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THE ECONOMY OF OWING

Rabelais' Praise of Debts

La présente étude examine les structures de pensée et d'expression dans l'«Eloge des dettes». Elle s'attache à révéler un réseau serré de formes récurrentes qui confirme textuellement la vision panurgienne de l'harmonie corporelle, sociale et cosmique. Partant de l'opposition binaire propre à toute forme d'échange, elle retrace l'évolution du texte de ses figures en chiasme, qui le sous-tendent dans son ensemble et dans son dynamisme, à ses figures circulaires, symbole parfait de son unité synchronique et diachronique. Comparé à l'*Encomium debiti* de Robert Turner, l'Eloge de Rabelais fait, d'autre part, apparaître sa qualité propre.

In the opening chapters of the *Tiers Livre*, Panurge's prodigality as the governor of Salmiguondin prompts Pantagruel to urge him to put his financial affairs in order. Panurge's response is the praise of debts, an apocalyptic vision of an orderly, harmonious universe ruled by the principle of mutual exchange. After listening to his friend in stony silence, Pantagruel responds with a bitter attack against borrowers. If he remains unconvinced by his friend's arguments, the giant nonetheless expresses his appreciation of the way Panurge has formulated them, referring to him as a "bon topicqueur et affecté à vostre cause" and complimenting him on his "belles graphides et diatypoques qui me plaisent très-bien."¹

The distinction which the good giant makes between the ignominious subject matter of his friend's discourse and the pleasing form which he has given it reflects a dilemma which has also divided modern readers of Rabelais. The coherent, dynamic universe conjured up by Panurge is a most compelling image. Ruled by the principles which govern man's existence and completely accessible to human reason, it appears to express a very real humanist ideal. Animated by Panurge's lyricism, it takes on an *élan vital* which is difficult to deny.² Yet, Panurge's encomium is

at the same time a blatant example of bad faith. Acting out of pure self-interest, he deliberately sets out to deceive his audience by basing his entire oration on the ambiguity of the word "devoir," taking advantage of its ability to signify both owing and a certain moral obligation. The duality of language becomes duplicitous.³

The difficulties which confront the reader of the praise of debts arise from two sources. The first is the text itself and the tradition of paradoxical encomium which it represents. Originally practiced by the Greek sophists, paradoxical encomium, or the praise of an object unworthy of being praised, was rediscovered by Erasmus and introduced to the Renaissance in the form of his *Praise of Folly*. It drew an increasingly large circle of admirers who set about to celebrate subjects of such dubious merit as the lowly doorstep and the deadly black plague.⁴ The popularity of mock encomium lay in its subversive tendencies, in its undermining of existing value systems by replacing their ideals with the trivial or the despicable, fostering the confusion, instability and relativity of a world upside-down. Paradoxical encomium held further appeal for the panegyrist in the challenge it presented to his virtuosity. The celebration of the inconsequential offered the opportunity to engage in the most dazzling displays of verbal pyrotechnics and rhetorical *tours de force* to transform it into an object worthy of admiration and praise. A tradition thriving on contradiction, whose elevated style constantly clashed with its unseemly object, whose formal expression was of equal if not greater importance than its subject matter, paradoxical encomium remained a highly ambiguous literary form throughout its history.

The reader's response to this ambiguity creates the second source of difficulty. Just as Pantagruel distinguishes Panurge's intent from his formal expression, so the reader attempting to discover an unequivocal meaning need choose between the point of view of Pantagruel, the ideal humanist prince, and that of Panurge, the linguistic prestidigitator. The correct reading must then lie with the one to the exclusion of the other: the humanist condemns the poet's irrational flight of fancy or the vitality of the poet's *brio* overpowers and defeats the tedious pedantry of the humanist.

In order to restore integrity to the praise of debts, the present study will re-examine Panurge's cosmic vision, revealing a network of interrelated structures more complex than the opposi-

tions which appear to polarize it. The order and coherence assured by these recurring patterns derives not from Panurge's duplicitous intent but from a deeper level of consciousness which is that of the author himself. A comparison of Rabelais' encomium with an imitation written in the 1580's by Robert Turner will then provide a context for both Panurge's oration and Pantagruel's response. Turner's piece presents a sixteenth century reading to complement the giant's and at the same time constitutes a text which can be compared with its model for the purpose of better defining and appreciating what is unique to it.

