

JAN M. ZIOLKOWSKI

# READING THE JUGGLER OF NOTRE DAME

Medieval Miracles and Modern Remakings

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*Jan M. Ziolkowski*



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To Nola and Tullia,  
Cayden and Brennan,  
your Boppa's mime-playing  
on the Capitoline Hill



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# Overview

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How does the tale about the juggler of Notre Dame go? The story just about always runs something like this: a medieval performer grows weary of wayfaring and sick of sideshows. Instead, he longs for the opportunity to settle down and express his faith. Alienated from the secular milieu, he joins a monastery. Unfortunately, this about-face leaves him not a bit happier. Once cloistered, he soon recognizes how hopelessly unqualified he is for monasticism. The erstwhile entertainer does not know the liturgy, the Latin language, or such rudiments of monkish etiquette as when to keep silent and when to speak. The realization of his utter unsuitability leads him to despair of his present monastic life, as much as he had done recently of his prior worldly one. But eventually he finds a way out by devising a ritual thoroughly his own that makes him feel less useless: whenever his fellow monks chant the divine office together in the choir of the church, he slips down by himself to the crypt and tumbles or juggles before an image of Mary there.

The brethren, once aware of this unconventional conduct, denounce their comrade. When they bring the head of their community to spy on his routine, the little gang is at first outraged. What arrant blasphemy! The newcomer's dancing not only violates the decorum of their worship through its irreverence but, still worse, conflicts in its individualism with the strict conformity that monastic obedience requires. Yet shortly thereafter, they behold a miracle that forces them to rethink. First their colleague collapses, bathed in sweat from the rigors of his performance. Then the Mother of God reveals herself and comforts him. The abbot, in his wisdom, perceives and explains the significance of the Virgin's apparition and intercession. Under his guidance, the other monks concede how misguided their assumptions have been. No longer condemning the tumbler as sacrilegious, they go on to extol and emulate him as saintly.

This narrative secured a modest toehold in the written records of France from the early thirteenth century up through the late Middle Ages, first as a poem and later as a preaching exemplum, only to vanish from view from then until 1873. After its rediscovery, the tale scaled the cultural ladder. Early on, it escaped from the confines of scholarship by being paraphrased, translated, and transformed into short stories and versifications. Rung by rung, it made the transition from opera to radio, television, and film. Simultaneously, poets, both major and minor, laid claim to it.

At first blush, the story may look too straightforward to allow much scope for creativity. Nonetheless, for a hundred years after its recovery in 1873, it evidenced

remarkable malleability and multiplicity. Not a single retelling or reenactment of it in any medium failed to introduce unexpected elements and angles. Nowadays, however, the juggler's miracle has not demonstrated much of a capacity to survive and even thrive through adaptation. On the contrary, it has slipped far down from the privileged post in cultural literacy it once occupied. A few charming specimens of it linger in children's literature, but otherwise it shows faint signs of life.

Why did the tale exercise such intense appeal seven hundred years ago, only afterward to be relegated to obscurity? Why did it regain or even intensify its magnetic hold over audiences in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and maintain it through the close of the twentieth, but then lose its magic touch in our own twenty-first? In sum, why did it twice emerge from a void to prosper, when countless other stories were ignored and even perished?

This collection is envisaged as a treasure chest partitioned into two well-stocked halves. If you throw open the lid of this stout coffer (and it is meant never to be locked but instead always to stand open to all prospective admirers), the first item to greet your eyes will be a gem of verse from early thirteenth-century France, not record-breakingly huge but brilliantly multifaceted. The precious stone in question has been commonly called "Our Lady's Tumbler" (after *Del Tumbear Notre Dame*, the medieval French name for the poem that the first editor appropriated) and "The Juggler of Notre Dame" (after *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, the present-day French title that rapidly displaced the original one).

However we designate the story, it looks at first glance to be short but sweet and simple as can be. For all that, more minute inspection proves that the seeming simplicity is illusory. In modern metamorphoses of the tale, both the earthly and heavenly protagonists have varied. The principal male part has been not merely a juggler, jongleur, and tumbler, as the titles previously quoted would imply, but also an acrobat, clown, dancer, and jester. He has dedicated his craft to another heavenly power such as God or an angel, not to the Virgin Mary. The variability is reflected in titles of children's literature such as *The Clown of God*, *The Acrobat & the Angel*, and *The Little Jester*, where the modification of both roles obscures the relationship of new treatments to the old story. Adults who have never heard of "Our Lady's Tumbler" or "The Juggler of Notre Dame" may carry within them hazy childhood memories of one or more of these other books, but the very elasticity of the tale, so long one of its strengths, has interfered with its recognizability. Nor does the heterogeneity stop there with the hero and the object of his veneration. The image for which he gives his all may be a painting, statue, or some other artwork. The miracle bestowed on him may take the form of a flower, a gesture of the hand, a smile, or the swipe of a towel to wipe away sweat. So much for simple.

A moment ago, this volume was likened to a jumbo-sized jewelry box. The top tray within it has three bays. The first offers, as already mentioned, a translation of the thirteenth-century poem. But that is not all: next come possible sources of inspiration

from the Bible and from a medieval work known as “The Life of the Fathers.” Another space in the tray can assist readers who are curious to compare the tale of the minstrel with other miracles, mostly relating to Mary, from medieval western Europe that show strong similarities to the tale of the minstrel. Lastly, a third area of this first level makes accessible, for the purposes of comparison, parallels to the basic components of this tale that can be identified in texts and traditions from very different places and times. These artifacts, mostly literary but from time to time biographical, are generally far removed in miles from Europe and in centuries from the Middle Ages; a few even lie distant both geographically and chronologically. Did they share any of our story’s ancestry, influence it, or arise altogether autonomously?

Beneath the top tray in this compilation resides a second compartment that encourages readers to explore how audiences and artists have reacted to the thirteenth-century French narrative poem since the excitement that greeted its recovery in the late nineteenth century. Within a few decades, the original was eclipsed by modern re-creations. They had one heyday after another as the tale seeped from one medium into the next, until its final glory days in the middle of the twentieth century. Since then, the leading man and the miracle in which he participated have persisted worldwide mainly in the subculture of children’s books.

Put together, the two parts of this compendium bring home the benefits and delights that the study of cultural and literary history can deliver through the reading and analysis of premodern texts in tandem with their subsequent recasting. Culture, counting literature, operates according to its own elaborate, unpredictable, and not seldom mystifying principles. For much of the twentieth century, the appearances and reappearances of a given story were regarded as conforming to laws of cause and effect, termed “source and influence” by literary critics of those days. Later, beginning fifty years ago or so, the newer models of reader-response criticism and especially of [reception theory](#) instead sought to emphasize the fresh contributions and innovations that each perusal produces. The thinking became that every individual who interprets a text generates novel meanings.

Among other main functions that this book has been designed to fulfill, one of the most fundamental relates to the intrinsic nature of literature. The materials contained here sprawl across an impressive spectrum. Fast and furious, we have hurtled ever deeper into an era in which communication depends predominantly on pixels glimmering on screens along with sounds rumbling forth from speakers. The subject matter enclosed within these covers can empower us to gaze back and probe the problems and promises presented by earlier phases of culture, with their radically dissimilar media. Our forebears relied more heavily than we do on ink, first written on parchment and later pressed on paper, to record words in writing. Each mode, quills from birds plied across hides from animals (supplemented by styluses scratched into beeswax on wooden tablets), movable type imprinted on sheets of dried pulp, and dots glowing on flat panels, has had its own characteristic fragility, durability, and

dynamism. The medium may not be all the message, but the two are indisputably interconnected.

The question of why the literary materials pertaining to the tumbler or juggler warrant our attention can also elicit other responses. For one, these gleanings grant insights into the depth and diversity that characterize the cultures of western Europe in the Middle Ages. They also give glimpses into the manifold and sometimes mistaken understandings that those from later epochs have evolved with respect to that period. Like any other phase of human development, the medieval European one entailed its share of breathtaking good and evil, beauty and ugliness, and conservation and innovation. Such olden times should not be viewed solely through rose-tinted glasses. Then again, they should not be damned as nothing more than a dry run for the ills and wrongs perpetrated by successive civilizations, of course not excluding our own. Rather, they ought to be judged on their own terms. For obvious reasons, they lacked the benefit of hindsight: how could they have foreseen that they would commit injuries and injustices by not operating in alignment with our values? If misty-eyed nostalgia can have its pitfalls, so too can its inverse of sitting in judgment on bygone days and pinpointing in them telltale signs of what we now have the wisdom to censure as moral shortcomings.

A second justification for the subject matter selected and assembled here is that it enables its users to confront the age-old interactions and frictions between individuality and community. In this interplay, collective concerns within cultures stir craftsmen of words and other artforms to compose and recompose stories. A perennial chicken-or-the-egg asks how much of history is prescribed by the force of specific personalities, once labeled “great men,” as opposed to overarching trends within economics, politics, culture, and nature that sweep along nations and now and then even the whole of humanity. What owes to larger dynamics within societies, and what to the temperaments, talents, and wills of individuals? How much freedom do we really have to affect others, or even just to determine ourselves?

Third, the readings bring us up against the eternal mystery of body and soul. Under many circumstances worship hinges on prayer that adheres to fixed verbal formulas, while at other times it centers on rituals that fulfill prescribed bodily movements. Where does the athleticism of the tumbler’s dance fit? Are his motions the physical equivalents of words, are they his idiosyncratic expression of liturgical movements, or are they something totally separate?

The paramount objectives behind the book are comparative, impelled by a humanistic conviction that, as fellow human beings, we may learn from one another. By pinpointing and meditating upon similarities and dissimilarities among persons, objects, and actions, we may gain sensitivity to gradations and nuances. In this case, the points of departure for comparison happen to be literary—multiple versions of a single tale, along with analogues to it.

Thanks to mass culture and especially to the animation of the Walt Disney Company, many have heard of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* or seen it adapted on the screen, even

if they have little or no awareness that the hefty novel behind it was written in 1829 by a French man of letters. In contradistinction, the narrative behind “The Juggler of Notre Dame,” composed six hundred years earlier by an anonymous countryman of Victor Hugo’s (or is it anachronistic to retroject the concept of the nation-state onto the Middle Ages?), has fallen into oblivion. Why should anyone bother with a quaint text from so long ago? Life is devastatingly short, while books are dauntingly plentiful. What renders this tale noteworthy in its own right, as well as important in cultural history for the sway that it has held over later authors, composers, and other artists and their audiences? How can the story, and the story of the story, enlighten us about the essence and operation of literature and culture? Last but not least, what light can the narrative shed on the human condition—on human beings, human behaviors, and human values—in the Middle Ages, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and right now?

The full title *Reading the Juggler of Notre Dame: Medieval Miracles and Modern Remakings* signals that the book will comprise two sections. The first half is devoted, for a start, to a thirteenth-century poem. From this one focal point, the camera pans back to situate this masterpiece in the setting of other miracle tales from western Europe contemporary with it. Then the aperture widens further, to permit comparisons with other traditions. The second half of the book zeroes in on how the medieval piece was received from 1873 on through the twentieth century, initially in France and later in America and elsewhere.

The Middle Ages, late nineteenth century, and twentieth century all look far removed, even beyond repair, from the perspective of the present. We have types (and hypes) of media, communication, and entertainment that precious few in earlier times could have anticipated even vaguely in their wildest dreams or nightmares. Yet certain puzzles recur constantly among people across time and space. What is art? What is faith? How do we express them? What is giving? What value should we place on gifts that carry no monetary value and may even be anti-materialist, rule-breaking, and authority-questioning?

By the same token, some topics of acute urgency in this century of ours are not without precedent but in fact were formerly anything but unknown. The questioning and rejecting of gender binaries, practicing of cross-dressing, and undergoing of sex changes: these considerations crop up again and again in versions of “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and in other stories connected with them. The same texts depict disabilities, both short- and long-term. They touch upon issues concerning classism and elitism, poverty and homelessness, ethnic identity and color, the perseverance of racial and religious minorities in the face of prejudice, and the disputed social status of artists.

At the same time, the literature of bygone times should not find its solitary raison d’être in serving as a mirror to our own preoccupations now. Our predecessors are already extinct. The past created by them is a threatened species, easily harmed, in acute need of respect, examination, and preservation. Its protectors, while endeavoring to keep it alive, will be rewarded by the delights that accrue from grappling with

similarity and difference. Each age through which humanity has transited has witnessed unprecedented change as well as unacknowledged continuity. The here and now has never been exactly identical with the bygone, nor entirely distinct from it. It behooves us to profit by learning from what has preceded us. Failing that, we can at least take pleasure from the days of yore, without leaving them damaged by misrepresentation.

The bundles offered in parts 1 and 2 position those using the book to reach their own opinions about the earliest extant form of the story and the world that engendered it as well as about more than a dozen ways in which the tale was revamped when reimagined by successive writers, from the late nineteenth century on. In the process, those who so desire can interrogate the selections while assessing them as imaginative reconceptions. The medieval era in Europe has been reinvisioned in this fashion ceaselessly in the popular culture of ensuing periods, down to ours at this very moment. Umbrellas tend to be at once cumbersome and indispensable. The word *medievalism*, marked by both of those qualities, has become a convenient shelter under which to collect and protect outlooks and art objects from this or that later time that were inspired by the European Middle Ages.

The body of evidence accumulated here equips readers to make their own case studies, by charting the trajectory that the story of “Our Lady’s Tumbler” has traced from the thirteenth century to today. Those who want or need further details, in analysis, images, or bibliography, relating to the medieval poem and its reception may refer to the six open-access volumes of *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity* that were published in 2018 or to the freely downloadable booklet for the exhibition *Juggling the Middle Ages* that came on its heels in 2019 at Dumbarton Oaks. All the information and images have a higher end: great story is never-ending, and my hope is that this one will endure deep into this millennium.

Translation can furnish the first line of commentary. In that spirit, the prose of most selections presented here sticks deliberately close to the originals. Square brackets indicate that the words or citations encased within them are not part of the base text that has been put into English. For ease of reference, poems have been provided with numbering every five lines.

A further note on nomenclature is in order. The medieval French poem is here designated “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” a literal translation of the title that became commonplace from the late nineteenth century. To avoid confusion and repetition, the modern French short story is called “The Juggler of Notre Dame,” likewise in quotation marks, while the opera is *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, italicized but otherwise identical. The character is the juggler of Notre Dame, plain and simple—or not.

## PART 1

### “OUR LADY’S TUMBLER”: SOURCES AND ANALOGUES, MEDIEVAL TO MODERN



# Introduction

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Part 1 of this collection enables readers to immerse themselves in a generous cross section of weird and wonderful written materials. All these constituents relate to the thirteenth-century French tour de force typically called “Our Lady’s Tumbler.” To set the stage, the opening subsection offers a brand-new, heavily annotated translation of the poem and the exemplum related to it. Afterward follows a concise chapter with episodes from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and apocrypha that could well have informed the poet and other storytellers contemporary with him in their thinking about the dancing of the tumbler. This first cluster is capped by selections from a medieval work known as *The Life of the Fathers*. All of these extracts show tantalizing similarities to the piece about the tumbler.

The next cluster of texts brings together miracles that have been culled from across medieval Latin Christendom. This medley has been put into English from Latin, French, Galician-Portuguese, and German. Its contents depict monks, minstrels, or maidens who merit miracles from Mary or other powerful intercessors.

Complementing the reports of miracles from western Europe in the Middle Ages is a third cluster with parallels from other cultures, including Roman, Persian, Hungarian, and French, in which entertainers persist in performing for God or the Virgin, despite the opposition of traditionalists. These analogues extend in their chronological range all the way from classical antiquity through the Middle Ages and early modernity to the second half of the twentieth century. If religious context is of interest, these materials were the products of pagans, Muslims (both Sunni and Shiite), Jews (both Hasidic and not), and Catholics.

Close engagement with this panoply of narratives lays the groundwork for exploration of many puzzles. What, if anything, that could have inspired these accounts is likely to have transpired in reality? In other words, are we discussing a swatch of actual history, a good yarn, or an interweaving of both? What may have been contrived for rhetorical or literary purposes, rather than supposedly experienced? Finally, whether fact or fiction, reality or legend, truth or lie, what did readers and listeners make of the poem and exemplum? Whether or not anything resembling the events recounted ever happened, did anyone seriously believe that they had? To arrive at our own determinations and verdicts, we will do well not to ignore the wealth of other texts from the late Middle Ages in which lay monks and minstrels apprehend

miracles that the Mother of God (to call her as they would often have done) effectuates through her apparitions and interventions.

What seems to have been transmitted by word of mouth, rather than as conventional literature in written form? What is owed to the laity, and what to the Church? To rephrase these questions slightly, which of the themes in the poem may we reasonably conjecture stemmed from oral tellings among everyday people and can accordingly be interpreted within the framework of [folklore and folktales](#), and which were instead composed by literate, educated, Latinate, and ecclesiastic authors whose writings cry out for literary analysis?

In most of the pieces in the first part, the key events are miracles. In the ones from Latin Europe of the Middle Ages and modernity, these wonders often involve visions of the Virgin. As time passed, the Catholic faith developed to shield the Mother of God ever more from any impurity of earthliness. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception freed her from original sin from the moment of her conception. At the other end of her existence, the doctrine of the Assumption taught that at the end of her earthly life Mary was taken bodily into heaven. Because of the last belief, the relics of the Virgin's physical presence on earth were, make no bones about it, less immediate than for most saints. In compensation, she rendered herself visible and even tangible constantly in visions.

Tales in which Mary intervenes and sometimes even materializes miraculously made themselves evident first in the East. After modest success there, they sometimes received much louder fanfare in the West. One case in point that comes up now and again in versions of the juggler story is Saint [Mary of Egypt](#). The essentials of her legend are that she was an Egyptian who as a young girl turned prostitute and as a woman was moved to take up an existence of extreme asceticism in the desert. The stimulus for her transformation is an icon of the Virgin that mesmerizes her, at which point she receives instruction to cross the Jordan and commence her new life.

In later apparitions, such people as musicians and monks received signs of celestial grace via Mary. From time to time she bestowed her favor upon devotees as lowly as lay brothers, despite opposition from others loftier than them in the social hierarchy. In many cases the wonders take place in or are otherwise connected with cathedrals and monasteries in France, such as Rocamadour and Arras, and in Italy, such as Lucca.

In the complex of miracles to which *Our Lady's Tumbler* belongs, white monks are salient. So called owing to the color of their clothing, these brothers were [Cistercians](#). Their order took its name from Cîteaux, the location in Burgundy where their first monastery was located. Not far from it was Clairvaux, the most significant site in the story of the jongleur. A favorable disposition to the white monks stands out in many tales related to ours. The main runner-ups to them are the Carthusians, monks whose head monastery was (and remains) the Grande Chartreuse, in an isolated French mountain valley twenty miles from Grenoble. Both orders arose during the period of

experimentation in monasticism that stretched across the long twelfth century, from the final quarter of the eleventh century through the first of the thirteenth.

The translations with which the first part begins bring home ways in which Jesus, saints, and, first and foremost, Mary materialize from heaven to aid and comfort those, including jongleurs, lay brothers, and women, who proclaim devotion to them. The focus of these reports often rests on folk who have little or no power within either the Church or nobility. The tumbler was doubly powerless, first as a professional entertainer and later as a lay brother.

A lay brother was a man who operated at the boundary between the world and religion as well as between physical toil and prayer. He was known now and again by the Latin term *conversus* or its medieval French derivative *convers*, to betoken that he had converted or (to break down the verb etymologically) turned around from secular life. Yet his turn did not take him all the way to religion as full monks, often called choir monks, were bound to practice it. If such a convert had a stability, it came from being stuck at the midpoint between the two statuses of lay and monastic.

Lay brethren were obliged to cultivate a distinct appearance from choir monks. Even in grooming, these converts stood apart. Whereas regular monks were clean-shaven and had the crowns of their heads especially shorn, their lay counterparts wore beards (giving them the name *barbati* or “bearded ones”) and had no such [tonsure](#). The lay monks wore a kind of uniform, but it amounted to work clothes rather than a monastic habit.

In sum, the lay brothers were neither fish nor fowl or, to transpose the proverb into more monastic terms, neither fully physical nor completely cowl. On the one hand, they undertook a commitment not to fulfill their potential worldliness by marrying. On the other, they agreed not to exceed their humble perch in the religious pecking order by aspiring to become full monks or clerics. In their daily round, they were tasked with executing heavy labor that choir monks could not have accomplished while also carrying out the many hours of chanting that *The Rule of Saint Benedict* prescribed. In return, the lay brothers were expected to adhere to a drastically reduced set of prayers.

The linguistic situation in medieval monasteries was unlike what most of the world’s population experiences today in daily life. A working command of Latin was essential since it was the language of worship and Holy Writ. In it, the monks performed the liturgy of the hours, which consisted of psalms, hymns, readings, and other prayers. The canonical hours obliged the brethren to fulfill these duties in seven (or eight) stretches spread across the day and night. At many other hours, the brothers were supposed to uphold silence. The strict wordlessness was broken, when necessary, by limited exchanges in sign language. Sometimes the monks would have had to converse in Latin or in the vernacular. What has just been described does not map well onto bilingualism, in which two living languages live alongside each other. Instead, it qualifies as diglossia, in which one or more mother tongues coexist with a

father tongue—a language that no one knows from the cradle but that everyone must learn who engages with Scripture and achieves any sort of formal education.

In the Middle Ages, being lay, ignorant of Latin, and illiterate were frequently overlapping categories. Individuals who could communicate only in their own tongue and not in the learned one were *idiotae*, from which derives the modern "idiot." Latin, only half-dead, possessed great prestige and its grammar was held in such awe that it gave us, by way of Scottish English, the word *glamour*. By not knowing the learned language, those in monastic communities who were not choir monks risked being second-class citizens who could be disrespected, exploited, and mistreated. In fact, sporadic uprisings bore out how real those risks were. Yet a sunnier case could be made for mutual respect. The work and worship enjoined upon the lay members of the monastic communities were restricted but rigorous. The combination contained a capacity for holiness, so long as the untensured brethren held true to their simplicity and sincerity.

But where does the tumbler fit? He is a lay brother but, to all appearances, he does not wish to be consigned to the grange as a purely manual laborer. On the contrary, he likes his liminality at the edges of the cloister and in the crypt beneath the church, much as he once relished his marginality while busking outside. He redefines work on his own terms. En route to saintliness, he comes to prize his peculiar outlet for physical asceticism. Likewise, his command of the most demanding dance steps and of the terminology to describe them endows him with a language of his own for prayer and empowers him to transcend his illiteracy and Latin-lessness in a unique fashion.

The medieval materials in Part 1 offer profound perspectives upon the means at the disposal of believers from long-ago times to manifest their religion and seek redemption. In addition, they pose conundrums about the very definition of sanctity. The tumbler in the medieval poem remains unnamed, and nothing suggests that any effort was ever mounted to have him beatified or sanctified. He is far from the elite, and practically at the bottom of the social hierarchy, at least within the Church. All the same, he is portrayed without question as being saintly.

The sources in the first part encompass a broad sweep of materials. Some are biblical and apocryphal, but many others comprehend Marian miracles. These other accounts relate wonders that Mary is reputed to have instigated after her death. The story came into its own as the cult of the Virgin was reaching its apogee in the European Middle Ages, with a multiplication of churches consecrated to her, pilgrimages undertaken in her honor, and tales of miracles set in motion by her, particularly in conjunction with apparitions of her. Among various features that distinguish the medieval poem and some of its closest comparanda is the representation to which the performer offers his distinctive devotion to the Mother of God. Carvings in wood of Mary with the infant Jesus were the first statues in the round that many viewers in western Europe had encountered in centuries. The story has much to say about the power of images and in its bigger context so-called Black Virgins loom particularly large.

The analogues from within medieval western Christendom mostly deal with entertainers who merit special acknowledgment from the Mother of God. Alongside the Christian depictions of such low-ranking figures may be considered those in other religious traditions, from Roman paganism through Islam and Judaism, who achieve commensurately privileged relations with God through some sort of program, often musical. Incidentally, many of these selections show the astounding range of mysticism across human experience.

The original, or at least the oldest extant, embodiment of the narrative comes in a poem in French dating from the first half of the thirteenth century that was brought to light in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and printed first in 1873. In the English language, popularizing translations of the medieval French, more often by enthusiastic amateurs than by trained professionals, were published repeatedly from the last decade of the nineteenth century on, in affordable but charming palm-sized hardbacks. This volume offers my own fresh rendering into English from the original.

Capping the first part is a French story published by Henri Pourrat after World War II. This iteration rehearses substantially the same sequence of incidents as do preceding versions, but it gives the principal character a new name. More important, it packages the narrative as a folktale from the Auvergne region. For want of any information about the teller, telling context, or date, the possibility remains that it is a faketale—the reshaping, either directly or indirectly, of Anatole France’s story, with trappings to coordinate it more tightly with the telling of an oral traditional tale.

One trait of culture in western Europe and maybe everywhere on earth is the constant give-and-take between folklore and literature. Perhaps related, debate has raged intermittently since the early nineteenth century over whether components of culture such as stories originate in the fervid imaginations of an educated elite and percolate from there down to mass audiences, or whether credit is owed to nameless tellers from lower classes whose creations are commandeered by individuals from the upper ones. The two viewpoints are summed up in the German phrases *gesunkenes* and *gehobenes Kulturgut*, which mean “sunken” and “elevated cultural material,” respectively. Is it shirking to speculate that both motions, sinking and elevation, take place, and that we need to assess each story on a case-by-case basis?

The susceptibility of human beings to binary oppositions in their thinking is no secret. One such dichotomy, reaching back to the nineteenth century, posits that folktales and other folklore which are attested in different places and times originated in two ways. At one extreme is *diffusionism*. This theoretical framework assumes, applying the concept of monogenesis, that a given item of narrative or lore is born in one location. From there spreads to other locales from one individual to another, as from one group to another. When sufficient information survives, the transmission from the place of origin may even be mapped by applying the techniques of the *historic-geographic method*. At the other end of the gamut, the theory of *polygenesis*

avows that similar tales may arise in different places because of shared human nature. In other words, people who are subject to similar wants, needs, and phenomena may cope with them by inventing narratives that are similar or even identical to those produced by others from the species of *Homo sapiens*. Let's keep our minds open to both hypotheses ... and to everything between them. Gray areas can turn out to be very colorful.

# 1. The Medieval Story

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“Our Lady’s Tumbler” here refers to a piece of French poetry from the Middle Ages. Probably a product of the late 1230s, the poem survives in [five manuscripts](#). It was written in a northern form of the medieval language or cluster of dialects that is conventionally [called Old French](#), with features that point to influence from the region of Picardy. The text comprises 342 rhyming couplets, for a total of 684 octosyllabic lines.

Though generally considered anonymous, the verse narrative has often been wrongly ascribed to the thirteenth-century Benedictine monk [Gautier de Coinci](#), who composed in medieval French verse the vast *Miracles of Our Lady*. Likewise, the story contained in it has sometimes been credited mistakenly to Jacobus de Voragine, also from the thirteenth century but Italian and a Dominican friar, who wrote the *Legenda Aurea* or “The Golden Legend,” an enormously popular collection of saints’ lives in prose. Neither attribution is correct. The author, still unidentified and likely to remain so till doomsday, is put under the rubric of that most prolific of medieval authors, Anonymous (anon., for short).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the work of this unidentified poet was generally called *Del Tumbear Nostre Dame*, with the *del* (meaning “of”) often omitted. This title is one of a few that have been transmitted in manuscripts, none of them likely to be authorial but instead all scribal. Early on, the words were translated as “Of Our Lady’s Tumbler,” with the order of the nouns in the original flipflopped. “Our Lady” refers to the personage known in Catholicism as the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. Though not as common as some synonyms, *tumbler* is a sufficiently normal word for an acrobat or gymnast who performs somersaults.

The name of the story raised greater challenges in French than in English. For a start, in modern speech the noun *tombeur*, corresponding roughly to *tumbear*, means lady-killer. Consequently, the title was modified to avoid the less-than-saintly associations of *tombeur* by substituting the synonym *jongleur*. The old-fashioned spelling of *Nostre* was modernized by deletion of the *s*. Finally, grammar now demands adding the word *de* to fulfill the role of *of* in English. By putting these little adjustments together, the poem is now routinely entitled *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*.

Confusingly, that expression can refer equally to a short story from the fin de siècle by the Nobel prizewinning French writer Anatole France and to an opera from the early twentieth century by the once well-known but now neglected French composer

Jules Massenet. Even more misleadingly, none of the three works has the slightest connection with *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* by Victor Hugo or even with the famous cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The epithet Notre Dame, meaning "Our Lady," designates the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, venerated in the Christian church. The name is attached to many cathedrals, churches, and chapels in France, so often that it can stand for one of them by itself. In this usage, the two words are in French properly hyphenated as *Notre-Dame*.

Enough fussing and fretting about the title: more major issues await in the contents. The tale tells of an all-round professional entertainer who is what the Middle Ages labeled indiscriminately a minstrel, mime-player, and the like. His versatility is borne out in the sole illustration of the poem to survive in a medieval manuscript, which shows him performing as a gymnast but includes a depiction of his violin-like musical instrument.



Fig. 1: The jongleur before the Virgin and Child. An angelic hand delivers a towel from the heavens while a protoviolin lies at the Virgin's feet. Miniature, thirteenth century. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Arsenal 3516, fol. 127r. Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. All rights reserved.

Such professionals belonged to an immensely varied class of itinerant performers who could specialize in verbal, physical, or musical skills. They could overlap with jesters and clowns; they could be storytellers or singers, acrobats or contortionists, or even animal trainers. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, the names by which they were called were **evolving**, along with the laws by which they were governed and the social norms by which they were judged.

This protagonist travels about, giving performances that in his case blur the boundaries between what we differentiate as dance and gymnastics. In doing so, he achieves ever more success but ever less satisfaction. Weary of his *métier*, he is eventually stirred to quit the secular world. After forsaking his money, horse, and clothes, he embarks upon a religious life by entering an abbey as a lay brother.

The anonymous medieval poem is all the more exemplary for having no named characters, excepting Mary herself. The nameless minstrel joins the monastery of Clairvaux. In the French region of Burgundy, this abbey had been founded by the man now called Saint Bernard. He and his followers were [Cistercians](#), often styled “white monks,” from the color of their habits. Cistercianism has special relevance to the background of “Our Lady’s Tumbler” because the adherents of this monastic order made a speciality of [collecting and communicating](#), often from oral tradition, short narratives relating to their founders and to the heavenly blessings bestowed upon the brethren, above all by the Virgin Mary. Between 1140 and 1200 the white monks devoted intense efforts to documenting the men and miracles from the especially heroic and saintly early days of their order. In tracing their history, they paid attention not only to the full monks, so-called choir monks, but also to the lay brothers. A word of explanation is called for about this latter group.

By being a lay monk, the lead character was disadvantaged in many ways vis-à-vis the choir monks. Like *jongleurs*, the lay brothers occupied a social space brimming over with ambiguity. Medieval society comprised the so-called three orders: knights who by warring delivered defense, clerics who by praying saw to salvation, and peasants who by tilling the land furnished food. But class systems are rarely as neat as they first appear. In fact, they are usually approximative. In this case, the lay brothers presented a particular quandary by straddling the last two categories.

The conversion of the tumbler to lay brother requires a thoroughgoing transformation. A man who was previously footloose and fancy-free embeds himself in the [fixity of place](#) that has been a regular essential of monasticism in western Christianity. Of his own accord, he dislodges himself from a position in which he was a professional who commanded his trade. Instead, he lands in a new environment with an utterly unfamiliar etiquette. He is illiterate and knows no Latin, he has no grasp of the liturgy that the choir monks must carry out eight times daily, and in fact he fails even to comprehend when he should speak and when he should keep quiet.

The inadequacy of the erstwhile tumbler in singing, reading, and even staying silent induces him after a while to despair. After the world degraded into a dystopia for him, he expected the monastery to be a utopia in contrast. Having the cloister become equally dissatisfying and disappointing knocked his legs out from under him. Yet he perseveres and maps out an escape from what a psychiatrist might diagnose as his clinical depression.

In due course the onetime entertainer devises a solution all his own for expressing his devotion. Whenever the monks gather in the choir of the church to perform the

liturgical office, he descends to the crypt to do acrobatics before a statue of the Virgin. Yet even now, his troubles have not ended. Eventually he is caught in the act by one of the others, who reports his unusual antics to the abbot. When this informant and his superior spy upon the lay brother, they see that his performance prompts Mary to appear. By fanning him and wiping away his sweat, she shows the favor he has won in the eyes of God. Soon afterward he dies, redeemed and vindicated.

The narrator makes clear that the tumbler achieves results not by worshipping a Madonna, which would violate basic Church doctrine, but by venerating Mary through the image of her, in the hope that she will intercede for him with Jesus. He speaks to the representation, but as a conduit to the Mother of God. The likeness does not come to life. Rather, the woman materializes to comfort him. In turn, God is swayed by her to grant the miracle and with it salvation.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries [the cult of the Virgin](#) grew breathtakingly throughout western Europe. She became the last refuge of sinners, a miracle worker, shielding them from diabolic dangers and interceding in their favor with her son. Her garments offered special protection and solace, as here. Monks, not the least the Cistercians (who dedicated all their churches to Mary), practiced ever greater devotion to her in prayer and poetry, and lay people, to the best of their ability, imitated them. Both churchmen and the laity craved the immediacy of contact that [Marian apparitions](#) procured them. Writings proliferated, Mariological ones that examined her theologically and that refined the doctrines associated with her, sermons that preached her, poems and hymns that praised her, and miracles that celebrated her feats.

This tale belongs to a large grouping of Marian miracles in which the beneficiaries are individuals whose piety compensates for their ignorance. The outcomes of these accounts bring home that the Mother of God can and does reward the faithful for their [saintly simplicity](#). For example, one such story tells of an ignorant but devout monk who can recite none of the obligatory prayers. Instead, to honor the Virgin he recites five psalms whose first letters spell out her name. After his death, [five roses](#) are found in his mouth in miraculous compensation for his devotion.

"Our Lady's Tumbler" establishes a direct equation between the formal liturgy of chanting the office and the improvised and idiosyncratic one of dancing it. The moves of the gymnastic lay brother are enumerated at length. Each is even assigned its own name, almost as if the French technical terms correlate to the Latin liturgical words that are incomprehensible to the lay brother: he has his own jargon. The description of the acrobat's routine demonstrates that the beauty and discipline of physical acts may stand on par with those of formal verbal reverence. At the same time, the detailed representation of the dance leaves the reader to suspect that the author's knowledge could not have been acquired casually. Being so conversant with the tumbler's trade must have required living within it or at least in intimate proximity to it: he was an insider or at a minimum rubbed elbows with one.

Simultaneously, the poet evidences a remarkable openness to what could have been treated by a lesser mind as the rigid hierarchy within the monastery. He shows compassion for the lay brother, who owing to his ignorance of Latin and the liturgy occupied the bottommost point on the social scale of the convent. By the same token, he evinces sympathy for the choir monks above the convert and finally for the abbot at the apex of the community.

As a craftsman of words, the writer knows that his verbal contribution is required to give the tumbler a voice. In the end, it is the acrobat alone, not his fellow monks, who through his humble physicality stirs Mary into action. Then again, no historical document names the gymnast or even attests to his existence. For such awareness as we have of the spiritual exaltation and exultation of his performance and miracle, we depend on the verse.

The abbot displays his wisdom in not subscribing to the harsh verdict of the monk who brings him to watch the lay brother perform. Yet shortly afterward, the same knowledge of people and human nature fails him, since by summoning the anxious newcomer to his quarters for a private interview, he precipitates the emotional turmoil that kills the tired tumbler.

The translation of the poem here holds close to the French, but not, it is hoped, at the cost of being idiomatic. Often the English follows the original in frequent changes of tense, but it does not attempt to retain many uses of the subjunctive when that verbal mood would be out of place today. The presentation here maintains the large initial letters and corresponding textual divisions of the earliest and best manuscript.

The Old French was not put fully into modern French until first Pierre Kunstmann in 1981 and then Paul Bretel in 2003. In contrast, a translation into English prose by Philip Henry Wicksteed was published first in 1894, by Isabel Butler in 1898, by Alice Kemp-Welch in 1908, and by Eugene Mason in 1910. The poem was translated into English verse in 1897 by William Showell Rogers, albeit in a form that attained only extremely limited circulation, and in 1907 by George Cormack. Among later versions, special mention should be made of the one prepared in 1979 by Everett C. Wilkie Jr.

## A. “Our Lady’s Tumbler”

In the *Lives of the Ancient Fathers*,  
 the contents of which are good,  
 we are told a little *exemplum*.  
 I do not say that people have not heard  
 5 equally nice ones many times,  
 but this one is not so flawed  
 that retelling it does not serve well.  
 Now, I want to speak to you and to tell  
 of a *minstrel*, what happened to him.

10 **H**e came and went  
 in so many places, and spent,  
 until he committed himself to a **holy order**,  
 because earthly concerns wearied him.  
 Horses, clothing, and money,  
 15 and **everything he had, he gave** to it;  
 and thus, he withdrew from the world,  
 for he wished never after to reengage there.  
 For this reason, he put himself in that holy order,  
 so they say, at **Clairvaux**.  
 20 When this young man committed himself  
 who was so elegant,  
 handsome, gracious, and well formed,  
 he knew no profession  
 of which they had need there.  
 25 For he had not lived except by **tumbling**,  
 vaulting, and dancing:  
 to leap and bound, this he knew,  
 but he knew nothing else,  
 because he did not know the **wording of any other prayer**,  
 30 not the **Our Father** or the **canticle**,  
 not the **creed** or the **Hail Mary**,  
 not anything that worked to his salvation.

**W**hen he committed himself to this order,  
 he saw men with a very **high tonsure**  
 35 who expressed themselves by **signs**  
 and did **not utter a word** from their mouths.  
 He believed most surely  
 that otherwise they did not speak.  
 But soon he was beyond doubt about it,  
 40 because he knew well that as penance they abstained from speech.  
 For this reason, they kept silent sometimes,  
 so that it happened often  
 to be expedient for him to keep silent.  
 45 He kept silent so patiently,  
 and for such a long time,  
 that he would not speak the whole day through,  
 unless someone directed him to speak,  
 so that they had much **laughter** about this.  
 50 In their midst, he was entirely confounded,  
 for he did not know how to say or do  
 what one was supposed to do inside there.  
 Because of this, he was very sad and ashamed;  
 he saw the monks and **lay brothers**:  
 55 each one served God here and there

in such an office as he held.  
 He saw the *priests at the altars*,  
 for such was their office,  
 the *deacons at the Gospels*,  
 60 the *subdeacons at vigils*;  
 and in turn the *acolytes stand ready*  
*for the epistles*, when it is the set time for them:  
 one pronounces *versicles*, the other the *lesson*.  
 And the *young clerics* are at the *psalters*  
 65 and the lay brothers at the *Miserere*—  
 in this way they present their laments—  
 and the most ignorant of them at Our Fathers.  
 He looked everywhere, up and down,  
 in the workspaces and main buildings,  
 70 and he saw hidden in corners  
 here five, there three, here two, there one.  
 He observed well, as he could, each one:  
 he hears *one groan, another weep*,  
*yet another moan and sigh*,  
 75 and so he wonders by what they have been touched.  
 “*Blessed Mary*,” he then says,  
 “by what have these people been touched, that they behave in this  
     way  
 and display grief of such a kind?  
 They are very distressed, it seems to me,  
 80 when they make such great mourning all together.”  
 “*Blessed Mary*,” he then said,  
 “alas, what have I, wretch, said?  
 I believe that they pray to God for mercy.  
 But what am I, base as I am, doing here?  
 85 Here there is not anyone so wretched  
 that he does not endeavor entirely  
 to serve God in his occupation.  
 But I would not have any occupation here,  
 for I neither do nor say anything.  
 90 I was most wretched when I joined,  
 for I know neither to do well nor to pray.  
*I go about aimlessly*,  
 I manage here only to waste time  
 and to consume food for nothing.  
 95 If noticed for this,  
 I would be badly mistreated.  
 They will put me *out in the fields*,  
 for here I am a sturdy peasant,  
 and here I do nothing but eat.  
 100 I am indeed wretched to a high degree.”  
 Then he cries to assuage his grief.

If he had had his wish, he would have wished very much to be dead.  
 "Blessed Mary," he said, "oh, mother,  
 entreat the father on high  
 105 to hold me in his good will,  
 and to send me such good counsel,  
 that I may be able to serve him and you,  
 so that I may be able to merit  
 the food that I consume here,  
 110 for I know well that I am committing a wrong."

After he had lamented so,  
 he went wandering through the monastery  
 until he found his way into a [crypt](#).  
 So he crouched near an [altar](#)  
 115 and as much as he could, he took a place there.  
 Above the altar was [the likeness](#)  
 of my lady, Blessed Mary.  
 He had not at all lost his way  
 120 when he headed there.  
 God who knows well to guide his people.  
 When he heard the [Mass sound](#),  
 he leaped up, altogether confounded.  
 "Ah!" he said, "how I am betrayed!"  
 125 Now each one will say his verses,  
 and I am here an [ox on a tether](#)  
 who does nothing here but browse  
 and squander food for nothing.  
 And I will say nothing or do nothing?  
 130 By the Mother of God, I will do it so.  
 I will not be reproached now,  
 I will do what I have learned,  
 I will serve the Mother of God  
 in her monastery with my office.  
 135 The others serve by singing,  
 and I will serve by tumbling."

He takes off his cloak, undresses,  
 and puts his clothes beside the altar,  
 but [so that his flesh would not be naked](#),  
 140 he kept a short [tunic](#),  
 which was very fine and delicate.  
 It counts for little more than an [undershirt](#)—  
 so his body remained dressed only in it.  
 He is well belted and outfitted;  
 145 he belts his robe and arrays himself.  
 He turns back to the statue

very humbly and looks at it.  
“Lady,” he says, “to your protection  
I commit my body and soul.  
150 Sweet *queen*, sweet lady,  
do not look down on what I know,  
for I wish to put myself to the test,  
to serve you in good faith,  
if God helps me, without any unseemliness.  
155 I do not know how to sing or read for you,  
but surely I wish to pick out for you,  
by choice, all my lovely stunts.  
Now let me be like a kid  
that leaps and bounds before its mother.  
160 Lady, do not be harsh  
to those who serve you rightly;  
such as I am, let it be for you!”  
Then he begins to make leaps,  
little and low, and great and high,  
165 first up and then down.  
Then he places himself on his knees  
toward the image and prostrates himself  
“Ah,” he says, “very sweet Queen!  
In your mercy, in your generosity,  
170 do not look down on my service.”  
Then he leaps and tumbles, and in performing makes  
*the Metz move, in a circle on his head.*  
He bends toward the image, so he worships it;  
as much as he can, he honors it.  
175 Afterward, he makes for it the French move,  
and then the one of Champagne,  
and then he makes for it the Spanish move,  
and the moves that they make in Brittany,  
and then the Lorraine move:  
180 as much as he can, he strives.  
Afterward he makes the Roman move:  
he puts *his hand in front of his forehead*  
and dances daintily.  
185 He looks with great humility  
at the image of the Mother of God.  
“Lady,” he says, “here is a good performance,  
I do it only for you,  
if God helps me, I do it surely,  
and for your son, in very first place.  
190 I dare indeed to say, and I make boast of it,  
that I take no pleasure from it,  
except to serve you and thus to discharge my duties.  
Others serve and so do I.

Lady, do not spurn your servant,  
 195 for I serve you for your pleasure.  
 Lady, you are the summit of joy,  
 who take stock of the entire world."  
 Then he turns his feet upside down  
 and goes back and forth on his two hands  
 200 before having them again on the ground.  
 He dances with his feet and weeps with his eyes.  
 "Lady," he said, "I adore you  
 with my heart, body, feet, and hands,  
 for I know how to do neither more nor less.  
 205 From now on I will be your minstrel:  
 they will sing there in a group,  
 and I will come here to entertain you.  
 Lady, you can guide me.  
 By God, please do not spurn me."  
 210 Then he *beats his breast*, sighs,  
 and sobs very tenderly,  
 for *he does not know another way to pray*.  
 Then he *turns backward and makes a leap*.  
 "Lady," he says, "as God is my savior,  
 215 I have never before done this.  
 This leap is not for the poorly trained;  
 on the contrary, it is brand new for you.  
 Lady, how he would have his wishes fulfilled  
 who could stay with you  
 220 in your splendid dwelling.  
 By God, Lady, lodge me there;  
 I belong to you and not at all to myself."  
 Then he performs again the Metz move,  
 and tumbles and dances all at once.  
 225 And when he hears the chant rise,  
 then he begins to push himself.  
 So, as long as the Mass goes on,  
 his body did not cease dancing,  
 prancing, and leaping,  
 230 to the degree that he was so close to fainting  
 that he could not keep on his feet;  
 instead, he sprawled to the ground,  
 he fell down, out of sheer fatigue.  
 Just as grease comes out from meat on a spit,  
 235 so the sweat comes out of him from top to toe,  
 from his feet up to his head.  
 "Lady," he says, "I cannot do any more now,  
 but truly I will come back."  
 He seems all inflamed from heat.  
 240 He put back on his clothing.

When dressed, he rises,  
 bows down to the statue, and goes off.  
 "Farewell," he says, "my very sweet friend.  
 For God's sake, do not lose heart,  
 245 for if able, I will come back.  
 At each canonical hour I intend  
 to serve you as well as is possible,  
 if it is attractive to you and permitted to me."  
 Then he goes off, watching the statue.  
 250 "Lady," he says, "it is with great regret  
 that I do not know all the psalms.  
 I would say them gladly  
 for love of you, very sweet lady.  
 To you I commit my body and soul."

255 **H**e led this life for a very long time:  
 at each canonical hour, without holding back,  
 he would go before the statue  
 to render his service and homage.  
 For it pleased him wonderfully,  
 260 and he did it so willingly,  
 that he was on no day so tired  
 as to be unable to accomplish his wish  
 to entertain the Mother of God;  
 he would never have wished to play another game.  
 265 People certainly knew well  
 that he went to the crypt daily,  
 but no one on earth except God knew  
 what it was that he did.  
 And he would not have wanted, for all the wealth  
 270 the whole world could possess,  
 that anyone should know of his conduct,  
 except Lord God, all alone.  
 For he believed fully that as soon as they knew it,  
 they would chase him out of there,  
 275 and they would put him back in the lay world,  
 which is ringed about entirely by sins,  
 and he would have wished to be dead,  
 rather than that he should ever submit anew to sins.  
 But God, who knew his will  
 280 and his very great contrition,  
 and the love for which he did it,  
 did not want at all to keep his activity hidden.  
 On the contrary, the Lord wanted and granted  
 that the work of his friend  
 285 for his mother, whom he celebrated,  
 should be known and evident,

so that everyone should know,  
 understand, and recognize  
 that God rejects no one  
 290 who commits himself to him out of love,  
 no matter whatever the profession to which he belonged,  
 provided that he loves God and does right.

**D**o you believe then that God would have approved  
 his service if he had not loved him?  
 295 Not at all, no matter how much he tumbled,  
 but he accepted that he loved him.  
 No matter how much you suffer and endure,  
 no matter how much you fast and keep vigil,  
 no matter how much you weep and sigh,  
 300 moan and worship,  
 no matter how much you subject yourself to mortifications  
 both at Masses and at matins,  
 and give whatever you have,  
 and pay whatever you owe,  
 305 if you do not love God with all your heart,  
 these goods are soon cast down to rot.  
 In such fashion, understand well,  
 they count for nothing in point of salvation.  
 For, without love and without charity  
 310 all toils are valued at nothing.  
 God asks neither gold nor silver,  
 but instead true love in people's hearts,  
 and God loves such individuals frankly.  
 For this reason, God appreciated his devotion.

**T**he good man lived this way for a long time:  
 I do not know to tally for you the years  
 that the good man was thus in comfort.  
 But soon he was in great discomfort,  
 for a monk took note  
 320 who reproved it much in his heart,  
 that he did not come to matins.  
 He wonders what becomes of him  
 and says that he will not make an end  
 until he knows  
 325 what this man is, how he serves,  
 and by what means he [wins his bread](#).

**T**he monk stalked,  
 followed, and spied on him so much  
 that he saw him, quite overtly,

330 perform his craft openly,  
just as I told you.  
"By my faith," he said, "this man has a good time  
and greater joy, it seems to me,  
than we have all put together.  
335 Now the others are at prayer  
and at work in the farm buildings,  
but he dances so vigorously,  
as if he had been paid one hundred silver marks.  
He performs his craft rightly  
340 and pays us as he ought.  
That is a very good arrangement:  
we sing for him, and he tumbles for us;  
we pay him, and he pays us;  
if we weep, he calms us.  
345 For this reason, the monastery should see him now  
as I do, even with the proviso  
that I fast until night.  
There would be no one, I believe,  
who could ever restrain himself from laughing,  
350 if he saw the frenzy  
of this wretch who thus kills himself,  
who so exhausts himself in tumbling  
that he takes no pity on himself.  
God counts it for him as penance,  
355 for he does it without ill intent,  
Surely, I do not hold it for wrong,  
for he does it, as I believe,  
according to his understanding, in good faith,  
for he does not want at all to be idle."  
360 The monk sees this with his own eyes,  
at all hours of the day,  
how he toils without respite.  
He laughed and wept much over this,  
for he feels pleasure and compassion about it.

365 **H**e comes to the abbot and tells him  
from beginning to end the whole tale,  
as you have heard.  
At this, the abbot raised himself to his feet  
and said to the monk: "Now keep silent  
370 and do not make an issue of it.  
By your monastic vows, I enjoin you.  
In fact, if you uphold this injunction well  
so that you do not speak of it except to me,  
we will both see him.  
375 So we will see what can be going on

and we will pray to the heavenly king  
 and his very sweet, dear mother,  
 who is so valued and famed,  
 for her to entreat with her sweetness  
 380 her son, her father, her lord,  
 that he allow me on this day  
 to see this activity, if it pleases him,  
 so that God may be more loved for it  
 and the good man not faulted for it,  
 385 if it pleases him likewise."  
 Then they go off without delay  
 to hide themselves in complete quiet  
 near the altar in a nook,  
 so that he does not notice them.  
 390 The abbot and the monk watch  
 the entire service of the lay brother,  
 the very varied tumbles that he performed,  
 the leaping and dancing,  
 the prostration before the statue,  
 395 the cavorting and bounding,  
 until he was at the point of collapse.  
 He presses on in such great exhaustion,  
 that he must of necessity fall.  
 Then he sat, so exhausted  
 400 that from effort he is completely soaked in sweat,  
 so that the sweat drips down  
 from him in the middle of the crypt.  
 But in a brief while, soon,  
 his sweet lady assists him,  
 408 whom he served completely without falsehood.  
 She knew to come in his time of need.

The abbot watches without waiting,  
 and sees come down from the vault  
 a lady so splendid  
 410 that no one has seen one so precious  
 or so richly adorned,  
 and none so beautiful was ever born.  
 Her clothes are very costly,  
 from gold and precious stones.  
 415 With her are angels  
 and archangels from heaven above  
 who surround the minstrel,  
 console him, and support him.  
 When they have assembled around him,  
 420 his whole heart is soothed.  
 Then they apply themselves in serving him,

because they wish to repay  
the service that he does the lady,  
who is such a [costly gem](#).  
425 For her part, the sweet, noble queen  
holds a [white cloth](#)  
and with it fans her minstrel  
very gently before the altar.  
The bountiful lady  
430 fans him to cool  
his neck, torso, and face.  
The lady endeavors well to help  
him; she devotes herself to the task.  
The good man does not take note,  
435 for he does not see or know at all  
that he has such beautiful company.

**T**he holy angels honor him very much,  
but they do not remain any longer with him,  
and the lady does not linger there any longer:  
440 she crosses him in the name of God, then departs from him,  
and the holy angels,  
who take wonderful delight  
in looking upon their companion, accompany [her](#).  
They pay heed to nothing, apart from the hour  
445 when God will release him from this life  
and they will take his soul.  
In truth, the abbot and his monk  
saw this indisputably at least four times,  
as it happened at each hour  
450 that the Mother of God came there  
to aid and support her servant;  
for she knows well how to support her servant.  
The abbot took great delight in this,  
for he yearned very much  
455 to know the truth.  
But now God showed him well  
that he liked the devotion  
his humble servant performed for him.  
The monk was bewildered through and through,  
460 inflamed with anguish as he was.  
He said to the abbot, "Lord, take pity!  
It is a saintly man that I see here.  
If I have said of him anything wrongly,  
it is right that my heart set it right.  
465 So impose on me the penance for it,  
for he is without doubt a virtuous man.  
We should have understood it entirely;

we ought never be misled."  
 The abbot says; "You speak truly,  
 470 God has made us well aware  
 that he loves him with a very pure love.  
 Now I order you without delay  
 and by virtue of obedience  
 (or else you will fall under a penalty)  
 475 that you speak to no one  
 of what you have seen,  
 except to God and to me."  
 "Lord," he says, "I commit to this."  
 After these words they go back  
 480 and do not stay any longer in the vault.  
 In truth, the good man did not stop,  
 but after putting back on his clothes  
 when he had completed all his office,  
 he goes to entertain himself in the monastery.

485 **S**o time came and went,  
 until a little afterward it happened  
 that the abbot called for him,  
 who had so much good in him.  
 When he heard that they were calling for him,  
 490 and that the abbot was requesting him,  
 his heart was so very full of passion  
 that he did not know at all what he could say.  
 "Alas," he said, "I have been denounced.  
 Henceforth I will not be a day without discontent,  
 495 without torment, or without great shame,  
 for my office is worth nothing.  
 I don't believe that it pleases God,  
 alas, but rather I believe that it displeases him,  
 for the truth of the matter is uncovered.

500 Did I believe that this task  
 that I performed, and that this game  
 should please Lord God?  
 Not at all, it does not please him a bit.  
 Oh, wretch that I am, I never did anything good.  
 505 Alas, what will I do? Alas, what will I say?  
 Good and most gentle God, what will become of me?  
 Now I will be doomed to die and to be shamed,  
 now I will be banished from here,  
 now I will be again put as a target  
 510 out in the world among the great wrongdoing.  
 Gentle lady, Saint Mary,  
 how my thinking has gone astray!  
 I do not know from whom to seek advice.

Lady, come to advise me!  
515 Very gentle God, assist me!  
Do not delay a bit, do not wait,  
and bring your mother with you;  
for God's sake, do not come without her.  
Both of you come to help me,  
520 for certainly I do not know how to make a plea.  
They will say swiftly  
at my first utterance, 'Get out of here!'  
What grief! What will I be able to reply,  
when I am unable to express a word?  
525 What good is it? It is expedient for me to go."  
Weeping, he comes before the abbot,  
such that his face is wet from tears;  
weeping, he kneels before him.  
"Lord," he says, "for God's sake, take pity!  
530 Do you want to drive me out of here?  
Tell what you order;  
I will do as you wish."  
The abbot says, "I want to know  
and want you to tell the truth:  
535 you have been here a long while,  
in both winter and summer.  
So I want to know in what way you serve,  
and by what you earn your bread."  
"Oh, woe," he said, "I knew well  
540 that I would be sent packing,  
as soon as they knew all my activity,  
that they would not have anything to do with me anymore."  
"Lord," he said, "I will go off.  
I am a wretch and will be a wretch;  
545 I have never done even half of a good deed."  
The abbot said, "I do not say this at all;  
on the contrary, I request and insist of you,  
and after that I order you,  
that by virtue of obedience,  
550 you tell me your whole heart,  
and what office  
you fulfill in our monastery."  
"Lord," he says, "how you have slain me!"  
How this order slays me!"  
555 Then he tells him, though it is burdensome to him,  
his entire life, from top to bottom,  
so that he does not neglect to say a word;  
instead he tells it all in a single go,  
as I have told it to you;  
560 he said it and told it all,

with his hands joined and weeping.  
He *kisses his feet* while sighing.

The saintly abbot leans down to him  
and, all the while weeping, lifts him up;  
565 he *kissed both his eyes*.  
"Brother," he said, "now be silent,  
for I make with you a compact  
that you will be in our monastic community.  
May God grant that we be in yours,  
570 as much as we may be able to merit in ours.  
We will be, you and I, good friends.  
Very sweet brother, pray for me  
and in return I will pray for you.  
In fact, I ask you, my sweet friend,  
575 and I order, without any dissimulation,  
that you perform this office fully,  
as you have done it,  
and better still, if you know how."  
"Lord," he said, "is this sure?"  
580 "Yes," the abbot said this, "it is sure."  
He imposes this on him as penance,  
so that he would not be any more in doubt.  
Then the good man was so very happy,  
as the story relates,  
585 that he hardly knew what became of him.  
It was expedient for him of necessity to sit down;  
he became completely pale.  
When his heart returned to him,  
it stirred him profoundly with joy,  
590 so vehemently that an illness attacked him,  
of which he died very soon after.  
Yet he performed his office  
with great goodwill unceasingly,  
morning and evening, night and day,  
595 such that he never omitted an hour  
until he fell ill.  
For, in truth, so great an illness took hold of him  
that he could not stir from the bed.  
It was extraordinarily burdensome to him  
600 that he could not pay his keep;  
it is this that distressed him most,  
for he did not complain of illness,  
but he was in anxiety  
that he might lose the fruits of his penance,  
605 for which he did not toil  
with such toil as he had been accustomed to do;  
it seemed to him all too much that he was idle.

The good man, who was little sinful,  
 entreated God to receive him  
 610 before idleness led him astray.  
 For he felt such great grief  
 that people should know about his business,  
 that his heart could not bear it:  
 it was necessary for him to lie in bed without activity.  
 615 The saintly abbot honors him greatly;  
 his monks and he go to sing  
 for him at each hour before his bed,  
 and he took such great pleasure  
 in their singing of God to him  
 620 that he would not have taken ownership of **Ponthieu**,  
 even if they had wanted to render it all to him;  
 so much it pleased him to hear the singing.  
 He had confessed and was repentant,  
 but all the same he was in uncertainty.  
 625 Yet what does it matter? In the end,  
 it was needful for him to reach the finish.

**T**he abbot was there and all his monks;  
 many priests were there and many **canons**  
 who watched him very humbly,  
 630 and saw entirely publicly  
**a most marvelous miracle**.  
 For they saw, with their own eyes,  
 that at his last moment were present angels,  
 the Mother of God, and archangels,  
 635 who were arrayed around him.



Fig. 2: The juggler is lifted up by angels, rescued from the clutches of a demon. Illustration by Henri Malatesta, 1906. Published in Anatole France, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906), 9.

O pposite were the **enraged**,  
**adversaries**, and devils,  
 so as to have his soul; this is no tall tale.  
 But to no avail they waited,  
 640 they struggled and strove so much,  
 for they would never have possession of his soul.  
 At that moment the soul takes leave  
 of the body, but it is not at all led astray,  
 for the Mother of God rescued it.  
 645 The holy angels who are there  
 sing for joy and so go off;  
 for a certainty, they carry it to heaven.  
 The entire monastery and all the others  
 who were there saw this.  
 650 Now all knew and understood  
 that God wished no longer to hide  
 his love for his good young follower;  
 on the contrary, he wished all to know  
 and recognize the man's good qualities.  
 655 From this they derived great joy and wonder:  
 they honored his body very highly,  
 and carried it into their chapel;  
 they performed the divine office solemnly.  
 There is no one who does not sing or read  
 660 in the choir of the main church.

W ith the greatest honor they bury him  
 and then watch over him as a holy body.  
 Next, the abbot relates to them,  
 without covering up anything, the whole story  
 665 about him and his whole life,  
 just as you have heard it,  
 and all that he saw in the crypt.  
 The monks gladly hear it.  
 "Surely," they say, "it does well to believe;  
 670 no one should disbelieve you about it,  
 since the facts give evidence.  
 He is tried and tested in the time of need:  
 no one should ever have any doubt  
 that he performed his penance."  
 675 They had among themselves great joy about this.

T hus, the minstrel came to an end.  
 He tumbled blessedly, he gave service blessedly,  
 for he merited high glory,  
 with which none other can compare.

680    *The holy fathers* tell us this,  
           what thus happened to this minstrel.  
           Now we pray to God, there is nothing equal,  
           that he grant us to serve him so well,  
           that we can merit his love.  
           *The Tumbler* concludes;  
           here ends “Our Lady’s Tumbler.”

### B. *The Table of Exempla, in Alphabetical Order: “Joy”*

Forty years after the French poem was composed, *the same tale* shows up again but stripped down this time to two sentences of Latin prose as an exemplum. The key figure—really, the only one—in the barebones narrative is an entertainer who abandons the world to become bound by religious vows. Because of being illiterate and untrained, he decides upon his own way of praising God when his peers sing psalms: he dances and bounds about. When questioned about his behavior, he answers that he is celebrating God in the way he understands. Nearly a third of the roughly fifty words in the text are given over to this mini-speech made by the religious dancer—or the dancing religious.

What were *exempla*? As their name suggests, these brief stories were told to exemplify the general themes in sermons. Among other things, they satisfied the age-old need of teachers, preachers, and other public speakers for motivational material that can entertain and edify audiences. Material of a comparable sort in Christian preaching tends today to be called illustrations. Such narration is loosely related to the recounting of cases in legal contexts. The Dutch literary scholar André Jolles raised this consideration intriguingly more than ninety years ago in a study of “*simple forms*,” as he styled basic structures of literary narrative.

The exemplum version of our story appears in *The Table of Exempla, in Alphabetical Order*. This anonymous compendium was assembled around 1277. Whereas “Our Lady’s Tumbler” bore the imprint of Cistercian monasticism, *The Table of Exempla, in Alphabetical Order* owes to the influence of Franciscanism, the religious movement connected with Saint Francis of Assisi. Franciscans are friars, religious who take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but who unlike monks of the traditional sort are bound to serve society, often in urban settings. The friars minor, as the members of this order have often been called, embraced preaching to the laity as a major constituent of their mission. For that reason, they needed tales that could serve as the stuff of their sermons.

Paradoxically, the very short exempla went hand in hand with the commensurately long compilations that assembled them and presented them so that they could be consulted for easy reference. The “table” with which the title begins is the table of contents that occupies the opening folios of the text. In total, the work contains more

than three hundred exempla. To help preachers in search of materials, these short anecdotes are classified under 151 headings, arranged alphabetically from the letter A all the way to X.

Our story, a mere two sentences for a total of a mere fifty words, is subsumed under the rubric for "Joy," in the Latin form of the noun.

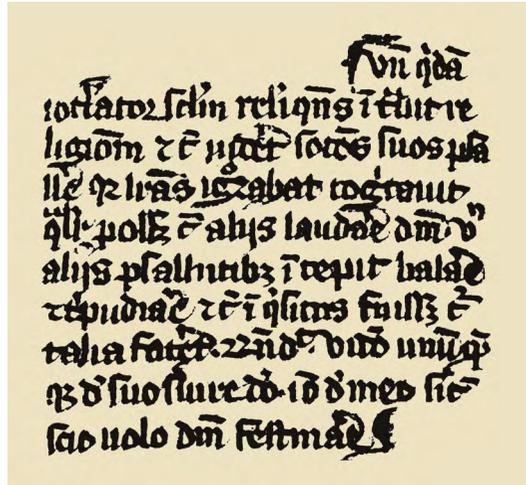


Fig. 3: Excerpt from *Liber exemplorum secundum ordinem alphabeti*, chap. 49, no. 28, "Gaudium." London, British Library, MS Additional 18351. Image courtesy of The British Library, London. All rights reserved.

That emotion accords well with the spirituality of Saint Francis. Tying the exemplum even more tightly to the founder of the Franciscan order are the facts that he had been an entertainer in his young manhood and that he presented himself later as being a "jongleur of God."

In 1911 an [American folklorist wondered](#), "Is this prose story the hitherto undiscovered original of the French poem?" The interrogative, a good one, is unanswerable. The exemplum could be similar or even nearly identical to a predecessor, oral, written, or both, that existed already before "Our Lady's Tumbler" was put down on parchment. Conversely, the extant prose could be a distillation and transformation of the literary work. A third possibility is that both owe to sources—once again, oral, written, or both—that have vanished in the long meantime.

In the study of literature as a whole and even more so of medieval literature as a subset, one delight (and desperation) is how much easier it can be at times to pose important and provocative questions than to be capable of pinpointing evidence for confident answers. Perhaps the biggest puzzle of the earliest evidence for "Our Lady's Tumbler" is whether the verse and prose are ultimately sheer fiction, fictionalized reality, or some hybrid of the two.

The tale has many qualities of an archetype. Such primal patterns involve personalities, situations, places, and shapes that possess deep psychological, mythic,

and literary importance. Their existence and significance have been explained variously. C. G. Jung hypothesized that they connected with the workings of what he styled the collective unconscious, Robert Graves and Joseph Campbell with myth, and Northrop Frye with literature. None of these thinkers wrote in their scholarship specifically about “Our Lady’s Tumbler” or “The Juggler of Notre Dame,” but the patterns in the story and its persistence across cultures make it a promising test case for interpretation according to the principles and procedures that they set forth.

A certain entertainer, forsaking the world, entered a religious order and, when he saw his peers singing psalms, since he did not know his letters, thought how he could praise God with the others. For that reason, when the others sang their psalms, he began to dance and leap for joy, and when asked why he did such things, replied, “I see everyone serving God in accord with his faculty, and for that reason I wish to celebrate God in accord with mine, as I know how.”



## 2. The Bible and Apocrypha

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### A. “The Dancing of David before the Ark”

David, the biblical king of Israel, has had two associations that could well have brought him to the mind of medieval (and postmedieval) authors and audiences who dealt with “Our Lady’s Tumbler.” Though famous as the killer of the giant Goliath and infamous as the adulterous lover of the beautiful Bathsheba, he has also been known as a lifelong musician and, in one minor but memorable episode, as a dancer.

The connections with music surface first when David is a young shepherd watching over his flocks and [comforting King Saul](#) in his despondency, later when in his own prime he becomes a king himself, and lastly when he reaches the autumn of life. In medieval European representational art he is pictured again and again, especially in author portraits, in his capacity as alleged composer of many psalms. Traditionally he is depicted with an instrument in hand, typically a lyre, harp, or fiddle.

In contrast, David’s nexus with dancing is not tied to one specific incident alone. For [twenty years](#), the ark of the covenant, which housed the two stone tablets that handed down the Ten Commandments, remained outside Jerusalem. After King David designates the city his capital, he determines to restore the repository to the temple built for it by his predecessor Solomon. The Lord enjoins anyone from touching the wooden chest. In transit, the [driver of the ox-cart](#) steadies the wooden box with his hand and is killed as chastisement for his temerity. In the aftermath of this transgression, David delays the return of the ark into Jerusalem [for three months](#). When [the transfer is finally completed](#), the exultant people celebrate the happy occasion with multiple sacrifices, shouts, and music. The ruler himself strips off all his clothing, except a priestly vestment called an ephod. In this sleeveless and apron-like garment of light linen, he leaps and dances before the ark. This behavior provokes [the contempt of his wife Michal](#), as she surveys the proceedings from a window. The scene was not uncommonly [depicted in art](#).

The circumstances of scanty dress, an exuberant dance near a revered object, and a disapproving onlooker would have struck those medieval people versed in the Bible as they thought through the miracle of “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and its analogues—or perhaps even as they thought them up.



Fig. 4: King David dancing. Miniature. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vindobonensis 2554, fol. 44r.

### 1. 2 Kings (= 2 Samuel) 6.13–23

- 13 And when they that carried the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he  
sacrificed an ox and a ram,
- 14 and David danced with all his might before the Lord, and David was  
girded with a linen ephod.
- 15 And David and all the house of Israel brought the ark of the covenant  
of the Lord with joyful shouting and with sound of trumpet.
- 16 And when the ark of the Lord was come into the city of David,  
Michal, the daughter of Saul, looking out through a window saw  
King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and she despised  
him in her heart.
- 17 And they brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place in the  
midst of the tabernacle which David had pitched for it, and David  
offered holocausts and peace offerings before the Lord.
- 18 And when he had made an end of offering holocausts and peace  
offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts,
- 19 and he distributed to all the multitude of Israel, both men and  
women, to every one, a cake of bread and a piece of roasted beef  
and fine flour fried with oil, and all the people departed, every one  
to his house.
- 20 And David returned to bless his own house, and Michal, the daughter  
of Saul, coming out to meet David, said, "How glorious was the  
king of Israel to day, uncovering himself before the handmaids  
of his servant, and was naked as if one of the buffoons should be  
naked!"
- 21 And David said to Michal, "Before the Lord, who chose me rather  
than thy father and than all his house and commanded me to be  
ruler over the people of the Lord in Israel,

- 22 I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done, and I will be little in my own eyes, and with the handmaids of whom thou speakest I shall appear more glorious.”
- 23 Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death.

### 2. 1 Paralipomenon (1 Chronicles) 15.27–29

- 27 And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen and all the Levites that carried the ark and the singing men and Cheneniah, the ruler of the prophecy, among the singers, and David also had on him an ephod of linen.
- 28 And all Israel brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord with joyful shouting and sounding with the sound of the cornet and with trumpets and cymbals and psalteries and harps.
- 29 And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord was come to the city of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looking out at a window saw King David dancing and playing, and she despised him in her heart.

## B. “The Dancing of Mary before the Altar”

Both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, despite the many pages they occupy, leave unanswered a host of questions. Not surprisingly, the Christians of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, like the Jews, often craved information and insights that were lacking from Holy Writ. To take a concrete example, the details that the Gospels provide regarding the Virgin Mary are sketchy at best. The evangelists Matthew and Luke tell readers mainly that even after becoming the mother of Jesus she remained a virgin and that her betrothed and husband was Joseph, a man with a lineage that reached back to King David. To stop the gaps, stories took shape outside the canon of Scripture that filled in some of the blanks about her conception, birth, and early childhood.

The extracanonical writings that deal with Jesus’s mother include the apocrypha, such as the so-called Infancy Gospels. These last-mentioned texts offer accounts of the birth and early life of Jesus. Among them the Book of James or, to call it by the name that has been assigned to it since the sixteenth century, the Greek *Protevangelium of James* entered circulation sometime in the middle of the second century or slightly later. In the oldest manuscript the main title attached to it is “The Birth of Mary,” the subtitle “The Revelation of James.” The author purports to be James. This is not James the Great (Mark 3:17), son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles. Rather, readers are probably supposed to recognize in him either Jesus’s brother by this name (Mark 6:3), who was Joseph’s son by a wife before his marriage to Mary, or James the Less or the Younger (Mark 15:40), Jesus’ cousin, son of the Virgin’s half sister, Mary of Cleophas.

The *Protevangelium* supplies details of the Virgin Mary's life from before her birth up to the arrival of the Magi, the three wise men who presented gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus (Matthew 2:11). The apocryphon describes her elderly parents, Joachim and Anna, as wealthy and pious, but saddened by being childless. Then, after angels brought the barely believable news that this lacking would be remedied, Anna conceived Mary and gave birth to her. Though most attention has been devoted to the Greek version, the account exists also in a host of other languages, such as Syriac, Georgian, Armenian, Arabic, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Church Slavonic. The western tradition, including fragments of versions in Latin and Irish, is decidedly slimmer, owing to the censure of the text as forbidden in the so-called Gelasian Decree, a list of canonical works drawn up in the western Church and ascribed erroneously to Pope Gelasius I.

In the episode of concern here, Joachim and Anna visit the temple to make offerings and in the same spirit to entrust little Mary, at the tender age of three, to the convent of virgins there. Their daughter, when deposited within the precincts of the holy place, betrays no sign of distress at being relinquished by her parents to be a temple virgin. On the contrary, she first does a little jig upon being set down and then races up the steps (which total fifteen in the Latin tradition) without so much as a backward glance.

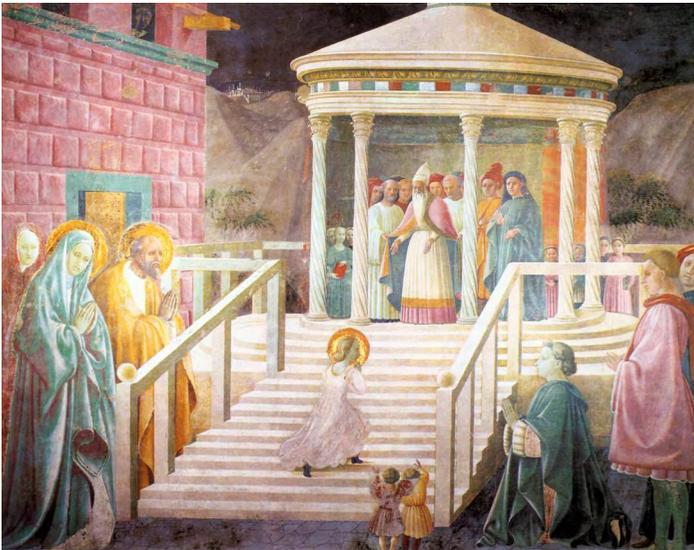


Fig. 5: Paolo Uccello, *Presentazione di Maria al Tempio*, ca. 1435. Fresco. Prato, Duomo di Prato. Image from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paolo\\_uccello,\\_presentazione\\_di\\_maria\\_al\\_tempio.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paolo_uccello,_presentazione_di_maria_al_tempio.jpg)

The emphasis on Mary's descent from King David helps to explain the motif of her dancing before the altar, paralleling her ancestor's exultation before the ark. All in attendance, counting the priests, are impressed. The girl's mother, Anna, intones a hymn of joy.

### Protevangelium of James 7

- 1 The months passed, and the child grew. When she was two years old, Joachim said [to Anna], "Let us **take her up to the temple of the Lord**, so that we may fulfill the promise which we made, that the Lord not send some evil to us and our gift not become unacceptable." And Anna replied, "Let us **wait until the third year**, that the child may then long no more for her father and mother." And Joachim said, "Let us wait."
- 2 And when the child was three years old, Joachim said, "Let us call the undefiled daughters of the Hebrews, and let each one take a torch, and let these be burning, that the child not turn back and her heart not be tempted away from the temple of the Lord." And they did so until they had gone up to the temple of the Lord. And the priest took her and kissed her and blessed her, saying, "The Lord has magnified your name among all generations; because of you, the Lord **at the end of the days** will reveal his redemption to the children of Israel."
- 3 And he placed her on the third step of the altar, and the Lord God put grace on her and she danced with her feet, and **the whole house of Israel loved her**.

### C. "The Widow's Mite"

The lesson of the widow's mite, related in two of the synoptic Gospels, has been interpreted in many ways. The episode does not refer to any form of worship, such as dance, that is expressed through physical activity. On the contrary, the pertinence of the biblical account to "Our Lady's Tumbler" stems from the idea that an offering to God has a value independent of the price that society would set upon it. Instead, its worth derives from the sacrifice made by its giver.



Fig. 6: Alexandre Bida, *The Widow's Mite*, 1874. Etching. Published in Edward Eggleston, *Christ in Art; or, The Gospel Life of Jesus: With the Bida Illustrations* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1874), p. 293.

The mite, as English translates the Greek term *lepton*, was the lowest denomination of Roman coinage. Two of these small copper coins were together worth a quadrans, itself a cast bronze coin of low value.

### Gospel of Mark, 12

- 41 And Jesus sitting over against the treasury beheld how the people  
cast money into the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much.  
42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites,  
which make a farthing.  
43 And calling his disciples together, he saith to them, "Amen I say to  
you: this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast  
into the treasury.  
44 For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want cast in  
all she had, even her whole living."

### Gospel of Luke, 21

- 1 And looking on he saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury.  
2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites.  
3 And he said, "Verily I say to you that this poor widow hath cast in  
more than they all.  
4 For all these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God,  
but she of her want hath cast in all the living that she had."

### 3. *The Life of the Fathers*

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The French *La Vie des Pères*, which translates into English literally but a little lumberingly as *The Life of the Fathers*, brings to mind immediately the more famous Latin *Vitae Patrum*, also translated as *The Lives of the Fathers*. The second element in these two names signals that the materials assembled in them pertain to the so-called **desert fathers**, legendary figures of early Christianity such as Saints Anthony, Hilary, and Paul of Thebes. From the third century on, these ascetics inhabited wastelands in Egypt near Alexandria as well as equivalent spaces in Syria and Palestine. Taking flight from the temptations of the world, they strove to perfect themselves by chastising their bodies and practicing constant prayer. At the same time, by dwelling in both heroic solitude as hermits and regulated communities as monks, they laid the foundations for two contrasting ways of life, eremitical (from the Greek word for *wilderness*) and coenobitical (from the elements in the same language for *common* and *life*). Predictably, the text that evolved from *The Lives of the Fathers*, along with the closely related *Conferences* of John Cassian, was later recommended for reading aloud to monks in *The Rule of Saint Benedict*. The title is well attested in many codices that survive to this day as well as in catalogues from medieval monasteries that contain listings for manuscripts now lost.

As the centuries rolled by, *The Lives of the Fathers* snowballed. Along the way, it absorbed content from such sources as a few lives written by Jerome, *The History of Monks in Egypt* by Rufinus of Aquileia, *The Lausiac History* by Palladius, and variously entitled sayings of early ascetics by assorted Christian authors of late antiquity. This expanding core of material, much of it translated and adapted from Greek models, was itself enlarged by additions drawn from other works. The quarries from which narrative building blocks were hewn included Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*, four books about the holy men of sixth-century Italy, and the story of the legendary Christian martyrs, Barlaam and Josaphat, likely based on the life of the Buddha.

This heterogeneous corpus awakened intense interest in the twelfth and early thirteenth century, as ever more attention was paid to imitation of the apostolic life and as aspirations grew that the glory days of early Christianity could and should be renewed. Would-be reformers saw the desert fathers as heroes to be emulated. This identification with the past may have held especially true for the Cistercians, who resembled these late antique forebears in practicing strict discipline and in inhabiting foundations usually located in remote wastes. Yet it would be a slip to overemphasize the role of ecclesiastics and to underestimate the attraction of the laity to these stories.

*The Lives of the Fathers* also offered role models to individuals who though outside conventional church organizations embraced spiritual rigor and even stringent self-discipline. Thanks to the Crusades, the regions of the eastern Mediterranean where the early solitaries had resided were once again on people's minds with an immediacy that had been lacking for more than a half millennium.

To satisfy the new enthusiasm, translations were required. As Cistercianism spread, more and more of Europe's many vernacular languages established themselves as media for literature that was more than worthy of being recorded on parchment. Consequently, portions of the Latin *The Lives of the Fathers* were put into medieval French versions time and again. The two best known were composed by an anonymous Anglo-Norman poet, perhaps before the late 1170s, for the Templars under the patronage of Henri d'Arce and by the prolific translator *Wauchier de Denain* for Philippe, marshal of Namur who died in 1212.

Confusingly, both *The Lives of the Fathers* in Latin and adaptations of it in French, despite the similarity of the titles, are distinct from *The Life of the Fathers*. This later compilation, written between 1215 and 1250 or so in French verse, is extant in some forty manuscripts. It comprises 74 devout tales, a fair number of which closely match short narratives found in contemporary compilations of exempla for preaching. Its contents include stories borrowed from the tradition of *The Lives of the Fathers* that relate to the desert fathers of late antiquity, but these traditional stories are supplemented with miracles of the Virgin that take place in less distant venues and more recent times.

The narratives within *The Life of the Fathers* have been traditionally known by short labels that were assigned to them in the late nineteenth century by the famous philologist, Gaston Paris (see Part 2, Chapter 1). The more than 30,000 octosyllabic lines of the collection at its fullest extent were produced in at least three stages. The first series, written between 1215 and 1230, contains nos. 1–42, while the second, from after 1241, and third, from around 1250, both shorter, comprehend the remaining 32. We will concentrate upon the first series.

"Our Lady's Tumbler" opens with a short preamble in which its author pretends to acknowledge indebtedness to *The Lives of the Ancient Fathers* for the "little exemplum" that he recounts. As often happens in medieval literature, the supposed citation is a red herring: no form of the work credited contains any story that approximates ours closely enough to be regarded as a source. Yet the poet was not being altogether disingenuous, since numerous narratives in the French text we know as *The Life of the Fathers* reveal many of the same preoccupations that inform "Our Lady's Tumbler."

Both tales here come from the first collection. They have been chosen for inclusion because of thematic correspondences they show to "Our Lady's Tumbler." The first belongs to a cluster of stories in which simple faith takes precedence over learning and Latinity. "*Miserere*," as this narrative is called, corresponds intriguingly to a miracle about a priest who could perform just a single Mass. The only such act of worship this simple and humble clergyman knew was in honor of the Virgin, built

around the Gregorian chant “*Salve sancta parens*” or “Hail Holy Mother.” This song was used in opening the celebration of the eucharist in feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The narrative about “the priest of one Mass” (as it is customarily designated) was incorporated within the poems of both [Adgar](#), a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman who composed the earliest extant *Miracles of the Virgin* in a vernacular language, and [Gautier de Coinci](#), active in the first half of the thirteenth century in Soissonnais, a region to the northeast of Paris within the historical territory of Picardy.

As the story goes in *The Life of the Fathers*, the protagonist is not a priest but a simple and humble man who left the world. He knew only one Latin prayer, which he uttered consistently with a key word differing from the prescribed text. When the hermit providing him spiritual guidance directed him to use the correct wording, the would-be monk ceased to experience the divine illumination and good health from which he had previously benefited. When the disciple was permitted to take up again his old way of praying, all returned to its previous happy state.

The second tale offered here, likewise from the first version of *The Life of the Fathers*, has been labeled “[Goliard](#).” True to the title, the principal player in this little drama is a goliard. Such status could align him with jongleurs and tumblers, but this man is a cleric whose distinguishing feature is that he likes to gluttonize and play games of chance in taverns. When the funds he has pilfered run out, this scoundrel concocts the scheme of entering a Cistercian monastery so that he may rob their valuables. Yet once inside, year after year passes without his being able to tear himself away. After two full decades, he is stopped from leaving when a painting of the Virgin with her son in her lap becomes animate. The baby Jesus snatches the host from the former carouser until he repents, at which point the infant restores it. When the penitent demands that he be executed, the abbot instead extols him.

The forty-two tales in the first version of *The Life of the Fathers* contain eight which are miracles of the Virgin. Among the other six, one that reveals intriguing affinities with “Our Lady’s Tumbler” is “[Fou](#).” As the French title suggests, it concerns a fool or madman. This man, named Félix, prays every night before an image of Mary. Once, when the supposed madman sleeps in front of the painting, the Virgin is seen by an onlooking knight to descend from heaven and crown Félix. Among other features connecting this narrative with that of our poem is the prominence in it of Cistercianism, in the form of Cîteaux itself. But “*Fou*” deals with not just Félix but two other clerics, along with assorted other characters. Its hubs are pan-Mediterranean, with Egypt, Jerusalem, Antioch, Besançon, and Cîteaux all becoming stopping points in the story. Finally, it runs to more than a thousand lines, most of which have no direct relation to “Our Lady’s Tumbler.” For these reasons it deserves mention here but not inclusion.

## A. "Miserere"

Whoever has ears for listening ought to listen to what he can enjoy, if he has in himself a little knowledge. The first bit of wisdom is to fear God. The man who fears and loves him sincerely benefits from it. He who wishes to act against reason [2750] sooner or later must find retribution for his folly. He is wise who humbles himself and does what he ought to do, there where he sees his honor and gain. Obedience, in truth, derives from fear and humility. He who upholds these two maintains himself as obedient.

The camel, which is a dumb beast, [2760] devoid of knowledge and reason, holds itself firm in obedience: when its master comes to load it, it kneels and humbles itself as he binds his load upon it. By this example a person who has reason and understanding can understand that he ought to obey God, when he sees the beast come to its knees out of obedience. [2770] You ought truly to contemplate it, as the wise do, but the fool can only carry out his intention, who does not fear before he finds death, which covers him in earth and sends him off to dwell in the death of hell without returning. He is silly who waits until death deals him its blow, and he is wise who shows foresight [2780] and who fears God as he ought to fear him.

### Of the Simple Man Who Was Saved by *Miserere tui, Deus*

May everyone now have mercy on himself.

I tell you here of a layman who was simple, humble, and gentle, and who gave himself wholly to God. All his wits went to loving God. He certainly spent his time well, because he had no concern for the world but took care about God.

This man set about doing good, [2790] until he heard about a saintly hermit, a recluse. In that country there was no other. There was no other: wasn't this one enough? A great country and land are enlightened by one man, and a great number of people are brought low by a fool, who leads them in such a fashion that thanks to him each one is in trouble. This one enlightened his country [2800] by the good counsels that he gave.

The simple man had a great desire to become acquainted with him and his life. So he thought to seek him out until he could see his saintliness. He had a great yearning to become a monk; he had thought about it a long time. He gave away all that he had and made the Lord God his heir. He wished to restore to the Lord God the goods [2810] that God had lent him: each of us ought to do the same.

When he had settled his affairs, he got up one morning and departed to seek him out. He sought him until the hermitage appeared to him in a wasteland, between a wood and a thicket. As one who was versed in loving God, he went now in that direction and [2820] found ready at hand the good man who was fulfilling his obligation to serve God and who took joy in the service. He told him of his intention, and the other listened to him in kindly fashion.

"Sir, I repent my sins; for God's sake I, as one who has need of it, ask advice of you."

"May the Lord God, who has guided you here, be thanked and praised for it."

[2830] "If it pleases you, sir, now listen to me. I have lived a long time in the world, where I have spent all my youth. If you please, I would become a monk and devote myself to serving God, to better my soul and my life, for I do not know or see at all how a man can save himself who consents to surrender himself to the world. So, for God's sake, act so that [2840] I may be put by you on a good path. You and the others who know the benefits that you ought to show us, you say that to serve God we ought to leave behind

everything and flee the comfort and riches of the world so as to gain the great majesty of heaven and to escape the wheel of hell, which makes fools grow hoarse from screaming who are tortured [2850] for the sins they have committed. For this reason I want to show foresight, for I do not want through my fault to send my soul to its doom, for to act so by sending it is all too foolish. I want then to consign myself to all manner of deprivation, and to give and render my soul to Jesus Christ. It is right that he should have it, insofar as he created it. May he be shamed who takes it from him; [2860] he will be shamed, that will never fail."

"Friend, you have spoken very well. Now listen to me a little. It is very difficult to give up one's habits and to take up others. Poverty, desperation, and anguish make many people do and say things that after the deed they regret to have done. There are three things, without lying, [2870] from which one cannot retreat: a wife, because of the sacrament, an oath, and belonging to a religious order. So you ought to put yourself to the test and weigh your heart, before you promise something that you will regret afterward."

"Sir, you have spoken well and truly. You ought then to know my circumstance. I have taken this oath and ought to maintain it; [2880] for that reason it is proper for me to follow through."

"By my faith, since you have made the promise, because of the obligation you ought to keep it."

"The obligation is good and agreeable for me; I took it gladly, for it pleases me very much."

From the words that he heard, the hermit saw well and understood that this man had a good disposition and that he himself would produce a good sowing in him. The person ought well to love his sowing [2890] and ought to sow plentifully, who knows that he spreads it in such a place that it will produce a hundredfold yield. So he thought that he would detain the man, who could hardly wait for counsel.

The following day, without waiting any more, he had him prepare a hermitage where he put him, and he gave him his rule and instructed him well. He was easily instructed, [2900] for he had a humble and fierce heart, fierce in opposition to evil and humble in doing good. He could not hold himself back from praising God, for he prayed to him by day and night, and honored him as much as he could. He knew no prayer but one, which he had every day in his habit and custom: *Miserere tui, Deus* or "Have mercy on your [servant], O God."

Our Lord, who sees everywhere, [2910] accepted his prayer gladly, since it came from the source that brings benefits to the tongue. From deep in the heart comes the root that extinguishes or illuminates the speech that each person expresses. This man performed his prayer from the heart, and for this reason he made no mistake, for he took it from the good of his heart. In this way he stood by the Lord God, [2920] and said and maintained his prayer. Every time that he said it, the Lord God illuminated his heart and his body and the place where he wished to fulfill his vow, so that he was filled entirely with all benefits and all delights. He lived a long time amid these benefits, until a Sunday in Advent when his master [2930] who wished very much to comfort him came to visit him.

He asked him about his situation, and the man replied to him, "Dear master, I have as much as any man can have. May the Lord God not wish that I have any other riches or possessions than always to be in this joy!"

"Friend," he said, "you must be blessed, inasmuch as you have given yourself to God! And what prayer do you say? [2940] Please tell me."

"I will tell you gladly. Thirty full years have passed in which I have maintained this prayer, which is very saintly, sweet, and dear: *Miserere tui, Deus.*"

"No one says this prayer, dear brother; from now on, don't say it any more. You ought to say *Miserere mei, Deus*, and learn it well. [2950] Leave off the other and take this other."

He was extremely distraught; he believed himself damned and lost. He said that he would not say it anymore because in saying it he would misspeak. Out of obedience he stopped it. At that point his master left him and went off to his dwelling place to carry out his penance. The other observed the prayer of his master, [2960] but the brightness did not come to him afterward as it had done before. He was extremely distressed at this, because he had lost it, but he did not know the reason. He could not eat or drink, sleep or rest, or be of any use. He lamented greatly, he grieved greatly; his affliction drained the color from him, and reduced his body to nothing, [2970] such that he came close to passing away. He continued so for fully half a year, until his master, who was extremely upset to see that he was in a sorry plight, came back to him. He comforted him very gently and stroked his brow and temples. He felt his pulse which was beating hard and fast.

"Brother," he said, "take with good will [2980] illness or health. The Lord God scourges his people: you are blessed if he takes you. If it comes to dying, you will die well by the rights of a good Christian. Be repentant, take confession, and receive extreme unction; and afterward, when you are thus prepared, put yourself into the hands of the Lord God; indeed, you would be untroubled by the Enemy, [2990] so I tell you by God. And what ill do you believe you have?"

"Master, it is easy to know. From when you departed from here, when you forbade me my prayer, I have not been healthy. In fact, I used to have, thanks to God, all benefits when I said it, and a brightness would come to me that would illuminate my entire heart, and it would restore me with all benefits [3000] so that the profits from it were mine. Never since have I been able to have benefits nor to see the saintly brightness."

The good man was moved by joy, for from what he heard, he recognized that God had great concern for him and loved him and his prayer. He spoke to him and preached to him and, as penance, charged him with resuming his prayer [3010] and saying it to his liking. He began it. Now the brightness came back to him so that the master saw it well and understood the joy and the benefits that the Lord God sent to him. He saw it completely openly, praised Jesus Christ for it from the heart, and said, along with the praise, "Jesus Christ, heavenly father, [3020] true in all things, the person who serves you from the heart is wise, inasmuch as he earns from it such great recompense; you show your generosity to this brother for his simplicity, for his simplicity, truly, as he makes a mistake in saying his prayer. Makes a mistake? What have I said? In truth, not at all, [3030] good sir, since it pleases you. On the contrary, he says it very well, I agree to that. I was wrong to fault him, for you know well his intention. Good fruit comes from a good branch. Noble-spirited God, powerful God, truly one hundred times more powerful *than any tongue could say*, neither heart nor tongue would suffice to describe your great gentleness, if they could live forever. So he is foolish who does not fear [3040] and believe in you, when from doing so such great joy comes to the person who pays heed to you and who takes care to serve you. I will never budge from here, and I will have my share of these great benefits that you grant to this saintly person who does not falter in serving you, and with him I will serve you, but I will be his slave and will be called his subject. [3050] I ought to love what you love; I ought to love it truly, for I see very surely my joy, honor, and benefit. He who loves me, *loves my dog.*"

So, the hermit did it; he stayed with his disciple, but he honored him as master, for he loved him and his conduct greatly. They were together for a long time, and [3060] they lived very honorably. God restored them every day by the prayer that the one would say. They existed in such great comfort that they yearned for nothing at all except this joy and this delight which came to them from the Holy Spirit. They served God in such saintly fashion that in compensation they might have the great joy of paradise [3070] when they passed away from the world. Thus the Lord God repays his followers and offers his realm as recompense.

By this tale you can recognize that no one can deceive God, for he knows all people and their inner intentions, those who have dirty thoughts, the hypocrites with pale faces who have [large, broad crowns](#) [3080] and large, trimmed copes, and who in their feigning adore God but in secret destroy him, and who have rotten and false hearts, abandoned to all wrongs, like a blighted pear, which is rotten and dried out inside but presents itself as pleasing outside and conceals its badness inside.

The impure and wicked work in this manner, [3090] who cover themselves in a lambskin, and have the devil in their bodies and cast out the Lord God. The Lord God does not care for such people. He wants all clean and without filth. He does not care for any ostentation nor for those who go about flattering him. The prayer of a good little man who puts his whole heart into saying it—God loves that prayer, God upholds it, [3100] and he remembers the one who says it. He gives himself to them, he grants to them earthly goods, and after death he bestows the joy of paradise and all consolations, just as he did to this good man. God restored him with his grace, because the man loved him surely and invoked him goodheartedly. So, each person should, no matter what anyone says, [3110] serve God without hypocrisy; and as soon as it inserts itself, you should recognize that it completely cancels the goods that a person creates with them. On the contrary, the vile hypocrite procures his torment and destruction by his hidden perfidy.

## B. “Goliard”

In the time when [Solomon](#), who had within himself all manner of wisdom, was living, he said to his son in admonition, to protect his soul from affliction, “Dear son, I will tell you three things by which you will improve yourself forever, [11890] provided that you give thought to them. Keep in mind first from where you come, what you are, and where you will go when you pass away from the world. Nature made you of base [mud](#), now you are a [chamber full of filth](#), and when you depart from the world, you will be [eaten by worms](#). Son, I have not said this for you alone; on the contrary, I have said it for me [11900] and for the whole world besides. So, we ought with intensity to perform all good deeds and uphold them, with regard to what will necessarily befall us. And know that the one who puts more thought into this will sin less, because he has sense and is such a person who strives for the joy of heaven.”

What I have said of Solomon is an exemplum and a sermon, [11910] and people tell it to you by way of a sermon. That person ought well to enter into affliction who turns his ear from his advantage and who destroys his soul for the sake of the world. The Enemy, into whose company he has put himself, destroys him altogether.

Make amends, by my counsel, you who see right before your eyes death, which draws you every day toward itself. It gives you an example and witness [11920] of its activity, and so it teaches you by those whom it takes every day, and so you ought to think that nothing can protect you from feeling sooner or later the venom that it has in its dart, by

which it will destroy the strong and the weak—but no one knows when it will be. So you ought all to fear death, from which no man or woman escapes; [11930] and so long as God loans you life, don't ever forget the words that Solomon said to his son; because of them, you will hold sin the more base. And outfit yourself with good so that you can bound from death upward into the joy of heaven, where the truly blessed are.

Of the [Goliard](#) Who Became a Monk to Steal the Abbey's Treasure

In bygone days there was in Egypt a cleric whom people called [Lechefrite](#), [11940] because he was a lecher leading a high life. From morning to night, the goliard went into taverns for good dishes and for [dice games](#). He was so intent on his high life that he spent on it whatever he had, such that he could not keep living and did not know how to do so or to pursue his high life. He thought a lot; he was very preoccupied about the pleasures to which he had become accustomed [11950] that he could no longer maintain. On the contrary, it was necessary for him to hold back from them. Habit led him to sin; poverty brought him back from it. If he entered a tavern, he could not pay what he owed there, for no one can frequent such a place if his wallet does not take care of him in it.

In that country there was an abbey of white monks, provided with holy men. [11960] The monastery was very well provided with crosses, books, and censers of gold and silver, with which they served the Lord God whom they had the duty to serve. The fool thought that he would become a monk there and that he would stay in peace within until he could rob the abbey to pay for his high life. So he took action to be received there. Stirred to carry out his undertaking, [11970] he strove much toward it and thought about it much, until the whole year went by without his being able to accomplish his deed.

One night he considered his misdeed and confessed his sin and said, "Jesus Christ, [king of majesty](#), I, who have been here a year already, have never said a good prayer; on the contrary, I have been intent on treachery, [11980] and to shame and deceive God, and to rob these saintly people who are full of the Holy Spirit, which rewards them and gives recompense to their simplicity and to their lofty life, so that the Holy Spirit is in their company, where it protects and sustains them and maintains them in doing all things rightly. And I would commit a wrong against such people? I would be more of a scoundrel than [Judas](#), who sold his lord wrongly, for which he [met a bad end](#). Will I do it? Not at all, in truth. Never, for coveting riches, will I betray God and his people. Already I have stolen one hundred [marks](#) of silver and spent them on my high life. By whom will they be returned? I don't know, and I will not be able to return them; on the contrary, I will die in my state of sin. [12000] To speak truly, I will not carry out anything of my scheme, but I will go off now soon, for I have no desire to remain any more in the abbey or in a cell."

Right away and in secret he decided to go now and to abandon himself to flight, until he heard [the Mass sound](#) and he said to himself that he would not stir before he had heard the Mass. [12010] When he heard the service, he directed his thought to the end that he would remain there within through the winter until summer returned. "But in summer, come what may, I will go off," he said, "without fail." Yet he had different thoughts once the winter had passed. He submitted to his earlier thought, came to the door, and said, [12020] "I am going off, I will not be here any longer. Alas, wretch, where will I go? I will go off! In truth, I will not do it. I have no surety or possession by which I could live two days. I hold myself a fool and a drunk to have thought such idiocy. If I go off, whatever I say, because of God I will indeed find nourishment. Do I fear that God, [12030] who [nourishes the birds](#) of the fields, will fail me? While the season is beautiful, I

want to play. Indeed, I will come back to my abbey when I have stretched out my life two or three years; I agree to that. I will go off; I do a wrong to no one."

He heard the Mass sound as soon as he decided to leave from there, so he said that he would hear his service, for he would succeed better after hearing it. [12040] When that Mass had been sung, the hour for eating the meal sounded. He went to eat; when seated at the table, he was very pensive that he had been so tempted and incited to do his worst.

What more will I tell you? The penitent remained in that order reluctantly until he had been there a good twenty years. [12050] "**Penitent**" comes from "to pain." The devil knew how to torment him, so that he was never in peace even a day that he did not have an opportunity for leaving. All the same, he kept guard over himself so that he did not leave even a day in twenty years, and he was ordained a priest until one night he was so tormented that he said for certain he would depart from there in the morning on the following day. [12060] When day broke, he made scant delay in his bed. He was all set on going from there, but beforehand he would say a Mass, so that God might protect him from sin and not pay attention to his foolish desire.

There was in the abbey an altar consecrated to the Virgin Mary where there was a painted image of the merciful saintly lady [12070] who held her son in her lap. He came forward, fully clad in vestments, and sang of the Holy Spirit. Just as he took the holy host and elevated it before him, the Virgin's son shot out his hand to the holy host and put it **into his own right hand**. [12080] At this the monk was dejected and grieving, and he was not slow to blame himself when the event befell him, and he said, "I have arrived at my rightful place, that I have deserved so holy a loss. Alas, disgraced: it is deserved, so I ought indeed to bear the burden of it. I admit to being guilty, and I confess from the heart, mouth, and clasped hands to you, God, who are a humane king, [12090] and to you, Holy Virgin and Mother. Hear me: if I have burdensome thoughts, I leave them, and I give you my word and vow, so long as I live, that I will not stir from here and that I will keep my heart intact, tongue unsullied, body clean, and soul pure to serve him and you, Lady. So I entreat your majesty, Lady, and the virginity [12100] in which the son of God took shelter, by which he fettered the death of hell, that you entreat of him for me that I may receive mercy from him."

While he was busy speaking, the infant restored the host to him, because of the promise he made and because of his clean conscience. Shedding tears of joy, he received it and then made use of it as he was supposed to do. [12110] Once he had taken off his vestments, he was as if downcast because of the fright he had had that had moved his flesh. He went right to bed now, holding his head between his hands, with contrite and moved heart.

The one who saw the miracle, who had assisted him in officiating, ran to his abbot to recount [12120] the miracle that he had seen, and the abbot, as soon as he could, came to him and comforted him; and the monk, who feared God, said to him while kneeling, "Dear Lord, may the savior reward you. Have the convent come to me. I say this because on this condition I will make confession before them all, I will tell the critical point [12130] that is inscribed within my heart. I am very impatient to tell it. I want to receive penance for it and, in telling it, to have shame."

The convent came there immediately, and before all, never seeking after falsehood or fraud, he recounted his conduct from start to finish, how and why he came there. He tells all that he recalls, [12140] and of the foolish heart that he had in him, and how he was supposed to leave there on that that day without any further delay when God made a portent because of which he was driven back forever; and because of these sins that he

was afraid, he had himself confessed before all as a base sinner and scoundrel that they should burn or hang: "People owe this to me, in return for my actions."

[12150] When the abbot heard the truth from his monk, and he recognized his great restraint, he said to him very openly, "Dear brother, you should know that to my knowledge you should have greater merit than I do, or all our convent does, because you have held back for twenty years and endured the great assaults [12160] that the devil has made on you. At first, he **accused you**; now he excuses you and indeed says that he ought to have no hold over you. He is the Enemy and you, when you tread him underfoot in this way, the friend. The Lord God loves your life and you, utterly, along with this abbey. You will be abbot, and I will be your subject, prostrate before your feet [12170] so that you grant approval to me."

"I will not do it, in no way. I like better the cloister and the convent than honor that passes away **like the wind**. I have not merited honor, according to the evidence of my life."

That monk, who thought to do well, recovered from his distress, so much did he repent and so much did he weep and pray before his altar, [12180] so much did he fast, so much did he strike himself that he submerged himself in love of God, that God held him tightly, thanks to these prayers that he loved. When the abbot died, the convent made haste together and they elected him whether he wanted or not, because of his morals and his renown. He could not decline the honor; he could not properly excuse himself from it. [12190] He comported himself very honorably and lived to improve himself, for he always strengthened his life, until God, who does not forget his followers, took him from the world and placed him in endless joy.

He is wise who makes a habit of good customs. He who habituates himself to the good and maintains himself in it, the Lord God bears him on his shoulders [12200] and, protecting him entirely and without a shadow of a doubt from misfortune, carries him. But he who holds to evil and gives himself to it, he surrenders himself to the death of hell, such that the evil in which he situates himself deprives him utterly of holy paradise. So everyone ought to strive to do good and to begin it. Know well that the beginning is the most difficult and the most painful. [12210] He who applies himself to good from the heart, the Lord God, who concerns himself with him, grants his grace to him and protects him, so that he has no fear of stumbling. And because you ought to make haste so that you can press on to erase your faults and to flee the great prisons of hell, from which no one can extricate himself once he has pressed his way into that state, [12220] so likewise you ought to hold fast to good from start to finish, for good that fails in midcourse is worth nothing at beginning or end. One kind of monks does good for a long time who then basely departs from it, and another goes astray in youth who later returns to the path of good, just as that monk did who in good subjected himself to great suffering. [12230] When he was there, he proved himself, such that by so doing he found endless joy.

# 4. The Pious Sweat of Monks

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## A. Cistercian Miracles of Monks Working

The erstwhile French abbey of Clairvaux in the kingdom of Burgundy was established by the future Saint Bernard and twelve of his followers in 1115. The members of this monastic order, which followed *The Rule of Saint Benedict* but branched off from the Benedictines, came to be called Cistercians. They had the additional byname of white monks, in acknowledgment of the contrast between the undyed woolen habits with cowls they wore and the black ones donned by Benedictines. To go one step further, these same religious have also been known, in acknowledgment of Saint Bernard, as the Bernardines.

Whatever we choose to name them, the Cistercians, particularly those in Clairvaux and foundations situated to the east of it, told, retold, and [collected exempla](#). Their commitment to the genre was indefatigable: they made this form of storytelling their own. The interest of the monks lay not in all short anecdotes but rather in those that illustrated the wonderful deeds of those who founded their order and that related the commensurately wondrous events involving their brothers from after the earliest days of Cistercianism down to their own time.

Often when Bernardines delivered sermons outside their cloisters, they had the additional objective of converting lay listeners to become monks. Tales along these lines helped to enliven preaching and other genres of public speaking while simultaneously imparting Christian conduct and values: the relationship between promulgating exempla and practicing exemplary behavior is far from casual or coincidental.

Beginning in the final quarter of the twelfth century and continuing into the first few decades of the thirteenth, white monks of subsequent generations devoted themselves to creating exempla, communicating them in speech and writing, and collecting them. The importance of these accounts to documenting and molding the cultural and spiritual worldviews of monks, clerics, and lay people in the Middle Ages from the twelfth century on would be hard to overstate. The results are fascinating to study.

Among other things, the short narratives give glimpses of the complex interactions that played out in monastic life between oral and written retelling. The stories were often treated as common domain, to be appropriated freely for use without citation.

No such thing as copyright existed. This communal and traditional quality may hold particularly true when they were produced by Cistercians about their order, since in a sense they belonged to the whole movement rather than to any individual monk within it. By the same token, the anecdotes take us to the heart of how members of a monastic society envisaged the past, present, and future of their collective institutional enterprise. Small changes in the characters and emphases within such tales could (to get at the heart of the paradox) speak volumes. Last but not least, the exempla sometimes inspired later hearers or readers to relive or at least to believe that they were reexperiencing variations upon the original inspirational occurrences. In turn, these encores of miracles and visions engendered fresh spoken reports and further literary or historical records. A seemingly endless loop of wondrousness rolled on.

The exempla generated by white monks in the heady foundational period of the order and assembled afterward by their successors foretold much that evolved decades later, when public preaching, promoted and refined above all by Dominican and Franciscan friars, surged in importance, and obliged sermonizers to master new tools and techniques. The followers of both Saint Francis and Saint Dominic were inspired to follow Jesus by living the apostolic life. They wished to dwell communally in fraternity and to go forth preaching the Gospel.

In the transition from the Cistercians to the friars, the illustrations were reshaped in response to evolving sensibilities. The narratives were massaged so as to achieve applicability not solely to the spiritual development of recluses but more broadly to the virtuous behavior of Christians in many other walks of life. As such stories burgeoned, they absorbed other types of tales. In turn, they were reused by authors working across many different genres. Among other things, these accounts fulfilled pivotal roles in the energetic exchange of material and motifs among social strata, in this instance clerics and lay people. Exempla broke free from confinement in monastic quadrangles and circulated on city streets, among courtiers, and in vernacular literature.

To circle back to the twelfth century and to the white monks, the exempla, miracles, and visions from the early days of the Cistercians were comparable to the Gospels for adherents of the order who were striving to live up to the ideals and standards of the original apostolic life. The founding fathers (and brothers) nurtured a heady desire to transform themselves and those around them through the way of living in their order, and they sought proof that heaven held their shared mission in special favor.

Among the celestial beings whose affirmation the white monks hungered to have, the Virgin was paramount. She was felt to have bestowed many blessings on a movement that paid her special favor. Among these benefits, she was attested to have shown herself in [repeated apparitions](#) to the brethren of Clairvaux in the second half of the twelfth century. The members of the community set their hearts on the direct contact with the heavenly beauty, bliss, and balm that Mary could furnish them: they dedicated all their churches to her in her capacity as queen of heaven. Above all, they yearned for the validation that her showings delivered. The miracles, along with the

exempla celebrating them, were a Q.E.D. that the Mother of God singled them out for favor by assuming the role of being their special champion. The Cistercians went so far as to call her *advocata nostra* or “our advocate.” In other words, they regarded her as their in-house lawyer.

The *exemplum* of concern to us tells of one of these miraculous manifestations. Once, as the brothers were in a field reaping, one of them who was sitting apart caught sight of three females descending from the hills who passed amid his colleagues as they toiled. An unknown person appeared beside the viewer and revealed to him that the lead woman was the Virgin, *accompanied by Elizabeth and Mary Magdalene*.

The apparition of Mary was exceptional, even more for being amplified by the presence of her distinguished companions. But the story holds still greater relevance to us because of a supplementary motif that it soon acquired. While in transit, the Mother of God soothed the harvesters by fanning them, wiping their sweat, or both. The narrative does not specify whether the laborers were choir monks or, like the jongleur in “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” lay brothers. In any case, the tale underpins the view that hard toils by monks can garner holy rewards from the Virgin.

So far as the evidence now available enables us to infer, this miracle was penned on parchment first by a person writing under Prior John of Clairvaux and second by Herbert of Clairvaux. Further versions proliferated in the aftermath of Bernard of Clairvaux’s canonization in 1174, perhaps because the Cistercians longed for exempla that would help inspire and guide them in their chosen life, perhaps because the push to have their founder sanctified left them with both a capacity and a craving for composing, compiling, and circulating dossiers of writings to promote their order, or perhaps because of both impulses.

In the next stages of the Cistercian transmission, Abbot Gevard of Heisterbach recounted the anecdote to Caesarius. His listener, after being moved by it to renounce the world, take vows, and become a brother of the same German monastery himself, composed his version. At roughly the same point, another white monk, Hélinand of Froidmont, recorded the vision but described it as having been experienced by Abbot Petrus Monoculus (aka Peter the One-Eyed) of Clairvaux. Even later, the tale apparently circulated in oral tradition at the abbey of Villers in present-day Belgium before being accorded the durability of written form in the *Vita Abundi* or “Life of Abundus.”

