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A popular comic approach to Renaissance culture through the work of Rabelais

Ricardo Floranes Gómez

Humorous manifestations of popular culture has a universal character. In Latin countries, especially France, where it develops the work of Rabelais, noted for its richness and complexity. According with Peter Burke, "these rituals humorous demonstration outside the control of the Church and the State offered an unofficial view of the world, of man and human relations, constituting a second world and a second duality based life". This duality existed en Early civilizations in which the cult comedians mocked and cursed by a ritual laughter of the gods, although officially. During the Middle Ages comedy was deinstitutionalized these forms, modifying their meaning, to finally become the fundamental forms of expression of the world view and popular culture in the Renaissance.

The carnival plays an important role in the life or Renaissance human. A feast of carnival itself is adjacent numbered civil parties as the "feast of fools" or "the party of the donkey", or religious festivals which had a popular comedian and public appearance as the "temple festival", which was accompanied by fairs and a rich cortege of popular rejoicing as giants, dwarfs, monsters, beasts... Other festivities were socio-economic aspects of towns and cities, such as agricultural festivals harvest seasons.

Is necessary to set out the conceptual schematic and typical features of the carnival for understand its importance:

- a) The carnival is a travesty forms of worship that are detached from the Church and become part of a particular sphere in everyday life.
- b) Relates to theatrical, even if it's considered an official show, with artistic forms and animated images, plain and simple without being artistic. It occupies a border between life and art. The viewer is involved in the theatrical carnival, becoming an actor in it.
- c) The carnival is universal, not just held in all European nations, but because it is designed by and for the nation. The main actors are life carnival jesters and clowns, who make the culture of folk humor expression.
- d) The carnival breaks with the prevailing social hierarchy in a temporary escape from the ordinary lifestyle, reigning for a few days a climate of freedom desired feudalization prohibited by society.

e) The Carnival is a holiday, spontaneity and lack of control, criticism and degradation of everyday situations.

In Bakhtin's words, "during the carnival is the life which it plays, and for a time the game and the fun turns into real life. This is the specific nature of the carnival, the particular mode of existence"

The carnival is the festive life of the people, festive life expresses itself an ideal conception of the world in relation to time in natural, biological and historical. This second life of the people entering fully into the utopian realm of universality, freedom, equality and abundance

The unofficial holiday carnival as opposed to the official ceremonies of the church and government, ruled by the consecration of difference, hierarchy and inequality. At the carnival all were equal and there was a special form of free and familiar contact between people separated normally in everyday life by impassable barriers of his condition, his fortune, his age and family status. In this carnival is the vision of the world. The second life built through the carnival is conceived as a parody of everyday life, as a true world upside down.

The rite carnival has its own language, which disregards the standards of conduct and etiquette. This language is used by writers of the time, from Rabelais to the fools German literature, through Erasmus, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Guevara and Quevedo.

The carnival mood is characterized by a festive mood universal and popular. The world is viewed from a prism considered comical and playful appearance. But it is satire, is mockery and sarcasm. It is an ambivalent humor that makes fun of mocking and derision.

The influence of the carnival at the thought of medieval and Renaissance man was radical, to the point that in the great cities of Europe could be as long a period of 3 months. Requires every citizen, regardless of social or economic, to contemplate the world from a humorous perspective and carnival.

Carnival analysis is only possible if we study with attention to comic medieval and Renaissance literature that reflect perfectly the expressions and slang in these and other European festivals.

Medieval comic literature, prevailed throughout a millennium, is an expression of popular and carnival world view. In line uses the language of forms and symbols.

Medieval comic literature and its popularity continued until the Renaissance. It is an evolution of parody works of antiquity, as Cyprian's Supper, which is invested with carnival spirit Scripture, or Vergilius Maro's Grammaticus, which is a treatise on Latin grammar parody or a parody scholastic wisdom and medieval science. In the renaissance this comic literature reaches its apotheosis.

Within the Latino comic literature there are two types of parodies. On one side are sacred parodies, which according to Bajtin, were the written reflection of the echoes of laughter of the popular and desacralized carnival that impacted on the walls of monasteries, were written governed by the laughter of Easter. Within this genre can be framed liturgies parodies, parodies belonging of the Gospel readings, the prayers, litanies, hymns or psalms, as well as imitations of the evangelical statements, wills, parody, parody prayers or homilies.