The most obvious organizing structure of the praise of debts is its division into two very distinct chapters. In chapter 3, Panurge invites his listener to contemplate the chaos of a cosmos in which the elements refuse to extend their services to one another. Beginning with a description of the stars and planets withholding their divine influence, he proceeds to the vision of a society from which charity and good deeds are absent and finally evokes the nightmare of a body whose members will not cooperate. In chapter 4, Panurge rejoices over the idea of a creative, productive, harmonious universe, energized by repeated acts of reciprocation. Passing in review once more the universe, society and the human body, he concludes his demonstration by recalling the role of sharing in the act of procreation and in the perpetuation of the human race. The binary opposition which governs the joint structure of the two chapters reproduces the binary opposition which is prerequisite to any form of exchange. Panurge's universe and the universe of his text are divided into have-nots and haves.

The juxtaposition of negative and positive creates an unstable condition, however, and the relationship between the two chapters is more complex than mere antithesis and more dynamic. Within the context of Panurge's world view, exchange provides the synthesizing force which will overcome opposition and incorporate all dissident actions into a complete and harmonious whole. Once again, a similar force is at work on the formal level. The three elements of the first half of Panurge's encomium, the universe, society and the body, reappear in the second half. Part 1 lends both its content and its structure to part 2. When the subjects universe-society-body are taken up in the second half, however, they are given a slightly different treatment. If in chapter 3 Panurge describes in great detail the sorry state of a universe without debt, he devotes progressively less attention to the question of a debt-free society and a debt-free body. In chapter 4, this order is

reversed: the universe and society are treated rapidly in order to contemplate at length the perfection of a debt-ridden body. The ascending order in the importance accorded to each element in the tri-partite structure is a mirror image of the descending importance which each received in the first part. The repetition of the three elements, universe-society-body, produces an ABC/ABC pattern while the attention and detail devoted to each creates a chiasmic ABC/CBA structure. As a result, part 2 both reproduces and reflects part 1. Just as part 1 had extended its content and form to part 2, now part 2 refers back to part 1, engaging in the very interchange which Panurge is proposing as the *copula mundi*.

A pattern of correspondences begins to emerge. Each of the three collectivities identifies not only with its reproduction on the opposite side of the diptych, but with the collectivity which occupies the corresponding position in the mirror image as well. Bonds form between the two A's of the ABC/ABC pattern, but also between the two A's of the chiasmus ABC/CBA. Thus, the universe of part 1 coincides with the universe of part 2 but also with the image of the body with which it would merge were the mirror image to be folded upon itself. Similarly, the body of chapter 3 finds a double echo both in the description of the body and of the universe in chapter 4. Here, in true humanist fashion, microcosm and macrocosm are totally integrated.

Panurge would have his listeners believe that debts cause this interdependency and that adherence to the principle of mutual exchange, "celle grand ame de l'univers," assures communication between successive levels of the universe's great chain of being. In reality, it is the carefully constructed text which imposes this symmetry. Within that text, however, the complex system of replication and inter-textuality also obeys the principle of mutual exchange. The text itself fully realizes the ideal to which Panurge's theory of cosmic indebtedness aspires. The text is at once the message's vehicle and its validation.

Within Panurge's universe, however, debts are not only a principle of organization. They are also an energizing force, most clearly revealed in the description of the human body. Just as the human body is a microcosm mirroring the organization of the universe, so also does the text devoted to its description reproduce on a lesser scale the structures of the entire encomium. And, just as the macrocosm and the microcosm share the same vital force, the text and the sub-text are motivated by identical structures.

The description of the human body in chapter 4 is divided into two parts, the first devoted to the digestive system and the second to the circulatory system. As is true of his image of the cosmos in general, Panurge conceives of these two systems in terms of have-nots and haves. The digestive system is characterized by the overwhelming need for blood, which lends such an urgency to the members' frantic efforts to seek out nourishment, to convert and purify it. The circulatory system is distinguished from this by the abundance of blood; its activities are determined by the necessity of distributing this wealth to the various members and organs.

