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By

Paul W. Logan

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ABSTRACT

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Paul W. Logan

Near the end of the fifteenth century excavators unearthed a group of Roman buildings containing strange and fantastic frescoes and reliefs depicting incongruous combinations of human and animal forms along with floral decorations and foliage. Found in "grotte" or underground caverns, these works were designated "grottesche" or "grottesca." This ornamental style became popular throughout Europe and in 1532, the year that saw the publication of Rabelais's Pantagruel, the term "crotesque" came into usage in France. Rabelais himself uses the word in the Tiers Livre and was apparently familiar not only with the term but also with the pictorial and decorative style which fused disparate elements into a single, ambivalent image.

In the nineteenth century, John Ruskin pointed out the grotesque's fundamentally ambivalent nature, recognizing that both comic and fearful elements are necessary components of the grotesque image. Mikhail

Bakhtin, the first modern critic to apply Ruskin's definition to Rabelais's work, underlined the profound ambivalence of Rabelais's grotesque imagery with particular reference to Pantagruel and Gargantua. This study analyzes the use and importance of the grotesque in the Quart Livre, perhaps the most ambivalent and grotesque of all Rabelais's works.

Whether portraying entire races like the Papefigues, the Papimanes and the Andouilles or describing the carnivalesque degradation of Panurge, Rabelais makes full use of the imagery, language and style characteristic of the grotesque. Comedy in the Quart Livre depends largely upon the ambivalent images of physical and verbal abuse and upon grotesque bodily humor. The ludicrous and the terrible conjoin in the depiction of the lower body to dispel fears of the unknown and to provoke therapeutic laughter. Satire in the Quart Livre derives from the unofficial tradition of Menippean satire and here, too, Rabelais enlists the grotesque to heighten its comic value. Grotesque inversion is the primary stylistic device by which both comedy and satire are reinforced as Rabelais humbles and ridicules the mighty. The paradoxical, grotesque cosmos created in the Quart Livre is, at base, a function of Rabelais's skillful use of the grotesque artistic mode.

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I. THE GROTESQUE: AN INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION

Near the end of the fifteenth century excavators unearthed a group of Roman buildings containing strange and fantastic frescoes and reliefs. These works depict incongruous combinations of human and animal forms along with floral decorations and foliage.[1] Because the works were found in "grotte" (underground caverns), they were initially designated by Italian words pertaining to caves: "grottesche," "grottesca."[2] During the sixteenth century, this ornamental style became popular in Italy and spread throughout Europe, represented in painting, architecture, engraving, and book decoration. Two notable examples of this grotesque revival are Pinturicchio's ceiling vaults in the Siena cathedral library (1502) and Raphael's decorative fresco borders for the Stanze in the Vatican (1515) (Clayborough, pp. 2-3).

The first great monument outside Italy which incorporated the rediscovered style was Fontainebleau, begun in 1530 at the request of Francis I. In keeping with contemporary French taste for Italian art, many

architects and painters were lured from Italy to aid in the design and construction of the château. With these artists, the exotic and intricate meanderings of the grotesque were introduced to France. Among the artists were Il Rosso, who built "la galerie du Roi" (completed in 1531) and Primaticcio, under whose supervision the king's chambers were finished in 1532.

It was in this year that the word "crotesque" (by analogy with the Old French "crotte," also meaning cave) first came into common usage in France. One of the earliest examples is found in the inventory of Florimond Robertet for the palace of Fontainebleau:

> Une grande cuvette (de vermeil cisele) faicte en fontaine, où sont de ces gentils crotesques nouvellement inventées, qui jettent mille fleurons à petits jambages tortus, portans les uns des paysages sur de simples lignes, mesme des elephants, des boeufs, et des lyons . . . (Barasch, p. 32).

Louis Dimier describes Primaticcio's work at Fontainebleau in similar terms:

> Autour de la figure humaine, les ornements se renouvellent sans fin: guirlandes de fruits, enroulements, feuillages, mufles de lion, masques tragiques, bucranes, coquilles, gaines, cornes d'abondance, et divers animaux, oiseaux, chiens, où se mêle la salamandre, emblème et comme on disait 'devise' de Francoys ler (Barasch, p. 10).[3]

The curious mixture of strange animals and plants with familiar decorative objects ("fleurons," "boeufs") again characterizes grotesque decoration even when far-removed from its Italian roots.

Coincidentally, it was also in this year that Francois Rabelais published the first volume of his immortal works, Pantagruel, Roy des Dipsodes, Avec ses faicts et prouesses espouvantables, and two years later, the prologue to Rabelais's masterpiece, Gargantua, opens with the description of a true physical grotesque: the Silenus box, covered with fantastic decorative forms (". . . de figures joyeuses et frivoles, comme de harpies, satyres, oysons bridez, lièvres cornus . . .," etc.).[4] Rabelais himself actually uses the word "crotesque" in a riotous list of epithets in the Tiers Livre (Panurge calls Frère Jean a "couillon de crotesque," p. 512). The physician also compares Gargantua's embroidered codpiece to the cornucopia design often found in grotesque friezes:

> vous l'eussiez comparée à une belle corne d'abondance, telle que voyez es antiquailles . . . tousjours verdoyante, tousjours fleurissante, tousjours fructifiante, plene d'humeurs, plene de fleurs, plene de fruictz, plene de toutes delices" (Gargantua, p. 36).

Rabelais was thus familiar not only with the word "crotesque" but also with its pictorial and decorative style.

In the early sixteenth century, the term most often referred to the plastic arts and to the style associated with the Roman excavations. It was not in fact until Montaigne's Essais that the word "crotesque"

was used in a literary context. In the essay "De l'amitié," Montaigne equates his own style with the unusual meanderings of the grotesque painter:

> . . . et le vuide tout autour, il [le peintre] le remplit de crotesques, qui sont peintures fantasques, n'ayant grace qu'en la varieté et estrangeté. Que sont-ce icy, à la verité que crotesques et corps monstrueux, rappiecez de divers membres, sans certaine figure, n'ayant ordre, suite, ni proportion que fortuite?[5]

Montaigne's perceptive transposition of the artistic term did not, however, provoke any serious debate over the viability of the literary grotesque. Boileau was one of the few seventeenth-century critics who even used the word. By grotesque, he understood "parody" or "mock poem" and used it interchangeably with the more common contemporary term "burlesque" (Barasch, p. 119). But Boileau, who understood the grotesque's satirical possibilities, did not give the word a pejorative definition. Only in popular usage did "grotesque" obtain a disparaging meaning. The Dictionnaire de l'Academy francoise of 1694 cites only the latter usage while ignoring the word's artistic origins: "Il signifie fig. Ridicule, bizarre, extravagant. Un habit grotesque, ce discours est bien grotesque, mine grotesque . . ." (Clayborough, p. 4).

Two meanings for the grotesque thus evolved, the popular and pejorative opposing the artistic-literary and more literal definition. Both were common

in the eighteenth century when the ornamental grotesque style was again revived under the label "arabesque" (Barasch, p. 32). It was not, however, until the nineteenth century that the implications and significance of grotesque style were truly explored. John Ruskin (1819-1900), who included a chapter entitled "Grotesque Renaissance" in his study of the architecture of Venice, was the first to pinpoint the fundamentally ambivalent nature of the grotesque. His definition remains valid and has served as a basis for all subsequent analysis of grotesque art and literature:

> . . . the grotesque is, in almost all cases, composed of two elements, one ludicrous, the other fearful; . . . as one or the other of these elements prevails, the grotesque falls into two branches, sportive grotesque and terrible grotesque; but . . . we cannot legitimately consider it under these two aspects, because there are hardly any examples which do not in some degree combine both elements . . .[6]

Almost every later critic has agreed with Ruskin that the grotesque is a composite form: if either of the two major traits is absent, the true grotesque is no longer in question. Thus a scene or passage that presents pure comedy without sinister, terrible, or even repulsive overtones cannot be considered grotesque. For example, in Pantagruel, Panurge proposes a new material for the walls of Paris ("les callibistrys des femmes," p. 296). While the suggestion smacks of obscenity, it is clearly stated with humorous intent:

"Quel Diable defferoit telles murailles? Il n'y a metal qui tant resistast aux coups" (p. 296). Had Panurge's idea been serious, it would not be grotesque but merely horrible or offensive.

The grotesque results from tension between fear and laughter; the grotesque image is at the same time the poetic resolution of that tension. Just as the original frescoes combine differing life forms (plant and animal, human and animal) to create a new and fantastic being, the literary grotesque fuses incongruous elements to create an image which is not purely comic or fearful, but both. George Santayana calls the grotesque the "suggestively monstrous" (Clayborough, p. 17). Unlike the farce, the grotesque provokes defensive laughter which is never free from its repulsive or terrifying roots. Thus, it is not surprising that most twentieth century critics have again followed Ruskin's lead and attempted to divide the grotesque into subcategories, depending upon whether the comic or the terrifying element predominates.

Among modern critics, Mikhail Bakhtin is clearly the first to elaborate significantly upon Ruskin's analysis by applying it specifically to the works of Rabelais. Bakhtin points out the relation of the rediscovered grotesque pictorial style to a folkloric tradition of grotesque imagery in the "fabliaux" and in

the "diableries" of the Middle Ages: "this form [the pictorial style] was but a fragment of the immense world of grotesque imagery which existed throughout all the stages of antiquity and continued to exist in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance."[7] Bakhtin introduces his study of Rabelais's grotesque realism by rebuking those who overlook the fundamental ambivalence of grotesque imagery. Bakhtin counters G. Schneegans' analysis (Geschichte der Grotesken Satyre, 1894) by observing that: "Schneegans ignores the deep ambivalance of the grotesque and sees it merely as negation, an exaggeration pursuing narrowly satirical aims" (Bakhtin, p. 304). Grotesque realism in fact moves far beyond mere satirical negation. In Rabelais, the grotesque world view is not only a dethroning but also a coronation; death always coincides with celebrative rebirth. The grotesque structure may be represented not by the straight line leading to an impasse but by the circle, symbol of renewal and continuity. Nowhere is this affirmative ambivalance more effectively portrayed than in the birth of Pantagruel (Pantagruel, pp. 228-231), where the mother's death and the child's birth occur simultaneously. Confronted with a potentially tragic dilemma, laughter and optimism mitigate grief and regret when Gargantua comprehends life's circular nature: "Dieu . . . m'a donné un si beau filz . . . laissons toute melancholie

. . . Foy de gentilhomme, il vault mieulx pleurer moins et boire dadvantaige! Ma femme est morte, et bien, par Dieu (da jurandi) je ne la resusciteray pas par mes pleurs . . ." (Pantagruel, pp. 233-34). In this example, Rabelais's grotesque, paradoxical world view not only presents the problem but is also the poetic resolution of that problem; although Badebec dies, the circle of death and life is completed with the birth of Pantagruel. And Gargantua ultimately responds to the crisis with laughter at his son's birth, accentuating the primacy of life. Moreover, here as elsewhere in his work, Rabelais's propensity for paradox and ambivalence is fundamental to the understanding of his work and its inherent grotesque manifestations.

Bakhtin reinforces his case for grotesque ambivalence by illustrating that inversion plays an integral, dualistic role in the creation of a grotesque universe. Like ambivalence, inversion conforms to the grotesque's basic law of simultaneous destruction and re-creation. As another illustration Bakhtin points to Gargantua's birth. In this episode, inversion occurs on two planes. First, Gargantua is born at this moment only because Gargamelle has feasted excessively upon the over-abundant tripes. The action of the upper body (eating) results in the movement of the lower body (giving birth: ". . . c'estoit le fondement qui luy eschappoit . . .,"

Gargantua, p. 30). However, Gargantua is not born from the lower body; instead, he ascends and enters the world through his mother's left ear. Elsewhere, we find Pantagruel creating a race of pygmies by the emission of intestinal gasses (Pantagruel, p. 352; God, on the other hand, creates by the word), men being paid for sleeping instead of working (Pantagruel, p. 380), and Cleopatra selling onions in the underworld (Pantagruel, p. 371). The grotesque world view has its own logic; it at once destroys and reconstructs the forms and laws of the real world, deriding the latter's inanities but never failing to signal man's potential by its enormity and comic vision.[8] Other examples of grotesque inversion abound in Rabelais's work. It is one of the essential patterns woven into the text and merits further investigation.

Yet Bakhtin expands his analysis well beyond the identification of grotesque forms as he explains the meaning and significance of the grotesque in Rabelais. His discussion of Pantagruel's birth and Epistemon's descent into Hell clarifies the cosmic implications of grotesque motifs. Neither episode should be reduced to a simply negative and satirical view of man; both in fact affirm man's privileged condition in the universe. Pantagruel is born at the height of the great drought of 1532; the young giant's appearance is

preceded by a hefty provision of salted meats. Some of the midwives are stricken with fear but others view the procession in a positive light: ". . . cecy n'est que bon signe, ce sont aguillons de vin" (Pantagruel, p. 231). The giant's birth marks the simultaneous apex and conclusion of the drought, dispelling the cosmic terror provoked by such a natural calamity and mocking man's irrational fear of the unknown. Epistemon's description of the "torments" of Hell is equally reassuring, for if justice does not exist on earth, it abounds in the underworld. Fear of death is ridiculed and dissipated; man was not created to cringe in horror at the unknown but rather to trust in divine providence and to laugh at his own frailty.

Bakhtin's chapter is one of the landmarks in the study of the grotesque. Before his work (aside from Ruskin), the grotesque had only been vaguely defined as an outlandish form of caricature which used exaggeration for satirical ends. And despite the fact that Bakhtin devotes only one chapter to the grotesque in particular and limits his discussion mainly to its role in Pantagruel, his work goes beyond any other in explaining the overall significance of the grotesque in Rabelais.

Unlike Bakhtin, most twentieth-century critics do not stress the positive or comic aspects of grotesque

phenomena. In The Grotesque in Art and Literature (Das Groteske: seine Gesaltung in Malerei und Dichtung), Wolfgang Kayser states that "the grotesque is the estranged world."[9] For Kayser, who principally discusses nineteenth- and twentieth-century examples, the grotesque is a structure of alienation rather than of reconciliation. Indeed, Kayser's views directly contradict Bakhtin's affirmative interpretation of the grotesque's cosmic implications when he declares that "The grotesque instills fear of life rather than fear of death" (Kayser, p. 184). Such a statement cannot be reconciled with Bakhtin's understanding of the grotesque in Rabelais. Moreover, Epistemon's visit to Hell effectively illustrates and argues for the correctness of Bakhtin's ideas, for in that passage, as elsewhere in Rabelais, there is hope rather than despair (Bakhtin, p. 325). It should be pointed out, however, that the grotesque has undergone a significant evolution in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when most works generally considered grotesque (those of Kafka or Grass, for example) no longer emphasize the optimism and comic nature of grotesque phenomena as Rabelais did. In the latter's case, trust in God enables him to present the grotesque as an essentially comic category; in modern works, the loss of faith, along with the menacing presence of a mechanized, industrial world, force

grotesque themes and episodes to be viewed in a much more somber and pessimistic manner.

There is nonetheless one point upon which contemporary critics agree: the grotesque is a valid artistic manner which, in all eras, has certain specific characteristics. Although it may be "the slipperiest of aesthetic categories,"[10] scholars recognize that it remains a legitimate and viable art form which reappears under many different guises. In fact, it is difficult to deny Kayser's assertion that the grotesque is "a comprehensive structural principle of works of art" (Kayser, p. 180). Given the importance and significance of that principle in the works of Rabelais, it is my intention to examine the fundamental traits, function, and meaning of the grotesque, with special reference to the Quart Livre, a choice dictated not only by the fact that the Fourth Book has often been neglected by critics but also by its very subject matter, for the voyage of Pantagruel and his companions through a fantastic archipelago provided Rabelais with a perfect subject for his fertile and grotesque imagination.

One facet of grotesque imagery which Bakhtin and others have underlined is its dominant physical nature. Most of the examples discussed so far relate to a cycle of life and death, thus focusing upon the human body as grotesque element par excellence. More specifically,

Bakhtin stresses that grotesque imagery most often results from interaction between the body and the external world (the giants' births suffice to illustrate this point). The grotesque drama occurs at the body's limits, as in the young Gargantua's "torchecul" experiment (Gargantua, pp. 54-59). In fact, this helps clarify why many of Rabelais's grotesque images have been mistakenly labeled "obscene," but those who so label them fail to recognize both the essentially celebrative value of the grotesque and its relation to folk humor. By its physicality, Rabelais's grotesque imagery descends both from the tradition of carnival degradation and renewal and from the decorative, pictorial tradition rediscovered in the sixteenth century.

Rabelais's use of the grotesque is not, however, exclusively limited to the physical plane. He sometimes employs a technique which is certainly grotesque but not entirely physical: the "contrepeterie" or spoonerism. One significant spoonerism introduces an episode which exemplifies grotesque inversion: "Comment Epistemon, qui avoit la couppe testée, feut guery habillement par Panurge et des nouvelles des diables et des damnez" (Pantagruel, p. 365). Another example occurs in the Fourth Book as a prelude to the "guerre des Andouilles." As the creatures approach praising "Mardigras," the narrator remarks: "Aulcuns depuys me ont raconté qu'il

dist Gradimars, non Mardigras. Quoy que soit, à ce mot un gros cervelat saulvaige et farfelu, anticipant devant le front de leur bataillon, le voulut saisir à la guorge" (Quart Livre, pp. 160-61). Such inversions in word order might be aptly described as "linguistic grotesques," for they both degrade and renew the accepted syntactical norms.

From this brief outline of the historical and etymological origins of the grotesque, we have seen that the grotesque is actually the simultaneous collision and integration of two different (and even opposing) realms, whether they be plant and animal, mythical and historical, or realistic and fantastic. Incongruity has served as the foundation for almost all definitions of the grotesque. Harpham states that "radical deformity" is "the ground base for the grotesque" (p. 462), and its pictorial origins certainly verify this claim. But before the existence of any deformity may be established, a norm or a natural standard must also exist. Without such an a priori or assumed norm, there can be no basis for incongruity. And in nearly every case, ordinary or everyday reality functions as a point of departure for grotesque structures. If objective reality does not appear as a frame for that departure, the result is not the grotesque but rather the unreal or fantastic. Such is the case in science fiction, for

example, where the suspension of belief in the objective reality of physical possibilities is required on the part of both the author and the reader.

With the grotesque, and particularly in Rabelais, the ordinary events of daily life are constantly intruding upon stranger and more unbelievable occurrences (or beings), which make the latter more striking and, in some cases, more believable. Eric Auerbach points out this constant juxtaposition and intermingling of worlds (and styles) in his article "The World in Pantagruel's Mouth": entering the giants's mouth, the narrator awaits an exotic "nouveau monde" only to be greeted by a peasant planting cabbages.[11] Subsequently, he does encounter practices which contradict those of the "outside" world (men paid for sleeping instead of working: ". . . ceulx qui ronflent bien gaignent bien sept solz et demy," Pantagruel, p. 380). In the same manner, Rabelais's giants also embody this structure of juxtaposition for they are at once human and non-human, the latter by virtue of size and intellectual capacity. The list of deformities in the giant's geneology ends with the branch that engendered Pantagruel: "Les aultres croissoyent en long du corps" (Pantagruel, p. 224). The giant is in fact a supremely radical deformation of the normal human body. As such, he personifies the grotesque, for "in nearly all symbolic traditions, he

[the giant] tends to appear as an outcropping of the marvellous and the terrible . . ." (Cirlot, p. 113). By combining the functions and features of normal men with those of a strange, and, in this case, anterior world, the giant exemplifies the grotesque principle of the intermingling of real and fantastic spheres.

It should be stressed that grotesque incongruity can by no means be limited to one specific level (here, the real and the unreal). As an essentially dynamic structure, the grotesque combines and resolves conflicting elements into singular images or characters. Ruskin perceived one facet of this dynamism by stating that the grotesque unifies the ludicrous and the terrible. The giant may again serve as example. His immensity may be understood to be threatening or comical; in fact, he is both at once, for his size and strength are always present, even if only in the background (in the case of Rabelais they are clearly de-emphasized in the later books). Gargantua's arrival in Paris illustrates this point, for it is his size and strength which enable him to drown 260,000 citizens in a flood of urine and steal the bells of Notre Dame (Gargantua, p. 68). Such actions are in no way completely comic, yet our laughter cannot be restrained precisely because of their outrageous nature.

Grotesque comedy depends in part, however, upon

the reaction of the reader or viewer. Undoubtedly, some would not consider the previous examples to be comic or even amusing. But those would be readers locked into what Bakhtin calls the sphere of official seriousness; they lack understanding of the tradition of folk humor and its celebration of the material bodily lower stratum.[12] Most critics would consider reader reaction as essential to the grotesque. The ideal reader should simultaneously experience a brief, involuntary laugh and a twinge of fear and/or repulsion. But reader or viewer reaction is a component of any aesthetic category and response remains impossible to measure. Obviously, responses will vary depending upon historical moment, ideological context, individual sensitivity, and an infinite number of environmental and personal factors. While the grotesque elicits a peculiar response in conjunction with its dynamic composition, in my view, that general composition largely determines any individual response and is therefore of primary importance for literary study.

In summation, the grotesque may be defined as the integration of contrasting spheres, the poetic resolution of opposites into one singularly unified artistic image, event, or character. Because of this constant dynamic combination (and/or juxtaposition), the grotesque is always ambivalent and dualistic; the

grotesque image incorporates real and unreal, birth and death, comic and horrific. Inversion, as interpreted by Bakhtin, is one manner of accomplishing this unification. Grotesque imagery, reflecting its roots in pictorial and carnival traditions, almost invariably assumes an extremely physical character, with special reference to bodily interaction with the external world. Above all, in the particular case of Rabelais, we must stress the fundamentally affirmative, optimistic implications of grotesque imagery which simultaneously denigrate and renovate. Rabelaisian grotesque portrays not fear but celebration of life, not estrangement but reconciliation:

> Mieux est de ris que de larmes escripre, Pour ce que rire est le propre de l'homme (Gargantua, p. 3).

Notes

[1]Arthur Clayborough, The Grotesque in English Literature (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 1. Additional quotations will be included in the text and refer to this edition.

[2]Frances K. Barasch, The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), p. 18. "At the Strozzi Chapel, the Siena library, the Vatican, Fontainebleau, and the Palace of Meudon, there were executed imitations of the antique designs found in the grottoes of Rome early in the century. By 1502, these designs were being called grottesche in Italy." Additional citations will be included in the text and refer to this edition.

[3]J.E. Cirlot describes the grotesque and its origins in a similar manner in his Dictionary of Symbols, translated from the Spanish by Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 128: "Grotesques: A type of ornament serving a largely decorative purpose. Favoured by the Romans, it became very common from the fifteenth century onwards, especially in the Plateresque style. Some of its characteristics owe their inspiration--like emblems--to Gnosticism which, as it is well-known, made wide use of the symbolic image in order to spread its doctrines. Bayley has collected a large number of grotesques and similar decorative motifs, among which the following figures predominate: the phoenix, swan, sheep, winged horses, serpents, dragons, gardens, diverse flowers, shrubs, sheaves, garlands, creepers, roses in jars, fruits, baskets of flowers and fruits, vines, pomegranates, trees (especially the evergreen sort), crosses, lilies, caducei, bolts, masks, steps, trophies, rosettes, bows, shields, brackets, swords, lances, cups and chalices, nude children, twins, sowers, fertility goddesses with multiple breasts, caryatids, damsels." Additional references to this edition will be included in the text.

[4]Francois Rabelais, OEuvres complètes (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962), p. 5. Further quotations from this edition will be included in the text.

[5]Michel de Montaigne, Essais (Paris: Pléiade, 1962), p. 181.

[6]John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, vol. III (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. 126.

[7]Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and his World, translated by Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968), p. 32. Additional quotations will be included in the text.

[8]Bakhtin calls this "a degradation and renewal of objects of a different order," p. 317.

[9]Wolfgang Kayser, The Grotesque in Art and Literature (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 180. Other references to this work will be included in the text.

