

CARNIVALESQUE AND PARODY IN "LE JARDIN DES DÉLICES"

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IN THEIR TREATMENT OF THE NOVELS of Roch Carrier, critics have discussed the presence in them of mordant satire that pokes fun at a church-bound culture and embodies in the joys of the flesh the rebellion of an oppressed community.¹ Carrier's delight in the senses is as obvious in *La guerre, yes sir!* (1968) and *Floralie, où es-tu?* (1969) as the countervailing darkness in each of these works; this delight is remarkable by its absence from *Il est par là, le soleil* (1970), the last work in the "trilogie de l'âge sombre." The novels contain many parodies — of Latin prayers, medieval morality plays, religious festivals — in which language, action, and characterization play their part. Encompassing the parody and the satire, both of which are often devastating, is a relentless preoccupation with liberation — from ignorance and innocence into knowledge and experience, however terrifying, however dark. This preoccupation — realized through a cast of representative *dramatis personae* — has been a recurring theme in Carrier's work which he has depicted more through broad social satire than by creating highly individualized characters. Carrier bears witness to the transformation of a community — in his case, Quebec — that he dramatizes by means of various techniques, two of which — carnivalesque and parody — are especially important in an attempt to come to terms with what may be Carrier's most challenging and complex work, *Le jardin des délices* (1975).

Carrier's frequent descriptions of village life, his use of exaggeration, his emphasis on bodily detail, and his evocation of communal celebrations are an intrinsic part of the Rabelaisian tradition to which he is linked by literary heritage, about which Antonine Maillet has written as part of the Acadian linguistic and cultural inheritance,² and on which Mikhail Bakhtin founded his concept of the carnivalesque.³ In addition, the echoes in *Le jardin des délices* of French Canada's first novel, *L'influence d'un livre* (1837) later reprinted in an expurgated version as *Le chercheur de trésors; ou, L'influence d'un livre* (1864, 1878, 1885, 1968),⁴ and the graphic use of and allusions to Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden*

of *Delights* (1510) exemplify Linda Hutcheon's definition of modern parody in which she argues that parody, as a technique of providing new contexts, "is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text."⁵ Parody is "extended repetition with critical difference" (Hutcheon, 7), and implicit in her treatment of parody is the notion of its liberating potential in the way that avant-garde and other modern texts come to terms with "cultural memories whose tyrannical weight they must overthrow by their incorporation and inversion of them" (Hutcheon, 5). These two factors, then, the Rabelaisian tradition embodied in Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque and the impact of modern parody as defined by Linda Hutcheon, will each be discussed in turn in this critical examination of *Le jardin des délices*.

Rabelais et son oeuvre by Bakhtin first appeared in French translation in 1970 and *Le jardin des délices* in 1975; whether Carrier had read Bakhtin's study before he began writing *Le jardin des délices* does not alter the fact that Rabelaisian characteristics were present in Carrier's work from the publication of *La guerre, yes sir!* Bakhtin's comments on Rabelais' use of the carnivalesque provide a very useful gloss in an attempt to better understand Carrier's work. In his study of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532-52), Bakhtin placed great emphasis on the importance in them of the characteristic ambivalence of fifteenth-century popular culture. Death and life, the corporeal and the spiritual, tears and laughter were complementary aspects of a world view that stressed the comic and affirmative. For Bakhtin, the primary manifestations of humorous medieval folk culture were (i) ritual spectacles; (ii) comic verbal compositions; (iii) various kinds of foul language. In their democratic, irreverent, and high-spirited vitality, these interdependent categories formed an alternative to the official, serious, and rigidly hierarchical structures of church and state. These categories, moreover, had as their common source "the carnival, ritual, and spectacle" that were central to "the unity of folk culture" (Bakhtin, 17). Bakhtin encapsulated his notion of the carnivalesque in the following description: "As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (Bakhtin, 10).

