

# The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity<sup>1</sup>

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Focusing on such cardinal constituents of the human condition as tale and interpretation offers a golden opportunity for representing my branch of learning, which sometimes is still quaintly styled arts and letters. Many terms have been devised to designate our species: *homo sapiens*, *homo faber*, *homo ludens*, *homo ridens*, *homo loquens*, and *homo narrans*. Alongside them, *homo interpretans* could be put forward as a strong nominee. At work and play, we human beings constantly recount and interpret. Understanding these activities holds increasing urgency, with the rapid and radical transformation of outlooks on story and history, fact and fiction, and text and image.

Traditionally, the humanities impart materials and methods for reaching and refining insights about such matters. Equally, they generate pleasure and facilitate progress from knowledge to wisdom. As a group, humanists have preferred particulars over percentages, generally the domain of the social sciences. On that principle, let us assemble a pattern from specifics. Fifteen years ago, I became enthralled by an anonymous poem from the 1230s.<sup>2</sup> In a medieval French dialect, these 342 rhyming couplets tell of a professional acrobat or dancer who wearies of wayfaring, gives up worldly possessions, and enters a monastery. Once having joined, he despairs: his peers comprehend Latin, can worship properly, and have other skills he lacks. The erstwhile entertainer judges himself a failure, not certain even when to stay silent or to speak. His solution to the crisis? In the crypt, he happens upon a likeness of the Virgin Mary. Whenever the brethren enact the liturgy in the choir above, he dances as he once did outside. His

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1 Read 26 April 2019.

2 Paul Bretel, ed., *Le Joueur de Notre-Dame*, Traductions des classiques du Moyen Âge (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), provides a modern French translation, Old French text, and commentary. An English translation can be found in Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Reading the Juggler of Notre Dame: Medieval Miracles and Modern Remakings* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, forthcoming 2022). Under titles such as *Our Lady's Tumbler* and *Of the Tumbler of Our Lady*, earlier versions can be located readily in both hard copy and online forms, from the late 19th- and early 20th-century translators Isabel Butler, Philip Henry Wicksteed, Alice Kemp-Welch, George Cormack, and Eugene Mason.



FIGURE 1. The jongleur before the Virgin and Child. An angelic hand delivers a towel. Miniature, 13th century. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Arsenal 3516, fol. 127r. Monochrome facsimile, published in Alice Kemp-Welch, trans., *Of the Tumbler of Our Lady and Other Miracles* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1908), frontispiece.

confreres remark on his absence, and two of them tail him. After spying him strip down to his underwear and execute his floor exercise before the Madonna, they run off and denounce him. Their abbot accompanies them below, where he too is shocked by the blasphemy—until a miracle transpires: Notre Dame, through the sculpture depicting her, soothes the tumbler by wiping away his sweat and fanning him.

The piece of poetry survives in five manuscripts from the Middle Ages. In one of them, a single miniature illustrating this jewel appears at the foot of a folio side—as a so-called *bas-de-page* (Figure 1). The painter alters the climax freely. He adds an angel, who extends a towel-like textile downward from a heavenly cloud; he portrays the gymnast as fully clothed; and he supplies a forebear of the fiddle on a baize cloth at the foot of the altar. Besides the French, a brief Latin exemplum of unknown authorship is extant from the 1270s (Figure 2). Like the illumination, but verbal rather than visual, this later thumbnail has distinct features. Whereas the vernacular emphasizes repentance, the

