

COMIC WRITING AND THE READER
IN THE QUART LIVRE
OF FRANÇOIS RABELAIS

By

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Abstract

The Quart Livre of François Rabelais is a work which like all the work of Rabelais, presents a non-verisimilar fiction, through abundant authorial commentary, and an unreliable narrator, through a narrative strategy peculiar to a certain genre of comic writing. Following the model of Aristotelian poetics, which founded a generic theory of tragedy on the response of a reader (catharsis), we pursue our inquiry into "genre" in the Quart Livre of Rabelais by examining the effects of the comic fiction on an "implied reader," an exemplary reader created by the generic expectations generated by the literary text itself. First, we examine the authorial strategy which distinguishes the comic fiction in the Quart Livre from other genres which rely upon a mimesis of "representation" (an "illusion of reality") to obtain their characteristic effects. Secondly, we examine the question of "purpose" (purposiveness) in the kind of writing of which the Quart Livre is an example, as literary form determined by the (anticipated) "desire" of a reader.

Finally, we examine the major episodes in the Quart Livre itself, with a view to drawing the portrait of this reader -- a reader who "indulges" the author, a smiling reader gratified by the accentuated "difference" of satire, a laughing reader identifying with the object of his laughter. It is this last

reader who is the sign of the characteristic ambivalence of the humour in Rabelais, which relativises any attempt by the polemic either to kill laughter by idealising or sacralising, or to reduce laughter to the smile of irony.

We conclude that the comic writing in the Quart Livre of Rabelais opposes the tendency, for instance, in tragedy to idealise, to individualise, and thereby to sacralise the tragic "victim" necessary to fulfill the cathartic (social) function in the audience. Comic "victimage" as we found it in the Quart Livre, shows a movement antithetical to tragic victimage: the ideal and the "individual" become the common and the "ordinary," and the sacred becomes the profane, in order that the reader may laugh.

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Introduction

In choosing to examine "comic writing" in the Quart Livre of François Rabelais, and not "comic writing" and the Quart Livre, I am choosing to see it not merely as an example of a wider genre, in which case the object would be to indicate the ways in which the rules of genre are respected in the Quart Livre. Instead, the aim of this study is to proceed inductively, discovering the effects produced in the reader by the comic narrative and bringing to light the how and why of these effects.

In order to study the how and why of these effects I have found it necessary to posit a certain author-function (in the sense of Foucault's "What is an author?"¹), and thus reader-function, outside the text. This does not mean a recourse to an historical, geographical or biographical approach. The concern is not, for instance, with the geographical references in the Quart Livre (as was the case with Lefranc and the other positivist critics of the Rabelaisian text) and their consequent historical reference -- the search for the Northwest Passage, the discovery of the New World and the concomitant explosion of knowledge in the Renaissance -- interesting as these questions might be. Nor is the concern here with the different "series" of images in the Quart Livre: the series of eating, sexual,

scatological and death images so brilliantly elaborated by Mikhail Bakhtin in his work on the "chronotope" in Rabelais, which he sees as a restoration of the primacy of the body image as an expression of cosmic unity after the Platonic and medieval denial of the body. The interest here then is in the Quart Livre as a cultural product, but not as a document in the history of ideas. The principle of referentiality that is to be posited here -- "implied author" and "implied reader" -- is a means of elaborating the kind of writing the reader encounters in the Quart Livre, a way of defining genre. We are concerned, not with the various series of images in the Quart Livre, or the new fictive elaboration of time and space one encounters there, so much as with the appeal of this imagery within the context of the intersubjectivity of author and reader, with how the artist (the author) adopts a certain rhetorical strategy in a specific socio-cultural context in order to elaborate his vision.

The narratives of the Renaissance and of the 18th century distinguish themselves from those of the periods where classical and realistic tastes prevailed by an abundance of authorial commentary. The commentary one finds in the Quart Livre, not only in both of the Prologues (that of 1548 and of the final one of 1552) but also in the narrative proper, wherever the "je" of the author (or narrator) intrudes, brings into question the whole mimetic project of an author of fiction. It is for this reason that we take the authorial commentary as the starting point, in order to re-examine the fictive premises of the

implied author in the Quart Livre.

Our project is an enterprise à deux volets: in the first instance, to examine the "comic writing" in the Quart Livre as an expression of "contract" between reader and author, different and distinct from that which exists in the "dramatic" or "romanesque" genre; and secondly, to show that the implied author distinguishes himself from his "unreliable" narrator and that the reader also fulfills his destiny as "hypocrite lecteur," pretending to believe the "truth" the narrator pretends to tell. As the second part of this volet, we shall examine the question of literary form as a "response" of the implied author to the anticipated desire of his reader. Although references to the Prologues of the Quart Livre and to some of its episodes to illustrate the argument, we are concerned mainly with elaborating the "comic writing" suggested in the title of this thesis, the kind of writing in the Quart Livre and the particular intersubjectivity it entails, a relation between author and reader which brings into question the whole idea of mimesis as representation.

We will thereafter proceed with the second volet of the project: "the reader." Progressing through the diegesis of the narrative itself, we attempt to draw a portrait of the "envisaged reader" (a term used by Dorothy Coleman²): a reader whose attention is not on "what happens next," a laughing reader

whose laughter betrays a certain "pleasure principle" at work, or an irreducible ambiguity of identity and difference, a smiling reader firmly aligned with an author championing "Nature" and "médiocrité" in an age of ideological extremes. Having rejected a narrow Aristotelian mimesis as an operating principle in the Quart Livre, we find in drawing the portrait of the laughing reader that a certain mimetic principle must be acknowledged in the comic narrative, a mimesis of identity which separates humour from satire, the ironic or parodic elaboration of difference. The laughing reader, finally, is a reader who can laugh at himself, he who laughs with, as well as at, the object of ridicule. Here we rejoin Bakhtin in his "history of laughter," in the first chapter to Rabelais and his world, where he valorises the inclusive "cosmic" nature of Rabelais' laughter, as against the exclusive satire of Voltaire, or the satanic "mockery" of Baudelaire (Bakhtin 1968, 59-144).

The later episodes of the Quart Livre, where satire predominates, we will analyse through the perspective of the reader's felt difference with the fictive object and identity with the ideological perspective of the implied author: the pure difference of an unimaginable Quaresmeprenant and the "too-readable" allegory of Antiphysie, "blurred" by the comic fantasy of the war with the Andouilles, becomes, with the Papefigues-Papemanes stories, through displacement and irony, a comic relativity which navigates on the margins of the sacred forswearing all ideological extremes. The final image of the

book, Messer Gaster, valorises the "belly" as common good and "juste milieu," which does not abrogate the domain of the sacred to itself, but which instead as "gouffre de l'esprit," to use the famous descriptive phrase of Victor Hugo in reference to Rabelais.³ recapitulates a certain folkloric wisdom or "popular culture."

I contend that the Quart Livre remains a literary text, and not just a repository of "popular culture." As a literary text, one of the first to be reproduced by the printing press, it must be analysed as a narrative having an "implied author" (term to which is ascribed all the strategies of the text, the narrator, etc.) and thus an "implied reader." It is to this reader that I have turned my attention, but the strategies of reading, identifications and responses demonstrated are, of course, my own. Thus the "implied reader" is unavoidably myself, but myself taken as an example of subject to generic expectations generated in the text. Literary criticism may be, as Wilde said, "the highest form of autobiography," but it is only the "highest form" insofar as it is "autobiography" that participates in the culture, not only in the cultural horizon of the text, but also in that of the reader, the critic himself.

Chapter I. Author and Reader: The Unreliable Narrator and
the "Hypocrite Lecteur"

Since the Quart Livre is not only a "literary text," but also a narrative, with all that this term implies (a narrator, etc.) we will begin the inquiry into its "comic" specificity by an examination of the narrative strategies of its "implied author."⁴ We will attempt to locate this "implied author" ideologically, rather than "biographically" or "psychologically," since by doing so, we will be able also to locate the "implied reader" ideologically. For our purposes, it is this "ideological alignment" of author and reader which is most important, since it is this which determines the operation of irony and parody in the narrative itself.

First, let us examine the device of the "prologue" in Rabelais, the liminary text in which the author, in principle standing outside the work of literary fiction itself, speaks about his work as a whole. In the Prologue to Gargantua, for instance, the author, under the pseudonym of Alcofribas, considers his work using gastronomic or medical metaphors: his books are "livres de haute gresse" with healing properties, concealing their precious inner properties with an ugly exterior, as Socrates concealed his wisdom under a Silenus-like appearance.

In the 1552 Prologue to the Quart Livre, however, the author does not refer to his book as a book. Instead, he refers to himself, the author, under the medical metaphor of a doctor who wishes his readers perfect health. Addressing his readers as "gens de bien," and thereby abandoning the previous formula "Beuveurs et goutteux très précieux," the author presents himself in a direct "oral" style, so to speak, as a personnage groping for his glasses in order better to see his interlocutor, the reader, viewed perhaps as an intruder into his study:

Gens de bien, Dieu vous sauve et guard! Où estes
vous? Attendez que je chausse mes lunettes.....
(Rabelais,15)

The literary work is only referred to after the narration of the Aesopian fable of Couillatris, and then only metaphorically as the hearing of a story rather than as the reading of a book:

Or, en bonne santé toussiez un bon coup; beuvez en
trois, secouez de hait vos oreilles, et vous oyrez
dire merveilles du noble et bon Pantagruel.
[my underlining]
(Rabelais,29)

In the 1552 Prologue to the Quart Livre, therefore, in contrast to the Prologues to the other books of Rabelais, the author does not distance himself from his book and therefore from his narrator. On the contrary, he becomes, in effect, a dramatised narrator who tells the story of Couillatris, which makes up the bulk of the Prologue.

It is in the Prologue of 1548 that the author distances himself from his work, and therefore from his narrator. The readers (addressed by the customary formula "Beuveurs très illustres, et vous Goutteux très précieux") are invited "to give, to say, to judge" on behalf of the author in the matter of his work. They are imagined as having invited the author to the "continuation de l'hystoire Pantagrueline" (Rabelais,6), considered as reading ("lecture") and not as hearing a story. The author flatters his readers, adopting an ironic tone, replete with the ironic formulae often encountered both in the liminary texts and in the diegesis of the fictive text in Rabelais. He asks his readers to reserve their laughter until the seventy-eighth book, saying also that he will maintain

.....jusques au feu exclusivement..... que vous
estes grands gens de bien, tous extraictz de bons
peres et bonnes meres.

(Rabelais,6)

The author then appeals to the readers to judge his calumniators (characterised as devils through the etymology of diabolus), the list of whom echoes similar lists in the other Prologues and in the Abbaye de Thélème episode in Garagantua:

.....cafars, cagotz, matagotz, botineurs,
papelards, burgotz, patespellues, porteurs de
rogatons, chattemites.

(Rabelais,6)

In the 1548 Prologue, therefore, the author stakes out his "moral territory,:" so to speak, by implication also locating

his "ideal" readers ideologically, while excluding those who misread him by attributing heresy to his comic tales, called by Rabelais in the dedicatory letter to Odet the Cardinal of Chastillon "folastries joyeuses, hors l'offense de Dieu et du Roi" (Rabelais, 13). The author thereby establishes complicity with his readers, a kind of connivance which, as often happens with satiric writing, is a precondition for comic effect which depends on the exclusion of a third party. It is "behind the back," so to speak, of the excluded third party that the author and reader laugh together. The exclusion of the hypocritical misreaders establishes a certain permanent "dramatic irony" upon which the connivance of author and reader is based, and which to some extent makes possible the comic atmosphere. But certain other "dramatic ironies," as we shall see, are involved as well.

