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RABELAIS AND WOMAN

by

JULIANNA K. LERNER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 13, 1976
date

Professor Henry Hornik
Chairman of Examining Committee

May 13/76
date

Professor Henri Peyre
Executive Officer

Professor Madeleine Morris

Professor Henri Peyre

Professor Alex Szogyi

The City University of New York

Verzeiht! es ist ein gross
Ergetzen
Sich in den Geist der Zeiten
zu versetzen,
Zu schauen wie vor uns ein
weiser Mann gedacht
Und wie wir's dann zuletzt
so herrlich weit gebracht.

Goethe, Faust

TO MY FAMILY

Acknowledgement

This dissertation is, in one sense, very special. Like others, it will, I hope, make certain contributions to existing knowledge about the Renaissance. However, it also represents the realization of my own personal Renaissance, an achievement within my own second start in life, and I wish I could thank all those who helped me along the way.

My gratitude to my Dissertation Director and Readers lies primarily in their examples as scholars, teachers and empathetic human beings. It goes far beyond the time and effort spent on my behalf on this dissertation and also far beyond my power of words. May I then just briefly say:

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problems seemed insurmountable, always positive, always encouraging, and without whose constant support I might have given up. It was Professor Hornik and his scholarship which awakened my interest in the Renaissance and in Rabelais and the subject of the dissertation was his idea. It was a privilege to be allowed to work with him and I am grateful for having had the opportunity.

My doctorate could never have become a reality without my family. The dream was sparked by my husband, Max, who gave me the confidence I needed and whose patience, understanding and pride have sustained me over the years. I am also greatly indebted to my parents, Dr. and Mrs. R. Fleischmann for their great wisdom and knowledge and for their unflagging moral support. - And the momentum was supplied by our children, David, Shereen and Tom, whose interest and good-natured teasing (and competition) always managed to dislodge me from my acedia. I thank them all.

Contents

Introduction

The adjective "Rabelaisian" is all too frequently used as a synonym for "gross", "vulgar" and "obscene" and thus Rabelais' attitude toward woman is generally assumed to be that of scurrilous vituperation. Now that the movement for the "Libération des Femmes" has returned full circle to France from the "Querelle des Femmes" of Rabelais' day, it is most appropriate that his writings and true philosophy be reexamined against the canvas of his time. However, before one can attempt to place him into either the feminist or anti-feminist camp, the term "feminism" must be defined.

There can never be any absolute criteria which determine "feminism" and "anti-feminism" since the only constant in human culture and philosophy is the kaleidoscopic change to which they are perpetually subjected. Just as "atheism" has acquired a meaning in modern times which differs from that of the Renaissance, so "feminism" no longer represents what it did then. Just as a denial of the existence of God was unthinkable in the Renaissance, so was total equality for women in all pursuits quite inconceivable. In considering "feminism" in the Renaissance one must deal

with the condition of women at that time, and succeeding chapters will examine the various facets of their life in depth. Certainly woman was no longer the Biblical "possession" who existed solely for the purpose of procreation, even if through the intermediary of her handmaidens. On the other hand she was also not represented by Dante's Beatrice, Petrarch's Laura or Boccaccio's Fiametta.

Ruth Kelso has conveniently divided the gamut of attitudes as delineated in the "Querelle des Femmes", into four levels:[1]

1. Woman is at best a necessary evil.

2. Woman is good in a limited and humble way but of inferior value compared to man.

3. Woman is good and necessary, equally with man.

4. Woman is superior to man.

Furthermore, there are basically two kinds of feminists. There are those who like woman just as she is and who are quite satisfied with the role bestowed upon her by contemporary society. And then there are those who would seek to improve her lot. The Renaissance saw quite a strong "affirmative action" program in a variety of areas.

The impetus for change in the lot of woman originated

[1] Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956) p.10

partly in the "sentiment Chevaleresque" of the Middle Ages, partly in the Neo-Platonism which views woman as the source of both spiritual and carnal love and raises her from the purely child-bearing level to the conveyor of divine beauty, and partly in the increased importance of the individual and his potential.

Perfection in the woman of the Renaissance was seen in her beauty which was a requisite to perfect happiness, and in her moral qualities of humility, sweetness, simplicity, peaceableness, kindness, piety, temperance, obedience, patience, charitableness and the most frequently mentioned quality, chastity. Modesty, humility, constancy and temperance were considered to be the handmaidens of chastity. (Kelso.pp.23-25) It was an idealism which permitted woman to aspire to education and to greater social and legal equality. It was (and still is) a long road to travel but the Renaissance gave woman a start in combatting ancient misogynist teachings of woman's spiritual, intellectual and physical inferiority, and above all, of her lustful immorality. It was certainly impossible for anyone, including Rabelais, to remain impervious to such changes in the role of woman, and this study will attempt to determine his position.

Rabelais was a man of the Renaissance, he was a cleric, a doctor, a writer and a father - though not a husband. He led a nomadic life and, as a cleric sworn to the vow of

celibacy, he had only limited opportunity to meet and to know women so that many experiental inferences must have been vicarious. At best, he had only a minimum of contact with the three generations of women which generally touch a man's wife, namely his mother, his wife and his daughter. He left his mother's side at an early age for the monastic life which did not permit him a wife and a married existence. We know nothing of his daughter except that, if she had lived, she was probably of marriageable age while he was writing the Tiers Livre and thus might possibly have influenced his diatribe against marriages contracted without parental consent. (Tiers Livre XLVIII)

The paucity of his contact with women may be contributive to the paucity of female characters in his work, who, in giving birth to Gargantua and Pantagruel, are the minimum required. Gargamelle, mother of Gargantua and Badebec, mother of Pantagruel, exist primarily in their role of wife and mother. Each "struts and frets [her] hour upon the stage and then is heard no more",[2] and yet Rabelais' genius endows each with implied but recognizable features and personality traits. However, the circumstances surrounding their appearance should furnish numerous insights into his general attitude.

Gargamelle, by virtue of her name, was a voracious woman. Sainéan writes "en Languedoc...'gargamelle' y

[2] Gargamelle appears in Gargantua Ch.III, IV, VI and Badebec in Pantagruel Ch.II.
The quotation is free after Shakespeare's Macbeth, Act V. Sc.5

désigne la gorge, le gosier, comme 'gargante' d'où 'gargantuas' (aujourd'hui 'gargantuan'), vorace."[3] Gargamelle must have been a great big mountain of a woman even for a giant. She was big with child and apart from her usual gluttony, she had the appetite of a pregnant woman who is past the period of morning sickness. She had been pregnant for eleven months (Gargantua Ch.III) and was quite understandably in a shrewish mood, blaming her husband's pleasures for her discomforts. She indulged herself therefore in spite of her husband's warnings and devoured truly gigantic quantities of tripe at the picnic - with the inevitable results.

Gargantua's wife, who gave birth to Pantagruel, was called Badebec. Sainéan says that "en Gascogne, comme en Saintonge, 'badebec' veut dire badaud, proprement bâille-bec." (Vol.I, p.242) She is the daughter of the king of the Amaurotes. Amaurotum was considered to be the capital of the fifty-four towns of Thomas More's Utopia (Book II) and is supposed to owe its name to "amauros", the adjective meaning dim, faint, shadowy, applied by Homer to the vision of Athens which appears to Penelope in a dream. (Odyssey, IV. 824,835) Presumably the name would mean "dreamtown".[4] Rabelais mentions it again later in connection with the Dipsodes.(Pantagruel Ch.XXXI) An interesting fact presents itself which, however, was probably an equivocation on the

[3] Lazare Sainéan, La Langue de Rabelais (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1923) Vol. I. p.242

[4] Thomas More, Utopia, transl. by Paul Turner (London:Cox & Wyman Ltd. "Penguin Books Ltd." 1965, rpt.1971) Glossary p.153

part of Rabelais rather than deliberate modification. Utopia was a republic and not a monarchy and therefore had no king who would be father to Badebec. Since "princeps" was translated as "prince" rather than "chief" in late Latin, Badebec was doubtlessly meant to be a true princess. The combination of the name and origin as well as her husband's description of her in his epitaph[5] make her seem like an "Ingénue", awe-struck and perpetually surprised, and somewhat homely.

Rabelais wrote Pantagruel (1532) before Gargantua (1534). According to Plattard[6] Rabelais intended Pantagruel as a sequel to the Grandes Cronicques du grant et énorme géant Gargantua since he hoped to profit from its success. However, in order to achieve a proper perspective of Rabelais' thought, any examination must treat his work in the order in which it was written rather than in the chronological and more logical one of the story itself. This study will therefore discuss Pantagruel in each case before Gargantua even though this means placing the son before the father.

5 Elle en mourut, la noble Badebec
Du mal d'enfant, qui tant me sembloit nice:
Car elle avoit visaige de rebec,
Corps d'Espaignole, et ventre de Souyce.
Priez a Dieu, qu'a elle soit propice.
Lui pardonnant, s'en riens oultrepassa.
Cy gist son corps, auquel vesquit sans vice,
Et mourut l'an et jour que trespassa.
Pantagruel III.

6 Jean Plattard, État présent des études rabelaisiennes (Paris: Société d'édition Les belles lettres, 1927) pp.57-8

Most of Rabelais' stories and references seem to have some connection with Pantagruel's companion, Panurge. In order to evaluate Rabelais' intentions with any validity, it is important to visualize Panurge in the light in which Rabelais meant him to be seen. His name comes from the Greek "Pan-urgos" which means "do-everything". Leo Spitzer calls him "the Falstaff of Pantagruel",[7] he is frequently compared to Tyl Eulenspiegel[8] and he may well have been Jules Verne's inspiration for Phileas Fogg's Passepartout. Panurge is one of the very few characters whose physical appearance is described. When Pantagruel first sees him, wounded and in rags after escaping from the Turks (who had made him prisoner during the crusade of 1502), he is "un homme beau de stature et élégant en tous linéaments du corps". (Pantagruel Ch.IX) He seems educated for he addresses Pantagruel in more than a dozen languages - all except French. Rabelais is more specific in Chapter XVI. describing him "de stature moyenne, ny trop grand, ny trop petit, et avoit le nez un peu aquillin, faict à manche de rasouer; et pour lors estoit de l'eage de trente et cinq ans ou environ, fin à dorer comme une dague de plomb, bien galand de sa personne, sinon qu'il estoit quelque peu paillard..." He

[7] Leo Spitzer, The Works of Rabelais in Literary Masterpieces of the Western World (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953) p.129

[8] W. M. Frohock, "Panurge as Comic Character" in Yale French Studies No.23 (Summer 1959) p.71

has no parents, no ancestry but in the Tiers Livre becomes most anxious to become the patriarch who will be able to transmit his name, fortune and honor.

Panurge is an Epicurean, he is in the tradition of the Goliards who seek to enjoy life and its grosser pleasures. He is a cunning and clever clown whose plans usually come to nothing because they are based on the wrong principles. But he is never embarrassed or disconcerted and his egocentricity and philautia float him above any possible undercurrents of conscience. Charity and morality are not in his vocabulary and he uses both men and women for his own amusement.

It is Panurge who tells the most stories in the great "fabliaux" tradition and the most grotesque. He suggests building the walls of Paris with the genital organs of women, arranging them in careful architectural order (Pantagruel Ch.XV) He follows this with his story about the lion and the old hag. Then he explains why women are so cheap in Paris and illustrates his theory by telling of the man with the two little girls who were at most two or three years old, and whose virginity was in doubt. These stories are based on existing ones[9] and are all told by Panurge in the same Chapter XV.

Panurge is also a practical jokester who would put fleas and lice down ladies' dresses in church, or pin ladies and gentlemen together as they stood at their devotions so

[9] Sainéan, op.cit. Vol.I. pp.230-1

that they would tear their clothes when they tried to separate, or annoy them with mirrors and itching powders to make them sneeze for hours. (Pantagruel Ch.XVI) Panurge's philanthropy consists of paying dowries for old hags in order to enable them to have a good time once more before they died, and of instituting law suits against the practice of ladies to wear high-collared dresses. (Pant.XVII)

Panurge falls in love with a well-born lady of Paris who, understandably, wants nothing to do with him. Rabelais paints her in very sympathetic colors. She is beautiful, she is dignified, she is not tempted by Panurge's rich promises and she rejects his advances with total equanimity. It makes Panurge's revenge seem all the more despicable. He catches a bitch in heat and scatters the pertinent parts all over his lady's dress. The smell attracts six hundred thousand and fourteen dogs to her in church, and she is pursued by them all the way home. (Pantagruel Ch.XXI, XXII)

Another story told by Panurge is the explanation of why leagues are shorter in France than in other countries. It seems King Pharamond sent out young couples well provisioned and with orders to place a stone wherever they lay together, and thus mark the leagues. Near Paris these stones were closer together but as the couples were more exhausted, the stones marked increasingly longer leagues.

At the end of Pantagruel Rabelais announces "Vous aurez le reste de l'histoire ... et là vous verrez comment Panurge

fut marié, et coqu dès le premier moys de ses noces. (Pantagruel Ch.XXXIV)

Before he dealt with Panurge's marriage, Rabelais wrote Gargantua in which Panurge does not appear at all, since after all, he was the companion of the son. There are no "fabliaux"-type stories in this section of the work, and it contains on the contrary, the most philogynic episode of his entire work, the "Abbaye de Thélème". (Gargantua Ch.LII-LVIII)

The outline for the central and largest part of the Tiers Livre is furnished by Panurge's quest for reassurance regarding three of the "inconveniences" of conjugal existence. Would his wife be faithful to him? Would she beat him? Would she rob him?

Panurge approaches fifteen sources of wisdom before he finally seeks out the Oracle of the Dive Bouteille. He first confers with Pantagruel. Then he attempts to find answers in supernatural powers such as Homeric and Virgilian lots, dice, dream interpretation, the Sibyl of Panzoust, the interpretation of signs made by the deaf-mute Nazdecabre and the dying poet Raminagrobis. He then asks Epistemon, the wisest of his companions, Her Trippa and Frère Jan des Entommeurs. After this he approaches the theologian Hippothadée and the medical doctor Rondibilis. Hearing nothing to his satisfaction, Panurge seeks counsel from the philosopher Trouillogan, the judge Bridoye and the fool

Triboulet. Some of these consultants are said to represent contemporaries of Rabelais. Raminagrobis is supposed to represent Jean LeMaire de Belges; Her Trippa is said to represent Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim; Hippothadée was probably modeled on LeFèvre d'Étaples and Rondibilis on the well-known contemporary physician Rondelet. According to Lefranc, Trinquamelle, the "grand praesident" of the very unique court of the juge Bridoye, was meant to represent Tiraqueau.[10]

None of Panurge's consultants can solve his problem and Rabelais never tells whether or not Panurge finally does get married.

By the time Panurge comes to the point when he wants to marry, he is probably already in his forties[11] and somewhat older than other bridegrooms. He has deceived other husbands too often in order not to expect to be deceived himself. He has a total lack of responsibility and wants

[10] Oeuvres de François Rabelais, Édition critique publiée sous la direction de Abel Lefranc (Paris: Champion, 1912-31) Introduction to Gargantua (1912) Vol.I. p.LIV, footnote 1; Introduction to Pantagruel (1922) Vol.III. p.IV; Introduction to the Tiers Livre (1931) Vol.V. p.XCff.

[11] Mario Roques, "Aspects de Panurge" in François Rabelais, Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort 1553-1953 (Geneve: Droz & Lille, Giard 1953) p.123 offers this calculation, based on the fact that Panurge is thirty-five years old at the time of his arrival in Paris. There are then the voyages from Honfleur via the Atlantic, the Cape, the Indian Ocean to the Kingdom of Utopia and Dipsodie, then the organization of the new kingdom with Panurge in Salmigondin and finally the voyage from Dipsodie to the Touraine via the same long way round.

perfection without the need of concessions. His pretext for marriage is to be exempt from warfare for a year, as decreed by Mosaic law.[12] Pantagruel explains that this hiatus is for the sake of paternity and its inherent assurances of immortality. "Scelon mon jugement (respondit Pantagruel) c'estoit affin que pour la première année, ilz jouissent de leurs amours à plaisir, vacassent à production de lignage et feissent provision de heritiers; ainsi pour le moins, si l'année seconde estoient en guerre occis, leur nom et armes restast en leurs enfans." (Tiers Livre Ch.VI)

The next day Panurge has his ear pierced[13] and attaches an earring with a small flea to it.[14] "J'ay....la pusse en l'aureille. Je veulx me marier." (Tiers Livre Ch.VII)

[12] "And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in battle and another man dedicate it.

And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it.

And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her."

Deuteronomy XX, 5-7

[13] The implication is that Panurge is a willing slave of lust. In Deuteronomy XV, 16-17 the Bible speaks about the freeing of Hebrew servants at the end of every seventh year: "And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; - Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be they servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise."

[14] M. A. Screech, The Rabelaisian Marriage, Aspects of Rabelais' Religion Ethics and Comic Philosophy (London: Edward Arnold, 1958) p.80, writes that "avoir la puce en l'aureille" was a contemporary idiom which alluded to the yearnings or the cares of love and which indicates the essential lustfulness of his quest.

Panurge's vacillations in his consultation with Pantagruel touch the essential points of contention of probably any era. Here is Panurge's dialectic:

Pro: "...il est escript: 'voe soli'. L'homme seul n'a jamais tel soulas qu'on veoyd entre gens mariéz." It is miserable to spend one's life without benefit of conjugal company.

Con: On the other hand, what if his wife would make him a cuckold? "J'ayme bien les coqüz, et me semblent gens de bien, et les hante voluntiers, mais pour mourir je ne le vouldroys estre."

Pro: Mais, puisque de femme ne me peuz passer en plus qu'un aveugle de baston...n'est-ce le mieulx que je me associe quelque honeste et preude femme, qu'ainsi changer de jour en jour avecques continuel danger de quelque coup de baston, ou de la vérolle pour le pire?" Sexual convenience begins to outweigh the excitement of novelty.

Con: But what if he marries a good woman and she beats him? "Car l'on m'a dict, que ces tant femmes de bien ont communément maulvaise teste."

Pro: Since he has no debts, there are not even creditors to worry about him or to care about him. If he were to become ill, he would be poorly cared for. In Ecclesiasticus XXXVI, 27 it says: "là où n'est femme, j'entends mèrefamilles,

---

Sainéan, op.cit. Vol.I.p.395-6 traces the usage of the expression "avoir la puce en l'aureille".

et en mariage légitime, le malade est en grand estrif."

Con: "On the other hand, it could be worse to be married when ill: "si...estant malade et impotent au debvoir de mariage, ma femme impatiente de ma langueur à aultruy se abandonnoit, et non seulement ne me secourust au besoing, mais aussi se mocquast de ma calamité et (que pis est) me desrobast..."

Pro: This last argument is truly the "pièce de résistance". If he were not to marry, "(dist Panurge), je n'aurois jamais aultrement filz ne filles légitimes, ès quelz j'eusse espoir mon nom et armes perpétuer; ès quelz je puisse esbaudir, quand d'ailleurs serois meshaigné, comme je voys journellement vostre tant bening et débonnaire père faire avecques vous, et font tous gens de bien en leur serrail et privé."

(Pantagruel Ch. IX)

Pantagruel is of no assistance but merely echoes Panurge's "pro's" and "con's". None of the supernatural devices are decisive since they depend on interpretation and Panurge manages to twist everything to please his own ego in spite of Pantagruel's more logical explanations. Panurge seems to insist on rejecting the obvious. These chapters primarily satirize divinations, superstitions, astrology and pseudo-sciences as well as mendicant fathers. There is even a mock encomium on cuckoldry by Frère Jan in Chapter XXVIII: "Si tu es coqü, ergo ta femme sera belle, ergo tu seras bien traicté d'elle, ergo tu auras des amis beaucoup, ergo tu seras saulvé."

It is when Panurge approaches Hippothadée and Rondibilis that Rabelais exposes much of his attitude toward women and this will be discussed in depth in the chapters to follow.

In the episodes on Trouilogan, Bridoye and Triboulet, Rabelais directs his satire against Ockham and Scotist scepticism, cynical cupidity and incompetence and Panurge again learns nothing. He and Pantagruel decide to seek the counsel of the "Dive Bouteille", for which they must ask Gargantua's permission. Panurge first tells them a little feminist ditty in Lanternois, which when translated, reads:

> Tout malheur, estant amoureux
> M'accompaignoit; oncq n'y eu bien.
> Gens mariéz plus sont heureux,
> Panurge l'est et le sçait bien.
>
> (Ch.XLVII)

Gargantua gives his approval for the voyage and proposes to look for a wife for Pantagruel in the meantime. In Chapter XLVIII he expresses his feelings about marriages contracted without parental consent.

The Quart Livre contains the gallic story and poem about "la coignée" in the Prologue and the fabliaux-like account of "Comment le diable feut trompé par une vieille de Papefiguière" (Ch.XLVII) but otherwise little that might shed light on any possible change in Rabelais' attitude toward woman since the publication of the Tiers Livre. One episode ought not to be overlooked, however, and that is his description of Niphleseth, "Royne des Andouilles" in

Chapter XLVII, who emerges as a thoroughly sympathetic, gracious, honorable and intelligent woman.

The Cinquiesme Livre provides no further insights on the subject of "Rabelais and Woman" and the question of its authorship can thus be conveniently ignored.

The above brief extracts of Rabelais' narrative are intended not only to permit the reader to meet Panurge but also to place later references into the proper context, since this study will approach Rabelais' multifaceted work from several different directions.

Perhaps the most important precondition of this study will be to place Rabelais into an historically accurate environment as regards woman, so that his work and his philosophy can be analysed in the proper perspective and anachronistic equivocation can be avoided. Each of the spheres of Rabelais' activity, namely religion, medicine, education and literature, will first be examined and described as they existed in his day in order to recreate the atmosphere and to show the background against which he expressed himself in his work.

It will be necessary to explore some of the scenes from different milieus in order to achieve an integral impression. Gargamelle and Badebec will have to be seen from the religious as well as from the medical point of view. Panurge's carnality will be germane not only to discussions on religion and medicine but also on literature since it is the counter-part of the proverbially insatiable sexuality

of woman. Marriage and children will, of course, also fit into several categories.

Before embarking on such an analysis, a summary of the most important scholarship on the subject will be presented. The initial chapter of this study will devote itself first to such an exposition and then to an evaluation based on the character of Rondibilis, who is generally singled out by critics as the key to Rabelais' attitude toward woman. Succeeding chapters will seek to follow logically in order to unfold a true vision of the distaff side of Rabelais' romp through the Renaissance.

Chapter I.

Rondibilis and Criticism on "le sexe fragile"

For the better part of four hundred years until relatively recently, critics unhesitatingly evaluated Rabelais' attitude toward woman on the basis of the dissertation of Rondibilis, one sole character who appears but once in the entire work. (Tiers Livre XXXI-XXXIII). Among the numerous sources consulted by Panurge in his quest for advance guarantees regarding marriage, Rondibilis represents the medical profession. Some critics doubtlessly felt that Rabelais, being a physician himself, would have a doctor speak for him.

One phrase of Rondibilis' discourse is usually cited in substantiation of Rabelais' anti-feminism:

> "Quand je diz femme, je diz un sexe tant fragil, tant variable, tant muable, tant inconstant et imperfaict que Nature me semble (parlant en tout honneur et reverence) s'estre esguarée de ce bon sens par lequel elle avoit crée et formé toutes choses, quand elle a basty la femme; et, y ayant pensé cent et cinq foys, ne sçay à quoy m'en resouldre, si non que, forgeant la femme, elle a eu esguard à la sociale delectation de l'homme et à la perpetuité de l'espece humaine plus qu'à la perfection de l'individuale muliebrité."
>
> (Tiers Livre XXXII)

Since this is the only speech in Rabelais' work which

specifically describes woman, it has been adopted as a convenient vehicle in proving his supposed mysogyny. Feminist episodes such as the Abbaye de Thélème and Hippothadée's advice have either been ignored or considered to be non-representative of Rabelais' real thought, as if to fit his anti-feminist reputation into the critics' Procrustean bed. An inference reached inductively from such a slim base must be challenged and re-examined.

Twentieth century critical opinion is rooted primarily in the writings of Françoys de Billon, a contemporary of Rabelais, who published his Le Fort inexpugnable de l'honneur du sexe feminin in 1555 after Rabelais' death. This is an allegorical work in which the honor of the feminine sex is represented by an impregnable fortress, complete with bastions, towers, moats, canons and all sorts of arms imaginable. Billon first lists the poets who fought for the ladies in the camp of virtue (Jean de Vauzelles, Salel, Héroët, Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, Saint-Gelais, Marot, Jodelle, Baïf, Peletier, Belleau, Tyard, etc.) and then attacks their enemies such as Jean Boccace, author of the Labyrinthe d'amour, the Italian jurist Jean Nevizan who wrote the Forest de mariage (Sylvae nuptialis libri sex, in quibus materia matrimonii, detium, filiationis, adulterii, originis, successonis et monitorialum plenissime discutitur...) and others, all of whom pale next to the greatest adversary of the feminine sex, namely François Rabelais, author of the Tiers Livre. He is presented to the ladies of the fort as a

prize of war, as head of all the "ingratz et mesdisans", all of the "morfonduz Pantagruelistes" who dared attack feminine dignity, grace and purity.[1]

It is Françoys de Billon who originally identifies Rabelais with Rondibilis: "un gros Rabelier, qui (comme Rondibilis qu'il est)..." and then paraphrases the above cited speech, thus accusing Rabelais himself of mysogyny.

Billon's authority was firmly re-established in the twentieth century by Abel Lefranc in his study on the Tiers Livre du 'Pantagruel' et la Querelle des Femmes in the Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes, Vol. II in 1904. It was later published also in the series Grands Écrivains Français de la Renaissance in 1914, as Introduction to the Tiers Livre, Vol. V of the Lefranc Edition of Rabelais' Oeuvres in 1931 and in the Études sur Gargantua, Pantagruel, le Tiers Livre in 1953.[2] It was inescapable. All versions are ostensibly identical but a small change in a footnote

[1] Marcel de Grève, L'Interprétation de Rabelais au XVI^e siècle; Etudes Rabelaisiennes, Vol.III (Genève: Droz, 1961) p.67

[2] Abel Lefranc quotes Françoys de Billon's Le Fort inexpugnable... toward the end of Chapter II of his study which appears in:

Grands Écrivains Français de la Renaissance (Paris: Champion 1914) pp.251-303

François Rabelais, Oeuvres, Vol. V, Tiers Livre, Introduction par Abel Lefranc (Paris: Champion, 1931) pp. XXX-LXIX

Rabelais, Études sur Gargantua, Pantagruel, le Tiers Livre, Avant-Propos de Robert Marichal (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1953) pp. 263-315

should be pointed out, as its subsequent omission reflects a possible hint of doubt. While the Grands Écrivains version reads: "Billon identifie Rabelais avec Rondibilis. C'est là un fait précieux à noter. Je n'ai jamais beaucoup cru, pour ma part, à l'identification, qui est admise un peu partout, avec le botaniste Rondelet." (p.299) The subsequent versions merely state: "Billon identifie Rabelais avec Rondibilis. C'est là un fait intéressant à noter." (Introd. LXVII; Études p.312) Lefranc no longer seems to insist that Rondibilis is Rabelais and not based on the contemporary physician Rondelet.

Lefranc considers Billon, who "s'est constitué l'historien quasi officiel de la querelle" (Introd. LXV) to be the man most knowledgeable regarding the circumstances and the vicissitudes of the "Querelle des Femmes". (Introd. LXIX) For Abel Lefranc the testimony of this single fortuitously extant work represents contemporary opinion. Such a premise would seem to be as tenuous and vulnerable as taking Ronsard's Épitaphe de Rabelais, written in 1554, as proof that Rabelais was a drunkard.[3]

[3] Ronsard wrote the Épitaphe de François Rabelais in his Bocage in 1554, giving Rabelais an undeserved reputation as an impious drunkard. According to Marcel de Greve, op.cit. pp.71-74, 99-103, Ronsard might possibly have been influenced by Rabelais' contemporary, the monk Gabriel de Puy-Herbault of Fontrevault who scattered the first seeds of falsehood in his persecution of what he deemed heretical writings.

Marcel Françon writes in "Note sur l'épitaphe de Rabelais par Ronsard" (Modern Language Notes, 71:101-3, Feb. 1965) that Ronsard could not have been familiar with Rabelais to any extent in view of such errors as substituting "Panurge" for "Pantagruel" and spelling Frère Jan des Entommeures, "Autonnières".

Billon's credibility plays a major role in the judgement of modern critics who have tended to question his assessments as the years went by.

Ferdinand Brunetière comments on the absence of women in Rabelais' work and on his gallic approach and concludes that, in spite of the Abbaye de Thélème, "si c'est Rondibilis qui parle, c'est Rabelais qui pense" in the speech "Quand je dis femme...". Brunetière maintains that while Rabelais says so laughingly, he means what he says and his comic façade does not vitiate his true anti-feminism.[4]

Jean Plattard reiterates that the words of Rondibilis express Rabelais' true attitude. Supporting Abel Lefranc's conclusions in his résumé of the Tiers Livre, Plattard says: "L'opinion de Rabelais, nous la connaissons par la dissertation de Rondibilis". He elaborates slightly on the famous speech but, similar to the other critics, he does not corroborate his choice of evidence.[5] Samuel Putnam agrees with Billon that Dr. Rondibilis represents Dr. Rabelais.[6] Georges Lote concurs by saying that the

[4] Ferdinand Brunetière, "François Rabelais", Revue des deux mondes, Vol. 160, 1900, p.670

[5] Jean Plattard, État présent des études rabelaisiennes, (Société d'édition Les belles lettres, 1927) p.65
Plattard supports the same view in his book L'Oeuvre de Rabelais (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion 1910, rpt.1967) p. 153

[6] Samuel Putnam, François Rabelais; Man of the Renaissance; A Spiritual Biography (New York: J. Cape and H. Smith, 1929) p.79

diatribe voiced by Rondibilis is really that of the doctor Rabelais. Lote then expands at some length on Billon's theory that Rabelais was the true spokesman of the anti-feminists.[7]

V. L. Saulnier deems Rondibilis' description of woman to reflect Rabelais' view but concedes that by calling her an error of nature, Rondibilis goes beyond his creator's belief.[8] Manuel de Diéguez, writing for the series Écrivains de Toujours, reiterates Rabelais' solid misogynist reputation which is based on the sacrilegious words of Rondibilis and then, as did most of his predecessors, he quotes the famous "Quand je dis femme...".[9]

Nock and Wilson were relatively early (1929) in expressing their misgivings regarding Billon's authority. They confirm that Billon knew Rabelais personally. Billon was secretary to Guillaume du Bellay in Turin while Rabelais was court physician there. They suggest that Billon at best may have misinterpreted or misremembered Rabelais' sentiments and that in view of several open questions, such

[7] Georges Lote, La Vie et l'oeuvre de François Rabelais (Genève: Droz, 1938) pp. 148-9

[8] V. L. Saulnier, Le Dessein de Rabelais (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1957) p.114

[9] Manuel de Diéguez, Rabelais par lui-même (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1960) Série: Écrivains de toujours, No. 48, p.87

as the dedication of the Tiers Livre to Marguerite de Navarre, caution is clearly indicated.[10]

The real turning point was finally marked by M.A.Screech. In his article "Rabelais, De Billon and Erasmus" (1951)[11] he attacks Billon's reliability. He considers Billon's work to be not a history of but a participation in the "Querelle des Femmes". Billon devotes a mere eleven out of two hundred sixty folios to anti-feminists, including Rabelais. He was a plagiarist who borrowed frequently and ineptly from Henry Cornelius Agrippa's De Nobilitate foeminei sexus Declamatio of 1529. Screech suggests the possibility that Billon, rather than reading Rondibilis' remarks in the original context of the Tiers Livre adopted them from the anonymously written Louenge des Femmes, a powerful invective against women, which contained Rondibilis' customarily quoted speech out of context.[12]

In his article "A Further Study of Rabelais' Position in the Querelle des Femmes" (1953) Screech not only compares Rabelais with some of his contemporaries but contends that Rondibilis "views by no means need to be assimilated to

[10] A. J. Nock and C. R. Wilson, François Rabelais, the Man and his Works (New York: Harper Bros. 1929) p.284

[11] M. A. Screech, "Rabelais, De Billon and Erasmus" Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance", Vol. 13, No. 3, Sept. 1951, p.250.

[12] M. A. Screech, The Rabelaisian Marriage, Aspects of Rabelais' Religion, Ethics and Comic Philosophy (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1958) pp.132-4

Rabelais' own". [13]

Finally, in his book The Rabelaisian Marriage (1958) Screech devotes the entire sixth chapter to Rondibilis, concluding that the good doctor has no monopoly as a mouth-piece for Rabelais. The point of view he expresses is the natural one rather than the anti-feminist one. The dissertations of Hippothadée and Rondibilis are but the two sides of the same coin, Hippothadée representing theological wisdom and Rondibilis physiological wisdom.[14]

Thenceforth the analysis of the dichotomous and yet complemental nature of the advice given Panurge by Hippothadée and Rondibilis is taken up by other critics. Pierre Grimal agrees in the Introduction to the Tiers Livre that both counselors represent Rabelais' thought and that neither is anti-feminist.[15] Walter Kaiser also accords both of them representation of Rabelais' beliefs, Hippothadée expressing his evangelistic faith and fideistic tendencies and Rondibilis, his medical beliefs and naturalistic attitudes.[16]

[13] M. A. Screech, "A Further Study of Rabelais' Position in the Querelle des Femmes" in François Rabelais, Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort, 1553-1953 (Genève: Droz & Lille, Giard, 1953) p.142

[14] Chapter VI. "Medical wisdom and medical controversy: the advice of Rondibilis", pp.84-103

[15] François Rabelais, Le Tiers Livre, Texte établi et présenté par Pierre Grimal (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1962) Introduction p. XXVIII

[16] Walter Kaiser, Praisers of Folly, Erasmus, Rabelais, Shakespeare (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963) p.156

Alfred Glauser considers Rondibilis and Hippothadée to be mere representatives of the current medical and theological points of view and entirely abstracted from their creator's attitudes. He maintains that Rabelais clumsily introduced two episodes to fit into the comic rythm of the cycle of consultants without seeking to have either one express his own philosophy.[17]

A. J. Krailsheimer in his Rabelais and the Franciscans attacks M. A. Screech's conclusions regarding Rabelais' view on marriage and women as "highly controversial and in some cases quite unacceptable".[18] He does this in a footnote, corroborating his judgement only through his own conclusions. He maintains that Rondibilis, as a physician carried more weight than Hippothadée, the theologian, and that Rabelais' medical training led him not to question the medieval concept of woman's inferiority. However, four years later, in the series Les Écrivains devant Dieu, Krailsheimer admits that no matter how weak and irrational woman might be, Rabelais sees her as an individual, as a member of the human race and therefore entitled to its privileges. One could, after all, hardly advocate the love of one's neighbor while excluding half of the human race.[19]

[17] Alfred Glauser, Rabelais Créateur (Paris: Éditions A.-G. Nizet 1964) p.164

[18] A. J. Krailsheimer, Rabelais and the Franciscans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) Chapter 13, p.153

[19] A. J. Krailsheimer, Rabelais (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967) p.69

Remarkably, in all these summary interpretations of the author's intentions in Rondibilis' discourse, no analysis has yet been made of the choice and of the treatment of the character nor of stylistic implications inherent in the pertinent chapters. Rabelais asks us to "sugcer la substantifique mouelle" because no arbitrary, if convenient deductions can arrive at his truths without probing the marrow.

