

Taras Shmiher

Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
taras.shmiher@lnu.edu.ua

Yuliia Naniak

Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
yuliya.nanyak@lnu.edu.ua

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4713-2882>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4398-9501>

FOOD AS CULTURAL
SYMBOL: THE CASE
STUDY OF FRANÇOIS
RABELAIS'S *GARGANTUA
ET PANTAGRUEL* AND ITS
UKRAINIAN TRANSLATIONS

ABSTRACT

Food became a symbol of societal and national identity throughout the Renaissance, when perceptions of the world shifted from divine to anthropocentric. There were more descriptions of food in Renaissance texts; the authors provided a thorough account of the composition of dishes, as well as traditions and customs of the time. Food, like humanism, has the same aims in Rabelais' works: human progress through the nutrition system. Two Ukrainian translations of Rabelais' "Gargantua et Pantagruel" are examined in the article, and the significance and content of food-related episodes are interpreted in various ways.

KEYWORDS: Food, cultural cuisine, translation, Rabelais

The Renaissance heralded a transformative shift from a theocentric mindset to anthropocentrism, leading to a reimagining of the role and significance of food. Food ceased to be solely associated with carnal pleasures in opposition to the spiritual realm and instead took on a distinctly human dimension that transcended mere materiality. Nevertheless, food had already evolved into a potent symbol of societal and ethnic identity, as exemplified by dishes such as Ukrainian Borshch, Greek Salad, and French Bouillabaisse. Within the context of the Renaissance, modifications in food descriptions found in the works of writers served as reflections of the broader cultural and social milieu of the era, where food emerged as a cherished and integral component of cultural life.

Food was described more frequently and in greater depth in Renaissance writings. Authors gave detailed descriptions of dish composition and preparation, as well as information about culinary traditions and customs of the time. Food descriptions were a significant part of cultural identity, which grew stronger throughout the Renaissance.

Food descriptions in Renaissance writers' works indicate the shift in cultural norms and growing interest in gastronomy that happened during this period. Francois Rabelais's works are the quintessence of this phenomenon.

In recent years, there has been a notable surge of interest in food and nutrition, both within academic circles and the broader media. Scholars have increasingly focused their research on various aspects of food, such as foodways, food systems, and eating patterns, considering them as new units of study within their respective fields. The remarkable source, which delves into the significance of food from both a nutritional and cultural standpoint, is "Encyclopedia of Food and Culture" (EFC 2003). Its articles are expertly crafted by a diverse group of professionals including anthropologists, chefs, food historians, nutritionists, agronomists, and food stylists, among other esteemed researchers in the field. The well-crafted entries provide valuable insights into various topics such as the origins of regional culinary traditions, prominent festivals and feasts, and broader subjects that explore the cultural, sociological, and psychological dimensions of food.

In this paper, we will base our analysis on two Ukrainian translations: Iryna Sydorenko (1990) composed an 'abridged retelling', which was aimed for teenagers (12–18 years old); Anatol Perepadia (2004–2005) provided the first complete Ukrainian translation of Rabelais's masterpiece.

In Rabelais's texts, food serves the same aims, which were set by humanism: in the chaos, a human develops if they follow a system. This refers to the consumption of food, which could be both systematic and influential for a human development. Kenneth Albala and Robin Imhof show that when Gargantua was advised by the humanist Ponocrates to eat sober and frugal meals according to the recommendations of Galenic medicine, "this didactic episode, as with many others, traces the development of self-control in precisely the ways that humanists such as Erasmus were prescribing for the upbringing of boys" (RE 2004: 80). It is really intriguing to see what is so 'Galenic' in this episode. The researchers must have referred to the fragment: "Lors, si bon semblaît, on continuait la lecture, ou commençâient à deviser joyeusement ensemble, parlants, pour les premiers mois, de la vertu, propriété, efficace et nature de tout ce que leur étoit servi à table : du pain, du vin, de l'eau, du sel, des viandes, poissons, fruits, herbes, racines, et de l'apprêt d'icelles" (Rabelais 1913: Vol.1, 74–75). It is difficult to identify what exactly is so balanced and impressive for lay reader to trace the ancient philosophy of nutrition, but the qualified doctor may detect the general medical milieu. However, the phrase "fruits, herbes, racines" gets diverse interpretations in two translations: Sydorenko shapes it as "городини, садовина, зілля" ('vegetables, fruits, herbs'), and Perepadia writes "плоди, зілля, корінняки" ('fruits, herbs, roots'). Formally, Perepadia is more exact, but Sydorenko has more didactic reason in changing the semantic row. Firstly, the typical Ukrainian food division is "овочі та фрукти", while the same, but a bit archaic and even poetic phrasing "городини та садовина" does not circulate now, and employing those equally valid synonyms, the translator wanted to enrich children's vocabulary. Secondly, *зілля* in its culinary sense means both greenery and spices, but the latter usually dominates. This is why Rabelais described technical parts of plants which can be eaten (and this concept is in Perepadia's text), and Sydorenko used a cultural code of traditional botanical food collected in the soil, the garden and the field (or imported spices).

