

Drama and Performance in the *'Satyre Menippée'* of 1594 by Pauline Smith

It has always been a custom and a pleasure, at the start of these lectures, to share memories of Klaus, his achievements and his influence. I remember in particular, as an undergraduate, how useful was his practice (by no means universally adopted within the department), of returning essays individually to students, “at times to be arranged” (in the words of the Bedford prospectus), and how helpful his guidance was; he could isolate a weakness in method, suggest a remedy and give one the confidence to try it. I like to think that the advice he gave, and which I took, after some hesitation, was mutually beneficial, since I never again handed in an over-long essay. It certainly saved us both time and effort.

Klaus was of course a most generous host, extending his students gastronomic and alcoholic horizons immeasurably. I remember, as does Rozel, how, at our post-Finals party at Klaus and Dana’s house, we were towards the end of the evening, offered a most exotic-looking drink, which I had never come across before and which, on enquiry, proved to be a rather James Bond-ish sounding liqueur by the name of Danziger Goldwasser. It did not quite have James Bondish-effects, except that I cannot for the life of me recall what it tasted like, although I do remember the flecks of gold leaf, floating on its surface.

It goes without saying that my subject and title tonight also owe a lot to Klaus.

His own thesis, on "Satire in the French Renaissance from 1525 - 60" and particularly the Lucianic variety, was the starting point for three others, Annette's, my own and Trevor's ¹.

One of Klaus's other interests was the theatre, as a spectator, producer and performer. So I shall be looking at these three perspectives as they relate to drama in the *Satyre Menippée*. I shall use this short form of the work's title for the sake of convenience.

I think it would be fair to say that the *Satyre Menippée* is today a work more often referred to than read. I suspect that there must be many such works in the canon of world literature, neglected sometimes for the most obvious of reasons, especially in the case of political satire where topicality, an initial strength, becomes with the passage of time a diminishing asset, a past which needs to be revisited, unveiled.

There is a second, not unconnected reason to this first one, of a material kind.

The lack, until very recently, of a sound critical edition of the *Satyre Menippée* ² with accompanying commentary also goes some way to explain my opening remark.

Nevertheless, in spite of a declining readership since the late 18th century, as suggested by historical bibliography, many have opted to embrace the work as a

¹ A.H. Tomarken [Porter], "The Satirical Eulogy in French Renaissance Literature", Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1966; P. M. Smith, "The Anti-Courtier Trend in French Renaissance Literature", Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1964; T. Peach, "La Vie et l'œuvre littéraire de Jacques Tahureau (1528-1555)", Ph.d thesis, University of Liverpool, 1975.

² All subsequent quotations and references, unless otherwise indicated, will be to this critical edition by M. Martin, *Satyre Menippée de la Vertu du Catholicon d'Espagne et de la tenue des Etats de Paris* (Paris, Champion, 2007).

masterpiece, a judgement I share. Indeed, its reputation went before it. It was the best-seller of its day. Apart from circulating clandestinely in a shorter manuscript form nearer to the event it pillories, namely the meeting of the Estates-General in Paris between January and August 1593, the longer printed version sold like hot cakes and it was in fact reprinted by the same house five times in three weeks. In the years between its first publication in 1594 and the tragic end of Henry IV's reign in 1610, no fewer than 20 editions or reprints have been recorded, not counting the English translation, and there may well be others lurking un-catalogued in private collections. So there was a public avid for the work. And many of these extant copies bear witness to the fact that their owners were not just slaves to literary fashion but had not only read the text but annotated it copiously, and the more so their descendants. This is certainly the case with seventeenth and early eighteenth century readers ³.

So, what ⁴ was the background, experienced at first hand by its earliest readers, of this satire? It was inspired by the tumultuous events which took place between the final years of Henry III's reign, say 1584-89, and his successor Henry IV's eventual and much delayed triumphal entry into his capital, Paris, in March 1594. But that particular decade was merely the culmination of more than thirty years of intermittent civil strife, the "Wars of Religion" so-called, misleadingly since the label hardly does justice to the intense personal and dynastic rivalries which, allied to religious

³ Details relating to the historical bibliography of the text will be found in Y. Cazaux, 'Essai de bibliographie des éditions de la Satyre Menippée publiées du XVI^e siècle au XVIII^e siècle, in Revue française d'histoire du livre, nouvelle série, 34 (1982), 3-40 supplemented by Jean-Paul Barbier-Mueller, 'Une chronologie des premières éditions de la Satyre Menippée (1593-94)', in Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 67 (2005), 373-93. Pierre Dupuy and Le Duchat were the major seventeenth and eighteenth century commentators on the Satyre.

