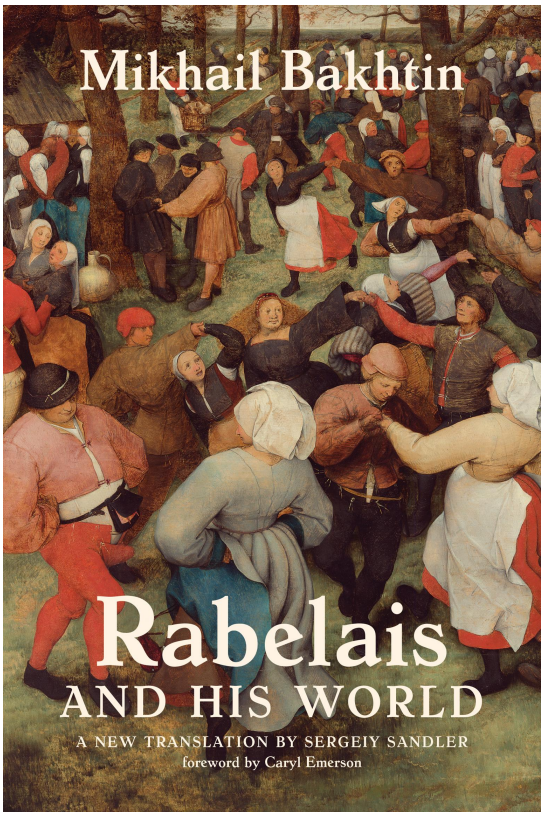
Rabelais and His World

A New Translation

Mikhail Bakhtin



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A new and improved translation of Mikhail Bakhtin's classic and celebrated study of carnival.

Mikhail Bakhtin's classic study of carnival, laughter, the grotesque, and medieval and renaissance folk culture has been the inspiration for countless new ideas in the humanities, in literature and the arts, and throughout human culture over the last half century.

Rabelais and His World is a study devoted to French Renaissance writer François Rabelais, author of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Rabelais, Bakhtin argues, can only be properly understood against the backdrop of a millennia-old tradition of festivity and laughter, a tradition that included the Roman Saturnalia, medieval carnivals and feasts of fools, and Greek satyr plays and symposia from antiquity, as well as countless medieval works belonging to various smaller genres, circus shows, foul language and gesture, and much more.

Bakhtin claims this tradition is united by the imagery it uses and the worldview it expresses. Its imagery is ambivalent. It effaces the boundaries between bodies, connects in one image birth with death, praise with invective. Its worldview is optimistic, defeating all fears and all official seriousness with laughter.

The book's new translation is informed by recent scholarship on Bakhtin and contains the most extensive scholarly apparatus this book has received to date.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) was a major Russian and Soviet philosopher, philologist, and literary scholar. He is the author of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, as well as works in philosophy and on the theory of the European novel.

This revised translation of Bakhtin's instant classic will renew his reputation as a thinker who speaks to our present post-humanist concerns; his illiberal embrace of the energy exuded by the masses is just as provocative as his skepticism of the mainstream and officialdom. Sandler's translation and scholarly apparatus are reassuringly attentive to detail; Emerson's foreword alerts the reader to Bakhtin's enduring significance in a manner that is both elegant and probing.

Galin Tihanov, George Steiner Professor of Comparative Literature, Queen Mary University of London

RABELAIS AND HIS WORLD
MIKHAIL BAKHTIN
A NEW TRANSLATION BY SERGEIY SANDLER
FOREWORD BY CARYL EMERSON

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Foreword: Bakhtin's Tricksterly Depths and the Laughing Grotesque

This is the first scholarly edition in English of Bakhtin's global bestseller on Rabelais, carnival bodies, and the cosmic virtues of laughter. He wrote it in the 1930s as a monograph, defended it in 1946 as a dissertation, and then revised it into a book publishable in the postwar Soviet Union. With his exquisite command of French and German of all periods, Bakhtin is a surprisingly good close reader of Rabelais. He is contentious, of course—in part because such was the Stalinist mandate: no more borrowing from the bourgeois West; Marxist-Leninist Russia is not a beggar nation; Soviet literary scholarship must now interpret Western classics better and more truly than their own home scholars can do. Bakhtin is indeed original, bold, granular in his readings, ambitious, and (although enterprising) not careless. One senses his photographic memory for literary texts, his relishing of sounds in their original language (here, Sergeiy Sandler matches him word for word, preserving the reiterations, researching the sources, and drawing on the most appropriate translations). Russian academic prose is thick, however. Modeled on the erudite practice of the nineteenth-century German professoriate, this language is heavier and more abstract than the chatty norms of our Anglophone essay. Add to this the fact that Bakhtin's own style can be ponderous, ecstatic, hyperbolic, and repetitious to the point of stupefaction. An honest translation must be true to this texture while also reflecting its patches of poetry, which can suddenly, unexpectedly raise us up—as do the rhythmic refrains of a liturgy or a chant.

This dual mandate—to shock and overstate with revolutionary verve and to document one's work with all the reassuring pedantry of the continental scholarly tradition—helps explain a great deal in this curious book. But an odd tension obtains between form and content. We think of the carnival square in terms of its unbridled, trickster-filled, fun-loving improvisations; carnival is not a bookish bit of human culture. Among the charms of this study, therefore, is Bakhtin's scrupulously academic treatment of Rabelais's scabrous material, its irreverent use of numbers, breathtaking crudeness of epithet, and digressions on Gargantua's arse-wipes as a top-to-bottom, cheeks-into-buttocks inversion that provide a defamiliarizing jolt. Such well-documented pedantry is itself hilarious—and Bakhtin, always more of a trickster than a moralist, was surely alert to a stylistic grotesque that mimics Rabelais's own

wickedly learned folly. Life, both what we hear and what we feel, is resurrected from the bottom-most organs first.

This foreword addresses two questions. First, surprisingly much in this book is "Party-minded," obedient to the reigning ideological slogans of the Soviet state. One might even say that its most exuberant parts succeed in grafting then-current communist catchwords on to the sixteenth-century French humanist François Rabelais. How does Bakhtin, an apolitical man, Christian personalist, and "strange kind of Kantian,"[1] manage to carry off this task—and do so honorably, with a transformative edge that caught the imagination of the world? Second, the year 2025 is the semicentennial of Bakhtin's death. Utopian projections have long been out of fashion; indeed, they are unsustainable. Can our twenty-first century tolerate a carnival worldview, one cast even remotely in Bakhtin's spirit, in which Death doesn't matter and nothing runs out?

To consider first the Party-mindedness. It helps to hear this book in its initial academic context. What rules did it need to follow? Bakhtin consistently presents Rabelais, a physician, scholar-poet, and diplomat educated in the sixteenth-century Franciscan Order, as an anticleric, an enemy of all dogmatism, piety, mysticism, and prayer, a radically democratizing and secularizing force. To be sure, Bakhtin assures the reader, Rabelais did not "overtly contest the immortality of the soul, taking it for granted." But he claims that his subject cared more about "relative immortality"—about bodies giving birth to other bodies on the earthly plane. The Church everywhere is oppressive, its personnel all lecherous parasites, and heaven itself is "decentralized"—that is, relocated from the vertical to the horizontal axis. Essential truth is "inwardly free, merry, and materialistic." Rabelais's books were indeed banned by the Sorbonne (the Kings of France took Rabelais under their protection); he was a persecuted writer. But Bakhtin's tone fits right in with the Soviet anti-God campaigns and purging of priests. Further, Bakhtin insists that the folk of folklore have no need of a transcendent. However devastating a famine or war, the common people celebrate "labor that triumphs in eating." The working class swallows the world, makes it part of itself, flushes away waste products as its body grows at the world's expense; "there can be no sad eating." However, none of this is ordinary-life eating, defecating, copulating, or the sort of playful combat that contributes to personal enjoyment, potency, or the lusts of an egoistic individual. It is the communal triumph of an entire people. And "there is no room for fear" in the people immortal, because optimism is natural for the folk. Laughing, they "give birth as they die." All this resonates with Stalin's World War II rhetoric—or with the war drums of the militarized, mythologized Russia of the mid-2020s.

These parallels might pacify the censors, but Bakhtin, of course, is after bigger game. He would have us appreciate the vast multipurposedness of the carnival idea, its antiessentialism and amoral survival potential that celebrates the very fact of change.

[1] For recent discussions that put these intellectual issues in context, see Sandler 2015; Hirschkop 2021, pp. 128–142; and the glossary entries in Birgy 2024.

For Bakhtin had devised a dynamic that works both ways. Carnival laughter is powerful enough to be revolutionary (against obscurantist feudalism or a stingy bourgeoisie), but it is also ambivalent, unfinished, two-way, and ever in transit. Thus it requires that we forever suspend judgment and take the present reality as unserious. Laughter is progressive only in the sense of breaking down constraints, not in building up class solidarity or setting an agenda. A two-way laugh both defeats fear and discredits the laws of cause and effect (when Rabelais praises the charlatan physicians and hawkers of fake cures on the public square, the lesson is that what heals us is not folk medicine but the miracle of laughter). And when Bakhtin insists that a "new seriousness, free and sober" is being born in the Renaissance, he has in mind an *open* seriousness, one not intimidated by monologic ideology or any allegories of predestination. Bakhtin's hero is "merry time"; he emphasizes Rabelais's "carnivalesque perception of the historical process as a game." This is not, then, the purposeful forward motion preferred by dialectical materialism but rather the spontaneous play of dialogic *matter*.

The two-wayness of carnival is a tricky beast. It guarantees one of Bakhtin's key virtues, ambivalence, an attitude grounded not in uncertainty, indifference, relativism, or any principled tolerance of otherness but in a peculiar creative type of negation, as well as in the potent and (to us moderns) "illogical" doctrine of antinomy. Negation does not deny a thing, but turns it inside-out or upside-down. The recurring exemplary antinomy for Bakhtin is the fused pair *khvala/bran'*, praise/invective, in words, actions, attitudes, intentions, and reception. Is this satire—that is, when required to praise Stalin, should others hear us as cursing him out? Bakhtin is careful here. Politicized thinking is always reductive and usually one-way. The "laughing whole" of public-square speech must be understood in terms of genre, not power. Laughter, and genres of laughing speech, do not pass judgment. What they do is provide energy, possible ways out into something different, and improve the mood.

Holy Writ is parodied. So are clericals, kings, and magistrates, who are shown feasting, drinking, and brawling endlessly. This hypocritical, stable official hierarchy of eaters, drinkers, and bullies is mercilessly satirized, but the images of food, drink, and punching a person out are not. Of asceticism or pacifism, there is none. "Wine and bread have their own logic, their own truth, always positive," Bakhtin writes. Such a logic holds that matter is nourishing—and that every material image is always becoming something else, invariably implicated in other images that share a border with it. Ambivalent "two-bodied wholes" of praise/invective are not neutral, cannot be "objective," and can never endorse "the non-participating position of a third." "There is no place for such a [detached] third party in a becoming world."

This brings us to a final fact about ambivalence, a potentially counterrevolutionary quality that Bakhtin costumes as politically correct. Ambivalence is expressed not in arguments but in images. An image is present to us all at once, as a field. It's an intuition, an orientation, not a linear narrative that moves from "problem" to "solution." Readers of this translation will note the omnipresence, in Bakhtin's writing, of the word "image"(*obraz*)—not "feast" but "image of a feast"; not "language" but "image

of a language." In every instance Sandler retains the word, even though it clogs the English text. There is a reason for this. Image-based thinking (*obraznoe myshlenie*) is overall a more accurate carrier for carnival truths than is word-based thinking (which is sequential, discursive, overly logical and ends up eliminating contradictions in order to make a point or deliver a moral). Rationalistic thinking, of the Renaissance and later, tended to make our images "thin and flat," Bakhtin laments. Although the material world is deeply positive, modernization moves the center of gravity to the "moral" (or the abstract) content of the image. Thus carnival hyperbole is reduced to exaggeration and negative satire. The folkloric image, however, has no fixed moral content. This is what ambivalence means.

Consider the case of pain and violence, so merrily indulged in throughout Rabelais and so seemingly anaesthetized. There are three interrelated ways to look at it. First, there is violence as *metaphor*. Its ugly reality is not a simple negative, just as verbal abuse is not. Beating up the kings, cops, bailiffs, and members of a wedding feast, and then proceeding to dismember their bodies, is not morose or masochistic. We're not meant to focus on the pain. In the "folk-festive system of images," the beaten-up body becomes a ploughed field, a "bodily harvest." Laughter and slaughter are fertilizing acts. Bakhtin is eloquent about the overlap of battle, kitchen, and butcher shop.

Since none of this seems to hurt, as a second option, we might consider violence as configured in *utopia.* Cuffing and aggressive physical contact in Rabelais is radically egalitarian. But egalitarian does not mean "equal rights." It means equal treatment: no one is exempt, no one can opt out, and no one has the right to complain. Since there are no footlights, none of the protected zones of a staged performance exist; there is no audience; no one is allowed to simply watch. From the Enlightenment on—and folk-festive culture is not on easy terms with what we call "enlightenment"—European culture has had trouble ignoring individual human rights and, especially in the Romantic era, ignoring individual pain. If the folk-festive economy is respected, however, bodies never run out. Food never runs out.

Finally, image-based thinking permits us to experience, at a single glance, what Bakhtin calls *becoming.* At the end of chapter 6 we find a lengthy discourse on recurrent sorts of violence and pain in the natural world—with special focus on the kinship between death throes and birth spasms. "The image of death," Bakhtin writes, "while picking out the given (individual) dying body, at the same time also picks up a small bit of another body, one that is being born." The image of birth is likewise ambivalent: "it picks out the body that is being born, but also picks up a bit of the dying one." All that exists now is in the process of becoming something else—and is therefore laughable, Bakhtin writes, "since all that becomes is laughable" (mockingly and joyfully). It is not uncommon to find instances in Rabelais of straight-up death from laughter, "merry death," death from "an excess [*izbytok*] of joy." Such scenarios are possible, however, only when I keep the whole picture in view, when I do not feel reality solely from within the "I." The individual parts of any whole are mobile and cannot be mechanically isolated.

Do we laugh or cry at this news? Much here makes the modern reader uncomfortable. There is no private laughter, no individual joy or grief, no solitude. Bakhtin devotes a great deal of space in chapter 3 to the ghastly techniques of "bodily harvest," quoting Rabelais at length on Friar John "disarticulating" human bodies to make them more fertile, all done jubilantly and without remorse: a symbol of the grape harvest and "blood transmuted into wine." In Stalinist Russia this can only sound like a glorification of torture. And then one winces at the lyricism of the birth-giver (Badebec the mother, the old world) who "is put to death and the child set free." Such dual images "register precisely the very moment of transition." But is there then no necessary role for mothering, for parenting, nurturing, for generational coexistence and cosymbiosis? Even granting all this fertility, it's a blurry sense of family, with something too tough and autonomous about it.

Bakhtin defends his complex of folk-carnival actions as thoroughly "realist." This was an obligatory bucket for Soviet literary criticism of the 1930s–1940s—but again, Bakhtin means more by the term than meets the censor's eye. He intimates that "deep and broad" realism must not be flattened to one-way materialism or positivism, nor should it be "moralized" (a giveaway for thinking one way). Turn and learn from the people. True, Bakhtin's images of "the people" in no sense correspond to the spanking-clean, zipped-up, athletically disciplined workers and peasants of the Socialist-Realist propaganda posters. But it was hard to condemn him for that: after all, Bakhtin was writing about Rabelais, four centuries old, from another era and another nation. Following the lead of Olga Freidenberg (and Sandler, in his "Translator's Preface," is one of the first to give Freidenberg her due), Bakhtin speaks out on behalf of a panhuman premodern and prelogical realm.[2] But he makes no further promises beyond suggesting that "folk images help one to avoid acquiring a naturalistic, fleeting, empty, meaningless, and disjointed image of reality." Enter into the spirit of these images—and we will find ourselves in the flow of the real, able "to grasp the very process of its becoming, the meaning and direction of this process."

We might legitimately ask whether Bakhtin is obliged personally to approve of folk-festive forms, to believe in their real-life rightness, in order to discover them (and applaud them) in Rabelais. Technically, of course, he is not. But something about the tone of the Rabelais book feels intimately and personally committed to the laughing carnival matrix. Russian Bakhtinians have pushed back against this assumption, pointing out that Bakhtin often remarked in his working notebooks that as a modern intellectual he could only be suspicious of, perhaps even hostile to and repelled by, folk-festive culture. But no topic could be studied properly if it remained alien and unloved. Thus Bakhtin, as a scholar, worked to overcome the alien quality (*chuzhdost'*) of this vast reservoir of popular energy. In itself, a carnival worldview, whether realized as a life practice or a philosophy, is neither good nor bad. It is, rather, an "aesthetic

[2] For this interface see, in English, Perlina 1997, pp. 249–262, on the "Freidenberg-Bakhtin Correlation."

instrument" that literary genius recognizes and opts to deploy as an interpretative language. Rabelais, Goethe, and Dostoevsky availed themselves of this language.[3] This, I believe, is a healthy takeaway lesson from *Rabelais and His World*. Bakhtin carried off this task honorably because the image of every genre, like it or not, is dual-bodied and thus double-voiced. For Bakhtin, Party-mindedness must have been a grandly ambivalent concept, permeated with the laughing grotesque.

We are now set up to consider, briefly and speculatively, the second question. Bakhtin stitches his vision of laughing carnival into a premodernized French context—although we sense he would happily recommend it as a balm for life's trauma anywhere. Is this vision robust enough to inspire us in the twenty-first century and in realms more "realistic" than the creative imagination?

Again, a cautious yes. But it probably requires that we rein in some of our own anxieties and enthusiasms, among them politics, justice, pain, and individual death. None really apply. Consider a comment Sandler makes in his preface. In the folk-image matrix, he writes, a substitute for death can be found in slavery (especially in stories where a king becomes a slave and then regains both throne and queen), in laughter, and in invective. It's a strange cluster: death, slavery, laughter, and the explosive curse. But such irreverence, which includes merry unfreedom and the responsive expletive, is crucial when working with death, which is so often personified, which taunts us and which so often wins. Death, however, is an "end" only from one limited linear perspective; from another, it is a renewal.

The above discussion helps illuminate a curious remark made by the weary and aging Bakhtin at his dissertation defense in 1946. According to the academic transcript of the session, when challenged by his examiners on the exclusively affirmative "image of laughter" that permeated his study of Rabelais even in cases of great loss and suffering, tov. [Comrade] Bakhtin patiently explained, "I didn't have in mind carnival as something cheerful. Not at all. In every carnival image there's the presence of death. Speaking in your terms, carnival is a tragedy. Only tragedy doesn't have the final word."[4]

Your—or our—terms, imputed to the dissertation audience, are the norms of a single-bodied life that wants to live forever. Bakhtin appears to have been free of that deceit. He was burdened with physical handicaps and censorship constraints that would have brought most of us servitors of culture to a halt: bone disease, political exile, banishment from major cities and libraries for most of his adult life. But for the research task he set himself in this book (the folk-carnival culture of continental Europe), he came on the scene fabulously well-equipped. He knew the necessary languages. He read all the time, easily retrieving by heart what he had read. And he was sufficiently out of the limelight not to be plucked up and sacrificed during the routine purges of intellectuals during those years. Memoirs attest that the mature Bakhtin was of a

[3] See Pan'kov 2010, pp. 402–406.

[4] Bakhtin 2008, p. 1063.

resigned and grateful temperament. The Good would never triumph (in no respect was Bakhtin ever a triumphalist) but the Bad could always be tricked, laughed down, cast into the depths and fished out transformed, diluted or swamped by new life. This is what Bakhtin saw in Rabelais and in the realism emergent in his world.

Caryl Emerson

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Translator's Preface: Putting Bakhtin's *rabelais* Back in Context

Mikhail Bakhtin's book, *The Work of François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, came out in 1965. At that time, few of its readers were aware that it had been almost thirty years in the making. Only three years later, in 1968, Hélène Iswolsky's English translation of this book, titled *Rabelais and His World*, was published. All this happened before, sometimes long before, most of Bakhtin's other works were published, and also long before the interest in Bakhtin's writings and ideas took off in the English-speaking world.

The book on Rabelais is Bakhtin's most extensive work and among his best-known and most frequently cited, but at the same time, its connection to the rest of his work is the least obvious, and the least well understood. This connection is doubly obscure to those reading Bakhtin in English, as the tradition of translating his central terms and notions began developing in earnest more than a decade after *Rabelais and His World* came out.

Thus, both in terms of its history of publication and reception and in terms of its content, Bakhtin's book on Rabelais is being read outside its context. It is read outside the historical contexts in which it was conceived of, written, and later revised by Bakhtin, outside the scholarly context of the sources upon which Bakhtin drew in writing the book, and, not least, outside the context of Bakhtin's thought and its development.

My main aim in working on this new edition of the book was to restore and reconstruct as much as possible of these various contexts. This aim guided me in the translation itself, and it guided me even more so in the endnotes added to the text. To tie it all together, presenting an overview of the contexts of this book is my main aim in this preface.

In what follows, I will survey the different relevant contexts and provide a summary of the main missing information readers should be aware of if they wish to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of what Bakhtin is doing in the book. I will start with the history of the book's writing and revisions. This information is going to be important for understanding how different layers in the text interact and will provide necessary historical background for subsequent discussions. The next section of the preface will deal with Bakhtin's sources—a matter around which there are some persistent misunderstandings (identifying sources is also one of the main tasks—and surely the most painstaking among them—dealt with in the book's endnotes).

The place of the book on Rabelais within Bakhtin's thought as a whole and its development over time is among the most difficult subjects in Bakhtin scholarship. I will devote the third section of this preface to an attempt to tackle this problem. Naturally, other scholars may disagree with various aspects of this analysis, but at least realizing the issues at stake, as well as considering the similarities and contrasts that link this book with Bakhtin's other works, would be important to any reader wondering what Bakhtin is getting at.

Finally, the fourth section of the preface discusses how all these contexts affect the English translation. Much of the information one would traditionally find in a translator's preface—how key terms are rendered and the like—is gathered there.

THE CONVOLUTED HISTORY OF BAKHTIN'S *RABELAIS*

As noted above, Bakhtin's book on Rabelais had a long and complicated history. A good place to start telling this history would be around 1936. At that point in his life, Bakhtin, in his early forties, was living in internal exile in Kustanay, Kazakhstan, where he was sent after having been arrested for involvement in a religious intellectual circle in 1929.[1] Despite this prior conviction, Bakhtin was negotiating with a Soviet publishing house around the manuscript of a second book, to follow the first edition of his book on Dostoevsky (also from 1929). The manuscript that was originally meant to be published was eventually revised and published posthumously as "Discourse in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981a). Bakhtin, however, withdrew that manuscript (for reasons that are not yet entirely clear) and asked to replace it with a new piece he started working on—a book on Goethe and the *Bildungsroman* (Bocharov and Liapunov 2012, 758–759).

The full manuscript of that new book, if it was ever written, does not survive.[2] What does survive is a massive set of working notes (over seven hundred pages of manuscript) that Bakhtin wrote, apparently as part of his work on the book (see Bocharov and Liapunov 2012, 761–762). About halfway in, the notes start shifting in focus and exploring what was then new theoretical territory for Bakhtin. Late in life, in

[1] On Bakhtin's biography, a good, if somewhat outdated, source is the classic Clark and Holquist (1984). The most recent detailed biographical sketch available in English can be found in Hirschkop (2021, 5–29). For an up-to-date account in Russian, see Osovsky and Kirzhaeva (2020, 2021). For more concrete details pertaining to the book on Rabelais and its publication history, also in Russian, see the commentary to Bakhtin's *Collected Works* (Bakhtin 1996–2012), especially to vols. 3 and 4 (Bocharov and Liapunov 2012; Popova 2008a, 2010a). See Hirschkop (2021, 53–56) for an overview in English, which also puts this information in much-needed historical context. Popova (2008a), in particular, is a source I drew on extensively throughout this and the following sections of the translator's preface.

[2] It is the subject of one of the most colorful stories about Bakhtin's life, namely, that he used his own copy of the manuscript as rolling paper for homemade cigarettes (first reported in print by Clark and Holquist 1984, 273). This story, dubious as it sounds, goes back to Bakhtin himself, as attested by Sergey Georgievich Bocharov, who heard it from him directly (Bocharov and Liapunov 2012, 760). I cannot tell whether Bakhtin intended this to be an unembellished factual account, but one does suspect he was also hinting at his own evaluation of that work's quality. An extended precis of the book that Bakhtin prepared, and which did survive (Bakhtin 2012d) appears to pander a bit too much to the Party-led line prescribed for Soviet literary scholarship in the 1930s, while Bakhtin's original ideas are

1973, Bakhtin edited and slightly expanded this second half of the notes into the article "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981c).[3] This long essay contains two sizeable chapters (Bakhtin 1981c, 167–224) devoted to François Rabelais. These chapters—we can say in hindsight—were the earliest version of Bakhtin's future monograph.

What motivated this new change in plans is up to speculation. There was surely a lot going on in Bakhtin's life at the time: he moved from Kustanay to the city of Saransk, where he found a teaching position in the local college for teachers, was ousted from that position as part of a broader political purge (only to return after World War II, this time for much longer), and had one of his legs amputated. More relevant to our question are new intellectual influences. I will discuss the most significant of these in the next two sections.

Be that as it may, Bakhtin turned to writing a book on Rabelais around 1938. We have several notebooks full of working notes, in which the plan and main concept of the future book were developed (Bakhtin 2008e), together with multiple summaries of literature he was reading on Rabelais and other subjects dealt with in the book (some of these were published as Bakhtin 2008b). By the autumn of 1940, a full manuscript of the book, titled *François Rabelais in the History of Realism* (Bakhtin 2008a) was completed.

This 1940 manuscript (as I will be regularly referring to it here and in the endnotes) is essentially the first edition of the book as we know it today. Despite the many revisions it underwent later, the bulk of the eventually published text follows the 1940 manuscript nearly verbatim.[4]

The 1940 manuscript was written as a book, but getting it published was not going to be easy. The nominal topic—Rabelais—was somewhat niche, and let us not forget World War II and the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941, which naturally made the publishing of scholarly manuscripts the least of anybody's concerns.

Bakhtin's strategy for promoting his work, meticulously documented by Popova (2008a, 894–897), was to prepare copies of the manuscript and send them to leading Soviet scholars in relevant fields (exploiting either personal acquaintance or mutual friends). The responses from these early readers were highly enthusiastic.

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perhaps concealed a bit too well (to be sure, the precis was intended for "official" eyes at the publisher). And in any case, that idea for a book was soon to seamlessly morph into something very different. Bakhtin, it appears, did not think the manuscript of his book on the Bildungsroman was worth more than the paper it was typed on.

[3] While the first half of the notes was published much later, as Bakhtin (2012b).

[4] Bakhtin's revisions generally took the form of adding or removing blocks of text from the manuscript, rather than more granular editing (the one major exception being the systematic replacement of the term "Gothic realism," on which I will remark below). And while the introduction and many parts of chapter 1 were significantly reworked later on, from chapter 2 onward, the book generally follows the 1940 manuscript, with later revisions mostly taking the form of more or less self-contained inserts (mostly whole sections or footnotes).

For a while, there were some hopes for getting the book published around 1944–1945, either in Russian or in French translation (Popova 2008a, 897–902). This led Bakhtin to prepare some materials for a possible revision of the text (of which the most significant and conceptually interesting is the set of notes titled "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 1996a, 2014, forthcoming-a). These hopes, however, never materialized, and Bakhtin's revisions from that period resulted only in very few, mostly minor, changes to the eventual text.[5]

By 1946 the war had ended, and Bakhtin returned to Saransk, where he remained a university lecturer until his retirement. Prospects for publishing the book, however, looked as dim as ever. Taking the advice of his old-time friend, pianist Maria Yudina, Bakhtin decided to submit his manuscript as a dissertation (Popova 2008a, 902–914).

The text of the 1946 dissertation remained unchanged from 1940, but Bakhtin did add one thing that the original manuscript lacked: a bibliography of scholarly sources "quoted or mentioned (in citations or allusions)" in the main text (Bakhtin 2008d).

Bakhtin's three official examiners at the dissertation defense knew the text well in advance. Two of the three were among the manuscript's earliest recipients and readers. Their reviews (included in Popova 2008c) unanimously acknowledged the work as a major contribution to research, and accordingly, all three recommended to award Bakhtin (who had no formal academic degree, though this fact was not known outside his closest circle of friends) the degree of *doktor nauk* ("doctor of sciences").

A brief technical digression is necessary here. In the Soviet system there were two distinct postgraduate degrees: the lower degree of *kandidat nauk* ("candidate of sciences"), which in some respects resembled our Ph.D. and in others was more akin to a master's degree, and the higher degree of *doktor nauk*, which functioned in some respects like a Ph.D. and in others like the German *Habilitation* and was normally awarded to already established scholars well into their academic career. Bakhtin's dissertation was submitted for the lower degree of *kandidat*, but universities did have the power, in exceptional cases, to award the higher *doktor* degree for an outstanding dissertation. This was what all three examiners unanimously recommended.

The ensuing discussion at the dissertation defense was pretty heated. After all, Bakhtin's text touched on some salacious themes and could easily be construed as ideologically unorthodox, not to mention its previously convicted author (all that with Stalin still in power). The university was taking a risk. Some also felt uncomfortable about the possibility that the unanimous recommendation by all three examiners to award the *doktor* degree was prearranged. In the end, there was consensus on awarding Bakhtin the *kandidat* degree, but the vote to award the *doktor* degree went down to the wire—seven for and six against (Popova 2008a, 913).

Alas, the university's decision itself was not final. It had to be further approved by a special committee in the Soviet Ministry of Education (Popova 2008a, 915). And

[5] They did add more input to other works—the second edition of the book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984; see Popova 2008a, 893) and an article on Rabelais and Gogol (Bakhtin 1983).

meanwhile, the faculty's fears turned out to have been justified. A hit piece against the Institute of World Literature, where Bakhtin defended his dissertation, was published in the press in late 1947. Bakhtin's dissertation was mentioned, albeit in passing, as "a pseudoscientific dissertation, Freudian in its methodology," that exemplifies the Institute's "irresponsible, anti-State attitude toward the awarding of scholarly degrees" (Popova 2008a, 916). The committee approving Bakhtin's degree of course took notice. It solicited several additional reviews from scholars, and even though the new reviews were as positive as the old ones, the decision was made to return the dissertation to Bakhtin for revisions in 1949 (Popova 2008a, 916–920).

These were the circumstances in which Bakhtin set out to make the first of two major rounds of revisions the text underwent before its eventual publication.

Several major changes in the text date to the 1949–1950 round of revisions, often responding directly to criticisms raised in various discussions of Bakhtin's dissertation in Ministry of Education committees and subcommittees. Some of these revisions were later reversed, but most made it into the final publication (Popova 2008a, 921–923). First, and most conspicuous, the work's title was changed from *François Rabelais in the History of Realism* to *The Work of François Rabelais and the Problem of the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*—almost exactly the title under which the book was eventually to be published. The title of the book's last chapter was also changed, from "Image and Word in Rabelais's Novel" to "Rabelais's Images and His Contemporary Reality." That revision also remained in force, despite Bakhtin's intention to reverse it (Popova 2008a, 922). Particularly notable was a change in terminology: the terms "folkloric realism" (covering mostly antiquity) and "Gothic realism" (covering the Middle Ages) were both consistently replaced by a single term, "grotesque realism," now among the terms most closely associated with this work.[6] Bakhtin also added some sections (especially at the ends of chapters, where claims could be framed in a way that would be more palatable to Party officials) and longer footnotes to the text.

After receiving these revisions, the examining committee was finally able to obtain one negative review (as was planned all along, one imagines), and in 1952 Bakhtin was officially denied the *doktor* degree, but at least he was finally awarded the lower *kandidat* degree (Popova 2008a, 923–924). At that point work on the book stopped. Bakhtin's main interests drifted to other subjects. But things changed again when Bakhtin was "discovered" by a group of young scholars (incidentally, also from the Institute of World Literature, where Bakhtin's dissertation was defended) in 1960. Through the efforts of Bakhtin's future literary executors, Vadim Valer'yanovich Kozhinov and Sergey Georgievich Bocharov, as well as several other people, a new edition of Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky was published in 1963, almost immediately launching Bakhtin to academic stardom in the USSR. Kozhinov and company pushed to get the other mono-

[6] This change in terminology was forced. Bakhtin was formally required to remove the term "Gothic realism" from his dissertation as part of the revision process (Popova 2008b, 1089–1090).

graph, the one on Rabelais, published as well (indeed, some early attempts to publish it go back to even earlier in the 1960s), and the effort eventually proved successful (Popova 2010a, 533–551).

This instigated the last round of revisions to the book in 1964–1965 (Popova 2010a, 547–551). A new extensive introductory chapter was written, using some materials from the old chapter 1 of the 1940 manuscript and the shorter introduction added in the 1949–1950 revisions. The numbering of subsequent chapters was changed accordingly (the old chapter 2 became chapter 1 and so on). Several new sections were added, especially, again, to the ends of chapters (which led to some chapters effectively having three concluding sections, from 1940, 1949–1950, and 1964–1965). Some sections were removed or replaced, and several minor edits were made too.

The 1949–1950 revisions had to introduce some amount of official Soviet rhetoric (such as typically caustic language against Western twentieth-century scholarship and literature). Some of this rhetoric made it into the published book, but the parts containing the most offensive or obsequious wording were edited out, resulting in a text that stood out, compared to most Soviet publications, even in the 1960s, as civil and respectful in its tone.

Two significant changes were made at the behest of the publisher. First, Bakhtin was asked to replace, as much as possible, all French text with Russian translations, so as to make the book more suitable to a broader audience. This led to multiple changes in the text (and introduced a few accidental inconsistencies). Second, practically all of the book's reviewers over the years found its last few pages, focusing on Rabelais's influence on later literature, with Gogol as the most prominent example, to be one of its weaker spots. Bakhtin kept insisting, but eventually relented, and those pages were removed from the book. Later, in 1970, Bakhtin used this segment, together with some draft materials from the mid-1940s, and reworked and extended it into a stand-alone article on Rabelais and Gogol (Bakhtin 1983).

With these final revisions, the book was at last published in early December 1965.

BAKHTIN AND HIS SOURCES

Mikhail Bakhtin has acquired a reputation for negligence in documenting the scholarly sources he used.[7] In the case of his book on Rabelais, things have even come to accusations of plagiarism (Poole 1998), which, as we will soon see, are based on

[7] This reputation is partly based on misleading appearances. A good case in point is the long essay "Discourse in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981a). Its initial publication, shortly after Bakhtin's death in 1975, indeed had very few footnotes and references. Later on, however, another copy of the work was discovered, where Bakhtin added multiple references by hand to the typewritten main text. It appears the only typewriter Bakhtin, or whoever typed the text up for him, had access to had Cyrillic script only, while most of the citations required Latin script and had to be written in by hand (Bocharov and Liapunov 2012, 723). The initial publication had few citations not because of Bakhtin's negligence, but because it was made from the wrong copy of the manuscript. Unfortunately, the only published English translation of the work is based on the old publication.

a misunderstanding of the conventions and practices current in Bakhtin's time and culture.[8]

To be sure, the task of clarifying Bakhtin's sources is useful not only for fending off accusations. We can learn a great deal about the text of the book and the context in which it was created from sorting out Bakhtin's sources: about the restrictions under which he worked, about the aspects of the book that *are* original and innovative, about how Bakhtin reacts to other authors' ideas, about the works that influenced him (as opposed to merely providing him with information), and about how he responded to these influences.

But let us first put away Brian Poole's claims. Poole (1998) identified a passage in chapter 5 of the book that reproduces, nearly verbatim, Bakhtin's notes, taken when reading Ernst Cassirer's *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (Cassirer 1963)—a work Bakhtin does not cite in his book. At first glance, this evidence appears damning. But recall that Bakhtin sent complete copies of his manuscript (including the pages in question) to several leading scholars, including, for example, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Smirnov and Aleksey Karpovich Dzhivelegov, two of the USSR's leading authorities on late medieval and Renaissance culture in Europe (both were also among the readers of Bakhtin's dissertation in 1946). Cassirer was, at the time, universally acknowledged as one of the world's greatest living philosophers and an unmatched expert on the history of ideas. Bakhtin's correspondents would be expected to know Cassirer's work, especially when it dealt with the historical period they specialized in. And yet, Bakhtin shared the "offending" part of his manuscript with them, of his own initiative, and their comments on the manuscript never mentioned Cassirer, nor did they suggest that Bakhtin's work was in any way derivative (quite to the contrary, in fact, they all stressed the originality of his approach). It appears neither Bakhtin himself nor his correspondents thought there was anything wrong with the text, despite the alleged wrongdoing Poole documents.

Indeed, the practices and standards of scholarly citation, and, moreover, its purposes and functions, are fundamentally different today from what they were in the 1940s. Today, citations are standardized and tightly regulated. Long and detailed manuals of style dictate every minute detail of how citations are to be formatted. Scholars are required and expected to back up almost every sentence in their texts by citations and are actively encouraged to cite as many sources as possible—which is not surprising, given that citation metrics play a crucial role in determining academic prestige. Citations are the currency of today's academic marketplace (and the inflation rate is consistently high!) We use the term "plagiarism" to condemn those whom we deem deficient or negligent in paying their dues in this currency.

[8] Brian Poole's claims, I believe, are based on a wrongheaded interpretation of the evidence—evidence which, to Poole's credit, he obtained through painstaking research, and included in what is an otherwise insightful and rich article. Other authors have made even more scandalous accusations of purported wholesale plagiarism against Bakhtin, but this time based on no evidence whatsoever (see Zenkine 2014 for a critical analysis).

It is easy to forget that not so long ago, within living memory, citations played nothing remotely resembling this role. There was significant variation between disciplines, countries, and individuals in how and how much scholarly literature was cited.[9] The purpose of references was, as the word itself suggests, to *refer* the reader to relevant literature, not to boost people's careers. Nor were people's lives as saturated with factual information of dubious reliability as they are today. Verifying the accuracy of factual claims in a text was not considered as crucial as it is today, at least where the claims in question are not central to the text's main theses.

The notion of plagiarism changed as well. In the mid-twentieth century it still referred to the act of deliberately and credibly presenting another author's ideas as if they were one's own. A lazy student, copying a term paper verbatim from some reference source—our prototypical example of plagiarism nowadays—would fail the course, to be sure, but back in those days, the label "plagiarism" would be considered way too lofty to apply. Summarizing or paraphrasing such sources, not as the entirety of one's work, but rather as secondary evidence supporting an author's original main claims (which is exactly what Poole found out Bakhtin did) was considered normal. It is still considered normal today, but only if the source in question is cited by all the rules, while in the past the citation was not nearly as crucial. More generally, a work would be thought of as plagiarized if its *main ideas*, not some random passage of secondary importance, were taken from somebody else. Indeed, a contemporary of Bakhtin's would have trouble even making sense of Poole's claim: How can a provincial scholar in some little-known part of Russia plagiarize a world-renowned author? Nobody would credibly think that Cassirer's well-known ideas were in fact thought up by Bakhtin. One could have accused an author reproducing Cassirer's ideas as their own of being derivative, unoriginal (and, of course, in the USSR, as being a bourgeois idealist), but not of plagiarizing Cassirer. That would have been a weird claim to make.

Added on top of this are considerations related to the special political circumstances of the USSR, especially under Stalin. Ernst Cassirer—an outspoken philosophical idealist, a leading "bourgeois" philosopher, not an orthodox Marxist—was not a safe source to cite, or at least not to cite approvingly. Unlike, say, American TV shows, where censorship assumes the form of a mechanical word search, following which the "blacklisted" words are bleeped out without any consideration of the context or purpose of their use, censors and smear-campaigners in the Soviet Union cared a lot about context

[9] The particulars of citation formatting were also generally left to the authors' discretion. Today's academics would be very surprised to read, say, the 1949 edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press 1949). The instructions on how one should format citations are concentrated in one chapter, titled "Bibliographies" (though the slightly longer chapter on "Notes and Footnotes" also contains relevant information here and there). This chapter occupies the grand total of three and a half of the book's 532 fairly small pages. It contains no instructions on how to cite books (other than books in a series) or book chapters. Authors are assumed to be able to figure that out on their own. Moreover, variation in citation practices by discipline is taken for granted: "Books of a purely scientific nature may call for a form generally accepted by that field of study" (University of Chicago Press 1949, 153); this instruction is followed by a single example citation to illustrate the point.

and purpose. Citing Cassirer was never risky *as such* (a point also made by Popova 2008a, 856–857). Even a relatively favorable reference could be tolerated, so long as it was framed within the context of an orthodox Marxist critique.[10]

We could surmise how Bakhtin might have gone about adding such a reference by looking at the way he treated another author, Otto Friedrich Bollnow. In 1965, shortly before the book's publication (see Popova 2010a, 616), Bakhtin managed to sneak into the book a footnote discussing Bollnow's philosophical anthropology. Bollnow was an author Bakhtin took great interest in around that time (we find two book summaries and notes inspired by Bollnow's ideas in Bakhtin's working notebooks of those years. See Bakhtin 2002b, 373–380, 384–385). The footnote appears at the very end of chapter 3. It bestows some praise on Bollnow: "The most interesting attempt to reveal man's festive sense of the world" and "contains many valuable observations"; but the obligatory critique (which can superficially appear Marxist, even though the absence of explicit Marxist language is notable and was no doubt a risky move) had to be included as well: "The author adduces no historical material at all, makes no distinctions between folk (carnival) and official feasts" and so on.

Ernst Cassirer was a thinker with whom Bakhtin had a much more significant engagement than with Bollnow. He had his major disagreements with him as well, but Marxism had nothing to do with those. He could have faked a Marxist takedown of a philosopher whose work he truly admired and respected, thus making it possible to sneak in a citation, without risking potential severe repercussions (for himself and, by the 1960s, for his newfound followers). Poole probably thinks he should have done so. But to Bakhtin and to other people at that time, in that environment, and with that cultural background, that would have felt like an outright betrayal. For them, the *ethically* correct choice was clear.

But enough about that. After all, Cassirer (1963) was by no means the only source Bakhtin relied on in the book. Most, if not quite all, of the other sources Bakhtin used are actually cited, but definitely not in the way scholars would do so today. Let me briefly explain Bakhtin's method of citation, as well as some of the reasons for which he had to opt for it. I will then go on to discuss the sources themselves.

On the whole—where censorship-related concerns did not come into play—Bakhtin made an effort to cite all of his major sources in the book. They were not cited every time he relied on them, though. When a text was used strictly as a secondary source to provide factual information (about historical events, the content of medieval manuscripts, meanings of words and expressions in Rabelais's French, and so on), Bakhtin felt no need to specify his particular source for that information (nor did his

[10] A good example of such a moderate, and even somewhat positive, review in a Marxist critical framing, for Cassirer's ideas can be found in Ol'ga Freidenberg's 1936 book *The Poetics of Plot and Genre*, which I will discuss in greater detail below (see Freidenberg 1997b, 31; see Perlina 2002, 88–93, 99–112 regarding Cassirer's influence on Freidenberg). One should note, however, that Freidenberg's Marxist credentials were far stronger than Bakhtin's and that a smear campaign against her book did, in fact, follow (Perlina 2002, 159), although the brief discussion of Cassirer does not appear to have instigated it.

readers expect him to do so back in the day). Instead, he would cite these secondary sources when discussing some of their authors' main theses (a pattern documented by Popova 2008a, 876–877) or as part of a more general historical survey, especially in the introduction.[11] A lengthy passage based primarily on one secondary source would often include an explicit citation of that source, typically toward its end.[12] Bakhtin was not as meticulous about this as scholars today would be expected to be. Secondary sources used no more than once or twice in the book are not always cited at all. Conversely, many of the sources Bakhtin does explicitly cite in the text, as well as in the bibliography prepared for the dissertation defense in 1946, were not consulted by Bakhtin directly, so far as we can tell.

In addition to the difference in practices and reader expectations between then and now, one more factor is important for understanding this pattern: the fact that Bakhtin had very limited access to scholarly literature while working on the book. As a political convict, Bakhtin was not allowed to reside in one of Russia's main cultural centers. With the exception of a single ten-day window (Popova 2008a, 877), Bakhtin had no direct access to a proper library. He did have friends, who sometimes arranged for library books to be sent to him for a while (Popova 2008a, 877–878), which is how he was able to obtain access to the books he mostly relied on while writing the 1940 manuscript, but the process was slow, and only so many books could be delivered over the relevant period. Bakhtin thus had to make do with very few smartly selected sources and make creative use of the sources he could access. At the same time, Bakhtin could *not* openly admit that he only used relatively few secondary sources throughout the book. Such an admission would immediately identify him to readers as a politically

[11] This practice is well within the norm for the time, not only in the special circumstances of the USSR. A useful comparison would be with Lote 1938, a book of similar size to Bakhtin's, which was the most recent scholarly monograph (and a very respectable one; it even won a prestigious award) that Bakhtin had at his disposal when writing the 1940 manuscript (for more on Lote's book, and how Bakhtin was able to get hold of a copy of it, see Popova 2021). This book's main text has 558 pages, followed by just over 2 pages of bibliographical sources (containing 10 editions of texts by Rabelais and some of his contemporaries and 38 scholarly sources, mostly devoted to Rabelais, 3 of which are names of journals). This is better thought of as a "recommended further reading" list than as a list of references. Footnotes in the text contain a total of about 50 references to scholarly works, not including references to sixteenth-century sources, only partially overlapping with the bibliography at the end of the book (by comparison, the 1946 bibliography, Bakhtin 2008d, has 172 citations, the great majority of which are cited in footnotes in the text). Other Rabelais scholars are often given general credit in the main text where Lote relies on their work, but without providing any citation to specific publications, let alone to specific passages, at these occasions.

[12] The citation itself would often be incomplete. For example, in chapter 7 Bakhtin relies heavily on Lazar Sainéan's book *La langue de Rabelais* (Sainéan 1922–1923). Bakhtin dutifully gives Sainéan credit for his work, noting that his "merit" in the relevant area "is particularly great," but does not point out which publications by this author he has in mind.

suspect figure.[13] As a result, Bakhtin would often reproduce his real sources' citations in relevant places in the book.[14]

This predicament Bakhtin was facing does offer a benefit to us, modern readers, though. Because Bakhtin relied overwhelmingly on a small number of sources, it becomes possible to reconstruct, to a good level of probability, the exact source or sources on which he relied for the vast majority of factual claims he made, and this indeed was one of the tasks I undertook in preparing the commentary to this edition of the book. Where Bakhtin does not cite his sources, the endnotes add the information that today's readers would expect to see in a scholarly publication (at least wherever I was able to reconstruct it with any degree of confidence; some patches of missing information do remain here and there).[15]

So, what were the main sources that Bakhtin relied on when working on the book? Popova (2008a, 858–859) helpfully lists the content of Bakhtin's main working notebooks, in which he summarized places of interest from the literature he read while working on the 1940 manuscript. The sources listed are the 1862 edition of Karl Friedrich Flögel's *History of the Grotesque-Comic* (Flögel and Ebeling 1862),[16] Heinrich Schneegans's *History of Grotesque Satire* (Schneegans 1894), Herman Reich's study of *The Mime* (Reich 1903), Eero Ilvonen's *Parodies on Religious Themes in French Medieval Poetry* (Ilvonen 1914), Paul Lehmann's *Parody in the Middle Ages* (Lehmann 1922), two books by Lazare Sainéan[17]—*Rabelais's Language* and *Rabelais's Influence and Reputation* (Sainéan 1922–1923, 1930), Georg Misch's *History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (Misch 1950), Albrecht Dieterich's book *Pulcinella* (Dieterich 1897), Otto Driesen's *The Origins of Harlequin* (Driesen 1904), Ernst Cassirer's above-mentioned *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* as well as vol. 2 (*Mythical Thinking*) of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (Cassirer 1955, 1963), a late nineteenth-century Russian article on Rabelais ("Rabelais and His Novel") by Aleksandr Nikolaevich Veselovsky (Veselovsky 1939), Konrad Burdach's book *Reformation, Renaissance,*

[13] Obviously, this is long before the age of the Internet. Readers would not have been able to easily find out about Bakhtin's status as a political ex-convict on their own.

[14] Which is not to say he did not at least try to get hold of the cited sources as well. There are a few cases where we see evidence of Bakhtin having consulted such sources, but only very briefly (perhaps in that ten-day window in which he was allowed to visit a large library). A good case in point is Sébillot (1883)—a book on popular legends about Gargantua, which is cited in a relevant discussion by Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:250–254). We find Bakhtin using information directly from that book, but it is quite clear that he only had time to briefly skim it, as he relies exclusively on its table of contents, index, and the very first page of the main text and, moreover, misinterprets some of that information in a way that even a slightly more thorough reading would have prevented (see endnote 105 to chapter 5).

[15] I explain my methodology for establishing Bakhtin's sources in a brief addendum to the book.

[16] I am here translating these works' titles into English for clarity. The titles are given in their original language in the references. Where a published English translation exists of the relevant work, I always cite the translation.

[17] This scholar is often referred to by the Romanian (Lazăr Șăineanu) and sometimes Yiddish (Eliezer Schein) versions of his name. The books Bakhtin worked with, however, were in French, so the author is listed as "Lazare Sainéan"—the version I will consequently be using throughout.

Humanism (Burdach 1918), Ol'ga Freidenberg's 1936 book *Poetics of Plot and Genre* (nowadays available in a revised edition as Freidenberg 1997b), Georges Lote's *The Life and Work of François Rabelais* (Lote 1938), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's description of the carnival in Rome, included in his *Italian Journey* (Goethe 1982), and Russian translations of various works by Lucian and Hippocrates (Lucian 1915–1920; Hippocrates 1936). A few more sources could be added to this list based on the text of the book itself, including two books by Jean Plattard that he relied on quite heavily: *Rabelais's Oeuvre* and *The Life of François Rabelais* (Plattard 1910, 1930), *Rabelais Through the Ages* by Jacques Boulenger (1925), Paul Stapfer's *Rabelais, His Person, His Genius, His Work* (Stapfer 1889),[18] Gustave Reynier's *The Realist Novel in the 17th Century* (Reynier 1914), and two Soviet collective volumes on West-European literature (Berkovsky 1936; Zhirmunsky 1937; most references to both were removed in 1964–1965).[19] There were also, importantly, two editions of Rabelais's works, with the introductory articles and commentary included in them (Moland 1884; Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, vols. 1–5; Bakhtin also lists Marty-Laveaux 1868–1903 among his sources in 1946, but there is only one place in the book where it is likely he actually consulted this edition) and Vladimir Pyast's abridged Russian translation (Rabelais 1938).[20]

These sources can be divided into three categories. The first, containing most of the list, is made up of texts Bakhtin relied on as secondary sources. He drew amply on all sorts of information he found in them. They give the book much of its "flavor." And yet, Bakhtin's engagement with their authors' main ideas was more superficial. We may find discussions of these ideas in the book (such as the lengthy polemic with Schneegans 1894 in the beginning of chapter 5), but they played, at best, only a minor formative role in the development of Bakhtin's own thought. This includes all the sources dealing directly with Rabelais (Sainéan 1922–1923, 1930; Plattard 1910, 1930; Lote 1938; Lefranc et al. 1913–1955; Moland 1884; Boulenger 1925; Veselovsky 1939; in part Schneegans 1894), sources on folk culture and the grotesque (Flögel and Ebeling 1862; Schneegans 1894 again; Driesen 1904; Lehmann 1922; Ilvonen 1914; more

[18] This work was quoted in the 1940 manuscript, but only mentions of it remain in the final version of the book. Interestingly, unlike with other studies devoted to Rabelais, Bakhtin makes practically no use of Stapfer's book as secondary source material but does touch on his conceptual insights (above all, his evaluation of indecency in Rabelais as integral to his style).

[19] Bakhtin was also following the literary scholarship coming out in the USSR more generally. The 1940 manuscript has references to some of this work, which were later edited out.

[20] I should briefly note sources used only in the 1949–1950 and 1964–1965 revisions, which were not consulted earlier, most significantly Reinach (1912), Hirzel (1895), and Bobertag (1881), possibly Dzhivelegov and Boyadzhiev (1941), as well as a Russian edition of works by Marx and Engels (I cite English translations in the relevant endnotes), quotes from which were inserted mostly to placate hardliners in 1949–1950. Nikolay Lyubimov's translation of Rabelais (1961) was used extensively in 1964–1965. Bakhtin also added to the book several reviews of relevant literature (including Febvre 1982; Kayser 1963; Burdach 1918; Allemann 1956; Bollnow 1955; Möser 1777; and Vischer 1846) in the 1964–1965 revisions. This literature is cited explicitly in the text. On top of all this, there are various one-off or tentatively identified sources discussed in the relevant endnotes to the text.

significant for the formation of Bakhtin's ideas, but still mostly secondary, are Dieterich 1897 and Reich 1903), some relevant texts from antiquity (the Lucian and Hippocrates translations), and sources on Rabelais's time and adjacent periods (Reynier 1914; the general overviews of Renaissance philosophy contained in Cassirer 1963). Bakhtin also occasionally relied on sources he studied while working on earlier projects. Goethe's autobiographical writings (Goethe 1891–1894) are a case in point.

The second category contains two of the books listed above—Burdach (1918) and Misch (1950). These did influence Bakhtin's thinking. Misch (1950) was a source that Bakhtin came back to several times in his writings. Burdach (1918) is more specifically linked to Bakhtin's thesis in the book on Rabelais, as Burdach seeks the origins of Renaissance culture and art in medieval thought, which is, in a sense, also what Bakhtin is doing with regard to Rabelais's novel. That said, the direct traces these books leave in the text are few and far between.[21]

Popova (2008a, 849–858, and see already Tihanov 2000, 266) also argues in detail that Bakhtin's interest in Rabelais was shaped by the work of Karl Vossler and his students, especially Leo Spitzer (in particular, Vossler 1921; Spitzer 1910, 1931). A citation of Spitzer (1910) appears in Bakhtin's 1946 bibliographical list. On the one hand, these are scholars whose work Bakhtin (and other Bakhtin Circle members) followed closely and who, in turn, took great interest in Rabelais. It is highly likely their studies indeed had a significant influence on Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais and contributed much to his selection of Rabelais, in particular, as the object of his study.[22] On the other hand, as with Misch and Burdach, I could identify no passages from either Vossler or Spitzer that are clearly paraphrased or used as source material in the book.

Finally, the third category of sources contains the books by Cassirer (Cassirer 1963 and, especially, 1955), Goethe's thoughts on the carnival in Rome (Goethe 1982, 445–469), and Freidenberg's *Poetics of Plot and Genre* (Freidenberg 1997b), as well as one source not mentioned earlier, Florens Christian Rang's article "Historical Psychology of Carnival" (Rang 1983, written in 1909 and first published in 1927).[23] Bakhtin does

[21] A relatively detailed review of Burdach (1918) appears in the book's introduction, but that, as I noted earlier, was added to the text in the 1964–1965 revision round.

[22] Also relevant is the fact that there was an uptick of interest in Rabelais in Soviet literary scholarship in the 1930s. Rabelais was clearly and visibly marked as part of the Party-approved literary canon (see Popova 2021, 325).

[23] See Popova (2010a, 555–559; see also Lachmann 1988). The correspondences between Rang and Bakhtin in themes, ideas, and even individual terms (which I will briefly explore below) are too close to be accidental. That said, as Popova notes, there is no actual record of Bakhtin's familiarity with Rang's article. Moreover, the publication itself, in the short-lived periodical *Die Kreatur*, would not have been easily accessible to Bakhtin. Popova hypothesizes that Bakhtin read Rang in the late 1920s (a period from which no records survive in Bakhtin's personal archive). Another possibility is that he had indirect access to this paper, possibly via notes prepared by one of his friends. Matvey Isaevich Kagan comes to mind in particular in this context. Hirschkop (2021, 119) surmises that Bakhtin's meetings with Kagan in 1937 had a decisive influence on Bakhtin's work in the next few years, though he appears more skeptical about Bakhtin's familiarity with Rang's work (Hirschkop 2021, 130).

use some discussions in some of these books as secondary source material, but their main contribution is in shaping Bakhtin's core ideas and concepts in the book. And by "shaping" I do not mean that Bakhtin simply adopted Cassirer's or Freidenberg's ideas as his own. Bakhtin's dialogue with his influences is always much more complex—always involves a mix of adoption and rejection. But the trace they leave in the book is deep, obvious, and goes to the core of Bakhtin's concerns.

I already noted above that Bakhtin's engagement with Rabelais organically developed from his earlier project focusing on Goethe. I will return to Cassirer as a point of reference for Bakhtin's ideas in the book in the next section, and will have a few words to add about Rang (1983) too. But for now, I would like to focus, in particular, on Freidenberg (1997b), not only because this book is not available to the direct review of English speakers,[24] but also because had Bakhtin not come across it, the book on Rabelais would probably never have been conceived of in the first place.

Ol'ga Freidenberg's *Poetics of Plot and Genre* was first published in 1936 (based on her doctoral dissertation defended in 1935 and reflecting work going back to the late 1910s). It is a book that makes radical claims, only thinly masked by its title. Freidenberg does not quite mean by the terms "genre" and, especially, "plot" what most people do, or at least, she claims, they started out as something very different.

In two passages that essentially bookend the text (Freidenberg 1997b, 12–15, 297–299), she explains her main thesis thus: What later became literary plots (or rather plot, in the singular) and genres started out in preclass society, in humanity's early days, as the totality of people's lived experience and worldview (keep this crucial point in mind for later):

> [It] was not at first a plot, or the embryo of literature, but simply lived meaning, the meaning of simple everyday routine, with the aid of which people lived, worked, ate, reared children (Freidenberg 1997b, 13).
>
> Primitive man's retort to life was an answering life, created by imitative imagery; in primitive semantics we uncover first and foremost a picture of world life, of that which takes place all around day and night, on earth and in society, beneath the earth an in the sky. This metaphorical picture remains one and the same, and it is also that which configures and gives

[24] While *Poetics of Plot and Genre* has not been translated into English, there is an English translation of one of Freidenberg's other books (Freidenberg 1997a), and several of her articles have been published in the journal *Soviet Studies in Literature* and elsewhere (Freidenberg 1976, 1978, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1990d, 1990e, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d, 1991e). For an extended treatment of Freidenberg's life and work, see Perlina (2002). This includes, to the best of my knowledge, the most detailed treatment of *Poetics of Plot and Genre* in English (Perlina 2002, 165–180), as well as a discussion of correlations between Freidenberg and Bakhtin (Perlina 2002, 249–262). For a more concise overview of Freidenberg's main ideas, which also contains a helpful examination of similarities and differences between Freidenberg and Bakhtin, see Moss (1997). A relatively recent work (in Russian) that offers a deep dive into Bakhtin's reading of Freidenberg, and in the process also reviews earlier scholarship on the subject, is Perlina (2011).

> meaning to ritual, everyday-life custom, the thing, the action, the word (Freidenberg 1997b, 298–299).

Then class society develops, but the plot—which now becomes something akin to the Marxist notion of ideology, encompassing not only literature and the arts but also ritual, religious worship, philosophy—retains its old content. A dialectical contradiction develops, and the plot acquires different genre forms. Its elements branch out into a growing variety of metaphorical extensions. However, when Freidenberg analyzes what she calls the "semantics" of the motifs, images, stock characters, and even poetic meters of literary works, she finds "total identity, despite stark morphological differences" (Freidenberg 1997b, 13).

Later still, this self-identical plot, which Freidenberg also refers to as "folklore," becomes inert tradition, a deadweight that holds the development of literature back for many centuries. It was not until "the industrial capitalist period"—essentially the nineteenth century—that writers were finally able to stop "writing 'from the plot,' " as a painter would "draw 'from nature' " (Freidenberg 1997b, 297).

Now, Bakhtin first read Freidenberg's book when it was still new. We know he borrowed a copy from the local library during his first stay in Saransk, on November 17, 1936 (incidentally, his forty-first birthday) and later reread it, taking detailed notes (Perlina 2011, 213; Popova 2008a, 878). These readings find a clear reflection in Bakhtin's work from that point on and in the book on Rabelais in particular.

First of all, Bakhtin veritably mined Freidenberg's book for bibliographical references (Perlina 2011, 214) and made a significant and sustained effort to then get hold of the sources she cited. Indeed, many of Bakhtin's main secondary sources for the 1940 manuscript (Flögel and Ebeling 1862; Schneegans 1894; Dieterich 1897; Reich 1903; Driesen 1904; together, these are responsible for the overwhelming majority of Bakhtin's source material on folk laughter culture) are cited by Freidenberg, and it is likely through Freidenberg that Bakhtin became aware of them—this on top of sources Bakhtin may have tried but failed to obtain or only made relatively minor use of in the book. He also kept seeking her citations out. For example, Bakhtin only got hold of Reinach (1912) in the early 1940s.

Freidenberg was also Bakhtin's conduit to a literature she relies on very heavily but he could not study directly, of which the most significant work is James George Frazer's famous monumental study *The Golden Bough* (for an abridged edition, see Frazer 1922).[25] Frazer's work was important enough for Bakhtin to acknowledge both explicitly (p. 56) and implicitly (see note 3 to the introduction) in the text.

[25] The main reason here is a language barrier. Bakhtin had some knowledge of English, but it was not one of his main working languages (in the late 1940s Bakhtin made some efforts to improve his English; we find several Soviet high-school-level English textbooks and some literary classics reworked for learners of English as a second language, mostly from 1947–1948, among the books he owned; see Klyueva and Lisunova 2010, 31, 60, 68, 80, 105, 150–152). Freidenberg, by contrast, was clearly oriented toward British academic culture, as evident even from such stylistic features as her choice (very rare in Russian

Indeed, the elements that Bakhtin adopts most conspicuously from Freidenberg's work are closely linked to her reading of Frazer. These are discussed by Freidenberg in part II of her book (Freidenberg 1997b, 38–229, see especially pp. 50–111) and deal with the specific content of the "primitive worldview," the metaphoric equivalences between folkloric themes, characters, and motifs.

Freidenberg discusses the basic content of the folkloric plot under three headings—"eating," "birth," and "death"—where all three are closely interconnected. Eating is linked to sacrifice, to rending bodies apart, to death, and to rebirth or resurrection (as in, among other examples, the Christian eucharist), where the act of eating itself symbolizes both death and rebirth. Birth is associated with marriage and copulation, with eating, with struggle and victory, salvation, rebirth, the yearly cycle (the new year emerges victorious from its struggle against the old one), and cyclical cosmogony. Death can be substituted, among other things, by slavery (especially in a story where a king becomes a slave and then regains the throne and the queen), by laughter, and by invective. Later on in the book (Freidenberg 1997b, 210–216) we also find references to comic doubles and to fools and picaros—all developing from the initial death phase that the hero goes through before rebirth.

These are all also developments of two main themes—the solar cycle (the sun passes through the underworld at night and is reborn in the morning) and the life cycle of vegetation (plants die, their seeds are buried underground, and new plants are born). Both, in turn, spring from the same "primitive" or "prelogical" conception of the world, where everything is seen as interconnected: "the cosmos (=the totem, society) disappears and [then] appears" (Freidenberg 1997b, 64).[26]

We find this entire nexus of ideas (with some telling differences in framing and emphasis) featured prominently throughout Bakhtin's book on Rabelais and slightly earlier in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981c). In both works, these ideas play a very significant role in explaining the literary images and social practices that Bakhtin is discussing. By contrast, they are entirely absent from Bakhtin's earlier writings.[27]

The correspondences between ideas we find in Freidenberg's book and those we find in Bakhtin's book on Rabelais are indeed very striking. But this is actually highly

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scholarship) to consistently use the first-person singular, instead of the "scholarly we," in her book.

[26] Freidenberg is prone to declare phenomena she discusses to be genetically related and essentially identical based on relatively slight evidence, without any rigorous attempt to rule out alternative explanations. Bakhtin often takes her word for it. When in the book he remarks that some genres or rituals are "genetically connected," this mostly (though not always) relies on statements made by Freidenberg.

[27] To be sure, Freidenberg was not alone in making these claims. I already mentioned that she relied on Frazer, as well as on other authors (in particular Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and, to some extent, Ernst Cassirer). Within Soviet academia, she was part of the very powerful (and later thoroughly discredited) school led by Nikolay Yakovlevich' Marr, and the particular set of ideas she is developing in the book was in many ways developed in cooperation with her close friend and colleague Izrail' Grigor'evich Frank-Kamenetsky. There is little doubt, though, that Bakhtin's familiarity with these ideas can be traced primarily to his reading of Freidenberg's *Poetics of Plot and Genre*.

typical of Bakhtin's pattern of integrating other thinkers' and scholars' influences into his own work: he tends to assimilate whole blocks of connected ideas into his own context but makes them serve his own purposes, in a way that is often opposed, even more strikingly, to the work he is borrowing from (cf. Sandler 2015).

Indeed, the block of ideas appropriated from Freidenberg is not alone, even within the same book. Consider, for comparison, Florens Christian Rang's study of carnival (Rang 1983; I am mostly relying here on Popova 2010a, 555–559). To begin with, Rang's study is explicitly devoted to carnival and gives the word "carnival" an extended meaning, which resonates very closely with the notion of carnival we find in Bakhtin.

Rang explicitly links carnival to times of transition: transition between years, between seasons, but also between roles, between reigns of kings ("a pause, an interregnum, between renunciation of the throne and accession to the throne" [Rang 1983, 14]), and between historical periods in times of historical crisis. He also explicitly links it to laughter. Moreover, this laughter is connected to freedom, especially to the free word, and is directed at the highest authorities, including deities ("the first blasphemy" [Rang 1983, 10]). Carnival is linked to overcoming fear. It has, among its regular attributes, feasting, masquerading, orgies, fools and folly, the fool as king, beatings, and more generally, turning the world upside-down or inside-out (Rang 1983, 8). Its imagery is cosmic. Rang also explicitly describes carnival as Dionysian (e.g., Rang 1983, 19), with reference to the Nietzschean contrast between the Dionysian and the Apollonian, which is very much how Bakhtin looks at carnival and at grotesque imagery (cf. Bakhtin's discussion of the classical and grotesque canons of depicting the body, drawn along those Nietzschean lines, and see Popova [2010a, 596–597] for Nietzsche's own take on the Feast of the Ass). A number of terms and phrases employed by Bakhtin can be traced back to Rang: "the world turned inside out" ("verkehrte Welt"), possibly "succession" or "replacement" (the Russian *smena*; Rang uses the German "Tausch" and specifically "Rollentausch," role-switching), and of course, "carnival" itself.

These correspondences are, again, striking, but so are the differences. Carnival laughter overcomes fear, but fear of what? For Rang, this fear is the fear of the future and of the Dionysian frenzy and disorder of the interregnum itself. Carnival has its legalized place in the calendar in order to integrate this transitional Dionysian aspect of human existence into the greater logical, Apollonian order of things. This is practically the polar opposite of the function that Bakhtin allots to carnival. For Bakhtin, carnival liberates from fears of the *past*, from fear of authority, of the powers that be, of the current (outgoing) social order, and itself depicts and instantiates the utopian condition of the absolute *future*.

Coming back to Freidenberg, just as Bakhtin clearly rejects, and even reverses, central ideas in Rang's account of carnival, so he also rejects crucial theses in Freidenberg's book. First and foremost, Bakhtin does not view links to the "plot" of folk tradition as a deadweight holding literature back. He stresses their importance for understanding Rabelais's images and claims they are responsible for the most socially progressive elements of his work. He even sees links to this tradition as an essential precondition for

any real innovation in literature in the ages that follow (though this becomes clearer from reading texts that postdate the book on Rabelais, such as Bakhtin 1984, 101–180). Bakhtin also does not see this tradition, stemming from folklore, as itself something static, where changes happen only on the level of "morphology" (as Freidenberg put it), while the core content remains the same.

More specifically, Bakhtin takes issue with Freidenberg's notion of "vulgar realism,"[28] which is the heading under which Freidenberg (1997b, 260–299) conducts her review of European literary history, from Classical Greece to the eighteenth century and beyond. This particular disagreement with Freidenberg turned out to be quite productive for Bakhtin.

Freidenberg's main claim here is that "realist" literature before the nineteenth century is not essentially realist at all. It repeats the traditional plot, as all literature of those periods does, but focuses on the lowly and comic genres, associated with the lower social classes, on the "dirty" or "vulgar" aspects of the traditional plot (where the hero goes through the phase of death in the guise of a fool or a slave, or, later, a charlatan, a knave, or a picaro).

Freidenberg's overview pays special attention to several authors from late antiquity (Petronius, Apuleius, and Lucian) and, in later European literature, devotes special attention to the picaresque novel. It also mentions in passing the so-called Greek romance, as well as several other genres and authors (including, at one point, Rabelais).

Now, the focus on these particular authors and genres may well have caught Bakhtin's eye, as he was already paying attention to them in his work at the time (they are discussed, albeit briefly, already in "Discourse in the Novel," the latest edits in which date to 1936; see Bakhtin 1981a, 371–372, 390–392). But if we look at Bakhtin's first text that contains clear traces of Freidenberg's ideas in it, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981c), we find that his own historical survey explicitly follows a very similar trajectory (though there is clearly "input" from other sources too, most notably Misch 1950). Chapter headings include "The Greek Romance," "Apuleius and Petronius," and later "The Functions of the Rogue, Clown and Fool in the Novel," and, of course, the two chapters on Rabelais, one of them explicitly focusing on "The Folkloric Bases of the Rabelaisian Chronotope."

And this trajectory is followed with clearly polemical intent. Bakhtin puts great effort into arguing that literary forms overcome the cyclical conception of time embodied in early folklore (e.g., Bakhtin 1981c, 209–210), that they move the evaluative center of mass of the world from the absolute past to the absolute future (Bakhtin 1981c, 146–151; 1981b). Some polemical remarks also made it into materials linked more directly

[28] Realism was a prescribed object of study for Soviet literary scholars in the 1930s. Everybody was writing about realism, its history and different types, and in the process reinterpreting the term "realism" to fit in with whatever they wanted to say. Both Freidenberg's term "vulgar realism" and Bakhtin's "Gothic/grotesque realism" should be read with this fact in mind. The 1940 manuscript included a relatively lengthy polemic with other Soviet scholars about how to properly characterize realism in renaissance literature, which was removed in 1964–1965.

to the Rabelais book (there is even one mention of "vulgar realism" in the eventually published 1965 text, at the very end of chapter 4, though it is unclear whether Bakhtin indeed has Freidenberg's use of this term in mind there). Again, Bakhtin consistently argues against the view of this "vulgarity" as dead weight or mere convention.[29]

So, with all this in mind, does Bakhtin cite Freidenberg in the book? In 1940 that would have been utterly impossible. *The Poetics of Plot and Genre* was removed from circulation and attacked in the daily paper *Izvestiya*, second in significance and reach in the USSR only to the *Pravda* (see Moss 1997, 4; Perlina 2002, 159–162). This was a clear signal that the work should not be cited, even though Freidenberg was successful in her appeal to remove the ban on its circulation and even kept her university position—but that fact was not widely publicized, of course, and Freidenberg's status as a scholar never quite recovered.[30]

By 1965 the conditions had changed. Citing the now deceased Freidenberg was no longer risky. If anything, Freidenberg was remembered as a proestablishment hardliner, and citing her risked alienating some of Bakhtin's newfound admirers. Be that as it may, Bakhtin does include a footnote that cites Freidenberg's book as "very valuable" and offers very succinct commentary on it: "This work collects an immense body of folklore material directly related to folk laughter culture (predominantly in antiquity). But this material is mainly interpreted in the spirit of theories of prelogical thinking, and the problem of folk laughter culture is not posed in the book" (p. 56).

Bakhtin had good reasons to only refer to the book briefly, without giving it a detailed review. The book itself was at that point nearly forgotten (it would reemerge as a significant study in its own right considerably later; indeed, this one footnote by Bakhtin was somewhat instrumental in getting that reemergence process started), and discussing it at length would be out of place in a publication that was meant to appeal to a relatively broad audience.[31] On top of that, as I noted above, Bakhtin's own critique of Freidenberg's claims had some features in common with the official takedown articles directed against the book in the daily press in 1936. Getting into a detailed discussion of Freidenberg's theses could create some fairly unpleasant dilemmas.

Within the brief commentary Bakhtin did supply, one should pay particular attention to the term "prelogical thinking," which requires some unpacking. On the surface

[29] In this, Bakhtin is (superficially) in agreement with the "official" critique of Freidenberg, who was slammed in the daily press for disrespecting the literary greats of past ages. More generally, both Bakhtin's texts and Freidenberg's own work have been to some extent tailored (albeit with limited success) to pass muster with the various censorship mechanisms of the USSR under Stalin and their rapidly shifting demands. As a general caveat, apparent agreements and disagreements between texts published in the USSR at the time should be taken with a grain of salt.

[30] There is also no citation of Rang's work in the book. This could have been for the same reasons that Freidenberg and Cassirer were not cited, but there is also the more mundane possibility that Bakhtin did not have a bibliographical record to cite.

[31] Recall that Bakhtin was asked to remove or translate almost all the quotations in French and German in the text and that he edited out, at the suggestion of the book's reviewers, an extended discussion of Soviet work from the 1930s on realism in renaissance literature.

level, Soviet readers at the time would likely associate this term with Nikolay Yakovlevich Marr and his school (which was by then discredited and remembered more for its persecution of other academics than for any scholarly achievements). This labeling was indeed factually correct. And if we focus only on that, Bakhtin's footnote could be read as saying, "Freidenberg's study is very valuable, but bear in mind that she was a Marrist."

Marr did not come up with the notion of prelogical thinking, though. As Freidenberg herself writes in the book, this idea was to some degree in vogue in the humanities and social sciences in Europe in the early twentieth century. One should particularly note, in this context, the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1926) and Ernst Cassirer (1955). With this reading of the term in mind, Nina Perlina (2011, 216–217, 220) argues that Bakhtin failed to fully understand Freidenberg's thesis: Freidenberg actually focused not on how prelogical thinking created the folkloric plot but on how literature develops and deforms this plot under the pressure of later forms of thinking (until the literary plot is finally able to break free).

But, as with other borrowed terms, Bakhtin here appears to be using the term "prelogical thinking" with a twist of his own, and if this twist is taken into account, it turns out that his brief remarks on Freidenberg point precisely to the very core of his disagreement with her. In a brief set of notes written around 1965, in the context of preparing the book on Rabelais to publication, Bakhtin writes, "The mistake of Lévy-Bruhl and Febvre. This is not prelogical thinking; it is parallel to it and cannot be replaced by it. Concepts are born out of it (from its womb), but never exhaust it. Carnival thinking is international. Logical thinking is the kind of thinking that can be entrusted to a machine" (quoted in Popova 2010a, 609).

Bakhtin here contrasts logical thinking with what he calls "carnival thinking." The "mistake" he argues against consists in viewing this carnival thinking as merely "prelogical"—that is, as a form of thinking that is later *superseded* by logical thinking.

Freidenberg consistently views the many mythical and folkloric elements she finds in literature as vestiges of a long-gone worldview, which are holding the development of literature back. Bakhtin, by contrast, views the same elements as radically progressive. When he writes that Freidenberg interprets them "in the spirit of theories of prelogical thinking," he means the same thing, namely, that Freidenberg views this legacy as something to be later *superseded*, in this case by modern literature. Bakhtin, on the contrary, argues that these folkloric elements are to be found, even in his own day, in any *advancement* made in the spheres of literature and art.

Coming back to the more general question of Bakhtin and his sources, reviewing Bakhtin's sources for the book is interesting not only for the purpose of setting the record straight or of documenting the history of ideas. It is also interesting as a study of how Bakhtin refracted and transformed his source material. Referring to *Rabelais's* use of sources, Bakhtin at one point writes, "But as with everything Rabelais borrows from others, this place in Pliny is completely transformed in the Rabelaisian context and is stamped with a specific Rabelaisian mark" (chapter 2, p. 185)."

This sentence (itself paraphrasing Sainéan 1922–23, 1:26) can well be read as Bakhtin's reflection on his own use of sources in the book (and elsewhere): it is not so much the materials he borrows from others that matter, let alone the citation conventions applied or ignored, but what he *does* with those materials.

THE BOOK ON RABELAIS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BAKHTIN'S THOUGHT

So, what does Bakhtin do with all these borrowings? What is the point of integrating all these ideas from Freidenberg, Rang, Cassirer, and others? And does this not make the resulting work unoriginal?

What makes Bakhtin's work original, and what attracted Bakhtin to the ideas of these thinkers and scholars in the first place, is that it develops Bakhtin's own distinct philosophical vision. It is this vision that I would like to turn to now, especially since discovering how Bakhtin's book on Rabelais fits into this vision is not a straightforward task.

The book on Rabelais is among Bakhtin's relatively late works, but it was among the first to be published (and translated), and it shaped the early stages of Bakhtin's reception. But by the 1980s, after more of Bakhtin's work had been published, it became apparent that the book on Rabelais sits uncomfortably with some of Bakhtin's other work. Morson and Emerson's (1990) classic study was among the first to draw attention to these mismatches. Indeed, the same author who elsewhere insists on the uniqueness of the individual and on dialogue (Bakhtin 1993, 1984, 1986a, 1986e among many other works) here meshes an entire crowd into one "kindred body" in a carnival celebration that can leave nobody out and even involves some beatings and violence (and some, like Groys 2017, indeed cry foul). Moreover, a simple periodization won't do. Bakhtin's writings on carnival are not isolated from his more personalist texts. The two themes coexist on the pages of Bakhtin (1984, 2017, 1986b) and elsewhere.

To be sure, there is a real tension here. There are also surely some merely apparent tensions, explainable by the need to appear to toe the party line (which strongly focused on nationalism since the mid-1930s). But above all, we should bear in mind that Bakhtin, in his lifetime publications, is not speaking in his "native" idiom, nor is he writing in his discipline of choice. Bakhtin had always considered himself to be first and foremost a philosopher (Bakhtin and Duvakin 2019, 41). Translated into his *philosophical* vocabulary, Bakhtin's claims in various periods appear much more consistent, even though they turn out—in this book more than in most of Bakhtin's writings—to be significantly different than what a surface reading of the text might suggest.

Now, Bakhtin's philosophy is inherently very complex. Add to this the fact that he was not free to expound it directly in his lifetime publications and that the drafts and notes where we can see more of it survive in fragments. Moreover, Bakhtin's only explicitly philosophical (incomplete) works belong to the earliest phase of his career, and changes and developments in his philosophy often have to be inferred from indirect statements. The early works themselves are not quite an easy read: they

are couched in the terms of the German philosophy of the time (neo-Kantianism and early phenomenology), which is itself very dense and has now mostly been out of the philosophical mainstream for over a century. On top of that, Bakhtin's use of these terms is highly idiosyncratic (Sandler 2015). So, obviously, my reconstruction of Bakhtin's main philosophical ideas in what follows should be read with a skeptical eye. But with this caveat in mind, let me guide you through Bakhtin's (early) philosophy.[32]

One thing that perhaps grabs the reader's attention the most about Bakhtin's early writings is a stylistic device he regularly employs: his totally idiosyncratic use of the first-person singular. We find it throughout Bakhtin's early works, even in a brief text from that period written for a lay audience: "Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself—in the unity of my responsibility" (Bakhtin 1990a, 2, translation modified).

Note that this is not the "I" of a narrator's voice. Instead, Bakhtin is making a philosophical point. He is stressing the importance of the first-person perspective. The reader is meant to repeat after Bakhtin and use the first-person singular, to link this to her own personal experience.

This unusual stylistic choice is an expression of philosophical radicalism. Philosophical realists claim that objective reality is the ultimate object of philosophical inquiry, because it is the same for all (as opposed to merely subjective appearances, which are different). Philosophical idealists instead seek unity in a subjective experience, in a "spirit," which may be individual, or may be collective, universal, or absolute. Both realists and idealists share the presupposition that what is the same for all underlies what is different, that the one underlies the many.

Bakhtin, by contrast, is a principled pluralist. Unity is important, to be sure, but the *uniqueness* of my conscious experience is more important, or as Bakhtin himself puts it, it is "heavier" (Bakhtin 1993, 8). This pluralism rests on three pillars: (a) my first-person perspective is real and cannot be reduced to anything else; (b) other people's perspectives are also real and cannot be reduced to my own or dismissed; and (c) there is essential and necessary interaction between us.

To illustrate what this means, let us imagine that two people—you and I—meet each other on a train. In objective physical terms, we are both making the same trip, traveling on the same trajectory in space and time. That is correct (Bakhtin is no relativist and does not dispute the objectivity of objective reality). But in a deeper sense, the trips are not really the same.

To begin with, the route of the train, which we may plot on a map, is not perceived by either you or me from that "bird's-eye view" abstract perspective. I experience this trip from my point of view, and you from yours. No matter how detailed is our objective information about the train, its location, its surroundings, or even about the

[32] I am covering the same ground in considerably greater detail in articles published over the years (in particular, Sandler 2012a, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2024c; see also Erdinast-Vulcan and Sandler 2015), where the statements I am making about Bakhtin's thought are also more scrupulously documented and exemplified with quotations and citations.

psychology of the people on the train, this information will not be able to replace my actual experience of traveling on it, the focus of my gaze and attention at any given moment, how it all feels to me. It may be possible to make accurate predictions about how a person like myself would experience a ride on that particular train, about what such a person would see at a particular moment, but that theoretical person is not me, and the existence of all that theoretical knowledge is not an experience of anything by anybody, so long as I am not there and do not, in fact, have those experiences, or some others. There is no way one can generate a first-person experience out of theoretical knowledge (in contrast, theoretical knowledge is, in fact, regularly abstracted out of people's reports of their first-person experiences).

My trip on the train happens to be part of an exciting excursion. Yours is a routine commute home from work. The similarity in spatial trajectory therefore masks a substantial difference in the actual experience. The view we see out the window, assuming we are looking in the same direction, may be quite similar in its geometrical features, but it is new and exciting for me, old and familiar for you. We focus our gaze on different things along the way. The station at which we will both be getting off the train is not just any station for you; it is *home*. It is also your *destination*. For me it is just one stop on a longer trip. These are all differences in how we experience the train ride. They are *real* differences, linked to our actions and *deeds*, and to the *values* with which our experiences and deeds are inherently imbued. The space and time of lived experience is a value-laden space and time. This value-laden space-time and trajectories of moving through it (which Bakhtin later referred to with the term "chronotopes") are a central point of interest in Bakhtin's thought throughout his career.

If what we see when we look out of the train's window is at least similar in its objective features, what we see when we look at one another cannot be more different. You see what is behind my back, and I see what is behind yours, but I cannot see behind my own back, nor can you see behind yours. When I look at you, I see your face, but I can only see my own face reflected in the pupils of your eyes (cf. Bakhtin 1990b, 23).

Bakhtin makes a more fundamental philosophical point here: René Descartes founded the human subject on introspection (it lies at the basis of his famous "I think, therefore I am" argument). But Bakhtin views the idea of direct introspection as naive. Direct introspection is impossible. I cannot see myself. I can only obtain a coherent image of myself from others. I also cannot simply express myself in some naive direct fashion; for self-expression, I need forms of self-expression (words, gestures, idioms, genres), which I must learn from others and painstakingly negotiate my way through the multiple voices they carry with them to make them speak (also) for me.

In short, I cannot ignore the existence of others. I need others to truly become a subject myself. I also cannot replace others. Any attempt to usurp the other's place in space (even the simple act of looking at myself in the mirror; see Bakhtin 2017, 217) or in time (cf. Bakhtin 2014, 527–529) is doomed to end in abject failure (and I use

the word "abject" advisedly; Bakhtin views this above all as an *ethical* failure, as an act of violence).

Bakhtin has a clever term for this fundamental interaction between me and the other. He calls it "the event of being" (*sobytie bytiya*). The term is a clever one, etymologically, because the Russian word for "event" can also be read as "co-being" (Bakhtin's choice of words strongly suggests this reading, though, to be sure, there is no surviving passage in which he explicitly refers to it). This clever term has its clever counterpart, the "being-event," or perhaps "being–co-being" (*bytie-sobytie*), which is Bakhtin's term for the metaphysical totality of existence, comprised neither of a common objective (physical) reality shared by all nor of the inner world of just one subject or (absolute) spirit. The being-event is, rather, the irreducible plurality of all individual conscious perspectives, of all deeds, which can form an organic whole but can never fit into the purview of a single mind.

The event of being has a basic structure, or architectonics, with three focal points: I-for-myself, the-other-for-me, and I-for-the-other (Bakhtin 1993, 54).

I-for-myself is the basic reality of my first-person experience and action. The-other-for-me is the other that I find in my first-person world, the others whom I can see and to whom I can grant images of themselves. I-for-the-other can be viewed as another functional space occupied by the other in my world (which will be particularly important for our purposes here). This is the other seeing me and granting me an image of myself, the other located on the rims or limits of my space and time (just as I myself am on the rim of my first-person-perspective world, not inside it), with whom I can communicate in the boundary region between our subjective worlds. This function of the other can assume the form of the ethical ought, or of God, or of the distant or absolute future (not in the purely temporal sense, but as a projected vantage point in the realm of values, from which I can be truly observed and evaluated). Bakhtin comes back to this role of the other in various ways in his writings in all periods (e.g., Bakhtin 1986d, 126).

Bakhtin's interest in images, especially literary images, and in the aesthetics of literature stems from the fact that literary images are (alongside the word) a central medium, through which such essential interaction between the other and me (which Bakhtin explicitly considers in terms of an interaction between an author and a hero in a literary work) is possible. At first (in Bakhtin 1990b), Bakhtin views the author's task in terms connected with the plastic or figurative arts, much along the lines of what in the book on Rabelais he will describe as the classical, not the grotesque, canon of representing the human body. Namely, the author is meant to create an organically holistic complete image of the hero, embodying the author's perception of the hero's face, outward appearance, conduct, and physical and social background, in short, of everything the hero cannot see about herself.

This will change pretty early on. Bakhtin revises his aesthetics already in the 1920s. The problem with such a figurative image is that it is static and deterministic. It

prejudges the hero, fails to capture the hero's activity and freedom. It is a monologue *about* the hero, not a true dialogue *with* the hero. It usurps the hero's place.

But what alternative forms of creating a literary image are there? In what forms can literature depict human freedom? This is exactly the question Bakhtin is exploring in his works on the novel in the 1930s. His study of the *Bildungsroman* has precisely this focus: the development of literary forms and tools that eventually allowed authors, Goethe in particular, to depict, or at least approach depicting, human freedom.

Now, let us finally return to what Bakhtin found in his sources. Recall (remember I asked you to make note of that point?) that Freidenberg claims the folkloric plot started out as the totality of the primitive human mind's experience of the world. We are thus talking about imagery that reflects predominantly a first-person perspective on the world. Yet, from the very outset, this experience is concerned with the entire cosmos and with human society, with the orbits of heavenly bodies and with the cycle of death and rebirth in nature. In an important respect, this first-person perspective is not limited to the local concerns of the individual but grasps space and time in their entirety.

Rang discussed many of the same practices and rituals as Freidenberg but now stressed their connection to times of crisis and change. The same images thus depict a world in flux and in transition. Rang also insisted that carnival imagery is linked to heavenly bodies.

Which brings us to the third side of this triangle, Ernst Cassirer. In the second volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer (1955) deals with folklore and myth. Indeed, he is one of Freidenberg's sources on the notion of prelogical thinking. In his study of Renaissance philosophy, Cassirer (1963) puts strong emphasis on (among other things) the idea of man as a microcosm, which indeed enjoyed considerable currency during this transitional period in history. The Renaissance was a time of transition not only from the point of view of the traditional historical narrative but also for Cassirer's own philosophical system, in which the historical development of symbolic forms culminates in science. Renaissance thought is on the very cusp of scientific thinking, but not quite there. The microcosm is still a "mythical" kind of symbolic form.

Bakhtin amalgamates these ideas he finds in Cassirer[33] to form one of the most significant concepts in his book on Rabelais, the notion of the *cosmic image*. The cosmic image is primarily a first-person-perspective image, where the point of view from within (the hero's) consciousness is dominant. However, this first-person purview is expanded (a notion Bakhtin develops, for instance, in Bakhtin 1984, 68; 1993, 50; and 2008e, 646) beyond the spatial and temporal limits of one's mundane experience

[33] Or is inspired to develop by his reading of Cassirer. Comparing Bakhtin's summary (Bakhtin 2008b, 785–828) with the passages in Cassirer (1955) that his notes there correspond to, it is clear that Bakhtin often does not give that text a plain reading. Instead, he views Cassirer's thinking as very close to his own and regularly assumes that his own ideas can be read between the lines of Cassirer's text, as it were.

to encompass the entire cosmos, from the nethers of the earth to the stars in the sky. In a cosmic image, one can gesture with one's hand toward heaven and toward hell (as one could on the original Shakespearian stage; see Bakhtin 2014, 532), one can literally reach to the stars with one's hands (or better, with one's teeth, as Rabelais would have it; see *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, book 2, chapter 1). In the cosmic image, the cosmos remains concrete and tangible, an integral part of living experience, not a theoretical abstraction.

Putting all these ingredients together, we get a carnival tradition that fosters the gradual development of an image that grasps the entire world as it undergoes historical change, seen through the eyes of the individual living in it and taking part in that historical change. This is very much the kind of imagery Bakhtin was looking for, and it was already with some initial form of the idea of carnival and cosmic imagery in mind that he read Rabelais and found in his novel ample material for exploring and developing this notion further.[34]

Obviously, as any cook will tell you, a successful dish is more than just a mixture of its ingredients. Bakhtin's cooking of the ingredients he found in Freidenberg, Rang, and Cassirer, and other sources too, meant that ideas and concepts that originated in one of these sources acquired new extended meanings as part of Bakhtin's vision. For instance, laughter for Bakhtin is a stand-in for death, as it is in Freidenberg, and is an antidote to fear, as it is in Rang, but Bakhtin redefines both functions of laughter when he connects them to the utopian vision that he finds in carnival imagery. Laughter does not portend a utopia in the absolute future in any of Bakhtin's (known) sources.

Indeed, this utopian vision (also linked to Bakhtin's emphasis on the merry tone of carnival imagery) is perhaps the most striking element of Bakhtin's conception of carnival, as developed in the book on Rabelais, which appears to be Bakhtin's own. (Based in part on his idiosyncratic reading of Nietzsche [Popova 2010a, 596–597], Goethe, and Rabelais himself.) Rang, and even more so, Freidenberg, see the images they are discussing as distinctly backward-looking, while Bakhtin directs them into the future.

And that is no accident. If we go back to Bakhtin's original philosophical depiction of the event of being and recall what is the function played by the absolute future,

[34] This reading (or, more likely, rereading) of Rabelais could have taken place at some point in 1938. Some level of engagement with Rabelais's novel was apparently part of Bakhtin's plan for his book on the *Bildungsroman* from the outset (Popova 2008a, 841–845). The deeper dive into Rabelais in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981c) may well have reflected Bakhtin's first reaction to reading the novel in this new light (recall that this text was originally part of an extended batch of working notes linked to the *Bildungsroman* book). In that essay, Bakhtin quotes Rabelais in Vladimir Pyast's Russian translation, published in 1929 and reissued in a revised edition just in time, in 1938 (Rabelais 1938). The short introductory article to that edition stresses that the seemingly disjointed structure of Rabelais's novel itself reflects the rapid *historical changes* Rabelais lived through (Krzhevsky 1938, 9–10). This claim, in turn, continues a tradition going back to Russian literary scholar Aleksandr Nikolaevich Veselovsky, who called Rabelais's novel "the moral autobiography of an entire period of the Renaissance" (Veselovsky 1884, 546; 1939, 463).

by the utopian ideal and the moral ought, we will find that these functions belong to the other, and specifically, to the other of I-for-the other, the other who authors me.[35] This other dwells on the rim of my subjective first-person lived experience, sees me, and can give me an image of myself and of my world as a whole.

The book on Rabelais is thus truly part of the development of Bakhtin's thought. His principled personalism does not go away in his work on carnival. Carnival imagery, with its blurred lines between individual bodies, does not offer a naive graphic illustration of Bakhtin's personalist philosophy, but it is grounded in this philosophy all the same.

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Rabelais and His World, Hélène Iswolsky's translation of Bakhtin's book on Rabelais, was published in 1968. It was the first translation of any of Bakhtin's works into English and among the very earliest translations of Bakhtin into any language. Bakhtin himself was still alive and (occasionally) publishing. Many of Bakhtin's best-known works were, at that point, still unpublished old manuscripts. His reception in the English-speaking world would not begin in earnest until well over a decade later.

In that sense, Iswolsky's translation was a pioneering work. It was also, on the whole, a decent translation (even if at times one could notice it was a bit rushed, with some technical faults, such as a few paragraphs in the original that were skipped). Some of Iswolsky's particular choices in translating Bakhtin's terms had the merits of simplicity and good common sense: "completion" for the Russian *zavershenie* (which later Bakhtin translations tended to overthink) is a good case in point. Other choices, however, were not as good (for instance, "marketplace" for *ploshchad'* is downright misleading).[36] The decision to change Bakhtin's original title to something catchier in English may have been shrewd, but it also appears to reflect a view of Bakhtin as a generic Soviet scholar, pushing the prescribed Marxist line about the base ("his world") determining the superstructure (Rabelais).

But, of course, Iswolsky did not know she was translating what would become a classic of scholarly literature. It would also have been impossible for her to attempt to preserve consistency in terms between this book and Bakhtin's other works. Again, most of these other works were published in Russian, let alone in English, only much later. That missing context clearly also limited her ability to understand passages in Bakhtin's Russian, resulting in some places, where the flow of Bakhtin's argument becomes incoherent in the translated text.

Now that the corpus of Bakhtin's writings is largely in print, now that his works have become recognized classics and his work in general, not just this one book, has become the object of sustained study by many scholars, the book on Rabelais deserves a new translation.

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[35] Cf. this telling note from the mid-1960s: "Merry kindness as the highest definition of the divine" (quoted in Popova 2010a, 609).

[36] I will devote a more detailed discussion to Bakhtin's central terms in the book and how they are translated shortly.

So, without further ado, let me discuss the details of the translation. Let's cross some technicalities off the list first.

The translation was made from the book's original printed edition (Bakhtin 1965). I also regularly consulted the 2010 edition, contained in Bakhtin's *Collected Works* (Bakhtin 2010), but in the rare cases where the two disagree, I normally follow the 1965 text. I also regularly consulted earlier versions of the text (the 1940 manuscript and the 1949–1950 revisions), both also published in the *Collected Works* (Bakhtin 2008a; 2008f).

Minor mistakes in Bakhtin's text (typos, misspellings, wrong numbers, and so on) are corrected without comment; where corrections require special attention, for one reason or another, I explain them in an endnote. Necessary editorial interpolations (these are extremely rare) are enclosed in square brackets.

Beyond those very few interpolations, and the explanations supplied in this preface and in the brief addendum at the end of the book, the main editorial instrument used in the book is the endnotes. In addition to providing some broader context and connections to ideas Bakhtin expressed in other works, and to citing sources for quotations and the like, endnotes are used to cite Bakhtin's sources of information for various factual claims in the book (where he does not provide such citations himself, or where the citations he provides are not his real sources). In the great majority of cases, such sources have been identified with a good degree of confidence (the addendum, mentioned above, explains the methodology applied in this identification process). In some cases there are still doubts, which are indicated in the relevant endnotes, and a few claims Bakhtin makes in the book are based on information he found in some source I was unable to locate.

Since adding endnotes to the text of footnotes poses technical issues, endnote references relevant to Bakhtin's footnotes are placed immediately after the relevant footnote reference or, in some cases, at the end of the relevant paragraph. The text of the endnote makes clear if the remarks in question pertain to the footnote. If there are different comments to be made to a footnote and to the relevant place in the main text, the remarks on the main text come first.

All italics (including inside quotations) reflect Bakhtin's emphasis in the text. The only exception to this rule is conventional italics for titles. Bakhtin makes significant use of emphasis in his texts, which Iswolsky's translation, unfortunately, almost entirely ignored. The new edition restores Bakhtin's emphases throughout.

More generally, I made an effort to remain faithful to Bakhtin's voice and style of writing. This includes his sometimes-irregular switching between present and past tense, his signalling of allusions with quotation marks, his somewhat idiosyncratic use of punctuation (he was, for instance, very fond of deliberately avoiding the final "and" or "or" at the end of lists in his sentences, just as I did in this sentence now). Perhaps especially significant is Bakhtin's choice of singular forms where technically one would expect a plural, signalling that he thinks of some group of related phenomena as a single conceptual unit.

I could not preserve these stylistic features in all cases, because some of them tend to clash with conventional expectations from an English-language text more starkly than they clash with such expectations in Russian. Still, style and voice cannot be separated from meaning, even in a scholarly work, so I did my best to convey as much of Bakhtin's style and voice as I could.

Back to more technical matters. Whenever Bakhtin cites, quotes from, or relies on a text that has an extant English translation, I am quoting and citing the published English text (if the translation in quotations needs to be modified for whatever reason, this is noted in an endnote). In other quotations Bakhtin makes, I made an effort to consult the original when translating the quote. This means that some Russian words that are consistently translated in a particular way in the main text may be rendered differently inside quotations.

All biblical quotes in the text use the English translation in the Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible. This might seem an unusual choice. The reason for it is that the Douay-Rheims translation was made from the Latin Vulgate, which is the biblical text Rabelais quoted from and alluded to. The differences are sometimes significant.

And as for Rabelais's own text, I have consulted all the French editions and translations of the text Bakhtin himself worked with, or at least may have worked with (Marty-Laveaux 1868–1903; Moland 1884; Lefranc et al. 1913–1955; Rabelais 1901, 1938, 1961; Regis 1832–1841), as well as three English translations, the venerable classic translation by Sir Thomas Urquhart and Peter Anthony Motteux, the translation by Jacques Le Clercq used by Iswolsky, and the relatively recent translation by M. A. Screech (Rabelais 1851, 1944, 2006). Rabelais's novel is everywhere cited by book and chapter number.

Of the three English translations, the one by Le Clercq is also the main translation I will be using, which means that, by default, quotations from and allusions to Rabelais's novel in Bakhtin's text follow Le Clercq's version of the text, as do names of characters, where Le Clercq chooses English equivalents for them. This relatively old translation has its issues, but it does have the merit of being in the public domain and being easily available for the readers' review (without as yet being difficult to follow because of its archaic English, as is the case with Urquhart's translation, excellent as it was for its time). Whenever I am quoting from one of the other translations instead (either because the relevant passage by Rabelais is not included in Le Clercq's translation or because it renders points Bakhtin goes on to stress or discuss much more clearly), this is stated in an endnote. I also note in an endnote when Le Clercq's translation is modified (again, to better match points Bakhtin highlights in his analysis) and mention when the modified version is based on either Urquhart and Motteux or on Screech. A particular issue with the Le Clercq translation is that it includes many interpolations. Le Clercq regularly introduced additional information, mostly from the commentary to the Lefranc et al. French edition, straight into the English text (and he also took a liking to peppering the text with lacuna signs for no apparent reason). These interpolations are usually removed, often without comment.

Finally, let me guide you through the main terms in the book and their English translations.

As a caveat, I should note that referring to the words Bakhtin casts his ideas into as "terms" does not quite do them justice. Bakhtin's aim is not to construct a rigorous logical system. Rather, his choice of words is more focused on evoking images in the readers' minds. "Terms" in such a text often have no unequivocal definition and can be used interchangeably in some contexts, while staying distinct and separate in others. If these are terms Bakhtin inherited from somebody else (as is very often the case), he makes these terms his own, often shapes them through the way they function in his arguments, rather than letting his arguments be shaped by them. When in the book I attempt, as much as possible, to maintain a consistent translation, or a small number of alternative translations for each significant word in the Russian text, this is often done out of an abundance of caution, to allow future scholars reading the translation to study these terms, as well as Bakhtin's use of them, for themselves.

But, with this caveat in mind, a good place to start surveying Bakhtin's key terms in the book would be by going through the chapter titles and exploring the issues raised by terms found in these titles and the broader semantic fields some of them evoke.

First, there is "Introduction (Posing the Problem)." The word to note here is "problem" (*problema*). It is commonplace in Russian scholarly texts and in Bakhtin's writing in particular, most prominently in the titles of several of his books and articles. The English word "problem," however, has connotations that the Russian word lacks when used in this scholarly context. The Russian word preserves more of its meaning in Greek, from which the word was originally derived. In this sense, a "problem" is something that is being "put forth" (see Medzhibovskaya 2018, 4); it poses an intellectual challenge, but there is no implication that it creates difficulties that can, or should, be eliminated. In the background of Bakhtin's use of this word, there is also its use as a term in the thought of Hermann Cohen. For Cohen, science and philosophy do not attempt to answer a constant or stable list of questions throughout history. Instead, the questions facing science are reconfigured at each turn. Science advances by rethinking the tasks ahead of it, by putting forth new *problems* it aims to solve, continuous with, but not identical to, the problems faced by science previously (Renz 2021). The most important thing one can do with a problem, thus understood, is not to solve it but to properly *pose* it. That is exactly what Bakhtin sets out to do in his introduction. With this caveat in mind, the default English translation of the word *problema* will remain "problem," but in some contexts the word "task" or "conundrum" may be more accurate.

On to chapter 1: "Rabelais in the History of Laughter." The interesting word to discuss here is "laughter," (*smekh*) and the semantic field it evokes.

First of all, the word *smekh* itself indeed simply means "laughter," and this is consistently how it is translated (Iswolsky often used "humor" instead, which loses the connection to laughter as a philosophical category in Bakhtin's thought). Bakhtin also

frequently uses two adjectival forms derived from *smekh*: *smekhovoy* and *smeshnoy*. These were originally translated inconsistently, with such words as "comic" and "droll." In both cases, Bakhtin clearly seeks to preserve the connection with the notion of laughter as he develops it in the book. I therefore made an effort to use the English root "laugh" wherever the root *smekh* appears in the Russian original. In particular, *smekhovoy* is usually rendered as "laughter-based," or as "laughter" (if, in context, "laughter" alone can be used as an adjective), and *smeshnoy* is normally rendered as "laughable."[37] Another etymologically related word is the verb *osmeyevat'* and its derivatives, which I usually rendered with such phrases as "laugh at" or "make a target for laughter," though "ridiculing laughter," and, in a couple of cases, just "ridicule" were also used when necessary.

By contrast, the English words "comic" and "comedy" are only used when the same Greek root appears in Bakhtin's Russian. One form of this root, the Russian *komika*, requires brief comment. This word refers, roughly speaking, to the collection of techniques and devices used to make something comical, to make an audience laugh. Depending on context, I translate this word as either "comedy" or "comic performance."

A closely related group of words is derived from the Russian words *shut* and *durak* and include such words as *shutovskoy*, *shutochny*, *durachestvo*, and the semantically related *glupost'*. Now, *durak* simply means "a fool," and, accordingly, *durachestvo* is "foolery"; *glupost'* is rendered as "folly." The word *shut*, though, occupies a very similar semantic space. A *shut* is also a fool, or, if this is a professional *shut*, a jester. Words derived from *shut* often have to be closely related to words derived from *durak*. The words "jester" and "jest" always indicate that the Russian has a word derived from *shut*. I also made an effort to reserve "foolishness" and "tomfoolery" for this root, but there are some cases where the same English word had to be used for both Russian roots.

The French cognate of *shut*, the word *sot*, is linked to the genre of French drama known as the *sottie*. Since this is a specifically French genre (a kind of comical play featuring stock characters, popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), I simply use the French word "sottie" (without italics) throughout the text. The same goes for the word "diablerie" (referring to a section in mystery plays that featured devils).

On to chapter 2: "The Public-Square Word in Rabelais's Novel." Here, there are two terms of interest: "public square" and "word."

As noted earlier, Iswolsky's choice of "marketplace" to translate the Russian *ploshchad'* is misleading. The Russian word refers to a place of communal gathering in an urban settlement, a square. It does imply that people are gathering there, but beyond that, the word's connotations are more likely to be with political activity

[37] This latter word is also part of the combination *smeshnoe strashilishche*, which Bakhtin uses repeatedly in the book (see note 79 to the introduction for more context). It combines both the root *smekh* (laughter) and the root *strakh* (fear). I translate it as "laughable bogeyman." More generally, the English "fear" allows for much less flexibility in use than the Russian *strakh*, and as a result I had to use words with different roots ("intimidation," "scary," and, in this particular case, "bogeyman"), when rendering Russian words that contain the root *strakh*.

(where protests are held), not with economic activity.[38] The English "public square" makes much better sense. One complicating factor is that Bakhtin also regularly uses the adjective *ploshchadny*, which, in addition to referring to the public square, often implies vulgarity and especially the use of foul language. Normally, using "public-square" as an adjective is sufficient, but when the reference to foul language is more central (and not prepared for in the context), I sometimes use the form "vulgar public-square."

This is also a good opportunity to discuss other terms for obscenity and foul language used by Bakhtin, of which there are several. Here, too, Iswolsky's frequent use of the obscure word "billingsgate" makes little sense. Bakhtin uses three main words regularly in the book to refer to obscenities: there is *rugatel'stvo*, which is rendered as "abuse," "verbal abuse," or "term of abuse," there is *nepristoynost'*, which is rendered as "indecency," and there is *bran'*, rendered as "invective."[39] The latter is also often part of a contrasting pair with *khvala* ("praise"). In addition, there is the rarer *sramoslovie* ("obscenity"; the Russian word combines the roots *sram*, "phallus," and *slovo*, "word," and Bakhtin uses it almost exclusively in reference to rituals, where such obscenities were directed at deities). On top of all these, there are a few more specific categories of foul language, such as *bozhba* ("swearing" or "oathing") and *proklyatie* ("curse").

From foul language, let us move on to language in general. The Russian word *slovo* (cf. Sandler 2024d) is one of the notoriously troublesome items in Bakhtin's lexicon (from the English translator's perspective, that is). This Russian word normally simply means "(a) word," but Bakhtin typically uses it in an older sense, as a reference to language use more generally (compare its use in such expressions as "the written word" in English). English translators have translated it either as "word" or as "discourse." In this book I opted for the former (with a single exception). One does have to be careful, though, and consistently refer to *the* word, rather than to *a* word. Implying a reference to the word as a lexical unit (where Bakhtin is discussing "the word" in general, not a particular word) would be badly misleading.

Iswolsky's translation of the title of chapter 2 rendered *slovo* as "language." In isolation, this is a perfectly reasonable choice, and, of course, Iswolsky knew nothing of Bakhtin's linguistic works. But "language" is a natural choice for translating a different Russian word, *yazyk*. That word, in turn, is sometimes contrasted with the Russian *rech'* ("speech"),[40] though there is little evidence that this distinction is in play in the book

[38] In a set of working notes tentatively dated to the early 1940s (published in Dolgorukova, Abbasova, and Sandler, 2024, 94), Bakhtin illustrates his understanding of the public square with a very telling contrast between the public square, where the people are not organized or divided hierarchically, and a camp (*lager'*, implying a military camp or even a detention or concentration camp), which is organized hierarchically.

[39] The word "invective" was used to render *rugatel'stvo* (which I translate as "abuse") in a different text by Bakhtin (1990b), but there it is a one-off mention, and maintaining consistency with it here would result in some needlessly awkward passages. My choice of "invective" for *bran'* is, however, consistent with the more closely related Bakhtin (2014; forthcoming-a), where *bran'* is a key term.

[40] The latter is significant in such works by Bakhtin as "The Problem of Speech Genres" (Bakhtin

on Rabelais. Another distinction that is significant in Bakhtin's writings, even though it does not appear to be at work in this book, is that between *smysl* and *znachenie*. Both words are often translated into English as "meaning," though the latter can also mean "significance" or "importance." I generally reserve the English word "meaning" for the Russian *smysl* and use either "significance" or "signification" for *znachenie* (it is often difficult to tell which of the two senses of the word Bakhtin has in mind, so the word "significance" should usually be read as possibly implying "signification"). The English word "sense" is used as a catch-all term to translate both Russian words where maintaining the distinction is, in context, impractical.

Chapter 3 is titled "Folk-Festive Forms and Images in Rabelais's Novel." This title has several terms of interest.

Let us begin with "image" (*obraz*). This, as we have seen, is a central term in Bakhtin's thought. In most cases it can and should be translated as "image." There are some uses (especially when the reference is, in essence, to a literary character), where I use "figure" instead. Bakhtin also uses the adjective *obrazny*, which I render as "image-based." That also includes the Russian *obraznoe myshlenie*, which I translate as "image-based thinking." Readers familiar with the work of Lev Vygotsky may know the same Russian expression as "figurative thinking," but my feeling is that Bakhtin puts a greater emphasis on the role that images in particular (and often in Bakhtin's own particular understanding of this notion) play in such thinking.

Next, we come to "folk" (*narodny*). Now, if there is one Russian root that has, to put it mildly, posed some translation challenges, it is the root *rod*, which is featured in this word. Bakhtin makes extensive use of numerous words derived from this root in the book, often giving them unusual extended meanings. Let me go over the most significant ones and explain my translation choices.

First of all, the main sense of the word *rod* itself is "(a) kind." It is the usual Russian equivalent of the Latin *genus*. When Bakhtin uses the root in this sense, or a related one, I make an effort to use the English root "kind" (or "kin") in the translation. This includes not only the word *rod* itself (which I tried consistently to render as "kind," while all its near-synonyms are translated as "sort," "type," and so on), but also the near-untranslatable adjective *rodovoy*. The latter is used prominently in the book. My standard translation for *rodovoy* is "kindred,"[41] as in "the kindred body" (for *rodovoe telo*, which, Bakhtin tells us, is the ever-growing and ever-renewing body of the people as a whole). This only sometimes works, and even then it is a stretch. In English, "kindred" is, I feel, more closely associated with the set phrase "kindred spirit" than with the original sense of the word (which was linked to kinship). But no other solution quite fits. There are also contexts in which "kindred" could not be used and I needed

1986c). And, as a matter of fact, the term "speech genre" (*rechevoy zhanr*) goes back to Bakhtin's work on Rabelais. See note 33 to the introduction and note 136 to chapter 1.

[41] Proposed by Irina Denischenko.

to find alternative one-off solutions, but I generally tried to at least somehow include a word that is etymologically related to "kin" to signal the presence of *rod* in the Russian.

Just as the word "genus" is linked to "genetic," so the Russian *rod* is linked to *rody*, "birth." In the book we have multiple references to birth, including, in particular, the adjective form *rozhayushchaya* (literally, "the one that gives birth"). For this gerund, I used the phrase "that gives birth" whenever possible but on a few occasions had to resort to the word "birthing," which dictionaries generally still consider a dialect form, though it has considerably grown in popularity in recent years.[42]

Finally, there is the etymologically related Russian word *narod* ("a people,"[43] "a nation," "a crowd") and its derivatives, including *narodny* and *vsenarodny*. The first of these derivatives is the first word in the title of chapter 2. Iswolsky typically (as here, in the chapter title) translated this word as "popular," sometimes as "folk," and on some occasions, as "(the) people's." All three translations are reasonable, and are retained in the current version, though, compared to Iswolsky, I gave much greater preference to "folk," which I made the default translation for *narodny* in the book.[44]

Then there is *vsenarodny*, which Bakhtin lists among the defining features of carnival laughter. Literally, this word means something along the lines of "all-people-wide." In ordinary Russian usage it can mean something like "nationwide" or "countrywide," "national," but also "public," as in a "public discussion" (implying that such a discussion is not only open to the public in principle, but also reaches the attention of the broad popular masses in practice). The latter sense of the word is closer to Bakhtin's use, but he also often stresses that something that is *vsenarodny* belongs to the entire community. After much trial and error, I settled for "communal" as my standard English equivalent.[45]

One more word to discuss in the title of chapter 3 is "festive" (*prazdnichny*), but it belongs in tandem with the word of prime interest in the title of chapter 4: "Feasting Images in Rabelais," namely, the word "feasting" (*pirshestvenny*).

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[42] Also related is the Russian word *vozrozhdenie*, "rebirth." It is used as an alternative term for the Renaissance, but Bakhtin also frequently uses it, as well as the corresponding verb *vozrozhdat'*, in a literal sense. It is not always feasible to use "rebirth" in the translation, and in many contexts the verb form can be translated as "revive."

[43] Note that when this word refers to a people, I will always be using it in the singular, as it refers to the people as a single entity.

[44] Explaining why in detail would be too much of a digression. Briefly, Bakhtin's use of *narodny* is a carefully crafted amalgam. On the one hand, it is deliberately reminiscent of Soviet official rhetoric. Indeed, in the 1949–1950 revisions Bakhtin explicitly connected his claims about *narodnaya kul'tura* (folk/popular culture—a term found in the book's title) to a quote from Lenin that he analyzed in the text. The Marxist-Leninist *narodny* is best rendered as "popular." But if we pay greater attention to Bakhtin's scholarly sources, where there is a strong stress on folklore, the same Russian word would be more accurately translatable as "folk." Bakhtin deliberately implies both senses (though perhaps to different readers), and one or the other may be more dominant in each context of use.

[45] This was originally suggested to me by Ilya Kliger.

The issue here, for once, is with the English, rather than with the Russian. The English word "feast" can refer both to a festivity or celebration (in Russian: *prazdnik*, derived from a root that means "free" or "at leisure") and to a rich meal (in Russian: *pir*). Both these senses play central roles in the book (indeed, as we see, each gets its own chapter). The fact that English has one word for both, in a sense, lends support to Bakhtin's claim that the two are closely connected, but it does raise issues when it comes to translating the Russian text.

Iswolsky solves that problem by translating *pir* as "banquet." The issue with this is that "banquet" strongly implies a relatively formal event. In some contexts, this is also what Bakhtin means, and in those contexts, I indeed kept "banquet" as a translation. But in the great majority of cases, Bakhtin's *pir* simply means to eat and drink aplenty—that is, to *feast*.

My own main solution here was to only use "feast" itself where the context makes it amply clear which of the two words is implied and to use "festive," "festivity," and "feast-day" to denote *prazdnik* and related words, while "feasting" is the main translation for *pir* and words derived from *pir*.[46] This rule was not always possible to keep to rigorously. In particular, the adjective *pirshestvenny* (that is, related to feasting), which Bakhtin uses quite frequently, could be rendered as "feasting" in most, but not all contexts. In the rare cases when "feasting" could not be used, I used the word "convivial" instead.[47]

The title of chapter 5 is "The Grotesque Image of the Body in Rabelais and Its Sources." "Grotesque" is an important term in the book, but its translation poses no challenges, this being a loan word from the same origin in both English and Russian.[48]

The more interesting term in the chapter title is "body" and the semantic field connected with it. The word "body" (*telo*) and the adjective "bodily" (*telesny*) are straightforward enough. More challenging was the very rare Russian word *otelesnenie*, which Bakhtin uses in the book relatively frequently. The word literally means "making (something) bodily," and in many cases I indeed use some variant of this phrase in the English translation. In some cases, the English noun "embodiment" and the verb "embody" could also be put to use, but "embody" has more mundane uses in English (where the Russian equivalent is *voploshchat'*—a word that Bakhtin also uses in the more literal sense derived from the Russian *plot'*, "flesh"; for such uses of *voploshchat'* I preferred, if possible, to use the verb "incarnate"). Bakhtin makes similar use also of the Russian word *prizemlenie*, which normally refers to the landing of an airplane but in Bakhtin's lexicon is used literally, in the sense of making something earthly, of the earth. Again, there is no alternative to a periphrastic translation in this case.

[46] Suggested by Caryl Emerson.

[47] This relatively rare word at least has some connection to medieval symposium literature, through Dante Alighieri's *Convivio* (*The Banquet*). There is also the word *pirushka*, referring to a small party, often with overeating, and especially drunkenness, implied, which I translated as "carousal."

[48] The same goes for the word "carnival" and its derivatives, though I should note that I tried to use the adjective form "carnivalesque" (which appears to be Iswolsky's linguistic innovation) relatively sparingly, preferring to use "carnival" as an adjective when feasible.

Bakhtin has a rich vocabulary that he uses to refer to the inside of the body (primarily implying the digestive and reproductive organs). These terms are often used interchangeably, though they also differ somewhat in register and connotation, and I still do my best to keep the same English translation for each Russian word. This is, frankly, a challenge, as the Russian vocabulary here is richer than the English, and Bakhtin deploys it up to the full extent. The words in question include *chrevo* ("belly"; Bakhtin also associates this word with the French *ventre*), *utroba* ("viscera" or, in relevant contexts, "uterus"), *vnutrennosti* ("entrails"), *nutro* ("innards"), *potrakha* ("guts"), and *trebukha* ("tripes," especially in the context of the story of Gargantua's birth in the first chapters of book 1). Also relevant are references to the abdomen that contains most of the organs in question, including *zhivot* ("abdomen"), *puzo* ("potbelly"), and *bryukho* ("stomach"; "paunch" is also used, when contextually relevant, for both *puzo* and *bryukho*, which are very close synonyms in Russian).

All these inner parts of the body belong to what Bakhtin calls "the bottom," or "nethers" (*niz*), which leads us directly to the title of chapter 6: "Images of the Material-Bodily Nethers in Rabelais's Novel."

Iswolsky chose to render *niz* as "lower stratum." This is reasonable on the semantic level but very problematic stylistically: a plain, short, everyday Russian word turns into a phrase with a fancy Latinism and with more syllables than the original has letters. But, in truth, this short Russian word indeed poses a major challenge. It simply means "bottom," or that which is "below." Bakhtin puts it to an extended use when he makes it one of the two poles of a cosmic and bodily topography: the top, where we find the heavens, paradise, heavenly bodies, and the head and eyes, and the bottom, where we find the nethers of the earth, and the nether parts of the human body (the digestive tract and genitals).

In most contexts, the most straightforward English word to translate the Russian *niz* would be "bottom." It too has drawbacks, though. Chief among them is that it is also used to designate one particular part of the human body (the buttocks). In many contexts that poses a problem, perhaps most graphically when Bakhtin writes *v niz* (literally, "into the bottom," not to be confused with *vniz*, "downward"), as well as in the frequently used term we find in the chapter's title: *material'no-telesny niz*. "Material-bodily bottom" just doesn't work in English. Bakhtin's extended conceptual use of the Russian *niz* does not attach to the word "bottom" as easily.

My main translation for *niz* in the book is the English word "nethers." It is admittedly somewhat rare, but it does convey the exact nexus of meanings that Bakhtin stresses in the book. In English, we speak of the *nether* parts of the human body, of the *nether*world, and of the *nethers* of the earth.[49] Also, as it happens, the words "nethers" and *niz* are cognates, traceable to the same Indo-European root.

The word "bottom" still remains a frequently used variant translation of *niz*. There are some contexts in which it clearly works better and others in which it is clearly

[49] Although the Russian equivalent of the set phrase "the nethers of the earth," which appears once

worse. There are, in fact, several passages in the book in which I had to use both translations in relatively close proximity. Readers should always bear in mind that, in the Russian original, "nethers" and "bottom" are the same word.

One merit Iswolsky's "lower stratum" did have is that it allowed for a natural link to a Bakhtinian term derived from *niz*—the word *snizhenie* ("lowering"). Iswolsky, alas, failed to make use of this affordance, as she translated *snizhenie* inconsistently (despite the fact that Bakhtin explicitly marked it as a term), with such words as "debase," "humiliate," and "degrade." It is true that Bakhtin normally implies that some sort of humiliation or abasement is involved when somebody or something is being lowered. But the topographical dimension of the term, its connection to the nethers (*niz*), is its most prominent feature. Accordingly, I render it as "lowering." This means that the etymological connection with *niz* is, unfortunately, lost. But Bakhtin's terms, especially those dealing with what he calls "topography," should always be thought of as expressions of tangible imagery (cf. Sandler 2024b), rather than abstract building blocks in a formal logical system. In this case, the affinity between "nethers" (or "bottom") and "lowering" in terms of spatial imagery is, on the whole, clear enough.

The title of chapter 7, "Rabelais's Images and His Contemporary Reality" (as well as its original title, "Image and Word in Rabelais's Novel") mostly contains terms we have already covered, so, instead of dealing with it, let us move on to discussing a few miscellaneous terms not touched on so far.

Bakhtin devotes significant attention to the *freedom* of carnival, but he actually has two different words, with different connotations, to refer to freedom. One is *svoboda*, which I translate as "freedom" (and its derivatives, accordingly, as "free," "freely," and so on), and the other is *vol'nost'*, which I usually render as "unfetteredness" (and the corresponding adjective as "unfettered") and, more rarely, where contextually appropriate, as "liberty."[50] This, roughly, reflects the difference between these two words in the connotations they bring up.

The word *deystvo* (not to be confused with the related *deystvie*, "action") requires brief comment. This word implies some sort of ritual or ceremony and has some Symbolist philosophical baggage behind it. I render it as either "ritual act" or "ritual drama."

There is a group of similar words that Bakhtin makes frequent use of, all involving the Russian *mir* ("world"). The word *mirovozzrenie*, originally a calque from the German *Weltanschauung*, is translated, accordingly, as "worldview." This is straightforward enough. However, Bakhtin also has *mirooshchushchenie* ("sense/feeling of the world") and *mirosozertsanie* ("world-outlook"). The latter is also used by Bakhtin in an adjectival form: *mirosozertsatel'ny*. Unfortunately, Bakhtin's use of this adjective often does not lend itself to periphrastic translation, and I had to use a single-word equivalent in English. The only adjective that at least roughly fits the meaning of

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or twice in the book, uses the word *nedra* instead of its distant etymological relative *niz*.

[50] The word *vol'ny* does not have a relevant verb form, however. The verb "liberate" thus always renders the Russian *osvobozhdat'*, derived from *svoboda*.

the Russian word is "philosophical." I was therefore compelled to use "philosophical" as a translation for *mirosozertsatel'ny*. Be advised that this translation is potentially problematic. As a philosopher himself, Bakhtin considered philosophy to be a particular discipline, with its methods and traditions, narrower and more specific than such things as a worldview or a world-outlook. Had Bakhtin wanted to refer specifically to philosophy in those instances, he would have used the adjective *filosofsky* (as he indeed sometimes does).

Some words in the text are notoriously difficult to translate from Russian in general, not only in Bakhtin's specific context. One such word is *moment*, which Bakhtin uses with great frequency. It can have the temporal meaning of its English cognate ("moment") but can also designate, roughly, a notable integral part of some whole. This use of the word has become routine in scholarly writing in Russian. There is no one English word that quite manages to capture it, and all the English words that can be used in context also have other words they correspond to. I typically use either "aspect," "factor," or "element."

The latter word, "element," is admittedly overworked. It can also, of course, render the Russian *element*, but yet another Russian word it corresponds to is *stikhiya*. This latter word means "element" in the sense of "a force of nature" (as in "exposed to the elements"). It may be translated as "the element" (normally with the definite article) or as "natural element," "elemental force," or "primordial element." The corresponding adjective, *stikhiyny*, may sometimes be translated as "elemental," but, in most contexts, a more fitting translation is "spontaneous."

Since we started this survey of terms with the headings of the different chapters of the book, it would be fitting to look at the title of the entire book as well. The very first word in that title, *tvorchestvo*, is another notoriously tough nut. In the context of the title (the *tvorchestvo* of an author) it is a close equivalent of the French word *œuvre*. In such a context, "work" can usually convey the correct meaning. But the word itself is etymologically derived from the verb *tvorit'*, which means "to create," and indeed, it often refers to the act of artistic or literary creation, in which case I translate it accordingly as "creation." Bear in mind, however, that in many contexts both meanings are implied, which cannot easily come across in the English. The word also often appears as part of the phrase *khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo*, where the former word is derived from *khudozhnik* (an artist—prototypically, though not always, a painter). The word *khudozhestvenny* alone is usually rendered as "artistic," but the English translation has to vary considerably with context. For *khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo* I use just "art" on one occasion but "creative work" on another. The idiom *khudozhestvennaya literatura* (which is, by the way, also the name of the book's first publishing house) is simpler to handle. I render it as "belles lettres."

Another Russian word that poses a constant problem is *byt* and its derivatives (especially the adjective *bytovoy*). In most cases I render it as "everyday life" or "ordinary life." The adjective form can be translated as "quotidian" (though I only use this word

very rarely).[51] This does not quite capture the full meaning of this peculiar Russian word, but it is difficult to do any better.

Some words and terms require comment not because of the Russian but, rather, because of the English. That was the case with "feast-day" and "feasting" above. Another case in point is the verb *ulegchat'* ("to lighten up"). Bakhtin clearly uses this word deliberately, as he repeats it several times in the book in fairly marked contexts. It is another attribute of carnival imagery. This word means "to make lighter," but, of course, the English adjective "light" has two distinct meanings (the opposite of "heavy" and the opposite of "dark"). The Russian verb refers to the former: *ulegchat'* means to make more lightweight. To avoid misunderstandings, whenever Bakhtin refers to the opposite of dark, not of heavy (the Russian *svetly*), I use the English word "bright," while "light" is never used in this sense.

Similarly, the English word "power" is primarily used to render the Russian *vlast'*, which refers to political power, to rule and authority. The Russian word *sila*, which can be animate or inanimate, issuing from humankind or from nature, is normally rendered as "force" instead.

One change made to the book, as it exists in Iswolsky's translation, is due to a change in the English language itself. The Russian *vesely* and its derivatives are consistently rendered as "merry" (and "merrily," "merriment," and so on). Iswolsky preferred the word "gay," which was still primarily a synonym of "merry" when Iswolsky was working on her translation, but nowadays it is primarily a reference to homosexuality (which the Russian *vesely* does not imply).

This brings me to the Russian word *chelovek* ("human being"). In most instances, there are three possible ways to translate this word into English: as "human being," as "person," and as "man." Of the three, "person" is a word that I use exclusively to render relevant instances of the Russian words *lichnost'* and *litso* (to preserve the direct link to other instances of *lichnost'*, where this word means "personality" or "personhood"). I use "human being" wherever this works well in the English text, but in other instances I use the word "man," in its now outdated sense. Technically, the Russian word *chelovek* is not gender-specific; it is the equivalent of the lower-case *man* in German and *on* in French, often rendered as "one". "Man" in this "human specimen" sense is, in fact, also the most accurate translation for most instances of *chelovek* in the text. There is also the issue of honoring Bakhtin in his own time. He uses *chelovek* precisely in the same way an English-speaking author of his time would have used "man" (consider such phrases as *srednevekovy chelovek*, which translates to "medieval man" and would probably sound somewhat dated in Russian today, just as "medieval man" sounds somewhat dated in present-day English).

As a more general point, I feel that as a translator, I should not insert into Bakhtin's text political and social sensitivities that he clearly lacked and that became a recog-

[51] In one case I even translate *bytovoy* as "bourgeois," though the context requiring that is very specific. See note 116 to the introduction for details.

nized concern after his death in cultural contexts he was never part of. He was a man of his time and culture, for better or worse, and should be perceived by readers as such. For the same reason, when in one brief (and somewhat cringeworthy) discussion Bakhtin uses the Russian word *negr*, I kept the translation that would have been obvious in the 1960s (and was indeed used by Iswolsky): "Negro." This word came to be seen as offensive only later. That being said, the discussion in which it appears, while not outright racist or offensive, is quite insensitive, so in this sense the problematic word is in its proper place.

We are reaching the end of this preface, and I have one last group of terms left to examine.

Bakhtin makes relatively frequent use of the Russian word *predel* and its derivatives, especially *predel'ny* and *v predele*. The natural English equivalent is "limit." Indeed, I normally make an effort to use the word "limit," in one way or another, when translating these words. So, *v predele* would often be rendered as "at its limit" or "taken to its limit" (Bakhtin's metaphor here comes from mathematics: something tends toward a certain limit like a mathematical function that approaches a certain value as it tends to its limit). Using "limit" is not always practical, though; the adverb *predel'no* is often rendered as "maximally" instead.

A semantically related word, which plays a central role in Bakhtin's philosophy in general is *gran'* (and the related *granitsa, rubezh*, and *mezha*). I make an effort to consistently translate these as "boundary," "boundary line," or "boundary region" (with "border" or "borderline" as relatively rare contextual variants). These boundary zones are where, according to Bakhtin, human consciousness and human culture dwell.

The boundaries of a human life in time—birth and death—are made manifest when one individual is replaced by another. Bakhtin refers to this taking of turns, which is more than mere "change," as "succession" or "replacement" (*smena*; I deal with this term in depth in Sandler 2024c). Unlike Iswolsky, and unlike most other translators of Bakhtin's writings, I make an effort to maintain a consistent translation throughout the book (though I should also credit Iswolsky with herself using "succession" to render this term on one occasion, which first suggested this translation option to me).

Having attained an outside perspective on a person, a body, a time, or a phenomenon, we may observe it as a whole. Bakhtin has a whole group of terms linked to the presence or absence of this holistic view. Something (for instance, a human body) can be depicted as *zamknuty* ("closed off"; the metaphor here is of a locked space or a closed electrical circuit) or as *gotovy* ("fully formed"; the word literally means "ready," as, say, a dish might be *ready* to eat, but the word "ready" has too many competing senses to be usable as a translation of this Russian word in Bakhtin's use of it).

Finally, there is the Russian word *zavershenie* and its derivatives (see Sandler 2024a), which Iswolsky translated most of the time as "completion." This common-sense rendering of the word is in fact, I believe, better than choices made by other Bakhtin translators over the years. It is far clearer and simpler than "consummation" (used in Bakhtin 1990b, 1993). "Finalization," which is the main term used in other transla-

tions, definitely has its merits, especially in texts where Bakhtin's main focus is on the impossibility of bringing something or someone to completion (most notably in Bakhtin 1984), and the adjective "unfinalizable" is more convenient than such phrases as "cannot be completed." But "finalization" does not do as good a job at reflecting the holism of the completed image, which is its most distinctive feature for Bakhtin. So, indeed "completion" is also the English equivalent to *zavershenie* that is used in the book.

The same Russian word does have additional, only partly related, uses. The word *zavershenie* itself is derived from *vershina* ("peak" or "summit"; the implied metaphor is that of a headstone completing an arch) and can sometimes refer not so much to completion as to culmination. To avoid confusion both the word "culmination" and the word "completion" in all their different forms, are reserved for the Russian *zavershenie* and its derivatives.

Finally, there is also the more mundane use of *zavershenie* as a synonym for *zaklyuchenie*: "conclusion," which is indeed a fitting point on which to conclude.

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Sergeiy Sandler

Rabelais and His World

The Work of François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance

Introduction (Posing the Problem)

Of all the great writers of world literature, Rabelais is the least popular, the least well-studied, the least understood and appreciated in our country.

And yet, Rabelais occupies one of the leading places among the great originators of European literatures. Belinsky used to call Rabelais a genius, "that Voltaire of the sixteenth century," and his novel one of the best novels of times past.[1] Western literary scholars and writers usually place Rabelais—in terms of his literary-ideological force and historical significance—immediately behind Shakespeare or even alongside him. The French Romantics, especially Chateaubriand and Hugo, included him among the few greatest "geniuses of humanity" of all times and nations.[2] He was and is still considered not only a great writer in the usual sense of the word but also a sage and prophet. Here is a very telling appraisal of Rabelais by the historian Michelet:

> Rabelais has collected *folk* wisdom from *old regional dialects, sayings, proverbs, school farces, from the mouths of simpletons and fools.* But through this *foolery*, the genius of the age and its *prophetic power* are revealed in all their majesty. Where he does not yet find, he *envisions*, he promises, he directs. Under each leaf of this forest of dreams, the fruit which *the future* will harvest lie hidden. This entire book is the *golden bough.*(1)[3] (Here and in all subsequent quotations the italics are mine—M. B.).

All such appraisals and evaluations are, of course, relative. It is not our intention here to answer such questions as whether Rabelais can be placed next to Shakespeare or whether he is superior or inferior to Cervantes and so on. But in any case, Rabelais's

[1] See Belinsky (1953–1959, 10:103 and possibly also 9:444). The reference to Vissarion Belinsky was added to the text in 1965.

[2] See the more detailed discussion of French Romanticism's appreciation of Rabelais in chapter 1.

[3] Bakhtin took the quote and the reference from Sainéan (1930, 194). For the quote in its original context, see Michelet (1856, 58). As Bakhtin notes in the footnote, the phrase "the golden bough" alludes to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Michael Hollington (2024, 200) raises the conjecture that this allusion's appearance so early in the text can be read as a nod to James George Frazer's (1922) famous study of the same title, which has influenced many aspects of Bakhtin's own approach (primarily mediated by Freidenberg 1997b). The fact Bakhtin emphasized these words in the footnote may also be read as indicating such an allusion.

(1) J. Michelet. *Histoire de France*, vol. 10, p. 355. "*The golden bough*" is the prophetic golden bough,

place in history among these originators of modern European literatures—that is, in the sequence of Dante, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Cervantes—is not subject to doubt. Rabelais has substantially determined not only the fortunes of French literature and of the French literary tongue, but of world literature as well (probably no less than Cervantes). There is also no doubt that he is *the most democratic* among these initiators of the modern literatures. But the most important point for our purposes is that he is linked more closely and essentially than others to *folk* sources and, moreover, to specific ones (Michelet enumerates them fairly correctly, though far from fully). These sources determined the entire system of his images and his artistic worldview.

It is precisely this special and, so to speak, radical popular character of all of Rabelais's images that explains their exceptional saturation with the future, so correctly stressed by Michelet in the statement quoted above. It also explains Rabelais's specific "nonliterary" nature—that is, the nonconformity of his images to all the norms and canons of literariness predominating since the end of the sixteenth century and still prevailing in our times, however their content might have changed. Rabelais failed to conform to them to a much greater extent than Shakespeare or Cervantes, who merely failed to satisfy relatively narrow classicist canons. Inherent in Rabelais's images is some special kind of fundamental and indestructible "unofficialness": no dogmatism, no authoritarianism, no one-sided seriousness can coexist with Rabelaisian images, which are hostile to all that is finished and stable, to all limited seriousness, to all that is fully formed and resolved in matters of thought and worldview.

Hence Rabelais's peculiar isolation in subsequent centuries: he cannot be approached along any of the wide beaten tracks followed by bourgeois Europe's arts and ideology during the four hundred years separating him from us.

And while during these four hundred years there have been many enthusiastic admirers of Rabelais, we can find nowhere anything approaching a full, well-spelled-out understanding of him. The Romantics who discovered him, as they discovered Shakespeare and Cervantes, were, however, unable to reveal what was essential about him and did not go beyond enraptured astonishment. Very many were repulsed and still are repulsed by him. The vast majority, however, simply do not understand him. In essence, Rabelais's images largely remain a riddle to this day.

This riddle can be solved only by means of a deep study of *Rabelais's folk sources.* If Rabelais appears so isolated, so unlike any other representative of the "major literature" of these last four centuries of history, then, when viewed against the backdrop of folk art, correctly approached, it is, on the contrary, this four-century period of literary development that may, rather, appear to be something specific, unlike anything else, while *Rabelais's images would turn out to be at home within the millennia of folk culture's development.*

Rabelais is the most difficult classical author of world literature because in order to be understood, he requires an essential restructuring of our entire artistic and ide-

given to Aeneas by the sibyl.

ological way of perception; he requires knowing how to set aside many deeply rooted demands of literary taste, the revision of many concepts. Above all, he requires deep penetration into the little- and superficially studied spheres of folk *laughter-based* art.

Rabelais is difficult. But then his work, correctly approached, casts a retrospective light on millennia of the development of folk laughter culture, which has found in his works its greatest literary expression. Rabelais's illuminative significance is immense. His novel should become a key to the grand treasuries of folk laughter-based art, which have been scarcely studied and understood almost not at all. But first of all, it is necessary to take possession of this key.[4]

The aim of this introduction is to pose the problem of the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to determine its scope, and to offer a preliminary characterization of its peculiar nature.

Folk laughter and its forms are, as we have said, the least studied sphere of folk art. The narrow conception of folkness and of folklore, which had been forming in the pre-Romantic period and was mostly brought to completion by Herder and the Romantics, had almost no room in it for the idiosyncratic folk public-square culture and for folk laughter with all its wealth of manifestations. Nor had the laughing folk in the public square ever become the object of even remotely thorough cultural-historical, folkloristic, and literary research in the subsequent development of folklore studies and literary scholarship. In the vast scholarly literature devoted to ritual, myth, lyrical and epic folk literature, the laughter element received only the most modest space. But most unfortunate was the fact that the peculiar nature of folk laughter is perceived in a completely distorted way, as entirely alien notions and concepts of laughter are being applied to it, concepts that were formed within the framework of bourgeois culture and aesthetics in modern times. We may therefore say without exaggeration that the profound idiosyncrasy of the folk laughter culture of the past remains entirely undisclosed to this day.

And yet, both the scope and the significance of this culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were immense. A whole fathomless world of laughter-based forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious (in its tone) culture of the ecclesiastical and feudal Middle Ages. In spite of the variety of these forms and manifestations—public-square festivities of the carnival type, individual laughter rites and cults, jesters and fools, giants, dwarfs, and freaks, joculators of various sorts and ranks, the vast and multifarious parodic literature, and a great deal more—all these forms share a single style and are parts and particles of an integral and holistic folk laughter culture, of carnival culture.

In terms of their character, all the multifarious manifestations and expressions of folk laughter culture can be subdivided into three main sorts of forms:

[4] The opening section of the 1940 manuscript ends here. What follows, up to the end of the introduction, is a lengthy overview of the book's main theses and a historical survey of theoretical views of the grotesque, written for the 1965 publication of the book. Bakhtin does integrate materials from the original first chapter of the 1940 manuscript, its 1949–1950 revisions, and the introduction added

1. *Ritual spectacle forms* (festivities of the carnival type, public-square laughter-based drama of various kinds, and so on)

2. *Laughter-based* (including parodic) *verbal creations* of various sorts: oral and written, in Latin and in the vernacular

3. Various forms and genres of vulgar public-square familiar speech *(cursing, swearing, oaths, folk blasons,*[5] *and so on)*

All these three sorts of forms, reflecting, despite all of their heterogeneity, a single laughter-based aspect of the world, are closely interlinked and interwoven with one another in many ways.

Let us provide a preliminary characterization for each of these sorts of laughter-based forms.

Carnival festivities and the laughter-based performances or rituals connected with them occupied a huge place in the life of medieval man. Besides carnivals proper, with their multiday and complex public-square and street performances and processions, there were special "Feasts of Fools" ("festa stultorum") and the "Feast of the Ass"; there was a special unfettered "Easter laughter" ("risus paschalis"), consecrated by tradition. Moreover, nearly every Church feast day had its folk and public-square laughter-based side, which was consecrated by tradition as well. Such, for instance, were the so-called kermesses, usually accompanied by fairs, with their rich and varied system of public-square amusements (with giants, dwarfs, freaks, and trained animals). A carnival atmosphere reigned on days when mysteries and sotties were staged. This atmosphere also pervaded such agricultural feast days as the harvesting of grapes ("vendange"), which was celebrated also in cities. Laughter also usually accompanied civil and household ceremonies and rituals: clowns and fools were constant participants and parodically doubled various elements of the serious ceremonial (the praising of victors at tournaments, ceremonies marking the transfer of feudal rights, the initiation of a knight, and so on). Ordinary household parties too were not without elements of laughter-based organization, such as the election of queens and kings to preside at a feast "for laughter's sake" ("roi pour rire").[6]

All the above-mentioned ritual spectacle forms, structured by the laughter principle and consecrated by tradition, were widespread in all the countries of medieval Europe but were especially rich and complex in Romance-speaking countries, including France.

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in 1949–1950, but these are heavily edited and considerably reworked (as opposed to most subsequent chapters, where the 1940 manuscript, with minor edits and relatively few additions, forms the backbone of the text).

[5] The term "folk blason" (or "popular blason"), referring to stereotypical qualities and epithets attributed to all manner of social groups (ethnicities, dwellers of various cities and regions, and so on), is discussed in detail in chapter 6 (cf. note 145), based on Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:427–435).

[6] Bakhtin's main source for these themes was Karl Flögel's *Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen* (Flögel and Ebeling 1862), though several other sources are relevant as well. Bakhtin will be returning to

We shall provide a fuller and more detailed breakdown of ritual and spectacle forms below, in the course of our analysis of Rabelais's system of images.

All these ritual spectacle forms, being structured by the principle of *laughter*, were exceptionally starkly, one may say fundamentally, different from the *serious* official—ecclesiastical and state-feudal—forms of cult and ceremonials. They offered a completely different, markedly unofficial, extra-ecclesiastical, and extra-governmental aspect of the world, of the human being, and of human relations; it was as if they constructed *a second world and a second life*, beyond all things official, of which all medieval people partook to a greater or smaller degree, in which they *lived* during particular set periods of time. If we fail to take into consideration this special kind of *double-worldness*, neither medieval cultural consciousness nor the culture of the Renaissance can be correctly understood. Ignoring or underestimating the laughing folk Middle Ages also distorts the picture of European culture's entire subsequent historical development.

The double aspect of perceiving the world and human life already existed at the earliest stages of cultural development. In the folklore of primitive peoples, alongside the serious (in structure and tone) cults there were also laughter-based cults that laughed and hurled obscenities at the deity ("ritual laughter"); alongside serious myths there were laughter-based and invective myths; alongside heroes there were their parodic doubles. These laughter rituals and myths have recently begun attracting the attention of folklorists.(2)[7]

But at the early stages, in a preclass and prestate social order, the serious and the laughter aspects of the deity, the world, and the human being were probably equally sacred, equally "official," so to speak. This remains true sometimes for particular rituals in later periods too. For instance, in Rome, even at the stage when it was a state, the ceremonial of the triumphal procession included on almost equal terms glorifying and laughing at the victor. The funeral ritual also included both (glorifying) lamentation of and laughter at the deceased. But under the conditions of a consolidated state and class-divided social order, the full equality of the two aspects becomes impossible. All laughter-based forms—some earlier and others later—shift to the status of an unofficial

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all the points made here in greater detail later in the book, primarily in chapter 1, where more concrete references will be given in the commentary (see in particular pp. 74–84 and notes 40–61). Indeed, the relevant parts of Bakhtin's own earlier manuscript are probably his actual direct source for the text here. "Vendange" is discussed at length in chapter 3 (and see note 93 to that chapter on the issue of celebrating it in cities, which may reflect an unknown secondary source).

[7] Interestingly, Meletinsky (1963, 56), whom Bakhtin cites in the footnote, connects the role of the comic doublet (in this context, especially in Native American folklore) with profaning parody of sacred beliefs more generally, and even specifically with such phenomena from the Middle Ages in Europe as the Feast of Fools, and mentions carnival and the Saturnalia.

(2) See some very interesting analyses of laughter-based doubles and some considerations in this regard, in E. M. Meletinsky's book *Proiskhozhdenie geroicheskogo eposa* [The Origins of the Heroic Epos], Moscow, 1963 (especially pp. 55–58); the book also cites additional sources.

aspect. To a certain extent, they then acquire a new meaning, become deeper and more complex, and emerge as the main forms of expressing the people's sense of the world, folk culture. Such were the carnival-type festivities of the ancient world, especially the Roman Saturnalia, and such too were medieval carnivals. They were, of course, already far removed from the primitive commune's ritual laughter.[8]

What are, then, the specific features of the laughter-based ritual and spectacle forms of the Middle Ages, and—first and foremost—what is their nature—that is, what is their mode of being?

Of course, these are not religious rituals of the same kind as, for instance, the Christian liturgy, with which they have distant genetic kinship.[9] The laughter principle that structures carnival rituals frees them completely from all religious and ecclesiastic dogmatism, from mysticism and piety; they totally lack the character of either magic or prayer (they extort nothing and ask for nothing). Moreover, some carnival forms directly parody the Church cult. All carnival forms are consistently extra-ecclesiastic and extra-religious. They belong to an entirely different sphere of being.

In terms of their tangible, concretely sensuous character and the presence in them of a strong element of *play*, they are close to forms of artistic imagery, and specifically to theatrical spectacle forms. And, indeed, a substantial part of the theatrical spectacle forms of the Middle Ages gravitated toward folk public-square carnival culture and, to a certain extent, were part of it. But the basic carnival nucleus of this culture is by no means a purely *artistic* theatrical spectacle form and does not belong to the sphere of art at all. It is located on the boundaries between art and life itself. In essence, it is life itself, but it is shaped in a special ludic manner.

Indeed, carnival knows no distinction between performers and spectators. It knows no footlights, not even in a rudimentary form. Footlights would have destroyed a carnival (just as the reverse is true: eliminating the footlights would have destroyed a theatrical spectacle). Carnival is not observed; it is *lived* in, and *everyone* lives in it, because it is *communal* in its very idea. While carnival lasts, nobody lives a life other than carnival life. There is nowhere one can escape from it, for carnival knows no spatial boundaries. During the carnival one may only live by its laws—that is, the laws of carnival *freedom*. Carnival has a universe-wide character; it is a special condition of the entire world, that of its revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is carnival in its basic idea, in its essence, which was vividly felt by all its participants. This idea of carnival was most clearly expressed and consciously perceived in the Roman Saturnalia, thought of as a real and full (but temporary) return of Saturn's golden age to earth. The tradition of the Saturnalia remained unbroken and alive in the medieval

[8] The last two paragraphs are based on themes discussed in Freidenberg (1997b, 93–106 and passim), as well as in some of her own sources that were also consulted directly by Bakhtin (particularly relevant in this case are Reinach 1912 and Reich 1903). The relation between serious and laughter-based rituals is reinterpreted in line with Bakhtin's own approach.

[9] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 53–56). Like Freidenberg, Bakhtin often used the word "liturgy" to refer specifically to the eucharist, and this may be the case here.

carnival, which embodied this idea of universe-wide renewal more fully and more purely than other medieval festivities. Other carnival-type medieval festivities were limited in some respects, and embodied the idea of carnival less fully and purely, but in them too it was present and was vividly felt as a temporary exit beyond the usual (official) order of life.[10]

Thus, in this respect, carnival was not an artistic theatric spectacle form but a real (albeit temporary) form of life itself, as it were, which was not just acted out, but was lived, almost for real (for the duration of the carnival). One may also put it thus: in carnival, life itself plays, acting out—without a stage, without footlights, without actors, without spectators, that is, without any kind of specific artistic theatrical characteristics—a different, free (unfettered) form of its realization, its rebirth and renewal on better foundations. Here, life's real form is simultaneously also its reborn ideal form.

Such figures as jesters and fools are characteristic of the laughter culture of the Middle Ages. They were the constant, accredited representatives of the carnival element in ordinary (that is, noncarnival) life. Such jesters and fools as, for example, Triboulet under Francis I (he appears in Rabelais's novel)[11] were not at all actors playing the part of a jester or fool on a stage (as did the comic actors of a later period, performing on the stage the roles of Harlequin, Hanswurst, and others). They remained jesters and fools always and wherever they made their real-life appearance. As jesters and fools, they are the bearers of a special form of life, simultaneously real and ideal. They stand on the boundaries of life and art (in a special in-between zone, as it were): these are not mere eccentrics or foolish people (in the everyday sense), but neither are they comic actors.

Thus, in carnival, life itself plays, and play becomes life itself for a while. Herein lies the specific nature of carnival, its special mode of being.

Carnival is the people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter. It is its *festive life*. Festivity is a substantial feature of all the laughter-based ritual and spectacle forms of the Middle Ages.

All these forms of carnival were also linked externally to the feast days of the Church. Even carnival, not coinciding with any commemoration of sacred history or of a saint, marked the last days before Lent (for this reason it was called "Mardi gras" or "carêmeprenant" in France and "Fastnacht" in Germany). Even more substantial is the

[10] The Saturnalia are discussed in a relevant context by Freidenberg (1997b, 82–85), who also makes the link to medieval carnival-type festivities (Freidenberg 1997b, 274–276). This link is also, notably, made by Goethe (1982, 446, 468) in his description of the carnival in Rome, which Bakhtin goes on to discuss at length in chapter 3. Bakhtin also integrates into his discussion here information he might have obtained from general reference sources (e.g., the notion that the Saturnalia reenacted the golden age of Saturn).

[11] Triboulet (real name: Nicholas Ferrial) was court jester to Kings Louis XII and Francis I of France, in the early sixteenth century. He is mentioned repeatedly by Rabelais, especially in bk. 3, ch. 38 and 45.

genetic link of these forms with ancient pagan festivities of the agrarian type, which included a laughter element in their rituals.[12]

Festivity (of any kind) is an important *primary form* of human culture. It cannot be deduced and explained based on the practical conditions and aims of labor in society, or—an even more vulgar kind of explanation—based on the biological (physiological) need for periodic rest. Festivity has always had a deep and essential content in terms of meaning and of experiencing the world. No "practicing" of organizing and perfecting the process of social labor, no kind of "playing at labor," and no rest period or respite from labor can ever, *as such*, become *festive*. To become festive, they have to be supplemented by something that belongs to a different sphere of being, from the spiritual and ideological sphere. They must be sanctioned not from within the world of *means* and necessary conditions but from within the world of *the higher aims* of human existence—that is, the world of ideals. Absent that, there is and can be no festivity.

Festivity is always essentially related to time. It is always grounded in a definite and concrete conception of time in nature (cosmic time), in biology, and in history. Moreover, through all the stages of their historical development, festivities were linked to moments of *crisis* and turning points in the life of nature, society, and man. Moments of death and rebirth, of succession and renewal always played a leading role in the festive perception of the world. It is precisely these moments, expressed in the concrete form of particular feast days, that made feast days specifically festive.

Under the conditions of the medieval class and state-feudal social order, this festiveness of the feast—that is, its link with the higher ends of human existence, with rebirth and renewal—could only be realized in all its undistorted fullness and purity in carnival and in the folk public-square aspect of other feast days. Here, festiveness became a form of the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of all-inclusiveness, freedom, equality, and plenty.

The official feast days of the Middle Ages, whether ecclesiastic or state-feudal, did not lead to anywhere outside the existing world order and created no second life. On the contrary, they consecrated, sanctioned the existing order and reinforced it. The link with time became formal; succession and crisis were relegated to the past. The official feast day, in essence, only looked back, into the past, and used the past to consecrate the order existing in the present. The official feast day, sometimes even against its own idea, affirmed the stability, permanence, and eternity of the entire existing world order: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions. It was the triumph of a truth already formed, victorious and reigning, which was put forward as eternal, unchanging, and indisputable. This is why the tone of the official feast day could only be monolithically *serious*; the laughter element was alien to its nature. This is precisely why the official feast day was unfaithful to the

[12] Such genetic links were stressed by Freidenberg, though she did not limit her claims to laughter-based rituals and forms alone. Ancient laughter cults are mentioned throughout the book, while medieval carnival lies mostly outside Freidenberg's main focus but does receive a few mentions (see especially Freidenberg 1997b, 275).

genuine nature of human festiveness, distorted it. But this genuine festiveness was indestructible, and it therefore had to be tolerated and even partly legitimized outside the official side of the feast day, and the folk public square had to be conceded to it.

As opposed to the official feast day, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order, the temporary abolition of all hierarchical relations, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, successions, and renewals. It was hostile to any kind of perpetuation, completion, and ending. It directed its gaze into the future that cannot be brought to completion.

The abolition of all hierarchical relations during carnival was of particular significance. Hierarchical differences were markedly on display at official feast days: everyone was expected to appear in the full regalia of their title, station, and merits and to take a place corresponding to their rank. The feast day consecrated inequality. In contrast, all were considered equal at the carnival. Here—in the carnival public square—reigned a special form of unfettered and familiar contact among people who, in their ordinary life—that is, life outside carnival—were set apart by insurmountable barriers of caste, property status, professional status, family status, and age.[13] Against the background of the exceptionally hierarchical nature of the feudal medieval order and of the extreme dissociation between people of different social groups and castes in everyday-life conditions, this unfettered familiar contact between all people was very acutely felt and formed an essential part of the general carnival sense of the world. The human being was, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations. Alienation temporarily disappeared. Man returned to himself and felt himself to be a human among humans.

Moreover, this genuine humanity of relations was not only the object of imagination or abstract thought but was actually realized and experienced in living material sensory contact. The ideally utopian and the real temporarily merged in this one-of-a-kind carnival feeling of the world.

This temporary annulment, both ideal and real, of hierarchical relations between people created on the carnival public square a special type of communication impossible in everyday life. Special forms of public-square speech and public-square gesture, candid and unfettered, recognizing no distance between those who interact with each other, free of the usual (noncarnival) norms of etiquette and decorum, are also being worked out here. A special carnival public-square style of speech has formed, specimens of which we shall find in abundance in Rabelais.

In the development of medieval carnival, which lasted many centuries and for which millennia of more ancient laughter rituals (including the Saturnalia at the classical antiquity stage) had laid the ground, a special language of carnival forms and symbols has been worked out, as it were—a very rich language capable of expressing the people's unitary yet complex carnival feeling of the world. This feeling of the world, hostile to all that was fully formed and completed, to any claims to immutability and eternity,

[13] Cf. Goethe (1982, 468).

required dynamic and volatile ("protean"), playful and unstable forms for its expression. All the forms and symbols of the carnival language are filled with the pathos of successions and renewals, with the consciousness of the merry relativity of prevailing truths and powers that be. Very characteristic of this language is the peculiar logic of "the contrary" (à l'envers), of the "other way around," "inside-out," a logic of a continual shifting between top and bottom (the cartwheel), front and rear; also characteristic are various kinds of parody and travesty, lowering, profanation, mock crownings and decrownings. The second life, the second world of folk culture is thus constructed to a certain extent as a parody of the ordinary, that is, extra-carnival life, as a "world turned inside out." We must stress, however, that carnival parody is far distant from the purely negative and formal parody of modern times: as it negates, carnival parody at the same time ushers in rebirth and renewal. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture in general.

Here, in our introduction, we have touched only fleetingly on the exceptionally rich and idiosyncratic language of carnival forms and symbols. The principal aim of this work as a whole is to understand this half-forgotten language, in so many ways already obscure to us. For it is precisely this language that was used by Rabelais. Without knowing it, it is impossible to truly understand Rabelais's system of images. But this same carnival language was also used, in different ways and to different degrees, by Erasmus, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Guevara,[14] and Quevedo, by the German "fool's literature" ("Narrenliteratur"), and by Hans Sachs, Fischart, Grimmelshausen, and others. Without knowing this language, therefore, a full and comprehensive understanding of Renaissance and baroque literature is impossible. Indeed, not only the belles lettres but also the utopias of the Renaissance and its worldview itself were deeply permeated by the carnival sense of the world and often clothed themselves in its forms and symbols.

A few preliminary words about the complex nature of carnival laughter are due. It is, first of all, a *festive laughter*. Therefore, it is not an individual reaction to some singular (isolated) "laughable" phenomenon. Carnival laughter is, first of all, the *communal* laughter *of the whole people* (as we already said, communality belongs to the very nature of carnival); everybody laughs; it is laughter in public. Second, it is *universal*; it is directed at everything and everyone (including the carnival's participants). The entire world is seen as laughable, is perceived and apprehended in its laughter aspect, in its merry relativity. Finally, third, this laughter is *ambivalent*: it is merry, triumphant, and at the same time mocking and sneering. It both negates and affirms, both buries and ushers in rebirth. Such is the laughter of carnival.

Let us note an important special trait of folk-festive laughter: this laughter is also directed at the very ones who are laughing. The people does not exclude itself from

[14] Referring to Spanish Renaissance writer Luis Vélez de Guevara. A Russian translation of Guevara's novel *The Limping Devil* came out in 1964 (Bakhtin's text here belongs to the 1964–1965 revisions). Evgeniya Mikhaylovna Lysenko, who translated the novel, and Leonid Efomovich Pinsky, who wrote the introductory article to the translation, gave Bakhtin a copy as a gift (Klyueva and Lisunova 2010, 59).

the totality of the world in its becoming. It, too, is incomplete, is born and renewed as it dies. Herein lies one of the essential differences of the folk-festive laughter from the purely satirical laughter of modern times. The pure satirist, who only knows negating laughter, places himself outside the object he is laughing at, opposes himself to it. The wholeness of the world's laughter aspect is destroyed, and that which appears laughable (the object of negative laughter) becomes a particularized phenomenon. The people's ambivalent laughter, in contrast, expresses the point of view of the whole becoming world; he who is laughing also belongs to it.

We should especially stress the philosophical and utopian character of this festive laughter and its orientation toward what is highest. Still alive in it—in a form that acquired a substantially new meaning—is the ritual laughing at the deity of the most ancient laughter-based rites. All that was cultic and limited has faded away, but the all-human, universal, and utopian element has been retained.[15]

The greatest carrier of this folk-carnival laughter in world literature, with whom it reached its culmination, was Rabelais. His work will permit us to gain an insight into the complex and deep nature of this laughter.

It is very important that the problem of folk laughter be correctly posed. Literature concerning this subject even now still contains gross modernizations: in the spirit of modern laughter-based literature, it is interpreted as either purely negating satirical laughter (and Rabelais is then declared a pure satirist) or as purely entertaining, thoughtlessly merry laughter, devoid of any philosophical depth and force. Its ambivalence is usually not perceived at all.

We shall now turn to the second form of the laughter-based folk culture of the Middle Ages: laughter-based verbal creations (in Latin and in the vernacular).[16]

This, of course, is no longer folklore proper (although some of these works in the vernacular could be placed in that category). But all this literature was permeated with a carnival sense of the world, made wide use of the language of carnival forms and images, developed under the cover of legalized carnival liberties, and—in most cases—was organizationally linked with festivities of the carnival type, sometimes indeed forming their literary component, as it were.[(3)17] Laughter in it is, indeed, ambivalent

[15] Laughter (and invective) directed at the deity, and later at kings, is a recurrent theme in Freidenberg (e.g., 1997b, 104). But for Freidenberg, this is one example, among many, of inherited traditional deadweight in later cultural forms, while Bakhtin's reinterpretation is strikingly different.

[16] Bakhtin's sources on parodic literature in Latin are Lehmann (1922), Ilvonen (1914), and possibly also Novati (1889; Novati is cited by both Lehmann and Ilvonen and is also cited by Bakhtin later in the book, but it is not clear whether Bakhtin had access to Novati's text directly). The Latin texts Bakhtin discusses in the section are mentioned and discussed in these sources (in particular, Ilvonen 1914, 2–5; Lehmann 1922, 19–22). Lehmann (1922) is also one of Bakhtin's primary sources on laughter literature in the vernacular, alongside Schneegans (1894). Almost all the texts and genres discussed here are also looked at in greater detail later in the book.

[17] Footnote: see, for example, Freidenberg (1997b, 155–156), who more specifically links Roman

[(3)] A similar situation existed in ancient Rome, where the liberties of the Saturnalia also applied to

and festive laughter. It was, through and through, the festive, recreational[18] literature of the Middle Ages.

Festivities of the carnival type, as noted above, took up a very large part of the life of medieval people, even in terms of the sheer time devoted to them. Large medieval cities lived a carnival life for up to a total of three months a year.[19] The influence that the carnival sense of the world has had on people's way of seeing and thinking was insurmountable: it made them renounce, as it were, their official status (of a monk, cleric, scholar) and perceive the world in its carnival laughter aspect. Not only students and minor clerics but senior clergy and learned theologians indulged in merry recreation—that is, a rest from pious seriousness, as well as "monkish jokes" ("Joca monachorum"), as goes the title of one of the most popular literary works of the Middle Ages. In their cells, they created parodies or semiparodies of learned treatises and other works of laughter-based literature in Latin.

The laughter-based literature of the Middle Ages had developed for a full millennium and even longer, since its origins go back all the way to Christian antiquity. Having existed for so long, this literature was, of course, undergoing fairly substantial changes over that period (Latin-language literature being altered the least). Multifarious genre forms and stylistic variations were worked out. But with all these historical and genre differences, this literature remains—to a greater or lesser degree—the expression of the folk-carnival sense of the world and uses the language of carnival forms and symbols.

Semiparodic and purely parodic literature in Latin was very widespread. The number of surviving manuscripts of such literature is immense. The entire official church ideology and ritual are here shown in their laughter aspect. Laughter here penetrates the highest spheres of religious thought and cult.

One of the oldest and most popular examples of this literature—the "Feast of Cyprian" ("coena Cypriani")[20]—offers a peculiar feasting-carnivalesque travesty of the whole of Holy Writ (both the Old and New Testament). This work was consecrated by the tradition of unfettered "Easter laughter" ("risus paschalis"); among other things, in it, too, can be heard the faraway echoes of the Roman Saturnalia.[21] Another of

satire to the Saturnalia.

[18] *rekreatsionnoy*. Unlike its English cognate ("recreational"), this Russian word is rare and unusual. Bakhtin most likely borrowed it from French sources (he later cites the French word *récréatif* as an equivalent). In Bakhtin's use of this word in the book, he most often stresses its link with festive recreations (*rekreatsii*). It is also plausible that he chose to borrow this particular word because of its Latin etymology (that is, he reads "recreation" as "re-creation").

[19] This calculation is probably based on a discussion in chapter 2 (p. 151), with the city of Lyon, France, with its large book fair, being Bakhtin's main example (see sources listed in the notes to that discussion for further details).

[20] Usually dated to the fourth century, though the dating is uncertain. For an English translation see Abrantes (2018). This work is discussed in detail in chapter 4.

[21] The link to the Saturnalia was proposed by Lehmann (1922, 19). Lehmann also mentions, in passing, a connection with Easter (Lehmann 1922, 27).

laughter-based literature, which was organizationally linked to them.

the most ancient works of laughter-based literature—"Virgil Maro the Grammarian" ("Virgilius Maro Grammaticus")—is a semiparodical learned treatise on Latin grammar that is at the same time a parody of the scholarly wisdom and of the scientific methods of the early Middle Ages.[22] Both these works, composed almost at the very boundary between antiquity and the Middle Ages, inaugurate the Latin laughter-based literature of the Middle Ages and decisively influence its traditions. Their popularity lasted almost up to the Renaissance.

As Latin laughter-based literature develops further, literally every aspect of church cult and doctrine has parodic doublets created for it. This is the so-called "parodia sacra"—that is, "sacred parody"—one of the most peculiar and insufficiently understood phenomena of medieval literature, even today.[23] There is a fairly large number of surviving manuscripts of parodic liturgies ("The Drunkards' Liturgy," "The Gamblers' Liturgy"),[24] parodies of Gospel readings, of prayers, including the most sacred (the Lord's Prayer, the "Ave Maria," and others), of litanies, church hymns, and psalms; we have surviving travesties of various sayings from the gospels and so on. There were also parodies created of wills ("The Last Will and Testament of a Pig," "The Donkey's Testament"),[25] parodies of epitaphs, of church council decrees, and so on. This literature is almost too vast to survey. And it was all consecrated by tradition and, to a certain extent, tolerated by the Church. Parts of it were created and persisted under the auspices of "Easter laughter" or of "Christmas laughter,"[26] while another part (the parodic liturgies and prayers) was directly linked with the "Feast of Fools" and may have been performed during this feast.

In addition to all this, there were also other varieties of Latin laughter-based literature, such as parodic disputations and dialogues, parodic chronicles, and so forth. All this Latin-language literature presumed a certain degree of learning (sometimes a fairly high degree) by its authors. These were all echoes and resonances of public-square carnival laughter within the walls of monasteries, universities, and schools.

[22] See Lehmann (1922, 21). "Virgilius Maro Grammaticus" is a reference to the author (who appears to have lived in the seventh century), not the name of the text.

[23] Bakhtin inherits the term "Parodia sacra" from his sources for the entire discussion (Lehmann 1922; Ilvonen 1914; Novati 1889). As Mark Burde (2010) argues, though, the term is quite anachronistic and problematic; it was not used at all in the Middle Ages, and the meaning assigned to it by Bakhtin only came into use in nineteenth-century scholarship.

[24] Bakhtin's sources mention "Spielmessen" and "Saufmessen," in German, and "Officium lusorum" and "Missa potatoribus," in Latin (e.g., Lehmann 1922, 39, 199).

[25] See a mention of both animal wills in, for example, Lehmann (1922, 234–235). The "The Last Will and Testament of a Pig" is, however, a premedieval text, dated to the fourth century. Parodies on prayers (mentioned earlier in this sentence) were the main topic focused on by Ilvonen (1914).

[26] Unlike "Easter laughter" (on which see note 120), "Christmas laughter" is not a term found explicitly in any of Bakhtin's regular sources, although various recreations linked specifically to Christmas are discussed in some of them (see especially Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 243–251; and possibly also Ilvonen 1914, 21–22, 104–112), and it is possible, even likely, that Bakhtin coined the term "Christmas laughter" himself, by extrapolating from these discussions. However, an additional unknown source may have been consulted.

The Latin laughter-based literature of the Middle Ages found its culmination at its highest phase of development in the Renaissance in Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (one of the greatest offspring of carnival laughter in all of world literature) and in the *Letters of Obscure Men*.[27]

No less rich and even more diverse was the laughter-based literature of the Middle Ages in the vernacular. Here, too, we find phenomena analogous to the "parodia sacra": parodies of prayers, of sermons (the so-called "sermons joyeux," that is, "merry sermons" in France), of Christmas carols, of hagiographic legends, and so on. But more prevalent here are secular parodies and travesties, which present the laughter aspect of the feudal order and of feudal heroics. Such are the parodic epics of the Middle Ages: epics of beasts, buffoons, rogues, and fools; elements of parodic heroic epos in the work of the cantastoria, the appearance of laughter-based doubles to epic heroes (the comic Roland), and so on.[28] Parodic chivalric romances are created ("The Mule without a Bridle," *Aucassin and Nicolette*).[29] Various genres of laughter-based rhetoric are developed: all sorts of "debates" of the carnival type, disputations, dialogues, comic "laudations" (or "eulogies"), and so on. The sound of carnival laughter is heard in fabliaux and in the idiosyncratic laughter-based lyrics of the vagantes (wandering scholars).[30]

All these genres and works of laughter-based literature are linked to the carnival public square and, of course, make much broader use of carnival forms and symbols than does Latin laughter-based literature. But it is the laughter-based dramaturgy of the Middle Ages that is most closely and directly connected to the carnival public square. Even the first (surviving) comic play by Adam de la Halle, *Play of the Greensward*,[31] is already a remarkable example of a purely carnivalesque seeing and understanding of life and the world. De la Halle's play contains in embryonic form many aspects of Rabelais's future world. The miracle and morality plays too have been carnivalized to

[27] Referring to the anonymously published *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum* (Stokes 1909).

[28] The cantastoria were street singers and oral epic poets or troubadours in the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Italy. Parodic elements in their work, referencing the epic of Roland in particular, are mentioned by Schneegans (1894, 97), who also devotes a chapter of his book to satirical epics, featuring a comic Roland (or, in Italian, Orlando) figure (Schneegans 1894, 96–118). On comic doubles, more generally, see Freidenberg (1997b, 210–214).

[29] Russian translations of both these romances were published in a booklet with an introductory article by Aleksandr Smirnov in 1956 (Smirnov 1956). Smirnov was among the scholars to whom Bakhtin sent copies of the 1940 manuscript of the book and later served as one of Bakhtin's official examiners at his dissertation defense (Popova 2008a, 894).

[30] On the fabliaux genre (mentioned in many of Bakhtin's sources), see, for example, Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:225). Similarly, the poetry of the Vagantes is mentioned in multiple sources, but Bakhtin's most likely main source here would be Lehmann (1922, 35–38).

[31] Adam de la Halle's *Play of the Greensward* (*Jeu de la feuillée*, also known as *Li jus Adan*) is discussed at length in chapter 3, based on the detailed treatment (including very extensive passages of the play's text) it receives in Driesen (1904, 38–66) and possibly also on the shorter discussion in Reich (1903, 836–842). The sentence with which Bakhtin introduces the play here contains a potentially misleading wording: the play is considered the earliest extant comic play *in French*. There are, of course, much earlier comedies written in other languages.

a greater or lesser degree. Laughter has also penetrated the mystery plays; the diableries that are part of these performances have a strongly pronounced carnivalesque character. The sottie was a deeply carnivalized genre of the late Middle Ages.[32]

We have here touched upon only a few of the better known phenomena of laughter-based literature, which can be mentioned without special commentary. This will suffice for the posing of our problem. Later on, in the course of our analysis of Rabelais's work, we will need to examine in greater detail both these and many lesser-known genres and works of medieval laughter-based literature.

Let us now move on to the third form in which folk laughter culture was manifested: to several specific phenomena and genres of public-square familiar speech in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

We have already said that in the carnival public square, where all hierarchic distinctions and barriers between people are temporarily annulled and some of the norms and prohibitions of ordinary—that is, extra-carnival—life are cancelled, a special ideal-and-real type of interaction between people is created, one that is impossible in ordinary life. This is an unfettered familiar public-square contact among people, recognizing no distances between them.

A new type of communication always generates new forms of speech life as well: new speech genres,[33] the reinterpretation or elimination of some old forms, and so on. Everyone knows how similar phenomena occur in present-day speech interaction. For instance, when two people establish close friendly relations, the distance between them shrinks (they are now "on an intimate footing"),[34] and as a result, the forms of speech interaction used between them also drastically change; they start using familiar pronouns, the form of address and the name used change (Ivan Ivanovich turns into Vanya or Van'ka),[35] sometimes the name is replaced by a nickname, one can hear invec-

[32] The genres of the diablerie (literally: "devilry," included as a section in mystery plays) and sottie (which can be translated as "foolery" or "fools' play") are mentioned regularly in Bakhtin's sources, with the former being mentioned by Rabelais himself (bk. 1, ch. 4 and bk. 4, ch. 13). Several particular examples will also be discussed in various contexts later in the book. An overview covering both can be found in Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:325–329). As these genre labels are applied specifically to French literature, I am using the French words to refer to them throughout the translation.