Although distinguished by their nature and function, the two systems are interdependent. Indispensable bonds are formed by the reciprocal needs they fulfill for one another. The digestive system provides the circulatory system with blood which the circulatory system in turn dispenses to the organs exerting themselves in the process of digestion. Once again the importance of this reciprocity is borne out by the fact that it serves as the underlying structure of the text as well. The pattern of reproduction and reflection which was discovered at the basis of Panurge's vision of cosmic harmony is also the structuring principle of his description of the human body. The first half begins with the activities of the outer extremities ("mains," "piedz," "oeilz"), moves inwards to the organs involved in digestion ("languie," "dens," "estomach"), and downwards to the elimination of wastes. Inversely, the second half begins at the low point of the cycle (elimination of wastes through the kidneys and bladder), reascends to the superior internal organs and external members ("pieds," "mains," "oeilz"), and finally to the mind. The various elements that constitute the two collectivities are not reproduced with the same simple fidelity with which they reappear in Panurge's vision of a cosmos without debts and a cosmos in debt. Their distribution adheres more closely to a reflexive, chiasmatic pattern: the workings of the two systems are first traced from top to bottom and then from bottom to top. As a result, the mirror image, and the endless reciprocity which it involves, assumes all the more importance as an agent of coherence and unity.

This symmetry and the order which it imposes on the body's functions is apparent only when the description has been completed. In the actual elaboration of Panurge's encomium, symmetry is encountered as a process unfolding by means of a series of transformations. The body offers a perfect model of this process at work. In the digestive system, the exchanges between the

organs allow them to convert food to blood. A second set of transformations is needed to refine and purify the blood, rendering it suitable for the various uses to which it will be put. Finally, the precious blood works its own transformation on the body, converting its members from their hungry, needful state to one of satisfaction and abundance. The process improves the condition of the individual members and the organism as a whole while all of them retain their original identity.⁵ The body's systems are not capable of creating new and different forms, but only of converting what already exists.⁶ And yet, it is the very closed nature of its systems, the body's inherent limitations, which endow it with its seemingly endless potential for regeneration and growth.

The dynamism of this process is most fully demonstrated by the way it serves both to organize and to generate the text. The elements of the description are arranged in a chiasmic pattern. In the first half, the active members (A) work upon passive matter (B) to convert it to blood. The pattern is reversed in the second half when this matter (B) in turn acts upon the passive members (A), revitalizing them. The ABBA pattern is itself a figurative representation of the act of exchange. The inert matter (B) is passed from the first half of the chiasmus (A¹) to the second (A²). Once B has been paired with A in the second half, the perfect symmetry of the completed figure makes it possible to reverse the order of the elements, to pass the matter back to the original members in an unending chain of exchanges. Both the combined digestive/circulatory system and the chiasmus which formulates it present a continuum which, while advancing and evolving, always returns to its point of origin. Although the beginning and end of the continuum are separated by time, by the surface of the written page, by the transformation accomplished by the intervention of the blood, the reproduction of the same elements at both extremes imposes a certain coherence on its development. Panurge has achieved the same symmetry which characterized the distribution of his universe in space. The endless reflection between the various members of his cosmic structure is now transformed to the temporal plane where it takes the form of endless advancement and endless renewal within this system.

The circle inscribed by this pattern of endless return is the ultimate figure of synchronic and diachronic unity, at the same time all-encompassing and eternal. This perfection was only achieved, however, through a gradual evolution from the original binary opposition to the symmetry of the chiasmus and finally to its

complete realization in the circle. The circle itself displays vestiges of this evolutionary process: its two hemispheres are a matched pair, mirror images of one another. Its circumference is the two-dimensional rendering of the one-dimensional ABBA pattern which, were it to be folded back upon itself, would circumscribe the same infinite arc. The circle is the perfection towards which all of Panurge's discourse has been aspiring and it is thus not surprising that it finds its most complete expression only in the encomium's closing paragraph, in which the reproductive system is evoked.

