DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER OCCASIONAL PAPERS • 10

RABELAIS AND HIS CRITICS

NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS

TIMOTHY HAMPTON

Confronting the Turkish Dogs

A Conversation on Rabelais and his Critics

THE DOREEN B. TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES was established at the University of California at Berkeley in 1987 in order to promote interdisciplinary studies in the humanities. Endowed by Doreen B. Townsend, the Center awards fellowships to advanced graduate students and untenured faculty on the Berkeley campus, and supports interdisciplinary working groups, discussion groups, and team-taught graduate seminars. It also sponsors symposia and conferences which strengthen research and teaching in the humanities and related social science fields. The Center is directed by Randolph Starn, Professor of History. Christina M. Gillis has been Associate Director of the Townsend Center since 1988.

CONFRONTING THE TURKISH DOGS: A CONVERSATION ON RABELAIS AND HIS CRITICS contains the text of one of the several events planned to mark the visit of historian Natalie Zemon Davis to the Berkeley campus as Avenali Professor of the Humanities. Professor David engages here with Professor Timothy Hampton of the Department of French at Berkeley, author of an earlier article considering the problem of language in the sixteenth-century writer Francois Rabelais. The discussion between Professors David and Hampton, and this Occasional Paper, were made possible by the generosity of Peter and Joan Avenali, who endowed the Avenali Chair in the Humanities in memory of family members. The Avenali Chair is attached to the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California at Berkeley, and is occupied by distinguished visiting scholars whose work is of interest to faculty and students in a range of humanities fields.

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Beyond Babel

During her month's residency as Avenali Professor in February and March 1997 Natalie Zemon Davis wove what she called "braided histories." The marvelous metaphor actually fits all her engagements as a historian. Order and transgression, high culture and low, the riveting detail and the big picture, sympathy, scholarship, imagined worlds, and real-world commitments have always intertwined in her work. She relishes in the back-and-forth, the give-and-take, of the historical characters whose stories she tells, of their ways and our ways of doing, thinking, and saying things. She is a consummate weaver of ties that bind the worthy (and not so worthy) denizens of early modern Europe and her many friends, colleagues, students, and readers around the world.

Her essays and books follow criss-crossing paths—more braiding. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (1975) stages a rambunctious Renaissance cast that "makes use of what physical, social, and cultural resources they had in order to survive, to cope, or sometimes to change things." A false Martin Guerre returning from the French king's wars and the real Martin Guerre's wife take that generic script to make up the particular arrangements of a life together in *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1983). The king and his magistrates intent on exposing fictions are themselves wooed and, it seems, mostly persuaded by exculpating narratives in *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (1987). In *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives* (1995) an Ursuline missionary, a Jewish widow writing the book of her life, a Dutch artist and entomologist *avant la lettre* turn out to be, in the "margins" of their writing, roles, and farflung travels, close to the center of the seventeenth century's expansive and explosive experience of the world. This procession of characters winds through an itinerary teaching, offices, and honors here and abroad. It passes through different disciplinary domains that Natalie Zemon Davis has brought together: history and literature; history and anthropology; history and film; women's and gender history; Jewish history.

The Avenali "braided histories" linked her last book to one in progress under that provisional title. She is working with "men on the margins," tracking the over-

lapping stories of early modern and twentieth-century men who crossed back and forth across boundaries in space and time, language, religion, and culture. Their lives become for her and became for us studies in the possibilities and the limits of mixed identity and cultural mixture. As always in her work, painstaking research has a moral and the lesson has an exacting history: we cannot escape either the historically rooted differences that separate us or the fact of their historical intermingling. In the first of two major public lectures the North African scholar al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan, alias Leo Africanus, negotiated double identities in Renaissance Rome between Africa and Europe, between Islam and Christianity. In the second lecture Jewish settlers, Enlightenment ideals, black slaves, and colonial authority in eighteenth-century Suriname confounded but also jarringly confirmed expectations of difference. Easy arguments on one side or another of our contemporary debates over affirmative action, multiculturalism, or globalization paled in the light of these intensely poignant and complicated histories.

The two lectures were only the beginning of a kind of floating seminar. There were panel discussions, living room exchanges, office hours, and conversations with new friends and the old guard who knew Natalie as a member of the Berkeley history department in the late 60s and early 70s. This Occasional Paper catches one of these encounters on the wing. The forthcoming book will begin with its protagonists, Rabelais and a displaced Romanian Jewish scholar who became one of the most telling students. Tim Hampton attended Davis seminars at Princeton and is a *métis* in his own right with three Berkeley professorial identities at Berkeley in French, Comparative Literature, and Italian Studies. Their talks sparked the lively exchanges sampled here.

Rabelais's works are Renaissance hybrids *par excellence*, worldly and cosmopolitan but utterly French and provincial at the same time, bawdily earnest, violently learned. Their modern critical reception can be read as a series of failed attempts to sort out and simplify them. The Hampton and Davis versions acknowledge that failure and give us a Rabelais exploring the mixed space between history and language in a world at least as fraught with conflicting interdependencies as our own.

—Randolph Starn
Director
Townsend Humanities Center

Timothy Hampton

Languages and Identities

At the center of Rabelais's first published book, *Pantagruel* (1532), there lies a great debate. In the opening of Chapter 18 of that work we learn that a great English scholar named Thaumaste—"The Admirable One"—has come to Paris and proposed to engage with the hero of the book, the giant Pantagruel, in a learned discussion. So great are his admiration of Pantagruel's learning and his commitment to finding truth, says Thaumaste, that he has come like the Queen of Sheba seeking Solomon, Plato seeking the Egyptian magi, and Hiarchus seeking the Gymnosophists to confer with Pantagruel on "some passages of philosophy, of geomancy, and of the Cabala" ["aulcuns passages de philosophie, de geomantie et de caballe"]. When Pantagruel agrees to the debate, Thaumaste proposes that they argue, not with words, but with gestures, "for these matters are so difficult that human words would not be adequate to expound them to my satisfaction" ["car les matières sont tant ardues que les parolles humaines ne seroyent suffisantes à les expliquer à mon plaisir"]. As Pantagruel throws himself into study to prepare for the debate, he is persuaded by his friend Panurge that he, Panurge, should debate Thaumaste, and that they should spend the night drinking instead of studying—which they do. There follows the next day a silent exchange of gestures which Rabelais describes in great detail, and which ends as follows: "Panurge

then placed his two forefingers at each corner of his mouth, drawing it back as wide as he could and showing all of his teeth. Then, with his thumbs, he drew down his eyelids very low, making rather an ugly grimace, or so it seemed to the spectators" ["Dont Panurge mist les deux maistres doigtz à chascun cousté de la bouche, le retirant tant qu'il pouvoit et monstrant toutes ses dentz, et des deux poulses rabaissoit les paulpiers des yeulx bien parfondement, en faisant assez layde grimace, selon que sembloit es assistans"]. At this point, the English sage stands up, pronounces himself satisfied, and praises Pantagruel with the words of the Gospel, saying, "Et ecce plus quam Solomon hic," "Behold, here is one greater than Solomon."

It seems appropriate that such a scene of mock disputation should lie at the center of Rabelais's book. For, to a degree perhaps unequalled by the case of any other writer from the European Renaissance, the reception of Rabelais's work has involved dispute, critical disagreement, and precisely the type of scholarly wrangling—often humorous, but just as often bitter—that seems to be parodied here. Of special interest are a series of twentieth-century critical debates about the relationship of language and history in his work, for they evoke compelling problems about how different critics construe the object of their attention. They suggest how Rabelais's text functions as a distorting mirror in which critics see their own image—even as the text places the validity of that image in question.

One of the most interesting of these debates finds its origins in a landmark of modern Rabelais scholarship. This is the great four volume critical edition of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* prepared by a team of researchers under the direction of Abel Lefranc, professor at the Sorbonne and at the Collège de France and founder of the Société des Etudes Rabelaisiennes—the "authentic father of Rabelaisian studies," as he was later called by one of his students. This edition is not only a mine of information about Rabelais, his language, and his world. It was conceived as a testament to a particular interpretation of Rabelais's writing. Lefranc opens the preface to the first volume by reproducing a letter sent to him by the Marquise Arconati Visconti, née Peyrat, dated March 27, 1907, inviting him to undertake the massive project of providing "the critical edition that we still lack." The Marquise goes on to say that she wants to associate with the project the name of her father, Alphonse Peyrat, who, she says, like "all the republicans of his generation," was "a fervent admirer of the one whom he venerated as one of the

fathers of free thought." She adds that the Society of Rabelais Studies will be meeting on Sunday morning, and she urges him to come to the meeting and accept publicly the task which her letter urges on him.

