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Hybridity, Hierarchy, and *Couleur Rabelaisienne*:

The Afterlives of François Rabelais on the Late Nineteenth-Century
Parisian Lyric Stage (1855-1895)

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the late nineteenth-century lyric afterlife of the sixteenth-century writer François Rabelais by examining the four musico-theatrical ‘adaptations’ of his works that appeared on the lyric stages of Paris between 1855 and 1895. These are: Théodore Labarre and Henri Trianon’s *Pantagruel* (1855); Hervé, Clairville, and Octave Gastineau’s *Panurge* (1879); Louis Ganne, Oscar Méténier, and Jean-Louis Dubut de Laforest’s *Rabelais* (1892); and Robert Planquette, Henri Meilhac, and Albert de Saint-Albin’s *Panurge* (1895).

On the basis of this material, the thesis addresses wider questions about the nature of the reception and reproduction of cultural artefacts. It interrogates the relationship between Rabelais’s texts and biography, their late nineteenth-century lyric afterlives, the period’s lyric culture (particularly its genre hierarchies), and ideas about the writer’s life and works that were in currency during that time. As well as using Rabelais’s reception in the nineteenth century as a tool with which to unravel some of the panoply of potential interpretations of his texts, this thesis demonstrates that in nineteenth-century imaginaries both Rabelais’s life and works were considered stylistic, registral, and social hybrids. This heterogeneity is the basis for what I term *couleur rabelaisienne*: in other words, a mode of historical representation that intersects literary and historical aesthetic discourses closely associated with Rabelais’s works and biography, particularly their supposed stylistic and social hybridity.

Alongside its study of Rabelais’s lyric posterity, this thesis makes a case for an approach to the phenomenon we now call ‘adaptation’ that remains sensitive to details of its theorisation through history. By offering more flexible frameworks through which to deconstruct, reshape, and subvert the hierarchies implied in terms like ‘source’ and ‘adaptation’, I seek to open new avenues for understanding the myriads of ways in which cultural artefacts interrelate.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather,
George Friedel Paechter
(1928 – 2024)

And to, Hans, Lisel, Anneliese, and the members of the Paechter and Landau families who
could not escape.

Resurgemus

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Zak Eastop
March, 2025
Haringey, London

Overture

...these figures flit through the heaven not only without meaning but, so far as providence is concerned, by mere chance; while we who by nature are prone to imitation rearrange and create them in these regular figures.¹

Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*

Elizabeth: How many times can one person read *Great Expectations*?

Calvin: You have made the same lasagne dish 79 times.

Elizabeth: That is not a fair comparison. It's slightly different every time.

Calvin: Same with a great book.

Elizabeth: How is that possible?

Calvin: 'Cause the book stays the same, but you don't.²

Lessons in Chemistry (The TV 'adaptation', not the book)

Tresillustres et Treschevaleureux champions, gentilz hommes, et aultres, qui voluntiers vous adonnez à toutes gentillesses et honnestetez: as readers of Rabelais, we are all part of a long line of fellow readers, stretching back to the mid-sixteenth century who – in accordance with their own precise and unique social, cultural, and historical context – have time and again confirmed and reconfirmed the *inestimable*-ness of the *curé*'s texts, unfurling their latent meaning in ever-new and unique ways as they made contact with a readership in a constant state of change.³

This thesis is my own historically, socially, and culturally informed study (and to some extent interpretation) of Rabelais's texts and biography and concerns fundamental questions about the nature of the reception and reproduction of cultural artefacts, tackling

¹ Lucius Flavius Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, trans. by Frederick Cornwallis Conybeare, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 of 2, (William Heinemann, 1912), bk. II. XXII, p. 175.

² Lee Eisenberg, 'Lessons in Chemistry' (Apple TV+, 2023).

³ François Rabelais, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon (Gallimard, 1994) p. 214. Hereafter, and throughout this thesis, references to Rabelais's texts will be given in-text, using the format (Book.Chapter.Page). Echoing the nineteenth-century sources I discuss who frequently refer to Rabelais as the 'curé de Meudon', throughout this thesis I will use Rabelais's name and the nickname 'the *curé*' interchangeably.

them by examining four little-known late nineteenth-century lyric reformulations of the *chroniques* (given in table 1).⁴

Date	Title and subtitle	Composer	Librettist(s)	Venue
1855	<i>Pantagruel, opéra en deux actes</i>	Théodore Labarre	Henri Trianon	Théâtre Impérial de l'Opéra (hereafter 'Opéra')
1879	<i>Panurge, opéra-comique en trois actes</i>	Hervé (Florimond Ronger)	Clairville, Octave Gastineau	Bouffes-Parisiens
1892	<i>Rabelais, pièce en 4 actes et 5 tableaux</i>	Louis Ganne	Oscar Méténier, Jean-Louis Dubut de Laforest	Nouveau-Théâtre
1895	<i>Panurge, opéra-comique en trois actes et dix tableaux</i>	Robert Planquette	Henri Meilhac, Albert de Saint-Albin	Théâtre de la Gaîté

Table1

These pieces span forty turbulent years in French, and in particular Parisian, socio-politics, emerging from the pens of a series of composers and librettists at differing moments in their theatrical careers and appearing at venues wielding vastly different levels of cultural prestige. Their titles alone indicate their distinct approaches to, and uses of, Rabelais's texts as a narrative or thematic source, and their subtitles attest to their diverse structures and

⁴ In this thesis, I use 'chroniques' as a collective term for the five books attributed to Rabelais: *Pantagruel* (1532); *Gargantua* (1534); *Tiers livre* (1546); *Quart livre* (1548); *Cinquième livre* (published posthumously in 1564 and attributed to Rabelais, though his authorship has been questioned and it is unlikely he wrote the entire thing himself). For an authoritative discussion of Rabelais's involvement in writing the *Cinquième livre*, see Mireille Huchon, *Rabelais grammairien: de l'histoire du texte aux problèmes d'authenticité*, Études Rabelaisiennes (Droz, 1981), XVI, pp. 412–89; Richard Cooper, 'L'Authenticité du Cinquième livre: état présent de la question', in *Le Cinquième Livre*, Études Rabelaisiennes (Droz, 2001), XVI, pp. 9–22.

intended generic contexts. In short, on a surface level there is precious little apart from Rabelais tying them together into a coherent corpus whatsoever. And yet, it is precisely *because* of their mutual incoherence that these four works are so interesting, demonstrating not just the flexibility of Rabelais as a thematic source, but the multivalence of his status in the nineteenth century and the way that interpretations of his life and works were influenced by social and political factors such as the perceived cultural value of an institution, audience demographics, or contemporary geopolitics. As my period and corpus, I have selected the second half of the nineteenth century and the four works that emerged from it. This is because, while they are distant enough from one another to have allowed substantial social, political, and cultural change to have occurred between performances, these works are close enough to each other to remain legitimately indicative of trends in Rabelais's reception across the era. They are a series of historical snapshots that together help reveal Rabelais's polyvalence – both in terms of the interpreted meaning of his texts, and of his fluctuating status among different audience groups – demonstrating how the *chroniques* were understood and conceptualised by different segments of the Parisian reading and theatregoing public, and how this changed over the second half of the century.

Limiting my study to the period between the formation of the Second Empire and the turn of the twentieth century has meant excluding works from my corpus that, were I to prioritise historical breadth, might have otherwise been included. For example, a study of wider historical scope might incorporate André Grétry's and Étienne Morel de Chedeville's (a pseudonym for the future Louis XVIII's) 1785 *grand opéra Panurge dans l'isle des Lanternes*, extending backwards to examine Rabelais's treatment by a composer close to the leaders of the *Ancien Régime* during the years shortly preceding the Revolution of 1789.⁵ Or

⁵ André Grétry, 'Panurge dans l'isle des lanternes, comédie lyrique en trois actes' (1785), BnF, Département Musique, L-5352 (1). Chedeville's real identity is discussed by theatre critic Benoît Jouvin in his review of Hervé's *Panurge* (Benoît Jouvin, 'Bouffes-Parisiens', *Le Figaro*, 9 December 1879, p. 3, BnF.)

it might have crossed into the twentieth century to discuss the tumultuous writing process of Claude Terrasse's and Alfred Jarry's *Pantagruel* (1911) or the spectacular size and scope of Jules Massenet's, Maurice Boukay's, and Georges Spitzmüller's *Panurge* (1913).⁶ Though each of these pieces, like each of those I discuss in this thesis, cast Rabelais's life and works in new light, this study lacks the space to examine them with the rigour they deserve.

This thesis constitutes the first book-length study of Rabelais's nineteenth-century reception in media beyond the written word. One of its primary contributions is thus to introduce a new and exciting group of reception artefacts to the study of Rabelais's texts, biography, and their legacy. Despite being freely available online for some time, a large amount of this material has remained unstudied. Alongside examining these resources, in this thesis I introduce two libretti – those of Hervé's and Planquette's pieces – to scholarship. Having transcribed these from manuscript materials kept by the Archives Nationales, I include them in full as appendices (included as a second volume).⁷ They now join the four piano-vocal scores and two libretti (1855 and 1892) that were already publicly available.

Throughout what follows, I will offer analysis of the pieces themselves, identifying borrowings from Rabelais's texts and engagement with details of his biography, as well as highlighting elements of the works with a particular national, generic, and socio-cultural association or significance. Though Rabelais is treated differently in each of these pieces, and though each draws on a different set of passages, episodes, characters, and gobbets from the writer's texts or biography, they share a handful of common themes that together lay the foundation for a process of aesthetic essentialisation to which Rabelais, as I will go on to argue, was subjected over the late nineteenth century. One of their most striking tendencies is

⁶ Claude Terrasse, Alfred Jarry, and Eugène Demolder, *Pantagruel: opéra-bouffe en cinq actes et six tableaux - partition chant et piano* (Société d'Éditions Musicales, 1910); Jules Massenet, *Panurge; haute farce musicale en trois actes - partition chant et piano* (Heugel et cie, 1912).

⁷ My thanks to Tommaso Sabbatini for sharing his scans of the 1895 libretto with me ahead of my visit to the archives in 2023.

to prioritise the transposition of material either lifted from, or suggestive of, Rabelais's *Tiers livre*, oddly, the least 'theatrical' or action packed of Rabelais's texts. In particular, they all engage with the book's debates about whether Panurge should marry. Though the marriage quandary lends itself to many possible redeployments within the broad generic space of 'comedy', playing humorously as it does on its reader's preconceived ideas about marriage and womankind, in Rabelais, its delivery is primarily linguistic, organised around a series of conversations rather than through the action that characterises much of the rest of Rabelais's *œuvre*.

In every one of these pieces Panurge has a love-interest to whom he is either forced into betrothal (Nicette, in 1855), tricked into betrothal (Phœbé, in 1879), or debating betrothal (Manon and Nicole in 1892 and 1895 respectively). Recreations of the well-known *chanson de ricochet* – the episode of the *Tiers livre* in which Panurge consults Pantagruel about whether he should marry – appeared in 1879 and 1892, but both substituted a different interlocutor for Pantagruel. In Hervé's piece, Panurge consults his lackey Claquedent, while in Ganne's, Pantagruel is replaced by Rabelais himself. In Planquette's piece, a similar consulting scene from the *Tiers livre* is recreated between Panurge and the Pyrrhonian philosopher Trouillogan. The potential dangers of marriage outlined in the *Tiers livre* are also echoed in Labarre's, Hervé's, and Planquette's pieces. Indeed, while in 1855, Panurge is presented with the ultimatum of marriage or execution, in 1879 and 1895 Panurge finds himself having to fight off attempts by those who socially outrank him to sleep with his love interest. In both cases, these superiors use the threat of execution to apply pressure to him.

The frequent appearance of female characters in these reception artefacts is part of another key aspect of the nineteenth-century treatment of Rabelais's texts: the narrative foregrounding of representatives of groups on lower rungs of the social hierarchies of Rabelais's era. In these works, women are afforded a voice (both sung and spoken) and

agency that they are rarely if ever granted in the *chroniques*.⁸ The ‘spectral presence’ (to borrow Olivia Tolley’s phrasing) of Panurge’s wife in the *Tiers livre* becomes an actual presence on the stage, and while Rabelais’s women are very rarely seen to speak their minds, in these nineteenth-century works they are frequently given arias and ariettes: the musical stage’s answer to the soliloquy in which narrative time pauses while a character gives voice to their thoughts.⁹ In Labarre’s, Hervé’s, and Planquette’s pieces, these women of agency are often also of low socio-economic rank: a barmaid, prostitute, and chambermaid respectively. And regarding lower-status men, not only does a lackey stand in for Rabelaisian royalty in 1879, but Dindenault – a minor, low born sheep-merchant from Rabelais’s *Quart livre* – is transformed in 1855 into a lovestruck hero who wins the girl from the wealthy miscreant prince Pantagruel.¹⁰

These parallels, coupled with countless small, subtle borrowings from Rabelais’s texts suggest that the creators of these musico-theatrical reception artefacts knew their Rabelais very well, leaving titbits in their libretti for audience members with a similarly detailed knowledge of the *chroniques* to find. These included mentions of fringe figures from Rabelais’s texts (e.g. Grippeminaud, Rodilardus, Jean Jeudy, and Brisepaille), references to Rabelais’s near-contemporaries and critics (e.g. Putherbeus, who appears as the knight Puits-Herbault in Ganne’s *Rabelais*, Jean Schyron, and Antoine Duprat), and some of the

⁸ Pollie Bromilow has demonstrated Rabelais’s interest and engagement with subjects relating to the female body (Pollie Bromilow, ‘Inside Out: Female Bodies in Rabelais’, *Forum for Modern Languages Studies*, 44.1 (2008), pp. 27–39.). More recently, François Cornillat has outlined the paradox at the heart of Rabelais’s fictions between the ideal of gender equality presented in his description of the Abbaye de Thélème and the exclusion of women in the rest of his works (François Cornillat, ‘Missing Women: On the Riddle of Gender Relations in Rabelais’s Fiction’, in *A Companion to François Rabelais*, ed. by Bernd Renner (Brill, 2021), pp. 429–54.) While I acknowledge that Rabelais’s position *vis-à-vis* womankind is complicated and subject to continued debate, it suffices to say here that while women, their bodies, and their status relevant to men are certainly the subject of much discussion in Rabelais’s texts, their voices or views are almost never included in them.

⁹ Olivia Tolley, “Comment les femmes ordinairement appétent choses défendues”: Writing Women into the History of Rabelais’ Reception (1628-1785) (University of Oxford, 2018), p. 169.

¹⁰ I discuss this transformation in more detail in Zak Eastop, ‘Undead Dindenault: Economics, Theatre, and Economic Theatre in Rabelais’s Quart Livre and beyond’, *Early Modern French Studies*, 45.2 (2023), pp. 114–30.

intellectual debates of his era (his part in the *querelle des femmes*, for example, or the theological writing of Nicholas of Cusa and Marguerite de Navarre).¹¹ Only a close familiarity with Rabelais's life, works, and wider times would reveal these references to an audience member. But why, during this period, was there such interest in Rabelais in the first place? What about his texts and biography was so appealing to nineteenth-century librettists and composers, and how closely did their historical readings resemble those of our own era? Was this pocket of lyric interpretations of Rabelais part of a wider renewed interest in the writer during the period in question, and if so, how did his reformulation in other medial contexts (like the visual arts, for example) impact on his reception trajectory on the lyric stage specifically? What might the increased presence of lower-status and female characters indicate about the potential for social and economic progress in Rabelais's texts, and what their representation of hierarchies afforded late nineteenth-century theatre more generally? And did Rabelais's frequent reappearances in the city's theatres – especially those associated with 'popular' genres – mark him out from other early modern writers?

Contrary to Olivier Donneau's claim that 'l'histoire de la réception de Rabelais est déjà écrite', even a cursory survey of existing scholarship should be enough to reveal the extent to which the corner of Rabelais studies pertaining to his reception – particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century – remains ripe for development.¹² A handful of studies of Rabelais's literary posterity notwithstanding (many dating from the early twentieth century), scholarship dealing with the nineteenth century in detail is limited.¹³ Regarding more recent attempts to grapple with Rabelais's reception, there has been a natural tendency

¹¹ I will identify and expand upon these references later in this thesis.

¹² Olivier Donneau, 'Réceptions, études, et usages de l'univers rabelaisien aux refuges protestants', in *Refuge et désert: l'évolution théologique des Huguenots de la Revocation à la Révolution française*, ed. by Hubert Bost and Claude Lauriol (Champion, 2003), pp. 185–206 (p. 185).

¹³ For example: Avenir Tchemerzine, *Les Éditions anciennes de Rabelais: bibliographie 1532-1742* (M. Pléem, 1933); Jacques Boulanger, *Rabelais à travers les âges* (Le Divan, 1925); Paul Pierre Plan, *Bibliographie rabelaisienne: les éditions de Rabelais de 1532-1711* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1904); Lazare Sainéan, *L'Influence et la réputation de Rabelais* (Gamber, 1930).

to eschew synchronic hyper-specificity in favour of a more *longue durée* overview of his lasting legacy among figures of the French literary canon (e.g. Richard Cooper); a handful of studies relating to the role of particular demographically defined readerships, in particular women, in shaping Rabelais's status among his belated readers (e.g. Olivia Tolley); and the role played by social hierarchy *vis-à-vis* Rabelais's texts, biography, and readership in the interpretation of his works and their meaning (e.g. Neil Kenny).¹⁴ While scholars like Tolley, Kenny, Marie-Ange Fougère, Elizabeth Emery, and Laura Morowitz have written about Rabelais's reception beyond the written word, this has not until now constituted the primary focus of any single large-scale research project.¹⁵

In my study of Rabelais's reception beyond the textual, I have tried to avoid judging the validity or accuracy of the nineteenth-century theatregoing public's understanding of Rabelais's life and works. In this way, my thesis parts ways with Marie-Ange Fougère's *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle*, a study whose central question concerns the extent to which the century's readers were able to 'appréhendre Rabelais et son œuvre dans leur globalité.'¹⁶ One of Fougère's key contributions, corroborated by my own research, was to associate Rabelais's humour with French national identity formation, demonstrating how the *curé*'s texts were used to make claims about Frenchness despite rarely being read in full by those

¹⁴ Richard Cooper, 'Reading and Unravelling Rabelais Throughout the Ages', in *The Cambridge Companion to Rabelais*, ed. by John O'Brien (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 141–56; Olivia Tolley, "'Comment les femmes ordinairement appétent choses défendues': Writing Women into the History of Rabelais' Reception (1628-1785)" (University of Oxford, 2018); Neil Kenny, 'Rabelaisian Hierarchy and Its Reception' (unpublished Seminar presented at the All Souls College, Oxford, 2023); Neil Kenny, 'Impressing Hierarchy in Rabelais' (unpublished Seminar presented at the Early Modern French Seminar, Oxford, 2024).

¹⁵ Marie-Ange Fougère, *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle: histoire d'un malentendu* (Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2009); Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Ashgate, 2003). Tolley, Kenny, Fougère, and Emery and Morowitz have discussed, respectively, the role played by supposedly more traditionally 'feminine' artforms like letters, journals, and ballets; the influence of the illustrator Gustave Doré; the organs of the century's press; and the rising interest in and awareness of medieval carnival culture in the late 1800s, in shaping perceptions of Rabelais among French audiences. There have been some studies of Rabelais's engagement with the theatrical traditions of his day that have moved on to discuss his theatrical reception, though these only briefly discuss his nineteenth-century reception and touch on his musico-theatrical afterlives only in passing: Nicolas Le Cadet, *Rabelais et le théâtre* (Classiques Garnier, 2020); Jelle Koopmans, 'Rabelais and Theatre', in *A Companion to François Rabelais*, ed. by Bernd Renner (Brill, 2021), pp. 216–40.

¹⁶ Fougère, *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle*, p. 8.

lauding his importance. Yet Fougère claims that over-interest in Rabelais's humour meant that his texts were not dealt with in a way that reflected their discursive pluriformity until Abel Lefranc's and Mikhail Bakhtin's twentieth-century attempts to portray 'leurs différents visages réconciliés'.¹⁷ This is not what my sources indicate. Instead, Rabelais's texts are characterised in my corpus of stage works and press reviews as highly pluriform, not uniformly humorous, and able to operate across multiple discursive levels of contrasting register. Relying primarily on the century's canonical literature and press sources, Fougère ultimately concludes that (as her subtitle 'histoire d'un malentendu' suggests) nineteenth-century commentators were mistaken to equate Rabelais and 'le rire français', and that this mistake arose from them not having properly read the *chroniques*. Though I also identify a lack of direct engagement with Rabelais's texts among the century's audiences, I have attempted to steer clear of making such judgements, remarking instead on the reading public's consistent association of the writer with this quintessentially French laughter. Whether this was an 'erreur d'interprétation' as Fougère suggests does not change the fact that it was an interpretation worth examining. Crucially, though, the identification of a *rire français* was only one aspect of Rabelais's otherwise highly pluriform nineteenth-century reception.

When reconstructing Rabelais's reception trajectory, I take my lead from the theatre critics who first wrote about these musical stage works in the era's critical press, paying particular attention to how reviewers explored these reception artefacts' national resonance, their generic definition, their artistic or socio-cultural value, and their mediality. While diverse, the nineteenth-century responses to Rabelais discussed in this thesis (whether stage works or press articles) shared a perception that his texts and biography could be characterised by stylistic, registral, and social heterogeneity or fluidity. But hybridity of these

¹⁷ Fougère, *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle*, p. 8.

various kinds is not monolithic. Instead, its meaning is socially and historically contingent, taking on new dimensions according to the context in which it arises. While each of my chapters deals with notions of hybridity and how they were key to a nineteenth-century understanding of Rabelais, each discusses a different manifestation of the phenomenon. Focussing on Labarre's *Pantagruel* (1855), Chapter One explores the hybridisation of national cultures in conjunction (or, perhaps, disjunction) with Rabelais's status as a quintessentially French writer. Chapter Two moves on to examine the socio-cultural dimensions of hybridity as they emerge in Hervé's *Panurge* (1879), aligning social and institutional mixing by discussing how – in a nineteenth-century context in which register was understood as concurrent with hierarchies of socio-cultural value – Rabelais's registral hybridity re-emerged as a form of socio-cultural hybridity that was, because of its nineteenth-century musico-theatrical context, expressed through debates about the relative cultural value of certain genres and the institutions that performed them. In Chapter Three, I turn first to Rabelais's status as a hybrid figure emerging from the combination of details of his texts and his biography that formed the plot of Ganne's *Rabelais* (1892), discussing how these combined to create a mythologised version of the writer that was derived as much from his fictions as from historical accounts of his life. Finally, in the second part of Chapter Three concerned with Planquette's *Panurge* (1895), I discuss how the *fin-de-siècle* conceptualised Rabelais's texts as intermedial hybrids that engaged in mimesis, rendering spectacular Renaissance images as text. Comparing the hybridity of Rabelais's texts and the generic hybridity of the nineteenth-century lyric works at the heart of this thesis, I will examine how the creators of other, related reception artefacts (e.g., reviews, biographies, illustrations) navigated the resonances between these differing but associated notions of hybridity. I will argue that, alongside the recreation of specific elements of Rabelais's narrative, it was the alignment with, or reformulation of, this or that *specific type of hybridity* associated with

Rabelais that decided whether an audience would deem them worthy of bearing their antecedental author's name.

Alongside emphasising the key role played by hybridity (or, rather, hybridities) in constructing a nineteenth-century view of Rabelais's life and works, in this thesis I argue for a new way of conceptualising lyric works sitting at the confluence of literary and historical aesthetic discourses that can account for their infusion of both historical representation and narrative fabulation. Given my primary concern with the works of François Rabelais, I have not sought to provide any overarching approach to doing this, presenting instead a Rabelais-specific example – *couleur rabelaisienne* – which can be used as a model for future studies of other authors and their lyric legacies. Part of what makes the infusion of history and fiction under examination in this thesis so Rabelaisian is its intersection with debates about hierarchies of cultural value and registral mixing. These are topics relevant to the study of Rabelais's texts and of nineteenth-century lyric culture alike. I seek to identify a resonance between the inter-genre mixing at work in these reception artefacts, and Rabelais's own combination of contrasting discursive levels and registers, demonstrating as I do that the *curé* was seen to wield a high degree of polyvalence by his late nineteenth-century audience. Indeed, these readers were aware of Rabelais's registral mixing, and though they lacked a generally agreed theoretical vocabulary with which to describe it, they still evoked it at length.

The Nineteenth-Century Reception Context

Late nineteenth-century musical and theatrical culture was a convergence point of several of the key social and political discourses that shaped the development of modern France, including shifting social class stratification and the rise of bourgeois consumerism, the reorganisation of Paris's urban geographies and the demographic shifts that it engendered, the advent of new spectacular visual technologies, and increasingly globalised geopolitics. Since each of the city's venues charted its own highly idiosyncratic course through the period's turbulent social, political, and aesthetic currents, I will save theatre-specific discussions for the ensuing chapters. Crucial to this thesis, though, is the idea that in the second half of the nineteenth century, when an audience member attended a show, the way they interpreted the spectacle unfolding before them would be heavily influenced by an implicit understanding of its venue's and genre's position on a hierarchy of socio-political value. Whether subsidised by the government or not, a venue's position was the product of a nexus of factors including its proximity to organs of the French state and the level of control these institutions could (or were seen to) exert over its programming and administration; its location; the demographic to which it primarily catered; the genre(s) it was allowed by the government to perform (pre-1864); and the genre(s) it usually performed (post-1864).

Before the city's theatres were liberated from legislative control (in Napoléon III's 1864 *Liberté des théâtres*, discussed in more detail in Chapter 2), venue hierarchies were effectively enshrined in law. The first separation was between the four theatres that were subsidised by the state (Opéra, Opéra-Comique, Comédie-Française, Théâtre-Italien) and the other 'commercial' theatres who relied on ticket sales, donations, and advertising revenue to stay afloat. No matter where a venue's income was generated, up until the 1864 legislative repeals, the generic parameters in which each venue was allowed to operate were clearly

outlined in its *cahier des charges*. For example, when it first opened in 1855, the Bouffes-Parisiens (the focus of Chapter 2) was limited by its licence to performing French-language one-act comedy-dramas in which musical numbers were interspersed with dialogue, and only four characters per piece were allowed to sing.¹⁸ Where these genre attributes added up to the widely accepted norms of an established genre, the corresponding label – e.g. *mélodrame*, *vaudeville*, *opéra-bouffe* – would be used as a shorthand. This governmental oversight prevented competition between theatre troupes by shoring up the dominance of the subsidised theatres, making sure none of the commercial institutions became their direct competitors by straying onto their generic patch. As the number of venues increased, overlapping license conditions between commercial venues inevitably became increasingly common over the century, and when these seemed to unfairly advantage one commercial theatre over another (as was the case for the Bouffes-Parisiens and their competitor, the Folies-Nouvelles, who had identical licenses except for the number of singing roles they were allowed) then those at a disadvantage could approach the government to ask for their license conditions to be changed.¹⁹

Even after Napoléon III's 1864 *liberté des théâtres* officially dismantled codified venue hierarchies by decoupling theatres from the narrowly defined genres that they were sanctioned to perform, the practice of associating a theatre with a genre continued without oversight or control. This, of course, rendered inter-venue and inter-genre hierarchies even more fluid than they previously had been, with composers (including Hervé) manipulating generic labels in an effort to stake a claim to a higher level of cultural prestige, and critics publishing endless hot-takes about how far a label could *really* be legitimately associated with a given piece. In this way, *any* discussion of a piece's genre identity was, by extension,

¹⁸ Mark Everist, 'Jacques Offenbach: The Music of the Past and the Image of the Present', in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830-1914*, ed. by Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 72–98 (p. 72).

¹⁹ Everist, 'Jacques Offenbach', p. 72.

also *always* a discussion of its position in hierarchies of cultural value. This has some knock-on implications for our purposes. Chiefly, as I make clear repeatedly throughout this thesis, it turned all the numerous debates about Rabelais's suitability as a literary source in a given genre context into veiled discussions of the legitimacy with which he could be associated with a certain segment of society. Put simply: genre was social, genre was political, and to discuss Rabelais in generic terms was implicitly to comprehend his texts along these lines.²⁰

Genre definitions were, and still are, extremely porous, fluid categories. As theorist Jean-Marie Schaeffer has asserted, their classification constitutes more than just the analytic terminology arbitrarily applied to a work in response to its objective structural or aesthetic attributes, but emerges from a network of discourses that informs the creation of the object to which the terminology is eventually applied.²¹ France's musico-theatrical culture both existed in, and was itself shaped by, a web of highly regulated codes and practices that became increasingly self-perpetuating and discursively determined over the century, with shifting genre parameters constituting both the subject and the fuel of debates about their definition.²² These codes began as official legislation, but as the number of theatres operating in Paris grew, it was increasingly the case that every member of the Parisian audience, by virtue of their participation in the city's theatrical culture, was involved in negotiating these genre boundaries. However, because only certain segments of the audience left written traces of their engagement in these debates, our account of them can only ever be partial, focussed overwhelmingly on voices from the city's critical press.

Alongside focussing on Rabelais's nineteenth-century lyric afterlives, this thesis also examines a para-textual corpus of press reviews – reworkings of Rabelais in their own right –

²⁰ For a discussion of the social and political discourses underpinning genre debates, see: Mark Everist, 'The Music of Power: Parisian Opera and the Politics of Genre, 1806–1864', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 67.3 (2014), pp. 685–734.

²¹ Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire?* (Seuil, 1989), p. 65.

²² This discursive network is discussed in: Everist, 'The Music of Power', p. 686.

most of which appeared in the weeks following the premiere of each of the stage works under examination.²³ These reviews serve a dual use in this thesis. Firstly, they constitute the most readily available trace of the otherwise highly ephemeral and idiosyncratic reception of each work among a small, highly educated, group of the city's audiences, with some of the broad spectrum of social, political, and aesthetic viewpoints taken by Paris's inhabitants reflected to some limited extent in the writing of journalists actively courting a readership. However, because these writers needed to elevate themselves above the rest of the audience in order to retain the legitimacy of their position as cultural leaders and taste-makers, their views cannot be treated as an echo of the theatregoing everyman. Secondly, these writers were just as involved in naming and framing Rabelais as the composers and librettists that they were (usually) set on lampooning. Their discussion of whether a piece did Rabelais justice relied on an implicit – often unarticulated – idea of what the writer *really ought to have* represented. Thus, throughout this thesis, I have tried to work backwards from their evaluations to unearth what their pleasure or displeasure might have indicated about their inner-held criteria for success. Ultimately, though, while together they constitute an invaluable historical account of the point of contact between a Rabelaisian rework and its public, individually these reviews are without exception highly subjective and biased towards whatever the ideological position of their publication happened to be.

Alongside their biases, these articles also often lacked musical detail or precision. Apart from the small number of journalists working in specialist music journals like the *Gazette musicale de Paris* and *le Ménestrel* – most notably Castil-Blaze, François-Joseph

²³ I have included a glossary of journalists and their publications at the end of this thesis which offers an overview of their background, other writing, ideological position, and publishing history. For ease of reading, whenever I discuss an article from the critical press, I will reference it only once at its first mention in any given section, repeating the footnote only if I return to it after a sufficiently long discussion of something else. Apart from two reviewers – Victorin Joncières and Léon Kerst – who throughout their careers were known primarily by their pseudonyms and a small handful of reviewers who have proved impossible to identify, I refer to journalists by their birth names throughout this thesis.

Fétis, Léon Escudier, and the handful of composers who also reviewed (like Hector Berlioz, Adolphe Adam, and Fromental Halévy) – the role of ‘music critic’ was hardly specialised.²⁴ It was, in fact, barely considered a profession in its own right until 1918, when the first journalistic trade union was formed in France. Before this, music critics were primarily literary and political men.²⁵ Sidestepping into the musical and theatrical sphere merely required some industry connections; a halfway decent knowledge of ‘culture’ in its broadest definition; an opinion (preferably a strong one – justification optional); and an ability to write with a lively wit and the aura of authority. As long as an *impression* of impartiality or objectivity was maintained, then these were also optional aims: certainly not journalistic requirements in the way they (supposedly) are today.²⁶ Nobody, for example, would have needed to declare their interest in the success of a venue’s most recent premiere, even if – as was the case for several critics – they were the venue’s director.²⁷

What reviewers chose to focus on varied greatly and formed part of their critical idiolect. The particular aspects of a performance or work chosen as the focus of a review would depend primarily on the writer’s individual knowledge base. This would then, in turn, be held as the primary measure of its success, or at least afforded disproportionate importance in their review. A number of the critics whose articles will be discussed later in this thesis are clearly guilty of manufacturing this home-ground thematic advantage. The regular theatre critic for *Le Monde illustré* Albert de Lasalle, for example, often focussed intensely on genre

²⁴ For a detailed analysis of the nineteenth-century Parisian specialist musical press, see: Katharine Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France: La Revue et gazette musicale de Paris 1834–80* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²⁵ Marie-Ève Thérenty, *La Littérature au quotidien: poétiques journalistiques au XIXe siècle* (Seuil, 2007), p. 13.

²⁶ Mark Everist, ‘Music Critics in France’, *Revue belge de musicologie / Belgisch Tijdschrift Voor Muziekwetenschap*, 66 (2012), pp. 77–80 (p. 80).

²⁷ E.g. François Buloz (Théâtre Française and *la Revue des deux mondes*); Louis-Désiré Véron (the Opéra and *la Revue de Paris*); Arsène Houssaye (Comédie-Française and *l’Artiste*). Listed in: Olivier Bara and Marie-Ève Thérenty, ‘Presse et Scène Au XIXe Siècle. Relais, Reflets, Échanges’, *Presse et Scène Au XIXe Siècle*, 2012, para. 6 <<https://www.medias19.org/publications/presse-et-scene-au-xixe-siecle/presse-et-scene-au-xixe-siecle-relais-reflets-echanges>>.

definitions and institutional generic suitability in his reviews of performances at the Bouffes-Parisiens. Lasalle, who had previously written a history of the institution with an emphasis on the generic development of its repertoire would, more often than not, comment on any mismatched generic labels and discuss the ways in which the work at hand was or was not worthy of them.²⁸ This was particularly true of works with a generic designator other than *opéra-bouffe*.²⁹

Paul Bins, comte de Saint-Victor (hereafter Paul de Saint-Victor) – as we shall see, a critic of limited musical training and seemingly unlimited verbal grandiloquence – would generally steer clear of technical discussion of musical details in favour of a more ‘impressionistic’ poetic writing style, couching discussion of the musical aesthetics of a piece in primarily literary terms. Musicologist Ralph Locke gives an example of this taken from Saint-Victor’s 1859 review of Félicien David’s *grand opéra Herculanum*.³⁰ Here, Saint-Victor described a musical passage as ‘une de ces mélodies éoliennes que M. Félicien David excelle à filer’.³¹ Yet the passage is neither written in the aeolian mode, nor for the harp (i.e. that of Aeolus). Thus, while Saint-Victor’s comment was surely *about* David’s music, it does not seem to have been informed by any particular knowledge of musical theory or terminology. Expanding upon his claim, the critic dampens any of *éolien*’s potential musical resonances, describing the passage as a ‘mélange ineffable de suavité-grecque et de nonchalance créole’. Rather than offering a media-specific discussion, Saint-Victor plays to his strengths by keeping his feet firmly planted on his poetic, literary home soil. Whether he

²⁸ Albert de Lasalle, *Histoire des Bouffes-Parisiens* (Librairie nouvelle, 1860). The ‘six époques’ in the venue’s history identified by Lasalle are all characterised primarily by the genre being prioritised at the time.

²⁹ His reviews of three *opéras comiques*: Jacques Offenbach’s *La Créole* (Albert de Lasalle, ‘Chronique Musicale’, *Le Monde illustré*, 1 June 1875); Gaston Serpette’s *Le Moulin du vert gallant* (Albert de Lasalle, ‘Chronique musicale’, *Le Monde illustré*, 22 May 1876); and Louis Varney’s *Les Mousquetaires au couvent* (Albert de Lasalle, ‘Chronique Musicale’, *Le Monde illustré*, 3 April 1880) illustrate his interest in policing generic terminology.

³⁰ Ralph Locke, ‘How Reliable Are Nineteenth-Century Reviews of Concerts and Operas?: Félicien David’s *Le Désert* and His *Grand Opéra Herculanum*.’, *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, 19.2 (2022), pp. 217–33 (p. 228).

³¹ Paul de Saint-Victor, ‘Théâtres’, *La Presse*, 3 June 1859, BnF. My italics.

had any musical expertise is, Locke suggests, ultimately moot, concluding that ‘perhaps Saint-Victor did not know that the word *éolien* could suggest musical features [...]. Did not know, or did not care.’³²

Others, like Benoît Jouvin who co-founded *Le Figaro* in 1854, had scandalmongering as a primary critical interest. Often writing under the cruelly ironic, and somewhat self-aggrandising pseudonym ‘*Bénédict*’, Jouvin’s articles were full of pointed and multidirectional invective. This was aimed as much at audience members – for whom he had seemingly limitless contempt – as the singers and composers on stage. Yet, like Saint-Victor, beyond some non-musical descriptions of the music and performance, Jouvin’s texts generally lacked any trace of specialist knowledge aside from a working familiarity with repertoire, and the ability to compare pieces (usually their narrative, not their score) that bore similarities. Jouvin’s reviews also carried a deeply conservative message, suggestive of *Le Figaro*’s broadly right-leaning *légitimiste* political tendencies.³³ As well as discussions of genre aimed at keeping the genre-venue associations of the early century in place, the hegemony-upholding figures of the visionary *homme du talent* and the unrefined, lemming-like *brutalité populacière* loom large in Jouvin’s writing. In his reviews, the one constant – the message diffused throughout a panoply of creative insults – is that some people are worthy of attention, but most are not.

Jouvin’s insistence on the innate insight of some over others also likely stems from a further hurdle facing all critics of the mid-century: competition for readership and income. As an industry, *la critique musicale* existed in a state of permanent self-justification, faced as it was with an audience of variable, but not inconsiderable, cultural understanding and literacy.³⁴ To maintain their sales, critics would thus need to constantly demonstrate and

³² Locke, ‘How Reliable Are Nineteenth-Century Reviews of Concerts and Operas?’, p. 228.

³³ Christophe Charle, *Le Siècle de la presse (1830-1934)* (Seuil, 2004), p. 109.

³⁴ Martyn Lyons, ‘Towards a National Literary Culture in France: Homogeneity and the 19th Century Reading Public’, *History of European Ideas*, 16.1–3 (1993), pp. 247–52.

reassert themselves as the individual with the most qualified opinion and the keenest nose for quality. Jouvin achieved this by putting his competitors, his subjects, and his audience down: differentiating himself – an *homme du métier* – from the unrefined theatregoing mass. Lasalle and Saint-Victor instead attempted, by keeping their reviews firmly in their own specialist fields, to fashion themselves as experts of a subject about which they were only tangentially qualified to write. By repackaging their expertise in other fields and presenting it to their readers as insightful and relevant, they might better retain their attention and, by extension, their money.

Theory, History, Method

‘Adaptation’; ‘Afterlife’; ‘Imitatio’

So far in this introduction, I have primarily used the word ‘reception’ or ‘reception artefact’ to describe the process and product by and in which Rabelais’s texts reappeared in the nineteenth century. However, this is by no means the only term that could be used for this task. One of the key contributions of this thesis is to refine how we conceptualise cultural artefacts that have been created in accordance with an antecedental model: a reproductive phenomenon that has persisted under an array of different names, each socio-historically inflected, and each dragging its own unique collection of connotations and implications along with it. These include keywords like ‘adaptation’, ‘afterlife’, ‘imitation’, ‘rework’, ‘reformulation’, ‘translation’, and so on. Part of the work of this thesis has involved weighing up which of these – and which of the processes, theoretical positions, and resultant methodologies that they may or may not represent – is most useful or appropriate for describing the particular instance of (re)production under examination at any given point, remaining as alive to the terminological choices of those writing in the nineteenth century as to our own time. In this thesis, I thus seek to refine the theoretical and methodological lexicon

available to scholars of what modern English speakers tend to just call ‘adaptation’, arguing for a more nuanced approach to the phenomenon which remains sensitive to details of its theorisation through history.

In everyday parlance, the term ‘adaptation’ is useful for glossing the otherwise multifarious processes and practices by which one cultural artefact is transposed into another medial context, semiotic system, and mode of consumption, while still retaining some observable relation or resemblance to its antecedent iteration. And one of the key strengths of the body of literature constituting ‘Adaptation Studies’ has been to offer space for an interrogation of such a ubiquitous cultural process in a way which accounts for this pluriformity, establishing parallels between more immediately recognisable types of ‘adaptation’ like book to film adaptation, and the less obvious transposition of, say, a painting to the lyric stage, a television series to a book or fan-fiction, graphic novel to computer game, or classic Disney cartoon to live-action interactive experience.³⁵ However, despite this, readers of this thesis – a piece of research with four ‘adaptations’ of Rabelais’s texts as its primary corpus – will note, I hope, how sparingly I use the word ‘adaptation’, avoiding it (almost) entirely before reintroducing it in the ‘common-or-garden’ sense I have just described only once I reach the ‘Finale’. This is for good reason. While Adaptation Studies is a dynamic and expanding field of research from which a plethora of excellent scholarship continues to emerge, in general there has been a tendency among its practitioners either to fall prey to the same handful of theoretical and methodological traps, or to focus so intensely on remedying them that their studies become overly introspective. Indeed, in *Theorizing*

³⁵ E.g. Georges Seurat’s pointillist landscape *Un dimanche après-midi à l’île de la Grande Jatte* becoming Stephen Sondheim’s and James Lapine’s musical *Sunday in the Park with George*. For a discussion of Dr Who’s adaptations from screen to text, see Christopher Marlow, ‘The Folding Text: Doctor Who, Adaptation, and Fan Fiction’, in *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities*, ed. by Rachel Carroll (Continuum, 2009), pp. 46–60. For a discussion of videogame adaptation, including from graphic novels, see Kevin M. Flanagan, ‘Videogame Adaptation’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. by Leitch, Thomas (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 441–56. For discussion of cartoon to live-action experience adaptation see Aviad E. Raz, ‘Domesticating Disney: Onstage Strategies of Adaptation in Tokyo Disneyland’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 33.4 (2000), pp. 77–99.

Adaptation – perhaps the most comprehensive overview of the field’s theoretical history – Kamilla Elliott identifies the troubling reality that ‘the most strident field critiques have come from within adaptation studies. I know of no other field whose scholars are so pervasively dismissive and denigrating of fellow scholars.’³⁶ Without wanting to lean too much into this practice of disciplinary self-flagellation, for the purposes of this study it is worth outlining some of Adaptation Studies’ weaknesses as far as historical processes of cultural (re)production are concerned.

Prevailing theories of adaptation have tended to rely on the implicit assumption that all instances of cultural reproduction throughout history can be conceptualised according to its rules. Just as Abraham Maslow’s Hammer sees everything as a nail, adaptation theorists – particularly those engaged in the field’s ‘historical turn’ spearheaded by Gregory Semenza and Bob Hasenfratz – have tended to view reformulations of previous cultural artefacts through the lens of ‘adaptation’ which, because of its origins in film studies, is built upon a handful of unavoidably anachronistic disciplinary principles.³⁷ Falling prey to Abraham Kaplan’s classic observation, that ‘a scientist formulates problems in a way which requires for their solution just those techniques in which he himself is especially skilled’, those contributing to the adaptation studies field have tended to impose the modern theoretical and methodological frameworks with which they are most familiar upon a cluster of historical practices that have been subjected to constant retheorisation for more-or-less as long as cultural production has been theorised.³⁸

Throughout (Western European) history, much of the retheorisation of cultural reproduction has been carried out in relation to specific medial and cultural contexts. This

³⁶ Kamilla Elliott, *Theorizing Adaptation* (Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 4.

³⁷ Gregory Semenza, ‘Towards a Historical Turn?: Adaptation Studies and the Challenges of History’, in *The Routledge Companion to Adaptation*, ed. by Dennis Cutchins, Katja Krebs, and Eckart Voigts (Routledge, 2018), pp. 58–66.

³⁸ Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science* (Chandler Publishing Company, 1964), p. 28.

was also the case for early contributions to Adaptation Studies, before Linda Hutcheon broadened the field's horizons in 2006 to encompass all forms of cross-medial reproduction beyond texts and films.³⁹ This move had the effect of introducing a still young field, developed under the aegis of film studies, to medial forms with much longer and more complex developmental and theoretical histories (such as visual art, music, stage drama, dance, literature, rhetoric, and poetics) than it was equipped to deal with. In this post-media-specific adaptational landscape, Elliott has argued that, looking back, there has been 'little discussion regarding the failure of humanities theorization generally to account for adaptation' and that 'instead, the blame has been cast on adaptation scholars, adaptation studies, and adaptation itself' for its own theoretical shortcomings.⁴⁰ Yet whom else are we to blame? Elliott's claim that 'almost no one has pondered the possibility that humanities theorization may have failed adaptation' does not hold water, given the panoply of historically grounded theoretical and methodological approaches to the cluster of phenomena for which 'adaptation' has become shorthand.⁴¹ Indeed, theorization in the humanities has been grappling with discourses such as these for centuries. To argue otherwise – even only implicitly – speaks to Adaptation Studies' disciplinary fatal flaw: its inability to see and overcome its own belatedness. I therefore disagree with Elliott's claims of a '*dysfunctional relationship between theorization and adaptation in the humanities*'.⁴² It is instead that adaptation has a dysfunctional relationship with the long history of theorising cultural (re)production from which it has only recently emerged.

³⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge, 2013). These early contributions to Adaptation Studies are what Thomas Leitch calls 'Adaptation Studies 1.0': a phase of the field's development during which it had yet to turn from media-specific ideas about the relationship between text and films as communicative modes, to a more intertextual, relational, dialogic approach to adaptation in which the adapter and the adaptand mutually revealed something of each other (Thomas Leitch, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. by Thomas Leitch (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 1–18 (pp. 2–3)). Key studies from this earlier phase of the field include George Bluestone, *Novels Into Film* (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957) and Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford University Press, 1960).

⁴⁰ Elliott, *Theorizing Adaptation*, p. 5.

⁴¹ Elliott, *Theorizing Adaptation*, p. 6.

⁴² Elliott, *Theorizing Adaptation*, p. 5. Her italics.

Extending adaptation studies beyond the medial configuration from which it developed (film) also dissolved the definitional limits of the concept at its heart: ‘adaptation’ itself. With these parameters widened, it is difficult to see where they stop without such judgement appearing totally arbitrary. For example, as Dudley Andrew has argued, ‘historical films’ could be considered a form of adaptation for their recreation and re-presentation of historical visual and linguistic palettes.⁴³ But what if we then broaden this to ‘historical writing’, engaged as it is with an analogous form of historical re-presentation? Once the limits set out by a medial context are surpassed in this way, it suddenly becomes impossible to reintroduce any definitional limits at all. Given all histories involve interpretation of earlier histories or historical artefacts, then all historical texts could be adaptations and by extension all academic research could also realistically be called adaptation. In this case, the conceptual difference between fiction and non-fiction completely collapses, and suddenly everything is adaptation! And, as adaptation theorist Thomas Leitch puts it, ‘if everything is an adaptation, what is the point of labelling anything as an adaptation?’⁴⁴ Once it comes to encompass more than one (inter)medial context, the label loses all relevance. So, one must be specific: is this ‘text to film adaptation’, is it ‘text to music theatre adaptation’, or is it ‘the adaptation of one textually recorded oration to another’? Clearly the term itself lacks precision and thus, in this thesis at least, I have done away with it except for in its most general use: as a shorthand for expressing the direct, self-conscious relation between two works. It is simply too vague, too loose, too general to be useful except in this common-or-garden, self-consciously imprecise use.

How, then, can we better conceptualise the historically situated instances of cultural (re)production at work in the case studies at the heart of this thesis? Developed as part

⁴³ Dudley Andrew, ‘Adapting Cinema to History: A Revolution in the Making’, in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, ed. by Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Blackwell, 2004), pp. 189–204 (p. 191).

⁴⁴ Thomas Leitch, ‘History as Adaptation’, in *The Politics of Adaptation; Media Convergence and Ideology*, ed. by Dan Hassler-Forest and Pascal Nicklas (Palgrave, 2015), pp. 7–20 (p. 18).

answer, part addendum to Terence Cave's seminal work *Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seuil de la modernité*, the 'afterlives' method was conceived as a way of understanding textual interrelations without full recourse to discussion of authorial agency, in which an object's meaning emerges from a dialogic negotiation between creator and receiver.⁴⁵ As the endless invectives against the use of 'fidelity' to a 'source' as an evaluative criterion strongly suggest, no matter how hard exponents of adaptation studies try to move past it, for the vast majority of its consumers – not to mention its creators – an 'adaptation's' identity is always partly derived from an understanding that its creator intended it to be part of a known 'source' text's posterity.⁴⁶ There have, admittedly, been some twentieth-century attempts from theorists in adaptation studies to engage with or manoeuvre around the notion of fidelity, approaching it from new angles.⁴⁷ And while these have produced useful frameworks for a reciprocal model of the phenomenon in which adaptation and adaptand enter into a sort of dialogue in which both emerge changed by the influence of the other's status in the mind of their shared reception audience, even they find it hard to escape the fact that implicit in the concept 'adaptation' (whether in its common-or-garden use or its deployment as a theoretical term) is a 'from', and a 'to'; a source, and a destination. As a case in point, though Robert Stam's essay 'Beyond Fidelity' proposes a less moralistic approach to appraising an

⁴⁵ Terence Cave, *Pré-histoires: textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* (Droz, 1999).

⁴⁶ Publications from Adaptation Studies that include attacks on fidelity discourse include: Bluestone, *Novels Into Film*; Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film* (The Clarendon Press, 1996); Andrew, 'Adapting Cinema to History: A Revolution in the Making'; Christopher Orr, 'The Discourse on Adaptation', *Wide Angle*, 6.2 (1984), pp. 72–76; Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation', in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 54–76; Erica Sheen, 'Introduction', in *The Classic Novel: From Page to Screen*, ed. by Erica Sheen and Robert Giddings (Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 1–13; Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited: Television and the Classic Novel* (Manchester University Press, 2002); Robert Stam, *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* (Blackwell, 2005); Thomas Leitch, *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ For example: David L. Kranz and Nancy C. Mellerski, 'Introduction', in *In/Fidelity: Essays on Film Adaptation* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 1–11; Colin McCabe, 'Introduction: Bazinian Adaptation', in *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity*, ed. by Colin McCabe, Rick Warner, and Kathleen Murray (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3–25; David T. Johnson, 'Adaptation and Fidelity', in *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, ed. by Thomas Leitch, (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 87–11.

adaptation's success (i.e. moving beyond accusations of 'sacrilege', 'desecration', 'travesty', 'violation', and so on) by overcoming the primary obsession with fidelity, he still begins by admitting that the notion 'does contain its grain of truth.'⁴⁸ In contrast, an 'afterlife' bears a relation to an anterior text simply because it is perceived to do so by its consumer, whether this was intentional or not. In this way, it hands power to the audience and their ability to establish intertextual links for themselves. Rather than rejecting outright the presence of what Stam terms the 'heart of the artichoke' – that inherently positivist idea of a hermeneutically stable text – the 'afterlives' method simply acknowledges that resembling something like this may or may not be a key facet of a given audience's reception of a cultural artefact.⁴⁹ Thus, what constitutes a work's heart is subject to change, a product of reception which itself emerges from a network of factors including prior knowledge of a text, an author's status, the prevailing attitudes of a given time period, and so on.

Since audiences are ever-changing, so too are the meanings of the objects that pass under their gaze. The afterlives method allows an object, its later reformulations, and the audiences producing and consuming them all, to be examined together, using their point of intersection to trace how meaning changes in response to encountering new temporal 'downstream contexts'. This, as I have previously written, 'is a context into which a text passes as it travels through time, in which – because of its relative belatedness – the assumptions underpinning the interpretation of cultural objects differ to that of the text's original context.'⁵⁰ One of the key strengths of the 'afterlives' method is the space it creates for drawing together transhistorical corpora into one single, hermeneutically coherent group defined not by synchronic, geographical, medial, or socio-political parameters, but by the red threads and partial connections that those who engage with them are able to draw between

⁴⁸ Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity', p. 54.

⁴⁹ Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity', p. 57.

⁵⁰ Eastop, 'Undead Dindenault', p. 116.

them for themselves.⁵¹ Often, as in Cave's example of the character Mignon, this cross-corporal unifying element is a character, but it could be a place, a theme (in all senses: e.g. musical, narrative), or – as is frequently the case in this thesis – an aspect of a writer's style.

Rather than inherent to the object, an artefact's importance relative to the others from its afterlife corpus is governed by the viewpoint of a particular audience at a given historical moment. This audience's understanding of an artefact's meaning is, in turn, shaped by the various tools available to the audience at their particular point of engagement, such as studies of an author, illustrations, re-editions, ideas of the writer in popular consciousness, and so on. An individual's comprehension of cultural artefacts thus occurs within a horizon of expectation (to use Hans Robert Jauss's terminology) whose parameters are defined not just by the cultural codes and conventions of their particular historical moment, or by their previous engagement with other artefacts (whether related or not), but also by their understanding and access to the details and traces of the prior reception trajectory of the specific artefact under their gaze.⁵² Otherwise put, their comprehension of one artefact is shaped by the lasting traces of the comprehension of others with which they are familiar.

The downstream comprehension of a given artefact thus emerges at the convergence point of several competing factors, and among these we *must* include the actual words in the text, the colours on the canvas, or the chords in the choir, that were first set down by their creator. Indeed, like Cave, I do not fully agree with theorist Stanley Fish's insistence that the meaning of an utterance (of, for our purposes, a cultural artefact) is governed solely by its reception.⁵³ For Fish, his classic test-case 'is there a text in this class?' could only take on its dual meaning (do we study a particular text in this class? vs. does this class work from the

⁵¹ Terence Cave, *Mignon's Afterlives: Crossing Cultures from Goethe to the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 7.

⁵² The idea of a horizon of expectation is discussed in: Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti, *Theory and History of Literature*, 2 (University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

⁵³ Stanley Eugene Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 306–07.

assumption that an immutable thing called a ‘text’ exists, or ‘is it just us’?) insofar as it made sense in the context of the first day of a literary studies class in the 1980s.⁵⁴ Here, for Fish, it was the receiver that defined the meaning of the utterance, not the utterer. Yet, as Cave has rightly pointed out, the idea that meaning is entirely the product of its contact with an audience is a ‘most extreme and paradoxical’ theoretical position, because it would ultimately mean that any critical engagement with an utterance or artefact can only provide information about how and in what context it was understood, rather than anything about the artefact in and of itself.⁵⁵

I agree with Cave that this theoretical posturing can ultimately yield limited insights. However, I think that he over-corrects. Using the reception to Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais* to respond to Fish in his article *Locating the Early Modern*, Cave proposes, essentially, that downstream contexts exist in what amounts to a hierarchy of legitimacy, at least insofar as their legitimacy is derived from offering an account of the artefact in question that is representative of its creator’s intentions. He does this by claiming that those writing closest to Michel de Montaigne’s lifetime were likely to have offered a more ‘legitimate (though not of course absolute) guide to what and how [the *Essais*] meant’.⁵⁶ I understand the pragmatism behind Cave’s assertion, as it would seem a safe assumption that someone from the same social and historical context as a writer like Montaigne might be better disposed to spot and understand subtle allusions for which (for want of a better phrase) you really had to be there. Yet, I would suggest that this hierarchisation is ultimately unhelpful because buried in it is the presupposition that artefacts have stable meanings of which their producers are primary arbiter and that can only be accessed by audiences in their immediate temporal, linguistic, and geographical surroundings. And I question whether these meanings are any worthier of

⁵⁴ Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*, p. 305.

⁵⁵ Terence Cave, ‘Locating the Early Modern’, *Paragraph*, 29.1 (2006), pp. 12–26 (p. 26, n. 20).

⁵⁶ Cave, ‘Locating the Early Modern’, pp. 21–22.

finding than others. Ultimately, any interpretation – simply by virtue of having been made – attests to the latent hermeneutic possibilities contained within an artefact, no matter how alien or meaningless a downstream reading of an artefact might or might not have hypothetically been to its original producer, and no matter how different the assumptions underpinning the downstream interpretation of cultural artefacts may have become since that producer was active. This, to me, makes a belated reading as legitimate as any other. There is thus, I would suggest, a middle way between Fish and Cave and the controversial theoretical debate in which they both engaged. Instead of trying to find some compromise between the two positions, I suggest stepping back and suspending judgement in order to remain alive to the variety of ways in which the audiences, critics, and others whose reception I examine traded in, negotiated, and offered conflicting views of what made for a legitimate form of downstream interpretation, reception, adaptation, and so on. With our judgement of the relative legitimacy of interpretations suspended, the overarching theoretical questions of the nature of reading and understanding broached by Cave and Fish become, instead, highly specific questions that concern the nature of particular instances of reading and understanding that occurred among an audience at a precise point in history. Since legitimacy, like meaning, is highly historically contingent, the method we pursue to pin it down must remain flexible, and closely attuned to its negotiation and renegotiation through time.

For the purposes of this thesis, Rabelais's *chroniques* occupy a prime position as the interpretive locus around which the nineteenth-century musico-theatrical afterlives revolve. Indeed, I have chosen to view my corpus as sharing Rabelais as their point of departure. But this was certainly a conscious choice, echoing the interpretive choice that the audience to my reception corpus seem from their review articles, letters, para-texts, and so on, to have made. Though some of the audience who left written accounts of their attendance – mainly reviewers – occasionally nod towards the idea that some of their fellow audience members

may have been ignorant of the details of Rabelais's texts, all of them without exception write in terms which elect Rabelais's texts as their primary source. However, a version of this thesis in which I did away with Rabelais's texts as a hermeneutic lynchpin entirely is not totally unthinkable. There are other, more subtle, ways in which this corpus could be considered related, like their representation of a particular period of history, or their complex hybridity which, though I read it in conjunction with Rabelais's, could also be explored independently. What I am trying to emphasise here is that the chronological primacy implied by words like 'adaptation' and 'source' – while often the most sensible or logical approach to a corpus such as mine – should never be assumed. The utility of approaching trans-historical corpora in terms of 'prehistories' and 'afterlives' is that it offers scholars the flexibility to deconstruct and reconstruct hierarchies and, in doing so, open new avenues for understanding the myriads of ways that cultural artefacts can be said to interrelate.

Thinking in terms of afterlives is also useful because of the necessity of historical relativism to their proper function. After all, the afterlives method requires its practitioner to remain attuned to the specificities of the particular socio-historical environments – the 'undiscovered country' to use the apt phrasing that Richard Scholar borrows from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – through which it travels. Because of this, it can only be used in conjunction with historically informed theories.⁵⁷ Alongside its pioneer Terence Cave's background in early modern French studies, this need for historical sensitivity is perhaps why the afterlives method has primarily been the preserve of scholars of European pre-modernity.⁵⁸ It is no surprise therefore, that one of the historically informed theories of cultural reproduction to appear most often in conjunction with the afterlives method is

⁵⁷ Richard Scholar, 'Montaigne's Forays into the Undiscovered Country', in *The Uses of the Future in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Andrea Brady, Emily Butterworth, and Peter Burke (Routledge, 2010), pp. 39–53.

⁵⁸ As a case in point, of the ten contributors to the collected edition *Pre-Histories and Afterlives: Studies in Critical Method for Terence Cave*, ed. by Anna Holland and Richard Scholar (Legenda, 2009), all were specialists in early modern culture.

‘imitatio’. This practice, with roots in the European Renaissance, involved consuming and internalising elements of the output of past authors such as their style and form in order to learn to write as they wrote and in so doing, identify oneself as both contributor to, and custodian of, their legacy. Crucially, Renaissance theories of *imitatio* differ from simple imitation in their emphasis on obscuring the *re-creative* process underpinning their own act of creation. As Cave explains, himself engaging in a sort of *imitatio*-esque veiled reformulation of Erasmus: ‘the reader must devour his models, destroying their alien substance so that they may be regenerated in his living utterance as a product of his own essential nature.’⁵⁹ The extent to which the reader is allowed to see the imitation at play is up to the imitator, but can often be entirely concealed.

Imitatio represents one of a handful of historically grounded approaches available to modern scholars grappling with questions of authorship and interpretive agency. In *Imitating Authors*, Colin Burrow emphasises *imitatio*’s Janus-like dual gaze into the past and future, with imitators constructing an idea of a past author in order to integrate what they think makes their output a distinctive object of imitation into a new product in a new context.⁶⁰ As Burrow outlines, by examining the process of cultural evolution behind the creation of imitatively interrelated texts, a history of ‘imitatio can blend outwards into the history of reading.’⁶¹ Thus, by examining how the traces of one author (whether subtle or not) resurface in a latter author’s output, one can start to say how that first author and their texts might have appeared to this or that segment of their downstream readership. In a similar way, it has

⁵⁹ Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text; Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 45–46. Here Cave imitates Erasmus whose character Bulephorus, in a passage of dialogue from *Ciceronianus*, explains that successful imitation ‘does not immediately incorporate into its own speech any nice little feature it comes across, but transmits it to the mind for inward digestion, so that becoming part of your own system, it gives the impression not of something begged from someone else, but of something that springs from your own mental processes, something that exudes the characteristics and force of your own mind and personality.’ Desiderius Erasmus, ‘Ciceronianus’, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. by A. H. T. Levi (University of Toronto Press, 1986), XXVIII, p. 441.

⁶⁰ Colin Burrow, *Imitating Authors: Plato to Futurity* (Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 3.

⁶¹ Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, pp. 2–3.

certainly been the case in the history of Western art music that ‘the compositional currents of an age shed light on the way it interprets past music, and vice versa’ as musicologist Carl Dahlhaus has put it.⁶² This is due in large part to a process of re-contextualisation inherent to all forms of imitation in which the distinctive elements of a past author’s output are reconfigured in order to appear sensible and current to its imitator’s intended audience.

For Dahlhaus, what set nineteenth-century composers apart from their predecessors *vis-à-vis* the use of historical models was that they operated in a context in which originality and individuality had become a key marker of authenticity. He thus contended that musical *imitatio* – the self-conscious use of the music of a prior composer as a source of general compositional rules or as a model from which to work and learn – had been replaced and superseded by *aemulatio*. This was, for him, a process that because of its lessened emphasis on direct recreation (what might now be called ‘mimicking’), was able to mediate between the twin imperatives of the adherence to compositional rules and the need for newness with, for example, Wagner’s recreation of Beethoven based not in the details of his music but in his praxis: in ‘how to be inimitable’.⁶³

An identification of this mediating position between past models and authentic originality is echoed by Burrow in relation to nineteenth-century literature, though he does not seek to reject or replace the term *imitatio* like Dahlhaus, but rather reframe its meaning along analogous lines. Discussing imitation at work in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Burrow argues that the monster in her book constituted the living recollection – the ‘monstrous progeny’ – of the assemblage of imitative objects gathered together in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.⁶⁴ Though fundamentally an imitation of his creator’s human form, the monster was also *inimitable* – one of a kind – insofar as Shelley never explained the source of its vital power

⁶² Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, trans. by J. Bradford Robinson (University of California Press, 1989), p. 3.

⁶³ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, p. 27.

⁶⁴ Colin Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, p. 390.

and so precluded any possibility of its *recreation*. As Burrow explains, this rendered it ‘a scientific miracle over which its author wishes to retain control, and which no other person will be able to imitate’.⁶⁵ In this sense, the monster was an original and uncopiable creation that was also itself a copy, representing an analogous process in the cultural reproduction that underpinned Milton’s text and its relationship to previous authors such as Ovid.

As part of his study of the developmental history of *imitatio*, Burrow identifies an imitative practice in which ‘the aim of the imitating author was rather to treat [an author such as] Cicero as a subjunctive principle’ whereby ‘an author might seek to adapt the vocabulary and conventions of ancient texts to new times and customs’ resulting in a text written, for example, “‘as Cicero would write” in a new set of circumstances and vocabularies’.⁶⁶ It is subjunctive imitation in particular that one finds still at work in the nineteenth century’s engagement with historical sources and, I claim, with Rabelais’s texts. Alongside straightforward fidelity judgements (i.e. was this or that element from the book included in the new piece?), a subjunctive principle was also a key criterion to which Rabelais’s late nineteenth-century afterlives were held by voices in the era’s press. As we shall see, for several reviewers the mark of whether or not the work under review was a success hinged not on how much material from Rabelais’s texts was referenced, but on whether it felt like the kind of thing Rabelais might himself have written. This implies a tacit understanding and expectation of a subjunctive form of imitation in which the librettist and composer produced *that which Rabelais would have written, were he a nineteenth-century writer or composer for the musical stage*.

⁶⁵ Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, p. 390.

⁶⁶ Burrow, *Imitating Authors*, p. 9.

Structure

Fundamentally, this thesis concerns how François Rabelais and his texts were named, framed, tamed, and (ac)claimed by his late nineteenth-century readership. It contributes to the scholarly understanding of how Rabelais's literary legacy was shaped by its contact with an era marked by significant social and cultural change. Its structure is simple. Given this is the first substantial study of any of these musico-theatrical afterlives, each of my chapters or sub chapters will be preceded by a plot summary of the work they tackle. The summary of Labarre and Trianon's 1855 work is noticeably shorter than the others. This is not only because it was only two acts long where the others were three or more, but because it was the only piece in this corpus that is through-sung. The shorter summary reflects the fact that explaining situations and delivering dialogue takes up more time in a musical rather than a spoken idiom because of music's function as a narrative 'retarding agent' (to use Leonard Rosmarin's term).⁶⁷ Regarding the chapters themselves, the first two are devoted to the first and second work of my corpus respectively, separated as they are by over two decades of cultural history. Because Ganne's and Planquette's works both appeared within three years of one another, they will be paired in Chapter Three. While at points I discuss them comparatively, since most of my analysis focusses on them individually, I have separated them into parts A and B.

Chapter One is thus, predictably, concerned with Théodore Labarre and Henri Trianon's 1855 two-act 'opéra' *Pantagruel*, which was performed once and then abruptly cancelled. I view Labarre's *Pantagruel* in both its generic and institutional context, examining how financial and aesthetic developments at the Opéra led to its creation as part of a mini-corpus of 'petits opéras' that were cheap to mount and 'light' in both narrative theme

⁶⁷ Leonard Rosmarin, *When Literature Becomes Opera: Study of a Transformative Process*, (Rodopi, 1999), p. 49

and musical style. Comparing the reception of *Pantagruel* with that of the other works in this mini-corpus – Emanuele Biletta’s *La Rose de Florence* (1856) and Edmond Membre’s *François Villon* (1857) – I demonstrate how *Pantagruel* shared the former’s Franco-Italian style and the latter’s relation to a classic French literary figure. However, while these other works were spared criticism for foreignness or the supposed misuse of French literary history in the critical press, Rabelais’s afterlife was subject to intense criticism on both these fronts. This, I argue, singles the *curé* out for his particular importance to *French* cultural identity formation, and suggests a highly idiosyncratic reception trajectory setting him apart from comparable pre-modern authors. Dwelling particularly on Rabelais’s hybridity in this chapter, I explore how the terms in which mid-century critics discussed Rabelais’s texts foregrounded their chimeric texture: a monstrous assemblage of heterogeneous and normally incompatible discursive levels whose mutual incongruity is at once apparent and poses no challenge to the text’s overall wholeness.

Pantagruel offers the raw materials from which *couleur rabelaisienne* emerged in the midst of a process of aesthetic essentialisation that characterised Rabelais’s nineteenth-century reception on the lyric stage. Yet this is a dimension of the writer’s posterity that, at least as far as my corpus is concerned, had only by the 1870s appeared consolidated enough to be properly defined. Thus, in Chapter Two, I turn to Hervé’s *Panurge* (1879) and to the concept I call the *couleur rabelaisienne*: a device through which flexibly historicist markers intersected with hybrid or hermeneutically ambiguous motifs from Rabelais’s texts. *Couleur rabelaisienne* echoed an aesthetic known as *couleur historique*, in which a loosely defined ‘past’ setting was represented through the deployment of tropes of non-specific historical provenance. By intersecting this historical non-specificity with nineteenth-century ideas about Rabelais’s texts, the *couleur rabelaisienne* allowed *Panurge*’s librettists to situate their narrative in surroundings that were at once non-specific *vis-à-vis* historical period but still

able to retain the impression of proximity to the material of Rabelais's texts by conforming to the audience's expectations of the world they presented. *Couleur rabelaisienne* rests on the idea that elements of Rabelais's texts were read as hybrid in the nineteenth-century. Thus, having established a parallel between the combination of discursive levels in Rabelais and the hybridisation of theatrical forms with differing cultural value associations, I then turn to the tumultuous interlacing careers of Hervé, fellow comic stage composer Jacques Offenbach, and the history of the venue at which *Panurge* was performed: the Bouffes-Parisiens. Since its founding by Offenbach, the Bouffes-Parisiens mounted stylistically and socio-culturally hybrid stage works that had aesthetic roots in Eastern Paris's popular theatrical districts but were marketed for the bourgeois audiences of evermore affluent Western Paris. In an attempt to capitalise on this potential for cross-genre hybridity, Hervé sought to position his piece at a higher point on cultural value hierarchies. In the critical press, the contrast between the negative reception of Hervé's attempts at genre-mobility and the general acceptance of Rabelais's well-established hybridity suggests, I claim, that the acceptance of such heterogeneity was itself dictated by previously held perceptions of this-or-that author's or composer's socio-cultural value.

Chapter Three turns to *Rabelais* by Louis Ganne (1892) and *Panurge* by Robert Planquette (1895), arguing that these pieces suggest a process by which Rabelais's status and legend in the *fin-de-siècle* became increasingly decoupled and dislocated from details of his texts themselves. Rabelais was no longer tethered to the specific content of the *chroniques*, instead transcending the literary origins of his fame to become a synonym for Renaissance culture in its entirety, with the boundary between Renaissance *couleur historique* and *couleur rabelaisienne* blending even further into one another as a result. I begin with a discussion of Louis Ganne's *Rabelais*, exploring how the generic ambiguity identified by voices in the critical press echoed already long-established ideas about the heterogeneity of Rabelais's own

writing style. While both were received as hybrid, their hybridities were seen to be of a different order; for critics, the stage work's combination of contrasting discursive levels was unstable, lacking the balance achieved by Rabelais.

In the second section of Chapter Three, I establish a strong resonance between Robert Planquette's *Panurge* and the *féerie* genre: an offshoot of *mélodrame* that rose to prominence in 'popular' theatres during the latter stages of the century. Discussed as if the opposite of literature, *féerie* had the production of sumptuous visual spectacle as its primary aesthetic goal. *Panurge* was discussed by contemporary critics as similarly anti-literary, with its Rabelaisian material subjugated to the needs of its spectacular new genre context. And yet, as my examination of how critics discussed the spectacularisation of Rabelais's *chroniques* and their historical setting in largely visual terms will suggest, by this point in the century Rabelais's texts were read by many as a kind of moving image rendered in text. This, in turn, implies a shift in his reception in which his quality was seen not as derived from his use of language itself, but from how that language's mimetic effects allowed for the textual representation of primarily visual phenomena.

Together, these chapters make clear how social and cultural hierarchy, generic and discursive hybridity, and the confluence of Rabelaisian literary aesthetics and historical representation – here consolidated under the conceptual label *couleur rabelaisienne* – played active roles in naming, framing, taming, and (ac)claiming Rabelais on the late nineteenth-century lyric stage. By looking to the panoply of approaches that his downstream audience took to reading his books and unfurling their latent hermeneutic possibilities, this thesis seeks in turn to broaden our own interpretive horizons, refamiliarizing ourselves with potential readings of Rabelais's texts that our own historical positionality has obscured.

PANTAGRUEL

OPÉRA EN DEUX ACTES

PAROLES

DE M. HENRY TRIANON

CHŒURS

MUSIQUE DE

M. THÉODORE LABARRE

REPRÉSENTÉ POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS, SUR LE THÉÂTRE IMPÉRIAL DE L'OPÉRA,
LE 24 DÉCEMBRE 1855.



PARIS

M^{me} V^e JONAS LIBRAIRE-ÉDITEUR DU THÉÂTRE IMPÉRIAL DE L'OPÉRA,
4, RUE MANDAR.

TRESSE, PALAIS-ROYAL,
Galerie de Chartres.

MICHEL LÉVY FRÈRES,
2 bis, rue Vivienne.

1856

Liv. 19 [379

PERSONNAGES.

GARGANTUA, seigneur tourangeau.....	MM. BELVAL.
PANURGE.....	OBIN.
DINDENAU, marchand de moutons.....	BOULO.
JEAN JEUDY, cabaretier de Paris.....	MARIÉ.
MAITRE PANSART.....	SAPIN.
THIBAUT, batelier.....	KOENIG.
RIFLAMBERGE, capitaine des Gardes de Gargantua.....	PISSARELLO.
PANTAGRUEL, fils de Gargantua.....	M ^{re} POINSOT.
NICETTE, fille de Jean Jeudy.....	LABORDE.

DE M. HENRY TRIANON

CHŒURS.

ÉTUDIANTS DU PREMIER ACTE.

- 1^{ers} Dessus : M^{lles} Duclos, Montellier, Bengraff, Marcus, Albertini, Prely, Courtois, Parent, Odot, Granier, Clarisse, Lourdin.
 2^{mes} Dessus : M^{lles} Kontzag, Dargis, Vernet, Tissier, Charpentier, Bernard, Cotteignies.
 1^{ers} Ténors : MM. Caraman, Desdet, Marly, Dupuis, Luçon.
 2^{mes} Ténors : Donzel, Robert, Hénault, Bay, De Hénau.
 1^{res} Basses : Noir, Delahaye, Margaillan, Lemasson.
 2^{mes} Basses : Mouret, Barbertéguy, Van-Hoof, Danel, Fayet, Thuillart.

PAYSANNES.

- 1^{ers} Dessus : M^{lles} Morlot, Garrido, Lemare, Mariette, Bertin, Esther, Camille, Planquette, Landais, Lanié.
 2^{mes} Dessus : M^{lles} Vaillant, Baron, Tuffaut, Jacques, Blanche, Ghiringhelli, Cusse, Déjazet, Damade.

PAYSANS.

- 1^{ers} Ténors : MM. Chazotte, Louvergne, Cresson, Bresnu, Sanson, Laissement, Laforge.
 2^{mes} Ténors : Foy, Marin, Laborde, Couteau, Lalande, Fréminet, Blanc.
 1^{res} Basses : Canaple, Beaucourt, Hennon, Gentile.
 2^{mes} Basses : Boussagol, Georget, Poppé, Eugène, Marjollet, Menoud, Jary, George.

LES OFFICIERS DE GARGANTUA.

- MM. Caraman, Chazotte, Dupuis, Luçon, Robert, Fayet, Donzel, Foy, Lalande, Hénault, Noir, Canaple, Delahaye, Georget, Mouret, Barbertéguy.

Le premier acte se passe à Paris, le deuxième acte en Touraine. — On est en 1525.

Summary: *Pantagruel* (1855)

Pantagruel is entirely through song, with solos, duets, and ensemble pieces interspersed by recitative. Following an orchestral overture, act one of *Pantagruel* opens in the *Cabaret de la Pomme-du-Pin* [sic].⁶⁸ Gargantua and his lackey Riflamberge sit at a giant table covered with the remnants of a comically large lunch. Gargantua repeatedly asks Riflamberge's opinion of the food, but each time that '*Riflamberge ouvre la bouche pour répondre; Gargantua poursuit*' (Trianon, p. 3), immediately cutting him off before he can reply.⁶⁹ Overcome with admiration for his lunch, Gargantua calls the innkeeper, Jean Jeudy, an 'artiste' and offers him a job as his personal chef.⁷⁰ Following a section of recitative, Gargantua sings an *air* extolling the virtues of *cuisinieres*. Jeudy is flattered by Gargantua's offer but explains that he cannot leave Paris as his daughter Nicette is due to wed a local *marchand* named Jean-Blaise Dindenault.

Nicette appears and embraces Gargantua as Dindenault doffs his cap, introducing himself as the *homme de ménage* Jean-Blaise Dindenault, the son of the sheep merchant Jean Dindenault.⁷¹ In an aside, Nicette introduces the love-triangle theme at the heart of

⁶⁸ This was a Parisian tavern thought in the mid-1800s to have once been frequented by Rabelais and, before him, by the mediaeval troubadour-poet François Villon. (Auguste Longnon, *Étude biographique sur François Villon : d'après les documents inédits conservés aux archives nationales* (H. Menu, 1877), p. 123.) My account of the plot is derived from the printed libretto kept by the BnF (Bibliothèque musée de l'Opéra, LIV 19-379). Any direct quotes will be cited in text in the format '(Trianon, pp.)'.

⁶⁹ The name Riflamberge helps to situate the narrative in a generalised, non-date-specific pre-modern French world, nodding towards the 'flamberge': a medieval sword shape associated with heroes of the *chanson de geste* form such as Galiens li Restorés, Maugris, Renaud de Montauban, and Garin le Loherain. These medieval epic texts were likely penned centuries before Rabelais's birth. (Albert Counson, 'Noms épiques entrés dans le vocabulaire commun', *Romanische Forschung*, 23.1 (1906), pp. 401–13 (p. 406).)

⁷⁰ Trianon's choice to name the innkeeper Jean Jeudy indicates the librettist's familiarity with details of Rabelais's texts, as 'maistre Jean Jeudy' is the name that Panurge gives to his 'longue braguette' as he tries to persuade the *Haulte Dame de Paris* to sleep with him in chapter XXI of *Pantagruel* (p. 292). Given the name only appears once in Rabelais's texts – albeit in rather a memorable context – this may be intended as an inside joke for 'knowing' audience members possessing a higher level of pre-existing familiarity with the *Chroniques*. For a discussion of 'knowing' vs. 'unknowing' audiences, see: Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, pp. 120–28.

⁷¹ Though Trianon is not explicit about the familial link in the libretto text, Jean-Blaise Dindenault describes himself as 'fils de Jean Dindenault, marchand des moutons' (Trianon, p. 4), suggesting he is supposed to be the son of a well-known sheep-merchant character from Rabelais's *Quart livre*. In this famous episode of Rabelais's text, an aborted economic exchange between Panurge and the salesman morphs into vengeful mass-murder as a ruse of the former's manufacture leads the latter and his entire flock to be drowned in the sea. For a more

Pantagruel's intrigue by admitting that her heart secretly belongs to someone other than Dindenault. Gargantua asks whether his son, Pantagruel, regularly frequents Jeudy's tavern. Jeudy replies that Pantagruel comes every morning and evening but, on this occasion, cannot come to Nicette's betrothal dinner because he has to attend a funeral for his late professor. Gargantua reveals that he has travelled to Paris after the Sorbonne contacted him about his son's increasingly erratic behaviour. He then retires for a siesta, guided to his room by Nicette.⁷²

Now alone, Jeudy and Dindenault sing a duet in which the latter insists on the unimportance of money in his decision to marry Nicette, while simultaneously seeking to confirm the financial arrangements and terms of his dowry: 'Oh! Les écus ne font rien à l'affaire, | Et c'est pour sa beauté que Nicette m'est chère... | Mille écus, je crois?...' (Trianon, p. 5). Alongside the farcicality of this internal contradiction, the duet's light-hearted humorousness is maintained by both a fast-paced, largely uneven rhyme scheme, and a lack of melisma. This simplistic-seeming use of musical and lyric material emphasises the pair's lower social rank, resisting both formal verse structures and ornate, embellished melody. During this duet, we also learn that for security, Jeudy had agreed to give Dindenault two hundred and fifty *écus* if the betrothal falls apart. In an obvious display of comic foreshadowing, the pair decide that a written record of the deal is unnecessary.

Nicette reappears as Dindenault and Jeudy leave, revealing in an aria that she secretly harbours ardent feelings for Pantagruel who is a nobleman, and so above her station. Nicette

detailed account of this episode, its underlying significance to discussions of early modern economics, and the importance of Dindenault to Rabelais's nineteenth-century reception see: Eastop, 'Undead Dindenault'. In this article, I also explore the significance of the intergenerational move from *marchand* to *homme du ménage* (p. 129).

⁷² Gargantua's visit constitutes a departure from Rabelais's texts, in which Pantagruel receives only a letter from his father in reference to his attendance at the Sorbonne, referred to in *Pantagruel* as 'la grande université de Paris' (Pant.VII.235). In this letter – something of a manifesto for humanist educational practices – Gargantua encourages his son to take advantage of the new opportunities for knowledge offered to him by the rediscovery and correct *ad fontes* study of antique texts, freed from the 'calamité des Gothz, qui avoient mis à destruction toute bonne littérature.' (Pant.VIII.243).

flees as Pantagruel and his classmates begin to process onto stage dressed in black, mourning the death of their professor Braccardo.⁷³ Jeudy welcomes the scholars to his inn and then leaves the stage. Pantagruel then reveals that the funeral is a ruse designed to disrupt Nicette's and Dindenault's wedding. He points out that the betrothed pair will arrive imminently and checks that his entourage are ready with 'les chevaux, les relais, les bâtons' (Trianon, p. 6). The scholars brandish their clubs as confirmation. Out of nowhere, a stranger appears tumbling from the top of the rear wall, crying for help as he crashes to the floor. He introduces himself as Panurge, explaining that he has journeyed to his beloved France from Turkey via the Balkans and Italy.⁷⁴

Panurge has arrived in France extremely hungry (Pant.XIII.263) and is evading authorities after having stolen some fruit from a stranger's pear tree.⁷⁵ Awoken by the tree's angry owner, Panurge was chased into Paris, climbing over the wall of the *Pomme-du-pin* in an attempt to escape capture. Reminiscent of the *buffo* 'patter song' style used by numerous stage composers including Rossini (e.g. the finale ensemble section of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Panurge's introductory air foregrounds his farcical stupidity, listing in up-tempo monorhyme the principalities through which he has passed to reach France.⁷⁶ The monotony of the

⁷³ One of their number carries his robes and bonnet. In 1855, *Pantagruel* was played by the soprano Mlle. Euphrasie Poinot, with her high voice emphasising the character's youthfulness. This helps to situate Trianon's narrative within the period covered by the early chapters of *Pantagruel* during which, still a youth, the eponymous character attends the Sorbonne.

⁷⁴ This echoes the journey taken by Rabelais's Panurge who details how he escaped from a group of Turks who tried to roast him on a spit (Pant.XIII.262-267).

⁷⁵ Nicolas Lombart has recently pointed out that when Panurge first appears in Rabelais's texts, he emerges from the direction of a prison ('vers l'abbaye saint Antoine' Pant.IX.246) and looks like a fruit picker ([il] ressembloit un cueilleur de pommes du pays du Perche.' (Pant.IX.246) ; Nicolas Lombart, 'Une fama en marge : l'écriture de soi dans la poésie carcérale renaissante (1533-1560)', in *L'écriture de soi à la Renaissance*, ed. by Paul-Victor Desarbres, Véronique Ferrer, and Alexandre Tarrête (Sorbonne Université Presses, 2024), pp. 233–61 (p. 235).). Panurge is also said to be hungry having escaped the Turks: 'Mais le pauvre Panurge en beut vaillamment, car il estoit eximé comme un haran soret.' (Pant.XIII.263) This suggests that Trianon had a close familiarity with the details of Rabelais's texts.

⁷⁶ This echoes Rabelais's comic use of lists. For a discussion of this aspect of Rabelais's writing, see: Rowan Cerys Tomlinson, 'Thinking with Lists in French Vernacular Writing, 1548-1596' (unpublished DPhil, Oxford University, 2008).

monorhyme is echoed in Panurge's melodic material, repeating the same short musical phrase for each country in his list.

Pantagruel dresses Panurge in Braccardo's professorial robes as the interloper praises Paris's scholarly community and, echoing his Rabelaisian precursor, begins to eat and drink with seemingly endless appetite. A door at the back of the stage opens. Dindenault and Nicette process into the tavern ready to be wed, led (according to the libretto, at least) by a flute and cornemuse.⁷⁷ Pantagruel interrupts the procession by telling Dindenault that it is tradition where he comes from to test a husband-to-be's mettle with a fight before he marries. In the 'jeu' Nicette will be encircled by the scholars, and Dindenault will have to rescue her. As Dindenault prepares to attack, Pantagruel instructs his entourage to descend on him with 'coups de gaule'.⁷⁸

The wedding guests return the assault and, as the stage descends into all-out combat, Gargantua appears on the balcony. Horrified, he rushes downstairs, harshly chastising his son for having tried to violate ('enlever') Nicette (Trianon, p. 9). Pantagruel scapegoats Panurge who, still dressed as a professor, has been busy eating, oblivious to the commotion around him.⁷⁹ Apoplectically angry with Panurge, Gargantua decrees that he must now marry Nicette.⁸⁰ Panurge is confused by his engagement, but he likes the idea of marriage, so does not protest. In an ensemble number, while Dindenault protests, Gargantua and Jeudy express

⁷⁷ These are two instruments that appear frequently in Rabelais's texts according to Nan Cooke Carpenter (*Rabelais and Music* (University of North Carolina Press, 1954), pp. 2–3, 16.) Carpenter emphasises the frequency with which Rabelais refers to the cornemuse, reminding her reader of its use as a cuckoldry metaphor in the *Tiers livre* ('guare moine! Cornemuse de Buzançay!' TL.XLV.491). The flute, she adds, is treated as the perfect instrument for wedding music by Rabelais, if paired with the tabor.

⁷⁸ This assault echoes one in the *Quart livre*, staged while Pantagruel and his entourage are visiting the island of the Chicanous: 'gens à tout le poil' (QL.XII.564) who earn their living by being beaten. As an exemplar for how to deal with such people, Panurge tells a story in which a noble named Basché stages a marriage attended by a Chicanous who is then violently attacked with weapons concealed in the wedding party's robes (QL.XII.566).

⁷⁹ This echoes a scene in Rabelais's texts in which Panurge stands in for Pantagruel to debate the English scholar Thaumaste (likely a satirical depiction of Thomas More). In this scene, Panurge volunteers to take Pantagruel's place and then defeats Thaumaste using only crude sign-language (Pant. XVIII-XXI.281-291).

⁸⁰ For a 'knowing' audience member aware of the origin of Jean Jeudy's name, it would be amusing that Panurge should be betrothed to the daughter of a man named after his own penis.

their pleasure at the new betrothal and the innkeeper welcomes Panurge into his family. Gargantua invites everybody (except Dindenault) to his *château*, and they all make to leave. Dindenault protests but is told to shut up. Panurge reassures the ‘manant’ that he will find another diamond (Trianon, p. 9). After demanding the two hundred and fifty *écus* of insurance dowry promised by Jeudy, Dindenault is told that nobody is listening. As the curtain falls, he is chased from the stage.

Act two takes place in the grounds of Gargantua’s *château* in Touraine.⁸¹ As the orchestra play a brief Entr’acte, Gargantua’s coach approaches. It is met by his household staff who laud him, comparing him to historical greats like Caesar and Alexander. The journey has given Gargantua a humid ear, dry mouth, and arid palate. To remedy this, his men process toward him ceremonially with a giant *coupe* of undiluted wine: a sight whose mimetic comedic content emerges from the juxtaposition of the ridiculous size of the goblet, the sheer amount of alcohol being consumed, and the footmen’s sincerity and ritualistic solemnity.⁸² After he is satiated, Gargantua informs his footmen – Pansart, Grippeminaud, and Bridioie (the latter two played by dancers) – that he has returned home with three ‘merveilles’: a divine chef, a doctor, and his own son (Trianon, p. 10).⁸³

⁸¹ This is Rabelais’s birthplace and the setting of much of his *œuvre*. For a full account of Rabelais’s close association with the area, see: Françoise Houvenaghel, *Géographie de la Rabelaisie: lieux de Touraine et d’ailleurs dans l’œuvre de Rabelais* (Editions Sutton, 2017).

⁸² It also nods towards Gargantua’s famed thirst, exemplified by his first words in Rabelais: ‘à boyre, à boyre, à boyre’ (Garg. VII.23).

⁸³ The names of Gargantua’s footmen are noteworthy for their relation to medieval carnival culture, and to Rabelais’s texts. Grippeminaud and Bridioie are both characters from Rabelais’s *chroniques*. The former is the leader of the *Chats-fourrez* (CL.XIII.755), a civilisation encountered by Pantagruel and his men who occupy the ‘isle de Cassade’. The latter is a judge who appears in the *Tiers livre*, advising Panurge to consult dice regarding his marriage (TL.XLIII.486). Pansart, in contrast, is not directly derived from Rabelais’s texts but instead a nod towards Saint Pensard, a figure from late medieval morality plays (*Deux jeux de carnaval de la fin du moyen âge: la Bataille de Saint Pensard à l’encontre de Caresme et le Testament de Carmentrant*, ed. by Jean-Claude Aubailly (Droz, 1977)). This minor saint, also associated with Mardi Gras celebrations, was thought in the mid-nineteenth century to have been invoked by François I’s famed jester Triboulet who, when asked how he would like to be put to death was said to have exclaimed: ‘par sainte Nitouche et saint Pensard, patrons de la folie, je demande à mourir de vieillesse!’ (Quoted in: ‘Triboulet’, ed. by Ferdinand Hofer, *Nouvelle biographie générale: depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu’à nos jours* (Firmin-Didot frères, 1866), pp. 632–33.))

Gargantua realises that Panurge is missing from his travelling party. Pantagruel whispers to a fellow scholar that he got Panurge notoriously drunk in an attempt to get rid of him. He then tells his father that Panurge is somewhere near the Loire but got distracted by an important problem befitting his role as a professor. A boatman appears, singing as he drifts along the river that runs across the back of the stage, and Gargantua remarks that he seems to have a contented soul. The boatman deposits the body of Jean-Blaise Dindenault on the shore, unconscious and half-drowned. Awaking suddenly, Dindenault curses Panurge and laments the death of his flock of sheep. Dindenault explains that having obtained default against Jeudy forcing him to pay the missing chunk of dowry, he left immediately for Touraine. On his way he encountered a flock of sheep with fine white coats and decided to buy twenty of the largest. He then came across Panurge, slumped in the doorway of a cabaret and drunk out of his mind. Dindenault approached him to tell him that he would be cuckolded ('dûment coiffé') by Nicette. Panurge replied by asking how much the merchant would charge for his finest sheep. When Dindenault replied 'dix écus', Panurge grabbed the animal and threw it into the nearby river. Over went the rest of the flock, screaming 'bêe bêe' as they fell (Trianon, p. 12).⁸⁴

Gargantua says that Dindenault's case is shocking, complicated, and will require long debate. But then the dinner bell rings, the matter is forgotten, and everyone leaves the stage except for Dindenault who, in a reversal of Rabelais's retelling of his conflict with Panurge, reminds himself to be 'patient': he will take his revenge tomorrow.⁸⁵ He then goes to sleep in

⁸⁴ This is a reformulated version of chapters V-VIII of the *Quart livre*. As well as operating as a useful narrative device by which to explain Dindenault's sudden uninvited appearance at Gargantua's chateau, this sheep-drowning incident serves to associate Trianon's libretto with perhaps the best-known Rabelaisian reference in circulation during the nineteenth century, *les moutons de Panurge*. This phrase – the equivalent of English 'lemmings' – was (according to Google Ngram) in reasonably common usage in France during the period under examination in this thesis, rising steadily throughout the Second Empire to peak in 1868. For speakers of French, whether familiar with Rabelais's texts or not, the name Panurge would constitute a synecdoche: he and his *moutons* were part of the same literary phenomenon.

⁸⁵ In Rabelais's text, it is *Panurge* who repeatedly reminds himself to be 'patient' while bartering with the merchant (QL.VII.553).

the boat, watched from the balcony by Nicette, who admits to herself that letting Pantagruel ruin her betrothal to Dindenault was a mistake. Pantagruel appears below, thanking the heavens that his father and his houseguests are all asleep under the table. He calls to Nicette who tells him to return to the party in case they are seen together. Pantagruel implores her to come downstairs, and she consents on the condition that he stays a minimum of six paces away. As Nicette descends, Pantagruel rushes to embrace her. She recoils, reminding him of her rule. Pantagruel asks if she has lost interest in him, and she explains that she believes he is trying to dupe her. Pantagruel proposes marriage and Nicette acquiesces, before swiftly reneging, telling Pantagruel that he thinks too highly of himself: he does not have Dindenault's sincere heart. She is also convinced that Pantagruel is seeking to trick her. As she sees it, the merchant loves her truly and Pantagruel does not. The young nobleman insists on his sincerity and, after declaring his profound love, wins the barmaid over. However, by this point she is so overcome with emotion that she flees the stage, reappearing at her balcony only once Pantagruel has gone.

After Pantagruel has exited the stage, Panurge reappears, cursing Dindenault. He sees Nicette on her balcony (in her nightgown) and is moved by his 'love' for her. She returns to her room as Pantagruel appears below the balcony with a ladder, climbing up the side of the tower and entering her chambers. Shocked, Panurge follows after him. Unable to sleep, Dindenault emerges from the boat to find Nicette being pursued across the stage by Pantagruel. Nicette calls for Dindenault, who calls back to her, revealing his presence. In response, Pantagruel threatens to throw the *homme de ménage* back into the river and then attempts to buy his silence with a bribe. Dindenault refuses, calls to Panurge for help, and the stage descends into frenzy as a crowd of local peasants appear.

Gargantua arrives and asks who molested Nicette. Again, Pantagruel accuses Panurge, who descends from the balcony and renounces his engagement to the barmaid. In response,

Gargantua sentences him to be hanged. Panurge suggests that instead of hanging him, they should settle the marriage dispute by following a classical example and imitating the apple of discord. Nicette (Paris), and must decide between Panurge (Juno), Dindenault (Minerva), and Pantagruel (Venus). Nicette chooses Dindenault, explaining that true happiness spurns power, knowledge, and opulence. It lies in a young, true heart with a bit of love and a passable roof over its head. It lies with Dindenault. As the curtain lowers, Pantagruel swears revenge, and Panurge celebrates having his freedom and gaiety back. Fin.

Chapter 1

1855

Franco-Italianate Rabelais - Prophetic Rabelais - Chimeric Rabelais

On Christmas Eve of 1855 the Opéra premiered a new two-act opera entitled *Pantagruel*, written by composer Théodore Labarre and librettist Henri Trianon. Its first performance, given before the Imperial family, was also to be its last. In the days that followed, *Pantagruel* was swept under the carpet, and all future performances of the work were cancelled. From supposed seditious political undertones to a satirical attack on the emperor's wife, angry aristocrats to plain old poor performance: there are so many plausible reasons for *Pantagruel's* cancellation that until new documentary evidence emerges from the archives, dwelling on the subject shall largely remain an exercise in unhelpful conjecture. It would also miss much of this case study's value, offering scholars a lens through which to understand not just the differing reception trajectories of pre-modern writers including Rabelais, but also the institutional and reportorial pressures being exerted upon the Opéra at a particularly difficult moment in its history.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ 1854 to 1857 was a turbulent period in the Opéra's history, and this is reflected in the availability of archive resources today. Both *Pantagruel's* short-lived performance life and frequent changes in the venue's administrative structures have resulted in fragmented records, with traces of the work's production and reception very limited compared to other pieces premiered under the Second Empire. Regarding production materials, the Bibliothèque-musée de l'opéra (a site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, hereafter BnF) houses a copyist's conductor's score (A-589), an autograph copy of a piano reduction intended for use at rehearsals (MAT-397), a printed libretto (LIV 19-379), and eight gouache costume illustrations by the production designer Alfred Albert (D216-18 (15-22)). There is also a ledger detailing honoraria paid to Labarre and Trianon (CO-497). Historically, the Archives Nationales has held the lion's share of the Opéra's administrative documentation. Yet in *Pantagruel's* case, these collections are also relatively limited. While no censor's reports have survived, we have a record of the work being deposited with the censorship office, a copied and signed *cahier de censure* (essentially a manuscript copy of the libretto), and a notice sanctioning the piece's performance, signed and stamped by the *ministère de la maison de l'empereur* Achilles Fould and the *commissaire de police* (F/18/37; AJ/13/500). The majority of material at the Archives Nationales concerns the costs involved with preparing and mounting *Pantagruel*, including receipts for the *mise-en-scène*, costume production, piano moving, and payments to Labarre and Trianon (AJ/13/679; AJ/13/500; AJ/13/433). There is also a large ledger detailing the

In this chapter, I will first discuss how the 1855 *Pantagruel* conformed to the norms of *petit opéra*. This was a light, two-act alternative to five-act *grand opéra*, short enough to be performed alongside one-act *ballet-pantomime*. I will then situate the work in its broader institutional context, arguing that it forms part of a mini-corpus of three *petits opéras* that were commissioned by the Opéra between 1855 and 1857 in an attempt to save money after running into debt in 1854. These other works are Emanuele Biletta and Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges's *La Rose de Florence* (1856) and Edmond Membrée and Edmond-François-Jules Got's *François Villon* (1857).

By comparing *Pantagruel*'s reception among Parisian theatre critics with that of its corpus counterparts, I shall demonstrate how its links to Rabelais led it to be judged according to different criteria. While *Pantagruel* was attacked for being too Italian, critics hardly mentioned this aspect of *La Rose de Florence*, even though it was written by an Italian in a noticeably Italian style and was set in Italy. Though *Pantagruel* and *François Villon* both foregrounded their links to important figures in French literary history, the way in which their respective author was discussed by critics differed greatly. When viewed together, these inconsistencies reveal a great deal about the particular ways in which Rabelais was received by the nineteenth century, how these differed from the fates of other pre-modern writers, and the important role his texts played in constructing the cultural prehistory of the modern French imperial state.

At the heart of this chapter are thus two overlapping sets of intersecting questions. The first set of questions is about hybridity. Specifically, they concern both the hybridisation of French and Italian musical and theatrical cultures on the Parisian lyric stage, and the

individual elements of each costume, including their materials and colours (AJ/13/513). Otherwise, records of production costs retained by the Archives Nationales are extremely patchy: and what remains is often very difficult to identify, such as the large (!) number of receipts for small miscellaneous costs. The majority of reception artefacts to survive are review articles published in the Parisian press soon after the piece's premier. These articles, held by the BnF, vary greatly in length and thematic focus depending on the views and reading habits of each publication's regular readership. I will cite these individually throughout the chapter.

hybridisation of the city's established lyric genres. The second set asks whether these hybridities were appropriate given that the work in question was both to be performed at the Opéra, and to be considered part of Rabelais's posterity. In short, this chapter interrogates which types of cosmopolitan hybridity were seen to be appropriate in what theatrical and literary contexts in mid-century Paris, and what this can tell us about how Rabelais was conceptualised by his downstream audience.

As the corpus of press reviews published in the aftermath of *Pantagruel*'s premier suggest, Rabelais was particularly special to his nineteenth-century readers for his supposed ability to bring together various contrasting, seemingly incompatible discursive levels (e.g. the sacred and profane), and have them co-exist in a way that foregrounded their incongruity and incoherence but without undermining any broader impression of the text's overall wholeness. Identifying this attitude to Rabelais in reviews of the 1855 *Pantagruel*, I will argue that the terms used to describe the *curé* foregrounded the chimeric incoherence of his texts, exploring the competing notions of hybridity at work in downstream interpretations of the *chroniques*.

***Pantagruel*, Genre, and Institutional Context: A *petit opéra* for a petit budget**

Pantagruel* and *petit opéra

Both stylistically and thematically, Labarre and Trianon's *Pantagruel* conforms to the loose set of norms and practices associated with 'petit opéra'. Identified and defined in scholarship by Mark Everist only relatively recently, the operatic sub-genre – recognised as a generic category during the mid-1800s and discussed both officially and informally – developed as a by-product of the expansion from three- to five-acts that French *grand opéra* underwent

towards the end of the Restoration.⁸⁷ Up to the late 1820s, the *modus operandi* of the Opéra had been to construct a night's worth of performances by pairing three-act lyric theatrical works with two-act *ballet-pantomimes* of the 'genre noble et gracieux'.⁸⁸ This was a very literal interpretation of Napoléon's 1806/07 theatrical legislation, which had put ballet and through-sung *grand opéra* on an equal footing in its account of the venue's intended role in wider Parisian theatrical life. Yet in spite of the state's desire to maintain inter-genre parity, *ballet-pantomime* diverged from *grand opéra* by retaining its traditionally modest size. As *grands opéras* swelled from three acts to five, *ballet-pantomimes* remained only one or two acts long, unable to sustain an entire evening's entertainment on their own. This put the form in danger of obsolescence should the production of new, short lyric works cease. *Petit opéra* emerged as the most viable remedy to the tension between what the state expected of the Opéra, and the ever-larger aesthetic aims of composers and librettists; it was a new type of opera genre 'specifically designed to accompany *ballet-pantomime*', according to Everist.⁸⁹ And though it began as a generic experiment in response to a shift in repertorial context, Everist has claimed that by 1840, *petit opéra* had become a genre as clearly defined as *grand opéra*, with its own set of consolidated and established norms and a small canon of classic works.⁹⁰

Everist identifies two works — Gioachino Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* and Daniel Auber's *Le Philtre* — as the dual-blueprint for all *petits opéras* written between the genre's inception in 1828 and the end of the Second Empire.⁹¹ Both of these were two acts long, leaving room for a *ballet-pantomime* to be performed the same night. They were also light, comedic, and

⁸⁷ Mark Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra: Parisian Opera and Ballet from the Restoration to the Second Empire', *19th Century Music*, 33.3 (2010), pp. 195–231.

⁸⁸ Ministère de l'Intérieur: Règlement pour les théâtres [25 April 1807] (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1807), cited in: Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', p. 196.

⁸⁹ Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', p. 196.

⁹⁰ Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', p. 220. Everist cites a handful of examples of the term 'petit opéra' appearing in official documents such as the venue's *cahiers des charges* (e.g. on p. 208 n.64).