Let us now explore the texts systematically. For what should we be alert? The sweat is no mere incidental. Though these exempla may be devoid of jongleurs and images of the Virgin, they show us lay brothers galore, apparitions of Mary, and gestures on the part of the latter to console the former as they pour out perspiration while laboring. Some of the anecdotes are written both by and for Cistercians, others by them for potential recruits who are solicited to come from the outside world into the monastery—and not merely into the cloister but also into the farmlands that generated food and funding. Can these little tales give any insight into the author and audience of “Our Lady’s Tumbler”?

## 1. *The Clairvaux Compilation*

The *Collectaneum exemplorum et visionum Clarevallense* or, put into English, *The Clairvaux Compilation of Exempla and Visions*, produced between 1165 and 1174, was likely the first major compendium of exempla that the Cistercians assembled. Known for short now as the *Collectaneum Clarevallense* or *The Clairvaux Compilation*, this miscellany was a team effort and not an individual one, though its production was probably overseen by a single person, [Prior John of Clairvaux](#). Even less in the Middle Ages than in many other eras, no bright line ran between initial creation and subsequent creative reuse: in other words, it can be hard to differentiate between a first-time composition and a later compilation. Although never copied, the manuscript apparently served over the next few decades as a reference work or primary source to be consulted or quarried by later monks who maintained and advanced [the miracle genre](#).

The exemplum in *The Clairvaux Compilation* recounts how Mary manifested herself among the brothers of Clairvaux during harvest time. It bears mentioning that the toponym of their institution, referring to enlightenment both literal and figurative, means "Bright Valley." On this special occasion the Mother of God, attuned to the environment, looks appropriately resplendent in her own person and attire.

The tale as disclosed here has at its nucleus the Virgin, whom the compiler wished to portray in her guise as an extraordinary patron and protector to the monks of his order. Incidentally, he highlights her beautiful and dignified appearance, with a glancing reference to the brightness of her dress. In recapitulating the miraculous occurrence, he homes in on Mary's role in shielding the reapers from demonic temptation. He also presents her as an overseer, who wishes to verify that the monks under her oversight honor their obligations to their lord—or, more accurately, their Lord—by completing their labors. His account lacks the element of solace: the perspiration of the laborers is mentioned prominently, but so far as we are told, the Virgin does nothing to assuage it.

### How the Blessed Mother of God Visited the Monks of Clairvaux during Harvest Time

This was a most beautiful sight, most worthy of everlasting memory. It took place in the time when according to the custom of the Cistercian order, monks had been engaged in gathering crops in conformity with [the tradition of blessed Benedict](#). Just like others, the brothers of Clairvaux devoted their effort to this work. I learned about the event from the account of a man from our order.

As some were sweating away one day in this exertion, one of them was standing at a distance. Looking with keen eyes, he saw in front a very radiant woman in respectable and bright dress, with two other most attractive individuals of the female sex. Coming with marvelous dignity and respectability, they were making the rounds of the assembly of monks, and they behaved toward them as secular men appointed by their lords are accustomed to behave in watching over the harvest. In reality, they kept watch over them, not that they held them under suspicion for pilfering the crops but that unseen pilferers

of saintly toils not presume through some temptations to commit pilferage upon the produce. For they ever lie in ambush against the devout acts of good people. If we did not have God's watchfulness around us, we could in no way endure the wickedness of their harassment.

That brother beheld for a long time and marveled to himself what it was that he perceived, especially since it was inconceivable that women should be present among an assembly of monks, especially Cistercians. Then lo and behold! an unknown person, venerable and almost apostolic, stood near him, saying, "Why are you marveling? I will tell you the mystery of the woman whom you perceive. She is the thousandfold blessed Mother of God, ever a virgin, Mary, advocate of monks, who has come to visit her harvesters with the other saintly women upon whom you are looking, clearly Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene and other saints whom you do not see. She endeavors to do this often, or rather constantly, and for the sake of visiting the assembly now present, to display her presence, which is welcome for the marvelous affection of her love.

Seeing that this order, not heedlessly, prefaced [her name as title of honor](#) to itself for her to act as its patron, on this account she visits them while patronizing them very particularly as her own, and with affection commends them to the Lord God, her son, as what she holds dearest."

After he said these things, the famous vision vanished, but the faith and truth of what was said ought to remain with us forever.

## 2. Herbert of Clairvaux, *Book of Visions and Miracles at Clairvaux*

The exemplum became a mainstay whenever authors ventured into lore about remarkable events in the glory days of the French monastery. [Herbert of Clairvaux](#) was a brother there from 1153 to 1168/69. Later abbot of Mores in Champagne, he was appointed finally as archbishop of Torres (today Porto Torres) in Sardinia, where he stayed until his death, about 1198. His output, to judge by his extant corpus, was restricted to miracles and visions. The *Book of Visions and Miracles at Clairvaux*, written in 1178 or thereabouts, is his only work to survive in its entirety—and the last phrase is somewhat of a misnomer, since on departing for his archbishopric he left less a finished text than an unfinalized draft in a bundle of quires.

In picking out his content, Herbert gave what would seem to be a deliberately wide berth to material included in the *Collectaneum*. Although he relied upon the earlier collection for the basics of the exemplum in which the Virgin materialized before the monks of Clairvaux as they reaped, he was anything but slavish in a retelling that held obvious importance for him: he places the exemplum [at the very opening of his text](#).

In preparing the ground, Herbert departs from Prior John and his team by not leaving the informant for the exemplum incognito. Instead, he identifies the beneficiary of the apparition as having been a monk called [Reinaldus](#) in Latin, which would equate to Renaud in French. In this exposition of the incident, Herbert focuses his energies on describing Mary's appearance and characterizes her objective as having been not so much administrative oversight of the harvest as moral support of her cherished

community. Additionally, he conjures up vividly the original context in which he was told the vision: a much older brother shared it in private with him when he was not far beyond his novitiate. In effect, we can discern the transfer, across generations of monks, of an episode that does honor to Cistercianism as a whole, while corroborating the faith of individuals within the order. This is tradition, both oral and written, in action.

About the Monk of Clairvaux  
Who Saw the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Visiting Her Harvesters in the Field

In the monastery of Clairvaux there was a monk named Reinaldus, a God-fearing man of virtuous simplicity who retained his innocence from his infancy all the way to old age and who though he lived in worldly dress for thirty years before his [profession](#), all the same did not live in worldly style, but ever intent on works of piety was concerned to [glorify and bear God in his body](#). For among the other good deeds that he did wholeheartedly, he also dedicated the wholeness of his body to the Lord, by whose assistance from his mother's womb all the way to the day of death he passed by the temptations of lusts and [the foulnesses of the flesh on an undefiled path](#). Having received the monastic habit in the monastery of [Saint Amand](#), he spent more than twenty years in a saintly way of life there, where he gave everyone no small example of his saintliness.

Then, blazing with greater passion for virtues, he transferred to the house of Clairvaux out of zeal for God; yet beforehand he had been forewarned by many revelations. How many toils, and how many troubles that blessed man endured from the brothers of that order, as they envied his fortunate actions and desired to divert him from a plan of this sort, I refrain from saying, as I wish to consider the weariness of readers. Having been received in Clairvaux, he girded himself manfully on the spot for new [warfare](#) and from being a veteran soldier he showed himself to us anew as the bravest recruit by mortifying himself all through the day [in toils, keeping vigils, fasts](#), and other services to saintly discipline. He had a zeal for praying unceasingly and a marvelous abundance of [tears in prayer](#).

One day, then, when he had gone forth with the others to the work of harvesting wheat, he separated a little from the group and began to gaze upon the harvesters, considering with great delight of mind to himself as well as marveling that out of love for Christ so many wise, noble, and frail men should subject themselves to toils and hardships, and should take upon themselves with so much eagerness the burning heat of the sun, as if they were plucking the sweetest-smelling fruits in a garden of delights or were banqueting at a table filled with quite elegant dishes. Then, with his eyes and hands raised up to heaven, he rendered thanks to the Lord that he had allied him, though unworthy and a sinner, to so saintly a multitude.

As he turned these and similar things over and over in his mind, and scarcely restrained himself in the boundlessness of his happiness, lo and behold! three women, respectable like married ladies, suddenly appeared to him, shining with rosy faces and bright white clothing. One of them who was preceding was gleaming in her clothing, comelier in her features, and taller in stature. They came down from the nearby mountain and drew near to the assembly of brothers harvesting crops on the side of that mountain.

Upon seeing them, he was agitated and astonished out of extreme wonderment, and he burst forth into words of this sort: "Lord God," he said, "who are these women, so beautiful and respectable, who against the custom of other women appear before our community?"

As he was saying such words, a man, covered in hoary hair deserving of respect and a white garment, stood near him and said to him, "The greater, who precedes the rest, is the Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ, Mary; the others who follow are Saint Elizabeth and Saint Mary Magdalene."

When he had heard the Mother of the Lord named, his whole heart trembled for devotion to the name of her whom he loved passionately, and again he asked, saying, "And where is she going, my lord, where is Our Lady going?" The man responded to him, saying, "She is coming to visit her harvesters." Having said these things, the person who was speaking suddenly vanished.

Having seen this, the man of God was the more stupefied within himself. Turning his eyes back to the saintly Mother of God and to her companions, he concentrated with astonished sight upon them. Proceeding with measured steps, they came one after another to the community. When they had entered, they began to walk separately from one another here and there among the monks and lay brothers, as if for the sake of an official visit. When they had done this, at length they disappeared from the eyes of the one who was gazing, and they retreated to the heavens from which they had come.

Next, the man of God stood planted and could not be stirred from the place until the miracle was ended. His way of life, to be emulated, and his daily increases of virtue showed how much he gained from a visitation of such a kind and how much he grew in love of God and of his most blessed Mother. He received many other revelations from God, which all the same, to avoid the [taint](#) of vainglory, he preferred to keep silent rather than to tell. For he suppressed in silence for almost eight years even the one recalled above. A short time ago, that is, forty days (if I remember right), he, unwilling and in a way coerced in such a situation, disclosed it to me, though unworthy.

One day we were both speaking in private about the salvation of our souls. Knowing him as a just and saintly man and one visited often by God, I dared to inquire and to seek something from him, in that confidence with which I loved him and felt that I was loved by him. So for love of Christ and his mercies, I began to beseech him from the depths of my heart and to press strongly that to the honor of God he should make known to me some one of his revelations, namely, that one by which he judged I would be most edified. Constrained then by such beseeching, he recounted to me the vision told above. But with what emotion, at last? God himself is witness, with how much [fear and trembling](#), with how much overflowing of tears he brought it forth, in such a way that groans and sobs bursting forth from the bottom of his heart would cut off his voice in speaking quite often as if in that very hour he was perceiving the vision itself.

### 3. Hélinand of Froidmont, *Chronicle*

Among various records of the occurrence that have been transmitted, the anecdote of Mary with her companions as she made her way among the monks reaping was retold by [Geoffrey of Auxerre](#). Another composition survives, this one from an abbey of white monks in Germany, that contains a related vision, in which the Virgin carries a vessel in which she has accumulated drops of sweat from her monks as they

exerted themselves in the fields. This version is the work of [Engelhard of Langheim](#), a Cistercian who passed away in 1210. He served first as prior of the cloister after which he is named and later as abbot of another community in Austria. Afterward he returned to Langheim, where he remained until the end of his days. The abbey, destroyed repeatedly since then, stood in what is now the district of Klosterlangheim in Lichtenfels. The last-mentioned Bavarian town is located on the river Main in Upper Franconia, not far from Bamberg and Coburg. Among other writings, Engelhard produced for the nuns of Wechterswinkel, the first nunnery of his order in Bavaria, a book of miracles that is brimming with exempla and visions, including this one. He brings us at least to the outskirts of the thirteenth century, which could be considered the golden age of the white monks.

In fits and starts between the 1180s and 1215, a Cistercian called Conrad of Eberbach amassed the *Exordium magnum Cisterciense* or *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux*, extant in more more than forty whole or fragmentary manuscripts. He tapped heavily into Herbert's *Book of Visions and Miracles at Clairvaux*, and by his own admission drew on it wholesale for the text of this same episode. Since his Latin is nearly verbatim identical with his predecessor's, printing the same translation a second time would have no utility; but because Conrad's magnum opus has all along benefited from broader currency than Herbert's, it is well worth saying a word about both author and text.

When Conrad died in 1221, he held office as abbot of Eberbach. This monastery was not distant from Mainz, the city on the Rhine. The cloister was the oldest daughter house to be established by Clairvaux within what is today Germany. In acknowledgment of this service, Conrad received the last component of his now-conventional name. Even so, his paramount claim to fame arises from his attachment to Clairvaux. In *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux*, he unfolds a lively and loving account of the order. In it he mines learning and lore picked up at the end of the twelfth century during his approximately three decades in the "bright valley." While still there, he put together the first four "distinctions" or books of his great work. His stint fell during a period when elderly community members who had been at the abbey during the heroic early years might still have been alive to report on the happenings. Certainly many brethren would have heard about famous episodes.

The apparition of Mary among the reapers also surfaces in the *Chronicon* or *Chronicle* by Hélinand of Froidmont. He takes his second name from the monastery in Beauvais that he entered. In [his pre-monastic life](#) he is often reputed to have made his living as a *trouvère*, the French word for a type of poet who belonged to the same motley crew of entertainers that encompassed jongleurs. After abandoning that profession to become a Cistercian, this prolific author did not forsake the vernacular altogether. On the contrary, he left a French poem on death that he composed in the monastery: the topic would hardly have been much of a crowd-pleaser in his career as a popular entertainer. But his native tongue became a sideline for him in his literary output: after making his profession as a monk, he operated primarily in Latin prose. The learned

language is the medium of his vast world chronicle. Of its original forty-nine books only twenty-three survive.

Writing sometime between 1211 and 1223, Hélinand inserts our exemplum into what may be regarded as a loosely historical collage. True to tradition, he described the wondrous apparition as having befallen the brethren of Clairvaux while they brought in the harvest. Unlike his predecessors, he fixed the date, with some equivocation, in 1184. Further, he specified that the monk who experienced the vision was none other than Petrus Monoculus, the one-eyed head of the abbey who guided Clairvaux from 1179 until his death in 1186. [Helinand's source](#) was the miracle collection associated with the *Vita Petri Monoculi* or *Life of Peter the One-Eyed* by Thomas of Rueil. The attribution of the miraculous event to the monocular abbot [persisted for centuries](#).

Across the assorted iterations of the exemplum, authors evidence little stability in the identities they assign to the [two women](#) who accompany Mary: here they are Saints [Mary Magdalene](#) and [Mary of Egypt](#). Among other departures from preceding versions, Hélinand's succinct presentation omits the motifs of bright whiteness, sweat, and cooling or fanning with fabric.

In a time of harvesting, he had gone forth with the brothers to work. As the monks then took a break in silence, the abbot saw three most beautiful women coming among the brothers. One of them stood out marvelously from the others. Then the abbot went to encounter them, and said, "Surely you are very brazen, who thus come among us. Don't you know well that a woman ought not to come among us, that is to say, among monks of our order?" Then the one more radiant than the rest said, "I ought indeed to come among my people. For I am the mother of Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, who come to visit my harvesters; and this is Mary Magdalene, and this is Mary of Egypt." Upon hearing this, the abbot fell at her feet; when he wished to embrace them, she disappeared.

#### 4. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue of Miracles*

Caesarius, born about 1180, earned his education in the German city of Cologne and its environs. In 1199, he donned the monastic habit to become a Cistercian in Heisterbach, in the Siebengebirge on the east bank of the middle Rhine, eight and a half miles from Bonn. Before doing so, he deferred his conversion briefly so as to go as a pilgrim to Our Lady of Rocamadour, the locus of many reputed miracles, among them ones closely related to "Our Lady's Tumbler" (see Part 1, Chapter 4). Upon wending his way back from pilgrimage, Caesarius entered the monastery after which he has been named. He stayed there with barely any interruption until his death about 1240.

Beyond writing extensively, Caesarius served his community as master of novices. In reflection of this occupation, his *Dialogus miraculorum* or *Dialogue of Miracles*, composed between 1219 and 1223, presents itself as an exchange between a probationer and the author himself, in his magisterial office. Designed to convert lay people and to educate those already monks, it is [replete with exempla](#). In fact, it comprehends a staggering total of 746 such illustrative stories. The anecdotes are grouped into twelve thematic

clusters, which the author labels "distinctions." The seventh such grouping is devoted to Marian miracles. With its range, its impressive number of short narratives, and its approachability to readers at even the earliest stage in their monastic vocation, the dialogue enjoyed considerable success and survives in more than a hundred codices.

The full title given to our exemplum in the *Dialogue of Miracles* is "[On the Entrance into Religious Life of This Little Work's Author](#)." The tale deals with a miracle, by now familiar, that befell brothers of Clairvaux while reaping. In it, the author tells how prolonged conversation with Gevard, [second abbot](#) of the Cistercian monastery after which both of them are named, motivated him to make his profession as a monk. The pivotal moment in the encounter between the two men occurred when Gevard told the legend that is translated here. The event recounted is called a vision rather than a miracle or exemplum. In it, the brethren are toiling hard to bring in the harvest. The Virgin Mary, her mother Anne (displacing Saint Elizabeth, who filled this niche in preceding versions), and Mary Magdalene come not to verify that the brethren are discharging their duties but rather to recognize their effort and reward it by wiping away their sweat, fanning them, and ministering to them in other ways.

Beyond anchoring in his own life the exposure to Gevard and to the exemplum, Caesarius's narration indicates clearly to readers when the actual miracle would have transpired, since [King Philip II of France](#) took the military action described in October of 1198. The author also gives us a good idea of where he was when he heard the story: Walberberg is located roughly halfway between Cologne and Bonn. The triangulation, both chronological and geographic, is very accurate. By twelfth-century standards, the geolocation cannot get much better.

In the first paragraph, Caesarius describes how his first contact with the miracle came through hearing it more or less as an exemplum in preaching or, to be more precise, in one-on-one mentoring. Gevard of Heisterbach told him the story as they traveled together to Cologne to the abbey of Walberberg. The abbot resorted to the narrative after failing in other attempts to win Caesarius over to take vows. But the oral is flanked by the literary: at the beginning and end of the second paragraph, the author acknowledges that a written form of the legend already existed.

In the time when King Philip first laid waste to the diocese of Cologne, it happened that I was going with lord Abbot Gevard from Walberberg to Cologne. And when on the route he encouraged me with much urgency to enter religious life and was not succeeding, he related to me that splendid vision pertaining to Clairvaux.

In this vision it is read that when at a certain harvest time the monastery was harvesting in the valley, the Blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, together with her mother Saint Anne and Saint Mary Magdalene, came down from the mountain, as a certain saintly man who was standing opposite looked on. They descended into the same valley in great brilliance, wiped the sweat from the monks, supplied air by fanning their sleeves, and did the other things that have been set down there in writing.

I was moved so greatly by the account of this vision as to promise the abbot that if God should yet inspire in me the will, I would not come to any monastic house except to his to enter religious life. Then I was morally bound by a vow of pilgrimage to Notre

Dame of Rocamadour, which had a very great hold on me. When after three months it had been fulfilled, I came to Heisterbach, with none of my friends knowing and with only the mercy of God guiding and urging me, and as I had taken into my head from words, I showed in deeds, by becoming a novice. Almost the same thing happened to our monk Gerlach of Dinge.

NOVICE: It will not be useless for those who are still in this world to hear such things for the sake of the example they provide.

### 5. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Eight Books of Miracles*

Caesarius's *Libri VIII miraculorum* or *Eight Books of Miracles*, composed between 1125 and 1127, survives incomplete, probably not having been finished. It contains a second miracle that takes place, we can infer from details in the one that precedes it, in Loccum Abbey, founded by the Cistercians in 1163. The monastery still exists, in the town of Rehburg-Loccum in the German region of Lower Saxony. This brisk anecdote ventures nothing about harvesting, fieldwork, or fanning, but it likely presumes perspiring monks and certainly depicts the Mother of God in action wiping their faces, sweaty or not. In this instance the gesture appears to be a sign of favor that may reward the brothers for past conduct, while simultaneously predicting what is to come, since at least one of the two denied this distinction leaves the monastery.

Likewise concerning a Certain Monk of the Same Monastery,  
Who Saw Saint Mary Go Around at Vigils,  
and Wipe the Faces of Every Single Monk,  
with Only Two Omitted

A certain other monk from the brethren of the same place, a man worthy of such great grace, on a certain night saw Our Lady go around the choir of singers and wipe the faces of every single monk, with only two omitted. Of them one soon renounced his monastic vocation; what became of the other is unknown.

### 6. Pseudo-Caesarius of Heisterbach, "The Virgin Mary's Vessel of Sweat"

A third piece associated with Caesarius of Heisterbach, albeit wrongly, is labeled explicitly as exemplary in its caption: "An Exemplum concerning a Monk, to Whom the Virgin Mary Revealed How Great a Reward Good Brothers and Sisters Will Have for Their Toils." A punchier title might be "[The Virgin Mary's Vessel of Sweat](#)." Although the short narrative has been printed as belonging to Caesarius's *Eight Books of Miracles*, it is now denied his authorship. However we entitle it, it is currently classed as Pseudo-Caesarian.

This exemplum relates to the other in describing the Virgin herself, who is as so often associated with bright light, as having visited monks engaged in fieldwork and having collected their sweat. The location is left indeterminate, beyond being (supposedly) somewhere in France.

On a Monk,  
to Whom Saint Mary Revealed How Much of a Reward  
Good Brothers and Sisters Will Have for Their Toils.

In a certain monastery located in France there was a commoner, a good and religious man advanced in age. When he was sent in due time for things needed in the cloister and came so late to the monastery that the dormitory was closed, he settled himself to sleep in the chapterhouse on a certain bench so as not to disturb the sacred quiet among the brothers.

But the Virgin Mary, daughter and mother alike of the highest king, held up to her saintliest nostrils a glass vessel, and with two most beautiful virgins, who were carrying two exceedingly bright lamps, she appeared to the man and asked him beforehand if he was sleeping. He responded that he was not sleeping, asking of her why even in nighttime she would presume to show herself in such a place against the order's custom.

She said, "Look, I am she to whom you, all things that are in this house, and everything which is to be found throughout the order belong. For today I was with my monks in the field, and I collected their sweat in this little vessel, which is the [sweetest of odors](#) to me and my son. For this toil indeed I will repay them with the greatest reward."

Then that man said to her, "Why, saintliest lady? Is our toil so great, which comes about out of necessity rather than devotion?"

In return, she said, "[Have you not read](#), that pleasure has punishment and need produces a crown? For everything that you do, if done out of necessity on behalf of me and my son, I claim for me, I accept everything, and I repay it with a worthy reward."

Having said these things, the Blessed Virgin was received into heaven. And that good monk afterward reported to his brothers what he had seen and what the Virgin Mary had said concerning them.

### 7. Goswin of Bossut, *The Life of Abundus*

Another miracle from the first half of the thirteenth century fits squarely within the family of exempla about Cistercians at work whose perspiration elicits comfort from the Virgin and her companions. The white monk named Abundus, who died in 1237, had a sighting of Mary. This mega-Mariophile held true to his name by experiencing the Mother of God in an abundance of visions. As the brethren were toiling over the harvest, he saw the Virgin, in the company of the Magdalene, caress and cool them by fanning them with her sleeve and patting away with it the perspiration from their sweat-drenched faces. Abundus's vision is reported in an unfinished life by [Goswin of Bossut](#). Within his monastery, this hagiographer held the office of cantor, which

required both physical and compositional skills in writing as well as proficiencies in singing, and he perhaps also served as librarian.

Both Abundus and Goswin were brothers at Villers, which had been founded from Clairvaux in 1146–47. At the time the great abbey was in the Netherlandish region of Brabant; now its ruins are in Belgium. During a key stretch from 1197 to 1209, the Brabantine monastery had as abbot a man from Cologne who at the time of his election served as prior of Heisterbach. Through its connections with Clairvaux and Heisterbach, the community, even more than most ones of white monks, would have had good reason to be awash in exempla relating to Marian apparitions.

#### *The Life of Abundus 14*

In harvest season one day the monks were occupied, according to the stipulation of the Rule, in [gathering in the crops](#) in a field. Owing partly to their determination but especially to the heat of the fiery sun, which at that time spread over the earth more than usual, they were tormented as if in a frying pan. When everyone took a break at the nod from the prior, [the man of the Lord](#) took his break a little apart from the rest, to [pour out his heart like water before the face of his Lord](#).

Suddenly it happened that he saw two women coming through the field right to the community of monks taking their break. At the same time, he saw standing near him a man unknown to him. With a nod he asked him who these women were who had come and why they had come. From him he [received a reply](#). He said that it was the mother of the Lord, Mary, who had come to visit the community and that the other, her comrade, was [Mary who is called Magdalene](#).

And what did the mother of piety and mercy do? Taking compassion on each of the monks, she approached each of them, and soothing and cooling, by fanning the face of each one with the sleeve of her mantle, dispelled the sweat from them. When this had been done, with right hand raised and making the sign of the cross over the whole community, she blessed everyone. And so, going away together from that place by the route on which they had come, they retired.

None of those who were present, excepting [the man of God](#), is reported to have seen this vision. From that day all the way to the end of the harvest, our harvesters attained during work time so agreeable a coolness that the sun was felt to have moderated for them its heat, out of respect for the mother of the Lord.

### 8. Johannes Herolt, *Storehouse with Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Written out in the second half of the thirteenth century amid assorted miracles of the Virgin in a [Cistercian codex](#) is [another version of the story](#) that takes an almost polemical tack in favor of the white monks. To quote verbatim a summary offered by a late nineteenth-century [cataloguer of the manuscript](#), “The vision is seen by a monk who had left the Benedictine for the Cistercian order, but who found the life in the latter too toilsome for his taste.”

Though the white monks continued to make use of the miracle in the thirteenth century for their purposes, Dominicans also coopted it for use in preaching. Taking it from his Bernardine predecessors, a friar incorporated the exemplum into the collection of miracles of the Virgin known as the *Mariale magnum*. The telegraphic Latin title could be expanded and translated as *The Great Marian Miracle Book*. The short narrative, thanks to being present in this grand compendium, spread even more rapidly and widely than it would otherwise have done. Vincent of Beauvais, a member of the mendicant order who worked as a lector in theology at the Cistercian abbey of Royaumont, was well positioned to serve as a bridge between the two groups. His iteration of the exemplum quickly won considerable traction. Johannes Gobi the Younger, another Dominican who lived from 1300 to 1350, produced a famous collection of exempla entitled *Scala coeli* or *Heaven's Ladder*. In it, he relied heavily upon Vincent of Beauvais and Caesarius of Heisterbach. Like them, he composed a version of the narrative of *Mary and the harvesting monks*.

Moving into the second half of the fourteenth century, we encounter another Black Friar in the person of Johannes Herolt. Probably born around 1380, he held office in the second quarter of the fifteenth century in the German city of Nuremberg in both the Dominican cloister as prior and the female convent of St. Catherine's as confessor, preacher, and general vicar. Death befell him in Regensburg in 1468.

Herolt's prolific activity as a preacher and [writer on preaching](#) extends over much of the first half of the fifteenth century. He acquired, and may even have granted himself, the Latin byname *Discipulus*: he struck a stance as a "student" in describing his sermons as "not refined compositions and deductions such as you might expect from a teacher, but only the [plain words that a learner would use](#)."

In keeping with his role in an order of preaching friars, Herolt made his reputation through sermons, which he published mainly in Latin but also in German. His first bestseller, composed in 1418, was entitled *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis* or *Sermons for Sundays and Saints' Days*. Subsequently he wrote many further works comprising sermons or otherwise connected with sermonizing.

He is counted among the most successful compilers of exempla in the late Middle Ages. His collections exercised influence long after the Reformation. Two of his, both now dated 1434, are given billing in their titles as *promptuaria* or "storehouses" of these short narratives. The first was the *Promptuarium exemplorum secundum ordinem alphabeti* or *Storehouse of Exempla following Alphabetical Order*. It features 643 illustrative tales told in full and another 224 cited only by title. The second was his *Promptuarium de miraculis Beatae Mariae Virginis* or *Storehouse of Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. This assemblage offers one hundred Marian miracles.

[Our miracle](#), customarily numbered 7, appears early in the second collection. For this compendium of Marian materials, the Dominican draws upon [many sources](#). In this case, Herolt is indebted to Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale* or *Historical Mirror*, which in turn owes to Hélinand of Froidmont's *Chronicon*. In this version we

encounter such familiar elements of the story as brightness, white clothing, sweating monks, and (also likely white) towels.

A knight, having put off his *knightly belt*, entered the Cistercian order in Clairvaux. Once upon a time at harvest, having gone out to labor with his brothers, he was told to sit there and rest, because he was full of years and had not been accustomed to *work with his hands*. Sitting thus, he struck his breast, taking it ill that he did no work while the rest labored, and thus talked with himself: “Wretched weakling! What wise and noble men according to the flesh are working here who, if they wished to enter on worldly paths, would have a great name, and you sit here all day so very delicate, you who have grown old in evil days, while they before you bear the burden and heat of the day, youths of gentle birth and breeding though they may be.”

Thus, talking with himself, he saw in a vision descending from a hill above a white-clad company led by a very beautiful woman, and before her two others carrying towels in their hands. This lady coming with her company saluted the brothers with a holy kiss and took them into her loving embrace, and by the hands of the two companions who went before her, she wiped away with the towels the dust and sweat from the brows of the monks.

The knight, seeing this and ignorant that it was Mary, the Mother of God, gnashed with his teeth against the brothers, saying to himself: “What sort of brothers are these, and what sort of religion is this, where women are admitted not only to their presence and converse, but even to their embraces and kisses!” While he was thinking such thoughts, one of that white-clad band approaching said: “Why do you ignorantly imagine such things, old man? This lady whom you see is Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who has come to see her reapers, comforting and helping them as her dearest sons.” The knight was edified and consoled by the reassurance of this vision in Mary, the Mother of God, and his brothers, and labored with the strength of that spiritual food, making a good end of his life.

## B. Gautier de Coinci, *The Miracles of Our Lady*: “A Monk of Chartreuse”

Carthusian monks belong to an order established in 1084 by Saint Bruno, together with six companions, in a foundation that became known eventually as La Grande Chartreuse. From this motherhouse near Grenoble in France they derived their name. By folk etymology, any one of their monasteries can be called a charterhouse in English. This emphasis on the particularity of the communal living space makes sense, among other things because Carthusian architecture is distinctive: the brethren spend much of their time in individual cells that look out on a common cloister where they gather to worship. Their way of life, fusing the eremetical and the cenobitic—that is, the solitary and the communal—is defined by dedication to contemplation of God. Owing to their emphasis on silence and reliance on *conversi* or lay brothers (who had responsibility for manual work of agriculture and herding), their brand of monasticism reveals obvious resemblances to Cistercianism.

The narrative that follows is accorded status as a separate miracle in some manuscripts of Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles* as well as in the current standard edition of them, but some experts hold that our tale should not be counted separately and that instead it forms a *coda* to "The Miracle of Our Lady of Saydnaya," the miracle that precedes it. Saydnaya is the location of a monastery on a mountain in Syria, not twenty miles from Damascus. Internal evidence supports the supposition that the two texts form a unity. One such moment occurs in "The Monk of Chartreuse" when the poet refers twice (lines 86–87 and 95) to the central crisis in "The Miracle of Our Lady of Saydnaya," in which an icon of the Virgin emits an oil with miraculous healing properties.

In literary style and rhetorical structure, Gautier fails to wrap up "The Miracle of Our Lady of Saydnaya" with the wordplay with which he customarily concludes these narratives. In contrast, he caps "The Monk of Chartreuse" with nine lines that ring changes on derivatives of the French word *fin* for "end." The disparity between the two pieces in this regard buttresses the inference that within the overall structure of the *Miracles*, the poet did not envisage our story as being entirely autonomous, but instead as a pendant to its predecessor.

For all that, "The Monk of Chartreuse" can be read on its own in its relation to the original medieval poem of "Our Lady's Tumbler." The resemblances between the two have long attracted comment. Both protagonists strip off layers of clothing, perform physically demanding activities as a devotion and perhaps as a penance before a Madonna, sweat profusely, and receive succor from the Virgin Mary without realizing it. The two devotees are seen by another member of their communities. Yet the differences should not be understated. The jongleur is a lay brother who engages in acrobatic dance, whereas the Carthusian practices repetitive genuflection. The first is seen by not only another brother but also the abbot. Most important, the Cistercian acrobat dies and remains the focus of the quasi-hagiographic ending, whereas the brother of the charterhouse yields the floor to the fellow monk just recently his spectator, who soon passes away. On the question of priority, no firm decision can be made as to whether Gautier knew the earlier poem, a Latin text or oral tradition related to it, or a Latin text or oral tradition telling in some form the story of a monk of Chartreuse.

By any reckoning, "The Monk of Chartreuse" is short. The narrative ends at line 65, after which ensues a distended moralization nearly equal in length that reaches a close only at line 136. Even the story proper contains a substantial parenthesis (lines 46–56) in which Gautier takes to task those who are insufficiently devoted to the Virgin.

Gautier's "A Monk of Chartreuse" is *Miracles* Book 2, no. 31 ("De un moigne de Chartrose").

There was a monk of Chartreuse  
who loved the Virgin, God's wife,

so much (just as I have discovered)  
that his soul occupies a great place in paradise.  
5 Day and night, he lingered often  
in the sanctuary after the monks  
to impose self-discipline, to pray,  
to kneel, to worship  
the Mother of God before her image,  
10 whom he loved greatly with a tender heart.  
His great devotion caused him  
to make so many obeisances  
before the image on bare knees  
that very often he was all covered in sweat.  
15 Weakness did not hold the upper hand over him,  
nor was he soft in imposing self-discipline.  
He worshipped the Mother of God so much  
that sweat very often ran down  
the length of his face,  
20 so much that it happened (it is my opinion)  
that one of his companions took notice of it.  
One night he spied what he did  
at such length in the chapel.  
He saw him go, all in tears,  
25 before a very lovely image,  
and then take off his shoes.  
When he had uncovered his knees,  
he genuflected before the image  
many times, to the ground,  
30 and made so many bows and bobs  
that he was all covered in sweat and all dripping.  
He saw him perform a good fifty or one hundred  
obeisances in a row.  
Then he sees descend from the sky  
35 (this is seen by him) a young girl,  
so very white, so very beautiful,  
that new-fallen snow did not have any edge on her.  
With a very delicate facecloth,  
much brighter and much whiter  
40 than new-fallen snow is on a branch,  
she wipes and dries so pleasantly  
the monk's face, which is all covered in sweat,  
that just from seeing such a sight  
he is so greatly cheered  
45 that it seems to him that he was lucky to be born.  
It seems to me, by Our Lady,  
that he is too lame and limping  
to secure the profit of his soul  
who hears this miracle,

50 if he does not desire greatly and does not try greatly  
 to make such bows and bobs,  
 for these are great achievements for the soul.  
 For God's sake, let us apply ourselves  
 to bow bows performed this way.  
 55 The Mother of God very soon applies herself to love  
 him who bows such bows.  
 The one who saw this served the Mother of God  
 most willingly and most devoutly  
 so long as he was alive.  
 60 He did not live long after  
 he had seen this event.  
 At the end he did not conceal  
 his vision from his prior,  
 and in private, and keeping his counsel,  
 65 he revealed it to the monk.  
 For I counsel this miracle  
 to my friends and proclaim to all  
 that in the end they should not love  
 their knees as much as those do.  
 70 When the body is cold in the knees,  
 then the soul is in a very hot bath.  
 Regarding our living flesh, it is not a concern to us  
 if it is hot or cold, to save our soul:  
 let us go often to greet  
 75 the sweet lady before her image.  
 The miracle of this good monk,  
 who immediately after matins went  
 without fail before her,  
 ought to urge on all honest fellows.  
 80 He who goes often to pray  
 before the image of Notre Dame  
 satisfies his soul well with *galantines*,  
 pike fish, sea bass, or game.  
 It behooves us to recall often  
 85 this nun, the saintly woman:  
 her good faith caused the liquid  
 to rise and come out of the icon.  
 Her good faith puts  
 firm belief in my heart.  
 90 No one, no matter if Jew or infidel,  
 has thinking so feeble  
 that, by *Saint Peter*, he ought not be made  
 a true believer by such miracles.  
 Since God makes a rock bleed  
 95 or makes oil come out of a wooden panel,  
 he can well make the sun be born from a star

and a virgin girl give birth to a child.  
Since God, who is so great, powerful, and high,  
wished to be born from his servant girl,  
100 the sun that enlightens all things  
issued from the star.  
Since God makes both flower and rose  
issue from a bush or a thorn,  
he is indeed mad who dares to have doubt  
105 about anything that his power accomplishes.  
He who is in doubt  
about the holy incarnation  
will never look God in the face.  
Since God in his great knowledge  
110 created and made everything from nothing,  
a person who is stunned and is amazed  
by the wonder, marvel,  
and miracle that he wishes to perform  
indeed has squinting eyes of the heart,  
115 indeed is *blind* and indeed one-eyed.  
God is of such very high estate  
that he made out of nothing and created  
the world and all that there is,  
and made of a virgin his mother.  
120 She is the gleaming and bright star  
who shines throughout the whole world.  
May the Mother of God, the pure Virgin  
whom we call the *star of the sea*,  
make our hearts so wakeful  
125 for serving her and loving her  
that our souls can see  
at life's end the bright sun  
which receives them in shelter.  
We all will see him at the end  
130 if we serve her with all our heart,  
the bright star, pure and fine,  
who purifies all and refines all,  
so finely refines our finish  
that can see without finish  
135 this sun which is so fine.  
Amen, amen, here I have finished.



## 5. The Jongleur and the Black Virgin of Rocamadour

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Rocamadour, a community in southern France, stands between Quercy and Périgord, in the diocese of Cahors. Perched high in a ravine above the river Alzou, the town serves as a way station for pilgrimage on the celebrated *Camino de Santiago*. “Saint Iago,” to break the last word into its two elements, shortens the Spanish equivalent to the Latin *Sanctus Iacobus*. The name, originally Hebrew and then Greek, gave English both Jacob and James. The “Way of Saint James,” to translate the Spanish phrase fully, designates a network of routes by which pilgrims travel from all points of the compass to the northwest of the Iberian peninsula, with the ultimate goal of reaching the shrine of the apostle Saint James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, twenty-two miles east of the Atlantic Ocean.

Since the Middle Ages the French municipality of Rocamadour has been renowned for having one of the most celebrated Marian sanctuaries in Europe and even in the world, to which visitors gain access by clambering up more than two hundred steps carved into the rock cliff. Already in antiquity the epicenter of a pagan cult, the location acquired luster from a local hermit named Amadour, after whom it is supposedly called: Roc-Amadour or “Cliff Amadour.” The alleged background of the holy man varies from version to version of his life. One account maintains that he spent most of his existence as Zacchaeus, the chief tax-collector at Jericho who is mentioned in the [Gospel of Luke](#). After changing his identity, he is said to have voyaged from the Holy Land and to have founded in honor of Mary a house of worship that is now named after him.

The main claim to fame of the church has been a wooden statue of the Virgin that the holy man purportedly hewed himself. The carving belongs to the type known in English as “[Throne of Wisdom](#),” because of the position in which the two figures are placed. In such likenesses, Mary is enthroned with her child on her lap. But the orientation of the Mother and Child in the representation is not what has elicited the most attention from visitors across the ages.

The image is a so-called Black Madonna or [Black Virgin](#), representing the Mother of God with the infant Jesus, both of them very dark in coloration.

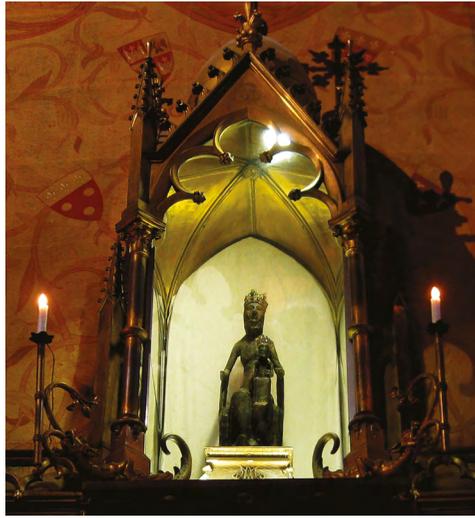


Fig. 7: *The Black Madonna of Rocamadour*. Photograph by Martin Irvine, no date. Image courtesy of Martin Irvine. All rights reserved.

Statues and paintings of this kind have fascinated viewers and generated much speculation across the centuries, with considerable curiosity about the reasons for the blackness. Sometimes they have darkened with time, from the natural aging of woods and paints, the effects of smoke and soot, or both; but in other instances they were crafted of substances that must have been black by nature from the beginning. In certain cases they may have been imported from outside Europe. Such circumstances have left researchers wondering which if any of these artworks were intended to represent black people and which acquired the color fortuitously.

The site of Rocamadour belonged to the Benedictine abbey of Tulle, which was located 55 miles away. In 1166 the leader of the latter, Abbot Gerald of Escorailles, commissioned a notary, presumably one of the monks, to compile the stories of wonders that had been bestowed on those who sought Mary's intercession by venerating the Black Virgin. The anonymous compiler claims explicitly to recount only those miracles that he had witnessed with his own eyes or that he had heard from reliable parties. Of course, this assertion must be taken with a hefty grain of salt: fact-checking was anything but the norm in the Middle Ages.

The resultant three-book text, entitled *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*, edifies its readers with 126 extraordinary events. The first and second books, written in unpretentious Latin prose, have been dated to 1172, the third to 1173. Because the initial miracle was reported only in 1148, the dating furnishes vivid evidence of the rapidity with which the local cult took shape.

Among the reports bundled up in this collection is the first attestation of a shrine wonder about a musical performer and a candle that subsequently received treatment in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century from Gautier de Coinci. The medieval

French poet, a Benedictine monk who eventually became a grand prior, credits the Latin of *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour* explicitly as his source. Later, King Alfonso the Wise renders the story into Galician-Portuguese verse in his songs that celebrate miracles of the Virgin.

The marvel revolves around a jongleur called Peter Iverni of Sieglar. The second component in his name has been construed as the genitive for a Latin noun of the second declension, here suffixed to the German personal name Ivern. To put all this more plainly, the implication is that [Peter was son of Ivern](#). The final element denotes the Rhineland community of Sieglar, today a neighborhood in Troisdorf. The last-mentioned German city is situated not far from Siegburg, in the district of Bonn and in the diocese of Cologne.

However the full appellation of this Peter is parsed and decoded, the incidents that bring him into conjunction with the Virgin Mary play out not in Germany but in France, in the commune of Rocamadour. The presence at the French shrine of a professional from the upper Rhine should not surprise us. In the stretch between 1166 and 1172, both lay people (merchants, above all) and churchmen from the Cologne Lowland made pilgrimages to Rocamadour or at least took vows to undertake them. These journeys had [impacts on both locales](#) that likely contributed to the specificity of the place with which the musician is identified in this narrative.

Then again, the writer of this account takes pains to indicate indirectly that the episode took place significantly before 1172–1173: he specifies that the key actor had experienced the miraculous reward long ago, had commemorated it annually for a lengthy but indeterminate period since it happened, and had died, all well before the gestation of *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*.

According to the legend, Peter Iverni of Sieglar played his viol and performed his best songs in honor of the Virgin before the wooden statue of her that stood in the basilica of Saint Mary. In return, he petitioned her before that same Madonna, if his entertainment pleased her, to give him one of her candles or at least a chunk of wax from it. [Three times the taper](#) descended upon his instrument. The miracle prompted the wonderment of the pilgrims who thronged around him, but by the same token it incurred the indignation of the sexton. Enraged, this officious Gerard twice took away the votive but had to give up when it alighted on the viol for the third time.

Thereafter Peter returned annually to the sanctuary to offer to the Mother of God a candle of more than a pound's weight.

The physical things that play such important roles in the story deserve a moment of consideration. First comes the [medieval viol](#), a protoviola or -violin. Its name is cognate with *vielle* and, far more familiar in English, *fiddle*. The instrument, used widely in western Europe, was a bowed and stringed instrument, with three to five gut strings, a leaf-shaped pegbox with frontal tuning pegs, a low and flat bridge, and a waist that curved slightly inward, sometimes resulting in an overall body shaped like a figure eight. It was sounded most often with the bottom of its lower bout resting on the shoulder of the instrumentalist.



Fig. 8: A taper miraculously alights upon a jongleur's viol, prompting wonder from bystanders. Illustration by Pio Santini, 1946. Published in Jérôme and Jean Tharaud, *Les contes de la Vierge* (Paris: Société d'éditions littéraires françaises, 1946), between pp. 130 and 131.

Second, the chapter title of the miracle features the unusual and somewhat ungainly Latin expression *cereus modulus* or "waxen form" to describe the candle or object made of beeswax that alights upon Peter's instrument. In the text proper, the nameless author of *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour* employs the noun *modulus* unmodified by the adjective five times. *Modulus*, if not a hapax legomenon (a term attested only once), was at least a rarity for denoting anything made of wax. Later versions of the legend in both literature and representational art depict the item invariably as a taper, mostly as a lighted one, but this writer gives no hint that whatever he has in mind is illuminated or indeed even a candle.

The word directs attention instead, without divulging any details, to the fact that the wax is shaped or, to use a cognate, "modeled." As the last translation suggests, *modulus* is related etymologically to the French noun *moule* for a mold or form. In an analogous development, the Latin *formaticum*, with "form" at its basis, gave rise to the modern *fromage* for cheese. At some point, in a common occurrence familiar to linguists as metathesis, the consonants *d* and *l* in *modulus* and the letters *or* in *formaticum* were flipflopped, and voilà! the present-day English and French words emerged.

The term *modulus* could designate a block of wax, a candle in a special shape, a large or small taper, or something else. To concentrate for a moment on votives, offerings could have been made that resembled an afflicted or healed body part. When Peter himself refers to "wax forms that hang," a wick could be implied. For instance, he could have in mind two candles that shared such a cord, as happens often in candle making. By being joined in this way and left uncut, a pair could have been draped over a peg or suspended from another sort of hanger.

The emphasis on the physicality of the material is amplified in the conclusion to the story, where the Latin *libra* does not denote a pound as a monetary value but rather as a weight. The author specifies further that Peter committed to depositing this amount of beeswax as an annual tribute. The spelling of the Latin *trecensus*, with an initial element that suggests the number three, tempts the translator to use the English “threefold payment,” but the term is encountered in dictionaries first under *transcensus* and only secondarily with the other spelling. Such payments have been interpreted as a yearly fee that membership in the confraternity of Rocamadour required. In this case, they would be a type of insurance that distributed the costs and risks of pilgrimage across a large group. Alternatively, they could have been expressions of [individual devotion to the Virgin](#) as she was embodied in one shrine that held special significance to them.

What light can this episode shed on “Our Lady’s Tumbler”? What relationships can we hypothesize between the two stories, and what could have motivated the differences between them? Some similarities are obvious. An entertainer expresses devotion to the Virgin by performing before an image of her. A church authority, not terribly high in the hierarchy but wielding power all the same, takes exception to the performer and denies the miracle. For all that, the jongleur is vindicated in the end.

Among many dissimilarities, “The Jongleur of Rocamadour” depicts no retreat from the world, no monastery, no class contrast between the professional and the monks, and no saintly death. Rather, it concludes by focusing upon a yearly gift made by the jongleur to a specific shrine. Additionally, it furnishes the particular of names for both the protagonist and antagonist, Peter Iverni the jongleur and Gerard the sexton, whereas “Our Lady’s Tumbler” is resolutely indeterminate except for the detail of its setting in Clairvaux.

“Our Lady’s Tumbler” calls attention to the narrative form called exemplum. This genre is a nod to preaching. The sermonizing could have taken place outside monasteries, for instance in or near cathedrals, where Cistercians such as Bernard of Clairvaux sought recruits to their cause. Alternatively, the story could have been used to good effect in homilies within the chapter houses of the abbeys. What better means could have been devised for coaching choir monks to treat their lay confreres fairly?

The tale connected with the Black Virgin of Rocamadour conjures up very different social settings and messaging, without the faintest whiff of monasticism. In the late fourteenth century, the English writer Geoffrey Chaucer composed *The Canterbury Tales*. In verse and prose, he regaled his readers with stories that are purportedly told in a contest by pilgrims as they wend their way from London to Canterbury. Already two centuries earlier, we can readily picture similar travelers on the Continent who are entertained by jongleurs. Going further, we can imagine entertainers singing to them of miracles that celebrate stopping places on pilgrimages. The great routes often had among their multiple destinations cathedrals where the Virgin Mary revealed herself and caused wonders on behalf of her petitioners. Accounts in which jongleurs

were cast as central characters would have held a special appeal to these professionals, making such stories natural choices for inclusion in their repertoires.

A. *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour:*

"On the Wax Form That Came Down upon a Viol"

Peter Iverni from Sieglar sought his sustenance by playing instruments. According to his habit, he would come to churches and, after pouring forth prayer to the Lord, he would touch the strings of the viol and render praises to the Lord.

Once he was in the basilica of the Blessed Mary of Rocamadour. For a long time he had been giving no rest to the strings while intoning, but harmonizing sometimes with the instrument in the notes he sung, when he looked up: "Lady," he said, "if my tuneful songs please you or your son, my Lord, take down any one you wish from the innumerable and inestimable wax forms that hang here and bestow it upon me." While singing in this way, he was praying, and while praying, he was singing, one form came down upon his instrument, as those who were present saw.

But the monk Gerard, sexton of the church, asserting that he was a magician and sorcerer, took back the form with indignation and put it back where it had been. Yet Peter, reckoning it the work of God, suffered patiently and did not cease making music. Lo and behold, the form that had been on the instrument previously was put down on it a second time. But the monk, unwilling to endure his anger, took back the same object and put it back fastened more securely.

As is to be expected, the Lord, whose essence it is to be constant always and not to vary on different occasions, performed a third time an act similar to what he had done twice already. As all those who were present saw, "[wonder at that which happened to him](#)" took hold of them. Praising the Lord together, they raised their voices to the heavens. He likewise, crying aloud for joy, returned to its giver the wax form that had been given him by God, praising him "[with timbrel and choir, with strings and organs.](#)"

To honor and praise the Lord's name, he became accustomed to render in memory of the miracle every year as long as he lived a wax form, supplementing it further by a pound, as annual payment to the magnificent Virgin of Rocamadour.

B. Gautier de Coinci, *The Miracles of Our Lady:*

"[Of the Candle that Came Down to the Jongleur](#)"

The next major iteration of the miracle owes to the Benedictine monk Gautier de Coinci. This medieval French poet, thought to have issued from lordly stock, was born in 1177, probably in Coinci-l'Abbaye. This village was located between Soissons and Château-Thierry, in the region known after its principal city as Soissonnais. He joined

the Benedictine monastery of Saint Médard in Soissons in 1193 at age 16 and entered the priesthood at age 23. In 1214 at age 37 he took office as prior of Vic-sur-Aisne, a dependency of Soissons located ten miles away. In 1233 he returned to his home institution as grand prior, in which capacity he served until dying in 1236 at age 59.

Despite the administrative burdens he bore, Gautier composed religious songs, sermons, and saints' lives. He was also a skilled musician. Where he acquired his knowledge and skill remains unknown, but it would be reasonable to hypothesize that he studied for a spell in Paris. Whatever the case may be with his education, his magnum opus is the *Miracles de Notre Dame* or *The Miracles of Our Lady*. He began the first book in 1218, wrote the second between 1223 and 1227, and revised the first intermittently. The two books comprise fifty-eight narratives and eighteen lyrics, for a total of approximately 35,500 octosyllabic lines.

His oeuvre has commanded admiration for its [narrative and lyric skill](#), virtuoso versification, exuberant vocabulary and wordplay, resolute moralism, and social satire, but above all for the range and intensity of the devotion to the Virgin Mary that it displays. These qualities secured strong success for the poet's Marian miracles in the Middle Ages, most readily gauged by the 114 manuscripts still extant that transmit the poetry in whole or part.

For many of the legends, Gautier [credits as his source](#) a Latin manuscript, no longer extant. In the case of the narrative about the jongleur in Rocamadour, he commences with a six-line prologue in which he points out that miracles of the Virgin of Rocamadour are numerous, that "a very large book" has been made to record them, and that he intends to retell one he finds attractive. By these remarks he acknowledges the Latin account given in *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*. He caps his narrative with an extended commentary in which he gives credit to the jongleur protagonist for his sincere faith in performing the songs: clerics would do well to follow heed, by bringing their hearts and mouths into accord as they fulfill their liturgical duties.

The sweet mother of the creator  
 performs so many miracles, so many lofty deeds,  
 at her church of [Rocamadour](#),  
 that a [very large book](#) has been made of them.

5 I have [read](#) it many times.  
 In it I found a very [fine](#) miracle  
 of a jongleur, a layman,  
 that I wish to relate, if I can,  
 so as to make understandable to anyone

10 the [refinement](#) of Our Lady.  
 In that land a jongleur lived  
 who would sing very willingly  
 the [lay](#) of the savior's mother  
 when he came through her sanctuaries.

15 He was a minstrel of great renown,

who was named **Peter of Sieglar**.  
 He went on pilgrimage  
 to Rocamadour, it seems to me,  
 where great crowds often gather.  
 20 There he found many pilgrims  
 who were from distant lands  
 and who were celebrating very greatly.  
 When he had said and done his prayer,  
 he grabbed his viol and drew it to him.  
 25 He makes the bow touch the strings  
 and makes the viol resound  
 so that without any delay  
 everyone gathers round, cleric and lay.  
 When Peter sees that everyone is heeding him  
 30 and everyone is lending him their ears,  
 it seems truly that he plays so well  
 that his viol is poised to speak.  
 When he had **greeted sweetly and praised** at great length  
 35 wholeheartedly the Mother of God,  
 and bowed down greatly before **her image**,  
 he said very loudly and cried out,  
 "Ah, Mother of the **king who created all**,  
**Lady of all refinement**,  
 40 if anything that I say has pleased you,  
 I ask of you in return  
 that you make me a gift of one of these candles  
 of which there are so many around **you up there**  
 that I have never seen more, far or near.  
 45 Lady without equal and without peer,  
 send me one of your lovely candles  
 for celebrating at my dinner.  
 I do not ask of you more, if God guides me."  
 Our Lady, saint Mary,  
 50 who is a fountain of refinement  
 and is the **source and channel of sweetness**,  
 heard well the voice of the minstrel,  
 for now, without waiting further,  
 she causes to come down on his viol  
 55 quite overtly, in the sight of the people,  
 a very lovely and fair candle.  
 A monk who had the name **Gerard**,  
 who was very wicked and wild,  
 who now guarded the sanctuary  
 60 and who watched over things,  
 took the miracle for a folly,  
 as a man full of **black bile** would.  
 He said to Peter that he was a magician,

thief, and enchanter.  
65 He takes the candle in his hands,  
he puts it back and hangs it high up.  
The minstrel, who knew a good deal,  
sees the monk as being obstinate and stupid,  
70 does not put his own sense on the level with his,  
for he understands and perceives well  
that Our Lady has heard him.  
From this he has a heart so rejoicing  
that he shed tears and weeps for joy.  
He prays often to the Mother of God  
75 and thanks her much within his heart  
for her very great refinement.  
He takes up the viol once more,  
lifts his face toward the image,  
sings and fiddles so well  
80 that there is neither a [sequence](#) nor a [kyrie eleison](#)  
that you would hear more willingly,  
and the candle, lovely and intact,  
comes back down again on the viol.  
[Five hundred](#) saw this miracle.  
85 The treacherous monk, the crazy one  
who has his [head full of relics](#),  
when he again sees his candle come down,  
rushes forward among the people and the crowd,  
faster than a stag, doe, or fawn.  
90 He is so angry, he is so upset,  
that he can hardly say a single word.  
With great irritation and great anger,  
he pulls his hood back,  
and, like one who does not have even a bit of sense,  
95 tells the minstrel to understand well  
that he will not at all have his candle.  
He marvels very much at what he sees  
and holds it very much for a great marvel.  
He never saw in his life,  
100 he says, such great magic.  
He claims over and over  
that the minstrel, the jongleur, is a magician.  
Vexed and fired up with anger,  
he took the candle again in his hands,  
105 angrily climbs up above again,  
puts it back very firmly,  
and ties it well and secures it well.  
He says to the minstrel to understand well  
that [Simon Magus](#) the magician  
110 was not such an enchanter

as he will be if ever he makes it  
come down from up there.  
The minstrel, to give the gist of it,  
who had seen both near and far  
115 many foolish and many wise men,  
is not in the slightest stirred up by all this.  
He endures patiently  
the monk's stubbornness and impatience.  
He is so even-tempered that he does not  
120 on any account take to heart anything  
of what the treacherous monk says,  
but begins once more  
his song and melody.  
He knows well that Our Lady  
125 will prevail in this matter very well  
if his songs are fit to please her.  
In fiddling he sighs and weeps,  
his mouth sings and his heart prays.  
He prays sweetly to the Mother of God  
130 that in her sweetness she again hearken to him  
and, to make the miracle even more evident,  
again make the lovely candle  
return at least once  
that the monk, like a man in fury,  
135 who is a fool and an illiterate,  
foolishly snatched  
twice from his hands.  
Around him there are great throngs of people,  
who are stunned and stirred  
140 by the miracles that they have seen.  
Everyone marvels, everyone makes the sign of the cross,  
with their fingers they point out to one another the candle  
that has come down already twice.  
Peter does not have his fingers  
145 asleep or numbed on the viol,  
but sings and fiddles so well  
before the image of Our Lady  
that he makes many a soul weep for tenderness.  
Whatever sound the viol produces,  
150 the heart sings and fiddles so loud  
that the sound goes off from it all the way to God.  
For now, as we read,  
the candle again makes the third leap  
to the minstrel, to whom God gives aid.  
155 Three times the lady held it out to him,  
who understood it better than the monk  
and who is more refined

than the treacherous monk, who  
 is astonished and stunned by the noise.  
 160 Everyone cries out, "Play, play!  
 A lovelier miracle never happened  
 nor will ever take place again, believe you me!"  
 Throughout the sanctuary they make so great a celebration,  
 both clerics and laypeople, men and women,  
 165 and go about sounding so many bells,  
 you would not hear even God thundering.  
 Who then had seen the minstrel  
 offering the candle on the altar,  
 to thank God and Our Lady,  
 170 would have a hard heart, by the faith that you owe my soul,  
 if not moved by compassion.  
 He was not foolish or worthless;  
 on the contrary, he was refined, worthy, and wise,  
 because, as long as his life lasted,  
 175 every year, as I find it in the book,  
 he brought to Rocamadour  
 a very lovely candle of a pound's weight.  
 So long as he lived,  
 he enjoyed serving God in such manner  
 180 that he never entered any church afterward  
 without immediately fiddling  
 a song or lay of Our Lady,  
 and when it pleased God that he came to his end,  
 he reached the glory of heaven  
 185 and his soul went off before God  
 thanks to the prayer of Our Lady,  
 of whom he would sing so willingly  
 and to whom each year at Rocamadour  
 he was donor of a candle.

*Of Those Who Sing and Read and  
 Do Not Think at All about What They Say*

190 **W**e priests, we cantors,  
 we clerics, we monks, we friars,  
 if we have understood well  
 this miracle that I have related,  
 we must sing night and day,  
 195 devoutly, loudly, and deliberately,  
 of the lady who brings to the respite  
 of heaven all those  
 who put effort into serving her.  
 But I certainly see many of them

200 who are weak and lazy.  
 It does not matter to many to serve God.  
 There are many who do not make what they perform  
 in any fashion *hot or cold to God*:  
 they screech much and they cry much  
 205 and they stretch their throats much,  
 but they do not stretch out  
 or pull well the strings of their viols.  
 By this they much worsen their singing.  
 The mouth lies to God and is in discord  
 210 if the heart is not in concord with it.  
 God wishes the *concord of the two*.  
 If the heart gambols, springs, and dances,  
 looks around and thinks of foolish pleasure,  
 neither God nor his mother take any pleasure  
 215 in the mouth, if it makes notes,  
 no more than in a *donkey if it brays*.  
 God is not very much concerned about  
 singing or trilling  
 or *singing descant or in five parts*,  
 220 but, when the mouth really exerts itself,  
 the heart must strengthen itself  
 and reinforce the strings  
 of the viol and extend them  
 so that without waiting anymore, the bright sound  
 225 goes off at the first word and soars  
 up above into paradise.  
 Then their song is lovely to God.  
 But many have such a viol  
 that is put out of accord both early and late  
 230 if it is not *tuned with strong wine*.  
 Whatever the heart thinks or says,  
 truly a melody will not issue  
 from the mouth until it has been refreshed;  
 but when the wine has cured it  
 235 and mulled wine has stunned the head,  
 then they sing and celebrate greatly  
 and rouse a whole monastery.  
 I know someone who often has  
 a sickly voice, feeble and weakened,  
 240 if strong wine does not heal it;  
 but when good wine strengthens it nicely  
 and the *son of the crooked* has struck it,  
 then it sings loud and then it rejoices.  
 Good *wine but not beer* does this:  
 245 such song is not at all lovely,  
 God does not listen to such a viol,

for when drunkenness pulls the bow,  
 God has a small share there.  
 When wine touches the strings,  
 250 the whole song is full of discords.  
 When wine rouses the heart,  
 God cannot hear the mouth;  
 God on no account hears **the mouth**  
**if there is not devotion in the heart.**  
 255 It is fitting for the stream to spring up from the heart  
 that causes the voice to please God.  
 God and his mother are not concerned  
 about a loud voice or a clear voice.  
 Some sing low and simply,  
 260 to whom God listens more tenderly  
 than he does to one who gives himself airs and graces  
 when he loudly sings—and loudly in five parts.  
 God sets no stock by  
 a clear voice, pleasing and lovely,  
 265 the sound of the harp and of the viol,  
 of the **psaltery**, the **organ**, and the **fiddle**,  
 if there is no devotion in the heart.  
 God pays heed to the intention,  
 not the voice nor the instrument.  
 270 He who wishes to praise God tenderly,  
 praises him as **David** did:  
 his heart was wholly rapt to heaven  
 when he praised God on his **harp**.  
 That one sings, fiddles, and harps well  
 275 who adores and prays to him in his heart  
 while the harp or the voice cries out.  
 And he who harps should watch out well  
 to keep his hand on the harp:  
 the hand signifies the craft.  
 280 When a man leads a good life,  
 in that case he harps and sings so well  
 as to enchant the devils,  
 just as David enchanted them  
 when he played the **harp for King Saul**.  
 285 There are plenty of good singers,  
 good clerics, and good preachers,  
 who preach and shout out in great quantity,  
 but do nothing of what they say.  
 He who sings and harps in this way  
 290 does not have his hand at all on the harp,  
 and neither his harp nor his fiddle  
 is pleasing or lovely to God.  
 He who pronounces and counsels something well,

if he does not do it, he is truly idiotic.  
 295 His wits are **not worth an old nothing**,  
 because **the opposite** of his wit is ignorance.  
 Let us not be such minstrels.  
 Let us do it well (there is none of that sort),  
 and then afterward let us teach it.  
 300 Let us immerse ourselves **in all good works**  
 and in doing good and in speaking good,  
 in singing good and in reading good.  
 Let us all pay heed to the minstrel  
 who sang before the altar  
 305 until Our Lady hearkened to him  
 and held out to him a lovely candle.  
 The movement of the candle tells  
 that devotion readily moves God.  
 If when singing we wish to please God,  
 310 let us not be intent on screeching loudly  
 or crying or bellowing,  
 but let us be intent on directing  
 to God our thoughts and heart.  
 We clerics, we monks, when we sing  
 315 in the choir our high kyrie eleisons,  
 our sequences, our lovely hymns,  
 we should be on guard that our heart be up there,  
 since we know that no one  
**reads** pleasingly or sings pleasingly to God  
 320 if he does not root his heart in God  
 while he chants, sings psalms, and reads.  
 Let us sing, let us sing with such delight  
 that sweet God may hear our sweet songs.  
 Let us think, let us think of the great joy  
 325 and of the sweet songs of heaven above.  
 As soon as the heart descends down here  
 and does not accord with the mouth,  
 the mouth fails and sings out of tune,  
 and there is great discord between the two.  
 330 People say "**Lift up your hearts**"  
 because it is right that the heart rises  
 up there on high as we sing.  
 At a time when the accord is lovely,  
 then our voices merge and join  
 335 without delay, have no doubt of it at all,  
 in the saintliest melody  
 and in the praises that are said  
 day and night by saintly spirits  
 who will praise with pure heart  
 340 God and his mother, always without end.

If we sing as I have said,  
 know truly, without counterargument,  
 that our viol will sound loud,  
 and our song will be good and lovely.  
 345 For our viol not to be in *discord*,  
 we pray to that one to make accord,  
 who achieves the *accord of humanity with God*.  
 You who have a heart, who still dance,  
 and who are in discord with God,  
 350 if your heart is in accord to serve this one,  
 who will so tune your viol  
 and harmonize your song  
 that you will be at once in accord with God.  
 You who still love dice  
 355 and whom *the Enemy* holds *in his cords*,  
 if you agree a little to the service of this one,  
 your chords will come into such concord  
 that they will bring you into accord with God's heart.

### C. Alfonso X the Wise, *Songs of Holy Mary*: “The Jongleur of Rocamadour”

Our third and final exposition of the miracle of “The Jongleur of Rocamadour” owes to none other than the King of Castile and León. Alongside untold other achievements that have left lasting imprints on history, Alfonso X the Wise was a preeminent patron of the arts and sciences. Beyond many other contributions in the law, history, and sciences that his sponsorship enabled, he may be most famous for overseeing, underwriting, and, at least in part, composing the thirteenth-century *Cantigas de Santa María* or *Songs of Holy Mary*. This homage to the Virgin Mary in poetry went through three drafts, the first overseen from 1270–74, the second from 1275–79, and the third from 1279–83. In its final form, it comprises more than four hundred miracles of the Virgin and hymns written in praise of her. These songs are in Galician-Portuguese, a language of medieval Iberia from which both modern Galician and Portuguese descend. They are unlikely to have been the work of Alfonso alone, though he certainly had a strong hand in them.

The collection holds more than one claim to being an important monument of Iberian culture in the Middle Ages. Most obviously, it transmits poetry of enormous literary worth. Apart from its value as literature, the songbook is entitled to broader cultural relevance because of its manuscripts. Of the four extant from the thirteenth century, two contain not only musical notation but also heavy illustration in the form of *miniatures*. Both of these codices are products of collaboration by a large team in the Alfonsine scriptorium. The music probably emanated from an equally substantial pool of composers and performers.

Whatever their authorship, Alfonso valued the *Cantigas* so greatly that in his so-called "Second Testament" of January 21, 1284, he directed that all the manuscripts of them be deposited in the church where he was to be interred and that they be intoned there on the Virgin's feast days. Continuing, he enjoined that if in the future a rightful heir should wish to take possession of the books, that descendant of his should compensate the church for them.

This is how in Rocamadour Saint Mary caused a candle to come down on the fiddle of the jongleur who was singing before her.

*Refrain:*

*The Blessed Virgin Mary:  
we all should praise her,  
singing in joy,  
we who hope for her blessing.*

On this account, I will tell you a miracle that it will please you to have heard. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord, performed it in Rocamadour. Now hear the miracle, and we will tell it to you.  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

A jongleur, whose name was Peter of Sieglar, who knew how to sing very well and to fiddle even better, and who has no equal in all the Virgin's churches, always sang a song of hers, according to what we learned.  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

The song he sang was about the Mother of God, as he was before her image, weeping from his eyes. And then he said, "Oh, glorious one, if these songs of mine please you, give us a candle so that we may dine."  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

Saint Mary took pleasure in how the jongleur sang, and made a candle come down on his fiddle. But the monk who was sexton had it removed from his hand, saying, "You are a wizard, and we will not leave it to you."  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

But the jongleur, who had put his heart in the Virgin, did not want to leave off his songs, and the candle then settled again on his fiddle. But the brother, very angry, took it away another time, faster than we can tell you.

*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

After that monk had taken the candle from the jongleur's fiddle, at once he put it there again where it had been before, and he stuck it there very firmly. He said, "Jongleur, sir, if you take it, we will take you for a sorcerer."  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

The jongleur did not worry a bit about all this, but fiddled as he had fiddled before, and the candle settled once again on the fiddle. The monk intended to take it, but the people said to him, "We will not allow you to do this."  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

After the stubborn monk saw this miracle, he understood that he had made a great mistake, and at once repented. He threw himself down before the jongleur on the ground, and begged his pardon by Saint Mary, in whom we and you believe.  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*

After the glorious Virgin performed this miracle that made a gift to the jongleur and converted the black monk, from then on, the jongleur of whom we have spoken brought to her each year in her church a man-sized taper.  
*The Blessed Virgin Mary ...*



## 6. The Jongleurs and the Holy Candle of Arras

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The municipality of Arras lies at the heart of Artois, a region in the northeast of modern-day France. Before 1250 this major city generated what count among the [earliest surviving examples](#) in prose and verse of many genres, writings both documentary and literary, ranging from charters and customary laws to plays. These texts are marked by some linguistic features associated with the neighboring territory of Picardy, but their language is often described simply as being Old French. The last-mentioned umbrella term encompasses most of the Romance dialects that were spoken and written in the Middle Ages in the center and north of France and in what are today the French-speaking communities of Belgium.

The wondrous tale of “The Jongleurs and the Holy Candle” that is purported to have unfolded in the principal church of Arras exposes the listener or reader to one transformation after another: a monastery sanctuary turns into a miraculous cathedral, moral enmity into brotherly love, lowly jongleurs into a lofty confraternity, and deadly illness into good health. The Virgin materializes on earth from her usual heavenly haunts, and solid wax melts as a taper burns, so that its drippings can be mixed with water to concoct a healing elixir. But we should approach the story methodically.

In the twelfth century or earlier, an [affliction ran rampant](#) in the environs of Arras. The disease has been commonly identified with [ergotism](#), a type of poisoning caused by consuming rye or other grains contaminated by the parasitic *Claviceps purpurea*—the ergot fungus. The most common mode of transmission was through bread. Back then, the malady was designated *le mal des ardents*, a French phrase that might be translated as “the illness of the burning ones.” It was identical or at least similar to what was also called [hellfire](#) and [sacred fire](#). The designation that eventually prevailed was Saint Anthony’s fire. All these terms refer to two symptoms. Outwardly the disease may resemble erysipelas since sufferers take on a burning-red or livid appearance on the exterior. Inwardly, owing to the hellishly hot pain caused by the inflammation on the interior, its manifestation is even more severe. Individuals who suffer the direst cases experience gangrene-like symptoms in the limbs.

Back to the tale. In the absence of modern medicine, no solace can be found for the ailment in Arras until Mary materializes and furnishes a [miraculous candle](#), along with instructions on its proper application. The faithful enduring the plague are

healed by imbibing water into which molten wax has been poured or dripped from the lighted taper, while their inflammations are soothed when the same liquid is applied externally.

The Virgin does not execute the miracle entirely on her own, but instead enlists a couple of accomplices as her agents. These two helpers are jongleurs who prior to this episode have become mortal and sworn enemies. The one known as **Peter** Norman, who is at **Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise** when events begin, experiences an initial vision on the night leading from Wednesday into Thursday and another subsequent one from Thursday into Friday. The town where he found himself is in northern France, within a county that bore the same name. Until 1180 both town and county were a vassalage subject to the count of Flanders.

To put nomenclature behind us, Norman sets out from this locality in the morning on Friday and arrives in the evening. The other entertainer, called **Itier**, departs that same morning from the region of **Brabant**, even the nearest parts of which lay much farther than Saint-Pol from Arras. Consequently, despite making the greatest haste, Itier arrives only very early on Saturday morning in the same town. Before the pair of performers can collaborate in accomplishing the wonderful cure, they must first be reconciled through the intervention of the wise bishop, **Lambert**.

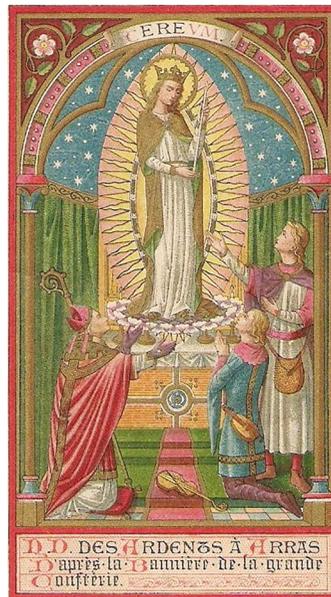


Fig. 9: Holy card depicting the miracle at Arras (Bruges, Belgium, ca. 1890).

After the mix of wax and water has healed nearly a full gross—twelve dozen—of the diseased locals, the two traveling entertainers commemorate the miracle by establishing a special association for members of their profession as well as for others within the Arras community. A kind of guild that enacted services for the dead, the *Confrérie des jongleurs et des bourgeois* or “Confraternity of Jongleurs and Townspeople” provided

mutual aid for funerals, and, perhaps the most important bonus, promised protection from the plague. Healthcare *avant la lettre*! The history of this group, apparently established initially as the *Carité de Notre Dame des Ardents d'Arras* or "Charity of Our Lady of the Burning Ones of Arras," becomes a fascinating story in its own right that reveals much about the complex and changing social position of jongleurs in medieval society.

The Latin communiqué of the miracle about the two jongleurs and the Holy Candle of Arras was apparently written between 1175 and 1200, but the official record of it was transcribed onto parchment as a charter in 1241. This document was certified by five seals. One piece of stamped green wax acknowledged the "mayors" of the confraternity, while each of the other four bore witness to the presence and approval of a [different ecclesiastic organization](#). The sealed original was incorporated in a cartulary that was preserved in the archives of the confraternity from then into the eighteenth century, but the medieval manuscript of it no longer exists. It remained intact, seals and all, at least until a *vidimus* or eyewitness copy was made on paper in 1482 by [two apostolic notaries at the request of a magistrate](#) of Arras. In the meantime, this fifteenth-century likeness has itself also disappeared. As a result, the earliest physical evidence of the text that is extant today comes through [a seventeenth-century transcription](#).

The Latin prose stands out from typical hagiography in its length as well as in the pains that were taken in its composition. Its anonymous author cultivated an elegant rhythmic style. As a writer, he demonstrated a lively command of narrative and dramatic technique by bringing characters on stage and by engaging them in dialogue with each other. The three principals, to wit, the bishop and the two jongleurs, draw back the curtains to reveal vivid and distinctive personalities. It may be going too far, but the theatricality of the writing has encouraged speculation that this version of the story owes some of its nature and flavor to the stage traditions and theatrical literature of Arras.

Unlike "Our Lady's Tumbler," "The Jongleur of Rocamadour" provided the specific of a name for its protagonist. "The Jongleurs and the Holy Candle of Arras" takes such granularity much further. In fact, it emanates a nearly legalistic and contractual urgency about establishing what happened when and where to whom. In the Latin and French texts we can glimpse interactions among different strata in medieval society. In the first document the players are the bishop and the two jongleurs. In the second a coda supplements these principals with the knights. A sense comes through that the longstanding division of society among ecclesiastics, knights, and peasants was not holding now as formerly, and that jongleurs were a cause of anxiety, as other classes sought to control them or appropriate their perquisites, while they endeavored to defend themselves and their interests. The miracle here elevates the Church, as the bishop reconciles two mortal enemies and as the Virgin delivers to a large populace in Arras a remedy for a dreaded illness that can be furnished henceforth as required under his oversight. The jongleurs elicit special attention from Mary and are protected

from those who would usurp their gains. Despite the particularity of the personal names and details, "The Jongleurs and the Holy Candle of Arras" in its initial two iterations displays at least as much concern about group identities and dynamics as it does about any alleged individuals.

### A. "The Foundation of the Jongleur Confraternity in Arras" (in Latin)

Whatever is done *under the sun* is easily effaced from the memory of human beings unless it has been committed to writing. But the deeds of kings and of others who hold dominion on earth seem worth being recounted and remembered, especially of that king who alone rules *the system of the universe*, who sits *upon the cherubim and beholds the depths*, who *confines the thrones of the heavens and encloses the earth in his fist*, who *has measured the height of heaven and the depth of the abyss*, and who *holds dominion from sea to sea*. Assuredly, we are bound to extol the glories of this healer, which *cannot be numbered*. Yet I will *work through one of them in a brief discourse*.

In the time then when the priest Lambert occupied the *episcopal see of Arras*, as the people's sins and neglect increased, a most virulent trouble arose, such that the inhabitants of the city of Arras and in the countryside, villages, and towns of the whole neighboring province were afflicted, some by fear and others by grief. One suffered *burning* in the mouth, another in the nose, and a third in the ear, one in the hand, another in the foot, one in the hip, another in the shin, one in the male sexual organs, another in the backside, all with that dreadful illness that is called *hellfire*. In contrast, those who survived in good health were beset by fear that similar torment would befall them.

Accordingly, the entirety of those inhabiting the province were stricken by this fear. One group appeared before priests for confession, being reborn through the baptism of penance; another, in contrast, weakened by that illness, took flight together, some by foot and others by vehicle, to the *holy Zion*, which is to say, the *church of blessed Mary*, in the city of Arras. There, lying on beds, pallets, straw, and sacks, all of both sexes shouted to the Lord: "*How long, O Lord, will you forget me to the end?*" The one was saying: "*How long do you turn your face away from me?*," the other was praying: "*O Lord, rebuke me not in your indignation.*" And so there were in number *144* people who all were awaiting the Lord's favorably inclined redemption and providence.

In that time there were two jongleurs dwelling in different areas, for one was in Brabant and the other in the town of Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise, but they had between them a mortal hatred, to the point where if one encountered the other, one would cut off the other's head with unsheathed sword. For one had slain the other's brother, with the devil proposing the idea and supplying weapons.

*As all things maintained deepest silence and night completed the middle of its course*, while that jongleur, the Brabanter, was sleeping in his bedroom, on the fourth night of the

week [Wednesday] in which it **began to dawn on the fifth day of the week** [Thursday], a vision was revealed in his sleep, namely, a woman **clothed in white, an exceedingly comely virgin** from the seed of King David, **surrounded with a variety of virtues, in gilded clothing**, with an ardent and unadorned appearance.

“Are you sleeping?” she says, “Are you sleeping? Hear what I say to you. Rising, proceed to the holy Zion of Arras, which is to say, that holiest place in which so many sick suffer to death, in number namely 144. Coming there, I will provide you a suitable place and time in which an opportunity may be afforded you for speaking with the priest Lambert who has charge of the church of Arras, by relating in order the vision you see. Add also that in the **third hour**, on the night of the Saturday, from which the first hour of the Sunday began to dawn, he will walk about through the church of the Blessed Virgin, going around the sick. When now the song of the first cockcrow sounds, a woman will come down from the choir, clothed in the same clothes with which I am too, carrying a candle in her hand and handing it over to you. When indeed you have received and lit the candle, drip the wax that overflows into vessels with water and in a circuit offer it to the sickly to drink, and pour it over the sickness of each and every one, and let there be no doubt to you that however many have faith, they will be restored to their former good health, but he who does not have faith will be condemned to death from his sicknesses. You will indeed unite with you (as the third) that one toward whom you bear a mortal hatred, who on the day of the coming Saturday will station himself in your presence. When mutual reconciliation has been achieved, you will enlist him for yourself as a third companion.”

When this vision ended, on the same night the vision, with the Blessed Virgin in the same form and clothing, and relying on the same words, befell the other jongleur dwelling in the Ternoise area. When he had awakened from sleep, he said, “**Oh such and so great** a vision of the ever so venerable Mother of God, Mary! Oh that with her as guide and helper we should be tied together by the bond of reconciliation and love! Oh that with God taking pity and with the Blessed Mary, ever a virgin, protecting and announcing me, so many sick people may be restored to their former good health! But I fear for myself on account of the greatly fantastic illusions. Therefore I will wait all the way until the recurrence of the third hour of the night and, staying awake, I will keep vigil, if the vision should come and be repeated. Oh that it should come!”

Therefore he rises in the morning and proceeding to the church to hear the rite of the divine service, with knees bent in view of the cross, with hands joined and raised up high, he prays devoutly that the Lord may finish in a short time according to his will what he had seen in his vision.

Now on the following night, the same vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary happened to the same individuals, with this added: if they did not hasten, they would be punished by sickness of the same torment. But Norman is aroused from sleep, as if put into a daze and a trance. Made ready and girded with a sword, he undertakes a journey in haste toward Arras and on Friday, worn out by his journey he spent the night in Arras. Itier also did likewise, but I believe that, because he was coming from afar, he hastened far more to Arras, but even so he did not come all the way to the city.

In the earliest twilight of Saturday, as day begins to shine, Norman arises from bed and goes to the church of the Holy Mother to handle the business for which he had come. He greets [the sign of the Lord's death](#) and arms the whole front portion of his body with [the sign of the cross](#). Upon surveying the pains and afflictions of the sickly, he recalls what he heard the Blessed Virgin say in the vision: "If you do not hasten, you will be tormented by the same affliction." Having poured forth tears then to the Lord, he repeats while beating his breast: "[God, have mercy on me, sinner that I am.](#)" Setting out on his journey toward the house of the lord bishop, he says in the silence the entire psalm "[May God have mercy on us,](#)" for he was to a slight extent lettered.

Running all about, he found him persevering in prayer before the [chapel of Saint Séverin](#). Gazing upon him, Norman, fearing to interrupt his prayer, drew a little nearer on bended knee behind him. Having finished his prayer, the lord bishop looked back and said, "What do you want, brother?" "Holy father, I have many things to say to you. May it be pleasing to [Your Paternity](#) to hear the private matters that I convey." Beckoning then with his hand, the bishop had him sit at his feet.

Norman began to speak in this way: "As it began to dawn on the [fifth day of the week](#) that in the end became visible to us, I saw in a vision the Blessed Virgin, who is [the mother of all mercies](#). She enjoined upon me to come to your presence, ordering me that on the current night [Saturday], from which Sunday begins to shine, after the first cockcrow, with you as the third, you should walk about those weakened by illness. In accordance with her will, she will in fact deliver to you a lit candle. You will pour out the wax overflowing from it on water that has had the sign of the cross made over it, and you will offer the water both to drink and to sprinkle over the sores of the sick. Those who lack faith concerning their present health will incur [temporal death](#) within seven days. I leave this command to Your Paternity, so that if you leave it undone, it will be neither my wickedness nor my sin."

When he ceased to speak, the bishop addressed him in these words: "What is your name, my son, and from where do you come and what is your profession?" That one replied to him: "My father, the [sponsors for my faith at baptism](#) named me Peter. Thereafter I acquired for myself the [additional name](#) Norman, having been born in Ternoise, from the town of Saint-Pol. I earn my living from the profession of jongleur." "Oh brother," said the bishop, "you feed me with [pleasant circumlocutions.](#)" Then Norman blushed, because the bishop struck him with his words. He sat in the church, feeling compassion for the miseries that he saw.

Let us come to Itier. Itier, who had spent the night two miles from Arras, hastened in the morning to the church of the Blessed Virgin, as the bell was being struck at [terce](#), and made a prayer to the Lord. Having entered the court of the lord bishop with no one objecting, he came into the chapel and there, as the lord bishop celebrated the Mass out of reverence for the Blessed Virgin Mary, he stood as the sole layman among the clerics so long as they were celebrating the divine office.

Itier advanced, as in contrast the clergy retired, and taking a position before the face of the lord bishop, he burst into these words: "May Your Paternity, holy father,

hear what your son has to say to you." The bishop, looking at him straightforwardly and drawing him back to more secluded places of the chapel, said: "Speak, brother, if you have something to say."

Then that one replied, "Holy father, in a vision I saw first once and then again a woman possessing beauty and grace above the [daughters of men](#). As commands she gave me that coming to you on this Saturday, I should announce her commands to you. She also added on threats that if I did not hasten, my flesh would be tormented on this [pillory of death](#) on which the sick in our church were being tormented. So she ordered that on the present night out of which Sunday begins to dawn (according to the testimony of two, mine and of a certain other whom you have chosen with you) you walk about the wretched ill through the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Around cockcrow she will deliver to you a flaming candle. Dripping the wax overflowing from it on water that has had the sign of the cross made over it, you will offer it to the sickly to drink. Who has faith will be saved; but who does not have faith will be condemned to immediate death."

When now he had ceased speaking, the bishop bursting out into words said, "You have tried deceitfully to make a fool of me in my straightforwardness. What is your name, from what origin is your birth, and of what rank are you?" That one said, "My name is Itier, taking my origin from the region of Brabant. I earn my living by [miming](#) and singing." To him the bishop said, "You have spoken to each other, you and the one who earlier conversed with me. I can neither believe you nor agree with you; for, as it has seemed to me, you strive to deceive me in my ignorance."

"How," says Itier, "[do you mean 'spoken to each other'?](#)" To him the bishop said, "A certain man of your rank, with the surname Norman, came to me, and he conversed with me in the same phrases in which you spoke, with which I cannot at all agree." "Oh, if only I see Norman," said Itier, "I will run through his bowels with a two-edged sword, because he was the cause of death to my brother!"

Hearing this, the bishop thought inside himself that the vision—which would be the reconciliation of two enemies, the health of so many sick, and the rendering of thanks of many kinds to God—had come from God. Then, thinking first about reconciliation, he burst out into these words: "My sons, if you have held fast to hate in your heart, you will not be able to perform the work of God, according to [that Gospel text](#): 'If you offer your gift before the altar, and there you remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there, and go to be reconciled to your brother, and then coming you will offer your gift.'

It is proper that you be reconciled with your brother and live quietly in peace. For the lord [Jesus says](#), 'Love peace and truth.' [God himself is peace](#), himself is truth, himself is the way. For [he says](#), 'I am the way and the truth. Love your enemy, because God is charity: and he who abides in charity, abides in God, and God in him.' Charity is accorded even to an enemy. [It has been written](#), 'Love a friend in God and an enemy on account of God.' 'Charity covers a multitude of sins.' [No virtue is perfect without charity](#). For [Paul says](#), 'If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, if I should

not have charity, it profits me nothing.' And **the Lord says in the Gospel**, 'If you do not forgive every each one his brother, I will not forgive you.' My son, you have undertaken the work of charity; complete the work of charity. Let all your works be done with charity. It is proper that you be reconciled with your brother. May he confirm you in charity, who made you **in his image and likeness**."

After encouragements of this sort, Itier prostrates himself at the feet of the lord bishop and **kisses the feet** of that one. He promises that he is going to do whatever he ordained concerning reconciliation. So the bishop, looking around, called his secretary and ordered him to look around through the church, if perhaps he saw anywhere the man who spoke with him before the rite of the Mass; and to find him more readily, he should run about shouting "Norman!" At the bidding of the lord bishop the secretary hurries and, entering the church, he shouts "Norman!" To him Norman says, "I am Norman. What is it to you?" To him the secretary says, "If you are the Norman who spoke before the rite of the Mass with the lord bishop, you should return to him as swiftly as can be." So he comes and **is introduced** by the secretary into the chapel. He finds the lord bishop negotiating with Itier about reconciliation.

Since Itier was sitting to the right, in whose mind and soul all hate had been rendered dead, and **charity was blazing** not through mere sparks but through flaming fire, Norman sat hesitantly to the left alongside the feet of the lord. To him the bishop says, "Son, no virtue, no good, is brought to perfection, unless charity has made itself available as companion and leader. Charity and hate are thus mutually **opposed as whiteness and blackness**. Hate is then a certain hostile rage, the **inducement** to all evils. Charity is the Lord's first and greatest commandment, and the virtue which is the inducement to all good actions. The **Lord's greatest commandment** is 'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole strength and your neighbor as yourself.'

This love is also extended, just as a **commandment kept most**, even to an enemy. For he commanded to love an enemy in God, just as, a pitiful pitier, **he took pity on Mary Magdalene and took pity on the robber on the cross**. My son, Christ suffered, **leaving to you an example that you should follow his footsteps. He prayed for those persecuting him that they not perish. Pray then one for another, that you may be saved**. My little sons, **you have been called by God that you may inherit a blessing**. The Blessed Virgin called you to one work of mercy, namely, to visiting the sick. Do not, with the devil's suggestion obstructing, let the Lord take away from you the Holy Spirit; for **the Holy Spirit does not rest upon** an ill-willed soul."

After charitable encouragements of this kind, Norman, with knees bent and hands joined, with heart and tears pouring forth most abundantly, humbly implores the paternity of the lord bishop to redirect the enmities of Itier into love, and he promises to do dutifully whatever he commanded concerning a peace accord.

Accordingly, the lord bishop said, arising, "Give in turn the **kiss of peace**, and at once acting upon the business that has been enjoined upon you, keep vigil through

the night in prayer, so that he who is [one in Godhead and threefold in persons](#) may restore through the threefold ministry of those serving him health to those lying ill in the church.”

Rising up then, those two jongleurs, with the contagion of all hate set aside, were allied, through the encouragement of the lord bishop, by a kiss of mutual reconciliation. With a fast on bread and water imposed on them until the hour for partaking of food, they feasted together around the [hour of none](#) at the table of the lord bishop. Thereafter, entering the church, persisting in prayer, they waited for the setting of the sun and evening. But, as the evening of the world presses, when the sinking sun had drawn darkness altogether over the whole face of the earth, while the three of them with contrite heart and humbled spirit gave their time to the specified prayer, at the first cockcrow the Virgin Mother of the Lord, [mother of mercies](#), mother of all consolation, she who calls back to the way those who have strayed, [star of the sea](#), port of salvation, hope of forgiveness, carrying from the choir in her hand a candle lit by divine fire, she said, “You who perform as jongleurs by miming, be present. I deliver to you, to be kept in perpetuity, this one memento. Whoever has been infected by the contagion of that illness which is called hellfire, may he drip the wax that overflows from the candle on the water, and when the lesion is sprinkled with water, may the fire be quickly extinguished. Who has faith will be saved; but who does not have faith, will be condemned to present death.”

After saying this, [she vanishes into thin air](#). Then, they delivered to the lord bishop the candle that they had received dutifully and respectfully out of veneration for the Blessed Virgin, so that they could act by his counsel concerning what they had heard and seen. To them the bishop said, “Because it has been granted to you from God, oh that you would deign to associate me with you! And that you summon me as a comrade to you, I do not cease to ascribe not to my own merits but to the grace of God and yourselves.”

Therefore, the jongleurs and bishop, after kissing themselves in mutual brotherly exchange, receiving the water in three vessels, and pouring from the God-granted candle into the water, proceeded in three files and offered it as a drink to the sick, pouring the blessed water over the lesions and ulcers. Under God’s protection they sweated over this work with earnest attention, to the same degree during the night on which they were as on the following day up to the hour of terce.

When they held out the drink of health to the last one as to the others, the sick man said, “Is this water or wine?” They said, “It is water.” The man replied, “Health is preferable in wine rather than in water, seeing that [wine is accustomed to cheer my soul](#).” “Accept,” said the bishop, “son, the communal drink of brotherhood; may you have communal health with them, seeing that you have been reborn in the same faith with them in baptism, and you have come to the same refuge of health.” He drank indeed, not to the increase of bodily health but instead to the hastening of momentary death, because expiring in a moment he [goes the way of all flesh](#).

After this duty of the health-bringing drink had been fulfilled along with what the Blessed Virgin had enjoined as a command upon the jongleurs, this very threesome, the lord bishop and the two jongleurs, returned among the sick, so that they could see the wondrous works of God, by which the Blessed Virgin Mary was glorified in the holy Zion of Arras. **Some sang with David:** "Sing to the Lord a new canticle, because he has done wonderful things." Others: "**The Lord has made known his salvation.**" Others: "**Shout with joy to God, all the earth, sing you a psalm to his name.**" **Others sang with Zachary:** "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he has visited and wrought the redemption of his people." Why should I tell you all the individual details? As many as were the tongues of those recovering, so many were the glorifications made to God throughout the church.

It was now almost the **third hour of the day**, and the clergy and people of the city came together in the church, that they might hear in keeping with custom the ceremonies of the Mass for Sunday. The lord archbishop, after leaving the candle in the hands of the jongleurs, exulting and praising God at the entrance to the choir, began in a loud voice "**We praise you, God,**" and the clergy of the choir, following the praises begun, **sang the Introit.**

On that day there were healed, with the Blessed Virgin being favorably disposed and God working together with her, sick people to the number 143. There were 144, but one did not have faith and did not regain health. Out of reverence for the Blessed Virgin and the miraculous action of God, that candle given by the hand of the Blessed Virgin Mary has been preserved, through generations of jongleurs in succession, in the city of Arras, down to the present day, and through it the mercy of God is often effected on the ill.

For the remembrance of this miracle, the jongleurs established the confraternity which for some time was maintained by few fellow members. But now, in these times of ours, the prayers, benefices, and support of the poor have been enlarged, as respectable men and women of the city and other nobles, which is to say, clerics and knights, have been **united with them.**

These are the customs of the confraternity and of the charity. To no person, so long as healthy, is it allowed to enter the charity, except on Friday or Saturday after **the Pentecost octave**, not even for the greatest amount of money. Who indeed on the aforesaid term-day, either man or woman, enters the charity, will ratify by the pledging of faith that he will conform to the best of ability to the customs and rules of the charity. Seeing that the charity will consist of twelve fellow members, male or female, let him make himself the thirteenth, to the best extent he can. If indeed a man without a wife or a woman without a husband enters the charity, the man will pair off with a woman or the woman with a man and will make the other a confrere or a consoeur, with the rule of the charity intact, whenever he or she wishes, in the presence of the mayor and aldermen.

The issuing of this transcript was done in A.D. 1241, in the month of May.

## B. “The Foundation of the Jongleur Confraternity in Arras” (in French)

The account of [the miracle in vernacular prose](#) must have been composed after 1241, since it derives from the one in Latin to which it corresponds. In addition, the text contains a reference to the county of Artois, which did not exist before 1237. The prestige attached to the miraculous event during these years takes tangible form in [a silver reliquary](#), preserved in the episcopal palace in Arras, which was crafted for the confraternity in the period 1220–1250. This container for relics portrays Lambert and a jongleur beneath an image of the Virgin with the candle.

The version in the spoken language abstains from much of the formal rhetoric and many of the learned allusions that typify the Latin. This restraint is evident already in the omission of the preface. The vernacular work alternates between translation and paraphrase. It was likely designed for an audience with less appetite for the moral exhortations that belong to the intrinsic nature of the earlier version, which was pitched at a clerical or at least literate audience. The text is in the dialect often known as Old French, but behind it likely lies a predecessor in Picard.

### On the Candle of Arras

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, all say amen.

In the time of Lambert, who was the first bishop of Arras after this bishopric was split from the bishopric of Cambrai, a great pestilence befell bodies of men and women living in towns, cities, and castles, owing to the sins of the people in Arras and in the countryside that depends on it in the county of Artois. For some were stricken and had maladies in the mouth, others in the eye, these ones in the nose, those others in the ear, these ones in the foot, those others in the thigh or in the leg, and some in the private parts, these ones in front, those ones behind, by this frightful ill, from which may God protect us, that they call hellfire. And if someone remained healthy and unharmed by it, he was racked by great fear that such an ill might befall him, either because of sin or on some other account.

For fear of this dread, one segment within the community of people of the country disclosed their confidences to their priests through confession and received penance; another that was stricken by this ill took flight to the mother church of Notre Dame, the Virgin Mary, at Arras in the city, some by foot, others by horse, cart, or other vehicle; some lay on litters, sacks, and straw, and everyone, men and women alike, cried in loud voices: “Lord, true God, mercy! Good Lord God, help!” Some said, “[O Lord, rebuke me not in your indignation](#),” the beginning of [the seven psalms](#). There were in the sanctuary of Notre Dame, the Virgin Mary, in total 144 with these maladies, all of whom awaited mercy and the aid of the Lord God and of his very sweet and dear mother.

In that time there were two jongleurs who lived in different regions. For one lived in Brabant and the other in Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise, and they had, the one for the other, mortal hatred, such that if one encountered the other, the one would gladly kill the other. For the one had killed the other’s brother, at the devil’s incitement.

Now it happened that the most beautiful woman who has ever been seen, a virgin girl, clad entirely in plain white, appeared in a vision to the jongleur of Brabant as he lay and slept in his bed, one Wednesday in the night from which the Thursday was dawning.

"Are you sleeping?" she says, "Are you sleeping? Hear what I will tell you. Get up and go off to this holiest place that people call the church of Notre Dame, the Virgin Mary, in Arras, there where so many sick—144—suffer to death. When you come there, I will provide and propose a place and time to allow you to speak to the bishop, who is named Lambert, and to recall to him the vision that you are seeing, and all in order. Then add that, around about the third hour of the night when Sunday will dawn which is the first day of the week, it will behoove him to go about the church to visit and assist the sick. And it will come to pass around midnight that a woman, clad in clothes just as I am, will come down into [the choir that people call the chancel](#) and she will carry a candle in her hand, indeed will hand it over to you. You will receive the candle all lit from the heavenly fire, and you will drip the melted wax, which will overflow from the candle, into vessels full of water, and. you will pour that upon the injuries of everyone with the malady. Have no doubt at all that the men and women who have faith will return to good health, and he or she who does not have faith will immediately die sick. And so you—both you and the third, the one whom you hate with mortal enmity—will accompany the bishop, and this same one will be made ready at Arras with you on the coming Saturday. And when the bishop has brought the two of you into harmony by the grace of the Holy Spirit and by the [fair speech of God](#), so you will have between the two of you each other as companion."

And when this vision to the jongleur in Brabant was finished, in the same night Our Lady, the Virgin Mary, appeared to the other minstrel who lived in Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise, all in such clothing and in like form and in such appearance as she had shown herself to the first. And all that she had said to the Brabanter, she says word for word to the other. And when he had come to his senses and had been awakened, he spoke a speech as follows: "Oh how very beautiful, how saintly, and how honorable is the vision of the manifestation of the Mother of God! If I had my wish, with her help we would be brought into accord and would have peace made between me and my mortal enemy, and if I had my wish, so many a grievously ill person would be restored to good health through the virtue of God and his sweet mother and by the effect of my service! But I suspect greatly that what I have seen is not a dream or illusion; now I will wait until the [third hour of the night](#) and I will keep watch if this vision has come to me from God. And may God grant that it comes to me from him."

He arises in the morning, and he goes off to the sanctuary to hear the Mass and the service of the Lord God, and he [kneels](#) before the crucifix and joins his hands and raises them on high, and he prays to God with great devotion that what he had seen in a vision, God fulfill by his will soon in deed.

The first night after, this same vision was manifested to these two same minstrels, and it was said as well additionally that if they did not make haste, they would be stricken with the same illness. The jongleur living in Saint-Pol, who was named Norman, awakens and leaps up all troubled; so he readies himself and girds his sword, and holds to the route to Arras by Friday and arrives at his hostel in Arras all tired. The other minstrel, who lived in Brabant and had the name Itier, makes haste likewise and even much more, for he was coming from afar, and it does not seem he can come to Arras on Friday in the evening.

The following day, on Saturday, Norman arises at daybreak and goes off to Notre Dame in the city to accomplish the matter for which he had come. And when he had hailed on his knees the symbol of the death of Jesus Christ and the crucifix, and he had made over himself the sign of the true cross, he saw throughout the church the suffering sick, crying and moaning. Then he recalls the threat that in the last vision had been revealed to him by the blessed Virgin, when she said to him: "If you do not make haste, you will be tormented by the same anguish." He began to shed tears from wretchedness and fear, beat his chest and recognize his sin and say, "Lord God, have mercy on this sinner!" Then he turns toward the bishop's palace, all the while saying the psalm "[May God have mercy on us](#)" softly, for he was a little lettered.

And he goes about to such an extent that he finds the bishop lying in prayers in his chapel before the altar of Saint Séverin. Norman watches him and beseeches that he not grow angry if he enters in upon him or infringes his prayer. He draws nearer, little by little, on his knees toward the bishop. The bishop looks at him gently and asks him, "What do you want, brother?" Norman replies to him, "Good father, if it pleases you and is allowed me, I would tell you very gladly a little confidential matter in private." The bishop beckons and has him sit at his feet, and Norman began to tell him how three days earlier, during the night that led to daybreak on Friday, the blessed Virgin, who is the mother of all mercies, appeared to him, and in such a fashion she enjoined upon him and ordered that he come to Arras and speak to the bishop: "Saturday, during the night from which Sunday will dawn, after nightfall, you who are my lord the bishop of Arras, Lambert, will go, you as the third, to visit the sick who in our church suffer travails from the anguishing hellfire; and the glorious lady, when it pleases her, will hand over to you a lit candle, and making the sign of the cross, you will drip down into some vessels full of water the melting wax that will flow beneath the flame, and you will give it to those sick to drink of the water and you will spread it upon the burns and wounds of those with the malady; and a person sick who has no faith will die within nine days. Lord, you who are bishop of the city of Arras and of whatever depends on it, I leave to you this injunction, and if you do not put it into effect, I who am a layman and a simple Christian pray to God that he asks nothing of me."

When Norman had related his speech, the bishop addressed him in such a speech and in such words: "What are your names, good son, and from where do you come, and what kind of life do you live?" Norman replies, "Lord father, my godfather and godmother, who answered for me in baptism to the clergyman, named me [Perron](#); afterward people called me by the surname Norman, and I was born in Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise, and as a poor minstrel I support myself from jonglery." "I believe it well," said the bishop, "for you feed me with pleasantries and fabrications, just as jongleurs do." Norman takes his leave from the bishop, ashamed and disconcerted, and enters the sanctuary and sits down, and has great wretchedness and pain, and is very fearful of the great pains that he sees and has.

Now we will speak of the other jongleur from Brabant, who is called Itier. Itier, who that same night had lodged two leagues from Arras, arises early and comes to Arras in the church of Notre Dame just as they were sounding terce, says his prayer, enters the bishop's court, and, without opposition, goes off into the chapel where the bishop himself was celebrating the Mass of Our Lady; and he was the the only layman among the clerics until the Mass had been said.

And when the clergy went out, Itier leapt forward and went before the bishop and said to him, "Good lord father, hear what I, who am your son in the Lord God, will tell

you." The bishop looked at him straightforwardly and drew him confidentially to one side in his chapel and said to him, "Tell me, brother, what you want."

"Lord," he said, "I have seen once and again, in a vision, the most beautiful woman who was ever born of a mother, and she said to come to you on this Saturday that is today and to announce her commands to you, and she threatened me that if I did not make haste, I would languish or die from the same painful affliction as the other sick people who lie within in your church. So she ordered that, on the coming night out of which Sunday will dawn, you should go about the church and visit the sick, you as the third of three, of whom I am one and the other is he who will meet your approval. And around the hour when the cocks will crow, the beautiful lady of whom I have spoken to you will hand over to you a lit candle, you will drip the melted wax into water, and you will make over it the sign of the cross, and from that water you will grant each sick person to drink. Who has faith will be healed, and who does not have faith will die immediately."

"Oh!" said the bishop, "You deceive me or wish to deceive. What is your name, and of what origin were you born, and what life do you lead?" "Lord," he said, "I am called Itier, and I was born in Brabant and am a resident there; I subsist from singing and jonglery." "Aha!" said the bishop, "You spoke together, you and the other who earlier conversed with me. I cannot believe you; indeed, I see that the two of you want to put me to the test and trick me."

"Lord," said Itier, "how long has it been since he spoke to you?" The bishop replies to him, "Another minstrel such as you are came to me recently; they call him by the surname Norman, and he related to me the same tricks as you have, which is why I cannot believe the two of you, neither him nor you." "Oh!" said Itier, "If I see Norman, and if I have place and opportunity, I will surely strike my sword through his stomach, for he killed my brother."

When the bishop heard this, he reflected, and his heart said to him that this vision came from God, by whom there would be peace and concord between these two mortal enemies, and with healing and health of so many sick, and many thanks rendered to God. The bishop pondered that it would be good for him first to talk about concord between the two enemies, and he said to Itier, "Dear sweet son, if you harbor in your heart hate or rancor, you cannot do God's work, for the Lord God, who never lies, says [in the Gospel](#), 'If you make your offering before the altar, and there you remember that your brother has any ill-will toward you, leave your offering in that place before the altar, and so you go off sooner to reconcile with your brother, and then you will return and offer your gift.'

Your brother is each and every Christian: it is proper for you to pardon your brother for vexation, for [God says](#), 'Love peace and truth, for I myself am peace and truth.' Love your enemy, for the [Holy Writ says](#), 'Love your friend in God and your enemy on account of God.' 'God is charity: and he who abides in charity, abides in God, and God in him.' 'God is charity: and he who abides in charity, abides in God, and God in him.' No virtue and no charitable act is perfect without charity. For this reason, [Saint Paul says to us](#), 'If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, if I should not have charity, it profits me nothing.' And [God says in the Gospel](#), 'If you do not forgive every each one his brother, I will not forgive you.' Dear son, you have undertaken to do the work of charity, and he wishes to confirm you in charity who [made you in his image and likeness](#)."

When Itier heard these saintly words that the bishop made known to him, he was [moved](#) to great compassion and let himself fall at the bishop's feet and began to kiss them and promised him that he would make peace and accord as the bishop recommended.

The bishop was very glad, and he looked around him and called his chamberlain and orders him that he go look throughout the sanctuary, high and low, if by chance he could find the man who before had spoken to him; and so as to find him still more readily, he shouts roughly in a loud voice, "Norman! Norman!" The chamberlain ran promptly and entered the church and calls Norman the jongleur in a loud voice. Norman replies, "You see me here; what is your pleasure?" "If you are the one who has the name Norman as a surname," the chamberlain said, "who spoke to my lord before the Mass, go off fast to him." Norman goes off; the chamberlain leads him into the chapel and finds my lord the bishop speaking of peace to Itier, who sat at the bishop's feet to the right, and all the hate and ill-will in his heart that he had had toward Norman were for certain dead, for he was for certain entirely inflamed by the fire of charity from the good examples that he had heard and understood. Norman sits at the feet of the bishop to the left, very hesitantly, and the bishop began to preach to him the goods of charity, just as well as or better than he did to Itier, and he said to him, "Dear son, no virtue, no good, no charitable act comes to fruition, if charity does not lead it there. Charity and hate are as **different as are white and black**; hate is madness and motivator of all evils, but **charity is the first and sovereign commandment** in the law of Lord God and is the motivator of all good works. The **very great commandment of Lord God** is that all Christians love our Lord God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their might, and their neighbor as themselves.

Charity extends further, for God, who is charity, orders that one **love his enemy**. Lord God **pardoned Mary Magdalene**, who was his enemy, her misdeeds, on account of the very great charity that she had toward him, and **took pity on the robber hanging on the cross**, and **prayed for those who crucified him**. The two of you likewise, my dear sons, **pray one for another, that you may be saved**. The blessed Virgin has chosen you and called you to a work of mercy for visiting these sick people. Now take care that at the advice of the devil Lord God not take back from you the Holy Ghost and the grace that he has furnished you; for you should know well that **the Holy Spirit does not rest upon an ill-willed soul**."

After this lesson on charity, Norman, with hands joined and knees bent, entreats my lord the bishop with a good heart, in tears, humbly, to transform the enmity of Itier into friendship, and he will do entirely whatever he commands for peace and accord.

The bishop arises and says to them, "Now exchange kisses by God in the name of peace and accord; and in the night that is coming, keep vigil with me in prayers and devotions, so as to fulfill well the obligation that has been given to us as a charge and command, so that this lord who is one in Godhead and threefold in persons, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, by the service of us three may render health to the sick lying within in this church."

The two jongleurs arise and the one pardons the other for hatred and they kiss each other according to the command of the bishop, who commanded them to fast this Saturday on bread and water. And around the hour of none, they breakfast with the bishop at his table, and after eating they enter the sanctuary and were in prayer until vespers. And when it became night, as the three of them said their prayers and called upon Our Lady Saint Mary, she, the sweet Mother of God, a little after cockcrow, came down from the choir, and she carried in her hand a candle lit from the heavenly fire. "You, jongleurs," she said, "who lived from song and the viol, come here. I hand over this candle to you to keep forever perpetually. Whoever, being a Christian, whether man or woman, has the condition of this malady that they call hellfire, if they light this candle and they drip in water some of the wax that melts by virtue of the flame, and if they

sprinkle from this water on the place where the sick person is inflamed and injured, it will be extinguished immediately in such fashion that if he has faith, he will be healed, and if he does not have it, he will die at once."