As an extended tall tale full of extravagant episodes, *Le jardin des délices* contains many incidents in which ordinary rules and order are suspended, but Carrier is as much a product of his time as Rabelais was of the fifteenth century. The carnivalesque of ambivalence and duality, embedded in comic balance in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, becomes an entertaining but ultimately unresolved paradox in *Le jardin des délices*. Carrier's novel describes events outside usual norms and proscriptions — the carnal liaison of the curé and Miss Catéchime,

Constantine Génereux's exploitation of his daughters, the "zizis japonais," and the final saturnalia. In all these instances, taboos are swept aside by a carnival which shows the process of dissolution rather than becoming. Both Rabelais and Carrier, however, use the carnivalesque for similar ends — to replace, however temporarily, the official hierarchy with a popular, spontaneous, and unofficial order. Both authors also make use of parody, although Bakhtin cautions that "the carnival is far distant from the negative and formal parody of modern times. Folk humour denies, but it revives and renews at the same time. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture" (11). Both are adept in the use of humour — be it farce, caricature, or burlesque — which is also part of their use of the grotesque.

Le jardin begins with the sombreness of autumn, "le temps des pacages gris, des branches nues, des feuilles pourchassées par le vent,"³⁶ where "la nuit gruge le jour, une nuit épaisse comme de la terre noire" (5), and where, at the Auberge du Bon Boire, patrons "cherchent des signes de l'avenir" (6). There, an impressive stranger, J. J. Bourdage, announces that there is gold under the earth of the village and that efforts should be made to find it. From this follow the events of Part 1: the plundering of the notary's grave, the burning of the church, the lusty gratification of Mme Petit-Lecourt, the miraculous rescue of the holy objects performed by the crippled Démeryse, and the discovery of the priest in bed with Miss Catéchime. The carnivalesque invites the highly caricatured portrayal of the characters whose names — Petit-Lecourt, Gros-Douillette, Miss Catéchime, le curé — are part of a collective portrait. Their physical appetites for beer, scotch, and sex are emphasized as are the robust high spirits of their adventures. The comic juxtaposition of the sacred and the vulgar occurs as Démeryse retrieves the holy objects from the burning church. Her "body" language mocks the narrow-minded strictures of her culture and recalls Bakhtin's discussion of the Rabelaisian play on "couillon" (Bakhtin, 417-20):

J' vous demande pardon, mon Dieu, de sauver votre pain et votre or. J' sais que mes mains sont pas dignes de toucher à des richesses aussi saintes. Si vous êtes pas content, mon Dieu, envoyez votre Curé les tenir. Mais avant de l'appeler, votre Curé, pensez ben que c'est un homme et qu'un homme est un couillon qui a peur de son ombre s'y a pas une créature à côté de lui. C'est vous qui les avez faits de cette manière-là. Et moé, j' les ai tellement aimés tels que vous les avez faits! Mon Dieu, donnez donc une créature à votre Curé; i' deviendrait un peu moins couillon . . . (39)

Each of the actions of Part 1 is an element in the ensuing general upheaval. One notes the abundance of humour and laughter, from the drunken blundering of the grave-robbers, to the blatant desire of Mme Petit-Lecourt, to the testy plain speech of Démeryse, to the burlesque of the priest found in his bed beside "les seins d'une femme échevelée qui dort les bras en croix" (47). These episodes,

all in some way representative of man's appetites and imperfections, create a carnival of disorder in which religion, sexuality, and self-interest play their part under the sign of gold, the dominant motif of the novel. The dissolution of the old order is satirically summarized in the description of the renovated waiting room of the manse:

Voici la salle d'attente. L'ancien Curé possédait de grosses chaises brunes qui ressemblaient à de vieilles religieuses en prière. Depuis, il y a eu des grandes réunions à Rome et l'Eglise a été révolutionnée. Pour rejeunir l'Eglise, le nouveau Curé a vendu ses vieilles chaises à des Américaines qui cherchaient des vieilleries. Il les a remplacées par de belles chaises en plastique aux couleurs gaies. Qu'elles sont belles ces lampes en forme d'oeuf en or qui pendent au plafond et ces autres qui se tiennent sur des pattes fines comme des pattes de poules, mais plus hautes! Il y a des tas de revues françaises et anglaises. Cela ressemble à la salle d'attente du dentiste de Saint-Georges-de-Beauce. Se faire pardonner un péché, n'est-ce pas semblable à se faire extraire une dent qui fait souffrir? (46)