During the course of the modern world the festive mood is going to be replaced by negative and sarcastic laughter, constant in the writings of Rabelais.

Despite the abundant production of sacred parodies, in the Renaissance emphasized the predominance and other literature parody, the secular parodies. This genus is fed parody epics, which stage animals, clowns and fools. It is in this genre where we can locate Rabelais.

Like the culture of folk humor derives from the carnival held in the public squares of Europe, the popular comic language is the result of the collective joy of the crowd in the public square. Is a vocabulary drawn from popular jubilation over the centuries to create grotesque degradation always alluding to lower the genital areas or viscera, guts or droppings.

Droppings acquire, during the celebration of Carnival, a very important role in pageants like the fool or bells, in which an important part of the ritual was to launch them. Since ancient times it was common to use this vocabulary grotesque. The satirical drama Aeschylus tells us how to throw a jar with urine on the head of Ulysses. Rabelaisian texts capture the essence of this popular festive laughter. According with Bakhtin notes, Gargantua and Pantagruel are full of passages of this kind. In the first work cited the giant urinating on a Parisian who surround him, his ass does the same with soldiers. On another occasion blocks the way to a pilgrimage to eject a stream of urine.

It is clear that one of the main features of the Renaissance, is the recovery of the culture of the ancient world, on the other hand, did not completely lost in the Middle Ages. Transmission and evolution of this popular culture is evident in the writings of Rabelais and other contemporary authors. Consequently, vocabulary, written language, verbal or body belonging to the people as well. And captured the essence of this language speak later Rabelais.

It is very probable that at present the transmission of culture has not been completed and continue to evolve the language used by classical authors, as well as the humorous, ridiculous, ironic or sarcastic it. It is well known the phrase "I put a shit on you". During the feast of the Charivari during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance it was common to use the term "shit for him" to refer to the objective of the launch of excrement. These connections formal language, such as Peter Burke notes, are an integral part of European cultural heritage, traditions and customs.

Perhaps the difference of language comic renaissance current expressions derived from it lies in one of the concepts that characterize the grotesque realism in duality. In the Renaissance period, according to Bakhtin, these expressions have a double meaning, an ambivalence. On the one hand pointed to the "inferior", so degrading, and, on the other, the beautiful, dignified. The ambiguous language is expressed through a cyclical formula. For example, the constant use of the grotesque in language indicates a cycle from the actual and normal life, going through the expulsion of these, i.e. death, to end up deposited on the ground, i.e. fertility, rebirth. The masses associated with these notions and who are experts in the stool is a great fertilizer, and fertilizer causes the land

more productive. However, the current grotesque language has lost its share of renewal, becoming only degrading expressions.

As can be seen, satisfaction of needs constitutes the subject and the body first comedian par excellence, making full use of the use of cynicism, the obscenities and profanities. But, when and where this language is used? Public places were in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance a unique world where popular integrated heterogeneity and in which, during holiday periods, there was a feeling of freedom, openness and fraternity. The language is a rather popular comic linked to the life of the public square, where they pass these festivals and rituals, and the informal nature and liberating. So you can determine that "the unofficial popular culture has its own territory and specific dates, the public square and public holidays and fair"

Free treatment and family carnival produces a form of special communication. It is transmitted to a downgrade language that breaks with the standards in it. In this language holidays floods everything, even the Church. Do not forget that it celebrates the Feast of the Donkey and the Feast of Fools.

Perhaps the importance of the work of Rabelais is able to grasp that this language family and put it in writing. And maybe that's the reason why these expressions belonging to the popular vocabulary Renaissance have survived, evolved and survived to this day. Now, how Rabelais captured that language? To explain this properly we must focus on certain periods of the life of Rabelais, taking it into account for the darkness that surrounds this biography.

Rabelais was born in France, in Touraine, in 1494. After starting his studies at a Benedictine abbey Seully was ordered Franciscan friar at Fontenay-le-Comte, as indicated in a letter to the humanist Guillaume Bude in 1521. This city, economic head of the French region known today as the Loire, was the place of location of a major French exhibitions. Rabelais made contact with the universe from a young popular holiday, in a century, the sixteenth, in which shows and fairs abound. Do not forget that these fairs festive laughter pierced the horizon and penetrated popular culture in the world full of official and dominant culture, as is the ecclesiastic and monastic who was involved in the life of Rabelais.