Lefranc's project is begun under the double sign of critical positivism and Enlightenment republicanism. His method aims to build upon the great tradition of philological study that flowered in both France and Germany in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By applying the principles of philology to a great sixteenth-century author, the new edition would bring philology and the establishment of critical editions, long associated principally with medieval studies, into the Renaissance. At the same time, this methodological positivism is placed at the service of an Enlightenment republicanism, of a vision of literary history that sees Rabelais, not as the pious Erasmian, Derridean jokester, or Bakhtinian reveller we think we know today, but as a precursor of the great eighteenth-century philosophes. For Lefranc and his patrons, Rabelais is a free thinker. In this context, it may not be by accident that the members of the Société meet on Sunday mornings. Instead of going to mass they talk about Rabelais.

Lefranc's edition occupied him and his team of scholars for fourteen years. During this period, however, they were never able to advance beyond the second book, *Pantagruel*. In his preface to that text, Lefranc notes the difficulties of working during the years of the First World War, when several members of the team had been mobilized, and scholarly serenity was difficult to obtain. The last volume was published in 1922. Yet despite the unfinished nature of the project, it succeeded in defining Rabelais studies in France for the next fifty years. Lefranc became the dean of French Rabelaisians and continued to direct the Society and its activities until well after the Second World War.

It was on the eve of that second war, when the very territory of France was in danger, that Lefranc himself was first put under scholarly attack. In address at the MLA meetings in Chicago in 1937, the great Austrian philologist Leo Spitzer took to task the positivism of the French university establishment. Spitzer's address, entitled "Le Prétendu Réalisme de Rabelais" refers to Lefranc's endorsement of the dictum of Gustave Lanson, the master of French positivist critics, that "never has there been seen realism more pure, more triumphant, more powerful than in Rabelais." Spitzer's talk mocks the commitment of Lefranc and his school to archival research, and to uncovering the historical underpinnings of Rabelais's

work. Later, after the war, Spitzer renewed and expanded his attacks on French Rabelais criticism in article entitled "Rabelais et les Rabelaisants. " Ostensibly a "review" of a collection edited by Lefranc in honor of the 400th anniversary of Rabelais's death—a collection presented by Lefranc in his preface as a monument to the French school of literary scholarship—Spitzer's attack holds up with malicious glee the minutiae through which Lefranc and his students try to link Rabelais's works to the author's life and context. He quotes derisively from Lefranc's note on the character of Bridoye, the senile judge in the *Third Book* who decides all of his cases with a throw of the dice. Lefranc's note laments that no real life model has been found for Bridoye, but urges that if scholars keep looking hard enough in the archives, the "real" Bridoye will some day turn up. And he argues strenuously that the work of the French school has had the effect of burying, rather than resuscitating, Rabelais for modern readers.

It is difficult not to see in this quarrel between Lefranc and Spitzer a kind of replay of one of the great comic debates represented in Rabelais's own work. Indeed, the participants themselves are somehow larger-than-life, allegorical figures in their own right. On the one hand, we have Spitzer, the polyglot Romance philologist who wrote hundreds of articles in at least six languages on topics ranging from Romanian folk lyrics to modern American advertising, who fled Nazi Germany, first for Istanbul, and then for Baltimore, where he lived as a kind of outsider in the land of the New Criticism, producing only a handful of students during his long career. On the other hand, there is Lefranc, closely allied with the institutions and traditions of the French university system, surrounded by his *équipe*. Even the names here seem Rabelaisian and invite a playful allegorical unpacking: Spitzer, whose name means "the Sharp One" in German, and calls to mind the expression *spitze Zunge*, "sharp tongued" (a fitting appelation for a critic who made his career out of often vicious debate with colleagues), versus Lefranc, the French man, the Frank Man, the honest man, the allegorically named exemplar of Frenchness and the French Academic system.

However, there is more here than mere parody. Spitzer's attacks raise important issues about the very relationship between literature and history. For Spitzer, the error of the French school was that it neglected the aesthetic dimensions of Rabelais's work. Spitzer himself had published, in 1913, a thesis in which he argued that Rabelais's contribution to European literature lay in his neologisms, in

the ways in which his language produced exorbitant forms of linguistic experimentation. For Spitzer, the center of interest in Rabelais's writing involved the capacity of words to create a new reality. The originality of Rabelais would thus not be that his work is rooted in historical detail, but, to the contrary, that through its linguistic productivity it breaks all connection with archival history of any type. Spitzer cites with derision the absurd oxymoron expressed in the anniversary collection by Verdun Saulnier, Lefranc's eventual successor at the Sorbonne, that "the work of art is an historical phenomenon, rather than an artistic one."

Yet Spitzer's own formulation of the way in which literature breaks with "history" merits close attention. He argues that Rabelais's text is a producer, not of humor, but of horror. Because of the way in which Rabelais's exorbitant language, with its endless lists, puns, and distortions, breaks with normal usage, Rabelais is one of the great producers of terror in Western Literature. Rabelais's excessive energy, Spitzer notes in a curiously Freudian, or even Bataillesque, register, "spends itself against itself and destroys itself through excess. Excessive vitality is near to the torpor of death, hilarity becomes a grimace." This grimace involves Rabelais's relationship to his reader. The creation of new reality in language, Spitzer claims, is always linked, for the observer, to a moment of horror, of anguish at the new. The neologisms of Rabelais, says Spitzer, "move along the line of demarcation between the comic and the horrible." They seem to "take root" in the language that we know, what he calls "the patrimony of acquired language," yet they have no "fixed location" in language, as they penetrate the "no man's land of the inexistent"—"le terrain vague de l'inexistant." They inspire in the soul of the reader "l'horreur du néant," the horror of nothingness, which endures until linguistic probation is over and the neologism can be accepted.

Now, of course, as one might expect in this type of episode, Spitzer's attacks on Lefranc's historicism seriously overstate the case. The essay of Lefranc which might be taken as his critical manifesto is entitled "La Réalité dans le Roman de Rabelais" ["Reality in the Novel of Rabelais"]. It begins with a section on Rabelais's "realism" that continually makes a claim for Rabelais's connection to the historical specificity of sixteenth-century France. Yet its language is surprisingly measured. Lefranc argues only that "a good number" of Rabelais's characters are rooted in historical fact, and that the canvas of the book is "in part" inspired by true events. The crux of the disagreement appears when Lefranc asserts that attention to his-

torical contexts provides not merely a background to literature, but a kind of guard rail. By delving into historical backgrounds, suggests Lefranc, one can produce a "well defined frame" within which to read textual details. Without that frame, he adds, a detail merely becomes "un procédé littéraire dénué de valeur propre" ["a simple literary procedure devoid of any value of its own"].

What is amazing here is not only that Spitzer and Lefranc disagree about the genius of Rabelais, but that each sees his method as a protective device to save the reader of Rabelais from intellectual irresponsibility. For Spitzer, stylistic analysis saves literature from becoming the history that Lefranc wants it to be. For Lefranc, it is historical research that saves literature from becoming "mere art." It is the methodology of the critic that constructs the text's meaning and preserves its creative center.

Curiously, Lefranc and Spitzer share a common lexicon. Both employ a vocabulary of mapping. Lefranc opens his essay on Rabelais's "realism" by citing a text from 1624 in which it is asserted that "Rabelais was born in Chinon, where he drank much wine. . .But if you look in the chronicles to see the adjoining boundaries and edges of Rabelais, you will find nothing." Nowadays, says Lefranc, everything has changed, for we know the "edges" or "boundaries" ("les tenants et aboutissans") of Rabelais. And those boundaries are revealed through the specific "cadres" or frames in which his work takes on meaning.

This curious topographic vocabulary—images of framing, borders, frontiers—is literalized and thematized as Lefranc's work unfolds. For indeed, Lefranc's major historical contribution to the study of Rabelais is about topography. It involves his discovery of an archive detailing an elaborate legal battle between Rabelais's father and his neighbor, Gaucher de Sainte-Marthe. At issue was a piece of land bordering both of their estates, and to which each claimed ownership. Lefranc argues that this legal battle provides the inspiration for the great war between Gargantua's father Grandgousier and his neighbor Picrochole in *Gargantua*.

Thus Lefranc uses a language of mapping, of circumscription and territoriality, to define his approach for an essay about territory.

