

# The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity

VOLUME 5: TUMBLING INTO THE  
TWENTIETH CENTURY

JAN M. ZIOLKOWSKI

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THE JUGGLER OF NOTRE DAME

VOLUME 5



# The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity

Vol. 5: Tumbling into the Twentieth Century

*Jan M. Ziolkowski*



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Cover image: Illustration of the juggler performing before the Virgin. From Anatole France, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, illustrated by Maurice Lalau (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924), p. 23.

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To Mary Carruthers

Nothing that has ever happened should be granted as lost for history. Admittedly, only redeemed humanity inherits its past fully; that is to say, only redeemed humanity has its past in each of its moments become citable.

—Walter Benjamin



# Note to the Reader

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This volume is the fifth of a half dozen. Together, the six form *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity*. The book as a whole probes one medieval story, its reception in culture from the Franco-Prussian War until today, and the placement of that reception within medieval revivalism as a larger phenomenon. The study has been designed to proceed largely in chronological order, but the progression across the centuries and decades is relieved by thematic chapters that deal with topics not restricted to any single time period.

This fifth installment, labeled “Tumbling through the Twentieth Century,” documents the explosion of interest in the story after the success of Massenet’s opera *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* in the early twentieth century. One manifestation of popularity comes to the fore in books, typescripts, and manuscripts. Another can be traced in performances, recordings, and films. A third category of evidence appears in the appropriation of the story by members of different faiths, especially but not solely as it is made into stock Christmas fare for theater, radio, television, and film.

The final volume will follow the story of the story from the Second World War down to the present day. The narrative was put to an astonishing range of uses during the war years. In the fifties and sixties, it experienced what turned out to be a last hurrah in both high culture and mass culture. Afterward, it became the occasional object of playfulness and parody before slipping into at least temporary oblivion.

The chapters are followed by endnotes. Rather than being numbered, these notes are keyed to the words and phrases in the text that are presented in a different color. After the endnotes come the bibliography and illustration credits. In each volume-by-volume index, the names of most people have lifespans, regnal dates, or at least death dates.

One comment on the title of the story is in order. In proper French, Notre-Dame has a hyphen when the phrase refers to a building, institution, or place. Notre Dame, without the mark, refers to the woman, the mother of Jesus. In my own prose, the title is given in the form *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, but the last two words will be found hyphenated in quotations and bibliographic citations if the original is so punctuated.

All translations are my own, unless otherwise specified.



# 1. Juggling across Print

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In these times of plenteous knowledge and meager performance, if we do not study the ancient work directly and learn to understand it, we shall find ourselves influenced by the feeble work all round us, and shall be copying the better work through the copyists and *without* understanding it, which will by no means bring about intelligent art. Let us therefore study it wisely, be taught by it, kindled by it; all the while determining not to imitate or repeat it; to have either no art at all, or [an art which we have made our own](#).

—William Morris

The first two and a half decades of the twentieth century turned over a new leaf in the story of the tumbler or jongleur. In both Europe and North America, the tale is attested first and foremost in what might be called high culture. The ground for this interest, and for this specific mode of making the medieval modern, was readied in more than one way. In the initial stage, philologists from within the Germanosphere participated, alongside peers from other European traditions, by establishing the text of the French poem from the Middle Ages after its discovery. Augmenting their work, Gaston Paris promulgated appreciation of the original to a larger public in France, through concise but glowing praise of *Our Lady's Tumbler* in his lectures and literary histories.

The next phase came thanks to the reception of Anatole France's short story. His prose narrative would have been widely accessible to the educated, because French was the most esteemed language of culture in Europe and its colonies, both past and present. Beyond the cultured, the tale as translated into a host of other tongues was soon propagated to a worldwide readership. In due course, the musical drama of Jules Massenet arrived. It won a foothold through premieres in Monaco, Germany, and France, but attained runaway success only after Mary Garden became implicated. Her involvement coincided with the Golden Age of Opera in the United States when Oscar Hammerstein I ratcheted up the reach of such entertainment not only in a handful of major cities on the coasts, with Chicago added for good measure, but far beyond.

In the country of both Anatole France and Jules Massenet, an atmosphere burgeoned that favored the production and collection of [medievalizing printed books](#) and handmade manuscripts. The French nation became the world center for the production of artistic books. The short story by the Nobel prizewinner lent itself beautifully to medievaesque experimentation, within a context of other literature and art. The City of Light was the capital of this book culture, the heartland of the presses, binderies, and bookstalls, and the hub of [the new bibliopolis](#). No major act took place in medievalism without paper and ink: in the Universal Exposition of 1900, the stage set of Albert Robida's Old Paris exhibition, with its recreations of medieval architecture and its hordes of reenactors, was propped by guidebooks and ephemera galore, as Auguste Rodin's stone sculpture of *The Cathedral* was followed eventually by his book on the Gothic great churches of France. Notre-Dame of Paris was part and parcel of the publication upturn. In its vicinity, the so-called *bouquinistes* in the first city of France plied their trade in selling used and antiquarian titles from green bookstalls that lined the quays along both banks of the Seine.

From the Franco-Prussian War through 1918, the fine presses of the metropolis turned out immense quantities of so-called deluxe and artistic tomes—in French, *livres de luxe* and *livres d'artiste*. Heavily illustrated, these volumes drew upon artists who sometimes restricted themselves to this medium but often also produced posters and paintings. In terms of stylistic movements, they drew upon classicism, romanticism, realism, symbolism, modernism, and, yes, medievalism. In technique, they took advantage of all that the newest technologies had to offer for color reproduction, while often enhancing the work of machines with additional coloring by hand. Almost inevitably, the process of image-making goaded them look to their roots in the lovingly penned and illustrated devotional codices of the Middle Ages.

In all countries, the gruesomeness of the Great War prompted some modernists of the interwar period to rebel against sentimentalism and romanticism. At the same time, the bad dreams of what had been a living hell of mutual slaughter and destruction primed others for a revival of the traditions that had been associated with the Arts and Crafts movement. For practitioners who were attracted to the second option, the ubiquitous romantic medievalism of the nineteenth century became a staging post. From it, they proceeded to particular brands of [twentieth-century modernism](#) that had ingrained in them the earlier reception of the Middle Ages. Was the medievaesque in the 1920s a conservative and traditionalist reaction to the calamities of the preceding decade—was it a futile reaching back in Europe to the belle époque in pricey books for connoisseurs?

In Germany, the original poem had been adapted into the national language first by Robert Waldmüller, who published under the pen name of Charles Edouard Duboc (see Fig. 1.1). A painter as well as translator and dramatist, and one of the top-level literati in Dresden in the second half of the nineteenth century, he had every reason to be predisposed to write in a medievaesque manner. In the late 1860s he

became personally acquainted with Victor Hugo. During the same span, he translated works by Tennyson. Though the texts by the British author that he chose to put into German were not specifically pieces of poetry set in the Middle Ages, he could not have failed to know at least some of the medieval pieces. A quarter century later, in 1894, he demonstrated his absorption in the medieval period by adapting the French poem of the tumbler into German verse under the title “The Dancing Little Monk.” Here, Waldmüller put on unobtrusive display an easygoing acquaintance with the premodern literary context of *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. At the same time, he did not think twice about making the story his own by interjecting new elements.

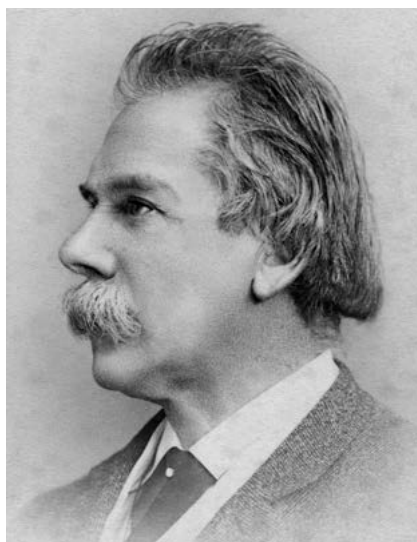


Fig. 1.1 Robert Waldmüller [Charles Edouard Duboc]. Photograph by W. E. Hoffman, ca. 1900. Image courtesy of Getty Images. All rights reserved.

The first octave of his composition sets the action in the cathedral of Soissons, in the joyous aftermath of a plague staved off by the Madonna. The title character is a jongleur who entered the order as a gray-haired old man. Pained at having no votive for the Mother of God, he first engages in a bit of handwringing and then slips off to the crypt. There a worm-eaten wooden image of Mary lies wrapped in cobwebs in a corner. Before it, he performs his routine. Waldmüller describes the jig in detail, even interspersing French words and phrases to identify the specific moves the former performer uses. A mob catches him in the act and drags him before the bishop. The dancer’s forehead turns out to be dry as dust, while the rest of him swims in sweat. The explanation is that the good brother rested his brow against the wood statue as he brought it out, but the churchman takes the circumstance as a miracle performed by the Virgin. The prelate reminds the swarm of other wonders that Mary has enacted, for example the candle that she bestowed upon another entertainer at Arras. The

clergyman draws the moral that people should not pay particular heed to liturgical formulas, but instead pray in whatever fashion they understand the best.

Afterward, the medieval French was paraphrased with reasonable accuracy by Severin Rüttgers, whose adaptation first came into print in 1914. Roughly a quarter century later, this German teacher and translator oversaw the efforts of the Nazis to [warp children's literature to their political purposes](#). Although generalizing too freely about his disparate publications would be unwise, two of his main preoccupations can fairly be identified. One could be called heroic narratives of Germany and Scandinavia. The other would be Christian legends, especially relating to Mary. After flaunting intellectual curiosities of a comprehensively eclectic sort through the 1920s, Rüttgers subsequently trained his sights ever more on supposedly Germanic folk literature. This narrowing view correlated exactly with his rise in influence during the National Socialist period. [The quality of his scholarship degenerated](#), no doubt as a consequence.

*Our Lady's Tumbler* led off an omnium-gatherum by Rüttgers of seven French Marian legends from the Middle Ages that were put into German prose. The other six tales in the volume were all translated loosely from Poquet's 1857 edition of Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles of Our Lady*. In a concluding note at the foot of the table of contents, the translator gave the impression that the original piece of poetry had itself been excerpted from the medieval French *Life of the Fathers* and that Gaston Paris had imprinted its title upon it. The German also invoked his scholarly predecessor approvingly as "the sensitive, subtle, and learned connoisseur of the medieval poetry of his fatherland"—meaning France. Finally, he quoted the French philologist's portraiture of the poem as being "perhaps the masterpiece of the genre, thanks to its [delightful and childlike simplicity](#)."

In Germany, [learned interest in the original medieval French](#), generated and supported by the toils of Romance philologists, reached its height in the early 1920s. To look at scholarly versions, first came the edition of 1920 by Erhard Lommatzsch. In his scholarly lineage, this Romance philologist [arrived at his inquisitiveness about the story naturally](#). In the first place, he had studied under Heinrich Morf, among others. At the turn of the century, Morf had lectured on *Our Lady's Tumbler* at [what would later become the university of Frankfurt](#); eventually Lommatzsch [inherited his chair in Romance philology](#) there. The surmise seems reasonable that *Our Lady's Tumbler* would have been more than an occasional component of the curriculum in the city on the banks of the river Main.

After Lommatzsch published the original text, Curt Sigmar Gutkind brought out a verse translation in 1924 (see Fig. 1.2). This German version was lodged in an appendix to a book by [Wilhelm Fraenger](#), who headed the castle library in Mannheim until his removal from office after the Nazis seized power in 1933. The study was devoted largely to the fascinating, [life-sized human heads](#) sculpted on the exterior of the great church of Reims. The combination of the art historian's study and the philologist's



translation accords well with the photographs that the volume purveys of the strangely screwed-up faces of sculptures on the chief place of worship of the French city. Like much else in the metropolis, the carvings had been damaged badly in the shelling and fires of World War I. Fraenger presents the artworks in what seems meant as a progression from, roughly speaking, gentle-hearted melancholy through good and mellow humor to downright mad and diabolical zaniness. The sculpted heads, busts, and full figures are often called masks. Although a misnomer, the designation is too well established to be dislodged now. In any event, the stone effigies mostly serve as corbels or brackets to support architectural elements above them. Their exact origins and significance continue to stir debate. The visages, anything but stone-faced, attract and mystify much as the gargoyles of Notre Dame in Paris do. A major distinction is that the so-called masks are medieval, whereas the Parisian statues are nineteenth-century medievaesque. [Fraenger contended](#) that “the pandemonium of grotesque grimaces” serves as a counterweight to the holiness of the sculptural figures in the portals.



Fig. 1.2 Front cover of Wilhelm Fraenger, *Die Masken von Rheims*, Die komische Bibliothek (Leipzig, Germany / Zurich: Eugen Gentsch / Erlenbach, 1922).

Inexplicably, the quirky miscellany omitted any mention that the cathedral of Reims had been badly damaged by the German military action in World War I. Readers are left to decide for themselves whether the omission came out of tact, skepticism,

regret, patriotism, or a mixture of all four and more. At the same time, the publication embodies an effort to honor not just the great church of Reims but also the broader medieval culture of neighboring Picardy, which had suffered much wartime degradation. The tesserae Gutkind fitted into the mosaic of materials were verbal, but his pages as printed were illustrated. *Our Lady's Tumbler* is presented as "a Picard legend." Besides thirty-two black-and-white plates of whimsical sculptural chimeras from the house of prayer, the volume incorporates five line drawings, modeled on images found in the medieval manuscript sketchbook of the draftsman Villard de Honnecourt. This much-traveled thirteenth-century Gothic architect is identified as having been a Picard (see Figs. 1.3 and 1.4). Viewed from the safe distance of a hundred years, the line art selected to bracket the German verse translation of the medieval French poem accords well with expressionist concerns about the hopes and fears of individual human beings. At the same time, the statuary photographed speaks to the same cultural movement's predilection for the grotesque.



Fig. 1.3 A kneeling male figure, tonsured. Illustration by Villard de Honnecourt, ca. 1225–1235. Reproduced in Wilhelm Fraenger, *Die Masken von Rheims*, Die komische Bibliothek (Leipzig, Germany / Zurich: Eugen Gentsch / Erlenbach, 1922), 15.



Fig. 1.4 A prostrate male figure, tonsured. Illustration by Villard de Honnecourt, ca. 1225–1235. Reproduced in Wilhelm Fraenger, *Die Masken von Rheims*, Die komische Bibliothek (Leipzig, Germany / Zurich: Eugen Gentsch / Erlenbach, 1922), 39.

The little works of Lommatzsch and Gutkind stood for more than a half century as the standard edition of the medieval French original and the most reliable modern German rendition, respectively. The piece of poetry from the Middle Ages retained a roost in high culture throughout the Western world, thanks to translations or adaptations into French, English, German, Hungarian, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, and other modern tongues, and even including the artificial language Esperanto.

## Printed Books as Pseudomanuscripts

The narrative has owed its popularity largely to a rebellion against the materialism that boomed in Europe and America during the Gilded Age and the belle époque. Yet the tale itself, for all that it intrinsically opposes material possessions, has been very much materialized in the physical guises it has been given. Among other things, it has been presented again and again in lovingly and sometimes lavishly printed, handwritten, or typed forms. It has been illustrated never-endingly. Our understanding of it is indebted to the durable fragility with which the paper and parchment of these books, manuscripts, and typescripts transmit knowledge and beauty across time. In the English-speaking world, the story of the jongleur attained a special niche in part because its brevity allowed it to be dished up in small volumes, either by itself or in company with other narratives from the Middle Ages. Although sometimes these publications could be barely more than booklets without any typographic adornment or illustrations, the norm was to furnish them with medievaesque features and flourishes. Nowhere are medievaesque traits more evident than in the New Medieval Library title *Of the Tumbler of Our Lady and Other Miracles*. A reviewer of the first three in this series, all translated from French by Alice Kemp-Welch, gushes in [extolling the production quality](#) of these dainty hardcovers. Such printing is truly magical, as befits a black art of ink on paper.

The items in the set embody a paradox of the nineteenth century. During the first three quarters of the century, a store of manuscripts from the Middle Ages existed for the well-off and scholarly to snap up. As the supply of the real thing dried up, these medieval treasures went from the auction block to the chopping block to be broken up. To stop the gap and sate the demand, codices were unbound (or “disbound”). Sometimes single leaves or quires were sold after such dismemberment. In other instances excisions were made from individual folios, to generate cuttings of miniatures. Although initially this abusive technique especially benefited the well-to-do, [one avid American of more modest means](#) refined it to a mass scale in the first few decades of the twentieth century. To fulfill his populist ambition, this self-defined “book-tearer” or “biblioclast” sought through his book-dealing, or rather through his piecemeal distribution of leaves from manuscripts that had been taken apart, to make art education more inspirational by enabling hands-on contact with at least pieces of the real items. Comparable treatment, probably profit-driven, was inflicted upon the parchment gatherings that contained the sole miniature to accompany the Old French of *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. The vandal who denuded the medieval folios of their ornamentation did his dastardly deed long before the US chop-shoppper made a mini-industry of undoing these venerable artifacts.

Barbarism of these types notwithstanding, eventually the growth of a large-scale market with an interest in the Middle Ages outstripped the supply of new originals. Hand-produced imitations, of which a hardly negligible number deal in one way or another with [the Virgin Mary](#), could not begin to compensate. At this point, in an irony

that will be lost on no one, salvation came through new technologies. The industrial revolution brought equipment for mass production, including knockoffs of earlier artisanry. Such objects of cutting-edge manufacture were acquired by buyers who surrounded themselves with products meant to hark back to the mists of time and imagined good old days, perhaps especially medieval ones. Consumers wanted, and got, a ready-made version of long-ago times, when life was simpler, faith and miracles came more readily, and humanity was still in the flush of youth.

Although Anatole France's adaptation never altogether displaced texts and translations of the poem from the 1230s, his *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* rapidly became at least as popular as *Our Lady's Tumbler* had been. Deluxe illustrated editions were vended in the early twentieth century, with calligraphy and paper designed to counterfeit manuscripts from bygone centuries. The book-buying public's appetite for medievaesque productions had been whetted by the [Pre-Raphaelites](#), William Morris, and others involved in movements that spun off from Arts and Crafts, all of them medievalizers who had shown a penchant for the purchase, study, and imitation of medieval codices. In the early 1870s, precisely when the original French of *Our Lady's Tumbler* was first edited and discussed, Morris was scooping up parchment masterpieces from the Middle Ages to study, as he practiced [lettering and illumination](#) in emulation of their manner.

Anatole France himself had an amateur's affection for painted manuscripts of yore. In reviewing the first edition of [French Literature in the Middle Ages](#), he commented upon [Gaston Paris's observation](#) that depictions from that era appear grotesque because they engage in anachronism, by representing the ancients in medieval garb. Going further, he even [likened the book itself to a miniature](#). The small-scale paintings on centuries-old folios were much in the minds of France's contemporaries. His readers and he miniaturized the past as they perceived it through medievalizing eyes. For the whole of the Middle Ages to be squeezed within two covers was not unreasonable, to their way of thinking. As the man of letters put it, "[their world, by comparison with ours](#), was quite small." In 1891, his fellow French novelist and critic Paul Bourget described a cathedral with the calculatedly self-contradictory analogy of a "[gigantic miniature](#)." The reduced magnitude of that once-upon culture was the concomitant of its childlike nature. In effect, they saw the era as inherently scaled down—a little era for amusingly simple people of correspondingly diminutive size. In keeping with this preoccupation with its petite charms, [France wrote elsewhere](#) of miniatures and other pictures.

In spinning his medieval yarn, the story writer elaborated a strand-by-strand account of the devotion shown to Mary by a brother named Alexandre. To move from metaphor to fictitious reality, this monastic artist wielded his brushes to create images in a manuscript. The outcome of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* would seem to put this virtuoso, like other brethren who have aptitudes more suited to a monastery, over a barrel in contrast to the entertainer, who after all merits the miracle of a personal gesture bestowed upon him by the Virgin. Yet, though it might at first seem paradoxical, the

presence of such an artist within the tale made it an even more appetizing subject to illustrators of early twentieth-century printed books. The juxtaposition of the juggler or tumbler to the other monks enabled these modern painters not only to depict in freeze-frame style the physical movement of the title figure but also to portray the much different activity of their forbears, the medieval illuminators.

## Image-Makers Go Mainstream

How times have changed! Typewriters were mechanical devices for composing in movable-type-like characters. Such gear was used throughout most of the twentieth century. The first desktop contraptions of this type to achieve commercial success were invented and produced in the late 1860s and early 1870s, just when the medieval jongleur of our tale was discovered. These machines took hold by leaps and bounds. Not necessarily true to form, they contributed to creating and recording a yearning for the past, especially for superseded writing technologies. The nostalgia can be discerned readily in a French trade card to advertise [one brand of such products](#) (see Fig. 1.5). The vignette depicts three tonsured monks in the white garb of Cistercians. One to the left, chin in hand, looking for all the world like a man reading a large-format newspaper over breakfast, studies an illuminated manuscript. Another, facing him to the right, is seated at a lectern at work on a broad piece of curling parchment, with paint boxes before him. Both are immersed in the equivalent of paperwork from hundreds of years earlier—long before the introduction of paper into Europe from the East.

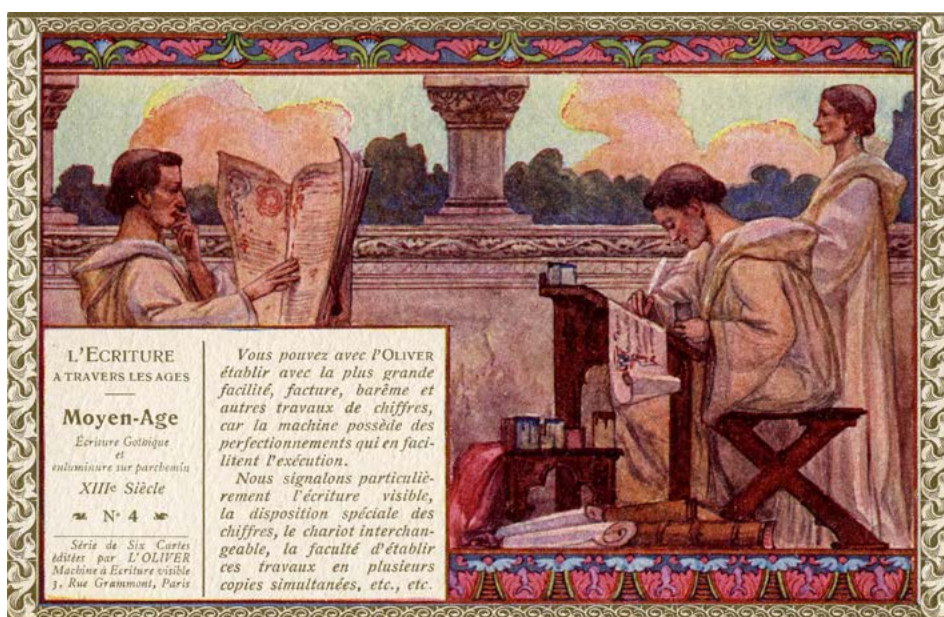


Fig. 1.5 Lithographed trade card depicting medieval monks at work (Paris: L'Oliver Machine à Écriture, early twentieth century).

Soon after the original poem of *Our Lady's Tumbler* was put into modern languages, books began to appear in which its text was presented typographically to simulate a medieval manuscript. Sometimes other features of bookcraft, such as bindings, incorporated traits imitative of the Middle Ages. Such simulacra had a long history already. In France, they had had their start at the latest in one specialized offshoot of the so-called [troubadour style](#), a French expression of medievalism that was popular in the early nineteenth century. Its very name would have made it apt for a story of a jongleur, but the piece of poetry from the thirteenth century was not discovered until well after the style's prime had passed.

In bookmaking, or less ambiguously manuscript-making, the most spectacular example of the style would be the 1844 [Chambord missal](#). One folio side depicts the Virgin and Child atop a crescent moon (see Fig. 1.6). She is crowned, wears red, and is cloaked in a white, veil-like outer covering. Talk about niche skills: both mother and son are positioned within an elaborate architectural bay, like one on the façade of a Gothic cathedral, except that it and the remainder of the border are painted gold, against a blue background. This medievaesque margin allows a glimpse into a world that stood ready for then-contemporary redactions of medieval Marianism and its miracles.



Fig. 1.6 Virgin and Child standing on a crescent moon. Manuscript miniature from the “Chambord Missal,” 1844. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, MSL/1984/68, fol. 7r. Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum. All rights reserved.

The Gothic revival also comprehended codices. The nineteenth century witnessed a surge in interest in imitation of handcrafted books from the Middle Ages. In the second half of the century, decorative lettering and illustration became no longer elitist but mainstream. The passion of that phase remains entrenched to this day in the custom in many colleges of using medieval-like scripts or typefaces on diplomas. When in English, the wording on such certificates is often replete with Latinisms, and sometimes the text is presented entirely in Latin. Likewise, such copycat Gothic characters came into currency in newspaper nameplates, to connote age and seriousness. They stay in use to this day.

The revivalists, both professional and amateur, were like nonprofessional bakers who rejected grocery-store mixes and store-bought confections by making their own from scratch. They sought to resuscitate and revitalize medieval or medieval-style penmanship, miniatures and illuminations, binding, and other such trappings of old manuscripts. They had special incentive to direct their efforts to the transcription of writings by Anatole France and other like-minded writers who loved the Middle Ages. Doing so was only returning a favor, for although the centuries since the invention of the printing press around the mid-fifteenth century had not killed calligraphy and illumination altogether, [those arts had beyond doubt declined](#). The full renaissance of both happened in the production of actual codices, handwritten and hand-illustrated, as well as printed books, often in limited printings, designed to resemble their medieval precursors or at least to do homage to that medium.

The imitation rested on study that teamed up scholars and artists. To go further, the craftsmen were not just professionals, but even hobbyists. Among other things, amateur manuscript-making procured an opening for female handworkers, whose options at the time were otherwise sharply restricted. In France, the art of illumination [enjoyed a uniquely vibrant revival](#) in the interregnum preceding the turn of the century, from 1888 to 1900. A case in point would be *The Image-Maker*, a periodical dedicated to the publication of images and of studies on “image-makers” both medieval and modern. The review was brought out [for only two years](#) by the French symbolist writers and critics [Remy de Gourmont and Alfred Jarry](#). In the fin de siècle, the makers of medievaesque manuscripts and books in France had not just one but two of their own magazines. One was *The Illuminator: Art in the Family*, the other *The Color Illuminator*.

In the latter journal, the essayist who composed an article on the Society of French Miniaturists and Illuminators quoted Anatole France’s praise of the group for rescuing a declining art that had attained excellence first in antiquity and again in the thirteenth century. In concluding, the journalist once more repeated verbatim words that the author of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* had uttered in his speech to the professionals and hobbyists:

The Society of Miniaturists has understood that, for art to live, it must be connected to life. This is why it has welcomed efforts aimed at decorating everyday objects; I am not speaking only of fans or specimens on fine paper of our modern books, but also of menus or programs and all other objects of contemporary elegance. It is only when we

no longer separate the industrial arts from what we call high art that we will be able to [hope for a rebirth of taste](#).

The paid experts and amateur enthusiasts of these rejuvenated crafts owed much to the support that France and his peers gave them, as they sought to make replicas of items from the Middle Ages. In doing so, these artisans and artists manufactured objects that were adjudged to be authentically medieval-like, if such a periphrastic and paradoxical formulation is permissible. Retailers purveyed these items to a much broader public than could possibly acquire actual historical pieces—authentic antiques. In their sophisticated and studied ways, the nineteenth-century illuminators strove for the seemingly spontaneous and natural handicraft that they supposed had been the customary mode of primitive craftsmen a half millennium earlier. In this way, they participated in a more general nineteenth-century seditiousness, one that in its way fomented the various medieval revivals, in rebellion against industrial society and mass production. At the same time, they helped set the stage for a proliferation of illustrated, medievaesque books in the early twentieth century.

The Arts and Crafts movement in England, already fired up by the writings of John Ruskin and Augustus Pugin, achieved further propulsion from the ideas and products of William Morris. All three of these men drew upon the Middle Ages for themes as well as for techniques. Although the term Arts and Crafts did not gain traction until after 1887, the style of design flourished during the half century that began in 1860. It was closely related to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which took shape in response to an extended field trip that Morris and Edward Burne-Jones had made to cathedrals in northern France in 1855. Arts and Crafts sent out ripples throughout the West, but the wavelets lapped strongest on the shores of the British Isles and America.

In France, a key moment can be identified in the eclectic output of Eugène Grasset. Trained as an architect and an admirer of Viollet-le-Duc, he was also well-traveled in Egypt. Already by 1871, he established himself in Paris. There he drew favorable attention for his distinctive style, which fused elements of Japonism and pseudo-Merovingianism. His medievalism bears comparison with the Pre-Raphaelites as well as with the symbolists. Among nineteenth-century experimenters in the medievaesque, this Swiss-born [father of art nouveau](#) may be best known for [chromolithograph posters](#) that epitomize what has been called the color revolution (see Fig. 1.7). He produced one such work for an extravaganza of medieval theming called the [Festival of Paris](#), which took place at the Opéra National [in 1886](#). The belle époque was the heyday of the poster as medium, when a placard could succeed at once as an advertising vehicle and an expression of true art. Through commissions such as this one, the government of the Third Republic wanted to legitimate its rule by overtly [linking medieval and modern France](#).

Grasset paid his dues and demonstrated virtuosity across a multiplicity of artistic forms, including stained glass, mosaic, typeface design, and calligraphy, but he may have left his most powerful and lasting mark in the book trade. [He was enlisted](#) for the landmark task of illustrating through a multicolor photo relief process a medieval





Fig. 1.7 “Les Fêtes de Paris.” Chromolithograph poster by Eugène Grasset, 1886.

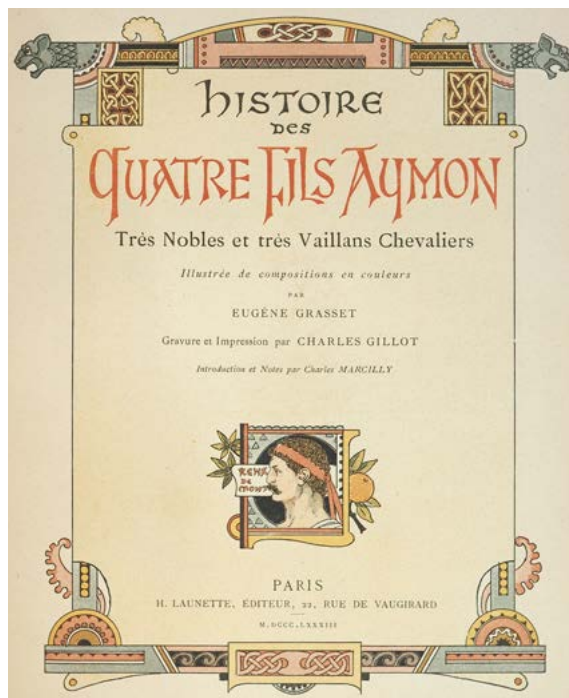


Fig. 1.8 Title page of *Histoire des quatre fils Aymon, très nobles et très vaillans chevaliers*, illus. Eugène Grasset (Paris: H. Launette, 1883).

*chanson de geste* entitled *The Story of Aymon's Four Sons, Most Noble and Most Valiant Knights* (see Fig. 1.8).

Following the style and layout of an illuminated manuscript from the Middle Ages, the artist devised for this extraordinary *livre de luxe* 240 four-color watercolors that were reproduced through four-color printing. He devoted the better part of two years to the tome, which was published in 1883. What relevance does the stunningly beautiful, proto-art nouveau book of this designer hold for the reception of Anatole France's *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*? A first observation, almost too unmissable at this point even to be committed to writing, is that in the late nineteenth century, a medievaesque style was not at all irreconcilable with a new and modern one. The production of the volume required Herculean effort and Daedalian innovation, with more than one thousand plates and the application of the latest and greatest printing techniques. Beyond that, this printed work inaugurates a convention of others that are not fakes, forgeries, or facsimiles, but that instead radically reimagine the Middle Ages to accord with changing reconceptions of the epoch. They modernize the medieval, even as they medievalize the modern. They belong to the same broader impetus as led to the institutionalization of medieval French philology and history and the popularization of fiction set in those long-ago centuries: such efforts to revive bookmaking and other decorative arts served to revive and remold national pride, badly battered after the Franco-Prussian war. More than ten years after its fabrication, the title was still being exhibited proudly not as old-fashioned for its medievalizing but as the latest and greatest for the modernity of the technology upon which it depended.

Conventions from medieval manuscript-making became solidly implanted within broader culture and commerce during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The specific facets and functions of Gothic revivalism differed from one nation to another, but everywhere the revival of medieval architecture and literature witnessed a similar intentness on the Middle Ages that manifested itself in decorative arts. Such medievalism found an ideal outlet in musical drama, which permitted its producers to conjure up buildings through stage settings and handwritten books through the mise-en-page of librettos, scores, and more. The lithograph placard by François Flameng for the 1901 musical drama *Grisélidis* encapsulates all these trends (see Vol. 4, Fig. 1.20 at <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/820/#page/36>). The eye is drawn to a text box. There, the name and subgenre of the opera, authors of the libretto, and composer of the music are spelled out in medievaesque black-and-rubric script. The initials to the title and to Massenet are given their own boxed majuscules, attached by an elaborate ramifying border. Simple drawing and flourishes fill out interlinear blanks. Outside the frame containing the wording, the world of medieval faith (as commonly viewed back in the day) holds sway. A devil, more fascinating than frightening, looms above the long-suffering Griselda, a heroine true to her ineluctable epithet of "patient." Between the antagonist and protagonist her son, Loÿs, stands pensively. Similar features, although more muted, are on show in the poster for *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. In both cases, the imaginative hegemony exercised by the

codices of the Middle Ages could not be better embodied—and the path could not be signposted more clearly to the manuscript-like publications that would soon follow, with modern French texts but medievaesque script and illustrations.

The librarian son of a bookseller, Anatole France knew both books and bookloving up close and personal. He wrote of [bibliophilia for bibliophiles](#). Are we to marvel that in turn his fictions were taken up by calligraphers and illustrators who crafted art objects of his texts and their images?

Among early twentieth-century decorated publications of France's tale, two especially splendid chefs d'oeuvre were brought out by François Ferroud. This publisher had launched, on the heels of Hugo's death, [a major new edition of his works](#), highlighting (of course) the novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Both forms of the later short story belong to a type known by the French term *livres d'artistes*, or "artists' books." Such volumes offered top-line production values. Often a single run would be broken down into different subgroups, by distinctions in quality of paper, format (for example, quarto or octavo), and stages of printing. These subdivisions would be numbered consecutively, and they would have gradations in rarity and cost. The highest-priced copies could incorporate one specimen or more of unique graphic material, such as the original gouache of one illustration. In effect, such products are manuscript-ed: they are customized for collectors by the addition of one-of-a-kind materials that are exclusive to the copy purchased.

[The first of the two Ferroud versions](#) was issued in 1906. By that juncture the genre of medievaesque books in France had a recent history that went back nearly a quarter century. The freestanding volume contained hand-colored engravings. It was the achievement of an artist legally named Henri Malteste but who signed his canvases Malatesta. [Like a small number of others](#), he specialized in medievaesque calligraphy and illustration. In both, he consistently showed a genuine love for the beauty of the writings he illustrated, and for Gothic art, in manuscripts and stained glass.

In 1906, the same printing firm also brought out Anatole France's "[Saint Euphrosina](#)" within its own two covers. This legend tells of [a young lady in the fifth century](#) who becomes a so-called transvestite saint. To escape an arranged marriage, this maiden of Alexandria feels compelled eventually to take the tonsure and to [adopt a monk's attire](#). [Until her death](#), she lives for decades under the unforgettable monastic pseudonym of Smaragdus, a man's name. The cross-dresser belongs to a cluster of saintly early Christians whose cults basked in a resurgence that played out in the revived spirituality of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. During that period, such ascetics became [role models for nuns, anchorites, and other aspirants to sanctity](#). These paragons of virtue, in consonance with a common polarization in Christian culture that casts females as either saints or whores, were called both desert mothers and harlots, and included such wayward souls who eventually saw the light as Mary the Egyptian and Thäïs. Fascinatingly, the same trollops-turned-holy-women won renewed favor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The front of the book produced by Ferroud bears [the story's elaborate subtitle](#) within a device designed to resemble a wax seal on a medieval manuscript (see Fig. 1.9). The fetching lass is portrayed as a dancing girl. France's "Saint Euphrosina" matches closely with his *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* in the narrator's assertion (here a jocular remark at the conclusion) that he has followed a medieval original. In reality, the headwaters for the short story were probably an 1874 collection by none other than Paul Meyer. In the scholarly work by Gaston Paris's closest collaborator, the story of Euphrosina is preceded directly by the life of Saint Thais.

The opening page gives a good impression of the techniques employed throughout. A box contains [a detailed illustration](#) with a mediaevalesque border and a caption "beautiful maiden" in Latin (see Fig. 1.10).



Fig. 1.9 Front cover of Anatole France, *Sainte Euphrosine*, illus. Louis Édouard Fournier (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906).



Fig. 1.10 Anatole France, *Sainte Euphrosine*, illus. with miniature by Louis Édouard Fournier, woodcut border by Edmond Pennequin (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906), 1.

Likewise in 1906, Malatesta published Gustave Flaubert's [Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller](#) as a "facsimile of a calligraphed manuscript, illuminated and historiated." The tale had already been printed three times with heavy embellishment for bibliophiles, and it was [illustrated repeatedly](#) in years to come. The broader cultural ambit of the story's influence extended ultimately to Massenet. [The composer was evidently well versed](#) in all of Flaubert's *Three Tales*, published originally in 1877, with

*The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller* being the centerpiece. The account relates that while hunting, the title character was reproached by a hart. The beast foretold that the young man would one day slay his parents. Eventually the son indeed killed his mother and father inadvertently. As penance, he and his wife established an inn for wayfarers and a hospital for the poor, alongside a river. In due course an angel, in the guise of a man afflicted with Hansen's disease, subjected Julian to what might be called a leper's spot test. By passing it, the penitent merited forgiveness for his crime. Flaubert's treatment of Saint Julian the Hospitaller was among the first efforts by French authors in the late nineteenth century to appropriate and refashion the microclimate of medieval hagiography.

Malatesta's volume contains the full fixings of a fine printed book, including a concise statement of the place and date of publication, with identification of the publisher. Such information, designated formally as a **colophon**, is here lovingly illustrated with an image of Saint Julian toting an oar in one hand and cradling the neck of a splendidly antlered hart in the other (see Fig. 1.11). The last illustration preceding this imprint amounts to an ingenious summa of the artwork in the tome (see Fig. 1.12). Occupying most of a textless side, it shows a **Gothic lancet** with elaborate colored panes. Taking the tale as starting point, the illustrator here **envisaged a design** for the fourteenth-century glass that inspired Flaubert himself (see Fig. 1.13).



Fig. 1.11 St. Julian with an oar and hart. Illustration by Henri Malatesta, 1906. Published in Gustave Flaubert, *La légende de S. Julien l'Hospitalier* (Paris: La société normande du livre illustré, 1906), 55.

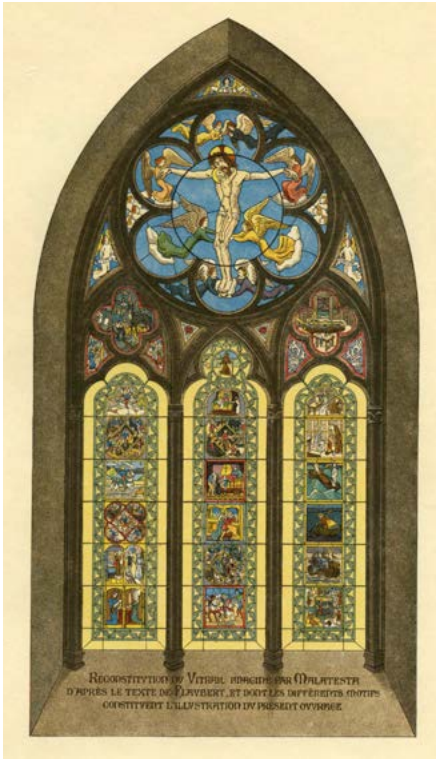


Fig. 1.12 A stained-glass window, the imagined inspiration for Flaubert. Illustration by Henri Malatesta, 1906. Published in Gustave Flaubert, *La légende de S. Julien l'Hospitalier* (Paris: La société normande du livre illustré, 1906), 53.



Fig. 1.13 Stained-glass window depicting the life of St. Julien l'Hospitalier, Rouen Cathedral, Rouen. Photograph from Wikimedia, 2016, CC BY-SA 4.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baie\\_23\\_-\\_Vitrail\\_de\\_Saint-Julien-l'Hospitalier\\_5\\_-\\_déambulatoire,\\_cathédrale\\_de\\_Rouen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baie_23_-_Vitrail_de_Saint-Julien-l'Hospitalier_5_-_déambulatoire,_cathédrale_de_Rouen.jpg)

The nineteenth-century author knew that his own conception of the artwork would take aback anyone who saw the actual window. In fact, he expressed the desire to have his story followed by a [colorized reproduction of an engraving](#) from 1823 that depicted the panel, so that readers could contrast the visual representation as a historical document with the verbal text that revealed what Flaubert wrought of it. The writer may have been the first, and was probably the most prominent, but was not the final medieval revivalist to see the world through stained-glass eyes. The translucent sheets, separated and supported vertically by the bars of stone or lead known as mullions, were only sometimes rose-tinted.

The page facing the pointed arch records the final words of the tale (see Fig. 1.14). Pictured in the illustration here is Gustave Flaubert himself with his left index finger held aloft toward the bottom corner of the medieval window. The depiction of the author in this guise is utterly appropriate. After all, [he acknowledged having taken](#)

his inspiration from the stained glass in the northern ambulatory of the cathedral of Rouen. Facing Flaubert in the portrayal is another figure, the wealthy banker and passionate art collector Lucien Félix Claude-Lafontaine, who commissioned the original manuscript. The tastes of this patron can be gleaned from a portrait of him that contains in the background squares of stained glass set into the larger uncolored window of his study where he posed for the painting.



Fig. 1.14 Gustave Flaubert gestures toward a stained-glass window. Illustration by Henri Malatesta, 1906. Published in Gustave Flaubert, *La légende de S. Julien l'Hospitalier* (Paris: La société normande du livre illustré, 1906), 52.

In the following decade, Malatesta tried his hand at decorating modern French renderings of medieval fabliaux. The first is the 1912 *The Sacristan Monk: A Fabliau of the Thirteenth Century* (see Fig. 1.15). This narrative, a macabre comedy, tells of a man and woman who are happily married, until they become impoverished. After learning of their circumstances, a member of a religious community offers the wife a large sum of money to sleep with him. The couple cooks up a plan to fleece the lustful brother, but it misfires and instead the husband accidentally kills him. The perpetrator hauls the mortal remains back to the abbey and deposits them on a toilet. A priest discovers the corpse and moves it to the house of the couple, in the hope of thereby deflecting suspicion for the manslaughter from himself. When they find the dead religious back

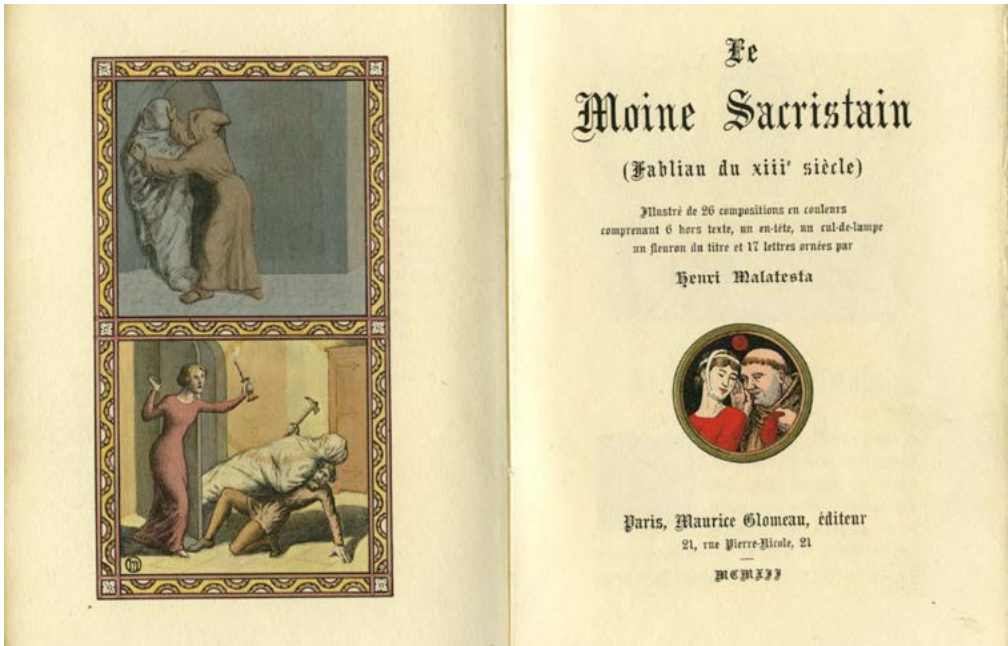


Fig. 1.15 Frontispiece and title page of *Le moine sacristain*: Fabliau du XIIIe siècle, illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1912).

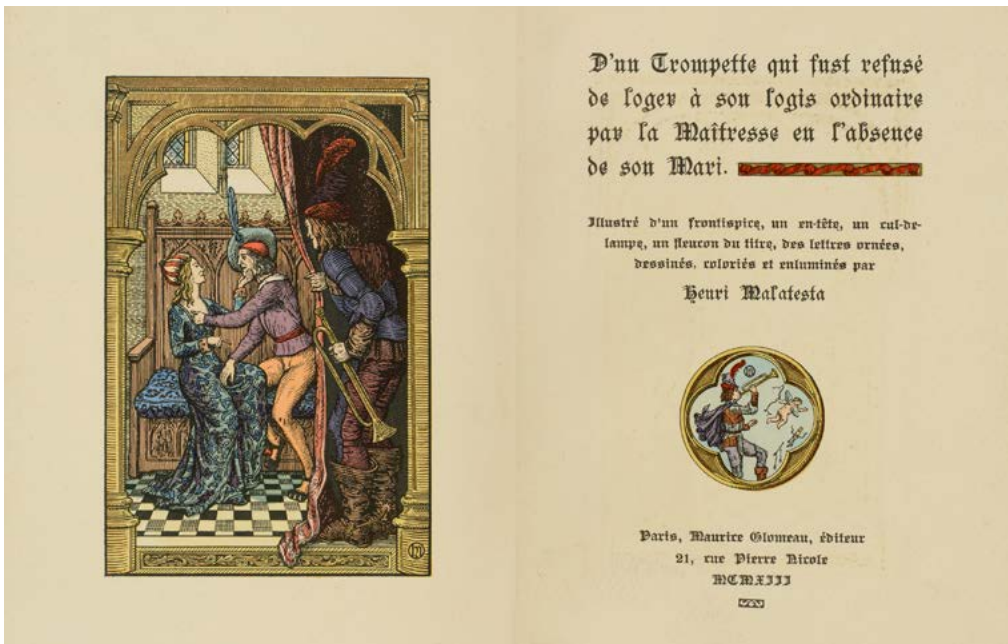


Fig. 1.16 Frontispiece and title page of *D'un trompette qui fust refusé de loger à son logis ordinaire par la Maîtresse en l'absence de son Mari*, illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1913).



on their doorstep, the married couple seek to bury him. While doing so, they chance upon a large ham that has been hidden by thieves. They replace the cold cuts with the remains, which the thieves find and carry back to their den. Upon realizing that they have a cadaver, the robbers take it back to the farm from which they stole the meat. When the farmer's boy happens upon the body, he runs back to his father. They strap it to a horse, which gallops through the kitchen of the monastery before plummeting from a precipice to its death. A second comic tale in the series is the 1913 *Of a Trumpeter Who Was Not Allowed to Lodge in His Customary Lodging-Place by the Lady of the House in the Absence of Her Husband, Illustrated with a Frontispiece, a Heading, a Tailpiece, a Fleuron in the Title, Ornamented Letters, Drawn, Colored, and Illuminated by Henri Malatesta* (see Fig. 1.16). In this case, the wordy title truly says it all.

In the verbal equivalent to Malatesta's work as illustrator, Marie-Anne Glomeau made a specialty of editing, translating, and reconstructing short fictions from the Middle Ages. One such book of hers is from 1923, *The Mystery Play of Griselda*, a text partway between a miracle and a morality play (see Fig. 1.17). We have observed what Massenet shaped out of this story in his opera. Another of her volumes is the 1925 publication of Rutebeuf's *The Life of Saint Mary the Egyptian, followed by the Legend of Saint Mary the Egyptian by Jacobus de Voragine* (see Fig. 1.18). Although the last-mentioned saints' lives are medieval, the style favored by the illustrator is in a late wave of the Egyptian revival.

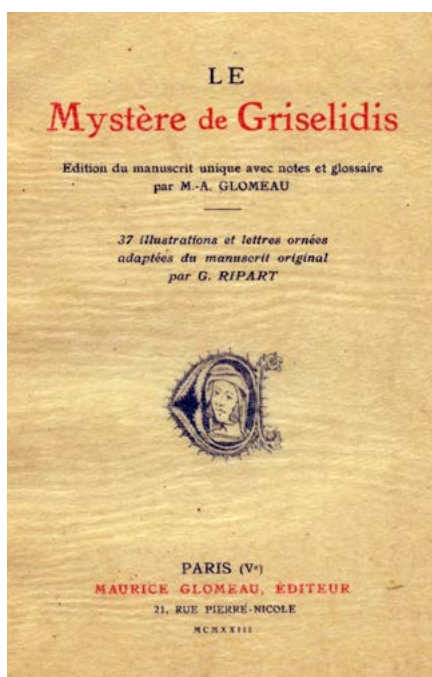


Fig. 1.17 Front cover of Marie-Anne Glomeau, ed., *Le mystère de Griseldis*, illus. Georges Ripart (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1923).

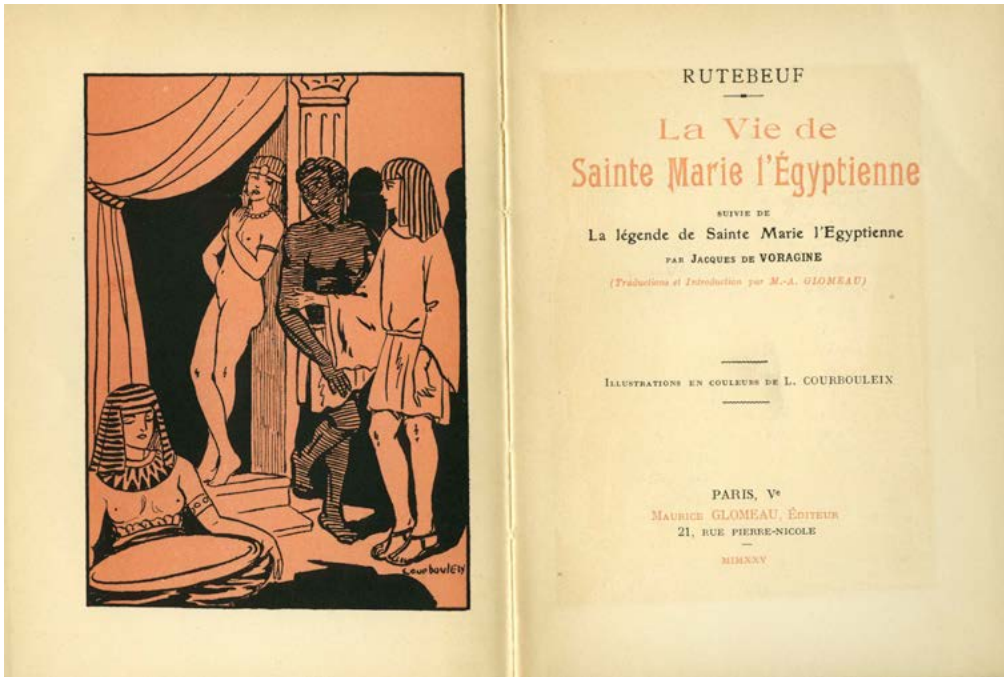


Fig. 1.18 Frontispiece and title page of Rutebeuf, *La vie de Sainte Marie l'Égyptienne*, trans. and ed. Marie-Anne Glomeau, illus. Léon Courbouleix (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1925).

The third in the series of anonymous humorous tales translated and illustrated by Malatesta is the 1914 *Of Saint Peter and the Jongleur: A Fabliau of the Fourteenth Century, Written, Illuminated, and Historiated* (see Fig. 1.19). In the original French, the archaic spelling of the participles at the end of the subtitle (*escript, enlumyné et ystorié*) diverges studiously from standard modern forms (*écrit, enluminé, and historié*), lending the book a quaintly medieval air. The story here tells of a down-and-out performer (see Fig. 1.20) who dies and whose spirit is promptly grasped by a fiend who frogmarches him to the underworld (see Fig. 1.21). There the the not-so-dearly departed is entrusted with the safekeeping of damned souls. The saint turns up and gambles at length with the entertainer, who eventually wagers and loses all those doomed to hell (see Fig. 1.22). When the demons return to find what the jongleur has done, they expel him, severely punish their colleague who brought him into the infernal regions, and establish the principle of not allowing other such professionals to darken their doors again (see Fig. 1.23). As for the hapless trouper, he goes to join Peter in heaven instead (see Fig. 1.24). The outcome of the story gives minstrels cause to rejoice forevermore (see Fig. 1.25).

In 1921, the first year of the next decade, Malatesta's brother Louis Malteste embellished *The Legend of Saint Mary Magdalene*. He took as his basis one of the final narratives in the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, a text from the Middle Ages

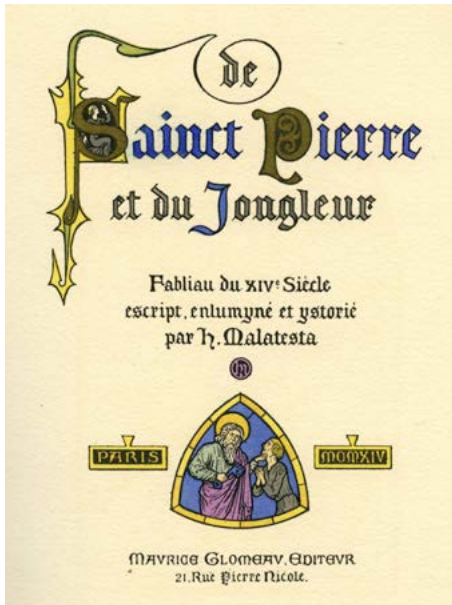


Fig. 1.19 Title page of *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur: Fabliau du XIVe siècle*, trans. and illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914).

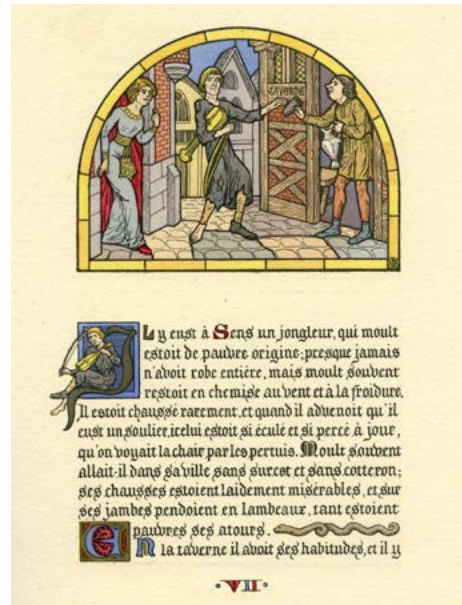


Fig. 1.20 *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur: Fabliau du XIVe siècle*, trans. and illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914), 7.

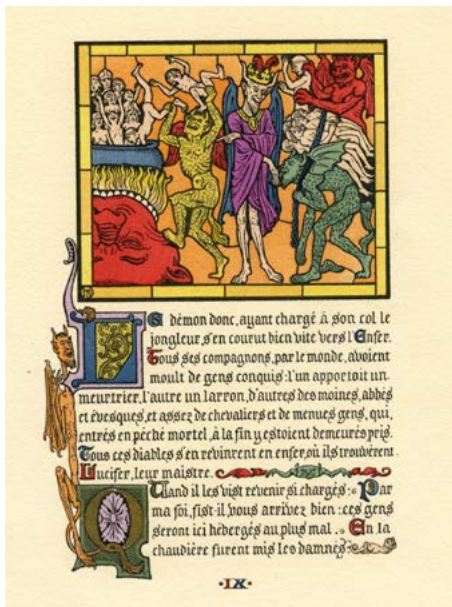


Fig. 1.21 *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur: Fabliau du XIVe siècle*, trans. and illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914), 9.



Fig. 1.22 *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur: Fabliau du XIVe siècle*, trans. and illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914), 16.

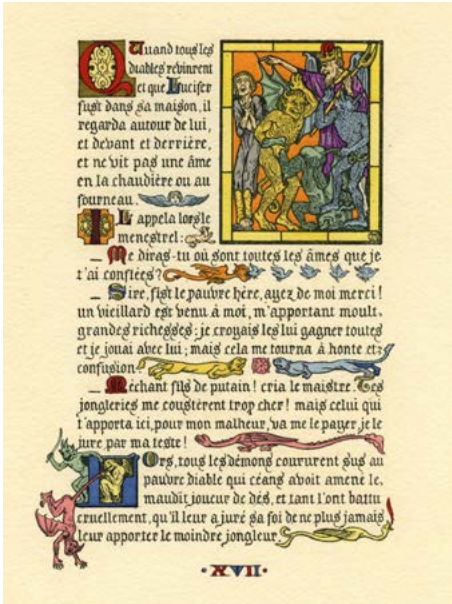


Fig. 1.23 *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur*: *Fabliau du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, trans. and illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914), 17.



Fig. 1.24 *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur*: *Fabliau du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, trans. and illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914), 18.

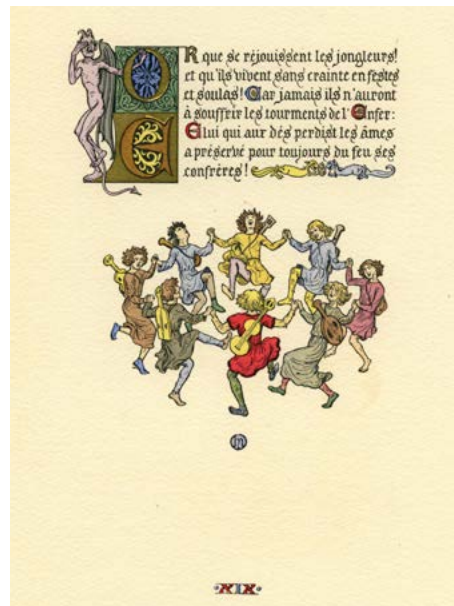


Fig. 1.25 *De Saint Pierre et du jongleur*: *Fabliau du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, trans. and illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914), 19.

that, as we have noticed, wormed its way deep into the hearts of the French in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first two illustrations, one the frontispiece and the other on the first page of text, are the most interesting (see Figs. 1.26 and 1.27). They put on display a Mary Magdalene who may stand at the interface of the medieval (like the initials), the ancient (since the actions take place in the time of Jesus Christ), and the modern (meaning in this instance the phase around 1920). The last element shows in the headgear of the saint.

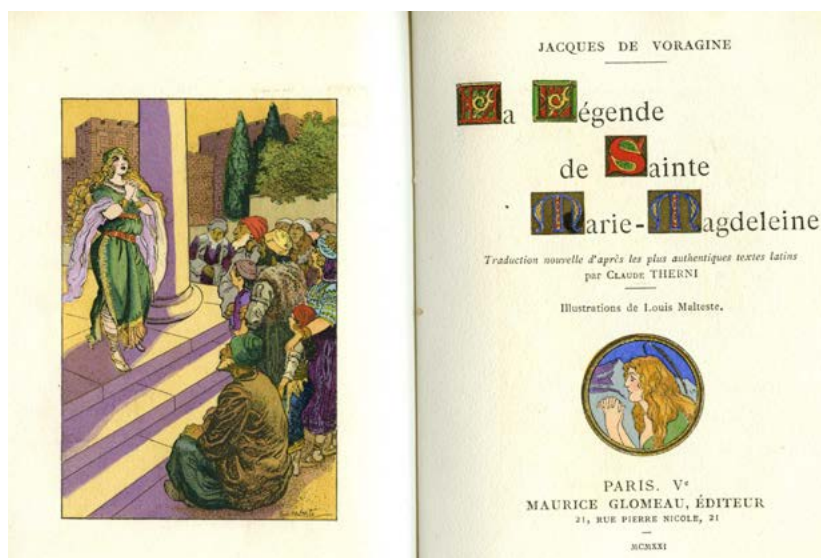


Fig. 1.26 Frontispiece and title page of Jacques de Voragine, *La légende de Sainte Marie-Magdeleine*, trans. and ed. Claude Therni, illus. Louis Malteste (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1921).



Fig. 1.27 Jacques de Voragine, *La légende de Sainte Marie-Magdeleine*, trans. and ed. Claude Therni, illus. Louis Malteste (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1921), 7.

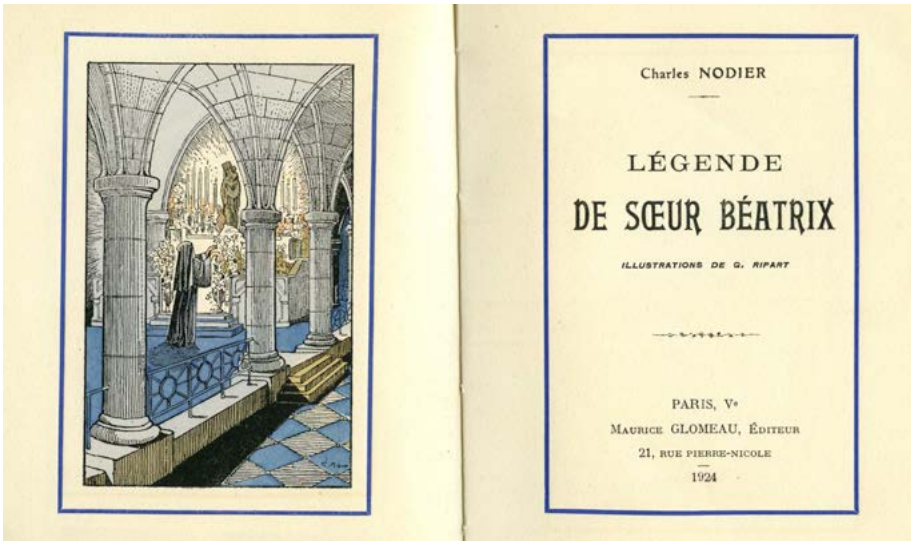


Fig. 1.28 Frontispiece and title page of Charles Nodier, *Légende de Sœur Béatrix*, illus. Georges Ripart (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1924).



Fig. 1.29 Our Lady of the Flowering Thorn. Illustration by Georges Ripart, 1924. Published in Charles Nodier, *Légende de Sœur Béatrix* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1924), 14.



Fig. 1.30 Beatrice and the wounded knight. Illustration by Georges Ripart, 1924. Published in Charles Nodier, *Légende de Sœur Béatrix* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1924), 30.

Yet another volume to receive such treatment in the medialesque vein was the *Legend of Sister Beatrice*, as adapted by Charles Nodier and illustrated in 1924 (see Fig. 1.28). Extraordinary favor was granted to this story in the early twentieth century, in fiction, on the stage, in cinema, and elsewhere. Among the major departures from the

two accounts by Caesarius of Heisterbach and most that followed it, the author sets the events in the Jura, in a nunnery dedicated to Our Lady of the Flowering Thorn (see Fig. 1.29). In the telling by this adaptor, the nun's seducer is not a cleric, but instead a knight who has been wounded and is taken to the convent to be nursed back to health (see Fig. 1.30). The silhouette of the story remains in a steady state, unaltered. The erstwhile Sister Beatrice descends into prostitution (see Fig. 1.31) before ultimately repenting and experiencing the boon of the miracle (see Fig. 1.32).



Fig. 1.31 Beatrice becomes a prostitute. Illustration by Georges Ripart, 1924. Published in Charles Nodier, *Légende de Sœur Béatrix* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1924), 38.



Fig. 1.32 Beatrice repents. Illustration by Georges Ripart, 1924. Published in Charles Nodier, *Légende de Sœur Béatrix* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1924), 46.

With tight integration of text and image, Henri Malatesta crafts a gorgeous layout of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. His illustrations are splendid in their own right. His 1906 production earned the esteem of the Parisian cultural establishment for the kid-glove delicacy with which the artist calibrated his subtle visual satire of the actors and events to accord with the verbal finesse of France's story.

The central portion of the title page features an aureate background. In the middle is an alcove with a pointed arch that is occupied by the name of the book (see Fig. 1.33). To the right of the archway stands the Virgin—or is it the Mother of God herself, who has come to life and vacated the recess now infilled by the Gothic lettering? She wears a golden crown over a white head-covering, red dress, and blue mantle, one edge of which she holds to wipe the juggler. Barnaby is tonsured, clad in a brown habit, and supporting his entire body weight on his left hand, with his right palm outheld in a gesture of petition. Aspects of the same stance are taken up in a historiated initial that appears later in the book (see Fig. 1.34), in which the entertainer performs before the

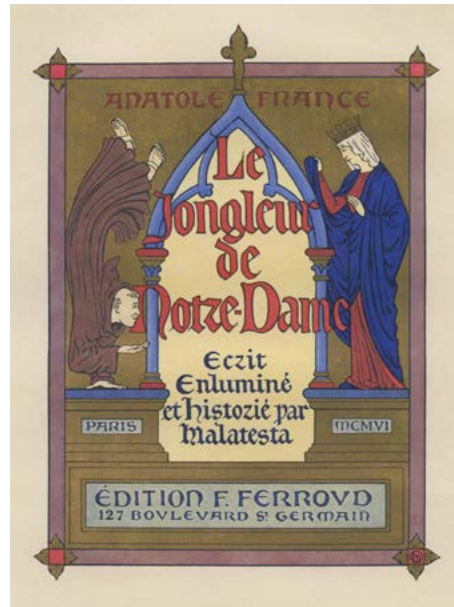


Fig. 1.33 Title page of Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906).



Fig. 1.34 Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906), 29.



Madonna and Child; and in a larger miniature, where Mary has descended the steps of the altar to mop off with a corner of her royal blue cloak the sweat dripping from the enraptured minstrel's damp face (see Fig. 1.35). The artwork and text are executed with conscientious care and beauty throughout the whole volume. The first folio side is representative (see Fig. 1.36).



Fig. 1.35 Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906), 31.



Fig. 1.36 Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, illus. Henri Malatesta (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906), 1.

Even more treasured among bookaholics, although less rare, is [the Ferroud edition of 1924](#) (see Fig. 1.37). A shift from the 1906 book is evident, in that this new version engages in less pretense to being medieval. If anything, it makes an open secret of its adherence to the Art Deco style that won favor in the 1920s and 1930s. In the representation of the jongleur before the Virgin, the tonality of blues and yellows intensifies the powerful juxtaposition of curved and jagged shapes. The illustrator was Maurice Lalau. Even more than Malatesta, this later artist carved out a niche for himself by illustrating medieval and medievaesque texts. The modern French translations and adaptations of French and Latin tales from the Middle Ages that were a mainspring of Lalau's career encompassed for example much of [Chrétien de Troyes and the Golden Legend](#). He also produced illustrations for the anonymous *The Fifteen Joys of Marriage* and for the adaptation of *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult* by Joseph Bédier, who had studied under Gaston Paris and succeeded to the chair of the earlier philologist at the Collège de France.

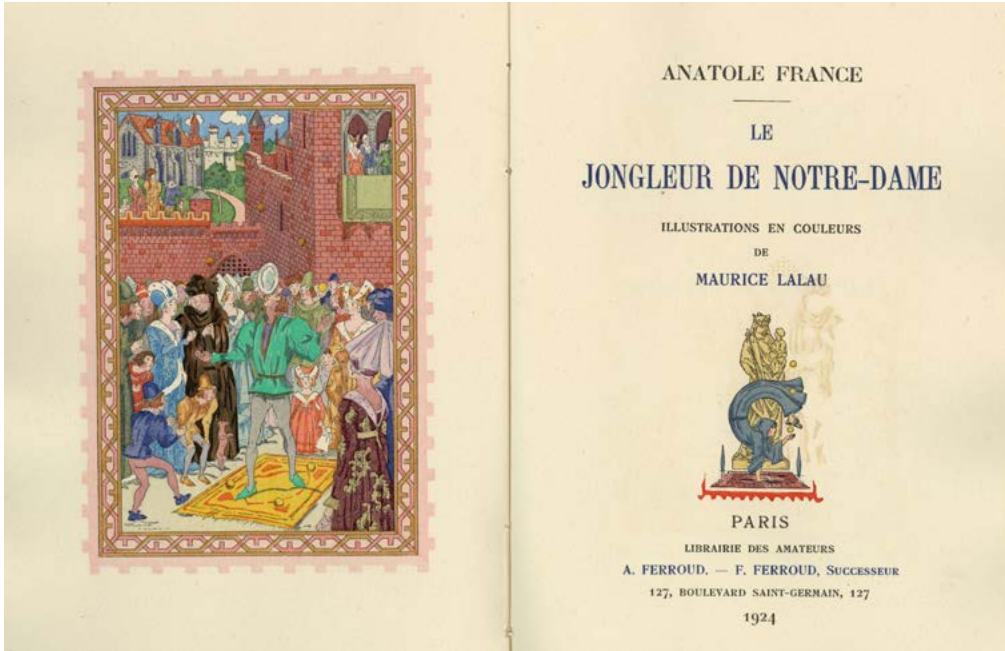


Fig. 1.37 Frontispiece and title page of Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, illus. Maurice Lalau (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924).

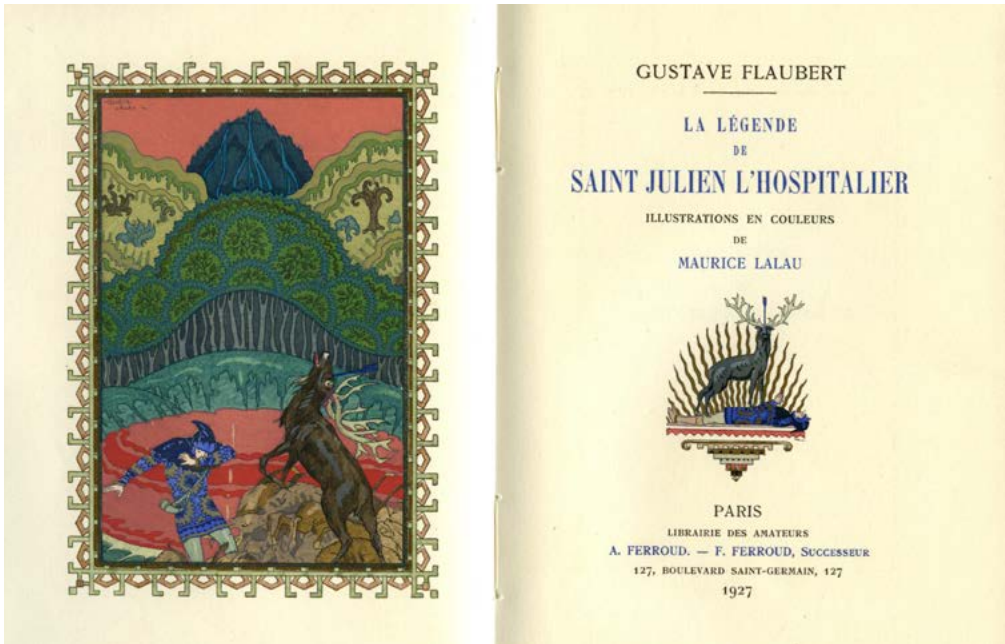


Fig. 1.38 Frontispiece and title page of Gustave Flaubert, *La légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*, illus. Maurice Lalau (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1927).

Even more relevant are Lalau's illustrations for glories of medievalizing fiction from the late nineteenth century. In 1927, he turned to Gustave Flaubert's *The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller* (see Fig. 1.38). In this case the artistry relies upon much the same palette as in his earlier *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, with opulent colors that include a vibrant Palatinate blue background (see Fig. 1.39).



Fig. 1.39 Julian realizes that he has slain his mother and father. Illustration by Maurice Lalau, 1927. Published in Gustave Flaubert, *La légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier* (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1927), 51.

If the Flaubert comes closest in style to the 1924 form of the juggler's story, Anatole France's *The Miracle of the Magpie* makes the best match in content. Lalau applied his hand to the second in 1921. The tale, set in 1429 from Good Friday through the Wednesday after Easter, tells of an amanuensis and a lacemaker in Le-Puy-en-Velay. The scribe was once unequalled in his craft, of engrossing the Hours of Our Lady of Le Puy. Now he has fallen destitute thanks to a close-fisted creditor, who eventually foreclosed on the shop he had owned at the sign of the Image of Our Lady, under the choir buttresses of the Annunciation. Owing to his poor dress, the impoverished wretch is kept at arm's length even by pilgrims with whom he hopes to share his deep expertise about the histories and stories of the Black Madonna of Le Puy. Eventually the desperate soul offers a prayer before the effigy, the raiment of which France describes with fond determinacy. Thereafter a magpie brings the scrivener a small purse containing twelve gold coins the miser had bestowed upon the Virgin. As this résumé conveys, France's narrative *The Miracle of the Magpie* concentrates on

the struggles of artists, devotion to the Mother of God, and the efficacy of prayers to likenesses of Mary. The account is set in the world of the late Middle Ages, which Lalau conveys through emphatically Gothic trappings. The frontispiece depicts the scarecrow-like copyist and the wimpled lacemaker set like statues within alcoves fit for a cathedral (see Fig. 1.40). The illustrations within the book proper resort regularly to traits of Gothic manuscripts, such as one that shows the professional writer kneeling before the Black Virgin. Behind him the sexton catnaps in a Gothic throne, flanked by lancet windows of stained glass. The whole vignette is fenced within a floriated border (see Fig. 1.41).



Fig. 1.40 Frontispiece of Anatole France, *Le miracle de la pie*, illus. Maurice Lalau (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1921).



Fig. 1.41 The scribe before the statue of the Virgin. Illustration by Maurice Lalau, 1921. Published in Anatole France, *Le miracle de la pie* (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1921), 31.

The tale of the bird as illustrated by Lalau looks less far adventurous than that of the jongleur that followed only a few short years later. The book of 1921 clings more firmly to the Gothic revival and art nouveau that preceded World War I than to the Art Deco that succeeded it. Yet in its leading female character, the story relates to a minor vogue of more than a decade earlier, when operas and silent films portrayed miracles that involved lacemakers and the Virgin. We will soon learn more about such phenomena. Both slender volumes, about the magpie and the minstrel, radiate affection and nostalgia for the Middle Ages, imagined much more positively than may commonly be the case today.

## Missal Attack

A new Gothic building, or a new missal, is in reality little less absurd than a new ruin.

—John Constable

A medieval missal is a manuscript that aggregates prayers, readings, and chants spoken and sung by the priest in the Mass throughout the year. By design it serves the celebrant and those assisting. From the middle of the nineteenth century in London, this kind of handbook was felt to epitomize the Middle Ages. Whole brochures and even manuals were produced with instructions to guide young people, both in school and as hobbyists, and adult amateurs in [how to handcraft their own liturgical codices](#). These texts occupied the minds too of those engaged in book-making.

By the time the score of Massenet's *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* was printed, it was nearly inevitable that at least a few of the sides would be decorated. The urge to conjure up the atmosphere and aesthetics of a chant book from many centuries earlier would have been nearly irresistible. In any case, the half-title, dedication, and title pages are all ornamented. In the half-title, the initial of each word looks like a letterform from six hundred years earlier. The first three even hold true to the etymology of *flourish*, from the Old French verb meaning "to flower," in having floral embellishment. The title page boasts an illumination of the Virgin with pseudogold leaf. [A contemporary commented](#) approvingly in 1904 on "the cover magnificently illustrated in color, in the form of a missal from the Middle Ages." In 1905, a Boston publisher brought out *Selections from the Gesta Romanorum* as the second volume in a series called "Breviary Treasures." Breviaries and missals are not identical, but from a nonexpert perspective they look close enough to be [treated as next of kin](#). In 1906, [an amateur calligrapher](#) and illuminator completed a mass book in French and Latin on paper. Her homemade codex teems with illustrations. The colophon reports that she lived in a small city in Alsace "on the street of Notre-Dame facing the parish church." [Below this information](#) a self-portrait captures the artist at work, while across from that depiction stands an image of the Madonna and Child in a Gothic architectural setting.

Whether translations or adaptations, whether literary, musical, or artistic, modern presentations of medieval material tended almost automatically to be graced with decorative features reminiscent of manuscripts. These undertones made excellent sense, since handwritten books belonged among the most familiar vehicles by which the culture of the Middle Ages had been handed down the centuries. Whether a given cultural product was consciously and deliberately designed to look handmade, anything set in the Middle Ages was likely to be examined through eyes conditioned by codices and cathedrals. The two art forms were regarded as similar, both spare and lean in many places but beautified in others with crockets, cusps, and foils, both regular but also improvised, both durable and delicate.

A reviewer of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* wrote of Massenet's opera as "a daintily illuminated leaf out of some dateless missal, or a mystical window, brilliantly colored, of our Gothic cathedrals." Daintiness and mysticism, mass books and stained glass—all were rated highly in the medievalism of the day. A bit more than two decades earlier, the Englishman Austin Dobson published a ten-stanza poem "To a Missal of the Thirteenth Century" that begins "Missal of the Gothic age, / Missal with the blazoned page, / Whence, O Missal, hither come, / From what dim *scriptorium*?" First the poet(aster) fantasizes about the hypothetical scribe and illustrator of the volume. Then he contrasts hand-produced works of yore and printed ones of his own day: "Not as ours the books of old— / Things that steam can stamp and fold; / Not as ours the books of yore— / Rows of type, and nothing more. // Then a book was still a Book, / Where a wistful man might look, / Finding something through the whole, / Beating—like a human soul." Nearly two decades later, critics professed to consider scenes in Yvette Guilbert's *Guibour* (from 1922) as if they were tableaux vivants based upon illustrations from a precious mass book of the Middle Ages that had been brought to life. The other side of the coin was that a great church could be envisaged as an opening in a liturgical manual. The same French novelist and critic Bourget who had likened an Italian place of prayer to a gigantic miniature set the stage for his simile with another: "The town has no reason for existing except this sacred emblem, this kind of missal page erected in stone."

The art historian Ruskin crowed over his very first acquisition of a medieval illuminated manuscript. In his words, it was "a little fourteenth-century *Hours of the Virgin*, not of refined work, but extremely rich, grotesque, and full of pure color." Continuing, he described it as occasioning in him a child's delight. His small book for the canonical hours of prayer was a machine for time travel to a period cherished for being childlike, one that would allow him to roll back the stages of life to childhood. Going further, we could infer that the parchment gave him a device that enabled him to bend his gender, from man to girl, and transcend geography, from West to East, in an orientalism powered by the *Arabian Nights*. Although Ruskin's turn of phrase "fairy cathedral" for his prized purchase was particularly vivid, he had a predecessor in drawing a comparison between a medieval codex and a medieval cathedral. Before him, Adolphe-Napoléon Didron had done the same already in 1845. Furthermore, we have noted that in due course, calling a printed book in a medieval-like style a "pocket cathedral" would become common.

Already from Horace Walpole on, the Gothic style was perceived, mostly in favorable senses, as concurrently puerile and puckish. Bookishness in no way excluded these qualities. But more than a very general bibliophilism is at stake here. The antiquarianism had about it a scholarliness, which undergirded different disciplines within medieval studies as they emerged, and an aestheticism that informed the practices of then-contemporary artists and artisans.

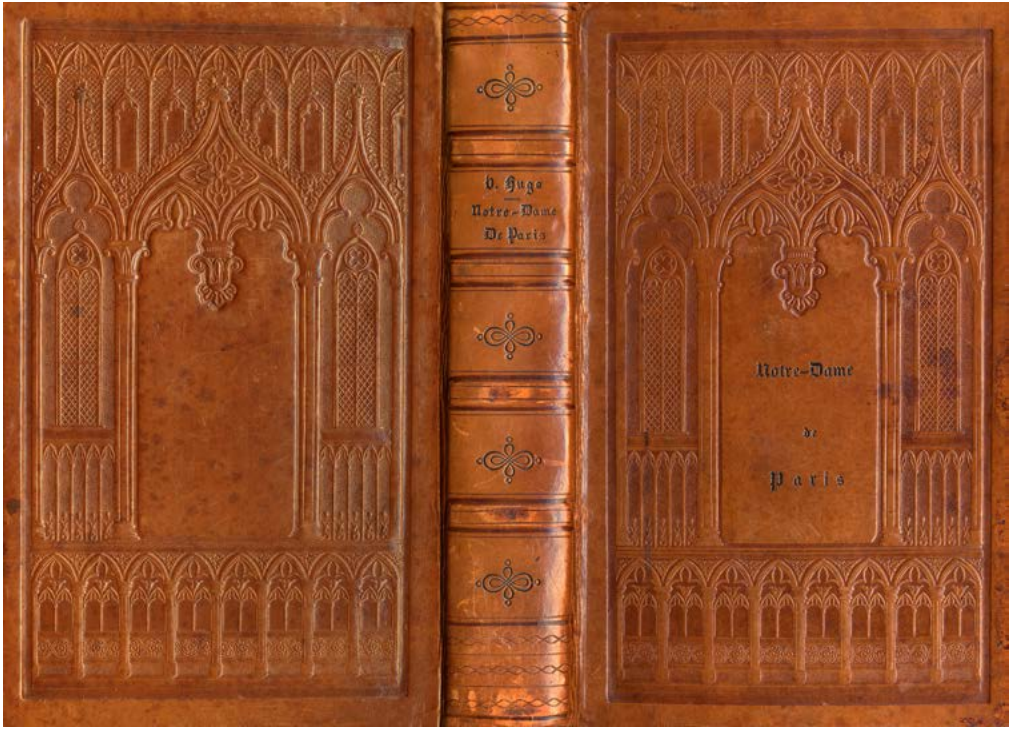


Fig. 1.42 Front and back covers of Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (Paris: Eugène Renduel, 1836).

The nineteenth century could be called the century of cathedral books. French, English, and American bookbinding introduced the fashion of craftsmanship called [cathedral binding](#), the most common expression of which featured stamped leather or leather-grained cloth, decorated with motifs that brought to mind the architecture of great churches. Because the houses of worship at issue were Gothic, a typical design presented a large window with a pointed arch (see Fig. 1.42), sometimes bordered by other elements well known from such architecture. Embossing of this sort attained its utmost popularity in the first half of the century. Within the relatively constricted ambit of the book trade, it expressed the broader Gothic revival, and partook of an irony that often shot through Gothicism, since this kind of imprint relied heavily on techniques of mass production. Although sometimes the images on the boards were made partly with finishing tools, often the pattern was done with metal die-stamps. [Gold was common](#). Thus, a backward-looking surface provided comfort and consolation for the rapid changes ushered in by industrialization. As a general principle, the proverb urges us not to judge a book by its cover. Where cathedral bindings are concerned, we would do well to disregard the injunction. This sort of outer layer became a vogue for volumes of liturgy or scripture, or on archaeological and antiquarian topics. In the English publishing industry, these stamped coverings came ultimately and unsurprisingly to be associated with the fiction of Sir Walter Scott.

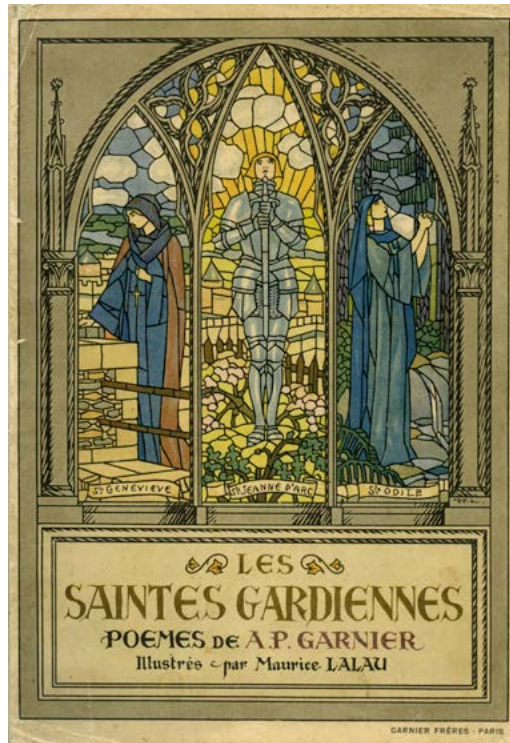


Fig. 1.43 Front cover of Auguste-Pierre Garnier, *Les saintes gardiennes: La geste de Jeanne d'Arc, le mystère de sainte Geneviève, le dit de sainte Odile*, illus. Maurice Lalau (Paris: Garnier frères, 1925).

Printed books such as Lalau's reflect some of the same curiosities and values that were concretized in cathedral binding, but with the stylistic inflection points that would be expected to emerge after a multidecade evolution. A case in point would be his cover art for a volume entitled *Guardian Saints: The Deeds of Joan of Arc, The Mystery of Saint Genevieve, The Poem of Saint Odile* (see Fig. 1.43). The design is very much a mid-1920s equivalent of the nineteenth-century leather boards stamped with elements of church architecture. A threesome of lancets pictures Joan of Arc, flanked by the other two holy women. The triad is bracketed tightly between pinnacled Gothic columns or pilasters. Even the floral motif surrounding the first word in the title proper harks back to the flourishes in Gothic manuscripts.

The mediaevalque books that rolled off the presses in the 1920s could bring a comparable delight to the fanciers who snapped them up. Indeed, Lalau's illustrated version of Flaubert's stories was published in a series called unequivocally the "Library of Amateurs." Furthermore, publications of this sort rest upon a generalist appreciation for earlier cultures that sensitizes nonscholarly connoisseurs to the past, as is not the norm in all periods. For instance, in depicting a monastic sculptor at work on an image of the Madonna and Child, the illustrator reveals a close familiarity with medieval "thrones of wisdom" and their successors (see Fig. 1.44). The artist is not a



whit less informed about the basic layout of Cistercian monasteries, when he portrays the abbey. The Cistercianism of course does not account for the weirdly vernal microclimate of the institution, in contrast to the wintriness the jongleur forsakes as he retires from the world outside (see Fig. 1.45).



Fig. 1.44 Monks carve the statue of the Virgin. Illustration by Maurice Lalau, 1924. Published in Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924), 17.



Fig. 1.45 The juggler enters the monastery. Illustration by Maurice Lalau, 1924. Published in Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924), 13.



Fig. 1.46 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), 23.

In what may be Lalau's most beautiful and memorable portrayal of a scene in the tale, the performer is shown as having a tonsure, sporting a monastic habit, and manipulating objects one-handed, while supporting himself on his free palm amid tapers burning in a circle. The Virgin, clad in a blue robe, wears a white head-covering surmounted by a crown. She and the juggler gaze raptly at each other, contrary to most versions of the story that leave him unaware of her presence (see Fig. 1.46). The illustrator heightens the intimacy of the moment, making it seem almost like a rendezvous between two lovers. He depicts the monastic brothers who are spying as peeping Toms who eye them through the keyhole to the church (see Fig. 1.47).



Fig. 1.47 Spying monks. Illustration by Maurice Lalau, 1924. Published in Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924), 27.

The same year of 1924 also saw issue from the presses of Ferroud a slim volume with *The Legend of Saints Oliverie and Liberette* by Anatole France. The color illustrations are by Gustave-Adolphe Mossa (see Fig. 1.48). Here as elsewhere, the art of this French painter is pervaded by **medievalesque influences**. The discursive fantasy of the author's faux legend about two saintly virgins lent itself well to the artist's tastes, which ran toward myth and fables. This wisp of trumped up hagiography stands up poorly when measured against *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, but it shares the same central theme of apparently simple and sinless faith. Like "Scolastica" and "Saint Euphrosina," the narrative is staged in late antiquity.

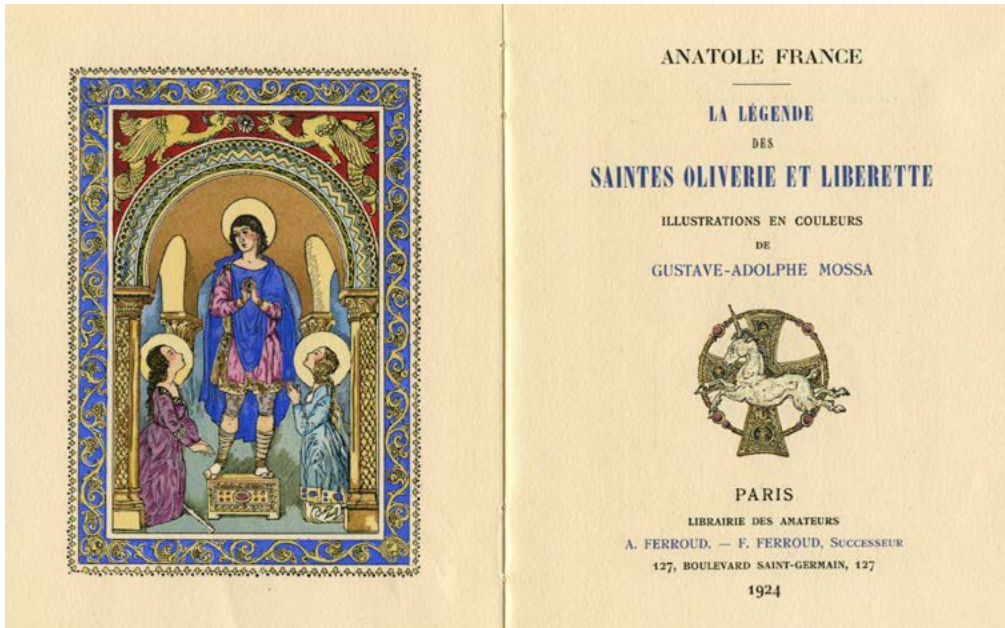


Fig. 1.48 Frontispiece and title page of Anatole France, *La légende des saintes Oliverie et Liberette*, illus. Gustave-Adolphe Mossa (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924).

The frontispiece and title page capture the main takeaways from the pseudosaint's life. The precipitating event involves a dashing stranger named Berthauld. The devout Christian son of the king of Scotland, he is put to sea in a **coracle**, without either sail or tiller. After a spell adrift, the unsafe little vessel was tugged by a swan to the mythical land of Porcin, occupied by pagans who worshiped the goddess Diana. There Berthauld crossed paths with the title characters, two young girls in whom he planted the germ of conversion. After he spent a long time as a hermit in the forest, a unicorn appeared miraculously that guided Liberette to him. First the solitary died and then Liberette. Afterward **Oliverie survived ten years** before herself passing away.

By the 1920s, the momentum to bring modernizations of medieval calligraphy and illumination before a readership of enlightened devotees had been building in French culture for more than three decades. Professional and amateur artistry that imitated illustrators of the Middle Ages had ramified to the point where it even infiltrated children's literature. In 1912 an author, under the anagrammatized pseudonym of Nalim, published *Duc Jean's Illuminator*. The story tells of a young man named Guy who ends up serving the Duke of Berry, known even today for the beautiful embellished manuscripts he commissioned. The illustrated tale includes a chapter "in which Guy makes a great sacrifice, and in which Our Lady the Virgin renders great joy to him." The episode involving Mary at least partly inspired the cover art, which depicts a thoughtful boy-illuminator gazing upward from his writing-desk toward the summit of a great church, while a wimpled woman in blue, bearing a crown, hovers

unseen beside him, with the lower hem of her cape billowing around both youth and furniture (see Fig. 1.49).

Nalim's was not the sole example of a children's book about such an artist. In 1921, a doctor with a strong side interest as an amateur in writing and the beaux arts came out with *The Distressing Episode of the Glazier, the Illuminator, and the Gargoyle* (see Fig. 1.50). When high art becomes kid stuff, the tide in a cultural movement is likely to be turning.

