FROM POPULAR CULTURE TO ENLIGHTENMENT: RABELAIS’ PANTAGRUEL
AND GARGANTUA AS INSTRUCTION MANUALS

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Popular references are a defining feature of François Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*. One cannot read either of these narratives without being exposed to a barrage of popular characters, imagery, and events. This study serves to elucidate Rabelais’ use of popular characters within *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* by arguing that the author used these characters as instructional tools. The first component of this thesis will analyze the manner in which Rabelais makes use of his mythical protagonists in order to denounce the ideological use of myth. This study will also demonstrate how Rabelais uses popular characters in his second narrative, *Gargantua*, to evoke Erasmian evangelism. The final chapter of this thesis will examine several narrative techniques employed by Rabelais in order to transmit to his readers lessons on wisdom and truth. The culmination of these examples serves to show how Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* function as instruction manuals, by redefining and reclaiming what it means to be a Christian, and informing readers how to live a better, more evangelical, life.
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INTRODUCTION

In the prologue of *Pantagruel* lies one of the most recognizable opening lines written by François Rabelais:

Très illustres et très chevaleresques champions, gentilshommes et autres, qui vous adonnez volontiers aux pratiques nobles et mondaines, vous avez récemment vu, lu et connu les *Grandes et Inestimables Chroniques de l'énorme géant Gargantua*, et comme de vrais dévots, les avez crues tout ainsi qu’un texte de la Bible ou du Saint Évangile ... (23).

Even though this line begins the narrative, it serves as more than just an introduction to the story. Instead, it serves as a blueprint to help readers understand the various episodes that occur within *Pantagruel*, as well as Rabelais’ second narrative, *Gargantua*. In this opening line, one can detect Rabelais’ disdain for a naïve interpretation of popular myth, where a story such as the *Grandes et Inestimables Chroniques de l’énorme géant Gargantua*, would receive as much respect and notoriety as the Bible or the Holy Gospel. On the other hand, the narrator also recognizes the potential of a text like the anonymous *Chroniques* when he states: “Et le monde a bien connu par expérience infaillible le grand bénéfice et utilité tiré de la *Chronique Gargantuine: car les imprimeurs en ont vendu plus en deux mois qu’il ne sera acheté de Bibles en neuf ans*” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 27). The preface of *Pantagruel* helps explain the framework of *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* because it clarifies why an educated man, such as Rabelais, would choose to employ characters from popular myth in his own narratives. Rabelais chose to include popular references in his narratives, not because he was a popular author, but because he was
obviously aware of the large readership of the *Chroniques*, based on its sales. The quotation suggests that Rabelais hoped to profit from the success of the *Chroniques* by employing its structure and principal characters in his own narratives.

The question of why Rabelais would choose to employ characters from popular myth in *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* is important, particularly since after the publication of Bakhtine’s work, *L’œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*, each of Rabelais’ narratives became largely defined by its popular references. For this reason, the narratives, and their author, can easily be interpreted as popular. This study serves to demonstrate that there is more to Rabelais’ narratives than what is represented by their popularized appearance. The risk in not seeing past the popular illusion of *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* is the misinterpretation of each of these works, for each is less about entertainment than educating readers in an entertaining manner.

Rabelais understood the importance of popular myth to his contemporaries, based on his critique in the prologue of *Pantagruel* of these myths taking precedence over readings of the Bible or of the Holy Gospel. Instead of attempting to combat these forces, he used them to his advantage: by adapting them and making them the central figures of his attack on popular ideology, by harnessing them to promote Erasmian evangelism,¹ and by employing them to transmit, to his reader, lessons on wisdom and truth. If readers preferred popular tales such as the *Grandes et Inestimables Chroniques de l’énorme géant Gargantua* over the Bible and the Holy Gospel, Rabelais provided them with what they wanted, a popular tale, but in doing so, he also integrated evangelistic lessons into his texts in order to reach this audience who seemed more inclined to read texts based on myth than ethics.

¹ According to Michael Screech in *Rabelais*, the evangelists were “liberal Catholics who shared ... respect for the New Testament, studied it in its’ original Greek, and battled for a church that was purer, closer to the beginnings of Christianity, and cleared of medieval accretions” (33).
CHAPTER I: POPULAR VS. POPULAR: CORRECTING POPULAR IDEOLOGIES IN

PANTAGRUEL

In his work, *L’œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*, Mikhaïl Bakhtine states: “On a coutume de signaler la prédominance exceptionnelle, dans l’œuvre de Rabelais, *du principe de la vie matérielle et corporelle*: images du corps, du manger et du boire, de la satisfaction des besoins naturels, de la vie sexuelle” (27). As Bakhtine has noted, it is impossible to read *Pantagruel* without being exposed to a barrage of popular imagery. Not only is the principal character of this narrative a giant, borrowed from folkloric tradition, but the events and exploits that the principal characters engage in are also filled with lewd gestures, sometimes to the point of being considered obscene. Borrowing from the genres of the *chanson de geste* and the romance of chivalry, common in the Middle Ages, Rabelais’ first work also appears to follow the example of the fabliaux, a vulgar, yet comical text, as well as the popular ritual of the Carnival, typified by “the world turned upside down” or “*le monde renueuré*” (Burke 268). The presence of popular allusions in *Pantagruel* begs to ask the question of why someone considered a learned man, such as Rabelais, would consider using these references in his inaugural text. For Rabelais, what could have been at stake; what message was he trying to convey?

An examination of the popular text, as well as the reader who consumed it, is a necessary first step before an analysis of Rabelais’ use of the popular in *Pantagruel* can be achieved. The

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2 The *chanson de geste* and the romance of chivalry were transformed throughout the middle ages. Originally considered more “noble” genres, the *chanson de geste* eventually became popularized and parodied, since its overzealous ideals were no longer accepted by society (Berg 71). The romance of chivalry saw a similar transformation, with its authors “[... reducing the tension between realism and the idealistic chivalric world...” to appeal to a wider audience (Hudson 46).
problem with such an examination, however, is rooted in the ambiguity of the term *popular*. Aron Gurevich describes the complexity of this term in his book, *Medieval popular culture: Problems of belief and perception*, “was it only the culture of the lower, oppressed classes of society? Or was it the culture of all *illiterai*, as opposed to that of the educated people?” (xv). In the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, the definition of popular became more objective, yet it was not defined by those who composed the popular population; instead, it was imposed by the elite (Gurevich xv). Due to its origin, the term popular refers to a symbolic division, since it was imposed from above, rather than being defined from within the population itself. Symbolic or not, in the sixteenth century the division did exist, and Roger Chartier, in *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, presents his interpretation of the dichotomy:

> I shall consider “popular” readers, by default, as those who belonged to none of the three “robes” – the black robe of the clergy, the short robe of the nobility, or the long robe worn by an array of office holders great and small, lawyers and attorneys, men of letters, and medical doctors” (146).

This definition leaves the population of “peasants, journeymen and masters in the crafts and trades, and merchants, including the retired merchants often designated as “bourgeois” [to comprise] those identified as “of the people” (Chartier 146).

The same problem presents itself with the definition of popular literature, due once again to the ambiguity of the term popular. The questions regarding popular literature’s audience, esthetics, and form compose essential elements in helping to define this unique classification. If the population can be divided in terms of social class, between popular and elite, can popular literature also be defined this way, in opposition to high culture literature? By comparing high culture literature and popular literature, it appears that such a dichotomy exists, for popular
literature was often “simplified ... to suit the needs and understanding of a popular audience” (Gibbs 22). According to Harriet Hudson, in her study of the popularization of the medieval text, the simplification process gave rise to a literature that was more accessible to a wider portion of the population, in particular the newly founded bourgeois (36). The end result was twofold: a popularized literature and a form of literature that can be called popular. The popularized form of literature was pieced together based on the “tastes and attitudes” of the audience and was placed into the “form of romance for reasons of convenience and literary prestige” (Gibbs 22). Here, the traditional aristocratic tale serves as a framework or convention, into which alternative, or innovative, material was placed. Although popular literature both simplified and adapted traditional elitist works, it also included genres of its own, including the fabliaux. Known for its obscenity, the fabliaux have been considered a literature of the bourgeois class (Baldwin 41). This statement can also be confirmed based on the social dichotomy, which defined popular by what it is not. As Joan DeJean explains in the introduction to her book *The Reinvention of Obscenity*, “[In the Middle Ages], material we might designate obscene was carefully confined: certain genres, those known as *courtois* avoided crude sexual terminology, while other, more vernacular genres displayed it prominently” (8). DeJean’s research thus shows that an opposition existed between elite, or *courtois* literature, and the popular, or non-*courtois* text. Popular literature can thus be described as either a simplified version of elitist work, a collection of popular references placed into the form of an elitist work, or a work that is obscene.

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3 Although Gibb’s text, *Middle English Romances*, deals primarily with the English romance, in his introduction, he provides an overview of the evolution of the medieval genres of the romance of chivalry and the *chanson de geste*, from England and France, as well as the influence that they had on one another.

4 According to John G. Cawelti, “All types of cultural products contain a mixture of two kinds of elements: conventions and invention. Conventions are elements which are known to both the creator and his audience beforehand – they consist of things like favorite plots, stereotyped characters, accepted ideas, commonly know metaphors and other linguistic devices, etc. Inventions, on the other hand, are elements which are uniquely imagined by the creator such as new kinds of characters, ideas, or linguistic forms” (384-385).

5 Although “there was no term specifically to designate [obscene] content, it was referred to as *non-courtois*, by opposition to the genres that refused it...” (DeJean 8)
More than anything, popular literature is known for its accessibility, as it was printed cheaply and distributed widely; its appeal broke through the constraints of class lines, and became a literature for one and all.

Now that the concept of popular has been defined, one must consider how it was used in Rabelais’ text. An examination of the popular narrative *Les Grandes et Inestimables Chroniques de l’énorme géant Gargantua* is key to defining the concept of popular in *Pantagruel*, since Rabelais borrowed much of his material from this anonymous work. The *Chroniques* can be defined as a popular text, due to the simplicity of its language, its use of conventional materials for its basic structure, in this case the legend of King Arthur, and its obscenity, which shall be referred to as farcical. Dominated by the third person narrative, the content of the *Chroniques* remains simple due to its lack of detailed description and frequent use of repetition. The text also follows Cawelti’s “conventions” formula of popular literature (385), since it uses the familiar legend of King Arthur as a framework. In fact, one of the most well known figures from the legend, Merlin, plays a central role in the *Chroniques*. Not only is the reader immediately introduced to this character in the opening scene, but his counsel and actions also direct the exploits of other key characters, particularly the giants, throughout the narrative. In the *Chroniques*, Merlin continues in his traditional role of guarantor of King Arthur’s power, by generating a non-conventional race of giants to serve as protectors of Arthur’s kingdom. Fashioned from a magical blend of whale bones, a vial of Lancelot’s blood, and the fingernails of Queen Guinevere, the giants Grant Gossier and Gallemelle engender a son, Gargantua, who Merlin prophesizes, will one day become a great warrior and protect King Arthur from his enemies. Although the *Chroniques* adopt popular characters and plots, the text also contributes to
the renewal of the Arthurian legend through the introduction of its own variants, which characterizes the anonymous narrative as popular rather than a popularized text.

One of the Chroniques’ most distinguishing features is its introduction of new characters, including Grant Gosier, Galemelle, and Gargantua. These giants and their farcical actions, create a separate and distinct layer in the narrative from references made to the Arthurian legend. It is only when Grant Gosier and Galemelle leave Merlin’s presence, for example, that their explicit sexual encounter is described. Likewise, the description of Gargantua’s battle scenes are also set apart, keeping mentions of dismemberment and flatulence separate from members of the nobility. The replacement of a valiant knight with the farcical Gargantua is one of the ways that the Chroniques distinguishes itself from the earlier legend. This substitution also helps to define the anonymous narrative as a popular text, since it replaces chivalric ideology with comedy, and provides readers with a new hero whom they can call their own.

Shortly after the publication of the Chroniques, a new narrative, presented by its author as a work “de même métal” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 27) as the preceding anonymous text, hit the local fairs. As with many popular texts of the day, an attempt to attract buyers can be observed by this narrative’s overly sensational title, Les horribles et épouvantables faits et prouesses du très renommé Pantagruel roi des Dipsodes, fils du grand géant Gargantua, but once inside, readers will find a “livre occulte,” for despite its popular appearance, this narrative “est un peu plus équitable et digne de foi que n’était l’autre” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 21-27). Just like its outward appearance, the content of Pantagruel presents itself as a popular text. Not only does it follow the traditional structure of the adapted chanson de geste, which placed an emphasis on the life story of the heroic character (Comfort 335), but its main character, Pantagruel’s, early

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6 “To modern readers, the parallel between broadsides or chapbooks and the ‘mass culture’ of the contemporary world is likely to be striking. They will notice the increasing standardization of format and they will be sensitive to the devices for attracting buyers, such as sensational titles...” (Burke 347-348).
description borrows references from preexisting works. At the moment of his birth, for example, Pantagruel is preceded by a vast array of provisions, drawn by mules and camels, which imitate the gifts promised by the King of Marseilles to Emperor Charles in La Chanson de Roland (Berg 17), and just as the giant Rainoart in Alscians (Cohen 171), Pantagruel’s large size takes the life of his mother.

In addition to his early life, Pantagruel’s description in the remainder of the narrative continues to remain close to that of the popular hero, particularly since he is depicted as realistic instead of idealized. This distinction was important to the popular reader, who, finding the idealistic description of the traditional hero difficult to relate to were instead drawn to characters who were presented as real and comical (Hudson 36). In Pantagruel, the character of Pantagruel is not only comical, but he is also real. The genuineness of Pantagruel is illustrated at certain points throughout the narrative by his vulnerability. Although known to be strong and powerful, Pantagruel is also vulnerable, since he sometimes doubts his capabilities. In the episode where Pantagruel must debate the great clerk from England, for example, he stays up the night before reviewing several texts in order to prepare. The fact that Pantagruel believes that he must prepare shows vulnerability on the part of this character, for despite his reputed intelligence, he remains uncertain of his abilities. The adaptation of the hero from idealized to realistic was one of the popularizing features of the chanson de geste (Comfort 308). Pantagruel thus resembles a popular hero from the chanson de geste, because his vulnerability brings him not only closer to reality, but also to humanity.

Pantagruel is also classified as a popular text due to its abundance of farcical material. Not only do the main characters constantly consume vast amounts of food and drink, but they also readily engage in vulgar acts, gestures, and dialogues. The character of Panurge is central in

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7 Hudson uses the example of Chaucer.
the expression of farcical material in *Pantagruel*. Seemingly acting as the prototype of the popular outlaw, Panurge’s lewd acts against elite society are numerous in the narrative. Not only does he act out against the local guard, but also against theologians, priests, and the nobility. Perhaps the most shocking display of Panurge’s antics, however, is when he takes the privates from a female dog in heat and places them on the back of a noble woman’s dress. As a result, the woman is pursued by more than six hundred male dogs, who chase her around the city and mark her with their urine. According to Peter Burke in *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, the outlaw in popular texts held a certain amount of appeal for the popular reader, oftentimes being raised to the ranks of a hero (220). In fact, the outlaw, like Panurge, was often regarded as “mythogenic,” since they “satisfied repressed wishes, enabling ordinary people to take imaginary revenge on the authorities to whom they were obedient in real life” (Burke 221).

In *Pantagruel*, the reader is thus presented with two primary characters who comply with traditional popular persona. Not only is there the realistic hero of Pantagruel, but there is also the vengeful outlaw Panurge. The greatest link between *Pantagruel* and the popular, however, is in its intertextuality, in that it borrows heavily from the popular text *Les Chroniques*. Rabelais sets up his novel to begin where the *Chroniques* left off, by having his Gargantua engender a son, Pantagruel, who like Gargantua in the *Chroniques*, will one day defend his kingdom. Rabelais’ use of a pre-existing text on which to base his own narrative, however, was not unintentional. By using the *Chroniques* as a conventional structure, Rabelais’ non-conventional characters, Pantagruel and Panurge, would have been more easily accepted by the popular reader. Acceptance of these characters was crucial, for not only do their words and actions drive the narrative, they also serve as the catalyst for Rabelais’ critique of the popular text. Just as Merlin and Gargantua dominate in the *Chroniques*, Panurge and Pantagruel dominate in *Pantagruel*. 
The parallels that Rabelais creates between these characters function as the main catalyst of his critique. Not only do they serve to draw attention to misguided popular ideologies presented in the *Chroniques*, but they also discredit them.

