

*PANTAGRUEL'S SEVENTH CHAPTER:
THE TITLE AS SUSPECT CODPIECE*

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES OF EUROPE AND THE AMERICAS
(FRENCH)

MAY 2006

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INTRODUCTION

I saw the Library of *St. Victor*: This most Antient [sic] Convent is the best seated of any in *Paris*; has very large Gardens, with shady Walks, well kept. The Library is a fair and large Gallery: It is open three days a week, and has a range of double Desks quite through the middle of it, with Seats and Conveniences of Writing for 40 or 50 People. ... In a part of it, at the upper end, are kept the Manuscripts; they are said to be 3000, which though not very ancient, have yet been found very useful for the most correct Editions of many Authors. This is one of the pleasantest Rooms that can be seen, for the Beauty of its Prospect, and the Quiet and Freedom from Noise in the middle of so great a City (Lister 131).

The Englishman Martin Lister published this description of the Library of the Abbey of Saint-Victor after his visit to Paris in 1698. While relishing this idyllic setting he could predict neither the demolition of the Abbey after its suppression in 1790, nor that the site would come to be occupied in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Paris (Ouy, *Histoire*, 86). The serendipity of this latter tenancy, however, might be construed as the resilient expression of nearly 900 years of serious intellectual pursuit in Paris, for the Abbey had been founded in 1114 by William of Champeaux, famous dialectician, master of the Paris schools, and teacher-turned-opponent of Peter Abelard. Interestingly enough, though the site that we see, and the site that Lister saw, have clear historical connections to the academic life of Paris, the former Abbey and its library are now known primarily due to their appearance in a single chapter of fiction: the seventh chapter of Rabelais' first novel, *Pantagruel*, published in 1532. This renowned chapter concludes with titles of books allegedly seen in the library by the eponymous hero. Generally regarded as a burlesque and satirical *tour-de-force*,

this vibrant list has informally entered the critical lexicon as the “catalog of Saint-Victor.”

My discussion of this chapter, however, distances itself from direct consideration of its burlesque and satiric components, and in fact begins in another text. This double move is not only sanctioned, but demanded, by Rabelais. In the prologue to *Gargantua* (1534), the returned narrator, Master Alcofrybas, directs his readers to look for deeper senses not only in the book at hand, but in his first book, and even in the invented titles it contains. Lumping together titles of books that exist (*Gargantua*, *Pantagruel*) with imaginary books (*La Dignité des Braguettes*, *Des Poys au lard cum commento*) he writes:

Par autant que vous, mes bons disciples, et quelques aultres foulz de séjour, lisant les joyeuls tiltres d'aucuns livres de nostre invention, comme Gargantua, Pantagruel, Fessepinte, La Dignité des Braguettes, Des Poys au lard cum commento, etc., jugez trop facilement ne estre au dedans traicté que mocqueries, folateries et menteries joyeuses, veu que l'enseigne extériore (c'est le tiltre) sans plus avant enquérir est communément receu à dérision et gaudisserie. Mais par telle legièreté ne convient estimer les œuvres des humains. Car vous-mesmes dictes que l'habite ne faict point le moyne, et tel est vestu d'habit monachal, qui au dedans n'est rien moins que moyne, et tel est vestu de cappe hespanole, qui en son couraige nullement affiert à Hespane. C'est pourquoy fault ouvrir le livre et soigneusement peser ce que y est déduict. Lors congnoistrez que la drogue dedans contenue est bien d'aulte valeur que ne promettoit la boite, c'est dire que les matières icy traictées ne sont tant folastres comme le titre au-dessus prétendoit (Boulenger 25-26).

[It's inasmuch as you, my good disciples, and a few other unoccupied madmen, reading the merry titles of certain books of our creating, such as *Gargantua*, *Pantagruel*, *Tossaint*, *On the dignity of codpieces*, *On peas with bacon cum commento*, etc., too easily judge that inside there is nothing treated but mockeries, tomfooleries, and merry falsehoods, seeing that the outward sign (that is the title) is commonly received without further inquiry as derision and jest. But it is not fitting to assess the works of humans so lightly, for you say yourselves that the robe does not make the monk, and a man may wear a Spanish cape who in courage has no relation to Spain. That is why you must open the book and carefully consider what is expounded in it. Then you will recognize that the drug

contained inside is of quite other value than the box promised, that is to say that the matters here treated are not so foolish as the title above claimed (Frame 3-4)].

Here, the narrator clearly asks his readers to look beyond the obvious humor of his titles, to peer inside them instead for a different and more serious content.¹

Many critics (presumably a subset of the class of readers, if not of unoccupied madmen) have taken Master Alcofrybas at his word when grappling with the titles in *Pantagruel's* seventh chapter. One strategy has been to focus on the titles as individual entities, looking for sixteenth-century bibliographic or biographical correlates, establishing, as it were, a concordance between fictional titles and actual titles. These findings are then collated, along with other pertinent observations, to show how the catalog collectively effects a critique of larger targets, such as scholasticism, the anti-Humanist reaction typified by the Reuchlin affair of the early sixteenth-century (Screech 60-63), or remonstrations against the reformer Luther (Febvre 316-230). Another approach has been to consider individual titles, or groups of titles, under some more specifically literary aspect. One critic, for example, concentrates on how individual but representative titles achieve their humorous effects (Bowen 96-101) while another devises a typology based on categories such as 'real title, unreal author' and 'real author, unreal work,' in an attempt to account for permutations arising from the fact that Rabelais situated a historical library and historical authors in his fictional work (Paris 149). This

¹ Critical discussions of this prologue have generated various opinions about what Rabelais is urging upon his readers. Duval concludes that one should look for the moral meaning (Duval, *Interpretations*, 17); Cornilliat suggests that the prologue was written to surmount perceived stylistic failings of the earlier book, *Pantagruel* (23); and Jan Miernowski suggests that Rabelais is exhorting his readers to *mis*-read his work (134). Amid such a diversity of opinions, I lean to the opinion of Raymond C. La Charité, namely, that "we can take the narrator's advice at face value" (La Charité, *Silenic*, 78).

last is striking confirmation of Raymond C. La Charité's observation that the *corpus* of Rabelais, and *Pantagruel* in particular, invite both literary and historical approaches, and encourage heightened speculation about the rapports between the two (La Charité, *Par où*, 79).

Both approaches have true merit. Yet one can also take the request of Alcofrybas in a different direction, one that might be seen, along with the other two, as providing the third side of a triangle. The line I propose to follow is not only consistent with the narrator's directive in the prologue to *Gargantua*, but with the accumulative imagery in which it is couched. In the short passage cited above, Alcofrybas employs three images of sheathing – the robe and the not-necessarily monk, the non-Spaniard in the Spanish cape, and the precious drug concealed in a box that promises something else. This last is the key image of the entire prologue, referring metaphorically to Socrates, the beautiful soul contained in the quite ugly body, and literally to the *sileni*, grotesque boxes bearing drugs and other precious items. The narrator has asked us to look past the “sheathing” of his writing to see what is contained inside; and similarly, to look past the “sheathing” of the titles in his previous books. Alcofrybas further notes that we should “romper l'os et suger la sustantificque mouelle” (Boulenger 27), that is, “break the bone and suck out the substantific marrow” (Frame 4). The important element common to all these images is not the incongruity – either positive or negative – between sheath and content, but the simple supposition of sheath and sheathed, of which incongruity is only one possibility. Some sheaths are accurate representations and others are not; what they have in common, in the dynamics of sheathing and unsheathing, is their function as invitations to discovery.

In this light, writing and reading become related acts, the author covering/uncovering, and the reader dis-covering.

Such a mental gymnastic of divining what lies beneath a sheath is pronounced elsewhere in Rabelais: in his copious references to codpieces. A codpiece, like any sheath, is both a window and a wall. Inasmuch as it bears congruence to what it purports to represent, it is metonymic; in this aspect it is revelatory – after all, a codpiece does not suggest a foot! But inasmuch as it blocks a direct view of the purported content, it is a wall, a hindrance to knowledge. As Terence Cave has pointed out, the Rabelaisian codpiece can be a true herald of what it sheaths, as in the case of the young Gargantua (184). But it can also be a form of false advertising. “Ornamental codpieces,” writes Cave, “like rhetoric, may turn out to be mere surface” (186). The codpiece, then, inherently invokes suspicion about its truthfulness as representation.

And though the Rabelaisian codpiece is a sheath, it is not just one sheath among others. It stands above. It resembles the *sileni* in that there is a marked disjunction between the material of the sheath and its purported content, but the codpiece is signally distinguished by the importance and potency of its imputed content. One of the major paradoxical set-pieces of the *Tiers Livre* is the encomium given to the codpiece in its role as armor (Colie 55), but which ultimately serves as praise of what it sheathes. While in *Gargantua* (ch. 8) we learn that Gargantua’s codpiece is “bien guarnie au dedans et bien avitaillée” (Boulenger 50) [well furnished inside and well victualed (Frame 23)], in the *Tiers Livre* (ch. 8) we further learn that such furnishings are more essential to the human being than the heart:

C'est ce que meut le gualant Cl. Galen, lib. I *De spermate*, à bravement conclure que mieulx (c'est-à-dire moindre mal) seroit point de cœur n'avoir, que point n'avoir de génitoires. Car là consiste, comme en un sacré repositoire le germe conservatif de l'humain lignage (Boulenger 378).