As with all the vital systems in the praise of debts, the reproductive system originates in a matched pair, male and female. Once again, Panurge conceives of the dynamics of their interrelation in terms of an exchange, but this time it is of a three-fold nature. The first series of exchanges takes place on the level of the individual participants, where the functioning of the reproductive system is expressed in terms of interdependence and cooperation, suggesting the same type of network of reciprocity which governed the circulatory and digestive systems. To produce a child

chascun membre du plus precieux de son nourrissement decide et roigne une portion, et la renvoye en bas: nature y a praeparé vases et receptacles opportuns, par les quelz descendent es genitoires en longs ambages et flexuositez, reçoit forme competente et trouve lieux idoines tant en l'homme comme en la femme, pour conserver et perpetuer le genre humain (1 : 424).

Like the debt-ridden economies of the other bodily systems, the reproductive system's vitality depends on the energies and generosity of the individual members working together for the common good. Unlike the blood which rewards the efforts of the digestive organs, however, the child which is the end product of the reproductive system's labors is more than a mere commodity. He is a new complete whole, reproducing within himself and in its entirety the reproductive system whose exchanges brought him into existence. Physically, he is the one which englobes the many. Temporally, he is the end which retroactively gives unity of meaning to the numerous and diversified activities of the various members.

The second exchange which Panurge evokes is the most obvious one which can take place between the two parties engaged in

the act of reproduction: "Se faict le tout par pretz et debtes de l'un à l'autre: dont est dict le debvoir de mariage" (1:424). The off-color pun is the last transformation which Panurge will work on the word "debvoir," creating yet a new meaning for a term which has evolved with the same consistency as all the other participants in his great chain of being. The child produced by this union is the synthesis of the two antithetical parties, male and female, which engendered him, combining in one complex being the traits and characteristics of each, embracing and celebrating contradiction.

If on the one hand the child is the ultimate object, the common goal towards which all the members' energies are directed, the result, product and unique end of all their labors, he is also a beginning. He embodies at the same time the principle of *conservation* and *perpetuation* of the species. His ambivalent function within the temporal evolution of mankind is recalled by the third manner in which Panurge conceives of reproduction. It is also a way of lending to the future: "Ce monde prestant, doibvant, empruntant, est si bon, que ceste alimentation parachevée, il pense desja prester à ceulx qui ne sont encores nez." And it demands to be repaid, for procreation is motivated by a certain narcissist desire to "multiplier en images à soy semblables, ce sont enfans" (1:424). As Gargantua explained in his letter to Pantagruel, the father gives life to his son but the son reciprocates by reproducing the image of his father, thereby granting him a certain immortality. The two principles which were seen to govern the integrity of the human body's hierarchy are now found to insure the integrity of its evolution in time as well. With each new individual the human race advances into the future and reproduces the past in an endless trajectory of progress and return circumscribing a perfect and eternal circle.

The child, the circle, the text — all are agents of unity paradoxically achieving oneness by embracing contradiction and thereby preserving it. All are the culminating point of an evolution which originated in a binary opposition, progressed to a reciprocal relationship based on reproduction and reflection before finally achieving perfect unity and coherence. Repository and beneficiary of the creative force which engendered it, each of them also bears the seed of the future — the circle in its endless configuration, the child in its own potential for procreation, the praise of debts in introducing the flea into Panurge's ear and into the *Tiers Livre*, as well. It is here that the theme of marriage is

presented for the first time. Since debts and conjugal bliss are inexorably linked in Panurge's mind, once Pantagruel has prohibited his friend from engaging in the former, Panurge transfers all of his energies to the latter. The creative force of debts will be replaced by the procreative force of marriage and Panurge's fertile doubt will generate the quest which occupies the two subsequent books, just as the negativity of his debt-free cosmos formed the vacuum which summoned forth his apocalyptic vision of a cosmos in debt. Pantagruel may be justified in distinguishing between the intention and form of Panurge's apology. In Rabelais' praise of debts, where form becomes performance and creates its own meaning, no such easy distinction can be made.

The "Encomium debiti" of Robert Turner, a Catholic priest who spent most of his life on the continent as a teacher of rhetoric, was probably written some 30 years after the publication of the *Tiers Livre*.⁷ Turner's decision to imitate Rabelais' praise suggests admiration for his model while, at the same time, the additions and deletions which he introduces imply an interpretation of Rabelais and a desire to modify the original so that it might conform more fully to the expression of his own world view. It therefore offers a double perspective from which to consider Panurge's encomium: as the reading of a near-contemporary and as a literary counterpoint to Rabelais' text.