At first glance, the parallel between the characters of Merlin and Panurge is difficult to detect, since these characters appear to be very different. Merlin, for example, is described as a noble character. His wisdom and magical abilities place him in a superior position to many of the other characters presented in the narrative, including King Arthur and the giant Gargantua. Panurge, on the other hand, is described as a rogue. Acting as a prototype of the popular outlaw, he sets out to overturn traditional hierarchies by humiliating those belonging to the elite. Despite their differences, however, many implicit parallels exist between these two characters.

One of the most significant parallels is the instant loyalty expressed between Gargantua, Pantagruel, and their respective Merlin figures. Upon meeting the magician, Gargantua says to Merlin, “Sire Merlin je suis à vous” (“Les Inestimables” 125) and Pantagruel follows suit, by stating to Panurge, “vous ne bougerez jamais de ma compagnie” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 103). Even though the giants do not personally know Merlin and Panurge before expressing their loyalty, they remain bound to these characters from their initial meetings until the end of the narratives. In addition to loyalty, each giant also expresses his love. Pantagruel, for example, says to Panurge, “Car par ma foi, je vous ai déjà pris si fort en affection ...” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 103) and Gargantua’s love, although not directly expressed, is made clear by the narrator: “... il se prit à rire si tresfort et de si grant affection pour la gentillesse de sa personne et de l’amour que il avoit à Merlin” (“Les Inestimables” 131). From these examples, a parallel exists between Merlin and Panurge, based on the giant’s mutual expression of loyalty and affection.
The parallel continues between these two characters based on their mysterious pasts, which, the reader is told, were both full of *merveilles*. In the opening paragraph of the *Chroniques*, the narrator attests to the quantity and variety of *merveilles* accomplished by Merlin, “Ledict Merlin fist de grandes merveilles, lesquelles sont fortes à croire à celulx qui ne les ont veues” (“Les Inestimables” 116), “Il fist plusieurs merveilles” (“Les Inestimables” 116), “Et plusieurs autres merveilles qui sont trop prolixes à racompter...” (“Les Inestimables” 116), which are mentioned, yet are never described by the narrator. The reader’s uncertainty about the validity of the *merveilles* contributes to Merlin’s mystery, a key component in his characterization. The same scenario presents itself in *Pantagruel*, when Panurge claims that he too has been involved in adventures “... qui sont plus merveilleuses que celles de Ulysse...” (Rabelais 105). The telling of these *merveilleuses aventures* occurs one chapter later, when Panurge recounts his escape from the Turks. Throughout his rendition, Panurge claims to speak the truth, but all that the reader is left with is his word, which makes the *merveilles* of Panurge just as mysterious as those of Merlin. The parallels between Merlin and Panurge, described above, are set up throughout *Pantagruel* so that readers can recognize the magician in the rogue. The reinforcement of these parallels is vital to Rabelais’ use of the popular, since an association between the two characters must be made clear in order for Rabelais’ critique of the popular to take full effect. By highlighting Panurge’s farcical characteristics, Rabelais, in turn, places the trivialities of Merlin into the limelight. In short, Rabelais manipulates the popular persona of Merlin, through his Panurge, to critique the popular text.

In the *Chroniques* and *Pantagruel*, Merlin and Panurge both appear to possess knowledge in the domains of philosophy, magic, alchemy and occultism. Merlin, for example, is described in the beginning of the *Chroniques* as being a “grant philosophe” (“Les Inestimables” 115) and
an “expert en l’art de nigromance” (“Les Inestimables” 115). His use of these pseudo-sciences is described throughout the narrative. Gargantua’s parents, for example, are created by the use of a hammer and anvil, which magically transforms the remains of a whale, mixed with the blood and nails of characters from the Breton cycle, into giants; the club given to Gargantua is “fait par la science de Merlin” (“Les Inestimables” 127); and at the end of the battle against the enemy citizens of Reboursin, Gargantua finds that Merlin, “fist ses enchantements comme il avoit de coutume” (“Les Inestimables” 139). In regards to philosophy, which was referred to at the time as sagesse (“Philosophie” 1622), the description of Merlin as wise is also found throughout the narrative. In Pantagruel, Panurge also appears to posses the power of magic and is described as being wise. Not only does he possess a “pierre philosophale” (Rabelais 171), which he claims brings him money, but he also brings Pantagruel’s pedagogue and fellow companion, Épistémon, back to life after the latter is decapitated in battle. In regards to his wisdom, perhaps Pantagruel says it best when Panurge asks him “Y a-t-il homme aussi savant que les diables?” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 189), to which Pantagruel replies, “Non, vraiment ... sans grâce divine spéciale” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 189).

Panurge’s greatest display of mastery in the subjects of philosophy, magic, alchemy and occultism occurs, however, during the debate against the great clerk from England. In the debate, Panurge steps in for Pantagruel to dispute several “… passages de philosophie, de magie, de alchimie et de caballe…” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 183), with the great clerk. Through a series of comically lewd gestures, Panurge defeats the grand clerk, who states in the end that Panurge “… [l]’a contenté et [l]’en a plus révélé qu’[il] n’en demandait …” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 196). Although this episode serves as a parallel between Merlin and Panurge, by showing how Panurge is a master of these domains, it can also be regarded as a critique of the magician.
In the debate, victory is gained through both lewd and ridiculous signs and gestures, including imitations of sexual acts, holding a ribbon in the air, and tossing and catching an orange eight times. The fact that victory is gained in this manner, rather than through reflective discourse, attests to the frivolousness of these supposed sciences. It appears that Rabelais also ridicules Panurge’s other magical possessions and abilities. Although Panurge’s “pierre philosophale” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 171) supposedly brings him money, for example, the reader learns that there is no truth to this statement since, directly after, Panurge follows up his previous claim by asking the narrator if he would like to “gagner les pardons” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 171), or steal money from the church. In addition, in order to bring Pantagruel’s pedagogue and battle companion, Épistémon, back to life, he first places his severed head against his “braguette” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 273), or privates, to keep it warm, and then cleans it off with white wine. By ridiculing these disciplines in his narrative, Rabelais implicitly critiques Merlin’s reliance on magic and other pseudo-sciences to achieve many of his great feats. Keith Thomas reminds us in his book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, that the belief in “astrology, witchcraft, magical healing, divination, ancient prophecies, ghosts, and fairies” was still quite prominent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (138). Not only was there belief in these domains, but they also offered for many people “an explanation for misfortune and the means of redress in times of adversity,” thus taking on “a role very close to that of the established church and its rivals” (Thomas 145).

Thomas’ research shows that the use of magic and other superstitious practices were not only dominant in the *Chroniques*, but they also made up a significant part of the belief system in the sixteenth century. For this reason, it is no wonder why an educated man, such as Rabelais, would choose to critique these superstitious practices. By trivializing Merlin’s actions, through
the use of his own character Panurge, Rabelais attempts to illustrate the error of believing in magic and superstition to his reader. Rather than using magic and superstition to cope with problems, it appears that Rabelais believes that man should rely on his relationship with God.

The importance of having faith in God, in order to get through difficult situations, is one of the major themes in *Pantagruel*. In fact, Pantagruel explicitly pronounces this theme after receiving a plea for mercy from an enemy soldier; “mets ton espoir en Dieu, et il ne t’abandonnera pas” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 253). The critique of looking to other sources of aid, besides God, is also reinforced in the parallel between Merlin and Panurge and their roles as advisors.

Battle scenes make up a large portion of the second half of the *Chroniques* and *Pantagruel*, where Merlin and Panurge share in their role as battle advisors. In the *Chroniques*, although Gargantua battles against the giants Gos, Magos, and an additional giant who remains unnamed, his main battle is against the unruly citizens of Reboursin, where Merlin’s role of counselor is placed in the forefront. In a similar fashion, Pantagruel, too, must battle against a group of unruly citizens, called the Dipsodes, who after the death of his father invade his home territory. In the *Chroniques*, Merlin not only leads the army to battle, but he also “bailleroit conseil à Gargantua ainsi que il avoit de coustume” (“Les Inestimables” 133). In a similar fashion, Pantagruel often looks to Panurge for his advice or interpretation of different events, both before and during the battle against the invading Dipsodes, including why the leagues of France were so small: “[il] en demanda la cause et justification à Panurge” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 217); when attempting to decipher a mysterious letter sent to him by a former lover, “Et lors il appela Panurge et lui montra le cas” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 221); even calling out to him in battle when he is in need, “Ah, Panurge, où es-tu?” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 269). In these scenes, Pantagruel appears to share the sentiment of Gargantua in the *Chroniques*, when he states “bon
fait croire le conseil d’un prudent et saige homme tel comme celui de mon seigneur Merlin” (“Les Inestimables” 131). The role of counselor is further reinforced when Panurge reminds Pantagruel to keep his mind on the battle, rather than ponder trivialities, when he states, “... il vaut mieux penser un peu à notre affaire, et par quel moyen nous pourrons l’emporter sur nos ennemis” (Rabelais, \textit{Pantagruel} 237), to which Pantagruel replies, “c’est bien pensé” (Rabelais, \textit{Pantagruel} 237).

The manipulation of the persona of Merlin in these examples comes from the types of advice that Pantagruel requests from Panurge. Instead of solely relying on him for counsel on battle, Pantagruel asks insignificant questions, including why the leagues in France are so small. This question is answered by an even more ridiculous response, since according to Panurge, the size of the leagues are based on the locations where a group of men, chosen by the mythical king Faramund, had intimate relations with their female companions. From this example, one sees that although Pantagruel asks for advice from his Merlin figure, Panurge, the trivialities of his requests serve to call attention to Gargantua’s misguidance, and discredit his requests and the advice he receives. The reliance of Gargantua on a character who embodies superstitious practices is the underlying component of Rabelais’ critique. By using the ignoble and ridiculous character Panurge, as a replacement for the noble and much respected Merlin, Rabelais calls into question the validity and appeal of the latter character, whose persona is based on his superstitious ways.

Although these examples show how Panurge is related to the character of Merlin in the \textit{Chroniques}, it is also apparent that Rabelais takes on his own rendition of this character, trivializing many of his key attributes. Although all parodies are meant to be comical, one cannot disregard the antithesis that is also at play. Through Panurge’s comically lewd and crude acts and
gestures, Rabelais calls into question Merlin’s reliance on magic and his role as advisor, because, for Rabelais, belief in God should be placed before belief in superstition. Through the use of his unconventional character, Rabelais educates readers on the superficiality of both magic and superstitious beliefs held at the time, including, astrology, alchemy and occultism. If the character of Panurge parallels that of Merlin, in order to point out the flaws of this character, the same holds true for the parallels between Gargantua and Pantagruel.

Unlike Merlin and Panurge, Gargantua and Pantagruel first appear very much the same. In their early youth, for example, both giants are described in relation to their height and power. Gargantua tosses rocks the size of three barrels of wine off of a mountain, and hunts birds with rocks the size of two windmill vanes. Pantagruel, likewise, hunts birds with a large crossbow, which the narrator claims can now be seen in the large tower of Bourges, and breaks several sets of large chains which bound him to his crib, which can be seen in La Rochelle, Lyon, and Angers, the narrator adds, in case the reader has any doubts.

Several of their farcical actions, found in the later battle scenes, also appear to be very similar. Before his main battle against enemy captain Loup-Garou, for example, Pantagruel erects a trophy to celebrate him and his companion’s first victory over the Dipsodes. This event opens to a scene where Panurge passes gas while jumping for joy in praise of Pantagruel. Pantagruel, wanting to repeat the act, also attempts to pass gas, but his flatulence engenders a colony of dwarfs, whom he sends to a nearby island to live and reproduce. Gargantua, in the *Chroniques*, also passes gas during his main battle against the city of Reboursin, but his flatulence leads to the death of 391 enemy soldiers who were imprisoned in his breeches. In a

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8 This hypothesis can be proven based on Rabelais’ adherence to famed evangelist Erasmus, who often shunned superstition, claiming that, “... the most part of christian men instead of true honourers of God are but plain superstitious” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 139). Rabelais’ adherence to Erasmus will be studied in depth in the next chapter.
later scene, Panurge provides Pantagruel with a diuretic, causing him to urinate, drowning the remaining enemy soldiers ("il les noya tous" (Rabelais, Pantagruel 259)). Gargantua, too, drowns a large number of enemy soldiers. The soldiers, noticing that Gargantua is asleep, decide to launch a surprise attack. Instead they accidentally wander into his mouth and eventually drown, after Gargantua drinks a large amount of water upon waking; "lors les citoyens qui estoyent tombez en sa gueulle furent tous noyés" ("Les Inestimables" 138).

In both of these cases, the farcical actions of the giants end in opposite results. In the *Chroniques*, for example, Gargantua’s gas causes death, whereas in *Pantagruel*, it engenders life. A similar scenario presents itself in the way that the giants drown the enemy soldiers. In the *Chroniques*, this occurs by bodily consumption, and in *Pantagruel*, by bodily expulsion. This opposition would have more than likely been perceptible to readers of *Pantagruel* who were familiar with the *Chroniques*; providing them with a clue that, although similar, the character of Pantagruel is not the same as Gargantua. In fact, Rabelais does not replicate the character of Gargantua, but adapts him. By doing this, Rabelais criticizes the popular by creating a giant character that not only opposes his predecessor, but who also surpasses him. The goal of this transfiguration is to provide readers with a true hero, since Pantagruel is not only a character that readers can look up to, but throughout his development, he becomes a character that they can emulate in their own lives.

Gargantua, although big and strong, is dependent on others. If one studies the direct discourse of Gargantua throughout the narrative, one can attest to these characteristics. Most of his dialogues consist of either stating allegiance to Merlin and King Arthur, or questioning the enemy on their behalf. In addition, Gargantua never provides his own interpretation of events, but is instead conditioned to respond favorably to the requests of Merlin and the King. Although
seemingly portrayed as an independent character, thrashing about and destroying the enemy through use of his size and force, Gargantua lacks true independence since his only role in the narrative is to conquer and defend, listen and obey.

Gargantua is not only loyal to the King and Merlin, but he also relies on them to make him a more noble character and provide him with a place in life. It is within their presence, for example, that Gargantua, for the first time, exhibits joy, and the “gentillesse de sa personne” (Les Inestimables 129) is placed at equal weight as his power. At court, Gargantua also becomes a true image of the chevaleresque ideal, delighting in “les belles paroles et honnestes juelx et devises du Roy et des princes qui là assistoient” (“Les Inestimables” 129), so much so that “il prenoit de plaisir cent mille foys qu’il ne faisoit à boire ne à manger” (“Les Inestimables” 129).

The clothing that King Arthur has created for Gargantua, also displays an attempt to make him more of a noble character. Made of silk, rubies, and gold, Gargantua parades around in his “sumptueulx habillements” (“Les Inestimables” 131) like a peacock, showing off his newly created identity to the King and his barons at court. Attempts to transform Gargantua into a more noble character, however, are short lived and artificial. Even though he may regard himself as breaking through the bonds of class distinction, King Arthur and his court still see him as being an inferior.

This point is made clear upon Gargantua’s initial meeting with King Arthur. When introduced to the King and his barons, who were “fort esmerveillés de sa grosseur et haulteur” (“Les Inestimables” 127), Merlin tells Arthur, “Sire de son nom ne vous soucies car il est pour deffendre contre son homme” (“Les Inestimables” 127), which places Gargantua out of the realm of humanity, for without a name, Gargantua’s identity as an inferior is affirmed. It is not until
Gargantua proves himself worthy as a warrior, after defeating the giants Gos and Magos that the King recognizes him by name.