How, then, is the ground of ideological commonality, the values held in common which facilitate this author-reader complicity, revealed? In the Quart Livre there are many passages which reveal, in different ways, the ideology (values and beliefs) of the implied author, to a greater extent, or at least more specifically, than, say, the celebrated letter of Gargantua in the eighth chapter of Pantagruel, or the Thélème episode in Gargantua, which are limited to widely-held humanist values. The first way in which the author's ideological "bias" is revealed is in the story (histoire) itself.⁵ An example of this would be the invention of Antiphysie and her children, the

familiar catalogue of anathematised misreaders, reminiscent of the list of those excluded from Thélème, though slightly more historically specific:

.....les Matagotz, Cagotz et Papelars, les
Maniacles, Pistoletz; les Demoniacles Calvins,
imposteurs de Genève.....
(Rabelais, 112)

A second way in which the implied author's ideological perspective intrudes is through the "reliable" commentary⁶ of his dramatised narrator, as on the island of Medamothi, where the narrator comments on the painting depicting the rape of Philomela:

.....Je vous jure, par le manche de ce fallot que
c'estoit une paincture gualante et mirifique. Ne
pensez, je vous prie, que ce feust le protraict
d'un homme couplé sus une fille. Cela est trop sot
et trop lourd.
(Rabelais, 33)

Thirdly, the implied author's values are further revealed through the reliable commentary of secondary characters whose function is to reinforce the reader's ideological commonality with the author⁷, such as Epistemon in the Homenaz episode:

A ces motz, se leva Epistemon, et dist tout
bellement à Panurge: "Faulx de selle persée, me
contraint d'icy. Ceste farce me a desbondé le
boyau cullier: je ne arresteray gueres."
(Rabelais, 156)

A fourth way that the author reveals and reinforces the

values he holds in common with the reader is through descriptions with, for instance, qualificative adjectives, such as the description of Manduce, idol of the Gastrolâtres:

C'estoit une effigie monstrueuse, ridicule, hydeuse
et terrible aux petitz enfans, ayant les yeux plus
grands que le ventre, et la teste plus grosse que
tout le reste du corps....

(Rabelais, 176)

Here we are dealing of course with description with no "realistic" implications: the details, the head too big for the body, the eyes too big for the stomach (itself simply a "dead metaphor" in popular usage made literal), correspond to the description of Antiphysie, who, "comme un arbre renversé," is also a travesty of nature. The description of Quaresmeprenant (whose "anatomy" is in fact a catalogue of metaphors) as "fouetteur des petitz enfans," also falls into this category.

The implied author in Rabelais thus makes very little attempt to be "objective" or to create the illusion of reality. His continual intrusions through commentary, the obvious lack of verisimilitude and autonomy on the part of his characters, and the rhetorical manipulation which forces the readers to "take sides" in a polemic (and thus destroys the myth of the "universality" of a virtual public), all indicate that the artistic unity of this type of writing is to be found elsewhere than in its realistic "mimetic" effect.

That is to say, the author does not attempt to efface

himself (to minimise commentary) in order to create by his silence an illusion of "objectivity," as in a realistic mimetic narrative presentation. Although, for instance, he presents dialogue in direct style, as in dramatic presentation, thereby imitating direct speech (as in Panurge's blubbering during the tempest, or his bargaining with Dindenault), it is in a parodic mode, that is, through exaggeration to create not identification with a character through verisimilitude, but a "distancing" effect produced by caricatural deformations of spoken idiom. The reader is therefore not expected to "experience" the work through identification with characters made believable by means of an artistic illusion of reality, but to judge reality through the work, which brings reality into a comic light, the light of ambiguity and irony. This "reality" can be seen only in social dimensions, since the reading public must be a "real" and historically specific one, and not a "universal" virtual one. The fiction does not therefore imitate social reality; it brings it into question, which seems to suggest an almost Brechtian commitment to didacticism.⁸

The commentary I have mentioned so far is "reliable" commentary, commentary which reflects the ideological point of view of the implied author, the values he shares with his (implied) readers. It does not matter whether this commentary is on the part of the narrator or on the part of his secondary characters. The "reliability" of the commentary depends not

upon proximity to the author but upon the moral "territory" already prepared in the text by the implied author. The commentary of Panurge, for instance, functions negatively in the Quart Livre (following the negative pattern in the Tiers Livre) through irony: one can be sure that his religious scruples during the tempest (cf. the Raminagrobis episode in the Tiers Livre) and his half-hearted praise of Homenaz are meant to be taken ironically by the reader as negative reflections of the implied author's attitude. Panurge's commentary, at the level of the story, is therefore "unreliable": it runs contrary to the implied author's (and therefore implied reader's) ideological perspective.

Although the Quart Livre is structured as a framework narrative whereby a multiplicity of narrators (Panurge, Xenomanes) tell a number of shorter "detachable" narratives which add nothing to the larger "quest" narrative, the role of the primary narrator is still important. Some important shorter narratives (the Dindenault, Tempest, and Andouilles stories) still form part of the primary narrative. Who is this narrator and what is his function in mediating implied author and implied reader?

We have already seen that the author, in the Prologue to the Quart Livre presents himself in oral style in the persona of a doctor, becoming in effect a dramatised narrator who ends by (re)telling the Aesopian fable of Couillatris, and using in the

process several digressive techniques which Abraham Keller identifies with the rhetorical manipulation of the oral storyteller.⁹ In the text proper of the Quart Livre the narrator is an "eyewitness" of the fictive events: he takes no significant part in the action and does not interact with any of the characters, but is nonetheless present, narrating such events as the drowning of Dindenault, the conquest of the Andouilles, the thawing of the frozen words and the killing of the monstrous whale by Pantagruel, as if he had himself "veu, leu, et sceu" (to use the formula from the Prologue the Pantagruel) the events described.

At at least two points in the Quart Livre -- once on the island of Ruach (Rabelais, 136), and once during the visit to the Papimanes (Rabelais, 154) -- the narrator addresses the readers as "beuveurs," using the familiar formula of address from the Prologues. On one occasion, on the island of Ennasin, he even refers to "notre pays de vache" (54), a reference which links him to the historical Rabelais himself. The narrator-author distinction is therefore quite fluid: the narrator feels free to address the readers as "beuveurs" just as the author of the Prologues does, and the reader might even assume that the author and the narrator are the same person. The narrator however never identifies himself in the Quart Livre, even under the pseudonym Alcofribas as in the first two books, though the author of the Prologues does.

The reader, in any case, though he may confuse author and narrator, cannot fail to notice that, when "speaking" as dramatised narrator, the "author" is at times an ostentatious liar. A good example of this would be the thirty-eighth chapter, where the narrator protests the veracity of what is obviously the author's fictive invention, the Andouilles:

Vous truphez ici, Beuveurs, et ne croyez que ainsi
soit en verité comme je vous raconte. Je ne
sçaurois que vous en faire. Croyez le, si voulez;
si ne voulez, allez y voir. Mais je sçay bien ce
que je veidz.

(Rabelais, 125)

It seems as though the implied author chooses to make his narrator appear "unreliable" so that reader and author may connive together "behind the back" of the narrator, so to speak, creating, here as well as in the case of the cursed misreaders, a kind of dramatic irony, which again contributes toward producing a "comic atmosphere," an atmosphere of ambiguity and irony.

The connivance of author and reader created by "dramatic irony" occurs in fact in three ways in the Quart Livre: first, against the characters, as for instance where the reader, aware of Panurge's cowardice during the tempest, takes his ensuing bravado ironically; secondly, against the cursed misreaders, those who attribute heresy to the "folâtries joyeuses" of the implied author; and thirdly, and perhaps most important, against the primary narrator.

One must therefore not only distinguish in the case of the author between "implied author" and "dramatised narrator," but also, in the case of the reader, between "implied reader" and "narrative audience." Although the dramatised narrator appeals loudly to his "narrative audience" that they should believe his story of the Andouilles, the implied author obviously does not expect his "implied reader" to "believe it really." The author's narrator is in fact impersonating a story-telling ("lying") charlatan of the foire (familiar from the Prologue to the Pantagruel), thereby rendering himself ridiculous in the eyes of the implied reader, who in turn impersonates a credulous listener (reader), that is, accepts the premise of the fiction without for an instant accepting it as real or reliable.

Thus the author of the Prologue of 1548, who characterises his stories as "folâtries joyeuses" in order to deflect the misreading of those who impart heresy to his work, is completely different from the dramatised narrator, who renders himself ridiculous by insisting on the literal truth of one of his most outrageous stories, the Andouilles story. It is a role, a persona that the author takes on in order to interact comically with a reader who is equally ready to take on a provisional role. Narrative audience and dramatised narrator interact under a consciously fictive premise, as if they were both "acting" roles: implied author and implied reader have in fact created fictional personae for themselves, all the while highly conscious of their dissimulation. A comic atmosphere is thus

created, partly through aesthetic distance, since author and reader both remain disengaged emotionally,¹¹ but also through willingness to play a game, since, though they never believe ("take seriously") for an instant their own pretense, they are still willing to play their roles ostentatiously.

The author in the Quart Livre has thus chosen: first, not to be silent, but through an abundance of commentary, to destroy any illusion of objective "reality," while revealing his ideological biases; secondly, to create through a kind of dramatic irony complicity with his "postulated" readers, so that often the communication of his essential attitude (the key to the tone, style and interpretation) is dependent upon the exclusion of either a character (Panurge), hypocritical misreaders, or even his narrator; and thirdly, "behind the back" of this excluded third party to cultivate a constant invitation to ostentatious "role-playing" on the part of his readers. The whole of his technique results in a comic atmosphere where no attempt is made to "convince" the reader through verisimilitude of the reality of anything. The fictive premise is in fact simply an invitation to the reader to impersonate a reader just as an author impersonates an author. The ground of the interaction of reader and author is therefore

"falsehood" rather than "truth." The author plays an ostentatious liar, while the reader only pretends to believe him. The author does not want his reader to believe him; on the contrary, the comic effect of his impersonation of the liar depends to a large extent upon the reader's tacit refusal to believe. Thus, the ground of interaction, the rules of the game, between author and reader, depends on a refusal on the reader's part to "suspend disbelief." In order for the comic effect to be realised, the reader must approach the text conscious of playing his role in the same way that the author is conscious of playing his.

Thus, having attempted to answer the question of genre through examining the "intersubjectivity"¹² of author and reader, we find that the implied author in Rabelais is not trying to convince his reader, through hiding his artifice, of the "reality" of his fictive creation. Nor primarily is he trying to produce in his reader identification with his fictive characters. His artistic method of fictive presentation is neither realistic, nor dramatic. The ground of interaction of author and reader is not "truth," imitation of real life through concealment of artifice or production of belief through probability, but "falsehood," highly conscious acceptance of ridiculously deformed fictive premises in the comic atmosphere of role-play. Clearly, this form of writing is "non-mimetic," in the sense that the line of demarcation between fiction and

reality is clearly drawn for the reader, who experiences the fiction highly self-consciously in a fictional role he constructs for himself, that of the credulous listener.

Chapter II. Literary Form and the Desire of the Reader

Let us continue our inquiry into the ways in which the narrative in the Quart Livre of Rabelais can be considered "comic" by an inquiry into the "purpose" of the narrative. Following the example of Aristotle, who defined "tragedy" in terms of the catharsis, the response of the reader, we will assume that the "entelechy" of the Quart Livre produces the "pleasure proper to its kind": the question of "purpose" is necessarily bound up with the question of "pleasure," the response of the reader.

First, we must specify the purpose for which the implied author is not writing. We can assume that his purpose is not a purely discursive one: if he had wanted simply to convince the reader of a series of propositions, he would not have chosen the fictive form. Secondly, he is not attempting to construct a "living plot" in the Aristotelian sense,¹³ a closed universe imitated in order to produce a cathartic pleasure of identification in the reader (audience). Nevertheless (let us continue to proceed inductively) the writing does produce pleasure in the reader, not the pleasure of cathartic identification, but pleasure nonetheless. What is the nature of this pleasure produced in the reader, and whence does it come?

Let us assume that this pleasure is more than simply an

"aesthetic" one in the formalist sense, the contemplation of forms and felicitous phrases and images, language "for its own sake." Let us examine the kind of writing we encounter in Rabelais as though it satisfied basic human wishes: the wish to know (the most "natural" and preeminent of wishes according to Aristotle); and the wish to judge. This may be a better way to proceed, in view of the real public of the Quart Livre and their "horizon of expectation,"¹⁴ in other words, the historical situation of the text.