Turner's encomium shares with Rabelais' the ambiguity which pervades the entire tradition of paradoxical encomium. Like many of his cohorts, he feels called upon to justify this somewhat disquieting mixture of comic and serious in certain prefatory remarks to prepare his reader for the apparent frivolity which covers the praise's hidden significance. It is not purely fortuitous that he should appeal to Alcibiades' comparison of Socrates to a Silenus box:

Alcibiades in suo symposio, Socratem dum vellet colore vero vivoque exprimere, eum Pharmacopoei pyxidem dixit. Pyxidem certe, extra si videas, intus si penetres. Vidistis enim. Pharmacopoei officinam pyxide undique instructam, & pyxide, quae prae se ferebat Harpyias, Satyros, hoedos reptantes, cervos quam videas. At intus si penetres, erit quod quaeres, quaeris? erit quod ames, amas? erit quod emas ingenti precio, lautas scilicet res, balsamum, ammomum zebetum, ambram, muscum, alia, quae servant sanum, sanant aegrotum. Ad hanc normam exigebat Socratem, vultu, ac moribus taurum potius, quam hominem, extra si examines: at intus si iudices principem

hominum, quo nihil videt vel schola nitidius, vel mundus divinius.⁸

The fidelity with which Turner imitates the prologue to *Gargantua*⁹ evokes the specter of Alcofrybas Nasier exhorting his reader to peek inside the pharmacist's box, to delve beneath Socrates' rough exterior and, finally, to "sugger la sustantificque mouelle." By associating this self-styled master of hermeneutics with arguments drawn from Panurge's praise of debts, Turner suggests the spirit in which he believed Rabelais' text should be approached. At the same time, by inviting Alcofrybas to preside over the inception of his own "Encomium," he is presenting the reader with a method for comprehending that text as well. He himself shows an appreciation of the paradoxical qualities of Panurge's encomium and reminds us of the difficulties which its reading presents. He appears to be both more tolerant of contradiction than Pantagruel and more sensitive to the coexistence of successive layers of meaning. If he shows every indication of having taken to heart the admonitions of the first half of the prologue to *Gargantua*, he proves to be a much less attentive reader of the second half, for he falls headlong into the error against which Alcofrybas warns: like those who impose allegorical readings, he attributes greater worth to the moral truth to be gained than to the vehicle which bears it, disrupting the delicate balance of antitheses which supports paradox. When, in the opening paragraphs of his encomium he begs of his reader "date mihi quaeso, hanc operam, ut me legatis," promising him "ego vobis vicissim dabo illam operam, optimam: ut vos omnes beam" (p. 175), he is not merely engaging in the conventional and specious promise to join the *utile* to the *dulce* with which writers of paradoxical encomia commonly introduced their subjects. Turner has a message which he is only too willing to reveal and which is the most clearly evident precisely at those moments when his imitation is the least faithful to its model.

When Turner chooses to alter the content of the praise of debts, his additions are usually of one of two types. In the first instance, they tend to be explicitly religious in character. He cites biblical passages which favor mutual exchange: "*Mutuum date nihil ex eo sperantes*," and "*facite (inquit Christus) amicos, id est facite vobis debitores de Mammona iniquitatis*" (p. 176). He compares the joy of the debtor over finding someone who will lend him money to the joy of the father over the return of the pro-

digal son. Among the many debts which a man must bear, he enumerates man's debt to God for having created him and to Christ for having redeemed him.

The religious element is not introduced merely for the incongruous effect created by its presence in the midst of a facetious piece. It is accompanied by and given weight by a second type of addition which is clearly moralizing in its inspiration. After paraphrasing Panurge's ecstatic vision of a body governed by the principle of mutual exchange, Turner's analytic mind is far from the state of wonder and awe to which Rabelais' character had succumbed ("Vertus guoy, je me naye, je me pers, je m'esguare" [1:423]). Instead, he is intent upon the lesson to be derived from this model of order and efficiency:

à singulis quod det, tanto ordine, tam arcta lege, tam certo tempore, ut videamus, DEUM aut nolle hominem esse aut velle esse debitorem in omnibus partibus, non in singulis tantum (p. 175).