Elements of the carnivalesque are present in the second part of the novel, notably in the episodes involving Constantin Généreux and the "zizis japonais." Highly subversive of the conventional moral norm, the episodes provide for good fun and highlight the communal obsession with the sinful flesh by distorting the social taboos associated with it. For Généreux, a parody of the solicitous father, his daughters' services are as calculated from his point of view as they are innocent from theirs; with the zizis, a farcical comedy is enacted involving what Bakhtin calls "the material bodily lower stratum" (368), the play on liturgical rites, and the exuberant and violent yoking of the sacred and the profane. Each episode is a variation on the theme of avarice; the gold that Bourdage has predicted in the village is coined for Généreux by the attractions of his daughters. In the story of his eldest girl whose husband is shot by the father, the *conteurs* of the story see no moral outrage, but the unhappy and inevitable destiny of the son-in-law. The "zizis japonais" are artful imitations of the penises of young boys who "offraient à l'Art leurs petits sexes chétifs et blonds afin de capter les messages de l'univers" (113). Fashioned in art class, these objects allow Carrier to make comic use of the students' confusion of the words "art" and "or," words which are pronounced identically in Québécois (111); the confusion also underlines how the theme of avarice is, here as elsewhere, central to the farce. What follows in this case is a rollicking send-up of religion, sexuality, and the liturgical feast of the eucharist. The broad lines with which the characters are drawn and the burlesque involved in the episode itself underline the extent to which Carrier is adept in his handling of surrealistic detail. The incongruities — the tavern which becomes a church, Miss Catéchime's religious and sexual ecstasy, her proper vocabulary and the phallic object she is describing, her embarrassment and the hilarity of the men who have carried her outside, the "zizi" resting where the host should be, the connection between demystifying sex and desexualizing

money — all combine to make the “zizi,” according the curé’s blundering analogy, an image of aberrant yet corrective punishment for the villagers’ sins, not unlike the biblical plague of grasshoppers, although in winter, “Dieu ne peut pas laisser s’abattre sur nous un déluge de sauterelles: elles auraient froid, elles prendraient la grippe, elles feraient de la fièvre, elles tousseraient et elles ne pourraient pas détruire en les dévorant nos moissons” (108). The account of how the “zizis” were made, their function as *monnaie courante*, the priest’s invective against this “commerce de la chair” (115), and against the profanation of “cette partie du corps de vos enfants que Dieu a faite à son image et à sa ressemblance et destinée à prolonger dans l’histoire la vie de notre valeureux petit peuple travailleur et pieux; cet instrument de notre survivance” (115), combines the rhetoric of the Catholic-nationalist past with the details of the bankrupt present. As important as the episodes themselves is the fact that they are told as a bulwark against the winter season which isolates the village by snow and storm. At this time of year, the villagers talk of the past, of “autre neiges, celles d’antan quand les tempêtes faisaient peur aux hommes, quand les tempêtes faisaient pleurer les femmes, quand les tempêtes engouffraient les villages dans leurs remous blancs” (62). The emphasis in this section falls on communal gathering and communal talk in defiance of the long, perilous night of winter — “Au milieu de l’hiver, les paroles entretiennent la chaleur de la vie” (101) — and in the hope of bringing about a transformation: “Avec les mêmes gestes et les mêmes rires, ils reprennent sans cesse la même histoire: comme si, à force d’être racontés, les faits allaient se transformer et ressembler à ce à quoi on souhaite qu’ils ressemblent” (101).

IN THE FIRST TWO PARTS OF THE NOVEL, Carrier presents the reader with a world in which the community rather than the individual is the focus. Into it he introduces an outsider, J. J. Bourdage, whose words, unlike the words of the villagers in their story-telling, are dynamic and transformative; the sleepy village is about to be shaken from its torpor. By means of techniques associated with the carnivalesque — among them, the comic use of the grotesque, the questioning of church authority, the humorous juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane, the use of farce and exaggeration — *Le jardin des délices* sustains the impetus which Carrier inaugurated with *La guerre, yes sir!* In Part III of *Le jardin des délices*, the carnivalesque reaches its apogée in a way that both echoes and breaks with Bakhtin; it becomes an orgiastic feast of fools in which the jester Bourdage is proclaimed king — “il est sacré empereur. Il est Dieu” (181) — and the celebration suspends the normal order of things in an apocalyptic saturnalia.