First, let us recall briefly the general principles of dramatic comedy, where the "pleasure proper to the genre" is produced more clearly than in comic narrative, and see how human wishes are gratified pleasurably there. In Aristotelian poetic theory, where "reader response" has priority in determining literary genre, comic writers are "meaner spirits" with a tendency to imitate "lower characters in order to incite laughter."¹⁵ Thus for Aristotle characterisation, and not plot, is the essential element in dramatic comedy producing the comic effect on the audience, whereas in tragedy it is plot which has priority. Also in dramatic comedy, because of the limitations of the stage, rules of verisimilitude must be respected not in order that the audience should sympathise with the characters, but rather in order that the audience should be surprised by

comic reversals in the plot. Of course, the moral framework in dramatic comedy is basically conservative: the archetype of démasure (Tartuffe, Arnolphe) is punished, but not too severely, lest the pity of the audience be aroused.

Where have these elements gone in comic narrative, of which the Quart Livre is an example? First of all, comic narrative does not conform to the same physical limitations as dramatic comedy. The only limitations in comic narrative are those of the imagination of the author and the provisional credulity of the reader. As we have seen, probability (verisimilitude) does not prescribe or determine anything. The very physical fact of reading a narrative, rather than attending a dramatic presentation, implies an individual, rather than a collective, aesthetic experience, and thus individualised interpretive work on the part of the reader. Nevertheless in Rabelais the reader is addressed by the narrator in the plural: the participatory fiction of the foire and therefore the role play of the credulous narrative audience is maintained. Thus the real individualised work of the reader is camouflaged in the narrative as collective role-play.

The reader, in his role of credulous participant in the audience, is thus asked in Rabelais to accept completely, yet provisionally, improbable events: the narrator's entering the giant Pantagruel's mouth, and discovering there cities the size of Rouen or Nantes, in the Pantagruel; the slaughter by Frère

Jean of incredible numbers of Picrochole's men in graphic detail, in the Gargantua. Narrative form, as opposed to dramatic form, invites hyperbole in the comic or parodic mode, and leads quite naturally to the gigantism of Rabelais' characters. Instead of the comic archetypes of démesure that we find in dramatic comedy, we find in Rabelais the "physical" specimens of démesure that are Grandgousier, Gargantua, and Pantagruel. It seems as though in the comic narrative of Rabelais, narrative imagination delights in violating the limits of belief. The author delights in "lying" outrageously, thus comically drawing attention to his power as a narrator and to the "written" character of his fiction.

There remains another type of character in Rabelais, particularly in the third and fourth books. This is the type represented by Frère Jean and by Panurge, the former being marked primarily by his warlike courage and voracious appetit, and the latter by his mischievousness (Pantagruel), his indecision (Tiers Livre), or by his cowardice (Quart Livre). This type of character, called in the 18th century a "humour," is distinguished by one trait and one trait only.¹⁶ Though the trait may change, at any one moment in the narrative the characterisation is still dominated by one trait at a time. Just as a single trait represents the character flaw leading to the comic resolution of L'Avare or Le Misanthrope of Molière, for instance, so also does a single trait function as a

character flaw in the comic narrative of the Quart Livre of Rabelais. In the third and fourth books of Rabelais, more than in the first two books, this single trait, say for instance the cowardice of Panurge, has "moral implications."

One might even say that if there is any unity in the Quart Livre, it is an ideological unity, since it is the theme of mediocritas, explicit in the Couillatris story in the Prologue, which forms the moral backdrop, not only to the Tempest story, but also the Lord of Basché and Dindenault stories, and also to the visit to the Papimanes episode and anatomy of Quaresmeprenant. The Messer Gaster episode is perhaps the most "emblematic" of this theme of moderation: the narrator's undisguised contempt for the Gastrolâtres is a clear manifestation of this.

Assuming that characterisation, and not plot, is the essential narrative element through which the comic effect is obtained, i.e., through which human wishes are pleasurably gratified, to what human wishes do these two classes of characters correspond? I would suggest that the giants, especially in the "apprenticeship" or "education" cycles in the first two books, seem to correspond to, or to function comically through, the reader's need to know; whereas the "humours," predominant in the third and fourth Books, function through the reader's need to judge. As in the first two books the education of Pantagruel and Gargantua lay open to the reader's curiosity

the branches of medieval and humanistic knowledge, in the third and fourth books the positive ideological content (following the Erasmian model) is no longer simply presented naïvely and exuberantly, but an appeal is made to the reader's moral sense, an appeal which relies upon the moral authority of antiquity: the principle of stoic moderation. The retelling of the fable of Couillatris in the Prologue, in spite of its vivid digressive meanderings, ends with a moral:

Soubhaitez donc mediocrité: elle vous adviendra;
et, encore mieulx, deuement ce pendent labourans et
travaillans.

(Rabelais, 28)

Thus the cowardice of Panurge, the fanaticism of Homenaz, the idolatry of the Gastrolâtres, and the "unnatural" Quaresmeprenant become ridiculous to the postulated reader of Rabelais, to a public sharing the ideological perspective of the implied author. The reader's need to judge is gratified pleasurably through ridicule. Laughter, which up to this point in Rabelais has been dominated by its positive content, now becomes dominated by its critical function, and the joyful exuberance of the first two books takes on, in the Quart Livre (as in the Tiers Livre), a more specifically satiric tone.

The purpose of the author's communication however with the reader in the Quart Livre is never reduced to mere polemic. The author's intention in a work of fiction, no matter how "coloured" it is ideologically, is almost never purely to

persuade the reader, but to evoke in him a (more or less) predictable aesthetic response. The ideological common ground of author and reader is assumed, not posited, in order that the reader might experience the fiction pleasurably. As in tragedy, where fear and pity are evoked in order to dissipate harmlessly and pleasurably in the cathartic resolution, in comic narrative also the appeal to the reader's judgement is made only in order to facilitate a pleasurable effect. The author is not attempting to arouse the indignation of the reader in order to arouse him to action; he is only assuming a certain ideological bias in the reader in order to realise his comic purpose. Polemic is absorbed by comic vision, and not vice-versa. Thus the two Kantian conditions for art are maintained: purposiveness (Zweckmässigkeit) and purposelessness (Zwecklosigkeit). The reader's need to exercise his free moral judgement is exercised, but only to be dissipated harmlessly in the comic.

Thus, though in the Quart Livre the effect is achieved through the reader's need to know and need to judge, the reader is not however motivated by a need for information or a need to exercise his moral judgement as such. The catalogue of metaphors in the anatomy of Quaresmeprenant and gamut of culinary terminology in the Andouilles and Gastolâtres episodes do not represent a useful recapitulation which answers the reader's need for information, nor are the various examples of démésure in the Quart Livre meant for the edification of the

reader in the fulfillment of his responsibilities. The author simply exploits the ideological consensus of his readers -- that cowardice is shameful, that religious hypocrisy is reprehensible, that an excess of asceticism is unnatural -- in order to achieve his comic effect.

The question of purpose of the author's communication with the reader in the Quart Livre, therefore, as with all works of fiction without external "use" is bound up with the question of form. The reader's natural human wishes, the wish to know and the wish to judge, are aroused (exploited) and fulfilled in order to serve purposes internal to the work of art, not external to it. For form, in literature as in the other arts, as Kenneth Burke puts it, is "the arousal and fulfillment of desire."¹⁷

Assuming that the creation of literary form in the Quart Livre is a "response" on the part of the implied author to the anticipated reactions of an envisioned reader, it soon becomes apparent that the author is working against the reader's expectations in two ways. First, the deliberate lack of verisimilitude in characterisation and plot reveals a working against the reader's "pattern of experience" or sense of reality, as we have seen. Secondly, the author seems to be working against the literary conventions of heroic romance, that is, working against expectations of naïve readers of heroic

romances.

As Jean Paris (among others) shows,¹⁸ the five cycles of heroic romance form the literary "background" to the five books of Rabelais: whereas the Pantagruel and the Gargantua correspond to the "apprenticeship" and "childhood" cycles respectively, the third and fourth books correspond roughly to the "quest" and "noble deeds" ("prouesses") cycles. The implied reader of the Quart Livre is aware of these correspondences, and, like the reader of Don Quixote, measures what he reads against expectations generated by the genre of heroic romance. That is to say, the author, working negatively against expectations of naïve readers of heroic romances, produces comic effect in a reader who is anything but naïve (but who pretends to be naïve, as we have shown) through parodying the conventions of heroic romance.

Aside from the Tempest and Andouilles episodes, which have antecedents not only in the heroic romance but also in classical and biblical literatures, a clear example of this kind of parody in the Quart Livre is the slaying of the "physetère," or sea-monster, by Pantagruel in the thirty-fourth chapter: "Le noble Pantagruel" is described, after a list of several javelin-throwers of antiquity, as "en l'art de jeter et de darder..... sans comparaison plus amirale," capable of opening oysters without touching the shells' edges, of turning the pages of

Frère Jean's breviary "l'un après l'autre sans rien désirer" (Rabelais, 115). Taken naïvely, in spite of this hyperbole, the ensuing exemplary dragon-slaying type of episode might seem to be an account by an admiring narrator of a particularly noble deed of the hero Pantagruel. Read by the reader postulated by much of the rest of the text, however, it would be seen as a parody of an admiring account of a noble and chivalrous deed. The Medamothi episode, with its exchange of gifts and highly "rhetorical" letters between father Gargantua and son Pantagruel, might be read "straight," were it not for the description of the gifts themselves:

Epistemon en achapta un aultre, on quel estoient
aussi painctes les Idées de Platon, et les Atomes
de Epicurus. Rhizotome en achapta un on quel
estoit Echo selon le naturel représentée.

(Rabelais, 33)

Thus the type of comic writing encountered in the Quart Livre seems to work negatively, "against the grain," first of the reader's "pattern of experience" or sense of reality; and secondly, against naïve readers' expectations associated with a literary genre, the heroic romance. Human communication, however, requires a minimum of positive polarity, a sort of consensus between sender and receiver, in order for a message to be comprehensible. Although, on the one hand, the creation of literary form in the Quart Livre seems to work negatively in terms of reader's experience and expectations, it does work "positively" in one respect -- ideologically. The implied

author assumes that his reader shares his values and beliefs, that his reader "takes his side" in the historically "charged" atmosphere in which the text is written. Certainly, the Quaresmeprenant, the Papimanes, and even the Tempest episodes will not be "received" properly by a reader who does not, at least provisionally, share the author's point of view in regard to religion, society and culture at a time when (in contrast to the grand siècle) a strong social consensus and a common ideology did not exist.

The historical "situation" of the Quart Livre does indeed shed light on the author's strategy for procuring his desired effect through his literary art. Whereas, for instance, the tragedies of Racine and the comedies of Molière relied on a strong social consensus to achieve their effects, the artists of a transitional period like the 16th century, such as Rabelais and Montaigne, could not rely on such a consensus. In Montaigne's case, this led to the creation of an entirely "new" genre, the essay, midway between autobiography and treatise, which relies upon self-disclosure, the autoportrait, for its artistic unity. Rabelais, however, prefers not to disclose himself, but instead to work through an unreliable narrator, working against outmoded literary convention through parody, and addressing himself to a reader alienated from a social consensus which he (the reader) experiences as repressive.

Unlike in Montaigne, in Rabelais one does not find an

author searching for a new consensus through painting the autoportrait of the "universal" self. Instead of searching for a new language in order to create a new consensus, Rabelais assumes that his reader already shares his values. He then sets about to achieve his comic effects through setting up characters for ridicule (like Dindenault and the Chiquanous) by having them violate a pre-existent code already accepted by his postulated reader.

If language is communication through symbols, and if, as Kenneth Burke says,¹⁹ artists divide into two groups: those who seek to conquer a reading public through discovering effective symbols (Montaigne, Rousseau), and those who seek to exploit an ideological consensus by making symbols effective, Rabelais certainly belongs (with Racine and Molière) in the second group.

We discover, then, that the type of characterisation and plot in the Quart Livre presents us with a negativity, a working against the reader's experience and expectations through deliberate lack of verisimilitude and parody. Nevertheless, we discover a positive factor in the assumed ideological commonality of implied author and implied reader, which facilitates predictable comic effects. The creation of literary form is thus still seen as "author's response" to anticipated reader's response, the "arousal and fulfillment of desire," where the work appeals through the reader's natural desires: to

know and to judge.