[10]Geoffrey Harpham, "The Grotesque: First Principles," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (Summer, 1976), p. 461. Additional quotations will be included in the text.

[11]Eric Auerbach, Mimesis, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 267-268. Further quotations refer to this edition.

[12]Bakhtin deals extensively with the significance of traditional folk humor in his work as well as with the relation of the grotesque to that tradition (the latter in his chapter entitled "The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources").

II. COMEDY AND THE GROTESQUE

Rabelais's prologue to the Quart Livre, addressed "Aux lecteurs bénévoles" and to "gens de bien," immediately invites the reader to partake in the pleasures of a fictional world whose ruling principle is "Pantagruelisme": "vous entendez que c'est certaine gayté d'esprit conficte en mespris des choses fortuites" (pp. 11-12). The narrator thus announces the continuation of his comic narrative in much the same manner as he introduced the Tiers Livre, whose prologue also sings the praises of "Pantagruelisme" (p. 401). In fact, Rabelais is still "prest à boire, si voulez," in a tone reminiscent of the Third Book's exhortations to drink up the comic spirit with which all his work overflows:

> Sus à ce vin, compaings! Enfans, beuvez à pleins guodetz! . . . Et paour ne ayez que le vin faille, comme feist es nopces de Cana en Galilée. Autant que vous en tireray par la dille, autant en entonneray par le bondon. Ainsi demeurera le tonneau inexpuisible. Il a source vive et vene perpetuelle" (Tiers Livre, pp. 401-402).

Rabelais clearly fulfills his earlier promises, for the Quart Livre remains an unending source of comic joy and laughter and, like the Tiers Livre, "un vray cornucopie de joyeusté et raillerie" (Tiers Livre, p. 402).

So filled with the comic spirit is this fourth prologue that even the gods themselves cannot contain their laughter. When Jupiter's council is interrupted by the lamentations of Couillatris over his lost axe, the great god finally resigns himself to resolve the tempestuous wood-chopper's problem: "'Ores seroit à scavoir quelle espece de coingnée demande ce criart Couillatris.' À ces motz, tous les venerables Dieulx et Deesses s'esclaterent de rire, comme un microcosme de mouches. Vulcan, avec sa jambe torte, en feist pour l'amour de s'amye, trois ou quatre beaulx petitz saulx en plate forme" (p. 23). Here, Rabelais surpasses his own axiom that laughter is the province of mankind, for, in the Fourth Book, the gods themselves cannot restrain their laughter, and, as Vulcan's acrobatics suggest, their assembly more closely resembles a carnival or circus than a high council of supreme beings.

The comic perspective of the Fourth Book can certainly not be disputed. But of equal importance, is the manner in which that comedy is constructed and its philosophical implications in relation to the grotesque, since Rabelais's universe is simultaneously comic and grotesque. Mikhail Bakhtin and other modern critics have underlined the profound ambivalance of the Rabelaisian text, characterized by plurality, antithesis, and contrast in the realms of both style and content.

To understand Rabelais is seldom a matter of understanding A or B but rather a case of grasping A and B in the same instant. Eric Auerbach makes much the same point when he states that Rabelais "maintains a constant interplay of different locales, different themes, and different levels of style" (p. 269), combining many disparate elements in his text. In terms of comic perspective, Rabelais seldom creates humor without the grotesque. This holds true for the Renaissance in general and for Rabelais in particular; Renaissance grotesque is above all else a comic, artistic mode and world view (Bakhtin, p. 323). Not all Rabelaisian comedy in grotesque, to be sure, but the Quart Livre exhibits many of those grotesquely comic qualities common to Renaissance humor. It is the fundamentally grotesque and ambivalent nature of the Quart Livre that is the focus of the present study.

Comic theory throughout history reveals that almost all comedy is deeply ambivalent. Plato called attention to the essential duality of laughter. In his Philebus, a dialogue between Socrates and Protrarchus, the former asks his interlocutor and student: "Are you aware that even at a comedy the mind experiences a mixed feeling of pain and pleasure?" Socrates goes on to point out that "the envious man finds something pleasing in his neighbor's misfortunes."[1] In almost every

conceivable case, the pain, trouble, or even physical deformities of one human being may provoke laughter in another. Grotesque comedy shares this same comic structure: that which is terrible (someone else's pain) becomes laughable to the observer. In both ancient and modern comedies, portrayals of physical beatings are invariably greeted with howls of laughter by the audience. Verbal abuse, a parallel phenomenon, provokes much the same response. Thus for Plato and for others after him laughter is a two-sided creature born of pleasure and pain.

Other ancient definitions of comedy allow for the close rapport between the comic and the Renaissance grotesque. Aristotle defines comedy as "an imitation of characters of a lower type; it does not, however, involve the full range of villainy but only the ludicrous, a subdivision of the ugly or base" (as quoted by Lauter, p. 13). In the second century B.C., Coislinian Tractae explained comedy as "an imitation of an act that is ludicrous and imperfect . . ." (Lauter, p. 21). Both philosophers thus make the ludicrous a necessary component of comedy; it is at the same time, as we have seen, an equally necessary factor in the grotesque, as all critics from Ruskin on have affirmed. The discussions of Plato and Aristotle reveal that the comic and the grotesque have long been considered to share common

ground, notably in their profound ambivalence.

Later definitions of comedy invariably point out comic facets that intersect with the grotesque and suggest a relationship of near identity between the two forms. Cicero, in his essay On the Character of the Orator, quotes Democritus in order to define what provokes laughter:

> But the seat and as it were province of what is laughed at . . . lies in a certain baseness and deformity; for those sayings are laughed at solely or chiefly which point out and designate something offensive in an inoffensive manner" (Lauter, p. 24).

Yet most modern critics will agree with Geoffrey Harpham's assertion (which I have cited in the introductory chapter) that a "radical deformity [is] the ground base for the grotesque" (p. 462). Obviously, that which strays from the accepted norms, whether it be a misshapen nose or an outrageously satirical discourse, is at once comic and grotesque. This is why most writers attempting to define the comic have been unable to ignore its basically grotesque nature. In the above citation, for example, Cicero continues quoting Democritus to the effect that "seriousness is used gravely on dignified subjects, joking on such as are in some degree unseemly, and as it were, grotesque" (Lauter, p. 25). While some modern commentators, such as Bergson in Le Rire, do not include the grotesque in their comic theories, others, like Baudelaire, have

found the grotesque indispensable to a discussion of comedy. The latter goes so far as to affirm that the grotesque in fact represents the "comique absolu," having "quelque chose de profound, d'axiomatique et de primitif qui se rapproche beaucoup plus de la vie innocente et de la joie absolue que le rire causé par le comique de moeurs."[2]

History thus indicates that the grotesque functions as an essential component of nearly all comic art. However, for the study of Rabelais, an historical analysis of comic theories would remain inadequate without an investigation of what comedy meant in the sixteenth century itself--and to what degree Rabelais's grotesque comedy conforms to contemporary standards. With his recent work, Rabelais's Laughers and Joubert's 'Traité du ris', Gregory De Rocher has contributed a significant study of this very question by examining Laurent Joubert's theory of comedy, a work contemporary with the Quart Livre and therefore of particular value to this study.[3] Drawing much from Cicero and Quintilian, Joubert views comedy in part as a function of surprise, and stipulates five major aspects of the unexpected which may cause laughter: "1.) les parties honteuses, 2.) le cu, 3.) la cheute, 4.) la deception, 5.) legers dommages" (p. 22). De Rocher immediately points out that "The fact that 'les parties honteuses' constitute

the first illustration of what is laughable in a scientific treatise indicates that a modern concept of humor is not to be aligned systematically with Renaissance laughter" (p. 23). As Bakhtin has argued, that which the twentieth century may consider obscene was merely comic or a simple laughing matter for sixteenth-century man. Even more interesting is the separation of "le cu" from "les parties honteuses." Joubert, it seems, is not suggesting that "le cu" be excluded from what is shameful or shocking but rather underlines its special significance in comedy. Bakhtin, of course, has outlined the role of what he calls the material bodily lower stratum (Chapter 6 of Rabelais and His World) in grotesque comedy, with particular reference to Rabelais. The sixteenth-century reader or viewer was in fact much more likely than a modern one to laugh at the unexpected exposure of the lower body as in chapter XVII of the Tiers Livre where the Sibyl "monstroit son cul," (p. 473) and in the Papefigue woman's trick played upon the naive demon of the Fourth Book's Chapter XLVII: "Lors se descouvrit jusques au menton en la forme que jadis les femmes Persides se praesenterent à leurs enfans fuyans de la bataille, et luy monstra son comment a nom" (p. 178). Laughter related to the lower body pinpoints the identity of comedy and the grotesque, especially in the Rabelaisian world: "le cu" is at once offensive and

ridiculously funny, and, as Joubert recognized, even less offensive and funnier for the sixteenth-century reader. In addition, as we shall see in textual analyses, Rabelais was the master of that comic form which welds together the comic and the grotesque, particularly in the realm of bodily humor.

Joubert's next example of laughter's causes, "la cheute," represents one of the great principles upon which all comic art is built: inversion.[4] The clumsier the fall, the funnier that fall becomes; in addition, as the victim is nobler, so will his fall become more hilarious. Descent is the major Rabelaisian comic movement and is of pivotal importance in the grotesque world view; for, as Bakhtin has pointed out, "debasement is the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism" (pp. 370-371). Joubert's theory concurs with this notion of comedy but is basically limited to the physical plane, leaving more figurative falls undiscussed: "nous rirons sans comparaison plus, si un grand et notable personage, qui s'étudie à marcher d'un pas fort grave et compassé, chopant contre une pierre lourdement, tombe soudain an un bourbier" (De Rocher, p. 27).

Rabelais's work is filled with examples of such falls, both literal and figurative. One of the most effective, albeit figurative, is Panurge's debasement

of the "haulte dame de Paris" who refuses his advances in Chapter XXII of Pantagruel (pp. 332-335). Panurge revels in bringing her down to earth and even goes out of his way to point her out to Pantagruel: "Maistre, je vous prye, venez veoir tous les chiens du pays qui sont assemblés à l'entour d'une dame, la plus belle de ceste ville, et la veullent jocqueter" (p. 334). This typical Rabelaisian episode thus combines physical debasement (of which "la cheute" is only one variety) with bodily humor: if the lady will not have Panurge, she will have the dogs instead. And because the lady is "la plus belle de ceste ville," her debasement becomes even funnier. The Quart Livre, as we shall see, abounds in such debasements; grotesque inversion functions as one of the book's major comic axes. The offensive nature of Panurge's punishment cannot be ignored, nor can the laughter it provokes be minimized. In the Fourth Book, Panurge carries out an equally grotesque punishment and is actually the center of a circle of inversion around which the entire book is constructed.

Joubert's discussion of "la cheute" continues by underlining a crucial facet of sixteenth-century humor; namely, a general indifference to the pain or discomfort of the comic victim. The marked brutality of much Renaissance humor makes it much less accessible to the twentieth-century reader. However, it must be

recalled that such corporal comedy depicting the inflicting of pain was an essential element of almost all sixteenth-century comic art: "Signalons . . . l'insensibilité qui accompagne d'ordinaire le rire . . . L'indifférence est son milieu naturel. Le rire n'a pas de plus grand ennemi que l'émotion" (De Rocher, p. 28). Physical pain is equally inseparable from the humor of the Quart Livre. Although a modern perspective tends to minimize the comic effect of such passages, Joubert provides us with a valuable reminder that his contemporaries found such humor commonplace and indeed quite funny. His theory also stresses the profound ambivalence of Renaissance laughter, an ambivalence Bakhtin has affirmed four centuries later. "Il faut bien que l'affection soit double ou melée, tout ainsi que son obiet" (De Rocher, p. 132). Thus "what strikes many modern minds as sadomasochism is laughable in Rabelais," for throughout the sixteenth century, "actual pain is an incontestable part of the comic experience" (De Rocher, pp. 35-36). Finally, what is incontestably distinctive about Renaissance laughter is its strikingly grotesque flavor which allows one to laugh heartily at what is painful or distressing to the comic victim.

Rabelais's humor in the Quart Livre emanates from dualism (pleasure/pain), ambivalence (joy/sorrow) and inversion (human/bestial) and is grotesque inasmuch

as it shares these qualities with the grotesque esthetic mode. For analytical purposes, the humor of the Quart Livre may be divided into three major subdivisions, all of which, as we shall see, are essentially grotesque in nature. It must be stated that since these divisions are utilized for argumentative purposes, they will naturally overlap at times. What they all share are roots deeply entrenched in the Rabelaisian grotesque world view; that essentially grotesque comic perspective weaves the vital thread which unifies the entire Rabelaisian text.

The first of these three closely related comic sub-categories is the realm of debasement and degradation, what Bakhtin calls the "fundamental" principle of Rabelaisian art, or what may be referred to as grotesque inversion. The haughty are brought down to earth, belittled, and ridiculed. However, although the fall may be terrible, its comic justice makes the debasement hilarious and comic. As Bakhtin states, Rabelais's images:

> throw down, debase, swallow, condemn, deny (topographically), kill, bury, send down to the underworld, abuse, curse; and at the same time they all conceive anew, fertilize, sow, rejuvenate, regenerate, praise, and glorify. This general downward thrust, which kills and regenerates, unifies such different phenomena as blows, abuses, the underworld, and the act of devouring (p. 435).

Three episodes in the comedy of the Quart Livre exemplify

Bakhtin's assertion: Panurge's humiliation of Dindenault, the episode of the Chiquanous, and the Papefigue peasant's triumph over a foolish demon. The second major comic axis of the Quart Livre resolves around the lower bodily stratum, essentially grotesque in its hilarious depiction of offensive and shocking sexual and excremental revelations, jokes, and puns. As the examination of Joubert's Traité du Ris has illustrated, this type of comedy was not only a commonly accepted comic mode but perhaps the single most important source of comic laughter in the sixteenth century. The Quart Livre, like Rabelais's previous works, is a veritable fountainhead of bodily humor; a close examination of the text reveals a myriad of examples in this vein. The third comic axis of the Fourth Book is the comedy of radical deformation, quintessentially grotesque in its depiction of ludicrous and terrible beings such as Quaresmeprenant, the Gastrolatres, the Papimanes, and the Papefigues. Most of these imaginary beings or races have a decidedly satirical flavor and transparently deride common contemporary vices. As textual analysis reveals, the unifying thread of these three comic axes is the singularly Rabelaisian, grotesque world view.

In Rabelais's work, derision never becomes mere invective and laughter is always therapeutic and regenerative. Much of the comedy of grotesque inversion

can be described by the adage: "the bigger they come, the harder they fall"--and the harder they fall, the more uproarious the laughter. Unbridled conceit and pompous self-esteem are offensive traits; when offenders are punished, the laughter of the offended derives from the joy of their just reward. Such degradations may be considered grotesque inasmuch as that which is terrible or offensive is plummeted into the gutter of debasement, provoking general and righteous mirth. One of the most famous Rabelaisian narratives, Panurge's humiliation of Dindenault, not only introduces the Quart Livre but also illustrates the principle of grotesque inversion.

In the episode, Dindenault, a pompous sheep-merchant, leads Panurge on, extolling the virtues of his lowly herd and treating the wily Panurge like a peasant. Dindenault's ostentatious, hard-sell approach makes him a perfect candidate for comic reversal: "ce sont moutons extraictz de la propre race de celluy qui porta Phrixus et Hellé par la mer dicte Hellesponte" (p. 53). He even attributes miraculous agricultural and medical powers to his stock:

> À propous. Par tous les champs es quelz ils pissent, le bled y provient comme si Dieu y eust pissé. Il n'y faut autre marne ne fumier. Plus y a. De leur urine les Quintessentiaux tirent le meilleur salpetre du monde. De leurs crottes (mais qu'il ne vous desplaise) les medecins de nos pays guerissent soixante et dix huict especes de maladies" (p. 53).

On numerous occasions, the presumptuous Dindenault even

insults his would-be client: "Tes fortes fiebvres quartaines, dist le marchant, lourdault sot que tu es! . . . Et que penses tu, ô sot à la grande paye, que valoit un talent d'or?" (p. 55). But Panurge, who has been biding his time in near silence, will have his revenge. After purchasing a sheep, he surprisingly flings it directly into the sea. Neither Panurge's countenance nor his words belie his true intent, contributing effectively to the scene's overall comic tone, in accordance with Joubert's fourth comic classification: "la deception." Panurge's surprise provokes an immediate chain reaction: "Tous les aultres moutons, crians et bellans en pareille intonation, commencerent soy jecter et saulter en mer après, à la file. La foulle estoit à qui premier y saulteroit après leur compaignon" (p. 56). Dindenault and his men are dragged in while trying to restrain the flock, and "tous furent pareillement en mer portez et noyez miserablement" (p. 57). As they struggle to reach the ship, Panurge pushes them away with an oar, sarcastically preaching all the while the miseries of this life and the joys of the paradise they will soon embrace. Although Dindenault's reward seems almost savagely sadistic by modern standards, it must not be forgotten that the sixteenth-century reader would undoubtedly have found purely comic material in this narrative of reversal. In fact, no Rabelaisian episode more clearly illustrates

the principle of grotesque comic inversion than Dindenault's demise. The offensive and dishonest merchant is belittled, humiliated, and eliminated. Like the contemporary reader, Panurge also revels in laughter at the merchant's fate: "C'est, dist Panurge, bien chié pour l'argent! Vertus Dieu, j'ay eu du passe-temps pour plus de cinquante mille francs. . . . Jamais homme ne me feist plaisir sans recompense, ou recongnoissance pour le moins" (p. 58). Neither the ambivalent nature of Panurge's laughter nor the grotesque manner in which Dindenault is debased can be minimized; the entire passage comically portrays grotesque inversion in exemplary fashion.

Three chapters later, Rabelais resumes his comedy of inversion in the narrative of the Chiquanous. Occupying four chapters, this episode is clearly of pivotal importance to the development of the Fourth Book's voyage. Rabelais outlines the inversion motif in the first paragraphs of Chapter XII: "A Rome, gens infiniz guaignent leur vie à empoisonner, à batre et à tuer; les Chiquanous la guaignent à estre battuz. De mode que, si par long temps demouroient sans estre battuz, ils mourroient de male faim, eulz, leurs femmes et enfans" (p. 70). This strange occupation parallels that of the workers who are paid to sleep in the world within Pantagruel's mouth (Pantagruel, p. 380). As semi-legal

representatives, the Chiquanous earn their wages by insulting their clients' enemies and by accepting the thrashings of the outraged foe:

> Quand un moine, prebstre, usurier, ou advocat veult mal à quelque gentihomme de son pays, il envoye vers luy un de ses Chiquanous. Chiquanous le citera, l'adjournera, le oultragera, le injurira inpudentement, suyvant son record et instruction; tant que le gentilhomme, s'il n'est paralytique de sens et plus stupide qu'une rane gyrine, sera constrainct luy donner bastonades et coups d'espée sus la teste, ou la belle jarretade, ou mieulx le jecter par les creneaulx et fenestres de son chasteau (p. 70).

The exaggerated description of the Chiquanous' rewards highlights the comic value of this passage. In addition, the comic nature of the narrative must be underlined, especially in view of the sixteenth century's violent sense of humor (in reference to the victim's suffering). In the following chapters, Panurge provides several lengthy descriptions of such beatings which accentuate the comic value of corporal punishment in Rabelais and which re-emphasize the importance of debasement in the Rabelaisian text.[4]

Comic episodes in Rabelais involving grotesque inversion are not always limited to a purely physical plane. In the story of the Papefigue peasants who outwit an inexperienced young demon, Rabelais raises grotesque inversion to the cosmic scale. Here, the devil threatens a farmer and then strikes a deal with him: the farmer will have what grows above ground and

the devil will have the roots. But since the farmer grows wheat, the demon is left with nothing to sell: "Les Diables ne vendirent rien: ains au contraire les paizans en plein marché se mocquoient d'eulx" (p. 174). Dissatisfied, the devil switches the bargain for the next season, this time choosing the tops for his profit. But the cunning farmer grows turnips this time and the demon is once more outdone: "Le diable ne vendit rien. Que pis est, on se mocquoit de luy publicquement" (p. 175). Instead of being a fearsome and terrible figure, the devil is reduced to an object of public ridicule, the laughingstock of the village. When the grotesque mode dominates an episode, man and his faith triumph over evil cosmic forces; fear of the unknown is dissipated and belittled while comic optimism prevails.

Unable to bear his lowly role any longer, the demon returns to mete out punishment on the farmer. This time, however, the farmer's wife outwits him, stating that her husband has gone "chès le mareschal soy faire esguizer et apoincter les gryphes" (p. 178). She then raises her skirts to show him her "wound," supposedly inflicted by the claws of her angry husband. Terrified, the devil turns tail and flees: "Je m'en voy bel erre. Cela! Je luy quitte le champ" (p. 178). For the third time, the devil is outwitted, humiliated, and debased, this time by an old woman. In this episode

inversion occurs on a cosmic level: laughter and hope triumph over fear of the unknown. The role of the lower body underlines the passage's decidedly comic spirit, for it is the woman's imaginary "mutilation" that concludes the story and returns the devil to Hell. Grotesque inversion is the axis around which this passage revolves, for the fearsome and/or terrible element (the demon) is not only debased but is also made the subject of ridicule, leaving the scene as the butt of a very well-executed joke.

In the passage just discussed, the exposure of the lower body provokes a laughter-producing shock that contributes significantly to the passage's comic impact. And in the Quart Livre, references that might be considered obscene by twentieth-century standards serve a purely comic purpose. Gargantua and Pantagruel provide abundant material supportive of this assertion, as in Gargantua's "torchecul" experiment and Panurge's project for rebuilding the walls of Paris. In all of these examples, the lower body serves not only a regenerative but also an equally important comic function by provoking therapeutic laughter, "le propre de l'homme." Although Rabelais was often criticized and censured for his ostensibly obscene writings, close textual examination reveals that his work is not prurient and does not aim to arouse his reader's sexual appetites but rather

seeks to amuse. Like Rabelais's earlier tomes, the Fourth Book is seasoned with expletives and episodes involving sexual and excremental matters which build a foundation for his grotesque world through the hearty laughter of bodily humor.

The prologue to the Quart Livre immediately introduces the theme of bodily humor that is to characterize the entire work. This prologue's hero, Couillatris, bears a name which cannot help but provoke mirth by its suggestive reference to the human anatomy. The language of the gods who consider Couillatris's predicament resembles that of a barroom rather than Olympus or even a monastery. For example, considering the case of Rameau, who had publicly criticized Aristotle, and his accuser Galland, Jupiter declares: "Tous deux me semblent autrement bons compaignons et bien couilluz" (p. 17). Such earthy, bodily language in the mouths of gods is certainly designed to provoke laughter, for it inverts the reader's conception of the cosmos and ridicules and debases the lofty and powerful. Suggestive word play with the "coignée" pervades the passage; Jupiter himself even sings a "chanson paillarde" on the subject:

> Quel maillet vous voy je empoigner?
> --C'est (dict-il) pour mieulx vous coingner,
> --Maillet (dictelle) il n'y faut nul:
> Quand gros Jan me vient besoingner
> Il ne me coingne que du cul" (p. 22).

The sixteenth-century reader would only have seen these passages as comic in nature. In terms of the grotesque, what might be offensive or surprising is mitigated by laughter, and the Quart Livre continues to bear this out.

The continual degradation of Panurge throughout the Fourth Book results in a concluding episode that exemplifies the importance of the grotesque comedy of the body. Everywhere in the book, Panurge exhibits a remarkable proclivity for cowardice and hypocrisy, such as during the tempest (Chapters XIX-XXIII) and upon the voyagers' approach to the Isle of Ganabin (the island of thieves, Chapter LXVI). In the final chapter, Panurge had fled below deck as Pantagruel orders Ganabin bombarded by cannon fire. Fearing both the cannon's noise and a cat which he mistakes for a demon, Panurge returns in a malodorous state of disgrace: "Car un des symptomes et accidens de paour, est que par luy ordinairement se ouvre le guischet du serrail on quel est à temps la matiere fecale retenue" (p. 245). The mixing of a sexual metaphor with the excremental focus of this passage amplifies an already ridiculous degradation. But even more decidedly comic is Panurge's ultimate response to his predicament as he concludes the entire book:

> Appelez vous cecy foyre, bien, crottes, merde, fiant, dejection, matiere fecale, excrement, repaire, laisse, esmeut, fumée, estron, scybale

> ou spraythe? C'est, croy je, sapphran d'Hibernie. Ho, ho, hie! C'est sapphran d'Hibernie! Sela! Beuvons! (p. 248).