When the glorious [lady of paradise](#) had said these words, she vanished. The jongleurs received the candle with great devotion, in honor and in memory of Our Lady Saint Mary, and they delivered it to the bishop, because whatever they had heard and seen, they wanted to act according to his counsel. And the bishop said to them, "Because this candle has been given to you from God and come from a miracle, if I had my wish, you would make of me your companion in this matter, not by merit but by the grace of God and by your own!"

The jongleurs received willingly and gladly my lord the bishop as a confrere and companion and they kissed him in the name of the confraternity. Now the three go off, carrying three vessels, each one his own, full of water, and they hold the lit candle and each one drips the melted wax into the water of his vessel; and they follow three routes, and they go around to visit the ill, each one by his route, and they gave from this blessed water to them to drink and they sprinkled from it over the wounds of the afflicted. In this important matter the bishop and the two minstrels worked the whole night through and the next day until the hour of terce, with the help of God.

And when it came to the last of the sick and they poured for him to drink as they had done to the others, he said, "Is this wine or water?" They replied, "It is water." He replied, "Better health is [in wine than in water](#), for [wine is accustomed to cheer my body and soul](#)." And the bishop said to him, "Dear son, your soul may have a share of both gladness and health in this drink, so that the power of the son of God be made clear in you. Take the common drink of the confraternity, that you receive common health with the others; for with them is this same faith and in similar belief you receive baptism in the water, and for similar assistance of health you came here as they did." He drank all the same, not at all for health, but encounters his death; he drank out of bad faith, in no way [to recover but to depart](#), for then he departed from this world.

When this giving of drink and all the other things had been completed, as Our Lady had ordered the two jongleurs, they headed off among the sick to see how God had performed his miracles in them, for which the sweet Mother of God was and is honored and exalted in this saintly church of Arras. And should I prolong the tale for you? As many as there were tongues of those who recovered, so many there were thanks and praises rendered to Lord God throughout the church.

It was now nearly terce, and the clergy and the people of the city were gathered to hear Mass and to go to procession, just as on Sunday; and my lord the bishop, when he had returned the candle of Our Lady to the jongleurs in their hands, he begins at the entrance to the choir to sing in a loud voice and with great joy "[We praise you, God](#)," and the clerics of the choir sang through to the end.

In that night and day, 143 sick people were healed who had been inflamed by the grievous hellfire, except for one alone, who was the last and kept the faith badly, as has been said. And this happened in the city of Arras, by the grace of God and of his blessed mother and in honor of her. And in remembrance of so lovely a miracle, this candle is kept at Arras, which was given by the right hand of the Mother of God herself, and should be in the keeping of the jongleurs and minstrels for posterity, and by it God shows mercy very often to those sick from inflammation.

And for remembrance of this miracle, the jongleurs established a confraternity and a charity which was for a long time maintained by a small lot of confreres. But within

a short time it was very large, for knights entered it, who owed it dues to look after the poor people at the annual session, which will have been said and done. It lasted eight or nine years in this way. Norman was lord of it—and Itier—so much so that it seemed a shame and humiliation to the knights of the country that the jongleurs had the right to be lords and masters over them; and when Itier and Norman died, they would not execute the commands of the other jongleurs, but instead **two lords**, whom I can in fact name, held them in contempt and mocked them: the one was Nicholas aux Grenons, who held **Imercourt** and **Bailleul** in fief, and the other was called Jean, who was born in **Waencort**.

Those two were the first who motivated the outrage for which they would afterward have shame, for they summoned the other knights, revealed their mind to them, and slandered: “Lords, this charity is distinguished by great lordship and we do it great shame, seeing that the jongleurs are thus lords and masters of it over us. But we do not want them to be in our confraternity, nor to come with us to make offerings, nor to have authority, but to keep their confraternity and their charity by themselves—and we will keep this one by ourselves. What do you think of this business?” “There is in them very little profit,” say the others, “Insofar as it seems good to you, we approve it indeed on our side, for they are foolish and excessive. Forbid them to come here anymore but let them keep their charity.”

They carried out the counsel of these two and threw out the jongleurs, in such a way that they did not dare to come among them nor to maintain their confraternity, which had been established by them—and for the relief of what was so dreadful and fearsome. The jongleurs experienced great shame and lamented much over these two and called upon the glorious lady who is queen of the entire world. So they were excluded for a long time during which a jongleur did not come there. But now hear what happened to those who motivated this great outrage. They were overpowered by such an illness that deprived them of their members, all of them, and oppressed them so gravely that they were not able even to eat. Who initiates a wrong, must indeed pay for it: for such a gain, such a recompense. To these two it happened in the same way, and they were stricken and tormented at such length that they craved nothing except death: therefore what is done right is wise.

Now hear what kind of event happened to those who were thus languishing. One night they were lying in their beds. To one appeared the glorious Virgin, Saint Mary, who is queen and lady in the heavens. She was adorned in glory and brightness. She spoke to him like an angry lady. “Have you heard,” she said, “for what reason you are lying here? Do you know why you are sick? Because you have enraged me severely. It is indeed right that it has turned out badly for you from it, for you have undone what I had established. But if you do not soon set it right, it will behoove you to end in a hideous death, as indeed rank will not be of value to you in it.” “Ah, good, sweet lady, mercy,” he said, “for I have never seen you, but I would set it right very willingly, if I knew in what I have done wrong to you. Ah, beautiful lady,” he said, “so give your name. This whole place is resplendent from you. I am entirely stunned by the brightness from you.” “I am,” she said, “the mother of Jesus Christ, who bewail the confraternity that you took from them. They have been thrown out of it by your pride; but if you want ever to recover your health, set this outrage right for them soon and return to them their inheritance that I bestowed on them forever; and once you have done this thing, your pain will be healed.” Then the glorious Virgin vanished.

She went to the other sick man. The whole matter that she told the first man, she revealed to this one who was very preoccupied and desired very much to be healed.

When these two sick men heard the matter, they had themselves carried to Arras to the sanctuary to the glorious lady. Their affair was so marvelous that they met before the sanctuary and related their visions, then stretched their hands toward heaven and rendered thanks to Our Lady. Then, as it seems to me, they had all the jongleurs come who were living in Arras; so they returned to them at once their charter and their rightful claim.

This miracle has existed in Latin a long time; now it has been translated into the Romance language so that the lay people will understand it better. Pray for all those who uphold the charity, and for all those who will hear it said that they pray to the glorious Virgin Saint Mary for her to advise them in body and soul on acquiring with honor their sustenance, true confession at death, and true pardon at judgment.

After the miracles of Our Lady, hear the customary laws and ordinances. No one can nor ought, so long as he is healthy and hearty, enter this charity except on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday after the octave of Pentecost, which people call *cinquiesme*, to have what he knows he cannot give. And who then will enter, be it man or woman, it will be necessary for this person to promise to pursue and maintain to the best of his or her ability the customary laws and rightful claims of the confraternity, and as far as there will be in the charity twelve, what with men and what with women, he or she will be the thirteenth; and upon entering the charity the person will pay six and a half *pennies*. And if it happens that any worthy man enters the confraternity without his wife, or any gentlewoman without her husband, the one and the other will form a pair in this confraternity, when he or she comes before the mayor and aldermen, with the rights of the charity protected.

Here ends the Candle of Arras.

### C. "The Arrival of the Holy Candle"

The text that follows was edited nearly a century and a half ago from the *seventeenth-century Registre Thieulaine*. The nineteenth-century editor, offering no support for his view, dated the poetry in the *thirteenth century*. Without identifying the manuscripts at issue or supplying a critical apparatus with alternative readings, he asserted that many other copies exist and that they display types of variation showing "that these verses were recited by heart and were transmitted in families by *oral tradition*." To my eye, traits of oral traditional composition are lacking in the poetic style. An intriguing feature, retained in the English here, is marginal notation that suggests pitch or volume. These marginalia may indicate which performer, the one with a high voice or the other with a low, is expected to read or chant which parts of the poem.

#### The Arrival of the Holy Candle, in Oldentime Verses That Are Sung on the Eve of Assumption

In the name of God in the Trinity,  
three names in one deity,

High Voice

I wish to retell and retrace for you  
word for word, as a just model,  
5 the disposition of the worthy candle,  
which was brought down here  
by the blessed Virgin, comforter of sinners,  
to two singers  
to comfort the sick,  
10 who at that time on account of their sufferings longed  
to die, without living any more in any way,  
on account of the burning from which God delivers us.  
The charter wishes to bear witness to us  
from the time of the first bishop  
15 of the noble city of Arras,  
in truth Lambert by name,  
who had no concern for pomp  
nor also for acquiring great riches.  
For in his days, it is altogether true,  
20 Arras was within the diocese  
and bishopric of Cambrai,  
but he had it split in half  
and then kept for his portion  
very much the lesser part.  
25 He was named bishop of Arras.  
He was famed for all good qualities;  
he was much beloved for his foresight,  
for he was full of morality.  
In the time when Lambert held office,  
30 a plague invaded  
the Artois region, it is a sure thing,  
falling upon many human beings,  
upon the bodies of men, women, and children,  
who were in grievous pain  
35 from the fire that is called hellfire.  
It is red and black as iron  
that is at one side inflamed  
and at the other is not at all burnt.  
Many were withered  
40 grievously by this plague.  
It spread with such great force  
in towns, cities, castles,  
villages, and hamlets  
that they found no relief from it  
45 from potions, doctors,  
magicians, and soothsayers.  
Some had fires in their arms  
and others in the lower limbs,  
in the legs, feet, and hands.

50 Many, enduring much torment from it,  
 are unable to find any relief  
 except to cry and weep  
 for the fire that can take hold of them,  
 from which may God wish to protect us all.

55 Even those who were healthy Low Voice  
 and who felt this illness not at all  
 were tormented by fear  
 that they might have it in turn as well.  
 As a result of the sin that then prevailed,  
 60 regarding which some, knowledgeable in law,  
 set themselves to rights  
 through good and sure faith  
 and took confession,  
 making amends  
 65 through penance for their misdeeds,  
 and confessed all their deeds  
 devoutly to their priests,  
 and some who in this torment  
 were touched by the hellfire already mentioned  
 70 in great sin  
 arrived at the mother church  
 of Arras, as well-informed people,  
 by cart, on foot, and on horseback,  
 entreating that the Virgin  
 75 might wish to heal and cure them  
 of this illness, she who can obtain  
 in such fashion  
 by her kindly will that they would be protected  
 and provided with good health,  
 80 so much so that the great illness  
 and frightful burning spark of this fire  
 came to an end because of the Virgin and young maid  
 who extended her great grace there,  
 just as you have heard.

85 Good people in that period, High Voice  
 as memory recalls,  
 the singers who then existed,  
 would recite the fine and lofty deeds  
 of noble worldly princes  
 90 who as valiant Christians  
 expended blood and sweat  
 to multiply every day  
 our law of Christianity  
 by worthy and good will.

95 And those singers, mentioned before,  
 recounted many of their fine deeds,

singing along with the viol,  
 which often renews joy.  
 And in this time people called them  
 100 jongleurs, and insofar as (they say)  
 one rejoices because of jongleurs,  
 one should call them bringers of joy.  
 But nowadays  
 they call themselves minstrels,  
 105 and those who lead about apes and bears  
 have themselves called jongleurs.  
 But it was not at all for such people  
 that the worthy Virgin with her noble heart  
 sent this great grace  
 110 when she sent the worthy candle  
 to display her virtue visibly,  
 which ought not to be at all unbelievable,  
 for by hot, everlasting fire  
 she causes infernal fire to be extinguished  
 115 in those who have solid and sure  
 belief, without inconstancy.  
 Those to whom this grace  
 was sent and ascribed  
 were called in those times  
 120 singers, playing the viol and singing  
 to entertain king and dukes,  
 princes, bourgeois, and lower class,  
 for by way of instrument there was nothing out of the  
 ordinary  
 except only the viol.  
 125 Now it happened that in anno Domini  
 (as *Holy Writ* says)  
 1105, there were  
 two singers who then lived.  
 They set out to occupy themselves  
 130 with singing, and with all their ardor  
 they secured their livelihood  
 for themselves with viol-playing.  
 The one lived in Brabant  
 and was called Itier,  
 135 and the other at Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise,  
 Norman was his name, so tells the report.  
 These two, through the intervention  
 of the devil, fell into discord,  
 for the one, through all too great disgrace,  
 140 had killed the other's brother.  
 As a result, if they should meet,  
 they would kill each other.

High Voice

Low Voice



190 as soon as you have left,  
 make your way to the bishop  
 and confess to him  
 and tell him in a very low voice  
 the vision that you are seeing.  
 195 And then on Sunday morning,  
 when Saturday has ended,  
 you will with the bishop make the rounds  
 of the sick, and there you will see  
 a lady similar to me  
 200 who will appear to you  
 and to your enemy Norman  
 and to the most knowledgeable bishop.  
 And know well that this Virgin  
 will deliver to the two of you, into your hands,  
 205 a candle all lit up,  
 by which the grievous fire will be extinguished  
 in the bodies of many human beings  
 who will commit their understanding and attention  
 to have true faith in them.  
 210 But all those who accept  
 the medicine in inconstancy  
 will, for an extremely hard chastisement,  
 die a hard and somber death,  
 and I will not devote my care to them,  
 215 that they can return to health.  
 Now think of readying yourself  
 and tell the bishop these facts,  
 and if you make known to him your misdeeds  
 and forgive all ill temper,  
 220 you will come by this means to salvation."  
 At this word Itier awoke High Voice  
 and marveled at this event.  
 He does not know if it is a truth or lie,  
 and says, "I believe that I have been dreaming  
 225 or fantasizing for sure,  
 or there is some enchantment.  
 Yet all the same I want to go  
 to Arras to speak to the bishop,  
 so as to see if this vision  
 230 will have verification.  
 So he prepared himself immediately  
 and during that night truly  
 that very voice revealed itself  
 to the other who was in Ternoise.  
 235 So it told him in all certainty  
 in the same way as to Itier.

Norman, when he saw the likeness  
 of the humble Virgin, worthy and white,  
 understands her bidding.  
 240 Now he reaches his hands on high  
 and says, "Oh Virgin, very much honored,  
 you will be adored by me,  
 when to this poor and great sinner  
 you appear in such honor.  
 245 I will obey your bidding,  
 and I will go off to Arras."  
 At once he arose from his bed  
 and dressed himself in his clothes,  
 and hung his viol from his neck,  
 250 and then made his departure.  
 Norman, of whom I am telling you, did so much  
 that he came to Arras on Friday  
 before Itier, quite plain to see,  
 for Itier was more exhausted  
 255 for having left from Brabant.  
 So he was coming from a more distant land,  
 such that he did not have the capacity to come  
 on Friday in the evening,  
 but instead he came there on Saturday.  
 260 And Norman, of whom I have told you,  
 arose on Saturday morning  
 and then set off  
 for the mother church of Arras.  
 At the entrance, on the first step,  
 265 he knelt piously  
 while praying humbly from the heart  
 to the Virgin, *Queen of Glory*,  
 that if his vision is true,  
 she should wish to make a demonstration  
 270 of the reality as a true proof.  
 There he was in great piety,  
 making his petition,  
 then he arose and left  
 to greet the crucifix.  
 275 After he goes off through the church, Reading  
 he chose many sick, tormented  
 in various ways by cutting fire, it is the truth,  
 who because of their frightful torments  
 280 made many moans.  
 From this he felt much great compassion.  
 When he sees the apparition  
 and beyond, he left, saying  
 "*May God have mercy on us.*"

285 He recalled this psalm  
 and then found the bishop  
 bowed in his chapel  
 before the altar of Saint Séverin.  
 Norman put himself on his knees,  
 290 recalling entirely his prayers.  
 For a little while he wishes to draw near the bishop,      High Voice  
 but he does not dare to greet him,  
 and the bishop watched him  
 and asked him with kindness,  
 295 "Friend, do you wish to speak to me?"  
 And "Yes, sir, in good faith,"  
 Norman says to him, "If it pleased you,  
 willingly my heart would tell you  
 a little bit of my secret."  
 300 Then when the bishop finished,  
 Norman came to sit at his feet  
 and related all his deeds  
 through sure confession.  
 Then he recounted to him the vision,  
 305 how the *mother of concord*,  
 queen of mercy,  
 appeared to him three nights earlier,  
 all dressed in white,  
 and had enjoined upon him and said  
 310 that he should come to him without any delay,  
 and when Saturday ends  
 and Sunday breaks,  
 they should go as a threesome  
 in the church of Saint Mary  
 315 to visit the sick  
 who are inflamed by the cutting hellfire  
 in different forms of suffering.  
 "And the mother of the lofty lord  
 at her pleasure will deliver us  
 320 a candle that will extinguish  
 the frightful fire and fumes.  
 So I will tell you in what fashion  
 just as through the vision  
 the arrangement was brought home to me.  
 325 When the candle is lit,  
 we will take a vessel full of water  
 over which you will make the sign of the cross  
 and you will drip the wax there.  
 We will make use of these worthy drops  
 330 with the water without deceit  
 for the sick who have need of

this grace and who have faith in it;  
 and the person who does not wish to have faith in it,  
 know that he will die within nine days."

335 When Bishop Lambert hears High Voice  
 Norman, he raises his hands toward heaven  
 and says, "Virgin, I give thanks to you  
 for your grace if it is so."

340 Then he asks of Norman his name  
 and from what he earns his living.  
 "Father," he says, "I assure you  
 that I have as name Pierre Norman.  
 I was born at Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise.  
 A true singer of song and of voice,

345 I like to occupy myself  
 in fiddling and singing for a living."  
Low Voice  
 And when the bishop heard him,  
 he reflected a great length of time  
 and said, "I believe these are mockeries  
 and trickeries that you are telling me,  
 for all jongleurs and singers  
 according to their custom are liars,  
 and for that reason, I would not believe  
 that this vision was true."

355 When Norman heard this speech,  
 all ashamed, he left the bishop.  
 He went off through the church,  
 very greatly wretched and tearful.  
 We will take our leave of Norman High Voice

360 and we would like to speak to you of Itier,  
 who departed from Brabant,  
 dressed in beautiful and elegant clothes.  
 He had hastened his pace so much  
 that on the Saturday he went to bed

365 two miles from Arras,  
 and in the morning he awoke  
 and then went directly to the city.  
 Thus as third, in truth,  
 he went to the bishop's court.

370 He arrived there at this moment so well  
 that the bishop was chanting the Mass  
 in his chapel where he was.  
 Itier listened to his Mass,  
 and when it was finished,

375 he made himself known before the bishop,  
 and he knelt before him,  
 saying, "Please hear  
 what I would like to recite.

Father in God, I am your son. Low Voice  
 380 May it please you to hear my speech."  
 The bishop stopped quite calmly  
 and looked him in kindly fashion.  
 Then he said, "Good son, speak your complaint."  
 Then Itier told him the news  
 385 and the vision he had seen,  
 which came to him  
 in Brabant where he was staying.  
 Word by word, he related everything,  
 the vision and the whole lot,  
 390 in the same way as Norman  
 had told him and recited.  
 When the bishop had listened,  
High Voice  
 he looked at him very sharply  
 and afterward asked him  
 395 his station, his way of life, and his name.  
 And that man said to him: "I am named Itier.  
 I was born and bred in Brabant,  
 and I live from being a minstrel,  
 from playing the viol and singing  
 400 so as to amuse and entertain people."  
 When the bishop hears him,  
 "Ah, false devil," he says, "Be off!  
 You think to tell me  
 such lies as the other whom you recall  
 405 came to me to tell,  
 precisely this vision,  
 and it is learned from your trade: Low Voice  
 you have taken counsel together  
 to bewitch and mislead me.  
 410 The one and the other, you know well to conduct  
 matters  
 so that you may have a little vain glory.  
 It is a thing very generally known,  
 for your two motivations are the same.  
 I have no need to hear  
 415 your jokes or stories."  
 "Ah!" said Itier, "So be it,  
 but do name for me the one,  
 if you please, who affirmed to you  
 the matters that I have said to you  
 420 here precisely, without any repetition."  
 The bishop said, "It is a singer, High Voice  
 as you are, and a liar,  
 who has himself called Norman:  
 he related to me the message

425 and the content of this procedure,  
 by which the two of you in a conspiracy  
 have devised this story."  
 "Ha, lord, may you not have had this thought,"  
 said Itier, "for if I had hold  
 430 of Norman, at once I would thrust  
 my sword into his body,  
 for my brother died because of him  
 and was slain in great dishonor."  
 When the bishop heard the case,  
 435 he thought that the vision came  
 to reconcile the dissension  
 of the two enemies,  
 so as to bring their wrath into accord.  
 He says to Itier, "Hear, good son,  
 440 be absolutely sure and set  
 that if you keep bitterness and hate  
 wrongfully in your heart,  
 the Gospel recalls to us  
 that that person cannot perform  
 445 in the world any act of mercy,  
 but on the contrary it is necessary that you cleanse your  
 heart  
 of resentment by your good will  
 in forgiving all ill will  
 to your brother out of charity.  
 450 For just as it has been revealed,  
 see truly that by the reconciliation  
 of you two, those will have relief  
 who have been struck here by the illness  
 in suffering, if by providence  
 455 they receive with openness the grace  
 that the Virgin has offered them.  
 But rather may you be willing to remember  
 how God wishes to forgive completely  
 the death that the Jews made him suffer  
 460 when they made him die.  
 So he who will not forgive from the heart,  
 surely God will not bring him forgiveness.  
 The bishop encouraged him and said so much  
 465 that by the grace of the Holy Spirit  
 he was stirred to great compassion,  
 and he fell near the bishop,  
 calling upon him that he engage himself  
 in peace from now on.  
 So the bishop acts to send  
 470 his chaplain through the sanctuary

Reading

High Voice

and says to him, "Try to find for me that man  
 who spoke to me in the morning,"  
 The chaplain hurried so much that  
 he soon found Norman.

475 Then he took him by the side,  
 and brought him to the bishop,  
 and when the bishop noticed him,  
 he came opposite him  
 and had Itier stay,

480 whom he made forgive  
 the death of his brother.  
 Then he took Norman by the hand,  
 and together with him soon led him,  
 and while going related to him

485 how Itier had come  
 who told the vision  
 in the same way as he had told him.  
 "Ha, lord, that is my enemy,"  
 said Norman, "If he can see me here,

490 misfortune could truly befall me,  
 for in the past through evil suggestion  
 I managed to put to death a brother of his."  
 "Good son," said the bishop swiftly,  
 "He has forgiven the ill will.

495 I have entreated and requested of him so much  
 that he promised me to forgive."  
 Norman is stirred so much by joy  
 that he fell at the feet of the bishop.

500 Then the bishop had Itier come  
 to keep the peace,  
 and Norman puts himself on his knees,  
 moves weeping toward Itier,  
 and humbly seeks mercy from him,  
 that he accord him true forgiveness

505 for his brother whom he slew.  
 He would like to make amends to him, as a man  
 who is repentant of it in his heart.  
 Then the bishop moves forward,

510 the better to confirm this peace.  
 In many lovely words he manages to instruct them  
 and says, "Child of charity,  
 he who wishes to live in the prosperity  
 of perfection must swiftly  
 forgive with a contrite heart

515 wrath, rigidity, and ill will,  
 for [the Gospel](#) deals with the topic and says  
 that hate, which is unnatural,

Low Voice

High Voice

Reading

and charity differ more  
 than white against black.  
 520 Hate makes fury arise.  
 It is the instigator of all ills.  
 But *charity is the principal:*  
 it is the path to paradise."  
 He spoke to them so many lovely words  
 525 that out of burning desire  
 they managed to draw near, the one to the other,  
 in love and accord,  
 and in a sure bond  
 to kiss each other sweetly.  
 530 Then Itier said very humbly,  
 "Norman, I forgive you the death  
 of my brother whom you killed wrongly.  
 For love and accord,  
 with good heart I grant you forgiveness."  
 535 When this peace was confirmed High Voice  
 which was affirmed by the bishop,  
 the bishop wishes to bring them,  
 both of them, with him to dine,  
 and the three of them out of piety  
 540 did not take their sustenance  
 except only in bread and water,  
 and when it came upon evening,  
 all three, like well-informed people,  
 went off to the mother church  
 545 to visit the sick  
 who wailed greatly.  
 Because they could not find comfort,  
 they would in fact have liked to meet their death.  
 The bishop, Norman, and Itier  
 550 comfort them wholeheartedly.  
 Then they commit themselves to prayer,  
 in making petition  
 before the image of Our Lady,  
 commending body and soul.  
 555 But right at the hour of midnight, Low Voice  
 she who shines upon the angels  
 appeared without delay.  
 In her hand the great candle  
 that she had promised them beforehand,  
 560 this worthy candle was burning Reading  
 with true, everlasting light.  
 And a heavenly voice  
 said to them: "Up, my good friends,  
 who have been dispatched to this place!"

565 To you two who live from song  
 and from viol-playing, a pleasing game.  
 {It is necessary} I deliver to you this candle  
 {to show} straightway and bid you keep it  
 {the Holy Candle} forever, perpetually.

570 And know that by the cleansing  
 and the dripped wax  
 and the well-treated sufferer,  
 he who receives it worthily  
 will recover from the sickness  
 575 that people call the cutting hellfire.  
 But he who, hard as iron,  
 does not have faith in this grace  
 will soon die of this sickness."  
 When the glorious queen

High Voice

580 had spoken this kindly word,  
 at once she disappeared,  
 and the two singers without wasting time  
 received with kindness,  
 between the two of them, the gracious gift:  
 585 it was the candle of grace  
 that then was spread in many places.  
 They presented it to the bishop  
 who had heard well the voice  
 and also seen the conduct

590 of the lady dressed in white  
 who made the glorious gift.  
 Then he spoke this gracious word:  
 "Virgin, may your grace be praised  
 and your virtue be increased."  
 595 Then he said to the two well-known singers,  
 "I want to oversee your charity:  
 in your goodness accept me  
 as your brother in charity,  
 and then we will go visit

600 and comfort the sick."  
 When the two heard the bishop,  
 they received it gently.  
 Now they go off, all three of them with vessels

Low Voice

605 They caused the wax to drip into it;  
 they never took any other medicine.  
 They cause the sick to be organized  
 in three rows without lingering,  
 to give each sick person

610 from the wax that they dripped,  
 with the water which was very healthy,

which was from well or fountain,  
 and they had them swallow  
 and then they had some water  
 615 sprinkled on the sickness.  
 And so the whole night,  
 as it seems to me, they stayed awake,  
 all three of them together, for the sick,  
 until the third hour of the following day.  
 620 But when they came along  
 to the last sick person and poured for him  
 this holy water, he asked  
 if it was wine or clear water.  
 So the bishop said to him, "Brother,  
 625 this is water of holy purification."  
 Then he responds swiftly,  
 "I would have greater confidence  
 if it were wine, for the contents  
 of wine have more potency  
 630 than water has." And the bishop said,  
 "What are you saying, kind and gentle friend?                      High Voice  
 God has put his high potency  
 into the water of our salvation.  
 By water you received baptism.  
 635 If you pray sincerely  
 to receive this worthy drink  
 as do the others without doubt,  
 so may you have within you solid faith."  
 That one received it without sincerity;  
 640 no great grace came of it,  
 for when it passed through his throat,  
 as the others see, it traversed  
 shamefully and wildly.  
 In this way he died because of his presumption.                      Reading  
 645 Then they were so solid in their faith  
 that they were recovered from the infirmity,  
 and from the cutting hellfire  
 they feel no more pain or illness.  
 Praises were offered,  
 650 the news spread  
 throughout Arras and the city.  
 Everyone made haste at a full run  
 to come there collectively,  
 and the clergy with the bishop  
 655 was clothed piously,  
 saying, "We praise you, God,  
 we acknowledge you to be the Lord."  
 And the clerks who were in the choir

sang it through to the end, very loudly.  
 660 In that night were healed,  
 by the grace that I am telling you,  
 144 sufferers  
 who were enduring various torments.  
 All of them were cured and healthy  
 665 except one alone who was last,  
 who because of his lack of faith  
 died in great fearfulness.  
 After this noble procedure, High Voice  
 many wished by common agreement  
 670 to enter this charity,  
 and people of great authority—  
 priests, knights, and bourgeois—  
 because the report of this miracle spread  
 everywhere, high and low.  
 675 The candle was placed in Arras.  
 The masters and lords of it were,  
 owing to the great honor, the two singers;  
 but the knights of the region Low Voice  
 who became brothers of the confraternity  
 680 felt great indignation  
 when they saw two singers  
 with such a possession hold sway  
 and govern over them.  
 They took among them such counsel  
 685 as afterward redounded to their grief.  
 When Norman and Itier died, High Voice  
 there were two knights in Arras  
 who had very great contempt  
 that this charity  
 690 was led by two singers  
 and that they were necessarily above  
 those who had renown.  
 Now I will tell you the names of those knights.  
 The one was Nicholas aux Grenons, Low Voice  
 695 a very powerful and wealthy man.  
 He held Bailleul and Imercourt.  
 The other was Jean of Waencort.  
 These two wished to begin  
 the outrage and were the prime movers,  
 700 for which afterward they would have shame and  
 disgrace,  
 as the charter gives evidence.  
 These two who began this deed High Voice  
 gathered many knights  
 and said in making their case,

705 "Good sirs, see the great shame  
 that this esteemed charity,  
 which has such great authority,  
 that singers are the lords of it  
 and receive the honors from it.  
 710 It is shame and insult to us.  
 Among us, who are confreres,  
 let us maintain this confraternity,  
 all together from our side,  
 and let them not be any longer with us,  
 715 in like fashion these two singers.  
 But let them go to make their charity  
 elsewhere, in another location,  
 and we will keep this one for ourselves.  
 What do you think? Is it good to proceed in this way?"  
 720 Those replied, "We agree  
 with your wish, without holding back.  
 Forbid them to come to us  
 any further but let them keep to their peers."  
 So their consultation was concluded.  
 725 It was forbidden to the two singers  
 that they should be any further so impudent  
 as to manage the charity.  
 In this way those two were removed  
 who had begun to manage  
 730 the charity  
 and who ought to have retained it,  
 for the grace had been dispatched  
 and the charity delivered to them.  
 For this they would lament very loudly  
 735 and they entreated the Mother of God.  
 Thirdly, after a great while it happened  
 that none of the singers came any more  
 but the Virgin did not forget her poor company  
 for long at all.  
 740 On the contrary, she took cruel vengeance for it,  
 because those who had caused  
 the disorder by their outrage  
 were seized by so grievous a malady  
 that all their limbs failed them  
 745 and they could not support themselves.  
 The two who were the beginning  
 of the misfortune  
 by which the two singers were sundered  
 from them and rejected,  
 750 those were so strongly burned  
 by the cutting fire that seized them

that they could not help themselves  
 except by wailing and crying out.  
 In this grim illness  
 755 an unexpected event happened to one of them,  
 because one night, where he lay  
 in his bed, there appeared to him  
 the Virgin, adorned with grace,  
 who is devoid of sin.  
 760 "Oh you," she said, "who lie here,  
 you know why you are thus languishing:  
 it is because of the sin of your misdeed.  
 You have undone what I did.  
 You have led grace astray  
 765 from those to whom I had delivered it,  
 and if it is not set right by you,  
 you will die shortly in great degradation."  
 And when that one heard the voice,  
 entreating mercy he raised his hands.  
 770 "Lady," he said, "what have I misdone  
 with regard to you? Tell me the deed,  
 because I have never ever seen you."  
 "I am the mother of Jesus Christ,"  
 the Virgin said very humbly,  
 775 "who complain harshly of you,  
 because you have taken the confraternity  
 from those to whom I had delivered it.  
 It belongs to the singers, bringers of joy,  
 because to those two I had delivered  
 780 my burning candle in the presence  
 of the bishop, full of wisdom,  
 so as to establish the confraternity.  
 But if you do not have restored to them  
 what you have done out of presumption,  
 785 in returning to them their inheritance,  
 that I gave them forever in fief,  
 I promise you that you will languish  
 in grievous sorrows and in great pain  
 and afterward you will die a bad death.  
 790 But if you wish to make amends to them,  
 in a short while I will make you recover,  
 and you will be cured and healed."  
 At that moment she vanished from there  
 and returned to the other sick man,  
 795 whom misfortune befell for this deed.  
 She told him once and told him again  
 the whole topic as she had the other.  
 Thus the voice told him everything

and afterward left without delay.  
 800 When the two sick men have heard High Voice  
 the topic that the Virgin Lady  
 revealed to them in such manner,  
 they had themselves carried to the church  
 of Our Lady and met each other  
 805 and afterward recounted  
 the vision that they have had.  
 They rendered, each one  
 with pleasure, thanks and praise  
 to the likeness of the very glorious *servant*,  
 810 Mother of God, Virgin and young maid, Low Voice  
 and afterward they had sought out,  
 by way of their people, everywhere rapidly  
 in all places the singers of Arras  
 who were viol-players and songmakers  
 815 and many others, I know not how many,  
 and they entreated pardon from the singers  
 and they returned into their hands  
 the worthy candle in truth.  
 Restoring to them their charity,  
 820 they promised to them at that point  
 all their time, assistance, and aid,  
 and because of this deed they were joined  
 to the bourgeois and all the singers  
 were joined with them too for having brought  
 825 aid, help, and comfort.  
 And the bourgeois supervised  
 the temporal, while the two singers justly have  
 completely in their oversight  
 the spiritual,  
 830 and must perform the miracle  
 of the worthy candle that brightens  
 the hearts of those who because of its substance  
 will have it in solid faith.  
 After these events, to verify  
 835 that it is true without going astray at all, High Voice  
 noble-hearted Bishop Lambert  
 drew up the charter in Latin  
 on which many seals  
 of royal religious communities were put  
 840 —and assuredly right in the place  
 where the Virgin made the gift  
 of the worthy and valuable candle  
 to her servants and true singers.  
 Without lingering, the bishop had  
 845 a dark-colored marble swiftly installed

where that procedure is portrayed,  
 just as the text explains,  
 for which there is great approval  
 and yet through piety  
 850 we beseech the Virgin Mary  
 that she petition for us her son Jesus  
 to defend us from the hellfire  
 and take us to good mercy.  
 Amen.

### D. Alfonso X the Wise, *Songs of Holy Mary*: “The Two Jongleurs of Arras”

Concluding this section is the Galician-Portuguese song on the miracle of “The Jongleurs and the Holy Candle of Arras” as shaped by King Alfonso X the Wise. This *cantiga* distills the chief events of the story with exceptional brevity. In its antepenultimate and penultimate stanzas it imposes upon the bishop, here left unnamed, some of the misconduct ascribed in other versions to knights.

The edition followed, in both text and line numbering, is the standard *Cantigas de Santa María*, no. 259, ed. Mettmann, 3: 24–25. The piece has been put into English previously in *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise: A Translation of the “Cantigas de Santa Maria,”* no. 259, Kulp-Hill, 315, and into Italian in Pier Carlo Beretta, ed. and trans., *Miracoli della Vergine: testi volgari medievali* (Turin: G. Einaudi, 1999), 1042–47.

How Saint Mary caused two jongleurs who wished each other ill  
 to reconcile in her church of Arras, and gave them a candle, which  
 no one but they could carry.

5       *Refrain: Saint Mary strives to reconcile  
           her devotees so as to be served better by them.*

R elating to this, the Virgin effected a great miracle,  
 which I wish to recount to you,  
 of two jongleurs whom she made wish each other well,  
 but the demon tried to drive them apart.  
 10       *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

F or though they knew to love each other much,  
 the demon made them so quarrel  
 that they then challenged each other to fight,  
 but the Virgin did not want to allow them,

15 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

For she came to them in dreams and thus  
spoke to them: "Friends, go both of you to me  
at my church of Arras, and there  
I will tell you how I send you to heal."

20 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

Each one of them when he awoke  
remembered what she said to them,  
and they went there where she commanded them,  
and saw her coming opposite them.

25 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

And she said: "Friends, leave off  
your intention, and both of you love me and each other  
wholeheartedly, and do not do  
otherwise, for I will not act to fail you."

30 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

And she gave them then such a candle  
with which to cure people of the ill  
they call *Saint Martial's fire*,  
and they cure all those who wish to go there.

35 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

They both went from there in great love  
and cured the people of pain,  
as had been commanded to them by our Lady  
who never lied and doesn't have the capacity to lie.

40 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

The bishop of that place took the candle  
from them, but he made a very bad bargain,  
for the fire began in his foot  
and sought to rise.

45 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

When the dull-witted bishop saw this,  
he asked them for some of that wax,  
and they gave it to drink, and it caused  
the fire then very nicely to depart from him.

50 *Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

To this very day the jongleurs of the country  
who go there have this power,  
and they heal completely the people, so well  
that afterward they do not have anything from which to feel ill.  
*Saint Mary strives to reconcile ...*

55



## 7. The Fiddler and the Holy Face of Lucca

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The community of Lucca lies west of Florence in the Arno Valley, in the central Italian region of Tuscany. It is the capital of the province named after it. Though the Italian *Volto Santo* and English “Holy Face” may refer to any representation of the face of Christ, the terms are mostly used in reference to a [statue on a cross](#) in the cathedral dedicated to Saint Martin in this city. The piece resides in a *tempietto* or “little temple” to the side of the nave. This free-standing chapel is an octagon of marble that was constructed in 1484 specifically to house the image.

The polychrome artwork of cedarwood depicts a [bigger-than-life Christ](#), measuring roughly nine feet high and eight wide, on a cross fourteen feet high and eight and a half wide. He is clad in a [long-sleeved tunic](#) that envelops him from his wrists to his ankles. The garment is cinched at the waist by a knotted cord that hangs down in two prominent strands. Christ appears to be alive and standing against or hovering parallel to the cross, rather than dangling from it.

The carving is called the Holy Face because of the remarkable head. It is framed by long ample hair, thick down to the shoulders, with an effect compounded by a flowing two-pointed beard. Its eyes, open wide, are fashioned of crystal and lend the face vividness. From the Middle Ages on, the impact of the ensemble has been intensified by further dress-up. From early on, the statue has been outfitted, sometimes permanently but often only temporarily, with additional clothing, a crown, and shoes or slippers, all frequently embellished with gems, precious metals, and costly textiles.

The appearance, symbolism, and provenance of the sculpture have given rise to much puzzlement and speculation. Its iconography has elicited comparison with monumental statues figuring Christ that have been associated with, among various other locations, Beirut as well as with Catalonia. In the latter region, such representations are known as the *Majestat*- or “Majesty”-type.

Tradition held that vials of Christ’s blood and other precious remains of the crucifixion were preserved in a hollow at the back of the head on the Holy Face. As a result, the story of the sculpture in Lucca became connected with the [cult of Holy Blood](#) in Fécamp, which a local confraternity of jongleurs there helped to disseminate. In medieval legend, the Holy Face was also associated with a [textile imprinted with the image of Christ](#). In modern scholarship, speculation has been rife about when the

crucifix arrived in Lucca and about when this putative original was replaced by a later replica, if in fact such a substitution was ever made.

The Latin legend has been dated to the late eleventh century. Though new physical evidence supports the assertion that the *Volto Santo* could be as old as the late eighth century, no documentary evidence of the object has been confirmed from before 1100. Compounding the uncertainties, the suggestion has been floated that the depiction of Christ now in existence replaced a much older predecessor that was lost to decay. In the Middle Ages, no such doubts hobbled the ascent of the Holy Face to fame. The statue is even mentioned by [Dante Alighieri](#).

According to what is reported in Latin, the body of the *imago crucifixi* or "image of the Crucified" was carved after the ascension of Christ by Nicodemus, a Pharisee who is mentioned three times in the [Gospel of John](#). If we accept the account, this man profited from his eyewitness memory to capture the features of his master as he had looked on the cross. When the would-be artist could not complete the head or at least fell asleep before he had done so, an angel finished the work—hence the epithet *holy* by which it is known to this day. This angelic contribution plants the Holy Face squarely in the category designated by the technical term *acheiropoiotos*. This adjective in Greek, meaning "not made by (human) hands," has been applied to a small class of miraculous icons. The report continues by describing how the sculpture, after being hidden in a cave for centuries, was transported miraculously to Lucca in the early Middle Ages.

In the Tuscan city the figure attracted wide reverence well into the sixteenth century as the object of a pilgrimage cult. However, it also sparked considerable skepticism already in the High Middle Ages. [Boncompagno da Signa](#), an Italian teacher of prose composition and other aspects of rhetoric who lived from about 1170 to about 1240, described the questions surrounding the Holy Face in one of his principal writings. The passage, despite its length, merits translation in full:

"A doctor of law is reproved, who was a detractor of the image that is venerated at Lucca by Christians."

You ought deservedly to be labeled a dunce of law rather than a doctor of law, seeing that against the binding force of the law you presume to detract from the law, not taking into account what is ordained in the law against heretics and their supporters. For you corrupt the legal code as you presume to commit offense in words against God himself, who is the author and agent of the law, not considering that on this account you render yourself notorious and afford an example of evildoing to the less foresighted.

Behold, you assert that the holy and venerable image of the crucifix, which is revered in the church of Lucca by the gentiles and peoples, was made from bentwood, which a woodworker polished by his craft, first cutting away from it with an adze and a hatchet the wood that had been exposed to fire and transformed into soot and ash. But the remaining part of the wood was entrusted to a talented sculptor, who with delicate hewing and craftsmanship distinguished limbs in it, installing in it eyes of crystal in the head and slippers of silver on the feet. Afterward he clad the entire ensemble in gold

with a diversity of colors, surmounting its head with a crown inset with precious stones and girding its loins with an exquisite belt.

You say too that it is repainted every single year, to the end that it seem more beautiful. And you pronounce that there are ants inside the substance of the wood, saying that those miracles which have been written about the image have been adorned with lies and invented out of greed for acquiring. And that it was not true or even closely similar to the truth that it cast off a silver slipper to a performer who with a sweet melody was playing a harp before it. Regarding which matters you seem to be mistaken according to the opinion of certain people, because many believe, and the report has gone forth throughout the world, that the cord with which that image is girded bestows joy upon a woman giving birth.

And though [Placentinus](#) said that fools would put small coins there, you ought not to imitate Placentinus regarding such matters, but may it please you to believe that that image is not God but shaped in honor of him. For this reason you ought to hold it in reverence and honor, like a seal that represents the image of Caesar but is not Caesar, and yet respect is shown to the golden or waxen shape, and the emperor's majesty is very much venerated and feared in this intermediary form.

The ample dossier of miracles about the Holy Face includes one, probably put to parchment in the twelfth century, that features a jongleur: Boncompagno alludes to this tradition fleetingly in his third paragraph. In this so-called fiddler's miracle, a performer arrives in Lucca and plies his craft by belting out hits from his repertoire on the piazzas, but to no avail: he cannot coax from his audiences the smallest coin in recompense. Finally, fatigued and famished, he enters Saint Martin's, kneels before the precious crucifix, plays his viol, and croons praise songs. God manifests his favor by causing the figure of the Holy Face to look upon the musician and to drop into his lap a silver slipper from its right foot. As in many stories starring jongleurs, this miracle pits the protagonist against an ecclesiastic antagonist—a bishop or beadle. This opponent restores the footgear to the statue, but the miracle repeats itself. Eventually the church authorities are obliged to repurchase the miraculous object at a steep price.

It requires little effort to imagine the utility of this narrative to professional performers, who could wield it to their advantage in soliciting compensation from noble audience members while fending off hostility from churchmen. As chance would have it, a [medieval French epic](#) from the cycle about the legendary ninth-century personage Guillaume d'Orange, William of Orange in English, provides vivid realization of this very hypothesis. This *chanson de geste* from the second half of the twelfth century is called *Aliscans*, after the fictitious battle with which it is chiefly concerned. The location of the combat has been presumed to be the necropolis in Arles called Alysamps. This place name, with its two main constituents reversed, equates to Champs-Élysées in French, meaning "Elysian Fields" in English. But to the point: the epic poem incorporates a passage that touches upon the fiddler's miracle precisely in the context of soliciting donations from those who can afford to be liberal. By implication, the generosity of the statue puts stingy listeners to shame.

4760 Indeed, I can tell you and affirm to be true  
 that a decent person (if he does not want, by God,  
 to give anything from his possessions) ought not listen to a jongleur,  
 who does not know how to work for a living in other fashion,  
 nor can make claim for his service.  
 If such a person does make him a gift from them, then let him be.  
 4765 You can prove this by the Holy Face of Lucca  
 who threw him his slipper from his foot;  
 then it became necessary for him to buy it back at a dear price.  
 People should love jongleurs greatly:  
 they crave joy, and love to sing of it.

The motif of the projectile footwear attests to the attentiveness that the original teller of the story showed to the reality of the statue on the cross. Among many aspects that make the figure distinctive, one is that its lower extremities are not nailed to the cross; another is that the feet are shod in silver shoes or velvet slippers.

A [thirteenth-century poem](#) that advocates for professional fiddlers and their repertory contains quatrains that sum up the story beautifully:

80 The sweet Mother of God loved the sound of the viol;  
 in the city of Arras she performed a lovely generosity:  
 she gave to the jongleurs the worthy Holy Candle,  
 that the prior of Celle would not dare to bear away.

She did them another good deed, I can well retell it.  
 A jongleur was singing to amuse the people;  
 neither noble nor peasant has interest in giving him anything,  
 but the Holy Face of Lucca gave him its shoe.

85 There is great meaning when the Virgin Mary  
 is there with the angels in beautiful company.  
 Out of her great generosity she gave them the candle,  
 which no one dares to take away because she has great authority.

The most important text in establishing the legend of the Holy Face is a [mysterious dossier](#), designated *Relatio leobiniana* or "The Report of [Leobinus](#)" for short, that survives in at least [nineteen manuscripts](#). Entitled in its full glory "The Report of Deacon Leobinus on the Revelation or Discovery, Transference, and Miracles of the Venerable Face of Our Lord, Jesus Christ," this comprehensive account sets forth bare-bones information in Latin prose regarding the origins of the image, its discovery in the Holy Land, and its transference to Lucca by way of Luni, a town in eastern Liguria.

The document begins with a prologue by the alleged author in which he professes to feel obliged to share what he has seen with his own eyes and heard from reliable witnesses. After this preamble, Leobinus proceeds to the *revelatio* and *inventio*.

In hagiography, an “invention” generally tells how a saint’s bodily remains were unearthed, but here a Bishop Geoffrey on pilgrimage in Jerusalem is induced by a miraculous “revelation” to discover the Holy Face in the basement of a house that belongs to an individual named Seleucius.

In short order the object is entrusted to a ship that, without crew, sails, or oars, transports its precious cargo divinely from the shore of Joppa to the Italian port of Luni. In the *translatio*—the report of a relic’s transfer from one place to another—the deacon relates how Bishop John of Lucca was motivated by an angelic vision to secure the transfer of the Holy Face to his see. Leobinus dates the triumphant arrival in 742. By way of conclusion, he signifies that he was in Jerusalem in the service of Bishop Geoffrey when this sequence of wonderful events began. He attests that the Holy Face contains the crown of thorns and some of Christ’s clothes, that the place where it was carved witnessed extraordinary cures, and that contact with wood shavings from the manufacture of the likeness healed all manner of infirmities. At this juncture the writer concludes.

The composition was eventually complemented by a sort of appendix supplied by another author or group of authors. This supplementary dossier documented the rise of the cult surrounding the relic, with a special focus on the miracles it occasioned. Only the original portion, ascribed to Leobinus, is put into English here as the first item in this section.

The name of the churchman by whom the text was purportedly written calls to mind in the first instance a sixth-century saint of France, called Lubin in modern French, and in the second the late eighth-century English-born Apostle of the Frisians. The latter is known in Latin as Lebuinus, in vernacular languages as Lebuin, Lebwin, and Liafwin. In no case does such onomastic speculation take us far, since whatever the ramifications of the name, this alleged deacon is otherwise unattested. What counts is the narrative ascribed to Leobinus or Leboinus, since it was foundational for the later hagiography: it offers the oldest record of the genesis and of the chain of custody that led to the presence of the sculpture in Lucca and its prominence as a miracle-generating object.

The tale of “The Fiddler and the Holy Face of Lucca,” like those of “The Jongleur and the Black Virgin of Rocamadour” and “The Jongleurs and the Holy Candle of Arras,” is attached irrevocably to one cathedral and one cult. It highlights an entertainer, his performance before an image, his recompense from on high, and his vindication in the face of ecclesiastic opposition. Does the absence of the Virgin Mary alter the fundamental significance of the story, or is it just one of many variables?

### A. “The Report of Deacon Leobinus”

Here begins the report of Deacon Leobinus on the [revelation or discovery, transference, and miracles](#) of the venerable face of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Deacon Leobinus, the least of Christ's servants, sends greeting to all brothers, observers of the orthodox faith serving God throughout all regions of the world in Lord Jesus Christ, everlasting author of eternal salvation.

What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears from religious men and have committed to tenacious memory, we do not dare to deny to those who desire to know, but instead, overcome by brotherly love, we rejoice, like attentive cupbearers, in offering drink to you who are thirsting. For in Holy Writ the servant is branded as bad and ungrateful, and is damned for his faults to deserved punishment, he who did not strive to give freely what he received freely, and who did not share [the talent entrusted](#) him by his lord with brothers wishing it and who did not bring it back to him redoubled by most attentive care.

And so, to strengthen the holy Church, to instruct the faithful who desire to know, to refute or, all the better, to convert non-believers, we have decided to offer with our stylus for the memory of posterity a few things concerning the revelation or discovery and transference of the most sacred Holy Face and also concerning the miracles that either we have seen ourselves or have learned about through the report of respectable men, so that it will be fruitful for those invited to [the Lord's Supper](#) and not burdensome to those easily wearied readers.

### On the Revelation

To fulfill a vow the respectable man, Bishop Geoffrey, from below the Alps, went off to Jerusalem and stayed there an exceedingly long time owing to the manifold and major illness of his companions. While passing through the holiest places by day and night out of concern, devoted to prayer, fasting, and alms, he merited an angelic vision. For after very long prayer, when he wished to refresh his tired limbs in sleep, he sought out his bed and went to sleep. An angel of the Lord stood near and addressed and consoled him with such a speech:

"Rise up, servant of God, and with diligent inquiry seek out near your lodgings the most Holy Face of the author of our salvation, which is to say, the redeemer of the world, carved by Nicodemus and do it, when found, reverence with worthy veneration. So go to the home of the most Christian man [Seleucius](#) that adjoins your lodgings and there you will find the most Holy Face located in a crypt."

[This Nicodemus](#) is moreover the one who, the sacred history of the Gospel tells, for fear of the Jews came first by night in stealth to Jesus. After being steeped by him and learned in the dogma of holy rebirth, he departed full of faith. In truth, after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord he blazed with such ardor from the presence of Christ that he always carried Christ in his heart and always had him on his lips.

Having then taken note most attentively of the shape of Christ's body in its dimensions and distinguishing features, and having also achieved a mental description of his lineaments, he carved the most Holy Face not by his own but by divine craft. Christ's grace, which can never be absent from those wishing well and doing well, stood by his good intention.

On what basis it is called the Holy Face, I will relate in a few words. For just as a face when seen testifies to the person whose face is seen, so the form of that precious face portrays our redeemer incarnate and hanging for us on the cross as if represented in his sure lineaments.

Accordingly, the blessed man had him before the eyes of his mind and, perceiving him with his bodily eyes, as if he gazed upon Christ, he took solace in the likeness of him. When the previously mentioned Nicodemus, dear and most welcome to God, had a presentiment that the end of life was approaching for him, he conferred the splendid work to be overseen and honored by a certain *Issachar*, who feared and worshipped the heavenly power. After he did this, his soul, released from his body, sought places of quiet, while his body was placed near his forefathers.

After [Nicodemus] died in Christ, [*Issachar*], the one who had received the holiest gift, so that the disclosure of such a great matter would not inflame the Jews against him, shut it away in a hiding-place inside his house and showed to it the respect owed it. In this fashion down to our times, through one generation after another it has been revered most devoutly by those faithful to Christ, even though in secret.

### On the Discovery of the Holiest Face

After having been cheered by dialogue with the angel, the bishop who has been previously mentioned woke up from sleep and told his comrades everything in order. Having heard this, without any doubt hindering their faith, they sought out, investigating earnestly, the place stipulated. By persistent inquiry they ascertained who and where the keeper was of such a great gift. After discovering him by the grace of God and asking him to show the gift of their salvation, they at length constrained him by clever devices, despite his at first shamelessly refusing, to uncover so glorious a treasure—by openly asserting, to the Jews and gentiles living there, that the cross of our redeemer was worshipped and revered in his home. The keeper of the blessed cross was overcome by entreaties and threats, and he was vanquished by the greatest grief. As Christ's clemency had effect, he disclosed unwillingly to them the place in which the holy work, as has been said, stood hidden through the period of many years. Then, weeping for joy, they rendered boundless thanks to the savior of all, that in those times he conferred heavenly advantage upon his faithful to the greatest possible extent. At length, at the bidding of the bishop who has been mentioned before, the aforesaid keeper deservedly received a weight of gold.

The reverend prelate, devoting himself to prayer with monks and companions, was greatly concerned by what device or by what skill the revered token of the Holy Cross should be transferred to the places of Italy. At last, it is determined collectively that the holiest work, stowed appropriately in a ship, should be conveyed under the guidance of God all the way to the regions of Rome. Therefore the bishop, attended by a retinue of monks and companions, singing heavenly hymns unendingly with heart and mouth, went off, transporting the token of the Holy Cross to the seashore where it is called *Joppa*. There, finding a heaven-granted ship of greatest solidity, they stowed in it with greatest reverence the most precious treasure. Embellishing it marvelously, they covered it, illuminated by a great many *candles and lamps*, from the top down with *pitch* and with other things befitting the work, just as the holy history of Genesis relates concerning Noah's ark.

Then the bishop with the monks devoted himself to prayer, and all pray with a shared wish for the indescribable goodness of the Lord that such a great and so special a place should be enriched by such a great gift. In this place countless peoples of the Christian faith should assemble devoutly and faithfully, and they should give thanks for being protected and defended constantly by his supervision and protection.

The ship is reported to have proceeded immediately across the deep sea, with no mortal rowing (for no one was inside it), but with the power of God alone at the helm, through the long circuits of the sea. It came ashore at the port of **Luni**. The townspeople of that place, not very content with what was rightly theirs, are known, because of spending their time on the coast, to have had this custom for a long time, that they persisted in crimes and pillage at sea. Therefore, perceiving the unaccustomed size and appearance of the ship, they wondered strongly upon seeing no mortal being upon it. So they arranged to seize the ship and wishing to open it, they pondered breaking it. But the ship, with the sacred goodness of God at the helm, withdrew far from them, as divine providence foresaw them to be filled with persistent wickedness. Then certain people of the same city on another day, looking on with measureless anger, attempted to do the same thing with a great vanguard. The compassion of God opposed them, that the opportunity of perpetrating the aforethought crime would not be allowed.

In the meantime, the mayor of the aforesaid city questions what should be done about a ship of this sort. His agents said in response that they had never seen a vessel of this sort. "In it no mortal being is evident and yet it does not seem to be devoid of human helmsmanship. Yesterday, from when dawn dispelled the dark all the way to sunset, and today, sweating away from much toil, we undertook to seize it, which seemed to very many of us near, but we were unable to have effect in the matter." For this reason, it is given to be understood for certain that this can hardly take place without its being the will of God.

### How It Was Transferred to Lucca

At the same time the bishop who was in charge in the city of Lucca was named John, a man certainly pleasing to God, propped up by his authority and having every title to respect. This man embellished the church of Lucca in many aspects.

To him as he was sleeping an angel then appeared and spoke to him in a heavenly voice. "Arise," he said, "servant of Christ, and direct your steps and those of your brothers in haste to the port of Luni. For there you will find a ship, in which an image of the savior of the world is placed that shows how he suffered for humanity on the cross. The Pharisee Nicodemus, who saw and touched Christ, hid it. Through your merits you have obtained from the Lord to bring it into this city." Having said all these things, the divine messenger departed.

The venerable bishop, most joyful about the vision of the angel, proceeded without any delay to the place with the clergy and the most devout people and found everything just as the angel had said. The inhabitants of Luni exerted themselves with twinned effort, with oars and sails. In competition, they rowed, shouted together with their voices, and made signs with their hands and nods. Friend encouraged friend. But they profited not at all by their planning.

It was a marvelous thing and unheard of until now: the wind and wave drove the vessel toward the shore, but the power of God cast it far back. Small wonder indeed that those who do not seek God with a devout mind earn the right in no way to find him. In the meantime, the saintly Bishop John cautions them little by little to rest and to beseech the aid of God. Then the devout servant of God, with the banner of the Holy Cross, singing with spiritual hymns and canticles, with mouth and heart, proceeded with the highest reverence.

Why say more? The ship, which was putting the impious to flight, offered itself spontaneously to the pious faithful and displayed to them the precious and invaluable treasure bestowed by God's kindness. Opening the ship and perceiving God's mighty works, they poured forth tears for joy and, singing an angelic hymn, they rendered thanks for God's mercy.

In the meantime, strife began to arise between the people of Lucca and those of Luni over who should be considered preferable for the gift. Then the servant of Christ, Bishop John, having entered a sound counsel, implored the Lord's mercy and, warned by the divine spirit, granted to the bishop of Luni with kindly love a glass ampoule filled with Christ's precious blood, which he found there, and with great glory carried to his city, with Christ as guide, the most precious Holy Face.

Hearing this, the portion of the clergy and people who had remained in the city went forth from the happy city. The venerable clergy and religious people, the most devout female sex, old men and younger ones, boys and girls go forth to meet the Holy Cross, and just as long ago [the boys of the Jews sang](#) with voice in harmony to the Lord as he came to the Passion: "Blessed, who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna on high," so too they shouted the same to the Lord's face, and those instructed by the Holy Spirit added: "Behold, the [lamb of God](#), behold, who bears the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, King of Israel." Therefore, with such great jubilation and such great triumph, the Lord's face was introduced into the city of Lucca in the year from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ 742, in the time of [the most serene kings](#), in the second year of their reign. It was placed in the [church of Saint Martin](#), in which the episcopal see is located, near the double doors of that same basilica toward the eastern direction.

I, Leobinus, who have written these words, have been the humblest deacon of venerable Geoffrey, from below the Alps, and, as I sojourned with him in Jerusalem, I came to know the matters described below from most religious [Syrian men who guarded the Lord's sepulcher](#). For they asserted, on the evidence of the Holy Spirit, that the [crown of thorns](#), which Pilate's soldiers had placed on Christ's head, and part of his clothes were stored in the same place. Also, in the [grove of Ramoth-Gilead](#), in its hidden places where [for fear of the Jews](#) Nicodemus made the tomb, a fountain arose suddenly, as it was being made. People who drank from it or who washed clean with it while touching a place of sickness were immediately healed of whatever infirmity by which they were held back. But as the rumor gathered strength, a multitude of the sick, blind, lame, paralyzed, and sufferers from other infirmities ran together there in competition. The lord of the place, drunk with the venom of greed, recognized this. Hoping for corrupt gain, he put the water out for sale. Once this had been done, the fountain, having dried up by God's just judgment, appeared nowhere any longer. For God's boons are not bought or sold for a fleeting price but free by the grace of Christ.

The saintly men who have been mentioned added a detail concerning the woodchips and the small pieces of the precious face that were left over as it was sculpted, and that remained as it had been transported there: if they touched part of a weakened or infirm body, they restored without any delay its original good health, in such a way that if an eye, foot, hand, or some other limb had been injured, it would be healed if touched by a small piece of the same most holy element, through the assistance of him who lives and rules in the oneness of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

To this point, Leobinus has written. In what follows the venerable, God-fearing clerics of the same church commit to writing, that these things not be handed over to oblivion for eternity, what they know either from truthful men or also what they have heard and recognize for certain, from the sick themselves who are now healed.

## B. "The Silver Shoe of the Holy Face, Offered Miraculously to a Pauper"

The legend of the Holy Face became linked with a narrative about the wondrous experience of a jongleur with the precious shoes or slippers that shod the feet of the image. This tale sometimes led off a dossier of more than ten miracles ascribed to the sacred carving. To supplement the report of Leobinus, it is translated here from Latin prose [edited from two thirteenth-century manuscripts](#). Among its notable features, this version of the story fails to flag the protagonist outright as a professional entertainer. Yes, he is presented as a devotee of the Holy Face who happens to carry a viol on his shoulder and to be an able singer. From these two traits we are well in our rights to infer that he is a jongleur. Additionally, the text concludes by emphasizing the inversion of the [Cinderella motif](#): the miracle explains why the silver shoe no longer fits properly on the foot of the image.

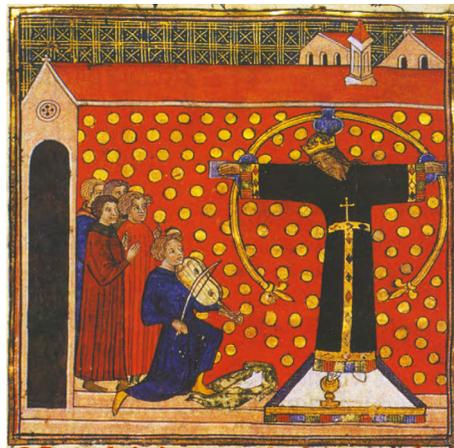


Fig. 10: The jongleur before the Holy Face. Miniature, fifteenth century. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Palatinus Latinus 1988, fol. 1r.

Likewise, it seems hardly right to pass over in utter silence what almighty God deigned to effect in the same way through the most venerable sign of the Holy Face.

A young man from the region of Gaul [longed to set out for the Lord's tomb in Jerusalem](#), because he had heard quite often that the glorious sign of the most Holy Face represented the true appearance and likeness of the Savior. About to make the journey, he committed himself to his planned intention of traveling by way of Lucca, so as to see the image that had been produced of that man, for whose tomb he was readying himself with all longing. So, having obtained the occasion, and fortified with the [sign of the cross](#), he approached Lucca as a pilgrim and was inflamed with such yearning love that he could not stand still until without delay he arrived at the church and [hospice](#) of blessed Martin.

But soon, as he retreated devoutly with an immense number of pilgrims within the chapel of the most venerable Face and looked with bodily eyes upon the truest appearance

and likeness of the savior, he prostrated himself in prayer, rejoicing and exulting. While he prayed there longer and persisted in it, he began to burn inwardly with such great love for him whose surest likeness he was allowed to look upon outwardly, that he stood up with his face and chest drenched in the most copious tears. When standing too, he remained fixated to such a degree that he wished in no way to avert his line of sight from the sign of the marvelous cross.

Next, seeing the countless crowd of faithful which had come together from sundry parts of the world out of respect for the beneficent cross, he was poor in material things but rich in merits to approach most humbly [the most holy foot of the Face](#) with his gifts. He thought himself unworthy, as if a person who approached empty-handed before others, and he began in shame to have uncertainty about what to do. So, resorting to the musical instrument that he held hanging against his upper arm, he desired in lieu of a present to offer a gift as he was able, meaning obviously, the praises of his music-making. He began to sing with such great sweetness hymns in honor of the most Holy Cross that he soothed with extreme delight the hearing of everyone standing near.

Almighty God, who is the [true searcher of the secrets of the hearts](#), regarded with kindness his servant's great faith and most pious devotion to the venerable sign of the most Holy Face, and he did not want to hold him any longer in needless uncertainty of anxiety, but he deigned to show him, powerfully and marvelously, the gift of his grace. For immediately, what is a marvel to say, a silver shoe sprang forth from the right foot of the Holy Face by the power alone of God and fell into the lap of the singer. Then the young man, astonished by such a great miracle, and reflecting with much fear upon what had happened, marveled intensely and reverently at the magnitude of the gift, and considered the magnificence of the gift and the ever so marvelous power of highest God: he began to think with uncertainty inside himself what to do. He is drawn in various directions, but stunned by the marveling of his mind, he was unsure what resolution to reach. So, going out of the chapel, he retired into part of the church. As he turned over many things in his mind there for quite a while, at length, as it is believed, he was inspired by divine inspiration and returned to the chapel and to the foot of the most glorious Holy Face. What earlier he had held in dread when destitute, he approached as a supplicant and with all humility, and he offered that silver shoe, bestowed upon him by divine grace, as a gift to almighty God in honor of the Holy Cross.

The countless crowd of pilgrims and very many others who had come together from neighboring places for the sake of prayer saw this remarkable miracle most openly, and raised their voices in praise of the savior; and at their shouts the whole city ran up. On all sides an assembly of peoples took place, of men and women, rendering thanks and praise to almighty God that he wished through the miraculous sign of the Holy Face to show such miracles to his faithful. So that at no time any misgiving of doubt about so great a miracle should arise in the minds of listeners, but it should remain to posterity an everlasting token, it was accomplished by God's dispensation that that shoe did not attach and fit any longer on the right foot of the most revered cross and it could be fitted by no human being exactly as it had been previously.



# 8. The Fiddler and the Bearded Lady

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Countless tales from the medieval period were never committed to parchment or paper. Of those that were recorded, many, perhaps even most, have perished since then through the ravages of time. Yet despite the incalculable losses, an immense corpus of stories has survived in extant manuscripts. One large and fascinating cluster of legends from the late Middle Ages and early modern period pertains to a supposed saint named [Kümmernis](#) as well as to other holy women related to her, none of them historically attested. These accounts offer insight into the intricacy and vibrancy of culture in those times, evident in both oral tradition and, at the risk of tautology, written literature.

In the classification system that folklorists developed over roughly a century of collaborative international research, this narrative was identified as a distinct [type of folktale](#). The type has been summarized as follows:

## St. Wilgefortis and Her Beard

A pagan king promises his daughter (Wilgefortis, Liberta, Ontkommer, Kümmernis), who is a Christian, in marriage to another pagan king who has conquered his country. In order to evade the forced marriage, she prays to God to alter her appearance, and suddenly she grows a beard.

Her angry father has her nailed to a cross, so that she will be like her beloved. As she dies, she prays for all who suffer pain or sorrow. Her father's palace burns down.

In some versions an old musician (fiddler) plays for the crucified woman before she dies. She (her picture) thanks him by giving him her gold (silver) shoe (ring).

The shoe is discovered in the possession of the musician, who is condemned as a thief. On his way to the gallows, he asks to be allowed to play again in the colonnade of the church. As soon as he begins to play, the holy picture of the crucified woman drops the other shoe to him, thus proving his innocence.

Despite all the erudite and energetic efforts to achieve clarity about these saintly females, confusions and uncertainties abound. An entry for one of these women found its way into a classic [twentieth-century compendium on saints](#), under the heading "St. Wilgefortis, or Liberata (No Date)," with the devastating caveat:

Her story is a curiosity of hagiology and is hardly worth including in a collection of lives of the saints but for the fact that it has the unenviable distinction of being one of the most obviously false and preposterous of the pseudo-pious romances by which simple Christians have been deceived or regaled.

Kümmernis, Wilgefortis, and Liberata belong to a considerable crew of pseudo-saints, nary a one of them historically verifiable. Their cults burgeoned from the fourteenth century on. In the eighteenth century they began to decline and eventually died out. Owing particularly to the fluidity in gender identity that these figures personify, they may well be ripe for attracting—or should we say engendering?—strong interest once again. Anyone who thinks that the binary opposition between female and male went uncontested in the Middle Ages should take a glance at these legends. At their heart, these stories have women who experience extraordinary beard growth. The phenomenon might be diagnosed today as resulting from hirsutism, an excess of the male hormone androgen; but here the condition is volitional.

In retellings of tales relating to the Holy Face, many adjustments were made. The cult of one saint, which may well have originated in Netherlandic regions but which honored a personage often supposed to have been Portuguese, made of the seemingly male figure a female. [These traditions are traceable](#) from the second half of the fourteenth century. According to this striking variation on the theme of the would-be runaway bride, the daughter of a king in Portugal defied the will of her staunchly pagan father by converting to Christianity and vowing to remain a virgin. When threatened with an unwanted arranged marriage to the king of Sicily, she was protected from matrimony by suddenly sprouting a luxuriant beard and moustache. Her facial hair repelled her princely suitor and caused him to withdraw the offer of betrothal he had tendered. Her non-Christian father, enraged at his daughter's disobedience, took the drastic step of putting her to the cross.

The outcome of the story about the persecuted princess would have helped to explain to perplexed viewers the peculiarity of the Holy Face as a form. In contrast to standard depictions of the crucifixion, this image shows on the crucifix a bearded individual who wears what could be mistaken for a nearly floor-length dress. Copies of the Luccan sculpture were disseminated widely throughout first the Italian peninsula and then all western Europe, from objects as small as pilgrims' badges and seals to others as large as full-size [replicas](#). Some of them could have been badly enough wrought to suggest the possibility that the person wearing a full-length robe was [a woman](#).

Whether thanks to the Volto Santo or not, at one point or another likenesses came to be made of clearly female figures nailed to crosses. The technical term "crucified maidens" is now used to denote them. The leading lady in these legends was called by various *noms parlants*. All of these "talking names" (to translate the French verbatim) are common nouns in the vernaculars where the saint's cults were based. All refer to the help and relief that the martyr can bring to petitioners, particularly wives burdened by husbands who mistreat them. The proper noun used of Saint Kümmernis or Kummernus in Germany points to the German common noun *Kummer* for "care" or "anxiety," from which these unfortunate women need to be liberated. Antithetically, the English Uncumber and Middle Dutch Ontkommer embody the idea of freeing

from care. Similarly, the Italian *Liberata*, Spanish *Librada*, and French *Livrade*, all imply being “freed.” Along similar lines, the French *Débarras* means “riddance.” The Middle Low German *Hülpe*, corresponding to the modern German *Hilfe*, signifies the “help” that can lead to (or be procured by) such liberation.

Another bearded lady from the same clan is *Wilgefortis*, perhaps the most well-known member of this saintly sideshow. Her gender-blending, -bending, and -crossing could well have been conceived for a twenty-first-century audience. Etymologically unrelated to the names of other such hirsute heroines in hagiography, hers may be a deformation from the Latin *virgo fortis* or French *vierge forte* for “strong maiden,” if not from the Germanic *hilge vartz/vratz* for “holy face.”

If the transsexuality of the protagonist gave the passion of Saint Kümernis some vivid features, the jongleur involved in the major miracle after her martyrdom added other oddities to the narrative. The performer transitions into an impecunious fiddler whom the crucified image of a woman, man, or both sought to reward for his devotion by tossing him a golden shoe. A church official, such as a bishop, is introduced into the story to provide an antagonist in the ecclesiastic hierarchy who must be won over. The insertion of this element may have been welcomed by those, such as women and entertainers, who subsisted outside the conventional norms and the societal chain of command bound up with them.

The name of Saint Kümernis alone has spawned a multitude of challenges to orthography. The most charming spelling may be *Kümmernuß* (the character ß, called *eszett*, stands for a double s). If these letters are misconstrued as a compound, the second seeming noun could mislead unwitting readers with a little German into inferring that a nut (German *Nuss*) was somehow involved in the onomastics. In the text to be discussed now, readers are notified that the protagonist is invoked as Kuminis but it is implied that her formal name is Kümernus. As in most sources, the assumption is that those would-be petitioners, particularly women who suffer from sorrows or grief (German *Kummer* or *Kümmernis*) would do best to turn for help to Saint Kümernis.

### A. Hans Burgkmair the Elder, “Saint Kümernus”

A woodcut linked with the supposed martyr was carved by Hans Burgkmair the Elder. Although also a painter, this artist was known before all else as a prolific printmaker: his documented oeuvre encompasses around 800 block prints. This cutting, printed in Augsburg around 1507, survives in a single exemplar now preserved in Munich. The uniqueness of the piece should not lead us to underestimate its evidentiary value: no more convenient point of entry into the early modern cult of the alleged saint exists than the concise text and the vivid carving of a crucifix at Lucca that accompanies it. [The print](#), with its combined text and image, gives access to the cults of both the Holy Face and Saint Kümernis.



Fig. 11: St. Kümernis. Woodcut by Hans Burgkmair, 1507. Augsburg. Image from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burgkmair\\_Kuemernis.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burgkmair_Kuemernis.JPG)

The woodblock is entitled with the German for Saint Kümernus. These words are followed by a Latin epigraph that quotes Psalms 67:36, in the text found in the Vulgate Bible that follows the Greek Septuagint. The final of the three elements at the top is further German wording to paraphrase the biblical tag in the learned language.

Interestingly, the artwork within the block complicates matters by juxtaposing two victims of crucifixion: the bearded and clothed woman implied by the overall title and her bearded and clothed male antecedent. Burgkmair’s cutting bears an inscription that serves effectively as a second title, “The Image at Lucca.” In his somewhat quaint spelling, the caption reads *Die Bildnus zu Luca*. Since the artist is known to have traveled in Italy, he could well have viewed the original crucifix in situ. It portrays a Christ-like figure on a cross, whose robe flourishes—true to the verb’s etymology, which implies adornment with flowers—a fleur-de-lis at the center of the chest. This stylized lily, a symbol for virginity (and for French royalty), is found as a decorative border on the Volto Santo. Did Burgkmair intend to exploit the arresting vignette, which put before the spectator a composition that verged on cross-dressing, to do a little cross-marketing? His woodblock may have been the early sixteenth-century counterpart of an illustrated advertisement. If so, this circular could have sought to encourage pilgrimage in both directions, whetting the zeal of those familiar with the Holy Face in Italy to visit sites associated with [saints and sites in Netherlandish regions](#) and vice versa.

The text indicates that the body of Saint Kümernis then lay buried in Stouberg. This purported placename is most likely a garbling of Steenberg, a town in the

province of North Brabant. Nothing survives to confirm or deny that this locale in the south of the Netherlands ever had a connection with the holy woman. Even so, it has been conjectured that the counts of this town were contracted as mercenaries to serve Italian city states such as Lucca and that these military ties, along with mercantile ones, may have encouraged Dutch people to import copies of the miraculous crucifix from Lucca and to install them in their [churches and homes](#). This intriguing hypothesis remains unproven.

The translation of the first account below hews close to the German text on the woodblock from 1507, but with paragraphing added and without adhering to its punctuation.

### [“God is wonderful in his saints”](#)

#### God works wonderful things in his saints

There was a pagan king’s daughter who was beautiful and white. For that reason, a pagan king desires her for a consort, which was loathsome to the maiden. When she prays to be chosen as a consort to God, that angers her father, who imprisons her. Then, in prison, she called upon God and prayed to him that he should come to help her. That happened, and God came to her in prison and consoles her. Then she desires to be changed into such a form that she would please no one on earth [except him alone](#) and that he should make her as she would please him best. Then he changes her and [makes her like him](#).

When her father saw that, he asks her why she should live so. Then she said, “The consort whom I chose for myself made me so.” When she wants no one other than the crucified God, then her father grows angry and says, “You too must die on the cross as your God did.” She was willing to do that and died on the cross.

And who calls upon her in trouble and worry, to him she comes to help in his need. And she is called by the name Kuminis and is named Saint Kümernuß and lies buried in Holland in a church named Stouberg.

Then a poor little fiddler came before the image and fiddled so long until the crucified image gave him a golden shoe. He took it and carried it to a goldsmith, and he intended to sell it. Then the goldsmith said, “I will not buy it. Maybe you have stolen it.” Then he answered, “No, the crucified image gave it to me.” They gave no credence to that and caught him, and they intended to hang him. The fiddler desires that they lead him again to the image. They do that and put the golden shoe again on the foot of the image. Then he fiddles as before. Then the crucified image made the shoe fall again. At that the fiddler became very happy and thanked God and Saint Kümernus.

### B. Brothers Grimm, “The Sainly Woman Kummernis”

The English here translates the German of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who incorporated the [legend](#) into the first edition of their famous [fairy tales](#). For their version, the renowned Brothers drew upon a [seventeenth-century collection of exempla](#).



Fig. 12: Unknown artist, *St. Kummernis*, 1678. Oil on panel. Museum im Prediger, Schwäbisch Gmünd. Image from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuemmernis\\_museum\\_schwaebischmuend.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kuemmernis_museum_schwaebischmuend.JPG)

They reused the narrative in their “[German Legends](#),” which appeared in two volumes in 1816 and 1818.

Once upon a time there was a pious virgin who vowed to God not to wed and was wonderfully beautiful, so that her father would not allow it and wished to compel her to marry. In this dire strait she implored God that he cause her to grow a beard, which happened right away; but the king grew furious and had her nailed to a cross so that she became a saint.

Now it happened that a poor minstrel came into the church, where her image stood, and he knelt before it; then it pleased the saint that he recognized her innocence and that image, which was outfitted with golden slippers, let one come loose and fall down, so that it went to the pilgrim. He bowed thankfully and took the gift.

But soon the golden shoe was missed in the church and people looked all around until at last it was found with the fiddler, and he was condemned as a wicked thief and led out to be hanged. But on the way the procession passed by the house of God where the pillar with the image stood, and the minstrel longed to be allowed to enter so that he might take a good final leave with his little fiddle and could pour out the sorrow of his heart to his benefactor. This was then allowed to him. But hardly had he made the first stroke [of the bow] when, see, the image let the other golden slipper fall and by doing so showed that he was innocent of theft. Thus the fiddler was freed from irons and shackles and went merrily on his way; the holy virgin was named Kummernis.

### C. Justinus Kerner, “The Fiddler at Gmünd”

The final selection in this section is by Justinus Kerner, who lived from 1786 to 1862. In reference to the artistic and literary movement that began in the late eighteenth century, this German writer, a doctor by profession, has been classified as a romantic. More pejoratively, he has been pigeonholed as an embodiment of the so-called Biedermeier style. The epithet, taken from the name of a fictitious German provincial schoolmaster and wannabe poet, often carries connotations of placid or complacent mediocrity.

The real-life Kerner lived and worked in southwestern Germany, where he was affiliated with a circle of Swabian men of letters. In Schlechtbach, a village not too far from his home, he discovered a representation of Saint Kümmernis in a local church. He discussed the legend of the jongleur associated with her with Ludwig Uhland when this poet-friend of his was visiting him. Eventually Uhland prevailed upon him to compose a ballad about what he had found. Kerner completed the composition in October and brought it into print on December 9, 1816, in a regional cultural daily called the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* or “Morning paper for educated classes.”

The twenty-six-strophe poem, entitled “[The Fiddler at Gmünd](#),” replaces Kümmernis with Cecilia, in her guise as patron saint of music, and sets the action in Schwäbisch Gmünd, a town that before Kerner’s versifying had had no special connection with either holy woman. Furthermore, it bears note that the balladeer, as a committed [Protestant](#), was not motivated by personal religious belief in either martyr, but that he was well informed about the veneration of saints. He regarded such piety as intrinsically medieval.

The ballad, which has enjoyed unbroken success since first being published, tells how a poor fiddle player enters a church dedicated to Saint Cecilia in Gmünd. While sounding his instrument before an image of the musical martyr, he complains of his destitution. Out of compassion, she gives the entertainer her right shoe, made of gold. When he goes to exchange the object for money, he is accused of theft and sentenced to death. He swears to his innocence before the judge and the crowd, and he is vindicated when Cecilia tosses to him her left shoe, it too made of gold.

Once Gmünd built an incomparable little church to tuneful Saint Cecilia; a stone from it still stands there. [5] Lilies of silver shone, moonlit on account of the saint; golden roses garlanded, bright as dawn, the altar. The saint wore shoes wrought of pure gold [10] and a dress bright from silver: for then times were still good—times when across the distant sea, not only in the homeland, [15] the honor of artisans from Gmünd was found bright in gold and silver. And many of the foreign pilgrims surged into Cecilia’s little church; [20] within, song and organ playing resounded, from an undetectable location.

Once a fiddler came along. Oh, great need oppressed him. Weak legs, pale cheeks, and no money, no bread in his bag! [25] He sang and played all his suffering before the image, he penetrated the saint’s heart: hark, her dress rustles melodiously! Smiling, the image bends down [30] from her lifeless stillness and throws her golden shoe, the right one, to the [poor son of songs](#).

Intoxicated with happiness, he rushes to the nearest goldsmith's house; [35] he sings and dreams of the best feast, when the shoe is swapped for money. But hardly has the goldsmith seen the shoe than he displays a rough tone, and the son of song is hauled off [40] harshly with abuse before the judge. The trial is soon concluded; it is apparent to all that the miracle was only contrived, that he was the most impudent of robbers. [45] Woe! You, poor son of songs, have probably sung your last song, flying fearfully up and down on the gallows, like a bird.

People hear a little bell ring out [50] and they see the **black procession** flow with you to the site where your flight is to begin. They hear nuns and the monks' choir sing penitential song, [55] but they also hear fiddle notes emerge brightly from there. The fiddler's last request was to bring along his fiddle: "Where so many make music, I, fiddler, will make music in company." Now the procession comes by Cecilia's chapel; he fiddles mightily in deep grief toward the entranceway of the little church.

[65] And who only shortly before still hated him, sighs, "The poor little fiddler!" "I have only one request," he sings, "just let me in, to the saint!" They allow him; [70] he again fiddles his sorrow before the image, and he stirs heavenly clemency: hark, her dress rustles melodiously! Smiling, the image bends down from her lifeless stillness [75] and throws down to the poor son of songs the second golden shoe.

The masses stand, full of astonishment, and now every Christian sees how the man of the folksongs [80] is dear, even to the saints. With song and dancing, they lead him, beautifully adorned with ribbons and garlands, well-fortified with money and wine, into the town hall.

[85] All wrong is forgotten, the hall lights up beautifully for the celebration, and the fiddler is seated at the head for the merry feast. But when they are full of wine, [90] he takes his shoes with his hand and wanders in this way in the moonlight merrily into another land.

Ever since, every little fiddler is received lovingly in Gmünd, [95] however poor he comes—and there must be dancing. For that reason too one hears fiddling, singing, and dancing there incessantly, and if a person has all the strings break, [100] he still clinks with the empty glass. And if soon the clinking of glasses, dance, and song die away all around, a merry sound will still always ring out at Gmünd, even from the broken pieces.

## 9. The Dancer Musa

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### A. Gottfried Keller, “A Little Legend of Dance”

Gottfried Keller, a nineteenth-century Swiss author of both poetry and prose fiction, was born and died in Zurich. After abandoning his initial aspiration to become a painter, he channeled his ambitions into literature. His novellas soon enjoyed notable success. Though employed fulltime from 1861 to 1876 as a clerk to the canton of Zurich, he continued to write.

Among other accomplishments during those fifteen years, he published his *Seven Legends* in 1872. He had begun drafting them from 1855 to 1858, while living in Berlin, and attempted without luck to see them into print in 1862. In 1871 he picked up the strands again, making further revisions.

Among his works, these tales of the Virgin Mary and of conversion were Keller’s personal favorites. The final element in the collection is a short story entitled “The Little Legend of Dance.” Thanks to its artfulness, this composition has been called “the pearl” of the *Seven Legends*. Whereas the other pieces in the cycle form contrastive pairs, this seventh stands by itself as the *keystone to the little book*. It is also the only legend in the group whose very title advertises it explicitly as being legendary. Setting aside the generic term of legend makes it easier to accept and read each of the fictional narratives as a *Novelle*, the distinctively German manifestation of what would be called the short story in English.

To whatever extent imprecise labels for artistic and cultural movements can help increase our understanding of this story, Keller tends to be bracketed as a *realist rather than a late romantic*. This tale by itself supports fully neither classification. In it, Keller wrestles with the meaning of life on earth (which suggests realism) even while situating much of the action in heaven (an artistic conceit that accords better with romanticism). Throughout the *Seven Legends* but perhaps especially in the concluding one, he displays much of the same delicacy and grace that Anatole France achieved in his account of “The Juggler of Notre Dame.” To fix on one specific, Keller’s personal lack of religion makes itself palpable, but his secularism is never infused by any ridicule of those who have faith. Irony and imitation about Christian dogmas and writings do not degrade into polemic and parody. Despite being a non-believer and inclined to a restrained antagonism toward Catholicism, he seems to have taken

pains to be gentle and fair in his [treatment of Christianity](#). He treats religious devotion respectfully but all the while allows for ribbing humor, striking a balance [between sacralization and secularization](#), neither exalting nor mocking unreservedly the saintly figure with whom he concerns himself.

In the legend of Musa as retold and further embellished by the Swiss author, its main character suffers from just one weakness: a passion for dance. For her, such lively movement verges on being itself a form of prayer. The young woman indulges in this compulsion even when standing before the church door or while walking to the altar. Finally, an elderly gentleman appears who reveals himself to be King David. He proves to be the best partner with whom the girl could ever imagine being paired. No mention is made of the episode in which the Old Testament ruler made a much less dignified impression by cavorting seminude before the ark (see above, Part 1, Chapter 2), but Keller could have expected many in his audience to be [familiar with this detail](#). In any event, the big man of the Hebrew Bible promises Musa eternal bliss in dancing, provided that during her lifetime she renounces all earthly pleasures for penance and devotion.

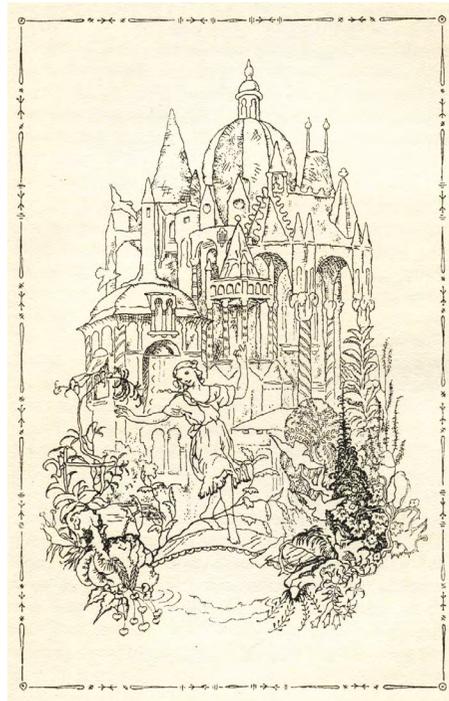


Fig. 13: *Musa dances in heaven*. Drawing by Gustav Traub, 1921. Published in Gottfried Keller, *Sieben Legenden* (Munich, Germany: Franz Hanfstaengl, 1921), p. 139.

Through self-abnegation of all sorts but especially through mortification of the flesh, she rises to the ascetic challenge. In quick order, she ascends to heaven itself.

In Greek and Roman mythology the Muses were nine goddesses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, who oversaw the arts and sciences. In the celestial crescendo to the tale, Keller puns on the name of his leading lady by bringing these classical divinities on stage in person. In fact, he goes so far as to seat the new arrival to paradise at a table with the ninesome, together with Cecilia, patron saint of music. Yet the bonhomie—or bonnefemie, because we are talking about an all-female cast—is shortlived. Complications ensue, since the classical deities have been permitted to enter the pearly gates only on sufferance. When given the opportunity to sing a song to voice their appreciation, the sisterly choir produces pandemonium: their seductive singing, which caps an [eroticism](#) that permeates the story and indeed the whole collection, makes the denizens of heaven long for the joys of earth. As a consequence, the legend comes to a melancholy conclusion in which the Muses are condemned forevermore to the underworld.

Unlike the nine sisters, Musa endures no ejection from paradise, but the reader is left to compare heavenly and earthly delights and to wonder whether the first do not come up short when set against the second. The virgin forwent earthly pleasures in exchange for heavenly ones, but the ending seems to foil her posthumous reward. If the number seven that Keller chose for his cycle alludes to the [days of creation](#), the parallel injects a sadness into the everlasting rest that the heroine has earned. Not all sabbaticals turn out well.

The translation of Keller follows the text in the 1991 [standard edition](#) of *Sieben Legenden* (Seven Legends). One challenge is the word *Jungfer*. The King James Bible is used here in place of the German Luther Bible quoted by the Swiss author. This adjustment requires rendering *Jungfer* as *virgin* in the epigraph and in mentions of the Virgin Mary. For consistency, I have resorted to the same noun in reference to Musa, even though the English “young lady” or another such synonym might be slightly more natural in many contexts today.

### “A Little Legend of Dance”

O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned  
with thy [tabrets](#), and shalt go forth in the dances ...

Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both  
young men and old together.

Jeremiah 31:4 and 13

According to the account of Saint Gregory, Musa was the dancer among the saints. The child of good people, she was a charming young virgin who served the Mother of God diligently, moved by only one passion, namely, by so uncontrollable a passion for the dance that when the child was not praying she was, without fail, dancing. And indeed

on all occasions Musa danced with her playmates, with children, with the young men, and even by herself. She danced in her little room, in the big hall, in the garden, in the meadows. Even when she went to the altar, it was more a pleasing dance than a walk, and on the smooth marble flagstones before the church doors she did not fail to try out quickly a little dance.

In fact, one day when she found herself alone in the church, she could not refrain from executing some figures before the altar, and, as it were, dancing a pretty prayer to the Virgin Mary. She became so oblivious in the process that she imagined she was merely dreaming when she saw an elderly but handsome gentleman dancing opposite her, who complemented her figures so skilfully that the two together performed the most expert dance imaginable. The gentleman wore a royal purple robe, a golden crown on his head, and a curly beard, which was gleaming black but had been dusted by the silvery frost of age, as if by distant starlight. At the same time music sounded from the choir, where a half dozen small angels stood or sat on its balustrade, with their chubby little legs hanging down over it, and fingering or blowing their various instruments. The youngsters were very comfortable and skilful at it. They let their music books rest on the stone images of angels (there were just enough) which were to be found as adornment on the choir-screen; only the smallest, a puffy-cheeked piper, was an exception, by sitting cross-legged and managing to hold his sheet music with his pink toes. He was also the most assiduous; the others dangled their feet and, now one and now another, kept spreading out their pinions with a rustle, so that their colors shimmered like doves' necks, and they teased each other while playing.

Musa found no time to wonder at all this until the dance, which lasted a fairly long time, had ended; for the merry gentleman seemed to enjoy himself as much with it as did the virgin, who thought that she was leaping about in heaven. But when the music ceased, and Musa stood there breathing deeply, she began to be frightened in good earnest, and looked in astonishment at the old man, who was neither panting nor hot, and who now began to speak. He revealed himself as being David, the Virgin Mary's royal ancestor, and her emissary. And he asked if she would like to spend eternal bliss in an unceasing pleasure-dance, a dance that in comparison with the one just finished could be called dreary slinking.

To this she promptly countered that she was aware of nothing better to wish for. Whereupon the blessed King David said again that in that case she had nothing else to do than to renounce all pleasure and all dancing for the rest of her days on earth, and devote herself solely to penance and spiritual exercises, and that without wavering or any relapse.

This proviso made the young virgin balk, and she asked whether she must then give up dancing altogether. She doubted whether there was really any dancing in heaven. For everything has its time; this earth looked to her good and appropriate for dancing on it; consequently, heaven would have very different attractions, since otherwise death would be a superfluity.

But David explained to her how much she was in error in this connection, and proved to her from many Bible passages as well as from his own example, that dancing was most certainly a hallowed occupation for the blessed. But now what was required was a quick decision, yes or no, whether she wanted to enter into eternal joy through temporal self-denial or not. If she did not want to, then he would go farther on; for they still needed some female dancers in heaven.

Musa stood, still doubtful and undecided, and played anxiously with a fingertip on her mouth. It seemed too hard to her, from that moment on to dance no more, for the sake of an unknown reward.

Then David beckoned, and suddenly the music played some bars of so incredibly blissful and ethereal a dance tune that the girl's soul leapt in her body, and all her limbs twitched; but she could not move one of them to dance, and she noted that her body was far too heavy and stiff for that tune. Full of longing she put her hand into that of the king, and pledged what he desired.

All at once he was no more to be seen, and the music-making angels rustled, fluttered, and crowded out from there through an open church window, after they in high-spirited, childish fashion struck the patient stone angels on the cheeks with their rolled-up sheet music, so that it made a slap.

But Musa went home with devout step, carrying that heavenly melody in her ear, and, having cast off all finery, she had a coarse garment made and put it on. At the same time, she built herself a cell at the back of her parents' garden, where trees cast a deep shade, made in it a little bed of moss, and lived there from then on as a penitent and saint, isolated from her housemates. She spent all her time in prayer, and quite often [struck herself with a scourge](#); but her severest penitential practice consisted in holding her limbs stiff and still; as soon as even one note sounded, the twittering of a bird, or the rustling of the leaves in the wind, so her feet twitched and suggested that they had to dance.

As this involuntary twitching would not forsake her, which at times seduced her to a little jump before she knew it, she had her tender little feet fettered together by a light chain. Her relatives and friends marveled day and night at the transformation, rejoiced at possessing such a saint, and guarded the hermitage under the trees as the apple of their eye. Many came to get counsel and intercession. In particular, they used to bring young girls to her who were somewhat clumsy on their feet; for they had noticed that everyone she touched at once became light and graceful in gait.

So she spent three years in her retreat; but, by the end of the third year, Musa had become almost as thin and transparent as a summer cloud. She lay continually on her little bed of moss and gazed longingly into heaven, and she believed that she could already see through the blue sky the golden soles of the blessed, dancing and gliding.

Finally, on a harsh autumn day it was said that the saint lay dying. She had taken off her dark penitential robe, and had herself clothed in dazzlingly white bridal garments. So she lay with folded hands, and smilingly awaited the hour of death. The whole garden was filled with devout people, the breezes murmured, and the leaves fell down from the trees on all sides. But suddenly the blowing of the wind changed into music, which seemed to be playing in the tree-tops, and, as the people looked up, look! then all the branches were clothed in fresh green, the myrtles and pomegranates blossomed and became fragrant, the earth decked itself with flowers, and a rose-colored glow settled on the white, frail form of the dying virgin.

In that instant, she gave up the ghost. The chain on her feet split apart with a sharp sound, heaven opened wide all around, full of endless radiance, and everyone could see in. Then they saw many thousands of beautiful virgins and young men in the utmost splendor, dancing in round dances farther than could be seen. A magnificent king rode a little toward earth on a cloud, on the edge of which a small performing group of six little angels stood, and received the form of the blessed Musa from before the eyes of all those

present who filled the garden. They saw, too, how she leapt into the opened heaven, and instantly vanished, dancing among the resounding and radiant ranks.

In heaven it was, to be exact, a high feast day. On feast days it was the custom (contested in fact by the Saint [Gregory of Nyssa](#), yet maintained by the one of [Nazianzus](#)) to invite the Nine Muses, who otherwise sat in hell, and to let them into heaven, that they might afford assistance there. They received good sustenance, but, once business was done, had to go back to the other place.

Now when the dances and songs and all the ceremonies had reached an end, and the heavenly hosts sat down to table, then Musa was seized by the table where the Nine Muses were being served. They sat huddled together almost timidly and glanced about themselves with fiery black or dark-blue eyes. The [busy Martha](#) of the Gospel was caring for them in person; she had put on her most beautiful kitchen apron and had a dainty, little smudge of soot on her white chin, and in a friendly way pressed all sorts of good things on the Muses. But just when Musa and also Saint [Cecilia](#) and still other women skilled in the fine arts came over, and greeted the shy [Pierian goddesses](#) cheerfully and joined their company, they began to thaw, became trusting, and a charmingly happy atmosphere developed in the circle of women. Musa sat beside [Terpsichore](#), and Cecilia between [Polyhymnia](#) and [Euterpe](#), and all took one another's hands. Now the little music lads came too and flattered the beautiful women, so as to obtain the bright pieces of fruit that shone on the ambrosial table. King David himself came and brought a golden cup, out of which all drank, so that lovely joy warmed them. He went with pleasure round the table, not omitting in passing by to caress for a moment pretty [Erato's](#) chin. While things were going so famously at the Muses' table, Our Lady herself appeared in all her beauty and goodness, sat down for an hour or so beside the Muses, and kissed [Urania](#), majestic with her coronet of stars, tenderly on the mouth, when in taking leave she whispered to her that she would not rest until the Muses could remain in Paradise forever.

That of course never happened. To show themselves thankful for the kindness and friendliness that had been shown them, and to prove their good will, the Muses took counsel among themselves and practised a hymn of praise in a secluded corner of the underworld. They tried to give it the form of the solemn chorals which were customary in heaven. They divided themselves into two halves of four voices each, above which [Urania](#) sang a sort of descant, and they managed thus to achieve a remarkable piece of vocal music.

When now the next feast day was celebrated in heaven, and the Muses again fulfilled their service, they seized a moment that appeared favourable for their plan, took up their places together, and began their song softly, but soon it grew extremely loud. But in those expanses it sounded so somber, even almost defiant and harsh, and at the same time so heavy with longing and plaintive that first a frightened silence prevailed but then all were seized with suffering for earth and homesickness, and burst out into general weeping.

An endless sighing rushed through heaven. Dismayed, all the elders and prophets came hurrying up, while the Muses, with their good intentions, sang louder and more melancholically, and all paradise with all the patriarchs, elders, and prophets, and all who ever walked or lay in the green meadows, lost all composure. But finally the Most High Trinity itself approached to put things right and to bring the zealous Muses to silence with a long, rumbling clap of thunder.

Then peace and calm returned to heaven. But the poor nine sisters had to leave, and since then have not been allowed to enter it again.

## B. Ludwig Theoboul Kosegarten, “The Legend of the Virgin Mary”

Gottfried Keller made no bones about the proximate source for all of the *Seven Legends*: he drew on the *Legenden* or “Legends” of Ludwig Theoboul Kosegarten. At first blush, it might seem peculiar that the Swiss writer chose to base his own tales on an equal number of narratives by a North German poet and Lutheran preacher. After all, the later author was raised not as a Catholic but as a Protestant—and in Zurich, of all places, a cradle of the reformation. Since in adulthood he was not merely unreligious but even atheist, he had no incentive to seek out an imprimatur, so to speak, from his predecessor’s Lutheranism. What is more, Keller found the contents of the *Legends* laughably at odds with *Kosegarten’s North German Protestantism*. In the retellings that the man of letters from Switzerland produced, he endeavored to peel away from the narratives any accretions, whether Roman or reformed, that masked what he regarded as their original pre-Christian vitality. To look at the process through a different optic, he heightened worldliness and eroticism wherever he could do so.

What more can be said about Keller’s point of departure? In 1804 Kosegarten brought out, in two octavo volumes, a gathering of 44 tales about the early Christian faith. In stock romantic fashion, he presented these stories as folk sagas, corresponding to the folk literatures of other nations. The English that follows translates the German in *Kosegarten’s Legends*.

There was a girl of noble-born stock who danced only too gladly. One day a preacher came into her father’s house; he asked what the girl’s favorite pastime and greatest pleasure was. They said to him, “Dancing.” Then he said to her, “Dear girl, would you like well to abstain from all gaiety one day long, so as afterward to live a whole year long in joy to your heart’s content? And would you like well a whole year long to be idle from dance, but if afterward you would be allowed all your life long to dance as often and as much as you ever only desired?” The girl said, “I would like that most gladly.” The monk continued, “Would you not give up love of the world, and spurn ephemeral, vain dancing, so that in the future you might enjoy eternal joy with God, and might dance and leap with his dear mother Mary and with all the heavenly hosts?” Then the girl fell silent and still for a long while, and sighed heavily.

Finally she spoke. “I would not want to swear off dance for the sake of some transient good, but so as to enjoy eternal dance with God and his saints. Could you now prove to me that they also dance and leap in heaven, then I will renounce all earthly dance, and I will do what you tell me.” Then the monk proved to her from the thirty-first chapter of *Jeremiah*, just as from the psalms of David, and from many other passages of Scripture, that dance also goes on in heaven. He also said, “It stands written that the *blessed in heaven* shall have full satisfaction in everything that they desire. Granted now that they arrived at a desire to dance and that there were no dance in heaven, then they would not have full satisfaction but instead one thing that they desired was lacking them; that would clearly be against God’s word.” When the girl heard, she pledged to the monk that she would leave off dancing out of love for God and his dear mother. Her father and

mother were very happy about this, and had made for her spiritual garb as she wished it; dressed in it, she served God in her parents' house with great devotion.

When four years had passed, she became gravely ill and began to withdraw from life. Friends and relatives advised her that they wanted to offer her the last sacraments. She said, "I will wait until my spiritual father comes; I am certain that I will not die so long as he is not present. I prayed to my bridegroom, Jesus Christ, about this, and he has granted it." Then the preacher came, through God's dispensation, from distant lands, and did not know that the girl was ill. The girl said to him, "Dear Father, with your permission I will now depart from here." Then the preacher provided her with our Lord's body and with holy oil. But she turned her eyes to heaven, looked happily at the preacher, and said, "Dear Father, when you converted me, you pledged to me that in heaven too there should be dancing and jumping; I release you from the pledge; for just now at this very hour I saw his dear mother and the saintly virgins in heaven in a beautiful dance; the same dance is also ready for me for eternity." As she said such things, she passed away in great joy.

Saint Gregory recalls a virgin named Musa who with pleasure danced beyond measure; and before and after the dancing she served Our Lady with great earnestness. Once, when she was in the process of praying, Our Lady came to her with many beautiful virgins, who danced with one another a very graceful dance. Mary asked the virgin if she would like to dance and play with the virgins eternally in this manner. She said, "Most gladly." Then Mary said, "Then leave off your dancing out of love for me from today on until the thirtieth day; and on the thirtieth day I will return to you, and I will lead you to the eternal round dance." With that, Our Lady disappeared. The virgin however went to confession and did penance, and took care from that hour on not to dance and not to commit other sins. And on the thirtieth day Our Lady came, as she had indicated, and took the virgin to eternal joy.

### C. Gregory the Great, "The Passing Away of Young Musa"

Keller's source for the legend of Musa is Kosegarten. In turn, Kosegarten's version relies on the recapitulation of the tale in the 1502 printing of the German legendary *Der Heiligen Leben* or *The Lives of the Saints*, less commonly designated as the *Passional*. In *The Lives of the Saints* the German (and Latin) poet Sebastian Brant was given a hand by the printer Johannes Grüninger. But the genealogy of the tale about dance reaches back much further than even the early years of the sixteenth century. Ultimately the otherworldly adventure recounted by Keller and his predecessors derives from an anecdote about a saintly girl named Musa that is preserved in the *Dialogi* or *Dialogues* of the pope and saint Gregory the Great.

In a brief account within that work, the sixth-century Father of the Latin Church introduces a girl named Musa who is the sister of Probus. The last-mentioned was a friend of the author, mentioned a few chapters earlier in the same text, and bishop of Rieti, a town in the central Italian region of Lazio. In Gregory's telling, Musa experiences a vision of Mary, in which the Mother of God shows the visionary other female children of her age clad all in white. The Virgin promises that the young lady may have them as her companions if only she refrains from the frivolity of laughing

and playing for thirty days. Not a word is breathed of dance, but the absence of this activity does not impede the usual course of events. No sooner said than done, the pious young thing dies on the thirtieth day and joins her saintly peers in heaven.

The chapter from *Gregory the Great*, which features Musa but as a very young girl and not as a dancer, is translated from the Latin of the *Dialogi* or *Dialogues*.

1. But I will not keep this silent, what the previously mentioned Probus, servant of God, was accustomed to relate about his sister, Musa by name, a little girl. He said that on a certain night the saintly Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, appeared to her in a vision, and showed to her girls her age in white clothing. When she desired to become familiar with them, but did not dare to associate with them, she was asked by the voice of Blessed Mary, ever the Virgin, if she would like to be with them and to live in her service. When the same girl said to her, "I wish that," she received immediately from her the command that she do nothing further frivolous and girlish, and that she refrain from laughter and jokes, knowing that she would come into her service among these very virgins, whom she had seen, on the thirtieth day.
2. Having seen these things, the girl was altered in all her behavior and with great application of seriousness wiped away from herself all frivolity of a girlish life. When her relatives marveled that she was altered, she, upon being asked, related the reason, what the Blessed Mother of God enjoined on her and on what day she indicated she would go to her service.
3. After the twenty-fourth day, she was taken by fever. On the thirtieth day, as the hour of her death drew near, she caught sight of the very same Blessed Mother of God coming toward her, with the girls whom she had seen in the vision. Musa began to respond to her as she was calling her, and to call out in an unmuted voice, with her eyes lowered respectfully, "Look, Lady, I am coming; look, Lady, I am coming." In saying this, she gave up the ghost, and departed from her virginal body to live with the virgin saints.
4. Peter: Since human kind is subject to many and countless vices, I think that the greatest part of heavenly Jerusalem can be filled up with little ones and infants.

#### D. Jacques de Vitry, *Sermons to the People*

The story of Musa, often but not always with outright acknowledgement of Gregory the Great as authority, appears in at least [sixteen medieval assemblages of Marian miracles](#) between the sixth and sixteenth centuries. In the long interim between Gregory and Brant, at least two major changes were made to the story. First, the female described by the Latin writer as *parva puella* or "little girl" becomes a little older, so that she is now a virginal young woman. Second, the conduct that the same character is persuaded to restrain in all three later vernacular forms is no longer the somewhat generic behavior of laughing and playing but instead the more particularized trait of dancing. A source that captures these two developments is found in the model sermons of Jacques de Vitry.

In addition to writings on history and theology, this French canon regular, who died in 1240, composed four cycles of model sermons. Whereas three follow the liturgical calendar, the fourth, written in the 1220s, is organized according to the social group of the audience to be addressed. This last cycle is known by the Latin title *Sermones vulgares* or by the Latin-English hybrid "*Ad status* Sermons." Whatever we call them, these sermons are replete with exempla. One of these illustrative tales retells in highly condensed fashion Gregory's account of Musa, with incidental mention of dancing. Many later recapitulations of the story expanded on the dance connection.

Gregory tells that a certain girl saw the Blessed Virgin with a multitude of virgins and longed mightily to be with them. The Blessed Virgin said to her, "Do not laugh for thirty days and you will be with us." After abstaining for thirty days from laughter, she died, and received the promised glory. Without doubt, if she had not ceased from laughter, songs, and dances, she would never have been received with the Blessed Virgin among the other virgins.

## 10. The Roman Report of “The Old Mime-Player”

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Later a saint in the Catholic Church, Augustine served in his lifetime as a bishop of the city Hippo in what was then the Roman province of Numidia (today the nation of Algeria). Among the most famous of his voluminous writings in Latin is *On the City of God against the Pagans*, often called for short *The City of God*. He composed this long philosophical tract between 413 and 427, to rebut claims by opponents of the Christians that the sack of Rome in 410 resulted from the abolition of paganism.

At one point in *The City of God* Augustine quotes a brief anecdote about a mime-player from *On Superstition* by Seneca the Younger. In the interim the treatise by the first-century Roman philosopher has been lost. Even without the benefit of whatever additional context the original might have supplied, the passage as transmitted by Augustine makes sense. In it, Seneca satirizes a superannuated performer. Though impoverished and old, the man had been in his prime an affluent star, no mere *mimus* but in fact an *archimimus* who surpassed all his peers in miming. Despite now being decrepit he persists in doing his routine daily on the Capitoline Hill in Rome.

Nothing is said of payment by passersby. Rather, the artist’s custom of putting on a show reflects a commitment to honor the chief of the pagan gods, since Jupiter was worshipped in the sanctuary on the Capitolium, the most important temple in ancient Rome. Since no mention is made of payment by priests, the habit likely attests to an assumption by the entertainer that ultimately artists such as himself perform not for human but instead divine audiences.

The anecdote that Seneca tells and that Augustine repeats could well have described an actuality. Professional actors who practiced pagan worship may have rendered performances in honor of their gods—and centuries later their Christian successors may have done the same for God, the Virgin, saints, and others. Afterward, events may have ensued that came to be credited as miracles. Both the fragment quoted by Augustine and the actions narrated in “Our Lady’s Tumbler” present entertainers, once at the pinnacle of success but now down-at-the-heels, who have withdrawn from their trades but who nonetheless offer their acts in homage to divinities.

Similar incidents have been widely attested across time and space, inside as well as outside western European Christian culture. How do we account for the likenesses? In this instance the two could have been bound together directly: the teller with whom

the key elements of "Our Lady's Tumbler" originated could have been inspired by perusing this moment in *The City of God*. Both the accounts could be tied together, then, through the narrative equivalent of cause and effect. In the past, literary historians often conducted research into sources and influences. Among folklorists, the process by which tales pass from one person and place to another has been called diffusionism. Though hope rarely exists of pinpointing all the evidence that would be required to map every movement in the passage of a given tale from its origins to all its eventual destinations, enough dots can often be jotted down to justify connecting them into lines.

But do we need to presume such an etiology? Alternatively, we could credit the existence of a story in multiple places around the world to polygenesis. According to this other theory, not all narratives need to be passed on by direct transmission from one teller to another or from one culture to another. Rather, one and the same tale can spring into being independently in different places at different times, because it deals with phenomena of human existence that are widespread, if not universal.

We cannot always ascertain whether the tellers or writers of this or that version believed that the events they described really happened or whether they merely deemed them good enough to be considered true and to deserve being retold. Likewise, we will often be unable to determine for sure whether the same individuals had encountered either a written source or an actual performance that inspired the gist of their narrative. The imagination of storytellers may not need such direct incitement.

A leading mime-player, an old man already grown decrepit, used to perform his mime-play daily on the Capitol, as if the gods gladly watched a performance human beings had abandoned.