The *Chroniques* presents a hero who lacks many reputable qualities. Not only is Gargantua dependent on others, but his size and force also make up his only distinguishing characteristics. Gargantua is thus presented as entertaining, but not as a character whom readers can look up to. The public will have to wait until the publication of *Pantagruel* for these two characteristics to be combined. Not only is Rabelais’ character entertaining, but he is also a true hero. Although initially presented as a popular character, Pantagruel develops throughout the narrative, using his independence, reason, and faith in God to help him through life’s struggles.

Unlike Gargantua, Pantagruel is not reliant on others to provide him with a place in life. Instead, Rabelais’ giant asserts his independence at an early age. In the beginning of Rabelais’ work, Pantagruel’s birth and childhood appear reminiscent of a typical popular hero, since power and force comprise the focal point of his characterization. Not only does he break the several sets of chains, which tie him to his crib, but he also grabs a cow and a bear, and afterwards, devours them whole. Although Pantagruel’s power and force exemplify his abilities, they also show a side of him that may not be apparent upon an initial reading, his independence. By refusing his traditional provision of milk, which the narrator states, “car il n’a jamais eu d’autre nourrice comme on le raconte” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 57), and instead grabbing and eating the cow which produces it, Pantagruel displays an act of self reliance. This trait is opposed to the character of Gargantua in the *Chroniques*, who relies on others for physical care and self-nourishment. The independence of Pantagruel, at an early age, is also illustrated by his desire to speak his wishes. Following a second occurrence of breaking an even more powerful set of chains that bind him to his crib, Pantagruel consumes a bear, and afterwards states “... ‘bon, bon, bon’ (car il ne savait
pas encore bien parler), pour faire comprendre qu’il l’avait trouvé très bon, et qu’il ne fallait plus que le resservir” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 59). This announcement, while comical, shows that even as a young child, Pantagruel displays his independence by using his limited vocal ability to state an opinion, even if it is contrary to what is expected of him.

In addition to being independent, Pantagruel is also portrayed as a character who is in continual development throughout the narrative. Although in his youth Pantagruel displays characteristics of the popular farcical giant, throughout the narrative he adapts, becoming less of a monster and more of a true hero. The appeal of Pantagruel as a hero is that he never becomes idealized. Throughout his development, for example, he makes mistakes and shows signs of vulnerability. Yet, despite his mistakes, Pantagruel relies on two things to help him through his struggles, his inherent reason and faith in God, which together, make the giant unstoppable.

Early signs of Pantagruel asserting his independence are described in his refusal to drink the milk that is provided to him and in his direct statement of preferring to eat meat instead. The subsequent chapter begins where the previous one left off, by continuing to distinguish Pantagruel from his predecessor and show that although he is already independent, further character development still needs to be made. The chapter opens with a reference to the childhood games of Gargantua in the Chroniques, since both giants are described to have hunted birds with large objects, “Et il [Gargantua] lui [Pantagruel] fit faire, comme il était petit, une arbalète pour s’amuser à chasser les oisillons...” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 63). Although the reference is made, it is almost just as immediately dismissed, with the narrator continuing on with the narrative. The quick dismissal of this reference announces to readers that they are receiving with Pantagruel a narrative that, though much the same surpasses the Chroniques for there are more important matters at hand. The dismissal of this reference is particularly
important, since in the next paragraph of the text, Pantagruel is sent to school, whereas in the
Chroniques, Gargantua is sent to serve under King Arthur. This is a much more direct method,
used by Rabelais, to create a distinction between his giant character and Gargantua from the
Chroniques. Gargantua, for example, is portrayed as a character ready to defend, without formal
training. Pantagruel, on the other hand, is still in need of development, in order to embody his
full characterization.

In the early years of his education, Pantagruel travels around France with his pedagogue
Épistémon. They stop in various cities along the way, in an attempt to procure the best education.
The description of Pantagruel’s education moves between serious and humorous, but the most
significant part of the episode is Pantagruel’s display of reason. After reading the chronicles of
his ancestors, Pantagruel decides to visit the gravesite of Geoffroy à la grand dent, a distant
relative. Upon reaching the site, Pantagruel notices that Geoffroy is portrayed as a mean
character, “tirant à moitié de sa gaine son grand sabre” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 65). When asking
the townspeople why this is the case, they simply replied that poets and artists have the liberty to
paint “ce qu’ils veulent comme ils veulent” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 65). For Pantagruel, however,
this reply is not good enough, since he believes that the portrait was not painted this way without
reason, deciding that he will better inform himself on the situation. In this example, the
characteristics of reason and independence are combined. Pantagruel not only refuses the
illogical claim made by the citizens of Maillezais, displaying reason, but he also decides that he
will find the real reason for why his ancestor was depicted this way, which shows his
independence. Unlike Gargantua in the Chroniques, Pantagruel does not simply abide by the

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9 The result of Pantagruel’s search is never recounted in the narrative. The point of the inclusion of this episode
within the narrative is to show that, rather than being influenced by outside sources, Pantagruel, instead, uses his
inherent reason, which dictates that the claim made the townspeople is illogical. The importance of reason, for
words of others. Instead, he follows his own instincts and asserts his independence by his commitment to find the truth.

Although Pantagruel displays the characteristics of independence and reason from an early age, there is still one component that is missing, his faith in God. In a letter received from his father, Pantagruel learns that in addition to continuing his studies, he must also serve, love, and fear God, to place all of his thoughts and hopes with Him, and to have a faith based on the concept of charity. From this point forward, Pantagruel’s independence and reason are combined with his newly founded Christianization, which is illustrated by his charitable treatment of Panurge and the Dipsodes and his adherence to prayer in time of need. It is through a combination of these three attributes that Pantagruel attains a hero status. Pantagruel surpasses heroism in the traditional sense, however, since his deeds are not accomplished through size and force. Instead, Pantagruel embodies a more realistic form of heroism, since his words and actions are used to show readers how they can better their own lives.

One of the ways that Rabelais critiques the popular text is through the use of his principal characters, Panurge and Pantagruel. By having these characters parallel the characters of Merlin and Gargantua in the Chroniques, Rabelais calls attention to the misguided popular values the earlier characters embody. Although the critique of the popular, thus far, has been indirect, in the main battle scene between Pantagruel and enemy captain Loup-Garou Rabelais’ critique becomes much more direct. What is interesting about this scene is Rabelais’ choice of popular

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10 Although Rabelais borrows the name, Gargantua, from the Chroniques, as the name of Pantagruel’s father, he distinguishes his character from the original by having the engenderment of Pantagruel occur more than 200 years after the death of Gargantua in the Chroniques. The Chroniques, for example, states that Gargantua served under King Arthur for two hundred years, three months, and three days: “Et ainsi vesquit Gargantua au service du Roy Artus l’espace de deux cens ans troys moys et .iii. jours justement” (“Les Inestimables” 141). Although this figure only accounts for the number of years that Gargantua was in the service of King Arthur, the text dictates that his parents took him to court when he was seven (“Les Inestimables” 121). In Pantagruel, however, Gargantua is introduced as having “quatre-vingt, quarante et quatre ans.” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 43).
folkloric characters as enemies. Loup-Garou is not only the enemy captain, but also a large werewolf, and his comrades are not simply soldiers, but an army of giants. By replacing the army of unruly Dipsodes with folkloric characters, the attack on the popular becomes more evident. Although Loup-Garou and his giants are not present in the *Chroniques*, Rabelais references this particular text by transferring the characteristics used to describe Gargantua to Pantagruel’s enemy. It is now Loup-Garou, for example, who wields a magical club of steel, and attempts to frighten Pantagruel by crying out “A mort, ribault, à mort” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 267). In addition, it is not Pantagruel, but an enemy giant who threatens to stuff Pantagruel’s companion, Carpalim, “au fond de [s]es chausses” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 269), or breeches. At the end of the scene, the offensive turns from opposition to confrontation, for when Pantagruel swings around the lifeless body of Loup-Garou, his armament of anvils disengages, striking the remaining army of giants and bringing them to their final demise. What is interesting about this scenario is that it was through the intermediary of an anvil that Merlin created Gargantua’s parents. Yet, what once brought about life in the *Chroniques* is now an agency for death in *Pantagruel*, or at least, the death of a popular folkloric figure. The fact that Pantagruel, who is presented as a popular figure, uses Loup-Garou, a werewolf, to destroy the remaining giants, once again popular figures, supports the theory that Rabelais uses his protagonists to combat the popular. Instead of employing a transposition of characters, however, the attack is portrayed in a more direct and literal fashion.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the paradox of the popular in *Pantagruel* by François Rabelais: how popular culture was both used as a primary reference while also being a subject of critique. In order to clarify this paradox, an examination of the popular text the *Chroniques* was used, since this is the primary text from which Rabelais drew his popular
references. The relationship between the *Chroniques* and *Pantagruel* is more than a simple parody, but rather, what Genette would refer to as a “transposition thématique” (*Palimpsestes* 360). According to Genette, ”Aucun auteur ne semble porté à la pratiquer sans la caution d’une raison ou d’un but. [La transposition thématique est] inspirée par le souci minimal de corriger telle ou telle erreur ou maladresse de l’hypotexte dans l’intérêt même de son fonctionnement et de sa réception” (*Palimpsestes* 360). *Pantagruel* thus presents itself as an attempt by Rabelais to correct the misguided popular ideologies found within the *Chroniques*. He does this by using the character of Panurge to call out the defaults of the magician Merlin, and the character of Pantagruel to provide readers with a hero that they can not only look up to, but also emulate in their own lives. Through the use of his protagonists, Rabelais thus instructs readers to disregard superstition, and to use their independence and reason, like Pantagruel, to develop into a better Christian. These would have been important lessons for an evangelist, such as Rabelais, to convey. Not only do Rabelais’ narratives serve to correct the misguided popular values, but they also instruct readers on the principles of Erasmian evangelism.
In François Rabelais’ second narrative, *Gargantua*, the reader finds himself, once again, in the realm of popular fiction. The description of Gargantua’s birth presents one such example of the popular theme. Born during a festival reminiscent of Mardi Gras, Gargantua’s mother, Gargamelle, consumes a large amount of tripe before feeling, what she believes to be, the pangs of childbirth. The relationship between the consumption of food and the birth of an infant has long been associated with popular myth. In an attempt to understand how a child was born, people believed that the mother would first have to eat a large amount of food. Freud illustrates this phenomenon in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, “people get babies by eating some particular thing (as they do in fairy tales) and babies are born through the bowel like a discharge of feces” (*The Freud Reader* 271). Upon an initial reading of *Gargantua*, it appears that Gargantua’s mother will give birth to her son in this way. The popular representation of childbirth is just as quickly dismissed as it is received, however, when the reader learns that it is not in fact childbirth that is causing Gargantua’s mother her pain, dismissing the popular relationship between food and childbirth, but instead indigestion. Just as in *Pantagruel*, Rabelais uses the popularized events surrounding the birth of Gargantua to dismiss the popular myth of childbirth.

This initiating episode not only dismisses popular myth, but also uses popular myth to introduce a Christian strand of thought referred to as evangelism. In order to provide his wife with relief from what he believes are the pains of childbirth, Gargamelle’s husband and
Gargantua’s father, Grandgousier, recites a passage from the gospel of John, “La femme à l’heure de son enfantement éprouve de la tristesse; mais lorsqu’elle a enfanté, elle n’a nul souvenir de son angoisse” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 72). Gargamelle, in reply, states that she receives much more comfort from these words than from stories from the life of Saint Margaret. In the Middle Ages and into the early Renaissance period, saints were often assigned specialized areas of miraculous expertise in order to help man through difficult moments. “Saint Margret, who, when swallowed by a demonic dragon, grew until she burst from his stomach, (for example), was the patroness of women in childbirth” (Shinners 157). The evangelists shunned such beliefs, believing them to be abuses of the faith. Their main critique was that popular worship of the saints often replaced the worship of God and the focus of the veneration was on the relics of the saints instead of their good deeds (Shinners 218). In the example of Gargantua’s birth, the popularized worship of saints was criticized by placing it into the popular context, in this case the myth of food consumption and its relationship to childbirth. This chapter will explore similar instances in *Gargantua*, where Rabelais’ characters are used to dispel misleading beliefs, and the figures who represent them, based on the writings of Erasmus.

Although Rabelais speaks out against those who are misguided in the faith in *Gargantua*, he was not the first to do so. Instead, this approach can also be found in the writings of famed evangelist Desiderius Erasmus. Erasmus will be used as the primary source of evangelical theory in this study, for not only did his widely popular works help to spread the evangelical movement, but a reflection of Erasmus’ philosophies are found within the pages of *Gargantua*. Although Rabelais and Erasmus never met, the influence that Erasmus had on Rabelais is testified in a letter that Rabelais wrote to Erasmus in 1532. In the letter, Rabelais goes so far as to call Erasmus his “père chéri” (Heulhard 8) and the respect that Rabelais held for Erasmus is affirmed
when he calls him the “invincible champion de la vérité” (Heulhard 8). Of the numerous texts written and published by Erasmus during his lifetime, the *Enchiridion* (1503) and *The Praise of Folly* (1509) will be examined, since they are particularly helpful to elucidate key issues particular to evangelism. These works will thus be studied in order to illustrate the transmission of Erasmus’ evangelical ideology in *Gargantua*.

The first of Erasmus’ evangelical texts, the *Enchiridion*, set itself apart from other religious publications of the time, since it addressed the devout layman, instead of the clergy or other religious orders. According to Erasmus, “it was not only everyone’s right but his duty to concern himself with the faith” (Dresden 118). Erasmus explicitly relays this message in his letter to Paul Voltz, which would later serve as the preface to the new edition, published in 1518 (Olin 107):

Thus, in my opinion, it would be most convenient if the task were assigned to some men as pious as they are learned to draw together in a short statement the whole philosophy of Christ from the most pure sources of the Gospels and the Epistles and from the most approved interpreters, and to do this with such simplicity in so far that it is still learned and with brevity in so far as it is still clear (Erasmus, “Letter to Paul Voltz” 114).

This citation not only presents one of Erasmus’ aims for writing the *Enchiridion*, but it is also key to understanding Erasmus, since within it, Erasmus lays out his life’s work: “to employ humanism in the service of religion, that is to apply the new scholarship to the study and understanding of Holy Scripture” (Olin 5). In other words, Erasmus wished to use his study of classical letters in order to interpret the Greek version of the Bible and recreate, for his readers,

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11 Paul Voltz was the abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Hugshofen (Olin 107). Erasmus considered Voltz’s life to be “an example of the precepts which he himself set down in the *Enchiridion*” (Olin 107).
the philosophy of Christ. From these objectives, the *Enchiridion* was born. The *Enchiridion* can best be described as a manual for the practice of Christian life. Originally composed in 1503 “at the request of a wife of a soldier ... to win him away from his all too rough life,” the book received wide acclaim fifteen years later (Augustin 43, 37). In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus advocates two main ideas: the great weapon of the Christian is knowledge of the Holy Scripture, and religion consists not primarily of outward signs and devotions but of the inward love of God and neighbor. The latter, with its emphasis on interior rather than exterior devotion, was to become Erasmus’ master thought (Olin 8). As Erasmus states in the *Enchiridion*, “The perfection of Christ consisteth only in the affections, and not in the manner or kind of living: it consisteth in the minds and not in the garments or in meats and drinks” (21). With this statement, Erasmus places emphasis on inward devotion, thereby critiquing those who believed that what they wore, ate, or drank, would bring them closer to God. For Erasmus, an inward, spiritual rapport with God was the definition of pure piety. Because of this, the dichotomy of interior versus exterior serves as a basis for Erasmus’ discourse throughout the *Enchiridion.*

Written as a guide to living a Christian life, the *Enchiridion* is divided into several sections, each containing its own theme. Although separate, the sections are built upon the central idea that man is divided into two parts: inward and outward. Erasmus presents this idea

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12 For Erasmus, the study of the Greek version of the Bible was important, for he saw it as a more authentic version than the commonly used Latin Vulgate. In reference to the theologians and their use of the Vulgate text, for example, Erasmus makes the following statement; “They fear that when they cite Sacred Scripture erroneously, as they often do, the authority of Greek or Hebrew truth will be thrown in their faces ...” (Erasmus, “Letter to Martin Dorp” 88). Moreover, Erasmus believed that it was important to present his readers with a clear message, since he believed that Christ’s philosophy could sometimes be lost in the Bibles rhetorical style: “I say this not because I do not know that the whole font and course of Christian philosophy is concealed in the Gospels and Epistles, but because the strange and frequently involved language as well as the figures of speech and involved metaphors give such difficulty that even we ourselves must often make great a great effort before we understand them” (Erasmus, “Letter to Paul Voltz” 114).
early in the text, when cautioning his reader to follow his inner spirit, or reason, rather than their outward and corruptible body, for, as St. Paul writes, “for the flesh desireth contrary to the spirit and the spirit contrary to the flesh” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 96). The early emphasis placed on the dichotomy of man is essential, as it sets the foundation for the advice that will appear in the twenty-two rules that follow. In his rules, Erasmus places particular emphasis on having knowledge of the Holy Scripture, following the example of Christ, doing all things for Christ’s sake, charity, and virtue. By the same token, he speaks against the practice of external vocation to his readers, citing theologians, monks, and even the common Christian man as being adherents to such superstitious conventions. In addition to speaking out against of the practice of external vocation, Erasmus also warns readers of bodily vices, including lust, avarice, pride, and vengeance. The manual ends with remedies against the vices listed above, with the recommendation that man should follow the example of Christ and hold the word of Saint Paul close to his heart in order to overcome temptation and enter into heaven, for, as Erasmus writes, “the reward of virtue is heaven” (*Enchiridion* 249). Thus, with the publishing of the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus presents to his readers what he refers to as the philosophy of Christ, a philosophy that places an emphasis on inward rather than outward devotion. Six years later, Erasmus would create a second narrative based on similar themes presented in the *Enchiridion*.