[33] The term "speech genres" is mostly associated with Bakhtin's linguistic text, written in the 1950s, "The Problem of Speech Genres" (Bakhtin 1986c), but it is worth noting that it already appeared in the 1940 manuscript of the book on Rabelais (Bakhtin 2008a, 107) and even earlier, in the 1938–1939 notebooks, reflecting the earliest stages of Bakhtin's work on the manuscript (Bakhtin 2008e, 640).

[34] The Russian idiom Bakhtin uses here literally translates as "on a short leg"—an expression that indeed evokes the shortening of a distance or a length.

[35] Regarding "familiar pronouns," Russian is one of many languages in which different second-person pronouns are used in formal and informal settings. The plural *vy* is used to address elders and peers (among adults) in formal settings, while the singular *ty* is used to address friends and family members (as well as children). Similarly, in formal settings, people are addressed in Russian by their full name and patronymic, while a more casual nickname is used in informal settings among friends and relatives. In English, there is a similar practice but only with regard to a few particular names (e.g., a person whose name is Robert may be addressed as Bob or Bobby in informal settings).

tive expressions used affectionately, and it becomes possible to laugh at one another (where there is no such close relationship, only some third person can be laughed at); the two friends may pat each other on the shoulder and even on the *abdomen* (a typical carnivalesque gesture), speech etiquette and speech prohibitions are relaxed, indecent words and expressions crop up, and so on, and so forth. But, obviously, such familiar contact in present-day *ordinary life* is distant from the unfettered familiar contact in the folk carnival public square. It lacks what is most essential: communality, festivity, a utopian meaning, and philosophical depth. Let us point out in passing that elements of the ancient rites of swearing brotherhood[36] were preserved in carnival in a deeper reinterpreted form. Through carnival, some of these elements have entered the everyday life of modern times but have here almost entirely lost the carnivalesque meaning assigned to them.

Thus, the new type of carnival public-square familiar intercourse gets reflected in a series of phenomena in people's speech life. Let us consider some of them.

It is characteristic of familiar public-square speech to use *verbal abuse* quite often—that is, to use words and whole phrases of invective—some fairly lengthy and elaborate. Terms of abuse are usually grammatically and semantically isolated within the context of speech and are perceived as finalized holistic units, similar to proverbs. This is why we may speak of verbal abuse as a special genre of familiar public-square speech. Abusive expressions are not homogeneous in origin; they had various functions under the conditions of interaction that existed in primitive communities, primarily related to magic and incantation. But of special interest to us are those abusive obscenities directed at the deity, which were a necessary component of ancient laughter-based cults. These abusive obscenities were ambivalent: lowering and putting to death, they at the same time ushered in rebirth and renewal.[37] It was precisely these ambivalent obscenities that shaped the character of the speech genre of abuse in public-square carnival interaction. In the context of carnival, they were substantially reinterpreted: they entirely lost their magic character, and any practical character more generally, and became autotelic, universal in character, and acquired depth. Thus transformed, abuse contributed to the creation of the unfettered carnival atmosphere and of the second, laughter-based, aspect of the world.

[36] Sworn brotherhood rituals were studied by Russian scholar A. N. Veselovsky (see, in particular, Veselovsky 1894—a paper listed among Freidenberg's sources; the subject is also discussed in Veselovsky 1940). Veselovsky was a pivotal figure in the development of literary theory in Russia and the USSR, and Bakhtin knew his work well. He surely would have been familiar with his book on historical poetics (Veselovsky 1940) by the time he wrote this passage. See also the detailed critical discussions of Veselovsky's own article on Rabelais in chapter 1 and chapter 2 (as explained in note 192 to chapter 1, in the late 1940s Veselovsky was shunned by the Soviet authorities, which Bakhtin had to take into consideration, especially in 1949–1950).

[37] The supposed connection between invective (especially one directed at a deity), laughter, and rebirth is posited, and explored in detail, by Freidenberg (1997b, 93–102 and passim).

Swearing or oaths (jurons)[38] are in many respects analogous to abusive language. They similarly flooded familiar public-square speech. Swearing should also be considered a special speech genre, on the same grounds as abuse (being isolated, complete, and autotelic). Swearing and oaths were not initially connected to laughter, but they were excluded from the spheres of official speech because they broke these spheres' norms; they were therefore relocated into the unfettered sphere of familiar public-square speech. Here, in the carnival atmosphere, they became imbued with the element of laughter and acquired ambivalence.

Other speech phenomena—for example, indecencies of various kinds—followed an analogous trajectory. Familiar public-square speech became the reservoir, as it were, in which various speech phenomena, prohibited and driven out of official speech interaction, had accumulated. In spite of their genetic heterogeneity, they were similarly becoming imbued with the carnival sense of the world, changing their ancient speech functions, acquiring a general tone of laughter, and becoming, as it were, so many sparks of one and the same carnival fire, renewing the world.[39]

We shall discuss other peculiar phenomena of familiar public-square speech in due course. Let us emphasize here, in conclusion, that all the genres and forms of such speech exercised a powerful influence on Rabelais's literary style.

Such are the three basic forms in which the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages has been expressed. All the phenomena we have reviewed here have been known to scholars and have been studied by them (especially the laughter-based literature in the vernacular). But they have been studied as separate phenomena, completely severed from their maternal womb—from carnival and ritual-spectacle forms—that is, they were studied apart from the unity of the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages. *The problem of this culture has not even been posed.* This is why the unitary and deeply singular laughter aspect of the world has never been seen behind the multifariousness and heterogeneity of all these phenomena, which are its different fragments. This is also why the essence of all these phenomena has never been fully revealed. These phenomena have been studied in the light of the cultural, aesthetic, and literary norms of modern times—that is, they have been measured not on their own terms but by modern standards, alien to them. They were *modernized* and were therefore incorrectly interpreted and evaluated. The special *type of laughter imagery*—one in all its multifariousness—characteristic of medieval folk culture and generally alien to modernity (especially to the nineteenth century) has also never been understood. We shall now proceed to give a preliminary characterization of this type of laughter imagery.

It is usually pointed out that *life's material-bodily domain*—images of the body itself, of food, drink, defecation, sexual life—is exceptionally predominant in Rabelais's work.

[38] On "jurons," see a more detailed discussion in chapter 2, based primarily on Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:328–342).

[39] Fire as affecting death and rebirth is discussed by Freidenberg (1997b, 61). Bakhtin is probably also alluding here to an episode from Rabelais's novel (bk. 2, ch. 25–26) where Pantagruel and his companions burn down an army of enemy knights and then use the fire to prepare themselves a meal.

What is more, these images are given in an overly exaggerated, hyperbolized form. Rabelais has been proclaimed (for example, by Victor Hugo) the greatest poet of "the flesh" and "the belly." Others have accused him of "crude physiologism," of "biologism," or "naturalism" and so on.[40] Analogous phenomena, but less vividly manifested, were also found in the work of other representatives of Renaissance literature (Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Cervantes). This had been explained as a "rehabilitation of the flesh," characteristic specifically of the Renaissance, as a reaction against the ascetic Middle Ages. Sometimes this was seen as evidence of a typical manifestation of the bourgeois element in the Renaissance—that is, of the material interest of "homo economicus," in its private, egoistic form.

All these and similar explanations are nothing but different forms of *modernizing* the material-bodily images in Renaissance literature; the narrowed-down and modified senses that "materiality," "the body," "bodily life" (eating, drinking, defecating, and so on) acquired in the worldview of subsequent centuries (primarily of the nineteenth century) have been applied to these images.

But, as a matter of fact, the images of the material-bodily domain in the work of Rabelais (and of the other writers of the Renaissance) are the heritage of folk laughter culture (albeit somewhat modified during the Renaissance), the heritage of that peculiar type of imagery and, more broadly speaking, of that special aesthetic conception of being, which is characteristic of this culture and which differs sharply from the aesthetic conceptions of later centuries (from classicism on). This aesthetic conception we shall name—for now conditionally—*grotesque realism.*[41]

The material-bodily domain in grotesque realism (that is, in the system of images of folk laughter culture) is given in its communal, festive, and utopian aspect. The cosmic, social, and bodily wholes are given here in a seamless unity, as an indivisible living whole. And this whole is merry and full of goodness.

In grotesque realism, the material-bodily elemental force is deeply *positive*, and is given here not in a privately egoistic form and not at all as severed from the other spheres of life. *The material-bodily element* is perceived here to be *universal and com-*

[40] Bakhtin discusses these views of Rabelais's work in greater detail in chapter 1, based primarily on Sainéan (1930) and Boulenger (1925). The more general characteristics of Renaissance literature that follow ("rehabilitation of the flesh," "homo economicus") appear to be often-repeated tropes Bakhtin cites, without any concrete source in mind (though note Bakhtin's own much earlier use of "rehabilitation of the flesh" in a relevant context in Bakhtin 1990b, 57).

[41] The term "grotesque realism," firmly associated with Bakhtin's book on Rabelais, was introduced into the book at a fairly late stage, during the 1949–1950 round of revisions. The original 1940 manuscript had two different terms—"Gothic realism," to refer to cultural phenomena in the Middle Ages, and "folkloric realism," to refer to more ancient forms—which were later consistently replaced by the new unifying term "grotesque realism," to satisfy a formal requirement that the term "Gothic realism" be removed (Popova 2008b, 1089–1090). The more general definition and theoretical discussion of the term here date to the latest stage of revisions, ahead of the book's publication in 1965. To be sure, the term "grotesque" on its own (without "realism") was present in the manuscript from the outset, following its use by Flögel (Flögel and Ebeling 1862) and Schneegans (1894).

munal. It is precisely as such that it is put in opposition to any form of *severance from the material-bodily roots of the world, to any sort of individuation and closing off into oneself*, to the abstractly ideal, to any *claim to validity estranged from and independent of the earth and the body*. We repeat: the body and bodily life have here a cosmic and at the same time a communal character; this is by no means the body and physiology in their modern narrow and precise sense; they are not fully individualized or marked off from the rest of the world. The bearer of the material-bodily principle here is not the stand-alone biological specimen, or the egoistic bourgeois individual, but the people, and moreover, the people as it eternally grows and is renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes so grandiose here, so exaggerated, so beyond measure. This exaggeration has a *positive, affirming character*. The leading element in all these images of material-bodily life is fertility, growth, and a brimming-over abundance. To reiterate, all the manifestations of bodily material life, and all things, are here attributed not to the singular biological specimen, nor to the private and egotistic "economic" man, but, as it were, to the popular, collective, kindred body (we shall make the meaning of all these assertions more precise later on). Abundance and communality also determine the specific *merry and festive* (rather than mundane and everyday) character of all images of material-bodily life. The material-bodily principle here is festive, feasting, jubilant; it is "feasting for the whole world."[42] This character of the material-bodily principle is retained *to a significant degree* also in Renaissance literature, and most fully, of course, in Rabelais.

A major distinguishing feature of grotesque realism is *lowering*—that is, the transfer of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract—to the material-bodily plane, to the plane of the earth and the body in their indissoluble unity. Thus, the "Feast of Cyprian," mentioned above, and many other medieval Latin parodies are, to a significant degree, nothing but a selection of all the material-bodily, lowering, bringing-down-to-earth details taken from the Bible, the Gospels, and other sacred texts. In the laughter-based dialogues of Solomon and Marcolf,[43] which were very popular in the Middle Ages, Solomon's high and serious (in tone) sententious pronouncements are contrasted with the merry and lowering sayings of the jester Marcolf, shifting the matter at hand to the markedly coarse material-bodily sphere (of food, drink, digestion, and sexual life).(4) It should be noted that one of the main elements of the comic performance

[42] "Feasting for the whole world" (or "a feast for the whole world"; *pir na ves' mir*) is a Russian idiom, often associated with folk tales. This may also be a textual allusion to Rabelais (bk. 2, ch. 26), where this idiom was used by Vladimir Pyast in his Russian translation (the older translation, which Bakhtin occasionally used in the 1940 manuscript). The equivalent place in Le Clercq's English translation reads (with reference to eating and feasting), "They ... fell to with a vengeance." See also note 36 to chapter 3.

[43] On Solomon and Marcolf, Bakhtin's main sources were Lehmann (1922, 23–24, 235–240), Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:498–499), and later also a few passages in Bobertag (1881). Bakhtin briefly discusses dialogues between Solomon and Marcolf in chapter 5 and chapter 6.

(4) These dialogues between Solomon and Marcolf are very similar in their lowering and bringing-down-to-earth character to many dialogues between Don Quixote and Sancho.

of the medieval jester was precisely the transfer of every high ceremonial or ritual to the material-bodily plane; such was the jester's behavior during tournaments, knights' initiation ceremonies, and so forth. It is precisely these traditions of grotesque realism that include, in particular, many gestures that lower chivalric ideology and ceremonial and bring them down to earth in *Don Quixote*.

Merry parodic grammar enjoyed great popularity in the scholarly and student milieu of the Middle Ages. The tradition went back to the aforementioned "Virgilius Maro Grammaticus," extended throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and has survived in oral form to this day in the religious schools, colleges, and seminaries of Western Europe. The essence of this merry grammar boils down mostly to reinterpreting all grammatical categories—cases, verb forms, and so on—as belonging to the material-bodily, predominantly erotic, plane.[44]

Not only parody in its narrow sense but also all the other forms of grotesque realism serve to lower, bring down to earth, make bodily. Herein lies the main identifying feature of grotesque realism, which differentiates it from all the forms of medieval high art and literature. Folk laughter, which structures all the forms of grotesque realism, has always been linked with the material-bodily nethers. Laughter lowers and materializes.

What, then, is the character of these *lowerings*, inherent in all the forms of grotesque realism? For now, we shall give this question a preliminary answer. Rabelais's work will permit us to make our understanding of these forms more precise, broader, and deeper in the following chapters.

In grotesque realism, lowering and bringing down to the bottom all things that are high on top is by no means formal or relative in character. "Top," or "heights," and "bottom," or "nethers," have here an absolute and strictly *topographical* sense. The top is heaven; the bottom is the earth. The earth, in turn, is an element that devours (the grave, the belly) and at the same time is an element that gives birth and revives (the maternal womb). This is the topographic sense of top and bottom in their cosmic aspect. In their *bodily* aspect proper, which is nowhere clearly demarcated from the cosmic, the top is the face (the head) and the bottom is the genital organs, the abdomen, and the buttocks. These absolute topographical senses of top and bottom are indeed what grotesque realism, including medieval parody, is working with. Lowering here means bringing down to earth, making something partake of the earth as an element that *simultaneously* both swallows up and gives birth: as something is lowered, it is simultaneously both buried and sown, it is put to death in order to be born anew better and greater. Lowering also means partaking in the life of the nether parts of the body, the life of the abdomen and the reproductive organs, and therefore also in such acts as copulation, conception, pregnancy, birth, devouring, defecation. Lowering digs a bodily grave for a *new* birth. This is why it has not only an annihilating, negating

[44] For an erotic "take" on Latin grammar in a late-medieval manuscript, see Lehmann (1922, 75–81). It is less clear what, if any, is Bakhtin's source for the claim that this tradition continued to his day.

sense, but also a positive reviving one: it is *ambivalent*, it both negates and affirms at the same time. Lowering does not merely drop down, into oblivion, into absolute annihilation; no, it means casting down into the reproductive nethers, the same nethers where conception and a new birth take place, from which everything grows with a surplus. Grotesque realism knows no other nethers; it is the fruit-bearing earth and bodily womb. The nethers always *conceive*.[45]

This is why medieval parody is totally unlike the purely formal literary parody of modern times.

Literary parody, like any kind of parody, lowers too, but this lowering has a purely negative character and lacks the ambivalence that ushers in rebirth. This is why parody as a genre, as well as all the other forms of lowering under modern conditions, could not, of course, preserve their former immense significance.

Lowerings (whether parodic or of some other type) are very characteristic of Renaissance literature, which in this respect was continuing the best traditions of folk laughter culture (especially fully and deeply in Rabelais). But already here the material-bodily domain is subjected to a certain degree of reinterpretation and narrowing, somewhat weakening its universality and festiveness. That said, this process is here still at its very beginning. This can be observed using *Don Quixote* as an example.

The main line of Cervantes's parodic lowerings has the character of bringing down to earth, of making their object partake in the reproductive and *reviving* force of the earth and of the body. This is a continuation of the grotesque line. But at the same time, the material-bodily domain has already become somewhat impoverished and shallower. It is in a peculiar state of crisis and bifurcation; Cervantes's images of material-bodily life have begun to lead a double existence.

Sancho's fat paunch ("panza"), his appetite, and thirst are fundamentally still deeply carnivalesque. His pull toward abundance and fullness have not, as yet, become privately egotistic and isolated in character. Sancho is the direct descendant of the ancient potbellied fertility demons, whose figures we can find, for example, on the famous Corinthian vases.[46] This is why the folk-feasting festive element is still alive in these images of food and drink. Sancho's materialism—his potbelly, his appetite, his abundant defecation—is the absolute nethers of grotesque realism; it is the merry bodily grave (the paunch, the belly, the earth) that has been dug for Don Quixote's isolated,

[45] This paragraph summarizes some of Bakhtin's most central ideas in the book. In terms of the sources of this conception, the connections between devouring, burial, copulation, death, and rebirth are a recurrent theme found throughout Freidenberg (1997b), and from her can be traced back to James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (see Frazer 1922). The notion of absolute top, or heights, and bottom, or nethers, can probably be traced to Bakhtin's somewhat idiosyncratic reading of Cassirer (1955; and see Bakhtin's own extended summary of the book in Bakhtin 2008b, 785–828). The way these ideas are amalgamated and reevaluated, however, is distinctly Bakhtin's own.

[46] The images depicted on vases from Corinth in the archaic period are mentioned by Reich (1903, 17, 497–498; and see Bakhtin's summary in Bakhtin 2008b, 768, 776). Reich notes the protruding bellies and phalluses of the figures on these vases and describes them as dancing. He also identifies them as fertility and vegetation demons.

abstract, and mortified idealism; in this grave, "The Knight of the Sad Countenance" should die, as it were, in order to then be born new, better, and greater. This is a material-bodily and communal corrective to any individual and abstractly spiritual claims. In addition, it is the popular corrective of laughter applied to the one-sided seriousness of these spiritual claims (the absolute nethers are always laughing; this is a death that gives birth and laughs). Sancho's role with regard to Don Quixote is comparable to the role of medieval parodies with regard to high ideology and cult, to the role of the fool with regard to serious ceremonial, the role of "charnage" with regard to "carême,"[47] and so on. The reviving merry principle, though in a weakened form, is still present in the earth-bound images of all those windmills (giants), inns (castles), flocks of rams and sheep (armies of knights), innkeepers (lord of the castle), prostitutes (noble ladies), and so forth. All these images form a typical grotesque carnival, which dresses up[48] a battle as a kitchen and a feast, arms and helmets as kitchen utensils and shaving basins, blood as wine (the episode of the battle with wineskins), and so on.[49] Such is the first carnival aspect in the life of all these material-bodily images on the pages of Cervantes's novel. But it is precisely this aspect that creates the grand style of Cervantes's realism, its universality, and its deep popular utopianism.

That said, under Cervantes's pen, bodies and things begin to acquire a private, individual character; they are rendered petty and domesticated, become motionless elements of private ordinary life, the objects of egotistic desire and possession. These are no longer the positive nethers, renewing and giving birth, but a blunt and deathly obstacle to all ideal aspirations. In the private everyday-life sphere of the life of isolated individuals, the images of the bodily nethers, while preserving the element of negation, almost entirely lose their positive force that renews and gives birth. Their link with the earth and with the cosmos is broken, and they are narrowed down to naturalistic images of everyday-life erotica. In Cervantes, however, this process is only just beginning.

This second aspect of the life of material-bodily images is interwoven with the first to form a complex and contradictory unity. And in this twofold, tense, and contradictory life of these images lies their force and higher historical realism. Herein lies the peculiar drama of the material-bodily domain in Renaissance literature—the drama of the body and things becoming detached from the unity of the earth that gives birth and the communal growing and eternally renewing body, with which they had been linked in folk culture. But this process had not yet been fully completed for the artistic and

[47] On "Carême" and "Charnage" (Lent and Shrovetide), see note 52 to chapter 4.

[48] "Dressing up": Bakhtin here uses the word "travesty," which appears frequently in the rest of the book, in its original literal sense ("a change of dress").

[49] A basin for shaving (and bloodletting) is used as a helmet in *Don Quixote*, bk. 1, ch. 21. The battle with wineskins appears in bk. 1, ch. 35 and is borrowed directly from Apuleius's *Golden Ass*. Wine as a stand-in for blood more generally (a theme, of course, best known from the Christian eucharist) is discussed by Freidenberg (1997b, 77). The other themes Bakhtin raises here (e.g., the use of kitchen utensils as weapons) do not appear to refer to any passages in *Don Quixote* (and, if read carefully, Bakhtin's text does not claim that they appear in Cervantes's novel). Bakhtin discusses them later in the book in the context of passages in Rabelais, as well as in other texts.

ideological consciousness of the Renaissance. The material-bodily nethers of grotesque realism here still fulfill their unifying, lowering, decrowning, but simultaneously also reviving functions. However atomized, dissociated, and individualized are the singular "private" bodies and things, Renaissance realism does not cut the umbilical cord that ties them to the birthing belly of the earth and the people. The singular body and thing do not coincide with themselves here, do not equal themselves, as they do in the naturalistic realism of subsequent centuries; they represent the material-bodily growing whole of the world and, therefore, transgress the boundaries of their singularity. The private and the universal are still blended in a contradictory unity in them. The carnival sense of the world is the deep foundation of Renaissance literature.

The complexity of Renaissance realism has not as yet been sufficiently revealed. Here, two types of image-based conceptions of the world meet at a crossroads; one of them descends from folk laughter culture, while the other is the bourgeois-proper conception of fully formed atomized being. The intermittent presence of these two contradictory trends of perceiving the material-bodily domain is characteristic of Renaissance realism. The growing, inexhaustible, indestructible, overflowing, bearing material domain of life, a domain that forever laughs, that decrowns and renews everything, enters into a contradictory combination with the thinly fragmented, rigid "material domain" of everyday life in class society.

Ignoring grotesque realism makes it difficult to understand correctly not only Renaissance realism, but also a long series of important phenomena belonging to later stages in realism's development. The entire field of realistic literature of the last three centuries is literally strewn with the debris of grotesque realism, which at times turn out to be not mere debris but something that is capable of renewed viability. In most cases these are all grotesque images that have either entirely lost or weakened their positive pole, their link with the universal whole of the world in its becoming. It is only possible to understand what these debris or half-living formations really signify against the backdrop of grotesque realism.

The grotesque image characterizes a phenomenon in a state of changing, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, at a stage of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation *to time, to becoming*, is a necessary constitutive (determining) trait of the grotesque image.[50] Another related necessary trait of this image is *ambivalence*:[51] *both*

[50] Cf. Ernst Cassirer's claim that a relation to time is essential to myth (Cassirer 1955, 104; Bakhtin 2008b, 804) and the extended discussion of the mythical conception of time and its development that follows (Cassirer 1955, 104–140; Bakhtin 2008b, 804–817). However, in stark contrast to Bakhtin, Cassirer insists that a true ability to grasp becoming is only attained by scientific thought, and mythical thought is incapable of it (Cassirer 1955, 52–53; Bakhtin 2008b, 793).

[51] Ambivalence is a key term in the book. Its origins can be tentatively traced to a short passage in Cassirer (1955, 77–79), in turn based on other authors' work that Cassirer cites. Cassirer speaks there of the ambivalence of contrasting emotions combined in the notions of mana and taboo, as well as in corresponding notions in ancient Greece and Rome. Bakhtin's reading of this passage (Bakhtin 2008b, 795–796) shows his use of the word "ambivalence" already in a sense close to the one we find in the book, though it is impossible to demonstrate conclusively that this reading predates Bakhtin's uses

poles of the change—the old and the new, the one dying and the one being born, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis—are given (or traced out) in it.

The relation to time, the feeling and awareness of time, which underlies these forms, has, of course, undergone substantial evolution and change in the course of their millennia-long development. At the early stages of the grotesque image's development, in the so-called archaic grotesque, time is given as a simple juxtaposition (essentially a simultaneity) of the two phases of development—the initial and the terminal: winter-spring, death-birth. These as yet primitive images move within the biocosmic sphere of cyclic succession, where one phase in nature's and man's productive life is followed by another. The components of these images are the succession of the seasons, seeding, conception, dying, sprouting, and so on. The concept of time that was contained implicitly in these most ancient images is that of the cyclical time of natural and biological life.[52] But grotesque images do not, of course, remain at that primitive level of development. The sense of time and of succession in time that is inherent in them becomes broader and deeper, drawing social and historical phenomena into its orbit; its cyclical character is superseded, and it rises to the level of sensing historical time. And, thus, grotesque images, with their essential relation to the succession of times and their ambivalence, become the main means for the artistic and ideological expression of that mighty awareness of history and of historical succession, which awoke with such exceptional force during the Renaissance.[53]

But at this stage of their development too, especially in Rabelais, the grotesque images preserve their peculiar nature, their sharp difference from images of fully formed, completed being. They are ambivalent and contradictory; they are ugly, monstrous, misshapen from the point of view of any "classic" aesthetics—that is, the aesthetics of

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of the term in his own notes (the earliest of which appears to be in Bakhtin 2008e, 617). In any case, Bakhtin gives the term "ambivalence" a much broader sense than what we find in Cassirer's book.

[52] Cf. Bakhtin's discussion of cyclical time in his essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" (e.g., Bakhtin 1981c, 209–210), which has clear parallels in Freidenberg (see especially Freidenberg 1997b, 139–140, 163–164). The depiction of this conception of time as involving a simple juxtaposition of the initial and terminal state of a process also clearly echoes Cassirer's discussion of time in mythical thought, cited above. Unlike Freidenberg, Bakhtin considers a cyclical conception of time to be merely an early stage in the development of the literary image (in the "Chronotope" essay) and of the grotesque image (in the book on Rabelais), not a legacy that lasts nearly into modern times.

[53] The theme of capturing historical transitions and the succession of times in a literary image continues a consistent line running through Bakhtin's work. The development of the ability to sense and capture the passage of time in a literary image, culminating in the work of Goethe, was the central theme of Bakhtin's lost (possibly never completed) book on the *Bildungsroman*, at least to judge by the surviving extended synopsis of the book that Bakhtin sent to its prospective publisher (Bakhtin 2012d). Goethe, according to Bakhtin circa 1937, was able to create an image of a human being as a free and active creator of historical change. This, in turn, links to the earlier stress on Dostoevsky's ability to depict characters as free participants in a dialogue, not predetermined by the author's surplus of seeing and knowledge, in the 1929 book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 2000). In turn, ideas from the book on Rabelais were integrated into the second edition of the book on Dostoevsky, published in 1963 (Bakhtin 1984). For more details on this line of development in Bakhtin's thought, see Sandler (2016; 2017, 30–35) and the translator's preface.

fully formed and completed being. The *new sense of history* that passes through them gives these images a new meaning but preserves their traditional content, their material:[54] copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the act of bodily growth, old age, the body's disintegration, its dismemberment, and so on—in all their immediate materiality—remain the key aspects in this system of grotesque images. They stand against the classical images of the fully formed, completed, mature human body, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development.

Among the famous terracotta figurines from Kerch, kept in the Hermitage Museum, there are some peculiar figurines of *pregnant old hags*, whose misshapen senility and pregnancy is grotesquely emphasized. Moreover, the old hags are *laughing.*(5)[55] This is highly typical and expressive grotesque. It is ambivalent; this is pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing steadily calm or serene in the body of a pregnant old hag. It combines a body decomposing from old age, already deformed, with the not yet formed, conceived body of a new life. Life is shown here in its ambivalent, internally contradictory process. Nothing here is fully formed; it is incompleteness itself. And such, precisely, is the grotesque conception of the body.

Unlike in modern canons, the grotesque body is not demarcated from the rest of the world, not closed in, not completed, not yet fully formed, it outgrows itself, exceeds its own limits. Emphasis is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world—that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or protrudes from it or through which the body itself protrudes into the world—that is, on the orifices, the protuberances, on various embranchments and offshoots: the gaping mouth, the vulva, the breasts, the phallus, the fat stomach, the nose. The body reveals its essence as a principle that grows and exceeds its own limits solely in such acts as copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, death throes, eating, drinking, or defecation. This is the ever-unfinished, ever-created and -creating body, a link in the chain of humankind's development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they join, where they enter into each other. This is most strikingly obvious in archaic grotesque.

[54] The contradiction between people's historically developing worldview and the unchanging traditional content of the literary plots and genres they express this worldview in is the main thesis of Freidenberg's *Poetics of Plot and Genre* (Freidenberg 1997b). Freidenberg views these traditional elements as rigid and limiting, while Bakhtin sees them as accumulating the ever-new meanings authors invest in them, and thus rather enabling, not limiting, authorial self-expression.

[55] The terracotta figurines in question were discovered near the town of Kerch, in the Crimean Peninsula, in a burial mound dated to the fifth century BCE, in the Greek colony of Pantikapaeum. Their interpretation, however, has been a matter of dispute. In particular, only one of them has been claimed to be laughing, and that claim too has been questioned. It also does not appear to be the case that these figurines are kept in the Hermitage Museum, but that they are instead kept in a museum in Odessa (Pan'kov 2006). Bakhtin inherits his interpretation of these figurines from Reich (as acknowledged in the footnote).

(5) On these terracotta depictions of pregnant hags, see H. Reich, *Der Mimus, ein litterar-entwickelungsgeschichtlicher Versuch*, Berlin, 1903, pp. 507–508. He understood them superficially, in the spirit of naturalism.

One of the fundamental tendencies of the grotesque image of the body amounts to showing *two bodies in one*: one giving birth and dying off and the other being conceived, gestated, and born. This is a body that is always pregnant and giving birth, or at least always ready for conception and fertilization, with an emphasized phallus or vulva. From one body, in some form or other and to one degree or other, another, new body always bulges out.

Further, in contrast to modern canons, even the ages of this body are most often taken to be as close as possible to birth or to death: infancy and old age, with a strong emphasis on their proximity to the uterus and to the grave, to the womb that gives birth and devours. But if the trend is extended (taken to its limit, so to speak), these two bodies unite in one. The individual is given here at the stage when it is recast into a new mold, as already dying and not yet fully formed; this body stands simultaneously on the threshold of both the grave and the cradle; it is no longer one body, but not yet two bodies either; two heartbeats always pulsate in it: one of them, the mother's, is dying out.

Next, this open and not yet fully formed body (dying—giving birth—being born) is not separated from the world by clear boundaries: it is mixed with the world, mixed with animals, mixed with things. It is cosmic; it represents the entire material-bodily world with all its elements (elemental forces).[56] The body tends toward representing and embodying within itself the entire material-bodily world as the absolute nethers, as the principle of devouring and giving birth, as a bodily grave and a womb, as a field that is being sown and in which new shoots are maturing.

Such are the rough and deliberately simplified outlines of this peculiar concept of the body. It has reached its fullest and most masterful culmination in Rabelais's novel. In other works of Renaissance literature it is weakened and attenuated. It is represented in painting in the works of both Hieronymus Bosch and Bruegel the Elder. Some of its elements can also be found earlier in the frescoes and bas-reliefs that have adorned cathedrals and even village churches since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[(6)57]

This image of the body acquired an especially broad and substantial development in the folk-festive spectacle forms of the Middle Ages: in the Feast of Fools, in charivari,

[56] The notion of the human body as a microcosm is explored by Ernst Cassirer in his book *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (Cassirer 1963; see also 1955, 91; Bakhtin 2008b, 799–800) and starts appearing in Bakhtin's own texts following his reading of this book. This appears to be the impetus for the creation of another central concept of Bakhtin's writings on carnival—the category of the *cosmic*. A cosmic image, according to Bakhtin, makes the cosmos, the world at large, accessible to tangible human first-person experience (rather than mere abstract knowledge).

[57] The reference in the footnote is to three books (not, technically speaking, parts of a multivolume publication) by Emile Mâle, all available in English translation (Mâle 1978, 1911, 1986). The observations regarding medieval church art may be partly based on Ilvonen (1914, 7), who cites Mâle, though

[(6)] A great deal of valuable material concerning grotesque themes in medieval art can be found in the extensive work É. Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XIIème siècle, du XIIIème et de la fin du Moyen Âge en France*, vol. 1, 1902, vol. 2, 1908, vol. 3, 1922.

in carnivals, in the popular public-square aspect of the feast of Corpus Christi, in the diableries of the mystery plays, in sotties, and in farces. The folk-festive culture of the Middle Ages in its entirety knew only this concept of the body.

In the literary sphere, all of medieval parody is built upon the grotesque conception of the body. The same conception also structures the images of the body in the immense mass of legends and literary works connected with the "wonders of India," as well as with the western wonders of the Celtic Sea.[58] The same concept also structures images of the body in the huge literature devoted to visions of the afterlife. It also determines the images in legends about giants; we can also uncover aspects of this same grotesque in beast epics, fabliaux, and Schwänke.[59]

Finally, this conception of the body forms the basis of abuses, curses, and oaths, which are of exceptional significance for understanding the literature of grotesque realism. They exercised a direct structuring influence on this literature's use of language,[60] its style, and on the construction of its images. In a way, they were dynamical formulas of candid truth, deeply akin (both genetically and functionally) to all other forms of "lowering" and "bringing down to earth" in grotesque and Renaissance realism. Modern indecent terms of abuse and curses retain dead and purely negative vestiges of this concept of the body. Such forms of abuse as our "three-storied" one (in all its multifarious variants), or such expressions as "go ...,"[61] lower the target of abuse according to the grotesque method—that is, they send him into the absolute topographical bodily nethers, into the zone of the birthing, reproductive organs, into the bodily grave (or into the bodily underworld), for annihilation and rebirth. But almost nothing has remained of that ambivalent reviving meaning in present-day verbal abuse, except bare negation, bare vulgarity and insult. These expressions are completely isolated in the meaning and value systems of modern languages and in the modern picture of the world: they are fragments of some alien language in which it was once possible to say something but in which one can now only meaninglessly insult. However, it would be

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the reference itself appears to be borrowed from Georges Lote (1938, 561). Reproductions of relevant paintings by both Bosch and Bruegel are contained on the plates inserted into Lote's book and are discussed in the text of the book, in tandem with some images from cathedrals (e.g., Lote 1938, 135), though without an in-text citation of Mâle.

[58] See the discussion of these themes in chapter 5, based predominantly on Lote (1938, 116–128; and see Bakhtin 2008b, 755–760). The designation "wonders of India" originates in Lote's text.

[59] The genres of fabliau and Schwank developed in the high Middle Ages in France and Germany, respectively. In both cases, these are short humorous stories, in verse or in prose, that involve explicit sexual and scatological themes. They are mentioned in various sources Bakhtin consulted while working on the book (the most focused treatment can be found in Bobertag 1881—a source Bakhtin used a few times while making the 1949–1950 revisions) and are discussed in tandem, alongside the Italian facetiae, by Freidenberg (1997b, 289–291; interestingly, this passage also contains the only mention of Rabelais in her book).

[60] "Use of language" here renders the Russian word *rech'*, normally translated as "speech."

[61] "Three-storied abuse" is a colloquial Russian expression for a long or elaborate barrage of profanities. "Go ..." has several variants (and subsequent partial euphemisms), but all involve sending the addressee into either the genitals or the buttocks, implying a sexual act.

absurd and hypocritical to deny that they still retain some degree of charm (moreover, quite apart from any erotic connotation). A vague memory of past carnival liberties and carnival truth still slumbers in them, as it were. The serious problem of their irrepressible resilience in language has not yet really been posed. In Rabelais's age, abuses and curses still retained their full meaning, and above all, they retained their positive, reviving pole, in the spheres of the people's language from which his novel grew. They were deeply akin to all the forms of lowering inherited from grotesque realism, the forms of folk-festive carnival travesties, the images of the diableries, images of the underworld in travel literature, the images of the sottie, and so forth. This is precisely why they were able to play such an essential role in his novel.

One should note, in addition, that the grotesque conception of the body was very starkly expressed in folk traveling-show comic performance and public-square comedy more generally in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. These forms carried the grotesque conception of the body into the Modern era in its best-preserved condition: in the seventeenth century, it was alive in Tabarin's "parades," in Turlupin's comedy, and in other analogous phenomena.[62] One may say that the grotesque and folklore realism's conception of the body is still alive even today (albeit in a weakened and distorted form) in many forms of traveling-show and circus comic performance.

Grotesque realism's conception of the body, which we have tentatively outlined, of course sharply clashes with the literary and visual-art canon of "classical" antiquity,[(7)] which formed the basis of Renaissance aesthetics and turned out to have been far from insignificant for the subsequent development of art. All these new canons see the body in a completely different manner, in entirely different moments of its life, in completely different relations to the outside (extra-bodily) world. The body in these canons is first of all a strictly completed, totally fully formed body. Next, it is alone, single, demarcated from other bodies, closed in. All signs of it not being fully formed, of its growth, and of its reproduction are therefore removed: all its bulges and offshoots are cleared away, all its protuberances (signifying new sprouts, germination) are smoothed out, all its orifices are closed. The ever-unfinished nature of the body becomes hidden—concealed, as it were: conception, pregnancy, childbirth, death throes are not usually shown. The preferred age is as far removed as possible from the mother's belly and from the grave—that is, placed at a maximal distance from the "threshold" points of

[62] Tabarin and Turlupin were popular street actors in Paris in the first half of the seventeenth century. Sainéan (1930, 258–260) discusses their performances and published works as reflecting Rabelais's influence. Tabarin's parades (a kind of theatrical farce) are not mentioned specifically by Sainéan, but this information could have been added based on other sources (for example, Dzhivelegov and Boyadzhiyev 1941, 307–309). See also the discussion of Gros Guillaume, a member of Turlupin's troupe, in chapter 4.

[(7)] But not of all antiquity. In ancient Doric comedy, in the satyr play, in Sicilian comic forms, in the works of Aristophanes, in mimes and Atellan farces, we find a similar (grotesque) body concept; we also find it in Hippocrates, Galen, Pliny, in the "table talk" literature—in Athenaeus, Plutarch, Macrobius, and in a series of other works from nonclassical antiquity.

individual life. The accent is placed on the completed, self-sufficient individuality of the given body. Only those actions of the body in the outside world are shown, which preserve clear and sharp boundaries between the body and the world; the intrabodily actions and processes of devouring and ejecting are not revealed. The individual body is shown apart from its relation to the kindred body of the people.

Such are the fundamental leading trends in the canons of the modern period. It is quite clear that from the point of view of these canons, the body of grotesque realism appears to be something ugly, deformed, misshapen. This body does not fit within the "aesthetics of the beautiful," which was formed in the modern era.

Both here, in the introduction, and in the following chapters of this book (especially in chapter 5), when comparing the grotesque and the classical canons of representing the body, we are not in any way asserting the advantage of one canon over the other, but merely establishing the substantial differences between them. However, the grotesque conception is naturally foremost in our study, since it was the one that determined the conception of folk laughter culture's and Rabelais's imagery: we wish to understand the peculiar logic of the grotesque canon, its special artistic will.[63] The classical canon is clear to us, artistically speaking; to a certain degree, we still live according to it, but we ceased long ago to understand the grotesque canon, or else have a distorted understanding of it. It is a task for historians and theorists of literature and art to reconstruct this canon in its genuine meaning. It is unacceptable to interpret it in the spirit of modern norms and only see it as a deviation from them. The grotesque canon should be measured with its own yardstick.

Here, we must add a few more clarifications. We understand the word "canon" not in the narrow sense of a certain nexus of consciously established rules, norms, and proportions in the depiction of the human body. In such a narrow sense, it may perhaps be possible to speak of the classical canon at certain phases of its development. However, the grotesque image of the body never had such a canon. It is noncanonical by its very nature. Here, we use the word "canon" in the broader sense of a definite, but dynamically developing, tendency of depicting the body and bodily life. In the art and literature of past ages, we observe two such tendencies, which are indeed what we conditionally designate as the grotesque and classical canons. We have offered definitions of these two canons expressed in their pure form, taken to their limits, so to speak. But in living historical reality, these canons (the classical included) were never something frozen and immutable but, rather, were undergoing constant development, begetting different historical variations of the classical and of the grotesque. In this process, it was common for various forms of interaction between the two canons to take place: there was struggle, mutual influence, crossing, and mixture. This is especially typical of the Renaissance (as we have already pointed out). Even in Rabelais, who expressed

[63] "Artistic will" (*khudozhestvennaya volya*) appears to be the equivalent of the German term *Kunstwollen*, introduced by Austrian art historian Alois Riegl. Loosely speaking, it designates the forms that artists, historical periods, national cultures, and so on actively strive toward in their art or literature (see, e.g., Riegl 2000, 95).

the grotesque concept of the body in the purest and most consistent manner, there are some elements of the classical canon, especially in the episodes of Gargantua's education by Ponocrates and the Abbey of Thélème.[64] But for the purposes of our study, the essential differences between the two canons, expressed in their purest form, are of the foremost importance. We shall focus our attention on these differences.

We have given the specific type of imagery inherent in folk laughter culture, in all the forms in which it manifests itself, the provisional title "*grotesque realism*." We must now substantiate this chosen term.

Let us first consider the term "grotesque." We will offer a history of this term in connection with the development of both the grotesque itself and the theory behind it.

The grotesque type of imagery (that is, method of image construction) is a most ancient type; we find it in the mythology and archaic art of all peoples, including, of course, the preclassical art of the ancient Greeks and Romans.[65] During the classical period too, the grotesque does not die but, rather, driven out from the sphere of major official art, continues living and developing in certain "low" noncanonical areas. In laughter-based plastic arts, mostly on a small scale, examples include the previously mentioned terracottas from Kerch, comic masks, Sileni, figurines of fertility demons, the highly popular statuettes of the ugly Thersites, and so on.[66] In laughter-based vase decorations we have, for example, the images of laughter-based doubles (the comic Heracles, the comic Odysseus), scenes from comedies, the same fertility demons again, and so forth.[67] Finally, in the vast sphere of laughter literature, related in one form or another to festivities of the carnival type, we have satyr plays, old Attic comedy, mimes, and so on. In late antiquity, the grotesque type of imagery undergoes a period of flourishing and renewal and extends to nearly all spheres of art and literature. Substantially influenced by the art of Eastern peoples, a new species of grotesque coalesces here.[68] However, the aesthetic and art-theoretical thought of antiquity developed along

[64] Bk. 1, ch. 21–24, 52–57.

[65] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 50–111). The themes Freidenberg highlights in archaic myth and art (as reflected in the literature she cites) are closely aligned with Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque, and in that sense, her book is the main source on which Bakhtin's claim here is based. However, these themes serve an entirely different function in her own book. She does not view them as representing one of two competing trends, finds no contrast in this respect between the classical and archaic periods of antiquity, and, needless to say, does not use the term "grotesque" in this context.

[66] Bakhtin's main sources on these figurines are Dieterich (1897) and Reich (1903), with the relevant information scattered in different places in these books. See, in particular, Dieterich (1897, 152–154 on images of Thersites) and Reich (1903, 507–508 on the terra-cottas and fertility demons). Sileni in Greek art are mentioned by Dieterich (e.g., 1897, 194–195). Bakhtin's reference to Sileni figurines may go back to an episode in Plato's *Symposium*, where Alcibiades compares Socrates to such a figurine, which is alluded to by Rabelais himself (bk. 1, prologue) and discussed by his commentators (Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:6–7; see also Reich 1903, 384–385).

[67] Dieterich (1897, 55–73). The comic double more generally is a recurring theme in Freidenberg's book (see especially Freidenberg 1997b, 208–214).

[68] This somewhat cryptic sentence may be read as an oblique reference to early Christian literature and ritual (there is a reference to Christianity as reflecting Eastern cultural influences later in the book,

the lines of classical tradition, and as a result, the grotesque type of imagery was neither given a stable general designation—that is, a term for referring to it—nor has it received theoretical recognition and interpretation.

At all three stages of development of the grotesque in antiquity—archaic grotesque, the grotesque of the classical period, and the grotesque of late antiquity—essential elements of realism were being formed. It would be incorrect to view the grotesque as merely "gross naturalism" (as has sometimes been done). But the development of grotesque realism in antiquity falls outside the scope of our work.[8] In the following chapters we shall discuss only those manifestations of the grotesque in antiquity that influenced Rabelais's work.

Grotesque realism was in its heyday with the image system of medieval folk laughter culture, while its artistic summit is the literature of the Renaissance. It is then, in the Renaissance, that the term *grotesque* itself first appears, but at first only in a narrow sense.[69] In the late fifteenth century, in Rome, in the course of excavating the underground parts of the Baths of Titus, a hitherto unknown kind of Roman painted ornament was discovered. This kind of ornament was, indeed, named, in Italian, "la grottesca," from the Italian word "grotta"—a grotto or an underground chamber. Somewhat later, similar ornaments were also discovered in other locations in Italy. What is the essence of this kind of ornament?

The newly found Roman ornament stunned the people of that time with its unusual, fanciful, and unfettered play with plant, animal, and human shapes, which transition one into the other, as if giving birth to each other. The sharp and inert boundaries that divide these "kingdoms of nature" in the usual picture of the world are absent: here, in the grotesque, these boundaries are boldly infringed on. Also absent is the customary stasis in the representation of reality: the movement is no longer that of fully formed shapes—vegetable and animal—in a similarly fully formed and stable world; instead, it becomes the inner movement of being itself, expressed in the transition of one shape into the other, in the *never fully formed* nature of being. In this ornamental interplay one feels an extraordinary freedom and lightness of artistic fantasy, a freedom that,

in chapter 1, p. 75). Beyond that, the influx of Eastern cultural influence into Greece in the Hellenistic period and its subsequent influence on the culture of late antiquity is a commonplace claim, made by many authors, though I was not able to find any claims about this influence being crucial for the development of grotesque imagery in particular in any of the sources Bakhtin is known to have consulted when working on the book.

[69] Bakhtin discusses the origins of the word "grotesque" and the ornamental forms that word originally referred to based primarily on Schneegans (1894, 29–30; with some information possibly also derived from Sainéan 1922–1923, 1:61). This passage in Schneegans is also the source on Raphael and Vasari below.

[8] Interesting material and highly valuable observations concerning the grotesque in antiquity, and to some extent in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance too, are contained in A. Dieterich's book "Pulcinella. Pompeian Mural Paintings and Roman Satyr Plays," Leipzig, 1897. (A. Dieterich, *Pulcinella. Pompeyanische Wandbilder und Romische Salyrspiele*, Leipzig). The author, however, does not himself use the term "grotesque." In many respects, Dieterich's book has not become outdated to this day.

moreover, is felt to be *merry*, to be an almost *laughing unfetteredness*. This merry tone of the new ornament was correctly grasped and rendered by Raphael and his pupils in their imitations of the grotesque in their decorations of the Vatican loggias.(9)

Such is the main distinctive trait of the Roman ornament to which the term "grotesque"—created especially to designate it—was first applied. It was simply a new word to denote what then appeared to be a new phenomenon. And its initial meaning was very narrow—a newly discovered variety of Roman ornament. But the fact is that this variety was but a little piece (a shard) of the immense world of grotesque imagery, which existed throughout all stages of antiquity and continued to exist in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. And this piece did indeed reflect the characteristic features of this immense world. This ensured a further productive life for the new term—its gradual extension to the entire, almost immeasurable world of grotesque imagery.

But this expansion of the term's reach happens very slowly and without a clear theoretical realization of the idiosyncrasy and the oneness of the grotesque world. The first attempt at a theoretical analysis—or more correctly speaking, a simple description and evaluation of the grotesque—was made by Vasari, who, relying on the opinion of Vitruvius (the Roman architect and art theoretician, who lived in the time of Augustus), evaluates the grotesque negatively. Vitruvius, whom Vasari quotes approvingly, condemned the new "bad taste" fashion of covering walls with "paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things."[70] In other words, he condemned the grotesque style from the classical standpoint as a gross violation of "natural" forms and proportions. Vasari shares this position. And this position, in essence, remained the prevailing position for a long time. Only in the second half of the eighteenth century will a deeper and broader understanding of the grotesque make its appearance.

In the period when the classicist canon dominated in all areas of art and literature, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the grotesque, connected to folk laughter culture, ended up outside the major literature of the time: it descended into low comic performance or underwent naturalistic decomposition (a matter we have already discussed above).

In this period (essentially, from the second half of the seventeenth century) a process of gradual narrowing down, shallowing, and impoverishment of the ritual-spectacle

[70] The full quote from Vitruvius is brought by Schneegans (1894, 30). The English translation used is by Morris H. Morgan (Vitruvius 1914, 211). Bakhtin's Russian rendering of the quote differs from the published English translation: "the [new] barbarian [fashion of] covering walls with paintings of monsters instead of clear reflections of the world of objects."

(9) Let us also quote the excellent definition of the grotesque made by L. E. Pinsky: "In the grotesque, life passes through all degrees—from the lowest, most inert, and primitive, to the highest, most mobile, and animate—in this garland of multifarious forms, bearing witness to its oneness. In bringing together that which is far removed, in combining the mutually exclusive, in breaching customary perceptions, the grotesque in art is akin to the paradox in logic. At first glance, the grotesque is merely witty and amusing, but great possibilities lay hidden in it" (see L. E. Pinsky, *Realizm epokhi vozrozhdeniya* [Renaissance Realism], Moscow, Goslitizdat, 1961, 119–120).

carnival forms of folk culture takes place. On the one hand, festive life *becomes more state-dominated*, and it becomes *ceremonial*; on the other hand, it *becomes increasingly associated with the domain of everyday life*—that is, it moves into the private, domestic, and familial quotidian existence. The past privileges of the festive public square become more and more restricted. The special carnival sense of the world with its communal, unfettered, utopian character, its orientation toward the future, begins to turn into a mere festive mood. The feast *almost* ceased to be the people's second life, its temporary rebirth and renewal. We have stressed the word "almost" because the folk-festive carnival principle is, in essence, indestructible. Though narrowed and weakened, it still continues to fertilize diverse areas of life and culture.

What interests us here is a special aspect of this process. By that point, the literature of these centuries is subject to almost no direct influence from the impoverished folk-festive culture. The carnival sense of the world and grotesque imagery now continue to live and are transmitted as a literary tradition, chiefly as a tradition hailing from Renaissance literature.

Having lost its living ties with folk public-square culture and become a purely literary tradition, the grotesque degenerates. A certain degree of *formalization* of carnival-grotesque images takes place, which permitted them to be used by different movements and for various purposes. But this formalization was not only external, and the content-richness of the carnival-grotesque form itself and its artistically heuristic and generalizing force were preserved in all the essential phenomena of this period (the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries): in the "commedia dell'arte" (it retained the fullest connection to the carnival womb that gave birth to it), in Molière's comedies (related to the commedia dell'arte), in the comical novel and the travesties of the seventeenth century, in the philosophical novellas of Voltaire and Diderot (*The Indiscrete Jewels*, *Jacques the Fatalist*), in the works of Swift, and in a few other works. In all these phenomena—in spite of all their differences in character and despite belonging to different literary movements—the carnival-grotesque form has similar functions: it consecrates the unfettered invention of storylines;[71] it allows the combination of heterogeneous elements and the bringing together of that which is far apart; it helps liberate from the prevailing point of view on the world, from all conventionality, from truisms, from all things ordinary, habitual, and generally accepted; it allows one to look at the world in a new way, to feel the relativity of all that exists and the possibility of an entirely different world order.

But a clear and distinct *theoretical* recognition of the oneness of all these phenomena covered by the term "grotesque," as well as their artistic specificity, has been gestating only very slowly. In fact, even the term itself has often been used interchangeably with

[71] *vol'nots' vymysla*. The Russian word *vymysel*, which literally means, roughly, "[that which is] thought up," is rendered here as "invention of storylines" (the explicit reference to storylines is implied but not stated in Bakhtin's Russian). Elsewhere (e.g., Bakhtin 1984, 108), Bakhtin emphasized the importance of free invention as a characteristic of Menippean satire (as opposed to earlier genres, which relied on legend and myth for their plots). In "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*," Bakhtin (1996a,

the words "arabesque" (mostly applied to ornament) and "burlesque" (mostly applied to literature).[72] Given the dominance of the classicist point of view in aesthetics, such a theoretical recognition was not yet possible.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, substantial changes come about both in literature itself and in the field of aesthetic thought. In Germany, a literary struggle breaks out at that time around the character of Harlequin, who was then a constant participant in all dramatic performances, even the most serious. Gottsched and other classicists demanded Harlequin's banishment from the "serious and respectable" stage and succeeded for a while. Among Harlequin's defenders in this controversy was Lessing.[73] Behind the narrow issue of Harlequin stood the broader and more essential problem of whether phenomena that did not match the demands of the aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful should be acceptable in art, or in other words, the question of whether the grotesque was acceptable. It is this problem that was the subject of a short work published in 1761 by Justus Möser, titled "Harlequin, or the Defense of the Grotesque-Comic" (Justus Möser, *Harlekin, oder Verteidigung des Groteske-Komischen*). The defense of the grotesque is here placed in Harlequin's own mouth. Möser's text stresses that Harlequin is a part of a special world (albeit a small-scale one) to which Colombine, the Captain, the Doctor, and other characters also belong—that is, the world of the commedia dell'arte. It is a holistic world with its own predictable aesthetic regularities and its own special criterion for excellence, which does not obey the classicist aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful. But at the same time Möser also contrasts this world with "low" traveling-show comic performance, thus narrowing the concept of the grotesque. He further explores some distinguishing features of the world of the grotesque: he calls it "chimerical," that is, combining elements that are alien to one another, and points out that it violates natural proportions (it is hyperbolic), pointing out also the presence of caricature and a parodic element. Finally, Möser stresses the laughter principle in the grotesque and, moreover, traces the origin of laughter to the human soul's need for joy and merriment. Such is the first, for now still quite narrow, defense of the grotesque.[74]

In 1788, the German scholar Karl Friedrich Flögel, the author of a four-volume history of comic literature and of the book *A History of Court Jesters*, released his

128; forthcoming-a) writes that within the realm of familiar speech and direct contact between people, such invention moves "into the core of the event and begins, at last, to invent the event itself." Bakhtin here recontextualizes and develops a claim made by Freidenberg (1997b, 297) that only in the age of industrial capitalism does literature develop the capacity to invent plots.

[72] See Schneegans (1894, 31–33), who bemoans this terminological confusion, especially with the burlesque.

[73] See Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 196–197).

[74] Bakhtin's brief review of Möser (1777) appears to rely on direct familiarity with this source, which is also confirmed by Popova (2010a, 589).

History of the Grotesque-Comic.[(10)][75] Flögel does not define and does not limit the concept of the grotesque from either the historical or the systematic point of view. He classifies as grotesque all that markedly deviates from the usual aesthetic forms and that strongly emphasizes and exaggerates the material-bodily element. But the bulk of Flögel's book is devoted, in particular, to phenomena of the medieval grotesque. He examines medieval folk-festive forms (the Feast of Fools, the Feast of the Ass, the folk public-square elements of the Corpus Christi feast, carnivals, and so on), mock literary societies of the late Middle Ages ("Kingdom of the Basoche," "Enfants sans Souci," and others), sotties, farces, Shrovetide games, some forms of folk public-square comic performance, and so on. Generally speaking, the extent of the grotesque according to Flögel is nevertheless somewhat narrowed: he does not examine at all the purely literary phenomena of grotesque realism (for instance, medieval Latin parody). The lack of a systematic historical point of view resulted in a somewhat random selection of material. His understanding of the meaning of the phenomena themselves is superficial—in point of fact, there is no understanding of any sort: the author merely collects his examples as curiosities. Nevertheless, Flögel's book is still significant today because of the material it presents.

Both Möser and Flögel know only the grotesque comic—that is to say, only the grotesque structured by the laughter principle—and moreover, this laughter principle is conceived by them as merry and joyful. Such was also the material analyzed by these researchers: the commedia dell'arte for Möser and medieval grotesque for Flögel.

But in the same period when Möser's and Flögel's works appeared, oriented backward, as it were, toward already past stages in the development of the grotesque, the grotesque itself entered a new phase of its historical becoming. A rebirth of the grotesque takes place in pre-Romanticism and Romanticism, but with a radically transformed meaning. The grotesque becomes a form for expressing a subjective, individual sense of the world, very distant from the folk-carnival sense of the world of centuries past (although it still retains some elements of the latter). The first and highly significant expression of the new subjective grotesque is Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (a translation of sorts of Rabelais's and Cervantes's sense of the world into the subjective

[75] Of the works by Flögel mentioned here (Flögel 1784–1787; 1789; Flögel and Ebeling 1862; Flögel and Bauer 1914), only the 1862 Ebeling edition of *Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen* was extensively used by Bakhtin as a source when working on the 1940 manuscript (this is also documented in Popova 2008a, 858). The brief inventory of themes that follows is based directly on Flögel's book and roughly follows the order in which Flögel discusses them, though Bakhtin adds his own terms and emphases to this overview. Popova (2010a, 589) also lists *Geschichte der komischen Litteratur* among Bakhtin's sources, but I found no cases where this was directly reflected in the text, and this mention might have been a mere technical mistake.

[(10)] Flögel's book was reissued in 1862 in a somewhat revised and expanded form: Fr. W. Ebeling, *Flögel's Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen*, Leipzig, 1862. Ebeling's adaptation was published in five later editions. All references to the book below are made to Ebeling's first edition. A new edition of Flögel, adapted by Max Bauer, was published in 1914.

language of the new age). A different variety of the new grotesque is the Gothic, or horror, novel. In Germany, the subjective grotesque underwent perhaps its most powerful and original development in "Sturm und Drang" dramaturgy and early Romanticism (Lenz, Klinger, the young Tieck), in the novels of Hippel and Jean Paul, and finally, in the work of Hoffmann, who hugely influenced the development of the new grotesque in subsequent world literature. Friedrich Schlegel and Jean Paul became the theorists of the new grotesque.

The Romantic grotesque is a highly significant and influential phenomenon of world literature. To a certain degree it was a reaction against those elements of classicism and the Enlightenment that had given rise to the limitedness and one-sided seriousness of those currents: against narrow cerebral rationalism, against state and formal-logical authoritarianism, against the tendency toward the fully formed, complete, and unequivocal, against the didacticism and utilitarianism of the Enlighteners, against naive or sanctioned optimism, and so on. In rejecting all that, the Romantic grotesque relied first of all on the traditions of the Renaissance, especially on the newly rediscovered Shakespeare and Cervantes, in whose light the medieval grotesque was also interpreted. A substantial influence on the Romantic grotesque was exercised by Sterne, who in a certain sense can even be considered its founder.

As for the immediate influence of the living (but now very impoverished) folk-spectacle carnival forms, it apparently was not significant. Purely literary traditions were predominant. We should point out, however, the fairly substantial influence of folk theater (especially the puppet show) and of some forms of traveling-show comic performance.

Unlike the medieval and Renaissance grotesque, which was directly linked to folk culture and had a public-square, communal nature, the Romantic grotesque acquired a *chamber* character: this is, as it were, a carnival experienced on one's own, marked by an acute sense of being thus isolated. The carnival sense of the world is, in a way, translated into the language of subjective idealist philosophical thought and ceases to be that concretely experienced (one might even say *bodily* experienced) feeling of the oneness and inexhaustibility of being, as it was in the medieval and Renaissance grotesque.

The principle that endured the most substantial transformation in Romantic grotesque was the principle of laughter. Laughter, of course, remained; after all, no grotesque, even the most timid, is possible under conditions of monolithic seriousness. But laughter in the Romantic grotesque underwent reduction and took the form of humor, irony, sarcasm. It ceases to be a joyful and triumphant laughter. The positive *reviving* aspect of the laughter principle is weakened to the minimum.

There is a very telling discussion of laughter in one of the most remarkable works of the Romantic grotesque, *The Nightwatches* of Bonaventura (the pseudonym of an

unknown author, perhaps Wetzel).(11)[76] These are the tales and meditations of a night watchman. At one point, the narrator characterizes what laughter signifies as follows: "Where, moreover, can a more effective means than laughing be found to bid defiance to the world's scorn and even to fate? The most redoubtable enemy is alarmed at this satirical mask, and even misfortune gives way in dread of me, if I dare to laugh at it!—What the devil is this whole earth along with her sentimental companion the moon worth anyway, except to be laughed at"[77]

Proclaimed here is the philosophical and universal character of laughter—an obligatory attribute of any kind of grotesque—and its *freeing* force is praised, but there is no hint of laughter's *reviving* force, which is why it loses its merry and joyful tone.

The author (speaking through the mouth of his narrator, the night watchman), even offers an explanation of sorts for this, in the form of a myth about the origin of laughter. Laughter was sent to earth by the devil himself. But it—laughter—appeared to men under the mask of *joy*, and men willingly received it. That is when laughter cast away its merry mask and started looking at the world and at men as spiteful satire.[78]

The degeneration of the structuring principle of laughter, the loss of its reviving force leads to a series of other essential differences between Romantic grotesque and medieval and Renaissance grotesque. These differences appear most distinctly in relation to the *scary*. The world of the Romantic grotesque is, to one extent or another, a world that is scary and *alien* to the human being. All that is habitual, ordinary, mundane, routine, and generally accepted suddenly turns out to be meaningless, dubious, alien, and hostile to man. One's *own* world suddenly turns into an *alien* world. The ordinary and unscary suddenly reveals itself as scary. Such are the leanings of the Romantic grotesque (in its most extreme and acute forms). If a reconciliation with the world occurs at all, it takes place on a subjective-lyrical, or even a mystical, plane. Meanwhile, the medieval and Renaissance grotesque, connected to folk laughter culture, knows the scary only in the form of *laughable bogeymen*[79]—that is, only the scary that has already

[76] For an English translation, see Bonaventura (2014). Following an archival discovery made in the 1980s, the book is nowadays attributed to Ernst August Friedrich Klingemann (Haag 1987).

[77] Quoted from the Fifteenth Nightwatch (Bonaventura 2014, 111; translation modified).

[78] Bonaventura (2014, 111).

[79] "Laughable bogeymen" (*smeshnye strashilishcha*) is a phrase that appears repeatedly in the book, with "merry bogeymen" as an occasional variant. It combines in it the two antagonistic tones of laughter (the root of the first word, which I preserved in the English word "laughable") and fear (the root of the second word, not quite visible in the English "bogeyman"; the Russian word refers to a figure, typically some sort of doll or contraption, deliberately designed to scare people).

Bakhtin sometimes encloses this phrase in quotation marks, which suggests it might be an allusion. If so, a possible target for the allusion may be the novel *Alexander the First* by Dmitry Merezhkovsky. The bogeyman is an important motif in the novel. A demonic vision of a priest with horns, which Merezhkovsky calls a laughable bogeyman, haunts St. Petersburg in part IV, ch. 3. The memory of this vision, referred to again as a "laughable bogeyman" or "laughable bogeymen," illustrates and symbolizes the tsar's fear in part VI, ch. 1–2.

(11) *Nachtwachen*, 1804 (see R. Steinert's edition, *Nachtwachen des Bonaventura*, Weimar, 1916).

been defeated by laughter. Here, the scary always turns out to be laughable and merry. The grotesque connected with folk culture brings the world closer to man and gives it a bodily form, it makes it akin to man through the body and bodily life (in contrast to abstract spiritual appropriation in Romanticism). In the Romantic grotesque, however, images of material-bodily life—eating, drinking, defecation, copulation, childbirth—almost entirely lose their reviving sense and turn into "lowly everyday life."

The images of the Romantic grotesque may express fear of the world and seek to inspire this fear in their readers (they "spook out"). But the grotesque images of folk culture are absolutely fearless and make everyone partake in their fearlessness. This fearlessness is also characteristic of the greatest works of Renaissance literature. But the apex in this respect is Rabelais's novel: here fear is annihilated at its very origin and everything has turned into merriment. It is the most fearless work in all of world literature.

Other distinguishing features of the Romantic grotesque are also linked with the weakening of laughter's reviving aspect. For instance, the theme of madness is highly characteristic of any kind of grotesque, because it allows one to look at the world with different eyes, unclouded by "normal"—that is, generally accepted—notions and evaluations. But in the folk grotesque, madness is a merry parody of official reason, of the one-sided seriousness of official "truth." It is a *festive* madness. In the Romantic grotesque, by contrast, madness acquires the somber, tragic shade of individual isolation.

Even more important is the theme of the *mask*. It is a most complex and polysemous theme in folk culture. The mask is connected with the joy of successions and transmutations, with merry relativity and with the similarly merry negation of identity and unequivocalness, with the negation of any dull coinciding with one's own self. The mask is connected with transitions, metamorphoses, and the violation of natural boundaries, with ridiculing laughter, with the nickname (rather than the name).[80] The mask embodies the playful domain of life; it is based on a very particular interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient ritual spectacle forms. Of course, it would be impossible to exhaust the intricate and polysemous symbolism of the mask. Let us point out that such phenomena as the parody, the caricature, all manners of grimacing, and so on are in essence derived from the mask. The mask very clearly reveals the utter essence of the grotesque.(12)

In the Romantic grotesque, the mask, torn away from the unity of the folk-carnival sense of the world, becomes impoverished and acquires a series of new senses alien to its original nature: the mask hides something, keeps a secret, deceives, and so forth. Such significations are, of course, entirely impossible when the mask functions within

[80] Cf. the discussion of the name and the nickname in Bakhtin's "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 1996a, 99–103; forthcoming-a).

(12) We are here discussing the mask and what it signifies already under the conditions of folk festive culture in antiquity and the Middle Ages and are not concerned with its more ancient cultic significations.

the organic whole of folk culture. In Romanticism, the mask loses almost entirely its reviving and renewing aspect and acquires a somber hue. A scary emptiness, a "nothingness," often turns out to lurk behind the mask (this theme is very strongly developed in Bonaventura's *Nightwatches*). Meanwhile, in the folk grotesque, behind the mask there is always the inexhaustibility and multifacedness of life.

However, in the Romantic grotesque too, the mask still retains something of its folk-carnival nature; this nature is indestructible in it. After all, even in our present-day ordinary life, there is some kind of special aura about the mask; it is perceived as a particle of some other world. The mask can never become just one thing among other things.

A major role in the Romantic grotesque is played by the theme of the marionette, the puppet. This theme is, of course, not alien to the folk grotesque either. However, for Romanticism, the notion of an *alien*, nonhuman force that controls people and turns them into marionettes, a notion entirely uncharacteristic of folk laughter culture, moves to the foreground. The peculiar grotesque theme of *the tragedy of the puppet* is also a characteristic solely of Romanticism.

The difference between the Romantic and folk grotesque is also vividly displayed in how the image of the devil is interpreted. In the diableries of the medieval mystery plays, in laughter-based afterlife visions, in parodic legends, in fabliaux, and so on, the devil is a merry ambivalent bearer of unofficial points of view, of sanctity turned inside out; it represents the material-bodily nethers and so on. There is nothing scary and alien in the devil (in Rabelais's afterlife vision of Epistemon, "the devils" are "boon companions and merry fellows").[81] At times the devils and even hell itself are mere "laughable bogeymen." In the Romantic grotesque, by contrast, the devil acquires a scary, melancholy, tragic character. Infernal laughter becomes somber laughter, a laughter born of schadenfreude.

We should point out that in the Romantic grotesque, ambivalence usually turns into a stark static contrast or into a frozen antithesis.[82] Thus, the narrator of the *Nightwatches* (the night watchman) has the devil for a father, while his mother is a canonized saint. He himself is in the habit of laughing in church and weeping in houses of pleasure (i.e., bordellos).[83] Thus, the ancient communal ritual laughter at the divinity and medieval laughter in church during the Feast of Fools become at the turn of the nineteenth century, the eccentric laughter in church of a lonely crank.

[81] Bk. 2, ch. 30 (Urquhart's translation). The words "boon companions" ("bons compaignons") also imply that the devils are good *drinking* fellows, which Bakhtin makes explicit in the way he translates Rabelais's French in the text.

[82] Cf. Hegel's (1977) notion of negation as an organic and creative process and his critique of the static notion of negation in Aristotelian logic. Hegelian (and, of course, Marxist) dialectics, in a simplified form, was part of the obligatory school and university curriculum in the Soviet Union, so this parallel with Hegel is something Bakhtin would have expected his readers to draw at this point.

[83] See Bonaventura (2014, 49–50). The English translation has the narrator praying, not weeping, in "houses of pleasure." Bakhtin interprets those latter to be *pritony*, which probably does indeed refer to bordellos but can perhaps also be read as referring to taverns.

Let us finally emphasize yet another special feature of the Romantic grotesque: it is in most cases *nocturnal* (Bonaventura's *Nightwatches*, Hoffman's *Night Pieces*[84]); darkness, but not light, is overall characteristic of it. By contrast, light characterizes the folk grotesque: it is a grotesque of springtime and morning, of dawn.(13)

Such is the Romantic grotesque in the Germanic context. We shall examine the Romance variant of the Romantic grotesque below. But for now, let us briefly consider the Romantic theory of the grotesque.

Friedrich Schlegel, in his "Dialogue on Poetry" (*Gespräch über die Poesie*, 1800), touches on the grotesque, though without a clear terminological designation (he usually calls it arabesque). Fr. Schlegel considers the grotesque ("arabesque") to be "the oldest ... form of human imagination"[85] and an "essential form ... of poetry."[86] He finds the grotesque in Shakespeare and Cervantes, in Sterne and Jean Paul.[87] He sees its essence in the odd mixing of heterogeneous elements of reality, in the destruction of the usual arrangement and order of the world, in the freely fantastic nature of its images and in an "alternation of enthusiasm and irony."[88]

The features of the Romantic grotesque, in particular, are revealed more pointedly by Jean Paul in his "School for Aesthetics," (*Vorschule der Äesthetik*). He does not use the term "grotesque" here either and considers it as "annihilating humor."[89] Jean Paul understands the grotesque ("annihilating humor") quite broadly, not limiting it to literature and art: he also includes in this category the Feast of Fools and the Feast of the Ass ("Masses of the ass")[90]—that is, the laughter-based ritual spectacle forms of the Middle Ages. Among the literary phenomena of the Renaissance, he quite often invokes both Rabelais and Shakespeare. He speaks, in particular, of the "ridicule of the world" ("Welt-verlachung") in Shakespeare, referring to his "melancholy" fools, as well as to Hamlet.[91]

Jean Paul understands perfectly well the universal character of grotesque laughter. "Annihilating humor" is directed not against isolated negative aspects of reality but against all of reality, against the entire finite world as a whole. All that is finite as such is annihilated by humor. Jean Paul stresses the radicalism of this humor: through it, the entire world is turned into something *alien*, scary, and *unjustified*, the ground slips out from under our feet, and we experience vertigo because we see nothing stable

[84] Referring to the *Nachtstücke*, a two-volume collection of stories by E. T. A. Hoffman, published in 1816–1817.

[85] Schlegel (1968, 86).

[86] Schlegel (1968, 96).

[87] Schlegel (1968, 95–98).

[88] Schlegel (1968, 86).

[89] Cf. the title of §33: "The annihilating or infinite idea of humor" (Richter 1973, 91).

[90] Richter (1973, 82, 94).

[91] Richter (1973, 89).

(13) More precisely, folk grotesque reflects the very moment when darkness is *succeeded* by light, night by morning, winter by spring.

around us. Jean Paul also detects a similar universalism and radicalism of destroying all moral and social norms in the laughter-based ritual spectacle forms of the Middle Ages.[92]

Jean Paul does not separate the grotesque from laughter. He understands that without the laughter principle, the grotesque would be impossible. But his theoretical conception knows only reduced laughter (humor), devoid of positive reviving and renewing force, and therefore joyless and bleak. Jean Paul himself emphasizes the *melancholy* character of annihilating humor and says that the greatest humorist of all would be the devil (of course, as understood in Romanticism).[93]

While Jean Paul does adduce phenomena of the medieval and Renaissance grotesque (including even Shakespeare), what he offers is essentially a theory of the Romantic grotesque alone, through the prism of which he also views the past stages of the grotesque's development, "romanticizing" these stages (mostly in the spirit of a Sternean interpretation of Rabelais and Cervantes).

The positive aspect of the grotesque, its final word, is conceived by Jean Paul (as it is by Fr. Schlegel) as located already outside the domain of laughter, as something that goes beyond the limits of all that is finite and destroyed by humor, entering into a purely spiritual sphere.(14)

Significantly later (starting in the late 1820s), a revival of the grotesque type of imagery also takes place in French Romanticism.

This problem is posed in an interesting manner, and one very typical of French Romanticism, by Victor Hugo, first in his preface to *Cromwell* and then in his book on Shakespeare.

Hugo understands the grotesque type of imagery very broadly. He finds it in preclassical antiquity (the Hydra, the Harpies, the Cyclops, and other examples of grotesque archaics), and later places in this category all postantiquity literature, from the Middle Ages onward. "The grotesque," says Victor Hugo, "is to be found everywhere; on the one hand it creates the deformed and the horrible; on the other hand the comic, the buffoon."[94] An essential aspect of the grotesque is the misshapen. The aesthetic of the grotesque is to a significant degree an aesthetic of the misshapen. But at the same time, Hugo weakens the independent significance of the grotesque by declaring it to be a means of contrast to the *sublime*. The grotesque and the sublime mutually complement each other, and it is their unity (most fully achieved in Shakespeare) that produces true beauty, unattainable by the classic in all its purity.

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[92] Richter (1973, 93–94).

[93] Richter (1973, 92).

[94] Hugo (1895, 14).

(14) In Jean Paul's own work as a writer we find many images, which are most typical of the Romantic grotesque, especially in his "Dreams" and "Visions" (see the collection of works belonging to this genre edited by R. Benz: Jean Paul [Richter], *Träume und Visionen*, Munich, 1954). Here, one can find many striking examples of nocturnal and sepulchral grotesque.

Hugo's most interesting and concrete analyses of grotesque imagery, and of the laughter and material-bodily domain in particular, can be found in his book on Shakespeare. However, we shall consider this later, for Hugo also develops there his understanding of Rabelais.

Interest in the grotesque and in its early phases of development was also shared by other French Romantics, and moreover, in France, the grotesque was understood as a national tradition. In 1853 Théophile Gautier published a book (a sort of anthology) titled "The Grotesques" (*Les Grotesques*). For this anthology he collected the work of representatives of the French grotesque, rather broadly conceived: here, we can find works by Villon, by libertine poets of the seventeenth century (Théophile de Viau, Saint-Amant), as well as Scarron, Cyrano de Bergerac, and even Scudéry.[95]

Such is the Romantic phase in the development of the grotesque and its theory. In conclusion, two positive aspects must be stressed: first, the Romantics searched for the folk roots of the grotesque, and second, they never attributed to the grotesque purely satirical functions.

Our analysis of the Romantic grotesque is, of course, very far from exhaustive. Moreover, it is somewhat one-sided and even polemical in character. This is explained by the fact that we were only concerned here with how the Romantic grotesque differed from the grotesque imagery of the medieval and Renaissance folk laughter culture. Romanticism made its own positive discovery of immense significance, however—the discovery of the internal, subjective human being in all his depth, complexity, and inexhaustibility.

This *inner infinity* of the individual person was alien to the medieval and the Renaissance grotesque, but its discovery by the Romantics was made possible only thanks to their application of the grotesque method, with its power to liberate from any dogmatism, completeness, and limitedness. In a closed-in, fully formed, stable world, with clear and unshakable boundaries between all phenomena and values, inner infinity could not have been discovered. To convince oneself of this, suffice it to compare the rationalized and exhaustive analyses of inner experiences by the classicists with the images of inner life offered by Sterne and the Romantics. Here, the heuristic artistic force of the grotesque method is clearly revealed. But all this already falls outside the scope of our present study.[96]

Let us say a few words on how the grotesque was understood in the aesthetics of Hegel and of F.-Th. Vischer.

Speaking of the grotesque, Hegel essentially has in mind only grotesque archaics, which he defines as the expression of the preclassic and prephilosophical condition of the

[95] Gautier's book (for an English translation, see T. Gautier 1910) is a collection of articles, not an anthology. It is likely that Bakhtin relied here not on Gautier directly but, rather, on a description of the book in a footnote by Schneegans (1894, 10). Scudéry, here, is Georges de Scudéry, not his more famous sister Madeleine

[96] Cf. Bakhtin's discussion of these themes in Bakhtin (2014, 534–535; forthcoming-a) and more generally in his book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984).

spirit. Relying mostly on Indian archaics, Hegel characterizes the grotesque as having three traits: the intermixture of heterogeneous spheres of nature, exaggeration without measure, and the multiplication of individual organs (the multiarmed, multilegged images of Indian gods).[97] Hegel has no knowledge of the organizing role the laughter principle plays in the grotesque and examines the grotesque without any connection to the comic.

F. -Th. Vischer departs from Hegel on the question of the grotesque. The essence and the driving force of the grotesque, according to Vischer, is the laughable, the comic. "The grotesque is the comic in the form of the miraculous," he writes; it is "the mythical comic."[98] These definitions by Vischer are not without a certain depth.

One must admit that in the further development of philosophical aesthetics up to our own time, the grotesque never received anything like a proper understanding and evaluation: it turned out there was no room for it in the system of aesthetics.

After the Romantic age, in the second half of the nineteenth century, interest in the grotesque drops precipitously both in literature itself and in literary-theoretical thought. If mentioned at all, the grotesque is either listed among the forms of low vulgar comic performance or understood to be a special form of satire, directed against separate, purely negative phenomena. With such an approach, all the depth and all the universalism of grotesque images disappears without a trace.

The most extensive work devoted to the grotesque was a book published in 1894 by the German scholar Heinrich Schneegans, titled "The History of Grotesque Satire" (Schneegans, *Geschichte der Grotesken Satire*). This book is largely devoted to Rabelais, whom Schneegans considers to be the greatest representative of grotesque satire, but it also offers a brief description of some phenomena of the medieval grotesque. Schneegans is the most consistent representative of a purely satirical understanding of the grotesque. The grotesque for him is always and only purely negative satire, it is an "*exaggeration of that which should not be*,"[99] of what is being negated, and, moreover, an exaggeration that goes beyond the limits of what is probable and becomes fantastic. It is precisely through such excessive exaggerations of that which should not be that it is being dealt a moral and social blow. Such is the gist of Schneegans's conception.

Schneegans totally fails to grasp the *positive hyperbolism* of the material-bodily domain in medieval grotesque and in Rabelais. Nor does he grasp the positive reviving and renewing force of grotesque laughter. He knows only the purely negative, rhetorical,

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[97] Hegel (1975, 1:336–346).

[98] Vischer (1846–1857, 2.2:465, 3.2.3:761).

[99] Despite being enclosed in quotation marks, "exaggeration of that which should not be" is not an exact quote. It does clearly allude to a few passages in Schneegans (e.g., 1894, 27, 39–40), all featuring the German word *Nichtseinsollenden* (hence the somewhat awkward turn of phrase "that which should not be" that I am using to translate it). Bakhtin notably uses the same phrase later in the book to make critical allusions to Schneegans and to the approach to the grotesque that he represents. It should also be noted that, despite Bakhtin's clear rejection of Schneegans's main theses (see chapter 5), he makes extensive use of his book as a secondary source.

unlaughing laughter of nineteenth-century satire and interprets the phenomenon of medieval and Renaissance laughter in its spirit. This is an extreme expression of the distorting modernization of laughter in the study of literature. Schneegans also fails to grasp the universalism of grotesque images. But Schneegans's conception is highly typical of all literary theory in the second part of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. Even in our days, the purely satirical understanding of the grotesque, and of Rabelais's work in particular, in the spirit of Schneegans, is far from having outlived itself.

As we already noted, Schneegans develops his conception mostly through analyzing the work of Rabelais. We shall therefore have to deal with his book again later on.

A new and mighty revival of the grotesque takes place in the twentieth century, although the word "revival" is not fully applicable to some of the forms of modern-day grotesque.

The development pattern of modern-day grotesque is quite complex and contradictory. Generally speaking, though, two main lines of development can be traced. The first line is the *modernist* grotesque (Alfred Jarry, the surrealists, the expressionists, and others).[100] This type of grotesque is connected (to a varying degree) with traditions of the Romantic grotesque, and it is currently developing under the influence of different strands of existentialism. The second line is the *realist* grotesque (Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, and Pablo Neruda, among others). It is related to the traditions of grotesque realism and folk culture and even reflects at times the direct influence of carnival forms (Pablo Neruda).

Characterizing the distinguishing features of modern-day grotesque lies entirely beyond the scope of our present concerns. We shall only consider the modern-day theory of the grotesque, linked to the first, modernist line of its development. We have in mind the book by the distinguished German literary scholar Wolfgang Kayser, "The Grotesque in Art and Literature." (*Das Groteske in Malerei und Dichtung*, 1957).[(15)101]

Kayser's book is essentially the first and, so far, the only serious work on the theory of the grotesque. It contains many valuable observations and subtle analyses. However, one cannot possibly agree with Kayser's overall conception.

According to its own design, Kayser's book should provide a general theory of the grotesque, reveal the very essence of this phenomenon. But, in fact, it offers only the theory (and a brief history) of the Romantic and modernist grotesque and, strictly speaking, of the modernist grotesque alone, since Kayser sees the Romantic grotesque

[100] Cf. Bakhtin's brief notes on Jarry and surrealism in his "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 1996a, 119; forthcoming-a), based on encyclopedia entries (Romov 1930; Rykova 1939).

[101] Bakhtin's page references are to Kayser (1960). The original (1957) edition of the book had a slightly different title (*Das Groteske: Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung*), which Bakhtin appears to have been unaware of (obtaining a copy of the book was a challenge, even in the 1960s; see Klyueva and Lisunova 2010, 29). For an English translation see Kayser (1963).

[(15)] W. Kayser's book was reissued (posthumously) in 1960–1961 in the "Rowohlts deutsche Enzyclopädie" series. Page references to the book below will be to this edition.

through the prism of the modernist grotesque and therefore has a somewhat skewed understanding and evaluation of it. As for the millennia of development of pre-Romantic grotesque—the grotesque archaics, the grotesque in antiquity (for instance, satyr plays or old Attic comedy), the medieval and Renaissance grotesque, linked to folk laughter—Kayser's theory is absolutely inapplicable to them. Indeed, in his book Kayser does not touch on these phenomena (he merely names some of them in passing). He bases all his conclusions and generalizations on the analysis of Romantic and modernist grotesque, and it is the latter which, as we have said, determines Kayser's conception. Hence, the genuine nature of the grotesque, which cannot be separated from the unitary world of folk laughter culture and a carnival sense of the world, was not understood. In the Romantic grotesque, this nature is weakened, impoverished, and reinterpreted to a significant degree. And yet, even in the Romantic grotesque, all the basic themes, which clearly have their origin in carnival, retain a certain memory of that mighty whole, fragments of which they once were. This memory is indeed awakened in the best works of the Romantic grotesque (most forcefully, although in different ways, in Sterne and Hoffmann). These works are more powerful, deeper—and *more joyful*—than the subjective-philosophical worldview expressed in them. However, Kayser is unaware of this genre memory,[102] and he is not looking for it. The modernist grotesque, which sets the tone for his conception, has almost entirely lost this memory and has almost maximally formalized the carnival heritage of grotesque themes and symbols.

So, according to Kayser, what are the basic distinguishing features of grotesque imagery?

Kayser's definitions first of all strike us with the overall gloomy and scary, the frightening tone of the grotesque world, which is all that this scholar detects in it. In reality, such a tone is completely alien to the entire development of the grotesque up to the Romantic period. We have already noted that the medieval and Renaissance grotesque, permeated by a carnival sense of the world, liberates the world from all that is scary and frightening, makes it maximally unscary and therefore maximally merry and bright. All that was scary and frightening in the ordinary world is turned into merry "laughable bogeymen" in the carnival world. Fear is the extreme expression of one-sided and stupid seriousness, which is defeated by laughter (we will discuss a marvelous elaboration of this theme in Rabelais's novel, in particular with the "Malbruk theme").[103] Only in a maximally unscary world is the utmost limit of freedom, characteristic of the grotesque, possible.

[102] The notion of genre as a carrier of historical memory in literature is one of the most prominent (and relatively well-known) ideas Bakhtin developed in the early 1960s, especially in the second edition of his book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984, 106, 121).

[103] The "Malbruk theme" is a reference to scatology, and in particular, to death during or by defecation. The French folk song "Marlbrough s'en va-t'en guerre" (set to the same tune as "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow") originally celebrated the (falsely rumored) death in battle of the English general John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough. The song became popular in Russia during the 1812 invasion of Napoleon's army (now with Napoleon as "Marlbrough," pronounced "Mal'brug," and later "Mal'bruk"),

For Kayser, by contrast, the most important thing in the grotesque world is "the ominous, alienating, and inhuman" ("das Unheimliche, das Verfremdete und Unmenschliche," p. 81).[104]

He particularly stresses the element of alienation: "The grotesque is the estranged world" ("das Groteske ist die entfremdete Welt," p. 136).[105] Kayser elucidates this definition by drawing a comparison between the grotesque and the world of the fairy tale. After all, the fairy tale world, if viewed from the outside, can also be defined as alien and unusual, but it is not a world that *has become* estranged. In the grotesque, however, that which was our own, kindred, and close to us suddenly becomes alien and hostile. It is precisely *our own* world that suddenly becomes *alien*.

This definition of Kayser's can be applied only to some phenomena of modernist grotesque, but it becomes not fully adequate when applied to the Romantic grotesque and is already entirely inapplicable to the preceding stages of the grotesque's development.

In fact, the grotesque, including the Romantic grotesque, reveals the possibility of an entirely *different* world, of a different world order, a different way of life. It leads out of the confines of the seeming (and false) uniqueness,[106] indisputability, and immutability of the existing world. Born of the folk laughter culture, the grotesque in principle always—in one form or another, through these or other means—plays out the return of Saturn's golden age to earth, the *living possibility* of its return. The Romantic grotesque does this too (otherwise it would no longer have been grotesque), but in the subjective forms typical for it. The existing world suddenly turns out to be alien (to use Kayser's terminology) precisely because the possibility of a genuinely kindred world, of the world of the "golden age," of carnival truth, is revealed. Man returns unto himself.

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and it was one of the Russian variants that introduced the scatological theme of death by diarrhea, which Bakhtin is alluding to here, into the song's lyrics. The song is mentioned in such classics of Russian literature as Gogol's *Dead Souls* (ch. 3), Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (part 5, ch. 5), and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (part 1, ch. 35 and part 6, ch. 4). Later still, a fully scatological version of the song (or rather, a new verse based on the first line of the song) emerged, where Malbruk shits himself, dies, and is buried with his besmirched uniform where the toilet booth used to stand. This verse gained popularity. It was alluded to, in quite explicit terms, by Lazar' Moyseevich Kaganovich, a senior state official, in a speech at the eighteenth National Congress of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party in March 1939 (as a warning to Japan against attacking the USSR). The relevant quote from that speech, illustrated with a caricature, was printed on postcards, so the verse, and its explicit association with death by defecation, was on people's minds at the time. I am grateful to Svetlana Anatol'evna Dubrovskaya for her help with locating this information.

[104] Kayser (1963, 103).

[105] Kayser (1963, 184; the phrase is emphasized in the original).

[106] The word "uniqueness" (*edinstvennost'*) may serve here as a connection to Bakhtin's early philosophy, in which it is a central term (especially in Bakhtin 1993, where the term is usually rendered as "once-occurrence"). In Bakhtin's early terms, the claim made here can be restated roughly thus: The world as it exists today, as it is *given* to me, is only seemingly unique (in the sense of being the only one possible), but a different world or reality is *posited* before me, as an ethical and aesthetic task to be accomplished. See also note 18 to chapter 7.

The existing world is destroyed to be born again and renewed. While dying, the world gives birth. The relative nature of all that exists is always merry in the grotesque, and it is always permeated by the joy of succession, even where (as in Romanticism) this merriment and this joy are reduced to their minimum.

Let us emphasize once more that the utopian aspect ("the golden age") in the pre-Romantic grotesque is revealed not to abstract thought nor to inner experience, but rather, it is played out and lived out by the *whole* human being, by the human being *as a whole*, by thought, feeling, and *body*. This bodily partaking in the possible other world, its bodily comprehensibility, is of immense significance to the grotesque.

In Kayser's conception, however, there is no room at all for the material-bodily domain with its inexhaustibility and eternal renewability. His conception has neither time nor successions nor crises in it—that is, it lacks everything that happens to the sun, to the earth, to man, and to human society, which in fact is what genuine grotesque lives by.

Also highly characteristic of modernist grotesque is this definition that Kayser provides: "the grotesque [is] the objectivation of the 'It' " (p. 137).[107]

Kayser understands the "It" not so much in the Freudian as in the existentialist spirit.[108] The "It" is an alien, nonhuman force, governing the world, people, their life, and their deeds. Kayser reduces many of the basic grotesque themes, such as the marionette, to a feeling of this force. He also reduces the theme of madness to the same. According to Kayser, we always sense something alien in the madman, as if some inhuman spirit had entered his soul. We have already said that the theme of madness is used in the grotesque in a completely different manner: to free oneself from the false "truth of this world" in order to look at the world with eyes *free* of this "truth."

Kayser himself speaks multiple times of the *freedom* of fantasy characteristic of the grotesque. But how is such freedom possible in regard to a world dominated by the alien force of the "It"? Herein lies the insurmountable contradiction of Kayser's conception.

In reality, the grotesque sets one free from all the forms of nonhuman necessity that permeate prevailing notions about the world. The grotesque decrowns this necessity as relative and limited. Necessity, in every picture of the world that prevails at any given period, always presents itself as something monolithically serious, unconditional, and indisputable. But historically, perceptions of necessity are always relative and volatile. The principle of laughter and the carnival sense of the world, on which the grotesque is based, destroy limited seriousness and all claims that perceptions of necessity may have to an extratemporal validity and unconditionality, and free human consciousness, thought, and imagination for new possibilities. This is why great upheavals, even in the field of science, are always preceded by a certain degree of the carnivalization of consciousness, preparing for them.

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[107] Kayser (1963, 185).

[108] Both in the original German and in Russian, Freud's term "the id" is the same word (the neutral

In the grotesque world, any "It" is decrowned and turned into a "laughable bogeyman." When entering this world—be it even the world of the Romantic grotesque—we always sense a certain special kind of merry unfetteredness of thought and imagination.

Let us examine two more aspects of Kayser's conception.

Summing up his analysis, he asserts that "the grotesque instills fear of life rather than fear of death."[109]

This assertion, expressed in the spirit of existentialism, contains, first of all, an opposition between life and death. Such an opposition is completely alien to the grotesque system of images. In this system, death is not at all a negation of life, understood in the grotesque sense, as life of the great communal body of the people. Death here enters the totality of life as its necessary element, as the condition of its constant renewal and rejuvenation. Death here is always correlated with birth, the grave—with the earth's womb that gives birth. Birth-death, death-birth—these are the defining (constitutive) moments of life itself, as in the famous words of the Earth Spirit in Goethe's *Faust.*(16)[110] Death is included in life, and alongside birth determines its eternal movement. Even the struggle of life and death in the individual body is understood by grotesque image-based thinking as the struggle of an obstinate old life with a new life being born (about to be born), as a crisis that is part of succession.

Leonardo da Vinci said: the man who with constant longing awaits with joy each new spring time and new year does not perceive that he is longing for his own demise.[111]

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singular pronoun *Es*) as the one used here by Kayser.

[109] Kayser (1963, 185).

[110] Goethe's lines in English (translated by Bayard Taylor; Goethe 1872, 20): "*Birth* and the *Grave* / An eternal sea, / A weaving, flowing / *Life*, all-glowing."

[111] Based on a paragraph in one of Leonardo da Vinci's manuscripts (see da Vinci 1970, 2:291, §1162). Bakhtin's direct source is unclear. A Russian edition of Leonardo's notebooks was published in 1935, also containing the passage paraphrased here (da Vinci 1935, 1:152), though the wording of the Russian translation differs considerably from Bakhtin's paraphrase.

We know Bakhtin took some interest in Da Vinci and his work. As a young man, he delivered a public talk on "Leonardo's worldview" (Osovsky and Kirzhaeva 2020, 93; also mentioned in Clark and Holquist 1984, 42; and, notably, Bakhtin vividly remembered this event in his later years; see Bakhtin and Duvakin 2019, 220).

(16) Here are these lines:
"*Geburt* und *Grab*,
Ein ewiges meer
Ein wechselnd Weben,
Ein glühend *Leben.*"

There is no *counter*position between life and death here, but rather a *juxta*position between *birth and the grave*, equally linked to the procreating and devouring womb of the earth and of the body, and equally included as necessary elements in the living whole of life as it is forever succeeded and renewed. All this is very characteristic of Goethe's sense of the world. A world in which life and death are counterposed and a world in which birth and the grave are juxtaposed are two completely different worlds. The latter is the world of folk culture and is in part Goethe's world.

Although this aphorism of da Vinci's is not expressed in grotesque form, it is based on a carnival sense of the world.

Thus, in the system of grotesque imagery, death and renewal are inseparable in the totality of life as a whole, and the last thing this whole can do is inspire fear.

It should also be said that the image of death in medieval and Renaissance grotesque (including the visual medium, as in the "Dance of Death" works by Holbein or Dürer)[112] always contains in it an element of laughter. It is always—to a greater or lesser degree—a laughable bogeyman. In the centuries that followed, especially in the nineteenth century, people almost entirely lost the ability to hear the laughter element in such images; they were perceived on a one-sidedly serious plane, where they became flat and distorted. The bourgeois nineteenth century had respect only for satirical laughter, which was in its essence an unlaughing rhetorical laughter, serious and didactic (no wonder it was compared to a whip or a cane). Merely entertaining laughter, thoughtless and harmless, was also tolerated. But all things serious had to be serious—that is, linear and flat in tone.

The theme of death as renewal, the combination of death and birth, and images of merry deaths play an essential role in the image system of Rabelais's novel. We shall submit them to a concrete analysis in later parts of our book.

The last aspect of Kayser's conception that we shall consider is his interpretation of grotesque laughter. He formulates it as follows: "Filled with bitterness, [laughter] takes on characteristics of mocking, cynical, and ultimately satanic laughter while turning into the grotesque."[113]

We see that Kayser understands laughter entirely in the spirit of Bonaventura's "night watchman" and of Jean Paul's theory of "annihilating humor"—that is, in the spirit of the Romantic grotesque. The merry, liberating, and reviving aspect of laughter, which is precisely its creative aspect, is absent. That said, Kayser is aware of the full complexity of the problem of laughter in the grotesque and abstains from offering an unequivocal solution for it (op. cit., see p. 139).[114]

Such is Kayser's book. As we have said, the grotesque is the prevailing form of various currents in contemporary modernism. Kayser's conception, in effect, provides a theoretical grounding for this modernist grotesque. With some caveats, it can still illuminate certain aspects of the Romantic grotesque. But we find it entirely unacceptable to extend it to the other periods in the development of grotesque imagery.

The problem of the grotesque and its aesthetic essence can be correctly posed and resolved only based on an examination of medieval folk culture and Renaissance liter-

[112] Flögel brings Holbein's Death Dances as an example of the grotesque comic in the visual arts (Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 419), though Dürer is not mentioned in that context. Indeed, there is only one woodcut on that subject attributed to Dürer (printed in the 1493 incunabula *Die Schedelsche Weltchronik*). This text has been added to the book in 1965, so establishing a clear source may not be possible.

[113] Kayser (1963, 187).

[114] Kayser (1963, 187).

ature, and the illuminating significance of Rabelais in this respect is indeed very great. The genuine depth, polysemy, and potency of individual grotesque themes can be understood only when considered within the unity of folk culture and the carnival sense of the world; if considered in separation from this unity, they become unequivocal, flat, and impoverished.

That we can justifiably apply the term "grotesque" to the special type of imagery found in medieval folk culture and the Renaissance literature linked to it is not subject to doubt. But how justified is our term "grotesque *realism*"?

Here, in the introduction, we can offer only a preliminary answer to this question.

The features that so sharply distinguish medieval and Renaissance grotesque from Romantic and modernist grotesque—first and foremost their spontaneously materialistic and spontaneously dialectical understanding of being—can be most adequately defined as *realistic*. Our concrete analyses of grotesque images in what follows will confirm this proposition.

Renaissance grotesque imagery, directly linked to carnival folk culture—in Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare—has had a definitive influence on all the major realistic literature of the following centuries. Grand style realism (the realism of Stendhal, Balzac, Hugo, Dickens, and others) has always been linked (directly or indirectly) with the Renaissance tradition, whereas severing this connection has inevitably led to the shallowing-out of realism, to its degeneration into naturalistic empiricism.

As early as the seventeenth century, some forms of the grotesque begin to degenerate into static "typicalness" and narrow genre art. This degeneration has to do with the specific limitedness of the bourgeois worldview. The last thing one can say of the genuine grotesque is that it is static; on the contrary, it precisely seeks to capture in its images the very process of becoming, growth, the eternal incompleteness and unsettled nature of being. It therefore offers in its images both poles of becoming at once—the departing and the new, the dying and the nascent; it shows two bodies in one, the budding and the division of the living cell of life. Here, at the heights of grotesque and folklore realism, as in the death of single-celled organisms, no dead body ever remains (the death of a single-celled organism coincides with its reproduction, i.e., with its division into two cells, two organisms, without any "waste products of death"). Here, old age gestates, death is pregnant, all that is limitedly typical, solidified, fully formed is thrust into the bodily nethers for recasting and a new birth. By contrast, in the process of grotesque realism's degeneration and disintegration, the positive pole—that is, the second youthful link in the chain of becoming—drops off (it is replaced by the moral dictum and the abstract concept); what remains is purely a corpse, old age deprived of pregnancy, pure, coinciding with itself, isolated, torn apart from that growing whole in which it had been linked to the next youthful link in the unitary chain of development and growth. The result is a broken-off grotesque, the figure of a fertility demon with phallus cut off and stomach pressed in. Hence, all these sterile images of the "typical," all these "professional" types of lawyers, merchants, matchmakers, old men and women, and so on, all these masks of realism in a process of shallowing out

and degenerating. All these types were there in grotesque realism too, but they were not used to construct a picture of life *as a whole*; in grotesque realism they still were nothing more than the dying-off part of birthing life.[115] The point is that the new conception of realism has a different way of drawing the boundaries between all bodies and things. It cuts double-bodied bodies apart and cuts off the ingrown things that are fused with the body in grotesque and folklore realism; it seeks to bring each individual to completion apart from its link with the *ultimate whole*, for which the old image has already been lost, while a new one has not yet been found. How time was understood has also substantially changed.

The so-called "bourgeois realism" literature of the seventeenth century (Sorel, Scarron, Furetière)[116] was, alongside genuinely carnival elements, already filled with such images of a halted grotesque—that is, of a grotesque almost removed from time writ large,[117] from the stream of becoming—and therefore either frozen in its duality or split in two. Certain scholars (for instance, Reynier)[118] are inclined to interpret this as the beginning of realism, as its first steps. In fact, these are all but the debris—which have become mortified and almost lost of all meaning—of the mighty and deep grotesque realism.

We already noted early in this introduction that both different individual phenomena of medieval folk laughter culture and particular genres of grotesque realism have been studied fairly fully and thoroughly, but, of course, they were studied from the point of view of the cultural-historical and literary-history methods prevailing in scholarship in the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century. Naturally, these studies dealt not only with literary works but also with such specific phenomena as the "feasts of fools" (F. Bourquelot, G. Dreves, Villetard, and others),[119]

[115] This passage may involve a hidden polemic with Freidenberg, who viewed traditional character types in literature as vestiges of the mythological images of the deep past and viewed their prevalence in European literature, from classical antiquity up to the eighteenth century, as a form of stagnation (see especially the last pages of her book; Freidenberg 1997b, 294–99).

[116] The Russian term Bakhtin uses for this group of writers is *bytovoy realizm*, which translates literally as "everyday-life realism" or "quotidian realism." This term appears to have been adopted from the title of an article by M. P. Alekseev (1946; Bakhtin's text here originates in a passage first added to the manuscript in the 1949–1950 round of revisions, so after 1946), who applied it to precisely the three authors Bakhtin lists, in that order. The equivalent French term, however, is "réalisme bourgeois," as used, for instance, by Reynier (1914, 119–127), whose work Bakhtin goes on to cite shortly. The literal translation of this term into Russian (as *burzhuazny realizm*), in the Soviet period, would be automatically understood to refer to a much broader category of literary and artistic works, which is why both Alekseev and Bakhtin were forced to avoid it.

[117] *bol'shoe vremya*. This term (translated as "great time") is best known from Bakhtin's latest notes (especially the notes assembled in the now-disbanded Bakhtin 1986e), though, as we see, the term was already in use earlier (and indeed made an appearance in Bakhtin's writings as early as ca. 1937; see Bakhtin 2012b, 247).

[118] Reynier (1914).

[119] The bibliography that Bakhtin appended to the manuscript when submitted as a dissertation in 1946 lists four works by these authors (de Corbeil 1856, 1907; Villetard 1911; and Dreves 1894; see Bakhtin 2008d, 509). These references are, however, copied from Ilvonen (1914, 7, 17) and Lehmann

"Easter laughter" (J. Schmidt, S. Reinach, and others),[120] "sacred parody" (F. Novati, E. Ilvonen, P. Lehmann),[121] and other phenomena, which strictly speaking, lie outside the sphere of art and literature. Various manifestations of the laughter culture of antiquity were, of course, studied as well (A. Dieterich, H. Reich, F. Cornford).[122] Folklorists also did much to elucidate the origin and character of individual themes and symbols that form part of folk laughter culture (it is sufficient to mention Frazer's monumental work *The Golden Bough*). Overall, the extent of the scholarly literature connected with folk laughter culture is immense.[(17)123] In the course of our present study, we shall refer to relevant works on particular topics.

But all this enormous literature, with a few rare exceptions, is devoid of *theoretical verve*. It does not seek to make any even modestly broad theoretical generalizations

(1922, 137, 166): they appear exactly in the form found in Bakhtin's actual sources (although "Dreves" is misspelled as "Drews"—probably a misreading of Bakhtin's handwritten notes). It is very unlikely Bakhtin was able to consult these works directly, especially since two of them are musicological editions of the same thirteenth-century manuscript (one edited by Bourquelot, the other by Villetard, who even contests the identification of that manuscript with the Feast of Fools in the book's subtitle—a subtitle not included in the citation Bakhtin copied).

[120] The 1946 bibliography (Bakhtin 2008d, 509–510) cites Salomon Reinach's article "Le rire rituel" (Reinach 1912) and then separately cites a small addendum to this article (Reinach 1912, 127–129) dealing with Easter laughter. Most of that addendum consists of a long quote from an eigteenth-century Latin booklet by J. P. Schmidt (1747). In citing this text, Reinach erroneously gives the author's surname as "Schmid," and the publication year as 1847, which makes Reinach a likely source for the citation found in Bakhtin's bibliography (which also has 1847 as the year and, for some reason, "Smid," but transliterated in the book itself as *Shmid*, as the surname). Missing from the list of references is an article on Easter laughter by Hanns Fluck (1934), which is frequently cited in other works when discussing the topic, including, notably, by Freidenberg (1997b). Fluck's article and Schmidt's booklet have nearly identical titles, which raises the possibility that Bakhtin remembered, but did not copy, the Fluck reference from reading Freidenberg but was later unable to locate it and ended up mistaking the reference to Schmidt, which he did find, for it.

[121] As noted above, Ilvonen (1914) and Lehmann (1922) are among Bakhtin's main secondary sources, while Novati (1889) is cited by both of them.

[122] Both Reich (1903, a book Bakhtin goes on to discuss shortly) and Dieterich (1897) are among Bakhtin's main secondary sources for the book. There is, however, no evidence that Bakhtin made use of any works by Francis Macdonald Cornford while working on the book. Instead, Cornford (like Frazer, mentioned later in the paragraph) is among the authors frequently cited and mentioned by Freidenberg (1997b), who refers to three works by Cornford (1907, 1912, 1914) in her book.

[123] The footnote explicitly citing Freidenberg (1997b)—one of Bakhtin's most significant sources—was added to the book in 1965 and was absent from all earlier manuscripts. This is hardly surprising, since the book was vehemently denounced in the USSR's second-largest daily newspaper shortly after publication (see Moss 1997, 4; Perlina 2002, 159–162), and while Freidenberg successfully appealed to Party authorities to stop the nascent campaign against her and return the book into circulation, that latter fact was not publicized in the daily press.

[(17)] Among Soviet works, O. Freidenberg's book, *The Poetics of Plot and Genre* (Goslitizdat, 1936), is very valuable. This work collects an immense body of folklore material directly related to folk laughter culture (predominantly in antiquity). But this material is mainly interpreted in the spirit of theories of prelogical thinking, and the problem of folk laughter culture is not posed in the book.

grounded in principle. As a result, all the well-neigh immeasurable, carefully collected, and often scrupulously studied material remains without a unifying framework and without a comprehension of its meaning. That which we have called the unitary world of folk laughter culture appears here as some sort of assemblage of disparate curiosities, and in spite of its immense quantity, it is quite impossible to include it in any "serious" history of European culture and literature. It—this assemblage of curiosities and indecencies—remains outside the circle of those "serious" creative problems, which European humanity has been working to solve. With such an approach, it is quite understandable that the mighty influence of folk laughter culture on the belles lettres as a whole, on humanity's "image-based thinking" as such, remains almost entirely unexplored.

Here, we shall briefly discuss only two studies, which in fact do also pose theoretical problems, and do so in such a way as to touch upon our problem of folk laughter culture from two different directions.

In 1903, Hermann Reich published his voluminous work titled *The Mime: A Study in the History of Literary Development* (see footnote on p. 28).

The object of Reich's study is essentially the folk laughter culture of antiquity and the Middle Ages. He presents an immense, most interesting and valuable body of material. He correctly reveals the unity of the laughter tradition throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages. Finally, he grasps the primordial and essential link that laughter has with images of the material-bodily nethers. All this permits Reich to approach, quite closely, a correct and productive posing of the problem of folk laughter culture.

And yet, he never actually posed this problem itself. There were, it seems to us, two reasons that hindered him from doing so.

First, Reich attempts to reduce the entire history of laughter culture to the history of the mime—that is, to a single laughter-based genre, albeit a fairly characteristic one, especially for late antiquity. For Reich, the mime turns out to be the center, practically the only bearer, of laughter culture. It is to the influence of the ancient mime that Reich

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Bakhtin's characterization of Freidenberg as interpreting the materials being discussed "in the spirit of theories of prelogical thinking" ("prelogical thinking," in the Soviet context, is a term identified with the followers of Nikolay Marr, with whom Freidenberg was indeed institutionally connected) has come under scrutiny. Nina Perlina (2011, 216–217, 220) argues that Bakhtin either failed to fully understand Freidenberg's thesis or, at the very least, used this slight-of-hand critical assessment to avoid getting into an extended polemic with Freidenberg. The latter claim obviously has much to it, as Freidenberg is not mentioned anywhere else in the book. However, in my reading (and see a more detailed discussion in the preface), Bakhtin did use his brief remarks on Freidenberg in this footnote to point precisely to the very core of his disagreement with her. Freidenberg consistently views the many mythical and folkloric elements she finds in literature from classical antiquity up to the eighteenth century as vestiges of a long-gone worldview that are holding the development of literature back. Bakhtin, by contrast, focuses on all those elements but views them as radically progressive, even as embodying a vision of the future world as it ought to be. They are not, according to Bakhtin, to be interpreted as "prelogical," in the sense of being later *superseded* by logical thinking (and cf. Bakhtin's use of the term "prelogical thinking" in a related context in the text quoted in note 46 to chapter 3), but are, instead, to be found, even in his own day, in any *advancement* made in the spheres of literature and art.

traces back both all of the folk-festive forms and the laughter-based literature of the Middle Ages. In his search for the ancient mime's influences, he even goes beyond the realm of European culture. All this leads to inevitable strained interpretations and to ignoring all that does not fit into the procrustean bed of the mime. It should be noted that Reich himself nevertheless sometimes fails to remain true to his own conception: the material he examines overflows and forces the author to stray beyond the narrow confines of the mime.

Second, Reich somewhat modernizes and impoverishes both laughter and the closely linked material-bodily domain. In Reich's conception, laughter's positive elements—its power to liberate and usher in rebirth—sound somewhat muffled (even though Reich knows the philosophy of laughter in antiquity all too well). And laughter's universalism and its philosophical and utopian nature are not properly understood and evaluated in Reich's work either. But it is the material-bodily domain that appears particularly impoverished in his conception: Reich examines it through the prism of the abstract and differentiating thought of modern times and therefore understands it narrowly, almost naturalistically.

Such are the two main elements that in our opinion weaken Reich's conception. Nevertheless, Reich did much to lay the groundwork for a correct approach to the problem of folk laughter culture. It is regrettable that his work, so rich in new material, so bold and original in its thinking, did not exercise the influence it deserved at the time.

We will have occasion to refer to Reich's work multiple times in what follows.

The second study that we touch on here is a small volume published by Konrad Burdach, titled "Reformation, Renaissance, Humanism" (Konrad Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, Berlin, 1918).[124] This book also comes close to posing the problem of folk culture in some degree, but in an entirely different manner from Reich's book. It contains not a word about laughter or the material-bodily domain. Its only protagonist is the idea-image of "rebirth," "renewal," "reformation."

In his book, Burdach shows how this idea-image of rebirth (in its manifold variations), initially conceived in the most ancient mythological thought of the Eastern peoples and of antiquity, continued to live and develop throughout the entire Middle Ages. It was also being preserved in the cult of the Church (in the liturgy, in the baptism ritual, and elsewhere) but remained there in a state of dogmatic petrification.

[124] As Popova (2008a, 859; 2010a, 602) notes, Bakhtin read and summarized Burdach (1918) while working on the original 1940 manuscript of the book, most likely after encountering multiple citations and discussions of this work in Cassirer's *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (see especially Cassirer 1963, 67). However, Burdach's influence on Bakhtin's text remains purely conceptual. The notion that carnival and carnival imagery embody a distinct sense of *time* can perhaps be linked indirectly to Burdach's ideas, and both authors agree that the Renaissance should be understood as a continuation of trends in medieval thought and culture, rather than a clean break from them, but I was not able to identify any passages in the text based on Burdach more closely. The 1940 manuscript cited Burdach once in a subsequently removed footnote (Bakhtin 2008a, 42), and the relatively detailed discussion of Burdach (1918) that follows first appears in the 1965 text.

From the time of the religious revival of the twelfth century (Joachim of Fiore, Francis of Assisi, and the Spiritual Franciscans)[125] this image-based idea comes back to life, penetrates into wider popular circles, acquires the hue of purely human emotions, awakens the poetic and artistic imagination, becomes the expression of a growing thirst for rebirth and renewal in the purely earthly, worldly sphere—that is, in the sphere of political, social, and artistic life (see p. 55).

Burdach retraces the slow and gradual process of secularization[126] (of becoming more worldly) that the idea-image of rebirth underwent in the work of Dante, in the ideas and activity of Cola di Rienzo, in Petrarch, Boccaccio, and others.

Burdach correctly believes that such a historical phenomenon as the Renaissance could not have arisen as a result of the purely epistemic explorations and intellectual efforts of some individuals. He makes this point thus:

> Humanism and the Renaissance are not products of knowledge (Produkte des Wissens). They did not emerge because scholars discovered the lost literary and artistic monuments of antiquity, and wished to bring them back to life. Humanism and the Renaissance sprang from the passionate and boundless expectation and yearning of an *aging* epoch, whose soul, shaken in its innermost depths, was thirsting for *a new youth.* (p. 138)

Burdach is, of course, completely correct in refusing to trace the Renaissance back to, and explain it by, scholarly and bookish sources, individual ideological pursuits, and "intellectual efforts." He is also correct in stating that the Renaissance was being prepared for throughout the Middle Ages (and especially from the twelfth century on). And finally, he correctly points out that the word "renaissance" did not at all mean "the rebirth of the sciences and arts of antiquity" but, rather, that there was an immense polysemous conglomeration of meaning standing behind this word, rooted in the very depths of humanity's ritual-spectacle, image-based, intellectual-ideological thought. However, Burdach failed to see and grasp the main realm of being for the idea-image of rebirth—the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages. The yearning for

[125] The Spiritual Franciscans (also referred to as Fraticelli, though both terms are used to refer to a few related groups, and some sources make a distinction between the two designations) were a faction within the Franciscan monastic order in the thirteenth century, as well as a heretical movement that subsequently developed from that faction. The Spirituals were *not* listed in the passage Bakhtin summarizes here from Burdach (1918, 55, who instead puts St. Dominic on his otherwise-identical list of names), and their inclusion here reflects Bakhtin's own interest in this religious movement, especially in the 1960s (Bakhtin, forthcoming-b). Popova (2002, 520–522) documents Bakhtin's references to the Spirituals in texts and conversations (based on the published recollections of Bakhtin's interlocutors), where he especially stresses their antidogmatic and antiauthoritarian understanding of religious truth and of the human being's relation to God and expresses his own solidarity with these views. Burdach does mention and discuss the Spiritual Franciscans in other places in his book, though, and indeed, Burdach's account may well have been a significant source Bakhtin relied on in attributing to the Spirituals the positions in question (see, e.g., Burdach 1918, 48).

[126] Cf. Cassirer (1963, 67).

renewal and a new birth, the "thirsting for a new youth" pervaded the carnival sense of the world and were embodied in multifarious concrete sensual forms of folk culture (both ritual-spectacle ones and verbal ones). In this could be found the second, festive life of the Middle Ages.

Many of the phenomena that Burdach examines in his book as laying the groundwork for the Renaissance themselves reflected the influence of folk laughter culture and anticipated the spirit of the Renaissance to the extent that they were under this influence. Such were, for instance, Joachim of Fiore and especially Francis of Assisi and the movement he founded. Not without cause did Francis refer to himself and his supporters as "joculators of the Lord" ("ïoculatores Domini").[127] Francis's idiosyncratic worldview, with its "spiritual merriment" ("laetitia spiritualis"),[128] the blessing it gave to the material-bodily domain, with its distinctive Franciscan lowerings and profanations, can be called (with some exaggeration) a *carnivalized* Catholicism. Elements of a carnival sense of the world were also quite strong in all of Cola di Rienzo's endeavors. Inherent in all these phenomena, which according to Burdach prepared for the Renaissance, is the liberating and renewing laughter principle, though at times in a form that has been reduced to the limit. But this principle is something Burdach entirely fails to take into account. Only the serious tonality exists for him.

Thus, Burdach too, as he sought to understand more correctly the relation of the Renaissance to the Middle Ages, lays the ground—in his own way—for posing the problem of medieval folk laughter culture.

This is how our problem is posed. However, the immediate object of our study is not folk laughter culture but, rather, the work of François Rabelais. Folk laughter culture is in fact too vast to survey and, as we have seen, exceptionally heterogeneous in its manifestations. As far as this culture is concerned, our task is purely theoretical—to reveal the unity and meaning of this culture, its general ideological—that is, philosophical—and aesthetic essence. This task can be best tackled in the place—that is, based on such concrete material—where folk laughter culture has been collected, concentrated, and has become an object of artistic awareness at its highest Renaissance level—namely, in the work of Rabelais. To penetrate into the deepest essence of folk laughter culture, Rabelais is indispensable. In his creative world, the inner unity of all the heterogeneous elements of this culture is revealed with extraordinary clarity. After all, his work is an entire encyclopedia of folk culture.

However, while using Rabelais's work for the purpose of revealing the essence of folk laughter culture, by no means do we turn him merely into a means for attaining some goal that is extraneous to him. On the contrary, we are deeply convinced that only in this way—that is, only in the light of folk culture—can we discover the genuine Rabelais, show the Rabelais within Rabelais. Up to now, he has been merely

[127] Burdach (1918, 47).

[128] Burdach (1918, 47). More generally, this entire paragraph reformulates the information provided by Burdach about several of the historical figures he discusses using the concepts Bakhtin develops in this book.

modernized: he has been read through the eyes of the modern age (primarily through the eyes of the nineteenth century, which were the least receptive to folk culture); Rabelais has been read selectively, focusing only on that which for Rabelais himself and his contemporaries—and, indeed, *objectively*—was the least essential. Rabelais's exceptional charm (a charm anyone can feel) remains unexplained to this day. For this purpose, it is necessary first of all to understand Rabelais's peculiar language—that is, the language of folk laughter culture.

With this, we can end our introduction. But to all its main themes and assertions, which were expressed here in a somewhat abstract and at times declarative manner, we will return in the main body of this work. We will make them fully concrete, drawing on examples both from Rabelais's novel and from other phenomena of the Middle Ages and antiquity, which served as his direct or indirect sources.

1. Rabelais in the History of Laughter

> It would be extraordinarily interesting to write the history of laughter.
>
> —A. I. Herzen[1]

The four-century-long history of the understanding, influence, and interpretation of Rabelais is highly instructive: it is closely intertwined with the history of laughter itself, its functions, and the way it was understood over the same time period.

Rabelais's contemporaries (and indeed almost the entire sixteenth century), who lived in the circle of similar folk, literary, and general ideological traditions, under the same conditions and experiencing the same events of that time, somehow understood our author and were able to appreciate him. Testifying to the high regard in which Rabelais was held are the surviving opinions of his contemporaries and of people who lived shortly afterwards,[(18)][2] as well as the frequent reprinting of his books in the sixteenth century and in the first third of the seventeenth century. Moreover, Rabelais was held in high regard not only in humanist circles, at court, and in the uppermost layers of the urban bourgeoisie, but also among the broad popular masses. I shall quote

[1] Herzen (2012, 69). This epigraph was added to the text in the 1949–1950 round of revisions, together with a footnote discussing a longer passage that this quote is part of later in the chapter (see note 86 below). Soviet historian Nikolay Pavlovich Antsiferov highlighted this passage in a dedicatory inscription on a copy of a volume of Herzen's writings, which he gave Bakhtin on the day of his dissertation defense in 1946 (on this, see Dubrovskaya and Osovsky 2020). I am grateful to Svetlana Dubrovskaya and her colleagues from the Bakhtin Center at the Mordovia State University in Saransk for bringing this information to my attention.

[2] Of the sources cited in this footnote, Sainéan (1930) and Boulenger (1925) are among Bakhtin's main go-to sources for the information he provides in this chapter. By contrast, it is unlikely Bakhtin could gain direct access to the two journals, though papers published in them are cited extensively in Bakhtin's sources in French. The more general information about these journals provided here most likely comes from Lote (1938, 552–553, 561).

[(18)] Rabelais's posthumous history, that is, the history of his understanding, interpretation, and influence through the centuries, has been fairly well studied in its factual aspect. Besides a long series of valuable publications in the *Revue des études rabelaisiennes* (from 1903 to 1913) and in the *Revue du seizième siècle* (from 1913 to 1932), two books have been devoted specifically to this history: Jacques Boulenger, *Rabelais à travers les âges*, Paris, le Divan, 1925; Lazare Sainéan, *L'influence et la réputation de Rabelais (Interprètes, lecteurs et imitateurs)*, Paris, J. Gamber, 1930. Collected here, of course, are also remarks on Rabelais by his contemporaries.

an interesting comment by one of Rabelais's younger contemporaries, the remarkable historian (and writer) Étienne Pasquier. In a letter to Ronsard he writes:

> Among us there is no one who does not know how much the learned Rabelais, *frolicking wisely* (en folastrant sagement) in his "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel," gained love among the people (gaigna de grace parmy le peuple).(19)[3]

The most striking testimony to the fact that Rabelais was understood by and akin to his contemporaries are the numerous and deep marks of his influence and the multitude of imitations that his work inspired.[4] Nearly all the sixteenth-century prose writers who wrote after Rabelais (or more correctly speaking, after the publication of the first two volumes of his novel)—Bonaventure Des Périers, Noël du Fail, Guillaume Bouchet, Jacques Tahureau, Nicolas de Cholières, and others—were Rabelaisians to one degree or another. Neither did the historians of the period—Pasquier, Brantôme, Pierre de l'Estoile—escape his influence, nor did the Protestant polemicists and pamphleteers—Pierre Viret, Henri Estienne, and others. Sixteenth-century literature can even be said to have reached its culmination under the sign of Rabelais: in the field of political satire, it culminates in the remarkable *Menippean Satire on the Virtues of the Spanish Catholicon* (1594) directed against the Catholic League, one of the best political satires of world literature,(20)[5] and in the field of the belles lettres in the remarkable work *The Path to Success* by Béroalde de Verville(21)[6] (1612). Both these works, the culmination of a century, bear the imprint of Rabelais's substantial influence; the images in them, in spite of their heterogeneity, live an almost Rabelaisian grotesque life.

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[3] As Bakhtin writes, the quote is reproduced from Sainéan (1930, 100), who does not clarify which edition of Pasquier's letters he is citing. For the letter in full, see (Pasquier 1723, vol. 2, cols. 11–12).

[4] This and the following paragraphs are an overview of Sainéan (1930, 125–246).

[5] The *Satire Ménippée* (as it is also usually referred to in English; I was not able to find any published translation of the work) is discussed by Sainéan (1930, 156–157) and by Schneegans (1894, 348–355), who both provide a reference to the Frank (1884) edition of the text.

[6] *The Path to Success* (to use the title given to the book in a published English translation; Béroalde de Verville 2017) is discussed by Sainéan (1930, 136–137). The origin of the citation of the Royer edition (Béroalde de Verville 1896), given in the footnote, is less clear. The Royer edition used a shorter version of the title than the one reproduced by Bakhtin, and the year of publication is wrong (1896, not 1876, nor 1870, as it was given in the 1940 manuscript). One possible source might have been Sainéan (1927, 283–284), where there appears a list of different editions of this work, beginning with the original 1612 publication, with its full-length title (Sainéan recommends the Royer edition as best). Assuming Bakhtin had brief access to this book, he could have copied in bibliographical details

(19) Etienne Pasquier, *Lettres*, vol, 2. Quoted in Lazare Sainéan, op cit, p. 100.

(20) The satire has been reissued: Satyre Menippée de la Vertue du Catholicon d'Espagne ..., Éd., Frank, Oppeln, 1884. This is a reproduction of the first edition of 1594.

(21) Here is its full title: Béroalde de Verville, *Le moyen de parvenir, œuvres contenants la raison de ce qui a été, est et sera*, with commentary, variants, and a glossary by Charles Royer, Paris, 1876, in two small-size volumes.

Besides the major sixteenth century writers we named, who were able to refashion Rabelais's influence and retain their independence, we also find a great multitude of minor Rabelais imitators who left no independent mark on the period's literature.

It must moreover be stressed that success and recognition came to Rabelais immediately—during the very first months following the publication of "Pantagruel."[7]

What does this fast recognition, these enthusiastic (but by no means astonished) reviews by contemporaries, the tremendous influence on the major *topical* literature of the age—on learned humanists, historians, political and religious pamphleteers—and finally, the great mass of imitators, what does all this suggest?

Rabelais's contemporaries perceived his work against the backdrop of a living and still mighty tradition. They could be amazed by Rabelais's forcefulness and success but not by the very character of his images and style. They were able to see the *unity* of the Rabelaisian world; they knew how to sense the deep kinship and substantial interrelatedness of all the elements of this world, elements that in the seventeenth century already appeared starkly heterogeneous, and in the eighteenth completely incompatible—the high degree of topical relevance, philosophical ideas as part of dinner conversation, abuses and indecencies, base comic wordplay, learnedness, and farce. Rabelais's contemporaries grasped that integral logic that pervaded all these phenomena that in our eyes appear so alien to one another. They also vividly felt the link between Rabelais's imagery and the forms of folk spectacle, the specific festivity of these images, their deep immersion in a carnival atmosphere.[(22)8] In other words, Rabelais's contemporaries grasped the wholeness and consistence of the entire Rabelaisian artistic-ideological world, the unity of style and consonance of all the elements that composed it, as informed by one and the same perspective on the world, by a single grand style. Herein lies the essential difference between how Rabelais's writings were perceived in the sixteenth century and how they were perceived in the centuries that

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with some haste but then, mistakenly, included the year of a different two-volume edition on the list (a limited edition with an anonymous editor, published by Léon Willem in Paris in 1870; this later got "corrected" to 1876), which was also cited by Schneegans (1894, 287). Indeed, Schneegans might have been Bakhtin's original source for the citation, which he then supplemented with information from Sainéan (1927) without noticing that these are different editions of the book.

[7] See, e.g., Plattard (1930, 137–142).

[8] Bakhtin's footnote has a few inaccuracies; chief among them is that (according to the soruces Bakhtin cites [Boulenger 1925, 17; Sainéan 1930, 20]) the text read out at that occasion was not the anonymous *Chronicles of Gargantua*, but Rabelais's own "Pantagruel." Also, the banner caried the inscription: "Alcofribas le disoit bien" ("Alcofribas said it well"). Alcofribas Nasier—indeed, an anagram of "François Rabelais"—was the pseudonym under which the first books of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* were published.

(22) We have, for instance, a curious description of a grotesque celebration of the carnival type held in Rouen in 1541. A procession representing a mock funeral was led by a banner with the anagram of Rabelais's name, and later, during the festive meal, a participant dressed like a monk read the *Chronicles of Gargantua*, instead of the Bible. (See the above-cited works by J. Boulenger, p. 17 and L. Sainéan, p. 20.)

followed. Rabelais's contemporaries understood as manifestations of one grand style traits that people of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries began to perceive as some strange individual idiosyncrasy of Rabelais himself, or as some kind of cipher, a cryptogram containing a system of allusions to particular events that took place in Rabelais's time and to particular persons of that time.

This understanding of Rabelais by his contemporaries was, however, naive and spontaneous. That which to the seventeenth and later centuries became a question was to Rabelais's contemporaries something self-evident. Hence, the understanding of contemporaries cannot provide us with answers to *our* questions about Rabelais, because for them these questions did not as yet exist.

At the same time, we can also already notice in the writings of Rabelais's first imitators the beginnings of the decomposition process of the Rabelaisian style. For instance, in Des Périers and especially in Noël du Fail[9] the Rabelaisian images become shallower and softer; they begin to acquire the character of genre art and of quotidian everyday life. Their universalism is severely weakened. Another facet of this process of degeneration makes its appearance when images of the Rabelaisian type begin to serve the purpose of satire. What happens in this case is a weakening of the ambivalent images' positive pole. Where the grotesque is put in the service of abstract leanings, its nature is inevitably corrupted. The essence of the grotesque, after all, is precisely to express the contradictory and two-faced fullness of life, which contains negation and annihilation (death of the old) as a *necessary* aspect, inseparable from *affirmation*, inseparable from the birth of the new and better. Moreover, the material-bodily substrate of the grotesque image itself (food, wine, the reproductive force, the organs of the body) is deeply positive. The material-bodily domain is triumphant, for the final result always turns out to be a surplus, an increase. Abstract tendentiousness inevitably distorts this nature of the grotesque image. It shifts the center of gravity to the abstractly meaningful, "moral" content of the image. Moreover, tendentiousness subordinates the material substrate of the image to the negative aspect: exaggeration becomes caricature. We can already find the beginning of this process in early Protestant satire and later in the aforementioned *Satire Ménippée*.[10] But here this process is still at its very beginning. The grotesque images, put in the service of abstract tendencies, are still too powerful here: they preserve their nature and keep pursuing the logic inherent to them independently from the author's tendencies, and sometimes contrary to them.

Among the highly typical documents testifying to this process is the free translation of "Gargantua" into German by Fischart, which bears the grotesque title: *Affenteurliche und Ungeheurliche Geschichtsklitterung* (1575).[11]

[9] These authors are discussed by Sainéan (1930, 128–133), but the information provided by Schneegans (1894, 282–286, 317–319), who brings some quotes from these authors, was probably more significant in informing Bakhtin's opinion. It is less likely that Bakhtin was able to read these authors' works themselves while working on the manuscript.

[10] See Schneegans (1894, 319–356), Sainéan (1930, 155–157, 200–204).

[11] Both Sainéan (1930, 62–68) and Schneegans (1894, 356–428) have chapters devoted to Fischart,

Fischart was a Protestant and a moralist; his oeuvre was connected with "Grobianism." In terms of its sources, German Grobianism was a phenomenon related to Rabelais: the Grobians inherited the images of material-bodily life from grotesque realism; they were directly influenced by folk-festive and carnival forms—hence, the pronounced hyperbolism of material-bodily images, especially those of eating and drinking. In both grotesque realism and folk-festive forms, exaggerations were positive in character; such, for instance, were the gigantic sausages that were carried by dozens of people during the Nuremberg carnivals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[12] But the moral and political leanings of the Grobianists (Dedekind, Scheidt, Fischart) lend these images the negative sense of something improper. In the introduction to his *Grobianus*, Dedekind[(23)] invokes the Lacedemonians, who showed drunken slaves to their children in order to inspire them with an aversion to drunkenness; the same goal of intimidation was also to be served by the images of Saint Grobianus and the Grobians he created.[13] The positive nature of the image is thus subordinated to the negative purpose of satiric ridicule and moral condemnation. This satire is presented from the point of view of the bürger and the Protestant, and it is directed against feudal nobility (junkerdom), sunk in the mire of idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, and debauchery. Precisely this Grobianist point of view (under Scheidt's influence) lay partially at the base of Fischart's free translation of Rabelais.[(24)][14]

However, despite these rather primitive tendencies of Fischart's, the Rabelaisian images in his free translation continue to live their original life, alien to these tendencies. The hyperbolism of material-bodily images (especially those of eating and drinking) is even more intensified than in Rabelais. The inner logic of all these exaggerations, just

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and it is the latter (specifically Schneegans 1894, 373–390) who is Bakhtin's source for the discussion that follows, covering Fischart's sources of influence and links with Grobianism. The title of Fischart's book (which can roughly be translated as: "An Eventful and Monstrous Hodgepodge of a Story") has in fact varied between different editions. The original 1575 edition was titled *Affenteurliche und ungeheurliche Geschichtschrift*, then changed to *Affentheurlich Naupengeheurliche Geschichtklitterung* (more often the title cited in reference sources nowadays) in 1577. Bakhtin reproduces an "amalgamated" title of the two editions, Possibly based on Sainéan (1930, 64).

[12] The reference is, most likely, to the giant sausages carried in procession in Königsberg (see Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 304–305), not Nuremberg. The city is identified correctly when these sausages are mentioned again in the footnote on pp. 182–183 in chapter 2.

[13] See Schneegans (1894, 376–377), which is also the source of the information in the footnote, citing a shortened version of the title of Dedekind's book and mentioning Scheidt's translation (and see Popova 2010a, 603).

[14] For an English translation of the passage from Marx cited in the footnote, see Marx (1976, 312–316).

[(23)] Friedrich Dedekind, *Grobianus et Grobiana Libri tres* (first ed. 1549, second ed. 1552). Dedekind's book was translated into German by Fischart's teacher and relative Caspar Scheidt.

[(24)] We say "partially" because in his translation of Rabelais's novel Fischart was not a Grobianist in full after all. Karl Marx provided a harsh but fair characterization of sixteenth-century Grobian literature. See K. Marx, "Moralizing Criticism and Critical Morality," K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, vol. 4, pp. 291–295.

as it is in Rabelais, is the logic of growth, of fertility, of a brimming-over abundance. All these images reveal the same nethers that devour and give birth. The special *festive* character of the material-bodily domain is also retained. The abstract leanings do not penetrate into the depths of the image and do not become its real organizing principle. Neither is laughter fully transformed as yet into naked ridicule: it is still relatively holistic, and relates to the *entire* life process, to both of its poles. The triumphant tones of birth and renewal can still be heard in it. Thus, abstract leanings have as yet not become the full masters of all images in Fischart's translation. And yet, they have already entered into the work and have to a certain extent transformed its images into a sort of entertaining supplement to an abstractly moral sermon. This process of laughter's reinterpretation could only be completed later, and it was, moreover, closely linked to the establishment of a hierarchy of genres and to the place of laughter in this hierarchy.

Already Ronsard and the Pléiade were convinced of the existence of a *hierarchy of genres*.[15] This idea, mostly borrowed from antiquity but reworked on French soil, could not, of course, take root right away. The Pléiade was still very liberal and democratic in relation to these questions. Its members treated Rabelais with great respect, especially du Bellay and Baïf, and knew how to appreciate him at his true value.[16] However, this high appreciation of our author (and the mighty influence of his language on that of the Pléiade) was at odds with his place in the hierarchy of genres, which was the lowest of all, almost below the threshold of literature. But this hierarchy was as yet only an abstract idea, not yet entirely clear. Various social, political, and mainstream-ideological changes and shifts had to take place, and the circle of readers and appreciators of major official literature had to be separated out and narrowed down, in order for the hierarchy of genres to become an expression of their actual relation to one another within the bounds of this major literature, in order for this hierarchy to become a real regulating and defining force.

This process was completed, as is well known, in the seventeenth century, but it already begins to make itself felt toward the end of the sixteenth. Already by that time, a perception of Rabelais as a *merely pleasant*, merely merry, writer begins to take shape. Such was also, as we know, the fate of *Don Quixote*, which for a long time was perceived as belonging to the category of pleasant literature for light reading. The same also happened to Rabelais, who from the end of the sixteenth century started descending lower and lower, to the very threshold of major literature, until he ended up almost entirely beyond it.

Montaigne, who was forty years younger than Rabelais, is already writing in his *Essays*: "Amongst books that are simply pleasant (simplement plaisants), of the moderns, Boccaccio's Decameron, Rabelais, and the Basia of Johannes Secundus (Jehan Second) (if those may be ranged under the title) are worth reading for amusement

[15] Cf. Boulenger (1925, 14–15).

[16] Boulenger (1925, 15), Sainéan (1930, 164–165).

(dignes qu'on s'y amuse)" (*Essais* book II, chapter 10; the writing of this passage dates to 1580).[17]

However, Montaigne's "simply pleasant" still lies on the very boundary line between the old and the new understanding and evaluation of "pleasant" ("plaisant"), "merry" ("joyeux"), "recreational" ("récréatif"), and similar epithets applied to literary works, words that were often included in the very titles of these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works.(25)[18] The concept of the pleasant and merry had not yet narrowed down completely for Montaigne and had not as yet acquired the tone of something low and trivial. Montaigne himself, elsewhere in his *Essays* (book 1, chapter XXXVIII), says:

> I for my part care for no other books, but either such as are pleasant (plaisants) and easy (faciles), to amuse me, or those that comfort and instruct me how to regulate my life and death (à regler ma vie et ma mort).[19]

From these words it is clear that among all of the belles lettres proper, Montaigne prefers precisely those that are pleasant and easy, since by books of the other sort, the ones that comfort and advise, he means, of course, not belles lettres but works of philosophy, theology, and above all, works resembling his own *Essays* (Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, Plutarch's "Moralia," and so on). The belles-lettres are for him still basically a pleasant, merry, recreational literature.(26)[20] In this respect he is still a man of the sixteenth century. But tellingly, questions concerning the regulation of life and death have already been decisively removed from the realm where merry laughter is in charge. Alongside Boccaccio and Johannes Secundus, Rabelais is "worth reading for amusement," but he does not belong to the number of comforters and instructors in the matter of "regulat[ing] life and death." And yet, Rabelais was precisely such a comforter and instructor in the eyes of his contemporaries. They were still able to pose the question of regulating life and death on the *merry plane*, the plane of *laughter*.

The era of Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare is a major turning point in the history of laughter. Nowhere are the boundary lines setting the seventeenth and later centuries apart from the Renaissance as sharp, principled, and clear, as they are precisely here, in the sphere of attitudes toward laughter.

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[17] Montaigne (1877, 2:102), quoted and dated in Sainéan (1930, 101; see also Boulenger 1925, 16).

[18] Footnote: see Plattard (1910, 59), Driesen (1904, 228).

[19] Montaigne (1877, 1:305), quoted in Sainéan (1930, 101).

[20] Footnote: Marot is quoted in Sainéan (1930, 101).

(25) Here, for instance, is the title of one of the remarkable books of the sixteenth century, by Bonaventure Des Périers: *Nouvelles récréations et joyeux devis*, that is, "New Recreations and Merry Chatter."

(26) The epithet "plaisant" was applied in the sixteenth century to all works of the belles lettres in general, regardless of genre. The most venerated and influential work of past ages for people of the sixteenth century remained the *Roman de la Rose*. In 1527 Clément Marot published a somewhat modernized (in terms of language) version of this great monument of world literature, recommending it in his preface as follows: "C'est le *plaisant* livre du 'Rommant de la Rose.' "

The Renaissance attitude toward laughter can be roughly and preliminarily characterized thus: laughter has a deep philosophical meaning; it is one of the most essential forms of truth about the world as a whole, about history, about the human being; it is a special universal perspective on the world, which sees the world differently, but no less (and perhaps more) essentially than does *seriousness*. Therefore, laughter is as admissible in major literature (moreover, in literature that poses universal problems) as is seriousness; certain utterly essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter.

The seventeenth century's attitude toward laughter and that of the centuries that followed, by contrast, can be characterized thus: laughter cannot be a universal philosophical form; it can apply only to some *individual and individually typical* phenomena of social life, phenomena of the negative order. That which is important and essential cannot arouse laughter; history, and the people put forward as representing it (kings, generals, heroes) cannot arouse laughter. The sphere of that which arouses laughter is narrow and specific (private and social vices); the essential truth about the world and about the human being cannot be told in the language of laughter; only a serious tone has a place here. Therefore, the place of laughter in literature is only in the low genres, depicting the life of private individuals and of society's lower rungs. Laughter is either light entertainment or a kind of socially beneficial punishment of corrupt and low people. With some simplification, of course, one can characterize the attitude toward laughter prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in this way.

The Renaissance expressed its attitude toward laughter first and foremost in the very *practice* of its literary creation and its evaluation of literature. But there was also no lack of theoretical statements that justified laughter as a universal form conveying world outlook. This Renaissance theory of laughter was built almost exclusively on sources from antiquity. Rabelais himself developed it in the old and new prologues to the "Fourth Book" of his novel, based mostly on Hippocrates. The role of Hippocrates as a kind of theorist of laughter at that time was very significant. Cited in this context were not only comments contained in his medical treatises concerning the importance of a merry and vigorous mood on the part of the physician and the patients for fighting diseases,[(27)][21] but also the so-called "Hippocratic novel."[22] This is Hippocrates's correspondence (of course apocryphal), appended to the Hippocratic Corpus, about the "madness" of Democritus, which was expressed in his *laughter*. In the "Hippocratic novel," Democritus's laughter has a philosophical, world-outlook-related character, its object being human life and all the vain human fears and hopes related to the gods and

[21] Bakhtin here takes Rabelais (bk. 4, dedicatory epistle) at his word, but Rabelais's reading of Hippocrates (probably of the text in Hippocrates 1994, 236–237) is either very speculative or just tongue-in-cheek. There is no passage in Hippocrates's *Epidemics* that clearly fits Bakhtin's description.

[22] Referring to letters 10–17 in Smith (1990a; and see 1990b, 20–32 for an English summary). Bakhtin's source on the "Hippocratic novel" is Karpov (1936, 27–32).

[(27)] Notably in book VI of the *Epidemics*, which Rabelais cites in the prologues mentioned above.

to life after death. Here, Democritus justifies laughter as a holistic worldview, as the spiritual attitude of a man who has reached maturity and has woken up. Hippocrates eventually agrees with him.

This teaching on the therapeutic force of laughter in the "Hippocratic novel" was especially appreciated and very widespread at the Faculty of Medicine in Montpellier, where Rabelais studied and later taught. A member of this faculty, the famous physician Laurent Joubert, published in 1560 a specialist treatise on laughter under the following characteristic title: *Traité du ris, contenant son essance, ses causes et ses mervelheus effais, curieusemant recherchés, raisonnés et observés par M. Laur. Joubert* ("A treatise on laughter, containing its essence, its causes, and its marvelous effects, carefully studied, argued for, and observed by M. Laur. Joubert"). In 1579 Joubert published another treatise in Paris, titled *La cause morale de Ris de l'excellant et tresnommé Democrite, expliquee et temognee par le divin Hippocras, an ses Epitres* ("The moral cause of the laughter of the eminent and very famous Democritus explained and witnessed by the divine Hippocrates in his epistles"), which was, in essence, a French version of the last part of the "Hippocratic novel."[23]

These works on the philosophy of laughter were already published after Rabelais's death, yet they are but a belated echo of the thoughts and discussions about laughter that were current in Montpellier back when Rabelais was there and that determined, as well, the Rabelaisian teaching on the therapeutic force of laughter and on the "merry physician."[24]

Second to Hippocrates as a source for the philosophy of laughter in Rabelais's time was Aristotle's famous phrase "No animal but man ever laughs."[(28)25] This formula enjoyed immense popularity in Rabelais's day and was given an extended interpretation: laughter was seen as man's highest spiritual privilege, inaccessible to other creatures. As we know, it concludes Rabelais's introductory poem to "Gargantua":

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[23] Both works by Joubert are cited by Plattard (1930, 99). Bakhtin augments these citations with additional information about publication years from another source (most likely Brunot 1906, 52) and in the process confuses two different editions of the text (see Popova 2010a, 604). For an English translation of the *Treatise on Laughter*, see Joubert (1980).

[24] The speculation regarding discussions in Montpellier is based on Plattard (1930, 98–99). The words "merry physician" possibly appear in quotation marks as an allusion to the text of the dedicatory letter to Rabelais's "Fourth Book" (bk. 4, dedicatory epistle). Rabelais's translators use the words "happy" or "joyful" to describe the physician's manner in the relevant passage.

[25] English translation by William Ogle (Aristotle 1984, 1:1049). Bakhtin reproduced the quote from Plattard (1930, 99), though the citation in the footnote contained an error. In the 1940 manuscript, the Latin name of Aristotle's work is abbreviated as "De part. an." but mistranslated as "On the parts of the soul" (mistaking *animalium* for *animae*). In the 1965 book, the Latin is gone, and the Russian misidentifies the source as the much more famous Aristotelian work *On the Soul*. As Plattard (1930, 100) points out, Rabelais and his contemporaries gave Aristotle's observation about laughter an extended interpretation.

[(28)] Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, book 3, chapter 10.

Mieux est de ris que de larmes escrire.

Par ce que rire est le propre de l'homme.[29]

Even Ronsard still uses this saying in its broader sense. In a poem dedicated to Belot (*Œuvres*, éd. Lemerre, vol. V, p. 10), we find these lines:

Dieu qui sous l'homme a le monde soumis,

A l'homme seul le seul rire a permis

Pour s'esgayer, et non pas à la beste,

Qui n'a raison ny esprit en la teste.[30][26]

Laughter, as God's gift to man alone, is mentioned here in connection both with man's mastery over the entire world and with his possession of reason and spirit, which animals lack.

According to Aristotle, a child does not begin to laugh before the fortieth day after birth; only from that moment on does it become a human being for the first time, as it were. Rabelais and his contemporaries also knew Pliny's statement that only one man, Zoroaster, began to laugh from the very moment of his birth; this was understood to presage his divine wisdom.[27]

Finally, the third source of the Renaissance philosophy of laughter is Lucian, especially his image of Menippus laughing in the kingdom of the dead. Lucian's work "Menippus, or the Descent into Hades" was especially popular at the time. This work also had an essential influence on Rabelais, more precisely on the episode of Epistemon's journey to the underworld ("Pantagruel").[28] Another highly influential work was Lucian's "Dialogues of the Dead." Here are a few characteristic excerpts from the latter:

[26] Both Rabelais's and Ronsard's lines are quoted by Plattard (1930, 99–100). Plattard's citation for Ronsard may contain a wrong page number. Both the French original ("L'Ombre du Cheval: à Jehan Belot") and the English translation reproduced in the footnote can be found in Ronsard (2002, xcviii–c).

[27] This paragraph was added to the book in 1965. Bakhtin's source here is Reinach (1912, 113–115). The passages referred to are from Aristotle's *History of Animals*, bk. 7, pt. 10 (Aristotle 1984, 1:920; Bakhtin omits the point that, according to Aristotle, neonates do sometimes laugh when asleep) and from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, bk. 7, ch. 15 (Pliny 1855–1857, 2:155).

[28] Referring to bk. 2, ch. 30; and see a detailed discussion of this episode, including a comparison with Lucian, in chapter 6.

[29] Better to write of laughter than of tears,
For laughter is the essence of mankind.

[30] God, who has subjected the world to man,
has granted laughter alone to man alone
for his enjoyment, and not to animals,
which have neither reason nor mind in their heads.

> Tell him that Diogenes says, "Menippus, if you've had enough *of laughing at things up there*, come on down here [i.e., to the kingdom of the dead]; *there's much more to laugh at.* After all, your laughter now has a bit of uncertainty about it. There's always the question: 'Who really knows what happens after death?' *But here you can laugh your head off without any worries, just the way I'm doing now.*" (Diogenes and Pollux, quoted from the translation published by Sabashnikov: Lucian, *Works*, vol. 1. Translation edited by Zelinsky and Bogaevsky, Moscow, 1915, p. 188)[29]
>
> Menippus, how about your getting rid of that *independence, frank speaking*, cheery resignation, high-mindedness, and *laughter*? You're the only one of us who's enjoying himself (Charon, Hermes, and Shades)[30]
>
> Charon: Hermes, where did you get this Cynic? He kept chattering away during the whole trip, *laughing and jeering at all* the passengers. While everyone was whimpering he was singing.
>
> Hermes: Charon, don't you know who this fellow you've ferried across is? *Completely independent*, doesn't give two cents for anybody. He's Menippus (Charon, Menippus, Hermes)[31]

Let us emphasize in this Lucianic image of the laughing Menippus* the relation of laughter to the underworld (and to death), to freedom of the spirit, and to the freedom of speech*.[32]

Such are the three most popular sources of the Renaissance philosophy of laughter from antiquity. They had a determining influence not only on Joubert's treatises but also on the opinions current in literary and humanist circles concerning laughter, what it signifies, and its value. All three sources define laughter as a universal, philosophical principle that heals and ushers in rebirth, that is essentially linked to ultimate philosophical questions—that is, precisely to those questions of "regulating life and death" of which Montaigne already thought solely in serious tones.

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[29] English translation by Lionel Casson (Lucian 1968, 194). I modified the translation in all three quotes to ensure that the words *laugh* and *laughter*, rather than their synonyms, appear wherever the Russian *smekh* appears in the Russian translation Bakhtin used (Lucian 1915–1920). That latter Russian translation was among the sources Bakhtin summarized in his working notebooks while writing the 1940 manuscript. It is perhaps worth noting that about the time this translation was published, its first editor, Thadeus Zelinsky, was the university mentor of Bakhtin's older brother, Nikolay, and of Bakhtin himself (under the likely assumption that he informally attended classes together with his formally enrolled brother). Late in life, Bakhtin referred to Zelinsky as his favorite teacher (Bakhtin and Duvakin 2019, 45, 54).

[30] Lucian (1968, 201).

[31] Lucian (1968, 205).

[32] "Freedom of the spirit and the freedom of speech" is a direct back-reference to the second of the three quotes from Lucian above. Casson has the same words translated as "independence, frank speaking." I left this discrepancy in the main text, because each of the words Bakhtin uses here in Russian plays a significant role in the rest of the book (and elsewhere in Bakhtin's writings).

Rabelais and his contemporaries were, of course, also familiar with notions about laughter in antiquity from other sources: from Athenaeus, Macrobius, Aulus Gellius, and others.[33] They knew, of course, also Homer's famous words about the inextinguishable—that is, eternal laughter of the gods ("ἄσβεστος ... γέλως," *Iliad*, I, 599, and *Odyssey*, VIII, 326).[34] They also knew perfectly well about the Roman traditions of freedom of laughter: about the Saturnalia and about the role of laughter during triumphal marches and the funeral rites of notables.[(31)][35] Specifically, Rabelais makes frequent allusions and references to these sources, as well as to the corresponding phenomena of laughter in Rome.

Let us stress once more that for the Renaissance theory of laughter (as for its sources in antiquity, described above), it is typical to acknowledge precisely laughter's positive, reviving, *creative* significance. This clearly distinguishes it from later theories and philosophies of laughter, up to and including Bergson's, which bring forward mostly laughter's negative functions.[(32)]

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[33] This is probably a reference to Rabelais's general reliance on compilatory works from late antiquity (cf. note 91 below), not to any particular passages in these authors' works (though it is worth noting that one of Macrobius's best-known surviving works is titled *Saturnalia*).

[34] The reference to Homer was added in the 1949–1950 revision round, based on Reinach (1912, 111–112). I added the missing lacuna sign and corrected the line number for the *Odyssey* (both inaccuracies originate in Reinach's text).

[35] The footnote contains a full reference to its source. To make it slightly more accurate, while most of the details about the work by Choricius come from Reich (1903, 207–208), as indicated, the story about a person being healed by a mime appears ten pages down the line (Reich 1903, 216–217). None of the information mentioned in the footnote comes from p. 182ff.

[(31)] A large volume of material concerning the traditional freedom of subjecting to laughter, and specifically on the freedom of laughter in the mimes is presented by Reich. He quotes corresponding lines from Ovid's *Tristia*, where the latter justifies his frivolous verses by alluding to the traditional freedom of the mime and the mime's permissible indecency. He quotes Martial, who in his epigrams justifies before the emperor the license he takes by recalling the traditional ridiculing laughter endured by emperors and generals at triumphs. Reich analyzes an interesting apology of the mime by the sixth century rhetorician Choricius, which in many respects parallels the Renaissance apology of laughter. In defending mimes, Choricius had first of all to take up the defense of laughter. He examines a Christian accusation that the laughter provoked by the mime is from the devil. He declares that *man* differs *from the beast by the ability inherent to him to speak and laugh.* The gods too laugh in Homer, and Aphrodite was "sweet-smiling." The austere Lycurgus erected a statue to laughter. Laughter is a gift from the gods. Choricius also cites the case of *a patient being cured* with the help of a mime, *by means of the laughter the mime provoked.* This apology by Choricius resembles in many ways the defense of laughter in the sixteenth century, and Rabelais's apology of it in particular. Let us stress the universalist character of the conception of laughter: it distinguishes the human being from the beast, it is of divine origin, and finally, it is linked to medical treatment, to healing. (See Reich, *Der Mimus,* pp, 52–55, 182 ff., 207 ff.).

[(32)] Notions of the creative force of laughter were characteristic also of ancient times beyond classical antiquity. In one Egyptian papyrus dealing with alchemy, from the third century CE, kept in Leiden, the creation of the world is attributed to divine laughter: "when God laughed seven gods were born to rule the world ... when he burst out laughing there was light ... he burst out laughing for the second time, the waters appeared." At the seventh burst of laughter the soul was born. See S. Reinach, "Le Rire rituel" (in his book *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, Paris, 1912, vol. 4, pp. 112–113).

The tradition of sources hailing from antiquity, which we have characterized above, was of essential significance for the Renaissance *theory* of laughter, which offered an apology for the laughter-based literary tradition and channeled it in the direction of humanist ideas. As to the artistic practice of Renaissance laughter itself, it is first and foremost determined by the traditions of the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages.

However, here, in the context of the Renaissance, these traditions are not simply continued; they enter a completely new and higher phase of their existence. The whole of this vastly rich folk culture of laughter in the Middle Ages lived and developed outside the official sphere of high ideology and literature. But precisely because of its unofficial existence, this culture of laughter was marked by exceptional radicalism, freedom, and merciless sobriety. Having, on the one hand, blocked laughter from entering any of the official spheres of life and ideology, the Middle Ages, on the other hand, afforded it exceptional privileges of liberty and impunity outside these spheres: in the public square, on feast days, in recreational festive literature. And medieval laughter was able to put these privileges to widespread and profound use.

And then, during the Renaissance, laughter in its most radical, most universal, its most (so to speak) world-encompassing, and at the same time in its *merriest*, form, only once in the course of history, and only for some fifty or sixty years (in various countries and at various times), broke through from the depths of folk culture, together with the vernacular ("vulgar") languages, into major literature and high ideology. There, it played an essential role in the creation of such works of world literature as Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Rabelais's novel, Cervantes's novel, Shakespeare's dramas and comedies, and others. The boundary lines between official and unofficial literature inevitably had to collapse during this period, in part because in some of the most important ideological sectors these boundary lines coincided with the dividing lines between languages—Latin and the vernacular. The transition of literature and some areas of ideology into vernacular languages made necessary a temporary sweeping away, or at least a weakening, of these boundaries. A series of other factors, having to do with the disintegration of the feudal and theocratic order of the Middle Ages, also contributed to this mixture and blending of the official and unofficial. The folk culture of laughter, which for centuries had been shaped and matured within the unofficial forms of folk art—spectacle forms and literary forms—and in unofficial daily life, was now able to rise to the very summit of literature and ideology, so as to fecundate them, and then—as absolute monarchy was stabilizing and a new officiality was being formed—to descend to the lowest rungs of the genre hierarchy, to settle there, and to a significant degree to be torn away from its popular roots, to shallow out, narrow down, and degenerate.

Thus did a whole millennium of extra-official folk laughter burst into Renaissance literature. This millennial laughter had not only fecundated this literature but was itself fecundated by it. It was combined with the most progressive ideology of the time, with humanist knowledge, with high-level literary technique. In the person of Rabelais, the word and the mask (in the sense of how the person as a whole is shaped) of the medieval fool, forms of folk-festive carnival merriment, the travestying and all-

parodying fervor of the democratic cleric, the speech and gesture of the fairground bateleur,[36] were all combined with humanist learnedness, with the science and practice of a physician, and with the political experience and knowledge of a man who, as a confidant of the du Bellay brothers, was intimately familiar with all the issues and secrets of his era's world politics at the highest level.[37] In this new combination and at this new stage of its development, medieval laughter had to undergo substantial change. Its communal character, radicalism, unfetteredness, soberness, and materialism were transferred from an almost elemental stage of existence to a state in which they were the object of artistic consciousness and purposefulness. In other words, at the Renaissance stage of its development, medieval laughter became the expression of a new free and critical *historical* consciousness of its time. It could become such an expression only because the buds and shoots of this historicity, the potentialities for such historicity, had already been prepared within it throughout the millennium of its development in the Middle Ages. How, then, were the forms of this medieval culture of laughter shaped and developed?

As we have said, laughter in the Middle Ages lay outside the boundaries of all official spheres of ideology and all official, strict forms of life and social interaction. Laughter was driven out from church worship, from state-feudal rites, from social etiquette, and from all the genres of high ideology. *A one-sided seriousness of tone* is characteristic of official medieval culture. The very content of medieval ideology, with its asceticism, its somber providentialism, with the leading role played in it by such categories as sin, atonement, and suffering, as well as the very character of the feudal order that is consecrated by this ideology, with its forms of extreme oppression and intimidation—all these have determined this exceptional one-sidedness of tone, its chilling petrified seriousness. Seriousness was asserted to be the only tone for expressing the true, the good, and generally all that was essential, significant, and important. Fear, awe, humility, and the like—these were the tones and hues of this seriousness.

Early Christianity (in antiquity) had already condemned laughter. Tertullian, Cyprian, and John Chrysostom preached against the spectacle forms of antiquity, especially against the mime and the mime's laughter and jest.[38] John Chrysostom declared outright that jest and laughter are not from God but from the devil. Only *incessant* seriousness, remorse, and sorrow for one's sins befit the Christian.(33) As part of the struggle against Arianism, Arian Christians were blamed for introducing elements of the mime—chants, gesticulation, laughter—into the church service.[39]

[36] A bateleur is a kind of street performer (e.g., a juggler or puppeteer) in medieval and Renaissance France. Bakhtin borrows the French word (in Cyrillic transcription) directly, even though it is not to be found in any Russian dictionary. I am, accordingly, acting in the same manner in the English text.

[37] On the du Bellay brothers and Rabelais's involvement with them, see an extended discussion in chapter 7 and endnotes 43–55 to that chapter.

[38] Reich (1903, 109).

[39] Reich (1903, 135).

(33) See Reich, *Der Mimus*, p. 116 ff.

But this exceptional one-sided seriousness of the official church ideology itself led to the necessity to legalize outside itself—that is, outside official canonical worship, rite, and systems of rank—all the merriment, laughter, and jest that had been driven out of them. And thus, alongside the canonical forms of medieval culture, parallel forms are being created that are purely laughter-based in character.

The forms of church worship itself, which had been inherited from antiquity, permeated by influence from the East and also influenced to some degree by local pagan rites (predominantly fertility rites), contain rudiments of merriment and laughter. These can be discerned in the liturgy, in funeral rites, in the rite of baptism, in the rite of marriage, and in a series of other religious rituals.[40] But here these rudiments of laughter are sublimated, suppressed, and muffled.(34)[41] But all the same, they need to be allowed into the custom that surrounds the church, that surrounds the feast day; even the existence of purely laughter-based forms and rites in parallel to the church ritual has to be tolerated.

Such were, first of all, the "feasts of fools" (festa stultorum, fatuorum, follorum) that were celebrated by students and junior clergy on St. Stephen's Day, on New Year's Day, on the feast of the Holy Innocents, on Epiphany, and on St. John's day. These feasts were originally celebrated in church and were fully legal; later they became only semilegal, and toward the end of the Middle Ages they had already become completely illegal; but they continued to exist on the streets and in taverns; they blended into Shrovetide amusements. The Feast of Fools ("fête des fous") displayed special strength and resilience, in France in particular. Feasts of fools had the character of a parodic travesty of the official cult and were accompanied by dressing up in costumes and wearing masks and by indecent dances. These amusements of the lower clergy were especially unbridled in character on New Year's Day and on Epiphany.[42]

Nearly all the rituals of the Feast of Fools are grotesque *lowerings* of various church rituals and symbols arrived at by transferring them onto the material-bodily level: gluttony and drunkenness right on the altar, indecent bodily movements, exposing naked bodies, and the like. We shall later analyze some of these ritual acts of the feast.(35)[43]

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[40] Bakhtin most likely relies here on Freidenberg (1997b, 53–54 and passim) and, again, probably refers specifically to the eucharist when speaking of liturgy.

[41] Bakhtin's source for the footnote and for the citations in it is Ilvonen (1914, 10–13). The term "tropes," in this context, refers to additions that were made to plainchant melodies in church service in the Middle Ages, for feast days and other special occasions.

[42] Lehmann (1922, 136).

[43] As noted above (see note 119 to the introduction), the references in the footnote are copied from

(34) Of interest here is the story of the "tropes"; the merry and joyful tone of these tropes allowed for the development of certain elements of church drama from them (see Léon Gautier, *Histoire de la poésie liturgique, I (Les Tropes)*, Paris, 1886; see also J. P. Jacobsen, *Essai sur les origines de la comédie en France au moyen age*, Paris, 1910).

(35) Concerning the Feast of Fools, see F. Bourquelot, *l'Office de la fête des fous*, Sens, 1856; H.

The Feast of Fools, as we have said, hung on with particular persistence in France. We have a curious apology for this feast that survived from the fifteenth century. In this apology, those who defend the Feast of Fools appeal, first of all, to the fact that the feast was established in the earliest age of Christianity by our ancestors, who knew better what they were doing. Next, the apology stresses that the feast's character is not serious but is purely *in jest* (foolish). This festive merriment is necessary:

> so that *folly* (foolishness), which *is our second nature* and seems to be *innate to man*, might *freely spend itself at least once a year*. Wine barrels would burst if from time to time we do not open the bunghole and let in some air. We, people, are all badly bound barrels, which would burst from the *wine of wisdom*, if we let it ferment with everlasting devotion and fear of God. We must give it air in order not to let it spoil. This is why we permit foolishness (folly) in ourselves on certain days so that we may later return with greater zeal to the service of God.

This is how the Feast of Fools was defended in the fifteenth century.[36][44]

In this remarkable apology, foolishness and folly—that is, laughter—are declared outright to be "man's second nature" and are contrasted with the monolithic seriousness of Christian cult and worldview ("fermentation with everlasting devotion and fear of God"). It was precisely the exceptional one-sidedness of this seriousness that led to the necessity of creating a vent for the "second nature" of man—that is, for folly, for laughter. The Feast of Fools served precisely as such a vent—for "at least once a year"—when laughter and the material-bodily domain linked with it were fully unfettered. We are thus faced here with a direct recognition of medieval man's second festive life.

Of course, laughter at the Feast of Fools was in no sense an abstract and purely negative mockery of Christian ritual and Church hierarchy. The negative sneering aspect was deeply immersed in the triumphant laughter of material-bodily rebirth and renewal. It was "man's second nature" that was laughing, the material-bodily nethers, which could not find an expression for themselves in the official worldview and cult.

The distinctive apology for laughter offered by the proponents of the Feast of Fools, which we cited, belongs to the fifteenth century, but similar statements on analogous matters can be encountered in earlier times as well. Rabanus Maurus, abbot of Fulda in the ninth century, a strict churchman, composed an abridged version of the "The Feast of Cyprian" ("Coena Cypriani"). He dedicated it to King Lothair II "ad jocunditatem,"

Ilvonen (1914, 7, 17) and Lehmann (1922, 166). Bakhtin did not consult any of them directly.

[44] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 226–227, 460). Bakhtin refers and alludes to this passage, especially the words "everlasting devotion and fear of God," many times throughout the book.

Villetard, *Office de Pierre de Corbeil,* Paris, 1907; H. Villetard, *Remarques sur la fête des fous*, Paris, 1911.

[36] This apology is contained in a circular letter of the Paris Faculty of Theology from March 12, 1444. The letter condemns the Feast of Fools and refutes the above-cited arguments of its defenders.

that is, "for merriment." In his letter of dedication he tries to justify the merry and lowering character of the "Coena" by arguing thus: "Just as the Church contains both good and bad people, so does his poem also contain the latter's speeches."[45] These "bad people" of the strict churchman correspond here to man's "second foolish nature." Later, Pope Leo XIII also proposed an analogous formula: "inasmuch as the Church ... is composed of a divine and human element, this latter must be expounded ... with great probity. 'God has no need of our lies,' as we are told in the Book of Job."[46]

Early in the Middle Ages folk laughter penetrated not only into the middle rungs but even into the highest rungs of the church: Rabanus Maurus was in no way an exception. The charm of folk laughter was very strong at all levels of the still-young feudal hierarchy (both ecclesiastical and lay). This phenomenon can probably be explained by the following factors:

1. The official church-feudal culture of the seventh, the eighth, and even the ninth centuries was still weak and not formed in full;

2. Folk culture was very strong and could not be simply ignored, while some of its elements had to be used for *propaganda*;

3. The traditions of the Roman Saturnalia and other forms of *legalized* Roman folk laughter were still alive;

4. The Church used to schedule Christian feasts to coincide with local pagan celebrations (with the purpose of Christianizing them), which were connected with *laughter* cults;

5. The young feudal social order was still relatively progressive and therefore still of a *relatively* popular nature.

Under the influence of these factors, a tradition of a tolerant attitude (a *relatively* tolerant attitude, of course) toward folk laughter culture could have coalesced during that early period. This tradition continued to live in later periods too, although it was subject to ever growing new restrictions. In subsequent centuries (up to and including the seventeenth) it became customary, when defending laughter, to invoke the authority of ancient churchmen and theologians.

Thus, authors and collectors of facetiae, anecdotes, and jokes of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries usually invoked the authority of medieval scholars and

[45] See Ilvonen (1914, 2–3, 8–9) and Lehmann (1922, 28). On the Feast of Cyprian, see an extended discussion in chapter 4.

[46] Ilvonen (1914, 7). I used the official English version of the encyclical (*Depuis le jour*, from September 8, 1899), as published by the Vatican. Leo XIII cites Job 13:7: "Hath God any need of your lie, that you should speak deceitfully for him?" Bakhtin translates "lies" ("mensonges") as *litsemerie*, i.e., "hypocrisy." He may have had a different verse from the same chapter in mind, Job 13:16: "for no hypocrite shall come before his presence."

theologians, who gave their blessing to laughter. Thus, Melander, who compiled one of the richest anthologies of laughter-based literature (*Jocorum et Seriorum Libri Duo*; first edition in 1600, last in 1643) introduces his work with a lengthy catalogue (several dozen names) of eminent scholars and theologians who had written facetiae before him ("Catalogus praestantissimorum virorum in omni scientiarum facultate, qui ante nos facetias scripserunt"). The best collection of German Schwänke belongs to the monk Johannes Pauli, a famous preacher at the time. It was published under the title "In Jest and in Earnest" (*Schimpf und Ernst*), with the first edition dated 1522. Describing the aim of this work in its preface, Pauli brings up concerns reminiscent of the apology for the Feast of Fools we cited above: he had composed his book "in order that the spiritual children in their monastic cloisters might have something to read to bring *merriment* to their spirits and to rest: *after all, it is not possible to always abide in strictness*" ("wan man nit alwegen in einer Strenckeit bleiben mag").[47]

The purpose and meaning of such utterances (and we could cite many others) is to explain and somehow justify laughter indirectly associated with the church and "sacred parody" ("parodia sacra")—that is, the parody of sacred texts and rites. Of course, there was no lack of condemnation for this laughter either. Conciliar and judicial prohibitions of the Feast of Fools were proclaimed many times over. The oldest prohibition, by the Council of Toledo, goes back to the first half of the seventh century. The last judicial prohibition of the Feast of Fools in France was a ruling by the Parliament of Dijon in 1552—that is, more than nine centuries after the first prohibition.[48] During all these nine centuries the feast continued to live semilegally. Its late French variant was those same processions of a carnival type that were organized in Rouen by the "Societas Conardorum." During one of these processions (in 1540), as we already mentioned, Rabelais's name was featured and the *Chronicles of Gargantua* was read instead of the Gospel at the banquet.(37) It is as if Rabelaisian laughter returned here to the maternal womb of the ancient ritual-spectacle tradition from which it has emerged.[49]

The Feast of Fools is one of the most striking and pure expressions of medieval festive laughter indirectly associated with the church. Another one of its expressions is the "Feast of the Ass" commemorating Mary's flight to Egypt with the infant Jesus

[47] Bobertag (1881, 1:129–134). Bakhtin reproduces both the title of Otto Melander's book and the quotation from it in an abridged form. The abridged title is reproduced from Bobertag. The quotation (quoted at greater length by Bobertag, and abridged by Bakhtin) can be translated as "A catalog of the most eminent men in all faculties of science, who have written facetiae before us."

This paragraph ends a longer passage (which began with the numbered list above and the short paragraph that introduced it) added to the text in the 1949–1950 revision round.

[48] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 226–227).

[49] On the *Societas Conardorum*, see Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 367–370). On the procession (where the reading was in fact from Rabelais's "Pantagruel," and which took place in 1541), see endnote 8 to this chapter.

(37) Two collections of this society's materials were published in the sixteenth century.

riding a donkey.[50] The center of this feast ended up being neither Mary nor Jesus (although it did feature a young girl with an infant) but, rather, the *ass* and its cry: "Hinham!" Special "ass masses" were celebrated. An officium of such a mass, composed by the austere churchman Pierre de Corbeil, has reached us.[51] Each part of the mass was accompanied by the comic braying, "hinham!" At the end of the service, instead of the usual blessing, the priest repeated the braying three times, and, instead of "amen," he received similar braying in response.[52] However, the ass is one of the most ancient and lasting symbols of the material-bodily nethers, which at the same time both lowers (puts to death) and revives. It is sufficient to recall Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, the widespread ass-mimes of antiquity, and finally, the image of the ass as the symbol of the material-bodily domain in legends about Francis of Assisi.(38)[53] The Feast of the Ass is one of the variants of this very ancient traditional theme.

The Feast of Fools and the Feast of the Ass are specific feast days in which laughter plays a leading role; in this respect, they are similar to their blood relatives: the carnival and the charivari. But in all the other ordinary Church feasts of the Middle Ages, too, as we already have noted in our introduction, laughter has always played a certain—greater or smaller—role, structuring the folk public-square facet of the feast day. Laughter was a mainstay of feast days in the Middle Ages (as was the material-bodily domain); it was a *festive laughter* par excellence. Let me first of all recall the so-called "risus paschalis." During the Easter season, an ancient tradition had permitted laughter and unfettered jest even in church. On these days, the priest would take the liberty to tell all manner of stories and jokes from the pulpit, so that, following the long fasting and gloom of Lent, he could elicit his congregation's merry laughter as a *joyous rebirth*; this laughter was called "Easter laughter." These jokes and merry stories mostly concerned material-bodily life; they were jokes of a carnival type. After all, laughter was permitted at the same time as was eating meat and having sexual intercourse (forbidden during lent). The tradition of the "risus paschalis" was still alive in the sixteenth century—that is, in Rabelais's time.(39)[54]

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[50] Matthew 2:13–15. The donkey is an apocryphal detail.

[51] Based on an ambiguous passage in Ilvonen (1914, 25), which can be read as implying that Corbeil's officium is linked to the Feast of the Ass.

[52] The ceremony is described in Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 228–230).

[53] St. Francis of Assisi is reputed to have referred to his body as "Brother Ass." This information cannot be found in any of Bakhtin's regular sources, but Bakhtin may well have been familiar with it as a matter of general knowledge. The Dostoevsky scene in the footnote is from *The Idiot*, part 1, ch. 5.

[54] See Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 238–242). The footnote was added in the 1949–1950 revisions. See note 120 to the introduction for more details about the references.