⁹¹ Discussed at several points in Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', pp. 204–15.

decidedly cosmopolitan, fusing aspects of both French and Italian comic stage traditions. While the libretti were grounded in the texts and intrigues of *vaudeville* and Enlightenment farce theatre, they were arranged in a way that foregrounded their Italianate resonances. Like the French neo-Aristotelian comedies of Molière and Diderot these *petit opéra* intrigues broadly adhered to dramatic unities, only ever concerning a small number of characters in a limited number of settings and timeframes. Eugène Scribe and Charles-Gaspard Delestre-Poirson's libretto for *Le Comte Ory*, for example, was little more than a reworked version of a *vaudeville* they had written together in 1816, retaining its vaudevillian character in its light-hearted exploration of complex love interests.⁹² While *Le Philtre*'s characters were reminiscent of stock 'types' from the *commedia dell'arte* – a theatrical tradition still strongly associated in the nineteenth century with Italian culture – they were organised into a narrative resembling the sorts of inter-class love intrigue common in comic but sentimental *vaudeville*, giving elements of Italian stage comedy a quintessentially French feel.⁹³ These plots, suggestive primarily (but not entirely) of the French comic theatrical tradition were then deployed in a musical context indicative of Italian musical comedy.⁹⁴ As Everist explains, all *petits opéras* written in the fifty years following *Le Comte Ory*'s premier diverged from *grand opéra* by maintaining a clear division between musical numbers and recitative (rather than smoothly transitioning between them), echoing the otherwise recognisably Italian practice of *recitativo dopo l'aria* or *recitativo dopo il duetto*.⁹⁵ By being both comic and

⁹² Damien Colas, 'Questioning the Frenchness of 'Le Comte Ory'', *Studia Musicologica*, 52.1 (2011), pp. 373–92 (p. 375).

⁹³ The tradition's persistent Italian resonances in mid-century France are discussed in: Rocco Rubini, 'The Vichian Resurrection of Commedia Dell'Arte: Michelet, Sand, and De Sanctis', *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 37.2 (2016), pp. 49–74.

⁹⁴ It is noteworthy that from the Enlightenment onwards, French farce theatre constituted a hybrid of the medieval farce tradition that developed in France and the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition that had taken root as a foreign import in France in the late sixteenth century. Consider, for example, the influence of Italian comic theatre on Molière's shorter three-act farces, discussed at length in Philip A. Wadsworth, *Molière and the Italian Theatrical Tradition*, 2nd edn (Summa Publications, 1987).

⁹⁵ Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', p. 205. *Recitativo dopo l'aria* or *recitativo dopo il duetto* denoted a section of recitative followed immediately by an aria, or by a duet.

through-sung, *petit opéra* resembled fully sung Italian *opera buffa* rather than French *opéra-comique*'s trademark alternation between singing and speaking.

By the dawn of the Second Empire there existed a small, established repertoire of *petit opéra* of a similar age to, and by the same composers as, that of *grand opéra*.⁹⁶ And because *petit opéra* was seen as *grand opéra*'s smaller subordinate, it became a stepping stone for up-and-coming composers looking to graduate from a career writing for the Opéra-Comique, or to move from writing *ballet-pantomime* to lyric works.⁹⁷ Writing new works of *petit opéra* was thus accessible to younger, or less well-established composers, and Théodore Labarre fitted the latter category. Though one of a large number of young composers who struggled for commissions in the closed shop of Paris's mainstream theatres, eventually in 1831 Labarre managed to gain a compositional foothold at the Opéra-Comique. Between 1831 and 1845, three of his lyric comedies were performed at the venue.⁹⁸ He then took over as the venue's conductor in 1847 when Narcisse Girard left to take up the equivalent role at the Opéra.⁹⁹ Labarre's *opéras-comiques* were never particularly successful, but the composer had generally been spared blame for their shortcomings by critics as their libretti were considered to have let down their otherwise worthy scores.¹⁰⁰ In the 1850s Labarre also wrote two ballets for the Opéra which were successful enough to enter into the venue's repertoire, receiving multiple performances throughout the decade. Writing a *petit opéra* was thus the obvious next step in Labarre's career. As for *Pantagruel*'s librettist, Trianon had recently pivoted from a career as a literary translator and art critic to write for the theatre, and had already

⁹⁶ Alongside *Le Comte Ory* (Rossini, 1828, 295 performances before 1855) and *Le Philtre* (Auber, 1831, 207 performances before 1855), this also included *Le Dieu et la bayadère* (Auber, 1830, 137 performances before 1855); *La Xacarilla* (Marliani, 1839, 92 performances before 1855); *La Bouquetière* (Adam, 1847, 35 performances before 1855).

⁹⁷ Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', p. 215.

⁹⁸ *Les Deux Familles* (1831 - Salle Ventadour); *L'Aspirant de Marine* (1833 - Salle de la Bourse); *Le Ménétrier, ou Les Deux Duchesses* (1845 - Salle Favart).

⁹⁹ François-Joseph Fétis, 'Labarre (Théodore)', in *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2nd edn, 8 vols (Culture et Civilisation, 1963), v, pp. 147–48 (p. 148).

¹⁰⁰ This is noted by Fétis, p. 148.

found some acclaim at the Opéra with a libretto for Armand Limnander de Niewenhove's 1853 *petit opéra*, *Le Maître chanteur*. He had also composed the lyrics for a nationalist cantata entitled *La Prise de Sébastopol*, performed in October 1855 to celebrate the Franco-British victory in Crimea.¹⁰¹

In terms of its structure, form, and relation to Italophone operatic traditions, *Pantagruel* conformed to the established norms of *petit opéra*. It was two acts long, each of which took place in a different setting. Throughout, it maintained division between recitative and musical number that was in keeping with the features of other *petits opéras*. Beyond easily identifiable structural attributes such as these, the piece also repeatedly incorporated musical and theatrical devices with strong Italian cultural associations into its otherwise decidedly French material. Among the strongest links the piece maintained to French comic theatrical traditions was its use of the name Nicette, shared as it was with a character from a very well-known 1743 *opéra-comique en vaudevilles* by Charles-Simon Favart entitled *La Chercheuse d'esprit*. Though written over a century before *Pantagruel* was premiered, it is not unreasonable to suggest that an audience would be able to recognise the intertextual reference, as in 1855 alone Favart's piece had been performed thirty-five times at the Théâtre du Vaudeville. This theatre stood in Place de la Bourse – a short walk from the Opéra on rue Le Peletier – and was frequented by many of the same affluent patrons. The diminutive '-ette' in the name 'Nicette' also operated as an indicator of both social class and theatrical genre, associating her with peasant and pauper characters from Molière's seventeenth-century comedic *œuvre* such as Lisette in *L'Amour médecin*, Georgette in *L'École des femmes*, and Zerbinette from *Les Fourberies de Scapin*.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Discussed in: Mark Everist, *The Empire at the Opéra: Théâtre, Power and Music in Second Empire Paris* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 27.

¹⁰² My thanks go to Professor Catriona Seth for drawing my attention to this class-inflected intertextual resonance.

Beyond this, *Pantagruel* was festooned with hybrid devices clearly influenced by both Italian and French theatrical and musical traditions which clearly situated it within the generic parameters of *petit opéra*. In its opening scene, for example, the demeaning interaction between Gargantua and his subordinate Riflamberge echoes the master-servant relationship underpinning several comic set-pieces (*'lazzi'*) of the *Commedia dell'arte* tradition that played on a comedy of unequal power dynamics (both upheld and subverted) and that had long since been absorbed into the tradition of French spoken farce theatre.¹⁰³ The scene's Franco-Italianism is further emphasised by the use of mime. Fully mimed mute servant characters were emblematic of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, and particularly its reception in France.¹⁰⁴ Like many of the tradition's Frenchified servant characters (such as *Pulcinella/Polichinelle* and *Arlecchinio/Arlequin*) Riflamberge remains entirely silent, played by M. Pisarello: a dancer, not a singer.¹⁰⁵ Given how common mute servants were to the *Commedia dell'arte* tradition, the opening scene of *Pantagruel* works to foreground the Italianate aspects of the *petit opéra* genre to which it belongs.¹⁰⁶

Yet Riflamberge's silence is also reminiscent of well-known mute characters from the Opéra's more French feeling repertoire, most obviously the eponymous *muette* in Daniel Auber's *La Muette de Portici* which had been performed at the Opéra during the winter of 1854-55. Mute characters were also a mainstay of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *mélodrame*, with muteness constituting one of the genre's aesthetic bases, according to Patrick McDonagh.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ For a collection of the most common *lazzi* see: Mel Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia Dell'Arte* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983).

¹⁰⁴ Rubini, 'The Vichian Resurrection of Commedia Dell'Arte', p. 67.

¹⁰⁵ Pisarello is listed among the dancers deployed in other premieres at the Opéra, such as *Don Carlos* in 1867, Cesare Pugni's *Le Marché des innocents* in 1861, and Adolphe Adam's *Le Corsaire* in 1856.

¹⁰⁶ For two complementary studies of pantomime's status in mid-century Paris, see: Robert F. Storey, *Pierrots on the Stage of Desire: Nineteenth-Century French Literary Artists and the Comic Pantomime* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Edward Nye, *Deburau: Pierrot, Mime, and Culture* (Routledge, 2022).

¹⁰⁷ Patrick McDonagh, 'The Mute's Voice: The Dramatic Transformations of the Mute and Deaf-Mute in Early-Nineteenth-Century France', *Criticism*, 55.4 (2013), pp. 655–75 (p. 655).

Beyond these mute characters and their French and Italian resonances, there are further ways in which elements of Italian comic theatrical culture appear Frenchified in *Pantagruel's* plot. For example, the wedding battle during which Dindenault is set upon by Pantagruel and his fellow students closely resembles another set of established *Lazzi* of the *Commedia dell'arte*. The image of a group of intellectual elites using sticks to attack someone below them in social hierarchies could be said to resemble both the '*lazzi* of comic violence' or '*lazzi* of social class'. In keeping with the tradition's broader focus on unequal social class interactions, these comic set pieces were 'predicated on a universe of unfair socio-economic arrangements', according to Mel Gordon, playing on divisions in social hierarchies and 'the comic subjugation of the innocent or defenceless' for comic effect.¹⁰⁸ In particular, several classic *lazzi* involved lower status characters receiving beatings with 'bastone' or other similar blunt-force weapons from those ranked above them. Crucially, *bastone* had a Gallic equivalent – the bâton – which was the traditional weapon of the French theatrical *farceur*. By using their batons to enforce socio-economic hierarchy by unleashing violence upon a manual worker, Pantagruel and the group of educated elites surrounding him find their equivalent in chapter VIII of the *Quart livre*. Here, as I have previously written, Rabelais's Dindenault character is drowned by being held underwater with an oar which, alongside its user Panurge, embodies 'the early modern economic systems that kept the wealthy rich, and the poor in poverty.'¹⁰⁹ However, unlike either the *zanni* of the *Commedia dell'arte*, or Dindenault and his flock in the *Quart livre*, the wedding guests of Trianon's narrative do not simply take their beating, but return the assault. Their resistance is perhaps indicative of the 'bigger future' that I have suggested Rabelais's Dindenault might be afforded in his nineteenth-century downstream context where the owners of the means of production (i.e. the

¹⁰⁸ Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia Dell'Arte*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ Eastop, 'Undead Dindenault', p. 123.

one in control of a flock of economically productive sheep) rather than the feudal landlords would come to control the economy.¹¹⁰

In its musical material, *Pantagruel* had strong stylistic similarities to light Italian music theatre. The piece conforms to the Italianate tendency of *petit opéra* to place its large-scale *finale*, involving the entire ensemble and chorus, at the end of the first act.¹¹¹ Much of Nicette's highly virtuosic solo material, particularly her early aria confessing love for someone other than Dindenault, was extremely stylistically Italianate, reminiscent of the virtuosic *bel canto* vocal style. Cemented in the French lyric tradition by Rossini and Meyerbeer via their compositions for the Opéra – including, crucially, the first true *petit opéra* *Le Comte Ory* – the *bel canto* style emphasises 'beauty of tone in the delivery of highly florid music'.¹¹² Nicette's *Air* is indicative in its extreme floridity of this style of singing. Basking in the joy of her engagement to Dindenault, Nicette sings:

La belle chose que l'amour!
Mais hélas! l'amour
Ne dure qu'un jour.
Quel dommage !...
Le mariage
Est bien plus sage.
C'est un lien
Je le veux bien ;
C'est une chaîne,
C'est une peine ;
Mais après tout, c'est une fin,
Et j'ai vingt ans le mois prochain. (Trianon, p. 5)

¹¹⁰ Eastop, 'Undead Dindenault', p. 129.

¹¹¹ Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', p. 205.

¹¹² Owen Jander and Ellen T Harris, 'Bel Canto', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 29 vols (Macmillan, 2001), III, p. 161. The technical demands of a *bel canto* vocalist were high. In a conversation in 1858, Rossini is said to have demanded a singer with 'a naturally beautiful voice, blended registers and an even tone from the low to the high range, diligent training resulting in effortless delivery of highly florid music, and a command of style not taught but rather learned from listening to the best Italian singers. (Retold in: Edmond Michotte, 'An Evening at Rossini's in Beau-Sejour (Passy) 1858', in *Souvenirs Personnels*, trans. by Herbert Weinstock (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 91–130; Quoted in summary by: Noel Sugimura, *Singing in Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 127.)

She then pauses on ‘hélas’ and ‘dommage’ for two highly melismatic extended cadenzas: one of the most widely used embellishment devices in *bel canto* singing.¹¹³ Her solo material is underscored by a waltz-like figure, its orchestration growing and tempo increasing line upon line, until she repeats her verse. Upon returning to ‘la belle chose...’, she pauses again for emotional effect on ‘ne dure qu’un jour’ (SCORE, p. 215), singing a compound appoggiatura figure reminiscent of the *gruppetto* – an ornament widely used by Italian *bel canto* vocalists – to signal an oncoming harmonic resolution by adding tension to the antepenultimate chord that forms the cadence.¹¹⁴

Feelings shared, the waltz then returns, punctuated by bars of *colla voce* for ‘mais après’ and ‘c’est une fin’ (SCORE, pp. 218-219). At its final repeat, Nicette’s solo increases in melismatic complexity with numerous chromatic semiquaver runs and wide interval leaps leading to a *forte* finale employing the orchestra’s heavy brass (SCORE, pp. 220-226). The brazen virtuosic Italianism and *bel canto* floridity of Nicette’s aria – its use of highly melismatic embellishment, wide tessitura, and complex ornamentation – strongly aligns it with the Italianate aspects of *petit opéra* genre, and especially with the music of its originator Rossini.

Pantagruel being played by a female singer might also have strengthened the audience’s association between the music of *Pantagruel* and an Italian lyric stage tradition that included the music of Rossini. Indeed, many of the works commonly performed from the Opéra repertoire that involved trouser-roles were by Italians, in particular Rossini (e.g. *Le Comte Ory*, *Sémiramis*). Male characters with high voices had other cultural resonances, however. On the one hand, this voice configuration harked back to the trouser role’s origins in Italophone *opera seria*, emerging as a substitute to the (highly ethically questionable) use of

¹¹³ BnF, *bibliothèque musée de l’Opéra*, A-589, pp. 206-207. All references to the conductor’s score shall be given in text as (SCORE, pp.); Sugimura, *Singing in Style*, p. 156.

¹¹⁴ Sugimura, *Singing in Style*, p. 147.

the castrato voice to portray heroes, Gods, and other characters at the top of inter-character hierarchies.¹¹⁵ On the other, by the nineteenth-century it had come also to suggest in some cases a gentle, childlike innocence, pastoral-ness, or the asexual non-human.¹¹⁶ The hermeneutic polyvalence of a high voice in a male character context will have thus rendered Pantagruel's characterisation highly ambiguous, though at least of an Italian hue. Whatever the cultural resonance, the cross-dressing was welcomed as an arousing addition to the piece, with the Italian political-exile-turned-reviewer for *L'Appel* Henri Montazio writing that Euphrasie Poinot, the soprano playing Pantagruel, 'est très bien en écolier du XVI siècle, le costume masculin lui sied à ravir et elle s'y montre dégagée, souple, et svelte.'¹¹⁷

Structurally, thematically, and in its infusion of French and Italian theatrical cultures, *Pantagruel* thus clearly conformed to the generic norms of *petit opéra*. It also, I claim, formed part of a mini-corpus of *petits opéras* commissioned in the mid-1850s by the Opéra's director François-Louis Crosnier (1854-56). This was a period during which acute financial difficulties pushed the venue's management to turn almost entirely away from mounting newly written works of *grand opéra*, retreating instead into a repertoire of classic three- to five-act works mostly written during the final years of the Restoration and the July Monarchy. I am going to go into such detail concerning the economic factors that led the Opéra to prioritise producing cheap two-act works because drawing a link between the venue's finances and their reportorial decisions constitutes the primary justification for grouping and comparing *Pantagruel*, Emanuele Biletta's *La Rose de Florence* (1856), and of Edmond Membrée's *François Villon* (1857).

¹¹⁵ For example, Julius Caesar in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* (1724); the Governor Arbate in Mozart's *Mitridate* (1770); The Emperor Ezio in Gluck's *Ezio* (1750)

¹¹⁶ Margaret Reynolds, 'Ruggiero's Deceptions, Cherubino's Distractions', in *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, ed. by Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith (Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 141.

¹¹⁷ Henri Montazio, 'Chronique musicale', *L'Appel: journal littéraire, artistique et scientifique*, 30 December 1855.

Institutional context: prioritising *petit opéra* between 1854-1857

The production of this trio of works occurred during a well-documented period in the Opéra's history which saw it turn away from new commissions towards re-runs of an established repertoire of *grands opéras* written mostly under the July Monarchy. Everist has suggested that prioritising performances of repertoire revealed the revisionist, culturally conservative agenda of individuals occupying high roles in its new management structure.¹¹⁸ Examining larger tendencies across the Second Empire, Flora Willson has associated the development of a 'fully fledged repertoire of largely homegrown classics' to a wider increased awareness of, and interest in, Paris's past that developed alongside the topographical change brought about by Haussmann's sweeping urban regeneration project.¹¹⁹ While both of these accounts are no doubt useful, I suggest a further, and in many ways much more straightforward explanation for the venue's reliance on *grand opéra* repertoire, at least during the short period between 1854 and 1857. Having fallen into extreme debt in 1854, the Opéra could no longer afford the high costs associated with mounting new large-scale five-act works. Viewing these repertoire decisions as emerging from acute financial troubles also explains why, at the same time as ceasing all production of new *grands opéras*, the venue continued to commission and mount newly written *petits opéras*, including *Pantagruel*. The latter were simply much cheaper.

In 1854, after several years of financial mismanagement exacerbated by a reduction in the state's subvention, the Opéra found itself teetering on the brink of fiscal collapse. In response, the government was forced to come to its rescue with a package of emergency financial and administrative measures.¹²⁰ The *Maison de l'Empereur* took over administration

¹¹⁸ Everist, *The Empire at the Opéra*, p. 32.

¹¹⁹ Flora Willson, 'Of Time and the City: Verdi's Don Carlos and Its Parisian Critics', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 37.3 (2014), pp. 188–210 (p. 194); Flora Willson, 'Future History: Wagner, Offenbach, and "La Musique de l'avenir" in Paris, 1860', *The Opera Quarterly*, 30.4 (2015), pp. 287–314.

¹²⁰ The scale of the venue's deficit is outlined in a letter from Roqueplan to Fould, dated 16/02/1854. Archives Nationales, AJ/13/1185

of the venue in July 1854, bringing it under the control of the government for the first time since 1830 via a newly formed *Commission supérieure permanente[...] du théâtre impérial de l'opéra*.¹²¹ The following November, the venue's financially disastrous director Nestor Roqueplan stepped down, replaced by experienced theatre director François-Louis Crosnier, given the job for having saved the Opéra-Comique from a similarly dire financial state during the previous decade.¹²² Chaired by the *ministre de l'état* Achille Fould, the new *commission*'s role was primarily to oversee the venue's personnel and finances. However, because the ministers that comprised it considered the Opéra's repertoire a factor in its financial health, they also sought to exert power over what was performed there. Because of this, a matter of weeks before Crosnier was due to take over as director, Fould sent him a letter asking him to rethink his projected repertoire for the coming year:

Je viens donc vous inviter, M. le Directeur, à vous rendre compte des opéras qui pourraient être remis, le plus utilement, au répertoire, et qui soit par eux-mêmes, soit avec l'adjonction d'un ballet, pourraient offrir des chances de recette. Je désignerai notamment à votre attention: *Guido et Ginevra*, *l'Enfant prodigue*, *le Comte Ory*, *le Freyschutz*, *Lucie de Lammermoor*, *Moïse*, *le Siège de Corinthe*, *la Muette de Portici*, *le Dieu et la bayadère*.¹²³

This list of suggestions has been used by Everist as evidence of Fould's extreme repertorial conservatism, leaving in his 'explicit recommendations' no room whatsoever for new commissions.¹²⁴ Yet whether or not Fould was attempting to foist a ready-made season programme on Crosnier, and whether or not Crosnier 'paid little more than lip-service' to his suggestions or 'evaded Fould's early attempts to bend the Opéra to his conservative artistic will' as Everist has suggested, ultimately Crosnier proved himself very receptive to the vision

¹²¹ Alicia C. Levin, 'A Documentary Overview of Musical Theaters in Paris, 1830-1900', in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830-1914*, ed. by Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 379-401 (p. 382); Everist, *The Empire at the Opéra*, p. 4.

¹²² Levin, 'A Documentary Overview of Musical Theaters in Paris, 1830-1900', p. 382.

¹²³ Letter from Fould to Crosnier, dated 27/09/1854, Archives Nationales, AJ/13/451.

¹²⁴ Everist, *The Empire at the Opéra*, p. 32.

Fould's letter set out of an operatic programme drawn from a repertoire of classics.¹²⁵ Of course, the pieces on Fould's list *were* extremely reliable: as *Table 2* shows, these nine operas alone accounted for 29.5% of all performances given at the Opéra between 1828 and 1854, and six had been given more than 100 times. Yet, in terms of their number of previous performances, the set of works eventually chosen by Crosnier to be performed in 1855 (*Table 3*) together exceeded those listed in Fould's letter, accounting for 43% of all performances at the venue since 1828. Crosnier's eventual programme for the year thus indicated that the call to stick to financially secure works had been heard, loud and clear.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Everist, *The Empire at the Opéra*, p. 33.

¹²⁶ Everist, *The Empire at the Opéra*, p. 32.

Title	Composer	Date premiered	No. of performances at the Opéra before 1854
<i>Guido et Ginevra</i>	Halévy	1838	37
<i>L'Enfant prodigue</i>	Auber	1850	41
<i>Le Comte Ory</i>	Rossini	1828	295
<i>Le Freyschutz</i>	Weber	1821 (Paris version 1841)	77
<i>Lucie de Lammermoor</i>	Donizetti	1835	127
<i>Moïse</i>	Rossini	1818	150
<i>Le Siège de Corinthe</i>	Rossini	1820s	106
<i>La Muette de Portici</i>	Auber	1828	308
<i>Le Dieu et la bayadère</i>	Auber	1830	137
Total:			1,278

Table 2

Title	Composer	Date premiered	No. of performances at the Opéra before 1855
<i>La Muette de Portici</i>	Auber	1828	308
<i>La Favorite</i>	Donizetti	1840	183
<i>Le Philtre</i>	Auber	1831	192
<i>Les Huguenots</i>	Meyerbeer	1836	271
<i>Robert le Diable</i>	Meyerbeer	1831	364
<i>Lucie de Lammermoor</i>	Donizetti	1835 (Paris version: 1846)	127
<i>La Juive</i>	Halévy	1835	198
<i>La Xacarilla</i>	Mariliani	1839	67
<i>Le Prophète</i>	Meyerbeer	1849	164
<i>Vepres Siciliennes</i>	Verdi	New in 1855	----
<i>Sainte Claire</i>	Ernst II, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha	New in 1855	----
<i>Pantagruel</i>	Labarre	New in 1855	----
Total:			1,856

Table 3¹²⁷

Alongside his overwhelming reliance on the Opéra's classic repertoire, Crosnier's directorship was characterised by the total cessation of new *grand opéra* commissions. Indeed, no new *grands opéras* were performed in 1856 or 1857, and while two – Giuseppe

¹²⁷ Performance figures taken from www.chronopera.free.fr.

Verdi's *Vêpres Siciliennes* and Ernst II, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha's *Sainte Claire* were premiered in 1855, these had little to do with Crosnier.¹²⁸ During the financially unstable period over which the director presided, the only new works commissioned at the Opéra were *petits opéras*. These were a much cheaper option. While new *grands opéras* would often require five or more newly painted backdrops (one for each of the libretto's *tableaux*), *petits opéras* rarely called for more than two, and often only one. Like works of repertoire, whose staging and sets were already stored by the venue ready to use, the backdrops for *petits opéras* needed not always be new. A bill from *Cambon et Thierry peinteur décorateur*, for example, listed items to 'retoucher pour *Pantagruel*', including Act 2's large 'plafond du paysage'.¹²⁹ Decorating the stage for a scene in a *petit opéra* could be as simple as pulling an old painted backcloth out of storage and touching it up.

As well as reduced staging costs, *petits opéras* had fewer characters, meaning fewer costumes would be required. This is clear from a list detailing the total spending on costumes for a number of works staged during Crosnier's directorship (see *table 4*): on average the costumes for *grands opéras* cost 25,459.81fr, compared with 10,487.64fr for *ballet-pantomimes*, and 4,308.20 for *petits opéras*. Among the works premiered in 1855, while the costumes for *Vêpres Siciliennes* and *Sainte-Claire* cost 24,353.45fr and 24,989.10fr respectively, and the costumes for *La Fonti*'s ballet dancers cost 11,948.45fr, those required

¹²⁸ Verdi's *Vêpres Siciliennes* was a hangover from Roqueplan's premiership: contracted at the venue since 1852, it was already in rehearsal when Crosnier took over (C. Leonard Coduti, 'Verdi et la défense de l'italianité', *Transalpina*, 16 (2013), pp. 153–66 (p. 160)). *Sainte Claire* was performed at short notice in the wake of France's victory in Crimea, at great expense, and largely against Crosnier's will. Mounting *Sainte Claire* — composed by Queen Victoria's half-brother Ernst II — was as much an exercise in diplomacy as it was art (Mark Everist, 'Music, Theatre, and Diplomacy: The Paris Opéra during the Second Empire', *Diplomatica*, 3 (2021), pp. 278–301 (p. 284)). Though it demonstrated the closer relationship between the Opéra and the Imperial government following the *commission*'s takeover in 1854, *Sainte-Claire* did not, however, showcase wise financial decision making. In Crosnier's end of year report to the *commission*, he made clear his displeasure at having been forced to perform such an outrageously costly piece, writing that 'la nécessité de représenter Santa Chiara est venue tout à coup bouleverser tous mes calculs; il fallait abandonner toutes les autres études pour s'occuper exclusivement de l'ouvrage du Prince de Cobourg et dès lors tous les engagements faits en prévision d'autre besoin devenaient inutiles au moins pendant un certain temps.' (Report by Crosnier, sent to Fould on 10/02/1856. Archives Nationales, AJ/13/1185). Though perhaps an extreme example, *Sainte Claire*'s costs are indicative of the high ones associated with mounting a new *grand opéra*.

¹²⁹ Archives Nationales AJ/13/679

for *Pantagruel* cost only 4,755.05fr. *Petit opéra* was thus comparatively cheap, meaning that commissioning new ones struck an acceptable balance between continuing to produce new material while minimising the inherent financial risk involved in bringing a new work before an audience for the first time. The venue could justify spending nearly 69,000fr on costumes for *La Juive* because they could be reasonably sure of substantial box-office returns, but Crosnier and Fould could ill-afford the financial loss that their venue would incur if a new *grand opéra* tanked.

Grand Opéra	Costume Spend	Petit Opéra	Costume Spend	Ballet	Costume Spend
<i>La Muette de Portici</i>	16,207.10	<i>Le Comte Ory</i>	9,067.15	<i>La Fille mal gardée</i>	710.40
<i>Guillaume Tell</i>	18,392.45	<i>Le Philtre</i>	3,844.05	<i>Le Diable à quatre</i>	12,976.20
<i>Robert le diable</i>	25,899.70	<i>La Xacarilla</i>	1,535.20	<i>La Vivandière</i>	1,612.80
<i>La Juive</i>	68,749.80	<i>Le Maître Chanteur</i>	2,339.55	<i>Jovita</i>	11,354.10
<i>Les Huguenots</i>	34,530.10	<i>Pantagruel</i>	4,755.05	<i>La Fonti</i>	11,948.45
<i>La Favorite</i>	16,958.10			<i>Le Corsaire</i>	16,534.65
<i>La Reine de Chypre</i>	31,860.55			<i>Les Elfes</i>	18,276.85
<i>Lucie de Lammermoor</i>	1,620.75				
<i>Le Prophète</i>	28,605.85				
<i>Les Vêpres Siciliennes</i>	24,353.45				
<i>Sainte Claire</i>	24,989.10				
<i>Le Trouvère</i>	13,350.75				
Mean Cost	25,459.8083	Mean Cost	4,308.20	Mean Cost	10,487.6357

Table 4¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Adapted from figures listed in a table entitled 'Dépenses des costumes', likely written out in 1856. Archives Nationales, AJ/13/443.

From the end of 1855 to March 1858, the Opéra commissioned and produced only three entirely new lyric works.¹³¹ Labarre and Trianon's *Pantagruel* was the first, followed in November 1856 by Emanuele Biletta and Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges' *La Rose de Florence*, and then in April 1857 by Edmond Membrée and Edmond-François-Jules Got's *François Villon*. While *Pantagruel* was the only one of the three to be performed during Crosnier's twenty-month tenure as director, he was directly involved obtaining the contracts required to commission and perform all of them. It was also Crosnier who actively pushed Biletta and Saint-Georges to shrink their piece from four acts to two and shift its style from *grand opéra* to *petit opéra*.¹³² However, despite emerging from the same generic and financial context as one another, *Pantagruel*'s reception among reviewers stood out. By examining the reception of Labarre and Trianon's *petit opéra* alongside that of *La rose de Florence* and *François Villon*, I will claim that *Pantagruel* invited criticism according to different criteria from other works of broadly the same generic order.

Comparing *Pantagruel* and *La Rose de Florence*: Unwelcome Italianism?

Much of the response to *Pantagruel*'s premier among voices in the critical press dwelt on the piece's Italian attributes, mostly as part of broader discussions about how correctly to conceptualise its genre. In particular, critics rallied around the idea that *Pantagruel* may have

¹³¹ Verdi's *Le Trouvère* was performed for the first time at the Opéra in January 1857, but this was an already well-known foreign import rather than an entirely new commission. In March 1858 Fromental Halévy's *La Magicienne* became the first entirely new five-act *grand opéra* to be performed at the venue since 1855.

¹³² The long and drawn-out development of a two-act *La Rose de Florence* is noted by several voices in the critical press, including Léon Escudier ('Revue musicale', *Le Pays*, 18 November 1856.), Taxile Delord ('Théâtres lyriques', *Le Charivari*, 12 November 1856.), and the unidentified writer of *La Chroniqueur de la semaine* (Anonymous, 'Mardi 11 Novembre', *Le Chroniqueur de la semaine* (11 November 1856), pp. 207–08.). Escudier even suggests that the decision to mount *La Rose de Florence* was Crosnier's final act as director: 'Un jour, M. Crosnier, armé d'une résolution qu'il croyait inébranlable, mais qui devait être bientôt ébranlée, fit répéter généralement *la Rose de Florence*, si lente à s'épanouir au soleil de la rampe, et le lendemain l'intrépide directeur reculait devant sa propre volonté.'

better suited the generic signifier ‘opéra bouffe’. This was a label derived from the Italian term *opera buffa* that, in Paris of 1855, had taken on new meanings associated with Jacques Offenbach’s activities in and around the city’s theatres. In December 1855 — the same month that *Pantagruel* was due to be performed — Offenbach moved his fledgling theatre company Le Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens from the temporary location it had occupied since June in the *Champs Élysées* gardens, to a permanent hall on the *passage Choiseul* just around the corner from the Opéra. Offenbach had been open about his venue’s aesthetic aims: to bring elements of the French lyric theatrical tradition – particularly *opéra-comique* – back to their Italianate origins; he cited a ‘mépris pour la petite musique’ at work in mid-century Parisian theatres as the driving force behind its alienation from the Italian operatic tradition.¹³³ Offenbach’s *opéra-bouffe* was a hybrid form of light opera, integrating elements of the emergent comic lyric culture of the boulevard theatres of Eastern Paris (such as risqué dancing, bawdy jokes, physical pantomime comedy, musical parody, zany libretti, and a spirit of inanity) with the musical style and structure of *opéra-comique*.¹³⁴ The result was a one-act, then later three-act, highly generically hybrid form that moved freely between comic and sentimental subjects. Crucially, in December 1855, Offenbach’s attempts to reform Parisian comic opera had the added effect of imbuing the generic designator *opéra-bouffe* with an extremely current double-meaning that was seized upon by *Pantagruel*’s critics. First, it could be used as a gloss for the integration of ‘low-born’ comic themes in otherwise ‘high-born’ genre- or venue- contexts in the way pursued by Offenbach. Second, it could denote the inclusion of motifs and devices with Italian resonances (discussed above) in a work that critics considered, by virtue of its association to Rabelais, to be decidedly French.

¹³³ Jacques Offenbach, ‘Concours pour une opérette en un acte’, *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique* (27 July 1856), pp. 1–3, BnF.

¹³⁴ For a more detailed discussion of this example of genre mixing, as well as a fuller account of Offenbach’s influence on the aesthetic trajectory of Parisian lyric theatre, see Chapter 2 of this thesis. Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (Routledge, 2003), p. 17.

One critic to suggest a parallel between *Pantagruel* and Offenbach's *opéra-bouffe* genre was *Le Ménestrel*'s Edmond Viel.¹³⁵ Following a *précis* of the plot, Viel wrote that he heard talk among the audience that the piece's score (here anthropomorphised) had got lost on the way to work and ended up at the wrong venue. As Viel explained, it should have turned up at passage Choiseul, the new location of Offenbach's theatre. For Viel, this stylistic proximity to *opéra bouffe* – or comic lyric theatre more broadly – was no inherently bad thing, though. As he explained: 'une bonne bouffonnerie comme, par exemple *le Turc, l'Italienne ou la Centrillon* n'a jamais déshonoré aucune scène, si élevée fût-elle'. These were certainly not such ills that they risked undermining the reputation of a venue.

The works Viel mentioned in his list of harmless *bonne bouffonneries* were, notably, all two-act Italian lyric comedies by Rossini. Yet, none were part of the Opéra's established *petit opéra* repertoire. In fact, aside from one performance of *La Cenerentola* in 1824, none of the works he listed were ever performed there. They were also never associated with Offenbach. Viel thus seems to have chosen these works as comparison points in order to make and emphasise an association between musical *bouffonnerie* and Italian culture, rather than in an attempt to justify *Pantagruel*'s suitability for the Opéra's stage. The critic was thus implying that *Pantagruel* ought to be considered to have emerged from if not an Italian, then at least a *Franco*-Italian comic lyric tradition. The parallel he drew between *Pantagruel* and the output of the Offenbach's Bouffes-Parisiens (expounded via the notion of Italianate 'bonne bouffonnerie') thus had the effect of loosening *Pantagruel*'s ties to French cultural traditions and, in turn, alienating it from the inherently French comedy at work in Rabelais's texts. And supposedly because of this, Labarre's piece could not achieve the same balanced mix of light-heartedness and *prud'hommie* for which the critic lauded Rabelais. Like others who had tried to use the *curé* as a source for their libretti, Trianon (according to Viel) discovered that 'la

¹³⁵ Edmond Viel, 'Théâtre impérial de l'opéra', *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*, 30 December 1855, pp. 1–2.

prose du vieux chroniqueur est comme une arme à deux tranchants, et malgré sa dextérité [il] a pu s'apercevoir que parfois qui s'y frotte s'y pique.' And though Viel commended Trianon's treatment of Gargantua and Panurge, he suspended judgement on Pantagruel, describing him as little more than 'un petit bourgeois d'escolâtre'. This Pantagruel, who is given a 'leçon de morale pour dénouement de ses escapades' was but a Pantagruel 'de fantaisie', a far cry from Rabelais's version of the character.

Echoing Viel by emphasising *Pantagruel's* Italian stylistic roots, Julien Lemer opened his review in *La Sylphide* by calling Labarre's piece 'une tentative dans le genre bouffe, à peu près tel que le comprennent les Italiens.'¹³⁶ The critic employed a lexicon that clearly associated *bouffonnerie* with Italian theatrical traditions. At first glance, he appears to be blaming the Parisian audience's rejection of both newly written and Italianate comic works on their own overly conservative stylistic tastes that were altered by twenty-five years in which, according to him, all new Opéra commissions were serious pieces of high drama:

Ce genre de musique ne convient pas au public de notre première scène lyrique [...] Certes, les spectateurs habitués aux grands drames lyriques, auxquels la scène de la rue Le Peletier semble vouée exclusivement depuis vingt-cinq ans, se familiariseront difficilement avec les lazzi, les facéties burlesques, les situations excentriques, les personnages fantasques que comporte le genre bouffon; c'est pour ainsi dire toute une éducation à faire, et ce n'est qu'en multipliant les essais qu'on pourrait espérer de les amener à bonne fin.

Lemer suggested that the best way around this impasse was to educate the audience by repeatedly mounting Italianate comic works at the Opéra, acclimatising them to its presence on the *Salle le Peletier* stage through what amounts to genre-based exposure therapy. For the critic, it was not, therefore, the Opéra's job to pander to its audience's tastes, but for the audience members to educate themselves, instead, regarding the complexities and history of the theatrical form with which they were engaging. Ironically, however, by making this

¹³⁶ Julien Lemer, 'Théâtres', *La Sylphide*, 30 December 1855.

argument, Lemer was also ignoring the Opéra's history of mounting light, two-act Italianate *petit opéra* during the period being discussed, obscuring this fact in order to present the venue's patrons as obstinate and ill-educated. In this way, Lemer was able to reaffirm his superior cultural knowledge, before going further in his critique of the audience and suggesting that they (unlike he) may not have read Rabelais. Their knowledge of the *chroniques*, he wagered, would likely be limited to the principal characters and to Gustave Doré's 1854 illustrated edition (discussed in detail in Chapter 2).

For Lemer, the pre-existing and partial ideas about Rabelais held by the audience meant that it was ultimately impossible for Labarre and Trianon to please everyone. This, the critic suggested, was the reason that great works of literature like *Don Quixote* had up to then never succeeded on the stage: it would be impossible to recreate the version of a character that existed in each audience member's head, especially when that audience member had a very limited understanding of the characters in question.¹³⁷ The faithful translation of specific elements of the *curé*'s texts into opera did not, however, constitute an automatic success according to Lemer. Indeed, judging the opera's success according to this single factor would miss the point. As the critic wrote: 'M. Henri Trianon, l'auteur du livret, n'a pas prétendu transporter à la scène le livre du bon curé de Meudon, il s'est borné à placer quelques-uns de ses personnages dans une situation d'une bouffonnerie légèrement pantagruélique, et voilà tout.' Rather than an object to be faithfully recreated in narrative or thematic terms, Rabelais's texts were for Lemer more an emblem of national culture to be emulated.

Stressing the significant role Rabelais played in the development of French literary culture, Lemer described the *curé* as 'une des plus irrésistibles et des plus philosophiques

¹³⁷ There had, in fact, been one notable rework of *Don Quixote* for the stage: a *comédie lyrique* penned in 1743 by composer Joseph Bodin de Boismortier and librettist Charles Simon Favart entitled *Don Quichotte chez la Duchesse*. In 1847, Hervé had also written a 'tableau grotesque' entitled *Don Quichotte et Sancho Pança* which was eventually performed at the Opéra-National in 1848, though this work – an early model of the emergent *opérette* genre – would have been lowbrow and *boulevardier* enough for Lemer to discount it as comparable. I mention this work in the following chapter.

inspirations de la gaîté gauloise’. It follows logically, therefore, that for him, any ‘bouffonnerie légèrement *pantagruélique*’ [my italics] would also be *intrinsèquement française* or *gauloise*. Lemer’s insistence on both *Pantagruel*’s Franco-Italianate resonances and Rabelais’s quintessential Frenchness thus stemmed from a disconnect he had identified between these national loci. The issue for the critic did not lie in the fact that the comedy of *Pantagruel* had Italianate resonances, or that this Italianate comedy appeared at the Opéra. Instead, Lemer implicitly rejected the idea that this mixing of national stage cultures was in any way legitimate in a work that purported to be based on Rabelais’s texts: the inspiration of a specifically French (and *certainly* not Italian!) form of humour.

Another critic, Benoît Jouvin, was more direct in his identification of the Italianate incongruities in Labarre and Trianon’s piece.¹³⁸ He used his review in *Le Figaro* to launch an acerbic attack against both the more Italianate aspect of Labarre and Trianon’s piece, and the Parisian public at large. Jouvin presented his readers with the image of ‘un monsieur qui, doué d’un caractère fort triste et sans aptitude à jouer de la *pratique* et des jambes, se rendrait néanmoins au bal de l’Opéra déguisé en polichinelle.’ A ‘man without dignity’, as Antonio Fava has put it, *Polichinelle* – or *Pulcinella* in Italian – was one of the key *zanni* (servant-clown) characters of the *Commedia dell’arte*, and an icon of the genre for its French audiences.¹³⁹ According to Fava, traces of *Polichinelle* persisted in pan-European cultural consciousness following the ‘cultural renovation’ inculcated by the French Revolution of 1789.¹⁴⁰ Yet despite the Frenchified name he earned during the eighteenth century, *Polichinelle* maintained an unbreakable link to the Italian theatrical culture from which he originated. It was this Italian resonance upon which Jouvin was leaning. In his article he

¹³⁸ Benoît Jouvin, ‘Théâtres’, *Le Figaro*, 30 December 1855.

¹³⁹ Antonio Fava, ‘Official Recognition of Pulcinella: The One Who Saved the Commedia from Extinction by Securing Its Continuity to the Present Day’, in *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell’arte* (Routledge, 2015), pp. 108–13 (p. 111).

¹⁴⁰ Fava, ‘Official Recognition of Pulcinella’, p. 108.

asked his audience to imagine that, dressed in the garb of an Italian farcical genre, a personification of Labarre's new work walked into a serious event at the Opéra – the figurehead of French culture – as if he belonged there, seemingly unaware of quite how badly he blended in with the other invitees. As Jouvin neatly summarised: 'avec tout l'esprit du monde, assurément, il y ferait un fort sot personnage.' This blunt assessment constituted quite the compelling metaphor for the (obviously unwelcome, according to Jouvin) infusion of Italian themes into the material of a quintessentially French text like Rabelais's.

For Jouvin, Rabelais's works were not, and never could be, suitable for operatic adaptation. Reducing Rabelais's 'fiction gigantesque' to the proportions of 'une vulgaire intrigue d'opéra' in this way would, Jouvin argued, only allow the person doing the reformulating to touch the surface of his texts '*sans en casser l'os, ni en sucer la moëlle*'. Here, Jouvin was paraphrasing one of the best-known passages of Rabelais's texts in which the *curé* explained how to correctly read his books. One must, Rabelais writes, imitate the intensity with which a dog gnaws at a bone in order to reach its marrow, noting 'de quelle devotion il le guette : de quel soing il le garde : de quel ferveur il le tient, de quelle prudence il l'entomme : de quelle affection il le brise : et de quelle diligence il le sugce' (Garg.Pro.6). It is only by following this 'curieuse leçon' that readers, following the dog's example, will 'rompre l'os, et sugcer la sustantifique mouelle' (Garg.Pro.7). By invoking this classic passage of Rabelais, Jouvin used a Rabelaisian reference to emphasise how infusing Italian cultural references into material from the *curé*'s texts constituted an example of their incorrect reading, missing the texts core and, by extension, failing to adhere to Rabelais's instructions. Thus, instead of a rich meal of Rabelaisian marrow, to Jouvin, the 1855 opera constituted little more than a parody of a few of Rabelais's characters, introduced lazily to a plot that had, at its core, very little of any substance to do with his texts at all. This, for Jouvin, was 'un embarrass de plus au lieu d'être un patronage.' It was surprising to the critic

that Trianon – a man ‘plus lettré qu’on ne l’est communément au théâtre’ – was not as aware as he of the unsuitability of Rabelais’s texts for stage adaptation. To Jouvin, the *chroniques* were works of such force, such complexity, and such foundational importance to the identity of his modern France, that they could never simply ‘servir comme d’un passeport à la scène’ because Rabelais and the cosmopolitan lyric stage were fundamentally incompatible.

Clearly, *Pantagruel* engaged with themes and styles that in the 1850s carried an implicit association with Italian stage culture, and was robustly rebuked by the critical press as a result. Italianism was perceived as highly incongruous when deployed in an otherwise Rabelaisian (and thus intrinsically French) context. Yet intercultural mixing of this type was common to all the *pétit opéra* premiered at the Opéra between 1855 and 1857, and this was particularly true of Emanuele Biletta’s *La Rose de Florence*: a two-act work, set in-and-around seventeenth-century Florence and Parma. Of the three *petits opéras* I discuss in this chapter, this one was perhaps the most upfront about the Italianism of its narrative and music. However, unlike *Pantagruel*’s infusion of French and Italian cultural markers that was discussed and criticised at length, *La Rose de Florence*’s Italianism passed with little comment in the critical press.

La Rose de Florence aligned with the conventions of *petit opéra*, following a two-act structure with musical numbers interspersed by recitative. Saint-Georges’ narrative also echoed eighteenth-century neo-classical French theatre by revolving around a limited number of characters and centring on a socially mismatched love triangle. In this piece, Aminta, the eponymous ‘Rose de Florence’ and daughter of a mosaicist named Cesario, is engaged to her cousin and childhood friend Teobaldo, but secretly loves the Duke of Parma. Musically, *La Rose de Florence* closely resembled the Italian *bel canto*. For example, in the first act, when Aminta is presented with bouquets from members of her wedding *cortège* she sings a florid air, thanking her father, her betrothed Teobaldo, and her wedding party for always supporting

her.¹⁴¹ Like Nicette's aria in *Pantagruel*, Aminta's melodic material employs a wide tessitura (c1 to c3), a broad range of ornamental figures, and an extremely technically demanding *colla voce* cadenza.¹⁴² As the ensemble reply, Aminta enthusiastically sings a heavily ornamented obbligato solo line, celebrating her impending wedding. Church bells ring and the group exits: Aminta is alone. The Duke, hidden in her chambers, emerges and persuades Aminta to elope with him in a solo described by prolific theatre critic Léon Escudier as a 'grand air à roulades'.¹⁴³ The critic's use of the word 'roulade' – a secondary onomatopoeia imitating the rolling melodic contour produced by the heavy use of Italian musical ornaments, graces, and divisions – indicates that to him, the musical material in this number was recognisably Italianate.

The music of Act Two – set in one of Aminta's dreams in which she has eloped and married the Duke – is similarly Italianate. At a lavish banquet in the duke's Palace gardens, she outwardly celebrates her newfound nobility, singing a *canzone* whose refrain has her joyously chirping 'tra la la, tra la la' over embellished semiquaver figures.¹⁴⁴ After a short interlude in which Teobaldo appears and laments how he and Aminta's father were abandoned, the The *Majordome* of the palace appears, offering comic relief in the form of an 'air bouffe' – a Frenchified version of the *buffo* aria – during which he quips on the fact that the path of love never did run smooth.¹⁴⁵ According to Franco-Italian critic Achille de Lauzières – writing in *Le Courrier franco-italien* under his usual pseudonym 'Aldo Aldini' – the Majordome's solo was both lyrically and melodically 'à l'Italienne'.¹⁴⁶ For Lauzières, the intensity of the piece's Italianism made it feel somewhat incongruous at the Opéra. Yet he

¹⁴¹ Emanuele Biletta and Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint Georges, *La Rose de Florence, opéra en deux actes* (Choudens, 1856), pp. 15–16, Bodleian.

¹⁴² Biletta and de Saint Georges, *La Rose de Florence*, pp. 21–27.

¹⁴³ Biletta and de Saint Georges, *La Rose de Florence*, p. 39; Escudier, 'Revue Musicale', *Le Pays*, 18 November 1856.

¹⁴⁴ Biletta and de Saint Georges, *La Rose de Florence*, pp. 73–74.

¹⁴⁵ Biletta and de Saint Georges, *La Rose de Florence*, pp. 102–08.

¹⁴⁶ Achille de Lauzières [Aldo Aldini, pseud.], 'Revue Musicale', *Courrier Franco-Italien*, 13 November 1856.

still judged it a success. This was because of the good performance of the singer M. Dérvis, and because it had ‘tombé par mégarde au beau milieu de l’ouvrage’ at a point in the narrative when the audience required a comic palate-cleanser. It also possessed ‘un cachet original’ that he deemed the rest of the work to lack. According to Lauzières, the *Majordome*’s ‘air bouffe’ also worked to supplement the libretto’s otherwise limited comedic material: a dearth caused, one assumes, by the piece’s four-year metamorphosis from serious and dramatic four-act *grand opéra* to light and comedic two-act *petit opéra*.

Aminta’s dream takes a dark turn when a mysterious masked guest challenges the duke to a game of dice, ultimately winning his entire fortune. In a move described by the critic for *Le Ménestrel* Edmond Viel as evocative of the ‘repertoire mélodramatique des boulevards’, the stranger then offers the duke a chance to recoup his losses, suggesting he bet them all against his marriage to Aminta.¹⁴⁷ The Duke loses again and, in a rage, he unmasks the stranger, revealing Teobaldo. The pair draw swords, and Teobaldo is fatally struck. Seized by grief, Aminta throws herself headlong into an abyss. During an orchestral intermezzo we are transported back to Aminta’s bedroom. She awakes from her dream, resolved to marry Teobaldo after all.

La Rose de Florence and *Pantagruel* were united in their coherence to the broader norms of *petit opéra*. Yet unlike *Pantagruel*, in Biletta’s piece the Franco-Italian aspects of the genre were obvious and unambiguous: not only was its musical material much more self-consciously Italian — penned as it was by a young Piedmontese composer — but it served an Italian narrative with an Italian setting. And in turn, perhaps because of *La Rose de Florence*’s clear and intentional-seeming fusion of national cultural markers, reviewers treated this aspect of the piece as broadly unworthy of detailed comment, making only straightforward and largely uncritical remarks about Biletta’s compositional style. For

¹⁴⁷ Edmond Viel, ‘Théâtre impérial de l’opéra’, *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*, 16 November 1856.

example, Viel suggested that ‘M. Biletta devra d’abord se défendre d’une certaine propension à imiter la manière italienne, et encore une manière italienne tant soit peu passée de mode.’ For him, while Biletta’s Italianate writing might have sounded a little old hat to the Parisian audience, the fact it was musically Italianate was unproblematic. While *Le Figaro*’s Benoît Jouvin commented on Biletta’s foreign birth, he did so primarily to question why a young, still unestablished immigrant had been awarded a commission at the Opéra when so many young French composers were being ignored. As Jouvin wrote: ‘M. Biletta est étranger, il débute à Paris, voilà deux ans qu’il attend la représentation de son ouvrage: de titres à l’indulgence et aux égards de l’hospitalité.’¹⁴⁸ This position was echoed by an unnamed writer for *Le Chroniqueur de la semaine*, who – perhaps pessimistically – lamented that ‘il ne faut pas plus de temps aujourd’hui à un étranger un peu bien appuyé pour se faire jouer à l’Opéra... Un Français y use sa vie.’¹⁴⁹

According to Achille de Lauzières, the only real downside to having an inexperienced Italian writing for the Opéra was that his nervousness at receiving such an important commission had bled into his score.¹⁵⁰ As he explained, moving between French and Italian in order to better illustrate how Biletta’s foreign birth influenced his state of mind: ‘Il n’est pas difficile de s’apercevoir qu’il l’a écrit d’une main tremblante. Sa musique devait être donnée au Grand-Opéra de Paris. Au Grand-Opéra! Que de fois ces trois mots, *queste parole di colore oscuro*, se dessinèrent en lettres noires et gigantesques devant lui.’ Ultimately, though, *La Rose de Florence*’s Italian themes and style remained largely unremarkable to critics: not only was Biletta an Italian, but Franco-Italianism was such the norm in the *petit opéra* genre to which *La Rose de Florence* belonged – and, indeed, in much of the Opéra’s output more generally – that it remained largely unworthy of detailed comment.

¹⁴⁸ Benoît Jouvin, ‘Théâtres’, *Le Figaro*, 16 November 1856.

¹⁴⁹ Anonymous, ‘Mardi 11 Novembre’ *Le Chroniqueur de la semaine*, 11 November 1856.

¹⁵⁰ Achille de Lauzières [Aldo Aldini, pseud.], ‘Revue Musicale’, *Courrier Franco-Italien*, 13 November 1856.

Why, then, was *La Rose de Florence* spared the Italianism-oriented criticism to which *Pantagruel* was so pointedly subjected? The answer, I suggest, is that the latter's narrative emerged from the works of a writer with an intrinsic tie to the history of French culture, and that this importance to national identity formation to some extent dictated the terms in which works that maintained a self-conscious link to his texts were perceived and received by their audience. Though set in the Renaissance and Franco-Italianate in style, *La Rose de Florence* had no basis in canonical historical literature – certainly not that of France – and thus was able to escape nationalistically inflected fidelity judgements of the sorts to which *Pantagruel* was exposed.

Ultimately, there appears to be a tacit agreement among *Pantagruel*'s critics discussed here that Rabelais's texts were misaligned with the conventions of mid nineteenth-century lyric comedy because lyric comedy (or at least the conventions of lyric comedy employed by Trianon) originated from Italian stage practices and thus retained an unavoidably foreign resonance. It is unsurprising, for example, that Viel only listed Italophone works by Rossini – one of a handful of Italian composers to find fame in France – when he attempted to argue that comedy could be acceptable on a supposedly high-brow stage.¹⁵¹ And herein lay the problem of trying to stage Rabelais's philosophical *gaieté gauloise* in a context in which comedic performance norms were inherently foreign: the very thing that assured Rabelais's intrinsic Frenchness was forced into an Italian mould by its new medial context. In contrast, since *La Rose de Florence* was both much less comic and much more obviously Italian in origins and themes than *Pantagruel*, it faced no such issues while being passed through the same Italian stylistic sieve. As a writer considered to be quintessentially and incontestably French, *porte*. In this sense, then, it was precisely by adhering to the theatrical norms of his time that Trianon was led away from the elusive but inalienably French *je ne sais quoi* that

¹⁵¹ Edmond Viel, 'Théâtre impérial de l'opéra', *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*, 16 November 1856.

supposedly lay at the heart of his source. One might, however, question the extent to which this misalignment with the conventions of nineteenth-century lyric culture was particular to Rabelais, rather than a fate shared by lyric afterlives of literary figures more broadly. Were the reformulations other classic figures of French literary history subjected to the same types of critique?

Pantagruel and François Villon: a Poet and a Prophet

At first glance, there might be plenty of reason to suspect that Rabelais and Villon — two pre-modern writers who freely and frequently integrated high and low discursive levels in their writing — would have occupied a similar space in mid nineteenth-century literary imaginaries. The best-known of France's medieval troubadour-poets and prolific criminal, François Villon enjoyed a reception whose trajectory was hard to separate from that of Rabelais's, influenced as it was both by accounts of the poet's life and elements of his works that were referenced in Rabelais's texts. Both writers also had their *œuvre* republished by well-known editor Paul Lacroix in 1854, offering them a renewed currency in discussions about French literary history.¹⁵² And yet, critics responding to the premieres of Labarre's *Pantagruel*, and of Edmond Membrée's *François Villon* demonstrated how the downstream fates of each writer diverged, prized as they were by audiences drawn from different segments of the nineteenth-century public. Being 'à la mode' in the mid-nineteenth century — to use Fougère's phrasing — bestowed upon Rabelais a high level of (often quasi metaphysical) importance to the construction of a prehistory for the French national spirit and

¹⁵² François Villon, *Œuvres complètes de François Villon, nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et mise en ordre avec des notes historiques et littéraires*, ed. by Paul Lacroix (P. Jannet, 1854); François Rabelais, *Oeuvres de François Rabelais [...] illustrée par Gustave Doré*, ed. by Paul Lacroix (J. Bry Ainé, 1854).

its culture.¹⁵³ This is particularly true of the comic dimensions of his texts, considered as they were to constitute the basis for the notion of *gauloiserie* and source of a ‘rire national’.¹⁵⁴ In contrast, by virtue of his popularity among bohemian Parisians, Left Bank students, and the more marginal poets of the nineteenth century, Villon remained, as Michael Freeman has put it, ‘le poète de génie incompris, indomptable, et fidèle aux traditions de la ripaille et de la franche rigolade d’un *Quartier latin imaginaire*’.¹⁵⁵ Essentially, while Rabelais constituted a mainstay of established French culture writ large, Villon was still much more of a counter-cultural poet, prized above all by those operating just outside the French literary establishment.

It is notable that Membreée’s *opéra* diverged from the norms of *petit opéra* by running for just one act, rather than the normal two. This was because it had been written to be played alongside a new two-act ballet version of Daniel Auber’s and Eugène Scribe’s lyric work *Marco Spada, ou La Fille du Bandit*, choreographed by the celebrated ex-principal dancer at the Opéra, Joseph Mazilier. Because *Marco Spada* was a collaboration between such titans of the French stage, during nights in which these two works were performed together the usual weighting of two-act lyric work and one-act *ballet-pantomime* was reversed. Subordinating a newly written lyric work to a piece of ballet by an established composer, scenarist, and choreographer in this way further demonstrated the lengths that the Opéra would go to protect themselves from the fiscal risks associated with mounting new works, upending their usual programming practices in order to keep the big names at the top of the playbill.

François Villon takes place at midnight on the premises of a country inn in ‘un faubourg de Tours le 25 Août 14...’.¹⁵⁶ Though he is ambiguous about the year in which his

¹⁵³ Fougère, *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ Fougère, *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle*, p. 107, 109.

¹⁵⁵ Michael Freeman, ‘L’Image Villon sous le Second Empire’, in *Le Champ littéraire, 1860-1900 : études offertes à Michael Pakenham*, ed. by Keith Cameron and James Kearns (Rodopi, 1996), pp. 149–60 (p. 152), my italics.

¹⁵⁶ Edmond Membreée and Edmond François Jules Got, *François Villon* (Maho, 1857), p. 1, Bodleian.

work was set, librettist Got clearly set his narrative after Villon's death sentence was commuted to banishment by the *parlement* of Paris in early 1463, a period during which nothing is known about Villon's whereabouts.¹⁵⁷ Emphasising this aspect of the setting, not only did Got insist on his Villon's middle-agedness by specifying that he appears with greying hair and a rough beard, but there are also numerous references in the libretto to Louis XI who only took the throne in 1461. The lack of documentary evidence of Villon's activities from 1463 onwards offered many, including Rabelais, the opportunity to speculate over his activities, providing a setting in which later writers, free from the constraints of historical accuracy, could grow Villon's mythical status as a troubadour-rogue. One such account occurs in chapter XIII of Rabelais's *Quart livre*. Within a story told by Panurge, the seigneur de Basché describes a trick that Villon was supposed to have played on a Franciscan friar named Tappecoue, who refused to lend his robes to the poet for use in a passion play. As revenge for his refusal, Villon organised for his men to ambush Tappecoue as he was riding home. Startled by the group's torches and hullabaloo, the monk falls from his horse but, unable to free his foot from the stirrups, is dragged along the road and decapitated. This story, like Got's, also took place during the period following the poet's banishment, described by Rabelais as 'sus ses vieulx jours' (QL.XIII.568).

Capitalising on the scope for speculative artistic license afforded by the mystery surrounding Villon's latter years, Got has his Villon character recount a story from his most recent period of imprisonment in the dungeon of chateau Plessis-lez-Tours, a palace in the Loire favoured by Louis XI. While languishing in his cell, Villon heard a girl's voice wafting through the walls. It was, he explains, a strange song: 'naïf' and full of gaiety, folly, and tenderness.¹⁵⁸ He replied to the voice with a couplet of his own and, after a brief silence, a

¹⁵⁷ David A. Fein, *François Villon Revisited* (Twayne Publishers, 1997), p. 19.

¹⁵⁸ Membrée and Got, *François Villon*, pp. 48–49.

pink coral bracelet fell at his feet. The girl is Aïka, a ‘morisque’ who is passing through town with a group of traveling bohemians and who subsequently arrives in the tavern. After she and Villon sing a ‘chanson bohême’ that emphasises her orientalist characterisation by repeating the nonsense foreign-sounding phrase ‘haï luli’, Villon attempts to return Aïka’s bracelet, but she insists that he keep it.¹⁵⁹ In a highly mellifluous, heavily ornamented, and largely *colla voce*, announcement, Villon reveals that he wishes the world to be as happy as he, demonstrating his joy in an extremely technically demanding *ad libitum* cadenza that climbs from a bottom C to a high E before resolving via a gruppetto.¹⁶⁰ After an episode in which Capitaine Stewart – the head of the guards at Plessis-lez-Tours – appears, announces that he loves Aïka, attempts to kiss her, and is rebuffed in another highly technically demanding, wide-ranging (bottom D to high A) solo with a fast-moving melody, Villon, Aïka, and Stewart sing a highly melodramatic ‘terzetto’.¹⁶¹ Here, tensions mount so severely that Stewart draws his dagger, Villon grabs a stool to defend himself, and Aïka throws herself in between them, exclaiming that she is uninterested in them both. Stewart leaves and Aïka and Villon reunite in a duet in which, over a swelling orchestra, they both confess their undying love for one another.¹⁶² However, realising that the age gap between them is too great, Villon sings a *Ballade des neiges d’Antan*, named after a passage of the real Villon’s *Ballade des Dames du temps jadis* that also appears in chapter 14 of Rabelais’s *Pantagruel*. In Rabelais’s texts, its poetic refrain – ‘où sont les neiges d’antan’ – is described by Panurge as ‘le plus grand soucy que eust Villon, le poete Parisien’ (Pant, XIV, 265). The piece ends with the sun rising, Aïka leaving, and Villon affirming in song that the best thing he can do is ‘[boire] pour oublier!’¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Membrée and Got, *François Villon*, pp. 68–70.

¹⁶⁰ Membrée and Got, *François Villon*, p. 72.

¹⁶¹ Membrée and Got, *François Villon*, p. 90.

¹⁶² Membrée and Got, *François Villon*, pp. 103–04.

¹⁶³ Membrée and Got, *François Villon*, p. 123.

Both *Pantagruel* and *François Villon* were musically Italianate works of *petit opéra* that offered substantial space in their narratives for comic material, alongside more sentimental, romantic themes. And yet, the reception of these two lyric works differed greatly. Their plots, too, focussed on different aspects of their authors posterity. While *François Villon* was concerned with the life of the author in question, *Pantagruel's* was instead derived from elements of Rabelais's texts. Focussing on biography in this way was reflective of the broader state of Villon's reception in mid-century France, with interest in him (at least among Parisian students) primarily linked to his personality rather than his poetry.¹⁶⁴ Got's choice to focus on Villon as an older man is crucial, because, by situating his narrative in the period after 1463, he had the freedom to imagine scenarios with little-to-no historical basis, providing something of a hypothetical biography, rather than a historical one. In contrast, Trianon's libretto would have been expected by its audience to maintain at least some link to the material in a set of widely recognised, prized (if usually little read), and commercially accessible texts. For the audience, drawing fidelity-based comparisons between the operatic *Pantagruel* and Rabelais's *chroniques* was thus possible for Trianon's audience in a way that it was not for Got's. As a result, Got was afforded far more artistic license and scope to invent than Trianon.

Reviewers of *François Villon* picked up on the conjecture at work in Got's libretto. In his review for *Le Pays*, for example, critic Léon Escudier opened with a general introduction in which he pointed out that Membreé's *opéra* was, to his knowledge, the first to be based on Villon's life or works.¹⁶⁵ This he followed with a long history of the poet's life (running for about half of the article's overall length) during which Rabelais's role in constructing the mythology surrounding Villon's later life becomes apparent. As Escudier wrote:

¹⁶⁴ Freeman, 'L'Image Villon sous le Second Empire', p. 152.

¹⁶⁵ Léon Escudier, 'Revue musicale' *Le Pays*, 28 April 1857.

On ne sait rien de positif sur l'époque de la mort de François Villon. Ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est qu'il conserva jusqu'au dernier moment ses habitudes vagabondes et son humeur facétieuse. Il faut lire dans Rabelais le plaisant récit du dernier tour qu'il joua en ce monde, pour se venger d'un sacristain des cordeliers, dont il avait besoin pour célébrer la Passion. Villon et ses camarades se déguisent en diables, et au moment où le pauvre moine revenait de la quête, monté sur sa mule, ils lui firent une telle peur, qu'il lâcha les rênes, tomba le pied dans l'étrier et fut traîné jusqu'au couvent dans le plus piteux état. Il résulte du récit de Rabelais que Villon était le chef d'une troupe de comédiens, dont la profession consistait à divertir la province par des sotties, des mystères et toutes sortes de joyeusetés. Tel est le héros du nouvel ouvrage que vient de représenter le théâtre impérial de l'Opéra.

Having retold Villon's post-exile escapades as they were communicated by Rabelais,

Escudier asks 'la donnée mise en œuvre par M. Got est-elle entièrement conforme à la vérité historique? Cette question serait difficile à éclaircir.' *Difficile*, maybe, but not

essentielle. As the critic concludes, 'dans tout cela, les érudits, les éplucheurs, trouveraient sans doute beaucoup à redire; mais laissons-là les commentaires [...]'. As far as Escudier was concerned, so much was unknown that historical nit-picking about Villon's life seemed superfluous.

Escudier was not alone in briefly dwelling upon, and then moving past, questions of historical fidelity. Léon Gatayes's article in *Le Ménestrel* opened with definitions of two fifteenth-century keywords — 'villonnerie' and 'villoner' — that to him 'peignent suffisamment le caractère médiocrement honorable du vieux poète François Villon, le célèbre bohème de lettres du XVe siècle.'¹⁶⁶ Gatayes was clear about the period in which *François Villon* took place, commenting on Louis XI's unusual leniency (in the plot) regarding punishment for Villon's crimes. But like Escudier, Gatayes seems not to have considered remaining faithful to the historical record a particularly important factor in the piece's success, closing his brief historical preamble with a straightforward statement: 'C'est cette

¹⁶⁶ Léon Gatayes, 'Théâtre impérial de l'opéra', *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*, 26 April 1857.

époque que M. Got a choisie.’ This observation was written as a stand-alone sentence offering no critique or comment: for Gatayes there was nothing more to say.

Villon’s and Rabelais’s reception histories also diverged from one another because of the way in which each was historically situated by their respective nineteenth-century audiences. Obviously both Rabelais and Villon were writers from the past, but the extent to which they were tethered to their particular historical setting in the minds of their downstream readers differed. Both Rabelais’s and Villon’s texts were understood as products of their respective specific historical and cultural contexts. However, as I will discuss, unlike Villon’s poetry, some of the journalists critiquing *Pantagruel* suggested that Rabelais’s *chroniques* were considered capable of stepping beyond their own historical context to extend themselves both forwards into the future and backwards into the past, echoing and perpetuating long-running European traditions of cultural (re)production in their reformulation of even older texts while also somehow presaging the social and political conflicts that would subsequently come to shape modern France. In short, their nineteenth-century reception on the Parisian lyric stage suggests that while Villon remained a fifteenth-century writer worthy of some celebration, Rabelais was considered one of the French nation’s key, timeless, sources of modernity.

There was a clear desire among reviewers of the *François Villon* opera to provide their readers with an impression of the poet’s unambiguous historical specificity. Even though Got did not specify the particular year in which *François Villon* was set — taking place on an unspecified Summer’s night sometime between 1463 and Louis XI’s death in 1483 — three reviewers still insisted on listing specific years, with Achille de Lauzières (*Le Courrier franco-italien*), Léon Gatayes (*Le Ménestrel*), and Léon Escudier (*Le Pays*) claiming that it took place on specific dates in 1473, 1475, and 1478 respectively.¹⁶⁷ And the fact that their

¹⁶⁷ Achille de Lauzières [Aldo Aldini, pseud.], ‘Théâtres’, *Courrier franco-italien*, 23 April 1857; Léon Gatayes, ‘Théâtre Impérial de l’Opéra’, *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*, 26 April 1857; Léon Escudier, ‘Revue musicale’, *Le Pays*, 28 April 1857.

chosen years all differed suggests that it was *they* who felt the need to provide the information, rather than reading such a detail in a programme now lost. They also located Villon in literary chronologies by designating him the precursor to other, perhaps better known or more celebrated French writers: particularly Marot and Rabelais. For Lauzières, Villon was the ‘insouciant et immoral précurseur de Marot’, while according to Escudier ‘François Villon est une des figures les plus originales du quinzième siècle, de cette époque turbulente et féconde qui vit surgir dans la littérature et les arts tant de hardis novateurs.’¹⁶⁸ These sentiments echoed those of literary historian Théophile Gautier who, in his 1853 *Grotesques*, insisted that ‘Villon, tel qu’il nous apparaît dans son œuvre, est la personnification la plus complète du peuple à cette époque. Il semble avoir inspiré à Rabelais le type délicieux de Panurge.’¹⁶⁹ Not only did Villon’s *œuvre* constitute the embodiment of the everyman from a specific point in history, but it was by appearing in such a specific *milieu* that his work’s role in the broader developmental trajectory of French literature was revealed.

In contrast, among reviewers in 1855, Rabelais was written about as if he operated on a temporal and an extra-temporal level at once: both emanating from, and overcoming, his own historical context. One of the critics to make this point most clearly in their review of Labarre’s *Pantagruel* was Benoît Jouvin, who described Rabelais in his article for *Le Figaro* as the ‘pseudonyme d’une époque’: such an intrinsic part of the French Renaissance that his name, his national origins, and his time period could not be divorced from one another.¹⁷⁰ And yet for Jouvin, though Rabelais’s texts retained an unbreakable link to the sixteenth century, they could also move beyond it, pregnant as they were with a history-to-be of social and political upheaval in France. As the critic suggested, Rabelais enclosed in his text

¹⁶⁸ Achille de Lauzières [Aldo Aldini, pseud.], ‘Théâtres’, *Courrier franco-italien*, 23 April 1857; Léon Escudier, ‘Revue musicale’, *Le Pays*, 28 April 1857.

¹⁶⁹ Théophile Gautier, *Les Grotesques* (Michel Lévy, 1853), p. 31.

¹⁷⁰ Benoît Jouvin, ‘Théâtres’, *Le Figaro*, 30 December 1855.

‘comme un alchimiste dans une fiole, l’esprit quintessencié de toutes les révoltes, à l’état de fermentation latente: la réforme religieuse, militante avec Calvin et Mélanchton, et les révolutions politiques de l’avenir, pointant comme une aurore de sang: la Ligue, la Fronde, 89 et 93.’¹⁷¹ To Jouvin, Rabelais’s *chroniques* wielded a specifically French politically destabilising force. Buried within them in latent form was the spirit of the sixteenth century’s religious anti-establishment and of French violence to come. It was as if, for Jouvin, Rabelais represented the key to establishing a literary prehistory for his nation’s politically violent tendencies.

Jouvin was not alone in emphasising the temporally transcendental qualities of Rabelais’s text. Theatre critic and all-round literary man Paul de Saint-Victor also insisted upon their extra-temporal qualities in an extensive review article he penned for the very widely read penny-press newspaper *La Presse*.¹⁷² Given his well-documented tendency toward highly literary discussion, it was perhaps to be expected that Saint-Victor would focus his critique on (and take most umbrage with) Trianon’s libretto. However, direct discussion of Labarre and Trianon’s piece only began in earnest during the final third of his review. Preceding it, Saint-Victor offered his reader an extended meditation on the *curé*’s capacity to overstep human scales and shapes, be they of time, bodily size and form, corporeal boundary, or human experience.

From his opening lines, the critic introduced ideas about unequal size and capacity, exclaiming: ‘*Pantagruel* mis en opéra bouffe! N’est-ce pas la grosse tonne de Heidelberg versée dans un verre à patte!’ This metaphor – highly Rabelaisian in its reliance on imagery associated with wine and its consumption – and the declamation it follows associate unequal

¹⁷¹ Here ‘La Ligue’ refers to ‘La Ligue catholique’ – a major power in the French Wars of Religion that broke out shortly after Rabelais’s death. ‘La Fronde’ is the title given to refer to a series of civil wars fought in France in the mid-seventeenth century. The numbers 89 and 93 refer to the French Revolution (1789) and the Terror (1793) respectively.

¹⁷² Paul de Saint-Victor, ‘Théâtres’, *La Presse*, 30 December 1855.

liquid capacity with unequal cultural value. Decanting the Heidelberger Fass into a regular wine glass is analogous for the critic to pouring themes from Rabelais's texts into the light, ephemeral *opéra bouffe* genre.¹⁷³ In this comparison, Saint-Victor implied that to do either would appear ridiculous: in both cases it is plain to see that one vessel can hold more than the other.

Continuing his discussion of contrasting size and shape, Saint-Victor employed a classical reference to describe the nineteenth-century reader as they try to comprehend the 'gaîtés énormes' of Rabelais's giant characters. They are like Virgil's labourer, exsanguinating as he unearths the giant bones of ancient warriors. Rabelais's book was not, however, the ancient battleground of Virgilian myth, but 'le charnier des festins de la renaissance et du moyen-âge'. The reader figure in Saint-Victor's text stands aghast, struck dumb by the bottomless *coupes*, copious dishes served on shield bosses, and masks whose rictus grins, we are told, revealed all the 'ridicules' of Saint-Victor's era. Rendering Rabelais's historical position ambiguous, Saint-Victor described the *curé*'s 'marotte' sounding the burial of an old – presumably medieval – world and a baptism of a new one. Thus, for Saint-Victor, Rabelais occupied a historical position that was simultaneously of a specific time (in a specific period of social and political transition in the history of France) and also timeless, reaching into his culture's future using material from his culture's past.

In their monstrous appetites the giants also transcended ordinary human scales and corporeal configurations, surpassing the capacities of the epic hero in size and appetite. Integrating talk of size with reference to classical literature, Saint-Victor suggested that the giants' fantastical scale meant that their heads were held 10,000 feet above reality, in the same space where Aristophanes' *Birds* chirp and sing. Continuing his classical references, Saint-Victor called Gargantua a 'roi d'Homère transporté dans un conte des fées, un ogre

¹⁷³ The Heidelberger Fass is a German storage barrel capable of holding 221,726L of wine.

épique, le vieux Nestor muni des dents et de l'estomac de Polyphème.' Appearing in the second book of the *Odyssey* sacrificing hundreds of bulls to honour Telemachus's arrival in an excellent display of *xenia*, Nestor stands as an example of good heroic behaviour. Yet Gargantua – though equal to Nestor in his regal resplendence – surpasses him in appetite, with the giant's hunger more akin to that of a cyclops or a fairy-tale character than a human king, epic or otherwise.

Referencing the *mens agitat molem* of the *Aeneid* further emphasises what, to Saint-Victor, were the divine attributes of Rabelais's texts. As he explained, 'un souffle divin anime son épopée matérielle'. According to the reviewer, therefore, the material of Rabelais's epic was brought to life by his connection to some level of divinity. He followed his reference to Virgil's *katabasis* scene by suggesting that Rabelais's texts had healing properties, further emphasising their spiritual power. Unlike the divine breath of Homer's muses, Rabelais's appear to work in two directions. Though 'un souffle divin anime son épopée matérielle' with the creative spirit moving the material text, Saint-Victor's review suggests that in Rabelais's case Virgil's formulation is reversed, with the mass also moving the mind. The *curé*'s books in all their transcendentality '[avaient] quelque chose de salubre qui fortifie; son fumier a la vertu de celui des étables; il guérit les consommations de l'esprit, les phthisies [sic] de l'âme; il y fait lever des moissons d'idées fertiles et joyeuses.' Like the Bible, then, Rabelais's book – a material artefact containing tales that bear witness to the potential for spiritual transcendence – offered its reader a tool with which to heal both physically and spiritually. It was both the map to spiritual enlightenment and, like Christ, the material embodiment of a divine power capable of healing the sick. These divine attributes

underpinned Saint-Victor's notion of the Rabelaisian *rire*. This was healing laughter – metaphysical, spiritual, transcendental – housed in the material confines of a book.¹⁷⁴

Throughout his appraisal of the 1855 *Pantagruel*, Saint-Victor used the motif of the Rabelaisian 'rire' as a gloss for the transcendental, more-than-human, qualities of the *curé*'s texts. According to him, Labarre's piece did not (and could never) share the Rabelaisian *rire*'s metaphysical attributes: its capacity to overcome the human body and surpass the limits of human understanding. Indeed, it was a 'rire surhumain', reliant on the magnificent size of Gargantua and Pantagruel for its metaphysical properties. The critic reflected this in his text by consistently deploying a lexical field of supernatural size. Alongside the images of the Heidelberger Fass and the giant heads in the clouds, the unfathomably large bodies of Gargantua and Pantagruel were contrasted with the regular-sized bodies of their entourage who moved in a 'fourmille' around the giants as they cackled a 'rire obscène': a human humour. Gargantua's therianthropic laughter, on the other hand, was a part of nature.

To illustrate this difference, Saint-Victor contrasted the giants' metaphysical laughter with the activities of a well-known representative of sinful human consumption: an ex-slave turned wine merchant from Petronius's *Satyricon* named Trimalchio, famed for his debauched booze-fueled sex parties. For Saint-Victor, this character's gluttony 'donne la nausée', whereas 'la faim naïve de Gargantua englouti[t] des montagnes de victuailles [et] ne choque pas plus que l'absorption d'un élément dévorant.' Far from sinful, for Saint-Victor the superhuman level to which Gargantua took his extreme gluttony was evidence of his *naïveté*: his proximity to nature. As the critic wrote: 'Représentans [sic] de la *nature en chair et en os* qui revendique ses droits dans l'exercice de la vie humaine, [Gargantua et Pantagruel] voyagent dans le pays du Mensonge et de l'Ignorance, affrontant leurs monstres,

¹⁷⁴ Saint-Victor's transcendental 'rire' differs from that discussed by Fougère insofar as hers is emblematic a nineteenth-century inability or reluctance to 'appréhendre Rabelais et son œuvre dans leur globalité', reducing his multivalent texts into works of pure humour. In contrast, Saint-Victor's discussion of the *rire* foregrounds its pluriformity. (Fougère, *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle*, p. 8.).

soufflant sur leurs fantômes, exorcisant leurs démons d'un éclat de rire fulgurant.'¹⁷⁵ These giants – the literary offspring of a superhuman imagination – were, for Saint-Victor, the physical embodiment of nature itself.

Bringing his meditation on Rabelais's *naïveté* to a close, Saint-Victor quoted the final lines of Victor Hugo's poem *Spectacle rassurant* (1830):

Homme! Ne crains rien! La nature

Sait le grand secret et sourit.¹⁷⁶

He then added his own addendum, presenting Rabelais as the French representative of pan-European artistic genius: 'Homme [...] console toi! Rossini chante, Rubens rayonne, Rabelais rit!'

Hugo's lines, heavy with the spiritual and naturalistic motifs of the Romantic poets, comfort their reader: though they may not understand the meaning in the world, nature does and smiles because of it.¹⁷⁷ Saint-Victor's addendum elects Rabelais as one of nature's privileged prophets and the pinnacle of French cultural production, able to communicate no less than the secrets of the universe to his readers. Conversely, then, reading Rabelais was for the critic akin to communing with nature, unsullied by the alienating and unnatural development of modern civilisation.

'Quel rire!' exclaims Saint-Victor, as his text reaches its zenith. 'Et où est l'écho capable de le répéter?'. Clearly, Labarre and Trianon's adaptation was no such thing, unable to mirror

¹⁷⁵ My italics.

¹⁷⁶ Victor Hugo, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Reynaud (Robert Lafont, 1985), p. 968.

¹⁷⁷ For a lucid account of the association of the natural and the spiritual in early nineteenth-century Romantic poetry, particularly that of England, see: Lydia Isabelle Shaw, "'Unapprehended Relations of Things': Remapping Mind and World in the Poetics of Nature in Byron and Shelley, 1816-1820' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Durham University, 2024), particularly her introduction. And for a discussion of Hugo's representation of humanity and its relation to nature, see: Katherine Lunn-Rockliffe, 'Humanity's Struggle with Nature in Victor Hugo's Poetry of Progress', *The Modern Language Review*, 107.1 (2012), pp. 143–61.

Rabelais's move beyond human scales and temporalities. Instead, the pair are characterised as 'les moutons de Panurge de l'Opéra': a pair of lyric lemmings, running off a stylistic cliff without a moment's thought as to what they are doing, why, or how. But what are we to make of Saint-Victor's choice of image? Echoes never match the volume of the sound they repeat: they are a lesser reflection, never a perfect recreation. Similarly, like the human-sized labourer of Virgil's text referenced earlier, the nineteenth-century imitator (whether that be Trianon, or Saint-Victor himself) is dwarfed by the material traces of their predecessor's writing. Perhaps this is how Saint-Victor wished his readership – the educated republicans of Second Empire France – to feel as they peered backwards to the sixteenth century, outsized by the great and lofty figures of France's literary past: an answer to, but not an equal to, their nation's cultural heroes. Perhaps Saint-Victor's question 'Et où est l'écho capable de le répéter?' was to be aimed at French culture in its entirety: a desperate plea for a return to France's more creative and intellectual past, lost to the social and political turmoil that had befallen the nation since 1789. The critic's inclusive use of the 'nous' pronoun would support this: when we open Rabelais's book to exhume the giant bones of its protagonists, '*nous* restons ébahis et pris de stupeur.'¹⁷⁸

It might have been that Saint-Victor was touting himself as the echo capable of answering Rabelais, but whether he was or not, Labarre and Trianon's *Pantagruel* acted for the critic as a comparative exemplar: useful for little more than revealing the sheer metaphysical magnitude of Rabelais's texts. Once he finally turned to discuss details of Trianon's *Pantagruel*, the critic insisted that the librettist was an 'homme d'esprit et non un parolier vulgaire' but argued that he was 'grandement trompé en prenant les personnages du Pantagruel pour des êtres de comédie.' By 'comédie', Saint-Victor likely meant the type of neo-Aristotelian bourgeois theatre performed at the Comédie-Française with plots typically

¹⁷⁸ My italics.

ending in marriage and characters representing what Diderot termed an ‘état dans la société.’¹⁷⁹ Labarre and Trianon’s petty piece of bourgeois proportions was, for Saint-Victor, nothing but a pitiful attempt at responding to Rabelais’s large-scale, transcendental, more-than-human texts. We are told by Saint-Victor that transforming Rabelais into *comédie* of this sort constituted a reduction in size akin to taking stylised images of the moon and sun from their home in the sky and painting them upon a magic lantern, turning them from objects of wonder into figures one might find in an almanack. To render the giants of Rabelais’s texts as human-sized characters of human-sized intrigue, and a human’s inescapable temporality would be, Saint-Victor tells us, as ridiculous and as incoherent of scale as an elephant with butterfly wings. Saint-Victor mourned that Rabelais’s giants ‘ne peuvent vivre, gouailler et s’ébattre à l’aise qu’à cent mille pieds au-dessus du niveau de la réalité’. Failure on this score was ultimately why, for him, Labarre and Trianon’s *Pantagruel* project was never likely to find success.

Placing *Pantagruel* in its proper context alongside the mini-corpus of *petits opéras* written during a period of acute financial strain for the Opéra reveals the *curé*’s special status among the reading public of nineteenth-century France. Since its inception, *petit opéra* had maintained a strong link to Italian lyric forms and styles, and this influence is plain to see in all three of the works performed between 1855 and 1857. Though repeatedly couched by reviewers as an attack on the very idea of Italian music being performed at the Opéra, closer examination of the anti-Italian sentiments expressed by *Pantagruel*’s reviewers demonstrates the extent to which Rabelais was considered an unambiguously French writer, whose texts were incompatible with traditions and conventions – particularly comic ones – imported from Italy. Yet Rabelais’s special status went beyond his role in the formation of French national culture: for the nineteenth-century reader he had somehow retained a palpable currency,

¹⁷⁹ Denis Diderot, *Diderot et le théâtre - Le drame* (Pocket, 1995), p. 129.

setting him apart from other writers with similar French literary credentials in his ability to transcend temporalities. While Villon remained historically situated — both product and poster boy of fifteenth-century knavish bohemian poetry — Rabelais was a writer for all times: his jocular books able to speak as keenly to issues of his future as his own time. For nineteenth-century readers therefore, Villon was a poet; Rabelais was a prophet.

Competing Hybridities in and after Rabelais

Petit opéra was a hybrid genre, not only because it mixed medial realms in much the same way as all lyric stage genres, but because it infused elements of cultural stage practices with varying national and social class resonances. But how might ideas about Rabelais's hybridity and the hybridity at work in *petit opéra* have intersected with one another?

Firstly, it is important to point out that the way that a reader or audience understands hybridity is highly historically contingent. If we consider what we now recognise as 'hybridity' to be the product of a mixing of heterogeneous elements taken from various distinct creative or intellectual fields, traditions, styles, modes, and genres, then this way of conceiving of creative production long predates Rabelais. Yet before the late 1800s the word 'hybride' was rarely used, and always in relation to cross-bred animals.¹⁸⁰ Even as late as the 1870s, 'hybridité' was a primarily biological term, defined in the *Larousse Grand dictionnaire universelle du XIX^e siècle* as the 'caractère d'une être organisé, animal ou plante, provenant de deux espèces différents.'¹⁸¹ Using 'hybride' to refer to any class of object (including literary texts) is thus an only relatively recent development.

¹⁸⁰ *Rabelais et l'hybridité des récits rabelaisiens*, ed. by Diane Desrosiers and others, *Etudes rabelaisiennes* (Droz, 2017), LVI 2017, p. 27.

¹⁸¹ 'Hybridité', in *Larousse grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* (Slatkine, 1982), IX, p. 468.

Historically, therefore, hybridity was used to refer to genetic mixes in which heterogeneous biological attributes of two (or more) different breeds were completely and coherently infused into one body. While, when examining a cross-bred dog's teeth, ears, or fur, one may be able to identify which breeds were amalgamated in order to create the hybrid, no element of the body under examination can be said to retain any impression of genetic purity. The genetic difference is still identifiable, but any monstrous incoherence is nullified, subsumed into an entirely consolidated animal whole. If we apply this way of conceptualising genetic mixing to theatrical genres of mid-century Paris — treating genres as though breeds, and generic markers as though physical attributes — then *petit opéra* emerges as one of several hybrid forms performed on Parisian stages whose generic heterogeneity had been combined into an overarching, if a little loosely defined, set of generic norms and parameters that, once consolidated, came to be discussed as their own separate category.¹⁸²

Coherent or consolidated hybridity of this type, as Edwin M. Duval points out, is *not* what is generally referred to when discussing Rabelais's stylistic heterogeneity. This is in part because judging literary hybridity along these lines would mean that pretty much all literature is hybrid. Instead, as Duval writes in relation to Rabelais's texts,

[...] j'ai bien l'impression que, lorsque nous parlons de l'« hybridité » de l'œuvre de Rabelais – c'est plus souvent de la juxtaposition monstrueuse d'éléments perçus comme incompatibles et inassimilables que nous parlons, et non pas d'une fusion naturelle d'éléments intégrés en un ensemble organique et uni.¹⁸³

One historically grounded analogy used to denote the particular form of stylistic heterogeneity at work in Rabelais – the 'juxtaposition monstrueuse' outlined by Duval – was the chimera: a monstrous, beastly assemblage of disparate animal parts that, while forming one composite whole, retained an extreme bodily incoherence. Perhaps the best-known

¹⁸² The process of consolidation the generic category *petit opéra* underwent in the first half of the nineteenth century is discussed in Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra'.

¹⁸³ Desrosiers and others, 2017, p. 29.

articulation of the chimeric aspects of Rabelais's texts appeared in Jean de la Bruyère's *Caractères* (1688) in which he wrote that

Rabelais sur-tout est incompréhensible. Son livre est une énigme, quoi qu'en veuille dire, inexplicable : c'est une chimère, c'est le visage d'une belle femme avec des pieds et une queue de serpent, ou de quelque autre bête plus difforme: c'est un monstrueux assemblage d'une morale fine et ingénieuse et d'une sale corruption.¹⁸⁴

One detects echoes of La Bruyère's list of monstrous antitheses in Saint-Victor's text, particularly in his suggestion that Rabelais blurs the human/animal boundary. From his second sentence, Saint-Victor referred to Rabelais's characters as 'chimériques', suggesting that even a theatre larger than the Colosseum would be unable to contain them. According to the critic, in the *curé's* texts 'le règne animal et la race humaine y confondent leurs instincts et leurs formes', encapsulating 'dans je ne sais quelle compose grandiose la double nature de l'animal et de l'homme!'¹⁸⁵ Their author, Rabelais, is characterised as a 'génie unique et difforme', a humanoid chimera with a human head and the body of a pig. For Saint-Victor he was also the reincarnation of the goat-man demi-god Pan: a mythological human/animal cross that, while a hybrid by definition, retained a level of monstrosity in its corruption of the human form. Saint-Victor emphasised this monstrosity in his insistence on Pan's 'jambes hérissées et tortues du bouc'. Alongside his disfigured body, the Rabelais-Pan's azure chest resembled a concentric mirror, reflecting images of the earth and the cosmos, warping the image before it in its concentricity, bringing together the top and bottom and by doing so forcing together cosmic and earthly ideas in such a way that their divisions become blurred.

Playing heavily on the contrasting, intermingling discursive levels at play in Rabelais's texts, Saint-Victor described the writer as a 'monstre de sagesse et de folie', asking 'où finit le dieu, où le bouffon commence-t-il?' This question, emphasising the dichotomy at play in

¹⁸⁴ Jean de La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*, ed. by Louis van Delft (Imprimerie Nationale Éditions, 1998), p. 144.

¹⁸⁵ Paul de Saint-Victor, 'Théâtres', *La Presse*, 30 December 1855.

Rabelais's texts between sacred and profane discursive levels, gave way to a series of oppositional declamations: 'Que de raison dans son délire, que de prophéties dans ses coqs-à-l'âne, que de vérités dans son vin!'. Clearly, for Saint-Victor, the key to Rabelais's writing style was that it allowed the reader to experience the mixing of contrasting discursive levels at work in the text while also obscuring the moment at which one extreme gave way to another. In this way, the chimeric disjointedness that underpinned the Rabelaisian style was still able to maintain an overall impression of balance and continuity. And this balance from imbalance — this coherent incoherence — was the Rabelaisian *je ne sais quoi* so lamented by other reviewers for its absence from the 1855 *Pantagruel*.

Benoît Jouvin was one such reviewer, describing 'l'impossibilité de vous conformer au principe de Rabelais' when reformulating the *curé's* texts for the stage. As he clarified, if one found themselves unable to 'toucher qu'extérieurement à son œuvre, *sans en casser l'os ni en sucer la moëlle*, mieux valait chercher ailleurs une pâture dramatique.'¹⁸⁶ As I have already explained, Jouvin was here implying that Labarre and Trianon's reading of Rabelais was overly simplistic, remaining at the level of comic fun rather than incorporating any of the more serious meaning of the *chroniques*, obtained through dogged and diligent gnawing.

But what of this *moëlle*? What, for Jouvin, would it mean to adhere to the 'principe de Rabelais'? Earlier in his review the critic had alluded to one of the scores upon which Labarre and Trianon's *Pantagruel* may have failed to conform to this principle. As he wrote, 'Je n'aime pas qu'on touche certains livres, et je dirais volontiers à ces gens qui vont à Rabelais comme à la *source* de la mère-gaité: « c'est sur le chemin qui conduit aux sources que l'on rencontre ordinairement les cruches! »'. For Jouvin, Rabelais was not a source from which writers of comic theatre could simply draw water. If that were the case then there would be multiple examples of successful Rabelaisian stage works predating the 1855 *Pantagruel* —

¹⁸⁶ Benoît Jouvin, 'Théâtres', *Le Figaro*, 30 December 1855.

numerous ‘cruches’ strewn across the path — rather than just Grétry’s 1785 *Panurge dans l’île des Lanternes*, which, incidentally, Jouvin also tars with the same *nothing-more-than-simple-humour* brush. Ultimately, it seems implicit from Jouvin’s text that the ‘principe de Rabelais’ constituted the mixing of discursive levels: their being more than *just* humorous. And while the *gai* was undoubtedly one of those modes of writing included in Rabelais’s *mélange*, it was only when in combination with other writing modes that it became *gaité rabelaisienne*.¹⁸⁷ Because of this, for Jouvin, it resisted being rendered the subject of a piece that prioritised and emphasised humour above the other elements that operated alongside one another within the loosely defined parameters of *petit opéra*.

In contrast to Jouvin, *La Sylphide*’s Julien Lemer suggested that it was possible when composing *après Rabelais* to stray too far from the *gai*, producing a score that was ill-fitting in its over-seriousness. According to this critic, Trianon ‘n’a pas prétendu transporter à la scène le livre du bon curé de Meudon.’ Instead, ‘il s’est borné à placer quelques-uns de ses personnages dans une situation d’une bouffonnerie légèrement pantagruélique et voilà tout [...] si l’action n’est pas très-bouffonne en elle-même, les incidents sont souvent comiques, et le dialogue est émaillé de traits vifs et drôlatiques [sic].’¹⁸⁸ Here, Lemer emphasised the role played by dialogue and linguistic play in defining Rabelaisian comedy: a bit of mildly humorous dialogue and some smart wordplay were enough to render a comic plot *légèrement pantagruélique*. Yet Labarre’s music got no such easy treatment from the critic: the score ‘n’a peut-être pas toute la verve qu’exigerait un pareil sujet et que comportent des personnages d’un si joyeux esbattement; sa bouffonnerie est trop cherchée, trop étudiée, trop savante, surtout dans le second acte.’ The *ancien* word ‘esbattement’, defined in the 1694 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* [sic] as relating to ‘s’esbattre’ – i.e. ‘se réjouir, se

¹⁸⁷ Jouvin’s account of Rabelais’s mixedness runs contrary to Fougère’s claims that the prevailing perceptions of Rabelais and his *œuvre* during the nineteenth century rested on the ‘malentendu’ that they were primarily humorous (Fougère, *Le Rire de Rabelais au XIXe siècle*, pp. 8–9.).

¹⁸⁸ Julien Lemer, ‘Théâtres’, *La Sylphide* (30 December 1855), p. 283.

divertir’ – but with the crucial difference that the word ‘ne se dit guere qu’en raillant’, is used by Lemer to emphasise to his readers that Labarre and Trianon’s opera was not a serious attempt at recreating the *curé*’s texts.¹⁸⁹ Because of the piece’s supposedly inherent unseriousness, he then accused Labarre of having written music that was too over-thought and over-wrought. Thus, while a score that mixed silly and *savant* compositional modes (whatever they may involve, Lemer gives no clarification) might have appeared most suited to a piece based on the works of a grotesque writer like Rabelais, because the *Pantagruélisme* at play in the libretto was only *léger*, in its performance context it appeared highly incongruous.

So, the 1855 *Pantagruel* was attacked for being too straightforwardly humorous to be grotesque in the same way as Rabelais, and too musically serious to suit its straightforwardly humorous libretto. Yet perhaps the most damning criticism levelled at the way *Pantagruel* integrated heterogeneous modes came from the theatre critic for *L’Appel* Henri Montazio, who considered the mixed end product too overly homogenised, and thus its intrigue too boring to be suitably Rabelaisian or indeed to suit performance at all! The opening paragraphs of Montazio’s review made an extended reference to one of poet La Fontaine’s fables: *La montagne qui accouche*, in which a mountain unexpectedly gives birth to a mouse. Like La Fontaine’s mountain, the Opéra, we are told, has long been ‘en mal d’enfant’, with onlookers expecting the child to emerge to be ‘très-joli, très-spirituel, très gai, qualités que l’on n’a pas souvent occasion d’admirer au théâtre de l’Opéra.’¹⁹⁰ However, rather than giving birth to a rodent, the Opéra — a Parisian cultural mountain in its own right — produced in *Pantagruel* a work ‘ni sotte ni spirituelle, ni gaie ni triste, ni bonne ni mauvaise, enfin de ce qu’on appelle une œuvre médiocre, — ce qu’il y a de pire en fait de travaux de

¹⁸⁹ ‘esbattement’, in *Le dictionnaire de l’Académie Française, dédié au Roy*, 1694, 1 A-L, p. 92.

¹⁹⁰ Henri Montazio, ‘Chronique musicale’, *L’Appel : journal littéraire, artistique et scientifique*, 30 December 1855.

tout genre.’ For Montazio, Labarre and Trianon’s *Pantagruel* was unworthy of the Opéra stage not because it failed to mix divergent discursive levels, nor because it was unbalanced in its integration of light and lofty musical styles, but simply because it did nothing much at all; it was not a mountain of culture so much as a mountain of mediocrity.¹⁹¹ Indeed, as La Fontaine’s poetic voice so aptly put it as he contemplated his mountain’s new-born mouse: ‘c’est promettre beaucoup: mais qu’en sort-il souvent? Du vent.’¹⁹² For Montazio, unlike Jouvin and Lemer, it was not a question of identifying and discussing a stylistic imbalance, but of lamenting their overbalance and over-homogenised integration, with the stylistic colours whose combination characterised Rabelais’s vibrant and bombastic texts instead blending together into an uninteresting and uninspiring murky brown.

Habent sua fata...

In this chapter I have demonstrated that by examining the 1855 *Pantagruel* in its proper institutional and critical context, we can obtain a fleeting but detailed glimpse of the way that members of Paris’s theatre-going public in 1855 thought about Rabelais and his texts.

Pantagruel was a *petit opéra*; part of a highly cosmopolitan genre whose infusion of French and Italian theatrical traditions was so widely accepted that it ceased to be worthy of note.

Yet, by focussing so keenly in their appraisals on *Pantagruel*’s Italianate influences, critics of the 1850s revealed how integral Rabelais and his texts were to their understanding of their own national identity and, by extension, that no matter how quintessentially French the literary basis of a narrative might have been, musical comedy was always associated with the

¹⁹¹ For a history of La Fontaine’s afterlife in the nineteenth-century illustrated press, particularly the use of his *Fables* as an anti-establishment thematic touchstone in the caricatures of Honoré Daumier, see Chapter 2 of: Erin Duncan-O’Neill, *Art against Censorship Honoré Daumier, Comedy, and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester University Press, 2024), pp. 72–115.

¹⁹² Jean de la Fontaine, *Fables*, ed. by Jean Baptiste Oudry (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1985), V.10.

Italian lyric tradition. To them, the *chroniques* were intrinsically and unalterably French. By comparing *Pantagruel*'s reception to that of François Villon's operatic afterlife, we learn that Rabelais's status among nineteenth-century readers as a literary source of their own modernity gave him a degree of temporal flexibility, setting him apart from other pre-modern authors in his prophetic ability to remain relevant, speaking to nineteenth-century issues as much as his own. While both Rabelais and Villon were key pre-modern French writers, Rabelais was not a relic of his time but a voice for all times: a monstrous, chimeric writer whose particular stylistic heterogeneity, though alluring and irresistible to his nineteenth-century readers, resisted their attempts at imitation.

While authorial intent must always be discussed carefully and with caveats, without a better understanding of what pushed the composer or librettist to choose Rabelais as a source we are left with only one side of the story: for no matter how vehemently opposed voices in the critical press remained to adapting Rabelais for the sung stage, it must have seemed like a good idea to its creators and those at the Opéra who sanctioned, supported, and produced it. Without these more supportive voices added to the mix, our account of the 1855 *Pantagruel* will forever remain incomplete.

I close this chapter by tentatively returning to the subject of *Pantagruel*'s cancellation, and with the words of an unnamed chronicler for the *Revue étrangère de la littérature des sciences et des arts*, a francophone periodical published in Saint Petersburg. The author was never able to see *Pantagruel*, having booked tickets for the second, cancelled performance and, while questioning how a writer of Labarre's calibre could ever have had such a poor reception, wrote with likely unintentional insight:

On m'assure que l'ouvrage renfermait des choses charmantes: je le crois. Pourquoi n'a-t-il pas réussi davantage alors? Je ne sais: *Habent sua fata...*

This elliptical Latin commonplace – ‘pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli’ – lifted as it was from verse 1286 of Terentianus Maurus’s *De litteris, De syllabis, De metris* constitutes, ultimately, the most fitting summary available to us of the reasons behind *Pantagruel*’s ill fate, affirming as it does that the fate of a book is governed to a significant extent by the preconceptions and interpretive capabilities of the readers whom it encounters on its journey downstream.¹⁹³ In 1855, the musico-theatrical destiny of Rabelais’s books was in the hands of an audience whose historically conditioned interpretive capabilities primed them to expect the elements of the works of their national literary hero to appear before them, looking, sounding, and acting in a way that was unequivocally French. The disconnect between what the audience expected of Rabelais and what was generally expected of a *petit opéra* meant that Labarre and Trianon’s Rabelaisian rework was destined to come up short.

¹⁹³ ‘According to the capabilities of the reader, books have their destiny.’ Terentianus Maurus, *De litteris, de syllabis, de metris*, ed. by Chiara Cignolo, *Collectanea Grammatica Latina*, 2.1, 2 vols (Georg Olms Verlag, 2002), I, l. 1286, p. 93.