Panurge closes the work with his own bodily laughter and certainly calls for the reader's laughter as well. The horror of what might be perceived as "obscene" or at least offensive once again is dissipated by the grotesque comic mechanism that results in laughter, good cheer, the uplifting of spirits, and a call for common revelry ("Beuvons"). The significant position of this passage as the work's conclusion fully affirms the assertion that bodily humor is one of the primary comic and grotesque modes of the Quart Livre.

The Fourth Book, however, is devoted not only to the description of Panurge's comic degradation but also to the peculiarities of the various island races that the travellers encounter en route to the oracle of the "Dive Bouteille." Rabelais has reminded us in the Prologue, both directly and through the fable of Couillatris, to live in humble moderation: "Soubhaitez doncques mediocrité: elle vous adviendra; et encores mieulx, deument ce pendent labourans et travaillans" (p. 28). With this advice in mind, the reader must view Rabelais's portraits of these extraordinary races with a critical eye, for they are not gratuitous meanderings into a world of fantasy. Rabelais's pen stings with the venom of the caricaturist, comically

deriding contemporary vices through a distorting mirror which nonetheless reflects much of the subject's true nature. This strange archipelago is a product of Rabelais the satirist, but Rabelaisian satire, too, is inevitably grotesque, depicting the radical deformity of his prey in a manner so outrageous that laughter is its unavoidable result.

Undoubtedly the most effective and the most transparent of these satires is that provided by the Papefigues and the Papimanes. This curious play of opposites deforms the feuding participants of a religious struggle into a ludicrously comic reflection of contemporary reality. Degradation is once again at the root of this grotesque comedy, as the Papefigues are subject to the tyranny of the Papimanes; one of the Papefigues, for example, "voyant le portraict Papal . . . luy feist la figue, qui est, en icelluy pays, signe de contempnement et derision manifest" (p. 171). Such comic abuse is of course one of the hallmarks of the carnivalistic, grotesque world view which provokes laughter by bringing the mighty down from their thrones to a more humble level. And, inasmuch as ridicule inflicts no corporal punishment upon the victim, it relates directly to Joubert's fifth comic category, "legers dommages," thereby again illustrating Rabelais's conformity with contemporary comic values.

Rabelais also ridicules the Papimanes, whose very name implies the excess which Rabelais so clearly abhors in his prologue. So bound up in dogma is this race that they have been reduced to mere idol worship, abandoning the word of the Gospels for appearances. Upon hearing that Panurge has seen the Pope (his image being their object of adoration), they prostrate themselves and try to kiss the voyagers' feet, claiming they would do even more if the Pope himself had come: "Si ferions, si, respondirent ilz. Cela est entre nous ja resolu. Nous luy baiserions le cul sans feuille, et les couilles pareillement" (p. 180). The introduction of lower bodily elements in this context underlines the comic ridicule in which Rabelais has steeped this entire episode. Having seen the Pope, the companions themselves are adored through a naively absurd transfer of affection: "A ceste proclamation tout le peuple se agenouilloit davant nous, levans les mains joinctes au ciel, et cryans: 'O gens heureux! O bien heureux!' Et dura ce crys plus d'un quart d'heure" (p. 181).

For six chapters (XLIV-LIV), Rabelais vents his comic spleen on Catholic fanatics who see the Pope as a "bon Dieu en terre" (pp. 186-187) and who worship his "Decretales" as the actual word of God (Chapters LI and LII). The radically deformed, grotesque nature of the Papimane high priest Homenaz is accentuated particularly

in Chapter LIII: "Comment, par la vertus des Decretales, est l'or subtilement tiré de France en Rome" (p. 196). The comic bent of this chapter is unmistakable, but so is its fundamentally grotesque tone. Repeated praise of the divine "Decretales" is exaggerated to the point of comic absurdity (pp. 198-199) and the high priest himself becomes a figure every bit as pitifully comic--and thus grotesque in this case--as Janotus de Bragmardo in Gargantua (Chapters XVIII and XIX, pp. 71-76). His harangue transforms Homenaz into a veritable comic monster: "Icy commenca Homenaz rocter, peter, rire, baver, et suer" (p. 199). Typically grotesque and typically Rabelaisian, Homenaz is seized by all these bodily functions simultaneously, so powerful is his rapture upon contemplating the holy word. At once comic, lamentable, and offensive by his religious fanaticism, Homenaz is quintessentially Rabelaisian. In his comic and grotesque natures he reveals ambivalance and debasement, two fundamental aspects of Rabelaisian laughter.

Beside the obviously ridiculous figure of Homenaz, the monstrous Quaresmeprenant appears comical in a more sinister fashion. Xenomane's first description presents Quaresmeprenant in a somewhat ominous light: "un demy geant à poil follet et double tonsure . . . dictateur de Moustardois, fouetteur de petitz enfans . . .

foisonnant en pardons, indulgences et stations, homme de bien, bon catholic et de grande devotion. Il pleure les troys pars du jour" (p. 126). The narrator's denigrative intent is emphasized by the tongue-in-cheek reference to the monster as "homme de bien" and "bon catholic," in contrast with his attitude towards children and his melancholy disposition. Weeping and lamenting the better part of the day certainly violates the comic spirit of "Pantagruelisme." Both in name and in practice, Quaresmeprenant portrays all that is anti-Rabelaisian, anti-carnival, and anti-natural, for laughter remains unknown to him, while his mortal enemies, the Andouilles, embody the carnival spirit. At first a threatening figure, Quaresmeprenant becomes more comical as Xenomane's description continues for over six pages; this exaggerated enumeration disarms the monster's menacing countenance and converts him into an object of ridicule. As Marcel Tetel observes: "Dans une accumulation verbale, les mots mêmes ne sont pas nécessairement comiques, mais se suivant sans interruption, ils nous font rire parce qu'ils acquièrent une raideur qui leur fait perdre toute signification . . . L'effet comique provient justement de la surabondance des détails qui nous abasourdit."[5] Quaresmeprenant becomes a lamentably comic figure by dint of description, for as the preposterous details pile up, the reader

cannot help but laugh at his absurd monstrosity, grotesque in its drastic deformity. Page after page, Rabelais relentlessly hacks away at the hypocrisy of the rules of Lent as personified by the gruesome giant: "S'il crachoit, c'estoient panerées de chardonnette. S'il mouchoit, c'estoient anguillettes salées. . . . S'il souffloit, c'estoient troncs pour les Indulgences" (pp. 133-134).

Grotesque inversion plays an integral role in this exaggerated description, for many of Quaresmeprenant's activities defy logic and common sense: "Se baignoit dessus les haulx clochers, se seichoit dedans les estangs et rivieres. Peschoit en l'air et y prenoit escrevisses decumanes" (p. 135). As Tetel makes clear, "dans ces genres d'entassement de vocables, deux éléments s'entrecroisent pour créer l'effet comique" (p. 97): "Cas estrange: travailloit rien ne faisant, rien ne faisoit travaillant" (p. 134). Just as the "contrepeterie" renders laughable a normal locution, Rabelais's use of crossing patterns heightens the enigmatically comic effect and the grotesque ambivalence of this description. Thus, despite Pantagruel's conclusion that this is "une estrange et monstrueuse membreure d'home, si home le doibs nommer" (p. 135), what could have been a truly terrifying and offensive monster becomes a ridiculous beast and object of comic

derision. Grotesque by virtue of his terrible deformity, he is rendered even more ludicrous by the satirist's outlandish description and disarmed by the artist's excessively degrading portrait.

If Quaresmeprenant becomes grotesquely comic through description, his mortal enemies, the Andouilles, are comic by their very nature. Here, Rabelais leaves the realm of satire and presents a mock epic, parodying ancient and medieval "chansons de geste."[6] Through a series of misunderstandings, among them the Andouilles' comical mistaking Pantagruel for Quaresmeprenant, the voyagers take part in a ludicrous, comic war with a race of sausages. The enemy's radical deformity highlights this conflict's obviously grotesque nature. Frère Jean's ruse, "la Truye, et les preux cuisiniers dedans enclous" (p. 156), openly mocks the Trojan horse and can only provoke laughter by its deformation of antique literature. The commander's appellations, Riflandouille and Tailleboudin, clearly announce the combat's comic character. Finally, the sausage queen's apology to Pantagruel, "Puys le pria vouloir de grace leur pardonner ceste offense, alleguant qu'en Andouilles plus toust l'on trouvoit merde que fiel" (p. 163), underlines the singularly grotesque complexion of this encounter by adding a touch of bodily humor to this already festive conflict. The satirical and parodical implications of

all these preceding episodes will be discussed further in a separate chapter, but it is eminently clear that they all include comic elements whose intrinsic value resides in Rabelais's essentially grotesque world view. In the Quart Livre, as elsewhere in Rabelais, it would at best be counterproductive to attempt to divorce comedy from the grotesque, for the two are truly intertwined, wedded, and bound together in Rabelais's artistic vision.

As Joubert suggests in his Traité du Ris, sixteenth-century comedy was forged out of the dualistic nature of that era's laughter: "Il faut bien que l'affection soit double ou melée, tout ainsi que son obiet" (De Rocher, p. 132). Ambivalence lies at the heart of almost all comedy, and this was particularly true for the French Renaissance. Without a suffering comic victim or in the absence of the lower bodily stratum, there could be no real comedy in the Rabelaisian age. Degradation, or grotesque inversion, is the hallmark of all comic art of that epoch, and the lower body almost invariably plays a major role in that laughter's birth. All these criteria are equally vital to the creation of the grotesque, so that for the Renaissance, comedy and the grotesque function together in a relationship of near identity. Thus, for Rabelais, as a writer of his time, there could be no grotesque

without comedy and no comedy without the grotesque, which provided the pivotal mode for comic creation. In the Quart Livre, grotesque, ambivalent laughter is the ruling principle from the Prologue to Panurge's concluding, excretory degradation. Whether laughter springs from bodily sources, from debasement, or from satire and parody, the grotesque is one of the roots which nourishes the flowering of all Rabelaisian comedy.

Notes

[1]As quoted by Paul Lauter in Theories of Comedy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 5-6. Additional citations refer to this edition.

[2]Charles Baudelaire, OEuvres complètes, tome II (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 535.

[3]Gregory De Rocher, Rabelais's Laughers and Joubert's 'Traité du Ris' (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1979). Further quotations refer to this edition.

[4]As illustrated by Villon's punishment of Tappecoue in the Quart Livre, Chapter XIII, pp. 74-78.

[5]Marcel Tetel, "La Valeur comique des accumulations verbales chez Rabelais," Romanic Review 53 (1962), 96-99.

[6]Satire, mock epic, parody, and their relation to the grotesque will be discussed in the following chapter.

III. MENIPPEAN SATIRE AND THE GROTESQUE

Almost every critical work dealing with satire puts forth its own, distinct definition of the term. In the light of widely divergent opinions, satire may appear to be a chameleonic literary form governed fundamentally by variables such as historical period, individual author, and critical viewpoint. Doctor Johnson provides a provisional definition in calling satire "a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured."[1] Most critics agree, however, that two elements remain indispensable to satiric creation: the first is an essentially comic perspective; the second, a scapegoat who inevitably suffers ridicule and derision at the hands of a righteously outraged narrator. Northrup Frye, by defining these two factors in the following manner: "one is wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack;"[2] clearly suggests that the grotesque functions as one of the very pillars of satire. In fact, satire often shares much common ground with the grotesque, for both are frequently accompanied by

exaggeration and caricature which deform the object of attack to build a more convincing, if one-sided case.[3] Moreover, as with the grotesque, comic perspective must be maintained, for without it, satire degenerates into invective. Thus, as Frye notes, "attack without humor, or pure denunciation, forms one of the boundaries of satire" (p. 224).

Scholars have long recognized that satire is an integral component of Rabelais's work, and one need only examine the chapters concerning education and the legal system in Pantagruel (Chapters VI, VII, and X-XIII) to confirm its essential presence in the text. But never does Rabelais stoop to the level of humorless vituperation. By constantly maintaining a comic perspective in his forays against human foibles and social evils, he neatly avoids crossing the line beyond which satire becomes slander. In each of his books, he displays his mastery of the realms of both satire and the grotesque, creating satirical portraits which use grotesque imagery to enhance their effectiveness as objects of laughter and shock or revulsion. It must also be emphasized that while satire may enlist the grotesque to heighten its impact, in Rabelais, the grotesque world view is never abandoned. Like the mock crowning of a king for a day during the Feast of Fools, Rabelaisian satire always retains not only its good

measure of laughter but its optimistic spirit of renewal as well. Indeed, the intersection of satire and the grotesque works to unify the Quart Livre, thereby making analysis of their interaction essential if we are to understand this complex work.

Although the Quart Livre has been called "the funniest travel satire ever written,"[4] it is, more particularly, a parody of the traditional epic with satirical elements. Parody, as a literary form, mocks or derides the style of an author or work through close but obviously distorted imitation. Its aim is comic effect or ridicule, and it may therefore contain significant bite, as it does in Rabelais. Distinct from parody, satire tends to aim its barbs at individuals, people, or institutions, holding them up to ridicule or scorn in an attempt to expose and discredit human folly and vice. It is, then, as satire that the Quart Livre makes of the would-be hero Panurge a perfect fool and foil for laughter and mockery, but that satire is contained within the larger parody of the popular genre of the epic. The epic often describes the long and arduous quest of an aristocratic hero acting in the service of his country, and though Panurge's voyage possesses nothing of the truly heroic, it is clearly made in derisive imitation of a traditional literary model. Thus, the parody of the Quart Livre is a vehicle by

which Rabelais satirizes contemporary vices and follies. Satire is the frame which surrounds the grotesque, providing the intent and meaning, while the grotesque itself provides the style and mode of expression.

Rabelais's use of both satire and the grotesque is announced in the Prologue to the Quart Livre with the tale of Couillatris. Although the fable is inspired by Aesop, the name given its hero comes from Rabelais's rich imagination, prompting immediate laughter and opening the door to the grotesque possibilities implicit in lower body imagery.[5] Couillatris, a woodchopper, loses his axe. So loudly does he scream in anguish that he disturbs the council of the gods. Jupiter, irritated by the interruption, finally commands that Couillatris be permitted to choose between three axes: his own, one of gold, and a third of silver. If he chooses his own, he will be awarded all three; if not he will be beheaded with his own axe. By forthrightly selecting his own tool, Couillatris personifies both moderation and honesty and is duly rewarded. But when his neighbors hear of the chopper's good fortune, common sense gives way to greed. The peasants deliberately "lose" their axes, with only the result that "Plus n'estoit abbatu, plus n'estoit fendu boys on pays, en ce default de coingnées" (p. 26). Petty nobles compound the fault, selling all they have to purchase hatchets which they

then toss away. Their reward is swift (carried out, indeed, by Mercury): "Et feut des testes couppées le nombre equal et correspondent aux coingnées perdues" (p. 27). Typically, Rabelais does not hesitate to exploit the ambiguity of the "coingnée," as the council of the gods interrupt the action to discourse on the instrument:

> cette diction, coingnée, est equivocque à plusieurs choses. Elle signifie un certain instrument par le service duquel est fendu et couppé boys. Signifie aussi (au moins jadis signifioit) la femme bien à poinct et souvent gimbretiletolletée. Et veidz que tout bon compaignon appelloit sa guarse fille de joye: ma coingnée. Car, avecques cestuy ferrement (cela disoit exhibant son coingnouoir dodrental) ilz leurs coingnent si fierement et d'audace leurs emmanchouoirs qu'elles restent exemptes d'une paour epidemiale entre le sexe feminin: c'est que du bas ventre ilz leurs tombassent sur les talons, par default de telles agraphes (pp. 21-22).

Still, the mocking derision of greed combined with the narrator's explicit appeal for moderation sets the tone of the Quart Livre and illustrates the means by which Rabelais will accomplish his ends.

The narrative of the voyage provides few examples of temperance aside from the travellers themselves, and among these, Pantagruel is, of course, the paragon of moderation. In contrast, each island race encountered in the course of the expedition reflects and magnifies the excesses and absurdities of the world the travellers left behind. The Papefigues-Papimanes conflict thus shows the dangers inherent in extremes: superficial

idolatry and monomania on the part of the Papimanes, irrational abusiveness and animosity towards the former by the Papefigues; the abundant sacrifices of the Gastrolatres to their deity Ventripotent exemplify the evils of gluttony and fanaticism; and the monstrous Quaresmeprenant leaves no doubt as to the evils of religious hypocrisy and the selling of indulgences. Opening as it does with a eulogy of the golden mean in the Prologue, the Quart Livre continues to laud moderation by satirizing contemporary vices and "the pathology of appetite."[6]

Like the Prologue, each of the satirical episodes in the Fourth Book contains fundamentally grotesque qualities. The comic incongruity in the very names "Papefigues" and "Papimanes" will be discussed in terms of grotesque inversion in a later chapter. The Gastrolatres become grotesque through their compulsive worship of food and the bodily function of eating. Anti-natural and incongruous in his deformity, Quaresmeprenant exemplifies grotesque personification. In each of these cases, a particular vice is magnified through grotesque imagery to the point where the characters become either ridiculous monsters (grotesque by definition) or an entire race of grotesque creatures, incompatible with the normal perception of humankind. There is also an undeniable element of fantasy in these

races and figures, for they remain creatures of the author's imagination however much inspired by real people and events. The exaggeration and caricature in these portraits are clearly common traits of both satire and grotesque imagery.

As previously stated, Rabelais uses the grotesque to make his satire more effective. In the Quart Livre, grotesque elements actually reinforce the power of satirical caricature. As employed by Rabelais the grotesque may sharpen satire's cutting edge by exaggerating or amplifying the deformity or imbecility of the subject that is criticized. The radical deformity of Quaresmeprenant, augmented by lengthy lists of incongruous attributes, becomes even more disturbing, though mediated, of course, by Rabelais's comic exaggeration. Xenomanes describes him in the following manner:

> Vous y voirez, disoit il, pour tout potaige un grand avalleur de poys gris, un grand cacquerotier, un grand preneur de taulpes, un grand boteleur de foin, un demy geant à poil follet et double tonsure, extraict de Lanternoys, bien grand lanternier, confalonnier des Ichthyophages, dictateur de Moustardois, fouetteur de petitz enfans, calcineur de cendres, pere et nourrisson des medicins, foisonnant en pardons, indulgences et stations, homme de bien, bon catholic et de grande devotion (pp. 125-126).

This portrait underlines Quaresmeprenant's decidedly hypocritical nature as a simultaneous "fouetteur de petitz enfans" and "bon catholic et de grande devotion."

"Foisonnant en pardons, indulgences, et stations," the monster unmistakably attaches more importance to appearances than to true piety. Rabelais's contempt for the sale of indulgences shines brightly throughout this humorous yet disquieting critique of over-zealous concern with religious practice rather than principle

Inversion, both linguistic and gesticulative, renders the Papimanes and Papefigues hilariously pitiful. So entranced by adoration of the Pope are the Papimanes that they would humiliate themselves before him:

> Nous luy baiserions le cul sans feuille, et les couilles pareillement. Car il a couilles le pere sainct, nous le trouvons par nos belles Decretales, aultrement ne seroit il Pape. De sorte qu'en subtile philosophie Decretaline ceste consequence est necessaire: il est Pape, il a doncques couilles. Et quand couilles faudroient on monde, le monde plus Pape n'auroit (pp. 180-181).

The passage is decidedly satirical with salvos aimed at idolatry and dogmatic rationality in the service of religious belief. In it the grotesque reinforces the satirical thrust. The Pope, normally viewed as a figure of genuine and sincere veneration, is physically debased as his primary attribute becomes his "couilles." The essentially grotesque phenomenon of "bringing down to earth," with its particularly Rabelaisian emphasis on the lower bodily stratum, serves a distinctly satirical purpose here and increases the scene's comic absurdity. The pope is leader of the spiritual world and as such

would normally be associated with upper body activity. In creating his satire Rabelais inverts the normal order to produce an ironic and grotesque image. And the laughter vital both to satire and to the grotesque at once mitigates and disarms potentially disturbing or offensive images.

Although satire and the grotesque often overlap and reinforce one another, they sometimes function autonomously depending upon the presence or absence of certain salient features. A comedy of manners, for example, may satirize a given social class without grotesque images. Likewise, the converse is true, since derisive condemnation is not a necessary component of grotesque imagery. This is true in the case of Pantagruel's birth; without mockery, Rabelais celebrates birth and the continuity of the life cycle. Thus satire and the grotesque do not always work hand in hand but may be expressed independently of each other. This, however, occurs only rarely in Rabelais.

Rabelais, of course, was not the first to blend the grotesque aesthetic mode with satire of contemporary events and morals. Such a combination can be traced to the roots of satire itself. One of the most important initiators of the satiric genre is generally agreed to be Menippus of Gadara, a Syrian emigrant to Greece of the third century B.C.,[7] who wrote thirteen books, none

of which is extant but which are reputed to have established the genre. According to varied references to his work, Menippus was a self-proclaimed cynic and, as such, a serious critic of the world's greed, vanity, and vice. In contrast to dogmatic philosophers, his only precepts are that men should live humbly in accordance with nature and that all are equal in the face of death.

Knowledge of what Menippus was really like remains almost totally second-hand. A Roman scholar, Marcus Terentius Varro (first century B.C.) wrote about 150 books of "Menippean Satires," but even in his case, only fragments and titles survive. Most indirect information on Menippus comes down from the satires of Lucian of Samosata in Syria who lived in the second century A.D. (Ramage, p. 172). In several of Lucian's satiric dialogues, Menippus appears as the protagonist of fantastic philosophical voyages to heaven and the underworld. The three most important of these are the Icaromenippus, in which the cynic perfects Icarian wings in order to fly to the heavens and dispute with the gods, the Dialogues of the Dead, and Menippus, or the Descent into Hades. In the latter two works, Menippus journeys to the underworld and views Hades with a jaundiced eye, mocking those who mourn their lost existence and deriding the rich and powerful who still lust after their now useless fortunes. Since the Greek word

for cynic has the same root as that for the word "dog" (Ramage, p. 55), Menippus' interlocutors sometimes refer to him by this canine appellation, appropriately, since "the dog, with its modesty, its free and easy ways, and its tendency to bite was openly adopted as a model" for human behavior, especially by Lucian.[8] The following passage from the Dialogues of the Dead describing the cynic's arrival in Hades illustrates Menippus' attitude:

> Charon: Pay the fare, curse you.
> Menippus: Shout away, Charon, if that's what you prefer.
> Charon: Pay me, I say, for taking you across.
> Menippus: You can't get blood out of a stone.
> Charon: Is there anyone who hasn't a single penny?
> Menippus: I don't know about anyone else, but I am without one.
> Charon: But by Pluto, I'll throttle you, you blackguard, if you don't pay.
> Menippus: And I'll smash your head with a blow from my stick.
> Charon: Then you'll have sailed all this long way for nothing.
> Menippus: Hermes delivered me to you; let him pay.
> Hermes: Heaven help me if I'm going to pay for the dead too.
> Charon: I won't leave you alone.
> Menippus: Then you'd better beach your ferry, and stay put; but how will you get what I don't have?
> Charon: Didn't you know you had to bring it with you?
> Menippus: Yes, but I didn't have it. What of it? Did that make it wrong for me to die?
> Charon: So you'll be the only one to boast of a free passage?
> Menippus: Not free, my good fellow; I baled, I helped at the oar, I was the only passenger who wasn't weeping.
> Charon: That's nothing to do with a ferryman; your penny must be paid. No alternative's allowed.
> Menippus: Then take me back to life.
> Charon: That's a bright remark! Do you want me also to get a thrashing from Aeacus for my pains?
> Menippus: Then don't bother me.