(38) Testifying to the resilience of the ass image in this sense are the following examples from Russian literature: the "bray of a donkey" in Switzerland *revived* Prince Myshkin and bonded him to the foreign land he was in and to life (Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*). The ass and "the cry of the ass" is one of the leading images in Blok's poem "Nightingale Garden."

(39) On "Easter laughter," see J. P. Schmidt, *De risu paschalis*, Rostock, 1847, and S. Reinach, "Rire

Besides "Easter laughter" there was also the tradition of "Christmas laughter." While Easter laughter was mostly realized in the form of sermons, merry tales, anecdotes, and jokes, Christmas laughter was expressed in merry songs. Songs with entirely secular content were sung in churches; religious songs were sung to secular, even street, tunes (for instance, we have a surviving score for a setting of the "Magnificat," indicating that this church hymn was performed to a clownish street tune). The tradition of Christmas songs flourished in France in particular. The spiritual content was combined with secular themes and with elements of material-bodily lowering.[55] The theme of the *birth of the new*, of *renewal*, was organically combined with the theme of the *death of the old* on the merry and lowering plane, with the images of a carnival *decrowning* in jest. For this reason, the French Christmas song—the "Noël"—could later develop into one of the most popular genres of revolutionary street song.

Laughter and the material-bodily element, as a lowering and reviving principle, play a most essential role in the extra-ecclesiastical or circum-ecclesiastical aspect of other feast days too, especially those that were local in character and could thus absorb elements of ancient pagan festivities, whose Christian substitute they often were. Such were the feasts marking the consecration of a church (the first mass) and kermess feasts. Local fairs, with their entire system of folk public-square merriments, were usually timed to coincide with these feast days.[56] They were also accompanied by unbridled gluttony and drunkenness.(40) Eating and drinking were also brought to the fore in feasts commemorating the dead. When honoring patrons and benefactors buried in a given church, the clergy would organize feasting and would drink to their memory, the so-called "poculum charitatis" or "charitas vini." One act of the Quedlinburg Abbey openly states that the clergy's feasting feeds and delights the dead: "plenius inde recreantur mortui." Spanish Dominicans drank to the memory of the patrons buried in their churches, toasting them with the typical ambivalent words "viva el muerto."(41) In these latter examples the festive merriment and laughter are feasting-related and are combined with the image of death and birth (renewal of life) in the complex unity of the material-bodily nethers (which devour and give birth).

Some feasts acquired a specific tinge due to the season in which they were celebrated. Thus, the autumn feast days of Saint Martin and of Saint Michael acquired a bacchic tint, and these saints were considered to be the patron saints of winemaking.[57] Some-

[55] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 243–251), and see note 26 to the introduction about the term "Christmas laughter."

[56] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 252–255).

[57] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 260).

pascal," in an addendum to his article "Le Rire rituel," cited above, pp. 127–129. Both Easter and Christmas laughter are linked with the tradition of the Roman popular Saturnalia.

(40) The matter lies, of course, not in *everyday-life* gluttony and drunkenness as such but in the fact that they acquired here a symbolically extended *utopian* sense of "feasting for the whole world," the triumph of material abundance, growth, and renewal.

(41) See Flögel, op. cit., p. 254.

times the distinguishing features of one or another saint provided an excuse for the development of extra-ecclesiastical laughter-based and lowering bodily-material rituals and acts during the feast day of the saint in question. Thus, on the feast day of Saint Lazarus in Marseilles, a ceremonial procession would be held with all of the horses, mules, asses, bulls, and cows. The entire population masqueraded and danced in the streets and public squares performing the "great dance" ("magnum tripudium").[58] The likely explanation for this has to do with the fact that Lazarus was linked to a cycle of legends about the underworld, which had a material-bodily topographical tinge (the underworld is the material-bodily nethers),[(42)59] as well as to the theme of death and rebirth. This is why the feast day of St. Lazarus could absorb the ancient elements of some local pagan festival.

Finally, laughter and the material-bodily domain were legalized in the festive aspects of everyday life, in parties, in street, public-square, and household amusements.

We shall not discuss here the forms of Shrovetide, carnival laughter proper.[(43)] We shall devote special attention to this subject in good time. But here we must emphasize once again *the essential relation of festive laughter to time and to the succession of times*. The calendar aspect of the feast comes to life and becomes acutely tangible precisely in its folk-laughter, extra-official facet. What is brought to life here is the connection with the succession of seasons, with the phases of the sun and moon, with the death and renewal of vegetation, with the succession of agricultural cycles. In this succession, the positive accent fell on the new, upcoming, or renewing side of things. Moreover, this aspect acquired a wider and deeper sense: it carried the people's hopes for a better future, for a more just social and economic order, for a new truth. The popular laughter-based side of the feast day acted out, to a certain extent, this better future of universal material plenty, equality, and freedom, just as the Roman Saturnalia acted out the return of Saturn's Golden Age. As a result, the medieval feast day became, as it were, a two-faced Janus: while its official ecclesiastical face was turned to the past and served to sanctify and sanction the existing order, its folk public-square laughing face *looked into the future and laughed at the funeral of the past and the present*. It placed itself in opposition to the protective immobility, "timelessness," and irrevocability, of the established order and worldview; what it stressed was precisely the element of *succession and renewal*, including at the socio-historical level.

The material-bodily nethers and the entire system of lowerings, inversions, and travesties acquired an essential relation to time and to social and historical succession.

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[58] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 231–232).

[59] See the discussion of the underworld in chapter 6. On Lazarus, see Lote (1938, 133–134). In the footnote, on "hell" see Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 308).

(42) We shall discuss this cycle of legends later on. Let us recall that a "*hell*" was an indispensable accessory of carnival.

(43) It was *carnival* in particular, with its entire complex system of images, that was the fullest and purest expression of the folk laughter culture.

One of the indispensable elements of folk-festive merriment was *changing costume*—that is, the *renewal* of garments and of one's social image. Another essential element was the transposition of the hierarchical top into the bottom: the fool was proclaimed king, a mock abbot, bishop, or archbishop was elected at the Feast of Fools, and in churches directly under the pope's jurisdiction, there was even a mock pope.[60] These mock hierarchs sang solemn mass; at many feasts, ephemeral kings and queens of the feast had to be elected (kings and queens for a day), as on Epiphany (the "bean king") and on St. Valentine's day. The custom of electing such ephemeral kings ("roi pour rire") was especially widespread in France, where nearly every household party had its own king and queen.[61] From the wearing of clothes turned inside out and trousers on the head to the election of mock kings and popes, the same topographical logic comes into play: *to shift the top into the bottom*, to cast the high and the old—the fully formed and completed—into the material-bodily underworld for death and new birth (renewal). And all of that was now placed in an essential relation with time and with social and historical succession. Relativity and becoming were put forward as a counterweight to any claims that the medieval hierarchical order might make to immutability and timelessness. All these topographical images sought to capture precisely the very moment of transition and succession—of two powers and two truths, the old and the new, the one dying and the one being born. The ritual and images of the feast day sought, as it were, to play out the role of time itself, which at once puts to death and gives birth, recasting the old into the new, allowing nothing to perpetuate itself. Time plays and laughs. It is Heraclitus's playing child, who possesses the supreme power in the universe ("the kingly power is a child's").[62] The accent is always placed on the future, the utopian countenance of which is always present in the rituals and images of folk-festive laughter. It is because of this that the buds, which would later blossom into the Renaissance sense of history, were able to develop in the forms of folk-festive merriment.

Summing up, we can say that laughter, which in the Middle Ages had been edged out of official cult and worldview, made its unofficial but almost legal nest under the shelter of almost every feast day. Hence, every feast day, in addition to its official—church- and state-sanctioned—side had yet another, folk-carnival, public-square side

[60] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 225).

[61] The election of bean kings is briefly discussed by Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:419; more broadly on beans and bean kings, see Freidenberg 1997b, 158–160). Beans and Epiphany are also briefly mentioned in tandem by Rabelais himself in bk. 3, ch. 25. There is also ample detail on this and other relevant festive traditions in Cortet (1867), which Bakhtin has in his 1946 bibliography but is less likely to have had access to. None of Bakhtin's regular sources mention St. Valentine's Day in any context, and the reference to it either comes from an unknown source or reflects some sort of mistake (most plausibly, Bakhtin took St. Valentines Day—which only became a notable feast day under recent American influence—to be one of several different names for Epiphany). I was also unable to locate Bakhtin's source on the election of kings and queens for other feasts and for parties.

[62] Heraclitus, Fragment Diels-Krantz 22B52, translated by John Burnet (1908, 153). See note 1 to chapter 3.

whose organizing principle was laughter and the material-bodily nethers. This side of the feast day had its own design, its own themes, its own imagery, and its own special ritual. The origins of the various individual elements of this ritual are heterogeneous. Doubtless, the tradition of the Roman Saturnalia continued to live on in these forms throughout the Middle Ages. The traditions of the mime from antiquity also remained alive. But another major source was *local folklore*. It was this folklore in particular that nourished the imagery and the ritual of the folk laughter facet of Medieval feast days.

The active participants of folk public-square festive events in the Middle Ages were junior and middle-rank clergy, schoolboys, students, artisans, and finally, the members of all those groups, so abundant in that period, that did not clearly belong to any of the main estates and were not a settled part of the social order. But the laughter culture of the Middle Ages was communal in its essence. The truth of laughter captivated and drew in everyone: nobody could resist it.

Also linked to the forms of folk festive laughter, directly or indirectly, is the enormous bulk of medieval parodic literature. It is possible, as certain scholars assert (for instance, Novati), that certain parodies of the sacred texts and rites were meant to be performed at the Feast of Fools itself and were directly linked to it.[63] But this cannot be asserted with regard to most medieval sacred parodies. What is important is not this immediate connection but the more general link medieval parodies had with legalized festive laughter and freedom. All medieval parodic literature is recreational, composed during festive recreations and intended to be read on feast days, imbued with the atmosphere of festive freedom and unfetteredness. This merry parodying of the sacred was permitted on feast days, as was "Easter laughter" ("risus paschalis"), as was meat and sexual intercourse. It was permeated with the same folk-festive sense of the succession and renewal of times on the material-bodily level. The same logic of the ambivalent material-bodily nethers prevails here as well.

School and university recreations played a tremendously significant role in the history of medieval parody, and indeed of medieval literature in general. These recreations usually coincided with feast days. All feast-day privileges granted by tradition to laughter, to jest, and to material-bodily life extended to them in full. During recreations, one would not only take a break from the entire official worldview system, from scholarly learnedness and school ordinance, but one also took the liberty to make all these things the object of merry lowering play and jest. One was, first and foremost, freed up from the heavy chains of devotion and seriousness (from the constant fermentation of "everlasting devotion and fear of God")[64] and from the *yoke* of such gloomy categories as "eternal," "immovable," "absolute," and "unchanging." Put forward in opposition to these was the merry and unfettered laughter-based aspect of the world, with its incompleteness and openness, with its joy of successions and renewals. This is why medieval

[63] See Ilvonen (1914, 9–10), who in turn cites Novati (1889, 184).

[64] Referring back to the apology for the Feast of Fools (see note 44), quoted from Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 226–227).

parodies were not in any way formal literary and purely negative parodies of sacred texts and of the provisions and rules of schoolish wisdom; grotesque parodies transpose all this into the merry and laughter-based register and onto the positive material-bodily plane, they make everything they touch bodily and material and, at the same time, lighter.[65]

This is not the place to consider medieval parodies themselves; we shall discuss some of them (for example, the "Feast of Cyprian") in due time. What matters to us here is merely to characterize the place of sacred parody within the totality of medieval folk laughter culture.[(44)66]

Medieval parody, especially early medieval parody (before the twelfth century), was not in the least aimed at some negative thing, at some particular imperfections of the cult, church establishment, or scholastic learning, which was thereby subjected to ridiculing laughter and annihilation. To medieval parodists, everything, without exception, is laughable; laughter is as universal as seriousness: it is directed at the totality of the world, at history, at all of society, at its worldview. It is *the second*

[65] *ulegchayut*. This word (in a few grammatically related forms) is one of the attributes Bakhtin frequently uses in the book to describe carnival imagery. It means to make lighter, or lighten up, in the sense of making something less heavy. As I explained in the preface, English introduces an ambiguity that cannot be easily avoided (between "light" as the opposite of "heavy" and "light" as the opposite of "dark"). All uses of "lighter," "lighten," "lightened," and "lightening" in the translation are connected to this Russian word and to this sense of "light" (as "lightweight"). The word "bright" is used to render the opposite of "dark" (in the one place where Bakhtin does use it).

[66] The general histories Bakhtin is citing in the footnote are Manitius and Lehmann (1911–1931), Ebert (1874–1887), and Curtius (1953, added to the list in 1965). Ilvonen (1914) and Lehmann (1922) are Bakhtin's actual main sources on the subject. It remains unclear whether Bakhtin was able to access Novati (1889) directly, rather than only indirectly, through citations in the other two works. There are no passages in the book that could *only* possibly rely on Novati as a source. The wording of this footnote, though, suggests that Bakhtin at least had a chance to form a general impression of Novati's work. It is also notable that he adopts the term "parodia sacra," which Novati coined.

[(44)] In addition to relevant sections in general works devoted to the history of medieval literature (by Manitius, Ebert, Curtius), there are three works dedicated to sacred parody:

1. F. Novati, "La parodia sacra nelle letterature moderne," (see Novati's, *Studi critici e letterari*, Turin, 1889).

2. Eero Ilvonen, *Parodies de thèmes pieux dans la poésie française du moyen age*, Helsingfors, 1914.

3. Paul Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, Munich, 1922.

All three works mutually complement each other. Novati's work is the broadest in terms of the types of sacred parody it covers (his work has not become outdated to this day and remains foundational). Ilvonen offers a series of critical editions of mixed French parody only (the mixture of French and Latin is a fairly frequent phenomenon in parodic literature) and supplies a general introduction on medieval parody and commentary. Lehmann gives an excellent introduction to the literature of sacred parody but limits himself exclusively to the Latin.

All these authors consider medieval parody as something isolated and specific; they do not, therefore, disclose the organic connection this parody has with the grandiose world of folk laughter culture.

truth about the world, which pertains to everything and from whose domain nothing is excluded. It is, as it were, *the festive aspect of the whole world* in all its aspects, the second revelation about the world in play and laughter.

This is why medieval parody plays a completely unbridled merry game with all that is most sacred and important from the point of view of official ideology. The oldest grotesque parody—the "Feast of Cyprian" (it was created at some point between the fifth and seventh centuries) transformed all sacred history from Adam to Christ into material for depicting a fantastical clownish banquet using this history's most important events and symbols for grotesque purposes.(45)[67]

More restrained in character was another very ancient recreational work—"Joca monachorum" (it appeared in the sixth to the seventh centuries and is of Byzantine origin; from the eighth century on it became very widespread in France; in Russia, it had its own history, which was studied by A. N. Veselovsky and I. N. Zhdanov). It is a kind of merry catechism, a series of questions on Biblical themes made in jest; the "Joca" is essentially also a form of merry play with the Bible, though more restrained than the "Feast."[68]

In the centuries that followed (especially from the eleventh century on), parodic art draws into its laughter-based game all the elements of the official creed and cult and *more generally, all the forms of a serious attitude toward the world*. Numerous parodies of the most important prayers—"Our Father," "Hail Mary," the "Credo"—have reached us,(46) as have parodies of hymns (for instance, the "Laetabundus") and litanies. Nor did the parodists hesitate to approach the liturgy. We have the "The Drunkards' Liturgy," the "The Gamblers' Liturgy," and the "Money Liturgy." There are also parodies of the Gospels: "The Money Gospel of the Mark of Silver," "The Money Gospel of the Paris Student," "The Players' Gospel," and "The Drunkard's Gospel." There were parodies of monastic rule, of ecclesiastical decrees and Council canons, of papal bulls and encyclicals, of church sermons. As early as the seventh and eighth centuries we find parodies of wills (for instance, "The Last Will and Testament of a Pig," "The Donkey's Testament") and epitaphs.(47) We have already mentioned the

[67] See an extended discussion of the Feast of Cyprian in chapter 4.

[68] Lehmann (1922, 22–23; and see also Ilvonen 1914, 8; Novati 1889, 180–181). The reference to Russian scholarship on this work was added in 1965.

(45) See the analysis of the "Feast of Cyprian" in Novati, *Studi critici e letterari*, p. 266 ff., and in Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, pp. 25 ff. A critical edition of the text of the "Feast" was prepared by Strecker ("Monumenta Germaniae": Poetae, IV, 857 [1923]).

(46) Thus, Ilvonen publishes in his book six parodies of "Our Father," two of the "Credo," and one of "Hail Mary."

(47) The number of these parodies is large. Besides the standalone parodies, the parody of various elements of cult and ordo is a most widespread phenomenon within the forms of comic beast epics. In this context, an especially rich source is *Speculum stultorum* ("The fools' mirror") by Nigellus Wireker. This is the story of the ass Brunellus, who goes to Salerno in order to get rid of his miserable tail, studies theology and law in Paris, and then becomes a monk and founds his own order. On his way to

parody of grammar, which was very widespread in the Middle Ages.[(48)] Finally, there were parodies of legal texts and laws.[69]

Besides this parodic literature in the strict sense of the word, the jargon of clerics, monks, students, court clerks, as well as the people's colloquial speech, were spangled with all manner of travesties of various religious texts, prayers, proverbs, and sayings of received wisdom, and at last, simply of the names of saints and martyrs. Literally not a single text or saying of the Old and New Testaments was left in peace, as long as it could be mined for some hint or ambiguity that could somehow be "dressed up," travestied, translated into the language of the material-bodily nethers.

In Rabelais, Friar John is the incarnation of the mighty travestying and renewing force of the democratic bottom-rank clergy.[(49)][70] He is a great connoisseur "when it came to the breviary" ("en matière de breviaire");[71] this means that he can reinterpret any sacred text on the plane of eating, drinking, and erotica, he can transpose it from the Lenten to the shrove, "salacious" level. Generally speaking, we can find in Rabelais's novel a sufficiently rich collection of sacred texts and sayings in costume, which are scattered throughout the work. This is the case, for instance, with Christ's last words on the cross, "Sitio" ("I thirst") and "Consummatum est" (It is consummated),[72] which are travestied into terms for eating and carousing;[(50)][73] or with "Venite apotemus"—that is "potemus" ("O come, let us drink")—instead of "Venite adoremus" ("O come, let us worship") (Psalm 94 [95]:6).x[74] Elsewhere, Friar John utters a Latin expression that is highly characteristic of the medieval grotesque: "Ad formam nasi cognoscitur 'ad te levavi.' "[75] In translation, this means: "By the shape of the nose you will know (how) '*I have lifted up.*' " The first part of this expression has to do with the then-prevalent

[69] The paragraph goes over multiple works discussed by Ilvonen (1914) and Lehmann (1922) throughout their books (with a chapter or section devoted to almost each of the works mentioned). See also Lehmann (1922, 104–106) for the footnote on *Speculum stultorum*. Many of the texts in question can be found in the famous Carmina Burana manuscript.

[70] The quote in the footnote is from *Boris Godunov*, scene 6 (Pushkin 2010, 29).

[71] Bk. 1, ch. 27.

[72] See John 19:28 and bk. 1, ch. 5 ("Sitio!") and John 19:30 and bk. 4, ch. 19 ("Consummatum est"; elided in Le Clercq's translation).

[73] For the footnote, see Plattard (1930, 198). Note, by the way, that the "Sitio!" reference was even added to the text in 1542.

[74] Bk. 1, ch. 41.

[75] Bk. 1, ch. 40; internal quotation marks added by Bakhtin.

Rome he falls into the hands of his master. Many parodies of epitaphs, medical prescriptions, blessings, prayers, monastic rules, and so on are scattered through this work.

[(48)] Numerous examples of play with grammatical cases are provided by Lehmann on pp. 75–80 and on pp. 155–156 ("Erotic grammar").

[(49)] Pushkin characterizes his Russian brethren thus: "you feisty novices."

[(50)] For the 1542 edition, Rabelais cleaned up the first two books of his novel somewhat, out of prudence; he eliminated all allusions aimed against the Sorbonne (the theology school of the University of Paris), but he did not even think of eliminating the "Sitio" and similar travesties of sacred texts, so alive were still the rights of carnival and the liberties granted to laughter.

superstition (it was even shared by physicians) that the size of the nose can indicate the size of the phallus and thus also a man's reproductive force.[76] The second part, which we have emphasized and enclosed in quotation marks, is the beginning of one of the psalms (122 [121]:1); thus, a sacred text receives an indecent interpretation. The lowering reinterpretation is further strengthened by the last syllable of the quotation—"*vi*"—which, due to its assonance with the relevant French word, was interpreted as a designation for the phallus.[77] In the grotesque—both in antiquity and in the Middle Ages—the nose usually signified the phallus. In France there existed an entire parodic litany composed of texts from the scriptures and from prayers, beginning with "ne" (the Latin negation, "not"), as in "ne advertas" ("do not avert"), "ne revoces" ("do not take away"), and so on (and there were, of course, many such texts). This litany was called "Noms de tous les nez," that is, "the names of all noses," as the Latin word "ne" was interpreted parodically to mean "nose" (standing in for the phallus), based on its assonance with the French word "nez." This litany began with the words "Ne reminiscaris delicta nostra"—that is "Remember not our offences." These words were sung at both the beginning and the end of the seven penitential psalms and were connected to the foundations of Christian doctrine and cult. Rabelais alludes to this litany (in book 2, chapter 1); with regard to people with monstrous noses, Rabelais says, "desquels est escript: Ne reminiscaris," that is, "of whom it is written, Ne reminiscaris."[78]

All these are characteristic examples of how even the most peripheral analogies and assonances are sought out in order to travesty the serious and force it to resound on the plane of laughter. In everything—in the meaning, in the image, in the sound of sacred words and rituals—an Achilles's heel to be laughed at, some minor trait that permitted linkage to the material-bodily nethers, was sought after and found. Many saints had their own unofficial legend, which was often constructed simply around a travesty of their names: for instance, Saint Vit, based on the sound of his name, was perceived as belonging to the nether parts of the body (in this case the phallus); there was a current expression, "to honor St. Mamie," which meant to visit one's lover.[79]

Arguably, the unofficial familiar speech of medieval clerics (indeed, of all the medieval educated classes) and of the common folk was all deeply permeated with elements of the material-bodily nethers: with indecencies and terms of abuse, with swearing and oaths, with sacred texts and sayings in current use that had been travestied

[76] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:344). Also, Bakhtin seems to be indulging in a bit of verbal travesty of his own here. The Russian words *proizvoditel'naya sila*, which he uses here in a sexual sense, are also an important term in Marxist economics (hence my choice of "reproductive force," to hint at the English equivalent "productive force"). Bakhtin goes on to use this expression regularly in the book.

[77] Cf. a similar point about St. Vit, mentioned in the next paragraph, based on Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:160).

[78] Bk. 2, ch. 1 (Urquhart). On the parodic litany, see Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:19). Rabelais's quote "ne reminiscaris" is not part of the penitential psalms themselves but, rather, is part of an associated prayer. It is also not included in the parodic litany Bakhtin is talking about—a point Bakhtin must have misread in the footnote he is basing his remarks on.

[79] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:160).

and turned inside out; everything that was brought into this speech had to subordinate itself to the lowering and renewing force of the mighty ambivalent nethers. And such did familiar speech remain in Rabelais's time. Friar John's and Panurge's speech offers typical specimens.(51)[80]

In all these phenomena, laughter's universal character is fully evident. Medieval laughter is directed at the same object as medieval seriousness. Not only does laughter make no exception for that which is high, but it is even directed primarily at it. Furthermore, it is directed not at a particularity or at a part but precisely at the whole, at the universal, at everything. One might say that it builds its own world opposite the official world, its own church opposite the official church, its own state opposite the official state. Laughter serves liturgies, professes its own Creed, performs marriage ceremonies and funeral rites, writes epitaphs, elects kings and bishops. It is typical that even the briefest medieval parody is always constructed as if it were a fragment of a whole unitary comic world.

This universal character of laughter reveals itself most keenly and consistently in carnival ritual-spectacle forms and in the parodies connected to them. But it also exists in all the other phenomena of medieval laughter culture: in the comic elements of church drama, in the comic "dits" (oral poems) and "débats" (debate poems), in beast epics, in fabliaux, and in Schwänke.(52) The character of laughter and its connection with the material-bodily nethers remains the same in all.

One may say that the laughter culture of the Middle Ages, which gravitated toward feast days, was in a sense like the "fourth" drama—that is the satyr play of the Middle Ages, which corresponds to and contrasts with the "tragic trilogy" of official Christian cult and doctrine. Like the satyr play of antiquity, the medieval culture of laughter was to a significant extent *the drama of bodily life* (of copulation, birth, growth, eating, drinking, defecation), but of course it was the drama not of an individual body or of a private material everyday life but of *the great kin and folk body*, for which birth and death are not the absolute beginning and end but merely moments of continuous growth and renewal. The great body of this satyr play of the Middle Ages cannot be separated from the world; it is permeated with cosmic elements and blends in with the earth that devours and gives birth.

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[80] Bakhtin's source for the footnote is Lote (1938, 213). Estienne quotes Psalms 50[51]: 12[10].

(51) In sixteenth-century Protestant circles, the joking and lowering use of sacred texts in familiar speech interaction was often condemned. Henri Estienne, Rabelais's contemporary, complained in his *Apology for Herodotus* of the regular profaning use of sacred words during carousals. He cites many examples of this usage. Thus, while one empties a goblet of wine into one's mouth, one would usually recite the words of the penitential psalm: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and *renew* a right spirit within my *bowels*." Even people suffering from venereal disease used sacred texts to describe their ailment and their sweating (see H. Estienne, *Apologie pour Hérodote*, 1566, I, 14).

(52) Although the specific limitedness of early bourgeois culture is sometimes already expressed in these phenomena, and in those cases the material-bodily domain becomes shallower and degenerates to a certain extent.

Alongside the universalism of medieval laughter, one has to place its second remarkable feature—its indissoluble and essential connection with *freedom*.

We have observed that medieval laughter was absolutely extra-official, yet it was legalized. The rights of the fool's cap in the Middle Ages were as sacred and untouchable as those of the pileus (the fool's cap) during the Roman Saturnalias.

This freedom of laughter, like any freedom, was, of course, relative; its sphere was at times broader and at times narrower, but it was never entirely revoked. As we have seen, this freedom was connected with feast days and was to a certain extent limited to the temporal boundaries of these feast days. It blended in with the festive atmosphere and went together with the coinciding permission to consume meat and lard, and to have sex. This *festive freeing of laughter and of the body* was in sharp contrast with the Lent that had just passed or that was soon to follow.

The feast day was in a sense a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchical barriers. For a short while, life leaves its beaten track, consecrated and enshrined in law, and enters the sphere of utopian freedom. The very evanescence of this freedom only increased the fantastic nature and utopian radicalism of the images created in this festive atmosphere.

The atmosphere of evanescent freedom reigned both in the public square and at the domestic festive carousal. The tradition, coming from antiquity, of unfettered, often indecent, but at the same time philosophical table talk, which was revived in the Renaissance, converged with the local tradition of festive carousals, which emerged from folkloric roots that were akin to it.(53)[81] This tradition of table talk remains alive in subsequent centuries as well. Also analogous are the traditions of bacchic drinking songs, which combine mandatory universalism (questions of life and death) with the material-bodily element (wine, food, carnal love), with an elementary sense of time (youth, old age, the brevity of life, the vagaries of fortune), and with a peculiar kind of utopianism (the brotherhood both of fellow-drinkers and of humanity as a whole, the triumph of plenty, the triumph of reason, and so on).

The laughter-based rituals of the Feast of Fools and the Feast of the Ass and various laughter-based processions and rites at other feast days have all enjoyed a certain

[81] Main source for the footnote: Sainéan (1930, 127–143). The list of works mentioned was expanded in 1965 compared to the 1940 manuscript, possibly based on some additional source. Bakhtin follows his sources in mistakenly naming Jean de Cholières Nicolas.

(53) Very characteristic of the second half of the sixteenth century is the literature of unfettered conversations (with prevailing material-bodily themes)—conversations at the dinner table, festive conversations, recreational conversations, or conversations while taking a walk: Noël du Fail, *Rustic and Facetious Conversations* (*Propos rustiques et facétieux*), 1547; idem, *Tales and New Speeches by Eustrapel* (*Contes et nouveaux discours d'Eustrapel*, 1585); Jacques Tahureau, *Dialogues* (1562); Nicolas de Cholières, *Morning Conversations* (*Matinées*, 1585); idem, *After-Dinner Conversations* (*Les après-diners*); Guillaume Bouchet, *Conversations after Supper* (*Sérées*, 1584–1597), and others. *The Path to Success* by Béroalde de Verville, mentioned above, also belongs to this category. All these works belong to a special type of carnivalized dialogue, and they all reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, Rabelais's influence.

degree of legality. The diableries were legalized, and moreover, the "devils" were sometimes already granted special permission to "run about freely" in the streets and the surrounding countryside some days before the shows and to create around themselves an atmosphere of devilry and unbridledness.[82] Merriment on the public square during fairs was also legalized, as was the carnival. Of course, this legalization was reluctant, incomplete, interspersed with periods of pushback and prohibitions. Throughout the Middle Ages, the state and Church were forced to make concessions, to a greater or lesser extent, to the public square, to take it into account. Throughout the entire year there were scattered islets of time, strictly limited by the dates of feasts, when the world was permitted to go off its official tracks, but exclusively in the protective form of laughter. Almost no limits were placed on laughter itself, so long as it remained laughter.

Linked to the universalism and the freedom of medieval laughter was also its third remarkable feature—its essential relation to *unofficial popular truth.*

In the culture of a class society, *seriousness* is official, authoritarian, combined with violence, prohibitions, and limitations. *In such seriousness there is always an element of fear and intimidation.* This element was starkly dominant in medieval seriousness. Laughter, on the contrary, presumed the overcoming of fear. There are no prohibitions and limitations created by laughter. Power, violence, and authority never speak the language of laughter.

It was precisely the *victory over fear* that medieval man sensed in laughter with special acuteness. And it was sensed not only as a victory over mystical fear ("the fear of God")[83] and over fear of the forces of nature, but above all, as a victory over moral fear, which shackles, oppresses, and obscures man's consciousness: the fear of all that was consecrated and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo"),[84] of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and retribution after death, of hell, of all that is *scarier than the earth.* In conquering this fear, laughter clarified man's consciousness and revealed the world to him in a new way. To be sure, this victory was ephemeral, for the duration of the feast, followed by the return of weekdays of fear and oppression, but from these brief festive moments of clarity for human consciousness, a different unofficial truth about the world and about man was being forged, which was setting the ground for the new self-consciousness of the Renaissance.

An acute feeling of victory over fear is a very essential aspect of medieval laughter. This feeling finds expression in a number of special characteristics of medieval laughter-based images. This defeated fear is always present in them in the form of laughable ugliness, in the form of symbols of power and violence turned inside out, in comic

[82] Driesen (1904, 137ff.). And see the analysis of François Villon's "tragic farce" (bk. 4, ch. 13) in chapter 3.

[83] Quoting from the 1444 apology for the Feast of Fools (see note 44).

[84] See Cassirer (1955, 75ff.; and see Bakhtin's summary in Bakhtin 2008b, 794–797), who in turn refers to the "mana-taboo formula" as an established "minimum definition of religion" in early twentieth-century religion studies. Cassirer (especially in Bakhtin's reading of him) treats these terms as central

images of death, in the merry tearing apart of bodies. All that was ominous becomes laughable. We have already mentioned that one of the indispensable accessories of carnival was a grotesque contraption called "hell." This "hell" was usually solemnly burned down when the festivities reached their culmination.[85] The grotesque image cannot be understood at all without taking this element of conquered fear into account. That which is scary is played with and laughed at: it becomes a "laughable bogeyman." But the grotesque image also cannot be understood if this factor is simplified and if one tries to interpret the entire image in a spirit that seeks to abstractly rationalize it. It is impossible to tell where defeated fear ends and where joyous merriment begins. That same hell of carnival is the earth that devours and gives birth, it often turns into a horn of plenty; the bogeyman—death—turns out to be pregnant; various deformities—all those protruding abdomens, enormous noses, humps, and so on—turn out to be signs of pregnancy or of reproductive force. Victory over fear is not the same as its abstract elimination but is, rather, simultaneously, both its decrowning and its renewal, its transition into merriment: "hell" has burst open and has poured out its content as a horn of plenty.

We have said that medieval laughter conquered the fear of that which was more terrifying than the earth. All things scary that are unearthly turned into *earth*, the same earth that is also one's own mother, devouring in order to give birth anew, to give birth to that which is greater and better. There can be nothing scary on earth, just as there can be nothing scary on a mother's body, where there are feeding nipples, where there is the organ of birth, where there is warm blood. That which is scary and is of the earth is the genital organ, the bodily grave, but it blossoms with pleasure and with new births.

However, medieval laughter is neither a subjectively individual nor a biological feeling of life's continuity; rather, it is a social, communal feeling. Man experiences this continuity of life in the festive public square, in the carnival crowd, as he comes into contact with other bodies of all ages and social standings; he senses himself as a member of an eternally growing and renewed people. This is why festive folk laughter contains an element of victory not only over the fear of supernatural horrors, of the sacred, of death, but also over the fear of any worldly power, of earthly kings, of the top end of the earthly social hierarchy, of all that oppresses and restricts.(54)[86]

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to the construction of a mythical sense of the world and of mythical lived space, where some places in the landscape, but not others, are holy (have mana, or are taboo). For Cassirer, this mythical space, in a dialectical process that grows out of mythical thinking itself, is later superseded by the abstract geometrical space of modern science. Bakhtin, as he in effect hints here, instead counterposes the fearless and laughter-based carnival sense of the world to the mythical sense outlined by Cassirer. This sense of the world is fearless, universal, and cosmic but never abstract.

[85] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 307–309).

[86] The footnote was added in the 1949–1950 revision round. The English translation of the longer

(54) Profound thoughts concerning the functions of laughter in the history of culture were expressed by Herzen (though he knew nothing of the laughing Middle Ages): "Laughter contains something rev-

Medieval laughter, having conquered the fear of mystery, of the world, of power, was also fearlessly revealing the truth about the world and about power. It stood against lie and glorification, flattery and hypocrisy. This truth of laughter lowered the powers that be and was combined with invective obscenity. Among the bearers of this truth was the medieval jester, or fool.

In his article on Rabelais, A. N. Veselovsky characterizes the fool's social significance thus:

> In the Middle Ages, the fool is the rightless bearer of objectively abstract truth. At a time when life folded entirely into the conventional frameworks of caste, prerogative, scholastic learning and hierarchy, truth was localized according to these frameworks and was relatively feudal, scholastic, etc., drawing its strength from either this or the other milieu, being a result of the rights it could practically exercise. Feudal truth is the right to oppress the bondman, to despise his slavish work, to go to war, to hunt in the peasants' fields, etc.; scholastic truth is the right to exclusive knowledge outside of which nothing is of use, which is why it should be fenced off from anything that threatens to obscure it, etc. Any universal human truth, not associated with this or that estate, established profession, i.e. with a certain privilege, was excluded, it was not taken into consideration, it was despised, dragged to be burned at the stake on the slightest suspicion, and was only tolerated when it appeared in a harmless form, arousing laughter, making no claim to any more serious role in life. This determined the fool's social significance.[55]

Veselovsky correctly characterizes feudal truth. He is also right to claim that the fool was the bearer of another, nonfeudal, unofficial truth. But this unofficial truth

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of the two quotes is from Herzen (2012, 68–69). Bakhtin also used a sentence from it (the one he

olutionary ... Voltaire's laughter destroyed more than Rousseau's weeping." (*Works in nine volumes*, Moscow, 1956. vol. 3, p. 92). And elsewhere:

> Laughter is no joking matter, and we will not give it up. In the ancient world they laughed heartily on Olympus and on earth while listening to Aristophanes and his comedies, and they laughed out loud all the way up to Lucian. After the fourth century, humankind stopped laughing—they wept, and heavy chains fell on the mind amidst the groans and pangs of conscience. As soon as the fever of fanaticism began to abate, people again began to laugh. *It would be extraordinarily interesting to write the history of laughter.* No one laughs in church, at court, on parade, before the head of their department, a police officer, or a German boss. House serfs have no right to smile in the presence of their masters. *Only equals can laugh amongst themselves.* If inferiors were permitted to laugh in front of their superiors and if they could not hold back their laughter then you can forget about respect for rank. To cause men to smile at the god Apis is to deprive him of his holy status and turn him into a common bull." (*A.I. Herzen on Art*, Isskustvo, Moscow, 1954, p. 223).

[55] See A. N. Veselovsky. *Collected Articles*, Goslitizdat, Leningrad, 1939, pp. 441–442.

can hardly be defined as "objectively abstract." Furthermore, Veselovsky considers the fool in isolation from the rest of the mighty laughter culture of the Middle Ages and therefore understands laughter to be merely an *external* protective form for "objectively abstract truth," for the "universal human truth," which was what the fool proclaimed using this external form—that is, using laughter. If there had been no repressions, no burning at the stake, these truths would have cast off their fool's attire and would have spoken in a *serious* tone. Such an understanding of medieval laughter appears to us to be incorrect.

No doubt, laughter has also served as an external protective form. It was legalized, it enjoyed privileges, it exempted one (of course, only up to a point), from external censorship, from external repression, from burning at the stake. This aspect should not be underestimated. But it is entirely inadmissible to reduce the full significance of laughter to this element alone. Laughter is not an external but a crucial *internal form*, which cannot be replaced with seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth that it reveals. Laughter frees one not only from external censorship but, first of all, from the great *internal censor*, from the fear, which was inculcated in man over millennia, of the sacred, of authoritarian prohibition, of the past, of power. It revealed the material-bodily principle in its true sense. It opened one's eyes to that which is new and is to come. It was therefore not only allowed to express antifeudal, popular truth, but it also helped to discover this truth in the first place and to form it from within. And this truth was forming and maturing over thousands of years in the womb of laughter and folk-festive laughter-based forms. Laughter revealed the world in a new form, in its maximally merry and maximally *sober* aspect. Its external privileges are inextricably linked with these internal powers that it possesses; they are, as it were, an external recognition of its internal rights. This is why laughter could not in the least become an instrument to oppress and dumbfound the people. Attempts to make it fully official always failed. It always remained a free weapon in the hands of the people itself.

In opposition to laughter, medieval seriousness was permeated from within with elements of fear, weakness, meekness, resignation, lies, and hypocrisy, or conversely, with elements of violence, intimidation, threats, and prohibitions. In the mouth of power, seriousness intimidated, demanded, and forbade, while in the mouths of subordinates it trembled, submitted, praised, and extoled. Medieval seriousness thus inspired the people with distrust. It was an official tone, which was treated like all that is official. Seriousness oppressed, scared, and shackled; it lied and displayed hypocrisy; it was tightfisted and Lenten. In the festive public square, at the feasting table, the serious tone was dropped like a mask, and a different truth was heard in the form of laughter, tomfoolery, indecencies, verbal abuse, parodies, travesties, and so on. All fears and lies dispersed before the triumph of the material-bodily and festive principle.

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emphasized) as an epigraph for this chapter. As noted above (note 1 to this chapter), this quote was brought to Bakhtin's attention by historian Nikolai Antsiferov.

It would be wrong, however, to think that medieval seriousness held no appeal at all for the people. Since there was room for fear, since medieval man was as yet too weak before the forces of nature and before social forces—*the seriousness of fear and suffering* in its religious, socio-political, and ideological forms had its genuine appeal.[87] Any consciousness of freedom could only be limited and utopian. It would therefore be a mistake to think that popular distrust of seriousness and popular love of laughter as a different truth were always conscious, critical, and clearly oppositional in character. We know that people who created the most unbridled parodies of sacred texts and church worship were often also people who sincerely accepted this worship and served it. We have the testimony of people in the Middle Ages who ascribed didactic and edifying purposes to parodies. For instance, we have the surviving testimony of a monk from the St. Gall Abbey, who asserted that the Gamblers' and Players' Liturgies were composed with the edifying purpose of turning people away from drinking and gambling and that they indeed allegedly brought many students to repent and correct their ways.[(56)][88] Medieval man could reconcile devout attendance at official mass with a merry parody of official cult in the public square. Trust of the fool's truth, the truth of "the world turned inside out," could be reconciled with sincere devotion. The merry truth about the world, based on confidence in matter and in the material-spiritual powers of man, the truth proclaimed by the Renaissance, was asserted spontaneously in the Middle Ages through the material-bodily and utopian images of laughter culture; however, the individual consciousness of each man considered on his own was by no means always able to free itself from the seriousness of weakness and fear. The freedom granted by laughter was often a mere festive luxury for it.

Thus, distrust of the serious tone and faith in the truth of laughter were unreflective. People understood that violence never lurks behind laughter, that laughter never erects gallows, that hypocrisy and deception never laugh but, rather, wear a serious mask, that laughter professes no dogmata and cannot be authoritarian, that laughter bespeaks an awareness of strength rather than fear, that laughter is linked with the reproductive act, with birth, renewal, fertility, abundance, eating, and drinking, with the people's earthly immortality, that, finally, laughter is connected with the future, with the new, with what is forthcoming and that it clears the way for it. This is why seriousness was spontaneously distrusted, while festive laughter was believed.

The people of the Middle Ages partook equally in two lives—the official one and the carnival one; they partook in two aspects of the world—the reverentially serious one and the laughter-based one. These two aspects coexisted in their consciousness. This

[87] From Bakhtin's working notes (Bakhtin 2014; 2017), we know that he distinguished more generally between official and unofficial seriousness (he found the latter to be expressed in Dostoevsky's novels; see Bakhtin 2014, 524–525).

[88] Lehmann (1922, 200; cited in the 1940 manuscript).

[(56)] This opinion reflects a bourgeois moralizing tendency (in the spirit of the later Grobianism), but at the same time also the tendency to render parodies harmless.

coexistence was very clearly and tangibly reflected on the pages of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century illuminated manuscripts, for instance, in the legendaria—that is, the handwritten compilations of legends about the lives of saints. Here, we find strictly pious illustrations of the hagiographical text on the same page as free depictions (that is, ones that bear no connection to the story) of chimeras (fantastical combinations of human, animal, and vegetable forms), of comic devils, of jugglers with their acrobatic tricks, of masquerade figures, of miniature parodic scenes, and so on—that is, of purely carnivalesque grotesque images. And all this, again, appeared within the confines of the very same page. The surface of the page, like medieval man's consciousness, contained within itself both these aspects of life and of the world.(57) But not only in miniature illustrations in books, but also in the decorations of medieval churches (which we have already discussed), as well as in church sculpture, we can observe a similar coexistence of the piously serious and strict with the carnival-grotesque. Most emblematic is the role of the chimera (that quintessence of the grotesque), which literally intrudes everywhere. However, in medieval figurative art too, a strict inner boundary divides the two aspects: they coexist alongside one another, but they do not merge and do not mix.[89]

Thus, the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages was mostly bound within the islets of feast days and recreations. Alongside it, there existed an official serious culture strictly delimited from the public-square culture of laughter. Within the latter, the shoots of a new worldview were sprouting everywhere, but they could not proliferate and blossom as long as they were closed up within the specific forms of laughter culture, scattered among the isolated utopian islets of folk-festive recreational and dining-hall merriment or in the fluid element of familiar conversational speech. For that to happen, they had to break through into major literature.

The reciprocal loosening of the boundary lines between the culture of laughter and major literature is already beginning toward the end of the Middle Ages. Lowly forms increasingly begin to penetrate into the higher strata of literature. Folk laughter penetrates into epics, its relative weight within mystery plays increases. Such genres as the morality play, the sottie, and the farce, begin to flourish. Typical of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is the appearance and blossoming of societies in jest—"Kingdom of the Basoche," "Enfants sans Souci,"(58)[90] and others. Laughter culture begins to

[89] The last paragraph was added to the book in 1965 and relies on information found in the book cited in the footnote (Lyublinsky 1963), and possibly in Mâle (1911; 1978; 1986).

[90] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 89–91, 95–97, 371–372).

(57) An extremely interesting book was recently published in our country: *An Unknown Artifact of Book-Art. An Attempted Reconstruction of a French Legendarium from the Thirteenth Century*, Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow and Leningrad, 1963. The book was edited by V. S. Lyublinsky, who led the effort to reconstruct the artifact—a unique thirteenth-century legendarium. The pages of this legendarium offer an exceptionally clear and full illustration of our claims (see V. S. Lyublinsky's magnificent analyses on pp. 63–73 of this book).

(58) "*Kingdom of the Basoche*": a society for the staging of morality plays. Its members were the secretaries of parliamentary attorneys. The first privilege was bestowed on the society as early as in the

overflow narrow feast-day boundaries and seeks to penetrate all spheres of ideological life.

This process culminated in the Renaissance. Medieval laughter found its highest expression in Rabelais's novel. Here, it became a form for a new free and critical *historical* consciousness. And the ground for this highest stage of laughter had already been prepared in the Middle Ages.

As for the tradition of sources from antiquity, this played a significant role only in the very process of becoming aware of and *theoretically* elucidating laughter's medieval heritage. We saw that the Renaissance philosophy of laughter relied on sources from antiquity. It should be noted that in the French Renaissance of the sixteenth century, at the forefront we find nothing like the "classical" tradition of antiquity—not the epic, nor tragedy, nor the strict lyrical genres, that is, nothing like the tradition that was defining for the classicism of the seventeenth century—but, rather, Lucian, Athenaeus, Aulus Gellius, Plutarch, Macrobius, and other erudites, rhetors, and satirists of late antiquity.(59)[91] Using Reich's terminology, at the forefront in the sixteenth century was the "mimic" tradition of antiquity, the "biological" and "ethological" image hailing from antiquity, the dialogue, the symposium, the brief scene, the anecdote, and the proverb. And all this is akin to the medieval tradition of laughter, is in tune with it.(60) All this, to use our own terms, is carnivalized antiquity.

[91] See Plattard (1910, 261–263; 1930, 214–215) and, for the footnote, Plattard (1910, 175–176, 193–194).

days of Philip the Fair. Later, the "basochiens" developed a special type of afterpiece called "parades." These "parades" widely used laughter's privileges of unfetteredness and indecency. The "basochiens" also composed parodies of sacred texts and "sermons joyeux" (i.e., comic sermons). For these productions, the "Kingdom of the Basoche" was often submitted to prohibitions and repressions. In 1547 this society was permanently disbanded.

The society of "Enfants sans souci" produced sotties. The head of this society was called the "Prince des sots."

(59) The authors of comedy—Aristophanes, Plautus, Terence—did not exercise much influence. It has become commonplace to compare Rabelais to Aristophanes. A substantial affinity between them in the very methods of the comic is often noted. But this cannot be explained by Aristophanes's influence on Rabelais. Rabelais was, of course, familiar with Aristophanes: among the eleven surviving books with Rabelais's ex libris, there is also a volume of Aristophanes in Latin translation, but there are few traces of his influence in Rabelais's novel. A certain similarity in the methods of the comic (it should not be overestimated) is accounted for by the kinship of their folkloric and carnival sources. The only surviving satyr play—Euripides's *Cyclops*—was very well known by Rabelais; he quotes it twice in his novel, and it undoubtedly influenced him to some extent.

(60) The nature of Rabelais's own erudition and that of the men of his time in sources from antiquity, their tastes and preferences in the choice of such sources, are excellently expounded by J. Plattard in his book *L'œuvre de Rabelais (Sources, invention et composition)*, 1910. P. Villey's book on Montaigne's sources, *Les sources et l'évolution des "Essais" de Montaigne*, Paris, 1908, can serve as a complement. Already the Pléiade introduces certain changes in this selection of sources from the heritage of antiquity, preparing for the seventeenth century with its definite and clear mindset favoring "classical" antiquity.

The Renaissance philosophy of laughter, built upon sources from antiquity, was not in all respects adequate to the actual practice of laughter in the Renaissance. The philosophy of laughter did not reflect that which was the most important about it—the historical directionality of laughter in the Renaissance.

Renaissance literature and other documents of that period testify that the people of that time had an exceptionally clear and distinct sense of being at a great historical boundary, a radical succession of times, a succession of historical epochs. In France in the twenties and the early thirties of the sixteenth century this sense was particularly acute and often took the form of conscious declarations. People were bidding farewell to the "darkness of the Gothic age" and welcoming the sun of the new epoch. Suffice it to recall Rabelais's dedicatory epistle to André Tiraqueau and Gargantua's famous letter to Pantagruel.[92]

The medieval culture of laughter provided already-prepared forms through which to express this sense of history. After all, these forms had the most essential relation to time, to the succession of times, to the future. They decrowned and renewed the established power and the official truth. They celebrated the return of better times and of communal abundance and justice. The ground for a new historical consciousness was being prepared in them. For this reason, it was precisely in laughter that this new consciousness had found its most radical expression.

B. A. Krzhevsky made very apt remarks on this in his article on Cervantes:

> The thunder of deafening laughter, which progressive Europe bursts into, while pushing the age-old mores of feudalism toward the grave, was a merry and tangible proof of its alertness to the change of historical atmosphere. The roars of this "historically" tinged laughter shook not only Italy, Germany, or France (I have in mind first and foremost Rabelais, "Gargantua and Pantagruel"), but they also found a magnificent echo beyond the Pyrenees.(61)

All folk-festive images were made to serve this new historical sense—from simple changes of costume and mystifications (their role in Renaissance literature, for instance, in Cervantes, is immense) to more complex carnival forms. Mobilized here are all the forms, developed over centuries, of merrily dispatching winter, Lent, the outgoing year, death and of merrily welcoming in spring, Shrovetide, the slaughtering of cattle,

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[92] Rabelais's dedicatory letter to his friend André Tiraqueau served as an introduction to a collection of works by Italian physician Giovanni Manardi (or Manardo), which Rabelais edited and published in 1532 (apparently, this was his first publication; see Plattard 1930, 107–108). Bakhtin's preceding sentence paraphrases the brief summary of this dedicatory letter found in Moland (1884, xviii; the words "darkness of the Gothic age" are a direct quote). Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel appears in bk. 2, ch. 8. Bakhtin examines it in greater detail in chapter 6.

(61) *Early Bourgeois Realism*, edited by N. Ya, Berkovsky, Leningrad, 1936, p. 162.

weddings, the new year, and so on—all of these images of succession and renewal, of growth and abundance, which have been ripening for centuries.

All these images, which were already sufficiently saturated with time and the utopian future, with the people's hopes and aspirations, now become the expression of the merry communal sending-off of a dying era, of the old power and the old truth.

Laughter-based forms prevail not only in the belles lettres. In order to attain popularity, to become accessible to the people and to win its confidence, Protestant writers began resorting to these forms in their pamphlets and even in their theological treatises. Here too, the transition to writing in the French vernacular was of great significance. Henri Estienne published his Protestant satirical pamphlet, "Apology for Herodotus" (*L'Apologie pour Hérodote*, 1566), for which he gained the moniker "the Pantagruel of Geneva," while Calvin said of him that he "turned" religion "Rabelaisian" ("tournoit à la rabelaiserie"). This work is indeed written in a Rabelaisian style and is full of folk-comic elements.[93] The famous Protestant author Pierre Viret, in his "Disputations chrestiennes" (1544) offers an interesting and characteristic justification for the comic element in theological writings:

> If it seems to them [to serious theologians] that such matters can only be treated with the greatest gravity and modesty, I do not deny that the word of God requires treatment with great honor and reverence. But consider also that the word of God is not so severe that it has no ironies, farces, honest games, jokes, and witticisms to add to its gravity and majesty.[94]

A similar idea is expressed by the unknown author of the "Christian Satires on the Papal Kitchen" (*Satyres chrestiennes de la Cuisine Papale*, 1560) in his address to his reader:

> I recall Horace's lines: "What is to prevent one from telling truth as he laughs?" And indeed, truth should be taught by various means, so that it may be received not only through demonstration and weighty authorities, but also under the cover of some witty stories (quelques facéties).[95]

In that period, only if armed with the principle of unofficial laughter could one approach the people, suspicious as it was of any kind of seriousness and accustomed to associating sincere and free truth with laughter.

Even the first French translation of the Bible, done by Olivétan, reflects the influence of Rabelais's language and style. Olivétan's library contained works by Rabelais. The Calvin scholar Doumergue puts it very well when discussing Olivétan's translation (Doumergue, *Calvin*, vol. 1, p. 121):

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[93] Sainéan (1930, 155).

[94] Quoted from Sainéan (1930, 269–270).

[95] Quoted from Sainéan (1930, 270). The internal quote from Horace is from the *Satires*, 1.1.24

> The Bible of 1535 reveals that naive folk humor which made Olivétan one of the founders of the French language, placing him between Rabelais and Calvin; closer in style to Rabelais, closer to Calvin in thought.[96]

The sixteenth century is the summit of the history of laughter, and the high point of this summit is Rabelais's novel. After this time, already from the Pléiade onward, a fairly steep decline ensues. Above, we already characterized the seventeenth century's perspective on laughter: laughter loses its essential connection with one's world outlook, it becomes entwined with negation, even with dogmatic negation, it becomes limited to the sphere of the private and the individually typical, it loses its historical tinge; and while its connection with the material-bodily domain is retained, this domain itself is now characterized as belonging to lowly private everyday life.

How did this process of laughter's degradation proceed?

The seventeenth century was marked by the *stabilization* of the new order of absolute monarchy. A new, relatively progressive "world-historical form"[97] was being created. It found its ideological expression in Descartes's Rationalist philosophy and in the aesthetics of Classicism. Rationalism and Classicism starkly express the fundamental features of the new official culture, which differed from the church-feudal culture but which was equally permeated with authoritarian seriousness, albeit of a less dogmatic kind. New dominant concepts were created that, according to Marx, the new dominant class inevitably expresses as eternal truths.(62)[98]

Tendencies toward the stability and completeness of being, toward the univocality and the single-toned seriousness of images, prevail in the new official culture. The ambivalence of the grotesque is now unacceptable. The high genres of Classicism are entirely freed from any influence of the grotesque laughter tradition.

However, this tradition does not die entirely: it continues to live and struggle for its existence both in the lower canonical genres (comedy, satire, fable) and, especially, in noncanonical genres (in the novel, in a particular form of everyday dialogue, in burlesque genres, and so on); it also goes on living on the popular stage (Tabarin, the Turlupins, and others).[99] All these genres were, to a greater or lesser extent, *oppositional* in character. This was precisely what permitted the grotesque laughter-based

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(Horace 1926, 7).

[96] Domergue (1899, 121), quoted in Sainéan (1930, 268), who is also the source of information in the paragraph that introduces the quote.

[97] A brief allusion to a passage from Marx (1970, 134), quoted at greater length at the very end of chapter 6. The entire discussion of general historical trends, beginning with this paragraph and until Bakhtin comes back to analyzing concrete examples, was added to the text in 1949–1950.

[98] Marx and Engels (1970, 64–67, directly paraphrasing text on p. 65).

[99] On Tabarin and the three Turlupins (comic street performers in seventeenth-century France), see Sainéan (1930, 258–260). Bakhtin devotes special attention to one of the Turlupins, Gros Guillaume, in chapter 4.

(62) See K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, vol, 3, pp. 45–48.

tradition to penetrate into them. But these genres too remained—to a greater or lesser extent—within the limits of official culture, and as a result, laughter and the grotesque change their nature and are degraded in them.

We will dwell on this *bourgeois line* in the development of Rabelaisian laughter-based grotesque in somewhat greater detail later. Here, however, we should further note a special line in the development of carnival and Rabelaisian imagery in the seventeenth century, which was, apparently, connected with the sentiments of the discontented aristocracy but which also has more general significance.

The following phenomenon is very telling: in the seventeenth century, Rabelais's characters become the protagonists of court festivals, masquerades, and ballets. In 1622 a "masquerade" is danced in Blois, titled *Pantagruel's Nativity*, featuring Panurge, Friar John, and the Sibyl of Panzoult, alongside the infant giant and his nurse. In 1628 a ballet is produced at the Louvre under the title *The Chitterlings* (on the theme of the chitterling war);[100] a while later there was another ballet, called *The Pantagruelists*, and in 1638 a "Rabelaisian Buffonade" (based on the "Third Book"). Similar productions also took place later on.(63)[101]

These phenomena indicate that the spectacle nature of Rabelais's images was still being perceived very vividly. The folk-festive and carnival native land of Rabelaisian fantasy had not yet been forgotten.(64)[102] But, at the same time, these images had migrated from the popular public square into the court masquerade, and here, their style, as well as the meaning ascribed to them, of course changed correspondingly.

It must be said that such was one of the lines of development that the folk-festive tradition was destined to follow in the modern age. Court festivities, with their masquerades, processions, allegories, fireworks, and so on lived, in part, at the expense of the carnival tradition. Court poets (first and foremost in Italy) were the producers of these festivities and masters of these forms, able at times to understand all their philosophical and utopian depth. That was still the case even for Goethe at the court of Weimar, where he was in charge of producing such festivities.[103] He studied traditional

[100] Bk. 4, ch. 35–42.

[101] Boulenger (1925, 34) is Bakhtin's source here. It is unlikely that Bakhtin could have had access to Clouzot (1907), whom Boulenger cites there, but in a shorthand format. The full citation in the footnote most likely comes from Sainéan (1930, 103).

[102] Source for footnote: Lote (1938, 519).

[103] Bakhtin's source on Italian court poets is unclear. Goethe mentions that organizing festivities was considered a significant part of a court poet's official duties at the time, though not with reference to himself (Goethe 1891–1894, 1:224), and, throughout his autobiographical works (which Bakhtin studied carefully when working on his *Bildungsroman* book around 1937) discusses his responsibilities regarding Weimar's cultural life. Goethe's biographers sometimes mention such duties in passing (thus,

(63) See J. Boulenger, *Rabelais à travers les âges*, p. 34. See also an article dedicated to this topic: H. Clouzot, "Ballets tirés de Rabelais au XVII siècle" (*Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes*, vol. 5, p, 90).

(64) Even in the most recent times, in France, comic operas are being created using Rabelaisian material: Massenet's *Panurge* (premiered in 1913) and Mariotte's *Gargantua* (premiered in 1935 at the Opéra-comique).

forms with the deepest attention, seeking insight into the meaning and significance of each of the different masks and symbols.(65)[104] He was also able to apply these images to the historical process in his own work and to uncover the "philosophy of history" stored in them. The profound influence of folk-festive forms on Goethe's work has not yet been sufficiently appreciated and studied, even now.

Once shifted into the court masquerade line of development, where it combined with other traditions, the style of folk-festive forms began to degenerate. Elements of decorativeness and abstract allegory, which were initially alien to these forms, begin to appear; ambivalent indecency, connected with the material-bodily nethers, degenerates into superficial erotic frivolity. The popular utopian spirit and the new sense of history begin to depart from these forms.

Very instructive for illustrating the history of the other, bourgeois, line in the development of the folk-festive heritage is the seventeenth-century "comic novel" of Sorel, Scarron, and others. Sorel's consciousness was already in many respects a limited bourgeois consciousness, which was clearly expressed in his theoretical views on literature. He sets himself against fictional and fantastic writing and adopts the stand of narrow common sense and sober bourgeois practicality. He writes a novel in order to wean the public off reading useless novels.[105] He sees in *Don Quixote* a simple literary parody of the chivalric romance, of fiction, dreaminess, and idealism, a parody offered from the point of view of common sense and practicality; he thus offers a typical narrowly bourgeois understanding of *Don Quixote*.[106] Such are his theoretical views.

But in many respects Sorel's own creative work does not correspond to these theoretical views. Far from it. It is complex and contradictory. It is filled with traditional images, which are found here at a stage of ongoing—but far from complete—transition and reinterpretation.

Bielschowsky [1909, 316] protests against the view that "Goethe was essentially court poet and *directeur des plaisirs*, and only incidentally an official," implying that his duties did also include court entertainment). See also note 144 to chapter 3.

[104] The scene referred to in the footnote is *Faust*, part 2, act 1, scene 3. The masquerade is part of a carnival celebration. Dieterich (1897, iii) used lines from this scene, where the herold, announcing the incoming masqueraders, struggles to understand the meaning of the masks they wear (Goethe 1842, 38), as the epigraph for his book (and Bakhtin reproduced this epigraph in full in the 1940 version of the footnote). See also the extended discussion of Goethe and his account of the carnival in Rome in chapter 3.

[105] Reynier (1914, 166–167).

[106] Reynier (1914, 172–184) dwells on the (obvious) comparison between *Le berger extravagant* and *Don Quixote* at some length and mentions in passing some remarks Sorel made about Cervantes. Bakhtin most likely ascribes this understanding of *Don Quixote* to Sorel based on Reynier's discussion, even though Reynier never explicitly does so himself.

(65) These studies found their expression (in part) in the masquerade scene in the second part of Goethe's *Faust*.

In terms of its basic design, "The Extravagant Shepherd" (*Le Berger Extravagant*) stands closest to Sorel's theoretical views.[107] This novel is a pastoral *Don Quixote*, simplified and reduced to a bare literary parody of the pastoral novels that were popular in those days. But in spite of this superficially rational and narrowly literary design, the novel contains a number of traditional images and themes, whose signification goes far beyond this superficial design. Such, first and foremost, is the theme of the madness or folly of the hero, Lysis. As in *Don Quixote*, the hero's madness allows a whole series of carnival crownings-decrownings, travesties, and mystifications to unfold around him. This theme (the hero's madness) also allows the rest of the world to depart from its usual official track and to join in the hero's carnivalesque madness. However weakened these themes are in Sorel, embers of the fire of folk-festive laughter, with its reviving material-bodily nethers, are still smoldering in them. However, these deeper features of the traditional carnival themes and images are manifest here almost outside the author's own will and consciousness.

Let us note the scene of expecting the end of the world, universal conflagration, and deluge at a hamlet near Saint-Cloud and the scene of grandiose rural drunkenness connected with it. We see here some points of contact with Rabelais's system of images. Let us also note the famous "Banquet of the Gods" ("banquet des dieux"), included in the "Third Book" of the novel.[108]

In Sorel's best novel, *Francion*, traditional themes and images are far more substantial and productive.[109]

Let us first point out the role of scholastic "facetiae" in this novel (and recall the great importance of school recreations in the history of medieval literature); the depiction of student Bohemia with its mystifications, travesties, and parodying takes up a considerable part of the novel. Let us further note Raymond's mystification and the remarkable episode—one of the best episodes of the novel—of the orgy in his castle. Finally, let us particularly stress the episode with the mock election of the school pedant, Hortensius, as King of Poland. This is perfectly carnivalesque and saturnalian play (as is the stage on which it unfolds—Rome).[110] However, the feeling of history these images reveal is extremely weakened and narrowed down. Such are Sorel's "comic novels."

The traditions of grotesque realism are even more impoverished and narrowed-down in character in the dialogue literature of the seventeenth century.[111] Here, we have

[107] The novel is discussed at length by Reynier (1914, 165–197).

[108] These events, from books 1 and 3 of Sorel's novel, are briefly recounted by Reynier (1914, 183, 186–187).

[109] *Francion* is discussed by Reynier (1914, 128–164), but there is also a Russian translation of the novel, which came out in 1935 (Sorel 1935), and which, it appears, Bakhtin was able to consult.

[110] See books 8 and 11 of *Francion*. Both episodes are mentioned by Reynier (1914, 132–137), but at least some of the details (e.g., the name of the character Raymond) reflect Bakhtin's direct familiarity with the full text.

[111] Bakhtin's discussion of this literature (in this and the following two paragraphs) is based on Reynier (1914, 105–119).

in mind, first and foremost, "The Prattling at the New Mother's Bed" (*Caquet de l'accouchée*). This is a short piece, which was serialized in the course of 1622; it was published as a single volume in 1623. It was probably composed by several authors. It depicts traditional gatherings of women at the bedside of a woman *recovering after childbirth*. The tradition of such gatherings is very old.(66) They were devoted to *ample eating and candid conversation*: many of the conventions of ordinary interaction would be dropped. Childbirth and eating predetermined the role that the material-bodily nethers played among the themes of these conversations.

Such was the tradition. In this particular piece the author eavesdrops on the women's chatter while hiding behind a curtain. In this chatter, however, themes belonging to the material-bodily nethers (for instance, the Rabelaisian theme of arse-wipes)[112] are shifted onto the plane of private everyday life; all this female prattle is nothing but gossip and tittle-tattle. The substantive, *vulgar public-square* candor, with its grotesque ambivalent nethers, was replaced by eavesdropping on the *chamber* intimacies of private life from behind a curtain.

Similar "caquets" were in fashion in those days. "The Prattling of the Fish-Sellers" (*Caquets des poissonnières*, 1621–1622) and "The Prattling of the Faubourg Montmartre Women" (*Caquets des femmes du Faubourg Montmartre*, 1622) are similarly constructed around women's chatter. Highly typical is the piece "The Loves, Intrigues and Cabals of the House Servants in the Mansions of our Time" (*Amours, intrigues et cabales des domestiques des grandes maisons de notre temps*, 1633). Here, we have the gossip and tattle of the servants and maids of a large household, but not even about the masters but, rather, about other servants like themselves, only of a higher rank. The entire work is based on eavesdropping and literally peeping in on intimate sexual details and candidly discussing them. Compared to the dialogue literature of the sixteenth century, we have here the full degeneration of public-square candor: it turns into the washing of private dirty laundry in public. This dialogue literature of the seventeenth century paved the way for the "bedroom realism" of private life, a realism of peeping and eavesdropping, which flourished already in the nineteenth century. These dialogic works are an interesting historical document, which allows one to trace the process of grotesque public-square candor and feasting carnival dialogue degenerating into the private everyday-life dialogue of the modern novel of everyday life. And yet some tiny ember of carnival was still smoldering in these writings.

The traditions of folk-festive themes and images acquire a somewhat different character in the works of the libertine poets: Saint-Amant, Théophile de Viau, d'Assouci. The philosophical meaning of the images is preserved here, but they acquire an epicurean-individualistic tinge. These poets were also strongly and directly influenced by Ra-

[112] See bk. 1, ch. 13, and a longer discussion in chapter 6.

(66) Étienne Pasquier and Henri Estienne mention them in the sixteenth century.

belais.[113] The epicurean-individualistic interpretation of the images of the material-bodily nethers is a fairly typical phenomenon in the life of these images in subsequent centuries, in parallel with their private everyday-life naturalistic interpretation.

Other facets of the folk-festive images come to life in Scarron's *The Comic Romance*.[114] The company of wandering actors is not merely a professional circle in the narrow sense, the way other professional collectives are. A company of actors stands in contrast to the rest of the settled and consolidated world in its entirety, as a special half-real half-utopian world exempted, to some extent, from common conventions and bonds and entitled, up to a point, to carnival rights and liberties. The wandering actors' theater bandwagon spreads around itself a festive carnival atmosphere, which holds sway in life itself, in the very daily existence of the actors. This was also how Wilhelm Meister (Goethe) perceived the theater. The carnivalesque-utopian allure of the theater world persists, in essence, to this day.

In Scarron's own oeuvre, alongside the novel about actors, we find works revealing other facets of that same broader complex of folk-festive, grotesque, and parodic forms and images. Such are his burlesque poems, his grotesque comedies, and especially his "Virgil in Travesty," (*Virgile travesti*). He describes the fair of Saint Germain and its carnival in verse.[(67)115] Finally, his famous *Boutades of Captain Matamoros* contain near-Rabelaisian images of the grotesque type. Thus, in one of his boutades Matamoros declares that hell is his wine cellar and heaven his storehouse; the firmament is his bed, the bed pillars are the poles, and the watery abyss his chamber pot ("et mon pot à pisser les abîmes de l'onde").[116] It must be noted that Scarron's parodic travesties (especially his *Virgil in Travesty*) are already far removed from the universal and positive parodies of folk culture and are approaching the narrow and purely literary parodies of the modern age.[117]

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[113] Bakhtin's most likely source here is Boulenger (1925, 36–37). Sainéan (1930, 215–217) and Lote (1938, 528–530) might also be relevant. Perrens (1899) is a more extensive source on the libertine poets that appears in Bakhtin's 1946 bibliography, though there is no clear evidence that Bakhtin was able to consult it.

[114] See Reynier (1914, 266–311). A 1934 Russian translation of the novel (Scarron 1934) might have been available to Bakhtin as well.

[115] Reynier (1914, 201–203).

[116] Schneegans (1894, 463–465). Several mistakes creep into this retelling of the text: In the original French, hell is Matamore's cellar, not necessarily a wine cellar (though the storage of wine might be implied), and heaven is his attic, not storehouse. These mistakes result from the fact that Bakhtin is translating from Schneegans's German paraphrase, not from Scarron's original French (only part of which Schneegans quotes). Also, Matamore declares his bed to be the world, while the firmament is his canopy.

[117] In addition to the discussion in Reynier (1914, 266–311), cited above, see also multiple references to Scarron's works in Schneegans (1894, 18–19, 461–465).

[(67)] In "La Foire Saint Germain" in his *Recueil de quelques vers burlesques*, 1643. Sorel also gives a description of the Saint Germain Fair with its carnival recreations in his unfinished novel *Polyandre, histoire comique*, 1648.

All the phenomena just analyzed belong to the preclassical period of the seventeenth century—that is, to the period preceding the reign of Louis XIV. Rabelais's influence is combined here with the still living, unmediated traditions of folk-festive laughter. This is why Rabelais did not as yet appear exceptional, unlike anything else. Later on, this living context—the context in which Rabelais was perceived and by which he was illuminated—almost entirely vanishes. Rabelais becomes a strange and solitary writer, requiring special interpretations and commentary. This state of affairs was expressed all too clearly in La Bruyère's famous opinion regarding Rabelais. This paragraph of his book "The Characters, or the Mores of the Time" (*Les caractères, ou les moeurs de ce siècle*, 1688) first appeared in the fifth edition, and thus can be dated to 1690.[118] We quote this paragraph in the original, followed by a detailed analysis:

> Marot et Rabelais sont inexcusables d'avoir semé l'ordure dans leurs écrits: tous deux avaient assez de génie et de naturel pour pouvoir s'en passer, même à l'égard de ceux qui cherchent moins à admirer qu'à rire dans un auteur. Rabelais surtout est incompréhensible: son livre est une énigme, quoi qu'on en veuille dire, inexplicable; c'est une chimère, c'est le visage d'une belle femme avec les pieds et une queue de serpent ou de quelque autre bête plus difforme: c'est un monstrueux assemblage d'une morale fine et ingénieuse et d'une sale corruption. Où il est mauvais, il passe bien loin au delà du pire, c'est le charme de la canaille: où il est bon, il va jusques à l'exquis et à l'excellent, il peut être le mets des plus délicats.[(68)119]

This opinion formulates the "problem of Rabelais," as it stood at the age of mature classicism, with the utmost clarity. The point of view of this era—"the aesthetics of the time"—found faithful and adequate expression in this judgment made by La Bruyère. Moreover, it is not the rationalized aesthetics of narrow canons and literary manifestos that is speaking here through La Bruyère's mouth but the wider and more organic aesthetic sense of the era of stabilization. It is therefore important to analyze this opinion.

First of all, Rabelais's oeuvre appears to La Bruyère to be dual, two-faced, but the key that could have united its two heterogeneous aspects is already lost to him. He considers the combination of the two aspects in a single work by a single author to

[118] Boulenger (1925, 53).

[119] English translation: la Bruyère (1885, 23).

[(68)] Here is this segment in translation: "Marot and Rabelais are inexcusable for scattering so much filth in their writings: they both had genius and originality enough to be able to do without it, even for those who seek rather what is comical than what is admirable in an author. Rabelais above all is incomprehensible: his book is a mystery, a mere chimera; it has a lovely woman's face, with the feet and tail of a serpent or of some more hideous animal; it is a monstrous jumble of delicate and ingenious morality and of filthy depravation. Where it is bad, it excels by far the worst, and is fit only to delight the rabble; and where it is good, it is exquisite and excellent, and may entertain the most delicate."

be incomprehensible ("incompréhensible"), enigmatic ("une énigme"), and inexplicable ("inexplicable"). One of these incompatible aspects is characterized by La Bruyère as "filth" ("l'ordure"), as "filthy depravation" ("sale corruption"), as "delight for the rabble" ("le charme de la canaille"). Moreover, in these negative aspects of his work, Rabelais goes far beyond the worst ("il passe bien loin au delà du pire"). The other, *positive*, side of Rabelais's work is characterized by La Bruyère as "genius and originality," as "naturalness" ("génie," "naturel"), as delicate and ingenious morality ("morale fine et ingénieuse"), as exquisiteness and excellence ("l'exquis et l'excellent"), as the most delicate food ("le mets des plus délicats").

Rabelais's negative aspect as La Bruyère understands it is first of all the sexual and scatological indecencies, the verbal abuse and curses, double-entendres and base comic wordplay—in other words, the tradition of folk culture in Rabelais: *laughter and the material-bodily nethers*. In contrast, the positive side for La Bruyère is the purely literary humanist side of Rabelais's work. The grotesque, oral public-square tradition and the bookish literary tradition have parted ways and already appear incompatible. Anything with the flavor of the grotesque and of the festive public square about it is "charme de la canaille." Indecency, which assumes such an enormous place on the pages of Rabelais's work, sounds absolutely different to La Bruyère and his contemporaries than it did in Rabelais's time. Its ties to essential aspects of being and worldview, to the organic unity of a system of folk-festive carnival images, have been severed. Indecency has become a narrowly sexual, isolated, and private everyday indecency. It was left without a place in the new official system of worldview and imagery. All the other elements of folk public-square comedy underwent similar changes. They were all torn away from the whole that supported them—the ambivalent material-bodily nethers—and they therefore lost their true meaning. The word of wisdom, the subtle observation, the broad socio-political idea have already been completely detached from this whole and have become chamber-literary; they started sounding different in La Bruyère's time. They could now be defined by such words as "exquisite," "a delicate food," and so on. The combination of these heterogeneous elements (heterogeneous from the new point of view) in Rabelais's oeuvre appears to be a "monstrous jumble" ("un monstrueux assemblage"). To characterize this strange mixture, La Bruyère uses an image: the "chimera." It is a very telling image. Classicist aesthetics indeed had no place for it. The chimera is grotesque. The mixture of human and animal forms is one of the most typical and ancient types of the grotesque. To La Bruyère—a faithful spokesman for the aesthetics of his time—the grotesque image is entirely alien. He has become accustomed to conceiving of being as something fully formed, stable, and completed, to drawing firm and clear boundary lines between all bodies and things. Hence, even such a restrained grotesque image as that of Melusine[120] in folk legends appeared to him to be "a monstrous jumble."

[120] Melusine, a water monster in French folklore, is usually depicted as a woman from the waist up and a serpent from the waist down (for instance, in Rabelais's bk. 4, ch. 38; and see Plattard 1930, 42).

La Bruyère, as we can see, appreciates Rabelais's "delicate morality." By morality, in turn, he understands first of all "mores," the study of characters, generalizing and typifying observations of human nature and life. In essence, this is the sphere of antiquity's "moralia," which La Bruyère finds and appreciates in Rabelais. But he understands this sphere to be narrower than it in fact was (in antiquity). He ignores the links between "moralia" and feast days, the links with feasting and with dining-hall laughter, which can still be felt in his prototype, Theophrastus.[121]

Such is La Bruyère's opinion. Similar dual evaluations of Rabelais also remain current in the period that followed. And they have survived to our day. Folk laughter, the material-bodily nethers, extreme grotesque exaggerations, tomfoolery, elements of folk comedy—all these are rejected in Rabelais as the "heritage of the crude sixteenth century," whereas "psychology," "types," craftsmanship in fashioning narrative and dialogues, and social satire are retained. In fact, the first attempt to understand Rabelais's work as a single artistic and ideological whole, in which all aspects are indispensable, was not made until the second half of the nineteenth century by Stapfer in his book about Rabelais.[122]

Another product of the seventeenth century is the historical-allegorical method of interpreting Rabelais.[123]

Rabelais's work is extremely complex. It contains a great number of allusions, which were often understood only by his closest contemporaries and sometimes even only by a narrow circle of people close to him. The work is exceptionally encyclopedic; it contains many special terms belonging to the most disparate branches of knowledge and technology. Finally, it contains a great number of new and unusual words, introduced into the language for the first time. It stands to reason that Rabelais requires commentary and interpretation. Rabelais himself started this by adding to the "Fourth Book" of his novel a "Brief Declaration" ("Briefve declaration")[(69)][124]

Rabelais's own commentary inaugurates the philological commentary on his work. However, the serious philological study of Rabelais was a long time in the making. It was not until 1711 that Le Duchat's famous commentary was published, which

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La Bruyère gives a similar description, without referring to Melusine by name.

[121] Theophrastus, a student of Aristotle, is the author of *On Moral Characters*. The *Moralia* is a famous book by Plutarch. Both are quite clearly alluded to by La Bruyère in the title of the book, from which the analyzed quote comes.

[122] While Stapfer (1889) appears in Bakhtin's 1946 bibliography, and there is evidence that Bakhtin was able to consult this work (see note 179 to this chapter), he is most likely relying here on Sainéan (1930, 106), who quotes from Stapfer in a footnote at the end of his own discussion of La Bruyère's critique.

[123] Bakhtin's information about the historical-allegorical method and its development comes from Sainéan (1930, 28–30, 37–50).

[124] Sainéan (1930, 37). The text itself is included in Moland (1884, 476–482).

[(69)] Rabelais's authorship of the "Brief Declaration" can be considered almost certain.

has retained its significance to this day.[125] Le Duchat's attempt was unique. Both before and after Le Duchat, almost to the present day, commenting on and explicating Rabelais followed a completely different path, neither philological nor strictly historical.

In the prologue to the first book of his novel ("Gargantua") Rabelais points to the hidden signification of his work, which one has to know how to decipher. Here are his words: "For here you will find a novel savor, a most abstruse doctrine; here you will learn the deepest mysteries, the most agonizing problems of our religion, our body politic, our economic life."

We shall return to an explication of this passage in due time. It can hardly be understood as a simple conventional device to pique the readers' interest (although such devices were indeed used in the literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; Berni, for instance, makes a similar declaration in his burlesque *Orlando in Love*).[126] What is important for our purposes is the attempt to decipher these "deepest mysteries" that, in the seventeenth century, led to the creation of the historical-allegorical method that remained dominant in Rabelais scholarship for almost three centuries.

The first notion of offering a historical-allegorical interpretation of Rabelais's images goes back to the sixteenth century. The well-known historian of the second half of that century, Jacques Auguste de Thou, in his book *Of My Life*, expressed the following opinion of Rabelais:

> *With the freedom of a Democritus and with the biting jest* of a fool*, he has created an ingenious book, in which he has recreated,* as if in a theater and under fictional names, all the conditions of human and political life and offered them to the people to laugh at*.[127]

This statement has several characteristic elements: the universal folk-festive nature of laughter at "all the conditions of human and political life," the Democritean freedom of this laughter, the theatrical-spectacle character of Rabelaisian images, and, finally, the real historical figures appearing under imaginary names. All these are the opinions of a man of the sixteenth century, who correctly grasps what is essential in Rabelais's work. But at the same time, this is the opinion of a man of the *second* half of the century, for whom Rabelais's laughter often sounds too fool-like, and who is seeking out entirely *specific* persons and entirely *specific* events under these imaginary names; that is, he is beginning to overestimate the allegorical element in Rabelais.

Doubtless, the tradition of substituting particular historical figures and particular events of political and court life for Rabelais's characters and for various episodes in his novel had already come about in the sixteenth century. This tradition was transmitted to the seventeenth century and was adopted by the historical-allegorical method.

[125] On Le Duchat, see Sainéan (1930, 40–46).

[126] Bakhtin here disagrees with Sainéan (1930, 47), who claims this *is* merely a conventional device to pique readers' interest, and cites Berni as evidence.

[127] Thou's *De vita sua* bk. 1, ch. 6 is quoted in Sainéan (1930, 28).

"Keys" to Rabelais's novel—that is, a concrete deciphering of names and events in the novel—begin to show up in the seventeenth century. The first such key was appended to the 1659 Amsterdam edition of Rabelais's writings. This key was subsequently modified for various later editions, up to that of A. L. Sardou in 1874–1876 (this edition offers a summary of all these keys). Different decipherments were appended to the 1663 Amsterdam edition. We find here, for instance, a highly characteristic historical-allegorical interpretation of the episode of Gargantua's gigantic mare, who, to rid herself of the oxflies pursuing her, uprooted with her tail all the trees of the Beauce forest: "It is universally known that this mare is Madame d'Éstampes, the king's mistress, who was the one who ordered the Beauce forest to be cut down." For this the author cites sixteenth-century oral tradition.[128]

But the true initiator of the historical-allegorical method was Pierre-Antoine Le Motteux. In 1693 he published in England (where he had emigrated after the Edict of Nantes was revoked) an English translation of Rabelais by Urquhart, which he supplied with a biography, a preface, and a commentary.[129] There, he offers an analysis of the various keys suggested prior to his time and then lays out his own interpretations. This commentary became the main source for all the subsequent development of the historical-allegorical method.

A prominent representative of this method in the eighteenth century was the Abbé Marsy, who published in Amsterdam a "Modernized Rabelais" (1752) with commentary.(70)[130] Finally, the most significant monument to the historical-allegorical method is the "Variorum" edition of Rabelais's works in nine volumes. The editors, Eloi Johanneau and Esmangart, made use of research by all the preceding commentators. They offer an entire system of historical-allegorical interpretations.[131]

These are the main points in any external description of the history of the historical-allegorical method. But what, essentially, is this method? Its essence is very simple: behind each of Rabelais's images—a character or an event in the novel—stands an entirely specific historical figure and a particular event in history or in court life; the entire novel as a whole is a system of historical allusions; the method deciphers these basing its conclusions, on the one hand, on tradition, going back to the sixteenth century and, on the other hand, by comparing Rabelais's images with the historical

[128] Sainéan (1930, 27, 37–39). The quote, commenting on bk. 1, ch. 16, is brought on p. 39 (though Sainéan does not actually say the author of the quoted comment cites sixteenth-century oral tradition).

[129] Sainéan (1930, 47–48). Peter Anthony Motteux, an important publisher and early journalist, indeed published the first complete English translation of Rabelais's novel. It included Urquhart's already-published translation of the first two books, Urquhart's previously unpublished translation of bk. 3, and Motteux's own translation of the rest of the novel.

[130] Bakhtin combines information about François-Marie de Marsy's edition from Sainéan (1930, 48) and Boulenger (1925, 186).

[131] Sainéan (1930, 48).

(70) *Here is the full title of this edition:* Le Rabelais moderne ou les oeuvres de Maitre François Rabelais mises à la portée de la plupart des lecteurs *(eight small volumes).*

facts of his time, as well as on all manner of conjectures and comparisons. Tradition being contradictory[132] and conjectures always being to some extent arbitrary, it stands to reason that the same image would be deciphered differently by different practitioners of this method. Let us give some examples: Gargantua is usually identified as Francis I, but Le Motteux sees in him Henri d'Albret; Panurge is believed by some to be Cardinal d'Amboise, by others, Cardinal Charles de Lorraine, by still others, Jean de Montluc, and finally by some to be Rabelais himself. Picrochole is believed to be Ludovico Sforza or Ferdinand of Aragon, while Voltaire recognizes in him Charles V.[133] The historical-allegorical method seeks to decipher every detail in the novel as an allusion to an entirely specific event. Thus, the famous episode of the novel's first book about Gargantua's arse-wipes is interpreted not only as a whole but also with regard to each of the arse-wipes (and there are quite a few of them). For example, in one instance Gargantua wiped his arse with a cat in heat, who scratched his buttocks in the process; commentators consider this to be an allusion to a particular event in the life of Francis I: in 1512, when Francis was eighteen, he caught a venereal disease from a Gascon mistress. Gargantua recovered from the scratches only when he wiped his arse with his mother's gloves; this is seen as an allusion to the sympathy shown Francis by his mother during his sickness.[134] The whole novel is thus transformed into a complex system of specific allusions.

At present, the historical-allegorical method is completely rejected by serious Rabelais scholars.(71)[135]

Rabelais's novel doubtless contains many allusions to historical figures and events, but it is by no means acceptable to assume that there is a system of *definite* allusions sustained strictly and consistently throughout the novel. One should not look for a *definite* and *unique* key to every image. Even where a specific allusion can be presumed to exist, in most cases the historical-allegorical method cannot provide a precise deciphering for it since the tradition is contradictory and all comparisons and conjectures are arbitrary. Finally, and this essentially clinches the matter, even if an allusion has indeed been discovered and proven correct, this is not yet necessarily a substantial contribution to an artistic ideological understanding of the image. The image is al-

[132] *raznorechiva*. This is the same word that in the context of some of Bakhtin's other works (especially Bakhtin 1981a) would have been translated as "heteroglot." Here, however, it is more likely used in one of its original senses in Russian, to mean "contradictory."

[133] Sainéan (1930, 28). In one case (of Ludovico Sforza), Bakhtin apparently used a later reference in the same book (Sainéan 1930, 57) to alter the list. The list on p. 28, citing Voltaire, has a certain Ferdinand Sforza, ruler of Piedmont (perhaps a mistaken reference to Francesco II Sforza). See also note 33 to chapter 7.

[134] Schneegans (1894, 236), referring to bk. 1, ch. 13.

[135] Footnote: the most recent such work cited by Sainéan (1930, 50) is Péladan (1905). In the 1940 manuscript Bakhtin cites this work in the footnote.

(71) But of course, even in recent times, various attempts are being made to decipher Rabelais's novel as a sort of cryptogram.

ways both broader and deeper; it is linked to tradition; it has its own literary logic independent of the allusion. Even if we suppose that the interpretation given above to the episode with Gargantua's arse-wipes turns out to be correct, it offers us nothing whatsoever for the understanding of the image of the arse-wipe itself and the logic of creative meaning behind it. The arse-wipe is among the most widespread images in scatological literature—in jokes, the speech genres[136] of familiar interaction, terms of abuse, vulgar public-square metaphors and similes. Nor is this image new in literature. After Rabelais we find it in *The Prattling at the New Mother's Bed*, mentioned above. The arse-wipe is among the most widely used images in epigrams satirizing writers and literary works. A deciphered allusion to a unique fact (if the episode in question in Rabelais's novel indeed contains one) does nothing to help us understand the traditional signification of this image (one belonging to the material-bodily nethers) or the special literary functions it plays in Rabelais's novel.(72)

How can one account for the fact that the historical-allegorical method held such sway, almost to the exclusion of other approaches, for three centuries? How can one account for the fact that such acute minds as Voltaire in the eighteenth century and the historian Michelet in the nineteenth paid tribute to this method? And finally, how can one account for the very emergence of traditions on which this method relies?

The point is that the living tradition of folk-festive laughter, which threw light on Rabelais's work in the sixteenth century, begins to die off in the centuries that followed; it ceases to be a living and generally understood commentary to Rabelais's images. The true artistic ideological key to these images was lost together with the tradition that begot them. So people began looking for false keys.

The historical-allegorical method offers a characteristic record of the process of laughter's decomposition that took place in the seventeenth century. The domain of laughter increasingly narrows down, it loses its universalism. On the one hand, laughter becomes entwined with the typical, the generalized, the average, the ordinary, the everyday; on the other hand, it becomes entwined with personal invective; that is, it begins to be directed at a singular private person. Historical universal individuality ceases to be the object of laughter. Laughter-based universalism of the carnival type gradually becomes unintelligible. Where there is nothing obviously typical, one begins to look for the singularly individual—that is, for an utterly definite actual person.

Of course, folk-festive laughter is fully compatible with allusions to singular concrete persons. But these allusions make up a mere overtone of the grotesque images, whereas the allegorical method makes them into the fundamental tone. The true grotesque image does not lose its force and its signification even after the allusions have been forgotten and replaced by new ones. The point does not lie in them.

[136] Cf. Bakhtin (1986c). The term "speech genre" first appears in Bakhtin's writings in notes he wrote while planning the book on Rabelais (Bakhtin 2008e, 640).

(72) We analyze the special function and artistic meaning of the arse-wipes episode in chapter 6.

During the seventeenth century, a very important process takes place in all ideological spheres: there is a precipitous growth in the significance of such factors as generalization, empirical abstraction, and typification. These factors acquire major significance in the picture of the world. This process is completed in the eighteenth century. The very model of the world is reorganized. The general is now accompanied only by the singular, which acquires its sense only as a specimen of the general—that is, only in so far as it is typical, generalizable, and "average."[137] In contrast, singularity acquires the sense of something indisputable, the sense of an indisputable fact—hence, the typical tendency toward a primitive documentalism. The singular fact, established through being documented, alongside the general and the typical, begin to play a leading role in the reigning worldview. This view is also expressed with full force in works of art and literature (especially in the eighteenth century), making up the peculiar limitedness of realism in the age of the Enlightenment.

But while the "documentary novel" proper belongs to the eighteenth century, "novels with a key" were created throughout the entire seventeenth century. Early in the century, such was the Latin novel "Euphormio's Satyricon" by the Englishman Barclay (Barclay, *Euphormionis Satyricon*, London, 1603), which enjoyed enormous success in the first half of the century (it also had several editions in French). Though the novel is set in antiquity, it is an autobiographical "novel with a key." The key, which deciphers the characters' proper names, was appended to the novel's various editions. This is a peculiar kind of masquerade dressing-up of well-known contemporary figures. This factor, in particular, added special interest to the novel.[138]

The historical-allegorical method, at the early stages of its development, was used to interpret Rabelais's work, too, in the spirit of these "masquerade" novels with a key.

Such were the fundamental lines in the development of laughter and the Rabelaisian tradition in the seventeenth century. Granted, in this century fairly important phenomena in the history of laughter, related to the folk-festive tradition, were still in effect. First and foremost, we have Molière in mind. But these are phenomena of a special nature and will not be considered here.

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[137] Cf. these notes from Bakhtin's draft notebooks for the Rabelais book, where Bakhtin contrasts the cosmic imagery of the Renaissance (referencing his own early notion of purview or horizon, i.e., the world as seen from a first-person perspective) with later scientific notions:

> An expansion of purview (of the spatial order), but there are no typifying generalizations. There are no chasms between the singular and the general. All abstractly mathematical, irrational, and imaginary quantities are absent. Sharp contrasts with the Cartesian and Newtonian world. The general (the typical, functional, mathematically regular) has not yet begun to play a leading role in the model of the world. The movement followed not from the singularly particular to the general and typical, but from the singularly particular to the cosmic (which is also individual), from the small to the larger and largest. Hence the importance of lists and naming (where now we have a generalization, Rabelais had a list of all possible things and actions); a collective, in which every member can be named (Bakhtin 2008e, 646).

[138] Barclay's novel (for an English translation, see Barclay 1973) is discussed by Reynier (1914, 81–84), who also devotes a chapter of his book to autobiographical novels and novels with a "key" in the seventeenth century in France (Reynier 1914, 228–251).

Let us now move on to the eighteenth century. In no other time was Rabelais so little understood and appreciated as in this particular century. In understanding and appreciating Rabelais, the Enlightenment reveals its weaknesses rather than its strengths. The Enlighteners, with their nonhistorical approach, with their abstract and rational utopianism, with their mechanistic conception of matter, with their tendency to abstract generalization and typification on one hand and to documentation on the other, were the least capable of correctly understanding and appreciating Rabelais. He was to the Enlighteners a prominent representative of "the savage and barbaric sixteenth century." This point of view was clearly expressed by Voltaire.[139] Here is his opinion on Rabelais, which he delivers while discussing Swift (*Lettres philosophiques*, 1734, published by G. Lanson, vol. II, p. 135 ff.):

> Rabelais in his extravagant and unintelligible book let loose an extreme jollity and an extremer impertinence; he poured out erudition, filth and boredom; you will get a good story two pages long at the price of two volumes of nonsense. Only a few persons of eccentric tastes pride themselves on understanding and esteeming this work as a whole; the rest of the nation laugh at the jokes of Rabelais and hold his book in contempt. He is regarded as chief among buffoons; we are annoyed that a man who had so much wit should have made such wretched use of it; he is a drunken philosopher who wrote only when he was drunk.[140]

This entire appraisal is very telling. Rabelais's novel appears to Voltaire to be something extravagant and unintelligible. He sees in it a mixture of erudition, filth, and boredom. The novel's fragmentation into heterogeneous incompatible elements has thus advanced much further for Voltaire than it had for La Bruyère. Voltaire thinks that only a few people endowed with eccentric taste could ever accept Rabelais as a whole. The way Voltaire characterizes the attitude of the "rest of the nation" (apart from those people of eccentric taste) is very interesting: it turns out everybody laughs at the novel, as they did previously, but at the same time they hold it in contempt. The attitude toward laughter has been radically transformed. In the sixteenth century, too, everybody laughed at Rabelais's novel, but nobody held him in contempt for this laughter. But now, in the eighteenth century, merry laughter has become something low and worthy of contempt; also worthy of contempt became the title "chief among buffoons." Finally, Rabelais's own declaration (in the prologues)[141] that he writes his work only while eating and drinking is understood by Voltaire literally, at the most

[139] The entire discussion of Voltaire is based on Boulenger (1925, 58–68), and possibly also on Sainéan (1930, 108–109). In addition, it appears that Bakhtin had access to the original French text of at least one of the quoted books (*Le temple du goût*), as he was able to correct minor mistakes in Boulenger's quote from the text.

[140] English translation from Voltaire (1961, 106).

[141] Bk. 1, Prologue.

elementary everyday-life level. The traditional and substantial link between the wise and free word and food and wine, the specific "truth" of table talk, is no longer understood by Voltaire (though the tradition of table talk was still alive). The entire folk-feasting side of Rabelais's novel lost all of its meaning and significance to the eighteenth century, with its abstractly rational utopianism.(73)

Voltaire sees in Rabelais's work merely a naked and linear satire; the rest, for him, is nothing but a deadweight. In his Temple of Taste (*Le temple du gôut*, 1732), Voltaire describes "God's library,"[142] in which "almost all the editions are corrected, and retrenched, by the hand of the Muses."[143] Voltaire places Rabelais's piece in this library too, but it is "reduced to one-eighth."[144] This type of abridgement applied to the writers of the past is highly typical of the Enlighteners.

Actual attempts to abridge and expurgate—"expurger"—Rabelais were also undertaken in the eighteenth century. In his "Modernized Rabelais," the Abbé Marsy not only modernizes Rabelais's language, removes dialect and archaic forms, but also mitigates the book's indecencies. The Abbé Pérau goes even further when he publishes in Geneva in the same year, 1752, the *Œuvres choisies*. Anything even remotely indecent and rude has been removed. Finally, in 1776 an expurgated Rabelais is published in a special edition "for the ladies" as part of the famous "Bibliothèque universelle des romans" (1775–78).(74) All three editions are highly indicative of the eighteenth century and its attitude toward Rabelais.[145]

Thus, generally speaking, the Enlighteners failed to understand or appreciate Rabelais, at least at the level of their theoretical consciousness. And this is understandable. In the age of Enlightenment, according to Engels, "Reason became the sole measure of everything."(75)[146] This abstract rationalism, antihistoricism, tendency toward abstract generalizing, and nondialectic thought (the break between negation and affirmation)

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[142] "God's library" is a quote from Boulenger (1925, 59), not directly from Voltaire himself.

[143] Voltaire (1751, 82).

[144] The published English translation (Voltaire 1751, 82) has "Three fourths, at least, of Rabelais are curtailed." I kept Bakhtin's interpretation, which appears to be more faithful to the French original ("réduit tout au plus à demi-quart," quoted in the 1940 manuscript).

[145] Sainéan (1930, 107). For the footnote, see Boulenger (1925, 127–131, 191).

[146] The quote is from the introduction to Engels's *Anti-Dühring* (Engels 1947, 25). The critique of Enlightenment thought this quote introduces is also a stock Marxist (essentially, already Hegelian) critique, but with Bakhtin's own emphases (e.g., the reference to abstract generalization) added to it. As is often the case with explicit Marxist references in the book, this entire paragraph was inserted in the 1949–1950 revision round. It replaces a paragraph in the 1940 manuscript that focused on Laurence Sterne.

(73) After 1759, when Voltaire reread "Gargantua", his attitude became more benevolent, but it changed little in essence: he appreciates Rabelais above all, and almost exclusively, for his anticlericalism.

(74) In the nineteenth century, an expurgated edition of Rabelais was planned by George Sand (in 1847), but her project did not materialize. Rabelais's novel rewritten for the youth first appeared, as far as we know, in 1888.

(75) K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, vol, 20, p, 16.

all made it impossible for the Enlighteners to understand and make *theoretical* sense of folk-festive ambivalent laughter. The image of being that becomes through contradiction and that is never fully formed could in no way be brought under the measuring yardstick of the Enlighteners' reason. It must be added, however, that *in practice*, both Voltaire in his philosophical novellas and his *Maid of Orleans*, as well as Diderot in *Jacques the Fatalist* and especially in *The Indiscrete Jewels*, were no strangers to Rabelaisian imagery, albeit in a limited and somewhat rationalized form.[147]

The influence of carnival forms, themes, and symbols on eighteenth-century literature is quite significant. But this influence is formalized: carnival forms have been turned into artistic *means* (primarily plot and compositional means) in the service of various artistic goals. In Voltaire's work they serve satire, which still preserves its universal and philosophical nature; but laughter is here reduced to the minimum, to bare scoffing. Precisely such is the notorious "laughter of Voltaire": its force and depth lie in the starkness and radicality of its negation, but it is almost entirely devoid of a renewing and reviving aspect; everything positive lies outside laughter and has the character of an abstract idea.

Carnival forms serve different artistic aims in Rococo literature. Here the merry positive tone of laughter is preserved. But everything becomes chamber-sized, small, lightened-up. Public-square candor becomes intimacy, indecency, connected with the material-bodily nethers; it turns into erotic frivolity, and merry relativity becomes skepticism and thoughtlessness. And yet, this chamber-sized and hedonistically tinged merriness preserved some living embers of the carnival fire that burns down "hell." Against the backdrop of the severe seriousness of moral and didactic literature, which was so widespread in the eighteenth century, the Rococo style nevertheless continued—albeit in a one-sided and extremely impoverished manner—the traditions of the merry carnivalesque.

At the time of the French Revolution, Rabelais enjoys tremendous prestige among the revolutionaries. He is even made out to be a prophet of the revolution. Rabelais's hometown, Chinon, is renamed "Chinon-Rabelais." This period correctly sensed Rabelais's deep revolutionary nature but failed to offer a new and correct interpretation for it. The main Rabelaisian document of the time is Ginguené's book published in 1791, titled *Of Rabelais's Influence on the Present Revolution and on the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.* Overall, Ginguené adopts the point of view of the historical-allegorical method, but he uses it with greater depth and seeks to discover Rabelais's social and political conception. Here, however, the antihistorical approach of Ginguené—a man of the eighteenth century—makes itself known. He turns Rabelais into a consistent foe of royal power. In reality, however, Rabelais was not at all an enemy of this power, and on

[147] This positive assessment of some of Voltaire's and Diderot's works (though with different individual texts highlighted) can also be found elsewhere in Bakhtin's works, most notably in the fourth chapter added to the second edition of his book on Dostoevsky (e.g., Bakhtin 1984, 143). The two paragraphs that follow, reflecting a more subdued critical attitude toward the eighteenth century, were added to the book in 1965.

the contrary, he perfectly understood its progressive significance in his time.(76) This is Ginguené's basic error. He also has a totally incorrect understanding, in the spirit of the eighteenth century, of Rabelais's grotesque exaggerations: he sees in them purely negative satire. Thus, for instance, the grotesquely exaggerated amounts of food, drink, and clothes spent on Gargantua should, according to Ginguené, indicate how much kings cost their peoples. He completely fails to hear the motif of abundance that is sounded here; he fails to understand the ambivalent logic of the material-bodily nethers. It goes without saying that it would be exceedingly naive to perceive Rabelaisian overabundance as excessive budgetary spending. In this sense Ginguené's book remains on the level at which Rabelais was understood by the eighteenth century.[148]

In the eighteenth century, the decomposition of folk-festive laughter, which by now has broken through into the major literature and culture of the Renaissance, was essentially completed. Also mostly complete at the same time was the formation of new genre varieties of laughter-based literature, the satirical and light varieties that were to prevail in the nineteenth century. The forms of reduced laughter[149]—humor, irony, sarcasm, and so on—which were to develop as stylistic components in serious literary genres (mainly of the novel) have also mostly coalesced. However, an examination of these phenomena lies outside the scope of our study.(77)[150] We were merely interested in tracing the main thoroughfare in the tradition of folk-festive laughter, which paved the way for Rabelais (and the Renaissance in general), and its gradual decay during the next two centuries.

This book is mostly concerned with literary history, though it is also linked quite closely to the field of historical poetics.[151] However, we are not posing broader general-aesthetic questions, especially those concerning the aesthetics of laughter. Here, we are

[148] This paragraph uses information from Boulenger (1925, 74–76). It is followed by yet another 1965 insert.

[149] The notion of "reduced laughter" appears in Bakhtin's writings in the 1960s and is developed most extensively, again, in the second edition of his book on Dostoevsky. See Bakhtin (1984, 164–166, 178).

[150] Bakhtin read Beda Allemann's *Ironie und Dichtung*, cited in the footnote, in the early or mid-1960s and made brief notes regarding it (focusing almost entirely on its bibliography, which apparently introduced him to work by Otto-Friederich Bollnow; see note 208 to chapter 3) in his working notebook for the period (Bakhtin 2002b, 372–373).

[151] This brief and somewhat awkwardly placed section was added to the book in 1965. It explores themes not dealt with elsewhere in the book, which help contextualize the book and its main theses within Bakhtin's thought more broadly (see notes 152 through 155 below). It also contextualizes the book within the Soviet literary scholarship of its time, as evidenced by Bakhtin's use of the label "historical poetics."

(76) Although Rabelais also fully understood the relative nature of this progressiveness.

(77) The most widespread form of reduced laughter in modern times (especially starting with Romanticism) is *irony*. The problem of irony is the main subject of a very interesting book by a Swiss scholar: Beda Allemann, *Ironie und Dichtung* (1956). This book analyzes the way irony is understood and the forms it takes in Fr. Schlegel, Novalis, Solger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, and Musil. Alleman's analyses excel in their depth and subtlety, but he understands irony to be a *purely* literary phenomenon and does not reveal its links with folk laughter culture.

examining only one particular historical form of laughter belonging to the folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and even that not to its full extent but only within limits set by an analysis of Rabelais's work. In this respect our study can at most only offer some *material* for a philosophy and aesthetics of laughter.

The particular historical folk-culture form of laughter that is the object of our study stood in opposition not to seriousness in general but, rather, to a similarly particular historical form of seriousness—the one-sided, dogmatic seriousness of the Middle Ages. But the history of culture and literature also knows other forms of seriousness.[152] Thus, the culture of antiquity knew the form of *tragic seriousness*, which found its deepest expression in the genre of ancient Greek tragedy. Tragic seriousness is universal (this is why one may speak of a "tragic worldview") and is permeated with the idea of *upbuilding demise*. Tragic seriousness is absolutely devoid of dogmatism. A dogmatic tragedy is as impossible as dogmatic laughter (even Classicist tragedy, at its best, overcomes dogmatism). Dogmatism in all its forms and variants is equally lethal both for genuine tragedy and for genuine ambivalent laughter. Within the culture of antiquity, by contrast, tragic seriousness did not exclude the laughter-based aspect of the world and coexisted with it. The staging of the tragic trilogy was followed by a satyr play, which complemented it on the plane of laughter. More generally, seriousness in antiquity did not fear laughter and parodies and even required a laughter-based corrective and complement.[(78)153] Therefore, there could not be as sharp an opposition between official culture and folk culture in antiquity as there was in the Middle Ages.

Yet another form of seriousness that formed in antiquity, similarly (in principle) devoid of dogmatism and one-sidedness and able to pass through the crucible of laughter, was that of critical philosophy. Its founder, Socrates, was directly linked with the car-

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In Soviet (and post-Soviet) literary scholarship, the term "historical poetics" refers to literary scholarship that seeks to trace the historical evolution of literary forms and genres. It was initially associated with the work of Aleksandr Nikolaevich Veselovsky, who used it in some lectures and writings already in the 1890s, collected in a posthumous publication from 1940 titled *Historical Poetics* (Veselovsky 1940). This work was highly influential in the USSR (despite some periods in which positive references to Veselovsky were actively discouraged by authorities). "Historical poetics" began to designate a field of study, or a school of thought, in the 1960s, when it became associated with literary scholars that were neither run-of-the-mill orthodox Marxists nor structuralists, scholars such as Dmitry Sergeevich Likhachev and Eleazar Moyseevich Meletinsky (whom Bakhtin cited in the introduction) and, perhaps most notably, with Bakhtin himself.

[152] This discussion of seriousness (and in particular of tragedy), while it is overshadowed by the emphasis on laughter in the bulk of the text, reflects Bakhtin's less one-sided view of seriousness. As he hinted in the previous paragraph, his understanding of the broader philosophy and aesthetics of laughter implies a certain kind of balance between laughter and (nonofficial) seriousness. His notes on Shakespearean tragedy and (more briefly) on the unofficial seriousness reflected in Dostoevsky's novels (both in Bakhtin 2014; forthcoming-a) are most closely related to the discussion here.

[153] Popova (2010a, 604–605) proposes that the reference in the footnote is to the beginning of Dieterich's book (Dieterich 1897, 5–19) and reproduces Bakhtin's (much earlier) summary of these pages.

[(78)] Let us recall the relevant analyses by A. Dieterich in his book *Pulcinella*.

nival forms of antiquity that fertilized the Socratic dialogue and freed it from one-sided *rhetorical* seriousness.[154]

A special form of seriousness—*rigorous scientific seriousness*—has acquired immense significance in the culture of the modern era. In principle, this seriousness is devoid of any form of dogmatism and one-sidedness; it is *problem-oriented* by nature, it is self-critical and cannot be brought to completion.[155] Starting with the Renaissance, this new seriousness also exercises a mighty influence on the belles lettres, of course undergoing relevant transformations within it.

Within the sphere of the belles-lettres itself, throughout its history, there existed—in epics, lyrics, and drama alike—multifarious forms of deep, pure, but *open* seriousness, ever ready to submit to death and renewal. True *open seriousness* fears neither parody nor irony nor any other form of reduced laughter, for it senses that it partakes in the ever-incomplete whole of the world.(79)[156]

In world literature there are works in which the two aspects of the world—the serious one and the laughter-based one—coexist and mutually reflect each other (*holistic* aspects, not separate serious and comic images, as in a run-of-the-mill drama in modern times). A striking example of this in the literature of antiquity is Euripides's *Alcestis*, in which a tragedy is integrated with a satyr play (it was probably staged as the fourth drama in a cycle).[157] But the most significant works of this type are, of course, Shakespeare's tragedies.[158]

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[154] This also alludes to discussions of Socratic dialogue as an early stage in the evolution of carnivalized literature in Bakhtin (1981b, 24–26; 1984, 109–112; both discussions rely heavily on Hirzel 1895).

[155] This description of scientific method basically summarizes neo-Kantian notions about the philosophy of science (and Hermann Cohen's ideas in particular). For a concise overview of these notions, in the context of discussing Bakhtin Circle ideas, see Brandist (2002, 16–18).

[156] The English translation in the footnote is from Pushkin (2010, 135–136).

[157] Dieterich (1897, 68–70).

[158] See again the extended analysis of Shakespeare's tragedies in Bakhtin (2014; forthcoming-a).

(79) Pushkin's Mozart accepts both laughter and parody, while the somber agelast Salieri does not understand them and fears them. Here is the dialogue between them after they have listened to the blind fiddler play:

> Salieri:
> And you can laugh?
> Mozart:
> Oh, yes. But you, Salieri,
> I can't believe that you're not laughing.
> Salieri:
> No,
> I can't laugh when some clumsy builder's painter
> caricatures a Raphael Madonna;
> I can't laugh when some pitiful buffoon
> dishonours Dante with a parody.
> (*Mozart and Salieri*, scene 1).

Real laughter, ambivalent and universal, does not negate seriousness but cleanses and complements it. It purifies from dogmatism, one-sidedness, and stiffness, from fanaticism and categorical judgment, from elements of fear or intimidation, from didacticism, from naivety and illusions, from bad one-dimensionality and single-meaningness, from dim-witted overintensity. Laughter does not permit seriousness to freeze and to become detached from the ever-incomplete totality of being. It restores this ambivalent totality. Such are the general functions of laughter in the historical development of culture and literature.

All of our remarks on the various forms of seriousness and their mutual relations with laughter already lie, in essence, outside the bounds of the present study. The limited material, in historical terms, on which it is based does not permit making overly broad theoretical generalizations.

Hence, our remarks here are somewhat declarative and preliminary in nature.

It remains for us in this chapter to examine two more questions: (1) the appreciation of Rabelais in French Romanticism and (2) the state of contemporary Rabelais scholarship.

In the introduction we described the attitude of the French Romantics (particularly Victor Hugo) toward the grotesque in general. We shall now look at their attitude toward the work of Rabelais, whom they considered, alongside Shakespeare, to be one of the most profound representatives of grotesque imagery.

Let us first turn to Chateaubriand's opinion about Rabelais.[159] He puts forward the idea, highly typical of Romanticism, of *mother-geniuses* ("génies mères"), who give birth to all the other great writers of a nation and nourish them. There are only five or six such mother-geniuses in the entirety of world literature. Rabelais is among them, together with Homer, Shakespeare, and Dante. Rabelais created all of French literature, just as Homer created Greek and Roman literature, Shakespeare the English, and Dante the Italian. Rabelais could not have been elevated any higher. How different from the opinions of previous centuries, from the opinion of, for example, Voltaire, for whom Rabelais is merely the chief of buffoons, despised by the whole nation!

The notion of mother-geniuses, common to nearly all Romantics, was fruitful for its time. It necessitated seeking the germs of the future in the past, appreciating the past from the point of view of the future that it had fertilized and begotten. A similar Romantic notion is that of the beacon-genius ("esprit phare de l'humanité"),[160] who casts a light far ahead. This notion forces one to see in works of the past—in Shakespeare, in Dante, in Rabelais—not only that which they already *contain*, as something fully formed, fully acknowledged, belonging to *its own time*, limited, but instead to see in them, first and foremost, the germs, the buds of the future, in other words, that which has been fully revealed, fully blossomed, and fully clarified only in the times that followed, only in the children conceived by the mother-geniuses. Thanks

[159] On Chateaubriand, Bakhtin follows Boulenger (1925, 77–80) and possibly Sainéan (1930, 1–2).

[160] The wording Bakhtin quotes comes from Boulenger (1925, 79–80).

to this notion, works from the past reveal new facets, new potentialities. It is thanks to this notion that the Romantics could make fruitful discoveries; it enabled them to discover Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Rabelais.

This notion and its consequences reveal with especial clarity the differences between the Romantics and the Enlighteners.[161] The latter wished to see in works and writers less than what was actually in them: from the point of view of extra-historical reason, too much in them turned out to be superfluous, unnecessary, incomprehensible; they had to be expurgated and abridged. Voltaire's image of God's library, where all the books are thoroughly corrected and shortened, is highly typical. The Enlighteners tended to impoverish the world: there is much less that is real in the world than is apparent; reality is bloated by vestiges of the past, superstition, illusions, fantasy, dreams, and so on. This narrow and purely static conception of reality also determined their perception and evaluation of works of art and led to attempts to expurgate and abridge them.

In contrast, the Romantics created an expanded conception of reality, in which *time and historical becoming* were ascribed essential significance. Based on this expanded conception of the world, they also sought to see as much as possible in a work of art—much more than is apparent to the superficial glance. They searched the work of art for future trends, for shoots, seeds, revelations, prophecies. Let us recall the opinion of the historian Michelet quoted at the beginning of this book.

The expanded conception of reality created by the Romantics has both positive and negative sides. Its positive side lies in its historicity, its attitude toward time and becoming. Reality is no longer static, naturalistic, atomized (held together by abstract rationalist thought alone); the real future begins to enter it in the form of trends, potentialities, and anticipations. Viewed historically, reality acquires an essential relation to freedom, the narrow and abstract deterministic and mechanistic view of the world is overcome. In the domain of artistic creation, we find a justification for deviations from elementary factuality, from the static description of the present day, from documentalism, from superficial typification, and at long last, a justification of the grotesque and grotesque fantasy as forms of capturing time and the future in art. These are the indubitable merits of the Romantic expansion of reality.

The negative side of the Romantic conception is its idealism and its incorrect understanding of the role and limits of subjective consciousness. As a result, the Romantics

[161] The subsequent discussion of Romanticism is couched in terms that hark back to Bakhtin's early writings (Bakhtin 1990b, 1993) and especially to his use of the distinction (inherited from early twentieth-century German philosophy) between the given (*dan*) and posited (*zadan*). For Bakhtin, reality is never limited to what is *given* to our observation (bare sense data, the world as-is) but, for the conscious being living in it, always includes what is *posited*—evaluations, expectations, the world as it ought to be. The contrast Bakhtin draws here between the Enlightenment, which limits the world to the given, and even further abstracts from that, and Romanticism, which sees the posited within it (and note, for example, the awkward but evocative expression "the real future" that he uses in the course of this discussion), thus restates his own philosophical views.

often thought up additions to reality, which were never there in the first place. As a result, fantasy could degenerate into mysticism, human freedom could break away from necessity and turn into some kind of supra-material force. This is the negative side of the Romantic conception.(80)

The Romantic understanding of Rabelais was expressed most fully and profoundly by Victor Hugo. While he did not devote a book or article especially to Rabelais, comments about our author are scattered throughout his works. He speaks about Rabelais in the most detailed and systematic manner in his book on Shakespeare.[162]

Hugo's starting point is the notion of the geniuses of humanity, reminiscent of Chateaubriand's notion of mother-geniuses. Each of these geniuses of humanity is absolutely original and embodies a certain aspect of being. Every genius has his invention or his discovery ("tout génie a son invention ou sa découverte"). Hugo counts fourteen such geniuses. The composition of this group is quite idiosyncratic: Homer, Job, Aeschylus, the prophet Isaiah, the prophet Ezekiel, Lucretius, Juvenal, Tacitus, the apostle Paul, the apostle John, Dante, Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. Among these geniuses, Rabelais is placed (in chronological order) after Dante and before Cervantes and Shakespeare. Hugo then provides the major characteristics for each of these geniuses, including Rabelais.

Hugo constructs his characterization not as a historical-literary definition but, rather, as a series of free Romantic variations on the theme of the absolute material-bodily nethers and of bodily topography. According to Hugo, the center of Rabelais's topography is the *belly*. This is precisely the artistic discovery that Rabelais made. The main functions of the belly are *paternity and maternity*. In connection with these nethers, which put to death and give birth, Hugo offers the grotesque image of the serpent in man—"it is the intestine." Generally speaking, Hugo understood correctly the significance of the material-bodily nethers as the organizing principle of the entire system of Rabelaisian images. But at the same time, he conceives of this principle in abstract moral terms: man's intestine, he says, "tempts, betrays, and punishes." This is the moral philosophical language into which the deadening force of the topographic nethers is translated.[163]

[162] Bakhtin's main source on Hugo for this discussion is Boulenger (1925, 94–118), and especially the long quote from the book on Shakespeare on pp. 96–100 and the subsequent discussion on pp. 100–101. Lote (1938, 547) and Sainéan (1930, 177–178) may also have been relevant. All English translations of quotes are from Hugo (1910, 56–59).

[163] The 1940 manuscript contained an additional critique of Hugo here: Hugo is unaware of the millennia-old traditions of grotesque realism (or, rather, "folk and Gothic realism," using the terms of the 1940 manuscript); he perceives Rabelais against the backdrop of the literary developments that followed him but not those that preceded him. That is why Hugo falsely believes Rabelais was the first to discover the belly (Bakhtin 2008a, 116).

(80) Of course, we do not pose the problem of Romanticism in all its complexity here. We are merely concerned within Romanticism with that which helped it discover and understand (albeit not fully) Rabelais and the grotesque in general.

Victor Hugo's variations on the belly theme further develop along the lines of moral and philosophical pathos. He proves (with examples in hand) that "the belly" can be tragic, that it can be heroic, but at the same time, according to Hugo, it is the beginning of man's putrefaction and corruption: the belly eats the man ("le ventre mange l'homme"). Alcibiades is transformed into Trimalchio;[164] the orgy degenerates into gluttony; instead of Diogenes, there remains but the barrel. These are the moral-philosophical images and antinomies into which the ambivalent material-bodily nethers of grotesque realism decay in Hugo's variations.

Hugo correctly grasps the essential relation of Rabelaisian laughter to death and to the struggle between life and death (moreover, in a historical aspect).[165] He feels the *special connection between eating-devouring, laughter, and death.* Moreover, Hugo was able to sense the connection between Dante's inferno and Rabelais's gluttony: "This universe, which Dante put into Hell, Rabelais confines in a wine-cask." The seven circles of the Inferno are the hoops of that Rabelaisian tun.[166] If, instead of the image of the wine-cask, Hugo had chosen the image of a gaping mouth or a devouring belly, his metaphor would have been even more accurate.

Having correctly pointed out the relation between laughter, the death of the old world, the underworld, and images of feasting (devouring and swallowing up), Hugo incorrectly interprets this connection: he tries to lend it an abstract moral-philosophical character. He does not understand the reviving and renewing force of the material-bodily nethers. All this also diminishes the value of his observations.

Let us stress that Hugo had a clear understanding of the universal and philosophical—rather than everyday-life—nature of such images of Rabelais's as gluttony and drunkenness, even though he ascribes to them a meaning that is not entirely Rabelaisian.

In connection with Rabelais and Shakespeare, Hugo offers a very interesting characterization of genius and of the work of genius. It follows from it that the grotesque nature of one's creation is an obligatory mark of genius. Writers of genius—including Rabelais and Shakespeare—differ from merely great writers by the *sharp exaggerations, excessiveness, obscurity* ("obscurité"), *and monstrousness* ("monstruosité") of all their images and of their writings as a whole.[167]

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[164] "Beginning with Alcibiades, we end with Trimalchio" (Hugo 1910, 57). Alcibiades was an important traitor in the history of Athens, also described by Plato as a love interest for Socrates, and is one of the praticipants of Plato's *Symposium.* Trimalchio hosts the banquet in Petronius's *Satyricon.*

[165] Possibly an allusion to one of Hugo's examples of the belly as heroic: "In one of the epic convulsions of Paris, a woman of the people, standing on a barricade, raised her petticoat, showed the soldiery her naked belly, and cried, 'Kill your mothers!' The soldiers riddled that belly with bullets" (Hugo 1910, 56).

[166] Dante's Inferno has nine circles, not seven (though a division of the underworld into seven parts does exist in some religious traditions—Islam, Jainism, Judaism, and others). Bakhtin, however, paraphrases Hugo, who follows up on the sentence just quoted above with "The seven circles of Alighieri bound and encompass this extraordinary tun" (Hugo 1910, 59). He then goes on to identify these seven circles with the seven deadly sins, which is perhaps the reason for the misstated number.

[167] Hugo (1910, 71–73) claims that these features distinguish the fourteen literary geniuses he dis-

These assertions reveal both the positive and the negative features of Hugo's conception. The distinguishing features that he considers to be marks of genius (in the Romanticist sense of this word) should, indeed, be attributed to writers who reflect—and, moreover, reflect essentially and deeply—the major watershed periods in world history. These writers deal with an incomplete world in the process of restructuring itself, filled with the decomposing past and with an as-yet unformed future. A special kind of positive and, one might say, *objective* incompleteness is inherent in their writings. These writings are imbued with a future that has objectively not yet been fully spelled out, and they have no choice but to leave loopholes open for this future.[168] Hence, their specific polysemy, their seeming obscurity. Hence, also, the exceptionally rich and varied posthumous history of these writings and writers. Hence, finally, their apparent monstrousness too—that is, their inability to fit in with the canons and norms of all completed, authoritarian, dogmatic epochs.(81)

Victor Hugo correctly senses the distinguishing features of these watershed periods in world history but gives this sensation of his an incorrect theoretical expression. His wording is somewhat metaphysical; moreover, he attributes the objective traits bound up with the historical process at its watershed moments to the special constitution of a genius's personality (granted, he does not dissociate genius from its time and considers the genius within history). In his characterization of men of genius Hugo also proceeds by his method of contrasts: he one-sidedly amplifies the features of the genius in order to create a stark static contrast with other great writers.

Rabelais's themes are also often found in Hugo's poetic works. Here, too, he stresses the universalism of Rabelais's images and the philosophical depth of his laughter.

In his later poetry Hugo's attitude toward Rabelaisian laughter changed somewhat. The very universalism of this world-encompassing laughter now appears to Hugo to be something uncanny and hopeless (transient, without a future). Rabelais is "neither

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cusses in his book from all lesser luminaries. Bakhtin here relies on the discussion in Boulenger (1925, 101–102). The entire section on Hugo is among the ones most drastically shortened in 1965 (possibly because the 1940 version of this discussion is full of lengthy quotations in French, which Bakhtin was asked by the publishers to either translate or remove), and the potentially misleading reference to Rabelais and Shakespeare at the beginning of the paragraph is a 1965 edit used to connect it to the preceding discussion after several paragraphs (dealing more broadly with Hugo's approach to the grotesque) were cut out.

[168] The loophole is a central term in Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984), and indeed already in the early "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity" (Bakhtin 1990b). The loophole as a feature of characters' discourse, or of individual experience, is viewed by Bakhtin as an expression of human freedom and of a connection to distant interlocutors (implicitly, to God). A loophole leaves open the possibility of a radical reinterpretation of the meaning of a person's or character's utterance. In the hands of such authors as Dostoevsky, loopholes in characters' discourse allow them to express human freedom in a literary image. Here, this term appears in a rather different context, but Bakhtin appears to give it a parallel meaning. See also note 66 to chapter 7.

(81) During these watershed epochs folk culture with its conception of incomplete being and merry time exercises a mighty influence on major literature, as was especially strikingly manifested in the Renaissance.

floor nor summit"[169]—that is, he is something one cannot dwell on, something specifically transient. This is a profound misunderstanding of the particularly *optimistic* nature of Rabelaisian laughter, which already was clearly present in Hugo's earlier utterances. From the very outset, laughter for him was predominantly a negating, lowering, annihilating principle. Although Hugo did repeat Nodier's characterization of Rabelais—"Homère bouffon,"[170] and although he also applied other similar descriptions to him—"Homère du rire," "la moquerie épique"[171]—it was precisely the epic quality of Rabelaisian laughter that Hugo did not understand.

It is interesting to compare these late utterances about Rabelais by Hugo with a distich written by Rabelais's contemporary, the historian Étienne Pasquier, devoted to the same theme:

> Sic homines, sic et coelestia numina lusit,
>
> Vix hommes, vix ut numina laesa putes,—[172]

That is, "He so played with men and heavenly gods that neither men nor gods appear offended by this play."

The opinion of Rabelais's contemporary more faithfully describes the true nature of Rabelaisian universal laughter-based play. Pasquier understood its profound optimism, its folk-festive character, its epic, not iambic style.[173]

Beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century Rabelais, his work, and his life become the object of comprehensive scholarly study. A number of monographs appear that are devoted to him. There begins a serious historical and philological study of his text. But the most comprehensive scholarly research into Rabelais belongs to the first years of the twentieth century.

We are not concerned here, of course, with the history of research into Rabelais. We shall limit ourselves merely to a brief assessment of the present-day condition of Rabelais scholarship.[174]

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[169] A line from Hugo's poem "Umbra" (quoted in Boulenger 1925, 109–110): "Il n'est ni le fond, ni la cime."

[170] Charles Nodier's use of this epithet is mentioned by Boulenger (1925, 82). Hugo's reference to it is also cited by Boulenger (1925, 118).

[171] "The Homer of laughter," "epic mockery" (Boulenger 1925, 110).

[172] Quoted in Sainéan (1930, 188).

[173] In the 1940 manuscript, the discussion of Hugo was extended somewhat further, and Bakhtin also added a few words about Rabelais's influence on other French Romantics (including, briefly, early Balzac) and a few later French authors (Prosper Mérimée, Gustave Flaubert, Anatole France, and Romain Rolland). Two discussions—one dealing with the "perversion" of Rabelaisian influence on Surrealism in literature and its precursors, and the other offering an overview of the chapter so far—were added in 1949–1950 but dropped in 1965 (they are both full of official Soviet rhetoric, of the type the 1949–1950 revision required, but could be dropped, more or less safely, by the 1960s).

[174] This section deals primarily with literature Bakhtin was directly familiar with, including many of the actual sources used for the book (though Bakhtin also cites several references to works he does not appear to have had access to). The factual information about the history and institutional context of

The Society for Rabelais Studies ("La société des études rabelaisiennes") was founded in early 1903. This is an important landmark in the history of Rabelais scholarship. The society's members were the students and friends of the Rabelais scholar Abel Lefranc. It became the center for all Rabelais scholarship, not only in France but also in England and America.[175] The Society's journal, *Revue des études rabelaisiennes*, began publication (with three issues a year) in 1903. In 1913 this journal was succeeded by another, covering a broader range of topics—the *Revue du seizième siècle*, published until 1933. In 1934, publication began of a journal with an even broader scope, *Humanisme et Renaissance*.

The Society and its journals became the focal point for all the textual scholarship on Rabelais: the study of his language, the work done on his sources, scholarship establishing the details of his biography, and finally, work on the historical interpretation of Rabelais's writings on a strictly scientific basis.[176] Based on all these studies, a scholarly edition of Rabelais's writings started publication since 1912, edited by the head of the Society, Abel Lefranc. By 1932, five volumes of this edition had appeared, covering the first three books of the novel.[(82)] At that point, the publication of this edition ceased for the time being.[177] This edition, with its text and system of variants, with its broad and substantial commentary, is exceptionally valuable for any scholarly work on Rabelais.

From among the individual works written by members of the Society, we shall name the most important for each subfield of Rabelais scholarship. One should first of all

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Rabelais scholarship that Bakhtin recounts in the process (for example, the next paragraph, about the Société des études rabelaisiennes and its publications) comes from Lote (1938, 552–553) and possibly also Plattard (1930, x).

[175] Note that Bakhtin remains almost entirely silent about Rabelais scholarship in Germany, where a competing tradition developed. One notable representative of this tradition was Leo Spitzer—an author whose work Bakhtin had closely followed since the 1920s. Popova (2008a, 849–858) offers an in-depth discussion of the dispute between Spitzer and Lefranc about Rabelais and of Bakhtin's positioning of his own book vis-à-vis this dispute. Spitzer, however, would not have been an author whose work Bakhtin could freely comment on, at least not in a context, in which he would have given it a fundamentally positive review.

[176] One should note that almost all of Bakhtin's sources about Rabelais and his novel (his life, the French language of his time, the reference of allusions in the text, and so on) come from the Lefranc school he discusses here. Many of their observations have been questioned by other scholars since, but Bakhtin would not have been aware of that and, not being a Rabelais scholar in the strict sense himself, he generally took these interpretations for granted.

[177] A sixth volume, dealing with bk. 4, ch. 1–17, was published by a new generation of scholars in 1955. Bakhtin does not appear to have been aware of its publication when preparing his own book for publication in 1965. To the best of my knowledge, the sixth volume was indeed the last, and the edition was never completed.

[(82)] *Œuvres de François Rabelais*, édition critique publiée par Abel Lefranc (professeur au Collège de France), Jacques Boulenger, Henri Clouzot, Paul Dorneaux, Jean Plattard et Lazare Sainéan. (The first volume was published in 1912, the fifth ("The Third Book") in 1931).

point out the fundamental study devoted to Rabelais's language by Lazare Sainéan, vice-chair of the Society: *La langue de Rabelais*, vol. 1, 1922, and vol. 2, 1923.

In the field that studies Rabelais's sources and the nature of Rabelais's erudition, one valuable contribution to Rabelais scholarship was Jean Plattard's book, "Rabelais's oeuvre" (*L'œuvre de Rabelais (Sources, invention, et composition)*, 1910). The same author also made the first attempt at producing a synthetic scholarly biography: *Vie de François Rabelais*, 1928.(83)[178] Let us mention the valuable work on Rabelaisian textual scholarship by Jacques Boulenger (the secretary of the Society) and on Rabelaisian topography by Henri Clouzot. Finally, one must take special note of the exceptionally valuable works, in terms of the richness of adduced material, by the chair of the Society, Abel Lefranc, and especially his introductory articles to the first three books of the novel, which he edited.

We shall have the chance to deal further with all the books just mentioned, as well as with a number of other contributions to Rabelais scholarship, as the present study progresses. For now, let us also mention only the rather detailed monograph on Rabelais by Georges Lote: *La vie et l'œuvre de François Rabelais*, Paris, 1938.

Thanks to the work of the members of the Society and of other contemporary Rabelais scholars, the understanding and the *philological* study of Rabelais's text were considerably facilitated; vast material was collected toward a broader and deeper understanding of this text's place in history and toward establishing the connections between Rabelais's work and the reality of his time, as well as the literature that preceded him. But all this material, painstakingly collected by scholars, still awaits a synthesis. A holistic countenance of Rabelais is not to be found in the works of contemporary Rabelais scholars. Indeed, Rabelais scholars are very cautious and meticulously avoid any remotely extensive synthesis, any far-reaching conclusion or generalization. The only book that lays claim to such a tentative—very tentative—synthesis is Plattard's book from 1910, which we already noted (and to some extent Lote's monograph mentioned above). But in spite of the valuable material collected in Plattard's and Lote's books, and in spite of some astute observations (this goes especially for Plattard), this synthesis cannot satisfy us. In fact, it is even less satisfactory than the old attempt at a synthesis by Stapfer (1889) or the work of the German scholar Schneegans (1894).[179]

[178] Plattard's biography is the only one of the sources Bakhtin mentions here that has been translated into English (Plattard 1930). The references in the footnote were copied from Sainéan (1930, 98).

[179] Schneegans (1894) is among Bakhtin's main sources for the book and is also the subject of a detailed (and highly critical) discussion in chapter 5. Stapfer (1889) is mentioned in the 1965 book (that too apparently based on another source; see note 122 to this chapter), but there is one more reference to Stapfer's book in the 1940 manuscript (Bakhtin 2008a, 136–137; and see even earlier brief references in 2008e, 648, 651), which did not make it into the book. Bakhtin praises Stapfer (with some qualifications) for being practically the only Rabelais scholar to have seen indecency in Rabelais as an integral part of

(83) Here are the main biographical works dealing with particular periods in Rabelais's life: A. Dubouchet, *F. Rabelais à Montpellier*, 1887; A Heulhard, *Rabelais, ses voyages en Italie et son exil à Metz*, 1891; A. Bertrand, *Rabelais à Lyon*, 1894; J. Plattard, *Adolescence de Rabelais en Poitou*, 1923.

Modern Rabelais scholarship, adhering to positivism, essentially limits itself to the collecting of material. Such collection per se is, of course, both necessary and useful. But the absence of a profound method and of any broad perspective limits the prospects of this collection work too: the material being collected is restricted to a narrow circle of biographical facts, minor events of the period, and literary sources (mostly books). Meanwhile, folklore sources are studied very superficially, in the customary narrow sense of folklore genres, which almost entirely excludes the study of *laughter-based folklore*, in all its originality and multifariousness. All this meticulously collected material very rarely goes beyond the bounds of *official culture*, whereas Rabelais as a whole can by no means be made to fit into these bounds. Rabelais scholars from Abel Lefranc's school assess laughter as a secondary phenomenon, which does not touch on the serious issues presented by Rabelais's novel: it is either a means to gain popularity among the masses or simply defensive camouflage. The key problem of folk laughter culture remains unposed within the grounds of Rabelais scholarship.[180]

The publication of historian Lucien Febvre's book, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*,(84) was a significant event in the field of Rabelais scholarship. This book was primarily directed against Abel Lefranc and his school. Febvre does not discuss Rabelais's novel as a work of art, nor does he touch upon Rabelais's autobiographical sources, a field in which Lefranc and his followers were especially productive; he is concerned solely with Rabelais's worldview, mostly his attitude toward religion and Catholicism.

Febvre's main task is to understand Rabelais within his cultural and intellectual milieu, within the limits of the possibilities available to his time. One cannot understand the sixteenth century, claims Febvre, if the individual is isolated from the "moral climate" and the "intellectual atmosphere" of the era. The historian's main task is to determine how people in 1532 (the year of publication of Rabelais's first book, "Pantagruel")[181] were capable of hearing and understanding "Pantagruel," and how they—*they*, not *we*—were incapable of comprehending it. One must read Rabelais's text with the eyes of his contemporaries, the people of the sixteenth century, not the eyes of twentieth-century people. The worst of all sins for a historian, according to Febvre, is the sin of *anachronism*.[182]

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his style and brings a quote (from Stapfer 1889, but without indicating the page number), which does not appear to have come from any other source.

[180] This paragraph, originally the last paragraph of the chapter, was added to the book in 1949–1950 (replacing the much less critical few sentences that ended this chapter in the 1940 manuscript). It was further edited in 1965 (the last two sentences replaced a more caustic critique of "bourgeois science"). From this point on, to the end of the chapter, the bulk of the text was written in 1965.

[181] "Pantagruel" is the second book of Rabelais's novel but was the first to be published. This is one of several places in the book where Bakhtin numbers Rabelais's books chronologically.

[182] This paragraph paraphrases passages from the foreword (Berr 1962, xvi–xvii) and introduction (Febvre 1982, 5) to Febvre's book.

(84) Lucien Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle: la religion de Rabelais*, Paris, 1942

From the point of view of these methodological demands, which are at base fully justified, Febvre criticizes Abel Lefranc's claim that Rabelais champions consistent rationalist atheism in his work. Adducing vast and valuable material from different areas of sixteenth-century culture and thought, Febvre seeks to prove that neither the sense of the world nor the (philosophical and scientific) worldview of the sixteenth century offered fertile soil or grounding for consistent rationalist atheism; there was nothing to support such a view. Any kind of negation has to be grounded in order to have even the slightest social value and historical significance. Subjective and capricious negation, without reasons or support (the plain "I deny") has no historical validity. In the sixteenth century, neither philosophy nor science (which essentially did not yet exist) could offer such support for the denial of religion. Consistent rationalist atheism was impossible (see Febvre, pp. 380–381 [352–353]).[183]

In fact, Febvre's entire book is devoted to proving this proposition. As we have said, Febvre pulls together vast and heterogeneous material, which is of indubitable value in its own right, that is, independently of Febvre's thesis. In light of this material, many long-established views concerning various phenomena of sixteenth-century culture should be reconsidered. Febvre's book has a great deal to offer for understanding some particular aspects of sixteenth-century culture. But the understanding of Rabelais's novel as a work of *art*, the understanding of Rabelais's *artistic worldview and sense of the world*, is poorly served by Febvre's book, and that too only indirectly. Rabelais's artistic thought equally fails to fit into either rationalist atheism or religious faith, no matter whether Catholic, Protestant, or in the spirit of Erasmus's "religion of Christ."[184] Rabelaisian thought is at once broader, deeper, and more radical. Any kind of one-sided seriousness and any kind of dogmatism are alien to it. Rabelais's artistic worldview knows neither abstract and pure negation nor one-sided positive assertion. Both Lefranc's thesis and Febvre's opposing thesis equally lead us away from a correct understanding of Rabelais's artistic worldview. They also lead us away from a correct understanding of sixteenth-century culture as a whole.

The crux of the matter is that Febvre, like Abel Lefranc, ignores the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Only the *serious* level of thought and culture exists for him. In his brilliant analyses of various areas and spheres of sixteenth-century culture, he remains essentially solely within the limits of official culture. This is why, in Rabelais's novel too, he perceives and appreciates only that which can be understood and interpreted on the serious level of official culture, and as a result, that which is the most essential in Rabelais—the genuine Rabelais—remains outside the scope of his perception and appreciation.

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[183] Page references in square brackets are to the English translation (Febvre 1982).

[184] Bakhtin most likely had in mind "philosophy of Christ." This phrase, unlike "religion of Christ," was used by Erasmus himself and by others to refer to his thought (and cf. the title of chapter 8 of Febvre's book: "Rabelais, Erasmus, and the Philosophy of Christ").

[English translation: Febvre (1982)].

Febvre, as we have noted, considers anachronism, modernization, to be the greatest sin for a historian. He rightly accuses Abel Lefranc and other Rabelais scholars of committing this sin. But, alas, he himself lapses into this sin with regard to laughter. He hears Rabelais's laughter with the ears of a man of the twentieth century, rather than how it was heard by the people of 1532. This is why he failed to read "Pantagruel" through their eyes precisely when it came to what is most important, most essential for this book.

Febvre perceives the laughter of Rabelais and his era as a man of the twentieth century and therefore fails to understand the main thing about it—its philosophical and universal character; he does not understand that a laughter-based worldview, a universal laughter-based aspect of the world, is even possible. He thus looks for Rabelais's worldview only where Rabelais is not laughing, or more precisely, where he, Febvre, fails to hear that laughter, where Rabelais appears to him to be fully serious. Where Rabelais laughs, however, he is, for Febvre, merely joking, and these jokes are innocent, like all jokes are, and tell us nothing about Rabelais's true worldview, because any worldview, according to Febvre, can only be serious. Thus, Febvre projects onto the sixteenth century an understanding of laughter and of its functions in culture and in the worldview of people that is typical for modern times, especially for the nineteenth century, thereby committing evident anachronism and modernization.

Febvre tells in his book how he was surprised by the analysis of the prologue to "Pantagruel" offered by Lefranc in an introductory article to the novel. He was especially astounded by Lefranc's conclusion that Rabelais was a conscious champion of consistent atheism. In order to verify this conclusion that had so astounded him, "With some apprehension, we pick up our copy of Rabelais and open to 'Pantagruel.' We start *laughing* and think no more of the 'crescendo' of impiety [of which Lefranc spoke]." ("On reprend son Rabelais avec quelque inquiétude. On oeuvre le 'Pantagruel.' *On rit.* On ne songe plus au 'crescendo' de l'impiété"). Febvre finds "nothing secret, nothing terrible or sacrilegious." All he discovers are "old ... clerical jokes" ("de vieilles plaisanteries cléricales"), which were already in circulation before Rabelais. This is all Febvre finds in the prologue to "Pantagruel" (see pp. 160–161 [153–154]).

This reveals very clearly Febvre's attitude toward Rabelais's jokes: they provoke mere laughter—"On rit." But it is precisely this "on rit" which needs to be analyzed. Do we, people of the twentieth century, laugh the way Rabelais and his contemporary readers did? And what is the nature of these "old clerical jokes"? If the serious and abstract atheist leanings seen by Lefranc do not stand behind them, could it be that there is something else to them, something far more significant, profound, and artistically concrete (i.e., the laughter-based aspect of the world)? But Febvre does not pose these questions. Apparently, he thinks that laughter is always the same in all eras and that a joke has always been merely a joke. And so he directs his fine historical analysis at the serious parts of Rabelais's novel (or more precisely, those which appear serious to him), while laughter is left aside, as something nonhistorical and unchanging.

Febvre ignores the laughter-based aspect of the world, which has been taking shape for hundreds and thousands of years in the most multifarious forms of folk laughter culture (and first and foremost, in laughter-based ritual spectacle forms). Analyzing individual "clerical jests," such as "sitio" ("I thirst"), "consummatum est" ("it is consummated"), and others (Lefranc was shocked by their boldness), Febvre merely points to their traditional character and to their harmlessness.[185] He does not see that these are particles of an immense and unitary whole—the folk carnival sense of the world, the universal laughter-based aspect of the world. In order to grasp this, it would have been necessary to uncover the historical meaning of such centuries-old phenomena as the "parodia sacra," the "risus paschalis," the immense laughter-based literature of the Middle Ages, and above all, of course, ritual-spectacle carnival forms. But Febvre does not do this. All of his attention is directed solely to the "serious" phenomena of culture and thought (serious in the spirit of the nineteenth century). For instance, discussing Erasmus and his influence on Rabelais, he does not touch on *In Praise of Folly*,[186] the work that is precisely the most in tune with the Rabelaisian world. He is only interested in the "serious" Erasmus. Only a small section of the book, titled "Some Clerical Jests" (pp. 161–165 [154–158]) is devoted to the comic aspect of his subject, only five out of five hundred pages. Febvre touches on the laughter-based domain in sixteenth-century culture in yet another small section, devoted to the preachers Menot and Maillard, who use "Rabelaisian jokes and japes" in their sermons (pp. 179–182 [170–173]).[187] There are also sporadic remarks, brief and few in number, in other parts of the book concerning laughter-based elements in sixteenth-century culture, but they are interpreted in the spirit of nineteenth- and twentieth-century notions about laughter. It is most telling that in a book devoted to the most carnivalesque of all writers in world literature, the word "carnival" appears only once (while analyzing Epistemon's visions of the underworld).[188]

At one point in his book, Febvre seems inclined to recognize the historicity of laughter. He declares that "irony is a creature of its time" (p. 172 [164]). But this thesis receives no development and is only used by Febvre in order to restrict the scope of the laughter element in Rabelais. Febvre believes that Rabelais's novel contains many more direct serious assertions than is generally believed, that irony is often heard where, in fact, it does not exist.

We consider these assertions of Febvre's to be radically wrong. Only *relative* seriousness is possible in Rabelais's world. Even the episodes that in a different context, or considered on their own, would have been fully serious (Thélème, Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel, the chapter about the death of heroes and others)[189] acquire an overtone

[185] See the section "Some Clerical Jests" (Febvre 1982, 154–158), and especially pp. 155–156.

[186] *In Praise of Folly* is actually mentioned several times by Febvre (1982, 261, 309, 314, 315, 333) but is indeed never discussed at any length.

[187] The quote is from p. 171.

[188] Febvre (1982, 236), referring to Rabelais's bk. 2, ch. 30.

[189] Respectively, bk. 1, ch. 52–57; bk. 2, ch. 8; and bk. 4, ch. 26–28.

of laughter in the context of Rabelais's novel; the surrounding laughter-based images reflect on them. The laughter aspect is universal and extends to everything. But it is precisely this universalism and philosophical nature of laughter, the special *truth* of laughter, that Febvre does not see. For him, truth can only proclaim. Nor does he perceive the ambivalence of laughter.

Indeed, Febvre's assertion is also incorrect on a broader historical level. In the world culture of the past there is much more laughter and irony (a form of reduced laughter) than our ear can hear and detect. The literature (also including rhetoric) of certain periods (Hellenism, the Middle Ages) is literally flooded with various forms of reduced laughter, some of which we are no longer able to perceive. Especially often do we lose the sense of something being a parody. No doubt, there is much in the world literature of past times that we are yet to read anew, to hear in a different register. But for this we need, first of all, to understand the special nature of the folk laughter of times past—its philosophical nature, its universalism, its ambivalence, its connection to time, and so on—that is, all that has been almost entirely lost by the laughter of modernity.

The fact that Febvre ignores folk laughter culture leads him to a distorted conception of the Renaissance and of the sixteenth century in France. The exceptional inner freedom and the almost maximal a-dogmatism of artistic thought that were typical of that epoch are things Febvre does not see and does not want to see, because he finds no support for them.[190] He offers a one-sided and false picture of sixteenth-century culture.

In the sphere of literature, the Renaissance in general, and the French Renaissance in particular, is marked first and foremost by the fact that folk laughter culture, at its highest level of potential, had risen up to the high literature of the time and had fecundated it. Without acknowledging this fact, it is impossible to understand either the culture or the literature of that period. Of course, it would be impermissible to reduce all the rich, complex, and contradictory content of that age to this factor *alone*. But it is precisely this factor—which is, in addition, an exceptionally important factor—that has not been acknowledged to date. And this has had particularly ruinous repercussions on the understanding of Rabelais.

In conclusion, we are compelled to agree with the harsh assessment of Febvre's book that was offered by Pierre Daix in his article "A Deficiency Report about Rabelais": "Febvre's book is the most subtle attempt of all those made over the four hundred years since Rabelais's death, to rip his work away from the people."(85)[191]

[190] An allusion to Febvre's own claim (discussed above) that there was no *support* for atheism in sixteenth century Europe.

[191] In Daix's original French (Daix 1955, 132), the attempt is "to rip us away from Rabelais's oeuvre" ("de nous couper de l'œuvre de Rabelais").

(85) See P. Daix, *Sem' vekov romana*. [Seven centuries of the novel], Inostrannaya literatura, Moscow, 1962, p. 121. See also an extended critique of Febvre in L. E. Pinsky's book *Realism epokhi vozrozhdeniya* [Renaissance Realism], Goslitizdat, Moscow, 1961, pp. 106–114.

Let us briefly examine the condition of Rabelais scholarship in our country.[192]

Prerevolutionary Russian literary scholarship was almost entirely unconcerned with Rabelais. We had no Rabelais scholars. Not a single book was published about him, not a single monograph. The entire Russian scholarly literature about Rabelais before the revolution is limited to a fairly sizeable article by A. N. Veselovsky, "Rabelais and His Novel,"(86) and a small booklet by Iu. Fokht (lacking any scholarly value).(87)193

The said article by A. N. Veselovsky on Rabelais undoubtedly had some scholarly significance for its time (1878). After all, it appeared long before strictly scholarly Rabelais studies began to develop in France and a quarter of a century before the founding of the Rabelais Studies Society. The article contains many observations that were valuable and new for their time concerning Rabelais's era as well as individual aspects of the novel; some of these observations subsequently became a firmly established part of Rabelais scholarship. But from the point of view of our conception, Veselovsky's understanding of Rabelais's novel has substantial flaws.

In the explanation he gave for the fundamental character of the novel, its genesis and evolution, Veselovsky places at the forefront narrow time-specific factors belonging to the politics of the royal court and various groupings among representatives of the ruling classes (the feudal aristocracy, the top echelons of the service class, and the bourgeoisie); the role of the people and its special position are not taken into consideration at all. Thus, Rabelais's optimism in his early period (before October 1534) is interpreted by Veselovsky as arising from his naive faith in the triumph of humanism with the support of the court and from his friendship with promoters of religious Reform, while the changes in Rabelais's worldview and tone in the subsequent books of

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[192] The following discussion of pre-1945 Russian and Soviet Rabelais scholarship uses two paragraphs from the first chapter—analogous to the book's introduction—of the 1940 manuscript and a slightly longer critical review of A. N. Veselovsky's article about Rabelais inserted between these paragraphs in 1949–1950, after Bakhtin was explicitly required to correct the "gross ideological error" of appealing to the authority of Veselovsky (Popova 2008a, 920; 2008b, 1089–1090).

[193] The list of pre-1917 Russian sources is not quite exhaustive. Smirnov (1935, 478), in his encyclopedia entry on Rabelais (cited by Bakhtin later in this section), lists two more sources. One is a book review of Stapfer (1889), whose author was identified by Smirnov, and in the original publication, only by her initials (Pogozheva 1890). The other is a short (nonscholarly) biography, containing a retelling of multiple episodes from Rabelais's novel, by Aleksandra Annenskaya (1892).

The reference to Fleury (1877) in the footnote comes from Veselovsky (1939)—both from Veselovsky's own text and from the editors' commentary to that article (which mentions Fleury's employment in St. Peterburg and supplies additional information about the book). Interestingly, the same commentary recommends Boulenger (1925) and Sainéan (1930) as more up-to-date and extensive sources that cover the same ground as Fleury's book. Both have been among Bakhtin's main sources in this chapter.

(86) A. N. Veselovsky, *Izbrannye stat'i* [Selected papers], Goslitizdat, Leningrad, 1939.

(87) Iu. Fokht, *Rable, ego zhyzn' i tvorchestvo* [Rabelais, his life and work], 1914. One should also mention, though this is not directly related to the Russian literature on Rabelais, that the French language lecturer at what was formerly St. Petersburg University, Jean Fleury, published in 1876–1877 in Paris a two-volume monograph compiling materials about Rabelais, which was not bad for its time.

the novel are explained by the defeat of humanism following a change in the policy of the royal court and by Rabelais's simultaneous break with the Reformers. But such emotional experiences as naive faith and disappointment are deeply alien to the mighty elemental force of Rabelaisian laughter, while such events as changes in the politics of the court and of various groups within the ruling classes held no more significance for this laughter, permeated with the thousand-year-old wisdom of successions and renewals, than a tempest in a teapot or the crowning and decrowning of fools at Roman Saturnalias or European carnivals. Rabelais's optimism is *the people's optimism*, and any hopes and disappointments arising from the limited possibilities of his age are but overtones in his novel; Veselovsky, however, turns them into its fundamental tones. He does not see the popular foundation of Rabelais's public writing.

Nor does Veselovsky grasp the peculiar character, and the revolutionary nature, of the folk laughter that rings out in Rabelais's work. In effect, he almost entirely ignores the laughing Middle Ages and underestimates the millennia-long traditions of folk laughter culture. Veselovsky perceives Rabelais's laughter as an expression of the primitive, elementary, almost animal exuberance of a "village boy let loose."(88)

Veselovsky, just like Western Rabelais scholars, essentially only knows the *official Rabelais*. He analyzes in this novel only the *peripheral* elements, which reflect such trends as the humanist club of Marguerite of Angoulême,[194] the movement of the early religious reformers, and so on. But, in fact, Rabelais's work, at its core, expresses the most radical interests, aspirations, and thoughts of the people, which did not fully identify itself with any of these *relatively* progressive movements of the aristocratic and bourgeois Renaissance.

Like Western Rabelais scholars in the nineteenth century, Veselovsky places the *Thélème episode*[195] at the forefront, making it out to be a key of sorts to Rabelais's worldview and to his entire novel. But, in fact, Thélème is characteristic neither of Rabelais's worldview nor of his system of images nor of his style. Though this episode does contain a popular utopian element, it is primarily linked with the aristocratic currents of the Renaissance; this is not a *folk*-festive but a *court*-festive humanist utopia, which has more the scent of Princess Marguerite's court circle than of the popular carnival public square. In this respect, Thélème falls out of the overall system of Rabelaisian imagery and style.

[194] Better known as Marguerite of Navarre, sister of King Francis I of France and a prominent figure in French humanist circles in Rabelais's time. Practically all of Bakhtin's sources (including Veselovsky, discussed here) refer to her as Marguerite of Navarre. The one reference to her as Marguerite of Angoulême that I found among Bakhtin's sources was in Dzhivelegov and Boyadzhiev (1941, 290)—a Soviet university textbook on the history of theater in western Europe, which Bakhtin appears to have consulted while working on the 1949–1950 revisions.

[195] Bk. 1, ch. 52–57.

(88) See a more detailed criticism of this image used by Veselovsky in chapter 2, p. 144 ff.

In many respects, Veselovsky's conception determined the interpretation of Rabelais in our country's university courses and surveys of Renaissance literature almost to this day.

Soviet literary scholarship before the Second World War did not alter this situation substantially. For a long time Rabelais, one of the greatest realists of world literature, was almost entirely ignored. There was a short entry, mainly informative in nature, by A. A. Smirnov, in the *Literary Encyclopedia*, an article of a similar sort by B. A. Krzhevsky appended to the second edition of an abridged translation of Rabelais's novel, and finally, a chapter devoted to Rabelais in the *History of French Literature* (published by the USSR Academy of Sciences), written by A. K. Dzhivelegov, which likewise did not pretend to pursue a research agenda, and two short original articles: "The Legend of the Glorious Gargantuas" by V. F. Shishmarev[(89)][196] and "Rabelais and Humanism" by I. E. Vertsman[(90)]—this is about all that was published on our author. There was not a single monograph devoted to him; not a single full-scale attempt to revise Rabelais's heritage in the light of the positions and aims of Soviet literary scholarship, especially in connection with the theory and history of realism and folk literature.

After World War II the situation changed. The year 1948 saw the publication of the first Soviet monograph on Rabelais, E. M. Evnina's book *François Rabelais* (Goslitizdat, Moscow, 1948). This book has its indisputable merits. The neglect of the comic principle in Rabelais's novel, so characteristic of Western Rabelais scholars, is nowhere to be found in E. M. Evnina's work. For her, Rabelais is first and foremost a comic writer. Evnina does see Rabelais as a satirist, but she interprets satirical laughter very broadly and, unlike Schneegans and others, she includes within this category substantial positive elements—joy, merriment, and exuberance. Rabelaisian laughter, in E. M. Evnina's conception, is *many-faced and ambivalent* (though Evnina does not use the latter term). Such an understanding of Rabelaisian laughter allows Evnina to offer an interesting and thorough analysis of the peculiar comic devices used by Rabelais. E. M. Evnina's book is a valuable contribution to the fledgling Soviet scholarship on Rabelais.[197]

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[196] See Smirnov (1935) and Krzhevsky (1938, who also wrote the commentary to the Pyast translation). Dzhivelegov (1946) was published shortly after World War II. As for Shishmarev (1928), this is an article that deals with an early partial Russian translation of Rabelais. It was not the article by Shishmarev that Bakhtin intended to cite. We know he was searching for Chichmareff (1999, originally published in 1926) but was unable to locate it and got the reference to this article instead (Popova 2008a, 878–879). See also note 82 to chapter 7.

[197] As Popova (2008a, 898) documents, the publication of Evnina (1948) was probably one of the reasons Bakhtin's own monograph was not published earlier. There were some initial arrangements

(89) See *Sbornik statey v chest' akademika A. I. Sobolevskogo* [Festschrift for A. I. Sobolevsky], Leningrad, 1928.

(90) See *Uch[enye] Zap[iski] MGPI* [Scholarly Communications of the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute], 1935, vol. 1. (History of General Literature Dept.).

In recent years, a number of popular works appeared that are devoted to our author of interest: an article by I. I. Anisimov, "François Rabelais" (*Znamya*, issue 5 for 1953), marking 400 years since Rabelais's death;[198] an article by E. M. Gordeev, "The Great Humanist Rabelais" (in *Srednie veka*, vol. 7, published by the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1955); S. D. Artamonov's introductory article to Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (in the translation by N. M. Lyubimov, Goslitizdat, 1961) and Artamonov's own short book *François Rabelais* (published by Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1964). An interesting and original booklet, in terms of its conception, appeared in 1960, *Rabelais's Artistic Method* by S. T. Vayman.

But the most significant event in Soviet Rabelais scholarship was the publication of L. E. Pinsky's long essay "Rabelais's Laughter" in his book: *Renaissance Realism* (Goslitizdat, Moscow, 1961, pp. 87–223).[(91)][199]

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made for publishing the book around 1945. However, Evnina's mentor, A. K. Dzhiveleglov, was able to ensure publication for his protégé's work, and Soviet publishers were reluctant to release two books on Rabelais in such short sequence. Dzhivelegov, in turn, was one of Bakhtin's correspondents (and later, dissertation defense examiners) and had a copy of the 1940 manuscript (Popova 2008a, 894ff.). He shared the manuscript with students and colleagues (Popova 2008a, 901), so it is quite likely that Evnina was familiar at least with part of Bakhtin's manuscript when she was writing her own book. Later on, in the 1960s, Evnina was briefly involved in the campaign to get Bakhtin's book on Rabelais published (see Popova 2010b, 632).

[198] Anisimov's article first appeared in the daily press, namely in *Pravda* in April 1953 (Anisimov 1953). A slightly expanded version was then printed in the May issue of the journal *Oktyabr'* (later reprinted as Anisimov 1977). Bakhtin's reference to the journal *Znamya* appears to be a mistake.

[199] Pinsky's book had behind it a convoluted history of its own (see Klyueva 2015): Pinsky defended a dissertation titled "François Rabelais's Laughter" back in the late 1930s, before Bakhtin turned to Rabelais as a subject. Then came World War II. After the war Pinsky was arrested and sentenced to ten years of hard labor as part of Stalin's campaign against "cosmopolitanism." His sentence was eventually annulled, and he was restored to his previous positions in 1956. Only then did it become possible for him to publish his own ideas about Rabelais (and other authors). His book *Renaissance Realism*, cited here by Bakhtin, was written before his arrest in 1951 but only reached potential publishers in the late 1950s. At that point, Pinsky was alerted to the existence of Bakhtin's manuscript on Rabelais, and to similarities between the two works, by A. A. Smirnov, who reviewed Pinsky's manuscript for the publisher and was among the early correspondents with whom Bakhtin shared his own manuscript in the 1940s. Pinsky wrote Bakhtin in 1960, and the two befriended each other. Pinsky reviewed Bakhtin's manuscript for its eventual publisher in 1962 (Popova 2010b, 644–649). A few years later Bakhtin reciprocated with a (similarly highly positive) internal review for the publisher of a book Pinsky wrote on Shakespeare (Bakhtin 2002a).

It should be noted, though, that the monolithically positive mutual reviews, while reflecting a true affinity in their positions, deliberately avoided (or smoothed over) disagreements, as well as a fundamental clash in the philosophical motivations behind the literary analyses (Pinsky considered himself, and presented himself to Bakhtin, as a Hegelian, while Bakhtin's basic philosophical motivation was grounded in a reaction against Hegelianism). Neither wished to appear critical of the other in print, and both kept their differences private (see Shaytanov 2011).

[(91)] Initially, L. E. Pinsky's conception was expressed in the article "On the Comic in Rabelais." (see *Voprosy literatury*, May 1959).

Unlike most Rabelais scholars, Pinsky considers laughter to be the basic organizing principle in Rabelais's novel, not the external but the inner form of Rabelais's very seeing and understanding of the world. Pinsky does not separate laughter from either Rabelais's world outlook or from the ideas contained in his novel. From this angle, L. E. Pinsky offers a critical survey of the understanding and evaluations of Rabelais throughout the ages. His conclusions are as follows:

> Based on this cursory survey of the way evaluations of Rabelais have evolved over the centuries, it is not difficult to notice that understanding his work turned out to be fruitful only when it did not belittle the significance of his laughter, when the comic principle was not separated from liberating and progressive ideas, from the content of "Gargantua and Pantagruel." Only when this was the case could a new aspect of his creation, important for human life, be revealed. Throughout all these centuries Rabelais remained to the living perception of his audience first and foremost the genius of the comic. (p. 118)

One cannot but agree with these conclusions reached by L. E. Pinsky.

Pinsky is also perfectly consistent in rejecting the notion that Rabelais's laughter is satirical in nature. Rabelais is not a satirist in the ordinary sense of the word. His laughter is by no means directed at the particular purely negative phenomena of reality. Only a few secondary characters and episodes in the novel's last books are satirical. When it comes to the novel's main images, in contrast, Rabelais's laughter is profoundly positive. Here is how Pinsky puts it:

> On the whole, it is not a satire in the precise sense of the word, it does not express indignation against vice or outrage at evil in social and cultural life. The company that Pantagruel keeps, above all Friar John and Panurge, are by no means satirical, and yet they are the main carriers of the comic element. The comic character of the uninhibited indications of our sensual nature—Friar John's gluttony, Panurge's lustfulness, the indecency of young Gargantua—is not supposed to arouse the reader's outrage. The language and the entire countenance of the narrator, Alcofribas Nasier, one of the members of the Pantagruelists' little company, obviously precludes any sort of satirical tone with regard to Panurge. He is sooner a close friend, the narrator's, and his main protagonist's, other "I." Panurge must amuse Rabelais's audience, make it laugh, surprise it, and even teach it in his own way, but by no means arouse its indignation. (p. 188)

L. E. Pinsky convincingly reveals the epistemic character of Rabelais's laughter and its connection to truth. Laughter purges one's consciousness from false seriousness, from dogmatism, from all manner of affects that cloud it. Let us quote Pinsky's own

relevant words. While commenting on the introductory poem to "Pantagruel,"[200] he writes:

> Laughter in "Pantagruel" is at the same time a theme and a mode of argument. The reader must be given back the ability that sorrow has deprived him of, the ability to laugh. He should return to the normal condition of human nature, so that truth may reveal itself to him. For Spinoza, a hundred years later, the path to truth passes through liberation from the affects of sadness and joy. His motto was: not to weep, nor to laugh, but to know. For Rabelais, a thinker of the Renaissance, laughter precisely is the liberation from affects that obscure the knowledge of life. Laughter testifies to one's clear spiritual vision—and bestows it. A sense of the comic and reason are the two attributes of human nature. Truth itself, smiling, reveals itself to man when he abides in a non-anxiously joyful, comic state. (p. 174)

Pinsky's acknowledgment of the ambivalence of Rabelaisian laughter appears to us to be a very important element of his conception. At one point in his essay (p. 181) he puts it thus: "One of the most surprising traits of Rabelais's laughter is the polysemy of its tone, the complex relation to the object of the comic. Outright mockery and apologetics, decrowning and admiration, irony and dithyramb, are here combined."

And elsewhere (p. 183):

> Rabelais's laughter is at once both negating and asserting, but most precisely, it is a "searching" and "hoping" laughter, like the company of "thirsting" Pantagruelists itself. Boundless enthusiasm concerning knowledge and cautious irony are here merging into one another. The very tone of this laughter shows that two contradictory principles can be made simultaneously compatible even in form.

In his essay, L. E. Pinsky also reveals the foundational sources of laughter in Rabelais. He is interested not in external formal comic devices but precisely in the sources of the comic in being, in the comic nature of being itself, so to speak. He considers the main source of laughter to be "the movement of life itself"[201]—that is, becoming, succession, the merry relativity of being. Here is how he speaks about this:

> At the core of this effect of the amusing in Rabelais's work there lies a feeling of universal relativity—of great and small, high and negligible, of

[200] Referring to the introductory poem to the entire novel.

[201] This is a close paraphrase, but not an exact quote, of Pinsky (1961, 128, italics in the original): To understand the origins of the comic in Rabelais, of preeminent importance are the contrasts and discrepancies of Renaissance culture itself, the Renaissance being the beginning of Modernity. What is grotesque this time is *the movement and course of objective life itself*, rather than its mere refraction

> the fantastic and the real, the physical and the spiritual—the feeling of appearing, growing, flowering, declining, disappearing, of the succession of the forms of eternally living Nature.[202]

Another source of the laughable, inseparably linked to the first one, Pinsky finds in the certain gaiety of spirit[203] of human nature. In his own words:

> In the prologue to the Fourth Book, Pantagruelism is defined as "certain gaiety of spirit produced by a contempt of the incidentals of fate."[204] The origin of the laughter-inducing in Rabelais's work is not only the impotence of the incidentals of fate which cannot arrest the movement of life (since "all things move on to their appointed end"[205] as the writing on the Temple of the Holy Bottle has it), nor is it only the flow of time and the movement of society in history, the law of "succession" of kingdoms and empires. A no less important origin of the comic is the "certain gaiety of spirit" of human nature, capable of rising above the temporal, to conceive of it precisely as something temporary and passing. (p. 147)

Such, according to L. E. Pinsky, are the main sources of the comic in Rabelais. These quotations indicate that Pinsky profoundly understands the primordial connection laughter has with time and with the succession of times. He also stresses this connection in other places in his work.

We have examined here only the most basic elements of the conception of Rabelaisian laughter, developed and argued for in detail in Pinsky's essay. Based on his conception, L. E. Pinsky offers deep and subtle analyses of the major episodes of Rabelais's novel and of its leading characters (Gargantua, Pantagruel, Friar John, and Panurge). The analysis of Panurge is particularly interesting and profound. Pinsky has correctly appreciated the immense significance of this character (as well as that of Shakespeare's Falstaff) for the understanding of the Renaissance worldview.

L. E. Pinsky does not examine the history of laughter and of folk laughter culture and, in particular, does not touch on Rabelais's medieval sources. His method (in this essay) is mainly synchronic. However, he does point out (on p. 205) the carnivalesque character of Rabelaisian laughter.

Such is the state of Soviet Rabelais scholarship. It is apparent from our brief survey that, unlike contemporary Rabelais scholarship in the West, our scholars do not

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in ossified perception.

[202] Pinsky (1961, 144).

[203] The phrase "certain gaiety of spirit" is a quote from Rabelais ("certaine gayeté d'esprit"—bk. 4, prologue). Lyubimov's Russian translation, which both Bakhtin and Pinsky are citing here, interprets the word "certaine" as referring to certainty. A back-translation of the phrase from the Russian would read: "a deep and invincible joy of living."

[204] Back-translation of the entire quote: "Deep and invincible joy of living, before which all things passing are powerless."

[205] Bk. 5, ch. 37.

separate Rabelais's artistic worldview from his laughter and are concerned above all with correctly understanding the peculiar nature of this laughter.[206]

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about N. M. Lyubimov's translation.[207] The publication of this translation is an event of great importance. One might say that the Russian readership has read Rabelais for the first time, has heard for the first time his laughter. Although people have been translating Rabelais into Russian beginning as early as the eighteenth century, they really only translated excerpts,[208] while nobody was able even remotely to render the idiosyncrasy and wealth of Rabelais's language and style. This is an exceptionally difficult task. The opinion had even formed that Rabelais was untranslatable into foreign languages (in Russia, this opinion was shared by A. N. Veselovsky).[209] Therefore, among all the classics of world literature, Rabelais alone did not become part of Russian culture, has not been organically appropriated by it (as Shakespeare, Cervantes, and others had been). And indeed, this is a very substantial lacuna, since it was through Rabelais that the vast world of folk laughter culture revealed itself. Now, thanks to Lyubimov's marvelous, almost maximally adequate translation, Rabelais has begun to speak Russian, with all his inimitable Rabelaisian familiarity and spontaneity, with all the inexhaustibility

[206] This is a conclusion Bakhtin was expected to reach for the book to pass muster with the authorities in the USSR. Denouncing (usually in much less collegial terms) the inadequacy of "bourgeois" scholarship and praising the merits of its Soviet counterpart is something any work published in the USSR at the time would be expected to do. In this sense, it is more interesting to pay attention to Bakhtin's reasoning than to the forced conclusion itself. If one reads the various articles Bakhtin has cited above, his praise here would appear to be somewhat off-target. Most of that literature focuses on Rabelais's humanist views as highly progressive for his time, touts what the authors see as his enmity toward the clergy and religion more generally, and does not make a clear connection with laughter or the comic in his work. Bakhtin chooses to highlight only the content of scholarship that does make such a connection (possibly under the influence of his own work) and only cite, without discussing, the scholarship that does not.

[207] Referring to Rabelais (1961). As the translator, Nikolai Mikhaylovich Lyubimov, recalled later (see Popova 2010a, 552–553), he was familiar with Bakhtin's 1940 manuscript early on and, indeed, had met Bakhtin in person already in the 1940s (Lyubimov was contacted in hopes that he would be able to assist with the book's publication). When working on the translation, Lyubimov consulted both Bakhtin's manuscript (which he states he found very useful) and Bakhtin himself, sharing and discussing drafts of his work.

[208] The earliest known partial translation (the focus of Shishmarev 1928) dates back to 1790. Bakhtin most likely took the information about previous Russian translations from the bibliographical notes in Smirnov (1935, 478). To say that previous translations only included excerpts from Rabelais's novel is somewhat of an overstatement. Thus, the Pyast translation (Rabelais 1938) replaces some of the chapters with brief paraphrases but does cover most of the text. That said, it is typically the elements of the novel that Bakhtin focuses on the most—the long lists, tirades of verbal abuse and obscenity, and so on—that older Russian translations tend to gloss over.

[209] The claim that Rabelais is "nearly untranslatable into foreign languages" was made by Artamonov (1964, 149–150), also in the context of praising Lyubimov's translation. The source of Bakhtin's reference to Veselovsky is unclear. Bakhtin was very well versed in Veselovsky's relevant writings, including some fairly obscure sources (see, e.g., Bocharov and Liapunov 2012, 839–840) and is likely relying directly on his reading of Veselovsky (though I was not able to locate where exactly Veselovsky makes such a claim).

and depth of his laughter-based imagery. It would hardly be possible to overestimate the significance of this event.

2. The Public-square Word in Rabelais's Novel

> I would know whence thou art sprung,
> I would study thy dark tongue.(92)[1]
>
> —A. S. Pushkin

Let us first of all consider precisely those elements of Rabelais's novel that, from the seventeenth century on, were a stumbling block for his admirers and readers, the ones La Bruyère called "delight [for] the rabble" and "filthy depravation" and Voltaire called "impertinence" and "filth." Let us call these elements—provisionally and metaphorically for now—the public-square elements of Rabelais's novel.[2] It was precisely these elements that the Abbé Marsy and the Abbé Pérau meticulously expurgated from the novel in the eighteenth century and George Sand wanted to expurgate in the nineteenth.[3] These elements hinder public readings of Rabelais to this day (even though no author rewards reading aloud more than Rabelais does).

Public-square elements in Rabelais's novel pose difficulties for its readers to this day, and not just for its rank-and-file readers either. It is hard to weave these vulgar public-square elements, organically and in full, into the artistic fabric of the novel. The narrowed-down, limited, and specific sense that these elements have acquired in modern times distorts their correct perception in Rabelais's writings, where their signification was universal and far removed from latter-day pornography. For this reason,

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[1] English translation from Deutsch and Yarmolinsky (1921, 10). Bakhtin added this epigraph in the 1949–1950 revision round. He originally quoted these lines from memory, and the version of the text he remembered was from the 1841 edition of Pushkin's poems, prepared by the poet Vasily Andreevich Zhukovsky (conveniently, that was also the version of the text used by the English translators). Zhukovsky is known to have taken some liberties in his editing process, and, indeed, the second line ("I would study thy dark tongue") significantly differs from the text in Pushkin's manuscript, which is now considered the standard (but would not be a good epigraph for this chapter of Bakhtin's book). The footnote clarifying that this is the Zhukovsky version of Pushkin's text was added in 1965 (see further details in Popova 2010a, 607–608).