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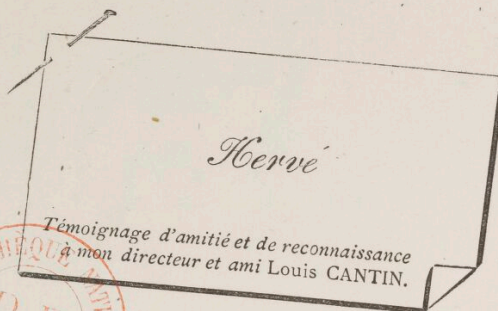
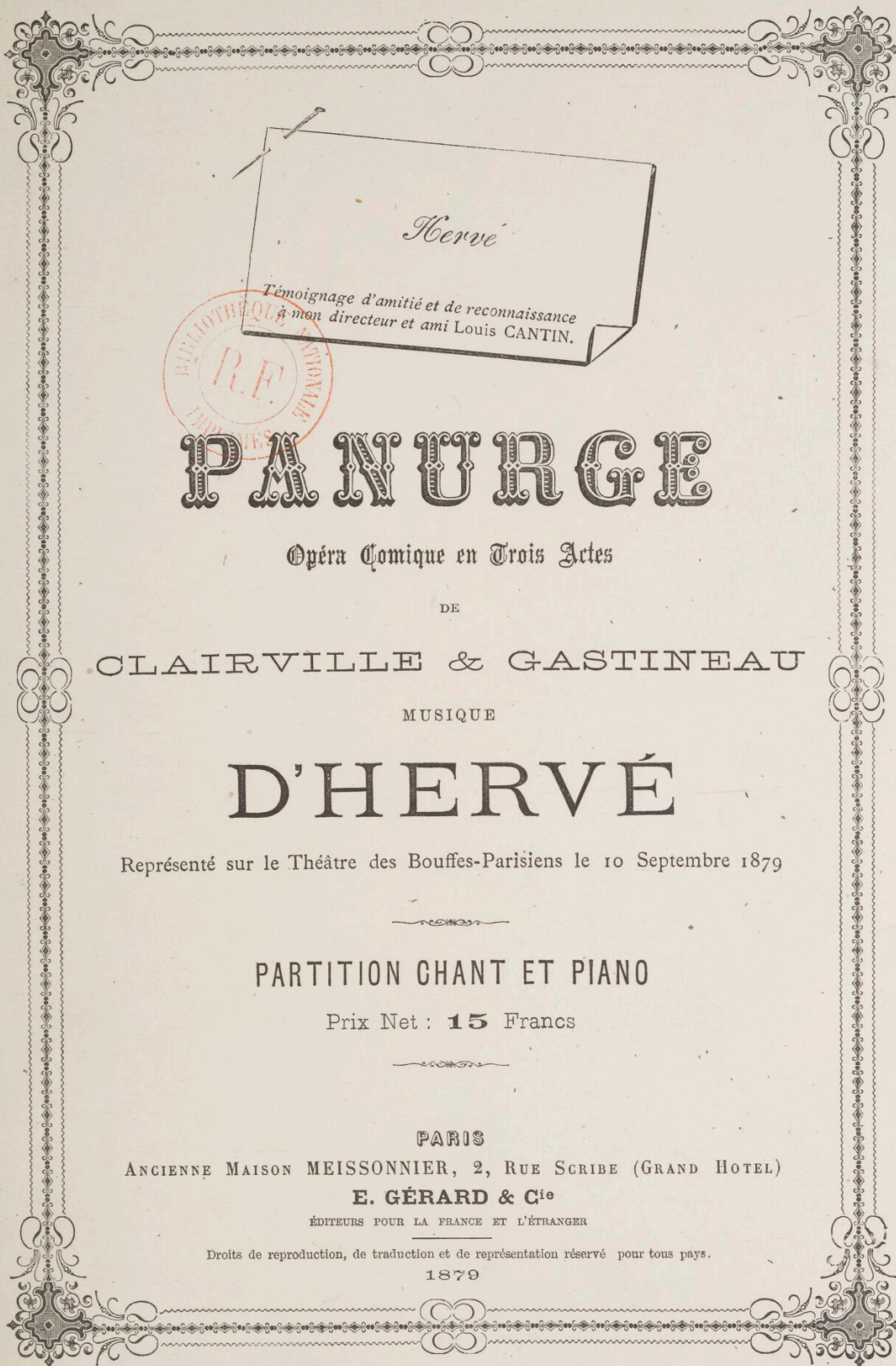
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NOTA. — Le rôle de Panurge peut être également joué par un ténor ou un baryton, à la volonté du directeur.

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2, rue Scribe (Grand Hôtel), éditeurs exclusifs de la partition (orchestre et piano) de l'opéra
comique de **Panurge**, pour la mise en scène et les dessins des costumes.

PANURGE

OPÉRA COMIQUE EN TROIS ACTES
DE CLAIRVILLE & GASTINEAU
Musique d'HERVÉ

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Summary: *Panurge* (1879)

Hervé, Clairville, and Gastineau's *Panurge* intersperses musical numbers with spoken dialogue, the latter of which makes up the majority of the piece's run-time. Following an orchestral overture, Act I of Hervé's *Panurge* opens in a large town square.¹⁹⁴ To the right of stage is a cabaret fronted by a gazebo covered in climbing plants. As a choir formed of drinkers, dancers, 'ribauds' and 'ribaudes' sing 'Riboter, gobelotter | Jusqu'à la lie' (V2. 1-2), a young female character called Phœbé sleeps alone underneath a tree.¹⁹⁵

Signalling the piece's relationship to *opérette*, the opening chorus gives way to an up-tempo *ronde* in which a male character named Brisepaille asks the female ensemble members their names: Gibeline, Fleurette, Coquerolle, Fanfare.¹⁹⁶ They reply, foregrounding their youth, their loose morals, and their love of physical intimacy. As Phœbé (the main female protagonist) wakes up, in a short and rare section of recitative Brisepaille wonders how she could have slept in their noisy company. Emblematic of Hervé's infusion of high and low musical markers throughout *Panurge*, Brisepaille's recitative gives way to a set of couplets in which Phœbé introduces herself as neither a queen, nor a marquise, nor even a member of the bourgeoisie. By her own estimations she is nothing but a mindless dancer without parents or social status. She lives only for ephemeral love.

Music gives way to dialogue as Grippeminaud's lackey Coupeoreille enters, followed by the town crier who announces that M. Grippeminaud, the governor of their town

¹⁹⁴ All references to *Panurge*'s libretto will be given in text as (V2. pg.) and refer to the transcription of the libretto included in the second volume of this thesis.

¹⁹⁵ The lyrics of this introductory chorus echo the text of Rabelais's *propos des bienyvres*: 'Tire, baille, tourney, brouille. Boutte à moy sans eau [...]' (Garg.V.17). This character's name is spelled Phébé, Phébée, and Phœbé interchangeably in the manuscript libretto. Since, in the vocal score, her name is spelled Phœbé, it is this spelling that I use throughout this thesis.

¹⁹⁶ The name Brisepaille is lifted from 'Brizepaille d'auprès Sainct Genou': a town from which one of Gargantua's mother Gargamelle's midwives is said to come (Garg.VI.21). This is near to Beauzençay, where this piece is set, according to Mireille Huchon (*Œuvres complètes*, p. 1080, n.6). In the text, this midwife administers a concoction to Gargamelle that causes all her sphincters to contract so tightly that only 'à grande poine avesques les dentz, vous les eussiez eslargiz' (Garg.VI.21).

Beaugency, has decided that whenever one of the local wives is unfaithful, he will come to the town square and name those involved publicly.¹⁹⁷ However, the crier explains that anyone with information relating to marital infidelity in the town should report it to ‘Mme le bailli Cornillard, rue de la Bicorné’ (V2. 6).¹⁹⁸ The crier leaves, and all remark on how overworked the *bailli* will become, given the proclivity for adultery of the town’s women. Brisepaille suggests that the governor’s ordonnance was likely inspired by Panurge, who they describe as a ‘malandrin’, ‘larron’, and ‘bête-noire’ (V2. 6).¹⁹⁹

The townsfolk of Clairville and Gastineau’s libretto complain that Panurge has been stealing their women, drinking their wine, and winning all their money at cards. Phœbé only recalls meeting Panurge once at the marketplace in Orléans, but only knew him as ‘le Tourangeau’ (V2. 7).²⁰⁰ At the time they met, he was on his way to prison. Brisepaille asks Phœbé what she thought upon meeting Panurge, and she responds by singing couplets, extolling him as handsome, brave, and noble, with big muscles: the man of her dreams. She sings that she tried to visit him in prison, but by the time she arrived he was gone, having escaped by seducing a jailer’s wife. Grippeminaud (the governor) enters, shocked that the women are cavorting with *ribauds*.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ It is possible that Coupeoreille’s name is a reference to the biblical character Malchus, the servant of the High Priest Caiaphas who participated in the arrest of Jesus. In the story, Malchus’s ear is chopped off by Peter the Apostle. If this is indeed the origin of the name, then it suggests that Panurge ought (at least in the eyes of the librettists) to be considered a quasi-Christ figure given he, like Christ, is punished by a Malchus-figure’s master.

¹⁹⁸ Beaugency is already associated with cuckoldry in Rabelais’s texts. Frère Jean calls Panurge the ‘cornemuse de Buzançay’ (TL.XLV.491) as he predicts he will be cuckolded. There is then a further nod toward the early modern association between cuckoldry and horns in the *bailli*’s name, ‘*Cornillard*’ of *Bicorné* road.

¹⁹⁹ In Rabelais’s *Pantagruel*, these descriptions are used in relation to Panurge. In chapter XVII, for example, the authorial voice Alcofribas Nasier describes Panurge as a ‘larron et sacrilege’ (Pant.XVII.278); and when the Haulte Dame de Paris seeks to come up with an excuse for losing her paternosters, she suggests claiming that a ‘larron’ (i.e. Panurge) stole them from her at church (Pant.XXI.294).

²⁰⁰ In Rabelais’s texts we are informed that Panurge comes from Touraine at the end of the famous scene in which Pantagruel meets Panurge who responds to each of his questions about his identity in a different language (Pant.IX.249). This is also the same part of France as Rabelais’s birthplace.

²⁰¹ Like Théodore Labarre’s Grippeminaud, Hervé’s governor shares his name with the leader of the *chats-fourrez* (CL.XI.749) in Rabelais’s *Cinquiesme livre*.

Returning to dialogue, we learn that the women are travellers who stopped over at the tavern. Grippeminaud asks Phœbé to introduce herself and is shocked that she dared take the name of the moon.²⁰² When she reminds him that it is the astral body of lovers, he calls her a cheeky rascal and emphasises that Beaugency was not built for *ribaudes*. Phœbé reminds him that were it not for the presence of girls like her, lusty men would be forced to sleep with married women. Grippeminaud compliments Phœbé's intelligence and Fleurette alludes to the fact that she spent six months with a teacher. When Grippeminaud enquires after their interaction, Phœbé explains that in reality he was *her* student, insinuating that their relationship was primarily sexual. Grippeminaud repeats his slander but concedes that the group can stay in his town. They all go to give him a hug of thanks, but he orders them back. He will let them stay on the condition that they help him with the *vendange*. He also reminds them that if they cause the slightest scandal, they will be sent straight to prison.

Grippeminaud asks Coupeoreille if he has seen Panurge who, we learn, has not yet returned from a night on the town, and expresses a need to see Panurge, much to the horror of Brisepaille, who reminds the governor of his beautiful (and thus threatened) wife. Grippeminaud tells him that when Panurge visits, he hides his wife away; and in any case, the governor's wife is, he tells us, a saintly woman who only takes advice from Father Hilarion. The crowd stirs and, to Grippeminaud's surprise, the crier returns (singing this time) to announce an extramarital transgression involving Panurge and the wife of Burge (the alderman). Grippeminaud swears to put a stop to Panurge's antics, and leaves.

After a brief interaction between Brisepaille and Phœbé concerning womankind's lusty predilections, Panurge appears dressed as a monk.²⁰³ During the ensuing *morceau* 'C'est un moine' (V2. 13-15) – a musical number involving Panurge, Brisepaille, and the ensemble

²⁰² Phoebe was the name of a Titan associated with the moon.

²⁰³ This dimension on Renaissance notions of womanhood is discussed throughout Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: doing unto others* (Routledge, 2012). Particularly pp. 15–16.

– Panurge’s identity is revealed and Phœbé (in an aside) recognises him as the *Tourangeau* she previously pined after. In couplets immediately following the *morceau*, Panurge explains to the ensemble how he used the monk’s habit to gain access to a married woman’s chambers where he gave her ‘ma bénédiction’ (V2. 15), using his faux holy status to sleep with her, cuckold her husband, and pretend to absolve her of the sin once they are finished. Following his *couplets*, Panurge pulls a variety of cured meats and roasted poultry from his frock and nine bottles of wine from his pack: the donations from guilty townsfolk seeking monastic absolution. He then calls his lackey Claquedent from inside the cabaret.²⁰⁴ Phœbé sneaks away, telling the audience that she wants to avoid revealing her presence to him until after he has taken her bait.

Panurge sends Claquedent to find a pen and paper before approaching the group of *ribaudes*, asking where they come from. The land of love and pleasure, they respond. He can visit if he gives them the travel fee, but he declines: his ‘escarcelle’ (V2. 17) is hollow and empty like a dried up well.²⁰⁵ Panurge continues his metaphor by telling the women that it was not an apple but a sack of coins that hung from the tree of knowledge. Claquedent returns with writing equipment as Coupeoreille informs Panurge that the governor wishes to see him. Panurge declares there is no longer a need to write, hands Claquedent his monastic frock, and tells him to look after the food and drink. As the pair panic trying to make good their escape, Grippeminaud appears. Citing his dalliance with Burge’s wife, the governor criticises

²⁰⁴ The name Claquedent means, according to Cotgrave, ‘a lazie rogue, idle luske, slouthfull idlesbie; one that will rather starve with cold, and hunger, than worke to get heat, or meat.’ (Randle Cotgrave, ‘Claquedent’, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (Adam Islip, 1611), BnF). This definition is echoed by the word’s entry in the 1871 dictionary of Emile Littré. Such a characterisation carries imbues Claquedent with an implicitly lower status to Panurge, bringing him into closer association to the Ribaud(e)s turned manual labourers who form the piece’s ensemble.

²⁰⁵ According to Littré, an *escarcelle* is a ‘grande bourse à l’antique, qui se portait suspendue à la ceinture.’ The image being evoked by Panurge here needs no further explanation (Émile Littré, ‘Escarcelle’, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* (Librarie Hachette et cie, 1889), 1485). This metaphor echoes the account given by Rabelais’s Panurge when discussing with Pantagruel ‘pourquoy les nouveaulx mariez estoient exemptz d’aller en guerre’. According to him, legitimate conception in wedlock requires husbands to ‘esgoutt[er] leurs vases spermaticques’ (TL.XXVII.435).

Panurge for cuckolding a townsman, but Panurge is unsure to whom he is referring: he has slept with more wives since Burge's. As he explains, they resemble his *moutons*: where one jumps, so jump the others. Grippeminaud is unfamiliar with Panurge's *moutons*, so he sings about his past encounter with Dindenault.²⁰⁶ After his song, Panurge pours Grippeminaud a drink. They sit under the gazebo and, using a metaphor of a fox and hens, Grippeminaud tells Panurge to stop sleeping with the town's wives. Yet Grippeminaud understands that foxes steal hens out of hunger, so to keep Panurge's voracious sexual appetite satisfied he plans to have him married to his niece Colombe, who is about to leave a convent. If Panurge agrees, the governor will also give him twenty *écus*. As Phœbé, concealed, swears to prevent Panurge from marrying, to the sound of a fanfare the crier and his accompanying musicians return to stage to announce in song that Panurge has slept with the wife of someone called Algolapa.

Panurge is touched that Grippeminaud wants to trumpet his victories, but the governor instead characterises his conquests as a one-way ticket to hell. Panurge is unconvinced – and actually quite scared – by the idea of marriage: when it comes to 'colombes' (V2. 24), he has known some grumpy ones. All leave and Phœbé enters alone to sing couplets about her cold heart melting at the sight of Panurge. She swears he will be hers. Following her song, she writes (and speaks) a letter to Mme Cornillard accusing Panurge of having slept with Grippeminaud's wife while disguised as a monk. She hands the letter to Coupeoreille to be delivered.

Grippeminaud walks onto stage enraged, holding a letter from his niece. He sees Phœbé and, over the course of their conversation, makes his attraction to her clear while also

²⁰⁶ The account of this episode offered by Clairville and Gastineau is well attuned to the theatrical resonances at work in Rabelais's version of Panurge's ovine encounter with Panurge, describing the scene as a 'Tableau digne d'un dramaturge' (V2. 20). In this vocal number, a retelling of V-VII of the *Quart livre* then gives way to lyrics about various groups (soldiers, idiots, beautiful women) acting like lemmings. For an account of these theatrical resonances, see: Eastop, 'Undead Dindenault'.

insisting that he is a virtuous man who loves his wife. Phœbé compares her virtues to those of his niece, but the governor disagrees with this comparison, describing Colombe as a ‘sotte’ who refuses to leave the convent to marry Panurge (V2. 27). The crier then returns, announcing in song that Panurge has slept with Grippeminaud’s wife. Act I’s large-scale ensemble *Finale* begins as the governor falls for Phœbé’s scheme, coming to believe that the monk who visited her was Panurge in disguise. He swears in song to hang Panurge in revenge, but Phœbé convinces him that a better punishment would be marrying her, a *ribaude*. Panurge enters with Claquedent and Grippeminaud introduces Phœbé to him as his niece Colombe, revealing that they are to wed. Before Panurge can protest too forcefully, Grippeminaud (in recitative) distracts him by having some old barrels of wine opened. As they begin drinking, Panurge sings couplets celebrating wine, women, and his impending marriage. After a choral celebration of wine and betrothal the curtain falls.

Opening on a large, vine-covered hillside, Act II begins with a chorus in which the *ribauds* and *ribaudes* of Act 1 pick grapes, singing about how changing jobs and changing lovers is akin to changing grapes into wine. As they sing, Claquedent enters and chases after the women, who threaten him with a beating if he touches them. This chorus gives way to a set of couplets in which Claquedent sings about how he cannot resist groping pretty young women when they come near him, especially if they are crying. After their song, the group are tired and take a break. Fleurette asks if anyone has news of Phœbé, and Claquedent outlines what has occurred between her and Panurge. According to Claquedent, Phœbé has managed to convince the governor that the man who slept with his wife was a different *Tourangeau*. However, because scandal has been following Panurge, the governor is still giving Panurge two options: marry his niece or leave town. While Panurge opted for the latter, Grippeminaud insisted that he meet Colombe before making his mind up conclusively.

And, as Claquedent conveys with surprise, after meeting the supposed niece (i.e. Phœbé), Panurge no longer wants to leave. Claquedent cannot be sure if Panurge is in love or not, but he describes his master as acting like Gargantua after having not eaten for three days.

Grippeminaud appears and chastises the group for slacking off work. All leave but Grippeminaud, who wonders aloud why Phœbé was so keen to leave his vineyard. He admits that she has a way of commanding him as if she was his governor, before breaking into song to reaffirm his desire for vengeance against Panurge in a set of couplets. Once he finishes singing, Phœbé appears in a ‘costume charmant, mais d’une grande simplicité’ (V2. 40) and asks if Grippeminaud is alone. She checks that Grippeminaud has followed her instructions: to set up a *rendez-vous* with Panurge and invite the entire noble family and their friends, dressing them up in ceremonial garb. Grippeminaud has no idea why these requests have been made. He also reveals that his adulterous wife will be sent to a convent. Phœbé requests that Madame Grippeminaud stays until after she and Panurge are married. She instructs the governor to find Father Hilarion and tell him to be at the little chapel nearby in an hour for a wedding ceremony. Grippeminaud expresses admiration towards Phœbé and reminds her of their deal, and that she has promised to facilitate him exacting a specific (though still undisclosed to the audience) kind of vengeance that involves her. Panurge is nearby, though, so she tells Grippeminaud to disappear. He follows her orders, remarking that he feels like her servant. Now alone, Phœbé expresses anxiety that Panurge will see marriage less favourably once he knows who he is really marrying. She sees Panurge approaching with his valet, and hides, cursing that he had not come alone.

Panurge celebrates his acquisition of twenty *écus* and a naïve Colombe. Claquedent reflects on his role as valet, reminding Panurge of the work he does to support his master. Literalising the ‘chanson’ aspect of Rabelais’s *Chanson de ricochet*, in a sung duet Panurge asks Claquedent for counsel regarding whether he should marry. Once the duet ends,

Claquedent suggests that Panurge should consult dice about his marriage quandaries.²⁰⁷

However, when rolled, these also fail to give any conclusive answer. The pair hear Phœbé singing from the wings. She enters and Panurge bounds over to her, causing her to scream and run away. He tries to approach her again, but she tells him to go away. Posing as Colombe, she then reveals that she intends to return to her convent and blames Panurge for provoking the decision. She explains how exposure to men is strictly limited in the convent, meaning that her main understanding of them is derived from what the other nuns say: that they are disgusting. Yet she finds him charming, polite, and respectful. She then tells him that she is returning on her uncle's orders as he has concluded that Panurge is a ribald charlatan who will never marry. Panurge asks her what *she* thinks of marrying someone like him, and this gives way to a duet, including a solo rondo section for Phœbé, in which she details the process by which she fell in love with Panurge.²⁰⁸

As the duet ends, Grippeminaud enters, expressing faux shock at seeing his 'niece' alone with Panurge, who implores the governor to allow them to be wed. Grippeminaud says he just came from the chapel, and Fr Hilarion has little better to do, so they should meet him in a quarter of an hour to travel together to the chapel for the wedding. Panurge raises an eyebrow about Hilarion officiating and checks that Grippeminaud has the twenty *écus* ready. The governor leaves with Phœbé. Panurge reveals a plan to swap Hilarion for Claquedent in disguise, whom he orders to dress in a habit and a fake beard.

²⁰⁷ Claquedent's suggestion to use dice echoes that offered by Rabelais's Panurge at the end of the *Tiers livre's Chanson de ricochet* as he tries to solve his marriage dilemmas through consultation with Pantagruel. In Rabelais's text, Pantagruel is against the use of dice (TL.XI.383-384). Notably, in this reformulated version of the passage, it is Claquedent – standing in for Pantagruel as Panurge's interlocutor in the consultation scene – who suggests the use of dice, which Panurge supports until it fails to yield certainty (V2. p. 47).

²⁰⁸ In this song, the pair echo Gargantua's reaction to his son's birth and wife's death in Rabelais's texts by crying and laughing at once 'Et ce disant pleuroit comme une vache, mais tout soubdain rioit comme un veau, quant Pantagruel luy venoit en memoire.' (Pant.III.225)

Claquedent appears, having sought out Panurge to inform him that Pantagruel has an indigestion.²⁰⁹ Panurge is uninterested, asking instead whether Claquedent had kept the monk disguise from three days ago, which he has. Panurge explains his plan to have Claquedent officiate in Hilarion's place, thus rendering any marriage resulting from the ceremony void. If Claquedent is caught and beaten, Panurge promises to pay him two *écus*, (and only one if he is not). When he is in place, Claquedent is to ring the chapel bells. As the *vendangeurs* appear, Panurge reminds Claquedent to wear the monk's hood low, and then the pair flee before they are seen. The chorus of grape pickers sings about obeying their governor. Once they finish singing, they notice that their overseer is absent and decide to take a break. They hear a bell in the distance and Fanfare climbs up the hillside to see what is going on. She sees a group leaving Grippeminaud's house on their way to the chapel and, with palpable surprise, spots Panurge. The chorus of pickers sings the *Chanson de carillon*: couplets in which they mimic bell peals ('digue, digue don!' V2. 59-60) and take turns singing about how Panurge will likely cheat on his wife (whom they still believe to be Colombe, not Phœbé) and how he will be deceived in turn.

The wedding party appears. Accompanied by *timbres* and *cloches* mimicking church bells, the choir of 'gens de la noce' sings joyfully about the wedding, and Grippeminaud greets guests who acclaim him in turn. At the end of the chorus, the wedding party leaves for the chapel, exiting the stage. The pickers describe the scene unfolding in the distance: Panurge looks triumphant and enchanted by his marriage. His new wife remains unknown by the group, however, shrouded by her veil. Gibeline and Fanfare suggest that she is probably hiding her face because she is fat and ugly, but this was likely part of Panurge's plan, as it's 'les plus laides qui sont les plus fidèles' (V2. 62). But then this, as Brisepaille points out, is

²⁰⁹ This echoes the bout of indigestion suffered by Rabelais's Pantagruel in the final chapter of *Pantagruel*. Unlike in Rabelais's text, this stomach pain is not said to cause the giant to produce 'pisse chaulde', and it is not cured by sending workmen with pick-axes into the giant's body to clear the blockage (Pant.XXXIII.333-334).

not possible as he has met the governor's niece and remembers her being beautiful. Then they realise: Panurge is being lined up by Grippeminaud to join the other cuckolded husbands of Beaugency. Poking fun at the audience in the auditorium, they sing a 'chanson' – in the form of a *ronde* – about how the husbands of Beaugency have wives as faithful as those of Paris, and wear tricorne hats.²¹⁰ The wedding party returns to the stage.

Now the marriage is concluded. As the musical Finale to Act II begins, Grippeminaud reveals that it was an act of vengeance: Panurge has married a *ribaude*! Phœbé lifts her veil to reveal her identity, singing about her loose morals. Panurge returns fire, revealing that the monk involved in the ceremony was a stooge. It was Claquedent in disguise. But Grippeminaud has Panurge's lackey brought onto stage in handcuffs. He was discovered and caught! Hilarion carried out the ceremony, and the marriage is legitimate. In speech underscored by the orchestra, Hilarion reads out the marriage contract. Returning to singing, Panurge unleashes a torrent of insults upon Phœbé, who storms towards him, telling him she is not afraid of him and slapping him hard across the face. As Grippeminaud celebrates the effectiveness of his punishment, Panurge swears vengeance in turn and Phœbé emphasises how she is now the one in charge.

Act Three takes place three months later in a farmhouse whose back doors open onto the banks of the Loire, and begins with a chorus passage during which a crowd of women are greeting boats carrying their husbands. Brisepaille, Coupe-oreille, and their fellow ribalds have returned from eight days of war. They disembark and embrace their significant others. The singing stops and Claquedent enters, still half asleep and wearing a cotton bonnet and nightgown. As the group converses, it emerges that no battle ever took place because a traitor had informed the enemy captain Rodilardus that his position had been discovered, causing

²¹⁰ This, again, plays on the early modern association between horns and cuckoldry.

him to move his troops away from the forest near Orléans. As Pantagruel's troops moved to ambush them at daybreak, they discovered them gone. Once the traitor is found, Pantagruel has sentenced him to hang.²¹¹ The returning soldiers in Hervé's piece are told that they have disembarked on Panurge's farm. Pantagruel gave him the property as a gift. He has willingly settled into domestic life and is said to love his wife.²¹² And in turn she is faithful to him: something the group think impossible. The pair lie together in bed until midday most days. The couples on stage link arms and sing a *ronde* extolling the virtues of what we might nowadays call consensual marital non-monogamy.

The group finish their song and leave Claquedent on stage, who explains in a spoken aside that he is concerned by the idea that the traitor will be hanged when found. Cryptically, he tells the audience that he is reassured by the fact that only Rodilardus knows... something. We are not told what. Claquedent leaves and Panurge enters. He sings a *romance* expounding his love for Phœbé: a ribald girl who turned into an angel. Once his song ends, he remarks that the first gift she ever gave him was a slap, but this lit a fire inside him. Phœbé enters, asking why he left her alone in bed and he kisses her. Discussing how love stories often begin, Panurge says that in his experience most start with a young man tired from a journey being invited in from the cold by a woman at home alone. Phœbé says this is only half the story: they are invited in because of curiosity. And, she continues, curiosity is the most alluring thing of all to women: the reason Eve tasted the apple. If they were freely available, she might have tried one but would soon have moved on. Their interdiction was their attraction. By this, Phœbé means that Panurge has somehow married the only woman capable

²¹¹ The name Rodilardus is lifted from an episode of the *Quart livre* (QL.LXVII.697-701) in which Panurge, covered in faeces and with breadcrumbs in his beard, bursts onto the deck of the Thalamege clutching a cat and begs Frère Jean to keep him safe from devils. The cat is called Rodilardus, and has been mistaken for a little devil by Panurge, who has been sent mad with fear by the sound of nearby cannon fire. The *Quart livre* ends with this image.

²¹² This revelation effectively ends the debate that the *Tiers livre* opens but never closes, concerning whether marriage will be good for Panurge.

of staying faithful to him, because she has known other men. They sing a duet in which she explains that she thinks he will never betray her as she is the only faithful woman on earth. Panurge replies that while most women could not be trusted on this score, he believes her.²¹³ She explains that she would only disobey him if he ordered her to cheat on him: this she could never do. He is overcome by love and promises to be faithful forever. At the end of the song they kiss, and then Grippeminaud enters.

The governor has come to tell Panurge something in private, so Phœbé leaves. Grippeminaud repeats that their marriage was part of his vengeful plan, and Phœbé was complicit in it. Since Panurge slept with the governor's wife, the governor will now sleep with Phœbé. Claquedent appears in the background and hides, listening into the conversation. Grippeminaud also reveals that Panurge will be hanged, as he was supposedly the one who notified Rodilardus of Pantagruel's battle plans. The accusation comes from Rodilardus himself, who explained (in a letter) that Claquedent was sent on Panurge's behalf to notify the general that Pantagruel's army was ten times the size of his. Yet this turned out to be untrue: Panurge duped both sides! In his letter to Grippeminaud, Rodilardus enclosed a copy of the letter, signed by Panurge, that informed him of the impending attack. Panurge says the signature is not his. Grippeminaud plans to send all the incriminating letters to Pantagruel, quipping that once Panurge is hanged, Phœbé will go back to being a *ribaude* and will thus be more open to his advances. Panurge can have the letters if he wants, but Grippeminaud will only hand them over to Phœbé, who must collect them from his house on Panurge's behalf. The governor then sings a set of couplets in which he outlines how he will take his revenge by seducing Phœbé. After this sung passage, he tells himself that he will give Panurge an hour to deliver Phœbé to him or else he will be hanged. Claquedent, still hidden, exits quickly

²¹³ This is in diametric opposition to the views of Panurge's sixteenth-century antecedent, who has a profound distrust of all women.

to notify her. As Grippeminaud leaves, he warns Panurge not to flee town with his wife, as he will certainly be caught.

Panurge, now alone (and speaking, not singing), cries out ‘Pendü! Ou... Cornes du diable!’ (V2. 89) before trying to generate a stratagem for overcoming this double bind of death or cuckoldry.²¹⁴ He takes stock of his options. If he is hanged, he is dead, and while that might put an end to the issue, such an eventuality cannot be reversed. And in any case, he would not be dying to save Phœbé as his death would deliver her directly to his hangman. Death, therefore, does not work. If he sends Phœbé to fetch the letters and tells her to cheat on him, then this will also be ineffective as she has sworn that the only time she will disobey him is if he tells her to cheat. He comforts himself that being cuckolded might not be so bad: it might actually bring him more glory. As he admits, Grippeminaud is still governor despite being cuckolded, and nobody would ever talk of Menelaus without Helen having strayed. Ultimately, this is the logical conclusion, but it is not very nice and will take all his powers of persuasion.

Claquedent re-enters with Phœbé, who has heard that her husband is in danger. She asks about the letters and Panurge replies that love has killed him. He heard that Pantagruel was going to attack Rodilardus’s camp and knew that their limited forces would fail. This would push Rodilardus to pillage Pantagruel’s lands and exterminate its inhabitants, including Panurge’s loved ones. To protect them he made Rodilardus believe that Pantagruel’s forces were so big that his best option was to flee. Phœbé refuses to go and retrieve the letters from Grippeminaud, admitting that being a widow after only three months of marriage would be sad for her. She is reminded, however, that it would be worse for Panurge. Eventually, she accepts that she must go to Grippeminaud, but continues to refuse to

²¹⁴ Panurge is stuck between two of his sixteenth-century antecedent’s greatest fears: being injured and being cuckolded. In the *chroniques*, Panurge often flees beatings, for example at the end of his second encounter with the *Haulte Dame de Paris*, ending with him fleeing ‘le grand pas de peur des coups, lesquelz il craignoit naturellement.’ (Pant.XXII.295).

let her husband be cuckolded. They sing a trio about her fidelity. In this song, Panurge emphasises the fact that in some contexts what seems bad can really be good. Panurge begs to be cuckolded, but Phœbé refuses, citing ‘fidélité jusqu’à la mort | et si tu meurs, je jure encor [sic] | de te pleurer toute ma vie.’

At the end of their song, they hear the governor’s voice in the distance calling for a boatman to help him cross the Loire. Claquedent hides in a barrel and Panurge hides in a wardrobe. Grippeminaud enters, lingering near the door. Phœbé suggests that Panurge has probably fled and tells the governor that if he catches her husband, he can hang him. She also indicates that she knows his plans to kill Panurge and sleep with her, but Grippeminaud insists otherwise; that to hang Panurge would upset him greatly. He then confesses love to Phœbé. While clarifying exactly when she would get her hands on the letters if they went back to his house, he reveals to her that he has them with him as he was on his way to deliver them to Pantagruel. She asks for them, he says no. She then comes up with an excellent stratagem, asking the governor to slip the letters into the wardrobe (containing Panurge), lock the door, and throw the key into the river. Once he has done that, she will follow him wherever he goes. With his speech underscored by the orchestra, Grippeminaud agrees.

The Governor opens the wardrobe door and Panurge grabs the letters before the governor has time to realise that he has been duped. The musical accompaniment abruptly stops. The governor says he will just tell Pantagruel of Panurge’s crimes, but he is reminded that without the evidence, nobody will believe him. Clutching at straws, Grippeminaud says that Rodilardus will back him up. As the orchestra begins the *Finale* of the final act, laughter from offstage gives way to the return of the ensemble who comment in song on the unexpectedness of the final plot twist. Also singing, Coupe-oreille and Brisepaille bring word that, in a fit of jealousy for Gargantua’s reputation, Rodilardus tried to eat a dinner as large as the giant’s and died of indigestion. Thus, Rodilardus cannot incriminate Panurge. To

celebrate, Panurge announces a party, over which he invites Grippeminaud to preside. The ensemble cheer for the governor. Phœbé turns to the audience, invoking the most widely recognised Rabelaisian reference available by calling them to applaud like the *moutons de Panurge*. Fin.

Chapter 2

1879

Couleur Rabelaisienne - Bawdy Rabelais – Well-Matured Rabelais

In September 1879 the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens – freshly renovated and under new management – was looking to make a comeback on Paris’s theatre scene. Located in a covered arcade running parallel to the square in which the *Salle Ventadour* (until recently, home to the Théâtre-Italien) stood, its newly modernised and gloriously regilded auditorium was to host the premiere of a new three-act ‘*opéra comique*’ by Hervé (the *nom-de-plume* of Florimond Ronger), Clairville (the *nom-de-plume* of Louis-François Nicolaïe), and Octave Gastineau entitled *Panurge*.²¹⁵

What might this particular adaptation tell us about how Rabelais was named and framed on the Parisian lyric stage in the latter part of the nineteenth century? And what might choosing to adapt Rabelais’s texts reveal about Hervé, Clairville, Gastineau, and the musical and theatrical culture in which they worked? This chapter begins by identifying the point of intersection in *Panurge* between the ambiguous register play of Rabelais’s texts and the theatrical practice of *couleur historique*. This was a technique employed by mid nineteenth-century composers and librettists who used historical tropes to situate their narratives in a loosely conceived ‘past’ setting. By infusing the historical ambiguities of *couleur historique* with the perceived register mixing at work in Rabelais’s texts, the trio of writers created a

²¹⁵ Hervé, Louis Clairville, and Octave Gastineau, *Panurge: opéra-comique en trois actes* (Paris: E. Gérard et cie, 1879) This will hereafter be cited in text as ‘(Hervé, pp.)’. The production materials connected to *Panurge* that are held in French archives are limited. Alongside the vocal score (freely available online), the BnF is home to the Fonds Hervé which holds several copies of the vocal score, and one handwritten orchestral score (Fonds Hervé 87). The Archives Nationales contain a manuscript copy of the *manuscrit de censure* (F/18/1158) which – as it is the only surviving trace of the dialogue – I have transcribed and is included in full in the second volume of this thesis. Beyond this, several newspaper reviews and some photographs of the production have survived (all discussed and cited later on in this chapter) but little else.

device that can, I suggest, usefully be called *couleur rabelaisienne*. Here, I use ‘couleur’ both broadly and figuratively to denote elements of the piece that, whether primarily visual or not, shape a piece’s narrative and aesthetic identity. Identifying three elements of Hervé’s *Panurge* that operated in this way, I will argue that the piece’s creators were able to maintain their proximity to Rabelais’s texts by situating their piece in a broadly defined ‘Renaissance’ setting, underpinned by the use of historical or historicist markers that carried ambiguous or hybrid registral or socio-cultural associations.

Because register and genre in the nineteenth century were conceptualised in part according to their correspondent place on socio-cultural hierarchies, the appearance of this *couleur rabelaisienne* in Hervé’s piece, with its emphasis on combining registally ambiguous markers of historicity, suggests that by 1879, Rabelais was widely thought to have engaged in an analogous form of inter-registral or inter-genre, and thus (in a nineteenth-century paradigm) cross-hierarchy, integration. In this way, ideas about Rabelais’s mixedness overlapped with – and thus could be mapped onto – parallel issues of social and cultural value that were current to nineteenth-century lyric culture.

With this overlap in mind, I shall follow my study of the *couleur rabelaisienne* in Hervé’s *Panurge* by turning to the interlacing histories of the Bouffes-Parisiens and its founder Jacques Offenbach on the one hand, and of Hervé and his tumultuous career on the other. I shall demonstrate that both of these, in their tendency towards generic hybridity, echoed the mixing thought to be at work in Rabelais’s texts. As I shall explain, Offenbach founded the Bouffes-Parisiens in order to perform a hybrid of high(er) brow *opéra-comique* and low(er) brow *opérette* that, he claimed, better resembled French *opéra-comique*’s light, gay, Italianate origins, mixing genres and national cultures in contemporary terms in order to return to purity in historical terms. I will then turn to Hervé’s career. By 1879, after more than a decade of personal setbacks and several years of political upheaval in France, the

composer had been forced to adapt his output, integrating elements of several genres of unequal perceived cultural value into his compositions in order to survive in post-war France. This was a period in which the light opera with which he had made his name was no longer fully welcome. This rendered his output ever more generically ambiguous as he strived to attain a higher level of cultural prestige with only minimal perceived stylistic change.

Panurge was characteristic of this ambiguity, a work whose generic marker – *opéra-comique* – seems to have been received as somewhat unrepresentative of its content. To support my claims, I will turn to the press reviews of *Panurge*, using them to demonstrate that its generic ambiguity – the incohesive misalignment between label and content – could be identified by critics. To do this, I shall examine and unpack assertions made by reviewers alongside both Hervé's score, and Clairville and Gastineau's libretto. I will then conclude by suggesting that one of the key differences between the reception of Hervé's piece and Rabelais's texts was the extent to which the latter's age allowed more room for the mixing of discursive levels. The *chroniques* had the benefit of being very old: like fine wine, Rabelais's books had been able to mature with time and accrue multiple complex and nuanced interpretative 'flavours'. This meant that their perceived engagement with lower cultural forms had come to contribute to, rather than limit, their value and genius. The fact that Hervé was still alive, on the other hand, was an impediment that prevented him from legitimately integrating markers of 'high' cultural forms into his otherwise 'low' idiom in a way that was acceptable to contemporary critics.

This chapter thus has two distinct, but parallel scholarly prongs. The first will bring Hervé's *Panurge* – a yet unstudied musico-theatrical adaptation of Rabelais's texts – into broader discussions of the author's nineteenth-century afterlives. Though nineteenth-century genre and venue hierarchies and the perceived inter-registral mixing in Rabelais are two separate phenomena, given the influence that genre and venue had on ideas about socio-

cultural stratification, part of the work in this chapter involves examining the way in which perceptions of Rabelais's position in, and navigation through, his own era's social hierarchies interfaced with the perceived status of the genres into which he was thought to have (or not to have) been translated by his downstream audience.²¹⁶

Given its primary concern with the compositional and theatrical context in which Hervé's *Panurge* emerged, the second half of this chapter will contribute primarily to the study of late nineteenth-century French music theatre by outlining how the generic and socio-political liminality of Hervé's *Panurge* was received and discussed by the members of the audience who wrote for the critical press. I emphasise how the extent to which the subversion of genre norms was tolerated depended largely on the cultural value or significance assigned to a piece's creator, and that this emerged from a nexus of factors including their age, perceived social status, audience demographic with which they were primarily associated, and proximity to, or involvement in, current affairs (e.g. scandals, diplomatic or military conflict, urban redevelopment). In particular, I will build here upon the work of John McCormick, F. W. J. Hemmings, and Tommaso Sabbatini on the history of Paris's popular theatres and the role that politics played in their development.²¹⁷ Like Mark Everist and Laurence Senelick, in this chapter I will insist on the importance of Jacques Offenbach to the development of mid-century French light opera.²¹⁸ I shall, however, echo Pascal Blanchet's claim that Hervé

²¹⁶ This aspect of my argument developed as a response to some of the ideas that Neil Kenny shared in seminars, particularly one he gave in January 2023 at All Souls College, Oxford, pertaining to the effect of social hierarchisation on the way Rabelais has been understood by his readers throughout history. I thank Professor Kenny for the generosity with which he has shared his ideas.

²¹⁷ John McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth Century France* (Routledge, 2003); Frederick William John Hemmings, *Theatre and State in France, 1760-1905* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Tommaso Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous: Parisian Féerie, 1864-1900* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

²¹⁸ Everist, 'Jacques Offenbach'; Laurence Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

would have played a similarly integral role in shaping Parisian light operatic culture, had he not been incarcerated at such a pivotal moment in its developmental history.²¹⁹

Conceptualising Rabelais's life and works in Paris, 1879

How might *Panurge* be considered Rabelaisian in manner, and what did writing, reading, and performing in a Rabelaisian manner mean for readers in 1879? It should be clear from the plot summary accompanying this chapter that Clairville and Gastineau's libretto borrowed liberally from Rabelais's texts, referencing numerous elements of the *chroniques* that would likely engender very different levels of recognition among a mainstream audience. Indeed, while the *moutons de Panurge* might have been understood as emanating from Rabelais's texts by the average late nineteenth-century theatregoer, references to Grippeminaud, Rodilardus, or deciding difficult quandaries using dice would have likely gone over the heads of all but the most familiar with the *curé's* texts. But what about *Panurge's* resonances with the *chroniques* beyond mere standalone, like-for-like reformulations of small bits of Rabelais's material? In this section of my chapter, I examine three elements of *Panurge's* narrative that have clear links to ideas about Rabelais's life and works in currency in the nineteenth century, discussing how far *Panurge* can be said to recreate what Rabelais's downstream audience considered key aspects of his style; in particular, his combination of high and low discursive levels. To do this, I will trace three elements of *Panurge's* narrative and performance back to their origins in Rabelais's texts or his nineteenth-century paratexts, using them as microcosmic examples of a wider resonance between *Panurge's* depiction of

²¹⁹ Pascal Blanchet, 'La contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l'opérette (1848-1870): éléments biographiques et mécanismes du comique' (unpublished PhD, Université de Montréal, 2010); *Hervé par lui-même: lettres et documents du père de l'opérette présentés par Pascal Blanchet*, ed. by Pascal Blanchet (Actes Sud / Palazzetto Bru Zane, 2015).

the Renaissance world and the writing style considered by nineteenth-century commentators to be authentically Rabelaisian. These come together to depict a distinctly Rabelaisian version of the *couleur historique*. This is the historical sister-concept to the culturally appropriative, orientalisising *couleur locale* which involved depicting historical settings on stage without relying on potentially audience-alienating precise historical detail.

The elements of Hervé's *Panurge* that I will discuss in detail are the appearance of sexually active and morally questionable monks; the use of church bells as a marker of moral ambiguity; and bawdy, drunken debauchery's relation to the nineteenth-century belief — foregrounded by the illustrations of Gustave Doré — that Rabelais grew up in a tavern. These elements of Hervé's *Panurge* help to imbue it with a non-specific, or 'flexible', historicity analogous to *couleur historique*. However, because these otherwise non-period-specific historical elements maintained their relation to Rabelais's life and works, the registral (and thus by extension moral and social) ambiguities associated with a nineteenth-century understanding of Rabelais still resurface in Hervé's piece. Though they remained historically vague, the close associations drawn by nineteenth-century readers between monks, bells, and drunkards on the one hand, and Rabelais's texts on the other, meant that the re-emergence of these themes in *Panurge* constituted something more than mere *couleur historique*. This is what I shall come to term *couleur rabelaisienne*: an aesthetic that maintains the historical non-specificity of *couleur historique* while also being alive to the particular ambiguities at work in nineteenth-century readings of Rabelais.

Couleur historique, and its emergence in Panurge

Like its better-known sister-concept *couleur locale* – an aesthetic that emphasised a setting's foreignness by employing a clichéd, exoticised, often xenophobic musical and visual palette – *couleur historique* depicted similarly hyper-stylised historical settings, relying on tropes and generalisations about a different time period and its inhabitants that were treated and received

as if historically accurate (and sometimes were). Interest in deploying *couleur historique* seems to have gone hand-in-hand with the musical stage's increased interest in historical representation following the 1789 Revolution: the same year that the term first appeared in print, according to Google *Ngram*.²²⁰

Historical representation, couched under the umbrella of *couleur locale*, had been a part of Parisian lyric culture since well before the turn of the nineteenth century, constituting an important element of late eighteenth-century lyric dramaturgy, and reaching its pre-Revolutionary zenith with André Grétry. Indeed, Grétry's use of *couleur locale* was recognised as particularly developed by his late contemporaries. This was demonstrated during an 1809 review of Jean-François Le Sueur's *La mort d'Adam* (cited by David Charlton) in which critic Etienne Sauvo wrote in the *Moniteur universel* that 'la couleur locale est un mot dont il est facile de se servir, et très facile d'abuser. Les ouvrages de Grétry ont ce mérite au suprême degré.'²²¹ According to Charlton, both during and after the period in which Grétry was most active, the 'criteria of local colour seem[ed] to include, therefore, expressions of distance and difference, or simplicity opposed to sophistication'.²²² Following the Revolution, as the shifting political configuration of France fuelled an interest in representing history on stage, *couleur locale* then took on new significance. For example, Annelies Andries has identified a desire among creators of Napoleonic opera – in particular of Gaspare Spontini's *Fernand Cortez* (1809) – to emphasise the historical grounding of their production in order to garner support for the growing French empire and the emperor's military campaigns in Spain.²²³ This Napoleonic *couleur locale* maintained its distance and

²²⁰ This is according to a Google Ngram search of the term 'couleur historique'. Search accessed 31.12.2024.

²²¹ Etienne Sauvo, 'Académie impériale de musique', *Gazette nationale ou Moniteur universel* (4 January 1809), p. 56.2, BnF; David Charlton, *Grétry and the Growth of Opéra-Comique* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 232.

²²² Charlton, *Grétry and the Growth of Opéra-Comique*, p. 232.

²²³ Annelies Andries, 'Mobilizing Historicity and Local Color in Fernand Cortez (1809)', *French Historical Studies*, 45.2 (2022), pp. 245–85.

difference, but gave added emphasis to the validity of the sources from which its historical aesthetic was derived. Looking further into the nineteenth century, Sarah Hibberd has tied the increasing role of historical representation in *grand opéra* written during the July Monarchy to the French public's experience of politics, living as they did through a period of such bombastic political upheaval that people could almost feel the historical currents pulling and churning around them.²²⁴ It was at this point that the term *couleur historique* seems to have separated from *couleur locale*, emerging as its own aesthetic practice, with usage of the term increasing steeply between 1825 and 1835, continuing throughout the remaining century.²²⁵ It was also during this period that the Napoleonic obsession with source accuracy died down again. In fact, according to Hibberd, historical representation in grand opera written between 1826 and 1850 (the period whose output formed the majority of the Opéra's regular repertoire after the mid-1850s) often used a historically situated remarkable individual – such as the eponymous lead in *Guillaume Tell* (Rossini) or Raoul in *Les Huguenots* (Meyerbeer) – as the locus around which to mount a multimedial depiction of a historical world that drew on musical, visual, or thematic palettes wielding a degree of historicity. Whether the individual at the centre was real or fictional was largely immaterial. As an unnamed literary critic explained in an 1830 edition of the literary periodical *Le Feuilleton des journaux politiques*:

[...] une preuve de plus de la vérité d'un conte: c'est ce que l'on appelle la couleur historique. Il y a en effet, il faut en convenir, une sorte de prestige attachée à cette résurrection d'une époque, avec ses grands noms, ses mœurs, ses monuments, ses lois, ses événements ; et l'on a peine à ne pas croire à l'existence réelle du personnage fictif, lorsqu'on le voit se mouvoir dans la sphère de ces figures historiques que l'on sait par cœur.²²⁶

²²⁴ Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2.

²²⁵ This is according to a Google Ngram (accessed: 22/11/2024)

²²⁶ 'Littérature', *Le feuilleton des journaux politiques*, 5 December 1830, p. 42. While the review is unattributed, it is likely to have either been penned by Honoré de Balzac, Hippolyte Auger, or Oliver-Ernest Sain de Bois-le-Comte (Bruce Tolley, 'Balzac and the "Feuilleton des journaux politiques"', *The Modern Language Review*, 57.4 (1962), pp. 504–17 (p. 1).)

As this explanation makes clear, for *couleur historique* to do its job of breathing realism into fiction, the historical world it conjured up needed to be easily recognised by its audience, cohering to their preconceived ideas about what history looked and sounded like. For a work to feel historical, therefore, it had to present a notion of history that the audience knew ‘par cœur’.

These fictional historical individuals were thus placed in surroundings that might be described as ‘old-lite’, negotiating a need to be both historical and graspable to the modern audience: what Katherine Hambridge describes as the ‘twin imperatives of “oldness” and “*einheimisch*”ness’.²²⁷ Because of this, mid nineteenth-century French music theatre tended to rely on historical markers taken from art-forms with long and slow developmental histories. Church music, for example, displayed a continuous and slow-evolving performance tradition, fostered by both a ‘self-conscious distance from ephemeral fashions’, and the clergy’s desire to have liturgical music remain familiar to worshippers of all generations.²²⁸ Because of this, religious music felt historical, but not consigned to history. It was of ‘the past’, rather than any particular past time, creating in turn the *feeling* of oldness without alienating an audience through historical fuss or pedantry. This ‘flexible historicity’, as Hambridge terms it, allowed pastiches of more clichéd forms of holy music (such as plainchant or chorales) to be used to demonstrate ‘the “pastness” of a range of historical moments’ rather than zeroing in on any one in particular.²²⁹

This, naturally, caused historical and chronological discrepancies between the music,

²²⁷ ‘Einheimisch’ has no direct equivalent in English. Though its usual English cognate is ‘native’, the sense in which Hambridge and her sources use the term suggests something analogous to ‘familiarity’ like that experienced when in (*ein*) one’s home (*heim*). My thanks to Katherine Hambridge for giving me advanced sight of a chapter draft from her forthcoming book, “Historical Drama and the Flexible Historicity of Music” in *Performing Politics: Music and Theater in Berlin c. 1800*, University of Chicago Press, forthcoming 2026.

²²⁸ Katherine Hambridge, *Performing Politics*.

²²⁹ Katherine Hambridge, *Performing Politics*.

visual language, and intended setting, leading to an overwhelming historical vagueness in works that sought to represent history on the musico-theatrical stage. This was especially true at the Bouffes-Parisiens, whose output leant heavily on *couleur historique*. Of the venue's twenty most frequently performed works, four were set in non-specific historical surroundings.²³⁰ These were: Georges Douay's *Les mules de Suzette* and Lucien Poujade's *Le coq de Viroflay*, as well as *Le princesse de Trébizonde* and *Croquefer* by Offenbach. A further two – *La chanson de Fortunio* and *Les Bavards*, both by Offenbach – specified a seventeenth-century setting but gave no more detail than that.

This historical and historicist confusion was compounded in *Panurge* because the piece had to mediate between the Bouffes-Parisiens' usual recourse to non-specific historicity, and the narrative's close ties to a historical author from a specific period. In a review of *Panurge* written in the popular weekly illustrated newspaper *Le Monde illustré* (a publication unrelated to the modern newspaper *Le monde*) theatre critic and theatrical historian Albert de Lasalle offered the clearest demonstration of this tension of any from my review corpus.²³¹ His critique moved between, on the one hand, calling for the specifically Rabelaisian elements of Hervé's *Panurge* (characters, in this case) to be historically representative of the mid-sixteenth century and, on the other, a desire for the piece's broader visual language to demonstrate stylised, non-period-specific historicity.

Dwelling on the supposed mismatch between characters lifted from the *chroniques* and *Panurge*'s narrative, Lasalle argued that the libretto was ahistorical, ignoring 'à quelle période de l'histoire se rattache son action'. This, he wrote, resulted in an intrigue that 'pourrait tout aussi bien se passer sous Louis XV'. To support this assertion, he turned to Hervé's characters, suggesting that two ought to be renamed: Panurge should be 'Lafleur',

²³⁰ Annie Ledout, 'Le Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens: historique et programmes (1855-1880)' (Paris Sorbonne VI, 2001), p. 78.

²³¹ Albert de Lasalle, 'Chronique musicale', *Le Monde illustré*, 20 September 1879, BnF.

and Grippeminaud ‘Lucidor’. The first of these appeared in multiple eighteenth-century theatrical works, including two ‘comédies’ with singing and dialogue: Philippe Néricault Destouches’ *Le Glorieux* (1732) and Nicolò Piccinni’s *Le Faux lord* (1783). The second equated Grippeminaud with a conniving lover from Marivaux’s 1740 travesty-play *L’Épreuve*, a work that had only recently been republished in the 1879 collected edition *Théâtre de Marivaux*.²³² He also quips that Phœbé’s name should remain, shared as it is with a character from Rameau’s *tragédie lyrique: Castor et Pollux* (1737).²³³ Thus, for Lasalle, because of the actions of its characters that appeared to come from periods other than Rabelais’s, Clairville and Gastineau’s scenario is anachronistic and ahistorical.

Moving beyond commenting on the narrative, however, Lasalle was struck by what he claimed to be eruditely historical visuals, praising *Panurge*’s costume designs for being ‘dessinés de main d’archéologue et affectant des couleurs inconnues de la teinturerie moderne.’ Such was the sartorial spectacle’s historical sumptuousness that, Lasalle suggested, the audience ‘dirait que les personnages des tableaux de M. Moreau, impatients de prouver tout ce qu’il y a de vie en eux, se sont évadés de leurs cadres, et qu’ils sont pris du service dans la nouvelle troupe du passage Choiseul.’ Lasalle’s choice of artistic reference is telling as, far from constituting historically accurate representations of the Renaissance, the neo-Renaissance, symbolist artist Gustave Moreau’s paintings usually depicted figures from antique mythology wearing stylised pseudo-historical clothing. His subjects presented a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European aesthetic. As art historian Lilie Fauriac explains, ‘ses peintures, recompositions imaginaires et archaïques des arts du passé, ouvrent et

²³² Pierre de Marivaux, *Théâtre de Marivaux* (Laplace, Sanchez et cie, 1879).

²³³ Lasalle does not mention these sources directly, and given they were rarely-if-ever performed in the 1800s, in 1879 they would have had limited currency. However, this does not disqualify them: they appear as part of an evocation of eighteenth-century French court theatre, and in a review festooned with extremely niche references (such as the list of obscure dances mentioned below). These characters also resemble the particular traits at which Lasalle is taking aim.

associent des champs iconographiques'.²³⁴ These were emphatically not historically accurate paintings, instead resting on visual and thematic historicist tropes. Thus, in his evocation of Moreau, Lasalle's appraisal of *Panurge*'s historicity was suggestive of the approach to history and historical representation underpinning mid nineteenth-century *couleur historique*. His further claim, that the Moreau-esque costumes were 'ce qu'il y a encore de plus rabelaisien', served primarily to demonstrate the role Rabelais's texts played in cementing many of these Renaissance tropes: 'hommes d'armes et ribaudes, moines et gens de justice, rôtisseurs et vignerons' all breaking free from their 'immobilité picturale'.

Lasalle's claims about Moreau's aesthetic proximity to Rabelais also demonstrated how *couleur historique* and what I shall term *couleur rabelaisienne* overlapped. Lasalle's review of *Panurge* offers us some idea of this, demonstrating a desire by the critic for a specifically Rabelaisian notion of historical representation and calling for even more of what could be understood as *couleur rabelaisienne*. Lasalle wanted *Panurge*'s libretto to stay closer to the word and content of Rabelais's texts and wished that 'tout au moins qu'à la suite d'une étude plus consciencieuse du texte, les auteurs eussent jeté ça et là dans le dialogue quelques traits caractéristiques du livre dont ils s'inspirent'. As for the score, the critic lamented its lack of historical dance forms. Despite conceding that the *ronde de Beugency* (a dance) in the second act was 'fort gaie', Lasalle remained unsatisfied, explaining that the piece's creators 'avaient d'autres danses à choisir parmi celles qui étaient populaires au seizième siècle'. Then, in a display of self-proclaimed 'érudition facile', Lasalle offered his reader eight examples of historical dances that Hervé ought to have incorporated into his score, only one of which had any basis in the historical record. The critic took them instead from lists of invented dances and chansons included in the *Cinquième livre* and *Le Disciple de Pantagruel*: works still

²³⁴ Lilie Fauriac, 'Accumulation, destruction et hybridation chez Gustave Moreau: rêver pour ou contre l'histoire', *Sociétés et représentations*, 45.1 (2018), pp. 175–86 (p. 175).

widely considered in 1879 to have been written entirely by Rabelais.²³⁵ Lasalle thus appears to be substituting Rabelais's texts for musico-historical record.

Despite their having no basis in the history of dance, Hervé's failure to include any of Rabelais's invented dances meant, for Lasalle, that 'il n'est pas non plus trace d'archaïsme dans [sa] musique'. While the critic conceded that *Panurge*'s score was no less 'joyeuse et rythmée pour le plaisir des jambes' because of its lack of adherence to Rabelaisian pseudo-history, it still 'ne trahit aucune préoccupation de *couleur historique*.'²³⁶ Here, Lasalle elided historical record and the content of Rabelais's texts, using 'couleur historique' to denote a version of dance history derived specifically from Rabelais.

Differentiating *couleur rabelaisienne* from *couleur historique*: three examples.

Mischievous Monks in Rabelais's life, works, and 1879 afterlife.

Mischievous monks were a trope associated with Rabelais's texts, and with broader ideas about Renaissance literary culture. The *curé* was among numerous Medieval and Renaissance writers who included scandalous monks in their writing; love triangles involving an extramarital affair were also a recurrent theme in Medieval *fabliaux*, and the adulterous lover was often either a clerk or a member of the clergy.²³⁷ Both Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Héptameron*, for example, included tales of uncouth monastic

²³⁵ The dances listed by Lasalle are 'la frisque'; 'les six visages'; 'les trilborys de Bretagne'; 'l'oiselet'; 'le grand hélas!'; 'le triple plaisir'; 'le beurre frais'; 'la patience du More'. The pseudo-Rabelais's texts accounted for all but 'le triple plaisir', though the list of 180 dances and chansons in the *Cinquième livre* includes 'le triste plaisir' which Lasalle may have altered. Only one of these – le beurre frais – seems to have been based on a real dance, and is included in composer Pierre Attaignant's 1529 collection *Dix-huit basses danses* (Pierre Attaignant, *Dix-huit basses danses* (Paris, 1529), fol. 27v, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).

²³⁶ My italics.

²³⁷ Alison Williams, *Tricksters and Pranksters: Roguery in French and German Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Brill, 2000), p. 51.

sex. Because stories about lecherous monks appeared so often across the pre-modern period, the monastic material of Clairville and Gastineau's libretto thus helps to thematically anchor *Panurge's* narrative in a version of the past with particularly Renaissance resonances. Alongside this wider significance for pre-modern literature, cuckolding monks had a specifically Rabelaisian prehistory, which also situates the motif within the material of Rabelais's *Tiers livre*.

Towards the end of the *Tiers livre*, Pantagruel and his entourage meet Triboullet the fool. Having offered him gifts, including an inflated pig's bladder full of peas, Panurge explains his marriage quandary using 'parolles rhetoriques et elegantes', to which Triboullet responds: 'Par Dieu, Dieu, fol enraigé, guare moine, cornemuse de Buzançay' (TL.XLV.491).²³⁸ This exclamation is accompanied by several attempts to strike Panurge with fists and a sword. While subsequently trying to decode Triboullet's outburst, Pantagruel deduces that 'sus mon honneur que par quelque moine vous [Panurge] serez faict coqu' (TL.XLVI.493). He continues:

Les aultres oracles et responses vous ont resolu pacifiquement 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. Faudra il que vostre lict conjugal soit incest et contaminé par Moynerie? Dict oultre, que serez la cornemuse de Buzançay, c'est à dire, bien corné, cornard, et cornu. (TL.XLVI.493).

Clairville and Gastineau turn Triboullet's suggested outcome on its head. Rather than confirming Pantagruel's prediction by having a monk cuckold Panurge, the pair disguise Panurge as a monk and have him use this disguise to gain access to the town's married women without the supervision of their husbands. These monkish transgressions ultimately

²³⁸ While I acknowledge the obvious resemblance of Buzançay and Beugency, I remain sceptical of their link. While the latter could be extrapolation of the former, it is just as likely that Beugency was chosen because, like Buzançais, it is a small town in Rabelais's native Loire and thus has an inherent geographical association with his books.

lead Grippeminaud to seek revenge by having Panurge cuckolded in return. Here, the division between, on the one hand, grace-loaded markers of monasticism like a monk's habit and talk of 'pénitente' and 'bénédiction' and, on the other, bawdy or sinful themes of lechery and adultery is inverted, with these usually opposed discourses brought into interface, integrated into the same song '*C'est un moine!*' during which Panurge explains his monk impersonation stratagem. In the recitative preceding these *couplets*, Panurge emphasises the religiousness of the habit he is wearing, singing in a style reminiscent of intoned chant.²³⁹ This evocation of spirituality is then contrasted by the bawdier um-cha galop accompaniment to his *couplets* in which he outlines all his sexual transgressions. This lyrical and musical combination brings two otherwise contrasting discursive levels – the sacred and profane – into interface.

Monk disguises feature elsewhere in Clairville and Gastineau's libretto. Nodding to Rabelais's famous observation in *Gargantua*'s prologue that 'l'habit ne faict point le moine' (Garg.Pr.6), Panurge believes that the monk performing his wedding ceremony is his lackey Claquedent in disguise. However, Panurge's ruse is ultimately used against him: Claquedent is arrested, and the ceremony is carried out by Hillarion who is a real monk and thus able to perform legitimate marriages. The effect of this monastic material is to mediate general historical colour and specific Rabelaisian reference, situating Hervé's piece in both a broadly defined historical period, and a specifically Rabelaisian environment at once. Crucially, across the piece, monastic markers anchor Clairville and Gastineau's libretto to both the material and registrally mixed style of Rabelais's texts, serving as a focal point for the meeting of high and low discursive levels. These musical monks thus illustrate the move from *couleur historique* to a more specific *couleur rabelaisienne*.

²³⁹ Hervé, Clairville, and Gastineau, *Panurge: opera-comique en trois actes* (vocal score), pp. 43–44.

Rabelais's Bells - Hervé's Bells

Another way in which Hervé anchored *Panurge* in Rabelais's era was by writing music that mimicked church bells. This indicator was often used by writers of nineteenth-century music theatre to situate their works in pre-modernity. Before 1789, a village's bells were a key source of territorial identity. As the French cultural historian Alain Corbin explains, 'when they heard them ringing, villagers, townsfolk, and those "in the trades" in the centres of ancient towns experienced a sense of being rooted in space'.²⁴⁰ Eventually, by 1879 – nearly a century after the revolutionary government's church bell confiscations – the association of church bells with pre-industrial geographies meant that they had become an instrumental tool with which composers could add historicity to their scores.²⁴¹ Using them recreated an audial landscape from the Rabelaisian age, when 'the possession [and ringing] of a vast number of bells once constituted an integral aspect of French identity', according to Corbin.²⁴²

Further, there was a close association in the nineteenth-century imagination between Rabelais's texts and French campanological history. According to Corbin, this originated with the harangue produced by Janotus de Bragmardo in chapter XIX of *Gargantua*.²⁴³ In this episode, a member of the Sorbonne faculty named Bragmardo is sent by the Parisian townsfolk to parlay with Gargantua after the giant steals the bells of *Notre Dame de Paris*. Bragmardo's address to Gargantua – in part a satirical attack on the Sorbonne – rolls in typically Rabelaisian fashion between the gibberish of the inebriated ('Hen, hen, hasch!') and the often meaningless but erudite-sounding Latin commonplaces of a *Sorbonnicule*. This scene, among the most memorable in *Gargantua*, emphasises the importance of church bells to the audial identity of the sixteenth century.

²⁴⁰ Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside*, trans. by Thom Martin (Papermac, 1999), p. 95.

²⁴¹ Think, for example, of the bell writing in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (set in 1572), Halévy's *La Juive* (set in 1414), or Planquette's *Les Cloches de Conville* (set towards the end of the 1600s).

²⁴² Corbin, *Village Bells*, p. 5.

²⁴³ Corbin, *Village Bells*, p. 5.

Alongside ensuring that ‘toute la ville feut esmeue en sedition’, Gargantua’s bell-theft leads Bragmardo to confirm the bells’ financial and cultural value to the city, admitting that they had ‘bien aultresfoys refusé de bon argent de ceulx de Londres en Cahors, sy avions nous de ceulx de Bourdeaulx en Bryem qui les vouloient achapter pour la substantifique qualité de la complexion elementaire’ (Garg.XIX.51). To bolster his argument for their return, Bragmardo offers an outburst of Latinate campanological lunacy – ‘Omnis cloche clochabilis in clocherio clochando clochans clochantiuo clochare faict clochabiliter clochantes’ – before explaining that ‘une ville sans cloches est comme un aveugle sans baston, un asne sans crochiere, et une vache sans cymbales’ (Garg.XIX.52). According to Corbin, for nineteenth-century campanologists this bell-based babble constituted a clear demonstration of the importance afforded to bells in the ‘ringing towns’ of Rabelais’s era.²⁴⁴ The historicity of bell-sounds in the semiology of nineteenth-century music theatre thus offered an easily graspable way for Hervé to locate his piece within a broadly defined French Renaissance – and particularly Rabelaisian – audial realm.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Corbin, *Village Bells*, p. 5.

²⁴⁵ While including bell sounds in works of music theatre was reasonably common practice in the nineteenth century, because the Opéra was the only venue in Paris to own a set of large (but still useable) bells, much of this repertoire was confined to grand opera (Gundula Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong, Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (University of California Press, 2018), p. 154). Using full-sized church bells was not only logistically impossible but potentially dangerous in a closed auditorium. Instead, the Opéra used smaller, thinner instruments: those François-Auguste Gevaert calls ‘grands timbres ou calottes hémisphériques’ (François-Auguste Gevaert, *Nouveau traité d’instrumentation* (Lemoine et fils, 1885), p. 326, BnF). Though these were unable match the low-pitch, timbre, or resonant power of a full-sized bronze church bell, their harmonic complexity and solemn tone gave the same impression of scale as their belfry-based counterparts. Jean-Pierre Rambosson’s 1878 list of the Opéra’s bell collection makes their smaller size relative to normal church bells clear. While Notre Dame’s bourdon weighed around 18,000kg, the largest of the Opéra’s bells weighed only 820 kilogrammes, and the smallest forty (M. Dubu, *Histoire, description et annales de la basilique de Notre-Dame de Paris* (A. Bray, 1854), p. 25; Jean-Pierre Rambosson, *Les harmonies du son et l’histoire des instruments de musique*, (Firmin-Didot et cie, 1878), pp. 324–25). Yet, these instruments were for use solely in *salle le Peletier*. Meyerbeer, for example, could only include the tolling bells that signalled the start of the *Saint Barthélemy* massacre in the final act of *Les Huguenots* if it was being performed in Paris. If played elsewhere, the *grosses cloches* would usually be replaced by tuned gongs or a tam-tam: instruments that offered an audible and resonant thump, but lacked the specific and complex interplay of strike note and hummed note produced by real, bell-shaped bells (Kreuzer, p. 154). These substitute instruments were likely what were used in *Panurge* as, according to Kreuzer, these were the replacements most commonly used in Paris’s minor theatres.

Both Rabelais's and Hervé's use of bell sounds are morally as well as liturgically significant. Rabelais uses church bells as part of his intervention in the *Querelle des femmes*.²⁴⁶ In the *Tiers livre*, Panurge asks Frère Jean if he should marry, to which the friar responds:

marie toy de par le Diable, marie toy, et carillonne à doubles carillons de couillons [...] Sçaiz tu pas bien, que la fin du monde approche? Nous en sommes huy plus près de deux trabutz en demie toise, que n'estions avant hier. L'Antichrist est desja né, ce m'a l'on dict [...] *Crescite. Nos qui uiuimus. Multiplicamini*. Il est escript. C'est matière de brevaire. [...] Vouldrois tu bien qu'on te trouvast les couilles pleines au jugement? *dum uenerit iudicare*. (TL.XXVI.434-435)²⁴⁷

Drawing an association between apocalypse, marriage, and ringing a *carillonne*, Frère Jean's reference to *carillons de couillons* figuratively depicts Panurge's genitals being used for their biological purpose. Yet it also associates the 'chiming' of one's testicles in wedlock with good preparation for the second coming. Representing both Panurge's procreative potential and the apocalypse at once, the bells thus mediate life's beginning and ending. They ring for the joy of a birth and in the face of death: for the baptism and for the funeral. By invoking this dual significance specifically in relation to wedding bells, Frère Jean imbues marital peals with a similar dual meaning. His later suggestion that Panurge listen to the 'oracle des cloches de Varennes' which first ring 'Marie toy, marie toy: marie, marie' and then 'marie point, marie point, point, point, point' (TL.XXVIII.442) further emphasises the

²⁴⁶ For two divergent discussions of the *Querelle des femmes* and Rabelais's role in it, see Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 191–99; Pierre Goumarre, 'Rabelais: misogynie et misogamie', *Littératures*, 15 (1986), pp. 59–72.

²⁴⁷ The Latin phrases that intersperse Frère Jean's apocalyptic claims are a hybrid of Genesis 1:22 ('Benedixitque eis, dicens: Crescite, et multiplicamini, et replete aquas maris: avesque multiplicentur super terram') and Psalm 113 ('nos qui uiuimus, benedicimus Domino, ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum'). The monk's combination emphasises that reproduction is a sacred imperative. He then ends with a reference to the line in the *Officium defunctorum* 'Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem', in which God comes down from heaven to judge the world by fire. From his phrasing, Frère Jean suggests that being found with full testicles at the apocalypse will invite the wrath of God and is thus associated by the monk with a form of religious transgression imbuing the idea of failed conception with a sense of cosmological, religious jeopardy.

simultaneous positive and negative associations of wedding chimes. Because they appear in the context of debates about marriage and female morality, the bells changing their tune and ringing whatever their listener wishes to hear does nothing to abate the marital emasculatory jeopardy facing Panurge in the *Tiers livre*. Given Panurge's anxieties about marriage and the threat of being cuckolded are essentially a cover for deeply held fears about discovering that he lacks sexual potency and alienating his hypothetical wife, the answers given by the bells suggest both positive and negative marital outcomes, leaving open both the possibility that Panurge legitimately procreates and avoids being cuckolded, and that Panurge does not procreate and is cuckolded.²⁴⁸

Hervé, Clairville, and Gastineau's wedding scene is a site of similar celebratory and apocalyptic duality, resulting as it is from both Phœbé's love, and from the threat of Grippeminaud's deadly vengeance. Hervé's score uses extended percussion forces – two *cloches* tuned to C and G and a set of *timbres* (a glockenspiel) – to represent the tolling bells and carillon chime patterns that would have emanated from French belltowers of Rabelais's era. The scene, written in a strident 2/4 in C major, opens with the *cloches* alternately chiming tonic and dominant crotchets. Above this, the glockenspiel and first violins play semiquaver phrases reminiscent of celebratory bell peals. Adding to the bell texture at the start of her *chanson*, 'Fanfare' – a female ensemble role – sings 'digue, digue, don! écoutez donc, c'est le clocheton de la chapelle'. The semiquaver phrases in her melody line also mimic bell peals, confirmed by the *timbres* which chime the second eight bars of her song along with her.

Capitalising on the differing timbres and potential for melodic complexity of the glockenspiel and the 'bells' at his disposal, Hervé used each to represent different types of

²⁴⁸ The progression from lack of potency to cuckoldry as a result of womankind's supposedly unbridled sexual appetite is discussed throughout Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* (Routledge, 2012), particularly pp. 15–16.

bell tower that operated during Rabelais's lifetime. In its chromaticism, the glockenspiel mimics a set of *carillon* chimes: a network of bells controlled by a keyboard and capable of playing complex melodic material and even polyphonic harmony. These were invented in the early 1500s and were still in use in the Netherlands, though any that had been built in France were destroyed during Revolutionary bell confiscations. Hervé's *cloches*, on the other hand, are, in their alternating between two tones more reminiscent of the comparatively limited campanological forces wielded by rural bell towers and the smaller belfries of monastic orders. While the *timbres* in Hervé's score play joyful bell peals, the *cloches* begin by ringing alternating tonic-dominant crotchets to underpin the song's C major tonality before tolling a bottom C in a manner reminiscent of a funeral bell once Fanfare begins to sing about the upcoming wedding. This is a subtle reminder to the Bouffes-Parisiens audience that, for Panurge, the 'clocheton' calling him to be wed is also part of Grippeminaud's revenge and will ultimately lead to his downfall. By recreating the music of a family of instruments so heavy with dually positive and negative meanings in Rabelais's texts, Hervé was able to take a widely used musical marker of *couleur historique* and give it a specifically Rabelaisian spin. By deploying a *couleur rabelaisienne* in this way, Hervé sent a foreboding musical message: Panurge, the bell tolls for thee.

De Thou, Doré, and Renaissance Ribaldry

Bells and monks were markers of ambiguity in Rabelais's texts that were seized upon by Hervé and his librettists as tools with which to situate their narrative in a Rabelaisian historical world of ambiguous verisimilitude. But these ambiguities extended beyond the letter of his texts to ideas in circulation during the nineteenth century concerning the writer's early life and position on the social hierarchies of his day. In particular, the ambiguous social position of Rabelais in nineteenth-century imaginaries informed the illustrations of Gustave

Doré. These were images so synonymous with the *chroniques* that, as I will now demonstrate, they came to operate as a key aesthetic touchstone for late nineteenth-century audiences and a lens through which to judge aesthetic fidelity to Rabelais.

In 1854, Doré published a new and extremely successful edition of the works of François Rabelais.²⁴⁹ Though by no means his most celebrated collection, Doré's illustrations of the *chroniques* were reprinted several times over the decades that followed, and then re-released in a new second edition by Garnier in 1873, only a few of years before Clairville, Hervé, and Gastineau began work on *Panurge*.²⁵⁰ Despite some of Doré's works – notably the illustrations accompanying William Blanchard Jerrold's *London: A Pilgrimage* – being accepted by critics of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as works of realism, Alan Woods has more recently insisted that the artist's process was rooted primarily in his imagination and recollection rather than keen observation and faithful recreation.²⁵¹ As Woods explains, both in his city scenes and his illustrations of literary works, Doré proceeded 'by imaginative reconstruction, by a judicial selection and distortion, which [when] followed consistently gave a unity to the illustrations as a whole'.²⁵² When illustrating books, Doré's compositional process would begin with details outlined in the text. He would then fill any gaps in the work's visual description by using his imagination which, in turn, would have been shaped by the particularities of the writer's reception history and status, as well as current ideas about the period in which they were active. This, ultimately, lent his illustrations a sense of manufactured, virtual realism, extrapolating from widely shared preconceived notions of what the Renaissance probably looked like and using this as his image's aesthetic backbone.

²⁴⁹ Rabelais, *Oeuvres de François Rabelais [...] illustrée par Gustave Doré*, (Paris, J. Bry Ainé, 1854).

²⁵⁰ François Rabelais and Gustave Doré, *Œuvres* (Garnier frères, 1873).

²⁵¹ William Blanchard Jerrold and Gustave Doré, *London: A Pilgrimage* (Dover, 1970); Alan Woods, 'Doré's London: Art and Evidence', *Art History*, 1.3 (1978), pp. 341–59 (p. 345).

²⁵² Alan Woods, 'Doré's London: Art and Evidence', *Art History*, 1.3 (1978), p. 345.

For reviewers, Doré's visual rendering of the *chroniques*, with its reliance on ideas about the Renaissance that were already in circulation in the 1850s, constituted a widely comprehensible comparison point with which to comment on the costumes and staging used in Hervé's *Panurge*. This touchpoint's effectiveness was then compounded by the fact that the illustrator was, according to Senelick, known to frequent the Bouffes-Parisiens.²⁵³ As an example of their association, in an article included in the annual theatrical periodical *Les annales du théâtre et de la musique*, one of either Édouard Noël or Edmond Stoullig – two prolific mid-century theatre critics – describes the town crier and his entourage as 'un groupe à la Doré', nodding towards the several scenes of large crowds that appeared in the illustrations.²⁵⁴ Elsewhere, the Franco-Italian journalist, librettist, and opera translator Achille de Lauzières – writing in *La Patrie* under the pseudonym 'M. de Thémènes' rather than his usual 'Aldo Aldini' – rendered the intermedial links between Rabelais and Doré explicit, stating outright that the costumes were 'la plupart copiés fidèlement sur les illustrations de Rabelais, par M. Gustave Doré'.²⁵⁵

Alongside stage directions in the libretto calling for 'costumes de grands parents au temps de Rabelais' (V2. p. 60), photographs of the performers go some limited way towards supporting these claims. For example, though soprano Benatti's costume seems to lack much historical resonance, in an effort to look historical both Auguste Louis Arsandaux (playing Panurge) and Doré's illustrated Panurge wore a doublet with puffed and slashed sleeves and a bonnet, and both accented their hats with a comically large feather (*Figure 1*). Arsandaux's tunic also echoed that worn by Doré's Panurge while aboard the Thalamège. In addition, in

²⁵³ Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture*, p. 37.

²⁵⁴ Édouard Noël and Edmond Stoullig, '10 Septembre', *Annales du théâtre et de la musique*, 1879, pp. 423–26, BnF. Because of the way that these articles have been collected, it is no longer clear which of these reviewers first penned the text in question.

²⁵⁵ Achille de Lauzières [M. de Thémènes, pseud.], 'Revue musicale', *La Patrie*, 15 September 1879, BnF. For much of his career, Lauzières used the pseudonym Aldo Aldini, but by 1879 he appears to only be using it in Italophone publications.

both Doré's images and Hervé's production, Panurge usually wore tights and often sported a satchel similar to the one worn by Arsandaux. Yet one could question whether these similarities constituted faithful copying, as Lauzières claimed. Ultimately, the main thing that critics demonstrated by their frequent reference to Doré's illustrations was the extent to which the artist relied on and extrapolated from widely accepted notions of what the Renaissance looked like, and how these ideas, in turn, had shaped how the era looked in the popular imagination. Whether the costumes resembled those in Doré's illustrations may not have mattered. In the eyes of the nineteenth-century audience member, they probably looked the same because they both looked Renaissance-ish: demonstrating a loose historicity akin to *couleur historique*.



Figure 1²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ BnF, Département estampes et photographie, FT 4-NA-238 (1)

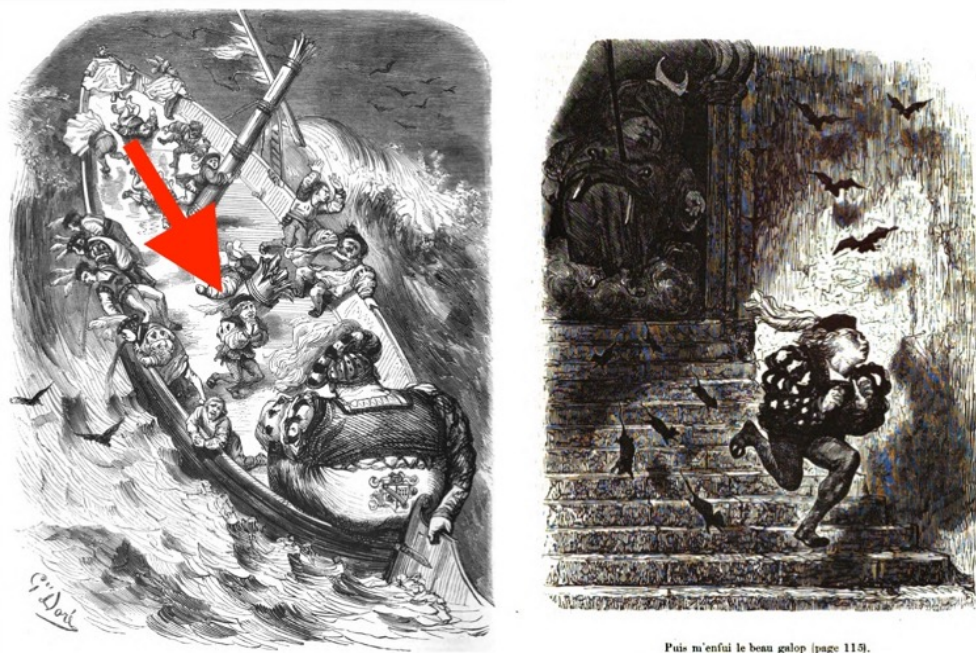


Figure 2

Alongside the ease with which his illustrations could be integrated into pre-existing nineteenth-century ideas and expectations of Renaissance aesthetics, the enduring currency of Doré's illustrated *chroniques* may have also had to do with his recourse to broader Rabelaisian tropes, at times derived from widely accepted second-hand accounts or interpretations of Rabelais's texts and his life. This included the bawdy tavern culture in which literary historians of the nineteenth century still believed that Rabelais had grown up. Though it is now widely accepted that Rabelais's father was a senior lawyer in Chinon named Antoine Rabelais, when Hervé was penning *Panurge*, François Rabelais was still generally believed to be the son of an apothecary-turned-innkeeper named Thomas Rabelais, and that before joining the Franciscans at Fontenay-le-Comte the young writer spent his early life among his father's ne'er-do-well drinking clientele.²⁵⁷ This myth is thought to originate with

²⁵⁷ For one of many biographies to claim that Rabelais's father was an innkeeper called Thomas, see: Jean Fleury, *Rabelais et ses oeuvres* (Didier, 1876), pp. 38–40. By the turn of the twentieth century, it would appear that the real identity of Rabelais's father had been established, though the link to tavern culture persisted (see, for example: Anatole France, *Rabelais* (Calmann-Lévy, 1928), p. 2.)

historian Jacques-Auguste de Thou's (1553-1617) account of his sojourn in Chinon during the early years of the seventeenth century.²⁵⁸

Though only broaching the innkeeper myth briefly, the passage of de Thou's *Vita* describing his stay in the Rabelais family inn came to be seen as an authoritative account of the curé's early life, re-emerging in several key nineteenth-century interpretations of Rabelais. Pierre Lanfrey's entry on Rabelais in the *Larousse Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^{ème} siècle*, for example, described the writer's imagined father Thomas as an 'aubergiste' and states that 'ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est qu'il possédait dans cette ville une maison qui, du temps de l'historien de Thou, était devenue un cabaret [...]'.²⁵⁹ This claim was echoed nearly verbatim in the preface to the 1870 re-edition of Burgaud des Marets and Rathery's *Œuvres de Rabelais*.²⁶⁰ Diverging from this, in 1873 Louis Moland questioned whether the house mentioned by de Thou was the same building once owned by Thomas Rabelais, writing that ultimately 'il semble prouvé que le père de Rabelais possédait, aux environs de la ville [de Chinon], un clos renommé pour le bon vin qu'il produisait; le clos de la Devinière, que Rabelais a célébré dans ses écrits.'²⁶¹ The mythologising smog surrounding Rabelais's pre-Franciscan years was so thick that specific details included in stories of his childhood in Chinon often differ wildly. Yet, crucially, all were united in their deferral to de Thou as a source wielding some level of historical legitimacy.

De Thou's account of Rabelais's early life comes as he describes staying in Chinon (in the third person) with his companion Calignon in the building that was once, supposedly, Rabelais's family inn:

²⁵⁸ Jacques-Auguste de Thou, *La vie de Jacques-Auguste de Thou* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2007). It is impossible to pin down the precise date that Thou wrote his *Vita*, but it was first compiled and published in full by a third-party in 1620 and subsequently appeared in French translation in 1711.

²⁵⁹ Pierre Lanfrey, 'Rabelais', in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* (Slatkine, 1982), XIII, pp. 589–90.

²⁶⁰ François Rabelais, *Œuvres de Rabelais*, ed. by Henri Burgaud des Marets and Edmé-Jacques-Benoît Rathery, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Firmin-Didot frères, fils et Cie, 1870), p. 2.

²⁶¹ François Rabelais, *Oeuvres de Rabelais*, ed. by Louis Moland (Garnier frères, 1873), p. X.

Chinone hospitum habebat in domo oppida amplissima quae quondam Francisci Rabelaesii fuit, [...]. Hominis ridiculi, qui tota uita ac scriptis ridendi aliis materiam praebuit, memoria a Iacobo et Calignono heic renouata est, cum belle cum Rabelaesii manibus actum uterque diceret, quod domus eius publico diuersorio, in quo perpetuae comessationes erant [...]²⁶²

So taken is Calignon with his hallowed surroundings that he composes a verse, written as if by Rabelais:

[...] Nam quae a patre domus fuerat Chinone relictæ, | Qua uitreo Lemouix amne
Vigenna fluit, || Postquani abii, communis in usum uersa tabernæ | Laetifico strepitu
nocte dieque sonat.²⁶³

De Thou's account makes a double association. The first is between François Rabelais and the bawdy inn-culture of the 'publico diuersorio', while the second is between this culture and *materiam risus*: the *curé*'s ability to produce humorous texts for others to laugh about. In this way, de Thou's account implies that Rabelais's childhood experiences defined his style. Jacques-Charles Brunet emphasised this aspect of de Thou's text in his 1852 study of the differences between Rabelais's original editions. Brunet pointed out that the interpretation of Rabelais presented in the *Vita* suggested that the writer's early life was represented through his texts allegorically rather than imitatively, implying that the influence of his father's inn permeated his texts' broader aesthetic, rather than appearing through direct reference.²⁶⁴ The inn culture in which Rabelais was thought to have grown up was thus seen as having a profoundly important influence on his style, and this in turn greatly informed Doré's approach to rendering it visually. In the first edition of the *chroniques* to be accompanied by

²⁶² De Thou, *La vie de Jacques-Auguste de Thou*, pp. 954–56. 'In Chinon, he [de Thou] stayed in a very large townhouse in which François Rabelais once was. [...] In these surroundings, Calignon and Jacques – so that under the spectre of Rabelais they might speak of how the building had been a public house of perpetual commotion – evoked the memory of that ridiculous man who throughout his life and writing always gave others something to laugh about.' (My translation).

²⁶³ De Thou, *La vie de Jacques-Auguste de Thou*, p. 958. 'In Chinon (the town through which the Limousin and Vienne flow), the house bequeathed by my father was turned into a tavern after I took my leave, and now rings night and day with joyful noise.' (My translation).

²⁶⁴ Jacques-Charles Brunet, *Recherches bibliographiques et critiques sur les éditions originales des cinq livres du roman satirique de Rabelais* (L. Potier, 1852), p. 131.

Doré's illustrations, the first image the reader encountered – placed above the *Preface* – depicted the Cabaret de la Cave-Peinte in fullest ribaldry (figure 3). As a band plays from atop an oversized wine barrel, plates of meat and drinks are carried down the stairs and through a rowdy crowd of drunkards dressed in stylised Renaissance clothing. At a table in the centre sits a group of gamblers buried in a game, while inebriated patrons collapse around it and someone vomits from the landing above. To the left, watching the debauchery from a distance with a flagon of ale sits François Rabelais, identifiable by his trademark hat, robe, and beard.



Le Cabaret de la Cave-Peinte, à Chinon.

Figure 3

This image, one of Doré's 'têtes de page' held by encyclopaedist Lanfrey as particularly worthy of celebration, depicted Rabelais's creative practice as it was understood by mid nineteenth-century France.²⁶⁵ Rabelais watches the fun from the side-lines, his gaze in the

²⁶⁵ Lanfrey, 'Rabelais'.

illustration embodying and literalising perceptions of his authorial gaze: brow furrowed from the effort of keen observation.

The supposed preoccupation Rabelais had with the debauchery of the Renaissance tavern is revealed in Hervé's *Panurge* through a variety of means. For example, the composer and his librettists open their piece among the 'Ribauds et Ribaudes' of Beaugency. In celebration of drink, love, and song, this group calls their fellow townspeople to 'riboter, gobelotter, jusqu'à le lie' (V2, p. 13): two verbs closely associated with tavern culture, according to Émile Littré's 1873 *Dictionnaire de la langue française*.²⁶⁶ A group of ribaudes then take it in turns to sing a *ronde* with a refrain outlining how '[nous] profitons de notre jeune âge | profitons de notre printemps | chacune de nous sera sage | Dans vingt ou trente ans | nous avons bien le temps' (V2, p. 23). This serves to associate bawdy drinking and tavern culture with flirtation and sexual promiscuity.

Several reviewers commented on *Panurge*'s sexual themes. For example, Paul Merruau closed his article in the weekly performing arts magazine *L'album théâtral* by suggesting that the 'bande de ribaudes qui ne mettent pas leurs yeux dans leurs poches et leurs... mamelons dans leur corsages' ultimately confirmed *Panurge*'s success.²⁶⁷ This was echoed – though less explicitly – by two further critics: composer Victorin Joncières (né Félix Ludger-Rossignol) and Léon Kerst (né Léon de Froidement). Oddly for a composer-critic charged with writing a 'revue musicale', Joncières' article in *La Liberté* – a relatively young publication for which he had written since 1871 – made no mention of Hervé's score.²⁶⁸ Instead, it commended some (mostly male) singers for their fine voices, and the female chorus members in the *Ronde de Beaugency* for being 'fort appétissantes'. Questioning why

²⁶⁶ Émile Littré, 'Riboter', in *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Librarie Hachette et cie, 1889), IV, p. 1721, Taylor Institution; Émile Littré, 'Gobeloter', in *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Librarie Hachette et cie, 1889), II, p. 1889, Taylor Institution. The first is called a 'terme populaire', the second a 'term familier', and both definitions reference excessive drinking.

²⁶⁷ Paul Merruau, 'Panurge', *L'Album théâtral*, October 1879, p. 1, BnF.

²⁶⁸ Victorin Joncières [Félix Ludger-Rossignol], 'Revue musicale', *La Liberté*, 15 September 1879, BnF.

so many of the townsfolk are cuckolded in Hervé's piece, Joncières re-emphasised the seductiveness of the chorus' female members by concluding that 'il faut que les épouses de ces malheureux soient bien séduisantes pour accaparer ainsi les mauvais sujets de la ville.'

Léon Kerst was also struck by the sexual themes and 'le terrain égrillard' through which Clairville libretto led.²⁶⁹ The critic opened a parenthesis in his plot summary in order to prime his readers for a shock. Invoking his recent salad days as a student of the humanities, Kerst suggested that he might have recourse to revisit the 'langue de Cicéron' he studied only four years earlier at university in order, one assumes, to obscure the raunchy details of *Panurge*'s plot from his thinner-skinned (and less classically educated) readers.²⁷⁰ He ultimately steels himself, however, concluding that 'il faudrait braver l'honnêteté d'une manière absolue' if one wants to understand the significance of Clairville 'détails épicés'. Clearly, then, *Panurge* was seen by this critic to represent Rabelais's raunchy side well.

The critical preoccupation with Rabelais's bawdier material suggests that questions of register were crucial to Rabelais's nineteenth-century reception. Yet in 1879 these registral considerations were also bound up with perceptions of his position in sixteenth-century social hierarchies: the son of a rural innkeeper, rather than a wealthy lawyer. Because of the prevalence of the innkeeper myth, readers from de Thou to Doré and beyond placed themes of debauched revelry — the textual manifestation of Rabelais's supposed popular roots — at the heart of their concept of the Rabelaisian. In its frequent recourse to themes of sex and drunkenness, Hervé's *Panurge* demonstrated the influence of the innkeeper myth well, illustrating how it had become an integral aspect of Rabelais's mythologised personal history, representing the biographical origin of his preoccupation with popular culture and engendering an association between Rabelais, sex, and drunkenness that was ultimately

²⁶⁹ Léon Kerst [Léon de Froidevent], 'Revue musicale', *La Presse*, 21 September 1879, p. 2, BnF.

²⁷⁰ Kerst had only left university to become a journalist four years before this article appeared in *La Presse*.

derived from both his biography and his texts in uncertain measure. When used by nineteenth-century readers as a tool for establishing meaning in the *chroniques*, ideas about Rabelais's position in social hierarchies came to shape how those creating their afterlives like Hervé, Clairville, and Gastineau approached reformulating them for the musical stage. In turn, by depicting aspects of Renaissance life associated with a lower socio-cultural viewpoint, Hervé and his collaborators underlined the importance that employing aspects of 'low' culture had to Rabelais's texts and the construction of *couleur rabelaisienne*.

The focus on themes of drunkenness and sexuality thus provided an account of Renaissance culture skewed by ideas about Rabelais's early life and the impact this had on the content of his texts. Because of this, both Doré's illustrated editions and Hervé's *Panurge* depicted a historical colour of a decidedly Rabelaisian hue. They may therefore be said to present a *couleur rabelaisienne*, a device integrating historicist aesthetics and elements of Rabelais's texts or biography operating on contrasting or ambiguous registral levels. In their own ways, each of the three motifs I have discussed thus presented an idea of history refracted by the fictional lens of Rabelais's *chroniques*. In *Panurge*, however, this *couleur historique* — reliant as it was on historical motifs that were associated with broad periods, rather than specific dates — was infused with beliefs and assumptions about Rabelais's life and times that mixed, confused, or undermined attempts to categorise cultural phenomena in terms of their value or morality.

Hervé's use of monks, bells, and ribald themes to foreground a version of history heavy with Rabelaisian ambiguity suggests that the fluid combination of discursive levels was an integral part of how the *chroniques* were understood by nineteenth-century French readers. While mischievous monks and pealing bells anchored Hervé's *Panurge* in a (broadly defined) Renaissance literary and audial past, incorporating themes of sex and cuckoldry into these usually lofty historically situated markers of religious devotion and practice also restated and

foregrounded some of the moral and registral ambiguities associated with the *chroniques*. The influence of the innkeeper myth on Rabelais's nineteenth-century reception then lent these discussions of registral ambiguity a socio-cultural significance, with Rabelais's position in the social hierarchies of his era emerging as a key factor in influencing how his texts were understood to have been conceived. Both the repeated appearance of bawdy *ribaude*s and *ribaude*s, and the frequent recourse to sexual themes in *Panurge* thus situated the work in a specifically Rabelaisian past as construed by the period. In an effort to echo the figure of Rabelais most familiar to them – a writer engaged in the generic, moral, registral and socio-cultural mixing – Hervé and his collaborators therefore set about depicting a version of history that echoed Rabelais's texts by presenting analogous markers of Christian devotion as highly registrally and morally ambiguous. All of this took place against a biographical backdrop that prioritised Rabelais's ascension from humble origins among debauched drunkards to the French court and literary immortality.

Generic hybridity and ambiguity in musical and theatrical culture of 1879: Hervé, Offenbach, and the Bouffes-Parisiens

The cultural and historical circumstances in which *Panurge* was premiered afforded the registral mixing for which Rabelais was known in the nineteenth century space to re-emerge. Examining the developmental history of the Bouffes-Parisiens and the aesthetic aims of its founder Jacques Offenbach, I will now demonstrate how the composer's theatrical genre hybridisation shaped his venue's development and its prioritisation of the *opéra-bouffe* genre, setting the stage for my discussion of how this mixing influenced the creation of Hervé's *Panurge*. Because of this hybridisation, I suggest that the Bouffes-Parisiens was well placed

to accommodate Rabelais's similarly hybrid dialogic writing. Following this, I shall turn my attention to Hervé's tumultuous career, demonstrating how his compositions became increasingly generically ambiguous as he encountered numerous and recurrent personal and political setbacks. Hervé's ever-increasing mixing and blurring of his period's musical and theatrical genres meant that by the time he came to pen *Panurge*, he had developed a generically ambiguous compositional style that echoed Rabelais's registrally mixed texts in its infusion of high and low forms. By examining the generic hybridity of Offenbach's Bouffes-Parisiens and the generic ambiguity of Hervé's later compositions in this way, I shall thus reveal resonances between the context in which *Panurge* was created and Rabelais's dialogic writing style.

These resonances did not, however, ensure the success of Hervé's adaptation. By turning to the reviews that appeared in the critical press following *Panurge*'s première in September 1879, I will examine some of the ways in which critics navigated the piece's ambiguous genre identity, demonstrating that this aspect of *Panurge* was noticed by those attending the premiere. As I discussed in the first half of this chapter, registral fluidity is a key aspect of *couleur rabelaisienne*. However, as will become clear, being of Rabelais, and being of a Rabelaisian *couleur*, were two very different things. Indeed, just because a piece and its performance venue echoed Rabelais's style in some ways, did not mean it could be said to wield the same level of cultural clout as the writer or his own texts. The context in which Hervé, Clairville, and Gastineau wrote and performed their Rabelaisian *opéra-comique* may well have afforded Rabelais's *chroniques* a prime opportunity to re-emerge in all their dialogic, genre-bending hybridity. However, because of the lesser perceived cultural value wielded by Hervé and his collaborators, this opportunity seems not to have been seized. These critical responses demonstrate the extent to which a writer's cultural status could influence the success of their adaptation. Ultimately, Rabelais's texts were considered unique,

timeless, and of a genius unavailable to Hervé, a composer who by 1879 had come to appear decidedly middle-of-the-road.

Tracing the development of the Bouffes-Parisiens and its generic hybridity

The *opéra-bouffe* genre developed by Offenbach was mixed, appropriating aspects of Eastern Paris's stage culture and presenting it in sanitised form to the well-to-do audience he had established by performing in the bourgeois salons of the Saint-Honoré and Saint-Germain *faubourgs*.²⁷¹ Offenbach (like Rabelais) could be said to operate in a space between preconceived discursive levels, adopting aspects of several in order to support his ambiguous position in his era's hierarchies of cultural value and taste.

Offenbach adopted this position because of a desire to return French light *opéra* to the aesthetic values of its past, combatting what Mark Everist has called the 'overinflated nature of contemporary [French] music' by (re)positioning the emergent *opérette* genre within the tradition of eighteenth-century light Italianate comic opera.²⁷² His chosen generic marker *opéra-bouffe* signalled this desire in its orthographic proximity to the *opera buffa* tradition of Italy.²⁷³ Offenbach called upon many of the state officials and icons of Parisian high society whom he had encountered in the salons, notably the director of *Le Figaro* Hippolyte de Villemessant, and asked them to support his application for a new theatrical license.²⁷⁴ In June 1855, his wish was granted, and the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens opened, first in the Salle Lacaze – a venue located in the middle of the Champs-Élysées gardens – then permanently in a newly refurbished and expanded 900-seat hall located on the passage

²⁷¹ Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture*, p. 12.

²⁷² Everist, 'Jacques Offenbach', p. 79. By 'overinflated', Everist likely means in terms of both orchestration and production scale. Offenbach echoed this, decrying the Opéra-Comique's 'préférence aux grandes choses'.

²⁷³ Offenbach outlined this aim in: Jacques Offenbach, 'Concours pour une opérette en un acte', *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique* (27 July 1856), pp. 1–3, BnF. Discussing the desire for a renewed emulation of eighteenth-century Italian styles, the composer writes that his venue's 'titre même lui en fait un devoir.'

²⁷⁴ Louis-Henry Lecomte, *Histoire des théâtres de Paris : 1402-1911*, (Slatkine, 1973), VIII, p. 40.

Choiseul that had previously been home to the Théâtre Comte and stood a few streets away from the Opéra.²⁷⁵ This proved to be a judicious choice of location because of its proximity to ‘la croisée de Paris’: the area bisecting boulevard de Sébastopol and the stretch of Rue de Rivoli between place du Châtelet and place de la Concorde which had been an early focus of Haussmann’s city-wide architectural gentrification project and had undergone redevelopment by the time Offenbach moved in.²⁷⁶ Because of this, as Paris’s theatrical geography – particularly the Eastern area housing the city’s popular theatrical district – was altered beyond recognition by Haussmann’s redevelopments during the early 1860s, the Bouffes-Parisiens could continue to perform, largely undisturbed.

For mid-century Parisian theatrical culture, Haussmann’s demolition of the boulevard du Temple in 1862 was the most consequential phase of his architectural redevelopment project. As Figure 4 shows, the seven theatres that stood on boulevard du Temple, alongside the cafés offering live entertainment that surrounded them, were demolished in order to make way for the new place du Château-d’Eau (now place de la République). The majority of venues in the area either closed or were dispersed across Paris, mostly Westwards, along Haussmann’s new boulevard de Sébastopol (completed in 1854). Ultimately, a large chunk of Eastern Paris’s lively popular theatrical district was disbanded; the companies that survived moved into more affluent areas of the city while many of its regular popular-class patrons were priced out.²⁷⁷ Haussmann’s twin-headed regime of architectural redevelopment and real estate speculation moved the popular boulevard venues further into the city’s affluent centre while also triggering a mass migration of working-class communities from the inner city towards its periphery.²⁷⁸ Audiences and venues were thus pulled away from one another by the

²⁷⁵ Levin, ‘A Documentary Overview of Musical Theaters in Paris, 1830-1900’, p. 401.

²⁷⁶ Patrice de Moncan and Claude Heurteux, *Le Paris d’Haussmann* (Les Editions du Mécène, 2002), p. 37.

²⁷⁷ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, pp. 45–46.