> Charon: Show me what you have in your bag.
> Menippus: Lupines,[9] if you want some, and a meal meant for Hecate.
> Charon: Where did you find this Dog, Hermes? How he chattered on the crossing too, mocking and jeering at all the passengers and singing on his own while they were lamenting!
> Hermes: Don't you know, my dear Charon, what sort of man you've taken across? He is absolutely independent and cares for nobody. This is Menippus.
> Charon: But if I ever get my hands on you--
> Menippus: If you ever get your hands on me, my good fellow! But you won't get them on me a second time.[10]

It is not surprising that Menippus' contemporaries referred to him as "the man who jokes about serious things" (Highet, p. 233). As is often the case with grotesque imagery, this philosophical satire occurs at the frontier of life and death. The cynic does not fear death. His hell may not be the "happy" one described by Epistemon but neither is it shrouded in gloom, for Menippus sings and jokes as he makes the final crossing. Verbal abuse and threats of physical punishment play an integral role in this passage as in other grotesque imagery, and throughout the work, formidable beings are humbled and reviled by the intractable Menippus in almost the same way that Panurge mocks the merchant in the Quart Livre.[11]

Another of Lucian's works, the True History, closely parallels the voyage of the Fourth Book and has been recognized by scholars as a source for Rabelais's work. In the True History, the narrator undertakes a sea voyage to Gibraltar, giving "mere curiosity" as his

reason for the venture. The expedition travels to a series of fantastic islands. At the first, wine flows in the rivers and a rare being is half-plant and half-woman, the quintessential grotesque, combining as it does plant and animal or human elements. Another isle is made of cheese and floats in a sea of milk. At one point, the entire ship is swallowed by a whale and the crew discovers another world within the leviathan's stomach, where they live for some time. Finally they escape after a battle with mermen,[12] beings as grotesque in nature as the plant-women by virtue of their combined animal form. They also visit the Isle of the Blest, where the narrator interviews heroes and authors, asking pointed philosophical questions. Ultimately, a violent storm wrecks the ship and all are washed ashore on the other side of the world. The author closes by promising to recount what happens there in a later book.

Rabelais's work mirrors that of Lucian in many ways. The Quart Livre is a voyage as unusual and fanciful as that of Lucian's narrator and his companions. While Lucian's characters skirmish with mermen, Pantagruel and his friends fight off a race of sausages in a similar mock battle. The imaginary elements of rivers of wine and islands of cheese give way in Rabelais to unicorns (p. 38) and frozen words that cry out upon defrosting (pp. 203-208), but in terms of basic plot

structures, both works clearly share the same tradition, despite a significant difference between them which stems from the fact that, as Thomas Greene points out, "Lucian's mythmaking is more gratuitous than Rabelais's [and while] he indulges in the same play with the monstrous and grotesque,"[13] Lucian does not concern himself as much with topical satire as Rabelais does.

Mikhail Bakhtin, in his Dostoevsky's Poetics, outlines the principal characteristics of this unofficial genre, maintaining that Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is the culmination of the Menippean tradition. Although he mentions Rabelais as a vital link in the chain[14] and, in his study of Rabelais's world, alludes to Menippus as a Rabelaisian ancestor (by way of Lucian),[15] neither of these magistral studies investigates the relation of Rabelais's work to Menippean satire or offers a detailed comparison of the works in question. Such an examination would therefore seem fruitful, particularly since a comparison of the characteristics of Menippean satire as described by Bakhtin (pp. 93-98) with the plot and themes of the Quart Livre reveals that the latter conforms in important ways to the principles of that tradition. In order to simplify discussion without yielding clarity, I have combined several of Bakhtin's categories which sometimes overlap.

Menippean satire is characterized most

importantly by its comic nature. Although the comic may be offset by the realistic or offensive, in the absence of a comic viewpoint, there can be neither satire, grotesque, nor menippea. Petronius Arbiter's Satyricon, a major Menippean narrative, contains many blunt allusions and scenes which might be considered obscene. Petronius was a refined and sophisticated observer of contemporary social customs and his characters are presented as buffoons rather than as models of behavior. Similarly, in the Quart Livre, Panurge plays the fool, regressing from a trickster to a babbling coward whose speech and deeds overflow with sexual references. Still, from the Prologue's introduction to Panurge's final degradation, the Quart Livre is an unquestionably comic work, although in Rabelais, as in Petronius, the presence of scatalogical, violent, or repulsive passages--integral elements in the grotesque aesthetic mode--has sometimes clouded the essentially comic nature of this work for readers of later periods.

It must be stressed that Menippean satire is not a "school" to which certain authors adhere. Indeed, it is distinguished in almost all instances by "extraordinary freedom of philosophical invention and of invention within the plot" (Bakhtin, p. 93), and neither physical reality nor conventional artistic canons impose limits upon the menippea. In fact, they represent the

very opposite of all that is conjured up by the words "genre" and "canon" and designate instead "the essence of a genre, not . . . the specific canon of a genre (as in antiquity)" (Bakhtin, p. 113). The Menippean tradition was created, perhaps unconsciously, by kindred spirits from distant times and places without a set of rules or official statements. The Menippean tradition, then, is not one externally established by rules but rather a flexible framework within which an author may choose to write, as did Rabelais when he designed the voyage of the Quart Livre.

"Extraordinary freedom of invention" in the menippea occurs on more than one level and allows for an extensive use of the fantastic, which may be provisionally defined as that which is physically impossible in objective, empirical reality. Imaginary characters, such as the Andouilles, and events, such as the "paroles dégelées,"[16] are easily recognizable manifestations of the fantastic in literature, but in Rabelais, as in Menippean satire, the fantastic does not function gratuitously but instead serves to create a situation in which a philosophical truth may be tested or explored: "it can be said that the content of the menippea consists of the adventures of an 'idea' or the 'truth' in the world either on earth, in the nether regions, or on Olympus" (Bakhtin, p. 94). When Menippus--and Epistemon

after him--visit the underworld, for example, they successfully defend the idea that the riches of this world are ephemeral and useless in the next.

Similar philosophical and fantastic combinations abound in the Quart Livre. The entire work is, of course, an imaginary voyage but one in which Panurge seeks an answer to the eternal quandry of marriage and knowledge about the future (that is, whether he will be happy if married and if it is indeed possible to determine this in advance). The gruesome Quaresemeprenant physically embodies the ethical questions created by forced abstinence, the selling of indulgences, and religious hypocrisy. In the case of the Papefigues and the Papimanes, religious polarity is transformed and expanded to make its participants into two entirely distinct and grotesque races. The bizarre race of the Gastrolatres,

> tristes, graves, severes, rechignez, tous ocieux, rien ne faisans, poinct ne travaillans, poys et charge inutile de la Terre, comme dict Hesiode; craignans (scelon qu'on povoit juger) le Ventre offenser et emmaigrir (p. 213),

is presented in the same manner but satirizes other religious and secular abuses such as idolatry and gluttony. Again, imaginary characters, distortions of reality, illustrate and effectively satirize a contemporary problem, in this case, a religious conflict. And, as the grotesque's pictorial origins indicate, fantasy is often a vital component of the grotesque

aesthetic mode. More importantly, the creation of these races reinforces the work's major themes, specifically, the condemnation of excess and the concomitant praise of moderation.

The grotesque functions as a pervasive, integral facet of Menippean satire and of the Quart Livre, which continues that tradition. Bakhtin points out that the fantastic and philosophical quest often plunges its seekers into the most vulgar and debased of situations: "the idea here has no fear of the underworld or of the filth of life" (Bakhtin, p. 94). The ethereal commonly rubs elbows with the carnal and degrading elements in Menippean satire. Lucian's Menippus, for example, visits not only the underworld but also the heavenly spheres to converse with the gods. In the Satyricon, the protagonists explore both the richest and the lowest areas of Roman life, continually participating in diverse erotic pursuits. As is often the case in the Menippean tradition, Petronius' satire explores "the incongruous world" and "violates etiquette" (Bakhtin, p. 96), incorporating scandalous scenes of eccentric and/or deviant behavior. This combination of disparate or opposing realms also parallels the pattern of grotesque art and literature where the integration of conflicting forms is commonplace.

Inversion, which will be discussed more fully in a later chapter, serves as one of the primary means

by which the grotesque fuses the spiritual and the material into one image. The menippea also commonly exploit this major literary device. In both Lucian and Rabelais, the underworld acts as an inverted reflection of earthly life. Rabelais's earlier works, especially Pantagruel, include a number of "underworld" scenes, such as Panurge's nocturnal Parisian vandalism and his consultation of fools and sorcerers in the Tiers Livre. Epistemon's sojourn in hell also typifies the "sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations" (Bakhtin, p. 97) characteristic of the Menippean mode, for in this inferno, kings become merchants and philosophers kings. Finally, inversion remains one of the principal thematic axes of the Quart Livre, uniting the ethereal fantasy of the "paroles dégelées" with the excretory degradation of Panurge and the war of the Andouilles.

Lucian and Petronius were among the first to bring underworld naturalism into literature; Rabelais extends their tradition. But Rabelais's knowledge of the ancients serves him as wings rather than as fetters in the best tradition of Renaissance humanism:

> to him, antiquity means liberation and a broadening of horizons, not in any sense a new limitation or servitude; nothing is more foreign to him than the antique separation of styles, which in Italy even in his own time, and soon after in France, led to purism and 'Classicism' (Auerbach, p. 278).

His eclectic mixing of styles and social milieux

corresponds to what Bakhtin calls the "tri-partite" construction of the Menippean cosmos. Generally, the philosophical quest departs from earth to travel to Olympus and/or the nether world. It is in fact at the entrance to these supernatural realms that much Menippean dialogue occurs, emphasizing the contiguity of these spheres to earth and the importance of the transition from life to death (or eternity). The previously cited description of Menippus' crossing into the underworld illustrates the philosophical relevance of these intersecting worlds. Bakhtin labels such interaction "threshold dialogues" and points to the cosmic pattern represented in medieval mystery plays as a precedent for later works in this vein (p. 95). In Rabelais, the travelers leave France (the known world) to seek the oracle of "la Dive Bouteille" (reached in the Cinquiesme Livre). The oracle is of course the mouthpiece through which one world communicates with the other and thus fulfills the function of a threshold which is only anticipated in the Quart Livre. Along the way, the explorers encounter numerous manifestations of other-worldly activity, most notably the "Diable extraict de noble et antique race" (p. 173 and Chapters XLVI and XLVII) and the "paroles dégelées" (Chapters LV and LVI). The latter actually originate in this world but are frozen into a state of suspended animation, a vacuum

from which they return to bombard the voyagers with the "motz de gueule" (p. 206). Although Rabelais makes the tri-levelled cosmic pattern of his predecessors fit his own needs, the basic structure remains the same and again reveals the relevance of the Menippean mode to the Quart Livre.

The frozen words episode serves as the best illustration in the Quart Livre of "experimental fantasticality," another representative Menippean trait (Bakhtin, p. 95). This component usually manifests itself through a radical shift in narrative perspective; Bakhtin cites Lucian's Icaromenippus and Voltaire's Micromégas as examples. In both of these cases, earth or a city is observed from a high altitude (and by an alien intruder in the latter). Rabelais's giants allow for such different perspectives by virtue of their height alone, although their size is clearly more pronounced in the earlier books. In the case of the "paroles dégelées," the shift occurs in temporal rather than physical terms, for the sounds of a past battle invade the voyagers' present as the words thaw. As we have seen, Rabelais seldom hesitates to incorporate imaginary or impossible episodes into his narrative and the unfrozen words are no exception.[17] They may at first appear to be one of the more gratuitous instances of Rabelais's "experimental" use of the fantastic; however,

they may also be perceived as a microcosm for the miracle of language and its ongoing creation, always a Rabelaisian concern. Metaphorically, the unfrozen words also parallel the reader's miraculous deciphering of the Rabelaisian text and his discovery of the work's philosophical "substantificque mouelle." Fusion of the real and the fantastic or imaginary is common in Rabelais, as the exploits of the young giants illustrate, and the fantastic nature of the passage appears perhaps less than experimental since Pantagruel lists classical accounts of similar events (pp. 204-205), employing another typically Rabelaisian device which helps to fuse (or confuse) two particular realms.

Menippean satire concerns itself with more than philosophical fantasies, however. Its roots are deeply embedded in the seamy realities of everyday life, as the low-life portraits of Petronius and the initial appearance of Panurge suggest. Like grotesque realism, the Menippean mode often focuses upon what is natural but bizarre or even extraordinary. Centering on the representation of man's "unusual, abnormal moral and psychic states" (Bakhtin, p. 96), it views man's nature as more than the sum of his conscious, waking experience and integrates his dream life into its world view. In fact, man's shadow-self, his unconscious or dreaming side, may become as important as the self he expresses

to others through his acts. An exemplary case of this occurs in the Tiers Livre when Panurge interprets his dream--the dream which will prompt the voyage of the Quart Livre--according to his self-acknowledged desires (pp. 458-463). Both the menippea and the grotesque portray man not only on earth but also in the supernatural spheres of heaven and hell, states which, like dreams, are both one with and apart from waking reality, existing only in man's consciousness and not tangible as physical reality.

This expanded vision of man is far removed from the unified hero of epic literature: "Dreams, daydreams, and insanity destroy the epic, tragic integrity of a man and his fate: in him the possibilities of another man and another life are revealed; he loses his finalizedness and singleness of meaning; he ceases to coincide with himself" (Bakhtin, p. 96). In the menippea, man pits himself not against other men (as in the epic) but against himself; from this struggle is born "the dialogical attitude of man to himself" (Bakhtin, p. 96) which Bakhtin so successfully illustrates in the novels of Dostoevsky.[18]

In the Quart Livre, Panurge conjures up another self who constantly eludes him while the real Panurge slides farther and farther down the path of debasement. Panurge has a vision of himself, the future Panurge,

content and happily married as he imagined in the Tiers Livre. It is precisely because of this image, initially drawn from Panurge's dream, that the voyage of the Quart Livre takes place; the Quart Livre is the result and execution of the "dialogizing" of Panurge in the Tiers Livre. In both the Menippean and the grotesque traditions, man is an unfinished being, in constant metamorphosis, moving toward a future, unrealized self, just as Panurge comically lurches forward to the oracle. The disparity between Panurge's vision of his future and his debased condition in the Quart Livre makes of him a typical grotesque being, comically pitiful and ludicrous while at times offensive. Nor is Panurge's vision ever realized, for it remains a mere dream even in the Cinquiesme Livre. Even the plot structure of the Quart Livre corresponds to this model of flux; like man himself, it is an unfinished work which only the future (the Cinquiesme Livre) could perhaps resolve.

Bakhtin closes his discussion of Menippean satire by nothing that it is almost always topical and contemporary as opposed to legendary or mythical. Actually, Lucian and Rabelais include both contemporary and mythical elements and characters in their satires. Menippus, as we have seen, parries with mythical figures such as Charon and Hermes in his travels to heaven and hell and also converses with recently deceased nobles

who mourn the loss of their fortunes, just as Epistemon encounters degraded and syphilitic popes along with the famous of history and antiquity (Pantagruel, pp. 367-373). Rabelais's portraits of Quaresmeprenant and the Gastrolatres reveal his taste for topical ridicule, but his incorporation of the antique gods into the Quart Livre's expressive prologue must not be forgotten. Bakhtin's point is nevertheless well taken, for satirical distortion of current events and problems characterizes both the texts of Lucian and Rabelais. Rabelais, of course, seldom shirks from snapping at contemporary groups or classes, whether religious, political, or educational. Indeed, his frankness earned him a privileged position on the Catholic Index as a repeated offender and forced him more than once to slip out of Paris in search of less troubled regions. In the Quart Livre, Rabelais places easily identifiable caricatures of everyday problems and realities into the context of imaginary realms that strangely but effectively reflect sixteenth-century France. Certainly the lengthy caricatures of religious fanaticism and intolerance in the Quart Livre, especially those of the Papefigues and Papimanes, conform to the menippean prerequisites of topicality and philosophical experimentation via imaginary races. The Seigneur de Basché's smashing reception of the Chiquanous also outrageously satirizes

and carnivalizes contemporary legal wrangling in much the same way as the Baisecul-Humevesne lawsuit in Pantagruel (pp. 270-287). And, in each of these examples, grotesque elements reinforce satirical bent, making the targets even more ludicrous by means of grotesque inversion (in the case of the Papefigues and Papimanes) or through the outrageous portrayal of physical abuse (painfully comic in the Chiquanous episode).[19]

Rabelais's "carnivalization" of current events and trends underlines the fact that much of his satire views the official world from the laughing, carnival point of view that is intrinsically grotesque. The carnival banquet or symposium is an interface between official and non-official realities; at the banquet table, "the combination of praise and abuse or of the serious and the comical within the word" (Bakhtin, p. 99) is at its apex. Finally, the essence of grotesque art and literature can only be defined as the fusion of the serious and the comical, embodied by Menippus, "the man who jokes about serious things" (Highet, p. 233). Rabelais's work is often compared to the carnival banquet; it is in fact a literary banquet at which many spheres of literature come together in familiar contact. Rabelais himself represents the confluence of forces pushed together by the rise of the Renaissance. Literature in its diverse forms, whether sacred or

profane, official or non-official, legendary or contemporary, is deftly woven into the tapestry of his work. His roots are both folkloric--as Bakhtin has illustrated--and classical--as Rabelais exhibits at every turn. Blended, intertwined, and enlivened by Rabelais's caricaturial expertise, these elements form the "mixture" (satura) that was originally conceived to be satire. The Rabelaisian symposium's free speech and ambivalence abound in the Menippean satire of the Quart Livre. Excess is ridiculed not with bitter sarcasm but with ludicrous caricature permeated with fearless laughter and good faith.

This laughter is the ultimate achievement of Rabelais's satire: biting, like Menippus the dog, yet confident and optimistic, founded upon faith in an eternal cycle of life and death which characterizes the grotesque world view. Rabelais's work, and the Quart Livre in particular, is clearly a descendant in the long line of the Menippean tradition. It is known, of course, that Rabelais was well-acquainted with the satirists, especially Lucian. But whether or not Rabelais consciously imitated the classical masters or the degree to which he did so is not a question of primary importance here, since the Menippean mode in no way represents an official school or genre imposing strict canons. Menippean satire is born instead from a fundamentally

comic attitude towards the world which understands literature as a distorted mirror-image of life itself. This distorted image is a "grotesque" critique of man's position in the universe. Its creator does not hesitate to display man's foolishness and radical deformity, nor does he spurn embellishing that portrait for effect, whether it be satirical or otherwise. The grotesque is often enlisted in the service of satire to render the attack more effective by exaggeration of its object's faults while retaining at least a minimal comic perspective.

Menippean satire is particularly identifiable with grotesque imagery in that both are often based upon oxymoronic combinations and inversions, in short, the incongruous. The mixture and integration of opposing literary spheres also reflects both the Menippean and the grotesque mode of presentation: as the dead rub elbows with the living through depiction of heaven and hell, so do secular and religious literatures as well as the folkloric and classical. The styles represented range from the loftiest to the crudest, most notably in Petronius but also and certainly in the cases of Menippus and Rabelais. Freedom of imagination forms a ground base for the intersecting world views, as all Menippean satirists actively pursue fabulous beasts and occurrences, seeking to create the unusual and

incongruous, often to test a hypothetical philosophical idea.

The concept of Menippean satire is thus of crucial importance to the understanding of Rabelais's grotesque world view and his use of satire. Study of the Menippean mode clearly indicates that Rabelais is a significant link in that tradition, a turning point not only between ancient and modern but also between carnival and official, and secular and religious traditions. It cannot be denied that the Quart Livre conforms to all the traits of Menippean satire as outlined by Bakhtin. The very plot structure of the Fourth Book clearly parallels Lucian's True History as well as his Dialogues of the Dead. But within this context, Rabelais creates topical satire which both reflects and moves beyond that of the ancients. His imaginary, satirical island races of religious hypocrites and fanatics transpose Petronius into the sixteenth-century milieu. With grotesque imagery, Rabelais's satirical bent is integrated into his grotesque cosmic world view without leaving a bitter residue of invective or cheerless dogmatic sarcasm. Instead, Rabelais's work remains, as always, a monument to man's ability to examine his weaknesses and, most importantly, a celebration of his ability to laugh at those shortcomings in good faith.

Notes

[1]Ben Johnson, as quoted in the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 738.

[2]Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 224. Further citations refer to this edition.

[3]It should be clarified that satire is a literary genre (i.e., Horace's satires or Ariosto's satires); the grotesque is the style associated with the Roman frescoes and reliefs unearthed at the end of the fifteenth century.

[4]Gilbert Highet, The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 162. Additional quotations refer to this edition.

[5]The name, in typical Rabelaisian fashion, leads in the text to plays on "couilles":

> lesquelles, viventes, allumoient couillonniquement le feu de faction, simultes, sectes couillonniques, et partialité entre les ocieux escholiers. A perpetuele memoire que ces petites philauties couillonniformes plus tost davant vous contempnées feurent que condemnées (pp. 19-20).

And, referring to Rameau and Galland: "Tous deux me semblent aultrement bons compagnons et bien couilluz" (p. 17).

[6]Thomas M. Greene, Rabelais: A Study in Comic Courage (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 93.

[7]Edwin S. Ramage, David L. Sigsbee, and Sigmund C. Fredericks, Roman Satirists and Their Satire (Park Ridge, N.J.: Noyes Press, 1974), p. 55. Further citations refer to this edition.

[8]Ulrich Knoche, Roman Satire, translated by Edwin S. Ramage (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 55.

[9]"Any of a genus (Lupinus) of leguminous herbs some of which are poisonous and others cultivated for green manure, fodder, or their edible seeds; also: an edible lupine seed (as of the European Lupinus Albus)," Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1977), p. 685.

[10]Lucian, with an English translation by M.D. Macleod (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), VII, pp. 9-15.

[11]This is the case with Midas, Sardanapalus, Croesus, and even Socrates; Menippus spares no one his acerbic wit. He addresses Croesus in this manner: "Even so, you lowest of the low from Lydia, Phrygia, and Assyria, I'd have you know that I'll never stop. Wherever you go, I'll follow, tormenting you with my songs of mockery" (p. 17). When Socrates inquires about his reputation in the world above, Menippus replies: "In these respects at least, you're a lucky fellow, Socrates. At any rate they all think you were a wonderful man, and knew everything, though--I think I'm right in saying so--you knew nothing" (p. 35). Others who are stung by the cynic's wit include Tantalus (pp. 37-41), Chiron (pp. 41-45), and Tiresias (pp. 45-49), the last of whom is called a "habitual liar" (p. 49).

[12]Rabelais's motif of a world within the giant's mouth (Pantagruel, Chapter XXXII, pp. 377-381) also closely parallels Lucian's situating another world in the belly of a whale.

[13]Greene, p. 83.

[14]Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, translated by R.W. Rotsel (U.S.A.: Arids, 1973), p. 28. All references to Bakhtin in this chapter are to this work and edition.

[15]Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, translated by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1965), pp. 69-70.

[16]For a discussion of this phenomenon in physical terms, see Abraham C. Keller, "The Geophysics of Rabelais's Frozen Words," in Renaissance and Other Studies in Honor of William Leon Wiley, ed. by George B. Daniel, Jr. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 151-161.

[17]For additional discussion of this episode, see: Jean-Yves Pouilleux, "Notes sur dux chapitres du Quart Livre, LV-LVI," Littérature 5 (février, 1975), 88-94; Jean Guiton, "Le mythe des paroles dégelées," Romanic Review, 31 (1940), 3-15; and Michel Jeanneret, "Les paroles dégelées," Littérature 5 (février, 1975), 14-30.

[18]Most notably in the case of The Double and in that of Ivan Karamazov's conversations with the Devil in The Brothers Karamazov.

[19]These examples will be considered more fully in a later chapter.