[2] As noted in the preface, the Russian adjective *ploshchadny* ("public-square") also implies vulgarity, which is why in some contexts, where the emphasis falls more clearly on the vulgar aspect, I sometimes render it as "vulgar public-square."

[3] See the discussion in chapter 1 above (based on Sainéan 1930, 107; Boulenger 1925, 127–131).

(92) "Verses Written during a Sleepless Night;" the second line is from V. A. Zhukovsky's edition.

Rabelais's admirers and scholars have developed a kind of condescending attitude to this inevitable heritage of the "naive and rude sixteenth century."[4] It is precisely the naively innocent character of this old indecency that is being emphasized, favorably distinguishing it from the new brand of perverted pornography.

In the eighteenth century, the Abbé Galiani expressed this condescension quite wittily: "Rabelais's indecency," he writes, "is naive, it is like a poor man's buttocks."[5]

A similar condescension toward Rabelais's "vulgarity" was displayed by A. N. Veselovsky, only he uses a different, less Rabelaisian, image. He writes:

> *Rabelais is vulgar*, if you will, but as a *healthy village boy* who has been let loose from a smoky hut straight into the spring, so he rushes headlong into puddles, *covering passersby with mud* and laughing merrily when lumps of clay covered his legs and face, ruddy with *springtime, animal merriment.* ("Rabelais and His Novel," p. 241)

This statement by Veselovsky is worth considering in greater detail. Let us, for the moment, take seriously all the elements of this image of the village boy that he depicts and contrast it with the distinguishing features of Rabelais's vulgarity.

First of all, the image that Veselovsky has chosen, of a *village* boy in particular, strikes us as rather infelicitous. Rabelais's vulgarity is essentially connected with the urban public square, with the fairground and the carnival square of the late Middle Ages and of the Renaissance. Further, this is not at all the individual merriment of a boy let loose from a smoky hut but the collective merriment of the popular crowd in the city square. The spring is entirely in place in this image: it is indeed a springtime, or Shrovetide, or Easter laughter. But this is not at all the naive merriment of a raging boy racing "headlong into puddles" but, rather, a folk-festive merriment, whose forms have gradually been shaped over many long centuries. Here, these forms of springtime or Shrovetide merry vulgarity are applied to a historical spring, to the welcoming of a new era (this is also what Veselovsky has in mind). The very image of the boy—that is, of youth, of immaturity and incompleteness—should be qualified as well; this image is only appropriate as a metaphor: it is ancient youth, it is Heraclitus's "playing child."[6] From the historical point of view, Rabelais's "vulgarity" belongs to the most ancient strata of his novel.

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[4] The words "the naive and rude sixteenth century" do not appear to be an actual quotation from any source (we also find references to the same idea but with different wording elsewhere in the book). One interesting place where this approach is expressed directly and succinctly is the translator's preface to the 1901 Russian translation of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by Anna Engel'gardt, who writes about

> The simplicity, not to say rudeness, of opinions in the age, in which Rabelais lived, ... thanks to which he unashamedly calls such things by their own names, of which we remain entirely silent, and finds such phenomena of human life and body comical and worthy of amusing antics, as no longer appear amusing to us, and of which we find it to be simply indecent to speak. (Rabelais 1901, iii)

[5] Boulenger (1925, 71).

[6] Referring to fragment Diels-Krantz 22B52, quoted in Cassirer (1955, 137), which is also used as

Let us go on "nitpicking" Veselovsky's image. His village boy covers the passersby with *mud*. This is a far too euphemistic and modernized metaphor for Rabelais's vulgarity. To cover with mud, to drag through the mud, means to debase or "*to lower*."[7] But grotesque lowering acts had always referred literally to the bodily nethers, to the zone of the genital organs. Hence, what one would have been covered with was not mud but, rather, excrement and urine. This is a fairly ancient lowering gesture, which was the origin for the modernized and euphemistic metaphor of "covering with mud."

We know that human waste played a considerable role in the ritual of the Feast of Fools. During the solemn service sung by the fools' bishop-elect, excrement was used instead of incense inside the temple itself. After the service the clergy sat in carts loaded with excrement; the clerics rode through the streets and threw excrement at the crowd following them.[8]

Bespattering with feces was also part of the ritual of the charivari. A description of a fourteenth-century charivari has reached us in the *Roman de Fauvel*, from which we learn that tossing feces at passersby was practiced then together with another ritual gesture—throwing salt into a well.[(93)9] Scatological liberties (mostly verbal) also play an immense role during the carnival.[(94)10]

In Rabelais's own writings, drenching and drowning in urine play an important role. Let us recall the famous episode in the novel's first book (chapter 17) in which Gargantua soaks the mob of Parisians, who have thronged around him out of curiosity, with his urine. Let us also recall, in the same book, the episode in which Gargantua's mare drowns part of Picrochole's army in her urine at the ford of Vède and the episode with the pilgrims, who had to wade through a stream of Gargantua's urine. Finally, let us recall how, in the second book, Anarchus's camp is flooded by Pantagruel's urine.[11] We shall return to all these episodes later. For now, what is important is merely to

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the epigraph to chapter 3 (and was one of two epigraphs to the entire book in the 1940 version).

[7] Bakhtin plays on a metaphorical sense of "cover with mud" that works well in Russian but does not quite work in English. I used the somewhat similar English expression "drag through the mud" and the word "debase" to make the transition sound more natural in English. More literally, the Russian here would translate as "To cover with mud means '*to lower*.' "

[8] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 225).

[9] Bakhtin's source is Driesen (1904, 105–106), who there cites the commentary provided to the text by Gaston Paris (1898, 146). Bakhtin misunderstands this as a reference to the primary source and reproduces it as such in the footnote. He also reverses the order of the lines in the text as quoted by Driesen (where they follow each other directly).

[10] This footnote was added in 1965, based on an unidentified source. The work Bakhtin is referring to, *Ein Vasnachtspil vom Dreck* (published in Keller 1853, 211–218), dates to the fifteenth century, some decades before Hans Sachs's time.

[11] Respectively, bk. 1, ch. 36 and 38, bk. 2, ch. 28.

(93) See "Roman de Fauvel" in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. 32, p. 146: "L'un getoit le bren au visage ... L'autre getoit le sel au puis"; that is, "One throws crap at the face, the other throws salt into the well."

(94) For instance, Hans Sachs has a Shrovetide *Play about Crap*.

bring to light one of the traditional lowering gestures behind Veselovsky's euphemistic metaphor ("covering with mud").

Human waste being used as a projectile is also known from ancient literature. From the fragments of Aeschylus's satyr play *The Bone Gatherers*, it is clear that it contained an episode in which a "foul-smelling vessel," that is, a chamber pot, was thrown at Odysseus's head.[12] The same event was depicted in Sophocles's lost satyr play, *The Achaeans Dine Together.*[13] Similar episodes are associated with the figure of the *comic Heracles*, of which we can learn from a series of ancient vase paintings: in one place he lies drunk at the door of a hetaera while an old procuress pours the content of a chamber pot over him; in another place he pursues someone with a chamber pot in his hands.[14] Finally, we have a fragment from an Atellan Farce by Pomponius: "Thou Diomedes, hast drenched me in urine" (apparently, an adaptation of an episode from *The Achaeans Dine Together.*)[15]

These examples we produced indicate that slinging excrement and drenching in urine are a traditional lowering gesture, known not only to grotesque realism but to antiquity as well.[16] Its lowering signification was known and understood by all. We can probably find in every language such expressions as "I ... on you." (equivalents are "I spit on you" or "I sneeze on you.") In Rabelais's time, a common expression was "bren pour luy"[17] (Rabelais uses it in the prologue to the first book of his novel). This gesture and the corresponding verbal expression are based on a literal topographical lowering—that is, making one partake in the bodily nethers, the zone of the genital organs. It is annihilation, it is a grave for the one lowered. But all such lowering gestures and expressions are *ambivalent.* After all, the grave they are digging is a *bodily* grave. After all, the bodily nethers, the zone of the genital organs, are the *nethers that fertilize and give birth.* This is also why, in images of urine and feces, an essential link with *birth, fertility, renewal, prosperity* is preserved. And this *positive* aspect was still fully alive and was felt with full clarity in Rabelais's time.

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[12] Dieterich (1897, 63). In the original Greek, the pot is for urine. "Foul-smelling" renders Dieterich's euphemistic description. Throughout this paragraph, Bakhtin follows Dieterich's classifications and identifications of the Greek plays in question, which all survive in fragments.

[13] Dieterich (1897, 64, 113). The title Dieterich cites for the play comes from Athenaeus, who is the source of the fragment in question. This might be a reference to *The Gathering of the Achaeans*, but in Sophocles (1996, 280) the fragment is listed as belonging to the play *Those Who Dine Together* (and the question whether this is the same play as *The Gathering of the Achaeans* remains open).

[14] Dieterich (1897, 65–66).

[15] Dieterich (1897, 112–113). Bakhtin's wording is a bit misleading, as the quote he brings is part of a longer fragment. The quote itself can be translated from the original Latin as referring both to drenching in urine and to drenching in diarrhea.

[16] There is an editing slip here. Bakhtin appears to have mechanically replaced his original term "Gothic realism" with the term "grotesque realism" (in the 1949–1950 revisions) but neglected to make the necessary adjustments to account for the fact that the term "grotesque realism," unlike its precursor, covers grotesque imagery both in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, rather than in the Middle Ages alone.

[17] Cf. Moland (1884, 666).

In the well-known episode with "Panurge's sheep" in the "Fourth Book" of Rabelais's novel, the merchant Dingdong praises his sheep by saying that their urine is endowed with the magic power to increase the fertility of the land, like God's urine.[18] In the "Brief Declaration" ("Briefve déclaration") appended to the "Fourth Book" Rabelais himself (or in any case, a contemporary and a man belonging to the same cultural circle) provides the following comment on this passage:

> "as if the Lord had pissed there" ["si Dieu y eust pissé"]. This is a vernacular expression in Paris and throughout France among the simple folk, who consider all those places to be particularly blessed, where Our Lord had urinated or had made some other natural excretion, for instance of saliva (as in John, 9, "Lutum fecit ex sputo" ["made clay of the spittle."])(95)[19]

This passage is very telling. It indicates that at the time, excretions were inseparably linked with fertility in both folk legend and in the language itself and that Rabelais himself knew of this link and thus made use of it in full awareness. Further, we see that Rabelais did not hesitate to combine the notion of "our Lord" ("notre Seigneur") and "the Lord's blessing" with the notion of human waste, (these notions were already combined in the "vernacular expression" he quotes). He saw no sacrilege in doing so and did not see between these two notions the stylistic abyss that was to open between them for the people of even the seventeenth century.

For the correct understanding of such vulgar public-square carnival gestures and images as the throwing of feces, the drenching in urine, and so on, we must take into account the following point. All such gestural and verbal images are part of a carnival totality, permeated with one and the same image-based logic. This totality is the laughter-based drama of the simultaneous death of the old world and birth of a new one. Each individual image is subordinated to the meaning of this totality and reflects within itself the unitary conception of a world going through a contradictory process of becoming, even where that image appears on its own. In partaking of this totality, each such image is deeply *ambivalent*; it acquires a most essential relation to life-death-birth. Hence, all such images are neither vulgar nor rude in our sense of these words. But these same images (such as, again, the tossing of excrement and drenching in urine), when they are perceived within the system of a more modern worldview, where the positive and negative poles of becoming (birth and death) are torn apart and put in opposition to one another in different incompatible images, really do turn into rude vulgarity, lose their *direct* relation to life-death-birth, and hence lose their ambivalence. Then they capture only the negative aspect, and moreover, the phenomena they signify (such

[18] Bk. 4, ch. 7.

[19] See also Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:486).

(95) See the single volume edition of Rabelais published by L. Moland, *François Rabelais: Tout ce qui existe de ses oeuvres*, Paris, 1884, p. 478.

as feces and urine) acquire a narrow everyday-life, unequivocal meaning (our modern sense of the words "feces" and "urine"). It is precisely in this radically altered form that these images, or more correctly speaking, the corresponding idioms, continue to live in the familiar speech of all nations. Nevertheless, they still preserve a very distant echo of their old philosophical meaning, a faint sense of public-square unfetteredness. Only this, after all, can explain their persistent durability and the fact that these images are so widespread.

Rabelais scholars usually understand and evaluate the vulgar public-square elements in Rabelais in the spirit of their *modern interpretation*, severed from the totality of carnival public-square ritual drama that bears them. They are thus unable to grasp the deep ambivalence of these images.

Let us cite a few more parallel examples confirming that in Rabelais's time, the aspect of rebirth, fertility, renewal, and prosperity was still fully alive and palpable in the images of feces and urine.

In Folengo's *Baldus* (this macaronic work, as is well known, had some influence on Rabelais) there is an episode that takes place *in the underworld*, in which Cingar *resurrects* a youth by drenching him in *urine*.[20]

In the *Admirable Chronicles*[(96)] there is an episode where Gargantua urinates for three months, seven days, thirteen and three-quarter hours and two minutes and thus *begets* the river Rhone, together with seven hundred ships.[21]

Rabelais himself (in the novel's second book) has all the thermal *healing* springs in France and Italy come into being from the hot urine of the ill Pantagruel.[22]

In the "Third Book" of his novel (chapter 17), Rabelais alludes to a myth from antiquity, according to which Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury *created* Orion (from the Greek οὐρεῖν, to urinate) from their urine (Rabelais's source is Ovid's *Fasti*). He makes this allusion in the following interesting form: Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury "officialement ... forgèrent Orion." "Official" is an officer of the Church, but people began using this word—in the spirit of the lowerings typical of familiar speech—to refer to a chamber pot (this usage has been recorded as early as the fifteenth century).[23] We in Russia

[20] Schneegans (1894, 125). The "resurrected" youth only appears dead to Cingar (who, by the way, also defecates in his pants in the same episode).

[21] See Schneegans (1894, 193–201; the episode itself is recounted on p. 200) and possibly also Sainéan (1930, 22) and Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:xxxvii). *The Great Chronicles of Gargantua*, mentioned in the footnote, is a popular anonymous book to which Rabelais latched his "Pantagruel" as a sequel. Bakhtin mentions it in passing several times in the course of the book and discusses it at slightly greater length in chapter 5 below.

[22] Bk. 2, ch. 33.

[23] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:134); Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:409).

[(96)] This is an expanded and modified edition of *The Great Chronicles*. It contains, among other things, multiple borrowings from "Pantagruel." It was probably published in 1534. The author is François Girault.

similarly sometimes call a chamber pot "the general."[24] From this word, Rabelais, with the exceptional freedom of language so typical of him, derived the form "officialement" to denote "from urine" (one could have translated that into Russian as "general-wise" or "in the manner of His Excellency"). The lowering and procreating force of urine are combined in this example in a fairly idiosyncratic way.

Finally, as an analogous phenomenon, we may also mention the famous *Manneken-Pis* in one of the fountains in the city of Brussels. This is an ancient figure of a boy urinating in the open. The people of Brussels consider him to be their "eldest citizen" and associate with his existence the security and prosperity of their city.[25]

One could have given many similar examples. We will return to this theme in due time, based on other Rabelaisian material. For now, the examples above will suffice. The images of urine and feces are ambivalent, as are all the images of the material-bodily nethers: they simultaneously lower and put to death, as well as usher in rebirth and renewal; they are both blessed and humiliating, and inseparably interwoven in them are death and birth, childbirth and death throes.[(97)26] At the same time, these images are inextricably linked to *laughter*. Death and birth appear in the images of urine and feces in their merry, laughter-based aspect. This is why images of human waste, in one way or another, nearly always accompany the merry bogeymen created by laughter as substitutes for the defeated object of fear; this is why images of human waste have indissolubly blended with the image of the underworld. One might say that

[24] This use of the word "general" is not current in Russia today. According to Elistarov (2002), it is attested in Russian argot since the nineteenth century (I am grateful to Keith Nightenhelser for drawing my attention to this point).

[25] Bakhtin, who never travelled outside the USSR, obtained this information from Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 441).

[26] In the footnote, on the "Malbruk theme" see note 103 to the introduction above. On Seneca, the *Apocolocyntosis* is discussed by Reich (1903, 71–72) and Freidenberg (1997b, 283–284), but the episode with Claudius's death while defecating (Seneca 1913, 447) is not mentioned. It is plausible, however, that Bakhtin read the work itself in German translation (Weinreich 1923). This translation was among the books cited by Freidenberg (1997b) and, as Popova (2010a, 574–575) points out, Otto Weinreich's short introductory article contains many parallels to Bakhtin's later analysis of Menippean Satire (Bakhtin 1984, 112–122), which would imply that Bakhtin read it (though other sources may well account for these parallels, in particular Hirzel 1895).

The episodes from Rabelais referred to in the footnote appear in bk. 4, ch. 43 and 17 (where the man dies not because he farted in the emperor's presence but because he feared to do so).

(97) In world literature and especially in anonymous oral literature we may find many examples of the interweaving of death throes and the act of defecation, or of timing the moment of death to coincide with defecation. This is one of the most widespread means of lowering death and the one dying. One may call this type of lowering the "Malbruk theme." Among major literary works, I shall only cite here the remarkable, genuinely Saturnalian, satire by Seneca, *Pumpkinification*, in which Emperor Claudius dies precisely at the moment of defecation. Rabelais himself has several variations on the "Malbruk theme." For instance, the inhabitants of "Windy Island" die while flatulating, and their souls leave the body from between their buttocks. In another passage Rabelais cites the example of a Roman who died because of emitting a certain sound in the presence of the emperor. Such images lower not only the one dying; they lower death itself and make it bodily; they turn it into a merry bogeyman.

human waste is the *laughable* matter and corporality par excellence; it is the most suitable matter for the lowering embodiment of all that is high. This is why human waste plays such a significant role in laughter-based folklore, in grotesque realism, and in Rabelais's novel, as well as in lowering expressions current in familiar speech. But when Victor Hugo says, in connection with the Rabelaisian world, "totus homo fit excrementum,"[27] he ignores the reviving and renewing aspect that the image of human waste carries, an aspect that had already been lost in Europe's literary consciousness by that time.

But let us return to Veselovsky's image of the boy. We now see that the metaphor of "covering with mud" for Rabelais's vulgarity is remarkably infelicitous. It is a metaphor that belongs to the order of abstract morals, whereas Rabelais's vulgarity is a system of grotesque lowerings, analogous to the tossing of excrement and drenching in urine. It is a merry funeral. The system of lowerings, in one or another of their various forms and expressions, permeates the entire novel from beginning to end; it also provides an organizing principle for those of the novel's images that are very far from vulgarity in the narrow sense of the word. All these are but elements of the unitary laughter aspect of the world.

The entire image offered by Veselovsky is exceptionally infelicitous. After all, the thing he depicts as a naive village boy let loose, whom he patronizingly forgives for his spattering of dirt, is none other than folk laughter culture, formed over thousands of years, bearing within itself depths of meaning that are extraordinary and not at all naive. The last thing a culture of laughter and of laughter-based vulgarity can be called is naive, and it has no need of our patronizing toleration. It demands from us attentive study and understanding.[(98)][28]

So far, we have talked about "vulgarity," about "indecencies," and "public-square elements" in Rabelais's novel, but all these terms are provisional and far from adequate for designating what they aim to signify. First of all, these elements are not some isolated factor in Rabelais's novel: they are an integral part of his entire system of images and of his style. These elements have only become isolated and specific for the modern literary consciousness. Within the system of grotesque realism and folk-festive forms they were essential aspects of images of the material-bodily nethers. To be sure, they were unofficial elements, but such too was the folk-festive literature of the Middle

[27] Hugo (1910, 58), quoted in Boulenger (1925, 98).

[28] The quote from Voltaire in the footnote is brought both by Boulenger (1925, 67) and by Sainéan (1930, 109).

[(98)] A typical expression of a disdainfully patronizing attitude toward Rabelais and his time was given by Voltaire (in his *Sottisier*): "We admire Marot, Amyot, and Rabelais, as small children are praised if by chance they happen to say something good. These writers are approved of because their time is despised and children because nothing is expected from their age." These words are highly characteristic of the Enlighteners' attitude toward the past, and toward the sixteenth century in particular. Alas, they are still often repeated, in one form or another, in our time. We must discard once and for all these completely false notions about the sixteenth century being naive.

Ages in its entirely, and such too was laughter. This is why we single out the "public-square" elements only nominally. By these terms, we mean everything that is *directly* linked with the life of the public square, that which bears the mark of public-square *unofficialness and freedom*, but which at the same time cannot be categorized as one of the forms of folk-festive *literature* in the strict sense of this word.

We have in mind, first, certain phenomena of familiar speech—verbal abuse, swearing and oaths, curses—and, second, the speech genres of the public square: the "cris de Paris," vocal advertisement from charlatans and potion sellers and so on.[29] There is no Great Wall separating all these phenomena from folk-festive literary and spectacle genres: they form part of them and often play a leading stylistic role in them. We constantly find them in "dits" (oral poems) and "débats" (debate poems),[30] in diableries, sotties, farces, and other genres. The everyday-life and artistic genres of the public square are often so closely interwoven that it is sometimes difficult to trace a clear boundary between them. Barkers and potion sellers also doubled as actors in performances at fairs; the cris de Paris were composed in verse and sung to a particular tune; the speech style of the traveling-show barker inviting customers to his booth did not differ in the least from the style of book salesmen advertising anonymous popular books (and even the long titles pitching these books are usually composed in the style of public-square advertisement). The public square of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance was one holistic world, where all "performances"—from the loud vulgar squabble to the organized festive spectacle—had something in common, were imbued with the same atmosphere of freedom, candor, and familiarity. Such elements of familiar speech as swearing, oaths, and verbal abuse were fully legalized in the public square and easily penetrated into all the festive genres that gravitated toward the public square (even into Church drama). The public square was the focal point for all that is unofficial; it enjoyed, as it were, extraterritorial rights in the world of the official order and of official ideology, it always remained in the people's "corner." Of course, these aspects of the public square were fully revealed specifically on *feast days*. The dates of the fairs were of special significance. Fairs were usually timed to coincide with feast days but usually lasted for a considerably longer time. For instance, the famous Lyon fair took place four times a year and lasted fifteen days every time.[31] Thus, Lyon led a fairground life, and thus to a significant degree a *carnival* life, for two months out of every year. Even if it was not, strictly speaking, carnival time, a carnival atmosphere always prevailed at the fairs.

Thus, in the Middle Ages and even in the Renaissance, unofficial folk culture had its own special territory—the public square, and its own special time—feast days and

[29] See longer discussions of these topics later in this chapter.

[30] Bakhtin mentions these two genres of medieval French poetry together, in this order, in several places in this book, as well as in Bakhtin 1984, even though the two genres are not particularly related to one another. The two are similarly mentioned in tandem, though in a somewhat different context, by Ilvonen (1914, 1).

[31] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:x); Plattard (1930, 105).

fairs.[32] This festive public square, as we have said several times, is a special second world within the official medieval world. A special type of social interaction prevailed here—unfettered familiarly vulgar public-square interaction. The hierarchical principle of social interaction, etiquette, and the rules of decorum prevailed in palaces, places of worship, institutions, and private homes. The public square was also where one could hear a special kind of speech—*familiar* speech, almost a language of its own, which could not exist in other places and which was sharply distinct from the language of the church, the palace, legal courts, institutions, from the language of official literature, from the colloquial speech of the ruling classes (the aristocracy, the nobility, the upper and mid-ranking clergy, and the top echelons of the urban bourgeoisie), although the elemental force of public-square speech, under certain circumstances, could intrude into this sphere as well. On feast days, especially during carnivals, the elemental force of the public square, to a greater or lesser degree, penetrated everywhere, even into the church (the Feast of Fools, the Feast of the Ass). The festive public square united in itself a great number of major and minor genres and forms, all permeated with one and the same unofficial sense of the world.

In all of world literature there is probably no other work that reflects so fully and deeply all the aspects of folk public-square life as does Rabelais's novel. In it, we hear the voices of the public square at their loudest. But before we start listening to these voices more attentively, we must first sketch the surface-level history of Rabelais's contacts with the public square (to the extent the scant information we have about his biography will allow).

Rabelais had excellent knowledge of the public-square fairground life of his time and, as we shall see, he was able to understand and reflect this life in his novel with exceptional depth and force.

In Fontenay-le-Comte, where Rabelais spent his youth in a Franciscan monastery, and where he was introduced to humanist culture and to the Greek language, he was at the same time being introduced to the special culture and language of the fairground public square. At that time, Fontenay-le-Comte hosted a fair that was famous throughout France. It was held three times a year. A great number of merchants and customers, not only from all over France but also from other countries, gathered in the town. According to Guillaume Bouchet, many foreigners, especially Germans, assembled here. Itinerant hawkers, gypsies, and various déclassé petty criminals, so abundant in those days, also came to Fontenay-le-Comte. We even have a late sixteenth-century source asserting that this town was the birthplace of its own *argot*. Here,

[32] This paragraph was added to the book in 1949–1950 and further edited in 1965. Interestingly, in the 1949–1950 version, this sentence included a reference to Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope (which had not yet been introduced to the public at the time):

Thus, in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, unofficial folk culture had its own special territory—the public square—and its own special time—feast and fair days, its own special "chronotope," as it were—the festive and fairground public square.

Rabelais could observe all that distinctive life of the fairground public square and listen to its voices.[33]

In the next period of his life, Rabelais, who constantly toured the province of Poitou with Bishop Geoffroy d'Estissac, could also observe the fairs of Saint-Maixent and the famous fair of Niort (Rabelais mentions the tumult of that fair in his novel). Generally speaking, the life of the public square, of fairs, and of spectacles in Poitou at that time flourished exuberantly.[34]

Here, in Poitou, Rabelais could also become acquainted with another very important aspect of public-square life—public-square spectacles. It is probably here that he acquired the specialist knowledge about theater scaffolds (les échafauds) that he displays in his novel. Temporary scaffolds for theater performances were put up on the public square itself, and the people crowded in front of them. Mingling in this crowd, Rabelais could attend the staging of mystery plays, morality plays, and farces. The towns of Poitou, such as Montmorillon, Saint-Maixent, Poitiers, and others, were famous for their theatrical productions of this type at precisely that period.[(99)35] Little wonder, then, that Rabelais chose Saint-Maixent and Niort, of all places, as the setting for the anecdote about Villon recounted in the "Fourth Book." From top to bottom, the theatrical culture of France at that time was still entirely connected with the popular public square.[36]

During the next period of Rabelais's life (1528–1530),[37] which has left no documentary record, Rabelais apparently travels and briefly stays at the universities of Bordeaux, Toulouse, Bourges, Orléans, and Paris. Here he familiarizes himself with the life of the student Bohemia.[38] This familiarity grows stronger during the following years, when Rabelais studies medicine at Montpellier.

We have already pointed out the immense significance of school festivities and recreations in the history of medieval culture and literature. By Rabelais's day, the merry recreational literature written by students had already ascended into the major literature of the time and was playing a substantial role in it. This recreational literature was also connected to the public square. Scholastic parodies, travesties, facetiae in Latin,

[33] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:iii; 5:109), Plattard (1930, 16–33), and possibly Moland (1884, x–xv). The fair at Fontenay-le-Comte is also mentioned by Rabelais himself in bk. 3, ch.13.

[34] See Plattard (1930, 39–40). Rabelais mentions the fairs in question in bk. 3, ch. 13 (where he refers to the "tumult" of the Niort fair) and in bk. 4, ch. 13.

[35] The citation in the footnote is taken from Plattard (1930, 40). Both Plattard and (originally) Bakhtin indicate the year of publication as 1900.

[36] See Plattard (1930, 40–42). The episode with Villon appears in bk. 4, ch. 13 (and is discussed in greater detail in chapter 3 below).

[37] Bakhtin skips the years 1524–1527. His main biographical source here, Plattard (1930), focuses these parts of his account on Rabelais's involvement in humanist circles, rather than on topics of interest to Bakhtin in the present context.

[38] Plattard (1930, 75–91).

[(99)] On that point, see H. Clouzot, *L'ancien théâtre en Poitou*, 1901.

and especially in the vernacular, are genetically akin and internally similar to public-square forms. Moreover, many school entertainments took place in the public square itself. Thus, in Rabelais's time, students in Montpellier on the feast of the Epiphany led carnival processions and dances in the public square. The university often produced morality plays and farces outside the campus.(100)[39]

Rabelais himself probably took active part in the student recreations of his time. J. Plattard suggests that during his student years (especially in Montpellier), Rabelais wrote a series of humorous anecdotes, facetiae, witty debates, comical sketches, and has acquired the experience in the forms of merry recreational literature that could explain the unusual rapidity with which "Pantagruel" was created.[40]

In the next period of Rabelais's life, spent in Lyon, his connection to the popular fairground public square becomes even closer and deeper. We have mentioned already the famous Lyon fairs, which occupied, in total, two months a year. Public-square and street life in Lyon—that southern city, which hosted a very large Italian colony—was exceptionally advanced in general.[41] Rabelais himself mentions in the "Fourth Book" the *Lyon carnival*, during which the monstrous figure of the *glutton-gobbler* "Maschecroûte," that typical *merry bogeyman*, was carried in procession. Other contemporary authors attest to the existence of a number of other mass festivals in Lyon, such as the feast of the printers' Maypole, the feast of electing the "workmen's prince," and others.[42]

There was another way in which Rabelais maintained even closer ties to the Lyon fair. In the sphere of book publishing and trade, the Lyon fair was among the world's leading fairs, second only to the famous fair in Frankfurt. Both these fairs were essential hubs for book distribution and literary propaganda. Books were published in time for the fair (summer, autumn, and winter). The Lyon fair determined, to a significant degree, the dates of book publication in France. The publication of new books was always timed to coincide with these fairs.(101) Consequently, these dates also determined the time at which authors submitted their manuscripts to publishers. A. Lefranc made excellent use of the dates of the Lyon fairs to establish the chronology of Rabelais's works. The dates of the Lyon fairs regulated all book production (even

[39] Plattard (1930, 97). The footnote was added in the 1949–1950 revisions, most likely not based on any concrete source (though Lehmann 1922, 36, could be relevant).

[40] Plattard (1930, 98).

[41] Plattard (1930, 105–107).

[42] Plattard (1930, 138). Maschecroûte ("Gnawcrust" in Le Clercq's translation) is mentioned in bk. 4, ch. 59. "Glutton gobbler" renders that monster's name (Plattard has a similar gloss in his text).

(100) This student recreational literature was to a significant degree part of the public-square culture and, in terms of its social character, was close to folk culture and at times even blended with it. Among the anonymous authors of grotesque-realist works (of course especially those of them written in Latin) there were, probably, many current and former students.

(101) Even Goethe's output was, to a certain degree, still regulated by the dates of the Frankfurt fair.

scholarly publishing), but especially, of course, the mass publication of popular books and recreational literature.[43]

Rabelais, who had first published three scholarly works,[44] then became a purveyor of precisely this kind of mass literature and therefore entered into a more intimate relationship with the fairground public square. He now had to take into account not only the dates of the fair, but also its demands, tastes, and tone.

Rabelais publishes almost simultaneously not only his "Pantagruel," which followed directly in the footsteps of the anonymous book *The Great Chronicles of Gargantua*, but also the "Pantagrueline Prognostication," and an almanac for the year 1533. The "Pantagrueline Prognostication" is a merry comic travesty of the *New Year prophecies* popular at that time. This composition (only a few brief pages long) was reprinted in subsequent years.[45]

The second of these two works, the "Almanach," is a popular calendar. Rabelais later published such calendars for the following years as well. In fact, we have evidence (and even a few fragments) of calendars Rabelais prepared for the years 1535, 1541, 1546, and 1550. One can surmise, as, for instance, L. Moland does, that this is not the complete list of calendars published by Rabelais and that he probably brought them out every year, from 1533 on, and was, so to speak, the accredited compiler of popular calendars, "the French Matthieu Laensberg."[46]

Both types of text—the "Prognostics" and the calendars—share a most essential relation *to time, to the new year*, and finally, to the folk-fairground public square.(102)

There is no doubt that also in the following periods of his life Rabelais preserved both a vivid interest in and direct ties to the popular public square in all the aspects of its life, although the scant data we have on his biography do not offer us, in this respect, any positive or interesting facts.(103)[47] But we do have a highly interesting

[43] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:ix–xviii, especially pp. ix–xii). The specific source for the footnote on Goethe is unclear. Bakhtin is most likely recalling information from his extensive study of Goethe a few years before the time of writing (which included a detailed study of Goethe's autobiographical works, primarily Goethe 1891–1894, though book fairs do not appear to be mentioned there).

[44] Plattard (1930, 107–112, 116–118). Rabelais was the editor and translator, but not the author, of all three.

[45] Moland (1884, xxi–xxii), Plattard (1930, 137–138). The connection of "Pantagruel" to the *Great Chronicles of Gargantua* is mentioned in multiple sources (e.g., Plattard 1930, 120–121), including Rabelais's own text (bk. 2, prologue).

[46] Moland (1884, xxi–xxii). Matthieu Laensberg (or Lansbert) was the titular publisher of the *Almanach de Liège*—a popular almanac containing various predictions and the like, published since the seventeenth century. It was still a household name in nineteenth-century France, when Moland was writing his text (though not by 1940, let alone today).

[47] For the footnote, see Moland (1884, xxxviii).

(102) This combination in one person of a serious erudite scholar and a purveyor of fairground carnival literature is a typical phenomenon of that time.

(103) The legend about Rabelais's biography, by contrast, depicts him as a popular public-square carnival figure. According to this legend, his life was filled with all manner of mystifications, travesties,

document dating from Rabelais's last journey to Italy. On March 14, 1549, Cardinal Jean du Bellay organized popular festivities in Rome on the occasion of the birth of a son to King Henry II [of France]. Rabelais attended these festivities and created a detailed description of them, using for this purpose his letters to Cardinal de Guise. This description was published in Paris and Lyon under the title "The Sciomachia and Festivities Given in Rome at the Palace of Monseigneur the Most Reverend Cardinal du Bellay."[48]

At the start of the festivities, a battle was played out in a public square, with dramatic episodes, fireworks, and even casualties, who later turned out to have been *straw dummies*. The festivity had a distinctly expressed *carnivalesque* character, as did all festivities of this kind. The indispensable carnival "hell" was featured here as well, in the form of a balloon ejecting flames. This balloon was referred to as the "mouth of hell" and "Lucifer's head" (see Moland's single-volume edition, p. 599). At the end of the festivities, grandiose feasting was offered to the people, with enormous—totally Pantagruelesque—quantities of sausages and wine.

Such festivities are generally highly typical of the Renaissance. Burckhardt has already shown how great and substantial was the influence of these festivities on the artistic form and worldview of the Renaissance, on the very spirit of that epoch. He did not exaggerate the extent of this influence. In fact it was even far greater than he thought.(104)[49]

Rabelais was not so much interested in the official parade aspect of the festivities of his time as in their popular public-square aspect. It was this aspect that had a defining influence on his work. On the public square he also studied the multifarious forms of folk-comic performance, which was so rich at that time.

Depicting young Gargantua's studies under the guidance of Ponocrates in the novel's first book (chapter 24), Rabelais says:

> Instead of herborizing, they would inspect *the shops of druggists, herbalists and apothecaries*, studiously examining the sundry fruits, roots, leaves, gums, seeds and *exotic unguents* and learning how they could be diluted or adulterated. He viewed *jugglers, mountebanks and medicasters*, carefully observing their tricks and gestures, their agile capers and smooth oratory. His favorites were those from Chauny in Picardy who are born jabberers and the readiest expounders of mealy-mouthed flimflam.

[48] See Plattard (1930, 237–240) and the text in question itself, published in Moland (1884, 592–603), which Bakhtin goes on to quote in the next paragraph.

[49] See Burckhardt (1921, 359–428). Bakhtin is most likely relying on his recollections from a much earlier reading of Burckhardt's classic study. The more critical footnote was added in 1949–1950.

and tomfoolery. L. Moland aptly calls this Rabelais of the legend "un ... Rabelais de carême-prenant," that is, "a Shrovetide Rabelais" (or "a carnival Rabelais").

(104) To be sure, Burckhardt had in mind not so much the popular public-square festivities as the courtly and, more generally, the official festivals of the Renaissance.

This account of young Gargantua's study of public-square life can legitimately be interpreted as autobiographical. Rabelais himself studied all these aspects of public-square life. Let us stress the *proximity*, typical of the Renaissance public square, of *folk spectacle forms to those of folk medicine*, to herbalists and druggists, to the hawkers of miracle ointments of all sorts and to medical charlatans. *There was an ancient traditional connection between the forms of folk medicine and the forms of folk art.* This also explains the combination in one person of the public-square actor and the seller of medical potions. This is why both *the image of the physician* and the medical element in Rabelais's novel are organically linked with this novel's entire traditional system of images. The quotation above correctly demonstrates the immediate adjacency between medicine and the traveling show booth in the public-square life of the time.[50]

Such is the surface-level history of Rabelais's contacts with the public square, based on the rather scant information we have about his biography. How then did the public square enter his novel, how was it reflected in it?

What faces us here first of all is the question of the specific atmosphere of the public square and the *special construction of the public-square word.* We already encounter this question at the very doorstep of Rabelais's novel, in its famous Prologues. Indeed, we began our study of the novel with a chapter devoted to its public-square elements precisely because from the very first lines of the novel's books we already find ourselves within the specific speech atmosphere of the public square.[51]

How is the prologue to "Pantagruel" (which was the first book of the novel to be written and published) constructed?

Here is the beginning of the prologue:

> O most illustrious and most valorous champions, gentlemen and all others who delight in honest entertainment and wit. I address this book to you. You have read and digested the *Mighty and Inestimable Chronicles of the Huge Giant Gargantua. Like true believers you have taken them upon faith as you do the texts of the Holy Gospel.* Indeed, having run out of gallant speeches, you have often spent hours at a time relating lengthy stories culled from these Chronicles to a rapt audience of noble dames and matrons of high degree. On this count, then, you deserve vast praise and *sempiternal memory.*

Here, we see how the eulogy of the *Chronicles of Gargantua* is intertwined with glorifying the people who are enamored with these *Chronicles.* These eulogies and glorifications are composed in the spirit of a traveling-show barker or the hawker of popular books at the fairground, advertising their merchandise: after all, these char-

[50] Cf. the longer discussion of the status of medicine in Renaissance humanism in chapter 5 below (where Bakhtin primarily relies on Lote 1938, 163–178 as a source).

[51] Bakhtin appears to draw on some of the analyses in Plattard (1910, 304–337) throughout this discussion, though with a rather different framing and interpretation.

acters always laud not only the wonders and books they offer, but also the "most illustrious public." This is a typical specimen of the tone and style of a public-square barker's call.[52]

But, of course, these calls are far removed from naive and direct "serious" advertisement. They are filled with folk-festive *laughter*. They *play* with everything they advertise; they also implicate in this unfettered play whatever "sacred" and "exalted" thing turns up and can fit within the flow of words. In our example, the *Chronicles'* fans are compared to "true believers" ("vrais fidèles") who take these *Chronicles* upon faith "as [they] do the texts of the Holy Gospel;" the author considers these fans to be worthy not only of "vast praise," but also of "sempiternal memory" ("mémoire sempiternelle"). Thus, Rabelais recreates that special public-square atmosphere of unfettered and merry play in which the high and the low, the sacred and the profane, become equal in their rights and are all drawn together into one vigorous verbal round dance. Indeed, such has always been the speech of public-square barkers. The demands of speech-related hierarchy and convention (i.e., the speech norms of official interaction) did not apply to it; it enjoyed the privileges of public-square laughter. One should note, by the way, that *folk advertisement* is always *ironic*, always *laughs at itself* to a certain extent (such was also the advertising of colporteurs, peddlers, and others in Russia); in the people's public square, even greed and deceit acquired an ironical and half-candid character. In the medieval public-square and street "cry" ("cri") there was always the sound of laughter, heard at one or another level of loudness.

Let us stress that in the quoted opening segment of the Prologue there are no neutral objective words at all;[53] all the words here express praise: "très illustres," "très chevaleureux," "gentillesses," "honnestetés," "grandes," "inestimables," and so forth (I quote from the original French text). The superlative prevails; in essence, everything here is given in the superlative degree. But it is, of course, not a rhetorical superlative—here everything is ironically and treacherously exaggerated and blown out of proportion—rather, it is the superlative of grotesque realism. It is the reverse side (or rather, the obverse side) of verbal abuse.

In the following paragraphs of the prologue we hear the "cry" of the fairground charlatan-physician and druggist: he lauds the *Chronicles* as an excellent remedy for toothache and offers a prescription for its use: to lay the *Chronicles* between two pieces of warm linen and apply to the painful spot. Such mock prescriptions are among the most widespread genres of grotesque realism.(105)[54] Next, the *Chronicles* are lauded as a remedy to relieve the suffering of those plagued by *venereal disease* and *gout*.

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[52] Cf. Plattard (1910, 309).

[53] This claim connects to a theme Bakhtin develops throughout his writings and further develops with reference specifically to Rabelais in chapter 6. See note 117 in chapter 6 below.

[54] For the footnote, see Lehmann (1922, 235).

(105) Thus, a parodic prescription recommending a remedy for baldness has survived from earlier in the Middle Ages.

Sufferers from gout and venereal disease (syphilis) are very often featured in Rabelais's novel and in the laughter-based literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries more generally. Gout and syphilis are "merry diseases,"[55] which are the result of overindulgence in *food, drink, and sexual life*, and are therefore connected in a most essential way with the material-bodily nethers. Syphilis was still a "fashionable disease" in those days.(106)[56] As to gout, it was already widespread in grotesque realism; we find it as far back as Lucian.(107)[57]

In this part of the prologue we observe the traditional intertwining of medicine and art; but the point here is not the external union of actor and druggist in one person. Rather, a literary work (the *Chronicles*), which entertains and induces laughter, is here directly proclaimed to have healing powers. This proclamation is made with the tone of a fairground charlatan-physician and of a traveling-show barker. Indeed, in the prologue to the "Fourth Book," Rabelais returns to this theme once more and supports the claim about the *healing force of laughter* by citing the teachings of Hippocrates, Galen, Plato, and other authorities.[58]

Having enumerated the merits of the *Chronicles*, Rabelais continues his prologue thus:

> Is this nothing? Then find me a book in any language, in any branch of art and science that possesses such virtues, properties and prerogatives. Find it, I say, and I will buy you a pint of tripes! No, gentlemen, no, none such exists. My book is peerless, incomparable, nonpareil, and unique! I maintain this on pain of anything, up to the stake, *exclusively.* If anyone contra-

[55] An old Russian euphemism for sexually transmitted diseases.

[56] For the footnote, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:46–47) and Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:163–164). See also Sainéan (1930, 20) more generally on the book on *Dame Verolle.*

[57] Lucian's *Tragopodagra*, or *Gout*, is mentioned by Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:365), but this does not appear to be Bakhtin's source, as no information about the dramatis personae is included. Moreover, Bakhtin's list contains a mistake (Lucian has no executioner, but there is a character named Pains or Torments, as well as a messenger). I was not able to locate any edition of Lucian that contains this piece and has a similar error. Bakhtin most likely relied here on his memory from reading Lucian at some earlier time. On Fischart, see Schneegans (1894, 384–387).

[58] Referring to bk. 4, dedicatory epistle.

(106) Syphilis appeared in Europe in the last years of the fifteenth century. It was called the "maladie de Naples." Another vulgar name for syphilis was "gorre," or "grand'gorre." "Gorre" means luxury or pomp, "grand'gorre," means sumptuosity, magnificence, luxury. In 1539 a piece was published under the title *Le Triomphe de très haulte et puissante Dame Verolle*, that is, "The Glorification of the Very Noble and Powerful Lady Vérole" ("vérole", that is, syphilis, is a feminine noun in French).

(107) Lucian wrote a comic tragedy in verse called "Tragopodagra" (its dramatis personae are Gouty Man, Gout, Doctor, Executioner, and Chorus). Rabelais's younger contemporary, Fischart, wrote the *Podagrammisch Trostbüchlein*; there, he offers an ironic glorification of gout, which he views as the consequence of larded idleness. The *ambivalent glorification of a disease* (mostly of syphilis and gout) is, as we said, a very common phenomenon of that period.

> dicts me, let him be herewith denounced as a false prophet, a champion of predestination, a poisoner, and a seducer of the people.[59]

Besides the excessive accumulation of superlatives typical of public-square praise, we find here a characteristic method of comically proving one's truthfulness—a comic pledge and oaths: to the one who can find a book better than the *Chronicles* the author is willing to pay "a pint of tripes" (that is, viscera, guts); he is ready to assert that there is no better book on pain of anything even up to the stake, "*exclusively.*" Parodically ironic pledges and oaths of this kind are typical of public-square advertising.

Let us pay special attention to the "pint of tripes" (with which the author bets). Tripes ("les tripes") figure multiple times in Rabelais, as well as in all the literature of grotesque realism (in its Latin branch, the word "viscera" corresponds to the word "tripes"). In the given context, what Rabelais has in mind is, of course, a *dish.* The stomach and bowels of cattle were thoroughly washed, salted, and fried. Tripes could not be preserved for long, so on slaughtering days they were consumed in excessive quantities and were worth next to nothing.[60] In addition, it was believed that even after the most thorough cleaning, tripe still contained at least ten percent excrement (of the total amount of tripe), which was therefore consumed together with the tripe.[61] This much can be said about "les tripes." We shall encounter this image again in one of the most remarkable episodes in "Gargantua."

But why did the image of "entrails" play such a role in grotesque realism? The entrails, the stomach, the intestines are the *belly*, the *viscera*, the *innards*—this is the very *life* of man. But at the same time, they are the gobbling, devouring viscera. Grotesque realism usually played with this double sense, with, as it were, the *top and the bottom* of this word. We have already quoted Henri Estienne, who showed that in Rabelais's time it was customary to empty a glass of wine into one's mouth, while repeating the words of the penitential psalm: "Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit *in my bowels*" ("in visceribus meis"):[62] after all, the wine flowed into the intestines (viscera). But the matter is even more complex. The entrails and intestines are connected to defecation and excrement. Further, viscera not only eat and devour, but are *also themselves eaten and devoured* (tripe as a dish). In "Palaver of the Potulent" (in the novel's first book) one of the participants in the conversation says to another, as he prepares to drink a glass of wine: "Have you anything to send to the river? That's where tripe is washed,"[63] referring to the tripes he had just eaten as well as to his own viscera. Further, entrails are linked with death, with slaughtering

[59] Bk. 2, prologue (translation modified, based on the Screech translation).

[60] As Rabelais himself explains in bk. 1, ch. 4. See also the more extended discussion of that episode (Gargantua's birth) in chapter 3 below.

[61] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:50).

[62] See footnote on p. 89 and endnote 80 to chapter 1 above.

[63] Bk. 1, ch. 5.

and murder ("to disembowel"[64] means to kill, to cut someone open). Finally, it is linked with birth: the viscera give birth.

Thus, in the image of tripe, *life, death, birth, excrement, and food* are all drawn together and tied into one inseparable grotesque knot; this is *the center of bodily topography, where top and bottom pass into one another.* This is why, in grotesque realism, this image was a favorite means of representing the ambivalent material-bodily nethers, which put to death and give birth, swallow and are swallowed. The "seesaw" of grotesque realism, the play of top and bottom, is strikingly set into motion in this image; top and bottom, heaven and earth, merge. We shall see below what a remarkable laughter-based symphony Rabelais created out of his play with the ambivalent and heterogeneous senses of "tripe" in the early chapters of "Gargantua" (the feast of cattle slaughter, the "Palaver of the Potulent," and the birth of Gargantua).[65]

In our example, the "pint of tripe" as the pledge of the prologue's author means not only something of little worth (the cheapest dish), "crap," but also life, the innards (in the sense of "giving it my all"). This image is ambivalent here as well; it is full of double meaning.

The final part of the quoted passage is also typical. After the praise, the author turns to *verbal abuse* (the reverse of public-square praise): those who view the *Chronicles* differently are branded as "false prophet[s], ... poisoner[s] and ... seducer[s] of the people." All three invective designations were applied especially to persons accused of heresy, to those being sent to be burned at the stake. The play with serious and dangerous subject matter continues here: it was not by accident that the author compared the *Chronicles* to the Bible and the Gospels; like the Church, he now also accuses all those who hold heterodox opinions regarding the *Chronicles* of heresy, with all the attendant consequences. This bold allusion to the Church and Church politics was in this case topical. This can be seen from the other invective term used: "champions of predestination" ("predestinateurs"), which evidently refers to the Protestants who professed the doctrine of predestination.[66]

Thus, the immoderate glorification of the *Chronicles* as the best and most unique book in the world, as well as the glorification of those who read it and believe it, the willingness to sacrifice one's life (in the ironic ambivalent form of "a pint of tripes") for this belief in the unique power of the *Chronicles* to bring salvation, the willingness to defend these convictions on pain of anything up to being burned at the stake (though not inclusively, but exclusively) and, finally, the accusation of heresy against all dissenters—all this, from beginning to end, is a parody of the Church, outside which there is no salvation, the only guardian and interpreter of the word of God (the Gospels). But this risk-laden parody is offered in the form of laughter and merry public-square barkers' calls, the language and style of which is being strictly followed.

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[64] Bakhtin uses the Russian argot expression *vypustit' kishki* (literally "to let the intestines out").

[65] Bk. 1, ch. 4–7. Again, see the detailed analysis in chapter 3 below.

[66] Specifically to Calvinists; cf. Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:7).

Thus, such a parody could pass without punitive repercussions. The traveling-show barker would not be accused of heresy, no matter what he might prattle, provided he strictly kept to a merry fool's tone. Rabelais keeps to it. The laughter aspect of the world was legalized. Thus, Rabelais is also not afraid, a few lines later, to openly declare that more copies of the *Chronicles* were sold within two months than Bibles had been sold in nine years.[67]

Let us move on to the end of the prologue. It ends in *a torrent of vulgar public-square curses and abuse* hurled both at the author himself, if there is a single lie in his book, and at those who will not believe him. Here is this ending:

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

This sequence of vulgar public-square abuse, which concludes the prologue, is highly typical. Typical, first of all, is the very transition from excessive public-square praise to similarly excessive annihilating curses. Such a transition is perfectly true to form. Public-square praise and public-square invective are like two sides of the same coin. If the obverse is praise, the reverse is invective, and vice versa. The public-square word is a two-faced Janus. Public-square praise, as we have seen, is ironic and ambivalent. It lies on the border of invective: praise is pregnant with invective, and it is impossible to draw a clear boundary between them; one cannot point out where one ends and the other begins. Public-square invective has the same character. Even though within language, praise and invective are distinct, in public-square speech they belong, as it were, to some kind of unitary but double-bodied body, which is subjected to invective while being praised and is being praised while invective is hurled at it. Thus, in familiar public-square speech, words of invective (especially indecent ones) are so often used in an affectionate and praiseful sense (we shall analyze many examples of this from Rabelais below). In the final account, grotesque public-square speech (particularly its most ancient strata) was oriented toward the world and toward each of this world's phenomena in a state of unfinished metamorphosis, in a state of transition from night to morning, from winter to spring, from the old to the new, from death to birth. Consequently, this speech showers both praise and invective, which relate, to be sure, not to one and the same phenomenon, but also not to two distinct ones. Although our example does not, perhaps, express this with sufficient clarity, its ambivalence raises

[67] Bk. 2, prologue. Rabelais makes the comparison to future, not past, sales of the Bible.

no doubt: ambivalence determines both the organic nature and the immediacy of the transition from praise to invective and back again, as well as the somewhat indistinct identity of the addressee of this praise and invective, a certain sense that this addressee was "not yet fully-formed."(108)[68]

We shall return to this merger of praise and invective in the same word and in a single image in chapter 6 of this study. This phenomenon is exceptionally important for understanding entire major stages in the development of humanity's image-based thinking in the past, yet it has been the subject of neither insight nor study to date. For the time being, let us make the preliminary and somewhat simplified remark that this phenomenon is based on the notion of the world as never fully formed, as dying and being born at the same time, as a double-bodied world. The double-toned image, combining praise and invective, seeks to capture the very moment of succession, the very transition from the old to the new, from death to birth. Such an image decrowns and crowns at the same time. Under the conditions of class society's development, such a sense of the world can only be expressed in unofficial culture, while in the culture of the ruling classes there is no place for it: here, praise and invective are clearly sharply divided and static, for official culture is founded on the principle of a static and unchanging hierarchy, in which the higher and the lower never merge. This is why the combination of praise and invective is absolutely alien to the tone of official culture. Conversely, this merger is extremely characteristic of the idiosyncratic tone of folk public-square culture. The distant echoes of ancient double-tonedness can still be heard even in the familiar speech of our present time. Since the folk culture of the past has not been studied, the phenomenon of merger between praise and invective has not been brought to light. But let us return to our prologue.

The content of the public-square curses being used is also typical. Nearly all of them present the human body in a particular aspect. The first, directed at the author himself, is of an anatomizing, body-dismembering nature: the author gives himself up to the devils whole—body and soul, belly and bowels. We encounter once more the "tripes" and "boyaulx," which mean one's life and the innards of one's body (as in "I give myself up whole, guts and all").

[68] The footnote was added in 1964–1965. The last few sentences of the paragraph, as well as the entire next paragraph, were added in 1949–1950.

(108) This many-faced addressee, *most proximately*, is the public-square fairground crowd that surrounds the traveling show booth's platform; it is the many-faced reader of the *Chronicles*. It is this many-faced addressee that praise and invective are showered on: after all, some of the readers are representatives of the old, dying world and worldview—agelasts (that is, people who do not know how to laugh), hypocrites, slanderers, agents of darkness—while others are the representatives of the new world, of light, of laughter, and of truth; but they all form one crowd together, *one people, dying and being renewed*; and it is this *one* people that is being *both glorified and cursed simultaneously*. But this is only the most proximate interpretation, while *further out*, beyond the crowd, beyond the people, there is *the whole world, not fully formed and incomplete*, which gives birth in dying and is born so as to die.

Of the seven curses directed at the skeptical listeners, five call down diseases upon them: (1) Saint Anthony's fire, (2) epilepsy, ("mau de terre vous vire"), (3) ulcers of the feet and lameness ("le maulubec vous trousque"), (4) bleeding diarrhea ("caquesange vous viengne"), and (5) erysipelatous inflammation of the anus ("le mau fin feu ... vous puisse entrer au fondement").

Curses of this kind offer a grotesque image of the body: they burn it, hurl it to the ground ("mau de terre"), cripple the legs, call forth defecation, afflict the buttocks; in other words, they turn the body inside out, make its nether parts stick out. Curses are always characterized by being *directed to the nethers*, in this case—to the earth, the legs, the buttocks.

The last two of the seven curses are also directed to the nethers: (1) "may lightning strike you dead" (falling from top to bottom) and (2) "may you vanish into a watery abyss of brimstone and fire"—in other words, may you tumble down into the underworld.[69]

All these curses are formulated in traditional ways that were in current use. One of them is in Gascon ("le maulubec vous trousque," which we find more than once in Rabelais's novel), another, judging from the refrain and assonances (in the original French text), is a fragment of some popular street ditty.[70] In many of these terms of abuse, the bodily topography is combined with a cosmic one (lightning, the earth, brimstone, fire, the ocean).

This series of curses at the end of the prologue brings it to a very dynamic culmination. This is a strong and abrupt lowering gesture, the descent of the grotesque seesaw all the way down to earth before it comes to a stop. Rabelais usually concludes either with verbal abuse or with an invitation to feasting and drinking.

This is how the prologue to "Pantagruel" is constructed. From beginning to end, it keeps strictly to the style and tones of the public square. We hear the "cry" of the traveling-show barker, the charlatan physician, the hawker of miracle drugs, the salesman of anonymous popular books, and finally, we hear vulgar public-square curses, which follow in succession after ironic advertising praise and ambiguous glorification. The tone and style of this prologue are thus structured by the everyday-life advertising genres of public-square life and by the speech genres of familiar public-square interaction. The word of this prologue is a "*cry*," that is, the loud public-square word uttered in the midst of a crowd, coming out of the crowd, and addressed to the crowd.

[69] Rabelais's actual text says nothing about lightning, nor about the ocean or the *watery* abyss, but Lyubimov's translation, which Bakhtin quoted earlier, does include a reference to both (probably in order to mimic the rhyming pattern found in the French original). Perplexingly, Bakhtin also has a reference to lightning (with a slightly different wording) in the corresponding place in the 1940 manuscript, long before Lyubimov's translation was published (earlier Russian translations do not mention lightning). One possibility is that Bakhtin read a reference to lightning into the French word "ricqueracque," which literally means "zigzag" (as noted by Sainéan 1922–1923, 2:308–9, who, however, explicitly claims this is a reference to a sexually transmitted disease, not to lightning). The zigzag shape can sometimes be referred to as a "lightning" in Russian.

[70] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:17; 3:10–11) and Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:193, 195).

The speaker is in solidarity with the public-square crowd; he does not contrast himself with it, nor does he teach it, denounce it, or intimidate it; he *laughs* together with it. There is not the slightest tone of morose seriousness, of fear, of reverence, or of submission, infiltrating his speech. This is absolutely merry, fearless, unfettered, and candid speech, which is heard freely in the festive public square beyond any kind of prohibitions, limitations, and conventions applying to speech.

At the same time, however, this entire prologue is a parodic travesty of ecclesiastical methods of persuasion. Behind the *Chronicles* stands the Gospel; behind the excessive glorification of the *Chronicles* as the book outside which there is no salvation stands the exclusiveness of the Church's truth; behind the public-square invective and curses stand the Church's intolerance, intimidation, and autos-da-fé. This is Church policy translated into the language of merry and ironical public-square advertising. But the prologue is both broader and deeper than the usual grotesque parodies. It travesties the very foundations of medieval thought, the very methods of establishing truth and convincing, which are inseparable from fear, violence, morose and one-sided seriousness, and intolerance. The prologue leads us into a completely different, contrary, atmosphere—the atmosphere of fearless, unfettered, and merry truth.

The prologue to "Gargantua" (that is, to the novel's second book, in chronological order) is constructed with greater complexity. The public-square word is here combined with elements of bookish humanist learnedness and with a retelling of an episode from Plato's *Symposium*. But the public-square word and the intonations of praise-invective still retain their leading role here as well, only more subtly and variedly nuanced and applied to a richer material of themes and topics.

The prologue starts with an emblematic address: "Hail, O most valiant and illustrious drinkers! Your health my precious and pox-ridden comrades ..." ("Beuveurs très illustres et vous Véroles très précieux"). This address immediately sets a public-square familiar tone for the entire conversation with the reader that follows (or more precisely, the conversation with the listener, since the language of the prologues is that of oral speech).

Invective and praise are mingled in these terms of address. The positive superlative is combined with the semi-invective words, "drinkers" and "pox-ridden comrades." This is invective praise and praiseful invective, typical of familiar public-square speech.

Further on, too, the entire prologue from beginning to end is constructed as a familiar public-square conversation between that same traveling-show barker and the audience crowding around the makeshift stage. We constantly encounter such appeals as "you would not have given an onion skin for him," "open this box, and you will find," "my beloved disciples, and ... other idlers and idiots," "Have you ever uncorked a bottle of wine?" and so on.[71] The familiar public-square tone of all these appellations to the listeners is absolutely obvious here.

[71] Bk. 1, prologue, translation modified.

In what comes next, we also find, scattered throughout the prologue, straightforward terms of abuse addressed to third persons: "witless ... Friar Jobbernowl, a true glutton for bacon and misinformation"; "a certain sorry clown"; "a third-rate cynic"; "some grouser."[72]

Familiar affectionate invective and outright verbal abuse structure the speech dynamics of the entire prologue and determine its style. Close to the beginning of the prologue we are presented with the image of Socrates as depicted by Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*. Alcibiades's simile, comparing Socrates to Sileni, was very popular among the humanists in Rabelais's time: Budé uses this simile; Erasmus cites it in three of his works, one of which ("The Sileni of Alcibiades") was, apparently, Rabelais's immediate source (although he was also familiar with Plato's *Symposium*).[73] However, Rabelais subordinated this theme, recurrent among the humanists, to the speech style of his prologue: he emphasized more intensely the combination of praise and invective in this theme.

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

> Well, Alcibiades likened Socrates to these boxes [the Sileni], because, judging by his exterior, you would not have given an onion skin for him. He was ill-shaped, ridiculous in carriage, with a nose like a knife, the gaze of a bull and the face of a fool. His ways stamped him a simpleton, his clothes a bumpkin. Poor in fortune, unlucky when it came to women, hopelessly unfit for all office in the Republic, forever laughing, forever drinking neck to neck with his friends, forever hiding his divine knowledge under a mask of mockery.
>
> Yet had you opened this box, you would have found in it all kinds of priceless, celestial drugs: immortal understanding, wondrous virtue, indomitable courage, unparalleled sobriety, unfailing serenity, perfect assurance and heroic contempt for whatever moves humanity to watch, to bustle, to toil, to sail ships overseas and to engage in warfare.

As far as content is concerned, we have no major deviations from the prototype (i.e., from Plato and Erasmus), but this contrast, drawn between Socrates's exterior and interior countenance, has become more familiar in tone: the choice of words and expressions used to describe Socrates's exterior and their very agglomeration bring this description closer to the invective sequence, to Rabelais's usual piling up of verbal abuse. We sense behind this verbal sequence the hidden dynamics of invective abuse. The description of Socrates's inner qualities is similarly enhanced in the direction of praiseful glorification: this is a piling up of superlatives. Behind this verbal sequence

[72] Bk. 1, prologue; the last term of abuse comes from the Screech translation (both Urquhart and Le Clercq give no English equivalent).

[73] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:6–7).

we sense the hidden dynamics of public-square praise. That said, this invective-praise has a fairly strong rhetorical element.

Let us note one very telling detail: according to Plato (in the *Symposium*), "Sileni" are sold in sculpturers' shops, and if opened, they reveal the picture of a god. Rabelais transfers the "Sileni" to the stores of apothecaries, which, as we know, young Gargantua visited when studying the life of the public square, and found within these Sileni are various precious substances, among them a popular remedy, a powder made out of precious stones to which healing powers were ascribed. The list of these substances (which we will not be quoting) acquires the character of loud public-square advertisement by apothecaries and charlatan physicians, which was so common in the public-square life of Rabelais's time.[74]

All the other images of this prologue are likewise permeated with a public-square atmosphere. Everywhere we sense public-square praise-invective to be the basic moving force behind the whole of Rabelais's speech, determining its tone, style, and dynamics. There are almost no objective words—that is, words neutral to praise and invective—in the prologue. We find the advertising-type comparative and superlative everywhere. For instance, "how much more reconciling, smiling and beguiling wine is than oil" or "these fine, full-flavored volumes." In the first case we hear the public-square and rhythmic street advertisement of the vendor; in the second case the epithet "full-flavored" is similarly an advertising description of the supreme quality of venison and meats. Everywhere we hear the "cry" of the public square that young Gargantua studied under the guidance of wise Ponocrates, with its "shops of druggists, herbalists and apothecaries," with its "exotic unguents," with the "tricks" and "oratory" of the people from Chauny, "the readiest expounders of mealy-mouthed flimflam."[75] All the images of the new humanist culture, so abundant in this prologue, are immersed in the atmosphere of the public square.

Let us quote the end of the prologue:

> And now, my hearties, be gay, and gayly read the rest, with ease of body and in the best of kidney! And you, donkey-pizzles, hark!—May a canker rot you!—Remember to drink to me gallantly, and I will counter with a toast at once.

As we see, this prologue ends on a note somewhat different from that of the prologue introducing "Pantagruel": Instead of a string of public-square curses, we have here an invitation to read with merriment and drink heartily. Still, there are curses and verbal abuse here too, but they are used to signify affection. The very same persons are addressed with "my hearties" ("mes amours"), with the term of abuse "donkey-pizzles" ("viédazes"), and with the already familiar Gascon curse "le maulubec vous trousque."

[74] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:3–5).

[75] Bk. 1, ch. 24.

These concluding lines of the prologue exhibit the entire Rabelaisian complex, expressed in the most elementary fashion: the merry word, the indecent term of abuse, and feasting. But this is also the simplest festive expression of the ambivalent material-bodily nethers: laughter, food, sexual potency, praise-invective. Thus concludes this prologue.

The dominant images of the entire prologue are images of *feasting*. The author eulogizes wine, which is in all respects better than oil (oil being the symbol of sanctimonious wisdom and awe, while wine is the symbol of free and merry truth). Most of the epithets and similes applied by Rabelais to spiritual things have what one might call an "edible character." Indeed, he states explicitly here that he writes his pieces only while eating and drinking, and adds:

> Is that not the proper time to commit to the page such *sublime* themes and such *profound* wisdom? Homer the paragon of all philologists, knew it perfectly well and Ennius also, the father of the Latin poets....

Finally, the central theme of the prologue—inviting the readers to seek the hidden meaning of Rabelais's works—is likewise expressed through images of eating, of crushing food with one's teeth, and of devouring: the author likens this hidden meaning to bone marrow and depicts a dog, who cracks open a bone with its teeth, finds the marrow in it, and then devours it. This image of *devouring the hidden meaning* is extremely typical of Rabelais and of the entire system of folk-festive images. Here we merely touch on it in passing. We shall devote a chapter specifically to images of feasting in Rabelais's novel.

The public-square word also plays a leading role in the prologue to the "Third Book," the most remarkable and thematically rich of all of Rabelais's prologues.

This prologue starts with an address: "Good people, most illustrious topers and you, thrice-precious gouty gentlemen, I wonder if you ever saw Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher?" The rest of the prologue also unfolds in the form of a familiar public-square conversation with the audience, full of images of feasting, elements of folk comedy, puns, slips of the tongue, and verbal travesties. This is the talk of the traveling-show barker introducing a performance. J. Plattard is absolutely correct in defining this introduction thus: "This is the tone of a barker, which justifies the coarsest jokes" (in his commentary to the scholarly edition of Rabelais edited by A. Lefranc).[76]

The prologue to the "Third Book" ends with public-square invective that is astonishing in its liveliness and dynamism. The author invites his audience to drink by the bowlful from his barrel, as inexhaustible as a cornucopia. But he invites only good people, lovers of wine and merriment who know how to drink. As to the others—parasites and pedants, pettifoggers and scribblers, holier-than-thou hypocrites—he chases them away from his barrel:

[76] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:5).

> Back, curs, to heel! Out of my way, back from the barrel, out of the sunlight, you scum of the devil! Away, hypocrites and sham Abrahams! How dare you come here, arsing and parsing, mumbling for my wine and then bepiddling my barrel? Look out! here is the stuff Diogenes willed to be laid beside him after death so he might exterminate such bustuary hobgoblins, and Cerberian hell-hounds as yourself. To your flock, mastiffs; fly hence, buzzards, by all the devils of hell!
>
> What you are still here? By God, for my part, if I stomach you, let me surrender my share of Paradise—yes, my share of Papimany, the Pope's temporal possessions! Grrrrrrr! Grrrrr! Kssssss! Kssss! Away, away with them! Are they not yet gone?
>
> May you never contrive a shit without first being lambasted with stirrup-straps, may you never squeeze out a piddle without being previously strappadoed, and may you never know bodily heat save that induced by the cudgel![77]

The abuse and blows have a more definite addressee here than in the "Pantagruel" prologue. This collective addressee is composed of the representatives of the old truth, of the medieval worldview, of "Gothic darkness."[78] They are somberly serious and hypocritical. They are the bearers of underworld darkness, "bustuary hobgoblins, and Cerberian hell-hounds," and therefore block the sun.[79] They are the enemies of the new, unfettered, and merry truth, represented here by the barrel of Diogenes turned wine barrel. They dare to criticize this wine of merry truth and to urinate into the barrel. Rabelais has in mind here agelasts reporting to authorities on the merry truth, their slander, and persecutions. Rabelais offers an interesting form of invective here. These enemies have come to "culletans articuler mon vin."[80] The word "articuler" means "to criticize," "to accuse," but Rabelais also hears within it the word "cul," (buttocks), giving it an invective, lowering character. It is precisely in order to turn the word "articuler" into a term of abuse that he tunes it in to the "cul" wavelength: for that purpose he places before it the word "culletans" ("wiggling one's buttocks"). In the last chapter of "Pantagruel" Rabelais uses this method of invective in a more elaborate form. He speaks there of the hypocritical monks who spend their time reading "Pantagrueline books" not to pass their time merrily but, rather, in order to report these books to authorities and slander them, and explains, "scavoir est arti*cul*ant, monarti*cul*ant,

[77] Bk. 3, prologue, translation modified (based on Urquhart).

[78] See note 92 in chapter 1 above.

[79] Alluding both to Rabelais's text ("out of the sunlight") and to the most famous anecdote associated with the cynic philosopher Diogenes (his purported request from Alexander the Great to move away, because he blocks the sun), to which, in turn, Rabelais himself was probably alluding.

[80] Le Clercq renders this as "arsing and parsing ... for my wine."

torti*cul*ant, *cul*letant, couilletant et diabli*cul*ant, c'est à dire calumniant."(109)[81] Thus, ecclesiastical censorship (referring to the censorship of the Sorbonne),[82] that calumny against merry truth, is cast down into the bodily nethers, to the buttocks ("cul") and the reproductive organs ("couilles"). In the lines that immediately follow, Rabelais further deepens this grotesque lowering, likening the ecclesiastical censors to the brutish village clods who in cherry season stir up the ordures of little children to find cherry kernels to sell.

Let us return to the conclusion of the prologue. Its dynamism is still further increased by the traditional call of shepherds setting their hounds on predators attacking their flocks (reproduced as "Grrrrrrr! Grrrrr! Kssssss! Kssss!").[83] The last lines of the prologue are a stark invective lowering. In order to express the utter dullness and fruitlessness of these gloomy slanderers of the wine of merry truth, the author declares that they are unable even to urinate, defecate, or be sensually aroused unless they are beaten up first. In other words, they can only become productive if triggered by fear and suffering (in the original text, "sanglades d'estivières" and "l'estrapade"—terms for torture and public-square whipping). This masochism of the gloomy slanderers becomes here a grotesque lowering of *fear and suffering*, those two leading categories of the medieval worldview.[84] The image of defecation induced by fear is a traditional form of lowering not only the coward, but fear itself: it is one of the most important variants of the "Malbruk theme." Rabelais develops it in detail in the episode that was the last he was to write himself—the concluding episode of the "Fourth Book."[85] Panurge, who by the last two books of the novel (especially in the "Fourth Book") has become a pious and cowardly man, was frightened by mystic fantasies. He mistook a cat in a dark ship storeroom for a devil and soiled his pants from fear. Thus, the mystical vision born out of fear has turned into a goodly pile of excrement. Rabelais immediately offers a medical analysis of this phenomenon:

> The retentive faculty of the nerve which restrains the muscle called sphincter (arsehole to you!) had slackened before the violence of Panurge's terror

[81] Bk. 2, ch. 34. Bakhtin's original footnote quotes from Lyubimov's Russian.

[82] The Sorbonne (i.e., the theology faculty at the University of Paris) as Rabelais's central antagonist is a recurrent theme in the Rabelais scholarship of Lefranc and his associates. See, e.g., Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:xviii ff.) and Plattard (1930).

[83] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:25). Bakhtin quotes the original French: "gzz, gzzz, gzzzzzz."

[84] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:25).

[85] Bakhtin apparently takes it for granted that bk. 4 was written in the same order as it reads (and that no part of bk. 5 was written by Rabelais himself, as argued by Plattard 1930, 270–284). No attempt to arrange the different parts of bk. 4 in the order in which they may have been written can be found in the literature Bakhtin had at his disposal.

(109) The [English] translation [by Le Clercq] of this passage is "fouling and befouling, by twiddling their dry fingers and fingering their dry twiddlers, by twisting wry necks, by bumming, arsing and ballocking, by devilscutting, in a word by calumniating." An adequate translation of this passage is, of course, utterly impossible.

during his fantastic visions. Add to this the thunder of the cannonade, always more dreadful between decks than above, and you need not wonder at Panurge's distress.

One of the symptoms and mishaps of fear is that it usually opens the back door of the rotunda where fecal guests await their turn to emerge. (book 4, chapter 67)

Rabelais then tells the story of Pantolfe de la Cassina of Siena, who suffered from constipation and asked an innkeeper to frighten him with a pitchfork, following which he relieved himself excellently. He tells another story about François Villon, who praised King Edward of England[86] for having painted the French royal arms, which inspired fear in him, in his privies. The king thought that he was thus humiliating France, but in fact, the sight of that frightening coat of arms helped him to relieve himself (this is an ancient tale, which reached us in several variants, dating from the thirteenth century and referring to different historical personages).[87] In all these anecdotes fear serves as a remedy for constipation.

Such lowering of suffering and fear is an extraordinarily vital element in the general system of lowerings directed at medieval seriousness, permeated with fear and suffering. Indeed, all of Rabelais's prologues are also, in essence, devoted to this lowering of somber seriousness. We saw that the prologue to "Pantagruel" parodically travestied the medieval methods of truth, which assumed no salvation outside of their doctrine, in the merry language of public-square advertising. The prologue to "Gargantua" lowers the "abstruse doctrine," the "agonizing problems," the "deepest mysteries" of religion, politics, and economics, by transferring them onto the feasting plane of eating and drinking. Laughter should free the merry truth about the world from the veils of gloomy lies spun by the seriousness of fear, suffering, and violence, which obscure it.

The theme of the "Third Book's" prologue is similar. It is the defense of merry truth and of the right to laughter. It is a lowering of gloomy and slanderous medieval seriousness. The concluding scene of abuse and the chasing away of obscurantists, played out next to Diogenes's barrel of wine (the symbol of merry and unfettered truth) brings all these lowerings to a dynamic culmination.

It would be totally wrong to think that the Rabelaisian lowering of fear and suffering through their reduction to human waste is rude vulgarity. We must not forget that the image of human waste, like all the images of the material-bodily nethers, is ambivalent, that the element of reproductive potency, of birth, and of renewal was alive and perceivable in it. We have already adduced evidence to prove this. We find further substantiation here as well. Speaking of the "masochism" of the gloomy slan-

[86] Rabelais (bk. 4, ch. 67) identifies the king as Edward V. The historical Edward V spent less than three months on the throne as a child, some years after François Villon's death, so the intended reference (if any actual reference was intended) may have been to his father, Edward IV (with perhaps a hint at the English monarch at the time Rabelais was writing, Edward VI).

[87] Plattard (1910, 335–336).

derers, Rabelais places sexual arousal—that is, the ability to perform the reproductive act—alongside defecation.[88]

At the end of the "Fourth Book" Panurge, who defecated under the influence of mystical fear and was laughed at for this by his companions, having finally freed himself of this fear and having entered a merry state of mind, utters the following words:

> Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho! What the devil is this? ... Do you call this ordure, ejection, excrement, evacuation, dejecta, fecal matter, egesta, copros, scatos, dung, crap, turds? Not at all, not at all: it is but Hibernian saffron. Selah! Let us drink.[89]

These are the last words of the "Fourth Book," and essentially the last words of the entire novel, that were written by Rabelais's own hand. Here, we find fifteen synonyms for excrement,[90] ranging from the most vulgar to the scientific. At the end excrement is declared to be "Hibernian saffron," that is, something wholly precious and pleasant.[91] And this tirade ends with an invitation to drink, which in the language of Rabelaisian imagery means to enter into communion with the truth.

This reveals the ambivalence of the image of excrement, its connection with rebirth and renewal and its special role in overcoming fear. Excrement is *merry matter*. In the most ancient scatological images, as we have said, it is linked to reproductive potence and to fertility.[92] At the same time, *excrement is conceived of as something intermediate between earth and body*, as something making them *akin* to one another. Excrement is also intermediate between the living body and the dead body—decomposing, turning into earth, into *manure*; the body gives excrement to the earth while it is alive; *excrement fertilizes the earth, as does the body of the dead man*. Rabelais was still able to clearly sense these nuances in what excrement signifies and be aware of them. And, as we shall see later, these nuances were not alien to his medical views either. Moreover, as an artist and an heir to grotesque realism, he conceived of *excrement* as *merry and sobering matter, at the same time both lowering and affectionate, combining in itself the grave and birth in their most lightened up and unscarily-laughable form.*

Hence, there is and can be nothing grossly vulgar in Rabelais's scatological images (nor in other similar images of grotesque realism). The slinging of feces, the drenching in urine, the barrage of scatological abuse hurled at the old and dying world (which

[88] This is implicit in the English translation (of Rabelais's English translators, Screech comes closest to spelling the implicit meaning out: "and never get it up except through a good cudgeling"), as it is in the original French. Lyubimov's Russian translation, which Bakhtin quoted earlier, explicitly speaks of arousal.

[89] Bk. 4, ch. 67, translation modified.

[90] There are fifteen synonyms in the French original. The English translation has fewer.

[91] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:301) suggests that Rabelais here plays on the similarity in sound between "Hibernie" (Ireland) and "bren" (crap).

[92] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 295).

at the same time is also giving birth) is its *merry burial*, fully analogous (but on the plane of laughter) to the tossing of affectionate clumps of earth onto a grave or to sowing—the tossing of seeds into the furrow (the earth's *womb*). With respect to the gloomy, bodiless medieval truth, this makes it merrily bodily, laughingly earthy.

All this should not be forgotten while analyzing the scatological images that are so abundant in Rabelais's novel.

Let us return to the prologue of the "Third Book." As yet, we have touched only on its beginning and its end. It begins with the public-square "cry" of the traveling-show barker and ends with public-square invective. But these already familiar public-square forms are not yet all we have here. The public square here reveals another, very essential, aspect. We hear the voice of the market-place herald announcing mobilization, siege, war, and peace, summoning all estates and guilds. We see the historic face of the public square.

The central image of the third prologue is Diogenes and his behavior during the siege of Corinth. Rabelais apparently borrowed this image directly from Lucian's treatise *How to Write History*, but he was also fully familiar with the Latin translation of this episode given by Budé in his dedication to the *Annotations on the Pandects*.[93] But this brief anecdote has been completely transformed in Rabelais's hand. It is full of allusions to contemporary events connected to the struggle of France against Charles V and the defensive measures undertaken in Paris. These measures taken by the citizens are described in every detail. There is the famous enumeration of defensive engineering works and armaments. This is the richest listing of military items and armaments in world literature. For instance, there are thirteen terms for swords alone, eight for lances, and so on.[94]

This enumeration of various types of weaponry and defenses is of a specific sort. It is a *loud public-square nomenclature*. Examples of such nomenclature can be found in the literature of the late Middle Ages, especially in mystery plays, including, in particular, long listings (nomenclatures) of armaments. Thus, in the *Mystery Play of the Old Testament* (fifteenth century), Nebuchadnezzar's officers, in the course of an inspection of the troops, make a list of armaments and name forty-three different types of weapons.

In another mystery play, *The Passion of St. Quentin* (from the late fifteenth century), which is overall very rich in nomenclatures of various sorts, the leader of the Roman troops gives a similar listing of forty-five types of weapons.[95]

These are folk public-square enumerations. This is an inspection and display of armed forces intended to impress the people. Similar nomenclatures, by heralds, of

[93] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:7). The reference is to a paragraph in Lucian (1959, 5).

[94] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:7–14), Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:68), Plattard (1930, 179–180).

[95] On both lists, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:66–68). Sainéan claims that the *Mystery of the Old Testament* lists fifteenth-century armaments but does not date it as belonging to that time (it probably dates to around 1500). On the *Passion of St. Quentin*, Sainéan mentions other lists found in that play elsewhere in his book.

various kinds of weapons and regiments (banners) were made as part of a call to arms and troop mobilization and when setting out for a campaign (see Picrochole's call to arms in Rabelais's novel).[96] Similar to these were also the listing of the names of soldiers receiving an award or killed in battle and so on. These are all loud, solemn, monumental nomenclatures, meant to impress with the very number of names and titles listed, with their very length (as in the case at hand in Rabelais's text).

Lengthy lists of names and terms or the agglomeration of verbs and epithets, lists that sometimes cover several pages, were common in the literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We also find an exceptionally great number of them in Rabelais; for instance, in that same third prologue, 64 verbs designate all the actions and manipulations applied by Diogenes to his barrel (they are intended here to serve as a parallel to the citizens' wartime activities); again in the "Third Book" we find 303 epithets characterizing the male sexual organ in good or bad condition and 208 epithets to characterize the degree of the jester Triboulet's folly. In "Pantagruel" there is a list of the titles of 144 books in the Saint Victor library; in the same book, 79 characters are enumerated as part of a description of the underworld. In the "Fourth Book," we have a list of 154 names of cooks who went into the "saw" (an episode of the chitterling war); also in this book, 212 comparisons are used in the description of Quarêmeprenant, and 138 dishes are offered by the Gastrolaters to their god.[97] All these nomenclature enumerations are laden with a *praiseful-invective* (and moreover hyperbolic) evaluation. But there are, of course, essential differences between the different enumerations, and they serve different artistic purposes. We shall return to a discussion of the artistic and stylistic significance of these enumerations in the final chapter. Here, we note only one particular type—the *monumental* nomenclature of the public-square parade.

This nomenclature introduces a completely new tone into the prologue. Of course, Rabelais brings no herald into his novel; the enumeration is made by the same author who spoke in the tone of the traveling-show barker, who "cried" in the advertising intonations of a street hawker, who hurled public-square invective on his enemies. Now he speaks in the solemn monumental tone of the public-square herald. Clearly heard in this tone is the national patriotic enthusiasm of those days when Rabelais was writing his novel. The consciousness of the historic importance of that moment finds a direct expression in the following words:

[96] Bk. 1, ch. 26. This is, by comparison, a fairly short list.

[97] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:372–373), referring, respectively, to bk. 3, prologue and ch. 26, 28, and 38; bk. 2, ch. 7 and 30; and bk. 4, ch. 40, 29–32, and 59–60. Bakhtin apparently double-checked Sainéan's numbers, as some of the list sizes differ slightly. On Quarêmeprenant, Le Clercq translates this character's name as "King Lent" and Urquhart and Motteux, as "Shrovetide," but Bakhtin, with a few exceptions, chooses to transliterate the French, and I follow suit.

> I would deem it very disgraceful indeed to stand aside as but an idle spectator whilst so many valiant and eloquent heroes perform soul-stirring rôles in the magnificent tragic comedy all Europe watches today.[98]

Let us stress, in passing, the *tint of spectacle* in this awareness and expression of the moment's historic importance.

But even this solemn monumental tone is intertwined in the prologue with other tones belonging to the element of the public square, for instance, with an indecent joke about Corinthian women who served in the military defense after their own fashion, with the tones of familiar address, with which we are already familiar, and with the tones of public-square invective, cursing, and swearing. Here too, the sound of public-square laughter does not cease. The historical consciousness of Rabelais and his contemporaries was not in the least afraid of this laughter. It fears *one-sided and frozen* seriousness.

In Rabelais's prologue Diogenes does not take part in the military activities of his fellow citizens. But in order to demonstrate his activity at this important historic moment, he rolls his barrel up to a promontory and performs a variety of manipulations on it, all equally meaningless and aimless in terms of practicality. As noted above, to describe these manipulations of the barrel, Rabelais uses sixty-four verbs, which he borrowed from various areas of technology and handicrafts. This fussing and bustling around the barrel is a parodic travesty of the citizens' serious practical work. But there is no bare and one-sided negation of this practically serious work here. The emphasis is placed on the fact that Diogenes's merry travestying is also useful and necessary, that he also serves, in his own way, the defense of Corinth. One must not be idle, but laughter is no idle pastime. The right to laughter and to the merry parodying of *any* seriousness is here contrasted not with the heroic citizens of Corinth but, rather, with the gloomy slanderers and hypocrites, the enemies of unfettered and merry truth. Therefore, when the prologue's author identifies his own role with that of Diogenes at the siege of Corinth, he transforms Diogenes's tub into a barrel filled with wine (Rabelais's favorite image for merry and unfettered truth). We have already analyzed the little public-square scene of driving away the slanderers and agelasts, which plays out near that barrel.

Thus, the prologue to the "Third Book" too is devoted to decrowning one-sided seriousness defending the *rights of laughter*, which laughter retains even in the most serious conditions of historic struggle.

The same theme is also the subject of the two prologues to the "Fourth Book" (the so-called "old prologue" and the dedicatory epistle to Cardinal Odet). As already noted above, Rabelais develops here his doctrine of *the merry physician and of the healing force of laughter*, relying on Hippocrates and other authorities. There are many public-square elements in these prologues (especially in the old prologue). Here, we shall

[98] Bk. 3, prologue, translation modified. Note, by the way, that Rabelais to some degree still follows

consider only the image of the merry physician who brings merriment to his patients, in whose voice the prologue is indeed narrated.[99]

We must stress first of all that this image of the physician, who is the speaker in the prologue to the "Fourth Book," has substantial folk public-square features. Rabelais's image of the physician is far removed from the narrowly professional genre caricature of the doctor in the literature of later periods. This image is complex, universal, and ambivalent. It is full of contradictions and contains, as its upper limit, Hippocrates's "physician who is ... the equal of a God" and, as its lower limit, the scatophagus (excrement eater) physician of ancient comedy and mime and of medieval facetiae.[100] The physician bears an essential relation to the struggle between life and death in the human body and has a special relation to childbirth and death throes: he is a participant in birth and in death. After all, the physician deals not with a completed, self-enclosed, and fully formed body but, rather, precisely with a body that is being born, in a state of becoming, pregnant, giving birth, excreting, sick, dying, dismembered—that is, exactly with the body we find in verbal abuse, cursing, swearing, and in general in all grotesque images connected to the material-bodily nethers. As a participant and a witness of the struggle between life and death in the patient's body, the physician also has a special kind of connection to human waste, especially to urine, which played an immense role in old medicine. In old engravings, the physician was usually depicted holding a glass of urine in his hand, raised in front of his eyes.(110) In the urine, he read the patient's fate; it determined the answer to the question of life and death. In his epistle to Cardinal Odet, while discussing examples of stern physicians, Rabelais quotes (from *Maître Pathelin*)[101] a patient's typical question, directed to a physician:

> Doctor, doesn't my urine tell
>
> If I shall perish or get well?

Thus, urine and other human waste (excrement, vomit, sweat) acquired an additional secondary relation to life and death in the medicine of olden times (on top of

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Lucian's model here (Lucian 1959, 7).

[99] Note that both "voice" and "narrated" are, in this case, artifacts of the translation. Bakhtin literally writes, "From whose person [or face] the prologue is indeed offered."

[100] The quote "For a physician who is a lover of wisdom is the equal of a god" is from Hippocrates's *Decorum* (Hippocrates 1923b, 287). Bakhtin had access to a Russian translation (Karpov 1936, 76; Hippocrates 1936, 111). The passage containing it is quoted in chapter 5, p. 356. On physicians as consumers of human waste, see Plattard (1930, 97), Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:258), and the text in bk. 3, ch. 34, on which Lefranc et al. are commenting. See also note 71 to chapter 5 below. The word "scatophage" itself is mentioned by Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:112).

[101] A fifteenth-century farce, very popular in its day (popular enough to have the noun "patelinage" coined from its title), which Rabelais mentions and quotes relatively frequently in his books. Cf. Plattard (1930, 97–98).

(110) One such engraving, from a book dated 1534, is reproduced in Georges Lote's monograph (op. cit., pp. 164–165, plate VI).

their connection with the bodily nethers and with the earth, which we have elucidated earlier).

This does not yet exhaust the heterogeneous elements forming part of the complex and contradictory image of the physician. For Rabelais, the cement that holds together all these elements of diverse origin—from the upper Hippocratic limit to the lower fairground one—was precisely laughter, in its universal, ambivalent sense. In that same epistle to Cardinal Odet, Rabelais offers a very telling image-based definition of the medical practice in the spirit of Hippocrates: "Hippocrates fittingly compares the practice of medicine to a struggle, and also to a *farce* with three characters: the patient, the physician and the disease."

The farce-like perception of the physician and of the struggle between life and death (with scatological accessories and with universal significations) is typical of Rabelais's entire epoch. We find it in the works of some sixteenth-century authors and in the anonymous literature of facetiae, sotties, and farces. For instance, in one sottie the merry and carefree "children of Folly" enter the service of "The World." But The World cannot be pleased, he is finicky; The World is evidently ill; a physician is called in, examines The World's urine, and diagnoses a disease of the brain; it turns out The World is possessed with fear of a catastrophe, a destruction by flood and fire. Finally, the "children of Folly" manage to bring "The World" back to a merry and carefree mood.[102]

Compared to Rabelais, of course, all this is far coarser and more primitive. But the traditional composition of images is very close to the Rabelaisian one (including flood and fire in their carnival aspect). The universal and cosmic nature of the images is acutely emphasized in the sottie, but they bear here a somewhat abstract character, bordering on allegory.

We have examined the role of the public square and its "voices" in Rabelais's prologues. Let us now examine some of the public square's speech genres in particular, and first among them, the public-square "cries." We have said that these practical genres penetrate into the belles lettres of the time, often playing a substantial stylistic role in them. We also saw this in the prologues we analyzed.

Let us first consider the simplest public-square genre, but one that is fairly substantial[103] for Rabelais—the "Paris cries" ("cris de Paris").[104]

The "Paris cries" are loud advertisements called out by Paris merchants.(111) These cries were rhythmical verses; each individual cry is a quatrain devoted to offering and

[102] Referring to the *Sottie du Monde* (Picot 1902–1912, 2:323–346). Bakhtin follows the brief retelling in Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 96), including referring to the children of Bontemps as "Children of Folly" and the reading of the sottie as having a happy ending (by contrast, Petit de Julleville [1886, 242] claims the ending represents the world as a blind man, led by the insane).

[103] In the 1940 manuscript, Bakhtin characterized this genre as the "least substantial." This changed to "fairly substantial" in 1949–1950.

[104] Bakhtin's main source for this entire discussion is Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:274–275).

(111) The expression "le dernier cri" (literally, "the latest cry") is still in use to this day.

lauding one particular product. The first collection of Paris cries, compiled by Guillaume de Villeneuve, dates back to the thirteenth century, while the last, by Clément Jannequin, dates to as late as the mid-sixteenth century (these are the "cries" of Rabelais's time). There is fairly rich material from the periods in between, especially from the first half of the sixteenth century. Thus the history of these famous "cries" can be traced through almost four centuries.(112)[105]

The Paris cries enjoyed great popularity. A special *Farce of Paris Cries* was even written, similar to the seventeenth-century *Comedy of Proverbs* and the *Comedy of Songs*. This farce was based on the Paris cries of the sixteenth century. The well-known seventeenth-century French painter Abraham Bosse has a picture titled *Les Cris de Paris*, depicting the city's street vendors.[106]

The Paris cries are a very important document of the period, not only for the historian of culture and the historian of language but also for the literary scholar. They did not have that specific and limited character of modern advertisements. Neither was literature itself, even in its high genres, in any way shut off from any kind or form of the human word, no matter how practice-oriented or "lowly" in character. In that era, for the first time, the French national language was becoming the language of major literature, science, and high ideology. Prior to that, it had been the language of folklore, the language of the public square, the street, the marketplace, the language of petty traders, the language of the Paris cries—which, under these conditions, occupied a relatively significant share of living verbal art.

The role of the Paris cries in the public square and street life of the city was immense. The streets and public squares were literally ringing with these highly diverse cries. Each product—food, wine, or commodity—had a cry with its own words and melody, its own intonation, in other words, its own verbal and musical image. We may judge how great this diversity was from Truquet's 1545 collection: *One hundred and seven cries which are cried every day in Paris*.[107] Even these 107 cries, given in this collection, did not exhaust the matter: many more cries could be heard in the course of a day. We must also recall that in those days not only was all advertising, without exception, oral and loud, a "cry," but that more generally, announcements of all sorts, resolutions,

[105] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:274). This is also the source for the references in the footnote. Neither of the works Bakhtin refers to is a "collection" in the modern sense. Rather, these are literary and musical works that incorporate "cries" into them. Janequin's musical piece has the latest publication date mentioned by Sainéan (in fact, Sainéan does not cite its earliest edition) but is by no means the latest example of "cries" included in songs and other works of the period (see, e.g., Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 4:190).

[106] The *Farce des cris de Paris* is mentioned by Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:491, 2:241; and see, e.g., 1:216, 264–265 for the other farces). The etching by Bosse is mentioned by Reynier (1914, 127).

[107] Cited in Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:275) and multiple times in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 4:306–324).

(112) On the "Paris cries" see the book by Alfred Franklin, *Vie privée d'autrefois*, vol. 1, *L'Annonce et la Réclame*, Paris, 1887, which gives examples of Paris cries from different periods. See also J. G. Kastner, *Les Voix de Paris: essai d'une histoire littéraire et musicale des cris populaires*, Paris, 1857.

decrees, laws, and so on were all brought to the people's attention in loud oral form. The role of sound, of the loud word, in everyday life and the cultural life of the time was enormous—incomparably greater than even now, in the era of the radio broadcast. As for the nineteenth century, compared with the era of Rabelais, it was simply mute. This fact should not be forgotten when studying the style of the sixteenth century and especially the style of Rabelais. The culture of the people's vulgar tongue was to a great extent a culture of the word spoken out loud in the open, on public squares and on streets. And in this culture of the word, Paris cries occupied their own very important place.

What significance, then, did these Paris cries hold for Rabelais's creative work?

In the novel itself, we find direct allusions to these cries. When King Anarchus was defeated and deposed, Panurge decided to teach him how to work and made him a hawker of greensauce. He started training the king to "cry" greensauce, which is something that took the miserable and incompetent king some pains to learn. Rabelais does not give us the text of the cry, but in the aforementioned Truquet collection of 1545, among the 107 cries, there is also a cry of greensauce.[108]

But the point lies not at all in Rabelais's direct or indirect allusions to the Paris cries. The question of their influence and their parallel significance should be posed both more broadly and more deeply.

First of all, we must be reminded of the enormous role played by advertising tones and advertising nomenclatures in Rabelais's novel. Within these tones and nomenclatures, to be sure, it is not always possible to distinguish the tones and images of commercial advertisement from the equally advertising tones and images of the traveling-show barker, the apothecary and actor, the charlatan physician, the fairground horoscope maker, and so on. But the Paris cries doubtless also made their contribution in this matter.

Paris cries also exerted some influence on Rabelais's epithets, which are often "culinary" in nature and are borrowed from the vocabulary used in Paris cries in order to characterize the superior qualities of foods and wines offered for sale.

In Rabelais's novel the very naming of various dishes, types of venison, vegetables, wines, or household objects—clothes, kitchen utensils, and so on—has significance. This naming is often of intrinsic value: a thing is named for its own sake.[109] This world of food and of things occupies an enormous place in Rabelais's novel. But this is none other than the world of products, dishes, and things, which was daily proclaimed in all its richness and variety on the streets and public squares by the Paris cries. We also find this opulent world of food, drink, and housewares in the paintings of the Flemish masters, as well as in the detailed descriptions of banquets, so commonplace in sixteenth-century literature. Naming and depicting all that has to do with the dining

[108] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:275). The episode is recounted in bk. 2, ch. 31. Rabelais does quote the first line of the cry, which indeed matches the cry in Truquet's collection.

[109] Cf. the quote from Bakhtin's 1938–1939 notebooks brought in note 137 in chapter 1 above, which puts these long sequences of named items in a broader philosophical context.

table and the kitchen suited the taste and spirit of the times. But aren't the Paris cries also a loud kitchen and a loud opulent banquet, where every product and every dish had its own customary rhyme and melody? It was an ever-sounding street symphony of the kitchen and of feasting. Quite understandably, this symphony could not but influence the images consonant with it in the literature of the time, and those of Rabelais in particular.

In the literature contemporary to Rabelais, feasting and kitchen images were no mere details belonging narrowly to everyday life; to a greater or lesser extent they were awarded universal signification. One of the best Protestant satires of the second half of the sixteenth century is titled "The Christian Satires of the Papal Kitchen" (*Les satyres chrestiennes de la cuisine papale*, already mentioned above). These eight satires depict the Catholic church as a gigantic kitchen spread all over the world: the belfries are oven chimneys; the bells are cooking pans; the altars, dining tables. The various prayers and rites are consistently depicted as different dishes, with a very rich culinary nomenclature unfolding in the process.[110] This Protestant satire is an heir to grotesque realism. It lowers the Catholic church and its ritual by transposing both into the material-bodily nethers, represented here by the images of food and kitchen. A universal meaning is obviously ascribed to these images.

The link with the material-bodily nethers is even more evident in the universalized culinary images of macaronic poetry. This link is equally clear in the moralités, farces, sotties, and other genres, in which universalized (i.e., symbolically extended) kitchen and feasting images play a huge part.[111] We have already had the opportunity to mention the significance of food and kitchen items in such folk-festive forms as the carnival, the charivari, and diableries: many of the participants of these spectacles were armed with oven forks, pokers, roasting spits, pots, and pans. We know of sausages and buns of grandiose proportions prepared especially for carnivals and carried in solemn procession.[(113)][112] Indeed, one of the most ancient forms of hyperbole and of the hyperbolic grotesque was the extreme oversizing of foodstuffs. Such oversizing of *valuable matter* was the first instance of revealing the positive and absolute significance of size and quantity in the artistic image. This hyperbole of food parallels the most ancient hyperboles of the stomach, mouth, and phallus.

A latter-day echo of these positive material hyperboles is the symbolically expanded functioning of the images of eatery, hearth, and marketplace in world literature. Even

[110] Schneegans (1894, 331–335).

[111] On culinary imagery in macaronic poetry, see Schneegans (1894, 124, 138). More broadly, see the various examples Bakhtin discusses in chapter 4 below.

[112] On the Königsberg carnival sausage, mentioned in the footnote, see Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 304–305).

[(113)] For instance, during the Königsberg carnival of 1583 the butchers made a sausage weighing 440 pounds, which was carried by 90 butchers. In 1601 the sausage weighed 900 pounds. Then again, even today one can still see gigantic sausages or pretzels, albeit fake ones, in the shopfronts of bakeries and pork stores.

in Zola's marketplace images (*The Belly of Paris*), we can still find such a symbolic expansion, a kind of "mythologization" of the image of the marketplace. Victor Hugo, whose work contains many Rabelaisian allusions in general, has one place in his description of his voyage along the Rhine (*Le Rhin*, [vol.] 1, p. 45), where, seeing an eating place with a blazing hearth, he exclaims: "Si j'étais Homère ou Rabelais, je dirais: cette cuisine est un monde dont cette cheminée est le soleil." That is, "If I were a Homer or a Rabelais I would say: 'That kitchen is a world, and the fireplace is its sun' ".[113]

Hugo understood very well the universally cosmic signification of the kitchen and the fireplace in the Rabelaisian system of images.

In the context of all the above, the special significance of the Paris cries in Rabelais's time becomes apparent. These cries were in direct contact with one of the most important main highways of image-based thinking of the era. They were perceived in the light of the hearth and the kitchen, which in turn reflected the light of the sun. They partook in the great feasting utopia of the age. It is precisely in this broad context that one should evaluate both the direct influence of the Paris cries on Rabelais and their comparably great significance in shedding light on Rabelais's work and on the entire literature of the time.(114)

For Rabelais and his contemporaries, the Paris cries were in no way a mere document of everyday life, in the latter-day sense of the world. What in later literature became "everyday life," was permeated with deep worldview-related meaning and was not considered in isolation from "major events," from history. Paris cries—a substantial aspect of the public square and the street—flowed into the overall stream of the folk-festive utopian elemental force of the public square. Rabelais heard in these cries the utopian tones of a communal "feasting for the whole world,"[114] and the fact that these tones of utopia were deeply immersed in the very thick of life—concrete, tangible, meaningful in a practical way, full of smells, and loud in a public-square manner—was quite in accord with the specific character of all of Rabelais's images in general; they all combine the broadest universalism and utopianism with extraordinary concreteness, tangibility, and vividness, strict localization, and technical precision.

Close in their nature to the Paris cries are the cries of salesmen for all manner of medical preparations. These cries had been part of public-square life since the oldest times. Similarly, the image of the physician advertising his remedies is also one of the oldest images of world literature. Among Rabelais's French predecessors, let us recall the famous "Tale of the Herbs" ("Diz de l'erberie") by Rutebeuf (thirteenth century).

[113] Quoted in Boulenger (1925, 106). The English translation is from Hugo (1843, 22). Bakhtin's observation regarding Zola's novel *The Belly of Paris* probably reflects his direct recollection from reading the novel itself.

[114] See note 42 to the introduction above.

(114) Among Rabelais scholars, the significance of Paris cries for Rabelais's novel was noted by L. Sainéan in his book on Rabelais's language, which is remarkably rich in adduced material. However, L. Sainéan does not reveal this significance in full and is content to merely point to direct allusions to these cries in Rabelais's novel. See *La langue de Rabelais*, vol. 1, 1922, p. 275.

This is a typical public-square cry of a charlatan physician praising his medicines, but Rutebeuf offers a grotesque satirical refraction of it. Among other remedies, this physician has a remarkable herb that increases the reproductive force of sex organs.[115] The connection the physician has with reproductive force, with the renewal and revival of life (as well as with death) is traditional. In Rutebeuf this theme is subdued, while in Rabelais it is usually foregrounded with full force and candor.

Elements of medical public-square praise and advertising, both naked and more concealed, are scattered throughout Rabelais's novel. We have already pointed out the laudation of the *Chronicles* as a remedy for toothache, as well as a treatment to relieve the symptoms of gout and syphilis. Elements of medical laudation also appear in the third prologue. A somewhat attenuated expression of the same type of advertising can be found in Friar John's laudation of a monk's cowl as a means for increasing reproductive force and of the breviary as a cure for insomnia.[116]

An interesting example of "medical praise" with some confounding factors is the famous laudation of "pantagruelion" that concludes the "Third Book."[117] This eulogy to hemp and asbestos (which is what "pantagruelion" is) is based on Pliny's praise of flax in his *Natural History*. But as with everything Rabelais borrows from others, this place in Pliny is completely transformed in the Rabelaisian context and is stamped with a specific Rabelaisian mark.[118] Pliny's eulogy is purely rhetorical in character. Genetically speaking, rhetoric is related to the public square. But nothing remained of the public square in Pliny's rhetorical praise; it is the product of refined, purely literate culture. In Rabelais's laudation, by contrast, one can distinctly hear the tones of public-square praise, similar to those of "The Tale of the Herbs," of the public-square advertising praise of herbalists and salesmen of miracle ointments. We also find here traces of local folklore legends about magical herbs, akin to the "raskovnik" of Slavic folklore.[119] The public square and local folklore lend the laudation of pantagruelion its utopian radicalism and its deep optimism, quite uncharacteristic of the pessimist Pliny. But, of course, the exterior forms of the public-square cry in the laudation of pantagruelion are considerably mitigated and weakened.

In post-Rabelaisian literature, let us note the brilliant use of public-square medical praise in the aforementioned *Satire Ménippée*. This remarkable work is indeed saturated with public-square elements more generally. The introductory part of the satire

[115] Schneegans (1894, 81).

[116] Bk. 2, prologue; bk. 1, ch. 41, 42.

[117] Bk. 3, ch. 49–52.

[118] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:26–27). "Asbestos," in this context, is not the mineral known by that name, but rather the name Pliny and Rabelais give to the kind of hemp or linen that is made fire-resistant.

[119] In Slavic folklore, *raskovnik* (also known by other names; Bakhtin uses the Russian variant, *razryv-trava*, literally: "rupture-herb," sometimes associated with the real plant saxifrage or rockfoil) is a special herb that has the magic property of opening any lock or enclosure. Bakhtin also associated pantagruelion with *razryv-trava* in his essay on the chronotope (Bakhtin 1981c, 242). There is mention of legends about magical herbs, though in a somewhat different context, in Lote (1938, 119; and see Bakhtin 2008b, 757; Popova 2008a, 862).

(corresponding to the "cri" of the morality plays and sotties)[120] portrays a Spanish charlatan: while preparations are being made in the Louvre for a meeting of Catholic League supporters, this charlatan is busy outside selling a miraculous panacea against all misfortunes and evils—the "Spanish Catholicon." He "cries" this remedy, lauding it in every possible way, and by this overblown public-square laudation he bitingly and merrily unmasks the Spanish "Catholic policy" and propaganda. This introductory cri of the charlatan sets up the atmosphere of cynical candor in which the leaders of the League expose themselves and their own plans in the parts of the satire that follow. The cry of the Spanish charlatan, in its structure and parodic orientation, resembles Rabelais's prologues.[121]

Both the Paris cries and the cries of miracle-remedy salesmen and fairground physicians belong to the praiseful genres of the public-square word. They too, of course, are ambivalent, and they too are ringing with laughter and irony; they may at any moment show their reverse side—that is, turn into invective and curses. They too function as means for lowering, they materialize the world and make it bodily; they are essentially connected with the ambivalent material-bodily nethers. Nevertheless, what is dominant in them is the positive pole of these nethers: food, drink, healing, rebirth, reproductive force, plenty.

The reverse side of public-square praise are abuses, curses, swearing, and oaths. They are similarly ambivalent, but it is the negative pole of the nethers that prevails in them: death, disease, the decomposition and disarticulation of the body, its being dismembered and devoured.

We have already analyzed a series of curses and abuses in our discussion of the prologues. Our next task is to examine another variety of the public-square word, akin to it in origin and in the artistic and ideological functions it has in Rabelais's novel—swearing and oaths.

All such phenomena as verbal abuse, curses, swearing, and indecent expressions are unofficial elements of speech. They are perceived, and were perceived, as a flagrant breach of the accepted norms of verbal address, as a deliberate refusal to conform to speech conventions, to etiquette, politeness, verbal reverence, respectability, deference to rank, and so on. As a result, all such elements, if present in sufficient quantity and deliberately used, exercise a powerful influence on the entire context, on speech in its entirety: they transfer it onto a different plane, place it wholly beyond any speech conventionality. Such speech, freed from the reign of the norms, hierarchy, and prohibitions of common language, thus turns into a special language, as it were, into its own kind of argot in relation to official language. By doing so, such speech also creates a special collective—the group of people initiated into familiar intercourse, the collective of those who are candid and unfettered with respect to speech. *The crowd*

[120] The "cri" as an introduction to plays is mentioned, e.g., by Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 96).
[121] Schneegans (1894, 351–354).

on the public square was in its essence precisely such a collective, especially the festive, fairground, carnival crowd.

The composition and character of those elements that have the force to transform speech as a whole and create an unfettered collective of familiar interaction change with the times. A great many indecencies and profanities that by the seventeenth century acquired such a force to transform the context were not at all perceived as such and did not transgress the acceptable limits of official speech in Rabelais's time. Similarly relative is the degree to which one or another extra-official ("unprintable") word or expression affects the context. Every age has its own norms of officialness, propriety, and decorum in speech.(115)[122] And every age has its own words and expressions whose use is perceived as an accepted signal to speak with liberty, to call things by their own names, to speak without omissions and euphemisms. The use of such words and expressions created an atmosphere of public-square candor, inspired speakers to invoke certain themes, made one's very viewpoint on the world unofficial. Of course, the carnivalesque potentialities of such elements of speech reveal themselves *in full* in the *festive* public square in particular, when all hierarchic barriers between people were canceled and they entered into real-life familiar contact. Here they become consciously meaningful particles of the unitary laughter-based aspect of the world.

Sharing these properties in Rabelais's time, among other unofficial elements, were the so-called "jurons," that is, swearing and oaths.[123] One would swear or take an oath predominantly on all manner of holy objects: "the body of Christ," "the blood of Christ," feast days, saints and their relics, and so on. In most cases the jurons are vestiges of ancient sacral oath formulas. Familiar speech was overabundantly sprinkled with such jurons. Social groups and even individual persons had their own special repertoire of oaths or one favorite oath that they used all the time. Among Rabelais's heroes, Friar John, in particular, overloads his speech with oaths; he cannot take a single step without them. When Ponocrates asked him why he swears, Friar John answered, "I do so but to adorn my language. For what are oaths save colorful figures of Ciceronian rhetoric?"[124] Nor is Panurge sparing in his use of oaths.

Oaths were an unofficial element of speech. They were even directly forbidden. The struggle against them was waged from two sides: by the Church and the state on the

[122] The reference to Brunot (1913, 279–297) in the footnote is somewhat inaccurate (the chapter is ch. 5, in bk. 4, in part 1 of vol. 4 of the monumental history of the French language). It may have been copied from Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:309). Bakhtin did, apparently, quote directly from a different volume of Brunot elsewhere in the book (see notes 23 to chapter 1 and 101 to chapter 7). See also Bakhtin (1986c, 79), where he recalls Brunot in a context similar to this one, though without providing any bibliographical details.

[123] Bakhtin's main sources for this discussion of *jurons* are Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:328–342) and the notes in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:158–160).

[124] Bk. 1, ch. 39 (quoted in Sainéan 1922–1923, 2:331).

(115) Concerning historical changes in speech norms regarding impropriety, see Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française*, vol. 4, chapter 5, "L'honnêteté dans le langage."

one hand and by armchair humanists on the other. The latter saw oaths as useless, parasitical elements of speech that merely obscured its purity and considered them to be the heritage of the barbaric Middle Ages. This is also the point of view expressed by Ponocrates in the dialogue with Friar John quoted above. The state and Church found them to be a sacrilegious and profaning use of holy names, incompatible with piety. Under the Church's influence, state authorities issued multiple ordinances against swearing (jurons). These were proclaimed on public squares. Such ordinances were issued by Kings Charles VII, Louis XI (dated May 12, 1478), and, finally, by Francis I (from March 1525).[125] These condemnations and prohibitions only further strengthened the perception of oaths as being unofficial in character and only made more acute the feeling associated with them that speech norms are being breached; this in turn intensified the distinctive coloration of speech studded with oaths, rendering it more familiar and more unfettered, in a public-square kind of way. Oaths began to be perceived as a recognizable violation of the official worldview system, as a recognizable degree of speech protest directed against it.

Forbidden fruit is sweet. The very same kings who issued the ordinances also had their own favorite oaths, which became attached to them in the popular consciousness as a special kind of permanent unofficial nicknames for these kings. Louis XI swore by "the Lord's Easter" ("Pasque Dieu"), Charles VIII by "the Lord's Good Day" ("le bonjour Dieu"), Louis XII swore "the devil take me" ("le diable m'emport"), and Francis I swore by "the honest word of a gentleman" ("foy de gentilhomme"). Rabelais's contemporary, Roger de Collerye, wrote a typical poem on this subject, titled "Epitheton des quatre Roys":

> Quant la "Pasque Dieu" deceda,
> Le "Bon Jour Dieu" lui succeda;
> Au "Bon Jour Dieu" deffunct et mort,
> Succeda le "Dyable m'emport,"
> Luy decedé, nous voyons comme
> Nous duist la "Foy de Gentil Homme."(116)[126]

[125] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:329).

[126] Quoted in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:159). Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:339–340) also discusses and quotes this poem, but apparently a different version.

(116) When the "Lord's Easter" has deceased
The "Lord's Good Day" it did succeed;
The "Lord's Good Day" defunct and dead,
"The Devil take me" came instead,
And when it died, we all heard then
"The honest word of a gentleman."

Here, these recurring oaths become characteristic attributes and their own sort of nickname for individual people. But particular social groups and professions were also characterized in similar fashion.

Oaths turn the sacred into the profane, and in this poem they do so twice over: "the Lord's Easter" dies, "the Lord's Good Day" (i.e., Christmas) dies too and is succeeded by "the devil take me." The unfettered and public-square nature of oaths is manifest here to the full. They create an atmosphere in which such free and merry play with the sacred becomes possible.

We said that every social group and profession had its own typical favorite oaths. Rabelais offers a remarkable dynamic depiction of the public square of his time with its motley social composition, using oaths alone. When young Gargantua, having arrived in Paris, gets fed up with the Paris crowd's pestilent curiosity, he starts drenching this crowd in urine. Rabelais does not describe the crowd itself, but he cites all the oaths and curses that this crowd began hurling, and we *hear* its social composition.

Here is that passage:

> "Upon my word, I think these boobies want me to pay my welcome here and give the Bishop an offertory. Quite right, too! I'll treat them! They'll get their drink! I'll recognize my obligations and liquidate I shall!—but only par ris, for a laugh!"
>
> Then smiling, he unfastened his noble codpiece and lugging out his great pleasure-rod, he so fiercely bepissed them that he drowned two hundred and sixty thousand four hundred and eighteen, besides women and children.
>
> By sheer fleetness of foot, a certain number escaped this mighty pissflood, and reaching the top of the Montagne Sainte Geneviève, beyond the University, sweating, coughing, hawking and out of breath, they began to swear and curse, some in anger, others in jest:
>
> —God's plague and pox take it! I'll deny God if ...'Sblood! Christ, look ye, its Mère de ... merde ... shit, Mother of God! Po cap de bious! Das dich Gots leyden Schend! Pote de Christo! By the belly of St. Quenet! ... God's virtue! by St. Fiacre of the land of Brie! St. Trynnian! Let me see St. Theobald! The Lord's Easter! The Lord's Good Day! The devil take me! The honest word of a gentleman! By St. Chitterling! By St. Godegran stoned to death with apple dumplings! By St. Foutin the Apostle! By St. Vit! By St. Mamie! Nous sommes baignée par ris (we are bathed for a laugh).
>
> Accordingly, that city has been ever since called Paris. (book 1, chapter 17)[127]

[127] Translation modified (in particular, unlike Rabelais, Le Clercq does explain who uses each oath, and I omitted all these interpolations).

We have here a very vivid and dynamic, loud (auditory) image of the motley Paris crowd of the sixteenth century. We hear its social composition: we hear the Gascon ("pro cap de bious"—"by the Lord's head"), the Italian ("pote de Christo"),[128] the German landsknecht ("das dich Gots leyden shend"),[129] the small farmer and greengrocer (Saint Fiacre of Brie was a patron saint of gardeners and horticulturalists), the shoemaker (Saint Theobald was a patron of shoemakers), and the drunkard (Saint Godegran was a patron of drinkers). All the other oaths (there are twenty-one of them in total) also have some distinctive nuance and bring to mind some additional association. Thus, we find here the already familiar oaths associated with the French kings, in chronological order, which confirms the popularity of these peculiar nicknames. It is possible that we can no longer grasp many nuances and allusions that were quite clearly understood by Rabelais's contemporaries.[130]

The distinctive character of this loud image of the crowd is created precisely by means of constructing it from oaths alone; that is, it is entirely constructed outside the norms of official speech. The speech reaction of the crowd thus organically blends in with Gargantua's ancient public-square gesture of drenching this crowd in urine. His gesture is as unofficial as the crowd's speech in reaction to it. Both reveal the same unofficial aspect of the world.

Both the gesture (drenching in urine) and the word (jurons) create the atmosphere for all those most unfettered travesties of the names and functions of saints that we encounter here. Thus, some in the crowd invoke "Saint Chitterling," which here refers to the phallus, and others invoke "Sainct Godegran," that is, Godet grand, which means a large goblet; "Grand Godet" was also the name of a popular tavern on the Place de Grève (Villon mentions it in his "Le Testament").(117) Still others invoke Saint Foutin, a parodic travesty of the name Saint Photin. And yet others invoke "Sainct Vit," which here also means the phallus. Finally, "Saint Mamie," whose name came to designate a mistress, is also invoked. Thus, all the saints invoked here are travestied either on the plane of indecency or on the plane of feasting.[131]

This carnival atmosphere also clarifies Rabelais's biblical allusion to the miracle of feeding the multitude with five loaves of bread. Rabelais reports that Gargantua has drowned in his urine 260,418 people "besides women and children." This scriptural turn of phrase is taken directly from the Gospel account of the miracle of feeding

[128] In 1965, Bakhtin added here a mistranslation of "pote" as "head" (instead of the correct "vulva"; see Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:159).

[129] "God's passion confound me!" Sainéan (commenting in Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:159) notes that the oath was so closely identified with German mercenaries in French that it gave rise to the nickname "dastipoteur" for Germans and the word "dasticotter," which had the sense "to speak German."

[130] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:158–160).

[131] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:159–160).

(117) Rabelais alludes to some legend in which the martyrdom of this saint is connected to apple dumplings (a lowering carnival image).

the multitude (Rabelais makes frequent use of it).[132] Thus, the entire episode with the urine and the crowd offers a travestying allusion to the miracle of feeding the multitude with five loaves of bread.(118) We will see later on that this is not the only travesty of miracles from the Gospels in Rabelais's novel.[133]

Before commencing on his carnivalesque act (drenching the crowd in urine), Gargantua declares that he will do this only "for a laugh" ("par ris"). And the crowd concludes its volley of swearing and oaths with the words "we are bathed for a laugh" ("nous sommes baignée par ris"). Ever since, the author asserts, that city has been called Paris. Thus, the entire episode is a merry carnivalesque travesty of the city's name, "Paris." At the same time, it is a parody of local legends about the origin of names (serious poetic renditions of such legends were very popular in France at the time; in particular, Jean Lemaire and the other poets of the "rhétoriqueurs" school were engaged in this task).[134] Finally, all the events in this episode take place "only for a laugh." This is, from beginning to end, *a public-square laughter-based ritual act, carnival play by the popular crowd in the public square.* The name of the city of Paris, the names of saints and martyrs, the Gospel miracle—all these are drawn into this play "for a laugh." Played with are things "exalted" and "sacred," combined here with images of the material-bodily nethers (urine, erotic and feasting travesties). Oaths, as unofficial elements of speech and as the profanation of the sacred, are organically woven into this play, are consonant with it in their meaning and tone.

What then is the subject matter of the oaths? Predominantly, their content is *the disarticulation of the human body.* People mostly swore by the members and organs of the divine body: the Lord's body, his head, blood, wounds, stomach; people swore by relics of saints and martyrs: legs, arms, fingers, and so on that were kept in churches. The oaths considered most unacceptable and sinful were those invoking the body of

[132] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:158). The reference is to Matthew 14:21: "And the number of them that did eat, was five thousand men, besides women and children."

[133] See chapter 6 below.

[134] Bakhtin's source here is unclear. In the 1946 bibliography, he placed a reference to Guy (1910–1926, vol. 1) that clearly corresponds to this remark in the text. However, this is unlikely to have been his actual source. That book does not appear to contain any reference to the sort of legends Bakhtin is talking about. Indeed, Bakhtin's claim here may simply be factually false (the most charitable reading could be that Bakhtin is referring to Jean Lemaire's best-known work, *Illustrations de Gaule et singularitez de Troye*, which deals with the legendary origins of the French nation in Homeric Troy). My best conjecture is that Bakhtin either misunderstood one of the multiple references to Lemaire's *Illustrations* in the main corpus of literature he used or preserved notes that carried this mistake from some other study he examined only briefly. Either way, he himself did not remember his real source for the claim and inserted the reference to Guy (1910–1926, vol. 1) into his bibliography by mistake, possibly because another work by Guy is cited by Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:161) in a comment on the same episode being discussed, and possibly since he might have briefly consulted Guy (1910–1926, vol. 2) elsewhere in the book (see note 140 in chapter 6 below).

(118) This is not a full travesty, but merely a travestying allusion. Such risqué allusions are fairly common in recreational Shrovetide literature (that is, in grotesque realism).

the Lord and its various parts, but these precisely were the most widespread oaths. The preacher Menot (an older contemporary of Rabelais), condemning people who excessively used oaths in one of his sermons, said, "One seizes God by his beard, the other by his throat, the third by his head ... There are some who speak of Christ the redeemer's humanity with less respect than does a butcher about the meat he sells."[135]

The moralist Eloy d'Amerval, condemning oaths in his *Diablerie* (1507), reveals with full clarity the carnival image of a disarticulated body, which underlies most of them:

> Ilz jurent Dieu, ses dens, sa teste,
> Son corps, son ventre, barbe et yeulx,
> Et le prennent par tant de lieux,
> Qu'il est haché de tous costez
> Comme chair a petits pastez.(119)[136]

D'Amerval himself, of course, never suspected how correct was the historico-cultural analysis of oaths he offered. But as a man who lived at the turn of the sixteenth century, he was well aware of the role of butchers and cooks, of the cook's knife, of the disarticulated body, and of stuffing for sausages and pies, not only on the everyday-life plane, but also in the system of folk-festive carnival images. This is why he was able to make such correct comparisons between these images and the disarticulated body of God in swearing and oaths.

The images of the disarticulated body and of anatomization of all sorts play a major role in Rabelais's novel. This is also why the subject matter of the oaths is organically woven into the unitary system of Rabelaisian images. Tellingly, Friar John, a passionate lover of swearing, is nicknamed "d'Entommeure,"—chopped meat, mincemeat, stuffing. Sainéan sees here a double allusion: to the friar's bellicose spirit and to his love of the kitchen.(120) The important point, however, is that the "*fighting spirit*," *war, battle*, on the one hand, and the *kitchen* on the other, intersect at a certain common point, and

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[135] The quotation is from Michel Menot's *Sermones quadragesimales* of 1532, quoted in Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:328).

[136] See Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:329). The publication date of 1507 is the one cited by Sainéan, though 1508 can be found in other sources. Eloy d'Amerval is mostly known as a composer, musician, and poet, not a moralist. Moreover, the book in question, contrary to what Bakhtin appears to assume, has some marked grotesque features in its own right (see Popova 2010a, 608).

(119) They swear by God, his teeth, his head,
His body, stomach, beard and eyes;
They grab him by all body parts
So that he ends up all chopped up
Like minced meat baked in little pies.

(120) Sainéan, *La Langue de Rabelais*, vol. 2, 1923, p. 472.

this point of intersection is *the disarticulated body*, "*mincemeat*." That is why culinary images were all the more common in depictions of battles in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, precisely where this literature was connected with the folk laughter tradition. Thus, Pulci is already describing the battlefield of Ronceveaux as being "like a saucepan filled with an enormous omelet stuffed with blood, with heads and little feet and other bones."(121)[137] Similar images could already be found in the epics of the cantastoria.[138]

Friar John is indeed "d'Entommeure" in both senses of this word, and the essential connection between these two seemingly heterogeneous senses stands out with exceptional clarity everywhere in Rabelais's work. In the "chitterling war" episode Friar John develops the idea of the military significance of cooks, based on historical examples (military leaders who were cooks—Nabuzardan and others). He then heads an army of 154 cooks equipped with kitchen weaponry (spits, spitbars, frying pans, and so on) and leads them into the historic "saw," which in this chitterling war plays the role of the Trojan horse.[139] Conversely, in battles Friar John shows himself to be a sworn "*anatomizer*," turning human bodies into "mincemeat."(122)[140] The depiction of him fighting in the abbey close (in which, incidentally, he wields the staff of a cross) bears precisely this markedly "anatomizing" character; it features a long and detailed anatomic enumeration of stricken members and organs, broken bones and joints. Here is an excerpt from this carnival anatomy:

> He brained some, smashed the legs and arms of others, broke a neck here, cracked a rib there. He flattened a nose or knocked an eye out, crushed a jaw or sent thirty-two teeth rattling down a bloody gullet. Some had their shoulderblades dislocated, others their thighs lammed to pulp, others

[137] Pulci's *Morgante*, canto 27, stanza 56 (English translation: Pulci 1998, 684) is quoted in Schneegans (1894, 101).

In the footnote, Bakhtin is referring to the medieval Russian epic *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, most likely to the last stanza of the first part of the epic, where the metaphor of feasting is used explicitly:

There of bloody wine there was not enough. There they finished the feast, the brave Russians; they plied the wedding-guests with wine, but themselves were laid low defending the Russian land (Magnus 1915, 9).

Bakhtin was familiar with the text of this epic directly, as evidenced, for instance, by a brief collection of working notes from roughly the early 1940s that he devoted to it (Bakhtin 1996f).

[138] Most likely an accidental misreading of Schneegans (1894, 101), who indeed follows the quote above with a claim connecting Pulci to the poetry of the cantastoria (on whom see note 28 to the introduction above), but not in relation to feasting imagery.

[139] Bk. 4, ch. 39–41.

[140] The quote in the footnote is "May all the millions of devils dissect [*anatomiser*] your brain and make mincemeat [*des entommeures*] of it." It also appears in Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:472).

(121) Then again, at the level of the high epic, too, we find depictions of a battle as a feast, for instance in our own *Tale of Igor's Campaign*.

(122) These words are linked to one another in Rabelais's own text: in the fourth book, chapter 66, there appears the following curse: "À tous les millions de diables qui te puissent *anatomiser* la cervelle et en faire *des entommeures*."

their hips wrenched, others their arms battered beyond recognition. (book 1, chapter 27)

This is an anatomizing description, typical of Rabelais, of blows dismembering the body. This carnival-culinary anatomization is based on the same *grotesque image* of the disarticulated body, which we have already encountered in our analysis of curses, abuses, and oaths.

And thus, the oaths with their profane culinary *dismemberment of the holy body* have brought us back to the *culinary subject matter* of the "Paris cries" and to *the grotesque-bodily subject matter of vulgar public-square curses and verbal abuse* (diseases, deformities, the nether parts of the body). All the public-square elements examined in this chapter are akin to one another both in subject matter and in form. All of them, regardless of their practical everyday-life functions, offer a unitary *unofficial aspect of the world*—unofficial both in tone (laughter) and in content (the material-bodily nethers). They are all connected to *the world's merry matter*, to that which *is born, dies, and itself gives birth*, which *is devoured and itself devours*, but which in the final account always *grows and multiplies, becomes ever bigger, ever better, ever more abundant*. This merry matter is ambivalent: it is *both the grave and the birthing womb, both the outgoing past and the incoming future*; it is *becoming as such*.

Thus, in spite of their variety, all the public-square elements we analyzed are permeated by the inner unity of medieval folk culture, but in Rabelais's novel this unity is organically combined with new Renaissance principles. In this respect Rabelais's prologues are especially instructive; all five prologues (the "Fourth Book" has two), are excellent specimens of *Renaissance public writing* on a folk-public-square basis. In these prologues, as we have seen, the very foundations of the medieval worldview, receding into the past, are being decrowned, and at the same time, they are filled with allusions and rejoinders to the most current ideological and political concerns.

The public-square genres we have examined are relatively primitive (some are quite archaic), but they are endowed with great powers to travesty, to lower, to materialize, and to embody the world. They are traditional and deeply popular. They create around themselves an atmosphere of public-square liberty and familiar candor. Rabelais therefore needs these heterogeneous public-square "cries," terms of abuse, curses, and oaths as essential factors of style formation. We have seen their role in the prologues. They create *the absolutely merry, fearless, unfettered, and candid speech* that Rabelais needed for the assault he had undertaken against "Gothic darkness." These everyday public-square genres prepare the right atmosphere for *folk-festive forms and images* proper, in whose language Rabelais reveals his new *merry truth* about the world. It is to these folk-festive forms and images that our next chapter is devoted.

3. Folk-festive Forms and Images in Rabelais's Novel

> Time is a child playing draughts, the kingly power is a child's
>
> —Heraclitus[1]

At the end of the previous chapter we touched on the "anatomizing" depiction of battles and blows in Rabelais's novel and on his peculiar "carnival-culinary" anatomy. Scenes of beatings are common in Rabelais's work. But these are not everyday-life scenes. Let us analyze some of them.

In the "Fourth Book" of the novel, the travelers—Pantagruel and his companions—arrive at the "island of the Catchpoles,"[2] whose inhabitants, the catchpoles, earn their living by letting themselves be beaten for pay. Friar John selects a "red-snouted" ("Rouge muzeau") catchpole and beats him up for twenty gold crowns: "Friar John swung his staff manfully, thwacking and cracking Redsnout so lustily on belly and back, on head and legs that, as he fell to earth, a battered pulp, I feared for the Catchpole's *death*."

We see that the anatomizing enumeration of body parts has not been neglected. Rabelais then goes on: "Then he gave him his twenty crowns. But the churl *rose*, *happy* as a *king*—or a *pair of kings*, for that matter." ("Et mon villain *debout*, *aise* comme *un roy* ou *deux*") (book 4, chapter 16).

This image of a "king" and "two kings" is here introduced, on the immediate level, in order to characterize the highest degree of happiness reached by the "rewarded"[3] catchpole. But the *image* of a "*king*" is *essentially* connected with both the *merry thrashing* and with invective, as well as with the catchpole's *red snout*, with his *seeming death*, and with his unexpected *return to life* and *jumping up* like a *clown* after the thrashing.

There is a plane on which thrashing and invective are not, in essence, a personal everyday-life matter but are symbolic acts directed at that which is *higher*—at the "*king*." This plane is the folk-festive system of images, which is most clearly represented

[1] Fragment Diels-Krantz 22B52, translated by John Burnet (1908, 153). In the 1940 manuscript, this fragment (in the original Greek) was one of the two epigraphs for the entire book. Bakhtin's source for the fragment itself is Cassirer (1955, 137; see Bakhtin's summary of Cassirer in Bakhtin 2008b, 816).

[2] Bk. 4, ch. 12–16. Unlike many places where Pantagruel and his companions visit in bk. 4, which are indeed referred to as islands, the place where the catchpoles reside is the "Land of Pettifogging."

[3] The word "rewarded" is somewhat of a pun in the original Russian (hence the quotation marks): it

by *carnival* (but, of course, not by carnival alone). It is on this same plane, as previously pointed out, that the *kitchen* and the *battle* meet and intersect in the images of the *dismembered body*. In Rabelais's time this folk-festive system of images was still fully alive and consciously meaningful to the utmost degree both in the various forms of public-square entertainments and in literature.

In this system of images *the king is the fool*. He is communally elected by all the people and then, *also communally*, he is *laughed at*, verbally abused and beaten when the time of his reign is over, just as the Shrovetide dummy of the ending winter or of the outgoing year ("merry bogeymen") is laughed at, beaten, torn to pieces, burned, or drowned even in our time. If at first the fool was *dressed up* as a king, now, as his reign comes to an end, *his costume is changed* into a fool's garment; he is "*travestied*." The invective and thrashing are fully equivalent to this change of costume, succession of garments, metamorphosis. Invective reveals the other—true—face of its target; invective removes his disguise and mask: invective and thrashing *decrown* the king.

Invective is death; it is former youth that turned into old age, a living body now turned into a corpse. Invective is the "mirror of comedy," placed in front of outgoing life, in front of that which is to become historically dead. But in this same system of images, death is also followed by rebirth, by a new year, a new youth, a new spring. This is why abuse is answered by praise. This is why *abuse and praise are two aspects of one and the same double-bodied world*.

Decrowning abuse, as truth about the old powerholder, about the dying world, enters organically into Rabelais's system of images, combined here with carnival thrashings and *with changes of costume, travesties*. Rabelais draws these images from the *living* folk-festive tradition of his time, but he was also well versed in the antique tradition of the *Saturnalia*, handed down in literary sources. The Saturnalia had their own rituals of changing dress, decrowning, and beating (Rabelais was familiar with the same sources that we too know, first and foremost Macrobius's *Saturnalia*).[4] Concerning the jester Triboulet, Rabelais cites Seneca's words (without naming him and apparently quoting from Erasmus) that kings and fools have the same horoscope (book 3, chapter 37).[(123)5] It goes without saying that he also knew the Gospel story of the "king of the Jews," who was crowned in jest, decrowned, and laughed at.

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refers both to the payment and to the beating itself (alluding to a Russian idiom that literally translates to "reward one with blows").

[4] Macrobius is directly cited by Rabelais. See bk. 1, ch. 3.

[5] In Le Clercq's translation: "Thus, mathematicians declared that the same horoscope applied for kings and zanies." See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:273) about Rabelais's sources (Seneca 1913, 437; Erasmus 2001, 62), neither of which, however, mentions horoscopes in this context.

[(123)] Seneca speaks of this in his *Pumpkinification*. We have already mentioned this remarkable saturnalian satire about the *decrowning* of the dead king, both at the moment of his death (he dies as he defecates) and after death *in the kingdom of the Underworld*, where he is transformed into a "*laughable bogeyman*," a miserable fool, *slave*, and *gambler who has lost his fortune*.

In his novel Rabelais also depicts the literal decrowning of two kings: Picrochole in the first book ("Gargantua") and Anarchus in the second ("Pantagruel"). He depicts these decrownings in a purely carnivalesque spirit but not without some influence of traditions from antiquity, as well as from the Gospels.

King Picrochole fled after his defeat; on his way, he killed his horse in anger (because it had slipped and fallen). In order to continue his journey, Picrochole tried to steal an *ass* from a nearby *mill*, but the miller's men *thrashed* him, *removed his royal robes, and changed his dress to an old smock*. Later, the deposed king worked in Lyon as a *common stevedore*.[6]

Here, we see all the elements of the traditional system of images (decrowning, change of costume, beating). But we can also sense here reminiscences of the Saturnalia. The decrowned king becomes a slave (stevedore), *the mill in antiquity* was a place where slaves were sent for punishment: they were beaten there and made to tread the millstone, which was hard labor. Finally, the *ass* is the biblical symbol of humiliation and meekness (and at the same time also of rebirth).[(124)7]

The account of King Anarchus's decrowning is sustained in a similar carnivalesque spirit. After having defeated Anarchus, Pantagruel turns him over to Panurge. The latter first of all *changes* the former king's *apparel* into a strange clownish costume and then makes him into a vendor of greensauce (the lowest step in the social hierarchy). Nor is the thrashing omitted. Granted, Panurge does not beat up Anarchus himself, but he weds him to a grumpy old hag who both *abuses* and *beats* him. Thus, here once more, the traditional carnivalesque image of decrowning is strictly adhered to.[(125)8]

As we have already mentioned, the legend about Rabelais provides us with his carnival image. Many legendary tales about his dress changes and mystifications have reached us. One story, as it happens, concerns his masquerade before death: on his deathbed Rabelais allegedly asked to be dressed in a *domino* (a masquerade costume), citing Holy Scripture (Book of Revelations): "beati qui in *Domino* moriuntur" (i.e., "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord").[9] The carnivalesque character of this leg-

[6] Bk. 1, ch. 49.

[7] On the mill as a place of punishment and on the donkey or ass as symbol in the Bible, Bakhtin is most likely relying directly on his familiarity with the biblical text (see, e.g., Lamentations 5:13 on millstones).

[8] See bk. 2, ch. 31 of Rabelais (though Anarchus's wife is only explicitly said to batter him, while verbal abuse is not mentioned). For the footnote, see Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, the end of Scene 22 (Pushkin 2010, 96).

[9] Moland (1884, xxxvi; Moland's introduction to his edition of Rabelais was more generally Bakhtin's source on various details of Rabelais's legendary biography). The biblical verse is Revelations 14:13.

(124) The ass was also one of the images of the folk-festive system of the Middle Ages, for instance in the Feast of the Ass.

(125) For a parallel high image of a decrowning, consider the ancient Russian custom of the decrowning and tonsuring of dying czars: in the process, they were clothed in a monastic habit, in which they were

endary tale is perfectly clear. Let us stress that the real change of dress (travesty) is here justified by a verbal semantic travesty of the sacred text.

But let us return to the red-snouted catchpole, thrashed and at the same time made happy by his thrashing, "like two kings." The catchpole is not a carnival king, is he? Yet the image of thrashing along with the anatomizing enumeration has also entailed the other inevitable *carnival* accessories, including likening the catchpole to a king, and even to two kings—the old king who is dead and the new one who is resurrected. After all, everybody thinks that the catchpole was beaten to death (the old king), but he jumps up alive and merry (the new king). And his *face* is *red* because it is the *foolish painted* face of a *clown*. All Rabelais's scenes of brawls and beatings are similarly carnivalesque.(126)[10]

The episode of the catchpole's beating, which we examined, is preceded by four chapters devoted to stories about similar beatings of catchpoles in the house of the Lord of Basché and to the "tragic farce" enacted by François Villon at Saint-Maixent.[11]

The noble Lord of Basché invented an ingenious method of beating up, with impunity, the catchpoles, who came to his castle to serve him with a summons to court. In Touraine, where the episode took place, as well as in Poitou and some other French provinces, the custom of the so-called "nopces à mitaines" (i.e., "gauntlet weddings") was observed: during wedding celebrations, it was customary for people to jokingly *punch* one another with their *fists*. The person who was subjected to these light punches could not complain; they were consecrated and legalized by custom.[12] And so each time a catchpole approached Basché's castle, *a mock wedding* would be staged, and the catchpole inevitably had to join the wedding guests.

On the first occasion, an *old, fat, and red-faced* catchpole ("un viel, gros, et rouge Chiquanous") arrived at the castle. While feasting at the wedding, the guests, according to custom, began serving one another punches:

> But when Catchpole's turn came, they whacked with lusty gauntlet, knocking their enemy dizzy, bruising his whole frame, making one eye like nothing so much as a poached egg with black-butter sauce, smashing eight ribs, staving in his chest, and cleaving his shoulder-blades in four, breaking his jaw into three separate parts, and accomplishing the whole amid good-natured laughter ("et le tout en riant"). (book 4, chapter 12)

[10] See some quotations from Scarron in Schneegans (1894, 464), which feature a great deal of anatomical detail in a relevant context and could perhaps have instigated Bakhtin's observation in the footnote.

[11] Bk. 4, ch. 12–15.

[12] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:292, 417–418).

to die. Pushkin's scene where Boris Godunov's clothes are changed and he is tonsured before death is widely known. The parallelism of the images here is almost full.

(126) Echoes of this are also retained in the literature of later times, especially literature connected to the Rabelaisian line of development, for instance, in Scarron.

The carnivalesque character of this beating is totally obvious. There is even a kind of "carnival within a carnival" here, but with real-life consequences for the beaten-up catchpole. The custom of punching at the wedding itself is among the rites of the carnival type (as it is linked with fertility, with reproductive force, with time). *The rite legitimizes a certain level of freedom and familiarity*, of violating the usual norms of communal life. But in our episode the wedding itself is also *fictive*: it is played out like a Shrovetide farce or a carnival mystification. Nevertheless, in this doubly carnivalesque atmosphere the old catchpole is served some blows that are quite real and, moreover, are dealt with "steel gauntlets." Let us also stress the anatomizing, *carnivalesque-culinary-medical* character of the description of the thrashing.

Carnival style reveals itself even more clearly in the depiction of the thrashing received by the second catchpole, who came to Bashé four days after the first one. This catchpole, in contrast to the first one, is *young, tall, and skinny* ("un autre jeune, hault et maigre Chiquanous").[13] The first and second catchpoles (while not appearing together) thus make up a typical folk-festive carnival *comic pair*, based on *contrasts*: fat and thin, old and young, tall and short.(127) Such contrasting pairs are still alive today in circus and traveling-show comic performance. Don Quixote and Sancho were also such a carnival pair (of course, with added complexity).(128)[14]

A fictive wedding rite is also staged for the second catchpole; its participants are outright called "the actors in the farce" ("les personnaiges de la farce").[15] As the catchpole (the protagonist of the laughter-based ritual drama of tearing to pieces) enters, everyone present (the chorus) begins to laugh, and the catchpole himself laughs along with them ("A son entrée chacun comença soubrire. Chiquanous rioit par compaignie"). Thus, the *laughter-based ritual drama* is introduced. At the given signal the wedding rites are acted out. Then, as *wine and refreshments* are served, the *nuptial bashing* begins. Here is how the catchpole's beating is depicted:

> But, suddenly, up came the glove; down it went, mitten-like over Oudart's hand, and out it shot straight at Catchpole. This was the signal for other gauntlets to pelt down upon the bailiff.

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[13] Bk. 4, ch. 14.

[14] On doubles and pairs, cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 210–214, a passage that has many connections with themes in Bakhtin's book in general and in this chapter in particular).

In the footnote, the image, cited by Dieterich (1897, 239; and see his own source, Hamilton 1795, plate 57), only gives one of the two figures (the short fat one) an exaggerated phallus. Dieterich also notes the similarity to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

[15] Bk. 4, ch. 14 (Urquhart and Motteux).

(127) We also find such a comic pair on the "Isle of Catchpoles." Besides Redsnout, selected by Friar John, there was also a tall thin catchpole who complained about this choice.

(128) Similar comic pairs are a fairly ancient phenomenon. Dieterich reproduces in his book *Pulcinella* the comic figure of a boastful warrior and his arms-bearer from an ancient vase from southern Italy (the Hamilton collection). The resemblance of the warrior and his arms-bearer to Don Quixote and Sancho

> "Remember the wedding, the wedding, the wedding," they cried. "Remember the wedding, the wedding, the wedding."
>
> They laid on so heartily that blood spurted from his mouth, nose, ears and eyes. Catchpole was beaten to a pulp; his shoulders dislocated; his head, neck, back and breast pounded into mincemeat. You may take my word for it that Avignon, in carnival time, never produced youngsters that played more melodiously at thumpsocket than these vassals of My Lord of Basché upon the person of Catchpole. The poor devil fell, in a faint, to the ground.
>
> They poured several gallons of wine into his snout; they tied yellow-and-green ribbons, for favors, to his doublet; and they set him on his snotty horse. (book 4, chapter 14)

We see here once more the anatomizing, carnival-culinary-medical dismemberment of the body; listed are the mouth, the nose, the ears, the eyes, the head, the neck, the back, the chest, and the arms. This is a carnival tearing to pieces of the protagonist of a laughter-based game. It is, of course, no coincidence that Rabelais promptly recalls the *carnival in Avignon*: the thumps produced by youngsters playing thumpsocket as part of the recreations, were not administered more *melodiously* ("melodieusement" in the original) than the ones inflicted on the catchpole.

The end of the scene is exceptionally telling; the beaten catchpole is, in essence, dressed up as a fool-king: his face is drenched in wine (probably red wine, resulting in him becoming "red-snouted," like Friar John's catchpole), and he is decorated with ribbons of various colors, like a carnival sacrificial victim.[(129)16]

The famous enumeration of the 216 names of games played by Gargantua (book 1, chapter 22) contains one game called "au boeuf violé." In some cities in France there was a custom—and one that has survived almost to the present day—to lead a *fattened ox* through the streets and public squares of the city during carnival—that is, when the *slaughter of cattle* and the tasting of meat were still permitted (as well as *copulation and weddings*, forbidden during Lent). The ox was led in solemn procession accompanied by the playing of *viols*, hence its name, "boeuf violé." Its head *was decorated with*

[16] The footnote is probably motivated by Rabelais's own text, which refers to the colors as "belle *livrée* de jauine et verd" (bk. 4, ch. 14, italics added). Robert Marichal, commenting on the text in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 6:188; this volume of the edition came out too late to be available to Bakhtin in 1940) notes that red, yellow, and green were indeed livery colors, but not those of the Basché house; they were those of Henry II, the reigning French monarch at the time bk. 4 was written and published. Screech, commenting on his own translation of bk. 4, ch. 14 (Rabelais 2006, 705), notes that yellow and green were colors traditionally associated with fools and jesters. All this fits Bakhtin's interpretation of the text here better than he himself guessed.

is striking (except that both figures are endowed with an enormous phallus) (see Dieterich, *Pulcinella*, p. 239).

[(129)] Yellow and green are probably the "livery" colors of the house of Basché.

multicolored ribbons.[17] Unfortunately, we do not know exactly what was the game that was played with this carnival ox, but most likely it did not proceed without some whacking being involved. After all, this "boeuf violé" was to be slaughtered, it was a *carnival sacrificial victim*. This ox is *a king, a breeder* (embodying the year's fertility), but it is also "*sacrificial meat*," which will be chopped up (haché) and "*anatomized*" to make sausages and pies.[18]

We can now see why the beaten catchpole is decorated with ribbons of different colors. *The beating is as ambivalent as verbal abuse, which passes into praise*. There is no pure abstract negation in the *folk-festive system of images*. This system's images seek to embrace *both poles of becoming* in their contradictory unity. The one who is thrashed (and slaughtered) is decorated; the beating itself has a *merry* character; it is both introduced with and culminates in laughter.

The episode worked out in the greatest detail, posing the greatest interest, is that of the beating of the third and last catchpole who turned up at Lord Basché's house.[19]

This time the catchpole arrives with two bailiffs (witnesses). Once more the mock wedding ceremony is played out. As the feasting proceeds, the catchpole himself proposes to renew the good old custom of "nopces à mitaines" and is the first to start delivering nuptial punches. At that point, the beating of the catchpoles begins:

> At once the gauntlets rained down upon him to good purpose. Catchpole's head was split in nine different places. The first bailiff's right arm was broken. The second bailiff's upper jaw was dislocated, so that it fell halfway over his chin, baring his uvula, with great prejudice to his molar, masticatory and canine teeth.
>
> Trudon changed the rhythm of his drumming; at once gauntlets vanished miraculously, and refreshments were served, ever more plentiful. The general merriment increased: friend drank to friend, and the whole company to Catchpole and his bailiffs.
>
> "God damn this wedding!" cried Oudart. "That cursed bailiff there dislocatocrushosnuggered my shoulder."
>
> But for all his wrath, he drank the fellow's health, punctuating his toasts with the old-fashioned refrain and the old-fashioned thump. The unjawed bailiff joined his hands, as though in prayer, in a pantomime of apology. (He could not speak!)

[17] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:198).

[18] Bakhtin alludes to lines from Eloy d'Amerval's poem cited above (see chapter 2, note 136), where it is the body of Christ that is being (metaphorically) turned into mincemeat. The reference to Christ also adds a layer to the (otherwise ungrounded) assertion that the ox in question was beaten up: beatings were part of the passion story in the Gospels.

[19] Bk. 4, ch. 14–15.

> Loire complained bitterly that the bailiff with dislocated shoulders had, with his leg-of-mutton fist, fetched his elbow such a thwack that he was bruisedblackandcontusedblue down to his very heels. (book 4, chapter 15)

The injuries inflicted upon the catchpole and his bailiffs are, as usual, described with an anatomizing enumeration of afflicted organs and body parts. The beating itself has a markedly *solemn and festive character*: it takes place *while feasting*, *to the sound of the wedding drum*, which *changes its tone* when the beating is over and a new upswing of feasting merriment begins. The change of the drum's tone and the renewal of feasting introduces a new phase of the laughter-based ritual drama: *laughing at the beaten-up sacrificial victim*. Those who did the beating pretend to have been beaten up themselves. Each plays out the role of the one crippled and holds the catchpoles to blame. The atmosphere of this unbridled carnival pranking scene is intensified by the fact that each of its participants characterizes the exaggerated (bloated) degree of crippledness using a multisyllable word incredible in its excessive length. These words themselves were not just randomly created by Rabelais: they are intended, up to a point, to tone-paint the nature of the injury inflicted, while their length, the number and variety of syllables in them (which also have a certain semantic tinge to them), is designed to convey the number, variety, and force of the blows received. When pronounced, these words cripple the organs of speech, as it were (they are "tongue twisters"). The length and difficulty of pronunciation of these words consistently increase with every new participant in the game; if Oudart's word has eight syllables, the one uttered by Loire has thirteen.[20] Because of these words, carnival unbridledeness enters into the very language of this scene.

Here is how this episode continues:

> Trudon protested, as he put his handkerchief over his left eye and pointed to his drum, stove in on one side:
>
> "What harm had I done them? They were not content to maimanglescotchblemishdisfigurepunch my poor eye, they had to bash in my drum. God knows, tabors are usually beaten and drumskins pierced at weddings, but taborers, far from being struck, are royally entertained. Let the devil use my drum for a nightcap!" (book 4, chapter 15)

Here, the prank played out on the beaten catchpoles intensifies—the handkerchief supposedly covering a black eye, the broken drum—and likewise intensified is the length of the word conveying the degree of the injury sustained: it already has twenty syllables, and the syllables themselves become more fanciful.[21]

[20] The syllable count fits the original French: "desincornifistibulé" and "esperruquancluzelubelouzerirelu," respectively. There is a discussion of such long words in Rabelais's text in Spitzer (1910, 99–107), though there is no indication that Bakhtin relies on it here.

[21] In French: "morrambouzevezengouzequoquemorguatasacbacguevezinemaffressé."

The *image of the broken drum* is telling. To correctly understand this entire episode where the catchpoles are being beaten up and to understand the peculiar nature of the thrashing itself, one should take into account the following. *The wedding drum had an erotic signification.* "To beat the wedding drum," and to beat a drum more generally, meant to perform the reproductive act; "drummer" ("tabourineur" or "taboureur") meant lover. This sense of the word was common knowledge in Rabelais's time. Rabelais himself, in book 1, chapter 3, speaks of the "drummers" ("taboureurs") of emperor Octavian's daughter—that is, her lovers. He also uses the word "drum" in the erotic sense in book 2, chapter 26, and in book 3, chapter 28. Words like "stroke," "to strike," "to beat," and "stick" ("baston") were also used in this sense. The phallus was called "baston de mariage" (Rabelais uses this expression in book 3, chapter 8), and it was also called "baston à un bout" (this expression can also be found in Rabelais's text, in book 3, chapter 18).[(130)22] Of course, *the "nuptial bashing" also had the sense of a reproductive act.* This sense also transferred to the beating of the catchpoles; it is no coincidence that they were beaten specifically under cover of a nuptial bashing and to the sound of the wedding drum.

This is why, in the entire episode we are analyzing, there is no everyday-life brawl, no blows that are purely of the everyday-life kind, understood in a narrowly practical way. *All the blows have here a symbolically extended and ambivalent sense*: these are blows that at once both *put to death* (if taken to their limit) and *give the gift of new life*, both put an end to the *old* and conceive the *new.* That is why the entire episode is permeated with such an unbridledly carnivalesque and bacchic atmosphere.

At the same time, the beating of the catchpoles also has full real-life significance, both in terms of the seriousness of the blows inflicted and in terms of their aim: they are beaten up in order to ward off, once and for all, false complaints against the Lord of Basché (which is successfully achieved). Yet these catchpoles—the representatives of the old law, the old truth, the old world—they are inseparable from all that is old, outgoing, dying, *but they are also inseparable from the new that is being born out of this old. They partake in the ambivalent world, dying and giving birth at the same time*, yet they gravitate toward its negative, *mortal* pole; their beating is a feast of *death–rebirth* (but from the perspective of laughter). Hence, they are being showered

[22] Bakhtin's source for the various erotic metaphors in Rabelais's text (both in the main text and in the footnote) is Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:299–309, especially pp. 306–307; see also Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:44–45, 50). I fixed a few minor errors in references to chapter numbers in Rabelais. I follow Bakhtin's literal Russian translations of the various French words he is referring to. Rabelais's published translations often use different words in English to convey the same idea (e.g., Le Clercq has "bellybumpers" instead of "drummers" in bk. 1, ch. 3, and "tailpushers" instead of "bowling players" in bk. 1, ch. 4).

[(130)] The word for "bowling pins" ("quille") and "to play bowling" was also used in an erotic sense. All these expressions, lending an erotic sense to *hitting*, *stick*, *cue stick*, *tambourine*, and so on, can also be found with high frequency in the works of Rabelais's contemporaries—for instance, in the aforementioned *Triomphe de la dame Verolle.*

with *ambivalent, nuptial, upbuilding* blows to the sound of the drum and the tinkling of feasting goblets. *They are being beaten up like kings.*

And such are all of Rabelais's beatings. All these feudal kings (Picrochole and Anarchus), aged magisters of the Sorbonne (Janotus de Bragmardo), monastery sacristans (Ticklepecker), all these hypocritical monks, morose slanderers, gloomy agelasts whom Rabelais kills, whose bodies he has torn apart, whom he beats up, chases away, curses, verbally abuses, and laughs at, they are all representatives of the old world and of the *whole* world, the double-bodied world that *is giving birth while dying.* By cutting off and discarding the old dying-off body, the umbilical cord of the new and youthful body is simultaneously severed. It is one and the same act. The Rabelaisian images register precisely *the very moment of transition*, which contains both poles within itself. Every blow dealt to the old world assists the birth of the new one; a caesarian section is being performed, as it were, where the mother is put to death and the child is set free. The representatives of the *old, but birthing*, world are the ones beaten and abused. Therefore, the invective and thrashing turn into a festive laughter-based ritual drama.

Let us quote another excerpt (with some omissions) from the end of this episode:

> The bride, weeping for laughter and laughing for tears, complained hysterically. Catchpole had not stopped smiting her, without choice or distinction of members; worse, he had rumpled her hair, and, worst of all, he had grasspressqueezedrubbangropricknockneadedandcrumpled her privipudendapeehole....
>
> The steward appeared and with his arm in a sling, as though it had been utterly bashbangdislocodecimated.
>
> "It was Satan himself made me attend this wedding," he grumbled. "As a result, by God's power, my arms are crackcrumblecrusharrowed. Do you call this a wedding? I call it a shedding—of shit! Yes, by God, I call it the marriage described by Lucian in his *Symposium.*" (book 4, chapter 15)

Here, the ambivalence inherent in all the images of this episode also acquires the form, typical for Rabelais, of an oxymoron: the bride was weeping for laughter and laughing for tears. Also telling is that the bride received blows (albeit made-up ones) to her private parts ("nuptial punches"). In the steward's words, with which the quoted excerpt ends, two points should be emphasized. First, there is in the original French text the lowering wordplay, typical of grotesque realism, which reduces engagement ("fiansailles") to defecation ("fiantailles"). Second, there is the reference to Lucian's "Feast of Lapithae."[23] This variety of the ancient "symposium" from Lucian is indeed closer than all other varieties in antiquity to Rabelais's scenes of feasting (especially

[23] Lucian's "A Feast of Lapithae" (Lucian 1905) is not included in the two-volume Russian edition of Lucian (1915–1920) that Bakhtin studied for the purposes of writing the book. It is included in another Russian two-volume edition that Bakhtin might have had access to (Lucian 1935), though the

to the one in question). Lucian's Feast also ends in a brawl. However, one should also emphasize an essential difference. The brawl at the feast depicted by Lucian is only symbolically extended thanks to the traditional material of his images, but not at all as part of the author's design, which is abstractly rationalist, and even somewhat nihilist, in character. Lucian's traditional images always speak despite the author's designs[24] and are always incomparably richer for this. Lucian works with traditional images, the worth and weight of which he himself has almost forgotten.

Let us give a partial summary of the entire episode we have been analyzing, of the beating of catchpoles in the house of Basché. The entire event depicted here has the character of a folk-festive laughter-based ritual act. This is merry and unfettered play, but it is imbued with deep meaning. Its genuine hero and author is *time itself*, which decrowns, makes laughable, and puts to death the entire old world (the old powers, the old truth) and at the same time gives birth to the new. In this play there is both a protagonist and a laughing chorus. The protagonist is the representative of the old yet *pregnant and birthing world*. This protagonist is beaten and laughed at, but the blows are upbuilding, since they aid in the birth of the new. Thus are the blows merry, melodious, and festive. Terms of abuse share this upbuilding and merry nature. The protagonist, as the laughter-based sacrificial victim, is decorated (the catchpole is adorned with ribbons). The images of the disarticulated body are also of essential significance in this context. As each catchpole is beaten up, a detailed anatomizing description is provided. The thrashing of the third catchpole and of his bailiffs features the disarticulated body in precise detail. In addition to the real injuries inflicted upon them, there is a long procession of fictitiously crippled organs and body parts: dislocated shoulders, bruised eyes, lame legs, crippled arms, injured genitalia. It is some kind of a bodily sowing, or more correctly speaking, a bodily harvest. It is like an Empedocles fragment.[25] This is a combination of a battle and a kitchen or

title is there rendered differently than what we find in Bakhtin's text (there are, of course, many other editions of Lucian, in several languages, that Bakhtin could have familiarized himself with at one point or another). In the secondary literature we know Bakhtin worked with, there are some mentions of this work in Reich (see especially Reich 1903, 827), though those are unlikely to have been Bakhtin's source. A comment on the relevant passage in the German edition of Rabelais by Regis (1832, 2:598–601) could have provided Bakhtin with the information he uses here, but it is not clear if Bakhtin ever had access to that edition while working on the book.

[24] This comment (as well as similar comments made about seventeenth-century authors—Sorel, Fischart—in chapter 1) links to a line of argument that is significant to Bakhtin's theories of language and of the literary image. Past utterances and forms carry their authors' intentions, and the speaker or author working with them, or responding to them, has to appropriate them to make them speak with the author's own voice (e.g., Bakhtin 1981a, 293–294)—an appropriation that is never quite complete. Forms carried on from the past thus maintain something of their own voice and can sometimes go against the author's intentions (as is the case here) or preserve the ancient, seemingly forgotten features of a genre, as if the genre had a memory of its own (Bakhtin 1984, 121).

[25] The idea that individual living things are all dismembered body parts of the universe as a living body is a central metaphor in Empedocles's thought. One fragment in particular (Diels-Kranz 31B20) provides a clear parallel to this discussion:

a butcher shop. But this is also, as we know, the subject matter of oaths and vulgar public-square curses. For the time being, we are merely outlining here this image of the grotesque body; we will devote a special chapter to an analysis of its meaning and origins.

Thus, *everything is stylized* in the way this episode is depicted, stylized in the spirit of folk-festive laughter-based forms. But here, these forms, which took shape over thousands of years, serve the new historic tasks facing the epoch; they are permeated with mighty historical awareness and help foster a deeper insight into reality.

The story of "Villon's prank" in Saint-Maixent[26] is adjacent to the episode just analyzed (it is told by Lord Basché himself to instruct the participants of the laughter-based ritual drama). However, we shall examine this story at the end of the chapter, where we will revisit the episode discussed here.

All the scenes of beatings in Rabelais's novel, as we have said, are similar in character. They are all profoundly ambivalent and permeated with merriment. Everything in them is done with laughter and for laughter's sake: "Et le tout en riant."[27]

Let us briefly examine two more scenes: in one of them blood turns out to be wine; in the other a massacre turns into feasting and the savoring of food.

The first scene is the famous episode of the beating of 13,622 men by Friar John in the abbey vineyard.[28] This is a most cruel massacre:

> Thwack to the right, thwack to the left, Friar John struck in the old-fashioned style of fencing; thwack, thwack, he felled them like so many hogs. He brained some, smashed the legs and arms of others, broke a neck here, cracked a rib there. He flattened a nose or knocked an eye out, crushed a jaw or sent thirty-two teeth rattling down a bloody gullet. Some had their shoulderblades dislocated, others their thighs lammed to pulp, others their hips wrenched, others their arms battered beyond recognition. Let a wretched fellow seek hiding amid the densest vines and Friar John ripped him up the back, gutting him like a cur. Let another take to his heels and Friar John split his head at the lambdoid suture. Let a third scramble up a tree and Friar John impaled him by the fundament....
>
> Where a man had the temerity to offer resistance, Friar John gave an exhibition of muscular competence as he bashed in the rashling's chest, exposing heart and lungs. Thumping others under the ribs, he mauled

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This (the contest of Love and Strife) is manifest in the mass of mortal limbs. At one time all the limbs that are the body's portion are brought together by Love in blooming life's high season; at another, severed by cruel Strife, they wander each alone by the breakers of life's sea (Burnet 1908, 242–243).

Bakhtin's most likely source on Empedocles here is Misch (1950, 83–88; see Bakhtin's summary of this passage in Bakhtin 2012a, 684–686).

[26] Bk. 4, ch. 13.

[27] "[And all] amid good-natured laughter" (bk. 4, ch. 12, quoted above).

[28] Bk. 1, ch. 27. Le Clercq's translation refers to the site of the massacre as the "abbey close."

> their stomachs so severely that they died at once. A whack on the navel and what enemy tripe came spurting forth! A lash at the testicles and out flew their bumguts. Undoubtedly, here was the most horrible spectacle ever seen upon earth.

We have here the image of a genuine bodily harvest.

When some younger monklings came running up to assist Friar John, he ordered them to cut the throats of the injured: "The little monkeys throttled and dispatched all those Friar John had struck down. Can you guess what instruments they used? Those fine little edge-tools children use hereabouts to scoop the kernel out of ripe walnuts."[29]

This most terrible and bloody slaughter was undertaken by Friar John in order to save the wine of the new crop. And this entire bloody episode is filled with not merely merry but outright jubilant tones. This is "the vineyard of Dionysus";[30] this is vendange, the feast of the grape harvest.[31] That precisely is the season during which the scene described in this episode takes place.[32] The children's blades used by the young novices at the abbey force us to discover behind the bloody mash of disarticulated human bodies vats filled with that "purée septembrale" (septembral-mash) that Rabelais mentions multiple times.[33] Blood is transmuted into wine.[(131)][34]

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[29] Bk. 1, ch. 27.

[30] "The Vineyard of Dionysus" (Ivanov 1971) is a short poem in blank verse (first published in 1903) by Bakhtin's favorite poet (see Bakhtin and Duvakin 2019, 44), and a significant figure in Bakhtin's intellectual lineage more generally, Viacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov. The poem reads:

> He surveys his chosen vineyard, the first of his chosen ones, Dionysus
> Women, two, clad in dark clothes—two gloomy vintagers—follow him
> He tells the two sorrowful wardens—two gloomy vintagers—Dionysus:
> "You take out, Sorrow and Torment, your, gloomy vintagers, sharpened knife;
> You shall reap, Sorrow and Torment, my grapes, the first of my chosen ones!
> Collect the blood of the scarlet clusters, of my bunches the golden tears—
> Sacrificed bliss in the press of sorrow, purple suffering pressed into bliss;
> Saturate with the eager moisture my fierce Grail of elations red!"

[31] On vendange as a feast, see a more detailed discussion later in this chapter. Bakhtin's source of information about this feast is unknown.

[32] See bk. 1, ch. 25.

[33] Refrring to wine (see Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:78; Sainéan 1922–1923, 2:245–246; Moland 1884, 734). The expression is used in bk. 1, ch. 7, and bk. 2, ch. 1, and a variant ("purée de septembre") in bk. 2, ch. 34.

[34] Footnote: *Don Quixote*, bk. 1, ch. 35; *The Golden Ass*, bk. 2, §32–bk. 3 §10. Implied, but not explicitly stated, is, of course, a reference to the transubstantiation of wine into blood in the Christian rit-

[(131)] We also find the theme of blood turning into wine in *Don Quixote*, specifically, in the episode where the hero fights against wineskins, which he takes for giants. An even more interesting development of this theme can be found in Apuleius's *Golden Ass*. At the doorstep of a house, Lucius kills people whom he takes to be robbers; he beholds the blood which he has shed. The next morning he is brought to court and accused of murder. He may face capital punishment. But it turns out that he was the victim of a merry mystification. The murder victims were mere wineskins. The gloomy trial turns into a scene of general merry laughter.

On to the second episode. In book 2, chapter 25, we are told how Pantagruel and his four companions defeated 660 knights of King Anarchus. They burned down all those knights by means of an ingenious use of gunpowder. Immediately following this, merry feasting commences. Carpalim hunted down an enormous amount of venison:

> Invoking the nine Muses, Epistemon fashioned nine splendid antique wooden spits; Eusthenes helped skin the game; Panurge laid two cuirassier saddles down to serve as andirons. Promoting their prisoner to the rank of cook, they *had their venison roasted by the fire in which the enemy burned.* Then they doused their food with vinegar and *great feasting followed*, guzzling like so many famished devils. To see them wolf down their food was a triumphant spectacle.[35]

Thus, the pyre on which people have just been burned turned into a merry kitchen hearth on which a pile of venison is being roasted. The folk-festive carnivalesque nature of this bonfire and of the burning of the knights (this is how the effigies of winter, death, and the old year are burned), together with the "feasting for the whole world"[36] that follows, becomes especially clear in the subsequent development of this episode. Pantagruel, together with his companions, decided to erect triumphal posts on the site of the battle and feast. Pantagruel erects a post on which he hangs the archaic attributes of the incinerated knights—a corselet, spurs, a coat of mail, a steel gauntlet, leg-guards. In the lines of poetry inscribed on the trophy he lauds the victory of man's common sense over heavy armor (after all, they burned the knights by means of an ingenious use of gunpowder). Panurge erects another post, to which he attaches feasting trophies: the horns, hide, and foot of a roebuck, a leveret's ears, bustards' wings, and so on. To these he adds a bottle of vinegar, a horn with salt, a spit, a larding stick, a salt cellar, and a goblet. His inscription on the trophy lauds the feast and gives a recipe.[(132)37]

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ual of the Eucharist and Jesus's corresponding words during the Last Supper (Mark 14:23–24, Matthew 26:27–28, Luke 22:20). This was also a focus of attention for Freidenberg (1997b, 53–54). Bakhtin analyzed episodes from both *Don Quixote* and *The Golden Ass* on several occasions. The latter, in particular, was a focus of attention in "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981c, 111–129). The footnote thus most likely relies on Bakhtin's direct familiarity with both texts.

[35] Bk. 2, ch. 26. I modified the translation in one place to preserve the explicit reference to feasting, which appears in Rabelais's Russian translations and which Bakhtin emphasizes in the quote.

[36] The Pyast Russian translation, from which Bakhtin quoted in the 1940 manuscript, contained the phrase "feasting for the whole world" (*pir na ves' mir*) as part of the above quotation, so, originally, this was a direct reference to the passage being analyzed. Moreover, other uses of the same phrase throughout the book can be read as allusions to this passage. However, the newer Lyubimov translation, which Bakhtin quoted from in the eventually published text of the book, uses a different Russian expression (*pir goroy*, literally "feasting-a-mountain") instead. See also note 42 to the introduction.

[37] Bk. 2, ch. 27. Panurge's inscription is a parody of Pantagruel's, maintaining its metric structure

[(132)] In Folengo's Italian (not macaronic) work *Orlandino*, there is a totally carnivalesque description

These two triumphal posts clearly express the ambivalent character of this entire system of folk-festive images. The historical theme of *the victory of gunpowder over knights' armor and castle walls* (the theme of Pushkin's *Scenes from Knightly Times*),[38] the theme of the victory of the inventive mind over uncouth, primitive force, are given here *in a carnivalesque reworking.* Hence, the second trophy also unfolds all the necessary kitchen carnival paraphernalia: spits, larding sticks, pots, and so on. The death of the old world and the feasting merriment of the new world are blended into one in this system of images: the fire that has consumed the old turns into the feasting kitchen hearth. The phoenix of the new is reborn from the ashes of the old.

Let us also recall in this connection Panurge's Turkish episode.[39] Having been captured by the Turks, Panurge almost suffered martyrdom at the stake for his faith but was miraculously saved. The episode is constructed as a parodic travesty of martyrdom and miracle tales. Panurge is being roasted on a spit, having first been larded, as he has not been sufficiently fattened up himself. Thus, the martyr's stake is here substituted with a kitchen hearth. Eventually, as we already pointed out, he managed to escape miraculously, and moreover, he himself roasted his tormentor. The episode ends with a laudation of grilled meats.

Thus, Rabelais has blood turn into wine and a ruthless slaughter and martyr's death turn into merry feasting, the sacrificial stake turning into a kitchen hearth. *Bloody battles, dismemberments, incinerations, deaths, beatings, blows, curses, verbal abuse are steeped in* "*merry time,*" *which gives birth while putting to death, which allows nothing old to be perpetuated and never ceases to give birth to the new and the youthful.* This understanding of time is not one of Rabelais's abstract thoughts; it is, so to speak, "immanent" to the traditional folk-festive system of images that he inherited. Rabelais did not create this system, but in his person it ascended to a new and higher level of historical development.

But perhaps all these images are nothing but a dead and encumbering tradition? Perhaps all these ribbons tied to the arms of the thrashed catchpole, these endless beatings and verbal abuse, that body rent to pieces, those kitchen utensils, are nothing but the meaningless vestiges of ancient worldviews, which became dead form, an

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and rhyme; the claim that it contains a recipe is slightly inaccurate (it contains no detailed cooking instructions).

For the footnote, see Schneegans (1894, 115).

[38] A short, apparently unfinished, play by Pushkin, not generally considered to be among his notable works. The theme of gunpowder overpowering armor and fortifications is made explicit not so much in the text of the play as in draft plans and ideas connected to it, found in Pushkin's notebooks of the 1830s and published in 1935 as part of a new Soviet edition of Pushkin's complete works (see Pushkin 1948, 348; this is a later revised edition of the 1935 publication).

[39] Bk. 2, ch. 14.

of Charlemagne's tournament: the knights ride asses, mules, and cows; they have baskets for shields and kitchen utensils—pails, cauldrons, pots—for helmets.

unnecessary deadweight, which hinders seeing and depicting one's actual contemporary reality as it is?[40]

Nothing could be more absurd and nonsensical than such a supposition. The system of folk-festive images has indeed been forming and living over thousands of years. This long process had *its own waste products*, to be sure, its own *dead deposits* in everyday life, in beliefs, in prejudices. But in the main line of its development this system grew, was enriched with *new meaning*, absorbed into itself *the people's new hopes and thoughts*, was reworked in the crucible of the people's new experience. The language of images was being enriched by new nuances of meaning and was becoming ever more refined.

As a result, folk-festive images were able to become a mighty instrument for the artistic grasping of reality, to become the basis for a genuine broad and deep realism. These folk images help one to grasp not a naturalistic, fleeting, empty, meaningless, and disjointed image of reality but, rather, the very process of its becoming, the meaning and direction of this process. From this follows the most profound universality and sober optimism of the folk-festive system of images.

In Rabelais's work this system of images lives an intense, topical, and fully conscious life, and moreover, it lives in its entirety, up to the minutest detail, including the colorful ribbons on the sleeves of the catchpole who is getting a beating, including the red snout of another catchpole, including the staff of the cross with faded fleur-de-lys brandished by Friar John, including his nickname "Mincemeat."[41] There is not a single vestige that is dead or has lost its meaning; everything is saturated with topical, purposeful, and holistic meaning. Rabelais's responsible[42] and clear *artistic* consciousness is present in every detail (although, of course, this consciousness is not narrowly rationalistic).