Critics generally endorse the theory that Rabelais based his characterization of Rondibilis on the traits of his friend and fellow-student at Montpellier, Dr. Guillaume Rondelet. In particular it is pointed out that Rondelet was rather rotund - hence the name Rondibilis.

Rabelais furnishes no obvious explanation and provides only one clue to the identity of Rondibilis. In the Tiers Livre, Ch. XXXIV, Panurge says to Rondibilis: "Monsieur nostre maistre, vous soyez le tresbien venu. J'ay prins moult grand plaisir vous oyant, et loue Dieu de tout. Je ne vous avois oncques puy veu que jouastez à Monspellier, avecques nos antiques amys Ant. Saporta, Guy Bouguier, Balthasar Noyer, Tollet, Jan Quentin, François Robinet, Jan Perdrier et François Rabelais, la morale comoedie de celluy qui avoit espousé une femme mute." For Lefranc the fact that Rondelet is not mentioned even though he probably acted in the farce, points to his identity with Rondibilis. (Introduction, pp.LXXXIV ff.)

M. A. Screech reinforces the identification through Rondelet's interest in theology, as described by his biographer Laurent Joubert, and by the fact that Rondelet wrote about women.[20] By the time of his death, Rondelet had embraced the reform movement of the church and among his voluminous writings, the most important of which are in the field of ichthyology, there are a number of chapters dealing with gynecology.[21] However Screech considers Rondelet's connection with French farces to be the most important factor[22] and the point is well taken. As this

[20] M. A. Screech, "Rabelaisiana" in Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance, XXIII (1961) pp.514-19

[21] Rondelet never found the time nor inclination to organize and edit these works and they were published posthumously. They are written in a highly scientific and objective style and embrace the newly popular Galenic and Hippocratic principles.

Guillaume Rondelet, Methodus curandorum omnium morborum corporis, in tres libros distincta. Vol. I. Ch.10, p.65; Vol.II. pp.382-87; Vol. III. pp.553-93

--------- -------- Ad cito et facile omnes morbos cognoscendos, (published as an addition to the above) Ch.15, pp. 692-69

--------- -------- De compositione medicamentorum tam internorum quam externorum libri duo, (published in the same edition as the above works) Vol. I. pp.899-908, 946-47, 1000-01, 1008-09, 1021-23; Vol. II. pp. 1060-62, 1091-92, 1120, 1126-27

--------- -------- Opera omnia medica (Genevae, apud Petrum et Iacobum Chouët, 1620) This edition includes the above plus three more works: Introduction ad praxim, pp.19-20; De urinis, p.66; Consilia medica, pp.71-74

[22] Rabelaisian Marriage op.cit. p.89

analysis hopes to prove, Rabelais sought to satirize a certain prevailing attitude rather than to represent his own, and choosing an actor of a farce as his medium is but one of several devices he used to guide the reader to this particular "mouelle". His lack of success seems difficult to justify.

But who was Rondelet and why should Rabelais have chosen him to be the medical consultant rather than one of his great professors at Montpellier, such as Louis Saporta, Denys Fontanon, Joannes Falco (Jean Faucon) or Gilbert Griffi? The most probable explanation lies in the connection with the farce mentioned by Panurge and the time of amusement and hilarity he remembered among his fellow-"bacheliers".[23]

Guillaume Rondelet was Rabelais' friend. He was his fellow-student, fellow-actor and also possessed an excellent sense of humor. "Hilaritatis & facetiarum cupidissimus, fatuos histriones si qui adessent amauit & apud se habuit", writes his disciple and biographer, Laurent Joubert. He was also popular with the ladies. "Iucundus, facetus, non parum mulieribus addictus, domicomitarum frequentem hilariter excepiebat, & choreas spectabat omnium lubentissime".[24]

[23] The names mentioned by Panurge were all listed in 1532 as "Bacheliers" according to Jean Astruc, Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier (Paris: P.G.Cavelier, 1767) p.319

[24] Laurent Joubert, Vita, mors et epitaphia, cum catalogo scriptorum ab eo relictorum, quae ad D. Joberti manus pervenerunt in Operum latinorum (Francof. 1599) Vol.II. Biography pp. 150-56, Epitaph pp.156-74

Beyond this strictly biographical work, peripheral

Joubert must have known Rondelet quite well as he lived in his house for three years during his studies. Rondelet would have liked Joubert to become his son-in-law and offered him both of his daughters. However the older daughter, Catherine, did not please him and he was aware of not pleasing Jeanne, the younger one. Joubert felt obliged to move out after offending the doting father by refusing twice. Contrary to the obstreperous and authoritarian character displayed by Rondibilis, Rondelet proved to be placable, understanding and good-natured and eventually he even named Joubert in his testament, leaving him his manuscripts for publication.[25]

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information about Rondelet can be found in:

J.-E. Planchon, Rondelet et ses disciples, ou la Botanique à Montpellier au XVI^e siècle. (Montpellier: Boehm, 1866) also in Montpellier Bulletin médical, No. 4, Vol. XVI. (Avril 1866) pp. 369-79, 567-74

Louis Dulieu, "Guillaume Rondelet", Clio medica, Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 89-111

Jane M. Oppenheimer, "Guillaume Rondelet" in Bulletin of the History of Medicine (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1936) Vol. 4, pp. 817-34

Jean Astruc, Mémoires op.cit. pp. 236-240

[25] Rondelet was born on September 27, 1507 to the pharmacist, Jean Rondelet and his wife, Renaude de Moncel. He was weak and sickly as a child and his education was delayed. He had five brothers and two sisters. Guillaume's father, who had planned a future in the Church for him, died when Guillaume was but a boy and his oldest brother, Albert, helped him to finance his education. Rondelet never had enough money, not in school, not out in practice and not even later when his fees were more than adequate. This was in great part due to his excessive generosity in supporting others and at his death he left his children virtually penniless. It is generally assumed that Rabelais' little fee-grabbing incident at the end of Chapter XXXIV was a spoof on the avarice of the medical profession, but it may very well have been based on the prototype's perpetual impecuniosity.

Rabelais' Tiers Livre was published in 1546 and obviously the portrait of Rondibilis must have been based on Rondelet's early years. Suffice it to say, therefore, that Rondelet's remaining career (he died in 1566) was illustrious both in the field of ichthyology and in the field of anatomy. A few months after his wife Jeanne died in 1560 he married a beautiful young woman with whom he had two more children.

As his health improved, Rondelet, who was a short man, gained weight and became somewhat portly. But contrary to Arthur Tilley's description of a "little pot-bellied man", (François Rabelais (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1970 rpt. of 1907) p. 195) Joubert makes a point of the fact that Rondelet was not "ventricosus" but rather well proportioned in a stocky way, having a round head and a thick neck. Rondelet had a thin shrill voice. His outgoing and cheerful manner and especially his squat exterior probably made him the butt of much buffoonery and very possibly suggested the model for a caricature to Rabelais. It is not at all likely, however, that Rabelais intended to caricaturize this genial good-humored man himself. It is far more common and simple to ridicule the stilted straightlaced pedant and Rabelais himself follows this pattern. He is at his most acerbic when he derides the solemnly rigid and self-glorious Sorbonists and clerics. He has nothing but praise and affection for the jolly and the jovial.

Guillaume Rondelet went to Paris in 1525 at age eighteen and in four years made up for his lack of education He became a student at the Université de Montpellier on June 2, 1529 (Folio 102, #925 Année 1529). Rabelais entered Montpellier some fifteen months later on September 17, 1530 (Folio 109, #964 Année 1530). These entries can be found in the Matricule de l'Université de médecine de Montpellier 1503-1599, Travaux d'Humanisme et de Renaissance, No.25, published by Marcel Gouron (Genève: Droz, 1957). The two students spent the year 1530-31 there together until both received their bachelor's degrees.

Thereafter, and in accordance with the custom of the time, both Rabelais and Rondelet left Montpellier to practice medicine. Rabelais traveled to Lyon and to Rome in the service of Jean du Bellay. Rondelet had to teach children for a while in Auvergne. Both returned to Montpellier to receive their doctorates in 1537.

For Rabelais, Rondelet was a classmate, a friend probably a dozen years his junior, yet someone to share his "joie de vivre", his Pantagrueliste "certaine gayeté d'esprit confícte en mespris des choses fortuites" (Prologue Quart Livre), a fellow-actor in a farce, an entertaining raconteur who illustrated doctrines with amusing tales and with whom he probably shared a very similar brand of humor.

In what manner does Rabelais' portrayal and characterization of Rondibilis resemble Rondelet? Except for the implication of rotundity in the name "Rondibilis" there is no physical description. However except for Panurge, Rabelais never really specifies the external traits of his main characters. Épistémon describes Rondibilis as "Marié est, ne l'avoit esté" (Tiers Livre XXIX) which was true for Rondelet. Rondibilis is learned and loquacious, answering more than he is asked and illustrating almost every point with a tale. This was also probably true for Rondelet.

Rondelet married Jeanne Sandré in January 1538 and the young couple moved in with and was supported by Catherine Botegari, Jeanne's older sister. Catherine was said to have run the household in a wise if somewhat firm manner, counteracting her brother-in-law's epicurean tastes while he continued his medical work. She later gave Rondelet half her means and promised the remainder to him as a legacy against a commitment from him to remain in Montpellier. Joubert calls her "maxime sagaz & ingeniosa mulier", a description he is likely to have received from Rondelet himself. The nature of the relationship between brother and sister-in-law can only be guessed at but it seems highly remote that Rabelais should have sought to base Rondibilis' ostensibly misogynistic attitude on Rondelet's own feelings.

Rondelet was an excellent physician and an ardent anatomist who dissected his own son when the latter died shortly after birth. He became physician to the Cardinal de Tournon and by 1545 was appointed Chancellor to the Université de Montpellier.

Beyond this, the mirror-image becomes distorted and the original appears caricaturized. The story-teller Rondibilis takes himself most seriously. His exclamations "Par les ambles de mon mulet" and "Havre de grace" are such obvious affectations that one can almost see him cast his eyes heavenward in despair over the inanity of Panurge's questions. In his dissertation he is solemn and methodically didactic as he counts the ways of suppressing the desires of the flesh. He proceeds in an absolutely single-minded manner, ignoring all interruptions and tolerating no digressions. When Panurge asks about cuckoldry, Rondibilis becomes condescending and patronizing, calling Panurge "mon amy" a few times, as he expounds on what he considers to be obvious and universally recognized truths.

In summing up the chapters on Rondibilis, M.A. Screech states that there does not seem any reason for assuming that the portrait of the doctor is intended as a satirical one. If Rondelet does underlie this character, it is not so that we shall mock at him."(Rab.Marriage p.101) Clearly Rabelais did not seek to satirize Rondelet himself. Yet the portrait of Rondibilis is definitely a travesty.

As if to reinforce the correct interpretation of his intention, Rabelais even stoops to burlesque. In Chapter XXXIV Rondibilis is thanked for his troubles and then identified with the farce in which he and Rabelais appeared with some of their colleagues. Épistémon recounts its plot - the story of the man who married a mute woman - which ends

similar to Pathelin. From this Panurge takes up the by now proverbial "Retournons à nos moutons", disinvites Rondibilis from his imaginary wedding because the doctor had not given him the advice he had sought, and assuring him that a doctor's preoccupation with his practice would be understood in lieu of his presence. Panurge follows this with a popular ditty mocking medical interest in human waste material, which the doctor answers in kind: "Nobis sunt signa, vobis sunt prandia digna". This mock-serious banter leads into the final burlesque of Rondibilis' mock remonstrance to and then happy acceptance of the fee proffered by Panurge. The entire scene displays a ludicrous lack of humor of a fatuously pompous doctor.

The comicality of the character is reemphasized in the following chapter (XXXV). In reply to Panurge's usual question as to whether or not to marry, Trouillogan, the philosopher, replies paradoxically: "Ne l'un ne l'autre". Each of the guests at the banquet tries to suggest an interpretation. Gargantua and Pantagruel for instance suggest that the enigma might be a play on words. Rondibilis, the physiological expert tries to sound more erudite and, assuming a literal interpretation, suggests the "Aurea mediocritas", the physical neuter or philosophical mean, neither one extreme nor the other. When applied to marriage, this is a completely vacuous reply for it is no more possible to be partially married as it is to be partially pregnant.

The derision of Rondibilis is rather obviously not aimed at his physical prototype. On the contrary, Rabelais probably chose Rondelet because he was a fellow-buffoon of similar attitudes who would share the humor and intent of the portrait and even agree with it rather than resent it. Rondelet was his vehicle and his tool, he was not his target. Rabelais' aim was to ridicule ideas rather than an individual.

Basically Rabelais attacked two areas - the medical science of his day and some of Tiraqueau's opinions on women.

Medical theory was in a state of flux and evolution and often contradictory. (This will be discussed in some detail in the chapter on "Medicine".) There was bastardization of the tracts of Hippocrates and Galen though consecutive translation from one language to another and one of Rabelais' aims in his translations was to arrive at the correct interpretations by working from the original texts. In the Rondibilis chapters he spotlights a number of the prevalent theories and generally sides against Galen.

J. Barat in his article "L'Influence de Tiraqueau sur Rabelais" extracts numerous parallels between Rabelais' Tiers Livre and Tiraqueau's 1546 edition of De legibus connubialibus, seeking to prove plagiarism on the part of Rabelais.[26]

[26] J. Barat, "L'Influence de Tiraqueau sur Rabelais", Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes, III. (1905) pp. 138-55, 253-75

Barat's views were supported by Lefranc, Plattard and W. F. Smith.[27] M. A. Screech, on the other hand, attacks the article as being too general, as ignoring important dissimilarities such as their attitude toward beauty and their unequal emphasis on sponsorship of marriage, and mainly as arbitrarily considering Rondibilis to be Rabelais' spokesman.[28]

There can be no doubt as to the validity of the similarity between the carefully juxtaposed excerpts. Furthermore, plagiarism was not unusual at the time and copyright did not exist. Most of Tiraqueau's work is itself a compilation of the writings of others, the classics, the churchfathers, the Bible. His De legibus connubialibus had been plagiarized at least twice before. The humanist Claude Chansonnette used some of Tiraqueau's material in his Topica legalia in 1530[29] and so did Barthélémy de Chasseneuz, Counsellor of the Parliament in Paris and President of the Parliament in Provence, before his death in 1541.[30]

[27] Lefranc, Tiers Livre, Introduction op.cit. p. XCIII
Jean Plattard, "Tiraqueau et Rabelais", Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes, Vol. IV (1906) pp.384-89
W. F. Smith, "Tiraqueau et Rabelais et le Conte de Seigny Joan", Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes, Vol. V (1907) pp. 185-88

[28] M. A. Screech, "Rabelais, De Billon and Erasmus" op. cit. pp. 261-65

[29] Jacques Bréjon, André Tiraqueau (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1937) p.23

[30] Ibid. p.44

The irascible André Tiraqueau considered plagiarism of his work to be a personal affront and always attacked the perpetrators. He never really forgave Rabelais even though it is highly unlikely that the latter had sought to offend. Rabelais had always held Tiraqueau in high esteem and in his dedication of the Epistolarum medicinalium J. Mainardi of June 3, 1532, he expresses not only his appreciation for Tiraqueau's encouragement but also praises his great legal and medical contributions.[31] In the Prologue to the Quart Livre he calls Tiraqueau "le bon, le docte, le saige, le tant humain, tant debonnaire et equitable And. Tiraqueau."

While Barat is convinced that Rabelais' plagiarism was intended as homage to Tiraqueau, Screech points out that "Opinions held in earnest by Tiraqueau are not infrequently sources of humour for Rabelais". (p.264) If one considers the fact that Rabelais used a comic figure to spout Tiraqueau's wisdom, even Screech's litote becomes too understated.

Rabelais met Tiraqueau when he was at the Franciscan monastery of Fontenay-le-Comte in Bas Poitou. Fontenay, an old feudal town, became rich and flourishing after Louis XI had made it into a commercial town. The king made it the seat of an appellate court which attracted a considerable personnel of officers, lawyers and clerks,

[31] "...Memini enim et scio quam tibi ars ipsa medica, cui elicius promodendae incumbimus, debeat, qui tam operose laudes ipsius celebraris in praeclaris illis tuis in Pictonum leges municipales ὑπομνήματι."
Rabelais Oeuvres complètes, Édition Jacques Boulenger, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) p.956

many of whom were vitally interested in the humanist movement. They studied in particular the work of Guillaume Budé, himself a lawyer, and his legal theories based directly on Roman law, published only twelve years earlier in 1508.[32] Rabelais and another Franciscan friar, Pierre Amy, joined the group which discussed not only law but also morals, philosophy, poetry and the question of women and marriage. They dedicated themselves not only to the amplification of law but also did purely literary original work such as the edition of De re uxoria by Francesco Barbaro, an adaptation of Aristophanes, an historic narration, and Latin and Greek verse which they wrote and put at the head of their most serious treatises.[33] Rabelais' participation was to have an obvious and undeniable effect on his own work.

The meetings were usually held at the home of André Tiraqueau. He and Rabelais had a mutual protector, Geoffroy

[32] Nock & Wilson, op.cit. pp. 21-23

[33] Jacques Bréjon, André Tiraqueau op.cit. p.14 describes the "Cénacle" of Fontenay-le-Comte as including:

Artus Cailler, lieutenant particulier de Fontenay-le-Comte (father-in-law of André Tiraqueau, who died in 1524)
Jean Brisson, avocat du roi
Mallet, procureur du roi
Jean Brissot, avocat, pere de Pierre Brissot, médecin
Jacques Ranfray, avocat
Jean Vernou, avocat, fils d'un maire de Poitiers
Pierre Fouschier, Raoul Collin, Hilaire Gosuet, avocats
Jean Bouchet (1476-1557) procureur de la sénéchaussée de Poitou

see also:

Henri Clouzot, "Rabelais à Fontenay-le-Comte et le prétendu acte de 1519", Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes, Vol. V. (1907), pp. 413-23

d'Estissac and a mutual friend in the Bishop of Maillezais.[34] They were quasi-contemporaries, Tiraqueau, born in 1488, being a mere seven years older than Rabelais.[35] In 1512, at age twenty-four, Tiraqueau married Marie, the daughter of the "lieutenant-particulier" Artus Cailler, when she was eleven years old. Little is known of her except that she made him happy and that they had many children. (p.7)

By 1513 Tiraqueau had published two books intended to teach his young wife the duties of her new state. He re-edited Francesco Barbaro's De re uxoria and published an original work, De legibus connubialibus, which he dedicated to his father-in-law and presented to him for his approval. There were three more editions of this work. The second edition appeared in 1515 and the third greatly expanded one which was prepared with the collaboration of Rabelais and Pierre Amy, appeared in 1524. The fourth edition of 1546 which appeared almost simultaneously with Rabelais' Tiers Livre, was even more voluminous than the others and is the one allegedly plagiarized by Rabelais.

Beginning with the 1524 edition, Tiraqueau changed the title to De legibus connubialibus et iure maritali, purporting

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Ch. Perrat, "Rabelais et le De nobilitate de Tiraqueau (autour du juge Bridoye)", Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance (Genève), Vol. 16, No. I. (1954) pp. 41-57

[34] Bréjon, op.cit. p.18 NOTE: Most biographical material will be from this work and reference page numbers will be indicated within the text itself in parentheses.

[35] Barat, op.cit. p.139, footnote 3

to comment on an article in the "coutume de Poitou" a body of local laws. (p.23 ff) Tiraqueau tried to codify marriage laws, rules and customs by drawing on a great variety of sources such as Greek and Roman philosophers, Christian Saints, historians, jurists and poets, ancient and modern.

In the 1524 edition there were sixteen so-called matrimonial laws. (There had been twelve in the 1513 edition but subsequent editions never had more than sixteen.) The first law reads "Viri uxoribus imperanto, Uxores viris obediunto". Woman is inferior and she must obey. The man must command, as nature has given force and reason to man. The eighth law confirms this by saying "Viri uxoribus sibi aequari iam a principio ne sinunto. Sed dicto audientes esse imprimis docento. Nec tamen se tyrannos, nec dominos, sed maritos praestanto..." (p.115) The remainder of the laws follow a similar vein. Laws II, V, VI, VII deal with the choice of a wife - she should not be too beautiful but she should not be too ugly. She should be of equal or possibly better social standing and family background. Widows and mature women should be avoided. Men should marry at thirty-six and women at eighteen years of age. Laws III and IV deal with the women's toilette - they should groom themselves for their husbands, present or future, only. Their imperfections should be revealed to each other without, however, disrobing, as had been suggested by Thomas More in Utopia. Laws VIII to XII deal with the education and punishment of wives. While the husband should not consider his wife his

equal, the husband must educate her and never beat her or mistreat her in any way or she will make use of one of the manners of revenge at her disposal, namely poison or adultery. He should mix tenderness with severity in educating his wife. (Law IX) He may consult with her but let him beware of telling her any secrets. The last three laws, XIII to XVI deal with the conjugal relationship. Law XIII tells those who wish to be loved by their wives, to love them and to be faithful to them. Law XIV forbids the use of incantations and aphrodisiacs. Law XV is so explicit in its clinical details that Barat (from whose article the above summary is adapted, pp.150-53) decided to leave it in the Latin original. He remarks that Tiraqueau's language also in the other laws is crude and blunt. Law XVI, the last law, forbids jealousy and states that if, in spite of all the methods of keeping a wife true to her duty, she is still unfaithful, the husband should bear it patiently. (see also Bréjon p.24, 110 ff)

By accepting the opinion of the majority that women were by nature weaker in body than men and far inferior in mind, he developed a body of opinions and quotations to substantiate his own attitude. While, as Lefranc points out, Tiraqueau strenuously objected to being called prejudiced, "c'est dans la catégorie des contempteurs du sexe féminin qu'il convient de le classer".[36] Rabelais and Pierre Amy as well as the other members of the "Cénacle" certainly helped in the

[36] Introduction, Tiers Livre, p. XXXIX

gathering of the sources used by Tiraqueau (p.26) and thus became familiar with them.

Tiraqueau's biographer André Bréjon, denies that Tiraqueau was a "contempteur du sexe féminin" since his point of departure was strictly juridical, i.e. the husband's power over his wife. (p. 42) The De legibus was intended to have the form of an encyclopaedia, telling all there was about women, good or bad, permitting a favorable or unfavorable attitude to be inferred. Bréjon cites the following example about Marguerite de Navarre, admitting in his footnote (p. 43, fn. 12) that it ends axiomatically in man's superiority: "...Margarita Francisci nostri regis sorer, et Navarrae regis uxor omnibus bonus literis instructissima, praesertim vero sacris, in quibus superiores omnes foeminas facilè superat, ut apertè ostendunt eius opera, tam sancta, tam pia, tam denique docta, ut vix credas à muliere facta..." Since Tiraqueau, even according to Bréjon, frequently sinks to into obscenity in describing female vices, such an example can scarcely be in philogynic balance to his attack.

Screech points out that when favorable arguments are presented, they are often explained away, wherever possible, or some warning is given. Antifeminist passages are not accompanied by such warnings.[37] Barat states outright (p. 141) that the antifeminists of the "Querelle des Femmes" considered Tiraqueau to be their leader.

[37] "A Further Study of Rabelais' Position in the Querelle des Femmes" op.cit. p. 138, footnote 3

Near Fontenay-le-Comte there was another "Cénacle de lettrés" which included Amaury Bouchard, "lieutenant général du sénéchal de Saintonge au siège de Saint-Jean-d"Angély", a friend of Pierre Amy. He met Tiraqueau and they became friends, if only for a short time. Bouchard wrote an apology for the feminine sex, published January 19, 1522 with a half Greek, half Latin title: τῆς γυναικείας ψύτλης adversus Andream Tiraquellum Fontiniensem in which he attacked Tiraqueau's basic premise of the inferiority of woman and her consequent subordination to man in marriage.[38]

[38] Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1956) p.95 quotes the following translation of Bouchard:

> Your conclusion must be tempered, Andreas, I think, which you can base only on false assumptions. From citations from your authors you assert women far inferior to men in body and mind when you ought to make them equal. Therefore, not like servants should wives be subjected to husbands as seems to you to follow your premise. St. Paul really settles that. We are not commanded to forsake father and mother in order to cleave to a slave, man or woman. Neither slave nor servant strives to know the will of his master, whose slightest word is law. You yourself claim that a man should seek a wife among equals and of similar character since likeness is the greatest cause of love, nor do the interpreters of the law even consider marriage between unequals. What similarity is there between servant and master? Moreover true love is said to be the fosterchild of liberty. Whoever fears, hates. Joannes Faber, our countryman, in his commentaries on civil laws not unlearnedly wrote whoever concedes power to the husband over his wife raises hate in the wife toward her husband, compulsion destroying love. Since all living things seek liberty, the woman more than others will be resentful of servitude. The wise legislator, not wishing to see the will of the woman broken, does not call her a slave or added to her husband's household servants but makes her a companion, a word how alien to rule. (37a-39 from The Defence of Women against Andreas Tiraqueau (1522)

See also Screech "Further Study" p. 135

Bouchard's work was headed by a Latin epistle composed by Pierre Amy. Rabelais was at that time collecting quotations for and studying law with Tiraqueau and the two friends found themselves on opposite sides of the fence. No attempts at mediation could prevent the ensuing quarrel and at one point Tiraqueau drew Rabelais into it. He wrote:

> Je ne puis m'empêcher de raconter ce que notre ami François Rabelais, franciscain, homme très instruit en l'une et l'autre langue, a dit de ton livre aussitôt après l'avoir achevé: "Vous serez bien haï des femmes si quelque galant, c'est-à-dire quelque Amaury, quelqu'un de vos pareils, traduit ce livre en langue vulgaire, et cette opinion prendra corps parmi le peuple, que Bouchard veille longuement et travaille avec une ardeur infatigable afin de publier des livres qui feront de lui le bienvenu à l'assemblée des femmes et lui permettront de se parer de sa tendresse pour elles. [39]

However Rabelais never openly declared his sympathies and in the year of 1532 cleverly dedicated one book to Bouchard, Ex reliquiis venerandae antiquitatis Lucii Cuspidii Testamentum, (Lyons 1532), and one to Tiraqueau, Epistolarum medicinalium J. Mainardi, (Lyons 1532).

In his article "A Further Study of Rabelais Position in the Querelle des Femmes", which has already been mentioned above, M.A.Screech analysed and compared the points of view expounded by the two adversaries and quite reasonably concludes that Rabelais' attitude toward woman as shown in his writings, was not in agreement with Tiraqueau's

[39] Jacques Boulenger, Rabelais (Paris: Editions Colbert, 1942) p.51

principles. Tiraqueau could never have envisioned the Abbaye de Thélème. (pp.135-6) Screech does, however, suggest a stylistic similarity in piling up words into lists, which both enjoyed, Tiraqueau in a serious vein and Rabelais with the intention of amusing. (p.137) Screech also points out that while Tiraqueau, like his contemporaries, believed in the natural lustfulness of woman and based his argument on this premise, Rabelais has only one of his protagonists dominated by lust, a man, Panurge. Even Rondibilis' remarks which have so frequently been identified with Rabelais' philosophy, are milder than Tiraqueau's. (p.142) Tiraqueau is also indifferent to education, contrary to Rabelais - and Erasmus, (p.143). He also seems to be indifferent to the blessings of parenthood (p.144) even though he had many children. Tiraqueau seems more preoccupied with the mechanics of marriage than with the original contract and makes no attempt to reform in the sense of Rabelais' Tiers Livre, Chapter XLVIII.

On the whole, Rabelais' attitude appears to be closer to that of Bouchard. It was not Bouchard's intention to show woman as a superior being, in the manner of some of the feminists of the time, but he sought to prove her equality with man - and so did Rabelais.

In later years Tiraqueau's feelings for Rabelais apparently cooled. He suppressed Rabelais' Greek Epigrams from his fourth edition of De legibus connublialibus (1546) He does not mention Rabelais in a list of the principal

doctors and professors of medicine of the XVIth century or among the commentators and translators of Hippocrates, which he lists in the thirtieth chapter of his De Nobilitate. Tiraqueau was one of the twelve judges who on March 1, 1552 suspended the Quart Livre "à la requête du procureur du roi, attendu la censure faite par la Faculté de théologie".[40] Actually it was not a real condemnation but a simple suspension of the sale of the "livre suspect" for a limited time of about two weeks. (Bréjon, pp.16-17)

Barat is most surprised at the absence of Rabelais' name among the sponsors of Tiraqueau's 1546 edition. But in view of the fact that Rabelais had dedicated two whole chapters (XXX and XXXI) of the Tiers Livre to the De Legibus, he honored his mentor more than with the writing of an epigram. Barat feels that if Rondibilis was really Rondelet, this good doctor was also honored to have Tiraqueau's words placed in his mouth, for Rabelais certainly did not intend to ridiculize Rondelet. However Barat inclines to believe with De Billon that Rondibilis was actually Rabelais himself.[41] It is an interesting interpretation, except that the more obvious explanation for Rabelais' ostracism was the satirical treatment and the ridicule of the ideas of his former mentor.

[40] Marcel de Grève, "L'Interprétation" op.cit. p.93

[41] Barat, op.cit. pp. 262-3 (see also footnote 2 on p.263)

Rabelais' intent was doubly misunderstood. If he disagreed with Tiraqueau's ideas and derided them, he did not seek to offend the man himself who had been his teacher in his youth at Fontenay-le-Comte. On the other hand, if he plagiarized Tiraqueau, it was not in agreement with the misogynist ideas he borrowed. His critics, with Billon as the standard-bearer, easily accepted that Rabelais' plagiarism of anti-feminist writings was an affirmation of his support of the misogynist faction of the "Querelle des Femmes". They readily recognized Rondibilis to be Rabelais' spokesman and acknowledged the entire episode as his contribution to the polemic. Earlier incidents in Rabelais' work ought really to have pointed to the implausibility of such an assumption, but were ignored. For instance, in Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel (Pant.VIII) he mentions that even women and girls aspire to knowledge - without in any way rebuking them for the idea or implying any inferiority. The chapters on the Abbaye de Thélème (Gargantua LII-LVII) are certainly sympathetic to women and place them on an equal footing with men. The chapter on the theologian Hippothadée (Tiers Livre XXX) which immediately precedes those on Rondibilis, is also kindly disposed toward women. As to instances of "gauloiserie" as in the "fabliaux"-like anecdotes - they are stylistically well defined and dissimular to the Rondibilis episode. In no way can they be linked nor are they intended to be. The humor in the Rondibilis chapters is unique unto itself.

The Rondibilis episode is composed of four chapters which satirize a variety of areas. The discussion on woman affords a means of exposing not only the teleology of Galen and the authority of Hippocrates but also the emerging popularity of Plato in order to make them vulnerable to Rabelais' sting.

Rabelais announced his humorous intent. Just as Panurge's mock encomium on debts and debtors introduces the Tiers Livre to the quest of a clown, so do the Rondibilis chapters begin on a burlesque tone to guide the reader. This can best be illustrated by a comparison between Panurge's first speech in Chapter XXX on Hippothadée and that in Chapter XXXI on Rondibilis:

Ch. XXX:

> Sus l'apport de la seconde table, Panurge en parfonde reverence dist:
>
> "Messieurs, il n'est question que d'un mot. Me doibs je marier ou non? Si par vous n'est mon doubte dissolu, je le tiens pour insoluble, comme sont 'Insolubilia de Alliaco'; car vous estes tous esleuz, choisiz et triez, chascun respectivement en son estat, comme beaulx pois sus le volet."

Ch. XXXI:

> Panurge, continuant son propous, dist:
>
> "Le premier mot, que dist celluy qui escouilloit les moines beurs à Saussignac, ayant escouillé le frai Cauldaureil, feut: 'Aux aultres'. Je diz pareillement: 'Aux aultres'.
>
> "Cza, monsieur nostre maistre Rondibilis, depeschez moy. Me doibz je marier ou non?"

The tone of deferential respect of the first speech is replaced by an earthy flippancy. The reference to the "Insolubilia de Alliaco", a scholarly work, becomes a quip about castration. In his first speech, Panurge knows himself

to be out of his social and intellectual depth but in the second, when he approaches Rondibilis, he seems entirely at ease. The reader is clearly advised to expect humor in the next scene - and humor he will meet from subtle satire to blatant farce.

True to his profession as a physician, Rondibilis attacks the problem of Panurge's marriage from the point of view of diagnosing an illness, namely concupiscence, in order to find the remedy, which may or may not be marriage.

"Vous dictez que sentez en vous les poignans aiguillons de sensualité" says Rondibilis. He applies himself only to Panurge's most formidable sexual needs. There is no mention of any other facets of marriage such as companionship or immortality through one's progeny, which Rabelais extols especially through Gargantua when he grieves for his wife and when he writes to his son.

Rabelais makes sexual voraciousness a most eminent feature of Panurge's personality, which is an important point to be noted in view of Rondibilis' later discussion of the insatiability of women. Not once is Panurge's lasciviousness attributed even in the slightest respect to the seductiveness or demonical salaciousness of women. Contrary to the prevailing attitude of his time, Rabelais never blames women for leading men into carnal sin.

Truth does not bridle Panurge's bragging. He is inordinately and vociferously proud of his pretended prowesses - far more than any woman in literature has ever

been permitted to be. In Paris he tells Pantagruel: "Je me vante d'en avoir embourré quatre cens dix et sept depuis que je suis en ceste ville - et n'y a que neuf jours". (Pant.XV) When a prisoner captured during the Pricocholine war is interrogated by Pantagruel as to "l'ordre, le nombre et la forteresse" of the king of the Dypsodes, he lists among others "cent cinquante mille putains, belles comme deesses". Without the slightest hesitation Panurge claims them for himself "Voylà pour moy". However he does have one slight problem "C'est (dist Panurge), comment je pourray avanger à braquemarder toutes les putains qui y sont en ceste après disnée, qu'il n'en echappe pas une que je ne taboure en forme commune". (Pantagruel XXVI) Historic and scientific evidence of female voraciousness present no particular problem to Panurge. "Et quand ma femme future seroit aussi gloutte du plaisir venerien que fut oncques Messalina, ou la marquise de Oin estre en Angleterre, je te prie croire que je l'ay encores plus copieux au contentement. Je ne ignore que Salomon dict, et en parloit comme clerc et sçavant. Depuys luy Aristoteles a declairé l'estre des femmes estre de soy insatiable; mais je veulx qu'on saiche que, de mesmes qualibre, j'ay le ferrement infatiguable." (Tiers Livre XXVII) Frère Jan encourages him never to stop his sexual activity in order to avoid what happens to wet-nurses who, when they stop suckling, lose their milk. (Tiers Livre XXVII)

All these indications of Panurge's prurient proclivities precede and prepare Rondibilis' judgement. It is surprising and even inexcusable that none of the critics have ever taken this fact into consideration and have preferred to accept Rondibilis' speech at face value.

