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Rabelais and His World

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republished in 1963, and soon thereafter, in 1965, the present monograph on Rabelais became available to readers. The book, however, was written in 1940, as we learn from the author's footnote in the second version of his Dostoevsky monograph.

Rabelais and His World is a new stage in Bakhtin's creative development. His study is concerned with semiotic operation. The author is no longer confined to the verbal language but investigates and compares different sign systems such as verbal, pictorial, and gestural. In the book on Dostoevsky Bakhtin had already mentioned that his analysis of the dialogue/monologue structure actually belongs to a metalingual level. In the present study he has proved to be most consistent in this creative development. The critic presents Rabelais' work in the richest context of medieval and Renaissance cultures, treating them as systems of multiform signs. To find a common denominator of these signs, that is, to discover their general *code* is the author's goal.

His procedure, naturally, continues to be structural. The dominant for all systems mentioned above is *laughter*. Its manifestation is the various forms of folk rites and festivities ("carnival"). In this way Rabelais' art proves to be oriented toward the folk culture of the marketplace of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Because of this large and systematized viewpoint, Bakhtin can go further in his semiotic analysis; he can go beyond the cultural products themselves. The objects of his analysis are not only products but also *situations* as semiotic systems.[11] Thus he can utilize the results of the semiotic approach for sociological studies.

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[11] See S. Żółkiewski, "Socjologia kultury a semiotyka," *Studia Socjologiczne*, 4, 1967.

the triumph of the people as a whole. Such imagery is torn away from the process of labor and struggle; it is removed from the marketplace and is confined to the house and the private chamber (abundance in the home); it is no longer the "banquet for all the world," in which all take part, but an intimate feast with hungry beggars at the door. If this picture of eating and drinking is hyperbolic, it is a picture of gluttony, not an expression of social justice. It is a static way of private life, deprived of any symbolic openings and universal meaning, no matter whether it is represented as satire that is, as purely negative, or as a positive state of well-being.

The popular-festive banquet has nothing in common with static private life and individual well-being. The popular images of food and drink are active and triumphant, for they conclude the process of labor and struggle of the social man against the world. They express the people as a whole because they are based on the inexhaustible, ever-growing abundance of the material principle. They are universal and organically combined with the concept of the free and sober truth, ignoring fear and piousness and therefore linked with wise speech. Finally, they are infused with gay time, moving toward a better future that changes and renews everything in its path.

This characteristic trait of the popular banquet images has not as yet been properly understood. They were interpreted on the level of the private way of life and were defined as "vulgar realism." Therefore, neither the extraordinary charm of these images nor their immense role in the literature, art, and philosophy of past ages could be grasped and explained. Neither was their antinomy studied as they developed within the system of class ideology, where they were subject to individualization and degeneration. These processes went on in different degrees, according to the various stages of class development. For instance, in Flanders, in spite of bourgeois development, banquet images still retained their positive popular aspect, though in a weakened form. This explains the forceful quality and the fascination of this genre in Flemish painting. In this sphere, too, a deeper study of folk culture will permit us to pose and solve in a new light a number of essential problems.

In the banquet images discussed in the previous chapter we have seen gross exaggeration and hyperbole. Such exaggeration is also inherent in other images of the body's life but is most strongly expressed in picturing the body and food. Here we must seek the deepest source and the creative principle of all other hyperbole of the Rabelaisian world, the source of all that is excessive and superabundant in it.

Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style.

The most consistent and well-documented endeavor to give the

history and, in part, the theory of the grotesque was made by the German scholar G. Schneegans in his *Geschichte der Grotesken Satyre,* "The History of Grotesque Satire," 1894. About half of this book is devoted to Rabelais, and indeed it can be said that the author centered his attention on Rabelaisian studies. His interpretation of the grotestque image is clear and systematic but appears, however, radically incorrect in our eyes. At the same time, his mistakes are typical; they are repeated in the majority of works devoted to this subject, preceding, or especially, following his own. Schneegans ignores the deep ambivalence of the grotesque and sees it merely as a negation, an exaggeration pursuing narrowly satirical aims. Because such an approach is typical, we shall begin the present chapter by a criticism of Schneegans' work.

The author of "The History of Grotesque Satire" insists upon the strict differentiation of three types or categories of the comic: the clownish, the burlesque, and the grotesque.

As an example of the clownish, Schneegans presents a scene from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* (a scene that was first discussed by Flögel and then by Fischer). A stutterer talking with Harlequin cannot pronounce a difficult word; he makes a great effort, loses his breath, keeping the word down in his throat, sweats and gapes, trembles, chokes. His face is swollen, his eyes pop; "it looks as if he were in the throes and spasms of childbirth." Finally Harlequin, weary of waiting, relieves the stutterer by surprise; he rushes head forward and hits the man in the abdomen. The difficult word is "born" at last.

The example of the burlesque is taken from Paul Scarron's parody of Virgil *Virgile Travesti,* 1653. In order to degrade the high images of the *Aeneid,* Scarron stresses the trivial material bodily images. Hecuba washes diapers, and Dido is presented as a blunt-nosed African negress.

Examples of the grotesque are taken from Rabelais. Friar John asserts that even the shadow of a monastery belfry bears fruit; the monastic habit restores to the dog the reproductive force it has lost; Panurge proposes to build the walls of Paris with genital organs.

Schneegans demonstrates the different character of the laughter provoked by these three types of the comic. In the first example (clownery) the laughter is direct, naïve, and devoid of anger. The stutterer can laugh at himself. In the second example (burlesque) irony is added to laughter, arising from the degradation of high literature. Moreover, the laughter is indirect, since it is necessary to be familiar with the *Aeneid* to enjoy the parody. In the third example (the grotesque) specific social phenomena are berated: monastic depravity and the venality of Parisian women are treated with extreme exaggeration. Here again the satire is indirect, for it is necessary to know the social phenomena that are being berated.

Schneegans founds the difference between these three types of laughter upon formal psychological aesthetics. The comic, in general, is based upon the contrast between the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. All types of the comic have this common ground. The differences between the three types Schneegans describes are determined by the various sources of pleasure and displeasure and the various combinations of these feelings.

In the first instance displeasure is caused by the unexpected and unusual method of healing the stutterer; pleasure is caused by the happy result of Harlequin's trick.

In the second example pleasure is caused by degrading high literature. All that is high wearies in the long run. The more powerful and prolonged the domination of the high, the greater the pleasure caused by its uncrowning. Hence the great success of parodies and travesties, when they appear at the right time, that is, when the reader wearies of high matters. Thus, Scarron's travesties directed against the despotism of Malherbe and classicism were opportune in his time.

In the example of grotesque, displeasure is caused by the impossible and improbable nature of the image: It is unimaginable that a woman could conceive from a monastery belfry, and such an absurdity creates a strong feeling of vexation. But this feeling is overcome by two forms of pleasure: first, we see the truly existing monastic corruption and depravity as symbolized in the hyperbolic

image; in other words, we find some place for this exaggeration within reality. Second, we feel a moral satisfaction, since sharp criticism and mockery have dealt a blow to these vices.

In the clownery example no one is mocked, neither the stutterer nor Harlequin. In the example of burlesque the high style of the *Aeneid* and classicism in general are the object of mockery, but there is no moral incentive for irony. This is merely a *boutade*. In the example of grotesque the object of mockery is a specific negative phenomenon, something that "should not exist" (*nichtseinsollendes*). Schneegans sees precisely in this fact the basic nature of the grotesque: it exaggerates and caricatures the negative, the inappropriate. In the author's mind this distinguishes the grotesque from the *clownish* and from burlesque. In the first two forms of the comic there can also be exaggeration, but they lack the satiric orientation toward the inappropriate. Moreover, exaggeration in the grotesque acquires an extreme, fantastic character.

In art, according to Schneegans, the grotesque is first of all a caricature but a caricature that has reached fantastic dimensions. Schneegans discusses a series of caricatures of Napoleon III based upon the exaggeration of the emperor's nose. The grotesque is manifested in the caricatures that lend the emperor's nose extraordinary dimensions, transforming it either into a pig's snout or a crow's beak.

The exaggeration of the inappropriate to incredible and monstrous dimensions is, according to Schneegans, the basic nature of the grotesque. Therefore, the grotesque is always satire. Where there is no satirical orientation there is no grotesque. From this definition Schneegans deduces all the peculiarities of Rabelais' images and verbal style: excessiveness, superabundance, the tendency to transgress all limits, endless enumerations, and accumulations of synonyms.

Such is Schneegans' concept. It is typical. The interpretation of the grotesque image as purely satirical, that is, negative, is widespread. Rabelais has always had the reputation of a satirist, although he is no more a satirist than Shakespeare and less than Cervantes. Schneegans transfers to Rabelais his own narrow modern interpretation of satire as a negation of separate individual phenomena, not as a negation of the entire order of life (including the prevailing truth), a negation closely linked to the affirmation of that which is born anew.

Schneegans' concept is, as we have said, typical but radically erroneous. It is founded on the complete neglect of a series of essential aspects of the grotesque and first of all neglect of its ambivalence. Moreover, Schneegans ignores the folklore sources of the grotesque.

Schneegans is forced to admit that even with considerable effort it is impossible to find the satirical orientation in all of Rabelais' exaggeration. He explains this by the very nature of exaggeration, which always tends to transgress its own limits; the author of grotesque is carried away, is "drunk" with hyperbole, at times forgetting the true role of exaggeration and losing his grasp on satire.

As an example of such exaggeration forgetful of its initial satiric goal, Schneegans cites the fantastic growth of body members in *Pantagruel*. True, hyperbole is one of the attributes of the grotesque (especially in the Rabelaisian system of images). However, it is not its essential attribute. It is even more inadmissible to reduce to mere satire the entire substance of the grotesque image. Schneegans incorrectly interprets the pathos of exaggeration and the principle that is its moving force.

We may inquire: whence comes this pathos, this "drunkenness," if something negative and inappropriate is exaggerated? Schneegans does not answer this question in his book. He fails to analyze the character of exaggeration, which often undergoes sharp transformations in quality.

If the nature of grotesque satire consists in the exaggeration of the improper, where can that joyful lavishness described by Schneegans come from? How can we explain the quality, wealth, and variety of the image, its often unexpected relation to the most distant and, it may seem, unrelated phenomena? At best, the purely satirical exaggeration of the negative could account for the merely quantitative, not qualitative element of the image and its various relations.

A grotesque world in which only the inappropriate is exaggerated is only quantitively large, but qualitatively it is extremely poor, colorless, and far from gay. (Such is, in part, Swift's gloomy world.) What would such a world have in common with Rabelais' merry and rich universe? Satire alone would not suffice to explain even the positive pathos of the quantitative exaggeration, not to speak of the qualitative wealth.

Because Schneegans relied on the idealistic aesthetics of the second part 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 understand the possibility of combining in one image both the positive and the negative poles. Even less was he able to understand that an object can transgress not only its quantitative but also its qualitative limits, that it can outgrow itself and be fused with other objects. The pregnant and two-bodied images could not be grasped by Schneegans; he did not see that, in the grotesque world of becoming, the limits between objects and phenomena are drawn quite differently than in the static world of art and literature of his time.

Let us return to Schneegans' point of departure, to his examples of clownery, burlesque, and grotesque. He sought to discover through analysis the purely formal psychological mechanism of their perception, instead of concentrating on the objective content of these images. But if we start with this objective content, and not with the formal psychological elements, we shall find the essential similarity and relationship of the three examples. The differences established by Schneegans will appear artificial and accidental.

What is the objective content of the first example? Schneegans himself describes it in such a way that we cannot be left in doubt: the stutterer enacts a scene of childbirth. He is pregnant, bearing the word that he is unable to deliver. Schneegans says that "it looks as if he were in the throes and spasms of childbirth." The gaping mouth, the protruding eyes, sweat, trembling, suffocation, the swollen face—all these are typical symptoms of the grotesque life of the body; here they have the meaning of the act of birth. Harlequin's gesture is also quite obvious: he helps to deliver the word, and the

word is actually born. We specify that it is the word that is born, and we stress this fact: a highly spiritual act is degraded and uncrowned by the transfer to the material bodily level of childbirth, realistically represented. But thanks to degradation the word is renewed; one might say reborn. (We are still within the cycle of delivery and childbirth.) We further see the essential topographical element of the bodily hierarchy turned upside down; the lower stratum replaces the upper stratum. The word is localized in the mouth and in the head (thought); from there it is transferred to the abdomen and is pushed out under the impact of Harlequin's head. This traditional gesture of the head ramming the abdomen or the buttocks is essentially topographical. Here once more we have the logic of opposites, the contact of the upper and the lower level. We have also an exaggeration: the symptoms produced by the stutterer's distress (tension of the eyes, sweat) are increased to such an extent as to typify childbirth. Thus the entire mechanism of the word is transferred from the apparatus of speech to the abdomen. An objective analysis of this brief scene discloses the fundamental and essential traits of the grotesque. It reveals a great wealth and fullness of meaning, worked out to the smallest detail. It has at the same time a universal character; it is a miniature satyrical drama of the word, of its material birth, or the drama of the body giving birth to the word. The extraordinary realism, the wealth of meaning are inherent in this excellent sketch, as in all comic folk images.