IV. INVERSION AND THE GROTESQUE

Having discussed the importance of inversion in Rabelaisian grotesque comedy, we have examined it in the Quart Livre as an expression of Rabelais's concept of the mock epic. We have also seen that on the level of both comedy and satire, inversion plays a significant role in the grotesque Rabelaisian world. The purpose of this chapter is to examine in greater detail the workings of inversion as a stylistic and thematic device relative to the grotesque in the Fourth Book.

In the comic world of Rabelais, grotesque inversion plays a vital and productive role. Always ambivalent, it reveals the grotesque's simultaneous duality of degradation and renewal. However, as an instrument of the grotesque, it must be distinguished from literary inversion in the broad and more general sense of a reversal of existing conditions or roles. Tragedy, for example, presents inversion that is clearly not grotesque. Oedipus' fall may disturb us deeply, but it does not provoke the concomitant laughter which would qualify it as grotesque. In its larger sense, inversion represents the topos of "mundus inversus" or

or the world turned upside-down. Ernst Robert Curtius traces this theme back to antiquity and suggests that its appearance coincided with an eclipse of the sun on April 6, 648 B.C.[1] Upon viewing the eclipse, Archilocus decided that if the sun could be blotted out from the sky, then anything was possible: "no one need be surprised if the beasts of the field changed their food for that of the eolphins."[2] Vergil's adynata, well-known during the Middle Ages, the contemporary love ballad, and the folksong offer a plentiful variety of examples which testify to the popularity of both the device and theme, but while inversion has a strong presence in nearly all literature and folklore, grotesque inversion is a special and specialized category of that device.

Raymond La Charité's article "Mundus Inversus: The Fictional World of Rabelais's Pantagruel"[3] provides an excellent discussion of the renewal motif, albeit without specific reference to the grotesque. La Charité views the giant as the reorganizing principle for a world gone berserk: "Only a giant could handle a task of gigantic proportions" (p. 96). In this context, inversion may accurately be called the process by which the world is brought back to its senses, a transformation which La Charité sees as "the mystery of the work's unity" (p. 104). But before this mad world can be

renewed, as Bakhtin notes, it must be degraded. In Rabelais's ambivalent world, one process does not take place without the other, and the paradoxical fusion of celebration and abuse, of up and down, lies at the foundation of grotesque imagery.

While La Charité focuses on renewal, Bakhtin emphasizes degradation. Indeed, for the latter, "the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (pp. 19-20). Descent from spiritual to physical in fact characterizes most grotesque literary phenomena, and inversion serves as one of the vehicles through which that descent takes place. At the same time, like La Charité, Bakhtin also stresses the circular path of grotesque imagery, never ignoring the fact that debasement in Rabelais always gives birth to restorative laughter.

Rabelais's Quart Livre provides fertile ground for the exploration of inversion. Panurge, Pantagruel, and their companions set sail to find the message of "la Dive Bouteille" and to end Panurge's doubts about marriage in a veritable physical quest for the reversal of present conditions. Panurge seeks to dissipate his own doubt and ignorance and replace them with certainty

and knowledge that he will be happily married and not cuckolded. While the Quart Livre does not resolve this problem, it explicitly portrays the effort to do so and constructs the quest on a foundation where grotesque inversion plays a very significant role. Panurge's voyage is a mock epic, a comic rendering and inversion of the classical epic.

The prologue, addressed "Aux lecteurs bénévoles," situates the Quart Livre in a familiar and richly comic world whose ruling, redemptive principle is "Pantagruelisme," defined succinctly as a "certaine gayté d'esprit conficte en mespris des choses fortunites" (p. 12). The "epic" itself is punctuated by long comic moments such as Panurge's outwitting of Dindenault, the war of the Andouilles, and Panurge's cowardly behavior during the tempest. In all these instances, the principal comic axis involves degradation; what is brought down becomes laughable, and laughter acts as a healing balm, mitigating the complexities of an insane world. Debasement also serves as the basis for renewal and optimism in the face of vice and absurdity. War, for example, is not normally a laughing matter, but when fought with kitchen tools against a race of sausages, violent conflict is both ridiculed and mitigated. By its comic and incongruous nature, the very form of this "quest" for knowledge manifests traits of grotesque

inversion.

Complementing inversion are the grotesque images which frequently occur on the frontiers of the body or, more specifically, at the point where the body meets the world. Thus, images of this sort include those of defecation and sexual activity, acts through which the body makes contact with the external world. Panurge's proposal for the building of the walls of Paris (Pantagruel, Chapter XV) offers an excellent example of the grotesque as it relates to the interaction between these spheres, but all bodily appendages become for Rabelais possible sources of grotesque laughter, especially when exaggerated as in the case of the giants. Finally, among physical activities, abuse--whether verbal, physical, or both--is also deeply woven into the fabric of grotesque imagery. Such images may be qualified as grotesque inversion inasmuch as they debase and bring down the comic victim, as in the case of Tappecoue in the anecdote related by Basché.

Two of the finest illustrations of Rabelaisian abuse take place in the Quart Livre: the Chiquanous episode and the carnivalesque account of Villon and Tappecoue. The abuse is purely physical in each case. In the Chiquanous story, those who serve legal summons are repeatedly thrashed but are always well-paid. While most people work for money, the Chiquanous earn their

living by being beaten; in fact, without an occasional thrashing, their wives and children may go hungry. But this abuse also becomes celebrative on the part of the thrasher, the Seigneur de Basché. For him and for those who help him, the beatings are administered like "nopces à mitaines" or gauntlet weddings.[4] In official spheres, such activity would be impossible, but the Seigneur de Basché's feast represents a carnival world where the unacceptable becomes normal, customary, and, for the reader, highly comic.

The same holds true for the Tappecoue episode, recounted by Lord Basché. Here the priest Tappecoue will not lend out religious habits for the "diablerie," as requested by Villon. By refusing to participate in the carnival, Tappecoue merits the fate which Villon and the demons mete out to him. After they frighten his horse, he falls but his foot is caught in the stirrup: "Ainsi estoit trainné à escorchecul par la poultre, tousjours multipliante en ruades contre luy et fourvoyante de paour par les hayes, buissons, et fossez. De mode qu'elle luy cobbit toute la teste, si que la cervelle en tomba près la croix Osanniere" (pp. 76-77). The mighty must fall and the poor enjoy their reversal of roles for a moment, becoming kings themselves temporarily. Tappecoue's fate can only be described as grotesque, at once offensive and comic. A stroke of

poetic justice by the narrator has the skull land appropriately near a cross.

In both examples, laughter supplies the element of renewal to the grotesque world. As Bakhtin states: "Rabelais deals with these dummies pitilessly, cruelly, but merrily. . . . Rabelais does not torture living persons" (p. 213). Also, as Joubert indicates in his contemporary study of laughter, humor of that period had a considerably crueler bent in terms of physical violence; a sixteenth-century reader would certainly have considered this passage comic above all. The exaggeration of outlandish details suggests that these thrashings cannot be viewed in so serious a light that the comic element is overshadowed. Situated within the larger story of the Chiquanous, the Villon anecdote reflects in miniature the theme and tone of the entire passage. Both center around grotesque inversion as represented by abuse carried out in a carnivalesque setting. In both tales, inversion functions as a unifying factor, tightening and integrating two related anecdotes which might otherwise be viewed as disparate.

Rabelaisian abuse, however, cannot be limited only to the physical plane. Verbal abuse or invective abounds in Rabelais and degrading gestures are commonplace. In the Dindenault episode, the merchant's vulgar insults ultimately conclude in his own drowning. Perhaps

the most celebrated example of verbal abuse in the Quart Livre is Frère Jean's assault upon Panurge during the tempest, but, as we shall see, it is not the only one.[5] The insulting gesture lies midway between physical and verbal derision. Although a gesture is an act, it does not inflict direct, corporal pain upon its recipient; at the same time, it conveys a specific and unequivocal message and to that extent belongs to the world of language. The offensive gestures of the "Papefigues" upon viewing the papal portrait touch off an immediate massacre: "Pour icelle vanger, les Papimanes, quelques jours après, sans dire guare, se mirent tous en armes, surprindrent, saccaigerent et ruinerent toute l'isle des Guaillardetz, taillerent à fil d'espée tout homme portant barbe" (p. 171). Even the names of the enemy peoples embody grotesque inversion, degradation, and renewal. "Papefigue" combines up and down, abusing the high and mighty, while "Papimane" fuses wisdom (papal) and folly (human) into one race. These comically incongruous names suffice to prompt healing laughter and mitigate the threat of an insane world.

In the chapters which recount the story of the young devil and the "Papefigue" farmers, Rabelais also presents verbal abuse as a form of grotesque inversion. Here, the devil's role is reversed, for rather than the

cunning temptor he plays the fool. After laying claim to half the farmer's crop, the demon announces he will take all that grows above ground, leaving the roots for the farmer. Since beets grow below the ground, the inexperienced devil is foiled and receives nothing in spite of his threats. Unable to sell the tops at the market, he is doubly frustrated: "Que pis est, on se mocquoit de lui publicquement" (p. 175). Public scorn sends the devil and his lofty expectations crashing down to earth. Instead of appearing as a fearsome and terrible figure, this demon becomes a simple object of ridicule; Hell and the world are turned upside down as he is humiliated, and the invective he suffers from the townspeople proclaims the victory of man and nature over supernatural forces.[6] Because they are ambivalent, both physical and verbal abuse function as vehicles for Rabelais's expression of the positive affirmation of life which underlies grotesque realism.

Aside from acting as a means of expressing physical and verbal abuse, grotesque inversion may also occur in the form of a lingustic or stylistic reversal. The incongruity of inverted speech patterns (like "Papefigues") amuses, shocks, and perhaps even outrages the reader's sensibilities at times. Spoonerisms ("contrepeteries"), for example, exhibit the dualistic nature of the grotesque by deforming, and

thereby degrading, an otherwise readily definable locution. Epistemon's "coupe testée" (Pantagruel, p. 365), an incongruous and comic deformation of a physical condition, serves as an example of Rabelais's linguistic inversion.[7] Here, the "contrepeterie" anticipates the entire passage's comic bent, for Epistemon will be brought back from the dead to describe an inferno that in itself exemplifies grotesque inversion, since it is a realm where kings become servants and servants kings.[8]

The same unity of form and substance exists in the linguistic deformations describing Quaresmeprenant and the "countrepeterie" setting off the war of the Andouilles, where linguistic inversions reinforce the essentially grotesque themes woven into the text. Quaresmeprenant personifies all that is unnatural and, by his incongruity alone, immediately qualifies as a grotesque figure. Xenomanes initially describes him to Pantagruel as "un demy geant à poil follet et double tonsure" (p. 126). As such, Quaresmeprenant's major physical characteristics accentuate his radical deformity. But his habits and actions reveal that he is more than a simple ogre. The inherent contradictions and satirical intent of Xenomane's description scarcely require elaboration: "fouetteur de petitz enfans, calcineur de cendres, pere et nourrisson des medicins, foisonnant en

pardons, indulgences et stations, homme de bien, bon catholic et de grande devotion" (p. 126). Indeed, Quaresmeprenant epitomizes the religious hypocrisy which Rabelais so frequently derides throughout his work.[9]

An enumerative litany of Quaresmeprenant's attributes follows the sketch, as Xenomanes gives us a lengthy portrait of the monster in the form of lists which fill two chapters, one describing his external parts, the other his internal anatomy. He has, for example:

> Le palat, comme une moufle.
> La salive, comme une navette.
> Les amygdales, comme lunettes à un oeil.
> Le isthme, comme une portuoire.
> Le gouzier, comme un panier vendangeret.
> L'estomac, comme un baudrier.
> Le pylore, comme une fourche fiere.
> L'aspre artere, comme un gouet.
> Le guaviet, comme un peloton d'estouppes.
> Le poulmon, comme une aumusse.
> Le coeur, comme une chasuble (p. 128).

The accumulation of similies (there are 76 in Chapter XXX, 62 in Chapter XXXI) makes this monster even more bizarre and outrageous than he might otherwise appear. As Jourda points out:

> Il s'agit de présenter Quaresmeprenant comme un monstre. Les comparaisons qu'indique Rabelais correspondent soit à des possibilités reelles, soit à des extravagances voulues, soit simplement à des associations d'idées ou de sonorités (p. 127).

Moreover, the listing itself creates a rather static image of Quaresmeprenant, augmented by the fact that the characters never interact with him but only talk

about him.

Following the initial lists, and complementing them in both form and content, Chapter XXXII elaborates the activities of this anti-natural beast, activities which may be divided into two opposing spheres, namely, self-gratification and religious hypocrisy. Like any "faux dévot," Quaresmeprenant inevitably betrays what he pretends to worship:

> S'il rottoit, c'estoient huitres en escalle . . . Sil souffloit, c'estoient troncs pour les Indulgences . . . S'il se gratoit, c'estoient ordonnances nouvelles (pp. 133-134).

Here, the predominance of sibilants creates a metaphorical snake. Also, the extremely long list--nearly three pages of the text--adds an almost surrealistic quality to the monster's nature. All of this leads to the creation of an image that is both a physical and linguistic inversion:

> Cas estrange: travailloit rien ne faisant, rien ne faisoit travaillant. Corybantioit dormant, dormoit corybantiant, les oeilz ouvers comme font les lievres de Champaigne, craignant quelque camisade d'Andouilles, ses antiques ennemies. Rioit en mordant, mordoit en riant. Rien ne mangeoit jeusnant, jeusnoit rien ne mangeant. . . . Se baignoit dessus les haulx clochers, se seichoit dedans les estangs et rivieres. Peschoit en l'air et y prenoit escrevisses decumanes. Chassoit on profond de la mer et y trouvoit ibices, stamboucqs et chamoys (pp. 134-135).

The grotesque in this description derives primarily from the essential inconguity of the inversions (such as drying in a river or fishing in the air).

Exaggerating these impossible activities to emphasize Quaresmeprenant's anti-natural way of life, Rabelais creates a monster who literally turns the world upside down and becomes pitifully comic through his hypocritical and outlandish nature. In addition, the inversions in sentence structure reinforce the overall portrait of the ogre's deformity.

The narrator concludes this description by telling the story of Physis (Nature) and Antiphysie. The latter offers a complete physical inversion which effectively balances the moral inversion of Quaresmeprenant. Jealous of Nature's children, Beauty and Harmony, Antiphysie engenders Amodunt and Discordance through copulation with Tellumon, but Antiphysie's children are born with "les pieds ronds comme pelottes, les braz et mains tournez en arriere vers les espaules. Et cheminoient sus leurs testes, continuellement faisant la roue, cul sus teste, les pieds contremont" (p. 136). Grotesque deformity and incongruity mark the entire passage, and inversion is the major vehicle for its expression. Antiphysie's radical deformity also buttresses the central message of the entire episode, which constitutes a stinging satirical indictment of Calvinism's anti-natural tendencies. Antiphysie's fecundity does not in fact end with the bearing of Amodunt and Discordance: "Depuys elle engendra les Matagotz, Cagotz

et Papelars; les Maniacles Pistoletz, les Demoniacles Calvins, imposteurs de Geneve; les enraigez Putherbes, Briffaulx, Caphars, Chattemittes, Canibales, et aultres monstres difformes et contrefaicts en despit de Nature" (p. 137).

Pantagruel's final words clarify the thrust of the entire Quaresmeprenant section of the Quart Livre. Quaresmeprenant becomes a mocking and ludicrous caricature of Rabelais's adversaries Calvin and Gabriel de Puy-Herbault; the ridiculous and comic nature of these grossly unusual beings reveals itself only with the narrator's concluding stab at his contemporary foes. Grotesque inversion, represented in the unnatural incongruity of Quaresmeprenant, Antiphysie, and her children in fact serves Rabelais's tastes exceedingly well throughout this episode, sustaining his ultimate point that such beasts attempt to swim against nature's current. Indeed, in this context, inverted sentence structures in the Quaresmeprenant description complement both the grotesque and the satirical nature of the text and again form augments and underlines meaning.

Linguistic inversion constitutes the foundation of textual development in the war of the Andouilles, for that war results in part from a misunderstanding involving an inverted speech pattern. As the conflict is about to begin, Pantagruel sends Gymnaste to greet

the approaching enemy and the latter gives them this message: "'Vostres, vostres, vostres sommes nous trestous, et à commandement. Tous tenons de Mardigras, vostre antique confoederé'. Aulcuns depuys me ont raconté qu'il dist Gradimars, non Mardigras" (p. 160). At this moment, the great battle commences during which Frère Jean showers his customary rain of blows upon the enemy, while Gymnaste brandishes his sword named "Baise mon cul" in the true spirit of grotesque inversion with its emphasis on the lower body. The mock epic style of the war also reinforces the inverted nature of this passage as Frère Jean and his companions use a "ruse de guerre" parodying the Trojan horse, hiding in the belly of a monstrous sow. The battle is in fact based on a misunderstanding: "les Andouilles pensent que Gymnaste dit Gradimars (mot qui évoque Gradius Mars, le dieu de la guerre et dont le surnom signifie 'brandissant une lance') au lieu de Mardi Gras . . . L'inversion d'un nom propre devient un cri de guerre."[10] Linguistic inversion thus plays an integral role in one of the most grotesque episodes of the Quart Livre and, more importantly, strengthens the thematic unit of the total work within the context of a grotesque cosmos.

Finally, the Dindenault episode, derived from Folengo and certainly the best known of all passages in the Quart Livre, is a quintessential example of the way

in which grotesque style and language elucidate and illuminate grotesque content. Rabelais, in fact, introduces the element of bargaining or haggling to Folengo's story, thereby availing himself of the opportunity to enhance the original tale with elements of grotesque linguistic inversion.[11] This addition signals the degree to which inversion and grotesque stylistic embellishments are vital to the Rabelaisian text, for he transforms that which touches his pen into a network of grotesque imagery. To realize this penchant, one need only listen to the merchant extolling his wares. He transforms his lowly sheep by words alone into a noble and ancient race descended from Greek antiquity: "Nostre amy, respondit le marchant, mon voisin, ce sont moutons extraictz de la propre race de celluy qui porta Phrixus et Hellé par la mer dicte Hellesponte" (p. 53). The humble nature of the sheep contrasts profoundly with the lofty language of the salesman. This loquacious owner even brags that his beasts possess magical powers:

> Prenez moy ces cornes là, et les concassez un peu avecques un pilon de fer, ou avecques un landier, ce m'est tout un. Puis les enterrez en veue du soleil la part que vouldrez, et souvent les arrouzez. En peu de moys vous en voirez naistre les meilleurs asperges du monde (p. 54).

Dindenault adds both literary and superstitious jargons to his dickering banter:

> . . . de la toison de ces moutons seront faictz les fins draps de Rouen. . . . De la peau seront

> faictz les beaulx marroquins, lesquelz on vendra pour marroquins Turquins, ou de Montelimart, ou de Hespaigne pour le pire. Des boyaulx, on fera chordes de violons et harpes, lesquelles tant cherement on vendra comme si feussent chordes de Munican ou Aquileie (p. 52).

The mixture of stylistic levels marks the entire episode as characteristically Rabelaisian (cf. Auerbach, pp. 269-271). As the language of both fantastic and erudite realms invades the marketplace, the discourse displays typical grotesque traits of incongruity and exaggeration, and the merchant's stylistic inversion introduces a major grotesque narrative.

Panurge patiently suffers through the merchant's outrageous praise of the sheep and insults to their potential buyer, but then takes his revenge by purchasing one sheep and tossing it into the sea. The entire flock follows in panic and Dindenault and his workers are dragged in trying to save them. Their efforts to climb back aboard the boat are thwarted by a mockingly self-righteous Panurge who, while pushing them away--an act which is truly grotesque in its provocation of both laughter and horror--preaches eloquently to the drowning men: "comme si feust un petit frere Olivier Maillard ou un second frere Jan Bourgeoys, leurs remonstrant par lieux de rhetoricque les miseres de ce monde, le bien et l'heur de l'autre vie" (p. 57), a "sermon" which adds linguistic and stylistic inversion to the multiple

grotesque elements in the passage.

Often expressed in physical terms, grotesque inversion may also serve as an important vehicle for meaning. Nor is its use limited in Rabelais to reinforce theme and plot, for it additionally acts to enhance our perception of character. The Quart Livre's most notable example of this, as we might expect, resides in the comic and cowardly figure of Panurge. In the Quart Livre, the Dindenault episode notwithstanding, Panurge generally bears little resemblance to the cunning rake of Pantagruel's early adventures. Even in the Tiers Livre, he has already started a striking transformation that will continue in the Quart Livre and conclude with his total degradation.

In fact, it is in the Tiers Livre that Panurge has the enigmatic dream that will ultimately lead to the quest begun in the third book and continued in the fourth. When, on the day after his dream, Panurge reappears "la pusse en l'aureille," he states his desire to marry. Once his search begins, Panurge the wily trickster virtually disappears (aside from the Dindenault passage in Chapters V-VIII of the Quart Livre) to be replaced by Panurge the comic seeker. He then proceeds to make a fool of himself by consulting every possible oracle, no matter how suspect, and by disputing any prediction which hints at his future discontent. At the

same time, Panurge loses his healthy disdain for religious practice and becomes a cringing hypocrite, defending the mendicant orders and accusing the poet Raminogrobis of heresy (Tiers Livre, p. 492).[12] In the Quart Livre, Panurge's cunning has almost entirely vanished. Indeed, he often acts as a mere foil for the boisterous Frère Jean. Panurge, once the man of action and chicanery, relinquishes his role to the strong-willed and tempestuous monk, and during the tempest, the man who formerly routed armies with clever ruses moans in fear, incapable of constructive action.

Panurge has clearly changed, and the reversal of role and fortunes conforms to the principle of grotesque inversion. In traditional quest literature, the hero undergoes a series of ordeals and perils before finally reaching his goal. While Panurge suffers through many trials, his attitude in the face of danger can in no way be classified as heroic. As the storm rages, Panurge is reduced to a state of total incoherence, in marked contrast to his linguistic versatility in Pantagruel during his first encounter with the young giant (Pantagruel, pp. 263-270). In a world dominated by the power of language, this "hero" can utter only gibberish: "Bebebebous, bous, bous, dist Panurge, bous, bous, bebe, be bous, bous, bous, je naye. Je ne voy ne ciel ne terre. Zalas, zalas!" (pp. 100-101). Once the storm

subsides, he compounds his foolishness by insisting that he is not a coward since he is no longer afraid: "J'ay du couraige prou, voyre. De paour bien peu. Baillez ça, mon amy. Non, non, pas maille de craincte" (p. 109). Panurge thus becomes, especially in the Quart Livre, a pitiful though no less comic figure, a ridiculous caricature of his former self. In the earlier books, he was rendered comic by what he did to others; now, he is funny, even ludicrous, because of what he is or does to himself. In the Fourth Book, he functions not only as an inverted version of the epic hero but also as a grotesque inversion of his former self. Only in the Dindenault episode does he even show a hint of his former spunk, and that, as we have noted, in a scene richly colored by multiple tones of the grotesque.

Panurge's ultimate comic degradation concludes the Quart Livre, and in light of what has preceded, the reader can hardly be surprised--though he continues to be amused--that grotesque inversion pervades the narrative. Upon learning that the ship approaches the Isle of Thieves (Ganabin), Panurge hastily agrees that the best course is not to land, then retires below. There he mistakes a cat for a demon and ascends to the main deck for his final undoing:

> remuant les babines comme un cinge qui cherche poulz en teste, tremblant et claquetant des dens, se tira vers frere Jan, lequel estoit assis sur le

> porthaubaunt de tribort, et devotement le pria avoir de luy compassion, et le tenir en saulveguarde de son bragmart; affermant et jurant, par sa part de Papimanie, qu'il avoit à heure praesente veu tous les diables deschainez (p. 244).

Panurge acquires grotesque proportions here and represents a debased portrait of the epic hero. Caricatured as an ape, Panurge's description blends human and animal forms into one image just as the original grotesque paintings combined human, plant, and animal depictions into a single tableau. Indeed, in the grotesque world, man is often portrayed in his more beastly aspect. The demon's imagined presence reminds us that the thresholds of Heaven and Hell form an integral part of the grotesque universe, as the episodes of Epistemon's descent to the underworld (Pantagruel, pp. 365-374) and the frustrated devil's pranks with the Papimanes farmers also illustrate. Fear of the unknown, in the form of hallucinated demons, will soon be dispelled by the revelation of an exceedingly grotesque turn of events.