The compelling need to edify the reader is even more evident in the final paragraph of the encomium. Here, in the position traditionally reserved for moral lessons, Turner sums up what conclusions can be drawn from his praise:

Debeo ego semperque debere volo. Cui? minimus maximo. Cui? Servus domino. Cui? cliens serenissimo principi Ernesto, qui quantum à Deo homo, tantum aliis hominibus suis quasi Deus largitur. Aliis quid & quantum debeo? Quod charitas quasi legem iubet, proximo me, quantum mei permittet aut pietas in Deum, aut Reverentia in Ernestum. O felicem me, omnia debitorem (p. 176).

The hierarchy which Turner constructs is quite different from that which was seen to govern Panurge's universe, and the image which it presents of mankind is greatly diminished. No longer defined by his affinity with the rotations of the heavenly bodies, but rather by the various authorities to which he must submit, man loses his cosmic proportions and eternal life and must satisfy himself with the role of good neighbor, obedient subject and God-fearing christian.

The reduction in man's image is the result of a difference in inspiration. Turner's praise is morally motivated: he wishes to advance a model of behavior which is easily imitable and which is

limited to the conduct of affairs on a day-to-day basis. The primacy of this message over the form which gives it expression accounts for variations in content between the imitation and its model. But perhaps the most revealing gauge of the distance which separates the two encomia lies in the differences in their structures. These are most obvious at points where Turner paraphrases Rabelais. His appeal to the argument of a body ruled by mutual exchange is a greatly reduced version of the first half of Panurge's vision: "Oculus videt pedi, pes stat manui, manus tangit ori, os edit stomacho, stomachus digerit corpori, redditq[ue]" (p. 175). The corresponding passage in Rabelais is:

Pour icelles trouver, praeparer et cuire, travaillent les mains, cheminent les piedz, et portent toute ceste machine; les oeilz tout conduisent; l'appetit en l'orifice de l'estomach moyenant un peu de melancholie aigrette, que luy est transmis de la ratelle, admonnest de enfourner viande; la langue en faict l'essay; les dens la maschent; l'estomach la reçoit, digere et chylifie; les venes mesaraïques en sugcent ce qu'est bon et idoine; delaissent les excremens, les quelz par vertus expulsive sont vuidez hors par exprès conduictz, puy la portent au foye; il la transmue derechef, et en faict sang (1 : 422).

Rabelais' text validates its message. The verbal *copia* of his description realizes the fertility and abundance which Panurge would bestow on his indebted universe. His dream becomes sensible through the joint participation of the formal and significant elements of the praise. Verbs multiply as the description progresses, increasing the tempo of the text at the same rate that the members intensify their efforts once the attainment of their goal is within sight. The end of the verbal crescendo coincides with the achievement of the end of the members' labors: "et en faict sang." By ascribing a function to each of the body's organs, Rabelais makes each an indispensable part of the whole, conferring dignity and worth on each individual. His text is organized in the same way: the meaning and value of each part of the structure is largely determined by its function within the totality and by its inter-relation with other parts. The two *corpora* become indistinguishable.

Turner's description reproduces the downward movement of his model and suggests a cyclical return. His text is encumbered by repetition, however, at the same time that it is impoverished by the comparatively small number of members whose forces it

enlists. Furthermore, he limits himself to the imitation of the digestive system alone, eliminating the circulatory system and omitting the complementary shift from negative to positive which vitalizes Rabelais' description.