Such territorial interests inform his more general claims elsewhere that Rabelais's importance for French literature lies in the way he reflects the first moment of French rebirth, when secular literature first flourishes in what he calls "the national language," and the countryside was covered with "magnificent monu-

ments and delicate marvels." Into this world, in "blessed Touraine, the garden of France, where the language has achieved its purest expression," Rabelais is born.

Spitzer, too, uses a language of space and location in approaching Rabelais. For Spitzer, as I noted, language itself is a kind of territory, a space within which the self is anchored. The violence done to language by neologism is a violence done to imaginary spatial boundaries; it takes place on the "demarcation line" between known territory and the "terrain vague"—the uncharted land—of discovery. Language and the conventions of accepted usage are the homeland that the philologist carries with him wherever he goes. When new forms of language are produced, they induce a terror in the reader no less real than the fear felt by the explorer on alien terrain. For Lefranc, Rabelais can only be understood through his relationship to the very marking out of France itself. For Spitzer, by contrast, literature works on the nervous system.

These parallels and differences between Spitzer and Lefranc are worth detailing, because they set the terms for a whole series of debates over Rabelais which followed. Indeed, one might say that the entire history of Rabelais criticism over the past three decades has been a fight between the Spitzerians and the Lefrancists. I think here first of a series of attacks at conferences and colloquia in the 1970s by Michael Screech, then the Dean of British Rabelaisians, on Mikhail Bakhtin's famous book on Rabelais and popular culture. Later, during the 1980s there came a particularly testy exchange between Francois Rigolot, of Princeton, Terence Cave of Oxford, and Michel Jeanneret of Geneva, on the one hand, and Gérard Defaux of Hopkins and Edwin Duval of Yale, on the other, following an article in which Defaux attacked a whole group of contemporary critics for being willfully irresponsible readers of Rabelais. When you locate Rabelais in the correct context, asserted Defaux sounding like Lefranc, troubling textual details cease to be troubling. Rigolot, Cave, and Jeanneret alluded directly to the Spitzer / Lefranc debate by calling their response "La prétendu transparence de Rabelais." In all of these cases the issue is the extent to which Rabelais's exorbitant use of language overflows or distorts the possible frames or contexts that critics and historians might construct to help us hear its message. For Lefranc that message is a message about the historical genesis of French literature, and about Rabelais's role as embodiment of the French national genius. For later critics, such as Screech and Defaux, it is a message in support of Erasmian Christian humanism. By contrast,

for Spitzer, as for Bakhtin in a slightly different register, and for later post-structuralist critics, Rabelais's work is a work on and in language

As a final note on this episode, it may be worth pointing out that, despite Spitzer's several attacks on Lefranc and his school in the name of a cosmopolitain European philological humanism, Lefranc never responded. The debate, in fact, was no debate at all. Spitzer's later essay, "Rabelais et les Rabelaisants," and yet a third piece, written in Italian at the end of the 1950s, "Ancora sul prologo al Gargantua," are filled with notes attacking the provincialism of the French school which, remarks Spitzer with horror, remained ignorant of the *Aesthetics* of Croce and even of Auerbach's magisterial *Mimesis* long after their publication. Such, in Spitzer's words was the hold over French scholarship of a "double autarchy, that of the nation and the Sorbonne"—two institutions that might be seen as distant echoes of the double ideologies of republicanism and positivist philology under which Lefranc began his famous edition. It may not be by accident that one of the passages to which Spitzer returns again and again when he wants to make fun of Lefranc's insensitivity to poetic language is Rabelais's satirical list of puns on the word Sorbonne.

Yet despite the importance of the Lefranc / Spitzer debate for recent Rabelais studies, it may be possible to provide a slightly different perspective on the relationship between language and identity in Rabelais by looking at two passages, both from *Pantagruel*. Curiously, both of these passages have to do with location, and with being in or out of place. The first comes at the end of Chapter V of *Pantagruel*. There we learn that, after having travelled to every university in France, Pantagruel has been granted his licenciate in law. He then has his first real "adventure" as an adult. This is his encounter with the Limousin schoolboy. One day, while strolling after supper with his friends, Pantagruel meets a schoolboy who salutes him. He asks the stranger where he's been: "My friend," he says, "where are you coming from at this hour?" The schoolboy responds in a strangely Latinized French: "From the alme, inclyte and celebrate Academie, which is vocitated Lutetia" ["De l'alme, inclyte, et celebre academie que l'on vocite Lutece"]. I come, says the Limousin schoolboy, from Paris. Pantagruel doesn't understand the schoolboy's jargon and proceeds to pose a whole series of questions, to which he receives equally incomprehensible answers. Finally, the irritated Pantagruel asks the schoolboy once and for all where is from, and when he grasps, through the affected

jargon, that he is from Limousin, he exclaims: "I understand. . . you are Limousin and you want here to pretend to be Parisian" ["J'entends bien. . .tu es Lymosin. . .et tu veulx icy contrefaire le Parisian"]. And he picks him up by the neck, at which point the Limousin breaks into the dialect of his native region and begs for mercy. Pantagruel releases him with satisfaction, "A ceste heure parle tu naturellement"—"Now you speak naturally." At the same moment it becomes clear that the student has shit in his pants. The odor drives Pantagruel and his men away, leaving the schoolboy in his fear and filth. And the chapter concludes thus:

> But this gave the Limousin such a lifelong terror and such a thirst that he would often swear Pantagruel held him by the throat; and after some years he died the death of Roland (that is, of thirst), this being a divine vengeance and proving the truth of what Aristotle and Aulus Gellius observed, that we ought to speak the language in common use, and Octavian Augustus's maxim, that we should shun obsolete words as carefully as ships' pilots avoid the rocks at sea.
> [Mais ce luy fut un tel remord toute sa vie, et tant fut alteré qu'il disoit souvent que Pantagruel le tenoit à la gorge, et, après quelques années, mourut de la mort Roland, ce faisant la vengeance divine, et nous demonstrant ce que dist le philosophe et Aule Gelle: qu'il nous convient parler selon le langage usité, et, comme disoit Octavian Augustse, qu'il faut eviter les motz espaves en pareille diligence que les patrons des navires evitent les rochiers de mer.]

This episode raises a number of questions about the relationship between language and identity. Most commentators link it to debates surrounding the dignity of the emerging French vernacular. Yet, one of the features never mentioned by commentators is that it is unclear who, exactly, is being tested here. It's easy to laugh at the silliness of the schoolboy—and the figure of the Limousin is a stock comic type in French satire—yet Pantagruel's various responses to him betoken a form of collective paranoia that would have been all too familiar to Rabelais's readers: on hearing the boy's jargon he exclaims, "By god, you are some kind of heretic" ["Par dieu, tu es quelque heretique"]. Later, he growls, "I think he is forging here some type of diabolical language and that he is charming us like a

sorcerer" ["Je croys qu'il nous forge icy quelque langaige diabolique, et qu'il nous cherme comme enchanteur"]. Strangeness is here seen as heresy or enchantment. Pantagruel's incomprehension is first manifested in a vocabulary reflecting the religious violence that would later tear France apart. As such, it raises issues about the nature of community. Yet as soon as Pantagruel sees what is going on, he recasts the situation in terms that are, as it were, topographic. The true sin of the schoolboy is that he wants to "contrefaire le parisien," to "imitate Parisians." His heresy seems to be that he is out of place, that he is using language to pretend to be someone that he is not. He's a misguided provincial trying to blend in with the arty crowd on the Left Bank.

What is striking is the way in which Pantagruel's violence seems to be sparked by this dislocation. Pantagruel objects to the schoolboy's presumption at denying, and perhaps even leaving, his place of origin. He begins by asking him, "D'ou viens tu, a ceste heure," "Where are you coming from, at this hour," and ends by shouting, "D'ou viens tu?" and "A ceste heure parles tu naturellement," "Where do you come from? At this hour [i.e. now], you speak naturally." He leaves the schoolboy humiliated and silenced, tormented by a thirst from which he will never recover and which the narrator disturbingly describes as "divine vengeance."