An objective analysis of Scarron's parody will reveal the presence of similar elements. But Scarron's images are poorer, more simplified; they contain many artificial, literary, accidental traits. Schneegans merely sees the degradation of the high style, which had reached the point of wearying the reader. He explains this degradation by a formal psychological consideration: it is necessary to lower the eyes in order to rest them from looking up. Actually, we have here the uncrowning of the *Aeneid*'s images by transferring them to the material bodily level, to the level of food, drink, sexual life, and the bodily phenomena linked with them. This sphere has a positive meaning. It is the generating lower stratum. Therefore, the *Aeneid*'s images are not only uncrowned, they are renewed.

Let us now look at the third example offered by Schneegans, at his Rabelaisian images. Friar John asserts that even the shadow of the monastery belfry can render women more fertile. This image immediately introduces us to the logic of the grotesque. This is no mere exaggeration of monastic "depravity." The object transgresses its own confines, ceases to be itself. The limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects. It must be recalled that the belfry (a tower) is the usual grotesque symbol of the phallus.[1] The entire context creates an atmosphere justifying this metamorphosis. We must quote the Rabelaisian text in the original:

C'est (dist le moyne) bien rentré de picques. Elle pourroit estre aussi layd que Prosperpine, elle aura, par Dieu, la saccade puisqu'il y a moynes autour, car un bon ouvrier mect indifferentement toutes pièces en oeuvre. Que j'aye la vérolle en cas que ne les trouviez engroissées à vostre retour, car seulement l'ombre du clochier d'une abbaye est feconde.[2]
(Book 1, Chapter 45)

Friar John's speech is filled with unofficial and degrading elements that prepare the atmosphere for our grotesque image. First of all, we have an expression borrowed from the game of cards (*rentré de picques,* in the sense of an unfortunate turn). Then there is the image of the ugly Proserpine, queen of the underworld. This, of course, is not the antique mythological figure, but the "devil's mother" of the medieval diableries. Moreover, this image was topographically set, since in Rabelais' novel the underworld is always linked with the bodily lower stratum. Further, we have the oath (*pardieu*) and the curse related to the bodily lower stratum (*que j'ay la vérolle*). There follows two metaphors for the sexual act; one is taken from horsemanship (*saccade* "jerk," or "jolt"), the other is a proverb about a good craftsman using every kind of wood. In both cases there is a degradation and renewal of objects of a different order: horsemanship and the carpenter's craft. These, too, are the preparations for the grotesque image.

All these elements of speech create a specific, free atmosphere. Most of them are directly linked to the lower stratum; they lend a bodily character to objects and degrade them, fuse the body and the world, thus introducing the concluding theme: the transformation of the belfry into a phallus.

Is this grotesque image merely a satire of monastic depravity, as Schneegans tells us? The passage just analyzed is part of an extensive episode of the pilgrims who were swallowed by Gargantua with his salad but later managed to escape. Actually, this scene is directed against the pilgrims and against the belief in the miraculous power of the relics that cure diseases (in this case the plague). But this definite private orientation of satire by no means exhausts the meaning of the episode and does not determine all the images that compose it. At the center we find the typical grotesque picture of the swallowing of the pilgrims, followed by their no less typical immersion in urine. Finally, there is the parody of the psalms, which seem to have predicted all the pilgrim's misfortunes. This travesty is a degrading interpretation of certain images of the psalms. The themes have a vast universal connotation; it would be absurd to believe that they have been mustered only in order to denounce the pilgrims' parasitism and their primitive faith in relics. This would be like shooting sparrows with heavy guns. The discountenancing of pilgrimages and crude superstition is the official angle of the episode. In his speech to the pilgrims Grangousier uses the formal language of a wise government. He speaks like the royal pamphletists expressing the official point of view on the

[1] The tall tower interpreted as the phallus was well known to Rabelais and to his contemporaries, from antique sources. Here is an excerpt from Lucian, ("The Syrian Goddess"): "In these propylaea there stand phalli thirty fathoms high. A man climbs on one of these phalli twice a year and remains on its summit seven days. And it is from his summit that this man can enter into closer conversation with the gods and pray for the welfare of all Syria."

[2] "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."

abuses of pilgrimages. He does not deny faith but only the pilgrims' uncouth superstition.[3]

This, then, is the official thought openly expressed in the episode. But the nonofficial, popular-festive language of the marketplace speaks here of very different things. The mighty material bodily element of these images uncrowns and renews the entire world of medieval ideology and order, with its belief, its saints, its relics, monasteries, pseudoasceticism, fear of death, eschatologism, and prophecies. In this world to be swept away the pilgrims are only tiny, pitiful figures, which can be swallowed down unnoticed in salad and almost drowned in urine. The material bodily element has here a positive character. And it is precisely the material bodily image that is exaggerated to disproportionate dimensions: the monastic phallus as tall as a belfry, the torrents of Gargantua's urine, and his immeasurably large, all-swallowing gullet.

This is the reason why the monastic belfry, uncrowned and renewed in the form of a giant phallus, with its shadow that impregnates women, is least of all an exaggeration of the monks' depravity. It uncrowns the entire monastery, the very ground on which it stands, its false ascetic ideal, its abstract and sterile eternity. The belfry's shadow is the shadow of the phallus that generates new life. Nothing remains of the monastery; there remains only the living man, Friar John—glutton and drunkard, pitilessly sober, mighty and heroic, full of inexhaustible energy, and thirsting for the new.

We must add that like all similar images the belfry has a topographic character: the tower pointing upward, to heaven, is transformed into the phallus (the bodily lower stratum) and impregnates women (again the body's lower parts).

Another example of the grotesque, chosen by Schneegans from Rabelais, is Panurge's proposal to build walls from genital organs of women. It is prepared thus:

[3] The criticism of this superstition is expressed in the spirit of moderate evangelism, which, it seems, was supported by the royal authority when Rabelais wrote the pilgrim episode.

"Do you know what Agesilaus said?" Pantagruel answered. "They asked him why the great city of Lacedaemon 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 cities need no stouter or safer walls than the valor of their citizens."
(Book 2, Chapter 15)

In this antique reminiscence, rendered in high style, the grotesque image of walls turned into flesh is introduced. It is prepared by the conceit that the strongest walls are made of the bones of soldiers. The human body becomes a building material. The limits between the body and the world are weakened (true on the high metaphoric plane). All this precedes Panurge's project:

"I have 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 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? . . . What is more, no lightning could strike them. Why? Because they are consecrated."
(*Ibid.*)

It is clear that the cheapness of Paris women is merely a secondary theme, and that even here there is no moral condemnation. The leading theme is fecundity, as the greatest and safest array of strength. It would be a mistake to rationalize this image by saying, for example, that the citizens' fecundity and the increase of population are the city's best military defense. This idea is not extraneous to the image, but such a narrowing of the grotesque metaphor is inadmissible.

Panurge's metaphor is broader and more complex, and above all it is ambivalent. It contains an element of topographic nega-

tion, since Panurge's walls uncrown and renew the fortified walls, as well as military valor, bullets, and even lightning, which is powerless to crush them. Military power and strength are helpless against the material bodily procreative principle.

In another part of the novel (Book Three, Chapter 8) we find Panurge's long dissertation stating that the first and most important armor is the codpiece protecting the genital organs. He states that when a man's head is cut off he alone perishes, but if he loses his genital organs all the human race will be destroyed. And he adds that these organs were the stones with which Deucalian and Pyrrha reestablished mankind after the flood. Here, once more, we find the image of the procreative principle as the best building material.

Panurge's dissertation is interesting from yet another point of view: the utopian principle is well expressed in it. Panurge declared that, wishing to preserve all the species of the vegetable kingdom, nature armed the seeds and germs of plants with sheaths, husks, shells, thorns, bark, and spikes, while man is born naked with his genitals unprotected. This passage of Rabelais' novel was inspired by Pliny's reflections from the seventh book of his "Natural History." But Pliny's gloomy world outlook led him to pessimistic conclusions concerning the weakness of mankind, while Panurge's deductions are extremely optimistic. He believes that if man is born with unprotected genitals, this proves that he is called to peace and a peaceful rule over nature. It was only the "Iron Age" that incited him to be armed, and he started arming, according to Biblical legend, with the first codpiece, a fig leaf. But sooner or later man will return to his peaceful vocation and will fully disarm.[4] Here explicitly, but in a somewhat narrowed rationalized form, we find the theme that implicitly was contained in the indestructible bodily wall uncrowning military power.

It suffices to consider Panurge's reflections, previously quoted, to be convinced of the irrelevancy of the satirical interpretation: the

[4] 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.

cheapness of Paris women. We shall then see that the stones suggested by Panurge for the city walls are the same stones used by Deucalion and Pyrrha to rebuild the ruins of mankind.

Such is the true objective content of the examples given by Schneegans. From the point of view of this objective content, the similarity between the examples appears far more obvious than the dissimilarity. The latter exists, of course, but not where Schneegans is looking for it. The artificial theory of the psychological mechanism of perception on one hand and the narrow aesthetic norms of his time on the other prevented Schneegans from seeing the true essence of the phenomenon he had undertaken to study, that is the grotesque. First of all, the examples we have examined, the scene from the *commedia dell'arte*, Scarron's travesty of the *Aeneid*, and finally Rabelais' images, are to a smaller or greater extent related to the medieval folk culture of humor and to grotesque realism. We find this heritage in the very construction of these images and especially in the concept of the body; this special concept binds together the quoted examples and essentially relates them to one another. In all three cases we find the same mode of representation of the bodily life, which differs sharply from the classical mode, as well as from the naturalist picture of the human body. This permits us to include all three examples (without, of course, ignoring their differences) in the common concept of the grotesque.

We find at the basis of grotesque imagery a special concept of the body as a whole and of the limits of this whole. The confines between the body and the world and between separate bodies are drawn in the grotesque genre quite differently than in the classic and naturalist images. We have already seen this difference in a number of Rabelaisian images. In the present chapter we must broaden our observations, systematize them, and disclose the sources of Rabelais' grotesque concept of the body.

But let us first have a look at another example cited by Schneegans: the caricature of Napoleon and the exaggeration of the size of his nose. According to Schneegans, the grotesque starts when the exaggeration reaches fantastic dimensions, the human nose being

transformed into a snout or beak. We shall not discuss the nature of these caricatures per se; it is but superficial satire, deprived of true grotesque character. We are interested in the theme of the nose itself, which occurs throughout world literature in nearly every language, as well as in abusive and degrading gesticulations. Schneegans correctly points out the grotesque character of the transformation of the human element into an animal one; the combination of human and animal traits is, as we know, one of the most ancient grotesque forms. But the author does not grasp the meaning of the grotesque image of the nose: that it always symbolizes the phallus. Laurent Joubert, the famous sixteenth-century physician and a contemporary of Rabelais, whose theory of laughter we have already mentioned, wrote a book on popular superstitions in medicine.[5] In Part 5, Chapter 6 of this book he speaks of the popular belief that the size and potency of the genital organs can be inferred from the dimensions and form of the nose. Friar John also expresses this belief in his monastic jargon. Such is the usual interpretation of this image in the literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, linked with the popular-festive system. The most widely known example of this symbolism is the famous carnival "Dance of the Noses" of Hans Sachs (*Nasentanz*).

Of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body; the head, ears, and nose also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt the animal form or that of inanimate objects. The eyes have no part in these comic images; they express an individual, so to speak, self-sufficient human life, which is not essential to the grotesque. The grotesque is interested only in protruding eyes, like the eyes of the stutterer in the scene described earlier. It is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines. Special attention is given to the shoots and branches, to all that prolongs the body and links it to other

[5] Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs populaires et propos vulgaires touchant la médecine et le régime de santé*. Bordeaux, 1579.

bodies or to the world outside. Moreover, the bulging eyes manifest a purely bodily tension. But the most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else. The grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open bodily abyss.

The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world (let us recall the grotesque image in the episode of Gargantua's birth on the feast of cattle-slaughtering). This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body: the bowels and the phallus. These two areas play the leading role in the grotesque image, and it is precisely for this reason that they are predominantly subject to positive exaggeration, to hyperbolization; they can even detach themselves from the body and lead an independent life, for they hide the rest of the body, as something secondary (The nose can also in a way detach itself from the body.) Next to the bowels and the genital organs is the mouth, through which enters the world to be swallowed up. And next is the anus. All these convexities and orifices have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome: there is an interchange and an interorientation. This is why the main events in the life of the grotesque body, the acts of the bodily drama, take place in this sphere. Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body—all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven.

Thus the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its

excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths.[6] Mountains and abysses, such is the relief of the grotesque body; or speaking in architectural terms, towers and subterranean passages.

Grotesque images may, of course, present other members, organs and parts of the body (especially dismembered parts), but they play a minor role in the drama. They are never stressed unless they replace a leading image.

Actually, if we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception.

As we have said, the grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and inward features are often merged into one.

We have already sufficiently stressed the fact that grotesque imagery constructs what we might call a double body. In the endless chain of bodily life it retains the parts in which one link joins the other, in which the life of one body is born from the death of the preceding, older one.