[That's what impelled the gallant Cl. Galen, in Book I *On sperm{De spermate}*, to conclude that it would be better (that is, less bad) to have no heart than to have no genitals. For there, as in a sacred repository, consists the preserving germ of the human line (Frame 281)].

Thus the codpiece betokens the presence of seeds that engender and preserve humanity, and though it might be the most overt phallic sign of all, it would be hasty to reduce its implications to sexual desire or mere biological perpetuation. Cave detects behind the codpiece a fount of textual creativity (222). Bakhtin, in discussing this encomium, refers to a wider procreative principle (314), and elsewhere suggests that Rabelais does not separate the biological element in procreation from “the social, historic, and cultural element” (406). It is not surprising then to find the traditionally phallic image of an abbey steeple (Bakhtin 310) associated with fecundity (*Gargantua* 45) or an episode in which a militia captain pulls a prayer-book out of his codpiece (*Gargantua* 35).

Yet a codpiece, at the same time that it invokes such powerful presences, at the same time invites us to “consider its potential emptiness” (Cave 192). It is not only suspect in its own right as true or false representation, but by invoking speculation about its purported contents, renders those contents suspect as well. It is not merely that the codpiece might *mis*-represent something, but rather, in the worst-case-scenario, that it might represent nothing at all.

I propose that *Pantagruel's* seventh chapter can be read as a progressive transit through a series of metonymic sheaths, with the inmost sheaths – the Abbey Library, the Catalog, and the Title – attaining the status of Rabelaisian codpieces. These stand apart primarily on account of the alleged germinal potency of their imputed contents, but also because of a related disjunction between the material of the static representation and those purportedly volatile contents. Our progress through the successive sheaths can be conceived of as progress through a leek, the reader successively peeling back, but not removing each layer. In this manner, the layers remain metonymically contiguous to the entire leek, in a reciprocal metonymy of mutual implication. The finger that leads to a hand leads to a hand that still has a finger. In the narrative of Alcofrybas, linguistic considerations sheath/unsheath academic endeavor, academic endeavor sheaths/unsheaths the University of Paris, the University of Paris sheaths/unsheaths Alexandria and the futility of textual transmission, Alexandria and the futility of textual transmission sheath/unsheath the Abbey of Saint-Victor, the Abbey sheaths/unsheaths its Library, and the Library sheaths/unsheaths the titles. Conversely, in this metonymy of mutual implication, each sheath serves to sheath/unsheath the others. In such a reading, the experience is one of continuity and sequential progression.

But I have omitted a key step in this chain, reversing the order one step too soon. And the step I have deliberately omitted is precisely the step Alcofrybas instructs us to take: to look inside his titles. Before reversing the progression, and moving outward again, we should have continued to look inward: what do the titles sheath? To my mind, that *is* the question. Is there something inside or not? If the titles, which are inmost,

sheath nothing, then a void lies at the center, and the entire sequence may be subject to collapse. The absence behind Rabelais' titles, when closely examined, implicates other titles, the practice of titling, and the wider practice of naming. If the metonymy of the chapter is indeed mutual, ripples from this absence will spread recursively outward, and in light of such doubts one can construe Rabelais' list not only as a critique of particular works and intellectual traditions (which it assuredly is), but as an oblique vista of the troubling nexus between names and things: if there is only a flat void behind the façade of names, inside and outside are of a piece. Yet the text of *Pantagruel* perhaps constitutes its own positive response to this critique, and in realizing two of its positive implications, valorizes them. In this chapter, sheathing unsheathes itself. And imputed presence, formerly deemed to reside in a cloistered *inner sanctum*, runs freely on the surface. As what I propose is a progressive unsheathing, and the titles are discovered only at the end of the chapter, it will be necessary, though slightly tiresome, to follow the entire sequence.

CHAPTER SEVEN OF *PANTAGRUEL*

In the most naked narrative terms, *Pantagruel's* seventh chapter recounts the hero's Paris arrival. One reaches this debut, however, only by passing through a linguistic episode that fills the entire sixth chapter, an encounter freighted with Paris and its academic system. While dining in Orléans near a gate that leads to Paris, Pantagruel meets a scholar who has just come from that city. When the student refers to Paris by its ancient name of Lutèce, he sets the tone for the ensuing dialog, in which Pantagruel can

make little sense of his sentences. As one of the giant's men explains, "ce gallant veult contrefaire la langue des Parisiens ; mais il ne faict que escorcher le latin et cuyde ainsi pindariser, et luy semble bien qu'il est quelque grand orateur en françoys, parce qu'il dédaigne l'usance commun de parler" (Saulnier 33) [this fop is trying to counterfeit the language of the Parisians; but he does nothing but flay Latin, and thinks he's Pindarizing that way; and it really seems to him that he's some great orator in French, because he disdains the common way of speaking (Frame 151)]. After Pantagruel frightens the scholar into speaking comprehensibly in his native Limousin, the narrator concludes the chapter with supports for the opinion that "il nous convient parler selon le langaige usité" (Saulnier, 35) [it befits us to talk according to the accepted language (Frame 152)]. In this initial presentation/ peeling-back of the sheath of Paris by the author, the reader discovers, even before arriving there, unsavory attributes of linguistic and academic opprobrium.

The seventh chapter opens with the announcement that Pantagruel has decided to visit "la grande université de Paris" (Saulnier 35). (This, despite his conversation with the Limousin scholar!) Before leaving Orléans, however, he performs a feat by grace of native strength and talent: he lifts a fallen church bell, so large and heavy that the townsmen of Orléans had not been able to raise it for over two hundred years. At this point we meet the chapter's first authors and titles. Alcofrybas lists some ancient works on engineering that the frustrated townsmen had consulted, including Euclid, Archimedes, "Vitruvius, *De Architecture*, Albertus, *De Re edificatoria*" and "Hiero, *De Ingeniis*" (Saulnier 33). "Hiero" is none other than Heron of Alexandria, a name of particular

interest in our context, for in Rabelais “a textual reference opens floodgates” (La Charité, *Silenic Text*, 75). By producing the sheath of Heron, Rabelais unsheathes for the complicitous reader that city’s famed – and reputedly, flamed – library. And though the men of Orléans, in spite of access to surviving ancient texts, had been unable to hoist their fallen bell, Pantagruel raises it easily and even rings a tune as it dangles from his little finger. Thus, the reader will reach the Library of Saint-Victor only after peeling back the sheaths of Alexandria and this more immediate image of the futility of textual transmission.

When Pantagruel arrives at Paris, the people “sot par nature” (Saulnier 36) [stupid by nature (Frame 153)], pour out to see him, equal parts astonished and afraid. Pantagruel takes up residence there and studies diligently in “tous les sept ars libéraux” (Saulnier 37) [all the seven liberal arts (Frame, 153)]. The next sentence refers to the most ancient cemetery in Paris (Boulenger 217) and the image it conveys, as the final sheath unveiling Saint-Victor’s, is of particular interest. Pantagruel, we are told, concludes that Paris is a good place for living, but a bad place to die, “car les guenaulx de Saint Innocent se chauffoient le cul des ossemens des mors” (Saulnier 37) [because the beggars of Saint- Innocent’s warm their asses with dead men’s bones (trans. mine)]. Here is a grotesque variant of the image given by Alcofrybas in the *Gargantua* prologue. There, he exhorts us to break the bones of his text in order to suck out the rich marrow, but here we see beggars putting bones to the service of the opposite (and presumably less intellectual) end of the alimentary canal. As the narrator has elsewhere likened books to

bones, an act of imaginative parallelism, likening bones to books, transforms the library of Saint-Victor into a cemetery where books are bones.

In this parallel image, then, who are the beggars? Again, the narrator has made suggestive associations. In chapter sixteen of *Pantagruel*, we find Pantagruel's great friend, Panurge, filling his hat with lice and fleas borrowed from the beggars of Saint-Innocent's (Boulenger 261). But vermin are by no means unique to these beggars. In *Gargantua* (ch. 31) when artillery-shells are falling out of the hero's hair, his father, Grandgousier, takes them for lice, and says : “‘Dea, mon bon filz, nous as-tu aporté jusques icy des esparviers de Montagu? Je n’entendois que là tu feisse residence’” (Boulenger 131) [‘Gracious, my good son, have you brought all the way here some Montaigu sparrowhawks? I didn’t know you were in residence there’ (Frame 86)]. Montaigu, as Saint-Victor’s (Ouy, *Histoire*, 86), was a college of the University of Paris, and Gargantua’s tutor, Ponocrates, assures the concerned father, saying:

‘Seigneur, ne pensez que je l’aye mis au colliège de pouillerie qu’on nomme Montagu. Mieulx le eusse voulu mettre entre les guenaux de Saint Innocent, pour l’énorme cruaulté et villennie que je y ay congneu’ (Boulenger 131)

[‘My Lord, don’t think that I put him into that louse-ridden school they call Montaigu. Better I had wanted to put him among the beggars of Saint-Innocent, in view of the enormous cruelty and villainy I have known there’ (Frame 86)].