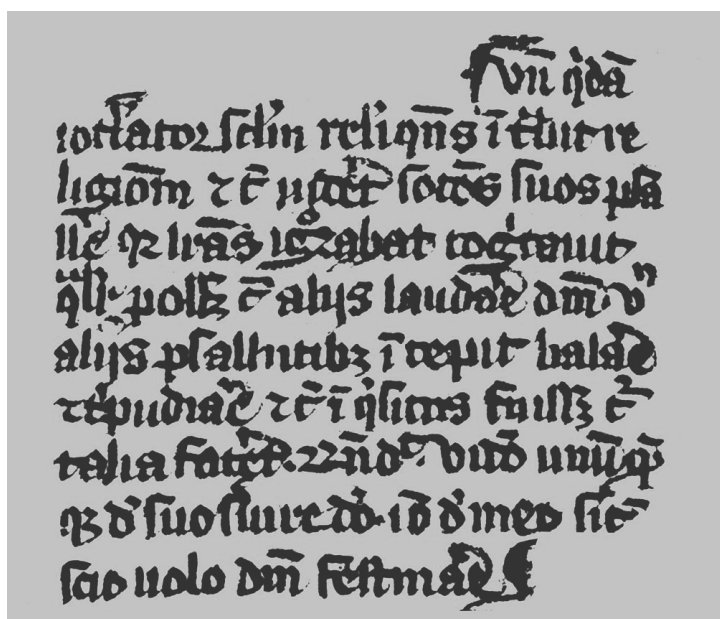


FIGURE 2. Excerpt from *Liber exemplorum secundum ordinem alphabeti*, chap. 49, no. 28, “Gaudium.” London, British Library, MS Additional 18351. © British Library Board. All rights reserved.

prose version in the learned tongue is subsumed under the heading of joy. More revolutionarily, it suppresses Madonna for God.

While studying this story in its evolution from the 13th into the 21st century, I rebelled against stale dictates about a book’s ideal length. While Frank Sinatra has never been my role model either vocationally or avocationally, his “I did it my way” resonated as I conducted the search-and-destroy mission of reading scholarship and writing a monograph. My top priority was to explore not only the 13th-century poem, but also its manifold reinventions after being unearthed in the late 19th century. Next came lodging the reception within the framework of medieval revivalism. The third step involved setting analysis of the literature and its context in dialog with images. The final product comprises six tomes, totaling close to 2,500 pages and 1,200 figures.<sup>3</sup>

The research demanded publications tied too closely to popular culture for research libraries to have collected them, but too antiquated and exotic for public ones to have bought or retained. Surveying my *de facto* archive, I resolved to mount a temporary museum exhibition

3 Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2018).

in the institution that I have directed since 2007 in Georgetown.<sup>4</sup> Realizing that Dumbarton Oaks possessed extraordinary assets for the undertaking, I set out to achieve the most modest objectives: to connect past and present, Europe and United States, humanities and arts, high and low culture, Middle Ages and medievalism. The exhibition afforded a novel opportunity to tell tales and to attain grander audiences. Toward that end, I coordinated translations and reprints along with story readings, conversations with authors, music concerts, and more.<sup>5</sup>

But we should begin with revivalism, or what could be identified as the medievalizing of the United States. The iconic *American Gothic* by Grant Wood (1930) (Figure 3) makes a perfect start. The clothing of its primly banal couple echoes the pointed window above, itself preposterously incongruous against the otherwise altogether different façade of the plain and unpretentious frame house. Why did this fenestration penetrate to the prairie? For one thing, the kind of architecture it embodied conferred a means of controlling the unfamiliar and threatening. Think of the disruption that a person born in 1840 would experience before dying in 1920. In technology, telegraphy spread rapidly from 1844 through the completion of the first transcontinental telegraph line in 1861, photography took root shortly after the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839, motion photography took off from the late 19th century, acoustic recording began in 1877, and radio arrived not too much later. In science, X-rays were discovered in 1895, radioactivity a year later, and the electron in 1897. In transportation, the transcontinental railroad was constructed between 1863 and 1869, the Wright brothers made four brief flights at Kitty Hawk in an airplane in 1903, and the first Ford automobiles rolled off a moving assembly line in 1913. These leaps coincided with the rise of corporations,

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4 The essence of the installation can be gleaned from the paperback catalog, *Juggling the Middle Ages: An Exhibition, October 15, 2019, through February 28, 2020*, written and edited by Jan M. Ziolkowski and Alona Bach (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018), exhibition catalog.

