



CI

Introduction

Cultural Production as a Natural Process: An Alternative Topography

CIP1 The blemmye, this ancient monster punctuating far-away lands on Renaissance maps, is headless—or rather, their head is in their chest.¹ The blemmye would be a fitting emblem for this study. Its aim is to explore the medical poetics of inventive, embodied thinking or ingenuity thematized and reflected upon throughout Rabelais's work, but studied here in a selection of episodes from *Gargantua* and, mostly, the *Quart livre*. It is an attempt at making sense of the classic Rabelais reader's experience: defamiliarization, a puzzling loss of bearings. Such a study unsettles the polarized topography of 'lowly' popular culture contrasted with 'high' erudite humanism, of obscenity pitted against decorous learning. It interrogates the dichotomies between the belly and the head, between literal meaning and more spiritual or allegorical ones which have defined Rabelaisian scholarship ever since his narrator's own tongue-in-cheek injunction to 'interpret in the higher sense' in the *Gargantua* prologue.²

¹ Blemmyes are wondrous markers of the geographical unknown: Pliny located them in Libya: Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*—vol. II, translated by Harris Rackham, LCL 352 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), V.8, p. 253. On early modern maps, they moved to America following its European discovery. Rabelais knew Pliny well; if, as Claude La Charité convincingly argues, he read and annotated Erasmus's translation of the *Natural History*, Blemmyes, alongside the whole Plinian list of monstrous peoples, caught his eyes: 'Blemmyi' features as one of his marginal annotations in what would be his copy: Caius Plinius Secundus, *C. Plinii secundi divinum opus, cui titulus historia mundi*, translated by Desiderius Erasmus (Basel: Johannes Froben, 1525), V.8, p. 69. See Claude La Charité, 'Rabelais scénariste des mondes imaginaires de Pline l'Ancien: le *Quart livre* et l'exemplaire BSB de l'édition érasmienne de l'Histoire naturelle—Bâle, Froben, 1525' in *Inextinguible Rabelais*, edited by Mireille Huchon, Nicolas Le Cadet, and Romain Menini with Marie-Claire Thomine, *Les Mondes de Rabelais* 6 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021), pp. 317–39. For this image, see Hartman Schedel, *Registrum huius operis libri cronicarum* (Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1493), fol. XIIr. I am grateful to Magdalen College library for letting me use this image.

² 'A plus hault sens interpreter' features in the pantheon of quintessential pronouncements commented to death by Rabelais scholars. François Rabelais, 'Prologue de l'Auteur', *La vie treshorifique du grand Gargantua* in *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Mireille Huchon with François Moreau, coll.

2 RABELAIS AND THE RENAISSANCE PHYSIOLOGY OF INVENTION

CIP2 For a physician like Rabelais, the ‘head’ or the brain as the site of cognition does not stand opposite to what is below it: the chest as the site of breathing, the belly and its nether regions as sites of nutrition and generation. In Renaissance medicine, these are integrated physiological systems of coction or ‘cooking’ whose products fuel each other’s operations—including cognition. So when Rabelais stages so prominently the workings of the body, what if he was concerned not only with either the carnivalesque inversion of the ‘high’ and the ‘low’, or the satirical degradation of the ‘high’ into the ‘low’, but with capturing the natural processes underpinning cultural production—the life, rather than the truth, of culture?³

CIP3 This reading of Rabelais’s medical poetics thus sidesteps any didactic interpretation of the Rabelaisian world, whose aim might not be to teach us the *truth* about anything—the ‘high’ economic, political, and theological mysteries promised by the *Gargantua* prologue might remain just that: mysteries—but to capture the animation which drives our inventive thinking, our own ingenuity, when we reach for these truths: the dynamism of ‘pas demourer là ne faut’ [one should not linger here].⁴

CIS1 ‘The Lowly Belly’? Critical Skirmishes

CIP4 Rabelais a fait cette trouvaille, le ventre. Le serpent est dans l’homme, c’est l’intestin. Il tente, trahit et punit. L’homme, être un comme esprit et complexe comme homme, a pour sa mission terrestre trois centres en lui: le cerveau, le cœur, le ventre; chacun de ces centres est auguste par une grande fonction qui lui est propre: le cerveau a la pensée, le cœur a l’amour, le ventre a la paternité et la maternité... Que l’hymne puisse s’aviner, que la strophe se déforme en couplet, c’est triste. Cela tient à la bête qui est dans l’homme. Le ventre est essentiellement cette bête. La dégradation semble être sa loi. L’échelle de la poésie sensuelle a, à son échelon d’en haut, le Cantique des Cantiques et, à son échelon d’en bas,

La Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 6. This book will be subsequently referred to as *Gargantua*. Following Mireille Huchon’s edition, I am using the 1542 edition of the text rather than the first, 1534 one.

³ Cognition, and cognitive approaches to literature, are currently a thriving field. While this work does not appeal to contemporary neuroscience, it historicizes Terence Cave’s cognitive approach to literature in order to interpret Rabelais: see in particular Terence Cave, *Live Artefacts: Literature in a Cognitive Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). I take cognition to mean, in accordance with the second definition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*: ‘The action or faculty of knowing taken in its widest sense, including sensation, perception, conception, etc., as distinguished from feeling and volition’. I use ‘cognition’ and ‘cognitive’ in what follows to refer to the sort of ‘knowing in the widest sense’ afforded by other faculties—to speak in early modern terms this time—than the intellect or reason: sensation, imagination, memory, ‘estimation’.

⁴ Rabelais, ‘Prologue’, *Gargantua*, p. 6. Screech translated as ‘you must not be stayed there’: François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, translated and edited by Michael A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 207.

la gaudriole. Le ventre dieu, c'est Silène; le ventre empereur, c'est Vitellius; le ventre animal, c'est le porc.

CIP5

[Rabelais made this one discovery: the belly. The serpent is within man: it is the guts. They tempt us, betray us, punish us. Man, one as spirit (or mind), and complex as man, has three centres within him to accomplish his earthly mission: the brain, the heart, the belly. Each of these centres is noble because of the great function proper to each: thinking is for the brain, loving is for the heart, giving birth is for the belly... That the hymn might become drunken, the strophe shrink to a refrain, that is sad. That comes from the beast within man. The belly is, in essence, this beast. Degradation seems to be its ruling principle. The ladder of sensuous poetry has its upper step, the Song of Song, and its bottom one, bawdy humour. The belly as God is Silenus; the belly as Emperor is Vitellius, the belly as beast is the swine.]⁵

CIP6

Rabelais was, according to Hugo, the satirical genius of the belly.⁶ Hugo read the Rabelaisian belly as site of the 'noble function' of generation, soon degraded into the deceitful, sinful source of sensuous appetites: the Christian epic of the Fall has gone gastric. For Hugo, Rabelais diagnosed in this procreating and digesting belly rotting into overgrown fleshiness the sick culture of late medieval Europe. His incisive laughter emblemized the historical agency of humanism and of the Reformation, anatomizing wide open several diseased body politics: the Church, the University, the Holy Roman Empire. According to Hugo, the Rabelaisian register is therefore satirical, its poetic matrix, parodic degradation.⁷ Rabelaisian satire is the caustic and therefore ultimately *modern* cure to the spiritual and moral corruptions born from a decaying scholastic culture, be they pedagogical inanity or religious rot. Rabelais is also epic for Hugo—sublime for Flaubert⁸—because he instantiates a peculiar form of the Romantic genius: a rule-breaker, his is a world of exuberant fiction unconstrained by the demands of Horatian mimesis, where luxuriant verbal invention grants literary *droit de cité* to the lowliest registers—the bawdy, the obscene—and to the most indecorous topics: drunken chats, monstrous births, a five-year-old's investigation of the best arsewipe, obscene defensive architecture made of genitalia, the dirtiest pranks

⁵ Victor Hugo, 'Rabelais' in *William Shakespeare* (Paris: A. Lacroix, Verboeckhoven and Co, 1864), pp. 96–7.

⁶ Flaubert features among its most famous contenders, for whom Rabelais is epic satirical laughter, breaking the old medieval world as much as Luther's anger did. See Gustave Flaubert, *Rabelais*, in *Œuvres de jeunesse*, 3 vols (Paris: Louis Conard, 1910), vol. 2, pp. 144–56.

⁷ On parody as generic degradation, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré*, coll. Points (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982). On parody in Rabelais (which does *not* always correlate with satire), see Richard Cooper, 'Rabelais et la parodie littéraire', *L'Année rabelaisienne* 1 (2017): 101–19. On Hugo's polarized and dualistic reading of Rabelais contrasted with Bakhtin's, see Michel Jeanneret, *Le Défi des signes: Rabelais et la crise de l'interprétation à la Renaissance* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994), pp. 98–9.

⁸ Hugo, *William Shakespeare*, p. 96; Flaubert, *Rabelais*, p. 156.

