sup> In world literature and especially in anonymous oral tradition we find many examples of the interweaving of death throes and the act of defecation, or the closeness of defecation to the moment of death. This is one of the widespread forms of degrading death and dying. This type of degradation could be called the "Malbrough theme." From the works of great literature I shall cite only one remarkable satire by Seneca, *Ludus morte Claudii*, in which the emperor dies at the moment of defecation. In Rabelais' novel the Malbrough theme is introduced in several variants; for instance, the inhabitants of the "Isle of Winds" die while emitting gases, and their souls leave the body via the rectum. In another passage Rabelais cites the example of the Roman who died because of emitting a certain sound in the presence of the emperor. These images not only degrade the dying but lend a body to death, transforming it into a gay monster.

can be said that excrement represents bodies and matter that are mostly comic; it is the most suitable substance for the degrading of all that is exalted. For this reason it plays an important part in comic folklore and in the grotesque realism of Rabelais' novel, as well as in current degrading familiar speech. But when Victor Hugo says in connection with Rabelais' world, *totus homo fit excrementum*, he ignores the regenerating and renewing element of the images, already lost in Europe's literary consciousness.

But let us go back to Veselovsky's picture of the village boy. We see that the metaphor of mudslinging is quite inadequate. It is abstract and moral, whereas Rabelais' cynicism is a system of grotesque degrading, similar to the tossing of excrement and drenching in urine. It is a gay funeral. This system of degradation in various forms and expressions permeates the entire novel from beginning to end; it even gives form to the images that are far from cynical in the narrow sense of the word. All these are but elements of one whole laughing aspect of the world.

The entire picture offered by Veselovsky is quite unsatisfactory. That to which he alludes in the metaphor of the naïve boy, indulgently forgiving his mudslinging, is nothing else than the culture of folk humor developed through thousands of years; this culture has a depth of meaning which is far from naïve. Humor and cynicism may least of all be defined as naïve and do not need our indulgence. Instead they demand our careful and attentive analysis.<sup>7</sup>

We have discussed the cynicism, the indecencies, and the billingsgate in Rabelais' novel. But all these terms are conventional

<sup>7</sup> A similar formula for a disdainfully indulgent treatment of Rabelais was given by Voltaire in his *Sottisier*: "Marot, Amyot, and Rabelais are praised, as small children are usually praised if by chance they happen to say something clever. These writers are approved because their time is despised and children are lauded because nothing is expected from their age." This is a characteristic attitude of the Enlighteners toward the past, especially toward the sixteenth century. It is too often repeated in this form or another, in our time. We should discard once for all this completely false conception of the sixteenth century.

and far from adequate. First of all, these elements are not isolated; they are an organic part of the entire system of images and style. They become isolated and specific only for modern literary consciousness. Within the system of grotesque realism and popular festive forms they were an essential part of the imagery representing the material bodily lower stratum. True, they were unofficial in character, but so too was all popular-festive literature of the Middle Ages, so too was laughter. We, therefore, brought out the billingsgate and marketplace images only conventionally. We mean by these terms all that is directly linked with the life of the people, bearing its mark of nonofficial freedom; but at the same time these images cannot be referred to as popular-festive literature in the strict sense of this word.

First of all, we have in mind certain forms of familiar speech—curses, profanities, and oaths—and second the colloquialisms of the marketplace: the *cris de Paris* and the announcements made during fairs by quacks and vendors of drugs. These genres are not “separated by a Chinese wall” from the literature and spectacles of folk festivals; they are part of them and often play in them a leading stylistic role. We continually find them in the *dits* and *débats*, in diableries, *soties*, and farces. The colloquial and artistic forms are sometimes so closely interwoven that it is difficult to trace a dividing line, and no wonder, since the barkers and vendors of drugs were also actors in performances at the fair. The *cris de Paris* were composed in verse and were sung in a peremptory tone. The style of the barker inviting customers to his booth did not differ from that of the hawker of chapbooks, and even the long titles of these books were usually composed in the form of popular advertisements. The marketplace of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was a world in itself, a world which was one; all “performances” in this area, from loud cursing to the organized show, had something in common and were imbued with the same atmosphere of freedom, frankness, and familiarity. Such elements of familiar speech as profanities, oaths, and curses were fully legalized in the marketplace and were easily adopted by all the festive genres, even by Church drama. The marketplace was the center of all that

is unofficial; it enjoyed a certain extraterritoriality in a world of official order and official ideology, it always remained "with the people."