Though this image serves to distinguish the students of Montaigu from the beggars of Saint-Innocent (the lot of the beggars being better), students and beggars are equals in filth and in putting bones and books to the wrong ends. It is a portrayal of forms of innutrition that are both languishing and improper. Our last image, then, before reaching

Saint-Victor's is a cemetery where impoverished wretches burn remnants of the dead and in turn are fed upon by vermin.

In the next sentence, without even a paragraph break, we reach Saint-Victor's. Thus, having passed through the sheaths of linguistics, academic endeavor, Paris, the University of Paris, the futility of textual transmission, Alexandria, the seven liberal arts, and the beggars of Saint-Innocent's, we have simply: "Et trouva la librairie de Saint Victor fort magnifique, mesmement d'aucuns livres qu'il y trouva, comme:" (Saulnier 37) [And he found the Library of Saint-Victor most magnificent, especially some of the books he found there, such as: (trans. mine)]. Except by way of the titles, Alcofrybas gives no description of the Abbey or its Library. After the colon, the narrator merely launches directly into the list of titles that comprise the rest of the chapter.

THE ABBEY LIBRARY AS CODPIECE

At this point, however, I would like to leap outside the narrative proper and mull other considerations. For, to my mind, it seems natural to suppose that for Rabelais' contemporaries, simple mention of the Abbey name designated other important presences. I will even suggest that for Rabelais the Abbey Library was not an ordinary metonymic sheath, but rather, a true Rabelaisian codpiece: a sheath that announces the presence (while simultaneously suggesting the possible absence) of purportedly germinal powers. Modern editions generally remark that the Abbey Library was "noted for its richness in theological works" (Frame 826) and cite this as sufficient grounds for Rabelais' choice of target. Many critics have searched Rabelais' immediate epoch for answers to this same

question.² Even these searches, however, remain oddly oblivious to the implications inherent in his choice of *this* Abbey and this Abbey's *library*. In fact, an unstated assumption of the critical work seems to be that Rabelais' titles combine micro-attacks on specific individuals with a broadside indictment of scholastic intellectual style and content. I will suggest additionally that in choosing the Saint-Victor Library as a target, Rabelais offers a direct critique of the intellectual germs that structured those contents and style. That structuration had early rhizomes at Saint-Victor's, and, in the course of its growth, came to be physically embodied in its own Library (as also in others): in its catalogs, in its classification and collocation, in its facilities and its rules, and even in the physical design of many of the texts. If we pause for several pages to scan the Abbey's extended historical record and particular intellectual contributions, we may cogently speculate as to what Rabelais' readers may have assumed as present behind the Abbey name. What is more, we can consider whether the Abbey Library can be construed as a true Rabelaisian codpiece.

Just as Saint-Innocent's was Paris's most ancient cemetery, Saint-Victor's was one of the city's oldest schools, older even than the University of Paris, a consortium it had joined at its thirteenth-century inception (Ouy, *Histoire*, 86). The founder was not Saint Victor (a fourth century martyr of Moorish descent) but William of Champeaux, and it was regularized as an order of Augustinian Canons in 1114 (Michaud 412). What

² Screech and Schutz, for example, both see his choice as grounded in his reaction to the conservative and anti-Humanist positions taken by the Abbey. Schutz notes that Augustinian officials regulating the Abbey had rejected some reforms that Erasmus had held hopes of seeing made earlier in the century (40-41). Screech points to the year of *Pantagruel's* publication (1532) when the Canons Regular of Saint-Victor's lobbied to print a book critical of Erasmus (61). Feasible notions to be sure, but rather narrow in scope.

distinguished this Abbey, even from other Augustinian establishments, was its emphasis on studying and teaching.³

The intellectual heritage of the Abbey was by no means confined to its walls. The man who became known as Hugh of Saint-Victor arrived at the Abbey a year or two after its founding (Chase 30; Knowles 143). Some consider his *De sacramentis christianae fidei* to be the first scholastic *summa* (Chase 31), while others see it as the “grandmother of all the *Summae*,” the honor of grandfather going to Abelard (Knowles 143). If one traces this genealogy one step further, then, William of Champeaux, as founder of the Abbey of Saint-Victor *and* as Abelard’s former Master, serves as great grandfather of the *summae* on both sides.

In the 1120’s Hugh wrote the *Didascalicon*, a small but very influential book.⁴ Intended as a guide for students new to Saint-Victor’s, it offered a comprehensive, revised outline of education (Taylor 3). In his reassessment of knowledge, Hugh posits Philosophy as a single whole, encompassing all other arts, including the previously lowly-esteemed *mechanica*. Reviving the ancient notion of the seven liberal arts, he places them in a larger context (Guarda 374). Since, in his arrangement, all knowledge can be conceived of as an ensemble, everything is theoretically amenable to classification in a corresponding *schema* (Guarda 374). According to his divisions, for instance, one

³ As the Church historian Fleury describes it: “Les chanoines y célébraient avec grande exactitude l’office divin, le jour et la nuit; ils travaillaient de leurs mains, gardaient un grand silence, et ne laissaient pas d’étudier et d’enseigner” (Cited in Michaud 400). [The canons diligently observed divine offices night and day ; they performed manual labor, kept a great silence, and did not leave off studying and teaching (trans. mine)].

⁴ Its popularity is confirmed by the fact that it survives in over a hundred manuscript copies dating from the 12th through 15th centuries (Besson 17-18).

might put “butter” under these hierarchical classes: Philosophy> Mechanical Sciences, (i.e, Adulterate) >Hunting> Food Preparation> Side Dishes> Porridges> Butter (Besson 10-14). Yet in the *Didascalicon* Hugh also explains how such serious classification can be done in a versatile way:

Let no one be disturbed that among the means employed by medicine I count food and drink, which earlier I attributed to hunting. For these belong to both under different aspects. For instance, wine in the grape is the business of agriculture; in the barrel, of the cellarer, and in its consumption, of the doctor. Similarly, the preparing of food belongs to the mill, the slaughterhouse, and the kitchen, but the strength given by its consumption, to medicine (Taylor 79).

For these reasons, Hugh is also credited with laying key groundwork for both medieval and even modern library classification (Guarda 374; Besson 8-17). With his conceptions of knowledge, his vision of reading, and his expansion of the seven liberal arts, Hugh of Saint-Victor influenced several generations, generations that increased the production of books, created many new libraries (Guarda 374) and transformed the practice of reading.

Another compelling figure with connections to Saint-Victor’s is Peter Lombard. The earliest document relating to Lombard is a letter recommending him to Saint-Victor’s first abbot, and Lombard, who eventually became Bishop of Paris, may have received instruction there, possibly even bequeathing his personal books to the Abbey Library (Ouy, *Manuscripts*, 39).⁵ Lombard was widely known for his *gloses* on the Psalter and the Bible, and for his *Libri sententiarum*, a compilation of earlier *auctoritates* that reigned as a standard theology textbook until the middle of the sixteenth century (Roseman 84).

⁵ Knowles (171) and Häring (191) present his attendance at the school as fact, while Colish leaves it as undecided (17-21).

Though the *glose*, or Biblical commentary, was by no means new, twelfth-century scholars produced them with greater intricacy than ever before, and Lombard's were among the most "highly developed" (Parkes 116). His *Libri sententiarum* adapted many features of the *glose*: rubrics, sub-headings, and red source-notes in the margins. Such complex, on-the-page appliances were both symptoms and instruments of a shift in the practice of reading, for whereas the monastic *lectio* involved "steady reading to oneself, interspersed by prayer," the newer scholastic *lectio*, "involved a more ratiocinative scrutiny of the text and consultation for reference purposes" (Parkes 115). Accordingly, texts found themselves divided into books, chapters, and paragraphs, and were equipped with running titles, analytical tables of contents, indexes and footnotes, all of which made them easier to search (Parkes 135). This not only accommodated the newer style of reading but physically embodied its motivating principles.

In tandem, then, Hugh of Saint-Victor and Peter Lombard can be seen as root and stem of a perceived structure of knowledge. This conception informed the shape of education, and its governing principles came to be inscribed in receptacles of various sizes: not only in the texts themselves, but even in the layout of those texts in their largest physical embodiment: the library.