According to Rondibilis' medical theories, "les poignans aiguillons de sensualité" are the symptoms of a physical condition which can be curbed at will by the sufferer. If a man - and Rondibilis does not speak of women here - wishes to quell his desire, there are means and methods available to him. Continence is a voluntary, acquired ability. The principle underlying the "cures" Rondibilis enumerates, equates sperm with desire and all but one of the methods predicate the prevention of the seed reaching its ultimate destination within the male body, either by its inability to form or by its eventual destruction.

Drunkenness is the first method cited by Rondibilis as an alternative to lust. Wine, when imbibed to excess, cools the blood, relaxes the nerves and dissipates the generative seed. It also dulls the senses and confuses the movements required for the sexual act.

Secondly, Rondibilis lists certain plants and drugs which render a man impotent. These anaphrodisiacs were well-known at the time and were listed in Avicenna's Canon and Pliny's Historiae Naturalis.[42]

[42] Rabelais, Le Tiers Livre, Édition critique et commentée par M.A.Screech (Genève: Droz, 1964) p.217 fn. 37
Rabelais Lefranc Edition op.cit. Vol.V. pp.235-37, footnotes 9-18

The third means of sublimation is assiduous labor which taxes the body to such an extent that the blood must use all its power to replenish the body's strength and thus cannot transform itself into spermatic secretion. Representing platonic medical theory, Rondibils explains that nature considers the preservation of the individual more important than the propagation of the species. This is in direct opposition to the Galenic principle to which Rabelais alludes in Panurge's praise of the codpiece (Tiers Livre VIII), and which maintains the priority of the species over the individual. Idleness is the mother of lechery, maintains Rondibilis, and there are historical examples to prove it.

His fourth remedy is fervent study which creates such cerebral arterial tension that the generative secretion is too weak to reach the area from which it must emerge to propagate mankind. Rabelais again attacks Galen here by supporting the Hippocratic theory that sperm originates in the brain. Once more there are supportive historical references.

J. Barat, in his article "L'Influence de Tiraqueau sur Rabelais" which was discussed above, shows that Rabelais borrowed freely from Tiraqueau's work not only for his theories but also for examples used to illustrate them. Abel Lefranc and M.A.Screech have researched, listed and documented this also in their respective editions of the Tiers Livre. The plagiarism was, however, no more than a convenience and did not constitute an attack on Tiraqueau.

If the latter took offense, it was perhaps due to the comical context within which he found his words. Rabelais' purpose here was primarily to present a synoptic view of conflicting contemporary opinions on spermatogenisis and a number of other phsyiological principles which were debated at the time. If he attacked anything, it was the discord in his medical microcosm.

The fifth method of assuaging the prickings of sensuality which Rondibilis mentions and which Panurge not surprisingly chooses immediately, is the act of coition. There is no moral judgement and no evaluation of choice on the part of Rondibilis. He immediately prescribes marriage as the indicated treatment. However there is not even the slightest hint of any possibility of extra-marital relationships in Rondibilis' advice. Panurge should find the right woman and marry her the sooner the better, especially if he wants to watch his children grow up. As elsewhere, Rabelais is unequivocally in favor of the legality of marriage and parenthood. He does not miss the opportunity of mocking the casuistry of clerics through Frère Jan's interjection which supports Panurge's choice on the basis that famous churchmen indulge in what they call "macération de la chair."

As to a choice of mate, Rondibilis remains strictly on the physiological plane and sets his standards accordingly. Rondibilis suggests a woman of like temperature to Panurge. Since Galen had written that "The female is less perfect than the male for one, principal reason - because she is

colder"[43] Panurge's mate would, being of "semblable temperature", be his equal.

Panurge is jubilant. Rondibilis has told him just what he wanted to hear and Panurge happily agrees to marry soon. He even invites Rondibilis to the wedding and tells him to bring his wife and her neighbors.

There remains only the little item of cuckoldry to be discussed. Once again the beginning of the respective Chapter XXXII presages its humorous tone. Panurge recalls the initials on the Roman Senate's standard: S.P.Q.R. (Senatus Populus Que Romanus), which he transforms into "Si peu que rien" or the assonant "Seray je poinct coqu?"

Rondibilis' reaction bursts like a crash of cymbals into the tranquility of a mellifluous lullaby. The doctor's staggering surprise and baffled amazement at the absurdity of such an idle question about an elementary fact of life completely discombobulates the self-satisfied and unsuspecting groom-to-be. Cuckoldry follows married people more closely than a shadow, says Rondibilis, and anyone who is married either is, was, will or might be cuckolded. Rondibilis attaches no moral judgement to his statement but considers it a part of nature: "Coqüage ist naturellement des apennages de mariage" and "...conséquences naturelles". It behooves the husband to take adequate measures to prevent it.

[43] Galen, On the Usefulness of the Parts, translated from the Greek with an Introduction and Commentary by Margaret Tallmadge May (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968) Books 14-15, #6, p.628

To illustrate the need for the husband's surveillance, Rondibilis tells the story of Hippocrates, one of the greatest authorities ever. When Hippocrates once went to visit the philosopher Democritus, he wrote to his friend Dionysius to keep watch over his wife who was visiting her parents during his absence, even though Hippocrates knew that there was no reason to mistrust her virtue. "Mais elle est femme, voylà tout."

Adultery is treated strictly as the wife's transgression and not the husband's. Biblical definition,[44] law and social custom have always tended to penalize the woman's infidelity and condoned the man's. The adulteress brought before Jesus[45] had been taken "in the very act" and yet her lover had not been brought along with her for punishment. Woman's sin has always been man's peccadillo. Since the wife has no real claim to her husband's fidelity, its loss is not supposed to affect her. There are after all no feminine equivalents to the word "cuckold", "cocu", "becco cornuto", "Hahnrei", etc. Adultery has never been bipartite and yet Rabelais seems to make a deliberate effort at equal treatment.

Rondibilis likens the wife to the moon and the husband

[44] "Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her." Leviticus XVIII,20

[45] "And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst," "They said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act."

St. John, VIII, 3-4

to the sun. The moon becomes insignificant in the light of sun but in its absence, achieves its full glory. This simile can be traced back to Plutarch's Matrimonial Precept IX[46] in which he writes: "Whenever the moon is at a distance from the sun we see her conspicuous and brilliant, but she disappears and hides herself when she comes near him. Contrariwise a virtuous woman ought to be most visible in her husband's company, and to stay in the house and hide herself when he is away." Rabelais uses the first part of the quotation but omits the moral remainder. As Plattard points out quite correctly, Rabelais uses merely the part which supports his own theory.[47] Hippothadée uses the same comparison in a slightly different sense and this will be discussed in the chapter on "Religion".

When Rondibilis interprets the simile of woman acting like the moon, he endows her with an independent will and personality. She is constrained by the superior forces

[46] Plutarch, Moralia II. with an English translation by Frank Cole Babbit, "The Loeb Classical Library" (New York: G.P.Putnam's Sons, 1928) "Coniugalia Praecepta" - "Advice to the Bride and Groom" #IX, p.139
The identification is confirmed by:
Abel Lefranc (Edition of Oeuvres), Vol.V p.233, fn.25
M.A.Screech (Edition of Tiers Livre) p.214, fn.201
both op.cit. and:
Rabelais, Oeuvres Complètes, Édition de Pierre Jourda (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1962) Vol. I, p.531, footnote 4

[47] Jean Plattard, L'Oeuvre de Rabelais (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1910 rpt. 1967) p.238

of tradition and law to fade hypocritically into insignificance and ineffectuality under the tutelage first of her father and then of her husband. When she is left alone she bursts out of her bonds and asserts herself. It is then that she is at her best and at her most beautiful. This is true for the moon when, especially at night, it is alone in the absence of the sun and not eclipsed by it, and it is true for the woman in a similar manner. Woman's legal incapacity was enforced only while she was under the guardianship of her father or her husband. Widowhood had the major advantage of possession of legal rights.

Plattard writes that Plutarch's Matrimonial Precepts would place him on the feminist side of the "Querelle des Femmes" while Rabelais would of course be on the opposite.[48] According to Plattard, when Rabelais eliminated the moral lesson of Plutarch's Precept IX, he changed what was meant as a criticism, into a truism, a mere fact. It seems to have escaped Plattard that Rabelais transcended Plutarch's law of feminine behavior by recognizing woman's potential splendor. Plutarch maintained a double standard which was never condoned by Rabelais and which places Plutarch quite squarely among the anti-feminists. Here is part of his Precept XVI: "If, therefore, a man in private life, who is incontinent and dissolute in regard to his pleasures, commit some peccadillo with a paramour or a maidservant, his

[48] Oeuvre, p.238

wedded wife ought not to be indignant or angry, but she should reason that it is respect for her which leads him to share his debauchery, licentiousness and wantonness with another woman." Rabelais, who through Hippothadée emphasized the importance of the husband's moral behavior, was never guilty of such sophistry.

Rondibilis now gives Panurge his definition of woman and the theory which explains the need for her close supervision. It is here that we find the famous passage quoted on the first page of this chapter, which is so frequently considered to be Rabelais' opinion and definitive proof of his anti-feminism.

Tiraqueau had written "Item inconstantes, varias, leves, vagas, mobiles, instabiles esse probat..." in Law IX #96[49] which Rabelais changed to "un sexe tant fragil, tant variable, tant muable, tant inconstant et imperfaict que Nature me semble(...)s'estre esguarée..." Tiraqueau had not mentioned imperfection. However the idea was not original with Rabelais. "Est-ne foemina opus Naturae imperfectum?" was an old scholastic theme which was much discussed not only in the sixteenth century but was debated before the distinguished Medical Faculty of Paris still during the following century.[50] St. Thomas Aquinas had written in the Summa Theologica that

[49] Barat, op.cit. p.257

[50] Paul Delaunay, "Rabelais Physicien" in François Rabelais, Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort, 1553-1953 (Genève: Droz and Lille, Giard, 1953) p.40

the female was a misbegotten male, but that Nature had intended her thus for the work of generation.[51]

If one considers some of the references Rabelais made to the work of nature, it does not seem possible that he believed that nature could really make mistakes, not even in the case of woman. Panurge's speech to the Parisian lady confirms this: "La vostre (beaultéz) est tant excellente, tant singulière, tant céleste, que je crois que Nature l'a mise en vous comme un parragon pour nous donner entendre combien elle peut faire quand elle veult employer toute sa puissance et tout son sçavoir." (Pantagruel XXI)

Nature is omnipotent and accomplishes its aims at will and in accordance with "ce bon sens par lequel elle avoit crée et formé toutes choses". In the case of the Parisian lady, nature flaunts her powers of perfection.

Nature made no mistake in creating woman. It is man's ignorance which fails to recognize nature's benevolent aim and which frequently destroys the harmony. Panurge makes this point when he sings the praises of the codpiece. (Tiers Livre VIII) Nature had bestowed natural armor to the seeds of plants but not to man. He was created "nud, tendre, fragile, sans armes, ne offensives ne defensives, en estat

[51] Saint Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, First Complete American Edition in three volumes, Literally Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (N.Y., Boston, Cincinnati, Chicago, San Francisco: Benzinger Brothers, Inc. 1947) Question 92 on "The Production of Woman", Article I. Objection 1 and Reply to Objection 1 in Vol. I. p.466

d'innocence et premier aage d'or, comme animant, non plante; comme animant (diz-je) né à paix, non à guerre, animant né à jouissance mirificque de tous fruictz et plantes vegetables, animant né à domination pacificque sus toutes bestes". But when malice appeared among men, the plant and animal world rebelled and decided to emancipate itself from him. In order to maintain his superiority, man had to arm himself. Nature then inspired him to begin by devising a codpiece for the preservation of his species. Nature made no mistake by creating man defenseless. But for his own misconduct, he would never have needed defenses.

Nature created the day for man to work and gave him sunlight to ease his task. In the evening nature took his light away, implying that he had worked enough and that, with night approaching, man should amuse himself and then sleep in order to be able to approach his work fully rested the following morning. Nature with its good sense and propitious inventions thus provides man with guidance, comfort and joy. (Tiers Livre XV)

Rondibilis himself found it difficult to believe that nature had made a mistake when it created woman, or else why should he have thought about it one hundred and five times. He concluded that nature must have intended woman more for the social delight of man and the propagation of the human species than for the perfection of individual womanhood. Is this also Rabelais conclusion? Absolutely and unequivocally yes. If there is any doubt, Rabelais

reconfirms this in Chapter XXXV through Pantagruel who says that nature created woman "pour l'ayde, esbatement et société de l'homme". "L'ayde" is commonly understood to apply to procreation, but this aspect is no requirement for Rabelais. Through Pantagruel he advocates marriages also for and with barren women. (Tiers Livre VI)

The frailty of woman, her capriciousness and, in Shakespeare's words, "her infinite variety", should be enjoyed by man. She is to be his delightful companion, to be accepted with her imperfections as she is, rather than molded into the concept of femininity invented by society. With him she is to perpetuate the species.

But man is bewildered by woman's physiology. Rondibilis next explains that Plato did not know whether to classify woman among the reasonable animals or the brutal beasts because, unlike men, they carry an "animal" inside them, the uterus, which sometimes produces unpleasant humors and causes violent symptoms. If nature had not provided woman with a sprinkling of modesty, this peregrinating animal would impel her to a constant insanity of debauchery. Plato, Aristotle and Galen each had different ideas as to the origin and nature of the animal's movements which could cause a number of physical and psychological illnesses.[52] Woman was compelled to fight a solitary battle against this powerful animal inside her which, while it could never be

[52] A detailed discussion of this medical controversy may be found in M.A.Screech's Rabelaisian Marriage, op.cit. pp. 88-92

completely subdued, could possibly be tamed by some outstanding and exceptional women. The only way by which this animal could be satisfied would be through what nature provides for it in man. However since no man is able to produce enough to glut this voracious animal, there is perpetual danger of cuckoldry.

In speaking of Plato's dilemma in classifying woman and the various theories regarding the animal which drives her to such lasciviousness, Rabelais very deliberately omits the part of Plato's argument which first describes a like animal in man. Plato writes:

> And this was the reason why at that time the gods created in us the desire of sexual intercourse, contriving in man one animated substance, and in woman another.... Wherefore also in men the organ of generation becoming rebellious and masterful, like an animal disobedient to reason, and maddened with the sting of lust, seeks to gain absolute sway; and the same is the case with the so-called womb or matrix of women; the animal within them is desirous of procreating children, and when remaining unfruitful long beyond its proper time, gets disoriented and angry... (53)

Screech admits to being puzzled by this omission. In his article on "Rabelais, De Billon and Erasmus" (pp.250-1, Note 7) he suggests that this might have been a private joke, "in some ways analogous to Bridoye's misapplication of legal texts". However he dismisses this theory in The Rabelaisian Marriage (p.89).

53 The Dialogues of Plato, Translated by J. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937) Volume II. Timaeus 91, p.67

There is at least one quite tenable explanation for Rabelais' selectivity in quoting. When Panurge first asks Rondibilis whether he should get married, the doctor explains that, if it is a matter of carnal concupiscence, this could be quelled by methods other than copulation. By extension Panurge then clearly embarks on his lascivious exploits strictly at his own will. Rabelais thus renders woman's chastity superior and more virtuous by blaming an autonomous animal for the desire she experiences. In an age when feminists and antifeminists used Plato correctly and incorrectly to serve their purposes, it is not at all surprising to see Rabelais take advantage of the same device.

After the initial shock of being told by Rondibilis that he would surely be cuckolded, Panurge is delighted to hear that the good doctor does know of a preventive. Rondibilis illustrates this with the following allegory adapted from Plutarch:

When Jupiter established the calendar of festivals for his gods and goddesses, he assigned a day for each one. Unfortunately he forgot "le paouvre diable Coqüage" who was in Paris on business at the time. Upon his return, Coqüage of course objected to having been left out, but the calendar was already full and he therefore had to double up with the goddess of Jealousy.

Coqüage endeavored to exercise his domination over men, and especially those with beautiful wives. He demanded

suspicion, mistrust, ambush, spying and similar sacrifices. All men would have to revere and honor him or suffer the consequences of his neglect. A man's indifference to Coqüage would cause the god to ignore him, to stay away from his house "ains les laisseroit eternellement pourrir seulz avec leurs femmes, sans corrival aulcun". On the other hand, those men who honored him, who left their affairs in order to spy on their wives and who, motivated by Jealousy, would lock them up and maltreat them, would find favor with Coqüage and could always be sure of his company.

The moral of this story is that the anxiety of being cuckolded assures the misfortune it dreads. This very much coincides with Tiraqueau's sixteenth law which forbids jealousy between married people, indicating to the husband the various ways in which he could hold his wife to her duty. "Haec omnia si praestiteris, et tamen uxor impudica fuerit, patienter ferre memento."[54]

The solution set forth by Rondibilis is immediately ridiculed by Carpalim who maintains that women are unfaithful

[54] Barat, op.cit. p.153

A similar wisdom was expressed by Erasmus in The Praise of Folly: "A husband is laughed at, called cuckoo, and who knows what else when he kisses away the tears of his adulterous wife; but how much happier to be thus deceived than to wear himself out with an unresting jealousy and to disrupt everything with quarreling." The Essential Erasmus, Selected and newly translated with Introduction and Commentary by John P. Dolan (New York: The New American Library, 1964) p.113

merely because they automatically want what is prohibited. Hippothadée corroborates this by reminding the assemblage of Eve's eating the forbidden fruit.

This failing, according to Rabelais, is not peculiar to women alone. Earlier in his work, in the idealistic episode of the Abbaye de Thélème (Gargantua LVII) he had said: "Nous entreprenons toujours choses defendues et convoitons ce que nous est denié." As in many other instances, Rabelais speaks ostensibly against woman but neutralizes the criticism either within the same framework or elsewhere in his work. It is a phenomenon universally ignored by the critics.

When Rondibilis' definition of woman was selected to represent Rabelais' attitude toward women in general, a single statement was taken out of context and expanded into a philosophy. The choice was called plausible since both Rondibilis and Rabelais were doctors, but no attempt was made to verify the identification. Françoys de Billon's judgement was adopted as convenient proof. No stylistic analysis was undertaken to determine the seriousness of characterization and intent and the comic introductions which indicated humorous interpretations of the chapters were ignored. The stage is set for a chuckle and a smile by the interview between the clown Panurge and the voluble and gravely didactic doctor who expansively exhibits a great fund of contemporary medical theory, some of which is contradictory, but all of which is accepted literally as

Rabelais' true and misogynistic opinion. It is incomprehensible that such superficiality could have endured for so long and have calcified into a seemingly unshakeable judgement.

The humorous and satirical character of the Rondibilis chapters permits unhesitating acceptance of Rondelet as model for Rondibilis. The merry doctor, student and friend of Rabelais at Montpellier, who illustrated theories with amusing stories, fits perfectly into the scene. It is difficult to understand how his statements could have been taken at face-value to represent Rabelais' serious opinion, rather than as a mockery of contemporaries.

Contrary to prevailing attitudes, Rabelais did not believe that nature made a mistake when it created woman. Nature, being synonymous with the Creator, formed everything in the best possible manner for man. If there are imperfections, nature intended them to exist, as per the Thomist philosophy. And if nature created woman primarily for the "sociale delectation de l'homme et la perpetuité de l'espece humaine", it was to maintain the harmony of the world, which man so frequently, if unwittingly, seeks to destroy. By explaining the possibility of cuckoldry Rabelais tries simultaneously to minimize its importance and to support the superiority of conjugal harmony. The human microcosm of marriage, the joys of propagation and parenthood are the essentials and woman and sexual activity are its integral components. Neither is to be disdained.

Rabelais considers Nature to be a positive and benign force. Sensuality is a natural attribute and Rabelais does not censure it either in man or in woman. If Rondibilis enumerates methods for its suppression, he does so in a pedagogic and not in a moralizing manner. Sexual gratification is a decision to be made or suppressed freely according to the attitude of the individual and Rabelais makes no judgement.

The theme of woman in the Rondibilis chapters is approached entirely unilaterally from the physiological point of view and therefore the only valid judgements that can be made are those pertaining to physiology itself, such as Rabelais' views on the medical theories he enumerates and frequently satirizes. Rabelais' intention was to complement the strictly spiritual aspect of the chapter starring the theologian Hippothadée and thus provide another dimension. No global impression of Rabelais' attitude toward woman can be found by studying Rondibilis alone, as has been attempted for too long, and it is therefore essential to understand the religious counterpart before proceeding to other areas. This is all the more essential since, as a cleric, Rabelais had to be influenced most by the Church and its teachings.

Chapter II.

Religion

The Renaissance was a "fundamentally Christian age" according to Paul Oskar Kristeller, even though there were important secular aspects to the era. He maintains that while some of the religious convictions of Christianity were transformed, many were retained from the Middle Ages and none were really challenged, and the study of theology and Canon Law increased.[1] Humanistic scholarship contributed to Renaissance theology, especially through its study of Greek texts. (p.79)

Daily life in the sixteenth century was saturated with religious atmosphere. From morning till night, from birth till death, all actions were overlaid with religious customs, regulations and beliefs.[2] The Church was ubiquitous as a

[1] Paul Oskar Kristeller, Renaissance Thought, The Classics, and Humanist Strains. (New York: Harper & Row, "Harper Torch Books", 1955 rpt. 1961) p.73

[2] Lucien Febvre, Le Problème de l'incroyance au 16e siècle (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1942 & 1968) Part II. Book 2, Chap. I. "Prises de la religion sur la vie" pp.307-25
J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (Garden City N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1949 rpt. 1954) Chapters XI-XIII on Religion, pp.138-214

source of news, entertainment and justice. Religion permeated the people's sentimental, professional and esthetic lives - it was "la prise insidieuse et totale de la religion sur les hommes".[3]

This was even more intensively true for Rabelais, whose life as a cleric revolved almost continuously around the Church and its representatives. Jean Plattard says that at the time Rabelais wrote Gargantua no other social class had been more constantly within the scope of his observation than the religious of various orders.[4]

When Rabelais was a child, he is said to have received his rudimentary education at the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Pierre de Seuilly[5] and by 1511 to have joined the Franciscans at the monastery of La Beaumette near Angers.[6] The period of Rabelais' childhood and youth unfortuantely remains obscure. The first valid documentation of his life is his letter to the great Guillaume Budé, dated March 4, 1521 and

[3] Febvre, op.cit. p.322

[4] Jean Plattard, L'Oeuvre de Rabelais, sources, invention et composition (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1910 rpt. 1967) p.38

[5] Jean Plattard, The Life of François Rabelais, transl. by Louis P. Roche (New York: The Humanities Press 1930 rpt. 1968) pp. 6-7

[6] A. J. Krailsheimer, Rabelais and the Franciscans, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1963) p.8 extrapolates from this admittedly "old but quite unconfirmed tradition" mentioned in the Chronology of the Lefranc Edition of Oeuvres Vol.I. Georges Lote on p.13 of La Vie et l'oeuvre de François Rabelais (Genève: Droz, 1938) challenges this traditionally accepted fact since the evidence is merely an assertion by the lawyer Bruneau de Tartifume who died in 1636. Lote considers this to be inadequate corroboration.

and sent from the Franciscan monastery of Puy-Saint-Martin of Fontenay-le-Comte in Bas Poitou. It is generally inferred from this letter that he arrived at that monastery during the second half of 1520[7]. According to his "Supplicatio" to Pope Paul III in 1536, Rabelais entered the order as "juvenis" and regularly took minor and major orders before being ordained priest. By 1521 at the latest he is a Friar Minor of the Observance and a priest.[8]

When Rabelais and his friend Pierre Amy were discovered by the Franciscans to be studying Greek and persecuted for it, Rabelais fled to the Benedictine convent of Saint-Mesmin near Orléans.[9] The Sorbonne had prohibited the study of Greek and the Franciscans, who were not an order interested in intellectual pursuits, were enforcing the ban more strictly than the Benedictines. Rabelais solicited an indult from Pope Clement VII authorizing him to transfer to the Benedictine monastery at Maillezais near Fontenay-le-Comte. It was probably due to the support of Geoffroy d'Estissac, Bishop of the diocese of Maillezais and Abbot of the monastery of Saint-Pierre-de-Maillezais that Rabelais received this papal authorization.[10] Shortly thereafter and

7 Jean Plattard, État présent des études rabelaisiennes, (Paris: Société d'édition Les belles lettres, 1927) p.19

8 Krailsheimer, op.cit. p.7

9 Plattard, Life, op.cit. p.32

10 ibid. p.34

as a new Benedictine monk, he entered the service of Geoffroy d'Estissac as his secretary and as tutor for his young nephew Louis d'Estissac, travelling everywhere and almost continuously with the Abbot. The priory of Ligugé was one of d'Estissac's favorite places and probably the site of Rabelais' study.

With his friend Jean Bouchet, the "procureur" and poet, he frequently visited the nearby Augustine Abbey of Fontenay-le-Comte, about one league from Ligugé. It was headed by Antoine Ardillon whom Rabelais mentions in Pantagruel, Ch.V and in the Tiers Livre Ch.XLIII. They met Augustinians, Franciscans and Benedictines there, but rarely any laymen. The circle was usually limited to religious men, teachers, theologians and canons - people who had professed to renounce the world. They were not entirely isolated from the breath of Humanism and read profane literature together, the classics, the Rhetoriqueurs, the Italians and even the rumblings for church reform.[11]

There is no record of Rabelais' activities from the time he left the service of Geoffroy d'Estissac in 1527 until September 1530 when he registered for the study of medicine at the Université de Montpellier. His translations of the Aphorisms of Hippocrates were dedicated to d'Estissac[12]

[11] Plattard, Life, op.cit. pp.53-55, 57-59

[12] Rabelais Oeuvres Complètes, Édition établie et annotée par Jacques Boulenger, "Bibliotheque de la Pléiade" (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) pp.959-60

in July 1532 but by the following year he had acquired a more influential and powerful ecclesiastical protector, the Bishop of Paris, Jean du Bellay. On January 17, 1534 Rabelais set out with him for Rome as his physician on a mission to Pope Clement VII.

When du Bellay was named Cardinal in 1535, Rabelais again accompanied him to Rome and took this opportunity to seek absolution for his own "apostasy". Rabelais had laid aside his Benedictine habit and wore a secular priest's habit. Pope Paul III now granted him an indult and authorized him to return to a Benedictine convent of his choice and to practice medicine, except for any use of a knife or cautery or for the sake of profit.[13]

In 1547 Rabelais went to Rome once more with du Bellay when the latter was sent there after the death of François I. Eventually Rabelais also received benefices from the Church from 1551-1553 when the family of du Bellay appointed him to the Cure of Saint-Martin-de-Meudon and to that of Saint Christophe de Jambet.[14]

With very few exceptions, such as the hiatus at Montpellier, Rabelais was enveloped in the guiding principles of the Church and by their promulgation. The Church was his earliest source of information about the nature of woman

[13] Plattard, Life, op.cit. pp.177-78

[14] ibid. p.243

and the greatest influence during his formative years. The relatively short time spent in the discussion group headed by Tiraqueau has been assigned a disproportionate amount of weight and importance in the sculpting of Rabelais' attitude toward women, especially when compared to the consistent misogyny of the Church. Through its interpretation of the Bible, the teachings of the Church fathers and finally its sermons which were its primary indoctrinary tool and bridge to the people, the Church perpetuated the subjugation of woman.

Rabelais was well versed in the Bible, in the philosophy of the Church fathers and had also read numerous sermons. Jean Plattard counts nearly forty references in the thirty-four chapters of Pantagruel and a dozen more in Gargantua.[15] Encrico U. Bertalot renders a great service by adding to his article on "Rabelais et la Bible d'après les quatre premiers livres" several synoptic reference tables.[16]

Rabelais was familiar with his breviary, he was able to cite from the religious commentators of the Middle Ages and he joined others in the study of the Fathers of the Church.[17] He knew the Franciscan sermons of Olivier Maillard (d.1502) and Michel Menot (d.1518) and according to Lucien Febvre,

[15] Plattard, Life, op.cit. p.20

[16] Enrico U. Bertalot, "Rabelais et la Bible d'après les quatre premiers livres", Études Rabelaisiennes (Genève: Droz, 1964) Vol. V. pp.19-40

[17] Plattard, Life, op.cit. p.20

borrowed some of their ideas for his work.[18] Krailsheimer suggests that Rabelais may well have also known the sermons of Antoine Farinier (d.1480) and Robert Messier (d.1546) even though those of the latter were not in print until 1531.[19] Etienne Gilson lists a number of references Rabelais made to scholastic material that he probably read at the Franciscan monastery.[20]

For centuries the Christian world has considered the Bible to be its most influential and most universally recognized work of reference.[21] The religious atmosphere which pervaded all aspects of life in Rabelais' time was based on the lessons of the Bible - but as interpreted by the Church and disseminated by its priests. Individual reading of the Bible, even though translations were gradually becoming available, was strongly discouraged by

[18] Febvre, op.cit. pp.158-60

[19] Krailsheimer, op.cit. p.10

[20] Etienne Gilson, "Rabelais Franciscain", in his Les Idées et les lettres (Paris: Vrin, 1932, Second Edition 1955) See especially pp.201-217

[21] Further references regarding the role played by the Church in the subjugation and subordination of women through the creation of malevolent misogyny can be found in works such as:

Mary Daly, The Church and the Second Sex (New York: Harper & Row Publishers Inc. 1968)

H. R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex, The Myth of Feminine Evil (New York: Pocket Books Inc. 1965)

Katherine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate, A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle, Wash.: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966)

Nancy van Vuuren, The Subversion of Women as Practiced by Churches, Witch-hunters and other Sexists (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Westminster Press, 1938 rpt. 1973)

the clergy, who could thus permit themselves discretionary choices of those texts they wished to emphasize. Therefore the misogynist attitude of the Bible was exacerbated by explicatory sermons which sought to contribute to the subjugated status of and the pejorative attitude towards women. The texts chosen were of course those most detrimental to womanhood.

Perhaps the most important and destructive example of this selectivity is to be found in the story of the Creation. There are two versions in Genesis. The Priestly account (P document) in Genesis 1:2-3 tells of God creating man, male and female, in his own image. It stresses an original sexual duality, a simultaneous creation of man and woman as necessary complements to each other, where both receive dominion over other creatures. This account is totally ignored by the Church.

The other story, the Jahvist account (J document) of Genesis 2:4-25 is the one which is stressed even today and tells that Eve was made from Adam's rib. Thus she does not exist in her own right but only as a "helpmeet" to man. She was created in man's image rather than in God's, she was created as an afterthought, almost reluctantly when no other creature could satisfy man's needs.

The Jahvist version of the Creation implies that woman is inherently less perfect than man. The story of the Fall serves to prove her moral weakness and ruinous influence. Being less intelligent and virtuous she allowed herself to

be misled by the serpent and then in turn misled her husband. Adam's primary fault was to have listened to Eve and he was punished with the necessity of toiling and struggling with recalcitrant nature in order to survive. This punishment of course afflicted Eve as well but, as the greater sinner, she was also condemned: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3:16)

The Bible thus provides divine proof of woman's natural depravity, implicitly shows what happens when a man listens to his wife and explicitly subjects her to the man.

Many Old Testament stories were rendered anti-feminine through distortion. For instance Samson (Judges 13-16) in the Bible is a man who, though physically strong, is mentally and morally weak and has a number of rather unfortunate encounters with women. However he is usually represented as a heroic figure who was ruined by the wiles and falsity of Delilah.

David (II. Samuel 11:1-27) accidentally saw Bathsheba's naked body and then committed adultery and caused the murder of her husband Uriah. The Bible explicitly emphasizes David's lust but preachers were unwilling to ascribe mortal sin to a holy man such as David. They therefore concluded that Bathsheba must have seduced him.

The brief verse of Job's wife suggesting to him to "Curse God, and die" (Job 2:9) was exaggerated in significance

and turned into proof that wives generally increase rather assuage their husband's misery.

There are numerous warnings in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes against harlots and any women other than one's wife "for a whore is a deep ditch and a strange woman is a narrow pit". (Proverbs 23:27) Young men are urged to avoid lose women, but not to avoid women altogether, for "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord". (Proverbs 18:22) It is stated quite correctly that "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman". (Proverbs 21:19) The Old Testament makes distinctions but nowhere indicts women in general.

In biblical times women were property. The Decalogue (Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21) includes a man's wife among his possessions along with his house and land, his male and female slaves, his ox and his ass. A husband could send his wife away if she did not please him (Exodus 21:8-11) although she could not seek divorce from him. Women were even booty in war. (Leviticus 27:1-7) It is repeatedly emphasized that woman's real value depended on her ability to bear children. Sarah and Rachel were barren and "gave" their handmaidens to their husbands so that they might have children by them. (Genesis 16, 30) God is praised for making a barren woman fertile (Psalms 113:9) and conversely he punishes Michal by rendering her sterile because she criticized David for dancing uncovered before the Arc. (II. Samuel 6:16-23)

Of the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus is accepted as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church. It resembles Proverbs in its praise of the good wife and in warnings against harlots and contentious wives, but it contains a generalized misogyny which is not found in Proverbs. Zerubabel in I. Esdras 4:13-40 explains that women are the strongest force in the world and can lead men to crime for their sake. It is indicative of Rabelais' gentle attitude toward women - as perhaps an autobiographical plaint - that he chooses among the many misogynist quotations the one "Où il n'y a pas femme, l'homme soupire dans la misère" (Ecclesiasticus 36:25) when he says "là où n'est femme...le malade est en grand estrif". (Tiers Livre IX)

The authors of the New Testament introduced a new note which was increasingly emphasized and intensified by later generations of Christians. They disparaged the married state and sexual relations and they extolled virginity. Guilt feelings about desire were assuaged by abhorrence of the sexual object and its alleged seductiveness. It was perhaps due to the exclusively male authorship and priesthood that this resulted in misogyny rather than misandry.

Jesus himself makes few outright recommendations of celibacy. In Matthew 19:9-12 he concedes that not everyone is capable of living celibate and in the description of his second coming (Revelations 14:4) he speaks of one hundred forty-four thousand virgin males who "were not defiled with women". There is no recorded speech of Jesus concerning

women as such, but in contrast to the practice of his time, he treated them as persons. His disciples were puzzled when he spoke to the Samaritan woman in public (John 4:27) and in effect broke a taboo. He defended the adultress who was to be stoned in accordance with the laws of Moses (John 8:1-11) and he forgave the prostitute her sins "for she loved much" (Luke 7:36-50). On the other hand, he taught that there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage in Heaven (Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25, Luke 20:35) which may well have contributed to the prejudice against marriage found in Pauline Christianity.