Chapter III. Portrait of the Reader in the Quart Livre

By distinguishing "implied reader" from "narrative audience," and "implied author" from "dramatised narrator," we saw that the expectations generated by the comic writing encountered in Rabelais's Quart Livre led to an emotional distance on the part of the implied reader which undermines this reader's identification and the verisimilitude of character and event (or "agent" and "act," to use the terms of the Burkean pentad²⁰) in the narrative. We saw this through noting the divergences of effects on the reader from those generated by the realistic or "dramatic" modes of fictive presentation, where the illusions of reality (mimesis) is important in order to achieve the aesthetic effect which is sought (catharsis, identification).

The implications of these divergent generic expectations still remain to be analysed and illustrated through the narratives of the Quart Livre, structured, as it is, as a framework narrative.

A. Reader's Interest and Digression: the Couillatris Story

Since most narratologies (and especially that of Gerard Genette²¹) analyse narrative from the perspective of grammatical

aspect (person, or narrative perspective or "point of view," relation of "temps narré" and "temps réel," etc.), let us follow their example and begin by examining the "grammar" of the narratives of the Quart Livre. Beginning with "syntax," we will notice first of all, in examining the first short narrative, the Couillatris story, which occupies most of the Prologue, the tendency to digress. One could characterise these digressions as "parenthetical." We could benefit, perhaps, by examining the Couillatris story in detail.

The scene is first set ("here below" on earth) by the loss of Couillatris' hatchet, the "coignée" on which he depends in order to earn a living. Necessity being the "inventrice d'Eloquence," Couillatris begins to implore the heavens to return his hatchet. At this point, the scene abruptly switches to heaven, where amid the cries of Couillatris Jupiter enumerates his preoccupations with various international events of historical importance. Jupiter ends his speech with a confession of his perplexity at the controversy between the scholars Pierre Rameau and Pierre Geland at the Sorbonne in Paris and a request for the advice of Priapus in the matter. Priapus, "la teste levée, rouge, flamboyante et asseurée" (Rabelais, 20), recommends that Jupiter turn both "Pierres" into stone, as he had once done to a dog and a fox in order to settle a dispute between Bacchus and Vulcan. After noting other civil disturbances and sending Vulcan either to stir or clear them up, Jupiter, as an afterthought, sends Mercury to find out what

Couillatris wants, since his insistant cries continue. Priapus in the meantime notes the various metaphorical uses of "coignée" (to designate male member) and brags of his own member (mentule) which he lets pass for a lapsus, since he meant to say "memoire" ("grande assez pour emplir un pot beurrier" [Rabelais, 23]). He proceeds to demonstrate by reciting two lists (of musicians) and two poems, where the play on words "coignée sans manche", "pour mieux vous coigner" is given free reign. The gods and goddesses respond with laughter, like a "microcosme de mouches" (Rabelais, 24). The primary story is resumed: we return to earth, where Couillatris is offered three hatchets -- one of gold, one of silver, and his own of wood -- out of sheer obstinacy, he chooses his own hatchet of wood and is rewarded with riches. His envious neighbours try to get rich the same way and are punished by decapitation. The moral is then presented: we should all, in all simplicity, wish nothing better for ourselves than "choses médiocres" (Rabelais, 27), the best example of which is good health.

We can see, first of all, that the primary narrative, that of Couillatris and his hatchet, is interrupted by a long digressive parenthesis, beginning with the scene in heaven, and including the Rameau-Galand story and Priapus' exposé of the metaphorical connotations of "coignée." What is the function of this parenthesis?

First, one should keep in mind the context of the

narrative: the Prologue of 1552, which, as we showed in the first chapter, asks the reader to imagine the author groping for his glasses after having been interrupted in his study, setting up a scene in which the "telling" of the story is indeed a "telling," and not a "writing." Nevertheless, the "original" written character of the fiction is highlighted, since the author cites his source: Aesop, whom he claims is really a Frenchman, since the French are descendants of the Phrygians the Trojans (a commonplace repeated throughout the Prologues). We are asked to believe that the Couillatris story is thus a "retelling" (though written) in a (false) "oral" mode of an Aesopian fable. The narrative audience is clearly evoked since the author has already addressed them directly in his role as author-dramatised narrator, the bellicose personnage groping for his glasses.

The "rhetorical situation" of the Couillatris story thus presents itself as that of an oral storyteller, as Abraham Keller shows in his detailed analysis.²² We notice also a sort of mise en abyme of this storyteller/audience situation within the story itself: the gods and goddesses laughing like "un microcosme de mouches" at the witticism of Priapus. This reflects the presumed amusement of the Prologue-author's narrative audience, which, as we showed in the first chapter, is a result of detached role-play on the part of the implied reader. By a sort of mimicry, Priapus' joking about the double-

meaning of "coignée" reflects the rhetorical situation of the oral storyteller in the Prologue: it is the audience's interest which is the determining factor in the amplification of the digression. The function of the parenthesis, the "digression," seems to be simply to sustain the "reader's interest," to "entertain" the crowd, the collective audience of an oral tale, which is itself a fiction, since the tale is written and the audience is in fact the reader.

Having said this, however, we have not said very much. Realistic and dramatic presentation avoid digression for the same reason: to sustain the reader's interest. The difference must lie, not in the objective stylistic feature, but in the subjective factor brought about by generic expectations created in the reader: the nature of the "reader's interest" itself.

The answer seems to be that "reader's interest," being, as we have seen, detached from identification with the characters and essentially "disbelieving" in terms of the verisimilitude of the events, is not directed teleologically toward the outcome of the story. For instance, the "outcome" of the framework narrative in the Quart Livre, the intrigue around the question of Panurge's marriage, the reason for seeking the oracle of Bacbuc, etc., has been entirely forgotten: it is a foregone conclusion with absolutely no interest for the reader. There is no question of using suspense, foreshadowing, prolepsis and analepsis, etc., in order to create a sense of the inevitable

fulfillment of the reader's worst fears, as with tragedy, or of meting out blame or justification, as in the detective novel or even in the realistic novel, as if the reader were a jury in a forensic proceeding.

The "digression" in fact "brackets" the passage of time in comic writing: the deferral of the outcome of a story does not produce suspense, because the reader's interest is not wholly in the "future," but instead is placed squarely in the "present" of the writing. The digressions in the Couillatris story -- the scene among the gods, the Rameau-Galand story, the speculation of Priapus over the semiosis of "coignée" -- though they interrupt a story which has the status of exemplum in a moral argument about "médiocrité," also reduce whatever "importance" or "seriousness" that the Aesopian fable itself could have had. The Priapus-Jupiter dialogue effectively places the Couillatris affair beside the infinitely more "important" Rameau-Galand affair, among others, thus bracketing and relativising it. Couillatris himself resembles a sort of peasant buffoon, and his moral choice is the result more of stupidity than of stoic resolution. The "hero" of the story is effectively Priapus, whose wit and erudition in the matter of the "coignée" vividly render him the audacious possessor of verbose loquacity.

Where, therefore, is the interest of the reader? Certainly not in the outcome of the fable, but in the digression itself. We can see how the story is in fact structured to accomodate the

generic expectations generated in the reader, resulting in a non-teleological structure, not only as a function of the necessarily episodic "framework narrative," but even within the story itself.

Having noted this tendency towards "non-teleological" digressive structure in the Couillatris story, we note, as we read further in the Quart Livre, certain uses of suspense, notably in the Dindenault and Tempest stories. How are we to reconcile this with our model of "non-teleological" structure? First of all, we should realise that "non-teleological" does not mean for us that a story in the comic writing of Rabelais does not have the "organic" unity of "beginning, middle and end." It simply means that the reader's interest is not directed towards the "future" in terms of his experience of (or even "participation in") the fictive presentation.

Whereas, for example, Stendhal envisages a reader whose entire attention is on the "future" -- "what happens next?" -- and thus forswears anything resembling digression, and even analepse and prolepse, ending up with a spare style in almost completely linear development. Rabelais envisages a reader whose interest is not in "what happens next," but rather, if not in "what is happening now," at least in the "now" of the writing, in commentary and textual comparison, enumeration and cataloguing, among other things. This reader can only be gratified through digression, where secondary narratives also

occasionally appear as a part of the commentary of characters on the action, as with the Lord of Basché story of Panurge during the visit to the Chiquanous.

B. The "monde à l'envers": Dindenault and the Chiquanous

The next story of real comic effectiveness in the Quart Livre, the Dindenault story, seems to use "suspense" in order to heighten the vividness of the outcome of the story, the drowning of Dindenault the abrasive sheep merchant with his sheep. Dindenault, seeing Panurge without his braguette and wearing glasses, loudly insults him by calling him a "coqu," initiating a dialogue with Panurge where the situation of buying sheep provides an opportunity for hyperbole and enumeration on Dindenault's part, a parody of the popular linguistic virtuosity of the charlatan of the foire.

Panurge's secret instructions to Frère Jean and Epistemon:

Retirez vous icy un peu à l'écart, et joyeusement
passez temps à ce que voirez. Il y aura bien beau
jeu, si la chorde ne rompt.

(Rabelais, 43)

seem to be a reflection of what the (implied) author is recommending to the (implied) reader. The "chorde" or the "trame" which the author seems to be "stretching out" is in fact the web which Panurge's monosyllabic replies ("Combien?"; "Patience"; "Voire") allow the verbose Dindenault to spin for

himself. Panurge is in fact, to borrow two metaphors from today's argot, "playing (Dindenault) like a violin," or "giving him enough rope to hang himself." Dindenault's digressions, which venture into domains such as the medical properties of the parts of sheep, serve to entrap him, to deprive him of the power of speech, and to reduce him to the status of a drowning man who must listen to Panurge's demonstration: "...leur remonstrant par lieux de Rethorique les misères de ce monde....(Rabelais, 49)".

The deferral of the punishment of Dindenault, though it produces a kind of "suspense," does not really create a "trame" in the sense of a teleological deferral of a reader's satisfaction in terms of story (plot, characterisation, identification and justification, etc.) but instead suspends reader's interest in outcome and simply surprises him. Panurge's action must appear as gratuitous and as unexpected as possible.

And so, as Panurge has been the duplicitous victim of Dindenault's bombast, Dindenault suddenly becomes the victim of Panurge's bathos: reversal of rapport of power, where "power" is the power of speech. Certainly the offense does not correspond to the punishment -- drowning -- the motif of revenge lacks verisimilitude or acceptability to the reader by any standard. The episode has the status of a game, quite self-consciously and intentionally: just as Frère Jean and Epistemon

are told by Panurge to "retirez un peu à l'écart," to "pass their time joyfully," the reader is indeed being invited to accept the seemingly cruel revenge inflicted upon Dindenault as a "passe-temps," a hobby, having no reference to any social code, no referent in the social context of the reader. The very effectiveness of the scene may even depend, from a comic point of view, on the very inversion of this accepted moral code: the "monde à l'envers," which stems from the operation of "carnavalisation,"²³ the key concept of Bakhtin so essential to the understanding of the Rabelaisian "world."

Yet this "world," which not only does not imitate the world of the reader but even inverts its codes and standards, is somehow also a function of the expectations generated in the implied reader by the implied author in this kind of writing. The very fact that the restraints of verisimilitude, identification and standards of moral justification do not apply in comic writing, since both reader and author in a sense only pretend -- "untrustworthy" narrator, in this case, to tell the truth, and the reader to believe him -- creates the very conditions for the symbolic appeal of the imaginary world "à l'envers."

The visit to the Chiquanous, which gives rise to the story of the Lord of Basché narrated by Panurge, which in turn is commented upon by a tertiary narrative, that of "Maistre

François Villon," narrated by the Lord of Basché himself,²⁴ illustrates this "monde à l'envers," which is, as the result of the fictive inversion of the social referent, a sort of joyous acting-out of the transgression of the social code. The "gentilhomme," in danger of losing all he possesses and rotting in prison "comme s'il eust frappé le Roi" (Rabelais, 60) if he dares to lay a hand on the legal representative of the Crown, the bailiff, finds in the Lord of Basché his hero and example. For the Lord of Basché has found a remedy to the situation of the sacrosanct person of the bailiff: thanks to popular custom, blows can be given during a marriage ceremony, and thus the bailiff, provided that there is a wedding, can be beaten with impunity.