Which brings us to the Library of Saint-Victor. As with other religious houses, the books at Saint-Victor's were not herded in one place, but were stored functionally: liturgical manuscripts were kept in the choir, books for reading aloud at mealtime were kept near the refectory, and books on the art of dying did not leave the infirmary even after those who used them had (Ouy, *Manuscripts*, 28-29). As readers of Rabelais,

however, what interests us is the collection housed in a common reading hall. Here, probably beginning in the thirteenth century, the books were chained to long, inclined tables.⁶ Though it is tempting to think of these chains as restricting access to books, the advent of chained libraries in the thirteenth century was another reflection of the shift in reading (Veziin 368-369). For books, instead of being committed to a single reader, were now available to many potential readers; and a library was no longer a book depository, but a reading room (Dobreau 398). Whereas in monastic *lectio*, one might read a work over several months in full or mid-voice, the newer consultation-reading covered more material in less time, and if not altogether silent, was at least conducted at a lesser volume, as witnessed by this admonition at Saint-Victor's Library to "communicate by signs as much as possible and read with a low voice" (Becquet 91).⁷

The common collection at Saint-Victor's was assembled on the perceived basis of frequent demand, and formed the medieval equivalent of a modern standard reference section (Ouy, *Manuscripts*, 28). It was open not only to resident Canons, but to students from the Sorbonne and the College of Navarre, rendering access not only to theological works, but to works on jurisprudence and medicine (Pommerol 98). After renovations in the early sixteenth century, an expanded collection was transported and re-chained in a larger building with many windows (Ouy, *Histoire*, 86). This was the same building that Lister saw in 1698, although by then the bibliographic materials had been removed to a

⁶ Though it is not known when this hall first opened, the date can plausibly be assigned to the mid or late-thirteenth century, for references can be found to similar arrangements at Cluny in 1270 and at the library of the Sorbonne in 1289 (Veziin 368-69).

⁷ Similarly, late-fifteenth century rules for the Library of the Sorbonne not only required the wearing of a hat and robe, but also enjoined that "as much as possible, silence should reign in the library ..." (Franklin 100).

higher floor due to severe flooding in 1651 (Desgraves 294). When Rabelais wrote *Pantagruel*, however, the premises were not only commodious, but relatively new. Newer, for instance, than the Library of the College of Navarre, which had assumed new lodgings on the cusp of the century, and newer still than the Library of the Sorbonne, which had made a similar move in the 1480s (Prache 360).

At the time of the move, two catalogs were compiled by the Abbey *armarius*, or librarian, Claude de Grandue. De Grandue was no innovator, and operated much as those who had filled the role before him (Ouy, *Manuscripts*, 35). These catalogs not only represent the collection, but further, as representations made by the institution, reveal much about its methods and philosophy. One catalog lists items alphabetically by author, while the other lists the materials in order of their physical disposition in the library (Ouy, *Manuscripts*, 55-56). That the catalogs served administrative ends of inventory and user ends of retrieval is made clear by the itemized information in the entries. In addition to the name of the author (when available) and the title (when available), entries include identifying features – such as size, material, first words of the second page, last words of the penultimate page, and total number of pages. More revealing for us than the information, perhaps, is the manner in which it is conveyed. These catalogs, like other texts of the time, and perhaps even more so, are inundated with alpha-numeric coding. Certain elements of information are signaled by a sequence of alphabetical markers, and additional alpha-numeric markers designate the location of an item in the library, the coding being duplicated on the item itself. Thus, these catalogs, designed to contain and

control, bear the same markers of containment and control as many of the texts they represent.

While both of these catalogs represent the physical collection, the second, topographical catalog mediates between the ideal of a rationally classifiable universe and the contents of the collection.⁸ Several centuries had elapsed since the days of Hugh of Saint-Victor, and his comprehensive *schema*, though evident as a substrate, is here compromised by considerations of educational purpose, collection diversity, and mundane realities of textual production (Ouy, *Manuscripts*, 54-55). Classed under 52 headings, the catalog deploys three alphabets, A-T, AA-TT, and AAA-000. It still reflects traditional priorities by launching the first alphabet with sacred texts - Old and New Testaments leading to Biblical commentaries, commentaries on Lombard's *Libri sententarium*, and Canon Law. But it is Civil Law and Medicine that complete this alphabet. Church Fathers and Victorine authors inaugurate the double alphabet, while its final range, TT, indiscriminately houses French texts and French translations, without regard for subject or author. The triple alphabet is weighted with histories, but its final ranges, NNN-000, comprise a veritable miscellany, Cicero rubbing shoulders with Thomas Aquinas, and Petrarch with Jacob de Voraigne. These last ranges may have been a necessary concession – in an era of scribal compilation and expensive materials – to the reality that many texts were often bound together in one physical item.

Such, then, is a description of the Abbey Library. For us, it is doubtless sufficient to think of Saint-Victor's as a more-or-less generic "scholastic" library, sufficient for the

⁸ Albertus Magnus, a thirteenth-century one-man *Summa*-machine, objected to alphabetical ordering on the grounds that it was not really "philosophical" (Guarda 379).

mocking needs of Rabelais; but it seems likely that both the author and his intellectual contemporaries sensed the presence of more specific targets and implications. Hugh of Saint-Victor, and those who followed in the Abbey tradition, played instrumental roles in the transformation of reading and in the organization of knowledge.⁹ Rabelais' contemporary readers – who were all educated - were likely to have known that Saint-Victor's was an important presence at the *incipit* of this vast change. Similarly, in our day, mention of Monticello invokes Jefferson, and mention of Mount Vernon invokes Washington. Such, to my mind, is what one might term the historical dimension of the Abbey as sheath. To mention the Abbey is to invoke its founding fathers. Viewed in this dimension, one might even accord the Abbey name the status of Rabelaisian codpiece – that is, as a semi-opaque sign behind which one might impute the presence of potent generative forces. For certainly the early fathers of the Abbey had propagated important cultural progeny.

But beyond the historical dimension, there also exists what one might call a structural dimension. For it is not merely a question of the Abbey, but the Abbey *Library*. The Library, in a far more significant way than the Abbey, might be given the status of Rabelaisian codpiece. If I have lingered over details that might seem of interest primarily to librarians, it is because I wanted to emphasize how principles of representation and containment, extrapolated from a particular conception of knowledge, inhered in the

⁹ Nikolaus Häring, who viewed Peter Lombard's commentaries as being rooted in the thought and lectures of Hugh of Saint-Victor, further notes that the Victorine tradition of commentary was "carried on by three masters of great reknown: Peter Comestor, the famous magister historiarum, Peter the Chantor, the leading moralist and exegete of his time, and master Stephen Langton, the future cardinal" (Häring 194). Ullrich Langer maintains additionally that it is primarily through "commentaries on the *Sentences*" of Lombard that late scholastic thought survives (19).

conception and creation of medieval libraries. In the physical library we have seen readers admonished to keep quiet. In texts, we have seen pages subjected to a host of formal structures. These structures themselves are applications of a conceptual design that delimits and contains the universe, a design, further, that permits texts to be ranged in classes. Alpha-numeric coding, in conjunction with these classes, permits items to be arrayed in a reading hall, which become a microcosm of the universe as so conceived. This, of course, is the ideal, but as we saw in the topographical catalog of 1514, changes in educational needs and the diversity of physical items offered resistance. The topographical catalog, mediating between classificatory ideals and the multiform physical library, evidences a yielding of the ideal before such exigencies. Such a Library - and its quintessential representation, the catalog - impugns the strength of the germinal impulse that had wished to order the entire universe but had eventuated only in this obviously compromised entity. The Library is not suspect here as a false representation; rather, in the speculation induced as a potentially true representation, it serves to malign its generative content. As Cave said, one paradoxical aspect of the Rabelaisian codpiece is to make us consider "its potential emptiness" (192). If the resistant components contained in the library on the one hand threaten to *explode* the representation, it appears as though the life-force behind the representation may have already leaked out as germinal fluid through cracks in its structure. Rabelais has taken a latent weakness and made it patent.

To see just how this drama plays out in Rabelais' fictional library catalog, we must return to the text where we left it, that is, in chapter seven, in mid-sentence, at the colon that announces the list of titles.

THE CATALOG AS CODPIECE

After the simple punctuation of the colon, the titles commence. Here is the shortest list, that of the first edition (Claude Nourry, 1532):

Bigua Salutis.
Bragueta Juris.
Pantoufla Decretorum.
Malogranatum Vitiorum.
 Le Peloton de Théologie.
 Le Vistempnard des Prescheurs, composé par Pépin.
 La Couillebarrine des Preux.
 Les Hanebanes des Evesques.
Marmotretus, de Babouynis et Cingis, cum commento Dorbellis.
Decretum Universitatis Parisiensis super gorgiasitate muliercularum ad placitium.
 L' Apparition de sainte Geltrud à une nonnain de Poissy estant en mal d'enfant.
Ars honeste petandi in societate, per M. Ortuinum.
 Le Moustardier de Pénitence.
 Les Houseaulx, *alias* les Bottes de Patience.
Formicarium Artium.
 Le Cabatz des Notaires.
 Le Pacquet de Mariage.
 Le Creziou de Contemplation.
 Les Faribolles de Droict.
 L'Aguillon de vin.
 L'Esperon de fromaige.
Decrotatorium Scholarium.
Tartaretus, De modo cacandi.
Bricot, De differentiis soupparum.
 Le Culot de Discipline.
 La Savatte de Humilité.
 Le Tripiez de bon Pensement.
 Le Chaudron de Magnanimité.