The most strikingly anti-feminist passages in the New Testament originate with St. Paul. In I. Timothy 2:11-14 he repeats the Jahvist version of the Creation (Genesis 2) as his theological justification for the subjugation of woman. "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." (I. Corinthians 11:8-9) St. Paul draws the analogy that Christ is to the Church as man is to woman (Ephesians 5:22-24) and that "A man is the image and glory of God but the woman is the glory of the man". (I. Corinthians 11:7). Women are exhorted to subject themselves to their husbands. (Colossians 3:18, I. Peter 3:1) Above all, virginity is to be preferred to marriage (I. Corinthians 7:1, 7-9) since the person who is married cares rather for worldly things than for those which please the Lord.

(I. Corinthians 7:32-34) St. Paul in his day addressed himself to people such as the Corinthians whose city was known for its temple of Aphrodite whose handmaidens prostituted themselves as part of the religious cult. The Christian Church of the Western World conveniently retained his admonitions for its own purposes.

The Churchfathers enthusiastically followed St. Paul's teachings on the Fall of Man and the consequent necessity for the subjection of women. The Pauline recommendation of celibacy turned into a condemnation of sexual desire which eventually hardened into dogma. The rejection of sex was supported by reducing woman to an exclusively sexual being, a seductress who would lead men into sin and who must be reviled. Misogyny reached its apex in the Christian literature of the Churchfathers as they equated femininity with sexuality and sexuality with sin.

Tertullian (155-220) attacked woman as being "the devil's gateway" who destroyed man, the image of God. Because she brought death, even the Son of God had to die.[22] He wrote three treatises on marriage (Ad uxorem, pp.39-50; De exhortatione castitatis, pp.50-59; and De monogamia, pp.59-70) in which he condemned second marriages as illicit and almost adulterous. He warned Christian women not to be dominated

[22] Tertullian, De cultu feminarum libri duo in Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926) Vol. IV. Book I. Ch. 1, pp.14, 19, 37

by pagan fashion (De cultu feminarum, pp.14-27) and recommended that women, married or unmarried, should be veiled (De virginibus velandis, pp.27-39).

St. John Chrysostom (345-407) warned against the probable consequences of associating with women, about David's adultery and Solomon's apostasy. He explained in graphic detail that female beauty is but a storehouse of repellent uncleanliness.[23]

St. Augustine (364-430) quoted Monica, his mother, when she spoke to women who criticized their husbands in her presence. Monica told the women that matrimonial contracts should be considered as legal forms by which they had become slaves.[24]

St. Jerome (347-420) had a deepseated distaste for women as sexual objects even though he had a number of women friends whom he taught and whose friendship he appreciated. He wrote "On the perpetual virginity of the blessed Mary against Helvidius"[25] in order to prove that

[23] St. John Chrysostom, Letters to the fallen Theodore in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889; rpt. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm.B.Eerdman Pub. Co., 1956) First Series, Vol. IX. Letter I. Section 14, p.104 and Letter II. Section 2, p.112

[24] St. Augustine, Confessions in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886; rpt. Grand Rapids Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdman Pub. Co., 1956) First Series, Vol. IX, Ch. IX, No. 19, p.136

[25] St. Jerome, St. Jerome Dogmatic and Polemical Works transl. by John N. Hritzu, in The Fathers of the Church Vol.53 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, Inc. 1965) pp.11-43

Mary had always been a virgin even though the Bible mentions that Jesus had brothers and sisters. He also attacked Helvidius' subsidiary thesis on the equal value of virginity and marriage. He assailed this theory as well in a harsh polemic against the monk Jovinian[26] who had dared place marriage above virginity, who was attacked by all leading preachers of his time and who eventually was excommunicated for heresy and blasphemy.

Jean Plattard points to the interesting fact that Rabelais never quotes any of the above Churchfathers[27] even though he had demonstrated curiosity for their writings.[28]

In the Middle Ages the Church continued to maintain that virginity is superior to marriage and that women are inferior to men. St. Thomas Aquinas continued the condemnation of all venereal pleasure, even with one's wife.[29]

[26] St. Jerome, Adversus Jovinianum in Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Tomus XXIII entitled St. Jerome Opera Omnia ed. J.P.Migne (Paris: Vrayet, 1845) pp.211-337

[27] Jean Plattard, "L'Écriture Sainte et la littérature scriptuaire dans l'oeuvre de Rabelais" in Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes, Vol. VIII (1910) p.327

[28] Plattard, Life, op.cit. p.20

[29] St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1963) Vol. XLIII, Part II. of the Second Part: Question 152, Article 4 "Is virginity nobler than marriage?"; Question 153, Article 1, 2 "Is the subject-matter of unchastity only the desires and pleasures of sex-intercourse?" and "Can the sex-act be sinless?"; Question 154, Article 8 "Is adultery a determinate species of lechery distinct from the others?"

The Thomist theology of the Middle Ages was somewhat modified through the assimilation of Aristotelianism which lent scientific authority to its teachings. St. Thomas, following Aristotle's principles, thus held that the female is a misbegotten male since the active force in the male seed tends to reproduce a perfect male likeness. Her existence is due to some defect which might stem from a variety of sources. However, as regards human nature in general, this defect was deliberately intended by nature for the sake of generation. Therefore woman, even if defective, has a reason for being.[30] This reason for being is, however, limited to her help in generation since man can be helped more efficiently by another man in his other works.[31]

St. Thomas adopts Aristotle's principle of woman supplying only formless matter in reproduction and thus contributing less than man. For this reason, says St. Thomas, a child should love his father more than his mother. The father is principle of the child's natural origin "in a more excellent way than the mother, because he is the active principle, while the mother is a passive and material principle".[32]

[30] ibid. Vol.XIII, Part I. of the First Part, Question 92, Article I. Objection 1 and Reply to Objection 1

[31] ibid.(p.35)

[32] ibid. Volume XXXIV, Part II. of the Second Part; Question 26, Article 10, Reply 3c

There were two important exceptions to medieval androcentric theology. In the religious world there were cases of exceedingly powerful abbesses who were as potent and influential as their male counterparts and frequently ruled double monasteries of monks and nuns.

Far more important and wide-reaching, however, was the rise of Mariolatry, the elevation of a woman to a highly revered and idealized status. Consistent with its anti-sexual attitude, the Church sought not a sex figure but a virgin, a wife and above all, a comforting and forgiving mother. The Holy Virgin Mary, wife of Joseph - whom artists began to portray less and less favorably - and unblemished Mother of Jesus, had conceived in a sinless and immaculate manner and could be venerated for her spirituality.

During the following few centuries nothing changed to any perceptible degree. In Rabelais' day preachers propounded the same exegesis of Genesis 2 and the same Paulinist teachings reinforced by the writings of the Churchfathers and thus achieved the same misogynist climate as had their forebears. A good number of their sermons are still available to us and we can thus re-create a relatively accurate picture of the theological attitude toward woman at the time.[33]

[33] A. J. Krailsheimer in Rabelais and the Franciscans, op. cit. lists the following extant works in his Bibliography, p. 318:

Antoine Farinier, Sermones xxi de Peccatis (Lyon: A. du Roy, 1518)

Oliver Maillard, Sermones de Adventu, Quadragesimales... (Lyon: S. Gueygnard, 1503) (Bibl. Nat. D 5197)

The preachers such as Menot and Maillard were anti-feminists who equated sex with sin and who, when they spoke of women in their sermons, usually did so in a sexual context and with disapproval. It did not matter that their congregation was composed primarily of women - the preachers did not hesitate to attack them and sometimes even identified them through innuendo. They denounced the fact that women carried prayerbooks in fancy bindings. They denigrated their vanity in dress, their use of cosmetics, their frivolity and their desire to attract men. They attacked the general behavior in church and their complaints made Panurge's nasty tricks less incredible. (Pantagruel XVI, XVII, XXI, XXII - Panurge's courtship of "une haulte dame de Paris") [34]

The sermons were extremely explicit regarding sexual licence. Premarital intercourse between engaged couples was condemned for practical as well as moral reasons. Adultery by the wife was considered likely especially if

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Oliver Maillard, Sermones de Stipendio Peccati (? :P. Pigouchet, 1500)

Oliver Maillard, Oeuvres Françaises (incl. Carême de Nantes, Sermon de Bruges, Chansons) (Nantes: ed. A. de la Borderie, 1877)

Michel Menot, Sermons Choisis (incl. Carême de Tours and two Carêmes de Paris) (? : ed. J. Nève, 1924)

Robert Messier, (Sermones de Quadragesima, (? : A. Boucard, 1531)

Both Lucien Febvre and A. J. Krailsheimer believe that Rabelais was familiar with the sermons of these preachers (see Notes #18, #19 above) and Febvre even suggests that Rabelais himself might have done some preaching as a Franciscan. (p.158)

[34] The descriptions of the contents of the sermons were taken from Krailsheimer's excellent synthesis, and primarily from his Chapter 3. "Criticism of the Laity and their Religion"

gifts might be forthcoming from the lover, and was constantly denounced. Female depravity and the profit motive in sex were the main features of attack throughout. Continence was preached as if to restrain what could not be prohibited, and widowhood was considered to be more precious and noble than marriage. The preachers railed against sex which would lead to abortion and infanticide of unwanted children.

When the preachers spoke of family life, they seemed to be preoccupied primarily with sex. They frowned upon the practice of children sharing the matrimonial bed and witnessing what they should not. The monks had no family life of their own but as itinerant confessors they were exposed to the whole range of human behavior. While male modesty and nudity was scarcely mentioned or decried, the lack of feminine modesty (even in front of other women in the bath taken after childbirth) was considered to be shameful.

None of the sins such as violence, anger, sloth, etc. were attacked as much as lust. Even students were more often rebuked for lechery than for idleness. Taverns were sinful places because the servingmaid might frequently be a harlot and men might contract "la verolle de Naples", leprosy or some other horrible sickness.

6p. 19-32) and Chapter 5. "Criticism of Society and Morals" (pp.48-60)

It is interesting to note that, according to Krailsheimer, "one finds proportionately greater emphasis on sex in the sermons than in Rabelais, who is popularly (and wrongly) associated with bawdy". (p.57)

Was Rabelais influenced by the omnipresent ecclesiastic philosophy of woman's moral, spiritual, intellectual and physical inferiority? Yes, of course he was - it was unavoidable in his day. However this by no means warrants the epithet of anti-feminism which he acquired.

It becomes evident from his characterization of the theologian Hippothadée, who was Panurge's religious consultant, that Rabelais basically embraced the teachings of St. Paul. Jean Plattard lists eleven quotations and eight allusions to St. Paul, whom Rabelais frequently calls "le sainct envoyé".[35] Plattard attributes Rabelais' preference to the interest inspired in the humanists who sought to reform the Church by the Commentaires des épîtres de St. Paul (1512) of Lefèvre d'Étaples. (p.327)

Abel Lefranc identified Hippothadée with Lefèvre d'Étaples and declared that Hippothadée's speeches are derived primarily from the Commentaires.[36] This opinion has been generally

[35] Plattard, "Écriture Sainte", op.cit. Vol.VIII, pp.257-330 and Vol.IX, pp.423-436

[36] Oeuvres de François Rabelais, Édition critique publiée sous la direction de Abel Lefranc (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion 1931) Vol.V, Introduction par Abel Lefranc, p.LXXX

accepted although Screech suggests that Hippothadée might have been Philip Melanchton[37] and Saulnier believes that such conjectures are rather farfetched since the prototype might have been anyone.[38] Strong support for Lefranc's judgement can be found not only in numerous ideological similarities between the real and the fictional theologian but also in Lefèvre d'Étaple's relationship with Marguerite, to whom Rabelais had dedicated his Tiers Livre and whom he certainly tried to please with his "Dizain".[39]

[37] M. A. Screech, "Rabelaisiana" III. Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance, Vol.XXIII (1961) pp.514-19

[38] V. L. Saulnier, Le Dessein de Rabelais (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1957) p.188

[39] Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Jacobus Faber Stapulensis) was born about 1455 and studied in Paris. He later lectured on philosophy at the College Cardinal Lemoine until about 1507 when he came under the patronage of Guillaume Briçonnet (1472-1534), who was the spiritual director of Marguerite d'Angoulême. Lefèvre d'Étaples continued his scholarly work at Saint-Germain-des-Près until June 1521, when he was called to Meaux by Briçonnet to participate in a comprehensive program of diocesan reform. He tried to inspire critical spirit and a taste for antiquity and ancient languages. He was persecuted by the Sorbonne for maintaining that St.Anne had only one husband and that Mary, sister of Lazarus, Mary Magdalen and the penitent woman in Luke VII:37 were three different women with the same name. He was also persecuted for his version and commentary of the New Testament and especially for his exhortation to the faithful to read the Holy Word in French.

He finally had to flee to Strasbourg in order to escape his enemies. François I. had to intercede several times on his behalf and also named him preceptor to his third son. He became librarian at Blois and there finished his translation of the Bible, the first French one in existence, although there had been German, Italian, Flemish and Bohemian ones made prior to his. In 1531 Marguerite de Navarre took him to Nérac where he spent his last days until his death in 1536. Lefèvre d'Étaples did not attach great importance to tradition but demanded that the Bible be consulted in matters of dogma as the sole foundation of Christian doctrine.

Rabelais' treatment of the character of Hippothadée suggests quite strongly that he represents his author's ideas. Lefranc observes quite correctly that "Hippothadée est le seul théologien qui fasse bonne figure dans le roman rabelaisien".(p.LXXXII) M. A. Screech and W. J. Kaiser support a dichotomy in the role of Rabelais' "porte-parole" represented by Rondibilis and Hippothadée, each one complementing the other rather than contradicting him, each speaking from his source of knowledge, one from scripture, faith and Grace and the other from the physical background of science and the law of nature.[40] Such an interpretation certainly has more validity than the customary unilateral selective quotation of one of Rondibilis' statements as fully representative of Rabelais' opinion, discussed in the previous chapter. However the greater seriousness and

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The above information on Lefèvre d'Étaples is based on the following works:

Karl Heinrich Graf, Essai sur la vie et les écrits de J. Lefèvre d'Étaples (Strasbourg: G.L.Schuler print. 1842)

E. F. Rice, "The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity: Lefèvre d'Étaples and His Circle" Studies in the Renaissance Vol.IX (1962) pp.126-160

N. Weiss, "La Réforme française. Réforme et préréforme. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples" Revue de métaphysique et de morale (Paris) Vol.25 (1918) pp.647-67

Biographie Universelle (Michaud) (Graz,Austria: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt) Vol.13, pp.475-77

Nouvelle Biographie Générale (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères & Cie, 1859)

The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc. The Universal Knowledge Foundation, Inc.1913) Vol. IX, pp.114-115

The New Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1967) Vol. VIII, pp.604-605

[40] M. A. Screech, The Rabelaisian Marriage, Aspects

the more sedate and dignified language of the chapter gives it the impression of greater validity than the chapters devoted to Rondibilis. The mere fact that Rabelais spent a disordinate amount of his work in criticizing and mocking the clergy indicates that his change of attitude in dealing with Hippothadée must be viewed as intentional and significant. The atmosphere of the scene is respectful rather than satirical and the reader is invited to listen rather than to laugh.

Panurge once again asks for help in deciding whether or not to marry. Hippothadée does not respond until he is specifically invited to do so by Pantagruel for, unlike most clergymen of the time, he is of a "modestie incroyable".[41] (Tiers Livre XXX)

Since Panurge admits to feeling the prickings of the flesh and since he does not have the divine gift of continence Hippothadée advises him in accordance with St. Paul to marry rather than to burn. (I. Corinthians VII:9) Contrary to Rondibilis' suggestions, he does not in the slightest manner hint at the possibility of sublimation or suppression of the desires of the flesh. Lefèvre's own commentary on this subject seems to summarize Rabelais philosophy not only

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of Rabelais' religion, ethics and comic philosophy (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1958) p.138

Walter J. Kaiser, Praisers of Folly, Erasmus, Rabelais, Shakespeare (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963) p.156

[41] N. Weiss, op.cit., writes of Lefèvre having "l'âme la plus pure, la plus noble et d'une modestie incroyable" on p.665

accurately but concisely:

> Le celibat est de beaucoup plus préférable au mariage, car il est plus saint, plus pur et plus spirituel; mais que ceux qui ne se sont pas proposé la continence se marient; car il n'y a pas de péché à se marier, mais il y a péché à ne pas observer la continence hors du mariage.
> L'état de virginité est bon en lui-même, - il est bon aussi à cause des difficultés de la vie, - il convenait surtout à cause de ces difficultés à temps des apôtres.- Mais il n'appartient de garder cet état qu'à ceux à qui Dieu en a accordé le don. Il y a des hommes vierges, des hommes mariés, des hommes célibataires et continents après le mariage, et tous ces états sont bons. (42)

In spite of the amount of sensuality which permeates Rabelais' work and in spite of the fact that he himself had transgressed in his own life, Rabelais still considers spirituality superior to carnality. In view of the revival of Platonism, one is tempted to ascribe this feeling to Platonic influence, but Rabelais was a man of the Church and a Paulinist so that at the very most, his would have been a synchretic attitude.

Rabelais writes non-judgementally and indulgently of Panurge's fantastically lecherous adventures and pretended formidable accomplishments, but Panurge is a clown and an anti-hero. None of the royal family is ever tarred by such behavior. In fact both Gargantua's and Grandgousier's marriages are good and happy ones. At one point Pantagruel also compares the joys of a happy marriage to those of

[42] This translation is copied from Graf, op.cit. p.78

paradise. (Tiers Livre X) There is then no onus placed on the married state. It is simply an alternative to not having been chosen by God to receive the special gift of continence.

When Lefèvre d'Étaples wrote about sin, he said that there are those who vow to abstain from meat. If they do eat it, the sin is not in the eating but in breaking the vow. (Graf p.79) One of the targets Rabelais chose for his most venomous attacks were the lecherous and incontinent monks, those who took vows of celibacy and who broke those vows. For instance, Frère Jan tells the pilgrims that the monks and the abbé Tranchelion "biscotent voz femmes, ce pendent que estes en romivage!". Lasdaller protests that his wife is so ugly that no one would desire her. "C'est (dist le moyne) bien rentré de picques! Elle pourroit estre aussi layde que Proserpine, elle aura, par Dieu, la saccade puisqu'il y a moynes autour, car un bon ouvrier mect indifférentement 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 féconde." (Gargantua XLV)

Pantagruel explains the "Guare moine!" warning of Triboullet to Panurge unequivocally, "Sus mon honneur, que par quelque moine vous serez faict coqu...Les aultres oracles et responses vous ont resolu pacificquement coqu mais n'avoient encores apertement exprimé par qui seroit vostre femme adultere et vous coqu. Ce noble Triboullet

le dict. Et sera le coquage infame et grandement scandaleux. Fauldra il que vostre lict conjugal soit incesté et contaminé par moynerie?" (Tiers Livre XLVI)

Nowhere does Rabelais imply that the fault for such behavior lies with the woman but he clearly places the responsibility and the sin on the shoulders of the monks. The same immunity continues when the subject turns to cuckoldry, the second half of Panurge's question.

At first Panurge had been elated by Hippothadées recommendation of marriage. His feelings change abruptly when he hears the theologian's rather equivocal answer to whether or not Panurge would be cuckolded. Please God, he would not be cuckolded. When Panurge rejects this reply, Hippothadée becomes more specific.

There are three ways in which Panurge can improve his chances for a faithful wife. First of all, Hippothadée advises him to choose a woman from a good family. His bride-to-be should be well taught in the various virtues and in honesty and should not ever have been exposed to any but the most well-mannered company. This theory is very much in line with Rabelais' choice of well-born and well-bred young people to populate his idealist society at the Abbaye de Thélème.

Secondly the young woman should be religious and observant "aymant et craignant Dieu, aymant complaire à Dieu par foy et observation de ses sainctz commandements, craignant l'offenser et perdre sa grace par default de foy

et transgression de sa divine loy, en laquelle est rigoureusement defendu adultere et commendé adhaerer unicquement à son mary, le chérir, le servir, totalement l'aymer après Dieu". (Tiers Livre XXX)

This description of the perfect woman is almost entirely that of St. Paul but also partly "la femme forte descripte par Solomon" whom Panurge believes her to be. A footnote in the Lefranc Edition referring to the above quotation (Vol.V, p.232 #23) suggests that the portrait was inspired by the "virtuous woman" in Proverbs 31:10-31 but that there are no related details between Rabelais' text and that of the Bible. Screech contests the implied assumption that "Panurge knew his Bible better than Hippothadeus" (Rab.Mar.p.74) and that if Panurge were right, Hippothadée would be guilty of deliberate deception.

Panurge has a history of self-satisfying misinterpretations of advice but he has rarely misquoted sources in the process. Rabelais quite deliberately had him speak of the "femme forte descripte par Solomon". According to Screech, the phrase "Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30) was frequently quoted in the sixteenth century and suggests that "mulier timens Dominum ipsa laudatibur" might be interpreted as fearing the lord, her husband rather than the Lord, God. (R.M. p.79) This is unlikely as well.

It will be remembered from the first few pages of this chapter that woman in the Old Testament was not described as

pejoratively as in the New Testament and notably by St.Paul. Hippothadée stipulated that Panurge would not be cuckolded "se Dieu plaist". Solomon specifies the Lord's will in finding a good wife: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22), and: "...and a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Proverbs 19:14). When one examines the description of the "virtuous woman" of Proverbs 31:10-31, it is quite true that she is bourgeois, (Screech R.M. p.75) but then Rabelais makes quite a strong class distinction between Panurge and the "well-bred", so that this objection also must be eliminated. She is a woman who will do her husband "good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:12) and who "feareth the Lord" (Proverbs 31:30) as stipulated by Hippothadée. Much of the theologian's description fits the Old Testament woman, but she no longer exists, and Panurge is quite correct. The New Testament woman has taken her place and she is evil and deceitful and must be strictly controlled by and subjected by her husband.

The admonition to the wife to cleave to her husband and to submit to him in everything is to be found numerous times in the Epistles of St. Paul (I. Corinthians 11:3,20; I. Corinthians 14:34 where Paul refers back to Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22, 23, 24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5). With the sole exception of I. Peter 3:1, the doctrine is exclusively St. Paul's. The Paulist theologian Lefèvre d'Étaples held that the Epistles were a gift of God himself and not merely

Paul's own and that therefore the teachings they contained were divine.[43] Hence it followed that if the Church taught the subjection of woman, it was merely the transmission of a divine incunction and Rabelais but repeated it here.

Adultery had already been forbidden in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18) as well as in Matthew 5:27. However it was St. Paul who warned that transgressors would suffer loss of grace and would not inherit the kingdom of God (I. Corinthians 6:9,10). A religious woman who truly believed that in transgressing against divine law she would lose God's gift of grace, would be faithful out of fear and the implication is of course that her own virtue would not necessarily suffice. This was the philosophy of the Church as it had evolved from the Bible, as it had been interpreted by the Church Fathers and finally, as it had been preached from the pulpit in Rabelais' time.

The third suggestion Hippothadée makes to Panurge to reassure him of a faithful wife is for him, as the husband, to lead a pure, chaste and virtuous life so that his wife

[43] "Ceux qui comprendront, dit-il dans sa préface aux Epîtres de Paul, que ces épîtres sont un don de Dieu, en retireront des fruits, et ils les retireront non pas eux-mêmes, mais par la grâce. Mais ceux qui n'y verront que l'ouvrier mondain, ou plutôt Paul lui-même qui est déjà dans le ciel, qui regarderont ces épîtres comme son ouvrage et non comme celui de la vertu divine qui agissait en lui, en retireront peu de fruits, et, enflés par leur sentiment charnel, ils porteront beaucoup de jugements faux et s'arrêteront a des considérations vaines et inutiles."
Quotation from Graf, op.cit. p.52

might follow his example. Hippothadée reinforces this idea by comparing the wife to a mirror which reflects her husband's example and reminds Panurge that the best mirror is not necessarily the most ornate, just as the best wife is not necessarily the richest, prettiest, most elegant or noblest but the one who, with God's help, conforms most assiduously to her husband's ways.

Hippothadée then explains that just as the moon receives all its light from the sun, so does the wife receive all her inspiration from her husband. (See discussion on Rondibilis' application of this simile in the preceding chapter.) Hippothadée considers the wife to be strictly a reflection of her husband. She is but a faithful mirror which possesses no light of its own and which receives and reflects nothing but the rays he alone deigns to cast on it. Hippothadée's purpose is to make Panurge aware of the importance of being a good and faithful husband. An immoral Pygmalion can scarcely create a moral Galatea.

Screech suggests that the admonition to be an example might stem from Titus 2:7.[44] St. Paul not only tells Titus to teach by being an example for others but also Timothy in

[44] François Rabelais, Le Tiers Livre, Édition critique commentée par M.A.Screech (Geneve: Droz 1964) p.214, footnote #115

Attention is drawn to misprints on p.213, footnote #85: it should read "Tite, II: 5" and "I.Tim.II:9"

I. Timothy 4:12. St. Paul had cited himself as an example when he spoke of virginity in I. Corinthians VII:7. It is to be presumed that when Rabelais created Hippothadée probably in the likeness of the Paulist Lefèvre d'Étaples, he remained true to the example.

The implication of Hippothadée's lesson is obvious. Both men and women must be chaste within their marriage. Rabelais rejects the double standard of the mandatory faithfulness of the wife and the relaxed moral code of the husband. The double standard was a social phenomenon which found its justification in the Biblical subordination of woman and in St. Paul's admonition to wives to subject themselves to their husbands. Their inferior position lent licence to the husbands to pursue their extramarital pleasures with impunity. Rabelais, through Hippothadée, reconfirms moral equality between men and women which, in his day, was a distinctly feminist point of view. He leaves the prospect of a happy marriage strictly up to Panurge and his decision. If he chooses a woman of good family background who fears God, he will merely need to comport himself in the manner which he would wish reflected in his wife. Woman is not inherently evil, but she seeks to please her husband through imitation of his ways.

During his peregrinations in search of prescience, Panurge visits the "Sibylle de Panzoust", an old woman "mal en poinct, mal vestue, mal nourrie, edentée, chassieuse, courbassée,

roupieuse, langoureuse" who was cooking her meager and frugal dinner. (Tiers Livre XVII) She was an ugly hag who lived in an era before the cosmetic aid of false teeth and medical treatment of deforming disease, and surviving by her wits in a cave.

Pantagruel had suggested the visit to Panurge but did not accompany him. Epistemon was to go along to help decipher any responses which might solve Panurge's dilemma. The implication is that Rabelais intended to satirize the pythoness and thus could not grant her the dignity or respectability of Pantagruel's presence.

Rabelais' attitude was clarified much earlier in his Pantagrueline Prognostication (1533), an exquisite satire on a current fad. He had also advised against fortune-telling and forecasting in Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel where he writes "laisse-moy l'astrologie divinatrice et l'art de Lullius, comme abuz et vanitez". (Pantagruel VIII) The sibyl's ugliness may have symbolized his feelings for sibyls were not necessarily ugly. Among the five sibyls painted by Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel ceiling the range in age and beauty runs the gamut. The final obscenity of the Sibylle de Panzoust but reaffirmed the vacuousness of soothsayers.

Arthur Tilley maintains that "the Sibyl of Panzoust, in spite of her classical title, is only an ordinary witch.[45]

[45] Arthur Tilley, François Rabelais (New York/London: Kennikat Press rpt. of 1907, 1970) p.346

However, Rabelais very pointedly emphasizes at the end of Chapter XVI that they were not seeking knowledge from a witch but from a sibyl. (In Michelangelo's paintings the genii of the Intellect peer over the shoulders of his sibyls and prophets.) Both times Epistemon agrees to accompanying Panurge to seek out a sibyl but not a witch and even cites the Biblical prohibition against visiting enchanters or witches. (Deuteronomy 18:10) This repeated emphasis is most significant in view of the dangerously charged atmosphere created by the Church in its persecution of witches. The power of the Inquisition chastened Rabelais' satire of this subject more than that of his other attacks against Church procedure. Furthermore, according to Lucien Febvre,[46] belief in the supernatural and the occult was the rule of the time, rather than the exception and Rabelais was not necessarily immune to it.

Witchhunting was not a new phenomenon in Rabelais' time, but it did rise to new crests during the Renaissance. The Old Testament had spoken of fallen angels but the theological concept of demonology was developed only by the Christians when they were a minority in the Roman Empire. They developed the ideology of good and evil in conflict, based on the struggle between God and the fallen angels. (Revelations 12:7-9) St. Augustine, who had been converted to Christianity from Manichaeism, which taught that the forces

[46] Incroyance, op.cit. Deuxième Partie, Livre deuxième, Ch.IV "Les appuis de l'irréligion: l'occultisme?" esp.pp.405-15

of good and evil, of God and the devil, were equally powerful, was probably responsible for the height of emphasis on demonology. Many of the Cathari women who were tried for witchcraft professed belief in this duality. St. Augustine held women responsible for the heretical beliefs of the equal power of the dual forces because of their original sin.[47] Eve had been deceived by the serpent, the vehicle of the devil, and had succumbed to him. It was just one step further to consider woman to be a tool of the devil, the Anti-Christ, who is at the source of her supernatural powers. Women who were able to foretell the future were said to be in league with the devil against men and against the Church. Therefore the denunciation of women was often thought to be protection from the devil.

By the end of the Middle Ages the Church was in control of all education and determined not only who should learn but also what was to be learned, such as the association of original sin, Satan and women. As the Church sought to gain more power, it used heresy and witchcraft as pretexts to destroy its enemies and finally in 1233, Pope Gregory IX empowered the Dominicans to establish the Inquisition.

The major Church document in the persecution of witches was the Malleus Maleficarum, the "Witches' Hammer", which

[47] van Vuuren, Subversion, op.cit. Section II. "Witchcraft", Ch. 2 "Historical Background of the Development of the Witch Craze of 1300-1700" esp. pp.75-76

was published shortly before Rabelais' birth, some time between 1487 and 1489.[48] This reference book for the identification of witches and for their destruction was immensely sought after, and, even though there was no translation into a modern language before the twentieth century,[49] fourteen editions had appeared by 1520.[50] The authors were two Dominican theologians, Heinrich Krämer (d.1505) and Jacob Sprenger (d.1495), who were appointed Inquisitors for the sake of the eradication of witchcraft in various parts of Germany.

The Malleus Maleficarum consists of three parts. The first part attempts to prove the existence of witchcraft and witches and that he who does not believe in the existence of witches is either in honest error or a heretic. The second part explains the different types of witches and the methods to be used for their identification. The third part describes the legal technicalities of examining and sentencing a witch, of delivering her from the devil or to the civil courts for execution, mostly by burning.

Sprenger and Krämer directed their venom chiefly against women and so the misogynous age of the Malleus resulted in

[48] Gregory Zilboorg in collaboration with Geo. W. Henry,M.D. History of Medical Psychology (New York: W.W.Norton & Co.Inc 1941) p.151

[49] 1906 - German translation by J.W.R.Schmidt
1928 - English translation by Reverend Montague Summers according to Zilboorg, p.152

[50] van Vuuren, op.cit. p.83

the conviction of women as witches fifty times more frequently than men as sorcerers.[51] The Bull of Pope Innocent VIII which gave Sprenger and Krämer their enormous powers as Inquisitors warned that any opposition to them whatsoever would result in "excommunication, suspension, interdict, and yet more horrible penalties, censures, and punishment, as may seem good to him, and that without any right of appeal".[52] The risks were high for all, and especially for Rabelais who had already stretched his luck in his relationship with the Church. He could not afford explicit contravention.

Nevertheless, Rabelais' Sibylle does combine the traits of the classical sibyls with those ascribed to the feared and persecuted witches. According to Pantagruel she has not been legally declared to be a witch, "n'est chose confessée ne averée que elle soit sorciere". (Tiers Livre XVI) She writes her reply to Panurge in verse and on leaves, similar to Virgil's Cumaean Sibyl in the Aeneid. She works herself up into an ecstasy which in sibyls was considered to be divinely inspired but in witches was considered to be a sign of demonic influence. Panurge's reaction is certainly

[51] Zilboorg, op.cit. p.185

[52] van Vuuren, op.cit. Appendix p.184 (Copy of Bull taken from Montague Summers' The Geography of Witchcraft (University Books, Inc. 1958, second printing 1965) pp.533-536

not the adoration of a divine presence embodied in a sibyl but the abject fear of the devil in form of a witch. Panurge is of course always a coward, but Rabelais' literary device of describing the witch through his eyes creates a most effective portrait which may have led Tilley to make the above astute and quite correct comment that she is but "an ordinary witch". Here are Panurge's words:

> "Par la vertus Dieu, je tremble; je croy que je suys charmé, elle ne parle poinct christian. Voyez comme elle me semble de quatre empans plus grande que n'estoit lors qu'elle se capitonna de son davantau. Que signifie ce remument de badiguoinces? Que pretend ceste jectigation des espaulles? A quelle fin fredonne elle des babines comme un cinge demembrant escrevisses? Les aureilles me cornent; il m'est advis que je oy Proserpine bruyante; les diables bien toust en place sortiront. O les laydes bestes! Fuyons. Serpe Dieu, je meurs de paour. Je n'ayme poinct les diables. Ilz me faschent et sont mal plaisans." (Tiers Livre XVII)

Rabelais concludes the chapter with an obscene gesture on the part of the Sibylle which to Panurge recalls the Virgilian "trou de la Sibylle" and with the message written on leaves blown by the wind. However, "l'habit ne fait pas le moine" and superficial gestures do not a sibyl make. Rabelais pictures an old woman wise in the ways to survive. In doing what she knew was expected of her, she had received food and payment. She played Panurge for the fool he was in seeking her out and informed him of her opinion in no uncertain way. Rabelais recognized and showed "witchcraft" for what it was but did it without putting his neck in the noose of the Inquisition. As an anti-feminist he could

have found infinite ways of picturing evil, devil-ridden women, but he chose to mock the concept and to let the ugly old hag emerge victorious.