5 Three translations came from my hand: Max Bolliger, *Jacob the Juggler, Based on a French Legend from the Thirteenth Century*, illus. Štěpán Zavřel (1991), trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Trieste, Italy: Bohem Press Italia, 2018); Anatole France, *The Juggler of Our Lady*, written out, illuminated, and historiated by Malatesta (1906), trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018); and Anatole France, *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, illus. Maurice Lalau (1924), trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018). Reprints appeared of both English and Spanish children's books: Barbara Cooney, *The Little Juggler, Adapted from an Old French Legend and Illustrated* (1961; reprint, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018); and José María Souvirón, *El juglar cillo de la Virgen*, illus. Roser Bru (1924; reprint, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018). The publishing side of the extravaganza was capped by *Juggling the Middle Ages: A Medieval Coloring Book* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2018).



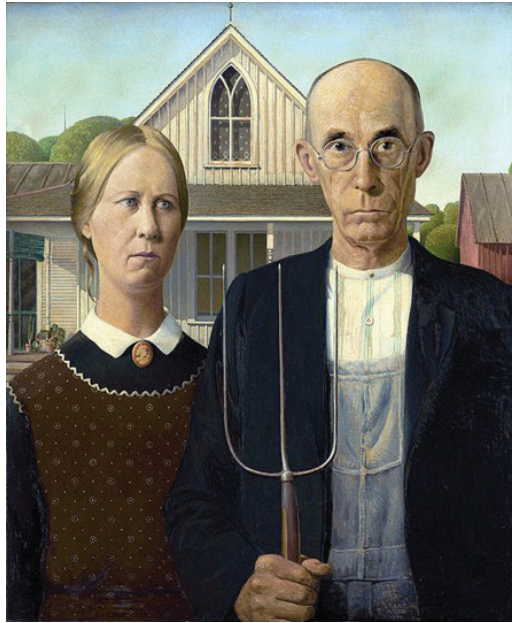


FIGURE 3. Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930. Oil on beaverboard, 78 × 65.3 cm. Chicago, IL, Art Institute of Chicago, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grant\\_Wood\\_-\\_American\\_Gothic\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grant_Wood_-_American_Gothic_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg).

concentration of wealth, mechanization of agriculture, surge of immigration, and rush of urbanization. The changes ushered in new political movements (labor unionism springs to mind) and ideologies: Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) published *The Communist Manifesto*, on what they termed “scientific socialism,” in 1848.

Against a backdrop that makes the past 75 years seem downright tranquil, people worldwide resorted to the Middle Ages conjured up by Romanesque and Gothic for its imagined serenity. In English, Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) and Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) reigned supreme as novelist and poet, respectively; in French, Victor Hugo (1802–1885) earned acclaim for his novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. In the United States, the same nostalgia for the faith of innocent and not-so-innocent olden times shows in mass consumption: even beer brewers made cathedrals selling points in promoting their wares (Figure 4). Mass-manufactured items, from pickles and pepper sauce to ink, were bottled in cathedral glass (Figure 5). Cathedral-style cases for bracket clocks (Figure 6) were then appropriated for radios (Figure 7), the home entertainment centers of the 1930s.