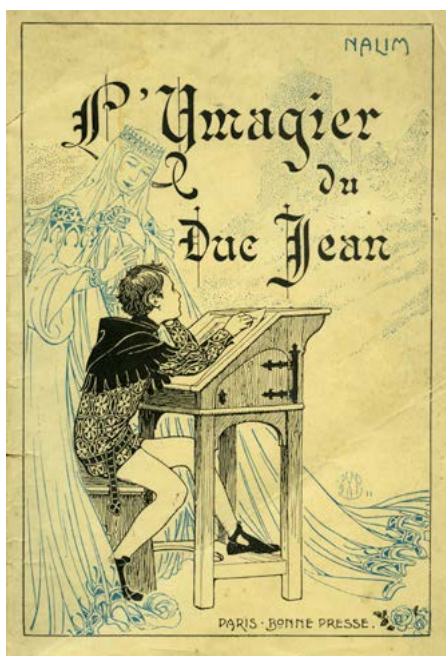


Fig. 1.49 Front cover of Amélie Milan (Nalim), *L'imagier du Duc Jean*, illus. Pichot (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1912).



Fig. 1.50 Front cover of Paul Duplessis de Pouzilhac, *La fâcheuse aventure du verrier, de l'enlumineur et de la gargouille: Légende de XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Montpellier, France: Montane, 1921).

## Handwriting the Medieval

Not only printed books expressed a yearning to conjure up the medieval period. Modern simulacra of codices displayed the same hankering and catered to it, by calligraphing and illuminating the text of the juggler story. Self-immersion in the Middle Ages through artisanry and artistry in a medievalizing manner began early. Near the end of the phase, [Théophile Gautier's 1832 short story](#) of "Élias Wildmanstadius or the Middle Ages Man" recounts how the protagonist whittled minuscule cathedrals out of cork, illustrated miniatures in the Gothic manner, copied out medieval chronicles by hand, and painted portraits of Madonnas with gold-leaf haloes and aureoles. Such hobbyism slipped out of style only slowly. For example, on the market [from another](#)

**dealer** early in the twenty-first century was an illuminated vellum manuscript of *Our Lady's Tumbler* dated 1920, probably the work of an American, twenty-eight pages of text on vellum, with initials in black or blue and red, and with decorations in red.

Nor was the activity restricted to dilettantes. Professionals had a role in it as well. The Middle Ages, it turns out, held no exclusive rights to painted books. In 1924–1925, a young Swiss French painter fulfilled a commission to transcribe and illuminate **two twenty-four page exemplars** of the Anatole France story on vellum highlighted with gold. Named Robert Lanz, he devoted himself to fabricating the codices not long after he underwent a religious awakening in the aftermath of two failed suicide attempts. To judge by his work in decades to come, Mary played a fulcral role in the manuscript-maker's recovery from despondency and turn to faith. In tandem with Maurice Vloberg, who had himself produced a popular retelling of the seven-hundred-year-old story, the artist later illustrated such Mariocentric, and oft-reprinted, classics as *The Virgin and Child in French Art* (1933–1934) and *The Virgin, Our Mediator* (1938). The lifelong Marianism makes small wonder that he met his maker on Christmas Eve.

Lanz's illustration of the culminating moment in the short story fuses elements from the medieval tale with the rudiments of Anatole France's (see Fig. 1.51). As in *Our Lady's Tumbler*, the Mother of God has dispatched an angel to minister to the winded tumbler. Whether the oddly green spirit brings balm to the performer or not is unclear, but she definitely outfits him with a nimbus. Three hairless and bug-eyed monks look on and up with mouths unzipped in ovoid amazement. Although the creator of this scene may have been cognizant of the medieval poem, this manuscript adheres to the text of France's *The Juggler of Notre Dame*. The turn-of-the-century tale is the primary inspiration. The seemingly pious content of the narrative, at least as interpreted by the devout, trumped the awkward fact that France's entire oeuvre had recently been inscribed (or proscribed) on the *Index of Prohibited Books*, a list of works deemed heretical or immoral by the Catholic Church.

In Lanz's composition, the tumbler is unclothed from the waist up, but in tights from there down to his toes. He may witness the miracle as it occurs, with his neck craned to look up. Then again, he may have no energy or eyesight to spare for the margins, as he concentrates upon the **six golden spheres** he is juggling. From his early years in Paris, the artist demonstrated a **commitment to manuscript illustration**. The style of his artwork nods to the Middle Ages, but simultaneously **typifies his own times** thoroughly. His project falls squarely (or to be more accurate, curvily) within the ambit of art nouveau. As such, it supplies one lovely span from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, a bridge leading from the Gothic revival that preceded it, especially as adapted by Arts and Crafts-like movements of the fin de siècle, to the modernism that followed. Artists lavished care upon decorative and applied arts that complemented architecture. The Swiss French artist experimented with both angularity and curviness in ways that typify art nouveau. He grants what may seem from today's perspective to be concessions to vital Gothic elements. The parabolas, both whole and half, stylize pointed arches and their sides.



Fig. 1.51 Robert Lantz, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, 1924. Mixed paints on vellum, 20 × 17.75 cm.

Not all new codices attained the artistry evident in Lantz's illustrated masterwork. From an unspecified place and date, but likely to have been handcrafted more than ten years later, is [an attractive illuminated manuscript](#) in octavo done by an amateur who was worth her or his salt. The book, on handmade deckled paper, consists of an opening title page, which acknowledges the translation as Wicksteed's, and [twenty-two pages of text](#). Both the title page and the first one of the text proper are elaborately

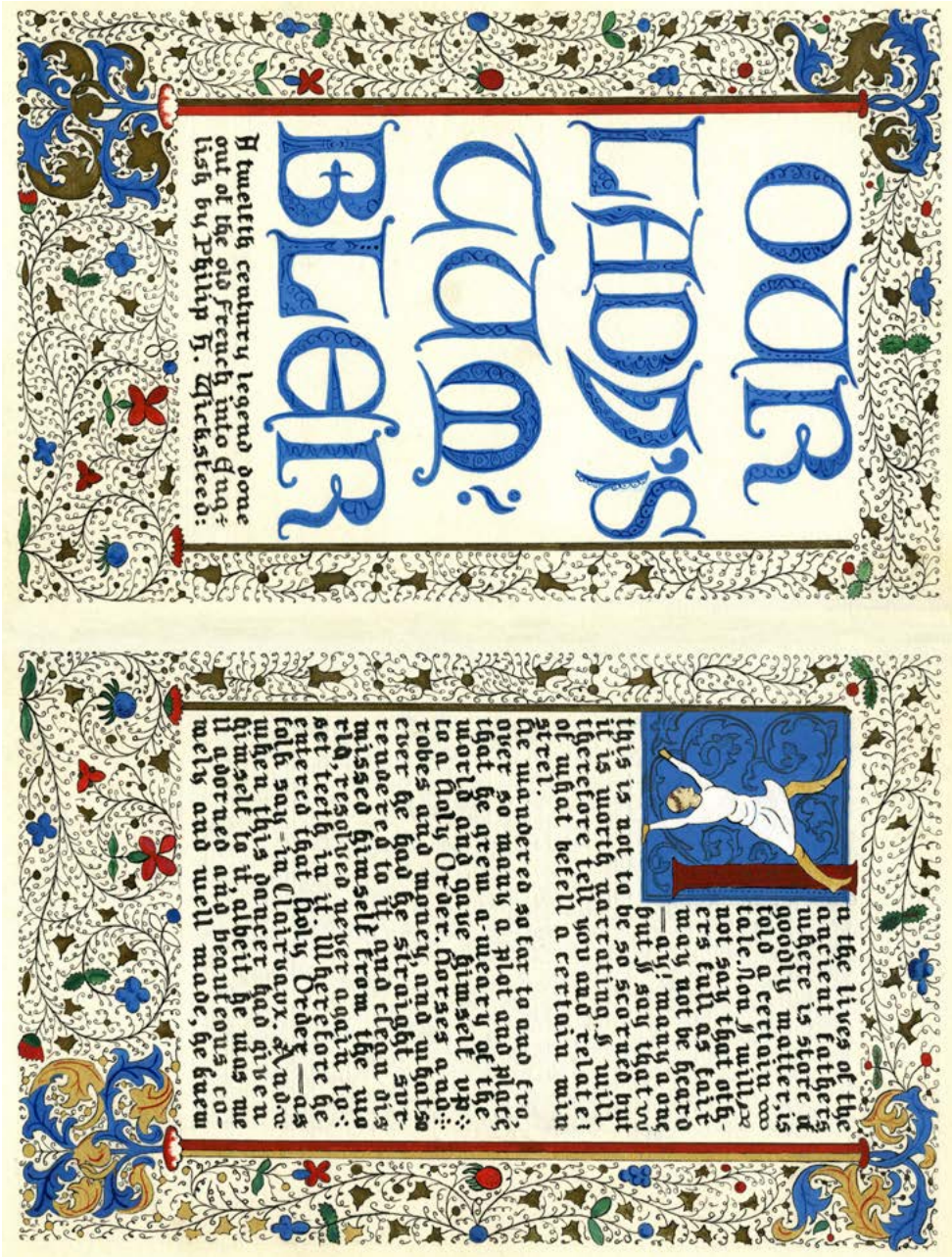


Fig. 1.52 Title and opening pages of Philip Wicksteed, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Twelfth Century Legend* (MS copied by Mary O. Kneass [?], early twentieth century).



floriated, and the latter displays an initial capital I which is historiated as a column (see Fig. 1.52). Before this pillar, a tonsured tumbler in a white shift knocks out a grandstanding handstand, with his full body weight resting on one palm.

Although not by design, this manuscript renders credit as it is due to nonprofessionals and independent scholars, with a high proportion of women among them. These two types of craftspeople have found *Our Lady's Tumbler* endearing in one or another of its many versions. In response, they have lavished their attentions upon the tale in the calligraphy of hand-produced manuscripts, typesetting and typescripts, or small-batch printing with hand-coloring. One notable example held in a rare book library is the 1942 *Del tumber Nostre Dame*, the work of [the renowned calligrapher Irene Sutton](#).

For self-explanatory reasons related to the economy of scale, printed forms tend to outnumber [handwritten manuscripts](#). Thus in 1923 Wicksteed's translation was appropriated for [a small publication in a private impression](#), created by an advertising service in New York City. [In the colophon](#), the firm avows that they are motivated to bring out the edition mainly by their liking for books and [the pleasure of designing them](#). They add jovially: "Of course, the tale itself may have some subtle significance: that is, as may be" (see Fig. 1.53). Viewed at a remove of one hundred years, an incongruity appears between the plights of the office-bound designers and of the itinerant physical performer; but if irony was intended, no remark was made on it.

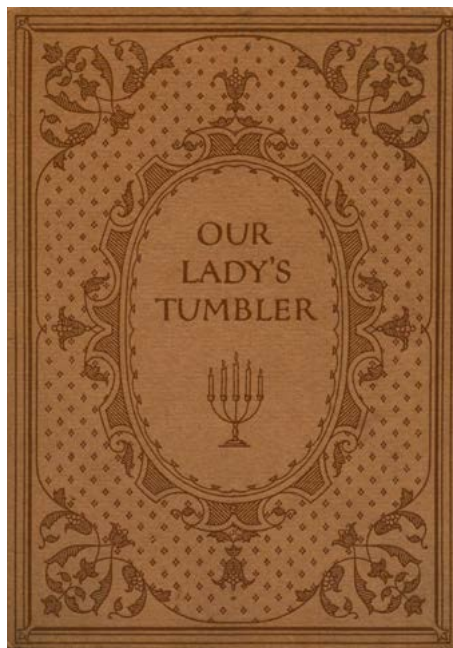


Fig. 1.53 Front cover of Philip H. Wicksteed, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Twelfth Century Legend* (New York: Privately printed for Stanford Briggs, 1923).

From a reckoning rendered by an English observer in 1925, we have testimony that the bureau was at the time a large and bustling commercial art studio. This presentation of *Our Lady's Tumbler* as a trim hardback was itself tantamount to a flyer, presumably for distribution gratis to confirmed and prospective clients. It is a belletristic equivalent to samplers that the partners put together and distributed to promote the quality of their design. The main illustration of the tale presents what looks to be a Gothic crypt (see Fig. 1.54). As two monks look on furtively, the gymnast performs. Fully tonsured, he is in a state of extreme deshabbille. He enacts his routine before a childless Madonna within an ogival embrasure. The narrative ends with a separate image of the Madonna in a more lancet-shaped window frame. Across the glass runs a jester's wand, a scepter with belled tassels at the right end and a fool's head at the left, with small bells attached (see Fig. 1.55).

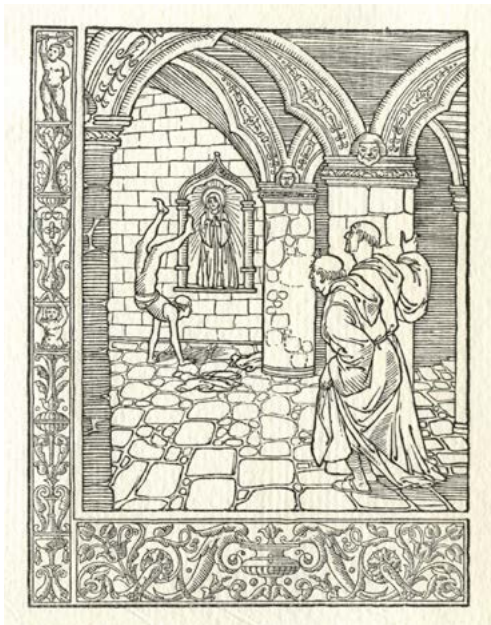


Fig. 1.54 The monks watch the juggler. Illustration, 1923. Artist unknown. Published in Philip H. Wicksteed, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Twelfth Century Legend* (New York: Privately printed for Stanford Briggs, 1923), 4.

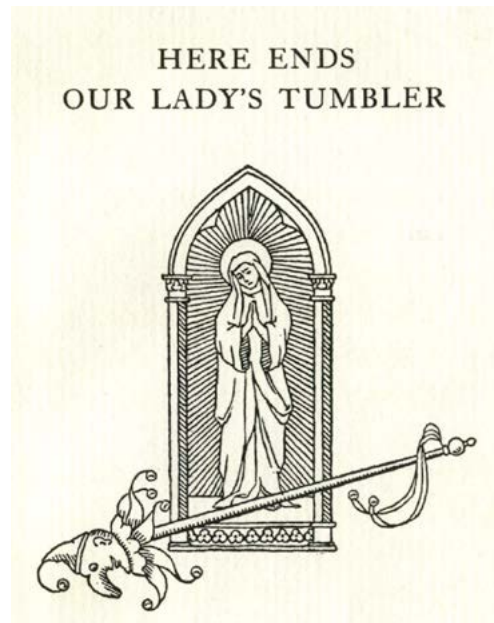


Fig. 1.55 "Here ends Our Lady's Tumbler." Illustration, 1923. Artist unknown. Published in Philip H. Wicksteed, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Twelfth Century Legend* (New York: Privately printed for Stanford Briggs, 1923), 31.

From England in the same era survives a printing of Anatole France's story in translation. Resembling a handbill, it was created during the academic year running from 1909 into 1910. The title page for this iteration of *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Legend of Compiègne* has at its center an elaborate monogram of the letters A and I, not for Artificial Intelligence but instead for the Aldenham Institute (see Fig. 1.56). At the bottom the page furnishes detailed information on the location of this facility in London. More

important, it signals that the [letterpress printing classes](#) of said institution produced the booklet. The text was set as [a collective exercise in typesetting](#). In its own way, the assignment grew out of the Arts and Crafts movement, and was ultimately engendered by guilds.

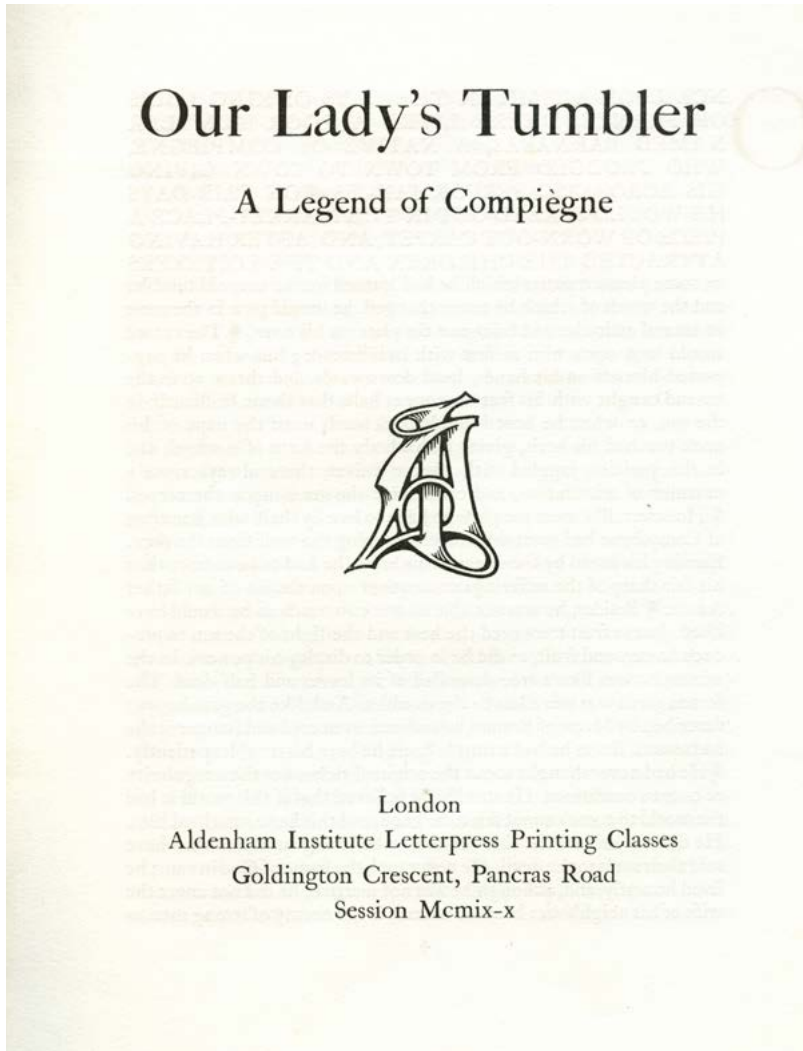


Fig. 1.56 Title page of *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Legend of Compiègne* (London: Aldenhurst Institute Letterpress Printing Classes, 1910).

The first three words of the title as given here in English are customarily affixed to translations or adaptations of the medieval poem, whereas Anatole France's version involves a combination of jongleur or juggler and Notre Dame. Yet although the late nineteenth-century French author is nowhere credited, these pages present a fresh Englishing of his modern prose short story (see Fig. 1.57).

ONCE UPON A TIME, IN THE DAYS OF KING LOUIS OF FRANCE, THERE LIVED A POOR TUMBLER NAMED BARNABAS, A NATIVE OF COMPIÈGNE, WHO TRUDGED FROM TOWN TO TOWN GIVING HIS ACROBATIC PERFORMANCES. ¶ ON FAIR-DAYS HE WOULD SPREAD OUT IN THE MARKET-PLACE A PIECE OF WORN-OUT CARPET, AND, AFTER HAVING ATTRACTED THE CHILDREN AND THE LOITERERS by some pleasant patter which he had learned from a very old tumbler and the words of which he never changed, he would pose in the most unnatural attitudes and balance a tin plate on his nose. ¶ The crowd would look upon him at first with indifference ; but when he supported himself on his hands, head downwards, and threw up in the air and caught with his feet six copper balls that shone brilliantly in the sun, or when he bent himself backwards until the nape of his neck touched his heels, giving to his body the form of a wheel, and in this position juggled with twelve knives, there always arose a murmur of admiration, and coins were showered upon the carpet. ¶ However, like most people who have to live by their wits, Barnabas of Compiègne had great difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door. Earning his bread by the sweat of his brow, he had to bear more than his fair share of the sufferings consequent upon the sin of our father Adam. ¶ Besides, he was not able to work so much as he would have liked. Just as fruit trees need the heat and the light of the sun to produce flowers and fruit, so did he in order to display his powers. In the winter he was like a tree despoiled of its leaves and half dead. The frozen earth was merciless to the tumbler. And, like the grasshopper described by Marie of France, he suffered from cold and hunger in the bad season. But as he had a simple heart he bore his troubles patiently. ¶ He had never thought about the origin of riches nor the irregularity of human conditions. He steadfastly believed that if this world is bad the world to come cannot fail to be good, and this hope sustained him. He did not imitate the thievish and unbelieving tumblers who have sold their souls to the devil. He never took the name of God in vain; he lived honestly, and, although he was not married, he did not covet the wife of his neighbour ; because woman is the enemy of strong men, as

Fig. 1.57 *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Legend of Compiègne* (London: Aldenham Institute Letterpress Printing Classes, 1910), 1.

## Typing a Translation

A unique application of handicraft to the tale of *Our Lady's Tumbler* can be uncovered in a modest book, not printed but at the same time also not fully manuscript, from 1940. Its maker, Pierson Underwood, evinced a lifelong passion for composing poems that evidenced itself already in his undergraduate years at Yale. Sporadically thereafter, he brought out volumes of verse as well. His prose translation from the medieval French represents a reaction to the thickening thunderclouds that would build into World War II. "Escapism" would be an unsatisfactory and even unconscionable way to describe his embrace of the peaceful loveliness in the story. The narrative's simplicity constituted a kind of antitoxin to the very real, more complex, bellicose worries of then-contemporary life.

Underwood graduated from college nearly twenty years later than Henry Seidel Canby, a fellow alumnus who received his bachelor of arts degree in 1899 from the

same university in New Haven. Despite the gap of two decades, the younger Yale too took part in what the earlier alumnus called “the Gothic Age of the American College” in the subtitle to his book *Alma Mater*. The experience with Gothicity during undergraduate education marked Underwood not only in his close companionship with other men (and perhaps especially Yale ones who had been classmates), but also in the sorts of medievaesque materials with which he opted to grapple in his literary and artistic production. He nurtured a romantic view of monasticism and cathedrals, as well as a religiosity that focused on Christmas and the Virgin Mary.

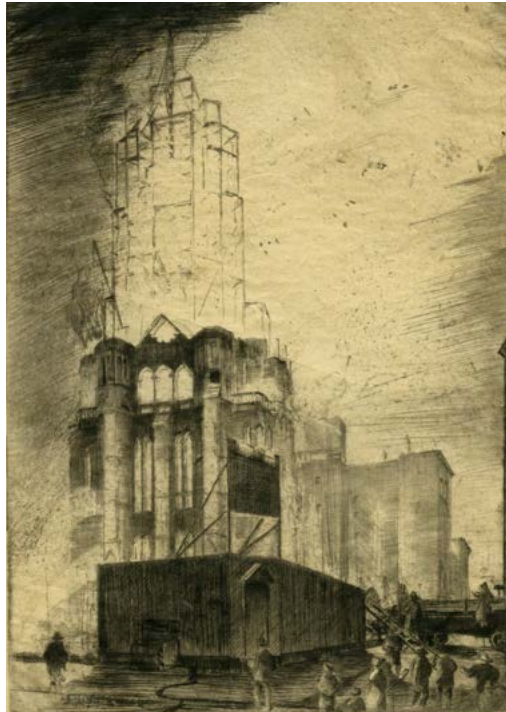


Fig. 1.58 “A Partially Finished Cathedral.” Drypoint by Pierson Underwood, 1928.

After taking his degree Underwood married, and in due course fathered two children. Even so, part of him remained ever after still cloistered in the all-male environment of Yale during the teens of the twentieth century. A dry point engraving of his from 1928 depicts a partially finished cathedral—but with its massive tower and lancet windows, it could as well have been a collegiate Gothic dormitory in New Haven (see Fig. 1.58). In 1936, Underwood brought out *The Monk, the Little Bird and the Lord God of Heaven*, a pamphlet offering an English translation of a medieval exemplum. So far as we can now ascertain, the narrative was employed first more than six centuries earlier in a French sermon by a late twelfth-century bishop of Paris. Eventually it **migrated in every direction** across space, time, and languages. The prelate, Maurice de Sully, is probably known best for having begun and nearly completed the construction of the

cathedral of Notre Dame of Paris. At the same time, [he retains a reputation](#) also for his preaching.

Since the Romantic era, [the short story of the monk and the bird](#) has benefited from a luxuriant afterlife in literary adaptations. The tale tells of an unnamed monk in an equally nameless monastery. When the brother prays to have the splendors of the hereafter unveiled to him, an angel in avian form flutters onto the scene and sings. Disregarding the proverbial advice about a bird in hand, the cenobite leaves the cloister to listen in the gardens. When the fowl ceases chirruping, he returns to transact his monastic duties. Although he thinks that only a short moment has passed, he discovers that he has become unrecognizably old, because unbeknownst to him a full three hundred years have elapsed. In effect, the protagonist is a kind of tonsured medieval equivalent of the famous character in Washington Irving's masterpiece of Rip Van Winkle.

Although not as widespread in its modern reception as *Our Lady's Tumbler* has been, the account of the contemplative and the songbird, too, is documented far more extensively in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than it was earlier. In the Middle Ages, the illustrative anecdote was diffused in the same genres of vernacular poetry and exemplum literature, as well as in sermons. A German poem from around 1300 is entitled *Felix the Monk*, which gives the exemplum one of its conventional titles. With its unnamed monastic hero, and its story in which a single human being receives through his individual worship a unique boon from heaven, reasons can easily be identified why it could have tickled the fancy of a person who would later find *Our Lady's Tumbler* attractive.

Underwood's brochure is both disarmingly and frustratingly unscholarly. One page identifies the contents crisply as [translated by him from Bishop Maurice](#). But the following one [puts the reader on more equivocal ground](#) about the source of the original-language text. In the end, the English looks like a very tardy expression of the late nineteenth-century amateurism that in general has formed a material part of medievalism and that has conditioned the reception of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. By comparison, the French adaptations by Brun, who first retold the thirteenth-century original in any modern language, spring to mind.

Just three years later, in 1939, Underwood turned his attention to the medieval minstrel, completing a [homemade book](#) that preserves twenty-two pages of text. [The typescript](#) is embellished with initials that were penned in ink and that stretch down a full four lines. It transmits an original English version of the medieval French *Our Lady's Tumbler*. The translator enjoyed wrestling with foreign languages, as his Englishing of other tales from French and Latin for [holiday-season pamphlets](#) makes evident (see Fig. 1.59). After he died in 1960, his widow circulated one of his poems at Christmas. Composed in that year, it celebrated the Nativity, with emphasis at the end on the Virgin (see Fig. 1.60).

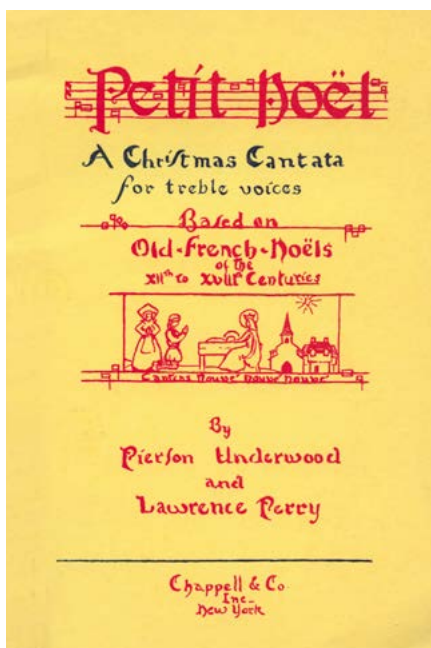


Fig. 1.59 Front cover of Pierson Underwood and Lawrence Perry, *Petit Noël: A Christmas Cantata for Treble Voices* (New York: Chappell, 1942).

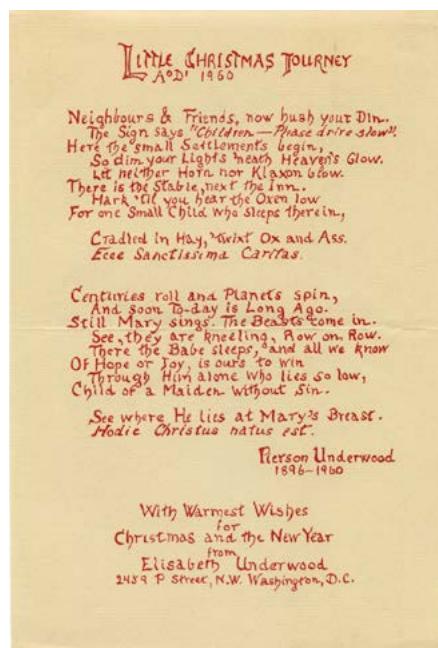


Fig. 1.60 Pierson Underwood, “Little Christmas Journey” (1960).

## Medieval French for Amateurs

The only printing of the original French in pseudomedieval fashion was published in France in 1954. With hand-colored illustrations, it appeared in a [limited edition](#) (see Fig. 1.61). Although the text is through and through medieval, the book is entitled *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. The illustration on the title page depicts in the foreground a juggler, in monastic habit that is pink pastel in color, with a Virgin in traditional country attire gazing down at him. To boot, the picture shows a lute-strumming angel and a vase of flowers to his left. A medievaesque effect is brought home by an empty banderole at the bottom of the scene, and by the floriated frame that surrounds it.

The artwork qualifies as sincere rather than distinguished. If subjected to hard scrutiny, it could be dismissed as religious kitsch. All the same, it was offered in a spirit of humility to bring joy to bibliophilic readers. The volume was printed for “[The Messengers of the Book](#).” To all appearances these evangelists were a local group of nonspecialists, who would not have been a world apart from the provincial circles for which the first French studies and paraphrases of the story had been brought into print in the 1880s. The volume was intended to launch [a series of writings by French](#)

moralists that would run in rough chronological order from the Middle Ages to Balzac. For better or worse, the ambitious scheme for publication was fast abandoned.



Fig. 1.61 Title page of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, vol. 1 of *Les moralistes français*, illus. Paul Dufau (Villeneuve, France: Les messagers du livre, 1954).

## A One-Novel French Novelist

The jongleur may one day return in full vigor for performances before the mind's eye of the reading public in the West, but only if brief fiction regains leverage in any dominant media. Since short stories cannot attain epic sweep or rounded character development, the medieval minstrel has failed to win purchase in enlarged forms that exist to benefit from longer scope. In these other genres, the simple tale of the simple performer suffers all the imaginable woes of overextension. Full-length novels and feature-length films suggest themselves at once as such "to be continued" types. The exception that proves the rule is the 1951 French-language *The Tumbler of Our Lady*, after *Gautier de Coinci*. Yet this telling, although not without its virtues, has had no detectable resonance in subsequent literary treatments of the theme. The height of its word count has far exceeded that of its impact (see Fig. 1.62 and 1.63).



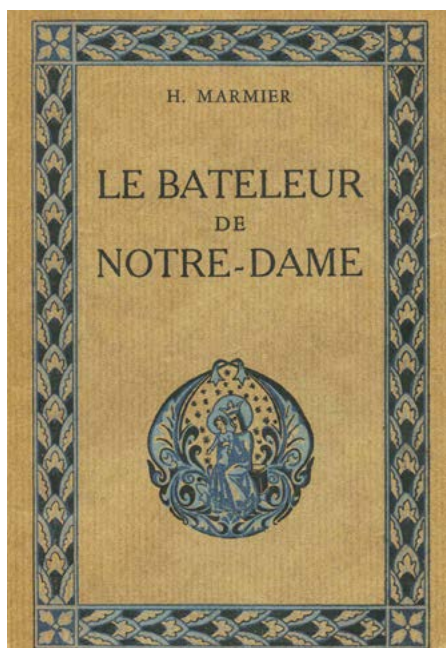


Fig. 1.62 Front cover of Henri Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, illus. André Hubert (Paris: H. Piazza, 1951)

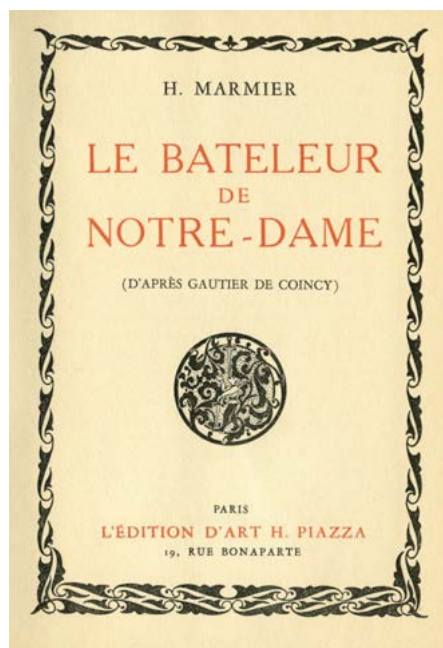


Fig. 1.63 Title page of Henri Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, illus. André Hubert (Paris: H. Piazza, 1951).

The printing history and reception are baffling. This curiosity first rolled off the presses in 1951. In its prime H. Piazza, the original publishing house, founded by a Frenchman of Italian origin, had brought out Joseph Bédier's 1900 adaptation of *The Romance of Tristan and Isolde*. Between 1897 and 1984 it produced hundreds of volumes [under its imprint](#). No library catalogue indicates that *The Tumbler of Our Lady*, after *Gautier de Coinci* has been printed [other than in 1951](#), but perplexingly it went through at least twelve editions in that single year. Reconciling the critical silence (or at least quiet) about the book with the many reprints puts us on the horns of a dilemma. How and why would so many copies have been put into circulation without [more notice in newspapers and journals](#)?

The novel was composed by Henri Alphonse André [Marmier](#). [Born in 1894](#), and decorated for his military service in World War I, he later led [a successful career as a magistrate](#). The decorative elements that adorned the fiction were by [André Hubert](#). [From this artist's involvement](#), we can be certain that *The Tumbler of Our Lady*, after *Gautier de Coinci* was not aimed primarily at a devotional readership. Rather, [it was pitched](#) at not especially moneyed connoisseurs of medievalism and art books. The very title of this refashioning perpetuates an old misconception that Gautier de Coinci composed the original of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. After maintaining the authentic medievalness of the tale through this ascription, the well-spoken author of the

twentieth-century novel then elaborates and embellishes it with elegant excursions. Along the way, he taps into a wide range of medieval literature and lore. For example, in a laudation of hell he draws upon a [conversation between the lead male character and the Viscount](#) in the Old French *Aucassin and Nicolette*. This medieval prosimetrum has been closely associated with the narrative of the jongleur since the end of the nineteenth century. Especially in English, the two works have been discussed and printed together more than once.

Marmier grants the tale primacy for “[the charm of the primitive text.](#)” This favoring of the medieval story for its enchantment and primitivism dovetails with a view of the Middle Ages as a time of love and charity, of hope for an afterlife to be achieved through prayer and humility, and of desire for miracles. By an unacknowledged interchangeability, the age of faith is automatically also that of cathedrals. The backdrop pullulates with Gothic architecture, and [the juggler is linked implicitly to great churches.](#) Intentionally or not, the author upholds the ecclesiastic censure that sought to expunge the contribution of Anatole France. In place of the disgraced (or at least disapproved) Nobel prizewinner, he invokes the philological pundit Gaston Paris and acknowledges [the version by the devout Catholic Vloberg.](#) The result of these choices is, to put the writer’s own words into English, “[a reworked and expanded version](#) ... a fantasizing adaptation, a pastiche.” Sometimes his embroiled syntax and archaizing lexicon can become cumbersome, even overwritten. Even so, the novelist makes his mastery of French vocabulary everywhere evident in a richly textured poetic lexicon. Not unrelated to what can devolve into verbosity, he puts on show a firm command of medieval French literature and culture. The tumbler, Rudel, may live during the reign of an unspecified King Charles, but specific details about literature and lore are sprinkled everywhere in the novel. The appellation assigned to the jongleur by Marmier is identical with the second element in the name of the famous troubadour of the mid twelfth century, Jaufré Rudel.

Such rituals as the Feast of Fools, with all their potential for the carnivalesque, are present. We also encounter the comic medieval story of the snow child. A woman has a son who had to have been conceived while her spouse was absent on an extended business trip. To exculpate herself, she professes to have been inseminated when thirst once drove her to consume the white stuff. Saying nothing about this snow job, her cuckolded husband then goes off on another expedition and sells off the bastard into thralldom. When confronted about the disappearance, he [claims the boy melted](#) from the heat of the sun. Beyond this one famous joke, Marmier regales us incidentally with much lore about medieval saints, [including the Faust-like Theophilus,](#) whom Mary saved from a pact with the devil. In addition, we hear about Ithier, one of the two jongleurs from the miracle of the Holy Candle of Arras, and about the female sacristan of a convent, none other than [sister Beatrice.](#) Thus Marmier manages to refer casually to many major medieval miracles of the Virgin that bear comparison with *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. In a low-key way, driven partly by the need for filler, the novel becomes a

summa of analogues and kindred tales. The book is not a tour de force, but it catches some of the original's spirit—and that achievement redounds to the author's credit.

## French Language-Study

To appreciate the prominence of our miracle in twentieth-century America, we must ground ourselves in a world with a populace and culture that underwent constant, often vertiginous changes but that still differed radically from what envelops us today. Take the linguistic situation for starters. For most of the 1900s, French held sway in many parts of the US as the prestige living language for study in secondary schooling and universities. As a consequence, Anatole France's story was popular fare in courses in both high schools and colleges. But at least in North America, the main mother tongue of France has lost its preeminence to Spanish. Furthermore, other modern vernaculars, most of them non-European, have saturated the linguistic market thanks to the changed demographics of immigration and to globalization.

Back in the day, circumstances could not have been more different—and not just owing to the vagaries that governed the distribution of first and second languages across the nation. *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* rode high on a cultural ascent for more than half the century. As the children's book suggests, the French tale was not destined to remain forever or even for long a treat restricted to connoisseurs. On the contrary, it slipped incrementally into a broader and often less elitist orbit. Even before Anatole France's adaptation was printed in a second edition by the Ferroud press in 1924, we find it serving as a school text for the study of French in the United States. In 1922 Josette Eugénie Spink slipped the legend into her reader, *The Beautiful Country of France*. An instructor at the University of Chicago, she operated in the heart of what in those days could have been styled "Mary Garden country." That connection may go far in explaining why the French short story commanded the respect it did.

The version by this pedagogue cobbles together elements from Anatole France, Jules Massenet, and her own fancy. In her telling the jongleur is, like his country of origin, good-looking. The French author of short stories acknowledged his indebtedness to the medieval poet Marie de France (a near namesake of his) when he alluded to the fable of the ant and the grasshopper. Following in his footsteps, the language teacher characterizes the entertainer as resembling the chirping insect. In a touch of her own, she describes him further as being free like swallows, migratory birds associated with the spring. The action takes place in May in Cluny. Lastly, the narrative ends with the Virgin embracing the performer, after having swabbed his brow with a serviette.

The volume's editor may have felt at liberty to monkey with the tale because as the third decade of the twentieth century commenced, it had come to be regarded as almost in the common domain. The story of the medieval minstrel is elevated through its appropriation by a writer and composer who had reached the apogee of their reputations. At the same time, the account is understood to be anonymous

and popular in its roots. From a no-nonsense perspective, not adhering to France's text would have spared an anthologist the twists and turns of copyright, permission, and royalties. Such legalities have caused headaches since even before the nineteenth century.

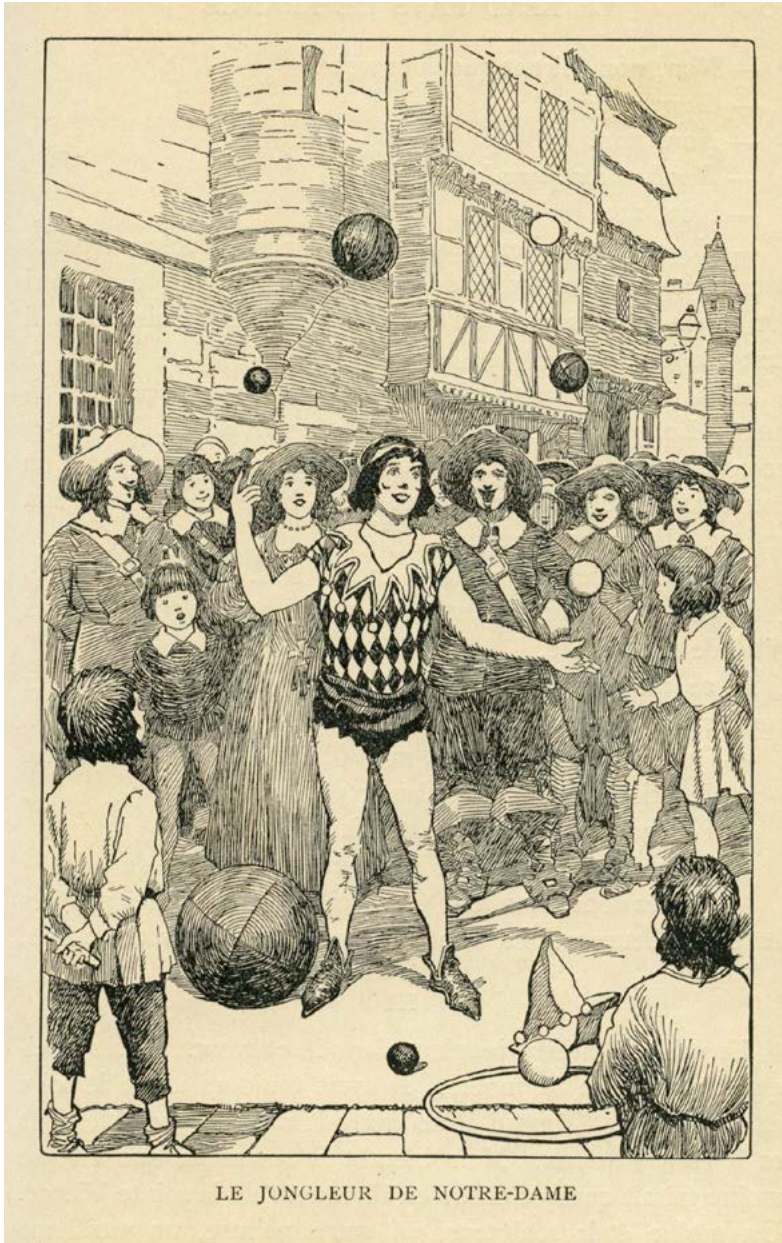


Fig. 1.64 The juggler performs. Illustration by Sears Gallagher, 1922. Published in Josette Eugénie Spink, *Le beau pays de France* (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1922), 59.

In keeping with the minor liberties Spink took in constructing her narrative, the single accompanying illustration would appear, from the style of dress, to set the tale in the seventeenth century (see Fig. 1.64). But the story is inlaid in a section that is resolutely medieval. For instance, it spoon-feeds information on troubadours, the *Song of Roland*, and Bertha of the Big Foot. The narrative about the jongleur, especially in Anatole France's version, continued to be incorporated for decades to come in anthologies of basic readings in French and in separate small formats. The account became canonical for a time, by being made a stock component of [textbooks for instruction](#) in the rudiments of French in Britain, the United States, and many other nations. Gaston Paris's influence lasted so strappingly that his words of 1888 on its "[delightful and childlike simplicity](#)" could be quoted without attribution a full forty years later. It defies imagination today that a literary critic should achieve such ubiquity and longevity.

Eventually the canonization hastened the unmaking of *Our Lady's Tumbler* as classroom material. [Old favorites can stale](#) in a twinkling if they are not reinterpreted and re-presented for new audiences of first-timers. Visionary moves were occasionally made to freshen the story's appeal by contextualizing it differently. For instance, [one compendium](#) situated the tale near selections from the *Golden Legend* and from later biographies of Joan of Arc. But such gambits did not suffice to turn the tide. Even when sanctity enters the picture, a fine line separates the respectability of being oft-told from the tediousness of being too oft-told. The narrative was dislodged from its former pride of place and fell from grace as teachers grew jaded from teaching it again and again.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* could be called only with misplaced charity a twice-told tale. Umpteenth would be more accurate. Unmistakable exhaustion with the story begins to show among critics. For example, an assessment of a 1947 anthology comments that students will know the protagonist already through English translation. As a result, [the reviewer proposes](#) that these palling pages could be replaced by "works of equal value but of greater novelty." In 1950, [a language teacher](#) evaluating an elementary French primer owns up that overexposure to the account of the medieval performer and other staples on the reading list has led to him to lose his appetite for reading or hearing about them. In 1951, [a third assessor](#) places the late nineteenth-century version among ones so old-hat as to risk being played out. He also questions the fit of the account among the other old chestnuts he has mentioned, since it is more recent. Nonetheless, he sees the narrative as guaranteed to spread "especially in the United States, where a sincere spiritualism flourishes despite the materialist atmosphere in which we live." The same argument would have served well more than fifty years earlier earlier.

In Italy, the French title headlines [a 1953 paperback volume](#) with a potpourri of Anatole France's fiction. The editor lauds the story for "simplicity, touching to the point of tears." In the following decade, [an article](#) wrestles with the place of foreign

languages in the curriculum for college freshmen and sophomores. The author faces new curricular tweaks. Compounding that pressure, he feels conscious of bearing a new onus as an American in the McCarthy era “in trying to break down provincialism and dispel xenophobia.” Despite the unprecedented cultural environment, the reading selections commence with three that transport us to the ambience of the late nineteenth century—an account of Saint Martin of Tours and other episodes from the *Golden Legend*, Anatole France’s story of the juggler, and two tellings of the life of Joan of Arc.

A late specimen of anthologizing exists from 1966. This book of literary extracts, now more than a half century old, presents the prose short story from 1890 in conjunction with photographs. These images, unprepossessing but serviceable, assimilate the Notre Dame of the title with the famed Parisian place of prayer. One drab snapshot shows the roof and most of the main spire, with the Seine behind. Another depicts a Madonna and Child, before a curtain with fleurs-de-lis, also from the great church in the French capital. The third photo pictures a gargoyle from the same building. The documentation and “little dictionary” focus on a word-for-word parsing of the text, rather than on any cultural or historical scene-setting. The homework assignments would have aimed at verbatim translation. The sort of presentation made in this elementary textbook would have furthered the well-entrenched proclivity of people to conflate the Nobel prizewinner’s concise fiction with Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris*. It speaks also to the tendency to equate the whole country of France with individual medieval houses of worship. The cathedralic predisposition is on display in the very first selection in the book, a few pages by André Maurois. The French author takes as his starting point a painting of the cathedral of Chartres by a countryman, Édouard Manet. A camera shot of the famous edifice surmounts the selection.

Anatole France’s story never mentions the central metropolis of the country. Nonetheless, it had been inevitable since the early twentieth century, as we have seen, that the tale from the Middle Ages as refashioned by him and as earlier entitled by Félix Brun would be misidentified with *the* preeminent Notre-Dame. In another anthology, the setting of the story is even spelled out as “Notre-Dame de Paris, a magnificent church of Gothic architecture, begun in 1163.” The American who in 2004 directed a revival of Massenet’s opera in Colorado made a confession to a reporter. He acknowledged that when asked to lead the production: “To be honest, I thought it was set in Notre Dame (Cathedral).” He had no cause for embarrassment. Reasons for the common conflation do not lie beyond modest guesswork. The Parisian Gothic monument is iconic internationally through untold touristic trinkets, is purveyed through incalculable adaptations of the Victor Hugo novel, and serves as shorthand for the city in all manner of advertising. A person who wants to evoke the City of Lights, the Middle Ages, or Gothic architecture could do no better than to show the façade of Notre Dame, as a medieval hieroglyph carrying all these meanings.

## 2. Juggling across New Media

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*The Middle Ages* is regaining its credibility and its seductiveness for our spirits, a Middle Ages released from the notorious darkness that until recently an entire rhetorical and political tradition deepened around its horror.

—Jacques de Baroncelli

As media multiplied in the early twentieth century, artistic imperatives and commercial forces coalesced to encourage the repurposing of creation in art from one channel of expression to another. Printed pages morphed into radio plays, while in the opposite direction transmissions through the airwaves transitioned into books and recordings. Opera passed onto high-fidelity cylinders, disks, and tapes. The melodies of Massenet even made their way *onto pianolas*, player pianos that were equipped to make music automatically by converting into notes on the keyboard perforations in long rolls or folded lengths of stout paper or cardboard. Librettos gained broad circulation in conjunction with radio broadcasts. Then television arrived, marking only the beginning of audiovisual forms that have proliferated at an ever more meteoric rate. In all of these, medieval-themed entertainment has had its place, however unlikely, and the juggler has occupied his own special niche.

Only tangible objects survive, but the breadth and depth of the testimony allow us at least a peep of an intangible cultural heritage, in vanished types of performances—including skits, dances, puppet shows, and artwork. These lost diversions far outnumbered what has been captured in print, preserved on film, pressed on shellac or vinyl, or recorded in other formats. Let us read, see, and hear what enables us to imagine the no longer legible, visible, and audible. In doing so, let us bear in mind that culture is not an unbroken chain of success. It also involves and even requires repeated instances of mediocrity and downright failure. The drearinesses and debacles supply the night soil that sometimes enables better artistry to take root and grow.

## Making a Spectacle of Miracle

Beyond Mary Garden's personal talent and blind (but only occasionally blonde) ambition, adept showmanship by Oscar Hammerstein I ensured the triumph of Massenet's magnum opus in New World productions. From 1906 to 1910, this sharp-elbowed entrepreneur poured resources into his [Manhattan Opera Company](#) (see Fig. 2.1). In this context—next door to the Gothic Reform Church—the diva made her début as Jean the jongleur, and here she also created additional roles in sundry other musical dramas for the first time in North America. In a head-to-head, knock-down, fight-to-the-finish competition with the [Metropolitan Opera House](#) (see Fig. 2.2), the impresario's own Manhattan equivalent lunged to the forefront of grand opera in New York City. In 1908, the producer augmented his presence on the Eastern seaboard by building in a second city another theater, the Philadelphia Opera House (see Fig. 2.3).



Fig. 2.1 Postcard of the Manhattan Opera House, New York (early twentieth century).



Fig. 2.2 Metropolitan Opera House, New York. Photograph by Detroit Publishing Co., ca. 1905. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Gift of the State Historical Society of Colorado, 1949.

When the curtain fell on the season in the two cities where he had at least wishfully a permanent footprint, the promoter took his troupe on tour to Boston, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. The repertoire of his prima donna for the road trip encompassed *Salomé*, *Pelléas*, *Thaïs*, *Louise*, and *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. The publicist's expansion of his activities guaranteed that knowledge and appetite for opera exploded outside the elite playhouses of a very few cities in the northeast, while the diva's shuttling between





Fig. 2.3 Postcard of the Metropolitan Opera House, Philadelphia, PA (New York: Union News Company, ca. 1914).

France and the United States contributed to the process that exalted the art into a truly transatlantic and eventually global form.

During the first decade and a half of the twentieth century *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* lent itself well to the tastes of theater- and operagoers. Among its assorted advantages, it featured a jongleur as the male lead, and it focused on a miracle—two traits shared by early silent films. At least a couple of these early black-and-white productions give prominence to professional performers. Although Sir Walter Scott had published his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* in 1805, the final turned out to be only the first, as far as the presence of these itinerants in popular and mass culture is concerned. The earliest specimen in movies without sound would be the French *Aloyse and the Minstrel*. The story of this 1909 feature centers on the melodrama of relations between the title character, who is a miller's daughter, and an entertainer. The lovers wed after overcoming the resistance of her parents. Slightly later, the enormously influential 1912 German film *Das Mirakel*—in English, *The Miracle*—begins with the seduction of a young nun by Satan in the guise of a bad-boy traveling entertainer.

Examples of lives and passions of Christ and saints are thick on the ground in early motion pictures. *Medieval miracles*, and among them those of the Virgin, form another large subgroup. *Joan of Arc enjoyed an extraordinary vogue*, along with Francis of Assisi. Possible explanations are readily forthcoming. The cinemas of the early twentieth century were in one sense modern through and through, while in another these rallying places for collective entertainment called very much to mind

the medieval past. In them, the public sat still as images of their idols flickered before their bloodshot eyes, just as churchgoers in the Middle Ages might have gazed at the representations in stained-glass windows when sunshine streamed through the panes, at statues or paintings illumined by the light of sputtering lamps and tapers, or at priests officiating at candlelit altars before laymen.

The tally of movie theaters designed and erected in Gothic revival style is not prodigious, but the number constructed suffices to suggest that resemblances between motion pictures and Christian ritual of the Middle Ages did not pass unnoticed. In 1900, [not a single purpose-built cinema existed](#). Within a few decades, communal viewing of films bordered on being a mass religion. At least on occasion, [moviegoers referred to their seats](#) as pews, the building manager as a divine functionary, and the stars as gods and goddesses. The experience of moving pictures was delivered in settings that aspired to grandeur almost inconceivable today. The all-embracing objective was avowedly “atmospheric.”



Fig. 2.4 Granada Cinema, Tooting, London. Photograph by John D. Sharp, 1967.

Lavishly appointed playhouses were most often called “movie” or “[picture palaces](#).” They were supersized, to accommodate on average more than two thousand seats. The largest had a capacity of 5,300. In American cities, [this form of mass entertainment](#) was a phenomenon of the two decades between 1913 and 1932. A far cry from today’s featureless and indistinctive multiplexes, such palatial constructions were lavishly conceived and constructed as fantasies of Greek and [Roman temples and amphitheatres](#), Italian Renaissance palazzos, Chinese pagodas, Hispano-Moresque palazzos, and [Gothic great churches](#). The film cathedral was a distinct subtype (see Fig. 2.4). Rightly or wrongly, in some quarters of Britain and America the construction of houses of worship in the Middle Ages was seen as an exercise in community-building.

The analogy meant that a fantasy church building could accord better with aspirations toward egalitarianism and democracy than anything palatial would have done. Social benefits were felt to derive from the cathedral-like qualities of the most advanced auditorium design. Beyond those advantages, architects planned the interiors to allow for adjusting them to match the content of what was being projected. Accordingly, a religious film could be screened in a theater with [lighting features](#) that would transform it into the simulacrum of a basilica or nave. [Norman Bel Geddes decorated one building](#) so that it could become a grand Gothic place of prayer. Its aisles served as the footpaths for processions that brought real-life movement into the moving pictures.

Cinemas on both sides of the Atlantic were called “cathedrals of the movies.” The Roxy Theatre in Manhattan went by the name “the cathedral of the motion picture.” Whenever a facility owned by the theater operator Samuel “Roxy” Rothafel opened, the inaugural ceremony followed an elaborate script that enacted a faux liturgy. The event in New York City was no exception, as the proceedings unfolded with a spotlight trained upon a man clad in monastic habit. Reading from a scroll, the pseudobrother intoned a portentous formula, in words that had the old-fashioned and fustian solemnity of liturgical or scriptural English. Think of the King James Bible. The text addressed the edifice itself as the divinity. At the instant when the sham monk enunciated the biblical “[Let there be light](#),” presto! an actual epiphany occurred. Artificial illumination was switched on to accentuate the interior design of the auditorium and the orchestra as it was hoisted out of the pit.

In these early days, many movies qualified as strictly hagiographic narratives with medieval settings. Still more counted as pious legends that related miracles. Not all of them were situated overtly in the Middle Ages, but most of them were steeped in an atmosphere redolent of that era. To an extent, the content of such films matched the medium’s stage of development: the screenplays of motion pictures called for their dramatic action to take place in earlier days because cinema was in its formative phase. Saints’ lives belonged among the prototypical narratives of the Christian West, and it seemed reasonable for the radically new form to seek out stories from the past that marked a similarly fresh departure after the advent of Christianity. Moreover, narrative, and perhaps to an even more conspicuous degree iconography, from those earlier centuries lent itself to the possibilities of celluloid. In these silent black-and-whites, the underlying tales are presented as [a succession of scenes or vignettes](#). One moving picture about holy men and their miracles was described as “[implicitly a Golden Legend](#) in animated tableaux.”

In this first wave of movie medievalism, miracles of the Virgin constituted a major subcategory of the options on offer to cinephiles. The stories in these films bobbed loosely in the wake of an 1888 book entitled *The Dream*. Although not set in the Middle Ages, this novel by Émile Zola plays out under the spell of a great church. The novelist’s reputation might lead us to expect the cool and unexcitable expression of naturalism. Yet the tale represents anything but such clinical detachment and sangfroid. Then again, [the writer was filled with paradoxes](#) in his attitudes toward the medieval period.

The action happens in an imaginary city. In English, its designation would be “Beautiful Mountain-The Church.” Within this settlement, life pivots on a twelfth-century Romanesque cathedral called the Church of Saint Mary. The story commences on Christmas day at the portal of the towering place of worship. There an orphan, Angélique-Marie Rougon, takes shelter from the driving snow (see Figs. 2.5 and 2.6). The given portion of her full name, identical with that of the leading character in Zola’s novel, could be translated into English literally as “Angelic Mary.” She is taken in as a foundling and adopted by a couple of embroiderers who dwell in a medieval abode connected to the house of prayer. Her adoptive parents produce liturgical paraphernalia for the bishop, using for their craft very much the same toolbox of equipment as their medieval forebears would have done.

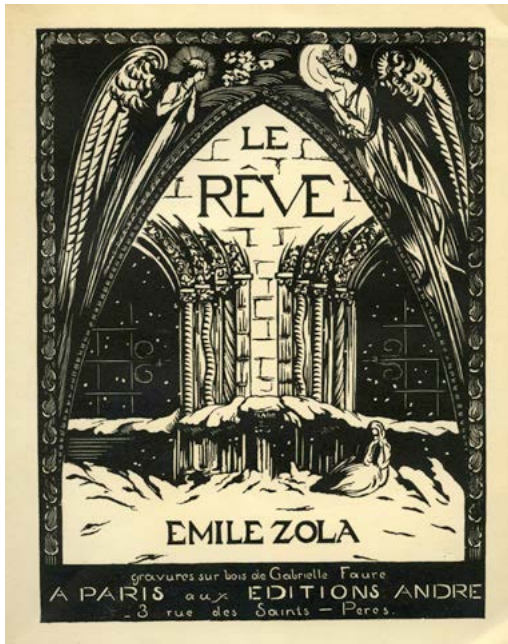


Fig. 2.5 Front cover of Émile Zola, *Le rêve*, illus. Gabrielle Faure (Paris: Éditions André, 1924).



Fig. 2.6 Title page of Émile Zola, *Le rêve*, illus. Louis Icart (Lausanne, Switzerland: Éditions du Grand-Chêne, 1946).

Angélique divides her days between two activities. Besides her textile handiwork, she learns to read by perusing an edition from 1549 of the *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine. Spurred on by the old book, she becomes engrossed in saints’ lives that she finds represented in the gray statuary and colored windows of the cathedral. In a reverie, the young girl discovers that she will marry royalty, but that she will die before achieving happiness. She convinces herself that a figure in a stained glass in the ecclesiastic building depicts her beau-to-be. In turn, she recognizes that the shape in the panes, and therefore her prince charming, is a real-world young man. This

debonair Félicien is the son of a priest who joined the Church after losing his wife. Not wishing his offspring to throw caution to the wind and to risk the same kind of loss, the diocesan prevails upon the youth to shun the temptation of wedding and instead enter the priesthood. In her grief at this turn of events, Angélique falls deathly ill. At Félicien's request, the prelate saves her by kissing her on the brow and uttering a healing prayer. Although she is restored to health and accepts her beloved's offer of marriage, a "happily ever after" is not to be. As she steps into the place of worship for her nuptials, she hears heavenly voices. This wonder presages her dropping dead on her big day as a bride.

French cinema overflowed with legend. In the filmic flood, *The Dream of the Lacemaker*, *The Legend of the Argentan Lace*, and *The Legend of the Old Bell-Ringer* all received cinematic treatment in black and white as **silent films**. The first of two about the making of fine fabric is *The Dream of the Lacemaker* from 1910, which explores a miracle in the life of a maiden who lives alone with the artisan in question, her grandmother. The old woman is prevented by advanced age from embroidering the lace she must supply. The young girl saves both her aging relative and herself through her faith in the Virgin. When granddaughter and her granny together fall asleep, Mary materializes to complete their piecework for them: a stitch in time. The lass takes the finished product to a Gothic castle, which houses a medieval-style court, and where the castellan rewards her richly for her lacy labor. The second movie, *The Legend of the Argentan Lace* from 1907, was based on **an opera printed a year earlier**. In this tale, a lace worker crumples from exhaustion after praying in desperation to a Madonna, since the noble lady Anne of Argentan has insisted on collecting overdue lacework she has ordered. The statue becomes animate and tops off the task. Surprise and delight ensue at the court when the craftworker hand-delivers the lace (see Fig. 2.7).



Fig. 2.7 Gaston La Touche, *La légende du point d'Argentan*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 130 × 162 cm. long. Alençon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et de la Dentelle d'Alençon, France.

The third of the three films was *The Legend of the Old Bell-Ringer* from 1911. This production revolves around a miraculous intervention, not by the Virgin but instead by an angel who takes the form of a homeless girl. The aged ringer, Gilles, is devoted to his instruments. One day he finds himself unable to wrest a single tone from the carillon. The bailiff tips him off that if he cannot sound his instruments at the devotion known as the Angelus, he will be burned as a heretic. After this word to the wise, the musician saves himself by signing unwittingly on the dotted line of a satanic pact. Fortunately, the waif whom he helped in the morning turns out to be a heaven-sent agent of God who was expedited to test him. Now that he has passed with flying colors, the angelic messenger overmasters the devil and spares the ringer from execution and doom.

Films of legends could unspool the narrative action in a sequence of languid, almost petrified dioramas. Alternatively, another approach could center on movement. These same decades saw the rise of automobiles and airplanes, as well as the growth of other new media such as radio and phonograph. Thus, the period compelled people to acclimate to dynamism, in pictures as in other aspects of life. What killed silent movies was, it goes without saying, not mobility or the lack thereof. After all, they were intrinsically moving. On the contrary, the fatal new development was sound, since silent films by their very nature had none prerecorded within them. The era of such motion pictures ran from the early 1890s until they came into competition with “talkies” in 1929, and subsequently suffered speedy extinction. Their muteness trailed off into everlasting silence.

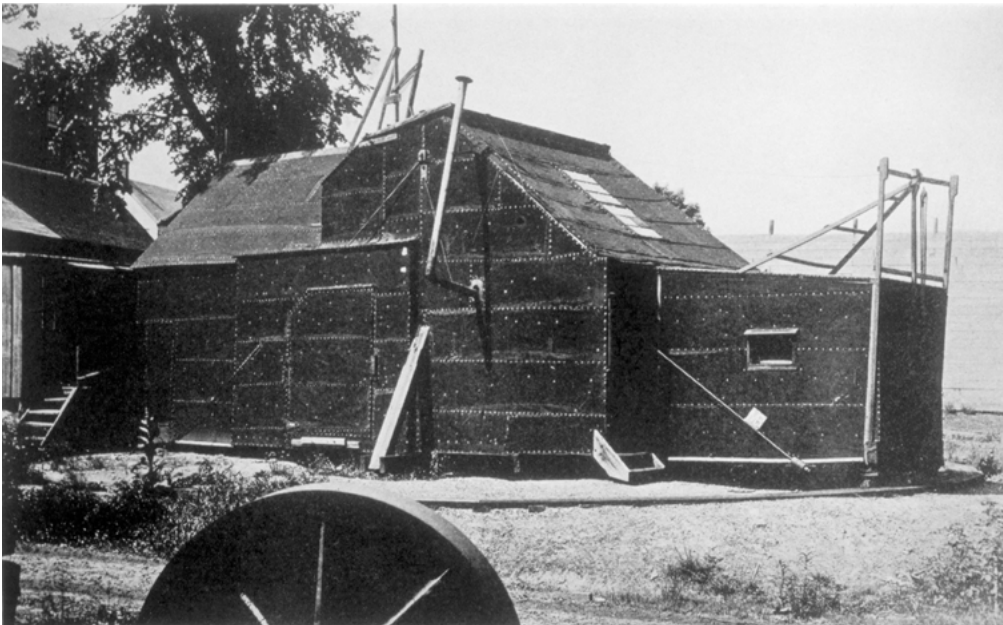


Fig. 2.8 Thomas Edison's "Black Maria" studio, West Orange, NJ. Photograph, 1894. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Glasshouse Images. All rights reserved.

Early movies had a glancing connection with the Virgin through the designation of the first production studio. Constructed by Thomas Edison in West Orange, New Jersey, in 1893, this cramped place covered in tar paper could be wheeled on a circular turntable. Black and boxlike, it resembled a police van of the kind then nicknamed the Black Maria (see Fig. 2.8). (Why the wagons acquired this designation has provoked much speculation, still up in the air.) The swiveling facility does bear a loose resemblance to a cathedral, with a nave, central tower, and apse—but Edison was no cathedralomaniac. More significant than the fortuitousness of a studio’s name, though, is the repeated adoption of feats performed by the Virgin that we have seen in early film. The ubiquity of Marian miracles both reflected the vitality of more established media, such as short stories and opera, and helped to support it.

## Sister Beatrice

To look at one Marian tale that was extraordinarily robust and active in the early years of the century, let us turn to Maurice Maeterlinck (see Fig. 2.9), the Belgian symbolist author writing in French who won the 1911 Nobel Prize in Literature. A decade earlier, he had composed a one-act drama, *Sister Beatrice*. For its plot, he drew on a miracle recorded most influentially in its early circulation by [Caesarius of Heisterbach](#), in two different versions. The narrative has at its center a wayward nun, a reasonably common type of character in the [miracle collections from the Middle Ages](#). It relates how the Virgin saves this woman from her exceedingly unvirginal deal with the devil.



Fig. 2.9 Maurice Maeterlinck. Photograph by Charles Gerschel, before 1923. New York, New York Public Library Archives.

The earlier of two tellings by the Cistercian monk is a concise one that appears in his *Dialogue on Miracles*. In it, a sister who serves as doorkeeper or sacristan for her convent runs off with a cleric. Before decamping, she deposits at the feet of the Madonna the keys that have been entrusted to her. After being seduced, the former nun is left in the

lurch by the tempter who cost her her chastity, and skids into subsisting as a woman of easy virtue. After ten years in this debased condition, she chances to meander into the vicinity of her former nunnery, and is amazed to hear tell that the nun called Beatrice—and of course that would be herself!—still remains alive. After praying before the effigy in the church, she enters the land of Nod and experiences there a vision. In it, Mary enjoins her to take up once again her responsibilities in the cloister, which the Mother of God herself has fulfilled for her in the intervening decade. Not too long after the rendering in the *Dialogue on Miracles*, Caesarius expatiated on the story a second time in his *Eight Books of Miracles*. In this encore, the seducer is a young man and just that, without being specified as a cleric, and Beatrice returns to her onetime community not merely by happenstance but explicitly out of regret. Through investigation of her own, she ascertains that the Virgin has been standing in for her. The story is a harlequin romance in the way the Middle Ages preferred: a lady has a torrid affair, with many ups and downs, that ends happily. Since the setting is medieval, it does not need to be transposed to an earlier historical one to make the grade as a bodice-ripper. The wrinkle is that the earthly love falls by the wayside and the Virgin insinuates herself to ensure spiritual salvation.

After Caesarius, our evidence proliferates hither and yon. The tale was enormously popular, showing up in texts not only in the half-dead language of Latin but also in many other spoken tongues of Western Europe. In medieval French, the legend of the female sacristan surfaces first in the oldest extant compendium of vernacular miracles, by a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman monk named *Adgar*. Thereafter, it recurs in both the French *Life of the Fathers* and Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles of Our Lady*. The story undergoes constant alterations, most glaringly in Spanish versions of the early seventeenth century. Afterward, it drops largely out of sight until the early nineteenth century, when its comeback begins. Already in 1837, the same account of the nun Beatrice was adapted and published to considerable acclaim as a short piece of fiction by Charles Nodier, a writer (and philologist, of sorts) who served as a librarian of the Arsenal library from 1824 until his death in 1844. *This French author's medievalizing* contributed to that of his close comrade Victor Hugo, especially since Nodier helped to make his place of employment a gathering point for bibliophiles (see Fig. 2.10).

The English poet Adelaide Anne Procter produced *a seemingly sentimentalized account* of the traditional story in verse. In 1872, Gottfried Keller brought out in German *Seven Legends*, scoring the first notable success of his career. The volume agglomerates no fewer than four Marian miracles, in which the Swiss writer struck a realistic and worldly tone that anticipates, loosely, Anatole France's treatment of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. In fact, this German-language author's secularizing focus on the theme of temptation, especially through sexual attraction, in early Christianity resembles closely some of the later French writer's interests. Indeed, the episode entitled "*The Virgin and the Nun*" exhibits analogues to *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. Keller tells of





Fig. 2.10 Charles Nodier. Engraving by Abel Jamas, before 1911. Image from Wikimedia, public domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles\\_Nodier-dessin-01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Charles_Nodier-dessin-01.jpg)

a sister named Beatrice (Beatrix in German). After falling in love at first sight, she leaves the convent to marry, and in due course bears an octet of sons to her spouse. Upon returning years afterward to her nunnery, she is open-mouthed to find herself treated as if she had never absented herself. Soon she realizes that in the long interim the image of Mary to whom she had entrusted her keys as sexton had assumed her appearance and fulfilled her duties. Once, all the members of the religious community prepare the finest gifts in their power to present to the Mother of God. Just when the gift-giving is to take place, coincidence has it that Beatrice's husband and boys chance by the convent. Their arrival leads the religious to reveal the miracle and to give the Virgin eight wreaths of oak leaves that come from her eight children. The acorn doesn't fall far from the tree.

In Maeterlinck's hands, the naughty nun in the story is named Megildis. After being appointed as sacristan, she is inveigled by the devil into abandoning her abbey. Her initial seduction takes place through music and dancing youths. She goes so far as to run away with a nice-looking knight—the prototype of the heavy-metal rockstar, except that his weight owes to his armor. Despite these grave gaffes, she is saved by Mary. A Madonna comes to life to assume the habit the once-cloistered woman has discarded and to stand in for her in her absence. In the world, the former sister endures many misadventures involving men, even including conceiving and carrying to term an infant that dies. These misfortunes notwithstanding, she eventually reenters her cloister (see Figs. 2.11 and 2.12). There the Virgin reverts to her original statuesque form, and in the process the dead child is transformed into the sculpted baby Jesus that the sculptural Mother of God cradles in her arms.

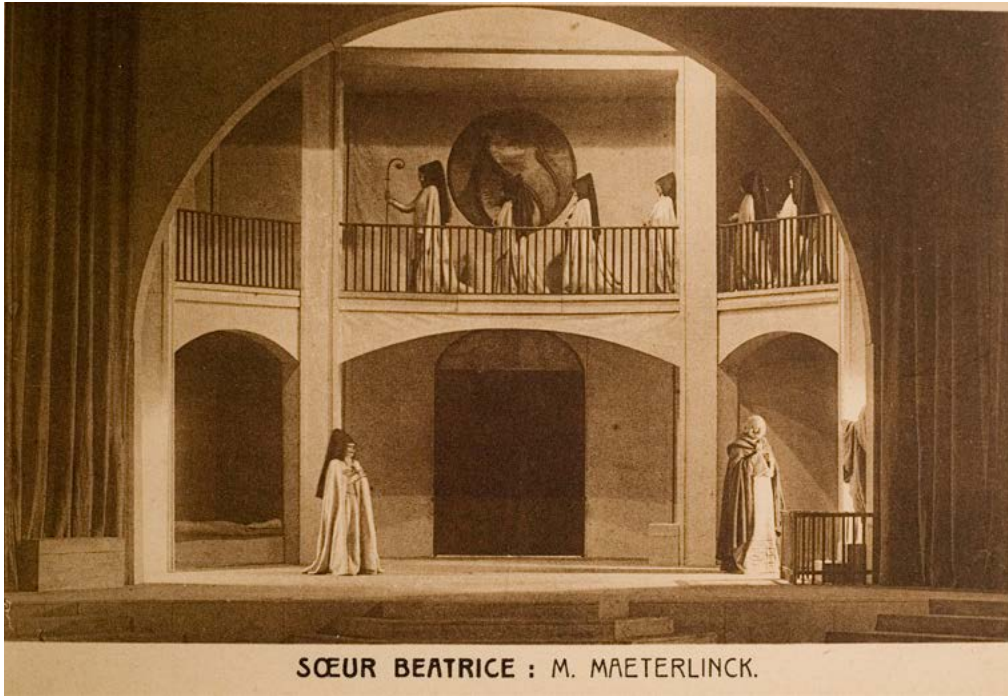


Fig. 2.11 Beatrice in the nunnery. Postcard of Maurice Maeterlinck, *Sœur Béatrice*, produced by Jules Delacre, at the Théâtre du Marais. Photograph by Benjamin Couprie, 1922. Brussels, Archives et Musée de la Littérature. Image courtesy of Archives et Musée de la Littérature. All rights reserved.



Fig. 2.12 Sister Beatrice kneeling in prayer. Postcard of Maurice Maeterlinck, *Sœur Béatrice*, produced by Jules Delacre, at the Théâtre du Marais. Photograph, 1922. Photographer unknown. Brussels, Archives et Musée de la Littérature. Image courtesy of Archives et Musée de la Littérature. All rights reserved.

In this miracle a jongleur figure plays a harmful role, by sounding music on a pipe that causes Megildis to dance. Gaston Paris had recounted this same wonder, and Anatole France in his review of the professor's book had [recapitulated it in a few words](#), but Maeterlinck shaped it into something very much his own. Although the narrative antedated the Belgian and in fact had exercised a reenergized impact for nearly half a century, it never garnered as much staying power as it did during the belle époque. Thanks to the rampant triumph of Maeterlinck's retelling, the tale wandered over a large area across both space and media.

Karl Vollmoeller fleshed out the account into a three-act stage pantomime that became entitled *The Miracle*. The German playwright and screenwriter was prodded by a sighting of the Virgin that he had while at death's door during an illness as an eighteen-year-old in 1896. In the element of the Madonna, he was stimulated or even overstimulated by numberless actual [images of Mary](#) that he viewed in museums in Italy, France, Germany, and Spain. In addition, he submerged himself in the literary history of the tale and genre. It goes without saying that his conception of the legend was affected by Maeterlinck's play. Less obviously, Vollmoeller was influenced by medieval versions, in both Latin and vernacular languages. In his handling of the story, the gist remains very much the same. A nun forsakes her convent to heed the calls of the world and of sex, even nymphomania. After a life aquiver with what are presented as being the shameful pleasures of prostitution, she returns as a penitent to redeem herself. At this turning point, she discovers that throughout her long absence the Mother of God has assumed her identity and fulfilled her responsibilities.

Convinced to his very kernel that the legend encapsulated a spiritual message for people of all faiths and incomes, [Vollmoeller sought to produce it as a pantomime](#), and so make it accessible to the broadest possible audiences. Although now and again the staging took place at Easter, the potential for a Noel nexus was self-evident from the date of the first performance. Yuletide remained an attractive season for putting on the show even a decade and a half after its opening. In London, the original enactment premiered formally [in the countdown to Christmas of 1911](#), and from England the spectacle fanned out triumphantly [throughout Europe](#). Long afterward it roved belatedly [across the Atlantic](#) to the United States. Plans for a New York iteration to have its initial enactment on December 9, 1914, had to be jettisoned when war broke out in Europe.

A decade later, Norman Bel Geddes erected a sham cathedral half a block long as the set for putting on the pageant in New York City. This make-do church had ["forty-two multi-lancet windows](#), the largest thirty-seven feet high, and a rose window triple the diameter of the ones at Notre-Dame de Paris." The cultural competition of the United States with the old countries of Europe stood then at its height. In Americanizing the Middle Ages—encompassing of course Gothic, great churches, Marian legends, and much else—the people of the United States, perhaps none more than New Yorkers, operated under the banner of "the bigger, the better." The San Francisco leg of the

traveling show opened on Christmas Eve of 1926. Even fifteen years after the debut, the yuletide connection still held strong.

The inaugural London production was directed by Max Reinhardt, who was at this point on a steep ascent in his international trajectory. A city newspaper, highlighting the Austrian-born actor and director on its cover, proclaimed him “an artist in crowds.” Not shying from the pitfalls of hyperbole, the article labeled *The Miracle* “one of the greatest successes this country has known” (see Fig. 2.13). The presentations organized by Reinhardt were the equivalent of today’s big-budget blockbusters, Brobdingnagian in both their casts and their audiences, with no fewer than 30,000 spectators and participants attending each day. The logistical challenges were commensurately colossal.



Fig. 2.13 Drawing “Professor Max Reinhardt,” by Arthur Kampf, on the front cover of *The Illustrated London News* 140, no. 3802 (March 2, 1912).

The stagings were also radically innovative, among other things in their deployment of chiaroscuro and other lighting effects in the *mise en scène*. Such contrasts between gleaming white and jet black typify expressionism as it manifested itself in German architecture, such as the church of Saint John the Baptist in Neu-Ulm. Built between 1922 and 1926, [the place of worship](#) was conceived as a memorial to the soldiers who fell in World War I (see Fig. 2.14). Whether his spectacle is classified as expressionist or not, Reinhardt resorted extensively to artificial illumination. For example, he had the light alternate between extremes: on one cue, it would simulate the multihued appearance of sunbeams through stained-glass windows in a Gothic cathedral, while on the next it would take the form of [a single stream of brightness](#) trained upon a figure such as the Madonna.

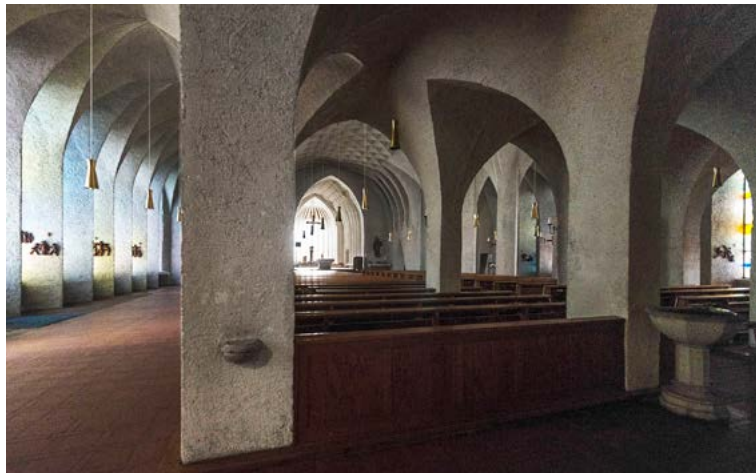


Fig. 2.14 View toward altar in St. John the Baptist Church, Neu-Ulm, Germany. Hans Peter Schaefer ([www.reserv-art.de](http://www.reserv-art.de)), 2015, CC BY-SA 4.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Neu-ulm-st\\_johann\\_baptist-260815\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Neu-ulm-st_johann_baptist-260815_01.jpg)

Albeit on a simpler scale, the illumination of the white-clad Cistercian nun appears already to have been a true highlight in a production of Maeterlinck's *Sister Beatrice in prerevolutionary Russia* (see Fig. 2.15). A fusion of Wagner and symbolism, this iteration by Vsevolod Meyerhold took advantage of [highly innovative techniques](#) in acting and staging. For instance, presumably especially in the portrayal of the Madonna, the director milked for all it was worth the potential of "silhouette," a technique in which actors [remained strictly motionless](#). He also projected onto the backdrop in Roman and not Cyrillic letters the initials BVM, to signify "Blessed Virgin Mary."

Elsewhere, the elaborate apparatus to support performance of the pantomime can be seen in [a plan for the stage engineering](#) that was originally published in the monthly *Scientific American*. The entire configuration of devices included motors, winches, smokescreens, and a [cyclorama](#). Lighting of course also came into play, with electric



Fig. 2.15 Postcard of Sister Beatrice in a Russian adaptation of Maeterlinck's *Soeur Beatrice* (early twentieth century).

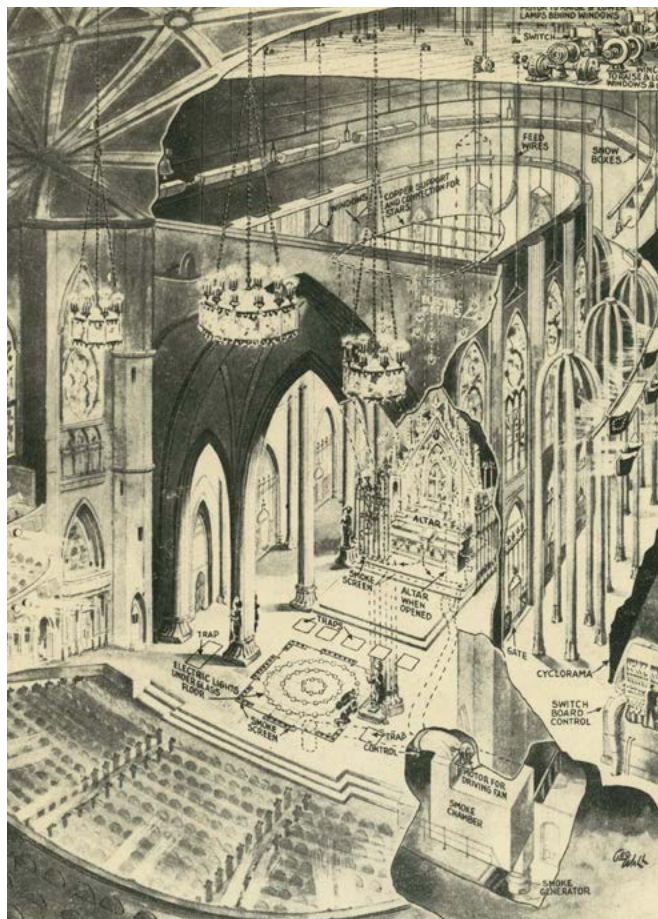


Fig. 2.16 Schematics of the Century Theatre's stage design for *The Miracle*. Drawing by George Wall, 1924. Published in *Scientific American* 130 (April 1924), 229.



Fig. 2.17 Set design for the Century Theatre's production of *The Miracle*. Drawing by Carl Link, 1924.



Fig. 2.18 Rosamund Botsford as the Nun and Asta Fleming as the Madonna in a production of *The Miracle*. Photograph, 1914. Photographer unknown.

illumination under a glass floor and a thousand-watt bunch light (see Fig. 2.16). The results could have borne a remarkable resemblance to what can be surmised about the staging of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. The similarities were breathtakingly strong in one scene of *The Miracle*, in which Megildis hurled herself atop her dead newborn on the pavers of the cathedral before the likeness of Mary (see Fig. 2.17). In the strobing light that followed, the image came to life, gently smiling, with the Child in her arms. The heart of these episodes remained the key characters of the nun and the Madonna (see Fig. 2.18).

Before the end of 1912, the spectacle had **twice been made into films**. Disentangling the two can be gnarly, since they shared variations of the same title, both the German and the English for *The Miracle*. At the time of release, the existence of two competing variants occasioned a major legal squabble over copyright, and subsequently the continental form circulated under varying titles. **In full color**, one was intended to be shown within a play that comprehended the projection of the motion picture, the accompaniment of a symphony orchestra and chorus with additional instruments and sound effects, and **live actors**. The colored cinematic version was screened to thunderous applause in Covent Garden in London a year after the live performance premiered on Christmas Eve of 1911.

Although only one of the silent films is extant, **the score by Humperdinck** and the stage directions for the pantomime by Vollmoeller and as expanded and adapted by Reinhardt have survived. Since these early cinematic forms would have been projected with the complement of piano playing and choruses, they would have cranked open the sluices for such miracles to migrate into a broader world in conjunction with music. The silver screen did not put an end to live enactments of the spectacle, although enactments did not take place again on the scale of the earliest extravaganzas.

The synchronous medievalism and modernity is evident in a sepia-toned print for the German production of *The Miracle* (see Fig. 2.19). The design is by **Ludwig Hohlwein**, who belonged to a movement that means in English “**advertising art**.” **His poster was issued in 1914** for the film version of the play that had been initiated by Max Reinhardt in Olympia Hall, London, but could not be posted **owing to the outbreak of the War**. Despite these inauspicious circumstances, **the picture enjoyed an esteemed afterlife** on purely aesthetic grounds for its inherent quality as an artwork.

In 1927, the tradition reached its erudite apogee in **a substantial tome of scholarship** that sets forth systematically all the medieval evidence and each and every supposedly modern attestation for the underlying tale, from the Renaissance and beyond, down to the then-present day. At the same time, such a definitive and learned autopsy in some ways (or do I have it backward?) sounded the death knell for stories about the sacristan. Only a few years earlier, *The Miracle* had received exhaustive description in a 1924 study. The very cover of this book in English monumentalized the association of Reinhardt’s whole oeuvre with Gothic (see Fig. 2.20).





Fig. 2.19 Advertisement for a German production of *The Miracle*. Poster by Ludwig Hohlwein, 1914.

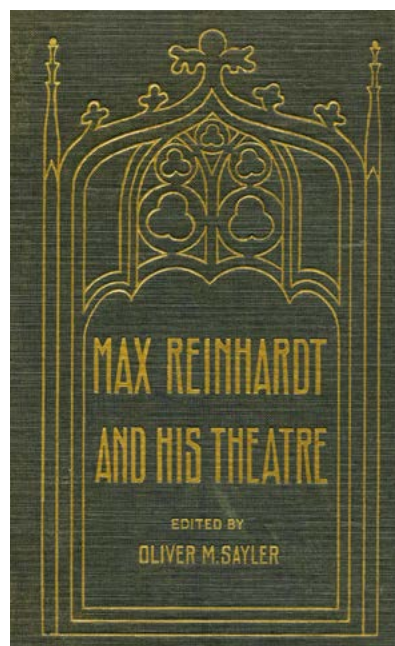


Fig. 2.20 Front cover of Oliver M. Saylor, ed., *Max Reinhardt and His Theatre*, trans. Mariele S. Gudernatsch et al. (New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1924).

Where dance and music are concerned, the pantomime verges on being an anti-*jongleur de Notre Dame*. Whereas in the tale of the tumbler the balletic is redemptive, in *The Miracle* both music and dance **qualify as damnable forms of expression**. Thus the young religious is lured into the secular world especially by professional musicians and dancing children. A villain of the first order through the play is the German equivalent of a minstrel, whose sinister piping animates the nun to caper wildly whenever she hears it. The ripple effects are anything but fun and games. What is more, the dramatic entertainment incorporates motifs familiar from other Marian miracles. Thus, when the central character reverts to her former status, a shower of roses rains down upon her and those of her sisters in attendance.

Maeterlinck's *Sister Beatrice* was acted widely by Sarah Bernhardt. Decades later, **the singer Yvette Guilbert** wrote an operatic version that she had no luck in bringing into production. The Scottish poet and playwright John Davidson put the same story into meter under the title "A Ballad of a Nun." His piece opens on a note of seemingly impeccable piety. **In clunky verse**, it describes the protracted solicitude of the nun (see Fig. 2.21). Alas, after a decade of unimpeachable conduct, she slips from the regular devotion of the nunnery into a most irregular life of secular sin. The composition rises



Fig. 2.21 Beatrice as a nun. Illustration by Paul Henry, 1905. Published in John Davidson, *The Ballad of a Nun* (London: John Lane, 1905), 11.



Fig. 2.22 Beatrice kneels before the Virgin. Illustration by Paul Henry, 1905. Published in John Davidson, *The Ballad of a Nun* (London: John Lane, 1905), 35.

to a crescendo in the recognition scene, as the Virgin coaxes the fallen woman into realizing that Mary has assumed her semblance and duties during the whole of her absence (see Fig. 2.22).

Davidson's piece of poetry was published in his *Ballads and Songs*, which in the United States came into print thanks to Copeland & Day, the same Boston-based firm that had brought out *Our Lady's Tumbler* in 1898. As this publication may suggest, the Scot's take on the story was conditioned by the fin-de-siècle attitudes and values of *The Yellow Book*. It handles the Mother of God with correspondingly less reverence than other versions might lead us to expect.

Later *Sister Beatrice* became a lyric legend in four acts, which was performed in the opera house of Monte Carlo in March, 1914. The mother of [one of the librettists](#) was Léontine Lippmann, who had been the lover and muse of none other than Anatole France. Furthermore, [the composer](#) of the music for this musical drama had conducted the world premiere of Massenet's medieval and medievaesque *Grisélidis*. The intertwining of relationships between the writers and musicians involved in different expressions of *Sister Beatrice*, on the one hand, and those who contributed to the tradition of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, on the other, was no accident. Rather, it resulted inevitably from the passion for Marian miracles that so many shared during this period.

Helped by Charles Nodier's 1837 story and "a miracle of the thirteenth century," Maeterlinck himself drafted a script for a 1923 Franco-Belgian motion picture *The Legend of Sister Beatrice* (see Fig. 2.23). [The movie was directed](#) by Jacques de Baroncelli, a Frenchman long resident in Belgium (see Fig. 2.24). Baroncelli's reputation rested mainly on silent films, although he also ventured a little later into talkies. In an exclusive conducted shortly before the cinematic release, the director displays his grounding in both the preceding literary history and contemporary cultural context of the tale. His ready familiarity with the development of the narrative from the Middle Ages to his own day bears witness to the strength of the axis that still ran between artists and scholars in the early twentieth century.

As Baroncelli deciphers his desire to translate a medieval miracle of the Virgin into images on the modern screen, he trots out an impressive erudition. For example, he adverts casually to similar episodes recounted in vernacular prose, such as those reaped by Adgar. Continuing to display a formidable range, the filmmaker also mentions in passing the thirteenth-century Everard of Gateley, a monk of Bury St. Edmunds who [recast three of Adgar's legends](#) in his own *Miracles of the Virgin*. The French moviemaker alludes too to a version of the story of Beatrice in Hugh Farsit's Latin prose from some time after 1143. Beyond Everard and Hugh, Baroncelli touches as well upon another account of the tale about the wayward nun in Old French verse by [Gautier de Coinci](#). Among other texts, [he gives special notice](#) to *Our Lady's Tumbler* and its reworkings by Anatole France and Jules Massenet.

Additionally, he manifests awareness of miniatures found in manuscripts held in the National Library of France. Finally, he was also well apprised of the success that Max Reinhardt had achieved in 1913.

Despite the fanfare of book learning, in the end we have a fair right to question how deeply Baroncelli had delved in his readings. While he identifies the French and Latin authors, he limits his comments to their names and no more. In his remarks about both “The Legend of Sister Beatrice” and *Our Lady’s Tumbler*, he exposes himself as utterly dependent on the short and sweet sketches that he quotes from a literary history by [Gustave Lanson](#). From this work the director would have derived views of the content that were thoroughly typical of the day. Thus Lanson brackets his résumés between two general observations: the first draws attention to [the stories’ naïveté](#), and the concluding one sounds gently [ironic and condescending](#). None of this is the stuff of great erudition.

About “The Legend of Sister Beatrice” Baroncelli digressed revealingly about attitudes, his own and his era’s, toward such material:

In the end, perhaps without wanting to do so, I have yielded to a vogue. The Middle Ages is regaining its credibility and its seductiveness for our spirits, a Middle Ages released from the notorious darkness that until recently an entire rhetorical and political tradition deepened around its horror. I think less of [Robin Hood](#) than of our present-day literature. What our scholars sorted out, brought to light already for a long time, our young writers finally have discovered and are carried away by the thrill of showing to the public. In reality, they reinvigorate juicy old legends of France which after having lulled from one era into another “evenings of thatched cottages and castles,” still charm the evenings of refined people with their fiction and their old, learnedly [naïve and gilded language](#).

He continues:

So that [the legend] may recover in the eyes of our contemporaries all its innate, deep value, I have believed myself obliged to make play, in the light of windows and the shadow of worship, reflections of the brilliant and brutal life of the Middle Ages.

What he craves from medieval culture turns out to be [a unity that by implication is wanting](#) in his own day. Henry Adams had reacted similarly.

Like many contemporaries on both coasts of the Atlantic, Baroncelli applauded an organic integrity and holism in the Middle Ages that technological, social, and religious transformations had banished from modernity—or at least many moderns and modernists professed to believe so. Ironically, he delivered himself of this opinion just as the revival of medieval legends and miracles wilted in the face of modernism and other forces. [One reviewer rewarded him](#) by describing him not merely as a medieval artisan, as a painter of stained glass and a manuscript illuminator, but even as a mystic who ventured into a cosmos that surpassed the ordinary senses. Little did either the filmmaker or the critic realize that these long-ago centuries would soon enough incur the risk of being a lost world, for not everyone wanted or appreciated the transcendence it offered.