4 RABELAIS AND THE RENAISSANCE PHYSIOLOGY OF INVENTION

one can pull on women who refuse intercourse—pestering them with fleas, ruining their clothes with urine and excrement.⁹

CIP7

The Romantic label of Rabelais, epic poet of the belly has polarized the modern history of his critical reception. The primacy of lowly bodily functions has proved central to the Bakhtinian thesis regarding the nature of the grotesque as ‘uncrowning and renewal’ in Rabelaisian fiction.¹⁰ Bakhtin highlights the stylistic exuberance and potential poetic subversion to which lowly bodily functions lend themselves in Rabelais’s five books: representing ingestion, digestion, and excretion means stylistic overgrowth, untamed excess, and a general disregard for orderly, rational mimesis which ultimately testifies to the carnivalesque crowning of the ‘belly’ as the hitherto neglected but nonetheless fundamental site of primary ‘principles’ in man: the Bakhtinian reading thus promotes an anti-intellectualist anthropology and its poetics.¹¹ In the wake of Bakhtin’s reading of Rabelais as a *chantre du ventre* who gave centre stage to popular culture and proved the genial heir to a medieval comic tradition, the history of the critical reception of Rabelais has insisted on topographical, carnivalesque inversion (to speak in Bakhtinian terms), generic and register degradation (to speak in Genetian ones), but also, and more generally, on anti-mimetic disorderliness and semantic open-endedness as defining features of Rabelaisian poetics.¹²

⁹ See François Rabelais, chapter V: ‘les propos des bienyvres’ [Words from the tipsy], chapter VI: ‘Comment Gargantua nasquit en façon bien estrange’ [How Gargantua was born in a manner most strange], chapter XIII: ‘Comment Grandgousier congneut l’esprit merueilleux de Gargantua à l’invention d’un torchecul’ [How Grandgousier recognized the wondrous wit of Gargantua from his invention of an arsewipe], *Gargantua*, pp. 17–22, pp. 38–42, pp. 267–72, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, pp. 219–24, pp. 224–7, pp. 245–50 (modified); and chapter XV: ‘Comment Panurge enseigne une manière bien nouvelle de bastir les murailles de Paris’ [How Panurge taught quite a new way to build the walls of Paris], chapter XVI: ‘Des meurs et condictions de Panurge’ [On the mores and characteristics of Panurge], chapter XXII: ‘Comment Panurge feist un tour à la Dame Parisienne qui ne fut point à son adavantage’ [How Panurge played a prank on that lady of Paris which was by no means to her—or his—advantage], *Pantagruel*, pp. 272–5, and pp. 295–7, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, pp. 80–5, pp. 86–1 (modified), pp. 114–18 (modified).

¹⁰ In Galenic medicine, ‘principles’ are organs from which other organs grow, who control these secondary organs, and are ‘served’ by them. Galen identifies five of these in the *Art of Medicine*: brain (from which the spinal cord and nerves grow), heart (from which arteries grow), liver (from which veins grow), and testes (from which spermatid ducts grow). Galen, *The Art of Medicine*, in *On the Constitution of the Art of Medicine—The Art of Medicine—A Method of Medicine to Glaucôn*, edited and translated by Ian Johnston, LCL 523 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016), 319K1–6, pp. 176–7.

¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, ‘The Grotesque Image of the Body’ and ‘The Material Bodily Lower Stratum’ in *Rabelais and his World*, translated by Helen Iswolsky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 303–436.

¹² See Bernd Renner, *Difficile est saturam non scribere: l’herméneutique de la satire rabelaisienne*, ÉR XLV (Geneva: Droz, 2007); Vincent Robert-Nicoud, *The World Upside-Down in 16th Century French Literature and Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 102–55. On the presence of medieval soties in Rabelais’s satire of medicine, see Renner, *Difficile est saturam non scribere*, pp. 124–46; on medieval theatre, see Roland Antonioli, *Rabelais et la médecine*, ÉR XII (Geneva: Droz, 1974), pp. 324–36 and, more recently, the thorough study by Nicolas Le Cadet, *Rabelais et le théâtre*, Les Mondes de Rabelais 5 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2020), especially pp. 77–198.

CIP8

These critical interpretations emerged alongside, and often against, the depiction of another, erudite, militant Rabelais.¹³ A humanist well versed in Greek, familiar with Macrobian and, later, Ficinian Neoplatonism, this Rabelais worked as editor for the Lyon printer Sebastianus Gryphius (1492–1556).¹⁴ Physician to the prominent diplomat cardinal Jean du Bellay (1492–1560) whom he accompanied in his missions to Italy in 1534, 1540, and 1547, and later protégé of Odet de Coligny, Cardinal de Châtillon and peer of France (1517–71), he is the well-informed spectator of tumultuous diplomatic and military relations between France, the papacy, and the Holy Roman Empire,¹⁵ as well as the increasingly despondent witness and sometimes victim of worsening religious strife in France.¹⁶ An Erasmus fan,

¹³ In 1979, Leo Spitzer declared war against the positivist historicism of Abel Lefranc: Leo Spitzer, 'Le Prétendu réalisme de Rabelais', *Modern Philology* 37.2 (1939): 139–50, and 'Rabelais et les Rabelaisants', *Studi Francesi* 12 (1960): 401–23. Major skirmishes have focused around the interpretation of the prologue of *Gargantua*, and include Gérard Defaux, 'D'un problème à l'autre: herméneutique de l'*altior sensus* et *captatio lectoris* dans le prologue de *Gargantua*', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 85.2 (1985): 195–216, with the reply by Terence Cave, Michel Jeanneret, and François Rigolot, 'Sur la prétendue transparence de Rabelais', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 86.4 (1986): 709–15, and the reply to the reply: Gérard Defaux, 'Sur la prétendue pluralité du prologue de *Gargantua*: réponse d'un positiviste naïf à trois "illustres et treschevaleureux champions"', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 86.4 (1986): 716–22. For a lucid account of the implications of this debate regarding the status of meaning in Rabelais, see François Cornilliat, 'On Word and Meaning in Rabelais Criticism', *ÉR XXXV* (Geneva: Droz, 1998), pp. 7–29. For bird's-eye views of a still smoking battlefield, see Tristan Vigliano, *Humanisme et juste milieu au siècle de Rabelais: essai de critique illusoire*, *Le Miroir des Humanistes* 10 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008), pp. 523–38; and Nicolas Le Cadet, 'Pour une histoire des querelles critiques: Rabelais et les Rabelaisants au XX^e siècle', *L'Année rabelaisienne* 1 (2017): 31–83.

¹⁴ We have several editions by Rabelais for Gryphius, and this is a lively field of current research. In medicine, rhetoric, and poetry, the following are relevant to this study: a textbook of Hippocratic and Galenic medicine, amending the Latin translations of his predecessors from the Greek: Galenus and Hippocrates, *Galen et Hippocratis libri aliquot*, edited by François Rabelais (Lyon: Sebastianus Gryphius, 1532); the first of the three volumes of the complete works of the humanist philologist Poliziano: Angelo Poliziano, *Angeli Politiani opera, quorum hic tomus complectitur Epistolarum libri XII, Miscellaneorum centuriam I*, edited by François Rabelais (Lyon: Sebastianus Gryphius, 1533). On these editions, see Claude La Charité, 'Les *Angeli Politiani Opera* (Lyon, S. Gryphe, 1533) et ce que d'iceulx Rabelais a desrobé pour son *Gargantua*', *L'Année rabelaisienne* 3 (2019): 57–69, and Claude La Charité, 'Ut *Galenus exponit*: Rabelais annotateur du *Régime dans les maladies aiguës* d'Hippocrate dans la traduction de Guillaume Cop', *L'Année rabelaisienne* 2 (2018): 71–86. Rabelais also edited for Gryphius the medical letters of Giovanni Manardo: *Iovannis Manardi Ferrariensis medici epistolarum medicinalium tomus secundus, nunquam antea in Gallia excusus*, edited by François Rabelais (Lyon: Sebastianus Gryphius, 1532). See Jean Céard, 'Rabelais, éditeur des Lettres Médicales de Manardo', *L'Année rabelaisienne* 2 (2018): 45–53. Strong arguments have also been made in favour of Rabelais's editorial work for Gryphius on Aulus-Gellius's *Attic Nights* and Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* and *Saturnalia*: Aulus Gellius, *Auli-Gellii luculentissimi scriptoris noctes atticae* (Lyon: Sebastianus Gryphius, 1537), first edn 1532; Aurelius Theodosius Macrobius, *In somnium Scipionis libri II–Saturnalia libri VII nunc denuo recogniti, et multis in locis aucti*, edited by François Rabelais (Lyon: Sebastianus Gryphius, 1538). See Romain Menini, 'Rabelais et Aulu-Gelle: de l'atelier de Gryphe aux fèves en gousse', *ÉR LVII* (Geneva: Droz, 2019), pp. 19–50; Mireille Huchon, 'Rabelais éditeur et auteur chez Gryphe' in *Quid novi? Sébastien Gryphe, à l'occasion du 450^e anniversaire de sa mort, actes du colloque de Lyon-Villeurbanne, Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon, Enssib*, edited by Raphaële Mouren (Villeurbanne: Presses de l'Enssib, 2008), pp. 201–18.

¹⁵ See Richard Cooper, *Rabelais et l'Italie*, *ÉR XXIV* (Geneva: Droz, 1991).