In the episode about the start of the war between Picrochole and Grandgousier, the reason of escalating a conflict is connected with *fouace*. This dish is so traditional for French cuisine that it denotes a number of types of cakes, breads and buns in various regions of France. What unites them is the use of flour. Thus, it is impossible to claim what specifically can be designated as an object of food. This situation gives more space for translators to implement their own creativity. Besides, the original recipe contained no sugar but just *fleur de farine* (fine flower). This is why Perepadia's translation *корж* (a flat, round product made of unleavened dough) is rather close to the form and taste of the *fouace* of ancient times.

Sydorenko opted for *пиріг* (pl. *пиріги*) that is a fundamental Ukrainian dish whose lexeme may denote two different things: first, pie in Eastern Ukrainian dialects and in the literary standard; second, dumplings in Western Ukrainian dialects. The phrase “Ось такі пироги” (literally ‘Here are these pies/dumplings’) meaning ‘that’s how things are’) means the same idiom “That’s the way the cookie crumbles” in the entire Ukrainian lingual space, but physically, the referents are different. However, technically, this is not the best option. If the situation with dialectal dumplings is clear, Ukrainian pie usually goes with some fruit filling. This is why when the shepherds added raisins, they would spoil the original taste of the dish, or simply, there is no necessity to add more fruit.

Perepadia chose the variant *корж* which is good from the viewpoint of the crown form which is meant in the original, but in the traditional cuisine usage, its diminutive plural form *коржички* has more currency. The 1961 Ukrainian cookery-book registers seven recipes with this diminutive lexeme (УС 1961). Nevertheless, even this variant is not technically good, as *коржички* can be both sweet and salty. From this perspective, the Ukrainian equivalent is not sufficient.

Food is a recurring interest throughout François Rabelais' epic five-part work *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. One of the episodes that deserves a special attention is chapter XXXVIII in the first book “How Gargantua did eat up six pilgrims in a salad.” Gargantua decides he needs a salad and walks outside to get lettuce. Six pilgrims from Picrochole's lands, however, are sheltering inside the garden. They hide in Gargantua's garden for fear that they would be taken for spies, but because they are so stealthy, Gargantua misses them and scoops them up with the lettuce heads. The pilgrims are cunning enough to grasp Gargantua's teeth and prevent themselves from being consumed when he combines them into a salad and comes dangerously close to devouring them. With a toothpick, Gargantua separates the pilgrims from the rest of the crowd but fails to see them. Then Gargantua urinates, and the pilgrims are carried away in his pee along with the garbage. Resting happily after managing to avoid the death, they quote Bible, claiming that their adventure was described there.

In the Ukrainian adaptation by Iryna Sydorenko this abstract is missing probably because of the fact that it was aimed at children and younger adults. As a result, the events that were taking place there may be viewed as being overly cruel because individuals were almost devoured and murdered. While in Perepadia's text, it was rendered in its entirety, since the culinary macroimage of food overlaps with the philosophical concept of the life cycle.