The schoolboy's identity not only stems from his geographical dislocation. It also involves his location in that other territory so prized by Leo Spitzer, the territory of language itself. In effect, the Limousin finds himself caught between two linguistic poles. On the one hand, he demonstrates the jargon that he has appropriated during his studies—a jargon which links him to a particular scholastic fraternity associated with the most powerful intellectual institution in the kingdom, the Sorbonne. On the other hand, we hear, at the end of the episode, the dialect of his home province, which he has left behind. However, the text both refuses to sanction the schoolboy's adherence to scholastic jargon and mocks his Limousin origins. He remains caught between a language he cannot have and a location he seems to have rejected. He shifts between provincial experience and Parisian jargon, between two worlds, one might note, which, by their contrast, have structured much of French cultural history. And they can never quite be brought into harmony. Between the two languages which the Limousin speaks lie the space that is never mentioned and the language that we never hear him speak,

the space of France and the emerging French vernacular. Both of these seem to be in the control of Pantagruel who, though nominally from Utopia, has just finished a tour of all French universities and embodies both provincial experience (he's been in many regions) and university life (he has studied at several institutions).

Identity thus seems to be linked to the conjunction of a location and a language. The struggle between Pantagruel and the Limousin is a struggle over the relationship between language and geography. It is in this struggle that Rabelais's text both echoes and surpasses the concerns of Lefranc and Spitzer. For Lefranc's vision of Rabelais as the embodiment of the French Renaissance, and of the national genius that produced that Renaissance, takes as its presupposition a France that has already been constituted and defined as a modern nation state. Similarly, Spitzer's location of Rabelais's creativity in the way his use of language transforms the conventions of normal usage to explore unknown linguistic terrain assumes a French vernacular that has been codified and well established. Rabelais's text, however, suggests that neither a coherent French space nor a coherent French language are to be assumed. Rather, the Limousin scholar episode hints that Rabelais's text is itself a symbolic battleground on which the relationship between language and nationhood is being fought out.

Yet there is another element in the Limousin scholar episode that helps us both to contextualize the Lefranc / Spitzer debate and to move beyond it toward a theory of language and identity in Rabelais. It is stressed at the climax of the scene, when Pantagruel, the young king and giant, seizes the Limousin schoolboy by the neck. His deed is accompanied by a word: "You skin Latin; by saint John, I'll make you skin the fox; I'll skin you alive" ["Tu eschorches le latin; par sainct Jean, je te feray eschorcher le renard, car je te eschorcheray tout vif"]. Pantagruel's phrase is inspired by the expression of one of his own men, that the schoolboy is "skinning latin," that is, speaking it badly. Pantagruel's threat, "I'll make you skin the fox," is a proverb meaning I'll make you vomit. What is significant about this phrase is that it introduces a new element into the relationship between language and identity. That element is the body. Pantagruel's threat wavers back and forth between language and the body, between metaphorical and literal registers of representation. It begins with a metaphorical description of Latin as a body, as a corpus that is skinned, before moving to a metaphorical threat, "I'll skin you

alive." Between this metaphorical linguistic body and this literal body, there lies the body of the skinned fox—a body that has become metaphorized as part of a proverb. Here, as so often in Rabelais, language becomes body and body becomes language. The violence of the powerful over the weak is accompanied by a violence done to rhetoric which creates a median zone between word and deed, between speech and body. Rabelais's text seems to blend the violence of an historical struggle over the French vernacular with the violence of linguistic invention, making it impossible to decide which comes first, One would be hard put to determine whether these figural displacements are somehow "reflections" of a political and historical violence that can be located in the archives (debates about the French vernacular, the imposition of French as a legal language a few years later, the increased political centralization of France, etc.) or rather whether the entire socio-political context that seems to be evoked here is simply an effect of the text, a mirage brought forth by the proximity of three proverbial expressions, to skin a language, to skin the fox, and to skin a person. The text evades our desire to determine whether language or history, Spitzer or Lefranc, takes precedence.

This moment of violence both recalls and contrasts with another moment in *Pantagruel*. This is the famous meeting between Pantagruel and his friend Panurge. When Pantagruel encounters Panurge, Panurge speaks to him in a dozen languages, before they both realize that they both speak French, at which point they become friends. Yet if the Limousin has a specific origin, a place from which he comes, Panurge, though he was born in Touraine, has been travelling the world, on adventures, he says, more miraculous than those of Odysseus. The Limousin has a domicile but no language. Panurge has a language, but no fixed domicile.

Panurge's narrative about his own adventures involves, principally, a story about how he escaped from the Turks. This tale begins with a scene in which Panurge is being roasted over a spit, adorned with a piece of bacon that the Turks have tied around his waist. Escaping from his spit, Panurge proceeds to set fire to the entire city in which he is held captive. As he runs from the flames, he looks back, like the wife of Lot, he says, and then almost shits with joy at the suffering he has caused. However, he goes on to point out, that God punishes him for his arrogance by sending a pack of dogs to chase him. Just as he is about to be devoured, he grabs a strip of bacon that was wrapped around his waist by his captors

and throws it to the dogs. They stop to devour it and he escapes.

The episode seems to be making a point about the importance of charity. It recalls a well known homily on martyrdom, Saint Paul's dictum in his first letter to the Corinthians (13.3) that, "If I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing." Panurge is punished by God by being threatened by the dogs whose fleshly appetites seem in so many ways to mirror his own. Indeed, the references to divine vengeance and shit here recall the encounter with the Limousin schoolboy. And if the schoolboy is "out of place" by pretending to be a Parisian, Panurge is lost on the very edges of Christendom. Yet the two episodes contrast in the ways they depict divine vengeance or punishment of moral error. For his transgression against proper language and proper place the schoolboy is marked for life—indeed, he is marked, we might say, by language itself. Having skinned Latin, he gets skinned. In the case of Panurge, by contrast, divine vengeance is evoked long enough to make a moral point about charity, but it is never inscribed on Panurge's body. In fact, Panurge escapes because he is able to "skin himself," because he detaches from his body of piece of flesh, the bacon, and throws it to those who threaten him.

The contrast between these two moments of violence provides a way of thinking about the relationship of language and identity in Rabelais. The episode of the Limousin schoolboy suggests the fate visited upon characters in Rabelais who in some way threaten the identity or power of the small group of Christian male heroes at the text's center—the heroic giants Pantagruel and Gargantua, as well as their sidekicks Panurge and Friar Joan. Characters who threaten this group and its identity (and there are a number of them, including Turks, women, and rival schoolboys) are punished by being marked. That marking always involves a violence that begins in language and moves to the body, as it did in the "skinning" of the schoolboy. Language itself wounds these threatening characters through the literalization of metaphors which, with a violence that prefigure's Kafka's Penal Colony, are literalized and inscribed on the body. By contrast, when Panurge himself finds himself in a compromising position, he is saved by a covering—in this case the bacon—which makes it possible for divine law to inscribe itself on the text, but not on the hero's body. The Rabelaisian hero is protected from a violence that begins in language, from that violence that he himself consistently visits

on others. Furthermore, these scenes of violence suggest that it is in the median space between language and body, between word and history, that fables of identity play themselves out in Rabelais. Beyond the nationalist positivism of Lefranc and the purely linguistic analyses of Spitzer, Rabelais's text involves the complex interplay of language, territory, and body. It is this interplay which more recent criticism of Rabelais has begun to explore, as it seeks to move beyond the Lefranc / Spitzer debate. Indeed, given the importance of the body as a site of power and meaning, it may not be by accident that when Pantagruel first takes a liking to Panurge, he gives him a suit of clothes.

Natalie Zemon Davis

Beyond Babel

This is a perfect introduction to my presentation, because I'm going to be in a mixed space between history and language. Tim and I have discussed our projects together, but I hadn't realized how beautifully they would converge. I've had arguments with my Princeton friend François Rigolot about the intersection of literature and history. He'll come to a view about the meaning, say, of gifts in Montaigne by stressing the importance of a gift reference because of it's located in the middle of an essay; I'll come to a related meaning by reading the same essay along with legal texts on donation and inheritance. He sees these as distinct disciplinary practices that lead to a different interpretation of the essay; I see them as overlapping practices that deepen and complicate the gifts of Montaigne.

Today the overlap will be about François Rabelais. The paper I'm presenting to you is called "Beyond Babel: Multiple Tongues and National Identities in Rabelelais and His Critics," which will eventually turn into the first chapter of my new book *Braided Histories*. In my Avenali lectures, I tried to develop an argument about the importance of mixtures, of looking at different kinds of *métissage culturel*. This is another form of middle space, whose contours I want to describe more precisely. In the lectures, I gave as my first example al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan, better known as Leo Africanus. His strategy for moving between Africa and Europe, between Islam and Christianity involved a conscious double vi-

sion. He moved into identities either playfully or with a kind of fascination, leaving himself room for a safe withdrawal when he felt too captured. In my second example, a figure of the Jewish enlightenment in the violent plantation society of late 18th-century Suriname, the mixtures were experienced in a very troubling way. In a few days I'll be telling the women's studies group about another Suriname case: a kind of marriage between a Dutch-Scottish soldier and a mulatto slave woman. The mixture here becomes literal when they have a child. Ultimately the mixed life becomes too hot to handle, and the man goes back to Europe and writes about it instead.