⁴ The literature on this period of French history is vast but see A. Jouanna and Jacqueline Boucher, Histoire et dictionnaire des Guerres de Religion (Paris, Laffont, 1998), Part 1, '1585-98.....', pp. 305-445 and Robert Knecht, The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France, 1483-1610, 2nd ed. (Oxford, Blackwell, 2001), pp. 260-468.

fanaticism, fuelled these incendiary outbreaks between Catholics and Protestants, frustrating the efforts at conciliation and compromise on the part of whatever moderates did exist.

The death in 1584 of Henry III's brother and heir presumptive precipitated the final phase of these conflicts by triggering a crisis of succession. With Henry III and his wife childless and likely to remain so barring the miracle they earnestly sought, and his brother dead, the heir presumptive was now the Protestant Henry of Navarre who declined suggestions that he convert to Catholicism to smooth his path to the throne and was in any case totally unacceptable to the Church, to the Catholic nobility and in particular to the Guise of the ultra-Catholic house of Lorraine.

Their aim, backed by Rome, Spain and the Jesuits was nothing less than the total eradication of the Protestant heresy and its adherents from France and the removal of Henry of Navarre's rights of succession to the throne. Internally, the Guise inspired princely Catholic League, ostensibly in defence of the faith, made common cause with the bourgeois Paris League, providing it with an imposing figure head, until his murder, in Henry of Guise. The Paris League however was to become ever more radical and increasingly fanatical, whipped up by a priesthood of markedly insurrectional tendencies and encouraged by the Paris Faculty of Theology. So much so that Charles, Duke of Mayenne who had followed his murdered brother as leader of the Catholic League and assumed the title of Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, found himself in the position of the man riding the proverbial tiger. While self-interest dictated that he needed to exploit the Paris League, its extreme elements threatened the continued existence of the French Monarchy and, *ipso facto*, the fulfilment of his personal ambition as a pretender to the throne.

On the other side, Protestant followers of Henry of Navarre received much needed support from moderate Catholics, pragmatists hopeful of Navarre's eventual conversion. Since their prime concern was for the integrity and unity of France returned to peace and stability under a legitimate French rather than an imposed foreign monarch, that is to say a political rather than a spiritual concern, they were known as the *Politiques*. The gulf between *Ligueur* and *Politique* is starkly expressed by a spokesman for the former in a contemporary dialogue thus: "Nous n'affectons la nation mais la religion"⁵.

While it would be impossible in the time available to chart in all their complexity the final stages of this conflict, certain defining moments are constantly referred to in the *Satyre Menippée*, namely, the Paris Barricades of May 1588, erected by the citizens against the King's troops but eventually controlled by the Parisians' charismatic idol, Henry of Guise; the retreat of the King from his capital to Chartres; his humiliating concessions to the Guise faction at the Blois meeting of the Estates-General in December of the same year, quickly followed by his own instigation of the murder of Guise and his brother the Cardinal of Lorraine and almost inevitably, seven months later, his own assassination at the hands of the monk Jacques Clément. For their part, the Protestants were not idle: May to August 1590 marked the second and much longer siege of Paris by Henry of Navarre resulting in food riots, famine and death before the blockade was lifted by Spanish troops sent by the Duke of Parma. The following year, November 1591,

⁵ *Dialogue d'entre le Maheustre et le Manant*, published 1593. Modern edition by P. Ascoli (Geneva, Droz, *Classiques de la pensée politique*, 10, 1977), p. 193. See also p. 50 : 'c'est un grand blasphème de postposer la Religion à l'Etat'.