## 11. The Persian Tale of “The Old Harper”

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The fragment quoted by Augustine in his early fifth-century *City of God* reports an episode that its author Seneca packages as a reality: an entertainer, despite having withdrawn from public practice of his profession, still puts on daily performances in homage to a god. The writer, who died in the capital of the Roman empire in 65 CE, treats the incident as having transpired in the city in his day. No other evidence survives to confirm or deny his description of what allegedly went on. “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” though poetry, lays similar claim to relating a real-life occurrence. Once again, we have no independent substantiation of the supposed event. Furthermore, nothing at all suggests that the medieval French poet had heard, let alone read, the anecdote that purported to have happened more than a millennium earlier.

Whether the two instances took place or not, they both depict performers whose “the show must go on” ethos is familiar even today. The distinguishing feature in both cases however is the faith of the protagonists that their true audience is not earthly but divine: in the end they feel certain that their most meaningful patrons are not people but God and celestial associates.

This chapter makes available a cluster of narratives preserved in Persian, composed from the late twelfth century on. All but the most recent, which is from the mid twentieth century, are imbued to various degrees with the kind of personal mystical meditation that is commonly associated with Sufism. This specifically Islamic brand of mysticism is hard to define. It means very different things at different times and has a complex history from the early medieval period to this day. The term can refer to distinct communities whose members share similar mystical beliefs that are accompanied by their own hierarchies and supporting literature. More comprehensively and in broadest terms, Sufism can be described as a mystical perspective on all of culture that has affected the discourse of literature and other modes of artistic expression throughout the Islamic world. This mystical reading, with its engrained defiance of, or impatience with, legalistic categorizations, enables Sufis to act as facilitators between different doctrines, inducing connections that break, or at least blur, sectarian divisions and internecine polemics. All these characteristics are particularly evident in Persian literature and its mystical classics. The remarkable Sufi poets cited here, ‘Aṭṭār and Rumi, were both Sunnis but their verses deal with human predicaments applicable to all faiths and sects.

So it would be misleading to belabor the terms Sufi, Sunni, and Shia, when the narratives in question hold paramount interest not for any specific religious doctrine but rather for the general circumstance of the miraculous element that they feature. The miracle depends on the involvement of a saintly figure, in these cases a great Sufi master, whose mediation brings an unexpected reward to the faithful old performer.

The Persian narrative telling of an aged professional entertainer who addresses God as a last resort and only then finds deliverance from adversity has been transmitted in at least a half dozen iterations, written between the late twelfth century and today. The most familiar version is by the thirteenth-century Sufi mystic poet, Rumi. The story is contained in his long mystical poem that has come to be known as *Mathnavi*. This designation denotes the prosodic form that has been used for almost all extended verse narratives in Persian. The composition has also been called *Mathnavi-ye Ma'navi* or "Spiritual Couplets."

The resemblances between these tales and the ultimately medieval European complex associated with Anatole France's *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* have seized the [attention of Persianists](#) sporadically for nearly a half century, but such specialists have not received much acknowledgment for their finds from those scholars in the West who specialize in philology, folklore studies, or any other division of learning, for that matter. The Persian-language material cries out for thoughtful analysis from many directions, and this dossier should greatly facilitate such examination.

Though some of the versions exist in English, others have never been put into any other language, and almost all of them would be hard for outsiders to track down. The older forms have received modern critical editions only recently, and little to no scholarship exists in Western research languages. All translations and annotation in this dossier are the work of Mohsen Ashtiany.

### A. Moḥammad ebn Monawwar, *The Mysteries of Unification*

The author of this extract from a long hagiography, commonly known for short as [Ebn Monawwar](#), was a descendant of [Abu Sa'id](#), a celebrated Sufi from Khorasan. Sometime between 1179 and 1192, Ebn Monawwar wrote his hagiographical text describing the life and deeds of his famous ancestor. Its full title may be rendered in English as [The Mysteries of Unification in the Spiritual Stations of Sheikh Abu Sa'id](#).

Among the numerous incidents recounted in the book, one tells of a lute-player who becomes destitute in his declining years. After performing in honor of God until he collapses from exhaustion, the entertainer is richly rewarded. The anecdote is ascribed to Ḥasan-e Mo'adab. Major domo to Abu Sa'id, he is mentioned frequently in this hagiography but seldom elsewhere. According to the narration attributed to him, the event took place in Nishapur, in Khorasan. In the Middle Ages, the city was a flourishing center of cultural activities. In this period, the province of Khorasan covered a large area that stretched well beyond its present borders in Iran.

Ḥasan-e Mo'adab recounted the following story:

"One day in Nishapur I was standing in the presence of Abu Sa'id, our Sheikh, may God sanctify his precious soul. The public session had come to an end, and the audience gone. I was deep in thoughts: I had amassed large debts, and there were callers demanding settlement. I couldn't see a way out. What I needed was for our Sheikh to say something on this matter and he was not saying anything.

The Sheikh beckoned to me to turn round. I looked and saw an old woman entering the door of the *khānaqāh*. I went to her, and she gave me a heavy purse and said, 'Here are a hundred gold dinars, go to the Sheikh and ask him to pray for our case.' I came back, delighted, thinking that I could meet my debts there and then. I took the purse to the Sheikh and put it down.

The Sheikh said, 'Don't put it down there. Pick it up and go to the graveyard at *Ḥayra*. You'll find there a dilapidated mausoleum with half-fallen walls. Go inside. There is an old man there, asleep. Give him our greetings and this gold. Tell him, "When you're done with this, come to us; we'll give you another. We're here till you come back.'"

Ḥasan went on with his story. "I left and followed the Sheikh's directions and went inside. I saw an old man, very frail, asleep with a lute tucked under his head. I woke him up, passed on the Sheikh's greetings, and gave him the gold. He bawled, demanding to be taken to the Sheikh.

I asked him about himself. 'I am as you see me, a lute-player by profession,' he said. 'I was much sought after by the public in my youth and a fixed feature in every get-together in town. A great many students came to me. I am old now and no one asks for me. We are in want of our daily bread, and I have no other skills. My wife and children told me, "We cannot have you here anymore. Leave now, and entrust us to God's care," and they threw me out of the door.

'I didn't know where to turn. I came to this graveyard and wept in agony and confided in the Almighty in my supplication, "I have no profession and my youth and strumming powers are gone. I have been shunned by all, and my wife and children have also thrown me out. It is now I and You, and You and I. Tonight I shall be your lute-player so that you will feed me." I kept playing some airs and weeping till the break of dawn. By the time the early prayers were called, I was exhausted. I collapsed and fell asleep till you came.'"

Ḥasan went on, "Together we went back to the Sheikh. He was still sitting there. The old man prostrated himself and embraced his hands and feet and repented. The Sheikh said to him, 'Good-hearted soul! You said your piece when you were left abandoned and in dire need. Keep on speaking to Him and spend this.' Then he turned to me and said, 'Ḥasan! In dealing with God no one has ever been a loser. That sum had been earmarked for him. Yours too will turn up.'"

Ḥasan narrated, "The next day after the Sheikh had finished with the session, someone came and gave me two hundred dinars, instructing me to take them to him. The Sheikh decreed that I should use them to meet my debts. I did and freed myself from all my debts."

## B. Farid al-Din 'Aṭṭār

*Farid al-Din 'Aṭṭār* was a renowned Persian poet as well as the author of a greatly admired hagiography of eminent mystics. He flourished in the final quarter of the twelfth and first two decades of the thirteenth century. Scant details of his life have

been ascertained, beyond the fact that he was supposedly a pharmacist in Nishapur. Two versions of "The Old Harper" appear in his works, in prose and verse.

### 1. *Saints' Lives*

Ebn Monawwar's account of Abu Sa'id, though the most voluminous and famous biography of him, was by no means the only one. Other descendants and disciples also recorded their versions. 'Aṭṭār must have been acquainted with a hagiographic account regarding Abu Sa'id that was distinct from Ebn Monawwar's, because he drew on it for the long section on Sheikh Abu Sa'id Abul'-Khayr in his book entitled *Saints' Lives*, about the notable sayings and miraculous deeds of various prominent Sufis. Probably one of his later works and composed in the early thirteenth century, this is his only extant prose. In its earliest form it comprises an introduction and [seventy-two biographies](#).

It is narrated by the (Sheikh's) attendant:

I had many debts and no resources. Someone brought a hundred dinars. The Sheikh said, "Go to such and such mosque. There is an old man there, give them to him." I went there and gave them to him. He was an old man with a lute tucked under his head. He wept as he got up and came with me to see the Sheikh and said to me, "They turned me out of the house and did not give me any food and no one took me to [samā'](#) and I was hungry. I went to a mosque and said, 'Oh Lord! I know nothing except playing the lute. I lack sustenance and they have thrown me into the street and my students have turned away from me and no one wants me. I will entertain you with my music tonight so that you feed me.' I kept playing and crying till morning and fell asleep after the dawn call for prayers till you came and gave me the gold."

So he came and sought repentance from the hands of the Sheikh. The Sheikh said, "Good-hearted soul! Driven by dearth and despair you said your piece and it did not go unheeded. Keep on speaking to Him and spend this silver!" The Sheikh then turned to the attendant and said, "In dealing with God, no one has ever been a loser."

### 2. *The Book of Afflictions*

'Aṭṭār also turns to the story of the old harper in verse, in his *Moṣibat-nāme* or *The Book of Afflictions*, a mystical allegory narrating a quest of the soul for unity. In this version the author twice mentions (lines 27 and 58–59) the importance of payment to the performer.

There was an old man, helpless and bewildered,  
 striving hard, but caught in the Wheel of Fortune,  
 crushed by penury, penned in by old age.  
 He grieved in distress and wailed like a harp.  
 5 He played the lute for his keep,  
 but found no buyers for his play,  
 and no charitable handouts of bread.  
 He was hungry, had no food and lacked sleep,

left stripped of all, with no provisions.  
10 Finding all doors barred,  
he picked up his lute and took to the road.  
A ramshackle mosque was on the way.  
He went in and played for a while.  
Facing Mecca, he began to pluck at the strings,  
15 with a song to accompany.  
After playing his lute for a while, he said,  
"Oh Lord, no skills have I,  
but what I do have, I have brought along for you,  
I have brought sweet melodies to your presence.  
20 I am helpless, old, feeble, and all alone.  
Bereft of bread, I've had enough!  
I am not sought for my music,  
I am not fed as an act of charity.  
Now I have given you what I have.  
25 You are munificent, so bring me what you have;  
I have nothing in the world,  
so don't listen to my session for free.  
Straighten my affairs once and for all,  
and save me from this life of sorrow."  
30 Having poured out his heart,  
he fell into a blissful sleep in that same mosque.  
The Sufi companions of that master of the path, Abu Sa'id,  
had all been famished for a while,  
all eyes were fixed on the road,  
35 waiting for relief, wanting to fortify body and soul.  
At last, a messenger arrived,  
bringing the Sheikh a hundred gold dinars.  
He kissed the threshold and said,  
"This is for your companions,  
40 to cover the cost of today's spread."  
The companions were truly thrilled,  
their cheeks flushed with the joy of expectation.  
The Sheikh gave the gold to his attendant and said,  
"In such and such a mosque there is an old man asleep,  
45 with a lute tucked under his head, a fine old man.  
Give him this gold, for this gold is his."  
The attendant took the old man's gold,  
leaving his own people hungry.  
When the old man saw all that gold,  
50 he threw himself on the ground, weeping,  
"Oh Lord! You are so magnanimous in bartering!  
So bountiful to a creature of dust like me.  
From now on, till death puts me to sleep for good,  
I will play my lute only for you.  
55 You truly appreciate the worth of masters.

No one is as discerning as you and yet,  
 since you yourself bask in praise,  
 how should I praise you, save by returning to you,  
 once I've spent all the gold."

### C. Rumi, "The Old Harper"

The Persian poet and Sufi mystic who is often known simply as Rumi in the West is conventionally called Mowlānā or Mowlavi in Persian literature and in Iran. More formally, he is designated by the fuller name Mowlānā Jalāl al-Din Rumi. Sometimes the adjective Balkhi is added, to acknowledge his birthplace of Balkh. His extensive mystical narrative poem *Mathnawi*, which counts among the major works of Sufism, comprises six books, with around 25,000 verses.

In the first book of *Mathnawi*, Rumi unfolds the story of the old harper, called "Pir-e changi" by the poet. Rather than relating the tale consecutively in a single sequence, he presents it in [five separate sections](#) that he intersperses among other stories and general observations. He uses such interlacement as a structural technique throughout the poem. In this translation the unrelated material that intervenes between the five is omitted. The last segment opens with a characteristic authorial interjection.

The line numbering assigned here is for the convenience of those who wish to navigate the English more precisely than by page alone. It does not attempt to follow the internal numeration of the Persian edition. Titles and subtitles have been excluded from the count.

*The story of the old harper who, in the time of 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, played the harp for God in the graveyard, on a day when he was utterly destitute.*

#### 1

In the reign of the [Caliph 'Umar](#), as you may have heard,  
 lived a harper, enjoying great pomp and opulence.  
 Hearing his song, nightingales swooned, fainting in delight.  
 On joyous occasions he raised the mirth a hundredfold;  
 5 he enriched gatherings and feasts by his presence,  
 and he could raise the dead when he took up his harp  
 like [Esrāfil](#)'s touch, whose artful strains  
 bring life to the dead, reviving the lifeless corpse.

## 2

He was a minstrel, who filled the world with joyous songs,  
 and with such airs that could kindle wondrous thoughts.  
 On hearing him, the soul would take wing like a bird  
 while his voice enchanted one's innermost spirit.

Time went by, he turned old and frail,  
 10 the falcon in him now a flycatcher perforce,  
 his back bent, curved like a barrel,  
 his eyebrows shading his eyes like a crupper strap.  
 His rousing fine voice now turned  
 hideous, trifling to hear.  
 15 His airs, once the envy of Venus,  
 echoed now the bray of an aged ass.  
 For all beauty is doomed to die:  
 roofs crumble at last and fall on earth, flat.  
 All save the voices of holy men from deep inside,  
 20 leading the way to the trumpet blast on the Day of Resurrection.

## 3

Weaker and idle, with advancing years,  
 even a loaf of bread was beyond his grasp.  
 "You've given me a long life and respite, oh Lord,  
 showered me with favors, and I, a worthless soul,  
 25 seventy years I have lived a life of sin,  
 not for a day did you take my bread away.  
 Today, I've had no takings. I'm your guest;  
 I'll play the harp for you. I'm yours."  
 He picked up the harp and set out, seeking God,  
 30 sighing all the way to the graveyard at Yathrib.  
 "I'll ask God to meet my strumming dues,  
 for His compassion reaches far, even to counterfeits."  
 He played his harp for a long while,  
 then lay down on a grave, his harp his pillow.  
 35 Sleep seized him; his soul like a bird,  
 freed from the cage, upwards flew,  
 away from the body and all the sorrows of the world,  
 leaving the harper and the harp.

## 4

40 **J**ust then God brought sleep to 'Umar's eyes,  
 so that he could not keep awake.  
 Baffled, he thought to himself, "This is strange.  
 It must come from the Unseen,  
 and to some purpose."  
 He lay down and fell asleep;  
 45 he dreamed of a call from heaven.

## 5

**R**eturn and listen to the minstrel's plight,  
 for he's exasperated by all this anxious waiting.  
 "Oh, 'Umar, go and tend to our servant's needs.  
 He is a special servant, in our highest esteem.  
 50 Take seven hundred dinars from the public purse,  
 and proceed to the graveyard.  
 Take the dinars to him, tell him he is our choice."  
 "Accept this modest sum now as the harper's dues.  
 Spend it all. When done, come here again."  
 55 Hearing the awesome command, 'Umar leapt up,  
 and to render service, set out to the graveyard.  
 Clutching the purse, in his quest,  
 he kept running round and round the graves,  
 but he found none except the old man.  
 60 "This can't be him," and so he ran once more.  
 He was exhausted and saw no one else.  
 "The Almighty had decreed that he had a servant,  
 pure, worthy, and favored.  
 How can an old harper be the chosen one? But then,  
 65 how wondrous are the Mysteries of the Divine!"  
 Once more he scoured the graveyard,  
 like a lion hunting on the plain.  
 Now convinced it had to be the old man,  
 "In darkness beat many a radiant heart," he mused.  
 70 Quietly he sat by the old man, but suddenly had to sneeze.  
 The old man leapt up, and seeing 'Umar, was taken aback.  
 In fear and trembling he set out to go.  
 "Oh God!" he said to himself, "Have mercy on me!"  
 "The **Moh̄taseb** has come after the Old Harper."  
 75 'Umar glanced at the old man,  
 looking shamefaced and pale.  
 "Don't be scared," he said,  
 "Don't bolt away from me!

I have brought you many good tidings from God.  
 80 He praised you to such a degree,  
 that he made 'Umar long to see you.  
 Come and sit beside me, don't go away,  
 so that I can relate in your ear the secrets of your good fortune.  
 God sends you his greetings and asks after you,  
 85 after all the endless sorrows and suffering borne by you.  
 Look! Here are scraps of gold for your strings.  
 Spend them all and come back here again."  
 The old man, tossed by emotions, heard this,  
 tore his clothes, and bit his hands.  
 90 "Oh Almighty without equal!" he kept crying,  
 as he melted in the sweat of his shame.  
 Sobbing violently and suffering beyond measure,  
 he threw down the harp and broke it into bits.  
 "You've been the veil hiding me from God;  
 95 a highwayman, waylaying me on the royal way,  
 you've sucked my blood for seventy years,  
 covered me with shame facing his pure presence.  
 Oh God, so compassionate, so steadfast,  
 take pity on a life spent in sinning!  
 100 God grants us life but its daily worth  
 is known to none save him alone.  
 I squandered mine, moment to moment,  
 blowing it all in treble and bass.  
 So absorbed in the [musical mode of Iraq](#),  
 105 I forgot all the bitter memories of separation.  
 The twenty-four melodies absorbed my hours,  
 while the caravan departed, and the day was lost.  
 Oh God! I rail against my own reprobate self!  
 I seek justice from none but you;  
 110 none can offer me redress save  
 He who is closer to me than I.  
 My selfhood derives from him, in dribs and drabs.  
 Less of that, and I will only see him.  
 When gold is counted in your presence,  
 115 your eyes will be fixed on the count, not on yourself.

*How 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, turned the harper's gaze from the station of weeping, which is existence, to the station of absorption, which is non-existence.*

"Your lamentations," 'Umar said, "are yet another sign of your sobriety.  
 The path of those who are wholeheartedly absorbed goes in another direction,

- for sobriety is yet another transgression:  
 sobriety is remembrance of the past.
- 120 Past and the future shroud you from God.  
 Set fire to both, past and future.  
 How much more do you wish to suffer from the two?  
 With their twists and turns and so many knots,  
 they are no better than a misshapen reed.
- 125 So long as there are knots, *the reed is not fit for secrets*,  
 nor as a companion to lips and songs.  
 What you say belies your ignorance of God's true knowledge.  
 Your contrition worse than what you repent,  
 you repent of your past deeds, but tell me,
- 130 when will you repent of this latest repentance?  
 For a while you prayed at the altar of your music;  
 now outpourings of tears have taken its place.  
 With *Fāruq* as his mirror of mysteries,  
 the soul of the Harper rose from within,
- 135 as with the soul itself, tears and smiles departed.  
 His soul departed, another soul was reborn,  
 a sense of wonder entered him at the time,  
 taking him beyond the earth and the sky.  
 A quest beyond a quest,
- 140 I cannot convey it; if you can, say so!  
 Such words and states are beyond words and states.  
 He drowned in the contemplation of his splendor and beauty—  
 not drowning, but detachment from all,  
 hidden from all, save the ocean.
- 145 When the tale of the Harper reached this stage,  
 The old man and his story drew a veil upon themselves,  
 Leaving all talk behind.  
 They remain half told, and they linger on in our mouth.

### D. Khvāju-ye Kermāni, *The Garden of Lights*

Khvāju-ye Kermāni, a Persian poet and mystic, was born on December 24, 1290. His birthplace was Kermān, in south-central Iran. After traveling in Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, he settled eventually in Shiraz, in the southwestern part of his homeland. He died there, perhaps in 1349. His *The Garden of Lights*, a poem of 2,037 couplets completed in 1342, comprehends twenty discourses that discuss the requirements of the mystical path and the ethics of kingship.

*The Story of the Old Lute-Player,  
Playing in the Wilderness and Receiving Favor*

There was once a minstrel, a musician,  
 who played his lute to earn his keep.  
 His soft whisperings took the tavern by storm.  
 As he sipped from a vintner's flagon, a blessed spring,  
 5 the *bird-ewer* was his soul mate.  
 Venus danced in circles to his tunes.  
 He lived on his airs,  
 his youthful days spent on his songs.  
 Then, with his lifespan at its last stage,  
 10 from riches he went down to rags.  
 His purse void as the hollow sound box of his lute;  
 his eyes, once sparkling like the garden of paradise, now bereft of its  
 resident beauties;  
 his gullet, narrow as the long neck of his lute.  
 The airs he once knew washed away from his mind,  
 15 hope abandoned, and teeth dislodged in despair.  
 The days of his youth had entered their evening.  
 All the melodies gone cold in his aged heart,  
 the appeal of his songs ebbed away.  
 He was well past playing his tunes,  
 20 and singing in different tongues.  
 Early one morning he made his way to a run-down inn,  
 and tuned his lute to the whispers of his heart.  
 His cries of woe rose to the firmament,  
 as he prayed to Heaven in softer tones,  
 25 grieving for his heart, laden with pain.  
*"You who know our hidden thoughts,*  
 my heartfelt songs all came from you.  
 The fleeting airs secured fame, inspired by you.  
 I've grown old, my back bent double like an arched harp,  
 30 my heart doleful as the lovers' dirge.  
 With a vengeance, the avenging spheres  
 twist and turn my ear, as if tuning a lute.  
 I cry and no one comes,  
 How long should I wail? Attend to my cries!  
 35 In a tumultuous world filled with anguish,  
 only to you can I offer my song.  
 Sixty years I've spent, serving your subjects,  
 composing songs in contraries.  
 How long should I go on, accommodating all?  
 40 Today it is for you that I play my song,  
 I play, with no caprice, nor a whim.  
 My lute has given me no succor.

Don't abandon me! Lift me up with a helping hand.  
 I seek your charity.  
 45 Show me compassion; I've come in need.  
 Your bounty is limitless, and I am destitute,  
 don't turn me away empty-handed."  
 He kept playing, shedding gemlike tears from his eyes,  
 tears of blood, rubies set in gold.  
 50 His palpable supplication took wing like a bird,  
 and at once a messenger arrived from the Unseen.  
 He drew out a sack of gold from his belt,  
 gave him his compliments, and placed it in front of him.  
 \*

I am that old songster now,  
 55 I made a home in this desolate corner,  
 a place for revelry in this day of mystery,  
 where in a hundred tunes I address him,  
 he who is free of all wants:  
 "See how tears flow from my eyes like the Oxus,  
 60 tears of blood rushing forth.  
 I have played in praise of your Oneness,  
 I have written chants dedicated to divine love.  
 Fortune's Wheel, baleful, bent on malice,  
 snatched away my heartfelt songs by its ruse.  
 65 My laments have become pitiful and my body frail.  
 The happy days of youth have gone; I have aged.  
 Birds screech when they hear me cry.  
 My unhappy heart sheds gloom on those about,  
 the color has drained from my cheeks,  
 70 wine has played havoc with my heart.  
 Like the tender silken strings of a lute,  
 my body has fallen victim to the perfidy of the firmaments,  
 thrashed about by their savage strumming.  
 My pristine soul awaits your service,  
 75 like a busker at the corner of your street.  
 Observe my impoverished state,  
 like the empty palm of an indigent Sufi.  
 Observe the way I stoop slanted,  
 like an alif in a Kufic script.  
 80 Since your bounty has no limits,  
 graciously replenish my needs.  
 On the road of my yearning for you, I made many songs.  
 Respond to this bandit of the road, lost on his way.  
 Don't drop me like a bowstring,  
 85 don't make me fall silent time and again.  
 Only you can straighten my affairs,  
 only you can make my market flourish.

From your garden comes Khvāju's flowering inspiration,  
 like a red tulip, scorched and branded by your mark.  
 90 Pour water on him from the fountain of your munificent bounty;  
 forgive him all his sins.

### E. Moḥammad Amin, *The Sea of Chronicles*

Precious little is certain about the author of this extensive historiographic work. His name was Moḥammad Amin, the son of Mirzā Moḥammad Zamān, and he was a native of Bukhara, in present-day Uzbekistan. In keeping with all the other uncertainties surrounding the writer, his year of birth is not sure: the best guess is that he was born at the end of the 1630s. He likely received a good education before assuming a high office in the service of the khan.

Moḥammad Amin tells us that he conceived the idea of writing *The Sea of Chronicles* when he turned sixty. This revelation suggests strongly that he composed the work late in the seventeenth century. In fact, a colophon in one manuscript puts the completion on March 5, 1699. The author lived on at least a few years afterward.

The title of the text signals its grand sweep. *The Sea of Chronicles*, or *of Histories*, comprises ten chapters. Following a pattern common in Persian historiography, the work offers in its opening chapters a potted universal history, beginning with the creation of the world, before proceeding in the final ones to more detailed local history. The whole is apparently based on thirty-seven earlier historical writings in Arabic and Persian. Given the direct quotation at the end of Moḥammad Amin's account of "Pir-e Changi" from the *Mathnavi*, Rumi must have been one of his main sources.

#### *An Account of Past Musicians and Minstrels*

Regarding that wayfarer on the path of sundry arts of music, privy to the mysteries of the Divine, the recipient of his favors, and a conveyor of eternal subtleties, the Excellent Pir-e Changi, may God have mercy upon him:

It is narrated that during the reign of *Anushirvān the Just*, he enjoyed such prestige and wealth that whenever he rode in a procession, two hundred Turkish and Indian slaves, clad in satin robes and wearing pearl earrings, escorted him. But when Anushirvan departed from this world, in a brief space of time and in the ensuing debacle all his wealth and chattel vanished or went to waste.

When the Caliphate was conferred on that guide on the path of righteousness, that ruler of the realm where religious law reigns supreme, whose presence embellishes the altar and the pulpit, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar b. Khattāb, may God be pleased with him, Pir-e Changi became apprehensive, and fearing the Caliph, went to the graveyard at Yathrib and took up his harp.

"Oh Lord," he said, "I used to play the harp regularly for your subjects. Now your creatures no longer pay heed to my music. I have therefore come here today to play for you so that you will pay for my performance."

He plucked at his harp, bewailing his broken heart, and weeping as he played. At last he tucked the harp under his head and fell asleep.

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, was asleep when a heavenly voice announced to him, "We have a friend in the graveyard at Yathrib. Take seven hundred dinars from the public coffers and give them to him and tell him it is the reward for his performance.

The Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, woke up from his sleep and took seven hundred dinars from the public purse and went to the Medina cemetery. No matter how hard he searched, he saw no one except the Old Harper, Pir-e Changi. On seven occasions, according to one version, and seventy according to another, he found himself arriving at the spot where the old man was sleeping.

"This old man is a miscreant," he mused to himself, "and not fit to be God's friend." In the end, since no one else appeared on the scene, he pondered awhile and thought to himself, "Perhaps it may be him after all."

He finally sat down by his feet. Suddenly he had to sneeze, and the old man opened his eyes. He saw his Excellency 'Umar. "My God!" he exclaimed, "I asked you to pay for my music and you've sent me 'Umar instead!" and he tried to beat a hasty retreat.

"Don't be afraid, old man!" his Excellency 'Umar responded. "The Almighty has called you a friend of his and has sent me to you to pay for your performance." And he left that seven hundred dinars with the old man, proffered his apologies, and added, "When you have spent it all come here again. The Almighty God has showered so much praise on your character that he has made me besotted by you." And he asked him to tell him how he had spent his seventy years on earth.

A citation from [Mowlānā Jalāl al-Din Rumi](#), may his grave be hallowed! In his [Mathnavi](#) he says:

In the reign of 'Umar, as you may have heard,  
lived a harper, enjoying great pomp and opulence.  
Hearing his song, nightingales would swoon, fainting in delight.  
On joyous occasions he raised the mirth a hundredfold.  
He was a minstrel who filled the world with joyous songs,  
and with such airs that could kindle wondrous thoughts.  
On hearing him, the soul, birdlike, would take wing  
while his voice enchanted one's innermost spirit.

[Rumi] noted down what had occurred and turned it into verse.

## F. Jalāl Āl-Aḥmad, "The Setār"

The twentieth-century Iranian intellectual Jalāl Āl-Aḥmad was born in 1923 in Tehran and died in 1969. His father was a Shi'ite cleric. Āl-Aḥmad made a strong mark as a social critic who pointed out the shortcomings of barren technology and consumerism. Equally important for our purposes, he also produced much fiction.

"The Setār" was first published in 1948. In it Āl-Aḥmad demonstrates his familiarity with the stories of "[The Old Harper](#)." Many elements have a familiar ring. For a start, we have a musician with a musical instrument (called setār and tār) and with pent-up

emotions who takes refuge in a mosque. But then the differences press forward, not to be ignored. The leading man is not old but young, not pious and devout but racked by doubts, not rooted in faith but angst-ridden in a bleak world where God is absent, not communitarian but individualistic. He has the air of an existentialist, transplanted from the pages of Camus or Sartre, Iranianized but by way of a rapidly changing Muslim land that was in friction with the encroaching sterilities of Western culture. We are far from both medieval Khorasan and Clairvaux.

He was holding a new *setār* with no cover. He was walking along in an open-collar shirt, oblivious to all. He came down the steps of the main mosque and struggled to make his way through the throng of sidewalk vendors and their crowd of customers, all milling around, sniffing for God knows what.

He was keeping the *setār* close to his chest and guarding its strings with his other hand in case they got caught up in a bystander's coat button or a porter's backpack and snapped apart.

At last, he had got what he had wished for. No longer did he have to hire a *setār* from someone else to play in gatherings and pay through the nose for its use and put up with patronizing condescension.

His disheveled hair reached down over his forehead, and it covered his right eye. He had a yellowish complexion and sunken cheeks but now he could hardly keep his excitement to himself and began running.

In gatherings and when in the right mood, he would sing and play the *tār* and the joy and happiness that he felt within would find its way to those around. But now he found himself in a crowd milling around for no good reason. So what could he do but rush to his destination? He was in a rush because he was happy thinking about a *setār* which was now very much his own.

He thought that from now on when he was in high spirits he could be as spontaneous and forceful as he wished, wielding the pick on the strings with no fear of breaking the strings and having the owner of the *tār* darken his day. This was a great relief to him and he thought that from now on he could give rapturous performances, irresistible even to himself, that would make him cry. He didn't know why he would cry, but from the bottom of his heart he wished to play well enough to make himself weep. He was convinced that only when the sound of his own *tār* brought tears to his eyes, would he have played well. Up to now he had never been able to play the way he had really wanted. His playing had all been for the sake of others, for people who were searching for their own fleeting and lost moments of happiness in the sound of his *tār* and deep within his doleful singing.

In all those nights at festive parties where he had sung and played, nights of revelry that appeared as canned jollity and were irksome to him, the sound of his strings had never been able to make him weep.

He hadn't been able to play the *tār* in a way that would have made him cry. Either the occasions were not suitable and the people who paid him and invited him didn't wish to be the recipient of his tears, or he himself, afraid of breaking the strings, had used the pick far more gently and slowly up and down the scale. He was certain of this too. He was certain of the fact that up to this time he had played and sung far more gingerly and placidly than he should have done.

He wanted to avoid dullness in his performance, to throw away caution. Now that he had been able to buy an instrument with these miserly sums that he had earned, he had fulfilled his goal. Now it was his, now he could easily play whatever he wanted. Now he could play the tār in such a way that would bring tears to his eyes.

He had been playing and singing for three years now. That's why he had left school. He always used to sit at the far end of the classroom and hum to himself. Others didn't care or notice but their math master was very strict. He disliked his humming to himself so much that he would get angry and leave the classroom in a fury. He had given formal promises on four or five occasions that he would stop humming but had found this impossible. It was only during the final year that no one could hear him humming at the end of the classroom. He was so tired and had spent so many nights awake that he would either stay in bed till noon or sleep in the classroom. But this episode too did not last long, and he soon left the school for good.

During the first year he had exhausted himself. He had played the setār, sang every night, and slept everyday till noon. Later he managed to bring some order into his life and would not accept invitations for more than two or three nights a week. He was gradually making a name for himself, no longer needing to rely on this or that music band. He was now known to people and they would come to the door of their shabby home and fix a date with his mother and knew for sure that he would turn up and they would spend a pleasant evening.

In spite of this, it was grueling work and his mother could see that he appeared more and more drained and haggard as the days went by.

He didn't pay any attention to this himself. He only thought of owning a tār and playing the way he wanted with his very own instrument. It was only recently that, from the tips he had received from playing in an upmarket wedding, he had managed to set some money aside and buy a brand new tār. And now that he owned a tār, he didn't know what else to wish for. It stood to reason that one could have more wishes, but he hadn't yet thought about this. For the moment his sole concern was to get somewhere as quickly as possible and take a good look at his tār and peer into its parts. Even in those nights of canned jollity and facile revelry, once he had the setār in his hand and singing to its tunes, he would lose all sense of here and now and feel such inner peace that he never wanted to put the instrument down—inconceivable of course, since this was someone else's home, the party belonged to others, and he was there only to entertain others.

In these states of oblivion he had not yet succeeded in experiencing real warmth and excitement. He had not managed to bring heat into his heart.

In the long nights of winter when he was returning home from these parties, dead tired, finding his way in the darkness to his home, he felt the need for internal warmth in such a palpable way that he thought that without it perhaps he would not be able to make it home. On several occasions he had been so panic-stricken that he had spent the entire evening in bars in search of this irretrievable object.

He was very frail. At a first glance he looked like an opium addict. But the tumult within, and the warmth that he felt inside in the past hour, ever since he had become the owner of the tār, had made his cheeks flush, and his forehead felt hot.

Busy with his thoughts, he had reached the main gates of the big mosque and was stepping forward on the smooth stone slab of the threshold when a lad selling perfumes who was sitting on the platform by the mosque door keeping an eye on his goods and twiddling his prayer beads waiting for customers, jumped down and grabbed him by the wrist.

"Bloody infidel! Coming into the mosque with your goddamn tool! Into God's own house!"

His train of thought was broken. The heat, which he had just felt, vanished. At first, he was confused but gradually realized what the boy was saying. No one else had yet noticed. He tried to extricate his wrist and carry on his way, but the perfume-seller was not letting go. He was clutching his wrist and kept on cursing and creating havoc.

"You godless rascal! Aren't you ashamed of God? How about some shame now ... a bit of modesty ..."

He tried once more to free his wrist and go on his way, but the boy wasn't going to be so easily satisfied and seemed to be making up for his lack of customers by wreaking vengeance on him.

Gradually one or two people began to take notice and gathered round them but no one was yet aware of what was going on and intervening. He had now been delayed for far too long.

It was evident that something would happen soon but the cold that had caught hold of his heart had again departed. He felt heat surging through his heart and into his brain. He saw red and lost control and with his other hand gave the boy a strong slap under his ear. The boy started panting and the cursing and swearing stopped. For a second, he felt dizzy in his head. He forgot about clutching the wrist and was rubbing his face with both hands. But suddenly he came to himself and jumped up. He was about to enter the mosque with his *tār* when the boy grabbed hold of the hem of his jacket and clutched his wrist again.

A brawl had begun. Several people tried to join in. The boy was still shouting and swearing and cursing the godless and fuming about the insult inflicted on God's own threshold and asking Muslims to come to his aid.

No one knew how it happened. He himself didn't notice it. Only that the *setār* with its wooden bowl hit the ground and broke with a short but resounding sound and its broken three strings twisted around each other and fell off at a corner. He stood by, dumbfounded, and gazed at the crowd. The perfume boy felt comforted, convinced that he had done his religious duties to the utmost. He expressed his heartfelt thanks and went back behind his stand and with his prayer beads at hand, intoned the many names of God.

Like the strings of his *tār*, all his thoughts were entangled and were rolled together. The cold had returned to his heart and was gradually seeping to his brain. Frozen, he huddled at a corner. His cup of hope had shattered into three parts like the bowl of his newly found *tār*. And its shards were slashing into his heart.



## 12. The Hasidic Tale of “The Little Whistle”

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In the *Confessions*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau tells in passing an [anecdote](#) about the nature of prayer. In the little story, the eighteenth-century Genevan philosopher and writer juxtaposes the highest of the high to the lowliest of the low. In this case the two poles of ecclesiastic authority that are brought into comparison are not an abbot and a lay brother, as they are in “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and its many descendants, but instead a bishop and an old woman:

I have read that a wise bishop, in a visit to his diocese, found  
an old woman whose only prayer knew only to utter  
“Oh!”  
“Good mother,” he said to her, “continue always to pray in this  
manner. Your prayer is better than ours.”  
This better prayer is also mine.

The old woman’s monosyllable is the plainest and simplest form of prayer, giving voice to pure adoration. In any case, no question exists of a direct relationship between “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and the Enlightenment author: neither knew of the other. Rather, the similarity arises from an age-old contention between top religious authorities and lowly laypeople over the mystery of what constitutes sincere and effective prayer. Often the core issue at stake is the even bigger one of letter and spirit—whether formal adherence to set structures or informal expression of inner feeling has more efficacy in reaching God.

Jewish lore contains a narrative that betrays intriguing parallels to the medieval poem that has stimulated this anthology. In this tale, a simpleminded and uneducated shepherd boy comes with his father to synagogue to pray on the eve of the Day of Atonement, known in Hebrew as Yom Kippur. The concluding service on this day is the Ne’ila, Hebrew meaning “locking.” The ceremony includes recitation of the final prayers of repentance. Despite repeated warnings from his parent, the youth, frustrated at his inability to recite properly, here resorts to sounding a rudimentary whistle or flute that he has with him, since he can offer God this skill alone. The congregants are shocked by the sacrilege. According to Jewish law, playing musical instruments is strongly prohibited on the Sabbath, even more so on Yom Kippur. The sole exception is

the shofar, made of a ram's horn. On this trumpet a blast is sounded on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But, as the rabbi explains, the illiterate boy's offering, because of its purity, does not cause offense. Rather, the blowing of the shepherd's pipe operates in tandem the shofar to break a spiritual blockage. In effect, it enables the congregation's prayers to go aloft and to reach God.

This legend circulated in variants already in the [early nineteenth century](#) as a legend about Yisra'el ben Eli'ezer (ca. 1700–1760), who is recognized for having founded Hasidism. He is commonly called the Besht, the acronym for Ba'al Shem Tov. In Hebrew the full phrase means "Master of the Good Name." His biography rests heavily on accounts transmitted orally by his students and other followers. Hasidic tradition, which originated in regions of Eastern Europe now located in Ukraine and Poland, relies on a large body of legends, about Yisra'el ben Eli'ezer among others, that have been called sacred anecdotes. By the late 1800s the story of the young herder was packaged regularly in anthologies of such Hasidic lore. [Retellings of the legend](#) have been folded into collections of tales from the Hasidim, especially those associated with Ba'al Shem Tov.

Outside Hasidism, the story of the shepherd and the whistle has been enshrined even in the general body of [Jewish folktales](#). The roots of the narrative have been traced to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, in the *Sefer Hasidim* or "Book of the Pious" by Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, a leader of the Jewish movement known as the Hassidei Ashkenaz or "Pious of Germany." In one form of such stories, a boy who does not know how to pray formally makes leaping over a ditch his means of worshipping God. In all cases, the Jewish tales tell of a young man of low status and little education who engages in a type of devotion that is initially deemed heterodox but that proves eventually to have greater efficacy than any of its more orthodox counterparts. The tale has often been called "[the ignorant's prayer](#)" or "the simpleton's effective prayer."

In an even wider multicultural context, the narrative has been grouped with other international religious folktales. In the taxonomy developed in folklore studies, the story has been given its own [classification number](#) as a [tale-type](#). Earlier the folktale was given a title that telegraphed its relation specifically to the Jewish tales as "A Shepherd Knows Nothing of God." More recently the tale has been given a more ecumenical title and summary:

### A Pious Innocent Man Knows Nothing of God

A pious man (farmer) worships God in his own way and never goes to church. A traveling preacher teaches him how to pray properly and continues on his way. When the pious man forgets the prayer, he follows the preacher's ship by walking on the water. By this miracle the preacher recognizes the man's holiness and understands that pious innocence is pleasing to God.

Did a prototype of the Jewish legend or a related tale exist more than a half millennium before Hasidism as we know it today originated, and did it migrate across religious and cultural divides to influence Christians and to inspire the exemplum underlying the medieval French poem? Or did the dynamic function in the opposite direction, as the story of the lay brother percolated across time and space from French Christians in the Middle Ages to eastern European Jews in the eighteenth century? If such seepage took place in either direction, was the chief conduit of transmission in Europe or in the Holy Land? Or were the [two traditions](#) altogether independent?

The legend tied to the Besht is here laid out succinctly, as retold by Martin Buber, who lived from 1878 to 1965.

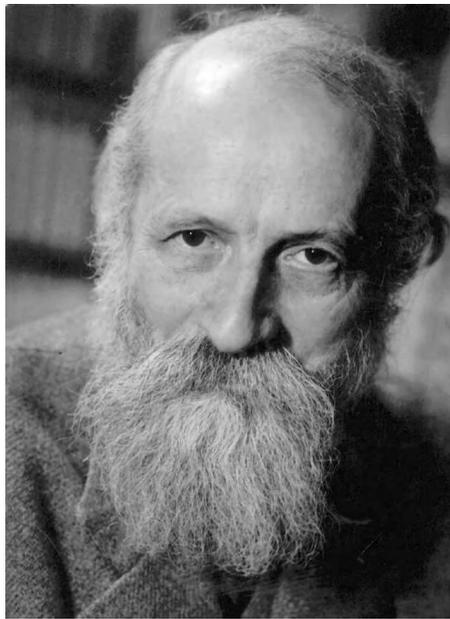


Fig. 14: *Martin Buber*. By The David B. Keidan Collection of Digital Images from the Central Zionist Archives (via Harvard University Library), Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11508348>

A very prominent intellectual figure in the first half of the twentieth century, this philosopher devoted one strand of his bountiful output to retelling stories of Hasidism. Buber, who was born in Vienna to an Orthodox family and died twenty years after World War II in Jerusalem, hoped that these writings would contribute to a renewal of Jewish culture.

## Martin Buber, "The Little Whistle"

A villager, who year after year prayed in the Baal Shem's House of Prayer in the Days of Awe, had a son who was so dull-witted that he could not even grasp the shapes of the letters, let alone the meaning of the holy words. On the Days of Awe his father did not take him to town with him, because he did not understand anything. But when he was thirteen and of age according to the laws of God, his father took him along on the Day of Atonement, for fear the boy might eat on the fast day simply because he did not know any better. Now the boy had a small whistle which he always blew when he sat out in the fields to herd the sheep and the calves. He had taken this with him in the pocket of his smock and his father had not noticed it. Hour after hour, the boy sat in the House of Prayer and had nothing to say. But when the Additional Service commenced, he said, "Father, I have my little whistle with me. I want to sing on it." The father was greatly perturbed and told him to do no such thing, and the boy restrained himself. But when the Afternoon Service was begun, he said again, "Father, do let me blow my little whistle." The father became angry and said, "Where did you put it?" And when the boy told him, he laid his hand on his pocket so that the boy could not take it out. But now the Closing Prayer began. The boy snatched his pocket away from his father's hand, took out the whistle and blew a loud note. All were frightened and confused. But the Baal Shem went on with the prayer, only more quickly and easily than usual. Later he said, "The boy made things easy for me."

# 13. The Western Reality of Religious Performers

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Rather than comprising translations or retellings of tales from long ago, this section presents in chronological order thumbnail sketches of a half dozen individuals who performed as dancers, clowns, or acrobats even after taking formal vows within Catholicism. Their activities usually created frictions with the hierarchy, which over the centuries has manifested an intense ambivalence toward unsanctioned physicality as an expression of devotion, above all within formal settings. The Church regulates praise and prayer. By the same token, its decrees determine what constitutes a miracle and who becomes a saint. Rare non-conformists have devised rituals of their own, sometimes out of a faith that ordinary life and entertainment have a capacity to be transcendent. The fate of these extraordinary people has run the gamut. At least two performers have been canonized. Most others, while not coming close to achieving sanctity, have at least negotiated a *modus vivendi* with the ecclesiastic authorities. One left the priesthood.

## A. Saint [Paschal Baylon](#)

The earliest of the six examples, Paschal Baylon was born in Aragon, in Spain, in 1540. He died in 1592. Of peasant stock, he was destined to be a herdsman. His given name, sometimes made into the Spanish diminutive Pascualito, refers to Easter: the Latin adjective *Paschalis* derives from the word for Passover taken by Greek via Aramaic from Hebrew. The saint's second name, Baylon, suggests "[one fond of dancing](#)." He may have picked up this nickname from his unusual way of honoring the Virgin.

Devoted to the Mother of God, Paschal taught himself to read so as to follow *The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, the prayerbook most favored in his day among laypeople. An ascetic, he went barefoot, fasted often, and ate only simple fare. Beneath his shepherd's cloak he wore an improvised friar's habit. In 1564, his longing to become a Franciscan was finally fulfilled when he entered the reformed friary of the Blessed Virgin of Loreto in Valencia as a lay brother.

According to tradition, he was appointed cook. A beautiful statue of Mary stood above a doorway of the frater. Paschal decked the altar there whenever he could with fresh-cut flowers. On feast days he put out candles. While fulfilling his duties, he would

sing quiet songs of praise to the Mother of God. Once a fellow Franciscan caught him doing rhythmic steps of joy, prancing backward and forward in a rudimentary [gypsy dance, before the statue](#). The image allegedly assumed a real body and blessed the saint-to-be. Another legend relates to Paschal's engagement with heretics in Calvinist France. On the homeward journey he first prayed before his walking staff and then broke into a jubilant jig.



Fig. 15: *San Pascual Bailón*. Comic illustration, 1961. Published in *Vidas ejemplares* 7.113 (November 15, 1961). Caption: "Then, filled with joy, he sang and danced like a madman."

In this case he danced, but without the explicit Marian connection of his previous antics in the dining room.

Paschal's cult has developed especially strong ties to [dance in the Philippines](#). In the eighteenth century, Spanish Franciscan missionaries there built a church dedicated to him in Obando, on the island of Luzon. Thanks to the connotations of Baylon, the saint became associated with the "Obando Fertility Rites." These three days feature dancing on the streets by men, women, and children in traditional costumes. The festival begins on the official feast of Paschal on May 17. On that day and the two that succeed it, a likeness of the patron saint of the day heads the procession as lead dancer.

## B. Saint [John Bosco](#)

The second person of interest is Saint John Bosco. This Italian priest, who was born in 1815 and died in 1888, drew youths into Catholic values by innovative methods, which included following and preceding prayer with presentations of juggling, acrobatics, and magic. But let us begin at the beginning. Bosco grew up fatherless and impoverished in the region of Piedmont, in the north of Italy. At the age of nine or ten,

he had the first of several life-determining dreams. In it, he saw himself in a field with young delinquents who played and cursed. After he failed to stop their misbehavior, a man of noble dress and bearing counseled him to win over the boys by being gentle and softhearted. A woman appeared, at which point the band of youths turned into wild animals. When she put out her hand, they changed into lambs.

By watching traveling showmen, Bosco learned juggling, tightrope walking, and magic tricks.

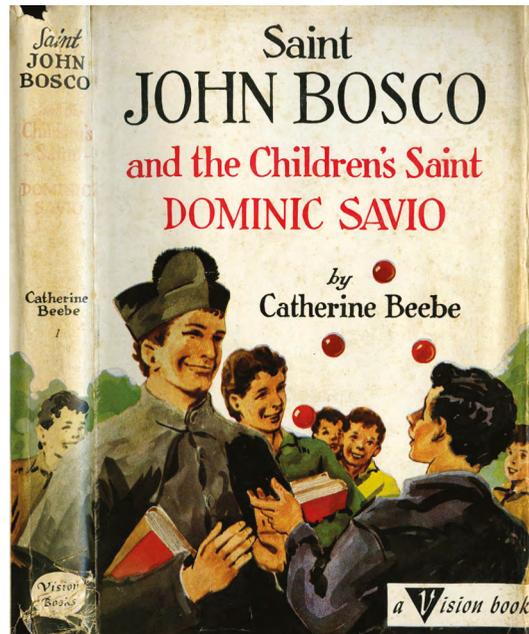


Fig. 16: Front cover of Catherine Beebe, *Saint John Bosco and the Children's Saint Dominic Savio*, illus. Robb Beebe (London: Vision Books, 1955). All rights reserved.

He played the class clown among his peers, but he would round off his repertoire with prayers. Supposedly changing pebbles into coins became a trademark stunt. In the decade that followed, he became a cleric and founded the Society of Saint Francis de Sales. The Salesians, as members were called, were divided into priests, seminarians, and lay brothers (known technically as coadjutors). Bosco, canonized in 1935, is regarded as the patron of stage magicians. On his feast day, Catholic illusionists sometimes venerate him by offering free magic shows to poor children.

### C. Ruth St. Denis

Our third focus of attention, an American modern dancer, takes us forward to the mid-1930s. Ruth St. Denis, whose life extended from 1879 to 1968, had long been interested in dance as a medium for [spiritual expression](#), and she even defined her shows as

"religion-art." In the mid-1930s she launched a performing ensemble called the [Society of Spiritual Arts](#). She specialized in [dancing on Christian themes](#) in churches to the accompaniment of music.

The most important of these shows was "The Masque of Mary," which premiered in 1934 at Riverside Church in New York. After an organ prelude and Gospel readings, St. Denis was introduced. In the guise of the White Madonna, she was posed on an altar, with thick facial makeup and equally heavy and bright nail polish on her fingers and toes, and with veils wound around her.



Fig. 17: Ruth St. Denis as the White Madonna in *The Masque of Mary* (Riverside Church, New York). Photograph, 1934. Photographer unknown.

Around her "The Angels of the Heavenly Host" danced joyously. When these ethereal beings ceased their movements, the lead dancer did what was tantamount to a sacred striptease by peeling back the layers of milky white to disclose a gown of deep turquoise. Now as the Blue Madonna, she presented balletic vignettes that illustrated major moments in the Virgin's life.

On Sunday, February 25, 1935, St. Denis celebrated a religious dance before the altar in Central Presbyterian, another Manhattan church. In this instance, her decision to color her toenails led to scandal, with heated [denunciations of dancing](#) in buildings used for worship.

## D. Mireille Nègre

Mireille Nègre, the fourth individual, was born in 1943. She is a French ballerina who turned nun. Once she took the habit, her longing to dance for God put her at odds with

the ecclesiastical hierarchy later in the twentieth century. But, once again, let us begin at the beginning.

As a two-year-old, Nègre suffered the loss of two toes in an elevator accident in Paris. At four she was encouraged to take lessons in classical dance, to correct the limp that she developed. By the age of seven she had made such headway in her studies that she was put forward at the French National Opera. As an adolescent, she achieved ever greater success in ballet there and eventually became the first dancer.

Nègre's commitment to dance was soon equaled or even surpassed by her attraction to a religious life. At the age of twelve, she had an epiphany. In 1965 she took a retreat in a convent and had the revelation of her religious calling, but she still wavered between dance and a spiritual vocation. In 1973, at twenty-nine, she entered the Carmelites of Limoges, a fervently Marian order, on a probationary basis.

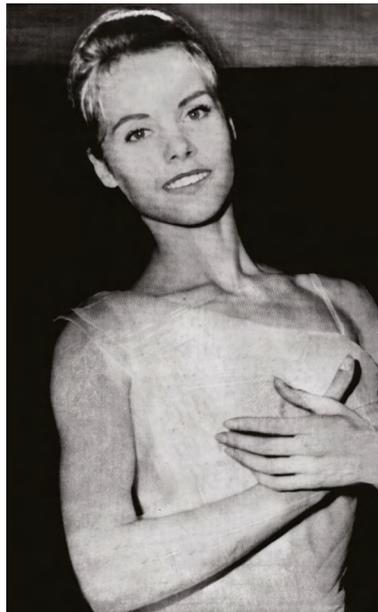


Fig. 18: Portrait of Mireille Nègre. Photograph, 1973. Photographer unknown. Argenta Images. All rights reserved.

For three of Nègre's ten years in the convent, she mainly embraced the contemplation and asceticism expected of her. Yet though required to abdicate the enticements of the body and with it dance, she displayed flashes of resistance and insubordination. For instance, she would strike the balletic pose known as an arabesque while plying a broom in the refectory. When caught in the act, she was chided by her mother superior, the figure in a nunnery equivalent to the abbot in a monastery. Yet despite the reprimands, Nègre could not renounce her passion. Many Bible passages reminded her of dance, and she would hear during Mass the pledge: "I will dance for you, Lord, as long as I live." When invited to serve as cantor, she declined because of being "exasperated

at not being able to pray for God by dancing for him." For Nègre, the leaps of ballet became degrees of rapture that could lead to union with the divine through love.

Her reminiscences make no attempt to conceal the painful sacrifices in forgoing dance. She establishes an equivalence between physical and verbal expression that recalls the tumbler. During her remaining seven years within the religious society, Nègre endured nervous breakdowns, bouts of anorexia, and the onset of a triple scoliosis. Eventually, she left the Carmelites for the order of the Visitation of Holy Mary in Vouvant. There she aspired to broaden the concept of spiritual self-consecration to Christ so as to comprehend the dedication to Him of her body as a dancer. For her, God was the lord of the dance, and dancing could conform to Christianity by enabling ascetic discipline and joyous ecstasy.

Eventually Nègre won over the Church authorities to her viewpoint. She was permitted by the Carmelites to resume dancing. In 1986 she became consecrated as a sister. Since then, she has danced in hallowed places, such as chapels and churches, and has choreographed the words of the liturgy. This experiment in matching the verbal with the corporeal parallels the performance of the tumbler in the medieval French poem, who made his leaps correspond to the offices performed in the choir above him. Just as the lay brother, knowing neither Latin nor monastic sign language, expressed himself through his tumbling, so too this Frenchwoman translated ballet into verbal terms and vice versa.

To what extent has Nègre's self-presentation been shaped by somehow knowing the tradition that originated in "Our Lady's Tumbler"? In her guise of "the protector of dancers," she presents herself as being "like the jongleur on the façade of Notre-Dame of Paris, who used to represent for me the struggle of an artist who finds no recognition in the world." This simile, which points to sculpture rather than literature and to a non-existent carving, suggests an indirect acquaintance with the story and not even through Anatole France. Yes, it would be hard to believe that a professional dancer of her vintage in France would not at some point have been told the tale or have heard of it. But it would be even more unbelievable that anyone would set out to relive a story by entering a nunnery for a decade. Both the story of the tumbler and the biography of Nègre speak to clashing and yet compatible loves that have fired many artists. Can dance and devotion go together? More to the point, can the Catholic religion allow prayer outside liturgy? The crux for this ballerina was her creed "I dance for God."

## E. Nick Weber

The fifth is Nick Weber. After becoming a clown, he was ordained a Jesuit priest. A while later, he saw a production of a medieval morality play that had been reconceived for a twentieth-century public. The experience inspired him to make a circus troupe the vehicle for conveying Christian messages to audiences. His Royal Lichtenstein Circus traveled the United States for twenty-two years, from the summer of 1971 through 1993.

In a manner that loosely paralleled that of the Italian performer Dario Fo (recipient of the 1997 Nobel Prize in Literature), Weber sought to make Christian faith compatible with sacred comedy. His clowning rested on two convictions—that comedy allows for the boisterous celebration of life and that laughter offers an additional avenue for the expression of worship. But Weber ended up believing that his last laugh could not and would not come within the Church. Eventually he left his order.

## F. Sister Anna Nobili

The final and most recent example of a real-life individual who prays and worships through dance is Sister Anna Nobili, born in Milan in 1970. This Italian woman left behind work as the equivalent of an exotic dancer to become instead a nun, but without abandoning dance itself. Like most of her predecessors, her choice has generated both fascination and unease within the Catholic Church. Her tale has been reported in newspapers and magazines, retold in on-screen interviews, and set forth in a tell-all memoir with a title translatable as *I Dance with God: The Sister Who Prays Dancing*. The blurb on the cover of the paperback concludes by referring to her “true and mysterious acrobatics of the heart and soul.”

After receiving training in modern, jazz, and classical dance, Nobili, in her early twenties, plied her trade for a time on raised platforms in bars, nightclubs, and discotheques of Milan. Though really a go-go dancer, she has been described often in the media as a lap dancer and stripper. In 1993, she left the dance floor and went on a short visit to Assisi. During those three days, she had a spiritual awakening thanks to Saints Francis and Chiara, and entered the order of Worker-Sisters of the Holy House of Nazareth. In 2008, she obtained permission to open a school for contemporary sacred dance. She now runs Holy Dance in Palestrina, near Rome.

Despite considering herself a ballerina for God, she has been found ungodly by some. As Sister Anna Nobili, her participation in a public event at the Cistercian monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, along with other celebrities such as the pop star Madonna, played a contributing role in a scandal in May of 2011. Undeterred, Sister Anna has appeared frequently on the small screen, written a book, and, above all, danced and taught dance. She contends consistently that she has been driven from the beginning by a desire for love, but that it took her a long time to find that the truest love was love for God.



## 14. The Hungarian Tale of “The Fool”

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[Dezső Malonyay](#), a writer from Hungary who lived from 1866 to 1916, produced prolifically in such disparate fields as folk art, art history, and French and Hungarian literary history.



Fig. 19: Ferenczy Károly, *Portrait of Dezső Malonyay*, 1904. Oil on canvas, 104.5 × 80 cm. Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria. Image from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malonyai\\_Dezs%C5%91.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malonyai_Dezs%C5%91.jpg)

Late in the fin de siècle, he composed a piece of short fiction that relates intriguingly to both the medieval “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and Anatole France’s “The Juggler of Notre Dame.”

Malonyay’s “[The Fool](#)” appeared in a Budapest daily on December 10, 1897. The date, doubtless not coincidentally, fell just two weeks before Christmas Eve. When the tale was first printed in his native land, the author was resident in Paris. That circumstance played a role in the nearly simultaneous publication in France of [a French translation](#)

of his text, likewise in December of 1897, in the special illustrated Christmas edition of the Parisian morning newspaper, *Le Figaro*. The translator was the French symbolist writer and journal editor Adrien Remacle. This prose was embellished with five illustrations in art nouveau style by the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha, internationally chic and astonishingly prolific. It was also enlivened further by the music for a dance song, courtesy of the Hungarian composer [Károly Agghàzy](#). Malonyay would have been hard pressed to imagine a more prestigious team for positioning his story to be attractive and attention-grabbing across the media of literature, art, and music.

In both the original and the translation, the fiction makes no explicit literary references. Similarly, it leaves the *dramatis personae* nameless. The title character is a youthful man who earns his living through physical comedy. This protagonist, a somewhat buffoonish character, falls head over heels in love with a mysterious young woman. Though not identified explicitly as belonging to any specific ethnic group, she may well have been assumed by many of Malonyay's readers to be a gypsy woman, in French *bohème* or *gitane*. All three terms are now avoided as slurs, with the most commonly preferred ethnonyms (without any gender specificity) being Roma and Romany. In nineteenth-century French literature, such women carried associations of [exoticism and freedom](#), both qualities that align with Malonyay's depiction of his leading lady as a witch and vagabond. By implication, she is cast as being somehow alien.

Eventually, another man becomes attracted to this enchantress and takes her overseas. He is seemingly rich, with much money to offer for her dancing performance. In addition, he is impressively large and muscular, attributes he applies to good effect when he deals a mighty blow to a sailor who ventures uninvited to accost his bewitching companion. This mystery man takes her off on a boat that he owns.

Bereft of his beloved, the forlorn fool who plays the lead in this little soap opera pours himself into his art and becomes wealthy: he earns more as a sad clown than ever before. Even so, he remains disconsolate. One day, drawn by the clanging of bells, he enters a church, donates all his wealth to the sacristan monk, and goes before the altar to the Virgin, where he performs an extraordinary acrobatic routine. Eventually he blacks out and bangs his skull against the altar steps. The Madonna [dismounts from her pedestal](#) to care for him.

In 1898, this story of a clownish protagonist was recast into a kind of comic opera that was staged in theaters in Hungary. [The libretto was by Jenő Rákosi](#), editor-in-chief of the same Budapest daily in which Malonyay's short story had debuted in the original Hungarian. In this quasi-operatic form, the main couple are called Bimbo and Bimbilla, names comically reminiscent of the Italian for "baby, little boy" in the masculine and "baby, little girl" in the feminine. The connotations of both words at the time were largely unrelated to shades of meaning that bimbo has picked up in English.

Western European literature, from its very beginnings, has confounded interpreters who have sought to pin down what priority and relative weight to assign to oral as opposed to written sources. In the French rendering, "The Fool" is qualified with a

subtitle that labels it a "Hungarian legend." What are we to make of this? Malonyay may indeed have encountered in his native land a popular tale, perhaps imbued in traditions of [holy fools](#), that happened to be intriguingly analogous to the medieval poem as adapted by Anatole France. Then again, he may have read the already famous French short story and calqued his version on it.

As the name suggests, holy fools—their holiness often undetected and unacknowledged by the public—made fools of themselves by feigning madness, drunkenness, and other forms of impairment. In western Europe the phenomenon had an analogue in the clowning of Saint Francis, who presented himself as a jongleur of God. But this kind of foolery was far more widespread in Christian lands far from Assisi. The first hotbed of such foolishness lay in the Greek East, where Symeon the Holy Fool comes immediately to mind. Only after his death in about 570 CE was the true holiness of his life recognized. Later fools for Christ made their mark in Russia, thanks to their unconventional behavior. Such eastern European traditions could have seeped into Hungary. Malonyay may come upon the peculiar story of his fool while playing the amateur ethnographer, investigating the popular religion and folktales in his native land. Then again, he may not have sought out or followed any authentic indigenous tradition. Instead, reading Anatole France's "Le Jongleur de Notre Dame" may have inspired him to concoct an imitation set in Hungary.

The Hungarian original has been translated by Réka Forrai. Though neither it nor the French translation has had much resonance when compared with the short story of Anatole France, the libretto of the opera by Jules Massenet, or the medieval poem as translated into English repeatedly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it raises intriguing questions about the diffusion of both "Our Lady's Tumbler" and "The Juggler of Notre Dame."

### Dezső Malonyay, "The Fool"

Once there lived a fool. He wandered from fair to fair, always cheerful, sunny and rainy days alike. If the mud was too deep, he was welcome in any cart heading to the fair, since he could contort his face into so many wrinkles, even the deaf and blind were cheered up.

Upon arrival, he would first stop in front of the pretzel woman. He would make one of his faces, where his eyebrows would sink all the way down to the corner of his mouth and his nose flattened out so much that his face became just like a pretzel. The pretzel woman rolled over with laughter. She would then give him a pretzel for his performance, but he would just gape, turn around, and vanish like [camphor](#). They would look for him everywhere, only to find him under the cloak of a passing monk. He would hang there on the [big beads of the monk's rosary](#).

"Don't fool with me, otherwise ..." And the holy man would curse, because at that time, holy men were not yet shy to curse if they got angry.

But the fool would kneel before him, cross himself, and regret his evil deed. The monk would even forgive his sin, because at that time monks still forgave, when asked, but then the fool would start [pulling lengths of blue and red ribbons](#) from the monk's cloak, the kind girls would weave into their hair for Sunday Mass.

And what reverent expression would follow this godless deed! But by the time the monk grabbed him by the hair, he was already at the tenth tent, standing on his hands, waving to the shocked monk with his legs.

"Someday you'll fall into my hands, by God!" yelled the monk.

But he never did. The fool rushed like the wind from here to there, one could never guess where.

Once this fool met on the road a little wildflower, belonging to no one, thrown to the winds.

"Where are you going, girl?"

"Nowhere."

"To whom do you belong?"

"To no one."

She was tousled and sweet, just perfect for him.

From then on, they travelled around the world together, the fool and the little witch. She remained tousled and hungry, although they always shared the pretzels and even acquired a comb at a fair. She learned to play music on the comb, but never to comb herself, not even when she grew tall and beautiful.

With a little piece of red ribbon, she could tie her strong, thick black hair in such a way that it was more beautiful even than if she had pleated it with a golden comb in a silver mirror. But she did this only before entering the city gates, using her own shadow as her mirror.

At the fairs she was followed by flocks of lads. She would jiggle colorful stones in her apron and tell them their future. But they didn't want to know their future, they only wanted a strand of her hair, though it was a thousandfold more expensive.

"Just one strand of your hair, beautiful witch, and my soul will be yours in return."

"The devil wants your soul," laughed the witch, her white teeth shining wickedly, and her blood-red, hot mouth steaming.

Alongside, the fool did his somersaults, rattled his hundred rattles, and offered handfuls of his own straw hair to the lads – for a kiss!

Then they left, like the wind.

They quite contentedly slept under the bushes. The witch would wash herself in the morning dew and dry it in the sunshine. And so she danced from fair to fair with her fool.

This is how they reached the city with the most beautiful church in the whole world, the city where there are always celebrations on the streets.

God, if only they could have avoided going there!

It was just at the time of the city's annual six-day fair.

At that famous fair [one could see](#) Greeks with their red caps, coming up the [Ionian Sea](#) together with Italian sailors, bringing fat olives and meaty raisins. Turbaned men from [Trebizond](#), big, bearded Armenians, who brought silk and filigrees, and who always revile each other's products. There were traders even from the other side of Spain, from the [Bay of Cádiz](#), and merchants from the feet of the great [Caucasus Mountains](#), not to mention black-robed [Jews](#), who are always easy to find wherever there is trading, and who are often beaten by the hearty merchants and worthy sailors if found in the city in the evening, after the closing of the gates.

The bells were ringing, and all the people were merry and laughing at the fool's antics, and hundreds of lads pursued the beautiful witch, offering their soul for one strand of her hair.

But among the hundreds, there was one who didn't ask her anything, but looked at her like the noonday sun. She could feel his gaze even when he was behind her.

After dancing her fiery flamenco, she would do the rounds with her little drum decorated with ribbons and copper bells, in which people would throw even silver coins. When she passed in front of the stranger, she would close her eyes, shivering, and drop the little Spanish drum, scattering all the coins.

People helped collect the coins and gave them faithfully to the fool, and the stranger gave them an entire purse in return, but the fool got scared from the incident, stopped his somersaults and called the beautiful witch.

"Let's leave this town, because we won't feel good here."

At that moment a big sailor in the crowd tried to grab the beautiful witch's waist, but the one with the gaze of noonday sun took him by the shoulder and threw him among the merchants like a snowflake, with just a bare hand.

Now the fool really began to insist that they leave the town, insisting as never before.

"Don't go," whispered a voice she had never heard, a voice that was soft like a cloud in a clean morning sky, and deep like the sound of the forest at night.

He kept following them.

He told her that his ship was at the city gates under the covered bridge and was easy to recognize by the blue flag with silver stars flying on its mast.

"Will you recognize it?"

"Yes," she said, even though the fool could overhear it, then she danced the flamenco as if she had thousands of stomping devils inside her.

In the evening, after the people scattered, the fool followed his witch out of the city gates, making a sorry face, even though no one could see him.

"So, you are going away?"

"Yes."

"Should I accompany you to the boat?"

"Yes."

He accompanied her to the ship, and instead of asking her even more eloquently not to leave him on his own, he simply contorted his face into the strangest expressions. When they reached the shore, he couldn't utter a word, his mouth long and silent. He looked like a fool indeed.

The witch asked him not to jump into the river and promised to return, and then kissed him and hugged him and ran dancing to the ship.

The fool sat on shore and watched the ship leave. He kept following it, rattling his hundred rattles. He followed it for three days, all the way to the sea and watched the blue flag with the silver star until it vanished.

When nothing could be seen, he continued to watch for three days. Then, on the seventh day he slowly walked back to the city where the most beautiful church on earth can be found, and where there are always celebrations on the street, and he got many, many coins, because there is nothing funnier than a sad fool.

He went straight to the church. He knew from when he was still a jolly fool that whatever people ask for in that church will be fulfilled, that is why all those processions go there.

He wanted to join the procession, but they chased him away. Everyone could enter the church except for him, because they thought he was only joking, and they simply laughed.

He sat at the street corner, head hanging. He was so good at being sad that coins piled up in front of him.

In the evening, when the bells went silent and the church was empty, he snuck into the sacristy.

"What do you want here?" asked the sacristan monk.

He gave him all his coins and told him to let him into the church.

"What do you want to do there, you fool?"

"I too want to pray for something."

"But you don't even know how to pray!"

But he begged until the sacristan monk consented to let him into the church.

"What should I do there, in order to be heard?"

"What you know best, offer it on the altar of the Virgin."

The monk let him in through the side door and watched. The fool didn't think for long; he headed straight to the altar where the beautiful image of the Madonna hung.

The sacristan monk was so shocked that he couldn't move, when he saw the fool begin somersaulting, twisting his arms and legs, turning around, falling back, nearly breaking his back, bending his legs to his neck, standing on his hands, and not sparing himself in any way, **banging his head on the altar steps**, his face in a thousand wrinkles, his chest pounding, his rattles continuously rattling, now small like a barrel, now long, like a snake, mumbling something meaningless, his veins visible on his neck and temples, lying down finally on the marble floor covered in sweat.

And then all the bells in the church tower began to ring, all the candles lit up and a heavenly light emanated from the altar, and the Virgin stepped out from the frame and took her starry veil and gently dried the fool's sweat.



Fig. 20: Mary tends to the fallen juggler. Illustration by Alphonse Mucha, 1897. Published in Dezsö Malonyay, "Le fou, légende hongroise," trans. Adrien Remacle, in *Le Figaro de Noël* (December 1897): 226.

But, oh God, once the beautiful witch was gone, how could the Virgin bring her back?

## 15. Henri Pourrat, “Péquelé”

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Henri Pourrat, born in 1887 and died in 1959, secured widest fame during his lifetime for *Gaspard des Montagnes* or, in English, *Gaspard of the Mountains*.

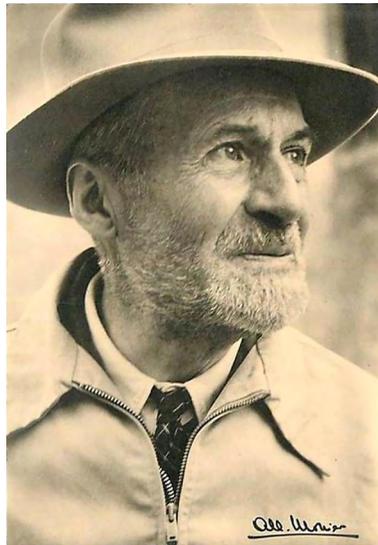


Fig. 21: Henri Pourrat. Photograph, date and photographer unknown.

The twentieth-century French writer began releasing his novel serially in 1921, brought out a first volume in 1922, published two more in the course of the decade, and rounded off the whole project with a fourth in 1931. Each of the four books that make up this grand whole recreates seven evenings of socializing and storytelling imagined to have taken place in the early nineteenth century. All the action in the fiction is set in central France, in the region of Auvergne, in the community of Ambert where the author was born and died. The entire enterprise is stamped by linguistic regionalism and local folk spirit, in both of which he took pride as a native son.

Already in 1910, Pourrat set out to inventory Auvergnat oral traditions and to stockpile jottings in which he summarized tales he had heard, along with their telling contexts. Roughly a quarter of a century later, he started to reconstitute these narratives and to see some of them into print. The project of seeking out such stories and publishing them became a lifelong mission, but it would not see fruition until after World War II.

When France fell to the Germans in June of 1940, the country was divided into an occupation zone in the north and west and a nominally free zone in the south. Both were in theory under the control of a French regime. Vichy France, as this government is often called, was headed by Henri Philippe Pétain, the Marshal who from 1940 to 1944 held office as Chief of the French State. A noun derived from his name, Pétainism, can be synonymous with collaborationism, owing to his policy of acquiescing to the demands of the German occupying forces. The word also evokes the ultra-conservative ideology associated with his nationalist and traditionalist regime and its supporters.

Pourrat's populism and conservatism aligned so well with the cultural priorities of Vichy that he has been called, with debatable fairness, "the official writer of Pétainism." After the war, the stances he struck while aligned with Pétain's government during the occupation rendered him suspect, rightly or wrongly, for having been a sympathizer or even a collaborationist with the Germans.

Once peace returned, the man of letters made sure not to embroil himself any further in politics. Instead, he concentrated on writing that stuck close to what had been his winning formula when he first made his name. Now a collector of folktales, he remained true to his long-held images of local people and their rural and regional arts, customs, and speech. The result was more than a decade, from the late 1940s through his death in 1959, in which he saw into print the fruits of indefatigable collecting over nearly a half century.

The cultural tide after World War II flowed in favor of whatever the French counterpart to "mid-century modern" should be named. Pourrat's interests in the old days of peasants and agrarian life fell hopelessly out of step with the radically changed new world, which of course encompassed a new France, that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. Unswayed by shifting vogues, he devoted himself unblinkingly to an immense enterprise that goes by the overarching title *Le Trésor de contes* or, in English, *The Treasury of Tales*. This magnum opus, based on the fieldwork that Pourrat conducted across almost fifty years, achieved a staggering expanse. Its first edition comprises thirteen volumes, published originally between 1948 and 1962, totaling close to a thousand tales. The next iteration, edited by his daughter long after his death but apparently in accordance with his express wishes, came into print between 1977 and 1986. It consists of seven formidable tomes, organized thematically without being numbered.

These days the assemblage of tales, however impressive its scope, is **not much known** within France and even less internationally. It fits loosely alongside the so-called fairy tales in German by the Brothers Grimm, the Uncle Remus stories in African-American dialect by Joel Chandler Harris, and other ventures of comparable magnitude. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, founding fathers of such activity, sought to mediate between common folk and the elite, toward the goal of solidifying one people and nation for Germany by preserving lore that threatened to disappear in the tumult following the Napoleonic wars. Their imitator in the United States, Joel Chandler Harris, coaxed

from former slaves the contents of trickster tales that starred the weak Brer Rabbit and showed him triumphant over the stronger Brer Fox. The efforts of both the Grimms and Harris relied on first interviewing oral informants and later [recording on paper](#) the gist of the tales and lore collected, along with sketchy details on the tellers and context. Neither the efforts of the German brothers nor those of the American would pass muster by the standards of present-day ethnography. Among other things, none of them could rely on audio recording or even word-for-word transcription of the interviews. At the end of the day, their prose must be regarded as literature and not as field notes. Their books do not record undoctored tellings by informants but instead offer their own creative retellings.

Calling Pourrat a Gallic Grimm or an Auvergnat Harris would go too far, but the Frenchman's volumes and archives, filled with extensive but hardly stenographic or scientific dossiers, adhere in many ways to the models of such nineteenth-century precedents. In his copious and yet not comprehensive notetaking, he often homed in on particularities of phrasing that lend the tales an aura of authenticity. For all that, he brought to the endeavor preconceived notions of the peasantry in Auvergne and of their orality. These preconceptions constantly informed and sometimes deformed the literary form that he imposed on the stories he heard.

Pourrat's longhand records served as the points of departure for exercises in redaction that cry out for a culinary metaphor: they were bouillon cubes, ready to be rehydrated into nourishing broth in a matter of minutes. In rewriting, he reconstituted the base and used it to infuse soups and stews. The resultant dishes retained the underlying flavor of oral tale-telling but added much complexity of his own making and accorded with his personal values and aesthetics. Like a chef aspiring to a Michelin rating, he served up regional fare from his native cuisine to the primarily Parisian audience of the prestigious Gallimard press. In this narrative cooking, he replaced the original tellers and tales with his reconceptions of the two.

Pourrat often endeavored, even if not to a degree that would satisfy a trained folklorist, to corroborate his fidelity to the oral deliveries of stories he heard that underlay the literate versions he wrote. Present-day researchers can consult the rich documentation in archives of his field notes. Yet those files give no hint whatsoever about the provenance of the story of relevance to us here, "Le Péquelé." Indeed, they contain no particulars at all about the tale, teller, or context. If truth be told, we have no guarantee even that the narrative reached the writer through oral tradition.

In the absence of records, we are left to speculate about Pourrat's sources. Theoretically, the progeny of "Our Lady's Tumbler" or of the exemplum associated with it could have lived on in Auvergne generation after generation from the late Middle Ages to the mid-twentieth century. The oddity would be that before Pourrat, no one else anywhere in all of France ever recorded this oral tradition. Likelier would be that the story came into (or back into) folktale-telling via "The Juggler of Notre Dame" as transmitted through Anatole France, Jules Massenet, or a medium influenced by one,

the other, or both. Readers of the short fiction, viewers of the opera, or, to put forward one further hypothesis, listeners of a radio program could have recounted the tale from memory, with alteration and embroidery. Yet curiously, Le Péquelé's activity as an acrobat recalls the unnamed tumbler of the medieval poem more than the juggling Barnabé of Anatole France or the jongleur Jean of Jules Massenet and Maurice Léna. Therein lies the mystery.

We find ourselves stuck, as so often, with regard to questions about oral or written origins. Whatever route of transmission delivered the story to Pourrat, he did his best to transform it into the semblance of a folktale, even one redolent in some ways of literary fairy tale. Right off the bat, he opened the narrative with the typical "once upon a time" phrase. Immediately afterward, he identified the hero first by his profession of [juggler](#) and then by his name of Péquelé. The entertainer, here struggling (as in France's story and Massenet's opera) rather than prosperous (as in "Our Lady's Tumbler"), wishes to live in a monastery so as to serve the Mother of God, but is not permitted to do so. The abbot believes that Mary would not want a physical performer in her service. Ultimately, the head of the abbey is forced to realize his mistake after witnessing the image of the Virgin as she leaves the stone column on which she stood, descends to Péquelé on a beam of light, and wipes the sweat from his brow with the edge of her veil. Thus persuaded to modify his views, the leader of the community allows the juggler to stay.

The English is reprinted from *French Folktales from the Collection of Henri Pourrat*, selected by C. G. Bjurström, translated and with an introduction by Royall Tyler (New York: Pantheon, 1989), 36–41, with the kind permission of the translator. Tyler has also produced the fullest [assessment in English](#) of Pourrat's immense project, with close comparison of tales as published with their oral field versions. By the luck of the draw "Le Péquelé" happens not to be one of these case studies, but they can inspire suggestive comparisons. Pourrat's folktale or, as some might prefer, "faketale" has had a modest but interesting afterlife in English-language [children's literature](#).

A final note about the title is in order. In both printed editions of the folktales, the story of concern to us is called "*Le Péquelé*," after its principal character. The distinctive designation of this eponymous hero may carry embedded within it connotations along the lines of [péquenaud](#), denoting a simple or, more pejoratively, brutish peasant. In the long run the name might then derive from the Latin *pagus*, which produced the French *pays* and Italian *paese*, both meaning "country," and *paganus*, whence the French *paysan* "peasant," Italian *paesano* "fellow countryman," and both the English *pagan* and *peasant*. Alternatively, speculation has also posited a relationship with the Spanish *pequeño* for "little." This second etymology is more convenient than convincing. Considering the additional uncertainty as to whether "Le Péquelé" is a true name or a epithet, no attempt is made here to translate and to evoke any of the possible associations. The definite article is dropped and the second element is capitalized.

## "Péquelé"

There was once a poor juggler people called Péquelé. He lived off the little shows he put on in village squares, when he rolled out his threadbare mat. Heaven knows what acrobatics he launched into then, leaping and somersaulting, walking on his hands, twisting himself up, tying himself into knots like a snake and then untying himself again, or springing about like a squirrel.

He lived off these tricks but he didn't live well. People always look down a bit on those who wander the countryside, though they may admit the wanderers keep the rest of us amused. For themselves, their work is to grow bread. With the strength of their arms they struggle mightily with wheatgrass, brambles, and thistles. They can hardly think much of strolling entertainers. Poor Péquelé didn't see many coins fall on his carpet. He now only knew by rumor what a roast of beef might be, or even a nice steaming bowl of thick soup. As pale as a church candle he was, and as thin as a draft through a keyhole. But he roamed on, hawking and coughing, hair in his eyes, like a skinny cat. He really was almost like a ghost, or like one of those scarecrows made of crossed sticks and a few rags that people put up in cherry orchards to keep jays and orioles off the fruit.

Lightly though he wandered, one December evening at nightfall Péquelé fell. He stumbled in some brambles and collapsed a few paces farther on, on the steps of a roadside cross. There he fainted.

Happily two [begging friars](#) on the way home to their cloister found him, just as it was beginning to snow, and loaded him on their donkey. At the monastery he got some wine to drink and some hot soup. The next day he tried walking again, but his legs were all rubbery and wouldn't hold him up. The abbot said he could stay a week to get his strength back.

The week went by and the snow melted. The south wind cleared the roads. One fine morning the abbot had Péquelé brought to the locutory, the cloister's visiting room.

"My good Péquelé," said he, "all friends must part. We're going to fill your pack and you're going to set out on the road again."

"But you see, Father Abbot, I'd rather stay here," replied Péquelé.

"You'll come and see us again next year, and we'll give you three days on retreat. Our rule won't let us keep a passing traveler for more than three days."

Poor Péquelé was dreaming of good round bread on the table, of bowls full of lentils, and of chunks of cheese washed down with a little wine. There was especially the peace of the monastery, like the peace of a room where you sit by the fire while it's snowing outside. How miserable it is then, on the road! The wind whistles, the rain beats in your face, and the dogs people loose at the sight of you bark savagely and snap at your heels. And above all, there's the whole countryside's sullen ill-will. Here, in the white-vaulted passageways, there was peace always present and always found; sweet, assured peace.

But there was still more in the monastery to capture the heart of poor Péquelé. Ever since he was a tiny boy, doing somersaults in the grass, he'd loved Our Lady and had given her his heart. There before her image, in the cloister's beautiful chapel with its red and blue stained-glass windows, he felt closer to her than anywhere else in the world.

"Oh please, Father Abbot, won't you keep me, so I can be a friar with the others?"

"My poor Péquelé, weren't you born instead to roam the highways and byways? You're good at somersaults, but that's all. Do you think Our Lady needs an acrobat in this monastery of ours?"

Péquelé hung his head. One tear, then another and another, ran down his cheeks.

"All right," said the abbot after a moment. "Listen. Will you promise me you'll be a good monk, worthy of the name?"

"Oh yes, yes, Father! I so love the Holy Virgin!"

"All right, we'll keep you here as a novice, and in three months' time we'll see."

Péquelé shone with happiness. Carried away by joy he flipped upside down, walked on his hands, then turned cartwheels round and round the locutory. Nothing like that had ever been seen in the room before.

"Enough, enough, Péquelé! We'll overlook your gamboling this once. But now you're a novice, we'll have no more of your mountebank tricks. Do you understand me, Péquelé?"

"I understand you, Father."

"No more leaps or somersaults!"

"Absolutely not. No, no."

"You're going to put on the habit, and you must stop acting like a carnival buffoon. Agreed?"

"Yes, Father Abbot, agreed!"

Péquelé had promised with all his heart, like a child. And with all his heart he kept the rule three days, three weeks, and three months. But winter was past now and spring was coming. Soon there'd be no more snowflakes sailing by on the wind, but instead petals of hawthorn and plum. Already you could hear the blackbird, the first bird to sing in the year's first thaw, like a little flute in the trees still bare and stirred by the wind. Far off, in the heart of the woods, cuckoos were calling forth yellow flowers to bloom in the grass. Wet garden paths, drying now, were running off toward the sun.

Something got into Péquelé's legs—something like the fife's mad magic, when the music comes to life before your eyes, dancing to each measure and phrase. The abbot, whose eye watched everything, saw well enough that Péquelé had quicksilver in his veins.

"Listen, my son," said he, "your work for today is to prune the orchard. Get up there in the tops of the apple trees and take out all the dead or weak branches."

So Péquelé got up in the trees, pruning hook in hand. Here and there he hopped, like a tightrope dancer. And all at once, in the spring wind, he discovered he was lighter than down. He ended up leaping from apple tree to apple tree like a squirrel.

When he got to the end of the orchard, of course, he had to come down and put back on the habit he'd taken off for climbing. But first, on the grass in his shirt and breeches, all alone, free and full of fun, he just couldn't resist. Off he went, standing on his head, walking on his hands, doing leaps and twists and flip-flops of all sorts, filling the orchard with acrobatics as a goldfinch fills its cage with song.

The abbot came to check on Péquelé's progress. He saw everything.

Péquelé promised very contritely that he'd never do it again. No more somersaults, oh no! In fact he apologized so humbly and so sincerely that the abbot couldn't help relenting. He sighed a big sigh and drew his hands back into his sleeves.

"Very well," he said, "I'll keep you on probation a while longer. But if you don't keep your promise, out you go! Remember that, my son, if you hope to stay."

The abbot thought the problem was quicksilver in the veins, did he? No, it wasn't so much that as heartfelt joy. Some evenings, Péquelé's heart was just bursting with joy.

The weather was fine, cool, and bright with a nice breeze. The setting sun, as red as a red-hot iron quoit, was turning the air in the distance all pink. You could see, beneath a few homing birds, the blue countryside settling into evening calm, and all space opening to the peace of God. Poor Péquelé (so he told himself) didn't know how to offer up dignified prayers like the other monks. But somehow he had to thank the Lord who

made all things so beautiful. And it seemed to him that he could do this only by doing the one thing he was good at in this world: his tricks of a showman and a carefree child.

The abbot called the chapter together. The matter seemed clear to him and to all the monks: it was wiser not to keep at the monastery a monk who leaped about like a goat—in a word, a mountebank.

"Surely he's no great sinner," one monk objected.

"Ah," replied another, "but there are all these somersaults of his. That's what he was born to and he can't help it!"

"We haven't been able to get him to mend his ways," concluded the abbot. "He's still a madcap, and no madcap will ever make a monk."

Péquelé confessed his fault and wept. He didn't dare try to defend himself. All he had were his tears. He wept at the very idea of leaving the monastery; his white, vaulted cell; the little garden full of box and pansies; and all the peaceful, kindly friars. Poor Péquelé wept like the spring at the back of the orchard.

The abbot, his eyes on Péquelé, felt a quiver in the pit of his stomach. More than one friar was close to tears, and so was he. But this mad spate of flip-flops seemed just too outrageous to let pass. Péquelé hadn't managed to keep on the path of wisdom and live like a monk, so he'd have to go back to his old path as a strolling acrobat.

They stripped off his habit and gave him back his mat and pack.

The abbot left right away and went to pray in the chapel. "I had to do it," he kept repeating, sunk in his stall. "Poor Péquelé's still a child. And we, Our Lady's servants, can't be romping children any more."

He'd gotten that far in his thoughts when from his dark corner he heard a slight noise. Not far away, Péquelé was unrolling his mat on the chapel's flagstones. He was right in front of the column which supported the Virgin's wooden image.

"Our Lady Mary," said Péquelé, "I wanted to live in your house all the days of my life, but as you can see, I'm not worthy. Still, I mean to thank you for the time I've spent here almost as your little boy."

Believing himself alone in the chapel, he addressed Our Lady as volubly as a child. And what did he do next but start in on his tricks. Bending and stretching, rolling and leaping, he did every trick he knew, but with so much spirit, so much soul, that the abbot, who was about to get up and stop the whole thing, stayed right where he was.

Suddenly, dazzled and bathed in light, the abbot slid from his seat down onto his knees. For at a certain moment Péquelé had come down on his feet, his face streaming with sweat and almost breathless. And at that very moment (the abbot saw it happen), the Virgin left her stone column and came to Péquelé on a ray of light. She leaned over him and, with the edge of her veil, gently wiped his streaming forehead.

Like a mother caressing her child, she caressed the strolling acrobat. The chapel was ablaze with light.

"Forgive me, Our Lady, forgive me," murmured the abbot, bowing his head to touch with his forehead the rail of his stall. "I thought I was truly wise, and yet could not see wisdom. What do we really know, after all, except to gather at your feet like children, innocently and with joy? That's all the saints have ever known—to love God with all their heart, and God's Mother, and everything that is of God. This mountebank is a greater saint than us all."

Péquelé stayed at the monastery to pray and to do his leaps and tricks, which in spirit were easily worth any prayers. Then, one fine day, he died. They say Our Lady appeared at his bedside and the abbot saw her there again, as he had that evening in the chapel when to wipe away with her shining veil the sweat of exhaustion, Our Lady had come and leaned down over her poor acrobat.



## PART 2

# “THE JUGGLER OF NOTRE DAME”: RECEPTION FROM FIN-DE-SIÈCLE FRANCE TO LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA



# Introduction

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This part of the book is pitched at all those who are interested in or at least open to cultural and especially literary studies. While ushering readers step by step forward across time, it aims to promote scrutiny of the responses that the thirteenth-century poem elicited from the late nineteenth up to the late twentieth century. Concurrently, this section shuttles its users back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean between Europe and the United States. The whole gives insight into the vagaries of success that a narrative undergoes in the constant Darwinian struggle for survival within culture. Above all, these pieces offer testimony to the broad swath of hearers and readers to whom the medieval period in general and this tale in particular have appealed.

For almost a hundred years, the story popped up everywhere. In France the original was not properly translated verbatim until the late twentieth century. That dearth did not impede its popularity at all. In the *fin de siècle*, the poem prompted one paraphrase and another poetic re-creation in French by authors who have now faded from memory. Each of these two treatments confirms that in the waning years of the nineteenth century the tale was deemed attractive. Its audiences ranged from the mass readership of newspapers through the more elite membership of national cultural academies and regional intellectual coteries.

The reception of the medieval poem begins in earnest with a short story by the Nobel Prize-winning author, Anatole France, and with an opera by Jules Massenet, who attained the greatest commercial success of all French composers in his lifetime. Today these two artists, especially the musician, are all but forgotten, above all outside their native country, but during the Belle Époque they commanded high esteem, not merely within their own nation but internationally as well. Anatole France's short story came out first in 1890. Two years later it achieved much greater impact at home and abroad after its inclusion in a volume bearing the title *L'étui du nacre* or "The little box of mother-of-pearl." The opening night of Massenet's opera fell in 1902. Its libretto, by a little-known collaborator of the composer, was inspired by both the poem from the Middle Ages and France's story.

In English, the star of the medieval French miracle has often been styled, somewhat quaintly, a tumbler. By what names did such a professional go in the thirteenth century? What would his shows have looked like? Would the typical busker of this kind have been poor or rich? How predictable would it have been for such a person to concentrate on dance and acrobatics, as opposed to being a generalist who could

sing, tell stories, flip and somersault, pull funny faces, play musical instruments, and amuse in other ways as well? How much competition would a tumbler have felt with other vagabonds? Would the pros of traveling together in troupes, almost like proto-circuses, have outweighed the cons?

Both the brief fiction by Anatole France and the musical drama by Jules Massenet were called *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*. The first noun can refer either to a jongleur, which is to say, an all-round medieval entertainer along the lines of minstrels, mime-players, jesters, jokers, acrobats, and dancers, or specifically to a juggler. The English words *joker*, *jongleur*, and *juggler*, like the Latin forms from which they and their French cognates derive, are all intimately related.

Such performers probably never vanished, not even in the radical transformations of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, but they would have been less numerous than they became from the twelfth century on. The rock musicians of their day, they sometimes had unsavory reputations. Even among the ancient Romans they had been held suspect. The demands of their lives both allowed and compelled them to move about, and the itinerancy in itself made them questionable. They traveled in bands that were suspected of pursuing illicit activities. Similarly, their trade raised many of the red flags that have often been raised by the presence and profession of actors. For one thing, it caused these virtuosos often to exhibit their physicality, to take on the appearances and attitudes of others, not excepting even women, and to talk of bodily functions and sex or even to imitate them.

For all these reasons, jongleurs had a complicated relationship with the ecclesiastic hierarchy. Often they aroused its distrust. Churchmen damned them repeatedly in canon law for being immoral, akin to prostitutes. Clerics felt grave ambivalence about their song and instrumental music, in contrast to the redemptive chant of the liturgy. In an environment in which the soul was privileged over the body, the corporeality of their profession counted against them.

To make matters worse, popular preachers, such as Franciscan and Dominican mendicants, now and again felt in competition for audiences with street buskers. At times the temptation could have been irresistible to preaching friars to cultivate exempla that presented jongleurs in an unfavorable light and admonished against frequenting and financing them.

Yet sometimes jongleurs with a knack for storytelling, poetry-making, and song-singing specialized in recounting or reenacting tales about the Virgin or saints. Especially when plying their trade on pilgrimage routes, they earned recognition as propagandists for cults: their performances increased the numbers and whipped up the fervor of the faithful who crisscrossed Europe on roads to saintly sites in cathedrals and other churches.

The connection could be mutually beneficial, even symbiotic: more pilgrims meant more rewards for both minstrels and churchmen. The itinerant entertainers had every reason to spread word of fresh apparitions and miracles, while ecclesiastic writers had

equally sound cause to return the favor by making the figure of the jongleur central within a subset of their narratives. So it happened that at one moment these crowd-pleasers could be taken to task for living in a manner Mary could never condone, but at the next be deemed laudable for their service to the Virgin.

In some instances they were credited with having a method to their madness. Fools for Christ (a label taken from the Pauline epistle, 1 Corinthians 1:25), they were thought to possess a wisdom behind a misleading surface of idiocy or madness. In this capacity, they gained validation from the assertions of holy men such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi that they too were jongleurs or fools for God. No wonder that like jesters and jugglers, jongleurs have become fixed within pop fantasies of medieval life. They crop up routinely in portrayals of the entourages of kings and noblemen.

Notre Dame is the French for “Our Lady,” byword for the Virgin or Mother of God. All four of these are formal appellations for Mary. For understandable reasons, the Gallic epithet for the woman has become confused and conflated with churches hallowed in her name. People in both France and globally default unthinkingly into associating the events in the story with the preeminent architectural Notre Dame, namely, the cathedral of Paris, emblem of the country and its capital alike.

The first few chapters in the second part of this book are translated from the French. They lead into English-language poetry, for the most part but by no means exclusively by Americans. One celebrity who was not a writer must be mentioned and given her due: Mary Garden. After taking Paris by storm, this Scottish-American diva repeated the feat in New York and Chicago across the first thirty years of the twentieth century—throughout the golden age of opera. Because she left no new literary text of musical composition of our story, Garden has no chapter of her own here, but it would be impossible to dispute that she did more than anyone else to establish the standing of “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and its offspring throughout the United States for decades to come. The seductive vitality of her performances may not come through in the few crackly audio recordings or the two stagey silent films we still have, but many firsthand accounts convey how very much her own she made the part of the jongleur.

Think about the story a moment: all the main actors, excepting the Virgin, are men. This one soprano, through her insistence on singing the role of Jean en travesti—meaning “dressed as a member of the opposite sex”—ensured that the medieval story, already boosted by the fame of Anatole France, reached a mass audience. Her star-power paved the way for the tale’s entry into vaudeville, radio, television, and other formats. Last but not least, she blazed a trail for innumerable later women to act, dance, and sing in adaptations of “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and “The Juggler of Notre Dame” from which they would otherwise have been precluded.

As odd as it may seem to us these days, the French monk and his thirteenth-century miracle passed muster as suitable fare for consummately American and modern consumption. In 1893 Katharine Lee Bates, a writer on the faculty of Wellesley,

composed a poem that she revamped fifteen years later as the lyrics to the patriotic song "America the Beautiful." But this professor's passions extended beyond national pride and what was then the present day. In 1904 she published further verse in which she paid homage to the medieval story of the gymnastic juggleur. She valued her piece about the tumbler enough to reprint it at a minimum four more times through 1930.

The onetime Harvard professor Henry Adams, great-grandson of the second US President John Adams and grandson of the sixth John Quincy Adams, gave a very different boost to "Our Lady's Tumbler" by incorporating into his *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* excerpts of the medieval French with his own translations in parallel columns. The private runs of 150 copies in 1904 that he had printed and the five hundred additional ones in 1912 in no way sufficed to satisfy demand. From 1913 until the end of the twentieth century, the book remained available through trade publishers. Adams's idiosyncratic contrasts between the twelfth century and the early twentieth—between the Virgin Mary and the dynamo—exercised powerful effects on readers. Among other things, the miracle of the tumbler reached a new public through its inclusion in this deeply personal meditation on the course of history from the European Middle Ages to American modernity.

A third, typical recasting of the narrative for the US market was produced by Edwin Markham. In 1898 he had bounded into the national spotlight with a poem entitled "The Man with the Hoe" that at once celebrated a French painting and advocated in a socialist spirit for manual laborers. In 1922 this same poet was selected to recite his "Lincoln, the Man of the People" at the dedication of the brand-new memorial to the president in Washington, DC. Like Katharine Lee Bates, Markham was engrossed in social issues confronting America in his day, but such engrossment in no way lessened his capacity to be entranced by the Middle Ages and our story. In 1907 he published "The Juggler of Touraine." His version of the miracle in narrative verse came out in the Christmas issue of a bestselling monthly.

From the very beginning, those recounting the tale of the tumbler or juggler have betrayed a strong penchant for explicitly citing their sources of information and inspiration. Every so often the citations are correct and truthful, while in other cases they are thoroughly or partly false and possibly fanciful. Indeed, occasionally authors deliberately misdirect their readers and even make unacknowledged appropriations that might warrant the charge of plagiarism. Among the versions served up in this section, Anatole France, Jules Massenet, and John Nesbitt were all intriguingly incomplete in divulging their sources. The same could be said for the wonderful books of R. O. Blechman and Tomie dePaola. Beyond the general principle of poetic license, the coy non-acknowledgments owe to the specific circumstance that from the outset this tale has been deemed to be common domain. No one can copyright the Middle Ages, least of all its oral traditional literature.

Not long before World War I ended and the Spanish flu pandemic swept from one continent to another, the story premiered in children's literature. Once again,

the pivotal author is an American—and again a woman, in this case an illustrator of children’s literature and later cartoonist, Violet Moore Higgins. Her rendition for young eyes and ears was published twice in 1917, once with her own illustrations and again with those of another artist. Though now cloaked in oblivion, her remolding of the narrative had the staying power to be reissued in 1934.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the short story by Anatole France was anthologized incessantly. Even as the golden age of opera waned, it held onto its popularity. In fact, in the second quarter of the century, his tale “Our Lady’s Juggler” attained ever greater numbers of new fans through broadcasting. Radio plays were heard on air and read in printed scripts that circulated as transcripts, pamphlets, and magazines. They facilitated the permeation of the story into such media as television, film, graphic novel, and cartoon, while extending its reach in children’s literature, where it remains most entrenched nowadays.

After World War II much creative energy for the jongleur, whether a tumbler or a juggler, manifested itself in English poetry. Though a ballad by the world-famous Anglo-American W. H. Auden has demonstrated the greatest resilience, the well-known Irishman Patrick Kavanagh, the late-blooming American Virginia Hamilton Adair, and still others from the US such as Virginia (Nina) Nyhart and Turner Cassity contributed one-of-a-kind lyric responses to the figure of the minstrel and the miracle that he occasioned. By sheer chance—or not?—when the tumbler puts in his final appearance in this section, he is a she, a denizen of a mental hospital whose antics casually reveal the private parts that most people keep carefully hidden from view. Though the Virgin offers no apparition in recompense, the setting is a chapel, and the athletic feats bring their doer joy.



# 1. The Romance Philologists

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The making of human culture is, put banally, a complex negotiation. So too, on a smaller scale within that overarching process, is the reconstruction of texts that survive from long ago. To be received by later audiences, such artifacts must be transferred from the formats in which they were recorded in bygone centuries. Most forms from earlier periods were handwritten with utensils, on surfaces, using scripts, and, last but not least, in languages that all differ from what we encounter nowadays. Consequently, they must be reconstituted if they are to be read and interpreted in other media by people today.

The transference from medieval manuscripts into modern printed books or today's computer bytes is not an automatic or automatable endeavor of one-to-one, word-for-word transcription: editing from such sources has seldom been simple and straightforward. On the contrary, the transaction has generally required repeated reassessment and refinement. The whole enterprise has mostly been carried out by specialists. Where literature is at stake, codicologists study physical manuscripts; paleographers, writing systems; and philologists, constitution of texts.

In the case of the medieval poem that would in due course metamorphose into "The Juggler of Notre Dame," the key early contributors to the collaborative venture of establishing and refining the text formed a pan-European rogues' gallery. The cast of characters from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries embraced, if we apply national labels that can be anachronistic when taken from the twenty-first, an Austrian (about whom more will soon be said), a [Finn](#), and more than one [German](#). Indeed, until the twenty-first century German speakers produced the only scholarly editions.

The first in this international roster was an expert in medieval French who usually published under the name [Wendelin Foerster](#) (see Figure 22). He lived from 1844 to 1915. In 1907 he reminisced about a eureka moment decades earlier, when while examining a thirteenth-century codex he chanced upon a manuscript of our poem. The piece had gone unremarked for the better part of a half millennium. Foerster described this finding and the influence it exercised on his subsequent interests:

Since discovering the charming jewel, "The Juggler of Notre Dame," in the fall of 1872 in the [Arsenal Library](#) in Paris and publishing it in the following year, I was the whole time constantly on the search for similar pieces, in which performers attempted to put their profession in the requisite light by way of legends of the saints or miracles.

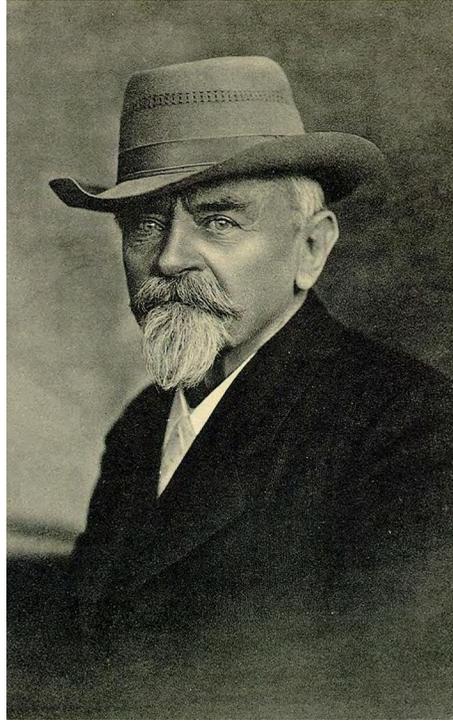


Fig. 22: Wendelin (Wilhelm) Foerster. Photograph, date and photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Graz. All rights reserved.

In the short run, the happenstance prompted Foerster to bring out the first modern edition. He could hardly have been more fortunate in the manuscript that had fallen into his welcoming hands. Eventually, four additional witnesses would be identified, but only one of them preserved the poem in even a slightly better form. Medieval writings that are extant in multiple codices, in this case five, often have family trees that split into two trunks, from which branches sometimes shoot out that require separate attention. The arboreal diagrams that chart the genealogies of manuscripts are called stemmas. The one for "Our Lady's Tumbler" shows a neat ramification. In its branching, the codex Foerster followed stands at only one remove from the hypothetical original and has an entire side of the split trunk to itself, whereas the others are thought to descend from two lost intermediaries. Thanks to Foerster's good fortune, the Old French of all subsequent editions has remained substantially unchanged from the text he presented.

The consequences of the serendipity did not end with the text in the *editio princeps* or (to translate the Latin) "first edition," which has largely stood the test of time to be what we read today. The happy chance left a personal mark for years to come on Foerster's research agenda, which was already geared to editing French literature from the Middle Ages. As it turned out, he prowled unendingly for an encore of the epiphany he had achieved as a young man. His yearning to relive his earlier feat

stimulated him thirty-five years later to grapple with an Old French narrative on the Holy Face of Lucca.

Who was Foerster? A native German-speaker, he would be hard to pigeonhole by today's categories of nationality. He was born in Wildschütz near Trautenau in the Riesengebirge district of what is now the Czech Republic. As an adult, he studied in Vienna, with an intermezzo in Paris. He remained in the Austrian capital city to gain what is known in German as the *Habilitation*. The "habilitation" is a qualification for advanced research and supervision of students that in many European countries must be attained before a person may qualify for the office of a professorship. After holding for two years in Prague a rank roughly equivalent to an associate professorship in the US system, he was duly appointed a full professor in the Rhineland university of Bonn.

In the four or so decades that intervened between the crushing defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War and that of Germany in the First World War, the citizens of the two nations engaged in a cultural competition that paralleled their rivalry in the military, political, and economic spheres. Yet whatever other frictions may have embroiled their countries, these editors generally cooperated across borders to build upon each other's investigations and to collaborate in furthering knowledge. Literary critics could be true to their homelands while still professing allegiance to a world of learning that admitted to no boundaries.

Against this backdrop, few would have been surprised or offended when Foerster chose to publish his find in *Romania*. The Paris-based periodical had been launched only months after the end of the short-lived War of 1870, in which a coalition of German states under the leadership of Prussia trounced France. The Prussian victory led to the birth of a unified Germany and to the annexation within it of Alsace-Lorraine, a historical region that had belonged to France and would return to it after World War I. On the other side, the French defeat led to the collapse of the Second French Empire, the insurrection known as the Commune of Paris, and the establishment of the Third French Republic, which was dissolved only in 1940.

When Foerster's article was printed, *Romania* was only in its second year of existence. Still, it had already established itself among the foremost vehicles for the dissemination of research on the French language and literature of the Middle Ages. It presented the fruits of Romance philology. The title of the journal has nothing to do with romance and romantic as connected to love. On the contrary, it is a learned and Latinate term meaning "Romance languages" that also refers to the collectivity of the regions, especially in Europe, in which they are spoken. As a term in linguistics, the word designates a family of Indo-European languages that descended from Latin after the dissolution of the Roman empire. Think of French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian, and so on.

And philology? As applied to the study of medieval languages and literatures, it denotes the establishment, improvement, and interpretation of texts. These processes often require application of paleography and codicology, morphology and syntax,

lexicology, and various other skills with arcane names constructed from Greek elements. The discipline has passed in and out of vogue. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was highly regarded. Philology was essential in charting and validating the origins of the national languages. In the context of the rivalry between the French and the Germans, its fruits were essential in the nation-building underway in Europe and beyond it in the construction and maintenance of world empires.

The cofounders of the periodical were the two leading lights of Romance philology, the field and discipline, in France at the time. One was Paul Meyer, who lived from 1840 to 1917; the other, [Gaston Paris](#), from 1839 to 1903.

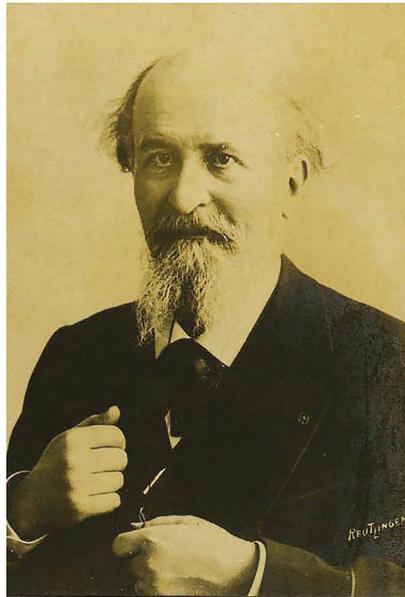


Fig. 23: Gaston Paris, age 61. Photograph by Léopold Reutlinger, 1900.

The last name of the second was pronounced not like that of the French city but instead Pa•rees, accentuated on the second syllable, with the final consonant sounded out, to rhyme with Matisse. The two friends and collaborators, Meyer and Paris, were motivated by the conviction that, beginning in the sixteenth century, the French had undergone a rupture with their medieval past and that repairing it through scientific study was a prerequisite to recovery from the debacle suffered by the nation in the recent combat. This belief that the Middle Ages held vital importance to their own country in their own times did not betoken that the two men who inaugurated the journal narrowed their sights solely to narratives, such as the *Song of Roland*, that could serve as patriotic rallying points. Nor does it presume that they were in any way closeminded about what scholars from the other bank of the Rhine had to offer.

In Foerster's introduction to his edition of what we now know as "Our Lady's Tumbler," the final line expresses gratitude to Gaston Paris. The Frenchman's direct personal contribution to the advance of editorial scholarship on the piece [was scant](#). Yet

since his views carried weight throughout the Western world, he achieved appreciable effect by broadcasting a sense that the story was a literary treasure. In the English translation of his best-selling guide to medieval French literature, [the thumbnail of the poem](#) given by Paris reads:

Some pious tales deserve to be mentioned because of their altogether mediaeval character, like the very charming tale, *The Tombeur of Notre Dame*. Among the jongleurs were so-called “tombeurs,” when their talent was limited to leaps and somersaults, a kind of exercise greatly appreciated and highly perfected. One of these “tombeurs” became a monk in an abbey consecrated to the Virgin, and for lack of any other skill, in her honor executed secretly before her statue his best tricks; the monks who followed him to spy on him saw with stupefaction Our Lady descend from her altar as he rested, and gently wipe away the sweat that rolled down his visage.