The Sibylle de Panzoust and witchcraft did not represent the only area through which Rabelais held some of the attitudes of the Church up to question, as regards woman. St. Thomas had taught that nature created woman for the purpose of helping man propagate the species, but that all other work could be better accomplished by man. On first impression, Rabelais' work reflects precisely this attitude. Gargamelle and Badebec appear merely for the births of Gargantua and Pantagruel and are then more or less quickly dispatched off the scene. (Gargantua III & IV and Pantagruel II repsectively) Rondibilis speaks of nature which, in creating woman, "a eu esguard à la sociale delectation de l'homme et à la perpetuité de l'espèce humaine, plus qu'à la perfection de l'individuale muliebrité" and adds a description of the animal which drives woman to her unquenchable sexuality. (Tiers Livre XXXII)

Yet with a few sketchy strokes of genius, Rabelais molds his parturient women into people rather than symbols, evil or indifferent. Badebec's life is granted merely one lone long descriptive sentence which is devoted to the identification of her husband, her father and her son: "Gargantua, en son eage de quatre cens qutre vingtz quarante et quatre ans engendra son fils Pantagruel de sa femme, nommée Badebec,

fille du roy des Amaurotes en Utopie, laquelle mourut du mal d'enfant: car il estoit si merveilleusement grand et si lourd qu'il ne peut venir à lumière sans ainsi suffocquer sa mere." (Pantagruel II)

Badebec's real meaning evolves from the expression of Gargantua's grief over her loss. To him she is not merely the means to procreate children but rather an individual whose loss causes him even to question God. "Ma tant bonne femme est morte, qui estoit la plus cecy, la plus cela, qui feust au monde. Jamais je ne la verray, jamais je n'en recouvreray une telle; ce m'est une perte inestimable! O mon Dieu que te avoys-je faict pour ainsi me punir? Que ne envoyas-tu la mort à moy premier que à elle? Car vivre sans elle ne m'est que languir." (Pantagruel III) Gargantua loves her more than himself, preferring his own death prior to hers. No man would utter such a wish in favor of a being he considered evil, inferior or mere chattel. Gargantua represents the sage "patter familias" in Rabelais' work and philosophically frequently speaks for him as such (e.g. "The Letter" Pantagruel VIII and "Parental Consent for Marriage" Tiers Livre XLVIII) thus voicing his own thoughts. Only the thought of his new son consoles Gargantua somewhat. He begins to think of the future and of possibly finding a new wife - not for the sake of procreating but to care for him in his old age and in case of illness.

One never hears of a second wife for Gargantua, probably because none is necessary to the story and certainly not

because Rabelais might have disapproved of second marriages, as other clerics did. In Chapter VI of the Tiers Livre he mentions the "prescheurs de Varenes" and "frère Enguainnant" who condemned second marriages. Krailsheimer quotes Menot as preaching that as gold is more precious than silver, so virginity is more noble than widowhood, and as silver is more precious than lead, so widowhood is more precious and noble than marriage. The gift of continence alone ensures safety.[53]

Contrary to Menot and the "prescheurs de Varenes", Rabelais advocates second marriages, even if the widows have been proven to be sterile. Once more Rabelais considers women to have other assets and attributes besides child-bearing. He would arrange the widows' second marriages as follows: "les fecondes, à ceulx qui vouldroient multiplier en enfans; des brehaignes, à ceulx qui n'en appeteroient et les prendrdent pour leurs vertus, sçavoir, bonnes graces, seulement en consolation domesticque et entretenement de mesnaige." (Tiers Livre VI) Thus Rabelais' attitude transcends even St. Paul's approval when he says "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (I. Timothy, 5:14), because Rabelais does not limit remarriage to young women nor does he enjoin them to bear children. At the same time he rejects the

[53] Krailsheimer, op.cit. pp.54-55

admonitions of the Churchfathers such as Tertullian (De monogamia) and St. Jerome (Adversus Jovinianum) against second marriages.

In Gargamelle's short appearance in Rabelais' work, she bears Gargantua for eleven months (Gargantua III) and gives birth to him through her left ear. (Gargantua IV) Rabelais goes to great lengths to document the possibility of such a phenomenon, concluding that this belief is of great advantage to widows of up to two months. This was not an idle invention on the part of Rabelais but a hotly debated question in his day, which involved not only the problem of female lust and chastity but the rights, duties and properties of legitimate heirs.[54] Great importance was attributed to all manner of sources in this affair and this is resoundingly satirized by Rabelais who holds no brief for the eleven month ruling.

Gargamelle dies "de joye" at Grandgousier's castle some time before this fact is mentioned in Chapter XXXVII of Gargantua and Rabelais writes "Je n'en sçay rien de ma part, et bien peu me soucie ny d'elle ny d'aultre". This statement has frequently been coupled with Rondibilis' speech (Tiers Livre XXXII) as additional proof of Rabelais' misogyny for ostensibly neither Gargamelle nor any other woman is of any concern to him. Yet quite the contrary

[54] M.A.Screech, "Eleven-Month Pregnancies. A Legal and Medical Quarrel a propos of 'Gargantua', Chapter III. Rabelais, Alciati and Tiraqueau." In Etudes Rabelaisiennes (Genève: Droz, 1969) Vol. 8, pp.91-106

was true if one but remembered the time of Gargantua's birth where Grandgousier showed an inordinate amount of consideration for his wife. (Gargantua IV)

Grandgousier provides a great feast at which everyone, including his wife Gargamelle, gorges himself on tripe. He tries to warn her to eat only little since her time was approaching, but she ignores him and joins in the eating and drinking. When her pains begin, Grandgousier goes to comfort her. The agony will be great but brief, he consoles her, but the joy will be so great as to erase all memory of the pain. (John 16:21)

Then he tries to think of the best promise he can imagine to cheer up his wife and says: "depeschez vous de cestuy cy et bien toust en faisons un aultre". He is shocked at her lack of enthusiasm. "Ha! (dist elle) tant vous parlez à votre aize, vous aultres hommes! Bien de par Dieu je me parforceray, puisqu'il vous plaist. Mais pleust à Dieu que vous l'eussiez coupé!" She soon apologizes, of course, but with qualifications "Mais je auray prou d'affaires aujourd'huy, si Dieu ne me ayde, et tout par vostre membre que vous feussiez bien ayse." Grandgousier, whose concern and attention have been "ne plus ultra" can now do no more than to entreat her to have courage and to go back to his drinking.

Rabelais shows Gargamelle to be unhappy with the role in which she is cast. She speaks of suffering for the sake of her husband's pleasure and mentions none of her own.

She does not betray even a flicker of supposedly innate joyful expectation of future sensual delights. Grandgousier's intentions are faultless when he speaks of what everyone believes to be a woman's greatest delectation and desire. His wife's bitter resentment comes quite unexpectedly and is against all accepted ideas. Admittedly the circumstances are extenuating, but not to the point of rebellion against and rejection of religious teaching. Woman is supposedly unable to restrain her sensuality (Proverbs 30:16), and yet Gargamelle seems to submit merely to give her husband pleasure. Besides, such submission is required according to St. Paul. (Colossians 3:18, Ephesians 5:22) Panurge later mentions "le debvoir de mariage"(I. Corinthians 7:3) in his mock encomium on debtors and lenders. (Tiers Livre IV) St. Paul had intended this marriage duty as a way for husbands and wives to satisfy each other's sexual needs, if not for propagation. Panurge manages to convert it into a pleasant duty: "Poine par nature est au refusant interminée, acre vexation parmy les membres et furie parmy les sens; au prestant loyer consigné, plaisir, alaigresse et volupté". (Tiers Livre IV)

For Rabelais parenthood is the supreme gift granted to man, especially when achieved in lawful wedlock, which then assures the perpetuation of one's name and seed. He expresses this through the letter Gargantua writes to his son Pantagruel in Chapter VIII of Pantagruel. Since this was the first book written and its first serious discussion

the topic was obviously quite important to Rabelais from the beginning.

Gargantua's letter consists of two parts, one of which glorifies parenthood and the other, education. It begins by extolling the most supreme of all divine gifts to human nature "par laquelle elle peut en estat mortel acquérir espèce de immortalité, et en décours de vie transitoire, perpétuer son nom et sa sémence: ce que est faict par lignée yssue de nous en mariage légitime."(Pantagruel VIII) Gargantua sees his own age come into flower again in his son and continues that when "mon âme laissera ceste habitation humaine, je ne me réputeray totallement mourir, ains passer d'un lieu en aultre, attendu que en toy et par toy je demeure en mon image visible en ce monde, vivant, voyant et conversant entre gens de honneur et mes amys comme je souloys." He has spared nothing in his efforts to make Pantagruel a good, honest and wise person "et tel te laisser après ma mort comme un mirouoir représentant la personne de moy ton père."

Children are man's immortality. Rabelais himself had at least three children. According to a request for legitimization, addressed to Pope Paul III and located in the Vatican archives, Rabelais fathered two children probably between 1528 and 1530. The children's mother is identified only as a "widow" and Rabelais' relationship with her remains conjecture. J. Lesellier, who found the document, implies in his article that it was the mother who obtained

the privilege of legitimization because of the father's disinterest and anti-feminism.[55] Screech disputes this, calling it a "rather dangerous imaginative reconstruction" since not even the name of the woman is known, whereas Rabelais knew Rome well enough to have handled such a matter.[56] Screech's judgement appears more plausible not only because Rabelais emphasizes the importance of children's legitimacy numerous times in his work but because he had already submitted a request for absolution to Pope Paul III in 1535, which was granted and was thus known to the Pope. Furthermore he perhaps expected an understanding ear from the prelate who himself had transgressed his vow of celibacy. Pier Luigi Farnese was known to be the bastard son of Pope Paul III.[57]

[55] J. Lesellier, "Deux enfants naturels de Rabelais légitimés par le pape Paul III", Humanisme et Renaissance, Paris (1938) Vol. 5, p.569

Rome, le 9 janvier 1540

Beatissime Pater. Supplicant humiliter s.v. devoti illius oratores Franciscus Rabelesi clericus seu scolaris et Junia etiam Rabelesi puella Parisienses aut alterius diocesis defectum natalium ex Francisco Rabelais presbytero et viuda geniti patientes, quatenus ipsos specialibus favoribus et gratiis prosequentes sibi...

Archives du Vatican
Regl. Suppl. 2,405, f.232

According to deux F. Barthelemy, "Un François Rabelais condamné en 1558" Revue du seizième siècle (1916-18) Vol.45, pp.22-23, mention of young François reappears in 1558 when he is accused of robbery in parliamentary court. It seems he had robbed the servant of the widow of one of the counsellors of said court. He was convicted on September 12th.

[56] Screech, Marriage op.cit. p.19, footnote 15

[57] Charles Whibley, Literary Portraits (London: A. Constable & Co. Ltd., 1904) pp.37-38

Thanks to a dozen sets of verses by the poet Boysonné we learn that Rabelais had another son, Théodule, who died at the age of two in 1538. He had been born in Lyon[58] and cardinals bounced him on their knees.[59]

Rabelais obviously loved children, and especially small ones. He was capable of reaching lyric heights of joy in some of his descriptions. Regarding the governments of new nations, Rabelais speaks of them as newborn children who must be suckled, rocked and amused. (Tiers Livre I) Panurge says "Je ne bastis que pierres vives, ce sont hommes". (Tiers Livre VI) He thinks of the child with which the wife,

[58] Lugdunum patria et pater est Rabelaesus; utrumque
Qui nescit maxima in orbe duo.

A. J. Nock & C. R. Wilson, François Rabelais, the Man and his Works (New York: Harper Brothers, 1929) p.223

[59] Quem cernis tumulo exiguo requiescere vivens
Romanos habui pontifices famulos.

Abel Lefranc, Introduction to the Tiers Livre, op.cit. p.VI

Boysonné's poem is of interest also in that it reflects the high esteem in which the little Théodule's father was held by his contemporaries:

Quaeris quis jaceat sub hoc sepulchro
Tam parvo? Theodulus ipse parvus.
Parva aetate quidem, simulque forma,
Et parvis oculis et ore parvo:
Toto denique corpore ipse parvus,
Sed magnus patre docto, et erudito
Instructo artibus omnibus, virum quas
Aequum est scrire bonum, pium atque honestum.
Has omnes Theodulus iste parvus,
Vitam si modo fata non negassent,
Erepturus erat patri, exque parvo
Magnus tandem aliquando erat futurus.

Whibley, op.cit. p.38, footnote 1

whom some day he might marry, will be pregnant: "Ce sera d'un beau petit enfantelet qu'elle sera grosse. Je l'ayme déjà tout plein, et ja en suys tout assoty. Ce sera mon petit bedault. Fascherie du monde tant grande et vehemente n'entrera desormais à mon esprit, que je ne passe, seulement le voyant et le oyant jargonner en son jargonnoys pueril." (Tiers Livre XVIII) Perhaps the most powerful reasons for Panurge's desire to marry are the perpetuation of his name and arms, the bequest of potential goods, the joy of playing with children and the wish to do as Gargantua and as "font tous gens de bien en leur serail et privé". (Tiers Livre IX) This prospect takes precedence even over the anticipated carnal gratification in marriage, which is so important to Panurge. Finally, even Rondibilis, when advising Panurge to marry, envisions offspring for him "digne de quelque monarchie transpontine." (Tiers Livre XXXI)

Saulnier remarks that in a work so devoid of all emotion, the paternal and maternal tone and the sentimentality about childhood afford numerous touches of tenderness.[60]

In all cases, without exception, Rabelais insists on the legitimacy of the children and the prior performance of the sacrament of matrimony.

The idea of propagation was certainly extremely important to Rabelais. It must therefore be especially noted that when Pantagruel defines the "usaige tel que Nature la créa",

[60] Saulnier, op.cit. p.77

meaning woman, it is "pour l'ayde, esbattement et société de l'homme" without the mention of childbearing. (Tiers Livre XXXV) Rabelais, in keeping with his ecclesiastic education, supports the Jahvist version of Genesis which claims that woman was made from and for man, as reiterated by St. Paul in I. Corinthians 11:8-9 and Timothy 2:13. If Rabelais feels that nature's purpose in creating woman is for the sake of man and for his use rather than as an equal to man and possessing her own individual merits, he but follows the Church's teachings. However, he transcends them in generally extolling marriage above celibacy, chastity and virginity, even without paternity, such as when he speaks of second marriages. (Tiers Livre VI)

When Badebec dies, Gargantua is almost unconsolable. Grandgousier could not be more concerned about his Gargamelle's welfare. Both husbands obviously care for their wives not only in the role of mother of their children but also as individuals, as human beings of great value and it is through the husbands' eyes that Rabelais' attitude is reflected. They are his royal family and their family relationship is intended to portray his ideal.

If he defends women's spiritual and moral equality, Rabelais is also compassionate about their physical suffering. As a physician he describes the clinical details of childbirth with remarkable anatomic accuracy and at the same time demonstrates that there may be danger of patients becoming victims rather than beneficiaries of medical science.

Chapter III.

Medicine

"C'est en médecin qu'il commence à publier" writes V. L. Saulnier in his Introduction to Pantagruel.[1] At the time this volume, the first one written, appeared in 1532, Rabelais was a physician in Lyon at the Grand Hostel Dieu de Notre Dame de Pitié du Pont-du-Rhône.[2]

Rabelais had come to Lyon that spring from the Université de Montpellier, which he had entered September 16, 1530 and where he had received his bachelor's degree by November 1st of the same year.[3] His prior knowledge of medicine probably

[1] François Rabelais, Pantagruel, Première publication critique sur le texte original par V. L. Saulnier (Genève: Droz, 1965) Introduction p.VIII

[2] Jean Plattard, The Life of François Rabelais, transl. by Louis P. Roche (New York: Humanities Press 1930 rpt. 1968) p. 105

[3] Jean Astruc, Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Faculté de Médicine de Montpellier (Paris: P.G.Cavelier, 1767) quotes the Régistre des Matricules at the University in corroboration of the following dates:
for Rabelais' registration (p.317):
"Ego Franciscus Rabelaesus, Chinonensis, Dioecesis Turonensis huc adpuli studiorum Medicinae gratia, delegique mihi in patrem egregium Dominum Joannem Scurronum, Doctorem Regentemque in hac alma Universitate. Polliceor autem me omnia observaturum quae in praedicta Medicinae Facultate statuuntur & observari solent ab iis, qui nomen bona fide dedere, juramento, ut mortis est, praestito; adscripsique nomen meum manu propria. Die 16 mensis Septembris an. Domini 1530. RABELAESUS "

permitted this most unusual acceleration.[4] During 1531 he had lectured publicly at the Université on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates and on the Ars Parva of Galen[5] being the first at Montpellier to lecture with the Greek text before him.[6]

By the time Gargantua appeared in 1534 Rabelais had edited in Lyon for Sebastian Gryphius the Latin version of four books of Hippocrates: the Aphorisms, the Praesagia, the Ratio victus in morbis acutis and De natura humana as well as Galen's Ars Medicinalis.[7] Rabelais worked from the

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for Rabelais' Bachelor's degree (p.318):

"Ego Franciscus Rabelaesius, Dioecesis Turonensis, promotus fui ad gradum Baccalaureatus, die 1 mensis Novembris, anno Domini 1530, sub reverendo Artium & Medicinae Professore Magistro Joanne Scurrono. RABELAESUS "

for Rabelais' Doctorate (p.322)

"Ego Franciscus Rabelaesius, Dioecesis Turonensis, suscepi gradum Doctoratus sub R. Antonio Griphyo in praeclara Medicinae Facultate. Die 22 mensis Maii, anno Domini 1537. RABELAESUS "

4 Rabelais Oeuvres complètes, Texte établi et annoté par Jacques Boulenger; ("Bibliothèque de la Pléiade" Paris: Gallimard 1955) Introduction p.XII

5 Plattard, Life, pp.94-95

6 Fielding H. Garrison, An Introduction to the History of Medicine (Philadelphia and London: W.B.Saunders Co. 1913 Fourth ed. rpt. 1966) p.196

7 Plattard, Life, p.109

see also:

Jean Plattard, "Les Publications savantes de Rabelais", Revue des Études Rabelaisiennes (1904) Vol. II. pp.66-77 in which he points out that Rabelais' comments are mainly corrections of mistranslations rather than innovative additions and commentaries.

original Greek texts in order to revive the true principles of these forerunners of modern medicine. Their works had over the centuries seen a linguistic transmigration from Greek to Syrian, from Syrian to Persian, from Persian to Arabic, from Arabic to Hebrew and finally into corrupted Latin.[8]

By 1537 Rabelais had returned to Montpellier to receive his doctorate on May 22, 1537 and also to deliver a series of lectures on the Greek text of the Prognostica.[9] The Université de Montpellier has always considered Rabelais to be one of its most prominent and illustrious alumni even though he spent but little time there. The famous "Robe de Rabelais", a wide-sleeved small-hooded red mantle, is still known to represent a doctorate from Montpellier.[10]

The extent to which Rabelais' work is written "en médecin", to which it is permeated with medical references, serious or satirical, can perhaps best be judged by an edition of the first four books annotated by Dr. Félix Brémond.[11] Unfortunately some of the explanations are by now obsolete and need to be superseded by a similar but modern work. More recent editions

[8] Benjamin Lee Gordon, Medieval and Renaissance Medicine (New York: Philosophical Library 1959) p.583

[9] Astruc, p.322, quotes Rabelais' plan from the Registre des Procureurs des Ecoliers at Montpellier:

"D. Franciscus Rabelaesus pro suo ordinario elegit Librum Prognosticuorum Hippocratis, quem Graece interpretatus est."

[10] Astruc, p.85

[11] Rabelais Médecin, Notes et Commentaire par le Dr.Félix

of Rabelais' works and the sixth chapter of M. A. Screech's Rabelaisian Marriage ("Medical Wisdom and Medical Controversy; the Advice of Rondibilis")[12] render this service to an all too limited extent.

In order to evaluate Rabelais' attitude toward women from the medical point of view, i.e. childbirth, venereal disease and the points raised by Rondibilis in the Tiers Livre (Ch. XXXI-XXXIV) one must bear in mind that medicine experienced a true rebirth in the Renaissance and that Rabelais was of needs caught up in its labor pains.

Medicine had come full cycle during the Middle Ages.[13] In ancient Greece medicine had been under religious control. Aesculapius was the god of healing and his temples were sanatoria for the care of the sick. The priests treated disease by rest and diet and assumed no responsibility for the success of their treatment. With Hippocrates (460?-370?BC) man's condition became man's problem. The gods no longer had the responsibility for disease and man had to find the solutions himself.

Brémond sur: Gargantua (Paris: Paillard, 1879), Pantagruel (Paris: Maloine, 1888), Tiers Livre (Paris: Maloine, 1901), Quart Livre (Paris: Maloine, 1911)

12 M. A. Screch, The Rabelaisian Marriage, Aspects of Rabelais' Religion, Ethics & Comic Philosophy (London: Edward Arnold Ltd. 1958)

13 The description of the historical background of medicine is based primarily on the work of B.J.Gordon, op.cit. and on Howard W. Haggard, Devils, Drugs and Doctors, The Story of the Science of Healing from Medicine-Man to Doctor (New York: Halcyon House, 1929) Part VI.

Hippocrates laid down certain rational principles of science upon which modern science is built. He considered facts to be the sole authority from which deductions could be made and obtained these facts by accurate observation. He was the first to differentiate diseases and to prescribe treatments and cures accordingly. Prior to his time all sickness was but one great disease and no particular significance was given to the varying symptoms.

Hippocratic medicine declined with the deterioration of Greek civilization but was partly revived by Galen (130?-200?AD), who was an energetic experimenter but unfortunately refused to admit any deficiency of knowledge. Much of his work is overlaid with dogma and mere speculation because Galen insisted on a theory for every phenomenon, whether or not it had any basis in fact. His elaborate theories gave plausible but usually erroneous explanations and completely obscured the simple principles of Hippocrates. Much of Rabelais' satire will be seen to be directed against Galen.

According to Galen the body, like the universe, was composed of four elements (humours) which represented certain qualities: heat (fire), cold (earth), moisture (water), dryness (air). Health consisted in the proper proportion of these qualities in the body and disease resulted when the balance between them was disturbed. Drugs which had cooling, heating, moistening or drying effects would then be administered in order to effect the restoration of balance.

Several thousand drugs were necessary for the Galenic system of therapeutics and a hundred or more drugs might be included in a single prescription.

The decline of the Roman Empire began to close the cycle of scientific progress. Rational medicine ceased altogether in Europe and Christian theology became the controlling influence in Western civilization. Attention was turned from the physical aspects of life to the spiritual. The Church was hostile to the scientific spirit and taught that all knowledge necessary to man's salvation, physical as well as spiritual, was to be found in the Bible as it was interpreted by the Church. Once more, disease was the will of God. It was supernatural and its cure was to be effected by the exorcism of some evil spirit or by some miracle. The responsibility for man's physical condition was again placed on the Deity and men were instructed to accept their lot in resignation. Medicine had reverted to its primitive state, at least within the Church's sphere of influence.[14]

When the Université de Montpellier was founded - the first notice of a medical school dates from 1137[15] - the

[14] Haggard, op.cit. pp.386-90 and on Galen, pp.339-340

[15] Hastings Rashdall, The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages (London: Oxford University Press, 1895, new ed. by F.M.Powicke and A.B.Emden, 1936, rpt. 1964) Vol. II. pp.119-28
Helene Wieruszowski, The Medieval University (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co.Inc., 1966) pp.78-80
Plattard (Life p.94) states that Montpellier was founded in the first quarter of the 13th century, an apparent error, which makes the statement that Avicenna still furnished the

physicians came from the entire Mediterranean area, bringing with them a number of different medical philosophies A proclamation of Guillem VIII, lord of Montpellier, in 1181 permitted any teacher of medical science from any country to give instruction and up to Rabelais' time Arab medicine was distinctly favored. Arab theories were succinct and quite exact in distinguishing different causes and cases of various illnesses and on the whole they were quite successful in obtaining cures. They were partial to complex prescriptions and also to some judicious use of astrology.

It was the rise of humanism under François I. which permitted the study of Greek works and the revival of Hippocratic and Galenic medicine. Their doctrines were adopted, causes, symptoms, diagnoses and prognoses were thoroughly described and there was rigid adherence to the system of the four humours. The most minute proceedings were religiously observed although they frequently had no other virtue than the respectability of antiquity.[16]

Rabelais' instruction took place during this period of transition from Arab medicine to the theories of Hippocrates and Galen. It is rather difficult to determine exactly what Rabelais was actually taught on the subject of women.

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the subject matter of half the lectures in Rabelais' time (p.95) of doubtful validity.

[16] Astruc, op.cit. p.92

I owe a great debt to Monsieur J. Monteil, Conservateur at the Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire, Section Médecine, of the Université de Montpellier who did an enormous amount of research for me in locating and listing the medical studies available at Montpellier from Rabelais' time.[17] Fortunately

[17] Denys Fontanon, De Morborum internorum curatione libri quatuor (Lugduni, apud Ioannem Frellonium, 1550) Vol. III. Chapters 17-30

Jean Faucon (or Falcon) Notabilia supra Guidonem scripta (Lyon: Ian de Tournes, 1559) pp.248-260

The following works of Guillaume Rondelet were listed already in the chapter on Rondibilis but are repeated here for the sake of completeness.

Guillaume Rondelet, Methodus curandorum omnium morborum corporis in tres libros distincta (Francofurti apud heredes Andreae Wecheli, 1952) Vol.I, Chap. 10; Vol. II, pp.382-387; Vol. III, pp.553-93

--------- -------- Ad cito et facile omnes morbos cognoscendos (published as an addition to the above) Ch. 15, pp.692-69

--------- -------- De compositione medicamentorum tam internorum quam externorum libri duo (published in the same edition as the above works) Vol.I.pp.899-908, 946-47, 1000-01, 1008-09, 1021-23; Vol.II. pp. 1060-62, 1091-92, 1120, 1126-27

--------- -------- Opera omnia medica (Genevae, apud Petrum et Iacobum Chouët, 1620) which includes the above plus the three following works: Introduction ad praxim, pp. 19-20; De urinis, p.66; Consilia medica, pp.71-74.

François Feynes, Medicine paractica, in quatuor libros digesta (Lugduni, sumpt Ioannis Antonii Huguetan et Marci Anton. Ravaud, 1650) Vol.II. pp.295-306; Vol.IV. pp.646-722

M. Monteil also mentioned the following three works which doubtlessly were not also published but also written after Rabelais' time, but summarize past teachings:

Laurent Joubert, Erreurs populaires au fait de la médecine et régime de santé (Paris: V. de Mehubert; Bordeaux, S. Millanges, 1578)

Jean Hucher de Beauvais, De sterilitate utriusque sexus (Aureliae Allogrogum apud Samuelem Crispinum, 1609) XXVIII - 910 p.

Jean Varandal, De morbis mulierum libri III. Multum antehac desiderati, nunc primum in lucem editi, opera Romani a Costa, de Briva (Genève apud Petrum et Jacobum Chouët, 1620) XVIII - 515 p.

these works were available to me either in an original edition or on microfilm in the United States, at the National Medical Library in Bethesda, Maryland. According to M. Monteil there are, however, no "textes de cours" nor any documentation regarding the teaching itself.

All but one of the treatises describe the various afflictions suffered by women during childbirth and otherwise as well as their respective cures, in an objective scientific manner. Since the purpose of this study is not to examine the technical knowledge of medicine but rather the attitude toward woman as promulgated by the professors, the highly subjective work of Jean Faucon is especially valuable.

Jean Faucon became professor at Montpellier in 1502 and dean in 1529. (Astruc pp.232 ff.) He died before his Notabilia supra Guidonem scripta was published but it can be reasonably assumed that its principles were taught while Rabelais attended lectures. Faucon not only refers to and evaluates his predecessors' theories but he also expresses his own very personal concepts regarding sexuality, embryology, pregnancy and childbirth.

In his chapter on the "Anatomy of the Uterus" (Notabilia pp.248-260) Faucon offers first a scientific refutation of Avicenna's description in De Animalibus which would theoretically permit the simultaneous birth of seventy offspring. Then, in a personal aside, he dismisses the idea because no matter what the theory, it would be impossible

to carry so many to parturition.

Faucon frequently quotes Galen and fully supports his theory on the four humours. While he does not cite him directly, he fully subscribes to Galen's "The female is less perfect than the male for one principal reason - because she is colder."[18]

The reciprocal influence of female erogenous zones can be explained by the fact that sensations travel with fluids through the veins. Faucon propounds three theories to prove that woman experiences greater delight in coitus than man. All are based on the Hippocratic theory of two kinds of sperm, the weak or female and the strong or male, which is also warmer, more spirited and pruritive. They also espouse the Aristotelian principle of conception being the union of passive matter, furnished by woman, and life, activity and force, contributed by man.

Faucon's description of woman being but a man turned inside out and fully complementary, is a teleological gem. Woman is colder than man, as proven by Galen, and she is imperfect, as set forth by Aristotle. Faucon refers to Averroes for anatomical details and to Hippocrates' prescription of laxatives to soften the umbilical cord. He even dips into astrology and its influence on the embryo. The chapter ends with a description of the relative psychological impact of the first sexual experience of a man and of a woman, confirming once more that

[18] Galen, On the Usefulness of the Parts trans. from the Greek with an Introduction and Commentary by Margaret Tallmadge May (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968) Books 14-15 #6, p.628

the greater sexual urgency was a physiological and scientifically proven axiom, not only unchallenged but supported by the medical world.

Rabelais' emphasis on feminine sexuality was certainly in line with the scientific knowledge of his time and in no way a misogynic exaggeration.

The mixture of sources and methods in the Rondibilis chapters of the Tiers Livre is typical and a direct reflection of contemporary academic procedure. However, it would be unjust to consider Rabelais as a mere mirror, an unbiased echo of contemporary currents. More often than not he rejected Galen in favor of platonic influence. Screech discusses several instances[19] in which Rabelais agreed with Pseudo-Hippocrates that semen is produced in the braim whence it descends through the spinal column to be stored in the testicles. He satirized the Galenic theory that semen was a product of the testicles themselves. Rondibilis' arguments are of course based on the impediment of the cerebral process for the control of desire, and thus entail certain moral judgements which were already discussed in the chapter devoted to this medical consultant of the Tiers Livre.

[19] M. A. Screech, Aspects of Rabelais' Christian Comedy (London: H. K. Lewis & Co. Ltd., 1968) pp.13-14
---------- The Rabelaisian Marriage, op.cit.pp.90-2
François Rabelais, Le Tiers Livre, Edition critique commentée par M.A.Screech (Geneve: Droz, 1964) Introduction p.XVI.

In the field of obstetrics Rabelais was a compassionate, critical but scarcely innovative product of the Middle Ages. Critics usually side-step the medical aspect and concentrate on the religious symbolism of the two childbirths, which admittedly was probably more important also to Rabelais. Abel Lefranc believes that Gargantua's birth through Gargamelle's ear (Gargantua VI) applies to Christian dogma regarding Christ's birth.[20] A.J.Krailsheimer considers it to be part of the controversy in which the Franciscans defended their doctrine of the Immaculate Conception against the Dominicans. He suggests that the auricular birth may have been Rabelais' farcical alternative to the theory of auricular conception which held that the conception of Christ (as the Word) was effected through the Virgin's ear.[21] Screech considers it to be Rabelais' way of asserting that faith is trust and not credulity.[22]

For the purpose of this study which seeks to examine Rabelais' attitude toward mortal woman, the medical canvas is more germane. Rabelais himself probably did not know a great deal about childbirth. Doctors were not called to

[20] François Rabelais, Oeuvres, Édition critique publiée par Abel Lefranc (Paris: Champion, 1922) Vol.III(Pantagruel) Introduction p.LII

[21] A. J. Krailsheimer, Rabelais and the Franciscans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) p.154

[22] M. A. Screech, L'Évangélisme de Rabelais, Aspects de la satire religieuse au 16e siècle (Études Rabelaisiennes, Genève: Droz, 1959) Vol. II, Chap.I

attend deliveries and in fact were prohibited to attend for reasons of modesty. Dr. Wertt of Hamburg in 1522 dressed as a woman in order to be present at and to study a case of labor, and was burned to death as punishment for his impiety.[23] Children were not delivered in hospitals and therefore Rabelais' experience at the Hôtel Dieu in Lyon would not have included childbirth. His studies probably covered descriptions of difficult and abnormal deliveries, judging by contemporary medical texts, but even Caesarean sections were performed by barbers rather than by physicians.

Arab medicine had continued to progress in the field of obstetrics but France was far behind. Rhazes (865-932 or 932) had already recommended podalic version but it took seven centuries for Ambroise Paré (1510-1590) to introduce it. (H.pp.39-40) Abulkasim (936-1013) described instrumental deliveries, but in Europe William Chamberlen (the French Huguenot Chambellan) devised forceps only towards the end of the sixteenth century and then kept them lucratively as a secret family invention until 1673 when his descendant, Hugh Chamberlen tried to sell them to François Mauriceau, the leading obstetrician under Louis XIV. (G.pp.689-90; H. pp.44-48) Avicenna (980-1037) whose chief quality lay

[23] Haggard, op.cit. p.29
Background information is based primarily on the above cited works of Haggard and Gordon, henceforth indicated in the text as "H" and "G". In case of conflicting information, facts were doublechecked against other medical works such as Garrison, op.cit. Dates used are uniformly those of of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1966).

in his ability to accumulate and synthesize the doctrines and theories of his predecessors, codified them in one huge work, the Canon, which was no doubt used at the Université de Montpellier.

The advanced techniques of Arab medicine were made available to physicians but childbirth was not within their domain. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, child-bearing women were in the exclusive care of ignorant midwives, who were usually women of low caste and who were held in low esteem. Not until Dr. Paré was the first step taken in the emancipation of child-bearing women from the complete charge of midwives.

The medieval Christians saw in childbirth the result of carnal sin to be expiated in pain as defined in Genesis 3:16. Women paid with pain, blood and death for the mythical fall of man. The enormous rate of mortality for mother and child was in part due to the resultant indifference to women's suffering.

The midwives were supervised by the Church. Abortion to save the life of the mother was prohibited under penalty of eternal damnation. In case of difficult delivery an embryotomy might be performed but the Church preferred and recommended Caesarean section, which would save the child's life at the expense of the mother's.

The Dominican monk Albertus Magnus (c.1200-1280) is said to have written Les admirables secrets d'Albert le Grand, contenant plusieurs traittez sur la conception des femmes...

for the guidance of midwives[24] and the Church councils passed edicts on their practices. However none of these attempted to alleviate the suffering of the child-bearing woman or to prevent her death. They were designed to save the child's life long enough to allow it to be baptized. (H p.27) There were even intrauterine baptismal tubes for applying the rite in cases of difficult labor. (H. p.4)

Rabelais' time saw slight progress when in 1513, at the request of Catherine, Duchess of Brunswick, the German physician Eucharius Rösslin of Worms wrote Der Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Rosengarten (G. p.687; H. p.29). This was a manual for midwives, intended to teach them safer and more efficient methods, which was however still marked with the superstitions of medieval medicine and the horrible doctrine of medieval and surgical midwifery. It did bring to light the work of the Greeks and it was immensely popular. About a hundred editions were printed and the book was extensively plagiarized. It was also translated into Latin, French, Dutch and English.