Taking leave of his senses, Panurge also loses control of the lower body. As Jean listens, he smells something unusual and examines Panurge more closely: "Car un des symptomes et accidens de paour, est que par luy ordinairement se ouvre le guischet du serrail on quel est à temps la matiere fecale retenue" (p. 245). As Joubert's contemporary treatise on laughter reveals, excrement (a function of the lower body) would surely

have been considered comic matter in the sixteenth century, grotesque in its fusion of the offensive and the humorous. The utterly inappropriate use of technical medical terms like "sphincter" and "retentrice du nerf" in an episode otherwise described in ludicrous and earthy language reinforces the grotesque and comic value of the passage as the learned language contrasts markedly with the language of the marketplace.

Another and similar illustration of grotesque language immediately follows this passage as the narrator, in a scholarly list of examples, compares Panurge's accident to others, including a quotation of Villon's famous lines which themselves represent grotesque inversion: "Sçaura mon coul que mon cul poise" (p. 247). Once again, the world has turned upside down, this time for Panurge. By the power of visions, a function of the upper body, excrement is created and the lower body moves. The significance of Panurge's degradation is augmented by its placement in the concluding chapter, and this placement, in its turn, demonstrates that grotesque inversion serves not only as a major thematic and stylistic device but as an organizational principle as well.

Inversion is equally recognizable in the character of Frère Jean, for the friar betokens in important

ways the "mundus inversus" of the monastic world. Although he is first introduced as a "vray moine si oncques en feut depuys que le monde moynant moyna de moynerie" (Gargantua, p. 107), Frère Jean exemplifies much that a monk was not (or, more accurately, was not assumed to be). One of his finest hours occurs during the tempest. While Panurge "restoit de cul sus le tillac, pleurant et lamentant" (p. 96), literally inverted ("les pieds à mont, la teste en bas," p. 97) by the rushing waves and pleading for his friend to hear his confession, Jean fearlessly stands his ground, challenging Panurge to do the same: "Mille diables, dist frere Jan . . . Vertus Dieu! parle tu de testament à ceste heure que sommes en dangier, et qu'il nous convient evertuer ou jamais plus? Viendras tu, ho Diable?" (p. 97). A man of action whose sexual frankness exceeds accepted monastic bounds, Jean sets the traditional monkish character on its ear, swearing and casting aside all thought of prayer as he furiously works to keep the ship afloat, even finding excitement in the tempestuousness of the sea, which, like the earth, in the grotesque world assumes the characteristics of human beings:[13]

> Inse, inse, inse. Vieigne esquif! Inse. Vertus Dieu, qu'est cela? Le cap est en pieces. Tonnez, Diables, petez, rottez, fiantez. Bren pour la vague! Elle a, par la vertus Dieu! failly à m'emporter soubs le courant (p. 100).

His language and, more particularly, its stress on bodily functions, especially on those through which man intrudes upon or interacts with the external world, go far in making this passage a brilliant illustration of the use of the grotesque in Rabelais, but the reader can hardly fail to note that much of the comic in Jean derives directly from the fact that he is a grotesque inversion of the monastic stereotype. Jean's actions at times may be considered offensive (as in his violent defense of the abbey in Gargantua), but his lively nature and earthy manners always accentuate the comic side of his character.

As the passages discussed indicate, grotesque inversion functions as a means of unifying the multiple facets of the Fourth Book. Through grotesque inversion, the Rabelaisian world is simultaneously turned upside down, ridiculed, and renewed. Laughter, always a restorative factor in Rabelais, is the key to this renovation, for it dispels fear and gloom while poking fun at the foibles of real men in a real world. Epithets and abuse in the Quart Livre provide prime illustrations of such ambivalent inversion, for they both deride and comically renovate their targets.

Like most grotesque phenomena, grotesque inversion usually involves a physical metamorphosis or degradation. Yet is would hardly suffice to state that

such reversals exclusively manifest a descent from abstract to physical. Rabelais uses inversion as a stylistic and thematic device; his taste for comic degradation allowed him to create both linguistic and stylistic inversions which, by their radical deformity, add new and vital elements to the grotesque universe. These original uses of basic grotesque structures serve to flesh out an imaginary world already populated with grotesque figures. In the case of Panurge, the progression from rakish scoundrel to cowardly fool exemplifies degradation on the physical, mental, and comic levels. Laughter, Rabelais's therapeutic cure, again supplies the crucial link which completes the circle of degradation and renewal. The grotesque world view ridicules the arrogant and disarms irrational fears. Even the demons of Hell are not as threatening as official canons would seem to imply. The entire Quart Livre is organized around the principle of grotesque derision and renewal, a principle which underlines and continually reinforces Rabelais's undaunted optimism in the face of a world gone mad.

Notes

[1]Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, translated by Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), p. 95.

[2]Curtius also illustrates the use of this theme with this example from Vergil: "A shepherd forsaken by this beloved is ready to compound for the reversal of the entire order of nature: 'Now may the wolf of his own free will flee the sheep, the oak bear golden apples, owls compete with swans, the shepherd Tityrus be Orpheus'" (p. 95).

[3]Stanford French Review I (Fall, 1977), 95-105.

[4]Bakhtin discusses this narrative in his chapter "Popular Festive Forms": "In Touraine, where the episode took place, as well as in Poitiers and other French provinces, there existed the custom of the so-called 'nopces à mitaines' ('gauntlet weddings'). During the wedding feast the guests cuffed each other jokingly. The person who was subjected to these light blows could not complain; they were consecrated and legalized by custom" (p. 200).

[5]These episodes will be further discussed in the following chapter.

[6]The best known example in Rabelais of this reversal of ordinary earthly and infernal roles is, of course, Epistemon's account of Hell (Pantagruel, pp. 365-374).

[7]Two other excellent examples of linguistic inversions are found in Pantagruel. Although they are not spoonerisms, they illustrate grotesque inversion by their incongruous juxtapositions and juggling of meanings. The first occurs in Chapter XVI, where Panurge claims that 'il n'y avoit q'un antistrophe entre femme folle à la messe et femme molle à la fesse" (p. 303). The second takes place as Panurge woos a Parisian lady in Chapter XXI:

> --Allez, (dist elle), allez, je ne m'en soucie; laissez moy ici prier Dieu.
> --Mais, (dist il), evocquez sur 'A Beaumont le Viconte'.

> --Je ne sçauroys, dist elle.
> --C'est, (dist il), 'A beau con le vit monte' (p. 329).

In both cases, inversion of the original locution causes the degradation of lofty images (the mass, royalty). The reader's laughter at this incongruous combination completes the circle of degradation and renewal.

[8]Travesties of Hell originated in antiquity. One of the most notable is Menippus, or the Descent into Hades, written in the second century A.D.; it has been discussed in the chapter on Menippean satire and its relation to the grotesque in the Quart Livre.

[9]The Quart Livre might well be considered a critique of excess and fanaticism. Many of the islands visited provide portraits of extremism as do those of the "Papefigues" and "Papimanes."

[10]Lawrence D. Kritzman, "La quête de la parole dans le Quart Livre de Rabelais," French Forum, no. 3 (September, 1977), p. 201.

[11]As Jourda notes in the Garnier edition, "Rabelais a complètement renouvelé [l'épisode] en y introduisant la scène du marchandage," p. 49.

[12]Donald M. Frame, "The Impact of Frère Jean on Panurge in Rabelais's Tiers Livre," in Renaissance and Other Studies in Honor of William L. Wiley (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 83-91, attributes the change in Panurge to the new role assigned to the monk.

[13]Another significant example of this phenomenon is found in Pantagruel, Chapter II, when the earth sweats during the great drought before Pantagruel's birth (p. 230).

V. THE GROTESQUE BODY AND OBSCENITY

Rabelais's works have often been misunderstood, disparaged, and even avoided because of certain obscene passages and imagery. Yet obscenity *per se* has very little to do with the Rabelaisian world, and to read his text as merely obscene is, in fact, to misread it. Standing at the literary crossroads of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Rabelais was able to draw from the powerful traditions of carnivalesque literature and folk humor, traditions which, in turn, helped him to depict the comic drama of the grotesque body--and especially its lower stratum--in which man interacts with the external world. By so doing, he regenerates faith and hope through laughter. Far from being obscene, Rabelais's work is a comic celebration of man's potential and a Renaissance vision of man as one with his natural world. A brief review of informed notions of obscenity will clear the path for a serious discussion of the grotesque comedy of the body as it functions in the *Quart Livre*.

In his article, "Obscenity and the Law of Reflection," Henry Miller declares: "To discuss the

nature and meaning of obscenity is almost as difficult as to talk about God."[1] A dictionary definition confirms suspicious as to the complexity and ambiguity of the subject: obscenity is that which is disgusting to the senses, repulsive, and abhorrent to "morality and virtue;" it is specifically "designed to incite to lust or depravity."[2] Yet how and by whom are "morality and virtue" or even what is repulsive to be determined with any specificity? And, as a morass of government-supported studies and Supreme Court decisions in the United States attest, it is an equally forbidding task to decide what materials or art works are "designed to incite to lust or depravity." D.H. Lawrence, who spent much of his life struggling against Puritanical canons and seeking a more realistic delineation of the word's implications, derives "obscene" from the Greek "obscena": "that which might not be represented on stage."[3] He too rails at the hopelessness of the lexicograher's task: "How much further are you? None! What is obscene to Tom is not obscene to Lucy or Joe, and really, the meaning of the word has to wait for the majorities to decide it" (p. 5). Definitions, like attitudes, are the products of cultures from which they emanate, and the case of obscenity is particularly sticky, for what is considered innocuous and mundane in

Paris may not be taken so lightly elsewhere. Epoch may also be important to any given definition of obscenity, as the trials of such now-accepted masterpieces as Madame Bovary and Les Fleurs du Mal reveal. Henry Miller undoubtedly speaks for many frustrated authors when he asserts that "D.H. Lawrence was probably right when he said that 'nobody knows what the word obscene means'" (p. 3). Finally, Theodore Schroeder, who spent his life battling censorship, states that "obscenity does not exist in any book or picture but is wholly a quality of the reading or viewing mind."[4]

In the view of many authoritative students of the obscene, the concept of obscenity depends upon the judgment of censorship of a "reading or viewing mind" without which the term would be rendered meaningless. But foes of censorship often argue that the censor seeks above all to eradicate or suppress the basest and most depraved of his own unconscious desires.[5] For him, so-called obscene materials represent a convenient scapegoat upon which these base desires may be projected. The waging of war, viewed by many as the epitome of obscenity, exemplifies this phenomenon:

> The sordid qualities imputed to the enemy are always those which we recognize as our own and therefore rise to slay, because only through projection do we realize the enormity and horror of them. Man tries as in a dream to kill the enemy in himself. This enemy, both within and

> without, is just as, but no more real than the phantoms in his dreams. . . . To those who no longer need to kill, the man who indulges in murder is a sleep-walker (Miller, p. 15).

The censor, acting as moral judge for society, "rises to slay" the phantoms of his own nightmare which he hopes others will not transform into reality.

Yet we must make an unequivocal distinction between censor and critic for their tasks run at loggerheads. While the censor condemns, lays blame, and seeks to repress, the critic seeks to understand, to interpret, and to clarify. The latter's work is not to condemn, nor is it to laud or approve the moral integrity of an art work, but rather to appraise the work's aesthetic impact and its implications for the art form in question. This distinction is of particular importance to Rabelaisian scholarship, since the question of obscenity has for centuries clouded the interpretation and comprehension of Rabelais's grotesque masterpieces. It is not, then, the purpose of this chapter to point out and condemn possibly offensive passages in the Quart Livre, but neither can these be ignored, as they have so often been, for they represent the deep ambivalence and are an important component of Rabelais's grotesque style and world.

A brief examination of Rabelais's historical reputation among artists and scholars reveals that the

good physician, perhaps more than any other author, has been considered both obscene and frivolous for five centuries. Rabelais's writings found a spot on the Catholic Index of condemned works in the sixteenth century, and their author was repeatedly forced to flee from Paris to escape possible persecution. No small number of his contemporaries viewed his work as of questionable moral value, objecting specifically to his free use of vulgar language and to his representation or suggestions of the sexual act.[6] DeGrève finds that while the "masse populaire" relished Rabelais's earthy tales, the literary elite, including the Lyonese poets Louise Labé and Maurice Scève, held his work in relatively low esteem (p. 18). Upon reviewing the literary strength of his contemporaries, Montaigne considered Rabelaisian humor as rather frivolous, and Rabelais along with Boccaccio as "simplement plaisans."[7]

Condemnation of Rabelais's work by scholarly commentators became more severe in the seventeenth century, as La Bruyère's comments in the opening chapter of the Caractères attest:

> Marot et Rabelais sont inexcusables d'avoir semé l'ordure dans leurs écrits: tous deux avoient assez de génie pour s'en passer, même à l'égard de ceux qui cherchent moins à s'admirer qu'à rire dans un auteur. Rabelais surtout est incompréhensible. Son livre est une énigme, quoi qu'on veulle dire, inexplicable: c'est une chimère, c'est le visage d'une belle femme avec des pieds et une queue

> de serpent, ou de quelque autre bête plus difforme.[8]

Even in denouncing Rabelais, La Bruyère curiously underlines the grotesque synthesis of Rabelais's writings, remarking its basic ambivalance.

In the eighteenth century, Voltaire, whom one would expect to appreciate Rabelais's impeccable anti-clerical tendencies, strongly tempers his faint praise of the ex-monk, considering him base in both style and substance and of questionable literary merit:

> Rabelais dans son extravagant et inintelligible livre a répandu une extrême gaieté et une plus grande impertinence. Il a prodigué l'erudition, les ordures, et l'ennui. Un bon conte de deux pages est acheté par des volumes de sottises. Il n'y a que quelques personnes d'un goût bizarre qui se piquent d'entendre et d'estimer tout cet ouvrage: le reste de la nation rit des plainsanteries de Rabelais, et méprise le livre. On le regarde comme le premier des bouffons. On est fâché qu'un homme qui avoit tant d'esprit, en aie fait un si misérable usage. C'est un philosophe ivre, qui n'a écrit que dans le temps de son ivresse.[9]

Nineteenth-century critics, while lauding the originality and folkloric value of Rabelais, remained nonetheless incapable of appreciating the work in its entirety. Sainte-Beuve reflects their hesitation and at the same time illuminates the reasons for it:

> Quand on veut lire tout haut du Rabelais, même devant les hommes (car devant les femmes cela ne se peut pas), on est toujours comme quelqu'un qui veut traverser une vaste place pleine de boue et d'ordures: il s'agit d'enjamber à chaque moment et de traverser sans trop se crotter.[10]

In truth, only in the twentieth century, and in particular with the publication of Bakhtin's monumental study of Rabelaisian humor, have many of Rabelais's "untouchable" episodes received serious critical analysis. Bakhtin accurately asserts that most critical objections to Rabelais's work take issue with his portrayal of the grotesque body and the functions of the material bodily lower stratum. Yet such protests emanate from points of view which ignore Rabelais's vital link with the universal tradition of folk humor and carnivalesque literature whose roots lie in remotest antiquity and which are replete with comic images of the lower body:

> Whenever men laugh and curse, particularly in familiar environment, their speech is filled with bodily images. The body copulates, defecates, overeats, and men's speech is filled with genitals, bellies, defecations, urine, disease, noses, mouths, and dismembered parts. Even when the flood is contained by the norms of speech, there is still an eruption of these images into literature, especially if the literature is gay and abusive in character. The common human fund of familiar and abusive gesticulations is also based on these sharply defined images.
>
> This boundless ocean of grotesque bodily imagery within time and space extends to all languages, all literatures and to the entire system of gesticulation; in the midst of it, the bodily canon of art, belles lettres and polite conversation of modern times is a tiny island. This limited canon never prevailed in antique literature. In the official literature of European peoples it has existed only for the last four hundred years (Bakhtin, p. 319).

Grotesque images of the lower body form the very marrow of Rabelais's world, for they disarm fears of death and the unknown with life-giving laughter. By definition the lower body is a natural focus for grotesque humor. In lower body activities the human experiences ambivalences and dualities, for in them he is both man and beast; man is most like an animal in sexual and digestive behavior and most human in the upper body activities of thought and speech. The lower body is also a debasement not only in the sense of ridicule but in the physical sense of a lower position in relation to the upper body activities of poetry and reason. Without these ambivalent images of the lower body, Rabelais's writings would be little more than an empty shell stripped of its essence.

One need look no farther than the first book to substantiate this claim, for language and imagery of the lower body are consistently integrated into the work's narrative development. Panurge's claims of sexual prowess with Parisian ladies (Pantagruel, XXI and XXIII), his attempted seduction of one of them, and his subsequent revenge on her along with his proposal for a new sort of city wall (Pantagruel, XV) lend adequate support to this statement. Although such episodes are perhaps not so coarsely portrayed in later volumes,

sexual and scatalogical forays are nonetheless included in those works and particularly so in the Quart Livre. Here it may be useful to cite another relevant definition. "Scatology" is defined as the study of excrement (for purposes of diet) and also as treatment of obscene subjects in art and literature.[11] The salience of the first part of this definition cannot be exaggerated, for Rabelaisian comedy depends every bit as much on the excretory as it does on the sexual, as illustrated in the early books by such brilliantly comic passages as the "torchecul" experiment (Gargantua, XIII) and Pantagruel's creation of the pygmies by excretion (Pantagruel, XXVII), And, as we shall see, the scatalogical or excretory continues to fill a dominant place even in the concluding chapter of the Quart Livre.

In fact, if the excretory and the sexual both play significant roles in the Rabelaisian world, it is partly because they serve a nearly identical purpose in Rabelais's grotesque cosmogony. Since the grotesque is always a function of two directly contrasting forces--the first represented by the ludicrous, the comic, or the absurd, the second by the terrible, offensive, fearsome, or repulsive--obscene or scatalogical elements in Rabelais may well be perceived as fulfilling the second or offensive aspect of the grotesque aesthetic

mode. But the question remains whether or not obscenity in Rabelais is also always comic. Part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that no critical reader of Rabelais has ever claimed that his "obscene" passages excite the sexual appetite. On the other hand, few if any have failed to laugh at these very passages. As Donald Frame states: "All [Rabelais's] obscenity is comic; almost all his comedy is obscene."[12] Thus, for those who understand it well, Rabelais has constructed a fundamentally comic world to which obscene or scatalogical elements may contribute but only in the service of his comic vision. Finally, the obscene or repulsive in art or literature becomes grotesque when those elements or episodes are presented as part of a carnivalesque, grotesque cosmos where, by the law of inversion, subjects that would elsewhere by purely repulsive become necessarily comic. Gargantua's "torchecul" experiment is an exemplary case, for in any other context the young giant's diversion would risk becoming exclusively offensive:

> the episode is not an isolated commonplace obscenity of our modern times, but an organic part of a large and complex world of popular marketplace forms. Only if torn away from this world and seen per se in the modern sense will these images appear vulgar and dirty (Bakhtin, p. 380).

Close scrutiny of the Rabelaisian text reveals that the second or offensive aspect of the grotesque is

in fact represented by four major modes: 1) excretory, 2) sexual, 3) physical (that is to say, abuse and the infliction of pain and/or death), and 4) linguistic. One need not search long to find copious examples of each expressive mode in the earlier works. Pantagruel's drowning of the Dipsodes in urine (Pantagruel, Chapter XXVIII), his creation of the pygmies (Pantagruel, Chapter XVII), the "torchecul" episode (Gargantua, Chapter XIII), and Gargantua's arrival in Paris (Gargantua, Chapter XVII) clearly illustrate the integration of the first mode into the Rabelaisian text. The cunning Panurge embodies the sexual mode, particularly in Pantagruel, as he boasts of his many conquests, proposes a new plan for the Parisian walls (Pantagruel, Chapter XV), and plays an outrageous trick on a Parisian lady who refuses his lascivious advances (Pantagruel, Chapters XXI and XXII). The most infamous instances depicting pain and death are portrayed by Panurge's "ruse de guerre" upon arriving in the land of the Dipsodes (Pantagruel, Chapter XXV) and, of course, by Frère Jean's defense of the Abbey of Seuillé (Gargantua, Chapter XXVII). This third mode may at first seem of dubious comic value, but it becomes fully comic precisely because of Rabelais's ludicrous, absurd, or exaggerated presentations of morbid events, which are thus mitigated and disarmed. In addition, as De Rocher

has noted in his work on Joubert's Traité du Ris,[13] the sixteenth-century reader had a very different comic perspective than his modern counterpart. As we have seen, what the modern reader might consider sadistic would have been perceived as hilarious and purely comic in sixteenth-century France. Linguistic outrages, perhaps most responsible for Rabelais's ill-repute, about but are particularly well-represented in the language of the comic foils Panurge and Frère Jean, whose liberal use of invective and blasphemy punctuate the first two books. Linguistic obscenity almost always encompasses one or more of the three other modes through the vehicle of language, but all four modes portray the grotesque drama of the lower bodily stratum and are represented in a ludicrous or exaggerated manner so as to render comic through the principle of inversion what would not ordinarily be so. On another level, of course, all four of these offensive axes are properly linguistic inasmuch as they are represented artistically through written language.

Rabelais's early works often place the obscene or offensive element at the center of narrative discourse. With this in mind, one is not surprised to learn that the Quart Livre provides Rabelais with more opportunities for further exploration of the grotesque body in its diverse forms. Rabelais has clearly drawn

his comically offensive imagery from the tradition of carnivalesque literature outlined by Bakhtin, who stresses that the grotesque body cannot be separated from its role within the larger context of the grotesque cosmos: "Bodily topography of folk humor is closely interwoven with cosmic topography" (p. 354).

Grotesque narrative generally moves from the upper stratum to the lower, consistently demeaning, inverting, and turning to ridicule that which is normally revered: "debasement is the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism; all that is sacred and exalted is rethought on the level of the material bodily stratum or else combined and mixed with its images . . . the accent is placed not on the upward movement but on descent" (Bakhtin, p. 371). Significantly, Bakhtin views the Quart Livre as Rabelais's exemplary portrayal of that downward trend; the fantastic archipelago of the Quart Livre, set unspecifically in the then unexplored Northwest Passage, is but a thin disguise for a more modern depiction of the underworlds described by Vergil and Lucian in antiquity:

> Actually, Pantagruel's entire voyage takes place in the underworld, the obsolete world of comic monsters . . . (the various monsters) are carnivalesque images of the old world and of old truths; they are the gay monsters who fill the grotesque underworld and are the protagonists of the diableries. The downward thrust in its most varied forms and manifestations marks all the images of the Fourth Book (Bakhtin, p. 400).

Thus Pantagruel and his companions explore a sixteenth-century version of the underworld just as Lucian's Menippus journeyed through heaven and hell with a critical eye and as the voyagers of Lucian's True History navigated the unknown realms beyond the straits of Gibraltar. The Fourth Book's downward thrust clearly parallels the "bodily topography" of Lucian's voyage and emphasizes the importance of the grotesque lower body in that Menippean tradition.[14] Bodily images of the lower stratum and/or repulsive aspects of the grotesque comedy as they appear in the narrative and thematic development of the Quart Livre thus have a long-standing validation.