²⁷⁸ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 45.

centrifugal forces of *embourgeoisement*. In this way, the gentrification of Paris's Eastern faubourgs was also the gentrification of the city's theatrical culture.²⁷⁹

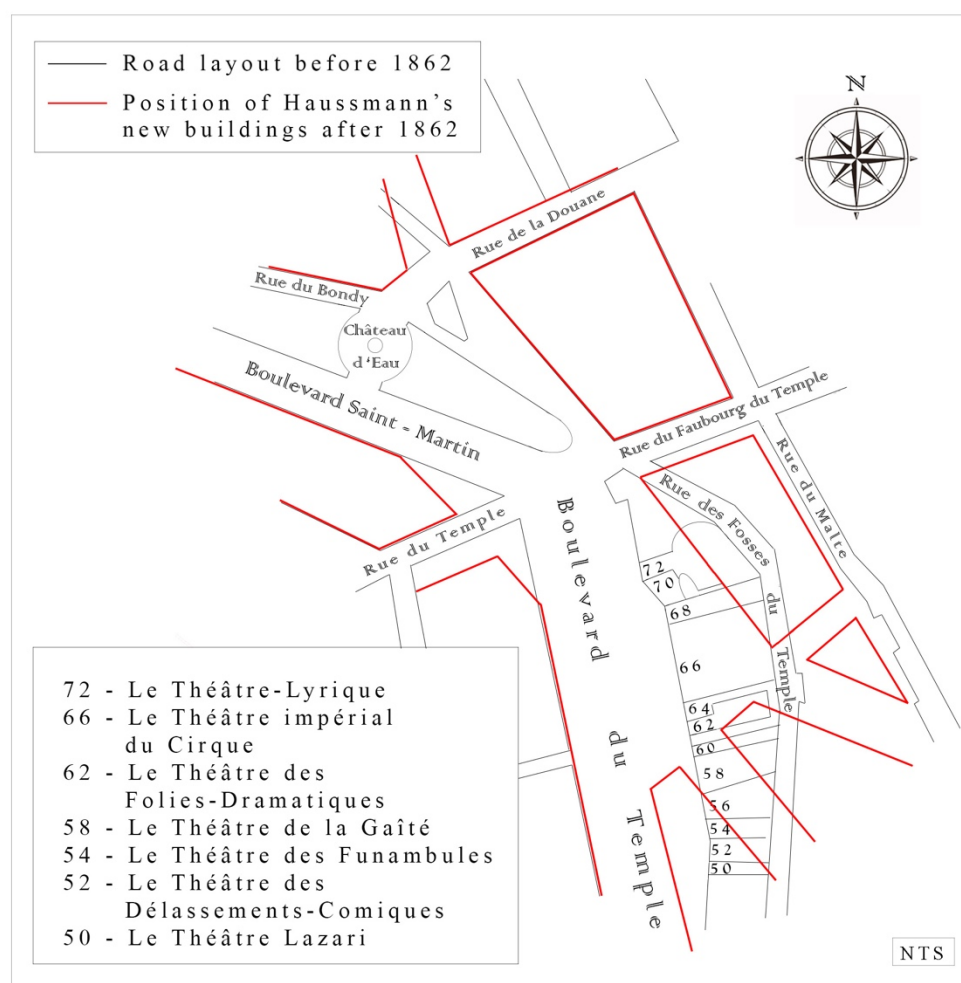


Figure 4²⁸⁰

As a clear example of how changes to Paris's geography affected theatres, the development of the Théâtre-Lyrique's repertoire reflected the effects of the theatrical gentrification caused by Paris's great Westward theatrical migration. The Théâtre-Lyrique gained a license in the early 1850s to perform new *opéra-comique* by young composers, as

²⁷⁹ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, pp. 45–48.

²⁸⁰ This map was created especially for this thesis in collaboration with cartographer Catherine Horton, and I am grateful to her for lending her time and skills. It was adapted from a series of nineteenth-century maps, cross-referenced with a similarly overlaid map included in Juliette Aubrun, 'Le théâtre dans les travaux d'Haussmann: histoire d'une reconstruction d'un dessein culturel', in *Les Spectacles sous le Second Empire*, ed. by Jean-Claude Yon (Armand Colin, 2010), pp. 72–83 (pp. 77–79).

well as revivals of old works of the *opéra-comique* and *opéra* canon. It had previously operated as a more economically accessible venue, performing older works of the *opéra-comique* genre. However, in 1863, just a year after relocating to the southern end of boulevard de Sébastopol, the theatre premiered Berlioz's *Les Troyens* and Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, both large scale works bearing the generic marker 'opéra'. Though the venue had never premiered any newly written *opéra* before its relocation, in its new surroundings it would perform at least one piece of *opéra* annually until 1869. It then burned down in 1871 and, after moving again to the Salle Athénée (located just behind the Palais Garnier's construction site), folded the following year, never to reopen.²⁸¹ The exodus of poorer communities also hamstrung attempts to rekindle the popular theatrical culture of the East. For example, the Prince-Impérial theatre that opened in 1866 on the new place du Château-d'Eau with the intention of performing popular theatrical forms never found financial success, lacking as it did any committed local audience.²⁸²

Ultimately, the fate of the Prince Impérial exemplified how demolishing the Eastern *boulevards* and pricing their inhabitants out of the city also served to limit the spread and success of the forms of theatrical culture most popular among the city's lower classes. In essence, Haussmann's redevelopment of boulevard du Temple constituted an architectural enactment of Napoléon I's 1807 theatrical legislation, placing the comparable limits on Parisian popular theatrical culture, but enforced passively, in a way that catered for the now much higher number of theatre troupes in Paris. Thus, when Napoléon's III proclaimed the *Liberté des théâtres* in 1864, this was a liberation in legal terms alone: of the kind that satisfied his desire to *appear* tolerant and liberal, revoking a whole tranche of laws that had

²⁸¹ Levin, 'A Documentary Overview of Musical Theaters in Paris, 1830-1900', p. 397.

²⁸² Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 44.

become largely defunct without sacrificing any real power or control.²⁸³ As Eastern Paris was taken over by more affluent residents during the 1860s, at the venues that still operated in the area the popular *mélodrame* was gradually overtaken by the more bourgeois-oriented, expanded three act *opérette* or Offenbach's *opéra-bouffe*. The spread of Offenbach's light operatic form Eastwards, alongside the relocation of numerous popular theatres Westwards over the 1860s was, as Sabbatini has demonstrated, the primary sign of cultural gentrification in Paris.²⁸⁴

Offenbach was both the chief architect and main beneficiary of Parisian *lyric* gentrification. When he opened the *Bouffes-Parisiens* in 1855, the composer was frustrated with the 'préférence aux grandes choses' displayed by the French audiences and directors of his day.²⁸⁵ According to Offenbach, the *opéra-comique* genre was originally 'formé à l'imitation' of the light and gay Italian *opéra-buffa* tradition. Yet he felt it had grown too large and too serious, becoming a 'genre mixte'.²⁸⁶ As he explained in the foreword to the announcement of his 1856 *Concours pour une opérette en un acte*, published in *Le Ménestrel*, 'le genre gracieux et léger des premiers jours disparaît à peu près de la scène pour faire place aux grands ouvrages. Ce n'est pas encore le grand opéra, et ce n'est déjà plus l'opéra-comique ; c'est un genre mixte, le *semi-seria* des Italiens [...]'.²⁸⁷ The libretti, rather than remaining 'gais, vifs, gracieux, se sont transformés en poèmes d'opéra, ont assombri leur couleur, distendu leur cadre et embrouillé la fable dramatique.' For Offenbach, *opéra-*

²⁸³ Hervé and Clairville reacted to this legislative change positively, responding by penning a five-act piece entitled *La Liberté des théâtres* that was performed at the Théâtre des Variétés: a venue at which the performance of such a large work would not have previously been allowed

²⁸⁴ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, pp. 47–49.

²⁸⁵ Offenbach, 'Concours pour une opérette en un acte'.

²⁸⁶ Offenbach, 'Concours pour une opérette en un acte'.

²⁸⁷ Offenbach, 'Concours pour une opérette en un acte'. The reference here to *opera semiseria* is indicative of Offenbach's wider call for a return models of lighter Italianate comic opera. It was a hybrid form, infusing comic plots with a strong element of pathos and offering a wider emotional and moral range of characters than in *opera-buffa*.

comique had lost its way, combined unnaturally with a genre he considered incompatible: dramatic *grand opéra*.

Crucially, though, the genre Offenbach created to counter French *opéra-comique* was itself a *genre mixte*, combining genres according to modern terms in order to return them to what he considered a state of purity in historical terms: either of perceived (though historically inaccurate) unmixed-ness or what had come to represent a level of hybridity so historically normalised as to become null. His *opéra-bouffe* integrated elements of *opéra-comique* (as it existed in the mid-1800s), and more recent developments in the lyric culture of Paris's Eastern boulevards (discussed in his article using the label 'opérette') to produce one-act, then later three-act, pieces that moved freely between comic and sentimental subjects.²⁸⁸ Indeed, as Laurence Senelick has put it, 'the *opéra-bouffe* was born of a clever marriage between the formulas of salon opera and boulevard comedy; modelled on the minor theatres, and fed by the sceptical spirit of the boulevard'.²⁸⁹ Thus, while composers and librettists with commissions at the Opéra-Comique mixing elements of the Opéra's dramatic style into their pieces was to be resisted, Offenbach took little issue with employing elements of 'opérette' to correct the stylistic digressions of *opéra-comique*. For Offenbach, *opéra-comique* really needed reform, and the *Bouffes-Parisiens* was uniquely equipped to do it. As he wrote, 'Le théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens veut essayer ressusciter le genre primitif et vrai,' enacting a 'retour au passé' in search of an aesthetic equilibrium lost to the 'mépris pour la *petite musique*'. It was thus by integrating the *petite musique* already popular in Eastern Paris but spurned by the more 'high-brow' theatres in the centre with *opéra-comique* that Offenbach could achieve a return to the more Italianate model of comic opera that he most valued, and that he considered (perhaps confusingly) to be a purer form of French stage culture. As Albert

²⁸⁸ As I discussed briefly in Chapter 1, this *boulevardier* culture – particularly the emergent *opérette* genre – was characterised by risqué dancing, bawdy jokes, physical pantomime comedy, musical parody, zany libretti, and a spirit of inanity. Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, p. 17.

²⁸⁹ Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture*, p. 11.

de Lasalle later summarised in his (highly value-laden) history of the Bouffes-Parisiens, Offenbach opened the venue aiming to produce ‘l’opéra-comique réduit avec intention à des formes modestes et non chétives pour cause d’impuissance, petites et non mesquines en signe de décadence.’²⁹⁰

The plot of Offenbach’s 1858 *Orphée aux enfers* demonstrated the infusion of modest form and generous decadence well. While *Orphée* was musically and narratively ‘light’ in a way reminiscent of boulevard *opérette*, it remained (in keeping with Lasalle’s wider characterisation of the venue’s output) generous in its provision of decadent bourgeois entertainment. Because of this, it was thoroughly lambasted by several critics in the years following its performance. To musicologist Georges Seigneur, for example, it represented culture’s anathema, travestying classical traditions and making a mockery of Gluck’s refined *Orfeo ed Euridice* in the process.²⁹¹ In the critic’s words, Offenbach and his librettist Hector Crémieux had created:

un Orphée bourgeois, qui a perdu sa bourgeoise, laquelle a été ravie par un Pluton bourgeois, laquelle est réclamée par un Jupiter bourgeois. [...] Il n’est pas très spirituel de transformer Pluton et Jupiter en bourgeois moroses, que la présence de l’opinion oblige à garder au moins le *decorum*. Ces infernales fadaïses soulèvent le cœur, et voilà tout. Mais, de nos jours, le dégoût est triomphant!²⁹²

To those like Seigneur who evidently had a stake in protecting notions of ‘high’ culture, Offenbach’s *Ophee* was not art but mere entertainment: emblematic of the ‘bêtise humaine’ of bourgeois cultural degeneracy.²⁹³

Of course, in the affluent and primarily bourgeois surroundings of Western Paris, Offenbach’s venue and its entertainment-forward fusion of new and old genres were

²⁹⁰ de Lasalle, *Histoire des Bouffes-Parisiens*, p. 1.

²⁹¹ Though Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* was written in Italian and premiered in Vienna in 1762, Gluck revised the score so it could be performed at the Opéra in 1774. This will have imbued it with an aura of ‘high’ cultural value.

²⁹² Georges Seigneur, ‘A propos d’*Orphée aux enfers*’, *Le Croisé*, 2.2 (1861), pp. 52–55 (p. 55).

²⁹³ Seigneur, ‘A propos d’*Orphée aux enfers*’, p. 55.

extremely successful. In a smaller, and thus more exclusive-feeling, hall located off one of the city's glamorous covered arcades, the Bouffes-Parisiens drew the upper middle-classes of central Paris with the promise of light-hearted entertainment in luxurious surroundings. As the still operational licensing system was enforced with less and less zeal over the 1850s, Offenbach was able to expand from the single act stipulated in his *cahier des charges* to three, moving even closer to the model of eighteenth-century comic opera he was seeking to reappropriate, and making his output even more structurally similar to that of *opéra-comique*.²⁹⁴ This move rendered the generic identity of his work even more ambiguous, incorporating a further marker associated with higher genres — pieces comprising multiple acts — into his already hybrid *opéra-bouffe*. The Bouffes-Parisiens thus occupied a liminal position, floating between numerous different genres that were already in currency on the stages of mid-century Paris. Alongside this, its output (if not its primarily bourgeois clientele) carried ambiguous class associations, being a fusion of popular (e.g. *vaudeville*, *opérette*) and more high-brow (*opéra-comique*) theatrical forms.

From *opérette* to *opéra-comique*: Hervé prepares to write *Panurge*

Like the generically ambiguous venue for which they wrote, the composers charged with writing the repertoire of the Bouffes-Parisiens operated in a comparably liminal generic space. Though Hervé is credited with pioneering *opérette*, over his career he also wrote three works for performance at the Bouffes-Parisiens, a venue set up by his closest (and subsequently much more commercially successful) competitor Offenbach.²⁹⁵ Especially

²⁹⁴ For discussions of the Bouffes-Parisiens's license, see: Levin, 'A Documentary Overview of Musical Theaters in Paris, 1830-1900', p. 401; Everist, 'The Music of Power: Parisian Opera and the Politics of Genre, 1806-1864', p. 703; Everist, 'Jacques Offenbach: The Music of the Past and the Image of the Present', pp. 72-73.

²⁹⁵ While Pascal Blanchet is emphatic in his insistence that Hervé was the father of *opérette*, Richard Traubner has attributed the genre's naissance to both Hervé and Offenbach, noting that the latter's fame obscured the

towards the end of his career, Hervé's writing for Offenbach's venue underwent a series of subtle but important changes engendered, I shall claim, by a life mired in scandal and a career interrupted by war. Hervé was forced to adapt to the developments to Parisian musical life that had occurred while he was briefly incarcerated for abducting a child in the mid-1850s. Once released, Hervé set about rebuilding his career, fashioning himself primarily as a composer of *opéra-bouffe*. Then, just as things were going well for him again, he had to change generic tack, moving away from operating under the generic umbrella of *opéra-bouffe* altogether in the wake of French defeat to the Prussians in 1870. As I discuss below, in post-war Paris, those involved in the portion of Parisian musico-theatrical culture that had been associated with the label *opéra-bouffe* were considered partly responsible for the will-weakening bourgeois cultural degeneracy that had led to France's loss to the Prussians. As a result, and despite bearing only limited difference in style and form to his pre-war writing, Hervé's later compositions for the Bouffes-Parisiens (including *Panurge*) were usually accompanied by the generic marker *opéra-comique*. This misalignment rendered his output even more generically confused, re-labelled for political, rather than aesthetic or structural reasons. Because of this, tracing Hervé's tumultuous career is necessary if one is to fully comprehend the registral, tonal, and generic ambiguities specific to *Panurge*, and to understand how he came to adopt a hybrid compositional practice that mirrored Rabelais's, but was not considered equally legitimate by the French public. The *curé* was a hybrid writer whose inclusion and infusion of both high and low discursive levels was legitimised by his status as an established, visionary genius. Hervé, on the other hand, reacted to his shifting socio-political surroundings in the lead up to 1879 by continuing to compose pieces that included markers of low-born stage culture, repackaging them under the generic label opera-

pioneering work of the former. Blanchet, 'La contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l'opérette (1848-1870): éléments biographiques et mécanismes du comique', p. 3; Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, p. 17.

comique in an attempt to disassociate them from their popular origins, staking a claim to a higher level of cultural value than he would otherwise have been due.

Unlike the vast majority of his peers, Hervé never attended a conservatoire. Instead, he learned his musical craft first among ‘les fous’ as the organist of the chapel attached to an asylum in Bicêtre, just south of Paris, and then as the organist of L’Église Saint-Roch, on rue Saint-Honoré in the city centre. Living a double-life as church musician and cabarettist (a hybrid career already rich in Rabelaisian resonances!), the young composer would leave the organ-loft as soon as evening prayers were done and travel into the city to perform *comédies* and *vaudevilles* in the *banlieue* theatres of still largely poverty-stricken (and not yet demolished) Montmartre and the boulevard du Temple.²⁹⁶ Like Offenbach, Hervé shared the difficulties facing many young musicians looking to break into Paris’s established theatre scene: a lack of available commissions. Both Offenbach and Hervé began their careers as theatre composers on the back-foot, with rejections at the Opéra-Comique.²⁹⁷ Hervé responded to this setback by capitalising on his popular roots and retreating to the *banlieue* theatres. In 1847 he penned what Reynaldo Hahn later called ‘simply the first ever French operetta’: a ‘*tableau grotesque*’ entitled *Don Quichotte et Sancho Pança*.²⁹⁸ This piece has been identified by Richard Traubner as a precursor to Offenbach’s *opéra-bouffe*, and its first run at the small Théâtre de Montmartre was successful enough to get picked up by the direction of Adolphe Adam’s new Opéra-National.²⁹⁹ However, the resultant run was cut short by the venue closing as a result of the 1848 Revolution.

²⁹⁶ Blanchet, ‘La contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l’opérette (1848-1870)’, pp. 4–5.

²⁹⁷ The venue’s director Émile Perrin rejected Hervé’s *Les Gardes-Françaises* in 1846, and Offenbach’s *l’Alcôve* in 1847

²⁹⁸ Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, p. 18.

²⁹⁹ Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, p. 18.

After struggling for success in Paris's oversaturated musical market, in 1854 Hervé opened his own theatre with the support of the Comte de Morny.³⁰⁰ Located just off the boulevard du Temple, the Folies-Nouvelles was decidedly *boulevardier* in its output, frequently performing the sorts of *Pierrot-esque* slapstick comedy already popular in Paris's Eastern theatrical district. However, only two years after Hervé's venue opened its doors, the composer was convicted of 'détournement d'un mineur' – a legal term referring to the abduction of a child from their legal guardian – and sentenced to three years in prison, of which he served one.³⁰¹ He then stayed away from Paris until 1861. Though he had managed to rebuild his career by the end of the 1860s, and found great success with *opéras-bouffes* like *L'Œil crevé* (1867), *Chilperic* (1868), and *Le Petit Faust* (1869, a parody of Gounod's *Faust*), Hervé's long absence at such a pivotal moment in the development of mid-century light opera gave Offenbach greater freedom to dictate the developmental direction of the city's secondary genres. Émile Perrin's resignation from the directorship of the Opéra-Comique in 1857 only served to further empower Offenbach, who found Perrin's successor Nestor Roqueplan far more receptive to his compositions.³⁰² Though *Barkouf* (1860), Offenbach's first commission at the Opéra-Comique, proved a humorous step too far for the audience of the Salle Favart, merely penning a commission for the venue gave him a level of mainstream legitimacy that Hervé could not match. Ultimately, not only did Hervé lose control of the genre he had helped develop, but he never quite managed to escape the shadow cast by the huge success of Offenbach and his bourgeoisie-friendly hybrid of *opérette* and *opéra-comique*.

³⁰⁰ Blanchet, 'La Contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l'opérette (1848-1870): éléments biographiques et mécanismes du comique', p. 5.

³⁰¹ A partial account of Hervé's trial entitled 'L'affaire Hervé' appeared in *La Gazette des tribunaux*, on 10 November 1856. This only includes Hervé's cross examination by the prosecution, and provides only limited reference to the testimony of the child or his uncle, whose words have not been preserved.

³⁰² Blanchet, 'La contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l'opérette (1848-1870): éléments biographiques et mécanismes du comique', p. 247.

The reasons behind Hervé's transition to using generic markers indicative of more high-brow stage genres were as much political as they were stylistic. Though both Hervé and Offenbach gained great popularity over the 1860s, their ascension was cut short by the Franco-Prussian war. French defeat to the Prussians was especially problematic for Offenbach who, though naturalised French, had never quite escaped his Germanic roots. The composer fled Paris, seeking refuge in Spain, Austria, and Italy before returning in 1871 once tensions had cooled sufficiently. Because of industry disruption Hervé looked elsewhere too, travelling to London where an English translation of his *opéra-bouffe* *Chilpéric* was being performed at the Lyceum theatre.³⁰³ The pair returned to a post-war Parisian stage culture that had grown extremely hostile to the light-hearted *opéra-bouffe* with which they had made their names. As Pascal Blanchet has explained with particular reference to Hervé's career:

la guerre de 1870 vient mettre un terme à l'élan d'Hervé et aux délires de l'opéra-bouffe. Après le cruel siège de Paris et la défaite honteuse de la France aux mains de l'Allemagne, l'opéra-bouffe, qu'on n'a jamais cessé complètement d'appeler opérette, est considéré en partie comme responsable des malheurs nationaux. On l'accuse d'avoir corrompu les mœurs par son immoralité.³⁰⁴

The effects of the War on French light opera were noticed as early as January 1871 by *opérette* composer Charles Lecocq. Having escaped Paris to Limoges, in a letter to his editor Gemmy Brandus the composer lamented: 'Je ne sais si je me trompe; mais je me figure qu'après la guerre les goûts seront sensiblement modifiés, et que peut-être les obus prussiens auront tué l'opérette.'³⁰⁵ Author Gustave Flaubert was somewhat harsher, putting the defeat down to 'the long falsehood in which we lived': a world of *divertissement* and delight – embodied by the rise in popularity of light opera – that had softened the French will enough

³⁰³ Blanchet, *Hervé par lui-même*, p. 218.

³⁰⁴ Blanchet, 'La Contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l'opérette (1848-1870): éléments biographiques et mécanismes du comique', p. 8.

³⁰⁵ Cited in: Louis Schneider, *Les maîtres de l'opérette française: Hervé; Lecocq* (Perrin et cie, 1924), p. 126, Bodleian.

to be easily bulldozed by the onward march of a newly united German nation (militarily, politically, and musically under Wagner).³⁰⁶ Though the careers of both composers were affected negatively by the fallout of France's defeat, Offenbach's arguably suffered the worst. In a pairing that, as Heather Hadlock rightly points out 'would have disgusted them both, Offenbach and Wagner had become linked in the French critical imagination of the 1870s as twin threats to the purity of the musical homeland – Wagner from without, Offenbach (more destructively) from within.'³⁰⁷ Worse than just culturally degenerate, Offenbach was also inescapably foreign.

While the term *opérette* just about managed to maintain its currency, the label *opéra-bouffe* suddenly fell out of favour after the War because of its association with bourgeois consumerist decadence, and the supposed (with post-war hindsight) cultural degeneracy of Napoléon III's France.³⁰⁸ Given Hervé's engagement in light stage music was primarily *boulevardier* and linked to *opérette* rather than bourgeois *opéra-bouffe*, one might imagine that he would be spared Offenbach's fate. But this was not to be: several commissions at the *Bouffes-Parisiens* over the 1860s meant that Hervé ultimately fell afoul of the same post-war distain for musical and theatrical frivolity as Offenbach. This is evident from the highly value-laden 1876 entry on Hervé in the *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle*. Here, he was afforded the 'triste honneur d'avoir créé ce nouveau genre d'opéra [ce qu'il appelle '*opérette-bouffe*'], digne d'être représenté dans des maisons de fous et qui devait faire les délices de toute une génération, hébétée par le despotisme impérial.'³⁰⁹ This description, nodding towards public perceptions of Hervé's (in)sanity stemming from his early training in

³⁰⁶ Cited in: Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture*, p. 5.

³⁰⁷ Heather Hadlock, *Mad Loves: Women and Music in Offenbach's 'Les Contes d'Hoffmann'* (Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 94.

³⁰⁸ Senelick, *Jacques Offenbach and the Making of Modern Culture*, p. 5.

³⁰⁹ The writer uses the term *opérette-bouffe*, conflating the early generic designators of Hervé and Offenbach and thus emphasising their perceived stylistic proximity after 1870. Hervé is credited with the invention of the *opérette* genre (as it was understood in the second half of the century). As I outline, the writer's artificial combination of *opérette* and *bouffe* is instead indicative of things beyond an accurate account of generic divisions.

an asylum, also associated ‘*opérette-bouffe*’ with the fate of the Second Empire. And this, in turn, was equated with a *maison des fous*: an institution whose population live in delusion, turned insane in this anti-imperial context by consumption and comfort. The genre discussed in the entry – ‘*opérette-bouffe*’ – was characterised not as a serious attempt at reviving a more naïve form of Italianate comic opera, but a ‘genre fondé sur l’absence de toute espèce de sens et de bon sens, et dont le mérite suprême est d’atteindre les dernières limites de la plus inepte insanité.’³¹⁰ The encyclopaedist’s insistence on inserting the term *opérette* artificially into the genre’s name only served to further enforce its unfavourable reputation as, according to Blanchet, this label maintained a ‘côté péjoratif’ due to its diminutive ‘-ette’.³¹¹

As a result of Paris’s new hostility towards *opéra-bouffe*, after 1870 Hervé moved away from using the generic marker almost entirely, pivoting instead to using ‘*opéra-comique*’ for his three-act compositions in order to piggy-back the more sober Opéra-Comique’s popularity in the aftermath of the war. The Opéra-Comique had been largely spared from accusations of cultural degeneracy due to its ever-increasing generic proximity to the Opéra’s serious repertoire, much of which predated the birth of the Second Empire.³¹² Despite Hervé’s change in preferred generic marker, however, his composition only underwent limited stylistic change. Hervé attempted to keep up with Paris’s fluctuating tastes ‘tant bien que mal’, according to Blanchet, though in order to survive he was forced to write music for *comédie-opérettes* and *vaudeville-opérettes*: new forms of theatre with less emphasis given to the larger ensemble numbers that characterised *opéra-bouffe*.³¹³ The programming at the *Bouffes-Parisiens* between 1875 and 1885 also reflected the fall in *opéra-bouffe*’s popularity, with only ten of the 26 three-act works performed at the venue during this period bearing the

³¹⁰ ‘Hervé’, *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, (Geneva: Slatkine, 1982), 9, p. 249.

³¹¹ Blanchet, *Hervé par lui-même: lettres et documents du père de l’opérette présentés par Pascal Blanchet*, p. 18.

³¹² ‘Opéra-Comique’, in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (Slatkine, 1982), 11.2, pp. 1365–66.

³¹³ Blanchet, ‘La contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l’opérette (1848-1870)’, p. 9

label. Only one – Lecocq’s *Fleur de thé* – was performed after musician turned venture-capitalist Louis Cantin’s takeover of the venue’s direction in 1879, but this was only in his first season and ran for less than a month. Aside from two productions with idiosyncratic generic titles (a ‘Revue de Printemps’ by Offenbach and an ‘opérette villageoise’ by Rillé), *opéra-comique* had become the generic marker for all other works premiered at the venue. When he came to write *Panurge* in 1879, after a tumultuous career Hervé had become a composer of particularly ambiguous cultural status. In turn, by 1879, his compositions echoed Rabelais’s texts in their constant vacillation between, and infusion of, various discursive levels, socio-cultural strata, and markers of genre.

Examining the reception of *Panurge*’s generic hybridity in the critical press of 1879.

Clearly, both Hervé and the Bouffes-Parisiens operated between and across preconceived genre-boundaries. Examination of the theatrical press’s response to *Panurge* demonstrates the extent to which this shared stylistic tendency shaped the piece’s composition and reception. In particular, reviewers were not fooled by Hervé’s adoption of the generic designator *opéra-comique*. While aspects of *Panurge* may have resembled elements of the higher-born genre, to them, the piece and its composer were pretenders. In a review for *Le XIX^{ème} siècle*, Henry Fouquier foregrounded Hervé’s attempts to imitate *opéra-comique*, suggesting that aspects of *Panurge*’s score were ‘severe’ or ‘trop sage’ enough to resemble the *opéra-comique*’s more dramatic output.³¹⁴ He did not, however, indicate the particular sections of the score that he meant. Alluding to Hervé’s success with *Le Petit Faust* (1869) – a parody of Gounod’s *Faust* – Fouquier described how the composer had previously excelled in parodying the formulae of

³¹⁴ Henry Fouquier, ‘Causerie musicale’, *Le XIX^{ème} siècle*, 16 September 1879, pp. 1–2, BnF.

the city's higher-born venues, putting a comic spin on their otherwise serious plots. However, for Fouquier, Hervé 'réussit moins dans l'imitation sérieuse.' *Panurge* was instead 'une longue contre-façon d'un opéra-comique et même d'un grand opéra'. The word 'contre-façon' emphasises the work's stylistic proximity to higher forms while also designating it a fake or forgery: it is similar, but not the same. Thus, according to Fouquier, in his half-baked counterfeit of *opéra-comique* Hervé ultimately produced a piece of which the 'sévérité de la facture [...] a un peu surpris le public, qui s'attendait à rire avec quelque bonne cascade.' Here, Hervé's genre-play rendered *Panurge* unsuitable for its light and gay comedic venue and may even have alienated its audience in its generic ambiguity.

The idea of impersonation was also invoked by Léon Kerst in his review for *La Presse*.³¹⁵ According to this critic, the composer '[lui] semble découvrir qu'[Hervé] est mieux habillé: par instants, il aurait même la désinvolture d'un personnage d'opéra-comique'. For Kerst, Hervé's score was so well balanced in places – particularly towards the end – that it resembled work by Adolphe Adam: one of the century's most prolific composers of *opéra-comique*. Offering specific examples, the critic singled out the piece's large-scale finales as being particularly well-developed. Passages such as these would have been somewhat reminiscent of the works of *opéra-comique* and *petit-opéra* performed at the city's (high-brow) subsidised venues and, interestingly, also recognisably Italianate, echoing the tendency of Italian light comic opera to position its large-scale ensemble and choral finale at the end of the first act.³¹⁶ Beyond the finale, Kerst lauded one of the clearest narrative parallels to Rabelais's texts: the recreation of the *Chanson de ricochet* from the *Tiers livre* in which Panurge consults his lackey Claquedent (rather than Pantagruel) about the benefits of marriage. He also suggested the association of higher cultural value with the representation of

³¹⁵ Léon Kerst [Léon de Froidement], 'Revue musicale', *La Presse*, 21 September 1879, p. 2, BnF.

³¹⁶ Everist, 'Grand Opéra - Petit Opéra', p. 205.

history through music, describing the appearance of the *Crieur* as both ‘la véritable trouvaille de la partition’, and also a ‘petit air moyen-âge absolument trouvé’, in which the revelation of Panurge’s exploits supposedly, by being uttered on the ‘*dominante* donne au motif une couleur très en situation.’ Kerst’s praise here not only reaffirms that the use of ‘couleur’ was key to the way that historical representation was conceptualised on stage, but also suggests that when the inclusion of historical music in a score was seen as both authentic and successful (with both meanings encapsulated by the phrase ‘absolument trouvé’), this brought the work into proximity to genres wielding higher cultural value. At least to Kerst, it thus seems that serious attempts at producing historical music were associated with the city’s more serious genres.

Despite his compliments, however, when put in context the comparison that Kerst drew between Hervé and Adolphe Adam was quite backhanded. Despite appearing to resemble an *opéra-comique* composer in his *laissez-faire désinvolture*, Hervé was emphatically not one. Far from it: no composition by Hervé has ever been performed on any of the Opéra-Comique’s various stages. Indeed, as I have already noted, Hervé had tried to have pieces performed there early in his career, sending his first score to director Émile Perrin in 1845.³¹⁷ Yet he had always been rejected. Alongside this, by the middle of the century a public animosity had developed between him and the venue’s management. In December 1849, for example, Perrin intervened in Hervé’s successes at another venue, having one of his works – *Les Gardes françaises* – cancelled 45 performances into its highly successful run at the rival Théâtre de l’Odéon. Despite bearing limited structural or thematic resemblance to the Opéra-Comique’s usual output, this, Perrin (very tenuously) claimed, was justified because the piece contravened the Odéon’s *cahier des charges*.³¹⁸ According to Perrin, the work would not

³¹⁷ Blanchet, ‘La contribution de Florimond Ronger, dit Hervé, au développement de l’opérette (1848-1870)’, p. 4.

³¹⁸ Renée Cariven-Galharret and Dominique Ghesquière, *Hervé: un musicien paradoxal (1825-1892)* (Éditions des Cendres, 1992), p. 39.

have been cleared for performance if submitted to the *Comité de lecture de la maison*, but this committee had never sat before for any reason and submitting manuscripts to it had never been usual practice.³¹⁹

When read in the context of Hervé's previous interaction with the Opéra-Comique and its directors, Kerst's suggestion that the composer was metaphorically well dressed enough to resemble Adolphe Adam morphs into a back-handed compliment, lauding his compositional prowess while also jabbing him for his previously fraught relationship with the venue. In this way, Kerst denies him fully legitimate access to the identity of a composer of the genre.

Panurge is thus also, by extension, denied its own generic designation: both composer and composition are impersonators. Thus, instead of enacting a wholesale move towards fully fledged *opéra-comique* identity, there remained, for Kerst, a misalignment at work in the score between, on the one hand, *flon-flon* material suggestive of *opéra-bouffe*'s popular roots, and on the other, the sections of more sentimental, lyrical music such as the *Romance de Phæbé*, of large-scale chorus finale, or of historically coloured composition indicative of the Opéra-Comique's move towards increasingly serious drama during the second half of the century.

In the late-nineteenth century, the term 'flon-flon', which Kerst insisted strong presence in Hervé's score and 'trône encore en grand seigneur', had various intersecting meanings. As its entry in the Larousse *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXème siècle* explained, 'flon-flon' denoted an 'air trivial, d'une banalité ridicule: "en fait de musique le peuple préfère les flonflons"'.³²⁰ This suggests a close link to more popular genres, cemented by its regular appearance as a nonsense rhythmic filler-word in *vaudeville* refrains exemplified in the dictionary entry by Béranger's supposedly well-known eighteenth-century lyrics 'flon flon

³¹⁹ Cariven-Galharret and Ghesquière, *Hervé: un musicien paradoxal (1825-1892)*, p. 39.

³²⁰ 'Flon-flon', in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (Slatkine, 1982), 8, p. 486.

flon, larira dondain, | gai gai gai, larira dondé'.³²¹ Despite the fact that *vaudeville* was one of French *opéra-comique*'s generic ancestors, as the latter's musical and thematic idioms became more serious over the nineteenth century, the light music with which early *vaudeville* was associated came to closer resemble the scores being played on (or rather, under) Paris's popular stages, rather than at the evermore serious Opéra-Comique. This development was further emphasised by the fact that 'flon-flon' was onomatopoeic, resembling the binary 2/4 rhythm of a 'contredanse' (a line-dance), played by 'des instruments à archet, et particulièrement celui du violon, et [...] aux airs de vaudeville usés et a toute musique chantée de peu de valeur'.³²² There are numerous passages that resemble this description in Hervé's score such as the choral refrain from the first act's *Couplets de Phæbé* with its string accompaniment playing an 2/4 galloping 'um-cha' figure. Ultimately, then, Kerst's description of the 'flon-flon' composer in an Adolph Adam costume was a pretty unambiguous rejection of the composer's claims to the *opéra-comique* genre.

Though opinions relating to which generic designator would be most suitable for *Panurge* varied, most critics expressed some doubt about Hervé's choice of '*opéra-comique*'. Lingering on the composer's nomenclatorial decisions in his review for *L'univers illustré*, a critic operating under the pseudonym 'Gérôme' – potentially Achille Denis, the secretary to the director of the Opéra-Comique from 1849 to 1871 – emphasised Hervé's choice to subtitle *Panurge* an '*opéra-comique*'.³²³ This generic designator was, for Gérôme, more suitable than '*opérette*' because after the French defeat at Sedan and the fall of the Second Empire, the latter marker had become 'abandonnée aux petites œuvres sans conséquence'.³²⁴

³²¹ 'Flon-flon', in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*.

³²² 'Flon-flon', in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*.

³²³ I am reluctant to claim that *Gérôme* is definitely Achille Denis because this pseudonym was used by several critics as the 'pavilion neutre' of *L'Univers illustré*. In his 1887 *Dictionnaire des pseudonymes* (Paris: Dentu, 1887), p. 177, BnF.), Georges d'Heylli claimed that the pseudonym had been used by Achille Denis, Albert Kaempfen, Albéric Second, Albert Wolff, Blaise Félix, 'et beaucoup d'autres écrivains'. Though Achille Denis is the most likely to have written this article as it seems he replaced Albert Kaempfen as the publication's theatre critic early in 1879, I shall for safety's sake, stick to '*Gérôme*' when discussing the author.

³²⁴ Gérôme [pseud.], 'Théâtres', *L'Univers illustré*, 20 September 1879, BnF.

For this critic, therefore, Hervé was able to raise his work above the cultural stratum upon which *opérette* resided. Yet, when suggesting his own alternative term to describe *Panurge*'s genre, Gérome settled for '*opérette-développée*': so *développée*, in fact, that its audience could have mistakenly thought themselves at the Opéra.³²⁵

What, then, might Gérome have meant by '*opérette-développée*'? Even after the *Liberté des Théâtres* in 1864, one of the key differences between works written for the Bouffes-Parisiens and Opéra stages remained their contrasting usage of dialogue and recitative. While according to theatrical legislation, pieces of large-scale *opéra* were to be through-sung with any discursive sections of the libretto set to recitative, *opéra-comique*, *opéra-bouffe*, *opérette*, *vaudeville*, *féerie*, *mélodrame*, and the other minor musico-theatrical genres performed at the time interspersed sung passages with dialogue. Though *Panurge* contained reasonably developed dialogue sections, it diverged from the performance norms still associated with its generic marker by also using recitative, often for extended periods. This may have rendered some sections reminiscent of the Opéra's usual fare, blurring boundaries between the various repertoires of the city's venues by mixing attributes of more than one genre. Gérome's text implied that *Panurge*'s generic slippage may have been part of an attempt by the composer to prove himself capable of writing more than mere 'calembredaines'. This, for Gérome, should be forgiven considering Hervé's recent attempts to break loose from his past as a composer of *opérette* and *opéra-bouffe*. For the critic, Hervé's attempts to reinvent himself as a composer of highbrow genres by incorporating elements of *opéra* and *opéra-comique* such as recitative into works bearing elevated generic markers meant that he no longer resembled 'le compositeur toqué', a nickname he earned because of his previous employment as the organist at the *asile de Bicêtre*. For Gérome, therefore, *Panurge* was stuck between tonal

³²⁵ Though *Gérome* focusses on the stylistic attributes of the work itself in his comparison between *Panurge* and the output of the Opéra, the notice in *Le Figaro* the morning of the premiere announcing timings and casting also mentions that new super-rich director Cantin's venue refurbishment involved installing performance technology comparable to that of the Salle le Peletier. This included four 'superbes lanternes'.

poles: ‘spirituelle et gaie’ but of a subdued *gâité* morally aligned to more ‘respectful’ venues. Gérome was, however, a lone critical voice suggesting that *Panurge*’s music might have been worthy of a generic label higher than *opéra-comique*. Most in the press remained skeptical of Hervé’s attempted pivot towards *opéra-comique*. This was even the case in reviews published abroad, with an unnamed reviewer in *Cæcilia: Algemeen Muzikaal Tijdschrift van Nederland*’s noting that ‘Hervé has moved closer to *opéra-comique* than ever before.’³²⁶ Here, the critic acknowledged a generic drift but suggested that this move was still only partial, stressing that Hervé had ‘moved closer’ to *opéra-comique* without saying that he had arrived there.

Back in France, most reviewers were agreed: *Panurge* fell short of its lofty generic designator. Albert de Lasalle, for example, rejected the label ‘*opéra-comique*’ without any discussion, using ‘*opéra-bouffon*’ from the outset instead.³²⁷ Yet despite the emphasis on buffoonery this label (assigned by the critic, not the composer) implied, and the ‘parties très gaies’ that he said *Panurge* included, Lasalle still bemoaned the piece’s over-severity, suggesting that its narrative focussed on ‘vertus conjugales [...qui] ne sont point-là les affaires des Bouffes’. Crucially, however, it was Lasalle and not Hervé, Clairville, or Gastineau who labelled *Panurge* an *opéra-bouffon*: a travestying of the generic designator assigned to works historically performed at the Bouffes-Parisiens. Lasalle thus criticised *Panurge* for not fitting a label that he, and not Hervé or his collaborators, assigned it, while also suggesting that the Bouffes-Parisiens was an unsuitable venue for it in the first place. It is therefore ironic that according to Lasalle, *Panurge*’s larger-scale ensemble numbers gave it ‘un fumet d’opéra-comique’: just a whiff of the genre to which its composer claimed it belonged in the first place. Ultimately, Lasalle’s nomenclatorial genre-juggling echoed

³²⁶ ‘Frankrijk’, *Cæcilia: Algemeen Muzikaal Tijdschrift van Nederland*’s Gravenhage, 10 January 1879, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België. ‘de indruk was, dat Hervé zich meer naar de opéra-comique heeft gekeerd dan ooit te voren.’

³²⁷ Albert de Lasalle, ‘Chronique musicale’, *Le Monde illustré*, 20 September 1879, BnF.

Panurge's own generic ambiguity, with both reviewer and subject stuck between *opéra-comique* and *opéra-bouffe* while not cohering to either fully.³²⁸

Alongside Hervé's only partial adoption of elements of more high-born genres already mentioned above, such as recitative, grand ensemble finales, sentimental lyricism, and musical historicity, the deployment of markers associated with lower-status genres and venues also gave rise to doubts about *Panurge*'s supposed generic identity. Hervé's score, for example, included several sections of comic *couplets*, with two described by Benoît Jouvin in his review for *Le Figaro* as 'dans le genre qui appartient exclusivement à l'opérette'.³²⁹ The *Couplets de Grippeminaud* (Hervé, pp. 118-122) is the first, written in a 2/4 allegretto with the voice underscored by a galloping flon-flon-esque 'um-cha' figure throughout. The 'ce' of the repeated 'ce que tu m'as fait' phrase is marked *marcato* for comic effect (Hervé, p. 119). The second – the *Strophes à l'amour* (Hervé, pp. 229-233) – is a waltz whose meter is interrupted each time the governor sings 'Ah! Ô amour!', with each syllable afforded its own *fermata* (Hervé, p. 230). These pauses were, according to Jouvin, accompanied by 'bonnes grimaces', heightening their comic intensity and engendering 'dans la salle les transports d'un rire fou.'

The use of lower-status theatrical forms was not limited to Hervé's score, however. In Clairville and Gastineau's libretto, *Panurge* employs a mock lower-class accent when discussing his run-in with lower-class Dindenault: 'Dind'nault avait un troupeau | Dont je n'pouvais faire emplette | J'achet' le mouton l'plus beau, | Puis dans ma barqu' je le jette. |

³²⁸ It was common for Lasalle to focus intensely on genre definitions and institutional generic suitability in his reviews of performances at the Bouffes-Parisiens. Having previously written a history of the institution with an emphasis the generic development of its repertoire, Lasalle would more often than not comment on any mismatched generic labels and discuss the ways in which the work at hand was or was not worthy of them. This was particularly true of works with a generic designator other than *opéra-bouffe*. His reviews of three *opéras comiques*: Offenbach's *La Créole* (Albert de Lasalle, 'Chronique musicale', *Le Monde illustré*, 1 June 1875); Serpette's *Le moulin du vert gallant* (Albert de Lasalle, 'Chronique musicale', *Le Monde illustré*, 22 May 1876); and Varney's *Les Mousquetaires au couvent* (Albert de Lasalle, 'Chronique musicale', *Le Monde illustré*, 3 April 1880) illustrate his interest in policing generic terminology.

³²⁹ Benoît Jouvin [Bénédict, pseud], 'Bouffes-Parisiens', *Le Figaro*, 9 December 1879, BnF.

Les autr's moutons à l'instant s'imagin'nt d'en faire autant; | Tableau dign' d'un dramaturge!' (Hervé, pp. 53-54). This is written in a form of *parigot*, a slang-like non-standard variation of French reminiscent of *genre poissard* or *style poissard*, which was a stylised speech pattern that emerged from eighteenth-century popular theatre and that had considerable influence on the development of lighter genres like *vaudeville*.³³⁰ The use of *parigot* thus further associates the libretto with the same theatrical tradition as the *flon-flon* musical styles to which Kerst referred. First used to mimic female fishmongers in La Halle, the *poissard* – and then more general urban *parigot* – dialect constituted a stylised portrayal of the speech patterns of stock urban working-class characters.³³¹ It was usually denoted in writing through incomplete spellings with letters and syllables replaced by apostrophes, and retained currency throughout the mid-nineteenth century. Clairville had also previously written *poissard*-adjacent scripts. Indeed, in 1873 he wrote the libretto to Charles Lecocq's *La fille de madame Angot*.³³² This was an *opéra-comique* sequel to the most famous *poissard* piece *Madame Angot, ou la poissarde parvenue*, a 1797 work by Antoine-François Ève, and attests to the style's persistence late into the century.

Panurge's shift to non-standard French in his song about Dindenault also recreates the social function that the merchant plays in Rabelais's world, as an isolated representative of lower social status. Here, as in Rabelais's text, Dindenault's rank is denoted by what Marichal (in reference to the shepherd's sixteenth-century antecedent) has called a verbal 'couleur locale'.³³³ In fact, Marichal's claim that 'il y a dans son style, dans son phrasé, quelque chose de si particulier qu'on défie un acteur ayant à lire ce dialogue de ne pas donner

³³⁰ McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth Century France*, p. 116. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 14.

³³¹ McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth Century France*, pp. 116–18.

³³² In the third act of Clairville's *Angot* libretto, young Clairette reminds everyone that she is the daughter of Madame Angot by singing: 'R'gardez-moi v'la c'qui faut que soit mam'zelle Angot!' (Charles Lecocq, *La Fille de Madame Angot: opéra-comique en trois actes* (Brandus et Cie, 1873), pp. 199–200).

³³³ Robert Marichal, 'Commentaires sur le *Quart livre*', *Études Rabelaisiennes*, I (1956), 159–81 (p. 160-161).

à Dindenault cet accent paysan de théâtre [...]’ appears to be confirmed by the 1879 stage-Panurge imitating Dindenault’s lower-class accent while retelling a story about him.³³⁴

While, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, Dindenault of the *Quart livre*’s status is revealed linguistically by its non-coherence to specifically sixteenth-century socio-cultural markers, in *Panurge* the shepherd’s class identity is confirmed by the librettists’ recourse to the working-class theatrical tropes of their day when discussing him.³³⁵

In its deviation from ‘standard’ French, Panurge’s mocking language use also functions as a further flexibly historicist marker of the piece’s pastness. As Anthony Lodge has demonstrated, the post-Revolutionary insistence on national linguistic unity – followed by the growth of an upwardly mobile urban bourgeoisie – caused many regional French dialects to fall out of everyday use.³³⁶ Thus, Panurge’s on-stage imitation imbues the peasant with an inalienable pastness by relying on archaic stigmatised language features associated first with depictions of the urban working class, then the working poor more generally. Following the process of dialectic levelling that occurred during the large-scale urbanisation of the first half of the nineteenth century, these dialects persisted instead in a variety of arts: especially in popular song. Because of their enduring currency in ‘low’ musical and theatrical spheres, these language features thus emphasised the impression of cultural low-ness nodded towards by Jouvin and the other critics I have mentioned, who remained skeptical of *Panurge*’s generic label.

For Jouvin, Hervé’s piece was entertainment, but it was not art: not, at least, in the same way as Rabelais’s *chroniques*. To him, Rabelais’s texts were timeless examples of Gallic humour at its finest, whereas Hervé’s piece was a poor imitation by a reasonably important, but not singularly brilliant, composer of ephemeral, low-born light opera. While Rabelais’s

³³⁴ Marichal, pp. 160.

³³⁵ Eastop, ‘Undead Dindenault’, pp. 5–6.

³³⁶ Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French*, pp. 207–08.

texts were, for Jouvin, high art to be appreciated by France's brightest and best, works written for the *Bouffes-Parisiens* provided barely-nuanced mass entertainment to unthinking crowds. Though they may have resonated with each other in their various ambiguities and hybrid generic textures, they remained, for Jouvin, utterly incomparable in real terms. As he put it: '*nous ne pouvons pas espérer rencontrer aux Bouffes-Parisiens cet amusant, cet immortel Panurge.*'³³⁷ As Jouvin's opposition here between an immortal Rabelais and the Bouffes-Parisiens implied, *opérette* (his favoured generic label when referring to *Panurge*) was inherently ephemeral: opposed to the transcendent humour of Rabelais's texts and unable to contain his *immortel* hero Panurge. His comment denigrated the venue and its light, *divertissement*-oriented repertoire, as well as the individuals who imagined a Rabelaisian piece performable there. But even worse than this for the critic was the writer's co-opting Rabelais's name for publicity reasons alone. As he wrote, with palpable sardonicism, 'les auteurs [...] ne pouvait avoir d'autre ambition, en s'emparant d'un nom populaire, que de donner à l'ouvrage un de ces parrains cossus qui, d'avance et aux yeux de tous, s'engagent à faire un sort à leur filleul.' Not only were Rabelais and the Bouffes-Parisiens an impossible combination for Jouvin, but the invocation of the *curé* in such a context could for him have only ever occurred in the service of obtaining commercial success.

Jouvin's article was extremely critical of the audience at the Bouffes-Parisiens, but this was to be expected from a reviewer whose primary interest often seemed to be scandalmongering. Jouvin's articles were invariably full of pointed and multidirectional invective and his review of *Panurge* was no exception, with the Bouffes-Parisiens' patrons depicted as a mass seeking mindless entertainment. Echoing the anti-audience sentiments of his 1855 review, and enforcing the post-war perceptions of *opéra-bouffe* as aesthetically and morally degenerate, Jouvin painted the crowd as mere uncultured simpletons in search of an

³³⁷ Original italics.

easy chuckle. He stated, in a stand-alone sentence shifting his authorial gaze from stage to stalls, that ‘le public ayant beaucoup ri, je ne vois pas pourquoi la critique ferait la grimace’. This he put down to critics and audiences having different conceptions of quality. In a rhetorical question addressing his reader directly, Jouvin asked if ‘les effets de scène qui amusent dans *Panurge* ont été employés dix fois, vingt fois avec le même succès?’ Composers and librettists, he suggested, may come to rely on structures, motifs, and scenic effects that guarantee audience satisfaction. To Jouvin, box office success and artistic success were, and had always been, separate things, with the latter the preserve of experts like himself. This echoed the review of Labarre’s *Pantagruel* that Jouvin wrote in 1855. As he claimed then, ‘en musique comme en littérature, ce qui constitue le choix exquis de détails, les délicatesses de la touche, attire les intelligences exercées, satisfait les hommes du métier, mais c’est tout.’ As for the regular audience: ‘l’enthousiasme est en elle, le goût seul n’y est pas.’³³⁸

By 1879, Jouvin seems to have thought the battle against this ‘brutalité populicière’ lost. As he lamented, ‘les hommes qui ont, avec du talent, une grande expérience du théâtre, se méfieront quelquefois de leur talent, mais en croiront volontiers leur expérience pour y réussir,’ recycling plot devices and scenic effects to garner financial success at the expense of artistic merit. Composers like Hervé fell prey to this too. As Jouvin explained, ‘un compositeur d’opérettes est placé en face d’un public qui lui dit: *Amuse-moi!* – et après? – *Amuse-moi encore!* – Et ensuite? – *Amuse-moi toujours!* – On ne saurait refuser à M. Hervé le mérite d’une soumission entière et passive à ce programme.’ As a piece of frivolous entertainment, Hervé’s *Panurge* was a roaring success, having ‘fort amusé son public, fort bruyamment quelquefois.’ Yet, Jouvin the *homme du métier* remained unamused. His article also had a faintly classist hue in its claim that, ‘tout en restant chansonnier, M. Hervé fait

³³⁸ Benoît Jouvin, ‘Théâtres’, *Le Figaro*, 30 December 1855.

aussi quelque effort plus ou moins heureux pour se montrer musicien.’ The label *chansonnier* harks back to Hervé’s roots in the popular theatres on and around boulevard du Temple, derogatorily implying that his artistic output held less cultural capital than that of his higher-born superiors at the Opéra, not to mention that timeless genius François Rabelais.

Jouvin’s views were echoed by fellow critic Paul Merruau in his review for *L’Album théâtrale*.³³⁹ To illustrate Hervé, Clairville, and Gastineau’s inferiority to Rabelais, Merruau used a metaphor of wine – a particularly Rabelaisian choice – to outline their difference in cultural value. Referencing a difference in conceptual, aesthetic, and metaphysical size and weight, Merruau emphasised *Panurge*’s lack of maturity or depth by foregrounding the imbalance between Rabelais’s texts and Hervé’s music, describing the latter as ‘clairette et agréable, qui coule du tonneau comme le petit vin capricant, haut en couleur et en ragout des côtes et vignes tourangelles.’ Here, Hervé’s score was a light, whimsical, bright, young red wine from Touraine, a region known for dry white and lighter, tannin-rich red wine best drunk un-aged. It was easy drinking, lacking the depth of Rabelais’s *côte du Rhône*. Paul de Saint-Victor made a similar comment in relation to Clairville’s libretto. The writer was accused by Saint-Victor of turning Rabelais’s rich ferment into a ‘piquette’ – a thin, weak wine made with poor quality grapes – by ‘mettant en couplets le vin puissant de maître François.’ In other words, for Saint-Victor, Clairville’s libretto was diluted Rabelais.

³³⁹ Paul Merruau, ‘Panurge’, *L’Album théâtrale*, October 1879, BnF.

Making a ‘piquette’ of *Panurge*?

Focussing first on the details of Hervé’s *Panurge* and then on the social, political, and cultural environment into which it was produced and performed, I have outlined the mutual affordances offered by Rabelais’s texts and Parisian musical and theatrical culture of 1879. The first half of this chapter demonstrated how Hervé, Clairville, and Gastineau’s *Panurge* presented its audience with a modified version of *couleur historique*, a tool for depicting non-specific historical periods that was already widely in use on the nineteenth century stage. By integrating elements of Rabelais’s texts that inverted or obfuscated stable or expected register judgements into the *couleur historique* at work in their piece, they came to depict a *couleur rabelaisienne*. I have suggested, therefore, that Hervé’s *Panurge* confirms the importance of Rabelais’s hybrid writing style to his nineteenth-century reception.

The second half of this chapter, focussed on the musical and theatrical context into which Rabelais’s *chroniques* re-emerged, suggested that the generic hybridity underpinning the repertoire of the Bouffes-Parisiens, alongside Hervé’s increasingly ambiguous engagement with the genre definitions of his era, offered Rabelais’s texts a space to re-emerge, mixity intact. Thus, while the first half explains how ideas about Rabelais’s mixedness were key to readings of his texts in 1879, the second half demonstrates how aspects of the era’s musical and theatrical culture made it well suited to representing registral and generic ambiguities similar to those thought (both then and now) to be characteristic of Rabelais’s writing style. This chapter in its entirety thus demonstrates that Rabelais’s texts and the nineteenth-century’s theatrical culture offered one another a handful of mutual affordances. For downstream adapters, Rabelais’s registrally and socially ambiguous texts and biography lent themselves to being mapped onto the genre mixing of the kind practiced by both Hervé, and the Bouffes-Parisiens. In return Hervé and the venue offered the *chroniques* a space in which their latent registral ambiguity had the potential to unfurl and bloom, evidenced by the lack of

critical consensus regarding the piece's quality, its correct genre designation, or, indeed, the legitimacy of its claim to being part of Rabelais's posterity at all. After all, given Rabelais's mythic status in the nineteenth century, the question of whether *Panurge* did his texts justice or not was also a question of cultural value judgement which was, in turn, largely a question of balancing registers.

If reviewers like Jouvin were to be believed, however, no matter what each afforded the other, Rabelais's texts would forever maintain a synchronic advantage: unlike Hervé's compositions, the *chroniques* were old, having gathered up enough prestige over their three-hundred-year afterlife that their incorporation of low cultural forms was no longer a hinderance but a constituent part of their genius. While Hervé's piece was let down by the composer's lowly urban origins and its venue's degenerate bourgeois class associations, Rabelais's youth among the rural poor – a demographic increasingly shrouded in nostalgia for France's pre-industrial, pre-revolutionary history – strengthened his status as a writer connected to a quintessentially Gallic muse. Though Hervé might have tried to move across the generic divisions at play in nineteenth-century Paris, these were the tangible manifestations of the cultural stratification underpinning the whole of French society, and so largely impossible to circumnavigate. Ultimately, then, Merruau's and Saint-Victor's descriptions of Hervé and Clairville's piece as a watered-down Rabelaisian *piquette* or an underdeveloped wine were excellent metaphors for the hurdle facing artists seeking to adapt, imitate, echo, reply to, parody, translate, squeeze something out of, intervene in, collaborate with, or borrow from Rabelais and his *chroniques*.³⁴⁰ Just as an old bottle of wine will develop richer, more complex flavours if stored and aged in the right conditions, texts like Rabelais's took on new and complex meanings that corresponded to how they were received

³⁴⁰ These are all terms used by *Panurge*'s reviewers to describe the process we now generally call adaptation. Echoing the claims I made in my introduction about the importance of historically sensitive methodologies, these keywords testify to the diversity of ways in which historical 'adapters' have conceptualised the processes of (re)production in which they are participating.

and treated once published. And with their age came added value and exclusivity. Though the *curé* was thought to have been born into a relatively low position in social hierarchies of his day, the value and prestige his texts had accrued over their long and varied reception history meant that, by 1879, engaging with them critically or adaptively had become the preserve of the rich and well educated. It was not a job for a mere *chansonnier* like Hervé. To France's literary and cultural elites, constituting as they did the backbone of the country's critical press, Hervé's Rabelaisian 'piquette' with its ill-fitting generic designator was the equivalent of a bottle of cheap plonk with a fancy label. It looked nice, and they might have even enjoyed consuming it, but 'fine' it certainly was not.

OSCAR MÉTÉNIER ET DUBUT DE LAFOREST

RABELAIS

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Summary: *Rabelais* (1892)

Ganne, Méténier, and Dubut de Laforest's *Rabelais* intersperses musical numbers with spoken dialogue, the latter of which makes up the vast majority of the piece's run-time.³⁴¹ Following a short overture, Act I of *Rabelais* opens in the gardens of the Rabelais family inn, *la Lamproie*, adorned with a bar-sign reading 'Vivez joyeux'.³⁴² In song, a choir of *buveurs* and *buveuses* toast Maître Rabelais, calling the tavern the 'cabaret du bon Dieu'.³⁴³ Rabelais himself appears, calling Panurge to fill everyone's goblets. He assures his friends that his barrels are a 'corne d'abondance,' promising infinite hope and eternal life through drink.³⁴⁴ Rabelais then reveals his intention to leave for Fontenay-le-Comte to finish his work, prompting his lackey Panurge's comic despair.

Following the revelation that Rabelais wishes to enter a monastery, a knight, André d'Ergis, questions him about his departure. Rabelais wants to become a monk so that he can finish writing his almanacs in peace, but André warns that they are too sacrilegious and could get him burned at the stake in the place de Grève (now the Hôtel de Ville in Paris). André also reminds Rabelais of how much his previous texts angered the king's seneschal, Diane de Poitiers. Rabelais jokes that if he were put to death he would go out in the good company of rogues and dismisses the concern, sending Panurge for more wine. The *curé* insists that he

³⁴¹ Music plays a lesser part in *Rabelais* than in any of the other works in my corpus.

³⁴² 'Vivez joyeux' is the instruction that closes the *Au Lecteur* section of *Gargantua* (Garg.Au Lecteurs.3). Reflecting the special interest that members of Paris's *avant garde* circles had in Medieval and Renaissance culture and history, *Rabelais*'s librettists Méténier and Dubut de Laforest filled their Rabelaisian rework with references to the *curé*'s life and works.³⁴² For a study of this tradition, see: Elizabeth Emery, 'Gaudeamus Igitur: Late Nineteenth-Century French Taverns as a Portal to the Medieval', *The Year's Work in Medievalism*, 31 (2016), pp. 90–103. With its plot situated from the outset in accounts of Rabelais's personal life, the 1892 piece perpetuated the historical misunderstanding that Rabelais was the son of an innkeeper, discussed in the previous chapter. Unless otherwise specified, all references to this work will come from the printed libretto (Oscar Méténier and Henri Dubut de Laforest, *Rabelais, pièce en quatre actes et cinq tableaux* (E. Dentu, 1893). These will be given in text in format (Mét, p.).

³⁴³ This was a description of the establishment used by Eugène Noël in his 1850 publication *Rabelais* (Eugène Noël, *Legendes françaises. Rabelais* (Comon, 1850), p. 72.)

³⁴⁴ This echoes the image offered by Rabelais in the prologue of the *Tiers livre* of a 'tonneau inexpuisable [...] un vray Cornucopie de joyeuseté et raillerie' (TL.Prol.351-352). For more on Rabelais's cornucopianism, see: Cave, *The Cornucopian Text; Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*, pp. 183–222.

wants to be a ‘moine... moine, moinant, moinillant, en de moinillantes moineries!’ (Mét, p. 7).³⁴⁵ André is saddened, as he hoped Rabelais might one day marry. Rabelais laughs, listing various professions he would prefer over marriage.³⁴⁶ André mentions his cousin Symone, whom Rabelais has previously tutored. However, she is promised to M. de Puits-Herbault, the head of the king’s guard. André leaves for a hunt, and Rabelais decides to join him.

Panurge returns with wine, drinking straight from the bottle and rattling off some excentric phrases (‘je suis de la même famille que la mule du pape [...] l’appétit vient en mangeant et la soif s’en va en buvant [...] ex hoc [drinks] in hoc!’: Mét, p. 16).³⁴⁷ Symone’s maid Manon enters, commenting on Panurge’s drunkenness. He explains that he is scared of thirst: like a man running behind a dog to avoid a mauling, he drinks before thirst to avoid thirsting. Calling this nonsense, Manon asks to see Rabelais. Panurge tries to kiss her, but she rebuffs him and inquires about her mistress. In the first musical episode since the beginning of the work, Panurge and Manon sing a duet about wine and sex, calling them a ‘double merveille.’ (Mét, p. 18). Ultimately, though, Manon dismisses Panurge’s ‘philosophical’ talk and asks him to consult Rabelais before proposing. Panurge explains that Rabelais had previously only given non-committal responses. Manon laments her mistress Symone’s unhappy engagement to Puits-Herbault.

Rabelais returns, and Manon asks him to dissuade Panurge from marriage. Rabelais advises caution in choosing a spouse, likening it to buying fruit or a horse. Panurge agrees, reminding Rabelais of his name: Panurge, from Panourgous, signifying the all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-foreseen. Manon calls their knowledge useless and sings a solo rondeau (with short interjections from Panurge) about the futility of theorising about marriage when

³⁴⁵ This is reminiscent of the first line of QL.XI in which Epistemon describes something said by Frère Jean as ‘parlé en moine. Je diz moine moinant, je ne diz pas, moine moiné.’

³⁴⁶ Echoing the real Rabelais’s penchant for lists, the 1892 Rabelais says he would sooner be a soldier, seneschal, minister, great salesman, provost, doctor, surgeon, executioner, gravedigger, actor, preacher, cardinal, or pope than a husband.

³⁴⁷ These are typical of his character in Rabelais’s texts.

you cannot see the thing that your fiancée keeps hidden until your wedding night (i.e. ‘pas mon visage!’)... Rabelais laughs, excusing Manon who then hands him a letter from Symone in which she expresses great sadness. As Manon leaves, Panurge consults Rabelais regarding whether he should marry, to which Rabelais responds with non-committal truisms.³⁴⁸ Manon returns with Symone who embraces Rabelais. Panurge and Manon then leave.

Symone begs Rabelais to help her avoid marrying Puits-Herbault as her father is refusing to reconsider. Rabelais suggests that Symone will learn to love Puits-Herbault, but she disagrees. Asked if she loves another, she makes her interest in Rabelais very clear, cuddling up to him and sweetening her voice. Rabelais is distracted by a fanfare in the distance and Symone complains about Rabelais misunderstanding her advances. As fanfare figures are played by the orchestra, Puits-Herbault enters, followed by François I^{er}'s entire hunting party. The king instructs his jester Triboulet to throw gold to the crowd as he takes a seat.³⁴⁹ Spotting Symone from across the room, the king asks that she is presented to him. As he and Symone are introduced to one another, the Seneschal tells Puits-Herbault that he will be rewarded with a province for marrying Symone quickly. The king asks when Symone and Puits-Herbault are to wed, and her father responds that it is up to the king. In a ploy to avoid marriage, Symone asks the king that she be made a nun but instead, he invites her to court, elevating her father to Duke to avoid the scandal of a low-born (by royal standards) woman entering the royal house. Symone is still upset and Rabelais consoles her by suggesting she copy him and laugh at everything, forgetting ephemeral pain for eternal laughter. As the king leaves, he asks for Rabelais's name, causing Triboulet to laud him as a great savant and poet,

³⁴⁸ This is a reformulated version of the well-known *chanson de ricochet* passage from the *Tiers livre* (TL.IX.377-379). While in Rabelais's text Panurge consults Pantagruel, in this version of the scene he repeatedly asks Rabelais who echoes Pantagruel's original non-committal truisms, tacitly associating the writer with the lack of interest in marriage normally associated with his character.

³⁴⁹ Not only was Triboulet the real François I^{er}'s jester, but he was also a character in Rabelais's *Tiers livre* questioned by Panurge regarding the strengths of marriage (TL.XLV-XLVI.490-494). In this interaction, Triboulet responds with a mixture of gibberish and accusations of cuckoldry.

master of the science of laughter, and the identity behind the pseudonym Alcofibas Nasier. Hearing this, the Seneschal (the target of Rabelais's recent pamphlet) demands justice. The King, in contrast, complements Rabelais and invites him to live among the *Pléiade* poets at his court, but the *curé* refuses. All leave but Rabelais and Panurge.

A few moments later, the pair are joined on stage by two monks: frères Buinard and Ardillon, who bless them as they enter. Panurge gives them food and wine and as they drink Rabelais questions them about monastic life. Buinard and Ardillon respond in monosyllables.³⁵⁰ They do not work, pray 'peu', eat six meals a day, and constantly drink white wine. They sleep ten hours a day but consider this too little. Rabelais is sold! As they prepare to leave, Rabelais suggests Panurge accompanies him so the pair can solve the marriage question together on their travels.³⁵¹ As they leave, grape pickers swarm the stage, singing as they mount a farewell wine festival. The monks bless the grapes. After a large scale chorus passage, Rabelais says it is time to leave, and the monks respond in Latin with 'fiat voluntas tua!' (Mét, p. 60) quoting the Lord's prayer and putting Rabelais (both comically and blasphemously) in the position of God.

In Act Two, after a short entr'acte, the curtain rises on the gothic hall at the monastery of Fontenay-le-Comte, where a throne stands below a statue of Saint Francis.³⁵² Panurge is conversing with some monks, during which he explains that the motto of this Fredon order is 'fais ce que voudras' (Mét, p. 64).³⁵³ Yet he is confused by how little freedom the order

³⁵⁰ This is a recreation of CL.XXVII in which Panurge questions a member of the 'Fredon' order about life in their monastery, encountered while visiting the island of *Esclots*. In this version, the monks give short answers between mouthfuls rather than for brevity

³⁵¹ The idea that travelling might inspire an answer to the marriage debates closely resembles the decision at the end of the *Tiers livre* to set sail in search of the *Oracle de la Dive Bouteille*.

³⁵² This image is suggestive of the story communicated in the preface to the first edition of Rabelais illustrated by Gustave Doré in which, as a young Franciscan, Rabelais disguised himself as a statue of the saint, suddenly coming alive in the middle of a service in order to fool worshippers that they were witnessing a miracle. (Rabelais, *Oeuvres de François Rabelais [...] illustrée par Gustave Doré*, p. 7).

³⁵³ This is the same motto as Rabelais's abbey of Thélème (Garg.LVII.149).

affords its members. The monks ask Panurge to stop Rabelais writing his almanacs but give no reason for their wishes. To obtain an account of their reasoning, Panurge employs a stratagem, lamenting the lack of Chinon wine at the monastery. When the monks concur, Panurge reveals that he has some bottles of the 1508 vintage in his chambers and promises to share it if the monks reveal their motives. Acquiescing, the monks explain that the abbot, père Chrysostome, fears the almanacs will compromise his order.³⁵⁴ Rabelais's cell has been searched and the drafts, still unaccounted for, ordered burned. In an aside, Panurge reveals that they are stashed somewhere secure. The monks sing a duet – described as a ‘Prière Bachique’ in the vocal score – celebrating wine, as Panurge leaves to fetch a bottle.³⁵⁵ This duet begins as if plainchant, but after a short introductory section about the monastery's rules it moves into double time as they describe ‘humant le piot sans vergogne!’³⁵⁶ After singing their song and receiving their wine, the monks tell Panurge that Rabelais has been constantly drunk, mixing wine and drugs to make them more potent. Singing unaccompanied from the wings, the *curé* lists insulting labels for the monks with whom he lives.³⁵⁷

As orchestral accompaniment begins, Rabelais enters the stage to finish his song. He then (in dialogue) asks Panurge how he likes monastic life, joking that he would prefer to live in Thélème than here. Panurge is unsure, interrupting Rabelais when he tries to remind him

³⁵⁴ An intrigue concerning illicit texts in circulation in a monastery resonates with Rabelais's own fate among the Franciscans who, in 1523, fearing that his increasing proficiency in Greek would open him to non-sanctioned interpretations of the New Testament, confiscated the books that he and his fellow friar Pierre Lamy's owned.

³⁵⁵ Louis Ganne, Oscar Ménétiér, and Jean-Louis Dubut de Laforest, *Rabelais, pièce-opérette en quatre actes et cinq tableaux* (Choudens, 1892), p. 35, BnF.

³⁵⁶ This echoes details given by Rabelais of Gargantua's youth, during which he famously also ‘humoit le piot’ (Garg.VII.23).

³⁵⁷ The list of personae non grata offered in these ‘Stances de l'Abbaye de Thélème’ echoes the inscription on the walls of the abbey of Thélème in *Gargantua*:

Ménétiér/Dubut de Laforest
 Cy n'entrez pas, hypocrites, bigots,
 Gueux mitouflés, mangeurs du Populaire,
 Torcoulx, badauds, précurseurs des magots, [...]

Rabelais (Garg.LIIII.141)
 C'y n'entrez pas Hypocrites, bigotz
 Vieulx matagotz, marmiteux borsoufflez,
 Torcoulx, badaulx plus que n'estoient les Gotz,
 Ny Ostrogotz, precurseurs des magots [...]

‘rions, parce que rire...’: he has heard that one before!³⁵⁸ Rabelais suggests that to avoid boredom Panurge could deliver some letters to some of his associates: André Tiraqueau, Guillaume Budé, or Geoffroy d’Estissac.³⁵⁹ Panurge is reluctant: last time he ventured out he received a beating after a misjudged interaction with a local woman he mistook for Manon. A mystery monk loitering behind the pair comes forward and reveals themselves to be Manon in disguise. While Rabelais is scandalised by a woman’s presence in a monastery, Panurge is overjoyed to see a female figure.

Panurge is sent away so Manon and Rabelais can talk privately. She reveals that the Seneschal and Puits-Herbault are plotting to have Rabelais assassinated. She implores Rabelais to leave but he laughs the threat off, telling Manon to go home, handing her a letter addressed to André. Unfortunately, Manon has left her escape until too late: the routes from the hall are now blocked by monks who are processing onto stage, underscored by a solemn orchestral chorale. She has no choice but to put her habit back on and hide amongst the novices gathered at the back of the hall. Once père Chrysostome is seated on the throne, Rabelais asks if Panurge might be permitted to ask the monks about the benefits of marriage before he re-enters society. Père Hippothadée asks Panurge if God gave him a high libido, and Panurge says he did not, prompting Hippothadée to suggest that marriage might help keep his concupiscent fires alight.³⁶⁰ Panurge voices concern about being cuckolded but (like his sixteenth-century antecedent) is told by Hippothadée that if God ordains it then it will not

³⁵⁸ Here is an example of a logical inconsistency identified by press critic François Sarcey (‘Chronique théâtrale’, *Le Temps*, 31 October 1892.). As he explains: ‘les auteurs se sont dit qu’apparemment Rabelais devait avoir lu *Gargantua et Pantagruel* puisqu’il les avait écrits ; ils lui en font donc à tout propos citer quelques passages, [...]’. Operatic Rabelais is quoting from the ‘au lecteur’ of *Gargantua*: a text that real Rabelais had not yet written while residing in Fontenay-le-Comte.

³⁵⁹ These are three contemporaries of Rabelais with whom he was known to be in contact.

³⁶⁰ This diverges from Panurge’s consultation with Père Hippothadée in the *Tiers livre*. Here, when asked about his ‘aiguillons de la chair’ Panurge replies that he feels them ‘bien fort’ (TL.XXX.446),

be. Chrysostome then turns to frère Epistemon who advises that if one can say a man is married, one can say he has been (or will be) cuckolded.³⁶¹

Frère Buinard rises to advise Panurge to be a good husband. As a carillon rings, Buinard suggests listening to the bells that, he claims, are ringing in support of marriage. Ardillon, however, interprets them as saying he must never marry. As the bells increase in volume and intensity, the monks sing a chorus in which some chant ‘marie-toi’ and the others ‘marie point’ (Mét, p. 90).³⁶² Complaining aloud that consulting monks was foolish, Manon accidentally reveals her presence. Chrysostome suggests asking her opinion of marriage. In a set of couplets, she replies that if Panurge marries her he will be cuckolded if she wants.³⁶³

As a bell tolls twice, Frère Beumette runs in, announcing that the King has summoned Chrysostome, sending Puits-Herbault in his capacity as president of the ecclesiastical tribunal to condemn the crimes of ‘Alcofribas’, the writer of some illicit and wicked books.³⁶⁴ Puits-Herbault enters and calls Rabelais to defend himself. The *curé* argues that his books should not be judged by their surface humour but should be meditated upon. Indeed, ‘l’habit ne fait pas le moine’ (Mét, p. 96; quoting: Garg.Pro.6). Rabelais continues, emphasising his belief in

³⁶¹ This echoes the claims of Dr Rondibilis in the *Tiers livre* that ‘Coquage est naturellement des apennages de mariage’ (TL.XXII.453).

³⁶² This quotes the well-known passage of the *Tiers livre* in which Panurge and Frère Jean interpret the bells of Varennes cathedral, with half the monks (TL.XXVII.436).

³⁶³ Manon’s reply confirms all of both sixteenth- and nineteenth-century Panurge’s fears about the potential emasculatory effects of marriage.

³⁶⁴ Gabriel de Puits-Herbault was also the name of a sixteenth-century member of the abbey of Fontevault and doctor of the faculty of Paris whose 1549 text *Theotimus* – written under the *nom-de-plume* ‘Putherbeus’ – contained an invective against the supposedly heretical concept of ‘Pantagruelismo’. In particular, Putherbeus insisted on the wickedness of Rabelais’s pamphlets (‘Certè si quid callet bonæ artis, cogatur in ea tandem sese exercere: alioqui ta impius homo, quam publice suis nefarijs libellis pestilens.’; ‘Certainly, if he is skilled in any good art, he might at last be forced to exercise himself in it; otherwise, he is a more unholy man, as he is pestering the public with his wicked pamphlets.’ My translation.), a criticism which his nineteenth-century knightly recreation shares. (Gabrielis Putherbeus, *Theotimus*, Paris, 1549, the Bavarian State Library (Pol.g. 784), 180-182). Crucially, nineteenth-century readers of Rabelais were aware of Putherbeus’ critique as it was discussed in the introduction to the 1854 edition of the *chroniques*: the first to be accompanied by Gustave Doré’s illustrations (François Rabelais, *Oeuvres de François Rabelais [...] illustrée par Gustave Doré*, ed. by Paul Lacroix (J. Bry Ainé, 1854, p. 34).

the infiniteness of God claiming that ‘Dieu est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout et la circonférence est nulle part’ (Mét, p. 96).³⁶⁵

Rabelais concludes his pleas by asking to be left to work and to laugh. However, this is rejected, and the *curé* is handed over to Puits-Herbault by Chrysostome. As Manon protests, she drops a handful of papers: the manuscript copy of a new farce by Rabelais entitled ‘*Morale comédie de celui qui avait épousé une femme muette*’.³⁶⁶ The revelation of the papers provokes Puits-Herbault to condemn Rabelais to isolation until the day of his execution. Suddenly, at the sound of a fanfare and with intensely *mélodramatique* aplomb, André appears, challenging Puits-Herbault to a duel, who is subsequently injured. Rabelais is carried triumphantly from the hall by a choir of townsfolk who had gathered to watch the fight and who sing about defending Rabelais from harm.

Following an Entr’acte in the form of an orchestral march, Act Three begins in the university of Montpellier with four medical students attempting to force Manon to kiss them. They are Rondibilis, Balthazar Noyer, Guy Bouguier, and Antonio Saporta.³⁶⁷ While the

³⁶⁵ This quote constitutes a flexibly historicist theological proposition, indicative of approaches to the description of God that were in currency during Rabelais’s era. Indeed, readers of the *chroniques* are presented with two versions, one in the *Tiers livre* (‘ceste infinie et intellectuelle sphère, le centre laquelle est en chascun lieu de l’univers, la cercunference poinct’ TL.XII.388) and one in the *Cinquième livre* (‘ceste sphere intellectuel, de laquelle en tous lieux est le centre et n’a en lieu aucun circonference, que nous appellons dieu’ CL.XLVII.839). In the *Tiers livre* Rabelais emphasises the sixteenth-century belief that this was ‘Dieu selon la doctrine de Hermes trismegistus’, yet, according to Mireille Huchon, the phrase first appeared as the second aphorism included in the twelfth-century theological work *Liber XXIV philosophorum* (Rabelais, *Oeuvres Complètes*, p. 1392 n.14.). Alongside Rabelais, the proposition also appears in the works of Marguerite de Navarre. In her poem *Les Prisons*, she suggests that God is ‘du cercle rond sans la circumference, | Par tous costez egal sans difference, | Commencement ne fin ne s’y retrouve’ (Marguerite de Navarre, *Les Prisons*, ed. by Simon Glasson (Droz, 1978), bk. III, ll. 795-797.). Though the exact phrasing used by Ganne’s Rabelais is anachronistic, directly quoted as it is from Blaise Pascal’s formulation of the aphorism, invoking it suggests both a close familiarity with Rabelais’s texts, and opens the possibility (though perhaps only slim) that the librettists might have been familiar with theological trends in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century evangelical Christianity and were using it to situate their narrative in this period of intellectual history (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Gallimard, 1977), p. 167.).

³⁶⁶ This shares its name with a comic play that sixteenth-century Rabelais tells his readers he was involved in mounting while a student at Montpellier (TL.XXXIV.460), further blurring the boundary between biography and fiction in *Rabelais*.

³⁶⁷ The first of these is named after the doctor consulted by Panurge in the *Tiers livre* (TL.XXXI-XXXIII.448-458). The rest are said by Alcofribas Nasier to have acted in a farce alongside Rabelais while students in Montpellier.

students harass Manon, Panurge arrives accompanied by soldiers and assumes she is cuckolding him. Manon explains that she and Panurge are engaged. The soldiers arrested Panurge for having his hand in another woman's pocket and are escorting him back to Rabelais who is being housed by a professor at the university named Jean Schyron.³⁶⁸ The medical students vouch for Panurge, and the soldiers leave. They reassure Panurge that their moves on Manon were in jest and ask for the pair's wedding date. It is undecided, postponed after he had a dream in which a young lady attached horns to his forehead, before he transformed into a small tambour and she an owl.³⁶⁹ Guy Bouguier reassures Panurge that the horns were probably those of plenty, and the tambour the kind played at weddings but Saporta reminds the group that horns signify marital disloyalty, tambours are made to be beaten, and owls steal.³⁷⁰ Manon has had enough: Panurge's dithering is insulting and his arrest for robbing (or groping) a woman is reprehensible.

Panurge announces that he and Rabelais are due to travel to Paris. To mark their departure, the students have organized a celebratory festival in which Panurge plans to perform a new song, '*l'art de se bien.... moucher!*' (Mét, p. 119, entitled the *Chanson de l'oison* in the vocal score), a sample of which he sings for the students.³⁷¹ Manon tells Panurge that Symone is to be forcibly married to Puits-Herbault today. He quips about unhappy marriages, and when Manon retorts by criticising his thieving, he explains that he

³⁶⁸ This was one of real Rabelais's medical professors while he trained to be a doctor in the early 1530s. (Donald Slaughter, 'Medicine in the Life of François Rabelais', *Annals of Medical History*, 1.4 (1939), pp. 396–401 (pp. 400–401)).

³⁶⁹ This is the same dream retold to Pantagruel, Epistemon, Ponocrates, Eudemon, Carpalim and Frère Jean by Rabelais's Panurge in the *Tiers livre*. The significance of the dream is debated by the group, who interpret Panurge's horns as a sign he will be cuckolded, his transformation into a drum as a sign that his wife will beat him, and her metamorphosis into an owl as an indication that she will steal from him (TL.XIII,393-394).

³⁷⁰ Saporta's interpretation echoes that of Pantagruel's entourage in the *chroniques*,

³⁷¹ In this song, Panurge stands in for Rabelais's Gargantua who, in a famous scene in *Gargantua* explains to his father how he has deduced the best material with which to wipe one's bottom (Garg.XIII.38-42). The 1892 Panurge acts out a similar process of trial and error, alternately smiling and grimacing as he outlines the various materials he has tried and the pain or pleasure that they provided, before coming to the same conclusion as Rabelais's Gargantua: that a goose's neck is the best utensil for the job.

has sixty-three ways to earn money and 200,000 to spend it.³⁷² After Panurge resists Manon's calls to disrupt the wedding, she storms out. Now alone, Panurge expresses frustration at the marriage question's unknowableness, but notes the curiously negative effect that marriage is having on those around him. Rabelais enters in doctoral robes and asks about Panurge's preparations for departure. Symone runs in wearing a wedding dress and Rabelais sends Panurge away. Having just jilted Puits-Herbault, Symone begs Rabelais for protection. He resists as her honour is now in question, but eventually suggests she join him on the journey to Paris. Once there she can ask the king to sort out the mess. She is apprehensive but Rabelais reassures her that if she explains she loves someone else then the king will persuade her father to back down. Loudly, she begs Rabelais to propose to her, startling him.

The *curé* is shocked that Symone loves him as he considers himself harsh, strict, with a soul in turmoil beneath a mask of laughter. He can feel his gaiety dissolving into tears, and this worries him as a crying Alcofribas signals the end of the world. Suddenly Symone's father Pierre bursts in and accuses Rabelais of taking advantage of his hospitality. Rabelais implores Pierre to see Symone's desperation: she is here to flee an odious marriage and that is all. Pierre further accuses Rabelais of pushing Symone to leave Puits-Herbault for him, but Rabelais insists that his only mistress is gaiety. Finally, Rabelais reminds Pierre that since Symone has an open invitation to the royal court, it is ultimately the King's decision whether she and Puits-Herbault marry.

Pierre and Symone leave as Panurge returns to announce Puits-Herbault's arrival. The soldier says he comes as a friend, explaining that in Fontenay-le-Comte he was just following orders. In reality, he is a great admirer of Rabelais's books. Puits-Herbault tells Rabelais that his critique in the monastery was based upon a poor reading.³⁷³ He claims that having

³⁷² This echoes sixteenth-century Panurge's 'soixante et troys manieres de recouvrer argent : mais [...] deux cens quatorze de le despendre' (Pant.XVII.280).

³⁷³ This echoes his medieval namesake's emphasis on the skill of proper reading in *Theotimus* (noted above).

explained the meaning of the books to the Seneschal, she is no longer his enemy either. Puits-Herbault asks for Rabelais's help in marrying Symone, offering money in return. This, he explains, is so he can later use her attractiveness to ingratiate himself with the King. Rabelais, incensed, orders him to leave and threatens to chuck him out the window if he refuses. As the captain exits, Rabelais calls for Panurge who is followed by the entire faculty of Montpellier. They process onto stage in academic robes, underscored by ceremonial entrance music. They ask that he plead the university's case to the chancellor Duprat.³⁷⁴ He is to ask that Duprat cease his opposition to the reopening of the *collège de Gironne*, closed since war broke out against the king of Aragon. We are given no context for this political cause. Rabelais agrees, the townsfolk are heard celebrating in the distance, and all leave.

The ballet sequence begins and Rabelais appears on a balcony overlooking the square outside the university, flanked by professors. In the centre of the square stands a statue of Gargantua and a Dive Bouteille with half naked dancers draping themselves across it.³⁷⁵ From all corners of the stage emerges a chorus of students. As one group sings praise of the *doctrine Pantagruéline*, another describes laughter as having healing properties.³⁷⁶ A third group lauds 'Maître Alcofribas'. They then join together to celebrate Gargantua.

Panurge and Manon enter, dancing. Panurge (speaking over a sustained timpani roll) greets the statue of Gargantua, celebrating his size and appetite. He suggests that the oil of savants is too dull to sustain Gargantua's gaiety.³⁷⁷ This gives way to a 'Ballet des nonnes et ribaudes'. The ribaudes enter to an up-tempo 6/8 waltz, before the nuns follow them, dancing to a daintier march-like passage. All adopt 'poses lascives'. The nuns dance a *valse-caprice*,

³⁷⁴ This is likely intended to be Antoine Duprat, 1463-1535.

³⁷⁵ This is a reference to the supernatural, intoxicating force behind the vision of the *Oracle de la Dive Bouteille* to which Pantagruel and his entourage sail in Rabelais's *Quart Livre*.

³⁷⁶ This laughter, they remind us, is in Rabelais's famous formulation also 'le propre de l'homme' (Garg.Au Lecteur.3)

³⁷⁷ This references a line in the prologue to *Gargantua* in which Rabelais uses a classical exemplar to encourage burning wine rather than oil while writing because its odour is 'plus friant, riant, priant, plus celeste, et delieux que d'huile.' (Garg.Pro.7).

marked to be played ‘timidement’, which is then contrasted by the frenetic *allegro vivo* of the music for *ribaudes*. Following a ‘petit galop’ the prima ballerina emerges from the giant *Dive Bouteille*, dancing as if intoxicated (Mét, p. 151) and accompanied by a violin solo. She approaches a group of nuns, getting them to join hands with the *ribaudes*. As the music slows, the nuns throw off their habits, joining the *ribaudes* in an ‘équilibre, harmonieuse et lascive’ (Mét, p. 152).³⁷⁸ The nuns and *ribaudes* dance a mazurka together, before Rabelais, Manon, and a crowd of students return to the stage. These students implore Rabelais to sing his ‘Chanson de la Bouteille’: a song lauding Bacchus and the bottle’s divinity and metaphysical properties.³⁷⁹ The chorus reprise Rabelais’s drinking song before the curtain falls.

Act four opens to the sound of a trumpet fanfare from the wings followed by a royal march as the curtain rises on the gardens of Fontainebleau Palace, being prepared for a performance of the ‘femme muette’ in which Rabelais will play the doctor, and Panurge the *femme*. The audience arrive, including members of the royal court. We learn that the Seneschal has asked Puits-Herbault to write a verse intended to be inserted into Rabelais’s script in order to bring the *curé* into disrepute. After some initial resistance, two actors are bribed to speak the anti-monarchical lines. The Seneschal chastises Puits-Herbault for his failure at Fontenay-le-Comte. The captain confesses love for the Seneschal and they kiss. They then leave the stage, promising to carry out their vengeful plan. Their kiss was seen by Panurge, who notes their conspiratorial air. He tells Manon, who calls him crazy. Rabelais

³⁷⁸ This may have been interpreted by the audience as a travesty of the *Ballet des nonnes* from Giacomo Meyerbeer’s hugely successful grand opéra *Robert le diable*. This piece would have been well known to a large portion of the Parisian theatregoing audience, performed as it was nearly 750 times between its creation year in 1831 and 1892. The parallel is mentioned by critic Albert Tisserand (in ‘La Soirée’, *La Marseillaise*, 27 October 1892.)

³⁷⁹ The lyrics to this song echo those of the *chanson* contained in the bottle given to Panurge by the oracle Bacbuc in the final episode of the *Cinquième livre* by starting with the exclamation ‘O Bouteille!’ and employing a similar lexicon (CL.XLIII.831).

and André arrive and Panurge warns them about Puits-Herbault's suspicious conversation with the actors. Rabelais is unfazed, adding that Panurge can marry Manon: she will cuckold him, but if she remained faithful then they would be ill-suited anyway. Following an entrance procession, the King strides over to Symone, telling her that he will not only grant the request Rabelais made on behalf of his university, but also give her the finest duchy in all of France. After a short 'pavane' and a chorus expressing reverence towards the King, he asks Rabelais how preparations are going for the farce. Symone informs Rabelais that his request was granted, and the King calls him a friend, much to the Seneschal's dismay. The King reminds her of the rarity of Rabelais's genius before ordering the farce to commence.

In the farce – introduced first by a short musical prelude, and then by the 'trois saluts classiques' – Rabelais plays a doctor mistakenly attempting to treat a husband instead of his ill wife who, it transpires, is extremely attractive. Under the auspices of a medical examination, the doctor comically fondles the wife. As she is mute, she cannot respond but appears to go along with the doctor's games. Instead of treating the wife, the doctor forces a pill down the husband's throat, and this magically gives the wife the ability to speak again. She then proceeds to chastise her husband, calling him names and threatening him with a beating. Eventually, the wife utters the lines inserted by Puits-Herbault and the Seneschal, cursing Paris and its inhabitants.

At this, the King's entourage explodes with collective rage. Rabelais flees as the King orders his arrest. Symone begs the King to hear Rabelais out, and Triboulet comes to his defence, suggesting that Rabelais would surely be more subtle in any satirical takedown of the King that he ordered. Rabelais is captured and pleads innocence to the King as the Seneschal argues for his execution. Rabelais accuses the Seneschal and Puits-Herbault in return. Manon reveals that Panurge saw the pair kissing. The King sides with Rabelais who then asks that Symone and André can be wed. André is given the province of Montpellier as a

wedding present. Panurge asks again if he should marry, and Rabelais answers ‘ni l’un ni l’autre!’ (Mét, p. 193).³⁸⁰ The King asks Rabelais for the secret to his eternal gaiety, and he leads a chorus in response, ending in ‘Pource que rire est le propre de l’homme!’ (Mét, p. 194, quoting: Garg.Au Lecteurs.3). Rabelais greets and bows to the chorus, full of emotion. They sing a ‘hymne-apothéose’ celebrating his genius and the liberty of the French. Fin.

³⁸⁰ This echoes the ‘ephectique’ and ‘Pyrrhonien’ philosopher Trouillogan’s reply to the same question posed by Panurge in the *Tiers livre* (TL.XXXV.462).

Chapter 3.A

1892

Hybrid Rabelais – Human Rabelais – Superhuman Rabelais

Rabelais, pièce en quatre actes et cinq tableaux was premiered in October of 1892 at the newly constructed (and creatively named) Nouveau-Théâtre: an annexe of the Casino de Paris located on rue Blanche in the Saint-Lazare district of central northern Paris.³⁸¹ Its libretto was written by Oscar Méténier and Jean-Louis Dubut de Laforest, members of the infamous Chat Noir intellectual circle of Montmartre, and its music was provided by Louis Ganne, a well-known writer for the Parisian popular stage and ex-student of Jules Massenet and César Franck.

This section will be largely concerned with the multi-layered hybridities at work in *Rabelais*, beginning with an account of the socio-culturally liminal space in which the Nouveau-Théâtre operated as a meeting place for Paris's upper and lower social crusts. Using press sources as my primary evidentiary base, I will then demonstrate that *Rabelais's* generic identity was received as similarly socio-culturally hybrid, echoing its venue's liminality by combining key elements of multiple genres in a way that resisted stable definition. One might imagine that stylistic mixing of this kind would have been felt to resonate strongly with already well-established ideas about Rabelais's own hybrid writing style. However, press

³⁸¹ Due to the ephemeral nature of the productions mounted by the Nouveau-Théâtre and the Casino de Paris, archival records of the material traces of Ganne's *Rabelais* are limited. We have a vocal score and a libretto including dialogue, both of which are freely available online. Beyond this, the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris holds a copy of the programme circulated at the performance (8-PRO-0195). The Archives Nationales holds a handwritten copy of the *manuscrit de censure* (F/18/1214). The BnF holds a Fonds Ganne (VM Fonds 130 GAN), but at the time of writing this thesis, it is unavailable for consultation. I have been assured by archivists that it contains no material relevant to *Rabelais*, but because of these access limitations I have been unable to check this for myself. The BnF also holds numerous press reviews of *Rabelais* that appeared following its premiere. I have cited these individually throughout this chapter.

accounts suggest that while both were considered hybrid, the way in which this hybridity was produced and received was considered to differ. While Rabelais's hybridity was considered both broad-spectrum and balanced, *Rabelais's* was judged to be off-kilter, overly emphasising certain discourses – in particular scholarly accounts of the writer's life – while neglecting others, like the comedy of his texts.

As this discussion develops, it will become clear that among certain voices in the press, Rabelais constituted something of a cluster-concept: the confluence of a body-normal and a body-literary.³⁸² The former was Rabelais-the-man: a monk, doctor, satirist, and close associate of the French crown. The latter was a more intangible product of Rabelais's reception trajectory: a mythologised figure of French literary history whose personality as it was imagined by his downstream audience originated in, and emanated from, either the world inside the *chroniques*, key episodes from his evermore embellished biography, or the culmination of key concatenating discourses in his reception history. Méténier and Dubut de Laforest's blurring of details from Rabelais's life and texts thus also constituted the intermingling of these two otherwise largely distinct conceptual bodies. In seeking to stage elements of Rabelais's texts by inserting them artificially into Rabelais's life, the librettists inadvertently created a comparably artificial notion of his Renaissance surroundings. Their piece took place in a version of Renaissance France derived from the period's representation in Rabelais's texts, given the aura of legitimacy by its simultaneous use of details from his life. The possibility of staging Rabelais's fictions was thus enhanced by deploying elements of his biography and ideas about his historical period, the latter of which were filtered through a fiction. As a result, in Ganne's *Rabelais* we see dual, complementary modes of

³⁸² My use of these terms echoes the differentiation between a monarch's body normal and body politic: the former referring to their material, corporeal existence, and the latter the immortal office that their body occupies. This division is explored by Ernst H. Kantorowicz in his seminal work, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, 1957).

seeking authenticity: one involving details of historical record, and one based in a fictional depiction of the Renaissance.

I will conclude by arguing that despite resonating strongly with Rabelais's combination of contrasting discourses, the mixing of myth and biography in the 1892 work and the levelling of contrasting discursive levels that it involved were not considered part of the same hybrid phenomenon. This was a difference between a coherent incoherence associated with Rabelais's works, and the supposed incoherent incoherence of *Rabelais*. Indeed, while for reviewers in 1892, the hybridity of sixteenth-century Rabelais's texts did not seem to undermine their impression of unified wholeness constructed as they were at, and out of, the convergence point of the numerous divergent discourses, *Rabelais* was perceived to remain insurmountably incoherent and, because of this, unworthy of carrying his name.

Hybridities in and around Ganne's *Rabelais*

Venue and socio-cultural hybridity: Le Nouveau-Théâtre

The Nouveau-Théâtre opened in 1891 in an annex of the Casino de Paris. This was one of three venues performing a model of music hall entertainment exported from London (what newspaper critic Albert Tisserand described in 1892 as 'la pudibonderie anglaise') and developed for a Parisian audience, first at the Folies-Bergère, and then the Olympia.³⁸³ Located a stone's throw from Gare Saint-Lazare, the Casino de Paris was intended to be the largest venue on the world, measuring 20,000 square feet with 60ft high ceilings, according to Sarah Gutsche-Miller.³⁸⁴ It also boasted a massive oriental garden and external *promenoir* that Gutsche-Miller explains were demolished in order to make space for the Nouveau-

³⁸³ Albert Tisserand, 'La Soirée', *La Marseillaise*, 27 October 1892.

³⁸⁴ Sarah Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871-1913* (University of Rochester Press, 2015), p. 22.

Théâtre's structure after the Casino fell into bankruptcy towards the end of its first year of business.³⁸⁵ At that point it was bought by the already successful theatre directors Louis Borney and Armand Desprez who, spotting the opportunity to double the revenue of their gargantuan new property, split the venue in two, maintaining the music-hall offering of the Casino's main auditorium while using the Nouveau-Théâtre to mount performances of large-scale spoken and lyric theatrical genres such as *pantomime*, *opéra-comique*, *opérette*, *mélodrame*, and *vaudeville*. Though Gutsche-Miller is keen to point out that the difference in generic offering between these twin venues was reflected in a difference in regular audience, the two halls still seem to have been linked in public consciousness. Indeed, when writing about *Rabelais*'s premiere, critics Albert Tisserand (*La Marseillaise*), Francisque Sarcey (*Le Temps*), and Victorin Jonciers (*La Liberté*) all noted their association.³⁸⁶

The Casino was certainly the least upmarket of the three Parisian music halls in its class, evidenced by the generally lower level of attention it was afforded by gossip columns and theatre critics. Yet it still aimed to attract a well-to-do audience, its ticket price unaffordable to anyone below middle-class.³⁸⁷ In turn, the Nouveau-Théâtre was a step above the Casino in exclusivity, costing more than its sister venue and enjoying a generally more respectable reputation. A ticket for the Nouveau-Théâtre gave patrons access to the Casino via a connecting passage, but not the other way round, and this free movement between the venues for the Nouveau-Théâtre's patrons formed another facet of its appeal, offering wealthy but perhaps more licentious patrons a gateway into the city's underbelly. For a 'walk on the wild side', customers with social status in need of protection could enter the venue through the

³⁸⁵ Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871-1913*, p. 22.

³⁸⁶ Albert Tisserand, 'La Soirée' *La Marseillaise*, 27 October 1892; Francisque Sarcey, 'Chronique théâtrale', *Le Temps*, 31 October 1892; Victorin Jonciers [Félix Ludger-Rossignol], 'Revue musicale', *La Liberté*, 31 October 1892. While for Tisserand, the Nouveau-Théâtre is the 'coquette et exquise bonbonnière annexée au Casino de Paris', Sarcey notes that the 'voisinage exclut du Nouveau-Théâtre les genres trop sérieux', emphasising their mutual influence.

³⁸⁷ Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871-1913*, p. 49.

Nouveau-Théâtre under the auspices of attending a show, before crossing incognito into the Casino to mingle with the sex-workers who circulated in the shadowy *promenoir* encircling the main auditorium.³⁸⁸

In this way, the Nouveau-Théâtre and its sister venue operated in a liminal space outside commonly held notions of socio-cultural stratification. Aimed at affluent patrons, it was considered upmarket, but not to the same extent as other comparable venues. It operated as a site of social mixing: a space in which members of the city's upper and lower social crusts could mingle and their practices and discourses could (to use comically apt phrasing from theorist Mikhail Bakhtin) penetrate one another.³⁸⁹ Its generic offering was similarly mixed, due in part to its being so new. At the time *Rabelais* was performed in October 1892, the Nouveau-Théâtre had been operating for barely a year and had yet to develop a clear generic association of its own.³⁹⁰ This lack of institutionally grounded generic clarity resulted in much greater scope for elements of *Rabelais* to be retroactively associated with one genre or another by reviewers looking to legitimise their criticism by using commonly held ideas about the level of cultural value wielded by each.

***Rabelais*: Genre and Generic Hybridity**

To date, there has been no consensus regarding the most appropriate genre designation for *Rabelais* among both modern and *fin-de-siècle* critics. As a case in point, in his brief passing mention of the piece, musicologist Richard Traubner asserted that Ganne's *Rabelais* 'was not an operetta, as some sources indicate' yet he offered in turn no detailed account of the materials upon which his claim was leaning, nor any more appropriate alternative genre

³⁸⁸ Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871-1913*, pp. 50–51.

³⁸⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (The MIT Press, 1965), p. 163.

³⁹⁰ In its first few years of activity, the Nouveau-Théâtre's output was highly generically mixed, and included *ballet-pantomime*, *opérette*, *tableaux vivants*, *fantaisies musicales*, and their popular ilk.

designations with which to replace the rejected label.³⁹¹ While a survey of press sources available would very well support the assertion that Ganne's piece was not received as *opérette* in any straightforward sense, Traubner's reluctance to offer any further detail is indicative of wider disagreement among writers in the late nineteenth-century critical press – one of his primary evidentiary bases – regarding how *Rabelais* might be best conceived in generic terms.

Behind every journalistic attempt to define the 1892 *Rabelais*'s genre was the implicit identification of a suitable corresponding position on contemporary hierarchies of cultural value. This overlap was exemplified by the well-respected theatre critic Francisque Sarcey, whose article in the long-established and highly influential daily newspaper *Le Temps* offered a reasonably clear account of *Rabelais*'s genre, firmly (and negatively) aligning it with *mélodrame*.³⁹² The critic described the work as 'ce que nos pères appelaient une comédie-ballet; c'est un genre dont Molière a plusieurs fois donné des modèles, et notamment dans *Le Malade imaginaire*.' As he explained, though Molière's piece began life as a multimedial work involving singing, *divertissement*, and ballet, these elements of the piece were eventually removed, meaning that what had originally constituted a 'comédie très forte' could no longer be counted as one of his best works. It was, Sarcey implied, in the accompanying sung and danced material that the special quality of Molière's play was revealed. Sarcey suggested that the same could be said for Ganne's *Rabelais*, writing that 'si l'on faisait subir à *Rabelais* la même amputation, il n'en resterait, hélas!, qu'un *mélodrame* sans couleur et sans vie.'³⁹³ To Sarcey, when *Rabelais*'s constituent multimedial parts – including its singing and dancing – were experienced together, the resulting mix could lay claim to being part of a generic tradition of which a French cultural giant like Molière was also part, imbuing

³⁹¹ Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, p. 221.

³⁹² Francisque Sarcey, 'Chronique théâtrale', *Le Temps*, 31 October 1892.

³⁹³ My italics.

Rabelais with a certain elevated level of cultural pedigree. However, if the ballet section, the *divertissements*, and the songs were to be stripped out, the remaining spoken action and orchestral underscore would, according to the critic, be devoid of verve, and would resemble *mélodrame* insofar as incidental music would constitute its primary musical material. Here, Sarcey may have been referencing the pioneer of early nineteenth-century *mélodrame* René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt's well known claim that his genre was born when he 'portai mon opéra [*Victor ou L'Enfant de la forêt*, 1799] à l'Ambigu-Comique où il fut joué en supprimant seulement les morceaux de chant.'³⁹⁴ In both formulations, *mélodrame* was the product of a process of musical – and more precisely lyric – subtraction.