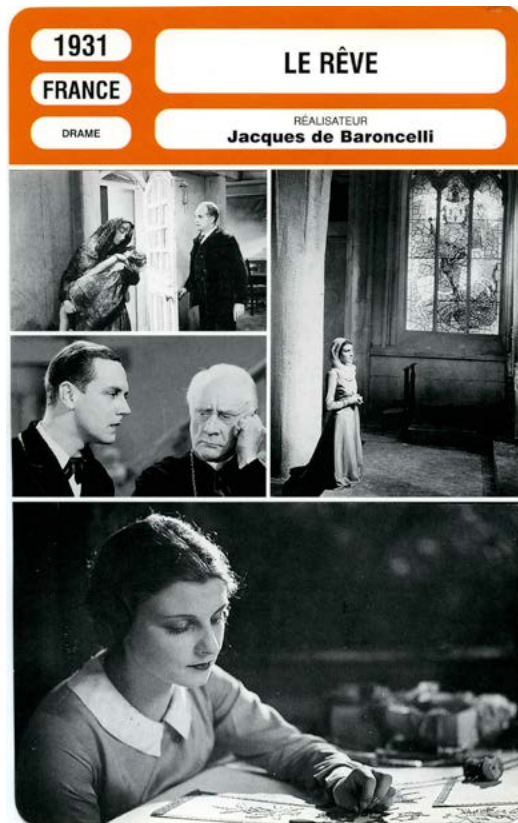


Fig. 2.23 Collector's movie card for the film adaptation of *Le rêve*, dir. Jacques de Baroncelli (1931).

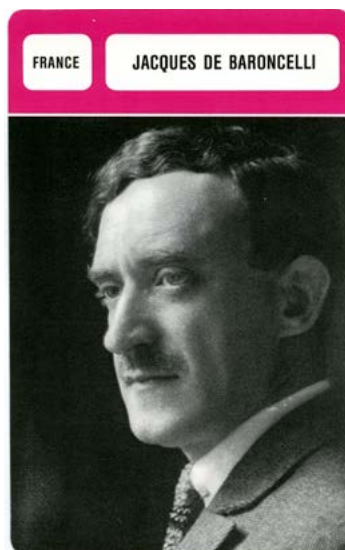


Fig. 2.24 Collector's movie card for Jacques de Baroncelli. Photograph, 1920s. Photographer unknown.

## Sister Angelica

Provocatively similar to the tale of Beatrice is *Sister Angelica* by the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini, which premiered in New York City in 1918 (see Fig. 2.25). Set in a convent near Siena in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the opera culminates in the suicide of a cloistered woman within the nunnery's precincts, and it concludes with the miracle of a heavenly vision that the conventual apprehends as she gives up the ghost. In the apparition Mary appears, along with Angelica's illegitimate son, who the nun realized only a little earlier had died of a fever. To join this child in death, she has perpetrated the mortal sin of swilling a draft of poisonous herbs she has concocted. Despite the infractions that have brought her to this dire pass, the Mother of God grants the compromised contemplative pardon.

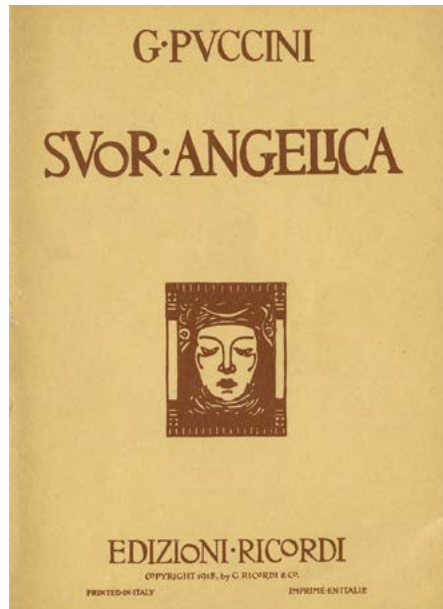


Fig. 2.25 Front cover of Giacomo Puccini, *Suor Angelica* (Milan, Italy: G. Ricordi, 1918).

By a kind of thematic symmetry, Puccini's musical drama also resembles, and is indebted to, Massenet's *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. The difference between the two compositions may be reduced to [the particulars of transgressions](#). Marian miracles have at their heart, in two senses, missteps that the Virgin rectifies so that sinners may be redeemed. Whereas the lead characters in the other stories we have discussed establish their sinfulness through their (mis)deeds or dispositions, the medieval performer in this one seems to have committed violations mainly through his choice of employment. Whereas the entertainer saves himself by applying for the Madonna the same skills that apparently put him in need of salvation in the first place, the disobedient brides of Christ cannot do the same on behalf of Mary.

Puccini weighed the possibility of composing music for a gaggle of dramatic works set in the Middle Ages or early Renaissance. Among his inspirations and options, one would have been the text by Maeterlinck for the 1909 [lyric drama](#) or opera *Monna Vanna* by the French musician Henry Février. The Belgian playwright situated this piece at the end of the fifteenth century. Another candidate would have been [the libretto for Puccini's own \*Margherita da Cortona\*](#), composed between 1904 and 1906. The title character under consideration was a thirteenth-century Italian religious in the Franciscan order, the Third Order of Saint Francis. At this stage, the musician was also so marinated in Victor Hugo that [he contemplated creating his own \*Notre-Dame de Paris\*](#). He may have been forestalled from doing so when Massenet's opera premiered, with its confusingly similar title.

Just as the story of the jongleur is set in a monastery with an all-male cast, so too that of Sister Angelica takes place in a convent with only women. The cloistral atmosphere in both operas challenges their composers and librettists to achieve drama within strict confines. Both the nun and the minstrel enter religious institutions at least partly as a means of performing penance and achieving redemption. In the end they receive celestial absolution for their past misdemeanors.

The climactic scene of Puccini's *Sister Angelica* has seen radical inconsistency in its staging. Directors of opera companies have been racked by doubts about who does what in the final throes. With machine-gun-like anaphora, the female principal calls upon the Madonna a full half dozen times in the distraught speech that precedes the sounds of angelic intercession for her with the Blessed Virgin. At the very end Puccini's stage directions call for veritable pyrotechnics of lighting. The chapel, swollen with light, evolves into a mystical blast of illumination, highlighting not Mary's image but the Mother of God herself, all in white with a fair-haired child before her. As audience members, [we are presumably bedazzled](#) visually, while experiencing aurally the Marian hymn that the chorus of angels intones.

## Audio Recording

The medium is the message.

—Marshall McLuhan

Both within and even outside the Anglophone and Francophone worlds, the tale of *Our Lady's Tumbler* soaked down the ridges of literature into the grooves of other media through which it might reach a broader public. The modes in which it and other narratives could be presented and preserved mushroomed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Books with the medieval narrative and Anatole France's short story multiplied, not just in French but in other languages too. Playbills, together with other less ephemeral materials for the opera such as [printed scores and librettos](#), helped to disseminate the jongleur in ever more expansive circles. Above all,

performances of Massenet’s musical drama helped to spread the word, along with the images and sounds that it delivered.

The degree to which the story suffused US culture can be extracted from, of all things, an obituary—and one that could not differ more radically from the gentleness of the medieval poem. The death notice marked the passing on July 26, 1925, of William Jennings Bryan, a long-prominent American politician who had served as Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson, and had run three unavailing campaigns as the Democratic candidate for US President. More to the point than the breath he wasted on the hustings, as an attorney for the anti-Darwinist camp he had dished out ugly talk, bursting with ignorance and intolerance, in the famous “monkey trial” of John T. Scopes which had taken place earlier in 1925 (see Fig. 2.26).



Fig. 2.26 Clarence Darrow (left) and William Jennings Bryan (right) at the Scopes Monkey Trial, Dayton, TN. Photograph, 1925. Photographer unknown.

Longstanding custom bids that we “speak no ill of the dead,” a principle accorded even more gravitas in the Latin formulation *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. In out-and-out contravention of this sacrosanct injunction, [a journalist published](#) on the day following Bryan’s demise an acidic “In Memoriam: W. J. B.” The relevant passage reads:

[The best verdict](#) the most romantic editorial writer could dredge up, save in the humorless South, was to the general effect that his imbecilities were excused by his earnestness—that under his clowning, as under that of the juggler of Notre Dame, there was the zeal of a steadfast soul. But this was apology, not praise...

This savage indictment of the antievolutionist came from the sharp-tipped pen of none other than H. L. Mencken. Often known as the “Sage of Baltimore,” this writer clambered to the pinnacle of his career as a newspaperman when he covered the Scopes



case (see Fig. 2.27). In [the curmudgeonly passage](#) quoted, he compared the newly deceased Bryan caustically to the juggler, claiming that the sole virtue ascribed to his dead antagonist was psychic sincerity—and yet he argued that under interrogation, the seeming genuineness turns out not to merit that name.



Fig. 2.27 H. L. Mencken. Photograph by Ben Pinchot, before 1928. Image from Wikimedia, public domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:H-L-Mencken-1928.jpg>

The story of the story from World War I and later can be sliced into stages determined by themes with which the juggler became associated. Thus he can be interpreted profitably as a character connected with Christianity and Christmas, an underdog to inspire children or the politically downtrodden, and an avatar of the artist or poet. At the same time, the narrative also tells a tale of new vehicles, for instance as opera first gains ground and then yields it to such forms as audio recording, radio, television, cartoon, animated short, and feature-length film. [Recordings were made](#) even before the musical drama opened in Paris, though after it premiered in Monte Carlo. The cylinders and disks on which the voices of singers attained preservation for posterity belonged integrally to the selling of the late antique and medieval periods to mass markets, as the medium was ballyhooed for the verisimilitude that allowed access to not just the voices but even the personalities of divas such as Mary Garden. The full centrality of the Middle Ages within this marketing effort can be seen in a promotional campaign for Columbia Records. The dog-and-pony show used to pitch this approach can be easily imagined. In printed advertisements, medieval performers of diverse sorts are flanked by two stars of the operatic stage. To the right, Olive Fremstad is posed as Wagner's Brünnhilde. To the left, Mary Garden stands costumed as Massenet's Thäïs, in her guise as "greatest exponent of modern French opera." They are juxtaposed in one case to a troubadour who strums [a lute in hand](#) (see Fig. 2.28), in another to a maiden bowing an "[ancestor](#)

From photo © Mifflin  
MARY GARDEN  
Greatest Exponent of  
Modern French Opera

OLIVE FREMSTAD  
WORLD-FAMOUS  
GREATEST EXPONENT  
OF  
MODERN FRENCH OPERA

*The Classic Love of the Troubadours*

**F**REMSTAD, greatest of Wagnerian sopranos, at the superb height of her brilliant voice in "Brunnhilde's Battle Cry"—

Garden, the world-famed French opera star, singing "Love Is a Virtue Rare"—the aria that is her greatest triumph in Massenet's "Thais"—

Recorded on two Columbia Records of such realism, truth and effectiveness that you get an unforgettable impression of the singers' personalities.

The sole proof needed that Columbia Records are absolute echoes of the living voice is to hear the records of Garden or Fremstad, or Gates, Nielsen or Macbeth—Queens of the Opera who paid the highest tribute to the exclusive Columbia process of recording, by electing to sing for Columbia exclusively.

**Columbia**  
Double-Disc  
Records

New Columbia Records on sale the 20th of every month

Fig. 2.28 Advertisement for Columbia Records featuring Mary Garden and Olive Fremstad, 1916. Published in *Outing* 69, no. 1 (October 1916): 123.

MARY GARDEN  
Greatest Exponent of  
Modern French Opera

OLIVE FREMSTAD  
Night Queen Concert  
and Operatic Soprano

**T**HE exclusive recording processes controlled by the Columbia give you the only true, vivid, living reproduction of some of the greatest voices in the world.

You hear Fremstad, Garden, Seagle, Graveure, Constantino, Mardones, Matzenauer, Nielsen and a score of other great singers themselves in their Columbia Double-Disc Records. Their voice, their genius, their very personality live again before you in glowing beauty.

In operatic, orchestral, instrumental and all other classes of music, Columbia Records have a quality of truth that changes them from "records" into reality.

New Columbia Records on sale the 20th of every month.

**Columbia**  
Double-Disc  
Records

Fig. 2.29 Advertisement for Columbia Records featuring Mary Garden and Olive Fremstad, 1916. Published in *Hearst's* (June 1916): 1.

MARY GARDEN  
Greatest Exponent of Modern  
French Opera

ALICE NIELSEN  
America's Favorite Lyric  
Soprano

**T**HE exquisite cadences of beautiful female voices have a matchless expressiveness in Columbia Double-Disc Records.

The lovely voices of Mary Garden and Alice Nielsen; of Matzenauer, Fremstad, Gates, Teyte, and Macbeth are as appealing and full of life as if heard from the stage in reality.

Hear their Columbia Double-Disc Records, or the records of other stars of the opera who sing for Columbia exclusively. You will need no other proof to convince you that Columbia Records are reality. "Hearing is believing!"

New Columbia Records on sale the 20th of every month

**Columbia**  
Double-Disc  
Records

Fig. 2.30 Advertisement for Columbia Records featuring Mary Garden and Olive Fremstad, 1916. Published in *Country Life in America* (October 1916): 79.

of the violin” (see Fig. 2.29). In another, Mary Garden appears in the same position, but with Alice Nielsen to the right. Between them parade *forerunners of a military band* (see Fig. 2.30). Purely by luck of the draw, the role chosen to spotlight the prima donna in this publicity was not that of the consummately French Jean the Jongleur. By co-opting a man’s role, she positioned herself to peddle the Middle Ages—or at least the operatic fantasy of that era.

## Silent Film

Like the cathedral, the motion picture gave people what was missing from their daily lives: religion, solace, art, and most importantly, a feeling of importance.

—S. Charles Lee

In 1917, the story of the tumbler may have made the passage into cinema, as a *silent film in Germany*. At this point, the national movie industry was prospering there, since the war brought to a screeching halt the importation of most foreign cinema that could have competed with domestic production. Yet our ability to appreciate the burgeoning activity is hamstrung by the paucity of surviving evidence: nine tenths of German movies filmed before soundtracks are estimated to have perished. Against the backdrop of such heavy losses, nothing sinister is to be deduced from the frustrating fact that apparently no canister containing *Our Lady’s Tumbler* or *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* performed in any language has survived.

What can we infer about the lost black-and-white? The evidence of the 1921 play by Franz Johannes Weinrich might bias us to suspect a kinship between the motion picture and the expressionist German text. Yet an account in a paper intimates that the movie may have been less complexly religious. In the first place, the very name of the cinematic outfit is a word to the wise that it was devoted literally to hagiography: it was called *Legend Film Company*. To be more specific, a newspaper squib confirms that the film, with a title that could be translated as *The Jongleur of Our Dear Lady*, was shown as the second in a double feature with *The Life of Saint Elizabeth*. In Munich, the picture about the entertainer was screened at the invitation of the archbishop, and the producers enjoyed the backing of church authorities. In any case, the evidence may be too paltry ever to determine for certain whether the reel recounted the tale of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, or whether instead it dealt with a version of the Saint Kümmeris miracle, in which a statue rewards a fiddler with a golden shoe or coin.

Explicating the reasons why a given motif in literature, music, or art was devised, and teasing apart the fragile tissues of meanings in its varied expressions, can be infinitely effortful tasks by themselves. Figuring out why artworks on the same theme never managed to be created would be mission impossible: the variables are too many. Why did the fleet-footed juggler apparently never make the jog to the studios of France,

Britain, or Tinseltown? The salience of the Madonna may have been too Catholic for Protestants, but that leaves us with the mystery of the jongleur's failure to fit within French motion-picture mystique. If the story was not long enough, why did it meet the threshold in Germany, or why were other brief fictions made into movies in all these lands? In one case, we have, if only secondhand, a filmmaker's rationale for not pursuing the topic. His identity and prominence may come as a surprise.

## Charlie Chaplin: Tramp Meets Tumbler

If attacked by a mob of clowns, go for the juggler.

Perhaps the most startling revelation to demonstrate how thoroughly the gist of the medieval French poem had permeated broader culture involves Charlie Chaplin. In 1933 or thereabouts, Alistair Cooke, the British-American journalist and broadcaster, was on very chummy terms with the star of comedy. According to Cooke, the world-famous English actor and director was on the prowl for a topic that would lend itself to being made into a short to be screened before the main feature—one of his own films (see Fig. 2.31). After a friend told him about the medieval legend, the comedian poured himself for one evening into roughing out (and acting out) the script for a mime play based on it.



Fig. 2.31 Charlie Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, Alistair Cooke, and Ruth Emerson Cooke (left to right). Photograph, 1934. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Getty Images. All rights reserved.

From memory, Cooke gave two descriptions of the sketch, [nearly forty years apart](#). In the earlier, he related in 1939 that the sketch told

of a mediaeval tumbler who, on his way to the next village, rests in the shadows of a nunnery. He is awed by the sight of a nun counting her beads. The Mother Superior catches him and he is [thrown into a cell](#). At night he escapes into the chapel and in

gratitude falls on his knee before the Virgin's image. He is ashamed to offer his ignorant prayers. So he decides to present, for the Virgin, the best show of his talent. He throws himself over and over. Wet and panting from going through all of his tricks, he finally attempts the best and hardest tumble known to his time. He breaks his back and dies. And the Virgin comes down and blesses [him in his death trance](#).

The journalist comments on the entertainer's special aptitude—a gift from heaven?—for portraying the acrobat. Before becoming a silent film star, Chaplin had performed as a clown, acrobat, aerialist, and skater. Cooke sums up:

He mimed a whole scene of wonder at the ritual serenity not of this world, the half-comic realization that he was ignorant, the slow self-questioning, then the quick flicker of ambition to show the only skill he knew. He was, for positively one evening only, every shape and name of humility.

In the report he [printed in 1977](#), Cooke includes specification of “the stumbling prayers, the shamed interval, the half-comic realisation that his acrobatics could be enough of a tribute.”

No way exists to discern who should take the blame for the distortions of the story as it is related in the later account, Charlie Chaplin himself or Alistair Cooke. Amendments appear right and left in the narrative that the memoirist unfolds more than four decades after the fact. The tumbler of the medieval poem metamorphoses into the starveling of Anatole France's version, the monastery morphs into a nunnery, and the athlete's collapse from exhaustion mutates into death by a broken back. Having a few lines to describe the project is tantalizing, but better than nothing; and nothing else remains, since lamentably for us, [the comedian dropped the undertaking](#). He never recorded his version of the story.

Later, when Cooke inquired about the superstar's reasons for passing up the opportunity to film the short, the actor referred to his public of admirers. He replied, “[They don't pay their shillings and quarters](#) to see Charles Chaplin doing artistic experiments. They come to see *him*.” This tart rejoinder might suggest that, despite the obvious reasons for which the pathos of *Our Lady's Tumbler* would have lent itself well to this particular celebrity's knockabout comedy and mimetic skills, the heart of the legend would not have resonated personally with him: the virtue it extolled lay far from his own character. But the real thrust of the retort comes in the monosyllabic pronoun, *him*. His fans, he insists, plunk down their coins to enter movie theaters because of their attachment to the deadpan persona he adopted in many of his most popular hits, the [phlegmatic tramp](#).

Charlie Chaplin in character was not a monastic juggler who strips down from his cowl to his underclothing. Rather, the pasty-faced tramp was a clown-like vagabond sporting a derby hat over his distinctive tousled black hair, knotted suspenders, droopy and baggy pants, and cracked boots. How are we to react to the jongleur, melancholic but blank-faced as he is? Are we to roister in stitches at his antics, as at those of the hobo played by Chaplin? Are we to imitate him? And are laughter and emulation

compatible, slapstick and sanctity, as they were with Saint Francis? A commonality between the two, the tumbler and the tramp, lies in the defining characteristics of the sad-faced clown. One stereotypical manifestation of this role is the figure known as woebegone Pierrot in *commedia dell'arte*, where his origins are usually traced. Naïve and unworldly, he fails in all his struggles, perhaps particularly in seeking to win the woman he adores. The exact chemistry between humor and hopelessness, or for that matter homelessness, can be elusive. The down-and-out character who shambles about in the silent films, like the long-faced and heart-rending buffoon, is disconsolate. Yet from his low emotional state he wrings comedy, at least in the eyes of his beholders. Furthermore, his personal heavyheartedness speaks to a much larger social and economic sag that engulfed millions upon millions of others from 1929 on: his one-man depression is a tiny cog within the gargantuan machinery of the Great Depression, when going-out-of-business signs gave way to mass unemployment and starvation.

In the Middle Ages, comedy was often defined not as a matter of cackling but instead as a rise from low to high estate, whereas tragedy limned an equal and opposite arc from high to low. From one vantage point, the ending of *Our Lady's Tumbler* could be construed as tragic: the protagonist passes his expiration date. Neither the first collapse before the Madonna nor the definitive one later qualifies as a comedic pratfall. The acrobat is not a fool on stage in a comic theater. From another perspective, true closure to the dramatic events comes in a development that is truly uplifting, in that the dead man's soul is borne aloft to heaven after the Virgin intercedes to deny Satan the power to hustle him off to hell.

Chaplin's attraction to the tumbler, along with the tale's progression into various new channels, testifies to the public and commercial interest that was being shown in *Our Lady's Tumbler* as well as in its adaptations by Anatole France and Jules Massenet. In one sense, the story's diffusion across media helped to position it not just for survival but even for success. At the same time, our tale may have begun to look to some too familiar and flavorless, washed out and characterless, even uncreative and trite. Two antithetical processes had been set in motion, and decades more may have to whiz by before we may conclude convincingly which of them has gained the upper hand conclusively.

# 3. Juggling across Faiths

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## The Ecumenical Juggler

Be he Catholic or Protestant, agnostic or Hebrew,  
no one at all capable of feeling emotion can help  
being thrilled by this last scene.

—Henry T. Finck, 1910

A rabbi, a priest, and a minister walk into a  
bar. The bartender looks up and says, “Is this  
some kind of joke?”

All along, the narrative has worked well within coteries, such as chapter houses of monks, schoolrooms of pupils, campus theater companies of students, faculty clubs of professors, and Sunday schools of young Christians. Although the listing just given of audiences and participants began and ended with religious groups, the story has reached beyond Catholicism, beyond any Christian denomination, and in fact even beyond Christianity altogether. From the beginning, the juggler has been on a sacred mission—but the religion has not been in a holding pattern. In reworking the epitome of *Our Lady's Tumbler* by Gaston Paris, Anatole France achieved the vivid economy and clarity that we may associate with the best of brief episodes in scripture, myth, or fairy tale. In turn, Jules Massenet and his librettist threw the narrative thrift of the short story to the winds. Yet by retaining an emphasis on the protagonist's immaculate devotion, the two managed to satisfy readers and spectators who at that point were split down the middle between devout Catholics and devoted freethinkers. Both the author and the composer also retained from the medieval poem the theme that any activity, no matter how small-bore or garden-variety, can be transmuted into an act of veneration by the alchemy of love.

It makes sense that eventually France's text would be presented in a list of [suggested readings for high schoolers](#), among selections plucked from the King James Version of both the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament, as the only nonscriptural

one on spiritual love. Yet comparison with Holy Writ may be specious. Although the nineteenth-century short fiction delineates a memorable instance of religious devotion, it leaves behind the particularities of Sacred Scripture and any single faith. All creeds endeavor to make their believers better human beings. This story, encapsulating some of the best from medieval Christianity, promises exactly such an effect. Despite its thoroughgoing religiosity, it exudes a potential to meet multiconfessional needs. In fact, to take *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* as unqualifiedly Christian clashes peculiarly with the irony of its larger context, which means narrowly Anatole France's *The Little Box of Mother-of-Pearl*, and broadly his collected works. The French author had long been arraigned for mocking morality and condemning Catholicism, and in 1922, a year after he nabbed the Nobel Prize in Literature, the Church held back no longer from reprisal. The Vatican consigned his entire oeuvre, jongleur and all, to the [Index of Forbidden Books](#).

Even the original *Our Lady's Tumbler* is not to be interpreted as uniformly and straightforwardly supportive of all the main values that the Catholic Church of its day—of the Middle Ages, that is—would have advocated. After all, its hero is an ignoramus about liturgy. He does not channel his piety toward heaven. He is not one compliant member within a choir that acts in unison. He shows no sign of being under the immediate say of a single superior and the broader control of the whole ecclesiastical reporting structure. Instead, he worships in autonomous and improvised aloneness. He dances out his devotions in a subterranean chamber as a skimpily clad man to a woman, the Virgin Mary. By marching (or tumbling) to his own drummer, he defies the norms of typical organized religion.

Both the tumbler and the jongleur, professionals in artistry but neophytes in adoration, outstrip (in more than one sense) the certified experts in worship—professional prayers. Both the medieval and the modern French versions tell tales of conversion, but the convert achieves redemption in unintended defiance of monasticism rather than because of it. From the beginning, the real renegades of the piece have been the juggler's fellows in the monastery. Yet for at least two key reasons, the brethren are indispensable to the essence and even the very existence of the story.

In the first place, in the thirteenth-century poem as well as in many of its relatively more recent adaptations, the monks serve as the sole onlookers who are fully mindful of the Virgin's two miraculous interventions. The acrobat himself is clueless about what transpires. His heedlessness implies an especially medieval change rung upon the age-old conundrum of a tree falling in a forest. In this context, the question becomes "If a ritual is repeated across time and space but is unwitnessed by any human being, does it still have an importance to the divine?," or "If a miracle happens without being witnessed, does it take place at all?" The lay brother has no awareness of the ministrations that the Mother of God lavishes upon him. If other Cistercians had not been eyewitnesses of what happened, would anyone ever have been the wiser? Who needs to clap eyes upon an apparition of Mary for it to have a meaning and an effect—for the Mariophany to have occurred?



The issue carried weight among the affiliates of monastic orders who kept studious records of miracles. For instance, the writer of the “Chronicle of Melrose” reported that an Adam of Yorkshire, a [thirteenth-century monk](#) in the Scottish abbey of Melrose, had once noticed the Virgin arrayed in pure white and was beside (or, etymologically, outside) himself with ecstasy. He was caught unawares by one of his confreres, who observed nothing but his reaction. When the other man asked him subsequently why he had been so blissful, [Adam explained](#) that normally Mary revealed herself only to those of the monastery who had been in her service for many years. To mull over another example, Caesarius of Heisterbach told of [two lay brothers](#) from a grange that belonged to the Rhineland religious society of Himmerod. One experienced a vision of a resplendent cross upon which Christ crucified could be perceived, but the other observed nothing. After communicating by signs, the unseeing man fell to his knees in prayer. Then he was allowed to share the vision vouchsafed to his colleague.

The second reason why the other brethren are required participants in the story is that they document and disseminate it. The lay convert of the medieval *Our Lady’s Tumbler* is a physical entertainer. As far as can be seen he lacks skills in language either spoken or written, either Latin or vernacular. The wonder that centers on him is not merely undetected by him, but also unsung or untold by him. It is incumbent upon the literate in the community to bruit about word of the miracle, as an incentive to their fellow choir monks and lay brothers alike. By way of them the tale eventually filters through to the medieval French poet, whether or not he is a religious in a monastery.

The frequent later use of the narrative to exhort and instruct Christian believers dovetails with the spirit of the French poem from the Middle Ages, which professes to be an exemplum for preaching. By detailing the triumph of heartfelt conversion, the report howls out its inner exemplarity. The story describes a come-to-Jesus episode, except that the operative adjective would better be come-to-Mary, or alternatively Mary-come-to-me. The suitability of the tale’s protagonist as an example clarifies at least partly why already in 1916 in Boston, in the United States, *Our Lady’s Tumbler* was absorbed into [a Unitarian catechism](#). In it, the purpose of the account is laid out for catechumens as being “to teach the lesson of doing the best one can, even when one’s best seems very poor indeed.”

Exactly six decades later Albino Luciani, then the patriarch of Venice and later the one-month pope, John Paul I, summered in a friary that belonged to the Servite Order. Known also as the Servants of Mary, these mendicants are friars whose religious family also embraces contemplative nuns, active sisters, and lay groups. The convent Luciani frequented was located near the Marian sanctuary of Pietralba, in the northern Italian region of Alto Adige. In the summer of 1976, he rediscovered Anatole France’s story of the juggler, which he had stumbled upon a half century earlier as a boy. He tapped into it as his point of departure for a homily on the Assumption. In December of the same year, [he published the text](#). Beyond his attraction to an order that brought together laity and clergy, his background and personality gave him other reasons to find special resonance in the lay spirituality of the medieval performer. His family

background was humble, with a father who was a bricklayer. In 1958, he took as his episcopal motto the Latin word for humility. Should we be caught off guard that such a person would be drawn to a story intimately concerned with the beatitude that blessed the simple or humble?

*Royal Murdoch* is a first novel published in 1962 by the Canadian Robert Harlow. In one episode, a priest named Father Moline lashes out against a woman who recently converted to Catholicism. To fulfill his pastoral obligations, he has earlier told this Mrs. Darien the tale of the juggler. The example motivated her to scrub the church staircase every day. He takes her obsession as a leftover of [her previous Protestantism](#), with its reverence of the principle “cleanliness is next to godliness,” and chides her. Unmoved, she resumes her scouring. At one point, bristling anger gets the better of him and he erupts in a tantrum:

“Le Jongleur,” he shouted, “Le Jongleur de Notre Dame brought a real talent to the altar of the Holy Mother. I told you the story only to guide you spiritually. This ... this, housework, it is not talent, [it is a mockery.](#)”

Beside himself with vexation, the livid padre rushes down the steps. In the heat of the moment, he kicks over the woman’s bucket of soapy water. To have lost control in such a hotheaded outburst only maddens him further.

The scene climaxes in [a consummation of this clerical cholera](#) as Father Moline reads Mrs. Darien the riot act. By interpreting for herself, she has committed a cardinal sin which she must expiate as he stipulates—but not by rubbing the flight of stairs with a brush and suds. The his-and-her divergences between the priest’s and the laywoman’s explanations are revealing. He elucidates the exemplum in one way, to bolster those within the ecclesiastical hierarchy and to vest them with the exclusive authority to chaperone errant members of the Church away from sin. She takes the story in the opposite direction. To her, it means that the laity outside the upper echelons of the clergy may achieve redemption through orthopraxy. No doubt such discrepancies in reactions to the narrative have been latent since the very first telling. In fact, they have contributed to its success across the ages, because they have enabled it to serve groups with diametrically opposing interests.

More than four decades later, in 2006, Anatole France’s account was alleged to be “an old French folk-tale” that he was supposedly the first to register. More to the point, in this instance the text was taken as the cover story for [an Australian book](#) that demonstrates how all worshipers, and less probably all people, make themselves presentable to God through prayer. This version ends with the child Jesus bounding down from Mary’s arms to be coached in juggling, until the candles in the chapel burn out.

Occasional wisps of acknowledgment may be detected that the spiritual ecology of medieval Christianity differed mightily from the modern one. Five years before embracing Catholicism, the author [G. K. Chesterton](#) wrote of “Our Lady’s Tumbler, who performed happier antics before a shrine in the days of superstition.” For all that, recognition that the tale emanated from the Christendom of the Middle Ages has not

prevented it from being taken often almost ecumenically. Perhaps more accurately, the narrative has been understood transdenominationally within Christianity, and even transreligiously within Judaism. To begin with purely Christian exegesis, the story's heavy focus on the Virgin Mary has not prevented it from being at times as popular among Protestants as among Catholics.

In the 1959 *Christmas Stories That Never Grow Old*, the version by Anatole France was placed immediately after the Gospel account of the Nativity. An editorial note in this US volume assumed that "The Juggler of Notre Dame" entices "people of all faiths." Yet since the book is after all a gallimaufry of Noel narratives, the burden of the final word here is moot. Rather than claiming that the tale is presented to be truly transfaith, it might be more accurate to subsume it as transconfessional within Christianity. That categorization would be understandable in view of demographics within the nation in the late 1950s, when the country was on the whole Christian, with the merest soupçon of Judaism, Mormonism, and other religions that would have then seemed exotic to those in the majority.

Just making the story work for both Protestant and Catholic markets required prestidigitation worthy of a juggler. The text of Cooney's *The Little Juggler* sets the events at Christmas. What goes on inside the book corresponds only loosely to what is promoted on the exterior. One illustration portrays the boy protagonist as he manipulates objects before a statue of the Virgin and Child. Another depicts the Madonna holding the young entertainer in her lap and fanning him, in a posture reminiscent of the Deposition.

In a strikingly different take on the tale, the dust jacket shows the title character keeping colored balls aloft in a Gothic room devoid of any images. The cover itself has embossed upon it the same youth performing his feat of dexterity without any architectural or ecclesiastical context whatsoever. Through these devices, the medieval Christianity—the Roman Catholicism—intrinsic to the story is treated as extrinsic in its packaging, perhaps since in 1961 most potential purchasers of children's literature in the United States would not have frequented churches that routinely or prominently displayed representations of Mary.

Despite being plainly Christian, the narrative has enraptured agnostics, Jews, and other non-Christians. To remain in 1961, the tale featured in the same year as the top-billed item in the *Trilogy of Interfaith Plays* by the Russian-born Jewish-American author [Ida Lublenski Ehrlich](#). In this last connection, one piece of the puzzle is that in most versions the leading female character is the Madonna, who in turn can be fairly described as an observant Jew—and who therefore can be considered without the slightest stretching or bending of the truth [a Jewish mother](#).

What do all these factoids tell us? The story of *Our Lady's Tumbler* is inherently religious. Even so, it has been accepted almost as if it does not pertain to a specific creed—as in spite of its innate Christianity, it constitutes an apt image for any artist who is at once artless and artful. At the close of the Gilded Age, [a music critic](#) played upon the sheerly spiritual dimensions of the tale as it unfolded in Massenet's opera.

He punned upon the title of the musical drama and the byname of its leading character in describing the American writer Edgar Saltus as *jongleur de notre âme*. The French phrase can be put word for word into English as “juggler of our soul.”

All along, the narrative has had the potential to be applied to far-reaching questions about the inherent features of artistry. At times the portentousness of such issues can drown out even the essential presence of Christianity in the actions. This circumstance helps to clarify a sound bite by the singer and poet Leonard Cohen in an interview conducted in 1966. In remarking upon the nature of the poetic mind, the Canadian Jew opined: “You know the story of that juggler who performed his acrobatics and plate balancing in front of the statue of the Virgin? Well, I think it really comes down to that: [you really do what sings](#).” This fleeting comment may be the closest the soulful juggleur has come yet to finding his footing in rock and roll.

Only seldom has the narrative been altered so as to suppress such quintessential constituents as the Mother of God. In this regard, Mark and David Shannons’ *The Acrobat & the Angel* stands alone in replacing Mary with a statue of an angel that comes to life and flies heavenward with the young performer, thus averting a plague. This version of the story gives the lie to the old saw that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. The two types of beings establish here an immediate *modus vivendi*. The author and illustrator are biological (and nonmonastic) brothers who collaborated in creating this children’s book in 1999. Getting to the heart of the story, Mark professed to aim for “[a popular appeal](#) that transcends strict religious orthodoxy, an appeal intrinsic to the tale since its beginning.” Generally even its most pious features have not haltered its appropriation by Catholics, Protestants, Jews, agnostics, and atheists, to pick out a handful of categories.

## The Hasidic Whistle-Blower

I have somewhere read of a wise bishop who in a visit to his diocese found an old woman whose only prayer consisted in the single interjection “Oh!” — “Good mother,” said he to her, “continue to pray in this manner; your prayer is better than ours.” [This better prayer is mine also](#).

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*

A story that draws intriguingly near to *Our Lady’s Tumbler* has become far-flung in Jewish lore. Most often, the narrative has been recounted as a legend about [the founder of Hasidism](#), a religious movement that originated in eighteenth-century Eastern Europe. This notability, Rabbi Yisra’el ben Eli’ezer, is conventionally designated as the Besht. The last term is the acronym for Ba’al Shem Tov. The Hebrew of the full phrase is usually translated as meaning “Master of the Good Name.”

Hasidic tradition contains a substantial body of accounts that have been aptly called “[sacred anecdotes](#).” Within not only this narrow context but even a broader

Judaic ambit, all the tales of this type fulfill roughly the same function as exempla do in medieval Christian sermons. They illustrate pivotal axioms of religion in a synoptic form, suitable to moralizing in a large group. Usually, such reports are concerned with a famous rabbi.

According to the legend in question, a simpleminded and illiterate young shepherd came to synagogue to pray on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. With him, the youth carried a humble woodwind—a whistle or flute—that he would play while herding. Frustrated that he could not recite the prayers properly, he finally started to sound the instrument. His skill in this activity was all he could proffer to God.

The congregation shrunk away in disgust. In their view, the action of the herder desecrated the High Holy Day. While blowing a pipe during a religious service is not self-evidently sinful, rabbinic law and tradition hold that such behavior entails sacrilege: whistle-blowing has always been a source of ambivalence. Specifically, utilizing a device for making music, or even carrying one outdoors, was regarded as a genus of labor and therefore off limits on the Sabbath. The prohibition against work held all the more strongly on Yom Kippur, which because of its association with atonement is holier than other ordinary days of religious observance. Yet in response, the [Besht](#) rebuked the congregants for their reaction and notified them that the purity of the shepherd's performance had unclogged a blockage and thereby enabled all their petitions to reach God, as had not been the case previously.

The motif of piping alludes to the pious use of the shofar. This wind instrument is usually a ram's horn without finger holes or valves. It is made to resound in synagogue services in the month leading up to Rosh Hashanah, a Hebrew phrase meaning "head of the year." The association is so strong that in the same Semitic language this high holiday is even called Yom Teruah, for "day of the shofar blast." Perhaps more important, [the horn is sounded on Rosh Hashanah](#) and at the end of the last service on Yom Kippur. The reverberation of the musical device can be interpreted as opening the gates of heaven, so as to enable prayers to ascend all the way to God. In the Hasidic tale, the boy's piping succeeds where all the formal ceremony and verbiage failed.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the narrative in question has been disseminated in [anthologies of Hasidic lore](#), and from there the story entered [Jewish tradition](#) more widely. Its influence on the literature of the Jews began with authors such as the Yiddish-writing [I. L. Peretz](#) from Poland (see Fig. 3.1) and the multilingual [Micha Joseph Bin Gorion](#) from Ukraine. The account agrees well with core emphases within Hasidic tradition. One rests upon the practice of storytelling. No other branch of Judaism puts as appreciable an [accent on tales](#). The other lies in the theme of the [simpleminded and guiltless person](#). Hasidism stresses that in the quality of spirituality, an individual of this sort may overmatch a learned scholar or higher-class people. Additionally, the legend of the whistling or piping boy gives utterance to the prominence within the mystical movement of emotional, ecstatic prayer, and preference for wholehearted, nonintellectual devotion over ritual formalities. Such

worship, not standing on formalities, may find outlet through reciting the Hebrew alphabet, *swaying or rocking back and forth* or to and fro during prayer, whistling, singing, or dancing.



Fig. 3.1 I. L. Peretz. Photograph, ca. 1910. Photographer unknown.

We may make more substantial progress by not becoming wrapped up in the particularity of whistling or piping. If we set aside this specific motif, the legend reveals similarities to a larger category of Jewish traditions about a phenomenon that has been styled “*the ignorant’s prayer*.” In it a boy or man of lowly social status and limited education engages in a heterodox way of piety that achieves greater effect than does the orthodox. The earliest evidence for this reflex of the tale in the transmission of Jewish beliefs exists in the *Book of the Pious*, which *took shape in the Rhineland* in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. At this very time the same theme gained traction in *Christian literature of Western Europe*, in miracles about know-nothing or ill-educated monks, despised by their brethren, who attain recognition from the Virgin through prayers that are short or garbled but sincere. The challenge would be to surmise which tradition influenced the other, or even whether the simultaneity of the two is out-and-out coincidence or cause-and-effect determinism.

The story also resembles a still longer variety of folktale, found not only in European and Jewish tradition but even throughout the world, and now classified as “*A Pious Innocent Man Knows Nothing of God*.” The standard description schematizes the narrative as follows:

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*.

Certain forms of the account promote as their protagonists not children but older people such as shepherds, opening up the prospect that access to the divine may be

achieved through many types of manual labor, with the import that not only educated people and religious professionals may seek and achieve God.

An incident loosely connected with this tradition was recorded in the first compilation of lore about the Besht. The Hebrew book at issue was published in 1814. It ushered into print a hagiographical miscellany that a [Hasidic writer](#) brought forth at the close of the eighteenth century. He gathered legends that circulated among the faithful of the faction. This anecdote tells of a man who became distraught because he fell asleep while trekking to the Besht. As a result, he was absent from synagogue for the high holy day of Yom Kippur. To console him, the spiritual leader pointed out that by having prayed in an area of open land and slept there inadvertently, the Hasid “had had to elevate the prayers of the people in the fields. He had been forced to do this by Heaven.”

Related Jewish legends, subsumed under the heading “[God Requires the Heart](#),” carried the underlying implication that the supreme being hearkens to the uprightness of the intent behind expressions of devotion rather than to the slickness of the performance achieved by the devout. In Judaic religious life, the opposition could be articulated as contrasting a pure religious spirit on the one hand and thoroughgoing knowledge of the Talmud on the other. [An example](#) would be narratives of a dutiful child who, not knowing how to pray, leaps over a ditch at daybreak to honor God. Stories of this ilk have been [compared with \*Le jongleur de Notre Dame\*](#).

What explains the rough likeness between the medieval exemplum and the Hasidic anecdote, as well as between Christian stories and Jewish tradition? Why has the tale told by Jews continued to be recognized as [compatible with the aims of preaching by Christians](#)? For a start, the miniature narrative has a straightforward designation in the sermon rhetoric and homiletics of the Middle Ages: exemplum. If this term were standard in the nomenclature for discussing Hasidic lore, the anecdotes we have surveyed just now would be called exemplary. But terminology occupies only one diminutive corner of a very big and muddled picture.

As is so often the case where folk literature is concerned, we may choose between at least two sorts of explanation. According to the doctrine of polygenesis, the same bright idea for a story may dawn on groups or individuals in different cultures unrehearsed, without there being a progression of cause-and-effect relations. In other words, the Jewish tale could have arisen through an independent act of imagination. Alternatively, the [theory of diffusionism](#) holds that the homogeneities may result from the interplay of source and influence. But how would the diffusion have taken place in this instance? The variant familiar in Hasidism could have been indebted ultimately, perhaps by oral transmission, to the narrative that we have come across in the two medieval attestations from Western Europe.

In this way of thinking, the Christian story could have percolated through sermons, from which it may have infiltrated oral tradition and reached Eastern Europe. Then again, the Hasidic anecdote could have originated long ago in the eastern Mediterranean. If so, that original tale could have been the source, first for the

medieval exemplum and later for the version ubiquitous among Hasidim. The first development would be consonant with the old conjecture that many new narratives leached through Europe in the aftermath of the military expeditions to recover the Holy Lands from the Muslims. In this connection we would do well to recall that the Cistercian order took shape close to the period of the First Crusade, and that the white monks first gained and later forsook many beachheads east of Italy in tandem with the comings and goings of the campaigners.

Although infrequently and never insistently, a hypothesis that the miracle of the tumbler had oriental origins has hovered over its reception since the late nineteenth century. At that point one camp of literary scholars contended that many short medieval narratives, such as the bawdy verse tales called *fabliaux*, had filtered into Europe from Eastern sources, particularly during the crusading. [Anatole France](#), after restating the basic outline of the story in a book review he wrote, referred to “these popular imaginings” and “the legends which arrived from the Orient.”

Alice Kemp-Welch, author of a 1908 prose translation, isolated the feature of dancing as demonstrating “[how deeply the East influenced the West](#), and even the Church itself.” She traced the motif back to [Salomé, the daughter of Herodias](#) who for her unvirtuous virtuosity in this art receives from Herod the boon of anything she wishes. The dancer demands shrilly that the rash promise be fulfilled, and specifically that the head of John the Baptist be delivered to her on a charger. Remember the coincidence—or not?—that Mary Garden sang, and danced, as both Salomé and the jongleur. The theory that *Our Lady’s Tumbler* and its descendants [flowed from Eastern sources](#) was still retailed after World War II, when we find the poem described as “originating in some oriental tale brought home by the crusaders.”

Too little evidence survives to pin down definitively the exact nature of the relationship between the Christian and Jewish narratives, if in fact the two overlap in any way. One certainty is that differences between the religions have never choked off exchanges: narrators from each tradition borrow readily from the other. In 2016, an author acknowledged the old Jewish tale explicitly but [retold it as a children’s story](#) about an illiterate young shepherd and set its climactic scene on Christmas eve. The boy receives his reward for the sincere purity of his prayer in being taught to read by the priest.

## The Jewish Jongleur

The first full translations into German of the medieval French story and of Anatole France’s version were both by Jews who were born in Germany, Curt Sigmar Gutkind and Hermann Levi, respectively. Even without modifying or suppressing its explicitly Christian features, the tale has paradoxical qualities that help to elucidate why *Our Lady’s Tumbler* and *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* could enthrall audiences across the line that demarcates Judaism and Christianity. True, the protagonist is a devotee of the



original Jewish mother. Still, by the same token hundreds upon hundreds of other Marian miracles from the Middle Ages could have influenced Jewish readers, but they have not done so. Similarly, David's dancing before the ark anticipates in a general way the minstrel's tumbling before the Madonna, but Jewish authors have not dwelled much on this interesting but slight resemblance. Likewise, the archetypal parallels between the whistling boy in Jewish lore and the jongleur in medieval Christian tradition have elicited explicit remark only fleetingly. In the end, Jewish authors may have been drawn to the narrative not because it had any specific ties to Judaism. Instead, they may have encountered it because of its ubiquity in the mass culture around them, which rested in the grip of the majority religion. Christianity engulfed them, and the tale flowed with it.

There is also no forgetting the paradoxical essence of *Our Lady's Tumbler* and all its heterogeneous progeny. The story resides firmly within the hierarchy of a particular creed, but at the same time it upends the orthodoxy and even the specificity of that belief system. Despite being embedded in medieval Christianity, and by extension in modern Catholicism, the tale verbalizes a revelation about faith in God that eclipses the boundaries of any one worship. For this reason, from early in the reception of Anatole France and Jules Massenet, Jewish writers have not felt it out of place to liken Jews to the jongleur. Thus, the Zionist leader and author Vladimir Jabotinsky referred unhesitatingly to the artiste from the Middle Ages in a fiction that drew heavily upon people, places, and events in his own life history (see Fig. 3.2). The novel was written in Russian in 1935 and published in France in 1936, but set in Odessa, Ukraine at the dawn of the twentieth century:

"May God keep you, Marusya, just as you are. If I were able to remake you, I would refuse. Perhaps each real person prays in his own way. There was Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame. Perhaps you're like that: in your own way you diffuse warmth or grace—that's your way of praying, you don't know any other way and you don't have to."



Fig. 3.2 Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky. Photograph, 1918. Photographer unknown. Jerusalem, National Photo Collection of Israel.

Almost thirty years later, a commentator from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean compared the juggler with Marc Chagall, the Franco-Russian pioneer of early modernism whom many esteemed as an [embodiment of the Jewish artist](#).

In the heyday of “Le jongleur de Notre Dame” in the 1950’s, it was not deemed untoward to press the minstrel into service as an analogy in philosophical writing. The American philosopher Paul Weiss was Jewish by background. In *Modes of Being*, he discusses the assertion “God can be reached through work.” As a case in point, he describes the juggler as achieving through the agency of his adoration an “existential relation to the divine.” In so doing, the performer’s act resembles “the Hasidic joyous dance before the Lord and the Zen Buddhists’ gestures and simple movements.” Weiss’s point about Buddhism, whether based on a misunderstanding of Zen or not, calls to mind another parallel that has been drawn to the tale of the jongleur. A stylized classical Indian dance-drama known as Kathakali arose definitively during the seventeenth century. The name fuses the concepts of story (Sanskrit *kathā*) and performance (*kalā*). This kind of sacred theater is performed by individuals who are at once actors, dancers, and, after a fashion, priests. Until very recently, they were exclusively male. This form of acting requires at least a half dozen years of training that yield only a thin trickle of financial profit. Wondering what incentivized them, one researcher concluded that the practitioner of Kathakali “[offers his body to the gods](#) like the Juggler of Notre-Dame in the medieval legend offered his juggling to the Virgin Mary.” Such similes attest smartly to the ecumenicism, or at least the capacity for it, that is immanent in *Our Lady’s Tumbler* as it has been transmuted and transmitted through Anatole France’s narrative and Jules Massenet’s opera.

Over the centuries, our story has shown elasticity commensurate with the athleticism of both the tumbler and the juggler. For better or worse, he has proved limber enough to be twisted in a multitude of directions. The tale has demonstrated a happy capacity to be applied beyond the strict boundaries of the religion in which the early thirteenth-century poem was grounded. For instance, a half century ago a locker room full of Christian professional football players in the United States found no oddity in having their Jewish coach impart the gist of it to them to motivate them in a ticklish situation. Let us listen in on [Allie Sherman](#), who coached the New York Giants, as he addressed his team before they faced off against the St. Louis Cardinals on Sunday, November 24, 1963 (see Fig. 3.3).

The entire nation had been plunged into deep shock and dirges two days earlier by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas. Almost all sporting events were [canceled or deferred](#). Standing firm against the storm surge of collective grief, the [commissioner of the National Football League](#) was hell-bent on not breaking any commitments in the calendar. Instead, he directed teams to play scheduled games as a tribute to a head of state who had been sports-loving and competitive. This call by Pete Rozelle was not the proudest or cleverest moment in his distinguished career. News coverage and public opinion ran against him. Ever since, [his snap judgment](#) has been debated (and mostly excoriated) over and over.



Fig. 3.3 Allie Sherman coaching the New York Giants. Photograph by Herb Scharfman, 1963. The LIFE Images Collection. Image courtesy of Getty Images. All rights reserved.

Thanks to the commissioner's unyielding determination, the Giants' coach had to pronounce a morale-building speech that would fire up the team members. The men needed to summon up and deliver their best despite the despondency that enveloped the country. A former pro quarterback and defensive back himself, Sherman rallied them with a pep talk that retold the events of "Our Lady and the Juggler." His religious background was Jewish. He even described himself, resorting to an ethnic slur, as "[a tough little Hebe](#)." Yet his faith and ethnicity did not stop him from pressing into service a story from a different tradition.

The coach implied that the professionals under his guidance could take to heart the example of a performer who, like them, expressed himself through his body. If the entertainer from the Middle Ages could offer his athleticism to an intangible authority above, [they could do the same](#). Sherman finessed one glaring contradiction between the juggler's story and the football players' situation: whereas the medieval journeyman was an individualist who thumbed his nose at the imperatives of communal activity (let alone play), the modern athletes formed a quasi-military collectivity that was expected to act in lockstep on command. What held together the individual and the group boiled down to spirituality: [a team has a soul](#), he said, just as a person does. The presupposition behind these hortatory words to the squad was venerable. According to this paradigm, the jongleur is a seasoned veteran who makes of his very professionalism a gift to a higher power. Already in 1924, [a critic of French literature](#) described the jongleur of Notre Dame who "having nothing to give to the Virgin, offered her an exhibition of his professional skill." The same perspective is

articulated seventy years later by a Polish sociologist, who counseled all teachers of “practical arts” to keep in mind “the old legend of the ‘jongleur de Notre Dame’ who made acrobatics an instrument of worship.”

In Stanley Elkin’s novel *The Rabbi of Lud*, the title character breaks into a monologue:

Am I a buffoon? Some wise-guy, ungood Jew? Understand my passions then. All my if-this-will-go-here-maybe-that-will-go-there arrangements were in their service. What did I want? What did I need? To keep my job with God. To hold my marriage and family together. Who was ever more Juggler of Our Lady than this old rebbie? As much the God jerk as any chanteuse out there in my rec room tuning her instrument or vocalizing scales.

The Holy Mother is a running gag of sorts in this fiction, since the daughter of the Lud-dite believes that she espies a vision of the Virgin in the cemetery of Lud. On reflection, the assumption that the jongleur is a trouper who sticks dependably to his vocation ends up allowing even a fictitious Jewish religious leader in a dreary location, and an even poorer personal situation, to liken himself to the medieval devotee of Mary.

## The Catholic Juggler

The story is, or has been, sufficiently well known that allusions to it by people of many faiths have not seemed arcane or even just against the odds. At the same time, it has possessed enough cultural patina to endue it with an elegance that is required in formal contexts. Especially when those settings are ecclesiastical, references to the tale make good sense. Take for example Jean-Marie Lustiger, Cardinal and Archbishop of Paris (see Fig. 3.4). First he renamed the weekly bulletin of his diocese *Paris Notre-Dame*, to reflect the famed name of the cathedral that stood sentry at the center of his domain. Later he established “Radio Notre-Dame,” once again to promote his diocese. Because of its expense, the station was derided as his “danseuse.” In French slang, this noun for a female dancer refers to a mistress.

On May 31, 1986, Lustiger attended the ceremony when the ballet dancer Mireille Nègre was consecrated—thus making, after a fashion, the acquaintance of a real-life Our Lady’s tumbler. More than fifteen years later, on June 20, 2002, the prelate appeared at a public hearing, in his capacity as founder and show-runner of a French Catholic television chain. Before his testimony proper, he got his remarks underway with a metaphor and simile:

I have the impression of being here, among mountebanks, the jongleur de Notre-Dame, and I will be able to do, like this jongleur, only what I know to do. I am not then a mountebank.

This exordium is worthy of rhetorical analysis in its own right. The then-archbishop’s gambit shows that he expected his audience to take note of the citation and to recall our story in a blink of the eye, even outside the confines of purely ecclesiastical middle management. While the Archbishop manages to equate himself with the others



Fig. 3.4 Jean-Marie Lustiger, before Notre-Dame of Paris. Photograph by Claude Truong-Ngoc, Feast of the Assumption of Mary, 1988, CC BY-SA 3.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean\\_Marie\\_Lustiger\\_par\\_Claude\\_Truong-Ngoc\\_1988.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Marie_Lustiger_par_Claude_Truong-Ngoc_1988.jpg)

participating in the political circus, at the same time he distances himself from them. He uses the French word *saltimbanque*, “street entertainer” or “comedian.” In a sense, then, these performers are jongleurs, by extension mountebanks. Yet the churchman paints a bright line between himself and both groups. By being a devotee of Mary, he separates himself from the rest. The fact warrants at least a passing mention that the later Cardinal’s personal background gave him ample reason to consider himself as standing marginally apart from others. He was born, as Aaron Lustiger, a Jew, and he remained one, at least in his own estimation, to his death. Christ himself had belonged to the same people too: he was the son of a woman who could be considered a prototypical Jewish mother, Mary.

For all the directions in which the medieval performer has been taken, the narrative has equally often been glorified with good cause as a parable of Christian faith, primarily but not exclusively with specific reference to Catholicism. As we have been made aware already, at the University of Notre Dame, more than mere happenstance explains why the tale crops up in campus culture. The entertainer’s story was common knowledge in the community to the point where a student music group and dance band in the late 1920s and early 1930s called itself *the Jugglers*. More important, an undergraduate humor magazine, constituted under the name *Juggler of Notre Dame*, was reestablished as a more serious literary periodical with the omission of the three final words. When the publication was re-launched after World War II, *the college newspaper* referred to “the little-known dedication of the old *Juggler*.” But the narrative that it feels obliged to recapitulate would not have become altogether unfamiliar, least of all at an institution called Notre Dame. The same aim looks evident as the reader ruffles the opening pages of the inaugural issue of the *Juggler* itself. A concise retelling of the medieval legend, hand-lettered in a medievaesque script, is printed in the front matter. To ensure that the *text of the tale* does not go unheralded,

it is topped by a simple drawing of the Virgin, with marginal doodles of the “minstrel” performing and kneeling.

On a humbler plane, it requires no lengthy rumination to realize why the football team of Notre Dame Junior and Senior High School in Utica, New York should have been nicknamed the Jugglers in the late 1950s, and why their mascot and emblem should be a cartoonish representation of our hero. In the official explanation for why a stylized performer of this sort should adorn the jerseys of their varsity athletes, the authorities focus on the moral of the story, which they sum up as “If you do the best you can, God will be pleased” (see Fig. 3.5).



Fig. 3.5 Mascot of the Notre Dame Junior and Senior High School, Utica, NY. Image courtesy of Anna Mae Collins, 2014. All rights reserved



Fig. 3.6 Front cover of *Le jongleur* 64 (October 1973), quarterly publication of the Institution Notre-Dame de Grâce, Cambrai, France.

Notre Dame Regional Secondary School in Vancouver, British Columbia, founded in 1953, has the same character as its symbol. Across the Atlantic in France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* served for sixty years as the designation for a quarterly publication of a Catholic school in Cambrai. For a dozen years the name was shortened to *Le jongleur* (see Fig. 3.6). Such truncations of the original French or English could telegraph one of two things. On the one hand, they could signify that the term had grown so jejune as to necessitate only partial citation to be fully recognized. On the other, they could indicate the very opposite. As the story receded from general awareness, we could infer that the title had become so alien and bewildering as to justify giving up and trimming the phrase down to a simple noun.

The juggler would have appealed to undergraduates at Notre Dame, as at many other educational institutions. American elite private colleges were mostly single-sex establishments until [coeducation was adopted](#) in the late 1960s. A considerable portion of them were pseudomonasteries (or sham castles) built in the collegiate Gothic style. After four years in them, their inhabitants who graduated successfully would enter the world of active life in their chosen careers. In the meantime, they were on loan from their families to professors and other university officials who acted *in loco parentis*—not altogether unlike the role that the Virgin Mary fulfilled by taking ownership of petitioners who besought her tender mercy. Whether wittingly and willingly or not, the young scholars existed like temporary oblates to monasteries. For this spell they lived in enforced contemplation, or at least occasional study. Church attendance was often must-do. Parietal rules regulated who could stop by to socialize with students when and where. A present-day collegian transported back to the middle of the twentieth century might well judge many customs to be quasi-monastic. The quadrangles could seem truly cloistered.

Outside Catholicism, [a society of storytellers](#) in America known as the Jongleurs de Notre Dame has been described. In one routine its membership follows a minister of the Gospel until he vociferates “party, party, party!” This outcry serves as his way of realizing in a holy party the wedding feast that is promised in scripture. Such artesian channels and chants have kept the tale alive in ways that would not have been altogether foreign to the thirteenth-century authors who gave it its inception.



Fig. 3.7 G. K. Chesterton. Photograph, before 1946. Photographer unknown, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G\\_K\\_Chesterton\\_at\\_work.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G_K_Chesterton_at_work.jpg)

At the same time, the religious application of the jongleur has also received backing from personages who have exerted force in shaping culture. A case in point in England would be G. K. Chesterton, who is credited with having prepped the ground for American conservatism in the late twentieth century (see Fig. 3.7). His penchant for the

Middle Ages is well known, although **sometimes oversimplified**. His medievalism has been pertinently described as “Mass and maypole.” It pays attention in equal measure to the seriousness of the orthodox liturgy (hence the first of the two m’s in the phrase) and the scalawaggery of more folkloric rituals and values (which accounts for the second element in the M & M). Both elements contribute to **the sway that Catholicism exercised** upon him and others of his generation in England.

Most relevant is the Englishman’s outlook on Francis. Chesterton’s memories of the religious figure reached back to his nursery days, when his parents captivated him with stories of the miracles. Already in 1892, he crafted a poem on the Italian saint. Later, he placed a statue of the same personage in his parlor. Finally, thirty years afterward, he devoted to the founder of the Franciscans **the first book he wrote** after his conversion from Anglo-Catholicism—that is, High Church Anglicanism—to Roman Catholicism in 1922. Since the poor man of Assisi had called his followers jongleurs of God, the twentieth-century litterateur offers, in a chapter entitled “Le Jongleur de Dieu,” background on the *trobadors* and *joglars* of southern France, who correspond to the troubadours and jongleurs of the North. The twentieth-century author’s devotion to the Assisan was so deep and abiding that it has been well said “Our Lady’s Tumbler had **performed for God’s Juggler**.”

Chesterton’s explanation makes evident how *au fait* he was with the tale of *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. **He appreciates the distinction** between jongleur and troubadour, the family relationship of the first term with *juggler* by way of Latin, and the similarity of Franciscan *jongleurs de Dieu* to the tumbler of Our Lady. Beyond citing the story to account for why Francis and his adherents would have qualified as performers of this sort, the biographer draws upon the conception of the mystic as acrobat to elucidate the saint’s conversion. **The holy man’s spiritual awakening** is a turning topsy-turvy of his soul that can be equated with the physical actions of an acrobat who locomotes on his hands or who turns a somersault. **The writer clarifies** that the gymnast did not upend himself for the novelty or perversity of the perspective, but rather as an act of devotion. Like the entertainer in the French poem, Francis gains metaphysically from seeing his world upside down. The posture is one that caught the Englishman’s fancy: with unmistakable relish, he quoted a definition of paradox as “**Truth standing on her head** to attract attention.”

In discussing the Italian saint, Chesterton does not isolate the Virgin for special notice, beyond alluding to the Tumblers of Our Lady. Yet elsewhere he highlights her. For instance, in his 1911 *The Ballad of the White Horse* he describes how a vision of Mary stimulates Alfred of Wessex to achieve a major victory in 878. The battle of the Christian sovereign against an invading army of heathen Scandinavians takes place in the Vale of the White Horse at **Ethandune**. From the toponym the poem takes its title. As the modern poet coordinates the past and present, King Alfred anticipates a kind of staunch Christian who would be needed nearly eleven hundred and fifty years after



his regnal dates. Likewise, [the Saxon in Chesterton's verse](#) brawls not so much against Danes of the ninth century as against false philosophers of the twentieth.

T. S. Eliot disliked the analogy with cavalry, to put it mildly: it left him saddlesore. [Signaling that he had perused the epic](#), he referred to it slantingly and slightly by announcing: "I have seen the forces of death with Mr. Chesterton at their head upon a white horse." The military detachments the American-born poet had in mind were wielders of pens who in his view proved to be lethal to the English language. To exemplify them, he singled out an author whose medievaesque style and values were radically opposed to the modernism Eliot and his closest poetic allies embodied.

Chesterton's thinking, and his resolve to describe it in the metaphors of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, had an outsized impact on his proponents, and not solely on converts to Catholicism. In 1943, the only authorized biography of him was printed. Its author came from a family that had been Catholic since all four of her grandparents. She [devoted a chapter](#) to her subject specifically in his guise as "Our Lady's Tumbler." As she recollects the ending of the medieval story, the peaked performer looks up at the statue of Our Lady and [commends his own routine](#). She sees the great man himself as exuding such confidence, along with a deep humility. In closing the chapter, she focuses upon the seeming contradiction between "[Chesterton the philosopher](#) pondering on the Logos and Chesterton the child offering trinkets to Our Lady."

In 1952, the Anglican Dorothy L. Sayers fashioned an unsuspectingly grim simile to justify the sway that Chesterton had held over her and others of her set in her younger days. The English writer, famed first and foremost for her crime fiction, described him as being "a kind of Christian liberator," who had delivered a freedom like the effects of German aerial sorties a decade earlier:

[Like a beneficent bomb](#), he blew out of the Church a quantity of stained glass of a very poor period, and let in gusts of fresh air in which the dead leaves of doctrine danced with all the energy and indecorum of Our Lady's Tumbler.

She could have hit on a more congenial way to bring home the point that her predecessor had thrown open the window to much-needed oxygen. She presented her idol not as a blast from the past but as a blast *of* the past. Still, the shattered panes of presumably nineteenth-century windows tell us dramatically that Chesterton achieved breakthroughs in Catholicism. Among other things, he [provided an alternative](#) to the artistic and moral values associated with modernism and the Bloomsbury group of English intellectuals active in the early twentieth century. He took a childlike view of wonderment at the infusion of everything in the universe by divine mystery, and he liked to [poke fun at pretentious intellectualism](#). These qualities aligned him with both Francis as the jongleur of God and the unnamed hero of the medieval poem as jongleur de Notre Dame.

## The Juggler and the Paulines

I don't know of any other way to reach as many people.  
As a Paulist, I'm especially interested in reaching people  
outside my church—the Protestant, the Jew, the agnostic.

—The head of Paulist Productions, about the  
1982 movie “The Juggler of Notre Dame”

Of the two medieval versions of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, one survives as a French poem that its poet compares explicitly with exempla. The other is an actual Latin prose specimen of such edifying stories. As the coordination with exemplary literature signals, the tale is attested first in forms bound up with preaching. In turn, such public speaking is often associated with proselytizing. The implantation of Catholicism in many regions of the world may be regarded as both an essential stage in imperialism and colonialism and a sincere attempt to spread salvation and bring redemption. Both viewpoints have truth to them. In either case, the juggler has been transported hither and yon thanks to the globalization of Catholic Christianity. Global Gothic is restricted largely to countries heavily populated by descendants of Europeans, especially English. Global or world Christianity and global Catholicism have filtered farther afield, carrying with them the jongleur from the Middle Ages.

Within the Catholic faith, the Paulines have put the narrative to systematic use over long stretches of time and space. The [Society of Saint Paul](#) was begun in 1914. To address the spiritual needs of life today through commensurately modern means, it and its many affiliated organizations are devoted to evangelizing the teachings of Christ through all suitable media. The brothers and sisters of this order have laid hold of *Our Lady's Tumbler* repeatedly. The earliest such appropriation was probably in 1970 as a children's book in Italian, *A Juggler in Paradise* by Giovanni Bonetto. The original was [published in Rome](#) under the aegis of the Society of Saint Paul (see Fig. 3.8).

A [brief introduction](#) refers to the short account known as “Le jongleur de Notre Dame.” Even if the tale went back to popular legends of the Middle Ages, it had become interlaced in particular with the name of Anatole France. The writer of the introductory pages alludes to Jules Massenet, but connects the narrative more generally with *Marcelino Bread and Wine* of José Maria Sánchez-Silva. The front cover of Bonetto's book depicts the hero, here a tow-headed little boy who has a horse called Candido, and who juggles in a circus. As it turns out, the youth's long-winded and thrice-hyphenated name describes verbatim in Italian his appearance, “[blond-haired and blue-eyed](#).” The front and rear, outer and inner end leaves contain vignettes of a dozen monks—who loosely resemble twelve apostles—who pop up in this piece of children's literature.

The story takes place in an imaginary settlement called Luciardenti, or “Blazing Lights.” Initially a paradise, the hamlet is laid waste by marauding barbarians. In the

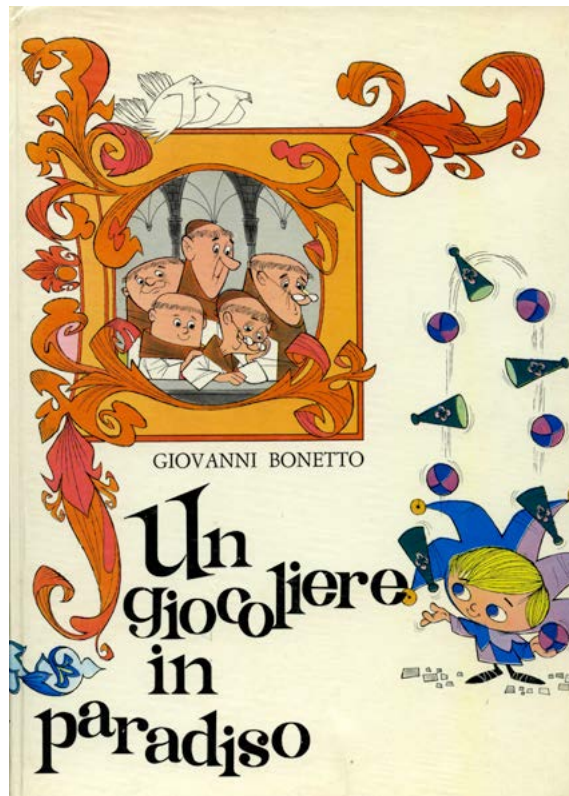


Fig. 3.8 Front cover of Giovanni Bonetto, *Un giocoliere in paradiso*, illus. Gino Gavioli (Rome: Paoline, 1970).

aftermath, one of the brethren finds the flaxen-haired and azure-eyed boy frost-bitten in a snowdrift and transports him back to the monastery. In the abbey, the young man takes the habit and assumes a monastic name, [Brother Welcome](#). Nearly immediately he becomes impatient at his inability to contribute as the other monks do. He meditates upon the observation, made by the head of the institution, that “to pray is to please God.” Soon he disappears, and his fellows find him juggling before an image of the Virgin and Child. Although enjoined to discontinue this practice, the youth persists, until finally he lays down his life. By this juncture the abbot has seen the Madonna not only reveal a smile of pleasure in her eyes but even descend to daub the sweat from the juggler with the fringe of her blue mantle, as the infant Jesus prances nearby.

This version of the narrative lacks a Hollywood “lives happily ever after,” since the central figure expires. The death of a leading character is atypical in a children’s book, perhaps especially when the main role is for a child, but as a religion Christianity is well equipped to prime its devotees for the beneficial aspects of dying at any age. Despite this probable drawback, the story was later [translated into Japanese and Spanish](#) by branches of the society (see Fig. 3.9).



Fig. 3.9 Front cover of Giovanni Bonetto, 天国のサーカス ぼうや [*Tengoku no sākasu bōya*], trans. Hiro Ebina, illus. Gino Gavioli (Tokyo: Joshi Pauro kai, 1974).

Other adaptations of the tale made by the Paulines include a fifty-minute [made-for-television movie](#) coproduced with Walt Disney for airing in 1982, and a compressed telling included in a cluster of *Saintly Tales and Legends* from 2004. The film has transdenominational pizzazz thanks to its Christmas setting. In sum, the juggler is well aligned with the spirit and values of the Paulines. Their publications and other products are meant to evangelize, and the medieval performer helps to achieve this end in a way accessible to nonclerics. He shows that if the worker has the right outlook, no toil is empty busywork, but in fact all labor has potential as a mode of devotion.

## Two Bills: Buckley Jr. and Bennett

The evidence of G. K. Chesterton, Giovanni Bonetto, and other authors and composers from Europe with whom we will intersect later is interesting and important. That said, in recent decades the juggler has been invoked as a cultural shibboleth especially in the Catholic intelligentsia not of Britain or Europe but instead of the United States.

In a 1997 autobiography, William F. Buckley Jr. seized upon the medieval performer as an image of his own Catholic belief (see Fig. 3.10).

The mere fact that a public intellectual of his religion should choose to compare himself to the acrobat before the Madonna was **not unheard-of**. Yet this tough-talking American writer and political commentator invested the analogy with greater significance than any of his predecessors had done. In the preamble to his life story, the conservative rephrased pages from an earlier book of his, in which he had recapitulated Anatole France’s version. Calling the French short story “the familiar tale,” he **summed up his interpretation** of it by accentuating private over public enactment of religious observance. Although he did not perform an outright gesture of devotion, he topped off this section of the introduction by stating how un-wishy-washy his own trust in God (and the Virgin Mary) had been:

*My faith has not wavered*, though I permit myself to wonder whether, if it had, I’d permit myself to advertise it: Would I encourage my dinner companions to know that I was blind in my left eye? I wish I could here give to my readers a sense of my own personal struggle, but there is no sufficient story there to tell. I leave it at this, that if I could juggle, I’d do so for Our Lady.

The author does not grant himself a ceasefire to wonder if he is consonant with the jongleur from the Middle Ages in not keeping his worship private, and in effect in trumpeting his unshakable loyalty to Catholicism. Those two decisions might seem to conflict with the juggler’s solitary humility.



Fig. 3.10 William F. Buckley Jr. Photograph by Bert Goulait, 1985, public domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William\\_F.\\_Buckley,\\_Jr.\\_1985.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_F._Buckley,_Jr._1985.jpg)

In co-opting the tale, Buckley responded unusually to its fundamental elements. His own conviction may never have wavered, but the narrative that he adduces diverges from what he seeks to make of it. Furthermore, the differences account in no small part for the story’s fascination. It tells of a man who sawtooths between highs and

lows in belief and hope. The medieval performer (and his later reincarnation in Anatole France's version) is first ignited by a sudden soulful awakening, then despairs as he rates himself incapable of expressing his new spiritual insight at the level of his fellow monks, and finally triumphs behind closed doors when despite the obstacles he contrives a means of communicating his veneration of the Virgin. The author from the twentieth century avows that he would juggle for Our Lady, but the explicit audience for his avowal of religious confidence, and for his own manipulation of words, is not Mary alone but instead his readers. Whereas the minstrel from the Middle Ages kept his piety rigorously personal, the modern-day polemicist proudly publicizes and politicizes his.

Around the same time, Buckley referred to the juggler in a [commencement address](#) he presented at none other than Notre Dame. On May 21, 1978, he proclaimed: "Ladies and gentlemen, I can give you on this feast day—like Our Lady's juggler—only that little I have to offer." He considered the speech counterproductive, for being too melancholic on what should have been an exuberant occasion. He enlisted the medieval entertainer only as an throwaway parenthesis in what was essentially agitprop, a condemnation of US President Carter for having been too soft on communism. The orator nodded to a previous title of his, *Gratitude: Reflections on What We Owe to Our Country*. The topic of thankfulness could accord well with the juggler, who almost personifies the antithesis of the ingrate, ungratefulness, unappreciativeness, and other such negatives. In the earlier book, Buckley had also drawn upon the story, but to a very different end. However improbably and incongruously, he related the tale there primarily as a parable for [responsible civic commitment](#). Secondly, he leveraged the imagery of the narrative to pass judgment on deficit spending: "[Without an economic surplus](#) we are left with not even enough to afford a set of the juggler's mallets and balls." Both these political and economic constructions take us far from the spirit of either the early thirteenth-century narrative or its belle époque reworkings by France and Massenet. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, Buckley's version of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* camouflages sharp-toothed ideology beneath the meek cowl of spirituality.

Another prominent Catholic who has promulgated the story for the faith it illustrates is William J. Bennett. This other US conservative, just as button-down as Buckley, achieved high national visibility through having administered as the third Secretary of Education from 1985 to 1988 (see Fig. 3.11). In both his *Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* and [the derivative revamping of the same anthology for children](#), he subsumes the tale of the jongleur (in Anatole France's version) under the heading "Faith." In this back-to-basics reconstruction of the narrative for young people, he supplies the moral "Faith leads us to employ our God-given talents in God's service." This typology veers from the classification under "Joy" that was made in the medieval *Tabula exemplorum*, or "Synopsis of Exempla." All the same, this use of the story transports us all the way back to its implementation as an exemplum in the

Middle Ages. Indeed, Bennett's conviction about the place that the past can hold in present-day culture would have been readily comprehensible and congenial to many men of letters from a half millennium earlier. In his words, "[our literature and history](#) are a rich quarry of moral literacy."

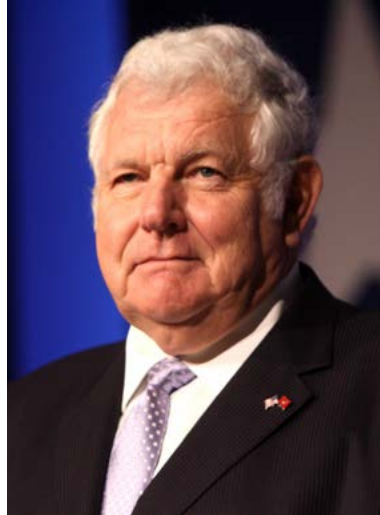


Fig. 3.11 Bill Bennett. Photograph by Gage Skidmore, 2011, CC BY-SA 3.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bill\\_Bennett\\_by\\_Gage\\_Skidmore.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bill_Bennett_by_Gage_Skidmore.jpg)

## The Lyric Juggler and Patrick Kavanagh

The story of the juggler or jongleur as invoked by the third-generation Irish-American poet and critic [Shaemus O'Sheel](#) is catholic at once with an upper- and lower-case c. Praising a fellow American man of letters, he lingered over Joyce Kilmer's observation that "every moment of every life" belongs to "the unfolding of the great mystery of human destiny." Yet the teleology is stamped as specifically Catholic, with a capital initial letter. It culminates when "all God's errant children" are gathered "into the Church Militant and the Communion of Saints." To reach that felicitous outcome requires devotion, which led him to our tale: "Like Our Lady's Tumbler in the medieval story, he saw the potentialities of worship in every commonplace and trivial action."

Especially in Ireland, the narrative has been instanced in explicitly Catholic contexts. A case in point would be the tale's appearance in one of two novels by Bernard Duffy, active mostly as a comic playwright. Writing in 1918, the Irishman describes a real-life parish priest from the perspective of the altar boy who gives the book its title, [Oriol](#). As pastor, this James Joseph MacMahon held responsibility for Saint Joseph's Church. The vignette reflects the writer's personal contacts in his boyhood, spent in the 1870s in

Carrickmacross, a municipality in County Monaghan. The novelist retains the names of the deacon as well as of the house of worship, but alters the toponym of the town to Farney. Knowledge of the medieval story in this decade would have been highly improbable in Ireland or anywhere else, except among Romance philologists. Yet we should allow for slight anachronism: Duffy may have retrofitted upon a bygone era a scene that would have been altogether plausible at any point from the 1890s onward. From then on, Anatole France's version became omnipresent. Additionally, English translations of the medieval French poem spread far and wide.

Early in the chapter on the pastor, a nod to *Our Lady's Tumbler* sets the stage discreetly. The dean tells Oriel not to blush at his childhood ambitions. MacMahon says: "Why, when I was your age I wanted to be an itinerant tumbler." But the weightier allusion to the tale comes in a moment of truth that begins when the boy, wishing to make a gift when the collection box is passed among the congregation, donates a prized button. The clergyman, after finding the offering, reprimands whoever of his parishioners had the effrontery to fling into the coffer such a trifle. When Oriel later acknowledges why he made this donation, the man of the cloth narrates the medieval story. MacMahon reveals, "I always liked the tale myself because of my early ambitions, and you will like it because it resembles your own."

Another wholesome instancing of the narrative can be tracked down in the popularizing hagiography of [Joan Windham](#). A British nurse, she wrote, over four decades, numerous [books about saints for children](#). She published her *Six O'Clock Saints* first in 1934. With two printings in December, the collection was inarguably intended for the Christmas retail market. The "Preface for Grown-Ups" declares that the stories in it were set down "with the object of making Children familiar with the Saints as Ordinary People to whom Interesting Things have happened" (see Fig. 3.12). Barnabas of Compiègne stands out as an oddity in not being designated as a fully validated holy man [even in the table of contents](#). Nonetheless, he is treated as a genuine historical personage who passed away in 1642. This specific year may have been picked arbitrarily: no evidence is proffered.

To those versed in the tale as told by Anatole France, Windham's reliance on the French short story is unconcealed throughout, in such features as the emphasis on six copper balls and the names of the monks in the monastery. Nonetheless, the recapitulator departs freely in her retelling as fancy drives her. For example, she emphasizes that the juggler wore clothing half blue and half white, out of reverence for the Virgin Mary. In her narrative, the statue of the Madonna itself becomes animate to caress Barnabas's brow and smile at him (see Fig. 3.13). Illustrations of her version dwell on two episodes. First, the artists portray the performer's sadness at being the only one of all the brothers not to have "a Special Thing to do for Our Lady" (see Figs. 3.14–3.17). Second, the illustrators show the entertainer standing on his head and juggling with "his six copper balls and twelve shiny knives, *right* in front of Our Lady's Altar!"





Fig. 3.12 Barnabas and a monk. Illustration by Marigold Hunt, 1934. Published in Joan Windham, *Six O'Clock Saints* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934), 83.

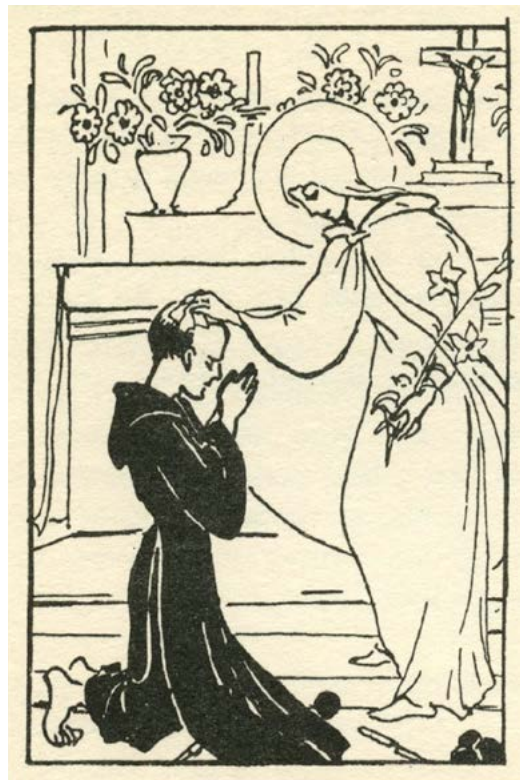


Fig. 3.13 The Virgin blesses Barnabas. Illustration by Marigold Hunt, 1934. Published in Joan Windham, *Six O'Clock Saints* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934), 85.



Fig. 3.14 The juggler, feeling inept and useless in the monastery. Illustration by Mona Doneux, 1948. Published in Joan Windham, *Sixty Saints for Boys* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 382. © Joan Windham, 1948, *Sixty Saints for Boys*, Sheed & Ward, used by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. All rights reserved.



Fig. 3.15 The juggler sits in sadness while the statue of the Virgin is carved. Illustration by Elizabeth Andrewes, 1974. Published in Joan Windham, *Story Library of the Saints*, 3 vols. (London: Harwin, 1974), 1: 154.

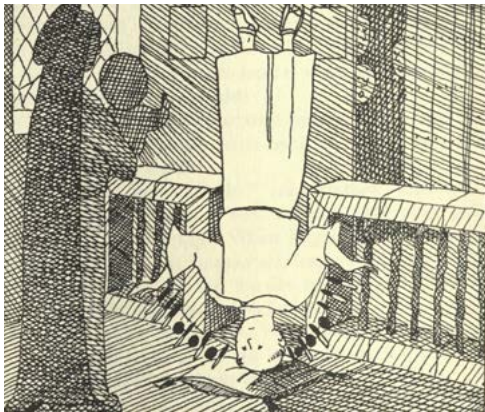


Fig. 3.16 Barnaby performs before the Virgin. Illustration by Mona Doneux, 1948. Published in Joan Windham, *Sixty Saints for Boys* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 383. © Joan Windham, 1948, *Sixty Saints for Boys*, Sheed & Ward, used by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. All rights reserved.

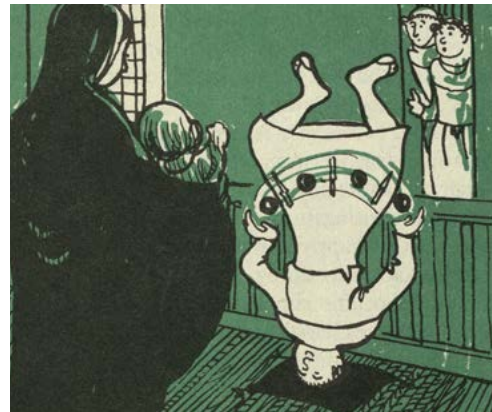


Fig. 3.17 The juggler performs before the Virgin while monks watch. Illustration by Elizabeth Andrewes, 1974. Published in Joan Windham, *Story Library of the Saints*, 3 vols. (London: Harwin Press, 1974), 1: 156.

The Irish Catholic writer Patrick Kavanagh manifested a lifelong devotion to the Mother of God in his work, as for instance in his favorite prayer “Hail, Queen of Heaven” and in a poem entitled “[The Lady of the Poets.](#)” One of his most famous compositions, “A Christmas Childhood,” leads up to his [reminiscences about the holiday](#) he experienced when a six-year-old farm-boy: “And I had a prayer like a white

rose pinned / On the Virgin Mary's blouse." The lyricist and novelist came by his devoutness naturally. After all, he was the first-born son of a father who **selected the names for his children** from the calendar of the saints and from the prayer known as the Litany of the Saints. The whole family was tied closely to the Virgin through its association with Saint Mary's church in **Inniskeen** (see Fig. 3.18).



Fig. 3.18 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>

Among Kavanagh's pieces of poetry stands out one from 1959, called "**Our Lady's Tumbler**." The lyric quietly presumes awareness of the minstrel's story as a means of expressing thankfulness for his poetic rebirth. The poet **most likely encountered the tale from the Middle Ages** though the translation by Eugene Mason. In the poem, the Irishman offers his own verse to celebrate the joys of existence, with a special focus on spring and summer. Only the last line echoes the title, by citing the worship that the entertainer of the medieval narrative tendered to the Virgin: "I come to you to verse my thanks / To parks and flowers and canal banks / I bring you this verse interlude / Our Lady's Tumbler's gratitude." The second-person addressee here is Mary. The reference to canal banks compresses much into two words. In 1955, Kavanagh had to go under the surgeon's scalpel for the removal of a cancerous lung, along with a rib. In the protracted convalescence that ensued, he underwent an epiphany on such a waterside embankment in Dublin. This awakening revitalized creatively or even perhaps truly vitalized him for the first time in his days on earth. In his autobiography, he later referred to this instant as **his birth**.

Kavanagh rued that devotion was ever more compartmentalized within strictly formal religion, and that God was ever less apparent in more mundane life and labor. As a corrective to those two tendencies, he espoused a theology that has been styled

one of “[everydayness](#).” Among the best-known lines associated with him are four that serve as the epitaph on the cross that marks his grave. [These verses](#) enjoin readers to have a sixth sense for the miraculous depths that lie beneath what may appear outwardly workaday. The Irish verse-maker was no saint, and yet he has been [likened to a medieval monk](#) for his finding of God in the day-to-day and pedestrian. With equal relevance, he has also been [compared with the Russian spiritual tradition](#) of holy fools. Like the the misunderstood minstrel and the hallowed halfwit alike, he could look coarse, primitive, and even loutish. Yet he was no dullard. Rather, he was gracefully transcendent in his devotion—and his art. Intensely verbal, he exerted himself simultaneously to avoid intellectualizing the essence of life, faith, and emotion.

Despite the miracle by which the Madonna becomes animate, the jongleur proved well suited to Kavanagh’s credo of the quotidian. The performer from the Middle Ages meshed well with the bard’s resistance to “tales of French-hot miracles,” as well as to the end of the spectrum where Lourdes and Fátima are located. Kavanagh frowned upon the [Romanization of Irish Catholicism](#) that was underway when he composed the poem. At the same time, by the middle of the twentieth century the story of *Our Lady’s Tumbler* had become fastened irrevocably to one day above all, namely Christmas, and to associations that were anything but everyday.

### “The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital”

What about the final throes of the twentieth century? At first blush, “The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital” by Virginia Hamilton Adair might seem to constitute an exception to the general retreat or even rout of *Our Lady’s Tumbler* from adult literature in the waning years of the second millennium, but in fact it does not do so. The lyric is likely to have been drafted decades before its publication, in response to experiences that were mid- rather than late twentieth-century.

The poem describes a sermon of sorts before a motley crew in a mental hospital. Though no primates of the Church are present, the cardinal event (so to speak) takes place when a lady, wearing a skirt but no panties, turns unerring sideways handsprings and somersaults past the altar for God. Finally, she moves “demure and quiet to her seat.” The account of the episode ends with a stanza pointing out that the jongleur would relate to this character, who is described as “Jean, the cartwheel queen of Mountain State.” Neither irrelevantly nor unintentionally, this personal name is the same as that borne by the protagonist in the opera by Massenet, as well as in other versions too—but the assonance here between the proper noun and the word “queen” brings home to us that in this instance we are dealing with a homograph and not a homophone. The character in this piece is female.

The stanza concludes: “[Gaffer](#) and girl convert us with their motions / to greater freedom in our own devotions; / the broken windows of the mind may give / [the winged spirit still a space to live.](#)” These verses capture much of the atmosphere in the

tale of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. The first describes the power of physical moves executed by the physical performer, here a woman, to bring us to religion, even more perhaps than the man preaching before her. The second makes explicit that the gymnastics affects the religious devotions of the viewers. The third refers to the circumstance that the dancer, like fools for God across the ages, may be perceived, and sometimes rightly, as delirious or even worse a dimwit or dunce. The final line encapsulates the dichotomy between body and soul, which the tumbling manages somehow to leave behind. Simultaneously, it may nod to the sparring over the athlete's soul. In some versions of the tale, demons and angels roughhouse in the air at the end before the forces of good waft the redeemed spirit aloft to heaven.

The poet of this lyric had a career that was anything but par for the course. Even as a very young child, Adair [displayed a flair for poetry](#) that was encouraged by her father. Although a lifelong composer of verse, she published precious little after a few forays into [leading magazines in the 1940s](#). Her first book, the bestselling *Ants on the Melon*, saw the light of day in 1996, when its author was eighty-three years old, sightless from glaucoma but still spritely in spirit. Thus she became prominent for her versecraft only extraordinarily late in life. Her inaugural volume brought welcome freshness and novelty to the literary scene.

"The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital" came out in a second culling of Adair's poetry, the 1998 *Beliefs and Blasphemies*. Devoted to the theme of religion, this effort did not garner the same wide-eyed adulation from reviewers and the public as her first volley of verse had elicited. Like the rest of the poems printed with it, the piece based on *Our Lady's Tumbler* was out of step with the times. Born in 1913, the lyricist belonged to a generation that had been bathed in the story. She may have conceived and even drafted her lines decades before their ultimate publication date. The underlying faith, religious or otherwise, in the verse flies in the face of postmodernism, and harks back to the chirpier optimism of the mid-twentieth century, when the tale of the juggler pervaded literature, radio, and television.

Should we root around for any special Marian connections? Adair was originally called Mary Virginia Hamilton, but she harbored an aversion to the first name and shed it in favor of the second. Even so, no cornucopia of imagination is required to surmise a privileged relationship between Virginia, with the Virgin inset within it, and Mary—but that speaks to her parents' more than to her own beliefs and values. A lifetime later, after her spouse's death and her own retirement, she became steadfast not in Catholicism but in Zen Buddhism.

As the title suggests, the action of the poem transpires in the chapel of a mental hospital. The episode related in the lines may be premised on Adair's firsthand encounters from 1950 to 1953 while a bibliotherapist at [Eastern State Hospital](#) in Williamsburg, Virginia. Among the factors that could have predisposed the poet to an interest in mental illness, serious weight should be given to the clinical depression of her husband. She married Douglass Adair in 1936, and thus their marriage was more than thirty years old when he committed suicide in 1968.

One assessment of *Ants on the Melon* commented that Virginia Hamilton Adair's debut volume contained many pieces of poetry that struck him as "transparently 'worked for' rather than 'given'"—"few ... products of 'inspiration' more than 'perspiration.'" This assessment could have applied equally to the tumbler, and the common feature may have led her to identify with his doggedness. The question becomes one of determining how strictly we define the faith the jongleur or juggler expresses. Then again, who are we to decide what constitutes fidelity? The drift of the original story is that even a theologically uninformed illiterate may devise a means of worship so effective as to pique the compassion of an intermediary between God and humanity, and thereby to set in motion his own salvation.

*Our Lady's Tumbler* has succeeded best when it has been stretched to its most capacious. In the beginning, it bestrode the chasm between laity and clergy, even between physicality and spirituality. It has exerted the most force when it has been construed with the maximum of magnanimity. It tells a story of faith, specifically of the Christian one, but the grandest messages of great religions bridge divides among people, rather than create or reinforce them.

## 4. The Yuletide Juggler

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[This old favorite](#) has been universally loved by people of all faiths for its warm portrayal of the spirit that is Christmas. It is presented here with the heartfelt hope that, whatever your belief, you will have found in its message added meaning for your celebration of the birth of the Son of God.

### Easter Tumbling

The term “ecumenism” means pan-Christianism. Whatever word we light upon, the phenomenon has conspired with commercialism to render the basic pacing of Christian holidays both simpler and more Christocentric, in the United States and many other western countries, than would have held true in earlier eras. Among other things, the simplification helps to obscure the distinctions among different strands within Christianity. In commerce, the major festivity has become Christmas, with Easter running a distant second. In the US economy, the Eastertime dyeing of hardboiled eggs and nibbling of chocolate rabbits, crème eggs, and jelly beans exercise far less effect on overall economic consumption than do yuletide parties, entertainment, travel, and above all gift exchanges. Yet the predominance of the Feast of the Nativity was not at all an established fact in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, [the celebration was abominated](#) by many denominations.