This episode is also a great manifestation of the ideas of consuming and swallowing everything. The procedure in the book under analysis is somewhat metaphorical since

during the time the book was written, getting enough food to eat and feast on indicated that people worked extremely hard and were able to harvest and gather enough food, aka winning the battle and performing heroic deeds. Another aspect here is that the characters are happy consuming not only the food but also generally all the merits that the world could give them. Interesting enough is the fact that in the Ukrainian translation and adaptation the very word meaning to swallow (*ковтати*) is not used quite often, because it is typically viewed as a hyponym and this status defines the low frequency of its usage. However, the word “to eat” is the most frequently used:

	Adaptation by Sydorenko	Translation by Perepadia
їсти (eat)	23	40
жертити (devour)	3	17
ковтати (swallow)	7	4
глитати (swallow quickly)	2	–
наминати (tuck into)	4	9

The reason for greater abundance of these words in the translation by Anatol Perepadia is the fact that translation is complete, without losses and shortenings as in the adaptation by Iryna Sydorenko.

Food names are considered to be stable nouns, a kind of closed system where a new name is possible, but its entrance into currency is quite limited and needs more promotion. New occasional food names can incorporate a cultural component. This is how the Ukrainian translators may have treated the phrase *pièce de laboureur salé* (Rabelais 1913: Vol. 2, 40). In Sydorenko’s text, it is *солоненький ратай*: the diminutive adjective indicates the personal estimation (subjective, individual on behalf of a translator or a reader, but not a standardized name); the noun in inverted commas designates a plowman. In Perepadia’s text, this phrase – *солоний орач* (a salty plowman) – sounds as a very genuine metaphor, besides the very author mentioned “a metaphorical reference” in the following paragraph. This identical approach shows that the translators saw it as an originally invented dish name and were not against additional associations connected with the stereotypical images of plowing and plowmen. Typically, the Ukrainians are called a nation of plowmen: this is an opposition to warriors, so the Ukrainians are a peaceful nation.

In fact, we face a translation loss: *laboureur salé* was a real beef dish in the times of Rabelais (cf. Furnivall 1868: 327). Thus, the real, original culinary object disappears: there is no sign of a well-known and maybe traditional dish. The idea of beef meat is hinted and reiterated in the following paragraph, but this dish as a cultural phenomenon of French cuisine does not exist in the translations.

François Rabelais describes the meals the major characters devour in great detail in his novel. Thus, the generalization *viande* (meat) is used only 28 times. Although concretizations are used far more frequently (as denoting the food and not the material for comparison): *boeuf* (beef) is used 31 times; *vaches* (cows) is used 15 times; *taureau* (bull) is used twice; *veau* (calf) is used 9 times; *génisse* (heifer) is used twice; *brebis*

(ewe) is used 7 times; *mouton* (sheep) is used 28 times; *chèvre* (goat) is used 7 times; *poules* (hens) is used 5 times; *chapon* (capon/rooster) is used 9 times; *poulet* (chicken) is used 6 times; *oisons* (gosling) is used 4 times; *porcs* (pigs) is used 9 times *cochon* 4 times; *truies* (sows) is used 4 times; *gorets* (piglets) is used twice; *saucisses/saucissons* (sausages) is used 18 times.

Anatol Perepadia was extremely creative in rendering these types of meat. Thus, *boeuf* (beef) and *taureau* (bull) was rendered as *бугай* (bull) 13 times, *яловичина* (beef) only once, *воловина* – 4 times, *віл/вола* – 5 times, *телятина/телячий* (calf) – 12 times. Pigs and piglets were rendered as *порося* – 5 times, *підсвинок* – twice; *свинина* – 7 times, *свиня/свинячий* – 12 times. Lamb's meat is rendered as *вівця* (twice), *овечка* (twice), *ягня* (4 times), *баран* (muttons – the most frequent – 31 times).

However, one of the most intriguing phenomena in naming meat varieties in Anatol Perepadia's Ukrainian translation was rendering the term *saucisses/saucissons*: *сосиски* – 13 times, *ковбаса* 10 times, *сервелат* twice. It may be stated that Rabelais is very attentive and employs particular terminology to describe the cuisine his characters consume. The frequent usage of these phrases demonstrates their relevance in the novel's descriptions. Perepadia's inventive translations highlight the need of appropriately expressing the novel's meat kinds to Ukrainian readers. The range of meat dish translations demonstrates the difficulty of translating specific cuisines from one language to another.