To open *Braided Histories*, I'm choosing the two figures in today's talk—Rabelais and Lazare Sainéan, a 20th-century student of Rabelais' language—precisely because they are often described as part of a smooth movement toward the establishment of a pure national vernacular. Rabelais was publishing the parts of his novel in the years before and after the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts of 1539, a celebrated law in the history of the national vernacular: henceforth all pleading before the courts and all government business had to be conducted in French. Some critics would see his writing as fulfilling the project of this law. And Chain / Shineanu / Sainéan saw himself as part of the late 19th- and early 20th-century effort to assimilate the Jews into the nation-state. In both cases, I'm going to suggest, that assimilation doesn't work; in both cases, individuals transcend an over-simplified version of the historical context and raise questions about narrow-minded and exclusive national and religious loyalties.

So let me begin with Rabelais. He was not a literal métis. He was a traveler, but not on a remarkable scale: he went throughout France, but beyond the kingdom no farther than Italy and Metz. His three children had an ambiguous status not because their mother was a foreigner, but because Rabelais was a Catholic cleric and the couple was unwed.

The cultural mixture in Rabelais grew from travels of the spirit—already suggested by Tim Hampton—and from his work as reader, listener, wide-ranging observer, and writer. Its product is the wealth of genealogies and languages in his novel.

Take Pantagruel, for example. He is Rabelais' model of the Christian ruler, even though he can sometimes be violent and mischievous. He is born in France to Gargantua and the Utopian princess Badabec. His ancestors are all giants and

warriors, but they are not all Christians and not all Europeans. They are biblical Jewish giants such as Hurtaly of rabbinic legend; his name in Hebrew means "he who has survived." They are Greek and Latin, a king of India, medieval Christian heroes, and some Muslims, including the Saracen prince killed by the Christian Roland. Pantagruel is not pure French, not at all. When Rabelais imagines a future marriage and progeny for Pantagruel, there is more mixture: he foresees that his giant will one day marry the daughter of the king of India, Prester John, who is Christian, but is certainly not French.

Another example is Panurge, whom Pantagruel hoped would be his friend for life. Panurge was born in the Touraine, as he tells Pantagruel, "the garden of France," and that is, of course, the *pays* of Rabelais himself. But Panurge's beard looks like a map of the world, *une Mappemonde*, as described by one of the men in Pantagruel's entourage: Asia here, Mesopotamia there, Africa here, Europe down below, and the Mountains of the moon in the middle. And, as you'll soon hear, he is a traveler outside the bounds of Christendom as well as within.

The greatest treasure is in Rabelais' words. There is immensely erudite language, with words and phrases from Latin, Greek and Hebrew. There are professional languages of the judge's chamber, of the theologian's library, of the physician's study (Rabelais was himself a physician, of course). There are colloquial languages redolent of the market, the fair, the workshop, the boat dock. Languages of graceful courtesy and the desiring and defecating body. Phrases from Paris, from Normandy, Gascony and other provinces. Words known to all, open and accessible. Words secret, packed with messages for those who might one day try to unlock them.

But the text is not a peaceable one, with diverse elements smoothly fused through laughter. As François Rigolot has shown and Tim Hampton has just suggested, verbal explosions, a waterfall of words from unexpected contexts, occur on almost every plage. And the extravagances are not only playful, they are also agonic and conflictual.

I want to examine more closely two moments in Rabelais' novel where the interplay between French and other tongues is made manifest and where Christian and Muslim are placed in strife: chapters 9 and 14 of the book of *Pantagruel*. Let me tell you first the story of these two chapters.

When Pantagruel first lays eyes on Panurge, the prince is struck by the contrast between Panurge's good looks, on the one hand, and his bruised and dishevelled appearance on the other. He asks Panurge, "My friend, tell me who you are, where you come from, where you're going, what are you asking for, what are you seeking, and what's your name?" Panurge then answers him in thirteen different languages—German, Italian, Scottish, Basque, Dutch, Spanish, Danish, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and some made-up languages—asking in various ways for food. He puts it politely and indirectly, but says (for instance, in Greek): "You see me dying of hunger, but still show me no pity, but go on asking questions that are beside the point."

Some of these languages Panurge's listeners can't fathom. "My friend, I can't understand this "barragouin," this "gibberish," says Pantagruel after Panurge opens in a polite and archaic German. "If you want us to understand you, speak another language." But some of responses, the Hebrew, the Greek and the Utopian, one or another listener can follow. "That time I understood," says the learned tutor Epistemon. "It's the Hebrew tongue very rhetorically pronounced. "I understand that it seems to me," says Pantagruel, as Panurge speaks in the prince's Utopian mother tongue. But no one attends to his hunger, even when they understand him.

Finally, Pantagruel presses him, "Here, here, my friend. Don't you know how to speak French?" "[Oui], c'est ma langue naturelle et maternelle," answers Panurge; "Yes, this my natural and mother tongue." Then Panurge goes on to explain, in French, that he has been a prisoner among the Turks, that he will tell them about his escape another time, that he willingly accepts Pantagruel's offer to be his companion, but that he is in desperate and urgent need of something to eat. Whereupon Pantagruel takes Panurge to his own lodging and gives him whatever he needs.

Sometime later, while Panurge and his companions are cheerfully drinking together, Panurge is reminded of his days among the Turks. You've heard part of this story from Tim, but let me tell you now the whole version.

Panurge opens saying how unfortunate he considers the Turks since, by the law of the Koran, all Muslims are forbidden even a drop of wine. He then tells the story of his escape. He had been taken prisoner at Mytilene, that is, he had been part of the ill-fated French army that had fought the Turks at Lesbos in a crusade

inspired by the pope in 1502. The French had lost and many prisoners had been taken. From the Christian point of view, it was a disaster.

The Turks were now planning to roast and eat him, Panurge explains. Larded and on the spit, Panurge managed to get a firebrand in his teeth while his captor was dozing, spit it out, and start a fire. In the subsequent confusion, he escaped through the streets. The Turkish citydwellers, running to put out the fire, saw Panurge with burns on his body and threw water on him. They did this, says Panurge, "with natural pity for me." "It refreshed me joyously." They also give him food to eat.

As Panurge leaves the town, he sees his captor, in despair at his burning house and losses and expecting demons to come and take possession of him. He tries to kill himself and fails clumsily. Panurge then offers graciously to assist him by killing him (and let us note that Panurge has presumably been speaking Turkish all the way through this episode; another language known to him), and does so after his former captor gives him 600 Turkish coins, together with some diamonds and rubies.

The fire has spread to some 2000 houses. Panurge looks back as he leaves town, like Lot's wife. He is pursued not by people, but (as you've heard from Tim Hampton) by more than 1300 dogs, "Turkish dogs," a phrase used often in Christian rhetoric to refer to Turkish people and used by Panurge himself in such a way early in the story. These are literal dogs, however, the kind described in Pierre Belon's travel account a little later as living in the streets, outside of every door in Turkey. They are attracted to Panurge by the smell of his partly roasted flesh. He diverts them with pieces of the lard still on his person, and gets away cheerful and happy with his coins and jewels, which somehow slipped out of his possession before he got back to France.

The scholarly interpretation of the first episode—of Panurge of the multiple languages—has seen it as primarily an expression of Rabelais' program of Christian humanism. Charity and *communitas* must stretch beyond differences in languages. Panurge's listeners can see from the beginning that he's I need. They ought to have come to his aid promptly, almost without his having to ask. This is the standard view: languages themselves are not important here, but rather recognizing people in need and helping them even if they're strangers.

Tim Hampton has given a remarkable interpretation to the second episode in an essay in *Representations*, to whose richness I can not give full due. For Tim, Panurge's escape from Turkish roasters and Turkish dogs shows the limits of Christian charity as well as the contradictions in the humanist position, both rhetorically and morally. There is a Christian humanist outreach toward people who are different, but it dries up when it comes to Turks. And Tim points out that at the end Panurge, who has been treated with pity by some Turks, does not change. He leaves with his money. Bread must be shared among Christians, but the Muslim Turks are profoundly other. Panurge is indifferent to them as their city burns.