This popular aspect was especially apparent on feast days. The dates of the fairs were usually adapted to the great feasts of the year but were extended over a long period. For instance, the famous fairs of Lyon were held four times a year, and each lasted fifteen days. Thus every year Lyon led for two months a life of fairs and carnivals, for even if there was no carnival, strictly speaking, its atmosphere reigned at every fair.

Thus, the unofficial folk culture of the Middle Ages and even of the Renaissance had its own territory and its own particular time, the time of fairs and feasts. This territory, as we have said, was a peculiar second world within the official medieval order and was ruled by a special type of relationship, a free, familiar, marketplace relationship. Officially the palaces, churches, institutions, and private homes were dominated by hierarchy and etiquette, but in the marketplace a special kind of speech was heard, almost a language of its own, quite unlike the language of Church, palace, courts, and institutions. It was also unlike the tongue of official literature or of the ruling classes—the aristocracy, the nobles, the high-ranking clergy and the top burghers—though the elemental force of the folk idiom penetrated even these circles. On feast days, especially during the carnivals, this force broke through every sphere, and even through the Church, as in "the feast of fools." The festive marketplace combined many genres and forms, all filled with the same unofficial spirit.

In all world literature there is probably no other work reflecting so fully and deeply all aspects of the life of the marketplace as does Rabelais' novel. But before examining these aspects at closer range we must first sketch Rabelais' contact with this sphere as well as the limited bibliographical material permits.

Rabelais was familiar with the marketplace and fairs of his time. As we shall see, he made good use of his experience and projected it forcefully in his novel.

In Fontenay-le-Comte, where he spent his youth in a monastery

of the Cordeliers, he had been taught humanist and Greek culture, but at the same time he had been introduced to the peculiar culture of the marketplace. A fair famous throughout France was at that time held three times a year at Fontenay-le-Comte. A great number of salesmen and customers, not only from France but also from other countries, assembled in the town. According to G. Boucher, many foreigners, especially Germans, came to the fair. Itinerant hawkers, gypsies, and the obscure *déclassés*, so numerous in those days, also came to Fontenay-le-Comte, and from records of the sixteenth century we learn that this town developed its own popular argot. It was here that Rabelais could observe the life of the fair and listen to its voices.

Later Rabelais traveled in the province of Poitou with Bishop Geoffroi d'Estissac. Here he observed the fair of Saint Maixent and the famous fair of Niort; he recalls the hubbub of the latter in his novel. Generally speaking, the fairs of Poitou were known at that time for their elaborateness.

Here Rabelais became acquainted with another important aspect of these gatherings, the marketplace spectacles. He learned about life on the theater scaffoldings (*les échafauds*) which he describes in his novel. These scaffoldings were put up on the square, and the people crowded around them. Lost in the crowd, Rabelais attended mysteries, moralities, and farces. The towns of Poitou, Montmorillon, Saint Maixent, Poitiers, and others, were famous for their theatrical productions.<sup>8</sup> This is the reason why Rabelais chose Saint Maixent and Niort as a setting for Villon's *facéties* described in the Fourth Book. France's dramatic culture was at that time closely related to the marketplace.

During the next period of Rabelais' life, concerning which there is no documentary record (1528-1530), he apparently journeyed to the universities of Bordeaux, Toulouse, Bourges, Orléans, and Paris. Here he was initiated into the students' Bohemian life. This experience was broadened during the following years when Rabelais studied medicine at Montpellier.

We have already pointed out the importance of school festivals

<sup>8</sup> See H. Clouzot: *L'ancien théâtre en Poitou*, 1900.

and recreation in medieval culture and literature. The schoolmen's exuberant compositions had already attained the level of great literature and played in it a substantial role. These recreative writings were also related to the marketplace. School parodies, travesties, *facéties* in Latin and in the vernacular, prove this relation and bear inner resemblance to popular forms. Many school spectacles were organized in the streets. In Montpellier on Epiphany students led carnival processions and danced in the square. The university often produced morality plays and farces outside the campus.<sup>9</sup>

Apparently Rabelais took part in student recreations. J. Plattard believes that during his student years, especially in Montpellier, he wrote a series of anecdotes, *facéties*, and witty debates. He acquired in comic literature the experience that enabled him to create *Pantagruel* so quickly.