As the opinions of Voltaire and Sainte-Beuve suggest, Rabelais has long been recognized for his scatalogical forays into scenes of bodily relief, frequently incorporating them into his narratives. The Quart Livre is especially notable for this Rabelaisian tendency, as it resolves to a great degree around the continual degradation of the mock hero Panurge. In this work, as in the Tiers Livre, Panurge forfeits his role as comic foil to the monk Frère Jean, becoming instead a pitiful cowering buffoon in contrast to the stereotype epic hero. Although Panurge enjoys a brief moment of grotesquely heroic glory in the Dindenault episode at the voyage's outset (Chapters VI-VIII),

almost all of his ensuing activities exemplify the "downward thrust" movement. The Dindenault episode itself also depicts downward motion, for the passage concludes at the bottom of the sea. Panurge's subsequent behavior repeatedly underlines his cowardice. He appears during the tempest (Chapter XVIII-XXIV) so paralyzed with fear that he cannot utter intelligible sounds and is reduced to gibberish (pp. 95-108), an inversion or perversion of human intelligence. Panurge then compounds his faults by insisting after the storm that he was never afraid: "J'ai du couraige prou, voyre. De paour bien peu. Baillez ça, mon ami. Non, non, pas maille de craincte" (p. 109). The mock hero continues to embody cowardice throughout the entire narrative. When Frère Jean proposes that the sinister Quaresmeprenant be attacked, Panurge immediately disagrees and closes the debate summarily:

> Combattre Quaresmeprenant, dist Panurge, de par tous les Diables, je ne suys pas si fol et hardy ensemble. Quid juris, si nous trouvions envelopez entre Andouilles et Quaresmeprenant? entre l'enclume et les marteaulx? Cancre. Houstez vous de là. Tirons oultre. Adieu, vous diz, Quaresmeprenant. Je vous recommande les Andouilles, et n'oubliez pas les Boudins (p. 127).

Panurge's argument characteristically contains references to the underworld (tous les Diables"), to the bodily functions of consumption (Andouilles" and "Boudins") and to sexual affliction ("cancre"). In this light,

the tone of Panurge's later speeches becomes almost predictable. At every new obstacle, he quickly expresses trepidation and urges evasion, as in the cases of the Physetere (p. 138), the Andouilles (p. 148), the "paroles dégelées" (p. 203), the Isle of Chaneph (p. 234), and the book's final episode near the Isle of Ganabin.

This concluding passage, narratively and thematically highlighted by its position in the work, provides a prime example of Rabelais's scatatogical grotesque imagery. Learning that the Isle of Thieves lies nearby, Panurge immediately registers his agreement with suggestions by Pantagruel and Xenomanes that all contact with the inhabitants be avoided:

> C'est, dist Panurge, bient et doctement parlé. Ha, do da! Ne descendons jamais en terre des voleurs et larrons. . . . Ne y descendons poinct, je vous en prie. Croyez, si non moy, au moins le conseil de ce bon et sage Xenomanes. Ilz sont, par la mort boeuf de boys! pires que les Caniballes. Ils nous mangeroient tous vifz (pp. 241-242).

As usual, Panurge unabashedly blurts out his feelings of fear. But this time, so great is his fear that he hides below deck "entre les croutes, miettes et chaplys du pain" (p. 243), where he mistakes a cat for a demon in the final chapter. The downward thrust so characteristic of the Fourth Book finds full expression here, for the upper body's visions provoke the lower body's movement, a fact made explicit by the narrator:

> La vertus retentrice du nerf qui restrainct le muscle nommé sphincter (c'est le trou du cul) estoit dissolue par le vehemence de paour qu'il avoid eu en ses phantasticques visions. Adjoinct le tonnoire de telles canonnades, lequel plus est horrificque par les chambres basses que n'est sus le tillac. Car un des symptomes et accidens de paour, est que par luy ordinairement se ouvre le guischet du serrail on quel est à temps la matiere fecale retenue (p. 245).

The passage emphasizes Panurge's descent to the hold, further reinforcing the entire episode's downward movement. Quintessentially Rabelaisian in style, the narrator describes the effect in three tongues: the learned, reflected in medical terms ("sphincter," "la matiere fecale"); the language of the marketplace ("le trou de cul"); and the suggestively sexual/excretory ("le guischet du serrail")--and quintessentially grotesque, for the fact that the "diableteau" turns out to be nothing more than a cat ridicules and dispels fear of the unknown represented by the demon. This disarming typifies the undaunted spirit of grotesque realism which laughs in the face of cosmic terror.

Rabelais characteristically follows up the occurrence with a list of historical precedents and anecdotes including an imaginary story about Villon coupled with an authentic quatrain that deals with the lower body and inversion ("Et d'une chorde d'une toise/ Sçaura mon coul que mon cul poise," p. 247). Villon's anecdote about Doctor Thomas Linacer also contributes to

the passage's decidedly scatalogical orientation. In response to the king's command to revere the French coat of arms, Villon recounts how Doctor Linacer recommended viewing the coat as a symbolic cure for constipation: "Car seulement les voyant, vous avez telle vezarde et paour si horrificque que soudain vous fiantez comme dixhuyct bonases de Paeonie" (p. 246). But the web of excremental intrigue runs even deeper into the text, for in the accompanying "Briefve Declaration d'aucunes dictions plus obscures contenues on quatriesme livre . . ." (pp. 249-260) we discover the significance of "Bonases":

> . . . animal de Paeonie, de la grandeur d'un taureau, mais plus trappe, lequel, chassé et presse, fianté loing de quartre pas et plus. Par tel moyen se saulve, bruslant de son fiant le poil des chiens qui le prochassent (p. 260).

Rabelais's rich imagination give birth to a truly grotesque being, combining the ludicrous and the repulsive in its radical deformity, so that once again the reader is compelled to focus on the comic and carnivalesque portrayal of excrement which depicts on a literal level, but in good faith and with laughter, what man leaves to the world once has has partaken of its fruits. The comic impact of the excretory grotesque cannot be overemphasized, for, as Bakhtin insists:

> We must not forget that urine (as well as dung) is gay matter, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter. If dung is a link between body and earth (the laughter

> that unites them), urine is a link between body and sea (p. 335).

The excretory comedy of Panurge, and indeed the entire voyage of the Quart Livre, centers upon man's laughter at his contact with the world, laughter calculated to dissipate false seriousness and fear of the unknown--the immortal laughter of "Pantagruelisme."

Elsewhere in the Quart Livre, additional incidents depicting bodily functions reinforce the comic, thematic value of the excretory-repulsive axis. After a semantic misunderstanding results in a battle with the Andouilles, the sausage-queen apologies to Pantagruel: "Puys le pria vouloir de grace leur pardonner ceste offense, alleguant qu'en Andouilles plus toust l'on trouvoit merde que fiel" (p. 163). Here, Rabelais strengthens the comic word play on the grotesque human-sausages with a reference to excrement. Moreover, the queen's words make light of an already ludicrous conflict that ridicules all war by its grotesquely deformed presentation.

Pantagruel's stop at the Isle of Ruach continues the line of excremental comedy, for its peculiar inhabitants consume only wind: "Ils ne vivent que de vent. Rient ne beuvent, rien ne mangent, sinon vent" (p. 165).[15] Rabelais does not hesitate to exploit comically the effects of such a deformity on their bodily functions:

"Ilz ne fiantent, ilz ne pissent, ilz ne crachent en ceste isle. En recompense, ilz vesnent, ilz pedent, ilz rottent copieusement" (p. 166). The comic element clearly resides in the beings' grotesque interaction with the external world. Even customs of death on the island revolve around this deformity which Rabelais typically describes with a blend of medical and popular terminology: "Ilz meurent tous hydropicques, tympanites; et meurent les hommes en pedent, les femmes en vesnent. Ainsi leur sort l'ame par le cul" (p. 167). The downward movement of Rabelaisian imagery could not be illustrated more vividly and in this case attains cosmic proportions. Grotesque inversion clearly enriches the excretory-comic value of these beings by its reversal of Christian imagery which normally describes the soul's ascension to the heavenly spheres.

Panurge pursues the same cosmic vein in the next chapter with a "dizain" concerning Jenin de Quinquenays and his wife Quelot. So fiercely does the latter break wind that her husband takes drastic measures:

> Mais ne pouvant Jenin dormir en somme,
> Tant fort vesnoit Quelot, et tant souvent,
> La compissa. Puys: "Voylà, dist il, comme
> Petite pluie abat bien un grand vent" (p. 168).

Rabelais thus provides a hilarious explanation for a folkloric aphorism that highlights the excretory

functions of the lower body and reinforces the Fourth Book's descending orientation with a masterful display of grotesque comic realism.

Rabelais's use of scatalogical imagery is not limited, however, to the purely comic plane of grotesque bodily comedy. In the case of Homenaz, bishop of the Papimanes, the narrator enlists excretory comedy in the service of a highly satirical portrait which mocks the extremism of religious idolatry. The bishop understands the Decretales to be God's uniquely divine message to man and lauds their celestial powers in Chapter LI: "O comment, lisant seulement un demy canon, un petit paragraphe, un seul notable de ses sacrosainctes Decretales, vous sentez en vos coeurs enflammée la fournaise d'amour divin" (p. 191). Pantagruel's companions, nevertheless, share a decidedly less enthusiastic opinion of these saintly works. Panurge first cites a case in which he read only a chapter of the works while visiting Poitiers: "le Diable m'emport si, à la lecture d'icelluy, je ne feuz tant constipe du ventre que par plus de quatre, voyre cinq jours de je fiantay qu'une petite crotte" (p. 191). Panurge's misfortune underlines the unnatural effects of such lofty reading matter, degrading their alleged powers by lowering them to the excretory level; this passage's comic, satirical value lies precisely in the debasement

of the highly praised religious literature, making a grotesque mockery of Homenaz's idol. Frère Jean reinforces Panurge's claims by recounting a similar experience:

> --Un jour, dist frère Jan, je m'estois, à Seuillé, torché le cul d'un feueillet d'unes meschantes Clementines, les quelles Jean Guymard, nostre recepveur, avoit jecté on preau du cloistre: je me donne à tous les Diables si les rhagadies et haemorrutes ne m'en advindrent si très horribles que le paouvre trou de mon clous bruneau en fut tout dehinguandé (pp. 191-192).

The nefarious effects of these writings on the companions' all-important bodily functions clearly indicate the author's opinion of their true value, and the victims' discomforts become more comical by virtue of their location in the lower body. In addition, the scatalogical tone of the two anecdotes, including their sacrilegious expressions--"le Diable m'emport si" and "je me donne à tous les Diables"-- comically contrasts with the elevated language of Homenaz. As the companions continue to cite the evil effects of the Decretales, Homenaz attempts to contradict each one, much as Panurge imagines interpretations contrary to Pantagruel's explanations of Panurge's dreams and soothsayers' forecasts of cuckoldry in the Tiers Livre. And, in the following chapter, "Comment, par le vertus des Decretales, est l'or subtilement tiré de France en Rome," Homenaz's continued adulatory tributes to this

divine work end on a ludicrous note of contrast accentuated by the functions of the grotesque body:

> Icy commença Homenaz rocter, peter, rire, baver et suer; et bailla son gros, gras bonnet à quatre braguettes à une des filles, laquelle le posa sus son beau chef en grande alaigresse, après l'avoir amoureusement baisé, comme guaige et asceurance qu'elle seroit premiere mariée (pp. 199-200).

The praise of the celestial documents is comically debased by the immeidate reaction of the grotesque body which both belches and breaks wind, an apt parallel to the bishop's long-winded acclaim. In fact, the comic movement from spiritual to material planes could not be better served than by the vehicle of the grotesque body. Above all, the clearly satirical thrust of this entire passage demonstrates the degree to which elements of grotesque scatalogical humor integrate themselves into the fabric of the Rabelaisian text.

The excretory comedy of grotesque realism in the Quart Livre is well sustained by the author throughout the narrative as a whole and provides many glimpses into the grotesque nature of Rabelaisian creation. Yet there exists another complex of comic-offensive threads woven into the text. Closely related to the scatalogical mode, scenes (or suggestions) of sexual activity and sexuality also function comically in the service of the grotesque. Sexuality, in fact, forms the second dynamic aspect of the lower body, and Rabelais, as we would

fully expect, explores the sexual for its comic potential in the Quart Livre. As we have already mentioned, Rabelais does not spin tales to excite the sexual appetites of his readers but instead utilizes sexual description in two manners: first, in order to shock the reader with laughter as the result; second, to depict unusual variations and comically grotesque deformity in sexual behavior. All scenes relating to sexual activity have a strictly positive value in Rabelais, and sexuality has a clearly regenerative meaning. "The material bodily stratum is productive. It gives birth, thus assuring man's immortality" (Bakhtin, p. 378). Like the excretory grotesque, comic sexual realism "simultaneously materializes and unburdens. It liberates objects from the snares of false seriousness, from illusions and sublimations inspired by fear" (Bakhtin, p. 376).

Rabelais's story of the young demon and the Papefigue peasants perfectly illustrates both the shock value of sexual comedy and the liberation from false seriousness and cosmic fear. On the island of the Papefigures, a peasant outwits an inexperienced devil who would rob the farmer of his crops, the latter taking advantage of the young devil's naiveté to foil him. The demon swears to take revenge and the farmer fears for his life. His wife, however, assures him that

she will clear up the matter and sends him off to town. When the devil arrives, ready for combat, she dramatically laments that her husband has grievously injured her:

> pour essayer ses ongles il m'a seulement gratté du petit doigt icy entre les jambes et m'a du tout affollée. Je suys perdue, jamais je n'en gueriray, reguardez. Encores est il allé chès le mareschal soy faire esguizer et apoincter les gryphes. Vous estez perdu, monsieur le Diable, mon amy. Saulvez vous, il n'arrestera poinct. Retirez vous, je vous en prie.
>
> Lors se descouvrit jusques qu menton en la forme que jadis les femmes Persides se praesenterent à leurs enfans fuyans de la bataille, et luy monstra son comment a nom (p. 178).

Stricken with terror, the demon immediately flees. But once again the underworld has invaded earthly life, sustaining the Fourth Book's downward focus. The peasant woman, through her preposterous threat and exposure, triumphs over the underworld menace; the comically displayed lower bodily stratum dispels all fear of the cosmic threat. Rabelais certainly includes nothing prurient in this passage. Instead, he utilizes the lower body for the devil's comic shock; human regenerative forces banish him to the underworld. To the reader, of course, the gesture cannot be seen as totally unexpected, since it is the very nature of a "Papefigue" to revile and abuse his or her adversaries.

Rabelais concentrates on radical sexual deformity in other instances, exploring grotesque possibilities

like those of the giants in Quaresmeprenant and in the story of Antiphysie. In Chapter XXX, Xenomane's long list describing the physical attributes of Quaresmeprenant is broken up by a narrative aside that underlines the monster's grotesque sexual nature. After a list of sixty succinct similes, Xenomanes reveals that Quaresmeprenant has:

> La geniture, comme un cent de clous à latte. Et me contoit sa nourrisse qu'il, estant marié avecques la Myquaresme, engendra seulement nombre de adverbes locaulx et certains jeunes doubles (p. 129).

The description of the monster's nature takes on special significance as it disrupts the seemingly interminable list of comparisons and introduces the grotesque into the realm of religious satire. Quaresmeprenant's radical deformity obviously lies in the fact that he engenders only "adverbes locaulx et certains jeunes doubles" rather than children, and the satirical thrust has been explained by Perreau:

> entre le Mi-Carême et Paques les adverbes de lieu étaient tres employés, car, les indulgences étant alors établies en plusieurs lieux on demandait ou et par où il fallait aller pour gagner les pardons.[16]

Pantagruel immediately reacts to this portrait by telling of the births of Amodunt and Discordance, children of Antiphysie. The tale prolongs the previous grotesque satire of religious practices, degrading and ridiculing not only fictional "enraigez Putherbes,

Briffaulx, Caphars, Chattemittes, Canibales," but also "les Demoniacles Calvins, imposteurs de Geneve" as "monstres difformes et contrefaicts en despit de Nature" (p. 137), descended directly from the offspring of Antiphysie. Amodunt and Discordance are singularly, radically deformed through grotesque inversion: "cheminoient sus leurs testes, continuellement faisant la roue, cul sus teste, les pieds contremont" (p. 136). Again, the Rabelaisian downward thrust, literally expressed by "cul sus teste," is stressed, this time in a particularly sharp criticism of Calvin and his followers. In this case, however, although the foes of nature regenerate, Rabelais effectively ridicules their activities by defining them as against Nature, with grotesque inversion and debasement verging uncharacteristically upon invective.[17]

As these examples attest, Rabelais makes extensive use of grotesque sexual comedy in the cartography of his heroes' imaginary voyage. His fantastic archipelago and use of the sexual mode afford him the opportunity not only to explore grotesquely deformed manifestations of sexuality for satirical purposes but also to enliven anecdotes which are both richly comic and optimistic in their debasement of cosmic fear.

Of the four major offensive or fearsome modes in Rabelais's grotesque world, the axis of comic imagery

depicting beatings, pain, and even death is perhaps the most difficult to grasp and produces the greatest discomfort in modern readers. After all, physical abuse and death are not common, comic subject matter in modern literature. A modern perspective makes this appreciation even more troublesome, since the twentieth-century grotesque often tends to forsake the comic optimism which cannot be subtracted from the Rabelaisian grotesque.

As a descendant of both the Menippean and medieval traditions, beatings meted out to the evil or unworthy function as just and comic retributions essential to Rabelais's grotesque perspective, and his grotesque style often provides the key to the understanding of such incidents, for an exaggerated and ludicrous rendering of a thrasing leaves the reader no choice but to laugh at the literary punishment. This is the case in Frère Jean's ruthless drubbing of the invaders as he defends the Abbey of Seuillé in Gargantua (Chapter XXVII); so outrageous and elaborate is the description that one cannot help but view the imaginary massacre as a comic distortion of warlike action. Several scenes of comic abuse in the Fourth Book are constructed in a like manner. While the victims may be pitiful, they are always ridiculously and humorously debased. Beatings play a large role in the Quart Livre and consistently characterize the descending movement of

the book:

> We . . . see the downward movement in fights, beatings, and blows; they throw the adversary to the ground, trample him into the earth. They bury their victim (Bakhtin, p. 370).

Indeed, fully seventeen of the book's fifty-eight chapters directly involve or at least set the stage for scenes of beatings, thrashings, and uncrownings.

Three major stories fill these chapters: 1) Panurge's debate with and demeaning of the merchant (Chapters V-VIII), perhaps the best-known incident of Rabelaisian comic abuse; 2) the beatings of the Chiquanous in Lord Basché's house (Chapters XII-XVI), one of the most imaginative, sustained episodes in all of Rabelais; and 3) the war of the Andouilles (Chapters XXXV-XLII), the lengthiest and probably the finest example of comic thrashing and "slicing up" in the Quart Livre. The importance of these passages to a full understanding of Rabelais's handling of the grotesque cannot be underestimated. A brief analysis of each will reveal the degree to which abuse is comic and how that comic essence is achieved in the physical mode.

Panurge's encounter with the merchant Dindenault becomes comic not only through its grotesque conclusion but also by the contrast between the lofty language used by the combatants and the baseness of the subjects at hand. Initially, the merchant attempts to dupe Panurge

by extolling the nobility and antiquity of his race of sheep: "Ce sont moutons à la grande laine, Jason y print la toison d'or. L'ordre de la maison de Bourguoigne en feut extraict. Moutons de Levant, moutons de haulte fustaye, moutons de haulte gresse" (p. 50). But Dindenault then arouses Panurge's ire through verbal ridicule: "Vous estes, ce croy je, le joyeulx du Roy" (p. 51). The merchant prolongs his extravagant claims throughout the debate but finally concludes the bargain, whereupon Panurge quickly dumps his purchase into the sea: "Tous les aultres moutons, crians et bellans en pareille intonation, commencerent soy jecter et saulter en mer après, à la file" (p. 56). Attempting to avert their demise, Dindenault blocks their way but is dragged in with his wares and his shepherds. For all that the scene would surely be less comic were it not for the ludicrous manner in which Panurge completes his revenge; in lofty tones, he prepares his victims for their passage from this life:

> leurs remonstrant par lieux de rhetoricque les miseres de ce monde, le bien et l'heur de l'autre vie, affermant plus heureux estre les trespassez que les vivans en ceste vallée de misere, et à un chascun d'eulx promettant eriger un beau cenotaphe et sepulchre honoraire au plus hault du mont Cenis, à son retour de Lanternoys (p. 57).

Panurge even pushes the other shepherds back into the sea, preaching elegantly to all. In typical Rabelaisian fashion, Panurge turns the tables, reversing the entire

situation. The resulting laughter is involuntary, defensive and characteristic of grotesque comedy; Panurge's lofty and sarcastic words of vengeance effectively balance Dindenault's previous exalted praise of his flock. Finally, the merchant's plunge into the sea literally exemplifies the downward thrust of the Quart Livre and that of grotesque, offensive comedy.

In the case of the Chiquanous, grotesque inversion and descending movement comically portray beatings in a parallel manner. As much-abused legal agents who serve subpoenas, they earn their pay in a unique manner: "A Rome, gens infiniz guaignent leur vie à empoisonner, à batre et à tuer; les Chiquanous la guaignent à estre battuz. De mode que, si par long temps demouroient sans estre battuz, ils mourroient de male faim, eulx, leurs femmes et enfans" (p. 70). But, as Bakhtin accurately remarks, the Lord Basché turns these beatings into a veritable marriage banquet, a "nopces à mitaines" (Bakhtin, pp. 2007-207). The guests exchange polite and affectionate cuffs at this banquet as part of the traditional ceremony in accordance with the Lord's instructions: "Mais, quand ce viendra au Chiquanous, frappez dessus comme sus seigle verde, ne l'espargnez. Tappez, daubez, frappez, je vous en prie" (p. 72). Both the Seigneur and Panurge carefully point out the comic nature of these thrashings, which surely would have been

perceived by the sixteenth-century reader: "Telz coups seront donnez en riant, scelon la coustume observée en toutes fiansailles" (p. 72, my emphasis). Thus the party begins and the first courteous blows are exchanged:

> Mais, quand ce vint au tour de Chiquanous, ilz le festoierent à grands coups de guanteletz, si bien qu'il resta tout eslourdy et meurtry, un oeil poché au beurre noir, huict coustes freussées, le brechet enfondré, les omoplates en quatre quartiers, la maschouere inferieure en trois loppins, et le tout en riant (p. 73).

The incongruous medical description of these injuries, so reminiscent of the language describing Frère Jean's destruction of his enemies while defending the abbey in Gargantua, contributes markedly to the grotesque comedy of the entire passage. The Chiquanous's drubbing is repeated "à plusieurs reprises" in subsequent chapters (XIV-XVI) and gives rise to Basché's anecdote about Villon (pp. 74-77). Frère Jean joins the thrashers and shows that he has lost none of his former spunk, beating "Rouge muzeau, dours et ventre, bras et jambes, teste et tout, à grands coups de baston, que je le cuydois mort assommé" (p. 86). Such outrageously exaggerated descriptions clearly reveal this passage's basic comic nature. And without a doubt, the constant drubbing to earth, indeed into unconsciousness, again testifies to the continuing presence of a downward movement in the Fourth Book. Finally, accomplished "tout en riant" in a banquet or carnival atmosphere, these uncrownings

accentuate comic abuse and debasement in accordance with the grotesque aesthetic mode.

The mock-epic war of the Andouilles is equally comic and grotesque, for the victims of abuse here are not even human beings but a race of sausages with human traits. What race could more fully embody the principals of grotesque realism and deformity than these sausages who combine human and gustatory characteristics and are thus radically deformed by definition alone. Because of the Andouilles' necessarily banquet nature, all sinister overtones of beating and slicing are immediately dispelled and only grotesque comedy results; battle terminology becomes banquet language and vice-versa. The entire episode functions as a parody of epic combat highlighted by Frère Jean's "grande Truye," an obvious lampoon of the Trojan horse, into which march "ces nobles cuisiniers guaillars, guallans, brusquetz, et prompts au combat" (p. 160). The inverted spirit of this war is represented by work play (the captains' names are Riflandouille and Tailleboudin) and by the sword of Gymnaste, appropriately named "Baise mon cul" (p. 161), referring comically to the lower body. Certainly these beatings are meant to be viewed in a comic light and, as culinary creatures, the Andouilles represent the idea of downward movement as they are actually devoured by Frère Jean's great army of kitchen utensils.

Closely linked to depictions of physical beatings in the Quart Livre are the numerous scenes containing verbal or gesticulative abuse. As Bakhtin points out, "oaths, curses and various abusive expressions are a source of considerable importance for the grotesque concept of the body" (p. 352). Curses and expressions of abuse, such as the name of Gymnaste's sword, often describe functions of the grotesque lower body in order to debase their targets; sexual or excretory matters generally form the nucleus of Rabelaisian oaths.