Les Hanicrochemens des Confesseurs.
 Les Lunettes des Romipètes.
 Majoris, *De modo faciendi boudinos*.
 La Cornemuse des Prélats.
 Beda, *De optimitate triparum*.
 Le Maschefain des Advocatz.
 Le Ravesseux des Cas de conscience.
*Sutoris, aduersus quendam qui uocauerat eum friponnatorem, et quod
 Friponnatores non sunt damnati ab Ecclesia.*
Cacatorium medicorum.
 Le Rammonneur d'astrologie.
 Le Tyrepet des apotycaires.
 Le Baisecul de chirurgie.
Antidotarium anime.
M. Coccaius, De Patria Diabolorum (Saulnier 37-38).

[The following translations are drawn from Frame, but as he includes titles from later editions of *Pantagruel*, I present only those corresponding to the 1532 edition, in the exact order as above:

The cart of salvation.
 The codpiece of the law.
 The slipper of the decrees.
 The pomegranate of vices.
 The Nest Egg of Theology.
 The Feather Duster of the Preachers.
 The Elephant Balls of the Worthies.
 The Saltpeter of the Bishops.
Marmosetus, On baboons and monkeys, with comments by des Orbeaux.
 Decree of the University of Paris concerning the gorgiasity of harlots.
 The Apparition of Saint Gertrude to a Nun of Poissy in Labor.
The art of farting decorously in society, by Master Hardouin.
 The Mustard-Pot of Penitence.
 The Leggings, alias the Boots, of Patience.
 The anthill of the College of the Arts.
 The Notaries' Sweet Spot.
 The Marriage Packet.
 The Crucible of Contemplation.
 The Balderdash of Law.
 The Goad to Wine.
 The Spur of Cheese.
 The scouring-brush of the students.
Craparetus, On the methodology of shitting.

Bricot, *On the distinctions between dips*.
 The Bottom Line of Discipline.
 The Gym Shoe of Humility.
 The Tripod of Worthy Thinking.
 The Cauldron of Magnanimity.
 The Entangling Enticements of the Confessors.
 The Spectacles of the Roming.
On the manner of making black puddings, by Mayr.
 The Bagpipe of the Prelates.
 Beda, *On the optimity of tripes*.
 The Insatiable Appetite of the Advocates.
 The Brooder Over Cases of Conscience.
 Sutoris, *Against someone who called him a scoundrel, and that scoundrels are not condemned by the Church*.
 The commode-pot of the medics.
 The Chimney-Sweep of Astrology.
 The Fart-Puller of the Apothecaries.
The Kissass of Surgery.
The Antidotery of the Soul.
 Merlin Coccai, *On the fatherland of the devils*. (Frame 153-158)].

A cursory glance at this list certainly affirms the insinuation of the *Gargantua* prologue: namely, that these “joyeuls tiltres” bear the appearance of being “mocqueries, folateries et menteries joyeuses” (Boulenger 26) [mockeries, tomfooleries, and merry falsehoods (Frame 3)] that might easily be taken as nothing more than “dérision et gaudisserie” (Boulenger 26) [derision and jest (Frame 4)].¹⁰ Screech assures us that “a large part of the laughter is provoked by the poor quality of the very doggy Latin” (62).

¹⁰ Rabelais’ comedic elements, bearing many tonalities, have inspired a wealth of critical commentary and schools of thought. “While critics of the ‘historical school’ do justice to the complexities of Rabelais’s humor, those of the formalist persuasion tend to denigrate quite violently the comedy of ideas to the profit of what they term ‘pure’ or ‘absolute’ laughter” (Gauna 26). Such an opposition sets grotesque realism against the more intellectual, Lucianic satire. Walter Stephens further warns that surface appearances may cause us “to mistake Renaissance irony, with its skeptical ambiguity” for satire (60), but is quick to add that ignoring “the element of burlesque and play is to misconstrue Rabelaisian seriousness as sobersided and sententious” (60). It is not my intent here to disavow the importance of burlesque, parody, irony and satire in *Pantagruel*; I merely wish to set them aside for a time in order to see what else might be found. This is a procedure that has been pursued elsewhere by Duval (*Design* xvii).

One finds deformations of common Latin titles, such as *Ars pettandi* (The Art of Farting) for *Ars praedicandi* (The Art of Preaching) (Ouy, *Manuscrits*, 331) or deformations of actual authors, such as *Tartaret* (Boulenger 218), rendered into *Tartaretus* (Craparetus). We also find numerous French titles, such as *Le Moustardier de Pénitence* and *Le Créziou de Contemplation*, that mimic the titling idioms of “old drivellers” (Saulnier, *Enquête*, 100) whose works were reprinted and still “read in the 1520s and 1530s” (Screech 61). The title *L’Aguillion du vin* (The Goad to Wine) is a reduction, by way of syncope, of the actual title “*L’Esguillon de l’Amour Divin*” (The Goad to Divine Love) (Le Duchat 176). *Marmotretus, de Babouynis et Cingis, cum commento Dorbellis* deforms the name of an actual author, *Mamotretus*, and transforms “*d’Orbellis*” (by Orbellis) to “Dorbellis”, yielding an entry that I would translate as: “*Marmoset, of Baboons and Apes, with Beautifully Sleepy Commentary.*” One could proceed in this manner with almost all the titles, and, in fact, one nineteenth century author, Paul Lacroix, tried to establish a link between each title in Rabelais and one in the 1514 catalog of the Abbey of Saint-Victor (Lacroix).

As I see it, however, if we want to mine the titles for some less jovial marrow, we can follow two paths. One is to take the titles as a collective structure. Not analyzing them one by one, but rather, looking at *how* they signify as an ensemble; for as a catalog is the representation of a collection, the structure of that representation can itself constitute a critique. The question then becomes: how does Rabelais deform the cataloging practices of the day? And to what ends?

The catalogs of Claude de Grandue made provision made for identifying items, locating items, and (through classification) the placing of like items together (collocation). In these three regards, how does Rabelais stack up? He gives us titles and a few authors, but no information about specific copies or where the books are to be found. Although these omissions may represent a missed comic opportunity (e.g. “rancid spewed-upon folio under the fifth pilaster”) they are wholly in accord with his failure to give any *physical* description of the Abbey Library; while reaffirming the tenor of his critique as one directed against intellectual premises, they do not appear to convey any critique of the catalog as catalog.

More inculpatory, however, is the total absence of the third function, collocation. Barbara Bowen, referring to a later edition, writes: “The modern reader’s immediate reaction to a list of 139 items is that there must be a structural principle at work somewhere, but I do not see any attempt at structuring this catalog” (96). She notes that there are “ninety titles in French and forty-nine in Latin” and that “at least thirty items joke with defecation ... or syphilis ... and ... twenty-three have to do with food ...” (96-97). Bowen fails to remark that these are all hopelessly interspersed. The 1532 catalog is quite the same in all these respects, only shorter.

Bowen states that the *modern* reader is inclined to look for underlying structure in this list. But why deny this inclination to Rabelais’ contemporary readers, who were - chronologically if not temperamentally - so much closer to an intellectual training that made a virtue of system? In fact, the notable thing about this catalog is precisely the *lack* of order. It is certainly not as if Rabelais did not know *how* to order a list, for the games

in *Gargantua* (ch. 22) are bundled and enumerated by type (Boulenger 86). Nor did he object to bibliographic order on principle, for again in *Gargantua* (ch. 53) we find the ideal Abbey of Thélème graced with collections divided by language and separated by floor (Boulenger 173).

The haphazardness of the list of chapter seven is further accentuated by a meticulous procedure pursued in the following chapter. For there, while *Gargantua* prescribes his educational desiderata, he takes his model – the prevailing educational system founded on the seven liberal arts – and *systematically* alters its parameters. As Edwin M. Duval writes:

...once we have recognized the structure behind the details of *Gargantua*'s program we cannot help but be struck by the crucial ways in which the details themselves modify and transform the structure that subtends them. Rabelais seems in fact to *use* the implicit structure of the curriculum as a norm against which to measure the most important innovations contained in the program proposed by *Gargantua* (Duval, *Curriculum*, 31).

Though Rabelais proceeds in chapter eight by means of point and counter-point, in chapter seven he instead scorns the prevailing paradigm, and denies any coherence to a form whose very root is structural coherence. He indicts the norm by wholly ignoring it. The disorder of his list, aggravated by the fact that many of its parts *resist* classification *ex post facto* by the reader, challenges the very notion, so strong in the writings of Hugh of Saint-Victor, that the universe even admits of classification.