Finally, let us point out that the grotesque body is cosmic and universal. It stresses elements common to the entire cosmos: earth, water, fire, air; it is directly related to the sun, to the stars. It contains the signs of the zodiac. It reflects the cosmic hierarchy. This body can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, islands, and continents. It can fill the entire universe.

The grotesque mode of representing the body and bodily life prevailed in art and creative forms of speech over thousands of years.

[6] This grotesque logic is also extended to images of nature and of objects in which depths (holes) and convexities are emphasized.

From the point of view of extensive use, this mode of representation still exists today; grotesque forms of the body not only predominate in the art of European peoples but also in their folklore, especially in the comic genre. Moreover, these images predominate in the extra-official life of the people. For example, the theme of mockery and abuse is almost entirely bodily and grotesque. The body that figures in all the expressions of the unofficial speech of the people 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 great number of expressions related to the genital organs, the anus and buttocks, the belly, the mouth and nose. But there are few expressions for the other parts of the body: arms and legs, face, and eyes. Even these comparatively few forms of speech have, in most cases, a narrow, practical character; they are related to the nearby area, determine distance, dimensions, or number. They have no broader, symbolic meaning, nor are they especially expressive. They do not participate in abuse and mockery.

Wherever men laugh and curse, particularly in a familiar environment, their speech is filled with bodily images. The body copulates, defecates, overeats, and men's speech is flooded with genitals, bellies, defecations, urine, disease, noses, mouths, and dismembered parts. Even when the flood is contained by norms of speech, there is still an eruption of these images into literature, especially if the literature is gay or abusive in character. The common human fund of familiar and abusive gesticulations is also based on these sharply defined images.

This boundless ocean of grotesque bodily imagery within time and space extends to all languages, all literatures, and the entire system of gesticulation; in the midst of it the bodily canon of art, belles lettres, and polite conversation of modern times is a tiny island. This limited canon never prevailed in antique literature. In the official literature of European peoples it has existed only for the last four hundred years.

We shall give a brief characterization of the new canon, concern-

ing ourselves less with the pictorial arts than with literature. We shall build this characterization by comparing it to the grotesque conception and bringing out the differences.

The new bodily canon, in all its historic variations and different genres, presents an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body, which is shown from the outside as something individual. That which protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off (when a body transgresses its limits and a new one begins) is eliminated, hidden, or moderated. All orifices of the body are closed. The basis of the image is the individual, strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade. The opaque surface and the body's "valleys" acquire an essential meaning as the border of a closed individuality that does not merge with other bodies and with the world. All attributes of the unfinished world are carefully removed, as well as all the signs of its inner life. The verbal norms of official and literary language, determined by the canon, prohibit all that is linked with fecundation, pregnancy, childbirth. There is a sharp line of division between familiar speech and "correct" language.

The fifteenth century was an age of considerable freedom in France. In the sixteenth century the norms of language become more strict, and the borderline between the different norms grew more evident. This process intensified at the end of the century, when the canon of polite speech that was to prevail in the seventeenth century was definitely formed. At the end of the century Montaigne protested in his "Essays" against these prohibitions.

What harm has the genital act, so natural, so necessary, and so lawful, done to humanity, that we dare not speak of it without shame, and exclude it from serious and orderly conversation? We boldly utter the words, *kill, rob, betray*: and the other we only dare utter under our breath. Does this mean that the less of it we breathe in words, the more are we at liberty to swell our thoughts with it? For it is amusing that the words which are least used, least written, and most hushed up should be the best known and the most generally understood. There is no person of any age or morals but knows them as well as he knows the word *bread*. They are impressed upon each of us, without being expressed, without voice and without form. (And the sex that does it most is charged to hush it up.)

(Montaigne, "Essays," III, Chapter 5. Translated by George B. Ivez, copyright Harvard University Press, 1925. Reproduced by permission.)

In the new canon, such parts of the body as the genital organs, the buttocks, belly, nose and mouth cease to play the leading role. Moreover, instead of their original meaning they acquire an exclusiveness; in other words, they convey a merely individual meaning of the life of one single, limited body. The belly, nose, and mouth, are of course retained in the image and cannot be hidden, but in an individual, completed body they either fulfill purely expressive functions (this is true of the mouth only) or the functions of characterization and individualization. There is no symbolic, broad meaning whatever in the organs of this body. If they are not interpreted as a characterization and an expressive feature, they are referred to on the merely practical level in brief explanatory comments. Generally speaking, all that does not contain an element of characterization in the literary image is reduced to a simple bodily remark added to speech or action.

In the modern image of the individual body, sexual life, eating, drinking, and defecation have radically changed their meaning: they have been transferred to the private and psychological level where their connotation becomes narrow and specific, torn away from the direct relation to the life of society and to the cosmic whole. In this new connotation they can no longer carry on their former philosophical functions.

In the new bodily canon the leading role is attributed to the individually characteristic and expressive parts of the body: the head, face, eyes, lips, to the muscular system, and to the place of the body in the external world. The exact position and movements of this finished body in the finished outside world are brought out, so that the limits between them are not weakened.

The body of the new canon is merely one body; no signs of duality have been left. It is self-sufficient and speaks in its name alone. All that happens within it concerns it alone, that is, only the individual, closed sphere. Therefore, all the events taking place within it acquire one single meaning: death is only death, it never

coincides with birth; old age is torn away from youth; blows merely hurt, without assisting an act of birth. All actions and events are interpreted on the level of a single, individual life. They are enclosed within the limits of the same body, limits that are the absolute beginning and end and can never meet.

In the grotesque body, on the contrary, death brings nothing to an end, for it does not concern the ancestral body, which is renewed in the next generation. The events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary dividing one body from the other and, as it were, at their points of intersection. One body offers its death, the other its birth, but they are merged in a two-bodied image.

In the new canon the duality of the body is preserved only in one theme, a pale reflection of its former dual nature. This is the theme of nursing a child.[7] But the image of the mother and the child is strictly individualized and closed, the line of demarcation cannot be removed. This is a completely new phase of the artistic conception of bodily interaction.

Finally, the new canon is completely alien to hyperbolization. The individualized image has no place for it. All that is permitted is a certain accentuation of expressive and characterized features. The severance of the organs from the body or their independent existence is no longer permitted.

We have roughly sketched the basic outlines of the modern canon, as they generally appear in the norms of literature and speech.[8]

[7] Let us recall Goethe's remarks as reported by Eckermann in "Conversations with Goethe" concerning Correggio's painting "The Weaning of a Child." Goethe is attracted by the duality of the image, preserved in an attenuated form.

[8] Similar classical concepts of the body form the basis of the new canon of behavior. Good education demands: not to place the elbows on the table, to walk without protruding the shoulder blades or swinging the hips, to hold in the abdomen, to eat without loud chewing, not to snort and pant, to keep the mouth shut, etc.; in other words, to close up and limit the body's confines and to smooth the bulges. It is interesting to trace the struggle of the grotesque and classical concept in the history of dress and fashion. Even more interesting is this struggle in the history of dance.

The comic conception, inherited from folk culture of humor, from grotesque realism and from elements of familiar speech, culminates in Rabelais' novel. In all the episodes that we have analyzed, and in their separate images, we have seen the grotesque body. Its mighty torrent flows through the entire novel: the dismembered parts, the separate organs (as in Panurge's wall), the gaping mouths devouring, swallowing, drinking, the defecation, urine, death, birth, childhood, and old age. The bodies are merged with each other or with objects (as in the image of *carême-prenant*) and with the world. A tendency toward duality can be glimpsed everywhere. Everywhere the cosmic, ancestral element of the body is stressed.

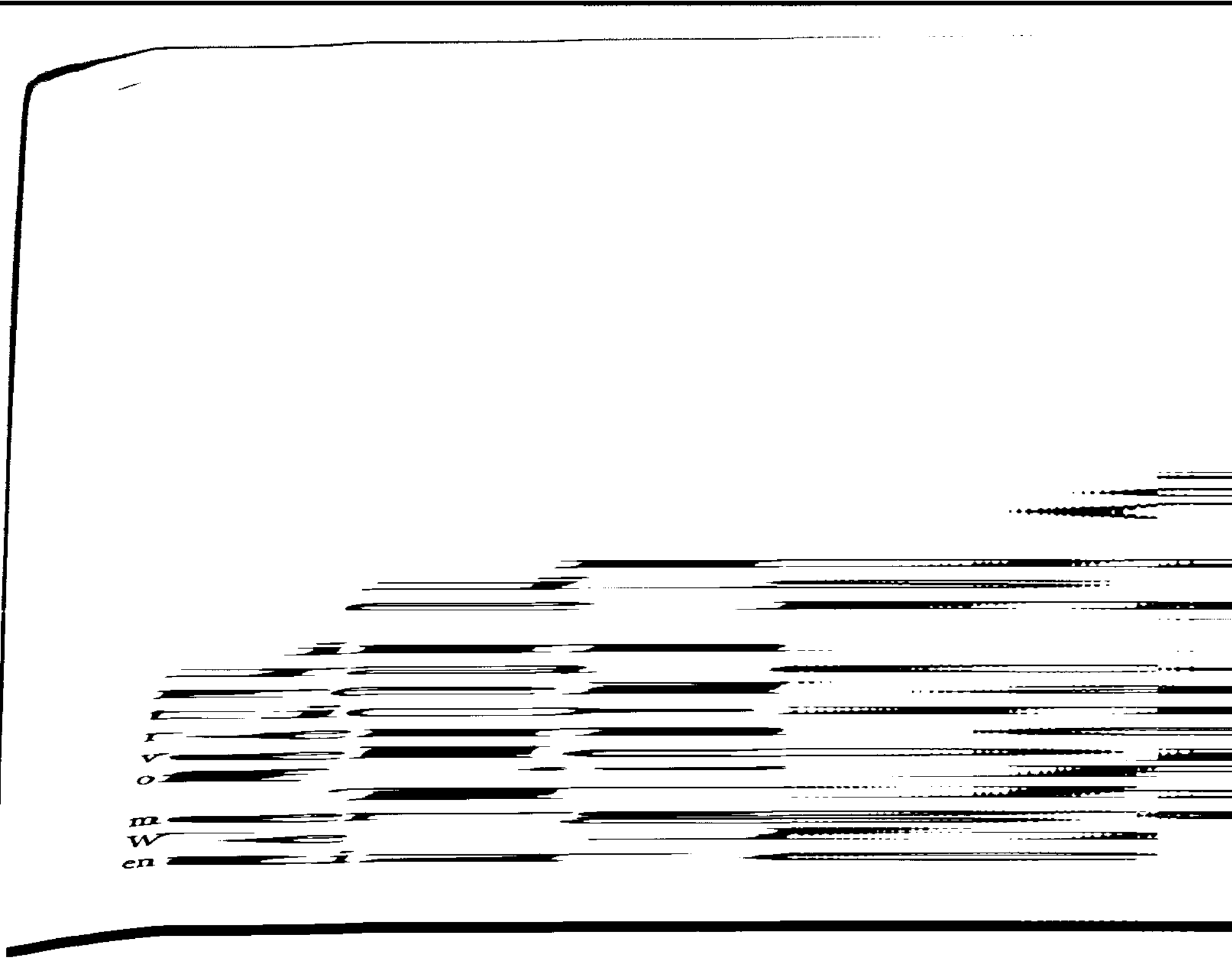
The tendency to duality can be found to a greater or smaller extent in the episodes we have examined. Let us offer an example of a more external and uncouth projection of duality.

> 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)

The androgyne theme was popular in Rabelais' time. In the sphere of pictorial art I will recall a similar presentation in Leonardo da Vinci's "Coitus," showing this act in its inner bodily aspect.

Rabelais not only represents the grotesque image of the body in its essential forms. He also offers the theory of the body in its ancestral aspect. Panurge's arguments quoted previously are typical in this respect. In another passage he says that in the realm of Salmagundi:

> . . . 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.
(Book 3, Chapter 26)

In his famous speech about debtors and creditors, describing the utopian world where all lend money and receive loans, Panurge also develops the theory of the ancestral 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)

Again, in the Third Book, there is an explanation of why newly married men are not forced to go to war. Here the ancestral theory is developed once more. This is one of the leading themes of the entire Third Book.

We shall resume this theme in our next chapter, examining it in its historic aspect as the growth and immortality of the human race, as expressed in Gargantua's famous letter to Pantagruel. The relative immortality of the semen is seen here in its intimate relation to mankind's historic progress. The human race is not merely renewed with each new generation, it rises to a new level of development. This theme, as we shall see, is also found in the praise of "Pantagruelion."

Thus, in Rabelais' book the image of the ancestral body is merged with the people's vivid awareness of historic immortality. We have seen that this awareness forms the very nucleus of the entire system of popular-festive imagery. The grotesque conception of the body is interwoven not only with the cosmic but also with the social, utopian, and historic theme, and above all with the theme of the change of epochs and the renewal of culture.

In all the episodes and images discussed in the preceding chapters, the material bodily lower stratum was most often represented in the narrow sense of the word. But in these images a leading role is also played, as we have said, by the gaping mouth. This is, of course, related to the lower stratum; it is the open gate leading downward into the bodily underworld. The gaping mouth is related to the image of swallowing, this most ancient symbol of death and destruction. At the same time, a series of banquet images are also linked to the mouth (to the teeth and the gullet).