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13 Although seemingly two different elements, Erasmus unites the spirit and reason as one, as testified in the *Enchiridion*, “That the philosophers call reason, that calleth Paul, sometime the spirit, sometime the inner man, other while the law of the mind” (Erasmus 96).

14 For Erasmus, the definition of charity can be found within the writings of St. Paul: “Paul calleth charity to edify thy neighbor, to count that we all be members of one body, to think that we all are but one in Christ, to rejoice in God of thy neighbor’s wealth even as thou doest of thine own, to remedy his incommodities or losses as thy own” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 171). As for virtue, Erasmus cites Socrates: “Unto this thing pertaineth that not indiscreet saying of Socrates (though it were rebuked of Aristotle), that virtue was nothing else but the knowledge of things to be ensued and followed, and of things to be eschewed or fled” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 186).

15 “Let ever the example of Christ thy head stick fast in thy mind” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 273)

16 “But specially make Paul of familiar acquaintance with thee” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 285)
but this time, instead of using the voice of a moral teacher, he would adopt that of a satirical
muse named Folly.

In the *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus incorporates much of the same information presented in
the *Enchiridion*. The tone of this second work, with its bantering and never-ending satire,
however, presents the evangelical ideal in an entirely different manner. In a letter written to
Martin Dorp, in defense of his new work, Erasmus lays out the design the *Praise of Folly*, “In
the *Enchiridion*, I simply set down a design for Christian living ... So for the Folly; the same
thing was done there under the semblance of a jest as was done in the Enchiridion” (“Letter to
Martin Dorp” 59). Although Erasmus’ approach was different in *The Praise of Folly*, his aim of
instruction remained the same: “I wanted to admonish, not to cause pain; to be of benefit, not to
vex; to reform the morals of men, not to oppose them” (Erasmus, “Letter to Martin Dorp” 60).
For Erasmus, the farcical presentation of the evangelistic ideal in the *Praise of Folly* served to
create a dialogue that would be more easily received by his readers. As Erasmus writes,
“evangelical truth sinks in more pleasingly and takes firmer hold in souls when dressed up in
these little entertainments than if it was simply stated as naked truth” (Erasmus, “Letter to Martin
Dorp” 60). Thus, the humorous approach that Erasmus takes with the *Praise of Folly* serves a
greater purpose than entertainment, since its true intention is to captivate the reader.

It is not only in the approach to writing, but also in structure that the *Praise of Folly*
differs from the *Enchiridion*. Instead of breaking the text into sections, the information is
presented, by Folly, as one long dialogue. The presentation of the material in this manner
engages the readers from beginning to end, without giving him the opportunity to jump from
section to section. In laying out his work, Erasmus first captured his reader’s attention with

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17 “Dorp (1485-1525) was a scholar in the humanist tradition and an old friend of Erasmus” (Olin 55).
pleasantries, before moving on to a more serious indictment of religious superstition. In
Erasmus’ critique, the theologians, monks, and ecclesial elite, who supported such acts of
external devotion, come under attack. Even though the tone moves from playful to stern in this
section, Erasmus’ satirical approach is ever present. Through the use of satire, Erasmus presents
the misdeeds of these religious figures in a comical manner, but he also makes sure to intercede,
from time to time, in order to instruct his reader.18 After critiquing religious orders, Erasmus
concludes his text with a section that exposes his readers to the virtues of the Christian way of
life. Keeping with an even more serious tone than what was presented in his critique, the
philosophy of internal devotion is repeated in this section, as when Erasmus advises his reader,
“the common herd of man feels admiration only for the things of the body and believes that these
alone exist, whereas the pious scorn whatever concerns the body and are wholly uplifted towards
the contemplation of invisible things” (The Praise of Folly 129). The Praise of Folly thus
presents a continuation of the main themes from the Enchiridion. Not only do corrupt religious
figures come under attack, but Erasmus also instructs his readers that true piety is to be attained
through inward devotion. The way that the material is presented, however, through a mix of both
seriousness and satire, forces the reader to become engaged with what he reads, in order to
extract the true message from the banter.

In Rabelais’ Gargantua, there is a continuation of the themes presented in the
Enchiridion and the Praise of Folly. Theologians and monks are critiqued for disfiguring
religion, and other followers of superstitious beliefs, such as pilgrims, also come under attack. In
addition to borrowing Erasmus’ themes, Rabelais also borrows Erasmus’ satirical voice in
Gargantua, by placing his more serious messages next to reveries, and engaging his reader to

18 “... they were pleasant things and laughable, not loathsome, deeds that I treated of, and I did it in such a way that I
could slip in here and there a word of advice, sometimes on very serious matters” (Erasmus “Letter to Martin Dorp”
63).
consider all that he reads. Though much the same, Rabelais differs from Erasmus in the way that he relays the evangelical ideology. Through use of his popularized characters, Rabelais not only reinforces the Erasmian evangelical ideology, but also personifies it. The result of this action is the presentation of evangelism via characters that the reader can relate to, which creates greater interest, thus giving the evangelical message a greater impact.

This study will focus on three different religious figures presented in *Gargantua*, Maître Janotus de Bragmardo, Frère Jean, and a group of pilgrims. These figures were selected in particular, since each of them has direct contact with Gargantua and his companions. The presentation of each of these characters will be examined to show how each of them, through their words and actions, are a transmission of Erasmus’ critique in the *Enchiridion* and the *Praise of Folly*. The chapter will conclude with Rabelais’ adaptation of Erasmus’ evangelical ideal through his description of the Abbey of Thélème.

The first religious figure presented in *Gargantua* is the theologian Master Janotus de Bragmardo. Although the same criticisms are made against the theologians in both Rabelais’ and Erasmus’ texts, Rabelais’ approach differs in that he uses an indirect presentation, which allows for Janotus’ reprehensible words and actions to speak for themselves. Selected by the Faculty of Theology, in order to regain the bells that Gargantua took from Notre Dame, Master Janotus de Bragmardo performs, for Gargantua and his companions, a ridiculous speech, which is void of reason. Although seemingly nothing more than a comical interlude in Rabelais’ narrative, Janotus’ speech reflects many of Erasmus’ main criticisms against the theologians presented in the *Enchiridion* and the *Praise of Folly*.

Rabelais begins the episode by providing readers with Janotus’ physical description. Among his features, Janotus is described as “tondu à la romaine” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 157),
wearing a “longue robe théologale” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 157), and having “l’estomac bien protégé de bon pain et d’eau bénite de cave” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 157). By describing Janotus in this way, Rabelais reflects Erasmus’ critique in the *Enchiridion*, where Erasmus condemns those who display their piety externally, through their dress and what they eat and drink.¹⁹ The words that Rabelais chooses to describe Janotus confirms this theory, since, for example, instead of simply stating “pain” Rabelais writes “bon pain” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 157) and instead of stating “vin,” he writes “d’eau bénite de cave” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 157), which gives these substances a religious significance. Upon seeing Janotus and his fellow theologians, Pontocrates, Gargantua’s pedagogue, is said to have felt “peur à les voir ainsi déguisés, et [il] pensa que c’était des travestis privés de raison” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 157). Through Pontocrates’ comical reaction, Rabelais is able to convey two different, yet essential, critiques of the theologians. The first critique that Rabelais presents is that the theologians are ridiculous for placing emphasis on outward signs of devotion. The second critique that he relays is that such acts are unreasonable. Thus, through the description of Janotus’ appearance and Pontocrate’s reaction, Rabelais lays the groundwork for his critique of the theologians, by characterizing them as adherents to external signs of piety who lack reason.

Rabelais’ continues his transmission of Erasmus’ critique of the theologians through Janotus’ speech, which is filled with superstitious and impious references. For Erasmus, superstitious practices were considered contrary to the true honoring of God, for as he states in the *Enchiridion*, “... the most part of Christian men instead of true honourers of God are but plain superstitious...” (139). Janotus begins his speech, for example, with the claim that the bells of Notre Dame held the power to “expulser les halos et les tourbillons de dessus nos vignes”

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¹⁹ “The perfection of Christ consisteth only in the affections, and not in the manner or kind of living: it consisteth in the minds and not in the garments of in meats and drinks” (Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 21).
The belief that church bells protected against tempests was a credence held by popular religion (Thomas 1250-1251). As Keith Thomas states in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, theologians would oftentimes enhance “popular belief in the existence of the Church’s mystical powers” in order to maintain control of the people. (1193,1208). Thus, from this example, one sees how Janotus endeavors to maintain control of the situation through the use of a superstitious belief as a bargaining tool. The claim Janotus makes that the bells hold the power to keep storms from vines is not the only superstitious belief, however, that he cites in his speech. Later on in the speech, he also offers Gargantua indulgences with the following statement, “Voulez-vous aussi des indulgences? Jourdieu, vous en aurez et vous n’aurez rien à payer” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 163). What’s interesting about this statement is not so much the offer to give Gargantua indulgences in exchange for the bells, but the statement that follows, where Janotus says that he will give them to him without cost. Here again, a superstitious belief is used as a bargaining tool. This time, however, Janotus’ manipulation becomes clearer. By stating that he would give Gargantua the indulgences without cost, for example, he makes the assumption that Gargantua believes they hold value. Thus, another example is presented where the theologian attempts to get what he wants through the use of superstition as a bargaining tool. The practice of superstition is not only against the true honoring of God, but the fact that Janotus uses superstition in order to get what he wants reinforces the impiety of this particular character.

In the next part of Janotus’ speech, Rabelais transmits another of Erasmus’ critiques of the theologian, as presented in the *Praise of Folly*. In the *Praise of Folly*, Folly states, “Yet those [theologians] who do so are so happy in their self-satisfaction and self-congratulation, and are so busy night and day with these enjoyable tomfooleries, that they haven’t even a spare moment in which to read the Gospel or the letters of Paul even once through” (Erasmus 93). In this passage,
Erasmus presents two critiques of the theologian. The first is that they think very highly of themselves, and the second is that they waste their time on trivial pursuits rather than reading and studying the Gospel. In Gargantua, Janotus’ egotism is expressed when he states that if Gargantua returns the bells, he will also require six links of sausages and a new pair of trousers. From this unreasonable request, and by only thinking of himself, Janotus displays self-love, which is further reinforced at the end of his speech when he declares “Vous pouvez applaudir” (Rabelais, Gargantua 164), requesting his audience to give him applause. In addition to transmitting Erasmus’ critique that the theologians are egotistical, Rabelais also shows how they waste their time with trivial pursuits. This is expressed when Rabelais follows up Janotus’ request for sausages and trousers with the following statement,

Ho! Par Dieu, seigneur, c’est bonne chose qu’une paire de chausses, et le Sage ne s’en détoure pas. Songez-y, Seigneur; cela fait dix-huit jours que je me tripatouille la cervelle sur cette belle harangue: Rendez à César ce qui est à César et à Dieu qui est à Dieu (Gargantua 161).

In this example, the manner in which Janotus spends his time is described. Instead of focusing on more important matters, he spent eighteen days fiddling with a common and simple citation. From these examples, Rabelais and Erasmus’ shared criticism of the theologian’s self-pride and endless internal debates becomes apparent. What fuses these criticisms, in addition to the criticism of superstition, together is the theologian’s lack of reason.

Although Janotus’ lack of reason is first expressed when Rabelais describes his character, his criticism of the lack of reason in all theologians, and its consequences, is more clearly defined by Janotus, himself, after returning home. In the episode, Janotus returns home with the gifts that Gargantua promised him. When his fellow theologians attempt to reclaim the gifts,
Janotus defends accepting them by stating that they were gracious gifts, given by pure generosity. When the theologians continue to counter him, asking him to use his reason, Janotus replies, “Raison? ... On n’en a rien à faire ici. ... La terre ne porte pas de plus méchantes que vous, je le sais bien. Ne claudiquez pas devant les boiteux: j’ai exercé la méchanceté avec vous” (Rabelais, Gargantua 171), and continues by calling them “traîtres, hérétiques et trompeurs, ennemis de Dieu et de la vertu!” (Rabelais, Gargantua 171). Although speaking out in anger, Janotus directly testifies to the theologians’ lack of reason, by stating that the theologians have nothing to do with it. The consequence of not using reason is relayed in the last sentence of Janotus’ speech, where he calls the theologians enemies of God and of virtue. This idea is reinforced in the text through Janotus’ actions, when, instead of using reason, the theologian acts maliciously, attempting to persuade Gargantua through the use of superstition as a bargaining tool. Although Rabelais’ critique of the theologians is reminiscent of the critique presented in the Enchiridion and the Praise of Folly, Rabelais takes his own twist on the theme. The way that Rabelais accomplishes this is by taking the elements of critique presented in Erasmus’ narrative and personifying them. The result of this action differs from Erasmus’ dialogue in that it creates a character that readers can relate to. By having Janotus be the main conveyer of the critique of the theologians, it also allows the message to take greater hold.

Another religious figure criticized in Gargantua is the monk. Just as with the criticism of the theologians, Rabelais’ criticism of the monks closely follows that which is presented in the Praise of Folly. The monks, in both texts, are defined as being despised by the people,

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20 “‘The whole tribe of them [the monks] is so universally loathed that even a chance meeting is thought to be ill-omitted... In the first place, they believe it’s the highest form of piety to be so uneducated that they can’t even read. ... But nothing could be more amusing than their practice of doing everything to rule, as if they were following mathematical calculations which it would be a sin to ignore.” (Erasmus, Praise of Folly 96). “‘There are others again who shrink from the touch of money as if it were a deadly poison, but are less restrained when it comes to wine or contact with women” (Erasmus Praise of Folly 97).
uneducated, rule followers, and lovers of wine and women. Although being lovers of wine and women is contrary to the monk’s rule following nature, this description attests to the monk’s immorality and propensity to bend the rules to fit their needs. Just as with his criticism of the theologian, Rabelais’ critique of the monk is relayed indirectly, since the monk, Frère Jean, confirms Erasmus’ critique in the *Praise of Folly*, rather than a third party.  

By presenting his critique in this manner, Rabelais’ critique is more convincing than Erasmus’, for instead of having a secondary character recount the abuses of the monk, the monk conveys and confirms these abuses himself.