Paris amplified the impact of such written sentences by making oral pronouncements along the same lines in lectures and conversations. As a result, he became the authority most cited by those who promoted the miracle of the medieval performer. This state of affairs held true above all along the Anglo-American axis of the Gilded Age, where the author’s stock soared through the first quarter of the twentieth century. He elicits reverential mentions, among other places, in the introductions to English translations of the poem from the Middle Ages.

The précis calls for one side note. The medieval heading that Foerster rightly reported from the manuscript he followed, even as the title of his pathbreaking article, was *Del tumbeor Nostre-Dame*. When Paris deploys the modern derivative *tombeur*, he takes considerable pains to gloss it, because in nineteenth-century French it had acquired the unfavorable connotations of “lady’s man.” The three Frenchmen who revised and popularized the thirteenth-century tale all substituted for the questionable noun the term *jongleur*. This word carried none of the unseemly associations evoked by *tombeur* but was ambiguous in signifying either broadly “professional entertainer” or particularly “juggler.” Though it could comprehend many meanings, it did not bring to mind right away gymnasts, acrobats, tumblers, or dancers.

In the translation, the ellipsis immediately before the last sentence signals the omission of eight lines in which Foerster discusses four medieval French words that he finds noteworthy. In the notes, square brackets enclose my supplements to what is found in Foerster’s original.

### Wendelin Foerster, Introduction to “Our Lady’s Tumbler”

People know that the Church, in the Middle Ages, did not consider it beneath its dignity to concern itself with minstrels, jongleurs, and comic actors of various sorts. Whereas it gave absolution to those who recited epics, those who performed these stunts of street acrobats, more or less decent, from which the Middle Ages derived such amusement, had to fear their excommunication. But grace does not always take into account the most serious decrees.

One of these minstrels, jaded with the world, withdrew into the abbey of Clairvaux. All that he owned, he had given away to serve Jesus Christ and his mother, the Virgin. The society he had just entered no doubt must have seemed unique and painful to him; the strict rules of the order, the silence it enjoined, the Masses and the offices—all that was peculiar to our lay brother. Though he was animated by the most spirited piety, he could not take part in the divine service, knowing neither the Our Father, nor the Creed, nor even the Hail Mary. Racked by the thought that he was a useless member of the congregation and that he ate the bread that it bestowed on him without doing anything, fearing also to be hounded out of the monastery so as to have to return into the world of sinners, he addressed the compassionate Virgin, whom one never beseeches in vain. While bells summoned the monks to the office, he entered a [crypt](#) where there was an altar to the Blessed Virgin. He related to her at length his uncertainty, telling her how much he loved to serve her and to pray to her. But he did not know how to go about it. For want of other homages, could he not do for her the only thing that he knew to do? As soon as this idea came to him, he hurried to put it into action: he took off his robe and, clad in a mere tunic, he did before the Virgin all the stunts that he had the habit of performing before curious crowds. He continues this same routine for a long time, until finally one of the brethren of the monastery, surprised at not having seen him at Mass, spied on him and uncovered his secret. After having been witness of this unique divine service, he hurried to notify the abbot. That man, who could hardly believe his ears, proceeded to the crypt and arrived there to see a touching miracle: as the poor jongleur, having finished by losing consciousness out of fatigue, fell at the foot of the altar, Mary came down from heaven accompanied by her retinue of angels, and with a *touaille* or "towel" by way of a fan, she began to fan her minstrel gently, [who did not notice it](#). Soon afterward, the jongleur died and angels carried off his soul to the abode of the blessed.

Such is the story of this scorned minstrel, in its main outlines. It is remarkable at once for its simplicity and its frank naïvety. If the subject in itself makes a person smile, the childlike innocence, ardent faith, and absolute renunciation of worldly life with which the tale is imbued transcend all that the most pious soul can conceive, and takes the form of the most charming poetry. If it is a stunning attestation of faith, it is even more a true poetic jewel.

This piece is found in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, [MS Arsenal 3516, fols. 127ra–139rc](#), and we were astonished not to encounter it in the *Miracles of Mary* by Gautier de Coinci, who however does also tell us of the favor shown by the Virgin to a jongleur. Not having encountered this tidbit in the [edition by Abbé Poquet](#), we searched for it to no avail in five manuscripts that the Bibliothèque nationale owns of the same work and in two Latin texts of *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, and we were not in a position to identify the source, even though the author claims to have drawn from the lives of the ancient fathers. Perhaps someone will be luckier than I in this research. Beyond this manuscript, there must be [another in the libraries of Paris](#), since [Carpentier](#) cites under the word *tombare* in his additions to [Du Cange's glossary](#) fifteen lines of the same piece, "from the first book of a manuscript of *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*," but I could not find it. In any case, this could not be the Arsenal manuscript from which we drew our piece, because its content does not accord with the title given by Carpentier and just these fifteen lines present some divergences from the text that we are publishing.

The manuscript has been badly mistreated: around fourteen folios have been cut out. Most of the miniatures have been taken out, with great harm to the text. One will find a listing of the pieces contained in this volume in the notice of manuscripts of the *Romance*

of the *Seven Sages*, compiled by *Le Roux de Lincy*, who has also determined the dating of the manuscript with certainty by taking as the year of its execution the first year in the perpetual calendar at the beginning of the volume, which is to say 1268.

There are no indications that allow identification of the author nor exact determination of the time and place in which he lived. Nevertheless, the language justifies us in ascribing to him an approximate date at the end of the twelfth century. The dialect is that of Île-de-France; but the copyist, who incidentally handled the text with respect, seems to have been a native of Picardy. In truth, he only rarely put *k* instead of *ch* and *ch* instead of *ç* in cases where Picard uses these letters; but he regularly, with three or so exceptions, changed the French *z* into the Picard *s*. The glossary points out some noteworthy words. [...]

Here I take the occasion to thank Monsieur Gaston Paris, to whose expertise I have had recourse many times.



## 2. The Medievalizer Félix Brun

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A general principle of cultural exchange holds that to gain purchase in a later culture, a literary work from a distant time or place requires translation and adaptation. Especially privileged masterpieces of literature have the good fortune to attract more than one editor, translator, and adaptor. Each edition, translation, or adaptation purveys the perspectives of its producer: knowingly or not, every single one is an interpretation. The earliest such endeavors may fall flat or have little effect. Before a beachhead may be established, repeated efforts are often required, like successive bombardments to soften enemy defenses or waves of infantry to advance a battle.

Félix Brun, the author with whom we are concerned here, was never a household name and is today still less so. It may never prove feasible to amass the requisite database and employ an algorithm for graphing mathematically the role he played in propelling “The Juggler of Notre Dame” before the grand public in France or a general one in what more than a century ago was the forerunner of the present-day Anglosphere. Yet despite these concessions, we should consider seriously the different ways in which this modest man laid the groundwork for the future prominence of the story.

Brun, whose life stretched from 1851 to 1926, was the first who attempted to put the medieval poem, even abridged and adapted, into prose in any modern language. In 1883 his paraphrase, spread across three columns in a popular [illustrated weekly](#), was presented to the newspaper readership. Anything but fortuitously, the release fell in late May—the month in which the Virgin Mary received special veneration. Four years later, in 1887, he printed an expanded but still by no means complete version of the story. He did this on his own initiative, in a limited run of fifty copies.

In this case the medium was a booklet that bore the title *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* or, in English, “The Juggler of Notre Dame.” (Be forewarned: deciding between the English words “juggler” and “jongleur” is particularly tortuous in translating Brun’s French.) Three years after that, in 1890, he reprised his lovely adaptation in nearly identical form, this time as the title piece that stood front and center in what is now an exceedingly rare book, with a French title equivalent to the English [The Juggler of Notre Dame: Seven Legends for as Many Friends](#).

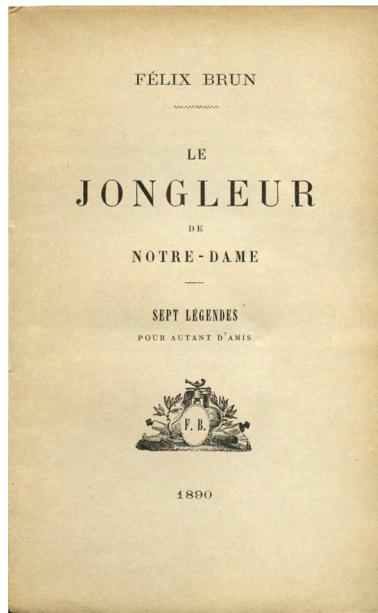


Fig. 24: Title page of Félix Brun, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame: Sept légendes pour autant d'amis* (Meulan, France: A. Masson, 1890).

Among his other contributions to the tradition, Brun took the lead by devising and using the title that in the 1890s became standard in French, "Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame." The wording was not meant to put readers in mind of the cathedral Notre Dame in Paris or of the Victor Hugo novel with the hunchback who made his home in the same soaring house of worship. We may be very certain that Brun did not have in mind the capital city of France or any of its many churches, not even its chief one. Rather than a reference to a building, the phrase pointed to Our Lady, by the customary denomination for the Virgin Mary in French.

Who was this Félix Brun? By vocation, he was an archivist. In that capacity, he seems to have been liked and respected. Even so, he made no pretence of having the formal training or prestigious credentials possessed by the philologists and historians who attained mandarin-like status in Paris in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. On the contrary, he struck a pose of being an old-school antiquarian: he presented himself as an amateur, not a professional.

This is not to say that Brun was inexpert about medieval texts or that he lacked the drive and discipline to research and write. In 1876, he published a book on the *Song of Roland*. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, he turned out study after study on topics relating to the town of Soissons and his hometown of Bucy-le-Long, located not quite 100 kilometers from Paris.

Being a native Picard, Brun had every reason to be interested in *Gautier de Coinci*. The poet of the *Miracles of Our Lady* was monk and abbot at Soissons, first just a monk but later the abbot, and, between those roles, the prior at Vic-sur-Aisne. Both

foundations were located near Bucy-le-Long. All three locales lay within the northern French region of Picardy. He placed into this context, alongside the poet of “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” Gautier. Bear in mind that one of Gautier’s miracles involved the minstrel Peter of Sieglar at Rocamadour.

Unprovincial provincial that he was, Brun made a deliberate decision in his version not to translate the medieval French verbatim but rather to abbreviate it. This move was partly in keeping with the aesthetics of his generation. Additionally, the “naïve language” of the original likely seemed to him impossibly out of keeping with the world he inhabited in fin-de-siècle France. At least sometimes, he also claimed to operate on memory rather than to have the sources spread out before him as he worked. In the first of two paragraphs with which he prefaced his little book in 1890, he confessed, with a coyness that would not be out of place in fiction writing:

None of the tales that follows really belongs to me. Every reader who is a little versed in the literature of the Middle Ages will be able to say easily from where I have drawn them. But he will see also that I have not been an extremely meticulous translator in every instance. Sometimes it has been my lot to reconstitute these naïve stories without having before my eyes the texts, Latin or Romance, which had transmitted them to me at the outset. Has my recollection always served me faithfully? I have reason to doubt. Have I not forgotten something here, added something there? It could be.

Brun knew enough not merely to be aware but even to make use of the heavy-duty journal in which Foerster had brought out his edition of the medieval poem. At the same time, he recognized that even though the learned organ sometimes preserved cultural showpieces, it was too rarefied in its focus and circulation to serve general readers. If put behind lock and key in a vault of such erudition, a jewel like “The Juggler of Notre Dame” would remain inaccessible to most people. Though harboring no disrespect for the likes of Gaston Paris, he wished to tend to different ends and a distinct audience from those served by the card-carrying philologists. In contrast to them, he presented himself, despite being a salaried archivist, as a dilettante who wrote for likeminded souls. In this pose, he belonged to a separate class of enthusiasts from those who were technically proficient and university-certified. His circle was, by choice, not Parisian but provincial. Its members, late romantics in their love of the Middle Ages, belonged to an outgoing generation that was losing control to rising young technocrats, medievalists with more formal study but perhaps less heart.

The archivist discerned and comprehended the transition that was in train. In the second paragraph of the preface that led into his collection from 1890, he admitted, with as much pride as ruefulness:

Here then is a little book that the [École des Chartes](#) would not recommend at all, I imagine: Oh, don’t believe that I take pleasure in that! I am the very first to agree, the most respectfully in the world, that this School has not been established for the fostering of such fantasies. It forms [medievalists: I am only a medievalizer](#).

As such a lover of the Middle Ages, he had good reason to identify with the lay brother of the medieval poem. Brun too had an innocent simplicity of belief, even if he risked losing it in the degenerate multiplicity of late nineteenth-century life. He opined: "Our faith has no longer, can have no longer, the simplicity of his."

The reach to which Brun aspired is brought home by the engraving that graced the cover of *La France illustrée* or "Illustrated France," the French Catholic weekly in which his translation was printed. The art depicts a spring scene. In the background loom Gothic ruins, while in the foreground a wanderer wends his way across a landscape full of flowers and birds. Who is the wayfarer? Can he be the juggler or jongleur himself? Or is he rather a nineteenth-century time-traveler to the Middle Ages? Or does he have all of these identities at once?

### "The Juggler of Notre Dame"

To the [Abbé Auguste Riche](#)

Once upon a time there was a juggler who, tired of roaming the world, was seized by revulsion for the world and determined to enter into religion. Having chosen the abbey of Clairvaux, he relinquished to it all his property—the good horse that had carried him on so many journeys and also the beautiful clothes, jewels, and furs, with which lords and townspeople had the custom of paying for his talents. Unfortunately he knew nothing of what they expected in these pious houses. Up until then, he had never done anything but juggle, vault, and dance for the amusement of people. In that he had become an expert; but conversely he did not know psalm-singing, the sequence of rituals and prayers, and, in general, everything relating to the holy liturgy.

So he began by remaining completely flabbergasted, completely dumbstruck, among the others. The choir monks and the lay brothers served God, each according to his rank and employment; the priests officiated at the altar; the deacons sang the Gospel and the subdeacons the Epistle; some said the versicles and others the responses; the lay brothers recited at the bare minimum the [Miserere](#); and there were none, down to the lowliest clerks, who did not know their Our Fathers. But he, too old to learn, was good for nothing, and whereas he came across brothers everywhere engaged in praying or working, he could only wander around uselessly alongside them. Because of this he was distraught with all his soul, at great risk of being sent off, since he did not even earn his board.

Roaming one day, sunk in thought, in the abbey, he happened by chance to go down into a crypt, and as he reflected on an image of the Virgin Mary there, on an altar, he heard the Mass ringing out. His fears and regrets redoubled: "Treason!" he cried out, "My brothers are going to say their office, each one will have his assigned duty in it, but I—I will be like an ox that people leave in the stable, to eat grass that it has not at all earned by its work. Well then, by the holy Mother of God, I will do, I too, what I know how to do, and he would be quite silly who could find cause to complain of it. Some serve God by singing; I will serve him by dancing."

Without delay he strips off his cloak and, keeping on only a light and supple little undertunic, he gets ready for his exercises. But first he turned himself humbly to the altar. "Gentlest lady, gentlest queen," he says, "I commit to you my body and soul. Do not

spurn what I know, I entreat you; with the help of God, I will try to pay you my tribute as I can. Knowing neither to read nor to sing, I will select my prettiest vaults to honor you, to honor also your son whom I see there, so lovely! in your arms. I will do it like a kid that, to amuse its mother, leaps and bounds before her in the middle of the meadow. You are hard to no one, you will deign to accept with grace my good intention, and perhaps my dances will delight your infant Jesus for a moment." After then making a big bow, he performs to the best of his ability a vault in the French style, then one in the Champagne style, then the Breton vault, the Spanish vault, that of Rome and of Lorraine. He walks sometimes on his head, sometimes on his hands, and does not stop except to say a Hail Mary in the most devoted way in the world. The chants that reached him from the church rekindled his passion; he danced the whole time the Mass went on. Finally, overcome by exhaustion, he halts and collects his clothes. Then, hailing the Virgin again, "Farewell, gentlest mother, I am going off, because I cannot do any more; but I will come back each day to offer you this enjoyment, which is all that I can do. I would be so pleased to serve you! It is really a great shame that I do not know the psalter as the others do; I would recite it for you quite gladly. Gentlest of ladies, I commit to you my body and soul."

Just as he had promised, he returned many times and he never, no matter how tired he was, failed to honor in his fashion the blessed Mother of God. But no one, apart from Jesus and Mary, suspected what he went to do in the crypt, for he did not wish to speak of it, so much did he fear that they would send him away from the convent. He would surely have liked better to die than to return into this hateful world, brimming over with sins. A monk, having observed him, uncovered his secret and told it to the lord abbot. The latter, as one might think, was greatly astonished. He went to the crypt, hid himself behind a pillar, and kept watch. Our man came as he had become accustomed; he began to perform all the graceful vaults that we said, and so well and with such spirit that he finished by falling to the ground, exhausted, unconscious.

Now hear a most impressive miracle! From the vault came down, in a circle of light, a woman and a child, one hundred times more beautiful than a person could express. They were clothed entirely in gold and gems, but it was their very faces that seemed to create brightness around them. Angels and archangels, forming an entourage to flank them, lined up near the stupefied juggler and raised him up gently in their arms. The lady, with a very white cloth, fanned his brow; the child dried the sweat that washed over him. When they had cooled him well and looked after him beautifully, they made the sign of the cross over him and then went back up to heaven with the angels.

Then the abbot understood. From then on, he held the poor lay brother in high esteem and affection, thinking that he must be quite dear to the blessed Virgin to receive favor of this kind. One day, the former juggler, all in tears, expressed to him his fear of not being able to serve God as it was necessary, and he even spoke of forsaking the convent so as no longer to occasion others the scandal of his uselessness. "Rest assured, my brother," the abbot responded to him with a smile, "You are quite worthy of being in our order; would that we could be so, we, in yours!" And he ordered him, as penance, to fret no longer.

The good vassal of the Virgin—so the one who told us his story calls him—died some time from then. Mary and the angels came in person to receive his soul, at which the devils of hell became extremely enraged. His body was buried most honorably by the monks; they venerated his memory like that of a saint.

What God wants before all else is love in the heart. If he repaid the monk whose adventure you have just heard, it is not because the monk knew how to dance, but because in dancing he gave the only proof that he could provide of his love and good will. Now, ladies and gentlemen, let us ask Jesus not to serve him badly anymore.



### 3. The Poetaster Raymond de Borrelli

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On three separate occasions, the Frenchman Raymond de Borrelli, born in 1837 and died in 1906, won the [prize for poetry](#) that the Académie française or “French Academy” awards.

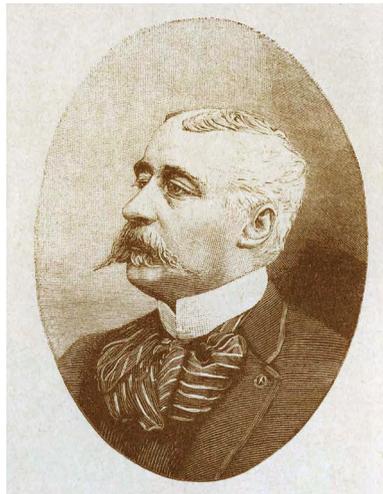


Fig. 25: Raymond de Borrelli. Engraving, before 1890. Artist unknown. Published in Raymond de Borrelli, *Arma* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1890), frontispiece.

Beyond being a heavily decorated war hero and an aristocrat holding the rank of viscount, he owed much of his fame to patriotic poetizing that drew on his [experience in combat abroad](#): he spent years as a cavalryman in Europe, Africa, and Asia—from the Second Italian War of Independence of 1859 through the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 to the Tonkin Campaign of 1883–1886. Despite popular plaudits, he was anything but a darling among Parisian literati. Such luminaries as the novelist Marcel Proust and French Symbolist writer Remy de Gourmont, barely bothering to keep their opprobrium private, passed scathing judgment on the literary caliber of Borrelli’s verse.

The former military man read aloud his second prize-winner, *Le Jongleur* or “The Juggler,” in the public session of the French Academy on November 19, 1891. The poem was [printed three times](#): in a journal ten days later, by itself in a slim book in 1892, and in a collection of Borrelli’s verse in 1893. The narrative comprises thirty-four cinquains,

to use the technical term for its five-line stanzas. The lines are rhymed variously, most often ababb. The form, which was known to have originated in the Middle Ages, lent itself well to Borrelli's chosen topic. It also accorded nicely with the values of the Parnassians, French poets of his day who stressed technical perfection in versification.

The medieval manuscripts entitle the thirteenth-century poem with the French for "Our Lady's Tumbler," to acknowledge its leading character. He is identified equally as [tumbler, minstrel, and jongleur](#). Borrelli spotlighted the last-mentioned French noun as the title of his own work, which omits the further element of *Notre Dame* or Our Lady. Even in English today the word *jongleur* denotes "an itinerant medieval entertainer proficient in juggling, acrobatics, music, and recitation." Among these activities, the main figure in *Le Jongleur* or, in English, "The Juggler" most nearly resembles a professional acrobat. His stunts include walking on his hands, standing on his head, and tumbling, but his foremost skill turns out to be juggling. That detail explains why, if push comes to shove, the translation "The Juggler" must be preferred to "The Jongleur." After a fever necessitates the hospitalization of the story's star, he prays to the Virgin and pledges to light a taper in her honor. This motif, though not in the thirteenth-century text, squares neatly with other medieval miracles related to "Our Lady's Tumbler": candles were salient in the miraculous events involving jongleurs at both Rocamadour and Arras. By the same token, the same kind of object remained even in the late nineteenth century the most common sort of votive that a worshipper praying to Mary would have offered.

What does the tradition of "The Juggler of Notre Dame" owe to Borrelli? He deserves credit from the very word *juggler* on. The poet's decision to make an all-round showman into a specialist of this kind speaks to the vogue that juggling enjoyed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Partly thanks to circuses, traveling performers specialized more than had been the case in the Middle Ages. Juggling became a bonafide profession in its own right. Paradoxically, the activity became closely [identified with the medieval period](#), as continues to be the case even today.

At the same time, Borrelli was very much a creature of his times. Whereas the original of the thirteenth century presented its hero as having been successful in his career and the possessor of material objects that proved his prosperity, the versifier of the nineteenth century could not resist the romantic impulses to cast him as a struggling artist and afflict him with the added pathos of illness. He restrained himself from making the juggler consumptive, coughing away in a windowless garret, but he hints at a similar picture.

The Viscount introduced two further motifs that resurfaced in many later versions of the story. The first of the poet's enhancements is the specific flourish that the protagonist strews the steps of the altar with roses. The flowers are unsurprising, in view of the frequency with which floral offerings have long been rendered to the Virgin, but no one before Borrelli brought them into the tale. Though not in the short

story by Anatole France, they show up often subsequently, from the opera by Jules Massenet and even in the poster contemporary with it down to the extraordinary protographic novel by R. O. Blechman. In the last-mentioned the tables are turned when Mary presents the juggler with the bloom rather than vice versa. Borrelli's other innovations were two details about the juggling. The performer, we are told twice, carries a carpet that he spread before putting on his show. The poet spells out further that the entertainer uses copper balls in his act.

Thanks in part to paraphrases by the local historian Félix Brun but much more to praise by the renowned literary historian and public intellectual Gaston Paris, the thirteenth-century "Our Lady's Tumbler" made a leap from being the province solely of the medieval French philologists who had known it since 1873. Borrelli's composition left no lasting mark, but it helped to boost the medieval miracle into a higher orbit. Its most enduring effect may have come from its contribution to Anatole France's almost simultaneous reimagining of "Our Lady's Tumbler." Therein lies a story.

Borrelli punctuates heavily, with semicolons, colons, and dashes that for greater readability have been reduced in many cases to commas in the translation.

### "The Juggler"

Have you read Baruch?

5     **H**ave you ever read [Jacobus de Voragine](#)?  
 It's Latin, not at all good, but easy to grasp,  
 if you've got, by chance, a moment free,  
 if you have Faith (as I suppose you do),  
 read that book: you will take pleasure from it.

10    **T**he title is among the most beautiful: [The Golden Legend](#)!  
 As for the text, the author, simple and scrupulous, made  
 a place of honor in it for the most minor saints.  
 This work has only one thing wrong: it is too little known,  
 as full as it is of miraculous events.

15    **A**nd these events are certain! Better than certain, well known!  
 And, if the marvelous blooms there openly,  
 it would be necessary, to complain of it, to be truly mean.  
[I transcribe, at random, one of these stories:](#)  
 you will tell me, afterward, if it is touching or not.

\*\*\*

**B**eing a street acrobat is a [poor profession](#);  
 seldom are evenings [golden](#) and triumphant in it!  
 You fear dark days and stifling days.

15 Bread is lacking in fall and spring, as soon as it rains:  
and it is hard, for your wife and little children.

Since come what may, it is essential to eat,  
you work all the same, in snow and shower, sun, and wind.  
Then, you feel sick: so it is. Often people die.  
Or, if they come out of it, recovered, somehow,  
20 they are a little weaker and poorer than before.

So then, it happened, long ago—the story is of a different era—  
it happened that a juggler suffered fatal destiny.  
An agile hand, a ready body, and a good heart for the work,  
he had it all; but at the end of the road and of stamina,  
25 fever landed him on a hospital bed.

When I say "hospital," I have it wrong. In our France,  
hospitals back then were called convents;  
people would talk there, in low voices, of love and hope,  
and, at least in this regard, the centuries of ignorance  
30 were perhaps worth more than others—more learned.

After treatment, bandaging, and pampering, the juggler got well  
quickly.  
His soul had also found great support:  
having entered there not much of a believer, he came out a Christian.  
All long suffering is an invitation to prayer;  
35 one fine day, you take the risk—and you find yourself happy for it.

Our man had prayed to the good Blessed Virgin,  
as the simple spirit he was, humbly.  
At the height of his torment, he had even promised,  
if he ever escaped, to burn a candle for her:  
40 he proceeded to keep his oath.

But first he wanted to be left in peace,  
alone in the chapel, for at least an hour.  
The request was disquieting and unprecedented.  
Consequently, without racking their brains very long,  
45 they did what was needed so that he would have witnesses—

Secret witnesses, so as to content a guest,  
but above all observant ones: keeping watch seemed urgent,  
the chalice being of gold and the candlesticks of silver.  
Some monks, hidden in the high gallery,  
50 stayed to watch everything with a diligent look.

\*\*\*

The nave was deserted. A prism of light  
 fell there, in full bloom from the transept to the altar,  
 where a Virgin of stone, with a halo on her brow,  
 lowered her white eyelid toward the forecourt of the choir,  
 55 in the reflection of the colored glass.

The man entered, believed himself to be alone, and closed the door  
 again.

\*\*\*

He still wore the loose-fitting garment  
 that at the hospital covers those suffering from every type of illness,  
 but because of being tighter where his waist is stouter,  
 60 this sort of gown pinches him noticeably.

The man came with an entire strange kit.  
 There was, beyond the candle, a bundle comprising  
 a folding table and its crossed feet;  
 then, a rolled-up carpet that was wearing through at the fringe,  
 65 then one knew not what, in a worn handkerchief.

Once he was in the choir, they saw him, without saying anything,  
 take his old carpet and spread it out nicely,  
 assemble the table, open the handkerchief, set up  
 some small objects; then, lighting the taper,  
 70 he knelt and began to speak:

“Madam, I know well that people call you Queen,  
 I know that they name you Morning Star,  
 but I also know well that neither a heavenly body nor a sovereign  
 would have helped me in my pain as you did,  
 75 and I would like to be able to say it to you in Latin.

Pardon me; what is more, having not a cent,  
 my candle, too little, gives me grief.  
 I don’t feel clear of my debt, and I am leaving today.  
 It is absolutely necessary that I do work for you.  
 80 You have a child: let’s say it is for him.

I will do my best. Unfortunately, unemployment,  
 cruel for the whole world, is more detrimental for us:  
 I can bungle my stunts, and that would be too bad.  
 You will not want the less to accept my homage,  
 85 and I request this of you, Madam, on my two knees.”

The man stood up. With a single rapid movement,  
 he cast aside the gown that was open in its roominess:  
 and, like a butterfly out of its chrysalis,  
 he looked spruce, light, supple, and solid,  
 90 under his old and faded juggler's outfit.

"I begin," he said. And alive and elusive,  
 the ball went in subtle bends.  
 There, *under this cup*, it was on the table.  
 Someone would go to find it there, there was no doubt—  
 95 and would have wagered that he would always be mistaken!

Mixing up in a box a mass of things,  
 the juggler then pronounces a *sacramental word*,  
 and this word was capable of everything—even transformations!  
 For the box, once open, was full of nothing but *roses*,  
 100 with which he went to strew the steps of the altar.

To conclude, he took some copper balls,  
 and one saw him, by way of his scarcely moving hands,  
 toss the spheres back and forth, in a perfect and enchanting orbit  
 in which the eye, marveling, got lost in following them,  
 105 tirelessly;

And the weightless globes, enflamed by a spark,  
 in this quickly alternating torrent,  
 produced for her a splendor, much like the one above  
 which strung into an immortal crown,  
 110 nimbed another brow with *nine stars of gold*.

\*\*\*

"Another thing!" he said. "Perhaps you are weary,  
 and, if I was doing too much of this, I would be in the wrong.  
 So then, I will put away the table and all the sleight of hand:  
 for what comes next there needs to be a lot of space,  
 115 and we are going to work harder and harder!"

Harder and harder! Without any presumption  
 he was speaking truly, for "what came next" was  
 a work of high style and exquisite elegance,  
 and of an originality and an extravagance  
 120 to make the monks be on the lookout:

He walked on his hands, he held himself steady  
 on his head, and with marvelous balance  
 he does a cartwheel and, forming a perfect arch,  
 he comes to land standing, in full view, in celebration,  
 125 after one jackknife and three dangerous flips!

A while passes. – Then, in silence, and with an air of mystery,  
 the man, with the slowness of a slinking reptile,  
 lay down on the ground, this time, full length,  
 and the performance then changed in character:  
 130 cheery as it was, it became alarming!

Everything that a person can get out of a head and a torso,  
 a neck, an arm, feet, legs, and hands,  
 in truth everything that they can produce, in feats of strength,  
 by wrenching, fracturing, and spraining,  
 135 took on superhuman aspects in this poor body,

So much that a person might have thought these *odd figures*  
 from ogival porches and from old capitals,  
 where, beneath holy patrons in stiff mantles,  
 the sculptor put misshapen monsters and demons  
 140 to enliven a little chapels and castles!

So too, when he concluded a final stunt  
 by his most beautiful bow, all pale from heat,  
 staggering and looking for the wall, his lead lowered,  
 with short breaths in his weary chest,  
 145 the juggler spoke again as follows:

“Madam,” he was saying, “this exercise is tough,  
 tougher than it seems and than you would believe!  
 For work of the kind, much study is needed:  
 a person gets rusty very fast and, for want of practice,  
 150 struggles a little, as you see.”

\*\*\*

Then—and we enter fully into the wonder—  
 this truly unheard of thing happened:  
 there is not only a poor, dazzled man,  
 but there are people, all of them having sound vision and hearing  
 155 who confirm it: the Virgin, smiling, said “Yes.”

All of them saw her, leaving the heights of the **tabernacle**,  
 descend to the ground in a gentle glide,  
 then, having reached the forecourt, walk there like us.  
 And he, the humble man, for whom a miracle happens,  
 160 kneeling, watched her come;

And as he stayed there, shaken to the marrow,  
 the beautiful lady with her brow haloed in stars,  
 white in the reflection of the colored glass windows,  
 wiped, with the noble hem of her veil,  
 165 the sweat that beaded at the juggler's temples.

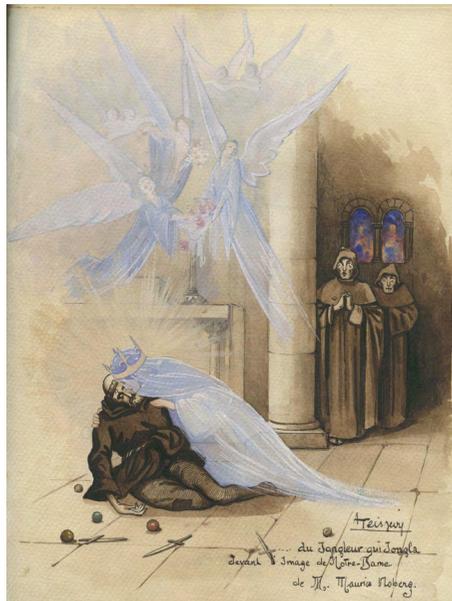


Fig. 26: Mary kissing the juggler. Watercolor by A. Teisseire, original art to illustrate story as recounted by Maurice Vloberg, tipped into a bound copy of Raymond de Borrelli, *Le jongleur* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1892), after title page.

## 4. The Writer Anatole France

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Félix Brun and Raymond de Borrelli brought very different reworkings of the thirteenth-century masterpiece before audiences of their late nineteenth-century countrymen. The first, with his three prose versions, had one chance to catch the attention of newspaper readers at the national level and two others to spread the word among the loyal coterie of cultivated friends and associates he enjoyed in his Picard hometown and its environs. The second was a known quantity in the French Academy, even if many members of the elite disparaged his poetry despite its blue ribbons.

For all their efforts, Brun and Borrelli by themselves would have realized precious little through their revamped forms of “Our Lady’s Tumbler.” Certainly, they would not have achieved a long-lasting niche for the medieval tale in the modern Western world or even merely in their native land. It required another individual, with greater writerly craft and cultural clout, to create the short story that would propel the tale to break out from restricted confines and to become disseminated not merely throughout France but even throughout the world, especially across the Atlantic. This third one who recast the gist of the poem from the Middle Ages plied his pen under the pseudonym of Anatole France.

The process of artistic creation often unites many elements. The metaphor of spinning a yarn conveys this multiplicity, evoking as it does the intertwining of many fibers to make a whole. In a few [columns published in the popular press](#), Anatole France, who lived from 1844 to 1924, revealed a central thread in his own textile craft: the intermediary through which he purported to have encountered the contents of the original poem. In evaluating Gaston Paris’s highly influential history of French literature in the Middle Ages, France sketched a romanticized vignette of his initial exposure to the thirteenth-century verse that he owed to the mediation of the illustrious philologist.

France conjures up a picture, possible but implausible, in which one fine day he perused the scholar’s book to the accompaniment of birdsong, while lolling on the grass beneath an oak. Modern literary historians often call this kind of setting, a commonplace of medieval poetry, by the Latin *locus amoenus*, for “pleasant place.” The belletrist showed his genius in transplanting himself into this very kind of pleasance for his first contact with the recently discovered miracle poem.

Though [Gaston Paris himself doubted](#) the capacity of literature from much earlier in the second millennium to inspire the authors of his own day, Anatole France contrived

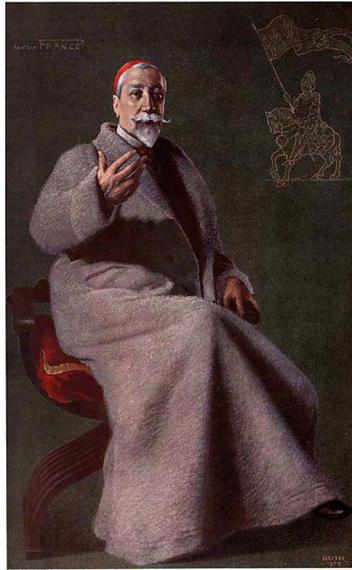


Fig. 27: Anatole France—“The Greatest Living Frenchman.” Illustration by Jean-Baptiste Guth, 1909. Published on the front cover of *Vanity Fair Supplement* (August 11, 1909). Image from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anatole\\_France,\\_Vanity\\_Fair,\\_1909-08-11.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anatole_France,_Vanity_Fair,_1909-08-11.jpg) By assuming this *nom de plume*, the man who had been christened Jacques-Anatole-François Thibault effectively transformed his nation into his family.

ways to appropriate for modernity aspects of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages as glimpsed through Belle Époque eyes. Among the works of postclassical literature that he reimagined for the readership of his day, the most numerous and important were saints’ lives and miracle tales, especially those involving the Virgin Mary. He took possession of the European past far less through direct study of older literature on his own—even in translation—than through [indirect reliance on scholarship](#). Gaston Paris was an especially distinguished intermediary, with whom the storywriter shared a privileged bond as a fellow member of the French Academy.

But the learned *académicien* was not the only contemporary who stimulated Anatole France’s fancy as he composed. The writer’s lovely narrative appeared first in 1890, in a daily as a feature for May, which was simultaneously the month of Mary, under the French title corresponding to the English “[The Juggler of Notre Dame](#).” The day after the paper hit the kiosks, an impassioned note arrived whose author accused France of having committed plagiarism. Allegedly, the celebrated man of letters had borrowed without acknowledgment from the letter writer’s own handling of the same story. Though the original communication no longer exists, and though no record of the aggrieved man’s name survives, France’s self-defense has come down to us. In English [it reads](#):

11 May 1890. Sir, I would regret immeasurably a circumstance that does me praise, if your work could suffer from it. But it is obvious that my work is not of a sort to do injury to yours. The idea came to me, in reading the book of Gaston Paris on poetry in the

Middle Ages, to tell in my manner the story of the “Jongleur de Notre-Dame.” I even say a word about it in an essay on *The Literary Life* that has been included in the second series [of that collection]. Being committed this year to furnish Monsieur Arthur Meyer one tale per month, the idea came to me naturally to take up this miracle of the Virgin again for the month of May. I should wish quite keenly, Monsieur, that Monsieur Arthur Meyer would publish your work, which could not have a likeness to mine. As you have surmised, I do not know the text of the original poem and I have created my tale solely on the basis of the six lines of analysis that Monsieur Gaston Paris has provided.

France’s offer to facilitate publication rules out Félix Brun as the disgruntled correspondent, since by this date the archivist had published his tale at a minimum twice and perhaps even three times. No, the injured party had to have been the Vicomte, the proud and thin-skinned Raymond de Borrelli. The poem “The Juggler” of the patriotic poetaster had not yet been printed, and though seemingly he had still not recited it before the French Academy, he could have submitted it already to be considered for the trophy it eventually won. Who knows? Anatole France could have been one of the jurors who read it in the competition, or he could have spoken about the piece with someone else who served on the jury. Nor are formal recitation and submission the exclusive channels through which Borrelli’s idea could have seeped to France.

The author of the short story brushed aside the reproach brought against him. He admitted freely to having gotten his idea from another, giving credit entirely to the foremost French medievalist of his day. In fact, in the daily newspaper he dedicated the pages not merely “To Gaston Paris,” as he put the matter succinctly in later volumes of his short stories, but with all the bibliographic trimmings of a full citation:

What you are going to read has been drawn from a *miracle* of the thirteenth century. (See Gaston Paris, *La Littérature française au Moyen Âge*, 2nd edition (Paris, 1890), p. 208.)

We can take France at his word about the original. Nothing suggests that he ever so much as laid eyes upon the edition by Wendelin (or Wilhelm) Foerster, which in 1890 remained the single means of printed access to the thirteenth-century poem for anyone not equipped to consult one of the few codices. The French fiction writer, the son of a book-loving bookdealer, was himself a bibliophile. Being a bookworm, he did his share of poking around in scholarly tomes, both hot off the presses and antiquarian. In fact, in “The Juggler of Notre Dame” he refers with fond exactitude to an illustration reproduced as the frontispiece to the mid-nineteenth-century edition of Gautier de Coinci’s *Miracles of Our Lady*. For all that, he did not fuss with the mustiness of learned journals or medieval manuscripts. He was far from being an autodidact historian or amateur philologist, with the requisite training for parsing the alien forms of Old French language. Instead, he was a belletrist living in a century preoccupied with a millennium or so of national history, who observed with both wryness and wonderment as experts from the world of learning engaged with the past. From this remove, he picked up tidbits with which he stocked his imagination.

The closer France drew to anything smacking of pedantry, the more he gave vent to his characteristic irony. His reputation had been launched by a first novel entitled *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, published in 1881. In it he treated with his hallmark dry wit the main figure, who was a Chartist—a graduate of the *École Nationale des Chartes* or, translating verbatim, National School of Charters. Recall that Félix Brun had differentiated his own research on medieval topics from the unimaginative technicality of these very scholars.

But let us venture back to the exchange with Borrelli. France pointed out correctly that in his [review of the literary history](#) he had summed up the medieval poem as described by Paris. Sure enough, the short-story writer had written:

Finally, here is a still more naïve miracle, that of "Our Lady's Tumbler." There was a poor jongleur who, after having performed physical feats in public places to earn his living, dreamt of eternity and had himself accepted into a monastery. There he saw monks, good clerics that they were, honor the Virgin by learned prayers. But he was not a cleric and did not know how to ape them. Finally, he had the notion to shut himself in the chapel and to perform, alone, in secret, before the Blessed Virgin, the somersaults that had won him the most applause in the days when he was a jongleur. Some monks, disturbed by his lengthy absences, set themselves to spying on him and caught him in his pious exercises. They saw the Mother of God come herself, after each somersault, to dab the forehead of her tumbler.

Not a sentence of France's prose follows its thirteenth-century forebear exactly. How could his précis have been more faithful to this ancestor, when he viewed it solely as refracted through Gaston Paris's recapitulation?

Despite his candor about what he appropriated from the summary of the Old French, France may have been more disingenuous about not owing any debt to Borrelli. The poet probably gave France the idea of casting the leading man not as a jack-of-all-trades jongleur but as just a juggler. Sure, both the English terms *juggler* and *jongleur* derive ultimately from the Latin *ioculator*, and both meanings of the French *jongleur* do too. But Borrelli innovated by transitioning the general gymnast of the medieval poem into a specialized entertainer: he made the dancing acrobat into a juggler who concentrates on the continuous tossing and catching of multiple objects.

Even less likely to be mere coincidence, the short story has at both beginning and end the colorful distinction that the juggler juggles with copper balls. This motif, not attested in the original from more than 650 years earlier, did not appear in the prose of either Gaston Paris or Félix Brun, but it was an eye-catching element in the prizewinning verse by Raymond de Borrelli. So too was the fine point that the performer carried a carpet that he would unfurl for use in his show. Though the two details may reflect the realities of juggling in the late nineteenth century, put together as circumstantial evidence they suggest strongly that the storywriter was indebted to the poet more than he was willing to concede.

But enough said about sources, when what matters is what France made of them. To him, the medieval era may not have been paradise lost but it was at least [simplicity lost](#).

In reaching this perspective, he could have had personal circumstances in mind. His mother died in 1886, his father in 1890. In 1888 he began a stormy affair with Madame Arman de Caillavet, née Léontine Lippmann, that contributed to his separation from his wife in 1892 and his divorce in 1893. To say that he was rethinking childhood beliefs and values or that he was endeavoring to be his own man would state the case too mildly.

If the Middle Ages as France supposed or at least desired them to have been constituted a parallel universe to the developments in his own life, he implied that the period contrasted even more emphatically to the tenor of the whole fin de siècle. He took as a given that in contradistinction to his contemporaries, medieval folk still clung staunchly to a simple faith in God and in the capacity of the Virgin to make herself felt on earth through apparitions and through intercession in heaven.

The simplicity belonged part and parcel to the childlike nature of people in the Middle Ages. Wendelin Foerster mentioned this childishness in the article printed by *Romania* in 1873. Anatole France, in concluding his assessment of Paris's literary history, exhorted readers similarly not to take their medieval predecessors to task for their shortcomings. They were to be held no more accountable than are children. In effect, they were the Old World's own [noble savages](#), resembling more than a little the natives of continents under the colonialist rule of Europe's empires: [cultural and chronological primitivism](#) have a close kinship. Supposedly primitive, medieval folk were free from the artificiality and decadence of the all too urbanized society in which their descendants lived.

France stayed true to this outlook in "The Juggler of Notre Dame." The closing message, even moral, of the story fuses two beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew, "[Blessed are the simple, for they will see God.](#)" At the same time, the author made clear that along with loss came a superiority: his own times possessed a sophistication that lofted his contemporaries and him beyond what, in referring to his medieval forebears, he called "the naïveté of their imagination." This naïve quality enabled their forerunners of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to maintain their certainty about a good deal that, more than a half millennium later, no longer seemed believable but instead charmingly ingenuous and childlike.

So much for chronological matters. What about geography? "The Juggler of Notre Dame" remarks nowhere explicitly on the capital city of Paris, but Anatole France could not have conceived and composed the short story outside the metropolis. In institutions such as the French Academy, the elite of the arts hobnobbed with the elect of the humanities. Though the archivist Brun may have had no aspiration to penetrate this inner circle, the Vicomte de Borrelli surely did. Yet despite his military medals, aristocratic title, and poetic laurels, he gained admittance without ever being embraced. Instead, he was kept on the outskirts and subjected to snickers by up-and-coming writers whose names and fames remain alive even today.

In the meantime, France's star rose for its half century or so of prominence in the firmament before fading from sight. In 1892, forty-eight years of age, he reprinted the

tale in a collection with a French title that could be put into English as *The Little Box of Mother of Pearl*. As the metaphor conveys, he envisaged the book to be a container for literary bric-à-brac—a case inlaid with nacre that holds small objects, such as gems. The jewels housed within its two covers are seventeen short stories, among them four saint's legends and two loosely hagiographic ones, counting "The Juggler of Notre Dame." Added together, they certified the Frenchman to be the worthy successor to his countryman Guy de Maupassant as the king of **short story, a genre** which was at its apogee when they wrote.

The tale of the jongleur lent itself well to the delicate cultural politics of France during the Third Republic. The populace was polarized over few issues more vehemently than over Church-State relations. At one extreme, the anticlerical mounted the ramparts; at the other, the reactionary advocates of Catholicism and royalism dug in. The irony of the short-story writer doubled as tact: his narrative of the jongleur could be parsed by either group as supporting its causes.

Anatole France called his leading man Barnaby. His story, despite its brevity, teems with names, which render less stereotypical the collectivity of monks. The individualization, absent from the medieval poem, marks the juggler as an artist, but as one who feels inadequate in comparison and competition with the monastic specialists in the fine arts.

For more than a half century, "The Juggler of Notre Dame" held sway as a classic. Anatole France reigned supreme in France for his short fiction and novels. The canonicity of his story may have been even more pronounced in the English-speaking world and especially in America than in his homeland. In the original French, it lent itself to language instruction in schools and colleges. For those contexts it was incorporated into one anthology and reader after another. In translation, it was deemed suitable for reading aloud, dancing, singing, and theatrical presentation.

But the very success of "The Juggler of Notre Dame" set the stage for the exhaustion and overexposure that were doomed to set in. Teachers eventually recoiled from the ubiquity of the tale, and students may have done the same: familiarity breeds contempt. Its author took a nosedive in popularity: the existentialism of more recent French intellectuals such as Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre became chic; the irony of Anatole France, old hat. Then, as the French language lost ground within the United States educational system, so naturally the little narrative slipped even further from the universal recognition that it had once commanded. Along the way, the religious content—despite its author's trademark wit—shifted from being an advantage to effectively disqualifying it from use in many teaching contexts. A story that had taken the world by storm at the turn of the century and charmed multitudes for decades after became forgotten.

## “The Juggler of Notre Dame”

### I

In the time of King Louis, there lived in France a poor juggler, a native of Compiègne, named Barnaby, who would go from town to town, performing tricks of strength and skill.

On market days, he would spread out in the public square an old carpet, all worn-out, and after attracting children and passersby with some amusing quips that he had picked up from a very old juggler, and that he never changed at all, he would strike unnatural poses and balance a tin plate on his nose. At first, the crowd observed him with indifference.

But when, standing on his hands with his head down, he would throw into the air and catch with his feet six copper balls that glittered in the sunlight, or when, tilting backward until the nape of his neck touched his heels, he assumed the shape of a perfect wheel and in that posture juggled with twelve knives, a murmur of marvelment arose from the spectators, and pieces of change would rain on his carpet.

For all that, Barnaby of Compiègne, like most of those who make a living by their wits, had a very hard time doing so.

Earning his bread by the sweat of his brow, he bore more than his share of the troubles linked to the sin of Adam, our father.

What is more, he could not work as much as he wished. For showing his fine know-how, he needed, as do trees for producing flowers and fruits, the warmth of the sun and the light of day. In winter, he was no more than a tree stripped of its leaves and all but dead. The frozen earth was hard for the juggler. Like the cicada of which Marie de France tells, he suffered cold and hunger in the winter months. But since he had a simple heart, he endured his ills patiently.

He had never thought about the origin of wealth or the inequality of human conditions. He expected firmly that if this world is evil, the next could not fail to be good, and this hope supported him. He did not imitate the mountebanks, thieves, and miscreants who sold their souls to the devil; he never took the name of God in vain; he lived honestly, and though he did not have a wife, he did not covet his neighbor's, for woman is the enemy of strong men, as is evident from the story of Samson, which is recounted in the Scriptures.

In truth, he did not have a mind inclined to carnal desires, and it was harder for him to renounce drinking than women. For, without neglecting sobriety, he liked to drink when the weather was warm. He was a good man, God-fearing, and very devoted to the Holy Virgin.

When he went into a church, he never neglected to kneel before the image of the Mother of God and to address to her this prayer:

“Madam, take care of my life until it please God that I die, and when I am dead, let me have the joys of Paradise.”

### II

Now, one evening, after a day of rain, as he went along, sad and stooped, carrying under his arm his juggling balls and knives hidden in his old carpet, and looking for a barn

where he might go to bed without having eaten, he saw on the road a monk who was going the same way, and greeted him courteously. As they were both walking in step, they began to exchange pleasantries.

"Friend," said the monk, "how does it happen that you are dressed all in green? Would it be to play the part of the fool in some [mystery play](#)?"

"Not at all, father," replied Barnaby. "Such as you see me, I am named Barnaby, and I am a juggler by trade. It would be the finest trade in the world if a person in it could eat every day."

"Barnaby, friend," continued the monk, "take care what you say. There is no finer trade than the monastic one. The person in it performs in praise of God, the Virgin, and the saints; and the life of a monk is a never-ending hymn to the Lord."

Barnaby replied: "Father, I [confess](#) that I spoke like an ignorant man. Your trade cannot be compared to mine, and though there may be some merit in dancing while balancing on the tip of my nose a coin on top of a stick, the merit does not come close to yours. I would not mind [singing the office](#) every day like you, my father, especially [the Office of the Very Holy Virgin](#), to whom I have pledged a special devotion. I would gladly give up the craft for which I am known from [Soissons](#) to [Beauvais](#), in more than six hundred towns and villages, to pursue the monastic life."

The monk was moved by the simplicity of the juggler, and, as he was not lacking in insight, he recognized in Barnaby one of those [men of good will](#) of whom [our Lord said](#), "Let peace be with them on earth." That is why he replied:

"Barnaby, friend, come with me and I will have you enter the abbey of which I am the [prior](#). He who led Mary of Egypt into the desert put me on your path to lead you down the road to salvation."

It is in this way that Barnaby became a monk. In the abbey where he was received, the brethren celebrated in eager competition the cult of the Holy Virgin, and to serve her, each one used all the knowledge and skill given to him by God.

The prior, for his part, put together books which, according to the rules of [scholasticism](#), treated of the virtues of the Mother of God. With an expert hand, Brother Maurice copied these treatises on leaves of [vellum](#). On them, Brother Alexander painted delicate [miniatures](#). [In them, you could see](#) the Queen of Heaven, seated on [the throne of Solomon](#), at the foot of which four lions keep watch; around her haloed head fluttered seven doves, which are [the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit](#): gifts of fear, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, understanding, and wisdom. As companions, she had six golden-haired virgins: Humility, Prudence, Restraint, Respect, Virginity, and Obedience. At her feet, two little figures, naked and all white, held themselves in a suppliant pose. They were souls who entreated for their salvation and, surely not in vain, for her all-powerful intercession.

On another page, Brother Alexander depicted Eve opposite Mary, so that one might see at the same time sin and redemption, the fallen woman and the Virgin elevated. In this book one could also marvel at [the Well of Living Waters](#), Fountain, Lily, Moon, Sun, and Garden Enclosed (which is described in [the Canticle](#)), [the Gate of Heaven](#), and [the City of God](#), and on it there were images of [the Virgin](#).

Brother Marbod was by the same token one of the most loving children of Mary. Unceasingly, he carved images of stone, so that his beard, eyebrows, and hair were white with dust and his eyes were perpetually swollen and teary; but he was full of strength and joy in his advanced years, and evidently the Queen of Paradise watched over the old age of her child. Marbod represented her on a pulpit, seated, her forehead encircled

by a halo with an orb of pearls. And he took care that the folds of the robe covered the feet of the woman of whom the prophet said, "My beloved is like a garden enclosed." Sometimes he also depicted her with the features of a child full of grace, and she seemed to say, "Lord, you are my Lord! I have spoken from the womb of my mother: You are my God" (Psalms 21:11).

There were also in the abbey poets who composed prose and hymns in Latin in honor of the blessed Virgin Mary, and there was even a Picard who put the *Miracles of Our Lady* into the vulgar tongue and into rhymed verses.

### III

Seeing so great a competition in praises and such a handsome harvest of works, Barnaby bemoaned his ignorance and simplicity. "Alas!" he sighed, as he walked by himself in the little shadeless garden of the abbey, "I am so unhappy at not being able, like my brothers, to give worthy praise to the Holy Mother of God, to whom I have pledged all the tender feeling in my heart. Alas, alas, I am a coarse and artless man, and to serve you, madam Virgin, I have no edifying sermons, no treatises set out in order according to the rules, no fine paintings, no precisely carved statues, and no verses counted off by feet and marching in time! I have nothing, alas!" He groaned in this way and gave himself over to sorrow.

One evening, as the monks took a break by conversing, he heard one of them tell the story of a monk who could not recite anything but the Hail Mary. This monk was scorned for his ignorance, but when he died, there issued from his mouth five roses, in honor of the five letters in the name Maria, and in this way his holiness was made evident.

In listening to this account, Barnaby marveled once more at the kindness of the Virgin, but he was not consoled by the example of that blessed death, for his heart was full of fervor and he wished to serve the glory of his lady, who is in heaven.

He sought, without being able to find it, a way to do this, and each day he was more distressed, until one morning, having awakened joyfully, he ran to the chapel and remained alone there for more than an hour. He returned there again after dinner. And, starting from that moment, he would go every day into the chapel at the time when it was empty, and there he spent a good part of the time that the other monks dedicated to the liberal arts and mechanical arts. He was no longer sad and he groaned no more.

Such peculiar behavior awakened the curiosity of the monks. People in the community asked themselves why brother Barnaby went off by himself so often. The prior, whose duty it is to be unaware of nothing in the behavior of his monks, decided to watch Barnaby during his times on his own. One day then, when Barnaby had shut himself up in the chapel according to his custom, Dom Prior, accompanied by two elders from the abbey, came to watch, through the chinks of the door, what was going on within.

They saw Barnaby, who was before the altar of the Holy Virgin, his head downward, his feet in the air, juggling six copper balls and twelve knives. In honor of the Holy Mother of God he was performing the tricks that had formerly brought him the most praise. Not understanding that this simple man was thus putting his talent and knowledge at the service of the Holy Virgin, the two elders cried out at the sacrilege.

The prior knew that Barnaby had a blameless soul; but he believed that the man had sunk into madness. All three were preparing to remove Barnaby forcibly from the chapel when they saw the Holy Virgin descend the steps of the altar to come wipe with a fold of her blue mantle the sweat that was dripping down from the forehead of her juggler.

Then the prior, prostrating himself with his face against the flagstone, recited these words: "Blessed are the simple, for they will see God."



Fig. 28: "Blessed are the simple-hearted, for they shall see God." The Virgin descends to wipe the brow of the juggler. Illustration by L. A. Patterson, 1927. Published in Anatole France, *Golden Tales of Anatole France* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1927), facing p. 112.

"Amen," replied the elders, kissing the ground.

## 5. The Composer Jules Massenet

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Jules-Émile-Frédéric Massenet, despite being consigned nowadays to relative oblivion, scored greater commercial success during his lifetime than any of the many other French composers roughly contemporary who command greater fame today, such as—to name only four—Camille Saint-Saëns, Gabriel Fauré, Claude Debussy, and Erik Satie.



Fig. 29: Caricature of Jules Massenet. Illustration by Sem, before 1909. Published in Sem, *Célébrités contemporaines et la Bénédictine* (Paris: Devambez, 1909).

Massenet set a goodly share of his operas in the Middle Ages: *Le Cid*, playing out against the backdrop of Christian-Muslim clashes in Spain, premiered in 1885; *Esclarmonde*, focused upon a Byzantine empress (and sorceress) who falls in love with a French knight, in 1889; and *Grisélidis*, the story of a long-suffering and unfairly mistreated wife, in 1901. His operatic outpouring of medievalism reached a crescendo in 1902 with *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* or, put into English, *The Jongleur of Notre Dame*.

Like many others of his day, the young musician was dazzled by his first exposure to Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*. Later, when the Frenchman conceived of his own musical drama based on a medieval romance, *Esclarmonde*, its purportedly Germanizing features caused him to be slurred as *Mademoiselle Wagner*. Though the German composer influenced him, the taunt of "Mrs. Wagner" was not entirely fair. Neither Massenet's Middle Ages nor his music exhibited consistent [signs of Wagnerism](#).

Whatever the case with this or that among his earlier operas, the setting and music of *The Juggler of Notre Dame* are through-and-through French, from the town square of the opening scene on. In his ghost-written autobiography, Massenet concocted [a fanciful anecdote](#) to explain how he came to compose this sensation. The centerpiece of the fantasy takes place on a train ride, as the composer tears open a parcel supposedly sent to him anonymously by mail and thumbs through the manuscript of a libretto that seizes his imagination.

Whatever the realities of the collaboration, Maurice Léna, a professor, music critic, and librettist, evidences in the text a profound, even erudite acquaintance with Latin liturgy, Medieval Latin poetry, Old French poetry, and modern French poetry.

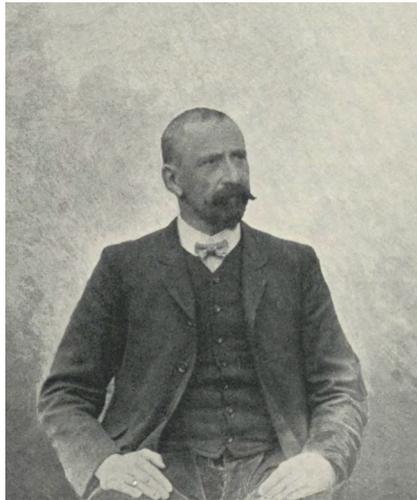


Fig. 30: Maurice Léna. Photograph, date and photographer unknown. Published in Louis Schneider, *Massenet: L'homme—le musicien. Illustrations et documents inédits* (Paris: L. Carteret, 1908), 247.

What he does not betray is any inclination to acknowledge his principal sources, perhaps partly because no one would have needed telling that to some extent he was indebted to Anatole France—but for a story that originated in the Middle Ages. Decades later, the [deeply learned Léna](#) reveals his awareness of the edition by Wendelin Foerster, the passing mentions of the centuries-old original by Gaston Paris, the poem by Raymond de Borrelli, and the prose by Anatole France. The question is whether he possessed all

these minutiae before putting together the libretto, or whether he picked up some or most of his erudition about the literary tradition after the fact.

The only certainty is that the librettist had to have been aware of France's famous piece. Yet Léna's remaking has little in common with its closest predecessor. Though the short story has three sections, each numbered with a Roman numeral, and the opera has three acts, even so the progression of the narrative differs greatly. Yes, in both France and the opera, the principal character feels inadequate as an artist when judged against the monks, with their mastery of more prestigious crafts. But the two characters, the exotic-sounding, well-traveled Barnabé in the prose and the homespun, almost peasant-like Jean in the libretto, are not at all the same. The second is not a top-flight juggler but a humbler and even sometimes inept jack-of-all-trades in the entertainment industry—a jongleur. This adjustment is essential to the drama, since it enables Léna more scope for the performance of songs and display of verbal art.

To turn to religion, Jean appears far more sacrilegious than Barnabé, but the old adage seems to apply: the greater the sinner, the greater the saint. The sinfulness makes itself manifest early, since Jean joins the monastery only under pressure and with reluctance. As events proceed, he may not be a martyr, but he is miserably mistreated. The hostility toward Jean in the opera, particularly from the prior, is far more intense than toward Barnabé in the short story. The antagonism is counterbalanced only by the jovial Boniface, whose affability distracts the audience from recognizing what his gourmandise reveals about the hypocrisy of the monks' lifestyle. By the end, Léna's protagonist prevails and is proven to be truly saintly, his piety certified within the monastery.

The endings of France's short story and of Léna's libretto stand apart. In the opera stagecraft comes into play, with the glow of artificial lighting, angelic voices off stage, the special effect of a halo, the melodrama of fainting, the miracle of the jongleur's suddenly understanding Latin, the ascent of Mary and angels, and the death of Jean himself, who becomes almost in his own right a *deus ex machina*. Simplicity is rewarded with very showy sanctity: the composer and librettist were absolutely right to subtitle the poem as a "Miracle in Three Acts."

The text of the opera, wherever we choose to pin down its wellheads of inspiration, brought out the best in Massenet. In general, the musician attained more favor from audiences of his own day than from critics—and from posterity. But this topic encouraged him to display his talents and range as he did rarely elsewhere. Just as Léna endeavored to immerse his listeners in the literature, liturgy, and legends of the Middle Ages, so too the composer reveled in plumbing the potentials of Church music as well as those of what were thought in his day to be medieval melodies and folk songs.

One circumstance that affected very literally the tenor of the music is the all-male cast of the opera as Massenet originally framed it. In allocating no parts for sopranos or altos on stage, he was in a sense merely owning up to the single-sex realities of

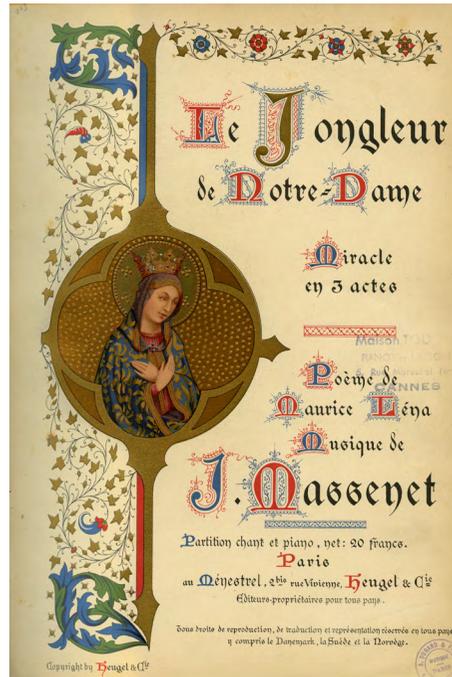


Fig. 31: Title page of piano-vocal score for Maurice Léna and Jules Massenet, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame: Miracle en trois actes* (Paris: Heugel, 1906).

medieval monasteries. At the same time, he had reasons relating to his reputation, far beyond verisimilitude, that induced him to conceive of music without any roles that required or even permitted to sing on stage a member of what was then styled “the fair sex” and would become in due course “the second sex.” Over much of his career, the musician was faulted, even ridiculed, for being a woman’s composer. In the gender politics of his day, he allegedly wrote feminine music, found his muse only when creating his operas for divas he adored or lusted after, and attained no success except with musical dramas, verging on soap operas, that relied on female heroines and that drew audiences predominantly of ladies. *The Jongleur of Notre Dame* is his only opera in which the leading soloist is not a soprano.

If Massenet was intent on proving a point about his masculinity, he trod more carefully in portraying religion and the Church. Both the words and the notes of the opera dance a delicate dance so as to appeal to the two extremes within the [riven cultural politics of France](#) in his period. The result could be construed as validating the piety valued by conservative Catholics. Seen from this perspective, the opera looks fondly at the humble faith of a medieval minstrel. Simultaneously, it could be interpreted by secularists as poking fun at the foibles of clerics and treating with irony—gentle, but irony all the same—the credulousness of the uneducated faithful.

The musical drama benefited from a couple of circumstances that kept it in the limelight longer than might otherwise have been the case. At that time the Prince of Monaco had his sights set on making his principality a serious competitor with Paris

in operatic productions. To that end, Albert I intervened personally to cajole Massenet into allowing *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* to debut in Monte Carlo, on February 18, 1902. As a result, the slightly belated opening in the capital of France, on May 10, 1904, gave the composition a lift when its novelty might otherwise have begun to sag. But the most emphatic boost came from a Scottish-American diva. [Mary Garden](#), who had taken Paris by storm, prevailed upon Massenet to rewrite the title role from calling for a tenor so that she might sing it en travesti—as a woman in a man’s clothing.



Fig. 32: Mary Garden as Jean the juggler in Massenet’s *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*. Photograph by Matzene Studio, 1909. Published in Henry C. Lahee, *The Grand Opera Singers of To-day* (Boston: L. C. Page, 1912), frontispiece.

She premiered it with this innovation in the Manhattan Opera House of New York, on November 27, 1908, during the phase when the impresario Oscar Hammerstein I was competing fiercely with the Metropolitan Opera.

Both Hammerstein and Garden were adroit at snagging headlines. *The Jongleur of Notre Dame* had the distinctive feature of a female lead, which was taken patriotically to be an American innovation, made contrary to the [vehement wishes of the composer](#) that “the monk’s habit ... [n]ever be disguised in a petticoat.” Whatever the case may be, the work became widely known throughout the United States until the golden age of this art form drew to a close. The end coincided with the curtain fall of Mary Garden’s career in 1930. By that point Massenet’s opera was well positioned for making the transition to vaudeville and radio, as well as for supporting the use of Anatole France’s short story in schools and universities, especially in the French-language curriculum.

The following translation is not intended to be singable, but rather to help English-speakers piece together what the French libretto from the Belle Époque means. Nowadays such an understanding requires decoding many references to Catholic religion and medieval literature that have become obscure in the more than a century that has intervened between its composition and our encounter with it today.

The Jongleur of Notre Dame:  
Miracle in Three Acts

Libretto by Maurice Léna

Jean, the Jongleur  
Boniface, the Monastery Cook  
The Prior  
A Poet Monk  
A Painter Monk  
A Musician Monk  
A Sculptor Monk  
The Virgin  
Two Angels  
A Crier Monk  
A Heckler  
A Drunk  
A Knight  
A Voice  
Angelic Voices, Monks, Knights, Clerics, Townsfolk, Peasants, Vendors, Beggars

ACT 1

*The town square of Cluny in the fourteenth century. At the center of the square, the traditional elm and under it a bench. We see the façade of the abbey with a statue of the Virgin over the door. It is the first day of the month of Mary, and a market day. Girls and boys dance the shepherd step.*

SCENE 1

TOWNSPEOPLE, KNIGHTS, CLERICS, PEASANTS, and BEGGARS  
*come and go; VENDORS are at their places.*

THE CROWD

For Our Lady of Heaven  
dance the shepherd step,  
oh, Pierrot! Oh, Pierrette!  
Here is charming May,  
dance the shepherd step  
and for young prince Jesus  
take another turn.

VENDORS

Leeks, turnips, prunes from Tours!  
Fresh strawberries!  
Cream cheese! White cabbage!  
Green sauce, buy the tasty **green sauce**!

A CRIER-MONK

**Indulgences** are available at the high altar!

SCENE 2

THE SAME PEOPLE

*In the distance is heard the melody of a **vielle** getting closer*

VARIOUS VOICES

Quiet! Do you hear? It's the sound of a **vielle**.

ALL

A jongleur, a jongleur!

VARIOUS VOICES

The lively refrain hops  
like a **grasshopper**. He's coming! A jongleur!  
**Praise be**, it's a jongleur!  
He will sing us a new song,  
do us a new stunt,  
pull his newest face.

ALL

He's here! Make way, make way!

SCENE 3

THE SAME PEOPLE, JEAN.

*JEAN enters playing the **vielle**; stops*  
Make way for the Jongleur King!  
*He is scrawny and gaunt-faced, with well-worn clothing.*

*General disappointment, murmuring.*

ALL

The king is not very handsome,  
A king with a piteous look.

HECKLER

His Majesty, **King Starvation**.  
*A few laughs.*

JEAN

Attention! Come forward ... Step back ... Attention!

Listen all, knights and churls,  
 Young and old, beasts and men,  
 Ladies with a sweet smile,  
 "Wise clerics who can read,"  
 Cripples, hunchbacks, drunkards, thieves,  
 Listen to Jean, Jongleur King!

KNIGHTS and PEASANTS *singing; girls and boys dancing, around the  
 jongleur, an ironic round.*  
 Noble king, choose your queen,  
 Lanturli virelonlaine,  
 Choose your queen, handsome king,  
 Lanturli lon la ...

JEAN, *interrupting the round*  
 Attention!  
 But first, my kind friends,  
 a little small change in my **begging bowl**.  
*To someone who gives*  
 May Jesus repay you for it, sir.  
*Sadly, looking at his bowl*  
 An old coin, worth nothing.  
*Resuming his patter*  
 Attention!  
 Would you like tricks of jugglery,  
 truly of magic?  
 Never have you seen on earth  
 one more skilled at juggling the stick,  
 bowls, or balls.  
*Scornful laughs*  
 I can pull eggs **out of a hat!**

ALL  
 It's childish ... an old trick ... Go away and pull out chickens!

JEAN  
 I know the **hoop dance!**  
 [*He clumsily sketches a dance step.*]

ALL  
 What nimble grace!  
*The boys and girls make the jongleur dance with them.*

ALL  
 Choose your queen, handsome king.  
 Lanturli lon la.

JEAN, *after breaking free*  
Peace, you fools!  
*Continuing his patter:*  
My lords, I'll sing a lovely *salut d'amour*.

ONE GROUP OF VENDORS  
Leeks, turnips!  
*Laughter.*

ANOTHER GROUP  
Prunes from Tours!

JEAN, *who begins to lose hope*  
Well then! A battle song,  
*olifant*, drum, and clarion,  
neighs under the spur,  
cut and thrust!

ALL  
No, no.

JEAN  
I know *Roland*.

THE TWO GROUPS OF VENDORS  
Cream cheese! White cabbage!  
*Laughter.*

JEAN  
I know *Bertha of the Big Feet*.

SEVERAL VOICES  
No, no, too old a story.  
*The round resumes*

JEAN, *trying to be heard over the racket:*  
*Renaud de Montauban*.

ALL  
No, no.

JEAN  
*Charlemagne*.

ALL  
No, no.

JEAN

Pepin.

A HECKLER, *imitating a cry from the street*  
Rabbit skins!

*Laughter, uproar*

ALL, *across the various groups*  
Tell us instead a drinking song.

ALL  
Very good! Hurrah! Very good!

A DRUNKARD  
In vino veritas.

A GROUP  
Tell us the Credo of the Drunkard.

A KNIGHT  
The Te Deum of Hippocras.

ALL  
The Gloria of Ruddy-Face.

JEAN, *proposing timidly*  
The Hallelujah of Wine?

ALL, *with joy*  
The Hallelujah of Wine!

JEAN *turns, his hands clasped, toward the statue of the Virgin.*  
Forgive me, holy Virgin Mary,  
and you, Jesus, sweet little child.  
I will sing a blasphemous song,  
but it is necessary all the same to earn a living.  
Hunger cries out in my guts,  
and if my heart is good Christian,  
why is my belly pagan?

ALL, *calling again for the song*  
The Hallelujah of Wine!

JEAN, *warming up on his instrument.*  
Pater Noster. The wine, it's God, it's God the Father,  
who descends from the very heights of heaven,  
clad in silky velvet,

all the way down my pious throat  
when I drain my glass.

ALL  
Hallelujah!

JEAN  
Hallelujah! Let's sing the *Hallelujah of Wine*.

ALL  
Hallelujah!

JEAN  
*Ave. Beautiful Venus* says to suitors: "Good fellow,  
by night even more than by day,  
drink *aged wine, potion of love*;  
Your heart is as hot as a furnace  
when you drain your glass."

ALL  
Hallelujah!

JEAN  
Hallelujah! Let's sing the *Hallelujah of Wine*!

ALL  
Hallelujah!

JEAN  
*Credo. Drink no water*, a baneful brew—  
To the water drinker, the infernal abyss!  
But so that heaven may say to my  
triumphant nose: "Enter, *cardinal*!"  
let's drain another glass!

ALL  
Hallelujah!

SCENE 4  
THE SAME ONES, THE PRIOR  
*The door of the abbey opens abruptly. The prior appears on the steps.*

ALL  
It's the prior ... Let's take flight!

THE PRIOR  
Away from here, you unspeakable crew!

*All flee except Jean, dumbfounded. To Jean:*

And you, base **balladeer**, the better to damn your soul,  
you come even to this abbey to insult  
our mother Mary and her divine child!

JEAN, *falling to his knees*  
Mercy, Father, mercy!

THE PRIOR  
Despised and cursed clan!

JEAN  
Oh Father, mercy!

THE PRIOR  
Do you not see Satan,  
whose **green** fist brandishes a scarlet **pitchfork**?  
He bestrides you; he carries you off.

JEAN  
Mercy!

THE PRIOR  
Here **flames and iron** engulf you,  
here tears and groans. Here  
the frightful gate of Hell opens!

JEAN  
Mercy!

THE PRIOR  
Tremble!

JEAN  
Mercy!

THE PRIOR  
Hell!

JEAN  
Pardon!

THE PRIOR  
Hell!

JEAN, *as if thunderstruck, stretched out lengthwise on the ground*  
Ah! I am burning! Ah! I'm dying!

*On his knees*  
 Ah! Father, pardon ...  
*Dragging himself toward the Virgin.*  
 Pardon, pardon, Mary,  
 See my tears.  
*He sobs.*

THE PRIOR, *aside*  
 He weeps ... A little faith, in this withered soul,  
 Pale winter rose, will it flower again?  
*To Jean.*  
 Your name?

JEAN  
 Jean.

THE PRIOR  
 That's the name of a [saint dear to the Virgin](#).  
*Pointing to the Virgin.*  
 This pardon of Mary, it may be won.  
 You'll be pardoned if, burning like a candle  
 and scented like a censer,  
 at her altar your heart renounces this impure trade  
 without delay, from this evening on.  
 If, full of keen repentance,  
 and shaking off at the threshold the dust of the world  
 you become, from this evening, my brother in this abbey.

JEAN, *his hands clasped to the Virgin.*  
 Lady of Heaven,  
 you know well, and Jesus knows it too,  
 the tender and devoted love with which  
 Jean, the poor jongleur, loves you ...

THE PRIOR  
 Well then?

JEAN  
 But to swear off, when I am still young,  
 To swear off following you, oh, [Freedom](#), my beloved,  
 carefree sprite with a bright golden smile?  
 It is she whom my heart has chosen as mistress.  
 Hair in the wind, laughing, she takes me by the hand,  
 and leads me off with no concern for the hour or path.  
 The [silver of the waters](#), the [gold of the blond harvest](#),  
 the [diamonds of the nights](#), through her are mine!  
 Through her I have space, love, and the world!

Through her, the beggar becomes king!  
 By her divine charm, everything smiles on me, everything enchants me.  
 I go, and I breathe, and I dream, and I sing,  
 and to accompany the flight of my song,  
 a concert of birds bubbles up in the green brush.  
 Gracious mistress, and sister I have chosen,  
 must I lose you? Oh, my royal treasure!  
 Oh, Freedom, my beloved,  
 carefree sprite with a bright golden smile!

THE PRIOR

A gorgeous mistress,  
 in truth?  
 Fear, poor fool, the fatal caress  
 of her deceitful beauty.

JEAN

Spring smiles in her train.

THE PRIOR

Do you not see Winter, Storm, and Snow?

JEAN

Her youth is in flower.

THE PRIOR

But soon her lover, the jongleur, will be old.

JEAN, *looking at his juggler's equipment.*

And you, balls, hoops, old friends full of enthusiasm,  
 Will he throw you away, your unfaithful master?

*Addressing his vielle:*

You, whose docile soul sang under my hand?

THE PRIOR

Keep them and go off. Go off to die of hunger,  
 in a ditch, without anyone to give you confession, you vile rag ...  
 But the abbey, that was the salvation of your soul,  
 the salvation of your body.

*Smiling.*

In Lent, no doubt, beans and salted herring;  
 but on major feast days,  
 ah! the plenteous days!  
 Come, see for yourself.

*Boniface appears atop a donkey that a lay brother holds by the bridle. The donkey also carries two baskets, one containing flowers, the other food and bottles.*

Cook without equal,  
 Brother **Boniface** returns from his quest,  
 glorious, smiling, he brings  
 every tasty delight for a feast.

## SCENE 5

## THE SAME ONES, BONIFACE

## BONIFACE

*Taking flowers and foods one by one from the baskets.*

First for the Virgin, here are the **flowers she loves**:

carnations, lilacs, forget-me-nots,

violet, sweetbriar, and lily,

rose, poppy, sunflower,

and here too the periwinkle,

silver sprig, and buttercup.

First for the Virgin, here are the flowers she loves.

And for the servants of Madame Mary,

here are spring onions

and green **leeks**.

Here is garden cress,

velvety cabbage, flowery sage ...

This is for the servants of Madame Mary.

Holy Virgin, the beautiful capon!

Father, if you please, feel the weight of this ham ...

chitterling sausage, a full quarter of head cheese,

saveloy, regular sausage, blood pudding.

Look what perfect saltiness;

Nothing like it for putting in wine to cook!

Wine: we have some, and how exquisite!

See how it sparkles in the crystal of the decanter.

Sweet Jesus, it is vintage **Mâcon**!

Here are flowers

and this beautiful taper

for the Virgin.

And this for her humble servants.

*We hear the breakfast bell ring from interior of the abbey; then the voices of the monks in the refectory reciting the **Benedicite**.*

*Voices of the Monks inside the Abbey.*

## A VOICE

*Benedicite.*

## ALL

*Benedicite.*

A VOICE

Nos et ea quae sumus sumpturi, benedicat dextera Christi.

ALL

Amen!

A VOICE

In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.

ALL

Amen!

BONIFACE

The *Benedicite*, Father. To the table! To the table!

And may a good lunch

*Showing his provisions.*

prepare us for dinner.

THE PRIOR to Jean, inviting him.

To the table!

JEAN, as if in ecstasy, hands joined in blissful blessing.

To the table!

ALL THREE, with varying expressions and gestures.

To the table!

*The Prior, Boniface, and the lay brother with the donkey make their way toward the entrance of abbey. Jean follows them, still hesitating, but attracted by the smell of the food. At the threshold he turns around to get his juggling equipment, which he carries in secretly. Before entering, he makes a humble prayer at the feet of the Virgin.*

ACT 2

The Cloister

*At the abbey, in the study hall that leads into the garden. Tables, desks, easels.*

*A statue of the Virgin, recently completed, stands out very much in view,*

*in a pose of indulgence and love. A monk is in the process of painting it.*

*Grouped around the musician monk, other monks finish rehearsing a hymn*

*to the Virgin under his direction which he composed for the occasion; it is the morning of Assumption Day.*

SCENE 1

JEAN, THE PAINTER MONK, THE POET MONK, THE SCULPTOR MONK, THE MUSICIAN MONK

ALL THE MONKS, including the four indicated above.

*The musician monk directs the vocal ensemble and adds his voice to the mix.*

Ave coeleste lilium,  
Ave rosa speciosa,  
Ave mater humilium,  
Superbis imperiosa.  
In hac valle lacrymarum  
Da robur, fer auxilium.

JEAN, *musings at a distance*

The cooking is good at the abbey.  
I, who did not sup often,  
now drink good wine, I eat marbled meats.  
Glorious day!  
Today the Virgin ascends to heaven,  
and for her they rehearse a song of thanks.

*Sadly.*

A song in Latin!  
Queen of angels,  
oh you, to whom I owe fat meat and good wine,  
I would like to celebrate your praises with them.  
Alas! I don't know how to sing Latin.

SCENE 2

THE SAME CHARACTERS, THE PRIOR, BONIFACE

PRIOR *entering.*

That's very good, brothers.

*To the Musician Monk.*

My compliments to the author.

*To the poet monk, author of the words of the hymn, who steps forward  
jealously.*

To the poet, too.

*Each of the monks resumes his station and work in the study hall: some paint,  
others sculpt or model, still others copy on vellum. Some dig with a spade  
at the bottom of the garden and cultivate flowers, and so forth. In a corner,  
Boniface modestly peels vegetables.*

THE PRIOR *to Jean*

But what are you doing, alone in this solitary corner?

You, an experienced singer, you do not sing?

JEAN

Pardon me, Father;  
But, alas, I know only  
profane songs in uneducated French.

SEVERAL MONKS *who have drawn near*

Oh, Brother Jean! What laziness!  
 Look how fat he's getting.  
*Touching his stomach*  
 Do you feel his stomach growing?

BONIFACE, *intervening good-naturedly*  
 Well what of it! Brother Jean loves good things.

THE PRIOR  
 To the Virgin, no doubt, he offers this morning  
 as a bouquet the freshness of his complexion,  
 all abloom with *lilies and roses*.

THE MONKS, *still without Boniface*  
*(The musician, the poet, the painter, and the sculptor)*  
*Brother Jean,*  
*are you sleeping ...*

JEAN  
 Brothers, I know my sad unworthiness.  
 Day and night I weep over it.  
 You mock me, but that is little.  
 Your wrath should destroy me this moment; I have well deserved it.  
 Ever since the Virgin, helping mother,  
 guiding me with her *white hand*,  
 has allowed me to eat my fill  
 in this prosperous abbey,  
 have I *earned my bread* a single day?  
 No, never has one meritorious deed  
 given witness of my love to heaven.  
 An ignorant monk, an uncouth monk,  
 I know nothing but in the refectory  
 to eat and drink, drink and eat.  
 Everyone in this holy house  
 serves Our Lady with great zeal;  
 there is no altar boy so little  
 that he does not know how to sing  
 verses or psalms for her in the chapel.  
 And I who would face death  
 with such a joyous heart for her glory,  
 alas, alas, what a dreadful fate!

JEAN  
 I know nothing but in the refectory,  
 to eat and drink, drink and eat.

## THE MONKS

Jean knows nothing but in the refectory  
To eat and drink, drink and eat.

JEAN, *to the Prior*

Ah! Drive me away, Father:  
I fear that I will bring you misfortune ...  
Let's go, jongleur,  
Take up again your shoulder bag and your poverty.

## SCENE 3

## THE SAME CHARACTERS

THE SCULPTOR MONK, *approaching Jean.*

Jongleur, a pitiable profession.

*Ironically*

Become a sculptor instead.

You can be my pupil ...

*Pointing out the small statue he is in the process of carving with a chisel.*

Look: the allure of the Queen, with her charming face,

rises from the flanks of marble,

awakened by a pious chisel.

I, in my turn, create her, I her creature,

winning heavenly glory.

Nothing equals sculpture!

THE PAINTER MONK, *approaching*

Brother, you forget painting.

Be my pupil, Jean.

Inanimate marble cannot give life;

but under the all-powerful brush,

*Pointing to a painting of the Virgin*

you see her quiver, trembling, subdued,

to the lips it reddens, to the expression in the eyes—

painting,

it is the great art!

THE SCULPTOR MONK

The great art,

it is sculpture!

THE POET MONK, *approaching*

Not so. Only poetry ought to take a seat

in the place of honor.

She is my Lady, and I am her devoted servant.

Your art is very coarse. Of choicer essence,

the poet, fixing the flight of pure spirit,

encloses it, still moving, in verses of gold and azure.  
Glory to poetry!

THE PAINTER MONK

Painting,  
that is the great art!

THE SCULPTOR MONK

The great art  
is sculpture!

THE PRIOR, *intervening*

Brothers, let's calm down.

THE MUSICIAN MONK, *approaching in turn*

As for me, I imagine that  
my art alone can make you agree ...  
See, while you grovel on earth,  
in what passionate flight  
music takes off straight up to heaven.  
Voice of the ineffable, echo of the great mystery,  
it is the Blue Bird that comes from the Eternal Shore,  
and the White Ship on the Ocean of Dreams.  
What does a seraph do in heaven?  
He sings, again, and always, without rest.  
Music is a divine art.

THE SCULPTOR MONK

No, the great art is sculpture.

THE PAINTER MONK

No, the great art is painting.

THE POET MONK

Poetry, oh, Queen of Arts!

THE MUSICIAN MONK

Oh, Music, Queen of Arts!  
A babbler, the poet!

THE PAINTER MONK

Sculptors are just masons!

THE SCULPTOR MONK

Painters, all they do is daub!

JEAN *frightened*

Good God! What a storm!

THE POET MONK *ironically, to the musician who threatens him*  
Music softens manners.

*(Tumult)*

THE PRIOR

Brothers, what discord in this haven!

*Agitans discordia fratres ...*

It's Virgil's turn of phrase.

By order of *Apollo*, by order of the prior,

Let *Muse to Muse* offer a sisterly kiss.

*The four rivals embrace, but reluctantly.*

Now everyone come to the chapel,  
to the feet of Our Lady, and with humbler hearts  
pray to receive her new image.

*Carrying the statue of the Virgin, the monks go back in front of the Prior and  
resume singing.*

SCENE 4

JEAN, BONIFACE

JEAN, *sitting head in hands.*

I alone offer nothing to Mary.

BONIFACE

Come on, Brother Jean, don't envy them.

They're all full of pride, you see,

And paradise, that's not for them.

JEAN, *disheartened*

Paradise!

BONIFACE

If one must swell with glory,

when I prepare a good meal,

I am also doing *work of merit*.

I am a sculptor of nougats;

a painter, by the soft color of my creams.

A chicken cooked medium rare is alone *worth a thousand poems*.

And what a symphony to ravish heaven and earth

is a table where harmonious order holds sway!

JEAN, *with conviction*

Certainly.

BONIFACE, *a little smug*  
 But to please Mary  
 I remain simple.

JEAN  
 Simple, alas,  
 I am too much so ... She loves to be venerated  
 in this *Latin I do not know*.

BONIFACE  
 And I know so little ... just *kitchen Latin* ...  
 Is that your worry?

*Naïvely*  
 Come on, the Virgin understands the French language quite well, too;  
 in her tenderness she senses if there is need.  
 For the humble, Mary has the generosity of a sister.  
 And I read *in a book a marvelous story*  
 in which you see clearly that she gave her heart  
 to the simplest, humblest flower.

*Telling the story.*  
 Mary was fleeing with the baby Jesus over mountains and plains,  
 but the winded donkey can go no further;  
 and see here how over there, on the side of the hill,  
 the bloodthirsty cavalry of the *child-killing king* suddenly appeared.

"Oh, my son, where to hide you in your helplessness?"  
 A rose was blooming on the roadside:  
 "Rose, beautiful rose, be good to my child!  
 So that he can nestle there, open wide the cup of your bloom;  
 save my Jesus from dying."

But for fear of spoiling the crimson of her dress, the proud flower  
 replied: "I don't want to open."

A sage plant was blooming on the roadside;  
 "Sage, my little sage, open your leaves to my child."  
 And the good plant opens her leaves so wide  
 that at the bottom of this cradle Jesus falls asleep.

JEAN *tenderly, an aside*  
 Oh, miracle of love!

BONIFACE *finishing*  
 And the Virgin, blessed among all women,  
 blessed the humble sage among all flowers!

*Aside, with great conviction.*

In fact, sage is prized in cooking.

JEAN, *aside, with enthusiasm, his eyes raised to heaven*  
 If your white hand should bless me someday,  
 let death come. To die beneath your gaze, what a feast day!

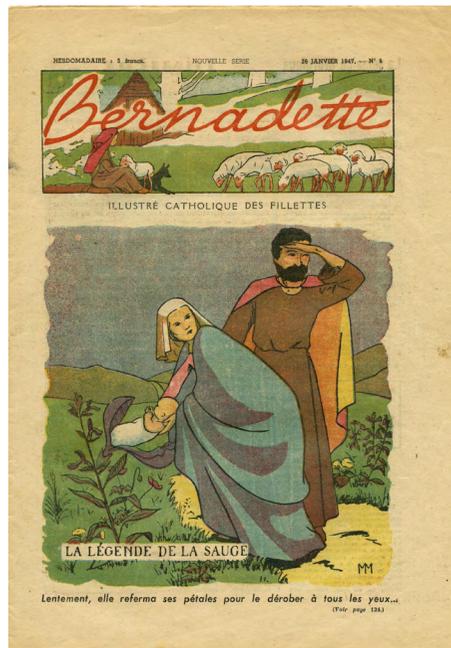


Fig. 33: Front cover of *Bernadette: Illustré catholique des fillettes*, no. 8, January 26, 1947.

#### BONIFACE

First we'll celebrate the dinner I'm preparing.  
 I must check on my young turkey,  
*Coming back*  
 for I please the Virgin in watching over the oven.  
 Did Jesus not receive with an equal smile  
 the gold, incense, and myrrh of the wise kings  
 and the pipe-tune of the poor shepherd?  
*He exits running.*

#### SCENE 5

*JEAN left alone, vaguely repeating the words just uttered by Boniface.*  
 The pipe-tune of the poor shepherd ...  
*Changing his tone, and with emotion.*  
 What a sudden ray of light,  
 and what a feeling in my heart!  
 He's right, the Virgin is not proud.  
 The shepherd, the jongleur, in her eyes, equals the king.  
*He walks forward, eyes and hands toward heaven.*  
 Virgin, mother of love; Virgin, supreme goodness.  
 Just as the Christ-child smiled at the tune of the shepherd,  
 if the jongleur dares to honor you likewise,  
 deign to smile from the threshold of heaven!

*Jean remains in a posture of divine invocation.*

*The orchestra plays the mystic pastorale that connects the two acts.*

### ACT 3

#### Mystic Pastorale

*In the chapel of the abbey. In plain sight on the altar, the painted statue of the Virgin. The chapel is arranged so that people can see Jean from the sides without his noticing those who watch him.*

#### SCENE 1

*In the distance we hear the monks singing the hymn to the Virgin.*

THE PAINTER MONK, *alone in front of the statue*  
 One last look at my work, at my Virgin ...  
 The chant grows faint and dies ... In the silence, where  
 the still flame of the candles sleeps,  
 for her jealous painter she is even more beautiful. ...  
 But someone enters.—It's Jean ... Why all this equipment?  
*He hides behind a column.*

#### SCENE 2

#### THE SAME CHARACTER, JEAN

*Entrance of Jean, still clad in his monk's robe, carrying his vielle and jongleur's shoulder bag. He enters on tiptoe, looking all around anxiously.*

#### JEAN

No one ... Come on, be brave!  
 No one comes any more at this hour.  
*Approaching the altar.*  
 Venerable mother of Jesus,  
 white queen,  
 so I am here alone before you ...  
 Trembling, my heart full of love and pain,  
 I fall at your knees ...  
 hear my prayer:  
 Alas, poor Jean is nothing but a worthless jongleur.  
 Yet let him, in his humble manner,  
 work beneath your eyes, oh, Virgin, in your honor.

*Stripping off his monk's robe, he appears in the outer tunic of a jongleur, spreads his carpet, and, grabbing his vielle, draws from it the same chords that announced his arrival at the town square of Cluny.*

THE PAINTER MONK.

He's going mad. I will run to warn the Prior.

*He goes out swiftly.*

JEAN

I begin.

*He greets the Virgin.*

Make way, make way, silence!

Listen to Jean, Jongleur King.

*Carried away by habit, he roams, with a cup in hand, through a circle of imaginary spectators.*

But first a few pennies in my cup ...

*Stopping, embarrassed, at the Virgin.*

Force of habit! Forgive me.

*Resuming his routine.*

Attention! ...

To please you,

I will sing a *song of war*.

*"It's nice to see these men-at-arms*

*when they are mounted and decked out;*

*it's nice to see these weapons gleam*

*beneath golden standards.*

*To gain honor and fine land,*

*between you and me, noble companions,*

*let's follow war!"*

SCENE 3

JEAN alone; then the PRIOR, BONIFACE, the PAINTER MONK, the  
POET MONK, the MUSICIAN, SCULPTOR, and OTHER MONKS

JEAN, *aside*

But all this racket frightens the Virgin.

*Addressing the Virgin, in his simplicity.*

Do you prefer, perhaps,

the *Romance of Love*?

*He starts the song, which was well known at that time.*

*"Pretty Doette at her window ..."*

*Memory fails him; aside.*

I don't remember it anymore.

*Beginning another.*

*"... Lovely Erembourg*

*atop the highest tower ..."*

*Memory fails him again.*

Oh, treacherous memory ...

Well then, stupid minstrel, keep repeating

the never-ending

*pastourelle*

of Robin and Marion.

"To the edge of the pretty countryside

Saderaladon—

Sing little nightingale—

Marion, shepherdess quite sensible,

still thinks

of her loves.

Aé!

A handsome horseman

just passed by, proudly sporting armor

Saderaladon—

Sing little nightingale—

'I am the King,

Be all mine.'

Aé!

'No, dear Lord, I will stay sensible.'

Saderaladon—

Sing, little nightingale—

'With my dress and my cheese

I belong to Robin,

I love Robin.'

Aé! Aé!"

*While Jean sings the pastourelle, the Prior, led by the painter monk, arrives with Boniface. Jean cannot see them; they observe the jongleur's routine. Several times, the outraged Prior makes as if to throw himself on Jean but is held back by Boniface.*

THE PRIOR

Sacrilege!

BONIFACE

Calm down.

The song ends with

a Catholic marriage of

the girl to the boy.

SCENE 4

THE SAME CHARACTERS, ALL THE MONKS

JEAN, *in the manner of a quick sales pitch*

And now do you want juggling tricks,

or even ones of sorcery?

Should I summon up griffins and flying devils

in the flaming air?

*Stopping, ashamed of this sacrilege; to the Virgin.*

Forgive me, old habit!

*Moving closer to the Virgin and in secret.*  
Between you and me, I exaggerate!  
But you know that a pitch  
is never completely honest.

*Resuming.*  
Attention! To finish the performance,  
I will have the honor to dance before you  
*With humility.*  
quite simply a dance from back home.

THE PRIOR, *ready to rush forward.*  
That's it, I'm going ...

BONIFACE  
Patience!

THE PRIOR  
*The dog returns to his vomit.*

BONIFACE  
*King David danced before the ark.*  
I don't believe that David was a pagan.

*The jongleur begins to dance a kind of **country step** with pliés and shouts given at intervals. He dances faster and faster, until the moment when, covered in sweat, he falls out of breath at the feet of the Virgin and prostrates himself in long and intense veneration. All the monks arrive successively, including the musician monk, the poet monk, and the sculptor monk.*

*The monks aside, their anger contrasting with the jongleur's dance.*

THE MONKS  
Sacrilège!

THE PRIOR  
Anathema!

BONIFACE  
Mercy!

THE MONKS  
*Pig covered in mud,*  
he wallows and plays  
in his impiety.

THE PRIOR  
Anathema!

BONIFACE

Mercy!

THE MONKS

What an insult ...

Vengeance

for the Mother of God!

Let us chase him away,

vile spawn,

chase him away from this holy place!

BONIFACE

Mercy, mercy for him!

THE PRIOR

Anathema!

THE MONKS

Sacrilege!

Death to the blasphemer!

*Furious, the monks are about to throw themselves on Jean. But Boniface stops them with a gesture toward the statue of the Virgin.*

SCENE 5

THE SAME CHARACTERS, THE VOICES OF UNSEEN ANGELS

BONIFACE

Get back, everyone.

The Virgin protects him!

The picture ... Do you see ... Do you see?

It's beginning to shine

with a *strange light* ...

A gentle glance arises at the edge of the eyelid,

a smile is nearly awakening on the mouth.

THE MONKS

Oh, miracle!

THE PAINTER MONK, *radiant with pride.*

Oh, painting!

BONIFACE

Ah, look! ... The white hand

reaches toward the jongleur in a maternal gesture ...

The exquisite brow

tilts down with love ...

THE MONKS

Oh, miracle!

*We hear heavenly voices.*

BONIFACE

Listen to the music of heaven.

VOICES OF INVISIBLE ANGELS

Hosannah! Glory to Jean! Hosannah! Glory, glory!

Glory in the heights of heaven! Glory and serenity!

Peace on Earth,  
to men of good will.

THE MONKS

Mystery worthy of adoration!

*The Prior, followed by the monks, draws near to Jean, who is still at the feet of the Virgin, lost in prayer. Jean gets up and turns at the noise, frightened at being caught in his jongleur's outfit.*

JEAN

It's the Prior!

*Falling on his knees.*

Pardon!

THE PRIOR

Get up:

it is I who should be at your knees.

You are a great saint ... Pray, pray for us.

THE MONKS

Pray for us.

JEAN, *thinking they are mocking him*

No, don't mock me. Punish me, Father.

THE PRIOR

Mock you, punish you?

You, the honor of the monastery,

*pointing to the altar,*

when with my own eyes I see the Virgin bless you!

JEAN, *very simply*

I see nothing.

## THE MONKS

Strange marvel!

## THE PRIOR

A teaching from heaven, a lesson without equal  
of innocent virtue, of holy humility.

*Addressing the Virgin.*

And yet, oh, Virgin Queen,  
Mother of love and goodness,  
divine and living paleness,  
to ease him of his trouble,  
reveal yourself  
to the eyes, still closed, of your dear jongleur.



Fig. 34: The juggler collapses: a scene from Massenet's *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*. Illustration by Edouard Zier. *Le Monde Illustré* 2459 (May 14, 1904): 395.

*The altar, up to this point dimly lit, gleams with an intense light.  
And detaching itself from the hands of the Virgin, the halo of the  
blessed comes to shine above the head of Jean.*

## THE MONKS

Miracle! Miracle!

JEAN, *as if he has been struck in the heart.*  
 Radiance,  
 happiness,  
 I die  
 in ecstasy.  
*He faints in the arms of the Prior.*

THE MONKS, *falling to their knees.*  
 Kyrie, eleison!  
 Christe, exaudi nos!  
 Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!

JEAN, *lifting himself halfway, in a simple and gentle tone,*  
 At last! I understand Latin.  
*He falls back.*

VOICES OF TWO ANGELS, *unseen,*  
 Hallelujah!  
 Caressed by the breeze of our wings,  
 the jongleur, smiling, falls asleep.  
 Look, the golden gate to heaven opens  
 before his humble zeal;  
 on his head crowned with light  
 shed your petals, cornflowers and lilies.  
 Amid incense and prayer,  
 let us sow the flowers of paradise.  
 Hallelujah!

*It rains cornflowers and lilies.*  
*Clouds of incense appear.*

THE MONKS, *reciting litanies.*  
 Mater purissima,  
 mater castissima,  
 mater inviolata,  
 ora pro nobis.

*The Virgin begins to ascend slowly toward heaven.*  
*We then see her, surrounded by angels, in the middle of paradise.*

JEAN, *near death, in ecstasy.*  
 Radiant vision!  
 I see the heavens open! ...  
 Divine scents ... the cool fluttering of wings ...  
 in blue meadows, blooming with new flowers,  
 under the eyes of Mary and the infant Jesus  
 I see passing the brotherly round of angels and chosen ones ...

The Virgin beckons me with her hand ... I come ...  
What a gentle smile ... Oh! Her white hand ...

BONIFACE, *with ardent and radiant piety.*  
Freed from earthly bonds,  
he flies away to the happiness of an eternal Sunday ...  
No more sorrow, no more worry ...  
He enters the heavenly round ...

JEAN  
I am here! ...  
*He dies.*

THE PRIOR, *reciting*  
Happy are the simple, for they shall  
see God.

VOICES OF THE ANGELS  
Amen!

THE MONKS  
Amen!

THE END.

## 6. The Professor-Poet Katharine Lee Bates

---

Katharine Lee Bates, who lived from 1859 to 1929, was first a student and later a professor of English literature at Wellesley. The famous women's college in Massachusetts had been founded in 1870, not even a decade before she matriculated. Independent of her activities there as a teacher and scholar, she was the author of poetry, novels, children's literature, and more.

Today Bates is remembered mostly for the lyrics of "America the Beautiful." Her words came to be paired with the melody only more than a decade after she originally composed the poem. Thereby hangs a tale. In 1893, the poet wrote down a first, partial draft of the words in her elation at the vista she saw upon reaching the summit of Pikes Peak in Colorado. The year has a strong bearing on her patriotic epiphany, since it witnessed the opening of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois. This extravaganza marked the four-hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World. Also called the Columbian Exposition, the exhibition was accompanied by much patriotic fervor throughout the US, including the release of commemorative postage stamps and coins. Two years later, a first version of the poem was printed in 1895 under the one-word title "America," in the Independence Day issue of a Boston-based church weekly. It was set to music repeatedly. In 1904, the text of her piece was matched with a melody entitled "Materna" that Samuel A. Ward (whom she never met and who died in 1903) composed as the setting for a seventeenth-century poem, "O Mother dear, Jerusalem." The two compositions dovetailed perfectly: both were in what is called **common meter double**. The combination of **her words and his music** resulted in a hymn that won the status of the anthem we still know today. Her final revisions are found in the form she published in 1911.

Despite the undeniably powerful name-recognition that "America the Beautiful" retains in the United States, it would be unfair to present Bates as nothing more than a one-hit wonder. After receiving her undergraduate degree in 1880, she taught high school before pursuing advanced studies. In 1891, she earned a master's degree from her alma mater and began teaching in the English department there. In the first two

decades of her career, she worked extensively with medieval literature, not just as a teacher and researcher but also as a poet and even as a [children's book author](#).



Fig. 35: Katharine Lee Bates. Photograph, early twentieth century. Photographer unknown. Wellesley, MA, Archives of Wellesley College. Image courtesy of Wellesley College. All rights reserved.

Committed to maintaining what might be called her creative side and beyond it her wholeness as a woman, she once wrote: "My heart isn't quite pressed flat in a Middle English dictionary." Over the past few decades one aspect of her interior life that has elicited considerable attention relates to her fellow Wellesley professor, housemate, intimate friend, and perhaps even more, Katherine Coman. The failed courtships of Bates by at least two men have also been the object of fascination. Could any of [these emotional entanglements](#) have informed moments in the poem that she made out of our story?

At an intersection between her scholarship and her poetry, Bates wrote a verse adaptation entitled "Our Lady's Tumbler." She published this poem [first in 1904](#) and a few times afterward. It totals fifty-four lines, in nine six-line stanzas (sixains or sextains) of iambic pentameter that are uniformly rhymed ababab. The form resembles the Sicilian sestet. Anything but a verbatim translation of the thirteenth-century French poem, these 428 words reduce the cast of characters to the tumbler and the object of his devotion, Our Lady. Though the dancer is a convert in a monastery, his fellow monks and the abbot or prior are omitted from the picture.

In "Our Lady's Tumbler" Bates's bent as a professional medievalist shows strongly in two ways. One is that her poem opens bookishly, by conjuring up the brittleness of the manuscript folio on which the text of the medieval legend was supposedly

transmitted. The other is her diction. Some terms relate to religious practices and customs that were entrenched within Christianity many centuries ago, often as maintained in Roman Catholicism even long after the Middle Ages. But other words are archaisms and obsolete English that are meant to evoke the society and speech of “ye olde” days when the dramatic action of the piece purportedly occurred. These choices in diction hold true to a style that was once commonly used in writing about olden times. This pseudo-medieval tic owed much to Sir Walter Scott, whose choice of vocabulary in his fiction about the Middle Ages exerted an irresistible influence on many later authors for more than a century. Bates herself had visited numerous sites in the British Isles that were associated with the novelist and his oeuvre. Her mannerism, including the archaizing lexicon, was encouraged more generally by the medieval revival. The movement made a medieval-esque style in architecture, decorative arts, and literature popular throughout the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### “Our Lady’s Tumbler”

On a leaf that waits but a breath to crumble  
 Is written this legend of fair Clairvaux,  
 How once at the abbey gates stood humble  
 A carle more supple than beechen bow,  
 5 And they cloistered him, though to dance and tumble  
 Was all the lore he had wit to know.

He had never a vesper hymn nor matin,  
 Pater noster nor credo learned;  
 Ill had the wood-birds taught him Latin,  
 10 But to every wayside cross he turned,  
 And Our Lady of Val wore cloth of satin  
 Because of the gold his gambols earned.

So they cloistered him at his heart’s desire,  
 Though never a stave could he tone aright.  
 15 With shame and grief was his soul a-fire  
 To stand in the solemn candle-light  
 Abashed and mute before priest and choir  
 And the little lark-voiced acolyte.

Of penance and vigil he was not chary,  
 20 With bitter rods was his body whipt;  
 Yet his heart, like a stag’s, was wild and wary,  
 Till at last, one morn, from the Mass he slipt  
 And hied him down to a shrine of Mary

Deep in the dusk of the pillared crypt.

25 "Ah, beauteous Lady," he cried, imploring  
 The image whose face in the gloom was wan,  
 "Let me work what I may for thine adoring,  
 Though less than the least of thy **clergeons** can,  
 But here thou are lonely, while chants are soaring  
 30 In the church above; and a dancing-man

**M**ight do thee **disport**." Then he **girt** him neatly  
 And vaulted before her the vault of Champagne.  
 On his head and hands he tumbled **featly**,  
 Did the **Arragon twirl** and the leap of Lorraine,  
 35 Till the Queen of Heaven's dim lips **smiled** sweetly  
 As she watched his **joyance** of toil and pain.

**A**y, even so long as the **High Mass** lasted  
 He plied his art in that **darksome** place  
 And never again he **scourged** nor fasted  
 40 His eager body whose lissome grace  
 Cheered Our Lady till years had wasted  
 The dancer's force, and he drooped apace.

**A**nd once, when the buds were bright on the larches  
 And the young wind whispered of violets,  
 45 He came like a **wounded knight** who marches  
 To the tomb of Christ. With striving and sweats  
 He made there under those sombre arches  
 The Roman spring and the vault of Metz.

**T**hen he could do no more and, with hand uplifted,  
 50 Saluted Our Lady and fell to earth,  
 Where the monks discovered his **corse** all drifted  
 Over with blooms of **celestial birth**.  
 For when human worship at last is sifted,  
 Our best is labor and love and mirth.

# 7. The Philosopher-Historian Henry Adams

---

The American intellectual [Henry Brooks Adams](#), whose life spanned the eight decades from 1838 through 1918, appreciated full well the privilege that birth from the bluest of blue blood accorded him. In *The Education of Henry Adams*, the author admitted of himself, using the third person as he did strikingly throughout the memoir, “Probably no child, born in the year, held better cards than he.” In John Adams and John Quincy Adams, he benefited from both a great-grandfather and a grandfather who had served as US Presidents. The political career of Charles Francis Adams Sr., his father, culminated in service as Minister to the United Kingdom (as the ambassador was then styled) under Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, from 1861 to 1868. During those seven years, Henry upheld a family tradition by flanking Charles Sr. as private secretary.

Though ancestry may have seemed to destine Henry Adams for prominence in politics, he in fact made his mark not as a leader but rather as an observer of men. Sure, he had a spell as a tenured professor at Harvard University from 1870 to 1877, but ultimately, by resigning his position in medieval history there, he renounced even the opportunity to guide others through teaching. Instead, he produced fiction such as *Democracy: An American Novel*, printed anonymously in 1880, and *Esther*, another novel, released under the female pseudonym Frances Snow Compton in 1884. He penned the innumerable pages of *The History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison*, nine volumes that appeared between 1889 and 1891. Near the end of his life, he published his most famous book, the autobiography entitled *The Education of Henry Adams*, in 1918. This is to say nothing of [his remarkable letters](#), which fill six stout tomes.

The work of concern here is *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, first printed privately in 1904. By today’s lights it could be considered a cultural and intellectual history, but the contents defy facile categorization into any conventional genre. Forming a pair (or more accurately an odd couple) with his memoir, it is a meditation that sets the culture of Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries against that of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In both titles he sought to identify the forces that propelled the respective eras. In the Middle Ages he pinpointed



Fig. 36: Henry Adams in the library of his home, 1603 H Street NW, 1891. Photographic self-portrait (MS Am 2327). Image courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

the faith vested in the Virgin Mary; in modernity, the electric power embodied in the dynamo.

For all its strangeness, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* was an oft-reprinted bestseller. The thirteenth of its sixteen chapters, entitled *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres: "Les Miracles de Notre Dame,"* explores, as the French would suggest, miracles of the Virgin Mary. It culminates in lengthy quotations from "Our Lady's Tumbler," reproduced from the medieval text with Adams's translations in parallel columns. The format reveals much about the writer's imagined audience, whom he expected to have sufficient command of the modern foreign language to enable them, with the help of his English, to muddle their way or better through the original poetry. The excerpts, totaling only a few pages in a long book, are tied together through intervening paraphrase and brief commentary. The section could not have failed to spark interest for decades to come in the tale of the medieval entertainer among admirers of Adams, including notably the poet W. H. Auden.