I would like not to add more complexity to the tale of Panurge's languages and perhaps take some of the bite out of the Turkish dogs.

Panurge has been compared to Mercury, the god of eloquence with an answer to everything, the god of merchants, crosser of boundaries, symbol of mediation. But Panurge is at the same time a man of Rabelais' own century. French is his "langue naturelle et maternelle," spoken with the accent of Rabelais' native Touraine, which he considered the most beautiful. Elsewhere in the book of Pantagruel, however, Rabelais speaks approvingly of speaking one's natural language in a case where it is not the most agreeable French vernacular. This is the story of the student whose language is so full of ornate and pretentious Latinisms that Pantagruel can't understand a word of it. When the prince-giant finally realizes that the student is a Limousin pretending he's a Parisian, he threatens to skin him alive if he doesn't stop skinning Latin. The student finally blurts out a plea to the saints and to Pantagruel in his own Limousin, and Pantagruel says, in an important phrase, "Now you're speaking naturally," and lets him go.

Thus, for Rabelais within France the "natural tongue" can vary. Panurge's is that of the Touraine, the student's is that of the Limousin. From this, it's clear that Rabelais does not present us with a simple French vernacular steamrolling over all diversity.

In addition to his French, Panurge speaks multiple tongues of Europe, knowing them not as barragouin, gibberish, mumbo jumo, but as languages by which to communicate. Let's imagine how sixteenth-century readers might respond to Panurge's first meeting with Pantagruel. Here I'm perhaps embarking on the kind of quest for which Leo Spitzer mocked Abel Lefranc (as we've just heard from

Tim Hampton); I'm doing so to suggest that contemporary audiences would not associate Panurge's multiple requests only to Christian humanist agendas. Chapter 9 would make them think, first, of the little language books printed in France to teach merchants and travelers "how to buy and sell in French, German and English, how to ask your way for lodgings, how to talk to the lady hotelkeeper." Second, 16th-century readers would recall one of the great moments in popular farce. This is a very amusing scene, one a comedian would love to play. Language after language rolls out, and heedless of all delay, Panurge stretches out the game till the listeners finally get it. This is a funny scene about human communication, not just a sober scene about human need and Christian charity.

Thirdly, 16th-century readers would not just think of these languages in terms of possible incomprehensibility and gibberish; they would think of them as languages of insult across political borders, languages in which war was being declared among Christian countries during the very years in which Rabelais was writing his book. Yet all of them are languages in Panurge's mouth. For Rabelais, multiple languages are not a source of Babelic breakdown, but a way to express the profound reality of difference in Christendom.

Well, how big is that mouth of Panurge? How adventuresome his palate? We see that he has little taste for Turks, though they wanted to eat him roasted. The chapter on the Turks is mockingly harsh in its portrayal of Muslims as cannibals and fools, but it is at least as harsh, if not more so, in its portrayal of Panurge.

The Turks are cruel, but some of them are kind. They help cleanse Panurge when he's filthy and they offer him food. He is not appreciative. He is not interested in drinking their water, which is all they offer him because they don't drink wine. He kills his captor in a cruel way which he describes with relish. To be sure, the captor would have killed Panurge if he could have, and welcomed Panurge's efforts to save him from demons by killing him. But Panurge's actions are still far from Christian charity and forgiveness. He accepts his captors money and jewels, but somehow they slip out of his hands "like the snows of yesteryear." His arrival in France penniless and starving turns out to be due as much to his profligacy as to his imprisonment by the Turks.

Rabelais has created in this chapter a Panurge who is a braggart and a liar, savvy about some matters but ignorant about others. He tells his listeners that his

experiences are "more marvelous than those of Ulysses," and everyone knew that Ulysses was a famous liar about his adventures. He knows enough Turkish to talk to his captors and benefactors, but is oddly unaware or indifferent to the Muslim prohibition against the lard with which he was allegedly being roasted.

Thus, the depiction of "Turkish dogs" is not just an example of the limits of Rabelais' imagination and empathy towards non-Christians. More important, through the blind spots, lies, and ingratitude of Panurge in regard to the Turks, Rabelais shows us the process by which alterity is imagined and reinforced. Even in this harsh Turkish chapter, Rabelais pokes some openings into Europe's 16th-century borders.

In our own 20th century, the languages of Rabelais have been described to us by Mikhail Bakhtin, François Rigolot, and most recently by Mireille Huchon. But the person who first opened this field of study was Lazare Sainéan. So now we'll go back to the world of Abel Le Franc, but look at it a little differently.

A man of remarkable mixture in both his personal background and intellectual activities, Sainéan illustrates the tension between the call of the nation-state and competing cultural loyalties. He was born in Romania in 1859. Lazar Chain / Shineanu—Chain is his Jewish name, Shineanu his Romanian name—came to adulthood in the anti-Semitic years of the late 19th century. While professional and wealthy Jews were claiming that they were sons of Romania like everyone else and should no longer be excluded from citizenship, right wingers were claiming that "the Jewish element" was incompatible with Romanian nationhood. There was much writing about this in right-wing nationalist and not even so right-wing nationalist literature: being Jewish was played off against being Romanian.

The Romanian government had promised at the 1878 Congress of Berlin that in return for Romania's freedom from Ottoman domination that citizenship would be granted to inhabitants irrespective of religion. In violation of that promise the government granted citizenship only begrudgingly to a few Jews each year. But Jews were allowed to attend the university. Shineanu studied philology, literature, and folklore at Bucharest, where his brilliance won him the patronage of the Romanian linguist Hasdeu. Though Shineanu never mentioned it, Hasdeu was

also one of the learned anti-Semites of the day—a middle-of-the-road anti-Semite rather than extremist—but in any case, he made an exception for Shineanu.

Shineanu also studied abroad at Berlin and Leipzig, where he was working in part on Yiddish studies, and at Paris, where he heard the innovative lectures of Gaston Paris on literature and of Michel Bréal on linguistics. Bréal is part of the background to the innovations of Ferdinand de Saussure in the next generation.

Back in Romania, Shineanu began to publish on Jewish subjects. Already as a very young man, he had published under the name of Chain a little book about Moses Mendelssohn, the great 18th-century figure of the Jewish Enlightenment in Europe. In 1889 appeared a pioneering book on what he called Judeo-German, that is, the Yiddish of Hungary, Galicia, and Romania and especially of Wallachia, a language he said his mother had spoken to perfection. It was a major contribution to Yiddish lexicography at a time when little had been done on the Yiddish language. The same year he launched an appeal with fellow Jews in Bucharest to collect materials in Yiddish—folk tales, riddles, folk medicine—before it was too late and the language disappeared. Here he was part of an ethnographic movement found among intellectual Jews in Russia and elsewhere. For a time he may have thought of doing his doctoral dissertation on Yiddish, but it could not have been submitted in Romania.

In the next decade under the name Shineanu he published extensively on Romanian subjects—mostly in Romania, occasionally in French for French periodicals. He wrote on Romanian fables and folklore in comparative perspective and on Romanian philology and lexicography. In all of this, he showed himself a critic of German romantic philology and a supporter of new ways to examine folklore and language. Some of these new ways he got from the Romanian folklore endeavor, some he got from his studies with Michel Bréal back in the Paris days.

Instead of a vain quest for a single origin of all folktales, say, in India, one assumed multiple origins. Similarities in tales were due as much to similarities in the historical psychology of peoples as they were to diffusion. Instead of a vain quest for an ur-language, such as the imaginary Aryan, philologists should look at the living history of languages and influences among them. In each of these positions, Shineanu is writing against major targets. Language had been falsely portrayed as an organism, evolving or decaying without human initiative. On the

contrary, a language was a set of arbitrary signs made up by people to communicate. It should be studied semantically for its meanings and especially historically as a process of popular creation and change in precise historical circumstances.

With so much publication, Shineanu hoped to get a university post in Bucharest. But this was not easy for a Jew to get, even with the patronage of an important man like Hasdeu. To be a university professor, he would have to be granted Romanian citizenship, already a difficult task. To make matters worse, his candidacy had aroused the opposition of an older competitor, a right-wing anti-Semitic philologist named Urechi_, who accused him among other things of undermining the Romanian nation and claiming that the Jews were the initial settlers of Dacia. One story behind this accusation is so ironic that I'm going to tell it to you now.