One of the medieval superstitions concerning childbirth

[24] Albertus Magnus, Saint, Bishop of Ratisbon, 1193-1280 Spurious and Doubtful Works: Les admirables secrets d'Albert le Grand, contenant plusieurs traittez sur la conception des femmes et les vertus des herbes, des pierres précieuses et des animaux. Augmenté d'un abrégé curieux de la phisionomie et d'un preservatif contre la peste, les fievres malignes, les poisons et l'infection de l'air. Tirées et traduits sur des anciens manuscrits de l'auteur. Cologne, Dispensateur des secrets, 1703 (Paris: La diffusion scientifique, 1962) Attributed also to Albertus de Saxonia (d.1390)

drew Rabelais' satirical fire three times. He derided the custom of reading "La Vie de la saincte Marguerite" to women in labor and of actually applying the book to their belly in order to assuage their pain. This custom was even known at court. Plattard recounts that when Marguerite de Navarre was in labor with Jeanne d'Albret, she told her brother François I. that she would rather have one of his letters read to her "en lieu de la vie de sainte Marguerite; pource qu'elle est escripte de la main que j'espère, elle m'aidera plus que nulle autre recepte."[25]

Rabelais extols his literary work as an effective, potent and universal panacea in the Prologue to Pantagruel. If one is unable to soothe a toothache, he suggests that the most expedient remedy is to apply the book, placed between two warm pieces of linen, to the painful area. Furthermore, the ultimate consolation for those who were in agony through their treatment for pox and gout, is to have Rabelais' work read to them. If these poor souls experienced no relief even then, they were known to have given themselves up to the devil, just like women in labor who have "La Vie de la saincte Marie" read to them.

The third instance in which Rabelais mentions this supposedly highly efficacious hagiographic work appears in

[25] François Rabelais, Gargantua, Texte établi et présenté par Jean Plattard (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres" 1961) p.206 note 2

Plattard cites as his source: Lettres de la Reine de Navarre, publiées par Génin (Sté de l'histoire de France, 1842) t.II, p.96

the sixth chapter of Gargantua which describes his birth. Only the first few editions carried the reference for by 1542 Rabelais expurgated it.

Gargamelle is in labor and Grandgousier tries to comfort her by reminding her that while the pain was surely acute, it would be short and the joy which would follow would erase all memory of it. The original speech included the following: "Je le prouve (disait-il). Dieu (c'est notre Sauveur) dict en l'évangile Joan.16:21 La femme qui est à l'heure de son enfantement a tristesse, mais lorsqu'elle a enfanté, elle n'a soubvenir aulcun de son angoisse. --Ha! (dist-elle) vous dictes bien et ayme beaucoup mieulx ouyr telz propos de l'Evangile et mieux m'en trouve que de ouyr la vie de saincte Marguerite ou quelque autre capharderie."

Rabelais' use of the word "capharderie" converts the smiling satire into serious attack and may therefore have been too dangerous a passage to let stand without compromising its author.

There were no deletions in Rabelais' attack of the incredible ingnorance of the midwives. He strips them disdainfully of their humanity and lends them the aspect of a cackling gaggle of geese.

Badebec dies in giving birth to Pantagruel. (Pantagruel II) The infant is so large and heavy that he cannot emerge without suffocating his mother. While the midwives - and there always seem to be great numbers of them flocking together - wait to

receive the child, Badebec's womb first spills out an unlikely procession of sixty-eight muletiers each leading a mule laden with salt, nine dromedaries carrying ham and smoked beef tongues, seven camels bearing eels and twenty-five carts of leeks, garlic, onions and chives. Returning to reality, Rabelais admits that the midwives are frightened. However, and in keeping with his previous description of the great drought, some of them immediately see the advantages of a greater thirst affording even greater justification for drink.

While the midwives "caquetoyent" (note the deliberately pejorative onomatopoeia) Pantagruel is born, killing his mother. There is absolutely no reaction to her demise whatsoever and all attention is directed to the newborn child. One of the midwives forecasts an auspicious future for the infant because he is born hairy. The mother who sacrificed her life for the sake of giving him his, seems to be totally ignored and is not mentioned. This is entirely in line with the Church attitude of saving the life of a child even at the expense of the mother and the stoïc acceptance of the high rate of childbirth mortality of the mother.

Rabelais quite unequivocally does not agree with such indifference. First of all he devotes an entire chapter to Gargantua's grief over his wife's death. If Gargantua ultimately opts for life rather than death, for joy at his son's existence rather than grief at his wife's demise, he can by no means be accused of ignoring the loss.

Secondly, Rabelais manufactures an opportunity for Gargantua to lash out at the midwives. He decides to stay home to care for his newborn son and to compose an epitaph for Badebec. He calls the midwives in order to have them attend the funeral. While speaking to them he says parenthetically ("où sont-elles? bonnes gens, je ne vous peulx veoyr") meaning that "saiges femmes" and "femmes saiges" are not synonymous. Abel Lefranc points out that this is not an original quip but that G. Bouchet had cited a fat monk who, when asked by some women as to when he would give birth, riposted "Quand j'aurai trouvé une 'sage femme'".[26] Nevertheless, there is nothing either in the scene of Pantagruel's birth nor in that of Gargantua's which belies the fact that what Rabelais might have repeated in jest he meant in earnest.

The episode of Gargantua's birth contains a visual caricature of the midwives along the line of the 'Keystone Cops avant la lettre'. The chapter (Gargantua VI) begins at a leisurely pace with Grandgousier comforting Gargamelle. As her cries mark the onset of labor "soubdain vindrent à tas saiges femmes de tous coustez". The impression conveyed by this scene is that of a horde of hags scurrying to descend on their prey. They converge, grope blindly under the mother's skirts, for modesty would proscribe the uncovering of a female even before other women, and mistake the feculent

[26] Rabelais' Oeuvres, Lefranc Edition, op.cit. Vol.III. p.41, note 22

results of her overindulgence of tripe for the newborn child, in spite of the accompanying fetor. It is remarkable that Gargamelle emerged from this scatological scene with her dignity in tact.

An eminent specialist emerges from the crowd, "une horde vieille", a midwife with an excellent reputation and at least sixty years of experience. She proceeds to administer an astringent so horrible and so powerful that all the muscles around Gargamelle's birthcanal cramp together and it becomes simpler for the giant infant to escape through a vein and eventually through his mother's left ear than through natural channels. While literary tradition required unusual births for the giants, it should be noted that Rabelais chose a midwife's probably not unusual but totally unconscionable overdose as impetus for his transition from reality into fantasy.

Whereas Rabelais scoffed at midwives and their doubtful help at deliveries, he himself made only one very veiled suggestion for improvement. It was customary for midwives to bring obstetrical chairs to their patients. According to Dr. Rösslin's Rosengarten (Haggard p.13) this was a type of armchair which had a "U" cut out of the front seat. It was used already in biblical times (Exodus I:16) and not really discarded until the nineteenth century. Rabelais does not speak of this chair in either of the birth scenes, but on the contrary, has Grandgousier suggest to his wife to lie down on the grass under the willows at the inception

of labor. (Gargantua VI) Delivery from the prone position was an innovation of the time.

Grandgousier also expresses Rabelais' compassion for the suffering of women during childbirth, when he leaves his drinking companions in order to comfort his wife. More than compassion, this scene also conveyes a sense of injustice. Grandgousier is shocked when his wife reacts negatively to his telling her to hurry up to have this infant so that they might soon get busy making another. Whatever her sexual appetite may be, woman overpays with the agony of childbirth. She is condemned to suffer while man can enjoy his pleasure with impunity. Supporting such a conclusion separates Rabelais from the prevalent opinion of woman's infinite and victimizing sexual urges. None of Rabelais' royal protagonists and spokesmen support the popular philosophy. Only Panurge, the satyr of a clown, dwells on the nymphomania of women and Rondibilis, who misquotes Plato or quotes him selectively regarding the animal inside woman which compels her to excessive sexual pursuits.

The impunity with which sexual pleasure may be enjoyed is not always entirely complete. Rabelais makes numerous references to "la verolle" and to "les vérolez", to the ubiquitous Pox or Syphilis.

Venereal disease was supposedly brought to Europe by the sailors of Columbus. Conditions for its reception and spread were ideal since this was the time of warfare over Naples between Charles VIII and Ferdinand. The mercenaries

of several armies came to Naples and to its brothels and ultimately scattered back to their own countries, taking the illness with them. By 1496 syphilis had appeared in France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland and Greece, by 1497 in Scotland and by 1499 in Hungary and in Russia. (H. p.239)

At first the venereal transmission of the disease was not recognized and it was thought to be spread by contagion. In 1497 by act of parliament in Paris, all persons infected with the new disease were prohibited under pain of death from speaking to others. The diseased persons who lived in the city were isolated in the suburbs of St.-Germain and non-residents were ordered to return to their places of residence or birth. They were given four sous to assist them. The Parisians gave little thought to the additional spread of infection this caused.

Once the sexual nature of the disease was recognized, no country would admit to its origin. Europe blamed it on America and America blamed it on Europe. The Spaniards called it the disease of Española; the Italians called it the "Mal Francese" or "Morbus Gallicus"; the French called it the "Mal de Naples" (Rabelais refers to the "napleux" in his Pantagrueline Prognostication, Chap.V); England referred to it as the "France Pox"; and in Germany it was known as "der Franzosen böse Blättern"; the Russians named it the Polish disease and the Poles blamed it on the Germans and called it the German sickness; for the Turks it was the French disease and for the Indians and the

Japanese it was the Portuguese disease. (H. p.240, G. p.524) It was ultimately Girolamo Fracastoro (1478-1553) who originated the term "syphilis" with his medical poem entitled Syphilis sive Morbus Gallicus in 1530.

The first physician to describe the stages of syphilis and its transmission to children was the Swiss, Phillipus Aureolus Paracelsus (1490-1541). (H. p.242) He was a mystic who publicly burned the works of Avicenna and Galen and to this day remains controversial. His interests centered in alchemy and most of his remedies - simple medicaments in contrast to Galen's complicated mixtures - were mineral substances such as mercury for the cure of syphilis. It proved to be more effective than the guaiacum, sasparilla and sassafras which had been used heretofore.

Unfortunately the mercury was used to excess. Patients were placed into sweatboxes into which mercury-laden vapors were propelled causing the perspiration to gush from them for as long as they could endure it. Sometimes fainting spells released the sufferer from this ordeal, and sometimes he was then wrapped in heated woolen blankets for more hours of perspiration. There was also a theory of oral flux, abundant salivation being considered as cleansing, and special bibs existed for those undergoing such treatment.

When Rabelais mentions "Le pape Sixte, gresseur de vérolle" in Épistémon's account of the world of the damned (Pantagruel XXX) he speaks of yet another treatment. Doctors would mix liniments composed of several drugs of which the main one was

always mercury. In accordance with their school of thought they rubbed it on the joints, on the arms and legs, on the spine and neck, on the neck and navel and others on the entire body. Most of the masseurs greased their poor patients so thoroughly front and back that their skin looked like polished leather.[27]

The cure of syphilis seemed like the ultimate in suffering to Rabelais. In the Prologue to Pantagruel he extols the effectiveness of his book as a remedy when other treatments have failed, and after "ilz estoyent bien oigtz et engresséz à poinct, et le visaige leur reluysoit comme le claveuer d'un charnier, et les dentz leurs tressailloyent comme font les marchettes d'un clavier d'orgues ou d'espinette quand on joue dessus, et que le gosier leur escumoit comme à un verrat que les vaultres ont aculé entre les toilles!"

A footnote to the term "verolez" in the Lefranc Edition (Vol.I, p.3, fb.3) of Rabelais' works suggests that the pox-ridden were dear to the author since he dedicated his writings to them in the Prologue to Gargantua: "vérolez très précieux (car à vous, non à aultres, sont dédiez mes escriptz)'. This seems somewhat exaggerated.

Rabelais felt that venereal disease was sooner or later unavoidable. "Car croyez que ceulx qui n'ont eu la vérolle

[27] Henri Chaumartin, "Rabelais et Dame Vérole" in Rabelais Écrivain-Médecin par vingt-deux médecins Français et Italiens (Paris: Editions Garance, 1959) pp.225-227

en ce monde-cy l'ont en l'aultre" says Épistémon upon returning from hell. (Pantagruel XXX) Certainly Rabelais felt pity for them, certainly he wished to alleviate all suffering as a doctor and certainly as a writer he hoped to contribute thereto by his writings. His motto throughout is "Voyant le dueil qui vous mine et consomme: / Mieux est de ris que de larmes escripre". (Aux Lecteurs, Garantua) This does not, however, make the sufferers of venereal disease "chers à notre auteur".

Quite on the contrary, Rabelais seemed to have been rather repelled by the illness. It is a punishment, according to the enigma in Gargantua, Ch.II: "Mais l'an viendra... Onquel le dos d'un roy trop peu courtoys / P o y v r é sera soulz un habit d'hermite". It is what one needs least (Pantagruel XVII) "...qui ne vous fauldront non plus que la vérolle en vostre nécessité". He compares a pox-ridden woman to "l'eaue des maretz et fontaines [où] ordure ou venin aulcun y estoit" (Cinquième Livre XXX) and specifies this "ordure" as "chancre, vérolle, pissechaulde, poullaine grenés et telz autres menuz suffraiges".

In the Pantagrueline Prognostication (Ch.V) the pox-ridden unfortunates suffer condemnation by association. They are named together with "putains, maquerelles, marjolets, bougrins, bragars, n a p l e u x, eschancréz, ribleurs, rufiens, caignardiers, chamberières d'hostelerie, 'nomina mulierum desinentia in' ière, 'ut' lingière, advocatière, tavernière, buandière, frippière" - a list of the lowest social caste.

Further evidence of Rabelais' unequivocal repulsion and even moral disapproval appears in the Inscription over the portals of the Abbaye de Thélème. Since only the cream of mankind is to enter this ideal society, it means "ny vous gualous, vérollez jusqu'à l'ous; / Portez vos loups ailleurs paistre en bonheur, / Croustelevéz, remplis de déshonneur." (Gargantua LIV) This admonition conforms to Rabelais' theory that the well-born would never catch such an illness and would thus never dishonor themselves.

Nevertheless, disapproval of such dishonor is by no means to be mistaken for condemnation of the sexual act itself, for Rabelais' entire work is a celebration of nature's ways. His aversion probably reverts to a belief that the symptoms of the pox are visible and that they can be shunned. In the above cited paragraph from the Pantagrueline Prognostication he advises that these people "se doibvent garder de vérolle, de chancre, de pisses chauldes, poullains grenetz, etc." The poet Jean Drouyn, a contemporary of Rabelais, warns in his Ballade sur la grosse vérole: "...gardez-vous de monter sur le tas / Sans chandelle: ne soyez point honteux, / Fouillez, jetez, regardez haut et bas, / Et en après prenez tous vos ébats."[28]

It should be noted that nowhere, either outright or by inference, does Rabelais throw the blame for the illness on women.

[29] Marcel Béalu, La poésie érotique de langue française (Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1971) pp.26-27

Rabelais was exposed to a confluence of different currents of medical teachings, most of which shared the common beliefs of the inferiority of the female and of her intense and infinite sexuality. His writings neither reflect nor support such Aristotelian, Galenic or similar theories. On the contrary, Rabelais rejects the Church-inspired medieval stoïc acceptance of woman's well-deserved agony in childbirth and contemptuously satirizes the omnipotent midwives and mystic superstitions. He expresses his compassion, empathy and even helplessness through Grandgousier at the birth of Gargantua. When Badebec dies in childbirth, Gargantua grieves for her not only as the mother of his child but as his beloved companion, his wife.

As a doctor, Rabelais pitied the pox-ridden and sought to assuage their pain and sufferings. As a man, he was repelled by the illness and the ugliness of the cure. Nevertheless he considers it a fact of life and condemns neither woman nor man - and least of all the sexual act. The illness never causes him to advocate celibacy. For Rabelais, "le jeu en vaut bien la chandelle".

Chapter IV.

The Heritage of the Ancients, Castiglione, Erasmus and the Querelle des Femmes

Rabelais was a man of the Church and a physician who used Literature as his tool for expression. He was an innovator who became one of the foremost writers of all time but he built on tradition and was very much influenced by the ambiance of his day.

One of the most pervasive currents which threaded their way through the Renaissance, was the reverence for the newly rediscovered works of the writings of classical antiquity. No aspect of Renaissance literature, culture or science was immune to the influence and Rabelais was no exception. On the subject of woman, the ancients but reinforced the prevalent misogyny in spite of the resurgence of Platonism.[1] Greek literature which was made more and more available in translation in Rabelais' day, was even more anti-feminist than that of the Romans.

[1] Summary discussions on anti-feminism can be found in: H. R. Hays, The Dangerous Sex, The Myth of Feminine Evil (New York: Pocket Books Inc., 1965)
Katherine M. Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate, a History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966)

The Greeks had Pandora, the equivalent of Eve in her aspect of being an evil first woman. As in the Bible, there are two versions of the creation in regard to the first woman. In the original story Zeus sends Pandora, whose name means "all-giving", to bless man. She brings a box containing her marriage presents into which every god had put some blessing. When she opened the box, all the blessings escaped except for hope.

In the 8th century BC and about three centuries before the Jahvist version of Eve's story, a Greek farmer Hesiod told that Zeus had ordered Hephaestus to create Pandora in order to punish man for taking the fire which Prometheus had stolen from heaven. Each of the gods contributed something to make Pandora irresistible and she was presented to Epimetheus, who made the mistake of accepting her. Zeus had given her a jar - not a box in this version - ostensibly containing her dowry, which was a collection of all the evils that befall mankind. When Pandora opened it to look inside, the evils escaped and spread throughout the world. When Rabelais speaks of her in the Prologue and Chapter III. of the Tiers Livre, he speaks of "la bouteille" and not "la boîte". It is Hesiod's version which prevailed, and Pandora brought evil.

Theophrastus (ca. 372-287 BC) summarizes the jaundiced attitude toward married life which colored most of ancient

Greek literature.[2] Woman was at most a breeder of children and a housekeeper. She was limited in mind and character and therefore could not be man's solace, mental stimulation or emotional support. She was essentially a servant and her virtues could be quietness, thrift and industry. Rondibilis cites him as an authority in Ch. XXXI (Tiers Livre) when he says "De faict, Theophraste quelques foys interrogé quelle beste, quelle chose il pensoit estre amourettes, respondit que c'estoient passions des esprits ocieux". Theophrastus considers woman equally troublesome whether she is beautiful or ugly, for "It is difficult to guard what many long for. It is annoying to have what no one thinks worth possessing".[3] This is the observation which Frère Jan twists into an argument in favor of cuckoldry when he advises Panurge. (Tiers Livre XXVIII) Quite obviously Rabelais does not take his source seriously.

Greek Middle and New Comedy abounds in jibes against marriage and shrewish wives for whom the stereotype was probably Socrates' wife, Xanthippe. Among the well-known playwrights, Euripides alone can be called pro-feminist and he was resoundingly satirized for this by Aristophanes (450-385 BC) in his Thesmophoriazusae.

[2] Rogers, op.cit. p.25, footnote 30, indicates that Theophrastus was quoted at length by St. Jerome in "Against Jovinianus" (Nicene Library, New York Christian Literature Co. 1893) Ser.2, VI. pp.383-84

[3] Rogers, p.25

Rabelais seems to have known the writings of Plutarch (c.45-125) quite well and accepted many of his ideas, even though he ascribed more individuality and value to women than did the Greek. According to Plutarch, a good wife should follow her husband in all ways. She should reflect his good and his bad moods, she should show interest in his interests and she should be unhappy when he is. The wife must follow the husband's leadership and be guided in all ways, lest she conceive untoward ideas.[4] This attitude very much resembles St. Paul's, as expressed in I. Corinthians VII and contained in the advice rendered to Panurge by Hippothadée. (Tiers Livre XXX)

The Greeks portrayed Hera (Juno) as the rancorous and jealous wife of Zeus, who threw her son Hephaestos out of heaven because his lameness made her ashamed. Virgil, in turn, portrays Juno as the ruthless, vindictive villain of the Aeneid who tirelessly persecutes the righteous Aeneas in defiance of her husband who granted success to the Trojans. Rabelais not only refers to her as "Juno la fascheuse" (Tiers Livre, L) but also makes reference to "le doubte propousé par Juppiter" (Tiers Livre XXII) when he speaks of having blinded Tirésias. Jupiter had asked Tirésias, who had experienced life as a male and as a

[4] Plutarch, Moralia II., with an English translation by Frank Cole Babbitt ("The Loeb Classical Library" New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928)

female, whether man or woman experienced more pleasure in the sexual act. His reply that woman felt nine times as much delight, angered Juno.[5] According to Screech, this was "l'exemplum obligatoire", whenever the question of relative enjoyment was raised.[6] It reiterates the maxim that woman derives enormous pleasure from her insatiable lust.

Perhaps the most acerbic attack on womanhood was launched by Juvenal (?60-?140 AD) at a time when women held a relatively strong position in the Roman Empire. His Sixth Satire[7] which catalogues women's vices, excoriates their excessive sexuality above all, and firmly establishes the inferiority of women and the need to prevent their aspirations for equality. His quasi-contemporary St. Paul composed his misogynic writings at about the same time and it appears likely that both the Roman and the Christian were greatly influenced by Greek literature.

The Greeks considered women to be either wives or mistresses. The former detracted rather than added to their husbands' pleasures and the latter were disdained for

[5] This story can be found in Ovid, Metamorphoses III. translated by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 1966) Vol. I, pp.316-338

[6] François Rabelais, Le Tiers Livre, Édition critique commentée par M. A. Screech (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1964) p.159, footnote 55

[7] Juvenal and Persius, translated by G.G.Ramsay (London: Heinemann, 1940) pp.93ff.

their low character. Women were either needed for propagation or for the satisfaction of sexual desire. Catullus had his Clodia, Tibullus his Nemesis and Propertius his Cynthia[8] - all of them were whores and unworthy women and naturally much was written about female inconstancy, lust and venality. Love was ecstasy and slavery at the same time and thus even the most ardent lovers were detractors of their love-objects. Frequently the quest for idealistic love was resolved in homosexual relationships. This is a subject on which Plato's writings were and are often misinterpreted.[9]

Rabelais' work is saturated with references to the classics and no more than an indication of this fact can be achieved here. He enjoyed using them in order to afford a pseudo-validity to comic points he made, a tongue-in-cheek lecture, a convenient twist to an interpretation. When Rondibilis cites Theophrastus regarding love (see above) he wishes to prove that assiduous labor, among other things, bridles concupiscence. To make this point he also cites Diana's chastity, Hippocrates' description of the Scythians, Ovid's Aegisthus, Diogenes and the Sicyonian sculptor Canachus who portrayed Venus sitting instead of standing.

[8] Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius are mentioned in Tiers Livre XVIII. A global idea of Rabelais' use of authorities can be found, at least for the Tiers Livre in the Screech Edition (op.cit.) "Index Nominum" pp.355-393

[9] M. A. Screech, The Rabelaisian Marriage (London: Edward Arnold Ltd. 1958) p.8

(Tiers Livre XXXI) All of them had considered leisure intrinsic and indispensable to love, hence Rondibilis prescribed preventive exertion.

When the third attempt at Virgilian lots turns up the verse: "Foemineo proedoe et spoliorum ardebat amore. / - Brusloit d'ardeur en feminin usaige / De butiner et robber le baguaige", Pantagruel interprets this as "vous serez desrobbé". Panurge is anxious to disagree and supports his own view by paradoxically citing Juvenal "Oncques n'en mentit le Satyrique, quand il dict que femme bruslant d'amour supreme prent quelques foys plaisir à desrobber son amy. Sçavez quoi? Un guand, une aiguillette, pour la faire chercher. Peu de chose, rien d'importnace." (Tiers Livre XII)

Panurge also calls upon a phalanx of male sexual acrobats, none of whom could equal him in satisfying the insatiability of women:

> Ne me alleguez poinct ici en paragon les fabuleux ribaulx Hercules, Proculus, Caesar et Mahumet qui se vente en son Alchoran avoir en ses genitoires la force de soixante guallefretiers. Il a menty, le paillard.
> Ne me alleguez poinct l'Indian tant celebré par Theophraste, Pline et Athenaeus, lequel, avecques l'ayde de certaine herbe le faisoit en un jour soixante et dix fois et plus. Je n'en croy rien.... (Tiers Livre XXVII)

Rabelais uses the fool Panurge to flaunt his sexual prowesses, his own insatiability and his vastly exaggerated accomplishments, "ridendo dicere verum", in order to deflate effectively the hypocritical moral disapprobation

of male philosophers, scientists, writers and clergymen on the subject of female sexuality.

Rondibilis explains that the insatiable beast inside woman can be satisfied only by the nourishment nature created for it in man. Since one man cannot expect to produce enough, he is in perpetual danger of becoming a cuckold. Panurge excludes this as a possible cause for cuckoldry in his case, "Ainsi auroys je eternellement le virolet en poinct et infatiguable, comme l'ont les Satyres. Chose que tous desirent, et peu de gens l'impetrent des cieulx. Par consequent coqu jamais, car faulte de ce est cause sans laquelle non, cause unique, de faire les mariz coquz." (Tiers Livre XIV)

For Rabelais the sexual drive of the female was no greater than that of the male, in spite of all that had been written to the contrary. Aristotle had written about the sexuality of women in Generation of Animals and maintained that woman held but a negligible, passive role in propagation, providing only the child's body while the father contributed the soul. The creation of a female is but a deviation in the formation of the male, and yet is necessarily required by nature.[10] In Politics he maintains that women hold an inferior position because they are naturally inferior,[11] and

[10] Aristotle, The Generation of Animals, translated by A. L. Peck (London: Heinemann, 1943) pp.335-339

[11] Aristotle, The Politics, translated by H. Rackham (London: Heinemann, 1932) p.21

since they are naturally inferior, they should occupy an inferior position. This is in contrast to Plato's Republic Book V. in which he is willing to grant women the same responsibilities as men, the same education and the same opportunities to serve the state.

Plato was a feminist in the sense that he tried to ameliorate the condition of women but he did not like women as a class. Nowhere does Plato encourage sex for pleasure - it was necessary for procreation. His own sexual or romantic preference was for men and the Timaeus is particularly strong in confirming his dislike of women.[12]

The Renaissance saw a resurgence of Platonism which gradually superseded Aristotelianism and which permeated the entire humanist movement in Rabelais' day.[13]

The impetus for the revival of Platonism and Neo-Platonism was given by Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) who founded the Florentine Platonic Academy where Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) translated and taught the philosophy of Plato and the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus. Ficino had an enormous influence and Renaissance Platonism to a large degree followed the theories found in Ficino's two main works, the Teologica Platonica and De Christiana Relgione, and in his letters.[14]

[12] Dorothea Wender, "Plato: Misogynist, Paedophile, and Feminist", Arethusa, Vol.6 (1973) 1, pp.75-90

[13] Raoul Morçay & Armand Müller, La Renaissance (Paris: del Duca, 1960) pp.198-205

[14] ibid. pp.51-54

Ficino saw Platonic love as "the spiritual love for anothe human being that is but a disguised love of the soul for God".[15] God inspires the soul to purify itself in order to unite with him. Human love is merely a step on the ladder to divine love. Beauty is a manifestation of the divine love and of its perfection through the body and thus physical beauty is a sign of the beauty of the soul. The beauty of the soul is the harmony of the virtues just as physical beauty is the harmony of proportions, lines and colors. Platonic love retains nothing material or sensual.

Rabelais never touched on the subject of romantic love. There was conjugal love which Grandgousier and Gargantua and their wives felt for each other and there was paternal love and filial love between the fathers and sons. There were of course Panurge's myriad relationships which were uniformly and unswervingly non-spiritual and then there were the innocent relationships between the young men and women of the Abbaye de Thélème. They liked each other well enough to marry - outside of the confines of the Abbaye. Inside they had such great sympathy for each other that they even dressed alike. (Gargantua LVI) It would be somewhat forced to assume that the physical beauty which was a requisite for the men and women who entered the Abbaye de Thélème,

15 Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Renaissance Platonism" in Renaissance Thought, The Classic, Scholastic and Humanist Strains (New York: Harper and Row 1955, rpt. 1961) p.63

was based on Platonic influence. The list of qualities which by nature lead to virtue included "gens liberes, gien néz, bien instruictz, conversans en compaignies honnestes" (Gargantua LVII) and not "beaulx". Hippothadée confirms Rabelais' evaluation of feminine beauty (Tiers Livre XXX) when he advises Panurge to look for a religious and devout woman rather than one with beauty, elegance, wealth and good family background to be his wife.

There is certainly evidence of the philosophy of equality of the sexes in accordance with their respective powers, as set forth by Plato in Book V. of the Republic. The men carried the heavier birds at the hunt and were mounted on larger horses than the ladies. There was no difference made in mental powers and men and women were well versed in the same skills - writing, singing, playing musical instruments, speaking several languages and composing music.

According to Marty-Laveaux,[16] Rabelais cited Plato more often in the first four books than any other author. Some of the critics such as Plattard[17] have expressed doubt as to whether Rabelais actually read Plato, even though it is known that he owned his works. Robert Marichal has conveniently summarized the dialectic[18] and concluded that

[16] quoted by Robert Marichal, "L'Attitude de Rabelais devant le Néoplatonisme et l'Italianisme" In François Rabelais, Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort, 1553-1953 (Genève: Droz & Lille, Giard, 1953) p.184 footnote 3

[17] Jean Plattard, L'Oeuvre de Rabelais (Paris 1910 rpt. Librairie Honoré Champion, 1967) p.225

[18] Marichal, op.cit. p.181

Rabelais certainly knew Plato and the Neo-Platonists well before Amaury Bouchard wrote his treatise De l'Excellence et Immortalité de l'âme in 1530. (p.184) Whether or not Rabelais knew his Plato through direct reading, through Ficino's interpretations or through the writings of Erasmus - and it is likely that he used any sources available to him - he knew Plato well enough to quote and misquote him deliberately and at will, such as the famous citation from Rondibilis' speech. (Tiers Livre XXX, discussed in the chapter on Rondibilis) Rondibilis was the parody of a doctor of the Platonic School which preferred Hippocrates to Galen and took Plato's medical ideas most seriously, especially those put forth in Timaeus.[19] There was too much reason for Rabelais to quote Plato selectively and incompletely and it was quite unlikely that Rabelais could have been ignorant of the complete passage, and that therefore the misquote was not deliberate. There has been a rush to accept the fragment as proof of misogyny and it is most surprising that critics have never questioned it. A. F. Chappell demonstrates some of the other satires on classical authors he discovered in Rabelais' work and writes that the entire Tiers Livre "suggests that the author principally desired to envelop the authority of the Ancients in absurdities".[20] M.A.Screech suggests that Rabelais scorned the feminists' misunderstanding

[19] Screech edition of Tiers Livre, op.cit. p.383

[20] A. F. Chappell, "Rabelais and the Authority of the Ancients" in Modern Language Review #18 (1923) p.33

of Plato and greatly enjoyed mocking the "platonists" with arguments taken from Plato himself.[21]

Of course not everything seemed derisible to Rabelais. He was most receptive to the ideas that the anterior development of the Renaissance in Italy had introduced not only to French thinkers and humanists but also to the cultural, political and artistic evolution of French society.[22] One of the basic tenets of the Renaissance was the increasing importance of man, of the individual who stood before God rather than within a society which was subject to the Church and its religion. This resulted in the gradual extrication of art, architecture and education from the complete domination of the Church and in the growing transfer of power into the hands of the princes. The general atmosphere became more secular, individualistic, natural and optimistic. It was the attitude reflected so glowingly in Rabelais' work.

A number of treatises were written in Italy on moral topics, among which were those that described the ideal citizen, magistrate, courtier or gentleman.[23] They were

[21] Rab. Marriage, op.cit. pp.8-9

[22] For an excellent comprehensive discussion of the main theories underlying this development which includes a wealth of bibliographical references, see Henry Hornik, "Three Interpretations of the French Renaissance" in French Humanism, ed. by Werner L. Gundersheimer (New York: Harper & Row, Inc. 1969) pp. 19-47 and also in Studies in the Renaissance VII (1960)43-66

[23] Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Moral Thought of Renaissance Humanism" in Renaissance II, Papers on Humanism and the Arts (New York: Harper & Row Inc., 1961, rpt. 1965) p.49

soon translated into French and gained great popularity. The most famous work of this genre was probably Il Libro del Cortegiano (1528) by Baldessar Castiglione (1478-1529) who was a courtier himself and for a time attached to the court of the Duke of Urbino, which he chose as the setting of his book. The Cortegiano was translated into French in 1537 but the section describing the ideal Lady of the Court in Book III. was read most consistently and was translated and published separately.[24] The book was written in the form of conversations held at the court between people who actually were there such as Giuliano de' Medici and Pietro Bembo, the great platonist humanist. It is divided into four sections which describe not only the duties of the Courtier to his prince but also the ideal in comportment, appearance and character to which he should aspire. Since the Ladies of the Court are of primary importance to his perfection, a large part of the discussion is devoted to them.[25]

[24] Lula McDowell Richardson, The Forerunners of Feminism in French Literature of the Renaissance from Christine of Pisa to Marie de Gournay (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1929) p.81 footnote 1

[25] The following editions will be used for quotations from Castiglione:
Italian: Baldessar Castiglione, Il Libro del Cortegiano (Milano: Editore Libraio Della Real Casa, 1928)
English translation: Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier trans. Charles S. Singleton (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1959)

Book III.3: Perchè come Corte alcuna, per grande che ella sia non po aver ornamento o splendore in sè nè allegria senza donne; nè Cortegiano alcun essere aggraziato, piacevole o ardito, nè far mai opera leggiadra di cavalleria, se non mosso dalla pratica e dall'amore e piacer di donne: cosi ancora il

Signor Gasparo takes the side of the misogynists and declares the eternal adage that women are inferior - "le donne siano mo animali imperfetti" - and that nature made a mistake when she created woman - "è difetto o error della natura" - since nature always intends and plans to make things most perfect - "perciò che sempre intende e disegna far le cose più perfette" (#11, p.270) This is another version of Rondibilis' discourse which has been identified with Rabelais' opinion: "Quand je diz femme, je diz un sexe tant fragil, tant variable, tant muable, tant inconstant et imperfeict, que Nature me semble (parlant en tout honneur et révérence) s'estre ésguarée de ce bon sens par lequel elle avoit créé et formé toutes choses, quand elle a basty la femme." (Tiers Livre XXXII)

It seems hardly logical that Rabelais was termed anti-feminist for writing the same as Castiglione, a great feminist. Just as Signor Gasparo is obviously the devil's advocate in the Cortegiano, so is Rondibilis a satiric figure and not a "porte-parole".