Released from prison, Bourdage returns to the village in the spring where he

enlarges the fiction of himself as an important businessman employed by an American company whose job is to secure gold-mining rights from local farmers for the "Grande Affaire." As the action becomes increasingly frenzied, so do the characteristics associated with the Bakhtinian carnival: the close association between death and birth as the crowd shouts, "Le passé, i' faut l'enterrer" (187) and as "les villageois célèbrent leur propre naissance" (187); the sacrilege in the comparison of Bourdage to Christ, and in the mistaking of the helicopter for the Holy Spirit; the crowd's awareness of what Bakhtin calls "their sensual, material bodily unity and community" (255) as they feel that "un même sang circule dans les veines des villageois, ils ont un même coeur" (198); the earthy jokes accompanied by great gusts of laughter; the recurring Rabelaisian image of the mouth; the exuberant celebration of the body. All the elements of the carnivalesque are handled with skill by Carrier in this final part of the novel. Behind it, however, and undercutting it is a contemporary use of the grotesque which shows how the distortions and exaggerations of this final episode are rooted in the alienating and intimidating passion of avarice and in Bourdage's crass manipulation. The destruction of the property and livestock, the night which is mute "comme si un grand désastre avait tout démolé" (200), the overwhelming night which stretches "aux frontières de la terre" (204), and the cavernous earth which seems to open at Bourdage's feet are all aspects of the estranged world foreign to the fundamental affirmation of the Rabelaisian carnival and for which the dead Bourdage is "un crucifix des temps modernes" (208). Here enters the crucial difference between the Rabelaisian and modern grotesque as identified by Bakhtin. The Rabelaisian holds that "death is not a negation of life seen as the great body of all the people but part of life as a whole — its indispensable component, the condition of its constant renewal and rejuvenation. Death is here always related to birth; the grave is related to the earth's life-giving womb" (Bakhtin, 50). The modern presents "an opposition of life to death" (Bakhtin, 50) and embodies alienation and separation which reject the unity of man and his world. This modern aspect of the grotesque is voiced at several points in Part III by characters whose invective or unruffled common sense is expressed clearly and unequivocally; it is also visible in Bourdage's own self-doubt. The sinister implications of the villagers' loss of inhibitions is captured in the image of "ce serpent rieur de villageois en fête" (199) that snakes its way to the bloody climax of the action. The denouement breaks with the Bakhtinian pattern in which descent and ascent are inseparable as part of the cycle of completion rooted in Rabelaisian duality and ambivalence. If, for Bakhtin, "carnival's hell represents the earth which swallows up and gives birth" (91) and is part of a ritual in which the grotesque "liberates the world from all that is dark and terrifying" (47), in *Le jardin des délices*, the earth which swallows Bourdage yields him up to murder and then to crucifixion on the roof of his white Cadillac. The feast has

become a *danse macabre*, and the story concludes as it began, with a dead trophy on a car roof. Carrier uses the grotesque in the spirit of liberation, but the world he creates is marked by disintegration rather than integration as he combines the Bakhtinian carnivalesque with the twentieth-century grotesque.

However, although the conclusion of *Le jardin des délices* is dark, it is not totally despairing. Bourdage's death stems from his part in the destruction of an old-folk belief which has been part of the villagers' identity as a community, and which was revealed to Bourdage by the notary: "Mais nous avons ici une croyance populaire: un jour, quelqu'un fendra une pierre et l'or en sortira comme le sang coule d'un cochon" (147-48). Caillouette goes on to say that the villagers do not actively search for gold because they are afraid of shattering their dream. For his part, Bourdage is the cause of their broken dream; "crucifié sur son toit" (213), he is a travesty of selfless, Christ-like sacrifice. The unnamed voice that concludes "Son secret est notre secret" (213) is a voice that also recognizes, accepts, and takes the first steps toward re-establishing community solidarity after the catharsis of guilt and knowledge. Rabelaisian confidence and gusto have been replaced by twentieth-century tentativeness.