When *Our Lady's Tumbler* first penetrated the English-speaking landscape, an attempt was made to nudge the narrative toward the Paschaltide. The front cover of the 1900 translation by Wicksteed hazards no gesture at subtlety. It is emblazoned with a cross, flanked by lilies, with the legend “For Eastertide” above, and “He is Risen” below (see Fig. 4.1). The crucifix and flowers are two surpassingly common symbols of the holiday. Inside the slim volume, the Virgin’s ministrations toward the title character are presented in an illustration as an entirely female affair, looking for

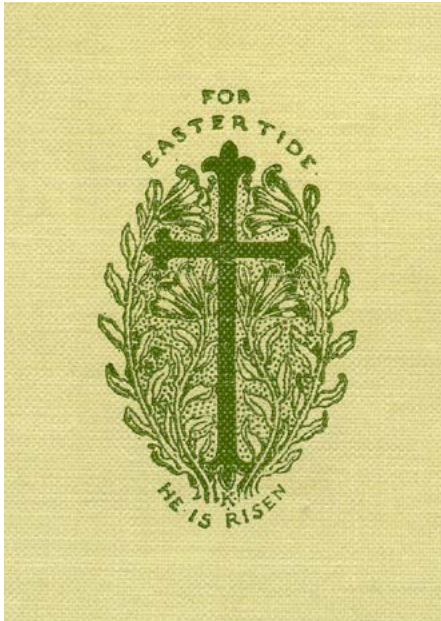


Fig. 4.1 An Eastertide cross. Published on the front cover of Philip H. Wicksteed, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A XIIIth Century Legend* (London: J. M. Dent, 1900).

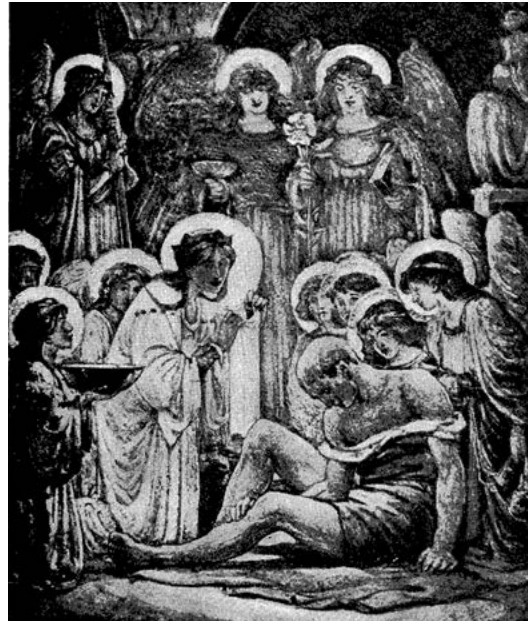


Fig. 4.2 "How the Queen of Heaven tends him." Illustration, 1900. Artist unknown. Published in Philip H. Wicksteed, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A XIIIth Century Legend* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1924), frontispiece.

all the world like a scene of the Deposition of Christ multiplied exponentially (see Fig. 4.2). A color card of the same vintage is not connected directly with the juggler story. In fact, it lacks any human figure whatsoever. Yet it displays the same bloom, emblem of Mary as well as of Easter and Jesus, [in a Gothic architectural setting](#) (see Fig. 4.3).

Roughly a half century later, the same effort to paschalize the tale is repeated, in [a version from 1949](#) that entitles it explicitly as "an Easter play." In 1956, BBC television aired [a theatrical production of \*Our Lady's Tumbler\* on the day before Easter Sunday](#). The network billed the show as "a morality," presumably to the same end. The 1977 version by Frederic Vanson, although for the "Feast of Our Lord's Nativity," is capped by [verses](#) that tether the narrative to same festival.

Though the paschal holiday may hold greater importance within Christian doctrine, in broader culture Christmas has exerted the irresistible pull, especially over the past century and a half. Anatole France annexed the story to May, the month of Mary, but only halfheartedly and not enduringly. In the medieval French poem the tale was bound to the Cistercian order and to the Virgin, but not to any one event in the liturgical calendar, and no association with the Nativity was implicit in any way. Yet throughout the twentieth century, the account became entwined irrevocably with the season of goodwill.





Fig. 4.3 Postcard depicting Eastertime lilies (H. Wessler, 1909).

## The Commercial Aesthetic of “Ye Olde”

To be up-to-to-date meant to look as old as possible.

Especially in Anglophone lands, Christmas remains a Victorian holiday, but one packaged as pseudomedieval. In the late nineteenth century, Noel came to be imagined as a celebration characteristic of the Middle Ages. In the first few decades of the twentieth century, the festivity became baked definitively into this fantasy world of more than a half millennium earlier. A memorable case in point can be found in a famous department store in Philadelphia. The moment is ripe for a few words about Gothic storefronts and exteriors, as exemplified by one specific shop.

The original marketplace established by John Wanamaker was called Wanamaker’s Grand Depot. The building opened in 1876, a special anniversary for the City of Brotherly Love owing to the American Centennial Exposition. Its style included a Moorish façade that squared well with the Gothic mania of the period, since it featured pointed arches (see Fig. 4.4). The interior of the facility strove for modernity, with all sorts of “firsts” to its credit as a sales outlet: the first to have electric illumination, a telephone, and pneumatic tubes to transport cash and documents. This edifice was replaced definitively in 1910–1911 by a very different Wanamaker Building. Unlike the ornate spire and other trimmings that certified the Woolworth Building in New York as a Gothic skyscraper, the exterior of the great shop that bore the name of John



Fig. 4.4 Postcard of John Wanamaker's Department Store before 1904, Philadelphia, PA (early twentieth century).



Fig. 4.5 Postcard of the John Wanamaker Building, Philadelphia, PA (Detroit, MI: Detroit Publishing Co., ca. 1911).

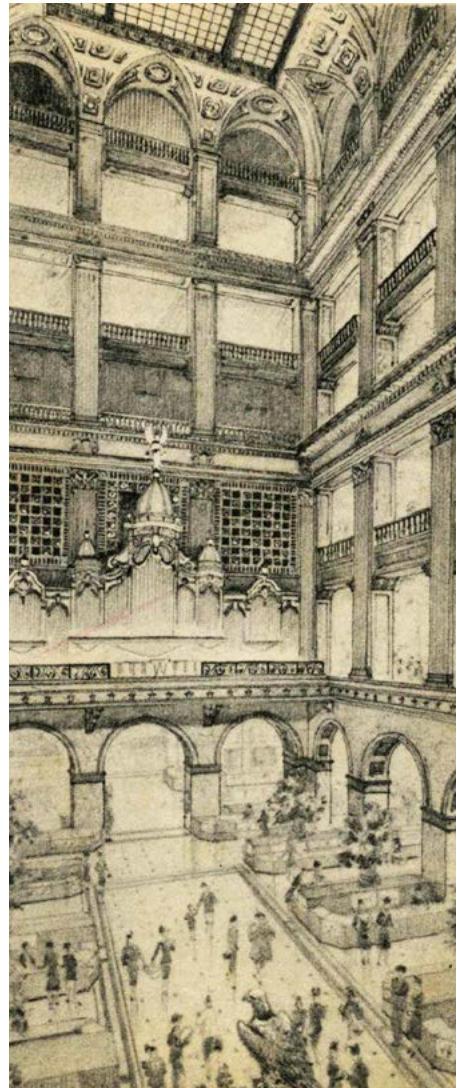


Fig. 4.6 Postcard of the Grand Court of the John Wanamaker Building, Philadelphia, PA (after 1911).

Wanamaker put on no charade of appearing medieval (see Fig. 4.5). Yet inside the newly redesigned retail establishment was a different story, especially in the Grand Court (see Fig. 4.6).

The family nurtured a passion for the Middle Ages that originated with the superstore's eponymous founder, John Wanamaker (see Fig. 4.7). Their medievaesque contributions to the metropolis in Pennsylvania affected the large public of shoppers and gawkers through temporary displays and other promotions within the flagship store. Permanently in place was the [Wanamaker Grand Organ](#). This spectacular pipe

instrument provided the backbone for **musical performances** (see Figs. 4.8 and 4.9). In this atmosphere we see an amalgam of made-up Middle Ages, commercialized Christmas, and dewy mawkishness. In this space ruddy-faced carolers can easily be imagined, trolling old-time melodies. Since the nineteenth century, this genre of music has been revived in large part thanks to the efforts of medieval musicologists.



Fig. 4.7 John Wanamaker. Photograph by George Grantham Bain, 1915. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 4.8 Front cover of John Wanamaker, *Christmas Carols and Songs of Olden Time, with the Wanamaker Grand Organ* (Philadelphia, PA: John Wanamaker, 1923).

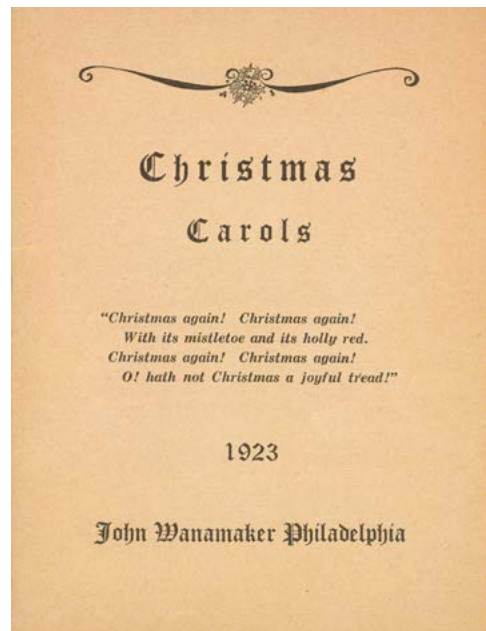


Fig. 4.9 Title page of John Wanamaker, *Christmas Carols and Songs of Olden Time, with the Wanamaker Grand Organ* (Philadelphia, PA: John Wanamaker, 1923).

During many yuletide seasons, the lobby of the department store was decked out as a pseudomedieval wonderland—a kind of American marketing equivalent to the Old Paris that Robida had devised for the 1900 Universal Exposition in the French capital. Once, this so-called Grand Court was beautified with a [replica of the façade of the Reims cathedral](#). In 1928, a small-scale [knock-off of Chartres](#) was created. The recreations were also related to performances in costume. Not coincidentally, in 1924 John Wanamaker’s son Rodman (see Fig. 4.10) [organized a fundraising expedition](#) to New York City by cast members of the Oberammergau Passion play. The event would not have been exactly a “don we now our gay apparel” moment, but the Middle Ages were inherently Christmasy (or vice versa: Christmas was Middle Ages-y). The United States stayed heavily German-American, as it does to this day, and German retained its status as the second most widely spoken language, after English: it was what Spanish has become today. For all that, bringing a troupe from the old country for a tour and stay cannot have been easy or popular in the wake of World War I. The sponsorship of that visit perpetuated a tradition that the native Philadelphian John Wanamaker had instituted to celebrate the family’s ethnic ancestry through events in the emporium, such as an [annual German Volksfest](#), or “popular festival.” The promotion of such occasions was unrestrained in [playing up the Middle Ages](#) (see Fig. 4.11).



Fig. 4.10 Rodman Wanamaker. Photograph, 1927. Photographer unknown.

Medieval strains are present emphatically not only in books of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also in printed material of the period that was not necessarily intended to be [long-lived](#). Among ephemera of this sort, holiday cards may hold the most value for the historical examination of attitudes toward the medieval past. Such goods from the presses of this period give the sense that the commercialization of the festivities coincided with nostalgia for olden times. Even Christmas greetings set in what was then the present day would often have

medievaesque calligraphy. Beyond the script, the scenes portrayed were meant to bring back the architecture of the Middle Ages, as the defining style of sincerity, simplicity, and spirituality (see Fig. 4.12).



Fig. 4.11 Front cover of *Book of Gifts*, 1924 (Philadelphia, PA: The John Wanamaker Store, 1924).



Fig. 4.12 Christmas card depicting the hanging of holly (early twentieth century).

As weird as it may seem, even wishes for the changeover from present to future to which we attach the name of New Year's Day could be loaded with retro elements. These cards often invite the viewer to step not forward but back, sometimes even through a pointed arch, to the cozy domesticity of an earlier era (see Figs. 4.13–4.15). Consider the paradox of wishing a bright and happy turn to a fresh yearly calendar in the twentieth century by inviting the recipient to hop five or six centuries back through an aged Gothic portal. The past is evoked as a place of soothing stability in a fast-changing present, with its threat of an even more disconcerting future. The artwork and lettering are intentionally redolent of epochs that were supposedly marked by quaintly folkloric customs and evidently simple joys. They allow us to voyage back in our fantasies through Gothic lancet arches to witness the holidays as they took place within faux Tudor houses, with their half-beamed domestic architecture, where the dowdy and the old-world were regarded as virtues and not vices.



Fig. 4.13 New Year's card depicting holly and a Gothic window (ca. 1925).



Fig. 4.14 Christmas and New Year's card depicting a Gothic gateway (ca. 1923)



Fig. 4.15 New Year's card featuring a medieval musician and castle (early twentieth century).

Not fortuitously, [one Christmas card](#) features an odd-looking ecclesiastic—a bishop, it would seem from his miter—on a throne that is pinnacled in Gothic revival style (see Fig. 4.16). He hoists a pewter tankard to a king in crusader garb (are we to surmise Richard the Lionheart?) who sports his crown at a rakish angle and draws on a flamboyantly long clay tobacco pipe in what might be thought to be the Dutch fashion. This item has a mate that shows the same medieval influence (see Fig. 4.17).



Fig. 4.16 Christmas card depicting a medieval bishop and crusader king (early twentieth century). Image courtesy of Michelle Higgs. All rights reserved.



Fig. 4.17 Christmas card depicting a medieval woman wearing a hennin who is on the verge of being fought over by two suitors (early twentieth century). Image courtesy of Michelle Higgs. All rights reserved.

The trend could lead to peculiar and even spectacular anachronism. For example, [one card](#) wishes the recipient “A Happy New Year” in painstakingly lovely imitation of a Gothic manuscript, with floriated embellishments at top and bottom (see Fig. 4.18) The central text is penned in a script that achieves an improbable compromise between blackletter and easy-to-read. The medievaesque here is unconsciously double-dealing, since the passage comprises a definition of cheerfulness ascribed to the decidedly unmedieval eighteenth-century English literary great [Samuel Johnson](#).



Fig. 4.18 “Cheerfulness. The habit of looking at the bright side of things is worth more than a thousand a year. — Samuel Johnson.” New Year’s card (Ernest Nister, 1912).

Among the legacies of earlier medievalism, the medieval revival of the Gilded Age bequeathed a plethora of tacky words and phrases that linger to the present day. Take for example “ye olde.” The faux-medieval or at least pseudoarchaic practice of writing [these two words](#) in lieu of “the old” took root in advertising and elsewhere at the latest from the 1880s on (see Fig. 4.19). [Another archaic “ye”](#) existed to compete with “ye olde.” Sometimes both homographs appeared on [one and the same card](#) (see Fig. 4.20). This couple of forms comported comfortably with Christmas, because of its medieval associations. The holiday’s name is itself an Old English noun, first documented in the early Middle Ages.



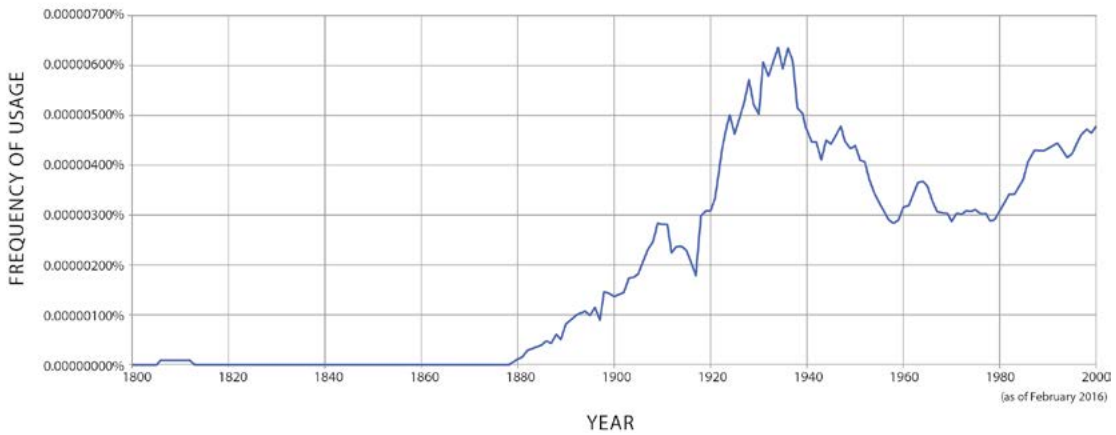


Fig. 4.19 Google Ngram data for “ye olde,” showing a marked increase in usage in the 1880s and a peak in the 1920s and ’30s. Vector art by Melissa Tandysh, 2016. Image courtesy of Melissa Tandysh. All rights reserved.



Fig. 4.20 “Ye Merrie Christmas Wishes.” Christmas card depicting holly-bearing figures in traditional dress (early twentieth century).

From the nineteenth century on, the celebration was retailed for its at least supposedly medieval traditions. The intermixing of “ye” with the real or sham Middle Ages can be documented readily on [holiday cards from the early twentieth century](#) (see Fig. 4.21). Somewhat less mannered is [a card that portrays youths](#) towing a king-sized piece of firewood. At the center, a jester with a large, belled coxcomb blows an impressively king-sized set of bagpipes (see Fig. 4.22). In such illustrations, the festivities afford opportunities for jaunty and rowdy male-bonding. Another very similar greeting begins “[Ye Jollie Christmastide](#)” (see Fig. 4.23).



Fig. 4.21 “Ye Merrie Christmas Greetings.” Christmas card depicting figures in traditional dress with a Yule log, in a procession led by a jester (early twentieth century).



Fig. 4.22 Christmas card depicting a Yule log (New York: E. P. Dutton, early twentieth century).



Fig. 4.23 “Ye Jollie Christmastide.” Christmas card depicting candle-bearers and a jester before the enthroned king or Father Christmas (early twentieth century).

Consider too the poem embossed upon a gilt postcard of the same vintage that enjoins “Merrie Xmas Cheer.” A jollily jingling jester cavorts, once again in parti-color. He clasps the wand characteristic of his profession as well as a spray of mistletoe, this time with red berries galore. Near the jolly joker, a boy holds two candelabra, each ablaze with five candles (see Fig. 4.24). The brief text is rife with “ye’s.” It looks like a shopping list for the feast days that starts with holly and a sprig of mistletoe. Doubtless “ye poinsettia” is not far away. (We readers can shoehorn in one further expletive: ye gods!)



Fig. 4.24 “Merrie Xmas Cheer.” Christmas card with medieval poem and jester (ca. 1910).

Less grating “Merry Christmas” and “Christmas Cheer” cards dispense with “ye,” as they picture rosy-cheeked young lads dragging a Yule log (see Figs. 4.25 and 4.26). They conjure up the Middle Ages through a backdrop of a snowy landscape with a Gothic-looking building and a church spire. Even by itself, the huge chunk of a tree is enough to connote a homey medieval Noel. The trunk presupposes stainless coziness. In simpler days of old, the happy faithful gathered around a woodburning chimney. This imagined hearthside heartiness took place long before whale oil, coal, gas, petroleum, and electricity existed, along with the industrialization they facilitated. These colorful pieces of stiff paper emphasize communal good cheer in centuries of yore rather than the commercial exchange that is stressed in the Santa-centered commercialization of Christmas today: ho, ho, ho! Also “ye”-free is a greeting that simulates a medieval charter: certifiable happiness. At the bottom are images of red and green wax seals, like the berries and leaves of holly; at the top a pretend illumination with one fool strumming a stringed instrument and another [holding on to a jester’s wand](#) (see Fig. 4.27).



Fig. 4.25 "Bringing in the Yule Log,"  
Christmas card depicting medieval  
figures dragging a Yule log (ca. 1910).



Fig. 4.26 Christmas card depicting  
medieval figures dragging a Yule log  
(Philadelphia: Hoover, 1916).



Fig. 4.27 Christmas card depicting a jester and musician (early twentieth century).

The most minimalist approach is taken by a card that simulates the sort of tag that would be attached to a gift. Here the caption "Hearty Xmas Greetings" stands alongside a likeness of a red-clad joker with vaguely sinister eyebrows who fingers what looks vaguely like an unfretted guitar (see Fig. 4.28). A fuller version has a [buffoon in red](#), with a fool's cap and the same musical instrument (see Fig. 4.29). These figures occupied a cultural space under development that was soon usurped by Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, and finally Santa Claus.

What larger meanings do all these items evoke? [Charles Eastlake anticipated them](#) by nearly fifty years in his *History of the Gothic Revival*, when he editorialized on the good old days. The Englishman notifies us, without necessarily aiming to do so, that in 1872 people longed already for a joyous prelapsarian Christmas past in a preindustrial, courtly, and feudal Middle Ages. The invention of holiday spirit had as its concomitant the creation of a medieval period in a specific vein. Across the Atlantic, the American Andrew Jackson Downing voiced much the same pining in 1842. His yearning may have been fueled by the novels of Sir Walter Scott, although without the specific association with yuletide. The American landscape designer described how the traditional, mostly Gothic [architecture of the English countryside](#) could transport the viewer magically backward to better days. Not eighty years after Downing, and not fifty after Eastlake, such longings were allayed by mass-produced goods that were meant to funnel consumers back in time to this romanticized medieval period. Seasonable products of these types help us to achieve multidimensionality as we endeavor to envisage the Middle Ages as folks did during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their ways of seeing those times remain with us still.



Fig. 4.28 Christmas card depicting a medieval musician framed by holly (London: B. B., early twentieth century).



Fig. 4.29 Christmas card depicting a mounted medieval musician (Saxony, early twentieth century).

Take for example a card to illustrate "[England of Old, 1475.](#)" This gem portrays a procession of brightly clad and well-coiffed fifteenth-century singers, led by a lutanist in the [garb of a professional entertainer](#) (see Fig. 4.30). In the background stand half-timbered edifices that would have been completely at home in the Tudor revival throughout the British Commonwealth and United States (see Fig. 4.31).

Woodrow Wilson was domiciled in a house of this sort in Princeton when he served as president of the university. Hard as it may be to picture his wife and him at their front doorway cheerily greeting visitors with glass cups from a punch bowl of steaming grog, others living on his street at this time would have given a friendly reception to bands of neighbors out a-caroling and a-wassailing to mark the season.



Fig. 4.30 Postcard depicting “England of Old, 1475” (London: Raphael Tuck & Sons, early twentieth century). Illustration by M. C. Whishew.



Fig. 4.31 Christmas card with a red-nosed drinker against a backdrop of Tudor-style half-timbered buildings. Illustration by George Mason (London: Raphael Tuck & Sons, 1907).

Even without any archaizing language or medievaesque lads and lasses, the Middle Ages slipped into modern Noel through the front door—and in this case, access came effectively through the central portal to a cathedral. When Gothic enters the picture, the old metaphor of the body politic cries out to be revised. The body ecclesiastic is so Gothicized that an arch or portal in this style suffices to say Church and Christianity. In the first few years of the twentieth century, a holiday card was crafted that communicated unambiguously the parallelism between the snugly lit pointed arch of the entranceway to a cathedral and a decorated tabletop Christmas tree (see Fig. 4.32). Wholly independently, an advertising firm designed for [publication on Christmas Eve of 1968](#) an expression of best wishes from a local electric company which juxtaposed a large and lavishly lit evergreen with the lancet of the doorway to a Gothic church (see Fig. 4.33). Again and again over the centuries, associations between the shapes of trees and architectural features of large places of worship have induced theorizing about what has been called arboreal Gothic. The ecclesiastical buildings could seem forestlike, while groves of trees could appear cathedralesque. Some things never change.

With each tick of the clock, we venture ever deeper into yet another new and different century, our own chaotic twenty-first. Yet the lenses through which we peer back to 1200 and thereabouts are unavoidably conditioned, and even coated, by what our predecessors saw. We carry their rose-tinted (or rose-window-tinted) views of the world within ourselves as afterimages. This condition stays true even if recently our preference has been to embrace the darker Middle Ages of malodorous crypts with

their sloe-eyed and sinister denizens. Ours are days of modern-day Goths, with black-lined eyes and painted faces. Nothing guarantees that the fair damsels and knights in shining armor of yore will ever again enjoy their day in the sun, but we should remember how omnipresent they were even just a hundred years ago. Granted, there is no going back, but who would feel certainty in second-guessing what will be the next big retro? Now could be the moment to revive Gothic revival—and with it, the juggler. Christmas could be just the ticket.



Fig. 4.32 Christmas card depicting a cathedral and Christmas tree (ca. 1907).



Fig. 4.33 Advertisement for Philadelphia Electric Company. Published in *Philadelphia Daily News* (December 24, 1963): 13.

## Noel Juggling: The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

—2 Corinthians 9:7 (King James Bible)

In a loose sense, the very gist of the tumbler's tale lifts the spirit of its readers in ways roughly comparable to *A Christmas Carol* (see Fig. 4.34). Charles Dickens, author of the famous novella, deserves more than perfunctory mention, since he played a unique role in establishing Christmas as the family-centered economic institution it has transitioned into being today. At the start of the nineteenth century, the holiday fell under siege from all sides, for the irreligiosity and rascality shown by its celebrants; by the turn to the twentieth, it won seals of approval from most of the same types of people who had clucked their tongues only a few short decades earlier. Bah, humbug!

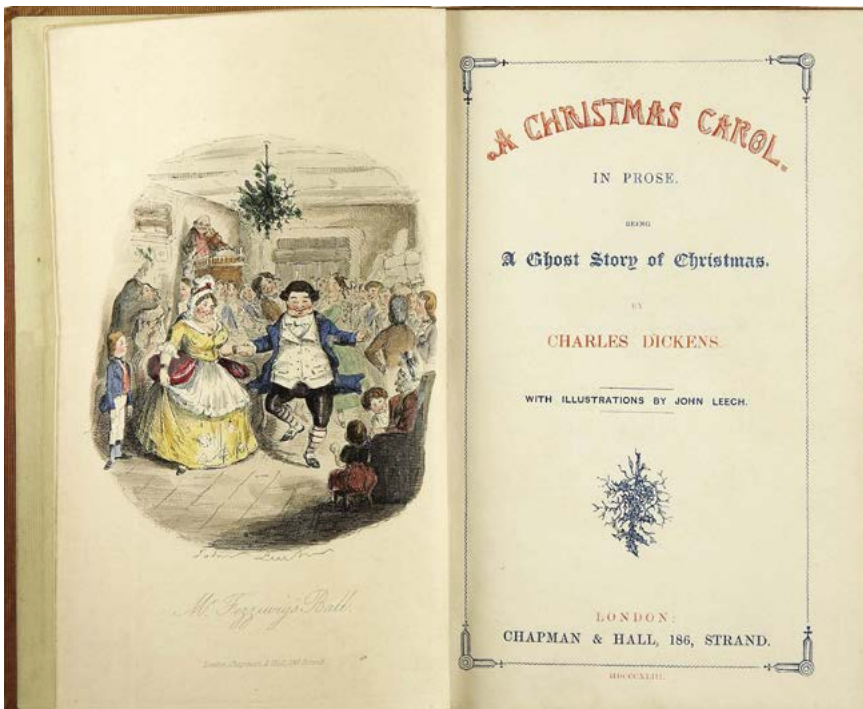


Fig. 4.34 Frontispiece and title page of Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, illus. John Leech (London: Chapman & Hall, 1843).

As a narrative, the account of the juggler stands the merest shade removed from fable or fairy tale in its universality. The line that sets off our story from these other genres relates to religion. God, or his agent Mary, belongs to the very *raison d'être* of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. At the same time, the oft-told tale holds appeal partly because it exalts



a person who exists outside the ecclesiastical hierarchy and, to a degree, outside formal doctrine or dogma. Adaptations of the medieval story succeed best when the balance struck between edification and entertainment remains as challengingly, but inspirationally, subtle as in the original *Our Lady's Tumbler*.

As a model for faith, the juggler has been mobilized in catechistic books. In **one such case** from the waning twentieth century, his tale is rendered into a *Little Juggler Play* to be staged at the close of the calendar year, between "Christmas Stations" and "Holy Innocents." By way of context, we are assured that both *Our Lady's Tumbler* and *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* bring home **positive messages** about the need to be receptive to true piety in unanticipated places and unexpected people. The exercises that accompany the skit in the catechism place weight on **a passage from the New Testament**. Attention to the little juggler's antics and attitudes can enable self-examination and soul-searching, so that we may determine whether, like him (and apostles), we have followed Saint Paul's words and thoughts by risking ridicule while playing "**fools for Christ**." As the proposed performance of the theater piece at the end of December suggests, the most common function that has been dreamed up for the story has been to provide *comme il faut* amusement at suitable dates in the annual liturgical cycle, especially Christmas.

The *Little Juggler Play* is set explicitly within a medieval cathedral. It opens with a procession that sings a Marian hymn and carries an effigy of the Mother and Child. A wealthy merchant is fittingly named Mercado, Spanish for "market." He has donated the statue and makes a lavish gift to it. In contrast, the title character has nothing of his own to present except a performance of his craft. During the night, he drowzes. In the morning, it turns out that a miracle has occurred: one of his juggling balls he thought he had lost has landed in the hands of the infant Jesus in the statue—and it has turned to gold.

The simultaneous medievalization and commercialization of the yuletide season could not help but draw the story of the jongleur and juggler into the gravitational field of Christmas. In 1897 William Showell Rogers composed as **his annual poem of holiday greeting** the first English verse treatment of *Our Lady's Tumbler* (see Fig. 4.35). The Englishman presented his "Tumbling Monk of Clairvaux" as a humble attempt to give an impression of **the flavor and spirit of the original**. At the end of the poem the professional lawyer and amateur poet tucks in a marginal note "Here followeth the lesson" to flag the final quatrain:

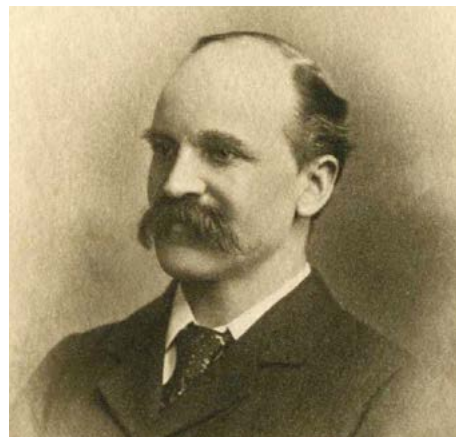


Fig. 4.35 William Showell Rogers. Photograph, before 1899. Photographer unknown. Showell Rogers, *Christmas Greetings, and Other Verses* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers Ltd., 1902).

Thus the abbot and his brethren  
 Learned, when gifts of love are given,  
 That 'tis not the gift, but giving,  
 Findeth favour most in heaven.

Across the Channel in the same year, the translation into French by the symbolist Adrien Remacle of a [Hungarian tale](#) was printed in the special illustrated Christmas issue of a Parisian daily morning newspaper. “The Fool” relates a modified form of our story, but it is identified simply as “a legend” with no acknowledgment of indebtedness to *Our Lady’s Tumbler*, *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, or any other specific written or oral source. In this supposedly Hungarian version, a humble fool stamps out a wild routine before a beautiful Madonna that ends in his collapsing, whereupon the Virgin descends amid great light to sponge the sweat from his face with the starred veil that encircles her head. Illustrations by the renowned artist Alphonse Mucha embellish the text.



Fig. 4.36 Mary tends to the fallen juggler. Illustration by Alphonse Mucha, 1897. Published in Dezső Malonyay, “Le fou, légende hongroise,” trans. Adrien Remacle, in *Le Figaro de Noël* (December 1897): 226.

More momentously for the future reception of the narrative, Massenet’s *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* did not premiere in December but on February 18, 1902. Yet already in 1901, the composer presented [the first draft](#) of the opera as a Christmas present to the wife of his music publisher and friend, Henri Georges Heugel (see Fig. 4.37).



Fig. 4.37 Henri Heugel and Jules Massenet. Photograph, 1899. Photographer unknown.

In 1907, Edwin Markham brought out under the title *The Juggler of Touraine* a free versification of Anatole France's *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. Not long thereafter, a reviewer labeled this effort "an **unusually meritorious** Christmas poem." In the magazine the pathos of the story was heightened by four attractive, even incantatory, full-page, **color illustrations** (see Figs. 4.38–4.41).



Fig. 4.38 "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.



Fig. 4.39 "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.



Fig. 4.40 "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.

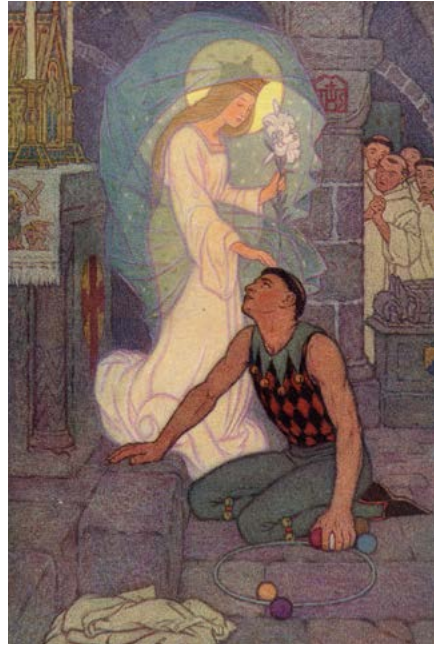


Fig. 4.41 "Lightly down from the dark descends the Lady of Beauty." Illustration by Leon Guipon, 1907. Published in Edwin Markham, "The Juggler of Touraine," in *Century Magazine* (December 1907): 231.

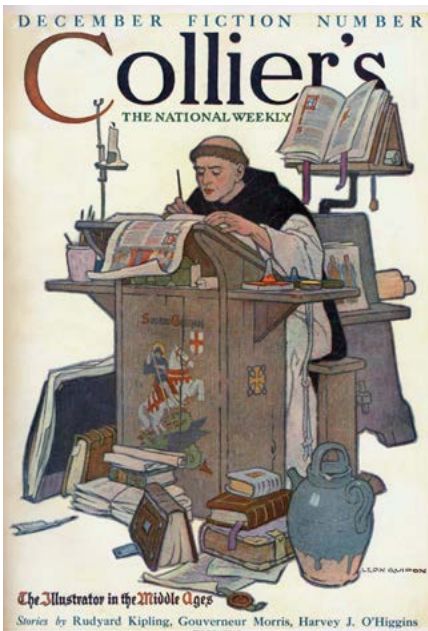


Fig. 4.42 "The Illustrator in the Middle Ages." Illustration by Leon Guipon, 1908. Published on the front cover of *Collier's* 42.10 (November 28, 1908).

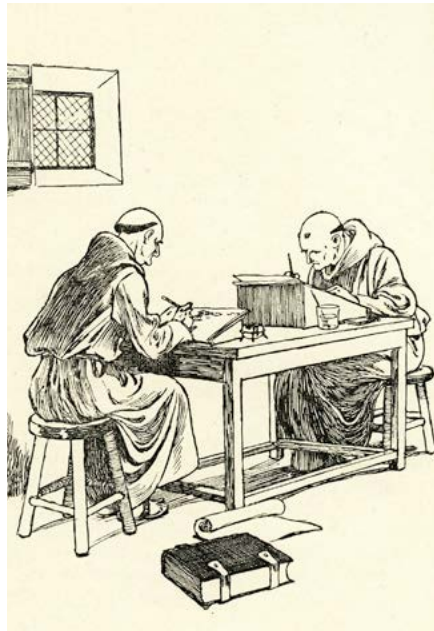


Fig. 4.43 Monks at work. Illustration by Henri Morin, 1928. Published in Anatole France, *Abeille / Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame / Les Pains Noir*, ed. R. I. Graeme Ritchie (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1928), 9.

By the finish of his tragically short life, the illustrator responsible for these artworks had already evidenced an undoubtable interest in the Middle Ages. This Leon Guipon may even have identified himself with its craftsmen, in [cover art](#) that was released in 1908 (see Fig. 4.42). [The artwork in question](#) shows a tonsured monk, with a black surplice over a white tunic. He hunches over a drafting desk in a scriptorium, a [setting that was a favorite artistic theme](#) (see Fig. 4.43). Here the scribe, surrounded by the [tools of his trade](#), is [focused intently on a codex](#). The same painter also produced “[The Fair Crowning the Brave](#),” a lovely image of a damsel placing a garland upon the head of a kneeling knight, presumably just back from a joust or some other feat of knightly valor (see Fig. 4.44).



Fig. 4.44 “The Fair Crowning the Brave.” Illustration by Leon Guipon, 1910. Published on the front cover of *Woman’s Home Companion* (October 1910).

Guipon’s work appeared just when the style sometimes known as the [Brandywine School](#) reached its [pinnacle](#). The artists’ colony was founded by the prolific Howard Pyle, “the [father of American illustration](#).” Although the French immigrant was not one of Pyle’s students, Guipon’s oeuvre betrays distinct traits of the master’s manner, which is often held to have coincided with the [golden age of book illustration](#). Among other things, the “Pyle look” emphasized historical accuracy, and inclined toward [tales about heroes](#) such as King Arthur and Robin Hood: Pyle was an Anglophile. Guipon’s drawings also bear a resemblance to the creations of Maxfield Parrish, with which they were once publicly displayed. In “[The Juggler of Touraine](#),” the relevance to Christmas is impossible to miss at the story’s conclusion. A simple image of Jesus as

a swaddled neonate is placed in a cruciform position, flanked by lilies and surmounted by a star (see Fig. 4.45). Thanks to this iconography, no room is left for slipperiness about [the specific holiday](#) at issue here.



Fig. 4.45 The infant Jesus framed by a cross. Illustration by Leon Guipon, 1907. Published in Edwin Markham, "The Juggler of Touraine," in *Century Magazine* (December 1907): 233.

Such early linkage between the tale of the jongleur and Noel has held firm or even rigidified during the more than a century that has elapsed since then. Because of gift exchange, the festivity of Christmas holds acute consequence for juveniles who celebrate it, and often the holiday season has ramifications even for those who do not. Through retailing and entertainment, it has saturated culture in Europe and the Americas, to point a finger at only the most obvious examples. Among Christians, the story could be used to inculcate and fortify belief in children as well as adults. The narrative could help the young to overcome diffidence about giving of themselves to others and to God.

Already in medieval times, the Adoration of the Magi bulked large as a major component in the long bacchanalia that began with Christmas Eve. The three kings journeyed to the crib and brought offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to honor the Christ child with Mary. Although the wise men were thoroughly regal, the setting was humble. This episode herded the thoughts of medieval viewers gently toward gift-giving. As a holiday, yuletide revolves ever more around bestowing and receiving gifts, trades that put both parties on pins and needles (in this case pine needles) while at the same time arousing pleasure. Givers may worry that their presents are not appropriate or considerate. They may agonize that what they have at their disposal to present may be too expensive or inexpensive. Those who receive something given

may fret about how to respond if it is not what they wanted, or even what they can take on sufferance. Easily overlooked is the basic reality that the day is a birthday, on which offerings should most suitably be made to Christ, not to all the others who swap them on the holiday. But what can a believer tender that would be worthy of the Son of God? In the final quatrain of a Christmas carol now called "In the Bleak Midwinter," Christina Rossetti summed up well the worried question of a believer in this quandary: "What can I give him, poor as I am? / If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; / If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part; / Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart." Such characters as the Little Drummer Boy, Amahl, and the poor little juggler share this anxiety and ultimately this solution. All these heroes of feel-good stories have been drawn ad infinitum into the orbit of Christmas.

The poem from the Middle Ages depicts a performer who renders his devotion to the Virgin and to her alone. No such votives from other monks are mentioned. In contradistinction, Anatole France lived deep in a market economy that had grown away from the medieval culture of gift exchange. He tilts his lens away from lone worship to focus upon a competition among would-be gift-givers, the brethren who make good use of their God-given talents. All the other monks in his short story create tangible objects: theological treatises, physical copies of them, miniatures to accompany the writing, sculpture, and poems. At the next stage, Jules Massenet homes in on a painter, poet, sculptor, and musician, with whom the jongleur competes at least tacitly through his dance. In both France and Massenet, then, all of the brothers confront the quandary of what to give the woman who truly has everything, in her capacity as the Mother of God.

In one version of *The Little Juggler* by Violet Moore Higgins from 1917, our piece is placed as the first of three supposed fairy tales. On the facing page stands an illustration, seemingly set in the late Middle Ages, of youths who have in hand presents such as a kite and dolls. Beneath, like an early twentieth-century chiron, runs the legend "To Give Is the Spirit of Christmas." Gift-giving is fundamental to the story as this writer tells it. Although the authors of children's books would do themselves a disservice by worming heavy-duty theory into their narratives, they often make their texts about the tumbler pretexts for confronting the challenges of reciprocation. They are especially alive to the difficulties that subordinates may face when they strive for reciprocity in giving to their superiors. John Nesbitt's telling of "The Juggler" was soon recorded and retailed under the title "A Christmas Gift." Then in 1942 the fictional treatments of competitive gift-giving culminate in a film short: *The Greatest Gift of All* dramatizes none other than the narrative of the juggler as transmitted from Anatole France via Jules Massenet and countless others.

Within a few years of Higgins, in 1925, a French sociologist would publish a foundational essay on reciprocal exchange in societies that in preceding decades would have been considered primitive. One conclusion of Marcel Mauss's study was that giving can improve life for the giver as well as the receiver—for the commonweal. Not many fiction writers are well versed in sociology or anthropology, but many

authors of children's literature have felt their way by the seat of their pants to similar messages, expressed in religious or ethical terms, when they have written about the jongleur. They have implicitly equated his medievalness and his childishness, they have been sympathetic to his sense of inadequacy in wishing to be generous to a being already incommensurably gifted and giving, and they have celebrated the sincerity of the only gift he finds himself capable of making.

The account of the juggler purveys reassurance that, as the adage holds, it is the thought that counts. The most valuable offering is to bestow oneself and one's talents. Thus the tale constitutes a splendid point of departure for reflection on the spirit of Advent, the season of expectation and preparation that leads up to marking the Nativity of Christ at Christmas. As such, it has been pointed up in [numerous books for Christmastide](#) that are meant to help parents find a lull for sharing with their young and for nurturing in them an appreciation for what should be a happy holiday. An early treatment can be found in a 1956 [children's activity guide](#) for Christian feasts and seasons across the year. In this publication the "story about a juggler" appears as the very first fiction selection. It demonstrates how youths can be taught how to approach "the all-important matter of a birthday gift for the Light of the World." The interpretation advanced [takes the narrative](#) in a direction like that of "The Little Drummer Boy." In fact, this reading of the juggler emphasizes outright that the offering "must be a giving of *self*." The difference is that [this presentation](#) underscores the notion of penance, so that the message of the tale becomes less about pure and simple giving than about giving up and forgoing, by sacrificing habitual pleasures during the season.

Coordinating the narrative with Christmas holds a further advantage. Audiences in preponderantly Protestant countries or communities would spring to mind as likely to be dead set against the veneration of saints. To them, the natural salience of Mary in this holiday could represent a major hurdle. But this snag disappears in an account set in the remote past. The medieval devotion to the Mother of God, and the connection of the Virgin with Christmas, were two topics on which Protestants and Catholics in America and elsewhere could be on the same page of Holy Scripture.

Within Protestantism, yuletide is the main stretch of the year when [Mary's role](#) within the otherwise heavily Christocentric faith is customarily feted. The association of the Virgin with Christmas would help to provide reasons for commemorating a character who holds her in special reverence. In other words, it would be natural within non-Catholic but still predominantly Christian cultures to fix the narrative of the juggler at a point in the liturgical calendar where the Mother of God would understandably stand out. In the medieval tale as well as in many later ones, the infant Jesus is present as a silent prop in the arms of his mother. In Protestant versions of the story, the role of the Christ child may have been almost automatically heightened, since Protestantism assigns much greater weight to Jesus than to Mary. But at Christmas, in all denominations of Christianity, both the Mother of God and the infant have their roles to play.



Other reasons could be conceived why Christmas made a good setting for the narrative. The medieval poem stresses that the tumbler ritualized his routine, by doing it again and again. We are probably to imagine performances at all the canonical hours, day in and day out. The ritualism would resonate later with Catholicism, but less so with Protestantism. For Protestants, the idea might be more appealing that the entertainer—whether tumbler, juggler, or another sort of artist—came up with his idea spontaneously for one holiday and that it bore fruit immediately in a miracle of redemption. So too would the notion of purging the tale of brethren and making the rivalrous gift-giving a community affair, rather than a monastic one. Accordingly, we find the story de-Catholicized, by making the juggler not a lay brother but an injured or trapped outsider who takes temporary hospice with the monks. Alternatively, the monastery disappears from the tale altogether.

For all sorts of reasons, then, the juggler settled into a natural place in a medievalized, Gothic, ecclesiastic Christmastime. That is where the mother and child belong. Accordingly, an unsigned card for the holiday by the prolific American illustrator Ellen Clapsaddle depicts a vaguely Raphael-like Mary and infant Jesus, both haloed. They are framed within a sort of mandorla that is ensconced beneath a trio of lancets with quatrefoils all around.



Fig. 4.46 Christmas card depicting the Virgin and Child (early twentieth century). Illustration by Ellen Clapsaddle, date unknown.

## The Juggler in Holiday Books and Cards

From a business perspective, in modern times Christmastide has become ever more a season not only for observance of God but also for consumption and consumerism. A mid-twentieth-century lyric proclaims, “Christmas comes but once a year.” Even so, the one day is preceded by a binge of buying that stretches across many weeks and even (for those who put advance planning into action) months. Consequently, no one should be startled to find that at a very early stage the tale of the jongleur-turned-lay-brother was attracted rapidly and powerfully to Noel for commercial purposes. In effect, the narrative was turned into a commodity available for retail and purchase. Early on, *Our Lady’s Tumbler* earned recognition for its compactness and charm. Thanks to these qualities, it was printed as a Christmas present from small presses for their patrons, or from individuals who commissioned copies with their own names imprinted on them, to be distributed as token keepsakes for clients, associates, and friends. These gift books were brought out with notable frequency in the mid- to late 1930s. On Christmas Eve in 1933, the *New York Times Book Review* gave conspicuous play to one such volume (see Fig. 4.47) and an attractive specimen from 1938 presents first an English translation and then the French original of Anatole France’s story (see Figs. 4.48 and 4.49).

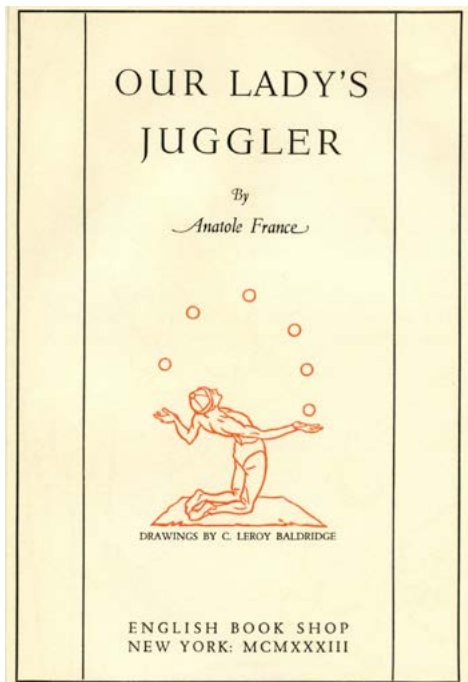


Fig. 4.47 Title page of Anatole France, *Our Lady's Juggler / Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, illus. C. Leroy Baldrige (New York: English Book Shop, 1933).

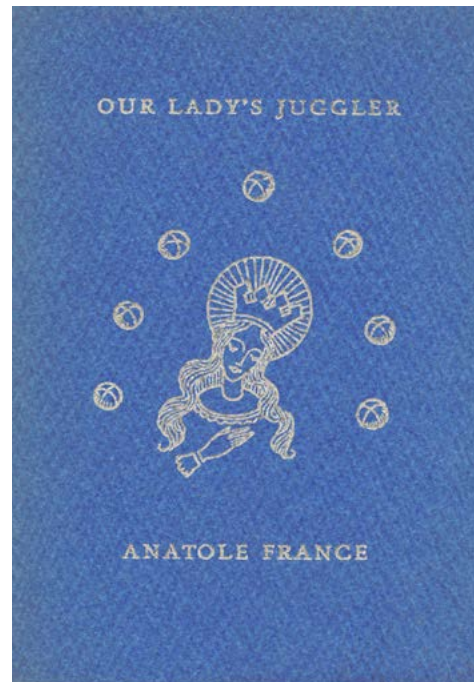


Fig. 4.48 Front cover of Anatole France, *Our Lady's Juggler / Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, trans. Frederic Chapman (New York: William E. Rudge, 1938).



Fig. 4.49 The Virgin descends to the juggler. Illustration, 1938. Artist unknown. Published in Anatole France, *Our Lady's Juggler / Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, trans. Frederic Chapman (New York: William E. Rudge, 1938), frontispiece.

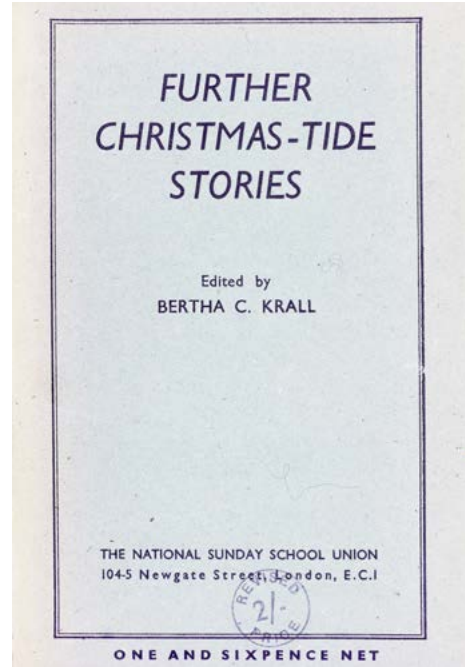


Fig. 4.50 Front cover of Bertha C. Krall, ed., *Further Christmas-Tide Stories* (London: The National Sunday School Union, 1946).

Even during the depths of the Great Depression, the affluent could afford special upmarket presents at Christmas. But the stinking rich were not the only ones who engaged with the narrative. The tale, especially in forms indebted to France's version, was not restricted to the fortunate few. At the opposite end of the spectrum from boutique books would be a dirt-cheap and dingily functional [little softcover](#) that was first printed in 1934, to assist Sunday-school teachers (see Fig. 4.50). Here the story, entitled "Our Lady's Juggler," is subtitled "A Legend from Long-Ago France," without credit to its ultimate source, Anatole France. The nexus with Noel is made clear by implication through [scriptural quotations](#). In the United States one key player in the trend to package the fiction in a volume tailor-made for the holiday was named Walter Kahoe. He [trained as a printer](#) at presses that brought out Christmas books.

From a slightly later period is the 1948 *Our Lady's Tumbler* by Sheldon Christian, a former pastor [based in Maine](#). During his ministry this playwright [maintained a passion for theater](#). Besides delivering illustrated lectures on theatrical history, he composed [short plays](#) to be acted out for his congregation. Although he also devised such pageants for Easter, Christmas was understandably a focus area. *Our Lady's Tumbler* as likely as not relates to this habit of composing seasonal dramas. The avocations of this clergyman and writer also extended to bookmaking. In the natural



Fig. 4.51 The juggler. Illustration by Raymond Lufkin, 1951. Published in Thomas J. McCabe, *An Adaptation of the Story of Our Lady's Juggler* (Tenafly, NY: Adeline and Raymond Lufkin, 1951), frontispiece.



Fig. 4.52 The Virgin blesses the juggler. Illustration by Raymond Lufkin, 1951. Published in Thomas J. McCabe, *An Adaptation of the Story of Our Lady's Juggler* (Tenafly, NY: Adeline and Raymond Lufkin, 1951), 14.

course of things, he would have been familiar with editions of *Our Lady's Tumbler* by the publisher Thomas Mosher. Beyond having a name instantly recognizable to bibliophiles in the United States, the homegrown book pirate from earlier in the twentieth century could not fail to have been a well-known quantity to a later typesetter and bookmaker located in his adoptive state. Mosher had reprinted Philip H. Wicksteed's translation, making economical use of medievaesque touches in the typography. Yet if Christian knew his predecessor's work, he chose to strike out on his own and to base his Christmas play on Eugene Mason's English version. This private printing of *Our Lady's Tumbler* makes subtle use of an element commonly deployed in printed volumes, and before them in manuscripts, to call to mind olden times: it bears a rubricated colophon that concludes: December, 1948.

The juggler tale sent out ripples everywhere in North America and Western Europe in the early 1950s. Its ubiquity can be verified by considering gift books from both seaboard of the Atlantic that were explicitly dated December, or even more specifically on the twenty-fifth of the month. Of two from the United States, [the earlier](#) is a small octavo that proclaims "Christmas 1951" on its title page. Entitled *An Adaptation of the Story of Our Lady's Juggler*, it [features illustrations](#) from the frontispiece on (see Fig. 4.51). The climax of the narrative is depicted unusually. The Madonna before whom the performer stands with bowed head does not soothe him. Instead, the miraculous intervention comes from a brilliant epiphany of Mary herself and not merely her effigy (see Fig. 4.52). In his handling of the Virgin, this artist hews closer to the medieval

poem than most other illustrators do. Of the five full-page pictures, one depicts the entertainer conversing for the first time with his future abbot. The landscape is incongruously wintry for talk that breaks the metaphorical ice between the two of them. The cold is in all likelihood an adjustment of the original late November timing in the text, where no snowfall is mentioned, to suit the Christmas season. Eventually those recounting the tale insinuated the holiday into it, so that its crescendo, the lay brother's fullest performance before the altar, took place on Christmas Eve.

The later of the two books contains only two items (see Fig. 4.53). This *Christmas Miscellany* contains two two-tone artworks. One is a title page for the story, on which an almost disturbingly enthusiastic Barnaby keeps aloft no fewer than seven knives before a statue of the Virgin, without child, in what looks to be a modern church (see Fig. 4.54). The other is a single initial at the start of the narrative, with a less intricate depiction of the performer.

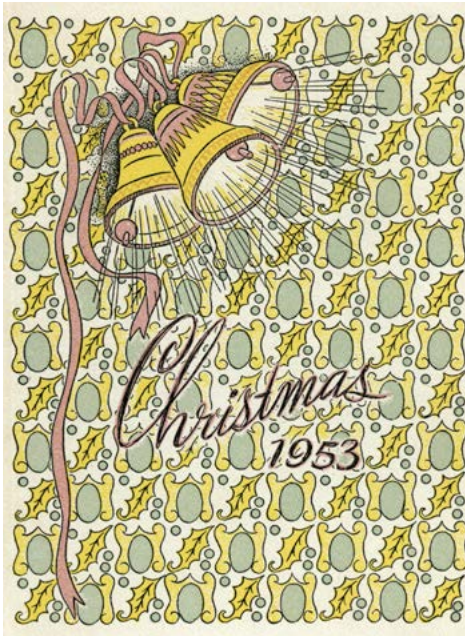


Fig. 4.53 Front cover of Heywood Broun and Anatole France, *Christmas Miscellany: A Collection of Short Stories from Traditional Literature*, illus. William F. M. Kay (Berkeley, CA: Lederer, Street & Zeus, 1953).



Fig. 4.54 The juggler performs before the Virgin. Illustration by William F. M. Kay, 1953. Published in Heywood Broun and Anatole France, *Christmas Miscellany: A Collection of Short Stories from Traditional Literature* (Berkeley, CA: Lederer, Street & Zeus, 1953), 7.

The phenomenon of printing the fiction in small batches as a Christmas gift or holiday card was not restricted to North America. A fifty-copy edition of Anatole France's *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* rolled off the presses, after a fashion, in December of 1955. Fritz Bühler meant [this production](#) to circulate among intimates as a present (see Fig.

4.55). This Swiss graphic designer, born into the family of a printer, [worked above all in advertising](#), a *métier* that he regarded as uniquely positioned to extend the appreciation of modern art. In fact, he conceived of graphics “as [a tool to convert the public](#) to art.” It requires scant effort to intuit why, as a teacher, painter, and illustrator who earned his living by working in the ad business, he would have been drawn to the story of the juggler. Beyond such loose parallelism in life choices and style between the medieval athlete and modern advertisers, his own character made him a sort of self-effacing tumbler redivivus. In the very year in which he assembled his Christmas project, he summed up his guiding principle about his craft as a designer: “You can always find attractive and fitting solutions, if you [think about the task and not about yourself](#).”



Fig. 4.55 Fritz Bühler. Photograph, date and photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Heinz Waech. All rights reserved.

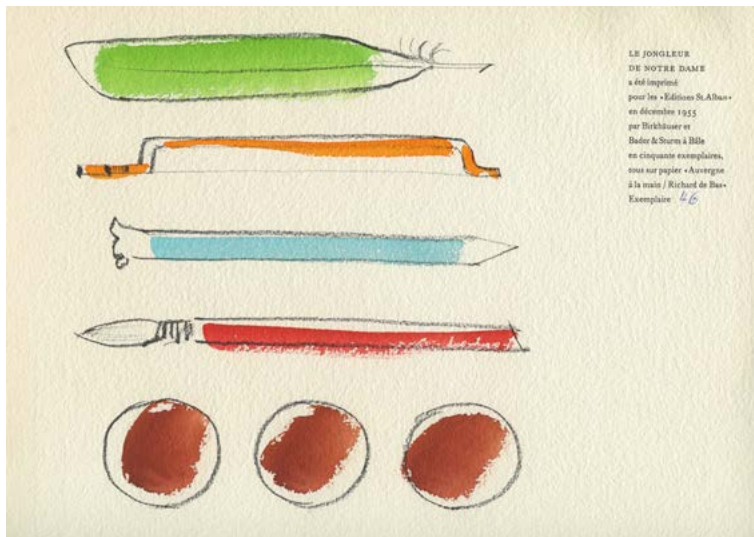
The juggler had dropped (or been forced) out of German culture just as the so-called New Typography movement came into its own in the late 1920s and 1930s. Now the story benefited in the Germanosphere, if not in Germany itself, from a very loosely related later impulse to [matchmake graphics and typography](#). Throughout his work Bühler fused techniques from these two crafts, all the while taking inventive advantage of colors that pop. [In this case](#), he illustrated heavily with brash, hand-painted coloring. In all copies of the book he presents the juggler flourishing a conical clown’s hat, with short shirt and pants, over tights (see Fig. 4.56). On the last side within the covers, the artist depicts his own toolkit for writing and illustration (see Fig. 4.57).

The custom took solid root of dealing out copies of the medieval poem in translation, Anatole France’s tale in French or English, or radio scripts based freely on them. Long afterward, commercial vendors began to mass-produce Christmas cards with summaries of the story or allusions to it. In the mid-twentieth century, one company peddled through traveling salesmen a card (see Fig. 4.58) that shows an adult juggler in a clownlike outfit, with a conical hat, ruffled collar, short jacket with a pointed fringe, green and yellow tights, and pointy pink shoes, as he manipulates colored

balls before a lifelike Madonna and Child. A faint broken line behind him conjures up a pointed arch. *Inside*, a caption clarifies that the artwork interprets an authentic twelfth-century legend of a juggler “who had only his talent to offer in his devotion to the mother of the Christ child.”



Fig. 4.56 The itinerant juggler. Illustration by Fritz Bühler, 1955. Published in Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Basel, Switzerland: St. Alban, 1955), 6.



LE JONGLEUR  
DE NOTRE DAME  
a été imprimé  
pour les «Éditions St.Alban»  
en décembre 1955  
par Hirkhäuser et  
Bader & Sturm à Bâle  
en cinquante exemplaires,  
sous sur papier «Aurore»  
à la main / Richard de Bas  
Exemplaire 46

Fig. 4.57 The illustrator's toolkit. Illustration by Fritz Bühler, 1955. Published in Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Basel, Switzerland: St. Alban, 1955), 16.



Fig. 4.58 Christmas card depicting juggler dressed as clown (Deer Crest / Grant, ca. 1950s).

In the 1970s, the merchandiser with the largest market share in the US included in a set of three Christmas cards one that delineated a young boy, wearing a simple shirt and trousers with a patched knee, who kept aloft three colored balls before the infant Jesus in the manger, with two lambs dozing nearby. The interior of the card, on the side opposite the Christmas greeting, retold the story of “The Juggler” with a couple of unusual wrinkles. First, the boy is not a juggler by profession. Through sheer

happenstance, he is inspired to toss the small but colorful spheres he has brought as gifts for the baby. His improvisation succeeds, to the point where the Christ child beams. Second, the tale is presented as an origin story to explain “why colored balls are hung on Christmas trees everywhere on Jesus’s birthday.”



Fig. 4.59 Christmas card depicting the juggler as a child (Dallas, TX: The Drawing Board, 1970s). Illustration by Christine Damen. Image courtesy of American Greetings Corporation. © AGC, LCC. All rights reserved.

Probably in the same era, a roughly similar card appeared (see Fig. 4.59). Like the other, it retells the story on the left-hand side of the opening. Here the boy is a little juggler (as the folded cardboard is labeled on the outside), who can bring to the table no gift beyond this dexterity. Baby Jesus responds with a spontaneous smile to show “that on this Day of Days, there is no greater gift than the gift of love.”



## Amateur Theater

Books and recitations were not the only media to be sucked into the Christmas-izing of the jongleur in the early twentieth century. In 1927 a corporate lawyer named [Charles Robinson Smith](#) put together and had printed as a holiday treat a simplification of Massenet's opera. [This noncommercial production](#) preserved what was effectively the script of a private performance arranged for his grandchildren. With them in mind as the primary audience, the attorney took pains in the foreword to underscore that "this is the story of a little boy." He specified a sort of syllogism. First, the "old medieval tale" took place in the era identified. Second, [it was a miracle](#). Third, the two preceding circumstances were intertwined in ways that bring home major differences between then and now: "Miracles sometimes happened in the Middle Ages, but they almost never happen nowadays."

The grandfather enlightens his two grandsons by explaining who jongleurs were: they anticipated the "[song and dance](#)" men of his own day, who had full quivers of talents in fiddling, singing, dancing, and performing other tricks. He spiced up the enactment of his own skit by arranging for musical accompaniment by [a pianist and singer](#). To heighten the high jinks, the patriarch personalizes his recounting by slipping in the [names of artists](#) whom his extended family had met [at his home](#). Yet in the end, his aim goes beyond merely grandfatherly fun and games, for he sums up the narrative to endow it with a characteristically American creed that has been called the [Protestant work ethic](#). The performer's footgear flaunts no bootstraps by which he can pull himself up, but in this New World context, the moral of the story becomes that hard work pays off. Ironically, the tale that the twentieth-century attorney chooses for this purpose has as its protagonist a medieval entertainer who would be consummately unclubbable in his own twentieth-century social set. Smith's text is not a closet drama, to be read rather than acted: rather, it provides the groundwork for an in-house and almost all-in-the-family production.

Transformations of the thirteenth-century fiction like the one by Smith, often as mediated through Anatole France's short story or Maurice Léna's libretto, must have been common. Obiter dicta about them abound. We have other printed forms of the texts that were enacted. To take a very different example, in 1926 Everett Glass, who later achieved recognition chiefly as a [film and television actor](#), published *The Tumbler, after an Old Legend, a Play in Two Scenes*. A footnote on the first page allows a glimpse into another intimate and amateurish performance, this one in Berkeley: "First Presented as [the Xmas Jinks](#), 1923, at the Faculty Club, University of California, in the large dining room."

The setting must be to blame for the decision to have the leader of the brethren at one point sprinkle coffee grounds onto the tumbler. The piece of theater is dedicated "To Certain Abbots Here and There." From this instant, it gives many signs of being intended for a specific in-group—and no one can doubt that the coterie is academic and all-male, a veritable old boys' club.

On display is the ethos of the United States, and especially of Berkeley in this era, where the atmosphere was multicultural and multilingual but still Eurocentric. Many [European languages](#) make cameo appearances in the facetious doggerel of the dialogue. Yet Latin holds pride of place. The head of the monastery [would seem to be a classicist](#). As Latinists are prone to do, the good father cannot resist discussing [the cases of nouns](#). The confabulation between him and the monk Barnabas typifies the air of the piece. The shenanigans are both drolly and ponderously professorial—faculty clubs never did roar as raucously or fascinatingly as speakeasies—but at the same time amiably high-spirited. The men-only cast makes it hard to imagine flappers anywhere in the vicinity. Even so, the text allows us a century later to dip our toes into a collegiate ambience in the roaring twenties and the Prohibition era. Who knows, the campus establishments may have availed themselves now and again (especially during the holiday season?) of the black-market booze that bootleggers had ready for delivery.

The drama reaches a boisterous curtain call when Pierre's tumbling, for which the brethren stand ready to cane him, elicits beautiful music from the Virgin. The tumbler, compelled to impose a penance upon the brethren for their previous doubtfulness, declines a chance to [have them flog each other](#). Instead, he obliges the abbot himself to perform gymnastics. The play ends when [Barnabas exclaims](#), with a gusto that may be more commendable than his comprehension of the dead language, "Ave Maria, mater jocularum!" This exclamation can be translated into English as "Hail, Mary, mother of little jokes," but a typo, misspelling, or poor Latin may obscure the expected "of jongleurs" (*joculatorum*). The classical language was much on Everett Glass's mind, but it may not have been his strong suit.

The original building of the Berkeley Faculty Club (see Figs. 4.60 and 4.61) was made to order by the architect Bernard Maybeck, who in 1892 took up residence in the town and became a [professor of engineering drawing](#) at the university there. [His architecture](#) succeeds in an idiosyncratic but healthy commingling of fashions,

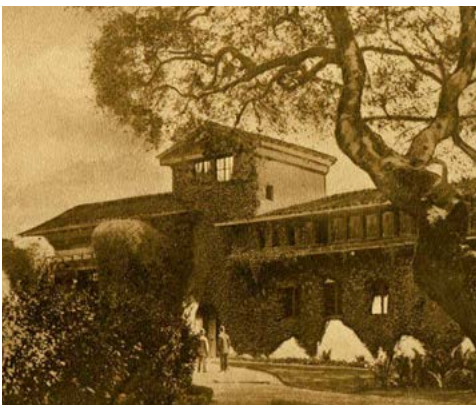


Fig. 4.60 Postcard of the Faculty Club, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA (before 1915).



Fig. 4.61 Postcard of the Faculty Club, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA (San Francisco: E. P. Charlton, early twentieth century).

in which medievalism receives its equable due. Maybeckian design amalgamates light touches of Gothic with orientalist trimmings, especially Japanese. Whatever the combination, he shows his training as a woodcarver to apt effect.

In 1907, Maybeck produced a pencil and watercolor painting *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, which depicts the culminating scene of the medieval story as adapted by Anatole France and followed by Jules Massenet. The setting is a large Gothic chapel or cathedral. No perspicacity is required to understand why a man who designed buildings would have formed such a picture in his mind. Vaulting with a fleur-de-lis-like motif soars high above a haloed Mary, who is clad in blue and holds her child. Before them a jongleur juggles as he lies supine. The animation of the Virgin is evoked by an unpainted double image of her in motion toward him. A yuletide setting is suggested by a snow-covered conifer outside (see Fig. 4.62).

The Faculty Club was officially incorporated and dedicated in 1902. The interior of the structure lent itself, as it still does, to pseudomonastic revelry. Although not a quadrangle, the institution is set on the campus in the serenity of a bosky glade. The Great Hall has medievaesque stained-glass windows and dragon-headed rafter supports that hold true to the eclectic [northern California style](#) for which Maybeck is celebrated. In the holiday season, the Club has been festooned with heraldic banners. More important, a hallowed Christmastime tradition has institutionalized “the [fantasy of the monastery](#)” through a brotherhood of up to [fifty singers](#). What began as informal caroling has evolved into something much more elaborate and histrionic. Men robed as cenobites have chanted “The Boar’s Head Carol” as they carried in this very item on a salver to mark the commencement of the Yule feast.

Most years have involved [comic plays](#), seasoned with lyrics that satirize specific subsets, individuals, or episodes from college life. By the early 1920s, the performers had reached their highest point as amateurs in both monasticism and theater, with in-jokes and parodic ditties in equal measure. The Faculty Xmas Jinks starring the jongleur probably had no afterlife whatsoever. Most likely, the text was never reused. In contrast, the tale on which the short performance was based was poised to ascend in popularity. The narrative retained its niche [on campuses](#), especially at Christmas.

Schools furnish another venue in which the story of the juggler has exercised appeal as a Noel-themed musical. In the United States, such adaptations have even been composed [in French and Spanish](#) for acting out by foreign-language classes. In 1932, a teacher at what is today the Juilliard School in New York City enumerated [activities](#) that could plant the learning of French in the context of music, dance, costume design, and other arts and crafts. Her plan of study conjures up in lush detail minutiae of nostalgia and make-believe that we have seen flurrying around the juggler again and again—Christmas cards, carols, Maeterlinck, dance, stained glass, Chartres, and medieval-style outfits. In hindsight, reworkings of this sort seem almost inevitable, in view of the heavy use to which French teachers put Anatole France’s tale in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Even now in the twenty-first, the tradition of Christmas musicals based on the narrative lingers on, though the custom lacks the

vitality that it once had. **The tale has lost its allure**, to artists, audiences, or both. *Our Lady's Tumbler* and *The Juggler of Notre Dame* have moved to far lower orbits. If they nosedive much further, they will ignite, fragment, and vaporize like rogue satellites.



Fig. 4.62 Bernard Maybeck, *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, 1907. Pencil and watercolor. Image courtesy of PBA Galleries, San Francisco, CA. All rights reserved.

## Mass Radio

Radio has been employed widely for the transmission of voice and music since the 1920s. At the time, many found the technology marvelously novel, but more than mildly intrusive. As receivers bulked up and invaded homes, the novelty and foreignness caused an understandable yearning to assimilate the devices to the more trite and old-line. What could meet those objectives better than the look of a medieval cathedral (see Fig. 4.63)? Such churches have acoustics that remain so well known even today that the brand name Cathedral lends itself well to reverb pedals for electric guitars. The way for radio sets in this manner had been readied on an urban scale by Big Ben and earlier medieval clocktowers, on a domestic level by grandfather and even more by mantle clocks in the steeple Gothic manner.



Fig. 4.63 General Electric J-80 Cathedral Radio (1932). Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018. Image courtesy of Joe Mills. All rights reserved.

Cathedral radios of the 1930s were [the granddaddies of later home entertainment systems](#). Their handsome wooden cases give them their name. Despite occupying a generic rectangular footprint, they featured at the top a pointed arch. On the front, they flaunted grilles carved into lancets and quatrefoils. At first high-end household possessions, such gizmos became ever more affordable. The inside sheltered [the latest electronics](#). In its carpentry, the outside proclaimed sobriety, elegance, and traditionalism, while promising tonal quality that befitted a serious listening experience. Their cabinetry delivered within the home the hybrid of fantasy and elegance that listeners in both England and the United States grew to expect through their exposure to the most radically new equipment.

Etymologically, the English word *focus* comes from the Latin for a hearth. Aptly, the darkest moments of the 1930s and 1940s often caught American families clustered around such pointed boxes: these confections of old and new were focal points of

living rooms, as listeners hung on the comforting words of hope that Franklin Delano Roosevelt vocalized in his [fireside chats](#). Now these devices survive as treasured antiques, sometimes reconditioned for collectors.



Fig. 4.64 Man listening to one of President Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats." Statue by George Segal, 1997. Washington, DC, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith, before 2006. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Carol M. Highsmith Archive.

As a medium, radio is well attuned (forgive me) to the story of the juggler or jongleur. Since the very beginning of its documented life in the medieval French poem and Latin exemplum, the fiction has cried out to be recited. In the Middle Ages, the principal audience may well have included illiterate adults. Notable among them would have been lay brothers, either already committed or prospective. In the late twentieth century, the target became youthful. To those who wish to perpetuate the narrative even today, a good counsel would be straightforward: dust off a seductively illustrated copy of the old tale, find a story-starved child, and read it aloud. But let us wend our way back to the sitting rooms of a century ago, when to divert themselves listeners clustered around radio receivers.

In Spain, Remigio Vilariño (see Fig. 4.65) began in 1925 to deliver broadcasts of [entertainment for families with children](#) underfoot. One of these scripts adapted, however indirectly, the tale of Our Lady's Tumbler. Of the three illustrations to the text, the last shows the monk-acrobat in the middle of a backflip, with his tunic lying on the floor. In the background an altar is visible with a Madonna that resembles a cage doll (see Figs. 4.66 and 4.67).



Fig. 4.65 Remigio Vilariño. Photograph, date and photographer unknown.



Fig. 4.66 The juggler before the Madonna, illustration by Goiko, in Remigio Vilariño Ugarte, *Radiocuentos por Erreñi Ezejot* (Bilbao, Spain: El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, 1926), 101.



Fig. 4.67 Cap i pota doll, ca. 1850–1900. Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018.

A vast corpus of Marian miracles unfolded on the Iberian peninsula during the Middle Ages, but the medieval story of *Our Lady's Tumbler* showed no sign of having seeped in there at the time. Later, Anatole France manifested scant curiosity about Spanish culture or literature, apart from Cervantes. In return for his disinterest,

authors in Spain retaliated by displaying far less interest in his oeuvre than was shown elsewhere on the Continent. To scan northwestward from the Pyrenees, the BBC transmitted Massenet's *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* in its 1928–1929 season. An illustration to the libretto places us in the thick of Art Deco, with its emphasis on angled geometricity (see Fig. 4.68). Likewise in 1928, the same corporation aired, in "The Children's Hour," a program with a retelling of "The Tumbler of Our Lady" in its medieval French guise.



Fig. 4.68 Maurice Léna and Jules Massenet, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame: A Miracle in Three Acts*, trans. Louise Baum (London: British Broadcasting Company, 1929), 4.

In the United States, commercial broadcasts of the story, sometimes solely narrative, at other times musical, become pervasive on air at the latest in the 1930s and 1940s, when multiepisode melodramas were in vogue. The account of "Our Lady's Juggler" was not such a serial, and the dynamic at its heart was not strictly interpersonal, but it had the sort of soppy or sudsy sentimentality that appealed to soap-opera listeners and advertisers. The very attributes that had rendered the tale magnetic to operagoers in earlier decades now did the same for devotees of the soaps.

In developments that could be seen as concomitantly commercializing and democratizing, the fiction of "The Jongleur of Notre Dame" passed from special printings by niche presses for Christmas distribution to productions by radio stations



for holiday transmission—and vice versa. The narrative speedily became a staple of **Christmastide**, although initially such programming was not restricted exclusively to December. The shows revolved around such heavy hitters as the singers and actors Bing Crosby, Orson Welles, and Spencer Tracy. **The texts for these dramatic readings** were now and again printed for the Christmas book trade. Later, as technology made strides, performances of these routines were made into bona fide historical records, through recordings pressed first on shellac and later on vinyl.

The intensity of the cross-marketing does not necessarily signal that scriptwriters could take weeks to sweat over their prose: on the contrary, they typed the texts mostly to tight deadlines. Despite the unfavorable conditions, they sometimes created adaptations that became favorite listening and reading for decades to come. For example, the version by Alexander Woollcott secured a distinct visibility, partly no doubt because of **its author's notoriety**. He was a broadcaster, writer, lecturer, and columnist for the American weekly magazine, *The New Yorker* (see Fig. 4.69). His version of the story seized the lead above all because of his skill as a spinner of yarns. His radio script circulated in a limited and informal print form from 1937, but **it spread much more broadly** when reprinted in books as well as in heavily read magazines. The impact of his popularization is a snap to track, since **columnists would cite it** in retellings that made the rounds in the days running up to Christmas.



Fig. 4.69 Alexander Woollcott.  
Photograph by Carl Van  
Vechten, 1939.

## OUR LADY'S JUGGLER

An Antique Legend as Retold for the Air

by

Alexander Woollcott



1937

Fig. 4.70 Title page of Alexander Woollcott, *Our Lady's Juggler: An Antique Legend as Retold for the Air* (San Mateo, CA: Quercus, 1937).

The initial edition of Woollcott's *Our Lady's Juggler: An Antique Legend as Retold for the Air* suffers from an odd chronological tension. Still clinging to the calendar of Anatole France's tale, the events within the narrative come to a head in the month of

May. For all that, the colophon makes clear that the book is meant for the Christmas season. That is when the tale was most often aired in radio broadcasts. The title page is equally unambiguous, with a medieval woodcut of the three Magi presenting gifts to the infant Jesus as he perches on the Virgin's lap near the feeding trough (see Fig. 4.70). By this point, the so-called antique legend had been sucked into the environment of December. Whatever associations the late nineteenth-century French short story had earlier with May, it would have had a nearly impossible time fighting free from the yuletide chokehold.

The performer whose version achieved the broadest currency was [John Booth Nesbitt](#) (see Fig. 4.71). This narrator, announcer, and actor was a luminary in the golden age of radio in the United States, from the early 1920s until the 1950s. That stage concluded when the medium was displaced as the paramount avenue for scripted programming: in the United States, television first became commercialized in 1941, but did not pass the tipping point in the consumer market until after World War II ended in 1945. By 1955, half of American households owned black-and-white sets. But the previous mode of communication did not go extinct. Old-time radio lives on even today as one sliver of the ever more finely gradated bandwidth, through programs that play recordings from decades ago.



Fig. 4.71 John Nesbitt, age 46. Photograph, 1956. Photographer unknown.

Known first on radio and later the small screen, Nesbitt first recounted *The Juggler of Our Lady* on the air in [December, 1938](#). His effort was an overnight sensation, with thousands of requests by mail for copies of the script. In the following year, the author shared his creation with Ronald Colman. For years afterward, radio listeners became accustomed to the reading of this crowd-pleasing Christmas favorite by one or the other of these dramatizers.

The storyteller professed to have adapted an original translation of a centuries-old French legend, miracle story, or folk tale that he had unearthed in a trunk of papers from [his late father](#). The fact sheet that accompanies the earliest recording plumes this averred finding as “one of the most interesting literary discoveries of

modern times.” The names of the characters give away that this claim is bogus. Either directly or indirectly, the announcer lifted the tale from Anatole France and Jules Massenet, without acknowledgment. The names and special talents of the monks are one giveaway. Other aspects seem indebted to the staging of the opera. The only substantial change is that he gave the story a Christmas setting. In short order Nesbitt’s retelling was [printed and recorded](#). The recording was marketed and remarketed, broadcast and [rebroadcast on radio stations](#). Before long, this narration was distributed far and wide through the medium of [long-play \(LP\) records](#).

The tradition of radio airings followed by audio recordings belongs to the decades-old backcloth behind the telling of “Barnaby the Juggler” that Andy Griffith incorporated into his 2003 gospel album entitled *The Christmas Guest*. The American actor, storyteller, and singer had long been a familiar face in US mass culture, especially owing to his role as lead character in the situation comedy *The Andy Griffith Show*, which was transmitted from 1960 to 1968. The wholesome, humble, and homespun character of the juggler story lent itself well to narration by him, and the fact that the tale had become associated with the good old days of the 1950s and 1960s would not have hurt either.

The radio broadcasts probably played a role in the further metastasis of amateur adaptations. The nonprofessional reenactments fitted with the growth of the postwar economy and the values of then-contemporary society, which accentuated the traditional togetherness of family, work, and Christmas. Arrestingly plain-spoken insight into the ethos of the year immediately following the end of World War II can be mined from an article about a music program sponsored by Goodyear. The tire and rubber company hailed the value of music for its workforce and their families as [“a living activity](#) with its many admirable qualities helping to overcome some of the social unrest contagious among people who have found little beauty and joy in their jobs or their environment.” Our tale occupied a predictable slot among [Christmas fare](#).

The title of this production by corporate workers, *The Simple Heart*, most likely alludes to a narrative by this name by Gustave Flaubert. Still, we have seen both *Our Lady’s Tumbler* and its hero likewise termed “simple.” In fact, the leading character was even assigned the monastic denomination Simplicius. Whether a literary reference to the nineteenth-century French author is intended or not, the inescapable thrust of the play is to celebrate childlike devotion in leading into a holiday that takes the joy of birth and infancy as its starting points.

Artists and audiences made a turn, or return, to the juggler during the perturbations of the global conflict and its aftermath. This impulse belongs part and parcel within the simultaneous gravitation of Catholic believers toward major Marian pilgrimage cults. Such worship centered upon miracle sites where visionaries had had sightings of Mary. This kind of yearning for a toehold in the safety of the divine order through a benevolent intercessor makes sense, in view of the many [political and social anxieties](#) that predominated in the 1940s and early 1950s. The Virgin held out hope of a heavenly haven.

## Mid-Century Medieval US Television

In the 1950s, the narrative made the leap downward and outward to the flickering small screen in the United States. The process concretized the [mutual importance of Christmas and television](#). The transition would not have been heavy going, since by then the tale had fidgeted its way into the repertoires of storytellers, singers, actors, musicians, and many others. [Plays and pageants](#) had been based on the miracle for decades. But the mainstay of the move to TV would have been radio performances, alternately narrative and theatrical.

Medievaesque pageantry goes hand in hand with Noel spirit, within the larger orbit of [medieval-themed television](#). The season is sold as a time of reverie. Ever hear the oft-sung words “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas”? No past time is dreamier than the Middle Ages—even though when the era assumes its darker forms, the dreams can turn out occasionally to be nightmares. Finally, the opera appearances by Mary Garden had made a lasting mark in American culture in the handling of the jongleur.

Very early the tale was recorded as performed on a live variety show known as [Fred Waring’s America](#), named after the [leader of a big band](#). Eventually he enlarged the company to encompass a choir and to showcase the singing and sex appeal of three so-called [Waring girls](#) (unquestionably women by today’s lights). Long before venturing from the dance halls into the pathbreaking medium of television, he had more than once staked out a stand as a vanguardist of novel technologies. Tech-savvy, he earned cred as an early adaptor decades before the term came into being. By the time the TV era dawned, he had [already left a mark](#) across phonographic records, radio, and film. Apparently, [vaudeville](#) was coupled so strongly with early movies, especially silent ones, that it put an unfading stamp on his approach to the new forum.

[With an acute sense](#) of both commercial markets and developing media, Waring sized up in a blink the potential that the narrative possessed for the small screen. Consequently, he [inserted it annually into his show](#) as part of the regular fare in the weeks leading up to Christmas. These segments capture the miracle as it took shape in the passage from the musical drama of 1902, through vaudeville and radio from the 1930s through the 1950s, down to television and film. The clips are disconcertingly faithful to a popularized, and greatly abridged, form of the opera, presumably by way of the stage in the 1930s and later. When the juggler is first featured in an episode in 1950, the bandleader rolls out the little drama with [several sentences of recapitulation](#). Not altogether out of nowhere, he conflates *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* gently, even insouciantly, with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. As a result, the setting becomes the cathedral in Paris. The episode assumes prior knowledge of the tale about the humble entertainer. As in Anatole France, the wretch is poor and unsuccessful, a sad-sack butt of mockery. As in both the medieval story and its late nineteenth-century adaptation, his dominant trait is humility.



Fig. 4.72 Nadine Gae. Photograph, ca. 1949. Photographer unknown.

If the 1950s may be said to resemble the two-faced Roman god Janus, then episodes with the title “Our Lady’s Juggler” from *The Fred Waring Show* limn the half of the visage that looked back in time, deep into the first half of the century, for simple faith and innocence. The role of the title character was performed, silently, by a [female modern dancer](#). The audience needs no explanation to grasp why the male part should be played by a woman (see Fig. 4.72). For the forward-facing visage of the divinity from the same time, we will need later to turn elsewhere—not to snippets of television produced by the entertainment entrepreneur when he was in his fifties, but to an illustrated book and animated short by a recent college graduate named R. O. Blechman in his twenties.

Waring’s productions of “The Juggler” are indebted tangentially to Mary Garden. They feature a lady in the lead role. But a salient characteristic of the sequence is that the talent who fulfills the role of the juggler is not a singer, but rather a dancer who employs [techniques reminiscent of mime](#) to convey the rudiments of object manipulation. The proximate source of the sketch on *The Fred Waring’s Show* was campus productions at the University of Oklahoma by the local branch of Orchesis. As we have noted, in the early 1930s this female dance group disseminated throughout the United States the custom of delivering dance recitals of *The Juggler of Notre Dame* in women’s collegiate societies. A few Sooners who went to work for the bandleader as singers in his glee club [cajoled him into televising](#) *The Juggler*.

Fred Allen lived from 1894 through 1956. The American comedian’s career exposed him to the whole sweep from vaudeville, radio, and long-play recording into the formative years of the small screen. Of the last-mentioned, he once observed famously: “[Imitation is the sincerest form of television.](#)” In its early days, TV was omnivorous in absorbing stories and other materials wherever its scriptwriters could light on them. A sickly-sweet medieval miracle that had merited the seal of approval in French literary and operatic culture before being repackaged for Christmas marketing in the United

States was fair game. Long before videotape technology, the kinescope recordings of Waring's "Our Lady's Juggler" were made with a movie camera mounted in front of a video monitor. However clumsily, these highlight reels give us a one-way mirror into our story as it lived through performances throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

## Postwar Britain

A peek into a similar kind of Christmas presentation across the Atlantic can be gained from instructions for staging wordless theater that were published in 1951 in London. Among such items set to music *Our Lady's Tumbler: A French Mime* stands out.

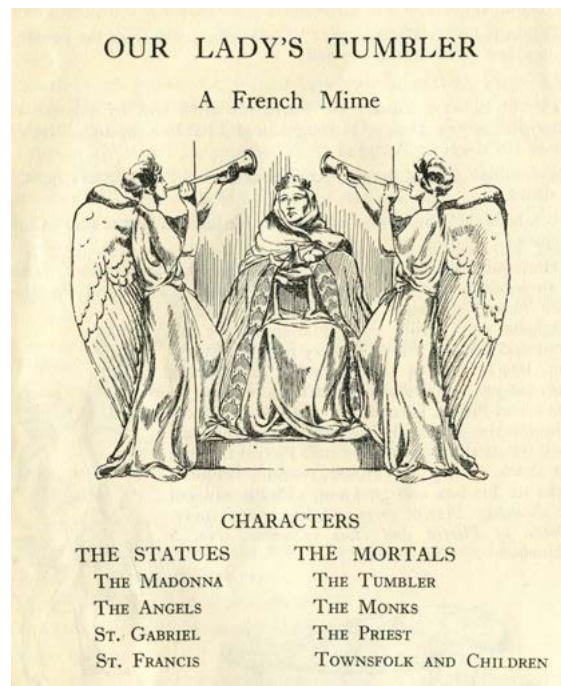


Fig. 4.73 Mary Gertrude Pickersgill, *Clever Alice and Other Mimes* (London: Samuel French, 1972), 44.

Other productions influenced a far larger public in Britain than this play did. In the United Kingdom, the pinched economy of the postwar years certainly affected the story's reception. But in general, the treatment of the tale probably did not stand worlds apart from contemporaneous tendencies in the United States. A case in point would be the one-act *Our Lady's Tumbler* of 1951, composed by Ronald Duncan. This playlet based on the narrative about the jongleur turned up at the tail end of a minor vogue for poetic drama. The writer was conditioned literarily by T. S. Eliot and the American expatriate poet Ezra Pound, with both of whom he corresponded. At the

same time, verse theater lost its lustre and became devalued precisely as Duncan came into his own. In [many of his works](#), the playwright plumbs the long-simmering tension between traditional religious faith and modern scepticism. The basic contours of the medieval narrative accorded perfectly with his predisposition to peel back seeming mundaneness and indifference in daily life to lay bare a covert spirituality and engagement.

*Our Lady's Tumbler* was commissioned for the [Festival of Britain](#), a national exhibition that took place in the summer of 1951. [Duncan's contract stipulated](#) that his composition would be performed before the altar of Salisbury Cathedral and that it should require no scenery, set, or props. The dramatist opted to make a virtue of the necessity by taking advantage of the ecclesiastical environs. His piece, like Massenet's original opera, calls for an all-male cast. This circumstance renders it anomalous within its own contemporary context, despite being true to the realities of medieval monasticism. If the church venue and production budget dictated a rigorously self-disciplined staging, they also prompted the writer to "use as much music as possible," with "a small orchestra to accompany Brother Andrew's acrobatics" and a [full choir](#) to sing the hymns with which the play opened and closed.

The frontispiece [claims explicitly](#) that Duncan's drama is based on the 1873 edition of the medieval French *Our Lady's Tumbler*. Yet despite being coordinated ostentatiously with the original from the Middle Ages, the English divulges indebtedness to other sources of inspiration in the much later tradition deriving from Anatole France. For instance, the protagonist, Brother Andrew, is a once-acrobatic clown, who is alleged to have retired from the circus ring and to have become a lay brother out of financial need. In an autobiography, Duncan related that after accepting the commission, [he kept picturing a clown](#) as the focal character in the play he was to compose. What would have attracted him to such a figure? This casting decision may partly reflect his predilection for the pathos, beauty, and physical comedy of Charlie Chaplin—although the verse dramatist would not have been aware that the comedian had himself been drawn to *Our Lady's Tumbler*. Then again, the medieval poem and its inheritors stand apart from much of modern comic acting. The actions can be physical, and humorous elements are present here and there, but the tale nowhere approaches the slapstick of acts along the lines of the Three Stooges. Taken in toto, the miracle of the jongleur is no laughing matter.

There is more to the story. Duncan later maintained that for a long while he could not fathom why he had the mental image of this character. Even so, a eureka moment eventually occurred. As [he suddenly remembered](#), years earlier a girl had mailed him a brief of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* with the tip that he write a ballet on it. We have seen repeatedly how often writers who interconnect with this story reconstitute it from nothing more than bare-bones summaries and nebulous memories. With equal frequency, either volitionally or involuntarily, they obscure the full extent and nature of their indebtedness to previous versions that they have read, heard, or seen. The

obfuscation started early: Anatole France was the first to muddy the waters of his own beholdenness to another author. Both trends operate here.

In Duncan's play the action features a competition among the monks to produce tributes to the Holy Virgin on her birthday. Father Marcellus oversees the process, which in due course pares down the field to [three finalists](#). According to the tradition as the poet describes it, the statue of Mary is supposed to indicate approval when the ideal contribution is made. Once this threesome has been identified, the clown is permitted only to light the candles. But when none of the preselected offerings bestirs the image of Our Lady, Brother Andrew first snuffs out the candles, then strips off his habit to reveal the clown's smock he wears beneath it, and ultimately begins to perform his old act. Unable to accomplish any of the acrobatics that once came as second nature to him, he finally collapses and ceases clinging to life. At this juncture the Mother of God lets a rose fall on his body, a miraculous gesture witnessed by the abbot and the other three brothers. After the survivors bear the clown's lifeless body to the altar and close the chancel gate, the villagers depart, dusk turns to night, and the brethren sing the "Hymn for the Dead" with a concluding "amen."

Initially, Duncan and the set designer sought to contrive mechanical devices to release the bloom, but eventually they "decided that the safest and simplest solution was to make a statue behind which a girl could stand and drop the rose, [only the live hand being visible](#)." However interesting we may find the means of achieving a special effect in an otherwise minimalist and fastidiously womanless play, a more noteworthy observation is that the production incorporates the motif of a rose bestowed by the Virgin. The flower by any other name appears periodically in versions of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, most memorably in the book and animation by the American artist R. O. Blechman, despite its absence from either medieval form of the tale. Floral touches bob to the surface (or flutter down to it) often in other miracles of Mary.

Beyond special effects and the red rose, larger considerations loom over the overall tenor and effect of the play. In this regard, what matters most is that *Our Lady's Tumbler* is a church drama, in both its setting and its central theme. Brother Andrew embodies humility and selflessness, a matchless incarnation of Christian spirit. Duncan worried that in his drama, a circus entertainer who cut capers and turned somersaults would be too indecorous for the liking of the cathedral dean and chapter. But [the overriding concern](#) of the clerics turned out instead to be that placing a statue of Our Lady before the altar could detonate Catholic associations. Since the venue was an Anglican great church, venturing too close to Catholicism by emphasizing the Madonna posed a risk. Even high Anglicanism remains more Christocentric, and consequently less hospitable to Marianism, than any strain of Roman devotion. Perhaps so as not to heighten Mary's prominence but maybe merely as a result of the summertime staging, [the world premiere](#) in the Salisbury Cathedral had no Christmas connection (see Fig. 4.74). Duncan's play was too long by more than half. One reviewer summed up, "The moving and simple story of the poor acrobat is, I think, too brief a tale to fill a 100 minutes of performance."