The mock marriage ceremony in the Lord of Basché story provides the opportunity for "bailiff-bashing" forbidden in the society of the day. The rhetorical appeal of the story thus resides in the breaking of a taboo: as in the Carnival, where, as Bakhtin shows, the travesty of the "Pope of fools"²⁵ is enacted, here the King is mocked in the person of his bailiff. But the condition for the reader's enjoyment of this is not custom (as with the Carnival), but the "contract" between implied author and implied reader. As the non-teleological structure in the Couillatris story stems from an envisaged reader whose attention is not on "what happens next," here the non-verisimilar story materials stem from the reader's "use" of

the fiction not to see himself reflected "mimetically" in the social hierarchy. The story inverts the social code and relativises it: the King in effect appears as victim, and the pleasure of the reader stems from this effacement of all difference between dominator and dominated.

As the Couillatris story is structured to bring linear temporality and thus causality into question, so the Dindenault and Lord of Basché stories show, under the doubled fiction (Panurge pretending to buy a sheep, the Lord of Basché pretending to celebrate a wedding) a joyous inversion of a power relationship, and thus stoical "causality," in a sense. "Maistre François Villon" 's mistreatment of the intransigent Tappecoue reveals the same mistreatment of an authoritative victim, under the pretense of the Carnival-like staging of a Passion play. There is a "doubling" of the fiction here as well -- the travesty of a Passion play -- which facilitates the violent humiliation of the authority figure, the joyous punishment of the punisher.

Here the scapegoating takes on the macabre dimensions of a blood sacrifice: there is nothing left of the poor Tappecoue but his right foot and shoe entangled in the stirrup of his runaway horse, and his dismemberment is described in graphic detail. The narrator, the Lord of Basché, model of the lighthearted "gentleman," ends the story by inciting his men to enact a similar "tragique farce" (Rabelais, 65) against the

bailiffs. The term "tragicque farce" is in fact appropriate to designate the "bracketing" effect of literary genre upon such story material, which, in another kind of implied author/implied reader "situation," that of realistic narrative, say, could be narrated unaltered with an opposite (tragic or cathartic) effect upon the reader.

The "bracketing" effect is none other than the parody of a "tragic" fictive "event," the event of a character, Tappecoue, who becomes a "victim" due to his intransigence in the matter of the Passion Play to be staged by Villon and his companions, dressed as devils. The grotesque dismemberment of Tappecoue is in fact a parody of the "victimage" employed by tragedy to achieve its cathartic effect: that is why it is described as a "tragicque farce" by the Lord of Basché.

C. The Mimesis of Laughter: the Tempest Story

We said, in the first chapter, that the comic writing of Rabelais is "non-mimetic" in the sense that it does not enjoin identification upon the reader, but instead presents non-verisimilar humours (characters with one overriding trait) resulting in the gratification of the reader's desire to know and to judge the characters as objects, since no attempt is made to present them as subjects. Thus, the mimetic principle of identity is replaced with a principle of difference.

Nevertheless, after looking at the operations of the "monde à l'envers" in the Dindenault, Lord of Basché and Villon stories, we must recognise that there remains a certain mimetic principle, at work, as it were, unconsciously. The source of pleasure in the fiction is that what is normally repressed is acted out ostentatiously and joyously, which must be seen as a sort of wish-fulfillment, since the fiction has the logic of a kind of "pleasure principle" at work in a wish-fulfilling dream, in opposition to the "reality principle" imposed by society.

Still, in spite of this Freudian schema, we do not see what Freud posited to explain the appeal of the romance-type of fiction, a James Bond-like hero, an ego-subject whose desires are invariably gratified. Instead, as we see in the Tempest story, the character closest to a protagonist, Panurge, is transformed through "dramatic irony" (the reader's giving the lie to Panurge's bravado), as outlined in the first chapter, from a narrating, controlling subject into an object of the reader's ridicule. Panurge is "demasked" as the crisis of the storm approaches, and the reader shares the perspective of Frère Jean, under whose critical eye Panurge's demasking (cowardice) during the storm is followed by his "remasking" (bravado) once the danger is past.

The episode of the Tempest in the Quart Livre is, I believe, an extremely good example of the mechanism of comic writing as it relates to the reader's identifications and

distances from the characters, to certain recurrent structures which produce the characteristic physiological reaction in the reader -- laughter. As René Girard points out,²⁶ the physiological aspect of laughter has a certain "mimetic" quality which "mimics" the object of laughter: laughter, which reduces the subject to convulsive impotence (Girard uses the example of tickling), mimics the loss of control of the object of this laughter, and the reduction of this object from the status of a subject, with whom the laughing subject can identify, to the status of a helpless laughed-at object. Baudelaire, in his De l'essence du rire,²⁷ sees this same possibility in the eventual identity of "weakness" of mocker and mocked.

Thus we find that a certain "mimesis" must be brought back as an active principle in understanding reader response in the Quart Livre. What kind of "mimesis" is this? and how is it distinguished from the mimesis of realism, which, as we said in the first chapter, is not at work in the Quart Livre? We said that the comic writing of Rabelais is not limited by verisimilitude to represent the probable in order to produce the "illusion of reality" in the reader. The key word here is "represent": the "world represented" ("monde représenté," term used by Bakhtin in his work on the "chronotope" in the novel²⁸), does not "mirror" the "world representing" ("monde représentant"), although the "monde représentant" forms either a horizon or a fertile substratum of culture (popular or

classical) for the "monde représenté" in the fiction. That remains true for us: part of what we did in the first chapter was to distinguish "monde représentant" from "monde représenté," when we distinguished "implied author" from "dramatic narrator" (and "implied reader" from "narrative audience"), thereby showing certain effects of genre in the text itself ("monde représenté"), and setting these effects against effects in other genres, notably the dramatic (tragic) and romanesque (realistic) genres, where the reader who responds, the implied reader, remains outside the text, forming part of the "monde représentant." We saw also through the workings of the "monde à l'envers" that the "monde représentant" is not "mirrored" at all, but rather inverted, "turned upside down," by the fiction.

We said also that the implied author does not enjoin "identification" on the reader; this remains true in that sympathy (pity) and terror, necessary to the catharsis, are not among the effects that the author wants his reader to experience. Yet, as we see in the Tempest episode, the reader does require a certain alternance of identity and difference in order to experience the full comic effect, which comes from an irreducible ambiguity, that of the identity of controlling subject and impotent object. Panurge, whom the reader has seen in the position of power in the Dindenault episode, now appears, in the light of his paralysing fear of death, as a helpless coward:

Panurge, ayant du contenu en son estomach bien
 repeu les poissons scatophages, restait acropy sus
 le tillac, tout affligé, tout meshaigné, et à demy
 mort: invoque tous les benoistz saints et saintes
 à son ayde....

(Rabelais, 79)

The "critique" of Panurge, which began in the Tiers Livre, where a sort of polarity Frère Jean/Panurge (honest human courage/hypocritical cowardice) has already established itself, here takes on its full physical dimensions as vomiting which has reduced him to impotence. In the Tiers Livre, where Panurge's meeting with the dying Raminagrobis leads him to a metaphysical crisis where he imagines that the room is full of devils, Panurge hypocritically defends the mendicant orders and condemns Raminagrobis for heresy, in order to "save his own skin," so to speak, and assuage his "doubts," which immediately reduce to "fears," fears not only of death but of the delirium of hell. Here in the Quart Livre the pattern is repeated, but Panurge's fear has an immediate physical manifestation: he empties his stomach, as here, or his bowels, as in the Ganabin episode which closes the book.

What are the effects on the reader, and what psychological mechanism is at work? First, let us admit that the reader has learned to identify with Panurge in the comic perspective: Panurge often appears as the narrating, controlling subject (according to the pattern established in the Pantagruel) who makes it possible for the reader to be comfortably established

as spectator, so that the Bergsonian condition of superiority²⁹ can be fulfilled, in order that the "mécanique plaqué sur le vivant" can trigger laughter. Yet it is this same character, Panurge, who is now degraded to impotent object through his shameless cowardice and hypocrisy. Notice however that Frère Jean, with the "demotion" in the eyes of the reader of Panurge, remains a paragon of courage, not only in the face of danger, but also in that of death and hell itself. The litany of epithets which Frère Jean hurls at Panurge ("Panurge le veau, Panurge le pleurart, Panurge le criart....") are matched by continual reference to multitudes of devils in hell, a defiance of the delirium of hell which, given the prevalent metaphysics of the 16th century culture, is bound to have its effect on any envisaged reader. The polarity -- Panurge the (temporarily) religious/ Frère Jean the (temporarily) irreligious -- is a structure which has the effect of, first, through Panurge's degradation, producing the ambiguous identity (of the reader) of controlling subject and impotent object, and secondly, through Frère Jean's courage, modelling a non-ambiguous controlling subject, through whom the reader can maintain his superiority, lest either sympathy or fear muffle his laughter.

The degradation of Panurge from controlling subject to object of ridicule causes the reader to laugh convulsively himself, thus mimicking the same process, that of reduction to impotence. Thus a mimetic process is indeed at work, though not

a mimesis of representation, but rather a mimesis of (unconscious) identification with the transformation of the character from controlling subject to helpless object. Just as, with the representation of the "monde à l'envers," the rapport of power was inverted, and thus all difference effaced between dominant and dominated, so here that degradation of the subject Panurge shows the "democratic" nature of laughter, the tendency in comic writing to replace the principle of moral justification so noticeable in dramatic or realistic presentation with a principle of levelling. Nothing is sacred, and nothing is individual in comic writing; the distinction sacred/profane is often reversed, and the individual, with his claims to nobility, uniqueness, etc., is reduced to his animal limitations, to what he has in common with the rest of humanity.

Although we see, in the degradation of Panurge, the "democratic" comic levelling process, when it comes to the reader's relation to Panurge's "double" Pantagruel, we see an attitude which, though ambivalent, is nonetheless respectful. When the cosmic effects of the death of Christ are recounted as the death of "le bon Pan, le grand pasteur.... nostre unique Servateur" (Rabelais, 103). Pantagruel is represented in his gigantic and grotesque form for the first time in the Quart Livre:

Pantagruel, ce propos finy, resta en silence et
profonde contemplation. Peu de temps après, nous
veismes les larmes decouller de ses oeilz grosses
comme oeufs de Austruche. Je me donne à Dieu, si

je mens d'un seul mot.

(Rabelais, 103-4)

(Note the protestation of veracity on the part of the narrator, in its ironic form "Je me donne à Dieu...." which, as we said in the first chapter, puts the fiction not the particularly comic context of the "ground of falsehood" between implied author and implied reader.) The tears of Pantagruel, as "large as ostrich eggs," lead to a certain effect of pathos in the reader which stems from the reader's position as admirer of the "noble Pantagruel" who, in the passage quoted in the first chapter, kills in mock-heroic (epic) style the monstrous "physetère" with all the parodic hyperbole that entails.

Thus, Panurge, and not Pantagruel, is the character to whom the reader responds with the characteristic comic ambivalence, with the ambiguity of identity and difference. The ambivalence the reader feels towards Pantagruel is an ambivalence of difference: Pantagruel is "noble" -- distinguished from the reader -- but his nobility is not the tragic nobility of the catharsis, a nobility mitigated by a tragic flaw (hamartia), but a parodic and grotesque nobility of mock-epic. It is in this (long-established and recurrent) role that Pantagruel vanquishes the Andouilles on the Isle Farouche, the non-verisimilar mock-epic narrative which occasions the narrator's self-discrediting protestation of veracity, the implications of which were discussed in the first chapter.

D. Satire and Difference: Quaresmeprenant and the Andouilles

Before we broach the subject of the mechanism of reader response at work in the Quaresmeprenant-Andouilles episode, the Papefigues and Papemanes episodes and the Messer Gaster episode, which form the major part of the rest of the Quart Livre, let us take a brief theoretical excursus into the difference between humour and satire, in the perspective of our mimetic principle of identification. This will be necessary because the elements of satire predominate in these latter episodes over the elements of humour.