In 1524, stung by the criticisms of superiors of his order on his reading, came to the Benedictine Order and was appointed secretary of Bishop Geoffroy d'Estissac. Was associated then with the circle of the poet Jean Bouchet, who sent a letter poem, its first known written in French. Since 1530, he attended as a student, faculty of medicine at Montpellier. A period of economic difficulties that led him to move to the city of Lyon, where he also served as a doctor, but was not already entitled. Lyon was held in another of the great fairs of France. The city came to live at their peak two months annual holidays from fairs and carnivals. In 1532, also published a translation of the Aphorisms of Hippocrates, the first book of his satire Pantagruel, whose success was spectacular, but the Sorbonne was sentenced in 1533 for obscene and heretical. In winter the same year he accompanied the bishop and diplomat Jean du Bellay in Rome, as a doctor. Then became interested in botany and topography and edited a topography of Rome, signed by Marliani.

In 1535, his second great work, The invaluable life of Gargantua, Pantagruel's father, was published by François Juste, in Lyon. After a further stay in Rome from 1536 he was released from his vows church and led for ten years, an adventurous life, devoting himself primarily to medicine. Finally graduated from the University of Montpellier, in 1537, was introduced in court and benefited from the protection of Guillaume du Bellay, Jean's brother.

The third book of Pantagruel, published in 1546 and dedicated to Marguerite de Navarre, was condemned as heresy by the Sorbonne, who included it in the index of prohibited books, together Gargantua, Rabelais after which first took refuge in Metz and then in Rome. The first chapters of the fourth book of Pantagruel appeared in 1548. In 1549, he returned to Paris where he lived for the prebend which had been granted.

The fifth book of Pantagruel, the first sixteen chapters were published in 1562, nine years after his death, the others were added two years later, but doubt its authenticity. His work is a fresco satirical society of his day, rich in specific and colorful detail that contribute to a humorous description, often exacerbated and parody of the France of his time. Rabelais's satires are directed above all against the folly and hypocrisy, as well as against all obstacles imposed on human freedom, which often put him at odds with the Church, to parody his dogmatism and his ascetic aspirations. It said contrary to traditional education and opted for certain reforms that related to Erasmus.

As can be seen, the contact with what Rabelais, Bakhtin as was the expression of popular culture, the festivals celebrated in public squares, was constant. His position as a priest, educated and literate, have allowed us now analyze this culture through the works of it. Bear in mind that Rabelais writes of popular culture while not belong to her. Is a direct observer of this culture but does not represent the full. The study Peter Burke made analyzing the social functions of language through history, explaining that the language used by the people, is a symbol of identity, and so does the language used by the upper classes certify this fact. When analyzing the work of Rabelais but do not pass this information overlooked.

Language forms of popular joy emanated in the hot summer holiday season Rabelaisian permeates the work. Bakhtin claims that the introduction of Pantagruel is one of the best examples:

"Very polite illustrious champions, gentlemen and others who have seen, read and learned, the Great and invaluable chronic huge giant Gargantua and that, as true believers, you believed as if they were texts of the Bible or the Gospels, and who have remained with them a long time in the company of women and girls, reading stories at the time of the party: you are very worthy of eternal praise and recommendation "

In the foreword Rabelais appropriates the language used by marketers and charlatans of fair, comic formulas used when advertising of products to sell. These discourses were constructed through praise for the target audience for these products, a deeply sarcastic praise. It is clear that the target of popular shows was the people, the vulgar, which is, as exemplified by this prologue, honorable, gentlemen or champions. They also make use of deep irony in comparing the products offered to the public with something sacred, superb, transforming the product to sell in a miracle product. The popular propaganda, like the texts of Rabelais, was joking, mocking himself and had an ironic character. But the language of popular comic fed not only praise but antagonistic expression used to praise: the injuries.