the most demagogic faction of the Paris League instigated and carried out the arrests and executions without trial of the President and two senior members of the Paris Parlement (supreme court), much to the fury of the League's nominal head, Charles, Duke of Mayenne, who exacted his own swift reprisals, hanging four of those deemed responsible for the outrage. Thus was laid bare the increasingly fractious nature of the self-styled *Sainte Union*, now exposed as neither so holy nor so united as it claimed to be. (Its opponents lost no time in re-designating it 'la Feinte Union', the sham union), a nice substitution of one consonant for another, confirming the suspicion that many contemporaries could not tell their *Ss* from their *Fs* literarily as well as politically). Against this background, the unauthorised league-dominated meeting of the Estates-General called by Charles, Duke of Mayenne, opened after many postponements in Paris in January 1593 to elect a Catholic king in place of the as yet uncrowned legitimate heir, Henry of Navarre. An ambitious agenda given the competing interests and numerous claimants, and one doomed to failure. Such were the dramas of history ("one damn thing after another" to paraphrase a recent definition of History ⁶) which provided the raw material, the plots and counterplots, the heroes and villains, the supporting cast of thousands for the writers of the *Satyre Menippée* to exploit as they wished.

Six authors according to contemporaries, of clearly royalist and *Politique* persuasion, did just that. The manuscript version, in prose only, established the basic framework and idea for a dramatised parody of the opening of the Estates-General. Its author was apparently a cleric, a chaplain to the Cardinal de Bourbon,

⁶ In Alan Bennett's play, The History Boys.

by the name of Jean (or Pierre) Le Roy. Later, others enlarged upon his work, added scurrilous verses, until it was first published as *La Vertu du Catholicon d'Espagne, Avec un Abregé de la tenue des Estats de Paris* in Tours, then the centre of the royalists, sometime in the Spring of 1594. Later, possibly in June of that year, it was reprinted in Paris by the same printer, finally receiving its canonical title: *Satyre Menippée de la Vertu du Catholicon d'Espagne et de la tenue des Estats de Paris*. Its remaining authors, Florent Chrestien, Jacques Gillot, Jean Passerat, Pierre Pithou and Nicolas Rapin had already distinguished themselves in the Church, the Law, Academia, the Royalist Army and by their own published classical and legal scholarship, poetry and polemics ⁷.

Contemporary commentators recognised the theatrical nature of the *Satyre Menippée*, which was viewed variously as a comedy to which further scenes could be added in the case of its earliest version or as a farce which presented unpalatable truths in a playful manner ⁸. Even the ancient Greek Satyr plays and their uncouth performers were invoked by the anonymous author of the work's "postface" to explain, for the benefit of less well educated readers, the word *satyre* in its changed title⁹. More recently, critics have praised the work's composition and structure as a

⁷ On these points see Martin's introduction to his edition of the *Satyre Menippée*, ed. cit., pp. XV-LIV and *Études sur la Satyre Menippée*, réunies par F. Lestringant et D. Ménager (Geneva, Droz, Études de philologie et d'histoire, 41, 1987), Avant-Propos, pp. 7-18, A. Armand and M. Driol, 'Deux états du texte : 1593 et 1594', pp. 19-38 and F. Poirson, 'Les deux avis de l'impimeur', pp. 39-54.

⁸ Most notably by Jacques-Auguste de Thou, in his *Histoire Universelle*, quoted in *Études sur la Satyre Menippée*, op. cit., p. 7, n.1 and by Simon Goulart in the foreword to his 1598 edition of the *Satyre* quoted by Pauline M. Smith in 'Simon Goulart et la *Satyre Menippée*', in *Renaissance Reflections. Essays in Memory of C. A. Mayer*, ed. Pauline M. Smith and Trevor Peach (Paris, Champion, La Renaissance française, 10, 2002), p. 232.

⁹ *Satyre Menippée*, ed. cit., pp. 160-161.

“modèle d’exposition théâtral” for which they see parallels in late medieval comic drama ¹⁰. While such parallels are plausible, other factors, specific events as we have seen, as well as shared customs and rituals, helped to shape, even dictate, the *Satyre Menippée*’s exposition as well as theatrical tradition. And the spirit of parody was certainly common to both.

A persuasive example of the blending of such elements is to be found in one of the opening scenes of the *Satyre Menippée* which features the Procession of the League as it makes its way towards the Louvre for a service to mark and bless the opening séance of the Estates-General. This (and other similar processions) was to invite comparisons from both contemporary and more recent sources with the medieval parade of Fools in costume which would take place two or three days in advance of the performance of a *Sottie* (Fools’ Play), in which they would later perform.