Fig. 4.74 Scenes from Ronald Duncan's *Our Lady's Tumbler*. Photographs, 1951. Photographer unknown. Published in *The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (June 8, 1951).

Pondering the case of *Jackanory* will help to round out our appreciation of the appeal *Our Lady's Tumbler* has held in Britain. This [long-running](#) children's program on BBC television conformed to a strict fifteen-minute format. In every segment, an actor read aloud a specimen of children's literature or folktale. In [two Christmas episodes](#) in the show during the late 1960s, the English comedian Ted Ray recited *The Little Juggler* in the version by Barbara Cooney. Since the American children's book author was first exposed to the story through the radio, this transfer of medium was a kind of onion-layered poetic justice (or chiasmus?).

## The French Connection

The story became equally ubiquitous on the American side of the Atlantic in the fifties and sixties. Since the tale was French not only in its medieval origins in both verse and prose, but likewise in its first major adaptations in literature and music, we should not find ourselves flabbergasted to discover that during the same period it remained familiar in the most heavily Europeanized portions of Francophonie, in both France and Canada.

Ronald Duncan's play reverberated at least twice outside England. Although [broadcast once by radio in Italy](#) in 1952, his piece of theater had its real day in the sun in the Great White North (although not in a season with much daylight there) as the screenplay for [a thirty-minute telecast](#) on Christmas Eve of 1955. In an autobiographical novel entitled *The Inheritor*, the director [Paul Almond](#) described

selecting *Our Lady's Tumbler* for programming at the holiday. The tale was well suited for transmission by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation because of its appeal to both major constituents in the linguistic demographics of the country at the time, [the Anglophones and the Francophones](#). No doubt religion belonged in the picture too, since French Canadians were heavily Catholic, whereas English speakers belonged preponderantly to the Anglican Church and other Protestant denominations.

The French connection was real. Although unbeknownst to the national television network, the co-opting of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* for the small screen was not a purely English-language phenomenon. The opera also aired on TV for Christmas in France in 1959. The cover of a weekly magazine devoted to French programming presented a female actor with a [gamin hairdo](#). The accompanying caption singles out her performance as the jongleur himself, and the photograph poses her, dressed in Marian blue, with a lighted candle in her left hand and a painting of a Gothic country church poking up behind her head (see Fig. 4.75). The taper calls to mind both yuletide and the devotional flames that often blaze before images of the Virgin in miracles such as that of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. The casting of a woman in the lead role gives evidence of influence from the United States, moderated or not. The entire tradition of playing the medieval performer *en travesti* can be traced back to the operatic tours de force of Mary Garden in Manhattan, Chicago, and elsewhere.



Fig. 4.75 Christiane Lasquin. Photograph by Daniel Fallot, 1960. Published on the front cover of *Télé 60*, no. 795 (January 23, 1960).

Although not in the medium of television or film, a collection of Christmas stories in French published in Belgium in 2005 substantiates that the tale of the juggler continues to be associated with the holiday season. The book is the work of [two Dominican sisters](#). In this grouping the narrative of the jongleur of Notre Dame is flagged as a “legend of the Middle Ages.” The opening sentence presents us with a cathedral that is personified as it awakens on a Christmas morning. Beyond the anthropomorphism, the building serves as a metonym for the whole medieval period.

The next paragraph introduces a statue of the Virgin and Child, smiling at each other. Then the lens widens to encompass the bustling square before the great church. At last, we come face to face with the famished and freezing jongleur. The poor entertainer cannot grab the attention or secure the donations of the passersby who scurry on Christmas errands as snow swirls. Eventually he catches sight of the Madonna, and the boy gives him a sign. The juggler begins juggling frenetically. When he blacks out, youthful Jesus takes over for him. In the hoopla and high adrenaline of the moment, the other sculptures within the house of prayer come to life, and the effigy and her babe in arms beam only more brilliantly. The grin is as common a manifestation of Mary’s delight as is the gift of a rose attested in other versions. The reader, too, may see images of the young Christ with or without the ball his mother has handed him. The manipulation of objects is reminiscent of motifs in medieval miracles of the Virgin in which her infant child interacts with youths. Such rascals find carvings of the Mother of God and her boy so lifelike as to mistake them for real people.

## Juggler Film

Noel is not always an essential ingredient in cinematic and small-screen reflexes of the story. A spectacularly wretched feature-length version not set at this holiday is *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, a dismal and even dispiriting shoestring affair from 1970. In contrast, Christmas is the day on which the crowning performance by the juggler takes place in the more widely known, fifty-minute *The Juggler of Notre Dame* from 1982. [This made-for-television movie](#) was coproduced by Walt Disney and the Paulist Brothers. Such teamwork between a secular entertainment conglomerate driven by the bottom line and a Catholic religious society motivated by charity may strike us, to say the least, as far-fetched. But the specific values and mission of the Paulist Order played a role in the choice of topic and medium. Interviewed by a *New York Times* journalist, the head of the brotherhood’s cinematic branch underscored the value of outreach and his firm’s long presence in Hollywood “as a production company concerned with [human values and audience enrichment](#).” The color film was given an up-to-date setting in the United States. In addition, it starred [a real juggler](#) in the leading role.

Despite these gestures toward typical values of the big screen, the motion picture is languorous, anything but action-packed. In it, Barnaby becomes the victim of two life-altering personal tragedies. First, we are told, partly through flashbacks, a backstory about the death of his wife in a tightrope accident when both high-performing

spouses are under the big top. Later, we witness the murder of the hobo who becomes Barnaby's bosom buddy, after the juggler has left the circus tent to become an itinerant and indigent street performer. Although initially soothed by being invited to enter a comradely community, the has-been entertainer soon despairs at having no gift to offer Mary and Jesus. At the conclusion, he receives a regenerative present from the Virgin, via a Madonna.

## Juggler Christmas Books Live On

A man sits on a bench, reading a book. A juggler walking by asks, "So, how many of those can you read at the same time?"

The Christmastide versions of the juggler story for television and cinema did not mark an end to printed forms of the narrative. As we have seen, special iterations of it continued to be designed as Christmas books in the United States. From England, we have in 1978 a [private-press printing](#) for "the Feast of Our Lord's Nativity." More indicative of the toll that tasteless commercialization was taking is the tale's inclusion in *Norman Rockwell's Christmas Book*. In this 1977 anthology, [a coxcombed jester once painted](#) by the artist for a magazine cover is slapped beside a translation of Anatole France's version. Not even a minimal attempt is made to achieve any meaningful harmonization between the two modules (see Fig. 4.76). The American painter would not pass away until the following year, but clearly his lifework was already being monetized without much anguishing over maintaining the quality of his artistic legacy.



Fig. 4.76 Norman Rockwell, Jester, 1939. Published in Molly Rockwell, ed., *Norman Rockwell's Christmas Book* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), 58. Illustration © Norman Rockwell Family Entities, 1939. Image courtesy of the Norman Rockwell Family Agency. All rights reserved.

Not fifteen years later, the miracle was pared down physically and downgraded in language, characters, length, and everything else by being fabricated as a **pop-up**. The volume was **one in a series**. The **advertising copy** on the back cover egged on potential buyers to “Deck the Halls with Dial Stockingstuffers!” The narrative of *The Little Juggler* gives a short-circuited rendition of our story that derives obliquely from Anatole France, but with the major adjustment that the object of the little virtuoso’s devotion is the Christ child. The infant is pictured unmistakably on the front cover and three times within the book itself—and of course at the center when the tableau is deployed to engage in three dimensions. Mary is suppressed in favor of a female angel, who materializes a single time to take the pint-sized performer in her arms and kiss his forehead. The tale closes with the orphaned juggler euphoric at being permitted to stay in the monastery, whereas before he had no home.

The book in question here was assembled in the Republic of Singapore. Why Southeast Asia, at the southern tip of Malaysia, far from the jongleur’s usual stomping grounds? Does the location hold any significance—does the chain of custody relating to the manufacture of the physical object reflect any special Singaporean involvement in this narrative? The population is a fifth Christian—and the faithful are heavily Catholic. The sovereign city-state boasts an impressive Gothic house of worship, the Anglican cathedral of St. Andrew, a centerpiece of downtown, built between 1856 and 1861. Yet no evidence suggests that the island country was anything more than the place of fabrication for the pop-up: it was neither created nor sold there.

In 2012, the narrative was curtailed in a different way: it was scaled down in a collection of ten Christmas stories, all of them designed to be read aloud in **120 seconds or less**. In this case, the account is billed as “The Little Juggler,” as having originated in Italy, and as having a protagonist named Pietro. A big-top artist, he juggles seven balls, all of different colors, which he supplements with a golden globe that shines like the sun. After he fails once to keep the orb in the air, he is fired and takes up performing on his own. Now an old man, he finds himself begging outside a cathedral at Christmas after the midnight service. Inside, he devises the notion to do his act before a statue of Mary and the infant Jesus. The story wraps up after he throws the sphere in the air: “The baby Jesus had caught it in his outstretched hand, and **he was sure the mother was smiling**” (see Fig. 4.77). Alterations have been made in miscellaneous elements, but this version is indebted to the one by Tomie dePaola that has become the perennial frontrunner in the children’s market.

Already in the first decades of the twentieth century, the jongleur had been rendered a product. At that time the familiarity of France’s short story and Massenet’s opera led to the Rochegrosse poster of 1904, the first Ferroud printing of 1906, the advertisement for Bénédictine liqueur, attractively ornamented scores and librettos from the publishing house of Heugel, and a superabundance of other such items. The commodification hastened and expanded in the mid-twentieth century. In the process, the tale stood to reach ever larger audiences, but simultaneously it risked shedding or contaminating defining aspects of the spirit that endowed the narrative with its charm.

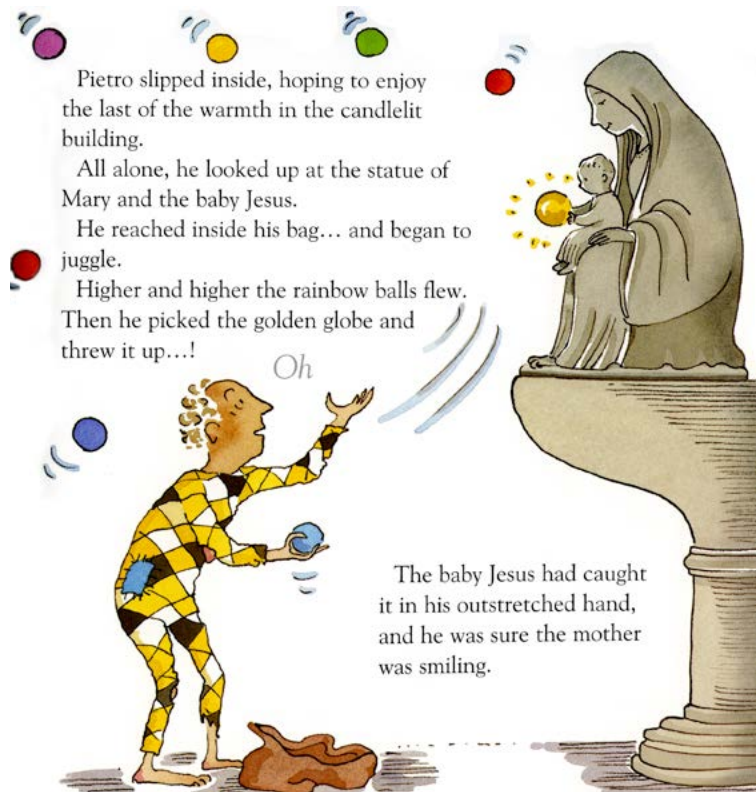


Fig. 4.77 Elena Pasquali, *The Lion Book of Two-Minute Christmas Stories*, illus. Nicola Smee (Oxford: Lion Children's Books, 2012), 37. Image courtesy of Lion Hudson PLC, Oxford, UK. All rights reserved.

The commercial hype placed the simplicity of the juggler and the sincerity of his faith in mortal jeopardy. The story has at its core the superfluity of possessions and the indispensability of religious belief. Consequently, merchandising it as an object to be purchased and gifted is inherently self-disruptive.

One other complication bears noting. Especially in the United States, the narrative of the tumbler or juggler, as naturalized within mass culture, has become susceptible to garbling. With the precipitous descent from popularity of first Jules Massenet and later Anatole France, the tale lost the stabilizing effect of being coupled to an authoritative composer or author. Even its name has suffered from instability. For that reason, the story has not enjoyed the secure rigidity that can result from bearing the equivalent of a trademark. For a few decades everyone was exposed to the narrative, but by the same token everyone recollected variously what they thought they knew. Their knowledge appears often to have come second- or third-hand. The account retained its luster, but the gleam grew hazy from tarnishing.

Ultimately, a point arrived when some remembered the narrative, but many forgot it. The American playwright John Guare, raised Roman Catholic and educated through college in Catholic institutions, could not have escaped exposure to the

tale. By 1977 and his *Rich and Famous*, he was well aware that not everyone would be au courant with the legend. His theatrical work is about the [first production of a script](#) by an aspiring playwright. The play contains a scene in which the dramatist-protagonist, Bing Ringling, encounters an old high-school girlfriend. This Allison recalls his “Christmas story about the juggler who goes to the cathedral and the Kings and Emperors all bring gold and diamonds, but the Blessed Mother only comes alive when the juggler juggles because he had a talent and [gave what was closest to him.](#)”

The recapitulation, in not even fifty words, raises a few questions about how the fictitious writer had presented it to Allison in her younger days. In the first instance, did Bing premeditatedly misreport someone else’s creation as his own—and is he still hanging back from admitting his borrowing? Did he display creativity by fusing two well-known fictions, one about the juggler and another about the three Magi, with an artfulness that his female friend from earlier times failed to notice? Did she embarrass him by putting her finger unknowingly on what was effectively plagiarism? Or did she make intolerably public her own insufficiency of culture, by not recognizing a nugget of cultural trivia he took for granted? Whatever the answers, this handling of the narrative about the juggler captures beautifully the paradox of the account, in being known universally yet the personal trouvée of everyone who retells it.

## Related Stories of the Season

Reduced to its rudiments, the first extant version of *Our Lady’s Tumbler* from the early thirteenth century betrays similarities to a few Christmas entertainments that have been sentimental standbys since the 1950s. No proof exists that the tale as told in the poem from the Middle Ages was informed by long-lost antecedents to any of the later stories. Contrariwise, through its own descendants the piece of medieval poetry may have influenced later Christmas operas and songs, but in this case too no one has yet sniffed out the sulfurous fumes of any smoking gun to prove any conjectural indebtedness. The only sure relationship among all the narratives is analogy. Whatever connections or disconnects we intuit among the various adaptations, they speak to certain widespread and even almost universal human responses to the stresses of gift-giving and the challenges of determining what to offer up to God.

A first analogue is a [one-act lyric opera](#), with text and music by Gian Carlo Menotti. Entitled *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, this dramatic work with music transported the form into a new idiom. It was the first musical drama composed [specifically for television](#). Reviewers reacted favorably, singling out for special plaudits [the child actor](#) who starred as the title character. In view of Mary Garden’s adamancy that the role of the jongleur be rewritten to allow her to perform *en travesti*, note should be taken that [Menotti insisted](#) that in all productions of the musical drama the lead be a young male. But the composer’s triumph has been pyrrhic. His proviso has held, but as fate would have it, his hallmark genre has nearly vanished. Not only the boy star of

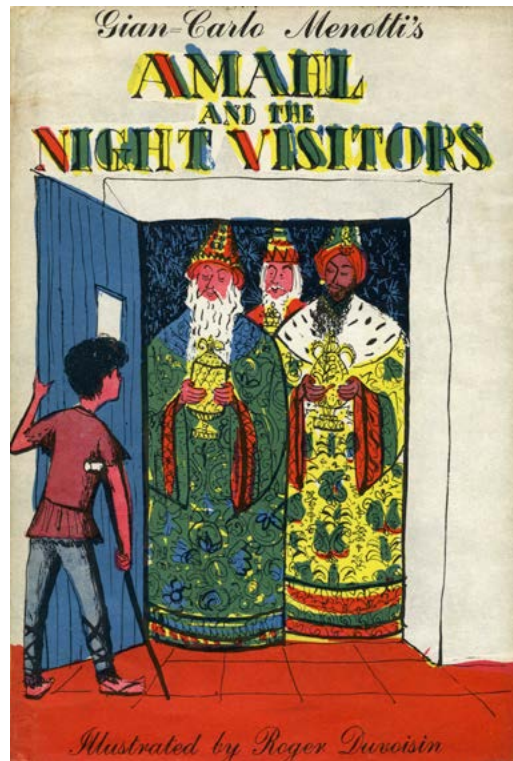


Fig. 4.78 Front cover of Gian Carlo Menotti, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, adap. Frances Frost, illus. Roger Duvoisin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952). Image courtesy of McGraw-Hill. All rights reserved.

the opening night has died. Television opera, after its initial heyday thanks to Menotti, has also [crept toward near extinction](#).

Frequently enacted on stage as a Christmas classic for more than a half century, this musical drama views the Nativity from the perspective of the fatherless Amahl and his mother. Under the inspiration of Hieronymus Bosch's *The Adoration of the Magi*, Menotti made the son is what would have been called in the Middle Ages "crippled," in the mid-twentieth century "handicapped," and now "disabled" or in North America "differently abled." The pair chance to be visited by Balthazar, Melchior, and Kaspar, as the three kings of Christian legend hike in search of a newborn (see Fig. 4.78). The child whom the threesome seek, although patently Christ, is not named explicitly, and the location is not spelled out as Bethlehem. For that matter, the three rulers are not linked outright to the Magi, who from a cursory mention in the [Gospel of Matthew](#) developed into the three kings or three wise men whom later tradition describes as bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh for Jesus after his birth.

When the potentates in Menotti's tale stay the night, Amahl's mother is caught red-handed trying to filch some of their precious metal. Melchior proposes that she keep





Fig. 4.79 The miraculous healing. Illustration by Roger Duvoisin, 1952. Published in Gian Carlo Menotti, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, adap. Frances Frost (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 75. Image courtesy of McGraw-Hill. All rights reserved.



Fig. 4.80 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, 1917), between pp. 16–17.

what she has pilfered, because the savior they crave will rule by love and not by riches. After the woman returns the treasure and expresses the wish that she had a gift of her own to present to the newborn, her lame boy volunteers his crutch. No sooner has he done so than suddenly he can walk (see Fig. 4.79). In the lump-in-the-throat ending, the now ambulatory little guy tags along with the kings so that he may present his prop personally to the Christ child. Not a dry eye in the house!

The lyric opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* evinces parallels to *Our Lady's Tumbler*. One is the humility of its chief character. Another is his desire to make a divine offering of his only high-value possession or, in the case of the medieval French poem, ability. As a puny kid who can get around only with the help of a wooden staff, Amahl bears a prominent resemblance to the youth named Rene in Violet Moore Higgins's 1917 version of *The Little Juggler* (see Fig. 4.80). Menotti would never have chanced upon the earlier children's book, nor does his musical drama need to have been related by consanguinity to Massenet's (although he could hardly have been unaware of

*Le jongleur de Notre Dame*). The probability can be rated even lower that the Italian composer was indebted to any segments, such as Waring's on the juggler, that he had viewed on television in America or elsewhere. However suggestive, the similarities look unlikely to have resulted from source-and-influence relationships.

A second Christmastide commercial success that shows likenesses to *Our Lady's Tumbler* is *The Littlest Angel*, a short story by Charles Tazewell (see Fig. 4.81). The fiction was reportedly drafted as a radio script in just three days in 1939. It relates the various hiccups in the post-mortem metamorphosis that an active four-year-old boy makes to being the newest attendant of God in heaven and the runt of the seraphic litter. The small book tells of the discomfiture that the correspondingly little protagonist, named Isaiah, experiences in choosing a gift to make to the holy infant when Jesus is born. When he lands on the ground (or the cloudtops) in the firmament, the freshly arrived cherub at first cannot adjust. The proverbial "little angels grow into big devils" would seem to be unexpectedly applicable. The quondam mortal sings off key, disrupts prayers, and sinks himself in celestial quicksand for his rollicking behavior. Finally, he is granted a heavenly hall pass to retrace the route to Earth and to retrieve a small box that contains the odds and ends he had treasured while alive.

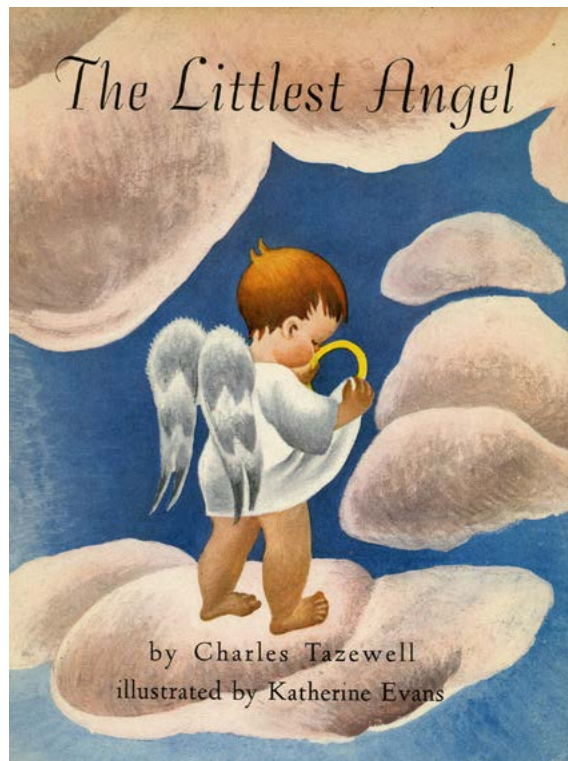


Fig. 4.81 Front cover of Charles Tazewell, *The Littlest Angel*, illus. Katherine Evans (Chicago: Children's Press, 1946).

The tiny casket helps Isaiah adapt to the afterlife, but soon he faces the new ordeal of selecting a present for Jesus. The angelic tyke is plagued about what to give, since he lacks the musical talent to compose a lyric hymn, and the literary or verbal skill to formulate a prayer. In the end, the winged moppet sets down before the throne of God the unpretentious package of his valueless valuables (see Fig. 4.82). When the climax comes, the wee winged one bursts into tears. Belatedly, he recognizes how woefully inappropriate and inadequate his offering is. Yet despite its shortcomings, his gift proves to be the one preferred by God. At that instant, the coffer is suffused with a brilliant radiance. It turns into the refulgent star of Bethlehem, which revealed to the Magi the birth of Jesus and led them to the scene of the Nativity.

This narrative too resembles *Our Lady's Tumbler* in the modest lowliness of its cherubic champ and in the divine vindication of his eagerness to bestow his most cherished belongings upon the infant Christ. In *The Littlest Angel*, the cutest being is the bright-eyed innocent who lavishes upon others what he loves, rather than what he hopes will impress. The story brings home the moral that the gifts of those who are regarded as being lowest in importance and stature earn the highest esteem from God.



Fig. 4.82 Gift box. Illustration by Katherine Evans, 1946. Published in Charles Tazewell, *The Littlest Angel* (Chicago: Children's Press, 1946).

By heroizing small children such tales express the propensity for favoring the underdog. At the same time, they speak to anxieties about gift-giving that youngsters feel from holidays such as Christmas, when whatever trivialities they can throw together or purchase are guaranteed to be outmatched by what adults can furnish. God's response to the gifts of the leading figures in these narratives plays out on a divine-to-human level the validation that real-life young people crave, particularly as their parents unwrap their low-cost or handcrafted presents on major holidays. The jitteriness of the situation resonates too with grownups, who tense up annually under the pressure of finding the elusive or even nonexistent "perfect gift."

Tazewell, who launched his career as an actor and stage director, prepared this fiction as [a script for radio](#) in 1939. Owing to the story's success, he subsequently made a specialty of telling about pint-sized protagonists. Many such accounts supplied the basis for [products in other media](#). Still more of these "little"-themed and -titled books emerged [posthumously](#) under his name. The lessons could not be clearer. A little can go a long way, and every little bit helps. The readiness with which Tazewell's narratives were soon associated with the miracle of the juggler may be detected already in [a 1955 article](#) on the use of Christmas stories in junior high schools. The list of recommended readings and recordings includes "The Juggler of Notre Dame," *The Littlest Angel*, and *The Small One*.

A third yuletide entertainment that calls to mind *Our Lady's Tumbler* is "[The Little Drummer Boy](#)." The song amounts to not even eighty words, with the ellipsis of no fewer than twenty-one instances of the onomatopoetic refrain. With the subtraction of the incessantly assonant "pa rum pum pum pum" and "rum pum pum pum," the lyrics run as follows:

Come, they told me, / A new born King to see,  
Our finest gifts we bring, / To lay before the King,  
So to honor Him, / When we come.  
Little Baby, / I am a poor boy too,  
I have no gift to bring, / That's fit to give the King,  
Shall I play for you, / On my drum?  
Mary nodded, / [The ox and lamb](#) kept time,  
I played my drum for Him, / I played my best for Him,  
Then He smiled at me, / Me and my drum.

Katherine K. Davis, often credited as the composer, reputedly professed that the piece came to her while she was "trying to take a nap" and that the words "practically wrote themselves." Some listeners may judge the earworm, especially the repeated lines, to be suitably soporific. Others could not imagine sleeping with such a melody and rhythm whirling about in their heads. The composition, a fixture of holiday radio and elevator music, receives so much airplay for a few weeks each year that despite seeming eminently forgettable, it becomes unforgotten. The nonstop nonsense syllables give new meaning to the idiom of having something drummed into you.

The apocryphal story of “The Little Drummer Boy,” which embodies first-person tale-telling at its most protozoan, overlaps with that of the tumbler. In both tales the lead figure becomes convinced that he has no present worth bestowing, beyond a performance on a humble instrument, and in both (despite initial anxiety) the modest gift is ultimately deemed more than merely acceptable. Although in the song the device in question is a drum, rather than the devotee’s own body as in *Our Lady’s Tumbler*, the equivalency between the two accounts remains potent. Although the would-be musician bangs his equipment to honor Jesus, and although the lyrics trail off with a description of the baby’s pleased reaction, the little instrumentalist may be directing his offering to none other than Mary. Another possibility is that the addressee in “Shall I play for you?” is Christ, for whom his mother communicates by nodding. He is an infant. As the very etymology of that noun presumes, he is **unable to speak**.

Where did such literature spring into being? It seems redundant and even wrongheaded to piece together a genealogy for all of them that would lead back to a single progenitor. There is no need for a cartoon-like evolutionary tree, which predicates a missing link. But what could be the alternative? Arguing against a single origin is the existence, first in medieval Spain and later in Mexico, of a Christmastime folk ritual that entailed music, song, dance, and painting, and included a scene in which a shepherd presented his dance to the infant Jesus. The nature and diffusion of this show suggest that this kind of motif may have arisen recurrently, when common folk and parish priests joined forces and literary imaginations.

From locale to locale, such symbiosis between the laity and clergy would have arisen naturally from negotiations over cradle cults. Such customs were threaded with practices such as Nativity plays. These dramas, which evolved in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, were acted out in churches. They may have derived especially from a tableau vivant of a crib or crèche that was constructed in Greccio to celebrate the birth of Christ in 1223.

The oldest evidence for the Spanish and Mexican version appears to be fossilized within the didactic *Stanzas on the Life of Christ*. The heterogeneous contents of this Castilian narrative poem encompass what has been interpreted as a **pastoral Nativity play**. The character **Mingo** proposes to his fellow herders that they worship the holy family with music and movement. At one point, he watches and listens with delight as choristers intone hymns and gambol in ring-dances around the manger. Later, as his fellows play instruments and sing, Mingo renders thanks and prayer. He makes his votive not in Latin verses he does not understand, but in a manner recognizable to him: he frisks in the steps of a rustic dance before Mary and the infant Jesus. **His gift can be compared** with performances recounted in other anecdotes drawn from real life, such as one in which a girl prances before a picture of Jesus or in stories such as *Our Lady’s Tumbler*.

In one hypothesis, the poem’s author was inspired by solemnizations of Christmas that he had earlier witnessed himself. Such protothespian festivities would have

borne a strong resemblance to religious theater that survives hundreds of years later, reported in [New Mexico](#) as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. In this act, the poorest in the cast of sixteen shepherds declares that [he has no possessions to offer](#) as tokens of his heart's devotion except song and dance. This herdsman may bear a [biblical name](#), but Holy Scripture contains no source for this scene. By 1906, could knowledge of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, Anatole France's *Jongleur of Notre Dame*, or Massenet's opera by the same name have already unfurled across North America to reach working-class Hispanics in what would later gain acceptance as the Land of Enchantment? Alternatively, could Chicano campesinos in a bustling town on the Santa Fe Trail and the railroad have been in touch with a motif that goes back to much older Spanish tradition?

From the same year we have a printed Christmas story that could have been conceived in response to a variant of *Our Lady's Tumbler*—or not. Called [Why the Chimes Rang](#), the tale has a timeless, fairy-tale-like indeterminacy (see Fig. 4.83). It begins "There was once, in a far-away country where few people have ever traveled, a wonderful church." To gauge by the illustration of the first page (see Fig. 4.84), the house of worship was envisaged as a Gothic cathedral. This huge edifice has an immense carillon that flaunts at the top a set of holiday bells. These would toll impromptu, perhaps sounded by angels, only on Christmas Eve when "the greatest and best offering was laid on the altar" to the Christ-child. A boy named Pedro hatched the plan to attend the celebration with his younger brother. While on their way they found a poor woman, who had fallen unconscious in the snow. To save her, the protagonist remained behind, but gave his sibling a little silver piece to deposit as his votive offering. None of the grand gifts made by others caused the giant metallic cups to awaken from their long silence, but this coin moved them to peal.

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The relationship between *Our Lady's Tumbler* and the Christmas holidays is a double-edged sword. How long will the two continue to be interwoven? In the United States the prognosis in the early twenty-first century must differ sharply from what it would have been one hundred years ago. One explanation could be that circumstances within public schools have altered radically.

Over many decades the sugarcoated and candy-striped power of Christmas worked to the tale's advantage, whether in Anatole France's French, modern English translations from the medieval original, or adaptations. On the web and in children's books the connection with the special day [may still serve well](#). Yet now the long-established associations with religion redound to the story's detriment. In fact, the context militates against the tale in the United States. For close to fifty years, the so-called Christmas controversy has pitted freedoms of religion and speech against separation of church and state. At no other point in the calendar do [tensions between the two extremes in the debate flare up](#) more often than in the weeks leading up to

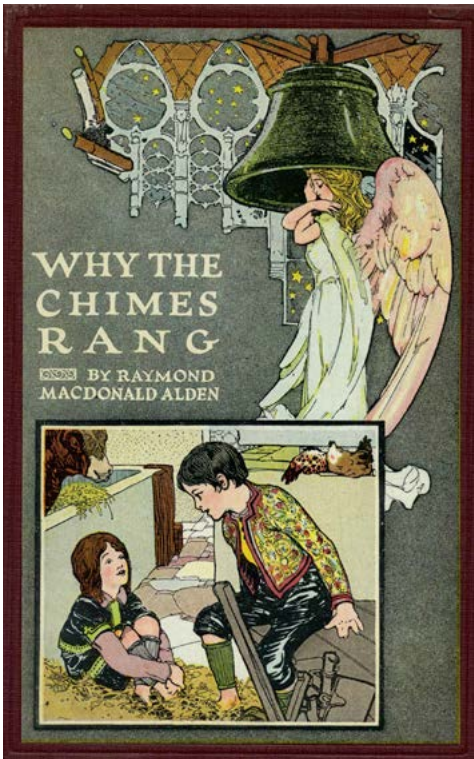


Fig. 4.83 Front cover of Raymond MacDonald Alden, *Why the Chimes Rang*, illus. Mayo Bunker (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1909).

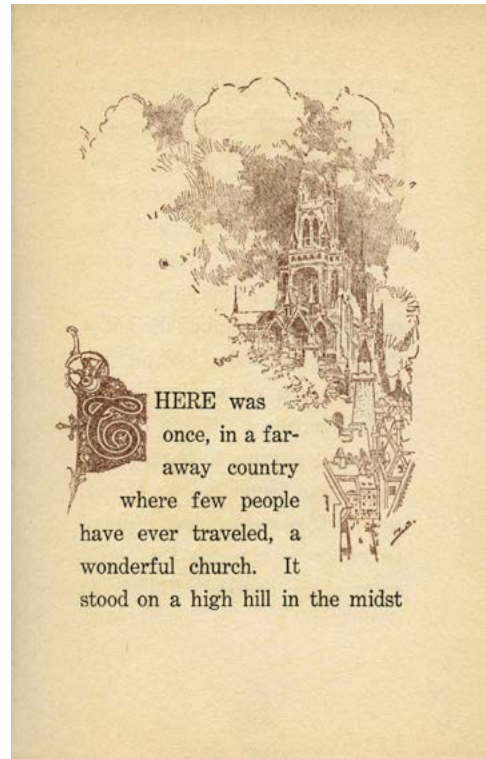


Fig. 4.84 Raymond MacDonald Alden, *Why the Chimes Rang*, illus. Mayo Bunker (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1909), 1.

the winter festivity. Secularists and civil libertarians, sometimes navigating perilous waters among the shoals of religions and atheism, file suit over concerns about crèches and colored lights, Santa Clauses and reindeers, and menorahs. Tellingly, the contention has sometimes been labeled inflammatorily the “war on Christmas.” In all this, the juggler has not been taken to court or for that matter given his day there. Instead, he has been summarily dispatched except from children’s books, and even those have been mostly excluded from use in public schools and libraries.

The time may have arrived for sundering the bonds, hardly original to the medieval account, that have fastened it artificially to modern manifestations of yuletide. Despite the airtight reality that the tale started out as an expression of Christian culture in the Middle Ages, *Our Lady’s Tumbler* in all its finest expressions stakes out a complex and subtle stand toward religion that has made the narrative enticing to believers of many faiths, agnostics, and even probably atheists.

The jongleur has been dulled and damaged by being restricted to a Nativity narrative. As we have discerned, this function as a seasonal story was not even faintly implicit in the original medieval poem and exemplum. Repentance, so pronounced an

ingredient in the French from the 1230's, and joy, equally salient in the Latin from the 1270's, may be narrowly associated with Lent in Christianity but more broadly such remorse and contrition know no season. Pulling the narrative away from Christmas might give it a chance to recover from whatever taint it may have taken on from middle- or even lowbrow culture after becoming omnipresent through television in the fifties.

Then again, the endeavor to defibrillate the legend might be futile. Like so many victims of organized crime, the corpses of numerous tales lie encased within the concrete that has been poured to prepare for a better future. Although a noble effort has been made to broaden culture to allow entrance to regions and religions, peoples and classes, that were formerly overlooked or shut out, the inclusivity has not been all-accommodating. The past has been treated as intrinsically different and alien in ways that warrant boxing it out. The humanities and arts need not be zero-sum: not every inclusion of a new element requires the exclusion of an old one. For our own good and pleasure, we still deserve to benefit from what has preceded us, along with the memory of its personages and the appreciation of its aesthetics. Not all bygones should be bygones. Being ignorant and prejudiced about what originated at a chronological remove from us is no better than being so about what comes from a geographical distance. A present without a past is a present without a future.



## 5. Children's Juggler and Child Juggler

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### Suitable for Children

I kid you not: [the question has been posed recently](#), by a person aware of only a few versions of our narrative, whether *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* can be adapted or not to be fit for a child. The adult answer must be a resounding and unqualified yes. Anatole France's tale is not intended for a pre-pubescent readership, but it is predicated on an assumption that medieval people such as the juggler were childlike and simple. The limpidity of its style made it accessible, even if not transparent, to young or at least youngish consumers of fiction. Furthermore, its author did write children's literature, as well as literature stocked with [reminiscences of his own childhood](#). The story's appropriateness for budding adults has been verified time and again for a century or so, as a text to be acted out in schools, a point of departure for reading aloud from a textbook or children's book, an opportunity for storytelling from no written script at all, an animated cartoon or claymation animation, a text to be metabolized by youths reading on their own, and on and on. Let me count the ways.

Already in 1928, the leader of [a famous private school in the United States](#) folded the tale into a "play book" of productions by the schoolchildren. In preliminary remarks, the editors touched swiftly upon all three main expressions of the narrative, to the advantage of the thirteenth-century poem. In the view of these elitists, Anatole France's story and Massenet's opera had coarsened *Our Lady's Tumbler* by making it "all too widely known." In the process, they "falsified the spirit of the legend." By this reckoning, the model of the account in [the original was far above average](#).

In the introduction, the playwrights offered detailed instructions on a stage set that accentuated Romanesque architecture. Even so, the first illustration in the English script was all pointed arches, with uncongenially and unpromisingly dark alcoves for school-age scribes that give the setting a decidedly scholastic aura (see Fig. 5.1).

Gothic, with its evocations of beauty, spirituality, and agedness, has long been purveyed to the young in Europe and America. Viollet-le-Duc devoted much of his lifetime to safeguarding France's heritage in this architectural style, by heading

government-funded commissions. Yet he made the effort to compose a heavily illustrated novelized history, published in 1878, of a cathedral in the unreal town of Clusy (see Fig. 5.2).

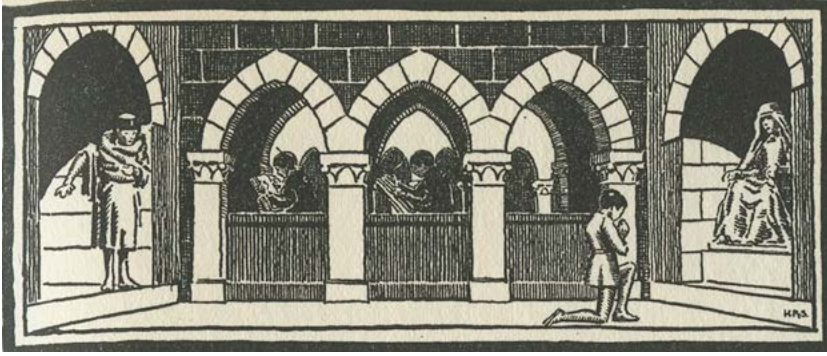


Fig. 5.1 The young juggler kneels with bowed head and hands clasped to pray before the Madonna. Illustration by Harold R. Shurtleff, 1928. Published in Katherine Taylor and Henry Copley Greene, *The Shady Hill Play Book* (New York: MacMillan, 1928), 99.

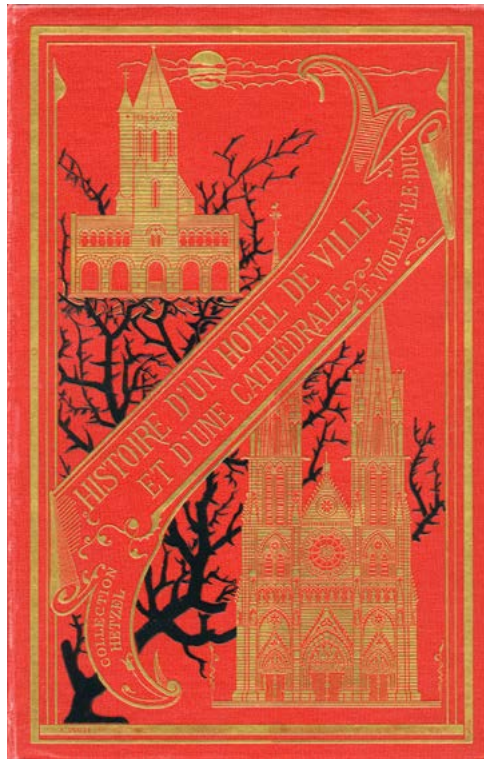


Fig. 5.2 Front cover of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Histoire d'un hôtel de ville et d'une cathédrale* (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1878).

He realized that reaching a *grand publique* that encompassed the next generation, especially teenagers, would be the surest step for preservation—and for furtherance of his reactionary politics, since in this particular publication he framed the ruination of monuments from the Middle Ages in Paris as owing to the Revolution and Commune. Far more recently and less politically, David Macaulay reprised his great French predecessor nearly a century later by publishing in 1973 as his first book *Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction*, on the imaginary great church in the equally made-up place of Chutreaux.

The text proper of the piece of theater from the Shady Hill School is adapted from the medieval miracle as transposed into English by Alice Kemp-Welch, by converting indirect into direct discourse. The translation is also put into modernized French, likewise for performance by the pupils. Both versions were to have musical accompaniment, in simple Latin plainsong. The objective of the volume is much less to guide simple schoolwork and even less rote work than to attain synchronism of education, edification, and entertainment.

Nowadays, children in many parts of America and Europe may encounter the Middle Ages most often through white knights, damsels in distress, witches and warlocks in long mantles, and other stock characters from romance as refracted through the peculiar prism of the “once upon a time” in Walt Disney products. King Arthur rules the day. In this lingering context, Camelot, not the monastery, holds sway. This is to say nothing of the sometimes medievaesque universes that J. R. R. Tolkien or J. K. Rowling have opened up. Still, much of the medieval world as it was once constituted has been jettisoned. In secularized nation-states and regions where Christianity generally, and Catholicism particularly, occupy less of the foreground in daily life than they did a century or more ago, many fewer early readers meet the saints, monks, and hermits who were familiar, through the *Golden Legend*, even to the extent of being jejune in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. All the same, the juggler has held his own in far more than a toned-down way. Although neither the thirteenth-century verses of the tumbler nor Anatole France’s story of the jongleur was designed to be children’s literature, in practice either of them could be digested by a mature young person. The French author’s could be perused by an even more precocious reader, and moreover lends itself more easily to a high density of illustration, because it relates a similar narrative in a much shorter compass. Accordingly, *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* has repeatedly become an illustrated book for both adults and children. *Our Lady’s Tumbler* has been embellished, but not as thoroughlygoingly. Both have been reshaped often to serve as picture storybooks.

France’s iteration of the tale is altogether plausibly incorporated into a much-favored group of Spanish prose selections that Juan José Arreola compiled [for reading aloud](#). With a gusto for verbiage and fantasy alike, this [major author of the literary scene in Mexico](#) came to be esteemed himself as a juggler of language who merged play and skill in his use of words. A thumbnail biography of this writer even has by way

of exordium a caricature subtitled “[master of minstrelsy](#),” by the Mexican artist and cartoonist [Jorge Salazar](#) (see Fig. 5.3). Arreola first brought out his collection in 1968, following a trouble-free principle of selection by marshaling the stories he had loved as a child. The anthology embraces works by many literary figures, down for example to such fin-de-siècle greats as Oscar Wilde and Marcel Schwob, whom we have met already. The inclusion of the juggler narrative in Arreola’s compendium simultaneously testified to the lingering vitality of Anatole France’s *pièce de résistance* in his Mexico and contributed to its continued well-being in Spanish and Latin American mass culture. In the same year of 1968, a Spanish novelist and author of children’s literature, at the time a long-term resident in Mexico, compiled a treasury of tales for audiences of tender age. He pegged *The Juggler of Our Lady* at number 15 among [his top 100](#).



Fig. 5.3 “Mester de Juglaría.” Caricature of Juan José Arreola by Jorge Salazar, 1988–1989.

With tinkering, both *Our Lady’s Tumbler* and *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* could be, and have been, turned into bedtime stories. A cut above a lullaby, their heroes are simple, their narrative lines are clean, and simplicity reigns supreme. Equally important, the juggler’s simpleheartedness is equated almost instinctively with that of juvenile readers. Accordingly, his devotion was seen to be childlike. Well before any author acted on the capacity of the tale to become the stuff of children’s literature, the publishers who engaged with *Our Lady’s Tumbler* homed in on [charm, simplicity, and diminutiveness](#) as its distinguishing qualities. Its petite size made the match with childhood all the smoother. From small chef d’oeuvre to masterpiece for the small was not a long step ... it was only a small one.

In 1931, Countess Anna de Noailles (see Fig. 5.4) was asked by Sacha Guitry, an actor and director of both the French stage and motion-picture industry (see Fig. 5.5), to copy out four lines of her poetry for him. The noblewoman, a Francophone writer from Romania, replied by claiming to have forgotten which verses he wanted. Instead, she [sent a photograph of herself](#) as a little girl, with the explanation, “Like the Tumbler of our Lady, I want to give you something. I am sending you that which in us is most simple and persistent—childhood.” For both the aristocrat and the filmmaker, it made perfect sense to inscribe the performer in allusive shorthand. After all, the two of them had attended the salon hosted by [Madame Arman de Caillavet](#), mistress of Anatole France, and would have been well versed in his literary corpus, including of course his jongleur.



Fig. 5.4 Anna de Noailles. Photograph, 1921.  
Photographer unknown.



Fig. 5.5 Sacha Guitry. Photograph, 1930s.  
Photographer unknown.

Long before World War II, the story wriggled down the road from high society and snaked very naturally in many other directions. For instance, it slithered into anthologies of Christmas fiction for children. Thus it took its place among the narrative inventory in a small and slight, [cheerlessly bound booklet](#) of such fare for Sunday school that was published in 1934 and reprinted in England even once hostilities ended. [An article that appeared a year after the initial publication](#) stresses the tale's utility and appeal to both girls and boys—although varyingly along gender lines—in kindergarten and elementary school.

Despite the evidence that the narrative was adopted in curricula for public, private, and Sunday schools, no one should be misled into inferring that it was kept alive mainly in formal education, or that it oozed into this milieu only in the 1930s. In fact, the account of the jongleur's miracle had been absorbed into books for youngsters already during World War I. The first efforts at recasting the exemplum as a work of juvenile literature may well be two products from 1917 by the American book illustrator and cartoon strip creator, [Violet Moore Higgins](#). One volume with charming pictures by

her was priced higher, whereas the other cheaper one had simpler artwork by another artist. The more elaborate in the pair of items containing the juggler narrative presents itself as a plain old children's book. The only two giveaways to its application are first the legend "Story-Time Tales" affixed discreetly at the bottom of the front cover, and then the depiction of two youngsters ascending stairs with a candlestick, presumably on their way to tucking themselves docilely into bed after a rousing reading aloud. Yet the third and final story, "[The Noel Candle](#)," ends on a note that infuses the volume with Christmas as an unquestionable occasion—and prospective market. The lower-budget book is equally fixated on yuletide.



Fig. 5.6 "To Give Is the Spirit of Christmas." Illustration by Helen Chamberlin, 1917. Violet Moore Higgins, *French Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler, The Wooden Shoe, and The Noel Candle* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), 6.

Higgins betrays evidence of having been conditioned by the poetic reshaping of France's tale that we owe to Edwin Markham. The action of his poem, entitled "The Juggler of Touraine," takes place in the French province that has Tours as its capital. In contrast, the later story by the illustrator is set in the similarly named but nonexistent "Turlaine, a quaint old French village." Yet her narrative amalgamates far more than merely one previous form of the text. In keeping with her evident ambition to inch the entertainer closer to fairy tale, she opens with the unchallenged marker of that genre in English, the phrase "Once upon a time." In fact, one of the two 1917 versions of her book flagged "The Little Juggler" as belonging explicitly within that category of literature. Greater future repercussions came from the author's decision to crank down the age of the hero, "not more than twelve." [Making the protagonist more youthful](#) enabled young readers to identify more easily with him. Other versions had sometimes tugged the performer in the opposite direction, aging him into an old juggler, past the prime of his talents and his worklife.



Fig. 5.7 "You May Stay Here and Learn." Illustration by Helen Chamberlin, 1917. Violet Moore Higgins, *French Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler, The Wooden Shoe, and The Noel Candle* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), 21.

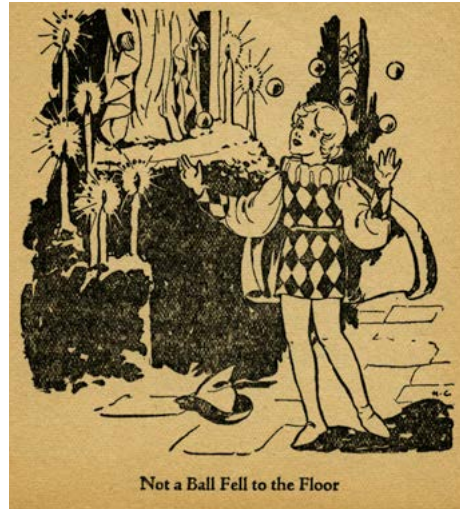


Fig. 5.8 "Not a Ball Fell to the Floor." Illustration by Helen Chamberlin, 1917. Violet Moore Higgins, *French Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler, The Wooden Shoe, and The Noel Candle* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), 27.

Higgins makes her hero, named Rene, both [a juggler and a dancer](#). While dancing, the boy wrenches his ankle badly and ends up convalescing in a monastery. The remainder of the story unfolds there, where he is bidden to remain and acquire an education (see Fig. 5.7). Eventually, the inevitable transpires: he dances and juggles before the Madonna (see Fig. 5.8). When he is spotted and spied upon, the statue springs to life, pats the boy on his pate, and with her scarlet mantle rubs the sweat from her small devotee's glistening brow.

## Downsizing the Juggler

Did you ever hear of a little juggler who lived in the neighborhood of Paris many, many years ago and who won such favor in the eyes of the Holy Virgin that she performed a special miracle to show her appreciation of his adoration?

The littleness and youngness of the leading character are incorporated into the diminutive for "juggler" in the tale's Spanish title, translatable as *The Little Juggler of the Virgin*, that was used in [a large-format children's book](#) published in Chile in 1942. The writer made the star a young man, "[twelve years old, more or less](#)" (see Figs. 5.9 and 5.10). [A short prelude](#) furnishes almost all the context we can knit together:

In this tale is told an old story, [full of naïveté](#) and enchantment, passed down by tradition from the days of the Middle Ages. Its theme has served as an inspiration to various

creative talents, in different periods. Now we offer the delightful medieval story, written in simple verses, to Spanish-speaking children.

For better or for worse, this publication is not quite as piquant a piece of evidence for the tale's dissemination and taking root outside Europe and the United States as might appear at first blush. If readers sidle up to these pages in the hope of engaging with an indigenous Chilean storyteller and illustrator, they will have the rug pulled out from under them. The author was not a native of the New World. Rather, he was a temporary exile, or at least expatriate, from Spain. Over the course of his life, José María Souvirón was a writer, first a poet and then a novelist, as well as a [critic and professor](#). He [published profusely in Chile](#) even before becoming a long-term transplant, and by 1941 [he had settled there](#). His children's book [found its way into print](#) early in his stint there. By 1953 the exile had [gone back permanently to his homeland](#). A few years after his return, a scaled-down form of his volume was reprinted in [a Madrid newspaper](#).

[Other children's versions](#) often flaunt the adjective "little" in their titles, making the protagonist the little juggler, little tumbler, and little jester. So we have, for instance, "The Little Juggler" as the title for a retelling of [an alleged folktale of the juggler](#) in 2004 (see Fig. 5.11). The same title appears on a [pop-up book](#) from 1991 (see Fig. 5.12). A related shrinkage comes in tactile guise when the physical size of the printed form



Fig. 5.9 The juggler in the town square. Illustration by Roser Bru, 1942. Published in José María Souvirón, *El juglarcillo de la Virgen* (Santiago, Chile: Difusión Chilena, 1942), 3.



Fig. 5.10 The juggler before the image of the Virgin. Illustration by Roser Bru, 1942. Published in José María Souvirón, *El juglarcillo de la Virgen* (Santiago, Chile: Difusión Chilena, 1942), 14.



in which the story is presented is cut back. The most adroit mode of such reduction is the one known affectionately as “littles.” Those who collect such bijou books go by the name of microbibliophiles. These products do not contain miniatures, in the sense used for the paintings in medieval manuscripts. Instead, they are actual hardbacks produced in diminutive dimensions. By definition, they are normally supposed to be no more than three inches in height.



Fig. 5.11 The juggler performs before the statue of the Virgin and Child. Illustration by Christina Balit, 2004. Published in Lois Rock, *Saintly Tales and Legends* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2004), 33. Image courtesy of Christina Balit. All rights reserved.

Our story has been presented in this [Lilliputian format](#) for lovers of such “littles” as retold and illustrated by [Maryline Poole Adams](#). Her output was immense, if that adjective may be applied non-oxymoronically to miniatures. In the world of bibliophiles, dealers, and librarians of rare books, this American bookmaker’s reputation rests securely on the creative and aesthetic gamut of such rarefied objects she crafted at a regular clip from [her private press](#) between 1979 and 2011 (see Fig. 5.13).

Most of her oeuvre has Christmas themes. The inaugural volume, from 1979, is entitled *Good King Wenceslas: A Celebration of the Carol by Rev. J. M. Neale, 1853, with Illustrations*. The marbled paper of the cover gestures toward the nineteenth century.



Fig. 5.12 Front cover of *The Little Juggler* (New York: Dial Press, 1991).



Fig. 5.13 Front cover of Maryline Poole Adams, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame / The Juggler of Notre Dame* (Berkeley, CA: Poole Press, 2003).

they often call out to be operated. Rather than being static, they move like stagesets. Opening *Matryoshka: Russian Nesting Dolls* requires finding inset after inset, each smaller than the last. The total of five is a bookish equivalent to the dolls after which this item is named—and each component in the publication has one of them pictured on its cover. Her *Song of the Wandering Aengus* by William Butler Yeats has as a slipcase a miniature replica of a fisherman’s creel or tacklebox.

For the year of 2003 she crafted by hand [her version of our story](#). Not to make too big a thing of it, but this “little” is very [imaginative in both physical composition and literary content](#). As an object, the book has the distinctive structure known from the French as *dos-à-dos*. The “back to back” quality resides in the binding. [Two parts](#), each of which has its own spine, share a back. Like Poole’s first volume, the covers of this lovely object are marbled, looking like the front and back endpapers to nineteenth-century hardcovers. The illustrations are hand-colored.

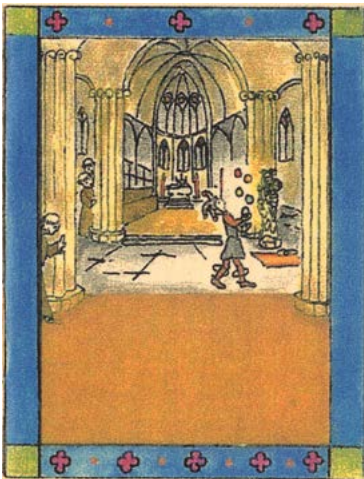
In this case, both portions in the Siamese twin-like arrangement employ the same artwork. Half of this “little” is in English as *The Juggler of Notre Dame: An Old French Legend Retold and Illustrated*, recounting the legend through the third eye of an omniscient narrator. When the tiny tome is flipped over, the other portion is in French that can be translated as “The jongleur of Notre-Dame: [An imagined journal](#) on the topic of the old legend.” In the French-language section, the episode is [presented in the first person](#) as the diary of a boy juggler named Jérôme (see Fig. 5.14). This text includes occasional childish mistakes of spelling and grammar, for which the diarist apologizes at the end: whoops!

The story plays out in the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. After a candlelit procession up the nave on Christmas eve, the events hit a crescendo. As the youth



Fig. 5.14 Maryline Poole Adams, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame / The Juggler of Notre Dame* (Berkeley, CA: Poole Press, 2003), 1–2. Image courtesy of Maryline Poole Adams. All rights reserved.

accomplishes feats of acrobatics and juggling before a beloved Madonna, monks spy on him. In their rush to judgment, they swoop in to stop him (see Fig. 5.15). Miraculously, his red ball takes flight and turns into a marble orb, held by the infant Jesus, who is supported by the Mary in the sculpture (see Fig. 5.16). Although the Virgin has her place in the story, the edifice named after her surpasses her in importance, and her son steals the limelight from her at the climax. From its initial production this publication was a [collector's item](#), as far from mass retail as could be conceived. To quote a well-turned phrase, a little can be a lot. No one who handles one of these books feels short-changed, despite their physical minimalism. Not all downsizing is nearly as artful.



Figs. 5.15 and 5.16 Two monks and the abbot spy on the juggler's performance and Virgin and Child. Illustration by Maryline Poole Adams, 2003. Published in Maryline Poole Adams, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame / The Juggler of Notre Dame* (Berkeley, CA: Poole Press, 2003). Image courtesy of Maryline Poole Adams. All rights reserved.

## American Children's Literature

Some versions of the story for beginning readers have banalized it. **Massive retrenchment is inevitable** when the legend is scaled down to a booklet attached to a single pop-up (see Fig. 5.17). Such a conversion cannot help but make little of a narrative. But many recraftings of the tale as a children's book have reflected pains on the part of their authors and illustrators to scrutinize the sources. After sifting through earlier versions, they have created new narrations and presentations consonant with the meanings they have found encoded in their predecessors. Such refashioning has functioned well within the confines of illustrated literature for the youth market.



Fig. 5.17 Pop-up of *The Little Juggler* (New York: Dial, 1991), opened to display climactic scene, with story pages in front.

A retelling that hewed closely to the older tradition appeared in 1954, the work of **Mary Fidelis Todd** (see Fig. 5.18). A graphic designer, she specialized in writing and illustrating children's books. She acknowledged that **many forms had been written**. Beyond the staples by Anatole France and Jules Massenet, she was aware of dramatizations for radio and television. She also singled out for special credit and commendation the version by Ruth Sawyer in her *Way of the Storyteller*. The tale's association with oral storytelling, legend, and folktale—even when the orality has

been substantially bogus—has helped secure for the juggler a niche in children's literature akin to that of fairy tale and myth.

If one dimension of Todd's attraction to the narrative lay in storytelling tradition, another was the draw of recounting a miracle of the Virgin that hinged on an image. A few years later she returned to similar terrain in writing of [Saint Catherine Labouré](#). This Frenchwoman was born in 1806. When nine years old, she suffered the death of her mother. Shortly after the funeral and burial, the girl reputedly adjourned to her parents' bedroom, clambered up on a chair, took down a statue of Mary that stood on a shelf, embraced it, and declared "Blessed Mother, [you must be my Mother now.](#)"



Fig. 5.18 The juggler before the Virgin. Illustration by Mary Fidelis Todd, 1954. Published in Mary Fidelis Todd, *The Juggler of Notre Dame: An Old French Tale* (New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill, 1954), 35. Image courtesy of McGraw Hill. All rights reserved.



Fig. 5.19 Zoé embraces the Madonna and Child. Illustration by Mary Fidelis Todd, 1956. Published in Mary Fidelis Todd, *Song of the Dove: The Story of Saint Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1956), 29.

Many years later, Labouré joined a Society of Apostolic Life (not an order of nuns) known as the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. In 1830, she witnessed [two episodes](#) in which the Mother of God made herself felt, seen, and audible to her. Despite having had [no formal schooling](#), the young woman rendered punctilious accounts of what she saw and heard in these experiences. She was forthcoming with

much detail about *Mary's attire and coiffure*. She was also unrelenting on the blaze of white light that preceded the Virgin, and the beams of jewel-colored luminosity that emanated from her hands.

Labouré received direction to have medallions struck after a *design that was revealed to her* in a vision (see Fig. 5.20). The visionary was assured that those who draped these tokens around their necks would be granted exceeding grace. The first specimens were minted in June of 1832. At most two years later, the badge came to be called simply the Miraculous Medal, in recognition of the miracles that were subsequently attributed to it by its wearers. The timing was propitious (or in another sense singularly unpropitious), since the recurrence of a cholera epidemic in Paris soon instigated a blind panic. In 1834, 150,000 of the pendants were distributed; in the following year, ten times that number. In the first decade in which the item existed, *more than 100 million circulated* both in France and abroad.



Fig. 5.20 Catherine Labouré's Miraculous Medal of the Immaculate Conception, ca. 1832. Photograph from Wikimedia, 2007, CC BY-SA 3.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Miraculous\\_medal.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Miraculous_medal.jpg)



Fig. 5.21 Postcard of the tomb of Catherine Labouré, Paris (early twentieth century).

The saint-to-be died on December 31, 1876, in the momentous 1870s. The end-of-days elements in the apparitions she perceived in 1830 were widely credited with foretelling the turmoil that befell France forty years later, during and after the Franco-Prussian War. When disinterred, Catherine Labouré's body was discovered to be incorrupt. Since then, the corpse has been displayed in Paris in a glass casket at one of the places where Mary appeared to her (see Fig. 5.21). The visionary was beatified in 1933, a year in which many sightings of the Virgin took place in Belgium, and canonized in 1947. The apparitions Labouré experienced resemble those of the tumbler from the Middle Ages in a way that sets them apart from the other six officially certified ones that ensued in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both the medieval lay brother and the nineteenth-century saint witness their visions within the confines of a cloistered religious community, and both are exempted from the public investigation outside that environment that became routine later. They resemble each other further in their anonymity. The tumbler is left unnamed in the two medieval accounts, while Catherine Labouré's name and the nature of her exposure to the unearthly were suppressed until long afterward.

The tale of the juggler is easily encapsulated in a summary of just a few words. To approach the evidence from the Middle Ages, the late thirteenth-century Latin exemplum could have been a distillation, whether direct or indirect, of the account related in the French poem from a few decades earlier. Alternately, the précis in the learned language could itself have been the takeoff for the poetic work in the demotic. To leap forward more than a half millennium, Anatole France could have elaborated his famous short story from a single evocative sentence in Gaston Paris. Then again, he may have received additional inspiration from hearing Raymond de Borelli recite his poetastery on the same theme.

In 1954, the legend of the juggler saw its inaugural printing in a textbook for fledgling Latinists. The abridged translation, under the title "Our Lady's Juggler," appears not in a children's book for entertainment but in a schoolbook for pedagogic purposes that can be imagined pocked with notes and battered in a knapsack. Amusingly, the version in this primer reconstitutes the story into Latin, nearly seven hundred years after its medieval precedent, but without awareness of it. In the short text, the protagonist is a juggler called Iohannes, corresponding to the French Jean. The choice of name and other features point straight toward Massenet. In the dead of a cold spell, the impoverished performer is taken in by Cistercians of Clairvaux. For two days, he has languished in a ditch. The white monks find him nearly starved to death. The brethren allow him to overwinter among them. A long while later, the Latin John droops in dejection over his inability to offer praise to the Virgin as the other denizens of the abbey do. Eventually, he finds a means of expressing himself in her honor. In the Marian month of May, he recounts one of his old stories and turns a cartwheel. The crisis in the tale is touched off when the brothers find out about the entertainer's seemingly sacrilegious behavior: their analphabetic lay associate has failed to mind

his monastic p's and q's. The abbot, just as he is poised to cast the juggler out of the chapel, is intercepted when the Madonna comes to life, smiles, and blesses the juggler.

In 1959, the prolific children's book illustrator Barbara Cooney won the first of her two [Caldecott Medals](#), for an adaptation of Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Nun's Priest's Tale," [one of the \*Canterbury Tales\*](#). [A reviewer praised her](#) for her successful medievalism, with illustrations that "spread brilliantly over the pages, the country scenes filled with medieval details gleaned from study of old manuscripts." In 1961, the author, doubtless heartened by her earlier triumph, tried her hand in [her second picture book](#) at another tale from the Middle Ages—ours (see Fig. 5.22). [She professed](#) to have had a lifelong infatuation with the legend that confirmed her ambition to be a children's book illustrator. She had had her first brush with the jongleur of Notre Dame one Christmas some fifteen years earlier (in 1945 or thereabouts), when she heard a radio enactment. This exposure stimulated her to instill her version with a holiday theme, by relating how a little juggler searched for a gift especially suited for Christ and his mother. Her leading character is a penniless orphan who triumphs over penury when he realizes that he may make a gift of his skills as a performer.

When *The Little Juggler* was reissued some two decades after its first appearance, Cooney called the reprinting her contribution to the yuletide season. Her foreword to the reprint from 1982 gives a succinct and well-read summation of [the modern reception](#). When readying herself for the inaugural edition, she took in earnest her responsibilities as an illustrator by going on [a preparatory expedition to France](#) to familiarize herself with Tours and Normandy—and she infiltrated into her creation scenes based on what she saw. She gave serious attention in general to the Middle Ages, as an object for historicizing representation, and in particular to the early thirteenth-century tale of the jongleur. On the French research trip, she even obtained photographs of the only manuscript of the original verse that contained an illumination. In her text, she slips in here and there specimens of archaizing vocabulary and morphology: "methinks" and "naught" set the scene for the explicit "Here endeth the story of the little juggler of Our Lady." Of a different order, she drops casually [a simile lifted from the medieval French poem](#) that describes a bull calf leaping and bounding before its mother. Additionally, she chanced to acquire a copy of the story in a Spanish-language children's book: this must have been the remodeling of the tale that [a Spanish author](#) had published in 1942 in Chile. Although she knew full well the literary background to the narrative, she presents it at the outset as oral: a "tale I now will tell you even as it was told to me."

[The style she chose](#) for her artwork resembles the spareness of some theatrical and operatic stage scenery, a quality that recurs later in Tomie dePaola's illustrations of his version for children. [This tendency](#) for the visual settings of picture books to resemble the painted backgrounds in theater sets is widespread. The most moving testimony to Barbara Cooney's love for the story is that [she resolved to name her son](#), even before his conception, after its hero. In the reprint, she dedicated the book to that child, the present-day Barnaby Porter, whose first name indicates that [his mother fused](#), as



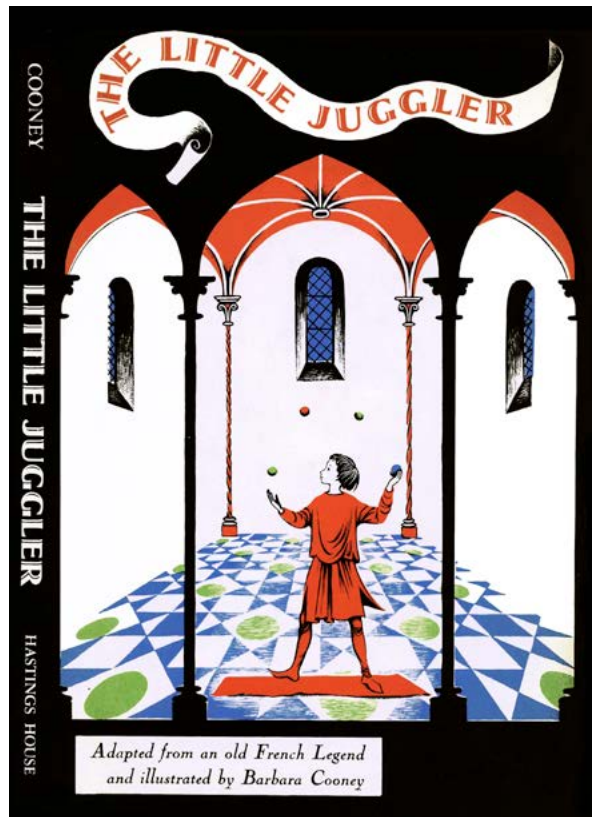


Fig. 5.22 Front cover of Barbara Cooney, *The Little Juggler* (New York: Hastings House, 1961). Image courtesy of the Barbara Cooney Porter Royalty Trust. All rights reserved.

many tellers both before and after her have done, elements of both the medieval tale itself and Anatole France's adaptation. In turn, her adaptation exercised appreciable influence on [later authors](#) of children's literature.

Between the first printing and the reprinting of the narrative by Cooney, [Louis Untermeyer](#) composed a retelling of it in 1968 (see Fig. 5.23). In one distinctive feature of the reworking by this prolific former US Poet Laureate, the juggler learns from a dream that he should express his devotion to the Virgin by doing his routine for her. The character is described as "little" only once in the story. The rest of the time, the emphasis rests mainly upon his destitution. He is emphatically a poor little entertainer. By being impoverished in the real world, and lacking stature within the powerful institution of the monastery, he bore a resemblance to the author himself. In the preceding decade, Untermeyer had been blacklisted during the days of the House Un-American Activities Committee. He may not have been a practicing communist, as he was accused of being, but by the time when he wrote his later précis of the tale about the medieval performer, he had not lost the concern for the powerless and

needy that his early Marxism had inculcated in him. In addition, the mishap gave him to understand (better than ever before) the plight of lacking resources, having trouble securing gainful employment, and suffering from espionage by hostile colleagues. Untermeyer had more than enough reason to identify with the medieval protagonist.



Fig. 5.23 The juggler performs before the Madonna. Illustration by Mae Gerhard, 1968. Published in Louis Untermeyer, *The Fire Bringer, and Other Great Stories* (New York: M. Evans, 1968), 209. Image courtesy of Rowman & Littlefield. All rights reserved.

In a 1991 account by Joe Hayes, the story bears one of its conventional titles, “The Juggler of Notre Dame.” The piece appears in a [booklet](#) that assembles seven holiday tales. The storyteller recasts children’s versions along the lines of *The Little Juggler*, in which the hero is represented as a ragamuffin, by fusing it with other forms, in which the poor fellow is portrayed as being in his dotage: the narrator leaps from the juggler’s boyhood to his twilight years. He sets the story on Christmas Eve and makes the miracle that the ailing old artist, far from being the mere whelp he once was, can measure up as well as he ever did in his youth, and thereby brings a smile to the previously dour faces on a beautiful carving of the Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus in her arms. The aged man passes away from a burst heart just after heaving aloft a bright red ball, which the image of the child holds at the end of the narrative.

In 1999, a team of two brothers, the author Mark Shannon and the illustrator David Shannon, revamped the tale radically in *The Acrobat & the Angel*. Their reconsideration accentuates the outsized strength and spirit that are discernible even in undersized

children. In their collaborative retelling, the standout is a boy called Péquelé—a tipoff that the author had been exposed to [the version of our story by Henri Pourrat](#). The future leaper is introduced when still a baby. Soon he loses his mother and father to the plague, bringing a characteristically medieval touch to the narrative. Now an orphan, the youth has no memory or souvenir of his progenitors, besides a homegrown angel that his mother had fashioned for him from sprays of dried flowers. The penniless, orphaned unfortunate goes to live with his grandmother. A born acrobat, he can alleviate their abject poverty only by the pittance he earns from his busking. After his elderly caregiver too dies, he falls on still harder days. Ultimately, he collapses by a roadside cross. The waif awakes to find himself in a friary, where he has been taken in by an open-hearted monk.

Initially, the head of the monastery expostulates with Péquelé, who has been doing handsprings and back flips before a statue of an angel, and makes him promise to give up his acrobatics (see Fig. 5.24). Then, a woman arrives with an infant suffering from the pathogen. The stealthy performer breaks his earlier word and cheers up the dying babe by turning somersaults. The abbot is incensed at this disorderly conduct and ejects the restive boy-athlete from the brotherhood. Even so, Péquelé reenters to entertain the angelic effigy one final time. At this juncture, the image becomes animate and the messenger of God carries him aloft to heaven. Thereafter a statue of the acrobat himself is erected to replace the one that has flown the coop, the tot is healed (see Fig. 5.25), the pestilence subsides, and all ends happily. Rather than being punished, the boy is rewarded for putting on a show.



Fig. 5.24 The boy acrobat soars. Illustration by David Shannon, 1999. Published in Mark Shannon, *The Acrobat and the Angel* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999), 22–23. Image courtesy of David Shannon. All rights reserved.



Fig. 5.25 The mother and her plague-ridden infant, now healed. Illustration by David Shannon, 1999. Published in Mark Shannon, *The Acrobat and the Angel* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999), 28. Image courtesy of David Shannon. All rights reserved.

In the picture book by the Shannons, the generous heroism of the good-as-gold gymnast is brought home by the protectiveness he shows toward a person still smaller and more vulnerable than himself. Among other changes worth contemplating is the replacement of the Madonna by a carving of an angel. This modification makes the story a shade more ecumenical, while simultaneously maintaining a kind of gender balance among the main actors. Visually, the role of Mary and the baby Jesus is filled through the mother with the plague-infected little one. In the acrylic illustrations, the characters are framed within stone archways adorned with flowers and gargoyles.

The success of *The Acrobat & the Angel* may have spurred the Shannons to return five years later to another medieval topic, in *Gawain and the Green Knight*. The Middle Ages can be habit-forming. In due course, the siblings' volume on the boy wonder was featured in a manual geared to middle-school teachers who wished to [incorporate picture books and novels](#) into their curricula. A section on miracles discusses the illustrated retelling by the two brothers, and the suggested study questions demand that pupils define a miracle and devise modern equivalents. As for the nature of the Middle Ages, the slant is unambiguous: "[The plague and many other hardships](#) were a part of medieval life. Why do you think miracles were an important part of these people's beliefs?" The spirit is materialized, the miraculous rationalized. Welcome to the twenty-first century. For all the claims of moral superiority over the past that some of its inhabitants may make, our era is, like all its predecessors, not without its favoritisms and prejudices about earlier times, peoples, and individuals. The juggler can help, by making manifest that humility is in order.

## European Children's Literature

The tale of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* insinuated itself early [first into children's newspapers](#) and magazines, and then into comic book-like publications in France. Young adults were exposed to the narrative. The story was sometimes presented to these readers as having been composed by Anatole France but often as having emerged anonymously. Both perspectives have a modicum of truth to them. In any case, the information conveyed to youngsters corroborated the status of *Our Lady's Tumbler* as a universal tale, folktale, or saint's life. The narrative's circulation in comics assisted in promulgating it in other guises for youthful audiences, such as popular fiction and cinema. Many other media purvey images of jongleurs that are colorfully [indistinct and historically inaccurate](#).

A [children's movie made in France](#) in 1965, with animated puppet-like figures, deserves more than passing mention. In it the fiction, in a modified form of Anatole France's version, is treated respectfully but also not without gentle humor. The French author himself, with his refined irony, would have approved. The events take place in the Middle Ages. A juggler named Barnabas has success by summer, but war, winter, and famine drive him to a sorry pass of grinding poverty, teeth-chattering cold, and aching hunger. A monk in transit finds him freezing and frostbitten, and brings him to his monastery. In the abbey, the entertainer tries and fails at various vocations. From these vicissitudes, he realizes that he is unsuited to any monastic function. Despondent, he darts into the church one night and displays his craft to the Virgin. The other brothers have been stumped and frustrated by their odd guest. Awakened by the racket, they arrive in the nick of time to see Barnabas keel over, as if dead, to the ground.

The brethren's astonishment increases when they see a rose drop miraculously from Mary's hand upon the juggler as he lies before her. [The motif of the flower](#) at the end of the tale is familiar from other medieval miracles of the Virgin. The rose and lily are both associated with sanctity, although the red more often with martyrs and the white with virgins—and therefore the Virgin with a capital V. Since the gesture takes place unbeknownst to the performer and sometimes even after his death, the floral touch could be related to the secrecy that since the sixteenth century has been associated with the rosaceae family. Who could forget the expression “sub rosa,” describing something done behind closed doors?

The prominence of armed conflict in the animation may well reflect the tensions of the Cold War. Worry about nuclear armageddon was so widespread that we should not feel obliged to seek out a proximate source. Alternatively, the blossom and the bellicosity could be an implicit nod toward R. O. Blechman's storybook and animated cartoon from the 1950s, both of which radiated a like concern with the perils of warfare. Although the French translation of his protographic novel came into print only early in the third millennium, Blechman may well have been a known quantity in France long before then among cognoscenti.

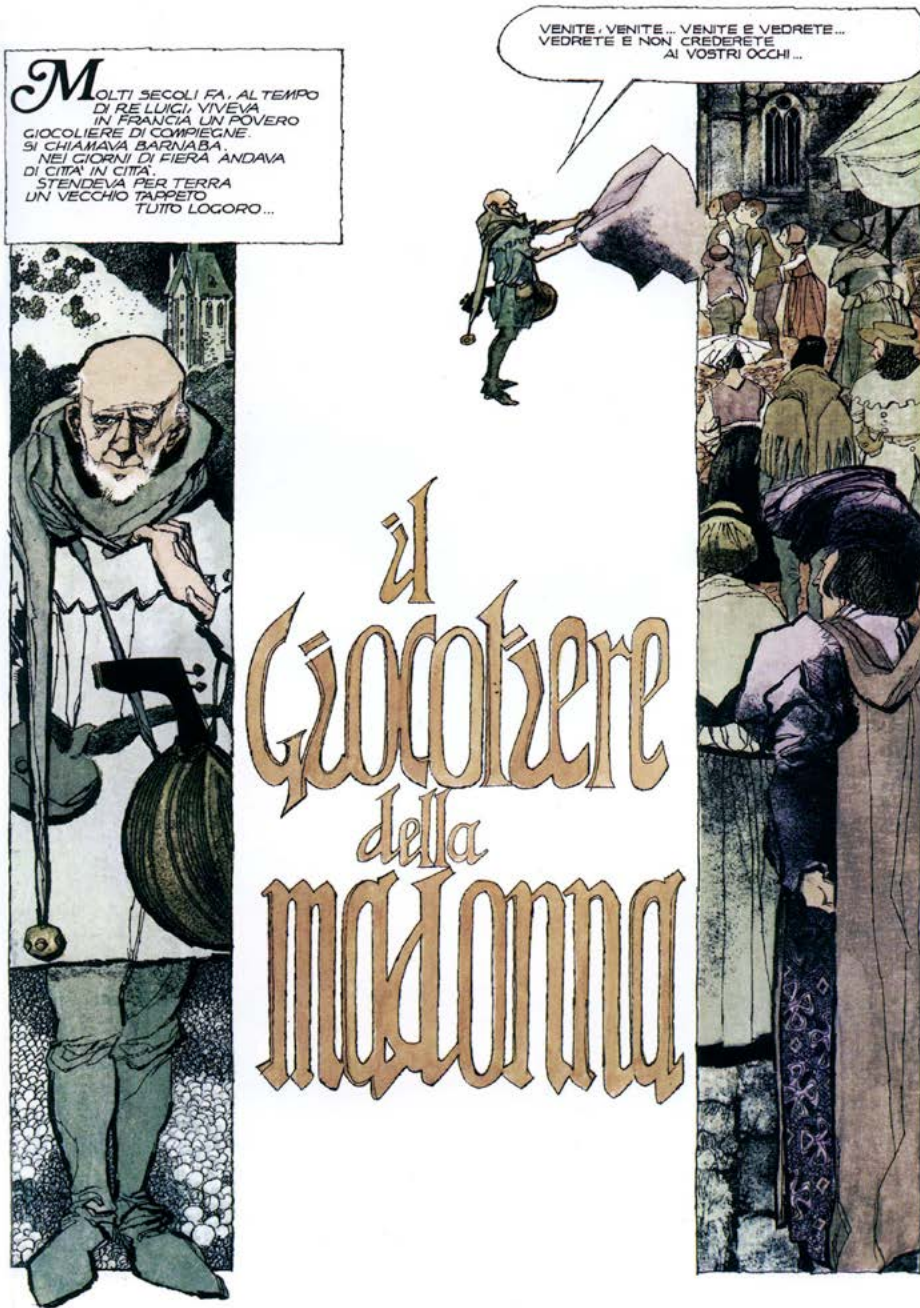


Fig. 5.26 First page of "Il giocoliere della Madonna" (1976), in Dino Battaglia, *Leggende*, 2nd ed. (Grumo Nevano, Italy: Grifo Edizioni, 2004), 35. Image courtesy of Grifo. All rights reserved.

PER TUTTO IL RESTO DELLA NOTTE,  
CONTINUO' AD ESIBIRSI  
IN ONORE DELLA MADONNA.  
LO SPETTACOLO NON GLI ERA  
MAI RIUSCITO COSI' BENE!



FINALMENTE SI FERMO.  
IL CUORE GLI BATEVA  
FORTE FORTE  
PER LO SFORZO.



AD UN TRATTO  
GLI SEMBRO...



...NO, VIDE... VIDE PROPRIO CHE LA MADONNA  
SI TOGLIEVA DAL DITO L'ANELLO  
E, SORRIDENDO AMOROSAMENTE,  
LO GETTAVA AL SUO GIOCOLIERE.



AL MATTINO, IL SACRESTANO  
TROVO' IL CADAVERE  
DI BARNABA, DISTESO  
A TERRA, AI PIEDI DELL'ALTARE.  
AVEVA VICINO UN ANELLO,  
CHE STRANAMENTE  
SOMIGLIAVA A QUELLO  
SCOLPITO NEL DITO  
DELLA MADONNA!



Fig. 5.27 Final page of "Il giocoliere della Madonna" (1976), in Dino Battaglia, *Leggende*, 2nd ed. (Grumo Nevano, Italy: Grifo, 2004), 41. Image courtesy of Grifo. All rights reserved.

In 1976, the husband-and-wife team of Dino and Laura Battaglia created a short graphic novella, or long graphic short story, with a title that can be put into English as “[The Madonna’s Juggler](#)” (see Fig. 5.26). The Italian artist had earlier made a specialty of illustrating [fairy tales, children’s books, classic novels and short stories](#), and episodes from the Bible. At the outset, this comic book-like reimagining of the jongleur tale cleaves closely to Anatole France’s treatment, even down to the names of King Louis, Compiègne, and Barnaby. Yet the collaborators show and tell the main events more darkly than in the French Nobel prizewinner’s reconception. On the final three sides of this graphic novelization (or novella-ization), Barnaby withdraws from the monastery, enters the cathedral in a small city, and performs before a statue of the Madonna—without child. The miraculous occurs when, in an age-old motif influenced by accounts in which young men become engaged to statues, the Madonna lobs him [the ring from her finger](#). At this pinnacle, the entertainer expires (see Fig. 5.27).

A writer who engaged intensively with the juggler story and close analogues to it was Max Bolliger (see Fig. 5.28), a productive and highly regarded Swiss author of more than fifty books for children and young adults. A significant proportion of his tales relate to the Bible or Christian legend. For example, he published a kind of [hagiographic yearbook](#), in which he made sure that each month had at least a few saintly women and men with feast days in it. The first of these holy people is Simeon the Stylite, who took his epithet from having constrained himself to the ascetic isolation and containment of dwelling atop a freestanding column (*stûlos* in Greek). This pillar saint inspired the young Anatole France. The collection of saints’ lives also encompasses holy fools as well as all manner of other colorful legends.



Fig. 5.28 Max Bolliger. Photograph, before 2013. Photographer unknown.

Much of Bolliger’s oeuvre, moreover, is [set at Noel](#). In 1999, he came out with what is called in English [The Way to the Stable: A Christmas Story](#). The tale tells of a shepherd who could get around only with crutches and who lived alone in the hills until angelic voices led his peers to Bethlehem. After demurring from following them, the hesitant



herder, halt and lame, finally hobbles his way to the stalls where the animals are kept. Despite failing to locate the holy family, he finds that miraculously he is no longer crippled. Analogies to Amahl are strong.

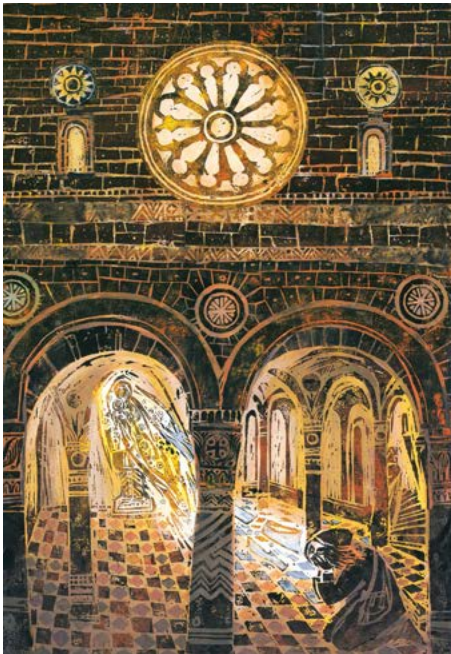
The closest to *Our Lady's Tumbler* among Bolliger's robust output—beyond his explicit retelling of the tale—may be the narrative of the [Christmas fool](#). The lead character is designated in the [Italian translation](#) by the term that denotes, and derives from, jongleur. An imbecile who resides in the East happens, like the three Magi, to catch sight of the astronomical prodigy of the star at Christ's birth. Bringing with him his only three possessions, he sets out to pay his respects, but on the way he gives away what he has brought. First, he offers his fool's cap to a paralytic; then, his bells to a blind boy; and finally, his flower to a deaf one. When at length he comes on scene, Mary would like someone to hold the Child. The three wise kings have their hands full with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, while Joseph is occupied with the animals in the stall. Consequently, the Virgin deposits the infant Jesus in the arms of the empty-handed and -headed Noel nincompoop. The moral of the story is that by giving away all that he possesses, the dolt acquires the prudence he craved at the outset. The theology is left unsaid, but Jacob becomes himself a throne of wisdom by supporting the member of the Trinity who embodies that quality.

In 1991, Bolliger published a beautifully illustrated Swiss children's storybook, under a title that could be rendered as *Jacob the Juggler: Newly Told, after a French Legend of the Thirteenth Century*. His German employs unfussy language and style well suited to the chief character and central topic. He relates how the jongleur rambles from place to place, tickling people's fancy with his dances and leaps. Eventually he endeavors to satisfy his craving for peace and quiet by joining monks in the seclusion of a monastery, but he soon realizes that he is an outsider among them. Through a miracle, the Virgin Mary brings the abbot and the other monks to the insight that God can take pleasure in the service even of a lowly jongleur. The tale as recounted by Bolliger warrants the qualification "newly told" that figures in the title. For a start, the protagonist is given the fresh name of [Jacob](#). The opening words of the text proper are the German equivalent of "[once upon a time](#)." Straightaway after the gambit of this stereotype, the juggler-tumbler is introduced. From other versions of the narrative, we have learned how readily it can shade into the fairy tale genre.

Although the essential contours of the story conform to the medieval poem, minor deviations from the account as recounted in the French verse from the Middle Ages begin almost at once. The title character is presented as "young," and depicted as being small. He forsakes the wayfaring life mainly because he dislikes the hubbub associated with performance. At the same time, Bolliger indicates subtly on the second page that he knows the original text and has grappled with it. Though he leaves nameless the monastery in which the juggler seeks refuge from the world, he tells how Jacob "wandered through a bright valley" to reach it (see Fig. 5.29), alluding subtly to the onomastic meaning of the French *Clairvaux*, "bright valley." Bolliger's retelling



Fig. 5.29 The juggler wanders through a valley. Illustration by Štěpán Zavřel, 1991. Published in Max Bolliger, *Jakob der Gaukler* (Zurich: Bohem, 1991), as now trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Jacob the Juggler* (Trieste, Italy: Bohem, 2018), 8–9. © Heirs of Štěpán Zavřel. All rights reserved.



Hidden behind a column, the abbot now also observed the amazing activity of the brother. He saw how he moved fervently and did not cease to dance until he sank in a faint to the floor. But at the same instant a bright form hovered down from the altar. It fanned cool air upon the juggler with a little cloth of fine linen, wiped the drops of sweat from his neck and brow, and gave him the sign of blessing. The abbot went off quietly from there. What he had witnessed put him in a cheerful and happy mood.

Fig. 5.30 The miracle of the Virgin. Illustration by Štěpán Zavřel, 2018. Published in Max Bolliger, *Jacob the Juggler* (Trieste, Italy: Bohem, 2018), 24–25. © Heirs of Štěpán Zavřel. All rights reserved.

glints with other distinctive features. For example, the unbookish and Latinless juggler pitches himself into gardening as a means of contributing to monastic work. He discovers underground a forsaken chapel, where he runs through his routine, but only after Mary speaks to him, through the intermediary of a statue of the Virgin and Child. The make-or-break miracle involves the Madonna. Amid a blaze of light, she fans the juggler with a linen cloth, pats down the sweat from his neck and forehead, and blesses him (see Fig. 5.30).



Fig. 5.31 Štěpán Zavřel. Photograph, 1992. Photographer unknown. Photograph Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stepan\\_Zavrel\\_a\\_1992-12-26\\_2.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stepan_Zavrel_a_1992-12-26_2.JPG)

The artwork came from [Štěpán Zavřel](#) (see Fig. 5.31), a Czech-born artist with a strong profile in children's book illustration. His contributions for *Jacob the Juggler* reflect the architecture prevalent in the Veneto region of northeastern Italy where he lived. Most germanely, he intensified the local flavor of a strictly Lombard Romanesque architecture, with thick walls and rounded ornamental arches. Zavřel's art here calls to mind [the style of woodblocks](#). Since at least the expressionists of the early twentieth century, above all in Germanic countries, woodcuts have been regarded as lending themselves especially well to material of medieval origins.

In 1996, another version for a youthful audience was produced elsewhere in Switzerland, in this case in Italian. Elena Wullschleger Daldini produced her first major children's book by teaming up with the artist Fiorenza Casanova. No sources are identified, but the title may be translated into English as *Barnaby the Jongleur: A Medieval Legend*. Despite the subtitle, this reinvention embroiders upon the tale as told by Anatole France and not upon the poem from the thirteenth century. The events are set in the kingdom of France in the reign of King Louis, and the main actor is a poor jongleur who bears the name that goes back to the late nineteenth-century short fiction.

More recently still, the medieval story's potential to be embellished in a mediaeval style has been exploited again in an engaging work of children's literature. In 2000, [Helena Olofsson](#) published *The Little Jester* in Swedish. Although the setting remains a French abbey in the Middle Ages, and the cynosure is again as sometimes in the past a boy, his profession has modulated to what is implied by the English title. Within the book, the author and illustrator of juvenile fiction placed intense emphasis upon the visual arts, focusing not only on the lovely pictures that illuminators from centuries ago painted in manuscripts, but also upon a depiction of a lachrymose Madonna located above the altar. The portrait of the boohooing Mary, the most beautiful in the monastery, is the object of Mariolatry. The monks execute their offices specifically in honor of the image, which "wept over all the bad things happening in the world" (see Fig. 5.32). The depiction of the weeping Virgin calls to mind miracles in which images, particularly statues, exude tears of water, blood, oil, or other liquids. In this case, the wonder happens when the representation of the Mother of God ceases to sniffle and instead [smiles](#) (see Fig. 5.33).



Fig. 5.32 The juggler performs. Illustration by Helena Olofsson, 2000. Published in Helena Olofsson, *The Little Jester*, trans. Kjersti Board (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren Bokförlag, 2002), 15. Image courtesy of Helena Olofsson. All rights reserved.

Olofsson's narrative appears in a children's hardcover, not a historical treatise. At the same time, she puts her finger inadvertently on a pattern that reaches back centuries. In 1657, Wilhelm Gumpfenberg published in Latin the first impression of a sprawling handbook that could be called in English *Marian Atlas, or, On Miraculous Images of the Mother of God, throughout the Christian World*. By the definitive edition of 1672, the German Jesuit had expanded the initial assemblage of 100 entries to a grand total of 1200. Among a myriad of other occurrences, he recounted in the later expansion experiences that took place in Prato over two and a half years from July 6, 1484. During this period, individuals and throngs saw a *Madonna painted on the wall* of the prison house that seemed to them to become animate: its eyeballs rolled as if deep-set in their sockets, and its demeanor looked now heavy-hearted, now beaming. Eventually, *a basilica was built* on the site in commemoration. The church is called Santa Maria delle Carceri, which equates in English to Saint Mary of the Prison.

In Olofsson's telling, the unidentified boy jester, after being permitted to enter the abbey, accomplishes spine-tingling feats of balancing, prestidigitation, instrumentalism,



Fig. 5.33 The Madonna smiles. Illustration by Helena Olofsson, 2000. Published in Helena Olofsson, *The Little Jester*, trans. Kjersti Board (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren Bokförlag, 2002), 21. Image courtesy of Helena Olofsson. All rights reserved.

dancing, and juggling. His gags ravish the monks, antagonize the prior, and cause a miraculous outcome, when the teary-eyed Madonna cracks a smile. The book has pseudomedieval embellishments on six pages. These one half dozen sides are made to resemble rectos and versos of folios in codices from the Middle Ages, with meticulous illustrations and elaborate marginalia. Whatever the immediate sources of inspiration, the visual and textual handling of the tale by the Swedish children's author and adorer aims at fidelity to medieval culture, even if it alters the narrative by substituting the motif of the weepy painting for the statue. In a way, its [contrast of repentance with laughing](#) captures a salient aspect of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. The dust jacket sums up the hardback as being "about the transformative power of laughter and creativity." In its own way, the modern narrative holds very true to much of the spirit of the thirteenth-century French original. At the same time it imparts a sharply different spin. A young entertainer relieves the Virgin, rather than vice versa. Its happy ending has the jester retire from the monastery for a successful career.