He did not, however, introduce this incoherence *ex nihilo*; rather, he amplified symptoms of disorder that were already evident in catalogs of his day. For, as we have seen, in spite of efforts to make collections submit to a stable, pre-ordained order, the

materials resisted. Whereas the topographical catalog of De Grandue shows us a catalog threatened with explosion, Alcofrybas gives us one whose lack of order suggests that it has already been exploded. His list is an empty circle, as Colie suggests, that is simultaneously the emblem of all or nothing (228).¹¹

Yet let us pause one moment longer, and consider how his catalog, as a sheath for a collection, if construed as a Rabelaisian codpiece, yields two implications, the second of which can be viewed as having severely destabilizing effects. The first, of course, is that his catalog casts doubt on the potency of germinal Abbey principles of ordination and subordination: Rabelais, in deranging his catalog, opens a route by which one can question its root. But in using the library catalog – a product and embodiment of those principles – as a vehicle for that indictment, he is simultaneously diminishing the distance between the codpiece and its contents. In a sense, it is like holding up a dead leaf behind whose tattered interstices one can glimpse time-lapsed views of a life-cycle that commenced with a long-dead seed. (And recall that we entered Saint-Victor’s by way of a cemetery!) We now see a third way in which a codpiece can be suspect: not as falsely representing its purported content, but as falsely representing its *relation* to that content. While the classic Rabelaisian codpiece, or representation, is constructed of one material, its imputed contents are of another, but this disjunction does not obtain for library

¹¹ W. Scott Blanchard proposes the term “scrambled encyclopedia” to describe not only parts of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, but entire works such as Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim’s *De vanitate et incertitudine scientiarum declamatio invectiva*. He writes that in the “scrambled encyclopedia”, “the categorical confusion and realignment of traditional hierarchies of knowledge ... become curricular analogues to the deformities and transformations of the literary grotesque” (87). It is viable to consider the “scrambled” catalog of our chapter, with its categorical confusion, as another such distortion and curricular analog.

catalogs. Catalogs are structured representations of representational structures.

Mediating between ideal representational structures (classification), catalogs also represent physical items that are themselves representational structures (texts). It is itself a text embodying structure, but the sometimes unpredictable texts it represents present challenges to the superposition of order it attempts to represent. In fact any catalog worth its name is a structured representation that will change to accommodate its content. In this aspect, the catalog is an epiphenomenon of a collection, and instability is not to be considered as limited to content.

Exactly what kind of havoc this creates will become more evident as we leave this consideration of the catalog as a whole, and embark on our second approach. We shall now heed the suggestion of Alcofrybas in the *Gargantua* prologue, and at last look *inside* the titles. After all, it is there that he says we will find the deeper meaning.

THE TITLE AS SUSPECT CODPIECE

How then, look *inside* these titles? My first suggestion is to leave aside specific considerations of verbal content and reflect on the dynamics of form. What functions do titles perform, or rather, what functions *should* they perform? And *how* do they or how *should* they accomplish their aims? Such concerns would not have escaped Rabelais, for as Harry Levin suggests, titling stood “more on ceremony after the invention of printing” (Levin xxv), a suggestion corroborated by the advent and development of the title-page (Eisenstein 53; Hirsch 3). Rabelais, in addition to being steeped in this atmosphere of intensified titling, was also concerned (as evidenced by the episode with the Limousin

scholar) with language. Titling, as a form of naming, could not be considered apart from such concerns and a key text for examining Rabelais is Plato's *Cratylus*. Plato, by way of Florentine popularizers, had become "monnaie courante parmi les humanistes" (Rigolot 131) [common among the humanists (trans. mine)], and the *Cratylus* was the first Platonic dialogue to be printed in France in Greek (Rigolot 131). Whether or not Rabelais read the *Cratylus* itself, he was influenced by its ideas (Gauna 39), and even enjoins his readers in the *Quart Livre* to refer to it (Boulenger 662).

In the *Cratylus*, Socrates mediates a dispute between Cratylus and Hermogenes on the nature of language and naming. Cratylus holds an extreme version of the view that names bear a natural truth; that he who knows names also knows the things expressed by them (435d). Hermogenes, on the other hand, holds an extreme version of the counter-view, and cannot convince himself that there is any "principle of correctness in names other than conventional agreement" (384d). Addressing Hermogenes, Socrates appears inclined to side with Cratylus. For Socrates, things are stable, and names, though variable, admit of bearing truth; for just as an awl will still be an awl whether made from metal or wood, so Hellenes and barbarians can both use words that have by nature a truth (391b).

Socrates then slides away from the natural position of Cratylus. He posits hypothetical legislators who knew the true natural names of all things and were able to put them into sound and syllable (389d). He asserts that such primordial imposers of names must have been "considerable persons" (401). He and Hermogenes go on a tour of proper names that should demonstrate this relation – names of Gods, Rivers, and the like

– but in many cases the relation is only established through the torture of etymology and semantics. Socrates points out that some names may be wrongly assigned, with insidious implications for language in general (431b).

Socrates again adverts to his firm distinction between things and names. He privileges the former as a source of knowledge (439b), and cites two weaknesses of language in support of this preference. The first is the circular self-substantiation of language, the fact that names can only be judged by means of other names (438d). His second indictment applies to the analysis of language, for one cannot reduce names farther than “the names which are the elements of all other names and sentences” (422b).¹² Yet Socrates questions how such primary names, which, according to the natural theory, precede analysis and show the natures of things, can be shown to do so if they are of a different material than the named (422e).

For Socrates, then, names have both a conventional and a natural facet. They are instruments that should characterize that which they name, but are liable to error. Things and names are strongly separated, things being stable, primary and true, while names are variable and secondary. Though names, when properly used, have instrumental value in communications, it is to the former that one should turn for knowledge (439b). Hence names should not be blindly trusted, and Socrates warns that:

¹² The *Cratylus* is not explicit about the difference between names and words. In Socrates’ critique of Cratylus’ position about natural names, he says that names can be broken down to elemental names, or primary names (422b), but also suggests – though the task is hopeless – that names can be analyzed into words, and words into elements – letters, syllables and the like (421e). Whether one can distinguish words from names or not, Socrates holds that the falsehood endemic to names afflicts verbs and other parts of speech as well.

No man of sense will like to put himself or the education of his mind in the power of names. Neither will he so far trust names or the giver of names as to be confident of any knowledge which condemns himself and other existences to an unhealthy state of reality (440c).

How then, do these concerns relate to the titles of Rabelais and our consideration of sheaths and codpieces? If we consider four aspects of the *Cratylus* - the primacy of thing to name, the representational relation of name to thing, the circularity of names, and the inability to achieve firm coherence when analyzing language into its elements – it is possible to view the titles as microcosms of the linguistic problems raised (but by no means solved) in the dialog. Titles, after all, are a kind of name, and the insinuation of Rabelais' catalog about the relation between title and work, when examined closely, can be seen as abrogating the distance between name and thing. If these two perceived orders are in fact one, depth becomes illusory, inner and outer merge into a continuum. An order of stable *things* can no longer be opposed to an order of unstable *names*: stability and instability inhere alike everywhere. One can even detect a chiasmus of the Socratic pairing of thing/stability and name/instability. Moreover, if name and thing are not separate, but of the same order, then it also turns out that the absence or presence of purported contents are not where they were thought to be; instead, they are instead unleashed everywhere. To get to this point, however, we must proceed systematically.

First of all, titling can be viewed as an especially privileged form of naming. “In the sense that a text is a new object, no immediate term of the language fits it,” and each new text creates an opportunity for neologism (Ricardou 143). The title-giver, then, is in the situation of the primordial Socratic name-giver, able to invent a proper noun that not

only identifies, but conveys something of the nature of the named. If we look at the structure of Rabelais' French titles of 1532, we can see how they present themselves as acts of naming, and how, syntactically, they conform to certain conventions of proper nouns. *Every* French title of this edition begins with a definite article (le, la, les, or l'), as in the following examples : *Le Creziou de Contemplation*, *La Couillebarine des Preux*, *Les Lunettes des Romipètes*, *L'Aguillon de vin*. The conjunction of these initial articles with subsequent capitalized nouns (e.g., *Le Creziou de Contemplation*, *La Couillebarine des Preux*) also establishes the credentials of these titles as proper nouns (Algeo 19). These features betray the conventional tendency of titles towards nominalization, and this, for its part, entails implicit reification (Kellman 154) for a "noun is a sign used to refer to entities as if they were substances" (Hewson 46). Our titles further reinforce this effect with the placement of what appear to be object-nouns in the first position (e.g., *Le Creziou*, *La Couillebarine*),¹³ Note, too, that our titles bear no verbs. Hence, not only do they disport the stabilized air of nouns and objects, but assume further features of stability by virtue of being free of tense – that is, of time and change. In the manner of naming, then, our titles work hard to establish the "thing-ness" of what they name. It is as though each title, grammatically speaking, strives to assert itself as a name, while simultaneously establishing the named as a thing.