In the next period of Rabelais' life, spent in Lyon, his relations with the marketplace became even closer and more intimate. We have mentioned already the famous Lyon fairs, which occupied about two months of each year. Life during that time was extremely animated in that southern city with its large Italian colony. Rabelais himself recalls in the Fourth Book the carnival of Lyon during which the grotesque statue of the glutton "Maschecroûte," a typical gay monster, was carried in procession. The chroniclers of that time described other mass festivals: the feast of printers and the election of the "prince of tradesmen."

Rabelais was linked by even closer ties to the Lyon fairs, since they represented one of the most important markets of publishing and bookselling, second only to Frankfurt. Both these cities were the center of book distribution and literary advertising. Books were published with an eye to the fairs, summer, autumn, and winter being the busy seasons. Lyon determined more or less the

<sup>9</sup> This student recreational literature was part of marketplace culture; its social element was related to folk culture and was sometimes completely fused with it. Among the anonymous authors of these works of grotesque realism (usually in Latin) there were probably many students or graduates.



dates of book publication in France and consequently also fixed the time at which authors submitted their manuscripts to publishers. A. Lefranc successfully established the chronology of Rabelais' works by using the dates of the Lyon fairs. These dates regulated the production of all books, even the scientific ones, but especially popular works and recreational literature.<sup>10</sup>

Rabelais, who had first published three scholarly works, later became the provider of mass literature and therefore entered into a closer relationship with the fairs. He not only had to calculate their dates but also their demands, tastes, and fashions. He published almost simultaneously his *Pantagruel* (which followed directly in the steps of the popular book by an anonymous author "The Great Chronicles of Gargantua") and the *Pantagrueline Prognostication*, an almanac for the year 1533. The *Prognostication* is a gay travesty of the New Year prophecies so popular at that time. This composition, containing only a few small pages, was reprinted during the following years and was followed by others. Indeed, we have certain data and even a few fragments of Rabelais' calendars for the years 1535, 1541, 1546, and 1550. We can surmise, as does L. Moland,<sup>11</sup> that this is not the complete list of calendars published by Rabelais. He probably brought them out every year, beginning in 1533, and was the accredited publisher. Both the "Prognostics" and the calendars are related to time, to the New Year, and finally, to the marketplace.

There is no doubt that during the following years of his life Rabelais preserved a vivid interest in the fairs and maintained relations with their various activities. The meager biographical data in our possession do not offer us, however, any positive facts in this respect.<sup>12</sup> But we have an important document dating from

<sup>10</sup> The combined publishing of erudite scholarly works and literature for fairs and carnivals was typical of those times.

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.* fn. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Rabelais' legendary biography presents him as a popular figure of the marketplace. According to this legend, his life was full of mystifications, travesties, and clownery. L. Moland rightly calls this legendary figure *un Rabelais de carême-prenant* (a carnival Rabelais).

Rabelais' last journey to Italy. On March 14, 1549, Cardinal Jean du Bellay organized a popular festival in Rome on the occasion of the birth of the son of King Henry II. Rabelais attended this festival and described it in detail, using for this account his own letters to Cardinal Guizou. This description was published in Paris and Lyon under the title of "The Sciamachy and Festival Offered in Rome in the Palace of His Eminence Monsignor du Bellay."

In the first part of this festival, performed in a piazza, a battle was fought with dramatic effects, fireworks, and even casualties (later shown to be straw dummies). The festival had a typical carnivalesque character. The traditional hell was presented in the form of a globe ejecting flames. This globe was known as the "jaws of hell" and "Lucifer's head."<sup>13</sup> At the end of the festival a gigantic banquet was offered to the people, with enormous, truly Pantagruelous quantities of sausages and wine.

Such festivals are characteristic of the Renaissance. Burckhardt has shown how important was their influence on the artistic form and philosophy of that period and on its very spirit. He did not exaggerate the importance of that influence; it was even greater than he thought.<sup>14</sup>

Rabelais was not so much interested in the official aspect of the festivities of his time as in their popular, unofficial elements. These were the elements that influenced his work. He could observe in them the most varied forms of comic folklore, so rich and colorful in his time.

Depicting in the First Book young Gargantua's studies under the guidance of Ponocrates, Rabelais says:

Instead of herborizing, they would inspect the shops of druggists, herbalists and apothecaries, studiously examining the sundry fruits, roots, leaves, gums, seeds and exotic unguents and learning how they could be diluted or adulterated. He viewed jugglers, mountebanks and medicasters . . . carefully observing

<sup>13</sup> L. Moland, *op. cit.* fn. 4, p. 599.