Throughout his encomium, Turner consistently displays the same indifference towards the organizing principle of his model. The arguments he appropriates are not reproduced in the same order in which they appear in Panurge's apology. He first describes the body without debts. Then, after noting that we are all indebted to God, he reproduces some of the arguments which preface Panurge's cosmic rapture: the attention and solicitude of creditors; the anecdote of the Gallic slaves who wished to avoid death on their master's funeral pyre; the usurers who preferred death to loss of capital. The next point which he borrows from Rabelais is the vision of a cosmos without debts, followed by that of the body without debts. In his final paragraph he returns to the beginning of Panurge's praise, re-introducing certain images from his description of a cosmos in debt. Thus, if the following letters are assigned to the parts of Panurge's encomium:

Ch. 3	— introductory arguments	— preface	(pp. 415-17)
	— cosmos	— a	(pp. 417-19)
	— society	— b	(p. 419)
	— body	— c	(p. 420)
Ch. 4	— cosmos	— A	(pp. 420-21)
	— society	— B	(pp. 421-22)
	— body	— C	(pp. 422-23)
	— procreation	— conclusion	(p. 424)

they can be found in Turner's encomium redistributed in the following order:

C	— paragraphs 2 and 3
preface	— paragraph 5
a	— paragraphs 6 and 7
c	— paragraph 7
beginning of A	— paragraph 7

Turner's departure from the abc/ABC pattern destroys the bonds of reproduction and reflection which had given coherence and vitality to Panurge's praise. As a result, his "Encomium" degenerates into an accumulation of arguments borrowed from Rabe-

lais, interspersed with those of his own devising. The absence of a rigorous organization reflects the fact that Turner's purpose is not so much to impress his reader with the excellence of the systems which he is describing as it is to direct him towards the moral truth they embody. The exemplary function to which Panurge's universe and body are reduced presupposes their imperfection, for they are mere mortal manifestations of divine, eternal truth. Ambiguity is overcome, order and harmony are restored by subordinating the literal meaning to the greater glory of its moral message.

Both encomia reveal the conflict and contradiction which arise from a problematic existence and both writers find in paradox the wit and irony suitable to communicate their conception of an unstable, ever-changing universe. Written at the time when the Renaissance was drawing to a close in Northern Europe, Turner's praise offers a response which would be echoed by mannerists such as Sponde and La Ceppède: refuge from imperfection must be sought in God who alone gives meaning to man's life. By locating truth in the great beyond, however, he is denying the paradox of existence. Rabelais transforms the tension produced by the co-existence of irreconcilables into a creative force, exalts contradiction and uses paradox as the foundation, motivation and expression of his universe.

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NOTES

¹ François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*, introduction, notes, bibliographie et relevé de variantes par Pierre Jourda, 2 vol. (Paris: Garnier, 1962), 1:424-5.

² Rigolot admits that "malgré l'excentricité du sujet, on ne peut s'empêcher de trouver dans cette explication libre-échangiste un fond de vérité" (Rigolot, *Langages*, p. 143). Glauser finds that Panurge's eloquence and *brio* compensate for a failing subject matter. Through Panurge ("cet autre lui-même"), Rabelais constructs an "édifice musical" which, if it does not coincide exactly with reality, is nonetheless a real work of "art pur" (Glauser, *Rabelais*, p. 160).

³ Perhaps the most severe critic of Panurge's rhetoric is Gérard Defaux:

"L'éloge des dettes, par exemple, n'est pas seulement un encomium burlesque où Rabelais condamnerait la rhétorique creuse de Panurge. C'est proprement un anti-sermon où Panurge opère, suivant les mots

de Pascal contre les casuistes, un renversement entier de la loi de Dieu... La subversion diabolique qu'il accomplit ainsi au moyen d'un langage fallacieux et des séductions d'une rhétorique habile éclate au grand jour cependant, lorsqu'on garde, comme Pantagruel, les yeux fixés sur la loi de Dieu" (Gérard Defaux, *Pantagruel et les Sophistes* [La Hague: M. Nyhoff, 1973], p. 205).

⁴ A number of studies have traced the development of paradoxical encomium as a genre and have devoted particular attention to its renewal during the Renaissance: Theodore C. Burgess, "Epideictic Literature," *Studies in Classical Philology* 3 (1902): 89-261; Arthur Stanley Pease, "Things without Honor," *Classical Philology* 21 (Jan.-Oct. 1926): 27-42; Alexander H. Sackton, "The Paradoxical Encomium in Elizabethan Drama," *Studies in English* 28 (1949): 83-104; Henry Knight Miller, "The Paradoxical Encomium with Special Reference to its Vogue in England, 1600-1800," *Modern Philology* 53 (Feb. 1956): 145-178; A. E. Malloch, "The Techniques and Functions of the Renaissance Paradox," *Studies in Philology* 53 (April 1956): 191-203; N.N. Condeescu, "Le Paradoxe bernésque dans la littérature française de la Renaissance," *Beiträge zur Romanischen Philologie* 2 (1963): 27-51; Sister M. Geraldine, C.S.J., "Erasmus and the Tradition of Paradox," *Studies in Philology* 61 (Jan. 1964): 41-63; Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966); Paolo Cherchi, "L'encomio paradossale nel Manierismo," *Forum Italicum* 9 (Dec. 1975): 368-384.