Olofsson came across the legend while delving into the [history of the circus](#). One book on the big top offered a short wrap-up of the medieval story. Upon reading these few sentences, she was stirred to put aside her work on companies of traveling entertainers who perform in tents. Instead, she embarked upon the new project that would become *The Little Jester*. The situation resembles what we have seen at the latest since Anatole France: through scholarship, a writer is exposed to a précis of the narrative that she fleshes out into a telling of her own making.

As an art therapist (and practicing artist), Olofsson made out at the heart of the miracle a very zestful message about the power of art. In her psychological interpretation, the monastery represents a rigid personality that is ruled by a harsh superego, personified by the abbot. This leader keeps the abbey closed to the rest of the world and organizes life strictly. The order and stability come at the cost of joy. Depression follows, embodied in the weeping Madonna. The jester and child who is the hero of the story embodies artistry. He introduces creativity that revolutionizes the status quo within the abbey. The institution throws open its doors, both literally and figuratively. The monks gain charity, joy, and empathy with the destitute and vulnerable. As an index of the change for the better, the Madonna no longer mourns but smiles.

Worthy of additional note is an adaptation into German by [Tatiana von Metternich](#), published in 1999. This Russian-born princess, an émigrée to Germany, shaped a version of the tale in her adoptive language and in rhymed couplets, beautified with her watercolors. She situates the story in a small village, and stages events on August 15, the feast day of the Assumption of the Virgin into Heaven. The juggler, manipulating six golden balls, expects a payout from the festival attendees, but instead goes unregarded. He slips into the church, where he intermittently snoozes and prays admiringly to the Madonna, a richly bejeweled, pearl-studded, and veiled statue (see Fig. 5.34). Whereas the other worshipers arrive bearing more substantial offerings, his only contribution is to toss his half dozen spheres. Unfortunately, the parishioners, when they step on scene, disapprove with more than mere pursed lips or pouts; they

strong-arm him to his knees and trample his juggling equipment underfoot. As they do so, the image comes to life, bends down, and gently lays her pearly veil upon the juggler's tear-smudged face (see Fig. 5.35). The churchgoers now understand that heartfelt humility alone can win blessing. Metternich presented her book as a religious offering, to bring home the acceptability of gifts, whether offertory candles, alms, or humble artwork (presumably such as her own publication), as a kind of prayer.



Fig. 5.34 Tatiana von Metternich, *Der Gaukler der Jungfrau Maria* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Modul, 1999), 16.



Fig. 5.35 Tatiana von Metternich, *Der Gaukler der Jungfrau Maria* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Modul, 1999), 24.

A relative Johnny-come-lately is a specimen of children’s literature from Italy called, to put the title into English, *Maria’s Juggler* (see Fig. 5.36). This slim paperback, dated 2005, purveys a retelling very much along the lines of Anatole France’s tale. This version is printed by a religious publishing house, in a series—as stated on the cover—of “exquisite stories, legends, and tales from the Bible and the Christian tradition.” This product aims to bring home two themes. One is that everyone has something to give. The other is that the devotion of the little juggler and acrobat, because of its sincerity, gratifies the Virgin more than the supposed piety of the other brothers. Here the performer is called Barnabè, the Italian equivalent of the name first attached to the protagonist by Anatole France. Despite his inability to write or to intone liturgical song, this character has tricks and stunts that please one and all. In the climactic episode, the monks see him as he runs through his routine, but they troop away in silence after Mary strokes his forehead with her veil (see Fig. 5.37).

The tale was implanted for a long while in the canon of French scholastic literature in almost the opposite spirit. This canonization can be traced in treasuries of stories for both primary and secondary school. For instance, the narrative was enshrined among a section of fabliaux in a [high school textbook](#) that became a standard from 1960. It was assigned a four-word heading that means “[The Notre Dame Tumbler](#),” but for all its brevity it served notice in two ways that the reader is about to be transported into olden times. First, in modern French, the noun for “tumbler” evoked problematic



Fig. 5.36 Front cover of Alberto Benevelli, *Il giocoliere di Maria*, illus. Manuela Marchesan (Milan, Italy: San Paolo, 2005).



associations of “lady’s man.” To eschew those connotations carried by *tombreur*, the substantive had to be construed in an obsolete sense. Second, the preposition was omitted that nowadays ordinarily signals “of.” Thus, both vocabulary and syntax made perfectly clear that the short title was not to be taken at face value.

The introductory remarks point to Christian virtues of humility and penance. A reference to the twelfth-century cult of Mary leads in turn to mention of the Marian poet Gautier de Coinci. The most famous of fabliaux about miracles of the Virgin is purportedly *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. The anthology makes no bones that this edifying narrative inspired first Anatole France and then Jules Massenet. In broad strokes, adolescent readers were afforded insights into French culture of the Middle Ages as the elite of around 1960 still wished, not without appreciable justification, to envisage it: Christian values, veneration of the Virgin, a major author, and two significant genres, fabliau and miracle. Equally important, the equivalent of high-school students in France received a reassuring suggestion that their national culture stretched stably and continuously from seven or eight centuries earlier up to what was then the present day: Frenchness was a bridge, Gothic and cutting-edge like its Brooklyn peer, grounded sturdily at one end in the medieval period and at the other in modernity.

After selected passages paraphrased in present-day French, the textbook poses a battery of to-the-point queries. Some relate straightforwardly to the actions and motivations of the principal character, such as why the jongleur decided to pray



Fig. 5.37 Alberto Benevelli, *Il giocoliere di Maria*, illus. Manuela Marchesan (Milan, Italy: San Paolo, 2005), 25–26.

as he did, what feelings motivated him, and how the author depicted his physical movements. Others trend to the more sophisticated. For example, the young reader is quizzed on how the poet conjured up an atmosphere befitting what could be put clumsily into English as the “[Christian marvelous](#).” This term refers to a range of phenomena, from dragons and demons through ghosts and resurrections. The rapid-fire questions asked of the text build up to the most mystifying puzzle of all, namely, what lesson is to be drawn from this edifying tale?

A later collection, pitched at elementary-school readers eight to twelve years of age, spotlights [a fiction by a writer](#) who has made a specialty of historical novels set in the medieval era. Although the book is not packaged explicitly as dealing with France, the cover is awash in Gallic heroism, cleverness, and gravitas. To be specific, it depicts the climactic scene in the *Song of Roland* in which the dying hero sounds the horn Oliphant. In smaller circles to the left it shows Reynard the Fox and Charlemagne. The blurb on the back cover concludes “Ten tales, legends, and fables for journeying into the terrible or comic world of our Middle Ages”: no doubt can exist that the first-person possessive plural in this case is a stand-in for French.

The miscellany is entitled, to translate into English, *Tales and Legends of the Middle Ages*. In its table of contents, our narrative is classed among “[moral or edifying tales](#),” as a subdivision of *fabliaux*. To all appearances, the jongleur owes his place among such comic stories to nothing more substantial than its brevity. The piece is paired, somewhat bizarrely, with the *fabliau* known as “[The Divided Horse Blanket](#).” At the same time, it would be unfair not to acknowledge that the compiler demonstrates close knowledge of either the thirteenth-century French prototype or a trustworthy modern translation of it.

A [third volume](#) of medieval stories for children was printed in 2004. It is devoted to a [fairy-tale world](#) ruled by a harsh dualism. This compilation has notes and detailed queries about culture and Christianity in the Middle Ages. In this compendium, the medieval entertainer takes a place amid such mixed company as the biblical Samson and Delilah (to whom fleeting reference is also made in Anatole France’s short story), the Odyssean Ulysses and Polyphemus, the Greek mythological Apollo and Daphne, and the more recent fairy-tale characters Cinderella and the clever little tailor. *Our Lady’s Tumbler* is subsumed within a larger class of fictions, “[marvelous tales](#).” This subgenre would correspond to the technical term “[wonder tales](#)” or to the less precise “[fairy tales](#).” [The narrative from the thirteenth century is labeled specifically](#) as belonging to “[Christian marvelous](#),” to all intents and purposes a domain parallel to the officially approved “[miraculous](#).” This world seems to be well on the way to the fantastic, and hence the science fiction with which in due course the American sci-fi writer [Robert Heinlein](#) associated the story.

The three French anthologies are too disparate to permit confident inferences and generalizations about the evolution of what is being made of *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. We might speculate that even in a present-day culture with a majority Christian population,

it remains conceivable to focus on situating the tale in the religious framework of the early thirteenth century. Yet what is emphasized about that setting may have passed over a watershed, in response to increasing secularization and changing demographics within the society of France. If the narrative can be merchandised mainly for its virtues as a literary fantasy, it may stand a better chance of not being ousted from the curriculum than by stressing the particularities of its relation to medieval Marianism.

Will it be feasible much longer to expect students in secondary school to be aware of an overarching French culture that joins Gautier de Coinci and fabliaux from the Middle Ages on the one side to Anatole France and Jules Massenet on the other? With much help from the results of sustained excavation into the past of six or seven hundred years earlier, philologists, men of letters, composers, and others in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constructed a nationalizing high culture for France that held strong for more than a century. Now it needs reevaluation, which will culminate at least in modification, or at the most extreme in abandonment.

## Global Children's Entertainment

José Maria Sánchez-Silva is the only author from Spain who has ever been awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Award for children's literature. In his early reportage and other writings he was tied closely to both the [Spanish Fascist Party](#) (also known as Falangism) and the Catholic Church. Partly on the strength of his own tumultuous childhood experiences in an orphanage-like facility, this writer published in 1952 a compact novel with a title that means literally in English *Marcelino Bread and Wine*. This work has been interpreted as responding to the ideological needs of the Nationalist Catholicism of [the Franco regime in Spain](#) at the time. The fiction achieved broad fame in 1954, when it was made into a [Spanish-language film](#), under its original title *Marcelino pan y vino* (Marcelino bread and wine) and with a screenplay by the novelist. Since then it has [lived on in various media](#).

The novella, along with sequels concerned with the same title character, tells of an orphan in the early twentieth century who as a newborn was forsaken at a Franciscan friary. Grown into a rambunctious rascal, this Marcelino comes into conflict with the friars. Among other things, they warn him not to set foot in the garret, where they claim that a bogeyman lives. True to form, the rascal disobeys. In the space above, his blood curdles: it scares the living daylights out of him to see what he takes to be the spook. Because of this and other perceived misconduct, the child is shunned with silence by the monks. During this phase, he returns to the attic and discovers there an image of Jesus on the Cross. When the young rogue delivers the offertory—the bread and wine offered at the Eucharist—Christ comes to life, descends from the crucifix, nibbles and sips the offerings, and begins to catechize Marcelino. Through a chink in the door, the brothers spy on the boy, and witness a miracle. The statue cradles the scamp in its arms and, by allowing him to die, grants the youth his wish to see first

his own mother and then Christ. The brethren burst into the top-floor room to see the child shrouded in a heavenly glow. Subsequently Marcelino is buried beneath the monastery chapel and becomes the object of veneration.



Fig. 5.38 Film poster for *Marcelino pan y vino*, dir. Ladislao Vajda (Filmayer, 1954).

The parallels between Sánchez-Silva's piece and the juggler story are striking. In both, the setting is an abbey. The hero is a newcomer and nonmember, whose role is to be seen and not heard. He goes apart to a separate realm and altitude within the institution, where he finds a representation. The carving becomes animate. The religious see it come to life. The outsider dies and receives divine favor connected with Mary. The fundamental motif of the novella is an offering made to an image of Christ and the Virgin, here specifically [a crust brought by a boy](#). Sánchez-Silva gives away a scintilla of anxiety as to his originality in the composition, since he professes to have heard its kernel from his mother. The chief motif is attested widely in medieval Latin texts, from the early twelfth century on, and later in vernacular languages. Designated by folklorists as "Food for the Crucifix," the narrative can be condensed at its most rudimentary to a two-sentence summary: "A pious (or simple) boy [offers bread to a statue](#) (or crucifix or image of Christ or the Virgin Mary). As his reward, he is entertained in heaven."

As in the tales of the little percussionist, littlest angel, and little juggler, the little boy in Sánchez-Silva's account is at once adorable, in the loose extension of the word, and an adorer in the technical sense. Tellingly, the main difference is that the Marcelino

story has as its crux (forgive me) love interrupted and resumed. The yearning for a mother who has passed away is completed and fulfilled through a worship of Christ that leads to the Virgin Mother. The only father figure is the abbot, who is a bystander in comparison with the Madonna.

The narrative of *Marcelino Bread and Wine* has thrived across the globe, not only among Spanish speakers in both the Old and New Worlds but also in the [Philippines and Japan](#). Thus it has fared well in many cultures in which the juggler has prospered in recent decades in children's literature—but that is another story. The success of the one does not come at the cost of the other: Marcelino, the little drummer boy, the littlest angel, and the juggler are not pitted against one another in cage fighting with fisticuffs and worse, forced to compete in a narrative “survival of the fittest.”

### Folktale or Faketale?

When speaking metaphorically of bread crumbs, we allude—whether knowingly or not—to the second trail that the brother lays down to save his sister and himself in the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel. The first such line of markers worked: the siblings could follow white pebbles to return safely home from the forest. This other one fails, because birds eat them: the track disappears. In literary scholarship, surviving books and manuscripts are the bright little stones. Bread crumbs are oral versions that may or may not have existed.

From the early days of the tale's modern reception, the thinking of many writers about its origins has been foggy. Some, for the sake of a good story, have consciously distorted what they knew. Initially, people were led most often into the misapprehension that the medieval French poem was composed by Gautier de Coinci. The extensive verse *Miracles of Our Lady* by the Benedictine monk and poet has been presented far more than once, incorrectly, as the direct inspiration for *Our Lady's Tumbler*. Later, other interpreters took as a given that the audience-friendly narrative must have issued from oral culture. Since the 1940s at the latest, those who write and tell children's literature have played an old game, sometimes out of deliberate disingenuousness, at other times out of insouciance or ignorance. In any case, they have claimed that the modern traditions of *Our Lady's Tumbler* and even of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* originated in folktales told and not read. Now and again, authors and readers have advanced such claims despite being well acquainted with centuries of written sources for these accounts. Perhaps they should not be criticized too harshly. Since being recorded in texts, the tales have bobbed back and forth constantly between recorded and unrecorded media and performances. We do not know if *Our Lady's Tumbler* gave rise to orality, was born of it, or both. Even the beginnings of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* are cloaked in uncertainty: we cannot make definitive pronouncements about what Anatole France perused, heard, and imagined. In the end, the question of the relative weight to assign to written and oral transmission is an unanswerable “the chicken or the egg?”

The liner notes to a recording of John Nesbitt's "A Christmas Gift: The Story of Our Lady" make boldly optimistic claims about the nature and origins of the narrative, its relative popularity at the time when the radio personality dramatized it, and the kind of fame that it subsequently commanded. For starters, the text hypothesizes that the "old legend" arose in the mid-fifteenth century, ignoring that since the account was transmitted by word of mouth, not much can be stated definitively about its ultimate beginnings. For all that, with a confidence that would have resonated with Gaston Paris, it declares, "It comes from the simple people." Fast-forward to the mid-twentieth century. Now the folktale has allegedly been forgotten, but Nesbitt digs out of his father's trunk a supposedly original translation that he adapts. His version is soon followed by the 1942 short film and dozens of renderings in print. Conclusion? "Because thousands of children and grown-ups request it every Christmas season, **it will some day be as familiar** to our children as *The Christmas Carol*, or *Puss in Boots*, or *The Little Match Girl*." The assertion may not be a radical misrepresentation. The story seems to have a will to be told. For every great adaptation that threatens to become canonical, scores of other retellings or restagings of one kind or another remain largely unrecorded. Where oral traditions are concerned, the absence of evidence is not necessarily, as the saying goes, evidence of absence. Yet our culture, worrying constantly at the relative priority of speech and writing, requires recording to keep even the unrecorded alive. For most of human history, records have been written.

The cornerstone for transmuting the tale into a folktale was put in place in the early twentieth century, if not earlier. To take one intriguing example, in late 1908, the American modernist poet Wallace Stevens was working and living in New York City. In a letter to **his intended** during the first month of their engagement, he made no mention of Massenet's musical drama, which was very much in the air at that moment. Thanks to Oscar Hammerstein, it had just premiered with the much-touted New World innovation of having Mary Garden sing the lead *en travesti*. Though he made no mention of the opera, Stevens would surely have had reports of it in mind as he recapitulated the story:

**Once upon a time** there was a beggar who scraped together a living by juggling; and that was all he could do. One day he thought it would be easier for him to become a monk, so he entered a monastery. Being a man of low degree, he knew of no way to worship Our Lady except to juggle before her image. And so, when no one was looking, he did his few tricks and turned a somersault; and thereupon, Our Lady, being much pleased by his simplicity, smiled upon him, as she had never smiled on any monk before.—Now, suppose that, instead of doing his best, he had grieved about his short-comings, and offered only his grief. Would the image have smiled?—And a jig—and a jiggety-jiggety-jig. There is *my juggling, my dear*—and my somersault. I inscribe a record of it in the last chapter of *The Book of Doubts and Fears*.

Stevens's précis reduces the jongleur to a poverty-stricken panhandler, touches equally upon the character's juggling and tumbling (very much in keeping with the broad range of activities associated with medieval entertainers), emphasizes the

man's simplicity, and suggests an identity between the performer and himself as poet, as well as perhaps between Our Lady and his wife-to-be.

Most arrestingly, the restatement places the story unambiguously within the galaxy of fairy tales. Stevens even opens his text with the words "Once upon a time." We have seen this same gambit repeatedly in [other later versions](#) from throughout Europe and North America. A 1977 American presentation of the narrative in English appears in a collection entitled *Once-upon-a-Time Saints: Faith-Tales for Children*, which commences unsurprisingly with the formula "once upon a time" every single one of the saints' lives it contains (see Fig. 5.39), thus localizing the account explicitly in a space between hagiography and fairy tale that it has long occupied implicitly, perhaps even since it was initially recorded in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.



Fig. 5.39 The juggler. Illustration by Victoria Brzustowicz, 1977. Published in Ethel Marbach, *Once-upon-A-Time Saints: Faith-Tales for Children* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1977), 60.  
© Victoria Brzustowicz. All rights reserved.

Worldwide, the tale's presentation as a folktale owes much to the German folklorist and philologist Ernst Tegethoff. In an [anthology of French folktales](#) and fairy tales published in 1923, he included a summary of *Our Lady's Tumbler* as distilled carefully from the medieval French poem, flanked with an illustration of a jester-like tumbler making his moves in an elaborately Gothic chamber (see Fig. 5.40). Owing to the stellar status of both the Brothers Grimm and the folktale genre in the German-speaking world, Tegethoff's certification of the story as belonging within this genre has led to [its](#)

frequency inclusion in later bundles of such narratives from France. In such collections the original tale is still presented as a French folktale, but it is depicted as being through-and-through medieval in its contents—and this medievalness is upheld in artistic representations. In an illustration, the dancer may shed all jester-like garb in favor of monastic habit. All the same, the checkered black-and-white pavement remains, along with the densely interlacing lancets that cry out a Gothic gotcha!



Fig. 5.40 Frontispiece of Ernst Tegethoff, trans., *Französische Volksmärchen, aus älteren Quellen* (Jena, Germany: Eugen Diederichs, 1923).



Fig. 5.41 The leaping dancer. Illustration by Eva Raupp-Schliemann, 1976. Published in Ursula Rauch, trans., *Märchen aus Frankreich den Niederlanden und der Schweiz: Märchen europäischer Völker* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1976), 83.

Tegethoff was not out to misrepresent the facts. Far from it. By packaging the story as a folktale, he aligned the illiterate and nonclerical juggler with a genre that has long been imbued with such qualities. Even so, he at least sowed the seeds of mild confusion. Yes, the earliest extant text of the tale relates it to the exemplum, a form that was conventionally delivered aloud and sometimes derived explicitly from oral sources. Yes, the all-important character in the account was illiterate. Furthermore, he is even highlighted for his professional abilities in a nonliterate performance culture. But none of these possibly underlying conditions proves that the narrative originated as a folktale, or even that it ever passed into folk literature before the twentieth century, when the boundaries between the categories of popular and mass culture were effaced



by the advent of new media. In turn, the head-scratching engendered by Tegethoff's acceptance of *Our Lady's Tumbler* as a folktale relates to a larger syndrome, in which the categories of medieval, folk, and oral tradition are commonly conflated.

Even before the German folklorist, a professor of kindergarten education in the United States pieced together at the end of World War I an annotated bibliography of [Suggested Readings](#) for a Course in *Children's Literature*. The early selections of this publication from 1918 are fairy tales, fables, myth, etiologies, nature and animal stories, hero tales, ballads, and literary legends. Thereafter come "medieval tales and tales of the saints," a section rounded off by *Our Lady's Tumbler*. The bibliographer observes that the origins of such fictions are mostly unknown, but opines that "they grew up with the people and give something of a clue to the life, customs and traditions of the people whose times they represent. The[y] were not written for children but they constitute the best literature for them." Set in this context, the narrative could easily be imagined crossing from one category to another, especially once the transmission involved the major media—and mass culture was the logical extension of popular culture.

To take a case in point, the germ for the radio play by Remigio Vilariño is most likely to have been Anatole France's short story. Still, it would be rash to rule out completely the influence (instead or in addition) of recapitulations based on that prose, a translation of the thirteenth-century verse, or Jules Massenet's opera. In any event, the Spanish Jesuit covers his tracks as a habitual storyteller would do, under no coercion or compunction to footnote. The first two easy steps are to change the protagonist's nationality and to assign him and other characters [fresh names](#). The new brother's performance for the Virgin takes the form of not juggling but acrobatics, as in the medieval original. Vilariño caps the tale with a long moral, enjoining children, in honor of the Holy Virgin, to put forth their best efforts in all their chores, such as studying, running errands, and even playing games. In turn, he dangles before the well-behaved ones the promise of a quid pro quo. In return for good comportment, [the sweetest blessings will come from her](#). He presents the account to children as an incentive, even an inducement, to be workhorses even if only on the scale of Shetland ponies. The narrative taught that the sky (or heaven) was the limit for those with disciplined self-application and flat-out hard work. This approach is not unique in Catholic applications of the miracle. On the contrary, it bubbles to the surface in a gamut extending from early instructional manuals down to William J. Bennett and perhaps beyond. It gets at values intrinsic already within the medieval French poem. The tumbler enacts his prancing prayer again and again, to no effect of which he is aware. If he had known the law of diminishing returns, he would have refused to abide by it: he cares nothing about the ratio of outcome to endeavor.

The juggler narrative came to be peddled as if its oral origins were a matter of fact. The pattern began at the latest in 1942, with the debut edition of [The Way of the Storyteller](#) by Ruth Sawyer. The tale collector and re-teller indicated in a prefatory note that the "old French legend" had been reworked by Anatole France into a short story and by Jules Massenet into an opera. She stood by no means alone in styling the

account as legendary. In a 1966 version, the introductory note states unhesitatingly that the text “is based on a medieval legend” — while wresting the protagonist’s name Barnaby directly from Anatole France. In other words, the 1890 short story has been taken as an unexceptionable record of a fiction that originated as a legend from the Middle Ages. Here, “legend” signifies a traditional tale that is regarded as historically based, rather than the kind that relates to the life, death, and afterlife of a saint (as in the *Golden Legend*). Yet the narrative’s putative traditionalism was remote from France and Massenet. As we have uncovered, neither of them can be confirmed to have consulted even the inaugural written form, let alone the Latin exemplum. In fact, neither is sure to have perused even an extensive paraphrase of the thirteenth-century French poem. Instead, they relied on late nineteenth-century materials. In their wake ensued a succession of nontraditional approaches to this supposedly traditional material.

Sawyer’s own proximate source was avowedly Massenet, as seen and heard rather than as read. Despite her indebtedness to earlier texts, she begins the story proper as if it were substantially oral in origin and nature. This tack fits with her overall presuppositions about her métier, which she brought to the fore instantly in her first chapter on “Storytelling—A Folk-Art.” Yet her own craft is based indelibly on print. An image from about 1950 captures her as she sits in an armchair, not with a troupe of children hanging on her every word but rather solitary with a crammed bookcase behind her and a pensive expression on her face. An inscription in her handwriting on the reverse of the photograph reads “A ‘close-up’ and rather sad—but where I spend most of my time.” Sawyer’s hold on subsequent practitioners of children’s literature in the United States would be powerful. The folklorifying or fakelorfying references by professional storytellers coincide with the tale’s passage from printed books to radio, before it wended its way into television and film. They also occur in unison with the increasing use of the narrative as the basis for musicals to be performed for or by young people. The concerted folktale-ification of the story, and the concomitant suppression of its medieval origins, persisted. For instance, a volume entitled *The Little Juggler by Katherine Evans* was published in the series Christian Child’s Stories in 1960, with a proclamation on the title page that it was “based on a folk tale by Anatole France.”

The story, stripped of particularizing features such as its customary title or the name of its originally anonymous hero, has even been codified in a thirteen-tome conglomeration of what are passed off as authentic folktales from one region of France entitled *The Treasury of Tales*. The



Fig. 5.42 Ruth Sawyer. Photograph, ca. 1950. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of the St. Catherine University Library Archives and Special Collections. All rights reserved.

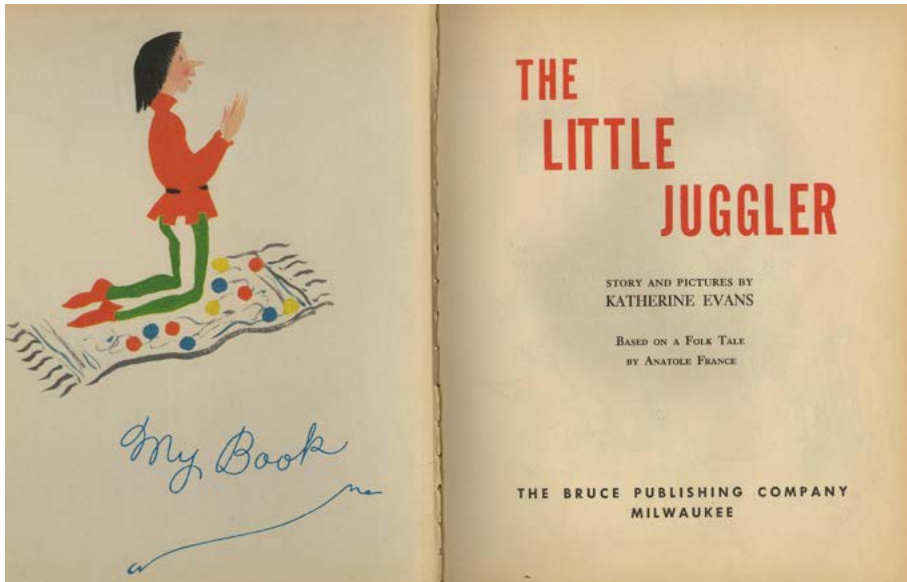


Fig. 5.43 Frontispiece and title page of Katherine Evans, *The Little Juggler* (Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1960).

whole endeavor was a one-man enterprise, intended to achieve results along the lines of the so-called *Grimms' Fairy Tales*. The narratives in it, which could be considered by equal rights either folktales or faketales, were rounded up in one specific region of France in the second quarter, and written up in the third quarter of the twentieth century. Our account found its niche in a volume called *The Fairies*, whose title acknowledges a presumption that the versions it contains are fairy tales. In this book, our tale is called "*Le Péquelé*," after the eponymous hero.

Henri Pourrat achieved his most long-lasting impact with *Gaspard of the Mountains*, a novel that unfolds in the early years of the nineteenth century. He began releasing it serially already in 1921, before completing publication in 1931. The fiction comprises four parts, each presenting seven evening gatherings that purport to recreate the atmosphere and narratives that would have been encountered in old-time oral storytelling as it was cultivated in Auvergne, a region of central France. The writer was born near Clermont-Ferrand, which happens to be where the first extant report survives for a Madonna carved in the round. Pourrat claims to have filled his strongbox of stories from fieldwork among tellers in the region. Once again, we find an overlap with medieval Marianism, for in the Middle Ages this area, more than any other, happened to be associated with carved "majesties" and "thrones of wisdom" that depicted Mary in a hieratic pose with the Christ child in her lap.

In 1910, Pourrat started to amass materials by making jottings based upon auditions of tales. In the 1930s, he began to bring into print versions he had harvested. Finally, between 1948 and 1962, he published methodically the fruits of his labors. The timing

of publication could have been dictated by the realities of life and research. After all, many investigators postpone writing up their results until their old age, to pile up beforehand as much data as they can. Good scholarship takes time, even without the disruption of a lengthy occupation and world war. Then again, the author may have had more than merely personal and practical motivations for his inventorying. His sprawling project to stockpile Auvergnat oral traditions could memorialize a gritty determination in the aftermath of World War II to conserve an endangered culture and vanishing ways of life. That commitment could have served broader purposes for his region and nation. In effect, he would have been a nativist, reinforcing what was inside and domestic over the outside and foreign. By assembling and preserving the heritage of a past that was evaporating, he may have sought to lift the spirits of French countrymen by turning their thoughts to former glories, before their humiliation (once again) at the hands of occupiers. From this vantage point, he would have been a patriot cut from the same cloth as Gaston Paris and company.



Fig. 5.44 Henri Pourrat. Photograph, date and photographer unknown.

Yet can we feel any confidence in dubbing Pourrat a loyalist to his nation in such a way? After the knockout punch dealt to the French by the Germans early in World War II, he became a Vichy star. [He has even been described](#) as the official writer of Pétainism. Among all his other writings, his undertaking to celebrate peasants and regional culture perpetuated many intellectual and moral values that had been stressed under Pétain. By staying glued to the enterprise after the war, he could have tacitly vindicated himself against accusations of being a collaborationist, and validated his unsavory bearing while France was subjugated. In effect, the project would have conveyed that his tradition-mindedness aligned with his altruism. Whatever assessment we reach, politicizing his work too intensely may have no point—or fairness. His activity as a self-schooled folklorist began long before the Nazi tanks rolled into France, it persisted through the years in which the German military gripped the country, and it came to fruition deep in the postwar period.

Whatever the brutal truth may be about Pourrat's private and public motivations in pursuing his research, his aggregation of material was sustained and sweeping. For all that, it would hardly attain any of the baselines that are advocated nowadays for scientific and systematic fieldwork by anthropologists, ethnographers, folklorists, and scholars of oral traditional literature. He did not jot down in even a pro forma way who told him which tale when. He presented material that was not only undocumented, but in addition not based on verbatim recording and literal transcription. His method, in fact a blunt instrument, was (ostensibly) first to listen to a storyteller, without scribbling notes, and later to write copiously from memory when he was back at home. If indeed he relied upon oral informants in constructing his version of our story, the variant he heard must have penetrated folkloric tradition ultimately from Anatole France's written words. Confluence with all sorts of other texts and media could also be imagined. The long and the short is that once again, the nineteenth-century short story has been taken as a guarantor for the existence of an authentic medieval legend.

Thus it would be erroneous to essentialize the motivations behind Pourrat's work. No one should be racked up or whittled down to conform to a Procrustean bed. Whatever role the author's wartime conduct played in his approach to the whole venture, he would have had good reason, during any of the decades in which he made his slow slog, to contribute as he could to [revitalizing the French spirit](#) after the bitter pill of World War II. After a long and barren winter from the Reformation until the Franco-Prussian war, *Our Lady's Tumbler* had first germinated and taken root for very similar reasons through the good offices of Gaston Paris.

For all that, Pourrat's adaptation of the tale may well have found more fertile fortune as a postwar windfall in the United States than in France. In America, the story was appreciated above all for its stirring soulfulness—not as fodder for budding jingoists. As a rule, the narrative's capacity to serve spiritual needs seems to upstage its potential for fulfilling flag-waving ambitions every time. The fact that the audience is now heavily and even predominantly American may matter less than that it comprises juveniles. Those superintending the posterity of Pourrat's project may have accepted the inevitability of the devolution toward children. The first comprehensive edition of his folktale or faketale collection was purveyed in volumes in which the selections were accompanied by beautiful woodcuts. The most promising opportunities for oral storytelling in present culture emerge in reading aloud and performing for youthful audiences, creating a circularity that distorts our perceptions of what folktales were, by making them more childish. At the same time, it favors casting the sources of children's literature as folktales rather than high literature.

The syndrome that infantilizes *Our Lady's Tumbler* and *The Juggler of Notre Dame* owes no small debt to the nineteenth century, when the Middle Ages were seen to be [a childlike stage](#) in the development of Western civilization as it was then thought of. Medieval European peasants were put on a par with aboriginal peoples of cultures that had been subordinated to colonial domination and even enslavement. Two grades of exoticism were conceived, one through chronological and the other through

geographical distance. On the one hand, an indigenous exotic was constructed from the strangeness of the temporally remote Middle Ages. On the other, the foreign exotic was constituted from the alienness of spatially far-flung empires. The oral traditions of both the medieval peasantry and more recently colonized peoples were felt to lend themselves well to being reformulated and retold for youthful audiences. An old saw holds that “children should be seen and not heard.” Whatever traction this principle of childrearing still has, many people would agree that books for the young should be visible and audible—and that thanks to the best of literature in this genre, they continue to be received lovingly through both senses.

### Tomie dePaola’s *The Clown of God*

The promotion of the narrative as a folktale became still more solidly entrenched in America after Tomie dePaola (see Fig. 5.45) published *The Clown of God: An Old Story* in 1978. This picture book, child-friendly as his productions have regularly been, enjoyed considerable acclaim in its original paper-and-ink medium. Beyond that conventional format, the tale was [first adapted for the stage](#) and later animated. DePaola is heralded above all for his nearly dozen volumes about *Strega Nona*, an old woman who unscrambles puzzles and solves problems for her fellow villagers. At the risk of evoking thoughts of witches burnt at the stake, you should know that this author of bestselling children’s books has had many irons in the fire apart from this stock-in-trade character. [Early in his career](#) he engaged with our story, drafting and illustrating in rough form a prospective book to be called *Our Lady’s Juggler: A Mediaeval Tale*.

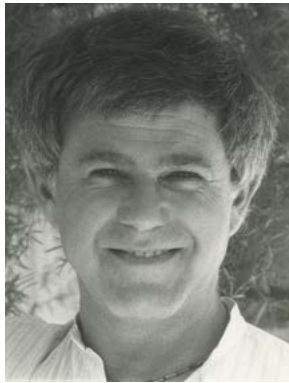


Fig. 5.45 Tomie dePaola. Photograph by Dan O’Connor, 1978. Image courtesy of Bob Hechtel. All rights reserved.

More than a decade later he reconceived and polished off the project, under a title that is a deliberate red herring. The expression “clown of God” triggers associations first and foremost with Saint Francis of Assisi. But let us explore the present-day author and his book systematically. They deserve such attention. After all, they have



Fig. 5.46 "Our Lady's Juggler: A Mediaeval Tale." Preliminary drawing by Tomie dePaola, 1970. Image courtesy of Bob Hechtel. All rights reserved.

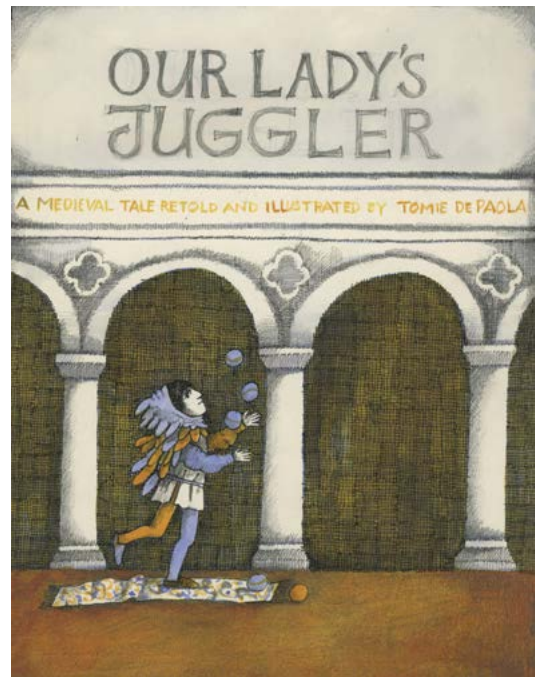


Fig. 5.47 "Our Lady's Juggler: A Mediaeval Tale." Preliminary drawing by Tomie dePaola, 1970. Image courtesy of Bob Hechtel. All rights reserved.

become one of the main chutes down which young people in the English-speaking or consuming world—what might be termed “the Anglosphere”—cascade through time to gain exposure to the old story of *Our Lady's Tumbler*.

Born in 1934, dePaola grew up during the era around World War II. In those days, radio reigned as queen among the channels for entertainment and information. At Christmastime one year he heard broadcast on a Sunday afternoon a dramatization of Anatole France's “Our Lady's Juggler.” The transmission left a deep impression upon him. Years later, [in art school](#) in the 1950s, the budding artist happened to be at a carouse with modern dancers. One of them brought a copy of R. O. Blechman's 1952 *The Juggler of Our Lady* she had just gotten. The future children's writer recalled the tale from his earlier exposure to it over the airwaves. Since at the time he was taking a dance class in lieu of regular gym, he proposed to [the instructor](#) that he satisfy a course requirement by performing with three young women a piece based on the narrative, accompanied by medieval music he handpicked.

[In the late 1960s and early 1970s](#) dePaola began to pursue seriously the possibility of making illustrated books for the young as a vocation. While teaching and working toward a master's degree, he related the Anatole France version of the story to a professor of his. This Wolfgang Lederer, a graphic designer who was guiding the up-and-coming artist toward type design and typography, asked him to produce

specimens of the tale as a projected children's book in two totally different styles of art, one classical and one very contemporary. The idea was that dePaola could send the samples to an editor who had visited. The person in question loved the trial versions, but pulled back from the undertaking when she realized that the narrative had been retold already recently. The publication that had stolen the thunder from dePaola's proposed juggler was the one by Barbara Cooney that came into print in 1961. [Because of her distinction](#), the representative from the press believed that the market had reached its saturation point where this story was concerned: not enough potential buyers would want another piece of children's literature on the same topic.

In 1976, after [dePaola himself won recognition for one of his books](#), he was approached by a representative from a different press who inquired about his ideas and interests in germination. When he mentioned the juggler, she was encouraging. After conducting a little research, she found that the tale had been included among recommended folktales in [a list drawn up in the 1920s](#). Around the same time dePaola himself attended a book festival in Bologna, where he met a French publisher who was enticed by his concept, and told him about [a one-sentence-long compression of the story](#) that had been brought to light in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale. In any case, the author acquired a sense of the original medieval French poem and its analogue in the learned tongue.

From these two perspectives on the story's past, dePaola developed ever more confidence that the narrative was appropriate for children. Simultaneously, he felt liberated from the bondage of the Anatole France version. While retaining the tale's basic contours as attested in both the medieval and the nineteenth-century reflexes, he opted to focus upon the element of "the clown of God." Consequently, he accentuated the entertainer's status as a kind of itinerant pariah or outsider rather than as a fixed member of the Church, concentrating on making the juggler an artist. To heighten the poignancy of the performer's plight, dePaola emphasized how the nature of the performance became familiar, and how in effect the familiarity bred contempt. In establishing the style and backdrop of the tale, he was influenced by Renaissance Italian artists such as Giotto.

For dePaola as a modern writer, the heart of the fiction relates to the nature of art and artistic production. An artist, if true to art, can create miracles. The Italian-American author has located a narrative whose underlying message he finds closely comparable to *The Clown of God* in a short story from China, recounted by a French-language author who resided in the United States. Entitled "How Wang-Fo Was Saved," [the piece by Marguerite Yourcenar](#) retells a Taoist morality tale about an elderly painter, who painted so well that the emperor decided to execute him, but the virtuoso was able to elude him by escaping on a boat he depicted.

The lead role in *The Clown of God* is played by [an old juggler named Giovanni](#) who roams in Italy and who offers up his final and best performance as a gift to God. The title phrase refers less to the aged entertainer's profession per se than to the nexus that the storyteller presupposes between him and Francis of Assisi, since [the good saint](#)



has often been styled as both a juggleur of God and a clown of God. Major themes that intertwine the children's book with dePaola's treatment of Francis are love, humble devotion, and piety. Artistically, the volumes are stitched together by a shared visual vocabulary that encompasses such features as the palette of colors and the architecture of rounded arches in the background. The artist also wrote a story entitled *Pascual and the Kitchen Angels*, which deals with an episode in the legends of another humble man we have seen previously, Saint Paschal Baylon. Pascual, to use the Spanish form of his name as dePaola does, earned sanctity through his devotion to the Eucharist while serving as a lay brother in the kitchen of a Franciscan friary. For the record, the author does not touch upon the minor episode in the saint's life in which he dances a reel before a statuette of the Virgin.

To return to Francis, the religiosity of the gray friars held a personal interest for dePaola. In the text on the dust jacket he disclosed that he had "once entered an order of brothers." As a junior in college, he had developed the notion of submitting himself as a postulant to the rule of Saint Benedict. Through his parish priest, he was put in touch with a community of Benedictine nuns, formed a tie with a sister who was an artist, and spent time in the convent. The experience led him to realize "how much [he] wanted to be a monk and to celebrate future Christmases in the Benedictine way." In November of 1956 he became a novice or postulant at a priory in Vermont and spent a Christmas there. Shortly thereafter he left the monastery, to live with other laypeople who aspired to follow the Rule independent of the Order.



Fig. 5.48 Virgin and Child. Illustration by Tomie dePaola, 1950s. Image courtesy of Tomie dePaola. All rights reserved.



Fig. 5.49 Virgin and Child. Illustration by Tomie dePaola, 1978. Published in Tomie dePaola, *The Clown of God* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1978), 31.

In his autobiography for readers of all ages, dePaola has a two-page illustration of black-clad monks at Christmas in a chapel before a Madonna and Child. He also constructed an entire book devoted to a Marian miracle in *The Lady of Guadalupe*, about [an apparition of the Virgin](#) to a poor farmer. Additionally, he wrote [Mary: The Mother of Jesus](#). The backdrop of dePaola's sustained devotion to Catholicism and to the Virgin renders unsurprising the similarities between a painting of a Madonna and Child by him from the early 1950s (see Fig. 5.48) and the image of the two in *The Clown of God* (see Fig. 5.49), which itself [resembles medieval representations](#) (see Fig. 5.50).



Fig. 5.50 Master of Camerino, *The Virgin and Child Enthroned*, ca. 1270. Tempera and silver on panel, 108.6 × 47.6 cm. Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums, Fogg Museum, Gift of John Nicholas Brown. Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved.

In a postscript to *The Clown of God*, dePaola invokes the precedent of oral storytellers from time immemorial to justify retelling “this ancient legend, shaping it to [his] own life and experience.” This addendum brings home how the author’s preoccupation with humble entertainers extends even to his self-identification with such traditional storytellers and the techniques they employ to keep their repertoires of tales alive and render them relevant to their own lives. In his preamble, dePaola walks the same line that Ruth Sawyer trod more than thirty-five years before him, acknowledging the heft of Anatole France while implying that the tale belonged to the oral tradition. He designates his version, which is set in the Renaissance, “an old story” in a subtitle and

an “ancient legend” in his remarks. Without any basis, he claims that “The Clown of God” is “its oldest known title.” In all of this, his approach to the story may be subsumed under the heading of poetic license, not of deliberate misstatement or mistake.

In keeping with a widely attested custom, dePaola sets the action at Christmas, thus tying the narrative to [the marketing power of late December](#) in US culture. We happen upon Giovanni the juggler first as a boy, but we see him last as a hoary dotard, manipulating objects before a statue of the Virgin and Child at Christmas. Although successful for most of his career, the performer is moneyless at the beginning and end. The Madonna under consideration resides in the cathedral of Sorrento, a small town in the region of Campania in southern Italy. The entertainer’s Italianness is watertight, even down to the fact that as a boy he juggles such typical ingredients of the national cuisine as zucchini and eggplants. Giovanni meets his end performing a special program called “the Sun in the Heavens,” a name that harks back to the Canticle of Brother Sun, for which Francis is famed. The routine involves a rainbow of different-colored spheres, to which the young juggler adds finally a golden one. Here he directs his performance especially to the likeness of the infant Jesus held by the Mother of God. From the strenuousness of his juggling, the aged professional dies of heart failure. At the end, the formerly stern-faced sculpture of the Christ child is miraculously revealed to be smiling and clutching a golden juggling ball. The closing motif differs subtly from versions in which [either the Virgin herself or an image of her](#), a Madonna, smiles at the monk’s performance. The story conveys the message that what a person offers matters far less than the spirit in which the offering is made.

The first descriptor for dePaola’s *The Clown of God* in the Library of Congress cataloging data is “Legends—Italy.” Not unexpectedly, in view of the author’s popularity and stature, his spurious provenance for “Our Lady’s Juggler” as [an oral folktale of Italian origin](#) has been embraced by other writers of children’s literature. Despite all the evidence to suggest that the story as we know it originated in France and even in French, the tale has defied fixity and has instead floated from place to place across western Europe. At least once it has been alleged, by Tatiana von Metternich, to have had [“Old English motifs.”](#) Not entirely concordantly, she also related it to a Spanish ceremony known [“the dance of the sixes.”](#) Documented no earlier than 1508, the practice must date to at least a century earlier, and it persists down to the present day, despite the occasional discomposure of bishops and others. According to her explanation, in [this ritual](#) a platoon of resplendently dressed boy choristers sings and dances twice a year before the high altar in the cathedral of Seville, in the Andalusia region of southern Spain (see Figs. 5.51 and 5.52). One could make a metaphorical leap to associate these choirboys with the youths who are represented capering before a statue of the Virgin in a miniature in a manuscript of Alfonso X the Wise’s *Cantigas de Santa María*, but even so no evidence exists to interlock “the sixes” with any particular miracle along the lines of the one narrated in *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. The youths do their



Fig. 5.51 Postcard with the boy choristers of the Cathedral of Seville, Spain, in the garb of *los seises* (early twentieth century).



Fig. 5.52 Postcard with the boy choristers of the Cathedral of Seville, Spain, in the garb of *los seises* (Seville, Tomas Sanz, early twentieth century).

liturgical high-stepping en masse, rather than making a private devotional offering of the sort ascribed to the tumbler.

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In the end, questions remain open about whether *Our Lady's Tumbler* could imaginably have originated as a folktale, or even about whether it ever circulated as a genuine one. We cannot be sure that the tale had any roots among common folk, although we can hypothesize that they may have heard it in the Middle Ages through recitation of the French poem and delivery of sermons with the exemplum. The only facts are written forms, some of which have been represented—or, really, misrepresented—as folktales.

Some such supposed tellings are pseudofolktales. They could be acknowledged frankly as fake tales.

To sum up, all that is certain is that the story was committed to writing first in France, in both French and Latin, in both cases by anonymous authors. To situate the action creatively outside this country is artistic license. To attribute it to another region or to present it as unquestionably folkloric in its origins distorts and even belies literary-historical facts.

Probably the fairest and most accurate statement of facts in a children's version is in the Shannons' *The Acrobat & the Angel*. In the case of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, the brother called Mark identifies the tale of the youthful entertainer as being ultimately "a French folktale from the twelfth or thirteenth century," but acknowledges having drawn the name of the lead character, Péquelé, from a folktale collected substantially later than the Middle Ages. The specific source of inspiration for his text was the narrative as allegedly recorded (not merely read or otherwise ascertained from print, radio, or the like) by [Henri Pourrat](#).

The same version from the French author subsequently inspired [another American author](#) of illustrated children's books as well, in this case under the original title, *Péquelé*. Here too, the narrative focuses upon a character who bears this name, an ill-paid and disrespected street performer who enters a monastery out of hunger for a square meal rather than out of devotion. The acrobat pledges to discontinue his antics, but proves unable to honor his vow. Although the story is purportedly based on oral literature set in the context of peasant life in early twentieth-century France, the illustrations of the standard edition depict a protagonist in not present-day but medieval or early modern garb.

From a scholarly perspective, does it matter whether we can draw up a stemma—the textual equivalent of a family tree—that places each tale in relation to the others, oral and written? Absolutely. Does it mark a milestone for researchers to be able, or at a minimum to try, to pinpoint which adaptations and responses are oral and which written? Yes. But in the end, if confronted with a choice between, on the one hand, highbrow punctilio or accuracy that might deprive the story of continued vibrancy, and on the other a lowbrow liveliness that distorts the facts of its transmission, I vote forthwith to see the narrative thrive. If retailing the juggler as folk literature strengthens its chances for survival and prosperity, then so be it. The underlying truth is that when the literary miracle has burgeoned, it has done so by shifting untrammelled from one medium to another, and by being permitted to evolve and mutate kaleidoscopically to suit the ever-changing vicissitudes of life.

*Our Lady's Tumbler* has held appeal in part because its protagonist's sincerity and simplicity prevail over book-learning and refinement. Since the romantic era, folktale and oral tradition have often been associated, rightly or wrongly, with the unadorned and unvarnished authenticity of peasants and other illiterates. We have no evidence that the story ever circulated among medieval rustics in an oral culture independent

of manuscripts, but no disembroiling is needed to clarify why equating the two would have become nearly irresistible. This trend does not necessarily bode ill for the tale.

The narrative's connection with the common folk relates to at least two other circumstances. First, since the modern recovery of the medieval French poem in the 1870s, its protagonist has often been regarded as childlike, much as small farmers have been. Second, the intended audience of the story has frequently been children. We may well ask ourselves why over time the tale has been pushed back upon ever more juvenile audiences. Occasionally *Our Lady's Tumbler* and *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* have been [packaged as adolescent fiction](#), in the category designated in an American context as "young adult literature." Even so, in general the account is deemed suitable now for children at an earlier stage of development. Probably the two trends are effectively one and the same. A hero who is childlike suits child readers. It would be heart-wrenching if the faith and disregard of materialism that characterize the juggler came to be viewed as being inherently immature. They are not traits that are predestined to be outgrown in normal human maturation. In the middle of the twentieth century, both qualities were craved by adults, who turned to the story for inspiration and solace. There were, and are, far worse things.

# Notes

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*Nothing that has ever happened.* Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 7 vols. in 14 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–1989), 1: 691–703, at 694.

## Notes to Chapter 1

*an art which we have made our own.* William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1882), 20; delivered on December 4, 1877 as "The Lesser Arts."

*medievalizing printed books.* Rolf Söderberg, *French Book Illustration, 1880–1905*, trans. Roger Tanner, *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: Stockholm Studies in History of Art*, vol. 28 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), 29–30 (on Luc-Olivier Merson and Georges-Antoine Rochegrosse).

*the new bibliopolis.* Willa Z. Silverman, *The New Bibliopolis: French Book Collectors and the Culture of Print, 1880–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

*twentieth-century modernism.* Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 61–62.

*personally acquainted with Victor Hugo.* "Ein Besuch bei Victor Hugo," *Die Gartenlaube* 26 (1867): 408–10.

*texts by the British author that he chose to put into German.* For example, see *Enoch Arden* (Hamburg, Germany: Grüning, 1868), and *Freundes-Klage: Nach Alfred Tennyson's "In Memoriam"* (Hamburg, Germany: Grüning, 1870).

*The Dancing Little Monk.* Robert Waldmüller, "Das tanzende Mönchlein," *Über Land und Meer: Deutsche illustrierte Zeitung* 39 (October 1894–1895). Cited by August Andrae, "Das Weiterleben alter Fablios, Lais, Legenden und anderer alter Stoffe," *Romanische Forschungen* 16 (1904): 321–53, at 327. The poem comprises sixteen octaves of octosyllabic lines.

*warp children's literature to their political purposes.* Jack David Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 137.

*The quality of his scholarship degenerated.* Dietrich Boueke and Brigitte Röttger, "Severin Rüttgers: Ein Beitrag zum Irrationalismus in der Literaturdidaktik," *Pädagogische Rundschau* 28 (1974): 23–41.

*delightful and childlike simplicity.* Both quotations appear on p. 73 in the 1914 volume. The first is Rüttgers's own German: "der feinsinnige und gelehrte Kenner der mittelalterlichen Dichtung seines Vaterlandes." The second comes from Gaston Paris, *La littérature française au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Hachette, 1888), 208.

*learned interest in the original medieval French.* Rüttgers's book was reprinted three times between the late teens and 1925. See Severin Rüttgers, *Unser lieben Frauen Wunder: Altfranzösische Marienlegenden* (Leipzig, Germany: Insel, 1914), with reprints in 1918, 1920, 1925, 1936, and 1940. The story "Vom Tänzer unsrer lieben Frau" was reprinted again decades later in *Vom Reich der Kleinen*, ed. Elisabeth Antkowiak, illus. Gitta Kettner, Benno-Bücher: Reihe religiöser Erzählungen 13 (Leipzig, Germany: St. Benno, 1961), 10–18.

*arrived at his inquisitiveness about the story naturally.* In 1913, Lommatzsch had published his postdoctoral thesis (in German, *Habilitation*), *Gautier de Coincy als Satiriker*, a study of Gautier de Coincy as satirist. His lifework continued an Old French dictionary that followed lines projected by his teacher and fellow lexicographer, the Swiss-born Adolf Tobler. Even today, the reference work is still commonly known among initiates as "Tobler-Lommatzsch."

*what would later become the university of Frankfurt.* To be specific, Morf was the first rector of the *Akademie für Handels- und Sozialwissenschaften* in the city, which preceded the university founded there in 1914.

*inherited his chair in Romance philology.* Morf was not Lommatzsch's direct predecessor there, since another professor, namely, Matthias Friedwagner, intervened.

*Wilhelm Fraenger.* He was an art historian and folklorist, even what might be called today a cultural historian, who wrote on such artists as the Netherlandish painter Hieronymus Bosch, the German Renaissance painter Matthias Grünewald, and the Golden Age Dutch painter and printmaker, Hercules Pieterszoon Seghers. For details on Fraenger, see Ingeborg Baier-Fraenger, ed., *Der Kunsthistoriker Wilhelm Fraenger (1890–1964): Eine Sammlung von Erinnerungen mit der Gesamt-Bibliographie seiner Veröffentlichungen* (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1994).

*life-sized human heads.* Fraenger's introductory disquisition, entitled "Zucht der Askese und Willkür des Lachens," was reprinted later separately in Wilhelm Fraenger, *Wilhelm*



*Fraengers komische Bibliothek*, ed. Ingeborg Baier-Fraenger (Dresden, Germany: Verlag der Kunst, 1992), 172–80. Despite its topic, the introduction is not discussed in Olaf Peters, “Die Physiognomik des Grotesken: Wilhelm Fraenger und das Komische,” in *Das Komische in der Kunst*, ed. Roland Kanz (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau, 2007), 259–80.

*Fraenger contended*. See Wilhelm Fraenger, *Die Masken von Rheims* (Erlenbach, Switzerland: Eugen Rentsch, 1922), 11.

## Printed Books as Pseudomanuscripts

*extolling the production quality*. *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 12.60 (March 1908): 382: “These admirable and charming little volumes must delight the hearts of all who love the romance of the Middle Ages, or are interested in its faith and its code of chivalry. ... The leather binding is brown, and looks old and ripe; it has clasps which art has mellowed as richly as time itself could do; and lest the clasps of each book should scratch its neighbours on the shelf, an unobtrusive case is furnished as a shield. The leather is stamped with designs, engraved on wood by Miss Blanche C. Hunter after contemporary manuscripts, which appear again on the first title pages. ... Altogether we know of no modern enterprise that should bring so much pleasure at so moderate a cost to the lover of dainty books and the exquisite literature of the ages of chivalry and faith.”

Hunter did the same sort of adaptation from medieval manuscripts for volumes such as *The Book of the Duke of True Lovers: Now First Translated from the Middle French of Christine de Pisan. With an Introduction by Alice Kemp-Welch* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1907), <https://archive.org/details/tumblerourladyo04gautgoog>, and *Early English Romances in Verse: Done into Modern English by Edith Rickert. Romances of Love* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), <https://archive.org/details/earlyenglishroma00rickuoft>

*one avid American of more modest means*. Otto F. Ege, “I am a Biblioclast,” *Avocations* 1 (March 1938): 516. On this character, two relatively recent studies are Fred Porcheddu, “Otto F. Ege: Teacher, Collector, and Biblioclast,” *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 26.1 (2007): 4–14, and A. S. G. Edwards, “Otto Ege: The Collector as Destroyer,” *Manuscripta* 53.1 (2009): 1–12. The most comprehensive investigation to date of the manuscripts Ege collected and sold is Scott Gwara, *Otto Ege’s Manuscripts: A Study of Ege’s Manuscript Collections, Portfolios, and Retail Trade, with a Comprehensive Handlist of Manuscripts Collected or Sold* (Cayce, SC: De Brailles, 2013).

*the Virgin Mary*. On the Virgin in nineteenth-century manuscripts, see Isabelle Saint-Martin, “Rêve médiéval et invention contemporaine: Variations sur l’enluminure en France au XIXe siècle,” in *The Revival of Medieval Illumination: Nineteenth-Century Belgium Manuscripts and Illuminations from a European Perspective / Renaissance de l’enluminure médiévale: Manuscrits et enluminures belges du XIXe siècle et leur contexte*

*européen*, ed. Thomas Coomans and Jan De Maeyer, KADOC Artes, vol. 8 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2007), 109–35, at 123–24.

*the Pre-Raphaelites*. Julian Treuherz, “The Pre-Raphaelites and Mediaeval Illuminated Manuscripts,” in *Pre-Raphaelite Papers*, ed. Leslie Parris (London: Tate Gallery, 1984), 153–69.

*lettering and illumination*. Heather Child, *More Than Fine Writing: The Life and Calligraphy of Irene Wellington* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1987), 14.

*French Literature in the Middle Ages*. Gaston Paris, *La littérature française*. Many more editions were to follow the first in 1888.

*Gaston Paris’s observation*. Anatole France, “M. Gaston Paris et la littérature française au Moyen Âge,” in idem, *La vie littéraire*, 4 vols. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1899–1905), 2: 272.

*likened the book itself to a miniature*. France, “M. Gaston Paris,” 2: 265 (and cf. 270): “Knights, burghers, churls, clerks, trouvères, and jongleurs appeared to me like the insects that inhabit the grass at our feet. It is a miniature of which my eyes have retained the impression, a miniature so fine that one could discover the least details in looking through a magnifying glass.”

*their world, by comparison with ours*. France, “M. Gaston Paris,” 2: 268.

*gigantic miniature*. Paul Bourget, *Sensations d’Italie (Toscane—Ombrie—Grande-Grèce)* (Paris: Lemerre, 1891), 111 (“une gigantesque miniature”), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9610094m.texteImage>

*France wrote elsewhere*. Anatole France, “José-Maria de Heredia,” in *La Vie littéraire*, 5th series (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1949), 292–301, at 294.

## Image-Makers Go Mainstream

*one brand of such products*. A text box, in modern italics and not a medieval script, announces the topic as “The Middle Ages: Gothic Script and Illumination on Parchment, 13th Century.”

*troubadour style*. The fullest study remains the revised and abridged dissertation of François Pupil, *Le style troubadour, ou, La nostalgie du bon vieux temps* (Nancy, France: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1985).

*Chambord missal*. So called because written and illuminated in 1844 (in Paris) for Count Henri de Chambord, grandson of the deposed French king Charles X. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 22 × 14.8 cm (8 ½ × 5 ¾”). Catalogued among the holdings of the Victoria and Albert Museum in Rowan Watson, *Western Illuminated Manuscripts: A Catalogue of Works in the National Art Library from the Eleventh to the Early Twentieth*

*Century, with a Complete Account of the George Reid Collection*, 3 vols. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2011), 3: 1106–17 (no. 242).

*those arts had beyond doubt declined*. Contrast their earlier fame: in *Purgatorio* 11.80–81, Dante attests that by his time the city of Paris had acquired celebrity for its excellence in this medium, or at least had given it its name by calling it “illumination”: “‘Oh,’ I said to him, ‘Are you not Oderisi, / the honor of Gubbio, and the honor of that art / which is called “illumination” in Paris?’” (“‘Oh!’ diss’io lui, ‘non se’ tu Oderisi, / l’onor d’Agobbio e l’onor di quell’arte / ch’alluminar chiamata è in Parisi?’”).

*enjoyed a uniquely vibrant revival*. For a bibliography of manuals on illumination published in France, see Rowan Watson, “Publishing for the Leisure Industry: Illuminating Manuals and the Reception of a Medieval Art in Victorian Britain,” in Coomans and De Maeyer, *Revival of Medieval Illumination*, 79–107, at 106–7. The density within a dozen years is remarkable.

*The Image-Maker*. In French, *L’imagier*.

*for only two years*. From 1894 to 1896.

*Remy de Gourmont and Alfred Jarry*. Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in fin-de-siècle France* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 44–45; Emmanuel Pernoud, “De l’image à l’ymage: Les revues d’Alfred Jarry et Remy de Gourmont,” *Revue de l’art* 115.1 (1997): 59–65.

*The Illuminator: Art in the Family*. In French, *L’enlumineur: L’art dans la famille*. *Organe de la Société des miniaturistes et enlumineurs de France*, published from 1889 to 1900.

*The Color Illuminator*. In French, *Le coloriste enlumineur: Journal d’enseignement du dessin, de la miniature, des émaux, de l’aquarelle, de la peinture sur verre, sur soie, etc., à l’usage des amateurs et professionnels* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1893–1899), published monthly. This journal was edited by the Assumptionist Fathers (in French, the Société de St. Augustin), who would be banned from France in 1900 for activities deemed to be anti-state. On the highly conservative Société de St. Augustin, see Sandra Hindman et al., *Manuscript Illumination in the Modern Age: Recovery and Reconstruction* (Evanston, IL: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, 2001), 153–54. During this same wave of interest in France, books on the topic by Alphonse Labitte appeared.

*hope for a rebirth of taste*. Louis de Lutèce, “II<sup>e</sup> Exposition de la Société des miniaturistes et enlumineurs de France,” *Le coloriste enlumineur* 3.6 (October 15, 1895): 48.

*father of art nouveau*. Anne Murray-Robertson, *Grasset, pionnier de l’Art Nouveau* (Lausanne, Switzerland: Éditions 24 heures, 1981).

*chromolithograph posters*. Philip Denis Cate and Sinclair Hamilton Hitchings, *The Color Revolution: Color Lithography in France, 1890–1900* (Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine

Smith, 1978). Grasset worked closely with Charles Gillot, a technician who pushed the boundaries of color reproduction further than any of their contemporaries.

*Festival of Paris*. In the late nineteenth century, this piece of commercial art was reproduced in collections of highly admired posters. Beyond that, it was hawked to amateurs in smaller form as separate chromolithographic sheets. See Ernest Maindron, *Les affiches illustrées (1886–1895)* (Paris: G. Boudet, 1896), and among the 256 color plates of *Les maîtres de l’affiche*, delivery no. 13, plate no. 50 (December 1896). More recently, the image has been used in a study of the absorption of the Middle Ages into mass culture at the turn of the century, in black and white on the dust jacket for Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past*, and as figure 1.3 on p. 28.

*in 1886*. The specific date in this year was March 26. Eugène Grasset, *Les fêtes de Paris*, 122 × 88.5 cm, chromolithograph, 1885, Musée d’art et d’histoire, Geneva. For context, see Melanie Paquette Widmann, *Eugène Grasset: A Passion for Design. The Father of Art Nouveau* (CTG Publishing, 2012 [digital publication]); Catherine Lepdor, ed., *Eugène Grasset, 1845–1917: L’art et l’ornement* (Milan, Italy: 5 Continents, 2011).

*linking medieval and modern France*. Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past*, 26–27.

*He was enlisted*. By the printer and engraver Charles Gillot.

*chanson de geste*. Introduced and annotated by Charles Marcilly.

*The Story of Aymon’s Four Sons*. In French, *Histoire des quatre fils Aymon, très nobles et très vaillans chevaliers*.

*published in 1883*. Paris: H. Launette, 1883.

*still being exhibited*. Silverman, *New Bibliopolis*, 39, 41–42.

*bibliophilia for bibliophiles*. Anatole France, *Le livre du bibliophile* (Paris: Lemerre, 1874), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5482297s>

*a major new edition of his works*. Söderberg, *French Book Illustration*, 30.

*The first of the two Ferroud versions*. Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, calligraphed (in a Gothic bastarda script), illuminated, and historiated by Henri Malatesta (Paris: F. Ferroud, 1906). The most expensive volumes in the edition were on Japon vellum and contained, beyond the main run of illustrations, preliminary sketches in black and white, as well as a unique gouache. The work was engraved in color by Raymond with the collaboration of the colorist Henry Joufroy. On Malatesta, see *Ddi*, 744. All the original gouaches for the 1906 printing, in an early twentieth-century binding, appeared on the bibliophilic market in 2016 in Argentina. This manuscript book was acquired by Houghton Library, within Harvard College Library. It has now been reproduced in facsimile, at full size, with facing English translation: Anatole France,

*The Juggler of Our Lady*, illus. Henri Malatesta, trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018), with an afterword by Ziolkowski (unnumbered pages).

*Like a small number of others.* Two worth singling out are Léon Lebègue and Edmond Malassis. See Pierre-Jean Foulon, *L'illustration du livre en France de 1870 à 1918*, Monographies du Musée royal de Mariemont, vol. 10 ([Marlemont, Belgium]: Musée royal de Mariemont, 1999), 66, 90.

*Saint Euphrosina.* With illustrations and borders by the French illustrator Louis Édouard Fournier. The volume also contains watercolors by Edmond Pennequin and engravings on wood by L. Marie.

*a young lady in the fifth century.* The legend originated in the East, and survives in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic. For editions of the Greek and Arabic, see Mourad Kamil, "Ste. Euphrosyne, vierge d'Alexandrie," in Institutouton Anatolikōn Spoudōn, *Tome commémoratif du millénaire de la Bibliothèque patriarcale d'Alexandrie*, Publications de l'Institut d'études orientales de la Bibliothèque Patriarcale d'Alexandrie, vol. 2 (Alexandria, Egypt: Institutouton Anatolikōn Spoudōn [Patriarchikē Vivliothēkē Alexandreias, 1953]), 231–60.

*adopt a monk's attire.* Brigitte Cazelles, ed., *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 172–81 (headnote and selected passages in translation).

*Until her death.* Reported variously as 420 or 470.

*role models for nuns, anchorites, and other aspirants to sanctity.* Judith Oliver, "Gothic Women and Merovingian Desert Mothers," *Gesta* 32.2 (1993): 124–34.

*the story's elaborate subtitle.* It reads "Les actes de la vie de sainte Euphrosine d'Alexandrie, en religion frère Smaragde, tels qu'ils furent rédigés dans la laure du Mont Athos, par Georges, diacre" ("The deeds of the life of Saint Euphrosina of Alexandria, named Brother Smaragdus, as written in the *lavra* [a type of monastery] of Mount Athos by Georges, deacon").

*a detailed illustration.* By Edmond Pennequin, in white, black, and orange. The Latin is *Formosa virgo*.

*Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller.* In French, *La légende de Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier*.

*The tale had already been printed three times.* In 1895, it was made into a book by the Parisian A. Ferroud, in an edition with twenty-six compositions designed by Luc-Olivier Merson and engraved by Adolphe Alphonse Géry-Bichard. In 1900, it was published by the London-based Eragny Press (London: Hacon & Ricketts, 1900), in the original French, in

a limited edition of 226 copies with a frontispiece designed and engraved on wood by Lucien Pissarro. The same artist also created the borders and embellished letters, which were engraved on wood by his wife Esther. Finally, in 1912, the story appeared in a different edition by the same French publisher as earlier, in a limited run of 1,000 copies in the little “Andréa” library, with twenty etchings by Gaston Bussière (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1912). All three tales were published in 1909 by another Paris-based firm (Paris: Pierre Lafitte, 1909). This collection was illustrated by R. Lelong.

*illustrated repeatedly.* It was illustrated once by Maurice Georges Lalau, former student of the painter and sculptor Jean-Paul Laurens and of the painter Jean-Joseph Benjamin Constant. See *Ddi*, 650–51.

*The composer was evidently well versed.* Jules Massenet, *My Recollections*, trans. H. Villiers Barnett (Boston, MA: Small, Maynard, 1919), 149.

*colophon.* Its text relates how the printed form of Malatesta’s illuminated manuscript was reproduced as a facsimile through photogravure, at the expense of the Société normande du livre illustré (Norman Society of the illustrated book), which existed from 1894 to 1921 in Évreux. On such societies, see Raymond Hesse, *Histoire des sociétés de bibliophiles en France de 1820 à 1930*, 2 vols. (Paris: L. Giraud-Badin, 1929–1931).

*a Gothic lancet.* The inscription included in the representation explains its contents: “Reconstitution of the window imagined by Malatesta after Flaubert’s text. The different motifs in it constitute the illustrations of the present work.”

*envisaged a design.* Arthur Join-Lambert, “Rapport du président pour les années 1907, 1908 et 1909,” *Bulletin de la Société normande du livre illustré* 7 (1909): 3–16, at 6; pp. 20–28 contain follow-up observations on the book by Georges Vicaire (pp. 20–22), anonymous reviews reprinted from other journals (pp. 23–25), and a review by René-François-Armand (Sully) Prudhomme (pp. 26–28).

*a colorized reproduction of an engraving.* Eustache-Hyacinthe Langlois, *Mémoire sur la peinture sur verre et sur quelques vitraux remarquables des églises de Rouen, orné de cinq planches, dessinées par Mlle. Espérance Langlois* (Rouen, France: F. Baudry, 1823).

*he acknowledged having taken his inspiration.* Rori Bloom, “‘Sur un vitrail d’église’: Structures and Sources in Flaubert’s ‘Légende de Saint Julien l’Hospitalier,’” in *Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture: Eight Essays*, ed. Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewaite (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), 13–24, at 20–22.

*The Sacristan Monk.* In French, *Le moine sacristain: Fabliau du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1912). Both the cover and title page tally meticulously the embellishments by Malatesta: “Illustrated with 26 color compositions, comprising six plates, one heading, one tailpiece, one title fleuron, and seventeen decorated initials.” For English

translations, see John DuVal, trans., *Fabliaux, Fair and Foul* (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York, 1992), 148–65; Paul Briens, trans., *Bawdy Tales from the Courts of Medieval France* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 108–23.

*a Trumpeter*. In French, *D'un trompette qui fust refusé de loger à son logis ordinaire par la maîtresse en l'absence de son mari, illustré d'un frontispice, un en-tête, un cul-de-lampe, un fleuron du titre, des lettres ornées, dessinés, coloriés et enlumines par Henri Malatesta* (Paris: M. Glomeau, 1913).

*The Mystery Play of Griselda*. In French, *Le mystère de Grisélidis*, ed. Marie-Anne Glomeau (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1923). The book was adorned by the artist Georges Ripart, who furnished illustrations as well as ornamented initials, modeled after the original unique manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Français 2203, dated 1395. On Ripart, see *Ddi*, 982.

*The Life of Saint Mary the Egyptian*. In French, *La vie de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne: Suivie de la légende de sainte Marie l'Égyptienne par Jacques de Voragine* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1925). The text is once again translated by Glomeau, with color illustrations by Léon Courbouleix. For a modern English translation of the Latin text, see Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, no. 96, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1: 374–83. A distinctly different work, published by a different editorial house, was Marie-Anne Glomeau, *Un doyen d'Orléans au XVe siècle: Pierre de Puy de Val* (Orléans, France: Société archéologique et historique de l'Orléanais, 1931).

*Of Saint Peter and the Jongleur*. In French, *De Saint Pierre et du Jongleur: Fabliau du XIVe siècle, escript, enlumyné et ystorié* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1914). See Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard, *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*, 10 vols. (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1983–1998), 1: 129–59 (for the Old French text); Willem Noomen, ed. and trans., *Le jongleur par lui-même: Choix de dits et de fabliaux* (Louvain, Belgium: Peeters, 2003), 152–85 (for the Old French facing a modern French translation); DuVal, *Fabliaux, Fair and Foul*, 130–39.

*Legend of Sister Beatrice*. This text was reprinted with illustrations by Georges Ripart: *Légende de sœur Béatrix* (Paris: Maurice Glomeau, 1924).

*His illustrations are splendid in their own right*. His effort is packaged in a jacket with ribbons to secure loose leaves, thirty-six of which are color compositions by him.

*the esteem of the Parisian cultural establishment*. See the 1909 review by Sully Prudhomme of the Académie française, the first French winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature: “L’art d’illustrer,” *Bulletin de la Société normande du livre illustré* 7 (1909): 26–28, at 28.



Fig. n.1 René François Armand (Sully) Prudhomme. Photograph, 1880s. Photographer unknown, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sully\\_Prudhomme,\\_René-François-Armand,\\_BNF\\_Gallica.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sully_Prudhomme,_René-François-Armand,_BNF_Gallica.jpg)

*occupied by the name of the book.* Like the rest of the text, the title is lettered in a calligraphy modeled on the late medieval Gothic script known colorfully as *bastarda*.

*the Ferroud edition of 1924.* France, *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, illus. Maurice Lalau (Paris: Librairie des amateurs, A. & F. Ferroud, 1924). The illustrations have been reprinted in Anatole France, *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, illus. Maurice Lalau, trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018), with an introduction by Ziolkowski (pp. v–xii).

*Chrétien de Troyes and the Golden Legend.* Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide: Le chevalier au Lion*, trans. André Mary (Paris: Boivin, 1925); André Mary, *La loge du feuillage, où il est devisé de l'enfance d'Eracle, Cligès et Fénice et de Guillaume d'Angleterre* (Paris: Boivin, 1928); Jacobus de Voragine, *Contes de la légende dorée* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1929). Other related efforts include Hilaire Enjoubert, *Passerose: Récits du Moyen Âge en Provence* (Paris: Boivin, 1936).

*The Fifteen Joys of Marriage.* In French, *Les quinze joyes de mariage*, ed. Jules Meynial (Paris: Jules Meynial, 1928).

*The Romance of Tristan and Iseult.* Bédier, *Tristan* (Paris: Piazza, 1909); trans. Florence Simmonds, *The Romance of Tristram and Iseult* (London: W. Heinemann, 1910).

*The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller.* Gustave Flaubert, *La légende de Saint-Julien l'Hospitalier* (Paris: Librairie des amateurs, A. Ferroud & F. Ferroud, Successeur, 1927).

*The Miracle of the Magpie.* In French, *Le miracle de la Pie* (Paris: Librairie des Amateurs, A. Ferroud & F. Ferroud, 1921). The story was published first in the European edition of the *New York Herald* as a supplement on March 23, 1904, and later in the *Revue bleue* on November 21, 1908, 641–45. Subsequently, it formed the second chapter in *Les Contes de Jacques Tournebroche*, in Anatole France, *Œuvres*, ed. Bancquart, 4: 258–68. 4 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.



## Missal Attack

*A new Gothic building.* John Constable, “Literary and Scientific Institution,” Lecture at Hampstead, July 25, 1836, from notes taken by C. R. Leslie, in John Constable, *Discourses*, ed. R. B. Beckett, Suffolk Records Society, vol. 14 (Ipswich, UK: Suffolk Records Society, 1970), 70.

*how to handcraft their own liturgical codices.* E. H. A. Frankland, *Amusements for Wet Mornings: Hints to Young People on Photographic Colouring and Illuminating Missals* (London: William Freeman, 1869); Henry Noel Humphreys, *The Art of Illumination and Missal Painting: A Guide to Modern Illuminators. Illustrated by a Series of Specimens, from Richly Illuminated Mss. of Various Periods, Accompanied by a Set of Outlines, To Be Coloured by the Student according to the Theories Developed in the Work* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1849), <https://archive.org/details/geheimengeschich00blgoog>; David Laurent de Lara, *Elementary Instruction in the Art of Illuminating and Missal Painting on Vellum: A Guide to Modern Illuminators. With Illustrations (Printed in Gold and Colours) and Outlines for Copying for the Students*, 2nd ed. (London: Ackermann, 1856). For a detailed bibliography, see Watson, “Publishing for the Leisure Industry,” 102–6. This medievalizing vogue arrived somewhat later in France, as evidenced for example, relating specifically to missals, by Lucien-Adolphe Foucher, “Notre cours: Missels et livres d’heures,” *Le coloriste enlumineur* 6 (1898): 8.

*A contemporary commented.* *Le Constitutionnel* (May 14, 1904): quoted by Terence Noel Needham, “Le Jongleur est ma foi’: Massenet and Religion as Seen through the Jongleur de Notre Dame” (PhD dissertation, Queen’s University Belfast, 2009), 105–6.

*treated as next of kin.* From the Latin *brevis* “brief”, a breviary is a short book that contains the hymns, psalms, and readings for the canonical hours of prayer. A missal collects similar texts for the mass. The publisher commented that the tales “are like the pictures that one finds in ancient missals, delicate and refined, though so far away from our modes of expression. They are restful to contemplate. The colours blend satisfactorily, even though the drawing be not quite modern.” *Selections from the Gesta Romanorum*, trans. Charles Small (Boston, MA: Privately printed by Nathan Haskell Dole, 1905). The quotation appears in Nancy Finlay, *Artists of the Book in Boston, 1890–1910* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College Library, 1985), 73.

*an amateur calligrapher.* Her name was Clothilde Coulaux. She was a known quantity among nonprofessional book-makers, since a decade earlier she had netted second prize in a competition sponsored by *The Color Illuminator*.

*Below this information.* Sandra Hindman, with Laura Light, *Neo-Gothic Book Production and Medievalism*, Primer, vol. 5 (New York: Les Enluminures, 2015), 24–25 (for text and image).

*a daintily illuminated leaf*. *L'Évènement*, May 18, 1904: quoted by Needham, "Le Jongleur est ma foi," 105.

*Austin Dobson published a ten-stanza poem*. *The Century Magazine* 23.1 (November 1881): 48. The poem has been discussed by Barbara A. Shailor, "Otto Ege: His Manuscript Fragment Collection and the Opportunities Presented by Electronic Technology," *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* 60.1 (2003): 1–22, at 3, 7–9.

*critics professed*. Bettina Liebowitz Knapp and Myra Chipman, *That was Yvette: The Biography of Yvette Guilbert, the Great Disease* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 297.

*The town has no reason for existing*. Bourget, *Sensations d'Italie*, 111 ("La ville n'a pour raison d'être que ce blazon sacré, que cette espèce de page de missel dressée en pierre. ..."), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9610094m.texteImage>

*extremely rich, grotesque, and full of pure color*. "The Grande Chartreuse," in *Praeterita: Outlines of Scenes and Thoughts Perhaps Worthy of Memory in My Past Life*, vol. 3, chap. 1, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), 35: 473–96, at 490.

*roll back the stages of life to childhood*. Ruskin, *Praeterita*, 35:491: "But now that I had a missal of my own, and could touch its leaves and turn, and even here and there understand the Latin of it, no girl of seven years old with a new doll is prouder or happier: but the feeling was something between the girl's with her doll, and Aladdin's in a new Spirit-slave to build palaces for him with jewel windows. For truly a well-illuminated missal is a fairy cathedral full of painted windows, bound together to carry in one's pocket, with the music and the blessing of all its prayers besides."

*fairy cathedral*. See Bernadette Nelson, "Ruskin's 'Fairy Cathedrals,'" *The Ashmolean* 21 (Christmas 1991), 12–14.

*Adolphe-Napoléon Didron*. He is also known as Didron the elder.

*in 1845*. See Enrico Castelnuovo, "La 'cathédrale de poche': Enluminure et vitrail à la lumière de l'historiographie du XIXe siècle," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 40 (1983): 91–93, at 92, <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-168125>

*cathedral binding*. For discussion, Eleanore Jamieson, *English Embossed Bindings, 1825–1850*, Cambridge Bibliographical Society Monograph, vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1, 19; for examples, figures 1, 2, 9, 26, 32, 40.

*Gold was common*. Josep Cambras, *The Complete Book of Bookbinding* (New York: Lark, 2004), 16.

*Guardian Saints*. Auguste-Pierre Garnier, *Les saintes gardiennes: La geste de Jeanne d'Arc, Le mystère de sainte Geneviève, Le dit de sainte Odile*, illus. Maurice Lalau (Paris: Garnier frères, 1925).

*The Legend of Saints Oliverie and Liberette*. Anatole France, *La légende des saintes Oliverie et Liberette*, 38 pp. Although best known for his phase as a symbolist between 1903 and 1918, Mossa subsequently illustrated for Ferroud a number of other tales by France, such as “Le petit soldat de plomb” (The little tin soldier) in 1919, “Les sept femmes de la Barbe-Bleue” (Bluebeard’s seven wives) in 1921, “La leçon bien apprise” (The well-learned lesson) in 1922, and “Madame de Luzy” (with the identical title in English) in 1927. On Mossa, see *Ddi*, 831.

*medievaesque influences*. Jean-Roger Soubiran, “Les influences gothiques dans l’art de Gustav-Adolf Mossa,” *Nice historique* 81 (1978): 73–81.

*coracle*. This small circular boat consisted of a simple wooden framework covered with leather.

*Oliverie survived ten years*. She allegedly died on October 9, 364. The dramatic date of the action was calibrated to accord loosely with the market timing of its original publication date, when it was published in *Le Gaulois* under the title *Mystic Tale: The Legend of Saints Oliverie and Liberette*. See Anatole France, “Conte mystique—La Légende des saintes Oliverie et Liberette,” *Le Gaulois*, October 21, 1890.

*Duc Jean’s Illuminator*. Nalim, *L’Ymagier du duc Jean*, illustrated by Pichot (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1928), 43–49 (chap. 8). The original edition has the key noun spelled with an initial *i*, as it is in modern French: *L’Imagier du duc Jean*, illustrated by Pichot (Paris: Maison de la Bonne presse, 1912). On Pichot, see *Ddi*, 909.

*The Distressing Episode of the Glazier*. Paul Duplessis de Pouzilhac, *La fâcheuse aventure du verrier, de l’enlumineur et de la gargouille: Légende du XIIIème siècle* (Montpellier, France: Firmin et Montane, 1921). On the author, see Etienne Bouday, “Paul Duplessis de Pouzilhac,” *Histoires des sciences médicales* 31 (1997): 277–80.

## Handwriting the Medieval

*Théophile Gautier’s 1832 short story*. The piece of fiction can be found in Théophile Gautier, *Works*, trans. Frederick C. de Sumichrast, 12 vols. (Boston, MA: C. T. Brainard, 1900–1903), 11: 280–81.

*from another dealer*. The Heritage Book Shop, Inc., of Los Angeles. Although the posted description left open the possibility that the item was printed on vellum (which could be Japanese vellum), the dealer informed me that the book was a true manuscript.

*two twenty-four page exemplars.* Both copies were reportedly lost until this leaf resurfaced: see Guy Bertaud du Chazaud, "Saint Léonard, par Robert Lanz," in *Sculptures en Touraine: Promenade autour de cent oeuvres. Catalogue de l'exposition, une exposition du Conseil général d'Indre-et-Loire*, ed. idem et al. (Tours: Conseil général d'Indre-et-Loire, 2014), 116–17.

*six golden spheres.* The orbs, looking a little like blobby fried eggs, match in their circularity the halo behind his head, as well as the larger one behind Mary's crowned head. Likewise, they complement the circles around the flames on three tapers next to the Madonna.

*commitment to manuscript illustration.* From 1931 to 1935, he served as an instructor in illumination to the *infante* Maria de Bourbon. He produced a forty-page missal for the use of young clerks of Saint Martin of Tours, created between 1937 and 1940, in the collection of the museum of Saint Martin.

*typifies his own times.* The center of the illumination is occupied by four lancet windows with stained glass. The rectangular frame is studded at each corner by a modified quatrefoil, tapering to points rather than rounded on the four leaves. The colors are bright, all the more so for the liberal application of gold leaf. The Madonna, with gilt stars on her dark blue mantle to cover the crimson garment beneath, is elongated to form one side of a Gothic arch over the tumbler. Even the three onlooking monks to the side, despite their closed mouths, bring faintly to mind the chief figure in *The Scream* of Edvard Munch, as does the clash between the hard-edged rectilinear frame and the wavy curvilinear movement within it.

*an attractive illuminated manuscript.* The item is possibly by Mary O. Kneass, who signed the front free endpaper. It emerged on the book market after being obtained from her family.

*twenty-two pages of text.* The full text is written in a modified blackletter script in black ink, with ornamental capitals in blue (a few ruled spaces awaiting further initials), and with rubrication restricted to the final nine and a half lines—and earlier for the single battle cry *monjoie* (a cryptic exclamation, meaning either "Mount Jove" or "Mount Joy"). The whole is bound in pebbled brown morocco leather (James Cummins Bookseller Inc., consulted on May 1, 2006).

*the renowned calligrapher Irene Sutton.* Newberry Library, Vault Case Wing MS folio ZW 945.W45. The manuscript bears the identification "Written out from the 12th century French by Irene Sutton [Wellington] and illustrated by Sax R. Shaw and given by us to Hubert Wellington. June 1942." The last-mentioned was her future husband. The work was done in Edinburgh.

*handwritten manuscripts*. The phrase is, of course, a pleonasm.

*a small publication in a private impression*. Anatole France, *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Twelfth Century Legend Done out of Old French into English*, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed (New York: Privately printed for Stanford Briggs, 1923). The printing was of 500 copies.

*In the colophon*. Here it is placed on the verso of the title-leaf.

*the pleasure of designing them*. The cloth cover of the book is stamped with an attractive motif. At its center stands a cartouche, an architectural device that resembles an escutcheon—a stylized heraldic shield of the sort that often surrounds a coat of arms. This frame highlights the title and a five-branched candelabrum.

*a large and bustling commercial art studio*. Reference is made to fifteen to twenty-five artists managed by two art directors and one assistant art director. Ninety-five percent of their work went into generating illustrations for advertising agencies to place in magazines and newspapers. See Percy V. Bradshaw, *Art in Advertising* (London: Press Art School, 1925), 446, 482, cited by Ellen Mazur Thomson, *The Origins of Graphic Design in America, 1870–1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 81.

*samplers*. For example, Stanford Briggs, Inc., *Advertising Art, Advertising Arts & Crafts, Layouts, Designs and Illustrations for Every Purpose in Every Practical Technique* (New York: Stanford Briggs, 1923).

*extreme deshabile*. What he wears on his lower body is challenging to determine: unless he has on the sheerest tights imaginable, he appears to be naked but lacking genitals.

*a handbill*. 11.5" × 9", printed on eight large quarto pages of Waldorf watermarked paper, enclosed in green string-tied wraps.

*letterpress printing classes*. London: Aldhenham Institute Letterpress Printing Classes, Goldington Crescent, Pancras Road, Session MCMIX–MCMX. The same details as on the title page are reprinted at the foot of the final printed page, with the additional crumb of the compositor's name, C. H. Hensby. The educational establishment had existed since the 1880s.

*a collective exercise in typesetting*. The text proper begins with a single oversized letter in red in the left margin and the first eight lines entirely in red capitals, but switches to black and normal handling of capitalization, with the red reserved for repetition of the running head *Our Lady's Tumbler* on each printed page, and for the colophon. Each sentence after the initial one is preceded by the paragraph mark, known as a pilcrow.

## Typing a Translation

*Pierson Underwood*. He studied at Yale (class of 1918), Harvard, and Cambridge Universities, as well as at the Sorbonne and in the Art Students League. A painter, printmaker, and sculptor, and in addition, a composer, he was active at times as a freelance writer. In the prime of his career, he had widest renown as a board chairman of a now-defunct radio station (WGMS) in Washington, DC, that promoted a classical music format. The source of the life dates recorded in the index is Virgil E. McMahan, *The Artists of Washington, D.C. 1796–1996*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: The Artists of Washington, 1995), 219.

*his undergraduate years at Yale*. He served on the board of the *Yale Literary Magazine: Yale Alumni Weekly* 26.27 (March 23, 1917): 713. In addition, he published poems in *The Yale Book of Student Verse, 1910–1919*, ed. John W. Andrews et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1919).

*volumes of verse*. Including his own *Brief Harvest*, printed in 150 copies (Mount Kisco, NY: Peter & Katherine Oliver, 1940). This collection comprises occasional pieces, prompted by the events that led up to the Second World War.

*A dry point engraving of his*. On Japanese paper.

*The Monk, the Little Bird*. New York City: Peter & Katherine Oliver, 1936. The same two friends who printed his later volume of poetry served as his publishers.

*migrated in every direction*. Paul Meyer, “Les manuscrits des sermons français de Maurice de Sully,” *Romania* 5 (1876): 466–87; 23: 177–91, 497–507; 28: 245–68. An imaginative analysis of the exemplum can be found in Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 44–54, 64–72 (on Longfellow), although her study suffers from being altogether innocent of knowledge about the major source studies in modern research languages other than English.

*he retains a reputation*. Sermons in both Latin and Old French have been ascribed to him in some abundance.

*the short story of the monk and the bird*. The most thorough study is Louis Leonor Hammerich, *Munken og fuglen: En middelalderstudie. Festskrift udgivet af Københavns Universitet i anledning af Universitetets Aarsfest, November 1933* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Bianco Lunos, 1933); the most concise exposition of the evolution, Fritz Wagner, “Mönch und Vöglein,” in *EdM*, 9: 788–93; the most comprehensive listing of versions is in *ATU*, 1: 278–79, no. 471A: “The Monk and the Bird.” The tradition of stories is particularly strong in English and German.

*Felix the Monk*. In German, *Mönch Felix*.

*translated by him from Bishop Maurice.* “An extract from a manuscript attributed to Maurice de Sully, Bishop of Paris in the years A.D. 1160–1196, translated by Pierson Underwood.”

*puts the reader on more equivocal ground.* “This story exists in at least six manuscripts. We believe this translation to have been made from a printed version of a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, number 24862, folio 126 c.” The choice of verb in the main clause is curiously evasive, as is the lack of bibliographic information on the text followed.

*homemade book.* It has boards backed with cloth tape.

*The typescript.* The colophon reads, in caps: “One Copy Set Up on the Typewriter January I, MDCCCCXXXIX, In Honour of the Birthday of Peter Oliver, Esquire, by the Translator, Pierson Underwood, Scribe.” Oliver emended the year to 1940, which corresponds to the handwritten dedication in French on the front pastedown: “Père Sous-Bois à Père Olivier, Jour de l’An, 1940: C’est à dire: P.O. from P.U. with love” (“Father Underwood to Father Olivier, New Year’s, 1940: That is to say: P.O. from P.U. with love”).

*holiday-season pamphlets.* A case in point would be his *Petit Noël: A Christmas Cantata for Treble Voices, based on Old French Noëls of the Twelfth to Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Chappell, 1938). The musical score was composed in collaboration with Lawrence Perry.

## Medieval French for Amateurs

*a limited edition.* Thirty numbered copies on a softly textured pure cotton known as velin d’Arches (also called Arches text wove) and fifty numbered copies on velin de Docelles (from the papermaker in Docelles). In both instances velin (cognate with English *vellum*) denotes a high-quality bond paper, felt to resemble true parchment. The verso sides have nothing but an Arabic numeral in a medieval-looking script. The recto bears the text, heavy ornamentation, and occasional miniatures.

*The Messengers of the Book.* In French, “Les messagers du livre.” The group’s chief supporters are inventoried on an unnumbered page near the end.

*a series of writings by French moralists.* Illus. Paul Dufau, typography Yves Filhol, binding René Privat, layout Bernard Gastaud, typeface by the foundry Deberny and Peignot. The illuminations were made by the *Messagers* as a group. The volume was printed at Villeneuve (which one is left unspecified). It is dated March 8, 1954, which would situate it during Lent.

## A One-Novel French Novelist

*The Tumbler of Our Lady, after Gautier de Coinci.* The 215-page novel is Henri Alphonse André Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame (d'après Gautier de Coinci)* (Paris: H. Piazza [imprimerie de Priester frères], 1951). The publishing house was established by Henri Jules Piazza.

*The Romance of Tristan and Isolde.* In French, *Le roman de Tristan et Iseult*.

*under its imprint.* The firm was eventually purchased in 1944. Four decades later, it disappeared from bibliographic view after being acquired by Editions d'Art Les Heures Claires, which had been founded in 1945. The current Paris-based art publisher has no record of the author, beyond the name Henri Marmier.

*other than in 1951.* Occasional indications of 1952 seem to refer equally to the 1951 printing. All editions, even including one limited to 250 copies on special paper ("vélin hollandaise de pannekoek"), appear to have been in paperback. This printing was purportedly held to 250 numbered copies, but mine lacks a number. All versions have beige card covers. The traditional bibliographic yardstick of reprints suggests that the volume was red-hot in the year of its publication. One copy indicates on the half-title page that it derives from the twelfth printing. A dozen print runs within a single year is impressive—and out of keeping with the relative lack of critical notices.