<sup>14</sup> True, Burckhardt had in mind not so much the popular marketplace festivities as the courtly official feasts.

their tricks and gestures, their agile capers and smooth oratory. His favorites were those from Chauny in Picardy who are born jabberers . . . (Book 1, Chapter 24)

This episode of young Gargantua's education can be legitimately interpreted as autobiographical, since Rabelais himself studied all these aspects of popular life. Let us stress that popular spectacles and popular medicine, herbalists and druggists, hawkers of magic unguents and quacks, could be seen side by side. There was an ancient connection between the forms of medicine and folk art which explains the combination in one person of actor and druggist. This is why the images of the physician and the medical element are organically linked in the novel with the entire traditional system of images. In the previous quotation we see medicine and the theater displayed side by side in the marketplace.

Such is the history of Rabelais' physical connection with the marketplace, as far as we can deduce it from the meager biographical data. But how did the marketplace enter the sphere of his novel and how was it reflected in it?

This question first arises in relation to the atmosphere of the marketplace and the organization of its verbal idiom. We encounter it at the beginning of each book of the novel, in the famous prologues. We started our study with a chapter devoted to these elements, precisely because we enter into the marketplace world from the very first lines of the five books, in the prologue to *Pantagruel*, chronologically the first book to be written and published.

How is the prologue of *Pantagruel* constructed? It begins thus:

O most illustrious and most valorous champions, gentlemen and all others who delight in honest entertainment and wit. I address this book to you. You have read and digested the *Mighty and Inestimable Chronicles of the Huge Giant Gargantua*. Like true believers you have taken them upon faith as you do the texts of the Holy Gospel. Indeed, having run out of gallant speeches, you have often spent hours at a time relating lengthy stories culled

from these *Chronicles* to a rapt audience of noble dames and matrons of high degree. On this count, then, you deserve vast praise and sempiternal memory. (Book 2, Prologue)

Here we see combined the praise of the "Chronicles of Gargantua" and of the readers who enjoy this chapbook. The praise and glorification are composed in the advertising spirit of the barker at a show or the hawker of chapbooks, who praise not only their wondrous merchandise but also the "most illustrious" public. This is a typical example of the tone and style of the fair.

But of course these announcements have nothing in common with naïve and direct practical advertisements. They are filled with popular-festive laughter. They toy with the objects that they announce, and they include in this free game all the "sacred" and "exalted" topics that they can fit into their oratory. In the quoted lines the admirers of the "Chronicles" are compared to true believers (*vrais fidèles*) who put their faith in it as in a sacred text, and who therefore deserve honor, praise, and undying memory (*mémoire sempiternelle*). Thus Rabelais recreates that special marketplace atmosphere in which the exalted and the lowly, the sacred and the profane are leveled and are all drawn into the same dance. Such have always been the announcements at the fair. They did not demand conventional forms or official speeches. They enjoyed the privileges of the people's laughter. Popular advertising is always ironic, always makes fun of itself to a certain extent (as does the advertising of our own peddlers and hawkers).<sup>15</sup> At the fair even cupidity and cheating have an ironical, almost candid character. In the medieval street cry there was always laughter, more or less forceful.

In the quoted excerpt from the prologue there are no neutral objective words. All are words of praise: *très illustres, très chevaleureux, gentillesses, honnestetés, grandes, inestimables*, and so forth. (I quote from the original text.) The superlative is the prevailing tone; actually, all the adjectives are used in this mode. But it is, of course, no rhetorical tone; rather it is an ironically

<sup>15</sup> Meaning Russian street vendors. (Translator's note.)

and maliciously exaggerated style. It is the superlative of grotesque realism: the wrong side, or rather, the right side of abuse.

In the following paragraphs of the prologue we hear the cry of the quack and druggist at the fair. He praises the "Chronicles" as an excellent remedy for toothache and offers a prescription for its use: to be wrapped in warm linen and applied to the sensitive area. Such mock prescriptions are one of the most widespread genres of grotesque realism.<sup>16</sup> Further, the "Chronicles" is praised as a potent medicine for pain inflicted by gout and venereal disease.

Sufferers from gout and venereal disease are often featured in Rabelais' novel and in comic literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially. Gout and syphilis are "gay diseases," the result of overindulgence in food, drink, and sexual intercourse. They are essentially connected with the material bodily lower stratum. Pox was still a "fashionable disease" in those days.<sup>17</sup> As to gout, it was widespread in grotesque realism; we find it as far back as Lucian.<sup>18</sup>

In this part of the prologue there is the traditional combination of medicine and art, but it is not this overt fusion of physician and artist in one person which is important. Here a literary work (the "Chronicles") is proclaimed as a writing which not only entertains and provokes laughter but also cures. This is announced

<sup>16</sup> A mock prescription of the early Middle Ages recommending a remedy for baldness has been preserved.