Sixteenth-century Paris had inherited a long established tradition of religious, academic, confraternity and civic processions (now customarily referred to in the literature as performance activities or paratheatrical displays!), which provided a welcome distraction for the populace. These processions were one of the most pervasive forms of public spectacle, and increasingly so in the turbulent final decades of the century. They proved, as a group activity in which both performers and spectators participated, to be a useful vehicle exploited by the League to

¹⁰ Quotation from F. Lestringnant, ‘Une topographie satirique ...’, in *Études sur la Satyre Menippée*, op. cit., p. 56, n.1. See also Ch. Lenient, *La Satire en France ... au XVI siècle* (Paris, Hachette, 1877), pp. 128-129 ; Ch. Read’s ed. of the *Satyre Menippée* (Paris, E. Flammarion, 1892), pp. v-viii. See also my article ‘Drama, performance and spectacle in the medieval city: some survivals in the *Satyre Menippée* (1594)’ in *Performance, drama and spectacle in the medieval city. Essays in honour of Alan Hindley*, ed. C. Emerson, M. Longtin, A. Tudor (Louvain-Paris-Walpole, MA, Peeters, Synthema, 8, 2010), pp. 473-488.

reinforce its dominance in the public's perception and to manipulate popular sentiment ¹¹. Indeed, a cynically revealing boast to that effect is placed by the authors of the *Satyre Menippée* in the mouth of Mayenne, its leader and spokesman, who says: "nous avons mesné des processions nompareilles, qui ont, obscurcy le lustre des plus belles mommeries qui furent oncques veuës. " ¹². The word "mommeries" highlights the theatrical element of such displays and their past, whereas the present object of the League was to wean strife-worn Parisians away from the harsh realities of famine and the siren calls for peace emanating from their *Politique* opponents. The most potent of such processions, in intent if not always in execution, judging from the derision they provoked from Protestants and moderates, were those which united the forces of town, gown and Church. While the description of the League's procession in the opening pages of our *Satyre* is ostensibly based, as a gesture to topical verisimilitude no doubt, on the procession to Notre-Dame on January 17, 1593 to celebrate the first (and later postponed) meeting of the Estates-General, it also incorporates elements of an earlier and more notorious one featuring the then Papal Legate, which had taken place in May 1590. Here the record of events conspired helpfully with our authors to maximise satirical impact since neither the Legate's participation nor the blessing he bestowed upon it could prevent a spectacular fatality among his own entourage, apparently caused by an over enthusiastic but inept musket firing monk, a contre-temps captured for posterity in countless contemporary paintings and engravings ¹³.

¹¹ On such processions see A. Jouanna and J. Boucher, *Histoire et dictionnaire des Guerres de religion, op. cit.*, pp. 1227-1229 and E. Barnavai, *Le Parti de Dieu. Étude sociale et politique des chefs de la Ligue parisienne 1585-1594*, Publications de la Sorbonne. NS 34 (Louvain, Nauwelaerts, 1980), pp. 175-176.

¹² *Satyre Menippée*, ed. cit., p. 33.

¹³ See Pauline M. Smith, art. cit., p. 482 and n.28.

The composition of the *Satyre Menippée*'s procession reflects the nature, origin and degree of League support in Paris on this occasion, headed as it is by Guillaume Roze, bishop of Senlis and Rector of the Sorbonne, accompanied by his beadle whose task it had been to organise the event and the many participants. It turned out to be quite a lively affair, with the organiser closely followed by four of the most rabid of the League's preachers, one of whom is shown "sweating, shoving and panting" in his efforts to marshal the large supporting cast of novice monks and religious orders of every hue. These vastly outnumber such lay figures as the twelve remaining members of the League's Council of Sixteen (four having been previously executed by Mayenne), by the Mayor and Aldermen of Paris, magistrates of the *Parlement*, Mayenne's bodyguards (foreign be it noted), and one hundred of the League's newly elevated and much despised 'noblesse nouvelle'. Finally came the 'quality', the Archbishop of Lyon, the Cardinals Pelvé and Plaisance, preceded by the Dean of the Sorbonne, followed by the female fanatics of the House of Lorraine and Mayenne himself bringing up the rear ¹⁴.