Frère Jean plays a more direct role in the second half of *Gargantua*. He is first introduced in the text when the invading army of Picrochole attacks his abbey. Although his militant characteristics remain a defining feature in the remainder of the narrative, he is still, as Rabelais puts it, “... un vrai moine s’il en fut jamais depuis que le monde moina” (*Gargantua* 225). As stated earlier, Frère Jean confirms many of Erasmus’ criticisms of the monk in the *Praise of Folly*. In one episode, however, Rabelais changes his approach by placing the monk’s confirmation of the abuses of the monistic order next to the criticism. In the episode, Rabelais presents his criticism in the form of a dialogue between Frère Jean and Gargantua. Gargantua takes on the role of the primary conveyer of the criticism of the monks in this episode, referencing their inutility and their lack of sincerity in prayer. In response to Grandgousier’s comment that the monks pray to God for us, for example, Gargantua states, “Nullement.... Tout ce qu’ils font, c’est de déranger tout le voisinage à force de faire tintinnabuler leurs cloches”

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21 Frère Jean: In regards to education, “Pour moi, je n’étudie pas. Dans notre abbaye, nous n’étudions jamais de peur des oreillons”(*Rabelais, Gargantua* 309), in regards to following rules, “La chape enlevée, dit Gymnaste. Ôtons ce froc. Ho, par Dieu, dit le Moine, mon gentilhomme, il y a un chapitre dans les *Statuts de l’ordre* qui n’admet pas ce cas” (*Rabelais, Gargantua* 307), in regards to wine and women, “Comment, dit le Moine, se porte l’abbé Tranchelion, le bon buveur? Et les moines, quelle chère font-ils? Cordieu! Ils baisotent vos femmes pendant que vous êtes en pèlerinage!” (*Rabelais, Gargantua* 351).

What is unique about this approach is that in the interaction between Gargantua and Frère Jean, both the evangelistic and the monastic perspectives are conveyed. By presenting the critique in this manner, Gargantua’s dialogue, with its more serious tone, stands out against the humor of Frère Jean. The reader, as a consequence, more easily grasps the evangelical arguments brought forth by Gargantua, since they are placed alongside the less reasonable and more comical statements of the monk.

In addition to theologians and monks, the pilgrims, too, are critiqued in *Gargantua* for their link to superstitious piety. Holding the unreasonable belief that visiting sacred places and relics will help pave the road towards eternal salvation, the pilgrims would abandon home and family, oftentimes spending vast amounts of money, in order to buy their way to heaven. This critique is transmitted in the *Praise of Folly*, when Erasmus states: “Yet another leaves wife and children at home, and goes off to Jerusalem or Rome or St. James’s shrine, where he has no call to be” (77). Though mentioned in the *Praise of Folly*, the criticism becomes much more direct in the *Enchiridion*: “What availeth it to do good deeds outward, unto which within are committed things clean contrary? Is it so great a thing if thou go to Hierusalem in thy body, when within thine own self is both Sodome, Egypt, and Babylon?” (180). In this example, the pilgrims are not only criticized for abandoning their household responsibilities, but also for their adherence to

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²² Erasmus relays this same critique in the *Enchiridion*, “Thou, haply, when thou prayest, considerest only how much of thy psalms thou hast mumbled up, and thinkest much babbling to be the strength and virtue of prayer: which is chiefly the vice of them which (as infants) cleave to the literal sense, and are not yet grown up to the ripeness of the spirit” (57-58). For Erasmus, lack of sincerity in prayer is contrary to living a good Christian life, since pure prayer represents perfect piety. As he recounts in the *Enchiridion*, “Paul would we should be ever armed, which biddeth us pray continually without stop. Prayer pure and perfect lifteth up thine affection to heaven...” (Erasmus 56).
outward rather than inward devotion, which lies at the heart of Erasmus’ criticism of the standing religious orders of the day.

Rabelais’ criticism of the pilgrims is presented in chapter XXXVI of *Gargantua*, in an episode entitled “Comment Gargantua mangea en salade six pèlerins.” In the episode, Gargantua mistakenly consumes six pilgrims, who were hiding in the lettuce he picks in order to make a salad. Not much description is provided of the pilgrims, except that they came from Saint-Sébastien, and that they decided to hide in the garden that evening for fear of enemies. Although the pilgrim’s characterization lacks description, one can get a sense of their demeanor through their reaction to being picked, and carried into the kitchen by Gargantua. As Rabelais states:

Tandis qu’il les lavait d’abord dans la fontaine, les pèlerins se disaient à voix bas:


From this citation, it appears as though Rabelais describes the pilgrims as weak. Instead of speaking out to save themselves, they debate the issue with each other, which does not give them the desired result. Furthermore, the pilgrims appear quick to make assumptions, with one stating that if they do speak up, they will be killed as spies, although there is nothing within the episode that should make them come to this conclusion. As a result of their inaction, they are consumed by Gargantua, and are not released until one of the pilgrims mistakenly hits a sore spot on one of Gargantua’s teeth. The beginning of the episode thus serves to provide readers with a background of the demeanor of the pilgrims. Through Rabelais’ description, the pilgrims appear to be both weak and quick to make assumptions. This description serves as Rabelais’ first
critique of the pilgrims, which illustrates the weakness of their demeanor. Rabelais next critiques the pilgrim’s piety. This occurs at the end of the episode, where Rabelais conveys the pilgrims’ reaction to the day’s adventures:

Ils s’y réconfortèrent de leur malheur grâce aux bonnes paroles d’un de la compagnie, nommé Lasdaller, qui leur démontra que cette aventure avait été prédite par David dans son psaume: “Quand les hommes se levèrent contre nous, peut-être nous auraient-ils avalés tout vifs, quand nous fumes mangés en salade à la croquet-au-sel ... (Rabelais, Gargantua 303).

The evocation of the Bible in the ending lines of the episode is superficial. Instead of looking to God and asking for his aid in their misfortune, the pilgrims take a psalm from the Bible and transform its contents to fit their situation. It is only through their own, personal transformation that the pilgrims find comfort in its words. With this example, the pilgrims are described as being unable to take the holy word of God for what it is, in its original form. It is not until they construe its message, by altering it to fit their own needs, that they gain any comfort from its words. In this episode, Rabelais’ critique of the pilgrims is represented in two different ways. The first is their demeanor, which is both weak and assuming, and the second is their impiety, which is illustrated through their inability to take the word of God for what it is, and, instead, construing it to meet their own needs. Although this episode introduces the pilgrims, it is not until they meet with Grandgousier that Rabelais’ critique of the pilgrims is clearly conveyed. In Grandgousier’s meeting with the pilgrims, he uses direct dialogue to enlighten the pilgrims with a transmission of Erasmus’ evangelical message, critiquing their superstitious and misguided ways, and showing them the true path to salvation.
Grandgousier and the pilgrim’s meeting takes place after Frère Jean rescues them from the enemy army and brings them to Grandgousier’s home. Learning that the pilgrims are going to St. Sébastien, in order to make devotions against the plague, Grandgousier first condemns the superstitious worship of the saints, stating, “Ils blasphèment donc les justes et élus de Dieu et les faisant semblables aux diables qui ne font que mal parmi les humains...” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 349). As Keith Thomas explains,

By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the *Lives* of the Saints had assumed a stereotyped pattern. They related to the miraculous achievements of holy men, and stressed how they could prophesy the future, control the weather, provide protection against fire and flood, and magically transport heavy objects, and bring relief to the sick (759).

Grandgousier’s statement, in this case, is a transmission of Erasmian evangelism, since Erasmus believes that saints should be honored for their virtues in life, rather than for the miraculous powers given to them by man. In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus illustrates this idea, when he writes, “No religion is more acceptable to saints or more appropriate than if thou wouldest labor to repent and follow their virtues” (154). Grandgousier follows his critique of the superstitious worship of the saints by condemning the preachers who reinforced these beliefs in the minds of the common people, “La peste ne tue que le corps, mais ces prédicateurs diaboliques infectent les âmes des pauvres et simples gens” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 351). In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus relays this same message, placing the blame on the preachers who spread false beliefs, rather than the commoners who believe them:

I verily dispraise not them so greatly which do these things with certain simple and childish superstition for lack of instruction or capacity of wit, as I do them
which seek their own advantage prayeth and magnifieth those things for most
great and perfect holiness, ... for their own profit and advantage cherish and
maintain the ignorance of the people (137).

From these examples, Rabelais and Erasmus make two different criticisms. First, they speak out
against the superstitious worship of saints, believing that they should be honored for the good
they have done in life, rather than for the miraculous powers given to them by man. Second, they
place the blame on the ecclesial elite rather than the common man for spreading these beliefs
among the people. In concluding his speech, Grandgousier leaves the pilgrims with a piece of
advice:

Allez-vous-en, pauvres gens, au nom de Dieu le créateur, qu’il vous ait à jamais
en sa garde. Et dorénavant ne vous laissez pas aller à ces voyages oiseux et
inutiles. Entretenez vos familles, travaillez chacun à votre métier, instruisez vos
enfants, et vivez comme vous l’enseigne le bon apôtre saint Paul. Ainsi, vous
aurez la protection de Dieu, des anges et des saintes avec vous, et il n’y aura ni
peste ni maladie que vous fasse du mal (Rabelais, Gargantua 352-353).

At the center of Grandgousier’s assertion lies the evangelist credence in the word of St. Paul. As
Paul states in 1 Timothy 5:8: “but if any provide not for his own and specially for those of his
own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (The Holy Bible 994). In the
eyes of Erasmus, the actions of the pilgrims, who left domestic responsibilities in search of
salvation, went against the teachings of St. Paul. This act would have been particularly
reprehensible to Erasmus, since he believed that St. Paul was a “living example of faith”
(Erasmus, Praise of Folly 89). In addition to informing the pilgrims that by leaving their homes
they are neglecting their household, thus, denying the faith, he informs them that by following
Paul’s example, they would have protection from God. Therefore, by the simple act of following Paul’s example, they would have no need to waste their time in trivial pursuits, such as traveling to other places, in order to protect themselves from harm.

Throughout *Gargantua*, Gargantua and his companions encounter several figures whose beliefs have led to the disfiguration of what Erasmus and Rabelais would have considered to be the true religion. Among their faults, these figures are unreasonable, adherents to external signs of piety, and insincere in their worship. In concluding his narrative, Rabelais presents to his readers a utopia, which he refers to as the Abbey of Thélème. Although still considered an abbey, Thélème is created on the basis of establishing a new Order, which will function in complete opposition of those that already exist. In Rabelais’ description of the Abbey, and its inhabitants, the Abbey of Thélème is presented as a utopia, since it is structured to prevent the abuses of the before mentioned figures. In this manner, the Abbey of Thélème represents the evangelical ideal. One of the most distinguishable features of the abbey is that it does not contain walls. Instead, everything is laid out in the open, which prevents, as Frère Jean puts it, “murmures, jalousie et complots mutuels” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 397). As Erasmus states in the *Enchiridion*, “... and how much the true godliness of a christian man is away from pride, and how far true charity is from all feigning and deceit: how much backbiting and slandering and venomousness of tongue is contrary to pure and true holiness” (24). In constructing his abbey without walls, Rabelais better prepares its inhabitants to live closer to Christ based on Erasmus’ teachings in the *Enchiridion*. The manner of dress of the inhabitants of the abbey also keeps

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23 In instructing the pilgrims to follow Paul’s example, Grandgousier instructs them to live by charity. As Erasmus explains in the *Enchiridion*, “Paul everywhere (as I have said) commendeth charity, but specially writing unto the Corynthes he preferreth charity before miracles and prophecies, and also before the tongues of angels. And say not thou by and by that charity is, to be oft at the church, to crouch down before the images of saints, to light tapers or wax candles, to say many lady psalters or Saint Katheryne’s knots. God hath no need of these things. Paul calleth charity to edify thy neighbor, to count that we all be members of one body, to think that we are all but one in Christ, to rejoice in God of thy neighbor’s wealth even as thou doest thy own, to remedy his incommodities or losses as thine own” (171).
them from jealousy. Although the dress of the inhabitants is described as rich, what’s important in the description is that all of the inhabitants are dressed in the same manner. In the *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus testifies to how differences in the manner of dress can cause factions within the religious community, when he states, “... these professors of apostolic charity will create extraordinary scenes and disturbances on account of a habit with another girdle, or one which is rather too dark in color” (97). By having all of the inhabitants dressed in a similar manner, men and women included, Rabelais prevents the “scenes and disturbances” described in the *Praise of Folly*. Furthermore, particular emphasis is placed on the fact that although the women and men dress the same, as a group, they may decide to change their dress “selon leur plaisir et leur libre choix” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 419). Freedom of choice, without set rules, is one of the founding principles of the Abbey of Thélème. By having the abbey’s inhabitants choose their own dress, without set regulations, Rabelais prevents, within his community, both corruption and vice.

Another key feature of the Abbey of Thélème is that its inhabitants do not follow rules. Instead, their actions are based on their inherent reason. As Rabelais states in *Gargantua*, “La plus grande chimère du monde était de se gouverner au son d’une cloche et non selon les préceptes du bon sens et de la raison” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 397), which is reinforced later when he writes of the conduct of the Abbey’s inhabitants, “Toute leur vie était ordonnée non selon des lois, des statuts ou des règles, mais selon leur bon vouloir et leur libre arbitre” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 424). Thus, for Rabelais, man’s actions should be regulated based on his good sense and reason, rather than through an external set of rules. The particular emphasis on this point stems from the fact that, as seen in earlier examples, external sources and figures can be

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24 “Mais la communauté d’inclinations était telle entre hommes et femmes que chaque jour ils étaient vêtus de la même parure...” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 423).
25 “If ye be led with the spirit, ye be not subject to the law” (Erasmus *Enchiridion* 96).
corruptive, since they fashion rules to meet their own needs. By creating a place where no rules are permitted, Rabelais further negates the possibility of corruption within his utopia. In establishing an abbey with no rules, Rabelais not only spares his inhabitants from the corruption of others, but also the corruption of themselves. This idea is based on Erasmus’ writings in the *Enchiridion*, when he states, “Walk (saith Paul) in the spirit, and ye shall not accomplish the desires and lusts of the flesh, for the flesh desireth contrary to the spirit, and the spirit contrary to the flesh” (96). In his transmission of this passage, Rabelais condemns rules, which he believes to be oppressive and constraining, to be a chief conductor of man towards vice. As Rabelais writes:

Ces gens-là, quand ils sont opprimés et asservis par une honteuse subjection et par la contrainte, détoune cette noble inclinaison par laquelle ils tendaient librement à la vertu, vers le rejelt et la violation du joug de servitude; car nous entreprenons toujours qui nous est interdit et nous convoitons ce qui nous est refusé

(*Gargantua* 425).

This citation shows that although Rabelais claims that man tends naturally towards virtue, he is not ignorant of the fact that man is also predisposed to vice. Thus, creating an abbey without rules also serves the same purpose as creating an abbey without walls, since when free from vice and corruption, man lives closer to Christ.26

Although the manner of living described in the Abbey of Thélème may be perceived to be beyond the bounds of possibility, perhaps Rabelais had a citation from the *Enchiridion* in mind when composing his description. In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus states: “... I propound and set forth afore every man that thing which is best and most perfect: unless ye would think Plato to have done injury against all cities because his book of the governing of a city or a

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26 Erasmus confirms this idea in the *Enchiridion*, when he states, “the reward of virtue is heaven” (249).
commonwealth as yet never any man could see” (22). Thus, by presenting the Abbey of Thélème as a utopia, Rabelais provided his reader with something to strive for, a way of life that would bring him closer to Christ. Although both Erasmus and Rabelais proposed to “set forth afore every man that thing which is best and most perfect” (Erasmus, Enchiridion 22), Rabelais’ approach differs from Erasmus’ in that he not only presents generic ideals, but within his narrative, he creates a space and inhabitants that reflect these ideals. Just as with Rabelais’ critique of religious figures, where he personifies the criticisms presented in the Enchiridion and Praise of Folly, the message sinks better into the reader’s consciousness, since the conduct of the inhabitants is used to relay the message. Readers, therefore, not only receive the message, but also see it demonstrated.