<sup>17</sup> Syphilis appeared in Europe during the last years of the fifteenth century. It was known as the *maladie de Naples*. The other vulgar name for it was *gorre* (meaning luxury or pomp), or *grand gorre*, that is, sumptuousness, magnificence. In 1539 a work was published under the title of *Le Triomphe de la très haulte et puissante Dame Vérole* (The triumph of the very noble and powerful Lady Vérole).

<sup>18</sup> Lucian wrote a comic tragedy in verse: *Tragopodagra*. Its heroes are Podagrus and Podagra, the physician, the executioner, and the chorus. Rabelais' junior contemporary Fischart wrote the *Podagrammisch Trostbüchlein* in which he offered comic praise of gout, considered the consequence of overeating and laziness. Ambivalent praise of a malady, especially of syphilis and gout, was common.

with the accent of the quack and the barker of the fair. In the prologue of the Fourth Book Rabelais resumes this theme and bases the curative power of laughter on the teaching of Hippocrates, Galen, Plato, and others.

Having enumerated the "Chronicles" ' merits in the prologue of the Second Book, the author continues:

Is this nothing? Then find me a book in any language, in any branch of art and science that possesses such virtues, properties and prerogatives. Find it, I say, and I will buy you a pint of tripe! No, gentlemen, no, none such exists. My book is peerless, incomparable, nonpareil, and—I maintain it in the teeth of hellfire—unique! If anyone contradicts me, let him be herewith denounced as a false prophet, a champion of predestination, a poisoner, and a seducer of the people. (Book 2, Prologue)

Besides the enormous accumulation of superlatives, typical of marketplace advertising, we find the characteristic method of testifying to the speaker's honesty: comic pledges and oaths. He promises to pay "a pint of tripe"; he is ready to assert in the teeth of hellfire that no better book exists, it is unique. Such ironic parodies were current in advertisements of the fair.

Let us pay special attention to the "pint of tripe." This word figures more than once in Rabelais as well as in all the literature of grotesque realism (in the Latin versions the word *viscera* corresponds to tripe). In the given context the words refer, of course, to food. The stomach and bowels of cattle, tripe, were carefully cleaned, salted, and cooked. Tripe could not be preserved long; they were therefore consumed in great quantities on slaughtering days and cost nothing. Moreover, it was believed that after cleaning, tripe still contained ten per cent excrement which was therefore eaten with the rest of the meal. We shall find tripe again in one of *Gargantua's* most famous episodes.

But why did this image play such a role in grotesque realism? Tripe, stomach, intestines are the bowels, the belly, the very life of man. But at the same time they represent the swallowing, devouring belly. Grotesque realism played with this double image, we might say with the top and the bottom of the word. We have



already quoted Henri Estienne, who showed that in the time of Rabelais it was customary to turn a wineglass upside down, repeating the words of the penitential psalm: "create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit in my bowels" Wine cleanses the intestines (*viscera*). But our image is more complex. The bowels are related to defecation and excrement. Further, the belly does not only eat and swallow, it is also eaten, as tripe. In "the palaver of the potulent" (First Book) one guest says to another as he prepares drinks, "Have you anything to send to the river? That's where tripe is washed." Here he had in mind the food he had just eaten as well as his own belly. Further, tripe is linked with death, with slaughter, murder, since to disembowel is to kill. Finally, it is linked with birth, for the belly generates.

Thus, in the image of tripe life and death, birth, excrement, and food are all drawn together and tied in one grotesque knot; this is the center of bodily topography in which the upper and lower stratum penetrate each other. This grotesque image was a favorite expression of the ambivalence of the material bodily lower stratum, which destroys and generates, swallows and is swallowed. The "swing" of grotesque realism, the play of the upper with the lower sphere, is strikingly set into motion; the top and the bottom, heaven and earth, merge in that image. We shall further see the remarkable symphony of laughter derived by Rabelais from the ambivalent and varied meaning of the word tripe in the first chapters of *Gargantua* (the feast of the cattle slaughter, the palaver of the potulent, the birth of Gargantua).

In our example the pint of tripe as the author's pledge does not only mean a cheap variety of food but also life, the bowels, in the sense of "all my tripes." This picture, too, is ambivalent.