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ragionar del Cortegiano è sempre imperfettissimo, se le donne, interponendovisi, non danno lor parte di quella grazia con la quale fanno perfetta e adornano la Cortegianìa. (p.261)

Because just as no court, however great, can have adornment or splendor or gaiety in it without ladies, neither can any Courtier be graceful or pleasing or brave, or do any gallant deed of chivalry, unless he is so moved by the society and by the love and charm of ladies: even discussion about the Courtier is always imperfect unless ladies take part in it and add their part of that grace by which they make Courtier-ship perfect and adorned. (pp.204-5)

The greatest similarities between the works of these two authors are to be found in the Abbaye de Thélème. According to Morçay there is no proof of Rabelais' having actually read the Cortegiano, but he points out that the Italian had imbued his ideal court people with "toutes les qualités que Rabelais prête à ses Thélémites".[26]

Rabelais' ladies are beautiful - Castiglione considers beauty to be vital "perchè in vero molto manca a quella donna a cui manca la bellezza". (p.263 #4) The ladies should be of gentle birth and "bien naturées", just as the gentlemen. "Perchè molte virtù dell'animo estimo io che siano alla donna necessarie così come all'omo; medesimamente la nobilità, il fuggire l'affettazione, l'essere aggraziata da natura in tutte l'operazion sue, l'esser di boni costumi, ingeniosa, prudente, non superba, non invidiosa, non maledica, non vana, non contenziosa, non inetta;..." (p.262-63, #4) They must be well educated. "Voglio che questa Donna abbia notizia di lettere, di musica, di pittura, e sapiar danzar e festeggiare..." (p.268, #9)

When Signor Gasparo suggests that the same rules always apply to the Lady as to the Courtier, the Magnifico (Giuliano de' Medici who acts as Castiglione's spokesman) replies that this would not be seemly. "...alla donna non si convien armeggiare, cavalcare, diocare alla palla, lottare, e molte

[26] François Rabelais, L'Abbaye de Thélème, Edition critique publiée par Raoul Morçay (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1934) p.30

altre cose che si convengono agli òmini." (p.266, #7)[27]
Rabelais also separates the activities. As for the gentlemen - "Jamais ne feurent veuz chevaliers tant preux, tant gualans, tant dextres à pied et à cheval, plus vers, mieulx remuans, mieulx manians tous bastons, que là estoient." On the other hand, he describes the ladies - "Jamais ne feurent veues dames tant propres, tant mignonnes, moins fascheuses, plus doctes à la main, à l'agueille, à tout acte mulièbre honneste et libère, que la estoient." (Gargantua LVII) Both Castiglione and Rabelais placed great importance on a variety of attractive and yet correct dress. (Gargantua LVI; pp.267-8 #8)

The Lady of Thélème is closer to Castiglione's Donna di Palazzo than to the guardians of Plato's Republic or to the subservient wives of More's Utopia. In his ideal society Rabelais has envisioned a feminist image of woman which transcends even that of Castiglione, for the latter saw fit to warn against pitfalls such as gossip, unseemly conversation and untoward behavior. Rabelais wrote of perfection only.

The strongest influence on Rabelais' ideas was probably

[27] - women are imperfect creatures (p.213)
- it is a defect or mistake of nature (p.213)
- since nature always intends and plans to make things most perfect (p.213)
- for truly that woman lacks much who lacks beauty (p.206)
- For I hold that many virtues of the mind are as necessary to a woman as to a man; also, gentle birth, to avoid affectation, to be naturally graceful in all her actions, to be mannerly, clever, prudent, not arrogant, not envious, not slanderous, not vain, not contentious, not inept...(p.206)
- I wish this Lady to have knowledge of letters, of music, of painting, and know how to dance and how to be festive (p.211)
-...it is not seemly for a woman to handle weapons, ride, play tennis, wrestle and do many other things that are suited to men. (p.210)

exerted by a great contemporary he had never met, Desiderius Erasmus (1466?-1536). W. J. Kaiser confirms the fact that it is "now generally recognized that Erasmus supplies one of the best tools for breaking open what Rabelais called the marrow bone (os médullaire) of his work".[28] In a letter to Erasmus, Rabelais acknowledged the great debt he owed to the famous scholar and teacher to the point that he writes: "sic educasti, sic castissimis divinae tuae doctrinae uberibus usque aluisti, ut quidquid sum et valeo, tibi id uni acceptum, nî feram hominum omnium qui sunt aut aliis erunt, in annis ingratissimus sim".[29] Some of the critics have pointed out that beyond the similarities in their ideas there were many parallels in their lives, in their clerical

[28] Walter Jacob Kaiser, Praisers of Folly, Erasmus, Rabelais, Shakespeare (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963) p.104

[29] The complete letter is quoted in Rabelais, Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard "Pléiade", 1955) p.964ff.

The following is an English translation of the first part of the letter, to be found in Preserved Smith, Erasmus A Study of His Life, Ideals and Place in History (New York: Harper Bros. 1923) p.414:

"George d'Armagnac, the famous Bishop of Rodez recently sent me Flavius Josephus' Jewish History of the Sack and asked me, for the sake of our old friendship, that, when I found a "reliable" man setting out I should send it to you at the first opportunity. I gladly seized that handle and occasion, kind father, of showing by a pleasing service with what devotion and piety I love you. I call you father; for, as we daily see that pregnant women nourish offspring which they have never seen and protect them from the harsh outer air, the same has happened to you who have educated me who am unknown to you and of simple estate. Thus have you hitherto nourished me with the most chaste breasts of your divine learning, so that, did I not ascribe to you alone my whole worth and being, I should be the most ungrateful of all men who are now alive or ever will be. Hail again and again, most beloved father, father and glory of our country, champion and defender of letters and fighter for the truth."

emancipation, their travel, their intellectual freedom, the Augustinian Erasmus at Steyn and the Franciscan Rabelais at Fontenay-le-Comte.[30] It is quite possible that Rabelais used Erasmus' Adagia and Apophtegmata for his traveling library since he was able to carry only a limited number of books with him, and that some of his references to the Ancients therefore are traceable to the intermediary of Erasmus.[31]

A number of studies have shown the resemblances between the works of Erasmus and Rabelais[32] but with the exception of the article on "Rabelais, De Billon and Erasmus" by M.A. Screech, the similarities between their attitudes toward women and marriage have generally not been discussed. Screech comments quite correctly that even though the views of the two authors are almost identical, Erasmus is usually considered to be favorable toward women and Rabelais passes for an "anti-feminist extremist".(p.260)

[30] Lucien Febvre, Le problème de l'incroyance au 16e siècle, La religion de Rabelais (Paris: Ed. Albin Michel 1942 et 1968) pp.283-306

Raymond Lebègue, "Rabelais, the last of the French Erasmians" in London University Warburg Institute Journal, London (1949) Vol.12, pp.91-100

[31] Lebègue p.92

[32] Louis Delaruelle, "Ce que Rabelais doit à Erasme et à Budé" in Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France, XI (1904) pp. 220-262

Louis Thuasne, Études sur Rabelais (Paris: E.Bouillon 1904) to p.157

W. F. Smith, "Rabelais et Erasme" in Revue des Etudes Rabelaisiennes VI (1908) pp.215-64, 375-78

M. A. Screech, "Rabelais, De Billon and Erasmus," (a Re-examination of Rabelais' Attitude to Women)" in Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance XIII (Sept.1951) #3,pp.241-265

See also Plattard, Oeuvre; Lucien Febvre, Incroyance; and Lebègue, Rabelais, Erasmian - all cited above

According to Screech, both Erasmus and Rabelais were in favor of parental choice in the marriage of children, considered marriage to be the gateway to extreme happiness or distress, believed in the husband's superiority and valued birth and education in women. Screech feels that Lefranc's judgement of Erasmus' feminism was based on that of De Billon and that he was therefore misled. (p.258 footnote 6) Lefranc had greatly praised Erasmus' Christiani matrimonii institutio (1526) and the Enchiridion (1504) which contained "un magnifique éloge de la femme, image de Dieu, à savoir de la piété, modestie, sobriété et chasteté".[33] Screech points out that Erasmus speaks only of the Christian wife here and not of the entire sex, and that a good part of the Enchiridion is devoted to warning men against the wiles of part of the feminine sex. However, when considered within the context of the entire work, the balance is unequal and in favor of women.

The praise to which Lefranc probably referred is in a passage explaining that the spirit and spirituality in man is and must be superior to the soul and the flesh and must guide the latter. It is in line with the purpose of the Enchiridion which, similar to the Imitatio Christi of Thomas à Kempis, is a spiritual, ethical and theological guidebook for the good Christian, replete with examples of ideal behavior such as:

[33] François Rabelais, Oeuvres, Édition critique publiée sous la direction de Abel Lefranc, Vol.V. Le Tiers Livre (Paris: Champion, 1931) Introduction p.XXXVII

> You say that you love your wife simply because she is your spouse. There is really no merit in this. Even pagans do this, and the love can be based upon physical pleasure alone. But, on the other hand, if you love her because in her you see the image of Christ, because you perceive in her His reverence, modesty, and purity, then you do not love her in herself but in Christ. You love Christ in her. This is what we mean by spiritual love, and we will say more about it later on. (34)

The subsequent attack mentioned by Screech is in a section which deals with remedies for particular vices, subheading "Lust" and the assault on fornication with prostitutes is fierce indeed. (pp.83-86) While the Christian wife does not represent her entire sex, neither does the prostitute. In speaking of "Lust" Erasmus addresses himself to men alone and nowhere refers to the supposed insatiability of women, nor implies feminine guilt for leading men into temptation.

When Erasmus' work is considered in its entirety, and when allowances are made for the prevalent attitudes of his time (as they must be made for Rabelais) the philogynist emerges quite clearly. Seeing Christ in any woman rather than an embodiment of evil in all womankind is at the root of Erasmus' attitude. A short review suffices to show his influence on Rabelais.

In 1522 Erasmus produced a tract on how to write letters, De Conscribendis Epistolis, into which he inserted an example of persuasive and dissuasive declamation, using matrimony as

[34] English translation of the Enchiridion Militis Christiani was taken from The Essential Erasmus, selected and newly translated with Introduction and Commentary by John P. Dolan (New York: New American Library, Mentor Books, 1964) p.51

the theme. The dissuasive was addressed to an aspiring scholar who might fare better without domestic responsibilities and the persuasive extolled marriage most convincingly.[35] Erasmus reminds the reader that marriage was sanctioned by Christ at Cana as well as by nature. It was the first sacrament to be instituted by God himself and the most holy manner of life, pure and chaste. He condemns the priests and monks who profess but do not keep celibacy and would prefer to see them marry. How much better to have children to love and raise as legitimate offspring rather than to be ashamed of them. While contraception and abortion are capital offenses, perpetual sterility which prevents all conception is no different. Erasmus does not condemn physical desire which, after all, was instituted by God, sanctioned by nature and approved by human laws, but considers it to be part of the perfect companionship shared with one's wife. A wife will provide affection, consolation in adversity and respite from the tedium of solitude. Above all, there will be a little Aeneas by whom to be cherished in old age and in whom one is reborn.

A great deal of this lesson in writing letters is to be found in the letter Gargantua wrote to his son Pantagruel. (Pantagruel VIII)

[35] Roland H. Bainton, Erasmus of Christendom (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969) An abridgement of this argument can be found on p.49. Bainton gives the original reference as LB I.414-23: Lugduni Batavorum, the Leiden edition of the works of Erasmus, edited by Leclerc, 1703 rpt. 1963

Rabelais condemns the incontinence of monks throughout his book, although he never goes so far as to advocate their marrying. On the other hand physical desire is completely condoned within the confines of matrimony for, as Hippothadée advises "trop meilleur est soy marier que ardre on feu de concupiscence". (Tiers Livre XXX) And finally, Pantagruel declares that woman was created "pour l'ayde, esbattement et société de l'homme". (Tiers Livre XXXIII)

Erasmus had begun his collection of Colloquia in 1519. One year after the above argument in favor of marriage, he added five new colloquies on various aspects of love and marriage. Three of them, "Courtship", "The Girl with no Interest in Marriage" and "The Repentant Girl" combat the idea that celibacy is necessarily more holy than marriage. In "Courtship" Erasmus also deals with the exchange of vows which under Canon Law then sufficed to validate a binding marriage. Maria resists Pamphilus' plea and insists on parental approval.[36] Rabelais' corresponding conviction is expounded unequivocally in Chapter XLVIII of the Tiers Livre. The other two above-mentioned colloquies were prompted by a contemporary movement in Basel against forcing girls into nunneries. The ladies of the Abbaye de Thélème were invited to come at their will and the

[36] Erasmus, The Colloquies, translated by Craig R. Thompson (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965) pp.94 & 97

usual practice of sending young innocent creatures to a convent whether or not they wanted to go, was rejected. The Thélémites married eventually and there was no hint of disapproval. As for Erasmus, marriage was at least equal if not superior to celibacy and the Thélémites achieved a happiness in marriage for which the Abbaye had but prepared them.

The two other colloquies of the quintet, "Marriage" and "The Young Man and the Harlot" dealt on the one hand with a discussion of how to behave when married and on the other hand, thoughts of when you are not. There are no real parallels in Rabelais' work.

Later (1526) Erasmus wrote "The New Mother" in which he advocated that mothers nurse their own infants. "The Abbot and the Learned Lady" advocates liberal education for women (1529) and in "Marriage in Name Only" (1529) Erasmus denounces parents who allow a daughter to marry a diseased man. This had occupied Vives, who was married to the daughter of such a woman, as well as Thomas More. It becomes somewhat understandable that he advocated in his Utopia that an affianced pair be shown to each other naked to prevent ignorance or deception about the health of the future partner.[37] While Rabelais ignores the health and age aspects, he does emphasize that the choice not be made

[37] Thomas More, Utopia (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd. 1965, rpt. 1971) Book Two, p.103

for social advantage but from among "les enfans de leurs voisins et antiques amis, nourriz et instituez de mesmes soing". (Tiers Livre XLVIII) Just as Gargantua promises to choose the best possible match for Pantagruel, Rabelais takes for granted that this is the aim of all parents. His attack is launched strictly against the priests who obviate such a choice.

Lefranc praises Erasmus' Christiani matrimonii institutio (1526) in the most glowing terms as favorable to women.[38] Screech disagrees in that while Erasmus had a deep emotional sympathy for women, he considered them foolish, childish, spiteful and lustful.[39] In view of the context in which the treatise was written, it is difficult to form a definitive judgement on the basis of this treatise alone. In 1524 or 1525 Catherine of Aragon had asked Erasmus through her chamberlain to write her a book on marriage, possibly because of her anxiety about her own position.[40] The sentiment therefore tends to favor the queen. There is discussion about divorce, annulment of marriage, and above all, the necessity for parents to choose the mate. As a cleric, writing about a Christian institution, Erasmus takes the Paulinist point of view of the husband's leadership since woman originated

[38] Oeuvres, Introduction to the Tiers Livre, op.cit. p. XXXVII

[39] "Rabelais, De Billon and Erasmus" op.cit. p.260 note 4

[40] Preserved Smith, Erasmus, A Study... op.cit. p.279

from man. Screech feels that Erasmus places woman into an inferior position not only in her subjection to her husband but also in Erasmus' guidelines for the training and instruction of girls, quoting some seemingly pejorative comments. (pp.258-9, fn.1-7) Actually Erasmus advocates education for girls equal to that of boys, unless the girl is of a class which will cause her to have to work. He also advocated the abolition of a double standard of morality on adultery, maintaining that a man ought not to be allowed to dismiss his adulterous wife if he himself had been guilty of the same sin and taught his wife to be unfaithful.[41]

The same year he advocated the Paulinist subjugation of the wife to the husband in the Christiani matrimonii institutio, he wrote the colloquy "The New Mother" in which Fabilla and Eutrapelus discuss the supposed superiority of man:

> FABILLA. I suppose you think man is naturally better and stronger than woman.
> EUTRAPELUS. So I believe.
> FAB. On the authority of men, to be sure. Men aren't therefore longer lived than women, are they? Not immune to disease?
> EUTRAP. Not at all, but they generally excel in strength.
> FAB. But they themselves are excelled by camels.
> EUTRAP. Well, but the male was created first.
> FAB. Adam was created before Christ. And artists usually surpass themselves in their later works.
> EUTRAP. But God made woman subject to man.

[41] A convenient summary of Erasmus' ideas regarding women can be found in Lula M. Richardson (op.cit.) pp.52-3

FAB. A ruler's not better merely because he's a ruler. And it's the wife, not the female, who is subject. Again, the subjection of the wife is such that, though each has power over the other, nevertheless the woman is to obey the man not as a superior but a more aggressive person. Tell me, Eutrapelus, which is weaker, the one who submits to the other or the one to whom submission is made?

EUTRAP. I'll yield to you in this if you'll show me what Paul means in his letter to the Corinthians when he says the head of the man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man; and when he says man is the image and glory of God, woman the glory of man.

FAB. I'll explain that if you'll show me whether it's granted to men only to be members of Christ.

EUTRAP. Heaven forbid! That's granted to all human creatures through faith. (42)

Erasmus does not support the superiority of woman as some of the feminists did, but he does not consider them inferior. The colloquy "Marriage" argues that according to nature and to the will of God it is reasonable that the wife submit to the husband but Paul teaches that men should love their wives as Christ lived his spouse, the Church. (Colloquies pp.115-27) Rabelais' royal families were devoted to each other very much in this sense.

Raymond Lebègue writes that in the Tiers Livre "there is not much scope for direct borrowing from Erasmus' original writings". (p.96) Actually the bulk of it rests on the theme expressed by Stultitia in the Moriae Encomium when she asks: "What man would wish to put himself in the trap of matrimony ... if he had considered beforehand the inconveniences

[42] Colloquies, op.cit. pp.270-71

of married life?"[43] Panurge's quest is in search of reassurance that the inconveniences such as cuckoldry are not inevitable. Kaiser says that "when Rabelais came to write his most serious book, he turned, as Erasmus had a generation earlier, to a kind of fool for his protagonist and created in the character of Panurge a brother for Stultitia". (p.105)

It is difficult to determine to what extent it was the influence of Erasmus and to what extent it was coincidental that both felt so strongly in favor of parental consent before a marriage was contracted.

In the sixteenth century marriage was a "transaction, an 'establishment', a business partnership, a grave material union of interests, rank and social responsibilities".[44] The wife was not intended to be an object of love and any idea of pleasure or physical suggestion would degrade the noble character of marriage to the level of sensuality. The elements of duty and necessity do not easily mingle with passion. Sometimes the marriages were negotiated by intermediaries, relatives or friends, but essentially the task of marrying his daughter off was that of the father.

Under Canon Law marriage was a sacrament which had its sanction not in the laws of men but in the express decrees

[43] The Essential Erasmus, op.cit. p.105

[44] Marie René de Maulde la Clavière, The Woman of the Renaissance; A Study of Feminism, translated by George Herbert Ely (New York: G.P.Putnam's Sons, 1905) p.22

of God.[45] Thus even the betrothal acquired a sacred character and could be broken only if one of the partners decided to enter religious life. Betrothal was a "Sponsalia", a marriage "par paroles de futur", which was automatically validated by sexual cohabitation. The marriage by "paroles de présent" was the"matrimonium" which constituted a valid and binding marriage, whether or not it was consummated.[46] Minimum age was determined by the requirement of Canon Law of consent of the bride and groom, which could be given at the age of reason, at seven years of age. (Telle p.78) Considering the political and material importance of a favorable union it was frequently those at the top of the social ladder who were married at the earliest age.

Before the "Decretum Tametsi" was enacted in 1563 at the Council of Trent, the "paroles de présent" could be exchanged without witnesses and without the blessings of a priest. Canon Law considered parental consent desirable but not indispensable and while clandestine marriages were forbidden, they were nevertheless indissoluble. This loophole in Canon Law facilitated lovematches and secret marriages

[45] Eugene A. Hecker, A Short History of Women's Rights (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press 1914 rpt. 1971) Chapter VI. "The Canon Law and the Attitude of the Roman Catholic Church" p. 107

[46] Emile Villemeur Telle, L'Oeuvre de Marguerite d'Angoulême, reine de Navarre et la querelle des femmes (Toulouse: Imprimerie toulousaine Lion et fils, 1937) Ch. III. "A.-La Femme au XVI^{e} siècle: Aperçus sur son statut légal" p.74

but also permitted abuses such as bigamy. It sometimes led young people to bitter regrets, especially in view of the total ignorance in which young girls were kept. Erasmus as well as Rabelais fought for reform.

For Rabelais marriage was not only a religious sacrament but also a civil arrangement whereby the parents of the couple "veissent naistre lignaige raportant et haereditant, non moins aux meurs de leurs peres et meres que à leurs biens meubles et haeritaiges". (Tiers Livre XLVIII) The creation of such a union is certainly too important to be left to the capricious and volatile standards of an impulsive emotion such as love. There was danger of exploitation by men with less than honorable intentions for personal gain. If parental authority were thwarted, the future of families and, by extension, even that of monarchies appeared threatened to the royal jurists. François, the son of the Connétable de Montmorency secretly married Jeanne de Halluiin, Comtesse de Piennes, lady-in-waiting to Catherine de Médicis, instead of Diane de France, daughter of Henri II and widow of Horace Farnèse.[47]

The Church would censure unions contracted without parental consent but would not admit annulment, as requested by certain bishops in France and Spain, for in their eyes a sacrament of the Church could not be effaced. Secular

[47] Telle, op.cit. Ch.IX "La Question des Mariages 'Clandestins'" pp.344-354

wishes could not undo religious sacraments.[48] The dissension in this area added to the disaccord which already existed between the seculars and the clericals and which resulted in the religious revolution of the sixteenth century.

In order to discourage marriages contracted against parental consent, Henri II promulgated an edict in 1556 which, while it did not annul the clandestine marriages, permitted parents to disinherit their disobedient children. This was a very serious step at a time when only bastard children had no claim to the succession of their father.

The Council of Trent tried to resolve the question at its twenty-fourth session in 1563 without success. The French delegates wanted to have secret marriages annulled, but the Council could not do this without subscribing to Calvinist doctrine. They decided finally to leave all punitive action to civil authorities and to declare only that the Church "detested" such marriages. However, the Church required that henceforth bans be published and that the ceremony had to be attended by three witnesses, one of whom had to be the priest of one member of the bridal couple.

Even then the decrees of the Council were not applied in France until 1579 when Henri III promulgated an even more severe edict at Blois and in January 1780 Parliament

[48] Georges Lote, La Vie et l'oeuvre de François Rabelais, (Genève: Droz, 1938) p.350

regulated ecclesiastic discipline in the kingdom of France by sixty-six articles. (Telle pp.353-4)

Rabelais published the Tiers Livre just after the Council of Trent opened in 1545 and the royal ambassadors attempted to achieve reforms in Canon Law. There is no doubt about Rabelais' involvement regarding marriage on the side of civil authority over that of the Church. He did so with full force and vigor in Chapter XLVIII of the Tiers Livre, one of the very few completely serious chapters of his work.

When Gargantua suggests that the time has come for Pantagruel to get married, he is pleased that his son promises to submit happily to his authority and to let him choose the wife.

Gargantua then tells of a land where lascivious and salacious priests, whom he calls "pastaphores et taulpetiiers", would dare to make laws regarding wedlock even though they knew no more of marriage than the eunuch pontiffs of Cybele in Phrygia. He rants eloquently against both "la tirannique praesumption d'iceulx redoubtez taulpetiers" and the "superstitieuse stupidité des gens mariez, qui ont sanxi et presté obéissance à telles tant malignes et barbariques loigs". (Tiers Livre LXVIII) It is hard to tell who angers him more.

Gargantua paints the heartrending sorrow of parents who raised their daughters with love and care only to see their plans for them destroyed. And yet these parents were

foolish and afraid to object since the sacerdotal "taulpetier" had, after all, personally blessed the union. They would sit at home to cry and to lament. Some of the parents were unable to live with the disgrace and would kill themselves. Others would more heroically kill those responsible for their daughter's seduction. Gargantua considers such a murder morally right since "homme ne soit en son sens perturbé oyant les nouvelles du rapt, diffame et deshonneur de sa fille, que de sa mort." Even if the daughter had consented, the seducer as well as the priest at whose instigation he had ravished her, should be killed.

For Rabelais, through Gargantua, the problem was strictly defined. The seducer was always a "ruffian, forfant, scelerat, pendart, puant, punais, lardre, briguant, voleur, meschant en leurs contrées, qui violentement ne ravisse quelque fille il vouldra choisir." He was an "Incogneu, estrangier, barbare, mastin tout pourry, chacreux, cadavereux, paouvre, malheureux". On the other hand, the girl was always "noble, belle, riche, honeste, pudicque, delicate, saine". The entire argument was written from the woman's side. A true anti-feminist would have considered the man's side as well.[49] He speaks for the parent who wishes to protect his daughter.

[49] This point of view was already expressed by M.A.Screech in "Rabelais, de Billon and Erasmus", op.cit. p.252

If, as is generally assumed, Rabelais' daughter was born sometime between 1528 and 1530,[50] she would have been of marriageable age at the time he wrote the chapter and it is conceivable that he had a personal grievance. However this must remain conjecture because nothing has been found as yet regarding Junie's life beyond the request for legitimization.

If Rabelais' initial attitude originated with Erasmus, he certainly surpassed his mentor in vehemence on the opposition to marriage without parental consent.

On the whole, Rabelais' and Erasmus' attitude toward woman was truly similar in that they respected her as a human being, capable of feelings and of intelligence, who should be educated, who was to be accorded an equal moral standard in point of adultery, and who through marriage, would become a man's aid and companion as well as his means to immortality. Neither Erasmus nor Rabelais sought to establish the superiority of woman, but they also did

[50] There is no record of Rabelais' whereabouts between 1528 and 1530 according to Jean Plattard, État présent des études rabelaisiennes (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1927) p.33. J. Lesellier in "Deux enfants naturels de Rabelais légitimés par le pape Paul III" (Humanisme et Renaissance, Paris (1938) Vol.5, p.569) reports on finding a request of legitimization, addressed to Pope Paul III and located in the Vatican archives, of a Franciscus and Junia Rabelesi. The request was dated January 9, 1540. Since the remainder of Rabelais' life is reasonably well documented, it is likely that Junie was born between 1528 and 1530, making her sixteen or eighteen years of age by 1546, date of publication, and of correct marriageable age during the writing.

not treat her as an inferior creature. The emphasis on parental consent in the choice of a marriage partner was based in both cases on concern for the welfare of the woman and the mistrust of the clergy. While Erasmus admits to the possibility of parental selfishness in permitting the marriage of a young girl to a diseased man ("A Marriage in Name Only" in Colloquies) Rabelais makes no such mention anywhere. Gargantua takes for granted that parents want nought but the best for their children and that such a goal should not be thwarted by anyone less scrupulous.

It is odd that the influence exerted by Erasmus on the subject of woman is scarcely discussed while invariably the name of Tiraqueau is put forward as the source for Rabelais' attitude. It is all the more surprising since Tiraqueau's ideas are put forth by a comic figure while Erasmus' philosophy is approved in a serious manner.

Why did Rabelais choose the theme of woman and marriage as his vehicle while writing about wisdom[51] or prescience[52]? He deliberately chose a theme which was thoroughly controversial in his day because of the resurgence of the "Querelle des Femmes"[53] and which, together with his comic style,

[51] Kaiser, op.cit.p.136

[52] V. L. Saulnier, Le Dessein de Rabelais (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1957) p.44

[53] Complete summaries of the "Querelle des Femmes" can be found in:

assured him of a readership. It provided him with the ostensibly innocuous mantle of a clown in quest of advice from an assortment of sources of wisdom, which permitted him to satirize, criticize and anathemize with considerable impunity. Doubtlessly, taking advantage of a popular trend also had its pecuniary advantages.

Critics have discussed at length whether Rabelais sought to enter the fray, whether he wished to contribute to the diatribes which had their origins well in the Middle Ages, and even before. Lefranc maintains that "il ne songe qu'à faire entendre sa voix dans le concert général".[54] V. L. Saulnier disputes Lefranc's suggestion and considers it unlikely that Rabelais would have wanted to devote an entire book to the affirmation of his misogyny.[55] He cites several reasons such as the fact that Rabelais had dedicated the book to the "esprit Exstatique of Marguerite de Navarre, because the start of the "Querelle des Femmes" could not be considered to be 1540 and Héroët's work, but rather the

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Abel Lefranc, Introduction to the Tiers Livre, op.cit. Vol. V, pp.XXX-LXIX

E. V. Telle, L'Oeuvre de Marguerite, op.cit. pp.9-92

L. D. Richardson, The Forerunners...,op.cit. covers the "Querelle" from 15th century origins to the end of the 16th century

Jacques Bréjon, André Tiraqueau (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1937) pp.41-2

[54] Lefranc's Introduction to Gargantua, Vol. I. of Oeuvres op.cit.p.LII; See also p.XXX of Introduction to the Tiers Livre

[55] Saulnier, Dessein op.cit. p.39

fifteenth century and the Roman de la Rose, and perhaps even earlier than that. He feels that the Tiers Livre merely continues the tradition of the fabliaux. Anyone writing at the time about the subject of woman would by definition be included in the "Querelle". Had Rabelais truly wanted to participate, had he truly wanted to write a book about woman and marriage, "il l'aurait sans doute autrement bâti". (p.43) Had he taken sides, he would have mentioned names. He had, after all, mentioned his adversaries such as Calvin and Putherbe, but he never spoke either of Héroët or de La Borderie. (pp.42-3, 146-7 fn.14) Saulnier believes that Rabelais' intrinsic plan was based on the subject of prescience.

Screech maintains that Rabelais had little to do with the "Querelle" in the narrower sense, but in a wider sense, since it dealt with the topics of matrimony and celibacy which were a constant concern of the Evangelical Humanists, and which involved theology, law, philosophy and medicine, the quarrel was very much his concern. In the first two books Rabelais is a champion of marriage and he uses the prevailing interest in the subject in the Tiers Livre to express his own thoughts. According to Screech, Rabelais takes advantage of the "Querelle des Femmes" and its mental habits. (Rab.Marriage p.12)

In his work on L'Oeuvre de Marguerite d'Angoulême, reine de Navarre et la querelle des femmes, E.V.Telle refutes the belief that Rabelais took part in the polemic. Telle

suggests that Rabelais chose the topic of Panurge's marriage in order to make his readers laugh as with the "Nouvelles Quinze Joies de Mariage". He considered it to be a 'sujet d'actualité", a magnificent opportunity to expose the philosophical problem of free will and the ability to influence one's future. (p.60)

For Marcel Tetel, the Tiers Livre, while it may have links to the "Querelle des Femmes", transcends it philosophically, being a search for truth, wisdom and happiness, rather than love and marriage.[56]

In all these discussions about Rabelais' intentions, one is left with the impression that he achieved the desired effect - namely to cause discussions about his intentions regarding women rather than the far more dangerous purposes he effected. Had philogyny or misogyny been his theme, he would have been sure to be far more explicit.

Rabelais wrote a popular book in the popular bourgeois style, the "tradition gauloise" which Gebhart defines as "Un esprit de moquerie joyeuse, souvent licencieux, relevé de gros sel et de violentes épics, au fond point méchant, n'aimant qu'à rire et riant de peu à la façon de personnes simples, allumés d'une très légère étincelle d'ivresse".[57]

[56] Marcel Tetel, Rabelais (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1967) p.63

[57] Emile Gebhardt, Rabelais, la renaissance et la réforme (Paris: Hachette, 1877) p.41

The prototype of gauloise literature was the "fabliaux" which described unfaithful and immoral women, and it is this negative trait which helped classify Rabelais as an anti-feminist. However, the Gallic tradition actually represents two lines of thought: the popular comic tradition, and the ascetic tendency of medieval Christianity, which saw in woman the incarnation of sin, the temptation of the flesh.

The popular comic tradition is by no means hostile to woman in that it shows her to be ambivalent. She debases and destroys and lends a bodily substance to things. However, she is primarily the principle that gives birth, the womb. Womanhood is shown in contrast to the limitations of her husband, lover or suitor. She is a foil for his weaknesses (avarice, jealousy, etc.) while she also represents the renewal of life. On this level the theme of cuckoldry is developed, the old being replaced by the new. The whole is presented in a joyful, mocking, comic manner which is basically not negative or hostile to woman.[58] Rabelais uses a goodly number of stories in the gallic tradition. He uses them because they are funny, they are enjoyable and because he writes for men. He does not use them to cover a malicious motive, he does not use them to denigrate woman.

Perhaps the ultimate proof of the fact that Rabelais could not have intended pejorative treatment of woman in his work, lies in his dedication of the Tiers Livre to Marguerite de Navarre. He asks her to descend from her

celestial heights in order to "veoir une tierce partie / Des faictz joyeux du bon Pantagruel".[59] He would certainly not have invited her wrath, nor did he do so unintentionally. Marguerite had already "descended", read and liked Pantagruel. In an épître to her sick husband (ca.1546) she had made allusion to Pantagruel. Probably through her intervention Rabelais received on September 19, 1545 from François I. a privilege for his "livres et oeuvres consequens, des faictz heroicques de Pantagruel, commençans au troisième volume avec povoir et puissance de corriger et revoir les deux premiers par cy devant par luy composez".[60]

Marguerite, who was a highly educated woman and a Platonist, would have been quite vulnerable to offense. Obviously Rabelais' work was not guilty of giving it.

59 François Rabelais à l'esprit de la royne de Navarre

Esprit abstraict, ravy et ecstatic,
Qui frequentant les cieulx, ton origine,
As delaissé ton hoste et domestic,
Ton corps concords, qui tant se morigine
A tes edictz en vie peregrine
Sans sentement, et comme en Apathie:
Vouldrois tu poinct faire quelque sortie
De ton manoir divin, perpetuel?
Et ça bas veoir une tierce partie
Des faictz joyeux du bon Pantagruel?

60 Marcel de Grève, L'Interprétation de Rabelais au XVIe siècle, Études Rabelaisiennes III. (Geneve: Droz,1961) p.62
A corresponding reference is also made by Abel Lefranc in his edition of Oeuvres, op.cit. Vol.V. Tiers Livre, p.2, footnote 9

It has often been said that Rabelais combines the characteristics and attitudes of the Middle Ages with those of the Renaissance, and this becomes very obvious through his writings regarding women. The Gallic humor of the Middle Ages contributes the guffaw while the renewed acquaintance with the Classics weaves a fabric of sagacious wit. Traditional misogyny is tempered and finally replaced by the new feminism. The influence of a Castiglione and an Erasmus encroaches on that of a Tiraqueau and finally emerges triumphantly in the feminist microcosm of the visionary Abbaye de Thélème, the culmination of Rabelais' idealism. It is here one must seek Rabelais' true philosophy.

Chapter V.

The Abbaye de Thélème and Education

Since the Abbaye de Thélème represents Rabelais' personal version of an ideal society, some of his most untraditional, unecclesiastic and philogynous ideas are to be found in this episode. (Gargantua LII-LVIII) He chose to locate his paradise within the framework of a religious institution rather than into a part of the secular world. Raoul Morçay suggests that he did so simply because he was a monk,[1] Jean Plattard believes that Rabelais wished to contribute to the reform of the Church in accordance with the program envisioned by Lefèvre d'Etaples,[2] but whatever the impetus, the result was the creation of a harmonious and congenial combination of a religious and secular society.