So, a procession based on a composite reality, but not exclusively so. Heightened by parody, it does bear comparison with the muster of fools in costume parading through the streets in advance of a *Sottie* (and what better one to belittle the forthcoming Assembly)! The term for this theatrical parade or *montre* has (just as in the English muster) a military connotation as well. So the motley regiment of religious orders in the *Satyre* is depicted representing the Church Militant, grotesquely attired in habits, hoods and superannuated armour and weapons of one kind or another, the very antithesis in fact of that spiritual armour ironically

¹⁴ *Satyre Menippée*, ed. cit., pp. 16-18.

called to mind by an incomplete reference to it in St. Paul's Epistles. They are depicted casually brandishing their rusty weapons for want of something better to do, one of their number executing round flourishes over his head with a double-edged sword to impress the ladies lining the route or watching from balconies.

That the image of the *sot* was still current for readers of the *Satyre Menippée* is confirmed both by performances (the persistence of the *Sottie* as a popular genre of French comic theatre is attested well into the early decades of the seventeenth century)¹⁵ and by these lines of Agrippa D'Aubigné's satirical epic *Les Tragiques* which contain a scathing, punning identification of contemporary processions of hooded monks with parades of *sots* in costume: 'Des fols capuchonnez les nouveaux regiments/ Qui en processions sottement desguisees/ Aux villes et aux champs vont semer des risees/.../ Tous ces desguisements sont vaines mascarades.'¹⁶

The theatrical nature of the *Satyre Menippée* is further enhanced by scene-setting in the form of meticulous detail of the room and stage upon which the opening of the Estates-General was performed, a description which in part corresponds to the historical record surviving in the 'Registre du Tiers Estat'. This tells us that the session took place in the Salle haute of the Louvre where the major players were seated on a raised platform, the Duke of Mayenne himself occupying centre stage on a velvet covered throne-like chair under an ornate canopy of cloth of gold. While the door giving entry to the Salle haute is described as 'toute tapissée de riche

¹⁵ On this point see Jean-Claude Aubailly, *Le Monologue, le dialogue et la sottie ...* (Paris, Champion, 1976), Appendice II, '*Les Survivances de la Sottie*', pp. 472-481.

¹⁶ D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, 'Princes', vv. 966-967, 971, in *Œuvres*, ed. H. Weber *et al.*, (Paris, Gallimard, La Pléiade, 1969), pp. 76-77.

tapisserie', a 'loge de bois' similarly 'tapissée' and 'plusieurs bancz ... couverts de tapisserie' no detail whatsoever is given of any designs which such tapestry, or indeed of any others, might contain ¹⁷. However, what history in this instance has failed to record, the satirical mind was only too ready and able to supply.

Accordingly the authors describe the many rich hangings close by, tapestry which, they hint by the phrase 'sembloit estre moderne et faicte exprez' was of their own design and purpose as will soon become apparent. The scenes depicted in this medium perform the function of stage sets, visible, not only to the audience but also, dependent upon their placing, to protagonists who are thereby confronted by historical analogies, one of satire's most useful weapons. Episodes of revolt, treachery, idolatry and murder drawn from Roman Antiquity, the Bible, and medieval French history juxtaposed within the same frame with recent events closer to home oblige audience and actors to contemplate the dire consequences of insurrection ¹⁸. One such parallel among many compares the return to Paris of two heroes of the people, John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, in 1411 and Henry of Guise during the Barricades of 1588 in his bid to seize the capital with popular support, both later assassinated by those whom they challenged. For those with eyes to see, there is a message emerging; for those unable or unwilling to see, the full significance of these images will be brought to bear on those present by the last speaker to hold forth ¹⁹. There is another aspect to the decor of this scene made even more conspicuous by

¹⁷ See Auguste Bernard, *Procès-Verbaux des États-Généraux de 1593*, Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, Première série (Paris, Imprimerie Royale, 1842), Préface, pp. xx-xxii, pp. 15-376 (18-19) for the text of the Registre, for the Séance d'ouverture, Préface, p. lii and for the seating arrangements in the Salle haute du Louvre, Appendice X, pp. 758-764.

¹⁸ *Satyre Menippée*, ed. cit., pp. 19-26 and nn. 118-158, pp. 207-223. For further commentaries see also F. Lestringant, 'Une topographie satirique', ch. cit., pp. 55-84 and J. Vignes, 'Culture et histoire dans la *Satyre Menippée*', both in *Études sur la Satyre Menippée*, op. cit., pp. 186-189.