Mélodrame, according to John McCormick, was 'the nineteenth-century dramatic genre par excellence'.³⁹⁵ While since its inception *mélodrame* had always been a musical stage genre, it could not be said to be 'lyric' in the same way as either Molière's original version of *Le Malade imaginaire* or the 1892 *Rabelais*. And while, as the 1817 *Traité du mélodrame* made clear, works of the genre had still often included elements of ballet and some sung passages, these were always secondary to the spoken action and its dramatic underscore.³⁹⁶ Strongly moral in tone and often set in historical surroundings, the genre had also been a mainstay of the stages of the popular theatrical district located along boulevard du Temple before it was demolished in 1862, an area once nicknamed *boulevard de crime* because of the themes of criminality and eventual moral triumph common to many of the genre's narratives. This gave the genre an enduring association with low-brow, ephemeral popular theatre. In essence, then, Sarcey's claim seems to have been that both the piece's quality and its elevated cultural status lay in the elements he discussed removing: those same elements that differentiated it from *mélodrame*. Without them, *Rabelais* would drop in status, its form

³⁹⁴ René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, 'Le Mélodrame', in *Paris: ou, Le Livre des cent-et-un* (Ladvocat, 1832), vi, pp. 319–52 (p. 325).

³⁹⁵ McCormick, *Popular Theatres of Nineteenth Century France*, pp. 2, 113.

³⁹⁶ Abel Hugo, Armand Malitourne, and Jean Joseph Ader, *Traité du mélodrame* (Delaunay, 1817), pp. 9–10.

resembling the *mélodrame* genre archetype that had dominated the popular theatres of Eastern Paris before 1862, and whose generic derivatives and descendants accounted for so much of the city's popular theatrical culture from then onwards.³⁹⁷

Sarcey was not alone in suggesting parallels between elements of Ganne's *Rabelais* and *mélodrame*. Emphasising the genre's tendency to dwell on historical themes by drawing attention to the courtly characters involved in the piece, Paul-Emile Chevalier wrote in his column for *Le Ménestrel* that in *Rabelais*, a representation of the eponymous writer was thrown 'au milieu d'un vulgaire mélodrame où des fantouches [sic] qui s'appellent François Ier, Diane de Poitiers, Puits-Herbault, Symone d'Ergis, André d'Ergis se démènent comme les héros d'un Dugué.'³⁹⁸ Doubling down on associations with the handful of popular, ephemeral, theatrical forms that had constituted the basis of the Nouveau-Théâtre's output up to that point, Chevalier suggested that *Rabelais's* melodramatic environs were not only vulgar, but also populated by puppets.³⁹⁹ Referring to these *fantoches* had a double significance: it not only associated *Rabelais* with Parisian puppet street theatres – 'theatre for the poor' according to McCormick – but was also suggestive of a less nuanced attempt at characterisation, with figures from the *chroniques* resembling inanimate humanoid simulacra rather than fully rounded multidimensional characters.⁴⁰⁰ By associating these *fantoches* with characters from the plays of Ferdinand Dugué, Chevalier also further emphasised their lack of literary merit. While oft performed and reasonably popular, Dugué's plays were hardly considered great works of dramatic composition. Rather, as his entry in the *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle* put it, 'les drames de Dugué sont, en général, habilement charpentés, souvent intéressants, mais remplis de situations forcées et d'une

³⁹⁷ This included *féerie*, discussed in detail in Chapter 3B.

³⁹⁸ Paul-Emile Chevalier, 'Semaine théâtrale', *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*, 30 October 1892.

³⁹⁹ I have found no record of melodrama being performed at the Nouveau-Théâtre before *Rabelais's* premiere.

⁴⁰⁰ John McCormick, 'Puppets in the Streets and Fairgrounds of Nineteenth-Century France', *Maske Und Kothurn*, 33.1–2 (1987), pp. 143–50 (p. 143).

médiocre valeur littéraire.⁴⁰¹ Associating the noble characters in his list with the low-brow theatrical output of Dugué and the street-corner shenanigans of the late-nineteenth century's puppet theatres in this way served to emphasise, derogatorily, the genre mixing at work both in 'vulgaire mélodrame' and in *Rabelais*.

Continuing the comparison between mixing in *Rabelais* and mixing in melodrama, Henri Fouquier (writing under the pseudonym Marcel Fouquier) in the *Le XIXe siècle* offered a glimpse into the piece's developmental history, suggesting that it was previously written by Dubut de Laforest alone, and intended for performance at the Odéon.⁴⁰² Having been submitted to a series of transformations in order to be more in keeping with the Nouveau-Théâtre's 'scène peu sévère', Fouquier argued that echoes of this proto-*Rabelais* survived in the 'intrigue fort mélodramatique' at the heart of the piece that was eventually performed. However, its shift in both intended venue and medial configuration led it to morph into what Fouquier characterised variously as 'une façon d'opérette caricaturale' and a 'tragi-farce': both labels emphasising inter-genre mixing. In particular, Fouquier's generic designation 'tragi-farce' was noteworthy for its integration of divergent generic markers with contrasting implicit cultural value associations. Tragedy was emblematic of the high-culture neo-classical playwrights of the seventeenth century (Racine, Corneille, Shakespeare) and their classical antecedents among the Greek tragedians (Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus), all of whom were still performed regularly at the Comédie-Française and the Odéon.⁴⁰³ While farce theatre had been closely associated with Molière – a figure who because of his position in the French literary and theatrical canon wielded a high level of cultural prestige – the *fin-de-siècle* also saw an uptick in interest in medieval farce theatre, and an increased understanding

⁴⁰¹ 'Ferdinand Dugué', in *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (Slatkine, 1982), VI, p. 1360.

⁴⁰² Marcel Fouquier [Henri Fouquier, pseud.], 'Les Premières', *Le XIXe Siècle*, 27 October 1892.

⁴⁰³ See, for example, the long list of classical and neoclassical pieces that were performed at these venues in 1895: 'Répertoire général des pièces représentées sur les théâtres de Paris', 1895, Archives Nationales, F/21/4635 (3).

of its popular roots with students in the Latin Quarter especially, staging mock carnival parades in which those involved formed troupes and mounted farces and mystery plays.⁴⁰⁴ Of course, both farce and tragedy had started out as mixed genres themselves. Indeed, Molière's farce was inherently Franco-Italian, incorporating theatrical writing and performance practices with origins in both the French market-square farces of Rabelais's day and the imported Italian *commedia dell'arte*. Tragedy, too, had always employed short comic sections *en route* to its climax in order to intensify both its tragic payload and ultimate cathartic payoff. Fouquier's composite dramatic label, formed of these two already nationally, structurally, and registrally mixed genres, emphasised that their heterogeneity had become normalised and obscured over time thanks to their long- and well-established developmental trajectories.

Fouquier's label 'tragi-farce' emphasised *Rabelais*'s generic hybridity according to contemporary standards. And this was echoed by a broad range of critical voices, like that of the unnamed critic writing in *Le Panthéon de l'industrie*, an illustrated newspaper dedicated primarily to industrial and political matters. In an early and seemingly positive use of the word 'hybride' to describe something outside of the animal world, this writer suggested that 'ce qui est sûr, c'est que le Nouveau-Théâtre s'est mis en frais pour l'œuvre un peu hybride qui lui était apporté.'⁴⁰⁵ This writer's emphasis on the effort and money the venue had pumped into *Rabelais* seems to imply that its hybridity constituted a shake up of the theatre's usual offering and that he considered its particular inter-genre mix something of an anomaly there. But was this an accurate characterisation of the venue's generic offering, and did *Rabelais* really constitute a departure from, or refreshment of, the *pantomimes*, *comedies*, *vaudevilles*, and *opérettes* being performed there, or just their uncomfortable amalgamation?

⁴⁰⁴ Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France*, p. 177.

⁴⁰⁵ Unnamed, 'Théâtres', *Le Panthéon de l'industrie*, 11 January 1892. This is the only use of 'hybride' in any of the reviews in my corpus.

Going some way to providing an answer in his article for *La Liberté*, composer Victorin Jonciers began with a very clear account of *Rabelais*'s generic identity: 'Le *Rabelais* représenté cette semaine au Nouveau-Théâtre est un véritable opéra-ballet. Pourquoi ne pas lui avoir donné ce titre sur l'affiche? La musique et la danse tiennent une trop grande place dans cet ouvrage, pour qu'on puisse le qualifier autrement.'⁴⁰⁶ For Jonciers, the importance afforded to musical material by Ganne and his associates in *Rabelais* rendered their piece a clear example of 'opéra-ballet', a compound generic designator whose constituent sub-genres both prioritise space for music. But beyond this umbrella definition, the specific medial elements that underpinned *Rabelais* were themselves mixed. Indeed, the intrigue 'surannée' was, as Jonciers explained, 'semée de hors d'œuvre, qui font une heureuse diversion avec l'allure de vieux mélo de l'action.' The piece constituted a combination of old-fashioned melodramatic intrigue and stand-out sidelines.

Jonciers also identified a level of hybridity at work in the musical material, his description carrying implicit associations to socio-cultural value stratification. As he wrote, 'c'est mieux que de la musique d'opérette, et certaines pages révèlent un musicien de race, que ses succès populaires ont peut-être fait sortir de la véritable voie, qu'il aurait pu suivre vers un but tout différent.' This was a veiled comment on the socio-cultural status of Ganne's back catalogue, implying that the composer could have saved himself from a career trapped among the low theatres if only he could maintain the level of compositional prowess displayed in *Rabelais*. For Jonciers, Ganne's capacity to write music better than mere *opérette* had redemptive potential, and his account further emphasised the composer's *savoir-faire* through comparison with the music of *grand opéra*, particularly those works penned by prolific opera composer Jules Massenet. As Jonciers continued, 'le quatrième acte s'ouvre par

⁴⁰⁶ Victorin Jonciers [Felix Ludger Rossignol], 'Revue musicale', *La Liberté*, 31 October 1892. In this article, the Jonciers alias is spelled differently (i.e. 'Jonciers', rather than his more usual 'Joncières').

une *Marche royale* dans le style du grand opéra. On y sent l'influence de M. Massenet, le maître de M. Louis Ganne.' Though this may at first seem a favourable appraisal of Ganne's piece, by emphasising the composer's lower status to Massenet as well as singling out only one short passage of *Rabelais* as worthy of stylistic comparison to a high-status genre, Jonciers was able to belittle the piece as a whole, writing it off as overall lacking in value. This impression was then confirmed by his comparing Ganne to the erstwhile baritone laureate of the Conservatoire de Paris, Victor Chalmin, who, Jonciers explained, demonstrated how 'même dans l'opérette, l'éducation sérieuse qu'il a reçue n'était pas inutile pour réussir.' The mere fact that Jonciers felt the need to remark on the compatibility of 'sérieuse' musical training and (by implication) musically unserious *opérette* suggests that he viewed them as of separate and unequal value. Thus, Jonciers doubled down on his association of *opérette* and a lack of cultural refinement by treating the usefulness of Ganne's formal musical education in that genre context as worthy of note.

Much of the critical response to Ganne, Méténier, and Dubut de Laforest's *Rabelais* thus painted a varied picture of the piece's generic – and by extension socio-cultural – allegiances, characterising it as irredeemably linked to low-status popular genres, or profoundly hybrid, or a bit of both. But how did the discussion of generic hybridity intersect with and illuminate the *fin-de-siècle*'s understanding of Rabelais and his texts? In an article for *Le Rappel* – a mainstay of the republican politico-literary French press founded by Victor Hugo's sons during the Second Empire – critic Georges Bertal identified a profound generic hybridity at work in *Rabelais*. As he wrote, 'il y a de tout dans cette pièce: du drame, de la féerie, du vaudeville et de l'opéra-comique.'⁴⁰⁷ The piece was thus derived from the integration of a handful of genres occupying subtly different – though largely middling – strata on hierarchies of social and cultural value. Crucially, however, he added that 'c'est peut-être beaucoup à la

⁴⁰⁷ Georges Bertal, 'Les Théâtres', *Le Rappel*, 27 October 1892.

fois: ces genres si différents ont de la peine à s'amalgamer.' For Bertal, the mix was not cohesive: the stylistic incompatibilities of these genres rendered the piece's particular way of enacting hybridity irreconcilably incohesive.

Bertal's impression of *Rabelais*'s stylistic non-cohesion was echoed by an unnamed critic in *La Charente* who, emphasising the generic hybridity of Ganne's *Rabelais*, wrote that 'c'est donc, dans cette pièce, qui tient un peu de tous les genres, l'existence du grand rieur qu'ils ont évoqué, en raccourci - très en raccourci'.⁴⁰⁸ For this writer, rather than affording Rabelais's influence – particularly his laughter-inducing power – space to unfurl, in this generically mixed environment it was thoroughly curtailed. Dampening the more comedic aspects of the *chroniques* by seeking to integrate Rabelaisian material and a melodramatic love-intrigue, the librettists had inadvertently failed to recreate the same mixing that characterised Rabelais's texts: a combination that included room for comedic material. This reviewer's calls for more humour might seem to suggest a stylistically monolithic view of Rabelais as merely a comic author. However, blurring the boundary of between Rabelais's books and his body in the first sentence of his article by using the curé's face as a metaphor for his texts, this reviewer described Rabelais as having 'une physionomie si profondément intéressante et curieuse, à tant de points de vue'. This characterisation suggests that while the critic had pluralist understanding of the *chroniques* and their author, he considered the panoply of stylistic resonances that one could attribute to his life and works part of one overarching *visage*: a highly heterogeneous cohesive whole. This, however, was not the case for *Rabelais*.

Following his summary of *Rabelais*'s plot, the reviewer reaffirmed his identification of sixteenth-century Rabelais's stylistic heterogeneity by concluding that Ganne's piece was 'à ce qu'on voit, un Rabelais un peu... sommaire, et on ne peut dire que la pièce offre de ce

⁴⁰⁸ Unnamed, 'Les Premières à Paris', *La Charente: organe républicain quotidien*, 30 October 1892.

grand homme, singulièrement complexe, d'ailleurs, une idée bien nette.' Here, from being contrasted with the simplified and summarised version of the writer presented in the stage work, sixteenth-century Rabelais emerged by implication as a complex, hermeneutically elusive figure. Yet ultimately, as the critic conceded, *Rabelais*'s creators were likely primarily interested in creating 'le prétexte à une agréable spectacle', implying in this claim that a representation of Rabelais in all his heterogeneity was unlikely to have ever been their aim in the first place. The impression the reviewer gave was thus that despite offering a generally reasonable – if quite reductive – account of the *curé*, in transposing Rabelais onto the stage, the discursive complexities at work in his texts were levelled in service of effective dramaturgy. And as he neatly summarised: 'à ce compte, ils ont réussi'.

The importance of comedy in the Rabelaisian mix was also foregrounded by the prolific music and theatre critic Edmond Stoullig in his article for *Le National*. Starting his review by quoting Rabelais's well-known phrase 'rire est le propre de l'homme', Stoullig immediately turned to the piece's generic hybridity, writing that the librettist's 'pièce à spectacle, opérette ou comédie-ballet, - dont le genre est d'ailleurs, assez difficile à définir, - a un gros défaut : celui de n'être pas amusant.'⁴⁰⁹ Clearly, for Stoullig more comedic material was needed in order to reap audience approval. Yet, turning away from comedic matters, the critic went on to reference 'notre érudit confrère' Arthur Heulhard's 1891 study of Rabelais's life and works. Calling Heulhard's study an 'admirable livre' that contained 'la vérité' and the 'dernier mot' on Rabelais, Stoullig argued that true scholars of Rabelais (like Heulhard, and unlike the average audience member) recognised the writer as a 'grand philosophe et [un] savant théologien du seizième siècle'.⁴¹⁰ Stoullig thus identified a difference in understanding between more- and less-learned audiences with the average Parisian attendee generally

⁴⁰⁹ Edmond Stoullig, 'Les Premières', *Le National*, 27 October 1892.

⁴¹⁰ Arthur Heulhard, *Rabelais, ses voyages en Italie, son exil à Metz* (Librairie de l'Art, 1891).

considering Rabelais to be a ‘synonyme de bombance, de paillardise et de gaudriole.’

Crucially, however, for Stoullig the piece failed to cohere sufficiently to either of these characterisations of Rabelais’s writing, producing instead ‘un Rabelais “mitigé”, qui n’est ni assez sérieux pour être exact, ni assez bon vivant pour répondre aux idées préconçues de la masse de spectateurs.’ The critic lamented that even though *Rabelais*’s authors – unlike Heulhard – ‘n’avaient point à nous instruire, mais à nous récréer’, their piece was still neither an accurate portrayal of Rabelais, nor did it represent the ideas about the writer that held currency among audiences or scholars.

At the heart of Stoullig’s critique lay the implicit identification of a difference in the types of mixedness at work in Rabelais’ *chroniques* and Ganne’s *Rabelais*. The latter was characterised as a middling, homogenised compromise of heterogeneous discursive levels in which all elements (and especially comedy) were given short shrift. In contrast, the former was thought able simultaneously to represent a work of erudite theology and philosophy to specialists while remaining a purely comic work to readers with a lower level of expertise. Whereas Ganne’s piece occupied an aesthetic, stylistic, discursive, and generic centre-ground, for Stoullig, Rabelais’s texts enacted no such compromise between the contrasting discursive levels from which it was constituted, resembling whichever of the stylistic extremes an individual reader’s prior understanding primed them to see.

Rabelais in *Rabelais*: how was the *curé* conceptualised?

Though it would have never been expressed in such terms, the idea that Rabelais’s texts incorporated contrasting discursive levels was key to how Ganne’s piece was appraised by voices in the *fin-de-siècle* critical press. In a late nineteenth-century theatrical context and vocabulary, combination of this kind was both bound up in, and expressed through,

discussion of genre mixing. Indeed, as I have repeatedly emphasised throughout this thesis, to mix genres in the nineteenth century was to mix communicative and aesthetic styles with implicit associations to social, cultural, and national strata of differing hierarchised values. The overlap between Rabelais's stylistic and registral heterogeneity and theatrical genre hybridity was exemplified in an article by an unnamed writer for the Lille-based daily newspaper *Le Grand écho du nord de la France*. This critic suggested that the creators of *Rabelais* 'ont voulu que leur pièce ne fût ni un drame, ni une comédie, ni une bouffonnerie, ni une féerie, qu'elle fût tout cela à la fois, une sorte de *Revue* avec Rabelais pour sujet et Panurge pour compère.'⁴¹¹ According to its entry in Alfred Bouchard's *La Langue théâtrale*, the *revue* was a form of satirical stage entertainment with both low class and low cultural-value associations. *Revue* titles were often 'pris dans le vocabulaire des halles', linking the genre to working class language use.⁴¹² They also 'contiennent des gravelures en place d'esprit et beaucoup de MAILLOTS, mais peu d'idées', emphasising their lack of literary depth or artistic merit.⁴¹³ And yet, as the unnamed critic explains, the genre mixing that led the piece to resonate with the *revue* form was the result of the librettists seeking to 'donner au public du Nouveau-Théâtre l'impression du *chaos génial* qui caractérise l'œuvre de Rabelais.' Almost the opposite of Bouchard's characterisation of the weak-spirited and idea-devoid *revue*, the notion of *chaos génial* invoked by the Lille-based critic was both lively and derived from the integration of *chaos* and *génialité*: two ways of describing the unbridled abundance and proliferation of ideas. This is noteworthy in part because it emphasises that the heterogeneous panoply of interweaving ideas (the *chaos génial*) that the critic associated with Rabelais's texts were conceptualised in primarily generic terms, with the librettists supposedly turning to genre mixing in order to recreate it. And yet the inability of genre

⁴¹¹ Unnamed, 'Les Théâtres de Paris', *Le Grand écho du nord de la France*, 1 November 1892.

⁴¹² Alfred Bouchard, 'Revue', in *La Langue théâtrale* (Arnaud et Labat, 1878), pp. 229–30.

⁴¹³ Original capitalisation.

discourses to echo this aspect of Rabelais's writing suggests a misidentification at work between, on the one hand, the way that the Lille-based critic conceptualised Rabelais's writing style, and the genre designations of his own era on the other. This, in turn, suggests a mismatch between the types of mixing seen to have been going on in Rabelais's texts and those at work in Ganne's *Rabelais*.

Rabelais as a hybrid writer

By examining how voices in the critical press articulated their experience of the misalignment between mixing in Rabelais and mixing in *Rabelais*, we can reconstruct the way that the author was conceptualised by members of his *fin-de-siècle* audience. In Victorin Jonciers' review in *La Liberté*, for example, one finds evidence that Rabelais was understood to be readable on multiple, incompatible-seeming, levels at once, and that keeping these in balance was considered key to a downstream rework's success. The critic lamented the fact that *Rabelais*'s libretto 'bien qu'inspiré par l'œuvre du grand François, est d'une gaieté assez modérée.'⁴¹⁴ Jonciers implied in his identification of a mismatch between moderate gaiety and Rabelais's texts that the *curé* was really a figure of *gaieté immodérée*. And yet, the critic went on to explain that 'les adaptations du texte de certains passages [...] ne peuvent guère intéresser que les lettrés', seeming to contradict himself by suggesting that it was an over-proximity to details of Rabelais's texts that caused gaiety to be moderated. Jonciers' position could be interpreted as the identification of an affective difference between comedy for reading and comedy for staging. However, his emphasis over the rest of his article on the audience's knowledge of Rabelais suggests that his apparent contradiction arose instead from the understanding that there was a difference (whether consciously perceived or not) between

⁴¹⁴ Victorin Jonciers [Felix Ludger Rossignol], 'Revue musicale', *La Liberté*, 31 October 1892.

Rabelais's texts and ideas about the texts that were in currency among average Parisian audience members in the early 1890s. Questioning the audience's familiarity with the *chroniques*, the critic suggested that being preoccupied with staying true to the specific details about Rabelais's texts, rather than commonly held broad-brush ideas about their spirit and style, meant that 'la masse du public, qui fréquente l'établissement de la rue Blanche, ne saurait goûter ces réminiscences [...]'. Remaining too close to Rabelais's texts made the libretto less accessible to the audience and, by extension, less Rabelaisian. This was because fidelity to its literary antecedent had little impact on audience members with limited knowledge of Rabelais or his output. Quite the opposite: a faithful translation of Rabelais's texts onto the stage may have been a notable departure from the audience's pre-existing ideas about the author.

In order to retain coherence, Jonciers' knotty argument also relied on the assumption that Rabelais could be read and understood on both a *lettré* and a *gai* level, and that tension or disequilibrium between these two hermeneutic loci was the result of specific reception conditions like the audience's knowledge of the text, which he assumed to be generally surface-level. In particular, one can infer from Jonciers' appraisal that Rabelais was associated with very different sets of literary aesthetics by members of his reception audience, and that these were dictated by how *lettré* a reader or audience member was. Jonciers was not against the piece containing well-studied references to details in Rabelais's texts and biography, describing the ones that were included as 'très habilement pastichées', and complimenting them for their quality and fidelity. Instead, his text implied that these references were only one part of the required Rabelaisian-rework mixture. They were the element most familiar to the knowing rather than unknowing audience: the literary elite rather than the average *Jean*. Thus, it was over-proximity to the text without giving similar attention to maintaining the gaiety for which Rabelais was known among the Nouveau-Théâtre's

audience – a failure to strike a balance between fidelity to Rabelais and fidelity to commonly held *fin-de-siècle* ideas about Rabelais – that ultimately let the piece down.

Another critic to identify an imbalance in Ganne's *Rabelais* was Hippolyte Duret-Hostein (writing under the false first name Emile), who wrote for the highly popular conservative-leaning daily newspaper *La Presse*. Unlike Jonciers, Duret-Hostein did not consider the mixing of contrasting discursive levels in Ganne's *Rabelais* to create a bland middle compromise. In fact, in contrast to Jonciers' characterisation of Rabelais's stylistic heterogeneity as 'quelque allégorie, grossière peut-être, mais vive et piquante, quelque joyeux et original récit de *haute gresse*, quelque hilarante et morale fantaisie...', as I will demonstrate, Duret-Hostein argued that the various heterogeneous discourses that made up Ganne's piece seemed most incompatible and opposed to one another precisely when they were forced together: the more they tried to mix, the more obvious their differences seemed. In particular, he identified and emphasised the incongruity of the script's archaic language use in the broader context of an *opérette* aesthetic which he considered to be key to the 1892 *Rabelais*'s genre identity.

Duret-Hostein held disparaging views about popular *opérette*, bemoaning in his review the fact that Ganne's piece was, 'au fond une triste opérette, conçue selon l'éternelle formule, totalement dépourvue d'invention, de verve, et d'esprit [...]'.⁴¹⁵ To Duret-Hostein, *opérette* was clearly anathema to legitimate and valuable creative practice. The critic was, however, surprised that given their chosen genre paradigm the writers spurned staying 'simple et bon enfant' in favour of writing 'en une langue précieuse, archaïque et alambiquée.' Given the absence of late-medieval French in the libretto, it is hard to know exactly what Duret-Hostein meant by this comment, but for him the language use was elevated enough to create a

⁴¹⁵ Hippolyte Duret-Hostein [Emile Duret-Hostein, pseud.], 'Les Premières', *La Presse*, 26 October 1892.

‘contraste de l’idée et du style’.⁴¹⁶ For the critic, the juxtaposition of the ephemeral, low-status, genre and supposedly historically situated language ultimately ended up making both feel intensely out of place. As he explained, ‘cette contraste de l’idée et du style n’en découvre que mieux tout ce que celle-là a de navrante banalité, tout ce que celui-ci a d’outrancière prétention.’ One could interpret the mixing identified by Duret-Hostein in *Rabelais* as having a centrifugal effect. As contrasting discourses – such as lowbrow *opérette* and more erudite historical language use – were spun together, they separated, drifting to the outer extremes, emphasising their difference, unable as they were to form any semblance of unified substance. Rabelais, on the other hand, appears to be centripetal in Duret-Hostein’s account of his discursive mixing. Emphasising Rabelais’s cultural pull, the critic described him as the sum-total of numerous different discourses; ‘une évocation de tout le génie de la France’ whose ‘abbaye de Thélème synthétisa l’humeur cordiale, joviale et sensuelle de notre nation, sa facétieuse philosophie et sa cynique légèreté’. Behind ‘ce grand nom de Rabelais’ was a mixture of different forms of comedy and philosophy channelled through ‘son regard sceptique et gouailleur’: one single, unified look formed from the combination of numerous ways of looking. When it came to recreating him on stage, just being mixed was not enough: for Duret-Hostein, the Rabelaisian rework needed to be mixed *in the same way*.

Another critic to insist on Rabelais’s mixedness was *Le Ménestrel*’s Paul-Emile Chevalier. This critic considered Rabelais a ‘figure si composite’, yet he believed that focussing on Rabelais’s biography and using this as the basis of a melodramatic intrigue had caused the librettists to retain only Rabelais’s ‘côté sévère’ by presenting a ‘philosophe triste et ennuyé’.⁴¹⁷ While Chevalier acknowledged that real-life Rabelais was a doctor who trained at Montpellier and wrote ‘doctes volumes, inspirés ou traduits d’Hippocrate ou de Galien’, he

⁴¹⁶ Contrast this with Maurice Boukay’s and Georges Spitzmüller’s libretto for Jules Massenet’s *Panurge* (Jules Massenet, *Panurge; haute farce musicale en trois actes - partition chant et piano* (Heugel et cie, 1912), in which faux Rabelaisian middle French orthography was used throughout.

⁴¹⁷ Paul-Emile Chevalier, ‘Semaine théâtrale’, *Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*, 30 October 1892.

insisted that ‘pour ceux qui sont attachés le plus sérieusement à son œuvre, Rabelais évoque l’image d’un bon vivant, d’un joyeux compère, toujours prêt à lamper une bouteille ou à voler un baiser à une jolie fille’. While it is clear from his repeated and interweaving references to both the erudite and jovial aspects of Rabelais’s texts and biography that, for Chevalier, the figure of Rabelais was inherently hybrid, in his article the critic focussed more on the writer’s *gaieté*. This was more closely associated with his texts than his biography and was what, supposedly, got lost when the librettists’ transformed the story of his life into a melodramatic love intrigue. Indeed, the focus on Rabelais’s biography forced the comedy of his texts to the side-lines. Chevalier drew a distinction between Rabelais-the-man and Rabelais’s texts: the mythologised figure of fantastical, bawdy, comic literature and the real man involved in the world. For Chevalier, Rabelais and his texts constituted a literary cluster-concept, bridging the divide between reality and myth, the fantastical and the mundane, the world of sixteenth-century France and the semi-fictionalised late-medieval fantasy world of the *chroniques*. By limiting Rabelais to just his human, real-world side, the librettists undermined the bawdy, *gai* impression of a Rabelaisian *je-ne-sais-quoi* that made him so special to readers and audiences in the nineteenth century. Ultimately, for him, by removing the jocular and fantastical ideas about Rabelais from the more mundane reality of his life story, his representation on stage was left somehow empty and illegitimate. Whether they had read him or not, this was not the Rabelais that audiences thought they knew.

Blurring Rabelais’s life and texts

Rabelais stands alone among the *curé*’s lyric afterlives for placing the writer into his own story world, blurring the boundary between history and fiction by having him, his fictional characters, and historical figures associated with his era share the same stage. This echoes Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz’s assertion that during the *fin-de-siècle*, ‘as the image

of Rabelais gained popularity, the author himself became conflated with his characters.’⁴¹⁸

There were numerous precedents for inserting an author into their story world, however, including in the *chroniques* themselves, whose authorial voice, named ‘Alcofribas Nasier’ (anagram of François Rabelais), was a not-so-veiled avatar for the writer. While primarily a narrator, Nasier occasionally steps beyond this role in order to address the text’s characters directly, affirming his presence among them. The name François Rabelais is also mentioned in passing in the *Tiers livre* in a reference to the performance of a piece of comic theatre entitled *La Morale comédie de celui qui avait épousé une femme muette* in Montpellier (TL.XXXIV.460). On the French comic stage, there had been several examples of this type of drawing together a writer’s real and fictional worlds. For example, in *L’Impromptu de Versailles* (1663), Molière’s narrative centres around his own fictionalised attempts to stage a play for the king with a troupe of discontented actors.

Alongside this infusion of textual and biographical details in *Rabelais*, there was an understanding among voices in the critical press that the late nineteenth-century idea of Rabelais was a cluster-concept constructed from the integration of a tangible Rabelais-the-man and a more intangible Rabelais *qua* concept or icon whose attributes were derived from the text and Rabelais’s textual alter ego Alcofribas Nasier. He was a confection formed from both blurring and embellishing details about his life with the fantasist content of his texts. One such reviewer wrote for the literary periodical *Gil Blas* under the pseudonym ‘Intérim’. They argued that the librettists struck a middle ground between presenting an inflated, quasi-divine, version of ‘le prodigieux apôtre du rire que le nom de Rabelais évoque en notre pensée’ and a more biographical account of the real person behind the name.⁴¹⁹ In so doing, Intérim drew a clear distinction between Rabelais as he appeared to his downstream audience

⁴¹⁸ Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in Fin-de-Siècle France*, p. 182.

⁴¹⁹ Intérim [pseud.], ‘Premières représentations’, *Gil Blas*, 27 October 1892.

– as a kind of metaphysical force – and Rabelais as he was in his own time: remarkable and brilliant, but still a mere mortal. As they explained:

Il y a des personnages historiques qu’il est impossible de mettre à la scène. Ils nous apparaissent, ces hommes, à travers l’admiration accumulée des siècles, tellement grands, tellement au-dessus des autres hommes, qu’ils prennent à nos yeux des proportions surhumaines ; l’habitude que nous avons contractée de ne les voir jamais que derrière le rayonnement de leur gloire, de leurs actions ou de leurs écrits, nous permet peu de les imaginer à notre taille, vivant comme nous, marchant, parlant, buvant, mangeant comme nous. Ils nous semblent être une essence spéciale. Toujours je me rappellerai mon étonnement en face de Victor Hugo: je n’en revenais pas de voir un homme. Or, le fait même de mettre une de ces colosses à la scène, de l’incarner dans la peau d’un acteur, le diminue.

Here, *Intérim*’s text enacted a double movement by insisting on Rabelais’s dual identity – his body literary and his body normal – putting the development of the former down to the terms in which he was received by his downstream audience. Indeed, for *Intérim*, Rabelais’s ‘proportions surhumaines’ were a condition of his reception trajectory: of accumulated admiration and his perception ‘à nos yeux’. His status (like Victor Hugo’s, apparently) had so surpassed human scales and proportions that it eventually obscured the individual it first represented, breaking away from them to such an extent that it could be scarcely believed that one had ever emerged from the other. By insisting on Rabelais’s bodily functions – his eating, walking, and speaking – *Intérim* reminded their audience that both forms of the writer were connected, implicitly endorsing the representation of Rabelais’s body normal as the only possible (though inherently flawed) approach to staging him. Given representing the body literary would be categorically impossible, the body normal emerged as the only legitimate option left, even if this diminished the writer.

Later in his review, *Intérim* used the monarchical vocabulary of the ‘*personæ majestas*’ to discuss the approach taken to depicting Rabelais by the piece’s creators, focussing more on his work as a doctor in order to present ‘un sage, d’une philosophie souriante et résignée,

d'allure plutôt imposante'.⁴²⁰ Perhaps demonstrating a lack of knowledge of Rabelais's texts and the history of French medieval theatre by mistakenly attributing *La Morale comédie de celui qui avait épousé une femme muette* to Italian farce comedy rather than to a detail in the *Tiers livre*, for *Intérim*, representing Rabelais in his roles as a monk and a doctor constituted a departure from the writer's more mythologised status as 'l'homme à l'habit vert de la légende, le bouffon qui recourt à une farce de comédie italienne pour parvenir au chancelier Duprat.' The two sides of Rabelais – the *bouffon* and the *sage* – were thus reasonably distinct entities in the critic's mind and superimposed onto Rabelais-*qua*-literary-figure and Rabelais-*qua*-man respectively. Just as a King's body sacred was derived from public consent, Rabelais's body literary – the comic side associated with his texts rather than his academic, learned life-story – was, for *Intérim*, produced and perpetuated by his downstream readership's evermore inflated ideas about his superhuman comic literary genius. It is therefore clear from *Intérim*'s account of Rabelais's twin mythologised and quotidian realities that he believed the *curé*'s belated readership responsible for creating the Rabelaisian myth-reality dichotomy between which Méténier and Dubut de Laforest were seeking to navigate their libretto. For this critic, Rabelais looked as he did to his admirers in the 1890s because of the terms in which he was received and discussed by reader after reader during the time since his death. But how were the librettists meant to represent such inflated ideas about him?

In seeking to satisfy the twin imperatives of offering a stageable Rabelais-related production that also resonated with the reading public's ideas about Rabelais-the-myth's unstageable superhuman genius, Méténier and Dubut de Laforest turned elements of Rabelais's narratives into elements of his life, building on the potential for their integration

⁴²⁰ The label 'personae majestas' appears as another term for Rabelais's 'air majestueux' in the biographical preface included in the 1873 *Garnier* re-edition of Rabelais's works accompanied by Gustave Doré's illustrations (p. XVI). The description is associated with Antoine Leroy, a later *curé de Meudon* from the seventeenth century, who was said to have first used it in reference to Rabelais.

already offered by the text's subtle identification of its author's presence in his texts, and of a life before he wrote the *chroniques*. This was achieved, for example, by making Panurge his lackey and tangling the *curé* up in the marriage debates of the *Tiers livre*. Their Rabelais often quotes his own texts, writing and regurgitating sections of the *chroniques* not just before the audience's eyes but also at a point in his personal timeline before he ever put pen to paper. While *Intérim* might have separated Rabelais-the-man and Rabelais-the-legend, for the purposes of their libretto, Méténier and Dubut de Laforest seem to have made a concerted effort to dissolve the boundary between them. In so doing, they also dissolved the boundary between Rabelaisian fact and Rabelaisian fiction, between Rabelais-the-myth and Rabelais-the man, representing as they did a pseudo-historical account of Rabelais's life and his Renaissance surroundings in a way that could only be achieved if refracted through the lens of his books. In short, one needed the *chroniques* in order to create this pseudo-historical semi-fictionalised account of Rabelais's life and times. Because of its reliance on the content of Rabelais's texts, their attempt at historical representation constituted a confluence point of historical and specifically Rabelaisian literary aesthetics. It was a *couleur rabelaisienne*.

This particular instance of *couleur rabelaisienne*, derived as it was from the integration of nineteenth-century notions of Rabelais's twin mythic and human identities, also spanned the physical and the metaphysical in its combination of the transcendent reception trajectory of the writer's comic texts and the reality of his corporeal existence. The libretto enacted a constant negotiation between these two ways of conceptualising Rabelais, integrating elements of Rabelais's reception that resonated with differing positions in socio-cultural hierarchies of the nineteenth century. Indeed, in the 1890s, Rabelais-the-man was still associated with the people of lower social status who were thought to have frequented his father's tavern in Chinon and influenced his writing and world view at an early stage. In contrast, Rabelais-the-legend was an integral part of the French literary pantheon, a writer of

metaphysical significance and a representative of the apex of French cultural creation. Thus, Rabelais of the 1890s represented the amalgamation of the corporeal and the divine, the levelling of the sacred and the profane, and the combination of the loftily metaphysical and the bodily physical.

At first glance, one might assume that voices in the critical press agreed regarding the resonance between the stylistic and generic hybridity at work in Ganne's *Rabelais* and the mixing integral to Rabelais's idiom. And while the overwhelming impression one gets from the various press voices that I have discussed above is that both Rabelais and *Rabelais* were generally understood to be generically or discursively hybrid, it was the *way* in which each enacted their hybridity that differed. It was not so much a choice of genre matching, but of generic-mix matching, and in the case of the 1892 *Rabelais*, evidently not all mixes were made equal.

In the eyes of their critics, Ganne, Méténier, and Dubut de Laforest's shortcoming was that, generally, their combination of discourses was somehow unbalanced or off-kilter. It may have been because of an unavoidable over-emphasis on Rabelais's biography and body-normal, or because the writers operated in a context in which attempts at generic mixing were undermined by their regular audience's interpretive apparatus being entirely mediated by expectations concerning genre boundaries and norms. But, rather than recreating an analogous mix to that of Rabelais's texts, the piece's hybrid generic texture caused the 1892 *Rabelais* to experience a rapid unscheduled disassembly, tearing itself apart under the forces of journalistic scrutiny.

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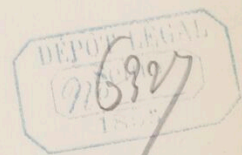
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Panurge.....	MM. SOULACROIX.	Nicole.....	Mmes J. AUBECQ.
Cocolati.....	PAUL FUGERE	Philoclœa.....	BERNAERT.
Trouillogan.....	DEKERNEL.	Caterina.....	M. SULLY.
Pantagruel.....	LUCIEN NOEL.	Philiberto.....	LEBEY.
Carpalini.....	LANDRIN.		
Her Trippa.....	DACHEUX.		

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Plot summary: *Panurge* (1895)

Planquette, Meilhac and Saint-Albin's *Panurge* intersperses musical numbers with spoken dialogue, the latter of which makes up the majority of the piece's run-time. Each of the ten *tableaux* but the first is preceded by a short orchestral Entr'acte. After an orchestral overture, *Panurge*'s narrative begins in the *cour d'amour* of Pantagruel's and his wife Philoclœa's estate in Touraine. A choir of women sing about love's difficulties. Philoclœa recalls her husband's recent infidelity, and in an *air* of her own, her maid Nicole condemns the fact that love leaves one susceptible to betrayal.⁴²¹

Once Nicole's air ends, Philoclœa announces that she was most impressed by her maid's singing and offers her a favour. Nicole requests permission to wed, shocking Philoclœa, who calls her a 'sotte' (V2. 107).⁴²² Philoclœa tells Pantagruel she will not forgive him for straying. He introduces the Italian Prince Cocolati, extolling his *château*'s romantic gardens. Cocolati's entourage enters, singing an ensemble number about the importance of following protocol. This, we learn after the song, includes insisting on five minutes of small talk, during which Philoclœa asks after Cocolati's wife. During their meeting Cocolati suggests visiting the *Cabaret de la Grand Pinte* [sic], but Pantagruel, wary due to his infidelity, resists. Cocolati departs, and Pantagruel asks Nicole what she wants. She wishes to marry Panurge, shocking Philoclœa, who considers him a 'vaurien' and 'sacripant' (V2. 117). Pantagruel, however, is more lenient and sends for Panurge.

⁴²¹ Philoclœa's anger at Pantagruel's infidelity calls to mind the inscription on a letter sent to Rabelais's Pantagruel by a Parisian lady reading 'Au plus aymé des belles, et moins loyal des preux, | PNTGRL' (Pant.XXIII.299). This is the only reference in the *chroniques* to Pantagruel's love-life: by alluding to it through Philoclœa, *Pantagruel*'s librettists give voice to Pantagruel's lover who, other than the inscription, enclosed a gold coin and a diamond, but no written message. These tokens are then interpreted by the men in Pantagruel's entourage as representing the question 'Dy amant faulx: pourquoi me as tu laissé?' (Pant.XXIII.301), emphasising that Pantagruel's lack of romantic commitment is accepted by those in his immediate homosocial network.

⁴²² All references to *Panurge*'s libretto will be given in text as (V2. pg.) and refer to the transcription of the libretto included in the second volume of this thesis.

Panurge enters, having been found in an abandoned windmill with a young lady named Pervette. Initially reluctant to marry, he reconsiders when told Nicole is his betrothed. Philoclœa and her chambermaids sing a short chorus reprise of the opening music and then depart. Nicole and Panurge discuss the idea of marriage and after singing a duet about its benefits, he agrees. After the duet, Pantagruel warns that Philoclœa might play tricks on Panurge because she is annoyed. Despite concerns about Nicole's potential adulterous behaviour post-marriage, Panurge is happy to proceed. In a chorus finale, noble courtesans mockingly congratulate him, emphasizing his lower status by purposefully and pretentiously mispronouncing his name ('Pa-urges' V2. 129). Panurge flees to the *Cabaret de la Grand-Pinte*. Curtain.

The episode set at the Cabaret begins with a chorus section during which the establishment's *buveur* and *ribaude* clientele introduce themselves as a group of ne'er-dowells. After the chorus, and with his speech accompanied by the orchestra, the landlord Her Trippa announces prince Cocolati will visit to meet with 'les Horreurs' in the basement (V2. 132).⁴²³ Trippa is the manager of the *Horreurs* – a group of assassins – and inspects them before sending them downstairs. As the prince approaches, the choir sings 'mi-voix' (the French term for *sotto voce*) about his dashing appearance in a stylised 'lower-class' *parigot* accent ('voyons donc c'te têt, c'te bobine | R'gardez-le donc.' V2. 133). Cocolati enters, singing *couplets* in which he explains that he is there to honour the poor, studying their 'écume' as he meets with the assassins (V2. 133). Panurge enters and is greeted like a celebrity. Cocolati asks if he is the famed Panurge so loved by Pantagruel and introduces himself as a wealthy prince. He invites Panurge to meet the assassins, but Panurge refuses

⁴²³ Her Trippa is the name of a fortune-teller whom Panurge meets during the *Tiers livre*'s marriage consultations. Oddly, Her Trippa's expertise in astrology, earth divination, palm reading, or metopomancy is not mentioned in the 1895 work (TL.XXV.427).

because (as readers of Rabelais know) he is fearful of a beating ('peur des coups' V2. 136).⁴²⁴

After Cocolati goes to the basement with his bodyguards, Trippa asks Panurge to sing a drinking song ('chanson à boire' V2. 137) about the redemptive power of alcohol ('buvoons pour devenir meilleurs' V2. 138-139).

After his song, Panurge asks the drinkers for advice about whether he should marry. Some say yes ('marie-toi!'), others, no ('ne te marie pas!') (V2. 139).⁴²⁵ Trippa suggests consulting the philosopher Trouillogan who by happy coincidence has just entered the tavern.⁴²⁶ Before Panurge finishes his question about marriage, Trouillogan, unaware of the topic, advises taking immediate action: knowing the problem at hand makes no difference. He asks what day it is, and is told Wednesday. The philosopher consults a card drawn from his pocket which informs him that while Monday is for Aristotle, and Tuesday for Epicurus... Wednesday is for Pyrrho! Today, Trouillogan is Pyrrhonien.⁴²⁷ In song, Panurge attempts to consult the philosopher about the benefits of marriage, but Trouillogan insists on providing only radically sceptical responses, maintaining that nothing is ever certain.⁴²⁸ Mid-way through the duet, Panurge clouts Trouillogan round the head with a stick. Trouillogan is

⁴²⁴ Panurge's fear of a beating is a theme throughout Rabelais's books, whether at the hands of the Haulte Dame de Paris's saviours (Pant, XXII.295) or the hypothetical wife he does not yet have throughout the marriage debates of the *Tiers livre*.

⁴²⁵ This echoes the answer to the marriage question offered by the supposedly prophetic *cloches de Varennes* in the *Tiers livre* (TL.XXVII).

⁴²⁶ Trouillogan shares a name with a philosopher in Rabelais's *Tiers livre*.

⁴²⁷ This aligns with Rabelais's description of Trouillogan as 'un philosophe Ephetique et Pyrrhonien' (TL.XXXVI.463).

⁴²⁸ This is a reformulation of Panurge's discussion with Trouillogan in the *Tiers livre* and echoes the philosopher's unwillingness to provide Panurge with any easy answers to his quandaries. The comedy underpinning this scene separates the audience into different comprehension groups influenced by their understanding of both Rabelais and classical philosophy. It is funny, given Panurge's preoccupation with finding a conclusive answer to the marriage question in Rabelais's texts, that the musical Panurge should miss the days associated with philosophers who espoused moderation, equilibrium, and pleasure (Aristotle and the middle way; Epicurus and sensory pleasure) and instead catch the Pyrrhonien day of radical doubt. In Rabelais's text, Panurge appears ridiculous in his abortive attempts to try and tidy up the messiness of life and get definitive advice because he can ultimately never know for sure if he will be cuckolded or not. In this light, Meilhac and Saint-Albin's choice to follow Rabelais by maintaining Trouillogan's Pyrrhonism (though only for the day, in their case) is an effective way of exposing how silly Panurge is being. My thanks to fellow Rabelaisian Robert Ley for helping me to wrap my head around the philosophical comedy in this passage.

outraged, but in a comic role reversal, Panurge reminds him that he wasn't hit, it only *seemed* as though he was hit: one can never know for certain.

Following the end of the duet, church bells begin to ring and Trouillogan suggests that Panurge ask them about marriage.⁴²⁹ Since the bells offer no clear guidance, ringing 'marie-toi' and 'ne te marie pas' (V2. 147) interchangeably, Trouillogan suggests that Panurge submit Nicole's fidelity to a series of trials. In the *finale* of Act One, Panurge and the choir sing about the ambiguity of church bells ('Marie-toi! ne te marie pas! | C'est bon ou mauvais, ça depend des cas!' V2. 148-150) The group of *Bohémiens* present in the tavern begin to dance as the bells ring 'avec violence'. Cocolati returns from the cellar through a trapdoor in the floor, and the act closes with an ensemble finale incorporating passages from Panurge's *chanson à boire*. Curtain.

The first tableau of Act Two resembles a 'site sauvage' (V2. 150) at which Cocolati and his entourage are disguised as bandits, busily preparing to ambush Panurge, Nicole, and Trouillogan. First, in an ensemble number, and then in dialogue with his second in command Carpalin (a name, though spelled with an M at the end, not an N, that is shared by Pantagruel's footman in Rabelais's texts), Cocolati explains how he plans to interrogate the trio, then change into armour and 'rescue' Nicole, taking her to his *château*: a ruse that we discover has been orchestrated by Philoclœa to get Nicole into Cocolati's gardens. Cocolati and his gang hide in a ditch as Panurge and Trouillogan enter the stage. They have walked a little ahead of the coach. The bandits strike and Nicole is led onto stage under duress. Cocolati begins his interrogation, asking Nicole her identity. She tells Cocolati to consider how his actions might lead him to be hanged before he interrogates her any further, explaining that she is Queen Philoclœa's lady in waiting and the fiancée of Panurge, who is

⁴²⁹ Panurge's consultation with Trouillogan becomes a reformulation of the scene from the *Tiers livre* in which Frère Jean (for whom Trouillogan is standing in here) and Panurge discuss the prophetic potential of Varenne cathedral's bell peals, and their metaphorical association with the ringing of testicles as preparation for the second coming (TL.XXVI-XXVII.434 & 436)

an intimate of Sir Pantagruel. Cocolati proceeds to threaten her sexually, asking her if she's ever slept with a bandit-chief. Comically, she asks Panurge to kill her. Cocolati threatens to hang Panurge if Nicole doesn't submit to him. He leaves them alone to consider their choice. Panurge and Nicole sing *stances* (a form of duet), hearing each other's feelings about their predicament before singing together about their lack of a clear answer. After this duet, Trouillogan returns and, now on the side of the captors, asks Panurge for a decision. In an attempt to save himself, Panurge claims that Nicole no longer loves him and loves Trouillogan, making Trouillogan believe that *he* will be hanged instead.

The bandits return without their leader and prepare to defend themselves from Prince Cocolati who, now in shining armour, has arrived to save Nicole and hang Panurge. Panurge moans that he would rather not be hanged, and Carpalin suggests he save himself by dressing as a coachman. Panurge exits as a scream of 'Cocolati à la rescousse!' (V2. 169) comes from the wings. Over a frenetic orchestral accompaniment, the stage breaks out into 'combat z'à l'hache dans le genre de ceux que l'on se livrait dans les anciens mélodrames' (V2. 169). Once the bandits are defeated, Cocolati puts Nicole in the carriage and after an ensemble number about the lack of comfort afforded by coaches in which Panurge's failed attempts to get the horses moving ('hue dia, hop là!' V2. 170-171) are notated and used as a musical effect, they depart for Cocolati's *château*. Curtain.

In her *boudoir* and accompanied by a harp, Caterina and her favourite pageboy Philiberto sing in unison of their Platonic love. Over flowing arpeggios, Caterina insists their warmly physical – though decidedly non-sexual – affection does not constitute infidelity, as she and her husband Cocolati agreed to give each other freedom when they married.⁴³⁰ She and Philiberto take turns sighing (notated) before Cocolati arrives, announcing the visit of

⁴³⁰ Planquette, Meilhac, and de Saint Albin, *Panurge: opera-comique en trois actes, partition piano et chant*, (Choudens, 1895) pp. 167-173.

Nicole and a philosopher, Trouillogan, who offers to teach Caterina about different types of love (for one's husband... for one's...), but she cuts him off. Caterina gives Philiberto some written instructions and, after he leaves to carry them out, enquires about Nicole's journey with Cocolati, who wore his armour the entire time. In a *flonflon*-esque rondeau (described as 'couplets' in the printed vocal score) reminiscent of mid-century *opérette*, she sings of the torture of travelling next to an armour-clad prince.⁴³¹ Nicole employs a hint of stylised, *parigot*-esque lower-class language to suggest her social standing relative to Caterina ('De se promener en voiture | Avec un homm' tout bardé d'fer! | Et notez qu'vot'mari, Princesse | Ne fut pas inconv'nant du tout.' V2. 177) who, once the music ends, explains that she was instructed by Philoclœa to subject Nicole to trials. Nicole must stay in the building until then. Philiberto returns with Panurge, whom Caterina scolds for seeking to subject his brave and honest fiancée to trials rather than expressing his undying love to her. Panurge claims that he accompanied Nicole to prevent the trials from escalating. Caterina will pardon Panurge if his story checks out but, in the meantime, forbids him from leaving the *château*. After Panurge exits, Philiberto resumes praising Caterina until Cocolati and Trouillogan enter. Caterina expresses displeasure at Cocolati's unannounced entry, but he explains that the hairdresser is about to arrive. She is gladdened and leaves with Philiberto.

Cocolati confides to Trouillogan that, as is customary for a nobleman, he loves all women except his wife and is currently interested in Nicole. Trouillogan noticed this during their coach ride. A page informs Cocolati of the apothecary's (Panurge in disguise) arrival. Cocolati asks Panurge-the-apothecary to create two potions: one to make a woman fall in love with the first person she sees and one of sugar water. Trouillogan, having briefly left, returns from a walk in Cocolati's gardens overwhelmed by emotion. The philosopher's

⁴³¹ Robert Planquette, Henri Meilhac, and Albert de Saint Albin, *Panurge [...] partition piano et chant*, pp. 179–83.

intoxication reassures Cocolati that his ‘chef des odeurs suaves’ is effective and the perfumes in his gardens fulfil their intended soporific function. Cocolati describes his seduction plan, involving a performance of his ballet, *La naissance de Vénus*. While this party is underway, he will lead the lady – already intoxicated – into the depths of his gardens. She loses her way, further bamboozled by the heady scent of flowers and the beguiling music. As she spirals into panic, he appears to rescue her. Trouillogan suggests tripping the lady over instead, which Cocolati finds harsh. Trouillogan reassures him that it is fine if preceded by a nice song, which he then sings. Referencing Rameau’s *Daphnis et Eglé* by calling the woman being tripped up Eglé, suggesting his hypothetical target shares the same lack of awareness with her eighteenth-century namesake, Trouillogan’s solo is very short, and highly embellished, employing several appoggiaturas and octave leaps held by fermatas.

As Trouillogan leaves, Panurge returns with the potions. Nicole enters half dressed, and Cocolati, aroused, reminds her that he saved her from brigands and asks for a thank you toast with a now spiked drink. They sing a duet, and Nicole, affected by the potion, follows Cocolati’s instructions, including making a ‘brrr’ sound. Just to be sure, Cocolati follows Trouillogan’s suggestion and trips her over but in the process falls himself. Caterina returns with an entourage, including Panurge, Trouillogan, a ballet master, composer, and the *chef des odeurs suaves*, as Cocolati prepares to perform his ballet. The chorus begins, and the ballet starts.

The ballet begins with a dance of women and nymphs. Bacchus enters with his *cortège* and dancing recommences. Nicole appears among the dancers, herself dressed as a nymph. She takes a few steps, stops, and then sings an air about love, and a desire to be frivolous. Women and satyrs approach her and she flees. Dancing recommences as Bacchus singles out a nymph who pleases him. He seeks her out, but she has disappeared. A fountain appears and the nymph being pursued dances in the water with other nymphs. Bacchus’s

entourage descend upon her, and she is carried away. Bacchus is triumphant: the nymph is his. He dances to celebrate his drunkenness. But a horn is heard from the wings: the equivalent instrument (according to the libretto, V2. 202) to the type played in the ‘époque of Diane’. After a clamour, Diane runs across the stage with her huntresses... once she has passed, the stage lies empty.⁴³² Nicole and Panurge appear. They sing a duet in which Panurge, dressed as a god of the gardens, expresses his love. An instrument sounds, signalling the end of Nicole’s trials. The pair can marry. Returning to speech, Caterina suddenly reveals that Panurge must face his own trial. He flees to the countryside. The choir returns and, as they sing of a world full of love, Venus rises from the stage, exiting a wave (in Botticelli style) while combing her hair. The sun – represented by an electric lamp – appears. ‘Triomphe du paganisme.’ (V2. 206) Curtain.

At the start of Act 3, Nicole appears in a ‘réaliste’ shepherdess costume (V2. 206) accompanied by a real flock of sheep, supposedly from north-western France, singing a *chanson* about her pastoral surroundings.⁴³³ Cocolati appears but fails to recognize Nicole until prompted. She had previously obtained permission to travel ahead to find Panurge. Cocolati, dressed in a ‘costume simple’, has been following her closely ever since. He explains that his surveillance is at the orders of Caterina, and that he chose a ‘demi-caractère’ costume as most suitable for the job (V2. 208), suggestive of the costumes of middle-ranking ballet characters who bore the same label.⁴³⁴ His costume is thus not too noble, nor too peasant-like as to seem incongruous, but somewhere in between. Nicole admits her love for

⁴³² Because none of the music of this section of the *ballet-divertissement* is included in the printed piano-vocal score or any other resource available to me, I have not commented on it.

⁴³³ This is the same region as Dindenault’s flock in Rabelais’s *Quart livre*, who come specifically from near Saintonge (QL.V.548).

⁴³⁴ Demi-caractère was the term used to denote the costume of a dancer whose character is of the type associated with character dances (i.e. those not formed of, or originating in, classical ballet), but who still execute their dances with steps based on classical technique. G. B. L. Wilson, ‘Demi-Character Dance’, in *A Dictionary of Ballet*, 3rd edn (Adam and Charles Black, 1974), p. 155.

Panurge and her intention to pursue him. Cocolati departs to question the townsfolk, and Nicole asks to be informed if Panurge is found dead.

Nicole, now alone, returns her attention to her sheep. Panurge appears on stage, flustered and out of breath, begging to be hidden. He does not recognise Nicole through her disguise. She hides him in a hay bale as villagers pile onto stage, singing of a desire to lynch Panurge for sleeping with their wives. Their wives refute the accusation strongly. The villagers ask Nicole if she has seen Panurge and when she says no, they leave. Nicole is glad that her fiancé has not murdered anyone. Panurge exits the haybale and thanks Nicole for saving his life, offering her a kiss in return. She agrees but says it will probably be the last he ever gives her. As he leans in, Panurge recognises Nicole and hurriedly asks whether she heard what the villagers said he had done. She heard it all. Panurge tries to make excuses, claiming the infidelity was not his fault and singing an emotional *couplet* number expressing guilt and repentance. He ends his song by emphasising his ardent love for Nicole, despite his transgressions. He tries to leave but Nicole stops him out of concern that he will cheat again. She makes it clear that her wanting him to stay is not an act of forgiveness and then disguises him with a hat and a 'limousine'. Panurge takes over shepherding and Cocolati returns.⁴³⁵

In the village, Cocolati heard that Panurge sang soporific songs to put the town's men to sleep so he could seduce their wives. He questions the identity of the disguised Panurge, and Nicole explains that he is an old shepherd helping with the flock. Playing along and 'faisant le berger', Panurge adopts a mock lower-class accent, asking whether 'c'h-là' is ill (V2. 220), amusing Cocolati. Throughout Panurge's speech, his dialogue includes incorrect verb conjugations and compressed words to signify a mock lower-class language use ('Si vous savions tout faire, vous savions été vétérinaire! Empoignez-moi c't'agneau et

⁴³⁵ This plays on one of the most widely recognised Rabelaisian reference among the nineteenth-century French public: the then common saying 'moutons de Panurge'.

venez un peu que j'vous cousions.' V2. 220) Nicole suggests fleeing to an abandoned windmill, probably where Panurge was supposed to have previously slept with Pervette. The pair exit, and Cocolati crosses the stage pursued relentlessly by the flock of live sheep.

Curtain.

In the old windmill, Nicole clears the dining table as Panurge hums the motif from the first act's *chanson de boire*. Nicole is scared and suggests that they go to bed immediately. Panurge offers to sleep outside, but Nicole insists he sleep inside as she trusts him not to try and touch her. They embrace and Nicole enters her chambers. Alone, and underscored by a soft orchestral accompaniment, Panurge wonders if Nicole was wise to trust him, considering his previous sexual transgressions. He reflects on the ease of vice versus the effort of virtue. Seeing Nicole asleep with her door open, he meditates on her beauty in what the vocal score describes as a 'romance-berceuse'.⁴³⁶ Though he hears her call his name in her sleep, he resists temptation and when he hears the choir of townsfolk approach, singing about exacting their revenge upon him, he exits to surrender to them and to Pantagruel's tribunal. Curtain.

Pantagruel, Philoclœa, Caterina, Cocolati, and Philiberto enter the gardens surrounding Pantagruel's *château* wearing magnificent costumes and accompanied by a march. After this procession, Pantagruel sings of his love to Philoclœa. Caterina kneels before Philoclœa, who asks (also in song) for a hug instead of her supplications. The singing stops and Philoclœa enquires about Caterina's marriage. Caterina replies favourably, and Cocolati replies 'bee', obviously yet to recover from his encounter with the Rabelaisian flock.⁴³⁷ A *défilé* section entitled *Le ballet des douze mariés* is performed, followed by Pantagruel announcing public court proceedings. He and Philoclœa exit to prepare.

⁴³⁶ Planquette, Meilhac, and de Saint Albin, *Panurge: opera-comique en trois actes*, pp. 2 and 246.

⁴³⁷ This echoes the nonsense sheep noises of Thibault l'Aiglelet in *La Farce de Maître Pathelin* ('La Farce de Maître Pathelin', in *Recueil de farces (1450-1550)*, ed. by André Tissier (Droz, 1993), VII.)

Caterina reveals that she has decided to send Philiberto back to Sicily to restore his happiness. Upset, he protests, as he feels this is cruel. Cocolati admits that he finds their closeness excessive, while Philiberto argues that Caterina's love for Cocolati is temporary: the day that Caterina needs another distraction, she will do well to remember her poor Philiberto. After a short sung section in which Philiberto argues that having a little bit on the side is healthy for a marriage like Caterina's, Pantagruel re-enters with judges and a choir of 'chats fourrés'.⁴³⁸ Their short introductory chorus characterises them as comedically cruel, stuck up, and dismissive. Trouillogan is acting as judge for the case and will be leading cross-examination. Even before witnesses have been heard, women are protesting that the charges brought against Panurge are false. A man named Maclou takes the stand, accusing Panurge of using soporific songs to put him to sleep before having his way with his wife. Trouillogan considers Maclou's testimony to be true, stating that the court need not hear more evidence before sentencing. Panurge protests but Pantagruel tells him to stay calm.

Philoclœa reveals in song that Panurge was a pawn in her plans to get back at her husband.⁴³⁹ She urges Trouillogan to sentence him and set an example to other adultery-minded men, but Pantagruel demands a defence for his friend. A mysterious *chat fourré* volunteers to represent Panurge, singing a *rondeau* retelling how their 'client' was shut away with a sleeping young lady. Rather than trying to sleep with her, Panurge fled and handed himself over to the mob who were pursuing him. Following the end of the *rondeau*, Philoclœa asks who the young lady was, and the lawyer reveals that it was herself: Nicole! The crowd cheers. Pantagruel suggests acquitting Panurge and allowing him to marry Nicole, and Nicole requests that Pantagruel kisses his wife as a wedding gift to her and Panurge, and that Philoclœa accepts it. The piece concludes with a solo in which Panurge (of all people)

⁴³⁸ This brief vocal interlude is not included in the piano-vocal score. 'Chats fourrés' is a label lifted from the *Cinquième livre* (CL.XIII.756-761; V2. 237) that also satirically denoted a magistrate.

⁴³⁹ This song is not included in the piano-vocal score.

advises the audience to respect women. This gives way to a chorus praising women, sung to a drinking song tune.

Chapter 3.B

1895

Spectacular Rabelais – Visual Rabelais – Anti-literary Rabelais

On November 22, 1895, *Panurge, opéra-comique en trois actes et dix tableaux* was premiered at the Théâtre de la Gaîté.⁴⁴⁰ Its libretto was the brainchild of Henri Meilhac and Albert de Saint-Albin, two influential figures of France's literary and theatrical community. Writing *Panurge* towards the end of his life, Meilhac was a highly successful librettist and had been a long-time associate of Jacques Offenbach, responsible for several mainstays of the French lyric stage including *La Belle Hélène*, *La Vie parisienne*, and *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*. Occasionally foraying into the city's more elevated genres, Meilhac was also involved in writing the libretti for Georges Bizet's *Carmen* and Jules Massenet's *Manon*. He was elected to the *Académie Française* in 1888, cementing his status as a man of letters, as well as humorous stage works. Alongside writing and performing for the stage, Saint-Albin worked as a journalist, writing about both theatre and sports for publications *Sport*, and *Le Figaro*.⁴⁴¹ Though a less active stage writer than Meilhac, Saint-Albin had still collaborated with several key Parisian composers, including Offenbach and Charles Lecocq. Continuing this pair's association with leading musicians of Parisian light lyric theatrical tradition, *Panurge*'s score was written by the well-established composer Robert Planquette, whose

⁴⁴⁰ *Panurge*'s source base comprises a vocal score (freely available online), a handwritten *manuscrit de censure* (Archives Nationales, F/18/935) which includes the dialogue, and which I have transcribed and included in full in volume 2 of this thesis. Beyond these, the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris holds a handful of copies of the photo-programme that were sold at performances (8-PRO-0043 – included below). There are also a number of photographs taken by the Atelier Nadar (BnF, département Estampes et photographie, NA-238 (37)-FT 4). Like the other works in my corpus, numerous press reviews were published following *Panurge*'s premier which I will cite as I go.

⁴⁴¹ Henri Avel, 'Albert de Saint-Albin', in *La presse française au vingtième siècle: portraits et biographies* (E. Flammarion, 1901), p. 435.

career in both Paris and London had been built primarily upon the success of two French *opéras-comiques* – *Les Cloches de Corneville* (1877), and *Surcouf* (1887) – and the comic opera *Rip van Winkle* (1882), written for the British stage.

I will return at the end of this section of the chapter to reflect more fully upon what Planquette's *Panurge*, Ganne's *Rabelais*, and the various documents, images, and articles in their orbits together add to the scholarly understanding of Rabelais's *fin-de-siècle* reception, but in broad terms this section – like the previous one – identifies a tendency in the period to blur details of Rabelais's texts with sources operating in communicative modes beyond their boundaries. While in the case of Ganne's piece, this meant the intentional infusion (and occasional confusion) of elements of Rabelais's texts with details of his biography, in this second section of Chapter 3, I will argue that Rabelais's primarily textual output was considered to be something of a semiotic hybrid; for those discussing Planquette's piece, the textuality of the *chroniques* was subsumed by, and then substituted for, an increasing emphasis on visuality and materiality. In both case studies, I have and will identify a process at work during the period whereby details of Rabelais's text were substituted by elements from without, rather than from within.

In this half of my chapter, I argue that by establishing and examining the resonances between Robert Planquette's *Pantagruel* and the spectacular *féerie* genre that came to increasing prominence on the stages of *fin-de-siècle* Paris, we can better understand the extent to which Rabelais's reception trajectory was influenced by wider social, cultural, and technological developments and their prioritisation of visual effect. With a particular emphasis on the influence of the spectacularization of Parisian culture (both on and off the stage), I will demonstrate that the visual turn in *fin-de-siècle* French society was mirrored by a visual turn in Rabelais's reception, with the *curé*'s texts being understood in an increasingly pictorial, material fashion.

Féerie was characterised as an anti-literary theatrical form, discussed at the end of the century as possessing qualities diametrically opposed to those of literature, replacing hard-won textual depth and flare with supposedly easily obtainable and artistically hollow visual trickery. The question at the heart of my argument thus concerns how a figure primarily associated with literary culture like Rabelais could be transposed into a context in which literary quality was of at best secondary concern (if a concern at all). Relying primarily on press sources, I will demonstrate how in *Panurge*, Rabelais's literariness was considered to have been subjugated to the needs of the genre's spectacular aesthetic aims.

The historical representation at work in *Panurge* was derived from the satirical and surreal account that Rabelais offered of his own sixteenth-century society and surroundings to readers, integrated with broader generalised ideas held by nineteenth-century writers about what pre-modern France was like. Crucially, here, the highly fictionalised way that Rabelais depicted elements of Renaissance life – identified and discussed by some of *Panurge*'s critics – was also expounded in primarily visual terms, with the writer being conceptualised by a portion of his downstream readership as the creator of primarily visual material expressed through text.⁴⁴²

It is true that in scholarship, Rabelais has long been considered both a highly visual and highly theatrical writer.⁴⁴³ It is also true that by the end of the nineteenth century, Rabelais's texts were closely associated with a set of paratextual illustrations (such as Doré's engravings, discussed in Chapter 2) further emphasising their visuality. However, these

⁴⁴² Though I do not, in this chapter, draw any direct association between Rabelais's engagement with the classical rhetorical traditions key to humanist movement of the European Renaissance and *fin-de-siècle* ideas concerning his supposed rendering of visual material in text, it is worth noting that this process finds its equivalent in Rabelais's practice of 'Ekphrasis'. This denotes the practice by which visual phenomena – often works of art – are vividly described in (often spoken) words. For a general introduction to classical ekphrastic rhetoric, see Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2009). And for a study of Rabelais's use of Ekphrasis, see Olivier Seguin-Brault, 'Pratiques de l'excipit ekphrastique chez Rabelais', *Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance*, 91 (2020), pp. 55–70.

⁴⁴³ For two excellent overviews of Rabelais's engagement with theatre and theatrical visuality, see: Koopmans, 'Rabelais and Theatre'; Le Cadet, *Rabelais et le Théâtre*.

established theatricalities and visualities are different to the ones I am identifying in this chapter section. As I will demonstrate, discussions about Rabelais and his representation of the Renaissance gave way to questions of semiotic translation, with Rabelais emerging as a visual writer whose texts were for at least some of his nineteenth-century readers, primarily mimetic: a moving image created in language.

Spectacular Rabelais and the *féerie-esque*

An offshoot of *mélodrame* developed and popularised over the second half of the nineteenth century, *féerie* was a popular theatrical genre for which the performance of large-scale spectacle was the primary dramaturgical goal, with emphasis given overwhelmingly to material rather linguistic content. Disregarding conventional markers of literary quality, they instead relied primarily on visual spectacle, sensational devices, and simple, moralistic psychology (e.g., the struggle between one-dimensional formulations of good and evil).⁴⁴⁴ On this score, Rabelais and *féerie* seem like they ought to be incompatible. Indeed, while Rabelais remained a key *literary* figure of French *literary* history, *féerie* was a genre commonly discussed as if somehow the antithesis to literature, known for disregarding literary conventions in favour of spectacle, often with little narrative coherence. As theatrical encyclopaedist Alfred Bouchard explained in his 1878 dictionary *La Langue théâtrale*, the *féerie* was a ‘pièce à grand spectacle, où le sujet est remplacé par les décors, le dialogue par les trucs, l’esprit par des actrices demi-nues.’⁴⁴⁵ This anti-literariness has been summed up more recently by Jean-Claude Yon, who echoes Bouchard by writing that ‘le sujet, le dialogue, l’esprit, bref ce qui appartient au domaine littéraire et à la réflexion est remplacé, on le voit, par les décors, les trucs, et les actrices dévêtues, c’est-à-dire par ce qui ressort de la

⁴⁴⁴ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 25.

⁴⁴⁵ Alfred Bouchard, ‘Féerie’, in *La Langue théâtrale* (Arnaud et Labat, 1878), pp. 116–17.

matérialité et du spectacle.’⁴⁴⁶ In both these characterisations, elements that belong to the reflective literary domain such as narrative coherence, compelling dialogue, and thematic profundity are replaced by material ephemera. The textual and verbal realm is subsumed by the visual. Operating in the orbit of *féerie* meant spectacle must have been of particular and primary importance to the creators of *Panurge*. This, by implication, meant that it also played a role in the way that they conceptualised Rabelais.

One of the strongest links between *Panurge* and *féerie* was its venue: written as it was to be premiered at the Théâtre de la Gaîté. This was one of the large commercial playhouses that specialised in *féerie*, according to Sabbatini.⁴⁴⁷ The venue’s long-running association with the genre would prime *Panurge*’s audience to interpret whatever spectacular production they encountered as cohering with the generic parameters of *féerie* simply because this was the sort of thing they expected to see performed there. And *Panurge* was spectacular: more or less every element of its production was created in the service of spectacle. The costumes, for example, were extremely lavish, crafted by the *Maison Landolff*, a husband-and-wife team in high demand at both private and state theatres, and among individual high-paying stars, according to Gutsche-Miller.⁴⁴⁸ The courtly costumes worn during the *défilé* procession of married couples in the final act were especially ornate, with a production photo depicting around 100 performers on stage dressed in silk, satin, and velour (see figure 5).⁴⁴⁹ This *défilé*, alongside the *ballet-divertissement* entitled ‘*la Naissance de Vénus*’ also constituted a part of the piece’s *féerie-esque* resonance, with both of these elements key to the genre’s usual plot and performance structure, offering the production a chance to showcase their most

⁴⁴⁶ Jean-Claude Yon, ‘La Féerie ou le royaume du spectaculaire: l’exemple de “Rothomago”’, ed. by Isabelle Moindrot, Olivier Goetz, and Sylvie Humbert-Mougin, *Le Spectaculaire dans les arts de la scène du Romantisme à la belle époque*, 2006, pp. 126–33 (p. 126).

⁴⁴⁷ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 32.

⁴⁴⁸ ‘Théâtre de la Gaîté - Panurge’, *Le Photo-Programme: revue artistique illustrée*, 1895, p. 7, Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris, 8-PRO-0043; Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871-1913*, p. 179.

⁴⁴⁹ ‘Théâtre de la Gaîté - Panurge’, *Le Photo-Programme: revue artistique illustrée*, 1895, p. 31.

spectacular costumes and choreography in a context slightly removed from the main narrative.

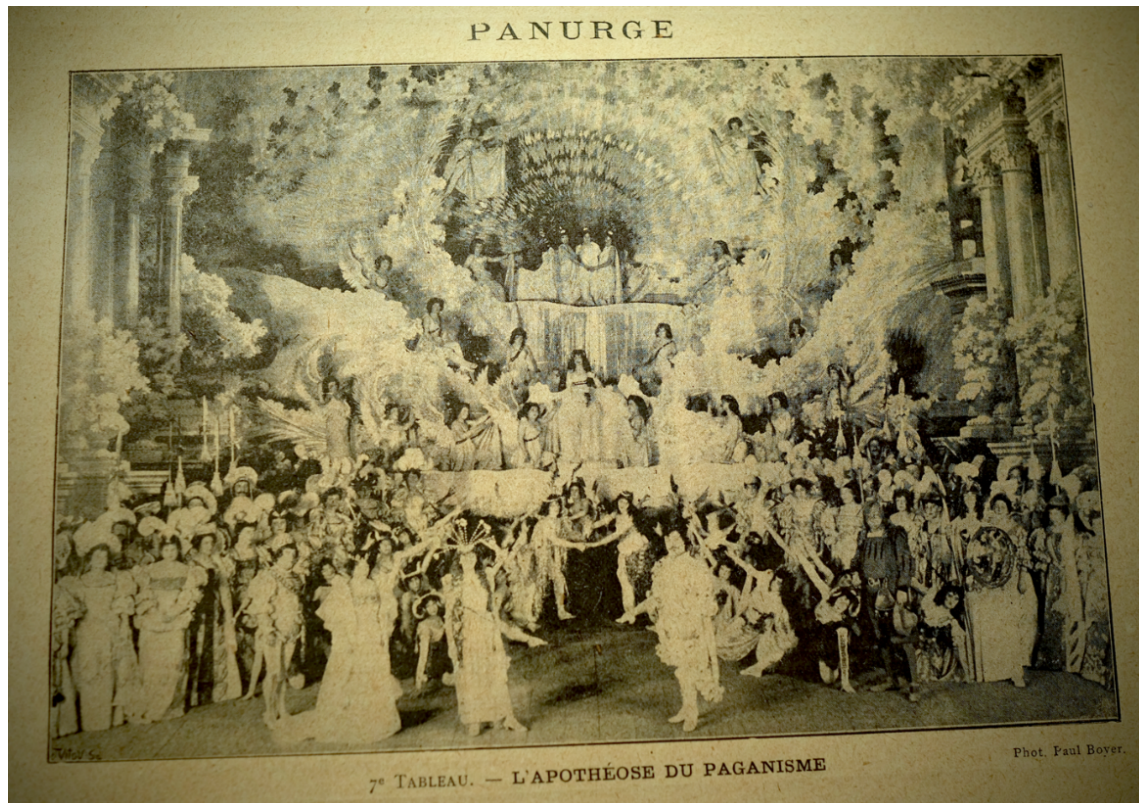


Figure 5

Costumes were not always needed (or wanted), however. In a similar way to other physical genres like *ballet pantomime*, one of the spectacular appeals of *féerie* was the appearance of mostly naked young female bodies. As production photographs taken by the *Atelier Nadar* made clear, this was intended to be a key element of *Panurge*'s audience appeal, with several images depicting female performers adopting suggestive poses while wearing minimal or sexually provocative clothing (figures 6-9). The librettists made sure to include instances of near-nudity in their plot, such as the encounter between Nicole and Cocolati in which the former appears only half dressed. The near-nudity was also foregrounded by reviewer Théodore Avonde who, writing in *La Liberté* under the pseudonym 'J. Chrysale', commented that *Panurge*'s plot was little more than a pretext 'à riches

costumes et à ballets suggestifs.⁴⁵⁰ According to him, the prima ballerina Mme Lamothe was ‘délicieusement deshabillée’, particularly in her ‘costume de ribaude [figure 9], où elle nous montre une jambe moulée dans un bas de soie noire, retenu par une tirette négligemment attachée à la ceinture.’ For this reviewer, it seems the near-nudity sealed the piece’s success.



Figure 6 ⁴⁵¹

⁴⁵⁰ Théodore Avonde [J. Chrysale, pseud.], ‘Théâtres’, *La Liberté*, 23 November 1895.

⁴⁵¹ Atelier Nadar, *Groupe Panurge. Gaîté. Panurge*, 1895, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, NA-238 (37)-FT 4 < Fol. 1 >. A trio of dancers pose together, nude except for small diaphanous togas and faux-antique headdresses. This image bears some visual similarity to Canova’s neo-classical sculpture *The Three Graces* which was, itself, loosely based on figures included in paintings by Botticelli, Raphael, and Rubens. It also echoes part of Rabelais’s description of Thélème, in which three graces sit atop a large alabaster fountain, spewing water from their breasts, mouths, ears, eyes, and ‘aultres ovuvertures du corps.’ (Garg.LV.144)



Figure 7 ⁴⁵²



Figure 8 ⁴⁵³

⁴⁵² Atelier Nadar, *Groupe de Bacchus (Gaîté)*. 'Panurge', 1895, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, NA-237 (5)-FT 4 < Fol. 4 >. A 'groupe de Bacchus' pose together in thin, lowcut dresses as one straddles a wine barrel, suggestively revealing her upper thighs.

⁴⁵³ Atelier Nadar, *Groupe Panurge. Gaîté. Panurge*, 1895, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, département Estampes et Photographie, NA-238 (37)-FT 4 < Fol. 1 >. A group of dancers dressed in suggestive satyr costumes accost a nymph during a recreation of the ballet-divertissement.



Figure 9 ⁴⁵⁴

As for its staging, spectacular effects included ten sumptuous *tableaux*, a vast number of painted backdrops, designed by three separate leading stage decorators: M. Carpezat, Amable (pseudonym for Dauphin-Amable Petit), and M. Gardy.⁴⁵⁵ The frequent movement from one highly ornate backdrop to another will have created a spectacle that few other theatres would be capable of matching. Similarly, in its use of new-fangled lighting techniques, the Théâtre de la Gaîté was ahead of the curve in terms of adopting modern staging technologies for use in its productions, leading the way in bringing technological advancements that were reshaping Parisian urban life into its auditorium.

In Paris more widely, new urban lighting technologies allowed more of the city to be visible for more of the time, and with more illuminating power. Yet, as Iwan Morus has

⁴⁵⁴ Atelier Nadar, *Groupe Panurge. Gaîté. Panurge*, 1895, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, département Estampes et Photographie, NA-238 (37)-FT 4 <Fol.1>. Dancers pose outside the Cabaret de la Grand'Pinte in costumes emphasising their breasts and legs.

⁴⁵⁵ These designers are listed in: *Le Photo-Programme: revue artistique illustrée*, 1895, p. 7, Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris, 8-PRO-0043. Their ten tableaux were: *Le Ménage de Pantagruel*; *Le Cabaret de la Grand'Pinte*; *Les bandits pour rire* ('site sauvage'); *Le Boudoir de la Princesse Caterina*; *Les Jardins de Cocolati*; *Cythère*; *La Naissance de Vénus*; *Les Moutons*; *Le Moulin*; *La Cour de Pantagruel*

pointed out, ‘technology that was designed to reveal reality in one context (the street of a domestic setting, say) was also designed to mislead in another context - the first commercial use of electric light was in the theatre’.⁴⁵⁶ The electrical sunrise at the end of *Panurge*’s ballet was a good example of how theatres capitalised on recent advancements in electrical stage lighting technologies, deploying new lighting techniques at a select few dramaturgically powerful moments with spectacular effect.

Alongside its deployment of modern staging technologies, *Panurge* resonated with the broader parameters of *féerie* in its use of elements reminiscent of the adventure *mélodrame*: the genre from which *féerie* first developed.⁴⁵⁷ In particular, the combat scene in which Cocolati emerges in his armour to save Nicole from his fake bandits was intended to be of ‘le genre de ceux que l’on se livrait dans les anciens mélodrames’ (V2. 169). Here the writers were self-consciously (and a little satirically) aligning their libretto with the over-the-top fight scenes common in classic *mélodrame*, acknowledging that their piece operated in the same universe as melodramatic *féerie* by emphasising this generic attribute in a highly spectacular and comedic context.

As part of a process that Sabbatini has termed ‘féerization’, other traditions in the orbit of *féerie* adopted practices from the genre such as modular articulation, humour, music, dance and, crucially, an increased emphasis on spectacular visuals.⁴⁵⁸ Sabbatini has also shown that as *féerie* spread through the city’s theatres, works involving its genre characteristics gradually stopped carrying it in their generic designations; *féeries* or *féerie*-like pieces were not always labelled *féeries*.⁴⁵⁹ This is the challenge of tracking the genre’s spread. Not only were all *féeries* to greater or lesser extents generic hybrids, but the more its tentacles reached into neighbouring generic domains, the less often works in its orbit bore

⁴⁵⁶ Iwan Morus, ‘Illuminating the Victorians’, *History and Technology*, 26.2 (2010), pp. 157–62 (p. 158).

⁴⁵⁷ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 30.

⁴⁵⁸ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 30.

⁴⁵⁹ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 29.

‘*féerie*’ in their subtitle, going instead under labels like *opérette à spectacle*, or *pièce à spectacle*. This is why I have opted to describe *Panurge* as ‘*féerie-esque*’ rather than claiming that it was absolutely part of a well-defined, stable, genre; in the 1890s, the generic parameters of *féerie* were highly unstable. Alongside this, thirty years after the 1864 *Liberté des théâtres*, the generic label *opéra-comique* had come to mean all manner of things beyond the strict genre parameters used for most of the century (see Chapter 2 of this thesis for a snapshot of this development in 1879), meaning that its use in *Panurge*’s title revealed little more than its combination of spoken word and music and a slightly elevated socio-cultural value claim.

Panurge’s aesthetic proximity to *féerie* was discussed in the press. Emblematic of this more general, city-wide generic drift towards the *féerie-esque*, a handful of *Panurge*’s critics ignored the generic designation of ‘opéra-comique en 3 actes et 10 tableaux’ altogether. While provincial writer Sir Telegraph (*L’Écho de Jarnac*) opted for ‘opérette’, the Parisian specialist music publication *L’Orchestre*’s reviewer Arthur Jaworski (writing under the pseudonym Arthur Verneuil) called it an ‘opéra-comique à grand spectacle’.⁴⁶⁰ *La Liberté*’s Théodore Avonde employed the label ‘opérette à spectacle’, while novelist, poet, playwright, and part-time theatre reviewer Catulle Mendès assigned it the subtitle ‘pièce à grand spectacle’.⁴⁶¹ At the time they were writing, Jaworsky’s, Avonde’s, and Mendès’ choices of generic designation were all associated closely with styles orbiting *féerie*.

⁴⁶⁰ Sir Telegraph [pseud.], ‘Revue des théâtres’, *L’Écho de Jarnac*, 12 January 1895; Arthur Jaworsky [Arthur Verneuil, pseud.], ‘Gaité’, *L’Orchestre*, 1 December 1895.

⁴⁶¹ Théodore Avonde [J. Chrysale, pseud.], ‘Théâtres’, *La Liberté*, 23 November 1895; Catulle Mendès, ‘Premières Représentations’, *Le Journal*, 23 November 1895.

Putting the spectacular before the literary: a Rabelaisian contradiction?

One might wonder how it can be that a writer like Rabelais famed for literary depth and language play could be reformulated in a genre context that paid such little attention to linguistic or literary material. However, *Panurge*'s placement of visual spectacle over literary quality was identified and discussed by a handful of the piece's reviewers, with *L'Orchestre*'s Arthur Jaworsky suggesting that treating one element as more important than the other was an intentional creative decision taken by the piece's creators. Having emphasised the importance of spectacular visuals in his use of the generic designator *opéra-comique à grand-spectacle*, Jaworski stated that 'contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait croire en lisant les noms de Panurge, de Pantagruel et de Trouillogan ce n'est pas toute l'épopée rabelaisienne que les auteurs ont évoquée dans *Panurge*.'⁴⁶² He was clear that aside from the *chanson de ricochet* they lifted from the *Tiers livre*, *Panurge*'s writers essentially pushed details of Rabelais's texts to one side. As my earlier summary of the piece makes clear, this claim is largely inaccurate, suggestive either of a limited understanding of Rabelais's texts, or of an attempt to obscure the piece's Rabelaisian resonances in order to make his point about spectacularism more strongly. But regardless, the lack of Rabelaisian parallels was not presented as a fault by Jaworski. Rather, it was the symptom of a conscious decision on the part of *Panurge*'s creators to render their own literary identities and aims of secondary importance to their piece's overall spectacular aesthetic goal. As he explained, 'on le voit, l'intrigue de *Panurge* n'est pas compliquée, mais on comprend que les auteurs ont voulu s'effacer devant la mise en scène qui est absolument merveilleuse.' For Jaworski it was mission accomplished: 'nous pouvons affirmer que tout Paris va passer et repasser à la Gaîté pour applaudir *Panurge* et ses

⁴⁶² Arthur Jaworsky [Arthur Verneuil, pseud.], 'Gaîté', *L'Orchestre*, 1 December 1895

magnificences.’ This perhaps explains why the librettists based their plot in the marriage material from the *Tiers livre* – the work of Rabelais’s most grounded in dialogue – rather than the more readily visualisable action of, say, the *Quart livre*’s swashbuckling seaborne adventures, or the more aurally and visually stimulating material of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*. In its reduced emphasis on visuality, material from the *Tiers livre* could essentially stay out of the way of the (often only tangentially related) spectacle, offering a Rabelaisian scaffold upon which to construct a *féerie-esque* production. In this spectacular context, an overly literary libretto would have been inappropriate and, according to Jaworski, the writers’ acknowledgement of this was to their credit.

Other reviewers echoed Jaworski. As well as using a spectacular generic designator – this time *opérette à spectacle* – *La Liberté*’s Théodore Avonde insisted that the libretto functioned primarily as a basis upon which to mount a spectacular performance. As he wrote, *Panurge* ‘offre une succession de tableaux, où le talent des décorateurs prime celui des auteurs, qui se sont effacés, devant la somptuosité d’une splendide mise en scène, avec une modestie peut-être excessive.’⁴⁶³ Their libretto was little more than ‘un simple prétexte à pittoresques décors, à riches costumes et à ballets suggestifs.’ Literary it was not.

Avonde’s and Jaworski’s views were also consistent with the impression offered by *Le Petit Journal*’s Léon Kerst who, rather than describing *Panurge* as ‘une pièce qui serait le *Panurge* de Rabelais’ characterised it as ‘une pièce fantaisiste inspirée par *Panurge*’.⁴⁶⁴ For Kerst, the *curé*’s influence in the libretto was subsumed by an overwhelming drive towards the visual. The critic was at pains to emphasise the looseness of the relation between *Panurge* and Rabelais’s texts ‘pour apaiser les ressauts de notre conscience rabelaisienne... alarmée’. With Rabelais in the distance, all that remained for the critic was ‘à constater un spectacle

⁴⁶³ Théodore Avonde [J. Chrysale, pseud.], ‘Théâtres’, *La Liberté*, 23 November 1895.

⁴⁶⁴ Léon Kerst [Leon de Froidement], ‘Paris au théâtre’, *Le Petit journal*, 23 November 1895. His italics: in both instances applied to the name Panurge, rather than the title of Planquette’s piece.

merveilleux, on pourrait même dire incomparable.’ Once Rabelais was removed from the equation, what remained was a visual spectacle worthy of celebration. To hammer his point home, Kerst closed his review by affirming that ‘Tous les “regardeurs” de Paris vont se ruer à la Gaîté.’ To this critic, it was visual spectacle alone that lent *Panurge* success. Thus, for, Jaworski, Avonde, and Kerst, the process of replacement of literary for visual elements outlined by those defining *féerie* was apparent in *Panurge*.

Like his subtly backhanded compliment about Hervé’s score (discussed in Chapter 2) Kerst’s label ‘regardeurs’ was a similarly underhand attack on those either swept up by, or contributing to, Parisian city life’s increasingly pictorial character. Up to and during the 1890s, Paris was caught up in a process of ‘spectacularization’, both on and off the theatrical stage. According to Bernard Lightman, through the middle of the nineteenth century a new and growing popular culture developed, both in England and France, that was distinguished by its increasingly pictorial character.⁴⁶⁵ According to Vanessa Schwarz, this affected every aspect of city life, right down to how its inhabitants moved around and interacted with their immediate environment. As she explains, Parisian city life became ‘so powerfully identified with spectacle that reality seemed to be experienced as a show’, with the *flâneur* – that most nineteenth-century of French cultural phenomena – appointing themselves as audience to the walk-about production of daily urban life.⁴⁶⁶ In this sense, Kerst’s choice of vocabulary suggested that as divisions lessened between the spectacles of the stage and those of daily life, the differences between modes of spectacular consumption began to overlap. *Regardeur* – a term alive to both the detached viewing position of the *flâneur* and the passivity key to prevailing anti-bourgeois criticisms of the fin-de-siècle’s ephemeral cultural consumerism –

⁴⁶⁵ Bernard Lightman, ‘Introduction: Victorian Science and Visual Culture’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 10.1 (2012), pp. 1–5 (p. 1).

⁴⁶⁶ Vanessa R. Schwarz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (University of California Press, 1998), p. 10.

is suggestive of Kerst's downward view on those seeking spectacular *divertissement* when they went to the theatre, rather than a more literary experience of any real import.

Of all the critics to distinguish between spectacular and literary theatre in their review of *Panurge*, Catulle Mendès from *Le Journal* was probably the most emphatic and radical. The critic devoted his first line to identifying the collaborators involved in creating *Panurge*, writing that 'Rabelais, Shakespeare, Molière, Alfred de Musset, et M. Henri Meilhac, sont les collaborateurs de M. A. de Saint-Albin'.⁴⁶⁷ Surprisingly, Mendès associated *Panurge* with a list of literary giants beyond just Rabelais, but what did they add? Their involvement was discrete: 'Shakespeare a fourni l'idée d'une scène, Molière un fragment de dialogue, Alfred de Musset quatre vers, et M. Henri Meilhac rien du tout.' Flexing his literary credentials, Mendès referenced the elixir provided to Oberon by Puck in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, an obscure fragment of Molière, and four lines of Musset's verse, using them to intensify his attack on Meilhac, a member of the Académie Française who did nothing to retain or uphold Rabelais's literary quality.⁴⁶⁸

Whether true or not, implying that only Saint-Albin contributed anything of significance to the libretto served to emphasise Mendès' impression of the piece as operating in the realm of popular theatre, distanced as it was from the supposed erudition of man of letters Meilhac. Indeed, Saint-Albin had made his career as a librettist and chansonnier among icons of the Parisian stage like Offenbach and Lecocq. And this type of theatre with its predilection for ephemeral stage tricks was, for Mendès, at odds with the enduring words of high-status figures of the literary canon. This was further emphasised by the sheer limitedness of the contribution made by these canonical figures: merely the idea of a scene or a couple of lines, and not the ones for which they were best known. Continuing his avenue of

⁴⁶⁷ Catulle Mendès, 'Premières représentations', *Le Journal*, 23 November 1895.

⁴⁶⁸ The Musset passage is potentially from *Rolla*, but given Mendès's air of literary superiority rested on his references being highly obscure, it is hard to say for certain where any of his literary references came from.

critique, the reviewer focused primarily on *Panurge's décors*, employing phrasing that emphasised their supposed opposition to theatrical writing of literary value. As he attested, 'Le décor, en certains cas, est l'ennemi du drame. Celui-ci gêne celui-là, celui-là celui-ci.' This was because 'les vrais chefs-d'œuvre doivent exprimer par la parole, les gloires qu'ils évoquent! et il n'y a pas besoin d'une toile de fond montrant la mer, lorsque sonne un vers d'Hugo, qui la fait gronder et bleuir.' For Mendès, elaborate décors were an easy alternative to meaningful – and in his example mimetic – literary expression. In a move diametrically opposed to the norms of *féerie*, spoken word emerged in Mendès' article as the prime semiotic system, the best way to represent even visual phenomena on stage.

Mendès' discussion of performance practice also had socio-economic significance. Not only was he characterising the bourgeois audiences who constituted the lion's share of *féerie's* regular audience as operating in a cultural context that wielded inferior value, but he also emphasised his points about the décor vs. dialogue dichotomy by turning to their relative costs. As he explained:

le luxe des étoffes, le rayonnement des peintures, les amusements des changements à vue sont tout à fait de mise en des pièces où l'on ne saurait être détourné de rien qui valût mieux. Il suffit de dépenser dix mille francs pour monter un drame de Shakespeare, ou de Musset, ou de Mæterlinck; il est normal, et indispensable, de dépenser deux cent mille francs pour monter *Panurge*.⁴⁶⁹

In this economic invective against popular theatre, a spectacular work like *Panurge* cost more to mount than a supposedly great work of literary drama because the price of producing the latter was lessened by the mimetic power of its words and their capacity to pick up the decorative slack. Mendès' critique thus also functioned as a rejection of the *fin-de-siècle's* bourgeois-oriented consumption-obsessed culture, decommodifying the idea of literary

⁴⁶⁹ It is worth noting that Mæterlinck eventually wrote a piece in 1908 called *L'Oiseau bleu* that was widely received by its reviewers as a form of poetically developed *féerie*. (Kristian Moen, *Film and Fairy Tales: The Birth of Modern Fantasy* (I. B. Tauris & Co, 2012), p. 94.)

quality by presenting it as irreducible to economic value.⁴⁷⁰ In short: more expensive did not mean better. Mendès' economic critique is significant when discussing Rabelais's lyric posterity because in the critic's schema, Rabelaisian reworks (or reformulated versions of any great literary work, for that matter) lost their cultural prestige when turned into commodities for which large sums of money were 'indispensable'.

Intersections: *Féerie, History, Couleur rabelaisienne?*

Panurge's review corpus adds legitimacy to Sabbatini's claim that as the nineteenth century progressed, plays cohering with the loose generic parameters of *féerie* were labelled less and less often as *féeries* in their production or performance materials.⁴⁷¹ Given this, when viewed in conjunction with ideas about Rabelais and the representation of his world offered in the *chroniques*, the handful of examples in which reviewers used the word as an adjective to describe particular elements of the piece took on extra significance.

One of the reviewers to refer to *féerie* directly was Albert Montel, who used his review in *Le Rappel* to celebrate *Panurge*'s 'décors de féerie, remarquables par leur pittoresque et leur souci historique qui paraît avoir préoccupé ceux qui les confectionnèrent.'⁴⁷² Later, repeating the association he drew between historical representation and effective *féerie* staging, Montel called the *décors* 'une merveille de reconstitution historique', reinforcing the idea that they amounted to an accurate representation of history expressed in primarily visual terms. In Montel's schema, *Panurge*'s

⁴⁷⁰ These anti-bourgeois ideas reappear in, and are nowadays most closely associated with, the musicological writing of Théodore Adorno (e.g. Theodore Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. by E.B. Ashton (Continuum, 1976).

⁴⁷¹ Sabbatini, *Music, the Market, and the Marvellous*, p. 29.

⁴⁷² Albert Montel, 'Chronique musicale', *Le Rappel*, 24 November 1895.

décors were at once *féerie-esque* and also historically accurate. But how could this be, given *féerie*'s primary concern with depicting fantasy worlds? *Panurge* being historically accurate (by which I mean, using elements of decoration that are directly informed by engagement with credible historical sources) would create a bind in which a work grounded in a historically attuned depiction of Renaissance history was also simultaneously based in fantasy: an example of historical realism in a generic context characterised by its fantastical *surrealism*. Montel's circumnavigation of this bind would suggest that his measure of faithful historical representation was broad, incorporating texts like Rabelais's and considering them part of the historical record: an objective account of their environs despite their obvious fictionality.

Further, Montel's text suggests that in the *fin-de-siècle*, Rabelais was understood visually or through primarily visual language by a significant proportion of his readership. The critic wrote that *Panurge*'s 'seul mérite' was to have 'permis à M. Debruyère [the director] de dépenser des sommes considérables pour la mise à la scène de cette œuvre nouvelle'. He also emphasised that a large amount of the narrative – whose only merit, he claimed, was its spectacular potential – originated in the material of Rabelais's *Tiers livre*. For him, then, this libretto with a strong link to Rabelais constituted little more than a pretext for sumptuous *mise-en-scène*. The critic was therefore either reinforcing the notion that all elements of the piece including its literary antecedent were subjugated to the needs of visual spectacle, or, that Rabelais's texts and their inclusion in a *féerie-esque* piece worked precisely because of a mutual aesthetic coherence, with Rabelais's texts understood primarily as a form of literary spectacle painted or performed through their visual language use, rather than by recourse to a primarily visual medium.

Montel brought together *féerie* and historical representation in a way that dissolved their apparent contradictions, modifying the parameters of each to create what might be

termed a history *féerie* in which the fairytale universe being depicted was also strongly historically situated, but in a version of history freed from the need to adhere to objective historical sources for legitimacy. In this example of *féerie-ized* historical representation, the history being presented appears to have been received by an audience with a nineteenth-century understanding of what the Renaissance was supposed to look like that was partially gained through engagement with Rabelais's texts (or second-hand knowledge of the texts they had not read, or engagement with broader ideas about the Renaissance world to which ideas about Rabelais has contributed). For a large chunk of the audience, therefore, the boundary between historically-situated-but-fantastical and historically informed visual realms was highly porous. Among this group of readers was Léon Kerst, who in his article for *Le Petit journal* described *Panurge's* decors as 'coloris d'époque, se déroulant en des tableaux dont le moindre vaudrait la signature d'un spécialiste en la matière.'⁴⁷³ This insistence on *Panurge's* decorative elements constituting the product of historical study and the deployment of specialist knowledge suggests that many, even well-educated men like Kerst, saw *Panurge's* visual material as representative of Rabelais's immediate experience of the world around him, rather than the product of the world conjured up by his imagination.

Also seeming to conceptualise the Renaissance through the subjective lens of Rabelais's texts, the provincial paper *L'Écho de Jarnac's* reviewer 'Sir Telegraph' complimented 'toutes les splendeurs de mise en scène qu'évoque le *souvenir* de la Renaissance.'⁴⁷⁴ His use of the word 'souvenir' emphasised the second-hand account of the period provided in *Panurge*: a secondary impression or trace of the period that, while recollective, was inherently subjective and fundamentally fallible. The idea that *Panurge* operated a step beyond the usual parameters of historical pieces in mainstream Parisian lyric

⁴⁷³ Léon Kerst [Leon de Froidevent], 'Paris au théâtre', *Le Petit journal*, 23 November 1895.

⁴⁷⁴ Sir Telegraph [pseud.], 'Revue des théâtres', *L'Écho de Jarnac*, 12 January 1895. My italics.

culture was further enforced by Sir Telegraph's claim that the décors 'sont d'une somptuosité à faire pâlir les décors de l'Opéra', the traditional home of *grand opéra* (the primary form of historical lyric drama) in Paris. Sir Telegraph's comparison between the staging of the Opéra's repertoire and Planquette's *Panurge* drew a difference comparable to that at work between the concepts of the real and surreal. In both cases, the latter is rendered unrepresentative of the real world because of the extreme intensity in which it represents its subject matter.

The *tableaux* Sir Telegraph identified as worthy of celebration for their evocation of a Renaissance *souvenir* and their surpassing of the Opéra's sumptuousness are notable because of their reliance on historical tropes that resonated strongly with ideas about Rabelais's texts. *Le Cabaret de la Grand-Pinte*, the setting of the ballet *La Naissance de Vénus*, and the *Cour de Pantagruel* all straddled the competing imperatives of the cluster-concept the 'Rabelaisian historical *féerie-esque*' in their wielding of spectacular potential, historical situatedness, and an imagined relation to Rabelais's life and works. As I have already demonstrated in the previous chapter, the cabaret constituted a flexibly historicist Renaissance marker with a strong link to accounts of Rabelais's life. *La Naissance de Venus* built on ideas in currency across the nineteenth century about Rabelais's supernaturalism and his direct links to antiquity discussed in Chapter 1, offering an account of the Renaissance and of Rabelais's texts as being part of the same culture as the nymphs, fauns, and bacchants of Greco-Roman myth. As for the *Cour de Pantagruel*, Sir Telegraph compared it to the Château de Gaillon. This was a castle in Normandy built in the early sixteenth century by the Cardinals of nearby Rouen: a key medieval city that featured as a cultural touchstone in Rabelais's texts, and whose 'Bailly' was included on the *Tiers livre*'s 'Privilege du Roy' (TL.PdR.343). These backdrops thus provided a *couleur rabelaisienne*: an intrinsically Rabelaisian Renaissance aesthetic

underpinned and facilitated by its articulation in a hybrid historical *féerie-esque* genre context.

Rabelais as a writer of images?

The presentation of Rabelais's world on the Gaîté stage was, for Sir Telegraph, successful on a visual level, but not a textual one. The critic outlined how by turning the *curé's* texts into a production suitable for young girls (a fact apparently celebrated publicly by the venue's director Debruyère), the libretto was rendered 'triste et monotone'. To illustrate this, Sir Telegraph drew a comparison between Meilhac and the writer Octave Feuillet, the so-called 'Musset des familles' famed for both his moral conservatism and frequent depictions of female protagonists that earned him popularity among female readers. Ultimately, to Sir Telegraph, reformulating Rabelais in this way constituted an 'erreur académique', remedied only by the fact that Rabelais's influence persisted so strongly in the visual elements of the piece.

Sir Telegraph's celebration of *Panurge's* visual qualities was echoed by the unnamed reviewer for *Le Cercle militaire* who also celebrated the quality of the *Cabaret de la Grand'Pinte tableau*. Notably, this reviewer employed the vocabulary of visual art in his critique, describing the scene as 'd'un pittoresque achevé, où truands et ribaudes emplissent la scène et forment, sur les terrasses de maisons gothiques de groupes qui n'ont pas l'air mélancolique, tant s'en faut!'⁴⁷⁵ At this point in the nineteenth century, the word 'pittoresque' still carried a primarily artistic meaning, but with literary resonances. Indeed, the Littré *Dictionnaire de la langue française* began its definition of the term by designating it that 'qui concerne la peinture', but continued by discussing Virgil's use of 'expressions pittoresques

⁴⁷⁵ Unnamed, 'Chronique théâtrale', *Revue du cercle militaire*, 30 November 1895.

dont il enrichit la belle langue latine.’⁴⁷⁶ Employing a word with such a double meaning was particularly noteworthy because both in its artistic and literary sense, ‘pittoresque’ denoted a second-hand representation of a visual phenomenon, with the literary meaning also underscoring the term’s appropriateness in situations in which there had been some intermedial transfer between textual and imaginal sign systems. The critic’s use of ‘pittoresque’ thus simultaneously referred to the painted backdrops and their fabricated depiction of the Renaissance, while also nodding implicitly to the move the *chroniques* underwent from mimetic text – i.e. that which rendered visual phenomena using words – to visual spectacle. In its picturesqueness, *Panurge* could thus be understood as both a visual spectacle in its own right, and as a product of intermedial translation: a literary rework whose relation to its antecedent text could be seen primarily in its visual rather than linguistic material.