Critical works which have investigated the question of paradoxical encomium in Rabelais include: Alfred Glauser, *Rabelais Créateur* (Paris: Nizet, 1966); Deborah Losse, *Rhetoric at Play: Rabelais and Satirical Eulogy*, Utah Studies in Literature and Linguistics, no. 17 (Berne: Peter Lang, 1980); C.A. Mayer, "Rabelais' Satirical Eulogy: the Praise of Borrowing," *François Rabelais: ouvrage publié pour le quatrième centenaire de sa mort, 1553-1953*, pp. 147-55 (Genève: Droz, 1953); François Rigolot, *Les Langages de Rabelais*, Etudes Rabelaisiennes, no. 10 (Genève: Droz, 1972); Marcel Tetel, *Rabelais et l'Italie* (Florence: Olschki, 1969).

⁵ A study of the verbs used to describe the members at work on the circulation of blood reveals that those activities which do not involve the transportation of blood are limited to distillation, purification and transformation, right down to the final conversion, which makes of a lender a borrower:

"Adoncques chascun membre se praepare et s'esvertue de nouveau à purifier et affiner cestuy thesaur. Les roignons par les venes emulgentes en tirent l'aiguosité, que vous nommez urine, et par les ureteres la découlent en bas. Au bas trouve receptacle propre, c'est la vessie, laquelle en temps oportun la vuide hors. La ratelle en tire le terrestre et la lie, que vous nommez melancholie. La bouteille du fiel en sous-traict la cholere superflue. Puy est transporté en une autre officine pour mieulx estre affiné, c'est le coeur. Lequel par ses mouvemens diastolicques et systolicques le subtilie et enflambe, tellement que par le ventricule dextre le met à perfection, et par les venes l'envoye à tous les membres. Chascun membre l'attire à soy, et s'en alimente à sa guise: pieds, mains, oeilz, tous: et lors sont faictz debteurs, qui paravant estoient presteurs" (1:423 [underlining mine]).

⁶ The clearest indication of the limits imposed on the body's autonomy is the sentence which initiates the entire description: "La matiere et metal convenable

pour estre en sang transmué est baillée par nature: pain et vin" (1:422). From the outset the description posits the dependency of the body on nature for raw materials, gives dignity to the body's powers of conversion by recalling the transubstantiation and, by reversing it, grounds the body's activities in an ever more immediate, concrete and vital reality.

⁷ Educated at Oxford and Cambridge, Turner taught for a time in Douai and in Rome but lived primarily in Germany, teaching rhetoric and eloquence at several universities. He died in 1599 and his "Encomium debiti," as well as his "Oratio de laude ebrietatis," both of which were published in Dornavius' *Amphitheatrum* in 1619, were probably written some time in the 1580's.

⁸ Robert Turner, "Encomium debiti," in *Amphitheatrum sapientiae*, ed. Caspar Dornavius (Hanover, 1619), p. 176.

⁹ A comparison of the two descriptions of the Silenus boxes alone is sufficient proof that Turner had Rabelais' text before him while writing his "Encomium." The prologue to *Gargantua* reads:

"Silenes estoient jadis petites boites, telles que voyons de present es boutiques des apothecaires, pinctes au dessus de figures joyeuses et frivoles, comme de harpies, satyres, oysons bridez, lievres cornuz, canes bastées, boucqs volans, cerfz limonniers et aultres telles pinctures contrefaictes à plaisir pour exciter le monde à rire (quel fut Silene, maistre du bon Bacchus); mais au dedans l'on reservoit les fines drogues comme baulme, ambre gris, amomon, musc, zivette, pierreries et aultres choses precieuses" (1:5).

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