*more notice in newspapers and journals.* Vanishingly few reviews show up in scholarly periodicals. For one of the rare exceptions, see Omer Jodogne, in *Les Lettres romanes* 8 (1954): 189. This reviewer concludes by commending the book, "By my faith, it is noteworthy and will exercise a lively attraction." A very short write-up appears in *Bulletin de l'Université de Toulouse* 59–62 (1951 or later): 105. It has not been easy to discover resonance in the popular press.

*Marmier.* The family name, although far from unique, is not very common. In assorted library catalogues (as of the Bibliothèque nationale de France) the initial H on the title page has been expanded without further ado to Henri: see *La librairie française: Catalogue général des ouvrages parus du 1er janvier 1946 au 1er janvier 1956*, 3 vols. (Paris: Cercle de la librairie, 1957), 2: 205. The listing signals two numbered runs, one on vellum and the other on Holland paper.

*Born in 1894.* On March 17, in Castets-en-Dorthe, Gironde. The fullest biographical information is to be found in *Who's Who in France 1959–1960*, 4th ed. (1959), 146. This entry lists *Le bateleur* among Marmier's publications.

*a successful career as a magistrate.* He wrote a 1924 doctoral thesis in law, *Les garanties de la liberté individuelle et la réforme du Code d'instruction criminelle* (Paris: Jouve, 1924).



*André Hubert*. Pseudonym of Edmond Baptiste. He worked primarily as a painter and glazier.

*From this artist's involvement*. Two years after illustrating this version of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, the same illustrator produced color initials and vignettes in debonair profusion to adorn a three-volume edition of *The Lives of the Gallant Ladies of His Day*. See Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, *Mémoires de Messire Pierre de Bourdeille sur les vies des dames galantes de son temps*, 3 vols. (Paris: Union latine d'éditions, 1953). This memoir takes the reader on a rambling romp through the social register of the author's day. The memoirist, a nobleman, abbot, and soldier of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, offers a graphic description of sexual mores and (particularly female) organs.



Fig. n.2 Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, *Mémoires de Messire Pierre de Bourdeille sur les vies des dames galantes de son temps*, ed. Maurice Rat, illus. André Hubert, 3 vols. (Paris: Union latine d'éditions, 1953) 2: 6.

*it was pitched*. This initiative was brought out in at least two different runs. The smaller one was on higher-quality paper. Yet even the many ordinary printings come on better stock than in typical mass-market editions. The typography reflects similar foresight and expense. The ornamentation of the volume, put together with the other features, makes it a late manifestation in the genre of *livres d'artistes* that we saw in the two Ferroud editions of 1906 by Malatesta and 1924 by Lalau. In overall professionalism, the book stands far above Anatole France's French prose as reprinted in 1944 by Pierre Watrin as a work of children's literature, and from the medieval French text of the original poem printed in 1954 for "The Messengers of the Book."

*conversation between the lead male character and the Viscount*. Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 62–63.

*the charm of the primitive text*. Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 13: "Nulle adaptation n'égalera le charme du texte primitif du Gautier de Coincy."

*the juggler is linked implicitly to great churches.* Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 12.

*the version by the devout Catholic.* Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 11, 13.

*a reworked and expanded version.* Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 13: “Une version remaniée et amplifiée. C’est donc une adaptation fantaisiste, un pastiche.”

*claims the boy melted.* Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 24.

*including the Faust-like Theophilus.* Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 17, 18, and, for Theophilus, 28, 35.

*sister Beatrice.* Marmier, *Le bateleur de Notre-Dame*, 36.

## French Language-Study

*The Beautiful Country of France.* Josette Eugénie Spink, *Le beau pays de France* (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1922).

*instructor at the University of Chicago.* In the School of Education.

*The version by this pedagogue cobbles together.* She referred succinctly to the medieval tale “taken from the writings of the Fathers in the Middle Ages,” to the “most exquisite” retelling of Anatole France, or to the opera by Massenet, indebted to Anatole France, “which Mary Garden interprets so superbly.” See Spink, *Le beau pays*, 160.

*good-looking.* In French, *beau*, the adjective of choice for both, means both handsome and beautiful.

*textbooks for instruction.* A partial inventory would include: W. M. Daniels, *Contes de la France contemporaine* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1922); Anatole France, *Contes*, ed. C. J. M. Adie and P. C. H. de Satgé (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 5–16; George Neely Henning, ed., *Abeille et autres contes: With Notes, Direct-Method Exercises and Vocabulary*, illus. Kurt Wiese (Boston, MA: Heath, 1928), with questions after each story, 115, 215–16; Anatole France, *Abeille, Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame, Les Pains noirs*, ed. R. L. Græme Ritchie, illus. Henry Morin (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1928); *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, adap. Angèle Hyland, illus. Nellie Gordon, Work[s] Projects Administration: Remedial Reading Program, Secondary Schools (New York: Board of Education, City of New York, [1940?]); Laurence Hervey Skinner, *Quinze conteurs* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940), 27–32 (text), 269–70 (questions, with French phrases to study closely and English sentences to translate); François Denoeu, *Contes et récits* (New York: Henry Holt, 1947), 130–36 (text), 246–47 (biographical note and questions); John Le Coq, *Vignettes littéraires: French Life and Ideals* (Boston, MA: D. C. Heath, 1957), 56–64, text with brief footnotes (mainly sources and parallels), preceded

by a one-page introduction and one-page description of date, place, qualities, and meaning; *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame and Other Stories*, trans. Margaret Weale (London: George G. Harrap, 1955), 6–14 (in facing-language format, with the French original on one side and the English on the other); Germaine Brée and Anne Prioleau Jones, *Hier et aujourd'hui: Premières lectures littéraires* (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), 77–86.

*delightful and childlike simplicity*. Henning, *Abeille et autres contes*, 115.

*Old favorites can stale*. In reviewing Arsène Croteau and Arthur M. Selvi, eds., *Belles lectures françaises* (New York: American Book Co., 1949), C. Maxwell Lancaster first comments on the assistance provided in annotations and translations by the compilers of an anthology, and then declares: “In this new presentation such old favorites as *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* ... assume a new interest and charm.” See *The French Review* 23 (1950): 403–4, at 404.

*one compendium*. Benjamin F. Bart, *La France: Carrefour des civilisations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949).

*the reviewer proposes*. Cyrus C. Decoster, review of Denoëu, *Contes et récits*, in *The French Review* 21 (1948): 493–94, at 493: “Those of us who have been teaching a few years have on our shelves a half dozen or more collections of short stories, each of which includes about fifty per cent of the stories in any one of the others. ... Naturally enough, some *teachers* have become a little weary of these old favorites and the effort to keep them amused is already at least a quarter of a century old. (I have italicized the word *teachers*, because it should be obvious that the students, reading the stories for the first time, have no reason to be bored.)”

*a language teacher*. Edward Harvey, review of Albert J. Salvan, *D'un siècle à l'autre: Contes et nouvelles*, in *The French Review* 24 (1950): 55–56, at 55.

*a third assessor*. Arsène Croteau, “Old Chestnuts,” *The French Review* 25.1 (October 1951): 65–67, at 67.

*a 1953 paperback volume*. Anatole France, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame et d'autres contes*, ed. Grazia Maccone (Milan, Italy: Carlo Signorelli, 1953), 14 (“La simplicité, touchante jusqu'aux larmes”). The whole volume is in French, including the introduction and notes.

*an article*. Robert A. Wagoner, “Fitting the Foreign Language into a Core Curriculum,” *Modern Language Journal* 38 (1954): 304–8, at 308.

*A late specimen of anthologizing*. Walter J. Cobb, *Pages à Plaire: A Modern Approach to Reading* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 74–86 (with discussion on i–vi).

*takes as his starting point.* Cobb, *Pages à Plaire*, 1–5.

*In another anthology.* Le Coq, *Vignettes littéraires*, 58.

*made a confession to a reporter.* Marc Shulgold, “Obscure ‘Jongleur’ Entertains,” *Rocky Mountain News*, July 9, 2004. The director was Ken Cazan; the opera house, Central City Opera in Colorado.

## Notes to Chapter 2

*The Middle Ages.* Jacques de Baroncelli, "Avant presentation: La légende de Sœur Béatrix," *Comoedia* 17.3819, June 1, 1923, "Cinéma," repr. in idem, *Ecrits sur le cinéma, suivi de Mémoires*, ed. Bernard Bastide (Perpignan, France: Collection Institut Jean Vigo, 1996), 110–11.

*onto pianolas.* Much of the trade was controlled by the Aeolian Company, which prospered until the Depression began in the late 1920s. This American-based multinational relied upon instruments that were often manufactured by Steck, a subsidiary in Germany. The roll for Massenet's *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (reference number 69769) contains a "bouquet of melodies" arranged for four hands by Jacques-Albert Anschütz (1835–1902). The arranger would have had to work rapidly to produce the music between the premiere of the opera and his death.

### Making a Spectacle of Miracle

*Manhattan Opera Company.* Its operations were based in the Manhattan Opera House, located at 311 West 34th Street, the building that now houses the Manhattan Center Studios.

*Metropolitan Opera House.* At 1411 Broadway. The facility, now known as "the old Met," opened in 1883.

*Salomé.* In Boston, her costume precipitated the banning of the production.

*Le jongleur de Notre Dame.* Vincent Sheean, *The Amazing Oscar Hammerstein: The Life and Exploits of an Impresario* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1956), 283.

*Aloyse and the Minstrel.* In French, *Aloyse et le ménestrel*, 1909, produced by Pathé Frères.

*Medieval miracles.* The foundational scholarship has all been published by François Amy de La Bretèque, especially "Présence de la littérature française du Moyen Âge dans le cinéma français," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes/Journal of Medieval and Humanistic Studies* 22 (2011): 155–65, at 156–57; and *L'imaginaire médiéval dans le cinéma occidental* (Paris: H. Champion, 2004), 906–16. In addition, see Amédée Aylfre, "La Vierge Marie et le cinéma," in *Maria: Études sur la sainte Vierge*, ed. Hubert Du Manoir de Juaye, 5: 793–810, with a filmography at 802–10. 7 vols. Paris: Beauchesne, 1949–1964.

*Joan of Arc enjoyed an extraordinary vogue.* La Bretèque, *L'imaginaire médiéval*, 1101–1225, nos. 1, 2, 4, 6, 25, 32, 72, 75, 109, 110, 114, 134, 158.

*not a single purpose-built cinema existed.* David Atwell, *Cathedrals of the Movies: A History of British Cinemas and Their Audiences* (London: Architectural Press, 1980), 2.

*moviegoers referred to their seats.* Jeffrey Richards, *Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in 1930s Britain* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 1.

*picture palaces.* They were also called by other names, such as “electric palaces” and “palaces of light.”

*this form of mass entertainment.* See Charlotte Herzog, “The Movie Palace and the Theatrical Sources of Its Architectural Style,” *Cinema Journal* 20.2 (1981): 15–37, at 15.

*Roman temples and amphitheaters.* On a smaller scale, what is a nickelodeon etymologically but a pseudoantique odeon or theater where entrance costs a nickel?

*Gothic great churches.* See Richards, *Age of the Dream Palace*, 20–21, and Atwell, *Cathedrals of the Movies*, 130–33, 139–41, on two theaters designed by the Russian-born Theodore Komisarjevsky: both the Granada at Tooting and the one at Woolwich were hybrids of Venetian and Spanish Gothic.

*lighting features.* William Paul, *When Movies Were Theater: Architecture, Exhibition, and the Evolution of American Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 15.

*Norman Bel Geddes decorated one building.* On the Century Theater, see Paul, *When Movies Were Theater*, 16.

*Let there be light.* Quoted in Ben M. Hall, *The Best Remaining Seat: The Story of the Golden Age of the Movie Palace* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1961), 5–11, at 8: “Ye portals bright, high and majestic, open to our gaze the path to Wonderland, and show us the realm where fantasy reigns, where romance, where adventure flourish. Let ev’ry day’s toil be forgotten under thy sheltering roof—O glorious, mighty hall—thy magic and thy charm unite us all to worship at beauty’s throne. ... Let there be light.”

*a succession of scenes or vignettes.* Tom Gunning, “The Non-Continuous Style of Early Film 1900–1906,” in *Cinema 1900/1906: An Analytical Study*, ed. Roger Holman, 2 vols. (Brussels: fiaf [Fédération internationale des archives du film], 1981), 1: 219–29; La Bretèque, *L’imaginaire médiéval*, 201.

*implicitly a Golden Legend.* François Amy de La Bretèque, “Les films hagiographiques dans le cinéma des premiers temps,” in *Une invention du diable? Cinéma des premiers temps et religion*, ed. Roland Cosandey et al. (Sainte-Foy, France: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1992), 121–30, at 121: “implicite-ment une *Légende dorée* en tableaux animés.”

*The Dream.* In French, *Le rêve*. For excellent analysis, see Elizabeth Emery, “‘A l’ombre d’une vieille cathédrale romane’: The Medievalism of Gautier and Zola,” *The French Review* 73.2 (1999): 290–300. The text of the narrative was subsequently adapted as an opera, silent film, and early film with sound. The novel was reworked by Louis Gallet as the libretto for an 1891 opera composed by Alfred Bruneau, and twice by the cinematic director Jacques de Baroncelli, once as a film without sound in 1921 and

later as his second talkie in 1930. For information on Baroncelli's movies (especially the one with audio), see Gilles Martinez, "Zola-Baroncelli, le traitement du son dans l'adaptation du *Rêve* (1930)," in Jacques de Baroncelli, ed. Bernard Bastide and François de La Bretèque (Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma/Les mistons productions, 2007), 159–67.

*the writer was filled with paradoxes*. Elizabeth Emery, "Bricabracomania: Zola's Romantic Instinct," *Excavatio* 12 (1999): 107–15.

*Beautiful Mountain-The Church*. In French, Beaumont-l'Église.

*Church of Saint Mary*. In French, l'Église Sainte-Marie.

*The story commences*. Émile Zola, *Le rêve*, illus. Louis Icart (Lausanne, Switzerland: Aux Éditions du Grand-Chêne, 1946), frontispiece.

*The Dream of the Lacemaker*. In French, *Le rêve de la dentellière* (Lux, 1910).

*The Legend of the Argentan Lace*. In French, *La légende du point d'Argentan* (1907), a six-minute-long French production (without sound).

*The Legend of the Old Bell-Ringer*. In French, *La légende du vieux sonneur* (Pathé Frères, 1911), written and directed by Camille de Morlhon.

*silent films*. In French, *La légende de la fileuse* (Société des Établissements Gaumont, 1908), directed by Louis Feuillade, although it contains the motif of weaving, deals with the Greek myth of Arachne, who metamorphosed into a spider. It is unrelated to the preceding films.

*an opera printed a year earlier*. With music by Félix Fourdrain, libretto by Henri Cain and Arthur Bernède (Paris: Choudens, 1907).

*The Legend of the Old Bell-Ringer*. Produced by Pathé frères, written and directed by Camille de Morlhon, and screenplay published in 1910 and 1911: *La légende du vieux sonneur: Scenario*.

## Sister Beatrice

*Sister Beatrice*. The original French title was *Sœur Béatrice*.

*Caesarius of Heisterbach*. *Dialogus miraculorum*, distinctio 7, capitulum 34 ("De Beatrice custode"), ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne: J. M. Heberle, 1851), 2: 42–43, <https://archive.org/details/caesariiheister00stragoog>; trans. H. Von Essen Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, 2 vols. (London: G. Routledge, 1929), 1: 502–3. For a study, see Heinrich Watenphul, *Die Geschichte der Marienlegende von Beatrix der Küsterin* (Neuwied, Germany: Heuser, 1904).

*miracle collections from the Middle Ages*. Graciela S. Daichman, *Wayward Nuns in Medieval Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

*Eight Books of Miracles*. In Latin, *Libri octo miraculorum*.

*Adgar*. This writer worked in two rounds on his translation of the Latin *Miracles of the Virgin* into rhymed octosyllabic couplets. First, around 1150, he completed a longer redaction of forty-nine tales. Later, between 1165 and 1180, he intercalated in his “Book of Grace” of twenty-two tales, not all of them repeated from the earlier collection. The tale of the sacristan appears in his *Le gracial*.

*Miracles of Our Lady*. Adgar, *Le gracial*, miracle 48, ed. Pierre Kunstmann, Publications médiévales de l’Université d’Ottawa / University of Ottawa Mediaeval Texts and Studies, vol. 8 (Ottawa, Canada: Editions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1982), 305–17; *La vie des Pères*, 13, lines 6842–7403, ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, A. et J. Picard, 1987–1999), 1: 222–39; Gautier de Coinci, *Les miracles de Notre Dame*, ed. V. Frédéric Koenig, 4 vols., Textes littéraires français, vols. 64, 95, 131, 176 (Geneva: Droz, 1955–), 1: 43.

*This French author’s medievalizing*. For the “Légende de Sœur Béatrice” (first published in *Revue de Paris* in October 1837), the standard edition is Charles Nodier, *Contes: Avec des textes et des documents inédits*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex (Paris: Garnier, 1961), 781–98. The story was also printed separately: Nodier, *Légende de sœur Béatrix*. On Nodier’s medievalizing, see Walter Kudrycz, *The Historical Present: Medievalism and Modernity* (London: Continuum, 2011), 63. Victor Hugo wrote a poem entitled “La Légende de la nonne,” which tells of a pious young nun who falls in love with a brigand; they are struck dead by God when they rendezvous beneath a statue of Saint Veronica.

*a seemingly sentimentalized account*. Under the title “The Legend of Provence.” For the text, see Adelaide A. Procter, *The Poems* (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Fields, 1863), 181–91 (“Legends and Lyrics: A Book of Verses, Second Series”). How far the sentimentality runs can be debated: a case has been made that the Victorian morality apprehensible on the surface is belied by covert questioning of conventional gender politics and repressed emotions and sexual desires. For interpretation, see Gill Gregory, “Adelaide Procter’s ‘A Legend of Provence’: The Struggle for a Place,” in *Victorian Women Poets: A Critical Reader*, ed. Angela Leighton, Blackwell Critical Readers in Literature, vol. 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996): 88–96; Francis O’Gorman, *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 320–21; Christine A. Colón, “Lessons from the Medieval Convent: Adelaide Procter’s ‘A Legend of Provence,’” in *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Lorretta M. Holloway and Jennifer A. Palmgren (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 95–115.

*Seven Legends*. In German, *Sieben Legenden*.



*The Virgin and the Nun*. For the German text, see Gottfried Keller, *Sämtliche Werke: Historische-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Walter Morgenthaler, 31 vols. (Frankfurt, Germany: Stroemfeld, 1996–2012), 7: 377–85; for an English translation, see “The Virgin and the Nun,” in idem, *Seven Legends*, trans. Martin Wyness (London: Gowans and Gray, 1911), 51–60, and in idem, *Stories*, ed. Frank G. Ryder, German Library, vol. 44 (New York: Continuum, 1982), 364–68.

*recapitulated it in a few words*. Anatole France, *La vie littéraire*, 4 vols. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1899–1905), 2: 268. See also Paul Gsell, *Les matinées de la villa Saïd: Propos d’Anatole France* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1921), which records a version of the story delivered orally by France.

*The Miracle*. In German, *Das Mirakel*. On the biographical circumstances, see Frederick D. Tunnat, *Karl Vollmoeller: Dichter und Kulturmanager. Eine Biographie* (Hamburg, Germany: Tredition, 2008), 152. The book has been reprinted in an expanded form under exactly the same title (Vendramin, 2012). In the second edition, key stretches on *The Miracle* are pp. 326–60, 457–73.

*images of Mary*. Tunnat, *Karl Vollmoeller* (2012), 295.

*Vollmoeller sought to produce it as a pantomime*. Tunnat, *Karl Vollmoeller*, 39, 44, and 48.

*in the countdown to Christmas of 1911*. It was drafted in Berlin and Starnberg from June to December of 1911, and it opened on December 23, 1911, in Olympia Hall. Its score was by the German composer Engelbert Humperdinck, whose name has proven to be more enduring than his music.

*throughout Europe*. It was produced in 1912 in Vienna; in 1913, in Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Elberfeld, Breslau (today Wrocław), Cologne, Prague, and Frankfurt am Main; in 1914, in Karlsruhe and Hamburg; and in 1917, in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, Helsingborg, and Bucharest.

*across the Atlantic*. *F. Ray Comstock and Morris Gest Present for the First Time in America the Stupendous, Spectacular Pantomime, the Miracle: Staged by Max Reinhardt; Book by Karl Vollmoeller; Score by Engelbert Humperdinck, Revised and Extended by Friedrich Schirmer; Production Designed by Norman-Bel Geddes; Built by P. J. Carey & Co. Entire Production under the Personal Supervision of Morris Gest: Souvenir*, ed. Oliver M. Saylor (New York: Sackett & Wilhelms, 1926).

*forty-two multi-lancet windows*. Laura Morowitz, “The Cathedral of Commerce: French Gothic Architecture and Wanamaker’s Department Store,” in *Medieval Art and Architecture after the Middle Ages*, ed. Janet Marquardt and Alyce Jordan (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 340–62, at 357.

*The inaugural London production.* Bradford Smith, "A Religious Spectacle in Theater and Film: Max Reinhardt's *The Miracle* (1911–1912)," in Cosandey et al., *Une invention du diable?*, 311–18.

*A city newspaper.* *The Illustrated London News*.

*the place of worship.* The building was designed by the architect Dominikus Böhm.

*a single stream of brightness.* Gösta M. Bergman, *Lighting in the Theatre* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), 343. On his relation to expressionism, see Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*, trans. Roger Greaves (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 7–8, 39–40.

*in prerevolutionary Russia.* See Robert Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 12. On lighting, see pp. 104–5.

*highly innovative techniques.* Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, 31, 57, 60, 89, 115.

*remained strictly motionless.* Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, 57.

*Blessed Virgin Mary.* To be more precise, the equivalent Latin phrase *Beata Virgo Maria*: see Leach, *Vsevolod Meyerhold*, 106.

*a plan for the stage engineering.* George Wall, drawing "How the Century Theatre Was Converted into a Cathedral for the Production of *The Miracle*," in Albert A. Hopkins, "Theatre without a Stage: The Whole Building Given over to the Play with the Audience Part of the Scenery," *Scientific American* 130 (April 1924): 228–29, at 229.

*cyclorama.* An image of this sort is a panoramic painting presented on the inside of a cylinder, so that a viewer standing in the middle has a 360° view.

*twice been made into films.* On the first, see La Bretèque, *L'imaginaire médiéval*, 1120, no. 58. On the relationship between the two, see Smith, "Religious Spectacle," 311–18.

*In full color.* Created by hand-coloring in the Pathéchrome process.

*live actors.* The movie was considered a "filmed pantomime" rather than a "moving picture drama."

*the score by Humperdinck.* See *The Miracle: Great Pantomime in Two Acts and One Entr'act*, by Karl Vollmoeller and Max Reinhardt (Berlin: Bote und Bock, 1912). On the score, see Eva Humperdinck, *Der unbekannte Engelbert Humperdinck: Engelbert Humperdinck Werkverzeichnis zum 140. Geburtstag seinem Andenken gewidmet* (Koblenz, Germany: Görres Verlag, 1994), 140–41, no. 151.

*Ludwig Hohlwein*. In his heyday before World War I, this graphic artist enjoyed a reputation as the “Munich Poster King” (Münchner Plakatkönig). See *Ludwig Hohlwein, Plakate der Jahre 1906–1940 aus der Graphischen Sammlung Staatsgalerie Stuttgart: Ausstellung der Graphischen Sammlung in der Staatsgalerie Stuttgart 2. März bis 21. April 1985*. Deutsches Plakatumuseum Essen: Bestandskatalog, ed. Christian Schneegass (Stuttgart, Germany: Staatsgalerie, 1985), 5. As a Bavarian, he had good reason to be nostalgically aware of the medieval past.

*advertising art*. The German is *Gebrauchsgrafik*.

*His poster was issued in 1914*. Schneegass, *Ludwig Hohlwein*, 79, no. 143.

*owing to the outbreak of the War*. Presumably, any entertainment at all would have been deemed inappropriate at the time, but the joint Anglo-German origins of the production opened an even bigger can of worms.

*the picture enjoyed an esteemed afterlife*. For instance, it was included in 1926 in a book devoted to reproductions of Hohlwein’s posters, where it was printed with text in both German and English: *Ludwig Hohlwein*, ed. Hermann Karl Frenzel (Berlin: Phönix Illustrationsdruck, 1926), table 59; Schneegass, *Ludwig Hohlwein*, 79, no. 143. In Frenzel, the posters are reproduced on pages 11.75 × 8.75” (30 × 22 cm). Schneegass refers to dimensions of 174 × 125.5 cm and 40.5 × 28.5 cm. Interest in Hohlwein among scholars and the public has exploded since the mid-1980s: see Ragna Jäckle, *Ludwig Hohlwein (1874–1949): Traditionsverbundenheit in Leben und Werk*, Tuduv-Studien: Reihe Kunstgeschichte, vol. 66 (Munich, Germany: Tuduv, 1994); Volker Duvigneau and Norbert Götz, eds., *Ludwig Hohlwein, 1874–1949: Kunstgewerbe und Reklamekunst* (Munich, Germany: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1996); *Ddi*, 532.

*a substantial tome of scholarship*. Robert Guiette, *La légende de la Sacristine: Étude de littérature comparée*, Bibliothèque de la Revue de littérature comparée, vol. 43 (Paris: H. Champion, 1927). For distilled information on subsequent scholarship, see Michaela Fenske, “Nonne, die in die Welt ging,” *EdM*, 10: 69–72.

*qualify as damnable forms of expression*. Smith, “Religious Spectacle,” 311–12.

*the singer Yvette Guilbert*. Bettina Liebowitz Knapp and Myra Chipman, *That Was Yvette: The Biography of Yvette Guilbert, the Great Diseuse* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 246.

*In clunky verse*. “From Eastertide to Eastertide / For ten long years her patient knees / Engraved the stones—the fittest bride / Of Christ in all the diocese.”

*Ballads and Songs*. John Davidson, *Ballads and Songs* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head; Boston, MA: Copeland & Day, 1894), <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet>.

dli.2015.503751. The poem enjoyed modest success, being reprinted with illustrations less than a decade later in London.

*one of the librettists.* The two were French writers (especially of plays and librettos), Robert de Flers and Gaston Arman de Caillavet. The latter's father was Albert Arman de Caillavet, and his mother Lippmann.

*the composer.* The musician in question was André Messager.

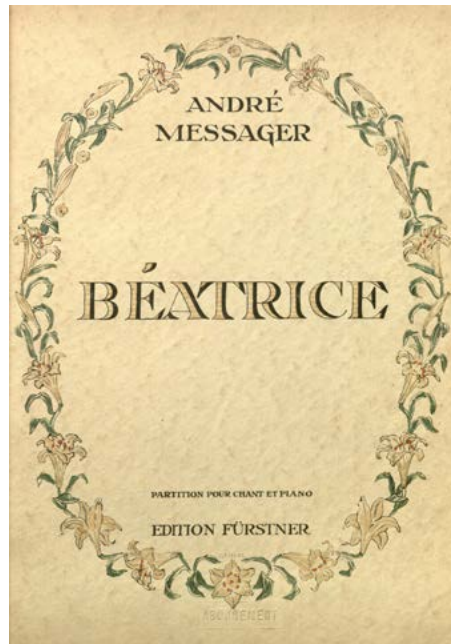


Fig. n.3 Title page of André Messager, *Béatrice* (Paris: A. Fürstner, 1914).

*The Legend of Sister Beatrice.* In French, *La Légende de sœur Béatrix*. La Bretèque, "Présence de la littérature française," 157, offers a distinctly different chronology of the relationship among these constituents.

*The movie was directed.* La Bretèque, *L'imaginaire médiéval*, 1133, no. 93; idem, "La Légende de sœur Béatrix (1923)," in Bastide and Bretèque, *Jacques de Baroncelli*, 134–45.

*recast three of Adgar's legends.* Likewise, in octosyllabic couplets.

*Gautier de Coinci.* Specifically, *Les miracles de Notre Dame*, 1.31: "Dou soucretain que Notre Dame visita," 11–22.

*he gives special notice.* Baroncelli, "Avant présentation."

*Gustave Lanson.* *Histoire de la littérature française*, 10th ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1908), 70.

*the stories' naïveté.* "Above all, medieval faith made of the Virgin and of her credibility with her son an inexhaustible wellspring of naïvely ludicrous marvel."

*ironic and condescending.* "People did not tire of hearing how the good Virgin took care of those devoted to her."

*Robin Hood.* In French, *Robin des bois*.

*naïve and gilded language.* *Comoedia*, 17.3819, June 1, 1923, (notes added), quoted by La Bretèque, "Présence de la littérature française," 158, and *L'imaginaire médiéval*, 915. The same piece is reprinted in Baroncelli, *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 110–11.

*a unity that by implication is wanting.* "There is not at all collision or conflict: there is coexistence and connection."

*One reviewer rewarded him.* Edmond Epardaud, in *Cinéa*, July 8, 1923, quoted by La Bretèque, *L'imaginaire médiéval*, 915n26.

## Sister Angelica

*Sister Angelica.* In Italian, *Suor Angelica*, libretto by Giovacchino Forzano. The opera was the centerpiece in a trio of one-act operas known as *Il trittico* (The triptych). It was preceded by *Il tabarro* (The cloak) and followed by the comic opera *Gianni Schicchi* (from the name of a man in Dante's *Inferno*, canto 30). *Suor Angelica* had its premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City in 1918. See Michele Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 396.

*Le jongleur de Notre Dame.* On Puccini's debt to Massenet's opera, see Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1977), 434–35; Girardi, *Puccini*, 263.

*the particulars of transgressions.* Yasmina Foehr-Janssens, "Histoire poétique du péché: De quelques figures littéraires de la faute dans les *Miracles de Notre Dame* de Gautier de Coinci," in *Gautier de Coinci: Miracles, Music, and Manuscripts*, ed. Kathy M. Krause and Alison Stones, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, vol. 13 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 215–26.

*lyric drama.* In French, *drame lyrique*.

*the libretto for Puccini's own Margherita da Cortona.* By Valentino Soldani.

*he contemplated creating his own.* The key sources are letters from Puccini to the librettist Luigi Illica, dated May 16, 1904; June 7, 1904: see *Carteggi pucciniani*, ed. Eugenio Gara (Milan, Italy: Ricordi, 1958), 273–74 (no. 379), 275–76 (no. 383), 276 (no. 386), 278–79 (no. 388), 279 (no. 389), 280 (no. 391). See Girardi, *Puccini*, 263.

*we are presumably bedazzled.* Robert C. Ketterer, "Machines for the Suppression of Time: Statues in 'Suor Angelica,' 'The Winter's Tale,' and 'Alceste,'" *Comparative Drama* 24.1 (1990): 3–23, at 5–7.

## Audio Recording

*printed scores and librettos.* The English version of Maurice Léna's libretto was *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame: Miracle Play in Three Acts*, trans. Charles Alfred Byrne (New York: C. E. Burden, 1907).

*a journalist published.* In the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, later reworked for the *American Mercury* (October 1925): 158–160.

*The best verdict.* H. L. Mencken, "In Memoriam: W. J. B.," in *A Mencken Chrestomathy: His Own Selection of His Choicest Writing* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1949), 243–48, at 244–45.

*the curmudgeonly passage.* In 1994, Russell Baker, a *New York Times* editorialist, invoked Mencken's obituary for its incisive harshness by way of contrast to the lifeless press of Baker's own day: "The Tiger with No Teeth," *New York Times*, late edition, April 26, 1994, 23.

*Recordings were made.* The French baritone Gabriel Soulacroix, who sang as the prior on the opening night, made a recording in 1903 of the "Legend of the Sage-Plant" from the second act of Massenet's *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*. The Belgian tenor Adolphe Maréchal, the first Jean, who created the role in its premiere in Monaco, followed suit in 1904. In 1911, Mary Garden recorded Jean's "O freedom, my friend" (in French, "O liberté m'amie"). These three, together with various other early recordings, have been reproduced on Malibran-Music CDRG 156. The "Legend of the Sage-Plant" had already been preserved twice for posterity in 1910 by French operatic lyric tenors, David Devriès and Émile Marcellin. In 1912, the baritone Louis Nucelly was captured on a recording device marketed by the American inventor and businessman Thomas Alva Edison from 1908 to 1912, singing the aria as the character Boniface: on the Edison Amberol label, issue number 17166, listed in *The Edison Phonograph Monthly* 10 [1912], digitized transfer available online.

*a lute in hand.* The caption reads "The Classic Lute of the Troubadours."

*ancestor of the violin.* The caption reads "The Tromba Marina of the Middle Ages, the Ancestor of the Violin" (1916).

*forerunners of a military band.* The caption reads "Ancient Zinke and Nakeres, Forerunners of the Military Band."

## Silent Film

*Like the cathedral.* S. Charles Lee, a designer of motion picture theaters on the US West Coast, interview with Karen Safer (April 28, 1980), quoted in Karen J. Safer, "The Functions of Decoration in the American Movie Palace," *Marquee* 14.2 (1982): 3–9, at 6.

*silent film in Germany.* The German is "Der Spielmann unserer lieben Frau," produced in 1917 by Legenden Film-Gesellschaft (DE) under commission from Weißblaugesellschaft in Munich, passed the censor first in Munich and later in Berlin: see Herbert Birett, ed., *Verzeichnis in Deutschland gelaufener Filme: Entscheidungen der Filmzensur. Berlin, Hamburg, München, Stuttgart, 1911–1920* (Munich, Germany: K. G. Saur, 1980), 556 (Munich, Germany, 1917, no 25665, as a film of 170 meters), and 442 (Berlin, 1918, no. 42353, as a film of 180 meters).

*Legend Film Company.* In German, *Legenden-Filmgesellschaft*.

*The Life of Saint Elizabeth.* In German, *Das Leben der heiligen Elisabeth. Rosenheimer Anzeiger: Rosenheimer Tagblatt*, 63.285, December 12, 1917, unpaginated 3, col. 3.

## Charlie Chaplin: Tramp Meets Tumbler

*nearly forty years apart.* He printed the first in 1939 and the other in 1977.

*thrown into a cell.* In the later report, the tumbler is taken in by a nunnery not because of some wrongdoing but because he is starving, and there is no mention of his being imprisoned in a cell or escaping from it.

*him in his death trance.* Alistair Cooke, "Charlie Chaplin," in *New Directions*, ed. Warren Bower, 2nd series (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1941), 408–23, at 421. The piece was first printed in *Atlantic Monthly* 164 (August 1939): 176–85.

*printed in 1977.* Alistair Cooke, *Six Men* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 43–44.

*the comedian dropped the undertaking.* Although Chaplin's reaction to the story could hardly be described as a conversion experience, this episode could explain a tantalizing reference in Sheldon Christian, *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Modern Miracle Play* (Portland, ME: Anthoensen Press, 1948), xii: "it is related that after a great modern tumbler (whose name, were we to give it, would be familiar to you) had read this story, he suddenly found new meaning in life, and from then on was a changed man. That veteran of the boards has enjoyed a peculiar veneration among his following, who sense in him something deeper than laughter. And, like all great truths, the truth set forth in the story of the tumbler is so apparent that one almost passes it by."

*They don't pay their shillings and quarters.* Compare Cooke, "Charlie Chaplin," 422.

*phlegmatic tramp.* Cooke, "Charlie Chaplin," 422.

## Notes to Chapter 3

### The Ecumenical Juggler

*Be he Catholic or Protestant.* Henry T. Finck, *Massenet and His Operas* (New York: John Lane, 1910), 95.

*suggested readings for high schoolers.* Beekman W. Cottrell and Lois S. Josephs, "Love in the Tenth Grade," *English Journal* 52 (1963): 430–33, at 431.

*Index of Forbidden Books.* "Anatole France's Books Put on the Index: Controversy Expected over Vatican Ban," *New York Times*, July 8, 1922, front page. The verdict was reached by the dicastery responsible for *Censura librorum*, which means both "examination of books" and "repression of books." This department, before being abolished in 1966, was called first the sacred Congregation of the Index and later the Holy Office.

*thirteenth-century monk.* During the abbacy of Adam de Harcarres (d. 1245).

*Adam explained.* "The Chronicle of Melrose," in *The Church Historians of England*, ed. and trans. Joseph Stevenson, 5 vols. in 8 (London: Seeleys, 1854), 4.1, repr. in Joseph Stevenson, *Medieval Chronicles of Scotland: The Chronicles of Melrose and Holyrood* (Dyfed, Wales: Llanerch, 1988), 7–124, at 94–95.

*two lay brothers.* Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, 8.17, 2: 95, <https://archive.org/details/caesariiheister00stragoog>; Scott and Bland, *Dialogue on Miracles*, 2: 18–19.

*a Unitarian catechism.* Frances May Dadmun, *Children of the Father: A Manual for the Religious Instruction of Children of Primary Grade, Prepared Especially for Pupils Eight Years of Age* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1916), 204–9 (lesson 36). At the time, "The Beacon Press Publications in Religious Education" series was more than a half century old: it had been established in 1854.

*he published the text.* Albino Luciani, "La beatitudine dei semplici" (or "La Madonna e il giocoliere"), *Messaggero di sant'Antonio* (1976), repr. Anatole France, *Il giocoliere di Maria*, ed. Roberto Alessandrini (Bologna, Italy: Lampi d'autore, 2016), 37–41.

*Royal Murdoch.* Robert Harlow, *Royal Murdoch* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1962).

*her previous Protestantism.* The principle of "cleanliness is indeed next to godliness" is recorded first in a 1778 sermon by a cofounder of Methodism, John Wesley.

*it is a mockery.* Harlow, *Royal Murdoch*, 76.



*a consummation of this clerical cholera.* The passage continues: “‘Madam,’ he said. ‘I am the priest. For you, I am the Church, and you must do as I say to expiate your sins—contrition, confession, penance, a hundred Hail Marys if I say so. But you do not, on your own, decide to scrub the steps.’ He stood straight again. ‘To interpret for yourself what the Church is here to rule on is...’ He hesitated. ‘A cardinal sin.’ Mrs. Darien began to cry and cross herself. ‘And no more Indians,’ he said. ‘Bring me no more Indians. I will make my own converts. If I need an assistant I will ask the Bishop for one.’ Mrs. Darien dropped her brush into the bucket and kneeled before him, crushed. ‘I must be forgiven, Father.’ The priest smiled. “‘Of course, dear lady,’ he said. ‘Go. And no more scrubbing and no more Indians. Just come to mass and if you would like to do something for God I tell you now the organ needs a little work on it—just a few repairs and a bit of tuning.’ He came down from the steps and bent over her, giving her the sign of the cross and raising her by the arm to her feet.” Harlow, *Royal Murdoch*, 76.

*an Australian book.* Graham English, author and illustrator, *Saying Hello to God: Learning to Pray* (Mulgrave, Victoria: John Garratt, 2006), cover, 74–80.

*G. K. Chesterton.* See his “The Innocence of Criminals,” *The Living Age* 292 (8th ser., vol. 5).3783, January 6, 1917: 740–43, at 741.

*Christmas Stories That Never Grow Old.* The citation in full is Van B. Hooper, ed., *Christmas Stories That Never Grow Old* (Milwaukee, WI: Ideals Publishing, 1959), unpaginated, selection no. 3: “This old favorite has been universally loved by people of all faiths for its warm portrayal of the spirit that is Christmas. It is presented here with the heartfelt hope that, whatever your belief, you will have found in its message added meaning for your celebration of the birth of the Son of God.”

*Ida Lublenski Ehrlich.* See her *A Trilogy of Interfaith Plays* (n.p.: n.p., 1961), 2–6.

*a Jewish mother.* Edward Kessler, “Mary—The Jewish Mother,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 76 (2011): 211–23. *Mary*, by way of the Latin *Maria*, derives from the Hebrew *Miriam*. Moses’s sister is the only woman in the Hebrew Bible to bear the name.

*a music critic.* Carl Van Vechten, *The Merry-Go-Round* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1918), 48.

*you really do what sings.* Leonard Cohen, “Leonard Cohen Considers the Poetic Mind,” interview by Adrienne Clarkson, “Take 30,” 1966, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yta36Ry8UFc>

*The Acrobat & the Angel.* Mark Shannon, *The Acrobat & the Angel*, illus. David Shannon (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1999), copyright page.

*a popular appeal.* Shannon, *Acrobat & the Angel*, copyright page.

## The Hasidic Whistle-Blower

*This better prayer is mine also.* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, pt. 2, bk. 12.

*the founder of Hasidism.* For an invaluable unraveling of fact and fiction in the biography of the Besht and publication history of traditions associated with him, see Ada Rapoport-Albert, "Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism," *History and Theory* (1988): 119–59.

*sacred anecdotes.* Martin Buber, *For the Sake of Heaven* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1958), vii.

*Besht.* Acronym for the Hebrew *Ba'al Shem Tov*, usually translated as "Master of the Good Name." The tale has also been ascribed, perhaps not inconsistently, to Rabbi Yitzhak Yehuda (Isaac Judah) Yehiel Safrin by his son, Rabbi Eli'ezer Tsevi Safrin. Father and son are respectively the first and second Komarner Rebbe. The son says that he heard the story from his late father, not that his parent claimed to have been rabbi when the incident occurred. The tale is told within a long comment on Psalm 119:105. In this instance the episode is supposed to take place on the two consecutive days of the New Year festival. The simpleminded boy here wishes to whistle with his mouth, but instead merely makes a loud utterance to profess his ignorance.

*the horn is sounded on Rosh Hashanah.* More broadly, the tale has been associated with the whole of the Yamim Noraim (Days of Awe) that connect two high holidays of Judaism.

*anthologies of Hasidic lore.* The legend has been retold by Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, trans. Olga Marx, 2 vols. (New York, Schocken, 1947–1948), repr. 1991 (1 vol.), 69–70 ("The Little Whistle"); Yitzhak Buxbaum, *The Light and Fire of the Baal Shem Tov* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 207–8 ("The Boy with the Flute"); Gedalyah Nigal, *The Hasidic Tale*, trans. Edward Levin (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 259–60. The story has been retold recently by Richard Walters, *The Simple Shepherd: A Baal Shem Tov Picture Story* (privately published, 2008).

*Jewish tradition.* See Dan Ben-Amos, ed., *Folktales of the Jews*, vol. 1: *Tales from the Sephardic Dispersion*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 208, 211, nn. 25–27. 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").

*I. L. Peretz.* On the story in the writings of this author, see Menasheh Unger, *R. Yisroel Bal Shem Toyv* (New York: "Hsides," 1963), 385.

*Micha Joseph Bin Gorion.* The tale is included in Micah Joseph Berdichevsky, *Der Born Judas: Legenden, Märchen und Erzählungen*, trans. Rahel Ramberg, 6 vols., 2nd ed. (Leipzig, Germany: Insel-Verlag, 1916–1923). For further information, see Unger, *R. Yisroel*, 385; Samuel Werses, *Sipur ve-shorsho: 'iyunim be-hitpathut ha-prozah ha-'Ivrit* (Ramat Gan, Israel: Agudat ha-sofrim ha-'Ivrim be-Yisrael le-yad hotsaat Masadah, 1971), 116–17. This and the preceding citation come from Nigal, *Hasidic Tale*, 260n13.

*accent on tales.* On storytelling traditions within Hasidism, see Nigal, *Hasidic Tale*, 1.

*simpleminded and guiltless person.* *Tamim* in Hebrew. See Nigal, *Hasidic Tale*, 2; 257–63.

*swaying or rocking back and forth.* Prayer performed with such motions is known as davening, from the Yiddish verb for praying: see Uri Ehrlich, *The Nonverbal Language of Prayer: A New Approach to Jewish Liturgy*, trans. Dena Ordan, *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum*, vol. 105 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Macy Nulman, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer: Ashkenazic and Sephardic Rites* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993).

*the ignorant's prayer.* Ben-Amos, *Folktales of the Jews*, 1: 207–8 (no. 28 "God Loves the Heart").

*Book of the Pious.* In Hebrew, *Sefer Ḥasidim*.

*took shape in the Rhineland.* The text of *Sefer Ḥasidim* survives in two forms. The relevant passage has been preserved only in the more extensive and probably earlier one, attested in a manuscript in Parma, Italy: see *Sefer ha-Ḥasidim: 'Al pi nosah ketav yad asher be-Parma*, ed. Yehuda ha-Kohen Vištinetski (Judah Wistinetzki), 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: M. A. Vahrman, 1924), 6, no. 6. This section of the work does not appear in translations of the shorter version, published in Bologna in 1538: *Sefer Chasidim: The Book of the Pious*, trans. Avraham Yaakov Finkel (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997) and *Medieval Jewish Mysticism: Book of the Pious*, trans. Sholom Alchanan Singer (Northbrook, IL: Whitehall, 1971). The author of most of the text in the Parma manuscript is agreed to have been Rabbi Yehudah ben Shemu'el he-Ḥasid (Judah ben Samuel "The Pious") of Regensburg (d. 1217), but this passage surfaces in the first part that is conjectured to have been written by Rabbi Yehudah's father, Rabbi Shemu'el ben Kalonimos.

*Christian literature of Western Europe.* Gautier de Coinci, *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, 2: 105–8 (1.14, "D'un provoire qui toz jors chantoit *Salve*, la messe de Nostre Dame,"), 224–26 (1.23, "D'un moigne en cui bouche on trova cinc roses nouveles").

*A Pious Innocent Man Knows Nothing of God.* It was formerly designated "A Shepherd Knows Nothing of God."

*pious innocence is pleasing to God*. ATU, 1: 465 (no. 827). See Lev G. Barag, "Heiligkeit geht über Wasser," *EdM*, 6: 694–98.

*a Hasidic writer*. [Dov Baer ben Samuel, *In Praise of Baal Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Besht]: The Earliest Collection of Legends about the Founder of Hasidism*, ed. and trans. Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 221, no. 219, entitled (by the translators) "The Hasid Who Prayed in the Field." For analysis, see Yoav Elstein (Yo'av Elshṭain), *Ma'ašeh ḥoshev: 'iyunim ba-sipur ha-Ḥasidi* [Studies in Hasidic tales] (Tel Aviv: 'Eked, 1983), 7–40.

*God Requires the Heart*. Alternatively, "God Desires the Heart." The expression is found at *Sanhedrin* 106b.

*An example*. See Alexander Scheiber, "Two Legends on the Theme 'God Requires the Heart,'" *Fabula: Zeitschrift für Erzählforschung* 1 (1958): 156–58, at 157–58, which contains parallels in sixteenth-century Western European Christian tradition. A folklorist, Francis Lee Utley, pointed out the connection of this legend to *Our Lady's Tumbler* when he touched upon Scheiber's article in reviewing the first three issues of *Fabula* in *Zeitschrift für Erzählforschung, Journal of American Folklore* 72 (1959): 258–60, at 259. The relationship had already been predicated in an article to which Scheiber was responding: Bernhard Heller, "'Gott wünscht das Herz': Legenden über einfältige Andacht und über den Gefährten im Paradies," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 4 (1927): 365–404, at 371–72 (under the heading "Simple Prayer").

*compared with Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. They have also been likened to the concept of the *acte gratuit*. In André Gide's thought, this term applies to a kind of act that is committed "gratuitously," without motivation or even ulterior motive. See Utley, review of *Fabula*, 259.

*compatible with the aims of preaching by Christians*. John Shea, *The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers*, 4 vols. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004–2010), 3 ("Year C: The Relentless Widow"): 212.

*theory of diffusionism*. For concise definitions, see "Polygenesis" and "Diffusion Theory," in *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, ed. Maria Leach (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 876, 313, respectively.

*Anatole France*. Anatole France, "M. Gaston Paris et la littérature française au Moyen Âge," in idem, *La vie littéraire*, 4 vols. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1899–1905), 2: 265–74, at 269.

*how deeply the East influenced the West*. Alice Kemp-Welch, *Of the Tumbler of Our Lady and Other Miracles Now Translated from the Middle French* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1908), 30–31, <https://archive.org/details/tumblerourladyo04gautgoog>

*Salomé, the daughter of Herodias*. Although not identified by name in the biblical accounts in Matthew 14:3–11 and Mark 6:17–20, Salomé is so called in the *Jewish Antiquities* (18.5.4) of the Romano-Jewish historian Josephus (37–ca. 100 CE).

*flowed from Eastern sources*. The theory was applied to *Our Lady's Tumbler* in Charles Williams Jones, *Medieval Literature in Translation* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1950), 595.

## The Jewish Jongleur

*retold it as a children's story*. Melanie Anna Mitchell, *The Boy and the Flute: The Tale about a Pure Prayer* (n.p.: Palm Tree, 2016).

*May God keep you, Marusya*. Vladimir Jabotinsky, *Five: A Novel of Jewish Life in Turn-of-the-Century Odessa*, trans. Michael R. Katz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 94.

*embodiment of the Jewish artist*. Edouard Roditi, "Chagall's Windows," *Commentary* 33.2 (February 1962): 152–54, at 154: "Chagall remains in a way a kind of Sholem Aleichem figure, an eternal innocent, a Jewish 'jongleur de Notre Dame.'" The comparison sprang to mind particularly naturally in the case of this artist, since he painted the 1943 oil on canvas *Le jongleur* and the 1960 color lithograph *La jongleuse*.

*Modes of Being*. Paul Weiss, *Modes of Being* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), 316 (4.47), "This approach is charmingly illustrated in the story of the juggler of Notre Dame, who offered his juggling as a way of expressing his adoration. He submitted himself to God through the agency of an activity, viewed as placing him in an existential relationship to the divine. ... It is remarkable how everyone, young and old, educated and untutored, is ready to believe in the efficacy of the juggler's act. The point of course has been made in other ways; it is embodied in the Hassidic [sic] joyous dance before the Lord and the Zen Buddhists' gestures and simple movements—in fact in the activities of all those who seek God selflessly apart from the constraints of some formal demand."

*offers his body to the gods*. Eugenio Barba, "The Kathakali Theatre," trans. Simonne Sanzenbach, *The Tulane Drama Review* 11 (1967): 37–50, at 50. The passage continues "The Virgin Mary responded to the Juggler's homage and came down from the altar to wipe the brow of her humble worshipper. Similarly, for the true believer the dance is a form of yoga, a method to eliminate the ego in order to attain final identification with the Eternal Future: the Cosmic dance of Shiva Nataraja."

*Allie Sherman*. Alexander (Allie) Sherman served as head coach of the New York Giants from 1961 to 1968.

*canceled or deferred.* Even (or especially?) the storied annual contest between Harvard, of which Kennedy was an alumnus, and Yale University was shelved.

*commissioner of the National Football League.* He held the office for nearly three decades from 1960 to 1989.

*his snap judgment.* Peter King, "The Blackest Sunday," *Sports Illustrated*, November 22, 1993: 76.

*a tough little Hebe.* The slur is abbreviated from "Hebrew." For a consideration of Sherman's career within the context of his identity as a Jew, see Bernard Postal et al., *Encyclopedia of Jews in Sports* (New York: Bloch, 1965), 274–77.

*they could do the same.* Michael Ranville, "Our Lady and the Juggler," Special to *Detroitlions.com* (November 22, 2000).

*a team has a soul.* "A ball club to be a good one has to have a soul. It's a feeling for each other outside of technique and ability." For both quotations, see Postal et al., *Encyclopedia of Jews in Sports*, 277.

*a critic of French literature.* Arnold Whitridge, *Critical Ventures in Modern French Literature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), 122.

*a Polish sociologist.* Florian Znaniecki et al., *What Are Sociological Problems?* (Nakom, Poland: Wydawnictwo, 1994), 133.

*the title character.* Jerry Goldkorn, from Chicago.

*rebbe.* This word is informal or slang for rabbi.

*vocalizing scales.* Stanley Elkin, *Rabbi of Lud* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 68.

## The Catholic Juggler

*the station was derided.* Henri Tincq, *Jean-Marie Lustiger: Le cardinal prophète* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2012), 291, 293.

*Mireille Nègre.* Mireille Nègre, with Mireille Taub, *Une vie entre ciel et terre* (Paris: Balland, 1990), 167.

*French Catholic television chain.* KTO, pronounced Catho, for short, to refer to both the company name and the denomination.

*I am not then a mountebank,* <https://web.archive.org/web/20110919103610/http://www.csa.fr/upload/publication/20-06-0220KTO.pdf>

*the Jugglers*. *The Notre Dame Scholastic* 62.10, November 23, 1928: 300; 63.5, October 18, 1929: 139; 64.1, September 26, 1930: 15; 67.7, November 3, 1933: 6. Later they changed their name to the Collegians.

*Juggler of Notre Dame*. Sometimes the title was shortened to *Juggler*, plain and simple. The first instantiation ran from December of 1919 through 1934. See Joe Wilcox, "Juggler Memories," *Notre Dame Scholastic* 87.7, May 10, 1946: 20. The publication was revitalized in April 1947: Stephanie Phael, "A Juggler's Celebration," *Notre Dame Scholastic* 109.13, May 5, 1967: 13; Richard G. Landry, "Valued Impracticality: The Art of Juggling," *Notre Dame Scholastic* 117.2, September 26, 1975: 15–17. See also Thomas Stritch, *My Notre Dame: Memories and Reflections of Sixty Years* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 163.

*the college newspaper*. Anonymous editorial, "New Campus Literary Magazine to Make Bow in Late Spring," *Notre Dame Scholastic* 88.12, January 10, 1947: 13: "The spirit of any honest literary or artistic work at Notre Dame is embodied in the legend of the medieval French juggler, who performed before the statue of the Virgin, with all skill, sincerity, and devotion, the only art he knew."

*text of the tale*. *Juggler* 1 (1947): 5–6: "Notre Dame has a new *Juggler*, but it will be very different from the College Comics of the '20's. The new *Juggler* will not be a funny paper, but a general magazine for all kinds of student writing ... We shall welcome the best student work we can get, of whatever kind—the merry no less heartily than the serious—and from any student who wishes to try. But we shall not say to you: this is *your* magazine. The new *Juggler* belongs to Notre Dame. It is dedicated to Our Lady. Our first purpose, in the words of the old legend, is to please her with whatever art we have."

*If you do the best you can*, <http://www.notredameutica.org/about-nd/juggler-legend>

*For a dozen years*. The publication ran from 1938 to 1999, with the shorter title from 1965–1977. The last issue was no. 86 (1999). The school, known as the Institution Notre-Dame de Grâce, has now been merged with two others under a different name.

*coeducation was adopted*. Nancy Weiss Malkiel, "Keep the Damned Women Out": *The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

*a society of storytellers*. Rachele Hamlin, *The Studio of the Son: Ministering In-Depth Healing. A Radical Approach to the Active Christian Life* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2001), 164 (with no particulars on place or date).

*sometimes oversimplified*. Ian Boyd, "Chesterton's Medievalism," *Studies in Medievalism* 3 (1991): 243–55. The topic received first and fullest treatment in Przemysław

Mroczkowski, *The Medievalism of G. K. Chesterton: A Critical Enquiry*, 2 vols., vol. 1: Zeszyty naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, vol. 367 / Prace historycznoliterackie, vol. 30; vol. 2: Prace Komisji Historycznoliterackiej—Polska academia nauk, Oddział w Krakowie, vol. 34 (Cracow, Poland: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe / Oddział w Krakowie, 1974).

*the sway that Catholicism exercised.* Philip Gleason, "American Catholics and the Mythic Middle Ages," in idem, *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism, Past and Present* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 11–34, at 33.

*the first book he wrote,* [http://www.fatherbobwild.org/tumbler\\_6.htm](http://www.fatherbobwild.org/tumbler_6.htm); Joseph Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence: A Life of G. K. Chesterton* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 291–92.

*performed for God's Juggler.* Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence*, 300.

*He appreciates the distinction.* G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), 108–9 (and compare 81): "A jongleur was not the same thing as a troubadour, even if the same man were both a troubadour and a jongleur. The jongleur was properly a jocolator or jester; sometimes he was what we should call a juggler. Sometimes he may have been a tumbler; like that acrobat in the beautiful legend who was called 'The Tumbler of Our Lady.' And when Saint Francis called his followers the Jongleurs de Dieu, he meant something very like the Tumblers of Our Lady."

*The holy man's spiritual awakening.* Chesterton, *St. Francis*, 101–3.

*The writer clarifies.* Chesterton, *St. Francis*, 104: "Our Lady's Tumbler did not stand on his head in order to see flowers and trees as a clearer or quainter vision. He did not do so; and it would never have occurred to him to do so. Our Lady's Tumbler stood on his head to please Our Lady."

*Truth standing on her head.* G. K. Chesterton, "When Doctors Agree," *Harper's Magazine* 171 (August 1935): 329–39, at 329.

*Ethandune.* Today Edington, Wiltshire.

*the Saxon in Chesterton's verse.* Boyd, "Chesterton's Medievalism," 246.

*Signaling that he had perused the epic.* T. S. Aptyryx (pseudonym for Eliot), "Observations," *The Egoist: An Individualist Review* (May 1918): 69–70, at 69. See Russell Kirk, "Chesterton and T. S. Eliot," *The Chesterton Review* 2.2 (Spring–Summer 1976): 184–96, at 184.

*devoted a chapter.* Chesterton's later biographer also attends to the pose he struck as "Our Lady's Tumbler," in a complementary relationship to Francis as God's juggler: see Pearce, *Wisdom and Innocence*, 291–300 (chap. 19: "Jongleur de Dieu").

*commends his own routine.* "Lady, this is a choice performance."



*Chesterton the philosopher.* Maisie Ward, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1943), 614–26, at 615, 626.

*Like a beneficent bomb.* In the preface to G. K. Chesterton, *The Surprise* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1953), 5. For context, see E. J. Oliver, “Dorothy L. Sayers and Chesterton’s Cloak,” *The Chesterton Review* 19.1 (1993): 63–71. The passage by Sayers merits comparison with Alan Watts, “G. K. Chesterton: The ‘Jongleur de Dieu,’” in idem, *The Modern Mystic: A New Collection of the Early Writings of Alan Watts*, ed. John Snelling (Dorset, UK: Element, 1990), 95–100, at 99–100.

*provided an alternative.* Michael Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 217.

*poke fun at pretentious intellectualism.* Watts, “G. K. Chesterton.”

## The Juggler and the Paulines

*the Protestant, the Jew, the agnostic.* The words were quoted from Father Ellwood E. Kieser, a member of the Paulist order, by C. Gerald Fraser, “Television Week,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1982, in reference to the movie *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, dir. Michael Ray, with Mike Rhodes (Walt Disney and Paulist Brothers, 1982). Kieser headed Paulist Productions.

*Society of Saint Paul.* The “Pauline Family” designates the congregation of the Society of Saint Paul and Daughters of Saint Paul, together with seven other religious institutes.

*A Juggler in Paradise.* In Italian, *Un giocoliere in paradiso*, illus. Gino Gavioli, *Bimbi e fiori*, vol. 28 (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1970). The same Italian author also brought out with the same press, Pauline Editions, other volumes for youthful readers, such as *Le avventure di Ulisse: Riduzione in prose dell’Odissea di Omero* (Bari, Italy: Edizione Paoline, 1975), on the escapades of Ulysses (a retelling of Homer’s *Odyssey*) and *La storia di Enea: Riduzione in prose dell’Eneide di Virgilio* (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1973), on the story of the Greek hero’s Roman counterpart, Aeneas (a prose version of Virgil’s *Aeneid*). Other books by the same writer dealt with pedagogy, Simone Weil, and assorted other topics.

*published in Rome.* By a Catholic publishing house.

*A brief introduction.* This portion is by Luigi Santucci.

*blond-haired and blue-eyed.* In Italian, *Bionda-capigliatura-occhi-azzurri*.

*Brother Welcome.* In Italian, *Benvenuto*.

*translated into Japanese and Spanish.* In Japanese, *Tengoku no sākasu bōya*, trans. Hiro Ebina, illus. Gino Gavioli (Tokyo: Joshi Pauro kai, 1974). The book in my possession bears the date 1974, but publication dates of 1970 and 1981 have also been reported.

For the Spanish, see *Un saltimbanqui en el paraíso*, trans. Antonio Temiño (Madrid: Ediciones Paulinas, 1972, 1977, 1979).

*made-for-television movie*. *The Juggler of Notre Dame*.

*Saintly Tales and Legends*. Lois Rock and Christina Balit, *Saintly Tales and Legends* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2004), 29 (text), 95 (notes).

## Two Bills: Buckley Jr. and Bennett

*not unheard-of*. For example, consider Giuseppe De Luca, “A Don Domenico Dottarelli,” in *Mater Dei: Bollettino dell’opera “Mater Dei” diretto da don Giuseppe De Luca, 1954–1959* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1972), 89–98 (81–90).

*summed up his interpretation*. William F. Buckley Jr., *Nearer, My God: An Autobiography of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), xvii: “But of course the special magic of the juggler’s ache to express his gratitude was in the privacy of the devotion. Anatole France’s story would not have worked if the juggler had proposed doing his act in Madison Square Garden.”

*My faith has not wavered*. Buckley, *Nearer, My God*, xx.

*commencement address*. William F. Buckley Jr., *Let Us Talk of Many Things: The Collected Speeches* (Roseville, CA: Forum, 2000), 242–49, at 245.

*responsible civic commitment*. William F. Buckley Jr., *Gratitude: Reflections on What We Owe to Our Country* (New York: Random House, 1990), xiii–xiv, at xiv: “How to acknowledge one’s devotion, one’s patrimony, one’s heritage? Why, one juggles before the altar of God, if that is what one knows how to do. That Americans growing into citizenship should be persuasively induced to acknowledge this patrimony and to demonstrate their gratitude for it is the thesis of this exercise. By asking them to make sacrifice we are reminding them that they owe a debt, even as the juggler felt a debt to Our Lady.”

*Without an economic surplus*. Buckley, *Gratitude*, xxi.

*Book of Virtues*. William J. Bennett, *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 782–87.

*the derivative revamping of the same anthology for children*. William J. Bennett, ed. *The Book of Virtues for Young People: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (Parsippany, NJ: Silver Burdett, 1996), 362–69. In the table of contents, the author’s name of *Our Lady’s Juggler* is transmuted memorably into “Anatole French.” The story failed to make the cut for inclusion in Bennett’s *The Children’s Book of Virtues* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

*our literature and history*. Bennett, *Book of Virtues*, 12.

## The Lyric Juggler and Patrick Kavanagh

*Shaemus O'Sheel*. "Preface to New Edition (1937)," in idem, *Joyce Kilmer's Anthology of Catholic Poets* (New York: Liveright, 1937), second unpaginated side.

*Oriel*. Bernard Duffy, *Oriel* (Dublin, Ireland: Talbot, 1918). The relevant chapter has been reprinted as "Portrait of a Parish Priest," *Clogher Record Album: A Diocesan History* (1975): 269–81, with allusions at 270, 280–81.

*Joan Windham*. John Regan, "'When the Saints Go Marching In': Saints, Money and the Global Marketplace in Danny Boyle's *Millions*," in *Roman Catholicism in Fantastic Film: Essays on Belief, Spectacle, Ritual and Imagery*, ed. Regina Hansen (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 17–28, at 18–19.

*books about saints for children*. Joan Windham, *Six O'Clock Saints*, illus. Marigold Hunt (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934), 82–86. The story was reprinted in idem, *Sixty Saints for Boys* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 380–84 and in idem, *Story Library of the Saints*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Catholic Press, 1974) 1: 152–57.

*even in the table of contents*. The entries in this volume are arranged chronologically by the death dates of the saints, whose deeds and deceases are recounted.

*The Lady of the Poets*. Úna Agnew, "Patrick Kavanagh: Early Religious and Devotional Influences on His Work," *Clogher Record* 15 (1994): 51–73, at 59.

*reminiscences about the holiday*. Patrick Kavanagh, *Collected Poems*, ed. Antoinette Quinn (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 39–41, at 41.

*selected the names for his children*. The need for onomastic options was acute, since the poet had seven sisters and two brothers. See Agnew, "Patrick Kavanagh," 51.

*Inniskeen*. In County Monaghan. The church is now the Patrick Kavanagh Rural and Literary Resource Centre. See Agnew, "Patrick Kavanagh," 64.

*Our Lady's Tumbler*. Patrick Kavanagh, *No Earthly Estate: God and Patrick Kavanagh, an Anthology*, ed. Tom Stack (Dublin, Ireland: Columba, 2002), 62 ("The Lady of the Poets"), 111 (*Our Lady's Tumbler*). *Our Lady's Tumbler* appeared first in his *November Haggard: Uncollected Prose and Verse*, ed. Peter Kavanagh (New York: The Peter Kavanagh Hand Press, 1971), 198. The poem is omitted from *Collected Poems*.

*most likely encountered tale from the Middle Ages*. Una Agnew, *The Mystical Imagination of Patrick Kavanagh* (Dublin, Ireland: Columba, 1998), 260n20.

*his birth*. He wrote: "as a poet, I was born in or about nineteen-fifty-five, the place of my birth being the banks of the Grand Canal." See Patrick Kavanagh, *Self Portrait* (Dublin, Ireland: Dolmen, 1963), 27–28, in idem, *Collected Pruse* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967), 21.

*everydayness*. Agnew, "Patrick Kavanagh," 54.

*These verses*. "And pray for him / Who walked apart / On the hills / Loving life's miracles."

*likened to a medieval monk*. Agnew, *Mystical Imagination*, 138.

*compared with the Russian spiritual tradition*. Agnew, *Mystical Imagination*, 156–60, 171.

*Romanization of Irish Catholicism*. Agnew, "Patrick Kavanagh," 51.

### "The Chapel at Mountain State Mental Hospital"

*Gaffer*. The word can denote a daft and deviant person, including one who dances constantly in public without music. The only full detailed information on this noun appears at <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=gaffer&page=2>

*the wingèd spirit still a space to live*. Virginia Hamilton Adair, *Beliefs and Blasphemies: A Collection of Poems* (New York: Random House, 1998), 27–29.

*displayed a flair for poetry*. She went on to receive her BA degree from Mount Holyoke College in 1933, and her MA from Radcliffe College in 1936. After holding brief appointments at a few colleges, eventually she served for twenty-two years as professor of English at California Polytechnic University at Pomona.

*leading magazines in the 1940s*. For instance, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, and *The Saturday Review*.

*Eastern State Hospital*. Under a different name, an earlier institution on the site, the "Public Hospital for Persons of Insane and Disordered Minds," "was the first building in North America devoted solely to the treatment of the mentally ill. The first patient was admitted on October 12, 1773" (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, <http://www.history.org/almanack/places/hb/hbhos.cfm>). For the sake of thoroughness, it must be mentioned that a Mountain State Mental Hospital existed for roughly fifty years, between 1921 and 1971, on Virginia Street in Charleston.

*One assessment*. This assessment is quoted from an anonymous entry on Adair on the Poetry Foundation website, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/virginia-hamilton-adair>

## Notes to Chapter 4

*This old favorite.* Colophon to reprint of Anatole France's "The Juggler of Notre Dame" in Hooper, *Christmas Stories That Never Grow Old*.

### Easter Tumbling

*the celebration was abominated.* On the history of the holiday in the US through approximately 1950, see James H. Barnett, *The American Christmas: A Study in National Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1954).

*in a Gothic architectural setting.* Behind the flower, it shows a lancet with a quatrefoil surmounting two further lancets.

*a version from 1949.* Dorothy Ramsey and Gerald Keenan, *Our Lady's Tumbler: An Easter Play in Two Acts* (West Chester, PA: n.p., 1949). Not surprisingly in view of its heavy bookishness, the text is rife with archaisms. Just to take a few examples from the first two pages: "Nay, trust me, brother"; "Let us hang out the hospice light betimes tonight"; and "the kine in the byre."

*a theatrical production of Our Lady's Tumbler.* A morality by Irene Hall, produced by Christian Simpson.

*the day before Easter Sunday.* March 30, 1956.

*verses.* "The moral of this story? Let us say / That Jesus also has his dancing day, / Who dances in the heavens and the seasons, / Who dances in the thoughts of proper reasons, / Who, to prove us far more than husks of clay, / Dances the sun itself on Easter Day!"

### The Commercial Aesthetic of "Ye Olde"

*To be up-to to-date.* David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9.

*The family nurtured a passion for the Middle Ages.* Their medievalism acquired its most enduring form in the resplendent Lady Chapel at Saint Mark's Episcopal Church, as well as in the Bethany Church (see Fig. n.4).

*Wanamaker Grand Organ.* The instrument was built for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, and it was moved to the Philadelphia emporium in 1911.

*musical performances.* The nature of the entertainment can be surmised from the 1923 songbook *Christmas Carols and Songs of Olden Time*.

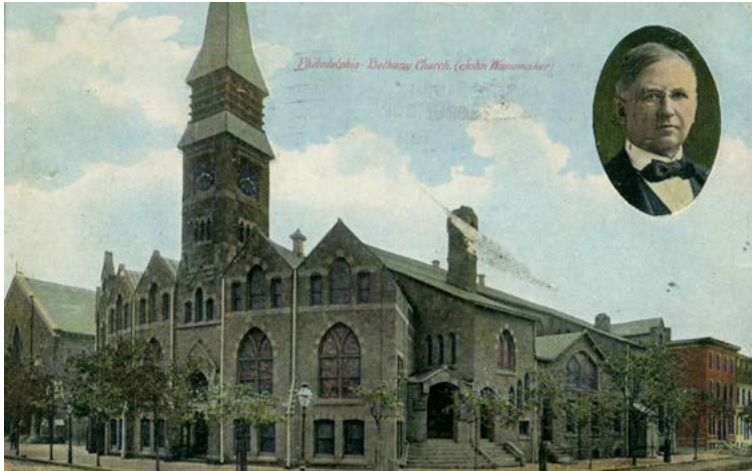


Fig. n.4 Postcard depicting Bethany Church, Philadelphia, PA, with inset photo of John Wanamaker (early twentieth century).

*a replica of the façade of the Reims cathedral.* It was depicted “on a scale of 60 feet for the frontage and with every one of the innumerable details of the façade faithfully reproduced.” See “Fidelity to Realism in Artistic Set in Wanamaker’s Credo Display,” *Women’s Wear Daily*, February 4, 1928, 1, quoted in Morowitz, “Cathedral of Commerce,” 345.

*knock-off of Chartres.* Morowitz, “Cathedral of Commerce,” 340.

*organized a fundraising expedition.* Morowitz, “Cathedral of Commerce,” 354–55.

*annual German Volksfest.* William Allen Zulker, “Presidential Profile: Our 19th—John Wanamaker: King of Merchants”: [http://williamzulker.com/yahoo\\_site\\_admin/assets/docs/JW\\_Presidential\\_Profile1.32170222.pdf](http://williamzulker.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/JW_Presidential_Profile1.32170222.pdf)

*playing up the Middle Ages.* For example, the company’s “1924 Book of Gifts” bore on its cover, in best mediaevalesque style, flourishes in red, green, and blue, with medieval lettering of “Happy Christmas” to match.

*long-lived.* The term *ephemera*, a plural form from a Greek adjective that meant “temporary” or “short-lived,” is used to denote such publications that were often expected to be discarded.

*one Christmas card.* The legend within reads “Ye Compliments of Ye Season.” The caption below explains: “Many Victorian cards featured designs with a historical influence, especially from the medieval period, as in this humorous unmarked card from the early 1880s.” See Michelle Higgs, *Christmas Cards from the 1840s to the 1940s* (Princes Risborough, UK: Shire Books, 1999).

*one card.* By the innovative publisher and printer Ernest Nister.

*Samuel Johnson*. For the ascription (which has not been without dissent), see *Uncle Jabez; or The Teachings of Adversity* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1860), 7.

*these two words*. The convention originated in the graphic resemblance of two letterforms that should have been kept distinct. One remains to the present day in the letter *y*. The other is the similarly shaped medieval English letter known as thorn (þ). Used routinely in Old English and often in Middle English, thorn was adapted from the runic alphabet called futhork. This rune served to represent the sound “th,” as it appears as the initial phoneme of the word from which it takes its name. This “ye” is then really a misunderstanding of an old letter to represent the sound at the beginning of the definite article “the.” The final *-e* of *olde*, too, is a relic of the Late Middle English period, by which time the complex system of noun endings inherited from Germanic had been reduced essentially to *-e*, *en*, and *-es*.

*Another archaic “ye”*. This other one is not a matter of mistaken identity through misreading of a forgotten letter. Rather, it preserves a nearly obsolete form of the pronoun “you.”

*one and the same card*. For example, one purveys “Ye Merrie Christmas Wishes.” In this case, *ye* gives us the misunderstood old initial letter of the definite article. Then follows a poem that contains the two rhyming lines “Right Heartily we meet Ye” and “With a Merry Christmas greet Ye.” Both of these *ye*’s are the archaic pronoun.

*holiday cards from the early twentieth century*. Take the legend on one Christmas card from around 1910, which begins “Ye Merrie Christmas Greetings” and ends “Ye Jolly Boys.” The topmost panels depict a procession led by a jester dressed in his parti-color costume, brandishing in his right hand a jester’s wand and in his left a sprig of holly. The main strip shows boys carrying a Yule log, astride which a little child clutches a twig.

*a card that portrays youths*. The inscription reads “Come bring with a noise / My merrie merrie boys / The Christmas log to ye firing.”

*Ye Jollie Christmastide*. “Call for ye Jolly Jester / he’s brimful of Fun. / His merry jokes make Laughter / For Christmastide’s begun.”

*Merrie Xmas Cheer*. In the legend, *Xmas* is a common abbreviation for Christmas. The *X* stands in lieu of either a Christian cross or the letter *chi* in the Greek alphabet, which it resembles in shape. *Chi* is the first letter in the word *christos*, the source of English *Christ*.

*rife with “ye’s”*. The list comprises “ye holly,” “ye mistletoe spray,” “ye heart,” and “ye jolly good folks.”

*holding on to a jester’s wand*. In between, the caption “Are we Downhearted” leads into “with hearty good wishes for a merry Xmas.”

*a buffoon in red*. He rides on horseback upon a snowy road through a moonlit landscape, with “Greeting” at the top and the little ditty “Sing hey the green holly, / This life’s most jolly” at the bottom.

*Charles Eastlake anticipated them*. Charles L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival: An Attempt to Show How the Taste for Medieval Architecture Which Lingered in England during the Two Last Centuries Has Since Been Encouraged and Developed* (London: Longmans, Green, 1972), 238: “It was Nash’s aim [in *Mansions of England*] to represent the[se ancient mansions] as they were in the days when country life was enjoyed by their owners, not for a brief interval in the year, but all the year round, in days when there was feasting in the hall and tilting in the courtyard, when the yule log crackled on the hearth, and mummers beguiled the dullness of a winter’s evening, when the bowling-green was filled with lusty youths, and gentle dames sat spinning in their boudoirs, when the deep window recesses were filled with family groups, and gallant cavaliers rode out a-hawking; when, in short, all the adjuncts and incidents of social life, dress, pastimes, manners, and what-not, formed part of a picturesque whole of which we in these prosaic and lack-lustre days, except by the artist’s aid, can form no conception.”

*architecture of the English countryside*. Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences, or, A Series of Designs for Rural Cottages and Cottage Villas, and Their Gardens and Grounds: Adapted to North America* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1842), 25, quoted in Elizabeth Bradford Smith, *Medieval Art in America: Patterns of Collecting, 1800–1940* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 74–76: “back to a past age, the domestic habits, the hearty hospitality, the joyous old sports, and the romance and chivalry of which, invest it, in the dim retrospect, with a kind of golden glow, in which the shadowy lines of poetry and reality seem strangely interwoven and blended.”

*England of Old, 1475*. By M. C. Whishaw. Among many other Christmas cards, one features angels (and quatrefoils) as wall art behind three children (see Fig. n.5). The messengers of God are costumed as miniaturized versions of two noble damsels, one clutching holly and the other mistletoe, flanking an equally well-dressed boy. It is the work of the American illustrator and cartoonist Albertine Randall Wheelan. The scene is presented as if an illumination, with what looks like a manuscript page to the right that reads “Give thanks to God alway upon thys blessed daye. Let all men sing and saye, ‘Holy, holy.’” Understand [*sic*] after all unusual spellings.

*garb of a professional entertainer*. If we had any trouble dating the scene from the sartorial evidence, the lancet to the left would suffice on its own. Even the pointed arch is expendable. Eastlake and Downing had nothing to say about swigging alcohol, but “A Merrie Christmas” card shows in the foreground a red-nosed tippler with a hearty pewter tankard in his right hand and a broad smile on his face.

*publication on Christmas Eve of 1968*. *Philadelphia Daily News*, Tuesday, December 24, 1968, 13.





Fig. n.5 Christmas card depicting medieval children singing (New York: E. P. Dutton, early twentieth century). Illustration by Albertine Randall Wheelan.

## Noel Juggling: The Gift That Keeps on Giving

*roughly comparable to A Christmas Carol.* Murray Sachs, *Anatole France: The Short Stories* (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), 43. Dickens's story was first published on December 19, 1843.

*establishing Christmas.* For a balanced assessment, see David Parker, *Christmas and Charles Dickens* (New York: AMS Press, 2005).

*one such case.* Pamela J. Edwards, *Catechizing with Liturgical Symbols: Twenty-Five Hands-On Sessions for Teens and Adults* (San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 1997), 118–23: the *Little Juggler Play* is “a tale that has been told a hundred times.”

*positive messages.* Somewhat curiously for the cheery Christmastide context, the narrative is described as bearing retelling “because each generation must learn to discern the false prophets of its time.” A negative message about threats posed by false prophecy seems ill suited to the story.

*a passage from the New Testament.* 1 Corinthians 1:18–26.

*fools for Christ.* “How have we been ‘fools for Christ,’ daring the ridicule of others as the little juggler did?” Compare 1 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:10.

*his annual poem of holiday greeting.* Showell Rogers, “The Tumbling Monk of Clairvaux (1897),” in *Christmas Greetings and Other Verses* (Birmingham, UK: Cornish Brothers, 1902), 63–76 (proem 65–66, translation 67–71, short extracts from the medieval French 73–74).

*the flavor and spirit of the original.* In Rogers's view, the French from the Middle Ages was a ballad-like "pious tale" (he uses the modern term *conte pieux*), belonging then to a subsection of fabliaux. He saw it, as many others have mistakenly done, as the work of Gautier de Coinci.

*Hungarian tale.* Désiré [Dezsö] Malonyay, "Le fou, légende hongroise," trans. Adrien Remacle, illus. Alphonse Mucha *Le Figaro de Noël (Figaro illustré)* (December 1897): 221–26 (224–25 are an accompanying dance song by the composer Carolus Agghàzy).

*the first draft.* Demar Irvine, *Massenet: A Chronicle of His Life and Times* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1994), 230. The manuscript survives in the Heugel archives. Although the timing may have been serendipitous, Massenet may have had Christmas in mind while composing the opera, since the music contains references to Hector Berlioz's *L'enfance du Christ*, a work that had made a deep impression upon him as a young boy.

*The Juggler of Touraine.* See *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (December 1907).

*unusually meritorious.* For the assessment, see the anonymously penned "Notes," *The Nation* 88.2288, May 6, 1909: 462–65, at 463.

*color illustrations.* They were made after paintings commissioned from Leon Guipon. The French-born artist, who immigrated to the United States around 1903, received his training in both Paris and New York. For basic biographical information, see Anita Jacobsen, *Jacobsen's Biographical Index of American Artists*, 4 vols. (Carrollton, TX: A. J. Publications, 2002), 1.1: 1341.

*cover art.* *Collier's: The National Weekly* 42.10, November 28, 1908 (December Fiction number), cover ("The Illustrator in the Middle Ages").

*The artwork in question.* Could it be a self-portrait?

*setting that was a favorite artistic theme.* Anatole France, *Abeille, Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame, Les Pains noirs*, ed. R. L. Græme Ritchie, ill. Henry Morin (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1928), 129.

*tools of his trade.* We can make out books, parchment, lecterns, flasks, quills, candles, ink- and paint pots, and, of course, manuscripts.

*focused intently on a codex.* Presumably, he is working as a scribe, rubricator, illuminator, or some combination of the three.

*The Fair Crowning the Brave.* *Woman's Home Companion*, October 1910. The caption reads, "The Fair Crowning the Brave."

*Brandywine School.* So called after the creek by this name in Pennsylvania and the artists' colony located nearby at Chadds Ford.

*reached its pinnacle.* See James J. Best, "The Brandywine School and Magazine Illustration: *Harper's*, *Scribner's* and *Century*, 1906–1910," *Journal of American Culture* 3.1 (1980): 128–44.

*father of American illustration.* Pyle's students referred to themselves as H.P.S.A., for Howard Pyle School of Art. The headcount of artists and illustrators in this orbit exceeded a hundred. It included such renowned figures as N. C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish.

*golden age of book illustration.* For Guipon's place in the movement, see Best, "Brandywine School," 136. Henry C. Pitz, *Howard Pyle: Writer, Illustrator, Founder of the Brandywine School* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1975), 228, lists those who studied with Pyle: Guipon is not among them.

*tales about heroes.* Jeanne Fox-Friedman, "Howard Pyle and the Chivalric Order in America: King Arthur for Children," *Arthuriana* 6 (1996): 77–95.

*the specific holiday.* To either side, lozenges spell out "In the lowly Stall—was the holy Birth."

*In the final quatrain.* The poem was published under the title "A Christmas Carol," *Scribner's Monthly* 3.3 (January 1872): 278.

*Violet Moore Higgins.* See Higgins, *Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler—The Wooden Shoe—The Noel Candle*, illus. Helen Chamberlin (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), 6, and author, *French Fairy Tales: The Little Juggler—The Wooden Shoe—The Noel Candle*, illus. Helen Chamberlin (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), 6. The latter volume, at least when reprinted close to two decades later, was sold with the same author's *English Fairy Tales* in a pictorial cardboard halfbox as a set labeled "2 Books in a Box" (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1934). *The French Fairy Tales* version has the exactly the same text of the story as in the distinct publication of the book from 1917, under the title *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold*, that has more sophisticated illustrations by Higgins herself.

*a French sociologist.* Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* (Paris: Alcan, 1925). The treatise was not brought out in English until more than four decades later: *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: Norton, 1967).

*numerous books for Christmastide.* For example, see Joe Hayes, *The Wise Little Burro: Holiday Tales from Near and Far* (Santa Fe, NM: Trails West, 1991), 27–32; Bob Hartman, *Lion Storyteller Christmas Book*, illus. Susie Poole (Colorado Springs, CO: Lion's Children's Books, 2000), 114–16.

*children's activity guide.* Mary Reed Newland, *The Year and Our Children: Planning the Family Activities for Christian Feasts and Seasons* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1956), 13–16 ("Advent Pences, and a Story about a Juggler").

*takes the narrative.* “There is a story to tell at the beginning of Advent, about someone who had nothing to give. It illustrates best of all for children how the intangible is to God the most tangible, and makes entirely reasonable to them a scale of values one would suppose far over their heads.”

*this presentation.* Another such volume of Advent activities, published in 2004, describes how the author’s children loved to draw the characters on paper, color them, and cut them out for use in an improvised puppet theater. See Julie Walters, *Advent: A Family Celebration. Prayers and Activities for Each Day* (Ijamsville, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2004), 124–26 (based on Barbara Cooney’s version). The story has also found a niche in less didactic collections of tales for children to be read during Christmastide. For example, see Hayes, *Wise Little Burro*; Hartman, *Lion Storyteller Christmas Book*, 114–16.

*Mary’s role.* Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby, eds., *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), xi, 59, 87.

## The Juggler in Holiday Books and Cards

*From a business perspective.* Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Priscilla A. LaBarbera, “The Meaning of Christmas,” *Interpretive Consumer Research* 1 (1989): 136–47. Sales of books, now often e-books, and other products soar in late November and December in comparison with other intervals in the year. Turnout at theatrical events spikes at the same time.

*These gift books.* For an example from Christmas 1935, see *Three Legends of the Middle Ages as Related by Three Modern Authors* (Yellow Springs, OH: Walter Kahoe at The Antioch Press, 1935). The exemplar consulted has printed on the page opposite the title page: “This copy was made for / S. W. Farnsworth to wish him a Merry / Christmas and a Happy New Year / from / Walter & Mildred Kahoe.” For 1937, see Alexander Woollcott, *Our Lady’s Juggler: An Antique Legend as Retold for the Air* (San Mateo, CA: Quercus, 1937): “The Quercus Press San Mateo California has printed thirty copies of this tale in Goudy Mediaeval type with the kind permission of the author, Christmas 1937.”

*one such volume.* The book in question is *Our Lady’s Juggler* (with English translation followed by the original French of Anatole France), trans. Henriette Metcalf, illus. Cyrus Leroy Baldridge (New York: English Book Shop, 1933): “This edition ... is limited to fifty signed copies ... designed & printed at the press of William E. Rudge’s sons.” Metcalf also translated the play *Camille* by Alexandre Dumas (fils). Baldridge was a prolific author and artist. This item was produced in one batch of fifty copies in which the artist not only autographed the colophon, but also colored the frontispiece by hand. Another much larger run of five hundred in the same year lacks both distinguishing features.

*the French original.* Anatole France, *Our Lady's Juggler: Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*, trans. Frederic Chapman, illus. Fritz Eichenberg (New York: For the Friends of William E. Rudge's Sons, Christmas 1938). William Edwin Rudge was a well-known printer, whose son by the same name was also in the trade. The booklet opens with a colored frontispiece woodblock. It was printed in blue wraps, stamped in gilt.

*little softcover.* Alice M. Pullen, "Our Lady's Juggler: A Legend from Long-Ago France," in *Further Christmas-Tide Stories*, ed. Bertha C. Krall (London: National Sunday School Union, 1934), 41–44. It was priced at "one [shilling] and sixpence net."

*scriptural quotations.* The first of two texts that lead into the story are "They brought unto Him gifts" (Matthew 2:11) and "Now there are diversities of gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:4), too obviously scriptural to require identification for an audience of Sunday-school instructors.

*trained as a printer.* He began at the house of William Edwin Rudge in Mount Vernon, New York, and moved later to the Antioch Press in Yellow Springs, Ohio. In Philadelphia in 1940, Kahoe launched as a hobby The Rose Valley Press, which specialized in small books to be given as Christmas gifts: <http://historical.ha.com/c/item.zx?saleNo=683&lotIdNo=23040>. A typical product is the 1935 volume *Three Legends of the Middle Ages as Related by Three Modern Authors*, crowned by Anatole France's "Our Lady's Juggler," which is preceded by two, shorter, poems.

*based in Maine.* He served in the Unitarian Universalist Church in Brunswick, Maine, from 1932 to 1945.

*maintained a passion for theater.* His commitment to the stage was evident already in his days as a college student at Tufts University, in Medford, Massachusetts.

*short plays.* One was entitled *The Birth in a Cave*, another *The Wise Men's Well* (based on a legend by the Swedish novelist Selma Lagerlöf).

*the earlier.* Thomas J. McCabe, *An Adaptation of the Story of Our Lady's Juggler*, illus. Raymond Lufkin (Tenafly, NJ: Privately printed for the Friends of Adeline and Raymond Lufkin, Christmas 1951).

*features illustrations.* It captures a juggler in medieval, but not monastic, garb and headgear as he juggles a physically impossible total of eleven balls and knives. All these objects are in alternation but restricted to a semicircle.

*The later of the two books.* Entitled *Christmas Miscellany: A Collection of Short Stories from Traditional Literature* (Berkeley, CA: Lederer, Street & Zeus, Christmas 1953).

*two items.* They are "Frankincense and Myrrh," by the newspaper columnist and author Heywood Hale Broun, and "Our Lady's Juggler," by Anatole France, both illustrated by William F. M. Kay, with a cover imprint of simply "Christmas 1953."

This illustrator supplied the artwork for several books, including *Donkey of God* by Louis Untermeyer in 1951 and *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde in 1954 (with the cover imprint “Christmas 1954”).

*this production.* Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Basel, Switzerland: Printed for Editions St. Alban by Bader & Sturm, December 1955). The book comprises sixteen sides, of which two are solely text, four solely illustration, and ten mixed text and illustration. The copy (numbered 49 of 50 exemplars) that has been acquired by Houghton Library at Harvard University includes a card from the artist’s wife, Betty Jacqueline Bühler, wishing the unidentified recipient a happy New Year (“Mit unseren besten Wünschen für ein glückliches neues Jahr!”). On it, see Jan M. Ziolkowski, in “An ‘Enchanted Palace’: A Humanistic ‘Masterclass’ for Houghton Library’s Seventy-Fifth Anniversary,” *Harvard Magazine* (March–April 2017): 36–41, at 37.

*worked above all in advertising.* After studying in Basel, Berlin, and Paris, he spent the rest of his life in Basel, where the special volume was printed. His life was relatively short: he died in an auto accident at the age of 53.

*a tool to convert the public,* <http://a-g-i.org/user/fritzbuhler/view/bio/>. Out of the same conviction he cofounded the International Graphic Alliance (in French, Alliance graphique internationale).

*think about the task and not about yourself.* Christian Jaquet, *Fritz Bühler, der Gestalter, Berater und Texter (1909–1963)* (Zurich: Swiss Graphic Design Foundation, 2015), 17: “Mann kann immer schöne und richtige Lösungen finden, wenn man an die Aufgabe denkt und nicht an sich selber.”

*matchmake graphics and typography.* Fritz Bühler’s desire for outreach through posters and lithographs that would wile casual viewers or readers almost unwittingly into an aesthetic experience accounts for his promotion of a renowned Swiss-designed typeface: Helvetica, meaning “Swiss” in Latin, was originally called Neue Grotesk Haas. It was created by Max Miedinger, with Eduard Hoffmann.

*In this case.* The product was a book printed on unnumbered pages of handmade Auvergne paper. The coloring varies from volume to volume.

*Inside.* The back of the card indicates only “Deer Crest Grant 2504, USA.” It bears no date, copyright, or trademark.

*a set of three Christmas cards.* The others tell of “The Shepherd Boy and the Wreath” and “The Drummer Boy.”

*an origin story.* Hallmark 150BX 87-1B. The card is copyrighted by Hallmark Cards, Inc.

## Amateur Theater

*Charles Robinson Smith*. Yale class of 1875.



Fig. n.6 Photograph of Charles Robinson Smith. Photographer, William Notman, Montreal, Toronto, and Halifax, 1875.

*This noncommercial production*. Charles Robinson Smith, *The Story of Jean, the Jongleur, and the Monks, Dedicated to David and Robin Beecher Stowe* (n.p.: Privately printed, 1927), 11 pp. Held at the New York Public Library and University of Texas, Austin (Harry Ransom Center). One of Smith's daughters, Hilda, was the wife of Lyman Beecher Stowe. This Stowe was a grandson of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the American abolitionist and author still known for her antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (serialized 1851–1852). Their two sons, David and Robinson, were the addressees of both the slight book and the performance it recorded (and for which it served as text).

*it was a miracle*. He defines a miracle as “a thing so wonderful and so difficult that it can only be performed by God or by one of His saints or angels.”

*“song and dance” men*. “... people who did something like that [what minstrels and troubadours do] in a smaller way. On Broadway today they would be called ‘song and dance’ men. They knew how to fiddle and to sing songs that pleased the people and to dance and do all sorts of tricks.” This analogy between jongleurs and “song and dance” men calls to mind a note in the English score for the opera. See *Our Lady's Juggler*, libretto by Maurice Léna, trans. Louise Baum, music by Jules Massenet ([Paris]: Heugel, n.d.), a publication that has been dated variously 1908, 1909, 1911, and 1929: “The *Jongleur* of the middle ages was minstrel, juggler, tumbler, jester, dancer, in one. The best the translator can do is to give the word its literal translation, *juggler*, although the name does not suggest to-day the character of those wandering men-of-all-arts whose programs foreshadowed the modern Vaudeville.”

*a pianist and singer.* The Frenchwoman Lillie Sang-Collins played the piano, as Miss Flora Collins warbled. Sang-Collins taught piano at the Institute of Musical Art (now the Juilliard School). See Andrea Olmstead, *Juilliard: A History, Music in American Life* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 25, 28.

*names of artists.* The sculptor Daniel Chester French, the writer Robert Underwood Johnson, and unnamed painters.