¹⁹ *Satyre Menippée*, ed. cit., pp. 19-20 (first and second tapestries) and Harangue de Monsieur D'Aubray, pp. 90-93 and especially pp. 108-109.

its absence, the royal emblem, the fleur de lys, normally to be found in profusion in such a setting on seats and pillars. Instead we find that the ‘bancs et sieges où, se devoient asseoir Messieurs des Estats, /.../estoyent tous couverts de tapis parsemez de croisettes de Lorraine, noires et rouges, et de larmes mi-parties de vray et de faux argent, le tout plus vuide que plein, pour l'honneur de la feste’.) The symbolism of these ‘armes parlantes’ needs no further commentary²⁰.

The subsequent performance is cleverly brought to life by the authors of the *Satyre Menippée*. There is of course a fictional narrator unobtrusively present at the outset and end of the session and it is through the sharp eyes and ears of this observer that the words in direct speech and the actions of those present, both on and off-stage in the auditorium, are conveyed to a readership transformed at one remove into a second audience but, more to the point, another constituency, to be moved, persuaded and converted (if need be!) to the author’s viewpoint.

The stage now set and the cast assembled in the great upper chamber of the Louvre, ceremonial procedure, inseparable from any State opening and itself intrinsically theatrical, is exploited to great effect. The performers are directed by the Herald-at-Arms-cum producer to their respective places on the platform. In the process they are clearly announced and identified for the benefit of the audience by their name, style, title and allegiance and, because this is parody, by their ambitions and egregious failings in a series of barbed allusions. Thus Mayenne, the chief pretender:

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26 and n. 158.

‘Monsieur le Lieutenant, Monsieur le Lieutenant, Monsieur le Lieutenant de l’ Estat et Couronne de France, montez là haut en ce throsne Royal, en la place de vostre maistre.’²¹

Or Cardinal Pelvé who owed his preferment to the League, and was notorious for his stupidity and as an orator beset by senior moments, hence no doubt the dictionary ‘Monsieur le reverendissime Cardinal de Pelvé, Pair, *ad tempus*, de la lieutenance, mettez vous viz à viz, et n’oubliez vostre Calepin’.²²

or the dowager duchess of Montpensier, reputedly promiscuous

‘Madame la Doũairiere de Montpensier, comme princesse de vostre chef, mettez vous sous vostre nepveu (her latest lover)’.²³

or, one last example, the Archbishop of Lyon, desperate for the constantly promised cardinal’s hat and widely suspected of incest:

‘Monsieur le Primat de Lyon, infalible futur Cardinal de l’Union, Pair et Chancelier de la Lieutenance, laissez là vostre soeur, et venez icy prendre vostre rang.’²⁴

The allocation of seats according to rank and protocol is not without generating some quarrels of precedence, and hence stage business, between Franciscans and

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 27.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

Jacobins. Some sharp words are also exchanged between two ladies, mesdames de Belin and Bussy. The latter, having unforgivably broken wind, described as ‘quelque mauvais vent pseudocatholique’ is ripely reprimanded by the former: ‘Allons procureuse la queuë vous fume, vous venez icy parfumer les croix de Lorraine – ‘

a second mention here of that visible symbol of the manipulation of this Assembly by the House of Lorraine ²⁵. The audience is now primed, silent and attentive, at least for the time being, for what is to follow.

At this point, it is worth comparing the surviving official record of what actually happened, and what the satirists tell us. The record shows that the opening session was very short. There were only two speakers, Mayenne who formally opened proceedings and Pelvé who, after much waffling eventually adjourned them to the following day. After that meetings would be ever more intermittent, plenary sessions were a rarity and the three Estates would often meet in separate rooms ²⁶. But the authors of a satire are under no obligation to respect reality beyond the minimum required for verisimilitude and topicality. Dramatic licence is pressed into service, firstly by compressing the time-scale. All the speakers perform *seriatim* in one single session with scarcely a pause between them. Although all with one exception are current supporters of the League from which they expect much advancement, their views are not always identical. Since their speeches are sharply juxtaposed and

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28 and cf. above, p. 26.

²⁶ Cf. Auguste Bernard, *op. cit.*, Preface, p. liv *et seq.*; Concordance et résumé des procès-verbaux, pp. lxxv-lxxi.

fresh in the minds of all present, contradictions and divergences are accentuated, tensions generated, reactions follow both on stage between speakers and off-stage within the audience, an audience into which the mere reader is readily absorbed, as much a participant as those present.