Food names are often quoted as cultural words or realia which represent the ethnic specificity of a word. In the semantic structure of the realia, R. Zorivchak discriminates between the denotative and connotative information and the subtype of the connotative information is ethnic and local information which sometimes plays more important role than the denotation (Зорівчак 1989: 76). Thus, we can pose a question: to what extent is food in Rabelais's masterpiece a sign of hedonism or a mark of local patriotism? Book 4 contains an extensive description of a battle with sausages where the author employs three sausage types or names: *andouille*, *boudin* and *saucisson* (Rabelais 1913: Vol. 3, 19).

Andouille is a type of a smoked pork sausage, but even in English, this lexeme is traced because it originated in France and survived especially in the cuisine of Louisiana where the French cultural component remains very strong. Thus, in the American cultural space, this lexeme is definitely the marker of the French identity. *Boudin* has a similar story in the Anglophone lingual history and its traditionally specific recipe is popular in French-speaking countries, though the basic idea of blood sausages can be called an ethnical exclusivity, and this dish is known over the world. *Saucisson* is the invention of the very Rabelais who was the first to use this word in French. Perhaps, he was not the one to have coined it, but he was the first to record it. Afterwards, this lexeme started denoting another sausage type which was considered as a sample from the French cuisine.

Therefore, a French reader might have felt some local flavours from the very words. In a wider context, the very lexemes do render the French identity to connoisseurs of European cuisine and culture, because they have some currency in European national culinary discourses. However, in the Ukrainian translations, this identity immediately evaporates. The translators did not consider it to be important to bring some French culinary taste into their texts. What is more calamitous is that some names stay for different sausage types. The use of the lexeme *ковбаса* is successful, though it is a very general hyperonym. The three synonyms created a problem for the translators:

	Перепадіа	Sydorenko
andouille	ковбик	ковбаса
boudin	кров'янка	
saucisson	сосиска	ковбаска

The least problematic turned out to be boudin. It was translated as ‘blood sausage’ whose name speak for itself. The other variants are not assessed as successful. The first reason lies in the denotationally different objects. From the culinary perspective, the French dishes were smoked sausages, while *ковбик* (salceson) and *сосиска* (Vienna sausage) are not. The second reason is the general perception. In speakers’ mentality, smoked sausage and cooked sausage are often viewed as different typological dishes, so these different types in the juxtaposed texts can be considered as a phenomenon of non-equivalence (instead of partial equivalence). The opposition *ковбаса* – *ковбаска* is not very understandable, as the reader sees it mainly as the opposition of a literary standard word and its diminutive form. Other associations with sausage types or dishes are very subjective. What is still hidden is the very filling of sausages. Here lies the difference: the French *andouille* is filled with stomach and guts of the pig and the Ukrainian *ковбик* is filled with the pieces of the head (tong, cheek, etc.) of the pig.

Now let us return to the question how well sausage can render the Ukrainian identity. Among all its type, the generalized sausage (*ковбаса*) is mentioned in rare Ukrainian idioms. Recalling the Easter traditions, both the Ukrainians and the Poles bless food for celebrating the Resurrection Day. However, in the typical greetings, the Poles refer to eggs and sausage, while the Ukrainians focus on bread. This is why the French identity from the original disappears in the Ukrainian texts, though it is not substituted for the Ukrainian one.

By the way, *Перепадіа* uses two lexemes for mustard: *зірчиця* and *муштарда*. The latter word can be seen as a sign of the Polish identity in the Ukrainian text. Although *муштарда* is a separate form of cooked *зірчиця* in culinary history, today speakers usually treat *зірчиця* as the only possible term. *Муштарда* did survive in some areas of Halychyna (Western Ukraine) where Polish was an actively practiced language in some historical periods. This current limited usage (*cf.* Шило 2008: 179) is definitely the remnant of the former Polish lingual interference.

Returning to the above-mentioned battle with sausages, Colin Sheringham writes: “Exemplifying the difficulty people have with the interpretation, this episode has been viewed as either a representation of the battle between Carnival and Lent; as a satire on Church and State, specifically on the German-speaking Protestants and the Council of Trent; and as a moral message supporting moderation” (EFC 2003: Vol. 3, 163–164). All in all, this position brings us to understanding that even exact translation will look like an adaptation from the perspective of cultural appreciation. Another example of this situation is a reference to “de fromages de Brie et de harengs frais” (Rabelais 1913: Vol. 1, 65). In Sydorenko’s abridged version, this phrase is shrunken to two main components. *Перепадіа* rendered all the components, but it is doubtful if any Ukrainian reader will decipher it to the full extent as a culturally minded French person could do. The second phrase is logical: if fish is masterfully brought fresh and simultaneously from far away, this is really a precious gift. The story of the cheese of Brie is more complicated.