As elaborated by Luigi Pirandello in his essay L'umorismo³⁰ the difference between "humour" and "satire" is that the latter is characterised by irony (ironia), defined by Pirandello as an expression of the contrary of what is meant (ex: Swift's A Modest Proposal), while "humour" stems from an ambivalence (sentimento del contrario) on the part of the implied author, and therefore of the implied reader. In our terms, "satire," whose modalities include parody and irony, presents an object with which the reader cannot possibly identify: everything is exaggerated in order to accentuate the feeling of difference on the part of the reader. Irony (satire, grotesque parody) leads the reader to a feeling of superiority, and is therefore marked not by laughter (which, as we saw with the example of Panurge during the tempest, requires a measure of identification) but by

the smile (Pirandello uses, for instance, the example of the smile of the "serene" irony of Ariosto). Humour, on the other hand, is marked by the ambivalence of laughter, a phenomenon remarked upon at length by Bakhtin in his "history of laughter" in the first chapter of his Rabelais.³¹ In humour, laughter is triggered by the unconscious ambiguity of the reader's identity coupled with his difference vis-à-vis the object of his laughter. In effect, the laughing reader in a sense laughs with, as well as at, the object of his laughter.

Due to the nature of the polemic behind the remainder of the episodes in the Quart Livre, made sharper by the ever-present threat of censure in the Prologues in the first chapter (curse of the misreaders, etc.), it is the elements of satire which begin to dominate over the ambivalence of humour, exemplified in the Tempest episode. The grotesque figures Quaresmeprenant, Antiphysie, and even Messer Gaster accentuate difference and reduce identity to a minimum on the part of the reader. The ambivalence the reader felt towards Panurge during the Tempest, the beaten Chiquanous, and even the drowning Dindenault diminishes, and so does the convulsive mimetic laughter: laughter is replaced by the bitter but superior (not to say "supercilious," as one could probably say of the smile of the reader of Voltaire) smile of irony.

Quaresmeprenant, the "fouetteur de petitz enfans.... homme

de bien et de grande devotion" (Rabelais, 101), whose description, as we saw in the first chapter, shows clearly the ideological perspective of the implied author, is "anatomised" in such a way as to render him completely "other," so that the reader regards him as an "object". His internal parts are listed as a series of similes, terms not even necessarily "marked" by pejorative connotations stemming from the satire. Particularly "interesting" internal parts, such as the heart ("comme une chasuble"), or the "boyau cullier" (always "interesting" in Rabelais, "comme un bourabaquin monachal"), or the urine ("comme un papefigue"), however, do have mock-religious resonances.

The similes corresponding to Quaresmeprenant's abstract qualities -- his imagination ("comme un carillonnement de cloches"), "sens commun" ("comme un bourdon"), "pensées" ("comme un vol d'estourneaulx") convey satirical intent, but when it comes to his "external parts," all reference seems to be lost in favour of the free play of the signifier. Nevertheless, as far as the signified is concerned, there seems to be a certain visual appeal: the "trou de cul" is compared to a "mirouoir cristallin," and the "mamelles" to "un cornet à bouquin." This visual appeal continues with the list of metaphors expressing the "contenances" of Quaresmeprenant: for instance, when he opens his mouth to belch, the spectacle is compared to "huytres en escale." However, if he speechifies ("discourait") it is (as) "neiges d'antan," the cliché from Villon indicating that he

tends to be a bore.

This enigmatic "anatomy" of Quareshmeprenant presents us with a kind of monstrous abstraction: not only can the reader not identify, but the metaphorical deformations of language inscribe Quareshmeprenant in the completely "non-mimetic" (in the sense of representation) category of language itself, without reference or even communicative purpose. The catalogue of metaphors does not "narrate" Quareshmeprenant, nor does it describe him. The term "Quareshmeprenant" is not a "character" in the sense of "subject"; it is the term under which the comparisons are listed, with hyperrealistic (belching like (*huitres en escalle*)) or even surrealistic (the "trou de cul" compared to "*mirouoir cristallin*") resonances without regard to fictional referent.

It is the commentary of Frère Jean and Pantagruel which contextualises Quareshmeprenant, and gives him his function in terms of the ideological alignment of implied author and implied reader. Frère Jean comments, obviously ironically:

Voyla le quallant.... C'est mon homme. C'est celui
que je cherche. Je luy vais mander un cartel.

(Rabelais, 110)

Pantagruel's commentary then situates Quareshmeprenant in reference to the positive ideological polarity, the perspective valorised by the implied author: the "médiocrité" of the Prologues is now replaced by the parent term -- "nature," of

which "mesure" is the epigonic ideal (as opposed to "dém mesure"). It is the element of "dém mesure" which makes Quaresmeprenant "une estrange et monstrueuse membreure d'homme," who reminds Pantagruel of the "forme et contenance de Amodunt [disharmony] et Discordance" (Rabelais, 110), children of "Antiphysie", "Anti-nature," the double³² produced by the idea "Nature," which is after all an abstraction whose function is to engender the humanistic ideals "médiocrité" and "mesure".

The image of the children of Antiphysie, their feet in the air and their heads below, "continuellement faisant la roue, cul sus teste, les pieds contrement" (Rabelais, 111) is an image which unambiguously fixes difference vis-à-vis the reader, a satirical image which relies for its effect on the ideological alignment of implied author and implied reader. The myth of Antiphysie, through the "smile" of irony, further elaborates and fixes the "monstrosity" of Quaresmeprenant, effecting the "comfortable" identity of reader and author, and naming and cataloguing their ideological enemies:

....Mategotz, Cagotz et Papelars; les Maniacles,
Pistoletz: les Demoniacles Calvins, imposteurs de
Geneve, les enragez Putherbes, Briffaux, Caphars,
Chattemittes....

(Rabelais, 112)

Lest the allegory become too "readable" here, and perhaps because of the censure, the war of Pantagruel (in his mock-

heroic role) and the Andouilles ensues in order to "blur" the transparency with comic fantasy. The Andouilles are the least referential of the fictive inventions of Rabelais, and it is this juncture exactly that the paradoxical protestation of veracity discussed in the first chapter occurs, not only reflecting the comic unreliability of the narrator but also proposing a sort of mock-mythic genealogy of Andouilles, as symbolic representatives of the seductive and serpentine feminine principle. Nevertheless, the scene of slaughter of Andouilles, with the flying pig Mardi Gras and the healing mustard, triggers laughter through the parody of epic -- the residue of the tendency to identify with the hero (Pantagruel), the parody of the Trojan horse story ("la Truye") filled with cooks by Frère Jean, etc.

The author has, in effect, through the "monstrosity" of Quaresmeprenant and especially through the invention of Antiphysie, exposed his ideological position, and now attempts to blur the transparency of the allegory with unbridled comic fantasy, not only to evade the censure but also to safeguard his artistic purpose, the comic vision which places everything in a "double" perspective, undecidable and irreducibly ambiguous. An unambiguous transparency would be by nature inartistic, rendering the fiction susceptible to literal translation. This is the reason, both for the play of the signifier and for the "unimaginable" signified in the "description" of Quaresmeprenant, and for the non-referentiality of the

Andouilles and their mock-mythological resonances.

E. Papefigues and Papemanes: the Non-committal Reader

One of the reasons for blurring the allegory through the "unreadable" and farcical battle with the Andouilles is to relativise the polemic which threatens to make the reader's smile of irony a little too self-satisfied. Polemic, as René Girard rightly observes, tends to "monopolise whatever remains of the sacred" (Girard, 116), to replace whatever is "debunked" with a new set of taboos, which abrogate to themselves the sacredness of the old taboos. If, as Roger Caillois says, the sacred can be defined as

...that being, object, or idea [...] for which man
departs from routine, that which he does not allow
to be discussed, scoffed at, or joked about...

(Caillois, 132-3)

we can say that the sacred, or at least the place of the sacred, is profoundly antagonistic to the comic, that which continually relativises exactly those things taken most seriously in the social context (as we see, for instance, in the operation of the "monde à l'envers").

The Papefigues and Papemanes episodes must be seen in the historical context, that of post-Affair-of-the-Placards France, the persecutions of the Protestants by the ecclesiastical and

monarchical powers, etc. Pantagruel, in the cursed and desolate land of the Papefigues (Protestants), comes upon the strange sight of a Papefigue totally submerged in a baptismal font with his nose protruding. The narrative which ensues explains the cause of this, and ends with a surprising gesture which liberates the submerged Papefigue. It concerns the outwitting of one of the devils who attempt to extort tribute from the oppressed Papefigue's agricultural produce. The narrative not only valorises the peasant wisdom of a folkloric culture against officialdom (who are represented by the devil as succumbing to his temptations), but also, curiously, situates the final vanquishing power of the Papefigues against the devil, by a kind of displacement, in the exposure of the sex of the old wife of the persecuted Papefigue. Seeing the sex of the old woman, the devil screams in alarm:

Mahon, Demiourgan, Megere, Alecto, Persephone, il
ne me tient pas! Je m'en voys bel erre. Cela! Je
lui quite le champs.

(Rabelais, 146)

The Papefigue in the baptismal font is thus saved from a promised "scratching" contest with the devil by the "wound" of his wife, which will "never heal." The sex of the woman has therefore taken the place of the sacred, capable of saving man and frightening away devils.

What does this mean in terms of the reader of the comic fiction? We can say, first of all, that the polemic of the

humanist author/reader has been refracted by the fiction, which displaces the interest of the reader from the assignation of praise or blame and the designation of hero/martyrs (an instinct nourished by the reading of the lives of saints, etc.), to the demonstration of intelligence on the part of the victims (and stupidity on the part of the victimizers), and finally to the scandalous showing of the female sex. The rapport of power is thus inverted to the delight of the reader, not through the triumph of one ideology over another, but through a parody of the sacred, the female sex having taken the place of the sign of the cross, the efficacy of which in the popular saint's lives genre is to frighten away devils.

Thus, though the sympathy of the reader is with the Papefigue farmer and his wife, and his ire directed against the various ecclesiastical and monarchical officials mentioned by the devil, one monological³³ context is not substituted for another, i.e., the ideology of the victims does not replace the ideology of the victimizers. The "victory" is obtained and the pleasure of the reader gratified, through a parody of the sacred, which puts in the place of the sacred what is not only not sacred, but even "obscene," the female sex. The reader is thus not allowed to satisfy his indignation against injustice, since this would destroy the comic tone and atmosphere; instead comic ambivalence is maintained through a radical juxtaposition of the sacred and the obscene, which is the essence of

"carnavalisation," the deliberate bringing together of two domains normally kept separate through parody.

The Papemanes episode, with the worshipping of the Pope by the Papemanes as "God on earth," Homenaz's bombastic praise of the Decretals, and the catalogue of the mock "miracles" of these said Decretals, continues this parodic modality. The sententiousness and bombast of Homenaz reminds one of the similar tone of Dindenault, but this time the object of the parodic encomium is not the medical properties of the parts of sheep, but the "Saintes Decretales." The parody in fact replicates a common style in Rabelais, the epideictic style used, for instance, in the praise of the debtors and of the herb Pantagruelion in the Tiers Livre.

Whereas, however, the reader in the Dindenault episode is gratified by the revenge of Panurge upon the verbose sheep merchant, by a reversal in the rapport of power (symbolised by the power of speech), here the commentary of both Panurge and Pantagrueul seems to reflect positively upon Homenaz. Panurge comments of the Papemanes:

Icy.... de par tous les Diables, ne sont ilz
hereticques comme fut Raminagrobis, et comme ilz
sont parmy les Almaignes et Angleterre. Vous estes
Christians trieiz sur le volet.

(Rabelais, 154)

And upon reception of Homenaz' parting gift of "good Christian

pears," Pantagruel comments: "...oncques ne veiz Christians meilleurs que ces bons Papimanes" (165) These seemingly "positive" remarks must of course be taken ironically by the reader, and in fact, after the ostensible tears of contrition shed for pathetic effect by Homenaz as he finishes the peroration of his epideictic oration in praise of the Decretals, capable of "drawing gold from France to Rome," Epistemon, Frère Jean and Panurge feign their own tears:

.....voyans cette facheuses catastrophe,
commencerent au couvert de leur serviettes crier:
Myault, Myault, Myault, feignant ce pendent de
s'essuer les oeilz, comme s'ils eussent ploré.
(Rabelais, 164)

Bombast thus calls forth bathos, as it did in the case of Panurge's sermon to the drowning Dindenault.