The speakers themselves, called in turn by the herald.-at-arms to take the floor are, for the League nobility, Mayenne; for the Church, Pelvé, Segar, Papal Legate, the Archbishop of Lyon and Roze, the Rector of the Sorbonne; Rieux, soldier of fortune; and finally D'Aubray, representing the third Estate. The speeches are dramatic, confessional, all, except the last, outrageous and all, for the most part monologues but not exclusively so, given the degree of interaction. They have been likened to the dramatic monologues of the late medieval French comic theatre on the one hand and to the Lucianic techniques of the *récit-aveu* on the other²⁷. They are, again with one exception, destructive of the speaker and the 'cause' he promotes. None more so than Mayenne's, the first, where self-interest is paramount with cynicism and shamelessness not far behind!

'Messieurs vous serez tous tesmoins que depuis que j'ay pris les armes pour la sainte Ligue j'ay tousjours eu ma conservation en telle recommandation que j'ay preferé de tresbon cœur mon interest particulier à la cause de Dieu qui sçaura bien se garder sans moy, et se venger de tous ses ennemis'

and, when he really gets into his stride:

²⁷ Pauline M. Smith, 'Drama, performance and spectacle in the medieval city', art. cit., pp. 487-488 and on the Lucianic *récit-aveu* Claude Albert Mayer, 'Monologue ou récit-aveu comme technique satirique', *Studi francesi*, 1978, no. 65-66, pp. 373-79 and *Id.*, *Lucien de Samosate et la Renaissance française* (Geneva, Slatkine, La Renaissance française, 3, 1984) pp. 53-55.

‘Quant à la foy publique, j’ay tousjours estimé que le rang que je tiens m’en dispensoit assez’²⁸

Sounds familiar? Overdrawn perhaps, but not unrecognisably so, and certainly not beyond the bounds of caricature. It is also explicable to some extent by his complacent and certainly misguided reliance on the complicity of his cronies, when he says: ‘Je sçay qu’il n’y a icy que de nos amys’,²⁹ a statement heavy with dramatic irony as it turns out.

One such friend proves to be more of a liability than an ally. Roze, the Rector of the Sorbonne, widely perceived to be a fool not fully in command of his wits, displays an unerring talent for the backhanded compliment. As one critic put it: his compliments are more dangerous than his insults. So he congratulates Mayenne for his achievements in transforming this once venerable and flourishing institution to its present state: its academics packed off to early retirement, the lecture halls no longer resounding to the cut and thrust of scholastic debate but rather to the harmonious lowing of cattle finding refuge in the hallowed precincts with their peasant owners sheltering from marauding troops. Self-taught these peasants from outlying villages may be, but they have graduated with full honours, and one of their number, a wine-grower has such practical good sense and wisdom that he would make an excellent King.³⁰ Not what Mayenne wanted to hear! The Rector also takes advantage of his status as a fool to deliver some home truths, with a crudity of language in marked contrast to the high-flown rhetoric of his professional persona.

²⁸ Satyre Menippée, ed. cit., p. 29 and p. 34 respectively.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 66.

So he dismisses in short order the claims to the throne of the Dukes of Lorraine and Savoy. You can forget about them, he tells Mayenne: ‘Ce ne sont en parlant par reverence, que des coüilles.’ And he adds, helpfully, and you can forget about marrying the Infanta of Spain to ease your path to the throne. For one thing, you’re already married, and for another: ‘il faudroit un autre ramonneur que vous à ceste garse de trente ans.’³¹ Enough said.

With so many cracks now appearing in the facade of the League, it is for the last speaker to effect the final demolition. This task falls to the representative of the Third Estate, Claude D’ Aubray, himself a former member of the League, now a *Politique* supporter of Henry of Navarre.³² He is the classic inside witness, the decent convert, equipped moreover with all the forensic eloquence of his script-writer Pierre Pithou, himself a lawyer. D’Aubray presents as it were the closing speech for the prosecution and in so doing delivers the *coup de grâce* to Mayenne’s ambitions, carefully reviewing recent events and elaborating on the lessons of history conveyed by the tapestry sets described earlier. D’Aubray reaches the heights of pathos in his description of the sufferings inflicted on a war-weary and starving population in Paris during the siege, in marked contrast to the callousness of previous League speakers.³³ He ends with an impassioned plea, not for his own advancement but for Henry of Navarre to be recognised as the legitimate heir to the

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 61 and p. 65 respectively.