This does not mean, of course, that each detail was invented, thought out, and weighed by the author's *abstract* thought. Rabelais had mastered his style—the grand style of folk-festive forms—in an artistically conscious way; the logic of this carnivalesque style suggested to him the catchpole's red snout, his merry resurrection after

[40] This paragraph might be read as a hidden polemic with Freidenberg (1997b), who indeed generally considered traditional forms to be vestiges of past social orders, which were first overcome by literature in the industrial capitalist age (see, e.g., Freidenberg 1997b, 289). To be sure, this paragraph does not quite do Freidenberg's position full justice, and Bakhtin may well have had other authors and other arguments in mind in addition to, or even instead of, Freidenberg. But the discussion Bakhtin engages in here does nevertheless focus on what was one of his main disagreements with Freidenberg.

[41] Bk. 1, ch. 27. I use Screech's literal translation of the nickname ("des Entommeures") from French (Le Clercq has "of the Funnels"). Bakhtin repeats the nickname as it appears in the Russian translation he was working with (Pyast's *kroshevo*, which also means "mincemeat," was used in the 1940 manuscript but changed to Lyubimov's *zubodrobitel'*, literally "teeth-crusher," in 1965). See also the discussion of this nickname in chapter 2.

[42] Responsibility (*otvetstvennost'*; typically rendered as "answerability" in published translations) is a key term in Bakhtin's earliest surviving writings (Bakhtin 1990a, 1990b, 1993; and see Birgy 2024). It has much in common with the notion of authenticity in existentialist philosophy: an attitude that consciously embraces one's position in the world (though Bakhtin understands this attitude as one that primarily *responds* to others, rather than as one that is *authentic* to oneself or to Being, as most

the beating, and his likening to a king and to two kings. But his abstract thought is unlikely to have chosen and considered such details in isolation. He still lived, as did all his contemporaries, in the world of these forms and breathed their air, he had confidently mastered their language, not needing the constant control of his abstract consciousness.

We have established the essential connection that blows and verbal abuse have with decrowning. In Rabelais, terms of abuse never assume the character of merely personal invective; they are universal, and—in the final account—always aim at what is highest. Behind anyone being beaten up and verbally abused Rabelais, as it were, sees a king, a former king, or a pretender to the throne.[43] But at the same time, the images of all those who are being decrowned are fully real and lifelike. All these catchpoles and intriguers, somber hypocrites and slanderers, whom he beats up, chases away, and verbally abuses are perfectly real. All these persons are being laughed at, subjected to abuse and beating as individual incarnations of the outgoing power and truth: of once-dominant thought, law, faith, and virtue.

This old power and old truth stake a claim to be absolute, to have extratemporal validity. Hence, all the representatives of the old truth and the old power are gloomily serious, neither knowing how to laugh nor wishing to (they are agelasts); they orate majestically, find their foes to be the enemies of eternal truth, and therefore threaten them with eternal demise. The dominant power and the dominant truth do not see themselves in the mirror of time and hence also do not see their own beginnings, boundaries, and ends, do not see their own old and laughable face or the comic nature of their claims to eternity and irrevocability.[44] And, thus, the representatives of old

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other existentialists would have it). The context here suggests that Bakhtin did not use his early term by accident, as it is precisely *consciousness* (and often specifically *artistic* consciousness) that Bakhtin characterizes as responsible in his early works.

[43] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 99 ff.), who also considers invective as directed at death itself, at a deity, or at some figure of authority.

[44] Bakhtin alludes here to one of the most consistent recurrent themes in his writings: one's inability to perceive oneself. Bakhtin explores these themes in detail in his early writings (especially Bakhtin 1990b). According to Bakhtin, I can never perceive myself as a coherent object. When looking at my own reflection in the mirror, what I see with my eyes fails to coalesce into a coherent image with my sense of myself from within (Bakhtin 2017, 217). Only another person can form an image of me, an image that puts me in the context in which I can be found, including parts of the world, and of my body and personality, not available to my own gaze, but which does not include my inner conscious experience and my freedom to act. In his book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984), Bakhtin focuses on the ethical aspects of the other's "surplus of seeing": presuming that my image of another person *exhausts* that person is, according to Bakhtin, an act of violence. One of the most concentrated discussions of these themes can be found in Bakhtin's working notes from the early 1940s (Bakhtin 2017)—that is, written not very long after the 1940 manuscript of the book on Rabelais, when Bakhtin was actively developing the themes he explored in the book.

In this context, the present paragraph of the book stands in apparent contrast to Bakhtin's other claims, a contrast Bakhtin notices and takes pains to account for in the ensuing discussion. The representatives of the outgoing power and truth cannot see themselves in the "mirror of time." But this, in fact, would be true of anyone. The audience's laughter at those representatives, however, should

power and old truth, with the most serious countenance and in serious tones, play out the remainder of their role, while their spectators have already long been laughing. They continue speaking with the serious, majestic, intimidating, dreadful tone of kings or heralds of "eternal truths," unaware that time has already made this tone laughable in their mouths and turned old power and truth into a carnival Shrovetide dummy, a laughable bogeyman, which the crowd of people mauls, laughing, in the public square.(133)[45]

And it is precisely these dummies that our kindest maître Rabelais[46] does away with—pitilessly, cruelly, and *merrily*. In essence, it is *merry time* itself, on whose behalf and with whose tone Rabelais speaks, that does away with them. Rabelais does not torture living people; let them go, he says, but first, let them take off their royal robes or their masquerade-like pompous gown of a magister of the Sorbonne, that herald of divine truth. He is even disposed to reward them afterward with a little cottage in a humble quarter and a stone mortar to pound out greensauce, as he awarded King Anarchus, or with some cloth for a new pair of breeches, a capacious food dish, some sausage, and firewood such as he awarded Master Janotus de Bragmardo.[47]

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have been denounced by Bakhtin as unethical, as it explicitly relies on the audience's surplus of seeing. Nevertheless, Bakhtin insists on the kindness of "kindest maître Rabelais," who uses the power of his surplus of seeing against the pompous pretenses of its targets but not against their person, not against them as human beings. By implication, it follows that the claim to exercise authority (which Bakhtin understands as inherently monologic and as yet another form of the same violent abuse of one's surplus of seeing) legitimizes the use of one's surplus of seeing to deflate such claims.

[45] The footnote was added in the 1949–1950 round of revisions and refers to Marx (1970, 134). Bakhtin quotes the same passage from the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* in a paragraph he added to the text, also in 1949–1950, close to the end of chapter 6 (see note 172 to that chapter).

[46] Cf. the French epithet "le bon Rabelais," commonly used in much of the literature Bakhtin relied on. In her commentary to the book, Popova (2010a, 609) includes a brief set of working notes (ten numbered paragraphs) that Bakhtin wrote in the 1960s, which begin with the words "Kindest maître Rabelais." These notes were clearly written in connection with the work on the book. The first of the ten paragraphs deals with the notion of cruelty (ranging from the "animal" to the "maniacally dogmatic") and contrasts it with a humane approach (implicitly ascribed to Rabelais) that "laughs at itself" and "does not consider itself to be the last word." Other notable points include a reference to the notion of "prelogical thinking," which Bakhtin used in the footnote citing Freidenberg (1997b) on p. 56. Referring to the type of thinking reflected in carnival imagery in paragraph 4, he writes, "This is not prelogical thinking; it is parallel to it [i.e., to logical thinking] and cannot be replaced by it. Concepts are born out of it (from its womb), but never exhaust it. Carnival thinking is international. Logical thinking is the kind of thinking that can be entrusted to a machine." There is also the brief and very telling paragraph 3: "Merry kindness as the highest definition of the divine."

[47] See bk. 2, ch. 31 (Anarchus) and bk. 1, ch. 18–20 (Bragmardo). Bakhtin alludes to both these episodes earlier in the paragraph ("let them take off their royal robes or their masquerade-like pompous gown of a magister of the Sorbonne, a herald of divine truth"), before mentioning them explicitly.

(133) All these representatives of old power and old truth are, in the words of K. Marx only the comedians of a world order "whose *true heroes* are dead" (see K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, vol. 1, p. 418). Folk laughter culture perceives all their claims (to immutability and eternity) in the perspective of time, bringing about the succession and renewal of all things.

The episode with Master Janotus is one that we shall examine more closely. It is connected to the episode that features young Gargantua carrying off the bells from the Notre-Dame cathedral.[48]

The theme of carrying off the bells was itself borrowed by Rabelais from the *Great Chronicles*,[49] but it is extended and transformed in his novel. Gargantua carries away the historic Notre-Dame bells to make them into *jingles* for his giant mare, which he intends to send back to his father with a load of cheese and herring. *This decrowning of cathedral bells into jingles on a mare* is a typical lowering carnival gesture, which combines decrowning annihilation with renewal and rebirth on a new material-bodily plane.

The image of a small tinkling bell or a jingle (usually a cowbell) already appears in the oldest evidence documenting ritual acts of the carnival type as their indispensable accessory.[50] Little bells are also an ordinary accessory in the mythical images of the "wild host," the "wild hunt," and "Erlking's people," which, since the oldest times, have merged with the images of the carnival procession. Cowbells also feature in the description of early fourteenth-century charivari in the *Roman de Fauvel*. The role of a fool's jingles on the jester's costume, cap, and staff, as well as the fool's scepter held by the jester, is common knowledge. We can still hear the tinkling of jingle bells under the shaft bow during Shrovetide and at weddings even today.[51]

In Rabelais's own text, the description of the "diablerie" produced by François Villon also features little bells and jingles. The performers wore garments from which, "on leather straps, hung heavy cowbells and mulebells that set up a terrific din."[(134)][52] And the very image of decrowning church bells appears yet again in Rabelais's novel.

In the episode with the burning of the 660 knights and of the transformation of the funeral pyre into a kitchen hearth, which we have already examined, Pantagruel, as the feasting was in full swing and when all were busily chewing, declared, "Would to God you all had two pairs of little bells hanging on your chins ... and I the *great bells* of Rennes, Poitiers, Tours and Cambrai. By heaven! we would boom out a fine carillon to the wagging of our chops."[53]

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[48] See bk. 1, ch. 17–20.

[49] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:161).

[50] See Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 230–231) and Driesen (1904, 29–37, 115, 145). The latter is Bakhtin's source on the wild hunt and the charivari in the next few sentences. Note, however, that these are all based on medieval documents (no earlier than the late eleventh century), so Bakhtin's phrase "the oldest evidence" should probably be understood as relating specifically to the medieval forms of carnival rites.

[51] A shaft bow is part of the harness of a horse, or a team of horses, which arches above the animals' necks, used traditionally in Russia and in a few other parts of the world. The custom of placing jingling bells on the shaft bow (or, for that matter, of using horse-driven vehicles in general) for some celebrations is not as alive today as it was more than 80 years ago, when this passage was written.

[52] Cf. Driesen (1904, 141), Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 83–84).

[53] Bk. 2, ch. 26; translation modified.

[(134)] See book 4, chapter 13.

Church bells and jingle bells turn up in this instance not on the necks of cows or mules, but under the chins of merrily feasting people; their ringing is to reflect the movement of the munching jaws. It would be hard to find an image that reveals more clearly and tangibly, albeit crudely, the very logic of Rabelaisian play with lowering—the logic of invective annihilation-decrowning and of renewal-rebirth. The bells, decrowned on the higher plane, removed from the belfries of Poitiers, Rennes, Tours, and Cambrai, unexpectedly come back to life on the plane of feasting and eating and ring anew, marking the motions of the chewing mouth. Let us emphasize that the very fact that this new use of the bells is unexpected compels their image to be born again, as it were. This image appears before us as something completely new against this new backdrop, uncharacteristic of and alien to the backdrop against which it usually appears. And the sphere in which this *new birth of the image* takes place is *the material-bodily domain*, in this case in its feasting aspect. Let us also emphasize the literal, spatially topographical nature of the lowering: the bells are brought down from the *height* of the belfries to the *bottom*, under the chewing jaws.

The feasting aspect, which ushers in the rebirth of the bells, is, of course, far removed both from the animal act of eating and from the private, everyday-life dinner party. This is, after all, "feasting for the whole world," by the people's giant and his companions, around a historic fire, which burned down the old world of knightly feudal culture.

Let us return to our episode of the carrying off of the bells. It is now quite clear why Gargantua wants to turn the Notre-Dame bells into harness bells for his mare. As the story develops, bells and jingles are continually associated with carnivalesque feasting images. The commander of the monastic order of Saint Anthony plotted to filch these bells so that he might be heard from afar and make the *bacons* tremble in the pantries (he was entitled to donations of ham and bacon from the populace).[54] The main motive for the return of the bells, which Janotus de Bragmardo puts forward in his harangue, is the influence of their sound on the fertility of vines around Paris. The other decisive motive is that Janotus would receive some sausage and a pair of breeches if the bells are returned.[55] Thus, the bells in this episode continue to ring in an atmosphere of carnivalesque feasting.

Who, then, is Janotus de Bragmardo himself? By Rabelais's design, he is a senior member of the Sorbonne. The Sorbonne was the guardian of orthodoxy and of indestructible divine truth; it controlled the destiny of every religious opinion and book. The Sorbonne, as is well known, also condemned and banned all the books of Rabelais's novel as they appeared in print,[56] but, fortunately, the Sorbonne, by that time, was no longer all-powerful. And Janotus de Bragmardo was the representative of this honorable faculty. But out of precaution (one would still rather not trifle with the Sorbonne),

[54] Bk. 1, ch. 17.

[55] Bk. 1, ch. 19.

[56] These bans are mentioned and discussed in the relevant chapters of Plattard (1930), which is Bakhtin's most likely source on the matter.

Rabelais removed all apparent signs of him belonging to the Sorbonne.[(135)57] Janotus was delegated to persuade Gargantua, by means of a wise and eloquent oration, to return the bells. In return he was promised, as we have seen, a handsome "carnivalesque" reward in the form of breeches, sausage, and wine.

When Janotus, with comic importance, wearing the ceremonial mantle of a magister of the Sorbonne and accompanied by his assistants, arrives at Gargantua's quarters, this strange company is at first taken for a masquerade procession. Here is this passage:

> Master Janotus, with a haircut like that affected by Julius Caesar, settled the traditional doctoral hood over his cootlike head. Next, he antidoted his stomach against possible contamination, with cakes baked in the most secular ovens and holy water from his excellently stocked cellar. Then, he proceeded to Gargantua's. Before him crawled three red muzzled beadles; behind him he dragged five or six servile and artless Masters of Arts, all of them mildewed and rotten as cheeses.
>
> Ponocrates met them as they entered and was terrified at their motley: he was convinced they must be crazed mummers. He therefore asked one of the artless magisters what this masquerade meant. For answer, he was told they wished to recover the missing bells. (book 1, chapter 18)[58]

Emphasized here is the entire arrangement of *carnival props* in the images of the Sorbonnist and his companions (up to and including the already familiar "rouge muzeau"). They are turned into *carnival fools*, into a merry laughter-based procession. "Holy water from the cellar" was a current travestying reference to wine.[59]

Having realized what was going on, Gargantua and his companions decide to play out a merry farce (a mystification) on Janotus. They first let him drink "theologically"[(136)60] while they return the bells to the city officials whom they have meanwhile summoned. Thus, Janotus has to deliver his oration for laughs, for nothing but the amusement of those assembled. He delivers it solemnly and seriously, insisting on the return of the bells and not suspecting that the whole bells affair has already been settled without him and that, as a matter of fact, he is simply playing out the role of a fairground fool. This mystification emphasizes even further the carnivalesque char-

[57] See Plattard (1930, 161, 198) and Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:164–181).

[58] Translation modified (the adjective "red-muzzled," to the French equivalent of which Bakhtin draws the readers' attention in the next paragraph, is taken from Urquhart's translation).

[59] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:245), though see Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:165), where the suggestion is made that it was Rabelais who coined this phrase.

[60] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:187, 368, 2:315). This was removed from the 1542 edition (and see Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:cxiii).

[(135)] In the canonical edition of the first two books of his novel (published in 1542) Rabelais deleted direct allusions to the Sorbonne altogether, replacing the word "Sorbonnist" itself with the word "Sophist."

[(136)] "Theological drinking" and "theological wine" mean a good drinking bout (a lowering travesty).

acter of the Sorbonnist, a figure that has dropped out of the real course of life and has become a dummy to be laughed at but continues to play its part in a serious tone, not noticing that everyone all around has long been laughing.

Janotus's speech itself is a magnificent parody of the Sorbonnists' oratory, of their method of argumentation, and their Latin; this parody almost deserves to be placed alongside the *Letters of Obscure Men*.[61] But Janotus's parodic speech displays, from beginning to end and with immense artistry, *the image of old age*. The speech's "transcript" is full of onomatopoeic elements rendering all manners and degrees of coughing and throat clearing, spitting, catching one's breath, and snuffling. The speech is full of slips of the tongue, blunders, pauses, struggles to catch a train of thought as it slips away, and torturous searches for the right word. Janotus himself complains frankly of his old age. This biological image of a man's old age and senility is artfully interwoven with the image of the social, ideological, and linguistic obsoleteness of the Sorbonnist to create a single composite effect. It is the old year, the old winter, the old king, who has become a fool. Everybody merrily laughs at him; and in the end he starts laughing himself too.

But the laughter is directed against the dummy of the Sorbonnist. As to the old man himself, he is given what he needs. And by his own admission, he does not need much: "my back to the fire, my belly to the table and a fine dish for my gullet."[62] This is the only reality that remains from the Sorbonnist's pretentious claims. Gargantua generously grants all of this to the old man. But the Sorbonnist is laughed at and utterly annihilated.

All the episodes and separate images we have examined so far—all the scenes of battles, brawls, beatings, of subjecting to laughter, of decrowning both people (representatives of old power and old truth) and things (for instance, bells)—are crafted and stylized by Rabelais in a folk-festive carnival spirit. As a result, they are all ambivalent: annihilation and decrowning is connected with rebirth and renewal, the death of the old is connected with the birth of the new; all the images relate to the contradictory unity of the world that is dying and being born. Indeed, not only the episodes we examined, but the entire novel from beginning to end is permeated with a carnival atmosphere. Furthermore, many of the most essential episodes and scenes are directly connected to feast days and directly deal with a specific, purely festive, subject matter.

We assign an extended sense to the word "carnivalesque." Carnival, as a strictly defined phenomenon, has survived up to our own time, whereas other phenomena of folk-festive life, akin to it in character and style (as well as genetically), with few exceptions, died out long ago or have degenerated beyond recognition. Carnival is well known. It has been described multiple times throughout the centuries. Even in the late period of its development—in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—carnival still clearly preserved, albeit in an impoverished form, some of the fundamental distinctive

[61] Referring to Stokes (1909).

[62] Bk. 1, ch. 19.

traits of the folk-festive element. Carnival can reveal the ancient folk-festive element to us since it is a relatively better-preserved shard of this immense and rich world. This is what gives us the right to use the epithet "carnivalesque" in an extended sense, implying not only the forms of carnival proper, narrowly and precisely construed, but also the entire rich and multifarious folk-festive life of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance with its fundamental distinctive traits, which carnival tangibly represents to subsequent centuries, while most other forms have died or degenerated.

But even in the narrow sense of the word, carnival is far from a simple unambiguous phenomenon. This word united in a single concept a number of local festivities of different origin, held at different dates but sharing some common traits of folk-festive merriment. This process of unifying heterogeneous local phenomena by means of the word "carnival" and bringing them into the scope of a single concept corresponded to a real-life process: various folk-festive forms, as they died out and degenerated, transmitted many of their elements—rites, paraphernalia, images, masks—to carnival. Carnival really became the reservoir into which folk-festive forms that had ceased their independent existence flowed.[63]

Of course, this process of carnival consolidation of folk-festive forms followed different paths at different times, not only in different countries but even in different cities. The clearest and, so to speak, most classical form assumed by this process was in Italy, and in Rome in particular (as well as in other cities of this country, though perhaps not as clearly), followed by France—in Paris. More or less classically (but at later periods), this process took place in Nuremberg and Cologne. In Russia this process never happened at all: the various forms of folk-festive merriment, both those that were generally accepted and those that were local in character (related to Shrovetide, Yuletide, fairs, and so on) never coalesced, never produced from among themselves a prominent form, analogous to carnival in Western Europe. Peter the Great, as is commonly known, tried to introduce and naturalize in Russia some forms of the late European Feast of Fools traditions (electing the "all-joking pope" and the like),[64] April Fool's Day carnival pranks, and so on, but these forms did not take root and did not accumulate local traditions around themselves.

Yet even where this process unfolded more or less in its classical manner (Rome, Paris, Nuremberg, Cologne), local forms of festivity, which differed from one another in their origins and development, formed its[65] basis in different places. Its ritual was

[63] Bakhtin's observations on the development of carnival in different cities in Europe, and its relation to other festivities that preceded it and coexisted with it, appears to reflect his own analysis of the materials he was reading (especially relevant in this context would be Flögel and Ebeling 1862, Dieterich 1897, and Driesen 1904). If there is an additional secondary source that he specifically relied on in making these claims, I was not able to locate it.

[64] This refers to Peter's "All-Joking, All-Drunken Synod of Fools and Jesters" and the "Prince-Pope" at its head. See note 198 to this chapter.

[65] That is, the basis of carnival, not of the process. This unclear anaphora appears in the Russian original.

later enriched in different places, at the expense of, among other things, the different dying-out local forms.

One should note that many of these folk-festive forms, having transmitted many of their features to carnival (and in the majority of cases, the most essential features), continued to lead a pallid and impoverished existence in parallel to it. Such was, for instance, the case of the "charivari" in France: the charivari transmitted most of its forms to carnival, but as an impoverished particular form of subjecting newlyweds to laughter (if the marriage, for some reason or other, was not considered normal), as a shivaree[66] under the windows, it has even survived to our day.[67] Furthermore, all the forms of folk-festive merriment that constituted the second, unofficial half of every church or state feast day, continued to exist alongside carnival and independently of it, and shared several traits with it, such as the election of kings and queens for a day on the feast of the Epiphany ("bean kings"), on St. Valentine's day, and so forth.[68] All these common traits are determined by the connection that all of these festive forms have with *time*, which becomes the true hero of the folk public-square aspect of every feast day, effecting the decrowning of the old and the crowning of the new.(137) All these folk public-square forms continued, of course, to live around Church feast days. Every fair (customarily scheduled for the dedication of a church or a first mass)[69] also retained a more or less carnivalesque character. Finally, certain carnival traits are also retained in everyday-life festivities—weddings, christenings, wakes—just as they are retained in agricultural feasts—of grape harvesting (vendange), of the slaughter of cattle (these feasts are described by Rabelais),[70] and so on. We have observed, for example, the clearly carnivalesque character of the "nopces à mitaines," that is, its role as a particular bridal ritual.[71] The common denominator for all the carnivalesque traits of the various feasts is the essential connection these feasts have with *merry time*. Wherever the

[66] Bakhtin uses a phrase that literally translates to "a cats' concert," but "shivaree" is the closest English equivalent. Unlike the Russian phrase, the English word is directly derived from the French word "charivari."

[67] On the charivari and its history, including reference to forms found later in carnivals, as well as some references to the word "charivari" as used much later, in the nineteenth century, see Driesen (1904, 107–155). Bakhtin does appear to add minor details (about customs that survived to his own day) from his personal knowledge or from some other, unidentified, source.

[68] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:419). This passage repeats information Bakhtin provided earlier in the book, possibly relying on an additional unidentified source. See note 61 to chapter 1 for further details.

[69] See Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 252–255).

[70] Bk. 1, ch. 25–27 (the events leading up to the battle in the abbey close and the battle itself) and bk. 1, ch. 4–7 (the story of Gargantua's birth), respectively. Both episodes will be analyzed in greater detail shortly.

[71] Bk. 4, ch. 12–15.

(137) In essence, every feast day decrowns and crowns and therefore has its own king and queen. See this theme in *The Decameron*, where a king and queen are elected for each of the days of the festive conversations.

unfettered folk public-square aspect of the feast is preserved, this connection with time is preserved as well, and hence, so also are elements of a carnivalesque character.

But where carnival in the narrow sense flourished and became the center that united all forms of folk public-square merriment, it weakened, to a certain degree, all the other feasts, depriving them of almost all unfettered and folk-utopian elements. All other feasts pale in comparison to carnival; their popular significance narrows down, especially because of their immediate connection with Church and State cult and ceremony. Carnival becomes the symbol and embodiment of the genuine communal popular public-square feast, completely independent of Church and State (but tolerated by them). This was true of the carnival in Rome when Goethe gave us his famous description of it (the 1788 carnival)[72] and was still true of the 1895 carnival in Rome, when Dieterich was drafting his book *Pulcinella* in its atmosphere (the book is dedicated to his Roman friends and to the 1897 carnival).[73] By that time, carnival had become almost the only living and colorful representative of the very rich folk-festive life of centuries past.

In Rabelais's time, this concentration of folk-festive merriment into carnival has not yet reached completion in any of the cities of France. Carnival, celebrated on "mardi gras" (that is, on Shrove Tuesday, in the last week before Lent) was but one of multiple forms of folk-festive merriment, although it was even then already a very important one. A major place in the festive life of the public square is occupied, as we have already noted, by fairs (in different cities, there were from two to four of them held every year). Fairground amusements were carnivalesque in character. Let us recall the already-mentioned numerous folk festivities in the city of Lyon.[74] Also still alive in Rabelais's time were the late forms of the Feast of Fools, as in the festivities organized in Rouen and Evreux by the Societas Conardorum, which elected its own mock abbot ("Abbas Conardorum" or "L'Abbé des Conards") and held carnival processions (already noted by us above).[75]

Rabelais, of course, knew this rich carnival life of his time, both urban and rural, intimately well. Which precise feast days, then, are directly reflected in his novel?

In the very beginning of "Gargantua"—in chapters 4, 5, and 6—we find a description of the "feast of cattle slaughter"[76] with merry feasting, and it is during this feasting that the miraculous birth of the novel's hero, Gargantua, takes place. This is one of the

[72] Goethe (1982, 445–469). Bakhtin will devote a longer discussion to this description later in this chapter.

[73] Dieterich (1897, iv–vii).

[74] The four fairs held each year in Lyon are mentioned by Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:x) and described in more detail by Plattard (1930, 105–106). Relevant mentions of Lyon are also scattered throughout Flögel and Ebeling (1862). Plattard (1930, 24, 39) also mentions fairs in Fontenay-le-Comte (three a year), Niort, and other places. These could be the ground for Bakhtin's assertion that cities had between two and four fairs a year.

[75] See Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 367–370).

[76] The phrase "feast of cattle slaughter" appears to be Bakhtin's own invention, possibly modelled on the German *Hausschlachtfest* (mentioned by Schneegans 1894, 378, paraphrasing a passage in Fischart's

most remarkable episodes of the novel and one that is among the most characteristic of Rabelais's idiom. We must spend some more time analyzing it.

Here is the beginning of the episode:

> The occasion and manner how Gargamelle was brought to bed, and delivered of her child, was thus: and, if you do not believe it, I wish your bum-gut may fall out, and make an escapade. Her bum-gut, indeed, or fundament escaped her in an afternoon, on the third day of February, with having eaten at dinner too many gaudebillaux. Gaudebillaux are the fat tripes of coiraux. Coiraux are beeves fattened at the cratch in ox stalls, or in the fresh guimaulx meadows. Guimaulx meadows are those, that for their fruitfulness may lie mowed twice a year. Of those fat beeves they had killed three hundred sixty-seven thousand and fourteen, to be salted at Shrove-tide, that in the entering of the spring they might have plenty of powdered beef, wherewith to season their mouths at the beginning of their meals, and to taste their wine the better. (book 1, chapter 4)[77]

The leading theme of this excerpt is material-bodily plenty, which goes over the top,[78] gives birth, and grows. All images are subordinated to this theme. First of all, the entire event being depicted is linked from the outset to Gargamelle's *childbirth*. This whole thing is a setting and background for the act of giving birth. A curse hurled at those who would not believe the author breaks into the very first sentence of the excerpt. This curse interrupts the flow of speech, but at the same time, it prepares the transition to what comes next. It immediately casts us into the material-bodily nethers: "and, if you do not believe it, I wish your bum-gut may fall out." Gargamelle's labor began precisely with the falling out of her bum-gut, as a result of her eating too much tripe, that is, entrails—the bowels of fattened oxen. *Entrails and bowels*, with all their wealth of signification and connotations, *are the main leading images of the entire*

German rendition of Rabelais's novel). In the 1940 manuscript, Bakhtin used a different designation—*prazdnik potrokhov*—which appears to be a calque from the French *fête des tripes*. This festivity is still celebrated in some locales to this day. It is also mentioned explicitly, in a reference to the same episode in Rabelais that Bakhtin is writing about, in an article by Jacques Boulenger (1921, 418), though it is unlikely Bakhtin would have had access to this text. Finally, Abel Lefranc (Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:lviii) claims that Gargantua's birth is set "at the time of the gaudebillaux, the local equivalent of the boudinée," the latter being a kind of festivity, whose name is derived from the French *boudin* (black pudding or sausage). Bakhtin may thus be trying to create a descriptive Russian equivalent for the unfamiliar name of the French festivity.

[77] Quoted from the Urquhart and Motteux translation with minor modifications.

[78] Literally "having surplus." The word "surplus" here is the same word as we find in Bakhtin's central early term "surplus of seeing" (which the author has over the hero in Bakhtin 1990b). One may also note the Marxist economic term "surplus production," which may perhaps be lightly hinted at (see the word "productivity" in the beginning of the next paragraph). Neither term is clearly relevant to this context, though, which is why I did not feel obliged to use the word "surplus" in the text where the more straightforward phrase "going over the top" would be clearer.

episode. In our excerpt they are introduced as food: they are "gaudebillaux," which is the same as "grasses tripes," that is, the fatty entrails of oxen. But the childbirth and the falling out of the right intestine, as a result of eating too much of these bowels, from the very outset *link the devoured belly with the belly that devours*. The boundary lines between the devoured flesh of animals and the devouring flesh of the human being are weakened, nearly erased. The bodies become interwoven and begin to merge into some kind of a *unitary grotesque image of a devoured-and-devouring world*. A unitary and condensed bodily atmosphere is being created—*the viscera writ large*. In it, the main events of our episode take place: eating, the falling-out of the intestine, and childbirth.

The theme of productivity and growth introduced at the very outset by Gargamelle's "childbirth"[79] is then developed in the images of abundance and a plentitude of material blessings: the fatty entrails of the oxen, specially fattened on choice meadows yielding grass twice a year, and a grandiose number, 367,014, of these oxen have been slaughtered. The word "fatty" and its derivatives are repeated four times in three lines ("grasses," "engressez," "gras," "gras").[80] The cattle slaughter is performed in order to have "*plenty*" (à tas)[81] of beef in the spring.

This theme of material plenty is here directly linked with Shrove Tuesday (mardi gras), when the beef of the slaughtered oxen was supposed to be salted; Shrove Tuesday is the day of Carnival. A carnivalesque Shrovetide atmosphere permeates the entire episode; it ties into a single grotesque knot the slaughter, dismemberment, and disemboweling of cattle, as well as the life of the flesh, abundance, fat, feasting, merry unfetteredness, and, finally, childbirth.

At the end of the excerpt there is a typical grotesque lowering—"commemoration des saleurs." Salted hors d'oeuvres, as extraordinary supplements to a dinner, are referred to by the liturgical term "commemoration," which meant a short prayer to a saint whose feast was not celebrated on that day—in other words, a supplementary extra-ordinary prayer. Thus, an allusion to the liturgy is blended into the episode.[82]

Finally, let us point out a typical stylistic peculiarity in this excerpt: its first half is constructed like a chain, where every link is inserted into the link adjacent to it. This is accomplished by having the same word end one sentence and start the next. Such a construction strengthens the impression of density and contiguity, of the inseparable unity of this world of abundant fat, meat, viscera, growth, childbirth.

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[79] Gargamelle's intestine is at first mistaken for the baby; hence the scare-quotes.

[80] Bakhtin counts the "gras" in "mardi gras" as one of the four occurrences. While all four instances of "gras" and its derivatives appear relatively close together in the text, no edition of Rabelais that Bakhtin had access to manages to pack all four within three lines of text (Moland 1884, 11, comes closest, with the four words placed in four consecutive lines).

[81] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:48).

[82] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:48). The phrase Bakhtin discusses here is not reflected well in the translation cited above (it is rendered as "wherewith to season their mouths at the beginning of their meals"). Of Rabelais's English translators, the only one to try to reflect this is Screech, who translates it as "to say a grace for saltings."

Let us trace the further development of this episode. Since the entrails of the slaughtered cattle cannot be preserved for any extended time, Grandgousier invites the inhabitants of all the neighboring locales to feast:

> For fear of leaving any, they summoned all the citizenry of Sinais, Seuilly, La Roche Clermault and Vaugaudry, without forgetting their friends from Coudray-Montpensier, and Gué de Vède and other neighbors, all accomplished tosspots, debonair fellows and ha! fine cuedrivers, skilled tailpushers, all! (book 1, chapter 4)

Thus, the feasting is extensive; it becomes, at its outer limit universally communal (no wonder they have slain 367,014 oxen). It is "feasting for the whole world." This was the idea inherent in all carnivalesque feasting. The merry characterization of the neighbors assembled by Grandgousier is curious. The last expression is "beaux joueurs de quille"—that is, "fine skittlers." But we already know that the word "quille" in Rabelais's time had an additional erotic sense, which is the sense intended here (and which is quite correctly reflected in the translation).[83]

Thus, this characterization of the guests invited to the feast keeps to the same material-bodily plane as the entire episode.

Grandgousier warns his wife not to overdo it with the tripe:

> "Whoever eats the skins of these chitterlings," he announced, "is an unparalleled turdchewer!"
>
> Despite his warnings, Gargamelle consumed sixteen quarters, two bushels and six pecks; in cases, barrels and pots. La! the sweet fecality that must have swelled up within her!

Here, the author introduces the theme of feces, which, as we have already said, is closely related to notions about viscera in general and about the entrails of oxen in particular, since even after the most thorough washing, a certain portion of feces remained in them.[84] In the image of the feces, the boundary lines between the devouring and the devoured body are again effaced: the feces contained in the bovine intestines facilitate the formation of feces in the human intestines. Animal and human intestines again become interwoven, as it were, in one inseparable grotesque knot. The author's concluding phrase, which begins with the words "La! the sweet fecality" ("O belle matière fécale"), is also characteristic of the atmosphere of this entire episode. Let us recall that the image of feces in grotesque realism was the image of *merry matter* par excellence.

Immediately after the cited excerpt, this text follows:

[83] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:50). Bakhtin's remark on the translation refers to Lyubimov's Russian but would equally fit Le Clercq's "cuedrivers" and "tailpushers."

[84] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:50).

> After dinner, they all made helter-skelter for La Saussaie, a meadow planted with willow trees. Here, on the soft greensward, they danced so gleefully to the tune of airy flutes and melodious bagpipes that to watch them was a most heavenly pastime.

This festive carnival merriment on the greensward is organically interwoven with all the other images of the episode we are analyzing. Again, in the atmosphere of Shrove Tuesday, merriment, dancing, and music were all an excellent match for slaughter, the dismembered body, viscera, feces, and other images of the material-bodily nethers.

For a correct understanding of Rabelais's entire novel, as well as the episode being analyzed in particular, it is necessary to renounce the limited and impoverished aesthetic stereotypes of modern times, which are far from adequate to the major lines of development in world literature and in the art of past ages. It would be especially inadmissible to modernize Rabelais's images, to fit them within the differentiated-out, narrowed-down, and single-toned concepts that dominate the modern system of thought. In grotesque realism and in Rabelais's work, the image of feces, for instance, had neither the signification it has in ordinary life nor the narrowly physiological sense with which it is being imbued nowadays. Feces were perceived to be an essential factor in the life of the body and of the earth, in the struggle between life and death; they were part of man's living sense of his own materiality and embodiment, inextricably linked to the life of the earth.

Therefore, Rabelais does not and cannot display any "gross naturalism," "physiologism," or pornography. In order to understand Rabelais, we must read him with the eyes of his contemporaries and against the backdrop of the millennia-old tradition that he represents. Then the episode of Gargamelle's labor, which we are analyzing, will also reveal itself to us as a lofty and at the same time merry drama of the body and of the earth.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the famous "Palaver of the Potulent." This is a carnivalesque "symposium."[85] It has no external logical consistency, no unifying abstract idea or problem (as in Classical symposia). Nevertheless, it possesses a deep internal unity. It is grotesque play with lowerings, holistic and true to form, up to the minutest detail. Nearly every turn of the conversation offers some saying that belongs to a higher plane—ecclesiastical, liturgical, philosophical, legal, or some words from the scriptures—applied to eating and drinking.[86] The conversation is, in essence, concerned with only two things: the ox entrails that are being consumed and the wine that washes these entrails down. But these material-bodily nethers are travestied into images and sayings of the holy and spiritual "heights."

[85] Referring to bk. 1, ch. 5 ("Palaver of the Potulent" is its title in Le Clercq's translation). The word "symposium" is used here to refer to a genre of ancient (and arguably also medieval) literature, which Bakhtin goes on to discuss in greater detail in later chapters (see endnotes 12 and 18 to chapter 4 for a discussion of some of Bakhtin's sources on that genre).

[86] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:52–66) and, with reference to legal terms in particular, Plattard

But what we find important to emphasize here is the *play with the image of the belly*, of the viscera. Thus, one of the interlocutors says, "Je laverois voluntiers les tripes de ce veau que j'ay ce matin habillé."[87] The word "habiller" means to "dress up," but it also had the special sense of "dressing the carcass of a slaughtered animal" (this was a term used by butchers and in cookbooks).[88] Thus, in the guest's words "the calf I dressed this very morning," the word "calf" ("veau") refers in the first place to that guest himself, who dressed himself in the morning, but it also refers to the calf, who, in that same morning, was dismembered and disemboweled, and whom the guest has eaten up. Similarly, the viscera (les tripes) signify both the guest's own viscera, which he intends to wash with wine, and the calf's viscera that he ate, which he intends to wash down.

Here is another, similarly constructed remark: "Voulez vous rien mander à la rivière? Cestuy cy [the glass of wine] vas laver les tripes."[89] Here the word "les tripes" also has a double sense: both the speaker's own viscera, which *have eaten*, and the viscera of the ox, which *have been eaten*. Thus, here, again, the boundary lines between the devouring human body and the devoured animal body are being effaced.

Gargamelle's *birthing viscera* become the hero of the next, sixth, chapter.

Here is the beginning of the birth:

> A few moments later she began to groan, lament and cry out. Suddenly crowds of midwives came rushing up from all directions. Feeling and groping her bottom, they found certain loose shreds of skin, of a rather unsavory odor, which they took to be the child. It was, on the contrary, her fundament which had escaped with the mollification of her right intestine (you call it the bumgut) because she had eaten too much tripe, as I explained above. (book 1, chapter 6)[90]

Here, we have the anatomy of the body's bottom ("le bas") in the literal sense. The grotesque knot of the viscera is here tied even more tightly: *the right intestine that fell out*, *the consumed ox viscera*, *the viscera that are giving birth* (the loosened intestine is at first mistaken for the newborn)—all this is inseparably interwoven in the images of this excerpt.

The midwife who rushes to the rescue uses too potent an astringent:

(1930, 69) and Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:371–372).

[87] "I'd gladly wash the tripe of the calf I dressed this very morning. What calf? My belly. Dressed how? For the table!" (bk. 1, ch. 5).

[88] The English verb "dress" has both senses of *habiller* in Rabelais's French, but Russian has no equivalent; hence the relatively lengthy explanation. Bakhtin's source here is Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:56).

[89] "Have you anything to send to the river? That's where tripe is washed; give this drink your message!" (bk. 1, ch. 5).

[90] Le Clercq's translation slightly modified.

> As a result of Gargamelle's discomfort, the cotyledons of the placenta of her matrix were enlarged. The child, leaping through the breach and entering the hollow vein, ascended through her diaphragm to a point above her shoulders. Here the vein divides into two; the child accordingly worked his way in a sinistral direction, to issue, finally, through the left ear.
>
> No sooner born, he did not, like other babes, cry: "Whaay! Whaay!" but in a full, loud voice bawled: "Drink, drink, drink!" as though inviting the company to fall to. What is more, he shouted so lustily, that he was heard throughout the regions of Beuxe and Bibarois. (book 1, chapter 6)[91]

The anatomical analysis concludes with the unexpected and thoroughly carnivalesque birth of a child through his mother's left ear. The child goes not *down*, but *up*: this is a typical carnivalesque inversion ("topsy-turvy"). Similarly carnivalesque and convivial in character is the baby's first cry, inviting the company to have a drink.

Such is the episode in question. Let us draw some conclusions in summary.

All the images of this episode develop the themes *of the feast itself*: of the slaughter of cattle, its disemboweling, its dismemberment. The images are developed on the plane of feasting, the devouring of the dismembered body, and transition, as it were imperceptibly, into an anatomical analysis of the viscera that give birth. As a result, an exceptionally dense atmosphere of holistic, uninterrupted carnality is created with remarkable artistry, in which all the boundary lines between the separate bodies of animals and people, between the devouring and devoured viscera, are intentionally effaced. From another angle, these *devoured-devouring viscera are blended with the viscera that give birth.* The result is *a genuinely grotesque image of one single, superindividual bodily life—the viscera writ large, devouring-devoured-birthing-born.* But, of course, this is not superindividual bodily life that is "animal" or "biological" in our sense. Glinting through Gargamelle's devouring and birthing viscera is the devouring and birthing womb of the earth, and so too glints through it the ever-revived body of the people. Besides, the child that is born here is the mighty folk hero Gargantua, the French Heracles.

In this episode, as everywhere in Rabelais, merry, plentiful, and all-defeating carnality is contrasted with the medieval seriousness of fear and oppression with its method of *intimidating and intimidated* thinking. As in the prologue to "Pantagruel," our episode ends with a merry and unfettered travesty of these medieval methods of faith and conviction. Here is that passage:

> Now I suspect that you do not thoroughly believe this strange nativity. If you do not, I care but little, though an honest and sensible man always believes what he is told and what he finds written. [The author goes on to cite the authorities of Solomon and St. Paul.—M. B.]

[91] Translator's interpolations removed.

> Why should you not believe what I tell you? Because, you reply, there is no evidence. And I reply in turn that for this very reason you should believe with perfect faith. For the gentlemen of the Sorbonne say that faith is the argument of non-evident truths.
>
> Is anything I have related beyond our law or faith, contrary to our reason, or opposed to Divine Scriptures? For my part, I find nothing in the Holy Bible that stands against it. And if such had been the will of God, would you affirm that He could not accomplish it? Ha, I pray you, do not ambiguembrangle your minds with such vain conceits. I tell you that nothing is impossible to God and, if He but pleased, women would henceforth give birth to their children through the left ear.[92]

The author then goes on to cite several cases of strange births from ancient mythology and medieval legends.

This entire passage is a magnificent parodic travesty both of the medieval doctrine of faith and of the methods of arguing for that faith and propagandizing it: by citing holy authorities, intimidations, provocations, threats, accusations of heresy, and the like. The condensed atmosphere of merry carnality throughout the episode sets up this carnivalesque decrowning of the doctrine of faith as "the argument of non-evident truths."

A most important episode of "Gargantua"—the Picrocholine war—unfolds in the atmosphere of another rural feast—the wine harvest (vendange) festival.

"Vendange" played an important role in the life of France; even public institutions were closed and courts stopped working during the wine harvest season, since all were busy in the vineyards.[93] It was an immense recreation, away from all business and cares, except those directly connected to wine. It is in the atmosphere of "vendange" that all the events and images of the Picrocholine war unfold.

The pretext for the war is a skirmish between peasants from Seuilly, guarding ripened vineyards, and bakers from Lerné, carrying a load of cakes for sale. The peasants wanted to eat some cakes with grapes for breakfast (a combination which, incidentally, has the effect of purging one's bowels). The bakers refused to sell their cakes and insulted the peasants. A fight broke out between them as a result.[94] Wine and

[92] Bk. 1, ch. 6. As Bakhtin notes in the 1940 manuscript, Rabelais removed parts of this passage from the 1542 edition of his novel, presumably out of prudence.

[93] I was not able to positively identify Bakhtin's source for this information about the grape harvest festival in France. Such local festivals indeed exist, even to this day, but no source I was able to locate mentions court holidays in particular in this context. The one possible, if not very likely, explanation here would be that Bakhtin misread a passage in Plattard (1930, 48; for the original French text see 1932, 62), who says of Rabelais's friend Jean Bouchet that "he versified in his leisure hours, that is to say, from time to time on working days, Sundays and holidays, and during the law vacations, at harvest and vintage seasons."

[94] Bk. 1, ch. 25.

bread, grapes and cakes, form a liturgical complex, which is subjected here to lowering travesty (its tendency to cause diarrhea).

The first major episode of the war—the defense of the abbey vineyard by Friar John—also contains a travestying allusion to Holy Communion. We have already seen how blood becomes wine, while the image of ruthless slaughter reveals "vendange" behind it.[95] In French winegrowers' folklore, "vendange" is associated with the image of "Bon-Temps," that is "good times" (Bon-Temps is the husband of Mère Folle). The figure of Bon-Temps in folklore signals *the end of evil times and the advent of universal peace*. Thus, it is in the atmosphere of "vendange" that Rabelais unfolds the folk-utopian theme of peaceful labor and abundance triumphing over war and destruction: after all, this is precisely the fundamental theme of this entire episode and of the Picrocholine war.[(138)][96]

In this fashion does the atmosphere of the "vendange" permeate the entire second part of "Gargantua" and organize its system of images, just as the first part (Gargantua's birth) was permeated by the atmosphere of the cattle slaughter feast and of carnival. The entire book is immersed in a concrete folk-festive atmosphere.[(139)][97]

In the novel's second book, "Pantagruel," there are also episodes directly linked to festivities. In 1532, which is the year in which "Pantagruel" was being written, the Pope proclaimed an extraordinary Jubilee year in France. During the Jubilee certain churches were granted the right to sell papal indulgences—that is, absolutions from sin.[98] And indeed, there is an episode in Rabelais's novel that is directly related to this jubilee year. Wishing to improve his finances, Panurge goes from church to church and buys indulgences; at the same time, pretending to pick up his change, he takes

[95] Bk. 1, ch. 27; see Bakhtin's analysis of it earlier in this chapter.

[96] Bakhtin's source on this is unclear. The figures of Bon-Temps (or Bontemps) and Mère Folle (or Mere Folie) are mentioned in the literature Bakhtin was familiar with (Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 356–367; Picot 1878; 1902–1912; Picot's works are more relevant, but it's less clear to what extent, if any, Bakhtin had access to them) but not in the context of "winegrowers' folklore," nor in any special connection with the grape harvest festival. Instead, these characters are staples of sotties, staged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in connection with carnival celebrations and the Feast of Fools.

[97] Footnote: Schneegans (1894, 377–379).

[98] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xxix–xxxi).

[(138)] The two figures of the folk feast of "vendange" determined the entire character of this episode: the figure of Bon-Temps determined the idea behind it (the final triumph of peace and communal prosperity—of surplus), while the figure of his wife, Mère Folle has determined the episode's farcically carnivalesque style.

[(139)] In his free translation of this book, Fischart considerably strengthens the festive element but reflects on it in the spirit of Grobianism. Grandgousier is a passionate venerator of all feast days, because one should feast and fool around celebrating them. A long enumeration of German sixteenth-century feasts is offered: the feast of Saint Martin, Shrovetide, church dedication, the fair, child christening, and so on. One feast day follows the other, so that the entire cycle of Grandgousier's year consists of feast days only. For Fischart, the moralist, feasts mean gluttony and idleness. Such an understanding and evaluation of feast days, of course, deeply contrasts with Rabelais's use of them. That said, Fischart's own attitude toward feast days is ambiguous.

"hundredfold" from the collection plate. He interprets the future tense of the words "shall receive a hundredfold" from the Gospel as an imperative, "receive a hundredfold," and acts accordingly.[99] This episode thus parodically travesties the festive theme of the Jubilee year, as well as the Gospel text.

In the same book there is also an episode recounting Panurge's unsuccessful attempts to harassingly court a noble Parisian lady. Having been rejected by her, he avenged himself in a somewhat peculiar manner. The main event of this episode takes place on the feast of Corpus Christi. This is an absolutely monstrous travesty of this feast. The episode depicts a procession of 600,014 dogs, who followed the lady and urinated on her because Panurge sprinkled her dress with the diced genital organs of a bitch.[100]

Such a travesty of the Corpus Christi religious procession would only appear monstrously sacrilegious and unexpected at a first glance. The history of this feast in France and in other countries (especially in Spain) reveals that utterly unfettered grotesque images of the body were quite an ordinary part of it and were consecrated by tradition.[101] Arguably, the image of the body in its grotesque aspect was predominant in the folk public-square part of the feast and was what created its specific atmosphere. Thus, the festive procession always featured traditional representatives of the grotesque body: a monster (a mixture of cosmic, animal, and human features) carrying "the Whore of Babylon" on its back,(140) giants (in folk tradition, the embodiment of grotesque notions of a large body), Moors and Negroes (grotesque deviations from bodily norms), a crowd of young people performing very sensual folk dances (in Spain, for example, it was the almost-indecent sarabande). It was only after these grotesque images of the body that the clergy followed, carrying the host (that is, the Communion bread). At the end of the procession came decorated carts carrying actors in costumes (for this reason, the feast of Corpus Christi was called in Spain "fiesta de los carros").

The traditional Corpus Christi procession thus had a clearly expressed carnivalesque character, with the bodily element markedly prevalent in it. In Spain, special dramatic performances called "autos sacramentales" were staged during this feast. We can surmise the nature of these performances from Lope de Vega's extant plays of that kind. They are of a prevalently grotesque-comic character, which even penetrates into their serious portion. They contain a great deal of parodic travesty, not only of themes from antiquity, but also of Christian themes, including the festive procession itself.

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[99] Bk. 2, ch. 17, and referring to Matthew 19:29.

[100] Bk. 2, ch. 21–22.

[101] Bakhtin's source for this discussion of Corpus Christi traditions in Spain (including the reference to Lope de Vega) is Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 62–63).

(140) The mixed body of the monster with the whore sitting on it is, essentially, equivalent to the devouring-devoured-procreating viscera of the "feast of cattle slaughter."

We can sum up by saying that the folk-festive side of this feast was, to a certain extent, a satyr play, which travestied the Church ritual of Corpus Christi (the host).(141)[102]

In light of these facts, Rabelaisian travesty turns out to be not all that surprising and monstrous. Rabelais merely develops all the satyr play elements already present in the traditional images of this feast: in the image of the chimera with the whore on it, in the images of giants and black people, in the indecent bodily motions of the dance, and so on. To be sure, the author develops these images very boldly and with full awareness. Within the atmosphere of the satyr play, we should be surprised neither by the image of urinating dogs nor even by the details of the story regarding the bitch. Let us also recall the ambivalent character of drenching in urine, the element of fertility and reproductive force contained in this image. It is no coincidence that in this episode, as the author assures us, the dog urine formed a stream that flows by the Abbey of St. Victor (and, he adds, the Gobelin dye-works use this stream for dyeing fabrics).

All the episodes we have analyzed up to this point are directly related to particular feasts (the feast of cattle slaughter, "vendange," the papal Jubilee, Corpus Christi). The subject matter of the feast also has a decisive influence on the way all the images of these episodes are organized. But such direct and immediate reflections of particular feasts in the very sequence of the novel's events far from exhaust the matter. Dispersed throughout Rabelais's novel we find multiple allusions to particular feasts: to St. Valentine's Day, to the fair in Niort, for which Villon prepares a diablerie, to the Avignon carnival, at which the youngsters played thumpsocket, to the Lyon carnival with its merry bogeyman, the glutton-gobbler Maschecroûte, and so on. Describing his hero's visits to the universities of France in "Pantagruel," Rabelais devotes special attention to the recreational amusements and games, in which both the students and baccalaureates delight.[103]

In the folk public-square side of the feast, a substantial place was reserved for all manner of games (from card games to sports), as well as for various kinds of divination, fortune-telling, and wish-making. These phenomena, inseparably linked to the folk-festive atmosphere, play a substantial role in Rabelais's novel. It suffices to say that the novel's entire "Third Book" is structured as a series of episodes in which Panurge tries to foretell the fortunes of his marriage to his future wife. These phenomena must therefore receive special attention.

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[102] Footnote: regarding the satyr play, see Dieterich (1897, 61 and passim).

[103] Rabelais's text does not appear to have any reference to St. Valentine's Day. As noted in note 61 to chapter 1, Bakhtin probably confuses St. Valentine's Day with some other feast, possibly Epiphany, in which case the allusions Bakhtin refers to here are to the election of "bean kings" (Sainéan 1922–1923, 1:419; see also bk. 3, ch. 25, bk. 5, prologue, and the "Pantagrueline Prognostication," Rabelais 1851, 2:545). For the other references, see bk. 4, ch. 13, 14, and 59, and bk. 2, ch. 5.

(141) The satyr play of antiquity was also, as we already said, *a drama of the body and of bodily life.* It is well known that monsters and giants played an immense role in it.

Let us first point out the considerable role of games of all sorts in Rabelais's work. Chapter 20[104] of "Gargantua" contains a famous list of games played by the novel's young hero after lunch. In the canonical edition (1542) this list is made up of 217 names of games: it includes a long series of card games, a number of parlor and table games, and many games played in the open air.

This famous enumeration of games had considerable resonance. Rabelais's first German translator, Fischart, supplemented this already long list with 372 names of German card games and dance tunes. Rabelais's seventeenth-century English translator, Thomas Urquhart, also extends the list by adding English games. The Dutch version of "Gargantua" (1682) also imparts a national character to the list by naming sixty-three purely Dutch games. Rabelais's list had thus awakened in several countries an interest in their own national games. In its Dutch version, the list was the starting point for the most extensive study of children's games in world folklore studies—Cock and Teirlinck's eight-volume work, *Children's Games and Amusements in the Netherlands* (1902–1908).[105]

Rabelais's own interest in games is, of course, no coincidence. He shares this interest with his entire historical period.[106] Games were connected not only outwardly but also *by an inner essential link to the folk public-square side of the feast day.*

In addition to the said list of games, Rabelais makes wide use of the rich vocabulary of game terms as a source for metaphors and similes. From this source he draws many erotic metaphors (such as the already familiar expression "joueurs de quille"), as well as many expressive images for success or failure (for instance, "c'est bien rentré de picques!"—"This is a bad move!").[107] We should note that similar expressions, borrowing from the domain of games, were in very frequent use in the vernacular.

Two important episodes in Rabelais's novel are constructed based on game images. The first among them is the "prophetical riddle" that concludes the novel's first book ("Gargantua"). This poem (probably in its entirety) was written by Mellin de Saint-Gelais.[108] But Rabelais did not make use of it in his novel by accident: the poem is deeply akin to the entire system of his images. An analysis of this poem will allow us to reveal a number of new and substantial aspects of this system.

Two factors are closely interwoven in the "prophetical riddle": *the parodically prophetic depiction of the historical future and the images of a ball game.* This

[104] Actually bk. 1, ch. 22. The list of games was, however, indeed included in ch. 20 of the book's first edition (1535).

[105] Bakhtin's source for the last two paragraphs is Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:278–280).

[106] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:280–285).

[107] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:415–416) collects numerous examples of game metaphors and idioms, including two uses of "rentré de picques" (bk. 1, ch. 45 and bk. 3, ch. 34; only the latter unequivocally with the sense of "a bad move"). On erotic metaphors, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 2: 306–307), including the example of "joueurs de quille" (bk. 1, ch. 4), mentioned earlier in this chapter.

[108] See Plattard (1910, 321) and Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:35–36, 2:439–440).

connection is far from accidental: it manifests a *carnivalesque* perception of *the historical process* as a *game*, which is very typical of that historical period.

The same author, Mellin de Saint-Gelais, has another short poem in which the struggle for Italy between Francis I, Pope Clement VII, and Charles V is depicted as a round of "jeu de prime," a popular card game of that time. The current political situation, the distribution of forces, and the respective advantages and weaknesses of each ruler are consistently and precisely depicted in the terms of this game.[109]

In Jean Longis and Vincent Sertenas's *Collection of French Poetry*, there is a poem of modest length, constructed as a rumination in lofty tones about the vicissitudes of historical fortunes, about the evil and calamities governing this world. In fact, though, these vicissitudes and calamities pertain not to life on earth or to history but merely to a game. This poem is a description in lofty enigmatic style of a bowling game.[110] Let us stress that here, unlike in Mellin Saint-Gelais's poem, it is not historical reality that is being depicted in the images of a game, but on the contrary, a game (of bowling) is depicted in the lofty images of life on earth as a whole, with its vicissitudes and calamities. Such a peculiar shifting of systems—a game within a game of sorts—makes the resolution of the somber poem unexpectedly *merry and lightening up*. The "prophetical riddle" in Rabelais's novel, as we shall see, is constructed in a similar manner.

Des Périers has a similar brief poem (vol. 1, p. 80), titled "A Prophecy Dedicated to Guynet Thibault of Lyon." This poem describes in prophetic tones the fortunes of "three companions." These companions eventually turn out to simply be three dice in a game of dice.[111]

Similar prophetical riddles were so widespread in Rabelais's time that Thomas Sébillet devoted a special section of his Poetics(142) to them (chapter 11, "De l'énigme").[112] These riddles are extremely typical of the artistic ideological thinking of that time. The heavy and scary, the serious and important are transposed into a merry and light register, from a minor to a major key. Everything receives a resolution that is merry and lightening up. The mysteries and riddles of the world and of the future turn out to be not gloomy and scary but instead merry and light. These are not, of course, philosophical statements; it is, rather, the direction that the artistic ideological thought of the period moves in, which seeks to hear the world in a new register, to approach it not as a somber mystery play but as a merry satyr play.

Another facet of this genre is parodic prophecy, which was also very widespread in Rabelais's time. Of course, prophecies of serious character were popular at the time as

[109] See Sanéan (1922–1923, 2:274).

[110] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2: 432–433). The game here, incidentally, is the same "jeu de quilles" that has just been mentioned as a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

[111] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:35–36, 2:432). The volume and page number reference, which Bakhtin copied from Lefranc et al., is to an 1856 edition of Des Périers's French writings (Des Périers 1856, 1:80–81).

[112] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:35, 2:432).

(142) See Thomas Sébillet, *Art poétique Françoys*, 1548 (republished by F. Gaiffe, Paris 1910).

well. The struggle between Francis I and Charles V gave rise to an immense number of historical and political predictions of all sorts. Many were also related to the religious movements and wars of the period. In most cases, all these serious predictions were of a gloomy and eschatological character. Also current, of course, were astrological predictions of the usual kind. Popular "prognostications" were published periodically in the form of calendars—for instance, "The Plowman's Prognostication" which collected predictions related to weather and agriculture.(143) Alongside this serious literature of predictions and prophecies, parodic and travestying works of this kind were created and enjoyed great success and popularity. The best known of these were the "General Prognostication,"(144) "The Prognostication of Friar Tybault,"(145) the "New Prognostication,"(146) and others.[113]

These are typically recreational folk-festive works. They mock not only, and not so much, naive trust in all sorts of serious predictions and prophecies, as they mock their tone, their manner of seeing and interpreting life, history, and time. The serious and gloomy is opposed by the jocular and merry; the unexpected and strange by the usual and everyday; the abstractly exalted by the material-bodily. The main task of the anonymous authors who composed these prognostications was to give time and the future a different coloring and to shift the accents to the material-bodily aspects of life. They often used folk-festive images to characterize time and historical changes.

Rabelais's own "Pantagrueline Prognostication" is written in the same carnival spirit. In this modestly sized work, we find material-bodily images ("bacon will run away from pease in Lent," "the belly will waddle before," "the a[rse] will sit down first") as well as folk-festive images ("There will not be a bean left in a Twelfth Night cake") and game images ("the dice will not turn as you wish," "nor an ace in a flush").[114]

In the fifth chapter of the "Prognostication," which parodies astrological predictions, Rabelais first of all democratizes them. He considers it the oddest whimsy to think that there are stars only for kings, popes, and great noblemen and for the major events of the official world.

[113] Bakhtin's main source on the various prognostications is Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:338). See also Moland (1884, xxi–xxii) and Plattard (1930, 137–138). The source of the claim (in the relevant footnote) that Rabelais may have authored the "General Prognostication" (*Prognostication générale*) is unclear. This claim was added to the passage in 1965. It is also highly unlikely to be true (the text's full title marks its year of publication as 1561, so some eight years after Rabelais's death).

[114] Rabelais (1851, 2:545).

(143) "Prognostication des Laboureurs," reprinted by A. de Montaiglon in his *Recueil de poésies françaises de XV*-e *et XVI*-e *siècles*, vol. 2.

(144) Reprinted in Montaiglon, *Recueil*, vol. 4. It is possible that the "General Prognostication" was written by Rabelais.

(145) Montaiglon, *Recueil*, vol. 13.

(146) Montaiglon, *Recueil*, vol. 12.

Astrological predictions must, according to Rabelais, concern themselves with the lives and fortunes of folks of low estate. This is, in a way, a decrowning of the stars, the stripping of their royal robes.[115]

The "Pantagrueline Prognostication" also contains a very typical "carnivalesque" description of carnival:

> One part of the world shall disguise itself to gull and chouse the other, and run about the streets like a parcel of addle-pated animals and mad devils; such a hurly-burly was never seen since the devil was a little boy.[116]

We find here, in miniature form, the "prophetical riddle" from "Gargantua." The images of a socio-historical and natural catastrophe are used simply to depict carnival, with its masquerades and disorder on the street.

The genre of parodic prophecies is carnivalesque in nature: it is connected in an essential way to time, to the new year, to the posing and solving of riddles, to marriage, to birth, to reproductive force. This is why food, drink, material-bodily life, and the images of games play such an immense role in it.

Games[117] are closely tied with time and with the future. It is no coincidence that the main accessories of games—cards and dice—are also the main tools of fortune-telling—that is, of finding out about the future. It is not necessary to dwell on the distant genetic roots common to festive and game images:[118] after all, what is important is not their distant genetic kinship but the *proximity in terms of meaning* between these images, which was clearly and consciously felt in Rabelais's time. There was a vivid awareness of the universalism of game images, of their connection to time and the future, to destiny, to political power, of their philosophical character. This was the way chessmen, as well as the suits and faces of cards, were understood; this was also how dice were perceived. The kings and queens of feasts were often elected by casting dice. For that reason, the most favorable throw of dice was called "basilicus"—that is, royal.[119] Game images were seen as a condensed universalistic formula of life and of the historical process, as it were: fortune-misfortune, rise-fall, gain-loss, crowning-decrowning. Life as a whole was played out, as it were, in a miniature form (translated

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[115] Rabelais (1851, 2:546–47).

[116] Rabelais (1851, 2:545).

[117] *igra*. This Russian word means both "a game" and "play," and Bakhtin's use of it in this discussion does not make a distinction between the two. I opted for "games" in this case (despite the singular form of the word in Russian) because of the reference to cards and dice in the following sentence.

[118] On these purported genetic links, see Freidenberg (1997b, 126, 241–244, 284, 326).

[119] This sense of the Latin word *basilicus* is, to the best of my knowledge, not mentioned in any of Bakhtin's usual sources. In this case, it is likely that Bakhtin would have been familiar with it from his general knowledge of Latin or from perusing general reference sources, such as a standard Latin dictionary.

As for the election of kings and queens for feasts, Bakhtin's source of information is unclear. See note 61 to chapter 1 for further details.

into the language of conventional symbols) in games, and moreover, it was played out without footlights.[120] At the same time, the game took one outside the bounds of life's beaten track, freed one from the laws and rules of life, and replaced life's conventions with other, more condensed, merry, and lightened up conventions. This holds not only for cards, dice, and chess but also for other games, including sports (bowling, ball games) and children's games. Sharp boundary lines between these games did not yet exist; they were drawn later. We have seen how the images of a card game depicted the world events of the struggle for Italy (in Saint-Gelais's poem). We have seen similar functions performed by the images of a bowling game (in the Longis and Sertenas collection), as well as by images of a game of dice (in Des Périers). In the "prophetical riddle," the same function is performed by a ball game. In his *The Dream of Poliphilus*, Francesco Colonna describes a game of chess; the chessmen are depicted as live people, wearing the relevant chessmen costumes. Here, the game of chess is transformed, on the one hand, into a carnivalesque masquerade and, on the other hand, into an equally carnivalesque image of military and political events. This game of chess is repeated in the fifth book of Rabelais's novel, possibly based on draft sketches by Rabelais himself, who was familiar with *The Dream of Poliphilus* (there are allusions to this book in "Gargantua").[121]

This distinctive feature of the way games were perceived in Rabelais's time must be meticulously taken into account. Games had not yet become merely an everyday-life phenomenon, of even a partially negative type. They still retained a philosophical sense. One should note that, like all humanists of his period, Rabelais was quite familiar with views of games from antiquity, which, for him, raised them above mere everyday-life

[120] The footlights are a central metaphor Bakhtin uses in this book and in other works dealing with carnival. The footlights separate performers on stage from the audience. Their absence, accordingly, signals the absence of such a separation. While in this book, and especially in this chapter, Bakhtin stresses that carnival has no footlights, other texts give the footlights a role. Thus, in "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" we read:

> The drive, characteristic of Menippean satire (and all its offspring), toward liminality, toward the cosmic, toward the ultimate whole, its topographic nature, its enmity toward the average, the averagely typical, the naturally realistic (the ordinary and average, that which is not extraordinary, has no right to appear behind the footlights) (Bakhtin 2014, 525–526; forthcoming-a).

As is often the case with such apparent contradictions in Bakhtin's writings (cf. Sandler 2012b, 2024b), there is an underlying image Bakhtin is trying to convey, which is the same despite the apparently conflicting wording: the footlights are a kind of threshold, or boundary zone. Carnival (like culture in general, like human consciousness) lives within this boundary zone of direct interpersonal contact (as opposed to abstract generalization). In some contexts Bakhtin would therefore extend the reach of the footlights to cover the entire stage, while in others he would extend the boundary zone even further to encompass the audience too, and then, seemingly paradoxically, declare that there are, hence, no footlights at all.

[121] See bk. 5, ch. 24–25, for the chess game and bk. 1, ch. 9, for the direct allusion to Colonna's work. Bakhtin's most likely source here is Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:452–457), though multiple other sources Bakhtin had access to also contain references to Rabelais's borrowings from Colonna and may have been consulted as well.

idle pastimes. This is also why Ponocrates does not exclude games from among young Gargantua's activities. On rainy days they:

> studied the arts of painting and sculpture. Or they revived the ancient Roman game of Tali, dicing as Nicolaus Leonicus Thomaeus(147) wrote of ..., and as our good friend Janus Lascaris ... plays at the game. In their sport, they reviewed such passages of ancient authors as mention or quote some metaphor drawn from this play.[122]

The game of dice is placed here alongside painting and sculpture and is illuminated by the reading of ancient authors. This reveals to us another, humanist, aspect of that same perception of games in Rabelais's time as linked to world outlook.

Consequently, when evaluating game images in the Rabelaisian context, one must not consider them from the point of view of more recent notions about games, which formed in subsequent centuries. What happened to game images is similar, in part, to what happened to terms of abuse and to improprieties. Having retreated into the sphere of everyday private life, they lost their universalist connections and have degenerated, they ceased to be what they were in Rabelais's time. The Romantics attempted a restoration of game images in literature (as well as of carnival images), but they perceived them subjectively and in the plane of one's individual personal destiny.(148)123 As a result, the tonality of these images in the Romantics' works is also entirely different: they are usually heard in a minor key.

All the above explains why images of games, (parodic) prophecies, riddles, and folk-festive images combine to form an organic whole, unified in terms of the import of their meaning and of their style. Their common denominator is *merry time*. They all turn the gloomy eschatologism of the Middle Ages into a "merry bogeyman." They humanize the development of history and set the ground for its sober and fearless study.

In the "prophetical riddle," all these forms (games, prophecies, riddles) are used to depict historical events in a carnivalesque aspect. Let us dwell on this "riddle" in somewhat greater detail.

If it is allowed—declares the author of the "prophetical riddle"—to gain knowledge of what is to be through the bodies lodged in Heaven's jurisdiction and through the

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[122] Bk. 1, ch. 24. The footnote relies on Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:238), as do the interpolations I skipped in Le Clercq's translation.

[123] Some of the titles of works by Lermontov in the footnote differ from how they are more usually referred to. Thus, "Shtoss and Lugin" is a reference to Lermontov's unfinished (and untitled) novella, usually referred to as just "Shtoss"; "The Treasurer's Wife" is better known under the title "The Tambov Treasurer's Wife"; "The Fatalist" is the title of the last part of *A Hero of Our Time*.

(147) A contemporary of Rabelais, an Italian humanist, who published a dialogue concerning the game of dice (Lyon, 1532).

(148) This claim of ours can be extended, with certain reservations, also to game images in Lermontov's

support of some divine decree, then he, the author, takes it upon himself to predict what is going to happen in this very place not later than the winter of this year. "There shall appear a race ... of men who, bored with indolence and tired of lethargy, will boldly venture hence" ("las du repoz et fachez du sejour"). These men will sow dissension and foster altercation among friends and kinsmen, they will divide all men into hostile parties, make sons rise against their fathers; all order will be banished, all social distinctions will vanish. Inferiors will lose all respect for their superiors. "On this point there shall be such wrangling to and fro, such fierce commotion and such an imbroglio that the supreme recorder of our woes and wonders, History's Muse herself, shall fail to match its thunders."[124]

Let us stress in this depiction of calamities to come the complete destruction of the established hierarchy, both in the socio-political sphere and in the family. It creates the impression of utter catastrophe for the entire socio-political and moral order of the world.

But the historical catastrophe is exacerbated by a cosmic one. The author depicts a flood, in which people will drown, and a terrible earthquake. Then a huge flame will rise, after which calm and merriment follow at last. Offered here, albeit in very vague imagery, is a picture of cosmic upheaval, of a fire that burns down the old world, and of the joy of a world renewed. "Better times" arrive as a result of a catastrophe and the renewal of the world. This is an image quite close to the transformation that we are familiar with of the funeral pyre, which consumed the old world, into a feasting hearth.[125]

Gargantua and Friar John discuss the meaning of the "prophetical riddle." Gargantua takes this prophecy seriously and relates it to contemporary historical reality, dolefully foreseeing the persecution of those who believe in the Gospel. Friar John refuses to see a serious and gloomy meaning in this prophecy:

> "By St. Goderan," the monk cried, "that is not my explanation. The style is that of Merlin the prophet [referring to Mellin de Saint-Gelais—M. B.[126]]. Make the gravest allegories and interpretations you wish, muse upon it, you and every one else, as long as you like. For my part I see nothing but the obscurely worded description of a game of tennis." (book 1, chapter 58)

He then offers the relevant explanation for specific images: social disintegration and turmoil are the ball players dividing into two camps; the flood is the sweat streaming from the players' bodies; universal conflagration is the fire near which the players rest

[124] Bk. 1, ch. 58. Bakhtin alternates between very close paraphrase and direct quotation of Rabelais's text.

[125] Alluding to bk. 2, ch. 25–27 (and Bakhtin's analysis of this episode of the novel).

[126] See, e.g., Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:439).

works (*Masquerade*, "Shtoss and Lugin," "The Treasurer's Wife," "The Fatalist"). Game images bear a special character in Dostoevsky (*The Gambler*, *A Raw Youth*).

after the game, followed by the feasting and merriment of all participants, especially the winners. With the words "great feasting" ("et grand chere!"),[127] Friar John's explanation, and the whole first book of the novel, is concluded.

The second major episode of Rabelais's novel constructed on game images is the scene with old Judge Bridlegoose, who decided all legal cases by casting dice.[128] The legal term "alea judiciorum" (meaning the arbitrariness of court decisions) was understood literally by the judge, since the word "alea" means "dice." Based on this realized metaphor, he was fully convinced that by deciding cases via the game of dice he was acting in strict accordance with the established legal order. He understands the proposition "in obscuris minimum est sequendum"[129]—that is, that in obscure matters one should make minimal decisions (which would be the most prudent)—in a similarly literal fashion. Following this rule, Bridlegoose uses his smallest game dice, which are "minimal" in size, to decide obscure cases. Bridlegoose's whole idiosyncratic procedural order of deciding court cases is constructed on the same kind of realized metaphors. Thus, he fulfills the requirement to juxtapose the evidence adduced by the parties to litigation by placing the file with the plaintiff's evidence opposite the file with the evidence of the defendant and then casting his dice. As a result, all legal proceedings are transformed, in Bridlegoose's hands, into a merry travesty, with the image of casting dice at its center.(149)

These are, thus, a few of the episodes related to predictions and games (not nearly all of them, of course). The basic artistic task of parodic travestying predictions, prophecies, and divinations is to decrown the gloomy eschatological *time* of medieval conceptions about the world, to renew it on the material-bodily plane, to bring it down to earth, to render it bodily, to turn it into a *good-natured and merry time*. In most cases, game images, too, serve the same purpose. In the Bridlegoose episode they also have an additional function: they offer a merry parodic travesty of the methods of establishing truth in a court of law, just as the prologues and several other episodes of the novel travestied the ecclesiastical and scholastic methods of determining and propagandizing religious truth.

We must give special consideration to fortune-telling in the "Third Book" of Rabelais's novel.

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[127] Bk. 1, ch. 58. Interestingly, Rabelais's translators consistently avoid reading the French word *chere* as referring to feasting (interpreting it to mean something along the lines of the English cognate "cheer"). Nevertheless, Bakhtin's reading is also a possible interpretation of the text (cf. the French expression *la bonne chère*).

[128] Bk. 3, ch. 39–43. Bakhtin's retelling here focuses on ch. 39.

[129] Rabelais's text has the words "Semper in obscuris quod minimum est sequimur." The wording Bakhtin uses comes from Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:290–291), where it is cited as the original canonical law formula that Rabelais adapted.

(149) Obviously, we are not explicating the entire meaning of this remarkable episode featuring Bridlegoose. We are here concerned only with the way the image of the game of dice is used.

The "Third Book" was a live real-time response to a debate that was stirring up minds in France at the time, most acutely between 1542 and 1550. This debate was called the "querelle des femmes," and it concerned wedlock and the nature of women.[130] Nearly all French poets, writers, and philosophers made heated contributions to this debate, which also received live responses both at the royal court and in the widest circles of the reading public. This debate was not new: it had already stirred up minds in the fifteenth century, and in fact, the question was of concern throughout the Middle Ages. The essence of the debate is fairly complex, more complex than researchers usually imagine.

Two opposing lines of thought concerning woman's nature and marriage are usually distinguished, which extend throughout the entire Middle Ages and Renaissance.

The first line is customarily called "the Gallic tradition" ("tradition gauloise"). This line, running through the entire Middle Ages, has, in general, a negative attitude toward the nature of woman. The second line, which Abel Lefranc proposes to call the "idealizing tradition,"(150)[131] on the contrary, exalts the woman. In Rabelais's time, this second line was supported by the "Platonist poets,"[132] in part relying on the courtly tradition of the Middle Ages.

Rabelais sides with the "Gallic tradition," revived and renewed in Rabelais's time by a number of authors and, in particular, by Gratien Dupont, who in 1534 published a poem in three books titled *Controversies of the Masculine and Feminine Sexes*. It would appear that in the "debate on women," Rabelais did not take the women's side. How can his position be explained?

The point is that the "Gallic tradition" is a complex and internally contradictory phenomenon. In essence, it is not one tradition, but two: (1) the folk laughter-based tradition proper and (2) the ascetic tendency of medieval Christianity. The latter—that is, the ascetic tendency, which viewed woman as the embodiment of sin, of the temptation of the flesh—often used materials and images from the laughter-based folk tradition. This is why scholars frequently combine and confuse the two. Admittedly,

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[130] Bakhtin's source of information about this debate is Abel Lefranc's lengthy discussion of the matter in his introduction to vol. 5 of Rabelais's writings (Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 5:xxx–lxix). Bakhtin indeed goes on to explicitly cite Lefranc in a footnote. Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais's position, to be sure, is independent of Lefranc's.

[131] Lefranc's actual proposed term is the "courtly tradition" (*tradition courtoise*)—a term Bakhtin also uses as a narrower designation later in the paragraph. Bakhtin, however, paraphrases a particular passage from Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:xliii), which was quoted in the 1940 manuscript, where the tradition in question is described as "idealistic."

[132] This may be a reference to the Platonist tendencies of some of the authors in question (see, for example, Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 5:xxxvi ff.), but Bakhtin may also be putting "Platonist" in scare-quotes as a reference to the notion of Platonic love, championed and popularized by some of these authors.

(150) The debate on women is discussed in detail by Abel Lefranc in his introduction to the third book (see vol. 5, pp. xxx ff. of the critical edition).

the two trends are also mechanically combined in a number of medieval writings hostile to women and to marriage (especially in encyclopedic works).

In fact, however, the folk-laughter tradition and the ascetic trend are profoundly alien to each other. The folk-laughter tradition is in no way hostile to the woman and does not in the least evaluate her negatively. Categories of this kind are, generally speaking, inapplicable to it. In this tradition the woman is essentially connected to the material-bodily *nethers*; the woman is the incarnation of these nethers, which at once both lowers and revives. She is as ambivalent as these nethers. The woman lowers, brings down to earth, makes bodily, and deadens; but first and foremost, she is *the principle that gives birth.* She is the *belly.* Such is the ambivalent foundation of the woman's image in the folk-laughter tradition.

But where this ambivalent foundation is interpreted as belonging to *everyday life* (in the literature of fabliaux, facetiae, early novellas, farces), the ambivalence of the woman's image takes the form of a duality in her nature, of fickleness, sensuality, whimsicality, deceitfulness, materiality, lowliness. But all these are not abstract moral traits belonging to a human being; they cannot be separated out of the entire fabric of images, in which they carry the function of materializing, lowering and, at the same time, of the *renewal of life*, where they are contrasted with the *limitedness* of the partner (husband, lover, or suitor): his miserliness, jealousy, dimwittedness, hypocritical righteousness, sanctimony, sterile senility, pompous heroism, abstract ideality, and so on. The woman of the "Gallic tradition" is a bodily grave for the man (the husband, lover, or suitor). She is, in a way, embodied, personified indecent invective, directed at any kind of abstract pretentious claims, any kind of limited state of completion, of being fully exhausted and fully formed. She is the inexhaustible vessel of conception, which dooms all that is old and finished to death. Like the sibyl of Panzoult in Rabelais's novel, the woman of the "Gallic tradition" lifts her skirts and shows the place where everything goes (into the underworld, the grave) and from which everything originates (the womb that gives birth).[133]

On this plane, the "Gallic tradition" also develops *the theme of cuckoldry.* This is the decrowning of the obsolete husband, a new act of conception with a young man. In this system of images, *the cuckolded husband* shifts to the role of the *decrowned king*, of the old year, *the outgoing winter*: he is stripped of his robes, beaten, and laughed at.

One should stress that the image of the woman in the "Gallic tradition," like all images in this tradition, is given on the plane of ambivalent laughter, at once both scornfully annihilating and joyfully affirming. Can one possibly claim that this tradition offers a hostile and negative evaluation of the woman? Of course not. The woman's image is ambivalent, as are all the images of this tradition.

But when this image is used by the ascetic strands of Christianity or by the abstractly moralizing thinking of modern satirists and moralists, it loses its positive pole

[133] Referring to bk. 3, ch. 17.

and becomes purely negative. One should note that such images can never be transferred from the plane of laughter to the serious plane without distorting their nature. As a result, in most Medieval and Renaissance encyclopedic works, which sum up the Gothic accusations against women, the genuine images of the "Gallic tradition" are impoverished and distorted. This is also true to a certain extent of the second part of the *Roman de la Rose*, although the genuine ambivalence of the grotesque image of the woman and of love is sometimes preserved there.[134]

The image of the woman in the "Gallic tradition" undergoes another kind of distortion in that sort of literature, where it has begun to acquire the features of merely an *everyday-life character type*. In this case either the image of the woman becomes solely negative, or else its ambivalence degenerates into a meaningless mixture of positive and negative traits (especially in the eighteenth century, when such *static* mixtures of positive and negative *moral* traits in a hero passed for true realistic verisimilitude, for "resembling life").

But let us return to the sixteenth-century debate on women and to Rabelais's participation in it. The debate was mainly conducted in the language of new, narrowed-down concepts, in the language of abstract moralizing and bookish humanist philosophy. The genuine and pure "Gallic tradition" is represented by Rabelais alone. In no way was Rabelais in solidarity with women's enemies—neither with the moralists nor with the Epicureans, the followers of Castiglione.[135] Nor was he in solidarity with the Platonist idealists. The Platonist defenders of women and love were nevertheless closer to him than the abstract moralists. The Platonics' lofty "femininity" retained a certain degree of ambivalence in the woman's image; this image was symbolically expanded, and the reviving side of the woman, as well as of love, was placed at the forefront. But the Platonist poets' abstractly idealistic and pathos-filled serious interpretation of the woman's image was nevertheless unacceptable to Rabelais. Rabelais understood very well the *novelty* of this type of seriousness and sublimeness that the Platonists of his time had introduced into literature and philosophy. He understood how this new seriousness differed from the gloomy seriousness of the Gothic age. However, he considered that it too could not pass through the crucible of laughter without being entirely burned up. This is why Rabelais's voice remained, in essence, completely isolated in this famous debate of his time: it was the voice of folk public-square feast days, of carnival, of the fabliaux, facetiae, anonymous vulgar public-square jokes, sotties, and farces. But this voice is here heard at the highest levels and degrees of artistic form and philosophical thought.

We can now move on to Panurge's fortune-telling, which fills the better part of the "Third Book." What is he trying to find out?

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[134] On the contrast between the two parts of the *Roman de la rose* in terms of its attitudes toward women, see Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:xxxi).

[135] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:xlvii–xlviii). The reference is to Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (*Il libro del cortegiano*), from 1528.

Panurge wants to get married, but at the same time he fears wedlock: he is afraid to become a cuckold. This is exactly why he wants to find out what the future holds for him through fortune-telling. All his attempts at fortune-telling give him the same fateful answer: his future wife will cuckold, beat, and rob him. In other words, his fate is that of a carnival king and of the old year, and this fate is inevitable. All the advice of his friends, everything said in the novellas about women, which are told in the process of fortune-telling, as well as the analysis of woman's nature provided by the learned physician Rondibilis,[136] all lead to the same conclusion. The woman's uterus is inexhaustible and insatiable; the woman is organically hostile to all that is *old* (since she is the principle that gives birth to the *new*). Panurge will therefore inevitably be decrowned, beaten up (at the limit: killed), and laughed at. However, Panurge refuses to accept this inevitable fate of all individuality,[137] a fate here embodied in the image of the woman (of the intended bride). He is obstinate. He thinks that this fate can somehow be avoided. In other words, he wants to be the eternal king, the eternal year, eternal youth. But the woman is by nature hostile to eternity and unmasks it as pretentious old age. Cuckoldry, thrashing, and being laughed at are unavoidable. In vain does Panurge, in his conversation with Friar John (chapters 27 and 28), invoke the exceptional and wondrous force of his phallus. Friar John gives him a solid reply: "I quite understand that, but time softens everything. No marble and porphyry but suffers old age and decay. If you have not at present reached this stage, then a few years hence, I shall hear you confessing that your cods are dragging in the dust for want of a firmer truss."

And at the end of this conversation Friar John tells the famous novella about Hans Carvel's ring. Like almost all the novellas inserted into the novel, this story was not created by Rabelais[138] but is fully integrated into the unity of his system of images and his style. It is no coincidence that the ring—a symbol of *infinity*—here signifies the female sexual organ (an extremely common folkloric signification).[139] An *infinite* stream of conceptions and renewals flows through it. Panurge's hopes to avert his fate, the fate of the one decrowned, laughed at, and killed, are as meaningless as old Hans Carvel's attempt, which was suggested by the devil, to stem this inexhaustible stream of renewals and rejuvenations with his finger.

Panurge's fear of inevitably becoming a cuckold and being laughed at is the equivalent, on the laughter-based plane of the "Gallic tradition," of a widespread mythical

[136] Bk. 3, ch. 31–34 (especially ch. 32).

[137] This theme, of the tragedy of the individual, and the subsequent discussion a few paragraphs later of the theme of the father's fear of his son was the starting point for the detailed analysis of Shakespearian tragedy in Bakhtin's 1944 notes "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 2014; forthcoming-a).

[138] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:222). The novella itself appears at the end of bk. 3, ch. 28. The broader observation regarding inserted novellas in the text likely originates in other similar editors' comments to Rabelais's text.

[139] Cf. Meister Eckhart on God as a ring (see note 5 to chapter 6), mentioned by Cassirer (1955, 250). Freidenberg (1997b, 85), by contrast, considers the ring to be a symbol of death.

theme: *the fear of the son* as an inescapable *murderer and thief*. In the myth of Chronos, *the woman's womb* (the womb of Rhea, Chronos's wife, "the mother of gods") plays a substantial role. This womb not only gives birth to Zeus but also hides the already-born child from Chronos's persecutions, thus ensuring succession and the world's renewal. Another universally known example of the theme of fearing the son as the inevitable murderer and thief (seizer of the throne) is the myth of Oedipus. Here, once again, Jocasta's maternal womb similarly plays a dual role: it gives birth to Oedipus and is fecundated by him. Yet another example of the same theme is Calderón's *Life Is a Dream*.[140]

If, on the plane of the lofty mythical theme of fearing the son, it is indeed the son who will murder and rob, then it is the wife who, to a certain extent, plays this role on the plane of the laughter-based "Gallic tradition." She is the one who will cuckold, beat up, and chase away the old husband. Panurge's image in the "Third Book" is the image of obstinate old age (albeit at its very beginning), which does not accept succession and renewal. The fear of succession and renewal appears here in the form of fearing cuckoldry, the intended bride, and fate, embodied in the image of the woman who puts the old to death and gives birth to the new and young.

Thus, the basic theme of the "Third Book" is again directly and essentially connected with time and with folk-festive forms: decrowning (the cuckold's horns), thrashing, and being laughed at. Fortune-telling about the intended bride and cuckoldry is therefore linked with the theme of individual death, succession, and renewal (but on the laughter-based plane); it serves the same purpose of making time bodily, human, of creating an image of merry time. Fortune-telling about cuckoldry is a grotesque lowering of high-level divination, which is the occupation of kings and usurpers, concerned with the fate of their crown and laurels (on the laughter-based plane their equivalent here is the cuckold's horns). Such, for example, are Macbeth's attempts to foretell his future.[141]

In our analysis of the "Third Book," we looked only at the festive theme of Panurge's parodic laughter-based fortune-telling. But this theme is like an axis, around which is organized a broad carnivalesque inspection of everything that is obstinately old, and of everything new that still induces laughter, in the domain of thought and worldview. We see before us a procession of the representatives of theology, philosophy, medicine, law, natural magic, and more. In this respect the "Third Book" reminds us of Rabelais's prologues: it is just as magnificent a specimen of Renaissance public writing, founded on a folk public-square carnival ground.

We have examined the definitive influence folk-festive forms exerted on a series of the most essential elements of Rabelais's novel: on scenes of battles, thrashings, and decrownings, on a series of episodes directly permeated with themes connected to particular feast days, on the images of games, on prophecies, on fortune-telling. The

[140] In the 1940 manuscript, Bakhtin continued this paragraph with a brief analysis, along the same lines, of Pushkin's *The Miserly Knight*. This segment was removed in 1949–1950.

[141] Referring to the two scenes featuring the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (act 1, sc. 3 and act 4, sc. 1). Cf. the more extended analysis of *Macbeth* in Bakhtin (2014, 529–531).

influence of folk-festive carnival forms, of course, goes well beyond all the above. We have yet to consider other reflections of this influence in the following chapters. For now, we must develop two issues: the basic worldview-related meaning of the folk-festive carnival forms and the special functions these forms carry out in Rabelais's novel.

In what, then, lies the general worldview-related meaning of folk-festive, carnival forms (in the broader sense)?

As a starting point for considering this question, we shall turn to the description of the Roman carnival given by Goethe.[142] This remarkable description deserves extensive study. Goethe was able to capture and formulate with great simplicity and depth nearly all that is most essential in this phenomenon. The fact that we are talking here about the carnival of 1788,[143] which is a comparatively late occurrence, is of no significance in this case. The central core of the carnival-worldview system of images was still preserved even considerably later than that.

Goethe was prepared for the description of the Roman carnival better than anyone else.[144] He showed throughout his life an interest and love for folk-festive forms and for the special type of *realistic symbolism* distinctive of these forms. In characteristic fashion, one of the most powerful impressions of his youth was the feast of electing and crowning the emperor of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" that he attended in Frankfurt. He described this festivity very late in life,[145] but the way he described it, as well as a number of other factors, convince us that this was one of the formative impressions of his youth—that is, the sort of impressions that to a certain extent determine one's forms of seeing for the rest of one's lifetime. This was a spectacle of half-real, half-symbolic play with the symbols of power, chosenness,

[142] Goethe (1982, 445–469). This choice of "starting point" reflects what is likely the starting point for Bakhitn's own engagement with carnival and with Rabelais, which grew organically from his earlier engagement with Goethe (as recounted in the translator's preface above). Among Bakhtin's unpublished notebooks, there is a summary that he prepared of Goethe's *Italian Journey*. That notebook also contains a relatively lengthy discussion inspired by that text, parts of which appear in the commentary to the Russian scholarly edition of the book on Rabelais (Popova 2008a, 846–847; 2010a, 611–615). Popova (2008a, 846, 850; 2010a, 585) dates this discussion to the late 1930s and claims it is the earliest, or among the earliest, of Bakhtin's surviving writings that deal with carnival. (To judge by these notes' content, which reflects Bakhtin's fully formed conception of carnival, compared to, say, the chronotope essay, I would not exclude the possibility that the text is, in fact, somewhat later, possibly written as part of his work on composing this section of the Rabelais book).

[143] Goethe's *Italian Journey* records his participation in two Roman carnivals, that of 1787 (Goethe 1982, 163–164) and that of 1788 (Goethe 1982, 445–469). The 1787 carnival is described in passing, and in highly unflattering terms. It was Goethe's second carnival experience that gave rise to the description Bakhtin focuses on here.

[144] Bakhtin's main sources about Goethe's life are Goethe's autobiographies: *Truth and Poetry* and *Annals; or Day and Year Papers* (Goethe 1891–1894). Bakhtin studied both in detail (together with *Italian Journey*) when working on the *Bildungsroman* book in 1936–1937 (Bocharov and Liapunov 2012, 790).

[145] Goethe (1891–1894, 1:165–174).

coronation, and triumph; real historical forces played out the symbolic comedy of their hierarchic interrelations. It was state spectacle without footlights, in which it was difficult to trace a clear boundary between symbol and reality. To be sure, this was not a decrowning, but rather a communal crowning. But there is doubtlessly a genetic, formal, and artistic kinship between chosenness, crowning, triumph, decrowning, and subjecting to laughter. After all, originally, all these ceremonies and the images that composed them were ambivalent (i.e., the crowning of the new always accompanied the decrowning of the old; triumph was accompanied by ridiculing laughter).

Goethe's love for the most elementary expressions of folk-festive forms too is well known: all kinds of masquerades and mystifications, which he engaged in since his early youth and recounted in *Poetry and Truth*.[146]

We also know that in his adult years he liked to travel incognito through the duchy of Weimar and had a great deal of fun doing so.[147] But this was not a matter of simple amusement. He sensed the deeper and more essential meaning of all these travesties, of all these successions and renewals of attire and of social status.

Goethe also passed through a phase of infatuation with the vulgar public-square Shrovetide comic work of Hans Sachs.(151)[148] Finally, during the Weimar period of his life, Goethe, as the sworn organizer of court festivities and masquerades,[149] had studied the late and specific court-festive tradition of carnival forms and masks.

Such are the main factors (we have not nearly listed all of them) that prepared Goethe to form a correct and deep appreciation of the Roman carnival.

Let us now follow through Goethe's description of the Roman carnival in his *Italian Journey*, emphasizing in it all that responds to the tasks that interest us. Goethe first of all stresses the popular character of this feast, the people's initiative in its celebration: "The Roman Carnival is not really a festival given *for* the people but one the people give themselves."(152)

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[146] Referring to Goethe (1891–1894). A possible specific passage referred to could be Goethe (1891–1894, 1:137), where, however, Goethe judges his youthful love of mystification quite harshly, but more likely, Bakhtin is making a more general observation concerning numerous episodes in the book.

[147] Goethe (1891–1894, 1:371ff.). This journey takes place in Alsace, though, well outside the Duchy of Weimar. More generally, it is likely that Bakhtin here relied on his notes and recollections from reading Goethe's autobiography a few years earlier and did not have the full text at his disposal at the time of writing, which explains such inaccuracies.

[148] See Goethe (1891–1894, 2:104–108). Bakhtin may have also had access to the works cited in the footnote themselves.

[149] See note 103 to chapter 1.

(151) The works written purely in Hans Sachs's style by the young Goethe are "The Fair in Plundersweilern," "Hanswurst's Wedding," and "A Shrovetide Play on Father Brey, a False Prophet." In one of these popular-festive works (the unfinished "Hanswurst's Wedding"), we even find such aspects of carnival style as vulgar public-square terms of abuse being remade into proper names (there are several dozens of these here).

(152) Goethe, *Collected Works in Thirteen Volumes*, Goslitizdat, vol. 11, p. 510. [English translation: Goethe (1982, 446).] Page references in the text below are to this [English] edition.

The people does not feel itself to be receiving something that it should accept with awe and gratitude. It is given nothing at all but, rather, is left to its own devices. This festivity *has no object*, in relation to which *astonishment, awe, pious respect* would have been required; that is, it lacks precisely that which is offered in any official festivity: "there are no fireworks, no illuminations, no brilliant processions for the people to pray and be astonished at. All that happens is that, at a given signal, everyone has leave to be as mad and foolish as he likes, and almost everything, except fisticuffs and stabbing, is permissible" (p. 511 [446]).[150]

It is very important for the carnival's entire atmosphere that it is not introduced by a tone of either awe or seriousness, nor by an order, nor by giving permission, but rather, that it opens with a simple signal to start the merriment and foolery.

Next, Goethe stresses the cancelation of all hierarchic boundaries, of all ranks and degrees of status, and the absolute familiarity of carnival merriment:

> The difference between the social orders seems to be abolished for the time being; everyone accosts everyone else, all goodnaturedly accept whatever happens to them, and the insolence and licence of the feast is balanced only by the universal good humour.
>
> During this time, even to this day, the Roman rejoices because, though it postponed the festival of the Saturnalia with its liberties for a few weeks, the birth of Christ did not succeed in abolishing it. (p. 511 [446])

The signal to start the carnival is given: "And from that moment on, the most serious-minded Roman, who has so carefully watched his step all year, throws dignity and prudence to the winds" (p. 515 [450)].

Let us stress this* full liberation from the seriousness of life*.

In the atmosphere of carnival freedom and familiarity, indecency also finds its place. The Pulcinella mask often permits himself indecent gestures in the presence of women:

> As he talks to women, he manages to imitate with a slight impudent movement the figure of the ancient God of Gardens[151]—and this in Holy Rome!—but his frivolity excites more amusement than indignation. (p. 517 [451])

Goethe also introduces into the carnival atmosphere the theme of historical decrowning. During the crowded and congested carnival days, "the Duke of Albany made [his] drive every day, to the great inconvenience of the crowd, reminding Rome, ancient ruler of kings, throughout these days of universal mummery, of the Carnival comedy of his kingly pretensions (525 [457])."

Goethe then describes the *carnival battles* of confetti, which at times almost become battles in earnest. He also describes *carnival debates*—battles of words between the

[150] Translation modified.

[151] The reference is to the Greek and Roman phallic god Priapus.

maskers, for example between Capitano and Pulcinella. Next, we have a description of *several Pulcinelle electing a king in jest.* He is given *a mock scepter* and is driven along the Corso in a decorated carriage to music and loud cheers.[152]

Finally, a little scene is depicted that is most characteristic of the carnival. It takes place on one of the side streets. A group of men in costumes appears: some are dressed as peasants, others as women; one of the women displays the signs of advanced *pregnancy.* Suddenly, a quarrel breaks out among the men, and *knives* (made of silver cardboard) *are drawn.* The women separate the fighters; from the shock of all this, the pregnant woman goes into *labor* in the street. She moans while the other women surround her, and right there and then, with all the people present, she *gives birth* to some misshapen creature. The play is over.[153]

This depiction of *bloodshed and the act of childbirth* requires no special explanation after all that has already been said: cattle slaughter, the dismembered body, and the act of childbirth, in their indissoluble unity, make up, as we have seen, the first episode of "Gargantua." The combination of murder and childbirth is highly characteristic of the grotesque conception of the body and bodily life. This entire little scene played out in the side street is a miniature grotesque drama of the body.

The Roman carnival concludes with a *festival of fire* called "moccoli," (that is, "candle stumps"). This is a grandiose circulation of fire along the Corso and the adjacent streets. Everyone must carry a lighted candle: "Sia ammazzato chi non porta moccolo!" "Death to anyone who is not carrying a candle!" With this bloodthirsty cry, each tries to blow out the other's fire. *Fire is combined with the threat of death.* But this threat of death, this cry of "Sia ammazzato!," the louder it becomes, the more it loses its direct and one-sided meaning: *the deeply ambivalent meaning of the wish for death* is revealed. Describing the process in which this expression changes its meaning, Goethe quite correctly broadens the phenomenon:

> Just as in other languages curses and obscene words are often used as expressions of joy or admiration, so, on this evening, the true meaning of "Sia ammazzato" is completely forgotten, and it becomes a password, a cry of joy, a refrain added to all jokes and compliments. (p. 539 [467])

The ambivalence of invective expressions is correctly observed and described. But Goethe's assertion that the original "meaning of 'Sia ammazzato' is completely forgotten" is hardly justified. In all the contexts he cites, in which *the wish of death is meant to express joy, good-natured joking, flattery, or compliments* (praise), the original sense by no means disappears: indeed, it is this sense that creates the specific character and specific charm of these carnival terms of address and expressions, which would not be possible at any other time. *The heart of the matter is precisely the ambivalent combi-*

[152] Goethe (1982, 458–460).
[153] Goethe (1982, 460–461).

nation of invective with praise, of wishing death with wishing well and wishing life, in the atmosphere of the festival of fire, that is, *of burning down and rebirth.*

However, beyond the formal contrast of senses and tones in this expression, beyond the subjective play of opposites, there stands the *objective* ambivalence of being, the objective convergence of opposites, which, while it is not thought out with any clarity, is to some extent felt by the carnival's participants.

The union of "sia ammazzato" with a joyful intonation, with friendly, caressing greetings, with praiseful compliments, is *absolutely equivalent to the union of the murderous stabbing spree with the act of childbirth* in the previously described side-street scene. It is, in essence, one and the same *drama of pregnant and birthing death*, enacted both in that scene and in the "fire festival" ("moccoli") that concludes the Roman carnival. "Moccoli" brings back to life the ancient ambivalence of death wishes, which also sounded like wishes for renewal and a new birth: *die—be born anew.* And here, this ancient ambivalence is no dead vestige of the past; it is alive and finds a subjective echo in all carnival participants precisely because it is fully objective, even if this objectivity is not brought to consciousness with full clarity.

The ambivalence of being (as becoming) comes to life in the carnival through the paraphernalia of ancient traditional images (daggers, murder, pregnancy, birth, fire). But the same objective ambivalence of being was expressed by Goethe on the lofty level of lyric and philosophical consciousness in his immortal poem "Sagt es niemand":

> Und solang du das nicht hast,
> Dieses* stirb und werde*,
> Bist du nur ein *trüber Gast*
> Auf der *dunkeln* Erde.(153)[154]

This is nothing but that same carnival "sia ammazzato," which was there sounded in an atmosphere of fire and combined with joy, greetings, and praise. For there, at the carnival, the wish of death—"Die!" ("stirb")—sounded at the same time as "be reborn," "become" ("werde"). And the carnival's participants are no "dreary guests" by any means. To begin with, they are not guests at all: Goethe rightly stressed that carnival is the only feast *the people gives itself*, the people here receives nothing and is in awe of nobody, *it feels itself to be the host and only the host* (there are neither guests nor spectators at the carnival; everybody is a participant, everybody is a host). Second, the carnival's participants are anything but dreary: at the signal announcing the beginning of the feast, they all, even the most serious among them, have unburdened themselves

[154] Goethe (2019, poem 17). Bakhtin refers to the poem by its first line, rather than by its title ("Selige Sehnsucht," translated as "Holy Longing").

(153) And as long as you do not possess this—this: Die and Become! You are nothing but a dreary guest on the dark earth.

of any seriousness (this too is stressed by Goethe himself). Finally, it would be not in the least appropriate to speak of darkness during the "moccoli," the fire festival, when the entire Corso is flooded with light from the flames, candles, and torches moving around it. Thus, there is here a complete parallelism: *the carnival's participant—the people—is the absolutely merry host of the light-flooded earth, because he only knows death pregnant with a new birth, because he knows the merry image of becoming and of time, because he is in full possession of this* "*stirb und werde.*" What matters here is not the degrees to which the individual participants of the carnival are subjectively conscious of all this; what matters is their *objective partaking in the people's feeling of its collective eternity, of its earthly, historical immortality as a people and its incessant renewal—growth.*

But the first two lines of Goethe's poem:

> Sagt es niemand, nur den Weisen,
>
> Denn die Menge gleich verhöhnet![(154)]

were not written by the Goethe who took part in the Roman carnival but perhaps rather by the Goethe who was a grand master of the Masonic lodge. He seeks to transform into esoteric wisdom precisely that which in its fullness and concreteness was accessible in his time only to the broad popular masses. In reality, it was precisely "die Menge" who in its own language, its poetry, and its images, among them carnival and Shrovetide images, imparted its truth to the wise man Goethe, who was wise enough not to ridicule it.

Let me quote another parallel passage, which confirms our proposition.

In his "Conversations with Eckermann" (of January 17, 1827), concerning the bonfires of St. John's night, Goethe quotes his poem:

> Still let the bonfire blaze away,
>
> Let pleasure never know decay;
>
> Old brooms to stumps are always worn,
>
> And youngsters everyday are born.

and comments upon it as follows:

> I need only look out of the window to see, *in the brooms* that sweep the street, and the *children* who run about, a visible *symbol of life, that is always wearing out and always becoming young again.*[155]

[155] Goethe (1875, 196–197). Translation modified.

[(154)] Tell it to no one except for the wise, for the rabble will scorn it at once.

Goethe had an excellent understanding of the language of folk-festive images. His sense of style was not in the least perturbed by the *purely carnivalesque combination* of the images of the broom sweeping the streets and of children as the most universal of all symbols of the ever-dying and self-renewing life.

But let us return to Goethe's description of the Roman carnival and, in particular, to the ambivalent *affirming curse* "sia ammazzato."

In the carnival world, all hierarchy is canceled. All castes and ages are equal here. And so, a young boy blows out his father's candle, shouting, "Sia ammazzato il Signore Padre!" (that is, "Death to you, sir father!")[156] This magnificent carnivalesque shout of the boy merrily threatening his father with death and blowing out his candle, after all we said above, requires no special comment.

Thus ends the carnival. Around midnight there is *feasting* in every home, where *meat* is consumed in abundance: after all, it will soon be forbidden.

The last day of the festive season is followed by "Ash Wednesday," and Goethe concludes his description of the carnival with an "Ash Wednesday meditation" ("Aschermittwochbetrachtung"). He offers us a "philosophy of carnival" of sorts. He attempts to reveal the *serious meaning of carnival foolery*. Here is the main passage of this meditation:

> In the course of all these follies our attention is drawn to the most important stages of human life: a vulgar Pulcinella recalls to us the pleasures of love to which we owe our existence; a Baubo profanes in a public place the mysteries of birth and motherhood, and the many lighted candles remind us of the ultimate ceremony. (p. 541 [469])

This meditation of Goethe's is somewhat disappointing: it does not gather together in it all the elements of carnival (missing, for example, are the election of a mock king, carnival wars, the murder theme, and so on); the meaning of carnival is limited to the aspect of individual life and death. The main collective historical factor is not brought forward. The "worldwide conflagration" of the renewing carnival fire is narrowed down, almost to the point of becoming funeral candles in an individual funerary rite. Pulcinella's indecency, the depiction of childbirth on the street, and the image of death symbolized by fire are correctly tied together in Goethe's meditation into a unity as aspects of a meaningful and deeply universal spectacle, but he unites them on the narrowed-down basis of the individual aspect of life and death.

And thus, the Ash Wednesday meditation almost entirely shifts the images of carnival, so magnificently described above, into the sphere of an individually subjective sense of the world. It is in this sphere, too, that the images of carnival will be understood during the Romantic era. They will be seen as symbols of individual destiny, while it was precisely the people's destiny that was revealed in them, indissolubly linked to the earth and permeated by the cosmic principle. Goethe himself, in his own artistic

[156] Goethe (1982, 468).

work, did not set his foot on that path of individualizing carnival images, but his Ash Wednesday meditation stood at the outset of this path.(155)[157]

Goethe's accomplishment in his description of the carnival, and even in his concluding meditation, is very great: he was able to see and reveal the unity and the deep philosophical character of carnival. Behind the isolated, seemingly unrelated foolish pranks, indecencies, and rude familiarity of carnival, and even behind its very lack of seriousness, he was able to sense *a single viewpoint on the world* and *a single style*, even as he did not give them a correct and clear *theoretical* expression in his concluding meditation.

In connection with the problem of the realistic symbolism of folk-festive forms, as it was understood by Goethe, let me quote two of his comments from his conversations with Eckermann. Concerning Correggio's painting *Weaning*:[158]

> Aye, ... there is a little picture for you! There are mind, naïveté, sensuousness, all together. *The sacred subject* is endowed with an *universally human interest*, and stands as *a symbol for a period of life* we must *all* pass through. Such a picture is immortal, because it grasps backwards *at the earliest times of humanity, and forwards at the latest* (December 13, 1826).[159]

Concerning Myron's *Heifer*:[160]

> Here ... we have a subject of the highest sort—*the nourishing principle which upholds the world, and pervades all nature*, is here brought before our eyes by a beautiful symbol. This and similar images, I call the *true symbols of the omnipresence of God*.[161]

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[157] The quotation in the footnote is from Heine (1876, 122; translation modified). Bakhtin first took notice of these lines in "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 1996a, 106; forthcoming-a), and the footnote itself dates to the 1949–1950 round of revisions.

[158] There is no known painting by Correggio with this title. Eckermann, in his remarks preceding the quoted passage, refers to the painting described in *Italian Journey* (Goethe 1982, 208): "It depicts a Madonna and Child at the moment when the latter is hesitating between her breast and some pears offered Him by a cherub—in other words, The Weaning of Christ." From among Correggio's known paintings, Goethe's description best corresponds to *Nursing Madonna with an Angel*.

[159] Goethe (1875, 179).

[160] The sculpture of a cow by the ancient Greek sculptor Myron (known only from Roman copies).

[161] Goethe (1875, 553).

(155) Compared to Romanticism, the carnivalesque element (the grotesque, ambivalence) becomes more objective in the works of Heine, though the subjective aspect, inherited from Romanticism, nevertheless prevails in his writings too. Here are lines from *Atta Troll*, which are characteristic of his awareness of ambivalence:

> Madness, which has wisdom *in it!*
> Wisdom that has become crazy!
> *Dying groans*, which on a sudden

From these two comments we can see that Goethe had an excellent understanding of the *symbolically extended sense of the images of feeding* (in the first example breastfeeding, in the second the suckling of a calf by a cow).

Let us quote two more excerpts from the conversations with Eckermann that testify to Goethe's almost carnivalesque understanding of the idea of demise and renewal, both of individual people and of all of humanity:

> You will generally find ... that in his middle age a man frequently experiences a change; and that, while in his youth everything has favoured him, and has prospered with him, all is now completely reversed.
>
> *But do you know my opinion on this matter?* Man must be ruined again! Every extraordinary man has a certain mission which he is called upon to accomplish. If he has fulfilled it, he is no longer needed upon earth in the same form, and Providence uses him for something else *(March 11, 1828).*[162]

Here is another passage:

> I foresee the time when *God will have no more joy in [mankind]*, but will *break up everything for a renewed creation.* I am certain that everything is planned to this end, and that the time and hour are already fixed in the distant future for the occurrence of this *renovating epoch.* But a long time will elapse first, and we may still for thousands and thousands of years *amuse ourselves* in all sorts of ways on this dear *old* surface (October 23, 1828).[163]

We must add that Goethe's views on *nature* as a *whole*, as "*all*," including man also, were penetrated by elements of a carnival sense of the world. Around the year 1782 Goethe wrote, in the spirit of Spinoza, a remarkable poem in prose titled "Nature."[164]

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[162] Goethe (1875, 312).

[163] Goethe (1875, 345).

[164] Bakhtin is referring to the essay "Die Natur" by Georg Christoph Tobler, published in 1783. The essay was inspired by Tobler's communication with Goethe and has been attributed to Goethe himself in many sources. Bakhtin is quoting the text from a collection of Goethe's scientific works edited by Bakhtin's old friend and member of the Bakhtin Circle, Ivan Kanaev (Goethe 1957, 361–363). Kanaev's commentary on this text (Goethe 1957, 529–530), possibly augmented by information transmitted in personal communication, is also Bakhtin's source of information about it. Kanaev discusses the possibility that Goethe is not himself the author but accepts Goethe's authorship based on Goethe's willingness to include this piece in a collection of his works, and especially based on a reference to this work in a letter to Friedrich von Müller (also included by Kanaev in the book and also quoted by Bakhtin below). That same letter to Müller includes language that can be equally well taken to indicate Goethe did not write the essay in question—language that Kanaev dutifully includes in his translation (Goethe 1957,

> Into *laughter* all are turned!

It was translated into Russian by Herzen and appended to the second of his *Letters on the Study of Nature*.[165]

Here are excerpts from this work by Goethe, confirming our notion:

> Nature! We are surrounded and embraced by her; powerless to separate ourselves from her, and powerless to penetrate beyond her. Without asking, or warning, she snatches us up into her circling *dance*, and whirls us on until we are tired, and drop from her arms.
>
> She has neither language nor discourse; but she creates tongues and hearts, by which she feels and speaks.
>
> She is all things. She rewards herself and punishes herself; is her own joy and her own misery. She is rough and tender, lovely and hateful, powerless and omnipotent.
>
> Mankind dwell in her and she in them. With all men she *plays a game* for love, and rejoices the more they *win*. With many, her moves are so hidden, that the game is over before they know it.
>
> The *spectacle* of Nature is always new, for she is always renewing the spectators. Life is her most exquisite invention; and *death is her expert contrivance to get plenty of life*.
>
> She is complete but *never finished*. As she works now, so can she always work.[(156)166]

We can see from these fragments that "Nature" is a work by Goethe that is deeply carnivalesque in spirit.

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364). The parallels with the notorious debate around the authorship of many Bakhtin Circle texts (including one published by Kanaev himself) are quite intriguing. It appears that Kanaev (and Bakhtin) did not understand the notion of authorship in quite the same way we do, at least in the West, today.

The paragraphs dealing with this essay are a late addition to Bakhtin's text, first appearing in the final 1965 publication.

[165] Herzen's *Letters on the Study of Nature* (Herzen 2004) is his main philosophical work, originally published as a series of articles in a periodical (hence Bakhtin's reference to "the second" of the letters). Kanaev used Herzen's translation (with some edits) in his collection of Goethe's scientific works, which Bakhtin is citing from.

[166] The English translation is the famous translation by T. H. Huxley (1869) that appeared in the very first issue of the journal *Nature*. As Bakhtin writes, this is not a contiguous quotation but, rather, a collection of excerpts from different places in the text. Interestingly, Bakhtin's emphasis here falls on an understanding of "nature" that chimes with his own understanding, already in his earliest works, of the whole of reality, the being-event (*bytie-sobytie*), as containing the irreducible multiplicity of all individual subjective worlds of deed and experience (see Sandler 2024c).

[(156)] I am quoting from the book J.-W. Goethe, *Izbrannye sochineniya po estestvoznaniyu* [Select writings on natural philosophy], Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1957, p. 361 ff.

Late in life (in 1828) Goethe wrote an "explanation" to "Nature."[167] In this piece we find the following momentous words:

> One may see a tendency toward a sort of pantheism, in which the world phenomena are fundamentally thought of as an inscrutable, unconditional, *humorous*, self-contradictory entity, and it may all be taken for a *game*, a strictly serious one.(157)

Goethe understood that one-sided seriousness and fear are *the feelings of a part* that senses itself to be torn apart from the whole. As to the whole itself, since it is "never finished," it has a "humorous," merry character; that is, it is amenable to be understood in a laughter-based aspect.

But let us return to Rabelais. Goethe's description of carnival can also serve, up to a point, as a description of Rabelais's world, of the Rabelaisian system of images. Indeed, the specific *aweless festiveness, the complete freeing from seriousness, the atmosphere of equality, unfetteredness, and familiarity, the philosophical nature of indecencies, the crownings and decrownings in jest, the merry carnival wars and beatings, the parodic disputes, the connection between stabbings and childbirth, the affirming curses*—do we not find all these elements of Goethe's carnival in Rabelais's novel? All of them are present in the Rabelaisian world, all of them are just as essential here, and they all have *the same philosophical meaning.* What, then, is this meaning?

The folk-public-square carnival crowd in the public square or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is *the people as a whole*, but organized *in its own way*, *the way of the people*, outside of and despite all existing forms of the people's coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is canceled, as it were, during the time of the feast.

This festive organization of the people is first of all profoundly concrete and sensual. Even the very crampedness, the *physical contact of bodies*, acquires a certain meaning. The individual senses himself to be an inseparable part of the collective, a member of the people's mass body. In this whole the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself: it is possible, so to speak, *to exchange bodies with one another, to be renewed* (changes of costumes, masquerades). At the same time *the people feels its concrete sensual, material-bodily unity and community.*

During his Italian journey Goethe examined an ancient amphitheater in Verona. It was, of course, empty at that time. Apropos of this visit, Goethe made a very interesting *claim concerning the people's special feeling of itself*, which, thanks to the amphitheater, *receives a concretely sensual, visible form of its mass and its unity*:

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[167] Referring to the above-mentioned passage from his letter to Müller. Kanaev included it in his collection under the title "Explanation Concerting the Aphoristic Essay 'Nature,' " and Bakhtin is quoting from this publication (see citation in the footnote below). This explains Bakhtin's use of "explanation" in quotation marks here.

(157) Ibid., p. 364.

> Crowded together, its members are astonished at themselves. They are accustomed at other times to seeing each other running hither and thither in confusion, bustling about without order or discipline. Now this many-headed, many-minded, fickle, blundering monster suddenly sees itself united as one noble assembly, welded into one mass, a *single figure* animated by a *single spirit.* (p. 52 [35])[168]

A similar sense by the people of its own unity was also born out of all the forms and images of the folk-festive life of the Middle Ages. But there this unity did not have such a simple geometric and static character. It was more complex, differentiated, and most importantly, it was *historical.* The people's body on the carnival square first of all feels *its unity in time*, feels its *incessant duration*in it, its* relative historical immortality*. Therefore, the people here senses not the static image of its unity ("eine Gestalt")*[169] *but, rather,* the unity and continuity of its becoming and growth*. That is why* all folk-festive images register precisely the moment of becoming and growth, of the incomplete metamorphosis, of death-renewal*. For all these images are* double-bodied *(if brought to their limit): emphasized everywhere is* the engendering[170] element—pregnancy, childbirth, the reproductive force *(Pulcinella's double hump, protruding abdomens, and so on). We have pointed this out already and will discuss it more later.* Carnival, with all its images, little scenes, indecencies, affirming curses, plays out this immortality and indestructibility of the people*. In the carnival world the feeling of the people's immortality is combined with the feeling *that existing powers and the prevalent truth are all relative.*

Folk-festive forms look into the *future* and play out *the victory of this future—of the* "*golden age*"*—over the past*, the victory of communal material well-being, freedom, equality, brotherhood. This victory of the future is ensured by the people's immortality. The birth of the new, the greater and better, is as necessary and as inevitable as the death of the old. The one shades into the other; the better makes the worse laughable and kills it. In the *whole* of the world and of the people *there is no room for fear*; fear can only enter *a part that has separated from the whole*, only *a dying link considered apart from the link that is born. The whole of the people and of the world is triumphantly merry and fearless.* It is this *whole* that speaks through the mouth of all carnival images; it reigns in carnival's very atmosphere, which makes each and all partake in the feeling of the whole.

In connection with this carnival feeling of the whole (which is "never finished"), I would like to quote another excerpt from Goethe's "Nature":

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[168] Goethe (1982, 35). Translation modified (in particular, the word "figure" renders the German word *Gestalt*).

[169] "A single figure" in the quote from Goethe (1982, 35) above.

[170] *rodovoy.* This is an odd case, in which none of the derivatives of the English root "kin" can be used to convey what Bakhtin means by this word (though, for what it's worth, "engendering" is etymologically linked to a Greek cognate).

> She has neither language nor discourse; but she creates *tongues and hearts*, by which she feels and speaks.
>
> Her crown is *love*. Through love alone dare we come near her. *She separates all existences*, and all *tend to intermingle. She has isolated all things in order that all may approach one another*. She holds a couple of draughts from the cup of love to be fair payment for the pains of a lifetime.[171]

In conclusion, it must be stressed that in the carnival sense of the world, the people's immortality is felt to form an integral unity with the immortality of the becoming of being as a whole, to blend with it. In his *body* and in his life, man has a living sensation of the earth, as well as the other elements, of the sun and of the star-filled sky. We will devote a special discussion to this cosmic nature of the grotesque body in the fifth chapter of our work.

Let us now turn to the second question we posed, concerning the special functions of folk-festive forms in Rabelais's novel.

Our starting point will be a brief analysis of the oldest French comic drama, "Play of the Greensward" (*Jeu de la feuillée*) by the trouvère Adam de la Halle from Arras. This drama dates back to 1262, almost three hundred years before Rabelais's novel. This first comic play in France makes use of a feast of the carnival type, makes use of its themes and all the rights associated with it to break away from life's beaten track, rights to unfetteredness with regard to all that is official and consecrated. All this is still used here in a manner that is quite simple, but then again very telling. This play is deeply carnivalized from beginning to end.[172]

Play of the Greensward has almost no footlights. The play is performed in Arras, and the action is also set in Arras, the author's hometown. The participants are the author himself, the young trouvère, his father (Maître Henri), and other citizens of

[171] Huxley (1869, 10). This quotation was, again, added to the book already in the 1960s.

Bakhtin's choice to include a paragraph that focuses on *love* in this context is interesting. As a philosophical concept, love has a long pedigree, going back to the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Empedocles. Empedocles posited that being, or nature, is shaped by the two active principles of *love* and *strife*. Tobler's/Goethe's use of the term here clearly follows in the same tradition (nature is described as wielding both principles). But closer to Bakhtin himself, love was the central term in the philosophy of history developed by his friend and cofounder of what we now call the "Bakhtin Circle," Matvey Kagan. Bakhtin himself refers to love rarely, but in philosophically significant contexts, in what appears to be an attempt to integrate Kagan's notion of love (rooted in secular philosophy and partly in Jewish religious tradition) with the notion of love derived from Christian theology. The present context hints at Bakhtin's understanding of love as what truly overcomes the tragedy of the individual, that part separated from the whole, rebelling against succession and replacement, without at the same time eliminating subjective individuality itself.

[172] Bakhtin's sources on this play are Driesen (1904, 38–66, probably Bakhtin's main source) and Reich (1903, 836–842). In addition, it is likely that Bakhtin was able to consult the full text of the play itself when preparing the book for publication in the 1960s. Bakhtin's account contains occasional bits of information not found in the secondary sources, but all these details first appear in the 1965 book, not in earlier versions.

Arras who appear under their real names (Riquece Aurri, Guillos the Little, Hane li Mercíers, Rikiers, and others).[173] The topic of the play is Adam's intention to leave his hometown and his wife to study in Paris. This also happened in real life. Thus, the plot too is hardly separated at all from actual reality by any footlights. There is also a fantastic element interwoven with the real one here. The play was performed *on the first of May*, a day on which there was *a fair and a popular feast* held in Arras, and the drama's entire action is associated with May Day.

Play of the Greensward falls into three parts. The first part can be referred to as carnivalesque-autobiographical, the second as carnivalesque-fantastic, and the third as feasting-carnivalesque.

The first part offers the most candid depiction, in the spirit of carnival unfetteredness and familiarity, of the personal and family affairs of the author himself (Adam). There follow references to other citizens of Arras, no less candid, exposing their private-life and boudoir secrets.

The first part begins with Adam appearing dressed up as a cleric (this is a masquerade, since he is not yet a cleric). He announces that he is leaving his wife to go to Paris and pursue his studies. He wants to place his wife under his father's care. Adam tells how much he was beguiled by Marie's (his wife's name) charms before their marriage. A detailed, fairly candid and unfettered enumeration of these charms is given. Enter Adam's father, Maître Henri. Asked whether he would give his son some money, Maître Henri replies that he is unable to do so, being old and *sick*. A *physician* ("li fisisciens") present at the scene diagnoses the father's disease as *stinginess*. The physician then names several other citizens of Arras afflicted with the same disease. Then the physician is consulted by a woman of easy virtue ("dame douce"). Apropos of this consultation, the play offers a "review" of sorts of the intimate boudoir life of Arras and names ladies of loose behavior. During this medical consultation, *urine* figures as the main indicator of human character and destiny.

The images of the physician and of the diseases or vices are sustained in a grotesque carnival spirit. Enter a monk collecting offerings for St. Acarius, who cures madness and folly. Some people wish to be healed by this saint. Enter a madman accompanied by his father. The role played in the play by this madman, as well as the theme of madness and folly in general, is quite significant. We get a critical free interpretation, put in the mouth of the madman, of one decree of Pope Alexander IV, which impinges on the privileges of clerics (among them, those of Maître Henri). Thus ends the first part of the play. Scholars usually explain the license and indecency of this part by reference to "the coarseness of those times." But, in fact, this "coarseness" has a system and a style of its own. These are all the already familiar elements of the holistic laughter-based carnival aspect of the world.[174]

[173] Reich (1903, 839); Driesen (1904, 40). Driesen imagines the performance as featuring these people as actors, playing themselves. The list of names in parenthesis first appears in the 1965 version of the book and adds minor details missing from the secondary sources.

[174] The last two paragraphs were inserted in the 1965 round of revisions. Bakhtin may be following

The boundary lines between life and play are here intentionally erased. Life itself is playing.

The second, carnivalesque-fantastic, part begins after the monk with his relics—here, he is to a certain extent the representative of the Church and, therefore, of the official world and of official truth—falls asleep by the side of the greensward (which forms the main section of the stage). In the greensward a table is set for three fairies who can only appear on the eve of May Day and then too only once the representative of the Church (i.e., of the official world) is away. Before they appear, "Erlking's army" passes by with a tinkling of jingles. First to appear is the Erlking's messenger, a kind of comic devil. Then enter the fairies themselves. Their supper in the greensward is depicted, alongside their conversations among themselves and with the Erlking's messenger. By the way, this messenger's name is "Croquesots," that is, "fool-muncher." The fairies pronounce their prophetic wishes, for both good and ill (among them regarding the fortunes of the author, Adam, himself); the "wheel of fortune," connected with fortune-telling and predictions, also plays a role here. At the end of the fairies' supper, the woman of easy virtue ("dame douce") appears. The fairies patronize such women, to whom, as to the fairies, belongs the night of May Day, with its freedom and unbridledness. The "dame douce," like the fairies, is a representative of the unofficial world, which on May Day Eve has been granted the right to liberty and impunity.

The last, feasting-carnivalesque, part takes place before dawn in a tavern, where the participants of the May Day festivities and of the play, including the monk with the relics, have assembled for some feasting. All drink, laugh, sing songs, and play dice. They also play for the monk, who falls asleep once more. Taking advantage of his sleep, the taverner grabs the monk's box with relics and plays the role of the monk curing fools; that is, the taverner parodies him, to all-round laughter. At the end of this scene the madman (the same one that appeared in the first part of the play) bursts into the tavern. But by that time dawn is already breaking, and the ringing of church bells begins. May Night with its liberties is over. To the sound of the bells, upon the monk's invitation, the play's participants go to church.

Such are the main content elements of this oldest of French comic dramas. Strange as it might seem, it contains the rudiments of almost the entire Rabelaisian world.

Let us stress first of all the exceptionally close connection the play has to the May Day feast. Up to its minutest detail, it springs from this feast's themes and atmosphere. The feast determines its form and the character of its staging, as well as its content. For the time of the feast, the power held by the official world—the Church and the state—is, as it were, suspended, together with all its norms and its system of evaluations. The world is permitted to go off its beaten track. In the play itself, the end of festive unfetteredness is very clearly indicated by the ringing of the morning bells (also, the jingling bells of the erlkings passing by the stage are heard as soon as the monk has

Dzhivelegov and Boyadzhiev (1941, 47), at least in part, or may be basing this summary on the original text of the play.

made his exit). *Feasting* assumes a substantial place among the themes of the festivity itself—the fairies' supper in the greensward and the participants' feasting in the tavern. Let us stress *the theme of playing dice*, which is not merely a mundane festive pastime: the game is internally akin to the feast; it is extra-official; it is governed by rules that stand in contrast to the ordinary course of life. Further, the temporary cancellation of the official ecclesiastical world's exclusive power leads to the temporary return of the *decrowned pagan gods*: the passing of erlkings, the appearance of fairies, and the appearance of the Erlking's messenger all become possible. *The feast of the prostitutes* in the public square, directed by the fairies, also becomes possible. *The theme of the prostitute* ("dame douce") merits special emphasis. On the night before May Day, the unofficial world of the prostitutes gains rights, and even power: in the play, the "dame douce" prepares to settle accounts with her enemies. Finally, *the theme of the wheel of fortune and of the fairies' May Day predictions and curses* is very important; the feast faces *the future*, and this future acquires not only utopian forms but also the more primitively archaic forms of soothsaying and of curse-blessings (originally concerned with the future harvest, animal yield, and so on). *The theme of relics* is also typical, connected as it is to notions of the dismembered body. A substantial role is also played by the physician, with his constant attribute—urine. The theme of folly and madness is very important. Something akin to a public-square "cri," addressed to fools, is introduced into the play and, together with the feast, determines its atmosphere to a significant extent. The feast grants a right to folly.

Folly is, of course, deeply ambivalent. It has both the negative element of lowering and annihilation (it alone survives in the present-day term of abuse "fool") and the positive element of renewal and truth. Folly is inverted wisdom, inverted truth. It is the flip side and the bottom side of official, prevailing truth; folly manifests itself above all in failing to understand the laws and conventions of the official world and in evading them. *Folly is unfettered festive wisdom, free from all the laws and stringencies of the official world*, as well as from its *worries* and its *seriousness*.

Let us recall the fifteenth-century apology for the Feast of Fools we cited earlier (in chapter 1).[175] The defenders of this feast, as we have seen, understood it as a merry and free working off of folly—"our second nature." They contrasted this merry folly to the seriousness of "devotion and the fear of God." Thus, the apologists for the Feast of Fools considered it to be not only a way to be freed "once a year" from life's beaten track but also as a way to be freed from the religious point of view on the world, from devotion and the fear of God. One was allowed to glimpse the world with "foolish" eyes, and this right belonged not to the Feast of Fools alone but to the folk public-square side of every feast.

This is why *the theme of folly* and the figure of *the incurable fool* become so important in the festive atmosphere of the *Play of the Greensward*, and the play ends with that same fool appearing just before the church bells start ringing.

[175] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 226–227).

We may recall that in his description of the carnival Goethe also stressed more than once that every participant, however serious and important he might be all the year round, permits himself here, once a year, every kind of jest and foolery. Rabelais, speaking on the matter of the fool Triboulet, puts the following reflection on wisdom and folly in Pantagruel's mouth:

> "Well, let us say a man who watches over his private affairs and domestic business, who attends to his household, who keeps his nose to the particular grindstone he works, who understands thoroughly how to avoid the pitfalls of poverty, That, according to the world, should constitute a wise man. Yet, in the eyes of the celestial intelligences, he may be the most unmitigated ass.
>
> And whom do those intelligences consider wise, then? Ha, that is a horse of another color. For them, a wise man, a man not only sage but able to presage future events by divine inspiration, and capable of receiving the gift of prophecy, is one who forgets himself, discards his own personality, rids his senses of all earthly affection, purges his spirit of all human care, neglects everything. All of which qualities are popularly supposed to be symptoms of insanity!"
>
> Thus, Faunus, son of Picus, king of Latium, and a great soothsayer, was called Fatuus by the common herd.
>
> Thus, when the various rôles were distributed among a company of mummers, that of the Fool or Jester invariably went to the most talented and experienced actor.
>
> Thus, mathematicians declared that the same horoscope applied for kings and zanies. (book 3, chapter 37)[176]

This reflection is worded in a bookish manner of speech and in a high style. Consequently, the norms of *official piousness* are observed here in the choice of words and of the very concepts they stand for. This explains why, in characterizing the fool's folly, such notions as "celestial intelligences" and "receiving the gift of prophecy" are employed. In the first part of this quote, Rabelais depicts the jester and fool as a saint (there was nothing out of the ordinary in such a notion in his days, especially as Rabelais was a Franciscan monk). He endows the fool's (madman's) "withdrawing from this world"[177] with an almost traditional Christian content. But, in fact, Rabelais understands the jester's and fool's withdrawing from the world to be a withdrawing from the official world with its worldview, its system of evaluations, and its seriousness. After all, such is the image of Triboulet himself as shown in this book. For Rabelais too,

[176] Translation modified.

[177] The phrase does not appear in the Rabelais quote (though it can be used as a paraphrase for a

the fool's truth presupposed *freedom from private material greed, from the unworthy ability* to profitably manage one's household and private affairs; but the language of this fool's truth was at the same time very *earth-bound and material*. However, this material principle did not have a private selfish nature but, rather, a *communal* character. If we put aside the official notions in this passage, which were superadded by the lofty style and bookish language, we shall find ourselves facing a Rabelaisian apology for folly as a form of *unofficial truth*, as a special point of view on the world, one that is free from all the privately mercenary interests, norms, and evaluations of "this world" (that is, of the prevailing official world, which it is, moreover, always profitable to serve). The concluding lines of the quotation directly point to the jesters and fools of the festive theater stage.

Let us return to Adam de la Halle's May Day comic drama. What are the functions that the feast and festive folly perform in it? *They grant the author the right to treat an unofficial subject* and, moreover, the right to *have an unofficial point of view on the world*. For all its simplicity and lack of pretentiousness, this play presents *a special aspect of the world*, completely alien and fundamentally deeply hostile to the medieval worldview and the official order of life. This aspect is first and foremost *merry and lightened up*, with a substantial role in it played by feasting, the reproductive force, play, the parodic travestying of the monk with the relics, the decrowned pagan gods (fairies, erlkings). The world looks *more materialistic, more bodily, more human, and merrier,* the fantastic elements notwithstanding. This is *a festive aspect of the world*, and it is *legalized* as such. *On May Day Eve one is permitted to look at the world without fear and without devotion.*

This play makes no pretense of being topical. But at the same time, it is deeply universal. It contains not a grain of abstract moralizing. It contains no comedy of characters, no situation comedy, more generally, no comedy based on particular, isolated aspects of the world and of public life, and, of course, there is no abstract negation. The entire world is presented here from a *merry and unfettered* aspect, and the author conceives this aspect to be universal, all-embracing. To be sure, this world is bounded, but not by one or another aspect or phenomenon of life; it is bounded exclusively by the temporal boundaries of the feast, the boundaries of the May Day night. The ringing of the morning bells marks a return to the seriousness of fear and devotion.

Rabelais's novel was written nearly three centuries after the *Play of the Greensward*, but the functions of the folk-festive forms in it are analogous. Then again, everything here has become broader, deeper, more complex, more conscious, and more radical.

In the "Fourth Book" of the novel, alongside the story about the beating of the catchpoles, a story is also told about the "tragic farce" played out by Master François Villon.[178]

section of it). Instead, it is associated with the vows taken by a monk during tonsure.

[178] Bk. 4, ch. 13. The story is referred to as a "tragic farce" in the book itself (as explained below).

Here is that story. The aging Villon, who was in Saint-Maixent, undertook to produce "a passion play" for the Niort Fair, which includes a "grand diablerie."[179] Everything was ready for the production; the only thing missing was a costume for God the Father. The local sacristan, Ticklepecker, categorically refused to lend any vestments from the sacristy, considering their use for a theatrical spectacle to be a sacrilege. He could not be persuaded. Master Villon then decided to take vengeance upon him. He knew when Ticklepecker toured the parish on a filly and scheduled the diablerie's dress rehearsal precisely for that moment. Rabelais gives a description of the devils, their costumes, and their "weapons" (kitchen utensils), part of which we have already quoted above. The rehearsal was held *in town and at the market in the public square.* Villon then took the devils to *a feast at a tavern by the road* that Ticklepecker was supposed to be traveling along. When at last he appeared, the devils surrounded him with terrifying shouts and clanging, threw about burning rosin that produced flames and terrible smoke, and frightened his filly:

> The filly, scared out of her wits, started, reared, plunged forward, bucketed, galloped, jerked and curvetted, then rushed headlong, her gyrations accompanied by a vast pooping, farting and funking.[180] Very soon (though he clung to the saddle with might and main) Ticklepecker lost his seat.
>
> Yet his stirrup straps were so many ropes, binding him to the beast; and his right sandal, caught in the stirrup, as in a vise, prevented his freeing his foot. The filly, meanwhile, charged along the road, shying and then darting, hellbent with terror, through hedge, briar and ditch, with Friar Ticklepecker dragged, peelarse, in her wake. Her progress bashed his head so hard against the road that his brains spurted out somewhere near the Hosanna, that cross by the roadside where the faithful pay homage on Palm Sunday. Both arms and both legs were crushed to a pulp; his intestines were pounded to a jelly; and when the filly reached her monastery stable, the sole trace of Friar Ticklepecker was a right sandal and the stump of a foot inside. (book 4, chapter 13)

Such is the "tragic farce" played out by Villon. Its essence is* the rending apart, the dismemberment of Ticklepecker's body on the public square, near a tavern, in the course of feasting, in the folk-festive carnival setting of a diablerie*. This farce is tragic, because Ticklepecker really was torn to pieces.

This story is put in the mouth of Basché, who linked it to the beating of the catchpoles in his house and recounted it to encourage the members of his household: "

[179] This reference to "grand diablerie" appears to be quoted from a different place in Rabelais (bk. 1, ch. 4), though, as we shall see in the upcoming discussion, the performance in the story can indeed be accurately described as a "grand diablerie."

[180] The pooping and farting (quite apposite to Bakhtin's ideas) is replaced with a euphemism ("exploding") in the published Russian translation, which Bakhtin is quoting.

'I can foresee,' said Basché, 'that from now on you too, my good friends, will act well in this tragic farce.' "[181]

How, then, do "Villon's prank" and the beating of catchpoles in Basché's house resemble one another?

In both cases, in order to retain *impunity* for the thrashing (but, as we shall see, not for that purpose alone), *carnival rights and liberties* are being invoked: those of a *nuptial* rite in one case and those of a *diablerie* in the other. As we have seen, the custom of "nopces à mitaines" allowed liberties that would have been inconceivable in ordinary life: one could cuff everybody present, regardless of their status and titles, with impunity. Life's usual order and pattern, and above all, social hierarchy, were cancelled for the brief time of the wedding feast. For this brief span of time, the effect of rules for politeness among equals and adherence to etiquette and hierarchical grades between superiors and inferiors were put on hold. Conventions were dropped and all distance between human beings was cancelled, which was indeed symbolically expressed by the right to subject the important and esteemed adjacent person to a familiar cuffing. *The socially utopian aspect of this rite is fully evident. For the short time of the wedding feasting, the people—its participants—enter, as it were, the utopian kingdom of absolute equality and freedom.*[(158)][182]

[181] Bk. 4, ch. 13 (Screech).

[182] The footnote is based on Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:235–238). The legendary king's name has several variant spellings, chief among them are Petaud (in most sources) and Petault (in fewer but, importantly, including Rabelais). Sainéan's title for the section of his book that Bakhtin is referring to is also the source for considering the character of King Petaud to arise from a legend. This is not quite what Sainéan actually claims, though. The sources he quotes all mention, or allude to, variants of a French idiom or proverb featuring King Petaud (i.e., "King Farter," though Sainéan disputes this etymology). That idiom, in turn, could have originated from a legend of some sort, but there is no reason to suppose this to be the case. Sainéan himself offers the theory that "King Petaud" is originally a reference to a goldcrest. It is the reference to the goldcrest as "the king of birds" (indeed arising from folklore) that Sainéan references when he speaks of a "legend" in this context.

As for the two quotes Bakhtin brings (both brought by Sainéan), the first is from Antoine Oudin's *Curiositez françoises*, 1640. This is, essentially, a dictionary entry. Bakhtin appears to slightly misinterpret its structure. He italicizes the words "The court of King Petaud," but the next clause, "everybody is a master there," is still part of the idiom being glossed, not of the gloss on it. The second is from the anonymous *Essai sur les Proverbes*. This appears to be a Latin dictionary of French idioms and proverbs. Sainéan quotes the entries for two similar proverbs featuring King Petaud in that book, of which Bakhtin only quotes the second, but again, it seems he misunderstands the structure of the entry. His quotation, in its entirety, is the proverb being explained. The Latin gloss for it is "Anarchia, Cyclopum regio." This gloss is quoted in the 1940 manuscript but excluded from the 1965 book. Cotgrave's

[(158)] Let us here mention as a parallel example the interesting Saturnalian and carnivalesque folk legend of King Pétaud and his court. This legend is also alluded to by Rabelais (bk. 3, ch. 6), as well as in the *Satire Ménippée* and in Molière's *Tartuffe* (Act 1, Scene 1). Here is how Oudin in his "Curiosities" (*Curiositez*, 1640) explains King Pétaud: "*The court of King Petaud*, everybody is a master there, that is to say, a place where everybody gives orders, where nobody knows the difference between masters and servants (*vulgar*)." In the anonymous *Essay on Proverbs* of the second half of the sixteenth century, we have the following explanation: "This is the court of King Petot, where everybody is master."

This *utopian element* is here, as in all folk-festive utopias, *embodied* in a clearly pronounced *material-bodily form*: after all, freedom and equality are realized in the form of a familiar cuffing—that is, in the form of *coarse bodily contact*. Beatings are, as we have seen, fully equivalent to indecent invective. In this case the rite is nuptial: that night full physical contact between the bride and bridegroom will be realized, *the act of conception* will take place, the reproductive force will triumph. The atmosphere of this central act of the feast applies to everybody and everything; *the cuffing is its emanation*. Further, as in all folk-festive utopias, the utopian element here is absolutely merry in character (after all, the cuffing is light, made in jest). Finally, and this is very important, this utopia may only be played out, but it is played out *without any footlights*, played out within life itself. To be sure, it has strict time boundaries, bound by the duration of wedding feasting, but during that time there are no footlights whatsoever: there is no distinction between participants (performers) and spectators; everybody is a participant here. While the usual world order is canceled, the new utopian order that has come to replace it is sovereign and applies to everyone. That is why the catchpoles too, even though they walked into the wedding feast by chance, are compelled to abide by the laws of the utopian kingdom and may not complain of the beatings. There is no sharp boundary line here between the game and spectacle on the one hand and life on the other: one shades into the other. This is why Basché could use the playful form of the wedding feast to seriously and in actual fact do away with the catchpoles.

The absence of strict footlights is characteristic of all folk-festive forms. The utopian truth is played out in life itself. For a short while this truth becomes, to a certain extent, a real-life force. That is why it is possible to use it to do away with the sworn enemies of this truth, as Basché and Villon did, in fact, do.

In the setting of Villon's "tragic farce" we find all the same elements as in Basché's "nopces à mitaines." The diablerie was the folk-festive public-square part of the mystery play.[183] The mystery play itself, of course, had footlights; the diablerie as a component of the mystery play also had them. But it was customary to permit the "devils," that is, the people playing their parts in the diablerie, already in costume, to run loose around town and even in the surrounding villages before the play was staged, sometimes even for several days before the performance. There are some documents that testify to this.

Thus, in 1500 several clerics and laymen of the city of Amiens submitted a petition to stage a passion play and specifically petitioned to "faire courir les personnages des diables."[184] One of the most famous and popular diableries in the sixteenth century

historical French-English dictionary has the following entry (also mentioned by Sainéan): "Petaud: m. *A farter; also, a footman.* C'est la Court du Roy Petaud, ou chaseun est maistre: *Pro[verb]. Applicable to an Anarchic, or a disordered familie, wherein everie one may doe what he listeth.*"

[183] Villon's production is referred to as a "passion play" earlier, but the Russian designation for a passion play, which Bakhtin uses (literally "mystery [play] of the Lord's passion"), identifies it explicitly as a particular kind of mystery play.

[184] "Let the devil characters run loose."

was produced in Chaumont (in the Haute-Marne department).[159] This diablerie was part of the *Mystery of St. John*. Announcements of the Chaumont mystery play always specifically mentioned that the devils and she-devils participating in it were allowed to roam the city and the surrounding countryside for several days before the opening show. Those dressed in devil costumes felt themselves to be, up to a point, *outside the usual prohibitions* and also infected those who came into contact with them with this special mood of theirs. *An atmosphere of unbridled carnival freedom* formed around them. Considering themselves to be outside the usual laws, and being mostly poor people (hence the expression "pauvre diable"),[185] they often breached property rights, robbed peasants, and thus took advantage of their role to amend their financial affairs. They would also commit other excesses. Consequently, special prohibitions were often issued against granting devils freedom off stage.[186]

But even within the limits of the roles assigned to them in the mystery play, the devils still preserved their deeply *extra-official nature*. Both invective and indecencies were introduced into their parts. They acted and spoke contrary to the official Christian worldview: they were devils, after all. They produced an unbelievable amount of noise and shouting on stage, especially if it was a "grand diablerie" (i.e., with four or more devils participating)—hence the French expression "faire le diable à quatre." Indeed, most of the curses and terms of abuse that contain the word "devil," as they were emerging and developing, were directly connected to the mystery-play stage. In Rabelais's novel there are quite a few such curses and expressions that evidently trace their origin to the mystery play: "la grande diablerie à quatre personnages" (book 1, chapter 4), "faire d'un diable deux" (book 3, chapter 1); "crioit comme tous les diables" (book 1, chapter 23), "crient et urlent comme diables" (book 3, chapter 23), as well as such very common expressions as "faire diables," "en diable," "pauvre diable." This link that terms of abuse and curses have with the diablerie is quite understandable: they belong to the same system of forms and images.[187]

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[185] "Poor devil." See Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:327).

[186] Bakhtin's source for the paragraph, including the footnote to it, is Driesen (1904, 136–139).

[187] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:326–327). Regarding the expressions quoted in the paragraph:

"Faire le diable à quatre" is an idiom that still exists in French today, meaning "to fool around," which literally translates, roughly, as "play the four-devil."

"La grande diablerie à quatre personnages" (literally a grand diablerie with four characters) is discussed above. In Rabelais's usage it is an exclamation that indicates a problem or conundrum.

"Faire d'un diable deux" means make two devils out of one, which is also how it has been translated (see the last paragraph of bk. 3, ch. 1). The implied sense is also straightforward: to exacerbate a problem.

"Crioit comme tous les diables"—"He would roar like all the devils in hell" (bk. 1, ch. 23).

"Crient et urlent [or ullent] comme diables"—"Thus struck, they whooped and yauped like devils" (bk. 3, ch. 23).

"Faire diables"—literally, "make devils" or "play devils." See bk. 1, ch. 42 (Screech): "do a devilish good job" and bk. 2, ch. 17: "raise a thousand devils." The same idiom also has a distinct sense (according to Sainéan), as in bk. 1, ch. 19 ("beat the devil's own tattoo") and bk. 2, ch. 12 ("played the devil").

[159] On the Chaumont diablerie, see Jolibois, *La Diablerie de Chaumont*, 1838.

But the *mystery-play devil* is not only an extra-official figure; he is also *an ambivalent image*, similar in this respect to *the fool and the jester*. He was a representative of *the deadening and renewing force of the material-bodily nethers*. The image of the devil in the diableries was usually shaped carnivalesquely. For instance, we see that in Rabelais's novel, the devils in Villon's diablerie use kitchen utensils for armaments (this is also confirmed by other accounts). In his book *The Origin of Harlequin* (1904), O. Driesen carries out a detailed juxtaposition of the diablerie and the charivari (as described in the *Roman de Fauvel)* and reveals a striking resemblance between all their component images. The Charivari is also akin to carnival.(160)[188]

These distinguishing features of the image of the devil (and, above all, its ambivalence and its connection with the material-bodily nethers) make it fully understandable why devils would turn into figures of folk comedy. Thus, the devil Erlking (although we do not come across him in mystery plays) turns into the carnival and comedy figure of Harlequin. Let us recall that Pantagruel was also originally a mystery-play devil.[189]

Thus, though it was a part of the mystery play, the diablerie was akin to carnival, extended beyond the footlights, intruded into public-square life, and possessed the corresponding carnival rights to unfetteredness and freedom.

This is precisely why the diablerie, once out on the public square, allows Master Villon to avenge himself on the sacristan Ticklepecker with impunity. Here, exactly like in the house of Lord Basché, the playing out, without footlights, of *utopian freedom* makes it possible to do away seriously with an *enemy of this freedom.*

But what did Ticklepecker do to deserve such a cruel reprisal? On the one hand, from the point of view of the Dionysus cult, Ticklepecker, as the enemy of Dionysus, having rebelled against the Dionysia (after all, he refused to furnish a costume for a theatrical production *on principle*), was subject to the death of Pentheus—that is, to be torn to pieces by the Bacchantes.(161)[190] But from Rabelais's point of view too, Ticklepecker was the most bitter of enemies: he was precisely the very incarnation

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"En diable"—found multiple times in Rabelais's text. Sainéan points to bk. 4, ch. 15: "thwacked me like a devil."

"Pauvre diable" literally translates to "poor devil" and has roughly the same meaning as in English. Sainéan mentions this idiom being used by Rabelais in bk. 1, ch. 27 ("The monks, poor devils! Did not know what saint to turn to"). There are, indeed, also multiple other occurrences of the idiom in the novel.

[188] Specifically, see Driesen (1904, 143–152), which is the source of information for the preceding sentence. This section of Driesen's book juxtaposes (in an extended table) the charivari section in the *Roman du Fauvel* with the story of Villon's "tragic farce" in Rabelais's novel.

[189] On Erlking and Harlequin, see Driesen (1904). On Pantagruel's origins as a devilkin in mystery plays, see an extended discussion in chapter 5, where Bakhtin relies on Plattard (1930, 122–126), Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xiv–xxiv), and Driesen (1904, 152–154).

[190] The Dionysia festival was the occasion on which the plays of classical Athenian theater (tragedies, comedies, satyr plays) were performed. Pentheus, protagonist of Euripides's *The Bacchae*, was a mythical king of Thebes whose body was torn apart by the Bacchantes. Bakhtin appears to imply full continuity

(160) See Otto Driesen, *Der Ursprung des Harlekin*, 1904.

(161) The culinary-carnival expression "Pentheus hash" was widespread in sixteenth-century literature.

of that which Rabelais hated the most. Ticklepecker was an *agelast*—that is, *a man who does not know how to laugh and who is hostile to laughter.* Admittedly, Rabelais does not use the word itself here, but the deed Ticklepecker has committed is typical for an agelast. This deed exhibited that *blunt and spiteful pious seriousness* Rabelais abhorred so much, which feared to make a sacred vestment into the object of spectacle and play. Ticklepecker refused to make a gift, do a favor, on behalf of *folk merriment*, and he did so on principled grounds: the Church's ancient hostility to spectacle, to mime, to laughter, was fully alive in him. Moreover, what he refused to provide was a garment for dressing up, for masquerading—that is, in the final account, for renewal and rebirth. He is the enemy of renewal and of new life. This is old age that does not want to *give birth and die*; this is the sterile and *obstinate old age* so repulsive to Rabelais. Ticklepecker is the enemy precisely of that *merry public-square truth about succession and renewal* that also permeated the images of the diablerie Villon devised. And thus this truth, which, for a short time, has become a force, had to bring about his demise. He died a purely carnival death by dismemberment.

The image of Ticklepecker, outlined by his one deed, which has a symbolically extended signification, embodies for Rabelais the spirit of the Gothic age, with its *one-sided seriousness* based on fear and coercion, with its tendency to perceive everything "sub specie aeternitatis"—that is, from the viewpoint of eternity, outside real time.[191] This seriousness gravitated toward an immobile, immutable hierarchy and allowed for no succession of roles and renewal. In essence, in Rabelais's time all that remained of that Gothic age with its one-sided petrified seriousness were robes, which were good for merry carnivalesque dressing-up. But these robes were jealously guarded by dim-witted and gloomily serious Ticklepecker sacristans. It is these Ticklepeckers that Rabelais does away with, while nevertheless using the robes for renewing carnival merriment.

In his novel, and by means of his novel, Rabelais does exactly as did Villon and as did Basché. He acts according to their method. He uses the folk-festive system of images with its recognized rights, consecrated by the ages, to freedom and unfetteredness

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between ancient Attic drama and the Renaissance mystery play (presumably with the diablerie inheriting the role of the satyr play). The Dionysia, especially as the cultic backdrop to Greek tragedy, was also a beloved theme for early Nietzsche, and, following him, the Symbolists, especially in Russia (both significant formative influences on Bakhtin).

"Pentheus Hash," mentioned in the footnote, is in fact an expression that dates back to Roman times, appearing in Petronius's *Satyricon* (Petronius 1922, ch. 47). The footnote itself was added to the book in 1965, though there is a reference to "Pentheus hash" (or "ragout") already in "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" from 1944 (Bakhtin 2014, 524). I was unable to identify Bakhtin's source on this.

[191] Note that Bakhtin speaks here of *real* time. This use of the word "real" goes back to Bakhtin's early philosophy. Time is *real* when it is phenomenologically real for a consciousness. This is an important point to remember when considering, for example, Bakhtin's statements about the immortality of the people (e.g., in the discussion of Goethe above). Bakhtin contrasts this (relative) eternity, which extends *real* conscious perspectives to a cosmic scale, with the *abstract* eternity of medieval dogma, or, for that matter, with the abstract time of modern science (and cf. the quote from Bakhtin's draft notebooks on Rabelais in note 137 to chapter 1).

in order to do away in earnest with his enemy, the Gothic age. It is only merry play and, therefore, unassailable. But this play has no footlights. And, indeed, in the atmosphere of this play's recognized unfetteredness, Rabelais carries out an attack on the fundamental dogmas, sacraments, and very holy of holies of the medieval worldview.

It should be acknowledged that this "prank à la Villon" performed by Rabelais was fully successful. In spite of the candor of his utterances, he not only avoided being burned at the stake but suffered essentially no serious persecution or unpleasantness. To be sure, he occasionally had to take certain precautions, to go off the radar for a time and even cross the French border. But, generally speaking, everything was ending well for him, apparently without much worry or trouble. What trifles, by comparison—but uttered without laughter—were sufficient reason for Rabelais's erstwhile friend Étienne Dolet to perish at the stake. He had not mastered the method of Basché and Villon.

Rabelais suffered harassment from agelasts—that is, from people who recognized no special rights possessed by laughter. All his books were condemned by the Sorbonne (which, however, did not in any way hinder their distribution and republication). Late in life, he was subject to a very vicious attack from the monk Puits-Herbault;[192] from the Protestant side he also faced harassment from Calvin. But the voices of all these agelasts remained isolated; the carnival rights of laughter proved to be stronger.(162) We repeat: Rabelais's prank à la Villon was fully successful.[193]

But the use of the system of folk-festive forms must not be understood as an external and mechanical device used for protection against censorship, as a reluctantly adopted "Aesopian language." For thousands of years the people has used the rights and liberties of these festive laughter-based images to embody in them its deepest criticism, its distrust of official truth, and its best hopes and aspirations. Arguably, *freedom was not so much an external right as it was the very inner content of these images.* It was the language of "*fearless speech*," thousands of years in the making, a language with no loopholes and unspoken parts, about the world and about power. This fearless and free language of images clearly offered *the richest positive content* for a new worldview.

[192] Referring to Gabriel de Puits-Herbault, a Catholic counter-Reformation propagandist and doctor of the Sorbonne, who published attacks on multiple authors.

[193] These details about Rabelais's life (the last two paragraphs and the footnote) are based on Lote (1938, 64–67). Bakhtin cited Lote in a footnote to the 1940 manuscript, but that footnote was edited out of the 1965 book (presumably following the publishers' instruction to minimize the amount of non-Russian text in the book; the original footnote quoted Lote in French). Lote himself, in turn, relies on Lefranc to substantiate the claim that Rabelais was not persecuted in his last years, without citing any work in particular.

(162) The legend that was current until recently concerning the cruel persecution supposedly suffered by Rabelais on the eve of his death has been completely discredited by Abel Lefranc. It seems that Rabelais apparently died in peace, having lost neither the protection of the court nor the patronage of his high-ranking friends.

Basché used the traditional form of "nopces à mitaines" not only to secure mere impunity for the beating of the catchpoles. We saw that these beatings were carried out as a *solemn rite*, as a laughter-based ritual drama, consistent and meaningful in all its details. *It was a beating up in grand style.* The blows being showered on the catchpoles were upbuilding nuptial blows; they were showered on the old world (the catchpoles were its representatives) and at the same time helped the conception and birth of a new world. Outward freedom and impunity are also inseparable from the inner positive meaning of these forms, from their philosophical significance.

Ticklepecker's carnival dismemberment was of the same sort. It too was sustained in grand style and was meaningful in all its detail. Ticklepecker was a representative of the old world, and his dismemberment was shaped and presented as positive. Here, too, freedom and impunity are inseparable from the positive content of all the images and forms of this episode.

The carnivalesque shaping of how the old world is done away with should not astound us. Even the great economic and sociopolitical upheavals of *those historic times* could not avoid a certain level of *carnivalesque* conscious understanding and shaping.[194] I will touch on two generally-known episodes of Russian history.[195] Ivan the Terrible, as he was struggling with appanage-based feudalism, with the ancient appanage-patrimonial truth and sanctity, as he was breaking old state-political, social, and to a certain extent also moral regimens, could not avoid the substantial influence of folk-festive public-square forms, forms of laughing at old truth and old power, with

[194] This paragraph and the two that follow it were added to the book in 1949–1950. They are the only extended fragment of the eventually published text that is directly based on a draft contained in "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 1996a, 112–113). There is a forthcoming complete English translation of "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*," (Bakhtin, forthcoming-a), and I made sure both texts would match verbatim, except where Bakhtin made changes to his earlier draft (all these changes were made in 1949–1950).

The first two sentences of the passage replaced a slightly longer introduction:

In periods of great crises and reevaluations, of the succession of truths, life in its entirety assumes a carnival character, in a certain sense: the boundaries of the official world narrow down, and this world itself loses its sternness and assuredness, while the boundaries of the public square expand, and its atmosphere begins to penetrate into every corner (in these periods one can even observe an extraordinary expansion in the use of familiar forms of speech and gesture: the familiar *"thou,"* invective expressions, the weakening of all kinds of etiquette, a more familiar conduct by children when addressing parents and adults in general, etc.).

This introduction can also explain why the words "those historic times" are emphasized in the book. In the 1949–1950 version, they would have referred back to a mention of the Renaissance, which was also later removed, but this still does not explain the plural form, so it is likely that Bakhtin still had the older "periods of great crises and reevaluations" in mind.

[195] Bakhtin refers to two episodes in Russian history: the establishment of the *oprichnina*—a special territory directly under the Tsar's control—accompanied by the reign of terror under Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century, and the Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. There is no clearly identifiable secondary source Bakhtin relied on for the historical information here, but in the USSR, much of what Bakhtin references here would indeed be, as Bakhtin writes, common knowledge.

all their system of travesties (masquerade changes of dress), hierarchical reshufflings (turning things inside out), decrownings, and lowerings.

While he did not entirely break with the ringing of the church bells, Ivan the Terrible could not do without the chiming of the fool's jingles. Even the external aspects of how the oprichnina was organized contained elements of carnival forms (up to and including such carnivalesque attributes as, for instance, the *broom*),[196] while the inner way of life of the oprichnina (its life and feasting in the Aleksandrovskaya Sloboda)[197] had a clearly expressed carnival character, exterritorial in a public-square sort of way. Later, during the stabilization period, not only was the oprichnina disbanded and disavowed, but a struggle was waged against its very spirit, which had been hostile to any kind of stabilization.

All this was also very strikingly manifested in the epoch of Peter I: for him, the chime of the fool's jingles almost entirely drowns out the ringing of the church bells. Well-known is Peter's extensive cultivation of late forms borrowed from the Feast of Fools (never and nowhere during the thousand years of its existence did this feast enjoy such a level of legalization and state recognition); the decrownings and fools' crownings associated with this feast directly invaded the life of the state, up to a blending of mock titles with real state power (as in the case of Romodanovsky);[198] the new was initially being instilled into life in a "*motley*" dress;[199] in the course of the reforms, a number of their aspects were intertwined with elements of almost clownish travesty and decrowning (shaving beards, European attire, politesse). However, the carnival forms of Peter's time more resembled an imported good; at the time of Ivan the Terrible, these forms were folkier, more alive, more complex, and more contradictory.

Thus, the outward freedom of folk-festive forms was inseparable from their inner freedom, and from their entire positive philosophical content. They offered a *new positive aspect of the world* and at the same time granted *the right to express it with impunity.*

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[196] The broom served as the emblem of the *oprichnina.*

[197] Alexandrovskaya Sloboda is the name of the fortress that was the base of Ivan the Terrible's power and the headquarters of his police force.

[198] "The All-Joking, All-Drunken Synod of Fools and Jesters" was organized by Peter the Great with his closest friends. Its members went under mock obscenity-laden "monastic" names, and it was headed by a "Prince-Pope." That latter title was held by Ivan Romodanovsky, a powerful boyar. Peter's predilection for such jollities was indeed a well-known fact in Russia. The "All-Joking Synod" itself, and its "Prince-Pope," were mentioned in some historical novels (Dmitry Merezhkovsky's *Peter and Alexis*, Aleksey Tolstoy's *Peter the First*). Here too, Bakhtin is most likely not relying on any particular secondary source.

[199] *v "poteshnom" nariade.* Bakhtin is alluding here to the Poteshny regiment, or "toy army," Peter's unit of loyalists that was instrumental to his rise to power in Russia. This unit was initially formed as a mock army to aid Peter's education as a child. This allusion is made much more explicit in "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*," with a few additional comments that have been edited out from the book:

> The new was conceived and first entered life in a *motley* [*poteshnom*] dress, just as European military organizational structures and equipment were introduced in the form of amusement [*poteshnoy*] (it was not merely a children's war game, but had elements of contrast with and decrowning of the old state army; there were elements of carnival *exterritoriality*, analogous to the oprichnina.

We have already clarified the philosophical meaning of folk-festive forms and images above and will not be returning to this topic. But now we can also clearly see the special functions of these forms in Rabelais's novel.

These special functions will become even clearer in light of the problem that all Renaissance literature was trying to solve. That historical period sought conditions and forms that would enable and justify *freedom and candor of thought and word taken to the highest limit*. Moreover, no distinction was being made between the *outward* (censorship-related, so to speak) *and inner right* to this freedom and candor. Candor was understood at that time, of course, not in a narrowly subjective sense as "sincerity," the "truth of one's soul," "intimacy," and so on; the era was far more serious than that. It was a perfectly objective, communal, loud public-square candor, which had to do with everyone and everything. Thought and word had to be placed under such conditions that the world could turn its other side to them, the side that was concealed, that was not spoken about at all or was spoken about without touching on its substance, that did not fit into the words and forms of the prevailing worldview. In the domains of thought and word, too, people were searching for America, they wanted to discover antipodes, they wanted to glimpse the Western hemisphere, they were asking, "What is under our feet?" Thought and word were searching for a new reality beyond the visible horizon of the prevailing worldview. Often enough, words and thoughts were deliberately turned upside down to look and see what really stands behind them, what is their underside. The aim was to find a position from which one could take a look beyond the prevailing forms of thinking and the prevailing evaluations, a position from which one could look around and find one's bearings in the world in a new way.[200]

One of the first to pose this problem in a fully conscious way was Boccaccio. The plague, which provides the frame for *The Decameron*, should create the required conditions for candid, unofficial speech and images. In the epilogue to *The Decameron*, Boccaccio stresses that the conversations that form the foundation of his book took place:

> not in the Church, of matters whereto pertaining 'tis meet we speak with all purity of heart and seemliness of phrase, ... nor yet in the schools of the philosophers, ... but *in gardens, in pleasaunces*, and among folk, young indeed, but not so young as to be seducible by stories, and *at a time when*, if so one might save one's life, the most sedate might without disgrace *walk abroad with his breeches for headgear*.[201]

[200] The last sentence references a constant theme in Bakhtin's work, that of people's perspectives and vantage points. In Bakhtin's early works (especially Bakhtin 1990b), he focuses on the "surplus of seeing" another person's vantage point offers them about me, and vice versa, and on how this surplus can be used (if it is not abused) to expand my own purview, and to grant me the ability to see myself, which I otherwise lack. He especially focuses on how literary images can serve such an expansion of purview—a point that also comes up in this discussion.

[201] Boccaccio (n.d., 2:401).

In another passage (the conclusion of the sixth day), one of the participants in the conversations, Dioneo, says:

> For in sooth, as you may know, so out of joint are the times that *the judges have deserted the judgement-seat, the laws, divine as well as human, are silent*, and ample license to preserve his life as best he may is accorded to each and all. Wherefore, if you are within somewhat *freer bounds* of speech than is your wont, not that aught unseemly in act may follow, but that you may afford solace to yourselves and others.[202]

The final part of this passage is furnished with all the reservations and toning-down that are characteristic of Boccaccio, but the beginning correctly reveals the role of the plague in his design for the piece: it grants the right to a different kind of word, to a different kind of approach to life and to the world. Not only have all conventions been dropped, but laws "divine as well as human" are silent as well. Life has been driven off its beaten track, the cobweb of conventions has been ripped apart, all official and hierarchic boundaries have been swept away, and a specific atmosphere has been created, which grants both an outward and an inner right to freedom and candor. Even the most sedate man could now wear "his breeches for headgear." And this is why life is an issue that is here discussed "not in the church ... nor yet in the schools of the philosophers," but "in pleasaunces."

We are speaking here of the special functions performed by the image of the plague in *The Decameron*: it grants the conversationalists and the author the outward as well as the inner right to a special sort of candor and liberty. But on top of that, the plague, as a condensed image of death, is an indispensable ingredient of *The Decameron*'s entire system of images, in which the renewing material-bodily nethers play a leading role. *The Decameron* is the Italian culmination of carnival grotesque realism, but here in its poorer, shallower forms.

Another solution to the same problem is the theme of the main hero's madness or folly. An outward and inner freedom was sought from all the forms and dogmas of the dying, yet still prevailing worldview, so as to glimpse the world with different eyes and to see it differently. The hero's madness or folly (of course, in the ambivalent sense of these words) granted him the right to such a gaze.[203]

The Rabelaisian solution to the same problem was to turn directly to folk-festive forms. They bestowed upon both thought and word the most radical, but at the same time also the most positive and content-rich, outward and inner freedom.[204]

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[202] Boccaccio (n.d., 2:107), translation modified.

[203] Compare Bakhtin's discussions in other works of the role played by fools and rogues or picaros in the novel, and in the genres that presaged it, which similarly focuses, indeed in greater detail, on the kinds of *vantage points* such protagonists can access the world from (e.g., Bakhtin 1981a, 400–408).

[204] In the 1940 manuscript, the chapter ends here. The two following brief concluding sections were added in 1949–1950 and in 1965, respectively. Being relatively more conspicuous to the eyes of cursory

The influence of carnival, in the broadest sense of this word, was immense during all periods of literature's development, but in most cases, it was undercover, indirect, and difficult to detect. During the Renaissance, however, it was not only exceptionally strong but also direct, immediate, and clearly expressed, even in its external forms. The Renaissance is, so to speak, a direct carnivalization of consciousness, worldview, and literature.

The official culture of the Middle Ages had been worked out for the duration of many long centuries. It too had its own heroic creative period; it was all-embracing and all-penetrating. It enveloped and enmeshed the entire world and every little corner of man's consciousness. It was supported by an organization unique in its kind, the Catholic Church. In the Renaissance, the feudal formation was nearing its end, but the power its ideology held over consciousness was still extremely strong.

Where could Renaissance ideologists find support in their struggle against the official culture of the Middle Ages? And note that their struggle was both mighty and victorious. Of course, the literary sources of antiquity, in and of themselves, could not offer sufficient support. After all, antiquity too could be perceived (and was indeed perceived by many) through the prism of the medieval worldview. In order to discover a humanist antiquity, one first had to free one's own consciousness from the thousand-year-old domination of the categories of medieval thought, one first had to acquire a position that lies beyond official culture, one had to depart from the centuries-old beaten track of its ideological development.

Such support could be offered only by the mighty folk laughter culture, thousands of years in the making. The progressive historical actors of the Renaissance directly partook in this culture and, first and foremost, in its folk-festive, carnival side. Carnival (again, in its broadest sense) freed consciousness from the power the official worldview held over it and made it possible to get a look at the world in a new way—without fear, without devotion, with absolute criticism, but at the same time, without nihilism, but instead, positively, as it revealed the world's superabundant material principle, becoming and succession, the invincibility and eternal triumph of the new, the people's immortality. This provided mighty support for storming the stronghold of the Gothic age and for working out the foundations of a new worldview. This, precisely, is the carnivalization of consciousness that we have been talking about—gaining full freedom from Gothic seriousness so as to blaze trails toward a new seriousness, free and sober.

In one of his literary reviews, Dobrolyubov expressed a remarkable thought:

> *One has to develop in one's soul* a firm conviction that a full exodus from the present order of this life is necessary and possible*, so as to gain the strength to express it poetically.[163]

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readers, they contain multiple references to traditional Marxist ideas and concepts (especially the 1949–1950 conclusion).

[163] [Nikolay Aleksandrovich] Dobrolyubov, "Poems by Ivan Nikitin," *Collected works in nine volumes*,

It is precisely such a "firm conviction that a full exodus from the present order of this life is necessary and possible" that lay at the foundation of progressive Renaissance literature. It was only thanks to this conviction that *a radical replacement and renewal of all that exists* is necessary and possible, that the Renaissance creators could see the world the way they did. But precisely this conviction also runs through folk laughter culture in its entirety, and runs through it not as an abstract thought but as a living sense of the world that determines all of this culture's forms and images. The official culture of the Middle Ages, with all its forms, images, and the abstract system of its thoughts, inculcated the exactly opposite conviction that the existing world order and the existing truth are unshakable and immutable, and more generally that all that exists is eternal and unchanging. This inculcation was still mighty in the Renaissance, and it could not be overcome through the pursuits of individual thinking or through the armchair study of sources from antiquity (a study not illuminated by "carnival consciousness"). Only folk culture could offer real support.

This is why in all the great works of the Renaissance we manifestly sense the carnival atmosphere permeating them, the unfettered winds of the folk-festive public square. In their very structure, in the idiosyncratic logic of their images itself, we can also discover a carnivalesque base, even if it is not given with the same level of external tangibility and clarity as it is in Rabelais.

An analysis similar to the one we have provided for Rabelais in this chapter would also help us reveal the substantial carnival factor in the organization of Shakespeare's drama. This does not merely concern the second, jesting plane of his plays. The carnival logic of crownings and decrownings—in both a direct and a covert manner—is an organizing principle behind their serious plane too.[205] But most important is the "conviction that a full exodus from the present order of this life is possible," which determines Shakespeare's fearless, maximally sober realism (a realism that has yet not shaded into cynicism) and his absolute a-dogmatism. This carnival pathos of radical successions and renewals is the foundation of Shakespeare's sense of the world. Such a sense allowed him to see the great succession of epochs taking place in reality itself and at the same time to understand the limitedness of this succession.

Shakespeare also very often manifests the carnival element externally: in images of the material-bodily nethers, ambivalent indecencies, folk feasting images, and so on (which we discussed in the introduction).

The carnival foundation of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, as well as of his novellas, is beyond doubt: his novel is directly organized as a complex carnival ritual drama with all its external paraphernalia. The depth and consistence of Cervantes's realism is likewise determined by the purely carnivalesque pathos of successions and renewals.

[205] See Bakhtin (2014; forthcoming-a), which contains an extended draft of precisely such an analysis of Shakespeare (it was already completed when Bakhtin was writing this section of the text). Bakhtin opted against including that analysis in the text, but, in a sense, he alludes to it here.

vol. 6, Goslitisdat, Leningrad, 1963, p. 167.

Renaissance literature still requires special study in light of *correctly understood* folk-festive carnival forms.

Rabelais's novel is the most festive work in all of world literature. It embodied in itself the very essence of folk festiveness. This is precisely why it stands out so starkly against the backdrop of the serious-quotidian and officially solemn literature of subsequent centuries, especially the literature of the nineteenth century. This is also why it is impossible to understand Rabelais based on the premises of the strictly *nonfestive* conception of the world that prevailed in that century.