These are some of the central images of the popular-festive system. The exaggeration of the mouth is the fundamental traditional method of rendering external comic features, as pictured by comic masks, various "gay monsters" (Mâchecroûte of the Lyon carnival), devils in diableries, and Lucifer himself.

It is obvious why the gaping mouth, the teeth, the swallowing have an essential meaning in the Rabelaisian system of images. The gaping mouth plays a specially important part in *Pantagruel*. One may say that it is the hero of this book.

Neither Pantagruel's name nor the nucleus of his image was created by Rabelais. The name existed before him in literature as that of a character of the diableries; it also existed in spoken language as a colloquial term for a hoarseness caused by excessive drinking. The colloquialism referred to the mouth, throat, to overindulgence and disease, in other words, to the characteristic grotesque complex. Pantagruel's character is also linked to the broader, cosmic complex of the diableries.

We already know that the diableries were part of the mysteries and that their images had a popular-festive character. The body they presented had a distinctly grotesque form. It was in this grotesque atmosphere that the figure of Pantagruel appeared on the scene.

We first encounter him in a mystery of the second part of the

fifteenth century, "The Acts of the Apostles," by Simon Gréban. In the diablerie of this play Proserpina, mother of the devils, brings four of her sons (*petits dyables*) to Lucifer. Each little devil represents one of the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire, and each exercises his specific activity in his own sphere. A broad picture of the elements is thus unfolded. One of the four devils, whose name is Pantagruel and who represents water, says: "I fly over the seas, more sprightly than a bird of prey." During his flights he becomes saturated with sea salt and is therefore related to the substance that causes thirst. In this mystery Lucifer says that at night, awaiting other activities, he throws salt into the mouths of drunkards.

The devil Pantagruel appears in a similar role in another play, *Saint Louis*. He delivers a monologue, relating in great detail that he spent the night among some young men who had been reveling all evening; with great precaution not to awaken them he threw salt into their mouths, and so "Glory be to God, when they awoke they were more thirsty than before!"

This image of Pantagruel as a mystery-play devil is linked on one hand with the cosmic elements water and sea salt and on the other hand with the grotesque image of the body (open mouth, thirst, drunkenness). Finally, he is linked with a purely carnivalesque gesture of throwing salt into an open mouth. All these features, which are the basis of the image of Pantagruel, are closely related to one another. This traditional nucleus was fully retained by Rabelais.

We must specially point out that *Pantagruel* was conceived and written by Rabelais during the unusual heat wave and drought of 1532. Men actually walked with their mouths wide open. Abel Lefranc is right in surmising that the little devil's name and his tricks of causing thirst were often mentioned in Rabelais' entourage, provoking jokes and curses. The weather conditions rendered this image popular. It is quite possible that Rabelais made use of Pantagruel's character because of the drought.

Pantagruel's first chapter immediately introduces the grotesque body with all its characteristic traits. It describes the origin of the giant race to which Pantagruel belongs. After the killing of Abel, the earth, saturated with his blood, became exceptionally fertile.

Here is the beginning 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 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 grossly carnivalesque traits are obvious. The first death (according to the Bible, Abel was the first man to die) renewed the earth's fertility. Here we have the combination of killing and birth with which we are familiar. Death, the dead body, blood as a seed buried in the earth, rising for another life—this is one of the oldest and most widespread themes. A variant is death inseminating mother earth and making her bear fruit once more. This variant often produces a flowering of erotic images (of course, not in the narrow, specific sense of the word). Rabelais speaks elsewhere of the "sweet, much-desired embrace of . . . Mother Earth, which we call burial." (Book Three, Chapter 48). This image of a burial is probably inspired by Pliny, who gives a detailed picture of the earth's motherhood and of burial as a return to her womb. ("Natural History," II, 63.) Rabelais is inclined to conceive this image in all its variations and nuances, not in the high style of the antique mysteries but in the carnivalesque, popular-festive spirit: a gay and sober belief in the relative historic immortality of the people and of himself within the people.

Thus, the theme of death-renewal-fertility was Rabelais' initial theme, the opening of his immortal novel (since *Pantagruel* was the first book to be written). We stress this fact.

The earth became especially rich in medlars (*en mesl*). But men who ate these medlars began to develop abnormally; one part of the body would grow to monstrous dimensions. Rabelais presents

a number of typical grotesque forms of exaggerated body parts that completely hide the normal members of the body. This is actually a picture of dismemberment, of separate areas of the body enlarged to gigantic dimensions. First of all, we see men with monstrous bellies (a typical grotesque hyperbola); Saint Pansard (St. Paunchman) and Mardi Gras belong to this gay race. Saint Pansard's ironic name was associated with carnival, and King Carnival, himself, is related to the family of fat paunches. Next, Rabelais depicts hunchbacks with humps of huge proportions, or monstrous noses, abnormally long legs, gigantic ears. There are men with disproportionate phalli (wound six times around their waists) and others with unusually large testes. We have a picture of a giant grotesque body and at the same time an array of carnival figures.

Directly preceding this gallery of grotesque human members, Rabelais pictures cosmic perturbations in the skies, which also have a carnivalesque nature: the star Spica is transferred from Virgo to Libra. But these phenomena are so difficult to understand that the astrologers would merely break their teeth on them. The grotesque image of teeth reaching up to the skies was inspired by the common expression "to chew" a difficult astrological problem.

Further, Rabelais gives a long enumeration of the giants who were Pantagruel's ancestors. We find here a great number of Biblical, antique, medieval, and imaginary names. Rabelais was a connoisseur, possessing a wealth of information on this subject, for the ancient giants had already been listed by the scholar Ravisius Textor, whose works were used by Rabelais. The giants and their legends are closely related to the grotesque conception of the body. We have already pointed out the role of giants in antique satyric drama (which was precisely a drama of the body). Most local legends connect such natural phenomena as mountains, rivers, rocks, and islands with the bodies of giants or with their different organs; these bodies are, therefore, not separated from the world or from nature. We have also pointed out that giants were an indispensable part of popular-festive carnival images.

Such is the content of *Pantagruel*'s first chapter. Grotesque figures are interwoven with cosmic phenomena. The entire array of

the novel's images starts with the theme of death-renewal-fertility. This theme also opens the second chapter:

> 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.
> (Book 2, Chapter 2)

This is the theme already familiar to us from the Roman carnival of combined killing and childbirth. Here, the killing is done by the newborn himself, in the very act of his birth.

Birth and death are the gaping jaws of the earth and the mother's open womb. Further on, gaping human and animal mouths will enter into the picture.

The terrible drought which occurred at the time of Pantagruel's birth is described in the novel:

> . . . 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 lay under a cow's belly to enjoy the shade . . . . It was hard enough. God knows, to save the holy water in the churches . . . scores of parched, unhappy wretches 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.
> (*Ibid.*)

We must point out that the images of the "well," the "cow's belly," and the "cellar" are equivalent to the "gaping mouth." The latter corresponds in grotesque topography to the belly and to the uterus. Thus, side by side with the erotic image of the *trou* (the "hole") the entrance to the underworld is represented: the gaping mouth of Satan, the "jaws of hell." The "well" is a current medieval image of the fruit-bearing womb. The cellar has a similar connotation, with the theme of death, of swallowing down, more strongly accentuated. Thus, the earth and its orifice acquire here

an additional grotesque element. This picture prepares the further assimilation of earth and sea as a bodily category.

Rabelais goes on to recall the ancient myth of Phaeton who, driving the sun's chariot, came too near to earth and almost set it on fire; the earth was covered with sweat so that the seas became salty. (Plutarch attributes this explanation to Empidocles.) Rabelais transfers these images from the high mythical level to the gay level of popular-festive degradation:

> 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 pox-stricken friends when they are put in sweat-boxes for treatment. It is all one to me.
> (*Ibid.*)

The entire complex of images composing this passage is extremely characteristic. The typical grotesque image of sweating (similar to other elimination) plays a leading role, and even a cosmic role, since the earth itself sweats and pours its sweat into the sea. Further, we have the image of the merry disease, syphilis, related to the bodily lower stratum. Finally, sweat is related to eating (the taste of sweat); this weakened form of scatophagy is characteristic of medical grotesque (as early as Aristophanes). This passage implicitly contains the traditional nucleus of the little devil Pantagruel, related to the sea element and causing thirst. At the same time, the hero of this passage is the earth. In the first chapter the earth, saturated with the blood of Abel, became fertile and gave birth; in the second chapter it sweats and thirsts.

Rabelais goes on to give a bold parody of a religious procession. During a ceremony organized by the Church, the faithful who were praying for rain suddenly saw drops of heavy sweat appearing on the ground as on the brow of a human being. They thought it was dew sent by heaven in answer to their prayers. But they were mistaken, for when they tried to quench their thirst, they found the liquid was a pickled solution even saltier than sea water. Thus, the miracle deceived the pious people. Here once more, the material bodily element appears in its role of uncrowning.

Precisely on that day and at that hour Pantagruel was born. His name in Rabelais' burlesque etymology means "the all-thirsting one." The hero's birth itself occurs in a grotesque atmosphere; before he emerges from his mother's womb, he is preceded by a caravan of wagons loaded with salted (thirst-arousing) food. Only then does the child Pantagruel appear, "shaggy as a bear." 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. He now laughs "like a calf" (a newborn animal), or moos "like a cow" (birth-giving and dying).

The fourth chapter tells of Pantagruel's early feats when he was still in his cradle; all of these exploits are acts of devouring and swallowing. At each feeding he sucked the milk of 4,600 cows. He was served his gruel in a gigantic bell. His teeth were already so strong and solid that he chewed off a big portion of his bowl. One morning, wishing to suck one of the cows, he freed one hand from his swaddling clothes and, seizing the cow by its legs, chewed off the udder and half the stomach, as well as the liver and kidneys. The cow was taken away from him, but he held on to one of the legs and swallowed it like a sausage. Another time Gargantua's pet bear came near Pantagruel; he seized it, tore it to pieces and devoured it as if it were a chicken. He was so strong that he had to be chained to his cradle, but one day he appeared carrying the cradle on his back in the hall where Gargantua was presiding over a huge banquet; the child's hands were tied, so he put out his tongue and licked the food off the table.

All these feats are related to sucking, devouring, swallowing, tearing to pieces. We see the gaping mouth, the protruding tongue, the teeth, the gullet, the udder, and the stomach.

We shall continue to analyze some of the more typical banquet images.

In the episode of the Limousin student, Pantagruel seizes him by the throat, which a few years later causes the man to "die the

death of Roland," that is, death of thirst. The traditional character of the little devil Pantagruel appears in this episode.

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, who was hoisted thither by an eruption of Aetna. 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 here point out the topographic content: the highest sphere of the sky and the lower part of the stomach. Once more we also find the traditional nucleus of Pantagruel's image, the arousing of thirst. But in this passage the leading role is played by Pantagruel's shadow (note the similarity to the shadow of the belfry). The grotesque element also appears in the ancient, traditional idea of the influence of the moon (or other heavenly bodies) on diseases.

During the banquet Panurge relates the story we already know, how he was almost roasted alive in Turkey but instead roasted a Turk on a spit, and how he was almost torn to pieces by dogs. He was cured from "toothache" (caused by the dog's teeth) by throwing to the animals the lard in which he had been wrapped. We also find here the image of fire that burned down the Turkish town and an image of a cure by fire: roasting on a spit cured Panurge of rheumatism. This purely carnivalesque scene ends by Panurge's eulogy of the spit and of the roast.

Pantagruel's traditional image reappears in the Thaumastes episode. After his first interview with Pantagruel, Thaumastes was so thirsty that he had to drink wine all night long and rinse his throat with water. During the dispute, when the public began to applaud, Pantagruel shouted at them to hold their peace:

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)

In the burning of the knights episode and in the banquet with which we are already familiar we see Pantagruel's gaping mouth. The knight whom he captured was afraid that Pantagruel was going to swallow him up. The giant's gullet was so large that he could have swallowed his prisoner like "a sugared almond," and the knight would appear in his captor's mouth no bigger than a grain of millet in the mouth of an ass.

The war against King Anarchus clearly presents all the leading images of the first chapter: the gaping mouth, the gullet, salt, thirst, and urine (instead of sweat). Pantagruel sends to King Anarchus a captured knight with a casket of euphorbium syrup and red pepper in order to make him thirsty:

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 . . . . 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 in view of the battle. He took 237 casks of wine, filled the ship's dinghy with salt, and attached it to his belt. He then took a dose of a diuretic. Finally, King Anarchus' camp was set on fire while the enemy was asleep after a drunken orgy. The further development of this episode is so characteristic that we quote it 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 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 water, Gargantua's; it could not relieve itself without making another Rhone 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. What they believed in the glow from the burning camp and the dim moonlight to be blood of slaughtered enemies was but the wine from our giant's bladder.