¹⁶ For a detailed account of Rabelais's life and his political as well as intellectual circles, see Mireille Huchon, *Rabelais* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011).

friend to the poet Clément Marot and, for a time, the humanist Etienne Dolet, he was won to the programme of religious reform promoted by French Evangelism.¹⁷ His prologues liken his own texts to unguent boxes and their intended effect to medical cure.¹⁸ He identifies his readers with a group of happy few whose sense of merry civility helps them navigate the wealth of erudite allusions of his books, and decipher their *plus haut sens*, the supposedly higher, spiritual meaning hidden in the comical container, by assuming the good intentions of his author.¹⁹ In this other, historicist critical tradition, this learned Rabelais lets loose an apparently disorderly poetics in order to better encode his evangelical message in the careful crafting of his fictions.²⁰ Alongside medieval, popular culture, his satire is effective weaponry aiming fashionable Hellenistic and Erasmian wit at his political and confessional opponents—the Sorbonne and its censors, corrupt Roman Catholics, but also Lutheran and Calvinist fanatics.²¹ This erudite, evangelical belly-singer uses lowly bodily functions to shape his increasingly sombre anthropological and spiritual diagnosis of post-lapsarian human nature evidenced in the political and religious tensions of his time. In this critical tradition, the Rabelaisian belly and its related obscenities have thus been read in turn as denoting a misogynistic or infantile form of comic designed to prompt ‘belly laughter’,²² as the very markers of the satirical condemnation of moral and political corruption and of theological heresy,²³ as the poetics best suited to the ‘scandal’—understood in the Pauline sense—of Evangelical Reform, this spiritual and theological wake-up call: a

¹⁷ Rabelais was an avid reader of Erasmus, whose works suffuse his own. See for example, on extensive borrowings from the *Adages* in the Gaster chapters of the *Quart livre*, Michael Screech, *Rabelais* (London: Duckworth, 1979), pp. 443–8. On Rabelais’s fan mail to Erasmus, see Rabelais, ‘Lettre à Érasme’ in *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Huchon, pp. 998–9.

¹⁸ See the prologues of *Gargantua* and the *Quart livre* in Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, p. 6 and pp. 523–5.

¹⁹ See the prologues: Rabelais, *Tiers livre*, p. 351, and *Quart livre*, pp. 523–5. On the ethics of the prologue, see Michel Jeanneret, ‘“Amis lecteurs”: Rabelais, interprétation et éthique’, *Poétique* 164.4 (2010): 419–31.

²⁰ See Michael A. Screech, *Laughter at the Foot of the Cross*, with a new foreword by Anthony Grafton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), first edn by Allen Lane the Penguin Press 1997, foreword 1998; and see Edwin Duval, *The Design of Rabelais’s Pantagruel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), *The Design of Rabelais’s Tiers Livre de Pantagruel*, ÉR XXXIV (Geneva: Droz, 1997), *The Design of Rabelais’s Quart Livre de Pantagruel*, ÉR XXXVI (Geneva: Droz, 1998).

²¹ See, for example, the reading of the *Quart livre* by Gérard Defaux in his edition: Gérard Defaux, ‘Introduction’ in Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, edited by Gérard Defaux (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1994), pp. 7–99, and Gérard Defaux, ‘Rabelais, *Le Quart Livre*, et la crise gallicane de 1551. Satire et allégorie’ in *Rabelais Agonistes. Du rieur au prophète*, ÉR XXXII (Geneva: Droz, 1997), pp. 454–516.

²² See Donald M. Frame, *François Rabelais: A Study* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 104, which denies the presence of wit in Rabelaisian comedy: ‘Rabelais is seldom witty and always exuberant and earthy.’

²³ Screech, ‘Christian Laughter for Faithful Folk’ and ‘Gluttony’ in *Laughter at the Foot of the Cross*, pp. 242–53 and pp. 289–92; Yvan Loskoutoff, ‘Les Appétits du ventre: évangélisme luthérien et satire du monachisme dans l’œuvre de Rabelais’, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 216.3 (1999): 299–343.

poetics that promotes absolute lowliness and abjection, while allegorically encoding in it à *plus haut sens*.²⁴

CIP9

These scholarly wars have left the *Rabelaisants* with two main interpretations of the Rabelaisian 'lower body stratum'. One, the belly is the focal point in the more or less covert satirical poetics of Rabelais the Evangelical writer. Two, it is the emblem of a carnivalesque, anti-mimetic and anti-rationalist poetics which both revels in stylistic exuberance, and interrogates semantic open-endedness: the proliferation of signs and the various ways of interpreting them were high stakes in the Renaissance.²⁵ I am aware that this quick sketch does not do justice to the complexities and nuances of more than a century of Rabelais scholarship. Thus the 'satirical regime' of the belly trope does not necessarily involve merely *either* the univocal condemnation of worldly corruption by Rabelais's evangelical didacticism, *or* the poetics of carnivalesque inversion and their related political functions: satire, by its very etymology—from the Latin *satura*, 'salad', 'miscellany'—involves composite poetic forms and traditions and contributes to the polyphonic poetics and hermeneutical open-endedness of the Rabelaisian corpus.²⁶ This polyphony and open-endedness itself has been duly accounted for by critics who also rightly saw in it the symptom of an early modern anxiety about the proliferation of signs (*copia*) and its related hermeneutic and theological crises.²⁷ There are numerous overlaps between the Rabelaisian belly as emblem of joyous, anti-intellectualist carnivalesque subversion with its copious poetics, and the Rabelaisian belly as learned, satirical marker of the evangelical condemnation of a fallen world entirely dedicated to 'the tripe' and forgetful of the Spirit. Yet ever since Hugo, scholarship has agreed that the Rabelaisian trope of the belly

²⁴ See Duval, *The Design of Rabelais's Pantagruel*, pp. 146–7. On scandal, see Paul, Cor. I.18–25. The Pauline notion of scandal as 'stumbling block' paired with the 'folly' of the cross states that the message of Christ requires faith to be understood, and is not amenable to rational interpretation. It became a central tenet to Reformation rhetoric and polemic: 'Il est nécessaire, que ce que le S. Esprit a prononcé de Jesus Christ mesme soit accompli: à savoir qu'il devoit estre pierre de scandale et de choppement' [It is necessary, that what the Holy Ghost stated about Jesus Christ come to pass: that he ought to be a rock of scandal and a stumbling block]; Jean Calvin, *Des scandales, 1550*, edited by Max Engammare et al. (Geneva: Droz, 2004), p. 48. Christ as scandal rejects classical eloquence in favour of a 'crude, simple language' that some have scorned as 'too crass and unpolished' ('un langage grossier et simple'... '[une] façon de parler... trop rude et mal polie'): Calvin, *Des scandales*, p. 64. It is in the name of such scandal of the cross and its lowly rhetoric that Reformers appealed to a lewd, scatological register as wake-up call in their polemics. See Antónia Szabari, 'The Scandal of Religion: Luther and Public Speech in the Reformation' in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, edited by Hent de Vries and Lawrence Eugene Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 122–36. On scandal in Rabelais's *Tiers livre*, see Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou, *Panurge comme lard en pois: scandale, paradoxe et propriété dans le Tiers Livre*, ÉR LIII (Geneva: Droz, 2013).

²⁵ François Rigolot, *Les langages de Rabelais*, titre courant 6 (Geneva: Droz, 1996), 1st edn 1977.

²⁶ On satire as a miscellaneous genre, see Renner, *Difficile est saturam non scribere*, pp. 86–103. Edwin Duval has highlighted the complementarity between macroscopic (unitarian) readings and microscopic (polyphonic) ones: Edwin Duval, 'En quoi les œuvres de Rabelais sont-elles hybrides?' in *Rabelais et l'hybridité des récits rabelaisiens*, edited by Diane Desrosiers, Claude La Charité, Christian Veilleux, and Tristan Vigliano, ÉR LVI (Geneva: Droz, 2017), pp. 25–39 (p. 39).

²⁷ Terence Cave, 'Rabelais' in *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 183–222.

denotes the ‘lowly’ contrasted with the ‘high’: the belly stands opposite to the head, the comical letter, opposite to the spirit.

CIS2

Food for Thought: Ingenuity and the Physiological Production of Culture

CIP10

A third way has brought the two parties to the banqueting table and called this very contrast and its dissenting evaluations into question by unravelling the poetic implication of food and eating in Rabelais’s text. In his 1987 *Des mets et des mots*, Michel Jeanneret has put aside the anachronistic dualism of the head and the belly, where ‘thought isolates itself in abstraction, and works to rein in physiological interferences’, and highlighted the importance of the meal in Renaissance literature. The meal is the very place where mind and body come together and a holistic, humanistic ideal of the human being as sociable animal is realized: ‘man seated at the table reconciles the mouth and the belly, reactivates the solidarity between the eating mouth and the speaking one.’²⁸ More recently, Romain Menini has used the natural-philosophical, physiological notion of alteration—the operation through which a substance undergoes radical qualitative change in Aristotelian physics and Galenic medicine—as the guiding trope of his study into the poetic manipulation and transformation Rabelais imposes onto his Greek sources, in particular Lucian and Plutarch.²⁹ Central to both Jeanneret and Menini’s accounts is Rabelais’s appropriation and reinvention of the late Hellenistic poetics of the *sympotica* or table-talks, whose main representative is Plutarch in the French Renaissance. Table-talks are characterized by the paradoxical mixture of both wonder and antiquarian distance towards the cultural heritage of a classical past already idealized by its Hellenistic successors in search of foundations, already sifted through by jest.³⁰ Circulating around the table with the food they season, knowledge and culture are primarily a matter of taste in the *Table Talks*: they involve both critical discernment and sensory enjoyment born from the shared process of choice cultural innutrition.³¹

²⁸ Michel Jeanneret, ‘La pensée s’isole dans l’abstraction et travaille à brider les interférences du physiologique’, ‘L’homme à table réconcilie la tête et le ventre, il réactive la solidarité de la bouche mangeante et de la bouche parlante’ in *Des mets et des mots: banquets et propos de table à la Renaissance* (Paris: José Corti, 1987), p. 9.