Shineanu had been interested as early as 1889 in a triple association that he kept finding in ethnographic studies of his own day and of rural areas in the past, especially in Romania. Three words were repeatedly linked in folk tales, proverbs, and other sayings: Jews, Tatars, giants. He published a little study both in French and unfortunately for him in Romanian, where Urechi_ could see it. He asked, without being a thorough reductionist, whether there was some historical trace carried by the association. And he said, yes there was, in the invasions of the Khazars, members of a mysterious Jewish kingdom, who had penetrated Europe centuries before. They were remembered as large tall people who were very violent. Shineanu suggested that was an explanation for the unusual trio of Jews, giants, Tatars.

Urechi_ discovered this article among other things by Shineanu and that was the beginning of the end. Shineanu was teaching as a kind of surrogate, a substitute, for Hasdeu. Urechi_ had student strikes organized against him and among many other accusations said Shineanu had claimed that the Jews were the original settlers of Dacia. If you know anything about the extravagance of Romanian arguments about who settled Transylvania and Dacia first, you will see why claiming that the Jews were there first—of course, a misreading of Shineanu's article—was enough to disgrace him in the eyes of many nationalists.

Twice in the 1890s he was turned down for citizenship by the Senate in a close vote. He did, after all, have some support. The third time, in December 1899, he was declared a citizen by the Senate, only to have the grant revoked the next day by governmental action. "For twenty-four hours, I thought I was a citi-

zen, he wrote. “Immediately I took a deep breath of the air of this *patrie* I could finally call my own. “ Civis Romanus sum!” He was devastated by the reversal the next day and the subsequent vote in the Senate confirming the reversal. He packed up his wife, his daughter, and his books and within a few weeks was living in France. Immediately he published an autobiographical account in French called *The Career of a Philologist in Romania*. His latest book on the Romanian language had just appeared in Bucharest. “I am proud,” he wrote from Paris, “to give this book to my pays as supreme witness of my love for the Romanian language and people. If it is my fate to finish my days on foreign soil, you will see me always faithful to this language.”

In fact, he was not always faithful to that language. During the next thirty-five years in France, where in fact he did die in 1934, his language loyalties shifted. He published his earlier Yiddish study in French translation in an important journal—the one favored by Ferdinand de Saussure and his supporters for their work. And he revised some of his Romanian dictionaries. But far from his Romanian books, Lazare Sainéan, as he now called himself, decided that henceforth he would concentrate on the languages of his new land.

His literary connections put him in touch with the vanguard of French linguistics, with Antoine Meillet and perhaps with de Saussure himself. Sainéan’s language studies were an innovative fulfillment of the new program. Not only did they stress actual language performance and the connection between recent historical events and change in language, they also looked a groups of speakers that French scholars ignored. He picked up right away certain topics that local specialists would not touch.

He did a book on the *argot ancien*, the slang of Old Regime France; a book on the speech of the popular classes in 19th-century Paris; and a small book on the language of the soldiers in the trenches of the Great War. These books were widely read, but some reviewers objected to the work of this foreigner. Did Sainéan want people to think that Parisians and good French solders talked like “Apache Indians”?

“In a democratic country like France,” Sainéan replied, “it is surprising to meet this contempt for the language of the people. I am proud to have given these forms of speech their social and linguistic value.”

He then went on to a major study of “the indigenous sources of French ety-

mology," in which he argued against the traditional ideas in 19th-century philology that the creation of language was not just due to learned grammarians or borrowings from distant times, but to "the little people, peasants, women and children" acting in history. He reminds one of later Bakhtinian populism.

The other prong of his work over his French decades was the 16th century and especially Rabelais, who would become, as Sainéan put it, "la grande préoccupation," "the great preoccupation of my life." What I love about this is that Sainéan finally got his giants, no longer the Jewish Khazars, but the Pantagrueline giants with some Jewish ancestors.

The Rabelais connection began when he listened raptly to the lectures of Abel Le Franc. Let us remember that Le Franc was not just creating a Third Republic atheist Rabelais against those arguing for a Christian humanist. His more significant targets were the people who thought of Rabelais as simply a bon vivant and libertine, an amusing esoteric text good for specialty publication and expensive leather-bound editions. Le Franc and his editorial colleagues were trying to wrest Rabelais from this special market and make him once again a national figure.

Only a few years after Sainéans's arrival in France, Le Franc invited him to provide the philological commentary for his multi-volume edition of Rabelais. He preferred for this task the innovating immigrant from Romania, interested in popular speech, to the more traditional French philologist, Antoine Thomas, who was a critic of the work of Bréal and Meillet.

Sainéan provided the commentary, and then went on to publish in 1922 and 1923 his own big two volumes on *La langue de Rabelais, The Language of Rabelais*, an invaluable work regularly cited today, even in the new work by critics whose theory supersedes his, but who still must use his findings. Sainéan used all the techniques from his earlier work on Yiddish and on Romanian language and folklore and from his explorations of French popular speech to map Rabelais' world. In terms of my larger project on cultural mixture, the immigrant Sainéan's braided history put him in a unique position to interpret Rabelais.

"The lexicography of Rabelais is the largest and most complex that we know," Sainéan insisted. Words and phrases were connected to Rabelais' reading in classical tongues, in Italian, and to some extent in other European languages. But more significant for Sainéan were the connections to Rabelais' nomadic wanderings throughout France, to the techniques of the crafts that he observed, the conven-

tions of theology, the understanding of medicine and the body, the phraseology of erotica. He illustrated all of these matters, and went on to popular legends besides. He even had a section on Rabelais' language and the Jewish speech of Provence.

Did he see in Rabelais' rich vocabulary and complex speech patterns coming together in a single smooth whole? In a way, yes. Writing in the Third Republic just after the Great War and with his own commitment to the idea of a nation, Sainéan did perceive Rabelais' language and usages as composing "une vaste synthèse de l'idiome national." Rabelais was producing a French mother tongue. The title of Sainéan's book was *La langue de Rabelais*—the language—not Les *langues de Rabelais*, the languages, as in the title of François Rigolot's recent important book. But the pluralistic possibility is simmering below the surface in Sainéans' study, the opposability that gives a place both to the natural speech of Panurge and the natural speech of the Limousin student.

The plural languages to which Chain / Shineanu / Sainéan finally admitted toward the end of his life were his own. For a number of years after having come to France, he talked of the noble pays which has received us, and referred to Franc as "our country," "notre pays." He did not forget Romania, however, saluting its future in a new edition of his Romanian dictionary published after World War I. As he said in its preface, he was particularly happy about the change in politics in Romania after the war, and hoped for the best for the land he had left.

Then, in an autobiographical memoir published in 1930, he described himself more fully. "My activity has a special feature, perhaps unique among 'Romanistes,' that is, to belong to two *patries* and thus to two languages. My scholarship has served them both." Indeed, he might have added his service to a third tongue, to the Yiddish of his mother and his childhood. But publishing in the France of the Third Republic, he referred to this contribution discreetly, only in a footnote. But it is there: the three languages, two father-tongues, a mother tongue.

In private he admitted to himself that there had been some unease in his relation to France. He had never had a proper professional post there, anymore than in Romania. During his early years he had briefly taught at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Philologie, a kind of extension course. After that, he never really had a university post. As he wrote to his brother in Bucharest in 1929, in a

set of letters published after his death, “In fact, here in France in social relations, after almost thirty years of service, I still remain the intruder.” It was this man with his multiple tongues, this exile from one fatherland, this intruder into another, who first opened the doors to the language worlds of François Rabelais.

This then is my presentation to you. I won’t make a formal conclusion here. I want to connect what I’ve said to a paper by Peter Eli Gordon we heard this morning at the Townsend Center. He was discussing Franz Rosenzweig, philosopher and thinker, reflecter on Jewish matters, someone concerned about ways to be authentically Jewish. At one point Rosenzweig was without a job and applied for a post at a Jewish school. The person doing the hiring asked him “Are you a German or are you a Jew?” And Rosenzweig found it hard to answer. As he wrote later, “My heart had one answer, but I knew that if I gave that answer, I would give my heart away. After the dissection I wouldn’t be alive at all.”

The life of Chain / Shineanu / Sainéan would be interpreted by many observers in terms of moving toward or away from assimilation. Rosenzweig’s quotation gives us a better understanding, one that sees interlacing, braiding as the heart of the matter. But let me now stop my flood of language so we may turn things over to discussion.