Following the teachings presented in the Enchiridion and the Praise of Folly by Desiderius Erasmus, this chapter has explored how Rabelais has transmitted evangelical ideology though the personification of both its criticisms and ideals. Like Erasmus, Rabelais criticized religious practices, including the cult of saints, pilgrimages, and relics. He also disagreed with the strict rules and mixed ideologies held by the monks and theologians of his time. In Gargantua, these practices and ideologies are exemplified through various characters, whose lack of reason is clearly displayed in their words and actions. In addition to attacking the enemies of evangelism, the direct expression of evangelistic ideology in Gargantua is presented through the description of the Abbey of Thélème and its inhabitants. In the next chapter, Rabelais’ evangelistic expression will continue to be studied by examining how Rabelais uses several narrative techniques to transmit to readers lessons on wisdom and truth. Rabelais’ narratives, therefore, are not just satirical, but they also provide readers with recommendations on how to live their lives.
CHAPTER III: PANTAGRUEL AND GARGANTUA: A LESSON ON WISDOM AND TRUTH

In Rabelais’ *Gargantua*, the narrator ends his prologue with an anecdote about the wise Démosthène, stating,

L’odeur du vin est ô combien plus friande, riante, priante, plus céleste et délicieuse que celle de l’huile! Et je serai aussi fier qu’on dise de moi que j’ai plus dépensé en vin qu’en huile, que l’était Démosthène quand on disait de lui qu’il dépensait plus en huile qu’en vin (41).

With this anecdote, the narrator testifies to his preference of wine over oil, favoring the enjoyment of life over the confines of the lamp. Although the narrator claims that the purpose of this citation is to caution the reader to, “[interprété] tous [s]es faits et dires en la meilleure part” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 43), he is actually providing his reader with a prelude to one of the key life lessons that is be found within his text. In this statement, the narrator conveys the lesson to enjoy life. The enjoyment of life is represented by the consumption of wine, and the oil, or lamp, represents study and work.

Although Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* are founded on a popular text, the *Chroniques*, they serve a greater purpose than to provide readers with entertainment. Hidden within the adventures of the giant lies instruction on how to live and approach life. Just as with the example in the prologue, however, Rabelais’ lessons do not always come across clearly. The reader, himself, must find the lesson within the otherwise popular tale. Just as the wine serves to represent enjoyment, and oil, the confines of work and study, the narrator testifies to the fact that
his text contains hidden lessons, when he states in the prologue, “Puis, par une lecture attentive et une méditation assidue, rompre l’os et sucer la substantifique moelle ... avec l’espoir assuré de devenir avisés et vaillants à cette lecture. Car vous y trouverez une bien autre saveur et une doctrine plus profonde...” (Rabelais, Gargantua 39). With this statement, the narrator asks his reader to be attentive in his reading, in order to find the doctrine, or lesson, hidden in the popular text.

This study has already presented and examined two of the lessons found within Pantagruel and Gargantua. In Pantagruel, for example, the manner in which Rabelais used popular protagonists to correct mistaken popular ideologies was studied, and in Gargantua, the way that Rabelais transcribed Erasmian evangelism was analyzed. In this chapter, the study of Pantagruel and Gargantua as instructional tools will be taken one step further, by showing how Rabelais employs several narrative techniques to transmit to readers lessons on wisdom and truth. The study will be based on Erasmus’ writings in the Praise of Folly, where he speaks of the mishaps of those who seek wisdom by denying the truth.

Rabelais transmits Erasmus’ lessons on wisdom and truth through the words and actions of his popularized characters. This unique approach to instruction requires the reader to engage with the text, in order to find the moral within the story. The act of deciphering the text thus becomes part of the lesson. Although the message may not always come across as readily apparent, by conveying the lessons in this manner, Rabelais better prepares his reader to take what he has learned and apply it to their life, for even life can be considered a sort of fiction.27

In the Praise of Folly, Erasmus writes, “... happiness consists in being willing to be who you are ...” (36), and he expounds on this moral by stating, “Nothing is so foolish as

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27 “To destroy the illusion is to ruin the whole play, for it’s really the illusion and make-up which hold the audience’s eye. Now, what else is the whole life of man but a sort of play?” (Erasmus, Praise of Folly 44)
misesteemed wisdom, and nothing less sensible than misplaced sense” (45). In *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, Rabelais transmits this lesson by presenting readers with two characters whose attempts to be what they are not end in both failure and ridicule. In *Pantagruel* this message is relayed through Pantagruel’s encounter with the student from Limousin. The student from Limousin is different than other characters in the narrative, because he is both introduced and dismissed in one episode. His presence within the text thus serves to transmit one of Rabelais’ moral messages, and nothing more.

In the narrative, Pantagruel and his companions happen upon a young student outside of Paris. When Pantagruel asks him where he is from, the student replies that he is from Lutèce. After many more questions, Pantagruel learns that by Lutèce, the student actually means Paris, but in reality, he comes from neither, for he is actually from Limousin. The student not only misrepresents his origins, but also his religious faith, by first describing how he and his friends sleep with prostitutes, before claiming that he is a good Christian. An additional error of the student is his misuse of the Latin language, which is conveyed through his attempt to copy the language spoken by the Parisians. Thus, through this one character, Rabelais presents three different examples of someone attempting to be someone who he is not.

In order to illustrate to readers the error in misrepresenting oneself, Rabelais employs his popular protagonists. When Pantagruel asks what Lutèce is, for example, one of Pantagruel’s companions steps in and states that Lutèce is Paris. In addition, when Pantagruel asks what

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28 Even in the student’s description of how he is a good Christian, there is error, since his practices do not represent pure piety. In the student’s description, he states, “... dès que point la première lumière du jour, je m’en vais dans un de ces beaux monastères, et là, m’aspergeant de la belle eau purificatrice, grignote un morceau de quelque prière du sacrifice de la messe. Et, marmottant mes prières du jour, je lave et nettoie mon âme de ses souillures nocturnes. Je révère les êtres célestes. Je vénère avec latrie le Dieu suprême tout puissant sur les astres. J’aime et aide mon prochain. Je respecte les dix commandements, et selon mes forces hélas trop limitées, je ne m’en éloigne pas d’un iota” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 73). From this example, we see that the student considers external devotion to be representative of piety. By simply going to church, washing himself with holy water, and murmuring prayers, he believes that his prior sins are absolved.
language the student is speaking, one of his companions says, “Seigneur, sans nul doute, ce
galant veut imiter la langue des Parisiens; mais il ne fait qu’écortcher le latin, et il croit ainsi faire
du bon style, il lui semble qu’il est quelque grand orateur en français parce qu’il dédaigne
l’usage de la langue courante” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 73). Finally, when Pantagruel asks the
student, once again, where he is from, he confesses that he is from Limousin. In reply,
Pantagruel states, “…tu es limougeau, pas plus. Et tu veux ici contrefaire le Parisien” (Rabelais,
*Pantagruel* 75). Although, at the end of the episode, it appears as though the lesson centers on
the misuse of language, the multiple faults described within this section indicate that the
message goes deeper than this.

In fact, Rabelais takes on a multi-tiered approach when conveying the message not to
misrepresent oneself. Although three faults are listed, language, origin, and religion, language
remains the focus. Origin follows, with two brief mentions by the protagonists, and religion is
last, with no extra dialogue used to convey this error. The approach by Rabelais is multi-tiered,
since he clearly calls to the reader’s attention the error of misusing the language, but it is the
reader’s job to make the association between this error and the others. Rabelais’ approach is
therefore unique, since he provides one piece of his intended message, and requires the reader to
construct the rest following the model he has provided.

In *Gargantua*, Rabelais reminds readers of the lesson he presents in *Pantagruel*. The
message comes through more discretely, but it is presented by a character who is very similar to
the student from Limousin: Master Janotus de Braquemardo. In the narrative, the Faculty of
Theology sends Master Janotus de Braquemardo to regain the bells that Gargantua stole from

29 “Et après quelques années il [the student from Limousin] mourut de la mort de Roland, la gorge rompue, selon
une vengeance divine, qui nous démontre ce que disent le Philosophe et Aulu-Gelle: qu’il nous convient de parler
selon le langage usité, et comme disait César, qu’il faut éviter les mots sans signification avec le même zèle que les
patrons de navire évitent les rochers de la mer” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 75).
Notre Dame. Readers of Pantagruel will recognize the similarities between the student from Limousin and Master Janotus due to the character’s misuse of the Latin language and the fact that these characters only appear once in their respective narratives. In addition, like the student from Limousin’s message, Janotus’ is hidden within his speech, and it is up to the reader to put the pieces together for himself. Within his long speech, Master Janotus makes the following statement, “Sur mon âme, j’ai connu un temps où je faisais merveille dans l’argumentation; mais à présent ne fais plus que rêver; il ne me faut plus désormais que du bon vin, un bon lit, le dos à la cheminée, le ventre à table et l’écuelle bien profonde” (Rabelais, Gargantua 163). With this statement, Janotus claims that he is no longer an orator, preferring, instead, to stay at home. Yet, in the episode, an orator is exactly what Janotus is attempting to be.30

Janotus’ attempts to be an orator are illustrated by his efforts to follow the traditional rules of rhetoric. Among his rhetorical techniques, Janotus employs syllogisms, popular anecdotes, jokes, and even attempts to reference the Holy Gospel, in order to give his speech more substance, and for it to have a greater influence on Gargantua and his companions.31 Master Janotus’ confession that he prefers to stay at home, however, testifies to the fact that he is not an orator. This confession stands out from the rest of the rhetorical babble due to its sincere tone and nature. Because of its sincerity, Janotus’ confession to not be an orator is the only candid statement made within the speech.

30 The fact that Janotus is not an orator is also confirmed by Rabelais when opening the episode, when he states, “Et malgré la remarque de certains universitaires qui alléguaien que cette mission eût mieux convenu à un orateur qu’à un théologien, on choisit pour cette affaire notre maître Janotus de Braquemardo” (Gargantua 154-155).
31 In the Praise of Folly, Erasmus makes note the traditional rules, and is thus used as a reference. Erasmus is used as a point of reference, since his text explicitly relays these rules to the reader: “It’s quite absurd but highly enjoyable to see them observe the traditional rules of rhetoric... by way of an exposition, they offer no more than a hasty interpretation from the passage from the gospel as an aside...then they let fly at the ignorant crowd their syllogisms...they trot out some foolish popular anecdote...last of all, they’ve learned that the writers on rhetoric mention laughter, and so they are at pains to scatter around a few jokes” (99-104). Since Erasmus is also a sixteenth century writer, from his writings, we get a better sense of what was considered to be “traditional rules” in the sixteenth century, rather than looking to ancient writers on speech and rhetoric.
The candor of Janotus’ confession is the means by which Rabelais’ transmits his lesson in this particular episode. By transmitting Janotus’ claim in a sincere manner, Rabelais attracts attention to this statement, particularly since it stands out from the nonsensical banter of the rest of the speech. The phrase, “sur mon âme” (Rabelais, Gargantua 163), serves to illustrate the candor of Janotus’ citation, since the soul is something that is sacred, inward, and spiritual.32 This phrase also sets the citation off from the rest of the speech, which is filled with external and impious references. By setting this key statement apart from the rest of the passage, Rabelais highlights to readers, in an indirect manner, the lesson that he wishes to convey of not attempting to be someone you are not.

Rabelais’ lesson to readers to not attempt to be who they are not does not end with the example of the student from Limousin and Master Janotus. For he also presents an alternative manner of living. The alternative that Rabelais presents is that man should accept his fate and who they are, and in turn, find pleasure in life. This lesson is adapted from Erasmus’ Praise of Folly, when Folly states, “A man’s conduct is misplaced if he doesn’t adapt himself to things as they are, has no eye for the main chance, won’t even remember that conventional maxim ‘drink or depart’... (45). In Pantagruel, Rabelais transmits Erasmus’ message through the example of Pantagruel’s father, Gargantua. The lesson is conveyed when Gargantua’s wife dies after giving birth to her son. Gargantua is not sure how to react to the situation. He wants to cry, for the death of his wife, but at the same time feels joy, and wishes to laugh in response to the birth of his son. He first attempts to resolve the problem through a syllogism, yet finds no relief.33 When hearing

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32 The soul was of particular importance to evangelists, such as Erasmus, who believed the soul to be part of the invisible world, which belonged to God: “Then let us imagine man as a certain third world, partaker of both the other: of the visible world if thou behold his body, of the invisible world if thou consider his soul” (Enchiridion 139); “God is a spirit and is moved and stirred with invisible sacrifice” (Erasmus, Enchiridion 177).

33 “Pour l’un et l’autre, il avait assez d’arguments sophistiques qui le suffoquaient, car il les formulate très bien en forme de syllogismes, mais il ne pouvait les résoudre. Et par cette méthode, il demeurait empêtré comme un Milan pris au lancet” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 51).
the litany and prayers of the funeral procession, Gargantua is suddenly “...emporté ailleurs...” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 53), and it is in this moment where he comes to his final resolve, “...il faut pleurer moins et boire plus...” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 53). Gargantua’s rationale for this decision is that his wife “...est au moins en Paradis, si non mieux...” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 53), and no longer has to worry about human worries or tragedies. Thus, faced with an unfortunate event, Gargantua “adapt[s] himself to things as they are” (Erasmus, *Praise of Folly* 45), recognizing that he can do nothing about what has happened, resolving, instead, to drink and eventually remarry. What occurs after this resolution, however, is even more surprising, since, instead of attending his wife’s funeral, Gargantua sends his wife’s midwives to attend in his place. The paradoxical composition, described above, adds to Rabelais’ unique approach to instruction.

The transmission of the lesson is paradoxical since Gargantua’s decision is “... contrary to commonly accepted opinion” (“paradox”). Common opinion, for example, would believe it necessary for a widower to mourn his wife’s death and attend her funeral. Gargantua, however, does not. It requires an engaged reader to find Rabelais’ message hidden within what appears to be the description of an irresponsible husband. What matters most in this passage is not Gargantua’s refusal, but what he intends to do instead. Not only does he resolve to drink wine and remarry, but also to cradle his son, instead of going to his wife’s funeral. These examples show multiple accounts of Gargantua’s resolution to adapt to life’s circumstances. Instead of clearly relaying this lesson, however, Rabelais introduces a paradoxical situation in his text in order to bring this passage to the reader’s attention. Once his attention is attained, it is up to the reader to discover the lesson, and see for himself the benefit of adapting to life’s difficulties rather than to remain sorrowful.

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34 This particular event also has its source in Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly*, “Or again, he might tell someone else who is mourning his father to laugh, because the dead man is just beginning to live, seeing that this life of ours is nothing but a sort of death” (45).
A similar example is presented in *Gargantua*, but instead of the message being conveyed through the intermediary of one of the giants, it is instead transmitted through the character of the narrator. In the episode, the narrator introduces Gargantua’s genealogy by first referring readers back to *Pantagruel*. In reflecting on genealogies and origins, the narrator speaks of his own lineage, citing that he believes that he must have descended from some rich king or prince from an earlier time, since the reader has never seen anyone having a greater desire to be both a king and wealthy.\(^{35}\) Here, the link between this episode and the episode in *Pantagruel* describing Gargantua’s wife’s death is clearly conveyed. The narrator states:

Mais je me console en pensant que dans l’autre monde je le serai, et même plus grand que je le serais actuellement. Pour vous, consoles-vous de votre malheur à cette pensée ou mieux si vous pouvez, et buvez frais, si c’est possible (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 47).

The lesson that Rabelais is attempting to convey here is to take life as it is and accept who you are. Although not a great king or prince, the narrator accepts his current situation. He consoles himself by stating that although there is nothing that he can do to change his fate in this life, he knows that after death he will be greater than he is now.