Partially due to the effects upon the reader of this commentary of the characters (an authorial strategy mentioned in the first chapter), we can say then that what is said, both by Homenaz and by the characters, through irony, is in fact the exact contrary of what is meant. The ideological alignment of implied author and implied reader is already so firmly established through the Prologues and commentary, the Antiphysie episode, etc., that the speech of Homenaz, with all the ornamentation of its rhetoric, is not only unconvincing in and of itself, but even convinces the reader of the exact opposite of what it purports to convince him. Thus we can safely assume that Homenaz' praise of the efficacy of the Decretals in drawing

gold from France to Rome is proof of the author's Gallicanism and Evangelicalism.

Can we say, then, that the polemic of the author here simply inverts itself through the fiction, and that we simply interpret (x) by substituting (y), that one monological context has been replaced by another through irony? If that were true, the comic aspect of the fiction would be in danger, just as it was endangered by the "too-readable" allegory of Antiphysie. If the author's polemic simply substitutes one set of taboos with another, the widest sense of the comic is lost, since the very nature of the comic is to relativise the sacred, not to replace it: laughter becomes "reduced"³⁴ and humour narrows its scope to the "satirical" exclusively.

If the full ambivalent nature of the comic is to be safeguarded, the reader must remain, to some extent, non-committal. If he were to be "engaged" by the polemic of the author and were to embrace a Manichean view of social reality in which humanity is polarised into ideological opposites, the full public participatory and "carnavalised" nature of laughter would be lost, the 'democratised' public square would become the drawing room of snobbery³⁵ and the laughter of humour would become the smile of irony. In the Quart Livre of Rabelais, however, this is not the case, for the speechifying Homenaz demonstrates his humanity through a few well chosen physical

actions:

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.....

(Rabelais, 163)

The interest of the reader is then further displaced from the inverted polemic of irony to the "poires du bon Christian," gifts of Homenaz to his departing guests, and to the obscene comments of Frère Jean concerning Homenaz' daughters. Thus, just as the sex of the old Papefiguière robs the sacred of its power through parody, the polemic of the author is referenced to the sweating, belching and farting body of the buffoon Homenaz, lest it divide the "represented world" into Manichean halves, and reduce laughter to exclusive ridicule of the ideologically "impure" other. The abstract and idealised, which tends to impinge on the sacred through the conflict of polemic, is thus relativised by a comic representation of the body in its most concrete and certainly "non-ideal" (heroic or tragic) functions.

F. Messer Gaster: the "Juste Milieu" of the Belly

The image of Messer Gaster, "premier maistre es ars de ce monde" (Rabelais, 171), like Antiphysie, is an allegory, a

fictive bringing to life of the "dead metaphor" of the proverb: "the stomach has no ears," a frequent topos in Rabelais (for example, the first meeting of Pantagruel with the famished Panurge in Pantagruel, where this idea is conveyed in fourteen real or imagined languages):

...Dieu de silence. En Grec nommé Sigalion, estre
astomé, c'est-à-dire sans bouche, ainsi Gaster sans
aureilles fut créé..... Il ne parle que par signes.
Mais à ses signes tout le monde obeist plus
soudain qu'aux edictz des Preteurs, et mandemens
des Roys.

(Rabelais, 171-2)

Citing the allegory of Aesop in which the primacy of the Belly was restored after a failed revolt against him of the other organs in the "royaume de Somates," the author goes on to posit Gaster (Belly) as the inventor of "toutes ars, toutes machines, tous engins et subtilitez" (172). Though Gaster himself cannot speak, he teaches the animals language:

Les Corbeaulx, les Gays, les Papegays, les
Estourneaulx, il rend poetes; les Pies il fait
poetrides, et leur aprent language humain
proferer, parler, chanter. Et tout pour la trippe.
(Rabelais, 172)

Everything is referenced to the Belly: the art of conserving grain, and of war, even language itself, which becomes a tool, a means more than an end, in order to facilitate the satisfaction of hunger, which takes priority over all the other human desires.

For all his priority and primacy, however, Gaster does not occupy the realm of the sacred: after the description of the sacrifices of the Gastrolatres by means of their "effigie monstrueuse, ridicule, hydeuse" (176) Manduce to "leur dieu ventripotent" (175) Gaster, the author makes abundantly clear that Gaster is "non Dieu, mais paouvre, vile, chetifve creature" (180). After all the culinary delights are sacrificed to him, Gaster sends the Gastrolatres:

....à sa selle persée veoir, considerer, philosopher
et contempler quelle divinité ils trouvaient en sa
matière fecale.

(Rabelais, 180)

What, then, is the function of this final powerful image in terms of the laughing reader and the comic vision of the Quart Livre? The appropriateness of this image of the profane and primal Belly can be seen from the ideal of "médiocrité" proposed in the Prologue of 1552, which provides the sign of ideological unity, the thematic under which could be subsumed almost the totality of the narratives of the Quart Livre: from Couillatris, Dindenault and Chiquanous, through the Tempest, the anatomy of Quaresmeprenant and Antiphysie, to the Visit to the Papefigues and the Papemanes. The image of the Master Belly recapitulates allegorically this thematic, a thematic more profound than any Gallican or Evangelical polemic. For not only does the Belly occupy the "juste milieu" between the Head (site of what Burke calls the "hierarchical goadings"³⁶) and the

Genitalia (site of all instinctive libidinal longings which, for Freud, have primacy in the Unconscious), but it also does not abrogate the sacred to itself: whereas men have worshipped the phallus and the human or animal countenance, they have never worshipped the belly.

For this reason the Belly is profoundly comic, relativising and "profaning" the sacred. Whereas the tragic has a sacred function, depending for its catharsis on a principle of "victimage,"³⁷ or scapegoating, the comic is profoundly, and by nature at odds with ideological extremes of any kind, and even with abstraction in general. It tends towards the corporeal, the profane, the scatological and the "obscene." If there are "victims" in comedy (Dindenault, the Chiquanous) these victims do not call forth the catharsis, the purgation of fear and pity in the reader, but instead self-inclusive laughter, which mimes pleasurably the helplessness of the "victim."

Our portrait of the reader of the Quart Livre -- a reader whose attention is "non-teleological," a reader who enjoys the inversion rather than the imitation of social reality, a laughing reader who mimes the helplessness of the comic "victim," a non-committal reader who transcends polemic in order to experience a desacralised and profoundly "material"

represented world -- is the portrait of an "implied reader," a reader implicated by the generic expectations generated by the "text" itself. We can say that this reader is the "evidence" that the "comic" as a literary genre exists at all, since we can see the differences between the responses of this reader and those of the reader of "tragedy" or of "epic." Through the demonstration of the response of this reader, we can show the particular kind of "mimetic" representation with which we have to deal in the "comic" narrative of the Quart Livre of Rabelais: first, negatively, through showing how it differs from the mimesis of tragedy and realism, and then, positively, through showing the profoundly material and desacralising, unifying character of the response of the identifying laughing reader.

Through drawing the portrait of the reader of the Quart Livre, we can therefore further generalise a strategy of an author of this kind of writing, seeing also similar strategies that apply to other literary works of art. The next step would be to see the context of such an artistic strategy, to explore the causes in the cultural context of the time, and then perhaps further to generalise to other similar socio-historical cultural contexts which may create similar reading publics sharing the expectations of the reader of whom we have drawn a portrait. If the creation of literary form is the result of the "arousal and fulfillment of desire," as Burke suggests (see above, 22-27), then the strategy of the author itself must be seen as a "response" to the "aroused" desire of a reading public, a public

which is as much a cultural product as the literary work itself.

Conclusion

The reading of a text which is a cultural product of a bygone humanist and Christian culture, of which only traces remain in our modernity, seems at best to invite us to a work of "archeological" reconstitution. The text of Rabelais, in spite of its striking "modernity," with all its "progressive" aspects (demonstrated convincingly by Jean Paris in his Rabelais au futur), and most important, the fact that it is a "literary text" in the modern sense, reproduced by a printing press, is, for all that, a product of a culture which will never regain its former dominance, but is destined to marginality.

Nevertheless, my project has not been a purely "archeological" one. I have tried to show, in demonstrating the artistic strategy of Rabelais and the portrait of the reader implied by his comic writing, that Rabelais, through his use of authorial commentary, unreliable narration, parody, and irony, rejoins the reading tastes of our own "post-modern" cultural climate. I suggest, at the end of my chapter on "Literary Form and the Desire of the Reader," that this is because of the fragmented and ideologically polarised nature of the cultural universe Rabelais inhabited, which of course is not unlike our own. I suggest parallels also from the 18th century, notably Sterne and Diderot, and Joyce from our own century, who adopt a similar artistic strategy: digression (Sterne), authorial commentary (Diderot), and parody (Joyce).

In concentrating on authorial strategy (commentary, unreliable narration, etc.) and reader response in the Quart Livre of Rabealis, I have tried to clear the theoretical path towards a "method" of reading which would not refuse everything not "textualised," but which would instead see the "text" as a cultural product of an author and a reader who are also cultural products. Believing that the Word ("text") and the World are inextricably linked, not only through a "naming" function, but also through what Burke calls "symbolic action," the creative power of language in general, I have approached this text as if it had the power to illuminate our own cultural context.

Since "poetics" is, it seems to me, an enterprise which necessarily entails abstraction, and distinguishes itself from "poetry" by the fact that it uses a descriptive language which is not "poetic," I feel that the project of the critic is not simply to comment, gloss, or explicate texts, nor to produce "poetic" texts themselves, but to synthesize, abstract and generalise: the object, after all, of "poetics," as Wellek and Warren point out in their Theory of Literature,³⁸ is not just "poems" but "poetry".

Thus my "method" has been to generalise and to contextualise the Quart Livre of Rabelais, to abstract from it generic expectations reflected in a reader implied by the text itself. Without explicitly proposing the new conception of

literary history of the proponents of the Rezeptionstheorie of the Constance school (Jauss, Iser), through my concentration on the reader I have sought to avoid an overly formalistic concern only with the text, situating the text in society and therefore in "history" without falling into either historicism or biographism, or "phenomenological" quasi-"poetic" renderings. Believing that some kind of descriptive poetics is still possible, I accept both a measure of "referentiality" (implied author and implied reader) and an idea of literary genre, in order to show the narrative strategies of a text like the Quart Livre, and their implications in terms of artistic "purpose" seen in terms of "reader response." In this I am simply following the example of Aristotle, who in his Poetics abstracted "rules" from a corpus of tragedies, a tragic "genre" which had already begun to decay, the artistic "purpose" of which was the catharsis, the response of the reader.

In the Quart Livre of Rabelais we found an author who neither discloses himself nor keeps silent, who uses an unreliable narrator and abundant commentary to present a non-verisimilar fiction underlying which is an ambivalent comic vision which, though it ensures ideological alignment of author and reader, transcends any polemic. We saw how the author in the Quart Livre relativises this polemic, thus safeguarding comic ambivalence, through parody: presenting characters (comic "victims") who function through the reader's need to "know" and to "judge," creating a literary form which arouses and fulfills

the reader's "desire," while working against the reader's "pattern of experience," even his pattern of reading experience, through parody. Thus, the "word" that the author presents us in the Quart Livre is what Bakhtin calls a "hetero-directed double voiced word,"³⁹ a parodistic narration, not the author's word, nor just the represented words of characters, but a word directed towards the expectations of a reader, which depends for its final meaning on these expectations.

We saw that this reader in the Quart Livre is a reader who "indulges" the author by pretending to believe him, a reader whose desires are gratified through both the "difference" of satire (the smiling reader) and the "identity" of humour (the laughing reader), where the elements of humour predominate through relativising and desacralising parody.

The "purpose" of the Quart Livre, in terms of "producing the pleasure proper to its kind," of realising its "entelechy," is therefore to produce the ambiguous identification of laughter in the reader. The mimesis of representation of realism is thus replaced by a mimesis of identification, through a "perilous balance"⁴⁰ which evades both "too much" distance or "too much" identity on the part of the reader. A certain non-committal skirting of what men call "sacred" is called for, a "light touch" which Rabelais calls "joyousness," combined with a common sense rooted in the body and its least "ideal" functions.