³² Barnavi, *op. cit.*, p. 125, classes him as among the ‘sympathisants [of the League], ou qui, à cette époque [1588] passent encore pour tels’. Jouanna and Boucher, *op. cit.*, p. 386 are more categorical: ‘Claude d’Aubray, colonel de la milice parisienne, ancien ligueur zélé devenu un politique.’

³³ A callousness most marked in the speeches of Mayenne and Rieux (this last a prime example of dramatic licence since there is no record of his presence, let alone of any speech he might have made at the Estates-General). Cf. *Satyre Menippée*, ed. cit., pp. 29-30, 33 (Mayenne) and pp. 69-71 (Rieux); pp. 75, 77, 105 *et seq* (D’Aubray).

throne, the sole heir who can restore France to peace, stability and freedom from foreign incursions.³⁴

The tempo of the performance is varied by the reactions provoked both on stage, between speakers and between stage and auditorium. The Rector of the Sorbonne for instance causes absolute consternation with his indiscretions so much so that Mayenne, in an aside to the Papal Legate, exclaims: 'Ce foi icy gastera tout nostre mystere.'³⁵ The disorderly reaction from the audience to his speech provokes the Rector to a fury, sweating, stamping, shouting : 'Messieurs, messieurs, je voy bien que nous sommes à la court du Roy Petault, où chacun est maistre : je le vous quitte, qu'un autre parle: j'ay dict.'³⁶ Resuming his seat, wiping his brow, he continues to mutter and grumble, belching several times for good measure. At another point, an unscheduled intervention by a delegate with no right to speak but determined to do so, degenerates into fisticuffs among the various factions.³⁷ Audience reaction in general varies from ecstatic applause, tears of joy, foot stamping, whistles, shouts of *vivat*, coughing and hawking, stunned silence or Spanish outrage: 'Todos los mattaremos, stos vellachos.'³⁸

To complete the theatricality of the *Satyre Menippée*, brief indications of movements, gestures, costumes given normally in the intervals between speeches, function in

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 120 *et sqq.*

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 67.

³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 74.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 38, p. 67; *ibid.*; p. 48; p. 49; p. 129 respectively.

the manner of implied stage directions to the performers as well as conveying much to that audience at one remove, the reader. Thus Cardinal Pelvé rises to his feet, ungainly, stiffly, like a goose and just as proverbially silly; the Archbishop of Lyon completes his speech 'en grande esmotion de corps et de voix', having worked himself into such a lather that he needs to ask for a clean shirt; Rieux, the thuggish, newly ennobled soldier of fortune wears 'un petit capot à l'Espagnole, et une haute fraize' which causes him to touch his throat several times where it itches, the ruff symbolising the hangman's noose and the fate that awaits him on the gibet; D'Aubray, the advocate of peace and reconciliation, significantly begins his speech only after removing his sword.³⁹

While there are no doubt many reasons (wit, humour, linguistic virtuosity come to mind) - far more in fact than can be encompassed in this talk - to account for the broad appeal of the *Satyre Menippée* in its own time and beyond, its dramatic and theatrical aspects must rank high among them. For precisely these qualities it springs off the page in a way that could never be attributed to its contemporary counterpart, the *Dialogue d'entre le Maheustre et le Manant*.⁴⁰ It may not be entirely fanciful to suggest that some latter day Jean-Louis Barrault could put his directorial talents to the adaptation and staging of the *Satyre Menippée*.⁴¹ Our own world, and taste for satire, are not so very different after all. Plus ça change...

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42 (Pelvé); p. 56 (Lyon); p. 68 (Rieux) ; p. 74 (D'Aubray).

⁴⁰ On contemporary reaction to this *Dialogue*, see the introduction to Ascoli's edition (cited above, n. 5) pp. 27-34; for that of modern historians, *ibid.*, pp. 35-40. See also Ch. Lenient, *La Satire en France, op. cit.*, II, pp. 96-102, who describes the work as 'à la fois un pamphlet et un manifeste'.

⁴¹ Jean-Louis Barrault (1910-1994), actor, manager and director, had adapted scenes from Rabelais's *Chroniques gargantuines*, featuring the giants *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* for production in the wrestling arena at Clichy.