Verbal and gesticulative abuse in the humiliation of the gullible demon and in the portrayal of the Papefigues indicates the high degree to which such expressions are woven into the narrative fabric of the Quart Livre. Indeed, an abusive gesture leads to a war (the Andouilles) and introduces a grotesque revenge as well as the entire tale of the Papefigues and Papimanes (Chapters LXV-LVIII), which includes the anecdote of the foolish devil. During a religious festival, a foe of the Papimanes, "voyant le portraict Papal (comme estoit de louable coustume publicquement le monstrer es jours de feste à doubles bastons), luy feist la figue, qui est, en icelluy pays. signe de contempnement et derision manifeste" (p. 171). This act ignites a public massacre and the Papefigues are subdued

by their adversaries. Only women and children are spared and they must undergo a strange and debasing ordeal in order to live. The emperor places "une figue" on the member of a donkey which had been used earlier to humiliate his wife:

> puys crya, de par l'empereur, à son de trompe, que quiconques d'iceulx vouldroit la mort evader, arrachast publicquement la figue avecques les dens, puys la remist on propre lieu sans ayde des mains. Quiconque en feroit refus seroit sus l'instant pendu et estranglé (p. 171).

The vengeful gesture of degradation that resolves the victory of the Papimanes comically illustrates the grotesque use of the lower bodily stratum to debase its victims and at the same time to resuscitate them, for in performing the base action, the losers regain their rights to live, thereby demonstrating the regenerative power of gesticulative abuse in Rabelais.

In the story of the credulous demon, which immediately follows, the renovative aspect of abuse is also emphasized. Since the devil has settled for crops growing above ground, he ends up with only "feuilles de raves" (p. 176) which he nonetheless tries to sell. At the market, "le laboureur vendoit tresbien ses raves. Le diable ne vendit rient. Que pis est, on se mocquoit de luy publicquement" (p. 175). Here, public degradation of the forces of evil comically regenerates hope through laughter, the fundamental remedy and vehicle of new faith in the grotesque cosmogony. Also

characteristically Rabelaisian is the marketplace setting, a most fitting scene for such comic raillery.

The oaths and curses of Frère Jean illustrate well Rabelais's use of obscene language in a comic manner. The monk's taste for ribald expression in no way diminishes in the Quart Livre. In the tempest, he finds his finest opportunity for obscene verbal abuse with the cowardly Panurge as his target. Throughout seven chapters (XVIII-XXIV), the monk vents his spleen while Panurge laments such blasphemous language: "Fy! qu'il est laid, le pleurart de merde. Mousse, ho, de par tous les Diables, guarde l'escantoula" (p. 98). Frère Jean repeatedly invokes not only the lower bodily stratum but also the minions of the underworld as he rails:

> Par la vertus, dist frere Jan, du sang, de la chair, du ventre, de la teste, si encores je te oy pioller, coqu au diable, je te gualleray en loup marin: vertus Dieu! que ne le jectons nous au fond de la mer? Hespaillier, ho gentil compaignon, ainsi mon amy. . . . Je croy que tous les diables sont deschainez aujourd'huy ou que Prosperine est en travail d'enfant. Tous les Diables dansent aux sonnettes (pp. 98-99).

Frère Jean's raving and his exhortations to act are instrumental to both narrative development and the delineation of character; this episode in particular establishes Frère Jean as a hard-working man of action and Panurge as a hypocritical scoundrel. The monk's obscene and occasionally blasphemous curses emphasize

this contrast (Panurge generally shuns blasphemy as heretical in the Quart Livre). Jean's language coincides with his active nature and both factors contribute to the voyagers' rescue. The comic genius of his curses lies in his imaginative use of what could be mundanely offensive language. He also frequently refers to the storm as the work of demons and wonders why the crew does not send Panurge to the bottom of the sea, providing another downward image of the underworld which the voyagers both revile and transcend.

The episodes of the Papefigues' humiliation, the peasant's outwitting of the demon, and Frère Jean's castigation of Panurge during the storm indicate the degree to which the abusive language of oaths and curses forms one of the major grotesque comic-offensive axes. Depictions of excrement, sexuality, and beatings previously discussed also weave a similar pattern into the comic fabric of the Quart Livre. Rabelais's language and imagery move far beyond the shadows of obscenity in their portrayal of the optimism and comic spirit of his grotesque perspective. Rabelais seeks not to arouse sexual passion but laughter, the physician's most potent medicine in a world gone mad.

Imagery of the grotesque body and of the lower stratum in particular is both positive and comic, regenerating life and hope while disarming fear and

false seriousness as the entire mock-epic comedy of the Quart Livre illustrates. Such images are essential to the construction of a truly grotesque universe, for without the fearsome or offensive aspect, grotesque comedy cannot exist. Indeed, debasement and grotesque inversion complete the eternal circle of grotesque comedy. Exaggerated punishment must be meted out to the foolish and arrogant in order to bring the tenacious spirit of "Pantagruelisme" to all who would partake of this "purée septembrale." In cosmic terms, this downward movement is reflected through the repeated intrusions of the lower realms into the Rabelaisian world as the narrator focuses on the lower stratum of the universe only to exalt man's potential with life-giving laughter and good faith.

Notes

[1]Henry Miller, Obscenity and the Law of Reflection (New York, New York: O. Baradinsky, 1945), p. 3. Further citations refer to this edition.

[2]Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, ed. Henry B. Woolf (G. and C. Merriam Co., 1977), p. 792.

[3]D.H. Lawrence, Pornography and Obscenity (London: Faber and Faber, 1929), p. 5. Further citations refer to this edition.

[4]Theodore Schroeder, as quoted by Henry Miller in Obscenity and the Law of Reflection, pp. 3-4.

[5]See Miller, pp. 15-19.

[6]See Marçel DeGrêve, L'Interprétation de Rabelais au XVI[e] siècle, Études Rabelaisiennes, tome III (Genève: Droz, 1961, p. 16: "si l'on peut admettre que la Sorbonne condamna Pantagruel, ce fut uniquement à cause des obscenités qui y pillulent."

[7]Michel de Montaigne, Essais (Paris: La Pléiade, 1962), p. 389 (II, 10).

[8]La Bruyère, Les Caractères ou les Moeurs de ce siècle (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962), p. 82.

[9]Voltaire, Mélanges (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1961), pp. 94-95.

[10]Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, volume 3, quatrième édition (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1869), pp. 5-6.

[11]Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 1032.

[12]Donald M. Frame, François Rabelais: A Study (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Johanovice, 1977), p. 111.

[13]See the chapter "Comedy and the Grotesque in the Quart Livre," pp. 6-11.

[14]The episode of the Physetere (pp. 137-142) illustrates the parallels between portrayals of the underworld in Lucian and Rabelais. In this encounter at sea, Panurge identifies the fearsome monster with a

threatening underworld, expressing his terror in these terms:

> C'est, par la mort boeuf, Leviathan descript par le noble prophete Moses en la vie du sainct home Job. Il nous avallera tous, et gens et naufz, comme pillules. En sa grande gueule infernale nous ne luy tiendrons lieu plus que feroit un grain de dragée musquée en la gueule d'un asne (p. 138).

Panurge's description delineates the underworld's proximity in the Rabelaisian text ("sa grande gueule infernale" [my emphasis]). And while the Biblical point of reference is explicitly verbalized, one cannot help but recall the adventures of Lucian's protagonists in the belly of a whale in the True History.

[15]For an intriguing perspective on "wind" as "nothing" in the Quart Livre, see Barbara C. Bowen, "Nothing in French Renaissance Literature," in From Marot to Montaigne, Essays in French Renaissance Literature, edited by Raymond C. La Charité, Kentucky Romance Quarterly, 19, Supp. no. 1 (1972), pp. 55-64.

[16]Cited by Jourda, p. 129, note 3.

[17]The rarity of true invective in Rabelais reflects the strong antagonism he felt toward Calvin at this point in his (Rabelais's) career.

VI. CONCLUSION

During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the grotesque pictorial and architectural style became popular in Italy and spread throughout Europe. Referred to as "grottesca" by the Italians because of Roman frescoes and reliefs unearthed in underground vaults, the grotesque style depicts incongruous and imaginative combinations of human and animal forms with foliage and floral decoration. In 1530, Francis I introduced this style into France by bringing in Italian architects and painters to assist in the design and construction of the château at Fontainebleau. Il Rosso finished the king's gallery in 1531, and Primaticcio supervised the completion of the king's chambers in 1532. In this year, the French word "crogesque" came into usage by way of analogy with the Old French "crotte," meaning cave. The year 1532 also marks the publication of Rabelais's Pantagruel, the first in a series of works dedicated to the comic spirit of "Pantagruelisme." The Quart Livre, published in its entirety in 1552, is either the last or next to last in this group of works, since the authenticity of the Fifth

Book remains uncertain. Not long afterward, Montaigne recognized that the term grotesque accurately described literary as well as pictorial art. In fact, Rabelais's work embodies the application of the term grotesque to literary forms, for grotesque imagery and style pervade his texts from the Silenus box in the prologue to Gargantua to the comically excremental degradation of Panurge which concludes the Quart Livre.

Four centuries later, John Ruskin aptly defined Renaissance grotesque as a combination of ludicrous and terrible images into a single artistic unit. Mikhail Bakhtin fully understood the importance of the grotesque in Rabelais and contributed a landmark to Rabelaisian studies in his work Rabelais and His World. Bakhtin stresses the fundamental ambivalence of all grotesque imagery with special reference to Rabelais's Pantagruel. Grotesque ambivalence resides in the dualistic nature of grotesque images which are simultaneously ludicrous and fearsome or repulsive as illustrated by Panurge's suggestion for rebuilding the walls of Paris with female genitalia: "Quel Diable defferoit telles murailles?" (Pantagruel, p. 296). Bakhtin also emphasizes the special and renovative role of the body in grotesque imagery:

> In the grotesque body . . . death brings nothing to an end, for it does not concern the ancestral body, which is renewed in the next generation. The events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other and, as

> it were, at their points of intersection. One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image (p. 322).

Pantagruel's birth illustrates perfectly the optimistic, circular nature of grotesque images in relation to the body. While the mother dies, the child is born; although Gargantua laments his wife's death, weeping yields to laughter as he sees young Pantagruel: "Et, ce disant, pleuroit comme une vache. Mais tout soubdain rioit comme un veau, quand Pantagruel luy venoid en memoire" (Pantagruel, p. 233). No single image could better exemplify the comic ambivalence of the grotesque world view in Rabelais. "A tendency toward duality can be glimpsed everywhere. Everywhere the cosmic, ancestral element of the body is stressed" (Bakhtin, p. 323).

In light of this basic duality, incongruity becomes one of the essential characteristics of grotesque imagery, for, as its historical origins attest, unusual combinations embody the very spirit of the grotesque. Geoffrey Harpham accurately states that "radical deformity" is "the ground base for the grotesque" (p. 462). Rabelais's giants exemplify this incongruity or deformity, since they are simultaneously human and non-human, the latter by virtue of size and intellectual abilities. The giant is a truly radical deformation of the human body; he personifies the grotesque, since "in nearly all symbolic traditions, he tends to appear as

an outcropping of the marvellous and the terrible" (Cirlot, p. 113). Examples of radical deformity abound in Rabelais, particularly in the Quart Livre, populated as it is with races and monsters such as the Andouilles, Quaresmeprenant, the Gastrolatres, the Papefigues, and the Papimanes. All of these deformities include both fearsome and comic traits, with the latter always dominating in a universe imbued with the spirit of "Pantagruelisme."

By virtue of its ambivalent character, the grotesque has been labeled "the slipperiest of aesthetic categories" (Harpham, p. 461). At the same time, Bakhtin's analysis of the grotesque in Pantagruel and Gargantua and other analyses of later works by other critics reveal that the grotesque is "a comprehensive structural principle of works of art" (Kayser, p. 180). With these studies in mind, the grotesque may be defined as the integration of contrasting spheres, the poetic resolution of opposites into one singularly unified artistic image, event, or character. Because of this dynamic unification, grotesque imagery is always dualistic, fusing the horrific or repulsive with the comic or ludicrous. Inversion, discussed at length by Bakhtin, is one manner in which this fusion occurs. Mirroring its roots in carnival and pictorial traditions, grotesque imagery usually assumes a special physical

character, with particular reference to bodily interaction with the external world. And, in the case of Rabelais, the fundamentally optimistic, affirmative side of the grotesque formula dominates grotesque imagery which simultaneously deprecates and renews; celebration and rebirth dissipate fear of the unknown and breed faith in the future, as in the case of Pantagruel's birth.

Renaissance grotesque emphasizes the comic and/or optimistic aspect of the grotesque equation. Laughter conquers fearsome elements and acts as a healing balm. Rabelais himself underlines the therapeutic value of laughter in the prologues to Pantagruel, Gargantua, and the Quart Livre. Rabelais's humor in the Quart Livre emanates from dualism (pleasure/pain), ambivalence (joy/sorrow), and inversion (human/bestial) and is grotesque inasmuch as it shares these qualities with the grotesque aesthetic mode. In fact, as De Rocher has illustrated in his study, Rabelais's Laughers and Joubert's "Traité du Ris," Renaissance humor, like so much comic art, seldom provoked laughter without incorporating some measure of pain or revulsion. Physical beatings, verbal abuse, obscene gestures, and exposure of lower body parts were viewed as strictly comic matter by the French Renaissance reader. De Rocher's reading of Joubert's contemporary treatise on sixteenth-century comedy

substantiates this claim. Laughter related to the lower body pinpoints the near identity of comedy and the grotesque in the Rabelaisian world. The sixteenth-century reader was much more likely than a modern one to laugh at the unexpected exposure of the lower body, as in the case of the Papefigure woman's displaying "son comment a nom" (Quart Livre, p. 178) to the naive demon in Chapter XLVII of the Fourth Book.

The humor of the Quart Livre may be divided into three major subdivisions, all of which are essentially grotesque in their ambivalence. The lower bodily stratum is one of these, offering a hilarious panoply of potentially offensive sexual and excremental revelations, jokes, and puns. Debasement, aptly called "the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism" (Bakhtin, pp. 370-371), is the second of these comic categories. Three major episodes in the Quart Livre exemplify its prevalence in Rabelais's text: Panurge's humiliation of Dindenault, the Chiquanous stories, and the Papefigue peasants' triump over a foolish demon. The third comic axis of the Quart Livre may be called the comedy of radical deformation, which is fundamentally grotesque in its depiction of ludicrous and terrible beings such as Quaresmeprenant, the Gastrolatres, the Papimanes, and the Papefigures. Most of these imaginary beings or races have a strong satirical flavor and

openly mock common contemporary vices. As textual analysis reveals, the thread that unifies these three comic axes is the grotesque world view of Rabelais whose derision never becomes mere invective and whose laughter is always regenerative and optimistic.

In regard to the humor involved in physical abuse, perfectly illustrated by the thrasings of the Seigneur de Basché meted out to the eager Chiquanous, it must be stressed that the comedy of corporal punishment is an essential element of almost all sixteenth-century comic art. De Rocher underlines this point, citing Joubert: "Signalons . . . l'insensibilité qui accompagne d'ordinaire le rire . . . L'indifférence est son milieu naturel" (p. 28). Although a modern perspective tends to minimize the comic impact of beatings, Joubert's treatise reminds us that his contemporaries found such humor commonplace and indeed quite funny. Throughout the sixteenth century, "actual pain is an incontestable part of the comic experience" (De Rocher, pp. 35-36). Renaissance comic art is in fact distinguished by its strikingly grotesque flavor, laughing heartily at what is painful or distressing to the comic victim.

Rabelais's comic casualties, however, do not always receive physical thrashings. The barbs of satirical deformation also function as trenchant weapons

in the Rabelaisian arsenal. The parody of the Quart Livre is a vehicle through which Rabelais satirizes contemporary foibles. Rabelaisian satire enlists the grotesque into its service in order to render its comic victims helplessly ludicrous. Each island race encountered during the companions' voyage reflects and magnifies the excesses of the world the travellers left behind. In the cases of the Papimanes and Quaresemeprenant, a particular vice (idolatry or hypocrisy) is augmented through grotesque imagery until the subject becomes either ridiculously monstrous (grotesque by definition) or an entire race of grotesque creatures, incompatible with real human beings, is created. The exaggeration and caricature in these portraits clearly links grotesque and satirical imagery in the Quart Livre.

Rabelais in fact descends from a long line of satirists who blended a grotesque world view with satire of contemporary morals. Bakhtin and others have discussed the unofficial genre of Menippean satire, including Rabelais in a list of authors adhering to this informal and biting tradition. Like Menippus, as described by Lucian, Rabelais may aptly be called, "the man who jokes about serious things" (Highet, p. 233). In the works of both Lucian and Rabelais, fear of death is mocked and dispelled. The hell visited by Menippus may not be as "happy" as that described by Epistemon in

Pantagruel, but neither is it shrouded in despair, since Menippus sings and jokes as he makes his final passage to the underworld. Verbal aubse and physical punishment play an integral role in both Lucian and Rabelais, as in all grotesque imagery. And in both authors works, formidable and threatening beings are humbled and revilved by satirical, parodical heroes like Menippus and Panurge.

Grotesque inversion is one manner through which these intractable beings are brought down to earth and heartily ridiculed. Rabelais, like other Menippean satirists and humorists, uses inversion as a stylistic and/or thematic device to enhance the comic impact of his work. Epistemon's account of his visit to the underworld in Pantagruel serves as an excellent example of this device and resembles in many ways Menippus' experience in hell. In both cases, men who were feared among the living are despised and comically degraded in death, mitigating traditional apprehensions of the unknown. Instances of physical and verbal abuse in the Quart Livre also illustrate the principle of grotesque inversion since they humorously debase the comic victim, as in the cases of the Chiquanous, Tappecoue, and Dindenault. The Renaissance taste for rather violent humor, along with an indifferent attitude on the part of the reader with regard to the sufferer,

reminds us that these beatings were purely comic for Rabelais's contemporaries. Exaggeration of offensive or painful details further suggests that these thrashings cannot be viewed in so serious a light that comic elements are overshadowed. Frère Jeans' defense of the Abbaye de Seuillé in Gargantua (Chapter XXVII, pp. 108-111) and the punishment of Tappecoue in the Quart Livre (Chapter XIII, pp. 74-77) remain highly comic despite or because of the excessive elaboration of the event.

Verbal abuse and insulting gestures in Rabelais also exemplify the process of grotesque inversion. Bullies and cowards like Dindenault and Panurge are humbled and chastised through the power of language, whether it be the reversal of their insults (Dindenault) or ridicule by others (Panurge). Offensive gestures, midway between physical and verbal derision, actually touch off a comic war in the Quart Livre when the Papefigues cannot restrain themselves upon viewing the papal portrait (Quart Livre, p. 171). The combattants' names epitomize grotesque inversion, for "Papfigue" combines up and down in one degrading gesture and "Papimane" fuses papal wisdom and human folly into one distinctly comical race; such fusions of disparate images into one unit are clearly grotesque. Finally, in the story of the naive demon and the Papfigue peasants, verbal abuse again functions as a form of grotesque inversion, for

public scorn sends the devil and his exalted expectations crashing down to earth.

In addition to cases of abuse, beatings, and oaths, grotesque inversion may be used for linguistic or stylistic reversals by Rabelais. The incongruity of inverted speech patterns like "Papefigue" amuses, shocks, and even outrages the reader's sensibilties. "Contrepeteries" exhibit the dualistic nature of the grotesque by deforming and thus comically degrading otherwise readily definable locutions. In the lengthy description of Quaresmeprenant ("Se baignoit dessus les haulx clochers, se seichoit dedans les estangs et rivieres," p. 135), inverted sentence structures complement both the grotesque and the satirical bent of the passage as form intensifies and underlines meaning. In the war of the Andouilles, linguistic inversion constitutes the foundation of an entire grotesque episode, for the ensuing conflict results in part from a misunderstanding based on an inverted speech pattern ("Mardigras" and "Gradimars" or "Gradius Mars," the god of war). Linguistic inversion thus plays an integral role in two of the Quart Livre's more grotesque passages, strengthening the thematic unity of the total work within the boundaries of a grotesque cosmos. Rabelais's taste for comic degradation permitted him to create linguistic and stylistic inversions which by their deformity add

vital grotesque elements to the Quart Livre, completing an imaginary, satirical world already populated with grotesque beings.

In Rabelais's description of these grotesque figures and races, the lower body plays a unique and specialized role. With the folkloric version of Pantagruel as a point of departure, Rabelais found inspiration in the powerful tradition of carnivalized literature and folk humor, allowing him to portray the comic drama of the grotesque body in which man interacts with the external world. Rabelais's work has been labeled obscene or offensive by authors as disparate as La Bruyère, Voltaire, and Sainte Beuve; yet an appreciation of the traditions of Menippean satire, carnivalized literature, and sixteenth-century humor reveals that Rabelais is never truly prurient or pornographic but always comic in the Renaissance grotesque sense of the word.

Grotesque images of the lower body form the "substantificque mouelle" of Rabelais's world, for they mock fears of the unknown with procreative, regenerative laughter. By definition, the lower body is a natural focus for grotesque humor. In the lower bodily activities of sexuality and excretion, the human experiences ambivalences and dualities, for in them he is both man and beast; man is most like an animal in sexual,

digestive, and excremental behavior and most human in the upper bodily activities of thought and speech. The lower body is also a debasement not only in the sense of ridicule but in the physical sense of a lower position in relation to the upper body activities of poetry and reason. Without these ambivalent, comic, and optimistic images, Rabelais's works would be little more than an empty shell stripped of its vital essence.

The voyage of the Quart Livre provided Rabelais with fertile ground for the grotesque, comic exploitation of the lower body. Descent--to the underworld or to the lower stratum--is the basic movement of all Rabelais's work. The companions' voyage is, in fact, a journey through the underworld which parallels those created by Lucian. Opening with a mock council of the gods peppered with bodily humor (cf. "couillatris," "coignée," "couilluz"), the Quart Livre moves through an underworld peopled with beings such as the Andouilles ("en Andouilles plus toust l'on trouvoit merde que fiel," p. 163) and the inhabitants of the Isle of Ruach ("et meurent les hommes en pedent, les femmes en vesnent. Ainsi leur sort l'ame par le cul," p. 167) and concludes with the excremental degradation of Panurge in the final chapter. The grotesque body is clearly of pivotal importance in this ambivalent, comic drama of the underworld where, as Donald Frame accurately

states: "All [Rabelais's] obscenity is comic; almost all his comedy is obscene" (p. 111). In the Quart Livre, the excretory comedy of Panurge and much of the quest for the oracle of the "Dive Bouteille" center upon man's laughter at his contact with the world, a laughter which dissipates false seriousness and fear of death, the optimistic laughter of "Pantagruelisme."

The pictorial origins of the grotesque which fuse disparate elements into a single, ambivalent image, illustrate why the grotesque principle of artistic creation is vital to a better understanding of Rabelais's Quart Livre. The comedy of the Fourth Book resides to a large degree in the ambivalent imagery of beatings and bodily humor which characterize the grotesque world view and sixteenth-century humor. Satire in the Quart Livre derives to a large extent from the long-standing, unofficial tradition of Menippean satire; Rabelaisian satire enlists the grotesque in its service in order to heighten its comic impact. Grotesque inversion is one manner through which both comedy and satire are realized and reinforced in the Quart Livre. Rabelais humbles the mighty, sows seeds of therapeutic, regenerative laughter, and unifies form and substance into a system of uniquely comic imagery. Within this fundamentally ambivalent, grotesque cosmos, the lower body plays a highly significant role in building hope in the future, dispelling

fears of the unknown, and provoking the laughter so necessary to the completion of the grotesque equation. Rabelais's grotesque world view was clearly a substantial factor in the creation of the Quart Livre; understanding more completely its diverse characteristics gives us a powerful key in the quest for Rabelais's "substantifique mouelle," the marrow of his work and his world.

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