*at his home.* In Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

*Protestant work ethic.* “The lesson of this story is that if you cannot do the best that others can do, at least do the best that you can do, and if the Virgin Mary now takes a less active interest in rewarding people than she used to do in the Middle Ages, you may be sure there will be others who will reward you.”

*film and television actor.* His career ran mostly from the 1940s through the 1960s.

*the Xmas Jinks.* Everett Glass, “The Tumbler, after an Old Legend, a Play in Two Scenes,” *Poet Lore* 37.4 (January–December 1926): 516–36. The indications of characters’ names in Glass’s book are sometimes disorganized, even apart from the author’s confusing choice to have a monk named Barnabas but to make the tumbler a person called Pierre. The name Barnabas signals Glass’s indebtedness to Anatole France. As we have seen, Xmas is, of course, a now common abbreviation for Christmas, and “jinks” are pranks or frolics, as in “high jinks.”

*European languages.* Scandinavian, Slavic, Spanish, Italian, and German.

*would seem to be a classicist.* He has lines such as “Don’t trust him. He doesn’t know any Latin” and is wont to pepper his speech with Latin tags that mean nothing in context.

*the cases of nouns.* Glass, “Tumbler,” 528–29: “Abbot. Another thing I like about the sermon is that brotherly love is always in the ablative case. / Barnabas. Is it really? / Abbot. If the whole thing had been in Latin you would have sensed that at once. It doesn’t show so well in translation. / Barnabas. No. / Abbot. The ordinary man has no conception, has he, of how hard we labor in our search for the truth? / Barnabas. No. Perhaps it is just as well. He might feel discouraged.”

*have them flog each other.* One has to wonder what subtexts of prurient curiosity about flagellation may have been in play here.

*Barnabas exclaims.* Glass, “Tumbler,” 536.

*professor of engineering drawing.* James Steele, *Faculty Club, University of California at Berkeley: Bernard Maybeck, Historical Building Monograph*, vol. 5 (London: Academy Books, 1995).



*His architecture.* Among the several masterpieces he built in the city of Berkeley must be counted the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1910), and the Maybeck Recital Hall. On the former, see Edward R. Bosley, *First Church of Christ, Scientist, Berkeley* (London: Phaidon, 1994).

*northern California style.* The style is known as Craftsman or Bungalowoid.

*fantasy of the monastery.* “The fantasy of the monastery, in fact, has been institutionalized in one of the groups with the longest and fondest traditions of The Faculty Club”; James Gilbert Paltridge, *A History of the Faculty Club at Berkeley* (Berkeley: The Faculty Club, University of California, 1990), 59–61, 68–69 (quotation from 59).

*fifty singers.* The group has been known variously as The Choristers, The Chorus of Monks, The Good Monks, The Monks, and The Monks’ Chorus. The custom of annually celebrating the holiday with a banquet began in 1902, the first year in which the Club occupied its present clubhouse.

*comic plays.* Many scripts have been deposited in the Bancroft Library.

*on campuses.* In Oregon, Reed College alumni were feted by a performance at their annual Christmas reunion in 1941. The student dramatic club adapted *Our Lady’s Tumbler* to dance form, to the accompaniment of an organ and madrigal singers. See *The Sunday Oregonian*, December 14, 1941: 20. A women’s modern dance organization known as Orchesis presented at Christmas in the 1930s an annual production of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* at what was then San Jose State Teachers College. For information on these performances, see Vol. 4, Chapter 1, <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/820/#page/14>

*in French and Spanish.* On the musical plays “with original dialogue and catchy songs” *Le petit jongleur* and *El pequeño Bérnabe*, see Alan Garfinkel, “Notes and News,” *The Modern Language Journal* 62.3 (March 1978): 113–31, at 122–23.

*activities.* Helene Freireich Farrere, “The Creative Teaching of French,” *French Review* 6.2 (December 1932): 114–22, at 117: “The study of Christmas vocabulary gave an impulse to the compilation of many pictures of the season, writing of French words and sentences to them, and gathering them into attractive, copious scrapbooks. Christmas cards, bearing French greetings were made, many carols were sung and two dramatic projects completed: one, a fragment of ‘L’Oiseau bleu’ [The Bluebird] by Maeterlinck, and the other a medieval French legend ‘Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame.’ The drama involves Christmas music, expressive dances, ... manufacture of costumes, painting of a large stained glass window from the illustrations of the French Cathedral in Chartres, and the study and manufacture of medieval costumes for the Juggler of Notre-Dame.”

*The tale has lost its allure.* A musical called *Juggler to the King* is based on Anatole France's short story, but is set in Denmark as a prequel to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The author has commented forlornly on the uphill battle to market it. See Stan Peal, <http://dev.juggle.org/history/discussion/archives/10477.php>: "The marketing of the script has been slow, as it is a challenging piece. It's a full-scale musical, which is challenging enough, but also requires an excellent juggler who can sing and act. ... [I]t is well-suited for churches and community theatres as a Christmas show." The musical was first produced in 1995. The most recent production, which speaks eloquently to the triangulation of the story with Christmas and children, was in December 2005 by a cast of children aged 5 through 18. Another musical expression of the story that is directed unambiguously to use in churches at Christmastime is "The Clown of God: A Christmas Chancel Drama for Children's Choir," by Mark Schweizer (St. James Music Press, n.d.).

## Mass Radio

*the granddaddies of later home entertainment systems.* See Mark V. Stein, *Cathedral and Tombstone Radios* (Chandler, AZ: Sonoran Publishing, 2008).

*the latest electronics.* The then-advanced technology included vacuum tubes and superheterodyne detectors.

*fireside chats.* The sculpture entitled *The Fireside Chat* forms part of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, DC. To convey the poverty of the Depression, the man is barefooted and a horizontal support is missing from the chair on which he is seated. The relief is one of three sculpted by George Segal.

*entertainment for families with children.* Eventually, this Jesuit published these scripts in Castilian, from which they were translated into French. See Remigio Vilariño Ugarte, *De broma y de versa* 182–183 (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, and *Radiocuentos por Erreví Esegota*, 2nd ed. (Bilbao, Spain: El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, 1929). This text was put into French in Vilariño, *Contes radiophoniques*, trans. and adap. Paul Bellot (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1934), 91–108. For a brief biography, see Manuel Revuelta González, "Remigio Vilariño (1865–1939)," *XX Siglos* 12.47 (2001): 145–47.

*elsewhere on the Continent.* Jean Sarraihl, "Le prestige d'Anatole France en Espagne," *Revue de littérature comparée* 16 (1936): 98–120, at 120. Accordingly, Vilariño had a free hand in his long retelling of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*. In his adaptation, the protagonist is a Hungarian jongleur named Georges, whose sidekicks are a horse and thirteen-year-old nephew.

*in its 1928–1929 season.* Printed librettos to assist listeners in following the opera during the transmission survive in abundance: *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), with one full-page black-and-white illustration. For a detailed review, see Scott Goddard, “Le Jongleur de Notre Dame,” *Listener* 21, June 5, 1929: 795.

*in 1928.* In this year the date of April 17 fell a week and a half after Easter Sunday. The program was on the theme of the buffoon or loon, and the juggler was the final case in point.

*soap-opera.* The term, often shortened to “soap,” dates to the golden age of radio, when individual programs were sponsored by advertisers such as soap manufacturers and retailers.

*a staple of Christmastide.* Schedules and even recordings survive for many of these radio shows, particularly from the 1940s and 1950s. Recordings of a number have been preserved. The following list makes no claim to be complete or fully verified: (1) Gulf Screen Guild Theater of CBS featured the *Juggler of Notre Dame*, on December 22, 1940, with Nelson Eddy. (2) Screen Guild Theater, episode no. 123, *The Juggler of Our Lady*, on December 21, 1942. (3) *AFRS Presents* of the Armed Forces Radio Service, “The Juggler of Our Lady,” on December 25, 1944, with Ronald Colman (host), Anatole France (author), Gladys Swarthout, John Charles Thomas (29:42). This was recorded on 33½ rpm LP as Series H-9, program no. 55. (4) World Broadcasting System syndication, *The Story of the Juggler of Our Lady*, with John Nesbitt, Bing Crosby, Orson Welles, Victor Young and His Orchestra, Bernard Herrmann (music), Charles Laughton, Hans Eisler and His Orchestra, Anatole France (author) (26:00). (5) The Westinghouse Program (NBC net origination, AFRS rebroadcast), Program 101 (also known as *The John Charles Thomas Show* and “AFRS Christmas Program No. 15”), “The Juggler of Our Lady,” on December 24, 1944, with John Charles Thomas, Victor Young and His Orchestra, The Ken Darby Chorus, John Nesbitt (29:56). Recordings of Nesbitt can be found in the Family Theater, a series created by Father Patrick Peyton for broadcast on the network of the Mutual Broadcasting Company, with Tony LaFrano as the announcer, which aired from February 13, 1947, until August 7, 1957. Its 533 programs included productions of *The Juggler of Our Lady* which may have been yearly, on December 25, 1947, and on December 29, 1948, in both instances with John Charles Thomas and John Nesbitt. (6) Reader’s Digest Radio Edition, *Our Lady’s Juggler*, on April 21, 1946, with Richard Conte, Alice Rinehart (30:00). (7) *Joppe the Juggler* (at Christmas, Joppe is discovered juggling his plates for the Holy Mother), on December 20, 1950, with Tony La Frano (announcer), Harry Zimmerman (composer, conductor), Francis X. Bushman, Tudor Owen, Milton Merlin (adaptor), Barbara Merlin (adaptor), Herbert Rawlinson, William Johnstone, Joseph F. Mansfield (director), Mae Clarke, Spencer Tracy (host,

with opening and closing remarks), Wallace Ford (29:42). (8) *The Juggler of Our Lady*, on January 16, 1952, with Danny Thomas, John Lund (29:40). The mimeographed, 25-leaf typescript of this radiocast is available archivally (OCLS 24511278). (9) *The Juggler of Our Lady*, on December 22, 1954, with Margaret O'Brien, J. Carroll Naish (24:40). (10) *The Juggler of Our Lady*, on December 21, 1955, with Maureen O'Sullivan, Jack Haley, Paul Frees (24:40). (11) An additional broadcast that would seem to be the same story is Lux Summer Theater (a summer series of fourteen shows), "The Lady and the Tumbler," on June 15, 1953.

*The texts for these dramatic readings.* For example, see Walter C. Hackett, "'The Juggler of Our Lady' by Anatole France, Adapted for Radio," in *The Jumbo Christmas Book*, ed. Edna M. Cahill (Boston, MA: Baker's Plays, 1951), 5–13. Hackett wrote both plays and screenplays. The text gives a good idea of how the germ of religion in Anatole France's story could be stripped of irony and intensified, down to the chorus of "Ave, Maria" at the end.

*its author's notoriety.* In fiction, he was the real-life model for Sheridan Whiteside, the main character in the three-act 1939 comedy "The Man Who Came to Dinner," by the American playwrights George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. The play is set in a small Ohio town in the 1930s, in the weeks leading up to Christmas. The subject of many salty anecdotes, Woollcott brought his legend to a fitting climax by dying on the air, while participating in a live roundtable on the war in Europe: by the end of the show, the mike was live, but the discussant was not.

*it spread much more broadly.* Woollcott's version was reprinted as "Our Lady's Juggler" already in *Twice Told Tales, Reader's Digest* 39.234 (October 1941): 15–16, and in David Goldstein, *What Say You?* (St. Paul, MN: Radio Replies Press, 1945), 154–56.

*columnists would cite it.* Ida Smith, "A Thought for Christmas," *Prescott (Arizona) Evening Courier*, December 15, 1947, 4.

*the colophon.* The text reads: "THE QUERCUS PRESS SAN MATEO CALIFORNIA has printed thirty copies of this tale in Goudy Medieval type with the kind permission of the author, Christmas 1937."

*John Booth Nesbitt.* He was sufficiently famous to earn a star of his own on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. His middle name memorialized his membership in an illustrious and notorious theater family: he was a grand-nephew of both Edwin Booth, a nineteenth-century thespian who made Shakespeare's *Hamlet* his signature role, and of Edwin's younger brother and fellow actor John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated the American president Abraham Lincoln.

*December, 1938.* The performance aired on the Gulf Oil Company radio program.

*his late father.* His father had died in 1931.

*printed and recorded.* Already in 1939, the text was circulated privately as a holiday gift for friends of a small press in San Francisco: John Booth Nesbitt, *The Juggler of Our Lady* (San Francisco: L'Esperance, Sivertson & Beran, 1939). The title page indicates: "Noel. / Printed for private circulation among friends of the press." The story in approximately this form was made into a 78 rpm recording on Decca Records in 1943 as "A Christmas Gift: The Story of the Juggler of Our Lady." This was reissued repeatedly. Later the cover was changed, and it was released as a 45 rpm recording.

*rebroadcast on radio stations.* In 1946, a fan of juggling in the United States sent to *Juggler's Bulletin* word of his delight that while testing out a clock radio, he had heard the recording by Nesbitt. See *Juggler's Bulletin* 27 (Tulsa, OK: December 1946), at <http://www.juggling.org/jb/jb27.html>: "The jolly old man with whiskers figured out a way to improve our 'getting out of bed disposition' and dropped off a radio-clock combination that wakes us up to music. By mere chance we were testing the gadget out when John Nesbitt, who is our favorite narrator, was introduced and gave out with his version of 'The Juggler of Our Lady.' We gathered that this was a recording and if this is correct, 'tis an excellent collectors' item. Barnaby, the principal character of the story, was quite a juggler, tossing twelve knives while standing on his head and then catching them with his feet."

*long-play (LP) records.* Fifteen years later, in 1961, this kind of record was singled out for special mention in an illustrated German printing of the juggler story: see Hans Hömberg, *Der Gaukler unserer lieben Frau*, illus. Ernst von Dombrowski (Vienna: Eduard Wancura, 1961). More than thirty years later, Nesbitt's version was still being lauded. A rereading of it was recorded by Georgianna Moore with the Tennessee Players on December 27, 2002. It was later sold as a compact disk (CD). In it, Nesbitt's text is reread as a narration with music that forms part of a Christmas medley, including "Little Drummer Boy," on a recording made by the arts organization that is entitled *The Juggler of Our Lady: A Christmas Gift*.

Also in 2002, an American storyteller published "The Little Juggler," as one of four stories for Christmas in a volume entitled *Tales of Holidays*. In the notes, he reveals that he happened upon the tale when listening to a holiday radio program in 1966, an encounter that affected him powerfully and made him resolve to tell the story himself eventually. See Pleasant DeSpain, *Tales of Holidays*, illus. Don Bell, *The Books of Nine Lives*. vol. 5 (Little Rock, AR: August House, 2002), 80–81. In 1997, the storyteller Howard Edmond recorded a cassette with four stories, under the title *Christmas Tales* (OCLC 39099503).

*a living activity.* The quotation comes from the opening paragraph: *Music Educators Journal* 33.2 (November–December 1946): 24–25, at 24. The article is entitled "An Industrial Music Program: Goodyear Believes in Employee Participation in Music."

*Christmas fare.* In the calendar of events that were organized by the corporate director of education and recreation: "Industrial Music Program," p. 24: "Christmas found the employees prepared to present an original production called 'The Simple Heart.' The story was based on the old French Christmas legend, 'The Juggler of Notre Dame,' and the scenes were transplanted to an early California mission. C. C. Osmun of the Dealer Department was responsible for the story. The orchestra and chorus added much to the story by performing Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony (fifth movement), Amparito Roca, The Monastery Garden, Grieg's At Christmas Time, Intermezzo, Adams' Holy Night, Gounod's Ave Maria, and the traditional Christmas songs." *Amparito Roca* is a piece composed in 1925 by the Spanish musician and composer Jaime Teixidor. *In a Monastery Garden* is by the English composer Albert William Ketelby. The 1847 Christmas carol "O Holy Night" (French *Minuit, chrétiens!*), was composed by Adolphe Adams.

*The Simple Heart.* In French, *Un cœur simple*.

*political and social anxieties.* This factor helps to explain the release of such films as the American *The Song of Bernadette* (1943, directed by Henry King); the Italian *Doorway to Heaven* (*La porta del cielo*, 1945, directed by Vittorio De Sica); the Spanish *Our Lady of Fatima* (*La señora de Fátima*, 1951, directed by Rafael Gil); and the French documentary *Lourdes and Its Miracles* (*Lourdes et ses miracles*, 1955, directed by Georges Rouquier); alongside a host of other documentaries released worldwide (Ayfre, "La Vierge Marie et le cinéma," 804–6, 808–9).

## Mid-Century Medieval US Television

*mutual importance of Christmas and television.* Diane Werts, *Christmas on Television* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 3–16.

*Plays and pageants.* Gladys Cromwell, daughter of James H. Cromwell, wrote *Our Lady's Tumbler*, a play, typescript, one-act, 13 pages, n.d.; in Princeton University Library, III. Papers of Persons Other than Ridgely Torrence, Box 95, Folder 7.

*medieval-themed television.* The history of medieval content in television has not been written even preliminarily. For studies on the twenty-first century, see Meriem Pagès and Karolyn Kinane, editors, *The Middle Ages on Television: Critical Essays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015). In their "Introduction: Television Medievalisms," 1–11, at 2, they refer to "the unlikely alliance between medievalism and the commercial medium of television."

*Fred Waring's America.* Also known as "The Fred Waring Show," his program ran on the CBS network from 1949 to 1954. It was stereotypical family TV, a favorite in surveys that canvassed teachers and parents about viewing suitable for children. See

Paul Witty, "Children and TV—A Fifth Report," *Elementary English* 31.6 (1954): 349–57, on teachers' preferences in 1954; idem, "Two Studies of Children's Interest in TV," *Elementary English* 29.5 (1952): 251–57, on parents' beliefs.

*leader of a big band.* His most famous ensemble was The Pennsylvanians, a fifty-five-piece jazz orchestra formed in the 1920s.

*Waring girls.* Along the same lines, Waring was also known as an arbiter of the "Miss America" competition, which originated in 1921.

*already left a mark.* For instance, his first auditions included one recorded for the entrepreneur Thomas Edison in the early 1920s. His band was also among the earliest to play in movies with sound.

*vaudeville.* On this connection, see Gunning, "Non-Continuous Style of Early Film," 221–22, 228n1.

*With an acute sense.* As much a businessman as a musician, Waring may have spread his name most widely in America through a line of kitchen appliances, most notably the Waring blender.

*inserted it annually into his show.* The variety show offered performances of "The Juggler" in at least four of its five years: 1950, 1951, 1952, and 1953. The kinescope recordings of these segments last roughly fifteen minutes. According to an endnote provided by McCabe (unnumbered final printed page), at the time when his version was printed in 1951, the story had "been done frequently on radio, as a record album by Decca, and at Christmas in 1950 by Fred Waring with choir and ballet." Kinescope copies of performances on television in 1951, 1952, and 1953 are held by the Fred Waring's America Collection, The Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pennsylvania.

*several sentences of recapitulation.* "Christmas has always been a season of giving, ever since the three wise men first placed their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh beside the manger. ... That is the reason that during this week before Christmas we do now present the legend of the little juggler who with his paltry bag of tricks sought to gain livelihood by begging pennies from the crowds which gathered before the cathedral. It all happened centuries ago on a certain day when this pathetic little juggler, ragged, hungry, and scorned by the people he hoped to entertain, found his way into the inside of the sanctuary of the great cathedral. It was just the time of the year when all other people were presenting beautiful gifts of great material worth. But he had no gift other than his meager art. But when with humility he laid the only thing he possessed at the feet of the statue in that sacred quiet place, a miracle occurred. The legend begins during the festival of Nativity in the square of the cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris." My transcription from the kinescope.

*a female modern dancer.* Nadine Gae came to television with a résumé in vaudeville as long as her arm—or legs. Her primary role in the Waring Show was as choreographer. Her husband was Ray Sax Schroeder, a member of Fred Waring’s Pennsylvanians as a musician, singer, and dancer. Like his wife, he had substantial credentials in vaudeville.

*techniques reminiscent of mime.* Like the actor who plays the Madonna, she is in theatrical terms a supernumerary. Neither role requires speaking.

*cajoled him into televising.* The episode is recounted in the cover story by Bill Goodner, “The Juggler of Notre Dame,” *Sooner Magazine* 25.4 (December 1952): 8–10.

*Imitation is the sincerest form of television.* Attributed in *Newsweek*, January 14, 1980.

## Postwar Britain

*published in 1951.* The publisher was the London Theatre of Dramatic Arts, which subsumed the London School of Mime.

*Our Lady’s Tumbler: A French Mime.* Mary Gertrude Pickersgill, *Clever Alice and Other Mimes*, French’s Acting Edition, vol. 1838 (London: Samuel French, 1951), 44–46: “Our Lady’s Tumbler: A French Mime.” The author was headmistress of the Theatre. In this mime, eight carols as well as the Angelus are sung. The cast is split into two sets of characters, namely, the statues and the mortals.

*Ronald Duncan.* *Our Lady’s Tumbler* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), repr. in idem, *Collected Plays* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1971), 151–92. He wrote the play after composing the libretto for Benjamin Britten’s opera *The Rape of Lucretia*.

*minor vogue.* The vogue had culminated in the extraordinary religious plays of Charles Williams, such as *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* (1936), *Seed of Adam* (1937), and *The House of the Octopus* (1945). On poetic drama, see A. Trevor Tolley, *The Poetry of the Forties* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985), 185.

*T. S. Eliot.* His 1950 lecture on “Poetry and Drama” laid a prestigious basis for the very notion that drama should be once again in verse, as opposed to prose.

*many of his works.* Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) had afforded a model for religious drama in a 1946 play, *This Way to the Tomb*. Earlier, Duncan had written a miracle play, *Ora Pro Nobis* (1939). A decade after *Our Lady’s Tumbler*, he set another theatrical work in the Middle Ages, *Abelard and Heloise: A Correspondence for the Stage* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961).

*Festival of Britain.* The commission came in the summer of 1950. The Festival was propelled by the postwar Labour government. The extended celebration was conceived to reinvigorate the British after the war for their achievements in the arts, technology,



science, and more. The boost in morale had to be realized on a small budget, because of the battered economy in postwar Britain. In some respects, the series of events and exhibitions was a last, or at least a late, gasp of the English artist and medieval revivalist William Morris, and the medievalizing of *Our Lady's Tumbler* may deserve to be so understood.

*Duncan's contract stipulated.* Ronald Duncan, *How to Make Enemies* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), 219–20 (subtitled on the book cover *An Autobiography* and on the half-title page *A Second Volume of Autobiography*); Max Walter Haueter, *Ronald Duncan: The Metaphysical Content of His Plays* (London: Rebel Press, 1969), 79. The limited decor for the original production was designed by Cecil Beaton, who is better known as a documentary, society, and fashion photographer of the 1940s.

*full choir.* It makes extensive use of choric passages. The music, with anthems, was composed by Arthur William Oldham. Chorus master as well as composer, Oldham was also credited for “special anthems” when the production was televised by the Canadian Broadcast Corporation. The two quotations are from Duncan, *How to Make Enemies*, 222.

*claims explicitly.* It even quotes at the beginning and ending nine lines from the original.

*he kept picturing a clown.* Irene Mora, “Duncan, Ronald (1914–),” in *The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama*, ed. Gabrielle H. Cody and Evert Springchorn, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 1:377–78, at 377.

*he suddenly remembered.* Duncan, *How to Make Enemies*, 220: “Then suddenly the bizarre filing system in my mind got reshuffled and I remembered that some years ago, I had received through the post, from a girl I had not met, a suggestion that I should write a ballet on the theme of a French legend called *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame*. She had enclosed a brief synopsis.”

*three finalists.* Brother Sebastian writes a poem, Brother Gregory grows roses and offers the most beautiful one, and Brother Justin composes an anthem.

*only the live hand being visible.* Duncan, *How to Make Enemies*, 221.

*the overriding concern.* Duncan, *How to Make Enemies*, 220.

*the world premiere.* From June 5–9, 1951.

*long-running.* 1965–1996.

*two Christmas episodes.* *Jackanory*, season 3, episode 110, “The Little Juggler,” December 22, 1967. *Jackanory*, season 5, episode 62, “Christmas Stories: The Little Juggler,” December 24, 1968.

*broadcast once by radio in Italy.* On the transmission, see Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame et d'autres contes*, ed. Maccone, 19. The radio play led to a published Italian translation, see *Il giocoliere della vergine: Mistero in due tempi*, trans. Giuliano Friz and Gianfilippo Carcano, *Controcorrente* 40.5–6 (May–June 1962): 11–38.

*a thirty-minute telecast.* This version, in a series “On Camera,” featured anthems from the Stratford Festival Singers to accompany the acrobatic performance. The music was composed by Louis Applebaum, who (in another manifestation of cross-religious attention to the story) was Jewish. See Walter G. Pitman, *Louis Applebaum: A Passion for Culture* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2002), 163. Although the episode was recorded, the black-and-white kinescope no longer exists at either the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) or the National Archives in Ottawa, but production files are available in the CBC Reference Library in Toronto.

*Paul Almond.* A movie and film director, producer, and writer, he studied at Oxford University and worked as an actor in a repertory company in England, before returning to Canada to embark upon a career in television in 1954 with the Canadian Broadcasting Company. Many of his productions and novels revolved around Christian themes. In an autobiographical novel entitled *The Inheritor* he describes selecting *Our Lady's Tumbler* for programming at Christmas.

*the Anglophones and the Francophones.* Pitman, *Louis Applebaum*, 163: “The CBC had found a story in the French tradition that could be perceived as universal and appropriate for the celebrations of all Canadians of the Christian faith on that sacred night.”

*actor with a gamin hairdo.* The actor is Christiane Lasquin. See Bernard Lesquilbet, “Christiane Lasquin,” *Télé 60*, no. 795, January 17–23, 1960: 2 (photo by D. Fallot).

*two Dominican sisters.* Renée Vancoppenolle, *Noël aujourd'hui*, illus. Marie Authelet (Liège-Bressoux, Belgium: Éditions dricot, 2005), 47–52. The volume is pitched at the child in all of us. The illustrations do not always bear much relation to the stories contained in it.

## Juggler Film

*The Juggler of Notre Dame.* The film also circulated under the titles *Magic Legend of the Juggler* and *Legend of the Juggler*. Its cast included Barry Dennen in the title role, along with Jessica Benton, Willoughby Goddard, Joe E. Ross, and Walter Slezak.

*This made-for-television movie.* *The Juggler of Notre Dame* (1984), directed by Michael Ray, with Mike Rhodes. Christmas is also the occasion for which *The Gift of the Little Juggler* is pitched. This product took the form of a low-budget filmstrip and an accompanying sound cassette (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation, 1982).

*human values and audience enrichment*. C. Gerald Fraser, "Television Week," December 12, 1982.

*a real juggler*. The performer was named Carl Carlsson. The film co-starred Merlin Olsen and Melinda Dillon. The role of the prior was played by Eugene Roche, whose character was called Father Delany.

## Juggler Christmas Books Live On

*private-press printing*. Frederic Vanson, *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Medieval French Tale Retold in English Verse* (Harlow, UK: Poetry Essex, 1978). The final page reads: "This story retold from the Medieval French Legend at the Feast of Our Lord's Nativity Nineteen Hundred and Seventy Seven. Thanks be to God."

*a coxcombed jester once painted*. Rockwell's *The Jester* appeared on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* on February 11, 1939. It was reprinted with the text of Anatole France's story in *Norman Rockwell's Christmas Book*, ed. Molly Rockwell (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), 59–62.

*pop-up*. Carol Schwartz, *The Little Juggler*, illus. Marcy Dunn Ramsey, paper engineering by Dick Dudley, Dial Stockingstuffer Pop-Ups (New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991). Movable parts such as volvelles had been used already even in medieval manuscripts, but not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were whole books designed and produced to spring out in three-dimensional tableaux, and the term and format of the pop-up came into their own only in the middle of the twentieth century.

*one in a series*. The set of products counted among its constituents *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *The First Noel*, *The Nutcracker*, and *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*.

*advertising copy*. The standard selling points were simple: "Each one contains a beautiful three-dimensional scene from a favorite Christmas tale or carol, and a twelve-page full-color illustrated book that tells the story." Intentionally or not, the total pagination matches the twelve nights of Christmas.

*120 seconds or less*. Elena Pasquali, *The Lion Book of Two-Minute Christmas Stories*, illus. Nicola Smee (Oxford: Lion Children's Books, 2012).

*he was sure the mother was smiling*. Pasquali, *Lion Book*, 37.

*first production of a script*. According to the fiction, the draft happens to be his 844th—but the first to meet even this provisional success.

*gave what was closest to him*. John Guare, *Rich and Famous* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1977), 29 (scene five).

## Related Stories of the Season

*one-act lyric opera.* It was commissioned by NBC-TV, performed by the NBC Opera Company, produced by Samuel Chotzinoff, and conducted by Thomas Schippers.

*specifically for television.* It aired on the NBC network on December 24, 1951, as the premiere presentation in the *Hallmark Hall of Fame* showcase. For studying the original and subsequent performances, the central resources are Ken Wlaschin, *Gian Carlo Menotti on Screen: Opera, Dance, and Choral Works on Film, Television, and Video* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999); Donald L. Hixon, *Gian Carlo Menotti: A Bio-Bibliography*, *Bio-Bibliographies in Music*, vol. 77 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 53–80; Richard C. Burke, “The NBC Opera Theater,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 10.1 (1965): 13–23.

*the child actor.* The boy was Chet Allen. His performance as Amahl was the highlight, and perhaps concurrently the curse, of a life that was snuffed out by suicide. He descended into long mental illness, alongside protracted failure to replicate the success that he had achieved in his debut. After 1951, the crippled shepherd boy was played several times by Bill McIver. The role of the mother was created by Rosemary Kuhlmann, who played the role repeatedly thereafter.

*Menotti insisted.* Gian Carlo Menotti, *Amahl and the Night Visitors (Piano-Vocal Score)* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1997): “It is the express wish of the composer that the role of Amahl should always be performed by a boy. Neither the musical nor the dramatic concept of the opera permits the substitution of a woman costumed as a child.”

*crept toward near extinction.* Jennifer Barnes, *Television Opera: The Fall of Opera Commissioned for Television* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2003).

*Gospel of Matthew.* Matthew 2:1–12. See Richard C. Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi: Meanings in History of a Christian Story* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

*Charles Tazewell.* Charles Tazewell, *The Littlest Angel*, illus. Katherine Evans (Chicago: Children’s Press, 1946).

*a script for radio.* It was read initially in 1940 by a British actor, Edna Best, in the show *Manhattan at Midnight* (see Fig. n.7). In the following year it was performed by an American, Helen Hayes (see Fig. n.8). Eventually, it was recorded by yet another US actor, Loretta Young (Decca). The text was first published as a story by the general-interest digest, *Coronet*, and as a book in 1946. In 1969, it was adapted and expanded as a 90-minute musical broadcast on television in the *Hallmark Hall of Fame*. This anthology program, which ran from 1951 on, was the same in which “Amahl and the Night Visitors” had premiered nearly two decades earlier. The title role was played by the American actor and singer Johnny Whitaker.



Fig. n.7 Edna Best. Photograph, date and photographer unknown.



Fig. n.8 Helen Hayes. Photograph by George Hurrell, 1931.

*products in other media*. Charles Tazewell, *The Small One: A Christmas Story* (Philadelphia, PA: Winston, 1947), recorded by the singer and actor Bing Crosby in 1955, and adapted by the Walt Disney Company as an animated feature in 1978. *The Little Gray Donkey*, about the beast of burden that carried Mary to Bethlehem, was recorded by the singer and television host Tennessee Ernie Ford, with music by the Roger Wagner Chorale. *The Littlest Stork*, narrated in 1952 by the actor Joan Crawford, with music by the composer André Previn. Last, *The Littlest Snowman*, winner of the Thomas Edison Prize for best children's story of 1956, was recorded later by Bob Keeshan—an actor and producer best known as Captain Kangaroo, the title character in a television program extremely popular with American children, during the nearly three decades in which it aired from 1955 through 1984.



Fig. n.9 Bob Keeshan. Photograph, 1977. Photographer unknown.

*posthumously*. For example, we have *The Littlest Tree* in 1997, *The Littlest Uninvited One* in 1998, and *The Littlest Red Horse* in 1999.

*a 1955 article.* Shirley M. Carrier, "Christmas Story Project—a Junior High Unit," *The English Journal* 44 (1955): 469–72, at 469: "'The Juggler of Notre Dame' (a favorite religious story emphasizing the value of gifts given in love), *The Littlest Angel* (a modern tale on the same theme, popular among adults and children, appealingly recorded by Loretta Young), and *The Small One* (another recent narrative recorded by Bing Crosby)."

*The Little Drummer Boy.* The ditty has its roots in a song entitled "Carol of the Drum," with music and lyrics by Katherine K. Davis. This original was written and first printed in 1941: "Carol of the Drum: For Chorus of Mixed Voices" (Boston, MA: B. F. Wood Music Co., 1941). From 1958, "The Little Drummer Boy" was printed under the names of Davis, Simeone, and Henry Onorati, with either Simeone's or Davis's name in first place: "The Little Drummer Boy: S.A.T.B. or S.A., with Piano Accompaniment" (Delaware Water Gap, PA: Shawnee Press, 1958). The "Carol of the Drum" may come in turn from a Czech folk song.

The piece has been a staple of Christmas playlists on the radio and in related media since 1955. In that year, the Trapp family recorded it as "The Carol of the Drum." The song became a hit when recorded and released in 1958, as rearranged by Henry Onorati and produced by Harry Simeone. The best-known version, based on the composition by Katherine K. Davis as arranged by Onorati and Simeone, was released by the Harry Simeone Chorale annually from 1958 through 1962, entitled "Little Drummer Boy." It has been sung by many others, including Bing Crosby, both solo and, a month before his death, in a 1977 duet with the rock star David Bowie in a modified form known as "The Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth." In 1968, the story recounted in the song, despite being diaphanously slim in its narrative fabric, was made into an animated television special, and in 1989 into a holiday classic in the form of stop-motion animation known as claymation.

*The ox and lamb.* The Davis lyrics differ from the Trapp and later versions in only a single word: they have "The ox and ass kept time" instead of "The ox and lamb kept time."

*unable to speak.* From Latin *infans*, literally "not speaking."

*Stanzas on the Life of Christ.* Originally entitled *Coplas de Vita Christi*, the piece was composed in at least three stages between 1467 and the *editio princeps* of 1482. Its heterogeneous contents incorporate romances, hymns, and various other genres. This long poem was the principal work of the Franciscan Friar Íñigo de Mendoza (not to be confused with Íñigo López de Mendoza y Zúñiga, the first Marqués de Santillana). Friar Íñigo was a favorite of the Catholic kings, and a major figure in Castilian poetry of the late Middle Ages.

*pastoral Nativity play.* In Spanish, the play could be (and has been) called *Auto pastoril navideño*. For an edition and Italian translation, see Íñigo de Mendoza, *Coplas de Vita*

*Christi*, ed. and trans. Marco Massoli (Messina, Italy: D'Anna, 1977), 163–74 (stanzas 122–57). A more widely available edition of the key stanzas 127–41 is Ana Maria Álvarez Pellitero, ed., *Teatro medieval* (Madrid: Espasa calpe, 1990), 91–104. For interpretation, see Charlotte Stern, “Fray Iñigo de Mendoza and Medieval Dramatic Ritual,” *Hispanic Review* 33 (1965): 197–245, esp. at 198, 204–7, 236–37, 244. At 237n99, Stern provides information on processions with accompanying dance that took place in the Canary Islands in the 1940s.

*Mingo*. Or Minguillo.

*His gift can be compared*. W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Sacred Dance: A Study in Comparative Folklore* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 22–23.

*New Mexico*. Winfred Ernest Garrison, “A Surviving Mystery Play: Primitive Religious Drama on the American Frontier,” *Journal of Religion* 7 (1927): 225–43, reported witnessing a version performed by amateurs in Santa Fe and the nearby Las Vegas (at that time twin municipalities, both in New Mexico and distinct from the city in Nevada) on evenings preceding Christmas in 1906 and 1907. They could have been along the lines of a medieval mystery play, representing Bible stories with song, about the reaction of the shepherds to the Nativity.

*he has no possessions to offer*. Garrison, “Surviving Mystery Play,” 229 (for the translation quoted), 238 (for information on the dates of the performances): “I am the poorest of all. I have neither sheep nor wheat, / But only a gift of song and nimble dancing feet. / So may I dance in thy honor, and make a song in thy praise? / The steps and the notes are gone when I cease, but my heart’s devotion stays.”

*biblical name*. Tubal, after a son of Japheth in Genesis 10.

*Why the Chimes Rang*. The story, the creation of Raymond MacDonald Alden, is also known through the theatrical adaptation *Why the Chimes Rang: A Play in One Act* by Elizabeth Apthorp McFadden (New York: Samuel French, 1915).

*may still serve well*. The bestselling author Paulo Coelho has posted a short version in which the leading player has the family name Burkhard, and the venue is Melk Abbey, overlooking the Danube River in Austria. “Christmas Tale: Our Lady’s Juggler,” source <http://paulocoelhoblog.com/2016/12/24/christmas-tale/>, trans. James Mulholland.

*tensions between the two extremes in the debate flare up*. At least since the early 1970s, contention has centered upon the holding of yuletide assemblies, singing of carols, display and decoration of trees, and even less obviously religious practices and trappings. Thus far, the courts have not intervened to settle the legal issues, which relate to fundamental constitutional rights. John Aquino, “Can We Still Sing Christmas Carols in Public Schools?,” *Music Educators Journal* 63.3 (November 1976): 70–73; Gilda Drotman, “Take the Crisis Out of Christmas,” *Learning* 2.3 (November 1972): 62–63;

John M. Hartenstein, "A Christmas Issue: Christian Holiday Celebration in the Public Elementary Schools Is an Establishment of Religion," *California Law Review* 80.4 (July 1992): 981–1026; Charles J. Russo and Ralph D. Mawdsley, "December Dilemmas: The Celebration of Christmas in American Public Schools," *Education and the Law* 13.4 (2001): 381–87.

*war on Christmas*. For the fullest treatment, see now Gerry Bowler, *Christmas in the Crosshairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).



## Notes to Chapter 5

### Suitable for Children

*the question has been posed recently.* See Paul Bretel, “Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame, un miracle pour enfants?” in *Grands textes du Moyen Âge à l’usage des petits*, ed. Caroline Cazanave and Yvon Houssais, *Annales littéraires de l’Université de Franche-Comté*, vol. 869, série littéraires, vol. 23 (Besançon, France: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2010), 277–97, repr. in Bretel, *Littérature et édification au Moyen Âge: “Mult est diverse ma matyre,”* *Essais sur le Moyen Âge*, vol. 56 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2012), 477–96.

*reminiscences of his own childhood.* Guillemette Tison, “France, Anatole,” in *DLJ*, 381.

*a famous private school in the United States.* The institution in question is Shady Hill School in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

*“play book”.* Katharine Taylor (director of the Shady Hill School from 1921–1949) and Henry Copley Greene, *The Shady Hill Play Book*, illus. Harold R. Shurtleff (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 95–97 (introduction), 98–102 (English play), 103–7 (French play), 107–8 (references and Latin chant).

*the original was far above average.* “Its clarity and its naïveté are incarnate in the poem” (p. 95).

*for reading aloud.* Juan José Arreola, *Lectura en voz alta*, *Sepan cuantos—*, vol. 103 (Mexico City, Mexico: Porrúa, 1968, 11th ed., 1991) 44–48: “El juglar de nuestra Señora.”

*major author of the literary scene in Mexico.* A biography of him by his son bears a title that begins with a common Spanish epithet meaning “The Last Jongleur”: see Orso Arreola, *El último juglar: Memorias de Juan José Arreola* (Mexico City, Mexico: Editorial Diana, 1998).

*master of minstrelsy.* In the original Spanish, *mester de juglaría*. The title alludes to a column that Arreola published under this name in *El Búho* in 1988–1989.

*Jorge Salazar.* Often known for short as Jors. The caricature is printed in *Juan José Arreola: 1992*, ed. Jorge Orendáin (Guadalajara, Mexico: Editorial Universitaria, 2005), facing the table of contents.

*his top 100.* Antonio Robles [Antonio Joaquín Robles Soler], *Rompetacones y 100 cuentos más* (Heelbreaker and One Hundred Other Stories), *Nueva biblioteca pedagógica*, vol. 2, 3rd ed. (Mexico City, Mexico: Oasis, 1968), 5 (for the table ranking), 8 (with the identification of Anatole France as the ultimate source), 83–85 (retelling of the story).

*charm, simplicity, and diminutiveness.* France, *Our Lady's Tumbler*, trans. Wicksteed, vii: "Difficult as it is to convey the charm of so slight a thing, we cannot but feel that Mr. Wicksteed has successfully turned into Nineteenth Century speech the simple Old World diction of this diminutive story."

*sent a photograph of herself.* Sacha Guitry, *If Memory Serves: Memoirs of Sacha Guitry*, trans. Lewis Galantière (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1935), 293. The memoirist quotes from his diary for November 15, 1931. On Guitry, see *Ddi*, 472–73; on Anna de Brancovan, countess of Noailles, see *Ddi*, 849.

*Madame Arman de Caillavet.* Jeanne Simone Maurice Pouquet, *Le salon de Madame Arman de Caillavet, ses amis, Anatole France, comdt. Rivière, Jules Lemaître, Pierre Loti, Marcel Proust* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1926).

*cheerlessly bound booklet.* Pullen, "Our Lady's Juggler," 41–44. This retelling, based at least indirectly on Anatole France, ends with the moral (voiced by the prior), well suited to children anxious about Christmas gift-giving: "Who gives his all with love in his heart, his gift is accepted."

*An article that appeared a year after the initial publication.* "The University School Laboratory," *Educational Research Bulletin* (The Ohio State University Elementary School and Kindergartens) 14.5 (May 15, 1935): 124–43, at 136, "All of the girls enjoy the use of scarfs in interpreting these ideas. A few of the boys use them although the majority of the boys prefer a more vigorous interpretation, as Morris dancing. The girls especially like to dramatize such abstract ideas as 'religion,' 'suffering,' and 'fear.' Both boys and girls enjoy rhythmic interpretation of stories such as 'The Juggler of Notre Dame.'" The exact significance of "rhythmic interpretation" is not immediately transparent.

*Violet Moore Higgins.* *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), 7–34 (see Fig. n.10). Before marrying, she published under the name Violet Moore. Having attended the Art Institute in Chicago in the early 1900s, by 1916 she had become an artist distinguished for writing and illustrating more than a dozen children's books and simply illustrating even more.

*The Noel Candle.* Higgins, *Little Juggler*, 70: "And so, forever after, they and all their descendants, have burned a candle in the window on the eve of Noel, to light the lonely Christ-child on his way." The book would have made a fine Christmas gift: relatively early in its long life, one surviving copy acquired on one of the first pages a sticker that reads "Health: Christmas 1924," on another the handwritten words "Xmas 1924."

The frontispiece in this more upscale edition contains one curiosity. The little juggler is portrayed, with his six copper balls on his knees, before the image of the childless Virgin. The Madonna has prominently below her niche a candelabrum that bears an uncanny resemblance to a Hanukkah menorah with candles (see Fig. n.11).

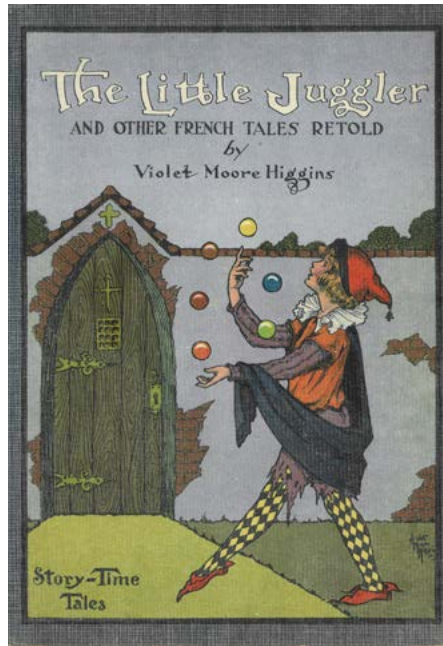


Fig. n.10 Front cover of Violet Moore Higgins, *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917).

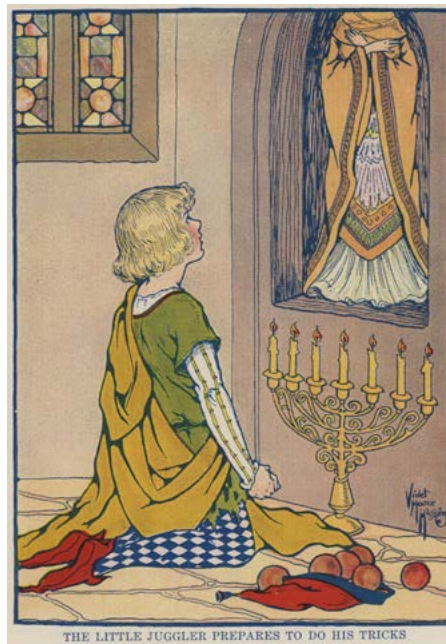


Fig. n.11 "The Little Juggler Prepares to Do His Tricks." Illustration by Violet Moore Higgins, 1917. Published in Violet Moore Higgins, *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), frontispiece.

This multibranch candleholder anticipates by a few years the one on the cover of the Wicksteed translation of *Our Lady's Tumbler* as printed privately by Stanford Briggs, Inc. in 1923 (see Fig. 1.53 p. 49).

*Making the protagonist more youthful.* Higgins, *Little Juggler*, 9.

*a juggler and a dancer.* The author may have been exposed not only to Markham's poem, but also to either a translation of *Our Lady's Tumbler* from the original medieval French poem or a performance of Massenet's opera with Mary Garden.

### Downsizing the Juggler

*Did you ever hear of a little juggler.* "Fascinating Legend Revived in Massenet's Coming Opera," *New York Times*, August 16, 1908.

*a large-format children's book.* José María Souvirón, *El juglarcillo de la Virgen*, illus. Roser Bru (Santiago, Chile: Difusión Chilena, 1942). Bru, a Chilean artist, produced the artwork for this project while still a college student, not even twenty years old. The story is divided into four sections, each one headed by a Roman numeral.



Fig. n.12 Roser Bru. Photograph from Wikimedia, 2013, CC BY-SA 3.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roser\\_Bru.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roser_Bru.jpg)

*twelve years old, more or less.* Roughly seventy-five years have elapsed, and the author has been dead for more than forty. At such a remove, we cannot know for certain the author's reasons for making the lead character this age.

*A short prelude.* The preamble, presumably by the writer, is printed on the inside of the front cover. On the following page, the author dedicates his effort to his two children, aged nine and six. The translation is mine.

*full of naïveté.* In Spanish, *ingenuidad*.

*critic and professor.* Born in Malaga, in 1923 he joined in the founding of the short-lived literary magazine *Ambos* in his hometown. He belonged to the Generation of '27, an influential group of Spanish poets.

*published profusely in Chile.* The first of many books composed, edited, or translated by him to appear from Chilean presses came out in 1932.

*he had settled there.* He served as a professor at the Catholic University in Santiago, and he became a close friend of Pablo Neruda, the Chilean poet and diplomat.

*His children's book found its way into print.* The press was Editorial Difusión Chilena, which operated during the war years.

*gone back permanently to his homeland.* There he held a professorship at the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in Madrid.

*a Madrid newspaper.* *ABC* (November 18, 1956): 13–17. This newspaper, founded as a weekly, has been published in Madrid since 1903. In this version, the dedication to his children remains, although they would have been twenty and seventeen, but the preamble has fallen by the wayside. The unexpurgated text is printed as prose. Two illustrations and a closing vignette are dropped, and the other illustrations are presented more according to the dictates of compressed space than the precise flow of the narrative.

*Other children's versions.* To offer only a partial list, we have books by Violet Moore Higgins, Barbara Cooney, and Katherine Evans, as well as the pop-up, *The Little Juggler*, with text by Carol Schwartz and illustrations by Marcia Ramsey.

*an alleged folktale of the juggler.* Rock and Balit, *Saintly Tales and Legends*, 29. The notes explain: "Variations of this legend are told in France and Italy"; see p. 95. In this case, influence is likely from Tomie dePaola, author of a version to be discussed later in this chapter. The giveaway is the Italian setting. All the same, the story manifests independence in its narrative, most particularly in the motif that the statue of an infant Jesus cradled by Mary catches one of the balls tossed by the little entertainer.

*pop-up book.* Schwartz, *Little Juggler*.

*Lilliputian format.* 75 × 62 millimeters (2 15/16" × 2 3/8").

*Maryline Poole Adams.* Adams is her married name; she was née Poole. She may be known best to the larger public as the mother of Timothy Hutton, an actor and director.

*her private press.* Poole Press, located in Berkeley, California.

*Matryoshka: Russian Nesting Dolls.* (Berkeley, CA: Poole Press, 1993).

*Song of the Wandering Aengus*. William Butler Yeats, *Song of the Wandering Aengus* (1998). 2 7/8" × 2", crewel embroidered cloth boards, decorative slipcase in the shape of a fishing creel, hand-colored illustrations throughout.

*her version of our story*. The entire product amounts to only thirty-two pages, printed on double leaves. The printing, binding, and hand-colored illustrations were all the work of Poole Adams.

*imaginative in both physical composition and literary content*. The book won a prize from the Miniature Book Society in its annual competition: see Frank J. Anderson, *A Catalog of the 2004 Miniature Book Society Exhibition* ([Cincinnati, OH]: Miniature Book Society, 2004), p. 9.

*Two parts*. Examined from a bird's-eye view, the spine and covers look like a squared S. Each segment has text that starts at the outside and finishes at the middle, where they share what would be a back cover if they were not bound together as conjoined twins. The volume, in full green morocco, fits within an accompanying slipcase, covered in marbling that resembles what was often found on the endpapers of nineteenth-century books. It was published during the years of Timothy Hutton's second marriage (2000–2009), to the Frenchwoman Aurore Giscard d'Estaing, a children's book illustrator.

*An imagined journal*. In French, *Jongleur de Notre-Dame: Un journal imaginaire à propos de la légende ancienne*.

*presented in the first person*. According to narrative theory, the technique of presenting a narrative from the perspective of an individual character is "focalization." In this case, the story is focalized through the boy juggler.

*a collector's item*. The edition was limited to 45 copies.

## American Children's Literature

*Massive retrenchment is inevitable*. Schwartz, *Little Juggler*.

*Mary Fidelis Todd*. *The Juggler of Notre Dame: An Old French Tale; Retold and Illustrated* (New York: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill, 1954). The hero is here named John.

*many forms had been written*. She provides this information in a note on the back of the title page.

*Saint Catherine Labouré*. Mary Fidelis Todd, *Song of the Dove: The Story of Saint Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal* (New York: Kenedy, 1957).

*you must be my Mother now*. The wording differs, but only trivially, in the English of Joseph I. Dirvin, *Saint Catherine Labouré, of the Miraculous Medal* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc., 1958), 14–17.

*two episodes.* On the night of July 18–19 and during meditation on November 27, 1830.

*no formal schooling.* She did receive the fundamental catechesis that came in advance of her first communion.

*Mary's attire and coiffure.* Dirvin, *Saint Catherine Labouré*, 98–99: “A white veil covered her head, falling on either side to her feet. Under the veil her hair, in coils, was bound with a filet ornamented with lace, about three centimeters in height or of two fingers’ breadth, without pleats, and resting lightly on the hair.”

*design that was revealed to her.* The obverse would picture the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception standing, with arms open and extended, and with bundles of luminous rays issuing from her hands, to symbolize the Grace that she obtains for humankind. This side of the medallion was to bear an inscription entreating Mary of the Immaculate Conception to pray on behalf of those who resort to her. The reverse would display a capital M surmounted by a small cross, above the sacred hearts of Jesus and the Mother of God.

*more than 100 million circulated.* René Laurentin, *Catherine Labouré et la médaille miraculeuse: Documents authentiques, 1830–1876* (Paris: Lazaristes, 1976), 56.

*for fledgling Latinists.* The author was a Latin instructor appointed in 1940 at Phillips Academy. This famous private boarding school in Andover, Massachusetts has existed since 1778.



Fig. n.13 John K. Colby. Photograph, date and photographer unknown.

*the version in this primer.* John K. Colby, *Lively Latin: Stories for the First and Second Years* (Andover, MA: Published by the author at Phillips Academy, 1954; New York: Longman, 1971), 37–38 (text), 66 (notes). The selection is one of thirty-two for schoolboys. The text, two pages in length, is supplemented by short notes and vocabulary. The stories were used in mimeographed form in classes at the preparatory school over several years before being printed as a book.

*the protagonist is a juggler.* His standard equipment for performing is six balls.

*Caldecott Medals.* This distinction is awarded annually by the American Library Association to honor the best US illustrated book for children.

*one of the Canterbury Tales.* Her version, entitled *Chanticleer and the Fox*, retells an episode from the medieval cycles of stories about Reynard the Fox. The artwork of *Chanticleer and the Fox* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1958) is by Cooney, but the text is not her work; it is adapted from the English in *The Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer: A New Modern English Prose Translation*, trans. R. M. Lumiansky (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1948). Whereas Katharine Lee Bates proceeded from a poetic form of *Our Lady's Tumbler* to her redesign of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* for children, Cooney followed the opposite trajectory. First, she adapted a tale by the grandest of medieval English poets, and then she tried her hand at the story of the juggler.

*A reviewer praised her.* Virginia Haviland, *Horn Book Magazine* 34 (December 1958): 463.

*her second picture book.* Cooney, *Little Juggler*.

*She professed.* Barbara Bader, "Barbara Cooney," *Horn Book Magazine* 76 (2000): 520–27, at 520: "The answer is that I love stories." Cooney deposited the drawings and illustrations for *The Little Juggler* in the Kerlan Collection of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

*the modern reception.* About it, she commented, "The legend has been written often and in many ways." The foreword of the 1982 edition ("A Word about This Book") is on p. 5 (counting backwards from the first numbered page).

*a preparatory expedition to France.* Barbara Cooney, "The Spirit Place," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 9.4 (Winter 1984–1985): 152–53.

*a simile lifted from the medieval French poem.* Paul Bretel, ed. and trans., *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, Traductions des classiques du Moyen Âge, vol. 64 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), 83, lines 159–60.

*a Spanish author.* Souvirón, *El juglarillo de la Virgen*.

*The style she chose.* Her own version was scratchboard, in one and four colors. This technique requires the artist to use sharp tools to cut into a thin layer of ink-coated clay. To achieve more than one color, multiple layers of the substance may be used: the depth of the etching determines the color of clay revealed.

*This tendency.* Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott, *How Picturebooks Work* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 62.

*she resolved to name her son.* Cooney, *Little Juggler*, 5: "I decided to name my next child, if it were a boy, after the little juggler."



*his mother fused*. In another sign of such hybridization, she concludes the story by recounting and illustrating how the Virgin Mary fanned the tumbler with a white napkin. In the French short story of the late nineteenth century, the character is a juggler, and the Madonna ministers to him with the edge of her blue mantle.



Fig. n.14 The Virgin and angels comfort the juggler. Illustration by Barbara Cooney, 1961. Published in Barbara Cooney, *The Little Juggler* (New York: Hastings House, 1961), 42–43. Image courtesy of the Barbara Cooney Porter Royalty Trust. All rights reserved.

*later authors*. Like her, Pleasant DeSpain, who published his refashioning of “The Little Juggler” more than four decades later, acknowledged that his first exposure to the tale came through hearing a radio broadcast. Yet he cited as his main sources printed texts by Ruth Sawyer and Cooney: DeSpain, *Tales of Holidays*, 80–81. In 1968, a female storyteller singled out “The Little Juggler” as her most loved story. Although also a devotee of Sawyer’s telling, she identified Cooney as having written the best among “all the many and varied versions” of “The Little Juggler” to which she had been exposed: Gwendella Thornley, “Storytelling is Fairy Gold,” *Elementary English* 45 (1968): 67–79, at 69. Later still, Bob Hartman gave credit to Cooney for motivating his iteration of the narrative, which is likewise entitled “The Little Juggler”: Hartman, *Lion Storyteller Christmas Book*, 114–16. Julie Walters capped her *Advent: A Family Celebration*, 124–26, with “The Little Juggler of Notre Dame,” based once again upon Cooney’s book. Walters presented Cooney’s own form of the miracle as having itself relied on “an old French legend known as ‘The Juggler of Notre Dame.’”

The reach of Cooney's reshaping has been stretched geographically, since it has been brought out with the texts translated into both Korean and Japanese but with the artwork unaltered. See Barbara Cooney, *Kkoma kogyesa: P'urangsu yet chonsol*, trans. Mi-rim Yi (Waegwan, Korea: Pundo Ch'ulp'ansa, 1987); *Chīsana kyokugei-shi Bānabī: Furansu ni tsutawaru ohanashi*, trans. Chieko Suemori (Tokyo, Japan: Suemori, 2006; Gendaikikakushitsu, 2014).

*Louis Untermeyer. The Firebringer and Other Great Stories: Fifty-Five Legends That Live Forever*, illus. Mae Katharine Gerhard (New York: M. Evans, 1968), 207–10 ("The Little Juggler ... and the Virgin"). On the artist, see "Mae Gerhard of Philadelphia," *American Artist* 22.9 (1958): 48.

*a booklet*. Hayes, *Wise Little Burro*, 41 ("This was one of the most popular stories with minstrels and troubadours in medieval France"); the text of the story, 27–32. Of the seven tales, five are set at Christmas, and three even put the name of the holiday in their titles. In his notes on the stories, the author refers to the 1978 picture book by his fellow American, the prolific and influential children's storybook creator Tomie dePaola. Even so, Hayes clarifies that the piece originated not in Italy (where the Italian-American dePaola placed it) but in France. The storyteller, who often focuses on the folklore of the American Southwest, also realizes that the account can be traced back to the Middle Ages. At the same time, he embroiders the popularity of the narrative then (at least as it can be gauged by the number of extant manuscripts).

*The Acrobat & the Angel*. Shannon, *Acrobat & the Angel*.

*the version of our story by Henri Pourrat*. In a note on the copyright page, Mark Shannon identifies the story as a French folktale from the twelfth or thirteenth century. He acknowledges that he took his little hero's name from the version of the tale in Henri Pourrat, *French Folktales from the Collection of Henri Pourrat*, selected by C. G. Bjurström, trans. and with an introduction by Royall Tyler (New York: Pantheon, 1989), 36–41.

*Gawain and the Green Knight*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994 (see Fig. n.13). The title proclaims how beholden they are to the fourteenth-century romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The medieval English alliterative poem has itself been thought by some to be indebted to folklore for various narrative elements: see Frederick B. Jonassen, "Elements from the Traditional Drama of England in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 17 (1986): 221–54; Claude Luttrell, "The Folk-Tale Element in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 105–27. Regardless, it begins memorably on Christmas day. In the background of one opening in the Shannons' version, two unnumbered pages depict an acrobat standing on one hand, a juggler juggling torches, and a musician running a bow across the strings of an odd instrument with two bellies and two sound holes.



Fig. n.15 Mark Shannon and David Shannon, *Gawain and the Green Knight* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994), 18–19. Image courtesy of David Shannon. All rights reserved.

*incorporate picture books and novels.* Nancy Polette and Joan Ebbesmeyer, *Literature Lures: Using Picture Books and Novels to Motivate Middle School Readers* (Greenwood Village, CO: Teacher Ideas Press, 2002).

*The plague and many other hardships.* Polette and Ebbesmeyer, *Literature Lures*, 25–26.

## European Children's Literature

*first into children's newspapers.* We saw that in 1923 Anatole France's text was reprinted in the illustrated periodical for youngsters, *Chanteclair* 18.176 (1923). In 1925, the story was likewise included in a Belgian illustrated review for young readers with a title that means "Youth" in French: *La Jeunesse* 5.34, August 20, 1925: 5–6. In this latter instance, the original author's name was omitted or suppressed. The explanation may lie in religious authority: in 1922, the entire oeuvre of this author had been registered on the Catholic Church's *Index of Prohibited Books*.

A French-language weekly newspaper intended for Catholic children aged 11 to 14 had a title that could be translated into English as "Brave Hearts"; see Thierry Crépin, "Cœurs vaillants," in *DLJ*, 202–3. It was founded in 1929 by the *Union des œuvres catholiques de France*, as part of a broader popular movement for Catholic youth known as *Cœurs vaillants*–*Âmes vaillantes*. In 1930, the periodical began distributing in France the print syndication of *The Adventures of Tintin*, created by the Belgian cartoonist Hergé. A featured story in one 1930 number (May 4) tells of none other than our *jongleur de Notre Dame*. The cover shows at the top a line of nine lancets above the title, and at the bottom the performer with an enormous halo juggling before the

Virgin. The story, with a different version of both text and art, was again displayed noticeably in no. 22, June 1, 1961: 22–23.



Fig. n.16 Front cover of *Cœurs vaillants*, no. 22 (May 4, 1930). Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France. All rights reserved.



Fig. n.17 *Cœurs vaillants*, no. 22 (June 1, 1961): 22.



Fig. n.18 *Cœurs vaillants*, no. 22 (June 1, 1961): 23.

*indistinct and historically inaccurate.* Florence Plet, “Le jongleur, portrait de l’artiste en clown,” *Études de lettres* (2001): 37–64.

*A children’s movie made in France.* *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*, color, 17–19 minutes and 27–30 minutes, France, 1965, produced by Stephano Lonati, Italo Bettiol, and Françoise Bettiol. The actions of the marionettes are supported by a voiceover, alongside music. The film was directed by Pierre Rémont. The French text, by Maurice Genevoix, was read by Jean Rochefort, and the music was by François de Roubaix. The US version was produced by Thomas Craven. The story is listed elsewhere as having been produced by the same team, with the addition of Rudi Briel, but at 26 minutes, Canada, 1980. The soundtrack has been put into other languages, such as English, Spanish, and Italian.

*The motif of the flower.* Gautier de Coinci has two miracles in which a flower blooms in the mouth of a dead man: *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame*, book 1, miracles 15 and 23.

*The Madonna’s Juggler.* In Italian, “Il giocoliere della Madonna” (1976). The artwork was created by this comic book artist from Italy, while the text was composed by his wife, Laura (née De Vescovi) Battaglia, for the monthly magazine *Messaggero dei ragazzi* (Children’s herald). The story has been reprinted often in collections bearing various titles, such as Dino Battaglia, *Uomini, donne e santi*, ed. Giovanni M. Colasanti (Padua, Italy: EMP, 1979); *Orient Express*, special 1, “Omaggio a Dino Battaglia” (Milan, Italy: L’Isola Trovata, 1983), 58–64; and Dino Battaglia, *Leggende* (Grumo Nevano, Italy: Grifo, 2004), 35–41.

*fairy tales.* An example of such a fairy tale-like story would be that of Aladdin, a Middle Eastern folk tale that has come to be allied with *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*. For brevity’s sake, the collection just mentioned is designated here as *Arabian Nights*.

*children’s books.* The volumes include the 1883 adventure novel *Treasure Island* (serialized, 1881–1882) by the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson, and the 1904 fantasy *Peter Pan* by the Scottish author J. M. Barrie.

*classic novels and short stories.* The classics encompass the 1851 *Moby Dick* by the American novelist Herman Melville, and stories by the American writer Edgar Allan Poe, the French short story writer Guy de Maupassant, and many others.

*the ring from her finger.* The motif is reminiscent—in reverse—of stories in which a man becomes betrothed to a statue of a woman by placing his ring upon her finger. See Theodore Ziolkowski, *Disenchanted Images: A Literary Iconology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 18–77.

*hagiographic yearbook.* Max Bolliger, *Die schönsten Heiligenlegenden*, illus. Ute Thönissen (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 2008).

*set at Noel*. For example, Max Bolliger, *Das Weihnachtswunder: Eine Geschichte*, designed by Ulli Wunsch (Eschbach, Germany: Verlag am Eschbach, 2014).

*The Way to the Stable*. Illustrated by Arcadio Lobato (Edinburgh, UK: Floris Books, 1999).

*the Christmas fool*. The story was published first in a volume entitled *Der Weihnachtsnarr: Drei Weihnachtstlegenden für Kinder und Erwachsene*, ed. Bruno Bischofberger (Zurich: Artemis, 1982). It has been reprinted often since then in German, by itself first as *Der Weihnachtsnarr: Ein Weihnachtsgeschichte*, illus. Gianni De Conno (Zurich: Bohem, 2004).

*the Italian translation*. *I tre doni del giullare*, trans. Donatella Mazza (Padua, Italy: Bohem, 2003).

*Jacob the Juggler*. Max Bolliger, *Jakob der Gaukler: Nach einer französischen Legende aus dem 13. Jahrhundert*, illus. Štěpán Zavřel (Zurich: Bohem, 1991). The story, including the frontispiece and title pages, comprises twenty-six unnumbered pages, all of them with color illustrations. The book has been translated into Italian, French, Dutch, Korean, and Japanese, as well as four dialects spoken in Friuli (including Bagnarola, Frisanco, and Montereale). See <https://web.archive.org/web/20180129021435/http://www.castellodibrazza.com:80/spazio-brazza/il-museo-artistico-stepan-zavrel/libri-illustrati-e-premi-vinti>. In all the translations, the illustrations have remained unmodified. The volume has been put belatedly into English: *Jacob the Juggler*, trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Trieste, Italy: Bohem, 2018), with an afterword by Ziolkowski.

*Jacob*. In German, the name is Jakob.

*once upon a time*. In German, *Es war einmal*.

*Štěpán Zavřel*. He emigrated to Italy in 1959. In 1968, he put down roots in the small village of Rugolo, located in the Veneto, and remained there until his death. In 1971, Zavřel cofounded the Zurich-based publishing house Bohem Press, which published the book.

*the style of woodblocks*. Here the medium is water-colored woodcut and silkscreen (a technique known equally as screen printing or serigraphy), as well as color linocut, which allows for both sharpness and intensity. The preparatory artwork for *Jacob the Juggler* stands out for its excellence in the illustrator's corpus. It makes good sense for one of the pieces to feature on the cover of the official guidebook to the museum of his art located in the Castello di Brazzà. See Marina Tonzig, *L'arte racconta: Guida al Museo artistico Štěpán Zavřel* (Brazzacco di Moruzzo, Italy: Leonardo, 2011), 44.

*Barnaby the Jongleur*. Elena Wullschleger Daldini, *Barnaba il giullare: Una leggenda medievale*, illus. Fiorenza Casanova (Bellinzona, Switzerland: Casagrande, 1996). A televised version of the same story achieved modest success under the title *Il giullare*

*di Nostra Signora* (a coproduction of SSR, A. Mondadori Publishers, and Polivideo). Produced with the help of Grytzko Mascioni and Mohammed Soudani, with original music by Andreas Pflüger, and directed by Manuela Crivelli, it was broadcast early on Christmas evening.

*Helena Olofsson*. Her name in full is now Helena Olofsson-Heshmat Pasand.

*The Little Jester*. Helena Olofsson, *Gycklarpojken* (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 2000). The Swedish original was followed a year later by a translation into Danish: *Gøglerdrengen*, trans. Vibecke Sandberg (Copenhagen, Denmark: Thorup, 2001). Two years later came an English version: *The Little Jester*, trans. Kjersti Board (Stockholm: R & S Books, 2002). The initial elements in the Swedish and Danish compound nouns are cognate with French *jongleur* and Latin *ioculator*.

*smiles*. The same motif appears in the final line of Vincent Arthur Yzermans, *Our Lady's Juggler* (St. Paul, MN: North Central, 1974), 16.

*Marian Atlas*. Wilhelm Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus, sive, De imaginibus Deiparae per orbem Christianum miraculosis*, 2 vols. (Ingolstadt, Germany: Typis Georgii Haenlini typographi academici, 1657).

*definitive edition of 1672*. Wilhelm Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus: Quo sanctae Dei genetricis Mariae imaginum miraculosarum origines duodecim historiarum centurijs explicantur* (Munich, Germany: Typis & impensis, Ioannis Iaecklini, 1672). On the project, see Naïma Ghermani, "Zwischen Wunder und Vernunft: Der 'Atlas Marianus' des Jesuiten Wilhelm Gumpfenberg," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 40.2 (2013): 227–55.

*a Madonna painted on the wall*. Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus* (1672), 441–43, no. 334.

*a basilica was built*. Anna Benvenuti, ed., *Santa Maria delle Carceri a Prato: Miracoli e devozione in un santuario toscano del Rinascimento* (Florence: Mandragora, 2005).

*contrast of repentance with laughing*. On the theme of repentance, see Jean Charles Payen, *Le motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale*, Publications romanes et françaises, vol. 98 (Geneva: Droz, 1967).

*history of the circus*. This paragraph follows scrupulously the explanation and interpretation provided in a letter sent in a personal communication from the author, dated August 8, 2017.

*Tatiana von Metternich*. *Der Gaukler der Jungfrau Maria: Eine Legende in Versen nach altenglischen Motiven erzählt und illustriert* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Modul, 1999). She was born a Russian princess, called Tatiana Hilarionovna Vassiltchikova. Her family

fled Russia after the 1919 Revolution. After living in France, England, and Lithuania, she settled in Germany. Later, she married a half-Austrian and half-Spanish aristocrat, Paul Metternich, great-grandson of the famous diplomat who steered the Congress of Vienna to its conclusion and thus shaped Europe after the Napoleonic wars. On her life, see Tatiana Metternich, Fürstin von Metternich-Winneburg, *Tatiana: Full Circle in a Shifting Europe*, 2nd ed. (London: Elliott & Thompson, 2004).

*Maria's Juggler*. Alberto Benevelli, *Il giocoliere di Maria*, illus. Manuela Marchesan (Cinisello Balsamo [Milan], Italy: Edizioni San Paolo, 2005).

*a high school textbook*. André Lagarde and Laurent Michard, *Moyen Âge: Les grands auteurs français du programme*, Collection textes et littérature, vol. 1 (Paris: Bordas, 1962), 108–10.

*The Notre Dame Tumbler*. In French, “Le Tombeur Notre-Dame.”

*Christian marvelous*. The established French phrase is *merveilleux chrétien*.

*a fiction by a writer*. Jacqueline Mirande, *Contes et légendes du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Nathan, 1995), 89–95. On this author, see Raymond Perrin, “Mirande, Jacqueline,” in *DLJ*, 665–66. The prose sports three illustrations by André Juillard, best known as a comic book artist. For close analysis of both the text and illustrations, see Bretel, “Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame, un miracle pour enfants,” 282–84.

*moral or edifying tales*. In French, *contes moraux ou édifiants*.

*The Divided Horse Blanket*. In French, “La housse partie.”

*A third volume*. Caecilia Pieri, *Il était une fois*. Contes merveilleux, vol. 1. (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 87–101, with the story proper on 90–94.

*fairy-tale world*. “Once upon a time there was a fantastic world divided between the forces of good and of evil. Inhabited by good fairies and inhumane giants, by talking animals and animate objects, it accorded frightful ordeals to noble heroes and beautiful princesses. To overcome them, they had to be wily and to muster all their mettle. In the end, they would perhaps attain happiness.”

*marvelous tales*. In French, *contes merveilleux*.

*wonder tales*. Somewhat paradoxically, the term “wonder tale” is associated above all with the Soviet-era folklorist Vladimir Propp.

*The narrative from the thirteenth century is labeled specifically*. Pieri, *Il était une fois*, 87, 89, 100.



## Global Children's Entertainment

*Robert Heinlein.* He selected it for inclusion in the collection by Spider Robinson, *The Best of All Possible Worlds* (New York: Ace Books, 1980).

*Spanish Fascist Party.* Emilio Pascual, "Sánchez-Silva y Marcelino," *Lazarillo: Revista de la Asociación de Amigos del libro infantil y juvenil* 1 (2000): 8–28.

*Marcelino Bread and Wine.* The Spanish *Marcelino pan y vino* was published in English as *Miracle of Marcelino*, trans. John Paul Debicki (Chicago: Scepter, 1963).

*the Franco regime in Spain.* Jessamy Harvey, "Death and the Adorable Orphan: *Marcelino pan y vino* (1954; 1991; 2000)," *Journal of Romance Studies* 4 (2004): 63–77.

*Spanish-language film.* Directed by the Hungarian Ladislao Vajda.

*lived on in various media.* Francisco Manuel Valiñas López and Roberto Cuadros Muñoz, "Marcelino pan y vino: Visiones literarias y cinematográficas de un milagro," in *El franciscanismo en Andalucía: Conferencias del VII Curso de Verano el arte franciscano en las catedrales andaluzas (Priego de Córdoba, 31 de julio al 5 de agosto de 2001). Conferencias del VIII Curso de Verano (Priego de Córdoba, 22 al 26 de Julio de 2002)*, ed. Manuel Peláez del Rosal (Cordoba, Spain: Obra Social y Cultural, 2003), 1: 229–42.

*a crust brought by a boy.* Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, 6 vols., 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–1958), 5: 149 (Q 172.1).

*offers bread to a statue.* The tale is classified (or "typed") as type 767 "Food for the Crucifix," in ATU, 1: 424. The most important medieval references are Guibert of Nogent, *De pignoribus sanctorum*, book 1, chap. 2, ed. PL 156 (1853): 607–80, at 617B–D; Walter of Compiègne, *De miraculis beatae virginis Mariae*, chap. 3, ed. PL 173: 1379–86, at 1383C–84A; Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, book 8, chap. 99 (Nürnberg: Anton Koberger, 1483), unpaginated. Additional citations may be found under this number in other indexes constructed on the ATU model, such as Ralph S. Boggs, *Index of Spanish Tales: Classified According to Antti Aarne's Types of the Folktale, Translated and Enlarged by Stith Thompson in FF Communications, No. 74*, FF Communications, vol. 90 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1930), 90 (Alfonso X, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise: A Translation of the "Cantigas de Santa Maria,"* trans. Kathleen Kulp-Hill, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, vol. 173 [Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000], 429–30, no. 353); Julio Camarena Laucirica and Maxime Chevalier, *Catálogo tipológico del cuento folklórico español*, vol. 3: *Cuentos religiosos* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 2003), 147–48; María Jesús Lacarra, *Cuento y novela corta en España* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1999), 253–54. The principal motif in the tale is Thompson, *Motif-Index*, 5: 149, Q 172.1.

For further information, 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: 474–77, 4: 464; Agata Sobczyk, *Les jongleurs de Dieu: Sainte simplicité dans la littérature religieuse de la France médiévale* (Łask, Poland: Oficyna Wydawnicza Leksem, 2012), 74, 240–43; Joseph Szövérfy, “A Medieval Story and Its Irish Version,” in *Studies in Folklore, in Honor of Distinguished Service Professor Stith Thompson*, ed. W. Edson Richmond, Indiana University Publications: Folklore Series, vol. 9 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), 55–65 (with many additional listings at n13); Gábor Tüskés and Éva Knapp, “Kruzifix gefüttert,” in *EdM*, 8: 517–21.

*Philippines and Japan*. The film has been remade repeatedly in an international Catholic context: a Philippine remake in 1979; an Italian-Spanish-French coproduction, *Marcellino*, in 1991; in animated form in a Spanish-Japanese-French collaboration, *Marcelino pan y vino*, in 2000; a Philippine television series, *May Bukas Pa*, in 2009; and a Mexican remake in 2010.

### Folktale or Faketale?

*it will some day be as familiar*. The tale came close to attaining such fame and permanency. In 1982, it was included in a set of four filmstrips, each with an accompanying sound cassette, that was published under the title *Christmastime Treasures* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1982). The four selections were “The Twelve Days of Christmas,” “The Gift of the Little Juggler,” “The Story of Silent Night,” and “The Little Match Girl.” They were targeted at children aged six to eight. The abstract reads: “A tale of making the best of what is available—in Barnaby’s case, talent and love. The story proves that the best gifts are given from the heart.”

*his intended*. Her maiden name was Elsie Moll. Their engagement ran from December 1908 to September 1909.

*Once upon a time*. Letter 139 to Elsie Moll, 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.

*other later versions*. Examples include Violet Moore Higgins’s English in 1917, Pieri’s French in 2004, and Max Bolliger’s German in 2007.

*Once-upon-a-Time Saints*. Ethel Marbach (Pochocki), *Once-upon-a-Time Saints: Faith-Tales for Children*, illus. Victoria Brzustowicz (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1977), 59–61, at 60. This version figured prominently in the whole collection, since

the illustration accompanying it was reproduced on the cover. The story apparently met a need in the market, because it was reprinted in 1996 and later, with different illustrations: see Ethel Pochocki, *Once upon a Time Saints*, illus. Tom Matt (Bathgate, ND: Bethlehem Books, 1996), 22–25.

*anthology of French folktales.* Ernst Tegethoff, *Französische Volksmärchen*, Die Märchen der Weltliteratur, vol. 21, 2 vols. (Jena, Germany: Eugen Diederichs, 1923), 1: 97–99, 310 (“Aus älteren Quellen”).

*its frequent inclusion.* Under the title “Der Tänzer unserer lieben Frau,” it is included in Ré Soupault, *Französische Märchen*, Märchen der Welt (Zurich: Buchclub Ex Libris, 1963), 29–32 (the medieval tale retold), 319 (a densely packed quarter page of notes—but be warned that the citations are both frustratingly imprecise and only loosely relevant). The tale also formed part of the repertoire in Karl Rauch, *Der Zaubervogel: Märchen aus Frankreich* (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1963). Once again under the title “Der Tänzer unserer lieben Frau,” it was among those stories from Rauch’s initial collection later subsumed within *Märchen aus Frankreich, den Niederlanden und der Schweiz*, ed. Karl Rauch, trans. Ursula Rauch, illus. Eva Raupp-Schliemann (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1976), 81–82 (text), 83 (illustration). This later volume was reprinted frequently under various imprints. In it, the translations are presented, without further specification, as being based on old copies (“alte Vorlagen”) in French. Karl Rauch was a publisher and writer, who in 1923 founded a press named after him.

*Suggested Readings.* Corinne Brown, *Suggested Readings for a Course in Children’s Literature* ([Cedar Falls, Iowa: Dannevirke Printing Co.], 1918), fourth unnumbered page of text.

*fresh names.* Thus, his jongleur is a Hungarian called Georges, who is the proud possessor of an Assyrian horse known polysyllabically as Téglathphalazar (or Phalazar, for short). The entertainer enters an unspecified monastery after the death of his little nephew, Frédéric.

*the sweetest blessings will come from her.* “As for you, my dear children, imitate worthy Georges in offering the Holy Virgin the best of your actions. Do you study? Study your best in honor of the Virgin. Are you learning a trade? Learn it then the best possible to bring pleasure to the Holy Virgin. Still being very small, do you just run errands? Do them the most perfectly you can, always in honor of the Holy Virgin. And so, likewise, in all your actions, that it may be always to pay homage to the Holy Virgin. Even in your games and recreations, play well in her honor. If you do well then in everything, as perfectly as possible in this objective, you will see, the Holy Virgin will load you up with her sweetest blessings” (pp. 107–8).

*The Way of the Storyteller.* New York: Viking Press, 1942.

*In a 1966 version.* Marcella Marie Holloway, *The Little Juggler: A Miracle Play with Music*, music by John Joseph Bezdek (London: Samuel French, 1966). The quotation appears on p. 3.

*Sawyer's own proximate source.* In fact, she went so far as to declare: "Those who have ever seen a production of the *Jongleur of Notre Dame* will never forget it. I have tried to put something of the loveliness of the opera into this arrangement for storytelling." Sawyer, *Way of the Storyteller*, 232.

*substantiably oral in origin.* Sawyer, *Way of the Storyteller*, 232–33: "Here is an old story, told by French mothers to their children for many centuries." The tale is also mentioned in Marie L. Shedlock, *The Art of the Story-Teller*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1952), 141, and is included in John Harrell and Mary Harrell, *A Storyteller's Treasury* (Berkeley, CA: Harrell, 1977).

*Sawyer's hold on subsequent practitioners.* Apart from her own direct influence, a family factor enters the picture. Her daughter married Robert McCloskey, an American writer and illustrator of children's books. If only his mother-in-law had supplied the right sort of encouragement, his most famous creation might have been a legendarily duckling-less *Make Way for Jugglerlings*.

*The Little Juggler by Katherine Evans.* Katherine Evans, author and illustrator, *The Little Juggler*, Christian Child's Stories (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce, 1960). Fourteen years earlier, the same children's book illustrator had illustrated Charles Tazewell's *The Littlest Angel*, a Christmas story that we have seen relates in its general conception to *The Juggler of Our Lady*.

*The Treasury of Tales.* Henri Pourrat, *Le trésor des contes*, 13 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1948–1962).

*The Fairies.* The French text is to be found in what has become the standard edition, Henri Pourrat, *Les fées*, ed. Claire Pourrat (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 233–39. Edited by his daughter, the volume contains reproductions of many woodcuts from early modern printed books, often (as with "Le Péquelé") only loosely related to the contents of the tales they accompany.

*Le Péquelé.* The name is not attested as a substantive in the dialect of the Auvergne. To be more precise, it is not recorded in either Pierre Bonnaud, *Nouveau dictionnaire général français-auvergnat* (Nonette, France: Créer, 1999), or Karl-Heinz Reichel, *Grand dictionnaire général auvergnat-français* (Nonette, France: Créer, 2005). It would appear to be a pejorative related to a French noun *péquenaud* (also spelled *péquenot* or *pecnot*), denoting a simple or brutish peasant.

*Gaspard of the Mountains.* In French, *Gaspard des montagnes*.

*in 1931.* Henri Pourrat, *Les vaillances, farces et gentilleses de Gaspard des montagnes: La tour du Levant, ou, Quand Gaspard mit fin à l'histoire, roman* (Paris: A. Michel, 1931). For this, this man of letters was honored by a French postage stamp in 1987.

*He has even been described.* Gisèle Sapiro, *La guerre des écrivains, 1940–1953* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), trans. Vanessa Doriott Anderson and Dorrit Cohn, *The French Writers' War, 1940–1953* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 275 (for the quotation), 495.

*His method.* Anne Collinot, "Pourrat, Henri," in *DLJ*, 764.

*revitalizing the French spirit.* Jack Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 96–108, at 99; 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 135–151, at 139.

*a childlike stage.* Elizabeth Emery, "Le Berceau de la littérature française: Medieval Literature as Storytelling in Nineteenth-Century France," in *Telling the Story in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Evelyn Birge Vitz*, ed. Kathryn A. Duys et al., Gallica, vol. 36 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 219–35.

### Tomie dePaola's *The Clown of God*

*The Clown of God: An Old Story.* A DVD (Scholastic, Weston Woods Studios, 2002) entitled *The Tomie dePaola Library* comprises three stories, namely, "Charlie Needs a New Cloak," "Strega Nona," and "The Clown of God" (runtime: ten minutes). "The Clown of God" has also been included as the first of two bonuses on a DVD entitled *The Night Before Christmas ... and More Christmas Stories* (Scholastic, Weston Woods).

*first adapted for the stage.* Theatrical adaptation by Thomas W. Olson, with music composed and orchestrated by Steven M. Ryberg, and with visual design consultation by dePaola himself. This reworking was presented in a very successful production by the Children's Theater Company in Minneapolis; this regional theater featured the play in the 1980–1981 season. DePaola's version was animated in 1982 by Weston Woods Studios in a very simple ten-minute form, intended for children from kindergarten through third grade.

*Strega Nona.* Her name derives from Italian words for "witch" and "grandmother," though the second is normally spelled *nonna*.

*Early in his career.* Barbara Elleman, *Tomie dePaola: His Art & His Stories* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999), 59.

*in art school.* DePaola was at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

*the instructor.* Her name was Jill Johnston.

*In the late 1960s and early 1970s.* DePaola happened to be in San Francisco.

*Because of her distinction.* She had prominence for having won a Caldecott Medal for “most distinguished American picture book for children” in 1959.

*dePaola himself won recognition for one of his books.* His *Strega Nona* was cited as a Caldecott Honor Book.

*a list drawn up in the 1920s.* This is likely to be Brown, *Suggested Readings*, fourth unnumbered page of text (from 1918 rather than the 1920s).

*a one-sentence-long compression of the story.* The reference must have been to the Latin exemplum.

*the piece by Marguerite Yourcenar.* The tale is the first of ten in Marguerite Yourcenar, *Oriental Tales*, trans. Alberto Manguel (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985), 3–20. The French original, *Nouvelles orientales*, was published in 1938. Master Wang’s cognomen Fo tags him as an aspiring Buddha, since *Fo* means “the Buddha.”

*an old juggler named Giovanni.* DePaola returned to a protagonist (this one a little boy) who clowns in *Jingle, the Christmas Clown*.

*the good saint has often been styled.* DePaola wrote first *Francis: The Poor Man of Assisi* (New York: Holiday House, 1982), and later *The Song of Francis* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2009).

*As a junior in college.* Tomie dePaola, *Christmas Remembered* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2006), 42–63.

*an apparition of the Virgin.* New York: Holiday House, 1980. This was the only such appearance of Mary to receive Church approval between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century.

*Mary: The Mother of Jesus.* New York: Holiday House, 1995.

*resembles medieval representations.* Elleman, *Tomie dePaola*, 62–63.

*the marketing power of late December.* Beyond the titles that have been enumerated already, his 1983 tale about the magi and his 1984 one about the first Noel hold true to this pattern: see *The Story of the Three Wise Kings* (New York: Putnam, 1983) and *The First Christmas* (New York: Putnam Juvenile, 1984). The list could be lengthened considerably by taking subsequent books by him into account. Also relevant is his nostalgic presentation of Christmases in his own life, from 1937 on, in *Christmas Remembered*. Most of the illustrations in the last-mentioned volume are of Noel settings without human beings in them, but in one vignette, dePaola presents black-robed monks standing in the chapel of the Weston Priory in Vermont, before the crèche figures he fashioned of the Virgin and Child during his sojourn there.

*either the Virgin herself or an image of her.* For the distinction, see Margaret Read MacDonald, *The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children* (Detroit, MI: Neal-Schuman, 1982), 366 (cf. V92 and V92.01.1\*).

*an oral folktale of Italian origin.* See Rock and Balit, *Saintly Tales and Legends*, 29–34: “The Little Juggler: A Folk Tale.” Hartman, *Lion Storyteller Christmas Book*, 114–16, does not claim the story to be Italian in origin, but despite acknowledging direct indebtedness to Barbara Cooney’s version, he includes it in a section that he identifies at the beginning (p. 75) as “Christmas tales and legends ... handed down from generation to generation.”

*Old English motifs.* Metternich, *Der Gaukler der Jungfrau Maria*, title page and 5.

*the dance of the sixes.* In Spanish, *el baile de los seises*. Despite the name, there are never now so few as six, but actually ten little performers who kick up their heels.

*this ritual.* The fullest accounts of the practice are probably Simón de la Rosa y López, *Los seises de la Catedral de Sevilla* (Seville, Spain: F. de P. Díaz, 1904); Juan Moraleda y Esteban, *Los seises de la catedral de Toledo* (Toledo, Spain: A. Garijo, 1911); Pierre Jobit, *Le ballet des six (el baile de los seises)*, Collection hispanique, vol. 5 (Paris: Tambourinaire, 1954). The most succinct introduction in English can be found in J. B. Trend, “The Dance of the Seises at Seville,” *Music & Letters* 2.1 (January 1921): 10–28. For more recent reviews of the evidence, see E. Louis Backman, *Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine*, trans. E. Classen (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), 77–85; Lynn Matluck Brooks, “Los Seises in the Golden Age of Seville,” *Dance Chronicle* 5 (1982): 121–55.

*Cantigas de Santa María.* Manuel Serrano y Ortega, *Glorias sevillanas: Noticia histórica de la devoción y culto que la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Sevilla ha profesado a la inmaculada concepción de la Virgen María desde los tiempos de la antigüedad hasta la presente época* (Seville, Spain: E. Rasco, 1893), 732.

*Henri Pourrat.* For the English of a sampling from the *Trésor des contes*, see Pourrat, *French Folktales*, 36–41.

*another American author.* Sue Stauffacher, *The Angel and Other Stories*, illus. Leonid Gore (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 7–13. Stauffacher has a note (p. 74) to indicate “the tales collected here have ancestors that date back to the 14th and 15th centuries.”

*packaged as adolescent fiction.* For a consideration of how the medieval past is treated in such texts, see Rebecca Barnhouse, *Recasting the Past: The Middle Ages in Young Adult Literature* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2000).





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## Abbreviations

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- DLJ *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.
- EdM *Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*. 15 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977–2015.
- PL *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series latina, ed. J.-P. Migne. Paris, 1844–1880, <https://archive.org/details/patrologiaecursu00hammuoft>

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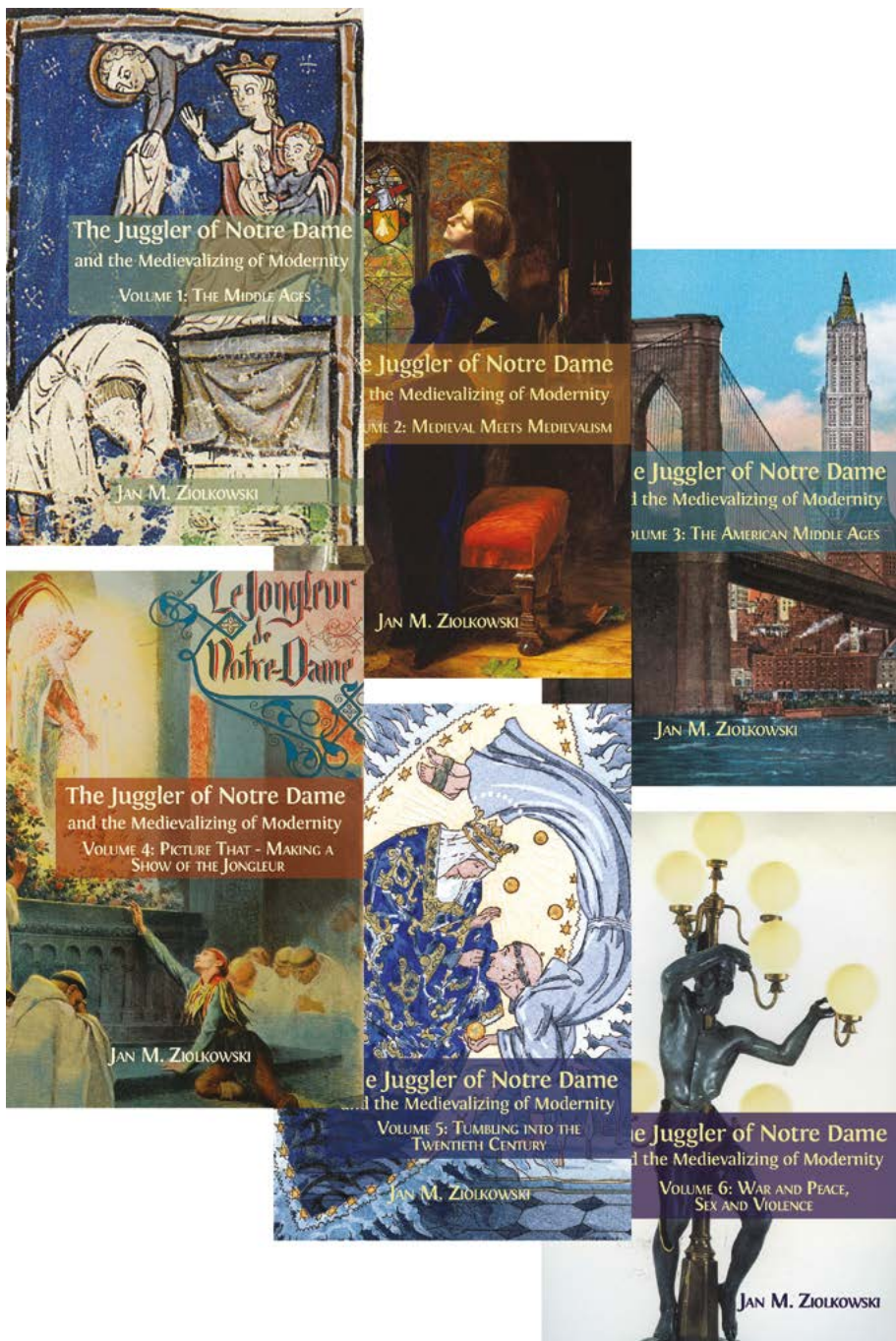
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