In order to relay this message, the narrator highlights the passage to the reader in a very direct manner. Before making the earlier mentioned citation, which contains the lesson, the narrator states: “Et, pour vous faire comprendre mon cas, moi qui vous parle...” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 47). In this example, the narrator not only invokes the reader, but he also insists on

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\(^{35}\) The purpose of the narrator’s statement is linked to an earlier argument, when he states, “Je crois qu’il y a aujourd’hui beaucoup d’emperors, de rois, de ducs, de princes et de papes ici-bas, qui descendent de quelques porteurs de reliquailles et de hottes, et qu’à l’inverse nombreux sont les gueux de l’hospice, souffreteux et misérables, qui descendent du sang et de la lignée de grands rois et empereurs” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 45-47). This argument also has its source in the *Praise of Folly*, when Erasmus writes, when speaking of ancestry, “Another man who boasts of his ancestry he might call low-born and bastard because he is so far removed from virtue, which is the sole source of nobility” (45).
the fact that he is speaking to him directly with the statement, “... moi qui vous parle” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 47). By first invoking the reader, thus employing what Genette refers to as the communication function of the narrator, the lesson is relayed more efficiently.

Just as with the example in *Pantagruel*, Rabelais uses a paradoxical approach in transmitting his lesson in *Gargantua*. The paradox in *Gargantua*, however, has a different significance than in the earlier narrative. In *Gargantua*, the paradox is conveyed as a “statement or proposition that seems self-contrary or absurd, but in reality expresses a possible truth” (“paradox”). The truth that Rabelais is attempting to relay can be found in the previously cited statement, where the narrator tells the reader that he consoles himself by accepting his current situation. This truth can easily be interpreted as comical or absurd, however, since Rabelais juxtaposes it with the narrator’s farcical description of how he believes he is a descendant of some great king. In juxtaposing a comical statement with his lesson, Rabelais’ intended message of accepting who you are can easily be interpreted as a farcical addition to the previous statement. The paradoxical nature of this scene requires a discerning reader to find the truth within the absurdity, which adds to the uniqueness of Rabelais’ instructional approach.

In addition to using a paradoxical approach to transmit the lesson to take life as it is and accept one’s place or destiny, Rabelais adds on to this lesson by having both Gargantua in *Pantagruel* and the narrator in *Gargantua* reference wine. The reference to wine, in both narratives, carries significance. Erasmus makes note of the maxim “drink or depart” (45) in the *Praise of Folly*, and Rabelais transmits this same idea in his narrative. In both *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, “drink or depart” (Erasmus, *Praise of Folly* 45), is communicated by the

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36 “The function that concerns the narrator’s orientation towards the narratee-present, absent, or implied—and the narrator” (Genette *Narrative Discourse* 255).

37 Wine plays a significant role in all of Rabelais’ narratives, but particularly in the *Tiers livre* and *Cinquième livre*, where the characters search for the *dive bouteille*. 
protagonist’s resolve to drink wine, and serves as a reference for the reader to not only accept who he is, but also to enjoy his life on earth by not taking life too seriously.

The manner in which Rabelais relays this message differs in both *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*. In *Pantagruel*, for example, the message is presented as a maxim, through the use of the pronoun “il”. As Rabelais writes: “...il vaut mieux pleurer moins et boire plus” (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 53). The universality of this message is expressed through the impersonal pronoun “il,” which separates it from the rest of the passage that is primarily conveyed through “je”, “me”, and “elle”. In *Gargantua*, the message is conveyed in a much more direct manner. Just as the narrator directly invokes the reader before relaying his overall lesson, he directly addresses the reader when transmitting his message to enjoy life. As the narrator states: “Pour vous, consolez-vous de votre malheur à cette pensée ou mieux si vous pouvez, et buvez frais, si c’est possible” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 47). With this example, the narrator places extra emphasis on “vous” when relaying his message. The emphasis on “vous” calls to the reader’s attention that the narrator is referring directly to him when making this statement, which makes the instructional intent of this message much clearer.

It requires a discerning reader to find the hidden moral within the otherwise popular texts, and to realize that Rabelais wrote such passages to instruct readers to accept their reality. As Erasmus writes, “...happiness consists in being willing to be who you are...” (*Praise of Folly* 36), and pure wisdom comes from accepting this truth. On the contrary, foolishness is defined as rejecting who you are, in the aim of becoming someone you are not. Above all, Rabelais reminds

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38 “Elle” in the passage explicitly references Gargantua’s deceased wife.
his readers to enjoy their time on earth, since, as Rabelais relays in his prologue, it is better to spend one’s money on wine than on oil.39

In continuing with his message to not take life too seriously, Rabelais instructs readers not to devote too much of their time to studies, but to take time to enjoy life as well. The narrator first relays this message in Pantagruel, when he presents two brief summaries of Pantagruel’s education. The narrator first states, “Pantagruel étudiait fort bien, comme vous l’avez parfaitement compris, et profitait de même” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 85), and later states, “Pantagruel, quelque jour, pour se récréer de son étude...” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 149). In these examples, recreation is not only juxtaposed with learning, but is also given equal weight. In this way, Pantagruel’s education avoids Erasmus’ warning in the Praise of Folly, when he states, “...a man who has frittered away all his boyhood and youth in acquiring learning, has lost the happiest part of his life in endless wakeful nights, toil, and care, and never tastes a drop of pleasure even in what’s left to him” (57). Although briefly mentioned in Pantagruel, this message becomes the central focus of a large portion of Gargantua.

In Gargantua, Rabelais continues with his adaptation of Erasmus’ message, but this time, it is conveyed in much greater detail. Whereas in Pantagruel, Rabelais simply places study and leisure side by side in a statement, in Gargantua he shows readers, first-hand, the detriment of spending one’s life in books without taking time for pleasure. In Gargantua, Grandgousier wishes to provide his son, Gargantua, with the best education, as he has already shown natural intelligence.40 In doing so, Grandgousier hires a theologian to instruct his son. Gargantua’s

39 “L’odeur du vin est ô combien plus friande, riante, priante, plus céleste et délicieuse que celle de l’huile! Et je serai aussi fier qu’on dise de moi que j’ai plus dépensé en vin qu’en huile, que l’était Démosthène quand on disait de lui qu’il dépensait plus en huile qu’en vin” (Rabelais Gargantua, 41).
40 The natural intelligence of the young Gargantua is illustrated in the episode prior where, “à force d’experimentation” (Rabelais, Gargantua 121) Gargantua discovers the best material to wipe himself. This example is considered ironic, since the perverse goal of Gargantua overshadows the intended meaning, which is, intelligence is to be obtained through reasoning and experimentation.
education consists of reading, memorization, and rewriting the books studied. The effects of this kind of education on the giant are reflected in his description. Before, Gargantua was described as “aiguë, subtile, profonde et sereine” (Rabelais, Gargantua 133), but after his education he becomes “fou, niais, tout ahuri et radoteur” (Rabelais, Gargantua 137). The detriment of this form of study is also emphasized later in the passage, when Don Philippe de Marais\footnote{Not much description is provided on Don Philippe, apart that he is the “vice-roi de Papeligosse” (Rabelais, Gargantua 137). His opinion on education, however, is authoritative since his page, Eudémon, in being elegant, bright, and well mannered, exemplifies the effects of a humanist education.} makes the following statement to Gargantua,

\[\text{…il vaudrait mieux qu’il n’apprenne rien plutôt que d’apprendre de tels livres sous de tels précepteurs; car leur savoir n’était que sottise, et leur science que niaiseries, abâtardissant les esprits bons et droits et corrompant la plus belle jeunesse (Rabelais, Gargantua 137).}\]

With this statement, Erasmus’ teaching in the Praise of Folly is directly reflected, where, by spending one’s youth in acquiring learning, one loses pleasure in life. Once Gargantua receives a suitable education, however, the narrator states that his demeanor changes.

The description of Gargantua’s second education is long and detailed. Reflection; finding practical applications from what is being read; a variety of activities for both body and mind; and a differentiated schedule, where the same activities are not performed every day for the same amount of time, are key features of the education. The effects of this manner of education are reflected at the end of the episode, where the narrator states, “C’est ainsi que fut élevé Gargantua; il continua ainsi jour après jour ... apparemment difficile au début, elle se révéla par la suite si douce, légère et plaisante qu’on eût plutôt dit un divertissement de roi que l’apprentissage d’un étudiant” (Rabelais, Gargantua 207). This passage illustrates that the utility and variety of Gargantua’s lessons have brought him back to his former self, saving him from the
corruption and joyless life of a scholar. Rabelais is sure to inform his readers, however, that Gargantua’s education, though full of variety, is not so regimented, for, just after the prior statement, the narrator states, “Toutefois Ponocrates, pour le distraire de cette tension mentale choisissait une fois par mois une journée bien claire et douce pour quitter la ville...” (Gargantua 207). From this statement, Rabelais attests to the importance of taking a break from one’s studies, and to follow the example of Gargantua and his pedagogue, taking a break, from time to time, “à rire, à s’amuser, à boire à qui mieux mieux, à jouer chanter, danser...,” (Rabelais, Gargantua 207) etc. By illustrating to readers the necessity to take a break from one’s studies, Rabelais reinforces his earlier message not to take life too seriously.

Rabelais’ method of instructing readers in the passage that describes Gargantua’s education is not transmitted through use of a rhetorical device, but instead through the function of the narrator. In describing Gargantua’s education, the narrator intervenes in order to provide his own evaluation of Gargantua’s progress and what he has learned. What is unique about Rabelais’ instructional approach, in this case, is that the intervention by the narrator is not readily apparent. Instead, it is hidden within the long, enumerated description of Gargantua’s education, which makes it difficult to detect. When relaying how Gargantua, after getting dressed, repeats his lessons from earlier that morning, for example, the narrator states, “Lui-même les récitait par cœur et en tirant de quelques conclusions pratiques sur la condition humaine...” (Rabelais, Gargantua 191). In addition, when speaking of how Gargantua played cards in order to learn arithmetic, the narrator says, “À force, il devient si savant en cette discipline, aussi bien théorique que pratique...” (Rabelais, Gargantua 193). Furthermore, “Pendant le repas on continuait la leçon du dîner autant qu’il semblait bon; le reste du temps se passait en bons propos érudits et utiles” (Rabelais, Gargantua 201). These citations present only a few examples of the
narrator’s intervention within the description. In each case, the narrator intervenes in order to state that Gargantua’s studies are both practical and useful. The insistence on the practicality and usefulness of Gargantua’s studies ties the long description together. Since Gargantua’s education can be interpreted as idealistic, due to the many educational activities he is described as performing every day, the narrator’s insistence on the practicality and utility of these activities takes the example from idealistic to practicable, and provides readers with a lesson on education they can follow in their own lives.

In the descriptions of Pantagruel and Gargantua’s education, Rabelais also defines true wisdom. True wisdom does not only come from books, but also from experiencing life. As Erasmus relays in the Praise of Folly, “First of all, if prudence develops through experience, does the honor of possessing a claim to it rightly belong to the wise man who attempts nothing ...?” (43). Rabelais illustrates this point through the description of his protagonists’ education. In Pantagruel, for example, in addition to the summaries presented above, which grant studying and pleasure equal weight, Pantagruel is described as travelling around France, going from university to university, where he attempts to get the most out of what each has to offer. Pantagruel attends, for example, the universities of Poitiers, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Montpellier, Avignon, Valence, Angers, Bourges, Orléans, and Paris; where he not only participates in recreational activities with his fellow students, but also studies medicine and law. In Gargantua, this message is conveyed in the description of Gargantua’s second education, where Rabelais highlights the variety of activities performed by Gargantua each day. If true wisdom comes from.

42 In the description of Gargantua’s education, Rabelais claims that he, among many other activities: reads the scripture; studies astronomy; plays games; discusses the human condition; talks about the nature and virtue of the food served at the table; prays; learns about all of the branches of mathematics; sings; plays instruments; practices equitation; swims; and all the while re-recites his lessons from earlier that day. Although the description is long, it is meant to be an idealistic approach to education rather than a practical approach. It is because of the length of Gargantua’s education that Rabelais’ main lesson on the practicality and utility of education becomes significant, because this lesson stands out as the common thread that links together the remaining description.
experience, Rabelais also insists that it is important to keep in mind not to hurry through life and its lessons, but instead to take time to reflect on what has been learned. This point is illustrated in the description of Gargantua’s education, where Gargantua continually re-recites his earlier lessons. With this description, a new lesson begins to emerge in Rabelais’ writing, which is: do not do things hurriedly, but use reason and take time to reflect.

Rabelais transmits his new lesson in the war episodes of each of his narratives. Although this lesson is conveyed through the military decisions of his characters, it serves a greater purpose than to demystify war, for it also provides readers with precepts regarding daily life. Just as with the previous lesson, this lesson is briefly introduced in Pantagruel before becoming expounded in Gargantua. It is also in Gargantua, where the utility of the message in regards to daily life becomes more prominent.

In Pantagruel, Pantagruel and his companions’ diligence before proceeding into battle is clearly conveyed. For example, after travelling home to Utopia, in order to defend his territory, Pantagruel and his companions first stop to refresh themselves before engaging in battle. Thus, instead of rushing into battle, Pantagruel and his companions first take the time to recover from their long journey. The diligence of the protagonists is further reinforced when Pantagruel makes the following statement, “Enfants, la ville n’est pas loin, il serait bon de tenir conseil sur ce qu’il faut faire, afin que nous ne soyons pas comme les Athéniens qui ne consultaient jamais, sinon après que l’acte est fait” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 225). With this statement, Pantagruel attests to the importance of taking one’s time, to reflect and consult, before engaging in action.

Consequently, the enemy in Pantagruel is described as taking the exact opposite approach, acting, instead of drawing on prior contemplation. This idea is first introduced when

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43 Gargantua is described as re-reciting his lessons several times during the day in the description of his education, including, when he is getting dressed, during lunch, while diner is being prepared, and before going to bed.
describing how the enemy, after hearing of Gargantua’s death, invades Gargantua and Pantagruel’s territory. In the description, no reason is provided for why the enemy decided to act in this manner,\textsuperscript{44} which allows for the assumption that they did not think this act through or that they acted on the belief that the absence of the king makes the state more vulnerable. The lack of reflection, on the enemy’s part, is also illustrated later in the narrative, when an enemy soldier returns to his king after being released by Pantagruel and his comrades. Before releasing the prisoner, Pantagruel first gives him a box full of euphorbia and “baies de Cnide” (Rabelais,\textit{ Pantagruel} 251),\textsuperscript{45} telling him that by eating an ounce, without drinking, that he will be able to resist Pantagruel and his army without fear. The soldier hands the box to his king, and the king consumes its contents, which results in a violent physical reaction. The captains, pashas and guardsmen, who witnessed this event, next try the drugs for themselves in order to see if they would have the same effect, which, in fact, they do. What’s interesting about this example is, not only did the king not take time to reflect on the contents of the package before consuming it, but he also never asked his soldier what was in the box. This irrational and unreflective action by the king resulted in harsh physical consequences. At the same time, the irrationality of the army as a whole is illustrated when the soldiers try the drug for themselves, in order to see if it has the same effect. Rabelais conveys his message of not doing things hurriedly, but suggests, instead, that one takes time to reflect, in much the same manner as he does in his lesson with those who attempt to be who they are not. Just as the student from Limousin and Master Janotus’ attempts

\textsuperscript{44} “Peu de temps après, Pantagruel apprit des nouvelles: son père Gargantua avait été transporté au pays des fées par Morgane, comme jadis Énoch et Elie; quand cela s’était su, les Dipsodes étaient sortis de leurs frontières et avaient dévasté un grand morceau de l’Utopie...” (Rabelais, \textit{Pantagruel} 217).

\textsuperscript{45} “Euphorbia is a genus of plants belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae ... Member of the family and genus are sometimes referred to as Spurges ... The common name “spurge” derives from the Middle English/Old French \textit{espurge} (“to purge”), due to the use of the plants sap as a purgative” (“euphorbia”). Les baies de Cnide sont de violents vomitifs” (Rabelais, \textit{Pantagruel} 251)
to be wiser than they are result in ridicule and failure, the result of the enemy’s haste is their illness. Pantagruel and his companions’ well thought out plan, however, ends in victory.