CARNIVALESQUE AND PARODY share a common emphasis on displacement, community, and play. In the first instance, carnival is an institution removed from the established order as parody involves texts which are lifted out of an original context; in the second, carnival is the unity of all people, as parody postulates the potential interdependence or intertextuality of all art; in the third, the rites of carnival are designed to entertain and delight, as parody also entertains in assigning new roles or contexts to existing texts or works of art. Linda Hutcheon's illuminating discussion of parody touches on all three areas of common emphasis, but there is one important divergent aspect of Carrier's use of parody in *Le jardin des délices* that should be mentioned here. Although his use of parody involves "imitation characterized by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text" (Hutcheon, 6), and by "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (Hutcheon, 6), Carrier is neither a metafictionist nor does he contest "the novelistic illusion of realist dogma" (Hutcheon, 72-73). He does, however, without subverting fictional norms, depict "feelings of insecurity in the face of both nature and social order" (Hutcheon, 73) through the carnivalesque and through parody.

Of the texts parodied in Carrier's novel, the two most important are Bosch's *The Garden of Delights* and Philippe Aubert de Gaspé's *L'influence d'un livre*, which is more widely known as *Le chercheur de trésors*. Also parodied, but of markedly less importance, is Molière's *L'avare* (1668). Bosch's painting pro-

vided the cover illustration and the title for *Le jardin des délices*, and one of the characters in the novel makes a confused but significant reference to the artist: “Un grand peintre moderne, Guillaume Boche, a peint des gens si riches qu’i mangent de l’or. Savey-vous qu’est-ce qu’i font ces riches? I’ chient de l’or. Oui Monsieur. Ça, c’est pas bon pour la santé” (194). This reference to “The Infernal Concert,” the third panel of Bosch’s triptych, conflates the modern and medieval, and reminds us, as Bakhtin did, that Bosch also portrayed, though not as vigorously as Rabelais, “the age of the body . . . an incarnation of this world at the absolute lower stratum, as the swallowing up and generating principle, as the bodily grave and bosom, as a field which has been sown and in which new shoots are preparing to sprout” (Bakhtin, 26-27).

Bosch’s triptych has intrigued viewers and critics for 450 years; its emphasis on the carnivalesque, on the grotesque, and on the material bodily lower stratum links it ostensibly with the Rabelaisian world as Carrier indicates. The three-part structure of Carrier’s novel echoes Bosch. In the first part of both, the seeds of discord are sown in a world whose tenuous innocence is only apparent. Bourdage awakens a deeply rooted avarice and Bosch’s Eden is darkened by stagnant pools, three-headed dragons, and animals preying upon each other. The second part is a celebration of sensual and erotic pleasure in Carrier’s description of the Généreux family and the “zizis japonais”; Bosch’s second panel — “The Garden of Delights” — highly charged with sexual energy and a sense of carnival, prompted one team of critics to remark that it is “the triumph of erotic excitement, contemplated in all its aspects and events, with an artist’s joy which seems very often to blur his moralistic intentions.”⁷ In the third part of both Carrier’s and Bosch’s texts, the action of disintegration and chaos is played under and against an appalling night sky lit by the destructive fires of a burning world. In this part of both artists’ work, reference is made to the defecation of gold; Carrier’s description of a black sea and the gaping earth are also details in Bosch’s painting as is the similarity between “la forme pointue d’une grande épulette” (208) and the knife blade in the painting. The title of Bosch’s third panel, “The Infernal Concert,” complements Carrier’s description of the tavern and of “l’orchestre [qui] crache du feu sonore” (187); the walls of the tavern are described as “les murs d’une cellule” (188) and recall Bosch’s tavern housed inside the jagged and broken eggshell body of the monstrous “*Alchemical Man*” (Oriente and de Solier, 95). Read in sequence, *The Garden of Delights* depicts an ambivalent world until the last panel when the action slides into chaos and hell from which there is no return. Known for his “constant effort to evade the dogmatic rigidity of the religious authorities and to uphold intellectual freedom” (Oriente and de Solier, 35), Bosch’s impulse is close to Carrier’s. The impact of Carrier’s parody of Bosch lies first in the transgression of art forms — literature and painting — and second in the way that the doctrinal conservatism of the triptych ironically

acquires, as parody, an iconoclastic and radical force in Carrier's novel. The chaos of Bosch's last panel, while terrifying, is an entrenched aspect of church dogma and, therefore, part of the divine order of things; Carrier's depiction of chaos, however, is cataclysmic and out of all proportion to its cause.