The very name is already a cultural reference point, which is connected with geography. However, the focus is on the role of this town in cheese-making. The produced cheese has such a long history that by the time of Rabelais, it had become a desirable gift. As it was willingly presented to the royal family, the very cheese can be considered to be a symbol of a very delicate and highly-appreciated gift. Its delicacy is added up by the fact that cheese is fit as a dessert. Thus, the mixture of references to different types of cheese as well as the awareness of its cultural history and significance will completely ruin the original assessment of cheese as a precious gift. Conversely, it can produce some ironical laughter in modern readership who are not part of this domain of European cheese culture.

The inclusion of translator's notes can indeed be valuable in providing cultural context through footnotes or endnotes within a book. While it appears that Sydorenko's abridged version does not contain any notes, Perepadia's version does include numerous, but extremely short notes. The insightful and extensive cultural commentaries are definitely useful and beneficial for the reader's perception. Unfortunately, publishers do not often tolerate them.

Both the humanistic ideals of the Renaissance and the role of food in Rabelais's works aimed to promote human progress, with Rabelais utilizing the nutrition system as a means to achieve this. The study has shown that the two Ukrainian translations of "Gargantua et Pantagruel" (by Iryna Sydorenko and by Anatol Perepadia) paid proper attention to the significance and interpretation of food-related episodes in each translation. Despite applying the domestication strategy in both translations, which targets to enhancing accessibility for the target audience, there exists a delicate balance between domestication and foreignization. The translators navigate this balance by incorporating locally specific food names that serve as equivalents or variants of the original source culture's food. What is even more surprising is that a lot of Ukrainian dishes correspond to medieval French ones, thus it shaped a very favourable milieu for perceiving the original writing, and the identity of the original is not violated so heavily as it could have been expected in the domain of food culture.

The study of food descriptions is a vital field that helps in understanding the cultural and social conditions in which the works were created. Food descriptions in literature can aid in the reconstruction of cultural traditions, rituals, and religious observances relating to food. Authors might use food and dish descriptions to create a symbolic ambiance or even to promote political beliefs. In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, a dish that had been named "Russian salad" for a long time was changed its name "Ukrainian salad" at some restaurants. This is yet another example of how food can be used as a symbol in both literature and everyday life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANALYZED TEXTS

PEREPADIA = Рабле Франсуа, 2004–2005, *Гаргантюа та Пантагрюель*, т. 1–2, зі старофранцузької переклав Анатоль Перепадя, Львів: Кальварія.

RABELAIS François, 1913, *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, Vols. 1–3, Texte transcrit et annoté par H. Clouzot. Paris: Bibliothèque Larousse.

SYDORENKO = Рабле Франсуа, 1990, *Гаргантюа і Пантагрюель*, скорочений переказ з французької Ірина Сидоренко, Київ: Веселка.

CRITICAL WORKS

EFC 2003 = *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, 2003, 3 vols. S. H. Katz (editor in chief), W. W. Weaver (associate editor), S. I.: Gale, Farmington Hills: Thompson Learning.

FURNIVALL F. J., 1868, *Early English Meals and Manners: With Some Forewords on Education in Early England*. London: Published for the Early English Text Society by H. Milford, Oxford University Press.

RE 2004 = *The Rabelais Encyclopedia*, 2004, Elizabeth Chesney Zegura (ed.), Westport, Connecticut–London: Greenwood Press.

Зорівчак Р. П., 1989, *Реалія і переклад (на матеріалі англомовних перекладів української прози)*, Львів : Вид-во Львів/ ун-ту.

УС 1961 = *Українські страви*, 1961, Київ: Держ. вид-во техн. л-ри УРСР.

Шило Г., 2008, *Надністрянський регіональний словник*, Львів–Нью Йорк: Інститут українознавства ім. Крип'якевича.