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)

We see once more all the fundamental images of the book's first chapters, but here the salt liquid is not sweat but urine, and it is not eliminated by the earth but by Pantagruel. However, as a giant Pantagruel acquires a cosmic meaning. The traditional nucleus of the Pantagruel image is hyperbolized: an entire army of gaping mouths, a boat full of salt poured into them, the element of water and the gods of the sea, a flood of salted urine. This is a characteristic interplay of images: urine-blood-seawater. All these images are put together to form the picture of a cosmic catastrophe, the destruction of the world by flood and fire.

Medieval eschatology in this episode is degraded and renewed in the absolute material bodily lower stratum. It is turned into carnivalesque fire that causes the world's rebirth. Let us recall Goethe's feast of fire in the "Roman Carnival," with its cry "Death

to thee!" Let us also recall the vision of a world catastrophe in the "prophetic riddle": a flood that is actually nothing but sweat and a world conflagration that turns out to be a kitchen hearth. In our episode all the dividing lines between bodies and objects are erased, even the boundaries between a banquet and war. The banquet, salt, and thirst are the means used for war. Blood is substituted by torrents of urine after a drunken orgy.

We must not forget that urine (as well as dung) is gay matter, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter. If dung is a link between body and earth (the laughter that unites them), urine is a link between body and sea. This is why the little devil Pantagruel, who in the mystery play is the incarnation of the salt sea element, becomes in Rabelais' novel the incarnation of the gay element of urine. (Pantagruel's urine, as we shall later see, possesses certain curative properties.) Dung and urine lend a bodily character to matter, to the world, to the cosmic elements, which become closer, more intimate, more easily grasped, for this is the matter, the elemental force, born from the body itself. It transforms cosmic terror into a gay carnival monster.

We must take into consideration the importance of cosmic terror, the fear of the immeasurable, the infinitely powerful. The starry sky, the gigantic material masses of the mountains, the sea, the cosmic upheavals, elemental catastrophies—these constitute the terror that pervades ancient mythologies, philosophies, the systems of images, and language itself with its semantics. An obscure memory of cosmic perturbations in the distant past and the dim terror of future catastrophes form the very basis of human thought, speech, and images. This cosmic terror is not mystic in the strict sense of the word; rather it is the fear of that which is materially huge and cannot be overcome by force. It is used by all religious systems to oppress man and his consciousness. Even the most ancient images of folklore express the struggle against fear, against the memories of the past, and the apprehension of future calamities, but folk images relating to this struggle helped develop true human fearlessness. The struggle against cosmic terror in all its

described. Pantagruel's mouth contains an entire universe, a kind of buccal underworld. Like Epistemon's Hades, this hell is also organized as a world "turned inside out." Here, for instance, men are paid not for working but for sleeping.

The story of a universe older than earth expresses the idea of the relativity of the evaluation of time and space, presented in its grotesque aspect.

Chapter 33 tells about Pantagruel's sickness and recovery. He had stomach trouble, and during his sickness his abundant urine formed hot springs, of therapeutic value, in various parts of France and Italy. Here, once more, Pantagruel symbolizes a gay cosmic element.

The episode further relates the story of the descent into Pantagruel's stomach in order to clean it. Men armed with picks, shovels, and baskets are enclosed in a copper globe that Pantagruel swallows like a pill. (Note the image of swallowing.) Once inside the stomach, the visitors climb out of their globe and do their cleaning operation. Like Pantagruel's mouth in the preceding chapter, his stomach has enormous, almost cosmic dimensions.

In the concluding chapter of the Second Book we find more grotesque images of the body. The chapter contains a plan of the next parts of the novel. Among the projected episodes is the destruction of the underworld by Pantagruel, who tosses Proserpina 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 during its decline the three quarters of the moon are hidden in the heads of women.

Thus, from beginning to end this book of the novel presents as its main theme the images of the open mouth, the gullet, the teeth, and the tongue. The gaping jaws belong to the traditional nucleus of the devilkin Pantagruel in the mystery.

This image is organically combined on the one hand with swallowing and devouring, on the other hand with the stomach, the womb, and childbirth. At the same time the banquet images, as well as those of death, destruction, and hell are also related to this system.

Finally, the open mouth is linked with another basic element of Pantagruel's traditional image, a composite of thirst, water, wine, and urine.

All the main organs and areas, as well as all the basic acts of the grotesque body, are pictured and developed around the central image of the gaping jaws. This is the most vivid expression of the body as not impenetrable but open. Further, the gaping jaws are a wide entrance leading into the depths of the body, and these characters are accentuated by the fact that an entire inhabited universe is located in Pantagruel's mouth and that people can descend into the stomach as into an underground mine. The same features (gaping jaws and depths) also appear in the open womb of Pantagruel's mother, as well as in the image of the earth that has absorbed the blood of Abel and the image of the underworld. The bodily depths are fertile; the old dies in them, and the new is born in abundance. The entire Second Book is saturated with pictures of procreative force, fertility, abundance. The phallus and the codpiece (as a substitute for the phallus) constantly appear within this open sphere. The grotesque body has no façade, no impenetrable surface, neither has it any expressive features. It represents either the fertile depths or the convexities of procreation and conception. It swallows and generates, gives and takes.

Such a body, composed of fertile depths and procreative convexities is never clearly differentiated from the world but is transferred, merged, and fused with it. It contains, like Pantagruel's mouth, new unknown spheres. It acquires cosmic dimensions, while the cosmos acquires a bodily nature. Cosmic elements are transformed into the gay form of the body that grows, procreates, and is victorious.

Pantagruel was conceived and written during the misfortunes suffered by France in 1532. True, these misfortunes were not catastrophic, but they were serious enough to affect the people's consciousness and to awaken their cosmic terror and eschatological expectations. Rabelais' book was a merry answer to these fears and pious moods. Once again we have a remarkable example of a Re-

naissance piece of journalism based on the popular tradition of the marketplace. It is a militant echo of the events and thoughts of that historic period.

In 1532, as we have said, there was a long and intense spell of hot weather and drought which lasted for six months, until September. The dry weather threatened the crops and especially the vineyards. Because of these conditions, the Church organized many religious ceremonies and processions, reflected in the parodies at the beginning of the novel. In the autumn of the year the plague broke out in various parts of France and lasted throughout the following year. There is an allusion to the plague in *Pantagruel,* where it is explained as the result of lethal vapors arising from Pantagruel's sick stomach.

The unfortunate weather conditions and the plague awakened a cosmic terror, like that of the fourteenth century, a terror related to a system of eschatological images and mystical ideas. But natural catastrophes, like other catastrophes, usually also awaken historical criticism and lead to a revision of all dogmatic positions (as in the case of Boccaccio and Langland in the fourteenth century). Something similar, though in a less drastic form, took place when *Pantagruel* was written. The historic events served as a starting point for Rabelais' novel. It is quite possible that the image of the devilkin Pantagruel, who makes men thirsty, and the very tonality of this figure were born from the free colloquial element of the marketplace and from the familiarity of table talk. For the devilkin was the object of gay curses intended for the world and for nature; he was the hero of the free parodies of eschatology, divine providence, and world catastrophes. But around this central figure Rabelais accumulated an enormous mass of material from the culture of folk humor developed during thousands of years: a culture that reflected the struggle against cosmic terror and created the image of the gay, material bodily cosmos, ever-growing and self-renewing.

The Second Book is the most cosmic. This element is not as strong in the other books in which the historic, social and political themes are emphasized. But the overcoming of cosmic fear and eschatology still remains a leading theme to the end of the novel.

In the development of this theme the grotesque body plays a most important part. It is the people's growing and ever-victorious body that is "at home" in the cosmos. It is the cosmos' own flesh and blood, possessing the same elemental force but better organized. The body is the last and best word of the cosmos, its leading force. Therefore it has nothing to fear. Death holds no terror for it. The death of the individual is only one moment in the triumphant life of the people and of mankind, a moment indispensable for their renewal and improvement.

Let us now examine some of the sources of the grotesque body, confining ourselves to Rabelais' immediate source material. The grotesque concept of the body lived especially in the familiar and colloquial forms of the language. The grotesque was the basis of all the abuses, uncrownings, teasing, and impertinent gestures (as pointing at the nose or the buttocks, spitting, and others). Finally, this conception of the body is contained in the most varied types of folklore. These patterns were scattered everywhere and were easily understood and familiar to all Rabelais' contemporaries. The groups of sources we intend to examine are but the separate characteristic expressions of this prevailing form, directly related to the theme of Rabelais' novel.

Let us first look at the legend of the giants. This is an essentially grotesque image of the body, but of course the theme can be more or less developed.

In the *roman de chevalerie,* which was widely known, the giants had almost entirely lost their grotesque character. They symbolized in most cases unusual physical strength and allegiance to the lord who had conquered them.

In the Italian heroic-comic tradition of Pulci (*Il Morgante Maggiore*) and especially of Folengo (*Fracassus*), the grotesque features of the giants, transferred from the genre of chivalry, reappear once more. The Italian tradition of comic giants was well known to Rabelais and must be considered as one of his sources.

But the direct source was, as we know, the chapbook entitled "The Great Chronicles of Gargantua" (1532). This anonymous

work contains certain travestied elements reflecting the King Arthur cycle; it does not represent, however, a parody in the modern sense of the word. The giant image has here a strong grotesque bodily character. The chapbook was inspired by the oral folk legend of Gargantua, which lived in folk tradition up to the time of the "Great Chronicles" and continues to live in its oral form even today, not only in France but also in England. The different versions of the "Chronicles" were written down in the nineteenth century and collected in the book of Paul Sébillot, *Gargantua dans les traditions populaires,* 1883. Contemporary *berrichon* legends of Gargantua and other giants are contained in the book of Jean Baffier, *Nos Géants d'autrefois, Récits berrichons,* Paris, 1920. Even in the late oral tradition Gargantua's image preserves a completely grotesque bodily character. The giant's enormous appetite is brought out first of all. Even today we hear the French expression *quel Gargantua!* (what a glutton!).

All the legends of giants are closely related to the relief of the locality where the story is told. The legend always finds a visible, obvious support in the physical setting; the dismembered, scattered, or flattened body of the giant is discovered in the natural landscape. Even in modern France a great number of rocks, stones, megalithic formations, dolmens, and menhirs have been named after Gargantua; we have Gargantua's finger, tooth, cup, armchair, stick, etc. This is actually a Rabelaisian complex of the giant's chopped members, of his kitchen utensils and other paraphernalia. In Rabelais' time this world of rock and stone was, of course, much larger.

The parts of the giants' dismembered bodies and their houseware, scattered throughout France, had an obviously grotesque character; they could not fail to exercise an influence on Rabelais' images. Thus mention is made in *Gargantua* of the gigantic bowl in which the young hero ate his gruel, and the author adds that the bowl can still be seen at Bourges. There is nothing which reminds us of Gargantua in the modern city, but a sixteenth-century document states that there was in Bourges an immense rock scooped out like a bowl which was known as *Scutella gigantis,* the

giant's cup. Once a year wine merchants filled it with wine for the poor. Rabelais borrowed his image from true life.[10]

Besides the bodily grotesque of the "Great Chronicles," we must also recall "Pantagruel's Disciple," an anonymous book published in 1537. This work reflected the influence of Rabelais' novel as well as of Lucian's "True Stories." But we also find in it popular-festive elements and the influence of the oral tradition of legendary giants. This work had in its turn an influence on Rabelais.

We must stress the role of popular-festive giants. They were common figures in the shows produced at fairs, in which they still appear in our days together with midgets. The giant was also the protagonist of carnival parades and of the processions of Corpus Christi. At the end of the Middle Ages a number of cities that employed permanent "town jesters" also had permanent "town giants" and even "families of giants," paid by the city and obliged to take part in all the pageantries. This institution of town giants in a number of cities and villages of Northern France and Belgium, for instance, in Lille, Douai, and Kassel, was maintained up to the nineteenth century. In Kassel a celebration was held in 1835 to commemorate the famine of 1638; on that feast a giant distributed free soup to the people. This connection of the giant with food is characteristic. In Belgium there were festive "giants' songs" closely relating the giant to the family hearth and to cooking.

The figure of the giant as part of folk festivals and carnivals was, of course, familiar to Rabelais. He also knew the local legends that have not survived in our time. His novel mentions the names of giants connected with eating and swallowing: Happemousche, Engolevent, Maschefain, and others.

Finally, he was familiar with the giants of antiquity, especially with Euripides' cyclopes, which are twice mentioned in his novel.

Such are Rabelais' sources. We may conjecture that the popular-

[10] Considerable folklore material concerning the broken body of stone and the stoneware of the giant is given by Salomon Reinach, *Cultes, Mythes et Religions,* Vol. 3: *Les monuments de pierre brute dans le langage et les croyances populaires,* pp. 364–433; see also P. Sébillot, *Le Folklore de France,* Vol. 1, pp. 300–412.

festive giants were the most important in his eyes. They enjoyed immense vogue, were familiar to everyone, and were saturated with the free atmosphere of the marketplace. They were closely connected with the popular conception of material-bodily wealth and abundance. The image and the atmosphere of the giant appearing at the fairs doubtless contributed to the shaping of the Gargantuan legend of the "Great Chronicles." The influence of popular giants of fairs and marketplaces on the first two books of Rabelais' novel is quite obvious.

As to the "Great Chronicles," its influence was mainly external and was actually reduced to a few topical themes.