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Open Discussion

Hampton: I had a couple of thoughts about your discussion of the multiplicity of identities and of languages in Rabelais. A sentence in my original text, which I eliminated while trying to shorten it for today's presentation, argued that Le Franc, at the beginning of his edition, has a long sort of discussion of Rabelais as the embodiment of a particular moment of French culture. He says that the national language is now in its flower, French art has not yet been perverted by Italian influences. Le Franc works with a model of French unity which is anachronistic and fantasmatic, in the same way that Spitzer works with the model of a fixed vernacular, which is also fantasmatic and non-existent in Rabelais. In 1910, those Turkish dogs are still out in the street for Le Franc. This returns us to the issue of sources. Find those dogs. Go down there and you can photograph them and bring them back. Just another thought on that matter: in Cervantes' Don Quixote, in the tale of the Christian who has been in captivity in Algiers, there is a love story where he's meeting his beloved, a Moorish princess, in the garden. Their tryst is interrupted by some Turks, who jump into the garden. Somebody comes along and says, "Get those dogs out of here." In Cervantes, it seems that the image of the dog is used as a way of introducing, for Christian readers, a kind of Islamic multiplicity ranging from Moorish princesses to Turkish dogs. In much the same way, Rabelais uses dogs to imagine alterity in the episode with the Turks.

Davis: To suggest how alterity is imagined.

Hampton: Exactly. I think that he's imagining possible responses to alterity as well, and the limits of those possible responses.

Davis: Yes, so you'd agree on that.

Hampton: Indeed. I also have a question for you about this Limousin student and his dialect. As you were saying, there are many vernaculars in Rabelais. When the Limousin speaks in his dialect, that's at the very moment that he shits his pants. It's not even in the past; it's in the imperfect. "He was in the process of shitting in his pants." The simultaneity of the patois with the speech of the body, as it were, would lead me to deduce an, . . .

Davis: Negativeness?

Hampton: Yes. At least a negative nuance which is being injected—a negative odor which is being connected with the speaking of the vernacular.

Davis: Well, I see your point. I smell your point.

Hampton: I've never quite known what to do with that, but it seems amazing to me that there, language and excrement come at the same moment.

Davis: But both language and excrement are natural. I was really seizing on the word "naturellement." Pantagruel says to the student "A ceste heure parle tu naturellement." "Naturellement" and "naturel" are words we should take seriously in the 16th century. And look at Panurge. He's not like the Limousin student, but he's a trickster and does all kinds of impossible things. And yet he speaks French in the manner of Touraine, which is the sound Rabelais especially likes.

Hampton: True.

Davis: So it's a mixed story. About the Turkish dogs. The historian in me gets excited when, after reading Rabelais, I discover that there really were dogs running around in the towns and villages of Turkey, not belonging to any particular master but guarding the house where people leave leftover food for them. That doesn't deflate Rabelais' creativity in using the Turkish dogs. He might have delighted to play with an image that was not only a commonplace of European language about Turks, but also a fact of Turkish life.

Hampton: Agreed. My point is that when these kind of metaphors occur in Rabelais, it raises the question whether there was an experience which was then transmitted or transformed into language, or vice versa. That makes it possible to be the deconstructionist who says, "Well, it's nothing but a juxtaposition of images," or, conversely, to say, "Let's find those real dogs."

Davis: In a way, then, I'd like to take that wonderful formulation and say that that's partly what I see in the chapter in which Panurge answers in all the languages. It seems clear that having all the languages has some implication for what then happens. Pretty strong.

Hampton: To return to another issue, though. This text marks a shift from Latin to a vernacular tradition. The multiplicity of vernaculars and the way they are presented, I think., also shows a desire to favor some vernaculars over others.

Davis: I agree. When I go through the text, I notice how Rabelais changes the language or the slant of the vernacula all the time. You discover something new every time you read a chapter. And this is perhaps a reflection of his experience in different regions of France. He lived in Lyons for years with the multiple accents, in the midst of a totally cosmopolitan environment. He lived in Metz, where they speak French and German.

Hampton: I guess the way I would think about Rabelais' use of vernaculars would be to return to your suggestion that the Turks episode is really about the problem of imagining alterity, that somehow what's interesting about this episode is that it sets in relief the kind of violence that is connected with language and with the standardization of language or a privileging of one language over another. Which is not to say that Rabelais thinks Limousin is bad or good. That is not the issue. The point is that there is a close association of language and violence. Pantagruel is a prince. He grabs this man by the throat, and he can never speak again. That suggests a meditation on issues associated with power and language, which seems amazing for this text.

Davis: But let me stress that the practice of Rabealis' book is not a single, smooth French vernacular. With Rabealis we're not dealing with the kind of language that the Pléïade will write, and he also reads very differently from Calvin.

Hampton: You're absolutely right that this is a multi-voiced text. But the moments when speaking in other languages is thematized and staged are very often moments like this one, where, there is violence or some other trouble.

Davis: Yes, although Panurge finally gets his idea across.

Hampton: True. I also wanted to draw attention to a sense of a language which would produce around itself a kind of symbolic capital that would help you gain power for yourself. The Limousin student seems like a good example because by speaking this curious Sorbonne jargon, a sort of academic jargon, he is allying himself with a particular class that has a prestige which he would not have if he spoke, presumably, his patois. It is very curious also that he never speaks "French." Almost as if there is no place for him to be.

Davis: What you find in practice is pleasure in switching from French, if you're among the city folk who know that language, and the local language. Here I'm referring to the findings of Paul Cohen, who's doing a doctoral dissertation on the presence of non-French vernaculars in governmental business and other kinds of communication after the Edict of Villiers-Cotterêts. And this persists on into the 17th century,when regional elites can speak a quite good French, the language of the courts and of government, but who still find all kinds of occasions to switch into the local tongue.

Let me tell you what Leo Spitzer once said about bilingual poets. I heard him speak years ago about the meaning of mother tongues. He talked of the difference in poetry written in Italian and poetry written in Latin. Poems in Italian used words with much affect; the love and feeling were in the mother tongue. Those in Latin were on grander themes. It wasn't that Spitzer preferred one to the other, but he did note how different they were.

And to return to our Limousin student, it's interesting that when he is terrified, he not only shits, he goes back into his mother tongue. Affect is once again connected with local speech. And in this comic episode, we also have an extreme version of the practice of switching languages.

Hampton: What you're suggesting makes the issue more amazing: that the there is no originary language, that everyone is speaking a foreign language.

Davis: It seems to me I understand that. For either it's the language of my country of utopia, or else it sounds like it, resembles it in sound. So, so Pantuguel is bilingual. I mean he's, he's also multi-lingual.

Davis: The idea of "Beyond Babel" is to think of multiplicity of languages as not just a source of disorder or cpnfusion. The biblical phrase is "the Lord did there confound the language of all the Earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad." When people are scattered they can kill each other, but they can also trade, exchange, communicate, learn each other's languages, even intermarry. It is this idea of not stopping at Babel, of moving beyond multiple languages as a punishment that is behind my ideas about Panurge. The many languages are a big mouthful for Panurge—troubling, difficult—but available for transactions.

As for this chapter having a Pentecostal element, I don't at the moment see it. Perhaps in Book 5. . . .

Audience Question: Dr. Hampton, were you suggesting that Rabelais was developing a deconstructive model of language?

Hampton: Not as such, no. One aspect of Rabelais that I find so fascinating is that unusual, unsettling gesture whereby it's possible to argue that what might seem to be extra-textual reference has somehow been produced out of figuration or out of juxtaposition of tropes and so on. That gesture makes it impossible to naively about a reflective model of langage. That's the insight of deconstruction, which gives us a basis for thinking about materiality, and the materiality of the script. Rabelais's text seems to me to be the great laboratory for that problem, more than any other text that I know of, even Shakespeare.

Audience Question: These associations with speech and the body—either shitting or violence—seem to indicate that Rabelais thought of language as a bodily and not a cerebral function.

Davis: I like your formulation a lot. Once again I can't help slipping into my historian's mode. As you were speaking I immediately began asking what 16th-century medical texts say about how speech works, including those texts that Rabelais himself was likely to have used. What do they say about how speech is related to the body, about what was at stake physically when you spoke?

Hampton: Yes. It's interesting that very often key moments in Rabelais are also linked to curses, I mean to violent speech acts.

Davis: But it's probably interesting and controversial because it involves breath and air, and the pulmonary system. So there might be a little materiality that is being followed through here, that he's playing with.

And with that, I think we can end.

Notes on Contributors

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