Perhaps the most striking example of Rabelais being conceptualised by his nineteenth-century audience as operating primarily in a visual realm came in an article by an unnamed reviewer for *Le Grand écho de Paris*. The critic began by evoking an idea of ‘La Renaissance française, avec ses luxueuses architectures, son faste et sa fantaisie de vêtements, sa gaîté entraînante’, emphasising the role played by *Panurge*’s ‘merveilleuse mise-en-scène’ in bringing key visual Renaissance touchstones to life on the stage.⁴⁷⁷ Then, turning specifically to Rabelais, the critic differentiated clearly between visual and literary elements of *Panurge* and their relation to his texts, arguing that while ‘l’époque et l’esprit se retrouvent si bien dans cette splendide évocation décorative [Rabelais] n’a collaboré que faiblement pourtant au *Panurge* de MM. Meilhac et de Saint-Albin.’ For this critic, the strongest link to Rabelais’s texts was to be found in the visual evocation of his era, rather than

⁴⁷⁶ Émile Littré, ‘Pittoresque’, in *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Librarie Hachette et cie, 1873), III, p. 1873, Taylor Institution.

⁴⁷⁷ Unnamed, ‘Les Premières à Paris’, *Le Grand Écho de Paris*, 26 November 1895.

in any narrative or textual material produced by the librettists. More simply put: Rabelais's material could be found in the imagery, not the text. This was then confirmed by the critic's description of the *Cabaret de la Grande-Pinte* as 'une véritable vision pantagruélique', emphasising visuality's primacy in *Panurge*'s multimedial theatrical reformulation of Rabelais's texts.

How, then, to characterise the interplay between Rabelais's role as a figure of French cultural history, the inherent textuality of his books, and the visual primacy of the *féerie* genre with which *Panurge* shared close aesthetic resonances? Exploring this overlap, Henry Céard's article in *Le Matin* presented the visual-before-literary organisation of *Panurge* as an inversion of theatrical norms, identifying how 'l'accessoire s'impose et devient le principal.'⁴⁷⁸ He continued, capitalising on the apparent ubiquity of the *maillot* as an emblem of a lack of literary merit:

La pièce qui les provoque s'est faite aussi effacée que possible tant les auteurs, désespérant de Rabelais et d'eux-mêmes, ont préféré se fier à la seule fantaisie des régleurs de divertissements, des peintres de perspectives et de fabricants de bonneterie de soie et de coton. Plus de maillots que de texte, plus de toiles de fond que de fond littéraire, une chorégraphie des femmes remplaçant la chorégraphie des phrases, c'est tout *Panurge*.

Céard's characterisation of this piece suggests the active suppression of literary devices closely associated with Rabelais: text, literary depth, and light-footed phrasing. It seems that for this critic, the piece bore diametrically opposing qualities both to those of Rabelais's texts, and to the literary output upon which its librettists had built their careers. Yet Céard later presents this desperate abandonment of literary quality as part-and-parcel of the intermedial shift between literary text and stage spectacle, insisting on the important role played by intermedial translation in turning a piece of historical literature into a work for the

⁴⁷⁸ Henri Céard, 'Les Théâtres', *Le Matin*, 23 November 1895.

stage. He described the work as an ‘interprétation plastique de l’œuvre de Rabelais’, emphasising the textuality of the *chroniques*, ‘animant littérairement dans [la] prose violente [de Rabelais] tout la sensualité d’un monde qui, pendant tout le moyen âge, protestait contre l’Eglise, acharnée sur l’amour en chair, en sculptant ironiquement ses vices autour des basiliques et des sanctuaires.’ In his characterisation of Rabelais’s texts – taking non-textual material like sculpture and intangible phenomena like physical feeling, rendering them prose – Céard emphasised the interface of the visual and textual in Rabelais’s texts. The critic’s use of a lexicon of creative production (‘animant’, ‘sculptant’) suggests an awareness of both the fictionalising process at the heart of Rabelais’s writing, and the invention presupposed by a move between sign systems.

Acknowledging the invention inherent in translation and the role this played in *Panurge*’s presentation of its historical setting, Céard argued that the piece’s depiction of the past cohered with a specifically Romantic understanding of the Renaissance, suggesting that ‘le tableau du Cabaret de la Grande Pinte, [était] très curieux dans la manière dont le romantisme avait compris la Renaissance.’ Emphasising *Panurge*’s link to Romanticism’s historical-visual theatrical palette, Céard insisted that the *Cabaret tableau* ‘reproduit avec exactitude la plantation du deuxième acte de *L’Esmeralda*, de Victor Hugo, alors que la fille bohème danse dans un carrefour, sous les fenêtres illuminées de Mme Gondelaurier.’ To Céard, though the plots and characters of *L’Esmeralda* and *Panurge* differed, in their depiction of a Romantic idea of a Renaissance tavern, their staging was identical.

Crucially, though, the *Cabaret de la Grand Pinte* had more to do with the *avant garde* circles of northern Paris than it did any notions of a Romantic Renaissance ideal, or, for that matter, with Rabelais or his texts. Indeed, the first Parisian drinking establishment with that name opened in 1724, nearly 200 years after the writer’s death, and around 100 years before Romanticism reached its peak in the 1820s and 1830s. And yet, despite this anachronism,

Rabelais and the tavern were associated in *fin-de-siècle* urban historical imaginaries thanks largely to the *avant garde*'s penchant for turning to Medieval and Renaissance architectural and decorative styles when creating spaces for their community to gather. This included a tavern on the Pigalle district's Avenue Trudaine named *La Cabaret de la Grand'Pinte* and that featured a 'Rabelais-style interior' according to Phillip Dennis Cate, animating through visual means the supposedly debauched world contained in Rabelais's texts.⁴⁷⁹ A small advert for the tavern that featured in an 1886 edition of the local paper *Paris-Montmartre* (figure 10) confirmed the role the bar played as a manifestly Rabelaisian space.

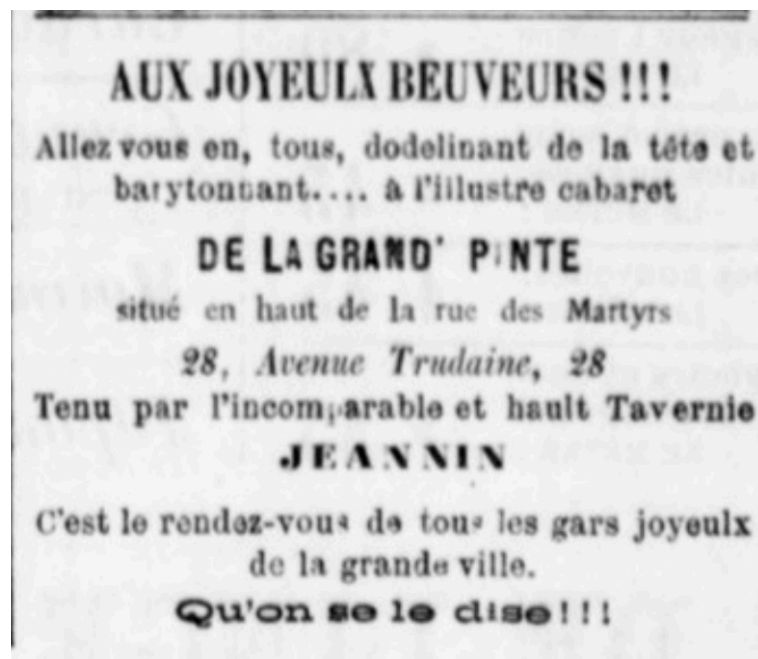


Figure 10

Its invitation to 'Joyeux Beuveurs' to come 'dodelinant de la tête et barytonnant... à l'illustre cabaret' referenced the Preface and chapter VII of *Gargantua* respectively (pp. 5 and 24), retaining Rabelais's middle-French orthography.⁴⁸⁰ Both the Rabelaisian and the Romantic

⁴⁷⁹ Phillip Dennis Cate, 'The Spirit of Montmartre', in *The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor and the Avant Garde, 1875-1905*, ed. by Phillip Dennis Cate (Rutgers University Press, 1999), p. 25.

⁴⁸⁰ *Paris-Montmartre: organe du XVIIIe arrondissement*, 23 May 1886.

Cabaret de la Grand Pinte were inventions: examples of historical representation based on fictional depictions of history in text. And while, in this advert, one finds a reformulation of some of Rabelais's more unusual use of language (and, perhaps, a chuckle for those knowing readers familiar with what follows 'barytonnant'...), it was still an invitation to a visual and interactive representation of Renaissance history and thus indicative of the increasing visuality and materiality with which Rabelais was associated in the *fin-de-siècle*.

Returning to Céard's review article, underpinning his discussion of *Panurge*'s staging was a double process of intersemiotic reversal, in which the visual phenomena that were rendered as text by Rabelais were turned visual again. Be it in *Panurge* or in Hugo's representation of the Renaissance – the latter derived as it was from a renewed interest in literature of the period shared by Romanticism's key exponents – Céard's subsequent characterisation of the work as 'véritablement ici un portail de cathédrale qui s'émeut et qui danse' was a clear representation of this twice-made crossing of medial boundaries that, for *fin-de-siècle* readers, was inherent to the reformulation of material from Rabelais. First, in a metaphor for Rabelais's texts, the subjects depicted in the cathedral narthex turned from flesh to stone – from vital visual phenomena to static object (i.e. the text) – before being reanimated again in the return to a visual realm brought about by staging *Panurge*.

Rabelais's Visual History Text?

Panurge's reviews in the critical press suggested that Rabelais's texts could be understood as highly mimetic works: almost as though they were a series of spectacular textual images. Rabelais could, and did, cross medial boundaries with little resistance or comment from his readership. And while it is hard to say for certain why or how this might have been, the generally unspoken acceptance of Rabelais's reappearance on the spectacular stage was suggestive of a handful of wider *fin-de-siècle* social and cultural changes, in particular the

fact that literacy rates and the value society attributed to the written word were negatively correlated. As Vanessa Schwarz has pointed out, just as France achieved near-universal literacy, its culture became saturated by image-based communication forms.⁴⁸¹ In a world in which a panoply of visual delights were constantly within easy reach, literary knowledge was considered a decreasingly important part of constructing one's social status. This is perhaps why Théodore Avonde lamented that 'la plupart des spectateurs n'ont pas lu Rabelais, et, par conséquent, se soucient peu d'un héros [Panurge] dont ils connaissent à peine le nom.'⁴⁸² While Gustave Doré's illustrations may not have been as key to critiques of Planquette's *Panurge* as they were to Hervé's (discussed in Chapter 2), and even though their popularity led to an uptick in sales of Rabelais's texts (as they were sold together), these ever more ubiquitous images will surely have contributed to Rabelais's drift away from literary detail towards visuality, substituting his often textually dense *chroniques* with highly accessible illustrations. They joined the *Songes drolatiques de Pantagruel* – republished under Rabelais's name in 1869 – in strongly associating the *chroniques* with visual arts. These were a series of woodcut prints, likely made by François Desprez, that despite being published nearly a decade after Rabelais's death were still incorrectly believed in the nineteenth century to have been of the *curé*'s creation.⁴⁸³ Planquette's *Panurge* and its easy recourse to visual material, even while reformulating elements of Rabelais's most wordy text, suggests that these images came to act not as supporting materials to the text, but their replacement. This decreasing primacy of literature relative to other medial forms may also have been one of the contributing factors to the rise in *féerie*'s popularity, opposed as it was to communicative modes traditionally associated with literary material.

⁴⁸¹ Schwarz, *Spectacular Realities*, p. 2.

⁴⁸² Théodore Avonde [J. Chrysale, pseud.], 'Théâtres', *La Liberté*, 23 November 1895; Catulle Mendès, 'Premières Représentations', *Le Journal*, 23 November 1895.

⁴⁸³ Michel Jeanneret (ed.), *Les Songes drolatiques de Pantagruel: cent vingt gravures attribuées de François Rabelais* (Editions [vwa], 1989), p. II.

In their insistence on Rabelais's visuality, *Panurge's* reception paratexts indicated that the visual turn in *fin-de-siècle* aesthetic imaginaries could have inculcated a parallel visual turn in Rabelais reception. Without a more comprehensive, less medium-specific, study of visuality's role in Rabelais's reception over this period it is hard to say whether this trend extended to Rabelaisian reworks beyond the stage. Yet, the corpus discussed in this chapter would suggest that at the very least, literary discussion had echoed its social *milieu* by taking on a more pictorial character. Again, then, Rabelais's shape-shifting chameleon-like propensity to suit the aesthetic givens of his ever-changing reception audience meant that when he encountered the dazzling lights, sumptuous costumes, and spectacular staging of the *fin-de-siècle* *féerie-esque*, he could make himself at home.

Rabelais in the 1890s: the Renaissance man incarnate?

What conclusions can be drawn about Rabelais's *fin-de-siècle* reception from this pair of musico-theatrical case studies? Firstly, these works suggest that the steady process of dislocation between Rabelais-the-figure and the content of his texts that characterised his reception over the second half of the nineteenth century continued, and perhaps even intensified, in the 1890s.

There is an odd misalignment at play between the swashbuckling, bawdy, carnivalesque image of the Rabelaisian Renaissance reformulated in the narratives of these lyric afterlives, and the fact that so much of the material from Rabelais that they replicated was derived from the *Tiers livre*: the text with the most talking and least physical 'action'. One possible explanation for this is that in its discussions of the perils of marriage, the *Tiers livre's* narrative engaged with similar – or at least *related* – romantic themes as those key to melodrama, a genre with which both Ganne's and Planquette's pieces were in different ways

associated. Indeed, both the *Tiers livre*'s marriage debates and the classic love-tryst plot lines of melodrama emphasised the virtiginous, existential dangers of love and marriage, with the emasculatory threat of cuckoldry constituting something of a primitive formulation of the dramatic love triangle. Whether spectral or actual, both the cuckold and the love-rival constituted the insertion of a third into an otherwise binary romantic relationship.

Yet narrative details were only one aspect of the reformulation to which Rabelais's texts and biography were subjected by writers for the lyric stage of the 1890s. A plot having a particular resonance to the *Tiers livre* did not preclude the construction and presentation of a Renaissance world derived from elements from across the *chroniques*. Both in 1892 and in 1895, Rabelais's texts were invoked in service of depicting a stylised Renaissance aesthetic. Rather than the writer of a specific set of tales about giants, the *curé* was primarily remembered and received as the writer of the Renaissance writ large, synonymous with a lavish, stylised, clichéd, and – crucially – primarily visually configured idea about the period. Méténier and Dubut de Laforest turned to Rabelais's biography, using it as a way of anchoring their otherwise primarily melodramatic narrative in a sixteenth-century setting. Capitalising on Rabelais's well-documented moves between various employments, homes, and social contexts, the writers could move their characters between four historical-seeming locations, setting their action in the tavern, the monastery, the ancient university, and the royal court of François I^{er}. While they certainly took a lot of material from Rabelais's texts and details of his life, overall Méténier and Dubut de Laforest's audience seems to have understood their account of Rabelais's life and works as little more than a historical thematic support for *Rabelais*'s largely unhistorical (melo)dramatic narrative.

In 1895, Rabelais was turned to again in the service of historical representation, but in a way that rendered details of his texts largely unimportant to *Panurge*'s audience. Faithful literary recreation was not the point, though; Rabelais – a literary cypher for the stylised

visual Renaissance – constituted both the basis and the excuse for lavish pseudohistorical stage spectacle. It is telling that of the ten *tableaux* supposedly derived from Rabelais's texts, only two – The *Moutons* and the *Cour de Pantagruel* bore any real resemblance to material from the *chroniques*. But even then, *Panurge's* shepherd scene took place in a field, not on a boat like its antecedent in the *Quart livre*. In its ridiculous depiction of court proceedings, the trial in the final act could be compared to the legal dispute between 'Baisecul' and 'Humevesne' in *Pantagruel*, but this would also be pretty tenuous. And yet, these settings *felt* Rabelaisian to the audience because they resembled a late nineteenth-century idea of the Renaissance. Because Rabelais and his capacious texts had come to seem so representative of the entire epoch that anything that was Renaissance was also somehow his.

It is perhaps most striking that as a cultural figure, Rabelais had become so thoroughly dislocated from the details of his texts in *fin-de-siècle* imaginaries that attempts at fidelity to them were received and discussed by critics as somehow paradoxically detracting from the overall Rabelaisian-ness of the work. Indeed, because of its emphasis on Rabelais's biography and its reworking of sections of Rabelais's textual material, Méténier and Dubut de Laforest's libretto was criticised for being overly literary and not comic or *gai* enough. In the eyes of their critics, the librettists' erudite insistence on fidelity to Rabelais's life and works undermined their overall representation of them. What felt Rabelaisian to the audience and what Rabelais actually did and wrote had evidently become two subtly different categories.

The 1895 piece demonstrates the extent to which Rabelais, as he encountered evermore spectacular Paris, took on a certain level of trans-semiotic hybridity: conceptualised, configured, and reformulated as if the creator of text-images. Again, then, sticking to a purely textual notion of Rabelais became insufficient. To meet the expectations of the nineteenth-century audience, one's representation of the *curé* had to somehow identify and reproduce that elusive Rabelaisian *je ne sais quoi*: the heart of the invisible, amorphous,

and everchanging artichoke.⁴⁸⁴ While neither of the works discussed in this chapter offered any clear idea of what or where that was, in their own ways they both demonstrated how in the *fin-de-siècle*, the answer lay somewhere beyond the text.

⁴⁸⁴ This vegetal metaphor is borrowed from Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation', in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 54–76.

Finale

Though I was born and educated in the UK, I have never read a single word of Charles Dickens. And yet, despite my total lack of engagement with his texts, at various points in my life I have used the word ‘Dickensian’ to describe various objects or phenomena without issue. To do this, I rely on a second-hand impression of the writer’s novels, derived from their widely accepted association in the British popular consciousness with – among other motifs – street urchin gangs, top-hat wearing fops, frustrated Cockney detectives, cobbled streets, and lots of smog. Whether or not these motifs offer a particularly accurate account of the details of his works is immaterial; if a lyric adaptation of *Bleak House* or *Nicholas Nickleby* (or any other Victorian novel set in London for that matter) failed to portray nineteenth-century London in the way that my cultural conditioning has taught me was aesthetically ‘Dickensian’ then I would feel as though something was amiss. The deftness with which the hypothetical composer or librettist transposed details of their literary source into their piece, or indeed demonstrated any familiarity with the text at all, would be rendered immediately immaterial. Looks wrong; sounds wrong; *is* wrong.

In this thesis, I have shown that in the nineteenth-century Parisian popular consciousness, Rabelais was reduced to an aesthetic ideal in an analogous way. As each of the plot summaries I have provided demonstrates, those reformulating Rabelais for the stage went to great lengths to transpose specific elements of his texts and biography into their own downstream lyric idiom. Yet, as the corpus of critical articles discussed in this thesis attests, the audiences to these afterlives appeared unable (or unwilling) to spot the signs of the composer’s and librettist’s close familiarity with Rabelais and his texts or the attention that they paid to their often very specific, minor details. The rejection of Rabelais’s lyric afterlives in the critical press and the accusations of the mistreatment or misrepresentation of the *curé*’s

texts discussed in this thesis suggest that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, ‘couleur rabelaisienne’ was the quality by which audiences had come to recognise a successful adaptation of Rabelais: the product of a loose aesthetic reformulation rather than a sensitive, erudite translation. One need not have read the *chroniques* to think that one knew them. And if one had read them, it need not have been recently or with much care. While a detailed knowledge of Rabelais’s life and works was required in order to create one of his lyric afterlives, only a cursory familiarity with the aesthetics or details of Rabelais and his textual world was needed in order to criticise, or worse, completely eviscerate them in the press.

One of my key contributions in this thesis has been to use one author – Rabelais, obviously – to try to conceptualise and codify what I suspect is a fact of all ‘adaptation’ of canonical writers: aesthetic essentialisation. Up to now I have steered clear of trying to suggest ways that these authorial *couleurs* might be extended beyond Rabelais and his downstream reformulations to the afterlives of other writers and the settings, power-dynamics, discursive modes, linguistic palettes, sound worlds, and so on, crafted by their creators. While it must fall to other scholars to explore these in detail, I strongly suspect that my arguments about the *couleur* at work in Rabelais’s afterlives would hold true for any number of now-classic writers: not just Dickens, but Steinbeck, Zola, Austen, Camus, Tolkein, or Dostoyevsky, as well as unattributable historical forms like the *chanson de geste*, or the Homeric epic.

In addition to being a useful lens through which to examine Rabelais’s nineteenth-century afterlives specifically, the *couleur rabelaisienne* offers a scholarly framework through which textual fidelity can be even further divorced from reception discourse through the radical widening of the very concept of fidelity. This, in turn, would overcome some of the pitfalls of fidelity discourse that have plagued the ‘adaptation studies’ field for years.

Indeed, in this world of *couleurs*, being ‘faithful’ to an author need not constitute the precise and laborious study and reformulation of their output. Instead, an adapter can seek to produce a work which bears little relation to the specific detail of the artefact being adapted, but remains alive to elements of the network of aesthetic, socio-cultural, and historical factors with which it has come to be associated by its downstream audience. Examining a writer’s posterity through the colourful transmutations they underwent as ideas about them passed from reader to reader – or between people who were culturally conditioned to have some vague idea of their widely accepted persona and might be familiar with a few passages from their books – could be a more fruitful approach to the study of cultural reproduction than one clinging to black and white comparisons between the specific details of an antecedent text and their re-emergence in its downstream reformulations. If my study is anything to go by, it may well be more representative of the way that most people have thought about their nation’s classic writers. It would at least start to explain the odd paradox running through my thesis: that by offering detailed reference to the material in the *chroniques* as these composers and librettists did, the perceived relation between their reworks of Rabelais, and Rabelais himself, were loosened, not tightened.

For his nineteenth-century audience, Rabelais was not a man, nor a body of literature, but a cluster-concept. And in this thesis, I have used his late nineteenth-century lyric afterlives as conceptual tin-openers, revealing the various elements that made up the amalgam for which his name had come to stand. In Chapter One, I emphasised his importance to French national culture of the period, demonstrating how his downstream audience rejected the idea that Rabelaisian motifs and references could be legitimately expounded in an Italian stylistic context. So profound were associations between his texts and French culture that they took on a metaphysical dimension, with press responses to Labarre’s *petit opéra* singling Rabelais out as a key figure in the founding myth of French modernity. I

also demonstrated how competing notions of hybridity were important to Rabelais's status in nineteenth-century cultural imaginaries; an aspect of his reception that I then expanded upon in Chapter Two. Here, alongside using Hervé's *Panurge* to identify, outline, and define the *couleur rabelaisienne*, I demonstrated the pluriformity of hybridity; while one type of hybridity can resonate with another in, for example, its infusion of markers of socio-culturally stratified discursive levels that differ in comparable ways, this does not automatically make them equals in the eyes of their receiver. The way in which hybridity is enacted by an object is itself contingent upon a network of interlacing factors, including the object's age, its position in a given period's power structures, and its location on hierarchies of socio-cultural value. Rabelais was hybrid, but in a highly idiosyncratic way that was impossible to replicate downstream because part of its acceptance was derived from his *œuvre's* age and long reception history. It was also, as Chapter Three demonstrated, connected in part to the mimetic qualities of his texts. As the measure of proximity to Rabelais gradually moved from the successful transposition of elements of his texts to the representation of a more reductive aesthetic tied to the mythologised status that he had accumulated over his reception journey, the emergence of the anti-literary Rabelais in the *fin-de-siècle* served to confirm the expanding gap between his texts and the ideas about him held by the average Jean.

One fact (and I use that word in all its absolutist certainty) of reception is that the way we read and discuss authors – whether canonical or not – is socio-culturally conditioned. In this thesis, I have demonstrated the extent to which Rabelais's reception trajectory was dictated not just by his position in downstream hierarchies of socio-cultural value, but also by the trajectory charted through these competing hierarchies by the various differently stratified discursive modes that his texts incorporated. For example, comedy in the sixteenth century had a different social resonance to comedy in the nineteenth, was understood in different

terms, and was created according to a different mix of pre-existing norms and practices. This was especially true in a nineteenth-century lyric context in which the policing of discursive modes (i.e. which genre could perform which kinds of comedy or tragedy and in what format) was, by design, bound up in social and cultural hierarchies that were in turn formalised and codified by systems of legislation and then perpetuated once that legislation was eventually repealed.

Put simply, all reception artefacts bear witness to, and are indelibly marked by, the social and cultural context from which they have emerged. The way a past author is handled by their downstream audience tells us as much, if not more, about the latter as it does the former. And so, my thesis, which began life as a study of Rabelais's reception in the nineteenth century – geared towards using the period to unravel the latent hermeneutic potential of his texts – has also ended up being an examination of the late-nineteenth century's reading, listening, and theatregoing public, of what in their approach to Rabelais's life and works they revealed about themselves, and of the processes of comprehension, appropriation, reformulation, and categorisation in which we cultural beings all engage.

Vostre treshumble et tresobeissant serviteur,
Zak Eastop, 2025

Glossary of Journalists and Publications

Where possible, I have listed the real names and known pseudonyms of the journalists whose articles I have used. I have also, where available, listed the publications for which they wrote and some background information about their activities outside of journalism. Alongside the sources cited in the entries, I have used information provided through the online database of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. If no bibliographical information is included in an entry, then information should be assumed to have come from there. I have also included (in parentheses) the specific publication in which the article used in this thesis was published. This is to facilitate cross-referencing between the list of journalists and the second list I have provided which offers more detail regarding the specific publications referenced in this thesis.

Some frequently used reference works will be cited in parentheses. These are:

- *Le Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (Slatkine, 1982). Shall be given as '(Larousse, vol, pg.)'
- Henri Avel, *La presse française au vingtième siècle : portraits et biographies* (E. Flammarion, 1901). Shall be given as '(Avel, pg.)'
- Georges d'Heylli, *Dictionnaire des pseudonymes* (Dentu, 1887), BnF. Shall be given as '(Heylli, pg.)'
- Claude Bellanger and others, *Histoire générale de la presse française*, 5 vols (Presses Universitaires de France, 1969). Shall be given as (HGPF, vol., pg.)

All other references will be in footnotes.

Journalists

Avonde, Théodore (*La Liberté*)

1858-?

Born in Paris in 1858, Avonde served as director of *La Revue littéraire et artistique* (1877-1882), then editor in chief of *Petit Nantais* in Nantes (1882-1886), and finally editor in chief of *L'Agence Havas* (1886-1890) before becoming the parliamentary and theatrical editor for *la Liberté*, *l'Événement*, and *La République française* from 1890 onwards. From that date, he was a member of the board of the *Association des journalistes parisiens*. As well as an *Officier de l'instruction publique*, he was a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* (Avel, p. 105).

Bertal, Georges (*Le Rappel*)

1856-1897

Bertal was born in Aigre (Charente) and died in Paris. He sometimes operated under the anagrammatic pseudonym **Georges Albert**. Alongside his journalistic writing, Bertal was a playwright, primarily penning comic works for the popular lyric stages of the 1880s and 1890s. He also collaborated with fellow journalist and playwright Henri Fouquier (see: Fouquier).⁴⁸⁵

Céard, Henri (*Le Matin*)

1851-1924

Céard was a Naturalist French novelist and close friend of Émile Zola. He was an important, if lesser celebrated, member of France's literary establishment. In 1883, Maupassant dedicated his book *En mer* to Céard. He was a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*. He was also known, supposedly, for his keen intelligence and profound pessimism.⁴⁸⁶

Chevalier, Paul-Emile (*Le Ménestrel: journal de musique*)

1861-1931

Chevalier was the nephew of Henri Heugel: the heir to the Heugel publishing company who owned and published *le Ménestrel*. He was an associate of celebrated mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot.

Delord, Taxile (*Le Charivari*)

1815-1877

Delord was born in Marseille and died in Paris. He arrived in Paris in 1837, where he worked as the editor of *Vert-Vert* and *Le Messager des théâtres*. He became editor-in-chief at *Le Charivari* in 1842 and then literary critic at *Le Siècle* in 1858, contributing political articles to *La Revue National*. In 1869, he ran for election in the *législatif* race as a pro-democracy candidate, opposing Napoleon III's regime, and became part of a republican minority bloc in the National Assembly. His theatrical work *La Fin de la comédie* was played at the *Odéon* in 1854.⁴⁸⁷

Duret-Hostein, Hippolyte (*La Presse*)

18??-????

⁴⁸⁵ 'Bertal', in *Nouveau Larousse illustré; supplément* (Librairie Larousse, 1906), p. 72.

⁴⁸⁶ 'Céard', in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. by Peter France (The Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 139.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Delord', in *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français*, 5 vols (Bourloton, 1891-1889), II, p. 324.

Duret-Hostein was editor of *La Patrie* until 1894. He was also a theatre critic for *La Presse*. He operated under the partial pseudonym **Emile Duret-Hostein** (Heylli, p. 197)

Escudier, Léon (*Le Pays*)

1821-1881

Escudier was born in Castelnau-d'Aud, died in Paris, and was primarily a musicologist and music editor. Along with his older brother Marie, he founded *La France musicale* in 1838, to which many of the period's leading composers contributed articles. After writing for *Bonsens*, *La Revue du dix-neuvième siècle*, *la Revue du Nord*, and *Le Monde*, he was given control of the *Chronique musicale* section of *Le Pays*. Among the compositions controlled by his music publishing house were those of Verdi, with whom he collaborated on several pieces including *Don Carlos* (Larousse, VII. 874).

Fouquier, Henri (*Le XIXe siècle*)

1838-1901

Fouquier was born in Marseille and died in Paris. He was known to be a liberal and publicly opposed Napoléon III's reign. He held a handful of governmental roles in the early 1870s including the press director at the Interior Ministry (1870-1873), and co-wrote several works for the stage, including one alongside Georges Beral (see: Beral). Fouquier was a prolific journalist, said to have usually penned two or three articles a day. He wrote primarily for *le XIXe siècle*, *Gil Blas*, *Le Temps*, and *Le Figaro* and often used the partial pseudonym **Marcel Fouquier**. He was a member of the *Académie Française*.⁴⁸⁸

Gatayes, Léon (*Le Ménestrel*)

1805-1877

Gatayes was a harpist, taught at the conservatoire in Paris by a member of the Cousineau family. He was the illegitimate grandson of the Prince of Conti but his family changed their names during the Revolution of 1789. He wrote for *Le Corsaire*, *le Journal de Paris*, *la Chronique de France*, and *l'Univers illustré*. He was a close friend of well-known journalist Alphonse Karr and was known to be an exercise fanatic and excellent at riding.⁴⁸⁹

Gérôme (Achille Denis?) (*L'Univers illustré*)

If Achille Denis, then:

1817-1889

Denis wrote for *La Nouvelle* and operated as editor in chief of *La Gazette de Paris* until 1848 when he left to found and edit the new daily paper and theatrical guide *le Messager des théâtres* from 1848.⁴⁹⁰

Intérim (*Gil Blas*)

Anonymous pseudonym.

Jaworski, Arthur (*L'Orchestre*)

1850-1921

⁴⁸⁸ 'Henry Fouquier', *Le Temps* (26 December 1901), p. 1, BnF.

⁴⁸⁹ Gérard [pseud.], 'Courrier de Paris', *L'univers illustré*, 2 October 1877, p. 82, BnF.

⁴⁹⁰ Jean François Vaudin, *Gazettes et gazetiers : histoire critique et anecdotique de la presse parisienne : deuxième année* (E. Dentu, 1863), p. 177, BnF; Michel Brix, *Nerval Journaliste (1826-1851): problématique méthodes d'attribution*, *Etudes nervaliennes et romantiques*, VIII (Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1986), pp. 358–59.

Jaworski was born in Paris and often wrote under the pseudonym **Arthur Verneuil**. Jaworski wrote libretti for around 80 lyric stage works during the 1870s and 1880s. Most short popular comic works written in partial *parigot*.⁴⁹¹

Joncières, Victorin (*La Liberté*)

1839-1903

Joncières – a pseudonym for Félix Ludger-Rossignol – was the son of a journalist at *La Patrie*. He first studied painting, but after a well-received performance of his musical adaptation of Molière's *Le Sicilien* he was persuaded to pivot and take up music full time. For the entirety of his compositional career, he was known by his Joncières alias. He was an early French admirer of Wagner, though this had little stylistic effect on his music and his enthusiasm waned over time as he came to see the composer's writing as antipathetic to French spirit and genius. He was sympathetic to a handful of French composers, among them Offenbach and Bizet. His writing for *La Liberté* – often published under the pseudonym **Jennius** – was known for its indiscriminate sarcastic attacks and this negativity was thought to have alienated his readership. He was awarded the *Légion d'Honneur* in 1877 (Heylli, p. 212).⁴⁹²

Jouvin, Benoît (*Le Figaro*)

1810-1886

Jouvin was born in Grenoble and died in Paris. Over his career, Jouvin wrote for *le Globe*, *l'Epoque*, *la Sylphide*, *la Mode*, *le Lampion*, *la Chronique* and *le Figaro*, the last of which he founded. He wrote a book about the life and works of composer Daniel Auber.⁴⁹³ Composer Gabriel Fauré was said to have sung *Pie Jesu* at his funeral.⁴⁹⁴ Jouvin was a *légitimiste*, meaning that he supported the rule of the Bourbon family, particularly the duke of Chambord. He often wrote under the pseudonym **Bénédict** in *Le Figaro* and was associated with the pseudonym **Ahasvérus** in the publication *La Mode*, but always denied that it was him (Heylli, p. 40).

Kerst, Léon (*La Presse*)

1846-1906

Léon Kerst – a pseudonym for Léon de Froidevent – was a lawyer, musicologist, and journalist. He contributed to *La Presse*, *Le Voltaire*, *le Petit journal*, and functioned as editor in chief of the *Journal illustré*. He wrote an 1877 book entitled *l'Opéra et M. Halanzier*. He was known as Léon Kerst for the entirety of his career. (Heylli, p. 221).

Lasalle, Albert de (*Le Monde illustré*)

1833-1886

Lasalle was born in Le Mans and died in Paris. He was the grandson of the famous cavalry general Jean-Baptiste Berthier, who served at the battle of Wagram. He wrote at length about music and theatre, including books entitled *La musique à Paris* (1863), *Histoire des Bouffes-Parisiens* (1860), *Les treize salles de l'Opéra* (1875), *Dictionnaire de la musique appliquée à l'amour* (1868). He would occasionally write under the pseudonym **Halbeer** (Heylli, p. 189).

⁴⁹¹ 'Arthur Jaworski', *Bru Zane Mediabase*, 9 June 2023 <<https://www.bruzanemediabase.com/en/node/8511>>.

⁴⁹² Cormac Newark, 'Joncières, Victorin de', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 29 vols (Macmillan, 2001), XIII, p. 187.

⁴⁹³ Francis Magnard, 'J.-B. Jouvin', *Le Figaro*, 15 November 1886, BnF.

⁴⁹⁴ 'Échos', *Le Figaro*, 17 November 1886, BnF.

Lauzières, Achille de (*Le Courrier franco-italien; La Patrie*)

1818-1894

Lauzières was born in Naples in 1818 and died in Paris in 1894. He was a Franco-Italian librettist, journalist, and translator. As a journalist, he contributed to *la Patrie*, *la Gazette musicale*, and *l'Art musical*, using multiple pseudonyms, primarily **M. de Thèmines**, **Aldo Aldini**, **Alt**, **Raph**, and **Paul Gravier** (Heylli, p. 432). He would sometimes switch between these names for different articles in the same issue of a publication. Alongside penning libretti for Vincenzo Fioravanti, Giovanni Pacini, Teodulo Mabellini, Luigi Giordigiani, Gaetano Braga, Paolo Serrao, Friedrich von Flotow, and Felipe Pedrell, he was responsible for translating Giuseppe Verdi's Don Carlos, Meyerbeer's *Faust*, Gounod's *La reine de Saba*, and Flotow's *Martha* from French to Italian.⁴⁹⁵

Lemer, Julien (*La Sylphide*)

1815-1893

Julien Lemer was writer, journalist, and publisher who founded *La Sylphide* in 1853. He also contributed to *la Semaine*, *la Liberté*, *la Lecture* under several pseudonyms, including **Lerme**, **Bachaumont**, **Jules Raymond**, and **Jean Lux**. Alongside his criticism, Lemer was the founder and director of the *Librairie Centrale*: the publishing wing of the *Union centrale des beaux-arts*. (Heylli p.250; Larousse, vol. X, pp. 350-351)

Mendès, Catulle (*Le Journal*)

1841-1909

Mendès was born and educated in Bordeaux and died in mysterious circumstances in Paris, where he had relocated in 1859, and where on an early morning in February 1909 his body was found in the railway tunnel running through Saint-Germain-en-Laye. He founded *Le Revue fantaisiste* in 1861 (which only lasted for a year) and *la Parnasse* in 1864, a publication supportive of Parnassianism whose name was later changed to *La République des lettres*. From 1893 onwards, he published an annual volume entitled *L'Art au théâtre* containing his articles from the previous year. Mendès sometimes used the pseudonym **Jacques Rollin** for his poetry (Heylli p. 318). He also wrote numerous prose works, one of which – *Le Roman d'une nuit* – resulted in his arrest, imprisonment for a month, and a fine of 500fr. In 1866 he married the writer Judith Gautier: the eldest daughter of Théophile Gautier. The pair parted in 1869 when Mendès began a relationship with composer and virtuoso pianist Augusta Holmès and their marriage was eventually annulled in 1877. His daughters (with Holmès) were the subject of an 1888 painting by his friend Auguste Renoir. He and Holmès separated in 1886 and he later married the (much younger) poet Jeanne Mette. He was awarded the *Legion d'Honneur* in 1894.⁴⁹⁶

Merruau, Paul (*L'Album théâtrale*)

1812-1882

Merruau was an explorer and novelist who wrote extensively about Egyptian culture and politics, China, Vietnam, New Caledonia, Russia, and Australia.

Montazio, Henri (Enrico) (*L'Appel*)

1816-1886

Montazio was born in Portico di Romagna and died in Florence. In 1847 he founded a populist political paper *Il Popolano*. His vitriolic articles were so extreme that he was

⁴⁹⁵ Eduardo Rescigno, *Vivaverdi* (BUR Rizzoli, 2012), p. non-paginated.

⁴⁹⁶ 'Mendès', in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. by Isidore Singer and Frederick T. Haneman (Funk and Wagnalls, 1906 1901), VIII, p. 487.

sentenced to life imprisonment for high treason after he wrote a series of columns in which he called for violence against the Grand Duke of Florence. This sentence was commuted to exile and he left for France. Once in Paris, he founded *L'Appel*. From Paris he moved to London where he directed *La Presse de Londres*. He returned to Italy in 1860 after Garibaldi's revolution and took over Turin-based *Il Mondo illustrato* and *La Rivista contemporanea*. He eventually returned to Florence in 1865. He also worked as a translator. He was known to be venal, fickle, and possess no moral or political rectitude.⁴⁹⁷

Montel, Albert (*Le Rappel*)

1866-1944⁴⁹⁸

Joncières, Victorin de (*La Liberté*)

1839-1903

Joncières – a pseudonym for Félix Ludger-Rossignol – was the son of a journalist at *La Patrie*. He first studied painting, but after a well-received performance of his musical adaptation of Molière's *Le Sicilien* he was persuaded to pivot and take up music full time. For the entirety of his compositional career, he was known by his Joncières alias. He was an early French admirer of Wagner, though this had little stylistic effect on his music and his enthusiasm waned over time as he came to see the composer's writing as antipathetic to French spirit and genius. He was sympathetic to a handful of French composers, among them Offenbach and Bizet. His writing for *La Liberté* – often published under the pseudonym **Jennius** – was known for its indiscriminate sarcastic attacks and this negativity was thought to have alienated his readership. He was awarded the *Légion d'Honneur* in 1877 (Heylli, p. 212).⁴⁹⁹

Saint-Victor, Paul de (*La Presse*)

1827-1881

Saint-Victor was born Paul Bins, comte de Saint-Victor, but ceased to use his title as it was out of keeping with his democratic principles. He began working as the dramatic critic for *Le Pays* in 1851 but moved to *La Presse* in 1855 to replace Théophile Gautier. Later, in the 1860s, he wrote for *La Liberté* and *Le Moniteur universel*. He was known for his highly ornate language use, echoing and often surpassing that of Gautier, his imitative model. During the final months of the Second Empire, Saint-Victor was made Inspector General of Fine Arts. He was also mentioned in passing by Marcel Proust in *Le Temps retrouvé*.⁵⁰⁰

Sarcey, Francisque (*Le Temps*)

1828-1899

Sarcey was born in Dourdan and died in Paris. His name at birth was Francisque Sarcey de Suttières. He began his journalistic career in 1858 with *la Revue des Alpes* (under the pseudonym **Jean**) while working as a schoolmaster in Grenoble. He subsequently relocated to Paris and worked as the theatre critic of *l'Opinion nationale* from 1859 before transferring to *le Temps* in 1867. He also became an editor of *le Journal littéraire* (under the pseudonym **Maître-Jean**) in 1865. Over his career, he contributed to *Le Figaro* (under the pseudonym

⁴⁹⁷ Antonio Panella, 'Montazio, Enrico', in *Enciclopedia Italiana* <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/enrico-montazio_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/>](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/enrico-montazio_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/>) [accessed 20 January 2025].

⁴⁹⁸ Dates found in metadata from the archives of the the *Syndicat professionnel de la critique dramatique et musicale*.

⁴⁹⁹ Cormac Newark, 'Joncières, Victorin de', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 29 vols (Macmillan, 2001), XIII, p. 187.

⁵⁰⁰ 'Saint-Victor, Paul Bins, Comte de', *Encyclopedia Britannica* (University of Cambridge), vol. XXIV.

Satané-Binet), *L'Illustration*, *Le Gaulois*, and *Le XIXe siècle*. Outside of journalism, Sarcey was an early adopter of a pescatarian diet (Heylli, p. 399).⁵⁰¹

Sir Telegraph (*L'Écho de Jarnac*)

Anonymous pseudonym, seemingly borrowed from the character Sir Telegraph Paxarett in Thomas Love Peacock's play *Melincourt*.

Stoullig, Edmond (*Le National*)

1845-1918

Stoullig was born in Paris and died in Nice. As well as founding *La Revue d'art dramatique*. Stoullig contributed to *l'Électeur libre*, *le Courrier d'état*, *l'Événement*, *la Tribune*, and *l'Homme libre*. He wrote the daily musical and theatrical *Chroniques* for *le National* (under the pseudonym **Fracasse**) and *le Petit National* (under the pseudonym **J. Loret**). In 1875, he began publishing the yearly compendium *Annales du théâtre et de la musique* along with Édouard Noël which ran for 41 volumes (Heylli p. 458).⁵⁰²

Tisserand, Albert (*La Marseillaise*)

????-????

Viel, Edmond (*Le Ménestrel*)

1812-1876

Edmond Viel was born in Lorient and died in Paris. He primarily collaborated with *Le Ménestrel* and was particularly interested in producing opera for the masses, writing a manifesto *Projet d'un opéra populaire* in 1870 that was published in *Le Ménestrel* and addressed to its owner J.L. Heugel.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰¹ 'Sarcey, Francisque', *Encyclopedia Britannica* (University of Cambridge, 1911), vol. XXIV.

⁵⁰² François-Joseph Fétis, 'Stoullig, Edmond', in *Biographie Universelle Des Musiciens: Supplément et Complément*, 2 vols (Firmin-Didot et cie, 1881 1880), II, p. 548 (p. 548).

⁵⁰³ Edmond Viel and Adolphe Sax, *Projet d'un opéra populaire à Paris* (Dentu, 1870).

Publications

Album théâtral (L')

A weekly theatre guide running from 1873 to 1900. It displayed listings for the city's most widely attended theatres, as well as one-off cultural events happening around Paris.

Appel (L')

Not to be confused with the collaborationist newspaper established by *La Ligue française* to support Nazi occupation of France, *L'Appel* was a weekly Sunday paper that ran from May to December of 1855. Re-established and renamed in conjunction with Henri Montazio, when Altève Morand took over from Constant Arnould as editor-in-chief. The paper was formerly called *Sans-le-sou* and, at the turn of 1856, changed its name again, this time to *Triboulet*.

Charivari (Le)

A daily illustrated paper founded by famed caricaturist Charles Philipon in 1832 as a cheaper and more frequent alternative to his already established *La Caricature*. It was edited by Louis Desnoyers and a large number of its subscribers were *légitimiste*. The publication was frequently up in court for its libellous satirical images and censorship under the Second Empire put hard limits on its ability to publish cartoons or articles unfavourable to the government (Larousse, Vol. III, pg. 996).

Courrier Franco-Italien (Le)

A weekly paper published in French and Italian for an expatriate audience during the 1850s.

Écho de Jarnac (L')

A local paper headquartered in Jarnac, a small town located between Cognac and Angoulême in the Saintonge region of Western France. It ran weekly between 1882 and 1914 under the direction of Victor Billaud and editorship of Eutrope Lambert.⁵⁰⁴

Feuilleton des journaux politiques (Le)

A literary periodical founded in 1830 by Balzac and Emile de Girardin, founded primarily to publish reviews and announce the publication of new books.⁵⁰⁵

Figaro (Le)

Once directed by Nestor Roqueplan during the Restoration, *Le Figaro* was closed by a lawsuit before reappearing in 1854 under the control of Hippolyte de Villemessant (and in collaboration with Benoît Jouvin). From its inception, *Le Figaro* courted scandal. Up until 1866 it ran weekly and covered mostly tabloid-esque topics, including columns reporting on rumours about theatre stars. Many of its key authors used pseudonyms, often for self-protection. After 1866 it became daily. It also entered politics in 1867, opposing Napoléon III. From then on, the *légitimiste* tendencies of its writers were made public. (Larousse vol. VIII, p. 351)

⁵⁰⁴ 'L'Écho de Jarnac' <<https://presselocaleancienne.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32760004g>> [accessed 20 January 2025].

⁵⁰⁵ Bruce Tolley, 'Balzac and the "Feuilleton Des Journaux Politiques"', *The Modern Language Review*, 57.4 (1962), pp. 504–17.

Gil Blas

Republican leaning literary periodical founded in 1879. Contributors to *Gil Blas* included Théodore de Banville, Guy de Maupassant, and Jean Richepin. As well as satire and criticism, *Gil Blas* published serialized novels and poetry.

Journal (Le)

Daily paper, running from 1892 to 1944. Founded by journalist Fernand Xau, *le Journal*'s launch was infamously large, seeing over 200,000 copies of its first issue disseminated across Paris. It aimed to bring culture to the everyman, and saw its primary audience as workers with an interest in literature. To attract the best writing talent, it offered highly lucrative contracts to the city's best writers, including Catulle Mendès, Gustave Mirbeau, and even Émile Zola. The paper's success eventually allowed Xau to buy *Gil Blas* in around 1900. (HGPF vol. III, pg. 314-315)

Journal des débats (Le)

The Journal des débats ran from 1789 to 1944. In 1896 it became a double-daily, running daily morning and evening copies that were entirely distinct from each other. It was set up during the *directoire* solely to publish debates that took place in the revolutionary assembly. Though it began as politically neutral, over first half of the nineteenth century as it passed from editor to editor, the JdD would adopt various positions relative to whatever France's political organisation happened to be, and at times received large amounts of state funding as a result. Following 1848, however, it abstained from supporting any one candidate for president and, once Napoleon III had seized power, it was known for its careful self-censorship and use of well-chosen neutral language. Following the end of the Second Empire, it was part of the liberal opposition (Larousse, vol. VI, p. 183).

Liberté (La)

Founded in 1865, *La Liberté* was acquired by Émile de Girardin's press empire in 1866. It was originally Bonapartist but, during the 1870s, a change in directorship between Léonce Détroyat (generally right wing) and Louis Gal (generally more *gauchiste*) brought *La Liberté* towards the political centre-left. It was mainly a political newspaper, though it also included some reviews. (HGPF vol. III, pg. 202-203)

Marseillaise (IL)

A Paris-based republican daily newspaper that ran from 1877 to 1925. (HGPF vol. III, p. 234)

Matin (Le)

Le Matin was favourable to moderate republicans and opposed to *Boulangisme*. It was originally backed by American money in an attempt to further US interests in Paris, but was eventually handed over to a French managing and editorial board. It was on the extreme right, espousing nationalist and antiparliamentary views.⁵⁰⁶

Ménestrel (Le)

Le Ménestrel was France's longest running and most prestigious specialist music journal.⁵⁰⁷ It was published weekly from 1833-1940. Many of the major figures of Paris's musical

⁵⁰⁶ Dominique Pinsolle, 'A French Daily Backed by American Interests: Le Matin, 1884-1890', *Transatlantica*, vol. 1, 2013.

⁵⁰⁷ Ellis, *Music Criticism in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 45.

establishment wrote in it, including Jacques Offenbach, Hector Berlioz, François-Joseph Fétis, Castil-Blaze, Léon Escudier, Fromental Halévy, and Adolphe Adam.

Monde Illustré (Le)

A weekly illustrated paper founded in 1857. It bore no relation to the newspaper *Le Monde* and survived by almost entirely steering clear of discussing political matters. (Larousse vol. XI, pg. 436)

National (Le)

A political paper founded in 1869 with a key focus on finance. It supported left-wing republicanism, opposed the Second Empire, and was particularly vocal in its fight against ultramontanist. During the siege of Paris, it supported the *Gouvernement de la défense nationale* in the name of national unity, but it later opposed the government that was set up in 1873. (Larousse vol. XI, p. 855)

Orchestre (L')

A daily theatre guide, published from 1856 to 1911. From 1859 to 1885, it published largely the same texts as those included in *L'Avant-scène*. Alongside publishing that evening's performance listings, it included reviews of new openings and occasional theatrical gossip columns.

Patrie (La)

A daily political, commercial, and literary paper, founded in 1841. It did especially well due to its publication in the evening as well as the morning. It was opposed to the government until 1844, when it was bought by a conservative banker. It defended the provisional government of 1848 and welcomed Napoléon III's *coup*. From then on, it was considered a semi-official mouthpiece of the imperial government. It was then vehemently anti-republican during the early years of the Third Republic. It was also the first French newspaper to use American printing machines (Larousse, vol. XII, p. 407).

Pays (Le)

Running from 1849 to 1914, *Le Pays* was one of the four principal imperialist newspapers in Paris during the Second Empire. From 1852 it bore the subtitle 'journal de l'Empire'. It was published daily (HGPF, vol. II, pp. 265-267).

Presse (La)

Running from 1836 to 1952, *La Presse* was originally an organ of the Girardin press empire. Before 1848, it was broadly supportive of the constitutional monarchy as it was defined in 1830. After the Second Empire was established, it became more progressive and displayed republican tendencies. The particular cachet of *La Presse* was the quality of the writing it was publishing, counting among its contributors Hugo, Balzac, Dumas, and Gautier. It was published in the evenings. (HGPF vol. III, pp. 117 and 272)

Radical (Le)

Le Radical was founded in 1881 as a republican-leaning daily newspaper and closed in 1931. Its founder wrote that 'je fonde le journal le Radical avec des amis sûrs, indépendants, connus et aumés de la démocratie. || Ce journal (ai-je besoin de le dire ?) mènera le bon combat de l'intransigeance contre l'opportunisme et le faux radicalisme. Nous bataillerons à côté de nos amis Rochefort et Clemenceau contre la dictature et pour la liberté. [...] derrière chaque

article on trouvera un républicain éprouvé.’⁵⁰⁸ Over its life, *Le Radical* gradually morphed into a mouthpiece for radical socialist ideas.

Rappel (Le)

Le Rappel was a daily newspaper with a radical republican tendency and strong anticlerical position, founded in 1869 by Victor Hugo’s sons Charles and Francois-Victor. Victor Hugo wrote a quasi-manifesto in the paper’s first edition:

Le Rappel. J’aime tous les sens de ce mot : Rappel des principes, par la conscience ; rappel des vérités par la philosophie ; rappel du devoir, par le droit ; rappel des morts, par le respect ; rappel du châtement, par la justice ; rappel du passé, par l’histoire ; rappel de l’avenir, par la logique ; rappel des faits, par le courage ; rappel de l’idéal dans l’art, par la pensée ; rappel du progrès dans la science, par l’expérience et le calcul ; rappel de Dieu dans les religions, par l’élimination des idolâtries ; rappel de la loi à l’ordre, par l’abolition de la peine de mort ; rappel du peuple à sa souveraineté, par la suffrage universel renseigné ; rappel de l’égalité, par l’enseignement gratuit et obligatoire ; rappel de la liberté, par le réveil de la France ; rappel de la lumière, par la cri : *Fiat jus* !⁵⁰⁹

Sylphide (La)

Running from the end of 1839 to 1885, *La Sylphide* was a bi-monthly fashion, literature, theatre, and music magazine.

Temps (Le)

A daily political paper first published in 1861 and founded by the former editor in chief of *La Presse*. It was a moderate political voice, interested in covering French business interests. After the fall of the Second Empire, it adopted a republican conservative position and was revered by diplomats. (Larousse, vol. XIV, p. 1595)

Univers Illustré (L’)

Weekly illustrated paper founded in 1858, running until 1900.

XIXe Siècle (Le)

Founded in 1871, *Le XIX Siècle* was republican and anticlerical. It was well regarded among university educated readers.

⁵⁰⁸ Quoted in: Émile Mermet, *Annuaire de la presse française*, (1882), pp. 37–38.

⁵⁰⁹ Victor Hugo, ‘Aux cinq rédacteurs-fondateurs du Rappel’, *Le Rappel* (5 April 1869).

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Hybridity, Hierarchy, and *Couleur Rabelaisienne*:

The Afterlives of François Rabelais on the Late Nineteenth-Century
Parisian Lyric Stage (1855-1895)

VOLUME 2: APPENDICES

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Panurge

Opéra-comique en trois actes

Composer : Hervé
Librettistes : Clairville, Octave Gastineau

Performed for the first time at the *Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens*, 10/09/1879

Personnages

Panurge
Claquedent
Grippeminaud
Brisepaille
Courpeoreille
Un crieur public
Quatre musiciens

Phébée
Gibeline
Fleurette
Coquerolle
Fanfare

Ribauds, ribaudes, paysans, paysannes,

La scène se passe à Beaugency.

Acte 1

La grande place de la ville. À droite, 1^{er} plan, un cabaret avec tonnelle, la tonnelle placée devant le cabaret et couverte de plantes grimpantes qui forment berceau. Une table sous la tonnelle.

Scène 1^{ère}

*Brisepaille, Phébée, Gibeline, Fleurette, Coquerolle, Fanfare, Ribauds et Ribaudes
(tous forment différents groupes. Les uns jouent aux dés, les autres boivent, d'autres dansent. Phébée
seule est couchée et dort sous un arbre.)*

Chœur

Riboter, gobelotter,

Jusqu'à la lie

Boire, aimez et chanter
Voilà la vie!
Vivent les vins chauds!
Vivent les amours chaudes!
Vivent les ribauds
Et vivant les ribaudes!

Ne rien faire
Sur la terre
C'est l'affaire
Du ribaud.
Et sa gloire,
Dans l'histoire
C'est de boire
A tire-la-rigot.

Riboter, gobeloter, etc.

Brisepaille, à Gibeline
Comment te nommes-tu, mon amante chérie?

Ronde

Gibeline

On m'appelle Gibeline,
Sans passé sans avenir,
Peu t'importe, j'imagine,
Mon seul nom, c'est le plaisir!
Profitons de notre jeune âge,
Profitons de notre printemps,
Chacune de nous sera sage
Dans vingt ou trente ans,
Nous avons le temps!
Bien le temps!

Reprise de l'Ensemble

Profitons de notre jeune âge
Etc.

Fleurette

Moi, je m'appelle Fleurette,
Poussée au milieu d'un champ,
On m'arrosa de piquette,
Et j'ai fleuri dans un camp.

Cocquerolle

Moi, Cocquerolle, je veux faire
Tourner la tête au monde entier
Et pour faire comme ma mère
Je ne veux pas me marier.

Fanfare

Moi, Fanfare, la vagabonde,
Je regarde comme un malheur
Quand je vois tant de joli monde,
De n'avoir hélas! qu'un seul coeur!

Reprise de l'Ensemble

Profitons de notre jeune âge
Etc.

(après cet ensemble, un grand mouvement dégage Phébé endormie)

Brisepaille, l'apercevant

(Récitatif)

Eh! Quoi, dormir en notre compagnie! Debout, ribaude!

Phébé

Voilà!
Que me veut-on?

Brisepaille

Elle est jolie!
Tiens, prends ce verre.

Phébé

À boire, ça me va!

Couplets

Phébé

C'est moi, Phébée, l'astre des nuits

Et qu'aisément l'on apprivoise.

Mais quoique Phoebé, je ne suis

Reine, Marquise, ni bourgeoise.

Je ne suis rien,

Et je n'ai rien,

C'est le moyen

De ne pas faire envie.

Toute ma vie

Est un roman

Qui finira, peu m'importe comment!

Chanter danser,

Ne jamais penser,

Vivre au jour le jour

De plaisir ou d'amour.

N'ayant ni rangs,

Ni toit, ni parents,

Le monde des fous

Est notre monde à nous.

Chœur

Chanter, danser, etc.

2.

Vivre d'amour, c'est mon destin,

Et si je disais à ma gloire,

J'en puis mourir, il est certain

Que l'on ne voudrait pas me croire.

D'un tendre amour,

Si bien fait pour

Dame de cour

Et noble châtelaine,

Sa bohémienne

Doit se garer

Et moi j'en mis pour me pas en pleurer.

--

Chanter, danser, etc.

Chœur.

Chanter, danser, etc.

Scène 2^e

Les mêmes, Coupeoreille, puis le Crieur.

Coupeoreille, entrant

Ah! Ah! Il paraît que l'on ripaille ici?

Tous

Eh! C'est Coupe-oreille!

Brisepaille.

D'où viens-tu donc?

Coupeoreille

De l'hôtellerie de la Grande-Pinte, où en jouant à la mirlitontaine, j'ai entendu trompeter la nouvelle ordonnance.

Tous

Quelle ordonnance?

Coupe-oreille

Vous ne la connaissez pas?

Tous

Non.

Coupe-oreille

Oh! Alors, vous allez rire. C'est l'invention la plus ébaubissante qui soit jamais sortie de la verve du gouverneur. Figurez-vous... (*bruit de trompe*) Ah! Je n'aurai pas la peine de vous la dire, car voici le crieur public qui va vous la dégosiller.

Le Crieur

Oyez ce que vient de décider, dans sa sagesse, Monseigneur Grippeminaud, gouverneur de la ville de Beaugency. (*tout le monde se découvre.*) Lorsqu'une dame noble, bourgeoise ou vilaine sera convaincue d'avoir... (*un son de trompe.*) son mari, quatre musiciens se rendront sur la grande place de Beaugency, et chanteront la complainte amoureuse avec le nom de la dame, et celui ou ceux des galants, afin que les habitants de la ville puissent se gaudir aux dépens des coupables. Mais défense est faite, à quiconque de se gaudir aux dépens du mari, lequel n'endroit être aux yeux de tous que plus intéressant.

Tous

Ah! Ah!

Le Crieur

Ceux qui auront à faire connaître un séducteur et une épouse coupable n'auront qu'à parler ou à écrire à Mme le bailli Cornillard, rue de la Bicorné, no. 2; où le trouvera tous les jours au bailliage de 10 heures à 4.

(Nouvelle fanfare. Le crieur sort avec le jouer de la trompe.)

Coupe-oreille

Eh bien? Que dites-vous de l'ordonnance?

Phébée.

Comment, le Gouverneur de la ville va faire... chanter de carrefour en carrefour les aventures des dames de Beaugency. Je plains le pauvre bailli de la rue de la Bicorné.

Brisepaille

Et les pauvres musiciens, donc!

Coupe-oreille

Les seront hors d'haleine tous les soirs!

Gibeline

Oui-dà! Les dames d'ici sont donc bien gringantes!

Fleurette

Et les maris bien... malheureux.

Coquerolle

Et l'on nous jettera la pierre à nous qui n'avons pas de mari!

Fanfare

Il est vrai que si nous en avons.... Après ça qui sait!

Brisepaille

Je gagerais que c'est encore Panurge qui nous vaut cette ordonnance-là.

Phébée

Panurge!... Depuis notre arrivée, nous n'entendons citer que ce nom-là.... Qu'est-ce donc que ce Panurge?

Brisepaille

Un malandrin, un larron!...

Coupe-oreille

Un batteur de pavés!...

Brisepaille

Qui ressemble à un cueilleur de pommes du pays du Perche.

Coupe-oreille

Ma bête-noire!

Phébée

Il paraît qu'il n'est pas de vos amis?

Brisepaille.

Demande-moi plutôt si j'aime la fièvre. Tous mes camarades et moi, nous détestons ce siffleur malfaisant, d'abord il a su gagner les grâces du seigneur Pantagruel... il nous commande, et il n'est pas soldat.

Coupe-oreille

Quand on se bat, il se cache, et après la victoire, la plus grosse part du butin est toujours pour lui.

Brisepaille

Il nous enlève nos maîtresses à notre barbe, boit notre vin, gagne notre argent au jeu, c'est le pipeur le plus rusé qu'il soit au monde.

Phébée

Oh! J'en connais un qui lui rendrait des points...

Coupe-oreille

Qui donc?

Phébée

Quand je dis que je le connais... je ne l'ai jamais rencontré qu'une fois... et j'ignore même son nom... véritable... on l'appelait le Tourangeau.

Coupe-oreille

Où as-tu rencontré ce Tourangeau?

Phébée

Il y a trois mois, à Orléans, sur la place du marché.

Brisepaille

Et qu'est-ce qu'il faisait sur cette place?

Phébée

Il était au milieu de soldats du guet qui le conduisait en prison.

Tous (riant)

Ah! Ah!

Phébée

Pour le punir d'une foule de tours joués par lui aux bourgeois et aux marchands, depuis mon arrivée à Orléans les oreilles ne cornaient de toutes ses promesses, si bien que je m'étais dit: "si jamais je le rencontre nous verrons qui de lui ou de moi sera plus malin que l'autre."

Brisepaille

Et quand tu l'as vu....

Phébée

Quand je l'ai vu....

Couplets

1.

Ah! Pristi! C'était un bel homme!

Au milieu de tous ces soldats!
Il marchait fier et noble, comme
Un roi parcourant ses états.
Il riait au milieu des glaives,
Comme un ribaud, comme un bandit!
Eh! ma foi, je me suis dit:
Ah! Voilà l'homme de mes rêves!

2.

Ah! chaque instant de sa défroque
Se détachait quelque lambeau,
Mais en sa tenue équivoque,
Il ne paraissait que plus beau!
Ses muscles des plus fortes sèves
Témoignent la puissance, enfin...
C'est un vrai Malandrin!
Et voilà l'homme de mes rêves

Coupe-oreille

Et tu n'as pas cherché à la revoir?

Phébée

Ah! Vous ne me connaissez pas, le lendemain j'étais à sa prison.

Tous

Eh bien?

Phébée

Il n'y était plus. Pendant la nuit, il s'était ensauvé avec la femme du geôlier qu'il avait séduite.

Tous (*riant*)

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Scène 3.

Les mêmes, Grippeminaud, puis 4 musiciens.

Grippeminaud

Que vois-je? Des femmes avec les ribauds?

Tous, (*effrayés*)

Le gouverneur!

Grippeminaud

Que faites-vous ici, ribaudes?

Gibeline

Monseigneur, nous sommes de pauvres voyageuses.

Fleurette

Nous arrivons de bien loin.

Coquerolle

Et nous nous étions égarées en route.

Grippeminaud

Oui, oui, vous ressemblez assez à des brebis égarées que je vais faire nature au bercail, entre les quatre murs d'un couvent.

Phébée

De moines?

Grippeminaud

Oui-dà! Comment t'appelles-tu?

Phébée

Phébée!

Grippeminaud.

Tu as osé prendre le nom de la lune?

Brisepaille, (au Gouverneur)

Sans doute parce qu'elle [?] pour tout le monde.

Phébée

N'est-ce pas l'astre des amoureux?

Grippeminaud

Voilà une effrontée coquine. Or ça, qu'on les conduise, elle et ses compagnes en bien sûr.

Toutes

Grâce, monseigneur.

Grippeminaud

La ville de Beaugency, n'a pas été bâtie pour des ribaudes.

Phébée

Mais, monseigneur, si vous nous faites enfermer, vos musiciens vont avoir encore plus de besogne.

Grippeminaud

Mes musiciens?

Phébée

Dame, à défaut de ribaudes, les amoureux s'en prendront aux femmes mariées, faute de grives, on croque des merles.

Grippeminaud

Ouais! Ce raisonnement n'est pas d'une sottise.

Gibeline

Ah! Dame, c'est que Phébée est une savante.

Grippeminaud

Oui-dà!

Fleurette

J'crois bien, elle a passé six mois chez un magister.

Grippeminaud

Pour s'instruire?

Phébée.

C'était mon élève. C'est à dire nous nous apprenions mutuellement ce que nous savions tous deux.

Grippeminaud

Je répète mon mot, tu es une effrontée coquine, mais tu raisones bien et je me rends à ta logique, tenez, restez, j'y consens.

Phébée

Ah! Monseigneur!

Fanfare

Il faut que je vous embrasse

Toutes (l'entourant)

Ah! Mon amour de Gouverneur.

Grippeminaud

Eh! Bien, arrière! Arrière toutes! (*son manteau reste dans les mains de Phébée.*) Et mon manteau, veux-tu me rendre mon manteau?

Phébée (à part)

Joseph! Va!

Grippeminaud

Je vous laisse en liberté! Mais à une condition!

Toutes

Laquelle?

Grippeminaud

Demain, commencent mes vendanges.... Et vous viendrez dans mon clos... aider mes vigneron.... Le pays manque de bras.

Toutes

Comptez sur nous.

Brisepaille

Nous vous aiderons.

Grippeminaud

Mais au premier scandale, vous irez toutes en prison. (*À Coupe-oreille*) Et maintenant, dis-moi, soudard, as-tu vu par ici, mon ami Panurge?

Coupe-oreille

Pas depuis hier. Il a quitté le camp dans la soirée et n'y est pas encore rentré. Il aura passé la nuit en ville.

Grippeminaud

Ah! Le coquin! C'est la terreur de Beaugency... mais au demeurant le meilleur fils du monde... je ne puis me passer de lui.

Brisepaille

Diable! Vous avez pourtant une jolie femme.

Grippeminaud

Oui, mais je l'enferme quand Panurge vient chez moi.

Coupe-oreille.

Oiseau qu'on met en cage ne songe qu'à s'évader.

Grippeminaud

Il y a des oiseaux qui ne volent pas.

Phébée (*à part*)

Oui, les poules.

Grippeminaud

Mme Grippeminaud est une sainte femme qui n'écoute que les conseils du père Hilarion, un saint homme aussi, un bon moine qui lui prêche la patience, la soumission...

Phébée (*à part*)

Et l'amour du prochain.

Grippeminaud

Tais-toi, coquine, tu ne savais comprendre la vertu.
(*Rumeur parmi la foule, on voit 4 musiciens qui viennent se placer au milieu du théâtre*).
Hein! Qu'y a-t-il? Que vois-je? Mes musiciens! Déjà!

Complainte

Les Musiciens

La femme du nommé Burge,
Notre premier échevin,
Le trompait hier matin
Avec le nommé Panurge!
Honte sur elle!
Honte sur lui!

Et plaignons le pauvre mari!

(Les musiciens sortent.)

Grippeminaud

Encore Panurge! Toujours lui! Ah! Il faut que ça finisse.... Je me mets à sa recherche, et si je le rencontre.... J'ai mon projet!... nous verrons! Nous verrons! *(il sort)*

Coupe-oreille

Le Gouverneur n'a pas l'air content?

Brisepaille

S'il pouvait nous débarrasser de notre trouble-fête....

Phébée

On parle de lui comme on parlait de mon tourangeau. Ça me donne le désir de le connaître.

Brisepaille

Une jolie connaissance.

Coupe-oreille

D'ailleurs vous êtes pour lui, gibier de basse-cour... il préfère le gibier... plus sauvage.

Brisepaille

Et il vous duperait comme les autres, car il n'a pas encore trouvé son maître.

Phébée

Il n'a donc j'amais rencontré une femme.

Coupe-oreille

Des femmes! Il en rencontre par troupeaux.

Phébée

Des femmes, peut-être! Mais une femme c'est bien différent!
(Grand mouvement. Tout le monde remonte et regarde à la cantonade. Rumeurs).

Coupe-oreille

Hein! Que se passe-t-il donc par-là?

Brisepaille

Eh! Les amis! Que regardez-vous donc là?

Un ribaud

Vois toi-même qui nous arrive?

Brisepaille

Ah! Par exemple!...

Scène 5^e

Les mêmes, Panurge (en moine)

Morceau

Brisepaille

C'est un moine!

Tous

C'est un moine

Dont le nez tout bourgeonné

Est rouge comme une pivoine,

On voit qu'il n'a pas jeûné,

C'est un moine!

Panurge (*qui vient d'entrer*)

Tous en contemplation!

(*tous s'inclinent*)

Relevez-vous, je l'ordonne

Mais qu'auparavant je vous donne

Ma bénédiction.

Et maintenant que pour un thaumaturge

Sans doute vous m'avez tout pris

Regardez-moi, mes bons amis,

(*il ôte son nez et son collier de barbe.*)

Brisepaille

Panurge!

Panurge

Panurge!

Tous

Panurge!

Phoebé (*à part*)

Mais je reconnais ce museau!

C'est bien lui, c'est mon tourangeau.

Panurge

Oui, c'est moi, sacrebleu, c'est moi!

Fleuri dodu comme un chanoine;

Certes que l'habit fait le moine

Puisqu'il fait un moine de moi!

Tous

Quoi, c'est toi! Sacrebleu! c'est toi!

Fleuri, dodu comme un chanoine;

Certes que l'habit fait le moine,

Puisqu'il fait un moine de moi!

Brisepaille

Quelle est cette trame nouvelle,

Et d'où viens-tu maintenant?

Panurge

Je viens de chez une belle

Dont le mari très bon enfant,

Pour un moine me prenant,

M'a laissé seul avec elle.

Choeur

Avec elle!

Couplets

1.

Panurge

Ce mari, comme de coutume,

Me ferme sa porte en tout temps

Mais à l'aspect de ce costume,

Il me l'ouvrit à deux battants

Pour que je lise dans son âme

Il me fit entrer chez sa femme;

Et par la même occasion,

En entrant ce celle que j'aime,
J'ai d'abord au mari lui même
Donné ma bénédiction...

Ah! Ah!

Trompé le voilà

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Oui trompé déjà,

Mais béni, béni pour ça, ah! ah!

Tous

Ah! Ah!

etc.

2.

Panurge

Mais d'abord émue et tremblante,

En me voyant paraître ainsi,

Ah! S'écria ma pénitente,

(voix de femme)

Grand Dieu'que dira mon mari

(voix naturelle)

Votre mari n'a rien à dire,

De vos péchés daignez m'instruire,

Et de ceux qu'a l'occasion

Nous commettrions même ensemble,

Le moine pourra ce me semble,

Vous donner l'absolution;

Ah! Ah!

etc.

Tous

Ah! Ah!

etc

—

Panurge

Mais ce n'est pas tout, sur ma route j'ai béni tant de monde, que je suis accablé de préseus [?!] Ils devaient avoir joliment de choses à se reprocher tous ces gens-là!
(Il ôte sa robe et montre des chapelets de boudins, de saucissons, de cervelas, plus des poulets, des oies et autres volailles pendues après lui avec ficelles.)

Claquedent

Ah! C'est magnifique!

Fanfare

On dirait une boutique de charcutier.

Coquerolle

Oh! Je voudrais être homme pour me faire moine!

Fleurette

Ah c'est un bon métier.

Panurge

Et dans mon bissac, et dans mes poches, aidez-moi donc.

(on retire des poches et du bissac neuf bouteilles que l'on range sur la table.)

Phébée, (à part)

Ah! Le malandrin! Toujours le même!

Panurge

Mais où est donc mon valet? Eh! Maître Claquedent, maître Claquedent!

Claquedent (au dehors)

Voilà! Voilà!

Panurge

Encore au cabaret!

Phébée, (à part)

Oh! Je ne veux pas me montrer à lui, qu'après lui avoir jeté l'hameçon et quand déjà il y aura mordu.
(elle disparaît)

Scène 5^{bis}

Les mêmes, Claquedent

Claquedent

Tiens! Vous v'là donc de retour?... ([mouïflaut ?]) Oh!...

Panurge

Quoi, donc?

Claquedent

Comme ça faire bon, la boudaine!

Panurge (lui donnant les saucisses et les boudins)

Tiens, voilà des chapelets pour dire tes patenôtres.

Claquedent

Vous avez donc dévalisé la boutique d'un charcutier?

Panurge

Et le cellier d'un vigneron. (*Il monte les bouteilles rangées sur la table*). Mais je veux avoir le compte des objets que je te confie. Va me chercher tout ce qu'il faut pour écrire.

Claquedent (*rentrant dans la maison*)

Y s'méfie de moi... il a raison.

Panurge (*allant aux ribaudes*)

Eh! Mais, voilà du fruit nouveau.

Gibeline

Mais pas défendu.

Panurge

Oh! Oh! Les belles filles! De quel pays venez-vous?

Fleurette

Du pays des amours.

Coquerolle

Et de celui des plaisirs.

Panurge

Nous me raconterez les merveilles de ce pays-là.

Fanfare

Comment donc! Mais nous t'y conduirons, si tu veux nous offrir les frais du voyage.

Panurge

Payer! Mes chères Poupelines, mon escarcelle est creuse et vide comme un puits à sec.
(*Toutes les ribaudes qui entouraient Panurge s'éloignent de lui.*)

Toutes

Ah!

Panurge

Oh! Petites filles d'Eve! Ce n'était pas une pomme qui pendait à l'arbre de la science, c'était un sac d'écus.

Claquedent, (*rentrant*)

N'là tout c'qui vous faut!

Panurge (*indiquant la tonnelle*)

Place sur cette table.

(*Claquedent met sur la table tout ce qu'il faut pour écrire*)

Coupe-oreille (*à Panurge*)

A propos, as-tu rencontré le Gouverneur?

Panurge

Non.

Coup-oreille

Il te cherche

Panurge

Ah! Diable!... Claquedent?

Claquedent

Maître!

Panurge

Il ne s'agit plus d'écrire (*ôtant sa robe de moine*). Prends ce froc. Charge-toi de toutes ces victuailles et de ces bouteilles.

Claquedent

Mais m'sieur, je ne pourrai jamais.

Panurge

Le-les au bien apportés, moi!... Allons, viens ici. Je vais t'arranger tout cela.
(*Mouvant autour de Claquedent le chapelet de boudins et les volailles.*)

Claquedent

Pristi! Que ça sent bon!

Panurge

Maintenant, mets la robe.

Claquedent

Comment, m'sieur, que je mette....

Panurge, (la lui mettant)

Dépêche-toi donc, imbécile...

Claquedent

Ah! M'sieur, respectez mon costume, si vous ne me respectez pas!

Panurge

Vite le bissac, et les bouteilles... (*Il remet les bouteilles dans le bissac et dans les poches de la robe. En montrant deux qu'il laisse sur la table.*) Je garde ces deux-là.

Claquedent

Mais je ne pourrai jamais marcher avec tout ça. Je serais obligé de boire et de manger quelque chose en route.

Panurge

Je t'en avise pas, c'est bien plus lourd en dedans.

Grippeminaud (au dehors)

Nous dites sur la grande place.

Panurge

La voix du Gouverneur, file bien vite.

Claquedent (*sortant par le fond*)

Ah! Que je sens donc bon, que je sens donc bon!

(*Tout le monde l'accompagne en riant.*)

Panurge

Diable, si le Gouverneur se doutait...

Scène 6

Les mêmes, Grippeminaud

Grippeminaud (*entrant par l'avant-scène*)

Ah! Enfin, je te trouve, maître Papelard, j'en ai appris de belles sur ton compte; tu as encore semé de la graine de futaies sur le front d'un mari.

Panurge

Duquel parlez-vous?

Grippeminaud

Comment duquel? Du marie de dame Burge; on la chansonne sur tous les carrefours!

Panurge

Le couplet date d'hier. J'en ai déjà ajouté d'autres à la chanson.

Grippeminaud

D'autres couplets?

Panurge

Que voulez-vous? Ce n'est point ma faute, mais les femmes, monsieur le Gouverneur, elles ressemblent à mes moutons; où l'une a sauté y faut que sautent toutes les autres.

Le Gouverneur

Quoi, tes moutons? De quels moutons parlez-tu?

Panurge

Comment, vous ne connaissez pas les moutons de Panurge?

Le Gouverneur

Je ne savais pas même que tu eusses des moutons.

Panurge

Oh! Mais alors, écoutez l'historiette, la scène se passe en pleine mer sur le vaisseau le allant de

Couplets

1

Panurge

Dind'nault avait un troupeu
Dont je n'pouvais faire emplette;
J'achète le mouton l'plus beau,
Puis dans ma barqu'je le jette.
Les autr's moutons à l'instant
S'imagin'nt d'en faire autant!
Tableau dign' d'un dramaturge!
Et tous sautent par pelotons.
Voilà les moutons (bis.),
Et tous sautent par pelotons,
Voilà les moutons
De Panurge!

Choeur

Et tous sautent par pelotons
etc.

2

Panurge

Quand l'soldat monte à l'assaut,
Vit! Tous les autres le suivent;
A la tribun'monte un sot,
Tous les imbécil's arrivent.
Partout, malgré le danger
Nous voulons nous insurger
Sitôt qu'l'un de nous s'insurge,
Et s'il se bat, nous nous battons,
Comme les moutons (bis.)
Et s'il se bat nous battons
Comme les moutons
De Panurge.

Choeur

Et s'il se bat nous nous battons,
Etc.

3

Panurge

Quand un diamant se fait voir
Aux bell's il est sûr de plaire
Et ce qu'un'fait pour l'avoir
Tout's les autres vont le faire.
Bref, quelqu'un est-il connard,
Tous, nous voulons notre part,
D'un malheur que l'ciel expurge!
Après les cornes nous sautons,
Comme les moutons (bis.)
Après les cornes nous sautons
Comme les moutons
De Panurge!

Choeur

Après les cornes nous sautons
Etc.

Grippeminaud

Ah! Ah! Ton histoire est plaisante.

Panurge

Et comme tout bon chanteur, j'ai besoin d'arroser mon gosier, aides-moi à décoiffer ces bouteilles.

Grippeminaud

Volontiers; mais que tout le monde se retire, allons, allons... au large; je veux rester seul avec Panurge.
(*Tout le monde sort.*)

Phébée (*qui vient de rentrer*)

Seuls. Oh! Non. Je saurai ce qu'ils ont à se dire!

Scène 7

Grippeminaud, Panurge, puis Phébée

Panurge (*entrant avec le Gouverneur sous la tonnelle et versant à boire*)

[?]-moi ce verre galamment.

Grippeminaud (*prenant place à la table*)

Tu sais, Panurge, que je suis ton ami de plus, comme gouverneur de la ville, je dois empêcher le renard de croquer mes poulettes.

Panurge

Ce sera difficile tant que le renard aura des dents.

Grippeminaud

Quand le renard a des dents, si on ne peut les lui arracher, on se débarrasse de lui!

Panurge

Voudriez-vous me faire chasser?

Grippeminaud

Je veux auparavant essayer de te corriger.

Panurge

Moi?

Grippeminaud

Suis-bien mon raisonnement; si le renard croque les poulettes, c'est qu'il a faim.

Panurge

Sans doute.

Grippeminaud

Or, qu'on lui donne une bonne nourriture quotidienne, et il se tiendra tranquille.

Panurge

Je ne vous comprends pas.

Phébée, (*à part*)

Ma foi, ni moi non plus.

Grippeminaud

En deux mots, Panurge, je veux te marier.

Panurge

Par la dive oie Guenet, me marier! Moi!

Phébée

Oh! Ça non. Je m'y oppose.

Grippeminaud

Écoute-moi bien: j'y attends aujourd'hui ma nièce qui sort du couvent. Une jeune fille naïve comme une tourterelle et pure comme une mouillette.

Phébée

Sa nièce!

Grippeminaud

Elle s'appelle Colombe! Un joli nom et une jolie fille. Si tu veux être son mari, je te donnerai vingt écus d'or.

Panurge

Vingt écus d'or! Ça mérite réflexion.

Phébée (*à part*)

Oh! J'empêcherai qu'il se marie. (*On entend du bruit*)

Grippeminaud

Qu'est-ce encore? (*allant pour se lever.*) Qu'est-ce donc? Reste là, ne te montre pas. Car s'il s'agissait encore de l'une de tes fredaines...

Panurge

Mes fredaines?

Grippeminaud (*après la fanfare*)

Ecoute!

Complainte

Les Musiciens

De ce pays que l'on expurge

La femme d'Algolapa

La perfide le trompa a

Avec le nommé Panurge!

Tous

Ah!

Les Musiciens

Honte sur elle! Honte sur lui!

Et plaignons le pauvre mari!

—

(*La foule se disperse, moitié criant, moitié furieuse, les musiciens se retirent.*)

Panurge

Comment!... Vous faites trompeter mes victoires?

Grippeminaud

Tes victoires, sacripant! Sais-tu où elles te conduisent, tes victoires?... À la potence.

Panurge

Un peu plus tôt, un peu plus tard.

Grippeminaud

Non! Il faut que de pareils scandales cessent; il faut que tu te maries, et pour cela, tu vas me suivre à la rencontre de ma nièce.

Panurge

C'est qu'il me semble que dans le mariage, je serais heureux comme le poisson dans la friture.

Grippeminaud

Bah! Ou se fait comme ça des idées... D'ailleurs songes-y vingt écus d'or.

Panurge (*sortant avec lui, lentement*).

Oh! Les écus d'or ne me font pas peur, mais le mariage!...

Grippeminaud

Ma nièce Colombe est l'innocence même.

Panurge

Je ne dis pas, mais l'esprit vient vite, même aux colombes. J'en ai connu de très roncouleuses.
(*Ils sortent*)

Scène 8

Phébé (*seule, entrant en scène*)

Couplets

1.

N'ayant jamais rien senti là,
Je me disais: Phébé, ma chère,
Votre cœur est-il donc de pierre?
Lorsqu'un jour enfin il parla.
Une fois qu'il se mit à battre,
Ah! dame, il battit comme quatre
Et j'eus beau le tarabuster,
Rien n'a jamais pu l'arrêter!
Je ne sais pas ce que je pourrai faire,
Mais ici j'en jure, ma foi,
Dussent crouler et le ciel et la terre,
Panurge, Panurge, tu seras à moi!

2.

Contre l'univers je m'insurge
Dans mes filets il est tombé
Il n'est que Phébé pour Panurge
Et que Panurge pour Phébé!
Des ribauds s'il est le prodige,

Ici bas, moi-même, que suis-je?
Une ribaude, et qui le vaut!
Plus ribaude qu'il n'est ribaud.
Je ne sais pas ce que je pourrai faire,
Etc.

Mais tout cela ne me donne pas un moyen. Comment empêcher que la nièce du Gouverneur...Eh!... mais ce qu'il nous disait ce matin de sa femme qui ne recevait qu'un moine, le père Hilarion; et ce que nous racontait Panurge de ce mari qui l'introduisait en moine chez sa femme, si c'était Panurge!... C'est lui! Et quand même ce ne serait pas lui, vite chez le bailli. (*s'arrêtant.*) Ah! Mais non, il ne faudrait pas moi-même... mais je puis écrire.... (*apercevant les plumes et le papier placés par Clauqedent sur la table*). Ah! Justement... vite.... Vite.... (*Ecrivant*). "Panurge s'est introduit chez M. le Gouverneur déguisé en moine. Il est resté seul avec sa femme en l'absence du mari qui les avait enfermés. C'est Panurge lui-même qui le racontait tantôt sur la grande place. - Un habitant de Beaugency."

Scène 9

Phébée, Coupe-oreille.

Phébée (*apercevant Coupe-oreille qui traverse*)

Ah! Coupe-oreille!

Coupe-oreille

Qui m'appelle?

Phébée

Moi.

Coupe-oreille

Phébée

Phébée

Où vas-tu?

Coupe-oreille

Je rejoins la compagnie.

Phébée

Ça te dérangerait-il de passer une de la Licorne?...

Coupe-oreille

C'est là?... C'est mon chemin.

Phébée

Veux-tu remettre cette lettre au bailli.

Coupe-oreille

Tu écris au bailli?

Phébée

Oui, parce qu'on veut nous renvoyer.

Coupe-oreille

Donne ma fille, dans une minute le bailli aura ta lettre. (*il sort.*)

Phébée

Merci. (*seule*) Je ne sais pas ce qui va se passer. Mais je doute qu'en apprenant cela le Gouverneur donne sa nièce à Panurge.

Scène 10

Phébée, Grippeminaud

Grippeminaud (*entrant un billet à la main*)

Que le diable soit du diable!...

Phébée

Lui.....

Grippeminaud

Cette petite sotte qui au lieu d'accourir.... (*voyant Phébée*). Qu'est-ce que tu fais là, toi?

Phébée

Moi, rien.

Grippeminaud

Rien, ça n'est pas possible, tu dois penser à faire mal.

Phébée

Ai-je donc l'air si méchant?

Grippeminaud

Méchante... non!... oh! Parbleu, si l'on se laissait prendre à vos grimaces.... Toi, surtout.... Tu as une figure....

Phébée (*souriant*)

Une figure?....

Grippeminaud (*l'examinant*)

Et même tu n'as pas qu'une figure.... En te voyant on ne se douterait jamais.... C'est au point que moi, si je n'étais pas le mari d'une femme si vertueuse, est si je n'étais pas si vertueux moi-même....

Phébée

Eh! Bien...

Grippeminaud (*avec conviction*)

Eh! Bien, ma parole d'honneur, je.... (*changeant de ton*) Mais je suis vertueux et je dois à mes concitoyens l'exemple des bonnes mœurs.

Phébée

Et à votre jeune nièce, un ange d'innocence... Elle...

Grippeminaud

Ma nièce est une sotte... comme du reste beaucoup d'innocentes, je l'attendais aujourd'hui pour la marier à un de mes amis et elle m'écrit que de saints devoirs la retiennent au couvent qu'elle ne viendra que dans un mois.

Phébée

Oh! Ça va bien affliger votre ami.

Grippeminaud

Mon ami est un vaurien que ça m'affligera pas du tout. (*À lui-même*) Ah! Le sacripant, il n'a même pas voulu venir au-devant d'elle, il m'a quitté en chemin. Il a bien fait du reste. Oh! Mais je le rattraperai et nous irons ensemble trouver ma nièce à son couvent, elle est jolie, et... (*regardant Phébée*) Moins jolie peut-être... ah! Si je n'avais pas une femme si verueuse, et si moi-même je n'étais pas... (*Bruit au dehors*) Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?

Phébée (*qui est remontée*)

Tiens, une grande foule qui sort de la rue voisine.

Grippeminaud

Une foule...

Phébée

Ah! C'est encore les musiciens.

Grippeminaud

Encore... Diable!... Je commence à me repentir de mon invention. Si c'était encore Panurge!

Scène 11

Les Mêmes, la foule, musiciens

Complainte

Les musiciens

Que tout le monde s'insurge!

La femme du Gouverneur

Grippeminaud (*parlé*)

Hein?

Les musiciens

Trompa ce noble seigneur

Avec le nommé Panurge!

Grippeminaud (*parlé*)

Lui!

Les Musiciens

Honte sur elle! Honte sur lui!

Et plaignons le pauvre mari!

(*les musiciens sortent*)

Tous

Ah! Ah!

Final

—
Grippeminaud

C'est une calomnie! Ah! Quelle indignité!

Phébée

Non, c'est la vérité!

Panurge ici, tantôt s'en est vanté.

Grippeminaud

Panurge!

Phébée

En moine, a-t-il dit

Chez la femme qu'il aime,

Vous l'avez vous-même

Introduit.

Grippeminaud

En moine; c'était, lui!

Tous

Oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui.

Grippeminaud

Vengeance vengeance
Son arrêt sur l'heure est rendu
Je fais apprêter la potence
Et ce soir, il sera pendu!

Choeur

Vengeance, vengeance!
Son arrêt sur l'heure est rendu,
Faites apprêter la potence
Et que ce soir, il soit pendu!

Phébée (*parlé*)

Arrêtez!

Non, le pendre serait je pense
Une très mauvaise vengeance
À votre place, on me verrait
Le faire avant ce qu'il m'a fait.

Grippeminaud

Comment, et que puis-je le faire?
Il n'est pas marié.

Phébée

Je le marierai!

Grippeminaud

Toi!

Phébée (*l'entraînant*)

Pour savoir de quelle manière
Venez causer seul avec moi.
(*elle le conduit vers la tonnelle*)

Choeur (*en sourdine*)

De Phébé tout est à craindre
Et Panurge est fort à plaindre
S'il tombe dans ses filets
Car c'est une fine mouche
Qui de rien ne s'effarouche
Et ne se trompe jamais.
Voyez déjà, sans rien dire,
Le gouverneur lui sourire
Il approuve ses projets.
De Phébé tout est à craindre
Et Panurge est fort à plaindre
S'il tombe dans ses filets.

Grippeminaud

Ah! C'est charmant, c'est admirable!

Panurge (*au dehors*)

Oh! là! Claquedent, par ici!

Grippeminaud

Sa voix c'est lui, le misérable!

Phébé

De grâce, il vient!

Grippeminaud

Malheur à lui!

Choeur

Que va-t-il se passer ici?

Scène 12

Les Mêmes, Panurge, Claquedent

Panurge

Eh! Mais en cet endroit quelle foule se presse!

Grippeminaud

Ah! Le voilà! Panurge, arrive donc, bandit!
Et vous tous acclamez avec moi ce maudit.
Je vous présente ici le futur de ma nièce.

Choeur

De sa nièce?

Claquedent

Vraiment! Quoi, vous vous mariez.

Panurge

Moi, mais pardon!... Est-ce que vous riez?

Grippeminaud

Non pas, ma nièce est arrivée,
En la voyant je l'ai trouvée
Encore plus charmante!

Panurge

Eh! Quoi?

Grippeminaud

Tu verras.

Panurge

Quoi, moi, me marier!

Grippeminaud

Ce soir tu le seras.

Ensemble

—

Panurge

Moi, marié! Comment me contraindre?

Oh! Non jamais!

Vingt écus d'or me font sourire

Et viennent adoucir mes regrets

J'aime les jaunets.

Et serai-je à plaindre

Si j'ai de l'or, si ma femme a des attraits?

Phébée

Il semble craindre

Quelques noirs projets,

Ah! Consentira-t-il jamais?

Pourtant l'or le fait sourire,

Il va tomber dans mes filets

Sera-t-il à plaindre?

Et qu'a-t-il à craindre,

S'il vient seconder nos projets?

Grippeminaud

Lui, marié! Je crois que ça le touche

Ça n'est pas dans ses projets!

L'or le fait sourire

Il va tomber dans nos filets

Sera-t-il bien à plaindre

S'il est ce qu'il nous a faits?

Claquedent

Lui, marié! Ça me paraît louche

Y consentira-t-il jamais?

Qui donc aurait jamais pu prédire

De tels faits?

Pauvre Panurge! Il est à plaindre,

Car on lui tend des filets!

Reprise du chœur (*pendant l'ensemble ci-dessus*).

De Phébé tout est à craindre,

Etc.

Récitatif.

Grippeminaud

(*seul*)

Oui, mais en attendant le jour des fiançailles
Je veux que nous vidions quelques vieilles futailles.

Choeur

Bravo! Bravo! Du vin! Du vin!

Panurge (*à part*)

Du vin... de l'or!

Grippeminaud

C'est entendu. Ta main?

Panurge

Vous le voulez?

Grippeminaud

Parbleu! C'est certain...

Panurge

Tapez la main! C'est dit, compère!

Allons, du vin! Donnez du vin un verre! Ah!

(*Sur l'ordre de Grippeminaud, on apporte des verres, des brocs, et deux tonneaux*)

Couplets

1.

Panurge

Ma foi, c'est dit, buvons d'abord,
Buvons et vogue la galère
Je verrai, buvant à pleine bord
Une femme au fond de mon verre.
Si mon hymen doit s'accomplir,
C'est le vin qui va l'embellir.
Versez! versez!
Chantez et dansez!
C'est Panurge qui vous en prie,
Bientôt Panurge se marie
Et ce jour-là nous serons
Tous ronds!

Tous

Versons! versions!
Chantons et dansons!
C'est Panurge qui nous en prie
etc.

2.

Panurge

Tous les maris que je connais
Vont accourir tout fou, tout flamme;
Comme à leurs femmes je faisais
Ils feront la cour à ma femme.
Pour oublier que je pourrais
Être ce que je les faisais,
Versez, versez!
etc.

Tous

Versons, versions!
Etc.

(Danses pendant les refrains. Grande mouvement de mise en scène)

Panurge

Jouons des gambilles,
Fillettes et drilles!
Buvez à l'hymen, ribaudes et ribauds!
Pour mes fiançailles,
Videz les futailles!
Allons, gais ribauds,
Il faut défoncer les tonneaux!

Reprise générale

Jouons des gambilles,
Fillettes et drilles!
Buvons à l'hymen, ribaudes et ribauds!
Pour ses fiançailles,
Vidons les futailles!
Allons gais ribauds,
Il faut défoncer les tonneaux!
Allons, gais ribauds,
Il faut défoncer les tonneaux!

Acte 2

Un coteau couvert de vignes, Grand décor de composition, praticables, etc, etc.

Scène 1

Claquedent, Brisepaille, Coupe-oreille, Coquerolle, Fanfare, Fleurette, Gibeline, ribauds et ribaudes, vendangeurs, et vendangeuses.

(ou lever du rideau, tableau réaliste d'une vendange; tous les personnages portent les paniers et des bottes, etc.)

Choeur

Vendangeons
Et changeons

De métiers comme d'amoureuses
Comme d'amoureux
Pour être heureux
Pour être heureuses
Imitons le raisin
Qui par un mystère étrange,
Lui-même se change,
Lui-même se change en vin!
Vendangeons
Et changeons
De métiers comme d'amoureuses
Pour être heureux
Pour être heureuses
Changeons d'amoureuses
D'amoureuses.

Claquedent (*entrant et poursuivant Gibeline*)

Ah! Prends garde! Si je t'attrape!

Gibeline

Si tu m'attrapes, je te tape!

Claquedent

Ah laisse-moi mordre à la grappe...

Gibeline

Pour toi les raisins sont trop verts

Fleurette

Eh! Quoi, ce valet se permettre!...

Fanfare

Voudrait-il imiter son maître?

Claquedent

Non, jamais il ne fut peut être
Qu'un Panurge dans l'univers!

Couplets

1.

Mais parfois après les maîtres,
Dans les vignes où toujours
Se promènent les amours,
Les valets trainent leurs guêtres.
Je n'ai pas de préjugé
Près de ribaude gentille,
Je grapille, je grapille
Où Panurge a vendangé.

Choeur

Il n'a pas de préjugé
Près de ribaude gentille
Il grapille, il grapille, il grapille
Où Panurge à vendangé!

Claquedent

Blaise avait séduit Nicole
Dans la vigne à Jean Grivet
En la voyant qui pleurait,
Je l'embrasse et la console.
N'est-on pas mon obligé?
Quand pleure une pauvre fille,
Je grapille, je grapille,
Où d'autres ont vendangé!

Tous

N'est-on pas son obligé?
Quand pleure une pauvre fille
Il grapille, il grapille
Où d'autres ont vendangé!

Coupeoreille (*dans le fond du décor*)

Ouf! J'en peux plus.

Coquerolle (*dans le fond du décor*)

Ah! Ma foi, ni moi non plus... vendanger, c'est trop fatigant.

Brisepaille (*idem.*)

C'est vrai que j'aimerais autant ramer sur une galère...
J'ai les reins brisés.

Fanfare

Tiens! On se repose donc...

Coupeoreille

Le gouverneur est loin, et j crois que nous pouvons respirer cinq minutes.

Fleurette

Eh! Bien, moi, quand j respire, c'est pour jacasser. Qu'est-ce qui a des nouvelles de Phébé?

Gibeline

Phébé, elle est plus maline que nous. Quand elle a un qu'il n'y avait plus rien à faire ici, que des vengeances, elle nous a tiré sa révérence.

Fanfare (*à Fleurette*)

Je sais bien qu'elle est allée à la découverte de son tourangeau, après avoir réconcilié Panurge avec le Gouverneur.

Brisepaille

Et c'est ça qui vous a étonné. Comment a-t-elle pu s'y prendre?

Claquedent

Vous ne le savez pas?

Tous

Non.

Claquedent

Voilà ce que mon maître m'a raconté. Le soir où le gouverneur lui a présenté sa nièce, il a commencé par le prendre à part, et il lui a dit: "Panurge, tantôt j'ai failli te faire pendre. On t'accusait dans le pays e m'avoir fait... ce que je suis, car, je le suis, ajouta le gouverneur". Seulement je sais que le coupable, ce n'est pas toi. Une ribaude de passage à Beaugency, une nommée Phébé m'a nommé le séducteur; c'est un Tourangeau; et elle vient de partir à sa découverte, afin de me le livrer.

Coquerolle

Comment! C'est pour ça qu'elle est partie?

Claquedent

A ce qu'elle a dit... mais ça n'est pas ça le plus drôle de l'histoire. Le Gouverneur ne s'en est pas tenu là, il a encore dit à mon maître: "Si l'on t'a accusé de la chose, c'est que tu es la teneur de tout le monde ici; il faut que ce scandale finisse, il faut que tu te maries ou que tu quittes le pays." Et comme mon maître préférait quitter le pays. "Viens d'abord voir ma nièce" lui a dit le gouverneur.

Tous

Eh bien?

Claquedent

Eh! bien, voilà l'extraordinaire : c'est que depuis qu'il a vu la nièce, mon maître ne veut plus quitter le pays; il me dit tous les matins: "Claquedent, nous partons ce soir, fais nos paquets..." Et tous les soirs il reste chez le gouverneur jusqu'au couvre-feu.

Coupeoreille

Bah! Est-ce que Panurge serait amoureux.

Claquedent

Je ne sais pas s'il est amoureux, mais il est fait comme monseigneur Gargantua quand il n'a rien à manger depuis trois grands jours. On dirait...

Scène 2

Les mêmes, Grippeminaud

Grippeminaud (*au fond*)

C'est ainsi qu'on travaille!

Tous

Le Gouverneur!

Grippeminaud

Par St Godepin! Est-ce qu'on se moque de moi!

Brisepaille

Nous prenions un instant de repos... la chaleur...

Grippeminaud

Comment donc, mais il vous faut peut-être des raisins qui poussent à l'ombre.

Coupeoreille

Nous allons nous remettre au travail.

Grippeminaud

Non, pas ici. Vous allez grimper sur le coteau voisin, du côté de la ferme à Boniface; vous le trouverez-là, il vous dira ce que vous avez à faire...

Brisepaille

C'est dit, maître. Partons.

Grippeminaud

Et songez que je marche sur vos talons.

—

(Reprise du Chœur d'introduction. Sortie Générale.)

Scène 3

Grippeminaud, (*seul*)

Pourquoi Phébé a-t-elle voulu que j'éloigne tout le monde du coteau?... C'est inouï! Elle ne me dit rien... et me commande comme si le gouverneur, c'était elle, et que la ribaude, ce fut moi... C'est qu'elle est si gentille! Parole d'honneur, il y a des moments où je suis jaloux de Panurge... et si ce n'était ma vengeance... mais patience, patience...

Couplets

1.

C'est quand ils seront mariés
Que je veux prendre ma revanche
Nous nous sommes rapatriés,
Mais s'il eut la première manche,
J'aurai la seconde. Et de fait,
Qui sera le plus stupéfait
Quand je lui dirai: cher compère
Ce que tu m'as fait,
Ce que tu m'as fait,
Eh! Bien, je viens de te le faire.

2.

Sur un démon je suis tombé
Et je l'adore comme un ange.
Ma femme ne vaut pas Phébé,
C'est Panurge qui perd au change.
Aussi, pardonnant son méfait,
Je me déclare satisfait
Et je lui pardonne en confrère
Tout ce qu'il m'a fait
Tout ce qu'il m'a fait
Parce que j'entends le lui faire!

Scène 4

Grippeminaud, Phébé

Phébé (*costume charmant, mais d'une grande simplicité*)

Vous êtes seul?

Grippeminaud

Comment, toi, ici!

Phébé

Eh! Bien?

Grippeminaud

Moins malheureuse, on peut te voir

Phébé

M'avez-vous obéi?

Grippeminaud

C'est-à-dire que j'ai suivi tes instructions.

Phébé

Vous avez donné ici rendez-vous à Panurge.

Grippeminaud

Oui.

Phébé

Bien. Et tous vos amis, tous vos parents doivent se trouver chez vous dans une heure et en grands costumes de cérémonie.

Grippeminaud

Je les ai conviés, mais sans savoir...

Phébé

Bon. Et Mme Grippeminaud, avez-vous de ses nouvelles?

Grippeminaud

Des nouvelles de la scélérate!..

Phébé

Ah! C'est que je me méfie plus d'elle que des gens dont je me cache

Grippeminaud

Mais tu sais bien qu'elle est enfermée à triples verroux! Ah! Je ne suis pas de ces mains dont on se moque. Elle mourra au couvent.

Phébé

Non.

Grippeminaud

Comment non?

Phébé

Je ne le veux pas; mais je veux qu'elle y reste jusqu'après mon mariage.