An important source for grotesque-bodily images is the cycle of legends and literary works related to the so-called "Indian Wonders." This cycle had a definite influence on all medieval works of fantasy. We also find this direct or indirect influence in Rabelais' novel. Let us briefly recall the history of this tradition.

The first collector of tales about the wonders of India was Ctesias, a Greek who lived in Persia in the fifth century before Christ. Ctesias assembled all the stories concerning India, its treasures, wondrous flora and fauna, and the extraordinary bodily forms of its inhabitants. This collection has not been preserved, but it was used by Lucian in his "True Stories," by Pliny, Isidore of Seville, and others.

In the second century of our era the *Physiologus* was compiled in Alexandria; this was a natural history book combined with leggends and "wonders." The *Physiologus* describes minerals, plants, and animals. The natural kingdom is presented in a most grotesque combination. The book was widely used during the following centuries, especially by Isidore of Seville, whose work served as a source for the medieval bestiary.

A compilation of all this legendary material was made in the third century by Callisthenes. There are two Latin versions of his work, one by Julius Valerius composed about A.D. 300 and the other entitled "The History of the Wars of Alexander the Great," dating from the tenth century. A further compilation of the Callisthenes

legends was included in all cosmographic works of the Middle Ages, by Brunetto Latini and Gautier of Metz, among others. All these works are deeply imbued with the grotesque conception of the body basically inherited from the "Indian Wonders."

These legends were later included in the stories of travels, real (as in the case of Marco Polo), or imaginary (as in Sir John Mandeville's popular book). In the fourteenth century all these travels were collected under the title of *Merveilles du monde,* "Wonders of the World." This manuscript contains interesting miniatures representing typical grotesque human figures. Finally, the "wonders" were incorporated in a poem, *Le Roman d'Alexandre,* composed in Alexandrian verse.

Thus was this legend built and spread. It determined the themes of numerous works of medieval pictorial art.

What are the main features of the "Indian Wonders"? The legend describes India's fantastic wealth and extraordinary natural resources, as well as its purely fictitious phenomena: devils spitting fire, magic herbs, enchanted woods, fountains of youth. The description of animals is quite extensive. In addition to real species are fantastic beasts much as harpies, unicorns, and phoenixes. Mandeville depicts a griffin in great detail and Brunetto Latini a dragon.

But most important of all in our mind is the description of extraordinary human beings. These creatures have a distinctive grotesque character. Some of them are half human, half animal: the hippopods with hoofs instead of feet, sirens with fishtails, "sinucephalics" who bark like dogs, satyrs, and onocentaurs. This is an entire gallery of images with bodies of mixed parts. There are also giants, dwarfs, and pygmies. There are various monsters: the "scipedes" who have only one leg, "leumans" without a head and with a face on the chest, cyclopes with one eye on the forehead, others with eyes on their shoulders or on their backs, creatures with six arms, and others who feed through their noses, and so forth. All this constitutes a wild anatomical fantasy, so popular in the Middle Ages.

Rabelais loved this fantasy, this free play with the human body

and with its organs, one recalls the pygmies born from Pantagruel's flatus, whose hearts were located in the rectal area, or the monstrous children of Antiphyses and the famous Carême-prenant. In all these images we find a fanciful anatomy.

An important feature of the "Indian Wonders" is their relation to the underworld. The numerous demons who appear in India's woods and valleys, according to the legend, led medieval writers to believe that the entrance to hell was hidden in this land. They were also convinced that the earthly paradise, the first abode of Adam and Eve, was located in India, some three days' journey from the Fountain of Youth. It was said that Alexander the Great had found there "the abode of the just," in which they would be enclosed until the Day of Judgment. The legend of Prester John and his kingdom (which was also set in India) tells of the roads leading to the underworld and to the earthly paradise. The river Phizon flowed from paradise through Prester John's kingdom. The roads and the orifices or holes (*trous*) leading respectively to paradise and hell lend a special character to these wondrous lands and reflect the peculiar artistic and ideological conception of space in the Middle Ages. The earth, consisting of mountains and precipices, was constructed like a grotesque body. The impenetrable surface of the earth was constantly broken up by a tendency to rise or descend into the depths, into the underworld. In these depths and orifices another world was believed to exist, like the one contained in Pantagruel's mouth. While traveling on earth, men sought the gates or doors to these "other" dimensions. The classic expression of this search is the remarkable "Journey of Saint Brendan," which will be discussed in our next chapter. In popular legends mountains and precipices acquired more or less bodily features.

All this created the specific character of medieval topography and a peculiar interpretation of the cosmos. We shall return later to this subject.

The cycle of legends contained in the "Indian Wonders" was extremely popular in the Middle Ages. This cycle not only influenced the cosmographic literature in the broad sense, including the travelogues, but also affected all medieval writings. Moreover,

the "Indian Wonders" were strongly reflected in pictorial art; the legends inspired the miniatures that illustrated the manuscripts, as well as frescoes and sculptures in churches and cathedrals.

Thus because of the "Indian Wonders" the eyes and imagination of medieval man were accustomed to the grotesque body. Both in literature and pictorial art, the body of mixed parts and the strangest anatomical fantasies, the free play with the human limbs and interior organs were unfolded before him. The transgression of the limits dividing the body from the world also became customary.

The "Indian Wonders" are therefore an important source of the grotesque conception of the body. We must add that these legends were still alive and stimulated interest in the time of Rabelais.

In the last chapter of *Pantagruel* Rabelais tells the story of his hero's voyage to the land of Prester John (India). This journey was to be immediately followed by the destruction of the underworld, and the entrance to hell was precisely located in the Prester's land. In the novel's initial plan the "Wonders" were to play an important part. The direct and indirect influence of this legend is clearly reflected in anatomical fantasies.

Another important source of the grotesque concept was the medieval mystery and, of course, the diablerie that was part of it. This genre often concerned itself with dismembered bodies, their roasting, burning, and swallowing. For instance, in the mystery "The Acts of the Apostles" we meet for the first time the devilkin Pantagruel. Lucifer orders his devils to burn several heretics, adding a long description of the methods to be used for their roasting. In "The Mystery of St. Quentin" there is a long enumeration of verbs (more than one hundred of them) referring to bodily tortures: the victims were to be burned, mutilated, torn apart, and so forth. We have here a grotesque dismemberment, an anatomization. Rabelais describes a devouring of sinful souls which is obviously inspired by the diablerie. We have already mentioned the grotesque bodily character of the devils and of their gestures, as shown in these medieval performances.

The very structure of the sets used in the mysteries was an im-

portant source of the concept of the grotesque body. In these plays the stage reflected the medieval idea of the world's position in space. The front of the stage presented a platform that occupied the entire first floor of the structure and symbolized the earth. The backdrop was formed by an elevated set which represented heaven or paradise.[11] Beneath the platform representing the earth there was a large opening, indicating hell, covered by a broad curtain decorated with a huge mask of the devil (Harlequin). When the curtain was pulled back, the devils jumped out of Satan's gaping jaws, or sometimes out of his eyes, and landed on earth. In 1474 the author of a mystery gave these stage directions, "Hell must be represented in the form of huge jaws which open and shut when needed."[12]

Thus the gaping jaws, located in the very center of the stage and at the level of the spectators' eyes, were familiar to every mystery-play audience. The medieval public centered its curiosity on them, expecting the most amusing and comic protagonists to emerge from them. (The diableries, as the popular billingsgate part of the mysteries, always enjoyed great success and sometimes eclipsed the rest of the performance.)

Considering the immense intrinsic value of this three-level stage in the artistic and ideological life of the Middle Ages, we may assert that the "jaws of hell" were merged with the image of the world itself, as well as with its dramatic, theatrical conception.

Otto Driesen devoted some excellent pages of his book "The Origins of Harlequin"[13] to the dramatic projection of this figure; he presents on page 149 a sketch of a seventeenth-century ballet preserved in the archives of the Paris Opera. At the very center of

[11] This word is still used in French and Russian for the top gallery of the theater.

[12] See also the description of a scene of the Passion performed in Valencienne in 1547, in an addendum to *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française, des origines à 1900*, Petit de Julleville, 1896–1899, Vol. 2, pp. 415–417.

[13] Otto Driesen, *Der Ursprung des Harlekin*, 1904.

the stage we see a gigantic head with gaping jaws. Inside the jaws sits a female devil, two devils look through the monster's eyes, a devil sits astride each of its ears, while devils and clowns dance around it. The sketch proves that this image and the dramatic events related to it were still quite usual and fully understood. Among other things, Driesen points out that even in his own times the expression "Harlequin's cloak" (*manteau d'Arlequin*) was still used in the Paris theaters, meaning the entire front of the stage.

The topography of the medieval stage had, as we see, a basically grotesque bodily connotation. It is obvious that the gaping mouth, as a leading image in *Pantagruel*, is not only related to the traditional symbolism of this hero (scattering of salt, for example) but also to the structure of the stage. Rabelais' organization of the novel's imagery reflects this topography. As far as we know, no author of Rabelaisiana has stressed the leading role of the gaping mouth in the novel's First Book or compared it with the organization of the mystery stage. Yet this comparison is of great importance for the correct understanding of these books, since it proves the influence of the popular theatrical forms on Rabelais' initial work as well as on the entire character of his artistic and ideological vision and thought. It also proves that the gaping mouth in its grotesque cosmic meaning, which may appear so strange and difficult to understand for the modern reader, was quite familiar and understandable for Rabelais' contemporaries. It was completely ordinary in their eyes; equally familiar was its universal, cosmic connotation. Neither were the men of that time surprised to see grotesque figures jump out of this mouth and land on the stage, on which events from the Bible and the Gospels were dramatized. The topographical meaning of this image was also understood as representing the gates of the underworld. Such was the influence of the mystery and the diablerie on Rabelais' own concept of the body.

A certain influence on the grotesque concept of the body was exercised by relics, which had great significance in the medieval

world. It can be said that various parts of the saints' bodies were scattered over France and indeed throughout the medieval Christian world. There was no small church or monastery that did not preserve a relic, at times a quite unusual one (a drop of milk from the Blessed Virgin's breast or the sweat of a saint, as mentioned by Rabelais). Arms, legs, heads, teeth, hair, and fingers were venerated. It would be possible to give a long grotesque enumeration of all these parts of a dismembered body. At the time of Rabelais the ridiculing of relics was common, especially in Protestant satire. Even the agelast Calvin wrote a pamphlet about relics with a certain comic overtone.

In medieval literature the dismembered bodies of saints were often an occasion for grotesque images and enumerations. In one of the best medieval parodies, "The Treatise of García of Toledo," which we have already mentioned, the hero, a wealthy simonist bishop from Toledo, brings to Rome a present for the Pope, the miraculous relics of the saintly martyrs Ruphinus and Albinus. In the language of medieval travesties the names of these nonexistent saints mean gold and silver. The story describes the Pope's particular devotion to the martyrs. He praises them and asks that all their precious remains should be brought to him; there follows a grotesque enumeration of the various parts of the dismembered bodies: "from Ruphinus' kidneys, Albinus' intestines, from stomach, back, rump, ribs, chest, legs, and arms; and all the members of the saints." We see that, as early as the eleventh century, relics were the object of parody.

Medieval recreational literature was rich in anatomical grotesque. We have already spoken of the parodies in which grammatical categories were listed in terms of the lower stratum. The renewal of abstract categories and philosophical conceptions was characteristic of the recreational genre. In the famous dialogue of Solomon and Morolf (quoted by Gargantua), Solomon's exalted proverbs are countered by the clown Morolf's answers; the latter transfers most of the questions to a coarse material bodily level.

Let us cite another interesting example of medieval grotesque

anatomy. From the thirteenth century on, a poem entitled "The Ass's Will" was widely known over Europe. A dying ass bequeaths the parts of his body to various social and professional groups, beginning with the Pope and cardinals. The dismemberment here corresponds to the divisions of the social hierarchy: the ass's head is for the Pope, the ears for the cardinals, the voice for the choir, the feces for the peasants, etc. The source of this parody is very ancient. According to Jerome, a satire called "The Pig's Will" (*Testamentum porcelli*) was popular among schoolmen as early as the fourth century. This parody was copied in the Middle Ages and has been preserved. It was apparently the source of "The Ass's Will."

In these satires it is interesting to note the combination of the dismemberment of the body and of society. This is a travesty of the widespread mythical concept of the origin of various social groups from various parts of a god's body. (The oldest monument of this social topography is the *Rig-Veda*.) In most cases this is a dismembered body.[14] But here, instead of a god's body, we have the body of an ass; this is an ancient traditional travesty of the divinity. In medieval parodies its organs and its braying, as well as the shouts of its drivers play an important part. We hear these shouts in Rabelais' novel. There are several mentions of the abusive term: *"viédaze,"* the ass's phallus. The topographical character of this abusive expression is quite obvious. Let us recall Rabelais' remark: "This is as difficult as to extract a certain sound (*pet*) from the bottom of

[14] The *Rig-Veda* pictures the birth of the world from the body of the man Purusha; the gods sacrificed him and cut up his body, according to the method of sacrificial dismemberment. Various social groups were thus created from the various parts of Purusha's body, as well as from certain cosmic phenomena. From his mouth appeared the Brahmans, from his arms soldiers, from his eyes the sun, from his head the sky, from his feet the earth, etc. In the christianized Germanic mythology we find a similar conception, but here the body is composed of the various parts of the universe. Adam's body is composed of flesh from the earth, bones from the stones, blood from the sea, hair from plants, and thoughts from clouds.

a dead ass." This is a peculiar method of raising to the highest degree the topographical lowest level: the rump of an ass and moreover of a dead ass. Such abuses are often found in Rabelais.