Finally the comic narrative in Rabelais serves an analagous function to tragedy, with its "victimage" principle on which the catharsis depends, except that comic "victims" are not unique and individual, as are tragic victims, but common "types" (humours) whose tragic flaws become their main characteristics (see p. 23). This comic principle of "victimage" is in fact a parody of tragic victimage: the violence, cruelty and danger that the comic victims experience (Dindenault, the Chiquanous, Panurge) make us laugh (instead of cry) only because of the relativising nature of this parody, which opposes the ideal and the sacred, profoundly antithetical as these are to the comic.

Notes

1 Here however I am not concerned with an "author" as "initiator of discursive practices" (Foucault, 146), but as a term under which not only literary indications of difference can be ascribed, such as style, but also ideological alignment in an historically "charged" atmosphere.

2 Dorothy Coleman uses the term "envisaged reader" to indicate the relationship of the reader to the author's strategy (Coleman, 45-6). The term "postulated reader" might also be used to indicate either authorial strategy or the modern critic's "reconstitution" of a real reading public. The term of Iser, "implied reader," is however the most general and inclusive one.

3 This phrase of Victor Hugo, from Les Contemplations (VI, 23), actually refers to the "éclat de rire énorme" of Rabelais rather than to his belly-image, but as Hugo elaborates elsewhere (in his Préface to Cromwell and in his book on Shakespeare) the belly-image is the topographic centre of Rabelais' imagery. Bakhtin points this out in his "History of Laughter" chapter of his Rabelais (Bakhtin 1968, 123-8) but denies that Hugo understood the "deep optimism," "popular-festive nature," or "epic" style of this imagery.

4 Shlomith Rimmon points out that this term of Genette parallels the term "implied reader." (Rimmon, 54)

5 I am using story (histoire) to mean story "materials," what the Russian formalists called "fabel" and what Seymour Chatman opposes to discourse. For the corresponding terms in the narratologies of Barthes, Genette and Todorov, see the concordance provided by Rimmon (Rimmon, 35).

6 I am using the terminology provided by Wayne Booth in his The Rhetoric of Fiction. "Reliable commentary," according to Booth, is commentary which reflects the perspective of the implied author, not necessarily the perspective of the (reliable) narrator. Included in the taxonomy of its functions are "providing the facts" (summary), "molding beliefs," "relating particulars to the established norms," "heightening significance of events," and "manipulating mood" (Booth, 169-205).

7 Booth, in the Afterword to the 1982 edition of his Rhetoric of Fiction cites Sheldon Sack's work in revealing the rhetorical role of secondary characters employed by the implied

author to reinforce his perspective (Booth, 438).

8 Brecht's famous "Verfremdungseffekt," or "alienation effect," is meant to destroy the identification and therefore catharsis of the audience effected through dramatic mimesis, in order that the audience should be free from pathetic manipulation, their critical spirit intact. For this reason his first collection of Schriften zum Theater (1957) was subtitled "Über eine nicht-aristotelische Dramatik."

9 I will return to this in my second chapter. Keller claims that the rhetorical situation of oral storyteller is the key to modes of digression not only in the Couillatris story, but also in the narrative of the Quart Livre as a whole.

10 Booth, again in his Afterword (see note 4 above), cites Peter Rabinowitz's work in making the crucial distinction between "authorial audience" and "narrative audience" (Booth, 423).

11 Here Bergson's theory of laughter might be recalled, with its insistence on the importance of avoidance of sympathy with the comic character.

12 "Intersubjectivity" is a term which suggests both Sartre and Bakhtin, who insist upon the importance of safe-guarding the moral freedom of both author and reader (cf. Todorov, 90). Here I am simply using it to reflect the interchange between (self-conscious though ironic) author and (respected though challenged) reader, which makes possible the mutual role-play in the reading of Rabelais.

13 "Living plot" is term used by "neo-Aristotelian" Wayne Booth, which reflects the theory of organicism first proposed by Aristotle in his Poetics (Aristotle, 52).

14 I am deliberately using the term "horizon of expectation," "Erwartungshorizon" in the nomenclature of the Rezeptionstheorie of the Constance school, in conjunction with the reference to the real (historical) public of the Quart Livre, thereby suggesting that the reader implied by the text has something to do with this real public, and therefore with the historical "situation" of the text.

15 This rather unflattering characterisation of comic writers is again from the Poetics (Aristotle, 49).

16 Wolfgang Iser shows in his analysis of Smollet that the humour, whose origins had been in allegory (such as in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress), can be used in the comic novel (Iser, 73-4)). The connection between comic character flaw and humour,

however, is my own suggestion.

17 Kenneth Burke, with his concern for rhetorical strategy and motivational situation ("dramatism") in literary form, sees form, whether "repetitive," "progressive," or "syllogistic," as a strategic response to the expectations of an audience. He also imputes a certain value to form working against the "categorical" expectations of literary convention (Burke 1953, 124-7; 167-70).

18 Jean Paris, however, does not mention the antecedent genre of heroic romance. He simply points out the "synchronic" and "diachronic" structural aspects of the five "foyers" around which the five books of Rabelais are organised (Paris, 224-5).

19 Burke sees all of language as "symbolic action" and refuses to see art in isolation from its "appeal" in an historical context. His theory of the division between "essayistic," more subjective authors and "dramatic" authors (Burke 1953, 193-7), I have applied here to Rabelais. Writers like Rabelais or Diderot, a class of authors Burke does not mention, are "dramatic" authors operating in a lack of strong social consensus, usually (according to Burke) a condition for "essayistic" writers.

20 Kenneth Burke, against the formalism of the New Critics, developed a "dramatistic" method of literary analysis which regards poetic language as a mode of "symbolic action" not radically different from any other "rhetorical" strategy based in human "motives." This "symbolic action" is described in terms strongly reminiscent of Aristotle: "Act," "Scene," "Agent," "Agency," and "Purpose," are the terms of Burke's dramatistic "pentad" through which all descriptions of "symbolic action" based in human "motives," are filtered.

21 Following the method proposed by her husband, Gérard, Raymonde Debray-Genette, in the introductory paragraph of her essay "Du mode narratif dans les Trois Contes" (Revue d'histoire littéraire de France: juillet-octobre 1981) says that the "grammaticality" of narrative, is an effective "descriptive" and "metaphorical" way to understand, for instance, "focalisation" (subjunctive mode of the verb) and "omniscience" (indicative mood of the verb). Here though we will limit ourselves to "syntactical" effects determined by the "destinataire".

22 Keller sees the digressions in the Couillatris story and the "suspense" elements in the Dindenault story as, respectively, "interruptions" and "prolongation" technique with a "time-killing" function, where, the effectiveness of the "time-killing" is measured by the retention of the audience's attention. He therefore imagines that the "written" character of the story is overshadowed by the "oral-storyteller"

rhetorical device. (Keller, 18-19).

23 It is not in the study of Rabelais, but in the study of Dostoyevski, that Bakhtin systematically catalogues the effects of "carnivalisation" in literature: in a sense, all carnivalistic "mésalliances," "profanation," parodic doubles, rites of "discrowning," and abolition of "hierarchical" relationships form a part of this "monde à l'envers" which is the carnival (cf. Bakhtin 1973, 100-7).

24 This story is of course apocryphal, since nothing is known of the poet François Villon in his old age.

25 Bakhtin describes this Saturnalian rite as a "crowning-discrowning," as an "ambivalent ritual" which expresses the "jolly relativity of every system and order, every authority and every (hierarchical) position." (Bakhtin 1973, 102).

26 René Girard sees a certain dialectic in operation with laughter, an effort to "deny reciprocity" and, at the same time, a restoration of "reciprocity," thus the "superiority" of laughter (emphasized by Bergson and Baudelaire), the feeling of difference from the object of ridicule, is replaced, if convulsive laughter continues, by "creeping identity" between laughing subject and ridiculous object (Girard, 128-9).

27 Although Baudelaire sees in the "satanic" nature of laughter an expression of superiority of man over man ("chez le lecteur, la joie de sa supériorité") or even nature, as with the "comique absolu" or grotesque (Baudelaire, 993) he allows the possibility of a "double" nature of laughter, an ambiguity which would allow a redemptive kind of "faiblesse" as well as strength and "orgueil":

... c'est avec le rire que (l'homme) adoucit
quelquefois son coeur et l'attire; car les
phénomènes engendrés par la chute deviendront les
moyens du rachat. (Baudelaire, 978).

28 Bakhtin makes very clear, not only that "monde représenté" and "monde représentant" should be dealt with separately, but also "real author" (what he calls "auteur individu") and "implied author" ("auteur-créateur"), as a matter of methodology (Bakhtin 1978, 394). He also separates two "chronotopes" (space-time relations) in the literary work that of the narrative and that of the narration, saying that the participation of the reader in the latter illustrates the penetration of the "real world" (monde représentant), a "monde social qui évolue selon l'Histoire." (Bakhtin 1978, 394-5)

29 Bergson situates his theory of the comic in a dialectic of "tension" ("raideur") and "élasticité," the former being characteristic of the laughed-at object and the latter

characteristic of the laughing subject. The laughing subject for Bergson is "société," since laughter has a social function, that of the punishment ("châtiment") of "raideur" (Bergson, 14-6). Emphasizing the "indifference" of the laughing "spectator", Bergson ignores the ambivalence and mimetic quality of laughter: he concentrates on the object of ridicule, and on how and why it makes us laugh.

30 Pirandello actually distinguishes between the "comic" and the "humoristic," saying that the comic is the "avvertimento del contrario," whereas the "humoristic" is the "sentimento del contrario," the former being external and the latter characterised by a "reflexion" (Pirandello, 146-7). Irony for him is "only verbal," saying one thing and meaning another.

31 The full character of laughter is for Rabelais "popular-festive laughter," which stems of course from the Carnival, "the people laughing in the public square." (Bakhtin 1968, 474)

32 I am using "double" here to indicate a procedure of antithesis: that an idea (Nature) engenders its "antithetical double" (Anti-nature), creating "vividness" (a procedure remarked upon by Aristotle in his Rhetoric).

33 This term of Bakhtin tends to refer to the "serious," an unambiguous expression whose semantic authority resides in the speaker. The lyrical genre lends itself to the "monological," whereas narrative presumes the "dialogical," and includes parody, irony and other procedures which lead to ambiguity and perspectivism in interpretation of an utterance. A "monological context" is an unambiguously "serious" ideological context (cf. Bakhtin 1973, 150-69).

34 "Reduced" laughter, within the scheme of Bakhtin's historical degeneration of laughter in the literary genres, coincides, not suprisingly, with the rise of the bourgeoisie (cf. Bakhtin 1968, 101-2).

35 Along with "reduced laughter," when laughter ceases to "belong to the whole people" (Bakhtin 1968, 107), the topography of ambivalent, "public-festive" laughter changes as well: the comedy of manners, etc., with its class divisions, privileges the drawing room, and the public square is left behind (Bakhtin 1973, 107-8).

36 In Language as Symbolic Action, Kenneth Burke defines man as the symbol-using (or misusing) animal who (among other things) is "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy" (Burke 1966, 15-16). The fact that Rabelais chooses the Belly as organising centre of his "world" and not the "head," is significant in that he opposes these "hierarchical goadings" as they organised themselves in the Gothic medieval culture, with its emphasis on

hierarchical authority.

37 The principal of "victimage," mentioned at length in the work of both Burke and René Girard, is an important one in the analysis of the effects upon the reader of dramatic (or comic) conflict, as well as in the analysis of all of what Girard would call "mimetic phenomena." Girard traces the cause of scapegoating to "mimetic rivalry," and has devoted his "essayistic" La Violence et le sacré (1977) to this problem, using the texts of Greek tragedy and anthropology.

38 Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature defends literary theory (poetics) as a necessary "organon of methods," in "universal terms," as against criticism and literary history, concerned with the "individuality: of a work, period, etc. (Wellek and Warren, 7). The abstraction of "rules of genre," etc., would of course fall under the category of "literary theory."

39 The "hetero-directed double-voiced word" (Bakhtin 1973, 164) is in fact the result of the "dialogic" nature of narrative itself, augmented in its effects by polemically "charged" historical context (cf. Bakhtin 1973, 153-63).

40 In his essay on comedy, René Girard forms a "comic hypothesis" in which he proposes a generic theory of comedy based upon reader-response, which depends upon an essential ambiguity of distance and identity, a "loss of autonomy and self-possession" (Girard, 128).

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