However, festivity within bourgeois culture has merely been narrowed down and distorted; it did not die. The feast is a primary and indestructible category of human culture. It may become impoverished and even degenerate, but it cannot entirely vanish. Even the private chamber feast known to bourgeois man preserves, albeit in a distorted form, the primordial nature of the feast: on feast days the doors of the home are open to guests (brought to the limit, this implies these doors are open to everybody, to the whole world); on feast days everything is more plentiful (festive food, dress, decorations); and of course, festive wishes for all the best of everything survive as well (although their ambivalence has been almost entirely lost), as do festive toasts, festive games and masquerading, *merry* festive laughter, jokes, dances, and the like. The feast is not amenable to any utilitarian interpretation (in terms of rest, relaxation, and so on). On the contrary, the feast frees one from all utilitarian and practical considerations; it is a temporary exit into a utopian world. Neither can the feast be reduced to any particular limited content (for instance to the historical event commemorated by the feast); it breaks through the bounds of all limited content. Nor can the feast be separated from the life of the body, the earth, nature, the cosmos. On feast days, "the sun plays in the sky." There is, allegedly, such a thing as special "festive weather."(164)[206] All this, in a defective form, survives in feasts in the bourgeois era too.

Tellingly, in Western philosophy in recent years, and specifically in philosophical anthropology, attempts are being made to reveal the human being's special festive sense of the world (festive attunement),[207] the special festive aspect of the world, and make use of it to overcome the pessimistic conception of existentialism. However, philosophical anthropology, with its phenomenological approach that is alien to genuine historicity and sociality, cannot resolve this problem. Moreover, it orients itself to the defective festivity of the bourgeois age.(165)[208]

[206] Bakhtin references a Russian popular belief (about feast days on which the sun "plays," that is, behaves in some unusual way, in the sky) and a Russian idiom ("festive weather" is fair weather).

[207] A reference to Otto Friedrich Bollnow's term *festliche Gestimmtheit* (Bollnow 1955, 222–223).

[208] The chapter's last paragraph and the footnote to it were added to the book in one of the very

(164) An interesting task would be to analyze the etymons and shades of sense for words signifying festivity in various languages, as well as to study festive images in the national language, in folklore, and in the belles lettres. Put together, they form a holistic picture of the festive world, the festive universe.

(165) The most interesting attempt to reveal man's festive sense of the world was made in a book by O.

last revisions made to it before publication (the information provided by Popova 2010a, 616, creates the impression of an effort to smuggle this potentially risky bit of content into the book). It offers an excellent example of a common practice among Soviet scholars at the time: engaging with Western philosophy under the cover of ostensibly criticizing it. Phenomenology, existentialism, and philosophical anthropology were all—in different ways and periods—significant influences on Bakhtin's thought. The superficially critical remarks (very mildly critical, by Soviet standards) might have encoded some points of disagreement he had with some representatives of these philosophical currents in language that could make them pass for a Marxist critique ("genuine historicity and sociality"). But probably, the main function of the passage is to direct potentially interested readers to literature on these subjects, to signal their significance.

Shortly before the book's publication (in late 1964 and 1965), Bakhtin took significant interest in the work of German philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow. We find relatively extended notes from reading Bollnow's works in Bakhtin's working notebooks from the period (Bakhtin 2002b, 373–379, 403). There are indeed some noteworthy parallels in their thought (no doubt traceable to shared sources of influence). In particular, one could mention Bollnow's detailed focus on the space of human experience, as distinct from mathematical or theoretically physical space (see Bollnow 2011). Bollnow also appears to have been Bakhtin's introduction to the term "philosophical anthropology," which Bakhtin references in this paragraph. We have evidence that, late in life, Bakhtin thought of his own central philosophical ideas as a form of philosophical anthropology (I discuss this point in greater detail in Sandler 2013).

Bollnow. See: O. F. Bollnow, *Neue Geborgenheit. Das Problem einer Überwindung des Existentialismus*, Stuttgart, 1955 ("The New Securedness. The Problem of Overcoming Existentialism"). At the end of his book, there is an additional special study devoted to the feast: "Zur Anthropologie des Festes," pp. 195–243. The author adduces no historical material at all, makes no distinctions between folk (carnival) and official feasts, ignores the laughter aspect of the world, the communal and utopian nature of the feast. Nevertheless, Bollnow's book contains many valuable observations.

4. Feasting Images in Rabelais

> Here we have a subject of the *highest* sort—the *nourishing principle* which upholds the world, and pervades all nature.
>
> —Goethe (commenting on Myron's *Heifer*).[1]

Feasting images in Rabelais's novel—that is, images of eating, drinking, devouring—are directly connected with the folk-festive forms we examined in the previous chapter. And surely, this is not at all the mundane, private-life eating and drinking of individual people. This is *folk-festive convivial eating*; taken to its limit, it is "*feasting for the whole world*." The mighty tendency toward *plenty* and toward communality is evident in each image of eating and drinking in Rabelais; it determines how these images are shaped, their *positive hyperbolism*, their *triumphantly merry tone*. This tendency toward plenty and toward communality is like yeast mixed into all the images of eating; they rise, grow, and swell with this leaven until they reach superabundant and exaggerated dimensions. Rabelais's images of eating all resemble the gigantic sausages and buns that were usually solemnly carried in carnival processions.

Feasting images organically dovetail with all other folk-festive images. Feasting is a necessary element in every folk-festive merriment. Not a single substantial laughter-based dramatic act can do without it. We observe that in Basché's house the catchpoles are beaten up during the wedding banquet. Ticklepecker is also torn apart while the diablerie participants are gathered at the inn to feast.[2] All this is, of course, no mere coincidence.

The role played by feasting images in Rabelais's novel is immense. There is scarcely a single page where these images do not figure, if only as metaphors and epithets borrowed from the domain of eating and drinking.

Feasting images are very closely interwoven with the images of the grotesque body. At times it is difficult to draw a clear boundary line between them, so organically and essentially are they connected to one another, as in the cattle slaughter feast episode analyzed above (the intermixture of the devouring and devoured body).[3] If we turn to the novel's first book (chronologically)—"Pantagruel"—we will immediately see how inseparably these images are intertwined. The author relates how, after Abel was slain, the earth was *nourished* by his blood and became exceptionally fertile. Following

[1] Goethe (1875, 553). The quote was discussed in the previous chapter.
[2] Bk. 4, ch. 12–15.
[3] Bk. 1, ch. 4–7.

that, people eat medlars—hence the excessive *growth of their bodies*.[4] *The theme of the gaping mouth*—the leading theme of "Pantagruel"—and *the theme of swallowing* that is linked to it, lie on the very boundary between images of the body and images of eating and drinking. Later in the book, from the *wide-open womb* of Pantagruel's mother in the throes of childbirth, a caravan emerges loaded with *salted refreshments*.[5] We thus see how inseparably images of eating are connected with images of the body and with images of the reproductive force (fertility, growth, birth).

Let us trace the role of feasting images through the entire novel.

All of Pantagruel's first heroic feats, accomplished when he was still in the cradle, are *heroic feats of eating*. The roast on a spit is the main image in Panurge's Turkish episode. Feasting concludes the litigation between Kissarse and Bumfondle, as well as the Thaumastes episode. We saw what an immense role feasting plays in the burning of the knights episode. The entire episode of the war with King Anarchus is permeated with feasting images, especially with images of boozing, which all but becomes the main weapon of the war itself. Feasting images also permeate the episode of Epistemon's visit to the underworld. Saturnine popular feasting in the capital of the Amaurotes is also the culmination of the entire episode of the war with Anarchus.[6]

The role of feasting images is no smaller in the (chronologically) second book of the novel. The action begins with feasting during the feast of cattle slaughter. Images of eating play a substantial part in the episode describing Gargantua's education. When Gargantua returns home at the beginning of the Picrocholine war, Grandgousier holds a feast, and there is a detailed enumeration of the dishes and game animals being served. We saw the role played by bread and wine in the events that led to the start of the Picrocholine war and in the massacre in the abbey close. This book is especially rich in all manner of metaphors and similes borrowed from the domain of eating and drinking. The book ends with the words "Et grand chère!"[(166)][7]

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[4] Bk. 2, ch. 1. In Rabelais's text, the earth is "imbued with the blood of the just." The metaphor of *nourishment*, which Bakhtin emphasizes, is explicit in the Russian verb Bakhtin uses (*vpitat'*, which simply means "to absorb" but has a transparent etymological connection to the word for nourishment, *pitanie*), but not in the original. Bakhtin's retelling also skips over the connection between the two events he refers to: the unusually large and plentiful medlars that people eat are the direct product of the unusually fertile blood-soaked land.

[5] Bk. 2, ch. 2.

[6] Referring, respectively, to bk. 2, ch. 4 (Pantagruel's feats in the cradle), ch. 14 (Panurge in Turkey), ch. 10–14 (Kissarse and Bumfondle), ch. 18–20 (Thaumastes), ch. 25–27 (burning of the knights), ch. 23–31 (war with Anarchus), ch. 30 (Epistemon in the underworld), and ch. 31 (feasting in the capital of the Amaurotes).

[7] See bk. 1, ch. 4–7 (feast of cattle slaughter), ch. 21–24 (Gargantua's education), ch. 37–40 (feasting upon Gargantua's return; the dishes are listed at length in ch. 37), ch. 25–26 (events leading up to the Picrocholine war), ch. 27 (abbey close massacre), and ch. 52–57 (Thélème, discussed in the footnote).

[(166)] Conspicuously, feasting images are almost entirely absent from the Abbey of Thélème episode. All the abbey's rooms are listed and described in detail, but curiously enough, the kitchen was forgotten; it turns out there was no room for it in Thélème.

There are fewer feasting images in the novel's "Third Book," but we do find them there, scattered in various episodes. Let us stress that Panurge's consultation with the theologian, the physician, and the philosopher takes place during a dinner;[8] the theme of this entire episode—an unfettered discussion concerning the nature of women and matters of matrimony—is typical of "table talks."

The role of feasting images greatly increases again in the "Fourth Book." These are the leading images in the carnivalesque episode of the chitterling war. The same book also contains, as part of the episode featuring the Gastrolaters, the longest list of dishes and drinks known to world literature. We also find here the famous laudation of Gaster and his inventions. Swallowing and eating play a substantial role in the episode that features the giant Widenostrils and in the episode of "Windy Island," where people eat winds alone. There is a chapter here devoted to "Why Monks Love Kitchens." Finally, the book ends with feasting aboard a ship, in which Pantagruel and his companions "raise fair weather." The last words of this book, at the culmination of Panurge's long scatological tirade, are "Let us drink!" These are also the last words of the novel written by Rabelais's himself.[9]

What then do all these feasting images signify in the novel?

We have already said that they are indissolubly linked with festivities, with laughter-based ritual drama, with the grotesque body image. Moreover, they are connected in an essential way with *the word*, with *wise conversation*, with *merry truth*. Finally, we have pointed out their inherent tendency toward plenty and toward communality. What could explain so exceptional and universal a role being assigned to feasting images?

Eating and drinking is one of the most important manifestations of the grotesque body's life. The distinctive features of this body are its openness, its incompleteness, its interaction with the world. In *the act of eating*, these distinctive features reveal themselves with full clarity and concreteness: the body here transgresses its own boundaries, it swallows, devours, munches the world, absorbs it into itself, is enriched and grows at the world's expense. *Man's encounter with the world*, which occurs in the wide-open, gnawing, munching, and chewing mouth, is one of the most ancient, most important plots of human thought and imagery. Here, man savors the world, feels the world's taste, introduces it into his body, makes it part of himself. Man's awakening consciousness could not but concentrate on this moment, could not avoid extracting from it a number of very substantial images determining man's mutual relation with the world. *This encounter with the world in the act of eating was joyful and jubilant.* Here,

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The words "Et grand chère" appear at the end of bk. 1, ch. 58. It is possible to interpret them as indeed referring literally to feasting, but it is probably more likely to read them as a more general salutation (and see note 127 to chapter 3).

[8] Bk. 3, ch. 30–36.

[9] See bk. 4, ch. 35–42 (chitterling war), ch. 59–60 (Gastrolaters' offerings; it is unclear what, if any, is Bakhtin's source for the claim that this is the longest such list in world literature), ch. 61–62 (laudation of Gaster), ch. 17 (Widenostrils), ch. 43–44 (Windy Island), ch. 11 ("Why monks love kitchens"), ch. 63–65 (feasting aboard the ship), and ch. 67 (Panurge's scatological tirade).

man triumphed over the world, he devoured it rather than being devoured himself; the boundary line between man and the world was being erased here in what, for man, was a positive sense.[10]

In the most ancient system of images, eating was inseparably connected with *labor*. It was the culmination of labor and struggle, their crowning accomplishment and their victory. *Labor triumphed in eating.* Man's encounter with the world through labor and the struggle against it by means of labor ended in eating—the devouring of a part of the world that had been wrested away from it. As *the last victorious stage of labor*, eating often replaces within the system of images the labor process as a whole. In the more ancient image systems, there could not even be any sharp boundaries between eating and labor: these were two sides of the same phenomenon—namely, man's struggle with the world, ending in man's victory. It must be stressed that both labor and food were collective; the whole of society equally took part in them. This collective eating, as the culminating moment of the also-collective labor process, is not a biological animal act but a social event. If eating is separated from the labor that culminated in it and perceived as a private everyday-life phenomenon, then nothing but a series of stretched metaphors, rendered meaningless, remains of the images of man's encounter with the world, of savoring the world, of the gaping mouth, of the essential connection eating has with the word and with merry truth. But within the system of images of the *laboring people*, continuing to win over its life and food through the struggle of labor, continuing *to devour the newly won, newly overpowered part of the world*, feasting images maintain their significance, their universalism, their essential connection to life, death, struggle, victory, triumph, rebirth. This is why these images continued to live, with their universal sense, in all the spheres of folk art. Here, they continued developing, renewing, becoming enriched with new shades of meaning; they kept forging new connections with new phenomena. They grew and were renewed together with the people who created them.

Feasting images were thus not at all the dead vestiges of long-extinguished eras, as some ethnologists and folklorists assert: vestiges, for example, of the early hunting period, during which a collective tearing apart and devouring of the defeated beast took place in the course of collective hunting. Such simplified notions of primeval hunting do lend greater tangibility and seeming clarity to explanations of many feasting images connected to tearing apart and swallowing. However, the most ancient surviving feasting images (as well as images of the grotesque body) are already far more complex

[10] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 50–67, especially p. 53). In this and the following paragraphs, Bakhtin, on the one hand, repeats and develops several of Freidenberg's claims about the semantics of eating and, on the other hand, implicitly polemicizes with important aspects of her framing and understanding of eating as an image. The Marxist framing of eating as a product of labor, introduced in the following paragraph, is also used by Freidenberg. The reference in the paragraph that follows to "vestiges of the early hunting period" and the assertions of "some ethnologists and folklorists" implicitly criticizes the understanding of the images in question advanced by Freidenberg (and—as Bakhtin assumes—by the sources she in turn is relying on).

than these primitive notions about the primitive: they show a deep conscious awareness; they are deliberate, philosophical, rich in nuances and living connections with the whole of their surrounding context, they are nothing like the dead vestiges of forgotten worldviews. The life of these images in the cults and rites of official religious systems has an entirely different character. Here, we really do have a more ancient stage of these images' development fixed in a sublimated form. But in the folk-festive system, these images have gone through a journey of development and renewal spanning thousands of years. In Rabelais's time, as well as in subsequent centuries, they continued to lead a meaningful and artistically productive life.

These feasting images led an especially rich life in grotesque realism. It is precisely here that one should seek the main sources of Rabelais's feasting images. The influence of the ancient symposium is only of secondary significance.

In the act of eating, as we have said, the boundaries between the body and the world are overcome in a sense that is positive for the body: it triumphs over the world, over its enemy, celebrates its victory over it, grows at its expense. This aspect of triumphant celebration is necessarily inherent in all feasting images. There can be no sad eating. Sadness and eating are incompatible (though death and eating are perfectly compatible). *Feasting always celebrates victory*; this belongs to its very nature. *The feasting celebration is universal*: it is *the triumph of life over death.* In this respect it is equivalent to *conception* and *birth.* The victorious body receives the defeated world into itself and is *renewed.*

This is why feasting as triumphal celebration and renewal often *functions as the culmination* of works of folk literature. In this respect it is equivalent to the *wedding* (the reproductive act). These two culminating finales very often blend together in the image of the "*wedding feast*" that is a common conclusion to works of folk literature. The point here is that "feasting," "wedding," and "wedding feast" offer not some abstract bare ending but, rather, precisely a *culmination,*[11] *always pregnant with a new beginning.* Characteristically enough, in a work of folklore, death is never the culmination of the story. Even if it appears toward the end, it is followed by the *funeral feast* (this, for example, is how the Iliad ends); it is the funeral feast that is the genuine culmination. This has to do with the ambivalence of all folk images: the end must be pregnant with a new beginning, just as death is pregnant with a new birth.

The triumphant nature of any feasting renders it not only a fit culmination but also a no less suitable framing for a number of essential events. Thus, in Rabelais too, feasting almost always either culminates or frames the event (for example, the beating of the catchpoles).

[11] Note that "culmination" is a variant translation of the Russian word *zavershenie*—the central category of Bakhtin's early aesthetics (see Bakhtin 1990b; the word in question is rendered there as "consummation"). In this context, Bakhtin mostly considers feasting as an event that takes place at the end of a work of folk literature, but it is quite possible he considers it also as what brings the work to *completion*, in the particular sense he gives to this word.

But *feasting* is especially significant *as substantial framing for the sage word, for speeches, for the merry truth.* There is a primordial connection between the word and feasting. The ancient symposium presents this connection in its clearest and most classical form. But medieval grotesque realism also had its own very peculiar tradition of symposia—that is, of the feasting word.

One is tempted to seek the genesis of this connection between eating and the word at the very cradle of the human word. But this "ultimate" genesis, even if it could have been established with any measure of probability, would offer but little to an understanding of the subsequent development of this connection and the meaning assigned to it. After all, for the authors of symposia in antiquity too—for Plato, Xenophon, Plutarch, Athenaeus, Macrobius, Lucian, and others[12]—this connection between the word and feasting was not at all a dead vestige but, rather, something they imbued with living meaning. Just as alive and meaningful was this connection in the grotesque symposium, and in the work of its heir, in which it reached its culmination—Rabelais.[(167)13]

Rabelais speaks directly of this connection in his prologue to "Gargantua." Here is this passage:

> I may add that in composing this masterpiece I have not spent or wasted more leisure than is required for my bodily refection—food and drink to you! Is that not the proper time to commit to the page such sublime themes and such profound wisdom? Homer, the paragon of all philologists, knew it perfectly well and Ennius also, the father of the Latin poets, as Horace testifies, though a certain sorry clown has said that his poems smelled more of wine than of oil.
>
> So, too, spoke a third-rate cynic about my books, but a ripe turd to the fellow! Oh, the sweet fragrance of wine! How much more reconciling, smiling and beguiling wine is than oil! Let the world say that I spent more on wine

[12] The list of names and the references to the symposium as a genre of literature in classical and late antiquity may possibly reflect familiarity with Martin (1931)—a book also cited by Freidenberg—if there is any concrete source Bakhtin was relying on here at all. Martin (1931) as a source is potentially more relevant for some passages in the chapter added to the second edition of Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984, 101–180) and as a book that extensively cites, and thus could have instigated Bakhtin's later reading of, one of the main sources that shaped Bakhtin's studies of Menippean satire, namely Rudolf Hirzel's *Der Dialog* (Hirzel 1895).

[13] The footnote was added in the 1949–1950 round of revisions. The remark on Beethoven may possibly be traced to a biography of the composer, published in the popular "Zhizn' zamechatel'nykh lyudey" ("The life of remarkable people") book series, where Beethoven's table conversations of 1819–1820 are said to be "permeated with genuine social radicalism" (Al'shvang 1940, ch. 20). Bakhtin read and summarized several biographies from this series in the 1940s (some information on Dante, Galileo, and Heine, originating in these biographies, is contained in "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*").

(167) The tradition of the grotesque symposium, in an impoverished form, of course continued to live in later years too. We encounter it in a number of phenomena in the nineteenth century (for example, Beethoven's dinner table conversations). It has, essentially, also survived to this day.

> than on oil: I shall glory in it like Demosthenes when they accused him of the opposite. For my part, I consider it honorable and noble to be a sportsman and a wit, for as such I am welcome wherever two or three Pantagruelists are gathered together. (book 1, prologue)

At first, the author intentionally downplays his own writings: he only writes while eating and consequently spends very little time on them, as he would on a joke or a trifle. Therefore, the expression "such sublime themes and such profound wisdom" can also be understood in an ironic sense. But this downplaying is immediately overridden by the allusion to Homer and Ennius, who did the same.

The dining-hall word is a jocular and unfettered word; the folk-festive rights of laughter and jest to unfetteredness and candor extended to it. Rabelais indeed clothes his writings with this protective fool's cap. But at the same time, the dining-hall word also fully satisfies him inherently, in its very essence. He actually does prefer wine to oil: after all, *oil is the symbol of* "*Lenten,*" *pious seriousness.*

Rabelais was fully convinced that free and candid truth can be uttered only in the atmosphere of feasting and only in the tone of table talk, since, outside all considerations of prudence, only this atmosphere and this tone corresponded to the very essence of truth, as Rabelais understood it: *a truth that is inwardly free, merry, and materialistic.*

Behind the sanctimonious[14] seriousness of all high and official genres, Rabelais saw the outgoing power and outgoing truth of the past: of the Picrocholes, Anarchuses, Janotuses, Ticklepeckers, catchpoles, the plotters and slanderers, hangmen, agelasts of all kinds, cannibals (who bark instead of laughing), misanthropes, hypocrites, flatterers, and so on.[15] For Rabelais seriousness was either the tone of the outgoing truth and a force doomed or else the tone of a human being who is weak and frightened by all sorts of fears. By contrast, the grotesque symposium, folk-festive carnival feasting images, and, in part, the "table talks" of the ancients provided him with the laughter, the tone, the vocabulary, with an entire system of images, all expressing his new understanding of truth. Feasting and feasting images were the most favorable environment for absolutely fearless and merry truth. *Bread and wine* (the world defeated by labor and struggle) *disperse all fear and set the word free.* The merry triumphant encounter with the world in the act of eating and drinking, performed by the victorious human being who devours the world rather than being devoured by it, was profoundly consonant with the very essence of the Rabelaisian worldview. This victory over the world in the act

[14] The Russian word for "sanctimonious" is derived from the word for "oil," as used by Rabelais in the quoted passage.

[15] This sentence lists various antagonist figures (concrete characters, as well as more general labels) in Rabelais's novel. Picrochole and Anarchus are the main antagonists in bk. 1 and bk. 2, respectively. On Janotus, see bk. 1, ch. 18–20. Ticklepecker and the catchpoles feature in bk. 4, ch. 12–15. On the cannibals and the misanthropes, see bk. 4, dedicatory epistle. Other labels are used sporadically throughout the book, but see especially bk. 1, ch. 54 (note that translations of particular labels may

of eating was concrete, tangible, and materially bodily; the very taste of the defeated world was felt. The world feeds and shall feed humankind. Moreover, this image of victory over the world contained no trace of mysticism, no trace of abstract-idealistic sublimation.

Such an image materializes truth, does not allow it to be torn away from the earth, while at the same time preserving its universality and cosmic nature. The themes and images of "table talk" are always "lofty matters" and "profound questions," but, in one way or another, they are decrowned and renewed on the material-bodily plane: "table talk" is freed from the requirement to maintain hierarchical distances between things and values; it freely mixes the profane with the sacred, the high with the low, the spiritual with the material; there is no such thing as a mésalliance for it.

Let us stress the opposition of wine and oil in the excerpt quoted above. As we have said, oil is the symbol of official pious seriousness, of "devotion and the fear of God."[16] Wine frees one from fear and devotion. "In vino veritas" is a free and fearless truth.

We must point out another substantial factor: the special link that the feasting word has with the *future* and with *glorifying-ridiculing*. It is still alive to this day in banquet speeches and toasts. It is as if while feasting, time itself, killing and giving birth in the same act, holds the floor;[17] hence, that word is ambiguous and ambivalent. Even in the most rigorous and inhibited form of the symposium—in Plato and Xenophon—praise maintains its ambivalence, includes invective (albeit mitigated): while glorifying Socrates, one may speak of his ugly appearance, while Socrates himself may praise himself as a procurer (as happens in Xenophon).[18] Old age and youth, beauty and ugliness, death and childbirth are often blended here into a single two-faced image. *But the festive voice of time speaks first of all about the future.* The element of feasting celebration inevitably assumes the form of presaging a better future. This lends a special character to the feasting word, freed from the shackles of the past and present. In the Hippocratic Corpus there is a treatise titled "Breaths" (with which Rabelais was well acquainted); it contains the following convivial definition of drunkenness:

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vary from one context to another).

[16] "Devotion and the fear of god"—one of several allusions Bakhtin makes throughout the book to the "apology" for the Feast of Fools that he discussed in chapter 1 (based on Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 226–227).

[17] The Russian words that mean "time itself holds the floor" can also be translated literally as "the word belongs to time itself."

[18] We can safely assume Bakhtin read Plato's *Symposium* earlier in life, and his remarks here reflect his direct knowledge of the text (moreover, Rabelais mentions the relevant passage in bk. 1, prologue). The same may well be true of Xenophon's *Symposium*, but the more concrete reference to a particular passage in bk. 3 (Xenophon 1923, 563) may suggest Bakhtin relied on a secondary source. In this case, a footnote in Martin (1931, 8) may be one possibility.

> Again in the cases of drunkenness, when the blood has increased in quantity, the soul and the thoughts in the soul change; the ills of the present are forgotten, but there is confidence that the future will be happy.[19]

However, this utopian nature of the feasting word, which is still alive to this day in banquet speeches and toasts, does not lose touch with the earth. Man's future triumph is given in the material-bodily images of abundance and of the human being's renewal.

What feasting images signify and their functions in Rabelais's novel become clearer when seen against the background of the grotesque symposium tradition. Let us trace the line of the main phenomena in this tradition.

The grotesque tradition is inaugurated by the famous "Coena Cypriani," that is "the Feast of Cyprian."[20] Establishing the history of this peculiar work's creation remains a problem. It has doubtless no relation at all to St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (d. CE 258), among whose works the "Coena" was usually included. It appears impossible to establish at what time it emerged; it can be roughly dated between the fifth and the eighth century. Also unclear is the immediate and conscious purpose pursued by the "Coena's" author. Some scholars (for instance, H. Brewer) assert that the author pursued purely didactic and even mnemonic aims: to fix the names and events of the Scriptures in the minds of students and worshipers. Others (Lapôtre) detected in it a parody of a "Banquet" in honor of the goddess Ceres, by Julian the Apostate. There are, finally, some (P. Lehmann and others) who view it as the parodic development of a sermon by Zeno, Bishop of Verona.[21] A few words have to be said about this sermon.

Bishop Zeno of Verona composed a special kind of sermon. Apparently, he aimed to impart a somewhat more noble character to the blusterous and not-quite-Christian bouts of feasting that his flock indulged in during the Easter holidays. For this purpose, Zeno selected from the Bible and the Gospels all the passages that mention various persons in sacred history eating and drinking—in other words, he assembled a compendium of all the feasting images in Holy Writ. The result was a kind of renewal of the sacred on the material-bodily plane. This sermon contains an element of "risus paschalis"—that is, the laughter and unfettered jokes that, by ancient custom, were permitted in church sermons on Easter.[22]

"The Feast of Cyprian" is indeed reminiscent of Zeno's sermon in its content, but it goes considerably farther. The "Feast's" author makes a vast selection not only of all feasting images but, more generally, of all *festive* images of the Bible and the Gospels. He combines all these images into a grandiose picture of a banquet, full of life

[19] Hippocrates (1923b, 249–251). Bakhtin is quoting from the Russian translation of Hippocrates that he also relied on elsewhere in the book (Hippocrates 1936, 271–272).

[20] For an English translation, see Abrantes (2018). Bakhtin's sources here are primarily Lehmann (1922, 25–30) and Ilvonen (1914, 2–10), and possibly also Novati (1889, 266–288.).

[21] The overview of opinions about the text's origins comes from Lehmann (1922, 27; with some information included from Ilvonen 1914, 2).

[22] See Lehmann (1922, 27), including regarding this being an Easter sermon, though the connection

and movement, with extraordinary carnivalesque, or rather, saturnalian, freedom (the relation of the "Feast of Cyprian" to the Saturnalia is recognized by nearly all scholars). As its starting point, it uses the parable from the Gospels of the king celebrating his son's wedding (Matthew 22:1–14). This grandiose banquet brings together, as dinner companions, all the protagonists of the Old and New Testaments, from Adam and Eve to Christ. At this banquet, they are seated according to the scriptures, which are used for this purpose in the most peculiar manner: Adam sits down in the middle, Eve sits on a fig leaf, Cain on a plow, Abel on a milk jug, Noah on the ark, Absalom on a branch, Judas on a moneybox, and so on. The dishes and drinks served to the banquet's participants are selected based on the same principle. For example, Christ is served raisin wine, because it is called "passus," and Christ had suffered "passio" (the Passion). All other elements of the banquet are constructed according to the same grotesque principle. After eating (i.e., the first part of the ancient symposium), Pilate brings water for washing hands. Martha, of course, serves at the table, David plays the harp, Herodias dances, Judas goes around kissing everybody, Noah is, of course, totally drunk, a rooster keeps Peter from falling asleep (after the banquet), and so forth. On the day following the feast everybody brings gifts to their host: Abraham offers a ram, Moses brings two tablets, Christ a lamb, and so on. Then the theme of theft is introduced: it turns out that many things have been stolen during the banquet. A search for the stolen goods is launched, with all the guests being treated as thieves, but eventually, only Hagar is killed in atonement for everybody's guilt, and she is solemnly buried. Such are the main elements of the construction and content of "The Feast of Cyprian," marking the beginning of the literary feasting tradition of the Middle Ages.[23]

"The Feast of Cyprian" is an absolutely free game played with all the sacred persons, objects, themes, and symbols of the Bible and the Gospels. The author of this game stops at nothing. Christ's Passion, purely because of a resemblance between two words, implies the necessity for him to drink raisin wine; all the sacred persons turn out to be thieves, and so on. One is dazzled by the fancifulness of the adjacencies and the unexpected combination of sacred images; only Rabelais could rival such mésalliances. The entire Scripture started twirling round in some sort of a buffoonish circle dance. The passion of God, Noah's ark, Eve's fig leaf, the kiss of Judas, and so on have all been transformed into the merry details of a Saturnalian banquet. The right to exercise such extraordinary unfetteredness was given to the author of the "Feast of Cyprian" by the feasting images that he selected as his starting point. These images, once selected, created the atmosphere for absolutely unfettered play. The material-bodily character of the feasting images allowed the author to draw almost all the contents of the Scriptures into this play, made it possible to decrown and at the same time renew them (in this renewed guise, the Biblical images are indeed very easy to remember). *Feasting had*

to "risus paschalis" is introduced by Bakhtin.

[23] Lehmann (1922, 19, 25–26).

the might to free the word from the shackles of devotion and fear of God.[24] Everything became accessible to play and merriment.

Let us stress one distinctive feature of "The Feast of Cyprian": the banquet brings together persons from the most diverse periods of Biblical history. It is as if all of history, in the person of its representatives seated around the banquet table, is brought together. Feasting acquires the most grandiose worldwide character. Let us also stress the appearance of the theme of theft, of the parodic atoning sacrificial victim (Hagar) and the parodic funeral. All this is closely interwoven with the feasting images and appears repeatedly in the tradition of the grotesque symposium in subsequent centuries.

Beginning in the ninth century (the century of its revival), "The Feast of Cyprian" enjoyed huge and widespread success, both in its original edition and in various retellings. Three such retellings survive to this day: by the famous Abbot of Fulda, Rabanus Maurus (855), by John the Deacon (877), and, finally, by Azelinus of Reims (the early eleventh century).[25]

Rabanus Maurus was a very strict and orthodox churchman; nevertheless, he saw nothing sacrilegious in the "Feast of Cyprian." He prepared an abridged edition of this work and dedicated it to Lothair II. In his dedication he wrote that this work would serve the king as reading "for amusement" ("ad jocunditatem"). John the Deacon of Rome reworked the text of the "Feast of Cyprian" into verse (the old version was in prose), adding a prologue and an epilogue. It can be understood from the prologue that John's work was intended to be recited at *school feasts* during *Easter recreations*, while from the epilogue it is clear that "The Feast of Cyprian" enjoyed great success at the *feasting table* of King Charles the Bald. These facts are very telling: they indicate how sacred were the rights and liberties of *recreations and feasting* in the ninth century. For Rabanus Maurus (and for other people of his time), the festive banquet justified such play with sacred matters that might appear to be a monstrous sacrilege in another context.[26]

The number of manuscripts of "The Feast of Cyprian" in all the subsequent centuries is very large, which testifies to this medieval symposium's huge influence. It is telling that the historical universalism of "The Feast of Cyprian" and several of its other distinctive features are found again in the most grandiose feasting-related work of the sixteenth-century, *The Path to Success*, as well as in *Pantagruel's Dream.*[(168)] The

[24] Again, an allusion to the "apology" for the Feast of Fools discussed in chapter 1 (based on Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 226–227).

[25] Lehmann (1922, 28–30; with some information from Ilvonen 1914, 2–3). "John the Deacon" (a designation used to refer to several different individuals) is Johannes Hymonides, the Deacon of Rome.

[26] See, again, Lehmann (1922, 28–30). This is also the source for the claim in the next paragraph that there is a large number of manuscripts of the "Feast of Cyprian" from the Middle Ages.

[(168)] François Habert d'Issoudun, *Le Songe de Pantagruel.*

latter work was written under Rabelais's influence, but it in turn determined the main complex of themes for the "Third Book" of Rabelais's novel.[27]

The next work of the medieval convivial tradition that we shall pause to consider belongs to the tenth century. In the so-called Cambridge songs manuscript there is a piece in verse telling the story of a certain scoundrel who comes to the court of Archbishop Heriger of Mainz and swears that he managed to visit heaven and hell;[(169)] Christ, according to his narrative, was *feasting* in heaven, and moreover, Peter the apostle serves as his *cook*, and his *cupbearer* is John the Baptist. The scoundrel was able to steal a piece of lung from the feasting table, which he has eaten. Archbishop Heriger imposes a penance on him for this heavenly theft. This short piece is very typical of the medieval feasting tradition: here, we find a travesty of the Last Supper. The image of feasting allows it to be transferred to the material-bodily level, introducing real kitchen-related details, turning Peter the Apostle into a cook and so on.[28]

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the medieval convivial tradition is complicated by the appearance in it of a satirical element. A work of the eleventh century, titled "The Treatise of Garcia of Toledo," is very telling in this respect.[29] It depicts the continuous feasting of the Roman curia—the Pope and the cardinals. The Pope himself drinks from a large golden cup; he is tormented by unquenchable thirst. He drinks to all and to everything: to the redemption of souls, to the sick, to a good harvest, to peace, to travelers and sailors, and so on (there are elements of parody of the litany here). Nor do the cardinals lag behind. The description of this continuous feasting, thirst, and gluttony by the Pope and cardinals is full of striking exaggerations and of very long lists and name sequences that are praiseful-invective (that is, ambivalent) in character. This work is usually put alongside Rabelais's novel as an example of grotesque satire. The Pope's insatiable appetite here acquires cosmic dimensions.

The "Treatise of Garcia" is entirely and openly directed as a satire against the bribery, greed, and putrefaction of the Roman curia. The feasting images, exaggerated to nearly cosmic dimensions, have here—it might seem—a purely negative signification: this is "exaggeration of that which should not be." However, the matter is far more complex. Feasting images, like all folk-festive images, are ambivalent. Here, they are indeed made to serve narrowly satirical, and therefore negative, leanings; but in that service, these images also retain their positive nature. And it is this positive nature that

[27] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:lvii–lxiv).

[28] Lehmann (1922, 33).

[29] The text exists in English translation (Thomson 1973). Bakhtin's main source on it is Schneegans (1894, 69–76; though see also Lehmann 1922, 45–50), which is also clear from the references to satire, and "grotesque satire" in particular, in the paragraph. Bakhtin grants Schneegans's point that the text in question is satirical, but then, in the paragraph that follows, states his qualified disagreement with Schneegans's reading of it. The target of the polemic is also hinted at by the phrase "exaggeration of that which should not be," alluding to Schneegans (1894, 39–40).

[(169)] This "comic vision of the afterlife" from the Cambridge songs was published in *The Cambridge Songs*, edited by Karl Breul, Cambridge, 1915, pp. 59–85.

begets the exaggerations, even though they are put to satirical use. Negation here does not spill over to the very matter of the images: to wine, to food, to abundance. The actual matter of the images itself remains positive. There are no serious and consistent ascetic leanings in this work. Wherever such leanings appear (as, for example, they very frequently do in the Protestant satire of the second half of the sixteenth century) the material-bodily images inevitably wither; they come across dryly and sparingly, the exaggerations become abstract. There is nothing of this in the work we are analyzing. The images coopted for a satiric purpose continue to live their feasting life. They are not exhausted by the tendencies they serve. And this does not in the least diminish the force of the satire: its author denounces the curia very effectively, but at the same time he is authentically under the positive power of his feasting images. These images create an unfettered atmosphere that allows the author to parodically travesty liturgical and biblical texts.

This splitting-in-two of the traditional (most often folk-festive) image is a very widespread phenomenon throughout world literature. The general formula for this phenomenon is the following: an image that formed and has developed within the grotesque conception of the body—that is, a *body that is collective and communal*—is applied to the *private domestic bodily life* of man in class society. In folklore *the people is feasting, as do its representatives standing in for it* (heroes, giants); here, however, the feasting is done by popes and cardinals. They feast like heroes, but they are not heroes at all. They are feasting not on behalf of the people, but at the people's expense and to its disadvantage. Wherever the image is directly or indirectly borrowed from folklore but applied to characterize the life of nonpopular, class groups, the image inevitably becomes contradictory from within in this specific manner and acquires a special tension.[30] Of course, our formula inevitably rationalizes and simplifies this phenomenon, which is complex, rich in nuances, and enriched by the struggle of contradictory tendencies; its ends don't meet, as indeed, they generally don't meet, and cannot ever meet in living and becoming life.[31] Bread stolen from the people does not cease to be bread; wine is always splendid, even when the Pope drinks it. *Wine and bread* have their own logic, their own *truth*, their own *insurmountable inclination toward superabundance going over the top*; *an indestructible shade of victorious triumph and merriment* is inherent to them.

[30] In the 1940 manuscript, this sentence contained a more colorful metaphor: "Wherever the image is ... borrowed from folklore, *born from and nursed with food and drink by the people* ..." (italics added to mark the words edited out). Bakhtin's revisions to the book in the 1960s were rarely that specific and local (typically, whole sections or at least paragraphs would be added or removed), and the fact that he *removes* a reference to food, drink, and birth is even more unusual. Notably, this sentence is also one of the places in the book where official Marxist and Populist terms are being employed. The edit suggests Bakhtin was consciously trying to dissociate himself from the official rhetoric to some extent, to make the sentence deliberately less colorful and less organically integrated into the text.

[31] Note that in Russian, as in English, when someone says they "can't make ends meet" this implies economic hardship. Bakhtin, however, borrows the same metaphor to make a different point—that living human beings, and the real-life processes and phenomena that have to do with them, "do not coincide

This *tendency toward plenty*, embedded in the folk feasting image, encounters and is interwoven in a contradictory fashion with *individual and class gluttony and greed*. In both cases there is "much" and "more," but their meanings in terms of world outlook, as well as their value-based tone, are deeply different. Feasting images in class-society literature are complex and contradictory; their communal superabundant soul, inherited from folklore, cannot get along with their privately domestic, limited, and greedy body.[32] The same complicated and contradictory character can be discovered in the images of the fat belly, the gaping mouth, the large phallus, and the popular positive image of the "satiated man," which are all connected to images of feasting. The fat abdomen of fertility demons and of popular glutton-heroes (for instance, the Gargantua of folk legend) turns into the fat paunch of the insatiable simonist abbot. Between these two extreme limits, the image leads a bifurcated, complex, and contradictory[33] life.

In the seventeenth century one of the most popular representatives and masters of folk comic performance was "Fat Guillaume" ("Gros Guillaume," one of the three Turlupins). He was exceptionally fat: "He had to walk many steps to reach his own navel."[34] He was girt in two places—under his chest and under his abdomen—which gave his body the shape of a *wine barrel*. His face was thickly powdered with *flour*, which he shed on all sides when he moved and gesticulated. Thus, his figure expressed *bread and wine in a bodily incarnation*. This plentitude of earthly goods walking on two legs enjoyed enormous success with the people. Gros Guillaume was the incarnation of the merry and communal feasting utopia in human form, the "age of Saturn" returned to earth. The sanctity and the purity of his abundant paunch is, of course, beyond all doubt. But consider now Mr. Pickwick's round little paunch: it surely has much about it of Gros Guillaume, or rather, of his English kinsmen, the folk clowns. The English people applaud Pickwick and will always applaud him, but this little paunch is far more self-contradictory and complex than Gros Guillaume's barrel of wine.

The bifurcation and the internally contradictory state of folk feasting images appears in world literature in the most multifarious variants and variations. The "Treatise of Garcia," which we have just analyzed, is one of these variations.

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with themselves" (as Bakhtin often puts it in other contexts; in this book, see note 152 to chapter 5).

[32] The last two sentences contain interesting terminological correspondences with Bakhtin's early philosophical writings. In particular, "value-based tone" is very reminiscent of "emotional-volitional tone," which always reflects an evaluation, in Bakhtin (1993), and "superabundant soul" brings to mind the notion of the "surplus of seeing" (the same Russian word, *izbytok*, is used in both) in Bakhtin (1990b), which is also connected to the soul in Bakhtin's early terminology. The specific meanings of this superabundance or surplus in the two contexts appear unrelated to one another, but one cannot exclude the possibility that Bakhtin used his early terms here on purpose.

[33] "Contradictory" renders the Russian *protivorechivy*. This word was introduced in 1949–1950 to replace the earlier *raznorechivy* (found in the 1940 manuscript). That word, in turn, was a central term in Bakhtin's essay "Discourse in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981a), translated into Ensligh as "heteroglot" (and see note 132 to chapter 1).

[34] The quote, as well as the rest of the information about Gros Guillaume in the paragraph, is from

Let us touch on several additional similar phenomena of the same period in the development of medieval feasting satire. In "The Latin Poems Commonly Attributed to Walter Mapes"[170] there is a piece titled "Magister Golias about a Certain Abbot" ("Magister Golias de quodam abbate").[35] It describes one day in the life of an abbot. This day is filled exclusively with events belonging to material-bodily life, and first of all, with eating and drinking beyond measure. All these events of bodily life (the abbot has no knowledge whatsoever of any other life) are depicted in a clearly grotesque manner: everything is exaggerated to excess, with many enumerations of the various different dishes devoured by the abbot. At the very start, we are told of the multifarious ways in which the abbot relieves himself (this is how he begins his day). Here, too, the material-bodily images lead a complex double life. The pulse of that enormous collective body, from the viscera of which they were born, still goes on beating in them.[171][36] But here this heroic pulse is weak and intermittent, for these images are torn away from that which justified their growth and excessive dimensions, which connected them with the people's plenty. The feasting celebration of the "certain abbot" is a stolen celebration, for it brings nothing to a culmination. The positive image of "feasting for the whole world" and the negative image of parasitical gluttony have blended here into one whole, beset with inner contradictions and interruptions.

Another work in the same collection, "The Apocalypse of Golias," is constructed in an entirely analogous way. But what is emphasized here is that the abbot who drinks the good wine leaves the poor wine to his monks.[37] We hear in this the protesting voice

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Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 97).

[35] Wright (1841, xl–xliv). The text is printed as an appendix to the editor's introduction to a book of Latin poems attributed to Mapes; however it is itself in prose and is not attributed to Mapes. Bakhtin's sources about it are Schneegans (1894, 65–68) and Lehmann (1922, 189–192).

[36] Footnote based on Lehmann (1922, 37, 189).

[37] "Apocalipsis Goliæ Episcopi" (Wright 1841, 1–20, 271–292; there is an extended quote in Lehmann 1922, 192–193; also mentioned in a footnote in Schneegans 1894, 68–69) is a long poem describing an apocalyptic vision, with one of the scenes described featuring an abbot holding a drinking contest with his monks (which is the segment Lehmann quotes, though no mention is made of the wine's quality). Bakhtin clearly mixed this text up with a different one—an untitled fifteenth-century song (published in Wright 1847, 2–3; briefly discussed in a footnote in Schneegans 1894, 64) that fully matches his

[170] See *Poems Attrib. to Walter Mapes*, Ed. Th. Wright, London, 1841.

[171] This piece names "Magister Golias" as its author. This is a generic name for a libertine, a man who has gone off life's normal beaten track and has gone beyond the confines of the official worldview. The name was also applied to drunkards and revelers, who live fast and wild. The vagantes, as we know, were also called "goliards." Etymologically, these names were understood in two ways: as resembling the Latin word "gula" (gluttony) and as resembling the name Goliath. Both interpretations were current, and, moreover, they did not contradict each other semantically. The Italian scholars F. Neri and F. Ermini proved the existence of a special "Goliath cycle." Goliath, the Biblical giant, was seen already by St. Augustine and Bede as a contrast to Christianity, as some sort of an incarnation of an antichristian principle. Goliath's image became the focus of legends and songs that were being composed about his extraordinary gluttony and drunkenness. This name apparently edged out a number of names for giants in local folklore, who were incarnations of the grotesque body.

of Friar John accusing his Prior that he likes to drink good wine, but he is reluctant and afraid to organize a battle in defense of the monastery vineyard.[38]

In the Latin recreational literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, feasting images, as well as images linked with the reproductive force, usually become concentrated around the figure of the drunkard, glutton, and lecher monk. The image of such a monk is fairly complex and intermittent. First, being excessively devoted to material-bodily life, he enters a state of acute contradiction with the ascetic ideal that he serves as a monk. Second, his excessive gluttony is the parasitism of a nonworking freeloader. But at the same time, he becomes, for the authors of these works, the bearer of the positive, "shrove" principle—food, drink, reproductive force, merriment. The authors of these stories offer all three aspects concurrently in their image: one cannot tell where praise ends and where condemnation begins. These authors are not in the least infused with the ascetic ideal. The accent is nearly always placed precisely on the shrove element of these stories. We hear the voice of the democratic cleric who tries to glorify material-bodily values while at the same time remaining within the confines of the ecclesiastical worldview system. These works were, of course, connected with recreations, with festive merriment, with the shrove days and with the liberties permitted during these days.

Let us look at one of these stories, which enjoyed great popularity.[39] Its content is extremely simple: a monk was spending nights with a married woman until he was caught one night by the woman's husband, who castrated him. The sympathy of this story's authors is extended rather to the monk than to the husband. In (ironically) characterizing the female hero's "chastity," the number of her lovers usually given is so high as to exceed all probability.[40] In essence, this story is nothing but "a tragic farce on the demise of the monastic phallus." Testifying to the popularity of this story is the large number of its manuscripts that reached us, from the thirteenth century onward. In a number of manuscripts the story is offered as a "merry sermon," and in the fifteenth century it was even given the form of a "passion." Thus, in a codex from Paris it is called "Passio cuiusdam monachi." It is here given the form of a gospel reading and begins with the words "At that time...."[41] In essence, it really is a "carnival passion."

One of the most widespread themes of Latin recreational literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the advantages the cleric had over the knight in amorous

description. The likely cause of confusion is that both were published in (different) books edited by Thomas Wright and are cited in footnotes by Schneegans, a few pages apart.

[38] Bk. 1, ch. 27.

[39] Bakhtin's discussion of this text follows Lehmann (1922, 171–174).

[40] In one of the manuscripts containing this novella, quoted by Lehmann (1922, 173), that number is 144,000. This is not just any large number, but a parodic biblical allusion to Revelations, ch. 7.

[41] A common expression to introduce sections of the narrative in the biblical text, especially the Gospels (e.g., Matthew 12:1 in the Douay-Rheims translation). In the 1940 manuscript Bakhtin quotes the Latin: "In illo tempore" (based on Lehmann 1922, 173).

matters. We have, for instance, the composition "The Love Council of Remiremont," dating from the second half of the twelfth century, which depicts a convocation of women. The speeches given by the participants of this convocation indeed praise the superiority of clerics over knights in amorous matters. Similar in their theme are the many thirteenth-century works depicting councils and synods held by clergy in defense of clerics' right to have wives and concubines. This right was argued for by making several parodic references to the gospel and other sacred texts.(172)[42]

In all these works, the figure of the cleric or monk becomes a contradictory bearer of reproductive might and of material-bodily superabundance. The ground is being laid for the image of Friar John, and in part also for the image of Panurge. But we have digressed from feasting images proper.

During the same period the medieval feasting tradition develops along two additional lines: the parodic drunkards' masses and the Latin lyrics of the vagantes. These phenomena are well known and need not be examined in detail. Alongside the parodic drunkards' masses ("Missa de potatoribus" or "Potatorum missa") there were also players' masses ("Officium lusorum"), and sometimes both elements—wine and games—were united in a single mass. At times, these masses quite strictly keep to the text of genuine church masses. The images of wine and drunkenness are here almost entirely devoid of ambivalence. By their nature, these works approach in their character the superficial formal parodic travesties of modern times. In the poetry of the vagantes, the images of wine, food, love, and play reveal their connection with folk-festive forms. Also present here is the influence of the tradition of drinking songs going back to antiquity. But generally speaking, feasting images in the poetry of the vagantes introduce here a new line of individual lyric development.[43]

Such is the feasting tradition in the Latin recreational and festive literature of the Middle Ages. The influence of this tradition on Rabelais is, of course, beyond any doubt. Moreover, works belonging to this tradition have an immense illuminating significance as phenomena that are akin and parallel to one another.

What, then, are the functions of feasting images in the medieval tradition characterized above?

In all instances—from "The Feast of Cyprian" and Zeno's sermon to the late satires and parodies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—feasting images *set the word free*; they lend a fearless and free tone to the whole work. Unlike the symposia of antiquity, the medieval symposium, in most cases, contains no philosophical speeches and disputes. But the work as a whole, its entire verbal mass, is permeated by the feasting spirit. *Free play with the sacred*—this is the main content of the medieval

[42] Lehmann (1922, 156–171). The reference to Oulmont (1911), reproduced in the footnote, is on p. 170.

[43] The paragraph contains information from Lehmann (1922, 174–228); see especially p. 199.

(172) The debate between the cleric and the knight was also a theme developed in works in the vernacular languages (see the book Ch. Oulmont, *Les débats du clerc et du chevalier*, Paris, 1911).

symposium. But this is not nihilism, or the primitive enjoyment of lowering what is held high.[44] We will not understand the spirit of the grotesque symposium if we do not take into account the deeply positive element of *triumphant celebration* inherent in every feasting image of folklore origin. The grotesque symposium is permeated by the consciousness of one's own *purely human material-bodily strength. Man is not afraid of the world; he has defeated it, and he savors it.* In the atmosphere of this *triumphant savoring*, the world has a new look—it appears as a plentiful harvest, a superabundant yield of offspring. All mystical fears are dissipated (ghosts at a banquet appear only to usurpers or to the representatives of the old dying world).[45] The feasting word is at once both universalist and materialistic. This is why the grotesque symposium parodically travesties and lowers any purely ideal, mystical, and ascetic victory over the world (that is, the victory of the abstract spirit). In the medieval grotesque symposium there are nearly always elements of parodic travesty of the Last Supper. These traits of the grotesque symposium are retained even where it is maximally subjected to narrowly satirical tendencies.

Testifying to the power of food and drink to set the word free is the fact that schoolmen's and clerics' language was invaded by an immense amount of "colloquial" parodic-travesties-in-speech of sacred texts, connected to eating and drinking. Such colloquial travesties of the sacred word were put to use at every household get-together that featured feasting. These sacred texts, liturgical words, fragments of prayers, and so on, which have been turned inside out and lowered, accompanied literally every goblet of wine, every consumed morsel of food. In Rabelais's novel this is vividly illustrated by Friar John's manner of speaking, and especially by the "Palaver of the Potulent."[46] We have also already quoted the relevant statement from Henri Estienne.[47] All these everyday-life dining-hall travesties (and they are still alive in our day) are the heritage of the Middle Ages; they are all shards of the grotesque symposium.

Some of Rabelais's contemporaries—Calvin, Charles de Sainte-Marthe, Jean Voulté, and others—directly connect the atheist and materialist currents and sentiments of their time to a dining-hall atmosphere; they characterize these currents as its own sort of "*dining-hall libertinism.*"[48]

In the Middle Ages and in Rabelais's time, this "dining-hall libertinism" was democratic in character. To a significant extent, such was still its English variety in Shakespeare's day—the dining-hall libertinism of Nashe's and Robert Greene's circle. Close

[44] Another polemical allusion to Schneegans, this time to his understanding of the burlesque (see Schneegans 1894, 24–25 and Bakhtin's overt critique in chapter 5).

[45] Alluding to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Act 3, Scene 4 (where Banquo's ghost appears to Macbeth, but not to other participants, at a banquet). This text already appears in the 1940 manuscript, so predates Bakhtin's more detailed analysis of *Macbeth* in his "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 2014; forthcoming-a).

[46] Bk. 1, ch. 5.

[47] See the footnote on p. 89 in chapter 1 (based on Lote 1938, 213).

[48] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:liv–lxx). The phrase "dining-hall libertinism" does not appear in Lefranc's text.

to it in France were the libertine poets: Saint-Amant, Théophile de Viau, d'Assoucy. Subsequently, this dining-hall tradition assumes the forms of aristocratic atheism and materialism, which found a striking expression in France, in the seventeenth century, in the feasting orgies of the Vendômes's circle.[49]

The role of the *feasting* word, freed from fear and devotion, cannot be underestimated either in the history of literature or in the history of materialist thought.

We have retraced only the Latin line of the medieval symposium. But feasting images also played a major role in medieval literature in the vernacular languages, as well as in oral folk tradition. The significance of feasting images is very large in all the legends about giants (for instance, in the oral tradition of legends about Gargantua and in the anonymous book about him, which was Rabelais's immediate source). There was a very popular cycle of legends about a utopian land of gluttony and idleness (for instance, the fabliau "Pays de cocagne").[(173)] We find these legends reflected in a number of medieval literary monuments. In the novel *Aucassin and Nicolette*, for example, we find a depiction of the land of "Torelore." This land is a "world turned inside out." The king bears children while the queen leads a war. That war is purely carnivalesque in character: they fight with cheeses, baked apples, and mushrooms (the childbearing king and the war with foods that are used as weapons are typical folk-festive images). The novel *Huon de Bordeaux* depicts a land where wheat is born in abundance and belongs to nobody. The book titled *The Voyage and Navigation of Panurge, Pantagruel's Disciple, to Unknown and Wondrous Islands*[(174)] (1537) describes a utopian country where the mountains are made of butter and flour, the rivers are of milk, warm pies sprout up, like mushrooms, straight from the ground, and so on.[50]

[49] Bakhtin's sources for this paragraph are not entirely clear. The French libertines Bakhtin mentions here are discussed in several of his sources, though often alongside others and not always in a context that conspicuously mentions feasting (see Boulenger 1925, 36–40; Lote 1938, 528–530; Sainéan 1930, 215–217; and Bakhtin also cites Perrens 1899 in his 1946 bibliography, though there is no evidence he had real access to this text). None of Bakhtin's usual sources mentions Nashe or Greene, though. Bakhtin might have added the reference to them based on recollections from earlier reading (e.g., about Shakespeare's life or about Elizabethan England more generally).

[50] Legends about giants are discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 (based mostly on Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 3:21–23, and Plattard 1930, 126). "Pays de cocagne" (i.e., "Land of Plenty") is mentioned in several of the sources Bakhtin used, but almost exclusively as a source for Rabelais's bk. 2, ch. 32, where one of the characters is being paid to sleep. The reference in the footnote seems to come from Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:226), but Lote (1938, 202) is a more probable source for the claims Bakhtin makes (it is less likely, but possible, that Bakhtin could have briefly consulted the publication he cites, Barbazan and Méon 1808). On *Aucassin and Nicolette* (referring to the episode in Lang 1909, 52–55) and *Huon de Bordeaux*, see Lote (1938, 116). Finally, *Pantagruel's Disciple* is discussed at relative length by Schneegans (1894, 272–278), with the information in the footnote based on Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:441–442).

(173) Published in Méon's *Recueil*, vol. IV, p. 175.

(174) In Rabelais's lifetime this book was reprinted seven times, sometimes under different titles. Written under the influence of the two first books of Rabelais's novel, this book was in turn used by Rabelais for his Fourth Book (the chitterlings war episode and the episode that features the giant Widenostrils).

This cycle of legends is reflected in the episodes of Rabelais's novel of Alcofribas's stay in Pantagruel's mouth (the theme of being paid for sleeping) and of the chitterling war.(175)[51]

Feasting images play a leading part in the development of a theme that enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages—namely, "The dispute between Lent and Shrovetide" ("La dispute des gras et des maigres"). This theme was treated very frequently and in various ways.(176) It is developed by Rabelais in his enumeration of the Lenten and non-Lenten ("shrove") foods offered by the Gastrolaters to their god, as well as in the episode of the chitterling war. Rabelais's source was a late thirteenth-century poem titled "Bataille de Caresme et de Charnage" (In the late fifteenth century this poem was already used by Molinet in his "Debate of Fish with Meat.") The thirteenth-century poem depicts the struggle of two great sovereigns, one embodying abstinence and the other embodying shrove foods. It depicts Charnage's army, which consists of sausages, wieners, and so on; fresh hard cheeses, butter, cream and the like are featured as participants in the battle.[52]

Let us finally point out the essential significance of feasting images in sotties, farces, and all forms of folk public-square comic performance. It is well known that national jester-like figures (Hanswurst, Pickelhering, and others) even got their names from national dishes.[53]

In the sixteenth century, there was a farce, *The Living Dead Men*, which was produced at the court of Charles IX. Here is its content: a lawyer developed a mental disturbance and imagined himself to be dead; he stopped eating and drinking and lay motionless on his bed. In order to cure him, one of his relatives pretended that he too

[51] Refrerring, again, to bk. 2, ch. 32, and to bk. 4, ch. 35–42 (the chitterling war). The source on Hans Sachs for the footnote is Schneegans (1894, 375).

[52] Bakhtin's source for the paragraph and the footnote is Lote (1938, 129–130; and see Popova 2008a, 867–868 for a side-by-side comparison of Bakhtin's text and the relevant part of his summary of Lote's book). Reference is made to Rabelais's bk. 4, ch. 35–42 and 59–60. The French word *charnage* here refers to the part of the year (between Christmas and Carnival) in which eating meat was traditionally permitted by the Church. The work by Jean Molinet being referred to is "Le débat du poison et de la chair." Of the works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder mentioned in the footnote, one (a study or drawing depicting a battle between Shrovetide and Lent) does not appear to be among Bruegel's original works, as recognized today. Lote might have referred to a work by another artist (e.g., Frans Hogenberg's 1558 print *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*).

[53] There is no concrete source for this paragraph, but cf. Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 213).

(175) Hans Sachs described in his "Schlaraffenland" a land where gluttony, laziness, and idleness are held in esteem; those who excel in idleness and gluttony are even rewarded; those who *fight against liver sausages* are knighted; sleeping is here compensated with wages, and so forth. We find here images that are parallel to Rabelais's: the chitterling war episode and the episode of Alcofribas's stay in Pantagruel's mouth. But in Hans Sachs there is a strong moralizing tone completely alien to Rabelais.

(176) It was still very much alive in the sixteenth century, as evidenced by Pieter Bruegel the Elder's works: two prints—*The Fat Kitchen* and *The Thin Kitchen*—the study *The Battle Between Shrovetide and Lent*, and, finally, *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent*; these works were all done by the artist circa 1560.

was dead and gave orders to be laid out on a table in the sick lawyer's room, as one would a dead man. All weep around the dead relative, but the relative himself, while lying on the table, makes such hilarious grimaces, that everybody starts *laughing*, and the dead relative himself follows their lead. The lawyer expresses his amazement, but is persuaded that *dead people are supposed to laugh*, so he forces himself to laugh: this is the first step toward recovery. Then the deceased relative, while lying on the table, began to *eat and drink*. The lawyer is now persuaded that *dead people eat and drink*. He also started eating and drinking and fully recovered. Thus, *laughter, food, and drink defeat death*. This theme is reminiscent of the novella "The Chaste Matron of Ephesus" by Petronius (from his *Satyricon*).[(177)][54]

In the written and oral vernacular medieval literature, feasting images are so closely interwoven with the grotesque image of the body that we will only be able to examine many of these works in the next chapter, devoted to the grotesque conception of the body.

A few words on the Italian feasting tradition. In Pulci's, Berni's, and Ariosto's poems, feasting images play a substantial role, especially in the case of the first two authors. This role is even more significant in Folengo's works—both the Italian ones and especially the macaronic ones. Feasting images and all manner of "edible" metaphors and comparisons in his works are frequent to the point of becoming downright annoying. Olympus in macaronic poetry is a fat land with mountains of cheese and seas of milk with dumplings and pies floating in them; the muses are cooks. Folengo describes the kitchen of the gods down to the last detail, over the course of 180 verses; nectar is a thick brew made of pork with spices and so on. The decrowning and renewing role of these images is obvious, but no less obvious is their weakened and narrowed character: the element of narrow literary parody predominates, the triumphant feasting merriment has degenerated, the genuine universalism is gone, and the folk-utopian factor is almost gone as well. A certain influence of Folengo on Rabelais cannot be denied, but it only concerns superficial elements and is overall insubstantial.[55]

[54] Bakhtin's source on this farce is Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 94–95, 458; Flögel's source is Guyon 1625, 1:351–358, as cited in the footnote). The title Bakhtin gives to the farce is probably a description provided by Flögel, as Guyon does not mention it. The novella included in the *Satyricon* (referring to Petronius 1922, ch. 111–112), which Bakhtin compares this farce to, has been discussed by him in greater detail in his earliest treatment of Rabelais, as part of his essay "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981c, 221–224). The novella tells of a young widow, at first inconsolable, falling in love with a legionnaire stationed near her dead husband's vault. The two consummate their love in the vault and end up placing the late husband's body on a cross, instead of a thief, whose body was stolen from the cross left unattended by the legionnaire.

[55] Schneegans (1894, 96–141) is both the source of the information Bakhtin presents in this paragraph and, again, the unnamed opponent with whom Bakhtin disagrees (regarding Teofilo Folengo's influence on Rabelais). Folengo's description of the Olympus is discussed in Schneegans (1894, 123–124). The reference, earlier in the paragraph, to Francesco Berni may have resulted from a misunderstanding: Schneegans (1894, 109–110) mentions Berni's famous retelling of Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando*

[(177)] Concerning this farce, see Guyon, *Diverses Leçons*, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 25.

Such is the tradition of feasting images of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to which Rabelais was an heir and which had indeed culminated in him. The positive, victoriously triumphant, and liberating aspect of these images prevails in his work. Their inherent tendency toward communality and abundance is revealed here in its full force.

But Rabelais also knows the image of the freeloader and the glutton monk. This aspect of feasting images is revealed, for instance, in the "Fourth Book," in the chapter "Why Monks Love Kitchens."[56] When describing how Gargantua spent his time while he was being educated in the spirit of scholasticism, Rabelais even depicts his hero's gluttony from a satirical angle (the way young Gargantua spends his time is very reminiscent of the day of the "certain abbot").[57] But this narrowly satirical aspect is of rather limited and subsidiary significance in Rabelais's novel.

Rabelais's "Praise of Gaster" is of a complicated sort. This praise, like the preceding chapters about the Gastrolaters and their immeasurable feasting offerings to Gaster, is permeated with the struggle between contradictory tendencies.[58] Feasting superabundance is here combined with the empty gluttony of the Gastrolaters, who venerate the belly as their god. Gaster himself "sent his mad votaries [i.e., the Gastrolatres] to his stool to see, examine, meditate upon, discuss and ponder the divinity to be extracted from his excretocrapturdivasation."[59] But against the background of these negative images of empty gluttony (the negation, however, does not in any way extend to the very foods and wines offered by the Gastrolaters) there arises the mighty image of Gaster himself, *inventor and creator of the entire technological culture of humankind.*

In Rabelais scholarship, one may encounter the assertion that the praise of Gaster contains historical materialism in embryonic form.[60] This is both correct and incorrect. That there could have been rudiments of historical materialism, in the strict sense of the word, at the stage of historical development when Rabelais was creating his works is out of the question. But by no means do we find here nothing but a primitive "materialism of the stomach." The Gaster, who invents agriculture, means for preserving grain, military weapons to defend it, the means for its transportation, the building of cities and fortresses, the art of destroying those cities, and who in this context also invents the sciences (mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and others)—this Gaster is not the biological belly of the individual organism but, rather, the incarnation of the material needs of organized human collectivity. This belly *studies the world* in order to defeat and subjugate it. This is why the praise of Gaster also has *triumphant feasting tones* that can be heard in it, which toward its end morph into technological fiction

innamorato, but the examples he reproduces, which appear to have inspired Bakhtin to mention Berni in this context, are from Boiardo's original version of the poem.

[56] Bk. 4, ch. 11.

[57] Bk. 1, ch. 21.

[58] See bk. 4, ch. 57–62.

[59] Bk. 4, ch. 60.

[60] Alluding to Plattard (1930, 264) and possibly Lote (1938, 254–255).

about Gaster's future inventions and conquests. But admixed with these triumphant feasting tones are tones of negation, because Gaster is greedy, voracious, and unjust. He has invented not only the building of cities but also the methods for their destruction—that is, war. This creates the complicated character of Gaster's image; a deep inner contradiction is introduced into the image, which Rabelais could not resolve. Neither did he try to resolve it: Rabelais retains the contradictory complexity of life, as he is certain that *almighty time* will find a way out.

Let us stress that Rabelais's triumphant feasting images always have a *historic coloration*, as seen most clearly in the episode of the fire that burned the knights being transformed into a feasting hearth, the feasting taking place, as it were, in a new epoch.[61] After all, carnival feasting was also held as if in the utopian future, in the age of Saturn that has returned to earth. Merry, triumphing time speaks in the language of feasting images. This aspect, as noted above, is still alive today in toasts.

Feasting images have one more highly substantial aspect to them, which we have not touched on here: *the special connection between eating and death and the underworld.* Among other senses, "*to die*" also signified "being swallowed," "being eaten up." The image of the underworld in Rabelais is inseparably interwoven with images of eating and drinking. But *the underworld* for him also signified *the topographical bodily nethers*, and he depicts the underworld also in *carnival forms.* The underworld is one of the most important nodal points of Rabelais's novel, as well as in Renaissance literature as a whole (it is no coincidence that this literature was inaugurated by Dante). But we shall devote a chapter specifically to the images of the material-bodily nethers and the underworld; in it we will revisit the aspect of feasting images, which links them to the underworld and to death.

Let us again stress in conclusion that the feasting images of the popular-festive tradition (and in Rabelais) differ starkly from the images of private everyday-life eating, everyday-life gluttony and drunkenness, in early bourgeois literature. Those latter images are expressions of *present-on-hand* contentment and satiety of the individually egoistic human being, an expression of individual *sensual pleasure*, rather than the people's communal *triumph.* These images are torn away from the process of labor and struggle; they are excommunicated from the folk public square and are confined to the limits of the house and the room ("household plenitude"); this is not "feasting for the whole world," in which all take part, but rather, a household party with hungry beggars at the door. If these images of eating are made hyperbolic, this is an expression of greedy gluttony, not an expression of a sense of social justice. This is immobile *quotidian ordinary life*, devoid of any symbolic extension and universal significance, no matter whether it is depicted satirically—that is, purely negatively, or positively (as prosperity).

The folk-festive images of eating and drinking, by contrast, have nothing in common with immobile ordinary life and with the present-on-hand prosperity of the private hu-

[61] Bk. 2, ch. 25–26.

man being. These images are deeply *active and triumphant*, for the process of social man's labor and struggle with the world culminates in them. They are communal because they are based on the inexhaustible growing abundance of the material principle. They are universal and are organically integrated with notions about life, death, rebirth, and renewal. They are organically integrated with the notion of the free and sober *truth*—alien to fear and devotion—and therefore also with the word of wisdom. Finally, they are permeated with merry time, moving into a better future, bringing about succession and renewal to everything in its path.

To date, this profound peculiarity of folk feasting images has not been properly understood. They were usually perceived on the private everyday-life level and were defined as "vulgar realism."[62] As a result, neither the wonderful charm these images possess, nor the immense role they played in the literature, art, and worldview of the past, were understood or explained. Also as yet unstudied is the contradictory life of folk feasting images within the systems of class ideology, where they are increasingly assimilated into ordinary life and degenerate, but to varying extents, depending on the various stages of class development. Thus, in Flemish painting, feasting images, despite their assimilation to bourgeois ordinary life, still retain, albeit at a weakened level of intensity, their positive folk-festive form, which indeed explains the force and charm these images possess in Flemish painting. In this sphere, too, a deeper study of the folk culture of the past will permit us to pose and solve a number of essential problems in a new way.

[62] Possibly an allusion to Freidenberg (1997b, 260–299).

5. The Grotesque Image of the Body in Rabelais and Its Sources

In the group of feasting images that we analyzed, we encountered stark exaggerations and hyperboles. The same kind of stark exaggeration is also typical of Rabelais's images of the body and bodily life. They are also typical of the novel's other images. But nevertheless, exaggerations are most conspicuously expressed in images of the body and images of eating. It is indeed here that one should seek the main origin and creative principle of all other exaggerations and hyperboles of the Rabelaisian world, the origin of any and all excessiveness and superabundance.

Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness, superabundance are considered by general consent to be among the most fundamental attributes of the *grotesque style.*

The most consistent attempt to offer a history and in part a theory of the grotesque, which is also the richest one in terms of the utilized material, was made by the German scholar H. Schneegans. In his book *The History of Grotesque Satire* (1894), a significant amount of space (about half the book) is devoted to Rabelais. Moreover, it can be said outright that Schneegans orients his history and theory of grotesque satire precisely around Rabelais. The understanding of the grotesque image that Schneegans proposes is distinctively clear and consistent, but it appears, however, radically incorrect in our eyes. At the same time, his mistakes are highly typical; they are repeated in the vast majority of works on grotesque satire, both preceding and even more following his own. Schneegans ignores the deep and essential *ambivalence* of the grotesque and only sees it as a negating exaggeration that pursues narrowly satirical aims. Since such an approach to the grotesque is so typical, we shall begin the present chapter with a critique of Schneegans's outlook.[1]

[1] As noted by Popova (2010a, 619–620), the following extended critique of Schneegans (1894) has some parallels with the reading of Schneegans in Leo Spitzer's early monograph on Rabelais (Spitzer 1910). While Spitzer (together with his mentor, Karl Vossler) had a significant influence on Bakhtin and his circle and was instrumental in drawing Bakhtin's attention to Rabelais in the first place (see Popova 2008a, 849–858), Bakhtin's analysis of Schneegans here is more detailed than Spitzer's and was clearly based on a direct reading of Schneegans. Popova (2008a, 854) does suggest Bakhtin may have followed Spitzer's lead in selecting the particular targets for his own critique.

Schneegans insists upon the strict differentiation between three types or categories of the comic: the *farcical* ("possenhaft"),[2] the *burlesque*, and the *grotesque*. To clarify the differences between them, he analyzes three examples.[3]

As an example of the farcical, we have a scene from one Italian "commedia dell'arte" (this scene was used as an example first by Flögel and then by Vischer). A stutterer in a conversation with Harlequin cannot pronounce a difficult word, no matter how he tries; he makes unusual efforts, *loses his breath* with this word in his throat, *gets all covered with sweat*, *gapes*, *trembles*, chokes; *his face becomes swollen*, and *his eyes pop out of their orbits*; "it looks as if things are coming to *cramps and labor pains*."[4] Finally, Harlequin, weary of waiting for the word, helps the stutterer out in a surprising way: he rushes forward, hits the stutterer in the abdomen with his head, and the difficult word is *born* at last. Such is the first example.

As an example of the burlesque, we have Scarron's travesty of Virgil. In order to lower the high images of the *Aeneid*, Scarron everywhere brings everyday-life and material-bodily elements to the forefront: Hecuba washes diapers; Dido, like African women in general, has a blunt nose; Aeneas attracts her with his physical freshness and health; and so on.

As examples of the grotesque, we have the following images from Rabelais: Friar John's assertion that "The very shadow of an abbey spire is fecund"; the same character's assertion that the monk's frock restores a hound's lost reproductive force; Panurge's project of building the walls of Paris out of reproductive organs.[5]

Schneegans demonstrates the different nature of laughter in each of these three types of the comic. In the first case (the farcical) the laughter is unmediated, naive, and good-natured (the stutterer himself might also have laughed). In the second case (the burlesque) the laughter is mixed with schadenfreude at the lowering of the high; moreover, the laughter here is no longer unmediated, since one must know the travestied *Aeneid*. In the third case (the grotesque) specific social phenomena (monastic debauchery, the venality of Parisian women) are made a target for laughter by means of their extreme exaggeration; there is no immediacy here either, as one must know these social phenomena that are being laughed at.[6]

Schneegans grounds the difference between these three types of laughter and of the laughable in the tenets of formal psychological aesthetics. The laughable is based on a contrast between the feelings of pleasure and displeasure. All types of the laughable

[2] Bakhtin's word here is *shutovskoe*, derived from *shut*, "a fool." However, in this context he clearly renders Schneegans's German word, for which "farcical" is the standard English translation.

[3] Bakhtin here follows Schneegans's introductory chapter (Schneegans 1894, 1–58). The examples for each of the three categories of the comical are presented on pp. 16–18. Popova (2010a, 619–620) points out similarities between the ensuing passages and Spitzer (1910, 27–31). Both authors are here mostly (critically) paraphrasing Schneegans.

[4] Schneegans (1894, 16).

[5] Respectively, bk. 1, ch. 45 and 42 and bk. 2, ch. 15.

[6] Schneegans (1894, 18–19).

are based on this contrast, while the differences between the particular types are determined by the various sources of pleasure and displeasure and the various combinations of these feelings.[7]

In the first case (the farcical) displeasure is brought about by the unexpected and unusual manner of healing the stutterer, while pleasure is generated by the successfulness of Harlequin's trick.[8]

In the second case (the burlesque) pleasure is generated by the very lowering of the high. All that is high unavoidably causes fatigue. You get tired of looking up, and you feel like you want to drop your gaze downward. The more powerful and prolonged was the domination of the high, the greater the pleasure of its decrowning and lowering. Hence the great success of parodies and travesties when they are timely—that is, when the high has had enough time to fatigue the readers. Thus, Scarron's travesties, directed against the despotism of Malherbe and classicism, were timely.[9]

In the third case (the grotesque) displeasure is generated by the impossible and improbable nature of the image: it is unimaginable that a woman could conceive from the shadow of an abbey spire and so on. This impossibility, this inconceivability, creates a strong feeling of displeasure. But this feeling is overcome by twofold pleasure: first, we recognize in the exaggerated image the real depravity and immorality prevalent in monasteries—that is, we find some place for the exaggerated image within reality; second, we feel moral satisfaction, since this immorality and depravity has been dealt a blow through pointed caricature and by our act of laughing at it.[10]

In the first case (the farcical) no one was laughed at—neither the stutterer nor Harlequin. In the second case the target of laughter is the lofty style of the *Aeneid* and of classicism in general, but there is no moral ground for this laughter: it's a simple frivolous joke. In the third case, however (the grotesque), a specific negative phenomenon is being laughed at, something that "should not be" ("Nichtseinsollendes"). This is precisely what Schneegans spots as the fundamental distinguishing feature of the grotesque: it exaggerates in caricature the negative phenomenon—that is, something that should not be. This is precisely what distinguishes the grotesque from the farcical and from the burlesque. Both the farcical and the burlesque may also feature exaggerations, but there they lack the satiric orientation against that which should not be. Moreover, exaggeration in the grotesque has an extreme, fantastic character; it is inflated to the level of a monstrosity.

In visual art the grotesque, according to Schneegans, is first and foremost caricature, but caricature stretched to the limits of the fantastic. Schneegans analyzes a series of caricatures of Napoleon III based upon the exaggeration of the emperor's large

[7] Schneegans (1894, 19ff.).
[8] Schneegans (1894, 22–23).
[9] Schneegans (1894, 24–25).
[10] Schneegans (1894, 25–27).

nose. The grotesque ones are those where the size of the nose is inflated to impossible dimensions, where this nose is made into a pig's snout or a crow's beak.[11]

The exaggeration of the *negative* (that which should not be) to impossible and monstrous limits is, according to Schneegans, the basic distinguishing feature of the grotesque. For that reason, the grotesque is always satire. Where there is no satirical orientation there is no grotesque. From this definition of the grotesque, Schneegans derives all the distinctive features of Rabelais's images and verbal style: its excessiveness and superabundance, the tendency to transgress boundaries in all respects, immeasurably long enumerations, the piling up of synonyms, and so on.

Such is Schneegans's conception. It is, as we have noted, highly typical. The understanding of the grotesque image as purely satirical—that is—negative, is very widespread. Rabelais, as is well known, has gained the firm reputation of a satirist, although he is no more a satirist than Shakespeare and less so than Cervantes. The point is that Schneegans transfers onto Rabelais his own narrow understanding of satire, in the spirit of modern times, as a negation of individual *particular* phenomena, not as a negation of *the entire order of life* (including the prevailing truth), a negation inseparably blended together with *the affirmation of the new that is being born.*

Schneegans's conception is radically incorrect. It is founded on completely ignoring a series of very essential aspects of the grotesque, above all—its ambivalence.[12] On top of that, Schneegans entirely ignores the folklore sources of the grotesque.

Schneegans himself is compelled to admit that even stretching matters to the maximum, it is not always possible to discover the satirical orientation in all of Rabelais's exaggerations. He explains this by the very nature of exaggeration, which always tends to transgress all boundaries; the author of the grotesque, carried away, even "intoxicated" with hyperbole, at times forgets the true purpose of exaggeration and loses sight of the satire.

As an example of such exaggeration that forgets its initial satiric goal, Schneegans cites the depiction of the fantastic growth of separate body parts in the first chapter of "Pantagruel."[13]

An element of exaggeration (hyperbole) is indeed one of the most essential attributes of the grotesque (including, in particular, the Rabelaisian system of images); nonetheless, it is not its single most essential attribute. It is all the more inadmissible to reduce to it the entire essence of the grotesque image. But Schneegans incorrectly interprets even the very pathos of exaggeration, the principle that sets it in motion.

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[11] Schneegans (1894, 41–53).

[12] In a brief set of notes on the theory of laughter, composed in the early 1940s, Bakhtin (1996d, 49–50; forthcoming-f) addresses the same critique as the one leveled at Schneegans here to Henri Bergson's theory of laughter (Bergson 2005). See Pan'kov (1996, 435) for a more detailed discussion. I am grateful to Caryl Emerson for directing my attention to this parallel.

[13] Schneegans (1894, 248–249). I am correcting a minor editing mistake in the Russian original, which refers to "the first book of 'Pantagruel' " (instead of the first chapter). The mistake was introduced in the 1965 version; the 1940 manuscript correctly refers to the chapter.

One may inquire: Where does this pathos, this "intoxication" with exaggeration, come from if what is being exaggerated is something negative, something that should not be? Schneegans's book does not offer us any answer to this question. Indeed, he fails to reveal the character of exaggeration itself, which very often morphs into clear qualitative changes.

If the nature of grotesque satire consists in the exaggeration of *something negative*, of that which *should not be*, then the *joyful* superabundance of exaggeration of which Schneegans himself speaks has nowhere whatsoever to come from. There is no source for the qualitative richness and multifariousness of the image, its heterogeneous and often unexpected connections to what would appear to be the most distant and unrelated phenomena. At best, the purely satirical exaggeration of the negative could account for only the purely quantitative aspect of the exaggeration, but not the qualitative diversity of the image and all its connections. A grotesque world in which only that which should not be is exaggerated would be quantitatively large, but at the same time it would become qualitatively extremely poor, impoverished, colorless, and far from merry (such is, in part, Swift's gloomy world). What would such a world have in common with Rabelais's merry and exceptionally rich world? Bare satirical orientation cannot even account for the positive pathos of purely quantitative exaggeration, not to mention the pathos of qualitative richness.

Because Schneegans relied on the idealistic aesthetics of the second half of the nineteenth century and on the narrow artistic and ideological norms of his time, he could not find the right path to the grotesque; he could not grasp the possibility of combining in one image both the positive and the negative poles. Even less was he able to grasp that an object can transgress not only its quantitative but also its qualitative boundaries, that it can outgrow itself, can be mixed with other objects. The pregnant and double-bodied grotesque images were unintelligible for Schneegans; he does not notice that, in the grotesque becoming world, the boundary lines between objects and phenomena are drawn entirely differently than in the static world of art and literature of his time.

Let us return to the point of departure of Schneegans's analysis, to his examples of the farcical, burlesque, and grotesque. By means of his analysis, he sought to reveal the purely formal psychological mechanism of their perception, instead of concentrating on the objective content of the images themselves. But if we start with this objective content, rather than with formal psychological factors, we shall discover the essential similarity and kinship between all three examples, while the differences established by Schneegans will turn out to be contrived and accidental.

Indeed, what is the objective content of the first example? Schneegans himself describes it in a way that leaves no room for doubt: *the stutterer acts out a childbirth.* He is *pregnant* with the word and doesn't manage to give birth to it. Schneegans himself says, "It looks as if things are coming to cramps and labor pains."[14] The gaping mouth,

[14] Schneegans (1894, 16).

the protruding eyes, the sweat, the shivers, the shortness of breath, the swollen face, and so forth—all these are typical manifestations and symptoms of the grotesque life of the body; in this case they acquire their meaning from the acted-out childbirth. Harlequin's gesture is also quite understandable: he *helps to deliver* the word, which is why his intervention is, quite consistently, directed at the *abdomen*; and the word is indeed born. Let us emphasize that it is precisely a word that is born. A high spiritual act is here lowered and decrowned by being transferred to the material-bodily plane of childbirth (which is being acted out in a fully realistic fashion). But thanks to this decrowning, the word is renewed as if born again (we keep moving within the circle of delivery and childbirth). Next, also evident here is the essential topographical factor of the bodily hierarchy being turned upside down: the bottom takes the place of the top; the word is localized in the *mouth* and in *thought* (in the *head*), but here it is transferred to the *abdomen*, from where Harlequin pushes it out by hitting it with his head. This traditional gesture of hitting the *abdomen* (or the *buttocks*) with the *head* is itself in essence topographical: it features the same logic of contraries, the contact of top and bottom. Next, we also have exaggeration: the bodily phenomena that accompany the impediment in the stutterer's articulatory apparatus (tension of the eyes, sweat, and so on) are exaggerated to such an extent that they turn into manifestations of childbirth; as a result, the entire event of pronouncing the word is transferred from the articulatory apparatus into the abdomen. An objective analysis thus reveals in this brief scene the fundamental and essential features of the grotesque. The scene turns out to be very rich and consistently meaningful throughout, in all its tiniest details. It has at the same time a universal character: it is, in a sense, a miniature *satyr play of the word*, the drama of its material birth, or the drama of the body giving birth to the word. An extraordinary realism, a richness and fullness of acquired meaning, and a deep universalism are inherent in this magnificent sketch, as they are inherent in all the images of genuine folk comedy.

An objective analysis of the images in the travesty by Scarron would reveal the presence of the same elements. But Scarron's images are poorer, more simplified; they contain much that is accidental, literarily contrived. Schneegans only sees in them the lowering of the high, which had already fatigued the reader. He accounts for this lowering with formal psychological considerations: one has to lower one's eyes downward in order to rest from looking up.[15] But what in fact happens here is that the *Aeneid*'s images are decrowned by being transferred into the *material-bodily sphere*: the sphere of eating, drinking, sexual life, and the bodily manifestations associated with them. This sphere has a *positive signification. These are the nethers that give birth.* Therefore, the images in the *Aeneid* are not only decrowned but are also renewed. To repeat, all this is more abstract and superficially literary in Scarron.

Let us turn to Schneegans's third example—the Rabelaisian images. Let us analyze the first among them. Friar John asserts that the very shadow of an abbey spire is

[15] Schneegans (1894, 24).

fecund.[16] This image immediately introduces us into the logic of the grotesque. In no way is this the simple grotesque exaggeration of monastic "debauchery." In this image, the object transgresses its own qualitative boundaries, ceases to be itself. The boundary lines between the body and the world are being erased here; the body becomes mixed with the outside world and with things. It must be stressed that the spire (a tower) is the usual grotesque image of the phallus.(178)[17] Indeed, the entire context setting the ground for this image creates an atmosphere justifying this grotesque metamorphosis. The Rabelaisian text should be quoted in the original:

> C'est (dist le moyne) *bien rentré de picques*! Elle pourroit estre aussi layde que *Prosperpine*, elle aura, par Dieu, *la saccade* puisqu'il y a moynes autour, car un bon ouvrier mect indifferentement toutes pieces en œuvre. Que j'aye la verolle en cas que ne les trouviez engroissées à vostre retour, *car seulement l'ombre* du clochier d'une abbaye est feconde.(179) (book 1, chapter 45)

Friar John's speech is entirely filled with unofficial and lowering elements that set up the atmosphere for our grotesque image. First of all, we see an expression borrowed from the sphere of card games ("rentré de picques," in the sense of an unsuccessful play).[18] Then there is the image of the ugly Proserpine, queen of the underworld; this, of course, is not an allusion to ancient literature but, rather, the image of the "devils' mother" of the medieval diableries; moreover, this image was topographically tinged, since in Rabelais's novel the underworld is always linked with the bodily nethers. Next, we also have swearing ("par dieu") and an oath related to the bodily nethers ("may I be infected with syphilis"). Then we have two metaphors for the sexual act: one is

[16] Bk. 1, ch. 45.

[17] The quote in the footnote is from Lucian (1913, 67–68). The footnote was added to the manuscript in the 1949–1950 round of revisions, though it quotes (with minor inaccuracies) a translation of Lucian that Bakhtin had access to already when working on the 1940 manuscript (Lucian 1915–1920). One could speculate that inserting this reference to ancient literature that relates to a theme often associated with Freud was one way Bakhtin could fend off the accusation of Freudian sympathies being made against his dissertation.

[18] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:367), Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:416), and see note 107 to chapter 3.

(178) The interpretation of a tall tower as a phallus was well known to Rabelais and to his contemporaries from ancient sources. Here is an excerpt from Lucian (*The Syrian Goddess*): "In this entrance those *phalli* stand ... *thirty fathoms high*. Into one of these a man mounts twice every year, and he abides on the summit of the phallus for the space of seven days. The reason of this ascent is given as follows: The people believe that the man who is aloft holds converse with the gods, and prays for good fortune for the whole of Syria."

(179) Here is the quotation in translation: "That's incompatible, it holds no water, the cap won't fit.... Were your wife uglier than Proserpine, by God, she'd find herself jerkthumped as long as there was a monk within a thousand miles. Good carpenters use every kind of timber. The pox riddle me if you don't all find your wives pregnant on your return. The very shadow of an abbey spire is fecund!"

borrowed from the domain of horsemanship ("saccade"),[19] and the other is a proverb ("Good carpenters use every kind of timber"). In both cases there is a lowering and renewal in the plane of the material-bodily nethers of objects of a different order (horsemanship, craft); this, too, helps prepare the ground for our grotesque image.

All these elements of speech create a specific unfettered atmosphere. Most of them are directly linked to the material-bodily nethers; they make things bodily and lower them, mix the body with the world, thus setting the ground for the concluding *transformation of the spire into a phallus.*

Is this grotesque image a pure satire on monastic debauchery, as Schneegans claims?

The passage just analyzed is part of a fairly large episode that features pilgrims who were *swallowed* by Gargantua together with his salad, but who were then saved.[20] This episode is indeed directed pointedly against pilgrimage and against the belief in the miraculous power of the relics that cure diseases (in this case the plague). But this well-defined and particular satirical orientation far from exhausts the meaning of the whole episode and by no means determines all the images that constitute it. At its center we find the typical grotesque image of the *swallowing* of the pilgrims, followed by the no less typical image of *flooding them with urine*, and, finally, the travesty of psalms, which allegedly predicted all these misfortunes that the pilgrims faced. This travesty offers a lowering interpretation to some images in the psalms. All these themes and images have a broad universal significance, and it would be absurd to think that they have been mustered only in order to laugh at the pilgrims' parasitism and their crude belief in relics; that would be like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. The struggle against pilgrimages and crude superstition reflects the totally official tendencies of the episode. In his speech addressed to the pilgrims, Grandgousier openly and directly expresses it in the elevated official language of a wise state government.[21] Rabelais speaks directly here, in the capacity of an official advocate for royal positions, expressing the official current point of view of the state on the misuse of pilgrimage. What is rejected here is not faith but merely the pilgrims' crude superstition.[(180)22] This is *the official thought* of this episode, expressed openly. But the *unofficial, folk-festive and public-square language* of this episode's images says something else entirely. The mighty material-bodily elemental force of these images decrowns and renews the entire world of the medieval order and worldview, with its religious belief, saints, relics, monasteries, false asceticism, fear of death, eschatologism, and prophecies. In this

[19] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:367), Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:305).

[20] Bk. 1, ch. 38–45 (the story of the pilgrims is the focus of ch. 38 and 45 and is a secondary line in the plot in between).

[21] Bk. 1, ch. 45.

[22] Plattard (1930, 163–164) and cf. Lefranc et al. (1913–1915, 1:xxii–xxiv) on Rabelais as a "public writer on behalf of the royal court" ("publiciste royal")—a position with which Bakhtin goes on to polemicize in chapter 7.

[(180)] The criticism of this superstition is expressed in the spirit of the moderate evangelism, which seemed to find support with the royal authorities at the time when Rabelais was writing this episode.

world that is being swept away, the pilgrims are but a minor and pitiful detail, which can really be swallowed down unnoticed in salad and almost drowned in urine. The material-bodily elemental force here has a *positive* character. And it is precisely the material-bodily images that are exaggerated to unbelievable dimensions: be it the grandiose monastic phallus, as tall as a spire, or the torrents of Pantagruel's[23] urine and his immeasurably large, all-swallowing gullet.

This is the reason why the abbey spire, decrowned and renewed in the image of a giant phallus impregnating a woman with its shadow, is not in the least an exaggeration of monastic *debauchery.* It decrowns the entire monastery, the very soil on which it stands, the monastery's *false ascetic ideal, its abstract and sterile eternity.* The spire's shadow is the shadow of the phallus that brings about the rebirth of new life. Nothing whatsoever remains of the monastery; there remains only the living human being—the monk Friar John, glutton and drunkard, pitilessly sober and candid, mighty and heroically brave, full of inexhaustible energy and a thirst for the new.

We should also stress that like all similar images, the image of a spire that impregnates a woman is topographic: the spire that reaches *upward*, to heaven, is transformed into a *phallus* (*bodily nethers*); as a shadow, it *falls to the ground* (topographical *nethers*) and *impregnates* a woman (the *nethers* again).

The image of Panurge's walls is also set up by its context:

> "Do you know what Agesilaus said?" Pantagruel answered. "They asked him why the great city of Lacedæmon was not girded with walls. Pointing to the citizens, expert in military discipline, strong and so admirably equipped: 'These are the walls of the city!' he said. He meant that there is no wall but of *bones*, and that cities need no stouter or safer walls than the valor of their citizens." (book 2, chapter 15)[24]

Already here, in this allusion to classical antiquity, rendered in a lofty style, the grotesque act of *making walls bodily* is being prepared for. It is prepared for by a metaphor: *the strongest* walls are made of *warriors' bones.* The human body here becomes building material for walls; the boundary line between the body and the world is weakened (albeit on the high metaphoric plane). All this lays the ground for Panurge's project. Here it is:

> "I've observed that the pleasure-twats of women in this part of the world are much cheaper than stones. Therefore, the walls should be built of twats, symmetrically and according to the rules of architecture, the largest to go in front. Next, on a downward slope like the back of an ass, the medium-sized, and last of all, the least and smallest. These should all be made to

[23] In context, Bakhtin probably meant to write "Gargantua," not "Pantagruel" (though there are episodes featuring profuse urination by both).

[24] Translation modified (based on Urquhart).

> dovetail and interlace, diamond-shape, like the great tower of Bourges, with as many horny joy-dinguses, which now reside in claustral codpieces.
>
> "What devil could possibly overthrow these walls; what metal on earth could stand up as well against punishment? ... God help any one who touches them, by all the devils! What is more, no lightning could strike them. Why? Because they are consecrated." (book 2, chapter 15)

It is absolutely clear that the cheapness of Parisian women is merely a side theme and that even that theme itself involves no moral condemnation at all. As for the leading theme, this theme is *fecundity, as the mightiest and strongest force.* It would be incorrect to rationalize this image in the spirit, say, of the following statement: the citizens' fecundity and the increase of population are a city's strongest military defense. This thought is not strictly alien to the given image, but on the whole, such narrow rationalization of grotesque images is inadmissible.

The image of Panurge's walls is both broader and more complex, and above all, it is ambivalent. It also involves an element of topographic negation. Panurge's walls decrown and renew the fortified walls, as well as military valor, bullets, and even lightning, which is powerless here. Military might and strength are powerless against the material-bodily reproductive principle.

Elsewhere in the novel (book 3, chapter 8) there is a long argument by Panurge stating that the earliest and most important piece of military armor is *the codpiece protecting the genital organs.* "When a man's head was cut off only the victim perished; whereas, with the loss of ballocks, all human nature would perish," he says there, and adds that the genitals were the very stones with which Deucalion and Pyrrha restored humankind after the deluge. Here, once more, we find the same image of the bodily reproductive principle as the best kind of stone for building.

This argument developed by Panurge is interesting in yet another respect: the utopian element is clearly expressed in it. Panurge points out that, wishing to perpetuate all the species of the vegetable kingdom, nature armed the seeds and germs of plants admirably with sheaths, husks, shells, thorns, bark, and spikes, while man is born naked with his reproductive organs unprotected. This passage of Rabelais's was inspired by Pliny's similar reflections (at the beginning of book VII of his *Natural History*).[25] But Pliny, in the spirit of his gloomy worldview, comes to pessimistic conclusions on the weakness of humankind. Panurge's conclusions, by contrast, are deeply optimistic. From the fact that man is born naked and with unprotected genitals, he infers that man's calling is peace and a peaceful dominion over nature. It was only the "iron age"[26] that forced him to arm himself (and he started arming, according to Biblical legend, with a codpiece—that is, a fig leaf); but sooner or later man will return

[25] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:74).

[26] Interestingly, Bakhtin neglects to mention that the "iron age" in question is the iron age of Jupiter, which came after the initial golden age, the age of Saturn (see Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 5:76; indeed,

to his peaceful vocation and will fully disarm.(181)[27] Explicitly revealed here, albeit in a somewhat narrowed-down rational form, is what was implicitly contained in the image of the *unassailable bodily wall* decrowning any kind of military force.

A simple comparison with Panurge's reflections above suffices to realize how insignificant is the satirical theme of the cheapness of Parisian women within the entirety of the image of Panurge's walls. The stones Panurge proposes for building the city walls are the same stones with which Deucalion and Pyrrha re-erected the ruined edifice of humankind.

Such is the actual objective content of all the examples given by Schneegans. From the point of view of this objective content, the similarity between them appears more essential than their differences. There are differences, of course, but not where Schneegans is looking for them. Both the artificial theory that proposes the psychological mechanism of perception, on the one hand, and the narrow aesthetic norms of his time, on the other, hinder Schneegans from seeing the real essence of the phenomenon that he had undertaken to study—the grotesque.

Above all, the examples we have examined—the scene with the stutterer from the commedia dell'arte, Scarron's travesty of the *Aeneid*, and, finally, Rabelais's images—are, to a lesser or a greater extent, connected to the folk laughter culture of the Middle Ages and to *grotesque realism*. The very nature of these images' construction and especially *the way the body is conceived of* in them are the heritage of laughter-based folklore and grotesque realism. This *special conception of the body* is what most essentially binds together all the analyzed examples and makes them akin to one another. In all three cases we find the same mode of depicting bodily life, which differs sharply both from the "classical" and from the naturalist type of depicting the human body. This is what gives us the right to subsume all three phenomena (without, of course, ignoring their differences) under the common concept of the grotesque.

Grotesque images are grounded in *a special notion of the bodily whole and of the boundaries* of this whole. The boundary lines between the body and the world and between separate bodies in the grotesque are drawn entirely differently than in classical and naturalist images. We have already observed this when considering a number of Rabelaisian episodes. In this chapter we must broaden our observations, systematize them, and uncover the origins of Rabelais's grotesque conception of the body.

But let us touch on one more example cited by Schneegans: the caricatures of Napoleon III, based on the stark exaggeration of the emperor's nose. According to

Le Clerq edits this detail directly into the text of his English translation). This is a theme Bakhtin discussed earlier with reference to the Roman Saturnalia. Bakhtin directly links the idea of Saturn's golden age returning in the future to the utopian element in carnival imagery.

[27] The footnote is based on Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:76). See Erasmus (2001, 320) for Erasmus's text. Note that the future return of the peaceful state is not a claim we find in Rabelais's text, at least not explicitly.

(181) We find a similar theme in Erasmus (*Adagia* III, 10:1): he also begins by saying that man is born naked and draws the conclusion that man is begotten not for war but for friendship.

Schneegans, the grotesque starts where this exaggeration reaches fantastic dimensions and the human nose transitions into that of a beast. We shall not discuss these caricatures as such; these are all no more than superficial cartoons, lacking the character of the true grotesque. We are interested, however, in *the motif of the nose*, which is among the more widespread grotesque motifs both in world literature and in nearly every language (such expressions as "rub one's nose,"[28] "thumb one's nose at," and so on), as well as part of the universally human stock of invective and lowering gesture. Schneegans correctly points out the grotesque character of precisely the transition into the nose of a beast. Indeed, the mixture of human and animal traits is one of the most ancient sorts of grotesque. But Schneegans fails to grasp the very thing that the nose signifies in grotesque images. The *nose* in these images always stands in for the *phallus*. Laurent Joubert, the famous sixteenth-century physician, Rabelais's younger contemporary, whose theory of laughter we discussed earlier, wrote a book on popular superstitions in medicine.(182) There (book 5, chapter 4), he speaks of the belief, exceptionally widespread among the common people, that the size and potency of the reproductive organ can be inferred from the dimensions and form of the nose.[29] Friar John also expresses this belief in his monastery jargon.[30] Such is also the usual meaning of the nose in the literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, connected with the folk-festive system of images. As the most widely known example, we may cite Hans Sachs's famous Shrovetide play "Dance of the Noses" (*Nasentanz*).[31]

Of all the features of the human *face*, a substantial role in the grotesque image of the body is played only by the *mouth* and the *nose*, the latter, moreover, as a stand-in for the phallus. The forms of the head, the ears, and again, the nose acquire a grotesque character only when they morph into *animal forms* or *the forms of inanimate objects*. The eyes, by contrast, play no role at all in the grotesque image of the face. The eyes express the purely *individual* and, so to speak, self-contained *inner* life of the human being, which is inessential to the grotesque. The grotesque has to do solely with *bulging eyes* (for instance, in the grotesque scene we analyzed featuring the stutterer and Harlequin), as it is interested in anything that *protrudes, bursts out or sticks out*

[28] The Russian here is *ostavit' s nosom* (literally: leave one with one's *nos*), which roughly means "leave one high and dry." However, Bakhtin appears to get the etymology wrong. The Russian word *nos* in this instance is not the one that means "nose" but an archaic homonym, meaning "an offering" (referring to a dowry or to a bribe offered to an official). The whole expression would literally translate to "leave one with one's offering"—that is, refuse the marriage offer or refuse to accept the bribe and therefore refuse the petitioner's request.

[29] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:344). The citation of Joubert's book in the footnote comes from Sainéan (1930, 220; the citation appears in many sources, but the exact form of the citation matches the one found here).

[30] Bk. 1, ch. 40: "*ad formam nasi cognoscitur ... ad te levavi*" (see discussion in chapter 1).

[31] The full text of Sachs's *Der Nasentanz* is reproduced in Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 160–169).

(182) Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs populaires et propos vulgaires touchant la médecine et le régime de santé*, Bordeaux, 1579.

from the body, anything that seeks to go out beyond the body's boundaries. In the grotesque, a special significance is accorded to all manner of *outgrowths and offshoots*, to all that extends the body and links it to other bodies, and to the extra-bodily world. In addition, the bulging eyes are of interest to the grotesque because they are evidence of *a purely bodily tension*. But the most important part of the face for the grotesque is the *mouth*. It dominates. The grotesque face is essentially reducible to the *gaping mouth*; everything else is just *a frame around this mouth*, around this *gaping and devouring bodily abyss*.

The grotesque body, as we have emphasized multiple times, is *a body in the act of becoming*. It is *never fully formed, never completed*: it is *always being built, created, and itself builds and creates another body*. Moreover, this body *devours the world and is itself being devoured by the world* (let us recall the grotesque image of the body in the episode of Gargantua's birth and the feast of cattle slaughter).[32] This is why the most essential role in the grotesque belongs to those of its parts, those *places*, where it *outgrows itself, goes beyond its own boundaries, conceives a new* (second) *body*: *the belly and the phallus*. These two play the leading role in the grotesque image of the body; it is precisely these parts that are subject to preeminent *positive exaggeration*, to hyperbole; they can even *be detached from the body*, lead an *independent* life, for they eclipse the rest of the body as something secondary (the *nose* can also, to some extent, detach itself from the body.[33]) Next to the abdomen and the genital organs in its significance within the grotesque body is the *mouth*, into which enters the devoured world, followed by the *buttocks*. After all, all these *protuberances and orifices* share the same trait: it is precisely in them that *the boundaries between two bodies and between the body and the world are being overcome*, where their mutual exchange and mutual orientation take place. This is also why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, *the acts of the bodily drama*—eating, drinking, defecation (and other excretions: sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, growth, old age, diseases, death, tearing apart, dismemberment, devourment by another body—*all these take place on the boundary lines between the body and the world, or on the boundary lines between the old and new body*. In all these events of the bodily drama *the beginning and end of life are inseparably interwoven with one another*.

Thus, the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the rounded off, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and only registers its protuberances—sprouts, buds—and orifices—that is, only that which leads beyond the body's boundaries and that which leads into the body's *depths*.(183) Mountains and abysses—such is the relief map of the grotesque body; or, speaking in architectural terms, towers and underground vaults.

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[32] Bk. 1, ch. 4–7.

[33] An apparent allusion to Gogol's famous short story, "The Nose."

(183) Then again, this grotesque logic is also extended to images of nature and to images of things, in which, similarly, depths (holes) and protuberances are registered.

Grotesque images may, of course, also feature other members, organs, and parts of the body (especially in images of the dismembered body), but they play merely the role of extras in the grotesque drama of the body; the emphasis never falls on them (unless they stand in for one of the leading body organs).

Taken to its limit, the grotesque image, in essence, does not contain the individual body at all; after all, this image consists of plunge holes and protuberances, which are already another, newly conceived body; it is a thoroughfare for eternally renewed life, an inexhaustible vessel of death and conception.

As we have said, the grotesque ignores that impenetrable surface, which rounds off and demarcates the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. Consequently, the grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inward countenance of the body: blood, bowels, the heart, and other internal organs. The outer and inner countenance are often mixed together in a single image.

We have already sufficiently noted that grotesque images construct, in essence, a double-bodied body. In the endless chain of bodily life, they register the parts *where one link enters the other, where the life of one body is born out of the death of another, old one.*

Finally, let us point out that the grotesque body is cosmic and universal: emphasized in it are the elements common to the entire cosmos—earth, water, fire, air; it is directly linked to the sun and to the stars; it contains the signs of the zodiac; it reflects within itself the cosmic hierarchy; this body can blend with various natural phenomena—mountains, rivers, seas, islands, and continents; it can fill the entire world with itself.[34]

The grotesque mode of depicting the body and bodily life prevailed in art and literature for thousands of years. *In terms of how widespread it actually is, it prevails even to this day*: grotesque forms of the body not only predominate in the art of non-European peoples, but also in *European folklore* (especially laughter-based folklore). Moreover, *grotesque images of the body predominate in the extra-official speech life of peoples*, especially where the bodily images have to do with *invective and laughter*; generally speaking, *the subject matter of invective and laughter*, as we noted above, is almost exclusively a *bodily grotesque subject matter*; the body that appears in all the expressions of unofficial and familiar speech *is the body that fecundates and is fecundated, that gives birth and is born, devours and is devoured, drinks, defecates, is sick and dying.* In all languages there is a huge number of expressions connected to such body parts as *the genital organs, the buttocks, the stomach, the mouth, and*

[34] The idea of the cosmic body is central to Bakhtin's understanding of carnival images, as well as to his philosophical motivation for engaging with these images. A major source for Bakhtin in this respect was Cassirer (1963; and see Poole 1998)—a book that is also the main source for a longer discussion later in this chapter. Bakhtin, one should stress, integrates the notion of the cosmic body into his own philosophy in a way that significantly differs from Cassirer's. In addition, references to the human body as a microcosm can also be found in other relevant sources (e.g., Lote 1938, 168; Plattard 1930, 100–102), as well as in Rabelais's text itself, e.g., in bk. 2, ch. 8 and in bk. 3, ch. 4 (cited in Plattard 1930, 101–102, 186).

the nose, while at the same time exceptionally few such expressions exist that involve other parts of the body, such as arms, legs, face, eyes, and so on. And even these comparatively few expressions in which these nongrotesque body parts are featured are, in the vast majority of cases, of a narrowed-down practical character: they have to do with one's orientation in immediately proximate space, with determinations of distance or dimensions, with counting, and they have no broader symbolic extension or metaphoric force of any sort, nor are they expressive to any significant extent (which is why they do not participate in invective and laughter).

Especially where people laugh and curse as part of familiar social intercourse, their speech is interspersed with images of the grotesque body—a body that copulates, defecates, overeats; their speech is flooded with reproductive organs, abdomens, feces, urine, diseases, noses, and mouths, a body dismembered into bits. But even where the levees of speech norms are in operation, *noses, mouths, and abdomens* nevertheless manage to break through from that flood into even the most formal speech, especially when this speech is expressive in character—merry or invective. The universally human stock of *familiar and invective gesture* is also based on a clearly pronounced grotesque image of the body.

Within this ocean of grotesque body images, immeasurable in space and time, filling all languages, all literatures, and the system of gestures, the bodily canon of art, literature, and decorous speech of modern times seems like a tiny, limited islet. This canon never prevailed in the literature of antiquity. In the *official* literature of European peoples it has become fully dominant, in essence, only in the last four centuries.

We shall also offer a brief characterization of the new, currently prevailing canon, modeled not so much on the visual arts as on literature. We shall construct this characterization of the new canon against the backdrop of the grotesque conception, continuously registering their differences.

Typical of the new bodily canon—despite all its significant historical and genre variations—is *an entirely fully formed, completed, strictly demarcated, rounded-off body, shown from the outside, unmixed with anything else and individually expressive.* All that bursts out, sticks out of the body, all manner of marked protuberances, sprouts and branchings—that is, everything in which the body transgresses its boundaries and conceives a new body—is cut off, removed, closed down, or moderated. All orifices leading into the depths of the body are also closed. The basis of the image is *the individual and strictly demarcated mass of the body, its massive and impenetrable façade. The impenetrable surface, the body's flatland*, acquires a leading significance as the boundary of a rounded-off individuality that does not blend with other bodies and with the world. All the signs that this body is incomplete, not fully formed, are meticulously removed, as are all the manifestations of its intrabodily life. The norms of official and formal speech, determined by this canon, ban anything that has to do with fecundation, pregnancy, childbirth, and so on—that is, precisely everything that has to do with the body's incompleteness, with its not being fully formed, and with its

purely intrabodily life. In this respect, an exceptionally sharp boundary line is drawn between familiar and official, "decorous" speech.

In this respect, the fifteenth century in France was an age of comparatively great freedom in matters of speech. In the sixteenth century, however, speech norms become significantly more strict, and the boundary lines between familiar and official speech become fairly sharp. This process especially intensified toward the end of the century, when the canon of speech decorum that was to prevail in the seventeenth century was formed in full.[35] Montaigne protested against the marked intensification of speech norms and prohibitions in the late sixteenth century (*Essays*, book 3, chapter 5):

> What has rendered the act of generation, an act so natural, so necessary, and so just, a thing not to be spoken of without blushing, and to be excluded from all serious and regular discourse? We boldly pronounce *kill, rob, betray*, but the other we dare only to mutter betwixt the teeth.[36]

Such parts of the body as the genital organs, the buttocks, the stomach, nose, and mouth cease to play a leading role in the new canon. Moreover, instead of their kindred sense, they acquire an exclusively *expressive* sense—that is, they express merely the individual life of a given singular and demarcated body. The *abdomen, mouth, and nose*, of course, always remain in the image of the body, they cannot be hidden, but in an individual, completed body they either fulfill, as we said, a purely *expressive* function (in essence, only the mouth) or a *characterological* or individuating function. Any symbolically extended signification for these organs in an individual body is, of course, out of the question. If they are not given a characterological or an expressive meaning, they are mentioned only on the narrowly practical level—that is, solely in explanatory remarks.[37] Generally speaking, everything in the literary image of the body that has no characterological and expressive signification, turns into a simple bodily remark to word and action.

In the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking, and defecation have radically changed their signification: they moved onto the plane of private everyday life and individual psychology, where their signification becomes narrow and specific, torn away from any direct connection to the life of society and to the cosmic whole. In this new sense they can no longer carry out the philosophical functions they once used to have.

In the new bodily canon, the leading role shifts to the individually characterological and expressive parts of the body: to the head, face, eyes, lips, to the muscular system, to the individual position that the body occupies in the external world. Brought to the fore are the purposeful positions and movements of *a fully formed body in a likewise*

[35] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:293).

[36] Montaigne (1877, 3:81; Bakhtin qutoes from Sainéan 1922–1923, 2:293).

[37] The Russian word *remarki* ("remarks"), which Bakhtin uses here and in the following sentence, also has the more specific sense of "stage directions" in a play, which Bakhtin may also have had in mind.

fully formed outside world, in which the boundary lines between body and world are not weakened whatsoever.

The body of the new canon is a *single* body; no signs of double-bodiedness remain in it: it is self-sufficient and speaks only for itself; all that happens to it concerns it alone—that is, only this individual and rounded-off body. Therefore, all the events that happen to it acquire an *unequivocal meaning*: death here is only death, it never coincides with birth; old age is torn away from youth; blows merely afflict the given body and do not assist the birth of anything. All actions and events are here made meaningful on the level of a single individual life: they are enclosed within the limits of the individual birth and death of the same body; these limits are an absolute beginning and an absolute end that can never meet within the limits of one and the same body.

In the grotesque body, on the contrary, death brings nothing essential to an end, for death does not concern the kindred body, which it, conversely, renews in new generations. The events of the grotesque sphere always unfold on the boundary of one body with another and, as it were, at the point where two bodies intersect. One body contributes its death, the other its birth, but they are (at the limit) blended in a single double-bodied image.

The body of the new canon retained a faint glimmer of double-bodiedness in only one of its motifs: that of breastfeeding.[184] But the images of the body—both of the breastfeeding mother and of the child—are strictly individualized and completed; the boundary lines between them are unshakable. This is already a completely new level of the artistic perception of how bodies interact.

Finally, hyperbolization is entirely alien to the new bodily canon. The image of the individual body offers no soil from which it might emerge. Here, all that is permitted is a marked accentuation of the purely expressive or characterological order. The severance of organs from the bodily whole and their independent existence is, of course, no longer possible either.

Such are the basic rough outlines of the modern bodily canon, as they predominantly manifest themselves in literature and in speech norms.[185]

Rabelais's novel is the culmination of the grotesque conception of the body, which he inherited from folk laughter culture, from grotesque realism, and from the primordial element of familiar speech. In all the episodes and separate images of the novel that we have analyzed, we saw only the grotesque body. A mighty torrent of the grotesque

[184] Let us recall Goethe's above-quoted comments from his conversations with Eckermann concerning Correggio's painting *Weaning* and the image of a cow feeding a calf (Myron's *Heifer*). Goethe is attracted in these images precisely by the double-bodiedness, which was retained in them to an attenuated degree.

[185] Similar classical notions of the body form the basis of the new canon of behavior in public. Good upbringing demands, among other things: not to place the elbows on the table, to walk without protruding the shoulder blades or swinging the hips, to hold the abdomen tight, to eat without loud chewing, not to snort, not to pant, to keep the mouth shut, and so forth; in other words, to shut in, mark off the body, and to smooth over its protrusions. It is interesting to trace the struggle between the grotesque and classical conception of the body through the history of dress and fashion. An even more interesting theme is the struggle of these conceptions in the history of dance.

bodily element flows through the entire novel: the dismembered body, the standalone grotesque organs (as in Panurge's walls), the bowels and entrails, the gaping mouths, the devouring, the swallowing, eating and drinking, defecations, urine and feces, deaths, childbirths, infanthood and old age, and so on. The bodies are mixed with each other, with things (as in the image of Quarêmeprenant),[38] and with the world. A tendency toward double-bodiedness passes through it all. Everywhere, the kindred and cosmic aspect of the body is emphasized.

The tendency toward double-bodiedness is present, sometimes more evidently and sometimes less so, in all the episodes we have examined. Let us offer one more example where this tendency is expressed more externally and bluntly:

> The emblem in his [Gargantua's] hat? Against a base of gold weighing over forty pounds was an enamel figure very much in keeping. It portrayed a man's body with two heads facing one another, four arms, four feet, a pair of arses and a brace of sexual organs, male and female. Such, according to Plato's *Symposium*, was human nature in its mystical origins. (book 1, chapter 8)

It should be noted that the "androgyne" motif, thus understood, was exceptionally popular in Rabelais's time.[39] In the sphere of the visual arts, I should mention, as a parallel phenomenon, Leonardo da Vinci's drawing *Coitus*, depicting this act in its intrabodily aspect.[40]

Rabelais not only depicts the grotesque image of the body in all its essential aspects but also offers a kin-centered theory of the body. Panurge's argument quoted previously is exceptionally telling in this respect. In another passage (book 3, chapter 26) he says:

> Therefore I do promise that henceforth no malefactor would be put to death by law, without friggling like a pelican (as lustily as belly can), until his spermatic vessels were drained of the few drops required to trace a Greek ϒ, the letter sacred to Priapus. After all, here was a wealth too rich to waste. Your criminal, begetting a male, would die content, forfeiting his life, he would have left the world another.[41]

[38] Bk. 4, ch. 29–32.

[39] According to Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:90), this passage in Plato was well known in Platonist circles at Rabelais's time. Bakhtin makes a stronger claim here, which might reflect an unknown additional source.

[40] The drawing, originally included in one of Leonardo Da Vinci's notebooks, depicts a man and a partially sketched woman in the act of copulation, with internal organs showing, and with the man's penis inside the woman's body. As noted above (see note 111 to the introduction), Bakhtin took interest in the work of Leonardo Da Vinci since early in his career and could possibly have relied on direct familiarity with Leonardo's notebooks in making this reference. If he instead relied on an unidentified secondary source, this was possibly a French text, as the 1940 manuscript refers to the drawing as "Le Coïtu."

[41] Translation modified (based on Urquhart and Motteux). Both Russian translations Bakhtin is

In Panurge's famous discussion about debtors and creditors, describing an ideal utopian world where everybody makes and themselves takes loans, Panurge also develops the theory of the kindred body:

> The interdependent universe was so beautifully organized that, the problem of nutrition perfected, it went on to lend to those unborn—a loan, by means of which it sought to perpetuate and multiply itself in its own image: children.
>
> To this end, each particular elects and pares off the most precious elements of its food to dispatch them downward into vessels and receptacles most suitably contrived by nature. These elements flow down long circuits and flexuosities into the genitories; receive a competent form; find chambers designed, in both male and female, for the preservation and perpetuation of humankind. And all of it is done by loans and debts, a fact proved by the phrase "the obligations of wedlock." (book 3, chapter 4)

Also in the "Third Book," there is a discussion of "Why newly married men were exempted from going to war."[42] The same theme of the kindred body is developed here. This is generally one of the leading themes of all theoretical discussions in the "Third Book."

We shall see in the next chapter that the same theme of the kindred body, but now in a *historical* aspect, as the theme of the immortality and growth of human culture, is being developed in Gargantua's famous letter to Pantagruel.[43] The theme of the relative immortality[44] of one's progeny is presented here as inseparably linked with the theme of *humanity's historic progress.* Humankind is not merely renewed with each new generation, but each time, it *rises to a new, higher, stage of historical development.* This theme, as we shall see, can also be heard in the praise of "Pantagruelion."[45]

Thus, *in Rabelais's book, the theme of the kindred body blends with the theme of the people's historical immortality and with the living feeling of this immortality.* We have seen that this *living feeling by the people of its own collective historical immortality forms the very nucleus of the entire system of folk-festive images.* The grotesque conception of the body is thus an inseparable component of this system. This is why in Rabelais's images, too, the grotesque body is interwoven not only with cosmic but also with social-utopian and historical themes and, above all, with the theme of the succession of epochs and the historical renewal of culture.

All the episodes and images of the novel that we analyzed in the preceding chapters by and large featured *the bodily nethers* in the narrow sense. But a leading role in

quoting (in the book as well as in the 1940 manuscript) do not mention the child's gender.

[42] Bk. 3, ch. 6.

[43] Bk. 2, ch. 8.

[44] On "relative immortality" see Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xliv–xlv).

[45] Bk. 3, ch. 49–52.

grotesque images is also played, as we have said, by *the gaping mouth*. It is, of course, also connected to the topographical bodily nethers: it is *the open gate leading into the nethers, into the bodily underworld*. Connected with the gaping mouth is the image of *devouring and swallowing*—that most ancient ambivalent *image of death and annihilation*.[46] At the same time, a number of feasting images are also linked to the gaping mouth (gullet and teeth).

The gaping mouth (gullet and teeth) *is one of the central nodal images of the folk-festive system*. It is no wonder that *the stark exaggeration of the mouth is a fundamental traditional device for shaping a comical countenance*: comic masks, various carnival "merry bogeymen" (such as "Maschecroûte" of the Lyon carnival), devils in diableries, and Lucifer himself.[47]

Quite understandably, the gaping mouth, the gullet, the teeth, the act of devouring and swallowing have an essential significance in the Rabelaisian system of images.

The gaping mouth plays an especially important, indeed a leading, role in the chronologically first book of the novel, "Pantagruel." One may presume that the hero of this book is precisely the gaping human mouth.

Neither Pantagruel's name nor the nucleus of his image was created by Rabelais.[48] The name itself existed before him both in literature, as the name of a devil in diableries, and in language as a common noun referring to an illness of the throat, a loss of voice caused by excessive drinking (a drunkards' disease). Thus, the common noun (the name of the disease) is connected to the mouth, to the throat, to booze, and to disease—in other words, to the entire characteristic grotesque complex. Pantagruel's image in diableries is connected to a similar complex, but one that is broader and more cosmic.

We already noted that as regards their images, the diableries, which were part of the mystery play, belonged to the folk-festive public-square forms. And images of the body in them had a markedly expressed grotesque nature. It is in this bodily-grotesque atmosphere of the diablerie that the figure of Pantagruel first appears on the scene.

We first encounter this character in a mystery play from the second half of the fifteenth century, *The Acts of the Apostles*, by Simon Gréban. In the diablerie of this play, Proserpine—"mother of the devils"—introduces four devilkins ("petits dyables") to Lucifer. Each of them embodies one of the four elements—earth, water, air, and fire. Introducing himself to Lucifer, each devilkin depicts his own activity within the corresponding element. A broad cosmic picture of the life of the elements thus unfolds. It is one of these four devilkins who bears the name Pantagruel.[49] He embodies *the*

[46] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 63–64).

[47] On Maschecroûte, already mentioned above, see Plattard (1930, 138). On Lucifer and the devils, see the discussion that follows in this section. This may also be an allusion to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where Lucifer is depicted as endlessly chewing Judas, Brutus, and Cassius.

[48] The following discussion of the origins of Pantagruel as a mystery-play character and the name of an illness is based on Plattard (1930, 122–126), Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xiv–xxiv), and Driesen (1904, 152–154).

[49] Spelled "Panthagruel" in the French sources Bakhtin used.

element of water. "Lighter than a bird of prey I traverse the regions of the seas," he says of himself.[50] Apparently, it is here that he absorbs *sea salt* and therefore gains a special connection *to salt* and to *arousing thirst*. In the same mystery play Lucifer says of Pantagruel that he "at night, awaiting other tasks, comes to *pour salt in drunkards' mouths*."[51]

The devil Pantagruel also appears in the same role in another mystery play, namely *The Mystery of Saint Louis*. Here, he himself delivers a monologue, relating in detail that he spent the night among some young people who had been feasting all evening: "I have poured salt into their mouths, gently, without waking them up, But by my faith when they awoke they were one half more thirsty than before!"[52]

From this we see that the image of Pantagruel as a mystery-play devil is linked on one hand with *the cosmic elements (the element of water and sea salt)* and on the other hand with *the grotesque image of the body (gaping mouth, thirst, drunkenness)* and, finally, with the purely *carnivalesque gesture of pouring salt into a gaping mouth*. All these elements, forming the basis of the image of Pantagruel, are deeply akin to one another. This traditional nucleus of the image is also fully retained by Rabelais.

Of special note is the fact that "Pantagruel" was conceived and written by Rabelais during the unprecedented heat wave and drought of 1532. People actually walked about with their mouths gaping wide open. Abel Lefranc is correct in surmising that the devilkin Pantagruel's name and his treacherous role in causing thirst were often mentioned in Rabelais's company, provoking many *jokes* or *curses*. The heat and drought made this image especially popular. It is quite possible that this was one of the reasons Rabelais made use of this image in his novel.[53]

The book's first chapter immediately introduces the grotesque image of the body with all its characteristic traits. It tells of the origin of the race of giants to which Pantagruel belonged. After the killing of Abel, the earth, saturated with blood, became exceptionally fertile. Here is the beginning (the second paragraph)[54] of this first chapter:

> You must therefore remember that I speak of the beginning of the world, of long ages since, of more than forty times forty nights ago, to reckon as the Druids did.
>
> A little while after Cain slew his brother Abel, the earth, imbued with the blood of the just, was one year extremely fertile in all fruits. Medlars were

[50] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xv).

[51] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xvii).

[52] Quoted in both Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xvii) and Driesen (1904, 152–153). Bakhtin follows Driesen in naming the quoted play "The Mystery of St. Louis," rather than "The Life of St. Louis," as in his French sources.

[53] See Plattard (1930, 123) and Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xxv–xxvii).

[54] So in the original French text. Le Clercq's English translation includes the beginning of this quote in the first paragraph.

> particularly plentiful and large, just three to the bushel. So that year was recorded in the memory of men as the year of the great medlars. (book 2, chapter 1)

Such is the first *bodily theme* of this chapter. Its *grotesquely carnivalesque* character is obvious. *The first death* (according to the biblical narrative, Abel's death was the *first* death on earth) *renewed the earth's fertility, fecundated it.* Here, we have the already-familiar *combination of killing and birth, but in its cosmic aspect of the earth's fertility.* Death, the dead body, blood as a seed buried in the earth that rises out of the earth as new life—this is one of the oldest and most widespread themes. Another variant of this theme is this: *death inseminates Mother Earth and compels her, again, to give birth.* This variant is often adorned with erotic images (of course not in the narrow, specific sense of this word). Rabelais speaks elsewhere (book 3, chapter 48) of the "sweet, much-desired embrace of great and kindly Mother Earth, which we call burial." *The image of burial* as the last *embrace* of Mother Earth is apparently inspired by Pliny, who develops in some detail the theme of the earth's motherhood and of death and burial as a return to her womb (*Natural History*, II, 63).[55] However, Rabelais is inclined to perceive this ancient image of death-renewal, in all its variations and nuances, not in the high style of the mysteries of antiquity but in a carnivalesque, folk-festive spirit, as a *merry and sober* confidence in *the relative historical immortality*[56] *of the people* and of oneself in the people.

Thus, *the theme of death-renewal-fertility was Rabelais's first theme, which opened his immortal novel.*[57] *Let us stress this fact.

The earth became especially fertile with medlars ("en mesles"). But people who ate these medlars began to develop abnormally: one part of the body would grow to monstrous dimensions. And so Rabelais unfolds a number of typically grotesque images of separate, monstrously exaggerated body parts that entirely eclipse the rest of the human being. In essence, this is a picture of a dismembered body, but these separate body parts are depicted as enormous in size. Depicted first are people with *monstrous abdomens* (a typical grotesque exaggeration); to this *merry potbellied race* belong Saint Pansart and Mardi Gras. Saint Pansart (i.e., St. Potbelly) is a facetious name for a saint, usually associated with carnival.[58] It is typical that carnival itself is said to

[55] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:336).

[56] Again, see Lefranc et al (1913–1955, 3:xliv–xlv).

[57] There is, potentially, some subtext to Bakhtin's use of the adjective "immortal" to refer to Rabelais's novel. In working notes from the mid-1940s, titled "On the Stylistics of the Novel," Bakhtin writes, "The novel is the only genre in the process of becoming. It allows one to glance into the laboratory of artistic creation, but not of the individual, superficially conscious and technical creation, but rather into the major laboratory of genre creation (which gives meaning to the individual creation and governs it, without reaching their [sic!] abstract and superficial practical consciousness). *There are almost no immortal novels (without caveats—only Rabelais, with caveats—Cervantes and Dostoevsky).*" (Bakhtin 1996c, 139 italics added).

[58] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:16). Le Clercq's translation replaces St. Pansart with two saints: St.

belong to the race of those with big paunches.[59] Next, Rabelais depicts enormously large *humps*, monstrous *noses*, exceptionally long *legs*, gigantic *ears*. Depicted in detail are those who grew an incredibly long *phallus* (they can wind it six times around their waists like girdles), as well as those whose ballocks have grown enormously. As a result, we have before us an image of an enormous grotesque body and at the same time a whole array of carnival figures (after all, such figures are usually shaped based on the same grotesque motifs).

Directly before this gallery of grotesque body parts, Rabelais depicts *cosmic* perturbations in the skies, which also have a carnivalesque nature: thus, the star Spica moved from the constellation of Virgo to the constellation of Libra. But Rabelais immediately intertwines these cosmic images too with the bodily grotesque: these stellar perturbations were so difficult to understand that "astrologians cannot set their teeth in them; and indeed their teeth had been pretty long if they could have reached thither."[60] The grotesque image of *teeth so long that they could reach the stars* was born out of the realization of a metaphor: to "set one's teeth" in a difficult astrological problem.

Rabelais then goes on to offer a lengthy enumeration of the giants who were Pantagruel's ancestors. In it are named many biblical, ancient, medieval, and fictional giants. Rabelais was well familiar with an enormous body of materials on the figures of giants and of legends about them (although giants from ancient sources had already been collated by the erudite Ravisius Textor, whose book Rabelais used).[61] Images of giants and legends about them are closely related to the grotesque conception of the body. We have already pointed out the immense role that giants played in satyr plays in antiquity (which were precisely *dramas of the body*).[62] Most local legends about giants connect natural phenomena and features of the local landscape (mountains, rivers, rocks, and islands) with the body of the giant and with its separate organs.[63] The giant's body is, therefore, not marked off from the world, from natural phenomena, from the geographical landscape. We have also already pointed out that giants were an indispensable part of the folk-festive carnival images repertoire.[64]

Such is the content of the first chapter. Grotesque images of the body are interwoven here with cosmic phenomena. The entire sequence of the novel's images is inaugurated *with the theme of death-renewal-fertility.*

The same theme also opens the second chapter:

Paunchard and St. Fatgulch.

[59] "Carnival itself" refers to the other name on the list—Mardi Gras.

[60] Bk. 2, ch. 1 (Urquhart).

[61] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:21–23). Textor is also mentioned multiple times in Plattard (1910).

[62] Referring to the footnote on p. 228, chapter 3.

[63] See Plattard (1930, 126), as well as the sources specifically on Gargantua (Sainéan 1922–1923, 1:250–257; Sébillot 1883), which Bakhtin comes back to in the next section of this chapter.

[64] The relatively more extensive treatment of this theme appears not earlier in the book but in the next section of this chapter, where the main source is Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 313–314).

> At the age of four hundred fourscore and fourty-four years, Gargantua begat his son Pantagruel upon his wife named Badebec, daughter to the king of the dimly-seen Amaurotes in Utopia. She died in the throes of childbirth. Alas! Pantagruel was so extraordinarily large and heavy that he could not have possibly come to light without suffocating his mother.

This is the theme, already familiar to us from the Roman carnival,[65] of combining murder and childbirth. Here, the murder is committed by the newborn himself, by the very act of his birth.

Birth and death—the yawning *maw of the earth and of the mother's belly.* Subsequently, the *gaping mouth* of people and of animals appears on the scene.

We have a depiction of the terrible drought at the time of Pantagruel's birth:

> beasts were found dead in the fields, *their mouths agape.*
>
> As for the men, their state was very piteous. You should have seen them *with their tongues dangling* like a hound's after a run of six hours. Not a few threw themselves into the *wells.* Others entered within *a cow's belly* to be in the shade.... It was hard enough, God knows, to save the holy water in the churches ... scores of poor *thirsty* fellows followed the priest who distributed it, *their jaws yawning* for one tiny driblet.... Ah! thrice happy that year the man who had a cool, well-plenished wine *cellar underground.*[66]

It should be pointed out that as images, the "well," the "cow's belly," and the "cellar" are equivalent to the "gaping mouth." After all, the mouth corresponds in grotesque topography to the belly and to the uterus; thus, alongside the erotic image of the "trou," that is, the "hole," the entrance to the underworld is depicted as the gaping mouth of Satan (the "jaws of hell").[67] The well is commonly known to be a folklore image of the belly that gives birth; the cellar is similar in character, although the aspect of death and devouring is stronger in it.[68] Thus, already at this stage, the earth and its orifices acquire an additional bodily-grotesque signification. This prepares the ground for the subsequent *incorporation of the earth and the sea into the bodily order.*

Rabelais then mentions the ancient myth of Phaeton, who, driving the sun's chariot, came too near to earth and almost burned it down; on that occasion, *the earth sweated so much that the seas became salty* (according to Plutarch, this is how Empedocles

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[65] Goethe (1982, 460–461).

[66] Bk. 2, ch. 2, italics added by Bakhtin, translation modified (based on Urquhart).

[67] This sentence integrates information found elsewhere in the book (mostly in chapter 6). There are several sources mentioning holes as entrances to the underworld (Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:28; Sainéan 1922–1923, 2:332; Lote 1938, 419). On Satan's maw and the "Jaws of hell" on stage, see Driesen (1904, 70–79).

[68] On the well see Freidenberg (1997b, 199). There is no clear external source on the cellar, but note the transparent etymological connection between the Russian word for cellar used here (*pogreb*)

explained why sea water is salty).[69] Rabelais transfers these grotesque-bodily notions from the high mythical plane to the merry plane of folk-festive lowerings:

> Earth at that time was so excessively heated that it broke into an enormous sweat which ran over the sea, making the latter salty, since all sweat is salt. If you do not admit this last statement, then taste of your own sweat. Or savor the perspiration of your syphilis-stricken friends when they are put in sweat-boxes for treatment. It is all one to me.[70]

The entire complex of images in this brief passage is extremely characteristic: it is *cosmic* (as it is the earth that sweats here, and the seas that are filled with its sweat); the typically grotesque *image of sweating* (sweating is analogous to other excretions; sweat is like urine) plays a leading role in it; furthermore, it contains *the image of a disease*—namely, syphilis, which is a "merry" disease and is connected to the *bodily nethers*; it, finally, connects the image of sweat to *eating* (we are encouraged to taste the sweat); all this is a weakened degree of *scatophagy*, characteristic of medical grotesque (already in Aristophanes).[71] This passage also implicitly contains the traditional nucleus of the image of the devilkin Pantagruel, related to the natural element of the sea and to the arousal of thirst. At the same time, the hero of this passage is *the earth*: in the first chapter the earth, nursed by the blood of Abel, was *fertile* and *gave birth*; here, in the second chapter, it *sweats* and *thirsts*.

Rabelais then goes on to offer a bold parodic travesty of a procession of the Cross and a miracle. During a litany organized by the Church, the faithful, who were beseeching God for rain, suddenly saw large drops of *sweat* emerging from under the ground as if from a person sweating copiously. The people thought it was dew sent by God in answer to their prayers. But they were mistaken, for when the procession of the Cross began,[72] and each sought to quench their thirst with this dew, it turned out to be pickle, and it was saltier and worse than sea water. Thus, the miracle deceived the righteous hopes of the faithful. Here, once more, the material-bodily element appears in its decrowning role.

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and the Russian word for burial (*pogrebenie*).

[69] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:32).

[70] Bk. 2, ch. 2 (translation modified).

[71] See Aristophanes's play *Wealth* (or *Plutus*), line 706, where Asclepios, the god of medicine, is himself described as a shit-eater. Bakhtin had access to a Russian translation of Aristophanes's comedies (Aristophanes 1934; and see Popova 2010a, 560 for direct evidence that Bakhtin owned a copy of the book), published by Adrian Piotrovsky—and old-time friend of the Bakhtin brothers (see Bakhtin and Duvakin 2019, 61).

[72] In Rabelais's text (bk. 2, ch. 2, as before), the drinking begins when the procession ends, not when it begins. The mistake here seems to originate in an editing error: in the 1940 manuscript, this part of the text is part of a direct quotation, made from the old Pyast translation. For the 1965 text, which used the newer Lyubimov translation for most quotes, this quote was mechanically integrated into the main text instead, resulting in this minor error.

It was on that very day and hour that Pantagruel was born. Hence, he was named "Pantagruel," which, according to Rabelais's burlesque etymology, means "All-Athirst."

The hero's birth itself occurs in the same grotesque setting: out of the *wide-open maternal womb* there first emerges a whole caravan loaded with *salted*, thirst-arousing *snacks*, and only then does Pantagruel himself appear, "hairy as a bear."[73]

The third chapter develops *the ambivalent death-birth theme*: Gargantua does not know whether to weep over his wife's death or to laugh with joy at the birth of his son, and so one moment he laughs "like a calf" (the newborn young), and the other he cries "like a cow" (giving birth, dying).

The fourth chapter depicts Pantagruel's early feats, accomplished when he was still in his cradle;[74] they are all expressed in the form of *devouring and swallowing*. At each feeding he *sucked out* the milk of 4,600 cows. He was served his pap in a huge bell. His *teeth* were already then so strong and sturdy that he *bit* a great piece off it. One morning, wishing to *suck* on one of the cows, he worked one of his arms free from the bands tying it to his cradle, seized the cow by its legs, and *chewed up her udder and half her abdomen*, including *the liver and kidneys*. He would have devoured her whole, but crowds of people rushed in and took her away from Pantagruel, but they couldn't take away the cow's leg, and he *swallowed* it like a sausage. Another time Gargantua's pet bear came near his cradle; Pantagruel seized it, *tore it to pieces and swallowed it* as if it were a pullet. He was so strong that he had to be chained to his cradle, but one time he appeared carrying the cradle on his back in the hall where Gargantua was presiding over a huge banquet; as his arms were tied, he *put out his tongue* and started picking up food off the table with it.

All these feats, as we see, have to do with *sucking, devouring, swallowing, tearing to pieces*. We see here *the gaping mouth, the tongue sticking out, the teeth, the gullet, the udder, the abdomen*.

We will not continue tracing the further development of the images that interest us chapter by chapter. Instead, let us touch on only the clearest examples.[75]

In the episode with the Limousin scholar,[76] Pantagruel seized him by the *throat*, because of which, a few years later, he "died the death of Roland"—that is, of *thirst* (the traditional nucleus of the devilkin Pantagruel's image).

In chapter 14 we find the following image: During a *feast*, offered at the end of the lawsuit of My Lords Kissarse and Bumfondle, the drunken Panurge declares:

> God help me, mate, if I could *rise up* as fast as I *swallow down*, I would long ago have been above the sphere of the moon with My Lord Empedocles,

[73] Bk. 2, ch. 2.

[74] The retelling here follows Urquhart's translation (as Le Clercq changes many of the details Bakhtin mentions).

[75] Bakhtin returns to following Plattard (1930, 123–125) and Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xviii–xx), who both focus here on Patnagruel's origin as a thirst-provoking devilkin.

[76] Bk. 2, ch. 6.

> who was hoisted thither by an eruption of Ætna. But I can't tell what's the matter. This wine is strong and delicious, yet the more I drink, the thirstier I get. I think the mere *shadow* of My Lord Pantagruel *engenders thirst* even as the *moon* produces *catarrhs*. (book 2, chapter 14)

Let us emphasize the topographic aspect here: the highest spheres of the sky and the bottom of the stomach. Once more we also see here the traditional nucleus of Pantagruel's image—the arousing of thirst. But in this passage this role is played by Pantagruel's shadow (let us stress the similarity to the fecund shadow of the abbey spire). Also grotesque in character is the ancient traditional notion about the influence of the moon (a heavenly body) on catarrh (an illness).[77]

At the same feast, Panurge relates the already familiar story of how he was almost *roasted like a piece of grilled meat* in Turkey, how he himself *roasted* a Turk *on a spit*, and how he was almost *torn to pieces* by dogs; he rid himself from the "toothache" (i.e., the ache caused by the dogs' teeth) by throwing to the dogs the *lard* in which he had been wrapped. We also find here the image of *fire* that burned down the entire Turkish town, as well as the image of *cure by fire*: roasting on a spit cured Panurge of sciatica. This purely *carnivalesque* episode ends with praise for roasting and for grilled meats.[78]

The traditional nucleus of Pantagruel's image comes alive again in the episode featuring Thaumastes.[79] After his first meeting with Pantagruel, Thaumastes was so thirsty that he had to drink wine all night long and rinse his *palate* with water.[80] During the dispute itself, when the public began to applaud, Pantagruel shouted at them:

> At which they sat there, struck of a heap and blinking like owls. Had they *swallowed* fifteen pounds of feathers, they would not have dared cough. The mere sound of his voice so *parched their throats* that *their tongues hung* a half-foot out of their mugs. It was as though Pantagruel had *salted their throats*. (book 2, chapter 18)

The already familiar episode with the burning of the knights and the subsequent feasting again features Pantagruel's gaping mouth. The knight whom they captured was:

> fearing lest Pantagruel *devour him whole*. Certainly Pantagruel could have made one mouthful of him, for his *throat* was wide enough to down the fellow like a sweetmeat. Truly, on Pantagruel's *tongue* the prisoner would have loomed as conspicuous as a grain of millet seed *in the mouth of an ass*. (book 2, chapter 25)

[77] Cf. Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 4:164).
[78] Also bk. 2, ch. 14.
[79] Bk. 2, ch. 18–20; cf. Plattard (1930, 123–124).
[80] Bk. 2, ch. 18. The reference to drinking "all night long" appears to be a misreading or a speculative

All the leading images of the first book[81] are clearly evident in the depiction of the war against King Anarchus: *the gaping mouth, the gullet, salt, thirst, urine* (instead of sweat), and so on. These images run like a golden thread through all the episodes of the war. Pantagruel sends to King Anarchus, with a captured knight, a jar filled with euphorbium and spurge flax to arouse his thirst:

> King Anarchus barely *swallowed* one spoonful when a terrific burning seared his mouth, ulcerated his *uvula* and *peeled the whole surface of his tongue*. No remedy offered him seemed to bring the slightest relief save incessant drinking; the moment he took the cup from his lips, his tongue scorched. So they kept *pouring* wine *down his throat* through a funnel.

The king's military chiefs followed him in drinking:

> Whereupon, the whole host began to booze, guzzle and swill until in the end they fell into a dead sleep, grunting and snoring like hogs. (book 2, chapter 28)

At the same time, Pantagruel and his companions made their own preparations for the battle. He took 237 casks of wine,[82] filled the ship's dinghy with *salt*, and attached it to his belt. They then drink up all this enormous amount of wine, and in addition, Pantagruel takes a dose of a *diuretic*. They then set on fire King Anarchus's camp, where everybody is still asleep after the heavy drinking. The subsequent development of the images is so characteristic that we quote the relevant passage in full:

> Meanwhile Pantagruel scattered the salt from his dinghy into their *gaping mouths* in such quantities that the poor wretches barked like foxes.
>
> "Oh, oh, Pantagruel," they hawked. "Why do you add further heat to the firebrands in our throats?"
>
> Suddenly Panurge's drugs began to take effect and Pantagruel felt an imperious need of *draining his bladder*. So he *voided*[83] on their camp so freely and torrentially as to drown them all and *flood* the countryside ten leagues around. We know from history that had his father Gargantua's great mare been present and likewise disposed to piss, the resultant deluge would have made Deucalion's flood seem like a drop in a bucket. A mare of the first wa-

interpretation introduced by Bakhtin.

[81] Referring to the *chronologically* first book—that is, bk. 2.

[82] So in the French original. Le Clercq's translation has 18,000 gallons instead (an untypically round number; see Bakhtin's discussion of Rabelais's use of numbers in chapter 7).

[83] In Lyubimov's Russian translation, Pantagruel "irrigated and watered" the camp, suggesting the added meaning of engendering future agricultural yield, not found in the original (where Pantagruel simply "pisses" on the camp). Bakhtin italicized the words "irrigated and watered."

ter, Gargantua's; it could not relieve itself without making another Rhône or Danube.

The soldiers sallying from the city saw the whole thing.

"The enemy has been hacked to pieces," they exulted. "See the *blood* run."

But they were mistaken. In the glow from the burning camp and the dim moonlight *they took Pantagruel's urine to be the blood of slaughtered enemies*.

The enemy now awakened thoroughly to see their camp blazing on one hand and Pantagruel's urinal inundation on the other. They were, so to speak, between the fiery devil and the deep Red Sea. Some vowed *the end of the world was at hand*, bearing out the prophecy that *the last judgment* would be by *fire*. Others were certain they were persecuted by the sea-gods Neptune, Proteus, Triton and others. Certainly the waters flowing over them were salty. (book 2, chapter 28)[84]

We see once more all the fundamental images of the book's first chapters, only here the salty liquid is not sweat but urine, and it is not excreted by the earth but by Pantagruel, but as a giant he acquires here a cosmic significance. The traditional nucleus of Pantagruel's image is broadly unfolded and hyperbolized: *an entire army of gaping mouths, a boat full of salt poured into these mouths, the natural element of water and the gods of the sea, a deluge of salty urine*. This is a characteristic interplay of images: *urine—blood—seawater*. All these images are assembled to form the picture of *a cosmic catastrophe, the demise of the world by flood and fire*.

Medieval eschatologism is here lowered and renewed in images of the absolute material-bodily nethers. Here, it is *a carnival fire that renews the world*. Let us recall the "fire festival" in Goethe's description of carnival in Rome, with its "Death to thee!"[85] Let us also recall the carnivalesque depiction of a world catastrophe in the "Prophetical riddle," where the streams of water flooding everyone turned out to be *sweat* and *a world conflagration* turned out to be *the merry fire of a hearth*.[86] In our episode, all boundary lines between bodies and things are erased; also erased are the boundaries between war and feasting: feasting, wine, salt, and arousing thirst become the main means of warfare. Blood is substituted by the plentiful torrents of urine that follow excessive drinking.

Let us bear in mind that *urine* (like excrement) is *merry matter*, which at once lowers and lightens up, turning *fear* into *laughter*. If excrement is, as it were, a middle term between the body and the earth (it is a laughter-based link that connects the earth and the body), urine is *a middle term between the body and the sea*. This is why

[84] Translation modified.
[85] Goethe (1982, 467–468).
[86] Bk. 1, ch. 58.

the mystery-play devil Pantagruel, *embodying* the salty *element of the sea*, becomes in Rabelais's novel, to a certain extent, *the embodiment of the merry element of urine* (his urine, as we shall later see, also possesses special healing properties). *Excrement and urine make matter, the world, the cosmic elements bodily*, make them into something intimately close and *bodily understandable* (after all, this is the matter, the elemental force, born and secreted from the body itself). *Urine and excrement turn cosmic terror into a merry carnival bogeyman.*

It is necessary to take into account the immense role played by *cosmic fear*—the fear of the immeasurably large and immeasurably powerful: of the starry sky, of the material masses of the mountains, of the sea, and the fear of cosmic upheavals and elemental catastrophes—in the most ancient mythologemes, worldviews, systems of images, in the languages themselves and the forms of thinking connected to them. *Some obscure memory of past cosmic perturbations and some vague fear of future cosmic upheavals are embedded in the very foundation of human thought, word, and image.* This cosmic fear, which, at its core is not at all mystical in the strict sense (after all, it is a fear of the materially large and of a materially insurmountable force), is utilized by all religious systems to oppress man and his consciousness. But already expressed in the most ancient images of folk art is *the struggle against this cosmic fear, the struggle against the memory and premonition of cosmic upheaval and demise.* It is in the folk images reflecting this struggle that truly human *fearless self-consciousness* was being forged.(186) This struggle against cosmic fear in all its forms and manifestations relied not on abstract hopes, nor on the eternity of spirit, but on the *equally material principle in man himself.* Man *appropriated* the cosmic elements (earth, water, air, fire), as it were, *finding and vividly sensing them in himself, in his own body; he felt the cosmos within himself.*

This appropriation of *cosmic elements within the elements of the body* was most acutely and consciously felt in the Renaissance. It found its theoretical expression in *the idea of the microcosm*, also used by Rabelais in Panurge's discussion cited earlier (about debtors and creditors). We shall return to these phenomena of Renaissance philosophy.[87] For now, it is important to emphasize that *it was the material cosmos with its natural elements that people appropriated and sensed within themselves, in the equally strictly material acts and eliminations of the body: in eating, in defecation,*

[87] The last few sentences summarize (but also recontextualize) ideas central to Cassirer (1963). A longer section on Renaissance philosophy, based entirely on Cassirer (1963; and see Poole 1998), indeed follows later in this chapter.

(186) The images expressing this struggle are often interwoven with images reflecting the parallel struggle in the individual body with the memory of the painful birth and the premonition of death throes. Cosmic fear is deeper and more essential; it is lodged, as it were, also in the kindred body of humankind, and hence it has penetrated into the very foundations of language, images, and thought. This cosmic fear is more essential and stronger than the individual-bodily fear of one's demise, though their voices often mingle in folklore images and especially in literary images. This cosmic fear is the heritage of man's ancient powerlessness before the forces of nature. Folk culture was alien to this fear

in acts of sexual life; it is precisely in these that people found within themselves, and detected, as if *from within their own body*, the earth, the sea, the air, the fire, and generally speaking, all the matter of the world in all its manifestations, thus appropriating it. Indeed, it was precisely *the images of the bodily nethers* that were given a preeminently *microcosmic signification.*

In the sphere of image-based creation, cosmic *fear* (like any other fear) was defeated by *laughter.* This is why *excrement and urine*, being *a laughable and bodily understandable kind of matter*, play such a role here. This is why they appear here in *hyperbolic quantities* and in *cosmic dimensions.* A *cosmic catastrophe* depicted using *images of the material-bodily nethers is lowered, made human, and turns into a laughable bogeyman.* Cosmic fear has been defeated by laughter.

Let us return to the episode of the war against Anarchus. We have a detailed description of Pantagruel's single combat with the giant Werewolf. The play with the same images continues here. Werewolf approached *Pantagruel with jaws agape* ("la gueule ouverte"). Pantagruel "threw more than eighteen kegs and four bushels of salt into his foe's *mouth*, *throat*, *nose*, and *eyes.*" In the fighting that followed, Pantagruel hit Werewolf in the groin and spilled the remaining wine. "Seeing the red flow, Werewolf thought Pantagruel had pinked his bladder and drawn urine."[88]

The next chapter contains the episode with the resurrection of Epistemon and his story about visiting the realm of the dead. If we recall that in bodily topography *the underworld* is depicted in the images of the bodily *nethers* or in the images of Lucifer's *gaping jaws* and that death is a *swallowing* or *a return into the bosom of the earth*, it will then become clear that we remain within the sphere of the same images of *the gaping mouth* or *the open womb.* We shall analyze the episode featuring the visit to the underworld in detail in the next chapter.

The entire episode of the conflict with King Anarchus ends in two images of a purely carnivalesque type.

The first image is a utopian carnival, "feasting for the whole world": when the victors entered the land of the Amaurotes, "huge *bonfires were lighted*, *round tables* set up in the streets and spread with the best *victuals* the country afforded. Their *feasting* was so hearty it seemed as though *the Age of Saturn* were come again."[89] The second

[88] Bk. 2, ch. 29 (translation modified). Where Bakhtin does not directly quote Rabelais, he closely paraphrases the text—hence the reference to the *remaining* kegs of wine, which is clear in the context of Rabelais's narrative but appears out of context in Bakhtin's retelling.

[89] Bk. 2, ch. 31, translation modified. In particular, I kept to the interpretation (which Bakhtin consistently upholds, but Rabelais's English translators unanimously reject) of the French "grand chere" as "great feasting." The older Pyast translation also interprets the word as referring to "feasting," while Lyubimov (like Le Clercq) interprets it as referring to a "celebration." Accordingly, Bakhtin kept Pyast's

and was overcoming it by means of laughter, making nature and the cosmos bodily in a laughter-based manner, for at the foundation of this culture there always lay the unshakable confidence in the might and final victory of man. Official cultures, however, often used and even, so to speak, cultivated this fear in order to belittle and oppress man.

image is *the carnival decrowning of King Anarchus*, which we have already discussed elsewhere.[90] Thus, the war ends with carnival feasting and decrowning.

The chapter that follows relates how, during a torrential rain, Pantagruel covers a whole army by "*putting out his tongue.*"[91] We have next, the description of the journey of the author (Alcofribas) *inside* Pantagruel's *mouth.* Having made his way into the *wide-open mouth* of his hero, Alcofribas found in it *a whole unknown world*: wide fields, woods, fortified cities. It turned out there are more than twenty-five kingdoms in that mouth. The people living in Pantagruel's mouth are convinced that their world is more ancient than the earth. Alcofribas lived *in the mouth* of his hero for six months; he *fed* on what passed through Pantagruel's mouth and *defecated* into his *throat.*[92]

This episode was inspired by Lucian (*A True Story*),[93] but it is an excellent culmination to the entire series of images of the gaping mouth that we have unfolded. It turns out in the end that the mouth contains an entire world, a kind of mouth underworld. Like the underworld in Epistemon's vision,[94] this mouth world is organized, to a certain extent, as "an inside-out world": here, for instance, one is paid not for working but for sleeping.

The episode about a world "more ancient than earth" in Pantagruel's mouth reveals the idea of the *relativity* of spatial and temporal evaluations, but does so from a laughter-based grotesque angle.[95]

Chapter 33 relates how Pantagruel *fell ill* and how he was *cured.* He had stomach trouble. While he was ill, his *abundant hot urine* formed *hot springs*, with *healing powers*, in various places in France and Italy.[96] Here, once more, Pantagruel appears as the embodiment of the merry bodily-cosmic element of urine.

The illness episode then depicts the descent of people into Pantagruel's stomach in order to clean it. These people, armed with picks, shovels, and baskets, go into great copper globes that Pantagruel *swallows* (the image of swallowing) like a pill. Once inside the stomach, these people come out of their globes and do their cleaning job. Like the *mouth* in the preceding chapter, the *stomach* is depicted as having enormous, almost cosmic dimensions.

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translation, which he used in the 1940 manuscript, in the final publication (unlike most other quotes, for which the Lyubimov translation was used instead).

[90] Also bk. 2, ch. 31.

[91] Bk. 2, ch. 32.

[92] Bk. 2, ch. 32.

[93] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 4:330). The comparison is to the protagonist's long stay inside a whale in bk. 1, ch. 30–40 of Lucian's work.

[94] Bk. 2, ch. 30.

[95] This brief paragraph was added to the book in 1965. It, significantly, ties the themes discussed here to Bakhtin's long-standing philosophical interests (space and time as evaluated from an individual's perspective), reflected most directly in his early philosophical works (Bakhtin 1990b, 1993).

[96] While hot springs have been viewed as therapeutic since antiquity (as Rabelais would have surely been aware), it is worth noting that Rabelais does not explicitly attribute any healing powers to the spas he lists in his text.

Finally, the last—concluding—chapter also contains grotesque images of the body. In it, there is a plan of the novel's subsequent parts. Among the projected episodes outlined, we find *the crushing of the underworld by Pantagruel*, who, moreover, tosses Proserpine into the fire and breaks Lucifer's *four teeth* and one horn. Further, the plan includes Pantagruel's journey to the moon in order to ascertain whether, when the moon is waning, three quarters of it are in women's *heads*.

Thus, running throughout the entire (chronologically) first book of the novel, from beginning to end, as its leitmotif, is the image of the gaping mouth, the gullet, the teeth, and the tongue. This gaping mouth belongs to the traditional nucleus of the image of mystery-play devil Pantagruel.

The image of the gaping mouth organically dovetails, on the one hand, with the images of swallowing and devouring, and on the other hand, with the image of the abdomen, the belly, and childbirth. At the same time, feasting images, as well as images of death, annihilation, and the underworld, also gravitate toward it. Finally, also connected with the open mouth is another fundamental element of Pantagruel's traditional image—thirst, the natural element of water, wine, and urine.

Thus, all the leading organs and places, as well as all the basic events in the life of the grotesque body, are here unfolded and depicted around the central image—the gaping mouth.

The image of the gaping mouth is the most vivid expression of the open body, of a body that is not closed off. It is *a wide-open gate leading into the body's depths*. The openness and deepness of the body are further enhanced by the fact that it turns out there is an entire inhabited world inside the mouth, while people can descend into the depths of the stomach as into an underground mine. Expressing the same *bodily openness* is the image of the *open womb* of Pantagruel's mother, of the fertile bosom of the earth that has imbibed the blood of Abel, of the underworld, and so on. These *bodily depths* are fertile: in them, the old dies and the new is born with surplus; the entire first book[97] is literally saturated with images of reproductive force, fertility, abundance. Alongside this bodily openness, we constantly find the phallus and the codpiece (as a stand-in for the phallus). Thus, the grotesque body has no façade here, no impenetrable rounded-off surface, nor does it have an expressive exterior: this body is either fertile bodily depths or reproductive, conceiving protuberances. This body devours and gives birth, takes and gives.

A body constructed from fertile depths and reproductive protuberances is never clearly demarcated from the world: it shades into it, mixes and blends in with it; lying hidden inside this body itself (like in Pantagruel's mouth) are new and unexplored worlds. The body acquires cosmic dimensions, while the cosmos acquires a bodily nature. *The cosmic elements turn into the merry bodily elements of a growing, reproducing, and victorious body.*

[97] Again, the *chronologically* first book—that is, bk. 2.

"Pantagruel" was conceived and written during the *natural disasters* suffered by France in 1532.[98] To be sure, these disasters were not particularly significant or catastrophic, but they were nevertheless powerful and noticeable enough to strike the consciousness of those living at the time and to awaken in it cosmic fears and *eschatological notions*.

"Pantagruel" was, to a significant degree, a merry rejoinder to the cosmic fear and to the religiously eschatological attitudes aroused by the natural disasters. Once again, we have a remarkable example of Renaissance public writing on folk public-square grounds. It is a combative retort to current events and to the current thoughts and attitudes of that moment in history.

In 1532 there was a long and intense spell of hot weather and drought that lasted from the spring until November, for a total of six months. This drought threatened the crops and, especially, the vineyards. In the context of this drought, the Church organized multiple public prayers and religious processions, the parodic travesty of which we find at the beginning of the novel.[99] In the autumn of the same year an epidemic of the plague broke out in various parts of France and lasted into the following year. There is also an allusion to this plague in "Pantagruel"; it is explained as the result of a noxious exhalation arising from Pantagruel's stomach due to indigestion.[100]

As we already said, the natural disasters and the plague epidemic awakened in those years, as they did in the fourteenth century,[101] *the ancient cosmic fear* and the system of *eschatological* images and mystical notions connected with it. But these same phenomena, like catastrophes in general, usually awaken *historical criticism* and an urge to *freely reconsider* all dogmatic assumptions and evaluations (for example, Boccaccio and Langland[102] in the fourteenth century). Something similar, albeit to a milder degree, was taking place when "Pantagruel" was being created. For Rabelais, this served as a starting point for his book. It is possible that the *image of the devilkin Pantagruel*, arouser of thirst, and the very *tonality* of this image, *sprung up to the surface from the unfettered elemental force of speech in the public square and in familiar table talk*, where this image was the immediate addressee of *merry curses* targeted at the world and at nature, as well as the hero of *unfettered travesties* dealing with eschatologism, with providence, with world catastrophe, and so on. But around this image Rabelais concentrated an enormous mass, *millennia in the making*, of material from *folk laughter culture*, reflecting the struggle against *cosmic fear and eschatologism*; a culture that had been creating the image of *the merry material-bodily cosmos, ever-growing and forever renewing itself.*

[98] The events of 1532 are discussed in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xxv–xxxi).

[99] Bk. 2, ch. 2.

[100] Bk. 2, ch. 32. The noxious smell is due to Pantagruel having eaten garlic sauce, not necessarily having indigestion as a result. In the 1940 manuscript, Bakhtin points out that the causes of the plague are thus made bodily and linked to the bodily nethers.

[101] An allusion to the Black Death epidemic of circa 1350.

[102] Referring to William Langland, presumed author of the poem *Piers Plowman*.

The first book of the novel[103] is the most cosmic. This factor grows weaker in subsequent books, and themes of the historical and sociopolitical order come to the fore. But the overcoming of cosmic fear and eschatologism remains among the novel's leading themes to the end.

In the development of this theme the grotesque body plays an immense role. This *communal*, growing, and ever triumphant body feels *at home* in the cosmos. It is the cosmos's own flesh and blood, containing *the same cosmic elements and forces*, but optimally organized; *the body is the last and best word of the cosmos*, it is *the leading cosmic force*; it is unafraid of the cosmos, with all its natural elements. It is also unafraid of death: *the death of an individual* is but one factor in the triumphant life of the people and of humanity, a factor that is *indispensable for their renewal and their ongoing process of becoming ever more perfected.*

Let us now examine some of the sources of the grotesque body. We will only be touching on several groups of Rabelais's most proximate sources. The grotesque conception of the body, as already mentioned, lived in the images of language itself, especially in the forms of familiar speech interaction; the grotesque conception lay at the basis of all the invective, decrowning, teasing, and merry forms of the *stock of gestures* (making a fig sign, thumbing one's nose, mooning, spitting, the most multifarious indecent gestures); this conception of the body, finally, permeates the most diverse forms and kinds of folklore. Images of the grotesque body were scattered everywhere; all of Rabelais's contemporaries understood them, were used to them, and were familiar with them. The groups of sources we will be touching on here are but separate characteristic expressions of this prevailing and all-permeating conception of the body, which are directly related to the subject matter of Rabelais's novel.

Let us first consider legends about giants. The image of the giant is a grotesque image of the body in its very essence, but, of course, this grotesque character may be developed in the images of giants to a greater or lesser extent.

In the chivalric romance, exceptionally widespread in Rabelais's time, images of giants—they are fairly common in this genre—had almost entirely lost their grotesque features. In most instances these images only exhibit exaggerated physical strength and loyalty to their lord and conqueror.

In the Italian heroic-comic tradition—in Pulci (Morgante) and especially in Folengo (Fracassus)—grotesque features come alive in the images of giants, transferred from the courtly to the comic plane. The Italian tradition of comic giants was very well known to Rabelais and should be taken into account as one of the sources for his grotesque-bodily images.[104]

But Rabelais's direct and immediate source was, as is commonly known, the anonymous book *The Great Chronicles of Gargantua* (1532). This anonymous work does

[103] Again, bk. 2.

[104] This and the previous paragraph are based primarily on Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:239–243, 480–483) with information possibly drawn also from Schneegans (1894, 96–141).

have some elements of parodic travesty of the chivalric romance of the King Arthur cycle, but, of course, it is in no sense a literary parody in the later sense of the term. The image of giants here is of a clearly expressed grotesque-bodily sort. The source for that book was the oral folk legend about the giant Gargantua. This legend existed in oral tradition before the *Great Chronicles* were published and continues to live, similarly within oral tradition even today, not only in France but in England as well. Different versions of this legend, written down in the nineteenth century, have been collected in the book by P. Sébillot, *Gargantua dans les traditions populaires* (Paris, 1883). Contemporary Berrichon legends about Gargantua and other giants are collected in the book by Jean Baffier, *Nos géants d'autrefoés. Récits berrichons* (Paris, 1920). Even in this late oral tradition, Gargantua's image has a totally grotesque-bodily character. At the forefront is the giant's enormous appetite, followed by other grotesque functions of the body; to this day the expression "quel Gargantua!" ("what a glutton!") is still alive in France.

All the legends about giants are closely related to the landscape of the locality where the legend in question is current: the legend always finds a *tangible, visible reference point in the local landscape*; it finds the *dismembered, scattered*, or crushed *body of the giant* in nature. Even to this day, in various places in France, there are a great number of rocks, stones, megaliths, dolmens, menhirs, and so on linked to Gargantua's name: these are all various parts of his body and household items. We encounter such names as: "Gargantua's Finger," "Gargantua's Tooth," "Gargantua's Spoon," "Gargantua's Pot," "Gargantua's Bowl," "Gargantua's Chair," "Gargantua's Walking Stick," and so on. It is, in essence, *a Rabelaisian complex of disarticulated members of the giant body, kitchen utensils, and household items.* In Rabelais's time, of course, this stone world of things and of the giant's disarticulated body was even richer.[105]

The parts of the giants' disarticulated bodies and of their utensils, scattered throughout France, had an exceptional level of *grotesque tangibility* and thus could not fail to exercise a certain degree of influence on Rabelais's images. Thus, mention is made in "Pantagruel" of the gigantic bowl in which the hero had his pap, and the author adds

[105] Bakhtin's main source on Gargantua legends (the last two paragraphs) is Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:250–254), but he was also apparently able to consult the book by Sébillot (1883), to which Sainéan refers in this passage and which Bakhtin cites directly in the text (the reference to Baffier 1920, however, appears to be merely borrowed from Sainéan). Details that probably originate in various places in Sébillot's book, and are missing from Sainéan, include the existence of legends about Gargantua in England, the idiom "Quel Gargantua!" and several of the different landmarks named after parts of Gargantua's body (Sainéan has a partial list, but Bakhtin's contains several items missing from it). It appears likely, however, that Bakhtin had only very brief occasion to skim Sébillot's book. The details he used may well have been taken from the book's table of contents (a reference to England, which Bakhtin probably misinterpreted, as it is about legends in which Gargantua travels to England, not legends about Gargantua current in England), its index (names of local landmarks; the index is cited by Sainéan 1922–1923, 1:252), and its first page (the idiom "Quel Gargantua!").

that the bowl can still be seen at Bourges.[106] Nothing of the sort exists in Bourges at present, but we do have evidence dating back to the fourteenth century that there indeed existed a huge basin-shaped rock, called "Scutella gigantis"—that is, "The Giant's Bowl"; once a year wine merchants filled it with wine for the poor.[107] Rabelais thus borrowed this image from reality.(187)[108]

Besides the bodily grotesque of the *Great Chronicles*, one should also mention *Pantagruel's Disciple*, an anonymous book published in 1537. This work reflected the influence of Rabelais's novel as well as of Lucian (*A True Story*); but alongside these there is here also a folk-festive factor, as well as the direct influence of the oral tradition of legends about giants. This work, in its turn, had a reciprocal influence on Rabelais.[109]

One should stress the role of folk-festive giants. The giant was a common figure in the fairground traveling-show repertoire (where he, alongside the dwarf, remains to this day). But he was also a requisite figure in carnival processions, in Corpus Christi feast processions, and others. At the end of the Middle Ages a number of cities had, in addition to permanent "town jesters," permanent "town giants" or even a "giant's family," employed and paid for by the city and obliged to appear in all folk-festive processions. This institution of town giants survived in a number of cities and even villages of Northern France and, especially, Belgium, up into the nineteenth century—for instance, in Lille, Douai, Kassel, and elsewhere. In Kassel, in 1835, at a celebration established in memory of the famine of 1638, a giant took part and was present at the ceremony of giving out free soup to the entire populace. This *connection of giants with food* is highly characteristic. In Belgium there were special festive "giant songs," in which *the image of the giant* was closely linked to the *household hearth* and to *the preparation of food*.[110]

The figure of the folk-festive giant, which was an indispensable element of public-square folk entertainments and carnival ceremonies, was, of course, very well known to Rabelais, even though we have no specific information on this subject. He also knew various local legends about giants that have not reached us. The novel mentions the names of legendary giants, suggesting their special connection with eating and swallowing: Engoulevent, Happemousche, Maschefain, and others.[111]

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[106] Bk. 2, ch. 4.

[107] See Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:252–253).

[108] In the footnote, the references to Reinach (1908) and Sébillot (1904–1907, 1:300–412) are copied from Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:250).

[109] See Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:441–443) and Schneegans (1894, 272–278).

[110] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 313–314).

[111] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:255–256).

(187) Extensive folklore material concerning the disarticulated stone body of the giant and his utensils is offered by Salomon Reinach, *Cultes, mythes et religions*, vol. 3, *Les monuments de pierre brute dans le langage et les croyances populaires*, 364–433: see also P. Sébillot, *Le folklore de France*, vol. 1, 300–412.

Finally, Rabelais knew the images of giants from antiquity—a matter we already noted above; one should especially stress his familiarity with Euripides's *Cyclops*, which he cites twice in his novel.[112]

Such are Rabelais's sources connected to the image of giants. We may assume that folk-festive giant figures were of the utmost significance for Rabelais. They enjoyed immense popularity, were familiar to each and all, were deeply permeated with the atmosphere of folk-festive public-square unfetteredness, and finally, they were closely connected with folk notions of material-bodily superabundance and plenty. The image and the atmosphere of the festive fairground giant had unequivocally influenced the way the legend of Gargantua was adapted in the anonymous book, the *Great Chronicles*. The influence that folk giants, in their fairground and public-square interpretation, had on the images of giants in the first two books of Rabelais's novel, appears to us to be beyond doubt.

As to the *Great Chronicles*, its influence was more external in nature and came down, in essence, to the simple borrowing of a number of elements purely on the level of plot.

One of the highly important groups of sources for grotesque-bodily images is the cycle of legends and literary works that have to do with the so-called "wonders of India."[113] The images of the wonders of India had a defining influence on all of medieval fantasy; their influence—both direct and indirect—can also be found in Rabelais's novel. Let us briefly recall the history of the "wonders of India" tradition.

The first to collect all the tales about the wonders of India was a Greek who lived in Persia, Ctesias of Cnidus. He lived in the fourth century BCE. He assembled all the stories about treasures, about the wondrous flora and fauna, about the *unusual body build* of India's inhabitants. Ctesias's work has not come down to us, but it was used by Lucian (in his *A True Story*), Pliny, Isidore of Seville, and others.

In the second century CE the *Physiologus*, which likewise has not reached us, appeared in Alexandria.[114] The *Physiologus* mixes natural history together with legends and wonders. "The kingdoms of nature" are here often mixed together with one another in the most grotesque manner. The *Physiologus* was widely used in subsequent epochs, including by Isidore of Seville, whose work served as the main source for medieval "bestiaries."

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[112] See, for example, Plattard (1910, 194). The special stress on *Cyclops* is because this is the only complete *satyr play* that came down to us from ancient Greece.

[113] The entire section on the "wonders of India" is based primarily on Lote (1938, 116–128; and see Bakhtin's summary of these passages in Bakhtin 2008b, 755–760; see also a side-by-side comparison of this summary with the eventual text of the 1940 manuscript in Popova 2008a, 860–866). The designation "wonders of India" appears to reflect Lote's word choice, rather than any particular medieval source.

[114] Bakhtin follows Lote in claiming that Ctesias's *On India* and the *Physiologus* did not survive to our day. This is, however, incorrect. Much of *On India* survives in fragments, and the *Physiologus* survived in full in multiple manuscripts. Both have also been published in English translation (Nichols 2011; Curley 1979).

A summary of all this material of legends was compiled in the third century CE by Pseudo-Callisthenes. There are two Latin versions of his work: one by Julius Valerius, composed about the year 300, and the other, titled "History of the Battles of Alexander the Great," composed in the tenth century. Later on, summaries of the Callisthenes legends are included in all the cosmographic works of the Middle Ages (Brunetto Latini, Gautier de Metz, and others). All these works were deeply permeated with the grotesque conception of the body, principally inherited from Calisthenes's summary of the "wonders of India."

From then on, legends about the wonders of India penetrate stories of travels, both real (for example, Marco Polo) and fictional (for example, in Sir John Mandeville's exceptionally popular book). In the fourteenth century all these travels were collected in one manuscript under the title *Merveilles du monde*, that is, "Wonders of the World."[115] This manuscript contains interesting miniatures depicting typically grotesque human images. Finally, the wonders of India make their way into a narrative poem in alexandrine verse, *Le roman d'Alexandre*.[116]

This is how the legend of the wonders of India was composed and disseminated. It determined the themes of numerous works of medieval visual art.