Grippeminaud

Ah! Ça, tu crois donc vraiment que Panurge t'épousera?

Phébé

Est-ce que vous en doutez?

Grippeminaud

Dame... c'est que je le connais.

Phébé

Et moi, me connaissez-vous?

Grippeminaud

Oui; c'est-à-dire... pas encore... mais...

Phébé

Eh! Bien, écoutez-moi. Vous allez aller trouver le père Hilarion, le vrai...

Grippeminaud

Oh! Ne me rappelle pas...

Phébé

C'est que vous pourriez encore vous tromper.

Grippeminaud

Non, non, maintenant, je le connais.

Phébé

Tant mieux. Vous lui direz de se trouver dans une heure à la petite chapelle, ici tout près, au bas du coteau.

Grippeminaud

Pourquoi faire?

Phébé

Pour me marier avec Panurge.

Grippeminaud

Dans une heure!

Phébé

Une heure, une heure et demie, ça dépendra de son exactitude à se rendre à votre rendez-vous.

Grippeminaud

Sais-tu, Phébé, que je t'admire

Phébé

Je ne vous en empêche pas.

Grippeminaud

Et qu'il me tarde que tu sois la femme de Panurge...

Phébé

Alors, allez trouver le père Hilarion.

Grippeminaud

Car tu n'as pas oublié ta promesse.

Phébé

Oui, oui.

Grippeminaud

Tu sais quelle est la douce vengeance que je me promets quand tu seras sa femme?

Phébé

Mais oui. Allez donc.

Grippeminaud

C'est que, parole d'honneur, il me tarde de...

Phébé

Silence! Le voilà.

Grippeminaud

Qui donc?

Phébé

Lui.

Grippeminaud

Panurge?

Phébé

Oui. Il tourne le coteau. Il ne faut pas qu'il vous trouve ici; partez bien vite.

Grippeminaud

Mais...

Phébé

Vous allez tout perdre... Partez, dépêchez-vous

Grippeminaud

J'y vais...

Phébé

Plus vite donc!...

Grippeminaud

Je cours! (*sortant*) J'ai l'air de son domestique.

Scène 5

Phébé, (*seule*)

M'en voilà débarrassée... Plus souvent que je l'aiderai à se venger comme il le comprend... oh! Non, une fois la femme de Panurge... sa femme... s'il allait ne pas venir... (*regardant à la cantonade*) Non, je ne le vois pas... ah! S'il savait que c'est moi qui l'attends... Décidément je crois ce bel oiseau assez englué et que c'est le vrai moment de le mettre en cage. Poussait-il des soupirs hier soi! Ah! Ces

hommes, comme il faut peu de chose pour leur mettre le cœur à l'envers. Dire que si au lieu de m'appeler Colombe et de passer pour la nièce du gouverneur, il ne voyait en moi que ce que je suis, ses soupirs se changeaient en gestes et qu'au lieu de me parler mariage... (*regardant à droite*) ah! Cette fois c'est bien lui, mais il n'est pas seul. Qui donc l'accompagne? Son valet... Oh! Il va le renvoyer. C'est égal... il faut attendre qu'il soit seul... ah! Là, dernière ce laillis... qui sait, on gagne toujours quelque chose à savoir ce qui se dit.

Scène 6

Panurge, Claquedent, Phébé (caché)

Panurge (*entrant suivi de Claquedent; à lui-même*)

Vingt écus d'or! Et une colombe naïve!

Claquedent

Mais, monsieur, qu'est-ce que vous avez donc à rêvasser comme ça?

Panurge

Oh! Laisse-moi tranquille... ou plutôt... Claquedent... (*se posant devant lui*) Quel air me trouves-tu?

Claquedent

Monsieur, c'est à ne plus vous reconnaître. Quand je vous regarde, j'ai envie de pleurer.

Panurge

Tu es bête, Claquedent.

Claquedent

Ce n'est pas mon opinion monsieur. D'abord, un proverbe dit: bel maître, tel valet.

Panurge

Hein! Qu'est-ce à dire?

Claquedent

Le proverbe a tout, il aurait dû dire: bel valet, tel maître. Attendu que c'est bien plutôt le valet qui fait le maître que le maître qui fait le valet; mais, enfin, que j'aie de l'esprit parce que vous en avez, ou que vous en ayez parce que j'en ai, la vérité est que nous en avons.

Panurge

Eh! Bien, donne-moi un conseil.

Claquedent

Rien qu'un seul? Je puis vous en offrir deux cents, si vous le désirez, ma bourse en est pleine.

Phébé (*se montrant*)

Ecoutons bien.

Duo

—

1.

Panurge

Que dirais-tu, monsieur le sage,

Si ton maitre hélas! Des plus fous
Voulait tâter du mariage?

Claquedent

Je lui dirais: “Mariez-vous!”

Panurge

Mais me marier, à mon âge...
Pour tous les maris ici-bas,
L’hymen est un dur esclavage.

Claquedent

Eh! Bien, ne vous mariez pas.

2.

Panurge

Mais la belle qu’on me propose
M’apporte, joints à des yeux doux,
Vingt écus d’or, c’est quelque chose,

Claquedent

Eh bien, Seigneur, mariez-vous.

Panurge

Mais vingt écus d’or, ce n’est guère,
Quand une femme a des appas;
Elle est coquette, elle veut plaire,

Claquedent

Alors, ne vous mariez pas.

3.

Panurge

Mais de mon nom l’éclat me touche.
Si jamais je ne suis époux,
Des Panurge s’éteint la souche,

Claquedent

Ah! Dans ce cas, mariez-vous.

Panurge

La femme doit-elle être crue?
Mon héritier peut-être, hélas!
Le fils d'un valet de charrue...

Claquedent

Pour Dieu! ne vous mariez pas!

4.

Panurge

Mais d'une femme, Dieu me damne!
Vieux, j'aurai besoin, entre nous,
Pour me faire de la tisane,

Claquedent

N'hésitez pas, mariez-vous.

Panurge

Mais un mari, sans sa tisane,
A souvent trouvé le trépas;
À mourir, l'hymen me condamne...

Claquedent

Ah! Seigneur, ne vous mariez pas!

Ensemble

Voilà l'embarras où nous sommes!
Et c'est bien fait pour m'effrayer!
Nul ne peut dire si les hommes
Doivent ou non se marier...

—

Panurge

Autant de raisons pour que de raisons contre, comment prendre un parti?

Claquedent

Le moyen est facile!

Panurge

Tu trouves?

Claquedent

Consultez le hasard

Panurge

Et où demeure-t-il, le hasard?

Claquedent

Dans votre poche! N'avez-vous pas vos dés?

Panurge

Claquedent, mon ami, tu es grand comme le monde!

(Il tire les dés de sa poche et les met dans un gobelet.)

Claquedent

Attendez... ne sont-ils pas pipés?

Panurge

Non, pas ceux-là.

Claquedent

Jouez-vous pour ou contre le mariage?

Panurge *(qui a pris les dés)*

Pour le mariage. *(il joue)*

Claquedent

Double as.

Panurge

Diab!e, contre le mariage.

Claquedent

Double six!

Panurge

Double six!

Tous deux

Ah!

Phébé *(à part)*

Jusqu'au hasard qui se met contre moi. *(Elle disparaît)*

Claquedent

Si vous vous mariez, vous êtes certain de votre affaire.

Panurge

Douze chances contre deux; il ne faut point aller contre sa destinée. (*On entend Phébé chanter au loin*). Hein! Qu'est-ce que j'entends?... (*remontant*) C'est elle (*à Claquedent*) Vite, vite, sauve-toi!

Claquedent

Monsieur, pensez au double six. (*Il se sauve*)

Panurge

(*pendant que Phébé, hors de vue, ne cesse pas de chanter à la cantonade. Le chant de Phébé soit être une jolie mélodie, mais fredonnée seulement et sans orchestre.*)

Elle ici... et toute seule... ah! Si c'était toute autre... mais près d'elle, je ne sais quel sot embarras... Morbleu! Panurge, quand une colombe vient se jeter dans les serres du vautour, est-ce au vautour de trembler?

Scène 7

Panurge, Phébé

(*Phébé entre en achevant l'air commencé trois répliques plus haut, et l'interrompt par un cri motivé par Panurge qui s'étant mis à l'écart pour la laisser passer, a couru après elle et lui a pris la faille en lui disant:*)

Panurge

Brave! (*Phébé en criant s'est déagée et a couru à l'extrémité du théâtre. Intendit.*) Ah! Mon Dieu! Je vous ai fait peur?..

Phébé (*tremblante*)

Ah! Oui... une peur... ah! C'est bien mal...

Panurge (*allant à elle*)

Combien je suis...

Phébé (*reculant*)

Ne m'approchez pas, monsieur, ne m'approchez pas...

Panurge

De grâce... remettez-vous... je suis désolé... je passais... c'est-à-dire... le gouverneur... votre oncle... m'avait donné rendez-vous ici... et en vous voyant arriver... heureux d'un si fortuné hasard... pour vous surprendre...

Phébé

Me surprendre... ah! Certes vous m'avez surprise et effrayée; c'est la première fois qu'on me surprend de même

Panurge

La première fois...

Phébé

Moi aussi, je cherche mon oncle. On m'avait dit que je le trouverais de ce côté.

Panurge

Il va venir... je l'attends... et si je ne vous fais plus aussi peur, nous attendrons ensemble...

Phébé

Je veux bien, mais pas longtemps, car il faut que je rentre faire mes préparatifs de départ.

Panurge

De départ?

Phébé

Oui, je retourne ce soir à mon couvent

Panurge

Ce soir... vous nous quittez... pourquoi?

Phébé

Justement à cause de vous

Panurge

De moi.

Phébé

Vous vous rappelez, monsieur, que le soir même de mon arrivée, mon oncle vous a présenté à moi, et vous savez que depuis trois jours que je suis ici, je n'ai pas vu d'autres personnes que vous. Cela m'étonnait bien un peu... mais habituée comme je le suis à la solitude, votre présence et celle de mon oncle c'était une grande nouveauté pour moi, et je me plaisais beaucoup dans nos causeries de chaque soir.

Panurge

En vérité.

Phébé

Oui, je ne vous le cache pas. Vous étiez assez bon pour écouter mes folles hisoires du couvent, assez aimable pour me les demander même, et petit à petit je m'étais fait un plaisir de vous voir; car vous vous rappelez que la première fois, je n'avais pas même osé vous regarder; pensez donc un homme... parler à un homme... Dame, au couvent, on se fait un monstre de cela...

Panurge

Et vous avez vu qu'on a grand tort.

Phébé

C'est ce que je me disais hier soir...

Panurge

Hier soir?

Phébé

Oui. Quand vous nous avez en quittés, et que je me suis trouvée seule dans ma petite chambre, je me suis dit: M. Panurge ne justifie pas du tout ce que nos supérieures nous enseignent; elles nous font une peur affreuse des hommes en nous disant qu'ils sont perfides, grossiers, vantards, qu'ils ne cherchent qu'à nous tromper, qu'à nous séduire par de belles paroles et de faux dehors, et c'était tout le contraire: je vous avais toujours vu timide, plus timide que de moi, respectueux, modeste; quand mon oncle me disait du bien de vous, je vous voyais embarrassé, on aurait dit que vous ne le méritiez pas.

Panurge

Voilà ce que vous disiez hier soir?

Phébé

Oui, monsieur.

Panurge

Et ce matin?...

Phébé

Ph! Je ne me dis plus cela

Panurge

Ah! Pourquoi donc?

Phébé

Ce matin, mon oncle est venu me trouver et il m'a dit: ma chère petite, tu vas faire au plus vite tes préparatifs de voyage. Je te ramène ce soir à ton couvent

Panurge

Il vous a dit cela?

Phébé

Et comme cela m'étonnait ainsi que vous, il a ajouté en te faisant venir ici, j'avais l'intention de te marier; je voulais te faire épouser Panurge.

Panurge

Ah! Il vous a dit...

Phébé

Mais Panurge, a-t-il ajouté, est un... attendez que je me rappelle les mots... un sacripant, un ribaud, un papelard, qui ne se marient jamais.

Panurge

Oh!

Phébé

Et comme je ne connaissais pas tous ces mots-là, il me les a expliqués en me disant autant de mal de vous qu'il m'en avait dit de bien.

Panurge

Ne parlons pas de ce que vous a dit votre oncle, vous voyez qu'il n'a aucune suite dans les idées; parlons de son intention de nous marier, et répondez-moi avec votre franchise ordinaire. Voyons, que penseriez-vous d'un époux comme moi?

Duo

Phébé

Je ne sais pas ce que c'est qu'un époux:

Et si quelqu'un doit me l'apprendre,

Dame, c'est facile à comprendre
J'aimerais mieux que ce soit vous.

Panurge

Mais avant de vous épouser,
Vous ne pouvez me refuser
Un récit fidèle et sincère
Il faut que par vous me soit dit
L'effet que sur vous j'ai produit.
Le savoir est très nécessaire.

Phébé

Vous le voulez?

Panurge

Soyez sincère.

Rondeau

—

Phébé

Je vous dirai tout et tout sans mentir
Quand je vous ai vu, ma peur fut extrême
Puis j'ai regretté de vous voir partir;
Ce que j'éprouvais, je l'ignore même.

En vous revoyant la deuxième fois
Je me sentie émue, affolée,
Et je bavardais sans savoir, je crois,
Ce que je disais, tant j'étais troublée.

Quand je vous revis, maîtresse de moi.
J'étais et plus forte et plus sérieuse.
Mais mon coeur battait, je ne sais pourquoi.
Je paraissais triste et j'étais heureuse.

À rêver de vous j'ai passé la nuit
En rêve bizarre, en rêve sans suite
Et quand ce matin, mon oncle m'a dit:
Il faut au couvent retourner, petite...

Quand il m'a parlé de votre dédain
Pour votre mariage et les filles d'Eve
Je ne sais pourquoi je me pris soudain
À me rappeler mon étrange rêve

Pourquoi me vit-on pleurer ce matin?
Pourquoi maintenant me voit-on sourire?
Pourquoi mon bonheur? Pourquoi mon chagrin?
À vous de savoir ce que ça veut dire?

Je vous ai tout dit, et tout sans mentir,
Vous ai-je froissé dans ma confiance?
De tous ces aveux, je me sens rougir,
Vous pardonneriez à mon innocence!

Panurge

Ah! L'innocence seule a dans la vérité
Cette entière sincérité
Et vois, à tes genoux je tombe.
Sois ma compagne, ô ma colombe!

Phoebé

Ciel! Un homme à mes genoux!
De grâce, que faites-vous?

Panurge

Je t'adore,
Et j'implore,
Oui j'implore à deux genoux

Le nom si doux de ton époux

Phoebe

Vraiment me voilà toute tremblante

En l'état où je me vois,

Je me sens fâchée et puis contenté;

Je ris et pleure à la fois.

Ensemble

Panurge

Que j'aime à la voir tremblante

Que j'aime au son de ma voix

La voir fâché et contente

Rire et pleurer à la fois

Phébé

Vraiment m'voilà toute tremblante

En l'état où je me vois

Je suis fâchée et contente

Je ris et pleure à la fois.

Scène 8

Les mêmes, Grippeminaud

Grippeminaud (*entrant à la fin du Duo*)

Ouais! Qu'est-ce que je vois là?

Panurge (*à part*)

Au diable!

Phébé

Mon oncle...

Grippeminaud

Ma nièce dans les vignes avec ce malandrin de Panurge!

Panurge

Voyons, ne levez pas de si grands bras, ne faites pas de si gros yeux; le hasard a mieux fait les choses que la prévoyance humaine... j'ai rencontré cet astre de toutes les vertus et de toutes les lumières, et vous m'en voyez aveuglé comme un prison chasseur. Panurge est vaincu! Panurge se marie!... o quand la noce?..

Grippeminaud

A tout de suite. Le temps de bichonner un peu la mariée.

Panurge

Tout de suite... mais...

Grippeminaud

Justement, je sois de la chapelle, où le père Hilarion n'a rien de mieux à faire.

Panurge (*à part*)

Hilarion...

Grippeminaud

Nous allons rentrer au logis; viens nous y prendre dans un quart d'heure.

Panurge (*à part*)

Le père Hilarion...

Phébée (*à part*)

A quoi pense-t-il donc?

Grippeminaud

Est-ce que tu ne m'entends pas?

Panurge

Si fait, si fait... à la chapelle dans un quart d'heure.

Grippeminaud

Non, pas à la chapelle, chez moi.

Panurge

Oui, chez vous, pour nous rendre de là à la chapelle.

Grippeminaud

C'est cela...

Phébé (*à part*)

Oh! Son terrible trouble... Il machine quelque chose.

Panurge

Eh bien, c'est convenu; mais vous apporterez les 20 écus d'or.

Grippeminaud

Je les apporterai.

Panurge

Touchez-là, et dans un quart d'heure chez vous.

Grippeminaud

Dans un quart d'heure!... Venez, ma nièce.

Phébé (*à part en sortant*)

Oh! Je ferai veiller sur lui.

Scène 9

Panurge (*seul*)

Le père Hilarion! C'est un trait de génie! Colombe et vingt écus d'or, c'est le bonheur et c'est la fortune; mais le mariage, c'est le guignon et c'est la misère. Donc avoir Colombe et les vingt écus d'or sans passer par le mariage, voilà ce qui mettait Panurge au-dessus de lui-même, et le père Hilarion aura deux fois été ma providence. Vite courons après Claquedent.

Scène 10

Panurge, Claquedent

Claquedent (*accourant*)

Monsieur, monsieur, je vous cherchais.

Panurge

Et moi, j'allais courir après toi.

Claquedent

On dit que le seigneur Pantagruel a une indigestion.

Panurge

Ça m'est bien égal. Ecoute-moi. Tu as conservé la robe de moine que tu portais il y a 3 jours.

Claquedent

Oui, maître.

Panurge

Ainsi que la perruque et la fausse barbe

Claquedent

Tout cela; mais il ne reste plus de vin.

Panurge

Peu importe. Cours bien vite à la maison et déguise-toi en moine.

Claquedent

Pourquoi faire?

Panurge

Pour me marier

Claquedent

Moi, vous marier...

Panurge

Pendant que tu te déguiseras, je me charge de l'éloigner le père Hilarion. Dès que tu seras prêt, tu te rendras à la chapelle dont j'aurai en soin de fermer toutes les fenêtres, et tu sais que le soleil ne passe guère à travers les vitraux.

Claquedent

Mais, monsieur, si l'on me cassait les reins...

Panurge

Je te donnerais deux écus d'or.

Claquedent

Et si on ne me les casse pas?

Panurge

Je t'en donnerai un.

Claquedent

Je vais aller m'habiller

Panurge

Attends. Aussitôt que tu seras dans la chapelle, tu sonneras la cloche qui m'en avertira.

Claquedent

Bon.

Panurge

Et surtout pendant la cérémonie...

(Bruit au-dehors et ritournelle à l'orchestre.)

Panurge *(remontant, sur la musique)*

Les vendangeurs... il ne faut pas qu'on nous voie ensemble, viens... Pendant la cérémonie, tu tiendras ton capuchon baissé de manière à ce qu'on n'aperçoive que...

(La voix se perd à mesure que l'orchestre annonce plus bruyamment l'arrivée des vendangeurs.)

Scène 11

Coupeoreille, Brisepaille, Fanfare, Gibeline, Fleurette, Coquerolle, vendangeurs et vendangeuses

Chœur

Quand c'est du repos à prendre

Après un pareil labeur

Soyons heureux de nous rendre

Aux ordres du gouverneur,

Sans même rien y comprendre

Obéissons de grand cœur

Quand c'est du repos à prendre

Après un pareil labeur

Soyons heureux de nous rendre

Aux ordres du gouverneur!

—

Brisepaille

Eh ben, nous y voilà.

Coupeoreille

Et personne pour nous dire ce que nous avons à faire

Fanfare

Excellente raison pour ne rien faire

Gibeline

Ne rien faire, ça me va.

Fleurette

Et à moi donc!

Coupeoreille

Ça n'empêche pas que c'est drôle tout de même.

Brisepaille

Le fait est que je m'y perds. Nous étions ici à vendanger ce coteau...

Fanfare

Que nous ne vendangeons pas.

Brisepaille

Enfin, nous étions là pour ça...

Coquerolle

Comment donc; mais nous allons même nous mettre en train...

Coupeoreille

Lorsqu'on nous a fait revenir ici.

Fanfare

Pourquoi faire?

Gibeline

Pour vendanger, sans doute.

Fanfare

Nous avons le droit de l'ignorer

Fleurette

Moi, je l'ignore.

Coquerolle

Et moi aussi.

Brisepaille

Du moment que nous l'ignorons tous... (*s'asseyant par ton*) Nous aurions même tort de faire une chose qu'on ne nous commande pas.

Gibeline (*s'asseyant par ton aussi; ce que fait tout le monde*)

Le plus grand tort; car enfin, l'intention du Gouverneur n'est peut-être pas qu'on touche à cette vigne.

Coupeoreille

Si nous ne faisons rien? Ah! Mon Dieu, c'est simple; nous allons...

Les jeunes filles

Quoi donc?

Coupeoreille

Nous allons nous croiser les bras.

Fanfare, (*avec dépit*)

En voilà un malin! (*On entend la cloche*)

Hein! Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? **Coupeoreille**

La cloche de la chapelle. **Brisepaille**

Qu'est-ce qui arrive? **Gibeline**

Ce n'est pourtant pas l'heure de dire ses patenôtres. **Coupeoreille**

Est-ce qu'il se passerait du nouveau dans les pays? **Fleurette**

Si c'était pour ça que le gouverneur nous a fait revenir? **Coquerolle**

C'est possible. **Tous**

Fanfare (*qui a grimper sur le coteau, regardant à gauche*)
Je ne vois pourtant rien du côté de la chapelle.

Regarde d'un autre côté. **Brisepaille**

Ah! **Fanfare**, (*regardant à droite*)

Quoi donc? **Tous**

On sort de chez le gouverneur. **Fanfare**

Mais oui, et une sorte de monde... **Coupeoreille**

On dirait une noce... **Fleurette**

Même qu'il y a une mariée **Gibeline**

Ah! **Brisepaille**

Quoi donc? **Tous**

Brisepaille

Panurge!

Coupeoreille

Est-ce que ce serait Panurge qui se marierait?

Fanfare

Avec la nièce du gouverneur, peut-être.

Tous

Mais oui.

Coquerolle

Ah! C'est un peu fort!

Fanfare (refrain)

Digue, digue don!

Écoutez donc,

C'est le clocheton

De la chapelle;

Ce sont les deux époux qu'il appelle

De son clair et joyeux ton

Digue, digue, digue digue, digue, digue, don!

Ecoutez donc

Ce que dit le petit clocheton:

La mariée est une tourterelle,

Le marié c'est le pigeon!

Ensemble

Digue digue don!

Sonnez donc!

Sonnez, clocheton,

Sonnez donc pour la tourterelle

Digue digue don

Sonnez donc!

Pour la tourterelle,

Et puis sonnez pour le pigeon!

1ere Couplet

Nul ne pouvait croire à ce mariage;

Et le gouverneur vient, par cette hymen,

De mettre un oiseau singulier en cage;

Et reste à savoir s'il y sera demain.
Je plains le tendron qui dans ses mains tombe,
Car ce volatile va la désoler!
Prolonge ton rêve, ô blanche colombe,
Ton oiseau léger bien sûr va s'envoler!

Les jeunes filles

Digue, digue, don, etc

2e Couplet

Panurge, a coup sûr, est un joyeux drille,
Plus d'une de nous voulait le capter;
Hélas! De nos mains, ainsi qu'une anguille,
Il fuyait toujours au moment de compter.
Espérons pourtant une chose drôle:
C'est que tout mari, qu'il aura vaincu,
Va pouvoir en jeu, en changeant de rôle,
Faire que Panurge à son tour soit... déçu!

Les jeunes filles

Digue, digue, don. Etc.

Etc.

Scène 12

Les mêmes, le Gouverneur, Panurge, Phébé (voilée), noce comique, (costumes de grands parents au temps de Rabelais)

Chœur général

(accompagné par la cloche)

C'est le bonheur qui nous appelle
A son doux signal rendons-nous
Sonne, cloche de la chapelle
Sonne pour les nouveaux époux.

Le Gouverneur

Oui, vilains et vilaines,
Panurge, qui fait une fin

Va d'un heureux hymen
Serrer les douces chaînes,
Il épouse ma nièce. Attendez-nous ici,
Car en sortant de la chapelle,
Il vous faudra danser pour elle
Et nous devons tous boire à lui.

Tous

Vivent les mariés! Vive le gouverneur!
Heureux de boire à leur bonheur

Reprise

C'est le bonheur qui les appelle
A son doux signal rendons-nous
Sonne, cloche de la chapelle
Sonne pour les nouveaux époux.

(Pendant cette reprise, les jeunes filles reprennent leur refrain: Digue, digue, don! etc.)

Scène 13

Les mêmes, moins la noce

(Sur la fin du Chœur, la noce est sortie, et tous les personnages restant en scène se sont groupés sur le coteau.)

Coupeoreille

Oui par la-sambleau! C'est bien un mariage véritable.

Brisepaille

Mais regardez donc, Panurge, comme y se...

Fleurette

On dirait un triomphateur

Fanfare

Un homme qui a trompé tant de maris, ne pas être plus ému que ça à la veille de l'être.

Coquerolle

C'est-à-dire qu'il a l'air d'être enchanté de son mariage!

Gibeline

Ah! Dame, c'est que c'est un bon parti qu'il fait là.
(la cloche s'arrête.)

Coupeoreille

Les voilà qui arrivent à la chapelle.

Fleurette (*redescendant*)

Un bon parti... dites donc, vous autre, avez-vous regardé la mariée?

Coquerolle

Pour la regarder, il aurait fallu pouvoir.

Brisepaille

C'est vrai qu'elle était cachée sous son voile comme le sabre de Panurge dans son fourreau, impossible d'en voir rien sorti.

Gibeline

Hum! Hum! Hum! Les jolies filles ne se cachent pas ainsi

Fanfare

Voilà l'histoire: Panurge épouse un laideron, c'est pour ça qu'il ne craint pas d'être... contrarié dans son ménage.

Coupeoreille

C'est pourtant pas les plus laides qui sont les plus fidèles.

Brisepaille

Et puis, c'est pas possible.

Tous

Comment?

Brisepaille

Je me souviens bien de la nièce du Gouverneur, moi; elle ne quitte pas beaucoup de son couvent; mais il y a deux ou trois ans que je me souviens de l'avoir vue chez son oncle.

Tous

Eh bien?...

Brisepaille

Eh! Bien, elle avait l'air d'une nonette aussi bêtasse que vertueuse; mais c'était un assez beau brin de fille.

Fleurette

Bon. Mais depuis deux ans, trois ans, y peut lui être arrivé des malheurs.

Fanfare

Y lui sera arrivé le malheur de rencontrer le jardinier du couvent, un jour qu'il avait dans l'idée de dénicher quelque oiseau.

Coquerolle

Et tu crois qu'elle l'a aidé à la besogne

Fanfare

Jardine!

Gibeline (*comme frappée d'une idée*)

Et v'là pourquoi le Gouverneur donne sa nièce à Panurge

Coupeoreille

Si bien que ce sera lui qui ne trouvera plus rien à dénicher

Tous (*riant*)

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Brisse paille

Allons, il était écrit que ce pauvre Panurge entrerait à son tour dans la confrérie des maris de Beaugency

Gibeline

Oh! Les maris de Beaugency ils envoient de belles.

Chanson

1.

Fanfare

Les maris de Beaugency
N'ont pas toujours ce qu'ont les autres,
Et pourtant ils en ont aussi,
Les maris de Beaugency.

Chœur

Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont?

Gibeline

Ils ont des femmes fidèles,
Comme celles de Paris

2.

Les maris de Beaugency
N'aiment pas ça plus que personne,
Et pourtant ils l'aiment aussi,
Les maris de Beaugency.

Chœur

Qu'est-ce qu'ils aiment?

Gibeline

Les vins d'Bourgueil et d'Saint Georges
Et les autres vins aussi

Chœur

Bien, bien, bien, c'est très bien,
Je vois qu'il n'leur manque rien.

3.

Les maris de Beaugency
Ne le sont pas plus que les autres,
Et pourtant ils le sont aussi,
Les maris de Beaugency

Chœur

Qu'est-ce qu'ils sont?

Gibeline

Ils sont heureux en ménage
Quand leur femme le veut bien

4.

Les maris de Beaugency
N'en portent pas plus que les autres,
Pourtant ils en portent aussi,
Les maris de Beaugency,

Chœur

Qu'est-ce qu'ils portent?

Gibeline

Des grands chapeaux à trois cornes
Ça fait cinq avec les leur
Disons-le de grand cœur
Dix ne leur feraient pas peur

Tous

Les maris de Beaugency
Ne sont pas plus trompés qu'les autres
Mais ils sont bien trompés aussi
Les maris de Beaugency!

Coquerolle (*parlé*)

Maintenant taisons nous... voyez!
(*tous remontent*)

Coupeoreille

Il n'y a plus à s'en dédire. Panurge est enrégimenté

Fanfare (*sur le coteau*)

Les voilà qui sortent de la chapelle

Gibeline (*idem*)

La mariée a toujours son voilà [sic] baissé

Coquerolle

Je ne sais pas pourquoi mais ce voile baissé ne me dit rien de bon.

Fleurette

Ils montent la colline.

Final

Chœur

Vivent les mariés! Vive le Gouverneur!
Est-il plus beau jour dans la vie
Que le jour bienheureux où l'on se marie?
Puisse l'hymen les conduire au bonheur!

Scène 14

Les mêmes, toute la noce

Reprise

Vivent les mariés! Vive le Gouverneur!
Etc.

Grippeminaud

Assez, et maintenant qu'on m'écoute en silence,

Ce mariage est ma vengeance
Contre le nigaud que voici:
(Il montre Panurge)

Panurge

Hein! Nigaud, moi?

Grippeminaud

Oui, dupe d'une fraude,
Apprenez que Panurge ici
Vient d'épouser une ribaude!

Tous

Une ribaude!

Panurge

Une ribaude!

Phébé *(levant son voile.)*

Une ribaude.

Tous *(parlé)*

Phoebé!

—

Phébé *(à Panurge)*

Couplets

1.

Oui, mon cher petit mari,
Oui, je suis Phoebé, la ribaude
Et plus que toi, mon chérie,
Je suis rusée et finaude
On te dit très scélérat
Mais entre nous je me flatte

D'être aussi très scélérate,
À bon chat, bon rat!

Chœur

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
L'excellent tour que celui-là!

Panurge

2.

Toi, ma femme, oh! sur cela,
Il faut te détromper, ma belle,
Celui qui nous maria,
Le moine de la chapelle
Est valet de son état;
C'est, s'il faut que je m'explique,
Claquedent, mon domestique,
A bon chat, bon rat,

Chœur

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
Meilleur encore est ce tour-là!

Grippeminaud

Voici venir le prisonnier

Tous

Le prisonnier!

Grippeminaud

Et rira bien qui rira le dernier!

Scène 15

Les mêmes, Claquedent (amené par les domestiques du Gouverneur)

Panurge

Ciel! Claquedent!

Claquedent

Oui, Claquedent claqué;
On m'a surpris dans la chapelle
On m'a traqué
Disloqué
Et j'ai reçu ce qui s'appelle
Une tripotée... Oh! Là! Je n'en plus plus...
Ah! Ah! Je suis brisé, moulu, perclus...

Panurge

Mais qui donc avait pris ta place?

Le père Hilarion (*sur le coteau*)

Moi!

Panurge

Hilarion!

Grippeminaud

Quelle grimace!

Hilarion (*Ouvrant un registre et parlant sure un dessin d'orchestre*)

“En l'an de grâce 1513, le 3 septembre, nous, père Hilarion, avons marié légitimement dans notre chapelle de St Magloire, près Beaugency, le nommé Jean François Panurge, tenant à la maison du haut et puissant seigneur Pantagruel, avec Phébé, orpheline sans père, ni mère, et n'étant comme que sous le nom de Phébé, la ribaude. En foi de quoi ont signé les conjoints et leurs témoins.”

Panurge (tombant sur un tertre)

Ah!

Reprise du Final

Grippeminaud

Eh! Bien, faiseur de dupe et de maris cornards,
Que dis-tu donc de nos traquenards?
Es-tu, maître dupeur, assez dupé toi-même?

Phébé

Ah! Ne l'accablez pas, c'est mon mari, je l'aime!

Panurge (*se levant furieux*)

Arrière,

Mégère!

Toi, moi femme, non!

Arrière

Vipère

Arrière démon!

Femelle hypocrite

Ribaude maudite

Dont l'aspect m'irrite

Fuis, de par San!

Je me tiens à quatre

Pour ne pas te battre

Mon poing peut t'abattre

De grâce, va-t'en

Phoebé (*marchant sur lui*)

Arrière,

Compère,

Regarde-moi bien

En somme

Mon homme

Je n'ai peur de rien.

—

Assez peu timide,

Ma poigne est solide,

Mon cœur intrépide,

La lutte me plaît.

Et quand on m'agace

Lorsqu'avec audace

Quelqu'un me menace

Je donne un soufflet

(elle lui donne un vigoureux soufflet.)

Septuor

Panurge (*seul*)

Coquine!.. Infamie!..
Malheur, malheur à toi!
Périsset ma femme!
Je suis tout hors de moi!
Mais pour cette injure
Je la punirai,
Et, je te le jure,
Cruellement je me vengerai!

Grippeminaud (*à part*)

Ah! Je jubile!
Mais ce reptile
N'est pas encor puni selon mon gré.

Ensemble

Phébé

Ah! Prends garde!
La femme par la loi.
Phoebé te réclame!
Et tu seras, oui tu seras à moi.
Ici je te le jure,
Dans peu je t'assouplirai
Oui, je te le jure
Et doucement, je t'apprivoiserai.

Panurge

Ah! L'infâmie!
Je suis hors de moi!
Jamais une femme
Ne me fera la loi
Non, jamais, je le jure,
je ne fléchirai
Et de cette injure
Cruellement je me vengerai!

Grippeminaud

Ah! Je jubile, sur ma foi!

Cette femme-là va me venger de toi.

Ah! Je bénis cette aventure!

Car j'avais dit: "Je me vengerai."

Et maintenant la chose est sûre

Je suis servi selon mon gré!

Claquedent

Ah! Panurge prends garde à toi!

Car cette femme-là va te faire la loi.

Pauvre mari, je te plains, sur ma foi!

Car cette femme va te faire la loi.

Mais je ne parle pas de moi,

Pourtant je suis à plaindre autant que toi.

Donc à part moi je me plaindrai,

Chacun ici semble effaré!

Mon être, hélas! est effondré.

Seul, à part moi, je me plaindrai.

Chœur

Prends garde, ta femme

J'impose ici la loi.

Son sexe réclame

Sa grâce de toi

Mais de cette infinie

L'homme est assuré

Car la femme est sûre

De triompher toujours selon son gré.

Strette

Panurge

Elle me le paira;

Quoiqu'elle porte la jupe,

Rien ne la sauvera;

Je ne serai pas sa dupe.

Pour l'instant restons ici,

Et dévorons cette offense.

Avant peu, ma vengeance
Saura prouver je le pense,
Saura prouver, je le pense,
Que la femme chez moi
Ne fera jamais la loi!

Phébé

Il enrage, oui-dà!
Mais peu je m'en préoccupe,
Bientôt il cédera,
C'est moi qui porte la jupe.
Et toujours, c'est la loi,
L'homme que la femme offense,
(Quoiqu'il rêve vengeance),
Arrive à l'obéissance.
Savez-vous le pourquoi?
C'est que l'amour toujours fera la loi.

Ensemble

Claquedent

Ah! Pauvre homme, en dépit de toi,
La femme toujours, fait la loi.

Chœur

(et les autres personnages)

Ah! Pauvre homme,
Etc.

(Pendant toute cette dernière partie, Panurge, de plus en plus furieux, est retenu par les hommes qui vient tout en le retenant, et bravé par Phébé qui, tranquille au milieu des femmes, semble encore le narguer.)

Fin du 2e Acte

ACTE 3

(Un corps de ferme. Le fond est ouvert et laisse voir les bords de la Loire. À droite, une porte donnant dans d'autres bâtiments; à gauche, une armoire.)

Scène 1

Gibeline, Fleurette, Coquerolle, Fanfare, ribaudes, ensuite Brisepaille, Coupe-oreille, ribauds, armés en guerre.

(Au lever du rideau, le fond du théâtre est couvert de femmes pesant des signes à la cantonade et sur le 2e chœur, deux ou trois barques amènent Brisepaille, Coupe-oreille et les ribaudes.)

Introduction

Chœur

Les voilà, les voilà!... Par ici! Par ici!

Après huit jours d'absence,

Ah! Pour nous quelle chance,

De les revoir ainsi.

Qu'ils soient les bienvenus ici!

(à la cantonade)

Oh eh! Les ribauds!

Voix d'hommes *(en dehors)*

Oh eh! Les ribaudes!

Les Femmes

Par ici! Par ici!

Les voix

Nous voici! Nous voici!

Les Femmes

Venez vers vos ribaudes

Qui vont être faraudes,

Si vous rapportez de là-bas

Des bijoux et des falbalas!

(Entrée des barques)

Chœur d'hommes

Eh! vogue la galère!

Ici comme toujours,

Sachons après la guerre

Retrouver nos amours!

Tous, hommes et femmes *(pendant que les barques avancent)*

Eh! Vogue la galère!

Ici comme toujours

Sachons/Sachez après la guerre

Retrouver nos/vos amours.

Fanfare *(à Coupe-oreille)*

O mon cher fiancé,

Quoi, tu n'es pas blessé?

Coupe-oreille

Tu vois, rien de cassé

Gibeline *(aux autres soldats)*

Et vous tous, mes amis,

Chez vous rien de démis?

Les Soldats

Non, rien de compromis.

Fleurette

Ô mon cher Brisepaille,

Ô toi, mon rien qui vaille,

As-tu bien combattu?

Brisepaille

L'honneur était perdu,

Mais je l'ai défendu,

Mieux que toi, ta vertu.
À part cela, comment vas-tu?

Fleurette (*l'embrassant*)
Ô monstre! Sois le bienvenu!

Les hommes
-Reprise-
Et vogue la galère, etc.

Les femmes
Enfin vous voilà,
Le bonheur est là.
Assez de combats
Ne nous quittez pas.

Les hommes et les femmes
Oui c'est assez de combats,
Et l'amour ici-bas
A vraiment plus d'appas,
Oui, c'en est fait, plus de combats, etc.

Scène 2

Les mêmes, Claquedent, entrant par la droite, et encore tout endormi en bonnet de coton et en pet-en-l'aire

Claquedent
Ah! Ça qui fait donc tout ce tapage à huit heures du matin?

Brisepaille
Eh! C'est l'ami Claquedent!

Tous
Bonjour, Claquedent.

Claquedent
Tiens, c'est nos braves défenseurs qui reviennent de l'armée de la guerre.

Coupe-oreille
Oui et nous revenons comme nous sommes partis.

Fanfare

Comment! Sans vous être battus?

Brisepaille

Nous battre et contre qui, puisqu'un traître avait prévenu l'ennemi.

Tous

Un traître!

Coupe-oreille

Vous savez qu'on nous avait annoncé la présence du capitaine Rodilardus qui se cachait dans une forêt aux environs d'Orléans...

Gibeline

Oui, même que Pantagruel vous a fait partir dans la nuit pour le surprendre au point du jour.

Coupe-oreille

Eh! Bien, au point du jour, c'est nous qui avons été surpris. Nous arrivons dans le bois... plus personne, l'ennemi avait décampé.

Brisepaille

Averti de notre arrivée. Ainsi c'est Pantagruel qui n'a pas été content, et si jamais on découvre le traître ou les traîtres, leur compte est bon.

Coupe-oreille

Pantagruel a juré qu'ils seraient pendus.

Claquedent, (*effrayé*)

Pendus!

Brisepaille

Eh! Bien, est-ce que tu trouves qu'il a tort, toi?

Claquedent

Non... non certainement... tort, Pantagruel, jamais...

Coupe-oreille

Mais où sommes-nous donc ici?

Claquedent

Chez Panurge

Les hommes

Panurge!...

Fleurette

C'est juste, vous ne savez pas... c'est Pantagruel qui lui a fait cadeau de cette jolie ferme...

Brisepaille

Panurge fermier!

Fanfare

Oh! Vous ne le reconnaîtrez pas.

Gibeline

Il ne quitte plus sa femme.

Coupe-oreille

Que vous ne reconnaîtriez pas non plus; c'est bien à présent la plus gentille fermière

Fleurette

Et Panurge en raffole

Coupe-oreille

Panurge est amoureux!

Claquedent

Amoureux que c'en est révoltant... surtout pour moi qui suis garçon et domestique; comme domestique mon devoir est d'être là, et comme garçon, quand je suis là, je vois des choses...

Tous

Que vois ti?

Claquedent

Faut vous dire que monsieur ne quitte plus madame et que partout madame est avec monsieur; monsieur embrasse madame, quand ce n'est pas madame qui embrasse monsieur; si vous saviez ce que ça me contrarie.

Brisepaille

Ah! Par exemple, si je m'attendais à quelque chose... Comment Panurge, la terreur des maris, le sacripant le plus endiablé, passé à l'état de tourtereau!

Claquedent

Et le plus incroyable, c'est que sa femme lui est fidèle.

Coupe-oreille

Pas possible!

Claquedent

Il est vrai qu'ils ne se sont mariés que depuis un mois.

Brisepaille

C'est égal, c'est bien extraordinaire...

Coupe-oreille

Et peut-on les voir; c'est deux pigeons ramiers?

Claquedent

Les voir à 8 heures du matin... Depuis leur mariage, ils ne se lèvent plus qu'à midi...

Tous (*riant*)

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Brisepaille

En ce cas, nous reviendrons; car nous devrions être déjà au rendez-vous général sur la place d'armes.

Fanfare

Nous vous accompagnerons.

Coupe-oreille

Oui, certainement... et sitôt après la revue... au cabaret.

Tous

Vivat!

(Ici Fanfare s'empare du bras de Coupe-oreille; Fleurette de celui de Brisepaille, et ainsi de suite).

Coupe-oreille

Oh! la la, Fanfare, comme tu me serve le bras!... et pourquoi ces yeux langoureux?

Fanfare

Ah! C'est que je pense au bonheur de Phébé! Un mari fidèle, c'est ce que j'ai rêvé!

Fleurette (à Brisepaille)

Et moi aussi!

Les autres femmes

Et moi aussi!

Fanfare

Oh! La vie à deux!

Ronde

On peut dire

Et médire

De la vie à deux,

Moi, je l'adore;

C'est encore

Ce qu'on a trouvé de mieux.

1.

Mais de ce bonheur les causes

Tiennent à beaucoup de choses,

Je vais vous en dire deux:

C'est quand la femme est fidèle,

Que son mari n'aime qu'elle,

Et qu'ils sont d'accord entre eux

On peut dire. Etc.

2.

Claquedent

Pourtant j'ai connu l'mari d'Berthe

C'était un mari trompé, certe!

Il trompait sa femme aussi

Tous deux le savaient, ce me semble,

Mais ils vivaient très bien ensemble,

Et chantaient comme vous, ici:

On peut dire

Et médire, etc.

3.

Fleurette

Cela dépend des caractères,

L'homme est entouré de mystères.

C'est en vain qu'on raisonnera

Fanfare

L'on s'adore à la folie,

Et puis tout serment s'oublie,

Et tant que le monde tournera,

Ce sera toujours comme ça

Ensemble

On peut dire. Etc.

(Ils sortent sur la reprise du refrain)

Scène 3

Claquedent, seul.

Pendu?... Pantagruel a dit que les traîtres seraient pendus... et dire que j'ai en assez de courage pour ne pas m'émouvoir en entendant cela! Ce qui m'a rassuré, c'est que personne au monde ne peut savoir... excepté le capitaine Rodilardus, et que ce n'est certainement pas lui. C'est égal, monsieur, a en la une bien mauvaise idée... Je vous demande un peu qu'est-ce que ça lui faisait... ah! Mon poisson que j'oublie... et ces maudites barques... ah! Ben! Nos filles doivent être dans un drôle d'état!

(Il sort par le fond).

Scène 4

Panurge, seul.

(il entre et regarde lentement de tous côtés)

Je croyais entendre des voix d'hommes... (*au fond*) Non, je ne vois que Claquedent entrain de relever ses filets... (*redescendant*) ah! C'est que je suis jaloux, mais jaloux... moi, moi, Panurge!...

Romance

1.

Moi, vagabond, seul sur la terre,
Riant et ne croyant à rien,
Méconnaissant ce doux mystère
Qui fait qu'un cœur est charmé d'un lien,
L'heure est venue, et je vois la clarté
Raillant l'amour, l'hymen et l'innocence:
Sentiment pur, qu'elle est donc ta puissance
Pour qu'un lion se trouve ainsi dompté?

2.

Tout ce bonheur me semble étrange,
Le destin veut-il se venger?
D'une ribaude il fit un ange!
Ah! Maintenant, s'il allait tout changer?
Loin de Phébé, parfois je deviens sombre;
Est-il donc vrai que l'amour fait souffrir.
Je l'aime tant que j'ai peur de mon ombre:
Je suis jaloux!... et douter, c'est mourir!

Voyons, récapitulons. Le premier cadeau que j'ai reçu de ma femme a été un soufflet, et c'est depuis ce moment que je l'aime. Je l'aimais bien un peu quand je la croyais la nièce du gouverneur, mais pas autant; le soufflet a ravivé ma flamme. Je sais bien qu'il y a des soufflets inventés pour cela, mais ma femme en donne qu'elle n'a pas inventés et qui produisent le même effet! Est-ce drôle, être amoureux comme je le suis!... mais à propos, quel était donc le bruit qui m'a réveillé?

Scène 5

Panurge, Phébé

Phébé (*entrant*)

Eh! Bien, monsieur, c'est comme ça qu'on se lève et que l'on quitte sa femme sans seulement lui dire bonjour!...

Panurge (*l'embrassant*)

Oh! C'est un devoir trop gentil pour que je néglige de m'en acquitter; mais ce matin, je ne sais pas ce qui me connaît aux oreilles, il m'avait semblé entendre des voix bourdonner par ici...

Phébé

Eh! Bien, est-ce que le rivage n'est pas à tout le monde. Est-ce que tu veux empêcher les promeneurs de se promener?...

Panurge

Je les connais les promeneurs; il y en a toujours beaucoup là où demeure une jolie femme.

Phébé

Et tu te plains de ça? Quand les amoureux se promènent, c'est qu'on les envoie promener; ce n'est pas en se promenant qu'ils sont dangereux...

Panurge

Ta, ta, ta, tu ne m'apprendras pas mon ancien métier. Les grandes passions commencent toujours par un nigaud planté devant une maison. Il n'y a pas de femme qui au bout de quelque temps ne finisse par se dire "voilà un pauvre jeune homme qui doit être bien fatigué" et de là à lui dire: "entrez doc vous reposer, monsieur..." le trajet n'est pas long.

Phébé

Ah! Mon pauvre Panurge... ton grand malheur, vois-tu, est dans ton expérience. Ce que tu as fait, tu crois toujours que les autres songent à le faire... mais résonne donc un peu; ce qui fait que la plupart des femmes disent à celui qui se fatigue à les attendre: "entrez donc vous reposer" C'est la curiosité.

Panurge

La curiosité!

Phébé

Sans doute. On élève si mal les jeunes filles, on garde si bien les jeunes femmes, ou leur tient un langage si peu varié, qu'elles ont le désir de changer de conversation. Pourquoi M^{re} Eve a-t-elle goûté au fruit défendu? Parce qu'il était défendu; si on lui avait dit: "voilà des pommes, mangez" elle en avait goûté une certainement, et comme elle n'aurait pas trouvé ça meilleur qu'autre chose, elle n'y aurait pas fait attention.

Panurge

Ce qui veut dire?

Phébé

Ce qui veut dire que tu as peut-être épousé la seule femme capable de te rester fidèle.

Panurge

Parce que tu connais les hommes.

Phébé

Pas pour autre chose.

Duo

—

Phébé

Je sais ce que les amoureux
Ont de franchise et de mérite
Et par l'expérience instruite

Je sais qu'un bon mari vaut mieux
Une beauté qui se parjure
Entend fort mal ses intérêts
Et quant à toi, la chose est sûre,
Tu ne me trahiras jamais.

Panurge

Jamais?...

Phébé

Jamais!

Quand on devrait dire à la ronde
Qu'il n'est exprès faite pour toi,
Qu'une femme fidèle au monde
Cette femme-là serait moi.

Panurge

Serait toi

Phébé

Serait moi!

Panurge

Répète ma petite femme...
Ces paroles me font un bien...
Il est vrai que plus d'une dame
En disant cela n'en pense rien
Mais je te crois du fond de l'âme
Tu parais si franche en parlant
Qu'il me semble que j'ai pour femme
Mis la main sur un merle blanc!
Répète encor, je t'en supplie,
Ces deux mots par toi prononcés

Pour que j'oublie)
(Bis)
Ce que je sais)

Ensemble

Phébe

T'inquiéter serait folie
Pensons plus aux jours passés
De grâce oublié
Ce que tu sais

Panurge

Répète encore je t'en supplie
Etc...

Panurge

Tu ne seras jamais volage...

Phébé

Jamais je le jure et de plus
Comme je connais tes vertus
Par intérêt, un jour, moins sage
Toi-même tu m'ordonnerais
De te devenir infidèle
Que ce serait, tu le verrais
La seule chose pour laquelle
Je désobéirais

Panurge

Alors ma confiance est grande
Attends que je te le commande
C'est tout ce que je te demande
O ma femme!
Que ta flamme
Reste celle des amours
Sans cesse
Sois ma maîtresse
Et sois fidèle toujours.

Ensemble

Phébé

Oui, ta femme
Fuit et blâme
Les infidèles amours
Sans cesse
Femme et maîtresse
Je serai sage toujours

Panurge

O ma femme!
Que ta flamme
Etc..

(à la fin du Duo, Panurge embrasse Phébé)

Scène 6

Les mêmes, Grippeminaud

Grippeminaud

Eh! Eh! On s'embrasse ici!...

Panurge

Tiens, c'est vous.

Phébé

Que vient-il faire chez nous?

Grippeminaud

J'arrive mal, je le vois, et d'autant plus mal que je vais avoir le regret de vous séparer...

Phébé et Panurge

Nous séparer!

Grippeminaud

Oh! Pas pour longtemps; je n'ai que quelques mots à dire à Panurge, mais je ne puis les dire qu'à lui seul.

Phébé

Oh! Je ne suis ni curieuse, ni jalouse, moi, j'ai mon ménage à faire, ma cuisine à surveiller, ma toilette à préparer; je vois donne deux heures est-ce assez?

Grippeminaud

Dix minutes suffiront!

Phébé

En ce cas, je ne dois pas vous arrêter ici, votre servante M. le Gouverneur.

Grippeminaud *(avec intention)*

Votre serviteur, Madame Panurge.
(Phébé sort)

Scène 7

Grippeminaud, Panurge, ensuite Claquedent

Panurge

Eh! Mon Dieu, quel est donc grand secret que ma femme ne peut savoir?

Grippeminaud

Tu vas en juger. Mais d'abord jouons comme on dit cartes sur table; tu n'es pas sans te rappeler tes gredineries envers moi.

Panurge

Vous y pensez encore

Grippeminaud

J'y peux d'autant plus qu'en épousant Phébé, tu l'as rendue complice de tes gredineries.

Panurge

Elle! Par exemple!

Grippeminaud

Oh! Ne fais pas l'étonné... tu sais fort bien qu'en servant ses projets, ce n'était ni pour elle ni pour toi que je faisais votre mariage. J'avais combiné tout un plan de vengeance: tu m'avais pris ma femme, je prenais la tienne. Tu sais que c'était convenu entre elle et moi; de cette façon nous étions quittes et bons amis.

Panurge

Oui, mais j'étais ce que vous êtes... et ça ne m'allait pas.

Grippeminaud

Je comprends ça. Aussi j'ai trouvé très-drôle la manière dont vous m'avez mis à la porte quand vous n'avez plus en besoin de moi.

Panurge

À la porte, non, nous vous avons prié de ne pas revenir; mais vois mettre à la porte...

Grippeminaud

C'était votre droit; et je le répète, j'ai trouvé ça très drôle...

Claquedent (*reparaissant au fond*)

Tiens! M. le Gouverneur...

Panurge

Et c'est pour me dire ça que vous venez...

Grippeminaud

Non, c'est pour l'annoncer une bonne nouvelle.

Panurge

Vraiment!

Claquedent (*se cabrant*)

Ecoutons.

Grippeminaud

Bonne pour moi.

Panurge

Pour vous...

Grippeminaud

Mon pauvre ami Panurge, tu vas être pendu.

Panurge

Hein!...

Claquedent

Qu'est-ce que j'entends?...

Panurge

Et pourquoi, s'il vous plaît, me pendrait-on?

Grippeminaud

Parce que le Seigneur Pantagruel a juré de faire pendre le traître qui a averti Rodilardus.

Claquedent

Aie! Aie! Aie!

Panurge

Et vous songez à m'accuser de ce crime?...

Grippeminaud

Moi, grand Dieu! Non, non... ce n'est pas moi, c'est Rodilardus, lui-même.

Panurge

Allons donc!

Grippeminaud

Je vais te dire à peu près ce que renferme une lettre de lui qui n'attend que mon bon plaisir pour être portée au palais de ton maître: "M. le Gouverneur, Panurge est un traître; il m'a envoyé son valet avec un message m'annonçant l'arrivée de Pantagruel avec une armée soi-disant dix fois plus forte que la mienne. Or, je viens d'apprendre que c'était tout le contraire, et qu'en me faisant donner cet avis, Panurge trahissait à la fois les deux partis. Je vous envoie sa lettre. Vengez-moi donc en vengeance Pantagruel du traître qui nous a trahis tous deux."

Claquedent (à part)

Je suis mort.

Panurge

C'est Rodilardus qui vous a écrit?

Grippeminaud

Et qui a signé sa lettre en m'envoyant la tienne.

Panurge

Je n'ai pas écrit, c'est une imposture.

Grippeminaud

Ça, c'est possible, mais ça ne me regarde pas. Mon devoir est d'envoyer le tout à Pantagruel, tu te tireras de là comme tu pourras. (*Il remonte*)

Panurge

M. le Gouverneur!

Grippeminaud

Hein, quoi?

Panurge

Vous ne ferez pas cela.

Grippeminaud

Quoi, qu'est-ce que je ne ferai pas?

Panurge

Ce n'est pas vous, mon vieil ami, qui vous ferez le complice d'un Rodilardus.

Grippeminaud

Pardon, pardon... C'est à moi que tu parles!... Mais, mon cher ami, tu ne comprends donc pas qu'une fois que tu vas être pendu, ta femme sera veuve, qu'elle redevient ce qu'elle était et qu'alors mon amour pour elle a toutes les chances possibles d'être fort bien accueilli.

Panurge

Mais c'est affreux ce que vous me dites là...

Grippeminaud

Oui, c'est affreux, mais ça n'est pas drôle. Certainement j'aurais bien préféré quelque chose de plus drôle, ce que je te disais tout-à-l'heure, par exemple; c'était de ton vivant que je voulais que les choses se fissent, afin que tu n'en puisses ignorer.

Panurge

Ah! Quant à se passer de mon vivant, jamais!

Grippeminaud (*remontant*)

Tu vois donc bien qu'il faut que l'on te pendre

Panurge (*l'arrêtant*)

Seigneur Grippeminaud

Grippeminaud

Eh bien! Quoi?

Panurge

Si nous cherchions quelque chose de plus drôle?

Grippeminaud

Crois-tu qu'on puisse trouver?

Panurge

Dame, en cherchant.

Grippeminaud (*sérieux*)

Ecoute Panurge, je t'ai dit que j'allais jouer cartes sur table et tu vas voir si je tiens parole. La chose est très drôle, je l'ai trouvée, moi.

Panurge

Ah!

Grippeminaud

Cela t'étonne mais je l'ai trouvée et tu vas voir que c'est bien simple, c'est aussi simple que mauvais goût, mais comme tu penses je ne m'arrêterai pas à cette considération... voici ce que j'ai trouvé. Il faut que toi même tu décides ta femme à venir me redemander, chez moi, les lettres que je tiens de Rodilardus.

Panurge

Chez vous

Grippeminaud

Chez moi.

Couplets

Grippeminaud

1.

Dans mon castel,
A mon appel
Ta femme bientôt doit se rendre
Moi l'œil ouvert
Et très bon air,
Rempli d'ardeur je vais attendre,
Mais sous mon toit
Rassure-toi,
Car, je m'engage à lui prendre,
Sans abuser,
Qu'un seul baiser
Mais je te jure, ils sera tendre!
Ah! Ah! amour
Accours en ce beau jour!
Et dans mon cœur,
De la vengeance double la saveur.

—

2.

Grippeminaud

Oui, ton pauvre cœur va se fendre.

Tu peux encore

Choisir ton sort,

Et demain l'on pourra te pendre.

Mais après tout,

Quel mauvais goût!

A ta femme je ne veux prendre.

Sans abuser

Qu'un seul baiser,

Mais t'assure il sera tendre.

Oh! Oh! amour,

Accours en ce beau jour

Et dans mon cœur,

De la vengeance double la saveur.

—
(*parle*)

Et je te donne une heure pour cela. Si dans une heure ta femme n'est pas venue, dans deux heures tu seras arrêté et ce soir ou demain, tu seras pendu.

Claquedent (*à part*)

Ah! Courons prévenir madame.

(*Il se glisse dans la maison*)

Grippeminaud (*revenant sur ses pas*)

Ah! Comme tu pourrais mettre à profit cette heure pour chercher à fuir avec Phœbé, je vous préviens que mes précautions sont prises (*il remonte et répète au moment de sortir*) que mes précautions sont bien prises.

(*il sort*)

Scène 8

Panurge, seul.

Pendu! Pendu! Ou... Cornes du diable! Tire-toi de là, Panurge, trouve un moyen de n'être ni l'un ni l'autre et encore mieux vaudrait être l'autre que l'un... voyons commençons par examiner... les... deux questions. Si je suis pendu, je suis mort; la mort, dit-on, c'est un remède à tout, et considérée comme remède... Oui, mais doit-on considérer comme un remède, ce qui est le plus grand des maux, le seul irréparable? Si l'on disait encore en mourant: "Je sauve Phébé..." mais non, je la livre au contraire, et je la livre à qui? À mon bourreau: donc la mort serait une bêtise, n'y pensons plus. L'autre moyen: dire à Phébé d'aller chercher ces lettres; lui dire: "Trompe-moi..." Un instant; commençons par analyser ce mot: "trompe-moi". Qu'appelle-t-on tromper? Il est clair que si ma femme m'obéit, elle ne me trompe pas. Non, mais elle me trompe pour m'obéir. Eh! Bien, puisque c'est par obéissance... Oui, mais le résultat est le même... examinons le résultat. Voilà une chose qui m'a fait peur toute ma vie. Eh! bien, voyons quel est son grand inconvénient? Y en a-t-il un, car on a

peur comme ça d'une foule de fantômes qui n'existent pas. Prenons pour exemple tous les maris de ma connaissance qui se trouvent dans ma position, est-ce que ça leur cause un préjudice, est-ce qu'ils s'en portent plus mal?... est-ce que ça empêche Grippeminaud d'être Gouverneur? Est-ce qu'on n'a pas vu des rois et des empereurs porter noblement le double poids de leur double couronne!... Mais au contraire, c'est quelquefois un titre de gloire; qui est-ce qui parlerait aujourd'hui de Ménélas si Hélène n'eut pas existé?... Supprimez Hélène, vous supprimez Ménélas. C'est clair, c'est logique et cependant...

Scène 9

Panurge, Phébé, Claquedent

Phébé

Qu'est-ce que j'apprends, tes jours sont en danger?...

Panurge

Tu sais déjà...

Claquedent

J'étais là, monsieur, j'ai tout entendu.

Phébé

Mais quelles sont donc ces lettres?... Qu'avez-vous fait?

Panurge

Hélas! C'est l'amour qui m'a perdu.

Phébé

L'amour...

Panurge

Je savais que Pantagruel, avec une poignée de soldats devait attaquer le camp de Rodilardus; je me disais: il va se faire exterminer, l'ennemi mettra tout à feu et à sang, il tuera les hommes et les femmes... naturellement je pensais à toi et alors j'ai cherché à tromper l'ennemi, à lui faire croire qu'il allait être surpris par des forces considérables et j'ai chargé Claquedent de porter cette nouvelle au camp de Rodilardus.

Phébé

Ô mon Dieu!

Panurge

Et Rodilardus pour se venger à son tour envoyé ma lettre au Gouverneur qui pour se venger aussi de toi et de moi ne consent à me rendre la lettre et celle de Rodilardus que si tu vas les lui redemander à lui-même.

Phébé

Oh! Pour cela, jamais!

Claquedent

Mais il faut y aller, madame. Si vous n'y allez pas, nous sommes perdus.

Phébé

Eh! Bien, Panurge à mon serment, mort ou vivant, je lui resterai fidèle.

Claquedent

Oh!

Panurge

Vivant, cette assurance me comble de joie, mais mort...

Claquedent

Oui, mort, qu'est-ce que vous voulez que ça lui fasse?

Phébé

Eh! Quoi, c'est ainsi que tous deux vous m'encouragez à la résistance.

Claquedent

Mais la résistance est coupable. Vous ne devez pas...

Panurge

Tais-toi Claquedent. Ecoute, ma petite femme, tu es mon trésor, mon trésor le plus précieux, mais pour te posséder, il faut que je vive, et quand je pense qu'en perdant la vie, je te perds... tu ne saurais croire la peine que j'éprouve.

Claquedent

Et moi donc...

Phébé

Moi aussi, être veuve après trois mois de mariage.

Panurge

C'est bien plus désagréable pour moi que pour toi.

Phébé

Oh! Non.

Panurge

Oh! Si.

Claquedent

Mais, si c'est désagréable pour vous jugez donc; moi qui n'ai pas de compensation.

Phébé (à Panurge)

Enfin, que veux-tu? Que j'aille chercher ces lettres.

Panurge

Ah! Si j'avais un autre moyen

Phébé

Cherchons...

Claquedent

Y n'y en a pas.

Panurge

En effet, la fuite est impossible, et si au bout d'une heure, Grippeminaud ne t'a pas vu, les lettres seront portées à Pantagruel.

Claquedent

Et l'heure s'avance, madame; vous n'avez que le temps.

Phébé

Tromper mon mari, je me le suis juré, jamais!

Trio

Panurge

Une seule femme est fidèle,
Une seule femme dit non,
Et voyez quel est mon guignon,
Il faut que je tombe sur elle.

Ensemble

Phébé

Oui j'ai juré de t'être fidèle,
De garder l'honneur de ton nom,
Et je serais par jure, non!
La mort me serait moins cruelle!

Claquedent

Lorsque notre sort dépend d'elle,
Elle s'obstine à dire non
Avons-nous assez de guignon
D'avoir une femme fidèle

Panurge

Une seule femme est fidèle
Etc.

Panurge

Cependant en raisonnant bien
Le mal, en certains cas extrême,
Le mal peut devenir un bien

Claquedent

Certainement et je dis même
Que dans ce cas fort anormal,

Faire le bien serait très mal.

Panurge

Voyons, je m'en rapporte à toi
Me tromperais-tu, chère amie,
Si je te disais: trompe-moi
Serait-ce de la tromperie?

Claquedent

Non, certes ce n'en serait pas,
Ce serait de l'obéissance.

Phébé

A vous comprendre je commence,
Eh! Bien voyons, qu'ordonnez-vous?

Panurge

Hélas!
Puisqu'il n'est plus d'autre moyen
De conserver avec ma vie
Mon trésor, ma femme chérie,
Pour vivre en t'adorant...

Phébé

Eh bien?

Panurge

Trompe-moi

Claquedent

Trompez-le

Panurge

Ma femme chérie
Nous avons tous deux assez combattu
Me tromper

Claquedent

Le tromper

Panurge

Pour sauver ma vie
C'est encore de la vertu.

Claquedent

Oui, certes, c'est de la vertu.

Claquedent et Panurge

Trompe-moi / Trompez-le || ma / sa femme chérie
Nous avons / Vous avez || tous deux assez combattu
Me tromper / Le tromper || pour sauver ma / sa vie
C'est encore de la vertu.

Phébé

Le tromper (bis) c'est lui qui m'en prie
Nous avons, dit-il, assez combattu
Le tromper (bis) pour sauver sa vie
C'est encore de la vertu

Non, t'obéir, serait une fausse nouvelle
Me reprochant ma lâche trahison
Demain tu me dirais que pour être infidèle
Je n'attendais qu'une bonne raison
Je t'ai juré, point ne l'oublie
Fidélité jusqu'à la mort
Et si tu meurs, je jure encor.
De te pleurer toute ma vie.

Panurge

Une seule femme est fidèle

Claquedent

C'est une abomination

Elle est fidèle

Par obstination.

Panurge et Claquedent

Ô désespoir, et c'est par elle

Que tous deux nous sommes perdus

Elle me / vous restera fidèle

Et demain, nous serons perdus.

Phébé

Je suis une femme modèle,

Je sais le respect qui t'est dû

Et je te resterai fidèle,

Quand tu devrais être pendu.

Voix de Grippeminaud (*dans le lointain*)

Oh là, batelier. Oh! Là!

Panurge

Cette voix...

Claquedent (*allant se cacher*)

Le Gouverneur!

Voix de Grippeminaud

Oh! Hé! Père Landry

Phébé (*qui est remontée*)

Mais oui, c'est lui. Il appelle le batelier pour traverser la Loire.

Panurge

C'est cela il porte les deux lettres au palais.

Phébé

Oh! Ce serait trop de bonheur.

Grippeminaud

Allons donc Landry, allons donc!

Phébé

Vite, cachez-vois et laissez-moi faire!

(*courant au fond et appelant*) Eh! M. le Gouverneur!

Claquedent

Ah! Dans le tonneau. (*Il entre dans l'un des tonneaux*)

Phébé (*au fond*)

Oui, par ici, par ici, venez vite.

Panurge

Elle l'appelle... ah! Cette armoire!

Phébé

Tiens! Mon mari dans l'armoire, ordinairement, c'est le contraire; mais voilà l'autre qui accourt... Attention Phébé.

Scène 10

Grippeminaud, Phébé

Grippeminaud (*au fond sans entrer*)

La vertueuse M^{me} Panurge me fait l'honneur de m'appeler.

Phébé

Un honneur que vous ne méritez guère.

Grippeminaud

En toute autre occasion, j'aurais beaucoup de choses à répondre à M^{me} Panurge, mais je suis pressé, que me veut-elle?

Phébé

Est-ce que vous avez peur de moi, que vous restez à cette porte?

Grippeminaud (*sans bouger*)

De vois, non... mais...

Phébé

De mon mari peut-être... ah! Le pauvre cher homme, si vous croyez qu'il est resté ici à vous attendre.

Grippeminaud

Oh! Je le défie bien d'avoir quitté le pays

Phébé

Le pays, c'est possible, mais il est grand le pays.

Grippeminaud (*passant la porte*)

C'est-à-dire qu'il se cache, est-ce dans la cave ou au grenier?

Phébé

Allons donc, il n'y a que les lièvres pour se cacher au gîte, Panurge est plus malin que ça.

Grippeminaud

Tu veux me faire croire qu'il n'est plus ici.

Phébé

Ici, pas si bête! Oh! Vous pouvez entrer et visiter la maison de fond en comble; si vous le trouvez, je vous permets de le pendre.

Grippeminaud

Ici, ou ailleurs, on le trouvera; et c'est une permission dont j'abuserai.

Phébé

Oh! Je ne vous en veux pas, je suis franche; à votre place, je ferais ce que vous faites...

Grippeminaud

Tu vois donc bien...

Phébé

Oui, mais je le ferais plus adroitement

Grippeminaud

Comment?

Phébé

Quand on propose un marché, il faut avoir l'air d'u mettre de la conscience.

Grippeminaud

De la conscience.

Phébé

Panurge ne demandait pas mieux que de m'envoyer chercher ses lettres, et moi, je ne demandais pas mieux que d'y aller.

Grippeminaud

Ah!

Phébé

Mais comme nous nous sommes dit: une fois chez le Gouverneur, la pauvre Phébé est en son pouvoir et quant aux lettres, bernique! Panurge est trompé et pendu.

Grippeminaud

Tu as pu croire...

Phébé

Oh! Ne dites pas le contraire, c'était votre intention.

Grippeminaud

Non, je te le jure et même bien mieux; faire pendre Panurge me coûte énormément, mais d'un autre côté, j'ai à me venger de lui, d'un autre côté, je t'aime à la folie, et je me suis juré que tu serais à moi; or, tu vois que je suis sincère, et que si tu veux, il en est encore temps, il faut dégager.

Phébé

A l'hôtel de M. le Gouverneur.

Grippeminaud

Où tu voudras

Phébé

Et puis, j'irai chercher les lettres après.

Grippeminaud

Non, je les ai sur moi.

Phébé

Sur vous

Grippeminaud

J'allais les porter à Pantagruel

Phébé

Vous dites ça.

Grippeminaud

Les voici...

Phébé

Donnez.

Grippeminaud (*Les resserrant*)

Non pas, tu ne voudrais pas que j'eusse en toi plus de confiance que tu ne m'en témoignes.

Phébé

C'est juste.

Grippeminaud

Oh! Pas ici, d'abord nous serions mal à l'aise pour causer. Mais tiens, auprès ici, cet endroit charmant, cette allée de tilleuls, tu ne me refuserai pas engager.

Phébé

Taratata! Prouvez-moi d'abord que les deux lettres sont là.

Grippeminaud

Volontiers, en cas de trahison de ta part, ce ne sera qu'une enveloppe à refaire. Éloigne-toi, voici les deux lettres.

Phébé

Parfait...

Grippeminaud

Et maintenant..

Phébé

Attendez... je crois que j'ai trouvé un moyen...

Grippeminaud

Un moyen?

(musique à l'orchestre sur le parle qui suit)

Phébé

Mettez les deux lettres dans cette armoire, et jetez la clé dans la rivière.

Grippeminaud

Eh! Bien après?

Phébé

Après?... je vous suivrai

Grippeminaud

Je veux bien le croire, mais...

Phébé

Ne le dois-je pas par dévouement. Et quant à vous vous n'emporterez pas l'armoire, je pense?

Grippeminaud (*avec galanterie*)

A moins que tu ne sois dedans; et encore... allons, je souscris volontiers. (*il ouvre l'armoire de la main droite en présentant de la gauche les deux lettres à l'armoire.*)

Panurge (*saisissant les deux lettres*)

Merci, monsieur le Gouverneur

(*la musique cesse.*)

Grippeminaud

Panurge!

Panurge (*déchirant*)

Notre très humble!

Grippeminaud

Trahison!

Panurge

C'est de bonne guerre

Grippeminaud (*regardant Phébé*)

Perfidie!

Phébé

N'étiez-vous pas honteux?... à votre âge!

Grippeminaud

Quel âge croyez-vous donc que j'ai?

Phébé

Je ne tiens pas à le savoir.

Grippeminaud

Ah! Vous croyez triompher? Eh! Bien je m'en vais vous dénoncer moi-même.

Panurge

Sans preuve écrite on ne vous croira pas.

Grippeminaud

Mais Rodilardus existe, et... il m'aidera à vous confondre.

Phébé

Eh! Bien, vous reviendrez.

Grippeminaud

Non! Assez d'armoire.

(*on entend rire au dehors.*)

Scène 11

Les mêmes, tous les Personnages de la 1^{ère} scène

Final

Tous (*entrant en riant*)

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

La plaisante aventure

Non personne, je le jure

N'aurait jamais prévu cela!

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Panurge

Nous direz-vous qui vous fait rire?

Coupe-oreille

Pantagruel vient de nous dire

Que de Gargantua, la réputation

Faisant mourir de jalousie

Rodilardus,

Brisepaille

Il eut la fantaisie

De manger comme, si bien que près Noyon

Rodilardus vient de perdre la vie

Il est mort d'indigestion

Reprise

Tous

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

La plaisante aventure

Non personne, je le jure

N'aurait jamais prévu cela!

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Phébé, Panurge, Claquedent

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Grâce à cette aventure

Jamais, jamais, tout nous l'assure

Rodilardus ne parlera

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Grippeminaud

Ciel! Ce nouvel accident là
Vient combler la mesure
Ainsi de leur nouvelle injure
Personne ne vengera
Pouvais-je m'attendre à cela?

Panurge

Pour célébrer cette bonne nouvelle,
J'offre un festin

Phébé (*à Grippeminaud*)

Ne fût-ce que pour elle
Monsieur le Gouverneur,
D'y présider vous nous ferez l'honneur.

Grippeminaud

Comment donc ma très chère,
Mais c'est avec bonheur
(*à part*) malgré tout faut faire
Contre fortune bon cœur.

Panurge

Vive monsieur le Gouverneur

Tous

Vive monsieur le Gouverneur!

Phébé (*au public*)

Messieurs, sommes-nous certains,
Dans cette intrigue modeste,
D'être arrivés à nos fins?
Non, un point encor nous reste,
C'est à vous de le trancher,
Puisse ma voix vous toucher!
Que personne ne s'insurge.

Applaudissez sur tous les tons,
Comme les moutons (bis)
Applaudissez sur tous les tons,
Comme les moutons
De Panurge.

Tous
Applaudissez, etc.

Fin

Panurge

Opéra-comique en trois actes et dix tableaux

Composer : Robert Planquette
Librettistes : Henri Meilhac, Albert de Saint-Albin

Performed for the first time at the *Théâtre de la Gaîté*, 22/11/1895

Personnages

Panurge
Cocolati
Trouillogan
Pantagruel
Carpalim
Her Trippa
Chef des Odeurs suaves
Maclou
Le compositeur de musique
2^e paysan
1^{ère} agent
La Minerve
Maitre de Ballet
L'introducteur
L'intendant
Une horreur
Un buveur

Philocloea
Nicole
Caterina
Philiberto
1^{ère} page
Mme Maclou
2^e Page

ACTE 1

1^{ère} Tableau

Scène 1^{ère}

Philocloea, ses femmes Nicole

Une sorte de cour d'amour, présidée par Philocloea, femme de Pantagruel

Chœur

Philocloea, ses femmes, Nicole

De tous les fléaux que les femmes
Eut à supporter tour à tour
Le plus dur pour nous, nobles dames,
C'est l'amour, le perfide amour

Philocloea

Vous savez de quel prix mon époux, mon doux maître
a payé ma tendresse et ma fidélité

Les femmes

Nous le savons.

Philocloea

Je l'aimais ; vous savez que j'ai surpris le traître
Aux pieds d'une autre femme et qu'il n'a pas nié.

Les femmes

Nous le savons...

Philocloea

Redites-nous l'affront de peur que je n'oublie,
Redites-nous le mal que nous causa l'amour.

Les femmes

Nous essaierons

(Prélude. Nicole se détache du groupe)

Nicole, (parlé)

Il convient de fuir l'amour

(Elle chante)

C'est en vain que tous les poètes
Ceux d'autrefois, ceux d'aujourd'hui
Ont chanté les plaisirs, les fêtes
Que l'amour amène avec lui.

Feu décevant, promesse vaine,
Ces plaisirs qu'ils osent vanter,
Que sont-ils auprès de la peine
Qu'on éprouve à se voir tromper?..

Et c'est le sort inévitable
L'inquiétude, le soupçon,
La jalousie abominable
Les larmes et la trahison!

Voilà ce que tous les poètes
Devraient dire et diront un jour...
Malgré ses plaisirs et ses fêtes
Il convient donc de fuir l'amour!...

(Les compagnes de Philocloea l'applaudissent, Philocloea l'embrasse)

Reprise de Chœur

De tous les fléaux que les femmes
Eut à supporter tour à tour
Le plus dur pour nous, nobles dames,
C'est l'amour, le perfide amour!...

Philocloea (*parlé*)

L'amour, le perfide amour... vous avez très bien chanté cela, M^{lle} Nicole, et vous y avez mis l'intention qu'il faut...

Nicole

Noble dame!..

Philocloea

Je serai enchantée de vous être agréable, et je vous accorderai bien volontiers la récompense que vous me demanderez...

Nicole

Je n'ai pas besoin de récompense...

Philocloea

Bon, demandez toujours...

Nicole

Votre altesse permet

Philocloea

Sans doute, je permets... qui est-ce que vous voudriez?

Nicole

Je voudrais être mariée..

Philocloea (*stupéfaite*)

Vous avez dit!...

Nicole

J'ai dit que je voudrais être mariée...

Philocloea

Comment, vous venez de chanter que tous les hommes étaient des monstres et qu'il fallait fuir l'amour et après, lorsque je vous demande qu'elle récompense vous voulez, vous osez me dire...

(Entre un page)

Le Page

Le Sire de Pantagruel

Philocloea

Mon mari! Nous reprendrons cette conversation tout-à-l'heure... en attendant, vous êtes une sotte.

(Entre Pantagruel)

Scène 2^e

Les Mêmes, Pantagruel

Pantagruel *(baisant la main de Philocloea)*

Ma chère épouse... vous m'en voulez toujours à ce qu'il pouvait...

Philocloea

Certainement, je vous en veux toujours. Vous m'avez trompée, je vous ai dit que je ne vous le pardonnerais jamais et jamais je ne vous le pardonnerai.

Pantagruel

C'est net...

Philocloea

Je ne présume pas que si vous êtes venu me voir ce soit seulement pour vous faire dire cela.

Pantagruel

Non pas, je suis venu pour autre chose...

(Philocloea s'assied, Pantagruel s'assied à son tour)

Mesdemoiselles, je vous en prie... Oh! Oh! M^{elle} Nicole, vous avez une figure bien sérieuse.

(Nicole va reprendre. Philocloea laisse pas le temps.)

Philocloea *(à Pantagruel)*

Ne vous occupez pas de Nicole, dites-moi d'abord...

Pantagruel

Je vais tout à l'heure vous présenter un étranger de distinction... le Prince Cocolati...

Philocloea

Ce seigneur Italien?...

Pantagruel

Oui, ce seigneur Italien, dont la fortune est immense, incalculable et il a eu la bonne idée de venir la dépenser chez nous, cette fortune incalculable...

Philocloea

J'ai entendu parler d'un château superbe qu'il s'est fait bâtir en Touraine, à une dizaine de lieues d'ici...

Pantagruel

Les jardins surtout sont merveilleux. Cocolati prétend que pas une femme ne saurait s'y promener pendant une heure sans tomber dans les bras du cavalier qu'elle avait choisi pour l'accompagner. Tout y respire l'amour, tout y semble fait pour l'amour, on y trouve des grottes qui sont membrées le plus galamment du monde et des bosquets où se sont entendre les musiques les plus voluptueuses qui se puissent imaginer.

Philocloea

Dites-moi, il est marié votre Prince Cocolati?

Pantagruel

Sans doute, sa femme est tout justement à son château.

Philocloea

Et quand il a envie de se promener dans ce jardin merveilleux, j'imagine qu'il ne s'y promène qu'avec sa femme...

Pantagruel

Je n'en sais bien, mais vous allez pouvoir le lui demander à lui-même... j'entends du bruit et je pense qu'on vous l'amène...

Philocloea, (entre des dents)

Tous les hommes se valent...

Pantagruel

[...]-il?

Philocloea

Rien, une réflexion sans importance....

(Entre l'introducteur des ambassadeurs)

L'Introducteur

Le Prince Cocolati est là... Il est accompagné par les seigneurs qui d'ordinaire assistent à ce genre de cérémonie...

Pantagruel

Faites entrer les seigneurs et faites entrer le Prince Cocolati

Scène 3^e

Les mêmes, Les Seigneurs, puis Cocolati

Les Seigneurs, (entrant)

Nous venons tous comme il convient
Foule sérieuse ou frivole
Pour voir si l'on ne manque en rien
Au Protocole.

(Entre Cocolati, Pantagruel, va au-devant de lui, l'Introduiteur des ambassadeurs remet avec un grand salut, un papier à dame Philocloea, un autre à Pantagruel et un troisième à Cocolati.)

Pantagruel, *(lisant son papier)*

Je vous présente mon ami
Le haut seigneur Cocolati
Qui de votre sante, veut avoir des nouvelles.

Cocolati, *(lisant)*

Je vous le demande à genoux,
Quelles sont-elles,
Madame!. Autrement dit, comment vous portez-vous?

Philocloea

Pas mal, et vous?

Cocolati

Très bien aussi, ne vous déplaie.

Philocloea

J'en suis fort aise

Pantagruel

Mesdames, messieurs, la cérémonie
Est finie!

Les Seigneurs, *(s'en allant)*

Nous avons, dans cet entretien

Tantôt grave, tantôt frivole
Vu que l'on ne manquait en rien
Au Protocole

Tout le monde
Le Protocole!

Scène 4^e

Les mêmes, moins Les Seigneurs

Pantagruel, (à Cocolati)

Ne m'avez-vous pas dit que vous aviez pour notre épouse bien-aimée une lettre de la Princesse Cocolati...

Cocolati

La voici... *(la remettant à Philocloea)* Madame.

Philocloea

Cette lettre me donne l'idée la plus favorable de la Princesse Cocolati... dès demain elle aura mon épouse.

Pantagruel (à Cocolati)

Maintenant, selon l'usage, nous allons avoir cinq minutes de conversation familière...

Cocolati

Familière?

Pantagruel

Oui...

Cocolati

On ne sera pas forcé d'avoir de l'esprit, alors...

Pantagruel

Ce sera comme vous voudriez...

Cocolati

Alors, j'aime mieux qu'on ne soit pas forcé... Quand je veux avoir de l'esprit à toute force, je n'en ai pas...

Pantagruel

Ah!

Cocolati

Non, je suis guindé, mal à mon aise, tandis que lorsque je ne tiens pas à en avoir...

Pantagruel

Vous en avez?

Cocolati

Non, mais alors comme on ne s'attend pas à ce que j'en aie, c'est moins grave...

Pantagruel

En effet : du reste, ce n'est pas vous qui mènerez la conversation, vous n'avez qu'à répondre.

Cocolati

J'aime mieux ça, c'est plus facile.

Philocloea

Prince...

Pantagruel (*à Cocolati*)

Eh bien allez, on vous parle...

Cocolati

Ah! Bon

Philocloea

Prince.

Cocolati

Madame.

Philocloea

Comment êtes-vous arrivé à posséder cette immense fortune?

Cocolati

Je vais vous dire, madame. Papa a été premier ministre dans notre pays...

Philocloea

Alors, tout naturellement...

Cocolati

Oui, quand papa n'a plus été là on a essayé de me la reprendre. Mais savez-vous ce que j'ai fait moi, malin...

Philocloea

Non, nous ne savons pas.

Cocolati

Je l'ai fait passer dans le pays voisin, le pays voisin c'était le vôtre. J'ai d'abord envoyé ma fortune, maintenant j'y viens de ma personne...

Philocloea

Pour faire un peu la fête...

Cocolati

Mon Dieu, oui.

Philocloea

Pour tromper votre femme?

Cocolati

Oui, c'est-à-dire non, c'est-à-dire si. Cela évidemment arrivera à un moment donné... (*Philocloea se lève*) mais enfin, ce n'est pas pour ça que je suis venu.

Pantagruel

La conversation est terminée.

Cocolati

Ah! Ça été bien, n'est-ce pas?

Pantagruel

Ça n'a pas été trop mal. Comment voulez-vous vous en aller?

Cocolati

Mais, par la porte...

Pantagruel

Non, je vous demande si vous voulez vous en aller avec de la musique, ou bien tout simplement à la bonne banquette.

Cocolati

J'aime mieux la bonne banquette ... je ne serai pas fâché maintenant d'avoir recours à l'incognito et d'aller voir les endroits où l'on s'amuse, le cabaret de la Grand Pinte, par exemple...

Pantagruel

Allez-y, je vous donnerai deux hommes pour vous accompagner.

Cocolati

Vous n'y venez pas, vous...?

Pantagruel

Non, je ne peux pas, je vous assure, dans ma situation, je ne peux pas...

Cocolati

Je regrette... *(saluant)* Madame... *(Philocloea lui fait un salut très froid)* Mesdemoiselles... *(Les Demoiselles éclatent de rire)* Elles sont gaies... *(Pantagruel ouvre la porte)* Monseigneur ne vous donnez pas la peine, je vous en prie... *(nouvel éclat de rire des Demoiselles)* Elles sont gaies, j'aime ça, moi... *(il sort)*.

Scène 5^e

Les mêmes, moins Cocolati

Pantagruel

Décidément, ma pauvre Nicole, il n'y a pas moyen de vous dérider... qu'est-ce que vous avez, voyons...

Nicole

M^{me} Philocloea m'a grondée.

Pantagruel

Vraiment, et qu'a-t-elle fait pour être grondée.

Philocloea

Elle m'a déplu...

Pantagruel

Mais encore...

Philocloea

Elle venait de chanter des choses très jolies et très sages, que l'amour est haïssable et que tous les maris...

Pantagruel

Sont tous à pendre...

Philocloea

Justement... je lui dis qu'elle avait très bien chanté, c'était vrai, je lui demande quelle récompense elle désire... là-dessus, elle me répond.

Pantagruel

Elle vous répond...

Philocloea

Qu'elle désire se marier...

Pantagruel

Cela vous a étonnée.

Philocloea

Cela m'a indignée.

Pantagruel

Mais cela ne m'étonne ni ne m'indigne... Et je suis bien sûr que ces demoiselles non plus ne sont m'indignées, ni...

(Assentiment des demoiselles d'honneur)

Philocloea

Qu'est-ce que c'est?

(Les demoiselles se taisent)

Pantagruel

Donc M^{elle} Nicole, vous voudriez vous marier et qui voudriez-vous épouser?

Nicole

Si je le dis, cela va encore fâcher Madame...

Philocloea

Bon, dites toujours.

Nicole

Je voudrais épouser Panurge...

Philocloea

Ce vaurien, ce sacripant...

Nicole

Vous voyez bien.

Pantagruel

Mais pas du tout, Panurge n'est pas un sacripant... Il a bien quelques petits défauts... ce n'est pas un ange assurément...

Philocloea

Ah!

Pantagruel

Mais qui l'est ici-bas?

Philocloea

Personne, monseigneur, vous avez raison...

Pantagruel

Panurge est un garçon d'esprit, un garçon que j'aime beaucoup... (*à Nicole*) connaît-il son bonheur?... Lui avez-vous fait part...

Nicole

Oh! Non, monseigneur, je ne me serais pas permis.

Pantagruel (*il frappe sur un timbre, entre un page*)

Qu'on aille me chercher Panurge... et qu'on me l'amène dès qu'on l'aura trouvé... (*le page sort à Philocloea*) dans ces jardins de Cocolati, il y a un endroit qu'on appelle Cythère. Il paraît que c'est là surtout que la promenade est irrésistible... ne voudriez-vous pas, un jour, vous y promenez avec moi?

Philocloea

Si fait, monseigneur, à la condition que vous m'aviez d'abord fait passer dans une allée où je perdrai tout souvenir de votre trahison.

(*Rentre le Page*)

Le Page

Ou l'a trouvé, monseigneur, ou vous l'amène... le voilà!

Scène 6^e

Les mêmes, Panurge.

(*Entre Panurge, poussé par des pages, des Seigneurs.*)

Panurge

Eh! Bien, oui le voilà Panurge... qu'est-ce qu'on lui veut?

Pantagruel

Drôle... c'est moi qui t'ai envoyé chercher...

Panurge

Monseigneur!...

Pantagruel

Comme le voilà fait d'où viens-tu?

Le Page

On l'a trouvé dans le vieux moulin abandonné. Il était là avec la petite Pervette.

Philocloea (*triomphante*)

Ah! Ah!

Panurge

Oui, cette petite ne se tient pas comme une jeune personne devrait se tenir... Je l'avais fait venir là pour lui donner de bons conseils... mais ses parents sont convives, ils ont prétendu que j'essayais de la séduire... alors, comme j'étais seul ils ont voulu battre le pauvre Panurge.

Pantagruel

Tu seras donc toujours le même...

Panurge

Dame, oui, monseigneur, le plus longtemps que je pourrai...

Pantagruel

Moi qui étais justement en train de dire du bien de toi...

Panurge

Ne le regrettez pas, monseigneur... je vous assure que je le mérite... je vous assure que je ne suis pas méchant...

Pantagruel

Enfin, il faut espérer que tu vas changer de conduite, on te marie.

Panurge

Mais, je ne veux pas...

Pantagruel

Comment, tu ne veux pas!...

Panurge

Je ne peux pas... j'ai promis à M^{lle} Nicole que si jamais je mourais.

Pantagruel

Justement, c'est avec Nicole que l'on te marie

Panurge

Avec Nicole...

Pantagruel

Oui.

Panurge

C'est différent alors, il est bien évident que si c'est avec Nicole...

Nicole

Oui, Panurge, c'est avec moi...

Panurge

Mais c'est égal, m'annoncer cela aussi brusquement... nous n'avons même pas eu le temps de causer un brin tous les deux...

Pantagruel

Nous allons vous laisser pour que vous avez le temps de causer un brin... quand vous avez causé, nous viendrons vous demander une épouse définitive. (*À Philocloea*) Vous voulez bien que nous laissions?...

Philocloea

Comment, donc, à Dieu ne plaise que je gêne un mariage qui se présente sous d'aussi heureux auspices.

Philocloea et ses femmes

Heureux époux

Consultez-vous

Avant d'entrer en mariage
Rien n'est plus sage!
Quand vous avez pris un parti
Que ce soit oui
Que ce soit non
Plaise à Dieu que ce soit le bon!

Philocloea

Je souhaite moi de tout cœur
Lui sait, cela sera peut-être
Que l'union du serviteur
Tourne mieux que celui du maître

Reprise

Heureux époux

(Après la reprise, sortie. Restent en scène Panurge et Nicole.)

Scène 7^e

Panurge, Nicole

Panurge *(se grattant la tête)*

Vous tenez à ce que je vous épouse...

Nicole

Sans doute, j'y tiens, est-ce que c'est une question à adresser à une honnête fille...

Panurge

Non, ce n'est pas une question...

Nicole

C'est si gentil le mariage.

Panurge

Oui, c'est gentil, il n'y a pas à dire le contraire, c'est très gentil, et pourtant il a un défaut, le mariage, si gentil qu'il soit...

Nicole

Lequel?

Panurge

C'est que lorsqu'on a été marié un jour ou l'est encore le lendemain, et les jours suivants aussi et toujours, toujours...

Nicole

C'est ce qui en fait le charme...

Panurge

Vous trouvez?

Nicole

Eh! Oui, c'est quand on a été heureux un jour de savoir qu'on le sera encore le lendemain et encore pendant les jours qui suivront et toujours, toujours...

Panurge

Il est clair que si on le prend comme cela...

Nicole

C'est comme cela qu'il faut le prendre...

Panurge

Nicole...

Nicole

Panurge...

Panurge

Alors décidément, vous tenez à ce que je vous?... Non, non, je ne l'ai pas dit...

Nicole

Je me fâcherai à la fin, vous hésitez trop je ne croyais pas mériter...

Panurge

Eh! S'il n'y avait que vous... je dirais oui tout de suite, s'il n'y avait que vous... mais il y a ce Diable de mariage...

Nicole

De quoi avez-vous peur...

Panurge

Eh! Pardieu, j'ai peur... non, je n'ai pas peur de cela précisément, mais enfin...

Nicole

Moi, qui croyais que vous m'aimiez...

Panurge

Ah! Oui par exemple, pour ce qui est d'aimer je vous aime de tout mon cœur, Nicole, je vous aime de toutes mes forces...

Nicole

Eh bien?

Panurge,

Eh bien, Dame...

Nicole

Après tant de gentilles paroles que vous m'avez dites dans tous les coins, après tant de promesses que vous m'avez faites...

Panurge

Je vous ai fait des promesses, moi...

Nicole

Sans doute.

Duo

1.

Nicole

Vous m'avez dit, souvenons-nous

Que vous me trouviez très jolie

Et que pour vous

Le sort qui serait le plus doux

Serait de passer votre vie

À mes genoux

L'avez-vous dit?

Panurge

Oui c'est certain

Nicole

Ça voulait dire, je suppose

Que vous aspiriez à ma main.

Panurge

Ça disait peut-être chose.

Et cependant, j'avoue ici

En prenant des mines contrites

Que ça pouvait s'entendre aussi

De la manière que vous dites!

2.

Nicole

Vous m'avez dit que vous bruliez
De me faire un tas de caresses
Et qu'à mes pieds
Il suffisait que vous restiez
Pour sentir mille et mille ivresses
Tant vous m'aimiez!
L'avez-vous dit?

Panurge

Oui, c'est certain.

Nicole

Ça voulait dire, je suppose.
Que vous aspiriez à ma main?

Panurge

Ça disait peut-être autre chose
Et cependant, j'avoue ici,
En prenant des mines contrites,
Que ça pouvait s'entendre aussi
De la manière que vous dites!

Ensemble

Nicole

Ça ne peut pas avoir en deux sens
Réponds-moi donc, je te l'ordonne
La façon dont je le comprends
Est bien la bonne?

Panurge

Non, ça ne peut avoir qu'un sens
Rassure-toi donc, ma mignonne
La façon dont tu le comprends
Est bien la bonne!

Nicole

Donc, tu m'épouses?

Panurge

C'est juré!

Mais toi, pour gage du marché

Tu me donneras un baiser.

Nicole

Un baiser.

Panurge

Un baiser.

Nicole

Je devais te le refuser

Et cependant je te le donne

Je suis si bonne

Pourvu qu'il soit bien convenu

Bien entendu

Que ce baiser n'est qu'un baiser

De fiançailles

Un simple baiser d'accordailles.

Ensemble

C'est entendu, c'est un baiser

De fiançailles.

Un simple baiser d'accordailles.

Scène 8^e

Les Mêmes, Pantagruel

Pantagruel

Eh bien, je n'ai rien à vous demander il me semble, vous êtes d'accord...

Panurge

Parfaitement d'accord, nous nous marrions vaille que vaille...

Nicole

Vous faites bien, monsieur Panurge.

Pantagruel

Allez, retrouvez votre maîtresse, M^{lle} Nicole, elle ne vous adressa pas un reproche, j'ai fait votre paix avec elle... Elle est quelque peu rancunière, ma chère épouse, et si elle trouve une occasion de vous jouer un tour...

Nicole

Elle peut me faire ce qu'elle voudra... elle ne m'empêchera pas d'être heureuse, très heureuse

(Elle envoie un baiser à Panurge et elle sort)

Scène 9^e

Panurge, Pantagruel

Pantagruel

Et toi, j'aime à croire que toi aussi tu es content, très content...

Panurge

Mais oui, très content, très content... cependant...

Pantagruel

Cependant?...

Panurge

Je sens-là, en dedans, quelque chose qui me chiffonne... il y a dans la vie des choses qui dépendent de nous, n'est-ce pas, qui ne dépendent que de nous...

Pantagruel

Sans doute...

Panurge

Si l'on tient à ne pas être pauvre il n'y a qu'à travailler ou qui à être un coquin...

Pantagruel

Holà!

Panurge

Si l'on tient à ne pas être battu il n'y a qu'à être brave ou qu'à éviter les coups, mais si l'on tient à ne pas être trompé par sa femme...

Pantagruel

Eh bien mais il n'y a qu'à l'aimer, qu'à lui être fidèle...

Panurge

En êtes-vous bien sûr, monseigneur... Toute femme, voyez-vous, est comme Pandore. Elle a dans ses mains une boîte que l'on ouvre seulement le jour du mariage, on voit alors ce qu'il y a dedans... jusque-là, personne ne s'en doutait ni le mari, ni la femme elle-même, le diable le savait peut-être mais comme il se gardait bien d'en rien dire...

Pantagruel (*en riant*)

Si c'est de cette façon-là que tu es décidé...

Panurge

Si fait, je suis décidé, tout à fait décidé, et pourtant, avant de sauter le pas, je ne serais pas fâché de consulter mes amis...

Pantagruel

N'est-ce que cela?... Voici messieurs mes courtisans qui savent la nouvelle et qui viennent te féliciter...

Panurge

Mais non, je veux dire mes amis de la Grand Pinte...

Pantagruel

Consulte toujours ceux-ci puisque tu les as sous la main, je te laisse avec eux.

Scène 10^e

Panurge, Les Courtisans (chœur masqué et prétentieux)

Finale

Panurge

Mais ce n'est pas, je dois le déclarer
Pas de ces amis-là que je voulais parler

Les courtisans *(d'une voix prétentieuse)*

Monsieur Pa-urge, permettez
Et souffrez,
Qu'avec des mots que la décence expurge
Monsieur Pa-urge
Nous vous complimentons
Et félicitons
De l'avantage
Que vous allez avoir d'entrer en mariage

Panurge

Je suis confus...

Les Courtisans

Monsieur Pa-urge

Panurge

Non mais vraiment...

Les Courtisans

Nicole est une Demoiselle

D'un mérite éclatant

Honneur à la plus belle

Et gloire au plus vaillant!

Panurge

Ils m'ennuient avec leur Pa-urge

Les Courtisans

Nous vous saluons!

Panurge

J'ai l'honneur d'être votre humble serviteur.

Et je vous laisse...

Les Courtisans

Permettez

Et souffrez

Qu'avec des mots que la décence expurge

Monsieur Pa-urge

(Après avoir deux ou trois fois essayé de se sauver, Panurge se sauve, Les Courtisans le suivent enchantent la suite)

Les Courtisans

Nous vous félicitons

Et compliments
De l'avantage
Que vous allez avoir d'entrer en mariage

Rideau

2^e Tableau

Le Cabaret de la Grand Pinte

Scène 1^{ère}

Buveur, Ribaudes, puis Her Trippa (hôtelier)

Le chœur

À nous tous les malchanceux

Grelotteux et marmiteux

Gens de rien et gens de peu

Lui n'avez ni feu ni lieu

À nous

C'est maintenant qu'il faut frapper la terre

C'est maintenant qu'il faut briser son verre.

(Entre Her Trippa)

Trippa

Va falloir être gentils, mes enfants; nous allons recevoir une visite d'importance... un Prince italien, le Prince Cocolati, rien que cela...

Les Buveurs

Un Prince!

(Mouvement)

Trippa

Doucement hé! Il ne faudra pas lui faire des farces, il est assuré... et il a payé son assurance... il visitera les souterrains... celui des horreurs spécialement

Une des horreurs

Les v'là...

Trippa *(les passant en revue)*

Oui, pas mal... je ne vois pas Pille-Miche...

L'Horreur

N'a pas pu venir... y travaille...

Trippa

Ne le dérangeons pas, il n'aime pas ça... *(aux horreur)* c'est bien, allez-vous-en dans votre souterrain, et vous savez quand le Prince sera là, n'oubliez pas les grincements de dents.

Les Horreurs

Comme ça...

(Ils grincent)

Trippa

Oui, et si cela vous amuse, bousculez-le un peu... qu'il puisse plus tard racontez qu'il a en peur.

(Les horreurs sortent)

(Reprise du chœur)

Reprise du chœur

C'est maintenant qu'il faut frapper la terre

C'est maintenant qu'il faut briser son verre!

(Entre le prince Cocolati avec les deux hommes qui l'escortent)

1^{ère} Buveur *(bas à Trippa)*

C'est le Prince, pas vrai?

Trippa

Sûr que c'est lui.

Scène 2^e

Les Mêmes, Cocolati

Chœur *(à mi-voix)*

Voyons donc c'te têt, c'te bobine

R'gardez-le donc

Pas la peïn' d'êtr'riche à millions

Pour avoir un' si fiche' mine...

(Cocolati, tout en demandant pardon aux gens qu'il dérange, finit par arriver sur le devant de la scène)

Cocolati

Je veux, comme c'est la coutume

Chez les gens de distinction

Aller étudier l'écume

De cette population!

J'honorerai de ma présence

Les tripots, les bouges malsains

Où l'on peut faire connaissance

Avec messieurs les assassins

Les Hommes

Nous le suivons

Nous l'escortons!

Cocolati

Quelqu'un m'objectera sans doute

Qu'un tel voyage est dangereux

Et qu'on peut très bien sur la route

Empocher une brique ou deux...

Je ne crains rien, je m'abandonne

À ces deux braves qui sont là.

Ils veilleront sur ma personne...

Ils sont d'ailleurs payés pour ça.

Ensemble

Les Hommes

Nous l'accompagnerons dans ses hardis voyages

Nous le défendrons

Le protégeront

Et s'il faut en venir aux coups

Nous tâcherons en hommes sages

Que ce soit lui qui les reçoive et non pas nous

Cocolati

Ils m'accompagneront dans ce hardi voyage

Ils me défendront

Me protégeront

Et si l'on se bat par ma foi

Ils sauront en gens de courage

Recevoir seuls les coups, tout pour eux, rien pour moi!

Trippa

Maintenant, monseigneur, vous allez vous amuser... par ici, monseigneur.

(Cocolati et ses hommes font un pas vers la gauche. Entre Panurge).

Scène 3^e

Les Mêmes, Panurge

Cris, *(parmi les buveurs)*

C'est Panurge... Bonsoir Panurge.... Ohé Panurge!

Panurge

Eh! Oui, c'est moi. Bonsoir mes amis.

(Les hommes donnent des poignées de main à Panurge, les femmes l'embrassent. Cocolati qui allait sortir avec ses hommes revient vers Panurge.)

Cocolati

Est-il possible? Seriez-vous ce Panurge que monseigneur Pantagruel aime tant?

Panurge

C'est moi-même...

Cocolati, *(voulant l'embrasser)*

Permettez, alors...

Panurge

Pardon, qui êtes-vous?

Cocolati, *(avec fierté)*

Moi? Mais.... (*Souriant en regardant son costume*) C'est vrai, vous ne pouvez pas savoir... que l'homme est peu de chose quand il est mal habillé... ne me jugez pas sur l'apparence, je vous en prie. Je suis le Prince Cocolati. (*Bas*) Ma fortune est immense...

Panurge

J'ai entendu parler de vous. Qu'est-ce que vous faites là?

Cocolati

J'étudie les bas-fonds, je vais visiter les sous-sols de ce cabaret... C'est là, il paraît que se tiennent les assassins de distinction...

Panurge

En effet...

Cocolati

Voulez-vous venir avec moi?

Panurge

Je vous suis obligé... Ces messieurs sont brutaux quelquefois, et tous ceux qui me connaissent vous diront que j'ai naturellement peur des coups...