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the philologist Gaston Paris salvaged the medieval French poems from the dusty shelves of scholarly libraries and thrust it before his countrymen for their attention and admiration. If the Frenchman had a counterpart in the United States of the early twentieth century, it would have to be Henry Adams. By the time Adams polished off his curious study of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, several renderings of "Our Lady's Tumbler" into English existed. Despite being short in length and small in size, these books played an essential role in

familiarizing the Anglophone world, perhaps especially in the New World, with the poem. Yet Adams's prose gave the tumbler added cachet.

The American writer observed correctly that the piece from the Middle Ages had achieved greater popularity in his day than it had done in its own. To take one crude measure that ignores the incommensurability of medieval scribal culture with the era of the printing press, the five extant manuscripts of the thirteenth-century French could not begin to compete with the untold thousands of copies of modern English translations already in circulation by the early years of the twentieth century.

In the original poem the [Francophile](#) Adams detected "a quiet sense of humour that pleases modern French taste." Though he abstained from invoking the concept of irony, the reader is left wondering if the historian was not projecting upon the verse from the Middle Ages the same spirit—the Gallic wit—that manifests itself ever so gently in Anatole France's retelling. But this is all guesswork: the American, in his disquisition on the contrasts between the medieval and the modern, never came close to mentioning such facets of contemporary mass culture as the short story, let alone the opera composed by Jules Massenet and sung by Mary Garden, however conversant with them he proved himself to be in his immense personal correspondence.

In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* Adams's heart takes wing and flies back from his own days to the Middle Ages. He may well have identified with the jongleur, both of them fully comfortable in no world, both characters striving for recognition from seemingly unattainable women to whom they were devoted. If such conjectural correspondences between Adams's and the tumbler's lives seem enlightening, what should we make of the Virgin? Henry's wife [Clover](#) left him a widower after her death by suicide in 1885 at the age of 42. Afterward he became stuck in a relationship with the younger and married [Elizabeth Sherman](#) that remained, contrary to his desires, platonic. His idealization of [medieval Marianism](#) and more generally of [women in the Middle Ages](#) ought not to be correlated too facilely with his own supposed experiences of the women in his own life. Then again, they should not be set aside. Adams's treatment of the tumbler could very well call for [psychological or even psychoanalytic criticism](#).

Whatever verdicts we reach on such matters, there can be no doubt that because of his fascination with late Romanesque and early Gothic French [architecture](#), the American historian could visualize the action and movement in "Our Lady's Tumbler" as he could have done with few other poems from medieval times. He had the imagination to transport himself to the crypt and to see in his mind's eye the athletic devotions of the performer. The vividness with which he re-created the scene could not have failed to stir readers. If he resorts to the word *naïveté* in summing up the poem, he means it as a compliment.

The text, English and French alike, has been unaltered, except that in extracts from the original poem line numbers have been added to facilitate consultation of the standard editions and of the fresh translation with which this book begins. The poetry is iambic tetrameter couplets, mostly rhymed aabbccdd.

### *Les Miracles de Notre Dame*

... A better [miracle] is that called the "Tombeor de Notre Dame," only recently printed; told by some unknown poet of the thirteenth century, and told as well as any of [Gaultier de Coincy's](#). Indeed the "Tombeor de Notre Dame" has had more success in our time than it ever had in its own, as far as one knows, for it appeals to a quiet sense of humour that pleases modern French taste as much as it pleased the Virgin. One fears only to spoil it by translation, but if a translation be merely used as a glossary or footnote, it need not do fatal harm. The story is that of a tumbler—tombeor, street-acrobat—who was disgusted with the world, as his class has had a reputation for becoming, and who was fortunate enough to obtain admission into the famous monastery of Clairvaux, where Saint Bernard may have formerly been blessed by the Virgin's presence. Ignorant at best, and especially ignorant of letters, music, and the offices of a religious society, he found himself unable to join in the services:—

25	Car n'ot vescu fors de tumer Et d'espringier et de baler.	For he had learned no other thing Than to tumble, dance and spring:
	Treper, saillir, ice savoit;	Leaping and vaulting, that he knew,
	Ne d'autre rien il ne savoit; Car ne savoit autre leçon	But nothing better could he do. He could not say his prayers by rote;
30	Ne "pater noster" ne chançon Ne le "credo" ne le salu Ne rien qui fust a son salu.	Not "Pater noster"; not a note; Not "Ave Mary," nor the creed; Nothing to help his soul in need.

Tormented by the sense of his uselessness to the society whose bread he ate without giving a return in service, and afraid of being expelled as a useless member, one day while the bells were calling to Mass he hid in the crypt, and in despair began to soliloquize before the Virgin's altar, at the same spot, one hopes, where the Virgin had shown herself, or might have shown herself, in her infinite bounty, to Saint Bernard, a hundred years before:—

	"Hai," fait il, "con suis trais!	"Ha!" said he, "how I am ashamed!
125	Or dira ja cascuns sa laisse  Et jo suis çï i bues en laisse Qui ne fas çï fors que broster  Et viandes por nient gaster.  Si ne dirai ne ne ferai?	To sing his part goes now each priest, And I stand here, a tethered beast, Who nothing do but browse and feed And waste the food that others need. Shall I say nothing, and stand still?
130	Par la mere deu, si ferai! Ja n'en serai ore repris;	No! by God's mother, but I will! She shall not think me here for naught;



In his earnestness he exerted himself until, at the end of his strength, he lay exhausted and unconscious on the altar steps. Pleased with his own exhibition, and satisfied that the Virgin was equally pleased, he continued these devotions every day, until at last his constant and singular absence from the regular services attracted the curiosity of a monk, who kept watch on him and reported his eccentric exercise to the Abbot.

The mediaeval monasteries seem to have been gently administered. Indeed, this has been made the chief reproach on them, and the excuse for robbing them for the benefit of a more energetic crown and nobility who tolerated no beggars or idleness but their own; at least, it is safe to say that few well-regulated and economically administered modern charities would have the patience of the Abbot of Clairvaux, who, instead of calling up the weak-minded tombeor and sending him back to the world to earn a living by his profession, went with his informant to the crypt, to see for himself what the strange report meant. We have seen at Chartres what a crypt may be, and how easily one might hide in its shadows while Mass is said at the altars. The Abbot and his informant hid themselves behind a column in the shadow, and watched the whole performance to its end when the exhausted tumbler dropped unconscious and drenched with perspiration on the steps of the altar, with the words: —

237 "Dame!" fait il, "ne puis plus ore; "Lady!" says he, "no more I can,  
Mais voire je reviendrai encore." But truly I'll come back again!"

You can imagine the dim crypt; the tumbler lying unconscious beneath the image of the Virgin; the Abbot peering out from the shadow of the column, and wondering what sort of discipline he could inflict for this unforeseen infraction of rule; when suddenly, before he could decide what next to do, the vault above the altar, of its own accord, opened: —

	L'abes esgarde sans atendre	The Abbot strains his eyes to see,
	Et vit de la volte descendre	And, from the vaulting, suddenly,
	Une dame si gloriose	A lady steps,—so glorious,—
410	Ains nus ne vit si precieuse	Beyond all thought so precious,—
	Nisi ricement conreee,	Her robes so rich, so nobly worn,—
	N'onques tant bele ne fu nee.	So rare the gems the robes adorn,—
	Ses vesteures sont bien chieres	As never yet so fair was born.
	D'or et de precieuses pieres.	
415	Avec li estoient li angle	Along with her the angels were,
	Del ciel amont, et li arcangle,	Archangels stood beside her there;
	Qui entor le menestrel viennent,	Round about the tumbler group
	Si le solacent et sostienent.	To give him solace, bring him hope;
	Quant entor lui Sont arengie	And when round him in ranks they
		stood,
420	S'ot tot son cuer asoagie.	His whole heart felt its strength
		renewed
	Dont s'aprestent de lui servir	So they haste to give him aid
	Por ce qu'ils volrent deservir	Because their wills are only made
	La servise que fait la dame	To serve the service of their Queen,
	Qui tant est precieuse geme.	Most precious gem the earth has
		seen.

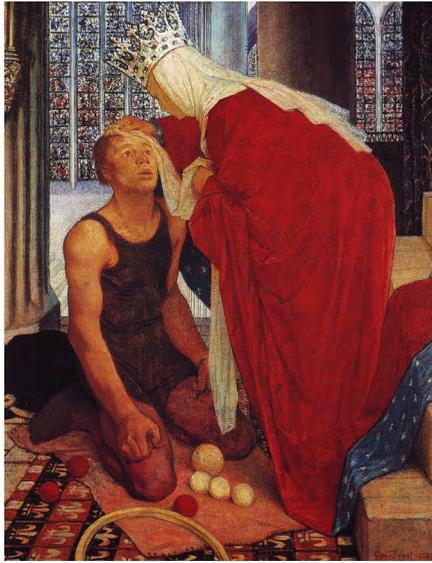


Fig. 37: Glyn Warren Philpot, *The Juggler*, 1928. Oil on canvas, 51 x 40.5 cm. Collection of Ömer M. Koç.

- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 425 | Et la douce reine france<br>Tenoit une touaille blanche,<br>S'en avente son menestrel<br>Mout doucement devant l'autel.<br>La franc dame debonnaire | And the lady, gentle, true,<br>Holds in her hand a towel new;<br>Fans him with her hand divine<br>Where he lies before the shrine.<br>The kind lady, full of grace, |
| 430 | Le col, le cors, et le viaire<br>Li avente por refroidier;<br>Bien s'entremet de lui aidier;  | Fans his neck, his breast, his face!<br>Fans him herself to give him air!<br>Labours, herself, to help him<br>there!  |
| 435 | La dame bien s'i abandone;<br>Li bons hom garde ne s'en done,<br>Car il ne voit, si ne set mie<br>Qu'il ait si bele compagnie.                      | The lady gives herself to it;<br>The poor man takes no heed of it;<br>For he knows not and cannot see<br>That he has such fair company.                             |

Beyond this we need not care to go. If you cannot feel the colour and quality—the union of naïveté and art, the refinement, the infinite delicacy and tenderness—of this little poem, then nothing will matter much to you; and if you can feel it, you can feel, without more assistance, the majesty of Chartres.



## 8. The Poet Edwin Markham

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Nowadays the American man of letters [Edwin Markham](#), who was born in 1852 and died in 1940, languishes forgotten.

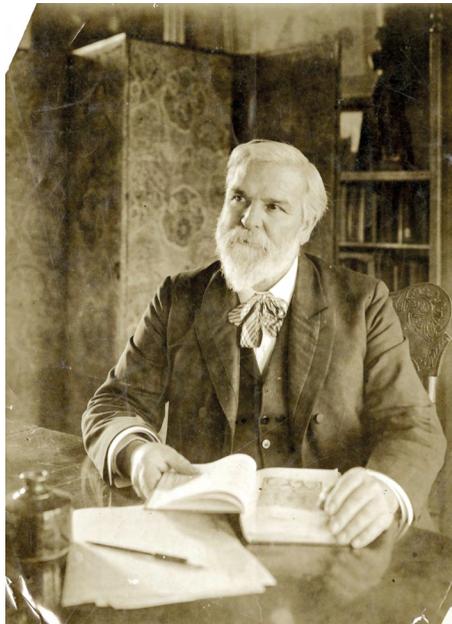


Fig. 38: Edwin Markham at his desk. Photograph, date, and photographer unknown. New York, Wagner College, Horrmann Library. Image courtesy of Wagner College, New York. All rights reserved.

He rests in a dead zone between such greats as Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, who preceded him, and T.S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, and Ezra Pound, who succeeded him. A century ago, the oblivion would have surprised many in the United States. In his prime, Markham enjoyed a far higher reputation than he does in literary history today. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, he achieved flashes of renown for the socialist themes he sounded as “the poet for preachers.” His first and perhaps foremost claim to fame was a poem entitled “[The Man with the Hoe](#),” composed in the last week of 1898 and published in a newspaper two weeks later. This paean to the proletariat was inspired by a canvas from 1862 by the painter Jean-François Millet, a founder of the Barbizon school in France. But Markham was not just a flash in the pan.

In 1900 he wrote "Lincoln, Man of the People," on the US president. A great success, it became the title piece in his second book of poetry, from 1901.

Markham's receptivity to Gallic culture did not end with "The Man with the Hoe." Quite to the contrary, he found himself moved a decade later by [Isabel Butler's prose translation](#) of the medieval French original as well as by Anatole France's short story.

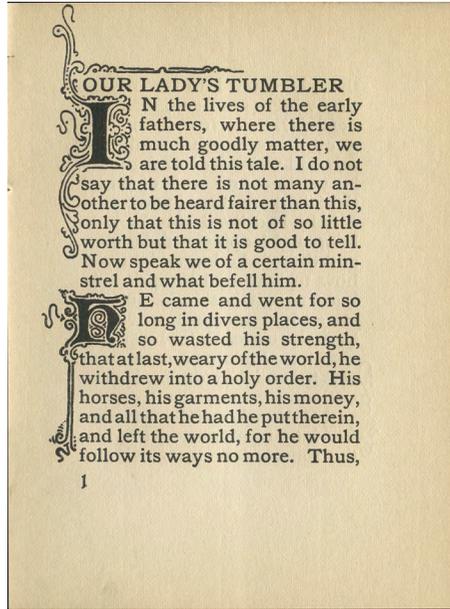


Fig. 39: Isabel Butler, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Tale of Medieval France*, Translated into English from the Old French (Boston: Copeland & Day, 1898), p. 1.

In response, he wrote a narrative to which he attached the title "The Juggler of Touraine." With four lovely full-page illustrations in color by the French-born artist Leon Guipon, his poem was printed first in [December 1907](#), in a weekly with wide circulation.

In his free versification Markham employs iambic pentameter, mostly but not thoroughly rhymed aabbccdd, but his goal was not to achieve a metrical tour de force. True to form, he seized upon the capacity of the tale to be coordinated with the social issues that he deemed most pressing in his day and in his nation. He took the opportunity to commend the humility of the performer. He implied that the proto-populist anticipated the struggles of the working poor in the United States. Yet he refrained from outright editorializing. Instead, he emanated a spirit, often mystical,

that has earned him recognition as “a poet of brotherhood and love.” The brotherliness accorded well with the monastic setting. In this fraternalism, the poet sounded what was at the time a distinctively American note of religious tolerance, by cautioning readers not to be judgmental of those who worshipped differently. This last message dovetailed nicely with the timing of the initial publication, which led one reviewer to judge the piece “an unusually meritorious Christmas poem.” An aura of “on earth peace, good will toward men” permeates the poem.

A small black-and-white embellishment in the magazine brought home the connection with the birth of Jesus, not that many readers could have missed it. More to the point is a decoration on the first page of the text that pictures a taper, surrounded by a juggler’s equipment, burning before a niche with a Madonna, against a backcloth with the fleurs-de-lis conventionally associated with her. In the early twentieth-century US, such symbolism was rare, because of its association with Catholicism. The Yuletide season allowed attention to the Virgin that at other seasons of year would have been out of keeping with the then-dominant Protestantism. In America, the two main branches of Christianity drew closer at Christmas than in other months, perhaps even than at Easter.

### “The Juggler of *Touraine*”

#### I

Once in the time of *Louis the King*  
 Happened a smiling and holy thing.  
 ’Twas all in the outdoor days of old,  
 Days that fancy has warmed with gold,  
 5 Days that are gone with the leaves, alas!  
 When the light-legged juggler *Barnabas*  
 From city to wondering city went,  
 Sprinkling the world with his merriment.  
 He would startle the Square on festival-days,  
 10 When all the town was a sudden blaze,  
 A clamor of tongues, and a clack of feet,  
 A flurry of thousands filling the street—  
 Princes with plumes and gartered knees;  
 Sailors back from the Indian seas;  
 15 Mayors and marshals viewing the town,  
 Horsed, and robed in the violet gown;

Thieves alert for the thoughtless purse,  
 And ever free with the easy curse;  
 Shepherds leading their April flocks;

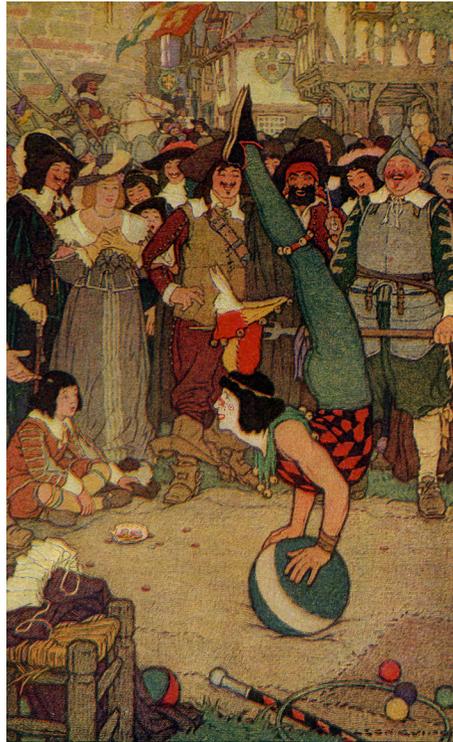


Fig. 40: "Sprinkling the world with his merriment." Illustration by Leon Guipon, 1907. Published in Edwin Markham, "The Juggler of Touraine," in *Century Magazine* (December 1907): 223.

- 20 Damsels driving their **turkey-cocks**;  
 Beggars droning their practised whine;  
 Troopers red from the tavern wine;  
 Ladies in feathers and flaring hoops;  
 Monks with relics and pious stoops;  
 25 **Bullies** with long mustachio twirls  
 Teasing the fops with the scented curls;  
 Quacks with doses for all the ills—  
 Coughs and colics, and gripes and chills;  
 Brigands home from their sorry trade,  
 30 And marked to **dance with the hempen maid**;  
 Hucksters bragging across the din;  
**Gaffers** agaze with shaking chin;  
 Gamesters, too, with the shifty eye  
 And the conical hat an arm's-length high,  
 35 **Clackering** loud their lottery dice,  
 Shouting the winning numbers thrice,  
 Giving to all their wild advice.

**I**n through it all, like a **straddling** ape,  
 The juggler strode, with the town agape,

40 A **punchinello** on tipsy stilts,  
 Wading his way with leaps and **lilts**.  
 A peaked hat on his bobbing head  
 Was half of yellow and half of red.  
 On his powdered face was the unicorn,  
 45 One cheek for the tail and one for the horn.  
 His gown, puffed out over belly and back,  
 Was sprinkled with signs of the Zodiac.  
 His sleeves, blown up like young balloons,  
 Were floating skies stuck full of moons.  
 50 And his **quips and cranks** seemed never to fail  
 To draw the crowd like a comet's tail!

**W**hy, even duennas on way to Mass  
 Would follow the train with their maids, alas!  
 And the **First Epistle** be reached and read,  
 55 While they were held by a **feather-head**!  
 For he stretched a carpet along the grass,  
 Where the murmurs mix and the laughters pass;  
 And ripping the skies from arms and back,  
 He stood **trim-trig** as a tumbling **jack**.  
 60 Like a blowing bough was his **whimsy** grace;  
 Like a rising moon was his fresh young face.

**N**ow he poised on hands on a rolling sphere,  
 And cracked his heels at the Marshal's ear.  
 Now he scattered nine balls to the morning air,  
 65 And kept them **a-shine and a-weaving** there;  
 For they flew to their places, one by one,  
 As planets tethered about the sun.  
 With toes to head, in a **spangling** round,  
 He ran as a light wheel over the ground.  
 70 He swallowed the Notary's signet-ring,  
 And down in your pocket you found the thing!  
 On, on he went till the crowd was full  
 Of **tarradiddle** and cock-and-bull;  
 And a shower of coins on the carpet fell,  
 75 Like a rain of leaves on an autumn well.

## II

**O**h, blithe is the trade of **Pantaloon**,  
 Light as the flight of an April moon.  
 Blithe are the travels of **Harlequin**,

Till the leaves turn red and the frosts begin.  
 80 And light went the days of Barnabas—  
 Light as the dews on a blade of grass,  
 Till the first faint frost at **Michaelmas**.  
 He and the cricket went chirruping by  
 Till the delicate snows began to fly.  
 85 Then all things crept to a snug abode—  
 Squirrel and lizard and lumbering toad—  
 And he and the wind were alone on the road.



Fig. 41: "He and the wind were alone on the road." Illustration by Leon Guipon, 1907. Published in Edwin Markham, "The Juggler of Touraine," in *Century Magazine* (December 1907): 220.

**F**or his purse was lean, his friends were few,  
 And the lodge for the night he never knew.  
 90 But however the hours ran dark with ill,  
 He only smiled on the old world still:  
 Wide was his love as the sun's good will.

**A**nd he kept him clear of the **deadly sins**,  
 Nor bragged and brawled in the noisy inns,  
 95 Where unfrocked **abbès** and tipsy churls

Made **light-hour** love to the loveless girls.  
 Through all the ways that went so wild,  
 He kept the heart of a little child.  
 And he never failed at a **wayside shrine**  
 100 With the bended knee and the holy sign,  
 And a candle, **tipt** with a tender flame,  
 Lighted in praise of Our Lady's name.  
 And he never failed of his parting prayer:  
 "Mother of Jesus, **Queen of the skies**,  
 105 Shine on the ways my feet may fare;  
 And when God pleases to shut my eyes,  
 Take me home to your paradise!"

**O**ne eve, on the edge of a lonely town,  
 As the clouds drove by and the rain shot down,  
 110 Poor Barnabas, hugging his knives and balls,  
 And seeking a **bed in the cattle stalls**,  
 Fell in with a friar from the **cloistral** halls—  
 A cheery friar, with a wind of words  
 And a head crooked out like a long-necked bird's.

115 "**H**ow is it, son," said the beaming friar,  
 "That a **grasshopper green** is your winter **tire**?  
 Are you **trigged** for the clown in a **mystery play**?  
 Are you out as a **droll** till the break o' day?"  
 "Father," said Barnabas, "this that you see,  
 120 This is the **kill-care** Barnabas, he  
 Who has lighted with laughter a hundred towns,  
 Driving before him the **phlegms** and frowns—  
 Lord of the revels; but now, ah, now,  
 Blown in the wind as a leafless bough.  
 125 Oh, the juggler's trade would the sweetest be  
 Of all in the world if bread were free!"

"**B**eware," said the friar, "beware, my son:  
 The cloistral trade is the sweetest one.  
 For the friars keep **orison** day and night,  
 130 And join the song of the souls in light,  
 And the **Seven Throne Angels** burning white."—  
 "Father, my tongue ran loose and long:  
 Your trade is the sweetest: I did God wrong.  
 It is much to dance with a feather thin  
 135 Or a crookèd sword on the upturned chin,  
 And to get the laugh and the **rat-tat-tat**,  
 When I pull the hen out of **Gaston's** hat.  
 But little are these to the cloistral ways,

Where long hours go to Our Lady's praise,  
 140 Where the pale friars pass with feet unshod,  
 And the bread is changed to the body of God.  
 Oh, would that I might the great hours know,  
 Where the Sanctus sounds and the gray monks go,  
 And the candles burn in a saintly row!"

145 So simply told was the wistful tale  
 That the word of the juggler had avail.  
 "Come," said the friar, "to the cloistral rest;  
 For the God who gives to the bird a nest,  
 And guides the worm on its lampless quest,  
 150 Has sent me out on the edge of night  
 To lead your soul to the place of light."  
 Sweet as the sound of a sudden stream  
 That cools the heat of a traveller's dream,  
 So sweet was the sound of the friendly word  
 155 The weary heart of the juggler heard.  
 That night he entered the convent door,  
 That night he slept on the frater's floor.  
 He had found a home for his heart at last,  
 And the piteous chance of the road was past.

### III

160 Lightly and still went the busy days  
 Where each one toiled in Our Lady's praise.  
 The Almoner lauded in lovely words  
 That went to the heart like a flight of birds:  
 She was the Lily, the Tower of Gold,  
 165 Gate of Ivory, Roof of the Fold,  
 The Rock of Vision, the Well that Flows,  
 The Star of the Sea, the Mystic Rose.  
 And ever the good Friar Estevan,  
 A little mysterious thread of a man,  
 170 Lauded her grace in Virgilian verse,  
 In numbers majestic, tender, and terse.  
 Friar Glorian copied the stately chants  
 With all of his scholarly curves and slants,  
 Prinking the pages in rainbow dyes,  
 175 Strewing them over with butterflies,  
 Winding the border with loop and lock  
 Of the fleur-de-lis and the hollyhock—  
 Bonaccord, Basil, and Théophile  
 Praised her in music, as others kneel,

180 Blowing silver and touching string,  
 Till hearts were struck by the mystic wing.  
 Bonaccord's love in the 'cello sang.  
 Théophile's praise in the hautboy rang  
 Or tenderly cried in the violin.  
 185 Basil, puffing his horn, came in,  
 Bladdering wide his jovial cheeks,  
 Till his eyes went out into little streaks.  
 Friar Julian painted Madonnas on  
 The throne of the great King Solomon,  
 190 With lions at corners, awake, aware,  
 And Our Lady bowed in her beauty there.  
 Two souls at her feet cried not in vain  
 For the grace that whitens the mortal stain.

Around her head, in a haloed light,  
 195 Were seven doves whirled in a silver flight,  
 The seven great gifts of the Holy Breath—  
 Devotion that saveth the soul from death,  
 Strength that steadies us, Awe that stills,  
 Science that measures the seas and hills,  
 200 Wisdom, Intelligence, Good Advice  
 That balks the throw of the devil's dice. —  
 And ever the stout Friar Palemone  
 Chiseled and hammered the patient stone,  
 Carving her beauty the whole day long,  
 205 Edging the time with a quiet song.  
 Like bearded rye were his bristling brows,  
 And white with the dust, as bended boughs  
 Are white with the sift of the early snow  
 When dead leaves stir and begin to go.

210 But to laud in marble, to praise in brass,  
 To honor in color, poor Barnabas,  
 Nothing of these could he do, alas!  
 As leaves on a desert his learning was scant:  
 He knew neither litany, credo, nor chant,  
 215 Nor Pater, nor Ave—not even a prayer,  
 Like a sheep of the field, like a hawk of the air.

One day, when his heart was nigh to fail,  
 The Prior to comfort him told a tale  
 Told of a friar from a southern isle,  
 220 His face all lit with a heavenly smile,  
 So lean in learning he could recite  
 Only an Ave and that half right!

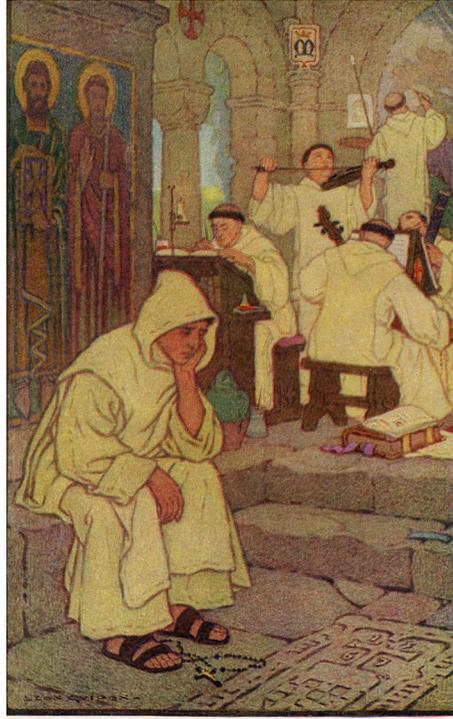


Fig. 42: "Nothing of these he could do, alas." Illustration by Leon Guipon, 1907. Published in Edwin Markham, "The Juggler of Touraine," in *Century Magazine* (December 1907): 227.

Yet beautiful tremblings went over his soul,  
 As stars go over a hidden shoal.  
 225 He died, and out of his bosom sprang  
 Four doves that flew to a wood and sang.  
 The four white doves that so lightly came  
 Were the four white letters of Mary's name!

But the Prior's story was little relief  
 230 To Barnabas, bearing his daily grief.  
 So morning by morning the young friar slipped  
 Through doors and halls to a secret crypt,  
 And kneeling low at the altar cried:  
 "O Madam and Mother, Virgin Bride,  
 235 Here am I only a tethered ox,  
 Eating the grass of the useful flocks!  
 The choir can sing, and the deacons read  
 The Gospel to scatter the living seed.  
 Others can praise where the censers swing,  
 240 And the white smoke circles, ring on ring.  
 And the learned can laud you with art and craft,  
 In the Latin chant and the marble shaft.

But I, poor Barnabas, nothing can I,  
But drone in the sun as a drowsy fly."

## IV

245 So the days crept on till a white dawn came  
When a thought flashed over his soul like flame,  
And he leaped from his cell all legs and arms,  
Filling the cloister with looks and alarms,  
As he shot his way to the chapel dim,  
250 Running for joy in the heart of him.  
And when he came out of the hidden place,  
A light as of stars was over his face.  
Now day after day to the secret crypt,  
He sped light-foot as the old earth dipped  
255 Softly and still in the fire of dawn,  
For the restless pain of his heart was gone.  
The friars were a-flutter that this should be,  
Till at last the Prior with two or three—  
Elders and *fraters* of high degree—  
260 Followed the juggler on *tipping toe*,  
Their breath held mightily, hoping to know.  
And they heard him cry at Our Lady's shrine:  
"All that I am, Madam, all is thine!  
Again I am come with spangle and ball  
265 To lay at your altar my little, my all.  
The friars know all of the saints, what they do,  
But of all up in Heaven, I know only you!  
Of holy St. Francis a little I've heard,  
But not of *St. Plato* or Peter a word.  
270 I know not *Quintilian*—nothing he said  
Of *the Three and the One*, and *the Wine and the Bread*.  
Ah, nothing know I of the holy books,  
And nothing of paints to put beautiful looks  
Of your eyes on the wall, nor the blowing of brass  
275 To make sound of my love—ah, nothing, alas!  
But the trade of the wandering Barnabas.  
Yet, Lady and Queen, if my heart would live,  
I must give the gift that I have to give."

280 **A**nd then the eyes of the elders shone,  
As they peered from the shade of a pillared stone.  
For laying his friar's robe tenderly by,  
He flickers as light as a dragonfly,  
Then whirls into many a whimsical shape,

As once he had whirled with the crowd agape.  
 285 And softly he cries as his breath comes quick:  
 "Look down, for, Madam, this is the trick  
 I did at [Toulon](#), when I took the eye  
 Of the King himself as he galloped by...  
 This trick drew a duchess at [Chateauroux](#). ...  
 290 But this is the one I have made for you!"  
 So flinging his feet in the air, he stands,  
 Or goes and comes on his nimble hands,  
 Or tosses the balls up to twinkle and run  
 Like planets that circle about a sun.  
 295 "Lady," he cries again, "look, I entreat:  
 I worship with fingers and body and feet!"

**A**t this all the elders mutter and chide:  
 "Nothing like this do the rules provide!  
 This is a scandal, this is a shame,  
 300 This madcap prank in Our Lady's name.  
 Out of the doors with him; back to the street:  
 He has no place at Our Lady's feet!"

**B**ut why do the elders suddenly quake,  
 Their eyes a-stare and their knees a-shake?  
 305 Down from the rafters arching high,  
 Her blowing [mantle blue](#) with the sky—  
 Lightly down from the dark descends  
 The [Lady of Beauty](#), and lightly bends  
 Over Barnabas stretched in the altar place,  
 310 And wipes the dew from his shining face.  
 Then touching his hair with a look of light,  
 Passes again from the mortal sight.  
 An odor of [lilies](#) hallows the air,  
 And sounds as of harpings are everywhere.

315 "A<sub>h</sub>," cry the elders, beating the breast,  
 "So the lowly deed is a lofty test!  
 And whatever is done from the heart to Him  
 Is done from the height of the [Seraphim](#)!"

# 9. The Children's Book Writer Violet Moore Higgins

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Violet Moore Higgins, an American who was born in 1886 and died in 1967, studied art in Chicago in the early 1900s. Afterward, she worked mainly as a cartoonist for newspapers. In addition, by 1916 she distinguished herself outside journalism by both writing and illustrating more than a dozen children's books. As an illustrator alone, she produced artwork for even more. Today this artist remains known, if only modestly, for her contributions to editions in the United States of such classics as *Pinocchio*, *Hans Brinker*, and *Heidi*, as well as of [child-friendly features](#) published in dailies.

When the prose of her "The Little Juggler" appeared in 1917, she scored a few important firsts in reconceiving the story. For a start, she begins with the stock opening "Once upon a time" and compounds its fairy-tale effect by emphasizing "long, long ago." We have already seen how the Frenchman Félix Brun, who first recast the medieval poem for a popular audience, commenced his prose with the corresponding cliché in his native language. Not a decade before Higgins's "The Little Juggler," the US poet Wallace Stevens started his own version of the tale with [the same formula](#): "Once upon a time there was a beggar who scraped together a living by juggling; and that was all he could do." But let us turn to versions after Higgins's that were composed by authors who would not have known her form of the story and that open with "Once upon a time" or the equivalent phrase in other modern languages. In English, we find one in a collection entitled *Once-upon-a-Time Saints: Faith-Tales for Children* from 1977; in German, one by [Max Bolliger](#) from 1991; and in French, two more, one by [Michel Zink](#) and the other by [Cecilia Pieri](#), both from 2004.

Higgins leaves not a shadow of a doubt about genre: she claims to be writing a fairy tale. True, one edition that makes our story its headliner contains in its title the vague and evasive *French Tales Retold*. Compensatorily, another volume containing the little juggler is entitled explicitly *French Fairy Tales*. This low-budget product was reprinted more than a decade and a half later, coupled with Higgins's *English Fairy Tales*, as a two-volume set in a pictorial cardboard halfbox labeled "[2 Books in a Box](#)."

Five years later, with no awareness of Higgins, the European side of the Atlantic too provides evidence that the story was being billed as a fairy tale. Ernst Tegethoff, a German folklorist and philologist, incorporated a careful summary of the medieval original into an [anthology of folktales and fairy tales](#) from France that he published in

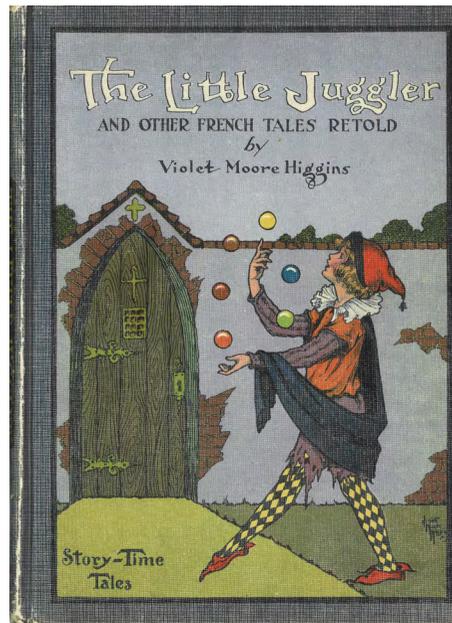


Fig. 43: Front cover of Violet Moore Higgins, *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917).

1923. By so doing, he certified that the piece belonged legitimately within the category of folktale. More than a half century later, it still made sense for publishers in Germany to feature the story within a popular [collection of French folktales](#).

In 1917 Higgins's text was offered for purchase in [two distinct forms](#). In what must have been the more economical one, the opening page of her story faces an illustration by another artist. The simple artwork conjures up a remote, perhaps late medieval, past. It depicts a scene in which young people clutch gifts such as kites and dolls. Whatever the era, a caption below it points to a set season of the year: "To Give Is the Spirit of Christmas." The more elegant edition that Higgins both wrote and illustrated in the same year wraps up with a story called "The Noel Candle."

The American children's book author was prescient in highlighting gift-giving as the guiding theme of the tale, as well as in connecting it with Christmas. Two decades or so later, the radio personality John Nesbitt recorded his wildly successful narration of the miracle under the title "A Christmas Gift." In 1942, a film short called "The Greatest Gift of All" was released.

To turn to the geographical setting of her story, Higgins specifies Turlaine, supposedly "a quaint old French village" but in fact an imaginary place listed in no atlas: she generated the name by ringing a single-consonant change on Edwin Markham's Touraine. The writer made a further major innovation of long-enduring influence: she turned the male lead from an adult into a boy "not more than twelve." This youthful hero is "The Little Juggler" of the title. He is called Rene, corresponding

to the French René, from the Latin *renatus* meaning “reborn.” The etymology of the name may not be beside the point.

Beyond his littleness, the principal character in her version is hurt. He sprains his ankle while dancing and is forced to convalesce in a monastery, where he can hobble around only with the help of a crutch.

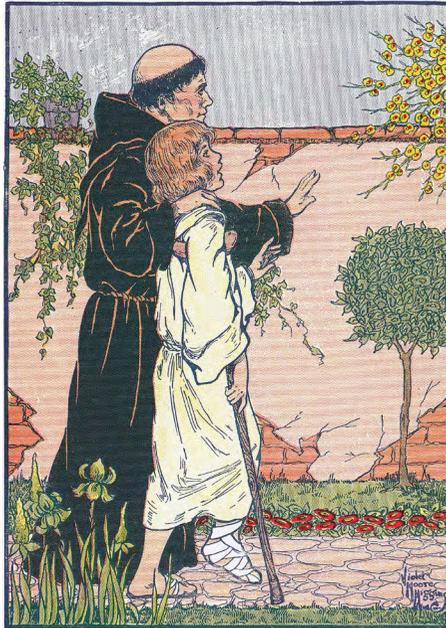


Fig. 44: Brother Ambrose supports the injured young juggler. Illustration by Violet Moore Higgins, 1917. Published in Violet Moore Higgins, *The Little Juggler, and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Co., 1917), between pp. 16 and 17.

Though we may be tempted to see the injury as reflecting the many servicemen wounded from combat in World War I, the US did not enter the war officially until April 6, 1917, well into the year in which Higgins's book came out. Maimed soldiers would have been returning stateside already, but not in the numbers that 1918 would see. Then again, she could have easily known from newspapers and other sources about the thousands upon thousands of injured soldiers even before America's belated entrance into the fray.

The author does not reveal what prompted her to make the star of her adaptation a juvenile or to pitch it to young readers or listeners, but her book leaves no uncertainty about being intended an audience of children. The ground for the repurposing of the story's genre was laid from the start of the late-nineteenth-century reception, when Wendelin Foerster described the hero's "childlike innocence" and Gaston Paris praised the poem for "its delightful and childlike simplicity." The writer Anatole France did not direct his short story at children, but he did reveal elsewhere his acceptance that the Middle Ages and the religious faith of medieval people seemed inherently childish.

The philologists who discovered the medieval poem saw it and its hero as being childlike. This perspective was consonant with a somewhat condescending conception of the Middle Ages that many people commonly held in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They saw the period as embodying childhood in a maturing process that presumably led to the civilizational adulthood of their own times.

Violet Moore Higgins's prose, for all its emphasis on guilelessness, is not itself irreproachable in the attitudes it discloses. For example, while writing about the distant past in which she sets her story, she layers upon her imaginary world prejudices about Africans that reflect the racism of the Jim Crow era in the United States. In this regard, late medieval or early modern France takes on a distressing resemblance to the nation in which she lived her whole life.

When the little juggler debuts, he brings up the rear in a procession of performers that includes "a hideous little dwarf, shaking a tambourine, and jabbering in some strange tongue to a wizened little monkey that perched on his shoulder." Two pages later one of the entertainers, touting the skills of his companions, singles out "a little monkey from Africa; and his master, who seems himself to be naught but a grinning ape, who can play the tambourine passing well." The grudging compliment at the end cannot unsay two preceding circumstances, first that the monkey takes precedence over the man and second that the human being is compared to a grinning ape. A page later, Higgins, in reporting the performance the troupe gives, again stresses the simian qualities of the monkey's trainer, describing him as "**grimacing like an ape.**" In her own time these passages may not have caused many readers so much as to bat an eye, but they now clash in ugly ways with the pathos and compassion that "The Little Juggler" seems designed to awaken.

After Violet Moore Higgins, the tale was pressed into service again and again by grown-ups who believed or wanted it to hold a special appeal to the young. Children's books proliferated, even as a pop-up, that retold the story with illustrations. Maryline Poole Adams released a handcrafted miniature book in a limited edition. Though her target audience was adults, half of the book consisted in a first-person narration by the protagonist as a youth. Female authors have been active in rewriting the story for children. The two most reprinted adaptations have been by the late Barbara Cooney and Tomie dePaola, but many others exist. In a class of its own is R. O. Blechman's protographic novel: though not pitched at juveniles, its heavy illustration has caused it to be mistaken for children's literature. That trend was only encouraged once it was made into an animated short.

As the narrative was presented in children's literature, it was also used in schools for didactic purposes. Anatole France's prose was widely used in French-language instruction in the English-speaking world, and more than one instructor based skits, musicals, or other dramatic enactments on it. As French, religion, and medieval Europe have all lost ground in American schools and perhaps even become undesirable presences, the juggler has lost all but the tiniest toehold there. But thanks to affection

for the story within the worldwide market for children's books, some of its best forms in such literature live on.

### "The Little Juggler"

Once upon a time, long, long ago, on the first warm morning of spring, the quiet streets of Turlaine, a quaint old French village, rang with strange and unusual sounds. The clear shrill notes of a flute vibrated in the air, and woke a thousand echoes, though the player was as yet unseen. So gay and merry was the tune that all the villagers were drawn to their doors and presently were hurrying along the pavements to seek the cause of it all. Even the thick gray walls of the monastery nearby were penetrated by the music and Father *Justinian*, the prior, unlocked the gate and led his band of twenty monks into the street.

Suddenly there appeared around a bend in the road the oddest procession that ever had entered Turlaine. A flute player was at its head, and he was a big burly man, with muscles like a blacksmith's. He was dressed in motley, as the bright-colored garments of the court jesters were called, and on his shock of coarse black hair was a pointed fool's cap, all a-tinkle with little bells. Thrust through his girdle was a stout cudgel.

Just behind him came a thin and haggard lad of fifteen, leading a shaggy black bear. The clumsy animal shuffled along patiently, with funny waddling steps that threw his great bulk from side to side, and made the spectators laugh, even as they shrank away from him, for all saw that his keeper carried a sharp pointed goad.

Next followed a hideous little dwarf, shaking a tambourine, and jabbering in some strange tongue to a wizened little monkey that perched on his shoulder. The fourth member of the band was an attractive youth with a lute strung over his shoulder and a roll of parchment, covered with music, in his hand.

Close at his heels came a boy, not more than twelve, with a thin delicate face framed in soft clustering locks of fair hair. There was a soiled white muslin ruff about his neck, and his clothes were a patchwork of bright colors. A gaudy satin cloak hung from his shoulders and in one hand he carried a bag, loosely knotted of cords, and containing six balls about the size of oranges, all painted in different hues—red, blue, yellow, orange, green and violet.

The procession advanced to the music of the flute until they reached the center of the village square. There they halted and the villagers quickly formed a ring about them. When all had assembled, the flute player pulled off his cap, grinned broadly, and began to speak.

"Good people of Turlaine," he cried in a deep rough voice, "ye shall see wonders come to pass. Here be a great singer; a dancing bear from the far cold countries; a little monkey from Africa; and his master, who seems himself to be naught but a grinning ape, who can play the tambourine passing well. And here's a wondrous juggler and dancer, with a foot like *thistledown*. Drop first a penny in my cap in token of good faith, and ye shall see all these wonders. Then if we please ye not, give us no more, but if ye like our tricks, reward us according to our deserts."

At that he pulled off his cap and passed among the crowd. There was a rattle of pennies into the cap and the people pressed and jostled closer and closer about the performers, each one trying to obtain a better view than his neighbor. Only the monks remained at some little distance, watching from the elevation of the chapel steps, half

in curiosity, half in disapproval. Nor did the stranger approach them for money. With a laugh, he called over his shoulder: "Holy men have no pennies, but ye may watch and welcome. *Mayhap* your blessing will fall upon us."

Then he returned to the circle, and raised the flute to his lips. The dwarf and his monkey came forward. Shaking his tambourine, and grimacing like an ape, the little man began to put his pet through its tricks. He held out one hand, and the monkey swung by its tail from his wrist. It climbed up and down on him as though the dwarf had been a tree; it danced a comical jig, and ended by snatching off its little cap and making a profound bow.

The next performer was the dancing bear. Urged on by his trainer's goad he went through some sort of a clumsy dance, snorting with pain whenever the sharp point was thrust into him. The villagers had been too much interested in the monkey's antics to notice that the flute player had been tweaking the dwarf's ear cruelly, whenever his efforts on the tambourine slackened, and now as his fingers were busy on the flute, he gave the bear an occasional kick, and sometimes followed it with one for the boy. There was a murmur in the crowd at that, but just then there stepped forward the lad with the lute, and began to pick at its strings. Then he sang in a high sweet voice a song of adventure, of knights and ladies, and held the crowd in perfect quiet by the beauty of his song. When he had finished they called for another. Flushed and smiling, he gave it to them, and when they clamored for it, would have sung a third, but the flute player, with a scowl and a muttered word, elbowed him aside and roughly thrust into his place the little juggler.

The boy drew his balls from their bag, and began to juggle them, tossing them up and catching them in his thin deft fingers until all the six were in the air at once. Many tricks he did that seemed no less than magic to the simple villagers. At last he began to dance. His nimble feet, moving in time to the lively music of the flute, were here and there, like thistledown indeed, and at intervals he would give a leap high in the air. The tune grew faster and faster, and at the shrill notes the dance grew wilder, and ended at last in a great leap, higher than the ones that had gone before.

But the little dancer did not regain his feet as he had done previously. His ankle gave a sudden twist, and with a scream of pain the boy fell to the ground and lay there, white faced and sobbing, holding his ankle with both hands. The crowd pressed in closer, and a dozen hands were stretched out to raise the boy. He tried to stand, but it was torture to rest his weight on the injured foot, and with a moan he sank down again.

There was a black frown on the face of the leader. He did not address a word to the little juggler, did not extend a hand to him, but stood apart, grimly silent, as if he were trying to decide what to do. At last he pulled off his cap and passed among the crowd.

There was a generous outpouring of coins. Everyone seemed to have the same idea. With the necessity of leaving the boy at the inn, and paying for his care, or providing a little cart for him to ride in, the troupe would need more money, and every villager who could spare even a copper, dropped it in until the hat was nearly full. The man emptied the coins into a leather bag, put on his cap, and gave a sharp word of command. The dwarf and his monkey were first to go, then followed the boy with the dancing bear. The lute player spoke to the master in a low voice, but the big man gave him a glance so ugly that the lad trembled, and hurried after the others. And then almost before the villagers realized what he meant to do, the flute player strode off down the road after him.

The little juggler made a frantic effort to rise. But the effort was too much for him and he fell forward on the grass in a faint.

Several of the men made a rush toward the leader, but he turned and faced the crowd, one hand on the bear's collar, the other gripping his thick cudgel.

"Advance another step," he cried, "and I set free this savage animal upon you all, and beat you with this thick stick. Think you I mean to bother with that useless child? He will never dance again, nor juggle either till he be able to stand on his two feet. I leave him to your gentle care. We thank you all," he ended with an evil grin, and swinging about on his heel he strode away down the road after his miserable troupe who were hurrying on with bent heads, as if they were too frightened to give even a backward glance at their deserted comrade.

The villagers returned to the circle about the boy. Father Justinian and another friar were kneeling beside him, **rubbing his hands and slapping the palms**. He opened his eyes at last and gave a wild look about.

"Is he gone?" he asked in a weak voice.

"Aye, lad," answered a dozen voices. The little juggler began to tremble. "I don't know what to do or where to go," he said in a quavering voice, "I have no home—no friends—no one but him—and now he has left me." There was infinite misery in his tone.

"You have friends," said the gentle voice of Father Justinian. "We are all your friends, and here is Brother **Ambrose**, who is even now longing to try his bone-setting skill on you. There—put one arm around my neck—so—now the other around Brother Ambrose's—there—easy," and gently and by degrees they raised the boy, made a chair of their crossed hands, and lifted him onto it.

What happened after that was very vague in the mind of Rene, the little juggler. All his life he could remember little else but hard work, tramping about from town to town, dancing and juggling, receiving in payment a small portion of food and many blows from his master. At night he usually slept in some stable, or on a heap of sacks in a tavern, but now he was carried within the monastery walls, and on into a small bare room, furnished only with a narrow bed. Gently they laid him upon it, and Brother Ambrose ran his fingers over the injured ankle.

It was a hard fifteen minutes that followed. The monk's fingers were strong and firm, and they pushed and pulled at the bones until the lad screamed with pain, though he tried hard to be brave, and smiled through his tears at the kind face bending over him. But at last it was over, and he lay back pale and weak, while the foot and ankle were swathed round and round with many rolls of clean white bandages, whose very snugness seemed to ease the pain somewhat.

Then followed the brightest days Rene had ever known. As the ankle began to mend, Brother Ambrose would help him out into the monastery garden, and place him where he might watch the monks at work among the flowers. Sometimes, however, he took him into the schoolroom instead, a great vaulted room where the boys of the village were learning their lessons. Some of the older ones were studying to enter the order, and wore plain **brown garments** very much like those of the monks. Rene himself had been given such a suit. His own clothes had been deemed unsuited for wear in the monastery, and now, neatly cleaned and mended by Brother Ambrose, lay in a small bundle at the foot of his bed, together with his red cap and the six bright balls. Rest and kindness, and simple nourishing food in abundance had made a different boy of Rene. His eyes had grown brighter, and his hollow cheeks were round and rosy.

There were two clouds, however, on the sunshine of Rene's joy. He was almost cured—soon he would have to go away—away from the beautiful garden—away from Brother Ambrose and Father Justinian and the others.

That was one cloud. The other was that Brother Melchior hated him. It was quite true. The tall thin gray man who was *second in authority* to Father Justinian had never a word or a smile for the lad, naught but frowns and every sign of open disapproval. Several times he had spoken to the prior, in Rene's hearing, of the welcome time when they should at last be rid of the nuisance. And so, on the day when Rene could bear his full weight on his left foot and feel no pain there, only a certain weakness, he knew that the happy hours were over for him. It remained only to learn what was to become of him.

A summons from Father Justinian, as he was walking in the garden with Brother Ambrose, brought him no comfort. It meant only his dismissal, he felt, and he walked slowly along the path, with lagging feet and hanging head. He had a wild desire to hurt himself in some way, so that his stay within the friendly walls might be lengthened, but he put that idea behind him, and went to Father Justinian.

"Rene," said the old man gently, as the boy stood before him, "if you might choose your life what would you do with it?"

Without hesitation came the answer. "I would study and learn, so that I might become a good man like you and Brother Ambrose, and serve our dear Lord, and the Blessed Lady all my days," said Rene earnestly.

The answer seemed to please the prior. "That is what I would have you do," he said. "You may stay here and learn. Then, when you are a man, you shall become one of the brethren if you will it so—there—there—lad—take it not so much to heart," for Rene had fallen to his knees and was sobbing over Father Justinian's hand.

And so the little juggler stayed on at the monastery, though much against the wishes of Brother Melchior. The boy had several duties to perform each day now, in addition to his studies. He did them all with a will, but best of all he liked to clean the chapel floor. It was hard work to kneel on the bare stones and scrub them, but there was a reward. In a niche in the wall between two high stained glass windows, through the panes of which the sunlight filtered in all the gay colors of the rainbow, stood a figure of the Virgin. Her face and hands were of wax, so delicately modelled and painted that they seemed flesh and blood. Her smile was so sweet and tender that the boy grew to feel that she looked for him, and welcomed him each day as he came in to do his work. He would polish away at the stones with all the strength in his slender hands until the floor fairly shone, and then would look up at the figure in the rich robes of red, blue and gold, as if for her smile of approval. He felt proud to serve the Queen of Heaven, even if in so humble a way.

But others were *servicing her in other ways*. One of the boys of Rene's own age had a beautiful voice, as sweet as that of the lute player who had been Rene's companion in his juggling days. Morning and evening he would enter the chapel, kneel before the statue and sing to it. But the songs were not about knights and ladies, nor of adventure, but all were in praise of God. Another boy played sweetly on the viola, and it was his custom to play before the altar each day. A third had learned to paint in colors and gold, on parchment, and often when he had made something especially beautiful he would enter the chapel and reverently lay it at the feet of the image.

A secret pain began to burn in Rene's heart. Added to the constant disapproval of Brother Melchior was the knowledge that he had no talent with which to serve the Virgin. He could neither play, nor sing, nor paint—he read badly, halting and stumbling over every long word. He was making but slow progress in his other studies, too. Never before in all his life had he been taught anything—even the dancing and juggling he had picked up for himself, with blows and hard words as his only encouragement. There was only that one thing he could do and do well.

One day as he scrubbed the chapel floor it seemed to him that the smile on the sculptured face was even sweeter and kinder than usual, and he made a sudden resolve. When the work was done he hurried to his cell and hastily dressed himself in his old garments of a juggler, took up the colored balls and returned to the chapel.

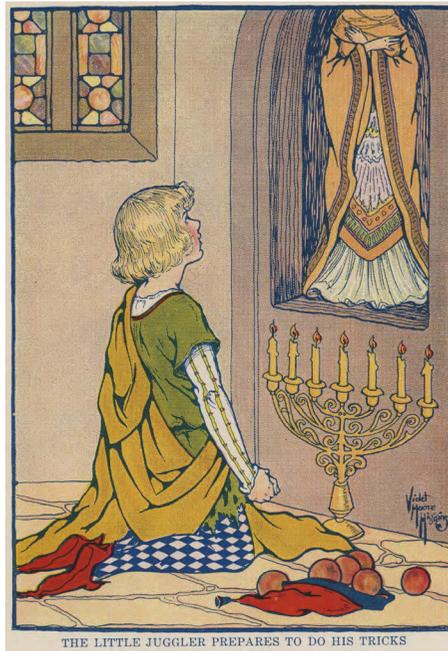


Fig. 45: "The Little Juggler Prepares to Do His Tricks." Illustration by Violet Moore Higgins, 1917. Published in Violet Moore Higgins, *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), frontispiece.

Rene did not see the thin figure that followed him, and stood at the doorway, watching him as he prepared to juggle the balls before the altar.

Only a moment did Brother Melchior linger, then he was on his way to Father Justinian. He had come so often with tales of the lad's misdoings, all very trifling ones except to himself, that the old man was inclined to doubt this latest story.

"Then come with me," the other replied sourly, "and see if I be wrong."

With a sense of misgiving the old man followed Brother Melchior, and the two hid in a recess of the deep stone doorway leading to the chapel. From their hiding place they could see Rene quite plainly, though he was so intent on his affairs that he did not see them, or hear, their stealthy footfalls. He was juggling the balls as he had done in the streets, and even the weeks without practice had not spoiled the cunning of his hand. It was harder work for him now, that was all. He had to strain every nerve and muscle to catch them, but not a ball fell to the floor. When he had done all his tricks of juggling, he put the balls on the floor in his red cap, and straightened up to his full height. It was here that Brother Melchior wished to rush forward and seize the wicked lad who dared to juggle before the very altar, but Father Justinian held him back. "I will see it through," he whispered in the other's ear, "I must know all."

The next instant the watchers received a second shock. Rene was dancing!

He did not trip as lightly as once he had done through the village streets. His ankle was not strong enough to bear this unaccustomed strain, and it began to ache painfully, but he gritted his teeth and kept on. Sweat poured down his face and mingled with the tears that would force themselves out; little involuntary moans came now and then from his lips. At last, utterly exhausted, he fell on his knees before the altar.

"Now," whispered Brother Melchior eagerly, but again Father Justinian held him back as the boy began to speak.

"Oh, Gracious Lady," he began, almost gasping the words, so out of breath was he, "I have served thee with the only talent that I have. I cannot sing, nor play the sweet toned viola, nor paint in glowing colors on the smooth white parchment. I can only dance and juggle for thee. Thou who knowest all the sorrows of the world, Thou knowest that it hurts me full sore to dance upon the foot that was hurt, yet have I done my best. All that I have is Thine. My life is given to Your service. Oh, bless me. Gracious Lady."

The earnest young voice ceased, and he knelt with bowed head. It was very still in the chapel. Then, as the hidden watchers would have slipped away unseen, there was a movement at the altar.

The figure in the niche was bending forward, a white hand rested for an instant on Rene's head, and with her scarlet mantle the Virgin was wiping away the moisture from his brow.

And at that sign, Father Justinian, happy in a faith justified, and Brother Melchior, his heart strangely softened, fell on their knees and prayed.

# 10. The Radio Narrator

## John Booth Nesbitt

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Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “The Juggler of Notre Dame” made breathtaking leaps and bounds, much like its humble star, from one form of expression to another. From the narrow confines of scholarship, it infiltrated into the more capacious ambit of verse adaptations, short stories, and prose translations. Eventually it crossed over into the still bigger realm of opera and vaudeville. From the 1920s on, the tale took a further jump by insinuating itself on the airwaves.

Commercial broadcasting furnished an excellent medium for the dissemination of the juggler story to even larger audiences than it had previously reached. The golden age of radio stretched from 1930 through 1955. In this era, broadcasters, advertisers, and listeners displayed an insatiable hunger for entertainment through dramatic plays and narrations. Soap operas, situation comedies, crime dramas, science-fiction shows, and anthology series abounded. Most of those who put together the scripts for such fare cut their teeth on reading books and to a lesser extent on seeing vaudeville, theater, operas, and other live spectacles on stage. A goodly number of them would have encountered Anatole France’s and Jules Massenet’s *The Juggler of Notre Dame*. Some of these writers, probably fewer, would have chanced upon the original “Our Lady’s Tumbler” in translation. As the decades rolled by, more and more of those active in the industry could have become acquainted with the tale through radio itself.

In Europe of the 1920s and early 1930s, a Jesuit named Remigio Vilariño, who lived from 1865 to 1939, produced a fanciful adaptation for a show that he devised for families. His script was published in [Castilian Spanish](#) in 1926 and 1929 before being [put into French](#) in 1934. These printings, in two languages no less, constitute convincing evidence that the good priest reached appreciative auditors among devout Catholics on both sides of the Pyrenees. In his adaptation, the leading role is played by a Hungarian jongleur named Georges, who is accompanied by a horse and thirteen-year-old nephew.

In the English-speaking world, the BBC aired a production of Jules Massenet’s opera in May 1929, for which the elaborate lead-up included a [printed libretto](#) in translation that listeners could purchase for their convenience. In America, many competing radio versions existed. The one that achieved the broadest currency and left the deepest marks was created by the Canadian-born narrator, announcer, and actor John Nesbitt.



Fig. 46: John Nesbitt, age 46. Photograph, 1956. Photographer unknown.

Within a life that ran from 1910 to 1960, his career extended from the 1920s well into the 1950s. His middle name was Booth, which memorialized his ties to an extended theater dynasty that stretched back to the first half of the nineteenth century. The clan included Nesbitt's grand-uncles Edwin Booth, the Shakespearean actor, and John Wilkes Booth, younger brother of the preceding, also an actor but better remembered as the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, the American president.

Known on radio first and television later, Nesbitt recounted his "The Juggler of Our Lady" on the air initially in December of 1938 on the Gulf Oil Company radio program. His effort became an overnight sensation, with thousands of requests pouring in for copies of the script. In the following year, the author circulated his text privately among friends as a holiday gift. He also shared his creation with the English-born actor Ronald Colman. For years afterward, listeners became accustomed to dramatic readings of this crowd-pleasing favorite at Christmastime by one or the other of the two. No two performances are word-for-word identical or have the very same accompanying songs, but all of them conform to roughly the same text and musical format.

The impact of Nesbitt's version was increased thanks to long-play records: his narration of "A Christmas Gift: The Story of the Juggler of Our Lady," enhanced by choral interludes, was released on vinyl first in 1943. Thereafter it was pressed again repeatedly for more than a decade. Beyond satisfying individual consumers, the recordings served for broadcasts that were transmitted not only domestically in the US but also abroad for the armed forces. The author of an illustrated [German reworking](#) of the juggler narrative that was published in 1961 related that he was exposed to the

narrative through Nesbitt. In 1942 the tale was reconfigured in a film short entitled *The Greatest Gift of All*.

In the [liner note](#) to the recording, Nesbitt elaborated on the source of his story. This long and fanciful account claims that in 1933, while sifting through an inherited trunk filled with his father's papers, he came upon "one of the most interesting literary discoveries of modern times." The find? A supposedly fresh translation that "his father had made from the French, of a folk tale called *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, an ancient legend almost completely unknown to the English-speaking world." The radio narrator put this version on a par, or so he claimed, with the collection of Hans Christian Andersen. If we take him at his word, he selected the text as his script to follow when he auditioned for a job in radio. Two years later he used it for another tryout, once again successfully.

Despite the apparently detailed provenance, the notes are evasive about the ultimate source. The rendering is "John Nesbitt's own, adapted from the original translation he found in his father's trunk, and presented in the clear and simple manner of a storyteller relating an old legend by the fireside on the eve of Christmas. As far as can be determined, the origin of this story is still unknown. It is suspected to be about five hundred years old, but as the story was passed on for so many centuries, nobody knows. It comes from the simple people." The text explains further that thanks to "Nesbitt's reintroduction of the forgotten story to America" it has "become part of our own folk lore." The announcer predicted that "It will someday be as familiar to our children as *The Christmas Carol*, or *Puss in Boots*, or *The Little Match Girl*." Consistent with this effort to package and market the tale as a folktale, Nesbitt cultivates a style frequent in storytelling, called parataxis, in which he lines up clause after clause and connects them simply by the conjunction "and," rather than by arranging them in a complex syntax that requires subordination.

The names of the characters belie any claim that the text is not derivative or that it transcribes the oral delivery of a folktale. Either directly or indirectly, the radio personality, his father, or both lifted the tale from Anatole France and Jules Massenet. The names and special talents of the monks are clear giveaways. Notably, Nesbitt commandeers from the French short story the sculptor named Brother Marbod who is covered in dust from his carving. Other aspects reveal an indebtedness, again either directly or indirectly, to the staging of the opera. For instance, the narrator describes, without giving a name, a fat monk who corresponds to Brother Boniface in Massenet. Likewise, Nesbitt focuses on visual features that betray his (or his father's, if we accept that pretense) familiarity with a theatrical form. Thus at the end he seems to evoke the brightness of a spotlight, a recollection of the artificial illumination that heightened the drama of Massenet's opera.

Nesbitt's only substantial change, not that it was original to him, is to set the miracle at Christmas. From early on, the story had been drawn into this season. Despite efforts to associate it with the Marian month of May, its sentimentality accorded better with the

winter religious holiday. In addition, Mary's salience in the action was easier to justify in Protestant communities at Christmas, owing to the Virgin's central involvement in the nativity. Whatever the causes, Massenet's opera was often performed around the holiday, especially with Mary Garden in the leading role. The children's version by Violet Higgins seems to have been retailed at Yuletide, and the poem by Edwin Markham was published in December. These bits of information speak to a pattern that in due course became entrenched.

### "The Juggler of Our Lady"

In the days when the world was young, there lived in France a little man of no importance. Everybody said he didn't amount to anything, and he firmly believed this himself. For he was just a traveling circus performer, a juggler. He couldn't read or write and all he knew how to do was to go about from town to town, following the little country fairs, doing his tricks for the children, and earning a few pennies a day. His first name was Barnaby, but he was too unimportant to have any last name at all.

Now when it was summer time, and the weather was sunny and beautiful, and the people were strolling around the streets, and the young lovers were holding tightly to each other's hands in the park, then Barnaby would be happy, because he could find a clear place in the village square, spread out a strip of old carpet on the cobblestones, and on the carpet he would perform his tricks for the children and grown-ups alike.

And Barnaby, although he knew he was a man of no importance, was a wonderful juggler. You wouldn't believe half the things he could do. At first he would only balance a tin pie plate on the tip of his nose. But when the crowd had collected, he would stand on his head and juggle six golden-colored balls in the air at the same time, catching them with his feet. And sometimes he could actually stand on his head and juggle twelve sharp knives instead of the golden balls and catch the knives with his feet too. And then the people would applaud and the children jump up and down with delight, and a whole rain of pennies would be thrown down onto Barnaby's carpet. And at the end of a day's work like this, Barnaby would collect the pennies in his hat and, before wearily resting his aching muscles, he would kneel down on his carpet and reverently thank God for the hat full of pennies. And always the people would laugh at his simplicity, and everybody would agree that Barnaby would never amount to anything.

But all this is about the happy days in his life, the summer days when the sun was shining and people were willing to toss a penny to a poor juggler. Well, when winter came, then Barnaby could afford no place to sleep, and he had to wrap up his juggling equipment in the old carpet and trudge along the muddy roads, begging a chance to sleep a night in a farmer's barn or doing his tricks for some rich person's servants in order to be given a meal. And Barnaby of course being so simple, never thought of complaining, for he knew that the winter and the rains were as necessary as the spring and the summer. And as he plodded along, he would say to himself, "How could such an ignorant fellow as me ever hope for anything better?"

[Choir] Now one year in France there was a terrible winter, and on an evening in early November at the end of a dreary wet day, as Barnaby trudged along a country road, sad and bent, with the raindrops running down his face and off the end of his nose, carrying under his arm the golden balls and knives in the old carpet, he saw something moving

in the mist ahead of him. As he got closer, he saw that it was a fine fat white mule and on top of the mule was a fine fat monk, dressed in warm clothes and singing to himself as he rode along. When the monk saw poor muddy Barnaby, he smiled at him and called out, "It's going to be a cold evening. How would you like to come and spend the night where I live, at the monastery?" "Oh!" cried Barnaby, running in the mud alongside of the mule. "If I only could! But will they let an ignorant fellow like me enter such a holy place as a monastery?" And the monk laughed, "Of course, friend! For aren't we all ignorant as jackasses when we compare ourselves to the Lord?" And the monk pulled Barnaby up behind him on the mule, and Barnaby had to hold both his arms around the monk's fat middle in order to stay on. And both of them began laughing again as they rode down the road.

And that night, Barnaby found himself seated at the table in the huge dining room of the monastery. It was blazing with candles and silver candlesticks, and the table was covered with enormous roasts of fine rare beef, and legs of mutton swimming in gravy, and whole roast pigs with red apples in their mouths, and chicken pies and big cakes covered with crushed almonds, and all the fresh apple cider you could drink.

Although Barnaby, of course, sat down at the very foot of the table, together with the servants and the beggars. He looked around with the candlelight shining in his eyes, and he thought he'd never seen such a wonderful sight this side of heaven. And suddenly, trembling with excitement, he jumped up, ran around the table to where the lord abbot who was head of the monastery sat at the top, and Barnaby sank down to his knees.

"Father, grant my prayer: please let me stay here! I can't ever hope to become a holy man: I'm too ignorant. But let me work in the stable, and mop the kitchen floor, and just stay." And the fat jolly monk who'd met Barnaby turned to the head of the monastery, "This is a good man. He's simple and pure of heart." And so the abbot nodded his head. And that night Barnaby was given a cell of his own to sleep in, and he put his juggling equipment under the cot, and before he fell asleep, he promised solemnly that he would never again go back to his old profession of juggling six golden balls and twelve sharp knives.

[Choir: "The First Noel"] In the days that followed, everybody smiled to watch Barnaby work. He would scrub the flagstones of the kitchen floor, and polish the big copper kettles, and with his strong acrobat's muscles knotting under the strain, he would willingly carry huge bundles of fodder to the cattle. And when the chapel bells rang out for services, he would creep humbly in by the side door and kneel down in a dark corner of the rear.

And all through those early days, his face shone with happiness from morning until night—until two weeks before Christmas. And then a bewildered expression began to appear upon his simple face, and slowly his joy turned to misery and despair. For all around him he saw every monk, busy preparing a wonderful gift to place in the chapel on Christmas Day. There was Brother Maurice who was a painter, who would take gold and silver and rare enamels and paint exquisite little miniature pictures on the corner of each page of a Bible. And then there was Brother Marbod who was a sculptor and who was finishing a beautiful statue of Christ. This artist spent all of his hours in chiseling stone, so that his beard and his eyebrows and his hair were always white with stone dust. And there was Brother Ambrose who was writing a new hymn to be sung at the Christmas service, and Brother Joseph who was composing the music for it. Everywhere Barnaby went were these educated, trained men following their work, each one of them making a beautiful gift to dedicate to God on Christmas. And what about Barnaby? He

could do nothing. He would go to his tiny cell and unwrap his juggling equipment and look at it sadly. "I'm but a rough man, unskilled in art. I can't read or write. All I know how to do is to perform a few tricks. Alas, everybody has a gift to give except me."

Christmas morning came at last. And strangely enough, it was the first day in that bitter winter that the sun broke out and shone brilliantly. And the great stone halls were decked out in pine branches and red holly berries. Thousands of candles gleamed everywhere, and all of the buildings rang with music and songs. It took twenty-five of the monks to roll Brother Marbod's big new statue into the chapel, and then the choir sang the new song that had been written by Brother Ambrose, and then the beautiful Bible with the paintings of Brother Maurice was placed before the altar, and every brother went forward to present his gift to God. But Barnaby had disappeared.

Now a strange and terrible thing happened that no brother in the great monastery would ever forget during all the days of his life. For that evening, after the visitors had gone home and the chapel was deserted and nearly all the brothers were resting on their hard beds, the plump jolly monk who had brought Barnaby to the monastery went running down the halls, with his face white as a ghost's. He pounded over the stone floors to the private room of the abbot. He shoved open the door without knocking, and panting with excitement he seized the abbot by the arm. "Father, a frightful thing is happening, the most terrible sacrilege ever to take place is going on right in our own chapel. Come with me!" Without speaking a word, the abbot joined him, and the two elderly men ran down the corridors, burst through a door, and came out on the choir balcony at the rear of the chapel. The monk pointed a trembling finger down toward the altar. The abbot looked, turned ashen in color. "God forgive him! He has gone mad."

[Choir: "Ave Maria."] Down below, squarely in front of the altar, was Barnaby. He had spread out his old strip of carpet and, kneeling reverently on one knee, was juggling in the air six golden balls. He was presenting his old act—the bright knives, the shining balls, and at the very tip of his nose was balanced a tin pie plate, and on his face was a look of adoration and joy.

"We must seize him and drag him away!" cried the abbot. And the two men turned toward the door, but at that exact moment a dazzling light suddenly filled the chapel, a brilliant beam coming directly from the altar. And both the monks sank to their knees. For as Barnaby had finished his juggling act and knelt exhausted on his carpet, they saw the statue of the Virgin Mary move.

She came down from her pedestal and, coming to where Barnaby knelt, she reached down and took the blue hem of her robe and touched it to his forehead, gently drying the beads of sweat that glistened there. And the light dimmed, and up in the choir balcony, the monk looked at the abbot. "God has accepted the only Christmas present he had to give," and the abbot slowly nodded, "Blessed are the simple in heart, but they also shall see God." [Choir: "Ave Maria."]

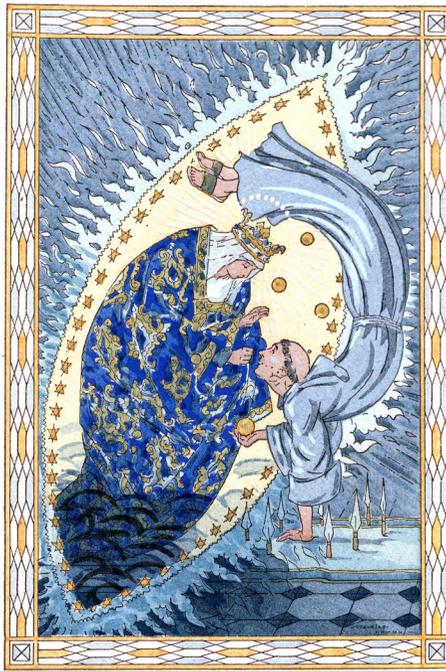


Fig. 47: The Virgin descends to bless the juggler. Illustration by Maurice Lalau, 1924. Published in Anatole France, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924), p. 23.



## II. The Mid to Late Twentieth-Century Poets

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### A. Patrick Kavanagh

Patrick Kavanagh was raised as a devout Catholic. His family frequented the parish church of Saint Mary in Inniskeen, a small village in County Monaghan, Ireland.



Fig. 48: Patrick Kavanagh Centre, former Catholic St. Mary's church, Inniskeen, Ireland.  
Photograph from Wikimedia, 2009, CC BY-SA 1.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kavanaghcentre.jpg>

The Irishman, who was born in 1904 and died in 1967, grew up to be a devotee of the Virgin himself. His favorite prayer was the Marian hymn "Hail Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star," by Father John Lingard. Not surprisingly, Kavanagh often referred to the Mother of God in his poetry.

In 1959 the poet composed "Our Lady's Tumbler." How he became exposed to the medieval tale remains an open question, but the vocabulary of his piece hints that he had read and borrowed from the translation by Eugene Mason, first printed in 1910. In any case, Kavanagh appropriates the story or rather its leading character to suit his personal circumstances. To be more precise, he assumes that his readers already know

the narrative and have no need of a recapitulation: the title of his own poem and the repetition of the same phrase in the final line are the only references he makes.

In "Our Lady's Tumbler" Kavanagh expresses thankfulness for his physical recovery and poetic rebirth after surgery he underwent in 1955 to remove a cancerous lung and rib. In his gratitude he celebrates the joys of life. In particular, he concentrates upon the beauties and pleasures that the canals of Dublin had to offer in spring and summer. Whereas earlier in his career the poet sometimes cast the Irish city as a hellish place, he now portrays it as a [locus of redemption](#).

Elsewhere in his oeuvre Kavanagh wrote poems that are called his Grand Canal sonnets, though this is not one of them. The lyric comprises ten couplets of iambic tetrameters. The main body consists of sixteen lines. An envoi of four more, with a summary and dedication, caps the composition—and directs the reader's attention to the devotion that the entertainer in the thirteenth-century French displayed to the Mother of God.

For all his attachment to the story of "Our Lady's Tumbler," Kavanagh in general rejected what he called "tales of French-hot miracles," such as the fervor associated with the cult of Mary in Lourdes, France. More broadly, he disapproved of the Romanization that from his vantage point was eroding the defining character of Irish Catholicism. Instead, he advocated his own practice of seeking out the miraculous in the quotidian, meaning the mundanities of daily life, especially in his native Ireland. In that spirit, he seemed to have no reluctance in overlooking any intrinsic Frenchness of "Our Lady's Tumbler" and instead to regard with favor the wonder of a nameless performer who gave expression to his piety through physical performance and thereby elicited approval from the Virgin.

### "Our Lady's Tumbler"

My verse though light I hope is not  
 A trivial thing facetious or  
 Inclined to doggerel at times.  
 I come to you with verse's chimes  
 5 For Easter's sake when tulip time  
 In [Stephen's Green](#) is yours and mine;  
 Once more, [deck chairs](#) and all the knowledge  
 That's learned in summer's sunny college,  
 The grass to lie on by the gate  
 10 Where we can see down [Grafton Street](#)  
 And get to know new blades of grass  
 Particular personal visions as  
 You last year on the [Grand Canal](#)  
 Got to know the mystical  
 15 View of [Leeson Bridge](#), the view  
 That happens to no one else but you.

I come to you to verse my thanks  
 To parks and flowers and canal banks  
 I bring you this verse interlude  
 20 Our Lady's Tumbler's gratitude.

## B. W. H. Auden

W. H. Auden was born English in 1907 but naturalized American in 1946, more than a quarter of a century before his death in 1973.



Fig. 49: W. H. Auden, age 60. Photograph by Jill Krementz, 1967.

However we pigeonhole him in nationality, he rates among the major poets of the twentieth century. He was drawn to the Middle Ages, especially poetry of early medieval England and Iceland that contained themes of Germanic mythology and heroism. But his interests in literature also ran to Middle English, Old French, and Medieval Latin. In 1971 he wrote an "Ode to the Medieval Poets" that singles out by name four who left their marks in Middle English and Scots as well as the "anons" who remain nameless to us.

In 1958 Auden produced the narration for the performance with music of the *Play of Daniel*, a Medieval Latin liturgical drama. Eleven years later, he returned to the Middle Ages and music. In this reprise he crafted "The Ballad of Barnaby" as the libretto for a musical performance put on by the pupils at a girls' school in Connecticut, the now defunct Wykeham Rise School in Washington. The score was composed by Chuck Turner, a friend of his who taught music there.

Also in 1969, Auden's lyrics for the ballad were printed on the sheet music. At roughly the same time, the text without musical notation graced the front of the *New York Review of Books*. As we have seen often before in other adaptations of the story, the piece was tied to the holiday season: this December number of the semi-monthly magazine was identified explicitly as the Christmas issue. To acknowledge the

associations of ballad with oldentimes, the cover page was styled as a kind of updated broadside with six decorations by the American artist Edward Gorey. At the same time, the format pays tribute to the [broadside ballad](#), a subgenre within the form. The same presentation was adopted, after Auden's death, as a handout for the memorial service in St. John the Divine on October 3, 1973.

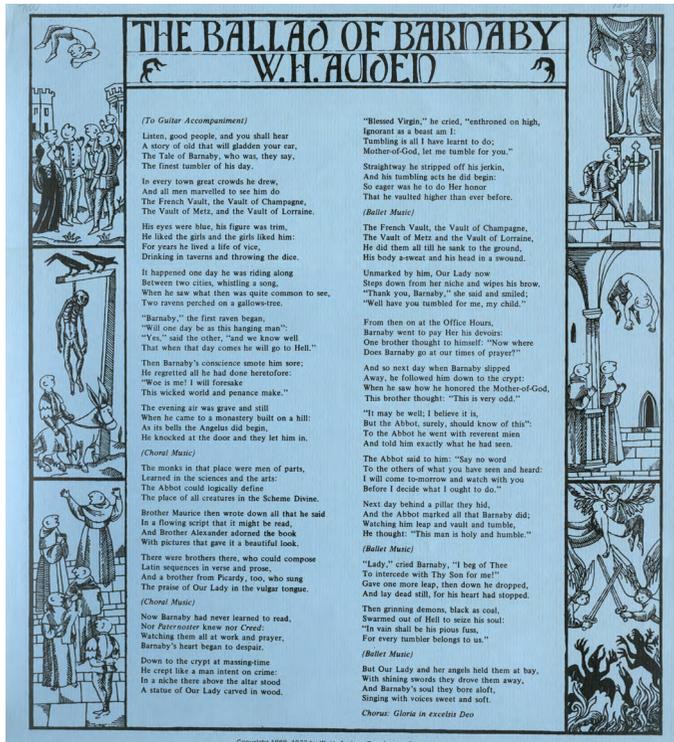


Fig. 50: W. H. Auden, *The Ballad of Barnaby*, illus. Edward Gorey. Pre-existing poem and artwork, distributed to complement the Memorial Service in St. John the Divine, New York City, Wednesday, October 3, 1973. All rights reserved.

Ballad, as a species of folk song, is commonly qualified as being [popular and traditional](#). For centuries now, it has been seen as having arisen from the [oral culture of western Europe](#) and as having been handed down by illiterate or partly literate singers who eventually carried the genre to the New World, where with the passage of time it entered the realm of folk song. Though Auden's poem is indisputably a literary ballad, he emphasized the oral and aural in the opening couplet. Despite choosing not to reuse many phrases, he repeated verbatim two whole lines that catalogue the four specific vaults that the tumbler performs in his routine. Metrically, he opted for four-line stanzas. In his quatrains the lines are four-stress, while the rhyme pattern is aabb.

"The Ballad of Barnaby" was a favorite of its author's. In fact, after he died on September 29, 1973, copies of it were distributed at a two-hour memorial service conducted in his honor in New York City. In the poem, Auden blended elements of

the thirteenth-century French version, with which he was acquainted through the translation by Philip H. Wicksteed, and Anatole France's short story. As the title of Auden's piece indicates, he appropriated the name of his protagonist from the nineteenth-century writer, but he made the leading character a tumbler and not a juggler, and likewise he drew from "Our Lady's Tumbler" the names of specific vaults performed by the young acrobat.

Could Auden have been acquainted with Kavanagh's "Our Lady's Tumbler"? The two poets knew and were influenced by each other's writings, presumably more [Kavanagh by Auden](#) than vice versa. Yet this particular composition by the Irishman was so little known, as indeed it remains to this day, that the odds seem slim. Auden's interest in the medieval French is likelier to have been piqued by his reverence for Henry Adams, which centered upon *The Education of Henry Adams* but extended also to *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. The poet's engagement with the American man of letters and historian surfaces repeatedly, above all in an essay entitled "The Virgin & the Dynamo."

In the hands of the great twentieth-century poet, the tale becomes one of rejoicing in art and hoping for salvation. The joy and redemption dispel the ominousness, reminiscent of a late medieval French ballad by François Villon, of two ravens on a gallows-tree. The raptors discuss how the tumbler Barnaby is destined for hell, and indeed black demons come to seize his soul when he drops dead of heart failure.

To the end, Auden shows a light touch, with flashes of comedy. The last-mentioned owe in part to his preoccupation with the theory of the carnivalesque that the Russian literary critic [Mikhail Bakhtin](#) had adumbrated in two books, one on the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky and the other on the French writer François Rabelais. At the same time, it is tempting to read Auden's death back into the poem and to wonder if while grappling with his mortality, he reflected on the deliverance he hoped to attain through his art.

"The Ballad of Barnaby"  
(*To Guitar accompaniment*)

Listen, good people, and you shall hear  
A story of old that will gladden your ear,  
The Tale of Barnaby, who was, they say,  
The finest tumbler of his day.

5      I n every town great crowds he drew,  
And all men marvelled to see him do  
The French Vault, the Vault of Champagne,  
The Vault of Metz, and the Vault of Lorraine.

10 **H**is eyes were blue, his figure was trim,  
 He liked the girls and the girls liked him;  
 For years he lived a life of vice,  
 Drinking in taverns and throwing the dice.

15 **I**t happened one day he was riding along  
 Between two cities, whistling a song,  
 When he saw what then was quite common to see,  
 Two ravens perched on a gallows-tree.

20 **"B**arnaby," the first raven began,  
 "Will one day be as this hanging man":  
 "Yes," said the other, "and we know well  
 That when that day comes he will go to Hell."

**T**hen Barnaby's conscience smote him sore;  
 He repented of all he had done heretofore:  
 "Woe is me! I will forsake  
 This wicked world and penance make."

25 **T**he evening air was grave and still  
 When he came to a monastery built on a hill:  
 As its bells the Angelus did begin.  
 He knocked at the door and they let him in.

*(Choral music)*

30 **T**he monks in that place were men of parts,  
 Learned in the sciences and the arts:  
 The Abbot could logically define  
 The place of all creatures in the Scheme Divine.

35 **B**rother Maurice then wrote down all that he said  
 In a flowing script that it might be read,  
 And Brother Alexander adorned the book  
 With pictures that gave it a beautiful look.

40 **T**here were brothers there who could compose  
 Latin Sequences in verse and prose,  
 And a brother from Picardy, too, who sung  
 The praise of Our Lady in the vulgar tongue.

*(Choral music)*

Now Barnaby had never learned to read,  
 Nor *Paternoster* knew nor *Creed*;  
 Watching them all at [work and prayer](#),  
 Barnaby's heart began to despair.

45     Down to the crypt at [massing-time](#)  
 He crept like a man intent on crime:  
 In a niche there above the altar stood  
 A statue of Our Lady [carved in wood](#).

50     “Blessed Virgin,” he cried, “enthroned on high,  
 Ignorant as a beast am I:  
 Tumbling is all I have learnt to do;  
 Mother-of-God, let me tumble for You.”

55     Straightway he stripped off his jerkin,  
 And his tumbling acts he did begin:  
 So eager was he to do Her honor  
 That he vaulted higher than ever before.

*(Ballet music)*

60     The French Vault, the Vault of Champagne,  
 The Vault of Metz and the Vault of Lorraine,  
 He did them all till he sank to the ground,  
 His body [asweat](#) and his head in a [swound](#).

Unmarked by him, Our Lady now  
 Steps down from her niche and wipes his brow.  
 “Thank you, Barnaby,” She said and [smiled](#);  
 “Well have you tumbled for me, my child.”

65     From then on at the [Office-Hours](#)  
 Barnaby went to pay Her his [devoirs](#).  
 One brother thought to himself: “Now where  
 Does Barnaby go at our times of prayer?”

70     And so next day when Barnaby slipped  
 Away he followed him down to the crypt.  
 When he saw how he honored the Mother-of-God,  
 This brother thought: “This is very odd.”

75 "It may be well: I believe it is,  
 But the Abbot, surely, should know of this."  
 To the Abbot he went with reverent mien  
 And told him exactly what he had seen.

80 The Abbot said to him: "Say no word  
 To the others of what you have seen and heard.  
 I will come to-morrow and watch with you  
 Before I decide what I ought to do."

Next day behind a pillar they hid,  
 And the Abbot marked all that Barnaby did.  
 Watching him leap and vault and tumble,  
 He thought, "This man is holy and humble."

*(Ballet music)*

85 "Lady," cried Barnaby, "I beg of Thee  
 To intercede with Thy Son for me!"  
 Gave one more leap, then down he dropped,  
 And lay dead still, for his heart had stopped.

90 Then grinning demons, black as coal,  
 Swarmed out of Hell to seize his soul:  
 "In vain shall be his pious fuss,  
 For every tumbler belongs to us."

*(Ballet music)*

95 But Our Lady and Her angels held them at bay,  
 With [shining swords](#) they drove them away,  
 And Barnaby's soul they bore aloft,  
 Singing with voices sweet and soft.

*Chorus: [Gloria in excelsis Deo.](#)*

### C. Virginia Nyhart

This poet, born in 1934, is a longtime resident of Massachusetts. Under the first name Nina, she published [two books of poetry](#) and [coedited an anthology](#) of contemporary poems that were selected and presented to encourage children's writing. As the publications suggest, she split her career between writing poetry and teaching it across

the whole pedagogic spectrum, from elementary school through college to adult education.

Like Kavanagh, Nyhart also composed a piece entitled “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” which appeared in 1973 in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, a literary magazine that was founded in 1925. In it she retells the tale in nine skilfully crafted six-line stanzas. The lines vary in syllabic count, with the shortest placed at the beginnings and ends of stanzas and with the longest in the middle. These stanzas are unified by rhyme, near rhyme, and loose assonance in an abccba pattern. Last but not least, in their typography they are presented on the page so that their visual shape becomes part of their nature as **concrete poetry**: they form a pattern poem, as the reader will see.

The poem opens with the words “It was time to turn,” which set the stage for the wheeling of the tumbler’s gymnastics. Nyhart plays in various ways on the arches or bridges that gymnasts form with their bodies during their routines. Here the performer’s thoughts are presented in the first person. The gender of the acrobat is left indeterminate. At the start she or he, hitherto successful, trips during a performance and feels ashamed of this failure. After contemplating suicide, the performer takes the advice of a bridge that spans a river and resolves to enter Clairvaux. Inside the monastery the athlete feels inadequate and useless until seizing the initiative by tumbling (and tumbling down) once again, this time beneath “Our Lady’s arch.” A miracle, unseen even by the tumbler, ensues, but we are left uncertain as to whether anything happens outside the performer’s personal perceptions.

“Our Lady’s Tumbler,” with its richly subjective perspective, makes the narrative a true lyric. The poem assumes that its readers are already conversant with the gist of the medieval tale. Word-choice suggests that Nyhart may have consulted all three of the most frequently read and reprinted English prose translations of the thirteenth-century original, the decades-old ones by Philip H. Wicksteed, Isabel Butler, and Alice Kemp-Welch.

### “Our Lady’s Tumbler”

It was time to turn.  
 They honored me in courts and streets  
 and cheered until I tripped one spring night  
 cartwheeling, upended by a dog’s bark and the sight  
 5 of a star spiraling between my feet.  
 My cheeks burn

to recall their jeers  
 the gutter smell, and under my fingers  
 slime. A child skipped over me, boasting a better  
 10 style. I backed down to the river, invited the water  
 to embrace me. But the longer  
 I faced that mirror

the more I endured,  
 shame ebbed, and the bridge, my fellow  
 15 arch, befriended me, saying, "Give up your horse,  
 your money, and your clothes. Go left at the cross,  
 take the road to Clairvaux,  
 that holy order

where they sing  
 20 the ancient psalms." So I entered their service  
 and they gave me meat and a bed. Daily, in prayer,  
 at lessons, and in chant, they praised Our Mother.  
 Fancy words for a simple novice,  
 unschooled, tongue-

25 tied. "Read  
 palms," they whispered, laughing. Once more  
 my bones unhinged. Night after night the dank wall  
 listened: "I do not earn my bread, have no call  
 here. How can I serve her  
 30 whom I need?"

The miller's wheat  
 is finely ground. The baker is proud  
 of each golden loaf, the weaver of his careful cloth.  
 The abbot cultivates his flowers. Even the bellows' breath  
 35 makes a fire grow. What can be made  
 with a heart and feet?"

The stones sighed.  
 "Consider the slender birch,  
 40 how it humbly bows." These words fell into my night  
 like tears on dry earth, like summer rain, like light.  
 Under Our Lady's arch  
 again I tried,

stiffly at first,  
 awkwardly, the Brittany trick,  
 45 the stand of Champagne. And then the Roman vault,  
 the leaps of Metz and Lorraine and the Spanish somersault  
 and my heavy feet grew quick  
 til my heart burst

with fervor  
 50 and I tumbled down. I swear I felt  
 her hand, yet waked to a still crypt. To this day  
 I covet no other's rite or talent, knowing how I may,

by the simple spending of myself,  
deserve her.

## D. Turner Cassity

[Turner Cassity](#), an American poet born in Mississippi in 1929, went on to receive his undergraduate degree there.



Fig. 51: Turner Cassity. Photograph, date and photographer unknown. Atlanta, GA, Emory University, Robert W. Woodruff Library. Image courtesy of Emory University Archives. All rights reserved.

Following college, he left the South for a long while. For a start he earned master's degrees, one on each coast, first in 1952 from Stanford in English and later in 1956 from Columbia in library science. After being drafted into the US Army, he spent a stretch from 1952 to 1954 in Puerto Rico. Between 1956 and 1962 he worked as a librarian not only in his native state but also in South Africa. Thereafter he moved to Georgia to serve in the same profession at Emory University from 1962 to 1991. He remained in Atlanta until dying there at the age of 80 in 2009.

From the 1960s on, Cassity published voluminously, as a playwright and short-story writer but especially as a poet. "[Our Lady's Juggler](#)," first printed in 1976, comprises three quatrains with abab rhyme. Where did he encounter the story? As a well-read poet, he would have likely been familiar with "The Ballad of Barnaby." His choice of meter may even echo Auden's. He could have come across Kavenagh's poem, Nyhart's,

or both, though the likelihood is markedly lower. In any event, he departs from all of these possible predecessors in assuming the leading character to be a juggler, as in the literary lineage leading back to Anatole France and less remotely to R. O. Blechman, rather than a tumbler, as in the medieval poem. Furthermore, he does not feel obliged in his poem to retell the tale but rather takes as a given that his own readers will already know its basics. Like Nyhart's "Our Lady's Tumbler," his "Our Lady's Juggler" is in the first person, from the standpoint of the protagonist. In the process, the Virgin and her power are paradoxically effaced.

### "Our Lady's Juggler"

The miracle is mine, My Lady.  
Do not think *your lifted hand*,  
*Your so late simpler* count. The steady,  
Prompted poise of no hoops in the hand

5     *A*nd some hoops in the air surpasses.  
This I make for you of rest,  
Eye, wrist—a going magic—grace's  
Access neither harms nor much assists.

10     *G*race is to have no need of grace,  
And I who send out no prospectus,  
Leave no memory, give *phase*  
To fall, in giving *mass* my little *ictus*.

### E. Virginia Hamilton Adair

Though not published until 1998, "The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital" was probably drafted three or even four decades earlier. At the very least its core idea became crystalized back then. Its author was Virginia Hamilton Adair, who lived from 1913 to 2004. Her career as a poet follows an unusual progression. In the 1930s she was educated at prestigious US women's colleges, with a B.A. degree from Mount Holyoke in 1933 and a M.A. from Radcliffe in 1936. In the 1940s she earned modest recognition from poems that were published in such major magazines as *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, and *The Saturday Review*.

After this promising start, she brought virtually nothing into print until reaching the ripe age of eighty-three years, when her first book, entitled *Ants on the Melon*, became an unlikely bestseller, and she found herself suddenly, though briefly, a media darling. The year was 1996, and the tale of her late-life success gained poignancy from the circumstance that not long before, she had lost her sight from glaucoma. From the

hoopla that ensued after publication, the press spotted an opportunity too tempting to forgo. A [second collection](#) of poetry by the blind octogenarian was put together from her unpublished oeuvre and printed in 1998. Largely devoted to religious themes, the collection failed to secure the warm welcome that its predecessor had received: Adair's fifteen minutes of fame had evaporated two years prior.

The sequel contains a piece that responds to the tale of "Our Lady's Tumbler." The poem is set in a chapel, not in a medieval monastery or cathedral in France, but in an imaginary mental hospital somewhere in what was then the present-day United States. The central figure in the cast of characters is named Jean, but do not be deceived into conflating this woman with the jongleur in Massenet's opera. Though the names may be homographs, they are not homophones. The pronoun used a few seconds ago says it all: this is a female /dʒiːn/ rather than a male /ʒɔ̃/.

Nothing is revealed about the previous life of this Jean, such as what profession she once practiced or even if she ever had one. She makes her mark by doing a cartwheel in a chapel during a service—and while wearing no underclothing. Though she creates the impression of being feeble-minded, in the end this dancer alone transcends the dichotomies between body and soul as well as between human and divine, like a fool of God. Through the impact of her physical moves, she brings her viewers closer to religious revelation than do the words of the man preaching, which go unreported and roundly ignored. The situation calls to mind "The Hasidic Jewish Tale of 'The Little Whistle'" (see Part 1, Chapter 12, above).

When did Adair write "The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital"? From 1950 to 1953 she worked as a bibliotherapist at Eastern State Hospital, a facility devoted to mental healthcare in Williamsburg, Virginia. Those years may well have given her the germ of her idea. Perhaps she even composed the verse during that spell. Alternatively, she could have come back to the topic at a later date. In any event, the poem is more redolent of mid-century modern than of the waning twentieth century. Nothing gives the impression that she was responding to any modern poet, and indeed she may have drafted her piece long before Kavanagh, Auden, Nyhart, and Cassity produced theirs.

"The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital" is not religious, if by the adjective is meant either Christianity in general or Roman Catholicism in particular. Adair eventually became a committed Zen Buddhist. The poem describes a congregation, supplemented by a bird, that has assembled for a service, but through a flurry of negatives it downplays formal religion. The first stanza informs us that the chapel contains no stained glass, no relics, no tomb, no brass, and no incense. Granted, reference is made later to the pulpit, opening prayer, hymn, sermon, collection, and

offering, but the preacher is mentioned only to emphasize how he pauses in his peroration when Jean performs her cartwheel. This humble action surpasses all words, except perhaps those of Adair's composition itself.

The piece is composed in iambic tetrameter. Its fifty-one lines follow a fluid rhyme scheme.

### "The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital"

The chapel boasted no stained glass,  
no holy relics, *shroud of Turin*,  
no marble tomb or funeral brass,  
no *incense* for the reek of urine.

5     *A*ttendants, prisoners on parole,  
a pair of alcoholic sin-mates,  
brought Alice in her camisole  
and other oddly costumed inmates,  
creaking and thundering on the stair,  
10     the crash of a collapsing chair  
competing with the opening prayer.

*A*ll types appeared, from crone to bimbo,  
pimplly youth to hoary *gaffer*,  
chatty fools and ghouls in limbo,  
15     weeper, curser, groaner, laugher,  
stylish Steve with arms akimbo.  
*A dove* flew in and out the window  
trying to catch *a moth* and gulp it,  
building a nest above the pulpit.  
20     Diane in *purple trimmed with ermine*  
called the male patients "swine" and "vermin"  
during the *hymn* and then the sermon.

*A* radio was turned up high,  
two patients listening to a game;  
25     the bird departed for the sky  
when down the aisle an old man came  
asking who took up the collection,  
and laid an orange upon the lectern.  
The sermon went on all the same.

30     *L*ike *le jongleur de Nôtre Dame*,  
Jean made her offering with aplomb;  
passing the front row to the aisle,

she turned on God a dazzling smile,  
with perfect cartwheels all the while  
35 in a full skirt with streaming hair,  
but not one stitch of underwear,  
no top except a scarlet halter,  
she somersaulted past the altar.  
The preacher stopped his peroration  
40 to marvel at each pure gyration;  
so did the motley congregation,  
and no one tried to make her stop,  
till ending, with a bow and hop,  
she moved, with hair and clothing neat,  
45 demure and quiet to her seat.  
Surely the *jongleur* would relate  
to Jean, the cartwheel queen of Mountain State.

Gaffer and girl convert us with their motions  
to greater freedom in our devotions;  
50 the broken windows of the mind may give  
the wingèd spirit still a space to live.



# Further Resources

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Tracking stories as they pass across time and space is fascinating, but identifying and securing the evidence can be difficult and time-consuming. The focus in this select bibliography rests on English-language materials. Most, though not all, early translations can be accessed freely in digitizations.

Some famous radio broadcasts may be streamed or purchased as analogue or digital recordings. The scripts are not easy to obtain, except when they were reprinted in major magazines. Likewise, though relevant episodes of television variety shows were sometimes recorded, arranging to view them can be challenging. By the same token, films that have not remained popular may be found only with difficulty and in outmoded media. Many of these same challenges apply to performances of musical compositions that have been recorded. Those which have not been recorded will be accessible only through their scores.

To return to print, a final category worth mentioning is children's books. The most famous from recent decades may be held in public libraries but not in research libraries. Those from long ago or in foreign languages can be extremely hard to secure, unless through purchase as collectibles.

Much information relating to the medieval story, Anatole France's adaptation of it, Jules Massenet's opera, and the rest of the rich traditions connected with all of them can be found in the six volumes of *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity*: vol. 1: "The Middle Ages," 2: "Medieval Meets Medievalism," 3: "The American Middle Ages," 4: "Picture That: Making a Show of the Jongleur," 5: "Tumbling into the Twentieth Century," 6: "War and Peace, Sex and Violence" (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2018). All may be downloaded gratis as interoperable PDFs.

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Lommatzsch, Erhard, ed., *Del tumbeor Nostre Dame: Altfranzösische Marienlegende (um 1200)*. Romanische Texte zum Gebrauch für Vorlesungen und Übungen 1. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1920.

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## Television and Film

- "The Greatest Gift." Released September 5, 1942. 11 minutes. Film short (MGM Miniatures), black and white. Directed by Harold Daniels. Lead played by Edmund Gwenn.
- "Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame." 1965 (France). 27–30 minutes. Color, marionettes. Directed by Pierre Rémont, written by Maurice Genevoix, read (in French) by Jean Rochefort, music by François de Roubaix, produced by Stephano Lonati, Italo Bettiol, and Françoise Bettiol. US version produced by Thomas Craven. Soundtracks made in English, French, Italian, and Spanish.
- "The Juggler of Notre Dame." 1970. 1 hour 20 minutes. Color. Directed by Milton H. Lehr, written by Milton H. Lehr and Maurice Tobias, starring Jessica Benton, Barry Dennen, Christopher Ellis, Willoughby Goddard, Joe E. Ross, and Walter Slezak. Filmed in Slovenia.
- "The Juggler of Notre Dame." 1982. 50 minutes. Color. Made for television. Directed by Mike Rhodes (Michael Ray Rhodes), written by Lan O'Kun, starring Sherilyn Wolter, Henry Proach, and James T. Callahan, coproduced by Walt Disney and Paulist Brothers.
- "The Juggler of Our Lady." Released December, 1957. 9 minutes. Animated short (Terrytoons in Technicolor). Produced by Gene Deitch, directed by Al Kouzel, based on book by R. O. Blechman, original music by Philip A. Scheib, voiceover by Boris Karloff.
- "Our Lady's Juggler." Length varies. Aired in December, 1950, 1951, 1952, and 1953. Segment of television variety show: *Fred Waring's America* (CBS, 1949–1954). Kinescope copies, black and white, held by the Fred Waring's America Collection, The Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pennsylvania.
- "The Young Juggler." Aired March 29, 1960. 49 minutes. Color. Made for television: *Startime* (NBC, 1959–1961), Season 1, Episode 26. Directed by Ted Post, written by Joseph Stefano, produced by William Frye, coproduced by Curtleigh, starring Tony Curtis, Nehemiah Persoff, Patricia Medina, Bert Freed, and Elisha Cook Jr.

## Illustrated Children's Books Devoted to the Story

- Benevelli, Alberto. *Il Giocoliere di Maria*. Illus. Manuela Marchsan. Cinisello Balsamo [Milan]: San Paolo Edizioni, 2005. Italian.
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- , author and illustrator. *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold*. Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Co., 1917. 7–34.
- Metternich, Tatiana. *Der Gaukler der Jungfrau Maria*. Wiesbaden: Modul Verlag, 1999. German.
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## Music

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- Hutter, Hermann. *Der Tänzer uns'rer lieben Frau: Nach dem gleichnamigen Gedicht von Wilhelm Hertz. Op. 17*. Leipzig, Germany: Luckhardt's Musik-Verlag, 1899. Based on Wilhelm Hertz, ed. and trans. *Spielmannsbuch: Novellen in Versen aus dem zwölften und dreizehnten Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart, Germany: G. Kröner, 1886. 210–17.
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## Bible Quotations and Citations

Most quotations from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testaments that are quoted in the medieval portions of this book follow the Vulgate, the Latin produced by Jerome, as translated into English in the Douay-Rheims version. The edition used for both is *The Vulgate Bible*, ed. Swift Edgar and Angela M. Kinney, 6 vols. in 7 parts, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 1, 4, 5, 8, 13, 17, 21 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010–2013).

In citations the Psalms are numbered first according to the Gallican Latin version, which Jerome is traditionally held to have translated from the earliest extant Greek, the Septuagint. When numeration in parentheses follows, it refers to Jerome's final Latin psalter, based directly on the Hebrew.

Some books of the Bible bear titles that vary across religious traditions. Since most medieval western European texts and many of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century ones in this book hewed to the Latin Bible and translations made from it, those titles have been provided first in citations. The others sometimes given parenthetically are alternative names that may be more familiar to some readers.



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All introductions in this book are mine, excepting the collaborative effort in “The Persian Tale of ‘The Old Harper.’” The translations are likewise mine, except when otherwise acknowledged. Such appreciation is thankfully extended to Mohsen Ashtiany for the Persian material (previously unpublished), Réka Forrai for “The Hungarian Tale of ‘The Fool’” (also never before put into English), and Royall Tyler for “The French Tale of ‘Péquelé’” (reprinted by his kind permission), all in Part 1. Looking back decades, I will always be grateful to the late Mary Weigand for making me aware of W. H. Auden’s ballad and to Bencie Woll for the Hasidic tale. Considering more recent times, I appreciate the six first-year students who by enrolling in a freshman seminar with me in the fall of 2021 made themselves the test market for a draft of this book. Cordelia Burn, Erin Cavanagh, Zoë Dienes, Remi Edvalson, Sofia Giannuzzi, and PK Vincze: thank you.

The final chapter of Part 2 presents five poems. “Our Lady’s Tumbler” by Patrick Kavanagh is reprinted by kind permission of the Trustees of the Estate of the late Katherine B. Kavanagh, through the Jonathan Williams Literary Agency. “The Ballad of Barnaby,” copyright © 1969 by W. H. Auden; from *Collected Poems* by W. H. Auden, edited by Edward Mendelson (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 824–27. Used by permission of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved. Excerpt from *Tales of the Hasidim* by Martin Buber, copyright 1947, 1948, copyright © renewed 1975 by Penguin Random House LLC. Used by permission of Schocken Books, an imprint of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved. My gratitude goes to Virginia Nyhart for permission to reproduce her “Our Lady’s Tumbler.” For “The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital,” I have relied upon Virginia Hamilton Adair Papers, Collection no. 0051, Special Collections and Archives, University Library, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. In the case of Turner Cassity’s “Our Lady’s Juggler,” I am beholden to the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library of Emory University, for assistance in the protracted quest to identify and contact literary executors.



# Notes

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## Notes to Overview

*reception theory*: See Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, *Theory and History of Literature 2* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), and Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1984).

*the medium*: See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 7–21.

*The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity* (published by this same press), comprises six volumes, which are freely available to read and download, and to purchase, on the publisher's website: *Vol. 1: The Middle Ages*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0132>; *Vol. 2: Medieval Meets Medievalism*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0143>; *Vol. 3: The American Middle Ages*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0146>; *Vol. 4: Picture That: Making a Show of the Jongleur*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0147>; *Vol. 5: Tumbling into the Twentieth Century*, [10.11647/OBP.0148](https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0148); *Vol. 6: War and Peace, Sex and Violence*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0149>.

*The exhibition Juggling the Middle Ages* (Dumbarton Oaks, 2019): <https://www.doaks.org/visit/museum/exhibitions/past/juggling-the-middle-ages>

## Part I

### Introduction

*folklore and folktales*: See Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974).

*Mary of Egypt*: For texts in translation, see Benedicta Ward, *Harlots of the Desert: A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources*, Cistercian Studies Series 106 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987), 26–56, and Hugh Feiss and Ronald Pepin, trans. *Saint Mary of Egypt: Three Medieval Lives in Verse*, Cistercian Studies Series 209 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2005). For further scholarship, see Erich Poppe and Bianca

Ross, *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1996). For a theoretical context, see Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 128–59.

*Cistercians*: These monks will be discussed at length in Part 1, Chapter 1.

*tonsure*: For context on both beards and tonsures, see Giles Constable, “Introduction,” in Burchard of Bellevaux, *Apologia de barbis*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Apologiae duae*, Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis, vol. 62 (Turnhout, 1985), 47–130.

*gesunkenes and gehobenes Kulturgut*: The first term was coined by the German Hans Naumann.

*diffusionism*: See Maria Leach and Jerome Fried, ed. *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1972), 313 (“diffusion theory”). Diffusionism is sometimes also called migrationism.

*historic-geographic method*: See Kenneth A. Thigpen, “Historic-Geographic Method,” in Mary Ellen Brown and Bruce A. Rosenberg, ed. *Encyclopedia of Folklore and Literature* (Denver: ABC-CLIO, 1998), 307–10.

*polygenesis*: See Leach and Fried, ed. *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore*, 876 (“polygenesis”).

## 1. The Medieval Story

*five manuscripts*: They are Chantilly, Musée Condé (formerly Bibliothèque et archives du Château), MS 475 (previously 1578), fols. 190–96; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal MS 3516, fols. 127ra–128vb; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal MS 3518, fols. 89r–93r; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS français 1807, fols. 142–46; and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS nouvelles acquisitions françaises 4276, fols. 78v–.

*called Old French*: In the late nineteenth century, the term *Francien* was coined to denote the dialect spoken in the Île-de-France, long before what is now called French became standard. On the retrospective creation of this antecedent to a language that developed only later, see Bernard Cerquiglini, *Une langue orpheline* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2007).

*Gautier de Coinci*: The mistake is understandable, among other reasons because in MS nouvelles acquisitions françaises 4276 the poem is copied along with Marian poetry of Gautier’s (fols. 1r–92v).

*Del Tumber Nostre Dame*: The wording is a contrivance. One manuscript (Arsenal 3518) has the title “C’est du tumeur nostre dame,” another (nouvelles acquisitions françaises 4276) “D’un menestrer qui se rendi moynes a qui nostre dame fit grace,” and a third (Chantilly) “D’un menestrel qui servoit nostre dame de son propre mestier.”

*evolving*: For the views being displaced, see J. D. A. Ogilvy, “‘Mimi, scurrae, histriones’: Entertainers of the Early Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 38 (1963): 603–19; for those being instated, see John W. Baldwin, “The Image of the Jongleur in Northern France around 1200,” *Speculum* 72 (1997): 635–63. The classic overview remains Edmond Faral, *Les jongleurs en France au Moyen Âge*, Bibliothèque de l’École des hautes études, 4e section, Sciences historiques et philologiques 187 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1910). For a fine recent appraisal, see Kathryn Emily Dickason, “From Satanic Minister to Holy Model: The Sacralization of the Medieval *Jongleur*,” forthcoming in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (JAAR).

*Cistercians*: From the extensive bibliography on the order, three books must suffice: Louis J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* ([Kent, OH]: The Kent State University Press, 1977), for a standard synthesis; Emilia Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in Medieval Europe 1090–1500* (London: Routledge, 2013), on contact between the Cistercians and lay people; and Janet Burton and Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Boydell Press, 2011), on lay brothers (*conversi*).

*collecting and communicating*: See Emilia Jamroziak, “Miracles in Monastic Culture,” in Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, Jenni Kuuliala, and Iona McCleery, eds, *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections*, Reading Medieval Sources 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 36–53.

*fixity of place*: In Latin, *stabilitas loci*.