¹³ This procedure, at once imitative and grotesque, contributes to Rabelais' burlesque parody of titles that were already passé (supra 24). It contrasts a register of exceedingly "low" vocabulary (e.g., Savatte [Slipper], Couillebarine [Elephant-testicle]) with the horizon of expectations for serious devotional works whose titles led off with a concrete noun (The X) and finished with an abstract noun (of Y). Of course, some actual titles of this type needed no help from Rabelais to sound ridiculous – witness, for instance, "L'Orloge de sapience" [The Clock of Wisdom (trans. mine)] (Brunet, 154). Yet while it is true that Rabelais "gleefully exaggerates" the incongruity of concrete and abstract nouns found in such titles (Bowen, 96), I will reiterate that I am less concerned with the send-up of a particular titling idiom than I am with the way in which its structural weaknesses, pointedly exposed by Rabelais, bear wider implications.

Yet in considering the relationships between title and text, can one so cleanly separate name and thing? In the *Cratylus*, Socrates calls for instrumental names that adequately distinguish and characterize things for the sake of learning and communication. But the relations between title and text admit of much greater complexity. A title might do far more than identify and characterize. Title and text are interpretively linked. In the tenth century, the medieval commentator Remigius of Auxerre viewed the title as “the key to the work which followed it” (Minnis 19). According to Remigius, the title illuminates a work in the same way that the sun illuminates the world (Minnis 19). Yet, remove the sun from the world and the world will not be the same; just so, remove the title, and the reading of the text will not be the same. The title does not just name, or characterize, but helps make the text intelligible. This illuminative relation can also operate in the other direction, for often the meaning of a title can only be grasped through a reading of the text. Thus, titles are not independent, but should be characterized as *épitextes*, or co-texts (Ricardou 144). For all the effort to establish the “thing-ness” of the named, and the name-iness of the title, name and title are not of separate orders.

This becomes more obvious when we try to determine the meaning of a title by an analysis its parts. To see what problems arise, let us return to the first two of the four titles extracted above:

Le Creziou de Contemplation [*The Crucible of Contemplation*]
La Couillebarine des Preux [*The Elephant-testicle of The Valorous* (trans. mine)]

Here are two noun-syntagmes syntactically and orthographically marked with the conventions of proper nouns. All bear a grammatical construction of the basic type, “The X of Y,” a construction that characterizes all but one of the twenty-five French titles in the edition of 1532. Yet this basic construction is more complex than it appears, and if we break it apart, we encounter various ambiguities in the leap from grammar to semantics. Here we seem to engage a variant of the problem suggested by Socrates, the difficulty of “analyzing names into words” (421e). Though the definite article carries its own gray areas (universality vs. particularity) the core problem for us lies here in a two-letter preposition: in French, *de* and in English, *of*.¹⁴

Described grammatically, “The X of Y” construction is a noun phrase with a modifier prepositional phrase following the head noun (Celce-Murcia 303). It can indicate possession, agency, material, or even destination. To assay these semantic possibilities we can look at a Latin title of an actual work that bears the same grammatical pattern: the *Malleus maleficarum*, or Hammer of Witches. If the title is taken as indicating possession, it suggests that there is a hammer and that this hammer belongs to witches. If taken as indicating agency, it suggests that there is a hammer – one that has been made by witches. If taken as indicating material, it suggests that there is a hammer, and that it has been made out of witches. Yet it is only the text of this

¹⁴ *Of*, when used to indicate possession, is a periphrastic construction derived from French. The French *de*, traceable to the Latin *de*, among its various functions, can mark the point of origin or departure (“je viens *de* Paris”) [I come from Paris], like a complement of material (une statue *de* marbre”) [a statue of marble], or introduce a noun complement (Brunot 425-26). In the second half of the sixteenth century *de* as the chief element in the partitive construction became a real article (Brunot 226). The French *de*, in its turn, derived from the Latin *de*, which, even in early Latin translations of the Bible, was being put to new uses, for example, constructions of the type, “Le Dieu *de* majesté” instead of the traditional Latin adjective-formation, equivalent to “Dieu majestueux (Brunot 426).

Inquisitor's manual that reveals that destination is intended: that there is a hammer and it is meant to be used against witches. It is also the text that identifies itself as constituting that hammer (Levin xxvi).

Now, using our two titles as examples, let us observe what happens when we try to make the leap from the grammar to semantics. First we have: *Le Creziou de Contemplation* [*The Crucible of Contemplation*]. Does this mean that there is an entity, contemplation, and that it possesses a crucible? Or that contemplation, as an agent, has created a crucible? Or that a material, contemplation, has been forged into a crucible? Or, that there is a crucible that is to be used against contemplation? Perhaps the alleged work itself is the crucible! And as for crucible – a related, but separate semantic consideration – is that something good or bad?

Our second title, *La Couillebarine des Preux* [*The Elephant-testicle of the Valorous*], proves even more recalcitrant, since the first noun of the formation is one of Rabelais' neologisms. By frequently proposing such "no-things" as nouns Rabelais not only comically subverts the titling practice of reification, but also sends his more assiduous readers deep into the grammar to ferret out some sense. Is there such a thing as an elephant-testicle, and does it belong to the valorous? But, then, why only one elephant-testicle to be shared by all? Perhaps elephant-testicle is a mass, qualitative noun, and might be more accurately translated as *The Macho of the Valorous*. Or should we take the preposition as one of agency, the elephant-testicle having been created by the valorous? Or have the valorous been compacted together and made into an elephant-

testicle? Or maybe the elephant-testicle is something to be wielded *by* or *against* the valorous?

To decide between the alternatives, we would need recourse to the named texts. If such texts existed we might illuminate them by way of our titles, or conversely, our titles by the texts. But our co-texts have no texts. There is no relation of name to thing, because we have nothing but the name.¹⁵ In this case we not only contemplate the possible emptiness of the representation, but find it. Titles, according to the seventeenth-century lexicographer Furètiere, serve as “pimps” of a work (cited in Grivel 174), but Rabelais, giving us a clearly empty bordello, should not be accused here of false advertising. Such titles, originally suspect in regard to their accuracy as representations, can no longer be deemed true or false, because they so patently represent nothing.

Though it might be objected that this void-behind-the-billboard is irrelevant because Rabelais’ titles are satirical in intent, there is nonetheless a recursive implication, one which leaves us still squarely within the concerns of the *Cratylus*. The persistent repetition (25 out of 26 French titles in the 1532 edition) of this blatant absence of relationship between title and text sounds a warning bell to look more closely at relations inhering in other instances. Can one truly posit for titles the clear separation of name and thing as proposed by Socrates? If a title requires a text to make sense, or conversely, if a text requires a title to make sense, then one no longer has thing and name, but rather a

¹⁵ Is a name of nothing really a name? Various solutions have been offered, and Bertrand Russell even provided two: 1) that a phrase may be denoting, and yet not denote anything, and 2) “that if a thing a true and proper name purports to name does not occur, the name is meaningless” (Algeo 43). The viability of the first solution has large ramifications for the study of fiction, and suggests a coherent tack for the list of titles in Rabelais: if his titles are denoting, but denote nothing, focus can be shifted to the denoting itself.

circular loop: what purports to be a name is a part of the thing it names and what purports to be named merely forms the larger portion of its name. Separation has ceded to contiguity, inside and outside have merged into continuum. This teeters towards the unacceptable situation described by Socrates in the *Cratylus* in which things and names are doubles (433d). But of course, in this case it is not that they are doubles, but merely of the same order. Is this not the stone whose ripples we already detected in the relations obtaining between the Catalog as Codpiece and the Library as Codpiece? It is in fact a kind of fractal pattern that repeats itself through the chapter, but whose largest impact is only sensed recursively after one dives into the titles under their aspects of function and structure. Here, contemplation of the absence of the named leads to the realization that one uncovers words only by means of more words. It was through a procession of names that we arrived at this concluding procession of titles which is itself a procession of names. Neither the Catalog nor the Library were wholly separable as representations from what they purported to represent, a situation rendered more starkly in the case of the last-reached titles. If name and named are of one order, the stability associated by Socrates with the named is now merged with the instability associated with names. Instability, consequently, inheres throughout.

It might be tempting to consider this as a debilitating view of language. But on the contrary, it appears that Rabelais seizes on this state of affairs in order to valorize it. If one looks at the abrogation of the gap between word and thing, and of the merging of inner and outer into a continuum, it can also be viewed as a liberation. If all signifieds (things), have been released into the vortex of signification, so too has the urge to signify,

formerly deemed as a thing contained somewhere safely behind a sign; it too, is now free to roam through signs themselves, heedless of inhibiting semantic and morphological borders. In the catalog of Rabelais, as elsewhere in his fiction, we see rampant stylistic evidence of this liberation in the almost stupefying incidence of neologism, syncope, paronomasia, paragoge, epenthesis, proparalepsis, sardismus and other rhetorical devices.¹⁶ Because it is a linguistic view in which there is no inside or outside, top or bottom, it is a “vision of imaginary richness whose support is the bottomless” (Spitzer 17). But whereas Leo Spitzer sees this effusion as establishing an “intermediate world between reality and irreality” (17), I am more inclined to say that it suggests instead a simple unitary view of the world, mediated by the operation of language.