²⁹ Romain Menini, *Rabelais altérateur. ‘Graeciser en François’*, Les Mondes de Rabelais 2 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014). This book owes a great deal to *Rabelais altérateur* and its intuition that physiological function underpinned poetics. Menini’s study is a magisterial account in writerly genesis: it takes the physiological model of alteration as trope to make sense of Rabelais’s erudite creative processes. By contrast, this book investigates the ways in which physiological processes feature in Rabelaisian fiction, in order to access the alternative anthropology and conception of culture his texts foreground.

³⁰ See Pascal Payen, ‘Plutarch the Antiquarian’ in *A Companion to Plutarch*, edited by Mark Beck (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 235–48.

³¹ See Jeanneret’s opening: ‘*Saveur et savoir: même étymologie. Nous l’avions oublié.* [Taste and knowledge: same etymology. We had forgotten it.]: *Des mets et des mots*, p. 9.

- CIP11 Tout beuveur de bien, tout Goutteux de bien, alterez, venens à ce mien tonneau, s'ilz ne veulent ne beuvent: s'ilz veulent, et le vin plaist au goust de la seigneurie de leurs seigneuries, beuvent franchement, librement, hardiment, sans rien payer, et ne l'espargent.
- CIP12 [Any good drinker, any good sufferer from the gout coming thirsty to this mine barrel need not drink from it if he doesn't want to. If any do want to, and if the wine be pleasing to the lordliness of their lordships, then let them drink frankly, freely and boldly, without payment and without stint.]³²
- CIP13 I share with Jeanneret, Menini, and François Rigolot, the view that theological, political, or ethical *docere* in Rabelais—if there is any—is entirely subsumed by the *placere* of shared taste: drink my wine and spirits, to the brim if you enjoy them; if you don't, I won't force them down your throat.³³ The Rabelaisian *placere* might not be to everyone's taste; its main, undisputed lesson for the past five centuries remains 'enjoy: this is food for thought'.
- CIP14 Indeed, as Jeanneret reminded us, if knowing is tasting (*sapere*) for Rabelais, we can suspend the dichotomies between body and mind and read the Rabelaisian 'lower body stratum' as a figure of *thinking* as it happens in the body. It is possible to interpret the belly in the Rabelaisian corpus as a thorough exploration of embodied cognition understood as a set of physiological processes taking place *in the body* and conditioned by it: this book relies on this medical perspective and attempts to carry out such reading.
- CIP15 Rabelais's emphasis on bodily functions and waste reflects his inquiry into the physiology of human ingenuity. Ingenuity in the Renaissance is the expression of one's *ingenium*: the wit and nature proper to each individual, as Robert Estienne defined it in his 1538 *Dictionarium latinogallicum*.³⁴ Ingenuity denotes all the manifestations of the *ingenium* as embodied thinking: it is one's turn of mind and temperamental bent, shaped and conditioned by the idiosyncratic workings of one's body.³⁵ What happens in us when we *think*—when we learn, discover, invent, and imagine—is, from a physician's perspective, the physiological production of invention. As a physician, Rabelais was well versed in such physiology, which also features in a number of contemporary Renaissance debates on the nature and use of invention and wit (in rhetoric, in emblematics, in mechanics and architecture, in the visual arts) with which he would have been familiar through his editorial work for Gryphius, and, in all likelihood, through his

³² Rabelais, 'Prologue de l'Auteur' in *Tiers livre*, p. 351, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, p. 410. 'Goutteux de bien' might also pun men with good taste (*goût*).

³³ François Rigolot, 'Caractères oral du langage' in *Les langages de Rabelais*, pp. 32–4 on thirst and taste.

³⁴ 'L'esprit et entendement que l'homme a de nature', Robert Estienne, entry 'Ingenium' in *Dictionarium latinogallicum* (Paris: Robert Estienne, 1538).

³⁵ For a philological account of the early modern meanings of ingenuity, see Alexander Marr, Raphaële Garrod, José Ramón Marcaída, and Richard J. Oosterhoff, *Logodædalus: Word Histories of Ingenuity in Early Modern Europe* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2019).

involvement with various learned circles in Poitou, in Lyon, and in Rome.³⁶ Pedagogy and poetry, rhetorical and mechanical inventions, artistic fictions and religious creeds—heretical or not—are ultimately fuelled by good or bad physiological processes of coction and refinement at work in the thinking body; these same processes are also in play when we eat and breathe, defecate and copulate. Rabelais's poetics, with its emphasis on the sonic, even material nature of language, its tendency to literalize vividly through narration the frozen meaning of proverbs and adages, reminds us that poetry in particular and art in general is a complex elaboration conditional on those bodily processes: that *spirit* (*spiritus*) means divine breath and godly inspiration as well as simple breathing, Galenic psychic pneuma or fart, and that *catharsis* is a medical as much as a spiritual purgation.³⁷ The interpretative lens of Renaissance medicine discloses in Rabelais's anthropology and poetics not only a physician's attempt to *diagnose* a healthy or diseased culture—be it the humanist digestion of the classical heritage or the schismatic convulsions shaking the Christian one—but also to explain *how* culture results from physiological processes, *how* it testifies to the specifically inventive activity of the human animal understood in the period sense of singular, animated body.

CIP16

The nature of life or animation in this singular, animated body, however, is not separate from Nature: physiology, *physiologia* for the early moderns and their ancient predecessors, is the natural-philosophical study of life as a whole—man as living organism is part and parcel of it.³⁸ Rabelais's account of the production of culture is, in this respect, thoroughly physiological: cultural transmission or the liminal experience of witnessing death envisaged as meteorological phenomena—a colourful hail of frozen words, a tempest—testify to it. So too do heresy, aesthetic appreciation, or diplomatic conversation (those ingenious processes) construed, as we shall see, as airy contagions. Our *ingenia* might be idiosyncratic—they are nonetheless also moulded by, and porous to, the air we breathe, the places we inhabit, the company we keep.

³⁶ On Rabelais's Italian acquaintances in the circle of Jean du Bellay, see Cooper, *Rabelais et L'Italie*, ÉR XXIV, pp. 25–6, pp. 30–1, pp. 59–61; Cédric Michon and Petris Loris (eds), sections IV and V in *Le Cardinal Jean du Bellay: diplomatie et culture dans l'Europe de la Renaissance* (Tours: Presses Universitaires François Rabelais, 2013), pp. 183–298.

³⁷ See e.g. Terence Cave, 'Rabelais' in *The Cornucopian Text*, pp. 212–14 on wind, farts, and frozen words; Gérard Defaux, 'Vers une définition de l'herméneutique rabelaisienne: Pantagruel, la lettre, l'esprit, et les paroles gelées' in *Rabelais en son demi-millénaire: Actes du colloque de Tours (24–29 Septembre 1984)*, edited by Jean-Claude Margolin and Jean Céard, ÉR XXI (Geneva: Droz, 1988), pp. 327–38, a polemic with Jeanneret which reasserts the *sonic* nature of language; Eric MacPhail, 'Rabelais and the Circulation of Commonplaces in Renaissance Humanism', ÉR LIV, edited by Max Engammare (Geneva: Droz, 2015), pp. 53–70; and François Rigolot, 'Sémiotique de la sentence et du proverbe chez Rabelais', ÉR XIV, edited by V. Saulnier (Geneva: Droz, 1977), pp. 277–96, on literalizing commonplaces into narratives and bringing them back to a plurivocal life respectively.

³⁸ See Vivian Nutton, 'Physiologia from Galen to Jacob Bording' in *Blood, Sweat and Tears: The Changing Concepts of Physiology from Antiquity into Early Modern Europe*, edited by Manfred Hortsmanhoff, Helen King, and Claus Zittel, *Intersections* 25 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 27–40.

CIS3

Ingenuity and Animation: The Spirits of Culture (Digesting–Breathing)

- CIP17 Time and again, as he strives to capture the tenets of human experience in his texts, Rabelais grapples as a physician with the nature of human animation.³⁹ He was deeply interested in it; his annotations throughout his copy of his 1525 Aldine edition of Galen's works bear testament to this interest—we will draw on them throughout this study.
- CIP18 For a Renaissance physician, the soul or *anima* is the 'life principle' within any given organism: any student of medicine would have learnt so in one of the beginner's text of the curriculum, the pseudo-Galen's *Medical Definitions*.⁴⁰ Renaissance medicine in the first half of the sixteenth century focuses on the soul not so much as a substance, but as what underpins a set of increasingly complex functions (or faculties) within living organisms.⁴¹ It is these embodied faculties, their operations, and their manifestations within the living body which are the physician's main quarry. Thus, for two of the main medical authorities Rabelais would have been familiar with, the Greek physician Galen and the Arabic polymath Avicenna, asserting the ontological and metaphysical status of the soul is irrelevant to the art of medicine because the physician deals with the soul in purely functional terms, as a source of activity.⁴² Even in the late *The Capacities of the Soul Depend on the*

³⁹ On the importance of animation and 'inspiration' as spirited breath projected through language in the rhetorical tradition, see Cave, 'Rabelais' in *The Cornucopian Text*, pp. 143–7.