*the cult of the Virgin*: The literature on Mary in the Middle Ages is vast. Two titles not to be overlooked are Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976; 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), and Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

*Marian apparitions*: For a book on these phenomena that is beautiful in more than one sense, see Sylvie Barnay, *Le ciel sur la terre: Les apparitions de la Vierge au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Cerf, 1999). For an alphabetical listing, see René Laurentin and Patrick Sbalchiero, *Dizionario delle “apparizioni” della vergine Maria* (Rome: ART, 2010).

*saintly simplicity*: See Agata Sobczyk, *Les jongleurs de Dieu: Sainte simplicité dans la littérature religieuse de la France médiévale* (Łask, Poland: Oficyna Wydawnicza Leksem, 2012).

*five roses*: Gautier de Coinci, *Miracles* Book 1, no. 23 (“D’un moigne en cui bouche on trouva cinc roses nouveles”), ed. V. Frederic Koenig, 4 vols., *Textes littéraires français* 64, 95, 131, 176 (Geneva: Droz, 1955–1970), 2:224–26.

*Lives of the Ancient Fathers*: The French *vies des anciens pères* calls to mind the *Vitas* (or *Vitae*) *patrum* or Lives of the Fathers: see Part 1, Chapter 3, below. Originally this work from Late Antiquity comprised a few lives of the Desert Fathers. Later the Latin snowballed by gaining other materials about hermits and ascetics of first the eastern and later the western Mediterranean. In the thirteenth century seventy-four stories were incorporated into three Old French cycles entitled the *Vie des Pères* or Life of the Ancient Fathers. These 30,000 verses comprise narratives about the Desert Fathers, monks, and the Virgin Mary, but nothing like “Our Lady’s Tumbler.” Though our narrative could be indebted to a now-lost form of the poem, the reference could merely signal a loose resemblance to a prestigious text. “Our Lady’s Tumbler” far more closely resembles miracle stories, which circulated both orally and in writing, about the early days of the Cistercian monastic order.

*exemplum*: The Old French diminutive *exempliel* derives from the Latin *exemplum*, which can mean not only “example” in a general sense but also “exemplum” as a rhetorical form. This genre may be defined as short narratives, presented as having happened in reality, that are used in sermons to entertain while at the same time edifying audiences with a kind of moral. Today preachers often call such exempla illustrations.

*minstrel*: Here and again in 205, 417, 427, 676, and 681 the main character is called a *menestrel*. The word is used particularly to signify his relationship to the Virgin Mary and her angels. Only outside the poem proper, in the explicit, is he designated by the more specific term *tumeor/tumbeor* or tumbler. The noun *jongleur* appears nowhere in the poem.

*holy order*: This phrase signifies a consecrated life in the Catholic Church. Members of these organizations take solemn vows and cohabit, under a religious superior, in accordance with a rule. Monastic orders live and work in a monastery and recite the divine office.

*everything he had, he gave*: Upon entering the monastery, a prospective monk was supposed to give away his possessions or to surrender them to the community: see *The Rule of Saint Benedict* 58.24, ed. and trans. Bruce L. Venarde, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 188–91.

*Clairvaux*: The toponym, *Clara Vallis* in Latin, signifies an abbey in Burgundy, in what is today France. It was founded originally in 1115 by Bernard of Clairvaux. Like him, the monastery was Cistercian.

*tumbling*: Though the “minstrel” is called a tumbler only once and, at that, in the explicit, the verb “to tumble” is often used to describe his activity in performance (25, 136, 171, 198, and so forth).

*wording of any other prayer*: The English phrase translates *leçon*, French for “lection” or “lesson” (both cognates), meaning “reading.”

*Our Father*: The French has *pater noster*, the first two words of the prayer in Latin. It is commonly known as the Lord’s Prayer because it was taught by Jesus to the disciples. The wording amalgamates elements of what is recorded in Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4.

*canticle*: In the original, *chançon* presumably alludes to the canticle of Mary, also known as the *Magnificat* after its first word in Latin. This Gospel canticle (Luke 1:46–55) is sung or recited not long before the Our Father at vespers (evening prayer).

*creed*: The *credo* mentioned here is the Apostles’ Creed, often called in Latin the *Symbolum apostolicum*. Its text reads “I believe (Latin *credo*) in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.”

*Hail Mary*: The angelic salutation in Luke 1:28, delivered by the Archangel Gabriel, announced to Mary that she would conceive and become the mother of Jesus. In Latin, this announcement, known formally as the Annunciation, begins *Ave gratia plena* (Hail, full of grace). The utterance was fused with the greeting given to the Mother of God in Luke 1:42 by her cousin Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist. From the fusion, with the insertion of the name *Maria* as the second word, derives the prayer to the Virgin known in Latin as the *Ave Maria* and in English as the Hail Mary. In Catholicism, the text is the most famous praise of the Virgin and petition for her intercession.

*high tonsure*: “Tonsure” refers to a circle or crown shorn from the hair on the scalp at the top of head. Along with the shaving of the beard, this haircut became mandatory as a token of religious status and authority for monks, canons, and clerks. The adjective “high” could qualify the placement of the trim, high on the head, but more often it implied by metonymy that the individual bearing it was a high clergyman, had a high reputation, or cultivated it as an expression of great penitence. The men so tonsured here are the choir brothers of Clairvaux. Cistercian lay brothers were not permitted to have this kind of cut. In addition to full heads of hair, they wore full beards and moustaches.

*signs*: To cope with the injunction of silence, monks developed systems of manual signs that enabled them to conduct many types of basic business without speaking. For records of the system employed among the White Monks, see Scott G. Bruce, "The Origins of Cistercian Sign Language," *Cîteaux commentarii cistercienses* 52.3–4 (2001): 193–209, and Mario Penna, "I 'Signa Loquendi' Cistercensi," in Jean Umiker-Sebeok and Thomas A. Sebeok, eds, *Monastic Sign Languages, Approaches to Semiotics* 76 (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), 495–532.

*not utter a word*: *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, most obviously in Chapter 6 "Silence," ed. and trans. Venarde, 42–43, prohibited speaking in many places and times within the monastery. The Cistercians adhered even more rigorously to silence. Lay brothers in their order were held to the same stricture, with modifications to reflect the realities of their different working conditions.

*laughter*: The theme of the monks' laughter at the expense of the tumbler, here caused by his unfamiliarity with the schedule and etiquette of silence, returns in 349 and 363, when his balletic routines prompt similar ridicule.

*lay brothers*: The substantive *convers*, roughly equivalent to the English "convert," appears in this line (where the two classes of people within Clairvaux are monks and *convers*), 65 (where *convers* occupy the bottom in a hierarchy that works down from priests), and 391 (where the tumbler is called a *convers* and his dance routine is identified as the office he performs). The French past participle corresponds to a Latin verb meaning "to enter into religion." Originally employed adjectivally, *convers* could denote two types of monk. One took vows as an adult rather than being offered as a child, while the other joined the community to perform manual labor while being expected to fulfill a reduced and simplified liturgy. On the complexities of differentiating between convert monks and lay monks, see Constance H. Berman, "Distinguishing between the Humble Peasant Lay Brother and Sister, and the Converted Knight in Medieval Southern France," in *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000–1400: Interaction, Negotiation, and Power*, ed. Emilia Jamrozik and Janet Burton, *Europa Sacra*, vol. 2 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 263–83. On the reputations of *convers*, see Jean Batany, "Les convers chez quelques moralistes des XIIe et XIIIe siècles," *Cîteaux: Commentarii cistercienses* 20 (1969): 241–59.

*priests at the altars*: The poet lists first all three major orders, as the ranks of the ministry are called. The priest plays the central role in the Mass, which begins when he reverences the altar with a kiss.

*deacons at the Gospels*: In the rite, the deacon assists the priest by proclaiming the Gospel reading.

*subdeacons at vigils*: The night office is one of the canonical hours of Christian liturgy. It is sometimes styled matins, sometimes vigils. The subdeacon rates the lowest in the minor orders. In addition to assisting in the Mass, he helps in the night office.

*acolytes stand ready for the epistles*: Often the subdeacon is tasked with reading the Epistle, but here the acolyte is described as taking that charge. The latter stands highest in the minor orders, which also comprise the exorcist, lector, and porter.

*versicle*: This term, in the French simply *vers*, denotes a short sentence chanted by the officiant, to which the congregation responds.

*lesson*: This designates a reading, often from the Bible but sometimes from Acts of Martyrs or writings of Church Fathers.

*young clerics*: The French *clerçon* is the diminutive of cleric. Like its English derivative *clergeon*, it denotes a person too junior to have yet entered minor orders.

*psalters*: The medieval psalter was a manuscript with the biblical psalms, generally with a format that facilitates liturgical use.

*Miserere*: This is the first word and conventional title of Psalms 50 (51) as translated into Latin from the Hebrew. The full incipit, *Miserere mei, Deus*, means “Have mercy on me, God.” Though the whole psalter belonged to the bedrock of monastic life, the seven Penitential Psalms, 6, 31 (32) 37 (38), 50 (51), 101 (102), 129 (130), and 142 (143), of which this was one, carried an extra cachet. The *Usus conversorum*, a set of directives concerned with the conduct of lay brothers, stipulated that these members of the community should know, beyond the Our Father (Latin *Pater noster*) and Apostles’ Creed (incipit *Credo in Deum*) already mentioned in lines 30–31, the *Miserere*: see *Usus conversorum*, Chapter 9, in Jean A. Lefèvre, “L’évolution des *Usus conversorum de Cîteaux*,” *Collectanea ordinis Cisterciensium reformatorum* 17.2 (1955): 66–96, at 92.

*one groan, another weep, yet another moan and sigh*: The physical manifestations of sorrow here express penance as a form of worship.

*Blessed Mary*: The tumbler likewise begins utterances with the exclamation *sainte Marie* in 81 and 103.

*I go about aimlessly*: Literally, “I go forward here and backward there.”

*out in the fields*: Cistercian abbeys tended to have associated farms, now customarily called granges. The protagonist fears that he will be ejected from the monastery proper and expected to work, as a peasant would do, in one of these agricultural facilities.

*crypt*: The French word *crote* derives from the Latin *crypta*, which can denote both loosely a grotto and more strictly a crypt. The main church of Clairvaux contained no such space, but a nearby chapel for the counts of Flanders did.

*altar*: Insufficient specifics are provided to permit forming any precise picture of the architecture. The crypt is vaulted, with a Madonna, an altar, and a space where

onlookers may watch without being seen. The sounds from the choir somewhere above are audible.

*the likeness*: This translates the French *la forme*. The word used in 146, 173, 242, and 257 is *image*. Context makes apparent that the object meant is a statue in the round.

*Mass sound*: What signal would have been sounded to indicate the Mass? Modern practices would encourage speculation that a bell was struck.

*ox on a tether*: This is the first of a few striking comparisons between the tumbler and animals. See lines 158–59.

*so that his flesh would not be naked*: The tumbler's dishabille, reminiscent of King David's lack of attire when he dances beside the ark (see Part 1, Chapter 2, below), compounds the shock of his dancing. This kind of outfit and conduct were strongly censured by the Church. See Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, FF Communications vols. 133–35, nos. 284–86, 3 vols. (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004), 1:436–37 (779E\* "The Dancers of Kolbeck"), and Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-Tales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, 2nd ed., 6 vols. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955–1958), 5:204 (Q222.5.3 "Bold woman who danced naked in church is stricken with leprosy").

*tunic*: The lay brothers were issued different vestments from the choir monks. Underneath their principal item of outer clothing, they wore a sort of tunic called a *cotele* that they cinched at the waist.

*undershirt*: To describe what the French calls the *cotele*, the poet employs the word *chemise*, a shirt-like garment worn next to the skin.

*queen*: The conception of Mary as sovereign of heaven (in Latin, *regina caeli*) took as its basis biblical passages such as Revelation 12:1–3.

*the Metz move*: None of the maneuvers mentioned in this passage are attested in other medieval texts. For this one (*le tor de Mes*) information is provided to indicate what sort of action it entailed but for all others but the last, no such guidance is forthcoming. The tumbler encores the Metz move in 223.

*in a circle on his head*: Though left uncertain exactly what sort of movement is meant, we can almost visualize a sort of breakdancing.

*his hand in front of his forehead*: Once again, the brevity about the stance being described defies certainty.

*Lady, do not spurn your servant*: The nouns carry strong overtones of medieval social structures that bound serfs to overlords (or overladies).

*beats his breast*: This gesture, now more familiar as a metaphor than a reality, was an ancient expression of intense emotion among Jews. It was later adopted by Christians, especially to convey sorrow and repentance (Luke 18:13, 23:48). In the Christian liturgy it is performed in the prayer called the *Confiteor* (I confess), which is said during the penitential act with which the Mass begins, and before receiving communion.

*he does not know another way to pray*: The passage leaves ambiguous whether the tumbler sheds tears because he has no other means of prayer than weeping, or because he can pray only by dancing.

*turns backward and makes a leap*: This line could indicate that the tumbler performs a backflip. Alternatively, he could bend in a backward bridge, from which he springs up afterward.

*canonical hour*: The set times of prayer, building upon Psalms 118 (119):62 and 164, comprise one of praise during the night, called matins (about 2 a.m.), and seven more during the day, lauds (at dawn), prime (about 6 a.m.), terce (about 9 a.m.), sext (about noon), nones (about 3 p.m.), vespers (about 6 p.m.), and compline (about 7 p.m.).

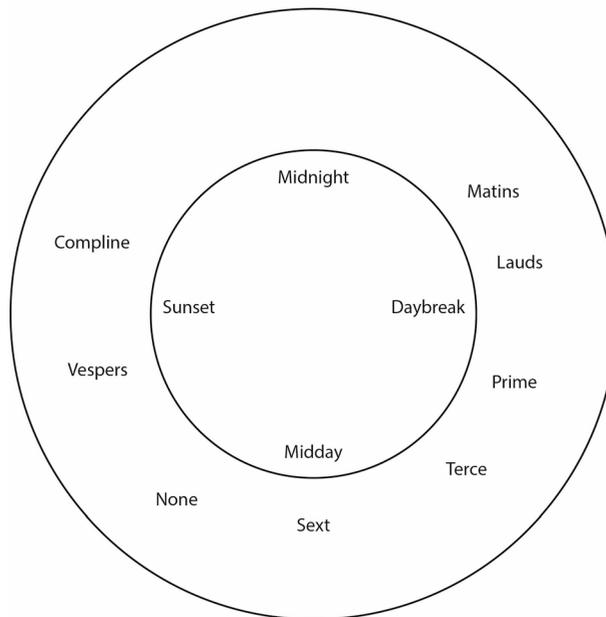


Fig. 52: St. Benedict's monastic rotation. Vector art by Melissa Tandysh, 2014. Image courtesy of Melissa Tandysh. All rights reserved.

*know all the psalms*: Knowing all the psalms in Latin by heart was generally the first stage in medieval education, literacy, and religion: the psalter was the standard primer from which children learned to read.

*wins his bread*: The same concern returns in 538.

*heavenly king*: In the Bible God is accorded the status of being the king of heaven: see Daniel 4:37, 1 Esdras 4:46 and 58, and Tobit 13:7 and 11.

*lay brother*: In this instance alone, the tumbler is specified to be a *convers*.

*sees come down from the vault*: Here it is made clear that the scene involves an apparition rather than a statue coming to life.

*gold and precious stones*: In art the Virgin is often depicted wearing sumptuous clothing appropriate to royalty.

*costly gem*: The poet leaves the reader guessing as to the gem he has in mind. One fact worth recalling is that in the Middle Ages the pearl was regarded as a jewel—as a stone that originated within an animal. Mary, as the star of the sea (Latin *stella maris*), was associated closely with this maritime gemstone, notably in the bestiary.

*white cloth*: The motif has parallels. In *Dou riche et de la veve fame* or “Of the rich woman and the widow” (verses 252–57, ed. 2:167), Gautier de Coinci describes how the Virgin comes to the bedside of an old woman in her death throes. Mary wipes her face with a *toaille* or cloth (cognate with the English “towel”) that is whiter than a lily. At this point a kindly deacon who has arrived to minister to the dying woman notices the mother of Jesus, who asks him to administer the last sacraments. In the *Magnum speculum exemplorum* or Great mirror of exempla (Douai, 1611) by Jean Major, Mary appears at a deathbed to dry the sufferer with a towel-like cloth (*Dives* 1, pp. 285–86) or to fan him with it (*Bona injuste acquisita* 8, pp. 84–85). Jean Major’s book expands the anonymous *Speculum exemplorum* or Mirror of exempla, first printed in 1481.

*her*: Here the personal pronoun *le* is the feminine accusative singular.

*he said*: Lines 539–42 are interior monologue.

*kisses his feet*: The hands are the lay brother’s, while the feet are the abbot’s. The act described here is known technically by the Greek term *proskynesis*, corresponding to the Latin *adoratio*, which denotes prostration that often involved kissing the ground or a body part of a person being honored or propitiated.

*kissed both his eyes*: The kisses, surely planted on the eyelids rather than directly on the eyeballs, seem to signify that the abbot cares for the lay brother and holds him in esteem. The gesture is not a common one.

*Ponthieu*: This was a feudal county in northern France, with a coast on the English Channel. Eventually it became part of Picardy. The poet's naming of it has encouraged speculation that he may have come from this French region. But an equally strong or perhaps an even stronger case could be made for Metz, mentioned twice as the place of origin for one of the tumbler's favorite dance moves. This other municipality is located a little more than two hundred miles, as the crow flies, from Abbeville, the principal town of Ponthieu.

*canons*: The term refers to clergy who lived communally in orders that were governed by a rule. The suggestion that Clairvaux had both monks and canons is puzzling.

*a most marvelous miracle*: The original reads *Un miracle tres merueilleus*.

*enraged*: Anger is closely associated with the devil: see Ephesians 4:26–27.

*adversaries*: The French is *li anemi*, cognate with the English "enemy." In Hebrew Satan in fact means "adversary," and the Latin *adversarius* is used in 1 Peter 5:8. The devil is often called the Enemy, with the word *hostis* being so employed in Latin.

*The holy fathers*: This phrase recalls the opening line of the poem, with its mention of the *Lives of the Ancient Fathers*.

*the same tale*: This exemplum has been included in the standard catalogue of such narratives: see Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, FF Communications 204 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/Academia scientiarum Fennica, 1981), 219, no. 2780: "Jester, dancing during chants. A jester who became a monk, danced while the others chanted psalms. He said that he was praising God in the only way he knew how."

*exempla*: For an introduction to the genre, see Claude Bremond, Jacques Le Goff, and Jean Claude Schmitt, *L'Exemplum*, "Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental 40, 2nd ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996). In English, a dated but still helpful resource is G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 149–209.

*simple forms*: For a concise presentation of Jolles's book, see "Einfache Formen," in Brown and Rosenberg, eds, *Encyclopedia of Folklore and Literature*, 178–82, at 180 (on no. 6). The book has been translated, unfortunately with *Exempel* rendered as "example": see André Jolles, *Simple Forms*, trans. Peter J. Schwartz (London: Verso, 2017), 144–46.

*The Table of Exempla, in Alphabetical Order*: *Tabula exemplorum secundum ordinem alphabeti*, no. 87, in Jean-Thiébaud Welter, ed., *La Tabula exemplorum secundum ordinem alphabeti: Recueil d'exempla compilé en France à la fin du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Occitania, 1926), 27–28. The same text is sometimes entitled *Liber exemplorum secundum ordinem alphabeti* (Book of exempla in alphabetical order).

*American folklorist wondered*: Thomas Frederick Crane, "Mediaeval Story-Books," *Modern Philology* 9 (1911): 225–37, at 231.

*C. G. Jung*: The concept recurs throughout Jung's writings, but for a start see *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 17–23.

*Robert Graves*: See especially his *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1948).

*Joseph Campbell*: See for example his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Bollingen Series 17 (New York: Pantheon Press, 1949) and *The Mythic Image*, Bollingen Series 100 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

*Northrop Frye*: See his *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

*he did not know his letters*: In medieval western Europe, the psalms were generally read and recited in Latin. The juggler, by not knowing his letters, was both illiterate and ignorant of the learned language.

## 2. The Bible and Apocrypha

*comforting King Saul*: See especially 1 Kings (= 1 Samuel) 16:23.

*twenty years*: 1 Kings (= 1 Samuel) 7: 1–2.

*driver of the ox-cart*: His name is Uzza. See 2 Kings (= 2 Samuel) 6: 6–7.

*for three months*: 2 Kings (= 2 Samuel) 6: 11; 1 Paralipomenon (= 1 Chronicles) 13: 14.

*the transfer is finally completed*: 2 Kings (= 2 Samuel) 6: 12–15.

*the contempt of his wife*: Her name is Michal. See 2 Kings (= 2 Samuel) 6: 12–16 and 1 Paralipomenon (= 1 Chronicles) 15: 29.

*depicted in art*: On the early Middle Ages, see Herbert Schade, "Zum Bild des tanzenden David im frühen Mittelalter," *Stimmen der Zeit* 172, no. 7 (1963): 1–16.

*2 Kings (= 2 Samuel) 6.13–23*: For the Latin and English, see *The Vulgate Bible*, vol. 2, part A "The Historical Books: Douay-Rheims Translation," ed. Swift Edgar, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 514–17.

*for three months*: See *The Vulgate Bible*, vol. 2, part B "The Historical Books: Douay-Rheims Translation," ed. Swift Edgar, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library* 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1208–09.

*Protevangelium of James 7*: This translation was made with reference to Wilhelm Schneemilcher, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 1:429, with notes 437–38), and J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 60.

*take her up to the temple of the Lord*: 1 Kings (= 1 Samuel) 1:21.

*wait until the third year*: 1 Kings (= 1 Samuel) 1:22.

*at the end of the days*: 1 Peter 1:20.

*the whole house of Israel loved her*: 1 Kings (= 1 Samuel) 18:16.

*Gospel of Mark, 12*: See *The Vulgate Bible*, vol. 6 “The New Testament: Douay-Rheims Translation,” ed. Angela M. Kinney, *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 21* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 258–59.

*Gospel of Luke, 21*: See *The Vulgate Bible*, vol. 6, 438–39.

### 3. The Life of the Fathers

*Vitae Patrum*: To add a further complication, the Latin is often called the *Vitas Patrum*.

*desert fathers*: Popular awareness of these figures was propelled by (citing in all cases first editions) two books of oft-reprinted translations, first Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1936) and then Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert* (New York: New Directions, 1960). This cottage (or desert) industry continued thanks to the work of another woman: see Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1975), and *The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1975). See also Norman Russell, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, introduction by Benedicta Ward (London: Mowbray, 1981), and Columba Stewart, *The World of the Desert Fathers: Stories and Sayings from the Anonymous Series of the Apophthegmata Patrum*, foreword by Benedicta Ward (Oxford: SLG, 1986).

*The Rule of Saint Benedict*: Chapter 42.3, ed. and trans. Venarde, 144–45.

*an anonymous Anglo-Norman poet*: See Keith V. Sinclair, “The Translations of the *Vitas patrum*, *Thaïs*, *Antichrist*, and *Vision de saint Paul* Made for Anglo-Norman Templars: Some Neglected Literary Considerations,” *Speculum* 72 (1997): 741–62.

*Wauchier de Denain*: See Marie-Geneviève Grossel, “Quand dans les cours on rêvait d’ascèse et de vie solitaire: La traduction romane des *Vies des Pères* de Wauchier de Denain,” in Jean-Charles Herbin, ed. *Richesses médiévales du Nord et du Hainaut: Actes du*

colloque tenu à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Valenciennes et du Hainaut Cambrésis les 1er et 2 décembre 2000, *Recherches valenciennes* 8 (Valenciennes: Camelia/Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2002), 49–64.

*short labels*: For these titles, see Édouard Schwan, “La Vie des anciens Pères,” *Romania* 13 (1884): 233–63, at 240n5.

*Miserere*: *La Vie des peres*, no. 7, lines 2743–3116, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Société des anciens textes français/A. et J. Picard et Cie, 1987–1999), 1:91–103; trans. Paul Bretel, *La Vie des Pères: Premier recueil, Moyen Âge en Traduction* 8 (Paris: Classiques Garniers, 2020), 99–104. For a glossed edition of this episode, see Claudio Galderisi, *Diegesis. Études sur la poétique des motifs narratifs au Moyen Âge, de la ‘Vie des Pères’ aux lettres modernes* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005), 181–94. For summary and discussion, see Adrian P. Tudor, *Tales of Vice and Virtue: The First Old French Vie des Pères*, *Faux Titre* 253 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 124–25 and 128–39.

*Adgar*: *Le Gracial*, no. 9, ed. Pierre Kunstmann, *Publications médiévales de l'Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa Mediaeval Texts and Studies*, 8 (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1982), 87–89. Adgar's poem has now been translated in its entirety into French: see *Le Gracial. Miracles de la Vierge*, trans. Jean-Louis Benoit, *Textes Vernaculaires du Moyen Âge* (TVMA) 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021).

*Gautier de Coinci*: *Miracles*, Book 1, no. 14 (“De un provoire qui toz jors chantoit *Salve*, la messe de Nostre Dame,” ed. Koenig, 2:105–08).

*Goliard*: *La Vie des peres*, no. 26, lines 11884–12231, ed. Lecoy, 2:60–72; trans. Bretel, 255–60. For summary and discussion, see Tudor, *Tales of Vice and Virtue*, 226–27 and 229–36.

*Fou*: *La Vie des peres*, no. 10, lines 4311–5361, ed. Lecoy, 1:141–75; trans. Bretel, 125–41. For summary and discussion, see Tudor, *Tales of Vice and Virtue*, 413–14 and 447–65. The most thorough examination is Jacques Chaurand, *Fou, dixième conte de la Vie des pères: Contes pieux du XIIIe siècle*, *Publications romanes et françaises* 117 (Geneva: Droz, 1971).

*Miserere tui, Deus*: The plea *Miserere mei, Deus* “Have mercy on me, O God” opens Psalms 50 (51). The first word by itself sufficed to evoke the piece, probably the most important of the entire psalter in the Middle Ages. In the Vulgate Bible its superscription ties it to King David's repentance for his sins with Bathsheba (Bethsabee) in 2 Kings (2 Samuel) 11–12. The humble ascetic in this tale errs by praying *Miserere tui, Deus* “Have mercy on your [servant], O God.” His error is understandable since the construction is not easily grasped by anyone who has not mastered the fine points of Latin grammar.

*wheel*: The device meant here, often called the breaking wheel or Catherine's wheel, was employed for torture and execution.

*than any tongue could say*: The key source for the "many mouths" commonplace that lies behind this passage is Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.625–7. Whereas in the Latin epic the Sibyl refrains from cataloguing the crimes and punishments in the infernal regions, here the poet refers to the gentleness of God. The larger context is the so-called inexpressibility *topos* in the medieval rhetorical tradition: see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series 36 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 159–62.

*loves my dog*: In the Middle Ages rhetoricians routinely recommended the use of proverbs in opening and closing sermons and other compositions. This specific turn of phrase is not listed in the *Thesaurus Proverbiorum Medii Aevi* or in *Middle French Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases*, but in later French it is ascribed to King Henri IV (1553–1610). The sense would appear to correspond to the English that to truly love means loving warts and all.

*large, broad crowns*: The phrase refers to tonsures. See note to Part 1, Chapter 1, line 34.

*Solomon*: In the Middle Ages the king epitomized wisdom. He was credited with the authorship of several whole books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and the Book of Wisdom) and parts of others (eighteen Psalms) in the canonical Bible, to say nothing of non-canonical books, proverb collections, and thousands of individual proverbs.

*mud*: Compare Genesis 2:7.

*chamber full of filth*: Compare Matthew 23:27.

*eaten by worms*: The image of being consumed by vermin after death was widespread in medieval literature and art.

*Goliard*: In Medieval Latin and related languages, the word *goliard* has served to designate so-called wandering scholars of the twelfth and thirteenth century. Though no organized class of such individuals ever existed, the idea took hold in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that an *ordo vagorum* or "order of wanderers," comprising students and clerics without stable sources of income, existed in the Middle Ages in western Europe.

The etymology of the noun has occasioned much speculation. Conjectures have been made to derive it variously from the Latin *gula* "gluttony," the giant Goliath in the Bible, and a legendary poet called Golias. The name of the main character in this story suggests that the author of *The Life of the Fathers* had the first association particularly in mind.

The adjective *goliardic* has been applied generally to rhythmic and rhymed Latin poetry of the period, but specifically to stanzas of four thirteen-syllable lines with monorhyme. In content such stanzaic verse is marked by satire against the Church and allusions to heavy drinking, games of chance, and promiscuous sex. The tone is often correspondingly profane and ribald. A book of translations, first published by John Addington Symonds in 1884, connected the goliards forevermore with the themes singled out in its title, *Wine, Women and Song*.

*Lechefrite*: This name, really an epithet, is a compound. The first element is from the verb “to lick” but also related to the “lechery,” while the second is the feminine past participle “fried.” “Fry-Licker” would be the English approximate.

*dice games*: For an exhaustive study of dicing in medieval culture, see Walter Tauber, *Das Würfelspiel im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit: Eine kultur- und sprachgeschichtliche Darstellung*, Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe I, Deutsche Sprache und Literatur Band 959 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987). In English, see Andrew Brown, “Passing the Time: The Role of the Dice in Late Medieval Pardon Letters,” *Speculum* 96.3 (2021): 699–725

*king of majesty*: The Latin *rex maiestatis*, from which the French derives, is attested, sometimes with an adjective to modify *maiestatis*, in more than a half dozen hymns: see *Analecta hymnica medii aevi* 28:47 (16.2.1), 30:68 (27.1), 35:202 (30.6), 41:263 (8.1), 45:2018 (5.1), 54:269 (8.1) [the famous *Dies irae*], and 64:86 (1120.3).

*Judas*: The Gospel of Matthew 26:15 describes how the disciple Judas Iscariot, one of the original twelve disciples, agreed to betray Jesus to the authorities for thirty silver coins by telling them where they could arrest him and by identifying him with a kiss when the moment arrived.

*met a bad end*: Judas’s suicide by hanging is related in Matthew 27:1–10, while his bursting asunder and spilling his bowels is reported in Book of Acts 1:18.

*marks*: These coins were a currency in many regions of western Europe. The mark was often equivalent to eight ounces of silver.

*the Mass sound*: Bells were rung, as they are still, to signify the time for worshippers, in this case the monks, to gather for the celebration of the eucharist.

*nourishes the birds*: The poet here paraphrases Matthew 6:26.

*“Penitent”*: This derivation differs from Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies*, 6.19.71, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 150–51, who relates penitence to punishment. The This etymology aligns closely with that of Hugutio of Pisa, who widens the aperture to correlate *pena* (= Classical Latin *poena*) or “pain” with punishment: see Ugucione

da Pisa, *Derivationes* P 61 [8–11], ed. Enzo Cecchini et al., Edizione nazionale dei testi mediolatini 2: Series 1, no. 6, 2 vols. (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004), 2:928.

*into his own right hand*: The translation accepts the rearrangement of 12074–77 and omission of 12078–79 (“forward and took it from him, at which the monk was much grieved”) that the editor Félix Lecoy suggested.

*accused you*: For Satan in the guise of accuser or prosecuting attorney, see Job 1:8–11, Zechariah 3:1–2, Apocalypse (Revelation) 12:10.

*like the wind*: The image is common. In the Bible, compare Psalms 77 (78): 39: “they are flesh, a wind that goeth and returneth not.” For the particular of honor likened to the wind, see *TPMA* 2:361, *Ehre* 59–60.

#### 4. The Pious Sweat of Monks

*collected exempla*: On the zeal of the white monks for exempla, see Stefano Mula, “Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Cistercian Exempla Collections: Role, Diffusion, and Evolution,” *History Compass* 8.8 (2010): 903–12. On the closely related issue of their miracle collections, see Lorenzo Braca, *I “Libri miraculorum” cistercensi: visioni dell’aldilà e crisi istituzionale tra XII e XIII secolo*, *Medievalia* 2 (Saonara [PD]: Il prato, 2016), 85–128, and Jussi Hanska, “*Miracula* and *Exempla*—A Complicated Relationship,” in Katajala-Peltomaa, Kuuliala, and McCleery, eds, *A Companion to Medieval Miracle Collections*, 125–43.

*repeated apparitions*: Eight, possibly an undercount, are listed by Patrick Sbalchiero, “Clairvaux I–VIII,” in René Laurentin and Patrick Sbalchiero, *Dizionario delle “apparizioni” della vergine Maria*, trans. Silvia Franceschetti (Rome: ART, 2010), 170–72.

*The exemplum*: For analysis, see Stefano Mula, “Les *exempla* cisterciens du Moyen Âge, entre philologie et histoire,” in Ludmilla Evdokimova et Victoria Smirnova, ed. *L’oeuvre littéraire du Moyen Âge: aux yeux de l’historien et du philologue*, *Rencontres* 77, *Série Civilisation médiévale* 9 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014), 377–92, at 381–88.

*accompanied by Elizabeth and Mary Magdalene*: The grouping of the Virgin Mary, Elizabeth, and Mary Magdalene looks a little like a fusion of the Three Marys (women reputed to have been at Jesus’s crucifixion and tomb) with the encounter of Mary, Mother of God, and Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist—and conventionally Mary’s cousin. The first scene, also referred to as the Marys at the Sepulcher, is presented inconsistently in the four Gospels regarding the number and identity of the women (Matthew 18:1–10, Mark 16:1–13, Luke 24:1–12, 33–35, and John 20:1–18). One unchanging element in the Gospels is the presence of Mary Magdalene. Apart from the Virgin Mary, the women who are identified in the exempla vary considerably. Mary Magdalene is mentioned

in most, while others such as Elizabeth, Ann, Agnes, and Mary of Egypt play a less frequent role. For a table, see Mula, “Les *exempla* cisterciens,” 384.

*Collectaneum Clarevallense*: Before this recent edition the collection was known by the title *Liber visionum et miraculorum*. The miracle that follows is contained in the fourth and final part of the miscellany: see *Collectaneum Clarevallense* 4.16 [90], ed. Olivier Legendre, *Collectaneum exemplorum et visionum Clarevallense e codice Trecensi* 946, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 208 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 289 (text), 409–10 (sources).

*Prior John of Clairvaux*: The codex was identified as John’s work by Brian Patrick McGuire, “A Lost Clairvaux Exemplum Found: The *Liber visionum et miraculorum* Compiled under Prior John of Clairvaux (1171–1179),” *Analecta Cisterciensia* 39.1 (1983): 27–62, with analysis of our exemplum at 39–41. The preceding has been reprinted as the centerpiece in a volume with other invaluable studies by the same author as Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Faith: Cistercian Men, Women, and their Stories, 1100–1250*, *Variorum Collected Studies Series CS742* (Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2002). For a close examination of various exempla in the compilation, see Brian Patrick McGuire, “Les mentalités des cisterciens dans les recueils d’exempla du XIIIe siècle: une nouvelle lecture du *Liber visionum et miraculorum* de Clairvaux,” in Jacques Berlioz and Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, ed. *Les exempla médiévaux: nouvelles perspectives* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 107–45.

*the miracle genre*: On the development of distinctively Cistercian collections in this genre, see Lorenzo Braca, *Libri miraculorum cistercensi: visioni dell’aldilà e crisi istituzionale tra XII e XIII secolo*, *Medievalia* 2 (Saonara [PD: Il prato, 2016]), pp. 85–128.

*the tradition of blessed Benedict*: *The Rule of Saint Benedict* 48.7, ed. and trans. Venarde, 160–61.

*her name as title of honor*: All Cistercian foundations were dedicated in memory of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven and Earth, under the title of the Assumption, and the white monks were seen as being closely identified with reverence for her cult.

*Herbert of Clairvaux*: Known sometimes as Herbert of Torres or in Latin as Herbertus Turritanus.

*Book of Visions and Miracles at Clairvaux*: *Liber visionum et miraculorum Clarevallensium*, ed. Giancarlo Zichi, Graziano Fois, and Stefano Mula, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 277, *Exempla Medii Aevi* 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 3–7.

*at the very opening of his text*: *Liber visionum et miraculorum Clarevallensium*, 1.1, ed. Zichi, Fois, and Mula, 3–7. The same exemplum can be found, with no substantial departures, in an abridged form: see Gabriela Kompatscher Gufler, ed. *Herbert von Clairvaux und sein*

*Liber miraculorum: die Kurzversion eines anonymen bayerischen Redaktors; Untersuchung, Edition und Kommentar, Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters 39* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 149–50. It has been classified as Albert Poncelet, “Miraculorum B. V. Mariae quae saec. VI–XV latine conscripta sunt Index postea perficiendus,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 21 (1902): 241–360, at 282, no. 576.

*Reinaldus*: The name is also attested as Renaldus or Rainaldus. For information on this monk, see Seraphin Lenssen, *Hagiologium Cisterciense*, 2 vols. (Tilburg, Holland: B.M. de Villa Regia, 1948–49), 1:283–84.

*profession*: The term here indicates the ceremony and vows that confirmed his entrance into the order as a Cistercian monk.

*glorify and bear God in his body*: 1 Corinthians 6:20.

*the foulnesses of the flesh on an undefiled path*: The Latin echoes the fourth response to the vigils for Saint Agnes, celebrated on January 21.

*Saint Amand*: This was a Benedictine abbey in northern France.

*warfare*: The metaphor of spiritual combat owes especially to 2 Corinthians 10:4.

*in toils, keeping vigils, fasts*: The Latin draws on 2 Corinthians 6:5.

*tears in prayer*: The salience of weeping in medieval prayer has been examined repeatedly. For example, see Jessie Gutsell, “The Gift of Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination of Western Medieval Christianity,” *Anglican Theological Review* 97, no. 2 (2015): 239–53.

*taint*: The text reads *scenum*, probably corresponding to the noun that would be written as *caenum* in conventional orthography of Classical Latin. In contrast, Conrad uses the word *vitium*.

*fear and trembling*: Philemon 2:12.

*Geoffrey of Auxerre*: This version is extant in a collection of exempla, as yet unedited, in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 14657, 118, fol. 69rb: see Stefano Mula, “Herbert de Torrès et l’autoreprésentation de l’ordre cistercien dans les recueils d’exempla,” in *La Tonnerre des exemples. “Exempla” et médiation culturelle dans l’Occident médiéval*, ed. Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, Pascal Collomb, and Jacques Berlioz (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 187–99, at 189 n14.

*Engelhard of Langheim*: See Bruno Griesser, “Engelhard von Langheim und sein Exempelbuch für die Nonnen von Wechtserwinkel,” *Cistercienser Chronik* 70 (1963): 55–73, at 64–65. The text was apparently edited in a dissertation, but the edition was deliberately omitted from the printed form that is held by libraries. See Hans D. Oppel,

*Die exemplarischen Mirakel des Engelhard von Langheim: Untersuchungen und kommentierte Textausgabe (Teildruck)* (Würzburg: Universitätsverlag, 1976), 148–208. Additional context has become available recently thanks to Martha G. Newman, *Cistercian Stories for Nuns and Monks: The Sacramental Imagination of Engelhard of Langheim* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

*Exordium magnum Cisterciense*: Poncellet, “Miraculorum ... Index,” 294, no. 769. For the Latin, see Conrad of Eberbach, *Exordium magnum Cisterciense siue Narratio de initio Cisterciensis Ordinis*, *Distinctio 3, Cap. 13*, ed. Bruno Griesser, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, vol. 138, 2nd ed. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1994). The text has been put into French by Anthelmette Piébourg, trans., *Le grand exorde de Cîteaux, ou Récit des débuts de l’Ordre cistercien*, *Cîteaux: Studia et documenta*, vol. 7 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1997), 161–64, and into English by E. Rozanne Elder, ed., and Paul Savage and Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Great Beginning of Cîteaux: A Narrative of the Beginning of the Cistercian Order; The Exordium Magnum of Conrad of Eberbach*, *Cistercian Fathers Series*, vol. 72 (Trappist, KY: Cistercian Publications, 2012), 252–57. In the oldest codices, from the thirteenth century, the work bears the title *Narratio de initio Cisterciensis Ordinis*, while in those of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it is sometimes entitled *Liber de viris illustribus Cisterciensis Ordinis*.

*Chronicon*: See Helinand of Froidmont, *Chronicon*, ed. PL 212:771C–1082C, with our exemplum at 1077C-D.

*his pre-monastic life*: For a sifting of fact and fiction in the rumors about Helinand’s poetic career before his monastic profession, see Marie-Geneviève Grossel, “Hélinand avant Froidmont: à la recherche d’un ‘trouvère’ perdu,” *Sacris Erudiri* 52 (2013): 319–52.

*Helinand’s source*: Mula, “Les exempla cisterciens,” 382 and 386n2 (where he specifies Troyes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 1133, fol. 36r).

*persisted for centuries*: Mula, “Les exempla cisterciens,” 387 cites the seventeenth-century hagiography of Peter in Chrysostomus Henriquez (Crisóstomo Enriquez), *Fasciculus sanctorum ordinis Cisterciensis*, Book 2, *Distinctio 22, Caput 8* (Brussels: Pepermanus, 1623), 196.

*two women*: Interestingly, both the Maries soon named were believed in the Middle Ages to have repented from sexually dissolute living.

*Mary Magdalene*: Mentioned in all four canonical Gospels, this woman traveled with Jesus and witnessed the crucifixion and what followed. The epithet may suggest that she came from the town of Magdala, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. She was conflated with the unidentified sinful woman, taken to be a reformed prostitute, who anointed Jesus’s feet (Luke 7:36–50). On her, see Ingrid Maisch, *Mary Magdalene*:

*The Image of a Woman through the Centuries*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998).

*Mary of Egypt*: Also called Mary the Egyptian, this woman, probably of the late fourth and early fifth century, was a popular Christian saint in the Middle Ages. In *The Golden Legend*, she is a former child runaway who served long term as a prostitute in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. On the threshold of turning thirty, she is inspired to do penance in the desert. She lives there in near solitude and eventually has nothing to cover her nakedness except her long hair. For the English of texts, see Hugh Feiss and Ronald Pepin, trans. *Saint Mary of Egypt: Three Medieval Lives in Verse*, Cistercian Studies Series 209 ([Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2005]). For studies, see Erich Poppe and Bianca Ross, *The Legend of Mary of Egypt in Medieval Insular Hagiography* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1996). For more recent theoretical context, see Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 128–59.

*replete with exempla*: For a survey, see Victoria Smirnova, Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, and Jacques Berlioz, ed. *The Art of Cistercian Persuasion in the Middle Ages and Beyond: Caesarius of Heisterbach's "Dialogue on Miracles" and its Reception*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 196 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

*On the Entrance into Religious Life of This Little Work's Author: Dialogus miraculorum* 1.17, ed. Josephus Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne: J. B. Heberle, 1851), 1:24–25; previously translated as *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. H. Von Essen Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland (London: G. Routledge, 1929), 1:25–26. The exemplum is indexed as Poncelet, "Miraculorum ... Index," 282, no. 576, and Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, 265, no. 3404 "Monks of Clairvaux Harvesting."

*second abbot*: 1195/6–1208.

*King Philip II of France*: Lived 1165–1223, reigned 1180–1223.

*King Philip II of France*: *Miracula* 7.18, ed. Strange, 2:24.

*The Virgin Mary's Vessel of Sweat*: Indexed as Poncelet, "Miraculorum ... Index," 300, no. 853, and Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, 386, no. 5114 "Virgin, Blessed, collects drops of sweat." Edited first as Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Miracula* 3.36, ed. Aloys Meister, *Die Fragmente der Libri VIII Miraculorum des Caesarius von Heisterbach*, Römische Quartalschrift Supplementband 14 (Rome: Herder, 1901), 164, but better by Alfons Hilka (who correctly deemed it Pseudo-Caesarian), *Die Wundergeschichten des Caesarius von Heisterbach*, Publikationen der Gesellschaft für Rheinische Geschichtskunde 43, 3 vols. (Bonn: Hanstein, 1933–1937), 3:129–218, Anhang 1 "Die Caesarius in der Ausgabe von Meister fälschlich zugeschriebenen Erzählungen der Zantener und

Bonner Handschrift," at 175–76. The same miracle is found in Engelhard of Langheim, in Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm 13097, fols. 145v–146r.

*sweetest of odors*: Here an effusion often connected with unpleasant body odor is related instead to the odor of sanctity. On the development of the last-mentioned concept, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage, vol. 42 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), especially 8, 103, 227–29.

*Have you not read*: Mary paraphrases a sentence from the final homily in a Lenten cycle on Psalms 90 by an author well known to Cistercian monks: see Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo* 17 "De versu decimo sexto 'Longitudine dierum replebo eum et ostendam illi salutare meum,'" in *Sermones in Psalmum 90 "Qui habitat,"* in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, vols. 1–9, ed. Jean Leclercq, Henri Rochais, C. H. Talbot, and G. Hendrix, *Bibliotheca auctorum traductorum et scriptorum ordinis cisterciensis* 6 (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–98), 4 (1957): 485–92, at 487, lines 17–19: "Bonum magis necessitas quam voluptas, quod, cum utraque res citius transeat, altera poenam habeat, altera sit paritura coronam."

*Goswin of Bossut: Vita Abundi*, Chapter 14, ed. Adrianus Maria Frenken, "De Vita van Abundus van Hoei," *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses* 10 (1959): 5–33, at 25–26. For a complete translation into English, see Goswin of Bossut, "Life of Abundus," in Martinus Cawley, *Send Me God: The Lives of Ida the Compassionate of Nivelles, Nun of la Ramée, Arnulf, Lay Brother of Villers, and Abundus, Monk of Villers, by Goswin of Bossut* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003), 207–46, at 234.

*gathering in the crops*: *Rule of Saint Benedict* 48.7, ed. and trans. Venarde, 160–61.

*the man of the Lord*: This means Abundus.

*pour out his heart like water before the face of his Lord*: Lamentations 2:19.

*received a reply*: To smooth the syntax and make the statements about the two Mariés parallel, the punctuation in the edition has been modified here.

*Mary who is called Magdalene*: Luke 8:2.

*the man of God*: Once again, Abundus is intended.

*Cistercian codex*: London, British Library, MS Harley 2851, fols. 71–89, at 84v, dated second half of thirteenth century by the British Library. On its Cistercian provenance, see C. H. Talbot, "A List of Cistercian Manuscripts in Great Britain," *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion* 8 (1952): 402–18, at 406.

*another version of the story*: Poncelet, "Miraculorum ... Index," 341, no. 1527.

*cataloguer of the manuscript*: H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts of the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1893), 2:670, no. 6 “Monks at their Field-work” (dated ca. 1300 by Ward).

*Mariale magnum*: On this collection, see Henri Barré, “L’énigme du *Mariale magnum*,” *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 16 (1966), 265–88; on our miracle, 285 (on part 2, no. 34), with reference to Vincent of Beauvais and three manuscripts, identified on 279; and on its reliance on Cistercian sources for this miracle, 287.

*His iteration of the exemplum*: Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* 7.107; in the Strassburg printing of 1473, chapter 29, 32, p. 1196, according Mula, “Les *exempla* cisterciens,” 386n3. On this exemplum in Vincent, see Poncelet, “Miraculorum ... Index,” 336, no. 1438, Mussafia, *Studien zu den mittelalterlichen Marienlegenden* (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1888), 2:52 [54], no. 107, and Ward, *Romances*, 2:629–30, no. 21 (London, British Library, MS Additional 15,723, late thirteenth century).

*Caesarius of Heisterbach*: See Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, “Dialogus miraculorum: The Initial Source of Inspiration for Johannes Gobi the Younger’s *Scala coeli*,” in Smirnova, Polo de Beaulieu, and Berlioz, ed. *The Art of Cistercian Persuasion*, 183–210.

*Mary and the harvesting monks*: See Poncelet, “Miraculorum ... Index,” 308, no. 986, which inventories Gobi, fol. clxvi b, s.v. Maria, Book 8, 4.

*writer on preaching*: The fullest introduction to Herolt’s writings in this genre is Ian D. Kingston Siggins, *A Harvest of Medieval Preaching: The Sermon Books of Johann Herolt, OP (Discipulus)* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2009).

*plain words that a learner would use*: Johannes Herolt, *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. C. C. Swinton Bland (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1928), unnumbered introductory pages.

*Our miracle*: It is Poncelet, “Miraculorum ... Index,” 312, no. 1057. The translation (modified) follows Herolt, *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. Bland, 23–24. Bland, in contrast to most scholars, numbers the miracle 6. For context, see two articles by Guy Philippart: “Les miracles mariaux de Jean Herolt (1434) et la *Legenda aurea*,” *Le moyen français* 32, no. 1 (1993): 53–67, and “Le récit miraculeux marial dans l’Occident médiéval,” in Dominique Iogna-Prat, Eric Palazzo, and Daniel Russo Marie, ed. *Le culte de la vierge dans la société médiévale* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 563–90, at 578.

*many sources*: Among those he cites outright, Vincent of Beauvais’s *Speculum historiale* occupies first position and Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus miraculorum* second in order of frequency.

*knightly belt*: The implication is that he sets aside his sword.

*work with his hands*: In a traditional tripartite schema, the *oratores* or prayers saw to the spiritual wellbeing of medieval society, the *bellatores* or warriors provided defense, and the *laboratores* or peasants worked the land to produce food.

*a coda*: The problem was pointed out by Pol Jonas, ed. “*C’est d’un moine qui vout retolir a une nonne une ymage de Nostre Dame que il li avoit aportee de Jherusalem*”: *Miracle versifié par Gautier de Coinci*, *Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia*, Sarja B = *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*. Ser. B 113, no. 2 (1959), at 41–42. The two miracles are designated Book 2, Miracle 30 (“*De l’ymage Nostre Dame de Sardanei*”), ed. Koenig, 4:378–411, and Book 2, Miracle 31 (“*De un moigne de Chartrose*”), 4:412–17, respectively.

*fin for “end.”*: See Hunt, *Miraculous Rhymes: The Writing of Gautier de Coinci*, 47.

*The resemblances*: First, Wendelin Foerster, “*Nachträge und Berichtigungen*,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 4 (1880): 190 n1; later, Wilhelm Hertz, *Spielmannsbuch: Novellen in Versen aus dem zwölften und dreizehnten Jahrhundert*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1900), 419, and Erhard Lommatzsch, *Gautier de Coincy als Satiriker* (Halle a. S.: Max Niemeyer, 1913), 15; and more recently, Bretel, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, 13–14 and 18–19, and Jean-Louis Gabriel Benoit, in Gautier de Coinci, *Cinq miracles de Notre-Dame*, trans. Benoit, *Traductions des classiques du Moyen Age 78* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), 139.

*De un moigne de Chartrose*: Ed. Koenig, 4:412–17. For the modern French, see Gautier de Coinci, *Cinq miracles de Notre-Dame*, trans. Jean-Louis Gabriel Benoit, *Traductions des classiques du Moyen Age 78* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), 147–51. The longer miracle to which it may serve as capstone is *Miracles*, Book 2, no. 30 (“*De l’ymage Nostre Dame de Sardanei*”).

*galantines*: To this day this term denotes a dish, especially of poultry or fish that is stuffed, served cold in its own jelly or aspic.

*Saint Peter*: One of the twelve apostles. His three denials of Jesus, recounted in all four Gospels (Matthew 26:34, 69–75; Mark 14:30, 66–72; Luke 22:34, 54–62; John 13:38, 18:15–18, 25–27), make him especially apt for invocation here.

*blind*: The metaphor of spiritual blindness appears commonly in the Hebrew Bible but even more in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of John and in the letters to the Corinthians.

*star of the sea*: This title for the Virgin is traditional in Latin as *stella maris*. The phrase in the learned language was often believed wrongly to correspond to the etymological meaning of Mary’s name in Hebrew.

## 5. The Jongleur and the Black Virgin of Rocamadour

*Gospel of Luke*: 19:1–10.

*Throne of Wisdom*: In Latin, *sedes sapientiae*. For the definitive study, see Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

*Black Virgin*: See Ean C. M. Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, 2nd ed. (London: Arkana, 1996), and Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet, *Vierges noires* (Rodez, France: Rouergue, 2000).

*The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*: For text, see Book 1, Miracle 34, ed. Edmond Albe, *Les miracles de Notre-Dame de Rocamadour au XIIe siècle* (Toulouse: Le Pèlerinageur, 1996), 142–45. For complete translation and detailed examination, see Marcus Graham Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour: Analysis and translation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1999), 122–23.

*Peter was son of Ivern*: Karl Corsten, “Rheinische Pilger in Rocamadour,” *Annalen des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 125 (1934): 1–11, at 6.

*impacts on both locales*: See Mauritius Mittler, “Abt Gerhard I. von Siegburg (1173–1185?),” *Heimatblätter des Siegkreises* (Special Issue) 32, no. 86 (1964): 21–30; Mauritius Mittler, “Annos Heiligsprechung und Verehrung,” in Mauritius Mittler, ed. *Siegburger Vorträge zum Annojahr 1983*, Siegburger Studien 16 (Siegburg: Respublica-Verlag, 1984), 41–74; and Mauritius Mittler, *Libellus de translatione Sancti Annonis Archiepiscopi et Miracula Sancti Annonis: Bericht über die Translation des heiligen Erzbischofs Anno und Annonische Mirakelberichte* (Siegburger Mirakelbuch) Lateinisch-deutsch, 3: Einleitung und Register, ed. Hans-Rudolf Fehlmann and Wolfgang Löhr, in 3 vols., Siegburger Studien 3–5, Geschichts- und Altertumsverein für Siegburg und den Siegkreis (Siegburg: Respublica-Verlag, 1966–1968).

*Three times the taper*: The opposite phenomenon involving a candle takes place in an exemplum: see Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, 69, no. 850: “Candle rejected three times. A candle placed on the altar of St. Paul by a sinful woman is three times rejected.”

*medieval viol*: For orientation, see Ian Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1–14.

*trecensus*: Jan Frederik Niermeyer and C. van de Kieft, with J. W. J. Burgers, *Mediae Latinitatis lexicon minus = Lexique latin médiéval = Medieval Latin Dictionary = Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002), 2:1354–55.

*individual devotion to the Virgin*: Corsten, “Rheinische Pilger in Rocamadour,” 5n23.

*wonder at that which happened to him*: Acts 3:10.

*with timbrel and choir, with strings and organs*: Psalms 150:4.

*Of the Candle that Came Down to the Jongleur*: *Miracles* Book 2, no. 21 (“Dou cierge qui descendi au jougleour”), ed. Koenig, 4:175–89. The fullest edition of this miracle is that of Reino Hakamies, ed. *Deux miracles de Gautier de Coinci, d’un vilain qui fut sauvé pour ce qu’il ne faisoit uevre le samedi et du cierge que Nostre Dame de Rochemadour envoia seur la vièle au jougleour qui vieloit et chantoit devant s’ymage*, *Suomalaisen tiedeakatemia toimituksia*, Series B 113, part 1 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Kirjapaino, 1958). Also well worth consulting is the Italian translation in Gautier de Coinci, Gonzalo de Berceo, and Alfonso X el Sabio, *Miracoli della Vergine: Testi volgari medievali*, ed. and trans. Carlo Beretta (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1999), 362–79 (text and translation), 1186–89 (notes). The miracle was translated long ago by Alice Kemp-Welch, *Of the Tumbler of Our Lady and Other Miracles* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1909), 129–37.

*narrative and lyric skill*: On the language, rhetoric, and versification, see Tony Hunt, *Miraculous Rhymes: The Writing of Gautier de Coinci*, *Gallica* 8 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007).

*credits as his source*: On this and other sources, see Adolfo Mussafia, “Über die von Gautier de Coincy benützten Quellen,” *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*, Philosophisch-historische Classe 44, no. 1 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1894), 1–58.

*Rocamadour*: The toponym, a roche by any other name, is spelled variously as Rochemadour, Roche Amador, Roche Amator, and Roche Amadeur.

*a very large book*: Compare 175.

*read*: Compare 152.

*fine*: The Old French term *cortois* (equivalent to the modern *courtois*), exceedingly difficult to put into English, is translated here as “fine.” Compare line 10. For context, see Tony Hunt, “Monachus curialis: Gautier de Coinci and courtoisie,” in *Courtly Literature and Clerical Culture: Selected Papers from the Tenth Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, Universität Tübingen, Deutschland, 28. Juli-3. August 2001 = Höfische Literatur und Klerikerkultur = Littérature courtoise et culture cléricale*, ed. Christoph Huber, Henrike Lähnemann, and Sandra Linden (Tübingen: Attempto, 2002), 121–35.

*refinement*: The word *courtoisie* is here translated as “refinement.” See note to line 6.

*lay*: By this term Gautier signals a poetic genre, truly lyric in being composed for instrumental accompaniment, with no set number of stanzas or of lines within them, and with melodic variation from one stanza to the next.

*Peter of Sieglar*: The leading character is named only this once in the miracle. Gautier presents this *Pierres de Sygelar* as being famous and by implication successful, whereas Alfonso later calls his equivalent of the same personage a poor jongleur.

*greeted sweetly and praised*: The implication is that he pronounces the Latin *Ave Maria* or Hail Mary. See the note to Part 1, Chapter 1.A “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” line 31.

*her image*: An illustration in the so-called Soissons manuscript of Gautier’s *Miracles* depicts a three-dimensional statue of a seated Mary with Child: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises MS 24541, fol. 175r. The manuscript, dated 1328–32, was produced for Joan the Lamé of Burgundy (1293–1349), Queen of France (1328–49). The decoration is credited to Jean Pucelle (died 1332).

*king who created all*: This half line fuses the conceptions of Christ the king (implied by Matthew 2:2 and elsewhere) and God the creator of all (Apocalypse [Revelation] 4:11).

*Lady of all refinement*: In this line and the following two, the jongleur employs tropes of courtly love.

*you up there*: He addresses not only Mary but also the image of her, in this case the black Madonna of Rocamadour, where it hangs above the altar. Candles given in her honor may have been attached to large, wheel-shaped chandeliers.

*source and channel of sweetness*: The epithets here bring to mind later Marian litanies that amassed phrases such as *fons pietatis* or “font of piety” to describe the Virgin.

*Gerard*: In French, *Girars*. Apart from Pierre himself, this antagonist is the only character identified by name.

*black bile*: According to a doctrine of physiology that the Middle Ages owed to ancient medicine (with credit given customarily to Hippocrates), the human body has four vital fluids, namely, black bile (or melancholy, to use the Greek derivative), yellow bile, phlegm, and blood. Imbalance of these four humors will result in flaws that affect a person’s disposition—good humor.

*sequence*: The musical form known as the sequence is a common type of Latin song, found both in the liturgy and outside it. In its early phases it is associated with texts that accompanied long melismas (or melodies) which were sung after the Alleluia (hence the term sequence, from the Latin for “following”), directly before the Gospel reading. The texts, initially in prose, were later in syllabic and strophic verse. The term recurs in line 316.

*kyrie eleison*: These words, which reappear in 315, are Greek for “Lord, have mercy.” The phrase is biblical, appearing with slight variations in the Septuagint repeatedly

in the Psalms and a few times in the Gospels, especially Matthew and Luke. From the Bible the expression became the name of a prayer, so entrenched in the liturgy from the transition from Greek to Latin in western Christianity that it was left in its original form but transliterated.

*Five hundred*: This number, beyond merely being conveniently round and impressively high, may resonate deliberately with 1 Corinthians 15:6 (the more than five hundred by whom Christ was seen after his resurrection).

*head full of relics*: Literally, his mind is filled solely with concerns about the relics, presumably along with others about the votive offerings and other valuables, that he is supposed to protect (Hakamies 80). Alternatively, the expression could refer figuratively to the cobwebs in his thinking (Beretta 1187).

*Simon Magus*: As the second element signals, this figure was a magician. Mentioned briefly in the Acts of the Apostles 8:9–24, he earned a niche in many later legends. The most relevant told that Simon tried to fly and succeeded initially, until the prayers of Saint Peter caused the demons supporting him to let him fall from on high to his death.

*a very lovely candle*: This custom, mentioned again in 188–9, may signal that Pierre became a member of the confraternity of Rocamadour and that he discharged his annual dues by depositing a candle each year.

*donor of a candle*: See note to lines 175–77.

*cantors*: Among various other duties, these church officials sing the solos to which the choir responds: see Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, A. B. Kraebel, and Margot Elsbeth Fassler, ed. *Medieval Cantors and Their Craft: Music, Liturgy and the Shaping of History, 800-1500* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: York Medieval Press/The Boydell Press, 2017).

*friars*: The term refers especially to the four mendicant orders of Augustinians, Carmelites, Dominicans, and Franciscans, all of which originated in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.

*hot or cold to God*: God is ill disposed to them because they are not heartfelt in their utterances. The proverbial turn of phrase owes in the end to the wording of the Apocalypse (Revelation) 3:15–16.

*concord of the two*: *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, Chapter 19.7, ed. and trans. Venarde, 90–91, enjoins monks to “sing psalms in such a way that our spirits and voices are in harmony.”

*donkey if it brays*: The poet here hints at stock characterizations of asses as not understanding music: see *TPMA* 3:64–66, *Esel* 6.1–6.2. The commonplace was represented often in art: see Walter S. Gibson, “Asinus ad lyram: From Boethius to

Bruegel and Beyond." *Simiolus* 33, nos. 1/2 (2007–2008): 33–42, and Martin van Schaik, *The Harp in the Middle Ages: The Symbolism of a Musical Instrument* 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 116–35.

*singing descant or in five parts*: The musical terminology in this and the preceding line is complex. The first verb, *orguener*, means not merely singing, but specifically singing at the interval of a fourth or fifth below or above the plainsong. The second, *werbloier*, is related to the English *warble*. The final expression probably refers to singing in consecutive fifths: compare 262. Far less likely is that reference is intended to the five parts possible in a choir (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass).

*tuned with strong wine*: On the truism that consumption of wine promotes better poetry and song, see *TPMA* 12:439, *Wein* 1.8.3.

*son of the crooked*: The underlying conceit is apparently that the grapevine (grammatically a feminine noun) is a cripple, for being crooked and twisted, and that wine is "her" son.

*wine but not beer*: Each of these alcoholic drinks had its respective partisans, as is evident from debate poems in which the two dispute their relative worth. For the classical presentation of the genre, see James Holly Hanford, "The Mediaeval Debate Between Wine and Water," *PMLA* 28, no. 3 (1913): 315–67.

*the mouth if there is not devotion in the heart*: A marginal gloss reads "Gregorius dicit: Oratio cordis est, non labiorum" (Gregory [the Great] says: Prayer is of the heart, not of the lips). In fact, the *sententia* derives from Isidore of Seville, *Sententiarum libri tres* Book 3, Chapter 7, no. 4, ed. *PL* 83:672A–B. The correct citation was supplied by Arthur Långfors, *Miracles de Gautier de Coinci: extraits du manuscrit de l'Ermitage*, Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia toimituksia (Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ), Series B, no. 34 (Helsinki: Imprimerie de la Société de littérature finnoise, 1937), 335.

*psaltery*: A medieval instrument like the zither.

*organ*: Meant here is the portative organ or organetto, a small pipe organ that a performer could carry and operate with the help of bellows and a simple keyboard.

*fiddle*: The word translated is *giga*, from which derives the modern German *Geige* for violin.

*David*: The second king of Israel, famed as a warrior, politician, poet, and musician, he is the only character from the Hebrew Bible identified apart from Saul in 284. David is mentioned again in 283.

*harp*: In the Latin of the Vulgate Bible, David is described as playing the *cithara*. That word is translated here as “harp.” On David and this musical instrument in medieval iconography, see van Schaik, *The Harp in the Middle Ages*, 38–61.

*harp for King Saul*: Saul was the first king of Israel. On David’s harping to dispel the evil spirit from him, see 1 Kings (1 Samuel) 16:23.

*not worth an old nothing*: A roundabout way of saying that they are not worth anything.

*the opposite*: In this translation *lanbers ruece* is construed as *l’anvers rudece*, but the line remains a crux. Hakamies 74 takes the first seven letters as a proper name, Lanbers, and speculates “probably Saint Lambert, Bishop of Maastricht, assassinated in Liège about 706?”

*in all good works*: The mention of good works in lines 300–302 may reflect the jargon of the chancery, since to obtain a benefice required satisfying the requirement “Bene legit, bene cantat et bene construit” (“He reads well, he chants well, and he construes well”) which could be summed up simply as “Bene per omnia” (literally, “well in all things”; more colloquially, “all things in good order”).

*reads*: The verb refers to the action in a liturgical sense.

*up your hearts*: The Latin *sursum corda*, literally “up hearts,” appears in the preface of the eucharistic prayer, which in the liturgy of communion forms the heart. The celebrant, in the person of Christ, acts as head of his body, the Church. The opening dialogue between the priest (1) and the congregation (2) reads in full: “(1) Dominus vobiscum. (2) Et cum spiritu tuo. (1) Sursum corda. (2) Habemus ad Dominum. (1) Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro. (2) Dignum et iustum est.”

*discord*: The fourteen lines 345–58 play upon derivatives of the French word *corde*, which suits the metaphors of the preceding narrative with the chords of the viol and the accord of heart and voice: see Hunt, *Miraculous Rhymes*, 46.

*accord of humanity with God*: The one who achieved such harmony between man and God is the Virgin, by virtue of being the mother of the Son of God.

*the Enemy*: The devil was often designated as being “the Enemy” or “the old Enemy,” opposition that is implied in Hebrew by the very term Satan. See especially 1 Peter 5:8.

*in his cords*: The image calls to mind that of the devil as a fowler who catches sinners in his snares: see Benjamin G. Koonce, “Satan the Fowler,” *Mediaeval Studies* 21 (1959): 176–84.

*Songs of Holy Mary*: The text followed is *Cantigas de Santa María*, no. 8, ed. Walter Mettmann, 3 vols., Clásicos Castalia 134, 172, 178 (Madrid: Castalia, 1986–89), 1:77–79. The miracle has been put into English previously in *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X*,

*The Wise: A Translation of the "Cantigas de Santa Maria,"* no. 8, trans. Kathleen Kulp-Hill, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 173 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), pp. 13–14. In addition, the *Códice rico* contains in its margins a version in Old Spanish prose of the original Galician-Portuguese for *Cantigas* 2–25. Our story in this prosaic form has been translated in Cash and Murray, *Cantigas de Santa María: 2–25, 62–65*; on 16 they posit, on the basis of paleography and language, a dating of 1325–30.

*miniatures*: The two with miniatures are, respectively, one split between San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de El Escorial, MS T.I.1, and Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS B.R.2 (together, the so-called *Códice rico*), and Escorial, MS B.I.2 (the *Códice princeps* or *Códice de los músicos*). The other two are Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, MS 10069, and San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de El Escorial, MS b.I.2.

*"Second Testament" of January 21, 1284*: For the original and English of this part, see Annette Grant Cash and James C. Murray, *Cantigas de Santa María: 2–25 of the Escorial Manuscript T.I.I. "Códice rico": Miniatures, Translations of the Old Spanish Prose Marginalia, and Commentary*, Juan de la Cuestas Hispanica Monographs: Estudios de literatura medieval "John E. Keller" 12 (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2017), 12–14. The standard edition is M. González Jiménez, *Diplomatario andaluz de Alfonso X* (Seville: El Monte, Caja de Huelva y Sevilla, 1991), 560.

*black*: The adjective could mean the color literally, since the Benedictine monks in charge of Rocamadour wore black habits. Figuratively, the brother is benighted in his bearing toward the jongleur: Kulp-Hill (p. 14) translates *negral* as "unenlightened."

*man-sized taper*: The candle called an *estadal* measured a fathom, the length from fingertip to fingertip of a person's outstretched arms. Such a taper was made from a rope of beeswax.

## 6. The Jongleurs and the Holy Candle of Arras

*earliest surviving examples*: See Carol Symes, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), especially 69–126.

*affliction ran rampant*: The year 1105 is often accepted as the date of the outbreak, but the evidence is too thin to be conclusive. See Alessandra Foscati, "La Vergine degli 'ardenti': aspetti di un culto taumaturgico nelle fonti mariane tra XII e XIII secolo," *Hagiographica* 18 (2011): 263–95, at 292 n90.

*ergotism*: On the history of the illness in the Middle Ages, see Alessandra Foscati, *Saint Anthony's Fire from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Francis Gordon (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020).

*hellfire*: *feuz d'enfer* in French.

*sacred fire*: *ignis sacer* in Latin.

*miraculous candle*: Compare the slightly different remedy for the plague in Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, 69, no. 845: "Candle cures sickness. A woman who has the illness called 'holy fire' is cured by offering a candle."

*Peter*: Pierre, in French.

*Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise*: A county that belonged successively to the Counts of Flanders (until 1180), to France (until 1237), and to Artois (until 1329), before passing back to France.

*Itier*: Sometimes spelled Ithier.

*Itier*: At the time when the miracle took place, Brabant was a landgraviate (1085–1183). This lordship encompassed a large territory, including Brussels, in what is now Belgium and the Netherlands.

*Lambert*: Bishop from 1093 until his death in 1115, Lambert of Guînes was Flemish-born ca. 1050, educated as a youth in the cathedral school of Beauvais, and later archdeacon and cantor at Saint-Pierre in Lille.

*different ecclesiastic organization*: See Symes, *A Common Stage*, 92, on first the abbot and convent of Saint-Vaast and then representatives of the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Trinitarians.

*two apostolic notaries at the request of a magistrate*: The officials were Jean Lostelier and Jean de Houdain; the magistrate, Jean de Beaumont. To all appearances, holding office in Arras at this time required having the personal name Jean: see Berger 2:139 [347]. On the *vidimus*, see Louis Cavrois, *Cartulaire de Notre-Dame-des-Ardents à Arras* (Arras: Eugène Bradier, 1876), 186–89.

*a seventeenth-century transcription*: The surviving document forms part of a bound paper register, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *Registre Thieulaine*, also known as D. Thieulaine Florilegium. It follows a manuscript copied in the late fifteenth century. The *Registre* was, as the second element in its name memorializes, the product of Philippe Thieulaine, who began work on it in 1607 but wrote this part in 1625. It is now Arras, Bibliothèque municipale, Archives de la Confrérie de Notre-Dame des Ardents, inv. 2. See Berger, *Nécrologe* 2:138.

*in Latin*: Printed in the left-hand columns in Berger, *Nécrologe* 2:139–56 [347–64], with extensive annotation. The text in this language was earlier published by Cavrois, *Cartulaire*, pp. 91–103.

*under the sun*: In the Latin of the Vulgate Bible, the phrase *sub sole* appears solely in Ecclesiastes 1:3, 1:10, 1:13, 1:14, etc.

*the system of the universe*: The words *machina mundi* are common in hymns.

*upon the cherubim and beholds the depths*: Compare Daniel 3:55.

*confines the thrones of the heavens and encloses the earth in his fist*: This wording owes to liturgical formulas.

*has measured the height of heaven and the depth of the abyss*: Ecclesiasticus 1:2.

*holds dominion from sea to sea*: Psalms 71 (72): 8.

*cannot be numbered*: Compare Virgil, *Georgics* 2.104.

*work through one of them in a brief discourse*: See Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in evangelia* (Homilies on the Gospels), 13, n. 1–3, and 30, n. 1–2.

*episcopal see of Arras*: The bishopric was established only in 1093. As the first incumbent, Lambert had responsibility for achieving autonomy for the diocese.

*burning*: As mentioned earlier, the inflammation and burning sensation caused by the disease led to its designation in French as the *mal des ardents* or “illness of the burning ones.”

*hellfire*: The corresponding French is *feu d'enfer*.

*holy Zion*: In the Hebrew Bible Zion denotes Jerusalem in general, the Temple and its innermost sanctum in particular. The term is often used in Medieval Latin as a synonym for “church.”

*church of blessed Mary*: The cathedral of Notre Dame of Arras, one of the largest and most famous in northern France, was destroyed during the French Revolution.

*How long, O Lord, will you forget me to the end?*: Psalms 12 (13): 1.

*How long do you turn your face away from me?*: Psalms 12 (13): 1.

*O Lord, rebuke me not in your indignation*: Psalms 6:2 (first Penitential Psalm).

*144*: In Apocalypse (Revelation) 21:17, the wall of the heavenly city is “an hundred forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of an angel.” As the square of twelve, 144 embodies perfection and stability.

*As all things maintained deepest silence and night completed the middle of its course*: Wisdom 18:14, lightly modified as used in the Introit of the Mass (a piece of music sung at the beginning of the service) for Sunday within the octave of Christmas.

*began to dawn on the fifth day of the week*: Compare Matthew 28:1 “And in the end of the sabbath, when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.”

*clothed in white*: For reasons needing no explanation, the color white, symbolizing virginity, is often associated with Mary.

*an exceedingly comely virgin*: Genesis 24:16.

*surrounded with a variety of virtues, in gilded clothing*: Compare Psalms 44 (45): 10.

*third hour*: The expression could be translated as “terce,” denoting the service in the divine office that is chanted at the third hour of the day, around 9 a.m.

*Oh such and so great*: An allusion to Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.591–92, which describes a vision that Aeneas has of his mother Venus.

*the sign of the Lord’s death*: The phrase refers to the crucifix that hung prominently in the cathedral.

*the sign of the cross*: Upon entering, Norman acknowledges the representation of the crucifixion by crossing himself. He would have made the sign by pressing together the tips of the thumb, index, and middle finger of his right hand and using them to trace a cross on his own body from forehead to stomach and from left to right shoulder.

*God, have mercy on me, sinner that I am*: Luke 18:13.

*May God have mercy on us*: Psalms 66 (67): 2.

*chapel of Saint Séverin*: This mention, along with the one in the French adaptation of this text, is apparently the only record we have of a private episcopal chapel named after this saint in Arras.

*Your Paternity*: Today a bishop would be addressed formally as “Your Excellency,” but all clergy can be addressed as “father,” whence “Your Paternity.” See *Novum Glossarium Mediae Latinitatis*, ed. Jacques Monfrin, 673.27–36, under *paternitas* D.2.b.

*fifth day of the week*: Thursday. The French has Friday.

*the mother of all mercies*: In hymns and litanies Mary is commonly “the mother of mercy.” The plural, less usual, appears a second time in this selection.

*temporal death*: Temporal death is the termination of temporal life, when the immortal soul of a human being separates from the mortal body.

*sponsors for my faith at baptism*: In other words, his godparents.

*additional name*: It is hard to gauge whether the more precise translation would be surname, nickname, or stage name.

*pleasant circumlocutions*: The bishop's reply alludes to the association of jongleurs with fiction, which often combines pleasantry with falsehood. The Latin adjective for pleasant is *iocundus*, a member of the same etymological family as the noun *ioculator*, from which the French derives.

*terce*: From the Latin *tertia* for the third hour, terce was a service chanted in the morning at around 9 a.m.

*daughters of men*: The expression is biblical. In the ages before the flood, there were two families, the sons of God and the daughters of man (Genesis 6:1–4). The latter were descendants of Cain.

*pillory of death*: The metaphor has a basis in the reality of medieval punishment. Both the pillory and the stocks were devices in which body parts (head, hands, ankles, wrists, or some subset of them) were secured. Confinement in the pillory always entailed humiliation and usually torture. In drastic cases death could result. For context, see C. David Benson, "*Piers Plowman* as Poetic Pillory: The Pillory and the Cross," in *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*, ed. David Aers (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 31–54.

*miming*: As used in this passage, *mima* appears to be a hapax legomenon. It could refer to physical as opposed to musical or verbal entertainment, but whether it means acting, wordless or not, or acrobatic action is impossible to determine with certainty.

*do you mean 'spoken to each other'*: The Latin as printed, *Quomodo ... interdicis invicem*, would suggest the nonsensical "How do you prohibit to each other?"

*that Gospel text*: Matthew 5:23–24.

*Jesus says*: Compare Zachariah 8:19.

*God himself is peace*: The Apostle Paul in particular connects the supreme being with such tranquility, especially in the famous verse "And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

*he says*: John 14:6, Matthew 5:44, and 1 John 4:16. The emphasis on charity that begins with the last quotation helps set the stage for the Charité, the charity run by the confraternity.

*It has been written*: The wording of the first tag here, owing ultimately to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:43–48 and Luke 6:27–38, achieved broad currency through Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia* 1, n. 9, ed. PL 76:1108D, and *Homiliae in Evangelia* 2, n. 27, ed. PL 76:1205B. The second phrase owes to Proverbs 10:12 and 1 Peter 4:8.

*No virtue is perfect without charity*: Intriguingly, nearly the same observation is found in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II–II q. 23 1. 7.

*Paul says*: 1 Corinthians 13:3, quoted loosely.

*the Lord says in the Gospel*: Matthew 18:35, again paraphrased roughly.

*in his image and likeness*: Genesis 1:26.

*kisses the feet*: The acts described here were common in medieval ritual, especially in proskynesis. The kissing of feet had authorization in Luke 7:38.

*is introduced*: Reading *introducitur* instead of *intronizatur*.

*charity was blazing*: A major point of departure for discussing the true fire of charity is 1 Corinthians 13:3.

*opposed as whiteness and blackness*: The pairing of these two qualities has been stock in logical argumentation, going back to Aristotle's *Categories*, 10 b 13.

*inducement*: The Latin substantive *irritativa*, used here twice in rapid succession, may be a hapax legomenon. The corresponding adjective *irritativus*, *-a*, *-um* is attested only in Antonius Bartal, *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis regni Hungariae* (Budapest: Budapestini, Sumptibus Societatis Frankliniae, 1901; rept. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1970), and Ladislav Varcl, Karl Ernst Georges, Eva Kamínková, et al., *Latinitatis medii aevi Lexicon Bohemorum Slovník středověké latiny v českých zemích* (Prague: Academia, 1977–).

*Lord's greatest commandment*: Luke 10:27: compare Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, and Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31.

*commandment kept most*: Compare Psalms 118 (119): 4 "Tu mandasti mandata tua custodiri nimis." This verse is sung on Holy Thursday after the anthem "Mandatum novum do vobis, ut diligatis invicem ..."

*he took pity on Mary Magdalene*: By casting out the seven devils: see Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2. At the same time, the choice of Magdalene, widely believed in the Middle Ages to have been a repentant prostitute, holds special interest in view of the strong links seen between female sex workers and jugglers.

*took pity on the robber on the cross*: See Luke 23:43.

*leaving to you an example*: Compare another anthem for Holy Thursday, based on John 13:15, for Holy Thursday: "Postquam surrexit Dominus a coena, misit aquam in pelvim et coepit lavare pedes discipulorum suorum."

*that you should follow his footsteps*: 1 Peter 2:21.

*He prayed for those persecuting him that they not perish:* Compare Luke 23:34.

*Pray then one for another, that you may be saved:* James 5:16.

*you have been called by God that you may inherit a blessing:* 1 Peter 3:9.

*the Holy Spirit does not rest upon:* Compare Isaiah 11:2.

*kiss of peace:* This ancient greeting among Christians became a powerful gesture in rites of reconciliation from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries: see Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace: Ritual, Self, and Society in the High and Late Medieval West*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions: Medieval and Early Modern Peoples, vol. 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

*one in Godhead and threefold in persons:* This is a standard expression of the Trinity, as the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in one godhead.

*hour of none:* This would mean around 3 p.m., roughly the ninth hour after dawn. The English “noon” shows that the time eventually shifted earlier, to the middle of the daylight hours.

*mother of mercies:* Berger hypothesized that this epithet and the ones immediately following it owed to litanies of the Virgin, which became widespread in the twelfth century, though they are often preserved only in sources from centuries later.

*star of the sea:* This common title for the Virgin corresponds to the Latin *stella maris*: see note to 4.B, line 123, above.

*she vanishes into thin air:* Compare Ovid, *Heroides* 1.79 and 12.85.

*wine is accustomed to cheer my soul:* Compare Psalms 103 (104): 15 and Ecclesiasticus 40:20.

*goes the way of all flesh:* Joshua 23:14 and 3 Kings (1 Kings) 2:2.

*Some sang with David:* Psalms 97 (98): 1.

*The Lord has made known his salvation:* Psalms 97 (98): 2.

*Shout with joy to God, all the earth, sing you a psalm to his name:* Psalms 65 (66): 1–2.

*Others sang with Zachary:* Luke 1:68.

*third hour of the day:* Meaning “terce.”

*We praise you, God:* This is the *Te Deum*, a Latin hymn written in 387 CE that was in regular use throughout most of the Middle Ages. Although often ascribed to Saint Ambrose, its authorship remains uncertain.

*sang the Introit*: The translation assumes a special and apparently otherwise unattested meaning for *introivit*. The Introit here refers to a piece of music sung at the beginning of the Mass.

*united with them*: The confraternity, which initially comprised only the socially marginal jongleurs, was altered to accommodate the bourgeoisie, clergy, and knighthood.

*the Pentecost octave*: The word *octave* derives from the Latin *octava dies* “eighth day. In the medieval liturgy, the feast was extended over the eight days following Pentecost (inclusive of the holiday itself).

*in French*: Printed in the right-hand columns in Berger, *Nécrologe* 2:139–56 [347–64].

*the miracle in vernacular prose*: The narrative, entitled *De la chandelle d'Arras*, is preserved in a collection of saints' lives, dated to the mid thirteenth century, in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 17229, fols. 352vb–357va. It was first published by Adolphe Guesnon, *La chandelle d'Arras: texte inédit du XIIIe siècle* (Arras: F. Guyot, 1899).

*a silver reliquary*: Jean Lestocquoy, “Deux reliquaires du XIIIème siècle: la custode du Saint-Cierge et le reliquaire de la Sainte-Épine d'Arras,” *Mémoires de la Commission départementale des monuments historiques du Pas-de-Calais* 3, fasc. 4 (1935), 397–407. For a photograph, see Berger, *Le nécrologe*, plate facing 2:49 [257].

*O Lord, rebuke me not in your indignation*: Psalms 6:2. The quotation is given in Latin.

*the seven psalms*: This gloss signals that the text quoted is the first of the seven Penitential Psalms, which were often copied and illustrated in prayer books such as Books of Hours. The other six are Psalms 31 (32), 37 (38), 50 (51), 101 (102), 129 (130), and 142 (143).

*the choir that people call the chancel*: The two terms, *choir* and *chancel*, have been used sometimes as though they were interchangeable. Taken narrowly, the chancel is a screen. More broadly, it refers to the space where the clergy officiate, separated from the nave by the screen. The choir is the part of the chancel where the service is sung.

*fair speech of God*: This phrase may point equally to the theology of Christ as the Word of God and to the conception of Scripture as the speech of God.

*third hour of the night*: The canonical hours comprised seven daytime hours and only one at night. The nighttime hour of matins was celebrated by monks beginning roughly two hours after midnight. The author of the French, pitching his composition at a lay audience, uses hours in a non-canonical sense.

*kneels*: This posture was commonly assumed in medieval prayer, see Przemyslaw Mrozowski, “Genuflection in Medieval Western Culture: The Gesture of Expiation—The Praying Posture,” *Acta Poloniae Historica* 68 (1993): 5–26.

*May God have mercy on us*: Psalms 66 (67): 2. Once again, the writer quotes the Latin rather than translating into the vernacular.

*Perron*: This is an equivalent to Pierron, a pet form of the personal name Pierre, French for Peter. A comparable form in English would be the nickname Petey.

*in the Gospel*: Matthew 5:23–24.

*God says*: The first clause should be compared with Zachariah 8:19, while the second quotes John 14:6.

*Holy Writ says*: The wording of the first quotation, owing ultimately to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:43–48 and Luke 6:27–38, achieved broad currency through Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in evangelia* (Homilies on the Gospels), 1, n. 9, ed. *PL* 76:1108D, and 2, n. 27, ed. *PL* 76:1205B. The second and third quotations are both from 1 John 4:16.

*Saint Paul says to us*: 1 Corinthians 13:3, quoted loosely.

*God says in the Gospel*: Matthew 18:35, also approximately.

*made you in his image and likeness*: Genesis 1:26.

*moved*: Reading *con meuz* as *conmeuz*.

*different as are white and black*: For other examples of this saying, see Hassell, *Middle French Proverbs*, 54, B104 “*Contraires comme le blanc et le noire.*”

*charity is the first and sovereign commandment*: 1 Corinthians 13:13 “*And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.*”

*very great commandment of Lord God*: This sets the stage for the quotation of Luke 10:27: compare Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, and Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31.

*love his enemy*: Matthew 5:44.

*pardoned Mary Magdalene*: By casting out the seven devils: see Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2.

*took pity on the robber hanging on the cross*: See Luke 23:43.

*prayed for those who crucified him*: Compare Luke 23:34.

*pray one for another, that you may be saved*: James 5:16.

*the Holy Spirit does not rest upon*: Compare Isaiah 11:2.

*lady of paradise*: This common title of the Virgin has no one specific source.

*in wine than in water*: This statement is related to a large body of proverbial sayings about wine and water: see *TPMA* 12:439–41, 4 “Wein und Wasser (Bier).”

*wine is accustomed to cheer my body and soul*: Compare Psalms 103 (104): 15 and Ecclesiasticus 40:20.

*to recover but to depart*: The French contains word play that defies translation: “il but par mauvese creance, neant por respasser mes pour trespasser, car lors trespassa de cest siecle.”

*We praise you, God*: The French writer uses the Latin name for the hymn *Te Deum*.

*two lords*: The mention of these two lords would date the events to a span between at the earliest a little before 1184 and the latest 1203, according to Berger, *Nécrologe* 2:46 [254].

*Imercourt*: This place, two miles northeast from the center of present-day Arras, was later renamed Saint-Laurent-Blangy.

*Bailleul*: Probably Bailleul-Sir-Berthoult, a farming village five miles northeast of Arras.

*Waencort*: The settlement of Wancort, five miles southeast of Arras.

*cinquiesme*: Pentecost, from the Greek meaning “fiftieth,” derives ultimately from a Jewish festival celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover. The medieval French form indicated here derives from *quingagesima*, the Latin for “fiftieth” that designates the Christian holiday.

*pennies*: Expanding *den* to *deniers*.

*from the seventeenth-century Registre Thieulaine*: By Cavrois, *Cartulaire*, 127–54, starting at folio XXXIXv of the register.

*in the thirteenth century*: Cavrois, *Cartulaire*, 127.

*by oral tradition*: Cavrois, *Cartulaire*, 127n.

*as Holy Writ says*: The French reads *l’an Jhu Crist*, perhaps referring to Luke 4:19 *annum Domini*.

*Brabanter*: Meaning, “an inhabitant of Brabant,” the region that once stretched from the south of what is now the Netherlands deep into the center of present-day Belgium.

*little sin*: Because Norman slew Itier’s brother, Itier is less sinful.

*fleur-de-lis*: The comparison is particularly apt, thanks to the strong associations of this stylized lily with the Virgin Mary.

*Queen of Glory*: Another title of the Virgin.

*May God have mercy on us*: The poet quotes in the original Latin the opening of Psalms 66 (67): 2 “Deus misereatur nostri.”

*mother of concord*: This French title for the Virgin corresponds to the Latin *mater concordiae*, commonplace in hymns and litanies.

*the Gospel recalls to us*: Though Luke’s is sometimes styled the Gospel of Mercy, the reference may well be to Matthew 5:7, 5:23–24.

*the Jews made him suffer*: The basis for this anti-Judaic trope was Acts 4:24–30.

*the Gospel*: Compare 1 John 2:9–11.

*charity is the principal*: 1 Corinthians 13:13 “And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

*We praise you, God*: Once again, a mention of the Latin hymn *Te Deum laudamus*.

*servant*: Luke 1:38 is the source of the biblical expression *ancilla Domini*.

*Saint Martial’s fire*: This is yet another name for the illness conventionally equated with ergotism. See Foscati, *Saint Anthony’s Fire*, 99, 118.

## 7. The Fiddler and the Holy Face of Lucca

*statue on a cross*: Hilary Maddocks, “Légende du Saint-Voult,” in Godfried Croenen and Peter F. Ainsworth, ed. *Patrons, Authors and Workshops: Books and Book Production in Paris around 1400*, Synthema 4 (Louvain: Peeters, 2006), 91–122. The most comprehensive investigations of the cult are Graziano Concioni, *Contributi alla storia del Volto Santo*, Accademia Lucchese di Scienze, Lettere e Arti: Saggi e Ricerche 11 (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2005), and Michele Camillo Ferrari and Andreas Meyer, ed. *Il Volto Santo in Europa: culto e immagini del crocifisso nel Medioevo: atti del convegno internazionale di Engelberg, 13–16 settembre 2000*, Collana La balestra 47 (Lucca: Istituto storico lucchese, 2005).

*bigger-than-life Christ*: To be precise, the Christ is 2.78 meters in height by 2.45 in width, the cross 4.34 by 2.65.

*long-sleeved tunic*: Sometimes called a colobium or a *tunica manicata* “sleeved tunic.” See Ernst Hagemann, “Zur Ikonographie des gekreuzigten Christus in der gegürteten Tunika,” *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 13 (1974): 97–122.

*cult of Holy Blood*: Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, “A l’origine du culte du Précieux Sang de Fécamp, le Saint Voult de Lucques,” *Tabularia: Sources écrites de la Normandie médiévale* 2 (2002): 1–8, and Jean-Guy Gouttebroze, *Le Précieux Sang de Fécamp: origine et*

développement d'un mythe chrétien, *Essais sur le Moyen Âge* 23 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), 51–64.

*textile imprinted with the image of Christ*: Andrea Nicolotti, *From the Mandyllion of Edessa to the Shroud of Turin, Art and Material Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 120–87 (Chapter 6, “An Overview of Iconography”), at 120–26.

*Dante Alighieri: Inferno* 21.48.

*Gospel of John*: 3:1–21, 7:50–51, and 19:39–42.

*Boncompagno da Signa*: The text at issue is his *Boncompagnus* (also known as *Rethorica antiqua*) 5.22.3 *De hereticis*, ed. Anton Emanuel Schönbach, “Beiträge zur Erklärung altdeutscher Dichtwerke II,” *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, philosophisch-historische Classe* 145, no. 9 (1902), at 88–89. Reprinted in Gustav Schnürer, *Sankt Kümmeris und Volto Santo* (Düsseldorf 1934), 163–64.

*Placentinus*: This Italian legist, who died in Piacenza in 1192, wrote prolifically.

*medieval French epic: Aliscans*, lines 4759–69, ed. Claude Régner, 2 vols., *Les classiques français du Moyen Âge* 110–11 (Paris: Champion, 1990), 1: 179; lines 4759–69, trans. Bernard Guidot and Jean Subrenat, *Traductions des classiques français du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1993), 132; lines 4821–31, ed. Claude Régner, trans. Andrée et Jean Subrenat, *Champion Classiques: Moyen Âge* 21 (Paris: Champion 2007), 328–31.

*A thirteenth-century poem: Dit des taboueurs* or “The Song of the Drummers,” strophes 20–22, ed. Achille Jubinal, *Jongleurs et trouvères, ou choix de saluts, épîtres, rêveries et autres pièces légères des XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: J. Albert Merklein, 1835), 164–69, at 167–68, and *Des taboueurs* or “On the Drummers” and *Les joueurs de tambour* or “The Drum Players,” ed. Willem Noomen, *Le jongleur par lui-même: choix de dits et de fabliaux, Ktēmata* 17 (Louvain: Peeters, 2003), 142–50 (even-numbered), at 148, and 143–51 (odd-numbered), at 149.

*mysterious dossier*: For the Latin of the *Relatio Leobini diaconi de revelatione sive inventione ac translatione et miraculis reverendi vultus Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, see Gustav Schnürer and Josef Maria Ritz, *Sankt Kümmeris und Volto Santo: Studien und Bilder, Forschungen zur Volkskunde* 13–15 (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1934), 127–34. Their text, not a critical edition, remains a stopgap. For an Italian translation, see Almerico Guerra, *Storia del Volto Santo di Lucca*, ed. Pietro Guidi (Sora: P. C. Camastro, 1926), 1: 1–9; the contents are summarized by Francesco Paolo Luiso, *La leggenda del Volto Santo—Storia di un cimelio* (Pescia: Benedetti e Niccolai, 1928), 9–12. Major elements in the account by Leobinus are included in Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia imperialia*, 3.24, ed. and trans. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 598–605. Gervase claimed to have read the *Gesta de vultu Lucano* or “The History of the Image of Lucca,” which may

have been identical with “The Report of the Deacon Leobinus” or may have included it in whole or in part.

*Leobinus*: The key name is sometimes Latinized as Leboinus. This form would correlate to Lebuin or Lebwin on the local vernacular, as opposed to Leobin in Frankish. In form the name looks to be not Luccan and local but of Frankish origin.

*nineteen manuscripts*: The extant manuscripts fall into two groups. In the first, all the earliest witnesses are French in origin, with six from the twelfth century and three from the thirteenth. The second is distinct from the first for including not only the *Relatio* but also a collection of miracles. In the second, the earliest manuscript dates from the early fourteenth century. All these codices are Italian, associated specifically with Lucca and Rome.

*revelation or discovery, transference, and miracles*: The terms *inventio*, *translatio*, and *miracula* have special valences in hagiography.

*the talent entrusted*: Talents were units of ancient Greco-Roman coinage. The reference is to the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14–30 and Luke 19:11–27. Before leaving on a trip, a master entrusted his property to his three servants, giving five talents to the first, two to the second, and only one to the third.

*the Lord's Supper*: Meaning “those who take communion.”

*Seleucius*: The appellation Seleucus, normally spelled without an *i*, was held by four Syrian kings, who ruled from the fourth century through the second century BCE. They are often termed the Seleucids. From their dynastic name derived the names of nine ancient towns, four of which hold importance for the Bible, in Syria, Mesopotamia, Cilicia, and Palestine. The character identified here may be named after one of the cities.

*This Nicodemus*: John 19:38.

*Issachar*: The name has deep roots in the Hebrew Bible, where Issachar was the ninth son of Jacob and the first of them born later to Leah (Genesis 30:18). He founded a tribe named after him.

*Joppa*: Situated on a rock hill thirty-five miles from Jerusalem, this city possessed a small harbor that appears in the Bible as the destination for cedar logs used in building and rebuilding the temple. It was also the port from which Jonah departed.

*candles and lamps*: These items are not part of the biblical account.

*pitch*: Mentioned explicitly in Genesis 6:14.

*Luni*: The ancient harbor of Luna was located on the northwestern coast of Italy, more or less midway between Genoa to the north and Livorno to the south. Its modern-day successor, with its final vowel changed to Luni, lies at the easternmost end of the Liguria region.

*the boys of the Jews sang*: This presents, in abridged form, the antiphon sung at the distribution of palms on Palm Sunday, which reads “Pueri Hebraeorum, portantes ramos olivarum, obviaverunt Domino, clamantes et dicentes: Hosanna in excelsis” (The children of the Hebrews, carrying olive branches, went forth to meet the Lord, crying out and saying: Hosanna in the highest!).

*lamb of God*: *Agnus Dei* identifies the prayer, based on John 1:29, that is said or (with a multitude of musical settings) sung in the Mass. This is the first verse, which is repeated once immediately and twice later.

*742*: On the debate among scholars between 742 and 782, see Pietro Guidi, “La data nella leggenda di Leobino,” *Archivio storico italiano* 18.2 (1933), 133–64.

*the most serene kings*: Carloman (d. 754) and his younger brother Pepin the Short (d. 768). After the death of their father Charles Martel in 741, they succeeded to their father’s position as mayor of the palace and duke of the Franks.

*church of Saint Martin*: The cathedral of Lucca is indeed dedicated to the fourth-century Saint Martin, third bishop of Tours.

*Syrian men who guarded the Lord’s sepulcher*: The church of the Holy Sepulcher, which stands in the Old City of Jerusalem, marks the place where Jesus was buried and resurrected. Before the Crusaders, the site was indeed reportedly held by eastern Christians.

*crown of thorns*: This object is mentioned in three Gospels, Matthew 27:29, Mark 15:17, and John 19:2 and 5. Individual prickles and larger pieces alleged to have come from it are found all over Europe (and in the United States).

*grove*: The account in the Gospel of John specifies a garden tomb, not a grove.

*Ramoth-Gilead*: Located east of the river Jordan, this was one of forty-eight cities in ancient Israel set aside for the tribe of Levi. Matthew 27:57 indicates that the body of Jesus was granted by Pilate to Joseph of Arimathea. Arimathea was sometimes identified with Ramoth-Gilead, and one notion was that Jesus was buried there.

*for fear of the Jews*: John 19:38.

*edited from two thirteenth-century manuscripts*: Gustav Schnürer, “Anhang: Die lateinische Spielmannslegende im Leboinus-Angang,” in appendix to Wendelin Foerster, “*Le Saint Vou de Luques*, altfranzösisches Gedicht des XIII. Jahrhunderts,” in *Mélanges*

*Chabaneau*: *Festschrift Camille Chabaneau zur Vollendung seines 75. Lebensjahres*, 4. März 1906, *dargebracht von seinen Schülern, Freunden und Verehrern* (Erlangen: F. Junge, 1907), 1–56, at 52–54. The same Latin text was reprinted, with a German translation, in Peter Spranger, *Der Geiger von Gmünd: Justinus Kerner und die Geschichte einer Legende*, 2nd ed. (Schwäbisch Gmünd: Stadtarchiv, 1991), 36–39. A large chunk of the French poem, at the latest from the beginning of the thirteenth century, that Foerster edits is concerned with the episode of the jongleur (named Genoio or in Latin Genesisius) at Lucca.

*Cinderella motif*: Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Cendrillon crucifiée. A propos du ‘Volto santo’ de Lucques,” *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public* 25.1 (1994): 241–70. The same author also wrote on the early knowledge and broad diffusion of the cult of the Holy Face in an oft-reprinted article: see Jean-Claude Schmitt, “La cité et son image: Lucques et le Volto Santo,” *Annali di storia moderna e contemporanea* 16 (2010): 229–48.

*longed to set out for the Lord’s tomb in Jerusalem*: More bluntly, “going on pilgrimage.”

*sign of the cross*: Medieval pilgrims often had crosses emblazoned on their tunics, imprinted on badges, or worn around their necks.

*hospice*: *matricula* can refer to a church with a hospice (Blaise) or to a hospice unattached to another institution (DMLBS).

*the most holy foot of the Face*: Thus the printed text. It is tempting but not necessary to emend to “the foot of the most Holy Face.”

*true searcher of the secrets of the hearts*: The phrasing fuses Wisdom 1:6 and Psalms 44:21.

## 8. The Fiddler and the Bearded Lady

*Kümmernis*: The foundational work on her and related figures remains Gustav Schnürer and Joseph M. Ritz, *Sankt Kümmernis und Volto Santo: Studien und Bilder, Forschungen zur Volkskunde*, vols. 13–15 (Düsseldorf, Germany: L. Schwann, 1934). A more recent overview of the research relating to her is Martin Kraatz, “Die heilige Kümmernis und ihre Erforschung zwischen Legende und Wirklichkeit,” in Sigrid Glockzin-Bever and Martin Kraatz, ed. *Am Kreuz – Eine Frau: Anfänge – Abhängigkeiten – Aktualisierungen, Ästhetik – Theologie – Liturgik* 26 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), 10–20.

*type of folktale*: Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, 1: 381 (ATU 706D).

*twentieth-century compendium on saints*: Herbert J. Thurston and Donald Attwater, ed. *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*, 2nd rev. ed., 4 vols. (London: Burns & Oates, 1956), 3:151–52 (July 20).

*These traditions are traceable:* On the iconography and history, see Friedrich Gorissen, "Das Kreuz von Lucca und die H. Wilgifortis/Ontcommer am unteren Rhein: Ein Beitrag zur Hagiographie und Ikonographie," *Numaga* 15 (1968): 122–48, and Georg R. Schroubek, "Sankt Kümmeris und ihre Legende," *Amperland* 24 (1988): 105–9, 125–30.

*replicas:* Reiner Hausherr, "Das Imervardkreuz und der Volto-Santo-Typ," *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft* 16 (1962): 129–67.

*a woman:* Ilse E. Friesen, "Virgo Fortis: Images of the Crucified Virgin Saint in Medieval Art," in *Virginité Revisited: Configurations of the Unpossessed Body*, ed. Bonnie MacLachlan, Judith Fletcher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 116–27, at 117 and 120.

*Wilgfortis:* Ilse E. Friesen, *The Female Crucifix: Images of St. Wilgfortis since the Middle Ages* (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 2001); David A. King, "The Cult of St. Wilgfortis in Flanders, Holland, England and France," in Glockzin-Bever and Kraatz, ed. *Am Kreuz – Eine Frau*, 55–97; Luc Devriese, "De vrouwelijke baardheilige Sint-Wilgfortis, Alias Ontcommer of Oncomena, een internationaal verspreide heiligenverering van Vlaamse makelij," *Van Mensen en Dingen: tijdschrift voor volkscultuur in Vlaanderen* 11, no. 3 (2013): 5–19; and Lewis Wallace, "Bearded Woman, Female Christ: Gendered Transformations in the Legends and Cult of Saint Wilgfortis." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30, no. 1 (2014): 43–63.

*The print:* Friesen, "Virgo Fortis," 116–20.

*saints and sites in Netherlandish regions:* For this hypothesis, see Friesen, "Virgo Fortis," 126n8.

*churches and homes:* Friesen, *Female Crucifix*, 48.

*God is wonderful in his saints:* The quotation in the heading is Psalms 67:36, as it reads in the Vulgate Latin Bible that was the norm in the Middle Ages. It is followed by a German paraphrase.

*except him alone:* At first glance this phrase may look as if it reads *sonder vm alt in*, but it is assuredly *sonder ym allein*, as translated here.

*makes her like him:* This assumes that God made her in his image, and hence male, in accord with Genesis 1:26.

*legend:* *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, first edition, 1812–1815 (reprinted Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 2: 293–94 ("Die heilige Frau Kümmeris"). The tale was no. 66 in this first edition, but it is numbered no. 152a in the complete edition.

*fairy tales*: The English “fairy tale” carries very different associations from the German Märchen.

*seventeenth-century collection of exempla*: Johannes Praetorius, *Gazophylaci Gaudium: Das ist, Ein Ausbund von Wünschel-Ruthen, oder sehr lustreiche und ergetzliche Historien von wunderseltzamen Erfindungen der Schätze Wünschelruthe* (Leipzig, Germany: Ritzsch, 1667), 152–53. See Johannes Bolte and George Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, 5 vols. (Leipzig, Germany: Dieterich’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1913–1932), 3: 241.

*German Legends*: *Deutsche Sagen*, no. 330: “Die Jungfrau mit dem Bart,” ed. Hans-Jörg Uther, 3 vols. (Munich, Germany: Diederichs, 1993), 1: 269–70.

*The Fiddler at Gmünd*: In German, “Der Geiger zu Gmünd.” For the text, see Justinus Kerner, *Werke*, ed. Raimund Pissin, 6 vols. (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong & Co., 1914), 2: 156–58. For exhaustive analysis, see Spranger, *Der Geiger von Gmünd*.

*Protestant*: Kerner, *Werke*, ed. Pissin, 2: 14.

*poor son of songs*: Kerner uses this distinctive tag twice more in the ballad. See Hermann Collitz, “Sunufatarungo,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 21, no. 4 (1922): 557–71, at 567–68.

*black procession*: The monks and nuns, if Benedictine, would wear black habits. Others in the procession may have worn similarly dark clothing because of the somber occasion.

## 9. The Dancer Musa

*Seven Legends*: The text took shape intermittently over the better part of two decades. On its genesis and constitution, see Dominik Müller, “Apparat,” in Gottfried Keller, *Sieben Legenden, Das Sinngedicht, Martin Salander*, ed. Dominik Müller, *Sämtliche Werke*, 7 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991), 6: 790–98; Karl Reichert, “Die Entstehung der Sieben Legenden von Gottfried Keller,” *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 57 (1963): 97–131; and Marianne Schuller, “*Sieben Legenden* (1872),” in Ursula Amrein, ed. *Gottfried Keller-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2018), 92–109, at 92–94.

*the pearl*: Albert Leitzmann, *Die Quellen zu Gottfried Kellers Legenden: nebst einem kritischen Text der “Sieben Legenden” und einem Anhang, Quellenschriften zur neueren deutschen Literatur* 8 (Halle an der Saale: M. Niemeyer, 1919), 163 “die Perle des Ganzen.”

*keystone to the little book*: Reichert, “Die Entstehung,” 115. For different conceptions of the cyclicity, see Karl Polheim, “Die zyklische Komposition der Sieben Legenden Gottfried Kellers,” *Euphorion* 15 (1908): 753–65, and Walter Morgenthaler, “Sieben

Legenden. Der Zyklus als Werk," in Walter Morgenthaler, ed. *Gottfried Keller. Romane und Erzählungen* (Stuttgart: Reclam 2007), 119–33.

*realist rather than a late romantic*: Gabriele Brandstetter, "De figura. Überlegungen zu einem Darstellungsprinzip des Realismus – Gottfried Kellers 'Tanzlegendchen,'" in Gabriele von Brandstetter und Sibylle Peters, ed. *De figura. Rhetorik – Bewegung – Gestalt* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2002), 223–45.

*treatment of Christianity*: Anya Banasik, "Gottfried Keller's Adaptation of Medieval Legends for the XIXth C. Audience," in Brenda Dunn-Lardeau, ed. "Legenda Aurea": *Sept siècles de diffusion: Actes du colloque international sur la "Legenda aurea": texte latin et branches vernaculaires à l'Université du Québec à Montréal, 11–12 mai 1983* (Montreal: Editions Bellarmin, 1986), 283–88, at 288.

*between sacralization and secularization*: On the context for this equilibrium in the influences to which Keller was exposed during his sojourn in Berlin, see Ursula Amrein, "'Als ich Gott und der Unsterblichkeit entsagte'. Zur Dialektik von Säkularisierung und Sakralisierung in Gottfried Kellers literarischen Projekten aus der Berliner Zeit 1850 bis 1855," in Hanna Delf von Wolzogen und Hubertus Fischer, ed. *Religion als Relikt? Christliche Traditionen im Werk Fontanes; internationales Symposium veranstaltet vom Theodor-Fontane-Archiv und der Theodor Fontane Gesellschaft e.V. zum 70-jährigen Bestehen des Theodor-Fontane-Archivs; Potsdam, 21. bis 25. September 2005*, Fontaneana 5 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 219–36.

*familiar with this detail*: Gabriella Cattaneo, "König David in Gottfried Kellers 'Tanzlegendchen,'" *Sprachkunst: Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft* 22, no. 1 (1991): 71–79.

*eroticism*: Though without references to our story, see Herbert Anton, *Mythologische Erotik in Kellers "Sieben Legenden" und im "Sinngedicht," Germanistische Abhandlungen* 31 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970).

*days of creation*: Antonius Weixler, "'Um modern zu reden': Gottfried Kellers Sieben Legenden zwischen Reproduktion und Restauration erzählerischer Archetypik," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 44, no. 2 (2019): 512–48, at 518–19.

*standard edition*: Ed. Müller (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991), 6: 790–98.

*tabrets*: The principal percussion instrument of the ancient Israelites.

*struck herself with a scourge*: The medieval ascetic practice of flagellation has attracted much attention in modern times. For a broad and provocative consideration, see

Niklaus Largier, *In Praise of the Whip: A Cultural History of Arousal* (New York: Zone, 2007).

*Gregory of Nyssa*: Younger brother of Basil of Caesarea and also born in the same city of Cappadocia, Gregory (ca. 330–ca. 395) was a rhetorician who became a churchman.

*Nazianzus*: Like Gregory of Nyssa, his namesake of Nazianzus (329–89) took part in the Council of Constantinople in 381.

*busy Martha*: This refers to the Martha who is described in Luke 10:38–42 and John 11:1–46. One of her siblings was Lazarus, whose resurrection by Jesus she witnessed. The other was Mary of Bethany. The differing behavior of the two sisters led to commonplace figurative interpretations. For the larger context, see Giles Constable, “The Interpretation of Mary and Martha,” in Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–141.

*Cecilia*: Supposedly a Roman virgin martyr of the third century. Having pledged her virginity to God, she refused to consummate her marriage. Her husband and his brother were martyred after she converted them. In rapid succession, she too was killed. She became associated with organ-playing and song.

*Pierian goddesses*: Pieria, just north of Olympus, was a region in ancient Macedonia. The Pierian spring, source of knowledge, was sacred to the Muses, who are therefore styled (as here) the Pierian goddesses. These nine sisters were born of the god Zeus and the goddess Mnemosyne.

*Terpsichore*: Muse of lyric poetry and dancing. Keller touches on five of the nine, omitting Calliope, muse of epic poetry; Clio, of history; Melpomene, of tragedy; and Thalia, of comedy.

*Polyhymnia*: Muse of hymns and pantomime.

*Euterpe*: Muse of flute-playing.

*Erato*: Muse of lyric poetry.

*Urania*: Muse of astronomy.

*Legenden or “Legends” of Ludwig Theoboul Kosegarten*: Leitzmann, *Die Quellen*, xxvii–xxviii.