This abolition of inner and outer, and its attendant liberation, is also exemplified in much of the imagery found in *Pantagruel*. This includes the hero’s birth. Badabec dies because Pantagruel is “si grand et si lourd qu’il ne peust venir à lumière, sans ainsi suffocquer sa mère”(Saulnier 17) [so wonderfully big and heavy that he could not come into the light of day without choking his mother (Frame 140)]. Freccero’s discussion of filial succession in *Father Figures* confirms the impression that Rabelais might gladly have dispensed with any mother at all for Pantagruel, noting that Badabec’s death facilitates the young giant’s mimetic relationship to Gargantua by reducing the potential for Oedipal conflict (21). Bakhtin, though, sees this birth-death as bearing the theme of “death-renewal-fertility” (329) and it comports with his notions of the grotesque body,

¹⁶ In order: coined word, shortening of word or phrase, inclusion of name in word, derivation of new words by analogy with existing forms, adding to the middle of a word, adding at the end of a word, mixing of languages.

which “is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body” (317). As the grotesque body unsettles “the confines between the body and the world and between separate bodies” (315), its nebulous and effluent borders echo our previously noted linguistic elision and liberation.

Most appropriately to our concerns, however, the grotesque body is also pronounced in images of the breeched codpiece. In the opening chapter, which details the hero’s genealogy, we learn of early forbears, who, after having eaten a particular fruit, experienced swelling in various body parts. For some, the genitals were not spared:

Les aultres enfloient en longitude par le membre qu’on appelle le laboureur de nature: en sorte qu’ilz le avoyent merueilleusement long, grand, gras, gros, vert, et acresté, à la mode antique, si bien qu’ilz s’en servoient de ceinture, le redoublant à cinq ou six foys par le corps ; et s’il advenoit qu’il feust en point et eust ven en poupe, à les veoir vous eussiez dit que c’estoient gens qui eussent leurs lances en l’arrest pour joster à la quintaine (Saulnier 11).

[Others swelled in the member that is called nature’s plowman, so that theirs was wonderfully long, big, stout, plump, verdant, and lusty in the good old style, so that they used it like a belt, winding it five or six times around their body; and if it happened to be at the ready with the wind astern, to see them you would have said that they were men with their lances set to go jousting at the quintain (Frame 138)].

The liberation of content from codpiece, only implied here, is rendered explicit in subsequent editions:

Aultres croissoient en matière de couilles si énormément que les troys emplissoient bien un muy. D’iceulx sont descendues les couilles de Lorraine, lesquelles jamais ne habitent en braguette : elles tombent au fond des chausses (Boulenger 195).

[Others grew so enormously in the matter of balls that three of them quite filled up a hogshead. From these are descended the ballocks of Lorraine, which never

dwelt in a codpiece; they always come down to the bottom of the breeches (Frame 138)].

These germinal contents defy containment by a codpiece, and even seem to threaten an escape from the hem of trousers. But this is not all; they can escape the body altogether and perform various functions. For whereas the codpiece is praised as armor for the genitals in the *Tiers Livre* (ch. 8), we find an interesting transposition of roles in *Pantagruel* (ch.15). Here, in a prescription for building a defensive city wall, male genitals escape their codpieces and, joined with female genitals, compose the wall itself, thus serving in a capacity elsewhere attributed to the codpiece.¹⁷ Inside has slipped outside not only spatially, but functionally.

This mention of function returns us once more to consideration of the *Gargantua* prologue. There, Alcofrybas invites his readers to interpret his work by opposing the inner meaning to the outer appearance. Yet my reading of his text (arrived at, you will notice, by pursuing his advice to obstinate extremes) suggests that such a division is in fact chimerical. Richard Waswo, in *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance*, suggests that there was a shift in the Renaissance (though later reversed) away from “the domination of the dualistic model of how language means” (5). He writes:

With respect to meaning, the shift is from regarding it as referential to regarding it as relational. With respect to language, the shift is from regarding it as the transparent vehicle, the plain or fancy container of an independently fixed content, to regarding it as a creative agent that constructs its own protean meanings (Waswo 21-22).

¹⁷ Even if one eliminates the *mother* as social role one cannot so easily eliminate the feminine as element in fecundity and generation. In the case of this defensive wall it should be remarked that the female genitals are the primary component, the male genitals serving only in the manner of tenons.

My reading of chapter seven of *Pantagruel* appears to situate Rabelais within that shift, a shift which itself fits the larger framework of what Bakhtin characterized as the Renaissance reconstruction of the cosmos from a vertical axis to a single horizontal axis of becoming where all “things in the universe ... began to seek a new place and achieve new formations” (365). There are vast implications in such reductions for the reader, for the alternate:

dualistic picture of the world and the dualistic model of meaning are like the chicken and the egg: they propagate each other ... The consequence of referential semantics is also its premise; it implies the divided universe that it postulates (Waswo 40).

Yet, as Regosin notes in his discussion of the *Gargantua* prologue, Rabelais challenges the “binary opposition of outside and inside” (70) that are correlates of this dualistic model. This dichotomy was the foundation “of accepted hermeneutic practice” (70). “Traditionally,” he writes:

authoritative writing opened to reveal depth and difference in the hierarchy of levels; the reader penetrated toward a center whose uniform, ordered truth transcends difference (of levels, of meaning, of value) and both contains and is contained by the whole (70)

The Rabelaisian text, by contrast, remains “open, conflictual, plural” (70), creating, as Waswo might say, its own “protean meanings.”

Paradoxically, in following the advice of Alcofrybas in my reading of the text I have proceeded in the traditional manner, trying to penetrate “toward a center whose uniform, ordered truth transcends difference.” This, in spite of the fact that my reading of the text informs me bluntly that I have been barking up the wrong tree. I must allow that

this inconsistency gnaws at me, that I am in fact disturbed by my persistence in seeking and presenting “a meaning” as though the text were referential. Waswo attributes this impulse to human psychology:

For the real power of the dualistic model is not theoretical at all; it is emotional. It lies in our vocabulary of discourse because it haunts our psyche, reflecting our anxieties about language, displacing our reactions to the power of words, and satisfying our desires for closure and repose on what Samuel Johnson called ‘the stability of truth’ (6).

My excuse for how I have proceeded (were one necessary) is that this is what Alcofrybas told me to do. My pursuit of the inside/outside dichotomy (no matter how factitious it might in the final analysis be) has performed a function. And perhaps, in following the narrator’s advice, I have roughly arrived at a destination that the author, Rabelais, had intended.

CONCLUSION

I set out with an emphasis on processions of sheathing and unsheathing, following the narrator on a progress through sheaths of language, academic endeavor, the University of Paris, the foibles of textual transmission, Alexandria, the cemetery of Saint-Innocent, the Abbey of Saint-Victor and its Library. I posited the Rabelaisian codpiece as a distinct model of sheathing, and construed the inmost sheaths - the Abbey Library, the Catalog and the Title - as Rabelaisian codpieces. Codpieces were seen to invoke doubt in three ways: as possible misrepresentations of content; as inviting speculation about the contents without regard to the accuracy of the representation; and as possible misrepresentations of the *relation* to that content. Between the static material of the

Rabelaisian codpiece and its inspired content (the potent “conserving germs” of human lineage) there was a disjunction; however, this disjunction did not hold for our postulated codpieces. Originally most suspect on account of false representation of content, the most insidious implication accrued to the possible misrepresentation of their *relation* to that content. Yet the implications of this continuity, rather than eliminating them from their status as cod-pieces, only placed them more squarely in the central concerns of the chapter. For this chapter hinges on the relation between container and content, name and named. I focused on several such relations: between word and thing, catalog and collection, title and text. The blatant emptiness of the titles *sans* text at the heart of the chapter served notice to examine titles that do have texts, and the relation found to obtain there, in turn, suggested a general disturbance in the firm separation between name and thing as suggested in the *Cratylus*. The contiguity established between title and text echoed recursively through the chapter, and suggested the merging of thing and name, stability and instability into a single nexus. In a sense, codpieces were found to be, not artifacts, but foreskins.

This position argues, linguistically speaking, for a unitary world. Though Max Gauna states that Rabelais’ linguistic ideas are largely “presided over” by Plato (39), it seems to me that chapter seven of *Pantagruel* suggests an alternative to the opposition between word and thing as found in the *Cratylus*. As pervasively expressed in Rabelais’ fiction, it frees the urge to signify from the deceptive confines of fixed representations. Ironically, the terminus of all these sheaths has resulted in the arraignment of the notion of depth, a notion so prominent in the prologue to *Gargantua* and in chapter seven of

Pantagruel. If my conclusions are correct, however, and outside and inside here are but one, then surface is everything, and depth, reflection. What one took to be a lake turns out to be a mirror. This - and I say it with full appreciation of its irony - is perhaps some of the richer marrow to be found when one looks *inside* Rabelais' titles.

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