To analyze this action comedy allude, as did Bakhtin, the last paragraph of the preface quoted above:

"Therefore, to end the preface, saying that if there were a single word liar in the book, will give a hundred thousand diabolical baskets my body and my soul, my guts and entrails. So, too, that years of ergotism, epilepsy, ulcers of the legs, dysentery, anal eripsela damned and you fall for the sulfur, fire and the abyss, like Sodom and Gomorrah, if not firmly believe in all that I tell in this present Chronicle"

These folk curses that close the prologue are typical of this language, copper all the praise because he spends disproportionate to the injuries caps no less exaggerated. Praise and slander are two sides of a coin. The language of the public square is an alternation of compliments and insults, both ironic and mixed resources, to the point of being confused with each other. Sometimes you cannot see where the praise ends and begins the injury, and vice versa, because of this ambivalence in terms.

As mentioned earlier, the satisfaction of bodily needs is the art and comic principle par excellence. Starting from this premise is easy to sense the metaphorical use certain diseases such as gout and syphilis. Rabelais describes them as "gay disease". Gout is a disease caused by the abundance of eating and drinking. For its part, syphilis is asexually transmitted disease. Again, the use of irony in the oral and written language is a hall mark of Renaissance popular laughing.

Another feature of this laughter is the language use of "double meaning" that, according to Bajtin, became one of the game of grotesque realism. To illustrate this refers to the repetition of the word tripe in the work of Rabelais. Alludes to another passage in the prologue in which Rabelais and challenges the reader to find a better book than his, and if that book is found, personally paid a "pint of tripe." Corns are a food preparation comprising viscera of cattle. It was the cheapest meat product of the time. In addition, calluses are perishable, so people ate too much on holiday season. Being viscera, much as the product was washed, were always in them a percentage of excrement. The stool, as I said earlier, is one of the features of this grotesque realism, which degrade sand also purifies and renews. The ambivalence in the meaning of such words is another hallmark of this language.

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RABELAIS, F. (2009): Five books of the lives, heroic deeds and saying of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel. Penn State Electronic Classic Series, London.

The comic in Rabelais's originates from French variant of humanist ideas. Famous prologs by Alcofribas Nasier represent a merely authorial play with canons and methods of the medieval literature and a parody of the medieval understanding of words and books that had little to do with the spirit of popular carnival. Rabelais was extremely familiar with the theater of farce, and this intimacy affected his work in important ways. Indeed, the theater of farce is a crucial subtext in understanding Rabelais's literary project. Already at a very early stage, comic scenes proved to be popular additions to liturgical music drama and, later, to religious plays in the vernacular. Some scholars believe that the genre of farce developed out of these farcical elements. The suggestion was made that farces View Renaissance Comedy Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. A popular comic approach to Renaissance culture through the work of Rabelais. Save to Library. Download. by Ricardo Floranes. 7. Popular Culture, Renaissance Studies Rabelais's works, which for Bakhtin exemplify the carnivalesque genre, are a watershed of the "folk humor" and the "popular culture of the market place" which Bakhtin sees as the counterpart to the "serious" and "official" church and feudal culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Then come the literary comic works, including parody, in Latin and in the vernacular, in oral and written form. "Popular culture" in Bakhtin's understanding of the works of Rabelais, as well as his predecessors (Dante, Boccaccio) and successors (Cervantes, Shakespeare), has the attribute of authenticity. 2 Compare M. Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia kul'tura srednevekovia i renessansa*. [The Work of François Rabelais and the popular culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance] Two noteworthy trends in Renaissance humanism were Renaissance Neo-Platonism and Hermeticism, which through the works of figures like Nicholas of Kues, Giordano Bruno, Cornelius Agrippa, Campanella and Pico della Mirandola sometimes came close to constituting a new religion itself. Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe (New Approaches to European History). Cambridge University Press, 2006. Plumb, J. H. ed. From Petrarch through the 1800s, the Renaissance was seen as a revolt against the Middle Ages. The 1900s brought a reaction from scholars who specialized in medieval studies. Some accepted the existence of the Renaissance but placed its beginning back in earlier times. His influential studies focused on the qualities of works of art, rather than on the social and intellectual climates that produced them. Since the mid-1900s scholars have examined the Renaissance from multiple angles, such as its religious expressions and political organization. Specialists called social historians have increasingly turned away from politics and famous individuals to study the entire range of human activities and social groups. Popular Imagination and Culture.