⁴⁰ Galenus, *Definitiones medicae*, translated by Johannes Winter von Andernach (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1528), pp. 5r–v: 'According to Aristotle's statement, the soul is the first and perfect act of the instrumental body granted life by its power' [Anima est actus primus et perfectus corporis organici potestate vitam habentis secundum Aristotelis sententiam]. On translations of Galen, see Richard J. Durling, 'A Chronological Census of the Renaissance Editions and Translations of Galen,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 24.3/4 (1961): 230–305. On the Renaissance notion of the soul, see Katharine Park, 'Psychology: The Organic Soul' in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, edited by Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 464–84; Hiro Hirai, *Medical Humanism and Natural Philosophy: Renaissance Debates on Matter, Life and the Soul*, *Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy of Science* 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Fabrizio Bigotti, *Physiology of the Soul: Mind, Body and Matter in the Galenic Tradition of the Late Renaissance (1550–1630)*, *The Age of Descartes* 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019).

⁴¹ On the importance of function in Galen's physiology, see Armelle Debru, 'Physiology,' translated by Robert J. Hankinson in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, edited by Robert J. Hankinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 263–82 (p. 266).

⁴² On Rabelais's response to Galenic scepticism on this matter in his Aldine, see below, Chapter 6. See also Galen's commentary on Plato's 'likely' but undemonstrated statements about the substance of the soul, its immortality, and its relation to the body, which concludes: 'Therefore, just as he [Plato] said that our knowledge of these earlier statements about the soul extend to what is plausible and reasonable, I too for this reason am not so bold as to make rash assertions about them' [Quemadmodum igitur haec de anima protulit, quousque probabilia & verisimilia sunt, a nobis cognoscuntur: ac ideo audacter de ipsis pronunciare quomodo possim, non video]: Claudius Galenus, *De Hippocratis et Platonis placitis*, translated by Johannes Winter von Andernach (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1534), book IX, chapter 9, p. 156; translation from Claudius Galenus, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, edited and translated by Phillip de Lacy, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, V 4, 1, 2, 3 vols (Berlin: Academia Verlag, 2005), II: IX.9.7, p. 599. Rabelais annotated heavily several books from *On the*

Mixtures of the Body (*Quod animi mores temperaturae sequuntur*), where Galen seems to lean towards the assertion that the nature of the soul consists of a mixture of elemental qualities (hot and cold, wet and dry), he opens with a doxographical survey on the question of the nature of the soul, then professes his ignorance about it and reiterates the point that the physician is concerned with the anatomical and physiological sites of activity of the soul and their operations, thus emphasizing the embodied dimension of animation as dynamism.⁴³

CIP19

Animals, it turns out, are spirited beings: we might not know what the substance of the soul is, but we know for sure that spirit, *pneuma*, is its main instrument throughout the body.⁴⁴ Adapting loosely this Stoic model of the soul as *pneuma*, spirit, onto the Platonic tripartition of the soul, Galen locates three such main organic sites for the faculties of soul as principle of animation, of life. The brain is the location of the rational or ‘hegemonic’ soul, made manifest for Galen in the faculties of sense perception and voluntary motion. The heart is the location of the ‘spirited soul’, made manifest in the faculty of involuntary motions such as pulse, and the liver is the location of the ‘desiderative soul’, made manifest in the faculties of nutrition. Rabelais dutifully underlines or notes them down in his Galen.⁴⁵ For the early moderns (but not for Galen), the liver produces natural spirits, which are the instrument of the natural faculties of nutrition (especially

Doctrines, paying particular attention to the question of the soul, its location, and its manifestations (especially voluntary motion and voice): see Claudius Galenus, ΓΑΛΛΕΝΟΥ ΠΕΡΙ ΚΑΘ' ἹΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΑ ΔΟΓΜΑΤΩΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΑ in *Galenī librorum pars prima* (Venice: Aldus Manutius and Andreas Asulanus, 1525), pp. 119r–167v, books II to IX (book I is missing).

⁴³ Claudius Galenus, *Quod animi mores, corporis temperaturae sequuntur*, translated by Johannes Winter von Andernach (Paris: Simon de Colines, 1528), pp. 1r–4v. For a modern French translation, see Galien, *Les Facultés de l'âme suivent les tempéraments du corps* in *L'Âme et ses passions*, foreword Jean Starobinski, translated by Vincent Barras, Terpsichore Birchler, and Anne-France Morand, collection La Roue à livres 26, 1st edn 1995 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2018), pp. 77–116 (pp. 77–89). For a modern English one, see Galen, *The Capacities of the Soul Depend on the Mixtures of the Body* in *Psychological Writings*, edited by Paul N. Singer, translated by Vivian Nutton, Daniel Davies, and Paul N. Singer, 1st edn 2013 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 333–424 (pp. 374–84).

⁴⁴ Galenus, *De Hippocratis et Platonis placitis*, translated by Andernach, p. 105, translated by de Lacy in Galen, *On the Doctrines*, II: VII.3.21, p. 445: ‘it is better, then, to assume that the soul dwells in the actual body of the brain, whatever its substance may be—for the inquiry has not yet reached this question—and that the soul's first instrument for all the sensations of the animal and for its voluntary motions as well is this *pneuma*’ (Praestat igitur existimare in ipso corpore cerebri animam habitare, cujuscunque tandem sit substantiae (nondum enim de hoc venit consideratio) primum autem ipsius organum, tum ad universos animantis sensus, tum etiam ad motus arbitrarios hunc esse spiritum). See Robert J. Hankinson, ‘Galen's Anatomy of the Soul’, *Phronesis* 36.2 (1991): 197–233 (206).

⁴⁵ Galenus, ΓΑΛΛΕΝΟΥ ΠΕΡΙ ΚΑΘ' ἹΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΑ ΔΟΓΜΑΤΩΝ, Βιβλίον β in *Galenī librorum pars prima*, p. 120r, ll.32–33, underlined: ‘the seat of the governing part is enclosed in the brain, that of its spirited part in the heart, and that of its desiderative part in the liver’, translated by De Lacy in Galen, *On the Doctrines*, II.3.24, p. 115. See also Βιβλίον γ, p. 127v, ll.3–5, marginal annotation: ‘Three faculties of the soul in Medea: the desiderative, the spirited and the rational’ [Animi facultates tres in Medea. Conscupiblis. Irascibilis. Rationalis]: it refers to Galen's commentary on Euripides's characterization of Medea as ‘large-orgained’: ‘he represents the woman as having the most intense desires and the most violent passion, and also as clever at reasoning’, translated by De Lacy in Galen, *On the Doctrines*, I: III.4.23, p. 197.

sanguification, blood production); the lungs and heart produce vital spirits; these vital spirits are instruments of motion and themselves necessary for the elaboration in the brain of animal spirits or psychic *pneuma*.⁴⁶ Animal spirits are also an important constituent of seeds, semen (produced by both males and females for Galen), in generation. All sites of animation—liver, heart, brain, and, depending on the texts, testes—are therefore integrated.⁴⁷ Rabelais pays particular attention to this integration and to the anatomical similarities underpinning it. In *On the Doctrines*, Galen envisages the elaboration of psychic *pneuma* along the lines of nutrition: it is ‘concocted’ from vital *pneuma* (itself elaborated in the heart from breathed-in air from the lungs and vaporized blood carried in the arteries): this coction takes place slowly in the labyrinthine structure of the retiform plexus at the seat of the brain, whose anatomical complexity echoes that of the testicular vessels on the one hand and of the vasculature of the mammal glands on the other; these ‘concoct’ semen and milk from blood respectively—Rabelais annotates this passage heavily.⁴⁸ Animal spirits underpin sense perception and voluntary motion, alongside the cognitive faculties these may involve (imagination, memory, estimation).⁴⁹ Like Galen’s, Avicenna’s account of the apprehensive

⁴⁶ Natural spirits produced by the liver became part of the pneumatic model in later systematizations of Galen’s thought—for Galen, the liver is a major organ integral to the overall system of pneumatic elaboration because it is the site of blood production; however, it does not as such produce *pneuma*.

⁴⁷ Galen’s account of ‘soul’ is in fact less dogmatic than its early modern tradition would have us believe. While he adopts the Platonic tripartition model, because he identifies ‘soul’ with the various forms of life dynamism (or powers) in the organism and keys this philosophical notion onto the medical one of ‘principles’ (main organs which are the sources of others), he is also willing to modify it when necessary. Thus gonads as source of semen and therefore spirits as well as hegemonic organ from which spermatid ducts stem are identified with a fourth part of the soul in *De semine* and the *Ars parva*: see e.g. Galenus, *Ars medicinalis in libri aliquot*, edited by Rabelais: ‘the principles [hegemonic organs] are the brain, the heart, the liver and the testes’ (Principia igitur sunt cerebrum, cor, hepar, testiculi): p. 290. See Hankinson, ‘Galen’s Anatomy of the Soul’, p. 199.

⁴⁸ See Galenus, *ΠΕΡΙ ΚΑΘ’ΙΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΑ ΔΟΓΜΑΤΩΝ*, Βιλιόν ζ’ in *Galenī librorum pars prima*, p. 151r, ll.28–49, marginal annotations, l.29: ‘Rete mirabile’ (the ‘marvellous net’ or retiform plexus, a vascular network at the base of the brain present in large mammals such as oxen that Galen dissected); ll.39–40: ‘σπερματος γαλακτος ὄργανα’ [instruments for sperm and milk]. Passage translated by de Lacy in Galen, *On the Doctrines*, VII.3.25–29, pp. 445–7. On the physiological analogy of coction and the anatomical analogy of the labyrinth, see Julius Rocca, ‘The Elaboration of Psychic Pneuma’ in *Galen on the Brain: Anatomical Knowledge and Physiological Speculation in the Second Century AD*, Studies in Ancient Medicine 26 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), pp. 208–37.