The second instance of parody in *Le jardin des délices* is the repeated allusions to French Canada's first "novel," *L'influence d'un livre*. Aubert de Gaspé's book is a crudely fashioned tale about the search for the philosopher's stone. On this thin thread are hung a love story, moralistic folk tales, episodes of blood and gore, and a claim by the author that he has offered his countrymen "le premier Roman de Moeurs canadien . . . m'en tenant toujours à la réalité."⁸ In both books, "or" is a repeated motif, especially in *Le jardin des délices* and throughout Carrier's novel, gold is referred to as "trésor" and those who look for it as "chercheurs de trésor" or "chercheurs d'or," an echo of the second title of Aubert de Gaspé's book. In fact, books play a crucial role in both novels. Initially, Charles Amand is obsessed with "un livre ouvert [qui absorbait] une partie de l'attention de l'Alchimiste modern; ce livre était: *les ouvrages d'Albert le Petit*" (Aubert de Gaspé, 6), and this obsession closes the story: "il lit, sans cesse, le petit Albert, ouvrage qui a décidé du sort de sa vie" (122). Aubert de Gaspé's "novel" is, in fact, the story of a book; its intertextuality, however embryonic, is itself a basic parody whose irony is not directed at the parodied text. In its turn, *Le jardin des délices* possesses an intertextual relationship to *L'influence d'un livre* and, like the earlier work, places some emphasis upon the influence of books, namely the many books on gold that Bourdage has read in his cell such as *Barnato, le roi de l'or*; *Klondike, the Last Great Gold Rush*; *L'Or dans le monde*; *What I Heard, Saw and Did at the Australian Gold Fields*; and the prophetic *L'Or, fléau des peuples*.

Significantly, Carrier's parody is neither patronizing nor is it dismissive. In fact, by going back to Aubert de Gaspé, Carrier revitalizes some of the features of *L'influence d'un livre*: the romance genre, the use of episodic units, the presence of folklore and representative folk types. Unlike Aubert de Gaspé, Carrier has no pretensions to any kind of literary realism in his work, but creates an unsettling romance in which the unexpected and extraordinary are the norm. The episodic composition of Part II, the representative description of characters like Petit-Lecourt, Gros-Douillette, the Curé, Démeryse, and Miss Catéchime are not unlike what one finds in *L'influence d'un livre*. Carrier's parodic achievement in relation to the earlier work is to have intensified and refined many of Aubert de Gaspé's techniques. This is not to say that Carrier views *L'influence d'un livre* unironically, but it is to say that he has adapted aspects of the earlier work to create a metaphor of man's temptation and fall, and so has invested the techniques and themes of Aubert de Gaspé's "novel" with a self-conscious and ironic symbolism which has been further broadened by Carrier's references to Bosch's triptych.

Many of the local and particular characteristics of *L'influence d'une livre* have been at once preserved and universalized in *Le jardin des délices* as Carrier's novel necessarily makes of its critical difference from Aubert de Gaspé's book the contrast between the naive, crudely fashioned romance of a fledgling writer of another age and the dark extravaganza of an accomplished, contemporary novelist.

In Bosch, Aubert de Gaspé, and Carrier, the pattern of temptation and fall is present; all of the works that have been discussed are moral at their core and focus on the consequences of human appetite. Behind them is also a didactic impulse which seeks to instruct the characters and/or readers on the consequences of self-interested action. Carrier makes this duality clear at different points in the novel. Caillouette, the notary, tells Bourdage that "l'or n'est pas éternel comme l'amour" (148) and later Bourdage himself says, "Y a dans le monde une chose plus riche que l'or. Ça j' peux vous l' dire parce que la Compagnie vous en parlera pas. C' qui est plus riche que l'or c'est l'amour" (179). The duality, however, is not without paradox if we remember both the equivocation of Bourdage's next statement — "De l'amour, j'en ai eu entre les mains plus que j'ai eu d'or" (179) — and Bosch's energetic celebration of carnal love in the second panel of his *Garden of Delights*.