*Kosegarten’s North German Protestantism*: Letter to Ferdinand Freiligrath, April 22, 1860, in Gottfried Keller, *Gesammelte Briefe*, 4 vols. ed. Carl Helbling (Bern: Benteli, 1950–1954), 1:264–69, at 268: “Ich fand nämlich eine Legendensammlung von Kosegarten in einem läppisch frömmelnden und einfältiglichen Stile erzählt (von einem norddeutschen

Protestanten doppelt lächerlich) in Prose und Verse. Ich nahm 7 oder 8 Stück aus dem vergessenen Schmöker, fing sie mit den süßlichen und heiligen Worten Kosegärtchens an und machte dann eine erotisch-weltliche Historie daraus, in welcher die Jungfrau Maria die Schutzpatronin der Heiratslustigen ist."

*Kosegarten's Legends*: 2 vols. (Berlin: Vossische Buchhandlung, 1804), 1:118–20 and 126–27. The legendary is divided into four books, the first of which is in verse. Kosegarten also versified the story in a poem entitled "Die Tänzerin," in *Dichtungen* 3:61 (cited by Leitzmann, *Die Quellen*, xlvi).

*Jeremiah*: Most of the two relevant verses (31:4 and 13) is quoted as the epigraph to Keller's tale.

*blessed in heaven*: This sentence refers especially to Matthew 5:3–10 and Luke 6:21–23.

*The Lives of the Saints*: For detailed bibliography on the genesis and dating of the 1502 text, see Werner Williams-Krapp, "Studien zu 'Der Heiligen Leben,'" *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 105, no. 4 (1976): 274–303, especially at 298–99. On the indebtedness of the early nineteenth-century author to the early sixteenth-century work, see Margaret D. Howie, "Kosegarten's *Legenden* and Sebastian Brant," *Modern Language Review* 18 (1923): 89–90, cites the book that can be identified as *Der heilge[n] leben nüv mit vil me Heilge vn[d] dar zu d' Passio[n] vnd die grossen fest dz lesen mit figure[n] zierlich vn[d] nutzlich de[n] mesche[n]* (Straßburg: Johannes Grüninger, 1502), vol. 1, fol. cxxiii<sup>a</sup>. According to Howie, the German closely matches a Latin version of the late thirteenth century in London, British Library, MS Add. 18, 929 (in Ward, *Catalogue*, 2:656). Kosegarten, *Legenden*, 1:XI, made no secret of his indebtedness to this source, along with many others.

*The chapter from Gregory the Great*: Book 4, Chapter 18, De transitu Musae puellae (On the passing away of the girl Musa), ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, trans. Paul Antin, 3 vols. Sources Chrétiennes 251, 255, 265 (Paris: Cerf, 1978–80), 3:10–11 (title) and 70–73 (text and translation). The Latin text, quoted from the earlier but more readily accessible edition in *PL* 77:149–430, at 348 (where the episode is numbered as Book 4, Chapter 17), is reprinted in Leitzmann, *Die Quellen*, xlv–xlvi.

*Sermons to the People*: A twenty-first-century edition of this cycle is in progress, but the volume that has appeared to date does not contain the sermon of interest here: Iacobus de Vitriaco, *Sermones vulgares vel ad status*, ed. Jean Longère, vol. 1, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 255 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). For the time being, we remain dependent on *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones*

*Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, no. 275, ed. Thomas Frederick Crane, Publications of the Folk-Lore Society 26 (London: Nutt, 1890), 115.

*sixteen medieval assemblages of Marian miracles*: See Albert Poncelet, “Miraculorum BV Mariae quae saec. VI-XV latine conscripta sunt Index postea perficiendus,” *Analecta bollandiana* 21 (1902): 241–360, at 254, no. 137; 266, no. 320; 288, no. 665; 294, no. 773; 311, no. 1031; 318, no. 1145; 319, no. 1161; 319, no. 1168; 324, no. 1240; 324, no. 1245; 324, no. 1247; 325, no. 1255; 345, no. 1592; 347, no. 1632; 348, no. 1640; and 348, no. 1652. For another battery of citations, see Tubach, *Index Exemplorum*, 114, no. 1424 “Dancing before Virgin.” The roll call of authors who wrote of Musa as a Marian miracle includes William of Malmesbury, Adgar, and Alfonso X. The definitive treatment of this material will be Kathryn Emily Dickason, “The Dance of Musa: The Life and Afterlife of a Forgotten Medieval Saint,” forthcoming in *Arts*.

## 10. The Roman Report of “The Old Mime-Player”

*The City of God: De civitate Dei* 6.10, ed. Bernhard Dombart and Alfons Kalb, 2 vols., Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1981), 1:269, lines 2–4.

*On Superstition*: In Latin, *De superstitione*. The parallel between “Our Lady’s Tumbler” and the Senecan passage was first pointed out a century and a quarter ago by Francesco Novati, “L’archimimus di Seneca ed il tombeor Nostre Dame,” *Romania* 25 (1896): 591, and later reexamined by Gustav Šamšalović, “Del tombeor Nostre Dame,” *Živa antika / Antiquité vivante* 10 (1960): 320.

*Seneca the Younger*: Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 4 BCE–65 CE). The qualification “the Younger” differentiates him from his father, the author Seneca the Elder.

## 11. The Persian Tale of “The Old Harper”

*attention of Persianists*: For instance, consider Fritz Meier, *Abū Sa’īd-i Abū l-Hayr* (357–440/967–1049): *Wirklichkeit und Legende*, Acta Iranica 11, Acta Iranica: Troisième série, Textes et mémoires 4 (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1976), 256–59, and Safoura Tork Ladani and Maryam Haghi, “The Self-Actualized Individual: A Comparative Study of the Characters in Rumi’s ‘Pir-e Changi’ and Anatole France’s ‘The Juggler of Notre-Dame’, Based on Jungian Archetypes and Maslow’s Psychological Theory,” *Literary Theory and Criticism* 5, no. 1 (2020): 31–48 (in Persian, with abstracts).

*Ebn Monawwar*: His name has been transmitted as both Nūr-al-dīn Moḥammad b. Monawwar b. Sheikh-al-Eslām Abī Sa’īd b. Abī Ṭāher Sa’īd b. Abī Sa’īd and Moḥammad b. Nūr-al-dīn Monawwar b. Abī Sa’īd As’ad b. Abī Ṭāher b. Abī Sa’īd.

*Abu Sa'id*: In later poetry often shortened to “Bu Sa'id”

*The Mysteries of Unification*: Asrār al-tawḥīd fi maqāmāt al-Sheikh Abi Sa'id, ed. Moḥammad-Rezā Shafi'i-Kadkani, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1987), 1: 107–8 (*Ḥekāyat*). The entire work has been put into English: trans. John O'Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness, or, The Spiritual Stations of Shaikh Abu Sa'id* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers in association with Bibliotheca Persica, 1992). The key noun in the title has also been rendered as “unicity.”

*khānaqāh*: A hostel for Sufi dervishes, usually with a spiritual master presiding over their meditations and mystical sessions.

*Hayra*: An affluent quarter in Nishapur, with a graveyard mentioned in other sources as well.

*Farid al-Din 'Aṭṭār*: For a monumental study on him, see Hellmut Ritter's *The Ocean of the Soul: Man, the World, and God in the Stories of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār*, trans. John O'Kane, *Handbuch der Orientalistik. Erste Abteilung, Nahe und der Mittlere Osten* 69 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

*Saints' Lives*: Farid al-Din 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkerat al-auliya'*, ed. Moḥammad-Rezā Shafi'i-Kadkani, 2 vols. (Tehran, 2019), 1:884. The whole section is part 2, no. 95, ed. Shafi'i-Kadkani, 1:865–923. The manuscript used is Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Aya Sofiya 313b (dated 716/1316). The work has been translated only partially into English, much abbreviated in A. J. Arberry, trans. *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya'* (“Memorial of the Saints”) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) and more extensively in Paul Losensky, trans. *Farid ad Din 'Attār's Memorial of God's Friends. Lives and Sayings of Sufis* (Mahwah, NJ: Pauline Press, 2009). Neither contains the passage translated here.

*seventy-two biographies*: A further twenty-five lives are added in 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkerat al-auliya'*, ed. Shafi'i-Kadkani.

*samā'*: A Sufi gathering where mystical and meditative verses are chanted, often accompanied by music and dancing, inducing a sense of communal ecstasy.

*Moṣibat-nāme*: Farid al-din 'Aṭṭār, *Moṣibat-nāme*, ed. Moḥammad-Rezā Shafi'i-Kadkani (Tehran, 2007), 424–26

*Facing Mecca*: As he would be if performing one of the five daily worships that are obligatory for Muslims.

*Mathnawi*: See *The Mathnawī of Jalāllū'ddīn Rūmī*, ed. and trans. with commentary Reynold A. Nicholson, 8 vols. (London: E. J. Brill, 1925–40), 1 (1925): 116–35 (Book 1).

*five separate sections*: In the edition by Nicholson the first appears on 1: 116, lines 1913–16; the second on 1: 126, lines 2072–79; the third on 1: 127, lines 2082–89, the fourth on 1: 128, lines 2104–2106, and the fifth on 1: 132–35, lines 2161–2317.

*Caliph 'Umar*: 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ruled from 633 to 644 as the second of the first four caliphs in Islamic history. He was noted for his austere asceticism and rigorous enforcement of religious laws.

*Esrāfil*: The archangel associated with the Day of Resurrection, which he heralds by blowing his trumpet.

*Venus*: The planet, known as Zohreh in Arabic and Persian, was depicted in astrological iconography (in the medieval West too) as a woman playing a lute, or holding a mirror.

*Yathrib*: The ancient name for Medina.

*Moh̄taseb*: Among other things, this important official functioned as a morality enforcer.

*musical mode of Iraq*: This is a musical mode in classical Persian poetry.

*the reed is not fit for secrets*: The phrase refers to the well-known beginning of Rumi's *Masnavi*, "Listen to the reed ..."

*Fāruq*: This epithet, meaning "distinguisher between right and wrong," designates 'Umar.

*The Garden of Lights*: Khvāju-ye Kermāni, *Rowzat al-anwār*, ed. Maḥmud 'Ābedi (Tehran, 2008), 65–67.

*bird-ewer*: Wine vessels, like the theriomorphic vessels called aquamanilia in medieval western Europe, were often fashioned in the shape of birds such as ducks or roosters with the beak acting as the spout.

*You who know our hidden thoughts*: On God's constant awareness of innermost thoughts and desires, see especially Qur'an 20.7.

*Oxus*: This is the Latin name often used for the major river in Central Asia commonly known as the Amu Darya.

*like an alif in a Kufic script*: alif is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet and usually has a vertical shape except in the early calligraphic script called Kufic, in which it is drawn slanted.

*The Sea of Chronicles*: Muḥammad Amīn b. Mīrzā Muḥammad Zamān Bukhārī (Ṣūfiyānī), *Muḥīṭ al-tavārīkh* (The Sea of Chronicles), ed. Mehrdad Fallahzadeh and Forogh Hashabeiky, *Studies in Persian Cultural History* 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 161–63;

English translation and commentary by the same authors (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 125–27. *Šufiyāni* denotes a former district within Bukhara.

*Anushirvān the Just*: The epithet *Anushirvān*, meaning “immortal soul,” followed by ‘ādel, “the just,” is a common way of referring to the Sasanian king Khosrow I, often idealized in later literature as a firm but just ruler.

*Mowlānā Jalāl al-Din Rumi*: As noted earlier, this is the full name for Rumi.

*In his Mathnawi*: The first four lines are quoted from *The Mathnawi*, ed. and trans. Nicholson, 1:116, lines 1913–14; the second, from 1:126, lines 2072–73.

*Jalāl Āl-Aḥmad, “The Setār”*: *Setār* (Tehran, 1948).

*The Old Harper*: The two stories by Āl-Aḥmad and Rumi are discussed by Qodrat-Allāh Ṭāher, “Moqāyesa-ye *Pir-e changi-ye Mowlānā va Setār-e Āl-Aḥmad*” (Mowlānā’s *Pir-e Changi* and Āl-Aḥmad’s *Setār* compared), *Farhang* 55 (Fall 1384/2005): 201–18.

## 12. The Hasidic Tale of “The Little Whistle”

*anecdote*: *Confessions*, pt. 2, bk. 12, ed. Jacques Voisine, *Bibliothèque du XVIIIe siècle* 18 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011), 764.

*early nineteenth century*: For the English of the earliest form, see Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, trans. and ed. *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Bestht]: The Earliest Collection of Legends about the Founder of Hasidism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1970), 221, no. 219 “The Hasid Who Prayed in the Field.” For guidance on the pages in the first edition and in the edition from 1922 prepared by Samuel Aba Horodezky, see the concordance on 219.

*Retellings of the legend*: Yitzhak Buxbaum, *The Light and Fire of the Baal Shem Tov* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 207–8 (“The Boy with the Flute”), and Gedalyah Nigal, *The Hasidic Tale*, trans. Edward Levin (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 259–60. The story has been adapted recently as a freestanding work of children’s literature by Richard Walters, *The Simple Shepherd: A Baal Shem Tov Picture Story* (privately published, 2008).

*Jewish folktales*: See Dan Ben-Amos, ed., *Folktales of the Jews*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 1:207–8 (“The Ignorant’s Prayer”), 211, nn. 22–27. The tale in question has been put into English in Micha Joseph bin Gorion, *Mimekor Yisrael: Selected Classical Jewish Folktales*, ed. Emanuel bin Gorion, trans. I. M. Lask (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 336 (no. 186 “The Pipe”); Sheldon Oberman and Peninnah Schram, *Solomon and the Ant, and Other Jewish Folktales* (Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills, 2006), 96–99, at 99; Lesli Koppelman Ross, *Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994), 207; Pinhas

Sadeh, *Jewish Folktales* (London: Collins, 1990), 396 (“The Shepherd’s Pipe”); Ellen Frankel, *The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993), 475 (“The Yom Kippur Flute”).

*Sefer Hasidim*: Ben-Amos, *Folktales of the Jews*, 1:207n22, citing *Sefer Ḥasidim: ‘al pi nosaḥ ktav yad asher be-Parma = Das Buch der Frommen: nach der Rezension in Cod. de Rossi No. 1133, 6, no. 6*, ed. Jehuda Wistinetzki (Frankfurt am Main: Wahrmann, 1924). The only English available is based not on the Parma manuscript followed by Wistinetzki but on the very different text transmitted in the Bologna one: see Sholom Alchanan Singer, *Medieval Jewish Mysticism: Book of the Pious* (Northbrook, IL: Whitehall Company, 1971), xx–xxi.

*the ignorant’s prayer*: For the fullest analysis of such stories, those with knowledge of Hebrew should consult Yoav Elstein (Yoʻav Elshtain), *Maʿaseh ḥoshev: ʿiyunim ba-sipur ha-Ḥasidi* [Studies in Hasidic tales] (Tel Aviv: ʿEḳed, 1983), 7–40.

*classification number*: Uther, *The Types of International Folktales*, 1:465 (ATU 827). The key motifs in this type are unrelated to the legend of interest to us: see Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, 2:376 (D2125.1 “Magic power to walk on water”) and 5:438 (V51.1 “Man who does not know how to pray so holy that he walks on water”).

*tale-type*: For a definition of this technical term and an exposition of its application in practice, see Ilana Harlow, “Tale-Type,” in Brown and Rosenberg, ed. *Encyclopedia of Folklore and Literature*, 641–42.

*two traditions*: Not too long ago, the Jewish story was adapted for Christian purposes in a children’s book: Melanie Anna Mitchell, *The Boy and the Flute: The Tale about a Pure Prayer* (n.p.: Palm Tree, 2016).

“*The Little Whistle*”: Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, trans. Olga Marx, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken, 1947–1948), 1:69–70, and one vol. (1991), 69–70.

### 13. The Western Reality of Religious Performers

*Paschal Baylon*: In Spanish, Pascual Bailón.

*one fond of dancing*: The onomastics assume that first syllable is a stem that derives from the Spanish verb *bailar* “to dance,” the second the augmentative *-ón* with an affective meaning that expresses a liking: see Eric O’Brien, “Omer Englebert’s The Last of the Conquistadors, Junípero Serra: A Critical Appraisal,” *The Americas* 13 (1956): 175–85, at 179.

*gypsy dance, before the statue*: On this episode, see Antonio María Marcet, “El pastor de Torrehermosa,” section 68 (“La danza de los gitanos”), *San Pascual: Boletín informativo*

*de las obras del templo* 17, no. 168 (July–August 1965), unpaginated. The episode is recounted in Ximenez, *Chronica*.

*dance in the Philippines*: On his ties to dance in general, see Ivan Innerst, *Saints for Today: Reflections on Lesser Saints* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 18.

*John Bosco*: In Italian, Giovanni Melchiorre Bosco.

*spiritual expression*: Ruth St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), 57. See also Suzanne Shelton, *Divine Dancer: A Biography of Ruth St. Denis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), and Janet Lynn Roseman, *Dance Was Her Religion: The Sacred Choreography of Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham* (Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, 2004).

*Society of Spiritual Arts*: Jane Sherman and Christena Schlundt, “Who’s St. Denis? What Is She?,” *Dance Chronicle* 10, no. 3 (1987): 305–29, at 318.

*dancing on Christian themes*: Suzanne Shelton, “St. Denis, Ruth,” in Cohen et al., *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, 5: 490–98, at 497; Shelton, *Divine Dancer*, 241–43 (on a possible connection through Norman Bel Geddes with Max Reinhardt’s *The Miracle*); Sandra Meinzenbach, “Tanz ist eine Sprache und eine Schrift des Göttlichen”: *Kunst und Leben der Ruth St. Denis, Beiträge zur Tanzkultur*, vol. 8 (Wilhelmshaven, Germany: Florian Noetzel, 2013), 200–5.

*denunciations of dancing*: Rachel K. McDowell, “Dance by Ruth St. Denis in Church Stirs Up a Presbyterian Row: Denominational Leader Presses for Disciplinary Action against Those Responsible for Her Appearance at Service in Park Avenue Chancel,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1935, 21. On the puritanical reaction to the dance, see Shelton, *Divine Dancer*, 244.

*Mireille Nègre*: See her autobiography, written with Mireille Taub, *Une vie entre ciel et terre* (Paris: Balland, 1990). Accounts can be found also in Jean-Roger Bourrec, *Mireille Nègre, “alliance”* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1984); Mireille Nègre and Michel Cool, *Je danserai pour toi* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1984); Mireille Nègre, *Danser sur les étoiles* (Paris: Balland, 1993).

*Nick Weber*: See his book, *The Circus That Ran Away with a Jesuit Priest: Memoir of a Delible Character* (Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, 2012).

*I Dance with God*: This translates the title of the Italian: Anna Nobili, with the assistance of Carolina Mercurio, *Io ballo con Dio: La suora che prega danzando* (Milan, Italy: Mondadori, 2013).

## 14. The Hungarian Tale of “The Fool”

*Dezső Malonyay*: In French his personal name was sometimes assimilated to Désiré, since in fact Dezső is the Hungarian form of Desiderius. His family name occasionally was spelled Malonyai, an obviously trivial variation.

*The Fool*: Dezső Malonyay, “A bolond,” *Budapesti Hírlap*, ser. 17, no. 342, December 10, 1897, 1–3. Later in the same year the text was reprinted in an anthology of short stories from the same newspaper: idem, *A Budapesti Hírlap tárcái* (Budapest, Hungary: Budapesti Hírlap, 1897), 6: 196–203.

*a French translation of his text*: Dezső Malonyay, “Le fou, légende hongroise,” trans. Adrien Remacle, in *Figaro illustré: Numéro de Noël*, December 1897, 221–26 (for the song, 224–25).

*Károly Aggházy*: The name is attested with minor variations, notably Carolus for Károly.

*exoticism or otherness and freedom*: See Wening Udasmoro, “Gypsies in Nineteenth-Century French Literature: The Paradox in Centering the Periphery,” *k@ta [sic]* 17, no. 1 (2015): 26–32.

*dismounts from her pedestal*: The authors of the medieval miracles took pains to emphasize either that the Virgin appeared from the vault or that at most an appurtenance (such as a candle or shoe) levitated miraculously from an image of her, Jesus, or a saint to a jongleur. Here Malonyay introduces a new motif: see Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, 2:41 (D435.1.1 “Transformation: statue comes to life”).

*The libretto was by Jenő Rákosi*: It was printed as *A bolond: Mese három felvonásban* (Budapest, Hungary, 1898). This first edition, 56 pages long, circulated much less widely than the reprint, 130 pages long, issued five years later (Budapest, Hungary: Budapesti Hírlap, 1903). A credit page following the title page acknowledges Dezső Malonyay for the story, the composer Béla Szábados for the music.

*holy fools*: Also called fools of God or fools for Christ (1 Corinthians 4:10). For a standard introduction to these figures in both western and eastern Christianity, see John Saward, *Perfect Fools: Folly for Christ’s Sake in Catholic and Orthodox Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

*camphor*: A solid, it evaporates without melting.

*big beads of the monk’s rosary*: The scene may contain comic obscenity. The rosary may have had large beads of the sort implied, but at the same time those big balls under the monk’s cloak could call to mind features of the male anatomy.

*pulling lengths of blue and red ribbons*: The author describes an improvised magic trick, based on the same illusion as the hat-trick.

*one could see*: With a quick swing of the lens, Malonyay captures the multiethnic complexity of trade in the Mediterranean.

*Ionian Sea*: A bay of the Mediterranean, with the Adriatic Sea to the north, southern Italy to the west, and Greece to the east.

*Trebizond*: Modern-day Trabzon in northeastern Turkey, a city on the Black Sea coast.

*Bay of Cádiz*: In the southwest of the Iberian peninsula.

*Caucasus Mountains*: The range where Europe and Asia meet, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

*Jews*: Malonyay connects members of this group with mercantile activity, but was he anti-Semitic? His description of the beatings they receive censures rather than champions the attackers.

*banging his head on the altar steps*: By a curious chance, this same motif of head-banging appears in a report given of a skit that Charlie Chaplin was once inspired to consider doing, after he had learned of the tumbler story.

## 15. Henri Pourrat, “Péquelé”

*the official writer of Pétainism*: Gisèle Sapiro, *La guerre des écrivains, 1940–1953* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), trans. by Vanessa Doriott Anderson and Dorrit Cohn, as *The French Writers’ War, 1940–1953* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 275 (for the quotation), 495.

*The Treasury of Tales*: *Le trésor des contes*, 13 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1948–1962).

*not much known*: Jack Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 135–51, at 139.

*recording on paper*: Anne Collinot, “Pourrat, Henri,” in *Dictionnaire du livre de jeunesse: La littérature d’enfance et de jeunesse en France*, ed. Isabelle Nières-Chevrel and Jean Perrot (Paris: Éditions du Cercle de la Librairie, 2013), 764.

*juggler*: Pourrat uses the noun *bateleur* rather than *jongleur*. His protagonist is a general physical performer whose routines include acrobatics and gymnastics at least as much straightforward juggling.

*assessment in English*: Henri Pourrat and *Le Trésor des Contes* (Charley's Forest NSW, Australia: Blue-Tongue Books, 2020). In French two major resources remain Bricout Bernadette, *Le Savoir et la Saveur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), and Dany Hadjadj, ed. *Henri Pourrat et le Trésor des Contes: actes du colloque organisé par la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l'Université Blaise Pascal, Maison des Congrès de Clermont-Ferrand 1er, 2 et 3 juin 1987*, Cahiers Henri Pourrat 6 (Clermont-Ferrand: Bibliothèque Municipale et Interuniversitaire de Clermont-Ferrand, Centre Henri Pourrat, 1988).

*children's literature*: For example, it was the acknowledged source of inspiration for Mark Shannon, *The Acrobat & the Angel*, illus. David Shannon (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999), note on the copyright page, and Sue Stauffacher, *The Angel and Other Stories*, illus. Leonid Gore (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 7–13, 74.

*Le Péquelé*: See Henri Pourrat, *Le trésor des contes*, 4 (1953): no. 16, and *Les fées*, ed. Claire Pourrat (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 233–39. Pourrat also published the story as “Le Conte du Péquelé,” *Marie* vol. 9, no. 6 (Nicolet, Québec, mars-avril 1956), 54–55 (502–03).

*péquenaud*: Also spelled *péquenot* or *pecnot*.

*begging friars*: Péquelé is so destitute that even mendicants are better off.

## Part 2

### 1. The Romance Philologists

*Finn*: Arthur Långfors, “Der Springer unserer lieben Frau,” *Romania* 29 (1900): 159.

*German*: Gustav Gröber, “Del Tumbeor Nostre Dame,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 4 (1880): 88–97; Hermann Wächter, “Der Springer unserer lieben Frau,” *Romanische Forschungen* 11, no. 1 (1901): 223–88, which brought into general circulation his doctoral thesis, “Der Springer unserer lieben Frau,” Inaugural-Dissertation, Bonn (Erlangen, Germany: F. Junge, 1899).

*Wendelin Foerster*: The original article appeared under the name of Wilhelm Foerster, “Del tumbeor Nostre-Dame,” *Romania* 2 (1873): 315–25.

*In 1907 he reminisced*: Wendelin Foerster, “Le saint vou de Luques,” *Romanische Forschungen* 23, no. 1 (1907): 1–55, at 1.

*Arsenal Library*: The Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal (Library of the Arsenal) was founded in 1757 and made a department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1934.

*Wildschütz*: In Czech, his birthplace is known as Vlčice; the nearby town, Trutnov; and the district, Krkonoše.

*Gaston Paris*: For a concise introduction, see Gerard J. Brault, "Gaston Paris (1839–1903)," in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, ed. Helen Damico, 3 vols., Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 1350, 2071, 2110 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995–2000), 2: 151–65. For far more comprehensive studies, see Ursula Bähler, *Gaston Paris et la philologie romane*, Publications romanes et française 234 (Geneva: Droz, 2004), and Michel Zink, ed., *Le Moyen Âge de Gaston Paris: la poésie à l'épreuve de la philologie* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004). For a helpful review of both books, see Peter Dembowski, "Gaston Paris Revisited," *Romance Philology* 62 (2008): 59–74.

*was scant*: Gaston Paris, *Romania* 9 (1880): 479.

*the thumbnail of the poem*: Gaston Paris, *La littérature française au moyen âge (XI<sup>e</sup>–XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1890), 208. *Medieval French Literature*, trans. Hannah Lynch (London: JM Dent & Co., 1903), 84–85. The author repeated this passage nearly verbatim in Gaston Paris, *Esquisse historique de la littérature française au Moyen Âge (depuis les origines jusqu'à la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: A. Colin, 1913), 146–47.

*crypt*: Foerster here puts the original word *croute* in quotation marks and leaves it untranslated into modern French, but a few lines later overcomes his hesitation about its meaning and calls it a crypt.

*who did not notice it*: This is the subject of the miniature that is found in the manuscript at the bottom of the first column on fol. 127r where our poem begins. [The folio numbering has been adjusted to today's standard.]

*MS Arsenal 3516, fols. 127ra–139rc*: [Foerster's citation has been altered to bring it into accord with the shelfmark used currently.]

*edition by Abbé Poquet* [This is the same edition with an illustration that would later inspire Anatole France in his handling of the story.]

*another in the libraries of Paris*: [In fact, Paris has a total of four manuscripts, since the Arsenal Library contains one other and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France two more. The fifth is in Chantilly.]

*Carpentier*: [The individual in question is Pierre Carpentier (1697–1767), a Benedictine of Saint-Maur (and therefore a Maurist), who left his monastery in 1741 for reasons of health and retired to the collège de Bourgogne. He could have had access to manuscripts in Paris from both locations.]

*Du Cange's glossary*: [Foerster used Charles Du Fresne Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, ed. Léopold Favre, 10 vols. (Niort: L. Favre, 1883–87), 8 (1887): 120, under *tombare*, where lines 133–38, 163, and 165–72 are quoted from an unidentified manuscript of the medieval poem.]

*Le Roux de Lincy*: [Foerster refers to the description of the codex by Antoine Le Roux de Lincy (1806–69) in Auguste Loiseleur-Deslongchamps, *Essai sur les fables indiennes et sur leur introduction en Europe, suivi du Roman des sept sages/publié pour la première fois, d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque royale avec une analyse et des extraits du Dolopathos, par Le Roux de Lincy, pour servir d'introduction aux Fables des XIIe, XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris: Techener, 1838), pp. XXXIX–XLIII (item 20, no. 283 [B.L.F.]). Today the closest examination of this codex is now Claudia Guggenbühl, *Recherches sur la composition et la structure du ms. Arsenal 3516* (Basel, Switzerland: A. Francke, 1998).]

## 2. The Medievalizer Félix Brun

*illustrated weekly*: *La France illustrée* 10, no. 443, May 26, 1883, 308.

*The Juggler of Notre Dame: Seven Legends for as Many Friends*: In the original French, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame: Sept Légendes pour autant d'amis*.

*a book on the Song of Roland*: Félix Brun, *Étude sur la Chanson de Roland* (Paris: E. Plon, 1876).

*town of Soissons*: See for instance the book that appeared soon after the World War I, Félix Brun, *Jeanne d'Arc à Soissons. Recherche sur Soissons et le Soissonnais au temps de la Pucelle (1429–1430)* (Meulan, France: A. Réty, 1920). See also the same author's *Notes biographiques sur Renaud de Fontaines, évêque de Soissons au temps de Jeanne d'Arc (1423–1442)* (Soissons, France: Imprimerie de G. Nougarede, 1912). In 1924 he published a monograph on an eighteenth-century Benedictine of Soissons.

*Bucy-le-Long*: Félix Brun, *Bucy-le-Long: notes pour servir à l'histoire, 1634–1815 ; Notes sur les Simon de Bucy et le vieux château de Bucy-le-Long* (Meulan, France: Impr. de A. Refy, 1909). Offprint from *Bulletin de la Société archéologique de Soissons*. Other publications relating to local history include Dom Muley, *Bénédictin de Saint-Crépin-le-Grand, de Soissons, et sa correspondance avec divers érudits (1774–1786)* (Compiègne, France: Imprimerie de Compiègne, 1924).

*Gautier de Coinci*: Félix Brun, *Gautier de Coincy et ses Miracles de Notre Dame* (Meulan, France: Imprimerie de A. Masson, 1888), 38–41.

*École des Chartes*: Literally, the School of Charters.

*medievalists: I am only a medievalizer*: The French nouns are, respectively, *médiévistes* and *moyenâgeux*.

*Abbé Auguste Riche*: The title *abbé*, corresponding to “Father” in English, was customary for low-ranking Catholic clergy in France. Auguste Riche published extensively, not the least on the Virgin Mary. He was a close friend of the French mining engineer turned sociologist, Frédéric le Play.

*Once upon a time*: The opening words of both the 1887 and 1890 versions signal the fairy-tale atmosphere of the tale.

*Miserere*: This Latin imperative appears in the phrase *Miserere mei, Deus* (Have mercy on me, God) that opens Psalms 51.

### 3. The Poetaster Raymond de Borrelli

*prize for poetry*: In 1885, 1891, and 1895.

*experience in combat abroad*: His *Arma* assembles the martial poetry by campaign, from Italy in 1859 through the Far East in 1884–85.

*printed three times*: *Les annales politiques et littéraires: Revue populaire paraissant le dimanche* 9, 2e semestre, no. 440, November 29, 1891, 344–45; Raymond de Borrelli, *Le Jongleur* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1892); and Raymond de Borrelli, *Rimes d'argent* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1893), 7–17.

*tumbler, minstrel, and jongleur*: Bretel, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, 104, on *tumeor* and *tumbeor*, *jugleur*, and *menestrel*.

*identified with the medieval period*: Marc Cels's 2004 *Arts and Literature in the Middle Ages* assumes that "During the Middle Ages in Western Europe, many people made their living by creating art for the Catholic Church and entertaining nobles and townspeople with music, acrobatics, juggling, and plays." Kris Bordessa's 2008 *Great Medieval Projects You Can Build Yourself* includes juggling sticks as one of the activities. *Fun with Medieval Stencils* (Dover) features juggling.

*Have you read Baruch?*: This epigraph alludes to an anecdote about Jean de La Fontaine, in which the opening question is followed by the comment "He was quite a fine genius." After being handed a Bible by his fellow poet Jean Racine, the French man of letters became taken with the prayer of the Jews in Baruch; this book, purportedly by a friend and secretary of the prophet Jeremiah, is not in the Hebrew Bible but appears in the Greek of the Septuagint and Latin of the Vulgate, as well as in other Bibles used in the Catholic Church. One implication of the little story is that the Holy Scriptures can hold their own as literature.

*Jacobus de Voragine*: This thirteenth-century Dominican friar wrote, among other things, a legendary or collection of saints' legends.

*The Golden Legend*: Jacobus de Voragine's Latin work enjoyed such admiration in the late Middle Ages that it became known simply as the *Legenda aurea* or The Golden Legendary, in acknowledgment of its popularity. After falling into disrepute in the sixteenth century, it regained favor again in the late nineteenth century, especially in

France, figuring saliently in Anatole France's first novel *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, Émile Zola's 1888 novel *The Dream*, and Émile Mâle's art-historical writings.

*I transcribe, at random, one of these stories*: Borrelli received or at least sensed criticism for this red herring, because when he reprinted "The Juggler" as the headlining piece in the 1893 collection of his poems, he appended a note to clarify that the story he tells is not in *The Golden Legend* and that this indication of supposed source is poetic license: see *Rimes d'argent*, 171n1.

*poor profession*: The poet makes his protagonist a struggling artist, a romantic commonplace that held sway throughout the nineteenth century.

*golden*: Here the adjective implies "happy and prosperous."

*fever*: Borrelli is the first to make illness the reason for which the juggler ends up in an abbey.

*called convents*: Hospitals in the European Middle Ages were run by the Church, most of them by monasteries.

*nave*: Running from the main entrance (often at the west end) to the choir, the nave offers the largest space for the congregation to occupy.

*transept*: The part of a church, typically extending from north to south, that transects the nave at a right angle. From a bird's-eye view, the union of the two structures resembles a cross.

*altar*: The altar in question may not be the high altar, but a subsidiary "Lady Altar" dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

*choir*: As the name implies, this is where the singers perform their portion of the service. The choir is located in the continuation of the space occupied by the nave, past the transept.

*loose-fitting garment*: The generic hospital gown, still long and loose, is nowadays called a johnny, in informal American English.

*worn handkerchief*: The poet describes the equivalent of what used to be a stock piece of equipment in images of so-called hobos, namely, a stick carried over a shoulder with a bandana tied up at the top to carry small belongings.

*Morning Star*: In medieval Christian and modern Catholic tradition, this title is given to the Virgin Mary. Just as the celestial object announces the coming of day, so Mary was the precursor for the salvation that Jesus Christ brought.

*I begin*: The performance starts with a display of manual dexterity.

*under this cup*: Borrelli describes a classic shell game.

*sacramental word*: Think of a conjuror's exclamation, such as "abracadabra!" Such pseudo-liturgical (and pseudo-Latin) language and the sleight of hand with which it sometimes comes in tandem are both called hocus-pocus.

*roses*: Among the many flowers with which the Virgin Mary is associated, this is her signature one. She is called by the titles "mystical rose" and "rose without thorns." The rosary, prayers said in her honor, recreates on earth garlands of roses in heaven.

*nine stars of gold*: Mary is often depicted with a crown of stars. In compliance with the portrayal of the woman in the vision of John (Apocalypse [Revelation] 12:1–5), the stars often number twelve.

*odd figures*: The iconography of both Romanesque and Gothic churches, in their porches and capitals, abounds in sculptures of monstrous races, fallen angels, jongleurs, and other such suspect creatures.

*tabernacle*: A container that holds the consecrated Eucharist. It is frequently located in the center of the high altar or in a special chapel. The Virgin Mary has a special metaphoric association with the tabernacle, since as the Mother of God she was the vessel of the body of Christ.

#### 4. The Writer Anatole France

*columns published in the popular press*: Anatole France, "M. Gaston Paris et la littérature française au Moyen Âge," in Anatole France, *La vie littéraire*, 4 vols., 2 (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1890), 264–74, at 266–67. The piece appeared first in the Saturday column France wrote for the Parisian newspaper *Le Temps*.

*Gaston Paris himself doubted*: Ursula Bähler, *Gaston Paris et la philologie romane*, Publications romanes et française, vol. 234 (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 27–28.

*indirect reliance on scholarship*: Alvida Ahlstrom, *Le Moyen Âge dans l'œuvre d'Anatole France* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1930), 53.

*The Juggler of Notre Dame*: In French, "Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame: Conte pour le mois de mai," *Le Gaulois*, 3rd series, no. 2811, May 10, 1890, first page.

*it reads*: The French is quoted in Anatole France, *Œuvres*, ed. Marie-Claire Bancquart, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 1:1421–22.

*The Literary Life*: In the original, *La Vie littéraire*, 2nd series.

*Arthur Meyer*: A French press baron of the Third Republic whose empire included the newspaper *Le Gaulois*.

*The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*: Anatole France, *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard, membre de l'Institut* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1881).

*review of the literary history*: "M. Gaston Paris," 2:269.

*simplicity lost*: For context, see Mariane Bury, *La nostalgie du simple: Essai sur les représentations de la simplicité dans le discours critique au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2004).

*noble savages*: See Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), and Lars Lönnroth, "The Noble Heathen: A Theme in the Sagas," *Scandinavian Studies* 41, no. 1 (1969): 1–29. It goes without saying that none of the characters in "Our Lady's Tumbler" is either truly savage or heathen.

*cultural and chronological primitivism*: For a classic study, see Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935). For more recent perspectives, see Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

*Blessed are the simple, for they will see God*: Matthew 5:3 and 8.

*short story, a genre*: The history and the bibliography of the genre have grown as long as the stories are supposed to be short. For basic orientation, see Ian Reid, *The Short Story* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1977).

*Juggler*: The French is *jongleur*. In both English and French, *jongleur* also signifies an all-round medieval entertainer or minstrel.

*Notre Dame*: *Our Lady* would be another option in English for the French phrase, which serves to designate Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, in liturgical contexts. In addition, the French phrase, when hyphenated, is the usual name for a building dedicated to her, such as the Parisian cathedral made famous in the 1831 novel known in English as *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, by the French writer Victor Hugo.

*King Louis*: At least a dozen French monarchs from the Middle Ages bore this name. The sanctity of the miracle related would be compounded if it took place during the realm of Louis IX, who after having ruled as a king was in due course canonized as a saint. The identification of a ruler is Anatole France's innovation, not an element retained from the thirteenth-century poem.

*Compiègne*: Setting the story in a town sixty miles north of Paris, in Picardy, is another invention of the nineteenth-century storyteller. Joan of Arc, patron saint of France, was captured beneath the city walls there in May 1430, shortly before being burnt at the stake as a heretic.

*Barnaby*: Barnabé in French, related also to the English Barney. This element, not in either the medieval poem or exemplum, is a particular that Anatole France supplied. The name, transmitted to the West from Aramaic by way of Greek, belonged to a Jewish disciple of Jesus, mentioned repeatedly in the New Testament, especially in the Acts of the Apostles. He appears occasionally in subsequent texts, including apocrypha, and art. A later holy man called Barnabas, not much known later, was a cave dweller in Jordan. Since Anatole France, Barnaby has been taken often as a nom de théâtre by jugglers.

*sin of Adam*: This refers to the aftermath of the Fall, as recounted in Genesis 3:17–19.

*cicada*: This, or locust, is a literal translation of Anatole France’s word. In the canonical French of Jean de La Fontaine’s “The Cicada and the Ant,” the first insect fulfills the role conventionally taken by the cricket or grasshopper in English adaptations of the Aesopic fable. Such springing creatures, with traits of athleticism and high-pitched sound, make a good likeness for the performer in the short story. Anatole France may have been drawn to the fable partly through two anticlerical artworks from 1875 by the painter Jean-Georges Vibert, which represented under the title *The Grasshopper and the Ant* a medieval minstrel (representing the first insect) and monk (standing for the second): see Fig. 53.



Fig. 53: Jehan Georges Vibert, *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, 1875. Oil on canvas, 61.6 X 85.1 cm, Omaha, NE, Joslyn Art Museum. Gift of Francis T. B. Martin. Image courtesy of the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE. All rights reserved.

*Marie de France*: A poet active in England from around 1160 to 1215, she wrote in Anglo-Norman French. Her reputation rests on fables, lays, and a work entitled *The Purgatory of Saint Patrick*. The fable referenced here is entitled “Of a Cricket and an Ant.”

*cold and hunger in the winter months*: This passage may allude to Borelli, lines 16–20, in Part 1, Chapter 3, above.

*a simple heart*: In the late nineteenth century, medieval people in general were regarded as having been simple, naïve, ingenuous, and childlike, perhaps especially in their faith and goodness.

*took the name of God in vain*: This alludes to the prohibition of blasphemy in the Ten Commandments: see Exodus 20:7.

*covet his neighbor's*: This trait also points to the decalogue, in this instance the injunction against adultery: see Exodus 20:17.

*Samson*: The last of the judges mentioned in the Book of Judges in the Hebrew Bible, Samson had immense strength that he would lose if he violated a vow by allowing his hair to be shorn. His lover Delilah, by having a servant cut his locks, enables his enemies, the Philistines, to capture him.

*Madam*: This formulation corresponds to the Italian *Madonna*, meaning "My Lady." As in *Notre Dame*, the noun derives from the Latin *domina*. Whereas the plural possessive of the phrase is used in the liturgy and other Church contexts, the singular of *Madam* is appropriate when a supplicant addresses Mary.

*mystery play*: In the literature of medieval western Europe, this is the term used for long cycles of dramas in the spoken languages. The genre depicts the spiritual history of humanity, mainly from the creation of the world through the resurrection of Christ.

*confess*: The French verb *confesser*, implying a religious act, is appropriate in view of Barnaby's interlocutor, as opposed to *avouer*, which would befit a legal confession.

*singing the office*: The divine office is a service chanted by monks, priests, and other clergy at appointed hours during the day. It comprises prayers and psalms.

*the Office of the Very Holy Virgin*: Better known as the Hours of the Virgin or the Little Office of Our Lady, this is a changing cycle of psalms, hymns, and readings from the Scriptures and other texts, to honor the Virgin Mary.

*Soissons*: This municipality, site of a beautiful Gothic cathedral, is located in northern France, in Picardy. It was the deathplace of the poet Gautier de Coinci, who will appear soon in the story.

*Beauvais*: Another city in northern France, in Picardy.

*men of good will*: The expression is drawn from the Gospel verse that is partly paraphrased at the end of this sentence. The utterance is addressed by an angelic host, to the shepherds who have just been told of Christ's birth.

*our Lord said*: The phrase refers to Luke 2:14 (here in the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate): "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." There the words are not spoken by Jesus.

*prior*: This term commonly designates the head of a religious house, such as a monastery.

*scholasticism*: This noun refers to the philosophy taught in medieval European schools, especially its universities, that sought to fuse Aristotelian logic with the doctrines of the early Church Fathers, so as to bring into accord reason and faith.

*vellum*: Strictly speaking, this is a writing surface made from the skin of a calf. Often vellum serves more broadly as a synonym for parchment, which designates the hide of any animal prepared for such use.

*miniatures*: From the Latin *minium* for “red lead,” this term has often been applied to the paintings that sometimes embellished medieval European manuscripts. In the late Middle Ages those books and consequently the art in them could be very small.

*In them, you could see*: Anatole France describes meticulously the frontispiece in a manuscript of Gautier de Coinci that he had seen reproduced from the so-called Soissons manuscript, today Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises MS 24541, fol. 175r, in the edition by Abbé Alexandre-Eusèbe Poquet, *Les miracles de la Sainte Vierge, traduits et mis en vers par Gautier de Coincy* (Paris: Parmentier; Didron, 1857).

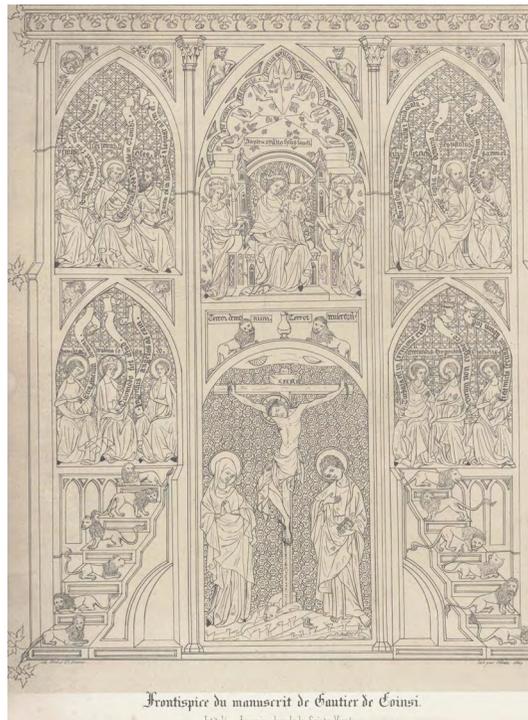


Fig. 54: Scenes of Christ, the Virgin, and saints. Lithography by François Le Villain, 1849, after an original manuscript illumination, 1857. Artist unknown. Published in Gautier de Coinci, *Les miracles de la Sainte Vierge*, ed. and trans. Alexandre Poquet (Paris: Parmentier, 1857), frontispiece.

*the throne of Solomon*: The ceremonial chair of the biblical king is described in 1 Kings 18–20.

*the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit*: They are enumerated in Isaiah 11:2.

*the Well of Living Waters*: This and the other items in the first list refer to the biblical Song of Solomon, especially 2:2 (lily), 4:12 (garden enclosed), 4:15 (well of living waters and fountain), 6:10 (moon and sun).

*the Canticle*: This signifies the Canticle of Canticles, the book of the Bible also known as the Song of Songs or Song of Solomon.

*the Gate of Heaven*: This barrier is mentioned in Genesis 28:17 and Revelation 21:21.

*the City of God*: This expression appears often in the Bible in reference to Jerusalem and Zion. In particular, see Psalms 46:4–5 and 48:1–3.

*the Virgin*: By allegorical interpretation, she is meant to be understood as present in all these images.

*prophet said*: The speaker is Solomon; the verse, Song of Solomon 4:12.

*Psalms 21:11*: In this instance Anatole France himself provides the citation of the biblical verse.

*a Picard*: This designates a person from Picardy, in the northern part of what is now France. The reference is to Gautier de Coinci, a Benedictine monk from this region who lived from 1177 to 1236. As a poet, he wrote a much-admired collection of miracles of the Virgin.

*vulgar tongue*: This means the spoken language. In this case the vernacular in question is now called Old French.

*artless*: The adjective gets at his ignorance of the liberal arts and fine arts.

*madam Virgin*: The turn of phrase indicates the simplicity of Barnaby. It is hard to translate, since *Mrs.* or *Ms.* would not have the right ring.

*counted off by feet*: The wording refers to the scansion and rhythm of verse, especially in Latin.

*story of a monk*: Anatole France knew the story that he now recounts from Gautier de Coinci's *Les Miracles de Notre Dame* 1.23, but only indirectly: his immediate source was Gaston Paris: Anatole France, "M. Gaston Paris," in *La Vie littéraire*, 2:268–69.

*Hail Mary*: On this prayer, see the note to Part 1, Chapter 1.A "Our Lady's Tumbler," line 31.

*five roses*: This motif refers to a miracle that Mary caused, to celebrate a monk who said daily five psalms to honor the five letters—M-A-R-I-A—of her name in Latin.

*liberal arts*: In the European Middle Ages, these disciplines were customarily seven, divided into a first group of three (the trivium of grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and a second of four (the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music).

*mechanical arts*: These were applied sciences.

*Dom*: This title derives from the Latin *dominus*, for lord. It remains a well-established honorific among Benedictine monks.

*they saw the Holy Virgin descend*: France does not state that the image comes to life but rather that Mary herself appears.

*blue*: This color has been favored in western art across the ages for the clothing of the Virgin. To be specific, blue has long been standard for the mantle worn by statues and paintings of the Madonna in French churches.

*mantle*: The garment has been common in many visual representations of the Virgin, from the Byzantine era until today, as the key attribute of Mary in her guise as the Mother of Mercy. Within this long cloak she shelters the faithful who pray for her aid.

*Blessed are the simple, for they will see God*: Anatole France restates and merges elements from two (the first and sixth) of the eight blessings, known as the beatitudes, pronounced by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. The first and the sixth read, respectively, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” and “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:3 and 8).

*Amen*: The exclamation entered Western European languages through the Church. Latin took it from Greek, which in turn derived it from Hebrew. In Hebrew it is a noun meaning “certainty” or “verity,” related to a verb meaning “to confirm.” The ecclesiastic usage in the liturgy draws upon the Bible, where the word is found in Hebrew to mark the end of prayers or professions of faith.

*kissing the ground*: The gesture expresses homage, because the Holy Virgin set foot there.

## 5. The Composer Jules Massenet

*Griséïdis*: This story is most familiar to audiences of English-speakers through the “patient Griselda” of “The Clerk’s Tale” in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

*signs of Wagnerism*: Steven Huebner, “Massenet and Wagner: Bridling the Influence,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5.3 (1993): 223–38.

*a fanciful anecdote*: Jules Massenet, *My Recollections*, trans. H. Villiers Barnett (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1919), 231–35. For analysis, see Demar Irvine, *Massenet: A Chronicle of His Life and Times* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1994), 229–30.

*deeply learned Léna*: Maurice Léna, “Massenet (1842–1912),” *Le Ménestrel*, issue 4422, vol. 83, no. 4, January 28, 1921, 33–34, at 33.

*riven cultural politics of France*: See John McManners, *Church and State in France, 1870–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

*Mary Garden*: Her autobiography, cowritten late in life, is rollickingly unreliable: see Mary Garden and Louis Biancolli, *Mary Garden’s Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951). For a commensurately solid biography, see Michael T. R. B. Turnbull, *Mary Garden* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1997).

*vehement wishes of the composer*: Massenet, *My Recollections*, 238.

*The following translation*: By way of comparison, see *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame: Miracle Play in Three Acts*, trans. Charles Alfred Byrne (New York: C. E. Burden, 1907), and *Our Lady’s Juggler: Miracle in Three Acts*, trans. Louise Baum (Paris: Au Ménestrel, Heugel et Cie, 1911).

*traditional elm*: These trees, rendered all but extinct by disease in the second half of the twentieth century, were once prized for their shade and often planted in public spaces.

*statue of the Virgin*: Sculptures of Mary are commonly placed on or above the portals of medieval abbey churches.

*month of Mary*: Since the Middle Ages, special devotions, such as a May crowning, have been enacted in Catholic churches to honor the Virgin Mary as the queen of this month.

*market day*: Market towns had the right to host, on one or two days a week, a regular gathering for the purchase and sale of commodities. The place, usually open-air, was in many cases (as here) a town square.

*shepherd step*: The *bergerette*, translated here as “shepherd step,” is a form of pastoral song and dance associated with (as the French element *berger* presupposes) shepherds and shepherdesses.

*Lady of Heaven*: This phrase, which Jean himself employs later, rings a slight change upon Queen of Heaven, a long-established title given frequently to the Virgin Mary.

*Pierrot*: This name, a diminutive of Pierre, was laden with humble associations in French culture. In pantomime, Pierrot was a male character easily recognizable by his white face, baggy white costume, and peaked hat.

*Pierrette*: This feminine diminutive was Pierrot's female counterpart. The two often came as a couple.

*young prince*: The French here has *dauphin*, a term that designated the eldest son of the king of France.

*green sauce*: A preparation of chopped herbs, without set ingredients but often made with parsley and sage.

*Indulgences*: In the medieval Roman Catholic Church, grants known by this name were sold to remit punishments that remained due for sins after absolution.

*vielle*: This term, pronounced 'vyel in English, denoted stringed instruments that ranged from a protoviolin or -viola to a hurdy-gurdy with keys, strummed by a hand-cranked wheel.

*grasshopper*: As observed in relation to the cicada in Anatole France's story, a close relationship was seen between this insect and the juggler. An affinity between the two is hinted at in the American tradition too, in Edwin Markham's poem (see Part 2, Chapter 8).

*Praise be*: Noël, associated mainly with Christmas, developed from being a cry of joy for the birth of Jesus to being one for the arrival of a king and other such major events.

*King Starvation*: This figure, not grounded in any given source, surfaces across time and space in European culture. In English, see for example William Gaspey, "Poor Law Melodies," in *Poor Law Melodies, and Other Poems* (London: Longman, Brown, & Co., 1842), 5–13, at 7: "Where King Starvation reigns supreme, / And plenty is—a pauper's dream!"

*Wise clerics who can read*: This line is drawn verbatim from Léon Gautier, *Les épopées françaises*, 2nd ed. (Paris: H. Welter, 1892), 2:114, which describes a medieval juggler as he musters an audience.

*round*: The term refers to a dance done in a circle to the accompaniment of music.

*Lanturli*: This nonsense word, along with its close relative *lanturlu*, has a long history, reaching back at least to the seventeenth century: see Gustav Thurau, *Der Refrain in der französischen Chanson: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Charakteristik des französischen Kehrreims*, *Litterarhistorische Forschungen* 23 (Berlin: Emil Felber, 1901), especially 119–22.

*virelonlaine*: These syllables call to mind the *virelai*, a late medieval French genre. Along with the ballade and rondeau, it was one of three "fixed forms" of lyric set to music.

*begging bowl*: Beggars held out such dishes in which they received food and other gifts, called alms.

*out of a hat*: The so-called hat-trick is a classic, in which a magician produces objects from an apparently empty hat.

*hoop dance*: Today this designation is associated mainly with Native Americans, but since ancient times dancers worldwide have employed hoops, especially of wood, in many ways.

*salut d'amour*: The term refers to a type of medieval Occitan lyric as cultivated by troubadours. The genre of "love greeting" purported to be a letter, following the conventions of so-called courtly love, written from one lover to another.

*olifant*: In the Middle Ages this musical instrument was a horn made from an elephant's tusk. The most famous was the one carried by the title character in the medieval French epic *Song of Roland*, which the juggler soon identifies for short by its hero's name.

*Roland*: Here reduced to just the name of its leading character, the celebrated *Song of Roland* (*Chanson de Roland* in French) is an epic of the eleventh century in the genre called *chanson de geste*.

*Bertha of the Big Feet*: Adenet le Roi, a professional poet of the late thirteenth century, wrote a *chanson de geste* entitled *Berte aus grans piés*. This long narrative poem contains some elements more typical of romance than epic. It deals with the circumstances that resulted in the conception of Charlemagne, son of Pepin the Short and Bertha, daughter of a Hungarian king. For an English translation, see Anna Moore Morton, trans. *Bertha of the Big Foot (Berte as grans piés): A Thirteenth-Century Epic by Adenet le Roi*, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 417 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2013).

*Renaud de Montauban*: This is one title for a massive anonymous French epic of the early thirteenth century, also known as *Quatre fils Aymon* (The Four Sons of Aymon), the most popular in a group designated the Rebellious Vassal Cycle. Alongside Roland (or Orlando, in Italian), Renaud, under the Italian form of his name Rinaldo, played important roles in later chivalric romances by Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso. The French poem was well known at the fin de siècle and in the Belle Époque, thanks to having been illustrated in a much-esteemed edition of 1883 by Eugène Grasset, a Swiss-born artist who was styled the father of art nouveau.

*Charlemagne*: As suggested by the mentions of epics about Roland and Bertha, many *chansons de geste* center on the famed Charles the Great, King of the Franks from 768, King of the Lombards from 774, and Emperor of the Romans from 800. No single narrative can be identified as the referent here.

*Pepin*: Charlemagne had three ancestors of considerable importance by this name, Pepin I, Pepin II, and Pepin III the Short (d. 768). One index of the close relationship is that the family of these Frankish leaders has been called both the Pippinids and the Carolingians.

*In vino veritas*: This maxim, the Latin for “in wine, truth,” has roots in ancient Greek literature but became established in modern culture thanks to the cachet of Erasmus’s proverb collection *Adagia*.

*Credo of the Drunkard*: The first word, meaning “I believe” in Latin, can denote various statements of faith in the Christian Church, especially the Nicene Creed. Such mainstays of the liturgy were often parodied in medieval literature, though no record exists of a parody called *Credo of the Drunkard*: see Paul Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1963), and Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

*Te Deum*: From a phrase meaning “We praise you, God,” these two Latin words indicate an anonymous hymn written in 387 CE.

*Hippocras*: a drink, often heated, concocted from sweetened and spiced wine. The noun, capitalized here, derives from the name of its purported inventor, Hippocrates, a Greek physician born ca. 460 BCE and died ca. 370 BCE.

*Gloria*: A famous hymn with the incipit *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (“Glory to God in the highest”) and the doxology or short prayer of praise that begins *Gloria Patri* (“Glory be to the Father”) are both called *Gloria* for short.

*Ruddy-Face*: The wording in French makes even more explicit that this epithet refers to a person red-faced from drinking.

*Hallelujah*: This interjection, equivalent to the Latin *alleluia*, derives ultimately from the Hebrew *hallēlūyāh* meaning “praise ye the Lord.”

*you, Jesus, sweet little child*: The audience is expected to take as a given that a representation of the Virgin will naturally include not only her but also the infant Jesus.

*belly pagan*: This conception owes ultimately to Saint Paul, especially Philippians 3:19 and 1 Corinthians 6:13

*Pater Noster*: The Latin for “Our Father,” these are the initial words of the Lord’s Prayer. The prayer was often parodied.

*The wine, it’s God*: The sacrilege here is intense. In the Christian rite of the Eucharist, sacramental bread and wine call to mind the Last Supper and in turn Christ’s sacrifice of his body and blood on the cross.

*Ave*: In Latin the first two words of the prayer known in English as the Hail Mary are *Ave Maria*. See the note to Part 1, Chapter 1.A “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” line 31.

*Beautiful Venus*: This Roman goddess was associated with beauty and sexual love.

*aged wine*: The positive changes that fine wines may undergo through aging have been valued at the latest since ancient Rome, but such appreciation was unknown or at least very uncommon in the Middle Ages.

*potion of love*: Though the science has been disputed and debated, tradition has long held that moderate consumption of red wine heightens sexual arousal in both women and men.

*Drink no water*: In modern times the view has become widespread that medieval people made a regular practice of avoiding drinking water. In fact, they may have relied on wine, beer, mead, and other fermented drinks when fresh water was unavailable, but support is weak for the belief that they shunned H<sub>2</sub>O.

*cardinal*: The joke is that from all the drinking, his nose resembles the bright red vestments that this church dignitary typically wears.

*balladeer*: The French *baladin*, referring to a wandering minstrel and carrying pejorative connotations, derives from Occitan. Its root element relates to dance.

*green*: The devil was often depicted as being or wearing green. On this convention, see D. W. Robertson, “Why the Devil Wears Green,” *Modern Language Notes* 69.7 (1954): 470–72, and Joseph L. Baird, “The Devil in Green,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 69, no. 4 (1968): 575–78.

*pitchfork*: This attribute of the devil in medieval iconography has been traced back to the trident of the ocean god known in Greek as Poseidon and in Latin as Neptune as well as to objects associated with gods in other ancient mythologies.

*flames and iron*: *Feu* and *fer* were sometimes paired figuratively in French to evoke the violence of war or even violence and cruelty in other contexts. The alliterative combination of *flammes* and *fer* here, meaning something like “hell and brimstone,” seems to be related.

*saint dear to the Virgin*: Jean is the French name that corresponds to John in English. By this remark the prior means John the Baptist, whose mother Elizabeth has been taken traditionally to be Mary’s cousin.

*Freedom*: As in most other European languages, *Liberté* is grammatically feminine in French. Consequently, it was customarily personified as a female. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Liberty was widely depicted, on coinage and elsewhere, as an attractive young woman.

*silver of the waters*: For obvious reasons, light playing upon water, especially on moonlit nights, has inspired comparison with the metal silver.

*gold of the blond harvest*: Mown hay and to a lesser extent wheat are often described as being gold and blond.

*diamonds of the nights*: Stars, because of their bright sparkle in dark skies, have long been likened to these precious stones.

*in a ditch*: The prior here refers to what was once a fairly common curse “And you will die in a ditch!” See B. Montgomerie Ranking, “On the Advantages of Dying in a Ditch,” in John C. Freund, ed. *The Dark Blue*, vol. 1 “March to August 1871” (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1871), 685–87.

*without anyone to give you confession*: The threat of dying unshriven—not having been given confession—was also formerly a routine malediction, since the person who died without having confessed and without having been absolved would not be fully prepared for the afterlife.

*vile rag*: Isaiah 64:6 (King James) “filthy rags.”

*Lent*: The forty days preceding Easter were the longest and most important period of fasting in the European Middle Ages. For six weeks, Christians gave up all meat and dairy.

*beans and salted herring*: A traditional recipe for Lent in various regions of Europe was (and remains) a potato salad with white beans and pickled herring.

*major feast days*: The French means literally “feasts when the carillon is sounded.” These days, to commemorate saints, were celebrated with feasting and other rejoicing.

*Boniface*: The name derives from Latin elements meaning “good fate,” but it would connote “cheery face” in French.

*flowers she loves*: The Virgin has been associated with numerous blooms, many of them in the catalogue that follows.

*leeks*: These vegetables, along with the cabbage mentioned two lines down, recall the jingle of the vendors in Act 1, Scene 1.

*Mâcon*: The Mâconnais region, though it receives less attention from oenophiles than does northern Burgundy, has long produced many fine vintages.

*Benedicite*: This term, the plural imperative in Latin meaning “Bless!,” refers to both a canticle of praise used in the matins service and (as here) a grace said at table in monasteries and other religious communities. The canticle is found in “The Song

of the Three Holy Children,” an apocryphon inserted after Daniel 3:23 in the Latin Vulgate Bible.

*Nos et ea quae sumus sumpturi, benedicat dextera Christi:* This traditional grace may be said before a meal. The benediction may be translated: “May Christ’s right hand bless us and the foods we are about to consume.”

*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti:* This is the Latin of the Trinitarian formula, a blessing originally in Greek that figures heavily in many parts of the liturgy and that conveys the fundamental Christian concept of the Godhead as one God in three persons: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

*To the table:* The summons to lunch could be translated more idiomatically as “Time to eat!” or even “Come and get it!”

*Assumption Day:* This feast, on August 15, celebrates the bodily ascent of the Virgin Mary to Heaven at the end of her life.

*Ave coeleste liliū:* The Latin that begins here reads “Hail heavenly lily; hail splendid rose; hail mother of the humble, commanding to the proud. In this vale of tears, give strength and bring aid.” This text is found with nearly identical wording as a prelude to open the month of Mary in Humbert, *Mois de Marie tiré des Pères de l’Eglise et des mystères* (Lille: Desclée, 1884), 1.

*humiliū, Superbis imperiosa:* These words recall a famous line in Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.853 “parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos” (to spare the conquered and subdue the proud). In many printings of the libretto the text often reads “Superis imperiosa,” which could be translated (awkwardly) as “commanding to those in heaven.”

*vale lacrymarum:* The phrase “vale of tears” owes to the Latin Bible, Psalms 83:7 [Septuagint]. It recurs later in the Marian hymn and antiphon, “Salve, regina.”

*Queen of angels:* This title is found in the Litany of Loreto. The list, which honors the Virgin by invoking many titles for her, was attested first in Loreto in 1531 and approved officially by the Church in 1587, but probably originated far earlier. The title alludes to the place of honor that Mary occupies in the kingdom of heaven, where she holds authority over God’s messengers. Her connection with angels begins with the annunciation.

*how to sing Latin:* Jean’s regret at not knowing the language is repeated in Act 2, Scene 4, and remedied miraculously in Act 3, Scene 5.

*lilies and roses:* Juxtaposed already in the Latin, these two flowers, beyond being apt as the equivalent to peaches and cream, are deeply rooted in Christian iconography of the saints, symbolic of virginity and martyrdom, respectively.

*Brother Jean, are you sleeping*: These lines play on the famous French nursery rhyme, traditionally sung in a round, entitled “Frère Jacques” and known in English as “Brother John.”

*white hand*: In many sculptures Mary is represented clothed heavily in garments, but with her hands white and bare, sometimes beckoning. The color of her hand is mentioned again later twice, first in an exclamation by Jean after hearing the miracle of the sage and then two times in the miracle with which the opera concludes.

*earned my bread*: See 2 Thessalonians 3:12.

*Be*: The painter directs his first words, using the formal manner of address (the second-person plural), to the sculptor. Speaking to the socially humble jongleur, he employs instead the informal (the second-person singular).

*gold and azure*: The two hues are often paired. Most interestingly, the poet Charles Baudelaire in his *Fleurs du mal* or “Flowers of Evil” has a poem entitled “To a Madonna” (first published in 1861) in which he likens his poetry to sculpture. He describes building an altar in his heart with a niche “all enameled with azure and gold” where his Madonna will stand.

*Blue Bird*: In French literature this creature occupies a privileged place, thanks in the first instance to a fairy tale published in 1697 by Madame d’Aulnoy. This line and the next seem to string together clichés, rather than make any specific allusion or allusions.

*Eternal Shore*: *Rivage éternel* is a euphemism for death.

*White Ship*: If a particular reference is meant, the *Blanche Nef* was a vessel that sank in the English Channel, not far from the Norman port of Barfleur, on November 25, 1120. Only one of circa 300 people aboard survived.

*seraph do in heaven*: In Isaiah 6:1–8 seraphim are six-winged beings who fly around the Throne of God crying “holy, holy, holy.”

*Agitans discordia fratres*: The tag, from Virgil, *Georgics* 2.496, here means “dissension stirring the brethren.”

*Apollo*: As the god of music, this Greek god has dominion over such arts as song, dance, and poetry. He leads the Muses, mentioned in the next line.

*Muse to Muse*: In Greek mythology the nine Muses were goddesses who presided over the arts and sciences.

*work of merit*: In Catholic theology good work earns merit, in the promise of reward to come from God.

*worth a thousand poems*: This phrase resembles the English adage “a picture is worth a thousand words,” close relatives of which have been identified in many languages.

*Latin I do not know*: Compare Act 2, Scene 1, and Act 3, Scene 5.

*kitchen Latin*: This English expression, corresponding to *latin de cuisine* in French and *Küchenlatein* in German, has long been used, disapprovingly or humorously, of bad or barbarous forms of the language, at their most extreme in pig Latin. The turn of phrase *Latinitas culinaria*, itself in Latin, became current first in the humanist period. This conception of Latinity is associated with such genres as macaronic Latin, which is related to the common foodstuff macaroni.

*in a book a marvelous story*: The following legend was popularized in France by Amédée de Ponthieu, upon whose version the librettist relies: *Les fêtes légendaires* (Paris: Mailliet, 1866), 29–30.

*child-killing king*: This phrase refers to the episode in the Gospel of Matthew 2:16–18 known as the massacre of the innocents. In a failed attempt to forestall the coming of the Messiah (Jesus), King Herod the Great of Judea orders all male children two years old or younger in the vicinity of Bethlehem to be executed.

*smile*: The gesture recurs in Act 2, Scene 5, and twice in Act 3, Scene 5. The Virgin or an image of her offers a special smile to the juggler in other versions, notably, line 35 of Bates’s “Our Lady’s Tumbler” (Part 2, Chapter 6), Higgins’s “The Little Juggler” (Part 2, Chapter 9), and line 63 of Auden’s “Ballad of Barnaby” (Part 2, Chapter 11.B.). The author and illustrator Helena Olofsson highlights the motif in her children’s book, *The Little Jester*, trans. Kjersti Board (New York: R&S Books, 2002).

*gold, incense, and myrrh of the wise kings*: The gifts of the Three Magi, described in Matthew 2:1–12.

*pipe-tune of the poor shepherd*: Luke 2:8–20 recounts the annunciation of the nativity of Jesus to the herdsmen. Though the Gospel makes no mention of the pipe-tune, a herder with bagpipes or pipes of another sort is often represented in artistic depictions of those who visit the manger to celebrate Christ’s birth.

*mother of love*: Mary merited this epithet for many reasons, notably by giving birth to Jesus as well as by showing love to her petitioners.

*supreme goodness*: The phrase is customarily applied to God rather than to Mary.

*smiled at the tune of the shepherd*: The smiling of baby Jesus in the manger is sometimes shown in depictions of the nativity.

*posture of divine invocation*: Presumably he still directs his eyes and hands toward heaven.

*pastorale*: The term signifies a slow instrumental composition, with droning notes well suited to the pipe-tunes just mentioned. This kind of music fits beautifully here, since the genre originated in rudimentary operas with rustic settings. The term derives from the Latin adjective (*pastoralis, -e*) for shepherd or herdsman (*pastor, -is*).

*white queen*: The librettist stresses the pallor of the whole Madonna, not just her hands, as intensified by the darkness of night.

*Make way*: The jongleur's first words here are reminiscent of those he uttered when he made his debut in Act 1, Scene 3.

*song of war*: Jean's offer to sing a specimen of this genre recalls his earlier attempt to please the market crowd with a battle song.

*It's nice to see these men-at-arms*: These words begin a passage in quotation marks which recombines and reworks lines from two stanzas of an old ditty, known by its incipit as "Il fait bon voir ces hommes d'armes." For an edition, see *La Chanson française du XVe au XXe siècle*, ed. Jean Gillequin, *La Renaissance du livre* (Paris: Jean Gillequin & Cie, 1910), 35.

*Romance of Love*: This title is one among several used for an anonymous piece for guitar that became internationally known in the half decade preceding the premiere of Massenet's opera.

*Pretty Doette at her window*: This line alludes to a *chanson de toile*, meaning "song of cloth" (or fabric). This genre was supposedly sung by women as they toiled at the loom. In this anonymous ditty of the thirteenth century, the heroine Doette, after learning that her beloved has died, founds a convent to which she retires.

*Erembourg*: The jongleur refers again to the same genre. The heroine of this other song was often called Erembour or Erembor. On its date, see Pierre Jonin, "Ancienneté d'une chanson de toile? La Chanson d'Erembourg ou la Chanson de Renaud?," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 28, no. 112 (October-December, 1985): 345–59.

*pastourelle*: In French this term denoted a young shepherdess and her song. Like the *pastorale*, the word is a derivative of the Latin *pastor* for "shepherd, herdsman." The genre is attested in both Latin and vernacular languages, but associated especially strongly with Old French. In it, a knight and a shepherdess usually engage in a witty exchange. The young woman often prevails in the verbal contest before submitting (sometimes willingly and other times not) to the man's sexual advances.

*Robin and Marion*: A reference to the *Jeu de Robin et Marion* (Play of Robin and Marion), often reputed to be the earliest French secular play with music, by the French poet Adam le Bossu (also known as Adam de la Halle), active in the second half of the

thirteenth century. The English tradition of Robin Hood and Maid Marian is not attested until centuries later.

*Saderaladon*: This exclamation is prominent in the refrain of the *chanson* “En mai au dous tens novel (Que reverdissent).”

*Sing little nightingale*: See Wendy Pfeffer, *The Change of Philomel: the Nightingale in Medieval Literature*, American University Studies: Series 3, Comparative literature, vol. 14 (New York: P. Lang, 1985), and Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

*cheese*: Since peasants often kept livestock, their diets relied heavily on dairy produce.

*griffins*: These mythical creatures were said to have the body of a lion but the head and wings of an eagle.

*flying devils*: Though without support in the Bible, many early Christians accepted that the rebellion of Satan resulted in the fall of angels who sided with him. These fallen beings, often winged like their unfallen counterparts, were equated with demons.

*The dog returns to his vomit*: Proverbs 26:11 “As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly” and 2 Peter 2:22.

*King David danced before the ark*: 2 Kings (= 2 Samuel) 6.13–23. See Part 1, Chapter 2.A.1 above.

*country step*: The librettist specifies the bourrée, a French step (sometimes called a clog dance) in double time like the gavotte.

*Pig covered in mud*: This line rounds out the thoughts in 2 Peter 2:22 to which the Prior’s earlier mention of the dog returning to its vomit drew attention: “For that of the true proverb hath happened to them: ‘The dog is returned to his own vomit,’ and ‘The sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mud.’”

*strange light*: In early productions a grand finale began at this juncture. The special effects made spectacular use of electrical lighting. Such illumination was still relatively novel and had acute relevance to the Opéra Comique, which had been destroyed by fire in 1887: see A. N. Holcombe, “The Electric Lighting System of Paris,” *Political Science Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1911): 122–32.

*Hosannah*: This expression entered western Christendom through Latin, which acquired the Hebrew expression from Greek. In Christianity it is a shout of praise and joy that calls to mind its use to recognize the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

*Peace on Earth, / to men of good will*: These lines echo the song of joy that the angelic host sings to the shepherds outside Bethlehem after announcing the nativity in Luke 2:14.

*intense light*: The stage instruction here assumes a capacity for artificial illumination that elicited comments from reviewers of early productions and that can be seen in artworks representing this scene. First the niche where the Madonna stood was illuminated blindingly, and then a halo of equal intensity was manipulated to hover above the juggler's head.

*Kyrie, eleison*: The formula, meaning "Lord, have mercy" in Greek, serves as a preliminary petition to introduce prayer.

*Christe, exaudi nos*: The Latin supplication, in English "Christ, hearken to us," appears as a responsory in the Litany of the Saints.

*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis*: These Latin words, meaning "Saint Mary, pray for us," appear, not directly adjacent to one another, in the hymn *Ave Maria* or Hail Mary. They are found in many other contexts as well, including arias.

*I understand Latin*: The regret Jean expressed earlier (in Act 2, Scenes 1 and 4) at not knowing the language is resolved. In the New Testament both Acts and 1 Corinthians contain references to "speaking in tongues," known technically as glossolalia, in which speakers utter sounds thought to be languages unknown to them (and often unrecognizable to others). Here the phenomenon occurring may be xenoglossia, in which people can miraculously speak, write, or understand a language foreign to them. For example, a Cistercian roughly contemporary with the author of the medieval "Our Lady's Tumbler" recounted a miracle in which an unschooled lay brother on his deathbed was granted knowledge of Latin, the Scriptures, and exegesis: see Conrad of Eberbach (1150–1221), *Exordium magnum Cisterciense, sive, Narratio de initio Cisterciensis Ordinis*, 4.17, ed. Bruno Griesser, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, vol. 138 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1994), 261–63. Alternatively, a more banal explanation would be that Jean can puzzle out three short tags in Latin, especially because they culminate in an invocation of his beloved Mary.

*golden gate to heaven*: Though the Bible does not refer to any such heavenly barrier as golden, the city of New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 is all of gold. Probably on that basis, the popular conception is widespread that heaven's gate is the same color.

*cornflowers*: This flower has been associated with Mary because its florets, generally intensely blue, bloom in a ring that has been understood to resemble Mary's crown as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

*flowers of paradise*: In medieval poetry Mary was often called by this name: see David J. Rothenberg, *The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23, 48.

*Mater purissima*: The Latin reads “Mother most pure, mother most chaste, mother inviolate, pray for us.” The three titles for Mary are found in successive versicles of the Litany of Loreto and its twelfth-century source: see Gérard Gilles Meersseman, *Der Hymnos Akathistos im Abendland*, Spicilegium Friburgense 2–3 (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1958–1960), 2:222–25. In most texts each title is followed by the response “pray for us,” as in the final line here.

*round*: A heavenly ring dance, to replace the earthly dance that has occasioned him such difficulties.

*Sunday*: The underlying conception is that this is the day of rest, fulfilling the fourth of the Ten Commandments and prefiguring the eternal rest of the afterlife in heaven.

*Happy are the simple, for they shall see God*: Matthew 5:3 and 8, from the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. The paraphrase of the biblical verses nods to Anatole France, who brings down the curtain on his short story with similar words.

## 6. The Professor-Poet Katharine Lee Bates

*common meter double*: Common meter comprises four lines that alternate between iambic tetrameter (four metrical feet per line, for a total of eight syllables) and iambic trimeter (three metrical feet, for six syllables): 8.6.8.6. Common meter double repeats the common meter twice in each stanza: 8.6.8.6.8.6.8.6.

*her words and his music*: For the full story, see Lynn Sherr, *America the Beautiful* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

*children’s book author*: See Kathryn L. Lynch, “Katharine Lee Bates and Chaucer’s American Children,” *Chaucer Review* 56.2 (2021): 95–118.

*these emotional entanglements*: For a careful and insightful biography, see Melinda M. Ponder, *Katherine Lee Bates: From Sea to Shining Sea* (Chicago: Windy City Publishers, 2017).

*first in 1904*: “In Meter: Our Lady’s Tumbler,” *The Chautauquan: A Weekly Newsmagazine* 40, no. 4 (1904): 370–71, and “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” *National Magazine* 20 (1904): 544–46. Reprinted in *Persephone and Other Poems*, by members of the English Literature Department, Wellesley College (Wellesley, MA: Helen J. Sanborn, 1905), 211–13; Katharine Lee Bates, *America the Beautiful and Other Poems* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1911), 113–15; and Bates, *Selected Poems*, ed. Marion Pelton Guild (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 117–19.

“*Our Lady’s Tumbler*”: The title of the poem signals indebtedness to the medieval poem rather than to Anatole France’s short story.

*leaf*: A leaf of paper would be likelier to crumble than a folio (itself from the Latin word for a leaf) of medieval parchment.

*Clairvaux*: By situating the monastery here, Bates underlines her reliance on the medieval poem.

*carle*: An archaic word for a common man.

*vesper hymn nor matin*: These refer to the evening and morning offices (meaning “services”).

*Pater noster nor credo*: The Our Father and Nicene Creed, both indicated here by Latin words as they would customarily have been in the Middle Ages.

*wood-birds*: As one would think, birds that live in the woods.

*wayside cross*: Crucifixes were often erected alongside roads and paths in medieval Europe and remain commonplace in Catholic regions.

*Our Lady of Val*: The valley implied by the French *val* is presumably that of Clairvaux, “light” or “bright valley.”

*wore cloth of satin*: Madonnas were often dressed in rich clothing, and sometimes even had large wardrobes that enabled rotation of outfits.

*stave*: In British usage this noun corresponds to *staff* in American English, to denote a set of parallel lines and spaces between them, on which notes are written to indicate their pitch.

*whipt*: For “whipped.” A reference to the practice, penitential and ascetic, of flagellation—whipping oneself.

*slipt*: For “slipped.”

*hied*: The verb, here used reflexively, is an archaism for “go quickly.”

*clergeons*: An obsolete word for a chorister boy, diminutive of the French for clerk or cleric. The word would have been most familiar to Bates from “The Prioress’s Tale” (line 51) in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*: “A litel clergeon, seven yeer of age.”

*disport*: This archaic noun denotes entertainment or amusement.

*girt*: For “girded,” meaning “secured his garments.”

*featly*: Nimbly, gracefully.

*Arragon twirl*: The medieval poem refers to moves associated with Champagne, Spain, Brittany, and Lorraine, an order lightly revised by Bates.

*smiled*: See notes to Massenet, *The Jongleur of Our Lady* (Part 2, Chapter 5), Act 2, Scene 4.

*joyance*: Archaic for “delight, enjoyment.”

*Ay*: Archaic for “yes.”

*High Mass*: In Roman Catholicism a Mass was “high” when it included full ceremonial, including music and incense, typically involving a deacon and subdeacon.

*darksome*: A seldom-used adjective, meaning “dark or gloomy.”

*scourged*: Another reference to flagellation.

*wounded knight*: Since Christ’s tomb is in the Holy Land, this warrior could well be a Crusader. At the same time, the descriptor calls to mind vaguely the legend of the Grail, in which a central character is the Wounded King (also known as the Maimed King or Fisher King).

*corse*: A further archaism, signifying corpse.

*of celestial birth*: Meaning that the blooms came from heaven.

## 7. The Philosopher-Historian Henry Adams

*Henry Brooks Adams*: The standard biography, in its distilled form, is Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989). More recently, see Garry Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

*The Education of Henry Adams*: The principal works published in his lifetime (excepting *The History*) are collected conveniently in Henry Adams, *Novels, Mont Saint Michel, The Education*, ed. Ernest Samuels and Jayne N. Samuels (New York: Library of America, 1983).

*his remarkable letters*: The standard edition for most of them is *The Letters of Henry Adams*, ed. J. C. Levenson and others, 6 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982–88).

*Francophile*: The topic warrants further exploration. For a start, see Max I. Baym, *The French Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).

*Clover*: See Natalie Dykstra, *Clover Adams: A Gilded and Heartbreaking Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

*Elizabeth Sherman*: On this relationship, see Arline Boucher Tehan, *Henry Adams in Love: The Pursuit of Elizabeth Sherman Cameron* (New York: Universe, 1983).

*medieval Marianism*: See Joseph F. Byrnes, *The Virgin of Chartres: An Intellectual and Psychological History of the Work of Henry Adams* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981).

*women in the Middle Ages*: See Daniel L. Manheim, "Motives of His Own: Henry Adams and the Genealogy of the Virgin," *New England Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (1990): 601–23, and Kim Moreland, "Henry Adams, the Medieval Lady, and the 'New Woman,'" *Clio* 18 (1989): 291–305.

*psychological or even psychoanalytic criticism*: For orientation, see Meyer Howard Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11th ed. (Andover: CENGAGE Learning, 2015), 319–25.

*architecture*: Michael W. Brooks, "New England Gothic: Charles Eliot Norton, Charles H. Moore, and Henry Adams," in *The Architectural Historian in America: A Symposium in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Society of Architectural Historians*, ed. Elisabeth Blair MacDougall, Studies in the History of Art 35/Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts 19 (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 113–25.

*Gautier de Coincy's*: Meaning the figure designated in this book as Gautier de Coinci.

## 8. The Poet Edwin Markham

*Edwin Markham*: On his life and works, see Charles Duncan, "Edwin Markham," in Robert L. Gale, ed. *Nineteenth-Century American Western Writers, Dictionary of Literary Biography* 186 (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1997), 228–37, and Joseph W. Slade, "Edwin Markham," in Peter Quartermain, ed. *American Poets, 1890–1945: Third Series*, 2 vols., Part 1: A–M, *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 54 (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Co., 1987), 284–93.

*The Man with the Hoe*: Published first on January 15, 1899, in a special edition of the *San Francisco Examiner*.

*Isabel Butler's prose translation*: Edwin Markham, *The Shoes of Happiness, and Other Poems: The Third Book of Verse* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1915), vii–viii.

*December 1907*: *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 75, no. 2 (December 1907): 221–33. The text was reprinted in *Shoes of Happiness*, 30–46.

*a poet of brotherhood and love*: See Peter J. Frederick, *Knights of the Golden Rule: The Intellectual as Christian Social Reformer in the 1890s* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 185–234.

*one reviewer*: Anonymous, “Notes,” *The Nation* 88, no. 2288, May 6, 1909: 462–65, at 463.

*on earth peace, good will toward men*: Luke 2:14, in the King James version.

*Touraine*: This was once a province of France, with its capital in the city of Tours.

*Louis the King*: Anatole France’s tale begins by likewise mentioning an indeterminate King Louis.

*Barnabas*: Markham takes his protagonist’s name from Anatole France, but anglicizes it.

*turkey-cocks*: This is one way to indicate the Guinea-cock or Guinea-fowl, an African bird familiar in Europe since antiquity.

*Bullies*: Ruffians or blusterers.

*dance with the hempen maid*: “Marrying the hempen maid” or “dancing with the hempen maid” was a metaphor for being hanged, because the person so punished would twitch convulsively with the rope of hemp around his neck.

*Gaffers*: In the language of country people from the sixteenth century on, this was a designation for an elderly person. The noun reappears in Adair, “The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital,” line 13: see Part 2, Chapter 11.E.

*Clackering*: On this infrequent alternative to the verb “clack,” see the *Oxford English Dictionary* “clacker” 5 “to cause (things) to make a sound between a clap and a crack.” Both “click” and “clatter” come to mind.

*straddling*: with legs spread wide apart.

*punchinello*: In the Italian *commedia dell’arte*, Punchinello—ancestor of the English Punch—was a clownish and foolish figure.

*lilts*: Light, springing steps.

*quips and cranks*: The turn of phrase owes to John Milton, *L’Allegro*, in *Poems* 31. A crank is “A twist or fanciful turn of speech; a humorous turn, a verbal trick or conceit” (*Oxford English Dictionary s.v.*).

*First Epistle*: The Mass usually includes three readings, of which the second comes from the New Testament (typically Pauline) epistles.

*feather-head*: A silly, empty-headed person.

*trim-trig*: In Scottish English the adjective *trig* can signify “sprightly, nimble, or trim” (*Oxford English Dictionary*): compare *trigged* in 117.

*jack*: The noun could mean generally “a man, a fellow.” Alternatively, it could refer to one of the small, six-pointed pieces employed in the children’s game of jacks.

*whimsy*: Whimsical.

*a-shine and a-weaving*: Markham shows a predilection for forming words this way. See also 257 and 304.

*spangling*: Sparkling or glistening.

*tarradiddle*: A petty lie.

*Pantaloone*: In the Italian *commedia dell’arte*, a Venetian character depicted as a foolish old man.

*Harlequin*: Another character in Italian *commedia dell’arte*, this one related to the clown.

*Michaelmas*: The feast of Saint Michael, on September 29.

*deadly sins*: Referring to the seven chief or cardinal sins.

*abbès*: In French *abbé*, correctly with accent aigu rather than grave, denotes narrowly an abbot but more broadly a priest or even a clergyman.

*light-hour*: An unusual turn of phrase, probably not light in contrast to dark, but with the adjective instead referring to unserious entertainment. Markham wanted the initial *l* for alliteration with *love* and *loveless*.

*wayside shrine*: In Katherine Lee Bates we witnessed already the fascination with wayside crosses in predominantly Protestant America: “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” line 10, in Part 2, Chapter 6.

*tipt*: That is, “tipped,” meaning “adorned at the tip.”

*Queen of the skies*: This phrase, attested in hymns, rings a slight change on the common Marian epithet, Queen of Heaven.

*bed in the cattle stalls*: This line hints at a parallel between Barnaby’s plight and that of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem at the nativity.

*cloistral*: The poet repeats this adjective in 128, 138, and 147.

*grasshopper green*: Anatole France compared the jongleur to the grasshopper in a fable by the late twelfth-century poet Marie de France, French but active in England: see Part 2, Chapter 4. Additionally, a celebrated painting of 1875 by the French artist

Jean-George Vibert transmutes the insect into a medieval minstrel, with a lute on his back and clad in green clothing: see Fig. 53.

*tire*: The word *attire* is elided here, by dropping the initial unstressed vowel. The technical term for this type of elision is aphaeresis.

*trigged*: The chiefly Scottish and north English dialect verb *trig* means “to make trig or trim,” which is to say, “to dress smartly or finely” (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

*mystery play*: A medieval dramatic genre, plays of this sort usually represented biblical subjects, from the Creation through the Last Judgment. Anatole France refers to mystery plays: see Part 2, Chapter 4.

*a droll*: A funny fellow, buffoon.

*kill-care*: Shakespeare lent authority to the verbal phrase that is here made a noun: see *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598–99), Act 5, Scene 1, l. [135]. The noun is Markham’s improvised opposite to kill-joy.

*phlegms*: In the four cardinal humors that medieval physiology inherited from antiquity, one, cold and moist, was believed to cause apathy and indolence, whence the adjective “phlegmatic.”

*orison*: An archaic word for prayer.

*Seven Throne Angels*: “Throne angels” are one level of angels. The poet seems to conflate them with the seven archangels.

*rat-tat-tat*: Here the onomatopoeia signifies applause.

*Gaston*: A personal name for males that Markham uses as typically French.

*friars pass with feet unshod*: “Discalced,” from a Latin participle meaning “with the shoes removed,” is the technical term to denote religious people who, as an expression of penitence, wear only sandals or no footwear at all. The Franciscans were often called the Barefoot Friars.

*bread is changed to the body of God*: Barnabas connects the monastery reflexively with the liturgy, especially here communion, the service in which bread and wine are consecrated and shared.

*great hours*: Though “the great hours” exist as a specific celebration in eastern churches, the reference here is likely to the seven or eight canonical hours of prayer that monks observe.

*Sanctus*: The so-called angelic hymn, from Isaiah 6:3, begins with the repetition of the Latin words *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus* (Holy, holy, holy).

*gray monks*: More than one order, such as the brothers of Savigny and Tiron, has been designated gray monks.

*avail*: This word, now obsolete as a noun, here means “beneficial effect.”

*frater*: The dining room of a monastery, also known as a refectory.

*Almoner*: In a monastery or other religious house, this official had responsibility for distributing alms and overseeing charity.

*Lily*: The lily-of-the-valley has been long associated with Mary.

*Tower of Gold*: This and most of the formulas that follow are common titles of the Virgin in litanies, such as the Litany of Loreto.

*Gate of Ivory*: “House of Ivory” is a more common title for the Virgin. Markham fuses the traditional wording with the image of the gates of horn and ivory mentioned in Homer’s *Odyssey* (19.560–69) and Virgil’s *Aeneid* (6.893–98).

*Roof of the Fold*: Meaning “roof of the earth.” *Fold* is an obsolete noun to indicate the earth.

*Well that Flows*: The Virgin Mary is commonly envisaged as a fountain of life.

*Star of the Sea*: The Latin *stella Maris*, corresponding to the English “star of the sea,” goes back to the early Middle Ages, if not further, as a title for Mary. See notes to Part 1, Chapter 4.B., line 123, and Part 1, Chapter 6.A., above.

*Mystic Rose*: In this case the equivalent Latin is *Rosa Mystica*, relating to Song of Songs 2:1.

*Estevan*: This is a Spanish name, of Greek origin.

*Virgilian verse*: The phrase presumably means dactylic hexameters.

*Glorian*: The resemblance of the name to the Latin noun *gloria* “glory” may have guided Markham here.

*Prinking*: In colloquial usage, the verb can mean to adorn.

*lock*: Though the import is immediately comprehensible, this usage is somewhat unusual. In the plural *locks* can denote something, especially foliage, that resembles locks of hair: see *OED lock* 3.

*fleur-de-lis*: This stylized lily was often an attribute of the Virgin Mary.

*hollyhock*: This plant is among the many flowers that have had Marian associations and have been grown in so-called Mary Gardens, to honor the Virgin florally.

*Bonaccord*: French meaning “good accord,” an appellation apt for a musician.

*Basil*: A Greek name, associated with the early Church and an early saint.

*Théophile*: The name is taken from the Greek “God-loving.” Markham may or may not have known that a character called Theophilus was the protagonist of a major medieval miracle.

*’cello*: The initial apostrophe, attested often through the 1800s but now quaint, is a reminder that our word *cello* is a shortening from the original *violoncello*.

*hautboy*: This denotes the high-pitched, double-reeded wooden wind instrument now usually spelled oboe.

*Bladdering*: The verb means to swell out like a bladder.

*Julian*: Like Théophile, this character bears the name of the leading man in a Marian miracle. Taking holiness on step further, Julian was a saint.

*throne of the great King Solomon*: This passage owes to a passage in “Le Jongleur de Notre Dame” in which Anatole France drew inspiration from the reproduction of a manuscript illustration in the mid-nineteenth-century, scholarly edition of Gautier de Coinci’s *Miracles of the Virgin*. France described Mary, with seven doves representing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. She sits on the throne of Solomon, which had lions at its feet.

*seven great gifts*: Going back to Isaiah 11:1–2, the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

*Holy Breath*: This wording is a less common variant for Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost, designating the third person in the Christian Trinity.

*balks*: The verb means “to check, hinder, or thwart.”

*throw of the devil’s dice*: The image lives on even today in such sayings as “devils roll the dice, angels roll their eyes.”

*Palemone*: This name might have been prompted by that of the knight in Boccaccio’s epic poem *Teseida*, who corresponds to Palamon in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (“The Knight’s Tale”).

*Edging*: The verb would seem here to be an obsolete usage, meaning “to give activity to” (*OED edge*<sup>1</sup> 2.a).

*bearded rye*: The fully formed heads of the cereal rye are conventionally described as being bearded.

*credo*: From the Latin “I believe,” the term refers to the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed.

*Pater*: Short for Paternoster, the Lord’s Prayer in Latin.

*Ave*: This points to the Latin *Ave Maria*, meaning Hail Mary, the conventional title of the famous prayer to the Virgin as the Mother of God. See the note to Part 1, Chapter 1.A “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” line 31.

*told a tale*: In his short story Anatole France refers to a similar miracle in which a monk who said five psalms daily to honor the Virgin was rewarded after his death when Mary caused five roses to issue from his mouth.

*Four doves*: This miracle appears to be Markham’s invention.

*tethered ox*: This metaphor points to familiarity, undoubtedly through a translation, with the medieval poem “Our Lady’s Tumbler.”

*living seed*: The phrase owes to 1 Peter 1:23.

*shaft*: The noun here designates a block of stone from which a statue could be carved.

*fraters*: As a synonym for a friar, this word has been obsolete for centuries.

*tipping toe*: Meaning “tiptoe.”

*St. Plato*: Markham may have meant either the martyr of the early fourth century who was put to death in Ancyra or Saint Plato the Studite, also styled the Confessor, who died in 814. Then again, he could have intended the allusion to signal the ignorance of the tumbler, in mistaking the ancient Greek philosopher Plato for a Christian holy man.

*Quintilian*: Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, who lived from about 35 to about 100 CE, was among the foremost Roman rhetoricians.

*the Three and the One*: The Christian doctrine of the Trinity holds that there is one God but that there are three persons, namely, the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.

*the Wine and the Bread*: The Christian eucharist derives from the rite instituted by Jesus Christ during the Last Supper, in which the bread he distributed represented his body and the wine the new covenant in his blood.

*Toulon*: A port city in southern France, on the Mediterranean coast.

*Chateauroux*: Châteauroux, to give the first vowel its requisite circumflex, is a town (second-largest after Bruges) in the province of Berry in central France.

*mantle blue*: Mary is traditionally portrayed enveloped in such outerwear. Beyond being the color of heaven, blue embodies the prestige accorded to her.

*Lady of Beauty*: The epithet may well have been influenced by the postmedieval prominence of Lourdes, thanks to the visions of the young woman Bernadette Soubirous, who described the Virgin Mary as “the beautiful lady.”

*lilies*: In Christian iconography, these white flowers symbolize the purity of the Virgin Mary.

*Seraphim*: Angelic beings who belong to the highest of the nine orders in the celestial hierarchy.

## 9. The Children’s Book Writer Violet Moore Higgins

*Violet Moore Higgins*: Before marriage Violet Idelle Moore published without the middle name. Her obituary in the *New York Times* identified her by her married name of Violet Higgins.

*child-friendly features*: Two were “Drowsy Dick” and “Junior Editors.”

*the same formula*: Letter 139 to Elsie Moll (his fiancée), December 8–9, 1908, in *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, ed. Holly Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 112–15, at 114; *The Contemplated Spouse: The Letters of Wallace Stevens to Elsie*, ed. J. Donald Blount (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 110–13, at 112. In the Stevens material of the Huntington Library, this letter is WAS 1795.

*Once-upon-a-Time Saints: Faith-Tales for Children*: Text by Ethel Marbach (Pochocki), illus. Victoria Brzustowicz (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1977), 59–61, at 60; repr. Ethel (Marbach) Pochocki, *Once upon a Time Saints*, illus. Tom Matt (Bathgate, ND: Bethlehem Books, 1996), 22–25.

*Max Bolliger: Jakob der Gaukler: Nach einer französischen Legende aus dem 13. Jahrhundert*, illus. Štěpán Zavřel (Zurich: Bohem, 1991), and later (after being put into various other languages) *Jacob the Juggler*, trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Trieste, Italy: Bohem, 2018).

*Michel Zink: Le Jongleur de Notre Dame. Contes chrétiens du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1999), 48–51, 199 (note).

*Cecilia Pieri: Il était une fois*, *Contes merveilleux* 1 (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 87–101, with the story on 90–94.

*French Tales Retold*: Violet Moore Higgins, “The Little Juggler,” in Violet Moore Higgins, author and illustrator, *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine and Chicago: Whitman Publishing Co., 1917), 7–34.

*French Fairy Tales*: Violet Moore Higgins, “The Little Juggler,” in Violet Moore Higgins, *French Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler, The Wooden Shoe, and The Noel Candle*, illus. Helen Chamberlin (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Co., 1917).

*2 Books in a Box*: (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1934).

*anthology of folktales and fairy tales*: Ernst Tegethoff, trans., *Französische Volksmärchen, aus älteren Quellen* (Jena, Germany: Eugen Diederichs, 1923).

*collection of French folktales*: Ursula Rauch, trans., *Märchen aus Frankreich, den Niederlanden und der Schweiz: Märchen europäischer Völker* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1976), 83.

*two distinct forms*: On the one hand, we have Violet Moore Higgins, *Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler—The Wooden Shoe—The Noel Candle*, illus. Helen Chamberlin (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), and *French Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler—The Wooden Shoe—The Noel Candle*, illus. Helen Chamberlin (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917). Of higher quality in production and art is Violet Moore Higgins, author and illustrator, *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917).

*grimacing like an ape*: The original text contains the typo “grimmacing.”

*Justinian*: The name calls to mind first the Byzantine emperor Justinian the Great (482–565), though Higgins may have chosen it for having embedded within it the element *just*.

*thistledown*: Figuratively, the flower head of the thistle evokes lightness and instability. Higgins repeats the usage four paragraphs down.

*Mayhap*: Meaning “perhaps, possibly.” Higgins often chooses archaic vocabulary to conjure up a medieval atmosphere.

*rubbing his hands and slapping the palms*: In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this treatment is sometimes prescribed for arousing a person from a faint.

*Ambrose*: The name evokes the saint (ca. 340–97), Bishop of Milan and Doctor of the Church.

*brown garments*: The color need not correspond to that of the order in which Rene has been given refuge, but if it does, Carmelite monks and many Franciscan friars wear brown habits.

*Melchior*: This is a somewhat odd choice for the antagonist. Though not mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, this name was traditionally assigned to one of the three Magi who visited the infant Jesus after his birth.

*second in authority*: For this reason Melchior is identified shortly as the prior, an official who in most abbeys stood next in command to the abbot.

*serving her in other ways*: Higgins has the boys in the monastery offer mostly the same types of cultured homage to the Virgin as Anatole France and Jules Massenet did in their portrayal of the adult monks in their versions.

*the smile*: See notes to Part 2, Chapter 5: Massenet, *The Jongleur of Our Lady*, Act 2, Scene 4.

## 10. The Radio Narrator John Booth Nesbitt

*Castilian Spanish*: Remigio Vilariño Ugarte, *De broma y de versa* 182–83 (February and March 1926) (Bilbao, Spain: El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, 1926), Cuento 9 “El volatinero de la Virgen,” 94–106, illus. Goiko, 95, 97, 101. Repr. *Radiocuentos por Erreví Ezejota*, 2nd ed. (Bilbao, Spain: El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, 1929).

*put into French*: Remigio Vilariño Ugarte, *Contes radiophoniques*, trans. and adap. Paul Bellot (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1934), 91–108.

*printed libretto*: *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, BBC Opera Libretto, broadcast on May 27 and 29, 1929, English version adapted from the translation by M. Louise Baum (London: BBC, 1929).

*as a holiday gift*: John Booth Nesbitt, *The Juggler of Our Lady* (San Francisco: L’Esperance, Sivertson & Beran, 1939).

*German reworking*: Hans Hömberg, *Der Gaukler unserer lieben Frau*, illus. Ernst von Dombrowski (Vienna: Eduard Wancura, 1961).

*liner note*: A small foldout pamphlet that accompanied Decca Album No. 357: 23 M Series.

## 11. The Mid to Late Twentieth-Century Poets

*locus of redemption*: See Adele Dalsimer, “Hell and Parnassus by the Canal Bank: Patrick Kavanagh’s Dublin,” in Alan A. Gillis and Aaron Kelly, ed. *Critical Ireland: New Essays in Literature and Culture* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 2001), 166–73.

*Stephen’s Green*: St. Stephen’s Green lies in the center of Dublin, halfway between St. Patrick’s Cathedral and Merrion Square. Once a common for grazing but now a public park, its landscape encloses a web of walkways that give access to a landscape of trees, shrubs, flower beds, rockeries, ponds, and statues.

*deck chairs*: Paid seating, formerly the norm, disappeared long ago from the Green. See Frank McNally, "An Irishman's Diary on when sitting down meant paying up: Chair-hire in St Stephen's Green," *The Irish Times*, Saturday, April 25, 2015.

*Grafton Street*: One of the city's main shopping thoroughfares, this street leads into the northwest end of the park.

*Grand Canal*: The southern of two canals that ultimately connect the Irish capital in the east with the River Shannon at the Shannon Harbour to the west.



Fig. 55. Patrick Kavanagh monument at the Grand Canal, Dublin. Image from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Patrick\\_Kavanagh\\_monument\\_at\\_Grand\\_Canal,\\_Dublin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Patrick_Kavanagh_monument_at_Grand_Canal,_Dublin.jpg)

*Leeson Bridge*: Leeson Street is a thoroughfare bisected by the Grand Canal. The lower portion runs north of the waterway to St. Stephen's Green. See Hugh Oram, *Leeson Street: Upper and Lower* (n.p.: Trafford Publishing, 2018).

*broadside ballad*: See Vivan de Sola Pinto and Allan Edwin Rodway, ed. *The Common Muse: An Anthology of Popular British Ballad Poetry, XVth-XXth Century* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), 15–17.

*popular and traditional*: See David C. Fowler, *A Literary History of the Popular Ballad* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968). The foundational modern collection is Francis J. Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (New York: Henry Stevens & Son/Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882–98). No traditional ballad of "Our Lady's Tumbler" exists.

*oral culture of western Europe*: See Johannes C. H. R. Steenstrup, *The Medieval Popular Ballad*, trans. Edward Godfrey Cox (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1914), and William J. Entwistle, *European Balladry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).

*Kavanagh by Auden*: See two articles, though without reference to either of their poems about the tumbler, by John Redmond: "Auden in Ireland," in Peter Robinson, ed. *The*

*Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press; 2013), 424–41, and “‘All the Answers’: The Influence of Auden on Kavanagh’s Poetic Development,” *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua: A Quarterly Record of Irish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2004): 21–34.

*Mikhail Bakhtin*: See *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1968) and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1973).

*Drinking in taverns and throwing the dice*: Since the nineteenth century, the *Carmina Burana* and related collections of lyric poetry in both Latin and vernacular languages have encouraged a popular image of medieval culture in which “wine, women, and song” have been writ large.

*Two ravens*: François Villon’s “Ballade des Pendus” (Ballad of the hanged) describes ravens pecking out the eyes of those who have been strung up in this way.

*smote him sore*: Found in many works of literature, the phrase appears most memorably (and more than once) in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*, a fifteenth-century collection of Arthurian legends in Middle English prose.

*monastery built on a hill*: Like many other Cistercian foundations, Clairvaux was situated in a low place. The French of its name may be translated as “bright valley.” In contrast, Montecassino, the first monastery of the Benedictine order, was located on a mountain top. Auden has poetic reasons for siting his imagined abbey on raised land.

*Angelus*: The word means “angel” in Latin, which borrowed it from Greek. Here the term refers to a prayer based largely on the Gospel of Luke 1:26–38 that begins with these three syllables. The devotion was recited in medieval monasteries in celebration of the Incarnation. The divine messenger at issue is Gabriel, who at God’s behest revealed to the Virgin Mary the plan that she should conceive the Son of God. A bell was rung to signal the time for the devotion.

*men of parts*: This idiom denotes men talented in more than one capacity.

*Sequences*: As noted in Part 1, Chapter 5.B., at line 80, these were long melodies joined with Latin texts. Such compositions were often but not always connected with the liturgy, especially with melismas that followed the chanting of the Alleluia.

*Picardy*: A region to the north of Paris. The reference points to Gautier de Coinci (1177–1236), a Picard monk and poet. He composed an extensive collection of songs in praise of the Virgin Mary, entitled *Les Miracles de Nostre-Dame* (The Miracles of Our Lady). Anatole France made a similar reference to Gautier.

*work and prayer*: The dual obligation, summed up with the activities reversed in the Latin motto *ora et labora* (pray and work), has been the guiding principle and traditional motto of the Benedictine monastic order.

*massing-time*: This word relies on the obsolete usage of the verb *mass* (OED † *mass*, v.<sup>1</sup> a. and c.) meaning “to celebrate Mass” or “to attend Mass.”

*carved in wood*: From his involvement in the staging of the medieval *Play of Daniel*, Auden would have been acquainted with the wooden “thrones of wisdom” that represented Mary with the infant Jesus in her lap.

*asweat*: A rare adverb, meaning “sweating, moist.”

*swound*: An archaic noun, meaning “a fainting-fit,” synonymous with *swoon*.

“Thank you, Barnaby,” *She said*: Exceptionally, the Virgin here speaks to the tumbler.

*smiled*: See notes to Part 2, Chapter 5: Massenet, *The Joueur of Our Lady*, Act 2, Scene 4.

*Office-Hours*: The Divine Office, the daily service recited at each of the canonical hours.

*devoirs*: “To pay one’s *devoirs* to someone” is to give the person one’s dutiful respects.

*shining swords*: This motif is an innovation in this scene. Uriel, the angel of repentance, is often depicted with a fiery sword, guarding the entrance to Eden.

*Gloria in excelsis Deo*: This phrase, its Latin meaning “Glory to God in the highest,” refers to a Christian hymn that begins with the words in Luke 2:14 that the angels sang when announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds.

*Virginia Nyhart*: For biography and bibliography, see <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/culture-magazines/nyhart-nina>

*two books of poetry*: Nina Nyhart, *Opens* (Cambridge, MA: Alice James Books, 1979), and *French for Soldiers: Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Alice James Books, 1987).

*coedited an anthology*: Kinereth D. Gensler and Nina Nyhart, *The Poetry Connection: An Anthology of Contemporary Poems with Ideas to Stimulate Children’s Writing* (New York: Teachers & Writers, 1978).

*Our Lady’s Tumbler*: Nina Nyhart, “Our Lady’s Tumbler,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 49, no. 4 (1973): 555–57.

*concrete poetry*: See Mary Ellen Solt, ed. *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968).

*psalms*: Medieval monks were expected to know by heart all 150 psalms and to follow a cycle in chanting at least some of them daily, so that they would sing the whole psalter every couple of weeks.

*Our Lady's arch*: Many churches were dedicated to Mary or contained Mary or Lady chapels. Nyhart substitutes an architectural feature that fits with her gymnastic metaphors.

*Turner Cassity*: Keith Tuma, "Turner Cassity," in R. S. Gwynn, *American Poets since World War II: Second Series* (Detroit: Gale Research; 1991), 19–24.

*Our Lady's Juggler*: Turner Cassity, "Our Lady's Juggler," *Poetry* 127 (1976): 343, reprinted in Turner Cassity, *Hurricane Lamp* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 57. Tuma ("Turner Cassity," 23–24) termed this Cassity's "most eclectic collection" and "best book." This piece embodies that eclecticism.

*your lifted hand, Your so late simper*: The gesture and facial expression called to mind here are often shown in pictorial representations and performances of the story, such as those on television, but are seldom mentioned in prose or verse.

*phase*: The noun here is meant as in physics.

*mass*: The word is used as in its scientific and not in its religious sense.

*ictus*: In prosody the term denotes stress that falls on a syllable in a metrical foot. In this instance *ictus* is transferred metaphorically from versification to juggling.

*A second collection: Beliefs and Blasphemies: A Collection of Poems* (New York: Random House, 1998), 27–29.

*Mountain State Mental Hospital*: West Virginia is nicknamed "the Mountain State," but the name Mountain State Mental Hospital is fanciful.

*shroud of Turin*: A linen cloth, kept in the cathedral of Turin in Italy, that bears the negative image of a man, reputed by long legend to be Jesus Christ.

*incense*: In Christianity the smoke of incense as it burns is not employed as a deodorant but instead to embody the ascent to heaven of the prayers offered by the faithful.

*gaffer*: Informal for "an old man."

*A dove*: In the iconography of the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit is often represented as a dove traveling toward Mary amid rays of light that pass through a window.

*a moth*: This is Adair's poetic license, since doves seldom eat insects, still more rarely flying ones.

*purple trimmed with ermine*: Velvet of this color trimmed with the fur called ermine was a luxurious combination for women's clothing in the haute couture of medieval Europe. The trim in question was made from the white winter coat of the weasel-like creature called the stoat.

*hymn*: This would be the so-called hymn of preparation with which the service typically begins.

*le jongleur de Nôtre Dame*: Though the original French is used, the circumflex accent on the letter *o* is a mistake.

*turned on God a dazzling smile*: Adair inverts the common motif in which the Virgin or her image smiles at the jongleur by instead having the performer do so. See notes to Part 2, Chapter 5: Massenet, *The Jongleur of Our Lady*, Act 2, Scene 4.

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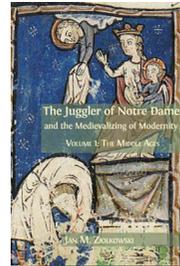
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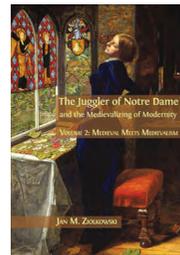
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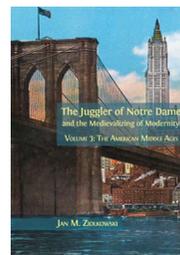
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