⁴⁹ These faculties present in all animals are located materially in the brain, and their good operation is reliant on the physiological work of the whole body, according to early modern medicine. The Galenic account of cognition takes for granted the Aristotelian division of cognition into ‘imagination, memory and recollection, knowledge and thought and ratiocination’ [imaginatio, memoria, cogitatio, consideratio] which Galen categorically locates in the brain: Galenus, *De Hippocratis et Platonis placitis*, translated by Andernach, p. 103; translated by de Lacy in Galen, *On the Doctrines*, II: VII.3.2, p. 439. Rabelais underlines ‘in the brain’ in his copy: Galenus, *ΠΕΡΙ ΚΑΘ’ΙΠΠΟΚΡΑΤΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΛΑΤΩΝΑ ΔΟΓΜΑΤΩΝ*, Βιλιόν ζ’, in *Galenī librorum pars prima*, p. 150v, ll.22–3. In his standard account of these faculties, Avicenna identifies the imagination with one of the ‘apprehensive [cognitive] powers’, a combinatorial faculty generating new mental representations on the basis of sensory imprints stored in the memory. As for *cogitatio* (or *estimatio*), it is the power to make inference about particulars; it is carried out by the imagination on the basis of such imprints. An ‘imaginative logic’ which

faculties located in the brain—common sense, memory, imagination—in his *Canon of Medicine* stops on the threshold of the rational faculty because its investigation does not fall within the remit of medicine: good or bad rational operations are relevant to the physician only inasmuch as they testify to the health or diseased state of the embodied faculties underpinning them. Chances are, if your common sense, memory, imagination are affected, this in turn will affect your rational thought: the physician, for his part, concerns himself *only* with the affection of your brain and its causes—wounds, humoral imbalance, poor diet, and poor constitution in the Hippocratic, that is, ecological, sense of the term.⁵⁰ Envisaged from a medical perspective, human animation does not translate into a dualist and intellectualist interpretation of the *essence* of human nature singling out the rational mind over the body (*L'homme, un en tant qu'esprit*, as Hugo would have it). On the contrary, it provides an integrated account of human *faculties* which emphasizes physiological continuities between all 'ensouled' and 'spirited' functions in human beings, and between human beings and their environment: *l'homme, complexe en tant qu'homme*. Nowhere is this integration more apparent than in Panurge's praise of debts in the *Tiers livre*, which likens the economic system of credit to the body's physiological workings: production of blood from ingested food by the liver, subtle elaboration from blood of spirits, this 'food for thought', by the heart and the *rete mirabile*.⁵¹

CIP20

The *ingenium* (one's not-so-inborn nature underpinning one's wit) progressively emerges as the very site where specific cognitive faculties and powers—imagination,

manipulates images rather than concepts and operates in beasts and men alike, *aestimatio* can lend itself to rational thought in humans only, at which point it is no longer an object of medical study: see Avicenna, *Fen prima, doctrina VI*, ch. 5 'de virtutibus animalibus comprehendentibus' in *Liber canonis totius medicinae*, translated by Gérard of Cremona, edited by Symphorien Champier (Lyon: Jacob Myt, 1522), p. 22v. Memory is twofold: memory proper is the storage of sensory imprints in the brain: it is therefore reliant on the quality of brain matter activated by psychic *pneuma*. By contrast, recollection or reminiscence involves the ability to reconstruct a whole inference (rather than merely storing its result): it is mostly reliant on the quality of the psychic *pneuma*. Hankinson points out that this distinction is an ancient commonplace, which already features in Hippocrates: Hankinson, 'Galen's Anatomy of the Soul', p. 200, n.9. Aristotle tackles it in *On Memory and Recollection* in the *Parva naturalia*: Aristotle, *On the Soul—Parva Naturalia—On Breath*, translated by William H. Hett, LCL 288 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 1st edn 1936, 453a1–453b13.

⁵⁰ See Avicenna, *Fen prima, doctrina VI*, ch. 5 'de virtutibus animalibus comprehendentibus' in *Liber canonis totius medicinae*, p. 23r: 'the power of understanding which is one of the powers of the comprehending soul, is the human soul. And because the physicians did not examine the estimative power for the reason we have discussed, on that account they did not discuss this rational power either. Indeed the examination of these powers [judgement, that is, estimative faculty involving reason, and reason itself] is not theirs to carry out, except with regards to three virtues only [sense perception, imagination, memory] and none of the others' [virtus vero comprehensiva quae est una de virtutibus animae comprehensivis est humana rationalis. Et quia medici virtutem existimativam non consideraverunt propter eam quam diximus: ideo hanc virtutem non consideraverunt. Non enim fuit eorum consideratio nisi in operationibus trium virtutum tantum et non aliis]. On the Hippocratic notion of constitution, see Chapter 6, p. 196.

⁵¹ Rabelais, chapter III: 'Continuation du discours de Panurge, à la louange des presteurs et debt-eurs' [Panurge's eulogy of lenders and debtors: continued], *Tiers livre*, pp. 364–7 translated by Screech, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, pp. 426–30.

memory, speed in discovery and learning, inferential work—are envisaged within the organic and physiological continuum which characterizes animation in Renaissance medical discourses.⁵² Abilities to learn and re-learn (to reminisce), to discover and to invent, to syllogize and prophesize, are all cognitive manifestations of one's *ingenium* understood as one's anatomical and physiological make-up: a soft or not-so-soft brain matter, the good or bad production of spirits by the main organs, a good amount of natural heat, the dominance of one of the four humours, and the role of one's environment in all these.⁵³

CIP21 For Rabelais the physician, the humanist investigation into the nature of man does not take the form of a philosophical chase after some immaterial intellect. Instead, he tracks the physiological workings underpinning human ingenuity and its cognitive manifestations. In so doing, he highlights their very continuity with other animal faculties, such as breathing, generation, and nutrition: no one would exercise one's ingenuity without a body, and especially, a breathing and digesting belly for Rabelais.⁵⁴ By envisaging man as an ingenious animal rather than a rational one, Rabelais provides his readers with a physician's investigation into the physiological production of culture as invention. In so doing, his anthropology undermines the divide between what Giorgio Agamben had identified as the incessantly re-articulated caesura within man between the 'animal inside'—the 'bare life' of vegetative, unconscious functions such as nutrition, and, for Agamben, breathing—and the 'animal outside', the relational life of the animal within his ecological and social environment culminating in man, the self-conscious political animal, and its culture.⁵⁵

CIS4 **Ingenious Invention in *Gargantua* and the *Quart livre*: Grotesque Readings**

CIP22 This book tracks Rabelais's medical investigation into ingenious animation and the physiological production of culture through a series of close readings of a miscellaneous collection of episodes—most of them from the *Quart livre*. While

⁵² Dominique Brancher has carried out a similar work in highlighting the continuity of 'animation' from plants to humans and its ability to undermine established ontological categories: Dominique Brancher, *Quand l'esprit vient aux plantes: botanique sensible et subversion libertine (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)*, Les Seuils de la modernité 19 (Geneva: Droz, 2015).

⁵³ On Rabelais's humoral anthropology, which will not be the main focus of this study, see Emmanuel Naya, *Rabelais: une anthropologie humaniste des passions* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998).

⁵⁴ 'Ingenium nemo sine corpore exercebat', Sallust, *The War with Catiline* in *The War with Catiline–The War with Jugurtha*, translated by John C. Rolfe, revised by John T. Ramsey, LCL 116 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1st edn 1921, 8.6, pp. 32–3.

⁵⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, translated by Kevin Attell, Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 14–15. Unlike pulse, breathing is a voluntary motion in Galenic medicine: it can be accelerated, slowed, or held at will.

they all gesture towards other moments in Rabelais's fictions, I do not claim to provide a comprehensive account of Rabelais's medical anthropology throughout his five books. I have selected these episodes because they are, in my view, high points in Rabelais's exploration of a major manifestation of ingenuity, namely invention in all its guises: to invent is, for the Renaissance, to discover and to make up. These episodes are, I suggest, those where the physician's investigation into ingenious animation and the physiological production of culture is in full swing. There, rather than providing a satirical diagnosis, or beyond providing one, Rabelais suspends any axiological reading of culture as 'healthy' or 'diseased', of man as worthy or sinful, and instead sets into narrative form *how* culture is *invented* and manifests ingenious animation: *how* it is that we speak, discover, believe, and make things up—fictions, art, machines.

CIP23

As a result, such chapters are also strongly meta-discursive: they represent, and playfully reflect on, the physiological and cognitive conditions for the inventive emergence of culture. In this respect, they are grotesque in the period sense. The grotesque was omnipresent on the title-pages, in the capitals, and in the illustrations of the books flowing from the workshops of printers Rabelais worked for and knew. Its ornaments spread on the facades of the buildings designed by his friend Philibert de l'Orme (1514–70); it was discussed by his other friend Guillaume Philandrier (1505–63) in his commentary on Vitruvius's *De architectura*. It was practised, and later theorized in Italian and German learned circles whose discussions and productions Rabelais either knew first hand through his Italian acquaintances—as was in all likelihood the case with the architect and antiquarian Pirro Ligorio (1512–83) in Rome—or could have known second-hand through the humanist Republic of Letters.⁵⁶ As recent scholarship has shown, Renaissance grotesque ornament with its emphasis on hybrid forms captures the metamorphic dynamism of ensoulment in the endless transformation of plants into animals and human figures. It also wittily exhibits the illusionistic, sophistic nature of the orderly mimetic images it frames, foregrounding instead the importance of *phantasia* in artistic invention—compositionally, by playing with perspective and impossible balance but also iconographically, by referencing masks, and including such 'humble' physiological figures of invention as cooking, farting, defecating, or nursing.⁵⁷ The Rabelaisian physiology of invention and its related, witty poetics is no different: if we look closely, we will find subtlety and we might even find grace there. Developing in the margins of axiological and

⁵⁶ On Pirro Ligorio's conflict with Jean du Bellay about the looting of Roman antiquities, see Flaminia Bardati, 'Between the King and the Pope: French Cardinals in Rome (1495–1560)', *Urban History* 37.3 (2010): 419–33 (430).