Cocolati

Vous ne venez pas, alors?..

Panurge

Non, j'aime mieux...

Cocolati

Nous nous reverrons au moins... Promettez moi que nous nous reverrons....

Panurge

Certainement, nous nous reverrons...

Cocolati

Merci. (*À ses deux hommes*) allons, messieurs... (*Il sort*)

Scène 4^e

Les Mêmes, moins Cocolati

Panurge

Maintenant, mes amis...

Trippa

Maintenant, tu vas nous chanter la chanson à boire que tu nous a promise...

Panurge

Je voudrais d'abord...

Cris (*dans la foule*)

Non, non, la chanson!

Trippa

Tu les entends... ils voudraient d'abord, eux, écouter la chanson

Panurge

J'ai une question à vous poser et je suis pressé d'avoir votre avis.

Trippa

Tu es si pressé que cela?

Panurge

Sans doute...

Trippa

Chante-leur la chanson, alors, car bien certainement ils ne te répondront bien avant que tu aies chanté...

Panurge

C'est comme cela...

Trippa

C'est comme cela...

Panurge

Vous êtes bien décidés?

Trippa et les buveurs

Tout à fait décidés...

Panurge

Je serais bien bête de m'obstinez, alors, je vais vous chantez ma chanson.

Trippa

A la bonne heure!

Panurge

1.

Buvons pour valoir quelque chose

Pour être forts pour être bons,

Buvons pour voir la vie en rose,

Ravissement apothéose

Buvons!

Buvons pour devenir meilleurs,

Hommes de bien amants sincères

Le sang qui fait battre nos cœurs

Est fait avec le vin qu'on verse dans nos verres!

2.

Buvons pour être aussi des braves
De joyeux, hardis compagnons
Buvons, que le vin de nos caves
Ne soit pas bu par des esclaves,
Buvons!
Buvons pour devenir meilleurs,
Hommes de bien amants sincères
Le sang qui fait battre nos cœurs
Est fait avec le vin qu'on verse dans nos verres!

(Après la chanson, applaudissements, cris: "Bravo, bravo Panurge!")

Trippa

Maintenant dis leur quel conseil tu as à leur demander.

Panurge

Je voudrais savoir de vous si je dois ou si je ne dois pas me marier...

1^{er} Buveur

Si tu te dois...

2^{er} Buveur

Ou si je ne dois pas marier, voilà...

Une partie des buveurs

Marie-toi Panurge, marie-toi!

Une autre partie

Ne te marie pas, Panurge, ne te marie pas...

("Marie toi! Ne te marie pas! - cris, tapage")

Panurge

Marie-toi, ne te marie pas... me voilà bien avancé!

(Entre Trouillogan)

Scène 5^e

Les Mêmes, Trouillogan

Trippa

Demande cela au Philosophe, il te répondra, lui, c'est son état.

Panurge

Vraiment! Monsieur le Philosophe, vous auriez cette bonté...

Trouillogan

Tout de suite, mon garçon...

Panurge

Mais vous ne savez pas de quoi il s'agit...

Trouillogan

Cela m'est égal, seulement, dites-moi quel jour sommes-nous aujourd'hui?

Panurge

Quel jour?...

Trouillogan

Oui, quel jour de la semaine.

Panurge

Mercredi

Troullogan

Attendez un peu (*consultant une pancarte qu'il a sur lui*) Lundi, Aristote, mardi, Épicure... Mercredi Pyrrhon!..

Panurge

Pyrrhon?

Trouillogan

Oui, Mercredi, c'est le jour de Pyrrhon... J'étais Épicurien hier, aujourd'hui je suis Pyrrhonien...

Panurge

Ah! Vous changez selon les jours...

Trouillogan

Sans cela je serais exposé à dire toujours la même chose. Ce serait fastidieux, allez maintenant, je vous écoute.

DUO

Panurge

J'ai besoin d'un avis sincère,
Et je viens vous le demander...

Trouillogan

Parlez-moi d'une autre manière,
Notre système est de toujours douter.
Il ne faut pas dire: je viens
Mais il me semble que je viens.

Panurge (*en riant*)

Il me semble?

Trouillogan

Oui!

Panurge

Nous sommes là
Nous bavardons tous deux ensemble,
Qui pouvait contester cela?
Il ne faut pas dire: Il me semble,
Car c'est certain,

Trouillogan

Rien n'est certain

Panurge

Ça peut durer jusqu'à demain
Arrivons au fait je vous prie:
Le fait, c'est que je me marie.

Trouillogan

Je n'en sais rien!

Panurge

Je vous le dis!

Trouillogan

Il me semble que vous me le dites...

Panurge

Celle que j'aime est pleine de mérites.
Son visage est des plus jolis.

Trouillogan

C'est bien possible!

Panurge

En conscience

Ferai-je bien ou mal de l'épouser?

Trouillogan

L'un ou l'autre à ce que je pense...

Panurge

Drôle de façon de causer!

Ferai-je bien?

Trouillogan

Nul ne sait!

Panurge

Ferai-je mal?...

Trouillogan

Il se pouvait!

Panurge

Elle est gentille, elle est mignonne,

Avec plaisir son père me la donne...

Donc je l'épouse et je fais bien.

Trouillogan

Je n'en sais rien!

Panurge

Mais en l'épousant je crains d'être...

Trouillogan

La chose est faisable

Panurge

Alors, je fais mal?

Trouillogan

Peut-être!

Panurge

Le diable emporte l'animal

Bref, si vous étiez à ma place

Que feriez-vous?

Trouillogan

Qui peut savoir?

Panurge

Mon cher philosophe, de grâce

Soyez plus net...

Trouillogan

Allez-y voir!

Panurge

Trouillogan mon bon Trouillogan

Ça va se gâter mon enfant!

Trouillogan

Je n'y puis rien!

Panurge

Moi j'y puis quelque chose!

(il prend son bâton et bat Trouillogan)

Trouillogan

Comment! on ose...

Panurge

Oui, l'on ose...

Trouillogan

Vous m'outragez, vous me battez,

Par ma foi, vous me le paierez!...

Panurge

Parlez-moi d'une autre manière,

Rien n'est certain sur cette terre,

Il ne faut pas dire: on me bat

Mais il me semble qu'on me bat...

(rires)

Trouillogan

Je t'enverrai devant le commissaire.

Panurge

Il se peut faire!

Trouillogan

Il te jugera, te condamnera.

Panurge

Il en sera-ce qu'il pourra

Trouillogan

Ah! Double chien,
Nous verrons bien!

Panurge (*reprenant son bâton*)
Trouillogan, mon bon Trouillogan
Ça va se gâter mon enfant!

Trouillogan
Trouillogan pauvre Trouillogan
Comme on te traite, mon enfant.

Trouillogan
En voilà assez! Il fallait donc me dire tout de suite que vous aviez de l'esprit.

Panurge (*menaçant*)
Ah! Mais...

Trouillogan
Eh! Bien, puisque vous avez de l'esprit, causons de bonne amitié, en gens d'esprit, que nous sommes. Nous disons donc que vous êtes sur le point de vous mourir et que vous hésitez parce que vous avez peur de certain accident...

Panurge
C'est cela même...

(Les cloches commencent à sonner et sonnèrent jusqu'à la fin de l'acte)

Trouillogan
Et vous me demandez de vous dire si vous éviterez ou si vous n'éviterez pas... je vais essayer... Oh! N'ayez pas peur... je ne vous parlerai ni de Python, ni d'Aristote, je serai sérieux.

Panurge
Je vous en prie...

Trouillogan
Voulez-vous que je vous tire les cartes....

Panurge (*tristement*)

Je n'y crois pas

Trouillogan

Moi no plus, que faire alors? Ah! Avez-vous consulté les cloches?

Panurge

Les cloches?..

Trouillogan

Écoutez-les, elles vous donneront peut-être un bon conseil.. Tenez, les entendez-vous? Marie-toi!

Panurge (*chantant avec les cloches*)

C'est vrai... Marie-toi, marie-toi!... Il faudrait me marier, alors?... Ah! Non, voilà que maintenant elles disent tout le contraire... ne te marie pas!... ne te marie pas!... marie-toi... ne te marie pas!... Le diable les emporte!

Trouillogan

Je me souviens qu'un ami à moi, au moment de se marier, a passé par des transes pareilles aux vôtres. Il a eu peur, lui aussi alors, il lui est venu une idée...

Panurge

Dites vite!

Trouillogan

Il lui est venu l'idée de faire subir des épreuves à sa future femme. Il se disait: si elle en sortait victorieuse, il pourrait sans danger...

Panurge

Eh! Mais elle était superbe, son idée.

Trouillogan

Alors, j'ai eu peur qu'elle ne succombât à toutes les autres... et comme je l'aimais, je me suis dépêché de l'épouser.

Panurge

Comment, c'était vous...

Trouillogan

C'est à la suite de ça que je suis devenu Philosophe...

Panurge

C'est égal, vous m'avez sauvé, vous m'entendez... La voilà, la réponse que je voulais... moi aussi je ferai subir des épreuves à Nicole.

(Les cloches commencent à sonner avec violence, elles sonnaient doucement depuis une minute)

Finale

Panurge

Les cloches maintenant diront diront

Tout ce qu'elles voudront

(en riant)

“Marie-toi! ne te marie pas!”

Le Chœur

“Marie-toi! ne te marie pas!”

C'est bon ou mauvais, ça dépend des cas!

Panurge

Je ne suis pas dans l'embarras

Je n'ai pas à choisir ce n'est plus nécessaire,

Je sais, je sais ce qu'il ne reste à faire!

(les Bohémiennes dansent)

Panurge

Bohémiennes, dansez, dansez, vous dansez bien.

Je ne vous demanderai rien

Je sais ce qu'il me reste à faire!

(Nouvelles danses. Une trappe s'ouvre. Paraissent Cocolati et les deux agents.)

Cocolati

J'ai vu des horreurs là-dessous

J'aime mieux être ici, le spectacle est plus doux!

Les Agents

Veillons sur lui,

C'est un ami!...

(ils se mêlent aux danses)

Panurge

Ohé! Les gens! gens d'ici, de là-bas,

Venez partager nos états!

Venez danser et hurler avec nous,

Venez tous

Joie à tout casser, ivresse infernale!

Bacchanale!

Cocolati *(dansant)*

Moi je m'amuse avec fureur

Tout en restant observateur!

Trouillogan *(dansant)*

Je m'amuse aussi, la Philosophie

Est l'art de bien passer la vie!

Le Patron du Cabaret (*ansant et empochant*)

Donnez vos testons, vos écus,
Jusqu'à ce qu'il n'en reste plus!

(les dansent [sic] tourbillonnent. Les cloches sonnent à toute volée, l'orchestre rappelle l'air de la chanson à boire, etc., etc..)

Panurge

Ohé! Les gens! gens d'ici, de là-bas,
Venez partager nos états!
Etc.

Bacchanale

Rideau

ACTE 2

1^{ère} Tableau

(Site sauvage. La nuit qui vient du moins, lui donne un aspect sauvage.)

Scène 1^{ère}

Cocolati, Carpalin, Bandits.

Chœur de brigands.

Cocolati

Nous sommes des bandits pour rire
De faux bandits, de purs farceurs.

Le Chœur

Mais nous ne voulons pas que l'on puisse le dire.

Cocolati

Donc s'ils suivent des voyageurs

Gras ou maigres, jolis ou laids

Arrêtons-les

Le Chœur

Arrêtons-les

Cocolati

Empoignons-les...

Le Chœur

Empoignons-les...

Cocolati

Détroussons-les

Le Chœur

Détroussons-les

Cocolati

Sans qu'ils aient le temps de rien dire

Prenons leur tout: leur argent, leurs habits

Comme si nous étions de vrais bandits

Et non pas des bandits pour rire

—

Cocolati

Tu m'as bien compris, mon bon Carpalin?

Carpalin

Parfaitement, monseigneur!

Cocolati

Ne m'appelle pas Monseigneur, appelle-moi chef... Je suis habillé en chef de bandits, appelle-moi chef, c'est plus couleur locale...

Carpalin

Je vous ai parfaitement compris, chef. Dans ce carrosse qui vient là-bas et que nous pouvons à peine distinguer, il y a trois voyageurs...

Cocolati

Panurge d'abord, Panurge, le protégé du noble seigneur Pantagruel, Mademoiselle Nicole la fiancée de Panurge, plus un Philosophe qui est là pour sauver les convenances, pur que Panurge, qui est un gaillard, ne voyage pas seul avec sa fiancée.

Carpalin

Dans un quart d'heure, ces trois voyageurs passeront par ici.

Cocolati

Nos hommes sauteront sur eux...

Carpalin

Ou les empoignera...

Cocolati

Et moi, votre chef, je les interrogerai.

Carpalin

Vous riez, chef?..

Cocolati

Oui je ris d'avance en pensant à l'interrogatoire que je leur ferai subir... tu verras. Carpalin, tu ne t'embêteras pas, après l'interrogatoire je disparaîtra.

Carpalin

Sous un prétexte habilement imaginé.

Cocolati

Très bien... et au bout de quelques minutes je reviendrai, non pas sous les traits d'un chef de bandits, mais sous mes traits à moi, couvert de mon armure de prince Cocolati, suivi de mes hommes d'armes... je vous attaquerai...

Carpalin

Nous nous défendrons!

Cocolati

Mollement, Carpalin, n'oublie pas que vous devez vous défendre mollement, vous vous laisserez battre.... Quand je vous aurai battus, je délivrerai vos trois prisonniers et je les conduirai triomphalement dans mon château. J'espère après cela, pouvoir comparer sur la reconnaissance de M^{lle} Nicole...

Carpalin

C'est une bonne farce... il n'y a pas à dire, c'est une bonne farce!

Cocolati

Et sais-tu comment l'idée m'est venue de la faire cette farce?

Carpalin

Non, chef.

Cocolati

Je vais te le dire

Carpalin

Que de bonté!

Cocolati

Ce matin, dame Philoclœa, femme du noble sire Pantagruel, a daigné écrire à Caterina mon épouse. Dans sa lettre elle lui annonçait l'arrivée de Nicole et voulant éprouver la vertu de sa demoiselle d'honneur, elle priait ma femme de lui faire faire un ou deux tours fans mes jardins mystérieux...

Carpalin

Compris.

Cocolati

C'est alors que tout en réservant l'épreuve des jardins j'ai pensé à faire subir à M^{elle} Nicole une épreuve d'une autre sorte. Te l'avouerai-je! Carpalin?

Carpalin

Ce sera comme vous voudrez.

Cocolati

Tu dis?...

Carpalin

Je dis que ce sera comme vous voudrez... si vous avez envie de me l'avouer, avouez. Le [sic] moi, si vous n'en avez pas envie...

Cocolati

Mon Dieu, Carpalin, que tu es bête!... quand je te dis! Te l'avouerai-je, Carpalin, je ne te pose pas une question, je t'avertis que j'ai une confidence à te faire... tu n'as qu'à t'incliner.

Carpalin (*s'inclinant*)

C'est ce que je fais, vous voyez...

Cocolati

Te l'avouerai-je, Carpalin, je suis assez content de cette épreuve que je vais faire subir à M^{elle} Nicole, quand en ma qualité de chef de brigands je la tiendrai là, et que je tiendrai aussi Panurge, ... Ho! Ho! Le carrosse se rapproche, il me semble.

Carpalin

Oui, et voici deux hommes qui viennent vers nous.

Cocolati

C'est Panurge, ma foi, avec le philosophe

Carpalin

Ils auront monté la côte à pied pour se dégourdir les jambes.

Cocolati

Commençons par nous cacher.... Si on les empoignait maintenant, cela donnerait l'éveil à M^{elle} Nicole et elle nous échapperait... Tout-à-l'heure nous les pincerons tous les trois. Allons vite!...

(Cocolati, Carpalin et les faux brigands entrent dans la grotte sur la reprise de l'air "Nous sommes des bandits pour rire". Dès qu'ils ont disparus, entrent en scène Panurge puis Trouillogan.)

Scène 2^e

Panurge, Trouillogan

(Panurge entre le premier et tend la main à Trouillogan que l'on ne voit pas, il a l'air de l'aider à monter.)

Panurge

Hardi là!... Nous manquons de souplesse, papa Trouillogan...

Trouillogan *(entrant)*

Les travaux philosophiques alourdissent le corps, c'est chose connue...

Panurge

Reposons-nous un peu... Nicole sera ici tout-à-l'heure, nous remonterons dans la carrosse...

Trouillogan

Reposons-nous, je le veux bien!

Panurge

Une fameuse idée que vous m'avez donnée là... faire subir des épreuves à Nicole avant de l'épouser...

Trouillogan

L'idée n'est pas mauvaise, mais croyez-vous que vous ayez bien fait en l'accompagnant? Il est clair que si vous êtes là, Nicole ne succombera pas, mais qui vous dit que si vous n'aviez pas été là...

Panurge

Oui, je le sais bien...

Trouillogan

Alors pourquoi êtes-vous venu?

Panurge

C'est que je ne serais pas fâché de savoir au juste à quoi m'en tenir sur ces fameuses épreuves... on m'a parlé d'une maison de campagne qui est machinée d'une façon dangereuse pour la vertu. Cela est bien vague... je ne voudrais pas non plus que l'on exposât la pauvre fille à des tentations auxquelles il serait impossible de résister.

Trouillogan

Vous êtes bon!

Panurge

Je ne suis ni bon ni méchant. Je suis un homme. Voyez-vous, je suppose, ce Prince Cocolati la faisant saisir par ses hommes d'armes?

Trouillogan

Dans ce cas-là, vous n'auriez rien à dire... ce ne serait pas sa faute...

Panurge

En voilà une raison!... est-ce que vous vous figurez que je l'épouserai, même si ça n'avait pas été sa faute...

Trouillogan

Rassurez-vous. Ce prince Cocolati est absolument incapable de faire saisir une jeune personne par ses hommes d'armes.... Et puis, sa femme ne le tolérerait pas... j'aime à le croire du moins. M^{elle} Nicole n'aura donc à subir que les épreuves courantes, et sur ce point, je crois pouvoir répondre d'elle.

Panurge

Comment cela?...

Trouillogan

Elle en a déjà subi une qui vaut toutes les autres.

Panurge

Laquelle?..

Trouillogan

Je lui ai fait la cour et elle m'a résisté.

Panurge

Drôle!..

Trouillogan

Vous vous fâchez!... Vous devriez être enchanté, au contraire... Eh! Regardez donc... ces gens qui entourait le carrosse, ils font descendre Nicole...

Panurge

Des brigands!... Ce sont des brigands!...

(Entrent les brigands. Ils s'emparent de Panurge et de Trouillogan)

Trouillogan

Ne me faites pas de mal... On paiera pour moi une riche rançon, ne me faites pas de mal!...

Panurge

Et Pantagruel qui prétend que sur ses domaines les toutes sont sûres... ce que je vais l'attraper quand je le verrai...

(Entre Cocolati de plus en plus déguisé en chef de bandits)

Cocolati

Les hommes sont pris n'est-ce pas?... Et M^{elle} Nicole?

(Entrent Carpalin et deux ou trois hommes. Ils amènent Nicole).

Scène 3^e

Cocolati, Panurge, Trouillogan, Nicole, Carpalin, Brigands

Carpalin

La voici, chef...

Cocolati

Nous les tenons tous les trois, c'est très bien, nous allons rire... *(bas à Carpalin)* Je t'assure que nous allons rire... *(haut)* Je vais procéder à leur interrogatoire... *(bas à Carpalin)*. Ils ne peuvent pas me reconnaître au moins?

Carpalin

Je les en défie.

Cocolati

Honneur aux dames! Je commencerai par vous. Mademoiselle... vous appelez Nicole, si les renseignements sont exacts...

Nicole

Oui, je m'appelle Nicole, demoiselle d'honneur de la Reine Philoclœa, et fiancée à Panurge qui est l'ami intime du Sire de Pantagrue. Songez à cela avant de pousser plus loin votre interrogatoire et dépêchez-vous de nous mettre en liberté si vous ne voulez pas être pendus.

Cocolati

Pendus!...

Nicole

Oui pendus!

Cocolati

Qu'entendez-vous par pendus?

Nicole

J'entends que vous serez comme l'on est quand on est pendus... pendus par le cou jusqu'à ce que vous fassiez comic!...

Cocolati (*à Carpalin*)

Elle est insolente!

Carpalin

Je suis obligé d'en convenir.

Cocolati

J'aime cela, moi, que les femmes soient insolentes.... Cela me donne envie de leur flanquer des gi... (*en reprenant*) cela me donne envie de les punir de leur insolence! Dites-moi la belle?...

Nicole (*avec hauteur*)

Hé?...

Cocolati

Avez-vous déjà un chef de brigands?...

Nicole

Misérable!

Cocolati (*se levant*).

Je serai votre premier, alors?

Nicole

Tue-moi Panurge.

Panurge

Tout-à-l'heure, nous avons le temps.

Cocolati

Ah! C'est monsieur qui est?...

Nicole

Oui, c'est Panurge, mon fiancé...

Cocolati

Il est bien...

Nicole

Je crois bien qu'il est bien!...

Cocolati (*à Panurge*)

Faites un pas en avant mon ami...

Panurge

Si vous me laissez le choix, j'aimerais mieux en faire plusieurs en arrière.

Cocolati

Oui, mais je ne vous laisse pas le choix. (*à Nicole*) Vous l'aimez?..

Nicole (*avec transport*)

De toutes mes forces...

Panurge (*à part*)

Elle a tort de dire ça... il n'y a rien qui agace les gens autant que de voir un homme qui est aimé...

Cocolati

Nul besoin alors, d'avoir recours à la violence le raisonnement [?] suffira...

Nicole (*égarée*)

Le raisonnement...

Cocolati

Vous l'aimez, eh bien, vous le trompette, quoique vous l'aimiez!

Nicole

Je le tromperai, moi!..

Cocolati

Mon Dieu, oui!

Nicole (*ironique*)

Avec vous peut-être?

Cocolati

Vous l'avez dit...

Nicole (*le rire de la folie*)

Ah! Ah! Ah!

Cocolati

Si vous refusez de le tromper, il sera pendu...

Panurge

Hé la!...

Trouillogan

Touché!

Nicole

Pendu?

Cocolati

Pendu par le cou, jusqu'à ce qu'il fasse...

Nicole

Mais c'est affreux!..

Cocolati

Si vous voulez qu'il ne le soit pas, vous savez le moyen.... C'est à vous de choisir...

Trouillogan

Eh! Mais! Voilà une épreuve qui en vaut une autre.

Cocolati (*à Nicole*)

Je vous autorise du reste à consulter Panurge... Il est homme de bon conseil, vous ferez ce qu'il vous dira de faire...

Panurge (*entre les dents*)

Canaille!...

Cocolati

Nous allons vous laisser seuls afin que vous ayez le temps de réfléchir... venez mes amis... emmenez le philosophe.

Trouillogan (*voulant résister*)

Ah! Ça mais...

Cocolati

Emmenez ce philosophe... (*on entraîne Trouillogan*) Eh! Bien, qu'est-ce que tu en dis mon bon Carpalin?

Carpalin

Ce n'est pas mal, pas mal du tout... Pendu ou... la situation est forte!

(Ils sortent, les brigands sont déjà sortis).

Scène 4^e

Panurge, Nicole

Panurge

Nicole...

Nicole

Panurge!

Panurge

Quelle idée as-tu eue aussi d'aller lui crier sous le nez que tu étais folle de moi... ça lui a été désagréable...

Nicole

J'ai cru bien faire.

Panurge

Je ne t'en veux pas Nicole...

Nicole

Panurge!

Panurge

Je vois bien ce qu'il a voulu dire en t'autorisant à me consulter... Il espérait que moi-même je te conseillerais de...

Nicole

Oh!

Panurge

Jamais je ne te donnerai ce conseil là... jamais!... tu entends...

Nicole

J'en étais bien sur mon brave Panurge...

Panurge

Non, jamais!... si l'idée te venait à toi-même, pour me sauver... par affection pour le pauvre Panurge... Hé?... Non?... l'idée ne t'en vient pas?

Nicole

C'est bien grave!

Panurge

A [?] qui le dis-tu?

Stances

Panurge

Glacé jusques au fond du cœur
D'une angoisse indicible et d'une peur immense
La honte d'un côté, de l'autre la potence
Et forcé de choisir, c'est raide sur l'honneur!
Que ferai-je? J'hésite et demeure immobile
Pair ou non! Croix ou pile!
Faut-il sauver mon cou? Faut-il sauver mon front?
Incertitude infâme.
C'est là ce que plus tard les gens appelleront
Un fâcheux état d'âme!
(parlé) À toi maintenant!

Nicole

Ne me forcez pas à parler
Je ne le pourrais pas, songez à ma jeunesse
D'un côté mon honneur, de l'autre ma tendresse
Ne me demandez pas à moi, de décider!...
Ne faut-il pas? Faut-il? Hélas! Pauvre petite
Je ne sais rien, j'hésite.
Je connais mon devoir quand il est éclatant
Comme un astre qui brille
Mais ces problèmes là
Mais ces problèmes-là sont trop obscurs vraiment
Pour une jeune fille !

Panurge et Nicole

Oui, faut-il ou ne faut-il pas?
Ou plutôt que faut-il? Il est là le problème
Et, tous deux comprenant qu'il est toujours le même,
Nous sentons, devant lui, grandir notre embarras...
Comme le voyageur que le Sphinx interpelle
J'ai très peur, je chancelle!
Et le problème est là, les efforts que l'on fait
Se réduisent en poudre
Et l'on ne trouve rien, même quand on se met
À deux pour le résoudre!

Panurge

Le fait est que l'animal nous a posé là un bien pénible dilemme.

Nicole

Nous en sortirons de son dilemme... tu as ton poignard?

Panurge

Oui.

Nicole

Tue-moi, tu te tuerons après...

Panurge

Tu dis toujours la même chose... Te tuez, me tuez après... Je ne pourrais pas... je me connais... quand ce serait mon tour....

Nicole

Que faire, alors? Quel parti prends-tu? À quoi es-tu décidé?

Panurge (*indécis*)

Je suis décidé, je suis décidé... (*avec fermeté*) Je suis décidé à trouver une idée pour nous tirer de là...

Nicole

Mais quelle idée?

Panurge

Tu m'en demandes trop... J'ai déjà trouvé qu'il fallait trouver quelque chose... J'en suis là pour le moment.

(*Entre Trouillogan*)

Scène 5^e

Les mêmes, Trouillogan

Trouillogan

J'ai dit au chef qui j'étais et nous sommes maintenant les meilleurs amis du monde. Je viens de sa part. Il désire savoir quelle résolution vous avez prise.

Panurge

Est-il besoin de le demander... je m'appelle Panurge. Je suis connu et l'on sait que tout m'est égal, pourvu que je ne sois pas pendu... je viens de le signifier à Nicole...

Trouillogan

Ce n'est pas chié!

Panurge

Aussi a-t-elle été tellement indignée de mes paroles qu'elle m'a déclaré tout net qu'elle ne m'aimait plus... C'est vous qu'elle adore, vous Trouillogan.

Trouillogan (*à Nicole*)

Est-il possible?

Panurge

Donc, c'est bien simple... il n'y a qu'un nom à changer. Si Nicole s'obstine à rester honnête... c'est vous qui serez pendu...

Trouillogan

Moi?

Panurge

Et je la connais, Nicole... Elle s'obstinera à rester honnête... N'est-ce pas, Nicole?

Nicole

Certainement, mon ami.

Panurge

Il n'y a plus alors qu'à pendre Trouillogan, la voilà mon idée...

Trouillogan

Mais je n'en veux pas de votre idée... Je la repousse avec une sauvage énergie, votre idée.

Panurge

Poltron!

(Entre Carpalin, suivi d'une douzaine de brigands).

Scène 6^e

Les mêmes, Carpalin et Bandits

Carpalin

Aux armes! Et tâchons de nous bien défendre... notre chef vient de prendre la fuite...

(Indignation des brigands)

Les Brigands

Hou!

Carpalin

Nous allons être attaqués par le prince Cocolati, suivi de ses hommes d'armes. Le prince vient pour délivrer M^{lle} Nicole. *(Nicole se jette dans les bras de Panurge)* Son intention est en même temps de faire pendre un certain Panurge, lequel a l'insolence d'être aimé par cette demoiselle Nicole.

Panurge

Ça va recommencer... je ne veux pas être pendu.

Carpalin

Sauvez-vous alors... Mais non, si vous vous sauvez, on vous rattrapera... vous feriez mieux de vous déguiser...

Panurge

Je ne demande pas mieux, mais comment?...

Carpalin

Tout-à-l'heure, quand on a attaqué le carrosse, le cocher s'est sauvé en abandonnant sa houppelande.

Panurge

Pas un mot de plus!... *(bas à Nicole)* Je veille sur toi. N'aie pas peur!

(Panurge sort, on entend des cris dans la coulisse: "Cocolati à la rescousse!")

Carpalin

Le cri de guerre de Cocolati!

Scène 7^e

Les mêmes, Cocolati (couvert d'une superbe armure).

Cocolati

Rendez-vous coquins...

Carpalin

Nous rendre... jamais!

(Musique, Combat z'à l'hache dans le genre de ceux que l'on se livrait dans les anciens mélodrames. Cocolati lutte contre Carpalin, celui-ci tombe et tend son épée aux vainqueurs. Cocolati en voulant la prendre, trébuche et tombe tout de son long à côté de Carpalin. Celui-ci alors se relève, aide Cocolati à se relever, puis se recouche et de nouveau tend son épée.)

Cocolati

Tu as été brave... je te la laisse... Et puis elle me gênerait... *(à Nicole)* Vous n'oublierez pas Mademoiselle, que je vous ai sauvée et que vous me devez un peu de reconnaissance.

Nicole

Monseigneur...

Cocolati

Qu'on fasse venir le carrosse... *(Arrive le carrosse, Panurge est sur le siège)* Montez mademoiselle...

Nicole

Avec vous, Monseigneur?

Cocolati

Sans doute...

Nicole

C'est que je crains...

Cocolati

Montez, ou je fais pendre le cocher...

(Tressaillement de Panurge sur le siège, Nicole monte immédiatement dans le carrosse. Trouillogan est monté derrière.)

Finale

*Panurge (sur le siège), Cocolati et Nicole (dans la voiture), Trouillogan (derrière la voiture),
Chœurs.*

Panurge

Ah! Qu'il est dur pour un cocher
Qui se pique d'avoir de l'âme
Ah! qu'il dur de voiturier
Des gens amoureux de sa femme!

Cocolati, Nicole, et Trouillogan

Allez-donc, Allez donc cocher
Qu'est-ce qui peut vous empêcher
De marcher?

Panurge

[crié]

Hue dia!

là!

(il donne des coups de fouet, les chevaux ne bougent pas)

Cocolati (*parlant par la portière*)

Hé cocher!

Un instant veuillez-vous pencher!

(*bas*)

Si ça vous va d'aller au pas,

Faites-le ne vous gênez pas!

(*il lutine Nicole qui aussitôt se précipite à la portière opposée.*)

Nicole

Hé cocher!

Un instant veuillez-vous pencher!

(*bas*)

S'il fait des chos's qui n'se font pas

En deux temps tu nous verseras...

Trouillogan (*lorgnant Nicole et Cocolati*)

Je vois tout, je vois tout très bien

Mais n'ayez pas peur je ne dirai rien!

Cocolati, Nicole, Trouillogan et les chœurs

Roulez donc, roulez donc cocher,

Qu'est-ce qui peut vous empêcher

De marcher?

Panurge

Heureusement je puis le dire

A pied, au trot, même au galop

Que ces chevaux ne sont pas trop

Trop difficiles à conduire

(*Il donne des coups de fouet, les chevaux ne bougent pas*)

Chœur

Hue dia,

Hop la!

Allons-y, courons-y,

Au château de Cocolati!

(Grêle de coups de fouet, hérissements des chevaux (à l'orchestre) La voiture enfin se met en mouvement.)

Rideau

2^e Tableau

Le boudoir de Catarina, femme de Cocolati

Scène 1^{ère}

Caterina, Philiberto.

(Caterina est assise, à ses pieds, lui tenant les mains, Philiberto son page favori.)

Ensemble

Divin Platon dont la sagesse

Inventa les pures amours

Permets-nous d'en goûter toujours

L'innocente caresse

Caterina

Petit page, mignon chéri

Philiberto

Noble dame Cocolati

Caterina

Ah! qu'il est doux de câliner
De dorloter
Un être mignon et gentil.
De l'aimer de toute son âme
Et malgré ça d'être une honnête femme!
Qui ne trompe pas son mari....

Philiberto

Noble dame Cocolati

Caterina

Petit page, mignon chéri

Philiberto

Ah! qu'il est doux de se laisser
Bien câliner
Et de se pâmer, de mourir...
D'adorer une noble Dame
De lui donner sa vie avec son âme
Sans espoir mais non sans plaisir...

Ensemble

Divin Platon dont la sagesse
Inventa les pures amours
Permets-nous d'en goûter toujours
L'innocente caresse!...

Caterina

Ça ne t'étonne pas que mon mari permette que tu prennes avec moi toutes ces gentilles libertés.

Philiberto

Je présume que c'est un mari à la mode.

Caterina

Sans doute... et puis le lien que nous attache l'un à l'autre est plutôt une association qu'un mariage... le Prince était riche, je l'étais aussi, on nous a mariés pour que nous ayons, tous les deux, la plus grosse fortune du royaume...

Philiberto

Je vous aimerais même si vous étiez pauvre...

Caterina

Je veux le croire... lorsque j'ai épousé le Prince, je lui ai signifié que je prétendais garder ma liberté, et je lui ai laissé la sienne. Cela t'explique pourquoi hier, dans des jardins, des allées qu'une femme ne saurait traverser sans devenir amoureuse...

Philiberto

Vous n'avez jamais voulu vous y promenez avec moi...

Caterina

Qu'est-ce que c'est, libertin! Il est bien entendu que nous nous sommes juré l'un à l'autre de ne jamais abuser de cette liberté que nous nous laissons... je ne sais pas au juste de quelle façon mon mari a tenu son serment, mais je puis certifier que j'ai tenu le mien... Tu en sais quelque chose petit...

Philiberto

Oui, hélas! J'en sais quelque chose...

Caterina

Tu dis: hélas! Enfant...

Philiberto

Dame...

Caterina

Comme cela m’amuse de t’entendre dire: hélas! Cela m’amuse tant que jamais, je crois, je ne te fournirai l’occasion de dire autre chose...

Philiberto

Hélas!

Caterina

J’entends un bruit de ferraille...

Philiberto

C’est le seigneur Cocolati qui revient de son expédition... Il ramène une jeune fille et un vieux monsieur.

Scène 2^e

Caterina, Philiberto, Cocolati, Nicole, Trouillogan

Cocolati

Ma chère épouse, je vous amène Mademoiselle Nicole... Dame Philoclœa vous parle d’elle dans sa lettre.

Caterina

La fiancée de Panurge?

Cocolati (*bas*)

Oui, il était là, Panurge, déguisé en cocher, il nous aurait gênés sans doute, je l’ai fait coffrer, mais j’ai ordonné qu’on ne lui fit pas de mal, je n’ai pas envie de me fâcher avec le sire de Pantagruel... (*haut*) Je vous amène en même temps un philosophe...

Trouillogan

Un grand philosophe...

Cocolati

Hé?...

Trouillogan

Vous ne le disiez pas, alors je l'ai dit... oui, madame. (*Catarina s'est mise à écrire*) Je suis un grand philosophe et cela me plaît de faire votre connaissance: je vous entretiendrai... je vous apprendrai combien il y a de sortes d'amour... primo: l'amour que l'on a pour son mari, secundo: l'amour que l'on a pour son....

Caterina (*elle a fini d'écrire*)

Je profiterai volontiers de vos leçons, mais un peu plus tard, je veux d'abord causer avec cette chère enfant...

Cocolati

Nous vous laissons, je vais mettre un costume plus léger... si, en même temps, monsieur le philosophe veut se laver les mains...

Trouillogan

Elles peuvent encore aller monseigneur. Madame...

(*Cocolati et Trouillogan sortent.*)

Caterina (*à Philiberto*)

Tiens, tu feras exécuter les ordres que j'ai écrits. Va, Philiberto, mais ne t'éloigne pas, j'aurai besoin de toi tout à l'heure... (*Philiberto lui baise la main.*) Tu m'aimes toujours...

Philiberto

Je vous adore humblement...

Caterina

C'est bien, c'est très-bien. Va, mignon, va...

(*Philiberto sort.*)

Scène 3^e

Caterina, Nicole.

Caterina

Eh! Bien, petite... Tu viens de voyager avec mon mari... as-tu été contente de lui?

Nicole

Certainement, madame, seulement...

Caterina

Seulement?

Nicole

Il avait gardé son armure et Dame...

Rondeau

C'est une effroyable torture
C'est un tourment digne de l'Enfer.
De se promener en voiture
Avec un homm' tout bardé d'fer!
Et notez qu'vot'mari, Princesse
Ne fut pas incouv'nant du tout
Il fut tout plein d'délicatesse
Ça n'fait rien j'ai des noirs partout!

En a-t-il, mon Dieu, d'ces affaires.
Pour parer et pour attaquer...
Ses jambières, ses molletières
Son casque et ses gants d'chevalier?
J'en suis encor'plus mort'que vive
Dès qu'il remie [?] il fait un bruit...

Je présumé que, quand l'soir arrive
C'n'est pas ça son costum'de nuit.

Je m'souviens d'une maudite ornière,
Le carross'versait patatras.
J'allais passer par la portière
Heureus'ment i'm'prit dans ses bras!
Il me serra tant l'noble sire
Sans pourtant me manquer d'égards;
Que je n'pus m'empêcher d'lui dire
Tu m'fais mal, ôt' donc tes brassards

C'est une effroyable torture
C'est un tourment digne de l'Enfer.
De se promener en voiture
Avec un homm' tout bardé d'fer!

Caterina

N'as-tu- pas en quelque querelle avec dame Philoclœa, ta maîtresse?

Nicole

Je ne pense pas, madame...

Caterina

C'est qu'elle me charge... t'a-t-elle dit ce que tu venais faire chez moi?

Nicole

Sans doute, je viens comme demoiselle d'honneur de madame Philoclœa épouse du sire de Pantagruel, vous dire qu'elle a été ravie de votre lettre et qu'elle sera enchantée de vous recevoir à sa cour.

Caterina

Tu viens aussi pour autre chose...

Nicole

Pourquoi donc madame?

Caterina

Je ne devrais pas te le dire, mais bah! Je te le dis tant de même... tu viens pour que ta vertu soit soumise à de certaines épreuves... auxquelles donne Philoclœa semble croire que vous ne résisterez pas...

Nicole

Je tâcherai de lui prouver le contraire.

Caterina

Le pire, c'est que c'est ton fiancé lui-même, qui avant de t'épouser, a désiré que tu sois soumise à ces épreuves...

Nicole

Panurge?

Caterina

Oui, Panurge.

Nicole

Ce pauvre garçon!

Caterina

Tu ne lui en veux pas plus que cela?

Nicole

Il a tort de douter de moi... je l'aime tant que je n'aurai aucun mérite à résister, il a tort, et pourtant je comprends qu'il hésite...

Caterina

Tu comprends?

Nicole

Dame oui, les femmes sont si drôles aujourd'hui...

Caterina

Drôles, qu'entends-tu par drôles?

Nicole

Mais...

Caterina

Ah! Ma foi, tu es trop gentille, et de tout mon cœur je me sens portée vers toi...

Nicole

Que vous êtes bonne...

Caterina

Je suis obligée d'obéir à Dame Philoclœa et je ne puis te soustraire à ces épreuves, je n'ai pas le droit non plus de te dire en quoi elles consisteront au juste...

Nicole

Nous verrons bien...

Caterina

Mais je puis au moins en abréger la durée... Deux heures, est-ce trop? Le sens-tu de force à résister pendant deux heures...

Nicole

Je me sens de force à résister pendant toute la vie...

Caterina

Que je t'embrasse... et je ferai encore quelque chose pour toi, mais cela je ne peux pas te le dire en ce moment...

Nicole

Je regrette...

Caterina

N'aie pas peur et compte sur moi, maintenant l'on va te mener dans ton appartement, tu y trouveras une toilette superbe, elle est pour toi...

Nicole

Merci, j'adore ça, moi, les toilettes superbes.

Caterina (*sonnant sur un timbre*)

Tu es coquette...

Nicole

Je ne serais pas femme si je n'étais pas...

Caterina

Et tu résisteras tout de même...

Nicole

Vous verrez ça... (*les femmes sont entrées. Nicole salue.*) Madame...

Caterina

Embrasse-moi encore... (*à ses femmes.*) Conduisez mademoiselle dans l'appartement qui a été préparé pour elle, et envoyez-moi Philiberto, il ne doit pas être loin...

Scène 4^e

Caterina, Philiberto, puis Panurge.

Philiberto (*entrant*)

Noble dame...

Caterina

Ah! Te voilà... l'on a exécuté mes ordres?

Philiberto

Oui, maîtresse, l'homme est là...

Caterina

Dis qu'on le fasse entrer.

(Entre Panurge, escorté par deux hommes d'armes. Les hommes d'armes ne font que se montrer et sortent.)

Panurge

Je dois vous prévenir, madame, que votre mari m'a fait empoigner parce qu'il est amoureux de ma fiancée...

Caterina

Taisez-vous.

Panurge

Cependant...

Caterina

Taisez-vous je vous dis... vous devriez mourir de honte... Vous êtes aimé par une brave et jolie fille. Elle consent à vous épouser et vous, au lieu de tomber à ses pieds, vous faites des façons, vous exigez que d'abord elle subisse des épreuves.

Panurge

Quant à cela, je me suis repenti... si j'ai accompagné Nicole, c'est tout justement pour empêcher que le jeu n'aille trop loin, et pour lui crier: "en voilà assez!" Dès que je m'apercevrai que les choses prennent une mauvaise tournure....

Caterina

Est-ce vrai cela?

Panurge

Oui, c'est vrai, demandez au philosophe, je le lui ai dit...

Caterina

S'il en est ainsi l'on peut essayer de vous pardonner...

Panurge

Je suis libre alors?

Caterina

Non, vous n'êtes pas libre... mais au lieu d'être enfermé dans un cachot, vous serez enfermé dans mon appartement. J'aurai soin que vous soyez tenu au courant de tout ce que mon mari entreprendra contre la vertu de Nicole, ce sera à vous de vous défendre...

Panurge

Et je me défendrai, soyez tranquille...

Caterina

Entrez donc chez moi, vous demanderez ma première femme de chambre et vous lui direz de ma part de vous installer dans le cabinet rose...

Panurge

Dans le cabinet rose?

Caterina

Oui.

Panurge

Merci madame... *(il salue et entre chez Caterina.)*

Scène 5^e

Caterina, Philiberto, puis Cocolati, et Trouillogan

Caterina *(s'entendant sur sa chaise longue)*

Maintenant Philiberto, parle-moi d'amour...

Philiberto *(s'agenouillant et soupirant)*

Ah!...

Caterina

C'est tout?...

Philiberto

Maîtresse adorée, maîtresse chérie...

Caterina

Continue

Philiberto

Maîtresse chérie, maitresse adorée... *(il se relève brusquement)*.

Caterina

Eh! Bien. Qu'est-ce qui te prend?

(Philiberto lui montre Cocolati et Trouillogan qui viennent d'entrer)

Philiberto

Votre mari!...

Caterina

Est-ce que c'est une raison? *(Elle se relève aussi et s'adressant à Cocolati.)* Voilà deux fois, monsieur, que vous entrez chez moi sans vous faire annoncer... je n'aime pas cela...

Cocolati

Pardonnez-moi, j'avais un prétexte...

Caterina

Quel prétexte?...

Cocolati

Je venais vous annoncer que le coiffeur vient d'entrer chez vous...

Caterina

C'est différent. Viens, Philiberto, continue de me dire de gentilles paroles, je tâcherai de t'en répondre de plus douces encore...

Philiberto

Ma divine maîtresse...

Caterina

Mon gentil petit page...

(Ils entrent tous les deux chez Caterina.)

Scène 6^e

Cocolati, Trouillogan.

Cocolati

Qu'est-ce que tu dis de ça?

Trouillogan

Je dis que monseigneur est philosophe lui aussi... c'est on ne peut plus flatteur pour nous autres...

Cocolati

Je suis grand seigneur, mon cher, j'aime toutes les femmes excepté la mienne...

Trouillogan

Et allez donc!...

Cocolati

Pour le moment, je suis fou de cette petite Nicole...

Trouillogan

Je le sais bien. Je vous ai vus tous les deux quand j'étais derrière le carrosse...

Cocolati

Elle était émue, n'est-ce pas?

Trouillogan

Je vous crois, vous lui brisiez les côtes...

(Entre un page, il parle bas à Cocolati)

Cocolati

Fais le entrer. *(Le page sort)* Je te demande pardon... j'ai fait dire à mon apothicaire que j'avais à lui parler. *(Trouillogan se lève.)* Qu'est-ce que tu fais?

Trouillogan

Je m'en vais.

Cocolati

Au fait, si, il vaut mieux que tu t'en ailles...

Trouillogan *(se relevant et s'en allant.)*

Ça m'étonnait aussi... que diable quand on demande son apothicaire... *(à Panurge.)* Bonsoir, mon garçon... *(il sort.)*

Scène 7^e

Cocolati, Panurge (déguisé en apothicaire)

Cocolati

Je ne te reconnais pas. Tu n'es pas mon apothicaire en chef...

Panurge

Non, je suis son garçon. Il a avalé par mégarde une potion qu'il avait préparée lui-même, ça l'a mis dans un état... Il n'est pas présentable, le pauvre homme, il n'est pas présentable... mais vous pouvez avoir confiance en moi, j'ai su zèle, de l'intelligence.

Cocolati

En as-tu assez pour composer un philtre?

Panurge

Justement, les philtres, c'est ma spécialité

Cocolati

Un philtre qui rende une femme amoureuse...

Panurge

Amoureuse de qui?...

Cocolati

D'un homme dans mon genre...

Panurge

Ça se peut tout de même, en triplant la dose...

Cocolati

Vraiment, ça se peut?

Panurge

Oui.

Cocolati

Quand me donneras-tu cela?

Panurge

Dans un quart d'heure...

Cocolati

Va alors... ah! Encore un mot... quand ce sera prêt, tu le mettras dans un flacon; dans un autre flacon qui sera pareil tu mettras de l'eau sucrée. Tu t'arrangeras de manière à ce qu'il n'y ait pas moyen de s'y tromper, et tu m'apporteras les deux flacons sur un plateau, bien gentiment!

Panurge

Encore un mot, moi aussi: vous savez que ces petits travaux-là ça se paie à part, et que c'est un peu cher...

Cocolati

On paiera, sois tranquille...

Panurge

Monseigneur... *(En sortant)* si je ne lui avais pas ait ça, jamais il ne m'avait pris pour un apothicaire...

Scène 8^e

Cocolati, puis Trouillogan

Cocolati

Cela suffira sans doute... si cela ne suffit pas, je ferai autre chose, je donnerai une fête dans mes jardins, et elle s'y promènera dans mes jardins, mademoiselle Nicole. Elle s'y promènera... *(entre Trouillogan, très ému, très agité.)*. Qu'est-ce que tu as?

Trouillogan

Ah! Mon ami... pardon, le respect...

Cocolati

Laisse-là le respect et dis ce que tu as.

Trouillogan

Je viens d'aller faire un tour dans une allée de votre parc... dans cette petite allée qui est là, en face et qui n'a l'aire de rien.

Cocolati

Après?

Trouillogan

A peine avais-je fait cent pas qu'il m'est arrivé.

Cocolati

Quoi donc?

Trouillogan

J'ai senti là tout d'un coup une émotion... agréable d'ailleurs, mais extraordinaire...

Cocolati

Et alors?

Trouillogan

Alors j'ai eu peur d'être malade et je suis revenu ici pour voir si l'apothicaire y était encore!

Cocolati

Non, Trouillogan, tu n'es pas malade, ce que tu as éprouvé, c'est tout bonnement l'effet de certains parfums dont le chef de mes odeurs suaves a soin d'inonder mes fleurs...

Trouillogan

J'aime mieux ça...

Cocolati

Sais-tu ce que je fais, quand j'ai envie, quand j'ai absolument envie de triompher d'une femme?

Trouillogan

Vous allez chez les bijoutier, vos moyens vous le permettent!

Cocolati

Eh! Non... j'annonce une fête, un ballet de ma composition, la naissance de Vénus je suppose, c'est le titre de celui que je prépare en ce moment... je fais venir Vénus, et les Grâces et les Nymphes et tout le tremblement... cela fait, je lâche la personne dans les jardins... préalablement trinqués! La femme, la pauvre petite femme, va de ci, va de là... troublée par l'air qu'elle respire, par la musique qu'elle entend... car tu supposes bien qu'il y a de la musique...

Trouillogan

Malin!

Cocolati

La femme, étourdie par tout ce qu'elle voit, par tout ce qu'elle devine ne sait que devenir. Elle appelle, elle implore... il lui manque quelque chose, j'apparais alors au coin d'un bosquet encore plus trinqué que le reste, j'apparais et elle tombe dans mes bras, voilà, qu'est-ce que tu dis de ça?

Trouillogan

C'est ingénieux.

Cocolati

N'est-ce pas?...

Trouillogan

C'est ingénieux, je ne dis pas le contraire... j'ai cependant connu des personnes qui s'y prenaient d'une façon plus simple... un croc-en-jambe d'abord, un petit croc-en-jambe pour fich'la personne par terre, et...

Cocolati

Oh! C'est brutal...

Trouillogan

Si l'on trouve que c'est brutal on peut faire précéder le croc-en-jambe de quelques paroles entraînantes, ou bien l'on chante une petite chansonnette...

Cocolati

En musique?

Trouillogan

Il faut toujours y revenir... venez, en voici une de chansonnette, qui m'a réussi quelquefois...

Cocolati

Voyons ça.

Trouillogan (*il chante*)

Bien que de tout côté

L'on vous proclame sage

Voulez-vous, belle Eglé

Accepter mon hommage

(*Changeant de ton*)

En voulez-vous des z'hommages?..

Cocolati

Veux-tu bien te taire?

(*Entre un page*)

Le Page

Monseigneur, c'est l'apothicaire

Trouillogan

Je disparaissais, monseigneur. Je ne sais ce qui m'arrive moi, cette conversation, ces souvenirs, je me sens tout... (*avec force.*) Je vais me laver les mains! (*Il sort.*)

Scène 9^e

Cocolati, puis Panurge, en apothicaire

Cocolati *(au page)*

Fais entrer et attends... *(à Panurge, qui entre.)* C'est fait?

Panurge

Oui, monseigneur.

Cocolati

Fais dire à mademoiselle Nicole que je la prie de passer à mon cabinet pour une affaire qui ne souffre aucun retard...

Le Page

Bien, monseigneur. *(Il sort. Panurge a posé le plateau sur une table.)*

Panurge

Vous voyez, monseigneur, il n'y a pas moyen de s'y tromper, dans le flacon qui a un bouchon blanc, il y a un philtre, dans le flacon qui a un bouchon de couleur il n'y a que de l'eau sucrée...

Cocolati

Répète-moi cela un peu... dans le flacon qui a un bouchon de couleur...

Panurge

L'eau sucrée...

Cocolati

Dans l'autre?

Panurge

Philtre...

Cocolati *(à lui-même)*

Bouchon-blanc, philtre; bouchon de couleur, eau sucrée... eau sucrée, bouchon de couleurs, philtre
bouchon blanc... j'y suis... Tu es sûr de l'effet?...

Panurge

Tout-à-fait sûr. Je l'ai essayé sur une petite amie à moi...

Cocolati

Et...

Panurge

Prodigieux!...

(Entre Nicole, elle n'a pas encore fini de s'habiller)

Nicole

Je me suis hâtée de me rendre à vos ordres...

Cocolati

Dites à ma prière... *(à Panurge.)* Laissez-nous...

Panurge

Vous tenez à ce que je m'en aille?

Cocolati

Mais sans doute, j'y tiens... en voilà une idée...

Panurge

Vous n'aimez pas mieux?... Je ne serais pas fâché de constater...

Cocolati

Veux-tu bien... veux-tu bien t'en aller... *(Il marche sur Panurge. Celui-ci se sauve)*. Il est tenace, cet apothicaire...

Scène 10^e

Nicole, Cocolati

Nicole

Vous me garderez le moins longtemps possible, n'est-ce pas, Monseigneur. Je ne suis pas encore tout-à-fait habillée, vous voyez?...

Cocolati (*avec expression*)

Oui, je vois...

Nicole

Je vous écoute...

Cocolati

Vous n'oubliez pas, Nicole, que je vous ai tirée des mains des brigands...

Nicole

Certes, je ne l'oublie pas.

Cocolati

Vous me devez donc de la reconnaissance... je voudrais que, pour me la prouver, vous me dissiez l'honneur de boire à ma santé...

Nicole

Je ne demande pas mieux, monseigneur...

Cocolati (*à part*)

Elle y vient... je m'attendais à plus de résistance...

Nicole

Versez, je boirai...

Cocolati

C'est là qu'il ne faut pas se tromper... bouchon blanc, le philtre, c'est pour elle... l'eau sucrée, c'est pour moi... Buvons maintenant.

Nicole

Buvons...

Duetto

Cocolati

Le goût de cette eau sucrée
Me paraît particulier...

Nicole

C'est bon mais si l'on avait eu l'idée
D'ajouter
Un peu de fleur d'oranger
Ce serait encore meilleur...

Cocolati

Eh bien, Nicole

Nicole

Monseigneur?

Cocolati

Vous n'avez rien à me dire... non?... rien?

Nicole

Que je suis votre humble servante
On ne peut plus obéissante...

Cocolati

Pas autre chose?... Cherchez bien...

Nicole

Non, monseigneur, j'ai beau chercher...

Cocolati

C'est bien singulier!

Rebuons alors!

Nicole et Cocolati

Rebuons...

Cocolati

Maintenant Nicole réponds.

(Parlé, animé parce qu'il vient de boire)

Brrrrrr!

Nicole *(l'imitant en riant)*

Brrrrr!...

Cocolati

Quand je te parle, moi ton maitre

Tu ne sens pas le long, le long,

Le long de tout ton petit être

Courir un immense frisson?...

Nicole

Nenni da, vraiment, nenni da!

Je ne sens rien de tout cela...

Cocolati *(plus marqué)*

Brrr...

Nicole (*l'imité*)

Brrr...

Cocolati

Tu ne sens pas comme une flamme

Poindre, tout au fond de ton cœur

Un désir qui brûle ton âme

Et qui va jusqu'à la fureur?...

Nicole

Nenni da, vraiment nenni da

Je ne sens rien de tout cela.

Cocolati

Elle reste froide, immobile
Elle n'est pas au diapason...
Je suis sûr que cet imbécile
Se sera trompé de bouchon,
Brrrrrrr!

Nicole

Il roule des yeux comme un diable
Qu'est-ce qui peut avoir, qu'est-ce qu'ila?
J'crois vraiment qu'il veut fair'l'aimable
Mon Dieu, qu'il est drôle comm' ça
(*L'imitant*) Brrrrrrr!

Cocolati

Nicole!

Nicole

Monseigneur?...

Cocolati

Ma foi tant pis, je risque le croc-en-jambe.

(*Il essaie de donner un croc-en-jambe à Nicole et il tombe. Nicole se sauve en riant.*)

Nicole

Ah! Bien... si c'est en ça que consistent les épreuves, il faudra trouver autre chose... (*elle sort*).

Scène 11^e

Cocolati, puis Caterina, Philiberto, Panurge, Trouillogan, le maître de ballet, le compositeur, le chef des odeurs suaves.

Cocolati

Certainement, mademoiselle, on trouvera autre chose (*il se relève et tape comme un furieux sur le timbre*) et moi, l'intendant de mes fêtes, à moi mon maître de ballets, à moi mon compositeur, à moi tout le monde, à moi, à moi..

(Entrent Caterina et Philiberto et tous les autres personnages amoureux)

Caterina

Qu'est-ce qui se pâme?... Qu'est-ce que vous avez?

Cocolati

Ma femme, tiens... elle est jolie ma femme... (*il l'embrasse*)

Caterina

Qu'est-ce qu'il lui prend?

Philiberto

Je n'aime pas beaucoup ça, vous savez?

Cocolati

Ce qui se passe c'est que tout à l'heure, c'est que tout de suite, je vais faire représenter mon grand ballet, la Naissance de Vénus.

Caterina

C'est décidé?

Cocolati

Oui, c'est décidé. Ah! Elle demande autre chose!

Caterina

Dans deux heures vous savez, les épreuves seront terminées!... Si Nicole a résisté elle sera considérée comme décidément victorieuse.

Panurge

Et ce mariage se fera, ma petite Nicole...

Caterina

Quant à cela, nous verrons...

Panurge

Que voulez-vous dire? Est-ce qu'il y aura encore des manigances?...

(entre Trouillogan)

Trouillogan *(regardant ses mains)*

Elles sont propres maintenant, je peux marcher...

Cocolati

Avez-vous tout votre monde, monsieur l'intendant de mes fêtes?

L'intendant

Oui, monseigneur...

Cocolati

Mon maître de ballets?... *(Le maître de ballets se présente)* tout marchera bien, monsieur?

Le maître de ballets

Je vous en réponds, monseigneur.

Cocolati

Et mon chef des odeurs suaves?...

Le chef

Me voici, monseigneur...

Cocolati

Vous avez fait ce qu'il fallait?

Le chef

J'ai inventé une nouvelle espèce de vanille.

Cocolati

Une nouvelle espèce de?... *(Il embrasse sa femme).*

Caterina

Encore...

Philiberto

Ah! Mais!... ah! Mais!...

Cocolati

Et mon compositeur... *(le compositeur s'avance et salue)* Êtes-vous content, cher maître?

Le compositeur

Je suis toujours content, mais je vous avouerai qu'aujourd'hui, je suis plus content que je ne l'ai jamais été.

Cocolati

Assez alors, et prenez chacun le poste que vous devez occuper... *(il embrasse sa femme à plusieurs reprises).*

Caterina

Mais qu'est-ce qu'il a? Qu'est-ce qu'il a?...

Philiberto

Je n'ai plus qu'à mourir...

Cocolati (*bas à Panurge qui est près de lui*)

Excellent, votre philtre!...

Chœur (*qui va decrescendo*)

Allons remplir, avec intelligence

Le poste qu'on nous désigna

Et méritons la niche récompense

Que le prince nous donnera...

(Sur ce chorus tout le monde s'en va. Caterina allait entrer chez elle avec Philiberto, Cocolati s'empare de son bras et sort en couvrant sa femme de baisers. Fureur de Philiberto, etc. etc.)

3^e Tableau

Les Jardins du Prince Cocolati

1.

Danse des femmes et de nymphes. Entrée de Bacchus, son cortège. Reprise des danses. Nicole parait au milieu des danseuses, habillée elle-même en nymphe. Elle fait quelques pas s'arrête. Elle chante:

Nicole

J'ai beau lutter contre moi même

Un trouble délicieux s'est emparé de moi

J'aime, je ne sais quoi, mais j'aime, mais j'aime

Et j'appelle le Dieu qui causa mon effroi!

Je sens s'en aller le courage

Qui m'a si bien gardée, hélas, jusqu'à ce jour...

Il est si dur de rester sage

Dans ces lieux enchantés où tout parle d'amour!

Des femmes, des satyres s'approchent d'elle. Elle prend la fuite. Reprise des danses. Bacchus a remarqué une nymphe qui lui plait plus que les autres. (La petite Lamothe.) On la cherche, mais après avoir dansé, elle a disparu. Bacchus et compagnons se lancent à sa poursuite, peut-être ne faut-il mettre l'entrée de Bacchus qu'après l'air chanté par Nicole.

2.

La fontaine - la nymphe poursuivie danse sur les eaux, les autres nymphes dans l'eau. Les compagnons de Bacchus s'emparent de celle qui est aimée par le Dieu et l'enlèvent.

3.

Bacchus, triomphant, la nymphe est à lui. Une danse pour célébrer son ivresse. Mais on entend du cor ou ce qui pouvait en être l'équivalent à l'époque où Diane. On entend en tous cas un aboiement et Diane en courant traverse la clairière avec les chasseresses... après le passage de Diane la scène reste vide. Nicole puis Panurge paraissent.

Duo

Nicole

Nicole

Je vais... Je porte en moi le feu qui me dévore

(Entre Panurge. Il est habillé en Dieu des jardins.)

Panurge

Va-t'en d'ici, Nicole, il en est temps encore...

Nicole

Panurge!

Panurge

Oui, c'est moi!

Nicole *(un cri d'amour)*

Panurge!..

Panurge

Que veux-tu?...

Ne comprends-tu pas malheureuse

Qu'une ivresse mystérieuse

Est plus forte que ta vertu!...

Nicole écoute ma prière

Et sans regarder en arrière

Va-t'en d'ici!...

Nicole

Il faut que cette ivresse fait sur toi peu d'effet

Puis que tu me parles ainsi!...

Tu ne m'aimes donc plus!...

Panurge

Si Nicole je t'aime,

Je t'aime à te vouloir respecter tout-à-fait

Et cela m'étonne moi-même...

Nicole

Cela m'étonne aussi, Panurge... qu'ai-je fait?

Je croyais moi, que j'étais belle.

Et que vraiment je méritais

Une réponse moins cruelle.

Il paraît que je me trompais...

Panurge

Ah! Mais tu sais ah! Mais tu sais ne va pas jusqu'au bout

Car je suis Panurge, Panurge après tout...

Nicole

Ah!

Ah! Ah! Je croyais aux ardentès fièvres ah! Ah! Aux transports divins!

Ah! Je croyais

Que lorsque j'approchais mes lèvres

Il parait

Que je me trompais...

Panurge

Ah! Mais tu sais, ne va pas jusqu'au bout

Car je suis Panurge après tout...

Nicole

Je croyais aux ardentès fièvres,

Aux transports divins, je croyais

Que lorsque j'approchais mes lèvres...

Il parait que je me trompais...

Panurge

Ah! Mais tu sais, ne va pas jusqu'au bout

Car je suis Panurge après tout...

Marchons parmi ces fleurs, l'air qui nous environne

Est tout chargé de volupté!

Nicole

Tu m'as parlé d'amour, si je t'ai résisté

Pardonne-moi, je m'abandonne...

(Elle va s'abandonner, en effet. Deux coups sonnent [il faudra trouver un instrument pas ridicule] on entend une voix qui dit: Les Épreuves sont terminées. Entrent en scène Cocolati, Caterina, Trouillogan, Philiberto, etc.)

Panurge *(parlé sur musique de scène)*

Elle a triomphé! Mariez-vous, mariez-vous tout de suite...

Caterina

Par ordre de Dame Philocloea, le mariage de Panurge ne sera célébré que lorsqu'il aura subi une épreuve, lui aussi, et qu'il en aura triomphé...

Panurge

Des épreuves, moi!...

Caterina

Lisez...

Panurge (*après un éclat de rire*)

O la bonne heure, mais je ne veux pas les subir ici j'irai dans les champs... (*à Nicole*) Tu peux être tranquille, je n'aime pas les bergères...

Cocolati (*à sa femme*)

Mon lapin rose... hé, tu es contente?

Caterina

Taisez-vous!...

Philiberto (*entouré d'une demi-douzaine des danseuses*)

J'aurai beau faire, jamais je ne pourrai me consoler...

(*Entre Trouillogan avec une femme de six pieds, costume de la Minerve de l'Institut.*)

Trouillogan

La Philosophie... ma maîtresse!...

Chœur général

Nous revenons au temps où le ciel sur la terre

Marchait et respirait dans un peuple de Dieux

Où Vénus astarté, fille de l'onde amère

Secouait vierge encor les larmes de sa mère

Et fécondait le monde, se tordant les cheveux.

(On pourra dans ce chœur utiliser la voix de Panurge et de Nicole. Tableau final, Vénus s'élève peu à peu, sortant de l'onde et tordant ses cheveux. Le soleil paraît derrière l'acropole et inonde la scène de lumière électrique. Triomphe du paganisme.)

ACTE 3

1^{ère} Tableau

Une plaine.

Scène 1^{ère}

Nicole, en bergère réaliste, quelques moutons également réalistes.

Nicole

Dans ces prés fleuris

Qu'arrose la Loire

Venez paître et boire

Moutons et brebis

Hardi là, regarder un peu.

Et vous verrez j'en suis certaine

Que les moutons que je promène

Sont de vrais moutons du bon Dieu

Ils ne sont pas jolis, bien peignés et tout blancs

Comme on nous les montre en peinture

Ils sont laids et crottés, comme ils vont dans les champs

Mes moutons sont nature!!

2.

Tels sont les moutons

Telle est la bergère
Étoffe grossière
Grossier cotillons
A sa jupe un voit plus d'un trou...
De la tête aux pieds sa toilette
Montre qu'elle n'est pas coquette
Oh! Là, là! non, pas pour un sou
Elle n'a point au front de fleurs ni de rubans
Elle est modeste en sa parure
La pauvre elle n'a pas non plus de diamants
La bergère est nature.

(Entre Cocolati. Costume Simple)

Scène 2^e

Nicole, Cocolati

Cocolati

Psst!... psst!... Ohé!... vous n'entendez pas la bergère?

Nicole

C'est-y pas à moi que vous parliez?

Cocolati

Si fait, la bergère, c'est à vous!

Nicole

Quoique vous m'voulions?

Cocolati

Vous n'auriez pas aperçu une jeune demoiselle qui a fort grand air et que l'on appelle Nicole?

Nicole

C'est-y que vous ne me reconnaissez pas pour lors?

Cocolati

Comment, je ne vous reconnais pas?

Nicole (*voix naturelle*)

Eh! Non, et j'en suis bien aise, car si vous ne me reconnaissez pas, Monseigneur, il est probable que les autres ne me reconnaissent tout pas davantage...

Cocolati

Comment!... Vous êtes Nicole?...

Nicole

Je suis Nicole, et je demande bien pardon à monseigneur de m'être permis cette innocente plaisanterie... Je ne lui en suis pas moins reconnaissante d'avoir consenti à m'accompagner...

Cocolati

Je ne pouvais guère faire autrement... C'est ma femme qui l'a exigé... Panurge venait de partir pour s'en aller dans les champs subir ses épreuves...

Nicole (*avec douleur*)

Ah!

Cocolati

Nous allions, ma femme et moi, partir à notre tour pour nous rendre à la cour du Sire de Pantagruel... vous deviez vous joindre un cortège, mais vous avez demandé la permission de voyager seule, la princesse vous l'a accordée...

Nicole

Elle est si bonne...

Cocolati

Et elle m'a ordonné de vous suivre et de veiller sur vous... J'ai pris un costume de demi-caractère, et je vous ai suivie...

Nicole

Que débouté!...

Cocolati

Je crois avoir deviné pourquoi ma femme m'a donné cet ordre... Elle m'adore maintenant, ma femme. ...elle a tenu à savoir s'il ne restait rien de ce caprice que nous avons en l'un pour l'autre...

Nicole (*à part*)

Comment l'un pour l'autre... (*haut*) Il n'en reste rien, n'est-ce pas?

Cocolati

Faut-il être franc?

Nicole

Je vous en prie...

Cocolati

Il n'en reste pas grand-chose surtout depuis que vous vous êtes accoutrée: Pardonnez-moi, je n'ai jamais pu aimer que des femmes excessivement bien mises, cela tient à une certaine délicatesse (*en riant*) Ma pauvre enfant... Êtes-vous assez fagotée? Mais comment l'idée vous est-elle venue de vous déguiser d'une façon aussi réussie?

Nicole

Il m'a semblé qu'en me déguisant, il me serait plus facile de retrouver Panurge...

Cocolati

Toujours Panurge?

Nicole

Sans doute.

Cocolati

Il est loin, Panurge, s'il court toujours...

Nicole

S'il est loin, nous en serons quittes pour courir, aussi, et nous finirons par avoir de ses nouvelles.

Cocolati

C'est possible. Mais jusqu'à présent...

Nicole

Hélas, oui, je dois avouer que jusqu'à présent...

Cocolati

Si vous le désiriez, je vais me répondre dans les alentours, j'interrogerai les habitants, et ce qu'ils me diront, je vous le répéterai....

Nicole

Je n'osais pas vous en prier....

Cocolati

Vous aviez tort, je suis gentilhomme et je sais qu'un gentilhomme doit toujours faire ce que désire une femme, même quand cette femme est fichue comme l'as de pique.

Nicole

Ah! Vous trouvez que je suis...

Cocolati

Vous n'en êtes pas moins charmante... je vais interroger les habitants.

Nicole

Allez, et vous savez, si vous apprenez que Panurge a succombé, n'ayez pas peur de me faire de la peine... dites-moi tout!

Cocolati

Soyez tranquille, je vous en dirai plutôt plus qu'il n'y en aura.

(Il sort).

Scène 3^e

Nicole, puis Panurge

Nicole

Attention aux moutons, là, mon bon chien...

(Elle commence à chanter)

Ils sont laids et crottés, comme ils sont dans les champs

Mes moutons sont nature

Oh! Oh! Qu'est-ce que c'est que cet homme qui a l'air d'être poursuivi?

(Entre Panurge, effaré, haletant)

Panurge

Cachez-moi...

Nicole, (à part)

C'est Panurge.

Panurge

Cachez-moi, je vous dis...

Nicole

Mais...

Panurge

Cachez-moi d'abord, nous causerons après, si vous voulez.

Nicole

Tenez, mettez-vous là dans ce foin.

Panurge

Merci... *(il se blottit dans le foin)*

Nicole *(en jetant sur lui des bottes de foin pour le cacher complètement)*

Qu'est-ce qu'il a pu faire, grands dieux! Est-ce qu'il aurait tué quelqu'un? *(elle reprend d'un air indifférent)*. Attention mon bon chien...

Ils ne sont pas jolis, bien peignés et tout blancs

Comme on nous les montre en peinture

(Entrant les Villageois qui poursuivant Panurge)

Scène 4^e

Nicole, les Villageois

Tous les Villageois

Où donc est ce coquin

Ce fripon ce faquin

Que l'on nomme Panurge?

Dès que nous le tiendrons

Nous le ligoterons

Crainte qu'il ne s'insurge...

Une partie des Paysans

Puis au Tribunal de police

Que va tenir Pantagruel

Nous conduirons le criminel,

Afin qu'il en soit fait justice...

Un Paysan

Nous verrons alors si l'infame
A le droit d'enjôler ma femme
Comme il l'a fait le sacripant!

Les Femmes (*voix très-claires, très femmes*)

Ce n'est pas vrai...

Un autre Paysan

S'il a le droit parmi nos filles
De se payer plus gentilles
Et de s'en aller en riant...

Les Femmes

Ce n'est pas vrai!

Les deux paysans

Nos femmes nous étaient fidèles
Mais Panurge arrive... alors elles
Se fich...t de la fidélité!

Les Femmes

Ce n'est pas vrai!

Les deux paysans

Le traître sachant les paroles
Qui les grisent, les rendent folles
En use avec habileté...

Les Femmes

Ce n'est pas vrai!

Les Villageois

Coquines!

Mâtines!

Nous verrons si ce n'est pas vrai!

Panurge par ci, Panurge par-là!

Nous verrons ce qu'on dira!...

Les Femmes

Ce n'est pas vrai! Ce n'est pas vrai!

Un Paysan (*parlé*)

Hé Ka bergerie, vous ne l'avez pas vu?

Nicole

Qui ça?

Tous les Villageois

Ce traître, ce coquin

Ce fripon, ce faquin

Que l'on nomme Panurge

Nicole (*parlé*)

Je n'ai vu personne.

Les Villageois

Dès que nous le tiendrons

Nous le ligoterons

Crainte qu'il ne s'insurge!...

(*Ils sortent*)

Scène 5^e

Nicole, Panurge

Nicole

Allons, grâce au ciel, il n'a tué personne... Et ce pauvre prince qui est allé aux renseignements... Je n'en ai plus besoin de ses renseignements, je sais à quoi m'en tenir...

Panurge (*passant sa tête hors du foin*)

Ils sont partis?...

Nicole

Ils sont partis.

Panurge (*sortant du foin*)

Vous m'avez sauvé, la bergère, et je vous donnerai volontiers un baiser pour vous prouver ma reconnaissance.

Nicole

Un baiser?

Panurge

Oui!

Nicole (*tristement*)

Donne-le moi donc, Panurge... Il est probable que tu ne m'en donneras jamais d'autre.

Panurge

Comment, il est probable... (*la reconnaissant*) Nicole!

Nicole

Oui, c'est moi!...

Panurge

Ah! Diable! Et tu as peut-être entendu ce que disaient ces gens?

Nicole

J'ai tout entendu.

Panurge

Tout?

Nicole

Tout.

Panurge

Au fait, oui, j'entendais bien moi, qui avais du foin par-dessus la tête. Il n'y a pas de raison pour que toi, qui n'avais pas de foin... et c'est pour cela que tu me declares que plus jamais je ne te donnerai de baisers...

Nicole

Oui, c'est pour cela...

Panurge

Tu m'en veux?

Nicole

Dame!... et puis je suis triste, parce que je crois bien que maintenant notre mariage...

Panurge

Je te jure que ce n'est pas ma faute.

Nicole

Ah!

Panurge

Dès que j'arrivais dans un village, le bruit se répandait que je venais pour subir des épreuves et que j'avais juré de résister... alors, tu comprends, les femmes, leur amour. Propre était-en jeu, elles se sont appliquées... Mais je te jure que si elles ne s'étaient pas appliquées...

Nicole

En voilà une explication!

Panurge

J'eus grand tort, sans nul doute

Malgré tous mes serments

De prendre sur la route

Quelques amusements!

Mais quand on vous fait fête,

Quand on semble insister,

Il serait malhonnête

De toujours résister...

Et puis, vrai, je croyais

Que tu ne le savais

Jamais!

Je jurais d'être sage

Quand le jour commençait

Mais au cours du voyage

Ma vertu faiblissait...

Aujourd'hui, me disais-je,

J'agis mal, c'est certain...

Quand me corrigerai-je?...

Ce sera pour demain...

Et puis vrai, je croyais

Que tu ne le saurais

Jamais!

Nicole

Il est franc, au moins...

(À partir de là, les moutons commencent à envahir la scène)

Panurge

Ce qui est sûr, en dépit de tout, c'est que c'est toi que j'aime et que je n'aime que toi... ça n'en a pas l'air, mais c'est comme ça tout de même... Nicole, tu ne veux pas me pardonner?

Nicole

Non, certes...

Panurge

C'est bien, adieu Nicole.

Nicole

Où vas-tu?

Panurge *(indécis)*

Je vais...

Nicole *(en colère)*

Subir d'autres épreuves, n'est-ce pas?... me trahir encore!... ah! Mais non, tu ne t'en iras pas!... Tu ne me quitteras plus, nous ferons toute ensemble.

Panurge

Tu me pardonnes, alors?

Nicole

Je ne sais pas... Je ne sais qu'une chose, c'est que je ne veux pas que tu t'en ailles...

Panurge

Je te jure que je suis innocent... ça n'en a pas l'air peut-être, mais...

Nicole

Ce n'est pas moi qu'il fondrait convaincre, je t'aime, moi, alors ce n'est pas difficile, mais les autres...

Panurge

Quels autres?

Nicole

Ces gens qui t'accusaient tout à l'heure et qui veulent te mener au Tribunal de Pantagruel.

Panurge

Bon! Le prince m'aime, il me défendra!

Nicole

Et puis, nous tâcherons de trouver quelque chose... Voyons, il faut d'abord arrêter que tu sois reconnu... Tiens, prends cet chapeau, prends cette limousine, enfonce ce chapeau sur tes yeux... Lui, je les défie bien maintenant... *(Cocolati paraît)* Oh!

Panurge

Quoi donc?

Nicole

Le Prince Cocolati que j'oubliais.

Oh! Il ne pense plus à moi! N'ai pas peur... Il faudrait avant tout nous débarrasser de lui.

Panurge

Quant à cela je m'en charge! *(Il commence à faire ce berger... On verra cela en scène.)*

Scène 6^e

Les mêmes, Cocolati

Eh bien, j'en ai des renseignements. Là bas, de l'autre côté de la montagne, on m'a parlé d'un villageois qui avait une femme jolie... ah! Mais jolie!.. Panurge entré chez lui sous prétexte de lui chanter des chansons... et il lui en chante une tellement assommante que le villageois s'endort... alors Panurge... je ne peux pas vous raconter la suite... une jeune fille... (*éclatant de vie*) Mais si je pouvais vous la raconter, bon sens de la vie... (*apercevant Panurge*) qu'est-ce que c'est que cet homme-là?

Nicole

C'est un vieux berger qui m'apprend à garder mes moutons.

Panurge (*faisant le berger et prenant un mouton plus petit que les autres*)

Qu'est-ce qu'il a, c'h-là il est malade?

Nicole

Malade, mon agneau favori!

Panurge

Je vous disions qu'il est malade! (*à Cocolati*) C'est-y pas que vous serions vétérinaire?

Cocolati

Je suis Grand Seigneur

Panurge

Un Grand Seigneur, c'est y pas un homme qui savions tout faire, sans avoir appris...

Cocolati (*flatté*)

Sans doute...

Panurge

Si vous savions tout faire, vous savions été vétérinaire! Empoignez-moi c't'agneau et venez un peu que j'vous cousions. (*Cocolati empoigne l'agneau et marche vers Panurge - tous les moutons le suivent.*) Attendez voir, faut d'abord que je cautions à la bergère... (*il va trouver Nicole et lui parle tout bas*) Eh! Bien, venez donc... maintenant, quoique vous faisons-là? Venez donc...

(Cocolati marche, les moutons le suivent; ils le poussent et l'empêchent de s'arrêter près de Panurge. Ils continuent de le pousser et le forcent à sortir de scène.)

Cocolati

Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont, ces moutons, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont?

Scène 7^e

Panurge, Nicole

Nicole

Sauvons-nous maintenant à un petit lieu d'ici, nous trouverons un vieux moulin abandonné que le prince Cocolati avait mis à ma disposition.

Panurge

Dis donc, le prince Cocolati aurait-il eu la bonne idée d'y faire préparer une collation; dans ce vieux moulin?

Nicole

Justement, il a donné des ordres.

Panurge

Allons, alors...

Nicole

Allons!

(Ils sortent tous les deux. Du côté opposé rentre Cocolati, toujours suivi par les moutons.)

Cocolati

Ils sont ennuyeux, ces moutons... Eh! Bien, Nicole n'est plus là... *(aux moutons)*. Vous ne savez pas ce qu'elle est devenue? Ah! Mais, ils sont assommants à la fin! Est-ce que vous n'allez pas me fich'la paiera bientôt? *(Et il sort, toujours poursuivi, toujours poussé par les moutons)*.

Rideau

2^e Tableau

Scène 1^{ère}

Panurge, Nicole

(Ils viennent de diner. Nicole débarrasse la table)

Panurge

Sois tranquille, petite Nicole, je m'en tirerai.

Nicole

Tu dis cela parce que tu viens de bien dîner et que pour voir les choses en beau il n'y a rien de tel que de manger à sa faim et de boire à sa soif. Mais moi, j'ai grand'peur...

Panurge

Ah! Si tu me décourages...

Nicole

Je n'ai pas envie de te décourager... mais Madame Philoclœa ne nous aime guère, et il lui sera facile, si elle en a envie, de nous faire du mal... Enfin, il sera temps de penser à cela demain matin, il faut dormir maintenant...

Panurge

Dormir...

Nicole

Sans doute...

Panurge

Ah! Heureusement la nuit est belle. Je vais m'étendre dans l'herbe, là, dehors, tout près du moulin.

Nicole

Tu es fou, je suppose... Ces gens qui te poursuivent qui te dit qu'ils ne battent pas la campagne pour essayer de te surprendre.

Panurge

Mais alors?

Nicole

Alors quoi?

Panurge

Si je ne vais pas dormir dehors?

Nicole

Si tu ne vas pas dormir dehors, tu dormiras ici, cela est évident. La Princesse Cocolati a bien fait les choses, j'ai une chambre pour moi... toi, tu dormiras là, dans un fauteuil. Tu ne seras peut-être pas très bien, mais, comme l'on dit, une mauvaise nuit est bientôt passée.

Panurge

Vraiment, Nicole, tu dormirais ainsi près de moi... séparée seulement par une méchante porte que l'on jetterait à bas d'un coup de poing.

Nicole

Certainement, je dormirais ainsi...

Panurge

Et tu n'avais pas peur?

Nicole

De quoi aurais-je peur?... J'ai dû être ta femme et tu es un honnête homme. Je crois bien, malheureusement, que je ne serai pas ta femme.... C'est fâcheux, mais cela ne t'empêche pas d'être un honnête homme...

Panurge

C'est gentil, petite Nicole, c'est très gentil, ce que tu dis là.

Nicole

C'est bien simple. Tu feras bien de ne pas allumer la lampe, tu sais... si les gens te cherchent il est inutile d'appeler leur attention. Tu as bien fermé la porte? Oui... tu as relevé le pont que l'on a jeté sur la rivière?

Panurge

Oui, n'aie pas peur!

Nicole

Allons, je crois bien que jusqu'à demain, nous pouvons être sans inquiétude... Bonne nuit Panurge.

Panurge

Bonne nuit, petite Nicole...

Nicole

Tu ne m'embrasses pas?

Panurge

Si fait, je t'embrasse... Bonne nuit, petite Nicole...

Nicole

Bonne nuit, Panurge.

(Elle entre dans sa chambre.)

Scène 2^e

Panurge

Panurge

Elle a raison d'avoir confiance, certainement elle a raison, mais c'est égal, qui m'aurait dit que je pourrais être si vertueux?. Panurge! *(il fredonne l'air du 1^{ère} acte)* Au demeurant le meilleur fils du monde... *(il a dit cela dans son fauteuil, il se lève)* comme ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler le vice, tout de même, est chose plus naturelle que ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler la vertu, il faut un effort

petit ou grand, mais il en faut un: le vice, au contraire, ça va tout seul... Eh! Bien Panurge, qu'est-ce que c'est que ces idées là, vous oubliez que vous êtes entré dans votre seconde manière... *(ils remontent jusqu'à la porte de la chambre de Nicole, la porte est restée entrebâillée)* Elle n'a même pas fermé sa porte... Elle dort... comme elle est jolie... et comme elle est calme.... *(il redescend)*.

Dors bien tranquillement
Sans trembler enfant,
Pour ton innocence!
Dors, ton ange gardien
N'apercevra rien,
Non rien, qui l'offense...
Il te regardera
Et s'endormira
Plein de confiance!
Dors sans crainte c'est moi
Qui tiens à veiller sur toi!

(Il remonte)

Elle n'a pas bougé, elle dort toujours.

Nicole *(parlant)*

Panurge!

Panurge

Elle parle en rêvant.

Nicole

Panurge...

Panurge

C'est mon nom qu'elle a prononcée...

Nicole

Cher Panurge, pourquoi

T'éloignes-tu de moi?

C'est une peine extrême

Je t'aime!..

Panurge

Ah! Mais, ce n'est pas de jeu!... Je ne veux pas, je ne veux pas!

Nicole (*chantant dans son rêve*)

Je t'aime!...

Panurge

Comment faire? Il est clair que si en dormant, elle se met à me dire des choses comme ça, j'aurai beau être vertueux, je finirai par... j'ai envie de prendre des ordres et de m'attacher à ce fauteuil... Bon, après m'être attaché, je saurais bien délier les cordes... si je m'en allais? Bon, une fois que je serai parti qui m'empêcherait de revenir?... Je reviendrais certainement... Il faudrait autre chose.

(*On entend assez loin le chœur des gens qui cherchent Panurge*)

Les Villageois (*loin*)

Ou donc est ce coquin

Ce traître, ce faquin

Que l'on nomme Panurge?

Panurge

Ah! La voilà, l'idée, la voilà! (*Il ouvre la porte*) Hé là-bas. Mon Dieu, je vais la réveiller. (*Parlant plus doucement*) Hé Là-bas! Ils m'ont entendu, ils viennent... C'est Panurge que vous cherchez?

Les Villageois

Oui, oui, oui...

Panurge

Chut! Donc, ne parlez pas si fort... (*parlant à mi-voix*). C'est Panurge que vous cherchez?

Les Villageois (*à voix basse*)

Oui, oui, oui...

Panurge

Entrez ici, je vais vous le livrer... vous ne pouvez pas entrer? Il n'y a pas de pont sur la rivière... attendez... (*Il lâche la chaîne qui tient le pont*). Et la porte... (*il ôte les verrous et ouvre la porte*). Entrez maintenant, mais ne faites pas de bruit, pour l'amour de Dieu, ne faites pas de bruit...

(*Entrent les villageois sur la pointe des pieds*)

Scène 3^e

Panurge, les Villageois

Les Villageois

Où donc est-il Panurge?

Panurge

Le voici!

Et maintenant, emmenez-moi d'ici

Emmenez-moi

Emportez-moi

Il faut obéir à la loi!

Les Villageois (*un peu haut*)

Oui, nous t'emmènerons.

Panurge

Doucement donc!

Les Villageois (*tout bas*)

Oui, nous t'emmènerons.

Mais d'abord nous t'attacherons

Nous te ligoterons

Panurge (*se laissant attacher les mains*)

Attachez-moi

Ligotez-moi

Est-ce fait, Messieurs? Grand merci...

Et maintenant, emmenez-moi d'ici.

Emmenez-moi

Emportez-moi.

Un Villageois

Le voilà donc, ce brigand

Ce beau muguet, ce galant

Vous le trouvez joli?

Les Villageois

Nous le trouvons très laid.

Panurge

Oh! Pas d'injures s'il vous plait.

Et partons!

Un Villageois

Soit, mais avant de partir

Si tu veux me faire plaisir

Avoue au moins que ma femme était belle

Panurge

Je l'avouerai très volontiers

Un autre Villageois

Et la mienne?... Elle était aux trois quarts demoiselle

Tous les Villageois

Et la mienne?

Panurge

Il est vrai mesdames os moitiés

Étaient charmants

Étourdissantes.

Et je le signerais si je pouvais signer...

N'allons-nous pas bientôt nous en aller?

Les Villageois

Oui, nous partons!

Panurge

Adieu, Nicole,

J'ai promis de veiller et je tiens ma parole!

Ensemble

Panurge

Suivez-moi, je passe devant
J'ai fait mon devoir maintenant
Pour le reste, ça m'est égal
En route pour ce tribunal !

Les Villageois

Et maintenant passe devant
Séducteur de femmes, brigand
En route, en route, homme immoral,
En route pour le tribunal.

Rideau

3^e Tableau

Les jardins de Pantagruel... au lever de Rideau, marche Pantagruel vient le dernier, conduisant Philoclœa. Il arrive jusqu'au trône. Pantagruel y fait asseoir Philoclœa.

Scène 1^{ère}

Pantagruel, Philoclœa, puis Caterina, Cocolati, et Philiberto

Pantagruel

Sur ce trône prenez ma place
Je veux que ce soit vous qui régniez aujourd'hui.

Philoclœa

Que de galanterie et quelle bonne grâce
Pour quoi n'avez-vous pas été toujours ainsi
Mais où tiendriez-vous?

Pantagruel

Ma place est à vos pieds...
Maintenant ordonnez!

Philoclœa

Faites Monsieur l'introducteur
Qu'on amène avec politesse
L'auguste prince et l'auguste princesse
Qui de nous saluer veulent avoir l'honneur.

(Entrant Caterina, Cocolati et Philiberto, costumes magnifiques.)

Caterina à Philoclœa qui s'est levée.

Souffrez qu'à vos pieds je me jette
Et que je vous prête serment

Comme il convient, bien humblement
En qualité de fidèle sujette...

Philoclœa

À mes pieds vous... Oh! Que non pas
Pas à mes pieds, mais dans mes bras...

Caterina

Vous êtes trop bonne vraiment.

(Les deux femmes s'embrassent. Murmure flatteur chanté par le chœur).

Caterina

Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?

Pantagruel

C'est un murmure flatteur, mes courtisans sont contents, alors pour exprimer leur satisfaction...

Philoclœa (*à Caterina*)

J'avais envie de vous connaître, figurez-vous...

Caterina

Et moi donc.

Philoclœa

Que me dit-on, que maintenant vous êtes tout à fait heureux en ménage, tous les deux.

Caterina

Parfaitement heureux, oui madame...

Cocolati (*d'un air enchanté*)

Bee, bee,

Philoclœa

Que dit le Prince?...

Caterina

Je ne sais pas, c'est une nouvelle façon de parler qu'il a adoptée...

Pantagruel

Puisque vous êtes heureux en ménage, voulez-vous permettre que douze jeunes gens qui ont épousé ce matin douze jeunes filles, dansent devant vous pour essayer de suivre votre exemple.

Caterina

Très volontiers.

Cocolati

Bee, bee...

Caterina

Ah! Mais il est insupportable à la fin, et puis je ne sais pas, il a une odeur...

(On se rassied)

|--- Ballet des douze mariés ---|

Pantagruel *(après le ballet)*

Que l'on ne s'éloigne pas... tout à l'heure nous allons juger Panurge. Nos lois exigent qu'il soit jugé en audience publique... *(à Cocolati et Caterina)* Pardonnez de vous quitter pendant quelques instants, cette affaire m'intéresse, et je suis forcée...

Philoclœa

Je vous suivrai si vous le permettez, l'affaire Panurge m'intéresse, moi aussi...

Pantagruel

Ah! Alors venez Madame... *(il donne la main à Philoclœa et ils sortent... tout le monde est sorti, il ne reste en scène que Cocolati, Caterina, et Philiberto).*

Scène 2^e

Cocolati, Caterina, Philiberto

Caterina

Tu es tout triste, mon pauvre Philiberto

Philiberto

Cela vous étonne, madame?

Caterina

Sois tranquille, je vais te rendre ta gaîté.

Philiberto

Comment cela, maîtresse chérie?...

Caterina

Je vais te renvoyer en Sicile.

Philiberto

Vous allez me renvoyer!...

Caterina

Sans doute. *(Lorgnant Cocolati)* Tu dois comprendre que maintenant je n'ai plus besoin...

Philiberto

C'est trop fort!... Vous me dites que vous allez me rendre ma gaieté... et lorsque moi, comptant sur quelque gentille parole comme celles que vous me disiez autrefois, je vous demande ce que vous allez

faire pour cela, vous m'annoncez que vous me renvoyez... c'est trop cruel, vraiment, c'est trop cruel...

Cocolati

Le fait est, ma douce brebis, que je trouve cela un peu dur.

Philiberto

N'est-ce pas, monseigneur?

Caterina

C'est votre avis, monsieur...

Philiberto

Je vois bien ce qui vous rend si fière, vous aimez.... pour le moment.

Cocolati

C'est moi qu'elle aime!

Philiberto

Mais êtes-vous sûr qu'elle vous aimera toujours?

Cocolati

C'est bien probable

Philiberto

C'est probable, je le veux bien, c'est très probable, c'est infiniment probable, mais ce n'est pas sûr.

Cocolati

Non, à la rigueur, je n'oserais pas affirmer que c'est sûr.

Philiberto à Caterina

Vous entendez...

Caterina

J'entends...

Philiberto

Le jour où vous n'aimerez plus, le jour où vous aimez moins, qui vous dit quelle idée ne vous viendra pas de chercher des distractions... Vous penserez alors à votre petit Philiberto que vous étiez si dévoué, vous penserez à lui, vous le regretterez, mais il ne sera plus là puisque vous l'aurez chassé.

Cocolati

Ce qu'il dit est juste

Caterina

Vous trouvez?

Cocolati

Il est bien clair que lorsque vous l'aurez chassé

Caterina

Au fait, vous avez peut-être raison

Philiberto

Il a raison, n'en doutez, écoutez-le, écoutez-moi, faites ce que vous conseille la sagesse de tous les temps et de tous les pays.

Nos pères avaient un usage
Que m'a toujours paru fort sage
En Sicile ainsi qu'en Anjou!
Ils savaient prévoir le cas où
Ils auraient soif et n'auraient point à boire
En pareil cas ils gardaient une poire...
Pour la soif, gardez une poire...

Cocolati (*avec force*)

Gardez la poire

Caterina

Puisque mon mari le tolère
Je ne veux pas être sévère.
Nous étions deux, nous serons trois
Il est fort pénible, je crois,
D'avoir soif et de n'avoir point à boire.
En pareil cas puisqu'on garde une poire...
Pour la soif je garde une poire.

Cocolati (*désignant Philiberto*)

C'est lui la poire!...

À lui la pomme pour la façon dont il a fait sa poire...

Caterina (*à Philiberto en montrant Cocolati*)

Il est gentil, n'est-ce pas?

Philiberto

Il est charmant, et puis il a de l'esprit.

Caterina (*à Cocolati, qui se rapproche*)

Mais qu'est-ce que vous sentez, à la fin?

Cocolati

Je n'en sais rien, si c'était le mouton, cela n'aurait rien d'extraordinaire.

(Entre Pantagruel)

Pantagruel

Les juges sont là, nous allons entendre les villageois qui prétendent avoir à se plaindre de Panurge...
Voulez-vous que nous reprenions nos places...

(Il va au-devant de Philocloea qui vient de rentrer, Cocolati, Philiberto et Caterina reprennent leur places avec cette différence que maintenant c'est Philiberto qui donne la main à Caterina. Musique, Les chœurs reviennent. Entre des Chats fourrés)

Scène 3^e

Les Mêmes, Les Chats fourrés, Trouillogan est président. Puis Panurge, puis Nicole.

Les Chats fourrés

Nous sommes les chats fourrés
Gens malfaisants, abhorrés
Avec nos airs d'escogriffes
Huissiers clercs et procureurs
Aux doigts nous avons des griffes
F'tt, F'tt,
Et nous griffons les plaideurs
F'tt F'tt

Philocloea

L'audience va commencer, maître Trouillogan, vous avez la parole.

Trouillogan

Avant tout, notre dame, je tiens à vous remercier, et vous aussi Monseigneur... je tiens à vous remercier tous les deux de m'avoir confié les délicates fonctions de Président... *(Au public)* Car ils me les ont confiées, seulement me les confiant, la femme m'a ordonné de condamner Panurge, le mari m'a ordonné de l'acquitter... voilà où en est la justice... je vais profiter de l'occasion pour leur en faire une bonne, j'acquitterai le prévenu, s'il est innocent, et je le condamnerai s'il est coupable. Faites entrer Panurge, les témoins sont là!

Les Villageois

Oui monsieur le juge, nous sommes là.

Une femme *(se levant)*

Je ne sais pas ce qu'on va dire, mais je proteste, ça n'est pas vrai.

Les Villageoises

Ça n'est pas vrai, ça n'est pas vrai...

Trouillogan

Déjà... allons! Allons, l'audience va être mouvementée.

(Entre Panurge)

Panurge *(s'inclinant devant Pantagruel)*

Monseigneur...

Pantagruel

Sois tranquille, tu seras bien défendu

Panurge

Je vous en remercie, Monseigneur *(s'inclinant devant Philoclæa)* Madame... *(Philoclæa détourne la tête)* Elle est froide, la Bourgeoise. *(Apercevant Trouillogan)* Tiens vous voilà vous!

Trouillogan

Oui, c'est moi qui vous juge.

Panurge

Allons donc

Trouillogan

Parole d'honneur... mais rassurez-vous, votre affaire n'est pas autrement dangereuse, si vous êtes condamné vous en serez quitté pour ne pas épouser.

Panurge

Mais je suis amoureux

Trouillogan

La Cour vous en tiendra compte, allez-vous asseoir.

Panurge

Permettez

Trouillogan

Allez-vous asseoir, je vous dis. (*On entraîne Panurge*) Ou m'avertit que l'on n'a en beau chercher partout la demoiselle Nicole, on ne l'a pas trouvée.

Philoclœa

Elle aura prévu ce qui allait arriver et elle sera retournée dans son pays, ou bien elle sera entrée dans un couvent. Commencez les interrogatoires.

Trouillogan

Témoin Maclou, venez un peu ici, dites ce que vous savez.

Maclou

Je sais que je suis

Les femmes

Ce n'est pas vrai!

Maclou

Cela vous plaît à dire, mademoiselle ma femme.

Les Femmes

Ça n'est pas vrai! Ça n'est pas vrai!

Trouillogan

Un peu de silence... (*à Maclou*) c'est chez vous que Panurge est entré sous prétexte de chanter des chansons...

Cocolati

Ah! Je la connais, celle-là, je la connais, Panurge en a chanté une tellement assommante que le mari s'est endormi, mais par la femme... *(se tordant)* alors Panurge... *(changeant de ton)* le respect que j'ai pour ma souveraine m'empêche de continuer.

La Femme

Ça n'est pas vrai!

Cocolati

Comment, ça n'est pas vrai, c'est nous qui me l'avez raconté.

La Femme *(à part)*

Il est bête, ce petit gars.

Trouillogan

La Cour me paraît suffisamment édifiée, il n'y a plus, je pense, qu'à prononcer l'arrêt.

Pantagruel *(à Panurge qui fait un mouvement)*

Tiens-toi tranquille.

Philoclœa

Mon pauvre Panurge.

Tu restes tout ébaubi
De me voir si sévère
En ne comprenant qu'à demi
Ce que je prétends faire
Je te crois trop malin pour ne pas deviner
Que c'est plus haut que toi que j'ai voulu frapper,
Certes, si j'avais eu le choix
J'aurais mieux placé ma colère
Ce n'est pas la dernière fois
Que les petits paieront pour les grands de la terre!...

Panurge

Grand merci, madame.

Philoclœa

Maintenant, prononcez l'arrêt et que tous ceux qui ont trompé leur femme avant ou après le mariage, veuillent bien en prendre leur part.

Trouillogan *(se lève en tenant un papier et en s'adressant à Panurge)*

C'e n'est pas ma faute, mon pauvre vieux.

Pantagruel *(au moment où Trouillogan va lire)*

Doucement... *(à Philoclœa)* Tout cela, il me semble, n'est pas fort régulier... coupable ou non, un accusé à le droit d'être défendu... on n'a pas défendu Panurge... qui le défendra?

Panurge

Pardieu, je me défendrai moi-même

Pantagruel

Nous faisons la chose dans les règles, tu dois être défendu par un avocat... Y a-t-il ici un avocat qui veuille prendre la défense de Panurge?

Un des chats fourrés *(le plus petit)*

Moi, si vous voulez, *(il s'avance)*

Tout le monde

Oh! Oh! Cet avocat! Quel drôle d'avocat!

Panurge

Il est vraiment trop petit, j'aimerais mieux...

Pantagruel

Bon! Laisse-le toujours parler... un avocat, si petit qu'il soit, vaut mieux que pas du tout.

Trouillogan *(à l'avocat)*

Comment vous appelez vous, petit bonhomme?

Le chat fourré

J'aime mieux ne dire mon nom qu'après la plaidoirie.

Trouillogan

Parlez alors, nous vous écoutons avec curiosité.

Le chat fourré

Monseigneur, messieurs de la cour, pour toute défense, je me bornerai à vous raconter un trait de la vie de mon client.

Mon client était enfermé
Avec une très jeune fille
Des gens de bien m'ont affirmé
Que la fille était très gentille.

La fille dormait, mon client
Ne dormant pas, veillait près d'elle
Sans bouger. Voilà qu'en dormant
La fille s'agite, elle appelle...

La fille ne disait plus mot
Viens, lui disait-elle, je t'aime
Mon client comprit aussitôt
Qu'il fallait fuir à l'instant même.

Certains braillards le poursuivraient
Voulant le mener en justice...
Ils les aperçoit qui passaient:
Voulez-vous me rendre un service

Vite, vite, il faut m'attacher

Me dit-il, prenez ma chaîne,
Vite, vite, il faut m'emmener
Jusques à la prison prochaine

On l'emmène et voilà comment
La jeune fille resta pure...
Et voilà comment mon client
Se tira de cette aventure...

Je vous le demande, messieurs de la cour, l'homme qui s'est conduit ainsi, mérite-t-il un châtiment ou une récompense?

Philoclœa

Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette belle histoire. Où est-elle cette jeune fille?

Nicole (*ôtant sa robe et sa perruque d'avocat, et paraissant en Nicole*)

La jeune fille n'est pas loin, ma noble maîtresse, car la voici.

Panurge

Ah! Nicole! Nicole!

Nicole

Panurge!

(Ils tombent dans les bras l'un de l'autre).

Tout le monde

Vive Panurge! Vive Nicole!

(Caterina va embrasser Nicole, Cocolati embrasse Panurge, Philiberto embrasse Caterina)

Pantagruel (*à Philoclœa*)

Vous entendez, madame, c'est la voix du peuple, et la voix du peuple, dit-on, c'est la voix de Dieu. Ne voulez-vous pas consentir à leur mariage?

Philoclœa

Comment, Nicole, tu épouserais un coquin qui t'a si souvent trompée?

Nicole

Que voulez-vous, madame, la vertu des hommes, c'est de se repentir; la vertu des femmes, c'est de pardonner.

Philoclœa

À la bonne heure, voilà une morale que les hommes accepteront... enfin, marie-toi, puisque tu le veux, tu es une bonne fille après tout.

Nicole

Ou m'a dit que ce matin douze jeunes filles s'étaient mariées et que vous leur aviez fait des cadeaux. Ne me donnez-vous rien à moi?

Pantagruel

Nous te donnerons ce que tu voudras

Nicole

Je veux alors... pardon, je demande que Monseigneur donne devant moi un baiser d'amour à ma noble maîtresse.

Pantagruel

Je suis tout prêt, quant à moi.

Nicole

Je demande aussi que ma noble maîtresse rende de ce baiser, qu'elle le rende tout de bon

Philoclœa

Allons, puisque pour une femme, il n'y a pas d'autre façon d'être heureuse... (*Pantagruel donne le baiser, Philoclœa le rend.*) J'en mauvais d'envie au fond.

Panurge

Là, j'espère que tous ceux qui assisteront à notre mariage, ne diront jamais de mal des femmes, j'espère qu'ils ne parleront d'elles qu'avec adoration.

Air de la chanson à boire

Aimons, tombons aux pieds des femmes

Des femmes que nous adorons

Et bénissons-les pour les flammes

Qu'elles allument dans nos âmes

Aimons!

Triomphe que le monde attend

Couronnes, fêtes immortelles,

Tout ce que nous rêvons de grand

Est fait avec l'amour que nous avons pour elles!

FIN