Oaths, curses, and various abusive expressions are a source of considerable importance for the grotesque concept of the body. We have already spoken at length of these forms of speech and will limit ourselves to a few additional considerations.

Each abusive expression always contains in some topographical and bodily aspect the image of pregnant death. Our analysis of *Pantagruel* showed that one of the main themes of this book is the theme of birth-giving death: for instance, the first death renewing the earth's fertility and the birth of Pantagruel which caused his mother's suffocation. This theme presents continual variations of bodily topographical images. It was further transposed, without losing its bodily character, into the theme of historic death and renewal: the burning of the knights, the transformation of death and war into a banquet, the uncrowning of King Anarchus. Strictly speaking, and however paradoxical this may seem, the episodes are but a widely developed form of abusive language. The entire world is shown as a pregnant and regenerating death.

In the popular-festive carnival atmosphere in which Rabelais' images were constructed, the abusive expressions were like sparks flying in different directions from the great conflagration that renewed the world. Ominously enough, each extinguished candle of the *moccoli* festival was accompanied by the cry of "Death to thee," which had a joyous overtone. The gay abuses and curses and the mocking of cosmic forces had initially a cultic character, but they were later to play an essential role in the system of images reflecting the struggle against cosmic terror and every other kind of fear of superior powers. For the ancient cultic abuse and derision were precisely directed against these superior powers of the sun, the earth, the king, the military leader. This defiance was preserved in the billingsgate of Rabelais' time.

The comic performers of the marketplace were an important source of the grotesque image of the body. They formed a huge and

motley world that we can only touch upon here. All these jugglers, acrobats, vendors of panaceas, magicians, clowns, trainers of monkeys, had a sharply expressed grotesque bodily character. Even today this character has been most fully preserved in marketplace shows and in the circus.

Unfortunately, the popular French comic forms are better known in their later manifestations (starting with the seventeenth century) when they were already influenced by the Italian improvised comedy. True, this comedy also preserved the comic concept of the body, but in a weakened form determined by purely literary trends. On the other hand, in the *lazzi* (the nontopical tricks of this comedy) the grotesque was fully developed.

We analyzed at the beginning of this chapter the scene from the Italian comedy presenting Harlequin and the stutterer. The comic nature of this scene consists in the fact that the utterance of a difficult word is enacted as childbirth. This is typical of popular comic creation. The entire logic of the grotesque movements of the body (still to be seen in shows and circus performances) is of a topographical nature. The system of these movements is oriented in relation to the upper and lower stratum; it is a system of flights and descents into the lower depths. Their simplest expression is the primeval phenomenon of popular humor, the cartwheel, which by the continual rotation of the upper and lower parts suggests the rotation of earth and sky. This is manifested in other movements of the clown: the buttocks persistently trying to take the place of the head and the head that of the buttocks.

Another expression of this principle is the important role of the inside out and upside down in the movements and acts of the grotesque body. A deeper and more subtle analysis would disclose in many traditional popular comic gestures and tricks a mimicking of childbirth such as we observed in the little Italian scene. Moreover, the great majority of these traditional gestures and tricks is based on the mimicking of the three main acts in the life of the grotesque body: sexual intercourse, death throes (in their comic presentation—hanging tongue, expressionless popping eyes, suffocation, death rattle), and the act of birth. Frequently these three

acts are transformed or merged into each other insofar as their exterior symptoms and expressions coincide (spasms, tensions, popping eyes, sweat, convulsions of arms and legs). This is a peculiar mimicking of death-resurrection; the same body that tumbles into the grave rises again, incessantly moving from the lower to the upper level (the usual trick of the clown simulating death and revival). Bodily topography of folk humor is closely interwoven with cosmic topography. The organization of the stage of the show and the circus ring displays the same topographical structure as the stage of the mystery: the earth, the underworld, and heaven (but, of course, without the Christian connotation of the mystery setting). We also find the cosmic elements in these shows: the air (acrobatic feats and stunts), water (swimming), earth, and fire.

The grotesque character is also seen in the form of the body. We have mentioned Gros Guillaume, symbolizing bread and wine. The forms of Fat William typify the usual tendency of the popular comic figure to efface the confines between the body and surrounding objects, between the body and the world, and to accentuate one grotesque part, stomach, buttocks, or the mouth.

In the oral popular comic repertory we also find everywhere the reflection of the grotesque concept of the body: specific obscenities, debasing parodies, abuse and cursing, and dismembered parts. It is obvious that the comic folk element was one of Rabelais' main sources.

A few words about epic grotesque anatomy. The ancient and medieval epics and the *roman de chevalerie* did not ignore the grotesque concept of the body. Images of dismemberment and detailed anatomic descriptions of wounds and deaths became *de rigeur* in these epics influenced by Homer and Virgil. Ronsard writes in his preface to *La Franciade,* "If you wish a soldier or an officer to die on the battlefield, he must be smitten at the most sensitive part of his body and you must be a good anatomist to draw such a picture."

Rabelais was considerably influenced by Pliny, Athenaeus, Macrobius, and Plutarch, that is, by the representatives of ancient prandial talks. In these talks we find scattered the main images of

the grotesque body and of grotesque bodily processes; they contain such leading themes as copulation, pregnancy, birth, eating, drinking, and death.

But of all the ancient authors, Hippocrates, or more correctly speaking, the "Hippocratic anthology" exercised the greatest influence on Rabelais, an influence that extended not only to his philosophic and medical views but even to his imagery and style. This was because Hippocrates' thought and that of the other authors of the anthology contain more images than conceptual traits.

The "Hippocratic anthology" is far from homogeneous. It contains works representing different schools; from the philosophic and medical point of view we find essential differences in the understanding of the human body, the nature of diseases, and methods of treatment. But in spite of these differences, all the works contained in the anthology present a grotesque image of the body; the confines dividing it from the world are obscured, and it is most frequently shown open and with its interior exposed. Its exterior aspect is not distinct from the inside, and the exchange between the body and the world is constantly emphasized. The organism's various eliminations, which so often appear in the grotesque, also acquire here a great significance.

It was in the doctrine of the four elements that the confines of the body and the world are effaced. Here is an excerpt from the work entitled "The Winds" (*De flatibus*):

The bodies of men and other living beings are sustained by three kinds of nourishment; the names of these nourishments are as follows: food, drink, spirit [*pneuma*]. The spirits which live in the bodies are called winds, and those outside are called air. The latter is the greatest master of all and everything and it is important to consider its strength. In fact, the wind is the current and flow of air. Therefore, when abundant air produces a strong current, its breath unroots the trees from the earth, the waves rise on the sea, and huge, heavily-laden ships are tossed to and fro. . . . In truth, that which lies between heaven and earth is filled with spirit, which is the cause of winter and summer; it is cold and concentrated in winter, soft and calm in summer. Moreover, the spirit directs the way of the sun, moon, and stars. For the spirit is the fuel of fire,

and the latter cannot exist without it, so that the spirit, which is eternal and subtle per se causes the eternal course of the sun. Why the air has so much power over everything else has already been said. But for mortals too, it is the cause of life, and for the sick the cause of sickness. And for all, so great is the need of spirit that if a man abstains from food and drink, he can still go on living for two or three days and more; but if he closes the path of the spirit to his body, he will die on that very day, so great is the need of that spirit for the body. . . . But air must also enter with many foods, for with all that is eaten and drunk, the spirit penetrates in a more or less large quantity. This is obvious from the fact that many persons belch when eating and drinking, doubtless because the imprisoned air escapes, breaking the bubbles in which it was enclosed.

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 obvious manifestations: wind tossing heavily laden ships, air directing the movement of the sun and stars. Cosmic life and the life of the human body are drawn intimately together by this element of man's existence. They are offered in their obvious unity of imagery; both the movement of the sun and belching are caused, for example, by the same concrete and perceptible air. In other works contained in the anthology, water and fire are presented as intermediaries between the body and the cosmos.

In the essay "Air, water and localities" (*De aere, aquis, locis*) we find the following passage:

Concerning the earth, conditions are similar to those of human beings. Indeed, wherever seasons bring about considerable and frequent changes, the locality also presents wild and contrasting aspects: many wooded hills as well as fields and meadows. But wherever seasons do not vary too much, the land is uniform. Similar conditions prevail among men. Indeed, some people are like mountains, others have the nature of meadows and lakes, while still others resemble valleys and bare regions, because the seasons which bring external variety to nature differ from each other, and if they differ among themselves, they will also produce many different men.

In this passage the confines between the body and the world are eased along yet another line: the relationship and concrete resemblance of man to the natural landscape. In one part of the anthology entitled "The number seven" we find an even more grotesque image. This essay represents the earth as a huge human body; the head is formed by the Peloponnesus, the spine by the Isthmus, and so on. Each geographical part of the earth and each land corresponds to a definite part of the body; all the physical and spiritual features and way of life of the population depend on their anatomical localization.

Ancient medicine, as reflected in the "Hippocratic anthology," lent great importance to bodily eliminations. In the physician's eyes the body was first of all represented by the elimination of urine, feces, sweat, mucus, and bile. Further, all symptoms were linked with the last moments of the patient's life and with his death and were interpreted as the issue of the struggle within the patient's body. As signs of this struggle between life and death, the smallest bodily manifestations were placed on the same level and were conferred the same importance as the heavenly constellations, and as the mores and customs of various peoples. Here is an excerpt from the first book of "Epidemics":

Concerning the circumstances of the diseases on which the diagnoses must be founded, we shall discover them from the general nature of all the people as well as from the particular nature of each man . . . and, moreover, from the general and individual condition of the heavenly bodies and of each land, from the customs, diet, way of life of each patient, from his speech, silence, thoughts, sleep or insomnia, dreams, their nature and when they occur, from rash, tears, paroxysms, eliminations, urine, mucosities, vomit. It is also necessary to observe the crisis occurring in diseases, to find out from where they stem and what is their nature, to study the chemical deposits leading to death or damage, sweat, aigue, low bodily temperature, coughing, sneezing, hiccups, breath, winds, either silent or with sound, hemorrhages, hemorrhoids.

This excerpt is characteristic of the "Anthology"; it places on one level the symptoms of life and death; these symptoms vary in rank of importance and in cosmic overtones, from the patient's sneezing and winds to the condition of the heavenly bodies. No less characteristic is the dynamic list enumerating the body's elimina-

tions. Such lists, doubtless inspired by Hippocrates, are found in Rabelais' novel. Panurge praises the virtues of "greensauce" in just this manner:

. . . finally, 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. . . .
(Book 3, Chapter 2)

Let us recall the famous *facies hippocratica* (the Hippocratic features). Here the face has no subjective expression, it does not reflect the patient's thoughts but only the objective fact of the approach of death. Life and death speak in it; it belongs to the supraindividual sphere of the ancestral life of the body. The face and body of the dying man lose their identity. The degree of the face's resemblance to itself determines the degree of death's proximity or remoteness. Here is a remarkable excerpt from the "Prognostics":

In acute diseases it is necessary to make the following observations: first of all as to the patient's face: does it resemble or not the face of persons in good health, and especially does it resemble itself? For the latter sign should be considered the best, and the lack of this resemblance presents the greatest danger. The face will then offer the following aspect: sharp nose, sunken eyes and hollow temples, ears cold and taut, the ear-lobes twisted, the skin on the forehead taut and dry, the color of the face greenish, dark or leaden.
. . . If the eyelid is wrinkled or turns blue or pale, as well as lips and nose, it must needs be understood that this is a lethal sign.

Let us finally quote the no less remarkable picture of death throes, from the "Aphorisms." (Section 8, Aphorism 18):

Death is near when the warmth of the soul rises above the umbilic to the diaphragm, and all the humors are burned out. When the lungs and the heart lose their moisture and warmth is concentrated in the lethal parts, the spirit of warmth evaporates, leaving the regions from which it entirely ruled over the entire organism. Then the soul escapes, in part through the skin, in part through all the apertures of the head, out of which, as we say, life issues forth. Then the soul, together with bile, blood, phlegm and flesh, leaves its bodily abode, which is grown cold and has already acquired the aspect of death.

In these last moments and in the language of the expiring organism, death becomes a moment of life, receiving an expressive reality and speaking with the tongue of the body itself; thus, death is entirely drawn into the cycle of life. The burning up of all bodily moisture, the concentration of warmth in the lethal parts, its evaporation, the departure of the soul with bile and phlegm through the apertures of the head—all these images demonstrate the grotesque open character of the body and the cosmic elements moving within it. The Hippocratic *facies* and this description of the death throes had, of course, an essential significance for the system of images of pregnant death.