The lesson in this episode, which instructs readers to not do things hurriedly but use reason and take time to reflect, is highlighted to readers by means of the directing function of the narrator. In the episode, the narrator interrupts his narration to both introduce the scene and to close the scene. In introducing the scene, for example, the narrator states: “Mais laissez ici Pantagruel avec ses Apôtres. Et parlons du roi Anarche et de son armée” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 253) and to close the scene: “Or maintenant, retournons au bon Pantagruel, et racontons comment il se comporta en cette affaire” (Rabelais, Pantagruel 255). The framing of this scene, through the directing function of the narrator, sets it apart from the rest of the narration. Furthermore, by use of the nous form of the imperative, the narrator not only invites the reader to depart, with him, the narrative at hand and enter into another sequence, but also with the verb parler, he invites them to discuss the passage. The use of the verb parler stands in opposition to the verb raconter, used at the end of the passage, whose meaning relates more to the act of telling rather than conversing. Not only does the narrator, thus, explicitly state when the scene is beginning and when it is coming to a close, but in introducing the passage, he also invites them to discuss it.

In Gargantua, Rabelais reiterates his lesson in Pantagruel, but with his second narrative, the enemy’s haste and lack of reflection are further emphasized in order to give the lesson greater impact. In Gargantua, the war between Grandgousier and Pichrochole is caused when the fouaciers refuse to sell their fouaces to the shepherds. An altercation ensues in which one of the bakers and one of the shepherds is injured. The shepherds are victorious in the end, but instead of taking the coveted fouaces from the fouaciers, they pay for them at a fair market price. The

46 “La fouace est une sorte de brioche, toujours fabriquée dans l’ouest de la France” (Rabelais, Gargantua 211).
episode ends with the *fouaciers* fleeing the scene, and the shepherds enjoying their *fouaces*. The purpose of summarizing this particular scene is to highlight the foolish grounds on which the war between Grandgousier and Pichrocholle is based. After fleeing the scene, the *fouaciers* go straight to Pichrocholle, without, as Rabelais puts it, first stopping to eat or drink,\(^{47}\) in order to complain about the shepherds. The significance of this citation lies in the mention that the *fouaciers* did not first stop to eat or drink before meeting with the king. What Rabelais implies by this is that they did not take the time to reflect over what had just happened before going to the king\(^{48}\). If the *fouaciers* had taken the opportunity to reflect over the day’s events, perhaps they would have seen, as the reader was sure to have, the frivolousness of what happened, and that in fact, it was their fault, not the shepherds’, that any altercation took place in the first place.

The consequence of their decision is that the *fouaciers* meet with an even more unreasonable and unreflective king, as Rabelais writes, “Picrocholle aussitôt entra en un furieux courroux, et sans plus s’enquérir du quoi ni comment, fit proclamer par tout son pays le ban et l’arrière ban, tout le monde, sous peine de la potence, devait se réunir devant le château à l’heure de midi” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 217). From the example of Picrocholle, Rabelais describes a king who allows his emotions take the place of his reason. Both he and the *fouaciers* let their anger overtake their reason, leading to a war, which never should have taken place in the first place. From this example, one of Erasmus’ lessons in the *Praise of Folly* is expressed, when Erasmus writes, “First of all, it’s admitted that all the emotions belong to Folly, and this is what marks the wise man off from the fool; he is ruled by his reason, the fool by his emotions” (Erasmus, *Praise of Folly* 45). Rabelais transmits Erasmus’ message by having the enemy in each of his narratives

\(^{47}\)“De retour à Lerné, les fouaciers, avant même de boire et de manger, se rendirent aussitôt au Capitole...” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 217)

\(^{48}\)This scene also contrasts the scene presented in *Pantagruel* where Pantagruel and his companions stop and refresh themselves before engaging in battle.
take on the role of the fool, by having their emotions lead them to the unreasonable conclusion to go to war with the protagonists, rather than stopping to consider the consequences. By letting his anger take over in place of reason, for example, Picrochole acts foolishly by waging war on Grandgousier.

Although Rabelais highlights the foolishness of the enemy, he also calls attention to the wisdom of his protagonists. Rabelais transmits this wisdom through his protagonists’ carefully thought out actions, which, in reading the narratives, stands in direct contrast to the foolishness of the enemy. When Grandgousier hears the news that his lands are being attacked by Picrochole, for example, instead of acting in haste, he takes time to reflect on the situation, stating, “... je n’entreprendrai point la guerre sans avoir exploré toutes les voies et moyens de la paix; c’est cela que je me résous” (Rabelais, Gargantua 239). In keeping with his word, Grandgousier first meets with his counsel before sending one of his men to meet with Picrochole, in order to understand why he lost his calm so suddenly.49

In the episode where Grandgousier sends one of his men to speak to Picrochole, the universality of Rabelais’ lesson is more clearly conveyed. Not doing things hurriedly, but using reason and taking time to reflect, goes beyond its military significance and expands to a general precept on how to live life. Although the speech made by Grandgousier’s man, Ulrich Gallet,50

49 In Pantagruel and Gargantua, the manner in which the protagonists act follow Erasmus’ recommendation in the Enchiridion. As Erasmus writes, “In the second circle all temporal and lay princes, which in keeping war and making laws, after a certain manner do service to Christ, either when with rightful battle they drive away their enemies and defend and maintain the public peace and tranquility of the commonwealth ... lest they should make sometimes war for their own pleasure, and not for the commonwealth...” (16). In both of Rabelais’ narratives, the enemies act in their own interests, invading Pantagruel and Gargantua’s territories without prior contemplation. The protagonists, on the other hand, act in the interest of their countrymen, attempting to find peaceful means and only engaging in war for defense.

50 In Gallet’s characterization, he is described as a wise man, “...homme sage et avisé, dont [Grandgousier] avait reconnu les qualités et le bon conseil en plusieurs affaires litigieuses” (Rabelais, Gargantua 245). In this description, the lesson presented in Pantagruel and Gargantua’s education is reiterated, where true wisdom comes not only from books, but also from experience. Grandgousier considers Gallet wise, not because of his education, but because he has proved himself to be during several litigations.
serves, in the narrative, as a plea to Picrochole, several principles concerning reflection and reason are found within the speech. The first principle included by Gallet is:

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\text{Toute chose connaît son apogée et sa fin. Et quand on est arrivé à son point le plus haut, on est précipité à bas, car on ne peut pas demeurer longtemps en cet état. C’est la destinée de ceux qui ne savent pas tempérer leur fortune et leur prospérité par la raison et la sagesse (Rabelais, } Gargantua \text{ 251).}
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The second principle is, “...il n’y a rien de saint ni de sacré pour ceux qui se sont affranchis de Dieu et de la Raison pour suivre leurs passions perverses” (Rabelais, \textit{Gargantua} 251). From these two examples, it is clear that Gallet’s speech serves to instruct, by speaking out against those who are unable to moderate what they have been provided and who, instead of acting reasonably, follow their perverse passions. The link that unites both of these messages is the use of reason when managing life. As Erasmus writes: “In man reason beareth the room of a king” (\textit{Enchiridion} 84), speaking of the importance of reason in the life of man. Unfortunately, however, for most men, “… the affections or appetites of the body strive to go against reason…” (Erasmus, \textit{Enchiridion} 83). By including these statements within Gallet’s speech, Rabelais reiterates Erasmus’ teachings by warning man to place reason over their passions.

In conveying his lesson, quoted above, Rabelais sets these statements apart from the rest of his speech. The manner in which he does this is through the use of the indefinite pronoun \textit{on} and the demonstrative pronoun \textit{ceux}. The use of these pronouns stands apart, since in the rest of the speech, Picrochole is addressed as \textit{tu}. These examples show how Rabelais, through the use of an indefinite and demonstrative pronoun in Gallet’s speech, is able to convey a direct moral lesson to readers within his popular narrative. The use of these pronouns separates the moral from the rest of the text and makes the lesson more universal.
Within the moral lesson presented by Gallet, lies the instruction not to withdraw from God. In both *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, the development of this message is expressed through the example of Rabelais’ protagonists, who, instead of withdrawing from God, ask for His aid in prayer when faced with difficult situations. In *Pantagruel*, the most notable example takes place just before Pantagruel’s battle with Loup-Garou. The prayer is emphasized within the text, for the action stops to allow for its transmission. As Pantagruel states,

Seigneur Dieu qui a toujours été mon protecteur et mon saveur, tu vois la détresse en laquelle je suis maintenant. Rien ne m’amène ici que le zèle naturel que tu as donné aux humains de garder de defender eux, leurs femmes, enfants, pays et famille, là où ne serait pas en jeu ta cause propre qui est la foi ... tu es le Tout-Puissant, qui, dans tes affaires propres et là où ta cause est en litige, te peux défendre mieux qu’on ne peut l’imaginer (Rabelais, *Pantagruel* 265).

In Pantagruel’s prayer, God’s role as protector and defender is highlighted. It is also important to note, that when saying the prayer, Pantagruel mentions that his reason for being in the altercation in the first place is his natural zeal, given by God, to defend one’s country and family. Thus, in this prayer, Rabelais transmits two important messages. The first message is that man should ask God for aid, since God acts as man’s best protector and defender. In addition, Rabelais highlights the fact that one should not ask for God’s aid, unless it serves a dutiful purpose. In this example, defense of one’s country and family is the dutiful purpose, which the text cites as being a natural zeal provided by God to man.

In *Gargantua*, Grandgousier asks for God’s aid when he first hears of his lands being attacked and pillaged by the army of Picrochole, “Mon Dieu, mon Sauveur, aide-moi, inspire-moi, conseille-moi sur ce qu’il faut faire!” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 237). In addition, Grandgousier
also prays, not only for himself, but also for his enemy. He is found, for example, “prie Dieu qu’il voulût bien apaiser la colère de Picrochle et la ramener à la raison” (Rabelais, *Gargantua* 255). In the example of *Gargantua*, Rabelais focuses on a different message. Through Grandgousier’s prayer, he shows to readers that it is not only right to pray for oneself in time of need, but also to pray for the aid of one’s adversary.

In these examples, the transmission of Rabelais’ lesson takes on a completely different form. Although the act of praying by the protagonists is important for the transmission of the message, it is not as important as what is being said in the prayer. Within each of the prayers, Rabelais includes instruction on when and how to pray. In *Pantagruel*, the lesson centers on asking for God’s aid in time of need, but only when the prayer is made for the right reasons, in this case defense of country and family. In *Gargantua*, Rabelais repeats this idea, but also expounds on it to include praying for one’s enemy. Thus, the lesson on praying is found within each prayer, which adds to the eccentricity of Rabelais’ instructional approach.

This chapter argues that despite *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*’s popularized exterior, each includes important lessons on how to both live and approach life. By examining how Rabelais’ lessons are not conveyed explicitly, but instead are hidden in the words and actions of his characters, two of the messages that Rabelais conveys in the prologues of his narratives become much more clear. In *Pantagruel*, for example, the narrator promises, “...un livre du même métal, sinon qu’il est un peu plus équitable et digne de foi que n’était l’autre” (Rabelais 27). The “other” book that the narrator is referencing is the *Chroniques*. Furthermore, in the prologue of *Gargantua*, the narrator makes reference to the Sileni of Alcibiades. Using the *Banquet* by Plato as a point of reference, the narrator recalls how Plato referred to his master, Socrates, as a sort of Sileni, for on the outside he appeared ugly and foolish, yet on the inside he harbored a wealth of
knowledge. After providing readers with an introduction to the concept of the Sileni, the narrator states,

À quoi tend, à votre avis, ce prélude et coup d’essai’’? C’est que vous, mes bons disciples, et quelques autres fous oisifs, en lisant les joyeux titres de quelques livres de notre invention ... vous pensez trop facilement qu’on ne traite que de moqueries, folâtreries et joyaux mensonges, puisque l’enseigne l’extérieur (c’est le titre) est, sans chercher plus loin, habituellement reçue comme moqueries et plaisanterie. Mais il ne faut pas considérer si légèrement les oeuvres des hommes ... C’est pourquoi il faut ouvrir le livre soigneusement peser ce qui y est traité. Alors vous reconnaîtrez que la drogue51 qui y est contenue est d’une tout autre valeur que ne promettait la boîte: c’est à dire que les matières ici traitées ne sont pas si folâtres que le titre le prétendait (Rabelais Gargantua 36).

Within this citation, Rabelais brings to his reader’s attention the error of perceiving his narratives as nothing more than comical texts. Instead, he asks them to read his texts carefully and analyze what he has written. As Rabelais states, the material found within his narratives is not as playful as the title may suggest.

By informing readers, in Pantagruel, that his narrative “est un peu plus équitable et digne de foi que n’était l’autre” (Rabelais 27), and building on this example in Gargantua, with the reference to the Sileni of Alcibiades, Rabelais sought, from the very beginning, to inform readers on how to approach his texts. He did this by asking them to forgo the popular context in order to find the moral truth. The transmission of the morals within Pantagruel and Gargantua

51 The “drug” mentioned in Rabelais’ prologue is in reference to the Sileni. As Rabelais states earlier, “Les Silènes étaient jadis de petites boîtes, comme celles que nous voyons à présent dans les boutiques des apothicaires, sur lesquelles étaient peintes des figures drôles et frivoles...Mais à l’intérieur on conservait les drogues fines...” (Gargantua 35).
are accomplished through a variety of narrative methods. By prompting his readers in the
prologue on how to approach his texts, however, he prepares them to become engaged. Among
his techniques, Rabelais uses impersonal pronouns, paradoxes, and a multi-tiered approach. By
transmitting his lessons through such indirect means, Rabelais’ instructional approaches are
somewhat challenging. Yet, for the discerning reader, the challenge of reading Rabelais’ texts
also becomes that much more rewarding, when he can uncover the message and find the truth.
CONCLUSION

François Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* may appear to be popular texts, written by a popular author. This thesis has, in fact, demonstrated several examples of popular sources, stories, and language found within Rabelais’ texts. The purpose of the thesis, however, is not to provide evidence, but rather to elucidate their presence by responding to the question of why someone considered a learned man, such as Rabelais, would consider using these references in his narratives. Although many critics have attempted to explain the presence of popular references in Rabelais’ narratives, none have examined the instructional function of his characters. The risk of not taking into account this function, is to allow oneself to be distracted by the popular elements of the texts. By re-evaluating the narrative function of the popular elements in *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, this thesis illustrates how Rabelais had a didactic agenda when including these elements. Woven into the popular components of each narrative are guidelines, which serve to instruct readers. At stake are the denunciation of popular ideologies, the evocation of evangelical precepts, and the transmission of lessons on wisdom and truth. The examination of these lessons within this thesis serves to show how Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* function as instruction manuals, by demonstrating to readers how to approach each text more critically, with the ultimate goal of teaching them how to live a better, more evangelical, life.

The use of popular characters in the transmission of Rabelais’ lessons is key to his didactic approach, since, as the prologue of *Pantagruel* confirms, popular texts were widely read in the sixteenth century, based on their sales. By building his texts upon the already well-known
and well-read *Chroniques*, Rabelais was better able to ensure a large readership for his own narratives, and in consequence, a larger audience for his message. Since Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* serve to instruct readers on evangelical ideologies, one can argue that they, like Erasmus’ works, contributed to the spread of the evangelical movement. This theory may be confirmed by an entry in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, which states that books played an important role in the spread of Evangelism, particularly to groups such as artisans and workers (“Evangelism” 83). From this entry, the importance of Rabelais’ use of popular references is further reinforced, particularly since, according to Harriet Hudson, “popular literature is assumed to reach a varied audience, particularly members of the middle class” (36). Thus, by including popular references in his narratives, and, in addition, by publishing his texts in the vernacular rather than Latin, Rabelais contributed to the spread of the evangelical movement to the middle class, which served as the primary consumer of popular texts.

In conclusion, this thesis has shown that François Rabelais communicated to readers his evangelistic vision of the world through use of his narratives. Rabelais’ approach is unique to that of his predecessor Erasmus, however, since he employed his popular characters to transmit his message. As this thesis has shown, this pedagogical strategy is significant in that it provided Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* with a larger audience for the transmission of his message. François Rabelais’ *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* thus contributed to the promotion of evangelical ideology to readers who, according to Rabelais in *Pantagruel’s* prologue, seemed more inclined to read popular texts than texts based on ethics.
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