What is the nature of all these wonders of India? The legends told of fabulous riches, of India's exceptional natural world, as well as of wonders of the purely fantastical order: of devils spitting flames, magic herbs, an enchanted forest, the fountain of youth. Much space is devoted to the description of animals. Alongside real ones (the elephant, the lion, the panther, and so on), there are detailed descriptions of fantastical ones—dragons, harpies, unicorns, phoenixes, and so forth. Thus, Mandeville describes a griffin in detail and Brunetto Latini, a dragon.

But of particularly great significance for us is the description of wondrous human creatures. These creatures have a purely grotesque character. Some of them are half animal, such as the hippopods, whose legs are equipped with hoofs, sirens, cynocephali, who bark instead of speaking, satyrs,[117] onocentaurs, and others. We are thus offered an entire gallery of images of *a mixed body*. There are also, of course, giants, dwarfs, and pygmies. There are, finally, people with various deformities: the sciapods, who have only one leg, leumans, who have no head and a face on their chest; there are people with one eye on their forehead, others with eyes on their shoulders, with eyes on their backs, there are people with six arms, and others who eat using their noses, and so forth. All this is unbridled grotesque *anatomical fantasizing*, so beloved in the Middle Ages.

[115] The manuscript in question is the original French of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, mentioned just now. Bakhtin misinterpreted a footnote in Lote (1938, 118) as referring to a different work.

[116] This major work of French medieval literature was not merely written in alexandrine verse but was the work that gave "alexandrine verse" its name.

[117] Lote (1938, 120–121), quoting the relevant medieval sources, refers to "les sathyriens," who have the head of an ox and the feet of a goat. It is not clear that these can be identified with the satyrs of Greek and Roman myth.

Such fantasizing, such free play with the body and its organs, was also loved by Rabelais: suffice it to recall his pygmies, born from Pantagruel's flatus, whose hearts lie very close to their anuses, the monstrous children of Antiphysis, the famous description of Quarêmeprenant, and so on.[118] In all these images, the same character of anatomical fantasizing manifests itself.

A very important special feature of legends about the wonders of India is their essential connection to the theme of the underworld. The numerous demons who appear in India's woods and valleys led to the assumption that in some places here were hidden *orifices* leading to hell. People in the Middle Ages were also convinced that it was here, in India, that the earthly paradise, the first abode of Adam and Eve, was located: it was placed three days' journey away from the fountain of youth. It was told that Alexander the Great had seen in India, hermetically sealed from all sides, "the abode of the just," in which the just will reside until the Day of Judgment. Legends about Prester John and his kingdom (which was placed in India) also tell of paths to the underworld and to the earthly paradise. The river Pishon, flowing from the earthly paradise, ran through Prester John's kingdom. The presence of paths and orifices ("trous"), leading into hell or into the earthly paradise, makes the space of these wondrous lands have an altogether special character. This has to do with the overall special manner in which space was artistically and ideologically perceived and made sense of in the Middle Ages. Terrestrial space is constructed in the same manner as the grotesque body: it is made up of heights and plunge holes. The impenetrable surface of the earth is constantly broken up by the drive to go upward or downward—into the depths of the earth, into the underworld. In these orifices and depths, like in Pantagruel's mouth, another world is presumed to exist. While traveling on earth, people sought gates or doors leading into other worlds. The classic expression of such wanderings is the remarkable *Voyage of Saint Brendan*, which we will discuss in the next chapter. In folk legends, this terrestrial space, made up of heights and crevasses ("holes"), was, to a greater or lesser extent, conceived of in bodily terms.

All this created the specific character of medieval topography and a special notion of the cosmos. We shall revisit these issues in the next chapter.

The cycle of legends about the wonders of India enjoyed exceptional popularity in the Middle Ages. In addition to the already mentioned cosmographic literature in the broad sense (including travel literature), it had an immense influence on the entire literary output of the Middle Ages. Moreover, the wonders of India found a potent reflection in the visual arts: they determined, as we already noted, the themes of the multiple miniatures that illustrated manuscripts, as well as depictions in murals and sculptures in churches and cathedrals.

Thus, in part thanks to the wonders of India, the imagination and the eye of medieval man were accustomed to the grotesque body. Both in literature and in the visual arts, he everywhere encountered the mixed body, encountered the most peculiar

[118] See bk. 2, ch. 27 and bk. 4, ch. 30–32.

anatomical fantasizing, free play with human body parts and internal organs. He was likewise accustomed to the transgression of all boundaries between body and world.

The wonders of India are therefore a very important source for the grotesque conception of the body. It should be noted that these legends were still alive and stimulated ubiquitous interest in Rabelais's time.

In the last chapter of "Pantagruel" Rabelais, while sketching out a plan for the continuation of his novel, previews an episode in which his hero travels to the land of Prester John—that is, to India; this was to be immediately followed by an episode where the underworld is destroyed (an entrance into it is, apparently, indeed located in Prester John's land).[119] Thus, in the novel's earliest plan, a significant role was designated for the wonders of India. The direct and indirect influence of legends about the wonders of India on Rabelais's grotesque anatomical fantasy was, of course, immense.

Another very important source for the grotesque conception of the body was the medieval mystery-play stage and especially, of course, the diableries.

The image of the body in the diableries is grotesque. Featured very often are *the body disarticulated into its parts, the roasting, burning, and swallowing of the body.* For instance, in that same *Mystery of the Acts of the Apostles*, where we encounter the devilkin Pantagruel for the first time, Lucifer orders the devils to roast several heretics, adding a fairly long and detailed description of the ways in which they should be roasted.[120] In another mystery play, *The Mystery of St. Quentin*, there is a long enumeration of verbs—more than one hundred of them—expressing various bodily tortures: they will be burned by fire, mutilated, quartered, torn apart, and so forth.[121] A grotesque disarticulation and anatomization of the body is performed here. Rabelais has images of *sinful souls being devoured*, which are obviously linked to diableries.[122] We have already mentioned the grotesque bodily character of the images of devils and their bodily movements as designed in the diableries.

The very arrangement of the mystery play stage is of exceptionally great significance as a source for the grotesque conception of the body.[123] This stage reflected medieval ideas about the hierarchical organization of the world's space. The front end of the stage was occupied by a special construction, a kind of platform, that served as the stage's first floor. This platform itself signified *the earth.* The back end of the stage was occupied, at a somewhat higher elevation, by *paradise, by heaven* (nowadays this name survived not as a reference to the stage, but to designate the topmost seats for the audience—that is, the gallery, *the gods*).[124] As for the platform depicting the earth,

[119] Bk. 2, ch. 34.

[120] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xxii–xxiii). The victims of the torture are not heretics, but Jews. Bakhtin indeed refers to them as Jews in the 1940 manuscript but has heretics instead in 1965.

[121] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:372). The list of tortures ("they will be burned by fire" and so on) is a quote from the text in question (as reproduced by Sainéan). The 1940 manuscript quotes it in the original.

[122] Bk. 4, ch. 53.

[123] The following discussion is primarily based on Driesen (1904, 70–79).

[124] "The gods" is still current in theater jargon in the UK (with "paradise" still used as a less common

beneath it was *the vault of hell*. It was made in the shape of a broad curtain, on which *the huge and fearsome head of a devil* ("Erlking") was depicted. The curtain would be opened using ropes, and the devils would jump out of it through *Satan's gaping jaws* (sometimes also through the eyes) and onto the platform representing earth. One mystery play author gives the following stage directions (dating to 1474): "Hell should be made in the form of a huge maw opening and closing as needed."(188)[125]

Thus, *the gaping maw* is precisely what all the spectators of a mystery play saw immediately in front of them. After all, this entrance into hell was located in the very center of the downstage and right at the level of the spectators' eyes. This "maw of hell" ("la gueule d'Enfer," as it was usually called) captured the entire attention of the medieval audience. All the crowd's curiosity was centered precisely on it. We have already said that the diablerie—that folk public-square part of the mystery play—had always enjoyed exceptional success among the people at large and had often eclipsed the rest of the mystery play. As a result, such a manner of organizing the mystery play stage could not but exert a great influence on the artistic perception of the spatial world among the broader medieval audience: *the audience grew akin and accustomed to the image of the gaping maw in its comical aspect*, got used to looking into this open maw and expecting the most interesting and grotesque characters to emerge from precisely this place. Considering the enormous relative importance of the mystery play stage within the artistic and ideological life of the late Middle Ages, one could directly claim that the image of the gaping maw became organically fused with the artistic notion of both the world itself and its theatrical-spectacle embodiment.

Otto Driesen, who devoted some excellent pages of his book *The Origins of Harlequin* to the maw of "Harlequin" on stage, reproduces on page 149 (figure 1) of this book a sketch of a seventeenth-century ballet (this sketch was preserved in the archives of the Paris Opera). In it, at the very center of the stage, there is a huge head with a gaping maw. Inside the gaping maw sits a she-devil, two devils look out of the eyes, the earlobes have a devil sitting in each, and devils and clowns are dancing around the head. This sketch tells us that the image of a huge gaping maw, as well as stage action taking place within this maw, were still quite commonplace and fully understood in the seventeenth century. By the way, Driesen points out that even in his own time the expression "Harlequin's cloak" ("manteau d'Arlequin") was still used in Paris theaters as a technical term designating the entire front of the stage.

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variant). The Russian term used by Bakhtin is *rayok*, which is a diminutive form of *ray*, "paradise." There is also a potentially relevant reference to *rayok* in Freidenberg (1997b, 211).

[125] Quoted in Driesen (1904, 79). The reference to Petit de Julleville (1896) in the footnote appears in Driesen (1904, 71). I corrected minor errors in the reference.

(188) See also the depiction of a scene from a passion performed in Valencienne in 1547, included in *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française, des origines à 1900*, by Petit de Julleville, vol. 2, between p. 416 and p. 417.

Thus, the topography of the mystery-play stage was by and large a grotesque-bodily topography. The gaping mouth, as a leading image in "Pantagruel," is undoubtedly related not only to the traditional nucleus of this hero's image (throwing salt in the mouth and so forth) but also to the arrangement of the mystery-play stage that we have examined. The way Rabelais organizes his images undoubtedly reflects the grotesque-bodily topography of this stage. In Rabelais scholarship, as far as we know, no one has noted the leading role of the gaping mouth in Rabelais's first book,[126] nor has anyone compared it with the organization of the mystery stage. Yet this fact is of outstanding importance for the correct understanding of Rabelais: it testifies to the immense influence theatrical folk-spectacle forms exercised on Rabelais's first work as well as on the entire character of his artistic and ideological seeing and thinking. It also shows that *the image of the gaping mouth* with its grotesquely cosmic signification, so strange and incomprehensible to the modern reader, was *deeply intimate* to Rabelais's contemporaries and *understood* by them: *the eye was entirely accustomed to it.* Its universalism and its cosmic links were customary too, as was the fact that grotesque figures jump out of that mouth onto a stage where the world events of biblical and gospel drama are being depicted. The topographical signification of this gaping mouth as a gate leading into the underworld was also well-understood and tangible. Such is the influence of the mystery-play stage and the diableries on the development of Rabelais's grotesque conception of the body.

A certain influence on the development of grotesque-bodily notions was also exercised by relics, which played a major role in the medieval world. It can be said that various parts of saints' bodies were scattered all over France (and indeed throughout the medieval Christian world). There was no churchlet or monastery that did not preserve such a relic—that is, a body part or particle, at times quite an unusual one (such as a drop of milk from the Blessed Virgin's breast, the *sweat* of some saints, also mentioned by Rabelais); kept as relics were hands, feet, heads, teeth, hair, and fingers, and so on—one could continue this grotesque enumeration of disarticulated body organs. In Rabelais's time, the ridiculing of relics was quite common, especially, of course, in Protestant satire. Even the agelast Calvin wrote a sort of pamphlet about relics, not entirely lacking comic tones.[127]

In medieval literature the dismembered body of the saint often provided an occasion for grotesque images and enumerations. In one of the best medieval parodic travesties, "The Treatise of Garcia" (1099), which we have already discussed, its hero, a wealthy simonist archbishop from Toledo, brings to Rome, as a present for the Pope, the miracle-

[126] Referring, again, to bk. 2.

[127] Calvin's 1543 *Treatise on Relics* contains a somewhat humorous discussion of the use of Mary's milk as relic (Calvin 1870, 248–249) and mentions hair, hands, feet, heads, and fingers (but not teeth or sweat). It is possible that Bakhtin read this text at some point or that he relies on some treatment of it in secondary literature that I was unable to identify. I was also unable to locate any reference to the sweat of saints or to sweat as a relic in Rabelais or any other source that makes this incorrect claim, though this may well be a plain mistake, a misremembered detail.

working relics of the martyred saints Rufinus and Albinus. In the language of the travesties and parodies of that time, these nonexistent saints signified gold and silver. There is a depiction of the Pope's special love for these saints. He praises them and asks that all these saints' precious remains be brought to him, offering, in the process, an utterly grotesque enumeration of dismembered body parts: "from the kidneys of Albinus, from the bowels of Rufinus, from the belly, from the stomach, from the lumbar, from the buttocks, from the ribs, from the chest, from the legs, from the arms, from the neck. And what else? From all the body parts of both martyrs."[128] We see that, as early as the eleventh century, relics offered a pretext for introducing a purely grotesque anatomy of the disarticulated body.

Medieval Latin recreational literature was generally very rich in images of grotesque anatomy. We have already discussed the parodic grammar, in which all the grammatical categories were, in most cases, given a meaning on the level of the *bodily nethers*. The *renewal* of abstract categories and abstract philosophical concepts on the material-bodily plane is indeed exceptionally characteristic of medieval recreational literature in general. In the famous dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf (Rabelais too quotes this dialogue in "Gargantua"), Solomon's high moral pronouncements are contrasted with the replies given to them by the cheeky Marcolf, in most cases shifting the matter into the fairly crude material-bodily sphere.[129]

Let me cite another interesting example of medieval grotesque anatomy. From the thirteenth century on, a poem titled "The Donkey's Testament" was very widespread in all European countries. In it, a dying donkey bequeaths the various parts of his body to the various social and professional groups of the Middle Ages, beginning with the Pope and cardinals. We are thus offered a dismemberment of a body, accompanied by the corresponding partition of the social hierarchy: the donkey's head is for the Popes, the ears for the cardinals, the voice for the choirboys, the feces for the peasants (for manure), and so on. The source of this grotesque anatomy of the donkey's body is very ancient. According to Jerome, a satire called "The Last Will and Testament of a Pig" ("Testamentum porcelli") was popular among schoolmen as early as the fourth century CE. This ancient will and testament was still being copied in the Middle Ages (and has, indeed, survived to this day). Apparently, it was this work that served as the main source for "The Donkey's Testament."[130]

[128] Quoted in both Schneegans (1894, 73) and Lehmann (1922, 48). The rest of the information in the paragraph comes from Lehmann (1922, 44–48) and Schneegans (1894, 69–75). Bakhtin's translation of the quote has a few inaccuracies (the order of body parts on the list is slightly different, misses the shoulders and nails, and lists the buttocks, not mentioned in the original, possibly because of misreading "collo" as "culo").

[129] See Lehmann (1922, 235–240) and Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:498–499). Rabelais mentions this dialogue in bk. 1, ch. 33.

[130] Lehmann (1922, 233–235).

In such travesties as "The Donkey's Testament," it is interesting to note *the combination of the dismemberment of the body with the partition of society.*[131] This is a parodic travesty of the most ancient and widespread mythical notions regarding the origin of various social groups from various parts of a deity's body (the most ancient source documenting this socio-bodily topography is The Rigveda), which in most cases was disarticulated as part of a sacrifice ritual.[(189)][132] Here, instead of the body of a deity, this role is played by *the body of a donkey.* The *donkey* is also, as we already noted, a very ancient traditional *travesty of a deity.* In medieval travesties, the role of the donkey—of its organs, of the donkey's braying, the cries made when goading a donkey—is immense.[133] We encounter the cries of donkey riders in Rabelais's novel;[134] we also encounter several times the very typical term of abuse "viedaze," that is, a donkey's phallus.[135] The topographical character of this invective expression is entirely self-evident. Let us mention another Rabelaisian expression: "as hard as drawing a fart from the rump of a dead donkey."[136] This is a peculiar kind of potentiation (raising to the highest degree) of the topographical nethers: the *rump*, moreover, of a *donkey*, and over and above that, of a *dead donkey.* Such potentiated abuses are found multiple times in the language of Rabelais.

A very important source for the grotesque conception of the body are swearing, oaths, abuses, and all kinds of invective expressions. We have already spoken at length about these phenomena, and thus will limit ourselves here to a few additional considerations.

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[131] Note that, both here and in the previous paragraph, "dismemberment" (of a body) and "partition" (of society) are the same word in Russian (*raschlenenie*).

[132] On Purusha (or Purusa) and Adam (discussed in the footnote), see Cassirer (1955, 90–91; identified by Popova 2010a, 621; see Bakhtin's summary of this place in Cassirer's text in Bakhtin 2008b, 799–800).

[133] See the discussion of the Feast of the Ass in chapter 1 (based primarily on Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 228–230).

[134] See Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:203), referring to bk. 1, ch. 11, 22 (the name of one of Gargantua's games), and 40, and to bk. 4, ch. 52.

[135] See Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:195–196, 218, 296–297).

[136] See Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:380–381). The idiom in question can be found in bk. 1, ch. 15, bk. 3, ch. 36, and bk. 5, ch. 22. Note that the donkey's rump is at times mentioned explicitly by Rabelais's translators (in Pyast's Russian translation, used here by Bakhtin, and in one instance in Le Clercq's English translation too) but never in the French original.

[(189)] The Rigveda (X, 90) depicts the emergence of the world from the body of the man Purusha: the gods sacrificed Purusha and dismembered his body, in accordance with the rules of sacrificial dismemberment; from the various parts of the body, various social groups and various cosmic phenomena emerged: from the mouth, the Brahmins; from the arms, the warriors; from the eyes, the sun; from the head, the sky; from the feet, the earth, and so forth. In Christianized Germanic mythology we encounter an analogous conception, but here, the body is being created from the various parts of the world: Adam's body is formed from eight parts—his flesh from the earth, bones from rocks, blood from the sea, hair from plants, thoughts from clouds, and so on.

Each invective expression always contains the image of *pregnant death* in one bodily-topographical form or another. Our analysis of "Pantagruel" showed that one of the main themes of this book is *the theme of birthing death*: the first death renewing the earth's fertility, the birth of Pantagruel suffocating his mother, and so on. Ever-new variations on this theme appear in the most diverse bodily topographical images and, without losing its bodily character, this theme shades into the theme of historical death and renewal: the burning of the knights, the transformation of death and war into feasting, the decrowning of King Anarchus, and so on. Strictly speaking, however paradoxical this may seem, what we have here is *unfolded verbal abuse: the entire world is shown as pregnant and birthing death.*

In the folk-festive carnival atmosphere in which Rabelais's images were constructed, abusive expressions were sparks flying in different directions from that great conflagration that was renewing the world. It is no accident that during the feast of fire, the "moccoli," "Death to thee," with a joyful intonation, was heard next to each extinguished candle.[137] It should be noted that the form of merry invective, merry curses, merry obscenity directed at cosmic forces, which initially had a cultic character, played in subsequent epochs a vital role in the system of images reflecting the struggle against cosmic fear and any fear of higher powers. Indeed, the most ancient ritual invective and ridiculing laughter were precisely invective and laughter directed against *a higher power*: the sun, the earth, the king, the military leader.[138] This ridiculing laughter was still retained in the public-square festive invective of Rabelais's time.

A very important source for the grotesque image of the body was the forms of *public-square folk comic performance.* This is a large multifarious world that we can only touch upon here in passing. All these "bateleurs," "trejectaires," "theriacleurs,"[139] and so on were acrobats, conjurers, jesters, monkey handlers (monkeys are animals that grotesquely travesty the human being), vendors of panaceas. The world of comic forms cultivated by them was a vividly expressed bodily-grotesque world. Indeed, even today, the grotesque body has been most fully preserved in traveling shows and partly in the circus.

Unfortunately, the forms of French folk comic performance are better known to us based on later phenomena (from the seventeenth century onward), after they had already come under the influence of Italian improvised comedy. That comedy, admittedly, retained the grotesque conception of the body, but in a form that was somewhat smoothed-out and weakened by purely literary influences. That said, in the "lazzi"—

[137] Referring, again, to the Rome carnival, as described by Goethe (1982, 467–469).

[138] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 98–106).

[139] A quote from bk. 1, ch. 24 (in Le Clercq's translation, "jugglers, mountebanks and medicasters"). Bakhtin's ensuing elaboration is most likely inspired by the commentary on the paragraph he quotes from in Lefranc et al. (Lefranc et al. 1913–1915, 2:240–241; Jacobsen 1910, 42–43 is another possible, though much less probable, source).

that is, in all the tricks of this comedy that do not belong to its plot—the grotesque conception of the body unfolds to its full extent.[140]

At the beginning of this chapter, we analyzed a short scene from an Italian comedy with Harlequin and the stutterer. The comic nature of this scene consists in the fact that pronouncing a difficult word was played out as an *act of childbirth*. This is a very typical phenomenon of old folk comedy. The entire *logic of the movements* of the folk-comic body (as can still be observed in traveling shows and in the circus) is *a bodily-topographical logic*. This body's system of movements is oriented around *the top and the bottom*: these are flights and falls (plunges). Its simplest expression, the "*ur-phenomenon*"[141] of folk-comic performance, so to speak, is *cartwheeling*—that is, the continuous relocation of the bodily top to the bottom and back again (or the equivalent mutual relocation of the earth and the sky). This is manifested in the multiple other motions of the simplest sort by the traveling-show clown: *the buttocks persistently seek to take the place of the head and the head that of the buttocks*. Another expression of the same principle is the immense role of *the inside-out, the topsy-turvy, the upside-down* in the movements and actions of the folk-comic body. A deeper and more subtle analysis would discover in many traditional and typical gestures and tricks of this comic performance the same playing out of childbirth that we observed in the little scene we analyzed. Moreover, at the base of the vast majority of these traditional gestures and tricks lies a more or less clearly expressed *playing out of the three main acts in the life of the grotesque body*: *sexual intercourse, death throes* (in their grotesque-comic expression: the dangling tongue, the meaninglessly popping eyes, suffocation, the death rattle, and so on), *and the act of childbirth*. Moreover, *these three acts* very frequently *shade into one another and blend together*, since their external symptoms and expressions coincide to a considerable degree (spasms and tension, popping eyes, sweating, convulsions of arms and legs, and so on). This is *a peculiar kind of comic playing out of the death-resurrection of one and the same body*; this body constantly tumbles into the grave and rises again above the ground, incessantly moving from bottom to top (a common trick—the mock death and unexpected resurrection of the clown). Bodily topography in folk comedy is inseparably interwoven with cosmic topography: in the arrangement of the traveling-show and circus space, in which the comic body moves, we can detect the same topographical components that we find in the construction of the mystery-play stage—the earth, the underworld, and heaven (but, of course, without a Christian meaning being assigned to them, as is typical of the mystery-play stage). One can also detect here the cosmic elements: the air (acrobatic flights and stunts), water (swimming), earth, and fire.[142]

[140] Driesen (1904, 211–212; see also multiple passages in Reich 1903).

[141] The notion of ur-phenomenon (also referred to as "archetypal phenomenon") goes back to Goethe's scholarly works (see, e.g., Pratt and Brook 1996). An ur-phenomenon is a principle of development, expressed in different ways and to different degrees in members of a given category of phenomena. Bakhtin also uses this term in other writings (e.g., Bakhtin 2014, 525; forthcoming-a).

[142] Cf. some relevant passages in Freidenberg (1997b, 186, 197–198, 211–214, 294).

Also grotesque in character is the way that the folk-comic body is shaped. We mentioned in the previous chapter the peculiar image of *Fat Guillaume* (Gros Guillaume), who embodied wine and bread.[143] This layout of Fat Guillaume's figure very tangibly illustrates *the general tendency in laying out folk comedy figures—to efface the boundary line between the body and the thing, between the body and the world, and to accentuate one or another grotesque body part* (the abdomen, the buttocks, the mouth).

In the *verbal* repertoire of folk comedy, we also find everywhere the expression of the grotesque conception of the body: a specific kind of indecency, invective and curses, lowering travesties, the disarticulated body, and so forth. It is quite clear that folk comic performance was one of the most substantial sources of Rabelais's grotesque-bodily images.

A few words about epic grotesque anatomy. The grotesque conception of the body was not at all alien to the ancient and medieval epic or to chivalric romance. Images of the dismembered body and detailed anatomic descriptions of inflicted wounds and blows are entirely ordinary phenomena here. These anatomical descriptions of wounds and deaths even become something canonical for the epic (under the influence of Homer and Virgil). Ronsard, in his preface to *The Franciad*, says: "If you wish a soldier or an officer to die on the battlefield, he must be smitten at the deadliest spot in his body, and for that you must be a good anatomist."[144] However, this grotesque anatomization of the body in the epic is very restrained, as the body here is too individualized and rounded off. Here, there are mere vestiges of the grotesque conception, already defeated by the new bodily canon.

Rabelais's grotesque conception of the body was considerably influenced by Pliny, Athenaeus, Macrobius, and Plutarch—that is, primarily by the representatives of the table talk literature of antiquity. Scattered everywhere in these conversations are substantial images of the grotesque body and grotesque bodily processes. Such phenomena as copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, eating, drinking, death played a leading role in the thematic composition of table talk.[145]

But of all the ancient authors, Hippocrates, or more correctly speaking, the Hippocratic Corpus exercised the greatest influence on Rabelais's grotesque conception of the body. This influence had to do not only with Rabelais's philosophical and medical views, but even with his images and his style. This can be explained by the fact that the thinking of Hippocrates and the other authors of this corpus is still more image-based than conceptual in character.

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[143] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 97).

[144] The quote is from the preface to the 1587 edition of the *Franciad* (Ronsard 1858, 28). Bakhtin's source for the quote, and for the entire paragraph, is Plattard (1910, 135). I am grateful to Phillip John Usher for his assistance in locating the quote.

[145] As noted in the endnotes to the previous chapter, a possible source here is Martin (1931). The authors Bakhtin mentions in this paragraph are indeed frequently cited by Rabelais himself and his commentators (Lefranc et al. 1913–1955; Plattard 1930; and others), and it is likely that Bakhtin was directly familiar with at least some of the ancient sources in question, so he could be integrating

The Hippocratic Corpus is far from homogeneous[146] in its composition: it brings together works originating in different schools; from the philosophical and medical point of view, there are substantial differences in the understanding of the human body, the nature of diseases, and methods of treatment. But in spite of these differences, the fundamental conception of the body in all the works of the corpus remains the grotesque conception: the boundary line between the body and the world is weakened, the body appears in the spotlight primarily in its moments of incompleteness and openness; its outer countenance is not detached from its intrabodily aspect; the exchange between the body and the world is being registered all the time. The organism's various excretions, which played such a major role in the grotesque image of the body, acquire an immense significance.

The doctrine of the four elements was the plane on which the boundary lines between the body and the world were effaced. Here is a brief excerpt from the work titled "Breaths" ("De flatibus"):

> Now bodies, of men and of animals generally, are nourished by three kinds of nourishment, and the names thereof are solid food, drink, and wind (pneuma). *Wind in bodies is called breath, outside bodies it is called air.* It is the most powerful of all and in all, and it is worth while examining its power. A breeze is a flowing and a current of air. When therefore much air flows violently, *trees are torn up by the roots through the force of the wind, the sea* swells into waves, and vessels of vast bulk are tossed about.... For everything between earth and heaven is full of wind, *wind is the cause of both winter and summer*, becoming in winter thick and cold, and in summer gentle and calm. Nay, *the progress of sun, moon, and stars is because of wind*; for *wind is food for fire*, and without air fire could not live. Wherefore, too, air being thin *causes the life of the sun to be eternal* ... How air, then, is strong in the case of wholes has been said; and for mortals too this is *the cause of life*, and the cause of *disease* in the sick. So great is the need of wind for all bodies that while a man can be deprived of everything else, both food and drink, for two, three, or more days, and live, yet if the wind passages into the body be cut off he will die in a brief part of a day, showing that the greatest need for a body is wind.... Now along with much food much wind too must enter, for *everything that is eaten or drunk is accompanied into the body by wind, either in greater quantity or in less.* This is shown by the following fact. After food and drink most people

information from primary sources, rather than relying on a particular secondary source.

[146] "Homogeneous" translates the Russian word *edinstvo*, usually rendered as "unity."

> suffer from *belching*, because the enclosed air rushes upwards when it has broken the bubbles in which it is concealed.(190)[147]

The author of this work considers air the basic element of the body. But he conceives this element, of course, not in its depersonalized physicochemical form but in its *concrete and tangible image-based* manifestations: it is displayed *as a wind* tossing *heavily laden ships*, as *the air directing the movement of the sun and the stars*, as the fundamental *vital element of the human* body. *Cosmic life and the life of the human body are here drawn exceptionally close to one another* and are offered in their *tangible image-based* unity—from *the movement of the sun and the stars* to human *belching*; both the path of the sun and the belching are engendered by the same concrete and perceptible air. In other works contained in the corpus, the same role of an intermediary between the body and the cosmos is played by other elements—water and fire.

In the work "On Airs, Waters, and Places" ("De aere, aquis, locis") there is the following passage:

> The land is affected by [the changes of the seasons] exactly as human beings in general are affected. For where the seasons experience the most violent and the most frequent changes, the land too is very wild and very uneven; you will find there many wooded mountains, plains and meadows. But where the seasons do not alter much, the land is very even. *So it is too with* the inhabitants, if you will examine the matter. *Some physiques resemble wooded, well-watered mountains, others light, dry land, others marshy meadows, others a plain of bare, parched earth.* For the *seasons* which modify a physical frame differ; if the differences be great, the more too are the differences in the shapes.(191)[148]

In this passage the boundary lines between the body and the world are weakened along another line: the line of *kinship and concrete resemblance between man and natural landscape, the earth's terrain.* A treatise of the Hippocratic Corpus called "On the Number Seven," offers an even more grotesque image: *the earth is depicted here as a huge human body; the head is the Peloponnesus, the Isthmus is the spine*, and so on. Each *geographical part of the earth*—a country—corresponds to a particular *part of the*

[147] English: Hippocrates (1923b, 229–237). In this discussion, Bakhtin relies directly on the translation he cites (Hippocrates 1936), rather than on secondary sources.

[148] English: Hippocrates (1923a, 109–111).

(190) I am quoting from the Russian translation: Gippokrat, *Izbrannye knigi.* Translated from the Greek by Prof. V. I. Rudnev, ed., introductory articles, and commentary by Prof. V. P. Karpov. Moscow: Gosudatstvennoe izdatel'stvo biologicheskoy i meditsinskoy literatury, 1936, 264–267.

(191) Gippokrat, *Izbrannye knigi*, 1936, 293–294.

body; all the bodily, everyday-life, and spiritual qualities of these countries' population depend on their *bodily localization.*[149]

Ancient medicine, represented in the Hippocratic Corpus, attributed exceptional significance to all manner of excretions. The image of the body for the physician is first of all the image of a body excreting out of itself urine, feces, sweat, mucus, and bile. Furthermore, all of the patient's bodily phenomena are linked with *the ultimate events in the life and death of the body*: they are perceived as indicators of the struggle between life and death within the patient's body. As indicators and factors in this struggle, *the most minute bodily manifestations turn out to be on the same plane and on equal terms with the constellations of celestial bodies*, with the mores and customs of nations. Here is an excerpt from *Epidemics*, book one:

> *The following were the circumstances attending the diseases, from which I framed my judgments, learning from the common nature of all the particular nature of the individual … from the constitution, both as a whole and with respect to the parts, of* the weather [the state of the heavenly bodies] and of each region; from the custom, mode of life, practices and ages of each patient; from talk, manner, silence, thoughts, sleep or absence of sleep, the nature and time of dreams, pluckings, scratchings, tears; from the exacerbations, stools, urine, sputa, vomit*, the antecedents and consequents of each member in the successions of diseases, and the* abscessions *to a* fatal issue *or a* crisis, sweat, rigor, chill, cough, sneezes, hiccoughts, breathing, belchings, flatulence, silent or noisy, hemorrhages, and hemorrhoids*.[(192)150]

This excerpt is highly characteristic of the Hippocratic Corpus; it unites *on the same plane of life and death indicators* the most multifarious phenomena in terms of their *hierarchical altitude and tone*—from the state *of heavenly bodies to* the patient's *sneezing and flatulence.* Also characteristic is the dynamic sequence enumerating the body's excretions. In Rabelais's novel we often encounter such lists, doubtless inspired by Hippocrates. For example, here is how Panurge praises the beneficial properties of greensauce:

> *It set the belly in apple-pie order, so a man could* belch, fart, poop, piddle, shit, sneeze, sob, cough, throw up, yawn, puff, inhale, exhale, snore, snort, sweat and wangle the ferrule *to his heart's content. In a word, it possessed a thousand advantages.*[151]

[149] Cassirer (1955, 92; and see Bakhtin's summary in Bakhtin 2008b, 800). The pseudo-Hippocratic text in question is also known as "On the Weeks."

[150] English: Hippocrates (1923a, 181). The reference to heavenly bodies appears in the Russian translation Bakhtin is citing where the English translation refers to the weather.

[151] Bk. 3, ch. 2.

[(192)] Gippokrat, *Izbrannye knigi*, 1936, 346–347.

Let us also emphasize the famous "facies hippocratica," the "Hippocratic facies." Here, *the face* is *not the carrier of subjective expression*, nor of the patient's feelings and thoughts, but rather, an indicator of* the objective fact of the nearness of death*.* Speaking through the patient's face is not the patient himself but life-death, belonging to the supra-individual sphere of the body's kindred life*.* The face and body of the dying person cease to be themselves*. The degree of* resemblance to oneself *determines the degree of death's* proximity *or* remoteness*.[152] *Here is a remarkable excerpt from the* Prognostics*:

> In acute diseases the physician must conduct his inquiries in the following way. First he must examine *the face of the patient*, and see whether it is like the faces of healthy people, and especially whether it is *like its usual self.* Such likeness will be the best sign, and the greatest unlikeness will be the most dangerous sign. The latter will be as follows. *Nose sharp, eyes hollow, temples sunken, ears cold and contracted with their lobes turned outwards, the skin about the face hard and tense and parched, the colour of the face as a whole being yellow or black.*(193)

Or:

> But if … eyelid, lip or nose be bent or livid, you must know that death is close at hand. It is also a deadly sign when the lips are loose, hanging, cold and very white.(194)153

Let us finally quote the following remarkable description of *death throes* from the *Aphorisms.* (section 8, aphorism 18):

> The boundary of death is passed when the heat of the soul has risen above the navel to the part above the diaphragm, and all the moisture has been burnt up. When the lungs and the heart have cast out the moisture of the heat that collects in the places of death, there passes away all at once the breath of the heat (wherefrom the whole was constructed) into the whole again, partly through the flesh and partly through the breathing organs in the head, whence we call it the "breath of life." And the soul, leaving the tabernacle of the body, gives up the cold mortal image to bile, blood, phlegm and flesh.(195)154

[152] This is a possible allusion to a recurrent theme and central claim in Bakhtin's thought: a person, a conscious being, the I-for-myself, does not coincide with her/himself. Bakhtin also regularly links this noncoincidence with oneself to liminal states and moments of transition/succession, as he does here.

[153] English: Hippocrates (1923b, 9, 11).

[154] English: Hippocrates (1931, 219–221).

(193) Gippokrat, *Izbrannye knigi*, 1936, 310.

(194) Gippokrat, *Izbrannye knigi*, 1936, 311.

(195) Gippokrat, *Izbrannye knigi*, 1936, 734.

In the indicators of death agony, in the language of the agonizing body, death becomes an integral part of life, acquiring bodily-expressive reality, speaks the language of the body itself; thus, death is entirely drawn into the cycle of life, as one of its integral parts.[155] We note the elements composing the image of death throes we quoted most recently; *the burning up of all bodily moisture*, the concentration of heat *in the places of death*, its evaporation from those places, *the soul departing together with bile and phlegm through the flesh and through the openings of the head.* This vividly demonstrates *the grotesque openness of the body* and the movement of *cosmic elements* within it and out of it. The Hippocratic facies and the description of death throes had, of course, an essential significance for the system of images of *pregnant death.*

We have already pointed out that among other things, Hippocrates's notion of the physician is of vital significance for the complex image of the physician in Rabelais. Let us quote one of the most important definitions of the physician by Hippocrates, from the treatise "Decorum" (*De habitu decenti*):

> Wherefore resume each of the points mentioned, and *transplant wisdom into medicine and medicine into wisdom. For a physician who is a lover of wisdom is the equal of a god.* Between wisdom and medicine there is no gulf fixed; in fact medicine possesses all the qualities that make for wisdom. It has disinterestedness, shamefastness, modesty, reserve, sound opinion, judgment, quiet, pugnacity, purity, sententious speech, knowledge of the things good and necessary for life, selling of that which cleanses, *freedom from superstition [superstitious fear of the gods], pre-excellence divine.*(196)156

We must stress that Rabelais's epoch in France was the only time in the history of European ideologies when medicine was at the center not only of all natural sciences but of the humanities as well and when it was almost identified with philosophy. This phenomenon was observed not only in France: many great humanists and scientists of that time were physicians: Cornelius Agrippa, the chemist Paracelsus, the mathematician Cardano, the astronomer Copernicus. *This was the only era* (of course, there were separate individual attempts at other times as well) *that attempted to orient the entire picture of the world, its entire worldview, precisely to medicine.*(197)157 In that

[155] The words "integral part" render the Russian word *moment.* It is perhaps also possible to read this word in its temporal sense—that is, "death becomes a moment of (or in) life," "death is drawn into life as one of its moments."

[156] English: Hippocrates (1923b, 287). Here, too, there are several differences between how the Russian and English translators interpret the text. The most significant among them, for the discussion that follows, is the mention of the gods in the Russian translation.

[157] Lote (1938, 163), cited in the footnote, is also Bakhtin's source for other claims in the paragraph

(196) Gippokrat, *Izbrannye knigi*, 1936, p. 111.

(197) Lote correctly characterizes this exceptional position of medicine: "*the science of sciences* in the

era, people were attempting to make good on Hippocrates's demand: to transplant wisdom to medicine and medicine to wisdom. Nearly all the French humanists of the time were to some extent involved in medicine and worked on ancient medical treatises.[158] The anatomization of cadavers, still new and very rare at the time, attracted the attention of wide circles in educated society. In 1537 Rabelais performed a public anatomization of the cadaver of a man who had been hanged, accompanying it with commentary. This demonstration of the dismembered body enjoyed huge success. Étienne Dolet devoted a short Latin poem to the event. In the voice of the hanged man himself, his good fortune is glorified: instead of becoming prey for birds, his corpse helped to demonstrate the marvelous harmony of the human body, and the face of the greatest physician of his time was bent over it. Nor was the influence of medicine on literature and art ever as strong as it was in Rabelais's time.[159]

Finally, a few words about the famous "Hippocratic novel."[160] This novel was included in the supplements to the Hippocratic Corpus. It is the first European epistolary novel, the first novel to have an *ideologist* (Democritus) as its hero, and, finally, the first novel to develop the "maniacal theme" (the madness of the laughing Democritus). It is therefore strange that historians and theoreticians of the novel have almost entirely ignored it. We have already mentioned the immense influence this novel exerted on Rabelais's theory of laughter (and more generally on the theory of laughter of his time). Let us also note that the Rabelaisian apology of folly (put into the mouth of Pantagruel), which we quoted above,[161] was inspired by Democritus's ruminations about the madness of those people considered wise in practical matters, devoted to coarse and selfish concerns, who considered him mad himself for laughing at all of their practical seriousness. These people devoted to practical concerns "consider madness to be wisdom and wisdom to be madness."[162] The wisdom-madness ambivalence is here displayed in full force, although in a rhetoricized form. Finally, let me note yet another detail of this novel, which is very important in our context. When Hippocrates, having arrived in Abdera, visited the "mad" Democritus, he found him sitting near his house with an open book in his hands, and around him on the grass lay birds *with*

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so far.

[158] Medical studies by Rabelais himself and other French Humanists of his time are mentioned and discussed in various places in Plattard (1930).

[159] On the dissection and Dolet's poem about it, see Plattard (1930, 185). In addition, it is possible that Bakhtin read the poem itself, reproduced in the Marty-Laveaux edition of Rabelais's works (Marty-Laveaux 1868–1903, 3:377–378), as he adds information about it (in particular, in whose voice it is narrated) not found in secondary sources.

[160] Bakhtin's source on the "Hippocratic novel" is Karpov (1936, 27–32).

[161] Bk. 3, ch. 37, quoted in chapter 3, pp. 258–259.

[162] The phrase "consider madness to be wisdom" appears in Karpov's (1936, 31) retelling of the "Hippocratic novel." Bakhtin's addition of "and wisdom to be madness" does not. Bakhtin may, perhaps, be making a biblical allusion (compare 1 Corinthians 3:18–19).

sixteenth century becomes Medicine, which then enjoyed immense influence and confidence, which it no longer did in the seventeenth century." (*La vie et l'œuvre de François Rabelais*, 1938, 163).

their entrails exposed;[163] it turned out he was writing a treatise on madness and was anatomizing animals in order to discover the location of gall, which, in excess, he considers to be the cause of madness. We thus find in this novel: *laughter, madness, the disarticulated body*; the elements of this complex are, it is true, rhetorically disassociated, but their ambivalence and the mutual connections between them are nevertheless sufficiently preserved even here.

To repeat, the influence that the Hippocratic Corpus had on the entire philosophical and medical thought of Rabelais's age was immense. Of all the *literary* sources of Rabelais's grotesque conception of the body, the Hippocratic Corpus is among the most important.

In Montpellier, where Rabelais completed his medical studies, the Hippocratic school of medicine was predominant. Rabelais himself gives a course there in June 1531 on the Greek Hippocratic text (it was still considered a novelty at the time). In July 1532 he publishes Hippocrates's *Aphorisms* with his own commentary (in the Gryphius publishing house). At the end of 1537 he delivers a commentary on the Greek text of Hippocrates's *Prognostics*. The Italian physician Manardi, whose medical letters Rabelais published, was also a consistent Hippocratic. All these facts speak to the immense place that was occupied in Rabelais's life by Hippocratic studies (especially when the first two books of the novel were created).[164]

Let us, in conclusion, mention as a parallel phenomenon the medical views of Paracelsus.[165] For Paracelsus, the basis of medical theory and practice in their entirety was the absolute correspondence of macrocosm (the universe) and microcosm (man). The first foundation of medicine, according to Paracelsus, is philosophy; the second is astronomy. *The starry sky is also located in man himself*, and the physician who is not familiar with it cannot know man either. The human body according to Paracelsus is extraordinarily rich: it is enriched by everything that exists in the universe. *It is as if the universe is reassembled in all its diversity within the human body: all its elements can be encountered and are in contact with one another on the unified plane of the human body.*[(198)][166]

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[163] The dissected bodies are of animals, not birds in particular (Karpov 1936, 30); birds are mentioned in Karpov's retelling of the story in a potentially relevant context earlier (Karpov 1936, 28).

[164] Plattard (1930, 95, 107–108).

[165] Bakhtin's source on Paracelsus is Cassirer (1963, 111–112). This is the beginning of a segment of the book based primarily on Cassirer (1963), as identified by Poole (1998). Popova (2010a, 622) points out the existence of a manuscript of the book, which included a citation of Cassirer as the source for a quote from Paracelsus.

[166] Lote (1938) dates the images Bakhtin is referring to in the footnote to 1484, 1499, and 1619, so the fifteenth and seventeenth, but not sixteenth, centuries.

[(198)] In Rabelais's age, the conviction that all the parts of the body had a match among the signs of the zodiac was almost universally acknowledged. Depictions of the human body inside which, in its various organs and parts, were placed images of zodiacal signs were very widespread. Such depictions had a philosophically grotesque character. G. Lote adds to his monograph on plate VIII (between p. 252 and

Abel Lefranc links Rabelais's philosophical ideas (especially regarding the immortality of the soul) with the Paduan school of Pomponazzi.[167] In his treatise "On the Immortality of the Soul" (*De immortalitate animae*), Pomponazzi argues for the identity of the soul with life and the inseparability of the soul's life from the body, which creates the soul, individualizes it, orients its activity, fills it with content: outside the body the soul would be entirely empty. For Pomponazzi as well, the body is a microcosm, in which everything that is disjointed and distanced in the rest of the cosmos is collected into one.[168] Rabelais was familiar with Pomponazzi's Paduan school. It should be noted that Étienne Dolet, Rabelais's friend, who studied in Padua, was a pupil and fervent follower of this school.[169]

The grotesque conception of the body in a number of its essential aspects was represented in the humanist philosophy of the Renaissance, first and foremost in Italian philosophy. It was here that the idea of the microcosm, which Rabelais adopted, was formed (on the basis of sources from antiquity). The human body was here becoming the principle with the aid of which, and around which, the destruction of the medieval hierarchic picture of the world was being carried out and a new picture was being created. This point must be examined at somewhat greater length.

The medieval cosmos was constructed according to Aristotle.[170] At its basis lay the doctrine of the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire), each of which was allotted a specific spatial and hierarchical place in the structure of the cosmos. All the elements are subject to a definite order of *top* and *bottom*.[171] The nature and the movement of each element is determined by its relation to the center of the cosmos.[172] Closest of all to this center is the earth; and any part of the earth that is taken apart from it strives to move back to the center in a straight line—that is, it falls to the earth. Opposed to this is the movement of fire: it constantly strives upward, so that it constantly flees the center. Between the locus of the earth and that of fire lies the region to which belong air and water. The basic principle of all physical phenomena is the transformation of one

[167] Probably referring to Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xliv–xlv, liii–liv), though the link to Pomponazzi is, if it is made at all, indirect. It appears that Bakhtin rather uses Lefranc here as an excuse to launch a discussion of Renaissance philosophy based on Cassirer (1963).

[168] Cassirer (1963, 136ff.).

[169] Plattard (1930, 182–183).

[170] The ensuing discussion (this long paragraph and the two paragraphs that follow) is based primarily on Cassirer (1963, 24–26; and see Popova 2010a, 622–624).

[171] Cassirer (1963, 24) has it as "order of 'above' and 'below' " ("Ordnung des 'Oben' und 'Unten' "). The use of "top," or "heights," and "bottom," or "nethers," as central terms in Bakhtin's work on carnival may possibly be traced to this particular passage. As is usually the case with such term borrowings, Bakhtin's use of the terms significantly departs from Cassirer's.

[172] Interestingly, Bakhtin here reverses the order of causation compared to Cassirer's text, where "the nature of every element determines its distance from the central point of the universe" (1963, 24), not the other way around.

p. 253) three such drawings from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, depicting the correspondence of each part of the body to one of the zodiacal signs and these signs' localization within the human body.

element into one of its neighboring elements: fire becomes air, air becomes water, water becomes earth. This mutual transmutability is none other than the law of emergence and decay to which everything that is of the earth is subject. But above the earthly world rises the sphere of heavenly bodies, which is not subject to this law of emergence and decay. Heavenly bodies are composed of a special kind of matter, "quinta essentia." This matter is no longer subject to transformation; it can only perform pure motion—that is, only change of place. Proper to the heavenly bodies, as the most perfect, is movement of the most perfect kind, *circular* movement around the world's center. "The substance of the heavens," that is, quintessence, was the subject of endless scholastic debates, reflected in the fifth book of Rabelais's novel, in the episode that features Queen Quintessence.[173]

Such was the medieval picture of the cosmos. Characteristic of this picture is the *accentuation of space in terms of value*: there was a strict correspondence between *spatial degrees*, moving from the bottom to the top, and *degrees of value*.[174] The higher an element stands in the cosmic stepladder, the closer it is to the "unmoved mover" of the world, the better that element is and the more perfect is its nature. *The concepts and images of the top and the bottom, expressed at once in terms of both space and value, entered the flesh and blood of medieval man.*

In the Renaissance, this hierarchical picture of the world was being destroyed; its elements were transferred into *one single plane*; *the heights and the nethers* were becoming *relative*. The accent was being moved instead to "*forward*" and "*backward*." This transfer of the world onto a single plane, this *replacement of the vertical by the horizontal* (with its parallel strengthening of the *time* factor) was being realized *around the human body*, which was becoming *the relative center of the cosmos. But this cosmos no longer moves from the bottom to the top but, rather, forward, along the horizontal line of time, from the past to the future.* In bodily man the hierarchy of the cosmos was being turned upside-down, canceled; he asserted his significance outside it.[175]

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[173] Bk. 5, ch. 18–25.

[174] The value-ladenness of space is a central theme in Bakhtin's early philosophy (especially Bakhtin 1993).

[175] Cassirer (1963, 25–26) attributes the departure from the Aristotelian vertical hierarchy specifically to Nicolaus Cusanus, while Bakhtin makes a more general claim about Renaissance thought. Moreover, the alternative horizontal hierarchy of "forward" and "backward" appears to be Bakhtin's own addition. The idea of Man as a new center, a new point of orientation for the Renaissance worldview, can be traced to Cassirer's text more generally, but not necessarily to any particular passage.

In "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 2014, 534–535; forthcoming-a) Bakhtin, interestingly, marks this new centering of world coordinates on the individual as a problematic development—quite the opposite assessment from the one found in Cassirer, or the one implied here. We effectively have the idea that the Renaissance's "horizontalization" of the world is the first step in the disintegration of carnival topography. One caveat, though, is that the new relative center of the universe heralded in this paragraph is the human *body*, while in "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*," it is the individual's mind, subjective experience, that turns into the unstable center of the world, a center of a coordinate system that is itself in need of a coordinate system to ground it.

This reconstruction of the cosmos from a vertical to a horizontal centered around man and the human body was very strikingly expressed in Pico della Mirandola's famous speech, "Oratio de hominis dignitate"—that is, "Of the Dignity of Man." This was Pico's introductory oration to the defense of the 900 theses to which Rabelais alludes by making Pantagruel publicly defend 9,764 theses.[176] In this oration, Pico claims that man is superior to all beings, including celestial spirits, because *he is not only being but also becoming*. Man exceeds the boundaries of any hierarchy, for *a hierarchy can define only the rigid, immobile, immutable being, but not free becoming*. All the other creatures remain forever what they were once created as, for their nature is created ready-made and immutable; it receives a one-and-only seed, which alone can develop in them. *But man receives at his birth the seeds of every possible life*. He *himself chooses* the seed that will develop and bear fruit within him: he cultivates it, nurtures it within himself. *Man can become a plant or an animal, but he can also become an angel and a son of God*. Pico retains the language of the hierarchy; he also retains, in part, the old values (he is cautious), but in essence the hierarchy is canceled. Such factors as *becoming*, the availability of *many seeds and possibilities*, *the freedom of choice* among them, lead man out, onto *the horizontal line of time and of historical becoming*. Let us stress that *the body of man unites in itself all the elements and all the kingdoms of nature*: plant, animal, and man proper. *Man is not something rounded off and fully formed; he is not complete and is open*: this is Pico della Mirandola's main idea.[177]

In the "Apologia," also by Pico, the microcosm theme (in connection with notions of natural magic) assumes the form of "*universal sympathy*," thanks to which *man can unite within himself the highest with the lowest, the far with the near,* can penetrate into all the mysteries hidden in the *nethers of the earth*.[178]

Ideas of "natural magic" and "sympathy" between all phenomena were widespread in the age of the Renaissance. In the form given to them by Giambattista della Porta, Giordano Bruno, and especially Campanella, they played a role in the destruction of the medieval picture of the world, overcoming the hierarchical distance between phenomena, bringing together that which was kept apart, erasing the incorrectly drawn boundary lines between phenomena, facilitating the transfer of all of the world's diversity into the single horizontal plane of the cosmos becoming in time.[179]

One should especially note the exceptional extent to which the idea of *panpsychism* was widespread. This idea was argued for by Ficino, who sought to prove that the world is not an aggregate of dead elements but, rather, an animate being in which each part is *an organ of the whole*. Patrizi, in his "Panpsychia," argues that everything

[176] Bk. 2, ch. 10 (mistakenly stated as 9,774 theses in Le Clercq's translation). This is identified as a parodic allusion to Pico's theses in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:123).

[177] Cassirer (1963, 83–86; and see Popova 2010a, 624, who also quotes a relevant paragraph from Bakhtin's summary of Cassirer's book).

[178] Cassirer (1963, 149–150).

[179] Cassirer (1963, 147–148, 150–51).

in the universe is animate—from the stars to the simplest elements. Cardano was no stranger to this idea either; in his theory of nature, he engages to a significant degree in the biologization of the world, viewing all phenomena as analogous to organic forms: metals for him are "buried plants," leading their life underground. Stones also have their development, analogous to the organic one: they have their youth, their growth, and their maturity.[180]

All these phenomena, in some part, could have exercised direct influence on Rabelais, and all of them, at any rate, are akin to one another, are parallel phenomena, stemming from the general trends of the time. All the phenomena and things of the universe—from heavenly bodies to elements—*had abandoned their former places in the hierarchy of the universe and set their course toward the single horizontal plane of the world in its becoming; they began to seek new places for themselves on that plane, to make new connections, to form new adjacencies.* The *center* around which this regrouping of all things, phenomena, and values took place was precisely *the human body*, which united within itself all the diversity of the universe.

For all the representatives of Renaissance philosophy that we named—Pico della Mirandola, Pomponazzi, Porta, Patrizi, Bruno, Campanella, Paracelsus, and others—two tendencies are characteristic: the first is seeking to find in man the entire universe with all its elements and forces, with its top and its bottom; the second is seeking this universe first and foremost in the human body, which draws close together and unites the most distant phenomena and forces of the cosmos. Expressed in this philosophy, in a theoretical language, is the same new feeling of the *cosmos* as *man's own home, unscary to him*, which is also adumbrated in the language of images on the plane of laughter in Rabelais's novel.

Astrology and "natural magic" play a greater or lesser role in the work of most of the above-mentioned representatives of Renaissance philosophy.[181] Rabelais took neither magic nor astrology seriously. He collided and connected phenomena that were set apart and infinitely removed from one another by the medieval hierarchy, decrowned and renewed them on the material-bodily plane, but he used for this purpose neither magic-based "sympathy" nor astrological "correspondence." *Rabelais is consistently materialistic.* But he considers matter only in its bodily form. For him, *the body* is *the most perfect form of the organization of matter* and is therefore *the key to all matter.* The matter from which the entire universe is composed reveals in the human body its genuine nature and all its highest potentialities: *in the human body matter becomes creative, upbuilding, is called upon to conquer the entire cosmos, to organize all cosmic matter; in man matter acquires a historic character.*

In the praise of Pantagruelion—that symbol of human technical culture in its entirety—there is the following remarkable passage:

[180] Cassirer (1963, 148–149).
[181] Cassirer (1963, 98–122, 147).

> Those heavenly intelligences we call the gods, both terrestrial and maritime, took fright, when they perceived how, thanks to the blessed herb pantagruelion, the Arctic peoples, under the very eyes of the Antarctic, crossed the Atlantic Ocean, passed the twin tropics, pushed through the torrid zone, spanned the zodiac, frolicked beneath the equinox, and held both poles within sight on the horizon.
>
> Faced with such a situation, the gods, terrified, said:
>
> "Pantagruel has, by this mere herb, caused us more worry and labor than ever the Aloides or Giants, Otus and Ephialtes, when they sought to scale Olympus. *He will soon marry and beget children* by his wife. This is a fate we cannot forestall, for it has been woven by the hands and shuttles of the three fatal sisters, daughters of Necessity. Who knows but Pantagruel's children will discover some herb equally effectual? Who knows but humans may, by its means, visit the source of hail, the springs of the rain, the forge where lightning is produced? Who knows but they will invade the regions of the moon, intrude within the territories of the celestial signs? Some, then, will settle at the sign of the Golden Eagle, others at the Ram, others at the Crown, others at the Harp, others at the Silver Lion. They will sit down at our divine board, take our goddesses to wife, and thereby themselves become divine." (book 3, chapter 51)

In spite of the somewhat rhetorical and official style of this excerpt, the thoughts expressed in it are not at all of an official sort. Depicted here is the divinization, the apotheosis of man. Earth's space is defeated; the peoples scattered across the entire earth are united by virtue of nautical navigation. All peoples, all members of humanity, have entered, thanks to the invention of the sail, *into real material contact. Humanity has become one.* Thanks to a new invention—that of aviation, which Rabelais anticipates here—humanity will begin to direct the weather, will reach the stars and subdue them to its power. This entire image of the triumph (apotheosis) of humanity is constructed on the purely Renaissance *horizontal line of space and time*; nothing remains of the medieval hierarchic vertical. *The movement in time is guaranteed by the birth of ever new generations.* It is this—*the birth of new human generations*—that had frightened the gods: Pantagruel "*will soon marry and beget children.*" This is indeed the relative immortality of which Gargantua speaks in his letter to his son, Pantagruel.[182] This immortality of the kindred body of humankind is here proclaimed in rhetorical language. But a deep and living feeling for this immortality, as we have seen, organizes all the folk-festive images of the Rabelaisian novel. Not the biological body, which merely repeats itself in the new generations, but precisely *the body of historic, progressing humanity* stands at the center of this system of images.[183]

[182] Bk. 2, ch. 8. On "relative immortality" see Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xliv–xlv).

[183] Cf. the distinction between cyclical and historical time, central to Bakhtin's essay on the chrono-

Thus, in the grotesque conception of the body a new, concrete, and realistic historical feeling was born and took form—not the abstract thought of future times but the living feeling of each man's partaking in the immortal people, creating history.

tope (Bakhtin 1981c). See also note 52 to the introduction.

6. Images of the Material-bodily Nethers in Rabelais's Novel

> Your philosophers who complain that the ancients have left them nothing to write about or invent are obviously very much mistaken. The phenomena you see in the sky, the wonders earth, sea, and river offer you are not to be compared to what is hidden in the womb of earth.
>
> —Rabelais[1]
>
> For the Eternal onward moves in all,
> And into nothing everything must fall,
> If it in being would persist.
>
> —Goethe "One and All"[2]

These words from the fifth book of the novel, chosen as an epigraph to this chapter, were probably not written by Rabelais himself.(199)[3] But they are (if we disregard their style) exceptionally expressive and indicative not only of Rabelais's novel but also of a number of phenomena akin to it in the Renaissance and the period that preceded it. In these words of the priestess of the Holy Bottle, the center of all interests is shifted to the bottom, the depths, the nethers of the earth. The new things and the riches hidden in the nethers of the earth are incomparably greater than everything that exists in the heavens, on the surface of the earth, in the seas and rivers. True wealth and abundance are not high up on top, nor in the intermediate sphere, but only at the bottom.

These words of the priestess are preceded by others:

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[1] Bk. 5, ch. 48.

[2] English translation by Christopher Middleton (Goethe 1983, 243). The Russian translation Bakhtin cites was published in vol. 1 of the (eventually unfinished) "Jubilee edition" of Goethe's complete works (Goethe 1932, 494–495). This volume was given to Bakhtin as a present by his long-time friend pianist Maria Veniaminovna Yudina. Special thanks to Svetlana Anatol'evna Dubrovskaya, of the Bakhtin Center in the University of Saransk, for both helping me get access to this, nowadays very rare, edition and providing additional information about how the book reached Bakhtin.

[3] Cf. Plattard (1930, 273–284).

(199) The style here, of course, is not Rabelaisian. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that the author of the fifth book had a plan and some drafts by Rabelais himself at his disposal, which, perhaps, could have also contained the thought expressed in this excerpt.

> "Go, my good friends; may you depart under the protection of that intellectual sphere, whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere, and whom we call God. When you return to your world, bear witness to your fellow men that the greatest treasures and most wonderful things lie hidden underground." (book 5, chapter 48)[4]

The famous definition, cited here, of the divinity as "*the sphere, whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference—periphery—is nowhere*" does not belong to Rabelais. It is taken from "Hermes Trismegistus," is found in the *Roman de la rose*, in Saint Bonaventure, Vincent of Beauvais, and in other authors; this definition was current in Rabelais's day.[5] Both Rabelais and the author of the fifth book, as well as the majority of their contemporaries, saw in this definition, first and foremost, *the decentralization of the universe*: its center is not at all in heaven but everywhere; *all places are equal*.[6] In this case, this gave the author the right to move the *relative center* from the heavens to *under the ground*, that is, into the place that, according to medieval beliefs, was farthest removed from God—*into the underworld*.(200)

Immediately before uttering the words quoted in the epigraph, the priestess also relates that Ceres foresaw that her daughter would find under the ground—that is in the underworld—more delights and blessings than on earth.

The mention of the figures of Ceres (*the goddess of fertility*) and her daughter Persephone (*goddess of the underworld*) as well as the implied allusion to the *Eleusinian mysteries* are also very indicative of all this *praise of the nethers of the earth*; the entire episode that features the visit to the oracle of the Holy Bottle is a travestying allusion to the Eleusinian mysteries.[7]

The words of the priestess of the holy bottle, which we have chosen as an epigraph, offer an excellent introduction to the theme of this chapter. The mighty movement toward the nethers—into the depths of the earth, into the depths of the human body—permeates the entire Rabelaisian world from beginning to end. All his images, all the main episodes, all his metaphors and similes are seized by this movement into

[4] The chapter of the quote is mistakenly identified as ch. 17 in the 1965 Russian text.

[5] See Plattard (1910, 282) and Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:106). The attribution of this definition of God to Hermes Trimegistes was made by Rabelais himself (bk. 3, ch. 13), though, as Bakhtin's sources here point out, it relies on a commentary to Hermes Trimegistes, rather than on the text itself. Bakhtin's sources also note that this definition of God appeared in the writings of Nicholas of Cusa and Ficino. See also Meister Eckhart's view of God as "a circular ring; the center of the ring is everywhere and its circumference nowhere" (quoted in Cassirer 1955, 250).

[6] This is how Cassirer (1963, 27–28) interprets this definition of God in the writings of Nicholas of Cusa.

[7] In Greek mythology, the Eleusinian Mysteries are said to have been revealed by Demeter (whose Roman equivalent was Ceres) to the people of Eleusis, on her way to find her daughter, Persephone, in Hades.

(200) In Dante's picture of the world, this point of maximum remoteness from the divinity is Lucifer's triple maw gnawing on Judas, Brutus, and Cassius.

the nethers. Rabelais's entire world, both as a whole and in each detail, is directed into the underworld—both that of the earth and that of the body. We have already pointed out that according to Rabelais's initial design, the search for the underworld and Pantagruel's descent into it (Dante's plot on the plane of laughter) were meant to assume a central place in the plot of the entire novel.[8] Moreover, we must acknowledge that although the novel was written over a period of twenty years and, moreover, with long breaks, Rabelais did not depart from his original design and has in essence come close to fulfilling it. Thus, this movement into the nethers, into the underworld, begins with the very design of the novel as a whole and descends into each of its details.

Being directed to the nethers is also inherent in all forms of folk-festive merriment and grotesque realism. To the bottom, inside out, upside down, back to front—such is the movement that permeates all these forms. All of them cast down into the nethers, turn things over, place things on their heads, replace top with bottom and back with front, both in the literal spatial sense and metaphorically.

Being directed into the *nethers* is inherent in brawls, beatings, and blows: they cast down, throw to the ground, trample into the earth. They bury. But at the same time, they are also upbuilding: they sow and harvest (let us recall the bridal blows in Lord Basché's house, the transformation of the battle into a harvest or into feasting, and so on).[9]

The same direction toward the nethers, as we have seen, characterizes curses and terms of abuse; they, too, dig a grave, but this is a bodily, upbuilding grave.

The carnival decrowning, related to blows and invective, is also a lowering and a burial. All of the king's attributes are reversed, turned upside down in the fool; the fool is king of the inside out world.[10]

Finally, lowering is also the fundamental artistic principle of grotesque realism: all that is sacred and sublime is reinterpreted on the level of the material-bodily nethers or else is combined and mixed with the images of these nethers. We spoke of the grotesque seesaw, blending together heaven and earth in its vigorous movement, but the accent is placed not on the upswing but on the downswing of the seesaw: heaven goes down into the earth, not the other way around.

All these lowerings are not abstractly moral, nor are they relative in character; they are concretely topographical, tangible, and palpable; they strive toward the unconditional and positive center—the devouring and birthing principle of the earth and the body. All that is brought to completion, quasi-eternal, limited, obsolete is cast into the nethers of the earth and of the body to die and be born anew.

These movements toward the nethers, scattered throughout the forms and images of folk-festive merriment and grotesque realism, are reassembled in Rabelais's work, are given a new meaning and blended into one single movement, directed into the depths

[8] See bk. 2, ch. 34.

[9] According to Bakhtin's interpretation, respectively, of bk. 4, ch. 12–15, bk. 1, ch. 27, and bk. 2, ch. 25–27.

[10] Cf. Freidenberg (1997b, 98).

of the earth and the depths of the body, where "the treasures and most wonderful things lie hidden and the new things, not written about by the ancients."[11]

We shall examine in detail two episodes of the novel that reveal most vividly both the meaning of this downward movement of all of Rabelais's images and the special character of the Rabelaisian underworld. We have in mind the famous episode featuring Gargantua's arse-wipes[12] in the novel's first book (chapter 13) and the episode of Epistemon's resurrection and his narrative about the world of the dead in the second book (chapter 30).

Let us turn to the first episode.

Little Gargantua tells his father about the new and most efficient kind of arse-wipe ("torchecul"),[(201)13] which he has discovered as a result of many preliminary investigations. He characterizes this best kind of arse-wipe in the following way: "the most royal, the most lordly, excellent and expedient ever seen."[14]

A long series of arse-wipes, which Gargantua tried out, then unfolds. Here is how it begins:

> "Once I mopped my scut with the velvet scarf of a damozel. It was pleasurable: the soft material proved voluptuous and gratifying to my hindsight. Once, too, I used a hood, from the same source and with the same results. The next time it was her neckerchief; again, her crimson satin earpieces, but they were bespangled and begilt with beshitten jewelry that scraped my tailpiece from end to end (Saint Anthony's fire roast the bumgut of the decorator and the decorated!)
>
> I recovered from this, thanks to a page's cap with plume to it like those the Swiss Guards sport.

[11] The text between quotation marks paraphrases part of the quotation from bk. 5, ch. 48 that appears in the epigraph of this chapter. In the 1940 manuscript, where the epigraph was given in French, this text could have been read as a loose translation of text from the epigraph itself into Russian—hence the quotation marks.

[12] The French *torchecul* was rendered as "rumpswab" by Le Clercq. I am using the more straightforward "arse-wipe" here instead.

[13] The Russian word Bakhtin (and Rabelais's Russian translators) uses is *podtirka*, which can be literally rendered as "under-rub" or "under-wipe"; it is indeed used primarily in reference to wiping one's bottom.

[14] Bk. 1, ch. 13. Translation modified (based partly on Screech). The mention of royalty in this context was edited out of the 1542 version of the book (and hence does not appear in most editions and translations). Bakhtin probably used the Moland edition, which preserves the wording from 1535, when quoting the text here (Moland 1884, 28).

[(201)] The Russian word for an arse-wipe sounds more respectable, since it does not include the name of the relevant body part. As a result, the invective and decrowning (but simultaneously reviving) aspect of this word is somewhat weakened.

> Next, spirting behind a bush, I came upon a March cat (Spring birds are best, runs the rune!) and I put it to excellent advantage though its claws mildly lacerated my perinaeum.
>
> But I was fit again on the morrow, for I employed the gloves of my charming mother; they bore odors of sanctity and scuttling.
>
> Sage, then, fennel, dill, sweet marjoram, rose leaves and gourd leaves, cabbage, beets, vine branches and mallow, mullein, scarlet to the butt, lettuce and spinach leaves and then mercury and purslane, nettles and comfrey—from which I caught the bloody Lombardy gripe, but I cured it by applying my codpiece for bum-wad!" (book 1, chapter 13)[15]

Let us consider, for now, this part of the arse-wipes sequence and analyze it.

Turning a thing into an arse-wipe is first and foremost its lowering, decrowning, annihilation. Such invective expressions as "like an arse-wipe," "can't even wipe your arse with it," and others of the same sort (there are very many such expressions) are also quite common in modern languages, but they retain only the negative, decrowning, and annihilating aspect.

However, in the episode of Rabelais's novel that we are analyzing, the renewing aspect is not only alive but even dominant. All these multifarious objects, brought forth to be used as arse-wipes, are decrowned in order to be reborn. Their worn-out image is renewed in a new light.

In this long sequence, each thing emerges absolutely unexpectedly: its appearance is not prepared by anything and not justified by anything; any other thing could have appeared as an arse-wipe just as well. The images of things are here freed from logical connections, as well as from any other meaningful connections; they follow one another here with almost as much freedom as in a "coq-à-l'âne"[16]—that is, in intentionally meaningless jumbles of words and phrases (for example, in the speeches of Lords Kissarse and Bumfondle in Rabelais's novel).[17]

But, once it has emerged in this idiosyncratic sequence, the thing is subjected to an evaluation from the point of view of its totally out-of-character purpose to serve as an arse-wipe. This unexpected purpose forces one to look at the thing in a new way, to assess its fit, so to speak, to its new place and purpose. In this assessment process, its form, its material, its size are perceived anew. The thing is being renewed to our perception.

The point, however, is not this formal renewal, considered on its own: it is but an abstract aspect of the substantive[18] renewal that has to do with the ambivalent

[15] Translation modified (I removed Le Clercq's explanatory interpolations).

[16] Cf. the longer discussion of the *coq-à-l'âne* later in the present chapter and see endnote 126, for further context.

[17] See bk. 2, ch. 11–13.

[18] The word "substantive" here renders the Russian word *soderzhatel'noe*, derived from *soderzhanie*

material-bodily nethers. If we take a closer and more attentive look at the sequence of arse-wipes, we shall see that the choice of things is not entirely random, that this choice has its own logic, albeit an unusual one. After all, the first five things used as arse-wipes—the scarf, the hood, the neckerchief, the earpieces, the cap—are intended for the face and head, that is, for the bodily top end. Their appearance as a torchecul is the literal *relocation of the top into the bodily nethers. The body tumbles. The body turns cartwheels.*

These five arse-wipes belong to a broad circle of themes and images connected to *the substitution of the face by the buttocks and of the top by the bottom. The buttocks* are the "*posterior face*" or "*the face turned inside out.*"[19] World literature and the world's languages are very rich in the most diverse variations of this substitution of the face by the buttocks and of the top by the bottom. One of the simplest and most common verbal and gestural varieties is a kiss on the buttocks. This variety can also be encountered multiple times in Rabelais's novel; for instance, Gymnastes's sword that he uses in the carnivalesque chitterling war is called "Baise-mon-cul"; the name of one of the contending gentlemen in the trial is Baisecul (Lord Kissarse); the sibyl of Panzoult displays her nether parts to Panurge and his companions.[20] The ritual gesture of showing the nether parts of one's body—predominantly the buttocks—is still alive to this day.(202)[21]

("content"). So, literally, this is renewal in terms of *content.*

[19] Both these expressions are euphemistic ways to refer to the buttocks in Russian. English has no direct equivalent that contains the word "face."

[20] Referring, respectively, to bk. 4, ch. 41, bk. 2, ch. 11–13, and bk. 3, ch. 17. The names "Baise-mon-cul" and "Baisecul" (both rendered as "Kissarse" by Le Clercq) are discussed by Sainéan. They are mentioned in two different contexts but are placed next to one another in that book's index (see Sainéan 1922–1923, 2:383, 488, 541).

[21] Sources for the footnote: On the *Roman de Fauvel*, see Driesen (1904, 106, 242–243). On Rabelais offering to kiss the Pope's buttocks, see Moland (1884, xxiii). In the novel, kissing the Pope's buttocks is mentioned in bk. 4, ch. 48. The paragraph on *Solomon and Marcolf* was added to the book in 1965 based on Bobertag (1881, 1:190). The story itself, in the original Latin, can be found in Benary (1914, 43–44; Bakhtin included this book in his 1946 bibliography). In the Latin text, Marcolf speaks about Solomon refusing to look him in the eyes, not to see his face, playing on the similarity between the words *oculus* (eye) and *culus* (buttocks).

(202) This is one of the most widespread decrowning everyday-life gestures in the world. It is also featured in the oldest description of a charivari from the fourteenth century in the *Roman de Fauvel*, where a song about kissing the buttocks is performed and, in addition, some of the participants show their buttocks. One should note that the legend about Rabelais contains a story on this subject: attending a meeting with the Pope, Rabelais purportedly offered to perform the kissing of the Pope's rear end, provided it was thoroughly cleaned first. In the novel itself, the inhabitants of Papimania promise to perform the same rite if allowed an audience with the Pope.

In "Solomon and Marcolf" there is the following episode: One day, Solomon refused to receive Marcolf in audience; to take his revenge, Marcolf lured the king to his house and received him sitting on the stove, with his buttocks sticking out of it: "You did not wish to see my face; behold my buttocks."

Thus, the first five arse-wipes belong to the traditional cycle of themes in which the face is replaced by the buttocks. The movement from top to bottom is embodied in them quite obviously. This movement into the nethers is also emphasized by the fact that between the first four arse-wipes and the fifth, the sequence is interrupted by a term of abuse—"de merde"—hurled at the jewelry and a curse—"Saint Anthony's fire roast the bumgut"—addressed to the jeweler and the lady. This invective that bursts into speech lends dynamicity to the whole movement into the nethers.

What also occurs in this condensed atmosphere of the material-bodily nethers is the above-mentioned formal renewal of the worn-out images of things. Things are literally reborn in the light of the new decrowning use made of them; it is as if they are born anew for our perception; the softness of silk, the satin of the earpieces, the spangles of "beshitten jewelry" on these things emerge in all their concreteness, tangibility, palpability. In the new sphere of lowering, all the distinctive features of their material and form can be detected. To repeat, the image of the thing is being renewed.

The same logic also governs all the rest of the arse-wipe sequence. The sixth arse-wipe is the March cat. The unexpected purpose it is made to serve, to which it is not in the least suited, makes its feline nature, its flexibility, its claws exceptionally palpable. This is a most dynamic arse-wipe. Following it, a little dramatical scene, a merry farce "jouée à deux personnages"[22] (the cat and the cul) is played out before the imagination. Just such a miniature farce scene lies hidden behind almost every image of an arse-wipe. In such a scene, the object plays an out-of-character role, and as a result it comes alive in a new way. A similar revival of an object, situation, office, profession, or mask is commonplace in the commedia dell'arte, in farces, pantomimes, and various forms of folk comic performance. The object or the person is assigned a use or purpose that is uncharacteristic, or even directly opposite to the usual one (due to absentmindedness, misunderstanding, or intrigue), thus provoking laughter and the renewal of that object or person in a sphere of existence that is new for them.

We shall not go over all the arse-wipes one by one, especially as the continuation of their sequence is constructed by Rabelais in groups. The queen's gloves are followed by a long sequence of plants, divided into subgroups: spices, vegetables, salads, medicinal herbs (though their subdivision into groups is not strictly observed). This enumeration is tangible botany. For Rabelais, each name was linked to a fully definite visual image of the leaf, its specific structure, its breadth; he forces us to measure the fit of these leaves to their new purpose and he makes their form and size felt. Botanical descriptions of the tangible type (without strict morphological analysis) were exceptionally fashionable at that time. Rabelais himself gives examples of such botanical descriptions in the chapters about pantagruelion.[23] In the arse-wipes episode he does not describe the plants; he just names them, but their unexpected new purpose makes their visible

[22] An allusion to bk. 4, dedicatory epistle, where Rabelais describes medicine as a "farce jouée à trois personnages" ("a farce with three characters: the patient, the physician and the disease").

[23] Bk. 3, ch. 49–52. On Rabelais's sources and other botanical descriptions in the literature of the time, see Plattard (1910, 154–166).

material likeness appear in the imagination. In describing pantagruelion, he goes the other way around: he offers a detailed description and makes one guess the real name of the plant being described (hemp).

It should be added that the images of greens as arse-wipes are also caught up, albeit to a lesser degree, in this movement from top to bottom. These are, after all, mostly food stuffs (salads, spices, medicinal herbs, leaves and stalks of vegetables) linked to the dinner table and intended for the mouth. Substituting the top by the bottom and the face by the buttocks can be felt here as well, up to a point.

Let me quote, with some abridgment, the further unfolding of the arse-wipes sequence:

> "I utilized sheets, blankets, curtains, cushions, carpets, rugs ...
>
> Next I wiped myself with a head-scarf ... then in turn with a pillow, a slipper, a gamebag and a basket—faugh! What a thorny, unpleasant bum-duster. I also used hats, and, in this connection let me tell you that some hats are smooth, others soft as velure, others shiny as satin, still others crisp as taffeta. But the best of the lot is the shaggy hat, for it makes a finished abstersion of the faecal matter.
>
> I tried a hen, a rooster, a pullet, a hide of calfskin, a hare, a pigeon, a cormorant, a lawyer's briefcase, a woolen hood, a coif and the feathers of a falconer's lure."[24]

Here too, as we see, the arse-wipes are selected by group. In the first group appear bedding items and table accessories. This also involves inversion and movement from the top down. There follows the group of hay, straw, and so on,[25] the material qualities of which are felt vividly in the light of their new purpose. In the next, more motley group, the mismatch between the object and its new purpose, and consequently also the farcically comical nature of putting it to this use, is starkly enhanced (especially in the case of the basket, which is emphasized by an exclamation). In the group of hats we are offered an analysis of the material from the point of view of their new function. In the last group the unexpectedness and the farcical comedy of the incongruous use made of the object is again dominant. The very length and multifariousness of the arse-wipe sequence are not without significance. This is almost an entire little world, immediately surrounding the human being: apparel related to face and head, bedding and table accessories, poultry, food. In the dynamically invective sequence of arse-wipes, this little world is renewed: it has emerged before us anew in the merry farce of its transformation into an arse-wipe. The positive aspect of this decrowning is, of course, the prevailing one. Rabelais loves all these things in their concreteness and

[24] Bk. 1, ch. 13, translation modified.

[25] Bakhtin skipped this sequence of arse-wipes ("I went on with hay, straw, oakum, floss, wool and paper"—bk. 1, ch. 13) in the quotation above.

multifariousness; he runs his fingers through them and touches them anew and in a new manner, touching and testing anew how their material, their form, their individuality, the very sound of their names feel. This is one of the pages of the great inventory list, compiled by Rabelais for the end of the old and the beginning of a new era of world history. As in every annual inventory, it is necessary to palpate each thing separately, to weigh and measure it, to determine its wear and tear; the worth of things has to be reevaluated and marked down; many empty fictions and illusions have to be written off the annual balance sheet, which must be true to real life and clean.

The new-year inventory count is first of all a merry inventory count. All things are palpated anew and reevaluated on the plane of laughter, which has defeated fear and any gloomy seriousness. This is why *the material-bodily nethers—at once materializing and lightening up, merry*—are needed here. They free things from the false seriousness that has ensnared them, from the sublimations and illusions instilled by fear. This is, as we shall presently see, precisely what our chosen episode strives for. The long sequence of decrowned and renewed household items prepares for a decrowning of another order.

Let us move on to the concluding, best arse-wipe, found by Gargantua. Here is this passage:

> "But to conclude: I affirm and maintain that the paragon arse-cloth is the neck of a plump downy goose, provided you hold her head between your legs. Take my word of honor on this score and try it for yourself. You will experience a most marvelously pleasant sensation in the region of your scutnozzle, as much because of the fluffy under plumage as because the bird's warmth, tempering the bumgut and the rest of the intestines, actually reaches your heart and brain.
>
> Do not believe the old women here when they prattle that the felicity of the heroes and demigods in the Elysian fields lies in their asphodel or ambrosia or nectar. On the contrary, they are happy, to my mind, because they swab their rumps with a goose. Duns Scotus, the learned philosopher, holds the same opinion." (book 1, chapter 13)

As part of the depiction of the last arse-wipe, the theme of delight and bliss ("béatitude") makes an appearance. The physiological path taken by this beatitude is also shown: it is born at the anus from the softness of the under-plumage and warmth of the goose; it then makes its way up the rectum, and next via other entrails, reaching the heart and then the brain. And it turns out this delight is precisely the beatitude enjoyed after death, albeit not by the saints and the righteous in the Christian paradise, but by the demigods and heroes in the Elysian fields. *Thus, the arse-wipes episode has led us straight into the underworld.*

The cycle of themes and images involving the posterior face and the substitution of the top by the bottom is most closely linked with death and the underworld. This traditional link was still alive and consciously recognized in Rabelais's time.

When the sibyl of Panzoult shows her nether parts to Panurge and his companions, Panurge exclaims, "I'll be damned if that's not the Sibyl's hole" ("trou de la Sibylle").[26] This phrase designated an entrance to the underworld. Medieval legends know a number of "trous" in various places in Europe, which were considered to be entrances into purgatory or into hell, and which at the same time were assigned an indecent sense in familiar speech. The most commonly known was "Saint Patrick's Hole" in Ireland. This orifice was considered to be an entrance into purgatory, and religious pilgrimages were made to it from all European countries beginning with the twelfth century. This hole was surrounded by legends, to which we shall return in due time. At the same time, Saint Patrick's Hole had an indecent sense. Rabelais himself mentions this place name precisely in its indecent meaning in the "Antidoted Flummeries" ("Fanfreluches antidotées"—the second chapter of "Gargantua"). Mentioned here are "St. Patrick's hole, Gibraltar too, and a thousand other holes."[27] Gibraltar was also called "Trou de la Sibylle" (a name derived from the name of the city of Seville), and this designation was also understood in an indecent sense.[28]

When, after visiting the dying poet Raminagrobis, who had driven away from him all the friars, Panurge bursts out with invective, he, among other things, expresses the following assumption as to the destiny of the impious poet's soul:

> "His soul is headed for thirty thousand basketfuls of devils. Would you like to know where? Why right under Proserpine's cacking stool, in the selfsame infernal bucket into which she voids her enema-induced fecalities, to the left of the giant cauldron of hell, three fathoms from the claws of Lucifer, very close to the dark chamber of Demigorgon." (book 3, chapter 22)[29]

One is struck by the Dante-like precision of hell's laughter-based topography. However, the most terrifying place in it for Panurge is not at all Satan's jaws but instead Proserpine's stool, where she dispenses her excretions. Proserpine's buttocks are, in a way, an underworld in the underworld, the nethers of the nethers, and it is there that impious Raminagrobis's soul is headed for.

Thus, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the arse-wipes episode and the incessant movement from top to bottom that permeates all the images in this episode eventually bring us into the underworld. Rabelais's contemporaries saw nothing unexpected in this. Though, to be sure, we are brought here not so much to hell as to paradise.

Gargantua speaks of the posthumous beatitude of demigods and heroes in the Elysian fields—that is, of the ancient underworld. But, in fact, this is an obvious parody of Christian teachings concerning the eternal beatitude of saints and of the righteous in paradise.

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[26] Bk. 3, ch. 17.

[27] Bk. 1, ch. 2. Translation modified.

[28] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:28).

[29] Translation modified (by removing interpolations).

In this travesty of Christian doctrine, the movement upward is contrasted with the movement downward. The entire spiritual topography is turned upside down as well. It is possible that Rabelais specifically had in mind Thomas Aquinas's teaching concerning beatitude.[30] In the arse-wipes episode, beatitude is born not at the top but in the bottom, next to the anus. The route through which it travels upward—from the anus through the rectum to the heart and brain—is also shown in detail. The parodic travesty of the medieval topography is evident here. The soul's bliss is here deeply immersed in the body, in its very bottom. Thus culminates the movement into the nethers of all the images in this episode.

This travesty of one of the most basic teachings of Christianity is, however, far removed from cynical nihilism. The material-bodily nethers are productive. The nethers give birth, thus assuring humanity's relative historical immortality. What dies in them are all the illusions that have lived out their course of life and are empty, while what is born is the real-life future. We have already seen in the Rabelaisian microcosmic picture of the human body how this body takes care of "those unborn" (qui ne sont encore né) and how each organ sends the most valuable part of its nourishment "to the nether parts" (en bas), to the genital organs.[31] These nethers are humanity's real future. The movement into the nethers that permeates all Rabelaisian images is ultimately directed precisely toward this merry real future. But at the same time, claims to perpetuation laid by the isolated individual—laughable in his limitedness and senility—are subjected to lowering and become the target of laughter. And both these elements—the derisive lowering of the old and of its claims and the merry real future of the human race—are blended into a unified, but ambivalent image of the material-bodily nethers. In the Rabelaisian world, we should not be surprised by the fact that the lowering arse-wipe is not only able to renew the images of particular real-life things, but that it also acquires a relationship to the real future of humanity.

The entire character of the Rabelaisian novel confirms our interpretation of the episode's conclusion. In his novel Rabelais consistently subjects all the aspects of medieval religious doctrine and sacraments to parodic travesty. As we shall presently see, the episode that features Epistemon's resurrection travesties the main Gospel miracles. A travesty of sorts of the Passion and of the sacrament of Holy Communion (the

[30] Bakhtin probably has in mind Aquinas's view that beatitude is derived from God (understood in the Aristotelian sense as the unmoved mover and therefore as the *highest* boundary of the cosmos) and arises from satisfying the desire to attain *intellectual* knowledge of God (for more context on Aquinas's position see, for example, Celano 1987; Stenberg 2016). This reading of the arse-wipe sequence as a parody on Aquinas appears to be Bakhtin's own idea. It is not clear what his source on Aquinas was. There is a potentially relevant discussion in Cassirer (1963, 137–139), which, however does not mention beatitude. A source Bakhtin could in principle have relied on is Gilson (2002, 399–405; the original French came out in 1922; we know Bakhtin was aware of Gilson's credentials as a historian of medieval philosophy, as well as of his contribution to Rabelais studies; see Bakhtin 2008e, 635), though we cannot say whether he actually did use this source or carried this knowledge from other reading, possibly at a much earlier time.

[31] Bk. 3, ch. 4; translation modified.

Last Supper), albeit a cautious travesty, runs like a scarlet thread through Rabelais's entire novel. But this travesty plays an especially important, outright organizing role in the novel's first two books. Its essence can be defined as an inverted transubstantiation: the transformation of blood into wine, of the disarticulated body into bread, of passion into feasting. We have seen various elements of this travesty in a number of episodes we analyzed earlier. In that same microcosmic picture of the human body, Rabelais shows how bread and wine ("Within those two are comprehended every kind of food")[32] are transmuted into blood in the human organism. This is the reverse side of the same travesty. A series of other parodic travesties of various elements of religious doctrine and cult can also be found in the novel. We have already mentioned Panurge's sufferings and miraculous salvation in Turkey.[33] Abel Lefranc considers Pantagruel's genealogy to be a parody of Biblical genealogies.[34] In the prologues we encountered a travesty of ecclesiastical methods of establishing truth and of convincing.[35] This is why the parodic travesty of the posthumous beatitude of the saints and the righteous in the arse-wipes episode should not appear unexpected to us.[(203)36]

In summary, let us draw some conclusions from our analysis of this peculiar episode. Against the background of modern literature, it appears both strange and coarse.

And yet, the arse-wipe is a traditional familiarly lowering laughter-based theme. We have already mentioned a number of highly important parallel phenomena in world literature. However, nowhere is this theme developed in such detail, with such differentiation, and in such an amazingly dramatical laughter-based manner as in Rabelais's work.

Typical of the Rabelaisian interpretation of this theme is not merely ambivalence but even the clear dominance of the positive, reviving pole. This is merry and free play with things and concepts, but this play has a far-reaching goal. That goal is to dispel the atmosphere of gloomy and false seriousness that surrounds the world and all its phenomena, to make the world appear differently—more material, closer to the human being and to his body, more bodily understandable, more accessible, lighter—and to make the word about it sound differently—familiarly merry and fearless. The goal of

[32] Bk. 3, ch. 4 (Screech).

[33] Bk. 2, ch. 14. On this as a possible parody, see Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xlv).

[34] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xlii–xliii), referring to bk. 2, ch. 1.

[35] See Bakhtin's analysis of the prologues, and especially the prologue to bk. 2, in chapter 2 of this book.

[36] This footnote was added in 1965, and what follows after it, up to the end of this section, was added in 1949–1950. The phrase "ever-unfinished wholeness," enclosed in quotation marks, expresses a philosophical notion (the notion of open-ended holism that was current in neo-Kantian thought), which Bakhtin was closely familiar with. However, if this is an allusion to a specific text, I was not able to identify to which.

[(203)] But, of course, all this should not be understood as abstract rationalist atheism. This is a laughter-based corrective to any kind of one-sided seriousness. This is a merry satyr play, which restores the ambivalent "ever-unfinished wholeness" of being.

the episode is thus the already-familiar carnivalization of the world, of thought, and of the word. This episode is not the isolated everyday-life indecency of modern times but an organic part of the large and complex world of folk public-square forms. Only if torn away from this world, considered on its own and in its modern interpretation can this episode seem to be a coarse everyday-life salaciousness. In Rabelais, as always, this is a spark from the merry carnival fire burning down the old world.

The episode is constructed, as it were, like a stepladder: the decrowning (through being turned into an arse-wipe) and the renewal on the material-bodily plane begins with trifles and rises to the very foundations of the medieval worldview. A consistent liberation takes place, from the petty human seriousness of practical daily affairs, as well as from the selfish seriousness of practical life, and from the somber didactic seriousness of moralists and sanctimonious hypocrites, and, finally, from that great seriousness of fear that condensed into the gloomy images of the end of the world, the Day of Judgment, and hell, as well as in the images of heaven and bliss after death. A consistent liberation of word and gesture takes place, from the pitifully serious tones of supplication, plea, submission, devotion, as well as from the menacingly serious tones of intimidation, threat, prohibition. After all, all the official expressions of medieval man were permeated by these tones alone, were poisoned by them. After all, fearless, free, and sober seriousness was unknown to official medieval culture. The familiar public-square carnival gesture of little Gargantua, turning everything into an arse-wipe—decrowning, materializing, and renewing—clears and prepares the ground, as it were, for this new bold, sober, and *human* seriousness.

The familiar manner of making the world one's own,[37] which our episode too is an example of, also prepared the ground for the new scientific way of coming to know the world. The world could not become the object of free, *experimental and materialistic* knowledge so long as it was *kept distant from man by fear and devotion*, so long as it was permeated with the hierarchic principle. The familiar public-square appropriation of the world, of which our episode too is an example, destroyed and canceled all the distances and prohibitions created by fear and devotion, it drew the world closer to man, to his body, allowed one to touch any kind of thing, to palpate it from all sides, to get to its inside, to turn it inside out, to compare it with any other phenomenon, however exalted and holy, to analyze, weigh, measure, and try it on—all this on the single plane of material sensual experience.

This is why *folk laughter culture* and the *new experimental science* organically dovetailed with one another in the Renaissance. They also dovetailed in Rabelais's entire work as writer and scholar.

Let us now turn to the episode of Epistemon's resurrection and of his visions from beyond the grave (book 2, chapter 30).

This is one of the boldest episodes of the novel. Abel Lefranc, through painstaking analysis, has proved convincingly enough that it offers a parodic travesty of two of

[37] *osvoenie mira*. This can also be translated as "mastering the world" or, in a different context, as

the main Gospel miracles: "the resurrection of Lazarus" and "the raising of Jairus's daughter." Some features are borrowed from the description of one of these miracles, and some from the other. In addition, Lefranc also finds here some features taken from the descriptions of the miracles of the healing of the deaf and dumb man and the healing of the man blind from birth.[38]

This parodic travesty is constructed by mixing allusions to the corresponding Gospel texts with images of the material-bodily nethers. Thus, Panurge warms Epistemon's head up by placing it on his codpiece: this is literally a topographical lowering, but at the same time, it is a *healing contact with reproductive force*. Next, Epistemon's body is brought to a place of feasting, which is where the entire event of the resurrection takes place. Then his neck and head are washed with "good white wine."[39] Finally, we also have an anatomizing image ("vene contre vene" and so on).[40] Panurge's oath deserves special mention: he is ready to lose his own head if he does not succeed in resurrecting Epistemon. Let us first of all stress the fact that the subject matter of this oath ("may I lose my own head")[41] matches the subject matter of the episode itself (Epistemon losing his head). Such matching is typical of Rabelais's entire system of images: the subject matter of curses, terms of abuse, swearing, is often repeated by the depicted events themselves (the disarticulation and dismemberment of the body, casting into the material-bodily nethers, drenching in urine). Let us also note yet another feature. Panurge adds that the loss of the head is "a fool's [fol] wager." But the "fool" (fol, sot) in the context of Rabelais (and of his entire historical period) never had the sense of purely negative everyday-life folly; "fool" is an ambivalent term of abuse; moreover, this word is inseparably linked to the notions of festive fools, of jesters and fools in sotties and folk public-square comic performance. The loss of a head for a fool is no great loss, but this is said by the fool himself, and this loss of the head is as ambivalent as his folly (it is the inverse and the bottom side of official wisdom). This tinge of jesting play extends to the entire episode that features Epistemon. *His loss of his head is a purely laughter-based ritual drama.* All the subsequent events of the episode—the resurrection and the visions from beyond the grave—also remain true to the same spirit of a carnival or traveling-show laughter-based ritual drama.

Here is how the revitalization of the resurrected Epistemon is depicted:

> Suddenly Epistemon began to breathe, then opened his eyes, yawned, sneezed, and afterwards let a great household fart. Whereupon Panurge said, Now, certainly, he is healed,—and therefore gave him to drink a

"appropriating the world" (cf. the appropriation of other people's words in Bakhtin 1981a, 293–294).

[38] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xlvii–li).

[39] Bk. 2, ch. 30 (Screech).

[40] "[V]ein against vein, sinew against sinew, and spondyle against spondyle" (bk. 2, ch. 30, transl. Urquhart). Bakhtin quotes the French of the first (1532) edition of "Pantagruel" (reproduced in the Moland 1884 edition).

[41] Bk. 2, ch. 30 (Screech).

> large full glass of strong white wine, with a sugared toast. In this fashion was Epistemon finely healed, only that he was somewhat hoarse for above three weeks together, and had a dry cough of which he could not be rid but by the force of continual drinking.[42]

All the signs of return to life are here placed in a sequence clearly directed toward the nethers: first, the breath of his mouth, then the opening of the eyes (lofty signs of life and the top of the body). Then the lowering begins—yawning (a low sign of life), sneezing (a lower sign still—an excretion, analogous to bowel movement), and finally, breaking wind (the bodily nethers, the buttocks). But it is precisely this last and lowest sign that turns out to be decisive: "A ceste heure est il guery,"[43] Panurge concludes.(204) Thus we have here a full reversal—a rearrangement that puts the bottom in place of the top: not the breath of the mouth, but the wind breaking from the buttocks turns out to be the genuine symbol of life and the real sign of resurrection. In the arse-wipes episode, it was eternal posthumous bliss that was connected to the buttocks, while here it is resurrection.

In the concluding part of the excerpt quoted above, the leading image becomes wine (an image of feasting), which reinforces the victory of life over death, and later also helps Epistemon to rid himself of the dry cough he suffered from for a while.

Such is the first part of our episode—Epistemon's resurrection. All its images, as we see, are permeated by the movement into the nethers. Let us also emphasize that it is framed by images of feasting. The second part of the episode is devoted to Epistemon's visions from beyond the grave—that is, to the underworld. This part is also framed by images of feasting. Here is its beginning:

> And now he began to speak, and said that he had seen the devil, had spoken with Lucifer familiarly, and had been very merry in hell and in the Elysian fields, affirming very seriously before them all that the devils were boon companions and merry fellows. But, in respect of the damned, he said he was very sorry that Panurge had so soon called him back into this world again; for, said he, I took wonderful delight to see them. How so? said Pantagruel. Because they do not use them there, said Epistemon, so badly as you think they do. Their estate and condition of living is but only changed after a very strange manner; for I saw Alexander the Great there amending and patching on clouts upon old breeches and stockings, whereby he got but a very poor living.
>
> Xerxes was a crier of mustard.

[42] Bk. 2, ch. 30 (Urquhart).

[43] "Now, certainly, he is healed" (bk. 2, ch. 30, Urquart)

(204) These words from Panurge are a travestying allusion to the Gospels, where eating is recognized as the sign of the final resurrection of the daughter of Jairus.

Romulus, a salter and patcher of pattens.

Numa, a nailsmith.

Tarquin, a porter.

Piso, a clownish swain.[44]

The image of the underworld is here connected from the very outset with feasting: Epistemon feasted in hell and in the Elysian fields. Next, alongside the feasting, the underworld provides Epistemon with a most entertaining spectacle of the posthumous life of the damned. This life is organized as a carnival in its purest form. Everything here is the opposite of the world above. All who are highest are decrowned; all who are lowest are crowned. The enumeration offered by Rabelais is nothing other than a series of carnivalesque outfit changes by the heroes of antiquity and the Middle Ages. The posthumous status and profession of each hero is a lowering of him, sometimes in the literal topographical sense of the word: for instance, Alexander the Great is busy mending old breeches. Sometimes the posthumous status of the hero is simply a realized term of abuse, for instance, Achilles is "scabby."[45] From a formal point of view, this sequence (we have quoted only its beginning here) is reminiscent of the arse-wipes list: the new assignments and occupations of the heroes in the underworld emerge just as unexpectedly as do the things used as arse-wipes, and the very incongruence of these new conditions produces the same effect of farcical reversal and inversion. Of special interest is this piece of detail. Pope Sixtus's occupation in the underworld is treating syphilis. This gives rise to the following dialogue:

"What!" exclaimed Pantagruel. "Do they have the pox in hell?"

"Of course," Epistemon informed him. "I never saw so many pox-bloods in my life. There must be over a hundred million. You see, those who never caught it in this world contract it in the other!"

"God's body! I'm safe!" cried Panurge. "I've been all the way to the hole of Gibraltar and the utmost bounds of the Pillars of Hercules, and I've gathered of the ripest, too!"

Let us emphasize, first of all, the logic of reversal (of going the other way around): those who did not have syphilis on earth contract it in the underworld. Recall the special character of this "merry" disease, which has to do with the bodily nethers. Let us finally emphasize in Panurge's words the geographical images of the bodily nethers—"Hole of Gibraltar" and "the Pillars of Hercules"—which were common in everyday speech during that historical period. Let us note the western direction of

[44] Bk. 2, ch. 30 (Urquhart).

[45] Bakhtin here translates directly from the French (of the editions he worked with; other editions differ on this): "Achilles teigneux." This translation, while there is nothing wrong with it, does not match

these geographical points: they were located on the western boundaries of the ancient world, and through them passed the route to the underworld and to the Islands of the Blessed.[46]

The carnivalesque character of the decrownings reveals itself clearly in the following excerpt:

> After this manner, those that had been great lords and ladies here, got but a poor scurvy wretched living there below. And, on the contrary, the philosophers and others, who in this world had been altogether indigent and wanting, were great lords there in their turn. I saw Diogenes there strut it out most pompously, and in great magnificence, with a rich purple gown on him, and a golden sceptre in his right hand. And, which is more, he would now and then make Alexander the Great mad, so enormously would he abuse him when he had not well patched his breeches; for he used to pay his skin with sound bastinadoes. I saw Epictetus there, most gallantly apparelled after the French fashion, sitting under a pleasant arbour, with store of handsome gentlewomen, frolicking, drinking, dancing, and making good cheer, with abundance of crowns of the sun.[47]

The philosophers (Diogenes and Epictetus) play here the role of *carnival fools who are now elected kings*. The *royal attire—Diogenes's purple gown and scepter*—is emphasized. Alongside this, the beating with a stick, which is inflicted on the "*old*" *decrowned king—Alexander the Great*—is also not forgotten. The image of Epictetus keeps to a different, more gallant style: he is the feasting and dancing *festive king*.

The rest of this vision from beyond the grave is developed in the same carnivalesque festive spirit. The writer Jean Lemaire (head of the "rhétoriqueurs" school), who in life was an enemy of the popes,[48] plays the role of a pope in jest in the underworld. Among his cardinals are former jesters—Caillette and Triboulet. Former kings and popes kiss Jean Lemaire's feet, while he orders his cardinals to beat them up.

Ritual lowering gestures are not omitted either. When Xerxes, who sells mustard, demands too high a price, Villon urinates into his mustard. Perceforest urinates against a wall on which "Saint Anthony's fire" is depicted. For this sacrilege, the Franc-Archer of Baignolet, who has become an inquisitor in the underworld, wanted to burn him alive.

As we said, feasting frames the entire episode. As soon as Epistemon finished his story: "Come, said Pantagruel, let us now make ourselves merry one bout, and drink, my lads, I beseech you, for it is very good drinking all this month."[49]

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any of the published translations into either Russian or English.

[46] See the discussion of Pantagruel's journey in bk. 4 and the discussion of the *Voyage of St. Brendan* later in this chapter (based on Lote 1938).

[47] Bk. 2, ch. 30 (Urquhart).

[48] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 4:320).

[49] Bk. 2, ch. 30 (Urquhart).

During the feasting, to which Pantagruel and his companions immediately proceed, the fate of the defeated King Anarchus is decided: Pantagruel and Panurge make the decision to prepare him, already here on earth, for the condition that he, as a king, will occupy in the underworld—that is, to train him in a lowly trade.

The carnival decrowning of King Anarchus, which we have already discussed,[50] is depicted in chapter 31. Panurge changes the king's clothes into a fool's costume (the costume is described in detail, and, moreover, Panurge accounts for some of its particular features using wordplay) and makes him into a vendor of greensauce. This carnival decrowning should thus reproduce such decrownings as take place in the underworld.

It remains for us to make some points in summary of our analysis.

The image of the underworld in this episode has a clearly expressed *folk-festive character. The underworld is feasting and a merry carnival.* We also find here all the lowering ambivalent images of *drenching in urine, beating, changing dress, verbal abuse*, with which we are already familiar. The movement into the nethers, inherent in all Rabelaisian images, leads to the underworld, but the images of the underworld itself are also imbued with the same movement to the nethers.

The underworld, in the Rabelaisian system of images, is *the nodal point at which the main highways of this system—carnival, feasting, battles and beatings, verbal abuse and curses—intersect.*

What accounts for the fact that the image of the underworld holds such a central position, and wherein lies its philosophical meaning?

It is, of course, impossible to answer this question by means of abstract reflection. It is necessary, first, to turn to Rabelais's sources and to the tradition of depicting the underworld that extends throughout the Middle Ages and culminates in Renaissance literature; second, we must reveal the *folk elements* in this tradition; third and finally, we must seek to understand the meaning both of the tradition in question, and of the image of the underworld itself, in light of the major and most topical tasks of Rabelais's time.

But first a few words about sources from antiquity. Here are the ancient works that offer images of the underworld: the eleventh book of *The Odyssey*; *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, and *The Republic* by Plato; "The Dream of Scipio" by Cicero; Virgil's *Aeneid*; and, finally, a series of works by Lucian (the most important being "Menippus, or the Descent into Hades").[51]

Rabelais knew all these works, but, with the exception of Lucian, any talk of their having anything like a substantial influence on him can be dismissed right away. Indeed,

[50] See chapter 2 (briefly, as part of the discussion of the cries of Paris) and chapter 3.

[51] Lote (1938, 131–132; see Bakhtin's summary in Bakhtin 2008b, 761; see a column-by-column comparison of the summary and the 1940 manuscript text in Popova 2008a, 868–869). Bakhtin returns to this passage from Lote later in the section, after a digression focusing on Lucian.

This list of sources is limited, implicitly, to the Greek and Roman world. But even within these limits, it is interesting that Bakhtin fails to mention images of the underworld in Greek comedy. In particular, *The Frogs* by Aristophanes is conspicuously missing from the list.

even Lucian's influence is usually greatly exaggerated.[52] In reality, the resemblance between "Menippus, or the Descent into Hades" and the episode from Rabelais that we have looked into is limited to purely external traits.[53]

The underworld is depicted as a merry spectacle by Lucian too. The element of changing dress and roles is emphasized. Indeed, the appearance of the underworld leads Menippus to compare human life as a whole to a theatrical procession:

> So as I looked at them it seemed to me that human life is like a long pageant, and that all its trappings are supplied and distributed by Fortune, who arrays the participants in various costumes of many colours. Taking one person, it may be, she attires him royally, placing a tiara upon his head, giving him body-guards, and encircling his brow with the diadem; but upon another she puts the costume of a slave. Again, she makes up one person so that he is handsome, but causes another to be ugly and ridiculous. I suppose that the show must needs be diversified.[54]

The condition of the mighty of this world—former kings and rich people—is the same in Lucian's underworld as in Rabelais's:

> But you would have laughed much more heartily, I think, if you had seen our kings and satraps reduced to poverty there, and either selling salt fish on account of their neediness or teaching the alphabet, and getting abused and *hit over the head* by all comers, *like the meanest of slaves*. In fact, when I saw Philip of Macedon, I could not control my laughter. He was pointed out to me in a corner, *cobbling worn-out sandals for pay*! Many others, too, could be seen begging at the cross-roads—your Xerxeses, I mean, and Dariuses and Polycrateses.[55]

Despite this external similarity, what a deep essential difference there is between Rabelais and Lucian! *Laughter in Lucian's text is abstract, merely derisive, devoid of any genuine merriment*. Scarcely anything remains in his underworld of the ambivalence of saturnalian images. The traditional images are rendered bloodless and made to serve the abstract moral philosophy of Stoicism (moreover, one that has degenerated and was distorted by late Cynicism). Lucian's former kings are also beaten up: they

[52] Cf., for example, the commentary in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:li, 4:306).

[53] Compare this to the much more positive evaluation of Lucian, and that of the genre of Menippean satire (not even mentioned in this book), in the fourth chapter, added to the 1963 edition of Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984, 101–180). This change in focus can be traced to Bakhtin's reading of Hirzel (1895), probably in early 1941, mere months after completing the 1940 manuscript. It is interesting that Bakhtin decided not to edit the more critical treatment of Lucian here as part of any of the revisions the text underwent after 1940.

[54] Lucian (1925, 99).

[55] Lucian (1925, 103).

are "hit over the head by all comers, like the meanest of slaves." But these blows are *the everyday-life beatings of the slave-owning system*, transferred into the underworld. Almost nothing is left of the saturnalian ambivalent image of the king-slave. These blows are simply blows, devoid of any upbuilding force: they aid neither in the birth nor in the renewal of anything. Feasting images are similarly unequivocal and everyday in character. They eat in Lucian's underworld too, but this eating has nothing in common with Rabelaisian eating. Former kings cannot enjoy it, but neither do the former slaves and paupers enjoy it. They simply eat in the underworld, but nobody feasts there; the philosophers do not feast either, they only laugh—with naked derision—and mock the former kings and rich people. This is the most important thing: for Lucian, the material-bodily principle serves the purposes of a purely formal lowering of high images; it is used simply to make them everyday-life in character; it is almost entirely devoid of ambivalence; it does not renew and does not bring about rebirth—hence also the deep difference in tone and style between Lucian and Rabelais.

One should place at the very outset of the medieval tradition of depicting the underworld the so-called "Apocalypse of Peter."[56] This work was composed by a Greek author at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century CE; it is a compendium of notions about the world of the dead that were current in antiquity but then adapted to Christian doctrine. The work itself was not available to readers in the Middle Ages,(205) but it set the template for the fourth-century "Visio Pauli" ("The Apocalypse of Paul").[57] Various editions of this "Visio" were very widespread in the Middle Ages and have substantially influenced the mighty torrent of Irish legends about hell and paradise, which had played an immense role in the history of medieval literature.

Among the Irish legends about the underworld, those connected with "Saint Patrick's Hole" are of special significance. This orifice led into purgatory. According to legend, it was first shown by God to Saint Patrick, who lived in the fifth century. Around the middle of the twelfth century, the monk Henri de Saltray depicted the descent into purgatory of a certain knight in his *Treatise on Saint Patrick's Purgatory.* The famous *Vision of Tnugdalus*[58] was also written at about the same time. After his death, Tnugdalus journeyed into the underworld but later returned to the world of the living in order to tell people about the terrifying spectacles he had witnessed. These legends aroused extraordinary interest and brought to life a whole series of

[56] Bakhtin resumes his summary of Lote. His source for the next several pages is Lote (1938, 132–37). Bakhtin's summary, which also includes some tangents and a link to an upcoming discussion of passages in Driesen (1904), can be found in Bakhtin (2008b, 761–766; and see Popova 2008a, 870–876).

[57] This text (one of the New Testament apocrypha) is known in English as "The Apocalypse of Paul," but Bakhtin refers to it as "Paul's Vision" (a literal translation of the Latin "Visio Pauli").

[58] Lote (1938, 132), and Bakhtin following him, spells "Tnugdalus" as "Tungdal," which is at odds with how the text is referred to in most sources. There is a notable Middle-English translation in verse of the *Visio Tnugdali*, titled *The Vision of Tundale.*

(205) It was first discovered in an Egyptian burial in 1886.

works: *Legend of the Purgatory of St. Patrick* by Marie de France,[59] *On Contempt for the World* by Pope Innocent III,[60] *The Dialogues of St. Gregory*,[61] and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

The images of visions from beyond the grave, borrowed from "The Apocalypse of Paul," reworked and enriched by the mighty Celtic imagination, grew extraordinarily in size and detail. Grotesque images of the body became especially starkly enhanced. The number of sins and means of punishment increased as well (from seven to nine and even more). In the construction of the images of the posthumous sufferings themselves, it is easy to detect the specific logic of verbal abuse, of curses and invective, the logic of bodily topographical negations and lowerings. These images of sufferings are often structured as the realization of metaphors found in terms of abuse and in curses. The body of the tormented sinners is presented in its grotesque aspect. The manifest connection with devouring comes to the fore very frequently; some sinners are roasted on a spit; others are forced to drink molten metals. In the *Vision of Tnugdalus* Lucifer is already depicted chained to a red-hot grill, on which he is being roasted while he himself devours sinners.

There was a special cycle of legends about the underworld connected with the figure of Lazarus. According to one ancient legend, Lazarus, during Christ's feast at the house of Simon the Leper, related the mysteries of the otherworld, which he had seen. There was a sermon by pseudo-Augustine stressing Lazarus's exceptional position as the sole among the living who had seen the mysteries of the otherworld. And in this sermon Lazarus relates his visions from beyond the grave during a feast. In the twelfth century, the theologian Petrus Comestor also foregrounds this testimony from Lazarus. At the end of the fifteenth century, this role that Lazarus plays acquires special significance: the figure of Lazarus penetrates into mystery plays, and Lazarus's feasting-related narrative becomes especially widespread thanks to its inclusion in mass-market popular calendars.[62]

All these legends about the kingdom of the dead, which contained substantial grotesque bodily elements and images of feasting, determined the themes and imagery of the diableries, where precisely these elements received elaborate development.

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[59] This is a translation of the above-noted "Treatise on Saint Patrick's Purgatory," but is indeed listed separately by Lote (1938, 133).

[60] Probably referring to *De miseria condicionis humane* (also referred to as *Liber de contemptu mundi, sive De miseria humanae conditionis*) by Pope Innocent III, though Lote (1938, 133) might have instead had in mind the better-known *De contemptu mundi* by Bernard of Cluny. Both texts contain descriptions of the damned in hell.

[61] If the reference is to the *Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great* (Lote [1938, 133] only gives us the title in French, without further details), this appears to be a mistake by Lote (carried over into Bakhtin's text), as this is a sixth-century text that does not contain graphic descriptions of the underworld. Most likely, Lote had a different text with a similar title in mind, though I was not able to identify clear candidates.

[62] Lote (1938, 133–134).

The laughter-based, comic aspect of the grotesque images of the underworld was also starkly enhanced in the diableries.(206)[63]

What influence did these legends and the literary works connected with them have on the Rabelaisian image of the underworld?

In the depiction of the underworld in Rabelais, as we have seen, two elements are brought to the fore: first, images of feasting (feasting frames Epistemon's narrative, he himself feasts in the underworld, the feasting of philosophers, the sale of foodstuffs in the kingdom of the dead) and, second, the consistently carnivalesque character of the underworld.

The former element is present in the legends and writings of the Middle Ages named above. Already in *The Vision of Tnugdalus* (twelfth century) Lucifer devours sinners while, as we noted, himself being constantly roasted on a huge hearth grill to which he is chained. Lucifer was sometimes depicted this way on the mystery-play stage. We also encounter this image in Rabelais: In "Pantagruel" he mentions that Lucifer one day broke out of his chains because of a colic caused by eating a bailiff's soul fricassee for breakfast.[64] In the "Fourth Book" (chapter 46) there is a detailed discussion coming from a devil, comparing the flavor of various souls: which are good for breakfast, which for lunch, and how precisely they are to be prepared. Apparently, Rabelais's immediate source were two poems, "Salut d'Enfer" by an unknown author and "Songe d'Enfer" by Raoul de Houdenc. In both poems the authors depict their visit to Beelzebub and their participation in the devils' feasting. Already here there is a detailed development of sinner cuisine. Thus, the hero of "Salut d'Enfer" is served a pot-au-feu made from a usurer, a roasted money counterfeiter, and a lawyer in sauce. Raoul de Houdenc offers an even more detailed description of *hell's cuisine*. Like Epistemon, both poets enjoy

[63] The footnote involves somewhat of a mix-up. It is based on the text in Lote (1938, 135), as well as on reproductions of paintings found in plates placed between pp. 132 and 133 and between pp. 134 and 135 of Lote (1938). The first of these reproductions is of the two side panels in Bosch's famous *Garden of Earthly Delights*. The right-hand panel, usually thought of as depicting hell, contains one image of a creature with the head of a bird devouring (and then also excreting) human figures. The claim that the painting has details depicting themes from the *Vision of Tnugdalus* is made by Lote, based in part on the fact that there exists a (slightly modified) copy of that panel with "Visio Tondaly" written on it by the painter (the copy is dated 1711, though). The possibility that descriptions contained in the *Vision of Tnugdalus* were a source for Bosch's images in that panel has been raised by other authors as well (see Gibson 1973, 97–98). As for Lucifer tied to the grill, this detail appears in the image reproduced on the other plate in Lote's book. That image, however, is a page from the fifteenth-century illustrated manuscript "Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry" (folio 108r). The manuscript is not, and never was, attributed to Bosch.

[64] Bk. 2, ch. 4.

(206) As we said, these grotesque-comic elements were already given in an embryonic form in the *Vision of Tnugdalus*; they also had an influence on visual art; for instance, the painter Hieronymus Bosch, in one of his panels based on themes from Tnugdalus, created circa 1500, stressed precisely the grotesque aspects of the "Vision" (the devouring of sinners by Lucifer, chained to the grill of a hearth). In the Cathedral in Bourges there are also thirteenth-century frescoes, where depictions of posthumous life similarly bring forward grotesque comic elements.

a very courteous welcome in hell and, like Epistemon, both converse straightforwardly with Beelzebub.

The influence on Rabelais of the cycle of legends connected to the figure of Lazarus is equally beyond doubt. We have already pointed out that the entire Epistemon episode is in part a parody of the Gospel miracle of resurrecting Lazarus. Epistemon's narrative about his visions of the afterlife, like Lazarus's legendary narrative, is framed by images of feasting.

Such are the sources of the first—feasting—element in the Rabelaisian image of the underworld. But the second—carnival—element is also outlined, in embryonic form, in the same sources.

The carnivalesque festive element is very powerfully present in the two poems referred to above. But it is also present already in the most ancient Celtic legends. The underworld is the defeated and condemned evil of the past. To be sure, this evil is thought through and depicted from the official Christian point of view; the negation is, therefore, somewhat dogmatic. But in the legends this dogmatic negation is closely interwoven with folkloric notions about the nethers of the earth as a maternal womb, at once devouring and giving birth, as well as with notions of the past as a merry bogeyman being ousted. The folkloric conception of merry time could not but penetrate into images of the underworld, as they are images of the defeated evil of the past. This is why, as early as in the *Vision of Tnugdalus*, Lucifer is depicted, essentially, as a merry bogeyman, as an image of the defeated old power and of fear before that power. This is why these legends could fecundate the two fairly festive poems referred to above, as well as the fully carnivalesque world of the diableries. The defeated evil, the defeated past, the defeated old power, defeated fear—all this in its incessant transpositions and various hues, was able to beget both the gloomy images of Dante's inferno and Rabelais's merry underworld. Finally, the very logic of the nethers, the logic of the contrary, of the inside-out, of the other way around, irresistibly drew the images of the underworld toward a carnival-grotesque design and interpretation.

But yet another factor at play here must be taken into consideration. The gods of ancient mythology, which Christianity had demoted to devils, and the images of Roman Saturnalia, which persistently lived on in the Middle Ages, were cast by the orthodox Christian consciousness down into the underworld and have introduced their Saturnalian spirit into it.[65]

One of the oldest surviving descriptions of carnival is given in the form of a mystic vision of the underworld. The eleventh-century Norman historian Orderic Vitalis depicts in detail a vision by a priest named Gauchelin, who on January 1, 1091, returning at night from a visit to a sick man, saw "Erlking's host" passing along a deserted road. Erlking himself is depicted as a giant, armed with a huge mace (his figure is reminiscent of Heracles). The host he leads is motley. Walking in the front are people dressed

[65] This paragraph serves as a transition between the passage based on Lote (1938, 132–137) and the upcoming passage, for which Bakhtin explicitly cites Driesen (1904, 24–30) as his source.

in animal skins and carrying all kinds of kitchen and household utensils in their hands. Following them are people carrying fifty coffins, with tiny people with large heads and large baskets in their hands sitting on them. Then follow two Ethiopians carrying a huge stake, on which a devil tortures a man by stabbing him with fiery spurs. Next follow a great number of women: they ride on horses, bouncing on saddles studded with red-hot nails; the women keep leaping up and falling back onto these nails; among them were noble ladies, including some who were still alive. Then followed the clergy and, at the end of the procession, warriors enveloped in flames. Thus, Gauchelin describes the procession. It turns out that all these are the souls of dead sinners. Gauchelin talks to three of them, including his deceased brother. It is from them that he learns that this is a procession of wandering souls from purgatory who are expiating their sins.

Such is Gauchelin's vision.(207) Of course, it contains neither the word, nor the concept of, "carnival." Both Gauchelin himself and the historian narrating about him consider this to be a vision of "Erlking's Host." This mythological notion (analogous to the "wild host," the "wild hunt," and sometimes "King Arthur's host")[66] is here given a Christian interpretation: these are souls from purgatory wandering upon the earth. Christian notions determine the tone, character, and some particular details in Orderic's narrative: Gauchelin's terror, the laments and moans of the people in the procession, the punishments to which individual participants of the procession are subjected (the man tortured by a devil on the stake turns out to be the murderer of a priest, the women astride the saddles studded with red hot nails are being punished for debauchery). The atmosphere here is thus far from carnivalesque. But at the same time, the carnival character of individual images and of the procession as a whole is beyond doubt. In spite of the distorting influence of Christian ideas, the traits of carnival (or the Saturnalia) come through with perfect clarity. We see here *the image of the giant*, characteristic of the grotesque body, who is a regular participant of all processions of the carnival type (we noted above that his figure brings to mind the image of Heracles, especially because of his mace; the figure of Heracles in the tradition of antiquity was closely tied to the underworld). The Ethiopians embody the same grotesque conception too. The image of newborn babes sitting on top of coffins is exceptionally characteristic: the ambivalence of birthing death is here clearly visible through the Christian coloration given to the image. The presence in the procession of lecherous women ("dames douces")[67] with their indecent bodily movements (depicting the coitus; let us recall the Rabelaisian metaphor for the sexual act, borrowed from

[66] The connection to the Wild Hunt motif is made by Driesen in many places in his book, including the passage on which Bakhtin bases his retelling here. For the reference to King Arthur, see Driesen (1904, 90–91).

[67] This is an allusion to another text (Adam de la Halle's *Jeu de la feuillée*, discussed in chapter 3, also based on Driesen); the words "dame douce" make no appearance in Orderic Vitalis's text.

(207) Gauchelin's "vision" is analyzed in detail by O. Driesen, *The Origins of Harlequin*, 1904, 24–30.

the domain of horseback riding, the "saccade")[68] should also be interpreted on the plane of the material-bodily nethers, setting aside their Christian interpretation. The people wearing animal skins and armed with kitchen and household utensils are, of course, entirely carnivalesque in character. The flame surrounding the warriors, too, is a carnival fire that burns down and renews the scary past (cf. the "moccoli" of the Roman carnival). The element of decrowning is also retained here: after all, all these sinners are former feudal lords, knights, noble ladies, and clerics; now, however, they are decrowned souls, deprived of their lofty positions. Gauchelin converses with a viscount who is being punished because he was an unjust judge; another feudal lord is punished for unjustly taking away a mill from his neighbor.

This New Year vision also has something about it of the "procession of decrowned gods," especially in the antique countenance of Erlking himself, with his mace. It is known that carnival processions were sometimes interpreted in the Middle Ages, especially in Germanic countries, as processions of decrowned and downcast pagan gods. The notions of a higher power that has been cast down, and of the truth of bygone days, has merged with the very nucleus of carnival images. It is, of course, also possible that the Saturnalia had exerted an influence on the development of these medieval notions. The gods of antiquity, to a certain extent, play the role of the decrowned king of the Saturnalia. Tellingly, as late as in the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of German scholars argued for the Germanic origin of the word "carnival," deriving it from "Karne" (or "Harth"), which means "a consecrated place" (that is, a pagan community—the gods and their priests), and from "val" (or "wal"), which means "dead," "slain." According to this explanation, therefore, carnival had the sense of a "procession of the deceased gods."[69] We bring in this explanation merely to indicate how persistent was the notion of carnival as a procession of decrowned gods.

Orderic Vitalis's unsophisticated account testifies to how closely the images of the underworld were interwoven with images of carnival, even in the minds of the God-fearing Christians of the eleventh century. Toward the end of the Middle Ages the forms of diableries develop out of this interconnection, when the carnival element finally emerges victorious and turns the underworld into a merry folk public-square spectacle.

A parallel manifestation of the same process of the "carnivalization of the underworld" is the so-called "hell" that featured in almost all festivities and carnivals in the Renaissance.[70]

This "hell" assumed highly diverse forms. Here, for example, are its metamorphoses in Nuremberg carnival processions in the sixteenth century (they were recorded in detail): a house, a tower, a castle, a ship, a windmill, a dragon spitting fire, an elephant with people on top of it, a child-eating giant, an old devil devouring wicked wives, a

[68] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:367), Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:305).
[69] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 311).
[70] Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 308).

stall with all manner of junk (for sale),[71] the mountain of Venus,[72] a bread oven for baking fools, a cannon for shooting at quarrelsome women, a bird trap for catching fools, a galley with monks and nuns, a wheel of fortune spinning fools, and so forth. Bear in mind that this contraption, stocked with fireworks, was usually burned in front of the town hall.

All these variations of the carnival "hell" are ambivalent, and they all reflect, in some form and to some extent, the aspect of fear defeated by laughter. They are all—in a more or less harmless form—carnival dummies of the old, outgoing world; at times these are outright laughable bogeymen, while at other times, what is emphasized in them is how obsolete, unnecessary, absurd, stupid, laughably pretentious, and so on the outgoing world is. All this is analogous to that lowering junk cluttering the Rabelaisian underworld: the old breeches that Alexander the Great fiddles around with, the piles of rags and waste that the former usurers rummage in, and so on. This world is committed to the flames, the reviving flames of carnival.

All that we have said above casts some light on the philosophical significance of underworld images both in the medieval tradition and in Rabelais's novel. The organic connection the underworld has with all the other images of the Rabelaisian system is made clear. Let us consider some additional facets of the image of the underworld.[73]

The folk culture of the past, in all stages of its millennia of development, strove to overcome by laughter, to make sober and to render in the language of the material-bodily nethers (in their ambivalent sense) all the nodal ideas, images, and symbols of official cultures. In the preceding chapter we saw how cosmic fear and the related images of world catastrophes and eschatological theories, cultivated within the systems of the official worldview, found their laughter-based equivalent in the images of carnivalesque catastrophes, parodic prophecies, and so forth, which liberated from fear, brought the world closer to man, made time and its passage lighter, turning it into the festive passage of the merry time of successions and renewals.

The same was also the case with the image of the underworld. The tradition of carnivalizing the official Christian notions about the underworld—that is, the carnivalization of hell, purgatory, and heaven—runs, as we have seen, throughout the Middle

[71] Flögel's text (which Bakhtin closely follows here) has an element of wordplay, possibly reflecting the Nuremberg carnival records themselves: "ein Kram mit einer Krämerin, die allerhand Narrenwerk feil hatte." "Kram" means both a business or store and junk or rubbish.

[72] Venusberg—a subterranean realm or temple from German folklore, best known from the ballad of Tannhäuser.

[73] The remainder of this section dates to 1949–1950 and replaces a somewhat longer discussion in the 1940 manuscript. The original text of this section contains several observations not found elsewhere in the book: Bakhtin makes an explicit connection between space and time in the topography of carnival imagery (the top is linked to the future and the bottom to the past, but the past gives birth to a new future that rises up from it). He also makes some links to the theme of trial and judgment (cf. Freidenberg 1997b, 90–93) and quotes at relative length from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (act 4, scene 3; Hamlet's statement that the slain Polonius is "At supper.... Not where he eats, but where he is eaten" and the subsequent rumination on worms).

Ages. Elements of this tradition penetrate even into official "visions" of the underworld. Toward the end of the Middle Ages the underworld became the nodal theme, the point at which two cultures—folk culture and official culture—crossed paths. This theme most clearly and vividly revealed that these two cultures, two worldviews, belong to different worlds. The underworld is a peculiar image of the final score, an image of the end and completion of individual lives and destinies, and at the same time, it is the final judgment passed on the separate human life as a whole, a judgment that was grounded in *the highest criteria* of the official Christian worldview (religious-metaphysical, ethical, social, and political). This is a synthetic image, which revealed the fundamental notions of good and evil held by the official Middle Ages and did so not in abstract form but in the vivid and condensed form of image and emotion. This is why the image of the underworld served as an exceptionally powerful tool of ecclesiastical propaganda.

The fundamental traits of the official Middle Ages were taken to their limit in the image of the underworld. This was the ultimate condensation of the gloomy seriousness of fear and intimidation. The extra-historical evaluation of the person and a person's actions manifested itself here with the greatest consistency. The vertical line of ascent and fall triumphed here, and the horizontal line of historical time, of progressive forward movement, was consistently denied. More generally, the official medieval conception of time revealed itself here with exceptional acuteness.

This is why folk culture strove to defeat with laughter this expression of gloomy seriousness, carried to its limit, and to turn it into a merry carnival bogeyman. Folk culture organizes the image of the underworld in its own fashion: placed in opposition to sterile eternity was pregnant and birthing death; the eternalization of the past, of the old, was opposed by the birth of a better future, of the *new*, out of the dying past. Whereas the Christian underworld devalued the earth, led away from it, the carnival underworld affirmed the earth and the nethers of the earth as the fertile womb, where death meets birth, where from the death of the old a new life is born. This is why the images of the material-bodily nethers run through the carnivalized underworld.

The image of the underworld in folk tradition becomes the image of fear defeated by laughter, and this is, moreover, the image of a double fear: fear of the mystical underworld itself (of "hell" and of death) and the fear of past truth and power (still dominant but already dying), which have been cast down into the underworld. This is a double laughable bogeyman: the scarecrow of "hell" and the scarecrow of the power of the past.

In the Renaissance, the underworld becomes increasingly filled with kings, popes, clerical and political leaders, and, moreover, not only recently deceased ones but also those still living. Collected in the underworld was everything that was condemned, negated, doomed. This is why the image of the underworld was also frequently utilized by Renaissance and seventeenth-century satire (in the narrow sense of the word) to depict galleries of hostile historical figures and negative social types. But this satire often (for instance, in the case of Quevedo) was purely negative in character; the

ambivalence of its images was already acutely weakened. The image of the underworld in literature was entering a new phase of its development.[74]

We know from the last chapter of "Pantagruel" that Rabelais intended to depict his hero's journey into the legendary land of Prester John (located in India) and thence into the underworld. This theme is by no means unexpected. Let us recall that the leading image of "Pantagruel" is the gaping mouth, which is, in the final account, that same "gueule d'enfer" of the medieval mystery play stage.[75] All of Rabelais's images are permeated with a movement to the nethers (the nethers of the earth and of the body); they all lead into the underworld. Even the arse-wipes episode, as we have seen, has led us into the underworld.

In Rabelais's main source—the folk legend of Gargantua—there was an episode of the hero's descent into the underworld. While it does not appear in the *Great Chronicles*, there is a farce dating to 1540 that retains an allusion to such an episode, treating it as a matter of common knowledge. One of the new oral variants of the legend, recorded in Sébillot (*Gargantua dans les traditions populaires*, 52–53), also contains a similar episode.[76]

Characters in folk comedy often descend into hell as well. Such a descent was also accomplished by Harlequin, who, like Pantagruel, was a devil in his preliterary past. In 1585, in Paris, there appeared a work with the following title: "The Merry Story of the Feats and Exploits of Harlequin, the Italian Comedian, containing his dreams and visions, his descent into hell to rescue mother Cardine, how and with what hazards he escaped after having deceived hell's King himself, Cerberus, and all the other devils."[77]

In hell Harlequin tumbles about, performs a thousand various kinds of leaps, walks backward, sticks out his tongue, and so on; he makes Charon and Pluto himself laugh.

All these merry leaps and tumbles of Harlequin do not, by any means, form a static contrast with the underworld, resulting in an oxymoronic image; instead, they are ambivalent, just as the underworld itself is ambivalent. After all, all of Harlequin's leaps and tumbles are deeply topographical: their points of orientation are heaven, earth, the underworld, the top, the bottom, the face, the rear; they play with substituting and relocating the top and the bottom—the face and the rear side; in other words,

[74] The last paragraph does not appear to rely on a single concrete source, though some passages in the literature Bakhtin was reading (notably Schneegans 1894, 124, 164–170; Sainéan 1930, 24, 173, 191) feed into it. Bakhtin clearly alludes to Dante's *Inferno*, as well as to Rabelais's chapter analyzed above (bk. 2, ch. 30). On Quevedo, see Reynier (1914, 37ff.; the implied reference is to Quevedo's *Visions*, which Bakhtin briefly discusses in a footnote to the 1940 manuscript, later published in his article on Rabelais and Gogol; Bakhtin 1983, 49). Note that the official line on Quevedo in the USSR was that he was a great satirist but ideologically a representative of the regressive forces of the aristocracy. Bakhtin here stays within the limits of the prescribed assessment (which also makes it difficult to judge whether it reflects his sincere views).

[75] See the section devoted to an analysis of bk. 2 in chapter 5. The "gueule d'enfer" is also discussed in chapter 5, based on Driesen (1904, 70–79).

[76] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:250; Sainéan is also the source for the reference to Sébillot 1883, 52–53).

[77] This text is reproduced in Driesen (1904, 248–255).

the theme of the descent into the underworld is implicitly contained in the simplest tumbling motion. This is why the characters of folk comedy tend toward the underworld. The famous seventeenth century comedian, Tabarin, has also descended into the underworld. His work, *Tabarin's Descent into Hell*, was published in 1621.[78]

Pantagruel's journey to the underworld, according to the novel's plan, passed through the land of Prester John, which was usually thought to be located in India. We already know that legends assumed the existence in India of entrances into the underworld and into the earthly paradise. Thus, Pantagruel's route is fully justified from this legend-based point of view. But the same path that Pantagruel follows to India is the path to the farthest reaches of the west, where "the land of death," that is, the underworld, was always assumed to be. This path, according to Rabelais, led through the Îles de Perlas—that is, through Brazil. At the same time, this legendary path into the land of death ("west of the Pillars of Hercules") was also Rabelais's topical reply to the geographical explorations of that time. In 1523–1524, Francis I had sent the Italian Verrazzano to Central America in order to discover straits that would shorten the distance to China and India (instead of sailing around Africa, as did the Portuguese).[79]

Rabelais has, in essence, almost fully realized the program of the novel's continuation as it was outlined in the last chapter of "Pantagruel." We say "in essence" because its outward aspect has drastically changed: gone are the land of Prester John and the underworld. But the underworld has been replaced by the "Oracle of the Holy Bottle" (though we do not know how Rabelais himself would have depicted it), while the southwestern route was replaced by a northwestern one (we have in mind Pantagruel's journey in the novel's "Fourth Book").

This new northwest path was also a response to France's now revised geographical and colonial explorations. Verrazzano discovered no straits in Central America. Rabelais's famous contemporary Jacques Cartier advanced a new idea—to shift the search for the strait to the north, to the polar regions. In 1540 Cartier makes his way into Canada. In 1541 Francis I tasks Cartier with colonizing this newly discovered land in North America. And, indeed, Rabelais too changes his hero's route and makes him sail to the northwest, to the polar regions, where Cartier was pointing the way.[80]

But this real-life path followed by Jacques Cartier to the northwest was at the same time a famous *Celtic legendary path into the underworld and into paradise*. This northwestern path was shrouded in the most ancient Celtic legend. To the northwest of Ireland the ocean was full of mystery; there, one could hear amid the roaring waves the voices and moans of the dead; there, the waters were scattered with mysterious islands, in which all manner of wonders, similar to the wonders of India, lay hidden. The above-mentioned legends connected with the Hole of St. Patrick also belong to this

[78] Sainéan (1930, 258).
[79] Lote (1938, 97).
[80] Lote (1938, 98).

Celtic cycle of legends about paths leading into the underworld. These Celtic legends about the wonders of the Irish sea made their way into the literature of late antiquity and, in particular, into the works of Lucian and Plutarch. For instance, Rabelais has an episode with words that froze and thawed; this episode was directly borrowed by the author from Plutarch, but its images are doubtless of Celtic origin. The same should be said about the episode concerning the island of Macreons, inspired by Plutarch. Incidentally, Plutarch relates that Saturn, guarded by Briareus, lives on one of the northwestern islands—that is, in the Irish sea.(208)[81]

We shall touch here on one legend of this Celtic cycle, which had doubtlessly influenced Pantagruel's journey (that is, the "Fourth Book" of the novel)—namely, the legend of St. Brendan's travels.[82] This is an ancient Irish myth in Christianized form. "The Voyage of St. Brendan" (*Navigatio sancti Brendani*) was written in the tenth century and became immensely widespread during the Middle Ages in all European countries, both in prose and in poetic versions. Its most remarkable adaptation is an Anglo-Norman poem by the monk Benoît, written in 1125. Its content is as follows:

St. Brendan and seventeen monks of his monastery sailed from Ireland in search of paradise, to the northwest, rising to the polar regions (Pantagruel's route). The voyage lasted seven years. St. Brendan sailed from island to island (as did Pantagruel), discovering ever new wonders. On one of these isles there were white sheep as large as deer; on another, on huge trees with red foliage lived white birds singing the praise of God; on another island reigned the deepest silence, and lanterns there lit up on their own at the time of the holy office (the old man on this "island of silence" is very reminiscent of Rabelais's old Macreon).[83] The travelers must celebrate Easter on a shark's back, (Rabelais has an episode featuring a Physeter—that is, a whale).[84] They are present at a fight between a dragon and a griffin, they spy a sea serpent and other sea monsters. They overcome all the perils thanks to their piety. They see a glamorous altar rising from the sea on a sapphire column. They pass by the opening that leads to hell, from which a flame rises. Close to this "maw of hell" they find Judas sitting on a narrow rock surrounded by raging waves. Here, on feast days, Judas rests from his hellish torments. Finally, they reach the gates of paradise, surrounded by walls made

[81] The paragraph and the footnote are based on two different discussions in Lote (1938, 123–126, 412–422). The references to Rabelais are to bk. 4, ch. 55–56 (thawed words) and ch. 25–28 (Marcreons).

[82] On *The Voyage of St. Brendan*, see Lote (1938, 124–126; summarized in Bakhtin 2008b, 759–760; see also Popova 2008a, 866–867). The voyage itself is usually understood to have the Island of the Blessed (or earthly paradise), not heavenly paradise, as its destination.

[83] Bk. 4, ch. 25–26. Lote (and Bakhtin's original summary of Lote) has "Macrobius" rather than "Macreon" (Rabelais's text tells us Macrobius is a title given to Macreon elders, so the two may be seen as equivalent).

[84] Bk. 4, ch. 33–34.

(208) According to contemporary scholars (for example, Lote), Rabelais had a special inclination specifically toward Celtic fantasy. This is reflected in the fact that even from the literature of antiquity, Rabelais tended to select elements of Celtic origin (for instance, from Plutarch).

of precious stones: topazes, amethysts, amber, and onyx are glistening here. God's messenger permits them to visit paradise. Here, they find lush meadows, flowers, trees laden with fruit; sweet fragrance is everywhere, the woods are full of tender and tame animals; rivers of milk flow here, and the dew is made of honey; there is no excessive heat or cold, neither hunger nor sadness. Such is the legend of St. Brendan, in Benoît's adaptation.

We have here a striking specimen of medieval notions about the earth's space and movement in this space. Here, just as in the grotesque body, there is no impenetrable surface, but only depths and heights. An excellent symbol of this legendary relief is the hole of hell and, rising next to it, Judas's festive rock, or the sapphire column with an altar on it, rising high up from the depths of the sea. The hole leading into hell and the gates leading into paradise break up the hard surface of the world, revealing other worlds in its depths. In this legend Christian ecclesiastical notions are combined in a contradictory fashion with folk notions. The latter are still powerful here, which gives the legend its charm. Paradise turns out to be a folk-utopian kingdom of material-bodily abundance and peace, the golden age of Saturn, where there are neither wars, nor struggles, nor suffering, but where, instead, material-bodily abundance and surplus reign supreme. No wonder Plutarch placed Saturn's abode on one of the isles of the Irish sea. Thus, in this pious poem, too, just as in Gauchelin's pious vision, the themes of the Saturnalias, which have never died out, can be vividly heard.

We can see that in Pantagruel's voyage to the Northwest, the most ancient legendary route to the utopian land of plenty and peace is blended into one with the most recent real-life path, with the state of the art in geographical exploration of that era—the path travelled by Jacques Cartier. Such intertwining is characteristic of all of Rabelais's main images; we shall return to this matter in the next chapter.

The images inspired by St. Brendan's voyage are intertwined in Rabelais's "Fourth Book" with images of a different character. In essence, Pantagruel's entire voyage passes through the underworld, the world of laughable bogeymen that has run its course. The island of the catchpoles, the island of wild chitterlings and the carnivalesque war with them, the carnival figure of Quarêmeprenant (the image of Quarêmeprenant reaches the very limit of anatomic fantasizing), the islands of Papimania and Popefiggery, the island of Gaster and the feasting offerings of the Gastrolaters, as well as the inserted novellas and episodes, especially the tale we analyzed about the beating of the catchpoles in the home of Lord Basché and the story about Villon's antics[85]—all these are images of the old world, the old power and old truth, stylized in a carnivalesque fashion, laughable bogeymen, the stuffing of the carnival hell, the characters from diableries. The movement into the nethers penetrates all these images of the "Fourth Book" in the most heterogeneous forms and expressions. One should especially note the huge number of topical political allusions running through the entire book.[86]

[85] Respectively, bk. 4, ch. 12–16, 35–42, 29–32, 45–54, 57–62, and, again, 12–16.

[86] On political allusions, most likely, this represents Bakhtin's overview of information from multiple

The legendary wonders of the Irish sea thus turn into a merry carnival underworld on the pages of Rabelais's book.

As we see, Rabelais's initial design for the book, outlined in the last chapter of his "Pantagruel," despite all the external changes it underwent, was in essence realized by him, and inexorably so.

The philosophical significance of the movement into the nethers, and the image of the underworld that is the culmination of this movement, becomes clear against the backdrop of the radical reconstruction that the medieval picture of the world underwent during the Renaissance. In the preceding chapter we described the hierarchical character of the medieval physical cosmos (the hierarchical positioning of the four elements and their movement). The metaphysical and moral world order had the same graduated hierarchical character. A defining influence on all of medieval thought, and even on its image-based thinking, was exercised by Dionysius the Areopagite.[87] Running through his works[(209)] is an accomplished and consistent development of the ideas of hierarchy. The teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite is a fusion of Neoplatonism and Christianity. The idea of a graduated cosmos, divided into higher and lower worlds, is taken from Neoplatonism, while Christianity contributed the idea of redemption as mediating between the higher and lower worlds. Dionysius offers a systematic depiction of this hierarchical stepladder, leading from the celestial to the earthly. Between man and God there is the world of pure intelligences and heavenly powers. They consist of three circles, each of which is in turn divided into three parts. The ecclesiastical hierarchy strictly reflects the heavenly hierarchy. The teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite had an immense influence on Eriugena, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and others.

In the medieval picture of the world, the top and bottom, higher and lower, have absolute significance both in terms of space and in terms of value. Consequently, images of movement to the top, the path of ascent, or the contrary path of descent, the path of a fall, played an exceptional role in the worldview system. They also played the same sort of role in the image system of art and literature, permeated with this worldview. Any essential movement was conceived of and imagined exclusively as a

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sources, including commentary on the book in Moland (1884), as well as various references to Rabelais's involvement in the political affairs of his time in Plattard (1930, 247–264 and passim) and Lote (1938, 23–37, 261–322). There are also explicit references in the book (most prominently to the death of Guillaume du Bellay, bk. 4, ch. 27). Some of these political themes are discussed in chapter 7.

[87] Bakhtin's source on pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (Bakhtin drops the "pseudo," as do many sources) and his influence is Cassirer (1963, 8–10). In the context of Cassirer's book, the work of pseudo-Dionysius is mentioned as part of a discussion of the philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa. Cassirer claims that Cusanus was "the first modern philosopher" because, while never fully rejecting the hierarchical world model laid down and exemplified by pseudo-Dionysius, he was the first major European thinker to begin venturing outside and beyond it. Bakhtin's analysis of vertical and horizontal imagery in subsequent paragraphs—despite a significant difference in detail, in the material being examined, and, not least, in its further philosophical implications—can be viewed as an elaboration on Cassirer's claims.

[(209)] Namely, "Divine Names," "Celestial Hierarchy," and "Ecclesiastical Hierarchy."

movement to the top or to the bottom, as movement along a vertical line. All the images and metaphors of movement in medieval thought and art bear an acutely expressed and strikingly consistent vertical character. And these images and metaphors played an immense role: after all, the entire system of evaluations was conveyed precisely through metaphors of movement: all that was best was highest, and all that was worst was lowest. One is struck by the almost total absence, among all these images of motion, of movement along a horizontal line, movement forward or backward. Horizontal movement had nothing essential about it; it changed nothing in the way the position of its object was valued, in its true destiny; it was thought of as marking time, as meaningless movement in a perpetual circle. Tellingly, even medieval accounts of voyages and pilgrimages lacked any spatial pathos of movement forward, into the distance, along the world's horizontal line: the image of one's path in these voyages was skewed and displaced by the medieval vertical, by the hierarchical evaluation of the earth's space. The concrete and visible model of the world that underlay medieval image-based thinking was essentially vertical.

The hierarchical movement along a vertical line had also determined the attitude toward time. Time was conceived of and imagined as horizontal. Therefore, hierarchy was considered to be extratemporal. Time had no essential significance for hierarchical ascent. As a result, there was no notion of progress in time, of forward movement in time. One could be reborn into the highest spheres instantly, before Mahomet's pitcher would have time to spill.[88] The eschatological nature of the medieval worldview similarly devalued time.

Dante's image of the world is exceptionally telling in this respect. In Dante's world picture, movement plays a major role, but all his images and metaphors of (spatio-valuative) movement are permeated with the purely vertical sway of ascent and fall. He knows only "to the top" or "to the bottom" and knows no "forward." But his system of images and metaphorics of vertical movement is developed to an astonishing degree of depth and richness.

Dante's entire world is stretched along a vertical line: from the lowest nethers—Satan's maw—to the ultimate heights that are the abodes of God and of beatified souls. The only essential movement, which changes the position and the destiny of the soul, is the upward or downward movement along this vertical line. It is also only along this vertical line that all essential diversity exists for Dante; that is, what is different is whatever is placed higher or lower, while any differences between things placed on the same plane, on the same level, are insubstantial. This is a characteristic trait of the medieval worldview: only the hierarchical indicator makes one thing substantially

[88] This refers to a story about the Prophet Muhammad, who, awoken by the angel Gabriel, traveled with him to the ends of the world and returned to his bed, still in time to stop a pitcher of water, which one of Gabriel's wings tipped, from falling to the ground. The immediate targets for Bakhtin's allusion are several mentions of this story in Dostoevsky's novels, for example in *The Idiot*, pt. 2, ch. 5 (Popova 2010a, 625).

distinct from another and creates diversity in terms of value. The official thought and imagery of the Middle Ages were indifferent to all other, nonhierarchical, distinctions.

In Dante's world, we find almost no images of distance or nearness in any real spatial and temporal sense, none that are substantial to any degree; he only knows hierarchical distance and nearness. It is telling that with relation to the image of Beatrice too—both in the *Divine Comedy* and in the *Vita Nuova*—it is only possible to move nearer or farther in a hierarchically tinged way: falling draws one away, whereas an elevation of the soul draws one nearer to this image; an infinite distance from the beloved can be overcome in a single moment, and a single moment is also sufficient to make her infinitely distant. It is as if space and time are entirely turned off in this love story; they feature here only in their hierarchical and symbolic form. How different this is from folk love lyrics, where real spatial distance from the beloved, the long and difficult roads to him, and the concrete time of waiting, yearning, and faithfulness play such an essential role.(210)[89] Time is devalued in Dante's world. In the hierarchical world, within the cross-section of it taken at any moment, there are both the extreme degree of baseness and the highest degree of perfection; real historical time makes no difference here.

But the medieval picture of the world in Dante's creations is already in a state of crisis and rupture. In his work, individuality and diversity end up, despite his ideological intentions, on the same hierarchical plane, at the same level of height, in his work. Such figures as Farinata, Ugolino, Paolo and Francesca, and others become significant and are differentiated not at all according to their hierarchical position on the scale of ascending souls. Dante's world is very complex. His exceptional artistic force is revealed in the immense tension of conflicting directions that fill all the images of his world. Standing against the mighty drive upward along the vertical line is the equally mighty drive of the images to break through onto the horizontal line of real space and historical time, the drive to make their destiny meaningful and to shape it outside the hierarchical norms and evaluations of the Middle Ages—hence the unbelievable tenseness of the balance to which the author's titanic artistic force has brought his world.

In Rabelais's time the hierarchical world of the Middle Ages was collapsing. The one-sidedly vertical extra-temporal model of the world, with its absolute top and bottom, with its one-sided system of ascending and descending movement, began to restructure itself. A new model was coming together, in which the leading role shifts to the horizontal lines, to forward movement in real space and in historical time. Philosophical

[89] The "distant princess" (*princesse lointaine*) is rather a trope popularized around the turn of the twentieth century, though it does refer back to the lyrical poetry of the troubadours. Bakhtin does not appear to rely on any specific source in making this reference.

(210) The famous Provençal image of the "distant princess" is a hybrid between the hierarchical distance of official medieval thought and the real spatial distance of folk lyrics.

thought, scientific cognition, human practice, and art all worked to contribute to the creation of this new model, and so did literature.

In the course of his struggle for the new world picture and the destruction of the medieval hierarchy, Rabelais continually used the traditional folkloric device of the "reverse hierarchy," the "world turned inside out," the "positive negation." He swaps top and bottom, intentionally mixes hierarchical levels in order to extract and free the object's concrete reality, to show its actual material-bodily countenance, its genuine real being, beyond all hierarchical norms and evaluations.

Rabelais counterposes the mighty movement of all folk images into the absolute nethers, the element of time they contain, and the ambivalent image of the underworld to the abstract hierarchical drive to the top. He sought the real earth and real historical time, not on top but at the bottom. As the priestess of the Holy Bottle said, true wealth lies hidden at the bottom, underground, and the wisest of all, as she also said, is time, since it will reveal all the hidden treasures and all secrets.[90]

The material-bodily principle, earth, and real time become the relative center of the new picture of the world. The forward movement of all of humanity along the horizontal line of historical time, not the ascent of the individual soul along an extra-temporal vertical line into the higher spheres, becomes the basic criterion for all evaluations. Having done its part on earth, the individual soul grows old and dies together with the individual body, but the body of the people and of humanity, fertilized by the deceased, is eternally renewed and walks unswervingly forward along the path of historical progress toward an ever-greater degree of perfection.[91]

Rabelais gave these ideas an almost direct theoretical expression in Gargantua's famous letter to Pantagruel (book 2, chapter 8). Let us consider the part of the letter that belongs to the present discussion:

> Amongst the gifts, graces, and prerogatives, with which the sovereign plasmator God Almighty hath endowed and adorned human nature at the beginning, that seems to me most singular and excellent by which we may in a mortal state attain to a kind of immortality, and in the course of this transitory life perpetuate our name and seed, which is done by a progeny issued from us in the lawful bonds of matrimony ...
>
> And, therefore, not without just and reasonable cause do I give thanks to God my Saviour and Preserver, for that he hath enabled me to see my bald

[90] Referring, again, to bk. 5, ch. 48. However, the claim about the supreme wisdom of time does not appear to come from that, or any other, monologue by Bacbuc, the priestess of the Holy Bottle. Bakhtin may have had in mind the claim (backed by citations of sources from antiquity) that time is the father of truth, made by Judge Bridlegoose in bk. 3, ch. 40.

[91] The phrase "progress toward an ever-greater degree of perfection" renders the Russian word *sovershenstvovanie*, which can be understood literally as "becoming increasingly perfect" or "reaching ever greater sophistication" (the latter especially in reference to technological advancement). See also note 96.

> old age reflourish in thy youth; for when, at his good pleasure, who rules and governs all things, my soul shall leave this mortal habitation, I shall not account myself wholly to die, but to pass from one place unto another, considering that, in and by that, I continue in my visible image living in the world, visiting and conversing with people of honour, and other my good friends, as I was wont to do.[92]

This letter is written in the high rhetorical style of the time. It is a bookish speech by a humanist who is externally perfectly loyal to the Catholic Church, a speech obeying all the speech norms and conventions of the time. Neither the tone of the letter, nor the somewhat archaic style, nor the strictly correct and pious choice of words and idioms, so much as hints at the vulgar public-square element, which determines the main verbal mass of the novel. This letter sounds as if it has come from another speech world; it is a specimen of its time's official speech.

However, in terms of its contents, it by no means corresponds to official ecclesiastic views. In spite of the very reverential turns of phrase, marking the beginning and the end of nearly every paragraph, the ideas developed in them concerning relative earthly immortality belong to a dimension entirely different from that of the Church's doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Rabelais does not overtly contest the immortality of the soul outside the body, taking it for granted. But he is interested in another, relative immortality[93] ("a kind of immortality") that has to do with the body, with life on earth, that is accessible to living experience. He is interested in the immortality of seed, name, actions, and human culture. The proclamation of this relative immortality and its very character are such that they totally devalue the immortality of the soul outside the body. Rabelais is not at all satisfied with the static perpetuation of the old soul, having departed from the decrepit body, in an otherworldly realm, where it remains devoid of further earthly growth and development. He wants to see himself, his old age and decrepitude, flourishing in the new youth of his son, grandson, and great-grandson. His visible earthly image, whose features survive in his progeny, is dear to him. In the person of his descendants, he wishes to remain "living in the world," in the person of the descendants he wishes to be in the company of good friends. In other words, he seeks the perpetuation of the earthly upon the earth, the preservation of all of life's earthly values: a beautiful physical countenance, blossoming youth, the merriment of friends. He seeks the continuation of life, while preserving these values for other generations; he seeks the perpetuation not of some static condition of the blessed soul, but precisely the preservation of life's succession, of eternal renewals, so that old age and decrepitude might flourish in new youth. We stress this highly telling wording that Rabelais uses. He does not say that the son's youth succeeds the father's old age; such an expression of his thoughts would have broken apart father and son,

[92] Bk. 2, ch. 8 (Urquhart).

[93] The term "relative immortality" was coined by Abel Lefranc in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 3:xliv–xlv). Bakhtin's discussion here draws significantly on Lefranc's analysis.

old age and youth, would have contrasted them with one another as two static, self-contained phenomena. The Rabelaisian image is a double-bodied image: he says that old age itself flourishes in new youth ("mon antiquité chanue refleurir en ta jeunesse"). He offers a translation, close in spirit to the original, of the folk-grotesque image of pregnant old age or birthing death into official rhetorical language. The Rabelaisian phrasing stresses the continuous but contradictory unity of life's process, which does not die in death but, on the contrary, triumphs in it, for death is life's rejuvenation.

Let us emphasize another expression in the excerpt quoted above. Gargantua writes, "when ... my soul shall leave this mortal habitation, I shall not account myself wholly to die, but to pass from one place unto another." One might have thought that the "I" will not wholly die because, together with the soul that has left the body behind, it will rise to heavenly abodes, "from one place unto another." It turns out, however, that Gargantua is not in the least interested in the fortunes of the disembodied soul; he thinks of the change of abode as happening here, on earth, within earthly space; he is interested in the earthly life and fortunes of his son, and, in his person, in the fortunes of all future generations. The vertical line of the disembodied soul's ascent becomes utterly irrelevant; what remains is the bodily earthly horizontal line of the passing from one abode to another, from the old body to the young body, from one generation to another generation, from the past to the future.

But what Rabelais has in mind is not the biological renewal and rejuvenation of a man in future generations. For him the biological factor is inseparable from the socio-historical and cultural one. The father's old age flourishes in the son's new youth not on the same level but on a new and higher level of humanity's historical and cultural development. Life, as it is reborn, does not repeat itself, but, rather, reaches ever greater degrees of perfection. In the continuation of his letter Gargantua points to a great breakthrough that took place during his lifetime:

> Now, by God's grace, light and dignity have been restored to letters, and I have lived to see it. Indeed, I have watched such a revolution in learning that I, not erroneously reputed in my manhood the leading scholar of the century, would find it difficult to enter the bottom class in a grammar school.[94]

Let us stress, first of all, the perfectly clear awareness, typical of Rabelais, of the historical upheaval that has taken place, of the abrupt succession of times, of the advent of a new era. Elsewhere in the novel, he expresses this sense of a great succession of epochs by means of the folk-festive system of images—those celebrating the New Year, spring, Shrovetide; in this epistle, by contrast, he gives this sensation a clear theoretical expression.

Rabelais's thought about the special character of human rejuvenation is formulated here with remarkable clarity. The son does not merely repeat the youth of his father.

[94] Bk. 2, ch. 8 (Le Clercq).

The knowledge possessed by the father, the most learned man of his time, turns out to be insufficient for admission into the first grade of the lowest level of school; that is, that knowledge is lesser than that possessed by a child of the new generation, of the new epoch. Humanity's historical and cultural progress is moving incessantly forward, and as a result, the youth of each new generation is a totally new, higher youth, because this is youth on a new and higher degree of culture's development. This is not the youth of an animal, which simply repeats the youth of the preceding generations; it is the youth of growing historical man.

The image of old age flourishing with new youth is historically tinged. This is the rejuvenation not of the biological individual but of historical man, and, consequently, also the rejuvenation of culture.

Two and a half centuries were to elapse before this idea of Rabelais's would be repeated (and not in the best edition) by Herder, in his teaching about the rejuvenation of human culture with the youth of each new generation. This attempt by Herder to justify death, being idealistic and professing a somewhat strained optimism, is inferior to Rabelais's unreserved apology for life, life that includes death within it.[95]

Let us stress that the idea of Man's progress toward an ever greater degree of perfection[96] is here totally divorced from the vertical line of ascent. The new horizontal line of movement forward in real time and space triumphs here. Man's progress is attained not by the rise of the individual soul into hierarchically higher spheres but in the historical process of humanity's development.

There is no tragic or scary tinge to the image of death in Rabelais's novel. Death is a necessary factor in the process of the people's growth and renewal: it is the reverse side of birth.

Rabelais expressed this attitude toward death-birth very clearly (albeit in a somewhat rationalistic and superficial manner) in the third chapter of "Pantagruel." Gargantua's wife died at the same time as his son was born. As a result, Gargantua is placed in a very awkward situation: "A terrible doubt racked his brain: should he weep over the death of his wife or rejoice over the birth of his son?" And so, at one moment, he "cried like a cow," but at another, suddenly recalling Pantagruel, exclaimed:

> "Ho, ho, ho, ho, how happy I am! Let us drink, ho! and put away our melancholy! Bring out the best wine, rinse the glasses, lay the table, drive out those dogs, poke up the fire, light the candles, close that door there, cut the bread in sippets for our pottage, send away these beggar folk but

[95] Bakhtin here offers his own interpretation of Herder's writings, in particular of his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Human History* (Herder 1800). Bakhtin consistently refers to this work when discussing Herder's ideas in the context of his notes on Goethe and the *Bildungsroman*. See Bakhtin (2012b, 249–250, 257, 310, 333; and 1981c, 205, where, however, the English translation misidentifies the work by Herder referred to in the Russian text).

[96] Again, *sovershenstvovanie*. See note 91.

> give them anything they ask for! You, there, hold my gown! I shall strip to my doublet to entertain the gossips better."
>
> As he said this, he heard the priests chanting litanies and mementos as they bore his wife off to burial. (book 2, chapter 3)

Birth and death met each other here. Death is the reverse side of birth. Gargantua does not know whether he should laugh or cry. The joy of renewal wins out. Gargantua greets triumphant life with merry feasting, but as in any Rabelaisian feasting, it has an element of a utopian future. Anything alien to feasting merriment should be removed: there should be no beggars, no pleading dogs; the feasting should involve everybody. Clothes should be renewed ("hold my gown! I shall strip to my doublet"). At the same time, there is also an element of the travesty of liturgy here (of the Last Supper: wine, bread, a clean tablecloth, burning candles, locked doors). But what is celebrated is the real-life triumph of birthing life that has defeated death.

The combination of death and laughter is very characteristic of the Rabelaisian system of images. The episode that features Janotus de Bragmardo, which we analyzed before, ends as follows:

> The theologian had no sooner concluded than Ponocrates and Eudemon burst into such uproarious peals of mirth that they all but gave up the ghost. Theirs was almost the plight of Roman Crassus who died of laughter when he saw a mule eating thistles and Greek Philemon, an ass eating figs prepared for his own dinner. Master Janotus began to laugh too, and all vied in hilarity. Their eyes watered at the violent concussion of the cerebral substance which pressed out these lachrymal humidities and brought them flowing out through the optic nerves. Here was a picture of Democritus heraclitizing and Heraclitus democritizing. (book 1, chapter 20)[97]

Death from laughter is one of the varieties of *merry death*. Rabelais returns to images of merry deaths several times. In the tenth chapter of "Gargantua" he lists a number of deaths from happiness and joy. These deaths are taken from ancient sources. For instance, he takes from Aulus Gellius the death of Diagoras, whose three sons won the Olympic games; he died from joy when the three victorious sons were placing their laurel crowns on his head, while the crowd was showering flowers on him. From Pliny Rabelais takes the death of the Lacedaemonian Chilo, who also died of joy when his son won the Olympiad.(211) In total, nine cases of death from joy are listed. Rabelais even gives a physiological explanation of death from excessive joy in the same chapter, relying on Galen.[98]

[97] Translation modified.

[98] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:110–111) and Rabelais's text in bk. 1, ch. 10.

(211) We should stress that these deaths of old people from joy are linked to the triumph of their sons,

In the "Third Book," chapter 21, there is a depiction of the merry death throes of the poet Raminagrobis. When Panurge and his companions arrived at "the good old man's house, they found him in the agony of death; yet his bearing was cheerful, his expression open, his glance clear."

In the "Fourth Book," in connection with the strange death of the giant Widenostrils, "swallower of windmills," Rabelais offers a fairly long list of unusual and curious deaths, including ones that are merry in terms of their circumstances and setting (for example, death by drowning in a butt of malmsey).[99] Rabelais had borrowed most of the examples of deaths from those ancient and new compendia of erudition, which were exceptionally popular at the time, where examples of death were already systematically selected. Rabelais's main source was the erudite anthology by Ravisius Textor.[(212)] This collection's first chapter was devoted specifically to deaths. Within this chapter there is a special section on "those who died of joy and laughter."[(213)100] An interest in various unusual deaths is typical of all periods, but a predominant interest in merry deaths and deaths of laughter was especially typical of the Renaissance and of Rabelais himself.

Death in Rabelais and in his folk sources is an ambivalent image, which is the very reason why death can be merry. The image of death, while picking out the given (individual) dying body, at the same time also picks up a small bit of another body, one that is being born, that is young (it may not be shown or named directly, but it is implicitly contained in the image of death). Where death is, there also is birth, succession, renewal. The image of birth is as ambivalent: it picks out the body that is being born but also picks up a bit of the dying one. In the former case the negative pole (death) is picked out, but without being torn away from the positive pole (birth); in the latter case, the positive (birth) is picked out, but without being torn away from the negative (death). The image of the underworld also bears this ambivalent character: it picks out the past, that which is being negated, condemned, unworthy to be in the

[99] For the list, see bk. 4, ch. 17. The example of drowning in a butt of malmsey, however, comes from bk. 4, ch. 33, and describes a method of execution (of "a certain British lord who, being sentenced for his crimes, was allowed to choose the form of death he preferred").

[100] Bakhtin's sources for this paragraph, including both footnotes, include Plattard (1910, 194–195, 247, 287) and, possibly, the commentary to Rabelais's German translation by Regis (1832–1841, 2:607, although there is no unequivocal evidence Bakhtin was able to consult this source). The Valerius Maximus chapter title is given as published in Shackleton Bailey (2000).

that is, to the victory of young life.

[(212)] The first edition of this book was published in 1503, with two more editions published by 1532. The book enjoyed great popularity.

[(213)] In Valerius Maximus's anthology, which enjoyed immense popularity already in the Middle Ages, there is also a special chapter (the twelfth chapter of book IX) titled "Of Deaths Out of the Ordinary." Rabelais took five cases from it as well.

In the erudite anthology by Baptista Fulgosus (1507) there is also a chapter about unusual deaths, from which Rabelais borrowed two cases. These anthologies speak to the popularity of the theme of unusual and merry deaths in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

present, obsolete and unneeded, but it also picks up a bit of the new life, of the future that has been born: for it is this future, after all, that condemns and kills the past, the old.

All such ambivalent images are double-bodied, two-faced, pregnant. They blend and mix together, in various proportions, negation and affirmation, the top and the bottom, invective and praise. We have to examine this ambivalence of Rabelais's images further, but now predominantly on the formal plane.

We shall first discuss the special features of negation in Rabelais's system of images (we are already partly familiar with them), and then we shall turn to the blending of praise and invective in his discourse.(214)[101]

Negation in folk-festive images never has an abstract logical character. It is always image-based, tangible, palpable. Standing behind negation is not nothing but, rather, an opposite object of sorts, the "inside out" of the object of negation, a carnivalesque contrary. Negation reconstructs the image of the negated object and first of all changes the position in space of the object as a whole, as well as of its parts: it moves the entire object into the underworld, puts its bottom in place of its top, or its back in place of its front, distorts the object's spatial proportions, drastically exaggerating some factors in it at the expense of others, and so on. The negation and annihilation of an object are therefore first and foremost its spatial displacement and reconstruction. The nonbeing of an object is its backside face, its seamy side. And this seamy side, or bottom, is tinged with time: it is perceived as a thing of the past, as bygone, as nonpresent. The annihilated object remains in the world, in a sense, but in a new form of spatiotemporal existence; it becomes, as it were, the seamy side of the new object, which has taken its place.

Carnival celebrates the annihilation of the old and the birth of the new world—the new year, the new spring, the new kingdom. The annihilated old world is given together with the new one, depicted together with it, as the dying off part of a single double-bodied world. This is why in carnival images there is so much of the inside-out, so many reverse faces, so many intentionally upset proportions. We see this first of all

[101] The word "discourse" here renders the notoriously difficult Russian word *slovo* (literally: "word"). While "word" (or "the word") is the default translation for *slovo* in the book, this is one context that requires an alternative (cf. Sandler 2024d).

The footnote was added in the 1949–1950 round of revisions and is couched in the standard vocabulary of Marxist philosophy. The distinction between formal logic, examining strictly static synchronic relations between concepts, and (Hegelian or Marxist) dialectics, examining their dynamic historical development, goes back to Hegel's (2010) *Science of Logic*.

(214) We are touching here on such phenomena of folk art imagery that until now have not been understood or studied, on spontaneously dialectic phenomena. What has been studied up to now are only phenomena expressing formal logical relations, or at any rate, ones that fit within the framework of these relations, phenomena that, so to speak, exist on one plane, are one-dimensional, and single-toned, drawing the outline of the object's statics, and alien to becoming and ambivalence. By contrast, in the phenomena of folk laughter culture we find precisely dialectics in the form of images.

in the participants' apparel. Men are dressed as women and vice versa, outfits are worn inside out, upper garments are worn in place of lower ones, and so forth. A description of an early fourteenth-century charivari says of its participants, "They donned all their garments back to front."[102]

The same logic of the inside-out and of swapping top and bottom also manifests itself in gestures and body movements: moving with one's back side in front, sitting on a horse facing its tail, walking on one's head, displaying one's buttocks.[(215)][103]

Essentially the same logic determines the choice of objects used in carnival and the purpose to which they are put: they are, so to speak, used here in an inside-out, reversed kind of way, despite their ordinary purpose: items belonging to the household hearth are used as weapons, kitchen utensils and dishes are used as musical instruments; frequently foregrounded are markedly useless and unnecessary things: a bucket with holes in it, a barrel with its bottom knocked out, and the like. We have already seen the role played by "junk" in images of carnival hell.[104]

We have also sufficiently discussed the role played by the relocation of top to bottom in forms of folk-comic performance (from simple tumbling to complex comic situations).

The element of negation is also given a spatiotemporal expression in verbal abuse: in most cases it is topographical in nature here (the nethers of the earth, the nethers of the human body). *Verbal abuse is the most ancient form of ambivalent image-based negation.*

In Rabelais's system of images, negation expressed spatiotemporally, in the forms of the contrary, the backside, the bottom side, the inside out, the topsy-turvy, and so on plays a stupendous role. We have already given sufficiently many examples of this phenomenon.

The fact of the matter is that spatiotemporal chronotopic negation,[105] while picking out the negative pole, does not tear itself apart from the positive pole either. This is not an abstract and absolute negation that cleanly separates the negated phenomenon from the rest of the world. Chronotopic negation does not perform such a separation. It considers the phenomenon in its becoming, in its movement from the negative to the positive pole. It does not deal with an abstract concept (this is not a logical negation, after all); it essentially offers a description of the world's metamorphosis, its

[102] Referring to the *Roman de Fauvel*, as quoted in Driesen (1904, 105, 242).

[103] Text in footnote quoted in Driesen (1904, 106, 244).

[104] The list of objects and utensils appears to be based on various descriptions found in Bakhtin's secondary sources (primarily Flögel and Ebeling 1862; Driesen 1904; Schneegans 1894).

[105] On the notion of the chronotope, see Bakhtin (1981c). Note, however, that the essay on the chronotope, while it was written before the book on Rabelais (and, indeed, itself contains Bakhtin's earliest extended treatment of Rabelais's work), was only published posthumously, in 1975. This paragraph is, in fact, where the term "chronotope" was first introduced to Bakhtin's readers.

[(215)] In the same description of charivari (*Roman de Fauvel)* one reads, "Li uns montret son cul au vent."

remodeling,[106] its transition from the old to the new, from the past to the future. This is a world passing through the phase of death toward a new birth. This is something that is lost on all those who see in such images a naked, purely negative satire directed against some entirely definite and strictly delimited phenomena of the day. It would be more correct (though still not entirely accurate) to say that these images are oriented toward their time in its entirety, toward the present as such, and that they depict this present as the process of the future being born out of the past, or as the past's pregnant death.

Functioning alongside the chronotopic form of negation, there is also the form, akin to it, of constructing a positive image by means of negating one or another phenomenon. It is the same logic of the inside-out and other way around, but more abstract, without a clear chronotopic relocation. This form was exceptionally widespread in grotesque realism. Its most common sort is the simple replacement of negation by affirmation. This is how, to a significant degree, Rabelais's image of the Abbey of Thélème is constructed.[107] It is the opposite of a monastery: that which is forbidden in a monastery is here permitted and even required. We can find a whole series of analogous constructions in medieval literature: for instance, "The Rules of the Blessed Libertine," a parodic monastic rule, constructed on allowing and sanctifying that which is forbidden for monks. Similar in nature is the so-called "Song of the Vagrant Order," based on the negation of customary prohibitions.[108] In the Renaissance, an image of an "inside-out monastery," where everything is subordinated to the cult of Venus and love, is offered by Jean Lemaire in his "Temple of Venus" and by Coquillart in his *New Rights*. Both these works had some influence on Rabelais.[109]

Evident in this play with negation is its directedness against the official world with all its prohibitions and limitations. It expresses the recreational, festive cancellation of these prohibitions and limitations. This is carnival play with negation. And, indeed, this play may also reflect utopian tendencies (though it gives them a somewhat formalistic expression).

The most interesting manifestation of this carnivalesque play with negation is the famous "History of Nemo" ("Historia de Nemine"). This is among the most curious pages in the book of Latin recreational literature.[110]

The surface history of this most idiosyncratic play with negation is as follows. A certain Radulfus (probably a Frenchman), composed the "Historia de Nemine" in the form of a sermon. Nemo is an entity equal in its nature, in its position, and in its exceptional powers to the second person of the Trinity—that is, the Son of God. Radulfus

[106] *perelitsovka*. This word is often also used to refer to turning a garment inside out. It is also derived from the Russian word *litso*, which means "face" or "person" (so: re-facing). This word was emphasized in the 1940 manuscript.