The last line of the excerpt is no less typical. After words of praise the author turns to curses (the reverse of marketplace praise). Those who do not share the positive view of the "Chronicles" are branded as poisoners and seducers of the people. These pejoratives were especially applied to persons accused of heresy, doomed to the stake. The play with serious and dangerous subjects continues. The author compares the "Chronicles" to the

Bible and the Gospels. Like the Church, he condemns all dissidents for heresy with all the inevitable consequences. The bold allusion to the Church and Church politics has a realistic note. The abusive words "champions of predestination" obviously had in mind the Protestants who professed this doctrine.

Thus we have on the one hand the author's exaggerated praise of the "Chronicles" as the best, the only book in the world, his praise of those who read it and believe in it and are ready to die for it, of those who defend their belief in the potency of the book and give up their life for it (in the ironic ambivalent form of the "pint of tripe"). On the other hand there is the accusation of heresy for all who disagree. All this is a parody of the Church as the only guardian of salvation and interpreter of the Gospels. But this dangerous parody is offered in the form of laughter and gay advertisements, the language and style of the fair being strictly observed. The barker of a show would not be accused of heresy, no matter what he might say, provided he maintained his clownery. Rabelais maintained it. The comic aspect of the world was legalized. He was not afraid to declare in his prologue that more copies of the "Chronicles" were sold than those of the Bible during nine years.

The prologue ends in a torrent of abuses and curses hurled at the author if there is a single lie in his book, as well as at those who do not believe him:

However, before I conclude this prologue, I hereby deliver myself up body and soul, belly and bowels, to a hundred thousand basketfuls of raving demons, if I have lied so much as once throughout this book. By the same token, may St. Anthony sear you with his erysipelatous fire . . . may Mahomet's disease whirl you in epileptic jitters . . . may the festers, ulcers and chancres of every purulent pox infect, scathe, mangle and rend you, entering your bumgut as tenuously as mercurialized cow's hair . . . and may you vanish into an abyss of brimstone and fire, like Sodom and Gomorrah, if you do not believe implicitly what I am about to relate in the present *Chronicles* . . . (Book 2, Prologue)

These are typical billingsgate abuses. The passing from excessive praise to excessive invective is characteristic, and the change

from the one to the other is perfectly legitimate. Praise and abuse are, so to speak, the two sides of the same coin. If the right side is praise, the wrong side is abuse, and vice versa. The billingsgate idiom is a two-faced Janus. The praise, as we have said, is ironic and ambivalent. It is on the brink of abuse; the one leads to the other, and it is impossible to draw the line between them. Though divided in form they belong to the same body, or to the two bodies in one, which abuses while praising and praises while abusing. This is why in familiar billingsgate talk abusive words, especially indecent ones, are used in the affectionate and complimentary sense. (We shall further analyze many examples from Rabelais.) This grotesque language, particularly in its oldest form, was oriented toward the world and toward all the world's phenomena in their condition of unfinished metamorphosis: the passing from night to morning, from winter to spring, from the old to the new, from death to birth. Therefore, this talk showers both compliments and curses. Perhaps our example does not clearly typify this, but its ambivalence raises no doubt. This ambivalence determines the organic and spontaneous character of the change from praise to abuse and back to praise again, as well as the uncertainty as to whom the talk is addressed.<sup>19</sup>

We shall resume this topic of simultaneous praise and abuse in Chapter 6. This phenomenon is reflected in imagery and is extremely important for the understanding of entire periods of the development of thought. This development has not as yet been analyzed, but in a preliminary and rather simplified way we

<sup>19</sup> At close range, this many-faced person is the crowd which surrounds the barker's booth, and also the many-faced reader. Praise and abuse are showered on this person, for some in the audience may be the representatives of the old, dying world and ideology—agelasts, that is, men who do not know how to laugh, hypocrites, slanderers who live in darkness; others are the representatives of a new world, a world of light, laughter, and truth. Together they form one people, dying and renewed, and this people is abused and praised simultaneously. But this interpretation is at the closest range. In the longer view, beyond the crowd, there is the whole world, unfinished, uncompleted, which generates in dying and is born to die.

can say that it is based on the conception of the world as eternally unfinished: a world dying and being born at the same time, possessing as it were two bodies. The dual image combining praise and abuse seeks to grasp the very moment of this change, the transfer from the old to the new, from death to life. Such an image crowns and uncrowns at the same moment. In the development of class society such a conception of the world can only be expressed in unofficial culture. There is no place for it in the culture of the ruling classes; here praise and abuse are clearly divided and static, for official culture is founded on the principle of an immovable and unchanging hierarchy in which the higher and the lower never merge.