We have already pointed out that for the complex image of the physician in Rabelais, Hippocrates' conception of the representative of the medical profession had great importance. Let us quote a significant definition of the physician from the treatise "Of Good Manners" (*De habitu decenti*):

Summing up all that has been separately said, we needs must transfer wisdom into medicine, and medicine into wisdom. For the physician-philosopher is equal to God. Indeed there is but little difference between wisdom and medicine, and between all that is sought in wisdom and all that exists in medicine: contempt of money, honesty and modesty, simplicity in dress, respect, sound judgment, the spirit of decision, neatness, thoughtfulness, the knowledge of all that is necessary for life, hate of vice, the negation of superstitious fear of the gods, divine excellence.

We must stress that the time of Rabelais in France was the only time in the history of European ideology when medicine was the center not only of the natural sciences but of the humanities as well; indeed it was assimilated into philosophy. This phenomenon was observed not in France alone; many famous humanists and scientists of that time were physicians: Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Cardano, Copernicus. This was the only age that attempted to orient the entire picture of the world toward medicine (there

were a few individual attempts at other times).[15] There was a tendency to obey Hippocrates' demand to transfer wisdom to medicine and medicine to wisdom. Nearly all French humanists of the Renaissance were to some extent associated with medicine and studied the ancient medical treatises. The dissection of corpses, which was a rare novelty, attracted wide circles of cultured society. In 1537 Rabelais performed a public dissection of a man who had been hanged and accompanied the autopsy by a scientific explanation. This demonstration of the dismembered body enjoyed great success. Étienne Dolet devoted a short Latin poem to the event, in which he praised the good fortune of the executed man: instead of becoming the prey of the birds, his corpse helped to demonstrate the harmony of the human body, and the face of the greatest physician of his time was bent over it. Never was the influence of medicine on literature and art stronger than during the Renaissance.

We must finally say a few words about the famous "Hippocratic novel." This work was included in the supplements to the "Hippocratic anthology." It was the first European novel in the form of letters and the first to have an ideologist (Democritus) as its hero. It is also the first work to develop the "maniac theme" (the madness of the laughing Democritus).

Strangely enough, historians and theoreticians almost entirely ignored this work, despite its immense influence on Rabelais' theory of laughter and on the general theory of laughter in his time. The Rabelaisian apology of folly (as expressed by Pantagruel) was inspired by Democritus' comments concerning the madness of men who are wise in the practical sense, covetous and devoted to material goods, who consider him mad because he laughs at their seriousness. These men "consider that madness is

[15] Lote correctly characterizes the exceptional position of medicine: "Medicine became the science of the sixteenth century, it exercised a great influence and inspired confidence which it no longer retained in the seventeenth century." Georges Lote, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de François Rabelais*, Paris: Droz, 1938, p. 163.

wise and that wisdom is madness." The wisdom-madness ambivalence is here quite obvious, although stated in rhetorical form.

Yet another feature of this novel must be pointed out as important in our context. When Hippocrates visited the "mad Democritus" in Abders, he found him sitting in front of his house surrounded by dead, disemboweled birds. He was writing a treatise on insanity and was dissecting the birds in order to localize the center of bile, which he believed to be the source of madness. We find here laughter, madness, and the dismembered body. The elements of this complex are, it is true, rhetorically abridged, but their ambivalence and mutuality have been sufficiently preserved.

As we said, the "Hippocratic anthology" had an immense influence on medical and philosophical thought of the Renaissance. Of all the literary sources of Rabelais' grotesque concept of the body, this anthology is one of the most important.

In Montpellier, where Rabelais completed his medical studies, the Hippocratic method prevailed. Rabelais himself gave a course in 1531 on the Greek Hippocratic text, still considered a novelty in that school. At the end of 1537 he published Hippocrates' "Aphorisms" with commentaries (in the "Grif" edition). At the end of 1537 he wrote a commentary on the Greek text of the "Prognostics." The Italian physician Manardi, whose medical letters were published by Rabelais, was also a devotee of Hippocrates. All of this proves how great a place was occupied in Rabelais' life by Hippocratic studies; this was especially true at the time when he wrote the two first books of his novel.

Let us conclude by recalling as a parallel the medical views of Paracelsus, in whose mind the basis of the entire medical theory was the complete concordance of the macrocosm (the universe) and the microcosm (man).

The first foundation of medicine, according to Paracelsus, is philosophy, the second is astronomy. The starry sky is also contained in man himself, and the physician who ignores the sky cannot know man. In this theory the body of man has an extraordinary wealth, being rich with all that exists in the universe. The universe

is, so to speak, reassembled in all its diversity within the human body; all its elements are found and are connected in the sphere of the individual body.[16]

Abel Lefranc links Rabelais' philosophic thought (especially in connection with the immortality of the soul) with the Paduan school of Pomponazzi. In his treatise "Of the Soul's Immortality" (*De immortalitate animi*), Pomponazzi proved the identity of body and soul. The soul cannot be separated from the body that creates it, individualizes it, directs its activity, lends it content. Outside the body the soul would be completely empty. In Pomponazzi's mind the body is a microcosm that assembles in one single entity all that is scattered and alienated in the rest of the cosmos. Rabelais was familiar with Pomponazzi's school. Étienne Dolet, Rabelais' intimate friend, was the Italian philosopher's pupil and follower.

The grotesque concept of the body in some of its essential elements represented the humanist and, above all, the Italian philosophy of that period. It had conceived, as we have seen, the idea of the microcosm (based on ancient tradition) as adopted by Rabelais. The human body was the center of a philosophy that contributed to the destruction of the medieval hierarchic picture of the world and to the creation of a new concept. We shall now examine this new picture.

The medieval cosmos was built according to Aristotle. It was based on the precept of the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire), each of which had its special rank in the structure of the universe. According to this theory all the elements were subject to a

[16] At the time of Rabelais the conviction that the parts of the body had corresponding signs in the zodiac enjoyed general recognition. Man was commonly pictured with his anatomical parts thus labeled. Such pictures had a philosophic grotesque character. G. Lote adds to his monograph (*Ibid.*, Table 8, pp. 252–253) three such drawings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, presenting the connection of each part of the body with one of the zodiacal signs.

definite order from top to bottom. The nature and the movement of each element were determined according to its position in relation to the center of the cosmos. Nearest of all to this center is the earth, and any part separated from the earth tends to move back to the center along a straight line; in other words, it falls. Fire moves in the opposite direction; it continually tends upward, therefore away from the center. Water and air lie between earth and fire. The basic principle of all physical phenomena is the transformation of one element into the element nearest it. Thus fire is transformed into air, air into water, water into earth. This transformation is the law of creation and destruction to which all earthly things are subject. But above the earthly world there rises the world of celestial bodies, not ruled by this law. The celestial bodies are composed of a special kind of matter, *quinata essentia*, which is not subject to transformation. Celestial bodies, as the most perfect, are endowed with pure movement only, the circular movement around the center of the earth. Concerning the sky's "substance," that is, "quintessence," there were endless scholastic debates, which found their expression in Rabelais' Fifth Book in the episode of the Queen of Quintessence.

Such was the medieval picture of the cosmos. The characteristic trait of this picture was that all degrees of value correspond strictly to the position in space, from the lowest to the highest. The higher the element on the cosmic scale (that is, the nearer to the "immovable motor") the more nearly perfect was this element's quality. The conceptions and the images of the higher and lower stratum as expressed in space value became the flesh and blood of medieval man.

The Renaissance destroyed this hierarchical picture of the world; its elements were transferred to one single plane, and the higher and lower stratum became relative. The accent was placed on "forward" and "backward." This transfer of the world from the vertical to the horizontal was realized in the human body, which became the relative center of the cosmos. And this cosmos was no longer moving from the bottom to the top but along the

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The Renaissance destroyed this hierarchical picture of the world; its elements were transferred to one single plane, and the higher and lower stratum became relative. The accent was placed on "forward" and "backward." This transfer of the world from the vertical to the horizontal was realized in the human body, which became the relative center of the cosmos. And this cosmos was no longer moving from the bottom to the top but along the

horizontal line of time, from the past to the future. In bodily man the hierarchy of the cosmos was reversed and canceled; he asserted himself outside it.

This reconstruction of the cosmos from vertical to horizontal in man and the human body was strikingly expressed in Pico della Mirandola's famous speech, *Oratio de hominis dignitate* ("Of the Dignity of Man"). This oration was Pico's introduction to the defense of the 900 theses to which Rabelais alludes by having Pantagruel undertake the defense of the 9764 theses. Pico asserted in his speech that man is superior to all beings, including the celestial spirits, because he is not only being but also becoming. He is outside all hierarchies, for a hierarchy can determine only that which represents stable, immovable, and unchangeable being, not free becoming. All the other beings remain forever what they were at the time of their creation, for their nature is ready-made and unchanging; it receives one single seed which can and must develop in them. But man receives at his birth the seeds of every form of life. He may choose the seed that will develop and bear fruit. He grows and forms it in himself. Man can become a plant or an animal, but he can also become an angel and a son of God. Pico preserves the language of the hierarchy, he preserves in part the old values (he is cautious), but essentially the hierarchy is suspended. Such concepts as becoming, the existence of many seeds and of many possibilities, the freedom of choice, leads man toward the horizontal line of time and of historic becoming. Let us stress that the body of man reunites in itself all the elements and kingdoms of nature, both the plants and the animals. Man, properly speaking, is not something completed and finished, but open, uncompleted. Such is Pico della Mirandola's basic idea.

In Pico's *Apologia* we find the theme of the microcosm (in connection with the idea of natural magic) and the form of "universal sympathy," thanks to which man can combine in himself the higher and the lower, the near and the distant, and can penetrate into all the secrets hidden in the depths of the earth.

Ideas of "natural magic" and of "sympathy" between all phenomena, were widespread during the Renaissance. These ideas, as

expressed by Giambattista Porta, Giordano Bruno, and especially Campanella, played a considerable role in destroying the medieval notion of hierarchical space in which natural phenomena had their own distinct levels. The new ideas brought together that which was divided, effacing false boundaries, contributing to the transfer of all to one horizontal plane of the becoming of the cosmos in time.

We especially stress the extreme popularity of the idea of "universal animatization." This idea was defended by Ficino, who sought to prove that the world is not an aggregate of elements but an animate being in which each part is an organ of the whole. Patrizzi proved in his *Panpsychia* that everything in the universe is animate, from the stars to the simplest element. This idea was also shared by Cardano, who considered all natural phenomena as similar in some respect to organic matter. For example, metals are "buried plants" leading their life underground; stones experience youth, growth, and maturity.

All these ideas could exercise some direct influence on Rabelais, since all of them stem from the general tendencies of the Renaissance. All things in the universe, from heavenly bodies to elements, had left their former place in their hierarchy and moved to the single horizontal plane of the world of becoming, where they began to seek a new place and to achieve new formations. The center around which these perturbations took place was precisely the human body, uniting all the varied patterns of the universe.

For all the Renaissance philosophers mentioned previously—Pico della Mirandola, Pomponazzi, Porta, Patrizzi, Bruno, Campanella, Paracelsus, and others—two tendencies appear characteristic. First is the tendency to find in man the entire universe with all its elements and forces, with its higher and lower stratum; second is the tendency to think of the human body as drawing together the most remote phenomena and forces of the cosmos. This philosophy expressed in theoretical terms the new awareness of the cosmos as man's own home, holding no terror for him. It was reflected by Rabelais in the language of images and on the plane of laughter.

In most Renaissance philosophies astrology and "natural magic"

play a more or less important role. Rabelais took neither seriously. He brought together the separate, infinitely remote phenomena of the medieval hierarchy, making them collide, uncrowning and renewing them on the material bodily level; but he used for this purpose neither "magic" sympathy nor astrological "concordance." He was consistently materialistic, and moreover approached matter only in its bodily aspect. In his mind the body was the most nearly perfect form of the organization of matter and was therefore the key to all matter. The material components of the universe disclose in the human body their true nature and highest potentialities; they become creative, constructive, are called to conquer the cosmos, to organize all cosmic matter. They acquire a historic character.

In the eulogy of Pantagruelion, a symbol of man's entire technical culture, we find the following striking passage:

. . . 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 idea it expresses is far from having official implication

We find here the divinization and apotheosis of man. Earthl space is defeated; all peoples who were scattered throughout th world are united. Thanks to navigation and the invention of th sail, men have entered into material contact. Mankind has becom one. After the invention of aviation (which Rabelais foresees man will direct the weather, will reach the stars and conquer them This entire image of the triumph of mankind is built along th horizontal line of time and space, typical of the Renaissanc Nothing remains of the medieval hierarchic vertical.

The movement in time is guaranteed by the birth of generatio after generation, a never-ending succession that fills the gods wit fear. Pantagruel, too, intends to get married and to have childre and this is the relative immortality of which Gargantua speaks i his letter to his son. The immortality of the ancestral body of ma kind is rhetorically proclaimed. As we have seen, this living an deep awareness gives form to all the popular-festive images of th Rabelaisian novel. Not the biological body, which merely repea itself in the new generations, but precisely the historic, progressin body of mankind stands at the center of this system of images.

Thus, in the grotesque concept of the body a new, concrete, an realistic historic awareness was born and took form: not abstra thought about the future but the living sense that each man b longs to the immortal people who create history.