[107] Bk. 1, ch. 52–57.

[108] Lehmann (1922, 220–227).

[109] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:cii–ciii).

[110] Bakhtin's source on "Historia de Nemine" is Lehmann (1922, 240–244).

learned about this great Nemo from a number of Biblical and liturgical texts, as well as from Cicero, Horace, and other writers of antiquity; he made that discovery by interpreting in these texts the word "nemo" (which in Latin means "nobody" and is used for negation) not as a negation marker but as the proper noun Nemo. For instance, in the Scriptures it says, "nemo deum vidit"—that is, "Nobody has seen God";[111] Radulfus reads this text as "Nemo deum vidit"—that is, "Nemo has seen God." Thus, everything that, according to the texts that Radulfus cites, is deemed to be impossible, inaccessible, or inconceivable for anybody thereby becomes possible, accessible, and conceivable for Nemo. Such an interpretation of these texts produces the grandiose figure of Nemo, a being almost equal to God, endowed with exceptional powers, knowledge (for he knows that which nobody knows), and extraordinary freedom (for he is allowed all that nobody is allowed) beyond anybody's reach.

Radulfus's own work has not reached us, but the figure of Nemo that he created dazzled the minds of some of his contemporaries to the extent that it even summoned to life a special sect, "Secta neminiana." A certain Stephanus of St. George Monastery wrote against this sect; in his text he denounced the Neminists and demanded that the Synod of Paris condemn them and burn them at the stake. Stephanus's polemic has reached us, as did a long series of later adaptations of "The History of Nemo." There is an unusually large number of surviving manuscripts containing these adaptations dating from the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, which testifies to the immense popularity of Nemo's image. What, then, might explain the attraction and force of this peculiar character?

We do not know the intentions of his original creator, Radulfus. But Radulfus is not likely to have taken the image he was creating seriously; most probably this was a game, these were the recreations of a medieval learned cleric. But the limited and bluntly serious Stephanus (an agelast like Rabelais's Ticklepecker)[112] took all this seriously and launched a struggle against the neminianist heresy.[113] His point of view is not representative, however. All the adaptations of the history of Nemo that reached us have the fully obvious and frank character of merry play.

We have no grounds for assuming any direct connection between the history of Nemo (in all known editions) and the Feast of Fools or, more generally, any other concrete festivity of the carnival type. But its link with the festive, recreational atmosphere, the atmosphere of the "shrove days" is, of course, beyond doubt. This is a typical recreation of a medieval cleric (as are the vast majority of medieval parodies), in which, in the words of the apologists of the Feast of Fools, the folly (in the ambivalent sense) that

[111] John 1:18: "Deum nemo vidit umquam" ("No man hath seen God at any time"). The example (in the word order reproduced by Bakhtin) is one of several cited in Lehmann (1922, 243).

[112] Referring to bk. 4, ch. 13.

[113] The wording here ("a struggle against ...") noticeably resembles slogans common in Soviet official discourse at the time.

is innate in man freely spends itself. It is the air that must be let into barrels so they don't burst from "ferment[ing] with everlasting devotion and fear of God."[114]

"Nemo" is unfettered carnivalesque play with the negations and prohibitions of the official worldview. The image of Nemo is literally spun out of freedom from all these restrictions and prohibitions that weigh in on man and oppress him, and which are consecrated by official religion—hence the exceptional attraction of this play with the image of Nemo for medieval man. All these endless miserly and gloomy "no one may," "no one can," "no one knows," "no one should," "no one dares" turn into the merry "Nemo may," "Nemo can," "Nemo knows," "Nemo should," "Nemo dares." The authors of the various adaptations of the history of Nemo continue to pile up ever more new freedoms, liberties, and exceptions for Nemo. It is said that "no prophet is accepted in his own country" ("nemo est acceptus propheta in patria"),[115] but Nemo is a prophet in his own country. No one may have two wives, but Nemo may have two wives. According to the Benedictine rule, it was forbidden to talk after supper: here, too, an exception is made for Nemo—he may talk even after supper ("post completorium Nemo loquatur"). Thus, Nemo's independence, freedom, and omnipotence stretch from the highest divine commandments to the most petty prohibitions and restrictions of monastic life.

The play with negation in Nemo's image was not devoid of a certain utopian element, though this utopianism was formally anarchic in character. Notwithstanding the difference between this type of play with negation and its previously analyzed chronotopic form (the inverted world, the world turned inside out), the two forms have a great deal in common as regards their essential function. After all, the image of Nemo turns out to be the embodied "other way around" of the world of limited human possibilities, of official oughts and official prohibitions. This is why the two forms frequently intertwine and blend with one another.

Play with negation appears very frequently in Rabelais's work. Besides the Thélème utopia, already mentioned, let us point to the depiction of Gargantua's childhood pastimes: proverbs here are realized contrary to their meaning. The role of play with negation is also significant in the description of King Lent's (Quarêmeprenant's) external and internal organs and of his way of life. This element also exists in Panurge's praise of debts, as well as in the depiction of the isle of Ennasin, and in a series of other episodes.[116] On top of that, play with negation is scattered throughout the entire novel. It is difficult at times to draw the line between spatiotemporal, chronotopic reversal and a play with negation (i.e., a reversal in terms of meaning): the one passes directly into the other (for example, in the description of King Lent); the spatial and temporal image tumbles, as does meaning, as does evaluation. Both body and meaning know how to cartwheel. In both cases the image becomes grotesque and ambivalent. Play with negation, as well as the chronotopic expression of negation, equally serve the pur-

[114] Recalling the discussion in chapter 1 (based on a document quoted in Flögel and Ebeling 1862, 226–227).

[115] Luke 4:24: "nemo propheta acceptus est in patria sua"; again, see Lehmann (1922, 243).

[116] Referring, respectively, to bk. 1, ch. 11, bk. 4, ch. 29–32, bk. 3, ch. 3–4, and bk. 4, ch. 9.

pose of uniting the old and the new, that which is dying and that which is being born, in one image. Both phenomena serve as the expression of a whole double-bodied world and an expression of that play of time, which simultaneously both annihilates and renews, brings about the succession and replacement of any thing and any meaning.

Let us move on to the blending of praise and invective in the Rabelaisian word. We have already touched on this phenomenon in the chapter on Rabelais's public-square word. We saw that invective is the reverse side of praise. The public-square folk-festive word hurls invective while praising and praises while hurling invective. It is a two-faced Janus. It is addressed to a double-bodied object, to a double-bodied world (for this word is always universal), at once dying and giving birth, to the past that gives birth to the future. Either praise or invective may prevail, but the one is always ready to pass into the other. Praise implicitly contains invective, is pregnant with invective, and, vice versa, invective is pregnant with praise.

Rabelais has no neutral words: we hear only a mixture of praise and invective. But this is the praise and invective directed at the whole itself, at merry time itself. The point of view of the whole is not at all neutral or indifferent. It is not the nonparticipating position of a "third;" there is no place for such a third party in a becoming world. The whole praises and hurls invective at the same time. Praise and invective are demarcated and set apart in individual voices, but in the voice of the whole they are blended into an ambivalent unity.[117]

Praise and invective are mixed in Rabelais not only in the author's word but quite often also in the words of his characters. Praise-invective relates both to the whole and to each phenomenon, however insignificant (after all, no phenomenon is ever taken

[117] This paragraph is closely connected to themes Bakhtin was developing in his other writings in the 1940s (as well as to central ideas from both earlier and later periods). It is also a passage where one should be particularly careful in analyzing the terms Bakhtin is using.

Not long after writing this, in the early 1940s, Bakhtin writes in his notes, titled "On the Philosophical Foundations of the Human Sciences," "Nature, presented as the all-powerful and all-conquering whole, is not serious, it is *indifferent*; it even smiles (beams) and laughs" (Bakhtin 1996b, 10; forthcoming-d). This is one of many examples of Bakhtin creating apparent self-contradictions because of varying the sense in which he uses a word or term (cf. Sandler 2012b). In this case, one such word is "indifferent." In the book, "indifferent" is used in tandem with, and as a synonym of, "neutral," so, lacking any emotional tone, purely theoretical, containing *neither* praise *nor* invective. In the notes, "indifferent" is, rather, contrasted with "serious" or "intimidating," with the implication that it can contain both sides of an ambivalent position, *both* praise *and* invective. Bakhtin, accordingly, goes on to describe the same "omnipotent and all-defeating whole" as smiling or laughing, rather than neutral. Also, the word "indifferent" here is part of a literary allusion (to the last stanza of Pushkin 2022, where the same Russian word is rendered as "uncaring").

Similarly, the term "third" is used in this paragraph to refer to a theoretical neutral position. The adjective "non-participating" (hinting at the notion of participative thinking, central to Bakhtin 1993) reinforces this reading. By contrast, the same term can also be found in this oft-quoted passage:

But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher *superaddressee* (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee) (Bakhtin 1986d, 126).

to be severed from the whole). The blending of praise-invective belongs to the very essence of the Rabelaisian word.

It would be superficial and fundamentally incorrect to explain this blending of praise and invective by the fact that in every real-life phenomenon, as well as in every real-life person, there is always a mixture of positive and negative traits, which is to say, there is always something deserving praise and something deserving invective. Such an explanation is static and mechanical in character; it considers the phenomenon as something isolated, unmoving, and fully formed, and, moreover, the singling out of individual traits (positive or negative) is grounded in abstract moral principles. In Rabelais, praise-invective relates to the present in its entirety, as well as to each of its parts, because all that exists dies and is born at the same time, blending within itself the past and the future, the obsolete and the youthful, the old truth and the new truth. And no matter how small the part of existence we consider, we shall find the same blending in it. Moreover, this blending is profoundly dynamic: all that exists—both the whole and each of its parts—is in the act of becoming and is therefore laughable (since all that becomes is laughable), but it is laughable both mockingly and joyfully.

We shall examine two episodes from Rabelais's novel where the blending of praise-invective is presented especially simply and tangibly and then touch on a number of other analogous phenomena, as well as on their common sources.

In the "Third Book" there is the following episode: Panurge, dispirited by the unresolved issues regarding his marriage, puzzled by the unfavorable answers produced by divinations, turns to Friar John, pleading for advice and a resolution. This pleading is put in the ecclesiastical form of a praiseful litany (an akathist) addressed to Friar John. For his invocation he chooses the indecent word "couillon" and utters it 153 times, accompanying each repetition with some praiseful epithet, characterizing the excellent condition of this member of Friar John's body.[118]

Here is the beginning of this litany (the translation renders the word "couillon" as "cod"):[119]

> "O dumpy cod, stumpy cod, famous in birth, hamous in girth; O cod, rich in lactory secretions and heavy as lead; O cod, rose-red; O cod, above all things fair, cod covered with hair; O cod, caulked and dawked, veined and ingrained: Hear me, I beseech you!
>
> O tuck, O cod, O stucco cod; O cod grotesque ... cod humoresque, cod arabesque...." (book 3, chapter 26)

Here, "the third" is, rather, again, a reference to the ultimate whole, to the absolute future, or to God, not to a disembodied neutrally theoretical stance.

[118] Popova (2010a, 627) points to an analysis of the same litany in Spitzer (1910, 40–41), though the two analyses are quite different in their focus.

[119] "Cod" is the traditional English translation here (both by Urquhart and Motteux and by Le Clercq). The more modern translation by Screech has "bollock." The Lyubimov Russian translation, from which Bakhtin quotes and to which he refers, uses the (fairly rare) word *bludodey* (literally "fornicator").

All the 153 epithets added to "couillon" are extremely varied. They are grouped (not overly strictly) either by the domains from which they are borrowed, such as a group of terms belonging to the visual arts (grotesque, arabesque), a group of literary terms (tragique, satyrique), and so on, by alliteration, or, finally, by the rhyme (or assonance) linking them together. But all these are purely external connections, which have no relation whatever to the object itself, designated by the word "couillon"; with regard to this object, all 153 epithets are equally unexpected and random, with nothing to prepare the ground for their arrival. The word "couillon," like all indecent words, is isolated in speech; it is, of course, used neither in the visual arts, nor in the field of architecture, nor in the crafts; as a result, any epithet applied to it is unusual and creates a mésalliance. But all the 153 terms have one trait in common: they are all positive; they depict the "couillon" in excellent condition, and are, in this respect, a form of glorifying praise. Consequently, Panurge's entire invocation, addressed to Friar John, is praiseful and glorifying in character.

After Panurge has put forth his case, Friar John addresses him in turn. But he is displeased with Panurge, and his tone is therefore different. He chooses the same invocation of "couillon" and utters it, in turn, 150 times, but all 150 accompanying epithets characterize the extremely poor and pitiable condition of this member. Here is an excerpt from Friar John's replying litany:

> Listen, O withered cod:
>
> O mouldy, mildewed, musty cod; O fusty cod; O reasty, rusty cod; cod frigid and numb, kneaded in ice-cold water; cod pendent and pendulous, O cod appellent, cod levelled, slack, relaxed and flapping cod: Hear me, I beseech you! (book 3, chapter 28)

Friar John's invocation is an invective invocation. The outward principle of choosing the epithets is the same, in and of itself, as that adopted by Panurge; as applied to the given member they are all essentially random, except perhaps a few epithets that indicate symptoms of venereal disease.[120]

Such is this famous episode of the parodic litany. Let us first of all point out certain traits it has in common with the previously analyzed arse-wipes episode. These are clear. All 303 epithets conjoined with the member in question are subject to the rite of decrowning and accomplish new birth. Their purpose is renewed in a sphere of life unusual for them. With all this we are already familiar. Let us move on to some new factors.

The word "couillon" itself was highly current in familiar public-square speech as a form of address, as invective, as a term of endearment ("couillaud," "couillette"), as a friendly way of expressing approval, or simply for seasoning one's speech. In

[120] Le Clercq's translation expands on many of the epithets in the French original and reads some of them as directly describing the functioning of male genitals, which somewhat undercuts Bakhtin's

Rabelais's novel this word appears very frequently too. Rabelais also has a significant number of derivations from it, at times fairly unexpected ones: "couillard," "couillatre," "couillaud," "couillette," "couillonnas," "couillonné," "couilloniforme," "couillonnicque," "couillonniquement," and finally the proper name of a woodcutter, Couillatris.[121] Such unexpected and unusual derivations revived and renewed the word (Rabelais generally liked unusual derivations from indecent words). One should note that the element of familiar invocation was far stronger in the word "couillon" than in other similar words. This is precisely why Rabelais chose it for the construction of his parodic litany.

This word was essentially ambivalent: it inseparably combined praise and invective within itself, it aggrandized and belittled. In this sense it was similar to the word "fol" or "sot." Just as the fool (fol, sot) was the king of the "inverted world," the "world turned inside out," so, in a sense, was the couillon, as the main container of reproductive force, the center of the unofficial, forbidden picture of the world, the king of the topographic bodily nethers. It is precisely this ambivalence of the word that Rabelais has unfolded in the litany. In this litany, from beginning to end, it is impossible to trace any even minimally clear boundary line between praise and invective; one cannot tell where the one ends and the other begins. In this respect it is of no significance that one speaker selects only positive, and the other only negative epithets: after all, both pertain to the deeply ambivalent word "couillon," and hence both only strengthen this ambivalence. The word "couillon" is repeated 303 times in the litanies, and the fact that the tone in which it is uttered changes, that the pleadingly affectionate intonation is succeeded by a mockingly contemptuous one, only increases the ambivalence of this two-faced, Janus-like, public-square word. Thus, both Panurge's praiseful invocation and Friar John's invective invocation are equally two-faced, each considered on its own, whereas taken together they once again make up a two-faced Janus, a second-order one, so to speak.

This ambivalent eulogy to "couillon" creates the peculiar atmosphere of the entire conversation between Friar John and Panurge, typical of the atmosphere of the entire novel. This eulogy introduces the tone of absolute familiar public-square candor, of calling a spade a spade, where all things are called by their own names,[122] shown both from the front and from behind, both from the top and from the bottom, from within and from outside.

To whom is the praise-invective of this litany addressed? To Panurge? To Friar John? Perhaps to the couillon? Perhaps, at last, it is addressed to those 303 phenomena, which are connected to this indecent word as epithets and are thus decrowned and renewed?

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point here. Bakhtin's reading is much better applicable to Rabelais's original French.

[121] For the various derivations from *couillon* mentioned in the paragraph, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:297–298). The woodcutter Coullatris (or Puddingballocks, per Le Clercq) appears in the prologue to bk. 4.

[122] The Russian expression translated literally as "call things by their own names" is the equivalent of the English idiom "call a spade a spade." Since Bakhtin plays on both the literal and the idiomatic meaning of this phrase here, I doubled it in the translation.

Formally, the praise-invective of this litany is addressed to Friar John and to Panurge, but in essence it does not have a definite and delimited addressee. It extends in all directions, drawing into its flow a variety of spheres of culture (in the form of epithets attached to the indecent word). The ambivalent word "couillon," being a familiar form for combining praise with invective, is universal. The ecclesiastical form of a litany is used here for a reason. The ecclesiastical form itself (which is pious, one-sidedly praiseful) is thereby also lowered, drawn into the stream of praise-invective, reflecting the contradictory becoming of the world. As a result, this entire ambivalent invocation thus loses its character of simple everyday-life familiarity and becomes a universal point of view, a genuine inverted litany to the material-bodily nethers, embodied in the image of the couillon.

It would not be out of place to emphasize that encapsulated between the two litanies (Panurge's and Friar John's) are Friar John's words about the birth of the Antichrist and the necessity of emptying one's genitals ("couilles") before the Last Judgment and Panurge's project of letting every criminal conceive a new life before execution.[123] Here, the image of the couillon (couilles) emerges in its universal cosmic signification and is directly linked with the theme of the Last Judgment and the underworld.

The parodic litany we analyzed is thus a condensed expression of the fundamental distinctive feature of the Rabelaisian word, which always—with greater or lesser clarity—unites praise and invective within itself and is always addressed to the double-bodied becoming world.

These distinctive features of the Rabelaisian word were already ingrained in the unfettered folk public-square speech, which is the overall orientation of Rabelais's style.

Characteristic of this speech is the absence of neutral words and expressions. Since it is conversational, this speech is always addressed to somebody, speaks to him, for him, or about him. Generally speaking, for an interlocutor—the second person—there are no neutral epithets and forms; rather, there are either polite, praising, flattering, and affectionate words or dismissive, lowering, invective ones. But neither are there strictly neutral forms and tones with respect to the third person, nor do they exist, in essence, with respect to things: the thing is also a target either of praise or of invective.[124]

The more official the speech, the more these tones (of praise and invective) are differentiated, since speech reflects the established social hierarchy, the official scale of

[123] Bk. 3, ch. 26.

[124] This last point goes back to Bakhtin's early philosophy. Cf., in particular, the discussion of language in Bakhtin (1993, 30–33):

> Similarly, the living word, the full word, does not know an object as something totally given: the mere fact that I have begun speaking about it means that I have already assumed a certain attitude toward it—not an indifferent attitude, but an interested-effective attitude. And that is why the word does not merely designate an object as a present-on-hand entity, but also expresses by its intonation my valuative attitude toward the object, toward what is desirable or undesirable in it, and, in doing so, sets it in motion toward that which is yet-to-be-determined about it, turns it into a constituent moment of the living, ongoing event (Bakhtin 1993, 32–33).

evaluations (with respect to things and concepts), and the static boundaries between things and phenomena, which have been established by the official worldview.

But the more unofficial is the speech, the more familiar—the more often and the more substantially are those tones blended together and the weaker the boundary line between praise and invective becomes; they begin to coincide in one person and in one thing as representatives of the becoming whole of the world. The rigid, official boundaries between things, phenomena, and values begin to shift and fade. The ancient ambivalence of all words and expressions awakens, uniting within itself wishes of life and of death, of sowing into the earth and of rebirth. The unofficial aspect of the becoming world and of the grotesque body is revealed. But this ancient ambivalence comes back to life in an unfettered and merry form.

Vestiges of this ambivalence can be observed even in the familiar speech of cultured people in modern times. In intimate correspondence, one sometimes encounters rude and invective words used in an affectionate sense. Once a certain boundary line is crossed in the relationship between people, and this relationship becomes fully intimate and candid, the usual patterns of word usage sometimes begin to break up, the speech hierarchy is destroyed, and speech is reconstructed into a new, candidly familiar mode; the usual affectionate words appear conventional and false, trite, one-sided, and above all, they fall short of fullness; they are hierarchically tinged and inadequate to the unfettered familiarity that has been established, which is why all these usual words are cast aside and are replaced either by invective words or by words created on their model and from the same mold. Such words are perceived as more real and full, as more alive. Praise and invective blend in them to form an indissoluble whole. Friar John's and Panurge's two-faced "couillon" emerges. Wherever the conditions for full, absolutely extra-official, and holistic real-life social interaction come about, words begin to tend to such ambivalent fullness. It is as if the ancient public square comes to life within the setting of chamber social interaction, and intimacy begins to sound like the familiarity of ancient times, which breaks down all boundary lines between people.

It would be grossly incorrect to relegate this phenomenon to the psychological plane. It is a very complex social speech phenomenon. All modern peoples still have enormous spheres of unpublishable speech, which are considered nonexistent, as it were, from the point of view of literary spoken language, raised on the norms and viewpoints of the bookish literary tongue. Only puny and smoothed-out fragments of these unpublishable spheres of speech life penetrate into the pages of books, most often in the form of dialogues between characters, meant to "add color" (these appear on a level of speech that lies farthest away from the level of direct and serious authorial speech). It is seemingly impossible to construct serious judgements, an ideological thought, and a full-fledged literary image, within these spheres of speech, not because these spheres are usually checkered with indecencies (these may be absent) but because they appear to be something *alogical*; they seem to violate all the usual distances between things, phenomena, and values: they blend together into one that which thought has grown accustomed to strictly partition and even to sharply contrast. In these unpublishable

spheres of speech, all the boundary lines between objects and phenomena are drawn in an entirely different manner than what the prevailing picture of the world demands and permits: it is as if these boundary lines seek also to capture the adjacent object, the next stage of development.

All these alogical spheres of unpublishable speech are manifested in modern times only where all of the even slightly serious aims of speech have been abandoned, when, in an utterly familiar setting, people engage in aimless and unbridled verbal play or let their verbal imagination run free, off the beaten track of serious thought and image-based art. The extent of their penetration into books and literature is minor, and then too, they only make it into the lowest forms of aimless verbal comedy.(216)[125]

Today these spheres of unpublishable speech have almost lost their erstwhile significance, their connections with folk culture, and in large part they have turned into dying vestiges of the past.

But in Rabelais's day the role of these unpublishable spheres was entirely different. They were not at all "unpublishable." On the contrary, they were linked essentially with the public nature of the public square. Their relative share within the national vernacular language, which was becoming for the first time the language of literature and ideology, was significant. And their significance for the process of breaking up the medieval worldview and constructing a new realistic picture of the world was deeply productive.

Let us here examine one phenomenon, even though it has no direct visible connection with ambivalent praise-invective.

One very popular form of verbal comedy was the so-called "coq-à-l'âne," that is, "from the rooster to the ass."[126] This is a genre of intentional verbal nonsense. It is speech let loose, ignoring all norms, even those of elementary logic.

Forms of verbal nonsense were very widespread in the Middle Ages. An element of intentional nonsense was featured in many genres, but there was also a special genre of this kind of verbal comedy, the "fatrasie." These are works written in verse, made up

[125] The footnote was added in 1949–1950. The reference to Flaubert is based on earlier notes on Flaubert that Bakhtin wrote in the mid-1940s (Bakhtin 1996e, 130; forthcoming-c). Bocharov (Bocharov and Gogotishvili 1996, 498–499) identifies Yury Danilin (Eykhengol'ts and Danilin 1933, 410) as Bakhtin's source on Flaubert's correspondence.

[126] Here and below, Bakhtin's main source on the coq-à-l'âne is Plattard (1910, 312–315). Popova (2010a, 628) also notes in this context Spitzer's (1910, 75) characterization of Rabelais's style as "Coq-à-l'âne-Stil."

(216) An important role is usually played by the unpublishable spheres of speech during the juvenile period of a writer's development, setting the ground for his *creative originality* (which always has to do, to a certain degree, with the destruction of the prevailing world picture, with its revision, at least in part). See, for instance, the role of the unpublishable spheres of speech in Flaubert's youth. Flaubert's correspondence with his friends (during all periods of his life) generally offers rich, and fairly easy, material for the study of the phenomena we characterized above (familiar forms of speech, indecencies, affectionate invective, aimless verbal comedy, and so on). See especially Le Poittevin's letters to Flaubert and Flaubert's letters to Feydeau.

of a nonsensical string of words, linked by assonance or rhyme; they had no connection in terms of meaning and no unity of theme. In the sixteenth century verbal nonsense appears very frequently in sotties.

The name "coq-à-l'âne" was established for this genre in 1535, after Clément Marot wrote his first coq-à-l'âne in verse, namely the "Epître du coq-à-l'âne, dédiée à Lyon Jamet."[217] This epistle has neither unity of composition nor logical consistency in depicting facts or in its development of thoughts. It tells of various "news of the day" in the royal court and in the city of Paris, which supposedly accounts for the intentionally incoherent collection of facts and thoughts, held together merely by the fact that these are all daily news, which are not supposed to have any special logical connection and coherence between them in the first place.

In Rabelais's novel, the coq-à-l'âne plays a major role. The speeches of Kissarse and Bumfondle in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth chapters of "Pantagruel" are constructed as pure coq-à-l'âne. The eleventh chapter of "Gargantua," which depicts the young hero's childhood pastimes in the form of a series of proverbs and sayings (most of them turned inside out), is constructed in the same fashion. A special variety of coq-à-l'âne is the second chapter of the same book, the "Antidoted Flummeries." All these examples are consistently, purely, and wholly coq-à-l'âne. But elements of coq-à-l'âne, elements of intentional verbal nonsense, as well as one-off alogisms, are scattered throughout the entire book, from beginning to end. Thus, for instance, there are strong coq-à-l'âne elements in the ninth chapter of the "Fourth Book," depicting the peculiar names, kinship relations, and marriages of the inhabitants of the Island of Ennasin.

What, then, is the artistic ideological meaning of all these coq-à-l'âne?

First of all, this is play with words, commonplace expressions (proverbs, sayings), and commonplace adjacencies between words, considered off the beaten track of logical and other meaning-related connections. This is, as it were, a recreation of words and things, released from the clamps of meaning, logic, and verbal hierarchy. Once fully at liberty to roam, they enter into utterly unusual relationships and adjacencies among themselves. And while in most cases, no new stable connections are created as a result, the very fact of the brief coexistence of these words, expressions, and things outside the usual conditions of meaning renews them, reveals the inner ambivalence and polysemy inherent in them, as well as possibilities with which they are endowed, which would not manifest themselves in normal conditions. This is the general significance of the coq-à-l'âne.

Each individual concrete occurrence of a coq-à-l'âne has its own functions and its own special character. For instance, the "Antidoted Flummeries" are constructed in the form of a riddle. They depict apparently historical events of some sort but with a huge admixture of indecencies and some images of feasting. The poem is deliberately

[217] The expression "coq-à-l'âne" itself, which referred to incoherence and inconsistency of speech, of course existed earlier as well.

constructed in such a way that the reader is encouraged to look in it for allusions to some contemporary or recent political events.(218) This creates a peculiar carnivalesque perception of political and historical life. Events are perceived outside their ordinary traditional and official interpretation and offer, therefore, new opportunities for understanding and evaluating them.[127]

The coq-à-l'âne in the eleventh chapter of the same book[128] is different in character. Gargantua's childhood amusements are depicted here using proverbs and various common expressions. But they follow each other without any logical connection. In addition, they are turned inside out. Gargantua acted every time in spite of the proverbs—that is, he acted contrary to the meaning expressed in them. For instance, he would sit between two stools, comb his hair with a drinking cup, strike the iron while it was cold, and so forth. As a result, the image of young Gargantua keeps true to the spirit of the folkloric fool, who does everything the other way around, defying all norms, common sense, and received wisdom. This is one of the variations on the theme of "the world turned inside out."

Finally, the speeches of Kissarse, Bumfondle, and Pantagruel in the legal case episode are of a special nature. This is the purest, one might say classic, coq-à-l'âne. There is, of course, no parody of the legal eloquence of that time here (these speeches are constructed not in the least like courtroom speeches). This is not a parody of any kind. The images that fill these speeches are devoid of any apparent coherence at all.

Here is the beginning of Kissarse's speech:

> "My Lord, the truth is that a good woman of my house was taking her eggs to market ...
>
> Whereas there passed between the twin tropics the sum of threepence towards the zenith; and whereas the Riphaean Mountains had that year suffered a great sterility of paste and imitation stone; and whereas this was due to a warfare of fiddlefaddle seditiously fomented between the tripegabblers and the Accursian maunder-mongers; and whereas the cause of the contention was the rebellion of the Switzers, who had assembled to the number of three, six, nine, ten; and whereas they did this to get presents on New Year's day, at the season when soup is served to oxen and the keys of the coal cellar given to country wenches so they may feed the dogs plenty of oats.

[127] See Plattard (1910, 320–321) and Sainéan (1930, 29, 48–49). Both sources criticize attempts by early commentators to find hidden references to people and events of Rabelais's time in the poem (bk. 1, ch. 2), with Plattard explicitly concluding the poem should be read as a coq-à-l'âne instead. With these sources as context, Bakhtin could be read here as implying that Rabelais deliberately sends his readers on a wild goose chase, hinting that the poem alludes to real events, while in fact making no such allusions.

[128] Bk. 1.

(218) Proponents of the historical-allegorical method attempted to decipher all these allusions.

> Well, my Lord, all night long they kept their hands on the pot, dispatching Bulls on horseback and Bulls on foot to keep the ships in harbor, because the tailors insisted on making stolen tatters into a peashooter to shoot a pea across the Oceanic Sea, which at the moment was pregnant with a potful of cabbage, according to the opinion handed down by the manufacturers of hay-bundles. On the contrary, the physicians maintained that the urine revealed no positive traces in the pacing of the bustard that he ate mattocks with mustard." (book 2, chapter 11)[129]

As we see, nothing connects any of these images in terms of meaning. Kissarse's speech really does skip "from rooster to ass." It is constructed in the spirit of the Russian proverb: "In the vegetable garden grows the elder tree, while the uncle is in Kiev."[130] But these jumbled images themselves keep to the spirit of the entire Rabelaisian system of images. We have here a typical grotesque picture of the world, in which the body that gives birth, devours, and excretes is merged with nature and with cosmic phenomena: the Riphaean mountains sterile of imitation stone, the sea pregnant with a potful of cabbage and eating mattocks with mustard, physicians analyzing the urine of the sea ("the Pantagruel complex").[131] We further see here various kitchen and household wares and activities used in a carnivalesque manner (i.e., contrary to their purpose): soup served to oxen, the feeding of oats to dogs, mattocks as food. Finally, all these grotesque-bodily, cosmic, and carnival images are mixed in with political and historical events (the rebellion of the Switzers, the dispatching of Bulls to keep the ships in harbor). All these images and the very way in which they are mixed together are typical of folk-festive forms. We can also find such images in the sotties and farces of Rabelais's

[129] Translation modified. Cf. Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:383), who does view this as a parody of legal discourse.

[130] The proverb *v ogorode buzina, a v kieve dyad'ka* (probably originating in Ukrainian) is used, as it is here, to characterize a narrative as incoherent or thematically disjointed. This is not the first time Bakhtin used this proverb in relation to Rabelais. We already find it in use in a similar context in his earliest extended treatment of Rabelais, in the essay "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel" (Bakhtin 1981c, 177).

Interestingly, the proverb appeared even earlier in a very relevant context in an entry on Gogol in the Soviet *Literary Encyclopedia*. Referring to some of the "stylistic devices, inherent in Gogol's work," the author (Soviet literary theorist Valer'yan Fyodorovich Pereverzev) writes, "Among them, one should first of all mention alogisms, i.e. phrases composed totally non-logically, along the lines of 'In the vegetable garden grows the elder tree, while the uncle is in Kiev' " (Pereverzev 1929, 572). Rabelais and Gogol are two authors Bakhtin considered to be closely connected to one another. The last pages of the 1940 manuscript were devoted to Gogol (this section of the manuscript was not included in the book, at the publishers' insistence, and was later expanded into a stand-alone article on Rabelais and Gogol: Bakhtin 1983). Note also the term "alogism" in Pereverzev's encyclopedia entry, which Bakhtin applies to Rabelais, and specifically to his coq-à-l'âne, on several occasions.

[131] Referring back to the discussion in chapter 5 of the mystery-play devilkin Panthagruel and his connection to the sea and to urine.

time.[132] However, there they are subordinated to particular lines of plot and meaning (although not always, of course); in the quoted excerpt, by contrast, an absolutely free carnival play with these images is being conducted, unencumbered by any confines of meaning. As a result, the boundary lines between things and phenomena become totally effaced, and the grotesque countenance of the world comes through ever more acutely.

In the context of radically breaking up the hierarchical picture of the world and constructing a new picture of it, in a context where the way all the old words, things, and concepts feel to the touch is being reexamined, the coq-à-l'âne was of substantial importance as a form that allowed them to be temporarily freed from all connections of meaning, a form of their free recreation. It was a sort of carnivalization of speech, which freed it from the one-sided gloomy seriousness of the official worldview, as well as from current truisms and commonplace points of view. This verbal carnival[133] freed man's consciousness from the many-centuries-old chains of the medieval worldview, thus preparing the ground for a new sober seriousness.

Let us return to the question of blending praise-invective in Rabelais by analyzing another example.

The "Third Book" contains a famous episode in which Pantagruel and Panurge sequentially (amoebaeally) praise the fool Triboulet.[134] They provide 208 epithets determining the degree of his folly ("folie"). This is also a kind of litany. The epithets themselves are borrowed from a highly diverse array of spheres: from astronomy, music, medicine, the realm of legal and political relations, falconry, and so on.[135] The appearance of these epithets is as unexpected and alogical as in the parodic litany analyzed above. Here, too, everything is ambivalent: after all, all these epithets, expressing the highest degree of some quality, glorify folly. But folly, as we know, is itself also ambivalent. Its bearer, the jester or fool, is the king of the inverted world. In the word "fol," as in the word "couillon," praise and invective blend together into an indivisible unity. To perceive the word "fool" as a pure term of abuse, or, on the contrary, as pure praise (along the lines of "saint"),[136] would imply destroying the entire meaning of this amoebaean litany. In another place in the novel the term "morosophe," that is, "foolishwise," is applied to Triboulet. Rabelais's comic etymology for the word "philosophie"

[132] This appears to be a general observation, based on some examples described in the literature (see, in particular, Plattard 1910; 1930).

[133] As Tihanov (2000, 266) and Popova (2008a, 850) point out, the phrase "verbal carnival" can be traced back to one of the original instigators of Bakhtin's interest in Rabelais, Karl Vossler. Vossler used the term "lexical carnival" (*lexikalischer Karneval*) with reference to Rabelais in 1921 (Vossler 1921, 260).

[134] Bk. 3, ch. 38. Bakhtin continues to follow Plattard (1910, 315–317), who also applies the term "amoebaean" (referring to so-called amoebaean singing, where two singers follow each other in turns) to the passage in question.

[135] See the commentary to this chapter in Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:277–283).

[136] Alluding to the notion of the holy fool (*yurodivy*) in Russian Orthodox Christianity (also quite prominent in Dostoevsky's novels—for example, Smerdyakov's mother Lizaveta in *The Brothers Karamazov*, bk. 3, ch. 2).

as "fine folie" is well known.[137] All this is play with the same ambivalence of the word and the image of "fol."

Rabelais himself calls the glorification of Triboulet a "blason." The blason is a very characteristic literary phenomenon of that time. The word "blason" itself, in addition to its special heraldic use,[138] has a dual sense: it simultaneously designates both praise and invective. This word had already acquired this dual sense in Old French; it was still fully intact in Rabelais's time as well (though its negative sense—that is, "blâme"—becomes somewhat weaker); only later does the sense of "blason" become limited to praise ("louange").[139]

Blasons were very widespread in the literature of the first half of the sixteenth century. Everything was submitted to blasoning—not only persons, but also things.

Clément Marot wrote two short humorous poems, "The Beautiful Breast" and "The Ugly Breast," thus creating a new type of blason, which had an immense resonance. The poets of the time began vying with one another in blasoning various parts of the female body: mouth, ear, tongue, tooth, eye, eyebrow, and so on; they were literally performing an anatomic disarticulation of the female body.[140] The very tone of these blasons—a tone of jokingly familiar glorification and disparagement—was typical of the time, as it was rooted in that element of folk speech that the advanced literature of the time drew upon amply (including poets of the Clément Marot school). The blason preserved, to one degree or another, the duality of tone, the duality of evaluation—that is, the contradictory fullness of tone; it permitted a rendering of praise as ironic and ambiguous; it allowed praising of something that it was usually unacceptable to

[137] See, respectively, bk. 3, ch. 46–47, and bk. 3, ch. 18. Both are mentioned as part of a discussion of the ambivalent Renaissance attitude to folly more generally in Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:303–304).

[138] The heraldic sense (a coat of arms, similar to the word's English cognate, "blazon") survives in modern French.

[139] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:96–97), Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:273, 427), and possibly also Plattard (1910, 315–317).

[140] Bakhtin's source here is unclear. While the story about Marot's poems and the flurry of imitations that followed is recounted in many sources, it is only mentioned in passing in the works Bakhtin relied on regularly in the book (Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 4:204, 5:xlii; Plattard 1910, 222; Sainéan 1922–1923, 1:273). Of the texts Bakhtin may have had brief access to (based on the 1946 bibliography), one could mention Villey (1923, 81–83, though Bakhtin lists one *blason* not mentioned in this source) and Guy (1910–1926, 2:210–220). The latter is the most likely source based on content, though the 1946 bibliography only includes vol. 1 of this publication (and that too appears to be a mistake, perhaps explainable by the use of the same source here; see note 134 to chapter 2). Bakhtin also explicitly cites Marot (1873, 33–36) as a reference for the original two poems in the 1940 manuscript. Finally, it is possible Bakhtin was able to consult Méon's (1809) collection of sixteenth-century *blasons*. That would account for the relatively detailed assessment Bakhtin gives of their style and tone, as well as the genre's development over time. However, the fact that Bakhtin uncharacteristically fails to mention the *blasons* of the belly (*ventre*) and the buttocks (*cul*), included in that collection, suggests that he was not aware of their existence.

praise.[(219)][141] The blason was located outside the official system of linear and segregated evaluations. It was unfettered and ambiguous praise-invective. Here is the definition of the blason genre given by Thomas Sébillet in his "French Poetics" (*Art poétique François*, 1548):

> The blason is perpetual praise or continuous vituperation of that which is intended to be blasoned ... both the ugly and the beautiful, both the bad and the good, can be equally well blasoned.[142]

This definition very clearly points out and emphasizes the blason's ambivalence. Sébillet's "Poetics" is the poetics of the Clément Marot school; as it is contemporaneous with Rabelais, it has illuminative significance also for understanding out author.

One should point out that poetic blasons, including those of Marot's school, sometimes acquired the character of straightforward and pure praise or disparagement. This rhetorical degeneration of the blasons greatly increases toward the end of the century. Their connection with popular blasons and with folk public-square two-faced praise becomes ever weaker, while, at the same time, the influence of (rhetoricized) forms of comic praise from antiquity grows stronger.[(220)][143]

Elements of the blason were also exceptionally common in the major genres of the time (the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century): in mystery plays and sotties. Here, we also encounter the glorification of fools (sots) by compiling a long list of epithets that apply to them; these enumerations are totally analogous to the Rabelaisian eulogy of Triboulet. We find just such an enumeration, for example, in the

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[141] Bakhtin's source for the footnote is Schneegans (1894, 255). Panurge's praise of debts appears in bk. 3, ch. 3–4. Berni's praise of a card game, titled "Lode della Primiera" ("Primiera" being the name of the game in question), was not discussed earlier in the book. It was mentioned in a footnote to the 1940 manuscript (Bakhtin 2008a, 226), also based on Schneegans (1894, 255), but this footnote did not make it into the published version of the book.

[142] Quoted in Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:273). Sainéan also refers to Sébillet there as "the theoretician of the Marot school."

[143] The footnote was added in 1949–1950. A plausible source could be Grimmelshausen (1863–1864, 1:xxvi–xxx). There is a brief survey of some of Grimmelshausen's writings included in Bakhtin's notes from the mid-1940s on Menippean satire (Bakhtin 2008c, 736–737), the content of which is consistent with the same edition of Grimmelshausen's writings being consulted.

[(219)] The glorification of debts by Panurge also has this character. Ambiguous praise was also quite widespread in Italian literature. See Berni's laudations: "Lode del debito" ("In Praise of Debt") and the already familiar praise of a card game.

[(220)] An interesting specimen of rhetoricized praise-invective in the form of a comic treatise is *Der Satyrische Pilgram* (1666) by Grimmelshausen. Its subtitle is: "Kalt und Warm, Weiß und Schwarz" (that is, "Cold and Warm, White and Black") In the preface Grimmelshausen declares that there is nothing perfect in this world except God, and that there is nothing so bad, except the devil, that it cannot be praised in some respect. The treatise discusses twenty themes (the human being, money, dances, wine, women, weapons and gunpowder, war, masquerades, medicine, and others), first praising each phenomenon and then disparaging it, and, finally, something like a synthesis is offered.

Mystery of Saint Quentin. Around a hundred epithets are offered in the "Monologue of Fools"[(221)] (forty-eight verses are filled with this blasoning enumeration of epithets for fools). Finally, in the "New Monologue of Fools"[(222)] we already find no less than 150 epithets for fools.[144]

Thus, Triboulet's blasoning ambivalent eulogy had a long tradition behind it and was perceived by Rabelais's contemporaries as self-explanatory (we have already pointed out multiple times the immense significance of the image of the jester-fool and the theme of folly in that historical period).

Let us move on to popular blasons in the narrow sense.[145] The folk blason tradition proper in large part spanned the praiseful-invective evaluations of other nationalities, of various regions, provinces, cities, villages; to each were attached definite epithets (in more or less extended form), which had an ambivalent signification (though with denigration being somewhat more dominant).

The oldest collection of this genre dates from as early as the thirteenth century. In Rabelais's time, a new collection of such blasons appeared under the title of "Dict des Pays."[(223)] It contains brief characterizations—in most cases based on a single trait—of nationalities, provinces, and cities.

A number of characterizations repeating popular blasons can be found in Rabelais. For instance, he says, "saoul comme un Anglois," that is, "drunk as an Englishman";[146] this was a persistent blason of the English: already in the oldest, thirteenth-century collection, England is characterized by this trait: "Li mieldre buveor en Engleterre" (that is, "The best drunkards are in England").[(224)][147] In the first chapter of "Pantagruel" Rabelais mentions the "couilles de Lorraine." The inhabitants of Lorraine were indeed blasoned for the unusual size of their "couilles." Rabelais also mentions the swiftness of the Basques, love in Avignon, and the curiosity of the Parisians;[148] all these are

[144] See Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:372), who is also the source of the references to Montaiglon (Montaiglon and Rothschild 1855–1878) in the footnotes.

[145] The next five paragraphs, dealing with "popular blasons," are based on Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:427–435). Sainéan starts this chapter of his book with a brief overview of what the word *blason* designated in Middle French (including Rabelais's use of the word, but without discussing the "anatomical" blasons of Marot and his followers) and then moves on to discuss the "popular blason" (*blason populaire*) as a term used by folklorists in his own time. Bakhtin's reference to "popular blasons in the narrow sense" can thus be understood in this context.

[146] Bk. 1, ch. 15.

[147] Referring to Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (see bk. 1, ch. 9, of the Wisdom and Murray English translation) and to *Othello*, act 2, scene 3.

[148] Respectively, bk. 1, ch. 28, bk. 2, ch. 5, and bk. 1, ch. 17.

[(221)] Montaiglon, *Recueil*, vol. 1, 11–16.

[(222)] Montaiglon, *Recueil*, vol. 3, 15–18.

[(223)] Montaiglon, *Recueil*, vol. 5, 110–116.

[(224)] It is interesting that this old "blason" of the English is repeated by Lermontov's Maxim Maximych. It also appears in Shakespeare (used by Iago in *Othello*).

epithets from popular blasons. Let us quote yet another ancient blason: "Li plus sot en Bretagne" (that is, "The biggest fools are in Brittany"). These examples will suffice.

We can see that popular blasons are deeply ambivalent. Each nationality, province, or city is the world's best with respect to some attribute: Englishmen are the best drunkards, people living in Lorraine are the most sexually potent, Avignon has the most women of easy virtue, Bretons are the most foolish, and so on. But this attribute itself has in most cases an ambiguous or, more correctly speaking, a dual character (folly, drunkenness, and so forth). As a result, praise and invective blend into an indissoluble unity. The Breton's attribute—"the most foolish"—directly reminds us of the blason of Triboulet. Popular blasons are usually referred to as ironical;[149] this is true in the original Greek sense of the word but incorrect if we ascribe to it its new, more subjective and negative, meaning. Popular blasons are two-faced.[(225)150]

All the types of blasons existent at the time are represented in Rabelais's novel. There is a blason in verse, in the spirit of Marot's school, in honor of the masters of laws of the University of Orléans, in "Pantagruel."[151] Popular blasons (that is, ethnic epithets), some of which we cited above, are scattered throughout the novel. The eulogy of the fool Triboulet and the blasoning parodic litanies of Friar John and Panurge most deeply disclose the very essence of the blason, its two-facedness, its thoroughgoing ambivalence, its contradictory fullness. Finally, blasoning tones pervade Rabelais's entire novel, from beginning to end: it is filled to the brim with ambiguous praise and ambiguous invective.

A certain level of two-facedness is also inherent in purely invective sequences, without any visible admixture of praise. Here is an example of such an invective sequence from chapter 25 of "Gargantua":

> The bakers not only turned a deaf ear to our shepherds' request, but worse, insulted them outrageously. Apparently our men were waifs, snaggle-teeth, red-headed Judases, wastrels and shitabeds; they were stinkers and fly-by-night smoothsters—idlers, too, yet nicksters—belly-busters, proudsters, badsters, clots, sharpers, puts, scabbard-dragglers and sweets.... Jokesmiths, they were, yet lazy, riffraff oaves, louts, wompsters, tonies, won-

[149] They are described as ironical (probably not in the ancient Greek sense of "ironical") by Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:427).

[150] The citations in the footnote (Gaidoz and Sébillot 1884; Canel 1859; Beauquier 1897) are reproduced from Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:428). I corrected minor errors in the bibliographical details (due mostly to Sainéan, though in one case, spotted by Popova 2010a, 628, Bakhtin compounded the error by incorrectly copying Charles Beauquier's already misspelled surname).

[151] Bk. 2, ch. 5.

[(225)] Interesting materials documenting popular blasons in various provinces of France were published toward the end of the last century. See H. Gaidoz and P. Sébillot, *Blason populaire de la France*, Paris, 1884; A. Canel, *Blason populaire de la Normandie*, Rouen, 1859; and Ch. Beauquier, *Blason populaire de la Franche-Comté*, Paris, 1897.

> glers, fops and rattletooth almsters, and, for occupation, they herded petrified turds and shepherded stillicidious excrement. Such was the harvest of defamatory epithets our herders reaped and, hard upon it, the flat statement that they were unfit to taste dainty pastry. Let them be satisfied with coarse bread and hard loaf.[152]

Here, we have an everyday-life sequence of invective. The length of this sequence of abuses is striking (there are twenty-eight terms of invective here). The point is that this is invective hurled not by one man but, rather, by an entire large crowd of bakers, but this invective is placed into one successive sequence (while in reality, these terms of abuse were uttered simultaneously by different bakers). The sequence itself, as a whole, is not ambivalent; this is pure invective. But within the sequence most of the terms of abuse are ambivalent: they are linked to animal traits, bodily defects, folly, drunkenness, gluttony, defecation—all traits characteristic of the folk-festive system of images. Such a term of abuse as "chienlicts" (that is, "chie-en-lit") has even been directly recorded as a name for one of the masks of carnival.[153] Thus, this sequence of invective too reveals the image of an undelimited, mixed human body and of bodily life (eating, defecation) in all its grotesque ambivalence. Even this everyday-life sequence of invective reveals the special two-faced aspect of the world, the special specific characterization of people and things that is absent from the system of literary image-based speech.

Let us touch on one more phenomenon of praise-invective in Rabelais's novel—the famous inscription on the gates of Thélème, in which some are chased away from the abbey while others are invited to enter.[154] This entire inscription in verse can be considered, in terms of its character, as belonging to the genre of the "cri," that is to say, of those "cries" that opened mystery plays and sotties, summoning the representatives of various estates or guilds or summoning fools (in the sotties). This is a loud public-square summoning cry cast in the official or in parodically official style.[(226)155] The inscription on the gates of Thélème is essentially a variety of such a "cri" (though, of course, not in terms of its meter and verse).

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[152] Bk. 1, ch. 25, translator's interpolations removed.

[153] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 2:247), referring to the word rendered as "shitabeds" in the quotation above.

[154] Bk. 1, ch. 54.

[155] The footnote follows Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 96–97), but it is also possible that Bakhtin briefly consulted Picot (1902–1912, 2:127), who reproduces the page with the "cry" in question on a photographic plate (though Bakhtin gives the wrong page number, which may be his own mistake or may follow an error in an unidentified source). The reference to Picot does not appear in any of Bakhtin's usual sources. Note also a related discussion, in chapter 2, of *Sottie du mond*—a text included in the same volume of Picot (1902–1912, 2:323–346), which is based on an adjacent passage in Flögel and Ebeling (1862).

[(226)] Pierre Gringore's famous sottie *Le jeu du Prince des Sots* begins with a summons (cry) to fools of all estates; see Picot, *Recueil*, vol. 2, 168.

The inscription can be divided into two parts: the one that chases away and the one that summons in. The first has a purely invective character, the second—a purely praiseful one. The invective character of the first part is strictly observed. In the first stanza, for instance, hypocrites are chased away. Rabelais uses fifteen different invective monikers to refer to the hypocrites ("hypocrites," "bygotz," "vieulx matagotz," "marmiteux," and others), and nearly all the other words of this stanza have a shade of invective to them ("abus meschant," "meschanceté," "faulseté," "troublez," and so on). In the summoning stanzas (starting with the fifth), by contrast, all the words are selected to have a glorifying, affectionate, positive hue ("gentilz," "joyeux," "plaisans," "mignons," "serains," "subtilz," and so on). Thus, a strictly invective and a strictly praiseful sequence stand in opposition to one another here. As a whole, the inscription is ambivalent. But there is no ambivalence within it: each word here is either pure unambiguous praise or equally pure unambiguous invective. We have before us ambivalence that has become somewhat rhetorical and external.

Such rhetoricization of praise-invective occurs in Rabelais's work wherever he moves away from folk-festive and public-square forms and approaches official speech and official style. Up to a point, this was also the case with the episode about the Thélème abbey. To be sure, we have here an element of inversion, of play with negation and some other folk-festive elements, but in its essence, Thélème is a humanist utopia reflecting the influence of literary (mostly Italian) sources.

We observe similar phenomena in the places where Rabelais appears directly as an almost official "public writer on behalf of the royal court."[156]

In the "Third Book" (chapter 48) there is a conversation between Gargantua and Pantagruel concerning an issue that was topical at that time: why it is unacceptable for the Church to consecrate a marriage concluded against the will of the parents.[157] Here, we find the following stark example of the rhetoricization of invective and praiseful sequences:

> "Yet, according to the laws of the country I cited, what happens? Take the most errant ruffian, villain or scoundrel; the most evil-smelling foul-breathing hangdog; the most scurvy and leprous stinkard; your most vicious footpad or brigand imaginable. Well, such a knave may abduct the most highborn, the richest, the most upright and the chastest maiden in the land; he may snatch her out of her father's house, out of the very embrace of her mother, and far beyond reach of kin and friend. All he needs is a priest to help him, by celebrating a secret marriage, and to share the future spoils."

The invective and praiseful sequences are here devoid of any ambivalence; they are disunited and put in opposition to each other as closed-in unmerging phenomena; their

[156] An allusion to Abel Lefranc's description of Rabelais as a "publiciste royal," which Bakhtin goes on to challenge in chapter 7 (Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 1:xxii–xxiv).

[157] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:332–333).

addressees are strictly separated. This is purely rhetorical speech that draws sharp and static boundary lines between phenomena and values. All that remains of the public-square element here is the somewhat exaggerated length of the invective sequence.

The phenomenon of blending praise and invective, which we have examined, carries an important theoretical and literary-historical[158] significance. Praising and invective elements are, of course, inherent in every word in living speech. Indeed, there are no indifferent, neutral words at all; there can only be artificially neutralized words.[159] As for the most ancient speech phenomena, what is most typical of them is, in all likelihood, precisely the blending of praise and invective—that is, the double-tonedness of the word.[160] In its subsequent development this double-tonedness is retained and acquires a new meaning in the unofficially familiar and folk laughter-based spheres, where this phenomenon is readily observed. The double-toned word made it possible for the laughing people, who had no interest at all in the stabilization of the existing order and of the prevailing picture of the world (the official truth), to grasp the becoming whole of the world, the merry relativity of all its limited class truths and verities, the world's constant state of not being fully formed, the constant intermixture in it of lies and truth, of darkness and light, of malice and affection, of death and life.(227)[161] The

[158] A possible allusion to the subtitle of Hirzel (1895), which is a central source of information later in this section.

[159] This sentence reflects one of the major constant themes in Bakhtin's thought from his earliest (Bakhtin 1993, 31–40) to his latest writings (see, e.g., Gogotishvili 1992; Sandler 2012b, 2013). The 1950s, in particular, were a period in which Bakhtin focused much of his attention on linguistic theory and, indeed, this section dates to the 1949–1950 round of revisions.

[160] This conclusion is Bakhtin's own and is couched in the terms (praise and invective) he is stressing in the book, and in other works from the 1940s, but the reference to the earliest forms of speech likely involved a nod to Marrism—the linguistic school still dominant in the USSR at the time of writing, in which speculation about prehistoric languages was a major component. Ol'ga Freidenberg, who had a direct institutional connection to N. Ya. Marr himself and other prominent Marrists, makes multiple references to ways in which primeval human consciousness would have conceived of the world (Freidenberg 1997b), and Bakhtin may have partly relied on these statements in making the claim about "the most ancient speech phenomena" here.

[161] For the full English translation of the poem in the footnote (by Edgar Alfred Bowring), see Goethe (1853, 196). Bakhtin quotes the poem in Russian translation and names the translator (poet and translator Aleksandr Kochetkov) below the quoted lines. The translation was published in the volume of the "jubilee edition" of Goethe, which Bakhtin received from Maria Yudina, from which the epigraph to this chapter was quoted (Goethe 1932, 500); and see note 2 to this chapter. Thanks go to Svetlana Dubrovskaya for providing me with this information.

(227) Goethe offers an interesting development of the double-bodiedness theme in its serious philosophical aspect in his poem "The Pariah." The blending of praise and invective (in relation to a deity) on the thematic (rather than the stylistic) single-toned plane is expressed here as follows:

> And I now will *kindly* warn him,
> And I now will *madly* tell him
> Whatsoe'er my mind conceiveth, What within my bosom heaveth.
> But my thoughts, my inmost feelings—
> Those a secret shall remain.

folk double-toned word is never torn away from either the whole or from the condition of becoming; this is why the negative and positive aspects are not expressed in it in any segregated, individualized, or static manner. The double-toned word never tries to halt the future or stop the turning wheel in order to find and demarcate in it the top and the bottom, the front and the rear; on the contrary, this word registers their continuous shifting and blending. In this, the accent in the folk word is always placed on the positive aspect (but, we repeat, without tearing it away from the negative one).

In the official worldviews of the ruling classes such double-tonedness of the word is, generally speaking, impossible: hard, stable boundary lines are drawn here between all phenomena (in the process, all the phenomena are torn away from the contradictory becoming whole of the world). This single-tonedness of thought and style has almost always prevailed in the official spheres of art and ideology.

In the Renaissance, a tense struggle took place between the double-toned folk word and the stabilizing tendencies of the official single-toned style. For a deeper understanding of the complex and multifarious manifestations of the style of that great epoch, a study of this struggle (as well as the related struggle between the grotesque and the classical canons) is of exceptional importance and interest. Of course, this struggle also continued in subsequent periods, but it did so in new, more complex, and sometimes concealed forms. However, this theme already lies outside the scope of our present work.

The ancient double-toned word is the reflection on the stylistic plane of the ancient double-bodied image. In the process of the latter's disintegration, we can observe, in the history of literature and spectacle forms, the interesting phenomenon of paired images, embodying the top and the bottom, the back and the front, life and death, in the form of their semidetached existence. The classic example of such paired images is Don Quixote and Sancho; similar images are still common today in the circus, in traveling shows, and in other forms of comic performance. The *dialogue* between such paired characters is an interesting phenomenon. Such a dialogue is the double-toned word at the stage of its incomplete disintegration. In essence, it is a dialogue of the face with the buttocks, of the top with the bottom, of birth with death.[162] An analogous phenomenon is the ancient and medieval *disputes* between winter and spring, old

[162] Bakhtin's main source for the remainder of this section is Hirzel (1895). Hirzel's study of dialogue is a significant source for some of Bakhtin's later work, as well as a more general significant reference point for his own concept of dialogue (alongside Yakubinsky 1997 and Buber 1970, both published in 1923 and known to Bakhtin and his circle already in the 1920s). Hirzel is also Bakhtin's main source for information on the genres of the Socratic dialogue and the Menippean satire, discussed at length in Bakhtin 1981b and 1984 (101–180) (this was already noted by Poole 1998, 570). The earliest evidence that Bakhtin read Hirzel's work dates to his notes "On Questions of the Theory of the Novel" (Bakhtin 2012c; forthcoming-e), written in early 1941, so very shortly after the 1940 manuscript of the book on Rabelais was completed. And while the materials discussed in Hirzel's work, especially on Menippean satire, substantially informed Bakhtin's thinking on carnival-related topics going forward, this paragraph appears to contain the only edits that can be traced back to Hirzel, which were incorporated into the book on Rabelais itself.

age and youth, fasting and abundance, the old time and the new time, and fathers and children.[163] Such disputes are an organic part of the system of folk-festive forms, connected to succession and renewal (Goethe, too, mentions such a dispute while describing Roman carnival).[164] These disputes (agons) are known in ancient literature: there is, for instance, an interesting surviving fragment of a τριχορία—that is, of a dispute between three choirs, one of old men, one of grown men, and one of boys, in which each of the choirs argued for the value of its own age.[(228)165] Such agons were especially widespread in Sparta and Lower Italy (and in modern Sicily they are a necessary element in folk festivities). Such are also Aristophanes's agons, of course with added literary complexities.[166] Similar disputes, both in Latin (for instance, "Conflictus veris et hiemis")[167] and, especially, in the vernacular languages, were widespread in the Middle Ages in all countries.[168]

All these agons and disputes are in essence, dialogues between forces and phenomena belonging to different ages, dialogues between times, between the two poles of becoming, between the beginning and the end of a metamorphosis as it is taking place; they unfolded, and to a certain extent rationalized or rhetoricized, the dialogic element inherent in the double-toned word (and the double-bodied image).[169] These folk-festive disputes of times and life stages, as well as the dialogues of paired characters, of face and buttocks, of bottom and top, were most likely one of the folkloric roots of the novel and of the specific novelistic dialogue. But this theme is also outside the scope of our work.

It remains for us to make some points in summary of this chapter.

The last phenomenon we examined—the blending of praise-invective—reflects on the stylistic plane the world's ambivalence, double-bodiedness, and incompleteness (it never being fully formed), expressions of which we observed, without exception, in

[163] A work titled "La dispute des gras et des maigres" (dispute between Shrovetide and Lent) was discussed earlier based on Lote (1938, 129–130). The other disputes listed in this sentence are instantiated by examples discussed or alluded to later in this paragraph.

[164] Likely referring to the scene where a child blows out his father's candle during the carnival in Rome, described by Goethe (1982, 468).

[165] See Hirzel (1895, 1:16), who is also the source of the (incomplete) citation of Bergk (1867, 1303) in the footnote.

[166] See Hirzel (1895, 1:16–21); in addition, there are multiple other discussions devoted to agons and to Aristophanes in Hirzel's book, on which Bakhtin could have partly relied here.

[167] The "Conflictus veris en hiemnis" (dispute between spring and winter) is mentioned and discussed by Hirzel (1895, 2:382–384).

[168] Hirzel (1895, 2:381–385).

[169] This is one of the few explicit connections Bakhtin is making between his notion of the grotesque image, central to this book, and his notion of dialogue, central to his book on Dostoevsky. Note also the implied analogy drawn as a result between the double-toned word discussed here and the two-voiced word (or double-voiced discourse, as this term is better known to English speakers) discussed in the Dostoevsky book (Bakhtin 1984, 185–204).

[(228)] See *Carmina Popularia*, published by Bergk, fragment 18.

all the distinguishing features of the Rabelaisian system of images. The old world, as it dies, gives birth to the new one. Death throes blend with the act of childbirth into one indissoluble whole. This process is depicted using the images of the material-bodily nethers: everything descends into the nethers—into the earth and into the bodily grave—in order to die and be born anew. This is why the movement into the nethers pervades Rabelais's entire system of images from beginning to end. All of them, all of these images, throw down, jettison into the nethers, lower, devour, condemn, negate (topographically), put to death, bury, send into the underworld, hurl invective, curse; and at the same time they all conceive anew, fertilize, sow, renew, revive, praise, and glorify. This general movement into the nethers, which at the same time both puts to death and gives birth, creates kinship between phenomena that would seem to be alien to each other, such as beatings, abuses, the underworld, devouring, and so on.

One should note that images of the underworld (of hell), even in Dante, are sometimes evident realizations of invective metaphors—that is, of terms of abuse—and at times the theme of devouring appears openly in his work (Ugolino gnawing Ruggieri's skull, the theme of hunger in his narrative, Satan's maw gnawing Judas, Brutus, and Cassius);[170] even more often, invective and devouring are implicitly contained in his images. However, the ambivalence of these images in Dante's world is almost entirely muffled.

In the Renaissance, all these images of the nethers—from the vulgar term of abuse to the image of the underworld—were permeated by a deep feeling of historical time, a feeling and consciousness of the succession of epochs in world history. In Rabelais, this element of time and historical succession penetrates deeply and essentially into all his images of the material-bodily nethers and lends them a historic tinge. In his work double-bodiedness becomes downright historical double-worldness, the blendedness of the past and the future in a single act of the death of the one and the birth of the other, in the unitary image of a profoundly laughable historical world in the process of becoming and renewal. It is time itself—at once derisive and merry, time as Heraclitus's "playing child," to whom belongs the highest power in the universe[171]—that abuses-praises, beats up-embellishes, kills-gives birth. Rabelais constructs an extraordinarily powerful image of historical becoming in terms of laughter, which is only possible in the Renaissance, when the ground had been laid for it by the entire course of historical development. "History is thorough, and passes through many phases when it conveys an old form to the grave. The final phase of a world-historical form is its *comedy*.... Why does history proceed in this way? So that mankind will separate itself *merrily* from its past."(229)[172]

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[170] See cantos 32–34 of Dante's *Inferno*.

[171] See the epigraph to chapter 3.

[172] Marx (1970, 134; translation modified). The quotation from the *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"* and the sentence preceding it were added in the 1949–1950 round of revisions.

(229) K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, vol. I, 418.

This Rabelaisian system of images, so universal and world-embracing, at the same time permits and even requires an exceptional level of concreteness, fullness, detail, exactness, relevance, and topicality in the depiction of contemporary historical reality. Each image here combines within itself a breadth and cosmic character taken to their limit with an exceptional lifelike concreteness, individuality, and the topicality of public writing on current events. Our book's last chapter is devoted to this remarkable distinguishing feature of Rabelaisian realism.

7. Rabelais's Images and His Contemporary Reality

Up to this point, we have been examining Rabelais's images predominantly in terms of their connection with folk culture. What interested us in Rabelais's work was the main, *major* line of struggle between two cultures—that is, the struggle of folk culture with the official Middle Ages. But we have already pointed out that this major line of struggle organically combined with topical rejoinders to the current events—both major and minor—of the years, months, and even days when the various parts of Rabelais's novel were created. One may even say that the entire novel, from beginning to end, was growing out of the life of its time—the very thick of it—where Rabelais himself was an active participant or an involved witness. The images of his novel combine within themselves the fathomless breadth and depth of folk universalism with the utmost concreteness, individuality, detailedness, vividness, relevance, and topicality. These images are endlessly remote from abstract symbolism and schematism. One may say that in Rabelais's novel the cosmic breadth of myth is combined with the acute topicality of a latter-day news summary and with the concreteness and the matter-of-fact precision of a realist novel. Behind even the most seemingly fantastic images one can discover actual events, living persons, and the author's vast personal experience and precise observations.[1]

French Rabelais scholars have carried out great and painstaking work in order to reveal all these multifaceted and close connections between Rabelais's images and his contemporary reality. As a result of this work, they were able to collect extensive, and in many ways valuable, factual material. However, this material is both illuminated and generalized upon by present-day Rabelais scholarship based on narrow methodological positions. The prevailing approach is that of dull biographism, in which the social

[1] The book's last chapter was originally titled "Image and Word in Rabelais's Novel" in the 1940 manuscript. The current title was given to it in the 1949–1950 round of revisions. According to Popova (2008a, 922), Bakhtin asked the publishers to revert to the original 1940 title when preparing the book for its eventual publication; however, that instruction ended up being ignored. A short paragraph that followed the first paragraph of this chapter in the 1940 manuscript, but was eventually omitted from the book, offers a plan of the chapter to come. This plan also makes the two alternative titles clearer: "It is on this aspect of Rabelais's images, directly connected with his contemporary reality, that we will first of all focus our attention in the present chapter. After that we will be able to offer a final definition of the distinguishing features of this image and its word" (Bakhtin 2008a, 457). This paragraph was replaced in the 1949–1950 round of revisions by the longer discussion that follows. Bakhtin comes back to the 1940 text below, when he begins discussing concrete examples from the novel's text.

and political events of the period lose their direct meaning and their political cutting edge, are muffled, blunted, and turned into mere facts of the writer's biography, placed alongside the minor events of his private and everyday life. Behind the bulk of such biographical facts, painstakingly collected, the major meaning disappears from view, both of the period itself and of Rabelais's novel, and the genuinely *popular position* that Rabelais occupied in the struggle of his time disappears as well.

To be sure, certain Rabelais scholars—first and foremost the late leader of contemporary Rabelais scholarship, Abel Lefranc—devote considerable attention to the political events of the period and their reflection in Rabelais's novel. However, both the events themselves and their reflection in the novel are interpreted *on the official plane*. Abel Lefranc even explicitly considered Rabelais to be a "*public writer on behalf of the royal court*."[2]

Rabelais was indeed a public writer, but he was not in any way a public writer on behalf of the royal court, even though he did understand the relative progressiveness of royal power and of some individual acts of Court policy. We have already said that Rabelais offered remarkable specimens of political public writing on folk public-square grounds, in which there was not a grain of officialness. As a public writer, Rabelais was not *fully* in solidarity with either of the groupings that existed within the confines of the ruling classes (including the bourgeoisie), with any of the viewpoints, with any of the undertakings, with any of the events of the time. But at the same time Rabelais was very well able to understand and appreciate the *relative* progressiveness of specific phenomena of the period, among them individual undertakings of the royal authorities, and he welcomed them in his novel. However, these evaluations and this welcoming attitude were never unconditional or official, for the form of folk public-square imagery, permeated with ambivalent laughter, also made it possible to discover all the *limitedness* of this progressiveness. From the *people's* point of view, expressed in Rabelais's novel, there were always wider perspectives open to view, reaching beyond the bounds of the limited progressiveness that was accessible to the movements of the time.

Rabelais's fundamental goal is to dismantle the official picture of the period and its events, to look at them in a new way, to illuminate the tragedy or comedy of the time from the point of view of *the laughing people's chorus in the public square*.[3] Rabelais mobilizes all the resources of sober folk imagery in order to eradicate from all notions about the contemporary era and its events any official lie and limited seriousness, dictated by the interests of the ruling classes. Rabelais does not take his epoch at its word, believing what it "says and imagines about itself";[4] he wants to reveal its genuine meaning for the people, the growing and immortal people.

[2] Lefranc et al. (1913–1915, 1:xxii–xxiv).

[3] Alluding to the chorus of ancient Greek drama—an allusion that corresponds with a philosophical tradition going back to Nietzsche (1910) and to Symbolism, and cf. Bakhtin's own notion of "choral support" in Bakhtin (1990b, 170–172).

[4] Bakhtin paraphrases and quotes from *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels 1970, 67): "Whilst

In dismantling official notions about the time and its events, Rabelais does not, of course, seek to offer a scholarly analysis of it. After all, he speaks not in the language of concepts but in the language of folk laughter-based images. But in dismantling false seriousness, false historical pathos, Rabelais sets the ground for a new seriousness and for a new historical pathos.

Let us now trace the way in which Rabelais's contemporary reality—from the author's closest everyday-life surroundings to the major events of the epoch—is reflected in his novel, based on a number of examples.

In "Pantagruel" (chronologically the first book), the chapter about the hero's birth depicts a terrible heat wave and drought and the universal thirst it caused.[5] According to Rabelais, this drought lasted "thirty-six months, three weeks, four days and thirteen hours and even longer." And sure enough, from the memoirs of Rabelais's contemporaries we learn that in the year when "Pantagruel" was being written (1532), there was indeed an unprecedented drought that lasted six months.[6] Rabelais merely exaggerated the scale and accuracy of its duration. As we already said,[7] the drought and the universal thirst have revived the image of the mystery-play devilkin Pantagruel, arouser of thirst, and made this image topical.

In the same book, there is an episode in which Panurge buys indulgences, thus improving his finances.[8] It turns out that in the year when the novel was being written, an extraordinary Papal jubilee was carried out in France. And the very churches visited by Panurge were, in fact, authorized to sell indulgences.[9] Thus, here too, the absolute accuracy of detail has been observed.

In the same book there is also the following episode:

> Reading the noble Chronicles of his ancestors, Pantagruel discovered that Geoffroi de Lusignan, known as Geoffrey with the Great Tooth, his stepmother's daughter-in-law's uncle's son-in-law's aunt's eldest sister's cousin-in-law's grandfather, was buried at Maillezais, the abbey he had destroyed and later rebuilt. Accordingly, like a dutiful relative, Pantagruel took a day off to call on Ardillon, the noble abbot; then, passing through Sansay, Celles, Coulonges and Fontenay-le-Comte (where he saluted the learned Tiraqueau), he reached Maillezais and duly visited the sepulchre of Geoffrey with the Great Tooth. (book 2, chapter 5)

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in ordinary life every shopkeeper is very well able to distinguish between what somebody professes to be and what he really is, our historians have not yet won even this trivial insight. They take every epoch at its word and believe that everything it says and imagines about itself is true." This quote was added as an epigraph to the present chapter in the 1949–1950 round of revisions but was not included in the 1965 publication. Nevertheless, allusions to the epigraph (here and near the end of the chapter) were retained.

[5] Bk. 2, ch. 2.

[6] Lefranc et al. (1913–1915, 3:xxv–xxviii), Plattard (1930, 123)

[7] See chapter 5.

[8] Bk. 2, ch. 17.

[9] Lefranc et al. (1913–1915, 3:xxviii–xxx).

When Pantagruel saw Geoffrey's stone sculpture erected on his tomb, he was struck by the unusually furious countenance that the sculptor had lent Geoffrey's whole figure.

In this episode there are two fantastic elements: the image of the traveling *giant Pantagruel* itself and the parodically comic designation of his kinship relation with Geoffroi de Lusignan. All the rest in this episode—the names of persons and localities, the events, the furious countenance of Geoffrey's statue, and other details—correspond to reality with absolute precision and are most intimately linked with Rabelais's own life and impressions.

In those days (1524–1527) when Rabelais was the secretary of Geoffroy d'Estissac, bishop and abbot of Maillezais, he would often travel from Maillezais to Poitiers and back (Pantagruel's route), riding through all the places that he names in our episode with absolute accuracy. D'Estissac continually travelled throughout his diocese (like most lords in those days, he had a great appetite for building), and Rabelais accompanied him. Consequently, he knew the province of Poitou superbly well, through and through, up to its smallest and most remote localities. He names more than fifty names of places and localities in Poitou in his novel, including the tiniest and most remote hamlets. All the places named in our episode were intimately familiar to him. Rabelais's first years as a monk were spent in the Franciscan monastery located in Fontenay-le-Comte; in that town he attended the meetings of a group of law scholars with humanist leanings, held at the home of the scholar Tiraqueau, toward whom Rabelais retained a friendly affection to the end of his life. Near Ligugé was the abbey where Rabelais often visited the learned Abbot Ardillon (here, under the influence of Jean Bouchet, he apparently first began writing poems in French). Thus, both Ardillon and Tiraqueau are the names of Rabelais's living and generally known contemporaries.[10]

Neither was Pantagruel's ancestor, Geoffroi de Lusignan, nicknamed "Great Tooth," a fictional person. He is a historical figure. He lived in the early thirteenth century. He burned down the abbey of Maillezais (for this Rabelais made him into a peddler of matches in the underworld[11]—a carnivalesque method of posthumous retribution), but later, having repented, he rebuilt the abbey, and richly endowed it. It is for doing so that a fancy cenotaph with his effigy in stone was erected in his honor in the Maillezais church (he was buried elsewhere).[12]

The exceptionally furious expression of Geoffroy's image in this effigy, which Rabelais writes about, also strictly corresponds to reality. While this depiction in stone has since been destroyed, its head was found in 1834 under the ruins of the Maillezais church and is now kept in the Niort municipal museum. This is how Jean Plattard describes this head: "The knit brows, the hard and fixed look, the bristling moustache, *the open mouth*, *the sharp teeth*, everything in this face naively expresses anger" (*Vie de François Rabelais*, p. 58).[13]

[10] The paragraph gathers information from Plattard (1930, 16–61), focusing especially on pp. 36–37.

[11] In bk. 2, ch. 30, as noted by Plattard (1930, 44).

[12] Plattard (1930, 43–45).

[13] English translation: Plattard (1930, 45).

Let us emphasize in this stone head of Geoffroy's *the wide-open mouth and the teeth*—that is, the leading grotesque features of Pantagruel's own image in the first book.[14] Could this be why Rabelais, who so often beheld this head in the abbey's church and impressed it upon his memory, made Geoffroy one of Pantagruel's ancestors?

This entire brief and unimportant episode, in its structure and composition, is highly typical. Pantagruel's grotesquely fantastical (and even cosmic) image is here woven into *a reality that is perfectly factual and intimately known to the author*; he travels through *places that are familiar and close to the author*, meets with *the author's personal friends*, sees the same objects that the author has also seen. The episode contains many proper names, the names of people and of localities, and they are all *absolutely real*, even the addresses of some persons (Tiraqueau and Ardillon) are given.

The reality surrounding Pantagruel is thus real, individual and, so to speak, *name-like* in character; it is *a world of singular familiar things and familiar people*: the element of abstract generalization, of the common noun, of typification is reduced to a minimum. Let us also stress the locally topographical nature of the images in this episode. We observe this topographical nature everywhere throughout the novel. Rabelais always tries to weave into the fabric of his narrative some real local peculiarity of some province or town or other, some local curiosity or local legend. Thus, we have already mentioned that the bowl in which Pantagruel's pap was cooked was actually displayed in Bourges as "the giant's bowl."[15] Little Pantagruel was chained to his cradle. Rabelais notes that one of these chains is in La Rochelle, another in Lyon, and a third in Angers. These chains were actually located in these places and were well known to anyone who has been to these cities.[16] In Poitiers young Pantagruel broke a large stone off a ledge of rock and made it into a table for the local students. This stone still exists in Poitiers to this day, only it is split in two.[17] These local elements, scattered everywhere throughout the novel, drastically strengthen the *individually name-like, familiar, and* (if one could put it this way) *seen* character of the entire Rabelaisian world. Even objects of daily use (such as a bowl for pap) have an *individually-unique*[18] character here, similar to objects that belonged to historical figures and are kept in museums. We shall return to the special type of Rabelaisian individualization in due course.

[14] Referring, again, to bk. 2, the *chronologically* first book.

[15] As discussed in chapter 5, based on Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:252–253) and Plattard (1930, 126) and referring to bk. 2, ch. 4.

[16] See Plattard (1930, 126), Lefranc et al. (1913–1915, 3:46), also referring to bk. 2, ch. 4.

[17] Lefranc et al. (1913–1915, 3:51), Plattard (1930, 126), referring to bk. 2, ch. 5. The "table" is actually a dolmen, which is known to have still been intact as late as the eighteenth century.

[18] "Unique" (*edinstvennyj*) is a central term in Bakhtin's early philosophy (often rendered as "once-occurrent" in the published translations of Bakhtin's early works). Bakhtin uses this term to refer to the actuality of the individual's (*my*) conscious experience and deeds, as lived from within, from a first-person perspective. See also note 106 to the introduction.

Let us move on to the chronologically second book of the novel, "Gargantua."[19] All the events of this book (except the Paris episodes) take place around Chinon—that is, in Rabelais's own native land. All the places and localities where the action is played out are designated here with absolute precision and can be found on the maps or in the cadastres of that time. At the (topographical) center of the entire action is, as you may recall, the royal "residence" of Grandgousier (Gargantua's father). By now, Rabelais scholars have been able to identify this residence of Grandgousier's, with full accuracy and beyond any doubt, as the real-life farmstead of La Devinière, which belonged to the writer's father, the lawyer Antoine Rabelais. The writer himself was born on that farmstead. The Rabelais family's modest house in La Devinière survives to this day. The old fireplace has survived as well—the fireplace at which good Grandgousier would sit roasting chestnuts, waiting for them to burst, poking the fire with a stick with a charred end, and telling his family tales of the good old times, when he was informed of Picrochole's sudden aggression.[20]

Once the identification of Grandgousier's residence with La Devinière was firmly established, all the other geographical names and topographical indications that Rabelais provides in depicting the novel's events, without exception (and there are many such names and indications indeed), immediately came to life. Everything turned out to be real and accurate to the minutest detail (albeit enlarged in its dimensions). Not far from La Devinière, on the left bank of the river Negron, there still exists a meadow—la prairie de la Saulsaye—on which the "Palaver of the Potulent" took place and where, on February 4, during the carnivalesque feast of cattle slaughter, Gargantua was born. Abel Lefranc reasonably assumes that these were the actual place and date of Rabelais's own birth.[21]

The entire topography of the Picrocholine war also turned out to be absolutely real and precise. Seuilly and Lerné, and the road running between them, where the brawl between the winegrowers and the bakers took place,[22] as well as the Negron valley, where military operations are conducted around La Devinière, within a very narrow space bounded from various directions by Lerné, La Roche Clermault, Vaugaudry, and La Vauguyon—all this is totally accurately named and indicated in the novel and reveals a clear and distinct picture of all the military operations.[23] The monastery

[19] Bakhtin's main source for the events in bk. 1 here is Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:liv–lxxxvii). Some details also come from Plattard, (1930, 4–7) and Lote (1938, 93–95). An interesting point to note is that Lefranc makes repeated use of the terms "topography" and "topographical" in the parts of his text Bakhtin uses here. It is tempting to think that this inspired Bakhtin's adoption of the same terms in his book. Of course, Lefranc uses "topographical" in reference to a geographical area, while Bakhtin's take on this concept is substantially extended beyond this more literal sense.

[20] Plattard (1930, 6), with an allusion to bk. 1, ch. 28. See also Krzhevsky (1938, 5).

[21] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:lv–lviii), referring to the events of bk. 1, ch. 4–6.

[22] Bk. 1, ch. 25; the "winegrowers" are shepherds tasked with guarding the vines.

[23] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:lxxii ff.) and referring to various events in bk. 1, from ch. 25 onward.

vineyard defended by Friar John also exists to this day; even part of the old wall, contemporary with Rabelais, survives.[24]

In fact, the Picrocholine war itself is also based on an absolutely real event. In depicting it, Rabelais used an actual conflict that was happening in his native land, in which the Rabelais family and their friends took part on one side, with the lord of Lerné, Gaucher de Sainte-Marthe, on the other. The latter owned fisheries on the river Loire, obstructing navigation. This led to a conflict and to litigation with the communities in the area, whose interests were linked with boat traffic. The legal proceedings lasted a long time, at times subsiding and then reigniting. It became especially acute precisely in the fall of 1532, when François Rabelais was staying with his father in La Devinière during the grape harvest. The writer's father, lawyer Antoine Rabelais, was for a time a friend of his neighbor, Gaucher de Sainte-Marthe, and was even in charge of some of his affairs, but in this conflict with the communities he sided with the latter. The communities were represented in the legal proceedings by the lawyer Gallet, a relative and close friend of Rabelais's father. Thus, during his summer stay at La Devinière (in 1532), François Rabelais found himself at the center of this conflict and possibly took part in some of its events himself.[25]

The depiction of the Picrocholine war is full of allusions to this real-life conflict. Even some of the names correspond to reality. Thus, Grandgousier's chancellor is Gallet,[26] and we have seen that the real Gallet indeed represented communities in court in their case against Gaucher de Sainte-Marthe. The beaten-up standard-bearer of the bakers, because of whom, in part, the war broke out, goes by the name of Marquet. This is the name of Sainte-Marthe's son-in-law.[27] In chapter 47, Rabelais lists the names of thirty-one feudal estates (one of Rabelais's characteristic long naming enumerations) that formed an "old alliance" and offered their assistance to Grandgousier. There is not a single invented name on this list. These are all the names of towns, boroughs, villages, and hamlets that were located on the banks of the Loire and the Vienne or in their vicinity and that had a direct interest in commercial boat traffic on the Loire. They all, indeed, formed an alliance in the legal proceedings against Sainte-Marthe.[28] It is quite possible that the episode of the brawl between the Lerné bakers and the Seuilly winegrowers also actually took place. Abel Lefranc points out that an old rivalry still exists between the two communities—a dim memory of some ancient feud.[29]

Thus, the central episodes of the second book, "Gargantua," take place in actual reality, in *the intimately familiar and seen world of the native home and its immediate*

[24] Referring to bk. 1, ch. 27. Plattard (1930, 6–7) mentions the survival not of the vineyard itself but of the storage rooms for wine located next to it, indicating the volume of wine produced at the monastery in the past.

[25] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:lx–lxxii).

[26] Bk. 1, ch. 30–31.

[27] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:lxviii), referring to bk. 1, ch. 25.

[28] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:lxix–lxx).

[29] Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:lxxii).

surroundings. The topography of these native places is given with all the tiniest details and with exceptional precision. This entire world—from things to persons—has an *individual name-like* and totally concrete character. Such fantastic events as, for instance, the pilgrims being swallowed with salad and drowned in urine, are set in the courtyard and garden of the La Devinière farmstead, which are designated with full topographical precision (they survive almost unchanged to the present).

All the other episodes, both of this book and of the two books that follow, share the same character. Behind most of them, Rabelais scholarship reveals real places, real persons, and real events. Thus, a number of characters of the "Third Book" have been identified as Rabelais's contemporaries: Herr Trippa is Agrippa von Nettesheim, the theologian Hippothadeus is Lefèvre d'Etaples, the poet Raminagrobis is Jean Lemaire, Doctor Rondibilis is the physician Rondelet, and so on. The village of Panzoult (in the episode featuring the Sibyl of Panzoult) existed and still exists in reality, and a fortune-teller that enjoyed popularity at the time really did live in it. Even to this day, people can point to the grotto dug into the rock, where legend has it that this soothsayer lived.[30]

The same must be said of the "Fourth Book," although the data on it available to Rabelais scholarship are not as rich and precise as for the earlier books. One example will suffice: the inserted story about Villon's prank. The action of this "tragic farce" takes place at Saint-Maixent (that is, in the province of Poitou, with which Rabelais was so well familiar). Here, in the outskirts of this town, the roadside cross, which the author referred to when pointing out that Ticklepecker's "brains spurted out somewhere near the Hossanna, that cross by the roadside," still survives from Rabelais's time. It is possible that, in addition to literary sources, Rabelais's story was inspired by some local tale, since one of the fiefs adjoining Saint-Maixent is still called "the fief of the dead monk"![31]

We will limit ourselves to these examples. They illuminate sufficiently well an essential aspect of Rabelaisian images—their connection with actual reality that is immediately proximal to the author. The most proximal object of depiction, the foreground of all images, is *the world of well-known, lived-in places, living familiar people, things that have been seen and touched*.

In this maximally proximal world (the foreground plane of depiction), everything is individually unique, historical. The role of the general and of common nouns is minimal: it is as if each object here wants to be called *by a proper name*. Characteristically enough, even in his comparisons and similes, Rabelais always seeks to recruit utterly individual, historically unique objects and phenomena. Thus, when during the feasting that follows the burning of the knights, Pantagruel says that it would be good to

[30] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:lxx–ci) and possibly also Plattard (1930, 219), referring to bk. 3, ch. 16–18 (the Sybil of Panzoult), 21–23 (Raminagrobis), 25 (Herr Trippa), and 29–34 (Hippothadeus and Rondibilis).

[31] Plattard (1930, 40–42), referring to bk. 4, ch. 13. Plattard points out that not one road-side cross, but a whole row, still survived to his own time.

hang bells from the chewing jaws, he is not content with the image of church bells in general but names absolutely particular ones—*the great bells of Poitiers, Tours, and Cambrai.*[32] Another example: in chapter 64 of the "Fourth Book," we find the following comparison: "Friar John with, in his wake, the stewards, footmen, butlers, cupbearers, carvers, servers, caterers and minor flunkies, brought on four tremendous ham pies, that looked for all the world like *the four bastions of the city of Turin.*" Many similar examples could be cited. Rabelais images everywhere gravitate toward *personally seen historically unique objects* (one variety of this is Rabelais's special liking, shared by his entire historical period, for curiosities, rare items, oddities).

It is typical that most of the objects from the examples we have analyzed can still be seen today: thus, one can still see Grandgousier's "royal residence" and his family hearth—that symbol of peaceful policy; one can see Friar John's monastery vineyard, the stone head of Geoffroy of the Great Tooth, the stone table for student feasting in Poitiers, the roadside cross in Saint-Maixent at which Ticklepecker spilled his brains.

But this most proximal world (or rather worldlet) of lived-in places, seen things, and familiar people by no means exhausts Rabelais's contemporary reality as reflected in his novel. This is only the plane of the novel's images that is closest to him (to his person, to his life, to his eye). Unfolding behind it is a second, broader and more historically significant plane, which also forms part of that same contemporary reality, but measured on a different scale.

Let us return to the images of the Picrocholine war. They are based, as we have seen, on a local* provincial *and even almost a* family *conflict of the Loire communities with Antoine Rabelais's neighbor, Sainte-Marthe. Their arena is* the narrow space of La Devinière's closest surroundings*. This is* the first, most proximal level of images for the Picrocholine war, walked by Rabelais's own feet, familiar to his own eyes, felt by the touch of his own fingertips, connected with his own relatives and friends*.

However, Rabelais's contemporaries and closest descendants recognized in the figure of Picrochole not Gaucher de Sainte-Marthe, but *Charles V* and in part other *aggressive rulers* of that time—Ludovico Sforza or Ferdinand of Aragon.[33] And indeed, they were right. Rabelais's entire novel is most intimately connected with the political events and problems of its time. And the first three books of the novel (especially "Gargantua" and the "Third Book") are connected with *France's struggle against Charles V.*[34] The Picrocholine war in particular is *a direct rejoinder to this struggle.* For instance, in the amazing scene of Picrochole's council of war there is an element of direct satire against Charles V's policy of conquest. This council of war scene is Rabelais's answer to a similar scene in Thomas More's *Utopia*, in which aggressiveness and claims to

[32] Bk. 2, ch. 26. Rabelais also mentions Rennes (spelled "Renes").

[33] Sainéan (1930, 28, 57). This is part of Sainéan's critique of the strictly allegorical reading of Rabelais that was current in the eighteenth century (a critique Bakhtin himself unequivocally agreed with in chapter 1). See note 133 to chapter 1 regarding the two different members of the Sforza family mentioned by Sainéan as identified with Picrochole.

[34] See Lote (1938, 261–322).

world monarchy are ascribed to Francis I. Rabelais readdressed these accusations to Charles V.[35] The source of Gallet's speech, in which he accuses Picrochole of aggression and defends Grandgousier's peaceful policy, is a comparable speech on the causes of the war between France and Charles V, delivered by Guillaume du Bellay (Rabelais's future patron and friend) to German princes.[36]

The question of determining the aggressor was posed very acutely, and at the same time in a totally concrete form in connection with the wars between Charles V and Francis I. A number of anonymous writings of the time were devoted to this question, coming out of the du Bellay brothers' entourage, to which Rabelais also belonged.[37]

The images of the Picrocholine war are *a living rejoinder to this topical political theme of the aggressor*. Rabelais offered his own solution to this problem and created in Picrochole and his advisers an undying image of the aggressive warlike politician. He also doubtless lent him some of the traits of Charles V.[38] This link with the political agenda of the time creates *the second, topically political plane* of images related to the Picrocholine war.

But in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the problem of war and peace also was posed more broadly, more as a matter of principle, than, so to speak, the *particular* question of determining the aggressor in any specific military conflict. It was a matter of whether rulers and peoples had *the right in principle* to wage war and of *the distinction between just and unjust wars*. The possibility of arranging a global peace was also under discussion. It suffices to mention Thomas More and Erasmus.[39]

The images of the Picrocholine war are also closely connected with this broader and more principled political agenda of the time. The second plane of these images is broadened and deepened by it.

Of course, this entire second plane of the images is also *concrete and individually historical*. There is no *abstract* generalization, no *typification*, but this is *an individuality on a broader scale, both historically and in terms of meaning*. From the *small-scale* individuality we move on to a *large-scale, encompassing* individuality (rather than to an abstract type); the structure of the smaller is repeated in the larger.[40]

Behind the second plane rises the last—third—plane of the images relating to the Picrocholine war: the grotesque body of the giants, images of feasting, the disarticulated body, torrents of urine, the transformation of blood into wine and of battle into

[35] Lote (1938, 63), referring to bk. 1, ch. 33.

[36] Lote (1938, 297), referring to bk. 1, ch. 31.

[37] Lote (1938, 284–285).

[38] In the 1940 manuscript, Bakhtin supports this claim with a quote from a letter by Voltaire, reproduced from Boulenger (1925, 66).

[39] See Lote (1938, 265–280), with particular relevant writings by Thomas More, Desiderius Erasmus, and Claude Seyssel (the latter was only mentioned by Bakhtin in the 1940 manuscript) discussed or mentioned on pp. 269–274.

[40] Cf. the paragraph from Bakhtin's early draft notebooks for the book (from 1938–1939), quoted in note 137 to chapter 1 (Bakhtin 2008e, 646), where the claim made here is put into a clearer philosophical context.

feasting, the carnival decrowning of King Picrochole, and so on—that is, the folk-festive plane of the Picrocholine war that we have previously analyzed.[41]

This third—folk-festive—plane is similarly *individual and concrete, but this is the broadest, all-embracing, universal individuality.* At the same time, what is revealed in the folk-festive images of this plane is *the deepest meaning of the historical process, which extends far beyond not only contemporaneity in the narrow sense but also beyond Rabelais's entire epoch.* They reveal the *people's point of view* on war and peace, the aggressor, political power, the future. Revealed in the light of this popular point of view, formed and sustained over thousands of years, is the *merry relativity* both of the events themselves and of the entire political agenda of the era. In this merry relativity, the *differences* between the just and the unjust, the right and the wrong, the progressive and the reactionary, *as applied to the given period and to the immediately present time*, are, of course, *not effaced*, but these differences *lose their absoluteness*, their *one-sided and limited seriousness.*

Folk-festive universalism penetrates into all of Rabelais's images, lending meaning to every detail and making it partake in *the ultimate whole.*[42] All these familiar, once-seen, individually unique things and topographical details, filling up the first plane of the images, partake in *the large individual whole of the world, the double-bodied, becoming whole, revealing itself in a torrent of praise and invective.* In such conditions there cannot be any suggestion of a naturalist *atomization* of reality, of *any kind of abstract tendentiousness.*

We have discussed the images of the Picrocholine war. But the second broadened plane of reality exists in all the other images of Rabelais's novel as well. All of them are connected with the most topical political events and problems of their time.

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[41] We find this description of three planes or levels to a literary image again in Bakhtin's "Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 2014, 527–528; forthcoming-a) when he analyzes the images of Shakespeare's tragedies (and especially of *Macbeth*). There is, again, the least significant plane of current affairs, the plane of the criminality of political power in general, and the deepest plane, that of the criminality of any self-asserting individuality. The two three-plane structures are interesting to compare. To begin with, Bakhtin reverses the numbering (the deepest plane is labeled first in reference to Shakespeare but third in reference to Rabelais). More significantly, Bakhtin essentially dismisses the outward plane of Shakespeare's images as mere ornament, while considering it more significant in Rabelais. The tone of the images themselves, of course, is also very different in the two examples.

[42] The *ultimate whole* is a theme we find explicitly in Bakhtin's other writings of the 1940s—perhaps most notably in a passage I already quoted from in note 117 to chapter 6 (Bakhtin 1996b, 10; forthcoming-d)—but it also connects to central ideas in Bakhtin's thought in all periods (as I've argued in detail in Sandler 2024c). In this paragraph, interestingly, Bakhtin describes this ultimate whole from two different angles, each of which plays a significant role in his philosophy in its own right. On the one hand, this ultimate whole is "*the large individual whole of the world*," implying that it is a world perceived from a first-person human perspective, rather than in abstract terms. On the other hand, it is also "*double-bodied*" and combines the opposite tones of praise and invective, implying the combination of irreducibly many distinct individual positions, forming the ultimate whole by entering into dialogue (to use a term Bakhtin would come to employ in this context somewhat later) with one another.

Rabelais was excellently well informed concerning all the issues in the high politics of his era.[43] From 1532 on begins his close association with the du Bellay brothers.[44] Both brothers[45] stood at the very center of the politics of their time. Under Francis I, Cardinal Jean du Bellay headed what might be called a bureau of diplomatic and literary propaganda—a matter that at that time came to be recognized as having exceptionally great significance. A whole series of pamphlets published in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and of course, France itself, was being written or inspired by the du Bellay brothers. Everywhere, in all countries, the du Bellay brothers had their own diplomatic and literary agents.[46]

Being closely connected with the du Bellay brothers, Rabelais could master the high politics of the period based on primary sources, so to speak. He was an immediate witness to how this high politics was being created. He was, probably, privy to many secret plots and plans of the royal government, which the du Bellay brothers were helping to realize. He accompanied Jean du Bellay on three trips to Italy with highly important diplomatic missions to the Pope. He was in the service of Guillaume du Bellay during the French occupation of the Piedmont. He was present at the historic meeting between Francis I and Charles V in Aigues-Mortes as a member of the king's entourage.[47] Thus, Rabelais was an immediate witness to the most important political acts of his time. They took place before his eyes and in immediate proximity to him.

Beginning with "Gargantua" (that is, the second book in chronological order), topical political issues play a fairly substantial role in the novel. Besides the straightforwardly political themes, the novel's last three books are full of allusions—clear to us to a greater or lesser degree—to various political events and various actors of that period.

Let us trace the main topical political themes of the third and fourth books.

We have already pointed out that the central image of the prologue to the "Third Book"—the defense of Corinth—reflects the defensive measures undertaken in France, and in Paris in particular, following the deterioration of relations with the emperor. These measures were put in force by Jean du Bellay, and Rabelais, in all likelihood,

[43] The following paragraphs, discussing Rabelais's involvement in his time's politics and his association with the du Bellay brothers, are mostly based on various passages in Plattard (1930; see concrete page references below) and Lote (1938, 24–33, 281–293).

[44] See Plattard (1930, 143–144), though Plattard gives the year as 1533, while 1532 is not mentioned in this context in any of the relevant sources and is thus most likely a mistake or typo.

[45] There were not two, but six du Bellay brothers, four of whom achieved some degree of fame in Renaissance France. Rabelais was associated with Cardinal Jean du Bellay and with Guillaume du Bellay, seigneur de Langey. Their younger brother Martin (known today for his memoirs, some cowritten with Guillaume) is mentioned here and there by Lote and Plattard. There was also René du Bellay, a bishop, with interest in physics and botany. The famous poet Joachim du Bellay was their first cousin, once removed.

[46] Lote (1938, 281–286).

[47] These events are covered, in some detail, by Plattard (1930, 143–151, 169–181, 187, 192–197, 226–246).

directly witnessed them.[48] The first chapters of the "Third Book," devoted to Pantagruel's wise and humane policy in the conquered lands of King Anarchus, are an almost direct eulogy of Guillaume du Bellay's policy in Piedmont when it was under French occupation. At the time of that occupation, Rabelais was working with Guillaume du Bellay as a secretary and close confidant and was, therefore, an immediate insider witness to all of his patron's undertakings.[49]

Guillaume du Bellay, Seigneur de Langey, is one of the most remarkable people of that time. He was, it seems, the only one of his contemporaries, toward whom the mercilessly sober and demanding Rabelais could not deny a certain degree of respect. The image of the Seigneur de Langey impressed him and left a mark in his novel.

Rabelais was closely associated with Guillaume du Bellay during the last period of the latter's political activity; he was also present at his death: he embalmed his body, and brought it to its place of burial. He recalls the last minutes of Seigneur de Langey in the novel's "Fourth Book."[50]

Guillaume du Bellay's policy in Piedmont had gained Rabelais's deep sympathy. Du Bellay strove, first of all, to draw the population of the occupied regions to his side; he sought to improve Piedmont's economy; the army was forbidden to oppress the population and was subjected to strict discipline. Moreover, du Bellay imported an enormous quantity of wheat to Piedmont and distributed it to the people, a project on which he spent his entire personal wealth.(230) At the time this was a completely new and unheard-of method of military occupation. The first chapter of the "Third Book" depicts this Piedmont policy of the Seigneur de Langey.[51] The leading Rabelaisian theme of the chapter is fertility and communal abundance. He begins with the fertility of the Utopians (Pantagruel's subjects) and then introduces the praise of du Bellay's (in this case, Pantagruel's) occupation policy:

> Here I draw the attention of my bibbing readers to a point of statesmanship. Certain despotic spirits, to their shame and loss, promulgate violence. What an error! On the contrary, in order to instill and maintain obedience in a newly-conquered people, the one thing a monarch must avoid is pillaging, harrying, vexing, oppressing, and tyrannizing them. The rod of iron will not work; woe to the conqueror who swallows the nation in his

[48] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 5:7) and Plattard (1930, 179–180), and cf. the discussion of the prologues to the books of Rabelais's novel in chapter 2.

[49] Plattard (1930, 192–194).

[50] See Plattard (1930, 201–203) and bk. 4, ch. 26–28, of Rabelais's novel (ch. 27 even mentions du Bellay in its title). There is another explicit mention of du Bellay and of his death in bk. 3, ch. 21.

[51] See Plattard (1930, 192–194), who also quotes the same passage from bk. 3, ch. 1, that Bakhtin is about to quote (of course, offering a rather different analysis of it), and Lote (1938, 388). On Rabelais's pension, mentioned in the footnote, see Plattard (1930, 204–205).

(230) After his death his heirs scarcely received anything. Even the pension that he willed to Rabelais was, apparently, never paid to the latter for lack of funds.

> maw—a demovorous king, as Achilles called Agamemnon.... Conquered nations are newborn babes; as such they must be given suck, they must be rocked, fondled and amused. Like newly planted trees, they must be supported, propped up, protected from all tempests, injuries and calamities. Like convalescents from lengthy illness, they must be nursed, coddled and cherished. (book 3, chapter 1)

We can see that this entire eulogy of a then-topical political method is deeply permeated with *the folk-festive conception of the body of the entire people, which is born, feeds, grows, and is revived. Growth and renewal are the leading themes in the image of the people. The people is a newborn babe* being breastfed, a newly planted tree, a recovering, revived organism. The people's ruler is a feeding mother, a gardener, a healing physician*. The bad ruler is given an equally grotesque-bodily definition too: "demovorous," "devourer of the people."

These purely Rabelaisian, and at the same time carnival festive, images of the people and the ruler broaden and deepen to an extraordinary degree the politically relevant, acutely topical issue of the Piedmont occupation. They make this factor partake in the major whole of the growing and renewing world.

The Seigneur de Langey, as we have said, left a deep mark on the entire third and fourth books of the novel. The memories of his figure and of the last moments of his life play an essential role in the chapters of the "Fourth Book" devoted to the death of heroes,[52] which stand out quite starkly from the rest of the novel in their *almost* fully *serious tone*. The foundation, borrowed from Plutarch, is combined here with Celtic heroic images from the cycle of voyages into the northwestern land of death (in particular from *The Voyage of St. Brendan*).[53] All these chapters devoted to the death of heroes are a kind of *requiem to the Seigneur de Langey*.

But furthermore, the Seigneur de Langey also determined the image of the third and fourth books' very hero—that is, that image of Pantagruel.[54] After all, the Pantagruel of the last two books no longer resembles the mystery-play devilkin, arouser of thirst, hero of merry facetiae. He becomes, to a significant extent, the ideal image of a sage and a ruler. This is how he is characterized in the "Third Book":

> Was he not, as I told you once, and repeat again, the best little great good fellow that ever buckled on a sword? He took everything in good part, viewed every action in the most favorable light, was never in the least worried or shocked. To allow anything to upset or vex him, he believed,

[52] Bk. 4, ch. 26–28.

[53] See a longer discussion in chapter 6, based on Lote (1938, 124–126, 417–421).

[54] See Lote (1938, 378–390), who also quotes (on pp. 384–386) the same passage from bk. 3, ch. 2, that Bakhtin goes on to quote here. Bakhtin's reading of Lote as consistently identifying Pantagruel with du Bellay (see the footnote below) is based on the same section of Lote's book. In the 1940 manuscript Bakhtin quotes Lote directly in support of this reading: "Guillaume du Bellay and the King of the

> was tantamount to flying the divine coop of his reason. He knew well that everything heaven covers and earth bears, in all dimensions of height, depth, length and breadth, does not warrant our troubling our equanimity or perplexing our spirit. (book 3, chapter 2)

The mythical and carnivalesque features in Pantagruel's image become weaker. He becomes more human and heroic, but at the same time he acquires a somewhat abstract and praisefully rhetorical character. This change in Pantagruel's image probably happened under the influence of impressions of the Seigneur de Langey's personality, whose image Rabelais indeed attempted to immortalize in his "Pantagruel."(231)[55]

However, this identification of Pantagruel with the Seigneur de Langey should not be exaggerated; this is but one of the elements of the image, which remains grounded in folklore and is therefore broader and deeper than the rhetorical glorification of the Seigneur de Langey.

The "Fourth Book" is filled with allusions to contemporary political events and topical issues. We have seen that the very itinerary of Pantagruel's journey combines the ancient Celtic route to the utopian land of death and rebirth with the very real colonial explorations of the time—the route taken by Jacques Cartier.[56]

At the period when the "Fourth Book" was written, France's struggle against papal claims had become much more acute. This was reflected in the chapters on decretals.[57] When these chapters were being written, they were almost official in character and corresponded to the Gallican policy of the royal court. By the time the book was published, however, the conflict with the Pope had been almost entirely settled; thus, Rabelais's contribution to political public writing came somewhat late.[58]

Allusions to the political events of the day can also be found in such important episodes of the "Fourth Book" as the chitterling war episode (the struggle of the Geneva Calvinists) and the storm episode (the Council of Trent).[59]

We shall limit ourselves to these facts. They all provide sufficient testimony to *the extent to which the political present day—its events, its tasks and its problems—were reflected in Rabelais's novel.* Rabelais's book is a "newsreel" of sorts, so topical and relevant is it to current events. But at the same time, the range of issues raised by the

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Dipsodes are one and the same person" (p. 389).

[55] Bakhtin here encloses the name "Pantagruel" in quotation marks, even though the reference is almost certainly to the character, not to the book.

[56] See chapter 6 (based, again, on Lote 1938, 98–99, 123–126, 412–422).

[57] Bk. 4, ch. 48–54.

[58] Bakhtin's discussion of bk. 4 and its political context is based on Plattard (1930, 244–266).

[59] Referring, respectively, to bk. 4, ch. 35–42 and 18–24. The link between the storm and the Council of Trent is not mentioned in any secondary source Bakhtin consulted but is transparently clear from the text itself (see the beginning of ch. 18).

(231) Georges Lote systematically identifies du Bellay with Pantagruel.

Rabelaisian images is incomparably broader and deeper than any newsreel could ever be, reaching far beyond the limits of the present day and even the entire epoch.

In the struggle between the forces of his time, Rabelais took *the most advanced and progressive positions.*[60] *Royal power* was for him the embodiment of that *new principle*[61] to which *the nearest historical future* belonged, the principle of *the nation-state.* This is why he was equally hostile toward the claims to higher supranational power made by both the papacy and the Empire. In these claims of the Pope and the Emperor, he saw the dying past of the Gothic age, *whereas in the nation-state he saw the new and youthful principle of the people's and the state's historical life.* This was his *direct*, and at the same time his *fully sincere*, position.

No less direct, open, and sincere was his position concerning science and culture: he was a committed supporter of humanism with its new methods and evaluations. In the field of medicine he insisted upon a return to the authentic sources of medicine in antiquity—to Hippocrates and Galen—and he was hostile to Arabian medicine, which had corrupted these ancient traditions.[62] In the field of law he also demanded a return to the ancient origins of Roman law, unobscured by the barbarian interpretations of ignorant medieval commentators.[63] In military art, in all branches of technology, and on matters of education, architecture, sports, dress, customs, and mores he was a committed supporter of all the new and advanced things that in his time flowed from Italy in a mighty, irrepressible torrent.[64] In all the fields that left a trace in his novel (and his novel is encyclopedic), he was *a man of the avant-garde for his time.* He had an extraordinary *sense for the new*—not for the new as such, not for novelty and fashion, but for that *essential newness*, which was indeed *being born from the death of the old* and to which *the future belonged.* Rabelais possessed an exceptionally well-developed ability to sense, pick out, and point to this essential newness, the *nascent.*

Rabelais expressed these advanced positions in the fields of politics, culture, science, and everyday life directly and unambiguously in various places in his novel, in such episodes as those dealing with Gargantua's education, the Abbey of Thélème, Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel, Pantagruel's arguments concerning medieval commentators of Roman law, Grandgousier's conversation with the pilgrims, the praise of Panta-

[60] Rabelais's political, cultural, and religious leanings are discussed at length in much of the literature Bakhtin relied on, and Bakhtin summarizes this information here without relying on any single source in particular. Especially relevant would be Plattard (1930), many passages throughout Lote (1938), and the introductory articles to Lefranc et al. (1913–1955).

[61] The Russian word for "principle" (*nachalo*) also means "beginning," so it is possible to read Bakhtin here as claiming royal power embodied "the new *beginning*," and later in the paragraph, speaking about "the *beginning* of the nation state," and "the new and youthful *beginning* of the people's and the state's historical life."

[62] Plattard (1930, 95–96).

[63] The legal views of Rabelais himself and of his friends in the 1520s are discussed by Plattard (1930, 23–30). Bakhtin is probably also relying directly on Rabelais's text, specifically on bk. 2, ch. 10.

[64] Italian influences on Rabelais himself and on people in his circle are discussed throughout Plattard (1930).

gruel's military occupation policy, and so on.[65] All these episodes are, to some extent or other, rhetorical, and the bookish language and official style of the period prevail in them. In these passages we hear a *direct*, and almost fully *serious*, word. This word is new, advanced, *the last word of its epoch.* And at the same time, it is Rabelais's *fully sincere* word.

However, if the novel did not also contain other episodes, a different word, another language and style, Rabelais would have been one of the progressive and yet still *ordinary* humanists of his time, albeit of the top order; he would have been someone along the lines of Budé. But he would not have been that unique genius, Rabelais.

The last word of the *epoch*, *sincerely* and *seriously* asserted, was nevertheless not yet the last word *of Rabelais himself.* However progressive the epoch was, Rabelais knew the measure of this progressiveness. And although he uttered the last word of his epoch seriously, he knew the measure of this seriousness. *Rabelais's own* real *last word is the merry, unfettered, and absolutely sober word of the people*, which could not be bribed with the *limited degree* of progressiveness and truth that was *available to that epoch.* This merry word of the people had access to far more distant future perspectives, even if the positive outlines of this future were still utopian and unclear. Any kind of *definitiveness* and *completeness* available to the epoch were to some extent *laughable*, because, after all, they were *limited.* But laughter was *merry*, since any *limited* definitiveness (and therefore *completeness*), as it died and decomposed, sprouted *new possibilities.*

We must therefore seek Rabelais's own last word not in the direct and rhetoricized episodes of the novel that we listed, where words are almost unambiguous, single-meaninged, and almost fully serious, but rather in that folk-festive element of images, in which these episodes are immersed (which is why they never become entirely one-sided and limitedly serious). No matter how serious Rabelais was in these episodes and in his direct unambiguous utterances, he always leaves *a merry loophole*[66] into the more *distant future*, which will render *laughable* the *relative* progressiveness and *relative* truth, accessible to his time and to *the nearest foreseeable future. Rabelais* therefore *never exhausts what he has to say in his direct utterances.* This, of course, is not Romantic irony but, rather, the *broad scope and exacting demands of the people*, handed down to him together with the entire system of folk-festive laughter-based forms and images.

Thus, contemporary reality, so widely and fully reflected in Rabelais's novel, is illuminated by folk-festive images. In their light even the best perspectives opened up by this reality appear nevertheless limited and a far cry from the people's ideals and aspirations as embodied in folk-festive images. But contemporary reality did not in

[65] Referring, respectively, to bk. 1, ch. 14–15, 21, 23 (Gargantua's education); bk. 1, ch. 52–57 (Thélème); bk. 2, ch. 8 (Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel); bk. 2, ch. 10 (Roman law); bk. 1, ch. 45 (Grandgousier and the pilgrims); and bk. 3, ch. 1–2 (Pantagruel as occupier).

[66] The *loophole* is a central term in Bakhtin's work (see, e.g., Bakhtin 1984, 232–236, 277–278, and passim; 1990b, 20–21, 40, 109, 164–165; 1986b, 126), describing utterances appealing to an understanding

the least lose its concreteness, tangibility, and vitality as a result. On the contrary, in the utterly *sober light* of folk-festive images, all the things and phenomena of reality became *convex, full, material, and individual* in a special kind of way. *They were freed from all narrow and dogmatic connections of meaning.* They revealed themselves in an absolutely unfettered atmosphere. This also determines the exceptional richness and variety of things and phenomena drawn into Rabelais's novel.

Rabelais's work, like all the great works of that period, is profoundly encyclopedic. There is no branch of knowledge or practical life that is not represented in his novel, and in specialized detail. Today's Rabelais scholarship—and here the merit of Sainéan's work is particularly great—has demonstrated Rabelais's extraordinary, remarkable competence in all the fields he dealt with. Thanks to a number of works devoted to the subject, our author's broad and impeccable knowledge base, not only in medicine and various branches of natural history but also in law, architecture, the art of war, seamanship, culinary art, falconry, games and sports, numismatics, and so forth, has now been proven. The nomenclature, the vocabulary of these multifarious branches of knowledge and praxis in Rabelais's novel is striking not merely for its richness and fullness but also for the astonishing knowledge of the most minute technical nuances of expression accessible only to specialists. Whatever specialized term or professional expression Rabelais uses, he does so with the correctness and precision of a master, not an amateur.[67] In the middle of the last century, serious doubts were raised concerning the correctness and competence of Rabelais's use of his rich nautical vocabulary. These doubts were expressed by the nautical specialist Jal. But Sainéan proved that all these doubts were unjust and unfounded: in nautical affairs, too, Rabelais's competence turns out to be substantial and solid.[68]

Rabelais's encyclopedic knowledge base and the extraordinary richness of his world have one remarkable trait that Rabelais scholars have not sufficiently appreciated: all that is *new*, *fresh*, *appears for the first time* always prevails in them. His encyclopedia is the encyclopedia of *a new world.* It was concrete and thing-oriented, and many of these things were entering the living purview of Rabelais's contemporaries for the first time, were acquiring a name for the first time or renewing an old name with a new sense. The world of things and the world of words (of language) were undergoing at that time an immense broadening and enrichment, a substantial renewal, and stark and idiosyncratic regroupings.

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that goes beyond and against their literal or apparent meaning, and see note 168 to chapter 1. The reference to Romantic irony in what follows can be read, possibly, as a self-critique by Bakhtin, who, in his earliest works, associated the loophole specifically with Romantic heroes.

[67] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:1–208, 505–506). Bakhtin may well have relied on the table of contents to briefly recount the various areas of Rabelaisian vocabulary Sainéan covers in the relevant part of his book.

[68] Sainéan devotes several passages and a dedicated appendix to his polemic with Auguste Jal (1840, 496–560 and scattered remarks in other publications) regarding Rabelais's nautical vocabulary. See, especially, Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:x, 93–125, 461–477).

Everybody knows what an immense and multifarious mass of new things first entered humanity's purview in that period. All this novelty made its way into France with somewhat of a time-lag, but then again, it did so almost in one go, in a mighty torrent. This torrent flowed from Italy beginning with the Italian wars and continued to strengthen and broaden. Rabelais lived precisely at the time when this torrent was the broadest and the most unstoppable. Since close contact with Italy began with an encounter between two armies, and only then between the two peoples, things belonging to military art and technology flowed in first, followed by marine navigation, then architecture, and only later did the remaining spheres of life—industry, commerce, everyday life, and the arts—undergo renewal.[69] Alongside the new things, new words appeared as well: the language became flooded with Italian, Greek, and Latin loan words, as well as with neologisms.[70] It should be emphasized that these were all not merely individual new things: these things had the force *to also renew the other, old things around them, to reshape them*; they made these old things adapt to themselves, as is typically the case, for example, with all discoveries and new technological inventions.

Rabelais exhibited great love and sensitivity to the *essential* newness of things and names. Not only did he not lag behind his time, but he was often ahead of it. His military nomenclature reflects (alongside some archaisms) the newest military technology and is especially rich in the field of military engineering. Many words are first attested on his pages.[71]

Rabelais's architectural nomenclature was also up to date on all things new.[72] This field occupies a fairly substantial amount of space in his novel. His architectural vocabulary is filled with new and *renewing* terms, many of which he was among the first to use. Thus, the new and renewing word "symétrie" (renewing in terms of its significance for the new architecture) appears on the pages of his work practically for the first time. Likewise, such phenomena and words as "péristyle," "portique," "architrave," and "frize," have in Rabelais's writings the still absolutely fresh character of something seen and named for the first time.[73] All these words and the things they designated are not merely new, as individual isolated phenomena; they have the power to renew and to restructure all the architectural notions of the period.

In the nomenclatures of all other fields of knowledge and practice, too, we encounter the same immense role of new and renewing words and things. This nomenclature is also rich in old words; it contains many archaisms. Rabelais sought fullness and diver-

[69] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:49).

[70] On Italianisms, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:50, 2:83–91); on Greek loan words, Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:38–63); on Latinisms, Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:64–82); on neologisms (mostly Rabelais's own), Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:98–100).

[71] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:65–92).

[72] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:52–64).

[73] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:58–61).

sity in everything and everywhere, but the new is always accented, and the renewing and contagious force of the new is always being put to use.

Let us move on to a very important phenomenon of the stylistic life of the word in Rabelais's novel.

An enormous quantity of elements of Rabelais's language were obtained by drawing on *oral sources*: these are *virgin words* that emerged for the first time from the thicket of the people's life, from the element of oral speech, to enter the system of *written and printed* speech. Even the vocabularies of nearly all branches of science, in very significant part, came from oral speech and have *for the first time* participated in *a bookish context, in systematic bookish thought, written-bookish intonation, written-bookish syntactic construction.* In Rabelais's time, science had only just begun, with the greatest effort, to wrestle for itself the right to speak and write in the national, vulgar, tongue, and at that time this right was still far from fully achieved. Neither the Church, nor universities, nor schools had yet recognized that language. Rabelais, alongside Calvin, was the creator of French literary prosaic language. In all spheres of knowledge and practice (in some to a greater extent and in some to a lesser), he himself had to rely on the oral element of speech, to draw on it for its verbal wealth. The words taken from this source came to him entirely *fresh*, as yet *unpolished by any written bookish context.*

Consider, for example, his nomenclature of fishes. It is very substantial: in chapter 5 of the "Fourth Book" alone (the feasting offerings of the Gastrolaters)[74] he gives more than sixty names of fishes. These include freshwater, Mediterranean, and ocean fish. Where did he take this rich fish vocabulary from? Certainly not from literary sources. The ichthyological works of the sixteenth century, written by the creators of French ichthyology, Guillaume Rondelet and Pierre Belon, were not published until 1553–1554—that is, after Rabelais's death. The source for Rabelais's knowledgeability here could only have been oral speech. He would have learned the names of ocean fish in Brittany and Normandy; somewhere in the ports of Saint Malo, Dieppe, and Havre, he must have directly addressed Breton and Norman fishermen, from whose living mouths he received the local provincial names of fishes for his list. He learned the names of Mediterranean fish from the fishermen of Marseilles.[75] Those were still absolutely fresh names for the fish, as fresh as the fish themselves in the fishermen's baskets, which Rabelais would probably have examined in the process. These names had never appeared in written or bookish speech; *they had not as yet been processed by any abstractly bookish, generalizing and systematizing context.* They had not yet been in contact with the names of other, *foreign*, fishes and were only adjacent to *their own*—say, other fish from Brittany, adjacent to hearty Breton oaths and abuses, to

[74] Actually, bk. 4, ch. 60.

[75] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:29–31). Note, however, that the ichthyologist Rondelet, mentioned in this passage, is the same Rondelet who was Rabelais's lifelong friend and the prototype for the character Rondibilis in bk. 3 (Plattard 1930, 98), so his scholarly work could have provided an input for Rabelais's list.

Breton winds and to the sounds of the sea. Strictly speaking, these were as yet not at all the names of fishes; these were *monikers, nicknames of fishes*, almost *the proper names of local fish.* They would have acquired the requisite *degree of generality and the character of names* only in a bookish context, in essence, for the first time only under the pen of Rondelet and Belon, because in Rabelais's *namings-enumerations* they are still *half-proper nouns.*

The point, of course, is not the fact that Rabelais learned these names from an oral source. The point is that these names of fishes listed by Rabelais *had never previously appeared in a bookish context. This is a crucial fact defining the status of these names in the speech-consciousness of Rabelais and of his contemporaries.* These were not, as yet, designations but, rather, as we said, monikers and nicknames in the vulgar tongue. *The abstract systematic element in them was not yet well developed*; not only had they not yet become ichthyological terms, but they had not even become simple common appellative nouns belonging to the literary language.

The vocabularies of other branches of knowledge—to a greater or lesser extent—have a similar character in Rabelais's work. It is still true even of his medical nomenclature. Admittedly, he makes extensive use in this nomenclature of neologisms, Greek, and Latin borrowings, but he also draws heavily on oral sources in the vernacular. Alongside a scholarly neologism he often places its vernacular equivalent (for example, "epiglotte" and "gargamelle").[76] Especially interesting are *the vernacular names of diseases. The element of the proper noun* and at the same time *the element of the invective nickname* are still very strong in them. Many names of diseases were directly linked to the names of saints who, for whatever reason, were assumed to have the power to heal or sometimes to cause those diseases (such as le mal de Saint Antoine, le mal de Saint Vit). But more generally, all names of diseases in the vernacular languages were easily *personified*—that is, were perceived as *the proper names of living creatures.* In the literature of the period we find depictions of diseases in the form of characters, especially of syphilis ("La Dame Verolle") and gout ("la Goutte").[77] The names of diseases play an immense role in *oaths* and *curses* and often become *invective nicknames*: one might *wish* cholera, the plague, a pestilence on a man, or one might *call that very man* the

[76] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:45). See bk. 2, ch. 14, though Rabelais does not use the word "epiglotte."

[77] Sainéan discusses names of diseases in Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:45–47), and this appears to be Bakhtin's principal source, including a mention of "le mal saint Antoine" and "la dame Verolle" (part of a book title; see note 56 to chapter 2), though he was seemingly trying to recollect some details from memory when he no longer had access to the text. Thus, "la Goutte" was probably meant to be "la Gorre," one more name for syphilis (this may also have been a misreading of his own handwriting). Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:207) also mentions "la Goute," but as the name of a dance, not a disease. There is also no "mal Saint Vit" (there is a "St. Vitus Dance," but this condition is not mentioned in any of Bakhtin's sources). Several other diseases connected to saints are mentioned in bk. 1, ch. 45, and by Rabelais's commentators (Lefranc et al. [1913–1955, 2:267–268, 4:286] mention "le mal Sainct Eutrope de Xaintes" and "le mal Saint-Martin"). As for Saint Vit, he was mentioned earlier in (p. 89; see note 79 to chapter 1) as a name with sexual connotations. Rabelais uses it in one of the Parisians' oaths in the episode where Paris was drenched in Gargantua's urine (bk. 1, ch. 17).

cholera, a plague, a pestilence.[78] The vulgar[79] names of genitals can easily acquire the same character. Thus, in Rabelais's medical nomenclature, too, there are many names, not yet sufficiently generalized and polished by generalizing bookish speech to become *neutral* designations belonging to the literary language and to scientific terminology.

Thus, the virgin words of the oral vernacular that entered the system of the literary tongue for the first time are, in some respects, close to *proper nouns*: they are *individualized* in a special way, and *the element of praise-invective*, which brings them closer *to the moniker and the nickname*, is still too strong in them; they are as yet insufficiently generalized and neutral to become plain common nouns in the literary language. Moreover, these qualities they have are *contagious*: given a certain way of organizing the context, their influence can spread to other words; they can affect the character of speech in its entirety.

We are touching here upon a very substantial distinguishing feature of Rabelais's verbal style: in some respects, it lacks that sharp distinction between common and proper nouns that we are accustomed to in the usual (new) literary language and style. The formal distinctions, of course, remain in full force, but on the more essential internal side of things, the boundary line between them has been exceptionally weakened.

This weakening of the boundary lines between proper and common nouns is *mutual*. Both types of nouns approach *the same common point—the praising-invective nickname*.

We cannot explore this more specialized topic in any depth here. We will only touch on its main crude outlines.

Most of Rabelais's proper names have the character of nicknames. This pertains not only to names created by Rabelais himself but also to those he inherited from tradition. Such are, first of all, the names of the main protagonists: Gargantua, Grandgousier, Gargamelle, and Pantagruel. All these four names were handed down to Rabelais by tradition. Two of them—Grandgousier ("big gullet") and Gargamelle ("gullet")—have a totally clear etymology, which was *clearly recognized* both by tradition and by Rabelais (and also, of course, by all his readers).[80]

If a name has a *well-defined and transparent* etymological sense, and, moreover, one that *characterizes the person* bearing this name, then it is no longer merely a name, but a *nickname*.[81] Such a *nickname-name* can never be *neutral*, since its sense always

[78] Here, Bakhtin appears to be relying on oral sources (namely, common Russian invective expressions) himself.

[79] Earlier in this passage, Bakhtin regularly used the same word ("vulgar") to refer to vernacular languages (as in, "the vulgar tongues"). It is in principle possible, though unlikely, that he also has in mind vernacular, not necessarily vulgar, terms for genital organs here.

[80] See Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:xlviii–xlix), Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:139), and possibly Spitzer (1910, 85). The etymology of the name "Grandgousier" is not mentioned in any of these sources but is indeed, as Bakhtin points out, transparent, even in modern French.

[81] Cf. an extended discussion of the name and the nickname in Bakhtin's "Additions and Changes

includes *an element of evaluation* (positive or negative); it is, in effect, a *blason*. All *genuine* nicknames are *ambivalent*—that is, they have a *praiseful-invective* tinge.

"Grandgousier" and "Gargamelle" are just such obvious nickname-names. The situation with the name "Gargantua" is somewhat more complex.[82] The etymology of this name is undetermined(232)[83] and, it appears, was not clear to Rabelais or to his contemporaries. In such cases, Rabelais resorts to an artificial etymology of the name, at times intentionally farfetched and implausible. This is what he does in this case too. Gargantua was born bellowing, "Drink, drink, drink!" "How great hast thou" ("Que grand tu as"),[84] said Grandgousier, implicitly referring to the gullet. Based on this first word, uttered by the father, the child was named Gargantua. This comic etymology essentially brings to life the name's actual designation, "gullet."

He also supplies a similarly artificial etymologization (though based on a different principle) for the name "Pantagruel" ("All-athirst"), the etymology of which was not transparent at all.[85]

All four nickname-names are ambivalent. The first three designate the gullet, not as a neutral anatomical term but as *a praiseful-invective image of gluttony, swallowing, devouring, and feasting*. It is that same *gaping mouth, grave-womb, devouring-birth*. The etymology of "Pantagruel" as all-athirst has a similar signification, revealing the ambivalent meaning of his traditional image. The absence of any roots in the national language, of course, weakens the ambivalence of this name.(233)[86]

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to *Rabelais*" (Bakhtin 1996a, 99–103; forthcoming-a), where Bakhtin connects names to praise and to the desire to perpetuate oneself, and nicknames to (ambivalent) invective and succession.

[82] In the context of the etymology of Gargantua's name, Popova (2008a, 878–879) recounts Bakhtin's failed repeated attempts to locate a paper by Vladimir Fedorovich Shishmarev that deals with that subject (Chichmareff 1999, originally written in 1925 and published in 1926), after several correspondents alerted Bakhtin to its existence in the 1940s.

[83] For the footnote, see Lefranc et al. (1913–1955, 1:xlix), where three words are mentioned: the Spanish *garganta* ("throat"), the Spanish and Languedoc (also known as Provençal and today mostly referred to as Occitan) *gargantuan* ("voracious beast or man"), and the Spanish *garganton* ("glutton"). Bakhtin apparently mashed up the second and third of these by mistake.

[84] Bk. 1, ch. 7 (translation modified based on Screech).

[85] Bk. 2, ch. 2.

[86] In the 1940 manuscript, Bakhtin provides additional information about Sainéan's (1922–1923, 2:458) conjecture mentioned in the footnote, namely that the name "Pantagruel" combined two patois words from southern France: *pantai* and *greule*, both referring to suffocation, heavy breath, and hoarseness. And cf. the discussion of the origins of Pantagruel's image and name (as the name of a mystery-play devilkin and of a throat condition) in chapter 5.

(232) In Spanish "garganta" means throat; the Provençal language has the word "garganton," meaning a glutton. Apparently, the etymology of "Gargantua" is the same as that of the names of the other heroes: throat, gullet.

(233) Although it is possible that this word had some roots in the national language and correspondingly evoked a dim awareness of an etymological signification. This is what Sainéan supposes to be the case (see *La langue de Rabelais*, vol. 2, 458).

Thus, the names handed down to Rabelais by tradition are either praiseful-invective nicknames from the outset or are made into such by means of an artificial etymology.

Names created by Rabelais himself have a similar character, that of ambivalent nicknames. The enumeration of sixty-four names of cooks in the novel's "Fourth Book" is telling in this respect. All these names are nicknames that are characteristic *precisely of cooks*. They are mostly based on the names of dishes, fishes, salads, vegetables, dining ware, and various kitchen utensils. For instance, a number of names are derived from soups: Bouillonsec, Potageanart, Souppimars, and others; meat dishes also produce a series of names: Soufflembayau, Cochonnet, and so forth; a very large number of names are derived from lard. This part of the enumeration is *a noisy kitchen and feasting in the form of proper names*. Another part of the list is made up of nicknames of *the invective type*: they are based on the names of various *physical impairments, deformities, uncleanliness*, and the like.[87] This part of the name sequence, in terms of its stylistics and imagery, is fully analogous to *a sequence of abuses*, such as the one the bakers award to the shepherds.[88]

The names of Picrochole's advisers and warriors also have the character of invective nicknames—for example, Merdaille, Racquendenare (Farthingscraper), Trepelu (Shagrag), Tripet (Tripefart).[89]

The formation of proper names *modeled on terms of abuse* is *the most common method* of forming names used by Rabelais, as well as in *folk comedy* more generally.

Praiseful names of the Greek type are a special case. For instance, in contrast to Picrochole's retinue, Grandgousier's soldiers have Greek names of the praiseful type: Sebastes (venerable), Tolmere (bold), Ithyboles (upright).[90] Also belonging to this praiseful type are the names of such Rabelaisian heroes as Ponocrates, Epistemon, Eusthenes, and even Panurge (Πανούργος—capable of doing everything, a "Jack-of-all-trades").[91]

All these Greek names are formally analogous to nicknames, but they are rhetorical and lack authentic ambivalence. These names resemble the rhetoricized decoupled sequences of praise and invective, analyzed above, in the official parts of Rabelais's novel.

Genuine ambivalence is inherent only in those praiseful-invective nickname-names, rooted in the soil of the national vernacular tongue and the folk imagery linked with it.

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[87] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:477–483), referring to bk. 4, ch. 40.

[88] In bk. 1, ch. 25.

[89] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:465–466), referring to bk. 1, ch. 26, 33, and 34. I use Le Clercq's translations of these names in parentheses, where Bakhtin provides his own Russian translation in parentheses in the original text. The name Merdaille ("Krapp") is not glossed, presumably to avoid explicit obscenity and because Bakhtin expected his readers to be familiar with the French word *merde*.

[90] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:464–465), referring to bk. 1, ch. 48, 49, and 51.

[91] Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:459).

The examples just analyzed will suffice. All the names in Rabelais's novel are, in one way or another, understood as *praiseful-invective nicknames* or *monikers*. The only exceptions are the names of real historical persons and of the author's real friends (such as Tiraqueau) or else names that are meant to approximate them in their aural image (such as Rondibilis instead of Rondelet).

Moreover, other proper names, not those of persons, also exhibit the same trend toward an ambivalent praiseful-invective interpretation. We have seen that a number of geographical names were given bodily-topographical interpretation—for example, "trou de Gibraltar," "bondes de Hercule," and others.[92] In some cases Rabelais resorts to artificial etymology of the comic type, as, for instance, when he explains the origins of the names "Paris" and "Beauce."[93] Of course, there are special nuances here, but the rough basic line of interpreting names and turning them into praiseful-invective nicknames remains the same.

Finally, the novel contains a number of chapters in which the theme of names and designations is specifically developed on the theoretical plane. Thus, the problem of the origins of plant names is treated in the "Third Book." In the "Fourth Book" a carnivalesque game of names unfolds on the Isle of Ennasin, and the same book also contains a long discussion on names in connection with the names of colonels Riflandouille and Tailleboudin.[94]

Proper nouns in Rabelais's novel thus approach the limit of praiseful-invective nicknames and monikers. But, as we have seen, common nouns approach the same limit. The element of *generality* is *weakened* in the Rabelaisian context. The names of animals, birds, fishes, plants; of organs, members, and parts of the human body; of dishes and beverages, kitchen utensils and household wares, weapons, clothing items, and so forth all sound in Rabelais's novel almost like *the nickname-names of characters in a peculiar satyr play of things and of the body.*

While analyzing the arse-wipes episode, we observed that peculiar role played by things as characters in a comic drama (the drama of the body was combined with the drama of things). One should stress that many of the vernacular names of herbs, plants, and some of the things featured in the capacity of arse-wipes were still fresh and virginal in a bookish literary context. The element of generality was still weak in them; those were not yet designations but, rather, still nickname-names. Their unexpected role in the series of arse-wipes facilitated their individuation even further. After all, in this peculiar sequence, they enter an entirely new grouping. They are extracted even from the feeble systematizing and generalizing links, in which they have hitherto featured in speech. Their individually naming character grows stronger. Furthermore, in the dynamic invective sequence of arse-wipes, their materiality and their individual

[92] See the discussion of various "holes" in chapter 6.

[93] Bk. 1, ch. 16 (Beauce) and 17 (Paris).

[94] See bk. 3, ch. 50, bk. 4, ch. 9, and bk. 4, ch. 37 (also mentioned in a relevant context by Sainéan 1922–1923, 2:452). The two colonels' names are rendered by Le Clercq as "Crushchitterling" and "Slicesausage."

shape are brought into sharp relief. The designation here almost turns into the typical nickname-name of a character in a farcical sketch.

The *newness* of the thing and of its name, or the *renewal* of an old thing by its new use and new *unexpected adjacencies*, *individuates* the thing and strengthens *the element of the proper name* in its designation, bringing it closer to a *nickname-name*.

Of special significance for the individuation of names is the general saturation of the Rabelaisian context with proper nouns (geographical designations and the names of persons). We have already said that for his similes and comparisons Rabelais uses historically unique things (such as when he compares pies to the bastions of Turin).[95] He seeks to confer historical and topographical definitiveness on each thing.

Finally, of special significance is *the parodic dismantling of obsolete ideological links and meaning-connections between things and phenomena*, including at times even elementary logical links (coq-à-l'âne alogisms). Things and their designations that are *liberated from the chains of a dying worldview*, set free to roam, acquire a special unfettered *individuality*, and their designations approximate *merry nickname-names*. The virgin words of the oral vernacular language, as yet not disciplined by any bookish literary context, with its strict lexical differentiation and selection, with its *increased precision and delimitation of senses* and tones, with its verbal hierarchy, carry with them a special carnival freedom and individuality and thus can easily become the names of characters in a carnival drama of things and of the body.

One of the most essential distinguishing features of Rabelais's style, therefore, is that all proper names on the one hand, and all common nouns designating things and phenomena, on the other, approach the praiseful-invective nickname and moniker as their limit. Thanks to this, all things and phenomena in Rabelais's world acquire a distinct individuality: their principium individuationis is praise-invective. *In the individualizing torrent of praise-invective, the boundary lines between persons and things are weakened: they all become participants in the carnival drama of the simultaneous death of the old world and birth of a new one.*

Let us turn our attention to yet another fairly characteristic trait of Rabelais's style—the carnivalesque use of numbers.[96]

Ancient and medieval literature is familiar with the symbolic, metaphysical, and mystical use of numbers. There were sacred numbers: three, seven, nine, and others.

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[95] Bk. 4, ch. 64.

[96] This brief section on Rabelais's use of numbers was first added to the book in the final, 1965, edition and did not appear in any of the earlier manuscripts. There is no indication to suggest that Bakhtin relied on external sources when writing it (the few bits of factual information, not derived directly from Rabelais's text, have already been covered earlier in the book). There is a brief reference to numerical precision in Rabelais (and Ariosto) in Schneegans (1894, 113), which could have perhaps instigated Bakhtin's interest in numbers in Rabelais, but there is not much overlap with that discussion in Bakhtin's text.

The notion of the number as carrying a mythical, magical, or religious significance has been discussed by Cassirer (especially Cassirer 1955, 140–151; see Bakhtin's summary of this discussion in Bakhtin 2008b, 817–820). Bakhtin echoes these observations of Cassirer's (themselves based on a large

The Hippocratic Corpus contained the treatise "On the Number Seven." This number was established here as a *crisis number* for the entire world and especially for the life of the human organism. But the number as such—that is, any number—was also sacred. Antiquity was pervaded with Pythagorean notions of the number as the foundation of all that exists, of all order and structure, including the gods themselves. The medieval symbolism and mysticism of numbers is a matter of common knowledge. Sacred numbers were also used as the foundation for the composition of artworks, including literary works. Let us recall Dante, for whom sacred numbers determine not only the structure of the entire universe but also the composition of his poem.

With some simplification, one might define the foundations of the ancient and medieval aesthetics of the number in the following way: the number should be definite; it should bring things to completion; it should be round, symmetrical. Only such a number can become the basis for harmony and for the completed (static) whole.

Rabelais pulls off from numbers their sacred, symbolic robes; he decrowns them. He *profanes the number*. But this is not a nihilistic act of profanation; it is, rather, a merry, carnivalesque profanation, which revives and renews the number.

There are many numbers in Rabelais's novel; scarcely a single episode can do without them. And they are all carnivalesque and grotesque in character. This is accomplished by various means. Sometimes Rabelais offers a direct parodic lowering of sacred numbers: for instance, nine spits for venison to match the number of the nine muses; three triumphal posts with carnivalesque accessories (in the episode on discomfiting 666 knights; indeed, the number of knights itself is parodically apocalyptic).[97] But such numbers are relatively few. Most numbers strike us and provoke our laughter with their grotesque hyperbole (the quantity of wine consumed and food eaten and so on). Generally speaking, all the quantitative definitions expressed in numbers in Rabelais are exaggerated and blown up beyond measure; they go overboard; they violate any possible verisimilitude. They are deliberately out of proportion. Additionally, a comic effect is obtained by the claim to accuracy (even to excessive accuracy) in situations where any remotely precise count is altogether impossible: for example, the novel indicates that Gargantua drowned in his urine "two hundred and sixty thousand four hundred and eighteen" people.[98] But the most important point concerns the grotesque *structure* of Rabelaisian numbers. Let us explain this with an example.

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body of earlier literature) in the second paragraph of the section. Cassirer (1955, 92, 149) was also Bakhtin's source regarding the Hippocratic Corpus treatise "On the Number Seven" (or "On Weeks") in chapter 5, though by the time he wrote this section, he was clearly able to consult other sources, possibly a translation of the text in question itself. The same goes for the rest of the paragraph: Bakhtin repeats themes discussed by Cassirer but does not follow any particular passage and makes his own additions (in particular, Cassirer does not discuss the numerological structure of Dante's poems, though there is the interesting misrepresentation of Dante's numerology by Victor Hugo that I commented on in note 166 to chapter 1).

[97] Bk. 2, ch. 25–27; the reference to three posts appears to be a mistake; also, the number of knights is 660.

[98] Bk. 1, ch. 17.

Here is a short fragment from Panurge's story about his Turkish adventures: "Suddenly six hundred—no, more than six, indeed, more than thirteen hundred and eleven dogs appeared on the horizon" (book 2, chapter 14).

We have here a grotesque exaggeration, moreover one that features a drastic leap (from six hundred all the way to thirteen hundred in one go), as well as a lowering object for counting (dogs), in addition to a totally unnecessary and excessive level of precision, and then the impossibility of conducting the count itself, on top of, finally, the words "more than," which decrown that precision. But what is most characteristic is the very structure of the number. Were we to increase the number by one—thirteen hundred and *twelve*—this number would immediately become more at rest, more round and complete; the comic effect would be greatly diminished. And if we were to increase it further to one thousand *five hundred and twelve*, it would become entirely at rest, reach static completeness, lose all its asymmetry and openness, and would cease to be a grotesque Rabelaisian number.

Such is the structure of all of Rabelais's large numbers: they all markedly avoid numbers that are balanced and at rest, solid and effecting completion. Consider the number of people drowned in urine, mentioned above—two hundred *sixty* thousand *four hundred and eighteen*—and change its aesthetic structure—two hundred *fifty* thousand *five hundred twenty*—and the effect will be drastically different. And here is another example: the number of casualties in the abbey close—*thirteen* thousand *six hundred* twenty-*two* people[99]—change its structure slightly—*twelve* thousand *five* hundred twenty—and you will kill its grotesque soul. One can be easily convinced of all this by analyzing any large number used by Rabelais. He keeps strictly to his structural principle. All his numbers are restless, ambiguous, and cannot be brought to completion like devils in medieval diableries. The structure of the number reflects, like a drop of water, the structure of the entire Rabelaisian world. One cannot construct a harmonious and complete universe based on such a number. A different aesthetics of the number prevails in Rabelais's work than the one that prevailed in antiquity and in the high Middle Ages.

One would think that there is nothing further from laughter than a number. But Rabelais was able to make it laughable too and has made it partake, on equal terms with everything else, in the carnivalesque world of his novel.

In conclusion, let us touch upon one more essential factor: the special attitude of Rabelais's time to language and to lingual worldview.

The Renaissance is the only period in the history of European literatures and languages that is marked by the end of bilingualism and by *lingual succession*. Much of what was possible during that unique and exceptional period of literary lingual life was no longer possible in all its subsequent periods.

It can be said of prose fiction, and especially of the modern novel, that they emerged *on the boundary of two languages*. Literary lingual life has concentrated on this bound-

[99] Bk. 1, ch. 27.

ary. An intense mutual orientation, interaction, and mutual illumination of languages was taking place. The languages stared each other in the face, directly and intensely: each was conscious of itself, of its abilities and its limitations, *in the light of the other language.*[100] This *boundary region between languages* was felt in relation to each thing, each concept, each point of view. After all, *two languages are two worldviews.*

We have already said elsewhere in this book (in chapter 1) that the boundary line dividing the two cultures—the popular and the official—in part directly coincided with the dividing line between two languages—the vernacular and Latin. The vernacular, as it was taking over all the spheres of ideology and driving Latin out of them, carried with it new points of view, new forms of thought (that same ambivalence), and new evaluations; after all, this language was the language of life, of material labor and everyday matters, the language of the "low"—mostly laughter-based—genres (fabliaux, farces, "cries of Paris," and so on), and finally, it was the language of unfettered public-square speech (needless to say, the vernacular was not uniform and did contain official spheres of speech). In contrast, Latin was the language of the official Middle Ages. Folk culture was but feebly and somewhat distortedly reflected in it (primarily in the Latin branch of grotesque realism).

But the matter was not limited to two languages—the national vernacular and medieval Latin. Intersecting this main boundary region were also the boundary regions of other languages; the mutual orientation of languages was complex and multifaceted.

The historian of the French language Ferdinand Brunot, answering the question of how the shift to the vernacular could have been accomplished, of all times, in the Renaissance with its classical tendencies, quite correctly points out that *the very aspiration of the Renaissance to restore Latin to its ancient classic purity was inescapably turning Latin into a dead language.* It would have been impossible to maintain this ancient classic purity of the language while at the same time using it in everyday-life routine and in the world of practical objects current in the sixteenth century, expressing in it the concepts and things of the living *present period.*[101] The restoration of the language's *classic purity* inescapably *limited its application*, limited it, in essence, to the sphere of stylization alone. Here, too—in relation to language—the ambivalence of the image of "renaissance"—that is, "rebirth"—manifests itself: the other side of rebirth turns out to be *death.* The rebirth of Cicero's Latin turned Latin into *a dead language.* The present time—the modern age in all its newness—broke away from the grip of the

[100] This statement, which is also the central thesis of the entire section, is clearly related to one of the main theses of Bakhtin's early philosophical writings (especially Bakhtin 1990b): direct introspection is impossible; I can only be seen as a coherent whole by others, and I only have access to a coherent image of myself if I receive it as a gift from others. In this section, the same claim is made about languages and language-based cultures, instead of individual consciousnesses.

[101] Brunot (1906, 2–3). Bakhtin appears to have relied on Brunot directly in this case (which is further evidenced by the fact that the passage he is referring to can be found on the very first pages of the book; this is typical of sources Bakhtin only had the chance to briefly skim when working on the manuscript).

vice of Cicero's Latin and stood in opposition to it. The present killed classical Latin, with its claim to serve as a living language.

Thus, we see that the mutual orientation of the vernacular and medieval Latin was complicated by the mutual orientation and mutual illumination of the latter with genuine classical Latin. *One boundary region intersected with another boundary region.* Cicero's Latin threw light on the true nature of medieval Latin, on its genuine face. People essentially saw this genuine face for the first time; before that, they had a command of their own language (medieval Latin) but were unable to see its ugly and limited face.

Cicero's Latin was also able to place before the face of medieval Latin the "mirror of comedy": it reflected back to them the Latin of the *Letters of Obscure Men.*[102]

The mutual illumination of classical and medieval Latin was taking place against the backdrop of a new modern world, which could fit neither the one nor the other language system. The present time, with its new world, threw light upon the face of Cicero's Latin: it turned out to be beautiful but dead.[(234)][103]

The new world and the new social forces that represented this world expressed themselves most adequately in the vernacular national languages. The process of the mutual orientation of medieval and classical Latin therefore takes place in the light of the national vernacular language. Three languages interact and mutually demarcate one another in a unitary and continuous process.

Rabelais would have compared this mutual orientation of three languages to a "farce jouée à trois personnages" (that is, a farce with three characters),[104] while such phenomena as the *Letters of Obscure Men* and the poetry of the macaronics might have been likened to a public-square squabble between three languages. Rabelais depicts the merry death of a language with an old man's wheezing, coughing, and slips of the tongue in Master Janotus de Bragmardo's speech.[105]

In this process of mutual illumination of languages, *the living present* (that is, all that is new and that did not exist before—new things, new concepts, new points of view) attains *an exceptionally acute level of awareness*; *the borders between times, the borders between epochs, worldviews, ways of life, can be clearly and tangibly detected.*

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[102] Referring to the anonymously published *Epistolæ obscurorum virorum* (Stokes 1909), mentioned in the introduction.

[103] The footnote is based on the discussion in Schneegans (1894, 121). Popova (2010a, 629) also points out Spitzer (1910, 41–42), though Spitzer in turn cites Schneegans.

[104] Alluding to Rabelais's claim in bk. 4, dedicatory epistle, about the practice of medicine being like "a farce with three characters: the patient, the physician and the disease."

[105] Bk. 1, ch. 19.

[(234)] The present time also placed the "mirror of comedy" before the face of the highfalutin stylizing Latin of the Ciceronists. The Latin of the macaronics is a reaction against humanist Ciceronian purism. It is not at all a parody of kitchen Latin; the macaronics' Latin is a totally syntactically correct Latin, but it is inundated with the words of the native language with Latin suffixes. A world of modern things and concepts, completely alien to antiquity and to the classics, is cast into the molds of Latin constructions.

The feeling of time and its flow within the limits of a single slowly and gradually renewed language system can never be that acute and clear. Within the limits of the all-leveling system of medieval Latin, *the traces of time* are almost entirely effaced; it is as if consciousness lived here in an eternal and unchanging world. Within this system it was particularly difficult to look around oneself in time (and indeed also in space—that is, to feel the idiosyncrasy of one's own nationality and one's own province). But *on the boundary line between three languages*, the consciousness of time had to take exceptionally acute and idiosyncratic forms. *Consciousness saw itself on the boundary of epochs and worldviews*; it was able for the first time to grasp *large scales* for measuring the progress of times; it was now able to acutely feel *its own present day*, with its *boundaries* and its *perspectives*, in all the ways *it was unlike the day before*. This mutual orientation and mutual illumination of three languages suddenly revealed *how much of the old had died and how much new had been born*. The present time had become conscious of itself, had seen its own face. It was also able to reflect this face in the "mirror of comedy."

But things were not limited to the mutual orientation of three languages either. The process of mutual demarcation also took place inside the internal territory of the national vernacular languages. After all, the single national language did not as yet exist. It was only being slowly formed. As part of the process in which ideology in its entirety shifted to the national languages, and in which a new system of the unitary literary language was being created, an intense *mutual orientation of dialects* began taking place within the national languages, which were still very far from being centralized. The naive and peaceful coexistence of these dialects came to an end. They began each to mutually illuminate the other; the peculiar features of each of their faces began to reveal themselves. The scientific interest in dialects and their study also comes into being, as does the artistic interest in using dialectalisms (their role in Rabelais's novel is immense).[(235)106]

Typical of the special attitude the sixteenth century had toward dialect features is a book by Odde de Triors, "Merry researches into the Toulouse dialect" (*Joyeuses recherches de la langue toulousaine*).[107] These "Merry researches" were published in

[106] On the general point of dialect words and expressions being ubiquitous in Rabelais's novel, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:132–201), as well as multiple comments throughout the volumes of Lefranc et al. (1913–1955).

On the footnote, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:192), but the oft-cited quote from Montaigne that Sainéan provides in this context is from bk. 1, ch. 25 of Montaigne (1877), not bk. 2, ch. 17. This appears to be some sort of confusion on Bakhtin's part.

[107] See Sainéan (1930, 152–154).

[(235)] For instance, Rabelais was very fond of the Gascon dialect as the most dynamic and rich in invective expressions, jurons, and curses. He shared this fondness with his contemporaries. There is also a praiseful characterization of the Gascon dialect offered by Montaigne (*Essays*, book II, chapter 17).

1578 and were significantly influenced by Rabelais.(236)[108] But the author's approach to language and to dialects is characteristic of the entire epoch. The author considers the special features of the Toulouse dialect, compared with the Provençal language in general, largely from the perspective of double-entendres and merry misunderstandings, which occur as a result of not being familiar with these special features. The dialectal peculiarities and nuances are utilized for a peculiar sort of merry play with languages in the Rabelaisian spirit. The mutual illumination of languages is here directly unfolded as a *merry farce*.

As such, the idea of a "merry grammar" is nothing new. We have already mentioned that the tradition of grammatical facetiae extends throughout the Middle Ages. At the outset of this tradition stands the already-mentioned parodic grammar of the seventh century, "Virgil the Grammarian."[109] But this entire medieval tradition has a somewhat formalistic character, concerns Latin only, and entirely lacks an approach to *language as a whole*, to a language's idiosyncratic physiognomy, to *the image of the language*, to *the comic aspect of the language*. But precisely such an approach is, in contrast, characteristic of the linguistic and grammatical facetiae and travesties of the sixteenth century. Dialects become *holistic images*, as it were, fully formed types of speaking and thinking, *lingual masks* of sorts. The role of Italian dialects in the commedia dell'arte is a matter of common knowledge; each mask here had a particular dialect of the Italian language firmly associated with it.[110] It should, however, be pointed out that the images of languages (dialects) and their comic aspects are offered somewhat primitively in this type of comedy.

Rabelais offered a remarkable image of the language of the Latinizers in the episode featuring the Limousin scholar in "Pantagruel."[111] Let us stress that this is precisely *the image of a language*, shown *as a whole*, with all its essential factors. And *this* image is *invective, decrowning*. It is no accident that the subject-matter of the scholar's speech is full of indecencies. Enraged by his language, Pantagruel seized him by the throat, and the unfortunate fellow was so scared that he started speaking in his pure native Limousin idiom.(237)[112]

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[108] To clarify an ambiguity in the footnote (and this is indeed an ambiguity found both in Bakhtin's Russian and in Sainéan's French), Jean-Baptiste Noulet is the name of the book's editor and commentator, not of a publishing house.

[109] See Lehmann (1922, 21–22) and a longer discussion in the introduction above (see endnote 22).

[110] See Flögel and Ebeling (1862, 27–52).

[111] Bk. 2, ch. 6. This episode is analyzed as a parody of Latinized French by Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:64, 94–95, 503–505; see also Lefranc et al. 1913–1955, 3:61–71).

[112] For the footnote, see Sainéan (1922–1923, 2:374–380) and Plattard (1910, 69). The first encounter with Panurge is described in bk. 2, ch. 9.

(236) This book was republished by J.-B. Noulet in Toulouse in 1892.

(237) The Middle Ages only knew the primitive *comedy of an alien language*. Thus, speeches in nonexistent languages, intended to provoke laughter by their *foreignness and inscrutability*, were fairly common in mystery plays. The application of the comic aspect of alien languages is more substantial in the famous farce *Maître Pathelin*. Here, the hero speaks in the Breton, Flemish, Limousin, Lorrainese,

If the mutual orientation and mutual illumination of the major languages rendered the feeling of time and of successions in time more acute and more concrete, the mutual illumination of dialects within the limits of the national language rendered more acute and more concrete the feeling of *historical space* and strengthened and made meaningful the sense of local, regional, and provincial idiosyncrasy. This is a very substantial factor in that new differentiated feeling of the space of one's country and of the whole world, which is characteristic of that period and which has found such a powerful and striking expression in Rabelais's novel.

However, the matter was not limited to the mutual orientation of dialects either. The national language, as it was becoming the language of ideology and literature, inevitably had to enter into substantial contact with other national languages, which had passed through that process earlier and had already mastered the world of new things and concepts. Italian was such a language in relation to French. Many Italianisms penetrated the French language, together with Italian technology and culture. They flooded the French language and soon instigated a counter-reaction. A struggle commenced between purists and Italianizers. Parodies of the Italianizers' language, offering an *image* of language deformed by Italianisms, appear as well. One such parody, for example, was written by Henri Estienne.[113]

The Italianization of the French language and the struggle against it are a new and important document in the history of the mutual illumination of languages. Here, we already have two new national languages, whose mutual orientation introduces a new factor into the feeling of language as an *idiosyncratic whole*, with its own limitedness and its own perspectives, as well as into the feeling of time, and also into the feeling of concrete historical space.

One must give special mention to the immense significance of *translations* in this process of mutual illumination between languages. It is well known what an exceptional place was held by translations in the literary lingual life of the sixteenth century. The translation of Homer by Salel was a major event. An even greater event was Amyot's famous translation of Plutarch (1559). The numerous translations of Italian authors were also of essential significance. The translation had to be accomplished into a language that had not been fully formed and shaped. In the process of translation, the language itself was being composed and was mastering the world of high ideology and of new things and concepts, still new to it, which had initially revealed themselves in the forms of a foreign language.[(238)114]

[113] Sainéan (1922–1923, 1:50). The parody by Henri Estienne is *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage François italianizé*, published in 1578.

[114] Sainéan (1930, 61–62). This passage is also the source for the citations in the footnote (Villey 1912; Sturel 1908).

Picardese, and Norman dialects and, to top it all off, in macaronic Latin and in "Grimoire," that is, a nonexistent language. There is a similar phenomenon in Rabelais in the episode in which Panurge answers Pantagruel in seven languages, including two nonexistent ones.

[(238)] In the sixteenth century, the principles of translation were the subject of Étienne Dolet's "How

We see *at what a complex intersection of borderlines between languages, dialects, idioms, and jargons the literary lingual consciousness of the time was being formed.* The naive and unlit coexistence of languages and dialects had come to an end. And the literary lingual consciousness found itself not in the well-cemented system of its own singular and indisputable language but in the boundary region of many languages, at the point of their *intense mutual orientation and struggle.* Languages are worldviews—not abstract but concrete, social, permeated by a system of evaluations, inseparable from living practice and class struggle.[115] This is why *every object, every concept, every point of view, every evaluation, every intonation turned out to be located at a point of intersection between languages-worldviews*, turned out to be implicated in an intense ideological struggle. Under these exceptional conditions, any sort of *language and speech dogmatism* and any sort of speech *naivety* became impossible. The language of the sixteenth century, and Rabelais's language in particular, is even to this day sometimes called naive. In reality, the history of European literatures knows no language that was less naive.[116] The exceptional degree to which it was uninhibited and free is very far removed from naivety. The literary lingual consciousness of the time was able not only to feel its language from the inside but also *to see it from the outside, in the light of other languages*, to feel *its boundaries*, to see it as a specific and limited *image* in all its relativity and humanity.

Such an active multilingualism and the ability to look at one's own language from the outside—that is, through the eyes of other languages—makes consciousness exceptionally free in relation to language. Language becomes extremely plastic, even in terms of its formal grammatical structure. On the artistic ideological plane, what is most important is, first of all, *the exceptional freedom of images and their combinations, a freedom from all speech norms, from all established lingual hierarchy.* The divisions between high and low, prohibited and allowed, sacred and profane in language all lose their force.

The influence of the hidden dogmatism of language itself, consolidated over centuries, on human thought, and especially on artistic images, is exceptionally strong. Wherever *the creating consciousness* lives in a one and only language, or where several languages—if that consciousness partakes in multiple languages—are strictly demar-

[115] The words "and class struggle" are a late (1965) addition to the text.

[116] This is the consistent philosophical meaning of "naive" in Bakhtin's vocabulary. Bakhtin calls a person naive when that person imagines oneself to be self-sufficient, to have a clear and distinct image of oneself acquired directly, without the help of others. A philosophical theory is naive when it views the human subject, a language system, a literary work, and so on as self-sufficient in the same way.

to Translate Well from One Language into Another" (1540). Joachim du Bellay, in his "The Defense and Illustration of the French Language" (1549) also devotes a significant amount of space to the principles of translation. On the translations of that period, see P. Villey, *Les Sources d'idées au XVI*-e *siècle*, 1912. Very valuable analyses of the translation methods of the time are offered by R. Sturel, *Amyot, traducteur de Plutarque*, Paris, 1908 (this work analyzes the first version of Amyot's translation while revealing the general trends followed by sixteenth-century translators).

cated without struggling inside that consciousness for dominance, it is impossible to overcome this deep-set dogmatism, inherent in lingual thinking itself. It is only possible to place oneself outside one's own language where and when an essential historical *succession of languages* is taking place, when these languages, so to speak, size themselves up against each other and against the world, when the *boundary lines of times, cultures, and social groups* start to be acutely felt in them. Such, precisely, was Rabelais's time. And only in that time was the exceptional *artistic ideological radicalism of the Rabelaisian images* possible.

Dieterich, in his remarkable book *Pulcinella*, while discussing the peculiar character of the ancient laughter-based art of southern Italy (mimes, farces, comic games, buffoonery, riddles, comic improvisations, and so on), asserts that all these forms are characteristic of a type of *mixed culture*: it is here, in Lower Italy, that the Greek, Oscan, and Latin cultures and languages were in immediate contact and interwoven with one another.[117] In the breast of all southern Italians, as in that of the first Roman poet Ennius, lived three souls. The Atellan farces, with their comic culture, are also situated at the center of the Oscan-Greek and later also the Roman mixed culture.[(239)] Finally, the figure of Pulcinella, too, emerges from folk depths, in the very same place, *where peoples and languages were constantly being mixed.*[(240)]

Such are Dieterich's claims. They can be summed up as follows: the peculiar and exceptionally *unfettered laughter-based word* of Sicily and Lower Italy, the similar word of the Atellan farces, and, finally, Pulcinella's likewise similar word of folly emerged *in a boundary region between languages and cultures*, which not only were in direct contact but were in a certain sense interwoven with one another. We posit that these forms' emergence and development precisely *in a boundary region between languages* had exceptionally great significance for their *laughter-based universalism and radicalism.* The link of these forms with *multilingualism*, as pointed out by Dieterich, seems to us to be of profound importance. In the sphere of literary artistic image-based creation, while remaining within the system of a single, unitary, and unique language,[118] it is impossible to overcome *by the efforts of abstract thought alone* that deeper and hidden dogmatism that leaves its sediments in all the forms of this system. The completely new, genuinely prosaic, self-critical, absolutely sober, and *fearless* (and therefore *merry*) life of the image only begins in the boundary region between languages. In the rounded-off system of the unique language, opaque to all other languages, the image is too constrained for that "truly divine insolence and shamelessness," which Dieterich finds

[117] For the broader context, see Dieterich (1897, 74–99). Note that Dieterich also mentions a fourth culture, the Etruscan culture, in this context.

[118] Bakhtin uses terms here that were significant in his early philosophical works (especially Bakhtin 1993): *ediny* (unitary) and *edinstvenny* (unique). Bakhtin uses these terms to speak of the individual consciousness from its own first-person perspective. See also note 18 to this chapter and note 106 to the introduction.

[(239)] A. Dieterich, *Pulcinella*, 1897, 82.

[(240)] A. Dieterich, *Pulcinella*, 1897, 250.

in the Lower Italian mime and farce, in the Atellan farces (insofar as we can judge of them), and in Pulcinella's folk comic performance.(241)[119] I repeat: another language is another worldview and another culture, but in their concrete and *not* fully *translatable* form. It is only on the border between languages that the exceptional unfetteredness and merry ruthlessness of the Rabelaisian image was possible.

Thus, in Rabelais's work, *the unfetteredness of laughter*, consecrated by the tradition of folk-festive forms, was elevated to a higher degree of ideological consciousness, *thanks to overcoming lingual dogmatism*. This overcoming of the most stubborn and hidden dogmatism was only possible under the conditions created by the intense processes of mutual orientation and mutual illumination of languages, which took place in Rabelais's time. The same drama of *simultaneous death and birth, senescence and renewal*, both of individual forms and significations and of *whole language-worldviews*, was played out in the lingual life of the epoch.

We have examined all the most essential—from our point of view—aspects of Rabelais's work, and we have tried to show that the exceptional idiosyncrasy of his work was determined by the folk laughter culture of the past, the mighty contours of which can be revealed behind all of Rabelais's images.

The main shortcoming of contemporary Rabelais scholarship abroad consists in the fact that, oblivious to folk culture, it tries to fit the work of François Rabelais into the framework of official culture, to understand it within the unitary flow of the "major," that is the official, literature of France.[120] As a result, Rabelais scholarship is indeed unable to master that which is most essential in Rabelais's work. By contrast, we, in this work, have tried to understand Rabelais precisely within the flow of folk culture, which had always, at all stages of its development, opposed the official culture of the

[119] The quote from Dieterich (1897, 266) is not quite verbatim. Bakhtin edits two sentences in the original into one without marking the edit in any way. The reference to Pulcinella's "shamelessness" here correctly renders Bakhtin's Russian, but "uninhibitedness" would probably be more accurate as a translation directly from Dieterich's German.

[120] This very brief summarizing section is a drastically edited-down, and drastically toned-down, version of a much longer section that was included in the 1949–1950 version, complete with the requisite rhetorical attacks on "bourgeois Rabelais scholarship," the obligatory quotes from Lenin, and various other elements that a prudent author writing in the Stalin era to an audience of Party officials would have to populate the most conspicuous parts of their work (introductions, conclusions, and so on) with. That said, the many removed passages still contained, even in this form, some of Bakhtin's signature insights and metaphors.

Earlier, in the 1940 manuscript, the rhetorical attack on Rabelais scholarship in the west was entirely missing, and instead, there was a longer section about the "illuminative significance" of Rabelais's novel for understanding other literature, about half of which focused on one author: Nikolay Gogol. This discussion was eventually removed from the published book (despite Bakhtin's wishes, at the editor's insistence; see Popova 2010a, 541), and the segment dealing with Gogol was augmented in 1970 to form a standalone article on Rabelais and Gogol (Bakhtin 1983).

(241) "Only the truly divine insolence and shamelessness of Pulcinella," says Dieterich, "can throw light for us on the character, tone, and atmosphere of the ancient farce and Atellan." (A. Dieterich, *Pulcinella*, 1897, 266).

ruling classes and had been working out its own special point of view on the world and special forms for reflecting it in images.

Literary studies and aesthetics usually take as their starting point the narrowed-down and impoverished manifestations of laughter in the literature of the last three centuries, and into these narrow conceptions of laughter and the comic, they also try to fit the laughter of the Renaissance, in spite of the fact that these conceptions are far from adequate even for the understanding of Molière. Rabelais inherited and brought to culmination thousands of years of folk laughter. His work is an indispensable key to the understanding of laughter culture in its most powerful, deep, and original manifestations.

Our study is only a first step in the vast task of studying the folk laughter culture of the past. It may be that this first step is as yet not sufficiently firm and not fully correct. But we are deeply convinced of the importance of the very task that we have posed. It is impossible to correctly understand the cultural and literary life and struggle of past epochs in humanity's history while ignoring the special folk laughter culture, which had always existed and which never blended together with the official culture of the ruling classes. When illuminating past eras, we are too often forced to "take every epoch at its word,"[121] that is, to believe its official—to a greater or lesser degree—ideologists, because we do not hear the voice of the people, do not know how to find and decipher its pure unmixed expression (thus, to this day, we still have a very one-sided notion of the Middle Ages and their culture).

All the acts of the drama of world history were performed before *the laughing chorus of the people.*(242) Without hearing this chorus, one cannot understand the drama as a whole. Let us imagine Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* without the scenes involving the popular masses; such a notion of Pushkin's drama would be not only incomplete but also distorted. After all, each of the play's characters expresses a limited point of view, and the genuine meaning of the epoch and its events in the tragedy is revealed only when the scenes that feature the popular masses are taken into account. In Pushkin's work, the final word belongs to the people.

Our image is not merely a metaphoric comparison. Each period of world history had its reflection in folk culture. Always, in all periods of the past, there existed the public square with the people laughing in it, that very public square that appeared to the Pretender in a nightmare:

> Below, a crowd was seething in the square;
>
> They kept laughing pointing up at me,

[121] Again, an allusion to the removed epigraph from Marx and Engels (1970, 67).

(242) The people is, of course, also itself a participant of the drama of world history, but it differs from other participants (among other things setting it apart) by its ability and right to laugh an ambivalent laughter.

And I became ashamed and terrified.[122]

We repeat, every act of world history has been accompanied by choral laughter. But not in every period did the laughter chorus have such a coryphaeus as Rabelais.[123] And although he was the *coryphaeus* of the people's chorus only in the Renaissance, so fully and clearly did he reveal the peculiar and difficult language of the laughing people that his work also sheds light on the folk laughter culture of other ages.

[122] *Boris Godunov*, scene 5 (transl. Roger Clarke, Pushkin 2010, 24).

[123] Beyond the extended meaning of "coryphaeus" as a cultural leadership figure, there is the original literal meaning of "coryphaeus" as the head of the choir of ancient Greek drama that Bakhtin is alluding to here (a usage found several times also in Freidenberg 1997b, by the way).

Addendum: Establishing Bakhtin's Sources

Many, indeed most, of the endnotes to the book identify the sources on which particular passages in the text are based or from which Bakhtin acquired the information he recounts. Of course, where Bakhtin does not himself indicate his source (in fact, also where he does), one cannot establish the identity of his sources with absolute certainty. Nevertheless, enough information is available to establish very high degrees of probability. Here, I would like to explain the methods I used to make these source attributions.

There are two tasks involved in establishing Bakhtin's sources. First one must identify the sources Bakhtin had access to and made use of while working on the book overall, and then one must link particular passages and claims in the book to particular passages in those sources. These two tasks are distinct but interconnected. The fact that a source is known to have been used by Bakhtin increases the likelihood that particular passages in that source match particular passages in the text. And conversely, the fact that there is a close match between passages in the book and passages in a candidate source increases the likelihood that this source was in fact among those he used.

For the first task we have a natural starting point, already mentioned in the preface: the list of summaries Bakhtin prepared while working on the book, provided by Popova (2008a, 858–859; I list all these sources in the preface). We know for certain that these sources were available to Bakhtin and that he studied them while preparing the manuscript. There are also several sources that Bakhtin summarized in other texts he wrote within the relevant time span (for example, Goethe 1891–1894; Hirzel 1895) or that have been thus identified by the editors of Bakhtin's *Collected Works*.

A second, less certain, tier of sources are the ones Bakhtin explicitly cites in the book and those he included in his 1946 bibliography (Bakhtin 2008d). Many of these were citations Bakhtin merely copied from the actual sources at his disposal, but he was not able to consult them directly (although citations in sections added during the 1964–1965 revisions, when Bakhtin had considerably better access to libraries and literature, are much more reliable). When a source is cited by Bakhtin, we can be certain that he was aware it existed, but more information is needed before we can decide whether he had access to it.

As a useful example, consider the citation of Schmidt (1747), in which Bakhtin misspells the author's surname and gives the wrong publication year (he has it as

Schmid 1847; see note 120 to the introduction for further details). We can be fairly sure that Bakhtin did not have direct access to this source, but we can also be fairly sure that he did, at some point, have access to another source, Reinach (1912), where the same citation appears with the same two mistakes. I also sometimes consider as possible candidates sources that Bakhtin's confirmed sources cite, even if Bakhtin himself does not do so (especially relevant are citations found in Freidenberg 1997b).

Finally, some sources can only be identified based on particular correspondences between them and Bakhtin's text (Bobertag 1881 is one case in point). The more correspondences there are and the more direct they are, the more probable is the source identification (likewise, the fewer matches, and the less precise and specific, the more tentative). Which brings us to methods for establishing sources for concrete passages and claims.

There are many passages in the book that closely paraphrase a source, or fully reproduce some text from it (typically quotations and citations). Such passages exhibit many direct correspondences and can be matched to their source with a high degree of probability. In some cases we can even compare the text of passages in the book to the text of Bakhtin's published summaries of some of his sources (such as the detailed comparison between the text of Bakhtin's 1940 manuscript and his summary of Lote 1938, provided in Popova 2008a 860–876).

To be sure, even here, there is room for uncertainty. Sometimes there are close matches between a passage in the book and passages in more than one of Bakhtin's known sources. In such cases, I normally indicate all reasonable candidates in the endnote. At other times, Bakhtin summarizes information from his sources without closely paraphrasing them. In these places I paid special attention to specific matches and mismatches between Bakhtin's text and the candidate source—including, for example, mistakes that Bakhtin "inherits," information he reproduces that is not found in a candidate source, or information found in a candidate source that Bakhtin would be expected to reproduce, but does not. The proper identification of such summarized sources becomes more probable if we have already established that Bakhtin had access to that source (as discussed above) and less probable if this cannot be clearly established.

Finally, there are passages in the book in which Bakhtin clearly relies on ideas found in one of his sources but not on specific factual information it contains, nor in a literal or word-for-word manner. Such source identifications are inevitably more speculative and interpretative, closer to the scholarly task of uncovering Bakhtin's intellectual influences than to the more technical task of tracking down a source. This is a problem more generally in the humanities (as Bakhtin would hasten to argue), where "ideas" cannot be patented in the same crisp way that, say, more impersonal scientific algorithms can be. Still, some attributions (especially to sections in Freidenberg 1997b, and sometimes to passages in Cassirer 1955) can be made with at least some amount of confidence, either because the correspondence between the ideas expressed is very close and specific or because we have Bakhtin's summary of the relevant source (see

Bakhtin 2008b). Triangulating these texts can, at the very least, give us insight into how he read the thinkers who nourished and provoked him.

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