Although the combination of praise and abuse is completely alien to official genres, it is characteristic of folk culture. The distant echoes of this dual form can still be heard in the familiar speech of our days. Since folk culture has not been profoundly studied, the fusion of praise and abuse has not been brought to light.

The content of the billingsgate expressions in the curses of the prologue is typical. Nearly all of them refer to a specific part of the human body. The first, directed at the author himself, rends him apart; the speaker gives himself up to the devil, body, soul, and bowels. We encounter once more the words *tripes* and *boy-aulx*.

Of the seven oaths hurled at the reluctant listeners, five call down diseases upon them: (1) Saint Anthony's fire (erysipelas), (2) epilepsy, (*mau de terre vous vire*), (3) and (4) ulcers of the feet and lameness (*le maulubec vous trousque*), (5) bleeding diarrhea (*caque sangue vous vire*) and inflammation of the rectum (*le mau fin feu . . . vous puisse entrer au fondement*).

These curses offer a grotesque view of the body; they burn it, hurl it to the ground, cripple the legs, cause diarrhea, and gripping; in other words, they turn the body inside out, causing the anus to protrude. Curses always indicate a downward motion, directed to the ground, the legs, the buttocks.

The two last of the seven curses also denote this downward

movement: fire from heaven and the brimstone abyss—in other words the threat of being hurled into the underworld.

All these curses are uttered in their traditional form. One, in Gascon (*le maulubec vous trousque*), is used more than once in Rabelais' novel. Another, judging from the refrain and assonance in the original French text, contains fragments of some popular street ditty. In many curses the body part is combined with cosmic images: lightning, earth, brimstone, fire, ocean.

The curses at the end of the prologue bring it to a dynamic conclusion in a powerful and rough debasing gesture, the "grotesque swing" which lowers it to earth before it comes to a stop. Rabelais usually concludes his speeches either with an abuse or an invitation to feasting and drinking.

Such is the structure of *Pantagruel's* prologue. It is written from beginning to end in the style and tone of the marketplace. We hear the cry of the barker, the quack, the hawker of miracle drugs, and the bookseller; we hear the curses that alternate with ironic advertisements and ambiguous praise. The prologue is organized according to the popular verbal genres of hawkers. The words are actually a cry, that is, a loud interjection in the midst of a crowd, coming out of the crowd and addressed to it. The man who is speaking is one with the crowd; he does not present himself as its opponent, nor does he teach, accuse, or intimidate it. He *laughs* with it. There is not the slightest tone of morose seriousness in his oration, no fear, piety, or humility. This is an absolutely gay and fearless talk, free and frank, which echoes in the festive square beyond all verbal prohibitions, limitations, and conventions.

At the same time, however, this entire prologue is a parody and travesty of the ecclesiastical method of persuasion. Behind the "Chronicles" stands the Gospel; behind the offer of the "Chronicles" as the only book of salvation stands the exclusiveness of the Church's truth; behind the abuses and curses are the Church's intolerance, intimidation, and *autos-da-fé*. The ecclesiastical policy is translated into the language of ironical hawking. But the prologue is wider and deeper than the usual grotesque parody. It travesties the very foundations of medieval thought, the meth-

ods of establishing truth and conviction which are inseparable from fear, violence, morose and narrow-minded seriousness and intolerance. The prologue introduces us into a completely different atmosphere, the atmosphere of fearless, free, and gay truth.

The prologue of *Gargantua* (the second prologue chronologically speaking) has a more complex structure. Billingsgate abuse is here combined with elements of scholarly humanism and with a parody of Plato's *Symposium*. But the language of the marketplace and its intonations of praise-abuse still retain the leading role. They acquire, however, a more subtle and varied tone, applied to richer combinations of themes and topics.

The prologue starts with the characteristic address: "Hail, O most valiant and illustrious drinkers! Your health my precious and pox-ridden comrades . . ." (*Beuveurs très illustres et vous Véroles très précieux . . .*) This address immediately creates the familiar tone of the further conversation with the readers, or more correctly speaking, with the listeners, since the style of the prologue is that of oral speech.

Abuse and praise are mingled in this address. The positive superlative mode is combined with such semi-insulting terms as "drinkers" and "pox-ridden comrades." This is abusive praise and praiseful abuse, typical, as we have seen, of the marketplace.