Most critics feel that Thélème represents a true picture of Rabelais' philosophy[3] but there are others who do

[1] François Rabelais, L'Abbaye de Thélème, Edition critique publiée par Raoul Morçay (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1947) Introduction p.27

[2] Oeuvres de François Rabelais, Edition critique publiée sous la direction de Abel Lefranc, Vol.I (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1912) "Essai sur Thélème" p.CIII

[3] Raoul Morçay discusses supportive statements of Emile Faguet, Jean Plattard, Pierre Villey, Michelet, Daniel Mornet in the above work, pp.20-22

not believe that he was serious. Alphonse Bouvet calls Thélème "l'idée facétieuse et sans grand malice, d'un moine en vacances, ensuite d'un écolier riche et puissant".[4] Desonay writes "Thélème n'est qu'une farce".[5] However, when contrasted with descriptions of other societies in Rabelais' work in point of concept, content and attitude as well as style, Thélème is farcical at best through the literary device of a careful composition and diligent description of a list of contemporary ecclesiastic mores "à rebours", which result in an idealistic but functioning microcosm.

As planned by Gargantua, everything at the Abbaye de Thélème was to be the reverse of actual monastic life. (Ch.LII) If monasteries were usually walled in, Thélème would be open. If life in monasteries was ruled and run by hours, there would be no clocks, no bells, no sundials. Life would be arranged according to occasions and opportunities and at will. If floors were usually cleaned after women had walked over them, they would now be cleaned after the passage of a religious. The defilement attributed to women was thus

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See also: Henry Hornik, "Rabelais and Idealism", Studi Francesi #37 (1969) pp.16-25. Footnote on p.19 furnishes references to articles by Desonay, Morçay, E.V.Telle and Screech.

[4] Alphonse Bouvet, "L'Abbaye de Thélème", L'Information Littéraire, 21:20-24 (1969) p.20

[5] Fernand Desonay, "En relisant l'Abbaye de Thélème..." François Rabelais; Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort (1553-1953) (Geneve: Droz, 1953) p.102

transferred to their detractors. This was unequivocally feminist in its redundancy since Rabelais envisaged an abbey for both men and women. Gargantua points out that since men and women usually lived strictly separate in convents and monasteries, at Thélème no men could live without women and no women could live there without men. The inhabitants of Thélème were free to leave at any time and were not obliged to remain there after their novitiate. The Thélémites were to be totally different from the usual population of a religious institution. Families usually sent those who were ugly, sick, useless and a burden to them to live there. But Thélème was to admit only the most pleasant and the most beautiful. The inscription above the entrance portals specified quite clearly the requirement of proper aristocratic and ideologic background in order to merit welcome at the Abbaye.

The customary triple vow of chastity, poverty and obedience was to be eliminated, for the Thélémites were to be allowed to marry, all were to be rich and everyone was to have perfect freedom of action under the basic rule of "Fay ce que vouldras". Free people who were well-born and well-educated and who were among good people were naturally guided to virtuous comportment through their feeling of honor.

Rabelais' elevation of the role of women is a logical consequence of the high quality of his society which can do no wrong. The Thélémite women were the intellectual equals of men and their intelligence, their artistic tastes, moral

aspirations and womanly skills culminated in their achieving an equally respected plane. Women and men were educated in a similar fashion: "Tant noblement estoient apprins qu'il n'estoit entre eulx celluy ne celle qui ne sceust lire, escrire, chanter, jouer d'instruments harmonieux, parler de cinq et six langaiges, et en iceulx composer tant en carme que en oraison solue." (Gargantua LVII) There was no question as to the ladies' ability to learn at the Abbaye de Thélème and there was none in Rabelais' mind. He had affirmed this much earlier in Pantagruel VIII, when Gargantua writes to his son about the fact that "Les femmes et les filles ont aspiré à ceste louange et manne céleste de bonne doctrine."

Knowledge and scholarship, education and study lay at the very heart of Renaissance Humanism and Rabelais devoted a sizable part of his work to the exposition of his pedagogic theories. When he described Gargantua's education, he satirized the limited and antiquated methods of the Sorbonne and extolled the expanded new horizons of knowledge available to students. Gargantua lists a treasure of subjects in his letter to his son and urges him to acquire as much as possible in each field. Unfortunately such learning had not been available in his own youth but now even "les brigans, les boureaulx, les aventuriers, les palefreniers" are more learned than the doctors and preachers of Gargantua's time. He adds quite factually and uncritically that now even women wish to be educated. He lists the education of women below that of criminals in priority, but this merely reflects the

shocking novelty of such a concept to Western civilization - except perhaps at court and in a few isolated cases.

The women at the court of France during Rabelais' lifetime were not only well-educated but also quite remarkable. Anne de Bretagne tried to raise the intellectual level of her ladies-in-waiting. Louise de Savoie was politically astute and a worthy example to her son, François I. and to her famous lettered and creative daughter, Marguerite d'Angoulême. Catherine de Medicis was an intelligent, cultured woman, as was her rival Diane de Poitiers. The daughters of Thomas More in England and the Pirckheimer and Blauer girls in Germany were mentioned by Erasmus in his Colloquy "The Abbot and the Learned Lady".[6] As the century wore on, more and more daughters of lesser nobilities had tutors and eventually became participators and patrons of the arts. They sowed the seeds for the Salons of the following century.[7]

[6] Erasmus, The Colloquies of Erasmus, translated by C. R. Thompson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965)p.223

[7] For further details and general discussions of this aspect of the era, please see also:

Albert Coutaud, La Pédagogie de Rabelais (Paris: Librairie de la France scolaire, 1899) Chapters XV and XVI (pp.173-204) He reproaches Rabelais for not trying to reform education for women. (p.186)

René Doumic, "Le Féminisme au temps de la Renaissance", Revue des Deux Mondes, Vol.CXLIX (1898) pp.921-932, esp.p.926. His article deals solely with women of the nobility.

Marie René de la Maulde la Clavière, The Woman of the Renaissance: A Study of Feminism, translated by George Herbert Ely (New York: G.P.Putnam's Sons, 1905) pp.86-108

Edith Sichel, Women and Men of the French Renaissance (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1901 rpt.1970) Ch.II. (pp.15-33)

Usually, however, the education of a girl was limited to what would be expected of her as a dutiful and submissive Griselda in her home. The boy's education was supervised by the father, as in the cases of Gargantua and Pantagruel. It was the mother who prepared her daughter for marriage, to keep the house in order, to see to her husband's comforts and to be in good health to bear him children. A girl's moral and religious training was for these ends and she was instructed to depend completely upon the will of her husband for all her own comforts and contentedness. Her experience was limited to watching her mother's existence within the orbit of the home and domestic tasks. No outside influences permitted a "revolution of expectations". If a broadening of experience and knowledge was advocated for boys, the opposite was true for girls.[8] Their training avoided even the slightest mental or physical exertions and they maintained an absolutely simple, cloistral existence. From the intellectual standpoint girls were taught needlework, tapestry, netting and similar work, they were allowed music as long as it was classical and not light or "suggestive". They were given some elementary books of religion or morality for their recreative reading, in science they were exposed to some notions of physics, agriculture, medicine and to

[8] Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956) pp.4, 18, 58-61

some philosophical questions of such great moral import as original sin, the Redemption, the immortality of the soul and the Creed in general. (Maulde p.88)

Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) in his feminist De Nobilitate et Praecellentia Feminei Sexus (1529) pours forth an eloquent plea for the amelioration of the intellectual lot of women. He blames men for suppressing women, for depriving them of their natural rights and freedom and for crushing all intellectual aspirations by keeping them at home like prisoners. A girl is taught only to sew, as if she were incapable of any other pursuits and when she is turned over to the tutelage of a husband, her lot does not improve.[9]

[9]The following French translation of Agrippa's description of woman's condition was found in E.V.Telle, L'Oeuvre de Marguerite d'Angoulême, reine de Navarre, et la querelle des femmes (Toulouse: Imprimerie toulousaine Lion et fils, 1937) pp. 50-51, who attributes it to Agrippa, Trad. Gueudeville, t.I, pp.147-48, Opera t.II, p.541

> La Tyrannie des hommes qui prévaut sur tout, agissant contre le droit divin, violant impunément l'équité naturelle, a privé notre femelle de la liberté qu'elle reçoit en naissant: oui, par des lois iniques on lui en interdit la jouissance, on l'abolit par l'usage et par la coutume; enfin, on l'éteint absolument par l'éducation. Car dès qu'une femme est entrée sur la terre, du moins dans ses premières années, et lorsqu'elle est sortie de l'enfance, on la tient comme prisonnière au logis et comme si elle était entièrement incapable d'une occupation plus solide et plus élevée, on ne lui fait apprentre qu'à manier l'aiguille. Ensuite, est-elle propre au joug, a-t-elle atteint l'âge mûr et compétent pour la multiplication de l'espèce? On vous la livre en esclavage à un mari, qui, trop souvent, par la fureur de la jalousie ou par cent autres travers d'humeur, la met dans une

In France the case for the potential equality of intellectual aptitude of men and women had been made a century earlier by Christine de Pisan in Le Livre de la cité des dames (1404-5) when she wrote: "Si la coustume estoit de mettre les petites filles à l'escole, et que communement on les fist apprendre les sciences comme on fait aux filz qu'elles apprendroient aussi parfaitement et entenderoient les subtilités de toutes les arz et sciences comme ils font."[10]

In the early sixteenth century, three of the great scholars, thinkers and writers of Renaissance Humanism espoused the concept of intellectual education for women, even though none of them believed in their social equality.

Thomas More (1478-1535) wrote in Utopia (1516) that "every child receives a primary education, and most men and women go on educating themselves all their lives..."[11]

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condition déplorable ou bien on l'enferme toute sa vie comme dans une vraie prison en une retraite de soi-disant vierges et vestales où elle essuie mille chagrins et surtout un repentir rongeant qui ne finit que par la mort.

10 M. Laigle, Le Livre des trois vertus de Christine Pisan (Paris: Champion, 1912) "Bibliotheque du XV^{e} siècle" Vol. XVI. Citation on p.120

11 Thomas More, Utopia, translated by Paul Turner (London: Penguin Books 1965 rpt. 1971) p.89

While he subscribed to equality of education, he nevertheless believed that "wives are subordinate to their husbands" (p.80) and that every month they should kneel before them "to confess all their sins of omission and commission, and ask to be forgiven". (p.126)

Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536) also envisioned a world in which not only women of the nobility but also those of the middle classes would be educated. His attitude is amusingly represented in the above-mentioned Colloquy "The Abbot and the Learned Lady" ("Abbatis et Eruditae") (1524) in which the young matron Magdalia turns the tables on the ignorant abbot Antonius and shows that learning threatens neither morals nor conjugal harmony. (pp.219-223)

One of the first to write an actual treatise on the instruction of women was Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) who dedicated his De institutione feminae Christianae (1524) to Catherine of Aragon. He said that women's education should emphasize "the study of wisdom, which doth instruct their manners and inform their living, and teacheth them the way of good and holy life. As for eloquence, I have no great care..."[12] He considered it incumbent upon the husband to instruct his wife, in accordance with the teachings of St. Paul. If the husband is truly "the woman's head, the mind, the father, the Christ" and if women are forbidden

[12] Juan Luis Vives, Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women ed. by Foster Watson (New York: Longmans Green & Co. 1912) p.53

"to speak in the congregation...and should ask their husbands at home" it is obligatory for the husband then to teach them. (pp.201-2) Here also the plea is for education and not for equality.

Contrary to a theory of G. L. Michaud, M. A. Screech writes that there is no evidence that Rabelais had ever read Vives, but that there is considerable agreement between Rabelais, Vives and Erasmus. Screech feels, however, that the greater influence of Erasmus is more evident.[13]

Whether or not Rabelais read Vives is not essential. He was certainly aware of the women's quest for knowledge. He had certainly read Plato and was aware of his argument in Book V. of the Republic that women could equal men of equal strength when given equal training.[14]

The humanists believed that education led to virtue and that the more educated a man, the more virtuous he was.

[13] M. A. Screech writes in his article "A Further Study of Rabelais' Position in the Querelle des Femmes (Rabelais-Vives-Bouchard-Tiraqueau)" in Rabelais, Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort (1553-1953) (Geneve: Droz & Lille, Giard, 1953) pp.131-33 that he does not agree with the idea set forth by G. L. Michaud in "L'Influence de Vives sur Rabelais", Revue du XVI^e siècle, t.XII (1925) that Rabelais was influenced in the Tiers Livre by Vives. Screech, in footnote 2 p.131 says that Michaud's theory had also been accepted by F. de Urmaneta in La doctrina psicologica de Luis Vives (Barcelona, 1949) p.478. The conclusion arrived at by Michaud was based on the similarity of translating St. Paul's "melius est nubere quam uri" (Corinthians VII:9)

[14] Plato, The Republic with an English translation by Paul Shorey (Cambridge, Mass.: The Harvard University Press, 1937) "The Loeb Classical Library" Vol.I. Book V. Sections III-IV, pp.433-453

Rabelais supports this principle in his description of the young people of his idealistic Abbaye de Thélème. They were free to do as they wished, for "gens libérés, bien néz, bien instruictz, conversans en compaignies honnestes, ont par nature un instinct et aguillon, qui tousjours les poulse à faictz vertueux et retire the vice." (Gargantua LVII) Pierre Villey interprets this to mean "puisque la nature est bonne, il faut laisser l'homme libre, du moins quand il est éclairé par l'instruction".[15] Rabelais of course included both men and women.

Physical education and physical prowess were as important to Rabelais as intellectual ability, and if there is no identity, there is equality in accordance with the respective sex. If the men were particularly adroit on horseback and with arms, the women were "plus doctes à la main, à l'agueille, à tout acte mulièbre". Both carried birds in falconry but the women's were lighter than the men's. Rabelais created women as equal to men within the limitations of their role in society as their physical strength permitted them to be, and ascribed unequivocal equality in the educational achievements to them without other modifying qualifications. As a matter of fact, women were admitted between the ages of ten and fifteen and men between the ages of twelve and eighteen, which would mean that women reach the same intellectual niveau earlier than men, and which would be quite a considerable tribute paid to women by Rabelais.

15 Pierre Villey, Marot et Rabelais (Paris: Champion, 1923) "Les Grands Écrivains du XVI^{e} siècle" p.227

If Rabelais admitted women to the Abbaye between the ages of ten and fifteen, if was in order to educate them during the hiatus between the tutelage of their fathers and that of their husbands. The society Rabelais envisioned for them permitted them to blossom forth in an atmosphere within religious confines which was superior to that of the secular world.

At the Abbaye both women and men were able to initiate activities, and Rabelais is quite specific "Si quelqu'un ou quelcune disoit..."(Ch.LVII) Women were also instrumental in chosing a husband. A man would take to wife "celle laquelle l'auroit prins pour son dévot".(Ch.LVII) If Rabelais insists on parental consent in Ch. XLVIII of the Tiers Livre, it must be remembered that one of his main reasons was the danger of mesalliance, which was a non-existent factor in the all-aristocratic select society of Thélème.

Some of the reversals announced for life at Thélème brought merely superficial changes. The lack of walls at the Abbaye did not prevent the exclusion of undesirables or even of those who wished to marry or to leave for other reasons. Conversely, the pattern of life with its joyful self-sufficiency effectively enclosed those within. If men and women lived together at the Abbaye, their quarters were separate and there was not even an implication of cohabitation. While the Thélémites were allowed to marry, they had to do so outside the community. Even the absdute freedom inherent

in a rule of "Fay ce que vouldras" eventually became the freedom of conforming, for when one person suggested doing something, everyone else happily followed suit. And when Rabelais wrote "le tout estoit faict selon l'arbitre des dames"(Ch.LVI) he placed it within the context of clothing.

Lefranc feels that Rabelais "glorifie les dames parce que cela est nécessaire à sa conception anti-monastique, mais il ne les loue point pour elles-mêmes".[16] Lefranc believes that this is merely a veneer and covers his real attitude which remained faithful to the gallic tradition with its medieval satiric and disdainful conception of women in spite of the episodes of Thélème and Hippothadée

E. V. Telle writes similarly "Le thème courtisan et philogyne est alors le pendant inévitable du thème monachophobe. Precher contre moines, monastères, voeux et monachisme, c'est déjà faire l'apologie des dames et de l'état connubial."[17]

Since anti-feminism was an inherent part of monasticism, Rabelais' plan for Thélème doubtlessly included such a

[16] Oeuvres de François Rabelais, Édition critique publiée sous la direction de Abel Lefranc, Vol.V (Paris: Champion, 1931) Introduction by Abel Lefranc, p.XLII

[17] E. V. Telle, "Thélème et le Paulinisme Matrimonial Erasmien: Le Sens de l'Enigme en Prophétie (Gargantua Chap. LVIII)" François Rabelais: Ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort (1553-1953) (Genève: E.Droz, 1953) p.116, footnote 1

reversal on the subject of women. However there are some inconsistencies of this reversal, at times supported by references in the remainder of his work, which permit his true attitude to emerge.

If he were praising women for anti-monastic reasons, he would have to praise all women. Since Rabelais almost immediately acknowledges the existence of women who are "borgnes, boyteuses, bossues, laydes, defaictes, folles, insensées, maléficiées et tarées" the entire subject acquires a real quality which transcends that of mere contrariety. Thélème is to admit only those who are "belles, bien formées et bien naturées".(Ch.LII) The invitation to the ladies on the inscription above Thélème's portals reads:

> Cy entrez, vous, dames de hault paraige
> En franc couraige entrez y en bonheur,
> Fleurs de beaulté à céleste visaige,
> A droit corsaige, à maintien prude et saige.

They are invited to join the community voluntarily rather than being forced to do so through circumstances which preclude any other choice.

The concept of an Abbaye populated by men and women where women enjoyed equal rights, was not original with Rabelais. Not far from La Devinière, Rabelais' home, was was Fontrevault, which was an abbey of nuns and monks, headed by an abbess.[18] Its proximity makes it highly likely that

[18] Alban J. Krailsheimer, Rabelais and the Franciscans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) p.157
Arthur A. Tilley, François Rabelais, (London: J.B. Lippincott Co.1907 rpt. New York: Kennikat Press, 1970) p.152

Rabelais was familiar with it. However the Abbaye de Thélème included relevance to the non-cloistered world and its secular pursuits and thus suggested a "modus vivendi" which combined the best aspects of life from outside and from within the ivory tower of an abbey.

Krailsheimer and Beaujour question the inconsistency of omitting any reference to sexual relationships or even desire when describing a society of men and women, especially in view of their guiding rule of "Fay ce que vouldras".[19] There are of course other omissions of references to biological needs, such as an absence of kitchens and dining facilities, but these are only rarely mentioned.

If, as maintained by Lefranc, Rabelais' anti-monasticism had been so pervasive as to result in a hypocritical feminist veneer, he could not have avoided a subject which he attacked so strongly throughout the remainder of his work, namely the lechery of monks.

The simple omission of references to sexual desire within the community does not necessarily eliminate its presence but merely relegates it to a place of minor importance. In the Tiers Livre Rabelais maintains through Hippothadée that continence is a divine gift not granted to everyone, and through Rondibilis, that desire can be sublimated, if not

[19] Krailsheimer, op.cit. p.157
Michel Beaujour, Le Jeu de Rabelais (Issoudun, Indre: Essais et Philosophie L'Herne, Editions de l'Herne, 1969) p.103

entirely controlled. Thus Rabelais permits the Thélémites to marry, if they so choose. On the other hand, St. Jerome had advised Paula to keep her daughter well occupied and thus too tired to give thought to carnal matters. Such sublimation must have worked also for the young people of the Abbaye for they were kept extremely busy with a wealth of sometimes quite strenuous activity.

More importantly, the ladies of Thélème did not carry the burden of Eve's transgression. The Church represented women as the carnal and evil embodiment of original sin. It vilified them also in order to render celibacy more palatable through feelings of disgust and through fear of contamination. Rabelais disowned this idea and transferred the onus and defilement onto the shoulders of the religious when he had the floors cleaned after their passage instead of after the passage of women. At Thélème women were essential to the community, indeed the community could not exist without them. They were beautiful human beings, they were cherished and they were respected.

Rabelais devotes the entire Chapter LVI to describing the opulent clothing and jewelry worn by the Thélémites. The intention was not beautification for the enhancement of mutual physical attraction for there was uniformity in dress due to the "sympathie" between men and women, and there was the explicit statement that a minimum of time was spent on the toilette. Both eliminate the extra and special care

usually devoted to improving outward appearance in order to attract the opposite sex. There is no vanity, no attempt at seduction but merely the duty of conforming to the aesthetic demands of the community.

Significantly located between the stanzas inviting the gentlemen and the ladies, the inscription above the portals of the Abbaye invites the Evangelists. This fact plus the designation of "religieux et religieuses" used by Rabelais near the end of Chapter LVI, when he speaks of the Thélémites, imply that they were bound not only by honor in accordance with their aristocratic heritage, but also by divine law to refrain from any sinful actions such as fornication.

This religious facet of the Abbaye de Thélème also holds the key to the ostensible inconsistency regarding marriage. According to Gargantua there was to be no vow of chastity at Thélème and the inhabitants were to be permitted to marry. In point of fact, if they wished to do so, they had to leave the Abbaye. Chastity was one of the cardinal virtues preached by the evangelists and since Rabelais, in spite of his own transgressions, condemned the monks' disregard of their vows, he had to find a compromise. He pictured marriage as an extension of Thélème and described the couple's supreme happiness, which lasted to the end of their days, as a better than equal substitute for life at the Abbaye - "si bien avoient vescu à Thélème en dévotion et amytié, encore mieulx la continuoient-ilz en mariage". (Ch.LVII)

Rabelais does not imply any change in the role to be played by the lady after her marriage. It can be assumed that her status of equality would change to that of subjugation to her husband, in accordance with St. Paul. This was to be taken for granted in Rabelais' day.

The concept of feminine equality was not Rabelais' radical invention. It pervaded the literary air in his day through the "Querelle des Femmes". The episode of the Abbaye de Thélème is thus not in itself an important step forward in the emancipation but it must be considered essential in the evaluation of Rabelais' attitude toward women. The fabric of life he wove for the ladies of Thélème was too congruous and harmonious to be dismissed as a mere anti-monastic device. If he pictured them as beautiful, gracious human beings - even if he was selective in choosing them - if he saw them equal to men in corresponding areas, if he absolved them of the onus placed upon them by centuries of ecclesiastical condemnation, it was because he loved all of mankind and not merely the male half. Were Rabelais a true misogynist, he would instead have sought to suppress the female role and his contemporaries would probably not have thought the worse of him.

Conclusion

When Rabelais criticized some of the prevailing institutions and practices of his time, he did so constructively as well as destructively. His constructive criticism usually had an underlying tone of seriousness such as in Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel (Pantagruel VIII), the case made for parental approval of marriages (Tiers Livre XLVIII) and the supreme example of all, the Abbaye de Thélème at the end of Gargantua. His destructive criticism took the form of satire, parody and even burlesque, as in the case of Janotus de Bragmardo (Gargantua XVIII-XX), and later, the treatment of the various consultants visited by Panurge.

The Abbaye de Thélème was Rabelais' positive vision of an ideal society and was composed only of the best. For Rabelais this selectivity meant that it had to be limited to the well-born and the well-bred since they, by definition, were moral, intelligent and valuable human beings. Rabelais maintains this dichotomy of classes throughout his work with a consistent difference of psychological approach and style. His Gallic stories are always either told by Panurge or take place in a setting of commoners, while the Abbaye de Thélème bears close resemblance to the literature of "courtoisie".

Perhaps the greatest and most obvious difference Rabelais makes is between the actions and ideas of Panurge and Pantagruel. Panurge's doubts, questions and uncertainties could never have been those of Pantagruel. Beaujour writes appropriately about Panurge: "Il se définit négativement: ni célibataire, ni marié; ni jeune, ni vieux; ni homme du people, ni bourgeois, ni noble, il est tout cela à la fois, mais il ne vit que l'envers de chaque condition".[1]

Rabelais introduces his clown together with the circuitous workings of his mind when Panurge meets Pantagruel in France and addresses him in all kinds of esoteric languages but French. He is in absolute contrast to Pantagruel who is a prince, possessing the concomitant wisdom, truth and calm. Rabelais continues the exposition of Panurge's devious thinking in the Mock Encomium on Debtors and Lenders at the beginning of the Tiers Livre (III-IV) and after this it is not at all surprising that Panurge misinterprets all the judgements of his consultants with his customary irrational rationalization while Pantagruel furnishes the reasonable answers. Rabelais uses Panurge as Erasmus used Stultitia, to point to the foolish ways of the world and in the case of woman, to point to the misconceptions and irrational attitudes of men. While it is true that Rabelais' style is like Horace's "Ridendo

[1] Michel Beaujour, Le Jeu de Rabelais (Issoudun, Indre: Essais et Philosophie L'Herne, Editions L'Herne, 1969) p.109

dicere verum", it applies strictly to the above-mentioned destructive criticism which is launched in a negative manner and where the reader is meant to understand the opposite of what is said. This applies to all of his comic characters, each of whom has his own brand of reasoning which is in contradiction with Rabelais' true meaning. They are not the court jesters who speak the truth with impunity because of a grimace or a hunchback. They are the teachers, scientists, poets, friars, judges as well as doctors whose contorted expression and twisted posture lie in their reasoning. If for no other reason, the critical evaluation which dignifies Rondibilis as being Rabelais' spokesman should be discarded. He cannot possibly be accorded the prestige and honor of seriously representing Rabelais' philosophy, except in reverse.

There is much proof in support of Rondibilis being Rabelais "à rebours". Nowhere in his work does Rabelais consider woman to be a mistake of nature, as put forth by St. Thomas Aquinas. Nature is a benign force and all that is natural - which includes sexual activity - is good in Rabelais' eyes. He never mocks female sexuality except through his fool Panurge, who insists on improving on it through his own insatiability. Rabelais even misquotes Plato in order to facilitate Rondibilis' misconception. Nothing is easier in proving a point, than to use a faulty premise in order to bring a syllogism to a specific, if faulty conclusion. One of Rabelais' contemporaries

understood this only too well. Tiraqueau took umbrage at Rabelais' plagiarism to what seemed to critics an excessive extent. Had Rabelais sought to honor Tiraqueau, the latter might have been brought to understand and would not have taken offense. However, considering the context within which Tiraqueau's ideas were presented and the fact that a caricature advised a buffoon, Tiraqueau, who was a dignified man of stature, had no choice. His De legibus connubialibus was a scholarly opus and not to be parodied or derided.

If Rabelais' comic characters represent the negative side of his philosophy, it would follow that the positive side would be represented by their opposite number, namely by the royal family, and especially Gargantua and Pantagruel themselves. They are the "gentilz compaignons" who are invited to the Abbaye de Thélème, the "gens libères, bien néz, bien instruictz, conversans en compaignies honnestes, [qui] ont par nature un instinct et aguillon, qui tousjours les poulse à faictz vertueux et retire de vice, lequel ilz nommoient honneur." (Gargantua LVII) It is they who are to be emulated. They are the benevolent heads of state, as evidenced in the chapters "La contion que feist Gargantua ès vaincus" (Gargantua L) and "Comment Pantagruel transporta une colonie de Utopiens en Dipsodie" (Tiers Livre I). Gargantua's father Grandgousier is pictured as sitting by the fire after supper, roasting chestnuts, making designs on the ground with the poker for the fire, and "faisant à sa femme et famille de beaulx contes du temps jadis". (Gargantua XXVIII)

Chez Rabelais there is conjugal love, there is filial love, there is paternal love. It is not important that there was no romantic love in Rabelais' work. There are those who believe him to have minimal sexual interest[2] but that would be an anachronistic explanation. There was little romantic love in literature except for the "chevaleresque" in France at that time. This love was of needs adulterous because women were married at an exceedingly early age. Love poetry and writing in France was prevalent primarily in the second half of the century and its romantic emotionalism was not yet part of Rabelais' generation.

One of Rabelais' primary interests in woman was as the mother of children, the link to immortality on earth. Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel introduces this feeling quite early. (Pantagruel VIII) He reiterates it numerous times in the Tiers Livre when the most potent argument and the one that closes the debate between Panurge and Pantagruel (see Introduction above) focuses on having legitimate offspring like the royal family. (Tiers Livre IX) Even a criminal should be given the opportunity to perpetuate

[2] Walter Besant, The French Humorists from the Twelfth to the Nineteenth Century (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874) pp.108-9. Besant writes that "Passion was killed in Rabelais" in convent living in Fontenay. "Rabelais never loved. He never contemplated the possibility of love." "The ex-monk is known by his sexless mind."

A.J.Nock and C.R.Wilson, François Rabelais, the Man and his Works (New York: Harper Bros. 1929) p.224 "External evidence and the evidence of his writings alike indicate that Rabelais had uncommonly little biological interest in woman-kind; his life seems to have been singularly free from such preoccupations..."

himself before he is hanged. (Tiers Livre XXVI) Parents wish to have the joy of seeing their children thrive and and beget. (Tiers Livre XLVIII) Nature's gift of fertility is all-important. He speaks enthusiastically of the fertility of the Utopians (Tiers Livre I), cites the Biblical admonition of conceiving before going to war (T.L.VI) and of course, in Panurge's praise of "La Braguette" (T.L.VIII) he mocks the idea that it is better to lose one's head than the parts protected by the codpiece. On the other hand, fertility and propagation are by no means the "raison d'être" of woman, in Rabelais' opinion. He speaks too strongly for the remarriage of widows, even if they are barren. (T.L.VI) Life depends on propagation and its virtues are extolled in an idealistic manner by the royal family as well as in a more earthy manner by the other characters. There is no difference of opinion, however, as far as prior marriage is concerned. Children must be legitimate.

Marriage is described only in a positive manner within Rabelais' work. He insists upon parents choosing the wife or husband for the child and presents his argument through Gargantua from the point of view of protecting the prospective bride. (T.L.XLVIII) Rabelais considers the "don et grace speciale de continence" (T.L.XXX) a divinely ordained remedy against lust which is not granted to all men, but where continence is lacking, he proposes marriage and holds it in the same high esteem. Pantagruel would most likely not even have a choice, for his estate as a prince would

require him to marry.

Unlike Erasmus, Rabelais feels that such a choice will be made for the best advantage of the child. Therefore, when Panurge is ready to choose a wife, he asks the younger Pantagruel "in locus parenti" because he feels loved by him: "car l'amour que de vostre grace me portez est hors le dez d'estimation, il transcende tout poix, tout nombre, toute mesure, il est infiny, sepiternel. Mais le mesurant au qualibre des bienfaictz et contentement des recepvans, ce sera assez plus que ne m'appartient, plus que n'ay envers vous deservy, plus que ne requeroient mes merites". (Tiers Livre V) Pantagruel confirms this affection: "L'amour que je vous porte inveteré par succession de longs temps me sollicite de penser à vostre bien et profit". (T.L.XVI) The master/servant, nobility/commoner relationship is underlined here quite clearly and the difference made by Rabelais between Pantagruel, the prince and Panurge, the commoner, is emphasized. Panurge will search throughout three books, while Pantagruel stoically and happily leaves the choice of a wife to his father. (Tiers Livre XLVIII)

The ideal woman is described above all by Hippothadée (T.L.XXX) as not necessarily the most beautiful or the richest but as fearing God and obeying his commandments. This would automatically make her wish to please and cherish her husband. Hippothadée, the theologian, was one of the few serious characters of the work - not because he was a cleric, for Rabelais waxed quite acerbic when he spoke of the

clergy - but because he, like the royal family in their secular world, represented the ideal of the man of the Church. Pantagruel describes marriage as "femme avoir est l'avoir à usaige tel que Nature la créa, qui est pour l'ayde, esbattement et société de l'homme", but he qualifies this by saying that man must not give up his other pursuits such as his duty to God and country for the sake of a woman. Woman is described in a positive manner, in accordance with the times. The moral ideal for men was always self-expansion and realization while for the woman it as the opposite and she was urged to self-negation and subjugation to the man. After all, she was frankly the property of her husband. A man had the choice of marrying or not. A woman had the choice of marrying or going to a convent. It is therefore quite liberal and progressive for Rabelais to have spoken in such terms.

When the subject of adultery was discussed, Rabelais took an outright feminist position in maintaining the need for faithfulness on the man's part. Once again, it was Hippothadée who showed Panurge that a wife was a mirror of the husband and implied that she would therefore be entitled to infidelity if her husband led the way. In Rabelais' day, both man and woman were bound by God's law but only she was bound by the laws of the world. There was a distinct double standard when it came to adultery[3] and Rabelais wished to abolish this.

Rabelais in many ways transcended his contemporaries in his feminist views. His women did not carry the burden of original sin. They were not the insatiably lascivious half of the human species. They were not potential witches. Their intelligence was equal to men and he felt they ought to be educated. When they performed their supreme function of giving birth, they ought, he thought, to be treated with compassion and given the best care available. It is interesting to note that Gargamelle, Gargantua's mother, was given more space, having been written later, than Badebec, mother of Pantagruel. Badebec gained in importance primarily through her husband's grief at her death, while Gargamelle became a valid person in her own right. This was most likely due to an increased interest on the part of Rabelais in women as time progressed.

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[3] Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1956) quotes from Benvenuto Italiano, pt.II. Dial.II. pp.607-611: "Chastity"

"Both men and women were enjoined to it - but only women are yolked with it by divine law. But there is a difference as to whether a man consorts with a married or unmarried woman. In the first case he deserves blame but does not lose honor since he injures no one except his own wife. In the second case, whether married or unmarried himself, he is dishonored in that he sins against temperance and against justice also, by injuring another man's honor - a thing more precious than any other outward good.

Does this mean that a married woman is infamous only when she offends with a married man and not with an unmarried? On the contrary - a married woman would sin worse than a man - first, because she would stain her husband's honor as well as her own; second, because subject to man, she inflicts the greater injury of an inferior upon a superior; third, because she may bring into her husband's house strange children and thus shortchange some of his own."

If one considers the two definitions of "feminism" proposed in the Introduction, one being satisfied with woman's role as it is and the other striving to improve her lot, Rabelais would most definitely be ranked among the latter. He contradicted the denigration of woman by the Church in his Abbaye de Thélème by substituting the clergy for the "defilers". He proposed compassion for women in labor instead of considering the pain as punishment for the sin of Eve. He emulated the feminists among the writers, e.g. Erasmus, and he satirized the anti-feminists, e.g. Tiraqueau. He presented a primary protagonist of the male sex who personified the carnality supposedly monopolized by woman and he preached that chastity was as essential for men as for women. His entire attitude, even in his Gallic stories, was aimed toward enjoyment of what God and Nature have granted, for all that is, is good!

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