⁵⁷ See e.g. the magisterial study by Clare Lapraik Guest, *The Understanding of Ornament in the Italian Renaissance*, Studies in Intellectual History 245 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 494–591; Damiano Acciarino (ed.), *Paradigms of Renaissance Grotesques*, coll. Essays and Studies 43 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2019).

intellectualist humanist discourses—about the dignity of man, about the imitation of nature or the ancients and its didactic truth, about culture anchored in *logos*, this specifically human, rational and linguistic faculty—and manipulating these alongside the fragments of a vast classical heritage, the Rabelaisian episodes studied here display the same grotesque logic: they foreground the inventive powers of ingenious animation and articulate reflexive, often ironic alternatives to the humanist learning they alter: a thoroughly embodied anthropology, a naturalist genealogy of cultural production and transmission, a phantastical account of artistic invention as uncanny liveliness.⁵⁸ Rabelaisian fiction utterly disrupts the axiology of the ‘high’ and the ‘low’—of humanist and popular cultures, of the intellect and the guts—by highlighting their inventive continuity to the point of rendering their opposition meaningless. As I have tried to limit myself to books Rabelais owned, had read, or had edited for certain, or with a high degree of likelihood—such as books printed by his publishers and/or authored by his friends on topics he was clearly interested in—most of the texts mentioned here are in Latin and Greek, especially those in natural philosophy, medicine, and mechanics.⁵⁹ As Menini has shown, it is one defining feature of Rabelaisian alteration to make these humanist texts the very chyle of his vernacular fiction—including in its lowliest and most obscene episodes.

CIP24

I have selected these episodes either because they are firm favourites among *Rabelaisants* and stubbornly resist purely satirical readings—the torchecul, the Macraëons, the thawing words, Gaster—or because they remain very neglected ones whose meaning has been neatly folded into a purely satirical one—the Papimanes. I chose them in the hope to show how analysing them as explorations of ingenious animation might help account for their ambivalence on the one hand, and might unearth a different logic to that of the nonsensical or satirical ‘*coq à l’âne*’ on the other. There is always more than satire in Rabelais; his nonsense is carefully composed. I also chose them because they endlessly please me—and I needn’t drink what I do not want to (neither do you). They are my Rabelais ‘best-off’: this book is a reader’s *spolia*, a collection of fragments. It is punctuated by a series of grotesque margins, which either envisage the episodes studied as Rabelais’s grotesque responses to visual artefacts he would have known (first ‘En Marge’ on Raphael’s Vatican *stanze*, second ‘En Marge’ on Dürer’s peasant column—both trophies, a major component of grotesque iconography), or

⁵⁸ On Rabelais’s explicit and implicit references to Renaissance grotesque ornaments, see ‘En Fin’, pp. 357–60.

⁵⁹ ... but not only: Etienne Dolet and François Juste (as well as Jean de Tournes) published numerous translations of Galen by Jean Canappe in the 1530s and 1540s in Lyon, where the publication of medical literature in the vernacular takes off, and where vernacular emblem books are also omnipresent. Locating Rabelais in its vernacular context is a thriving field of research which also unsettles the Bakhtinian distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture: see Le Cadet, *Rabelais et le théâtre*, and Guillaume Berthon, *Rabelais poète*, *Études rabelaisiennes* (Geneva: Droz, forthcoming).

focus on possible grotesque responses to his own work ('En Fin' on Jacques Androuet du Cerceau's grotesque prints).

CIP25 Chapter 1 provides the necessary backdrop survey of the meanings of ingenuity in natural philosophy (especially psychologies, that is, treatises on the soul) and medicine in texts that Rabelais would have been familiar with. Either he owned them: we have his Aldine Galen and Greek, and we know he worked with Latin translations as attested by his own editorial works on Galen, the 1532 *Galenī Hippocratis libri aliquot*. Or he mentioned them in his own works—Caelius Rhodiginus's *Lectiones antiquae*—or they came out of the press of the printers he was working for: Symphorien Champier's *Medulla totius philosophiae naturalis atque medicinae* and Melanchthon's *De anima commentarius* printed by Gryphius in 1534 and 1540. Or they were part of the Montpellier medical curriculum he had been taught and were edited by fellow physicians he knew: Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*, edited by Symphorien Champier. These meanings can also be found in his fiction.

CIP26 The first part of the book then turns to the digestive physiology of invention: ingenious animation born from the guts.

CIP27 Chapter 2, the only chapter dedicated to *Gargantua*, focuses on the *Torchecul* episode (*Gargantua* XIII) and explores invention as the ability to learn or docility, bound with natural and rhetorical *copia*.⁶⁰ This chapter studies the ways in which Rabelais turns verbal and material inventions into diagnostic signs of 'digestion' or 'coction'. Across Renaissance medicine and rhetoric, the same categories were used to assess human inventions and excretions such as abundance (*copia*), fineness (*subtilitas*), or dullness (*crassitas*). Diarrhoea and logorrhoea, culture and *crotte*, are symptoms of these physiological workings. As a result, the Rabelaisian discourse on excrement cannot always be accounted for *merely* in terms of satire: when Rabelais talks about shit, chances are, he is also discussing the powers and dangers of wit. In this perspective, the *Torchecul* episode makes sense if we adopt Grandgousier's own diagnostic interpretation of his son's speech and interpret it as a fictional exploration into the physiological workings of the copious 'esprit' or *ingenium* of the child, understood as his native wit requiring education: that his logorrhoea in need of discipline should have as its topic diarrhoea and hygiene testifies to the physiological underpinnings of this text.

CIP28 Chapters 3 and 4 examine a major banquet episode, that of the Popemaniacs (*Papimanes*) in the *Quart livre*, usually little commented upon by critics and read as pure, anti-papal satire. This episode is a bitter satire of the Popemaniac reverence for Canon Law rather than for the Bible, of their idolatry for the Pope

⁶⁰ Rabelais, chapter XIII: 'Comment Grandgousier cogneut l'esprit merueilleux de Gargantua à l'invention d'un torchecul' [How Grandgousier recognized the wondrous wit of Gargantua from his invention of an arsewipe], *Gargantua*, pp. 38–42, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, pp. 245–50 (modified).

unduly replacing veneration for Christ. The Papimanes episode is one where diseased physiological and cognitive processes—poor diet and its related slow wit—translate into the spirited rather than spiritual inventions of idolatry which define the whole *ingenium* of a people: in Papimanie, bling books and portraits are endowed with a strange, animated pull, but wit and its related access to elaborate figurative meaning is missing. Yet as Chapter 3 shows (*Quart livre* XLVIII–L), Pantagrue's Erasmian depiction of the papal portrait as Dædalic work goes further than satire: by shifting the focus onto the cunning that simulated animation requires and onto its uncanny impact on the beholder, it provides us with an unlikely genealogy of idolatry which involves an alternative, phantastical account of artistic creation as trick simulation of liveliness and of the aesthetic experience as spirited contagion: these differ drastically from the decorous Renaissance notion of mimetic representation.⁶¹

CIP29

Chapter 4 focuses on social performances of wit: as flair, quick-wittedness, and masquerade. The physiology of ingenuity sheds light on the facetious narrative sequence ruling the mocking 'table-talk' of the Papimanes' banquet in honour of Pantagrue and his crew (*Quart livre* LI–LIIII).⁶² Why does Popemaniac conversation amount to dry droppings, and what allusive diagnostic of their wit is at stake in the repeated tales of archers 'missing the mark' their mischievous guests entertain them with? The puzzling succession of disasters attributed in jest to the 'power' of the Decretals by Pantagrue's ironic crew—constipation, spoiled spices and clothes, inability to aim in archery, skin poisoning by masks—is a long variation on the topic of (failed) ingenuity in its various guises: as physiological process, as cognitive speed and accuracy, finally as social performance. The logic of the 'private joke' understood and enjoyed only by Pantagrue and his friends plays out at the expense of their host: theirs is a scathing performance of wit on the topic of its very absence in their blissfully unaware interlocutor, but also an ingenious display paradoxically bringing to life the social culture of ingenuity—its conversational arts, its games, festive refinements and fashions—and highlighting its excesses and ethical risks—the masque can easily turn into hypocritical masquerade tainting the jokers themselves.

⁶¹ Rabelais, 'Comment Pantagrue descendit en l'isle des Papimanes' [How Pantagrue landed on the island of the Papimanes]; 'Comment Homenaz évesque des Papimanes nous monstra les uranopetes Decretales' [How Homenaz, the Bishop of the Papimanes, displayed to us the uranopetary Decretals]; 'Comment par Homenaz nous feut monstré l'archetype d'un Pape' [How we were shown by Homenaz the archetype of a Pope], chapters XLVIII to L, *Quart livre*, pp. 649–55, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagrue*, pp. 802–10.