The entire prologue is built like the announcement of a barker speaking to the crowd gathered in front of his booth. We constantly encounter expressions of the advertising type; the familiar tone intended for an audience is here quite obvious.

We also find, scattered throughout the prologue to *Gargantua*, abuse addressed to third persons: an "empty-headed monk," a "dullard," a "dirty fellow," a "grumbler."

Familiar, friendly abuse and direct cursing make up the verbal dynamics of the prologue and determine its style. The beginning of the discourse presents the image of Socrates as described by Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*. Alcibiades' comparison of Socrates with Silenus was popular among the humanists. It was used by Budé and cited by Erasmus in three of his works, one of which,



*The Sileni of Alcibiades*, was apparently Rabelais' source, although he was familiar with the *Symposium*. Rabelais subordinated this current humanist theme to the style of his prologue, sharply stressing the praise-abuse combination.

Here is how Rabelais retells the description of Socrates by Alcibiades:

. . . judging by his exterior, you would not have given an onion skin for him. He was ill-shaped, ridiculous in carriage, with a nose like a knife, the gaze of a bull and the face of a fool. His ways stamped him a simpleton, his clothes a bumpkin. Poor in fortune, unlucky when it came to women, hopelessly unfit for all office in the Republic, forever laughing, forever drinking neck to neck with his friends, forever hiding his divine knowledge under a mask of mockery . . .

Yet had you opened this box, you would have found in it all kinds of priceless, celestial drugs: immortal understanding, wondrous virtue, indomitable courage, unparalleled sobriety, unflinching serenity, perfect assurance and heroic contempt for whatever moves humanity to watch, to bustle, to toil, to sail ships overseas and to engage in warfare. (Book 1, Prologue)

As far as content is concerned, we have no considerable deviations from Plato and Erasmus, but the contrasts of Socrates' exterior and interior image are expressed in more familiar tones. The choice of words and expressions and their very accumulation bring these lines nearer to the abusive style, to Rabelais' usual techniques of piling up curses. We sense behind this verbal arrangement the hidden dynamics of this abuse. Socrates' interior qualities are also brought out more vigorously in the form of a eulogy. Once more, behind the verbal arrangement we detect the secret dynamics of marketplace praise.

Let us now note a characteristic detail. According to Plato (in the *Symposium*) Sileni are sold in sculpturers' shops; if opened, the image of a god is found in them. Rabelais transfers the Sileni to the druggists' stores, which young Gargantua visited when studying life in the Paris streets. The statuettes contained various drugs, among them a popular remedy, a powder of precious stones

supposed to have healing power. These drugs are enumerated in the hawking style used by the apothecaries and quacks at the fairs in the time of Rabelais.

All the other images of the prologue are also steeped in the atmosphere of the fair. We find everywhere the abuse-praise combination as the basic moving force which determines the style and the dynamics of the speeches. There are almost no objective words, that is, words which imply neither praise nor abuse. The comparative and superlative are commonly used. For instance: "how much more reconciling, smiling and beguiling wine is than oil," or "these fine, full-flavored volumes." In the first case we hear the rhythmic beat of the vendor. In the second case the word "full-flavored" lauds the supreme quality of venison and meats. The market that young Gargantua visited under Ponocrates' wise guidance cries out in this prologue, with its herbalists and apothecaries, with exotic unguents, with the tricks and oratory of the people from Chauny, "born jabberers" and experts in cheating. All the images of the new humanist culture, and there are many of them in this prologue, are steeped in the atmosphere of the market.

Let us quote from the end of the prologue: "And now, my hearties, be gay, and gayly read the rest, with ease of body and in the best of kidney! And you, donkey-pizzles, hark! May a canker rot you! Remember to drink to me gallantly, and I will counter with a toast at once." (Book 1, Prologue)

As we see, this prologue ends on a note somewhat different from that of the prologue introducing *Pantagruel*. Instead of a string of oaths, we have here an invitation to drink and be merry. Here too we find abuses, but they have an affectionate tone. The same persons are addressed as "my hearties" (*mes amours*) and donkey-pizzles" (*viédazes*). We also find the Gascon expression *le maulu-bec vous trousque* that we have already encountered in the *Pantagruel* prologue. In these last lines of the *Gargantua* prologue the entire Rabelaisian complex is offered in its most elementary expression: the gaiety, the indecent abuse, and the banquet. **But**