The third instance of parody occurs in the last pages of the novel when the priest climbs the stairs of the pulpit in his devastated church and recites from Molière's *L'avare* Harpagon's speech which begins, "Au voleur! au voleur! à l'assassin! au meurtrier!" (199).⁹ The ensuing speech which is taken almost word for word from Molière's play (Carrier has changed the play's "argent" to "or") re-emphasizes the predominant role of avarice in both works. The theatricality of the source and of the conditions under which it is replayed — with the burned church as theatre, the pulpit stairs as stage, the car headlights as dramatic lighting, the village as audience, and the priest's own memories of "les applaudissements au théâtre de son Collège" (199) — exploits the comic qualities of the original and at the same time reveals the extent to which the highly ordered conventions of Molière's play form a contrast to the chaos in Carrier's novel. On the one hand, the priest repeats Harpagon's speech; on the other, the reader possesses a double-layered awareness of the original and of the incongruity of the play's highly mannered conventions in Carrier's uproarious context. Impotence is the burden of the speech and of its parody which is directed not at Molière, but at the distortions of *Le jardin des délices*. Harpagon's nightmare of losing his money comes true with comic results which are heightened by the hyperbole of his language and by the play's conventional comic resolution — marriage. In Carrier's story, the folk belief in the discovery of gold is broken and the resolution is tragic — the destruction of the village and the murder of Bourdage. The ironic inversion is visited on the parody and not on what is being parodied.

IN HER COMMENTS ON PARODY and the carnivalesque, Linda Hutcheon observes that “the presupposition of both a law and its transgression bifurcates the impulse of parody: it can be normative and conservative, or it can be provocative and revolutionary” (76). Parody can manifest respect or mockery, yet it can, “like the carnival, also challenge norms in order to renovate, to renew” (76). I argued earlier that the conclusion to *Le jardin des délices* breaks with the Bakhtinian pattern of ambivalence in its emphasis on the modern sense of the grotesque as the estranged and terrifying world. Seen in the light of Carrier’s evolving *oeuvre*, however, *Le jardin des délices* suggests, in its forceful depiction of an apocalyptic *table rase*, that the final “secret” mentioned in the novel may imitate a new knowledge and, just possibly, the germ of a new beginning from that knowledge, which echoes, however tentatively, another Carrier text printed on the novel’s cover: “J’aime la vie comme elle est, comme on veut la faire, comme on aurait dû la faire, comme on la raconte, comme on la fera, comme on la détruira et comme elle recommencera.” If this is the case, then Carrier’s use of parody may embody “the inscription of continuity and change” (Hutcheon, 36) by drawing upon past texts to create something new in *Le jardin des délices*.

NOTES

- ¹ See, among others, Nancy I. Bailey, “The Corriveau Wake: Carrier’s Celebration of Life,” *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1, 3 (Summer 1972), 43-47; Renald Bérubé, “La guerre, yes sir! de Roch Carrier: humour noir et langage vert,” *Voix et images du pays III. Littérature québécoise* (1970), 145-64; René Dionne, “Philibert, le fossoyeur,” *Relations*, 35 (mars 1971), 86-89; Gilles Dorion, “Roch Carrier, *Le jardin des délices*,” *Livres et auteurs québécois* (1975), 41-45; Gabrielle Poulin, “Vieux-Thomas le romancier,” *Relations*, 37 (octobre 1977), 284-86.
- ² Antonine Maillet, *Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie*, Les Archives de Folklore 13 (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1971).
- ³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press [1965], 1968).
- ⁴ David M. Hayne, “Les origines du roman canadien-français,” in *Le roman canadien-français*, Archives des lettres canadiennes, 3 (Montréal; Fidès, 1964), 37-67; consult Philippe Aubert de Gaspé (fils), *Le chercheur de trésors; ou l’Influence d’un livre*, présenté par Léopold Leblanc (Montréal: Réédition Québec, 1968), viii-ix.
- ⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (London: Methuen, 1985), 6.
- ⁶ Roch Carrier, *Le jardin des délices* (Montréal: Les Editions la Presse, 1975), 5.
- ⁷ Sandra Orienti and René de Solier, *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York: Crescent Books [1976], 1979), 93.
- ⁸ Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, junr., *L’influence d’un livre* (Québec: William Cowan et fils, 1837), iii-iv.
- ⁹ I am grateful to my student Joan Knoll for having called this to my attention.