⁶² Rabelais, 'Menuz devis durant le dîner, à la louange des Decretales' [Light conversation over dinner in praise of the Decretals]; 'Continuation des miracles advenuz par les Decretales' [Miracles produced by the Decretals: continued]; 'Comment par la vertu des Decretales est l'or subtilement tiré de France en Rome' [How gold is shrewdly abstracted from France by virtue of the Decretals]; 'Comment Homenaz donna à Pantagrue des poires de bon Christian' [How Homenaz gave Pantagrue some Good-Christian pears], chapters LI to LIIII, *Quart livre*, pp. 656–67, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagrue*, pp. 810–24.

- CIP30 A first grotesque margin will envisage the Papimanes episode as Rabelais's response to Raphael's Vatican *stanze* by focusing in particular on the 'cas Groignet'. Groignet the tailor was punished for using the Decretals as patrons to cut his clothes: he lost control of his hand and ended up cutting time and again papal attire. This text will be read as a historical grotesque, an enigma for happy few denouncing the grand historical propaganda of the *stanze* by appealing to a grotesque motif: the trophy.
- CIP31 Chapter 5 then turns to the layover of Pantagruel and his crew on Gaster's island (*Quart livre* LVII–LXII).⁶³ This chapter envisages the Gaster episode as an alternative, Agambien genealogy of culture. Here, culture is not the outcome of a body politics emerging from the logical ability—both linguistic and rational—of humans to transcend the world of need: Gaster is earless and does not speak. Culture stems from a making, a mechanical *poiesis* responding to need: Gaster reveals ingenuity as the amoral, physiological foundations of culture, thus erasing the distinction between nature and culture in the process and anchoring culture in bare life. His is a body economics borrowed from the analogy of the belly-as-city transforming wheat into chyle in Galen's *On the Usefulness of Parts*; the culture it promotes is that of the mechanical arts, not of the verbal ones. The logic of his inventions—whether breathless responses to events leading to catastrophic war in chapter LXI, or their magnetic suspension ending in silence in chapter LXII—can be understood as a poetic emblem of the natural faculties of the belly in Galen's *On the Natural Faculties* highlighting their uncanny functional similarities with cognitive ones such as quick-wittedness and judgement. In the Gaster episode, Rabelais's exploration into the physiology of ingenuity reaches its poetic peak.
- CIP32 In light of the Gaster episode and its anchoring of both mechanical culture and warfare in securing grain, a second grotesque margin will provide a reading of Rabelais's trophies alongside Dürer's own—especially his peasant column—in his *Institutions of Geometry*, printed in Latin by Wechel in 1532 and prefaced with a letter to François I^{er} by Amaury Bouchard, Rabelais's friend. This reading will be

⁶³ 'Comment Pantagruel descendit on manoir de messere Gaster premier maistre es ars du monde' [How Pantagruel landed at the manor of Messer Gaster, the first master of Arts in this world], chapter LVII; 'Comment en la court du maistre ingenieux Pantagruel detesta les Engastrimythes et Gastrolates' [How in the court of the Master-Inventor Pantagruel denounced the Engastrimyths and the Gastrolaters], chapter LVIII; 'De la ridicule statue appelée Manduce: et comment, et quelles choses sacrifient les Gastrolates à leur Dieu Ventripotent' [of the laughable statue called Manduces, and how and what the Gastrolaters sacrificed to their Ventripotent God—modified], chapter LIX; 'Comment es jours maigres entrelardez à leur Dieu sacrifioient les Gastrolates' [How the Gastrolaters sacrificed to their god during their interlarded fast-days], chapter LX; 'Comment Gaster inventa les moyens d'avoir et conserver Grain' [How Gaster invented means of gathering and conserving grain], chapter LXI; 'Comment Gaster inventoit art et moyen de non estre blessé ne touché par coups de Canon' [How Gaster invented the art by means of which one can remain unwounded and untouched by cannonballs], chapter LXII, *Quart livre*, pp. 671–3; pp. 674–5; pp. 676–9; pp. 679–82; pp. 682–4; pp. 684–7, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, pp. 831–4; pp. 834–7; pp. 837–42; pp. 842–7; pp. 847–50; pp. 850–3.

set against the political context of Guillaume du Bellay's governance of Piedmont in the late 1530s and early 1540s as war and religious tensions were rife.

CIP33 The second part of the book then alights on the spirited physiology of invention by focusing on *spiritus*. In rhetoric and literature, *spiritus* denotes inspiration and intended meaning (the spirit of the letter). In medicine, *spiritus* means animal spirits but also air—wind carrying disease, breath projected into voice. Ingenuity as the outcome of the spirited, airy physiology of invention turns out to display not so much one's inborn nature, but the collective workings of diffuse, airborne animation—the awesome experience of witnessing heroic last breath, the contagion of fear, the release of voice and the social exchange of fictions and puns all these generate.

CIP34 Chapter 6 analyses a lyrical high point of the *Quart livre*, experiencing death in the Macraëons episode (*Quart livre* XXV–XXVIII).⁶⁴ Here Rabelais explores the limits of animation: the airy dissolution of the heroic *ingenium* or inborn nature into last breath and the tempestuous, portentous winds that mark it. The episode also captures the dynamism of collective ingenuity in the form of the eschatological impulse of shared conjectures—from natural-philosophical explanations to divination—as the crew attempts to make sense with their host, the old Macrobe, of the tempest which has just spewed them on his shores and of the experience of the dying breath.

CIP35 Finally Chapter 7 focuses on the thawing words episode (*Quart livre* LV–LVI) which opens a new medico-poetic exploration into the experience of another form of diffuse animation, namely that of unintelligible voices from the past reaching us through the flow of time.⁶⁵ The 'thawing words' episode captures both our aesthetic—even synaesthetic—reactions and ingenious reinvention that the diffuse animation of ancient voices, however mutilated they are—possibly *because* they are mutilated—can prompt. The first of these reaction is panic in chapter LIV. The figure of Pan presiding over it instantiates the sonorous, spirited contagion of martial terror born from the sea; epic poetry does that to its audience. This experience of diffuse animation is met once again by Pantagruel's

⁶⁴ Rabelais, 'Comment après la tempeste Pantagruel descendit es l'isle des Macraëons' [How Pantagruel landed after the storm on the islands of the Macraëons], 'Comment le bon Macrobe raconte à Pantagruel le manoir et discession des Heroes' [How the good Macrobe tells Pantagruel about the dwelling and the departure of heroes—modified], 'Comment Pantagruel raisonne sus la discession des ames Heroïques: et des prodiges horricques qui præcederent le trespas du feu seigneur de Langey' [How Pantagruel reasons about the departures of heroic souls: and of the awe-inspiring prodigies which preceded the death of the late Seigneur de Langey], 'Comment Pantagruel raconte une pitoyable histoire touchant le trespas des Heroes' [How Pantagruel tells a pitiful story touching upon the death of heroes—modified], chapters XXV to XXVIII, *Quart livre*, pp. 597–605, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, pp. 739–50.

⁶⁵ Rabelais, 'Comment en haulte mer Pantagruel ouyt diverses parolles degelées' [How on the high seas Pantagruel heard divers words as they thawed out], 'Comment entre les parolles gelées Pantagruel trouva des motz de gueule' [How amongst the frozen words Pantagruel came across words both of gullet and gules], chapters LV and LVI, *Quart livre*, pp. 667–71, translated by Screech in Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, pp. 825–30.

conjectures. Yet these progress from an oracular interpretation undermined by irony to an increasingly playful and poetic fiction framing the transmission of culture as ingenious, grotesque reinvention and composition. As Plato's voices frozen then 'reheated' in old age, as the wind blowing in Orpheus's lyre harmonizing with his singing head, Rabelais's fiction exhibits the polysemy of *spiritus*—soul, air, voice—in order to represent cultural transmission as a *natural* phenomenon characterized by fragmentariness and loss. Culture is passed on in the 'thawing words' as the downstream journey of a song no longer anchored in a single agent, but stemming from body parts and the wind, and as melting ice.

CIP36 For all its precariousness, what is passed on nonetheless prompts synaesthetic wonder: when the 'thawing words' do materialize in chapter LV, they resist interpretation and become instead vectors of sensation: as they release the epic soundscape of war, the crew experiences them as noise but also potentially as taste, colour, and palpable textures. Rabelais's exploration of our synaesthetic response to the sensory matter of voice also becomes a genealogy of its biological production at this point: his onomatopoeia pun medical accounts of voice. In this respect, the second chapter of the 'thawing words' episode also transforms a poetic image—that of painting Echo—into a figure of cultural transmission. The journey of culture through time no longer entails passing on ancient truths, stable meanings, or clear auctorial intentions guaranteed by philological accuracy—all these have become fragmentary—but re-animating the expressive potential of ancient voices resonating in the wonder and synaesthetic responses they prompt in their audience.

CIP37 A final grotesque margin will read this episode and the trajectory of the entire book alongside the grotesque prints of Jacques I Androuet du Cerceau and attempt another interpretation of the Rabelaisian grotesque informed by contemporary visual arts.

End of Excerpt

This is the accepted manuscript version of the article. In keeping with the publisher's self-archiving policy¹, up to 25% of this version is permitted in an institutional repository. The final version is available online from Oxford University Press.

¹ <https://academic.oup.com/pages/authoring/books/author-reuse-and-self-archiving>