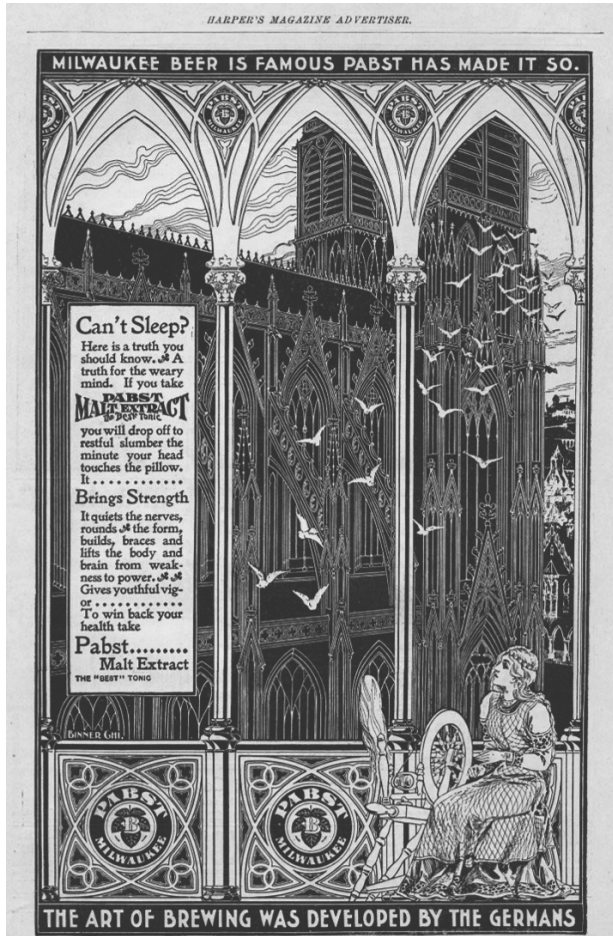


FIGURE 4. "Can't Sleep? Pabst Milwaukee," *Harper's Magazine Advertiser* 92 (1896): 94.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States flexed its newfound wealth and might on the world stage. With all the reserves at its disposal, it sought out and modified its cultural precedents. Its decisions can be readily detected in the nation's capital. At first glance, Washington resembles a Greco-Roman theme park. Take the Capitol building, substantially finished by 1863; then the Lincoln Memorial, dedicated in 1922; and finally, the Jefferson Memorial, put into service in 1943. These choices carry conviction: as America modeled its government and judiciary on Athens and Rome, it adopted architectures associated with them. But the DC theme park also exudes an unmistakable medieval character.



FIGURE 5. Cathedral bottles, clear blue, for pickles, late 19th century; and cobalt blue, Carter's ink, early 20th century. Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018.



FIGURE 6 (Left). Gothic mahogany bracket clock, manufactured by Waterbury Clock Company, 1914. Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018.



FIGURE 7 (Right). Cathedral radio, R102a, manufactured by Stewart-Warner, 1932. Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018.

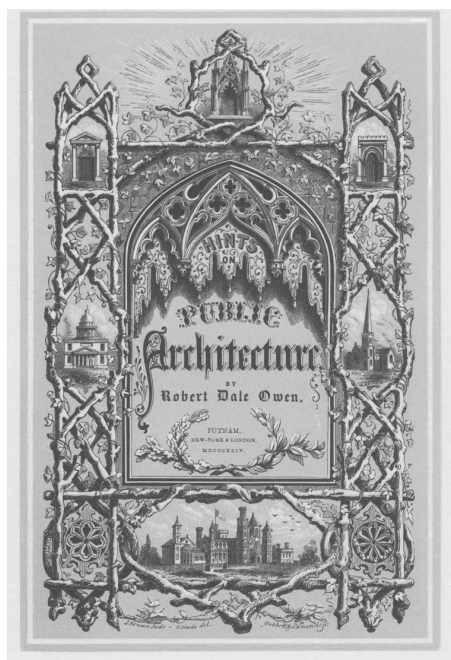


FIGURE 8. Illustrated title page of Robert Dale Owen, *Hints on Public Architecture* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849). Designed by James Renwick Jr., 1849.

The 19th century witnessed successive architectural revivals as the country went through the dress-up of a protracted costume party, trying on the construction styles of bygone eras and far-off places. Robert Dale Owen (1801–1877), the Scottish-born congressman who propelled the conception of the Smithsonian Institution Building (“the Castle”) and oversaw the selection of its designer, favored the Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> The frontispiece of the prospectus he disseminated (Figure 8) made clear his perception of Gothic as inherently natural and by implication—here is a surprise—intrinsically suited to the New World. The naturalist John Muir (1838–1914), also Scottish by birth, plausibly described the continent’s physical resources of immense geological formations (Figure 9) and gigantic trees (Figure 10) as cathedrals.<sup>7</sup>

6 Robert Dale Owen, *Hints on Public Architecture, Containing, among Other Illustrations, Views and Plans of the Smithsonian Institution: Together with an Appendix Relative to Building Materials. Prepared, on Behalf of the Building Committee of the Smithsonian Institution* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1849). For detailed discussion, see Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange, Buildings, Landscapes, and Societies*, vol. 2 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 243–58.

7 John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), 66–67; and John Muir, *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, ed. Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938), 230.





FIGURE 9. Postcard of Cathedral Spires, Garden of the Gods (Colorado Springs, CO).



FIGURE 10. Postcard of Cathedral Group, Big Tree Grove (Santa Cruz, CA).



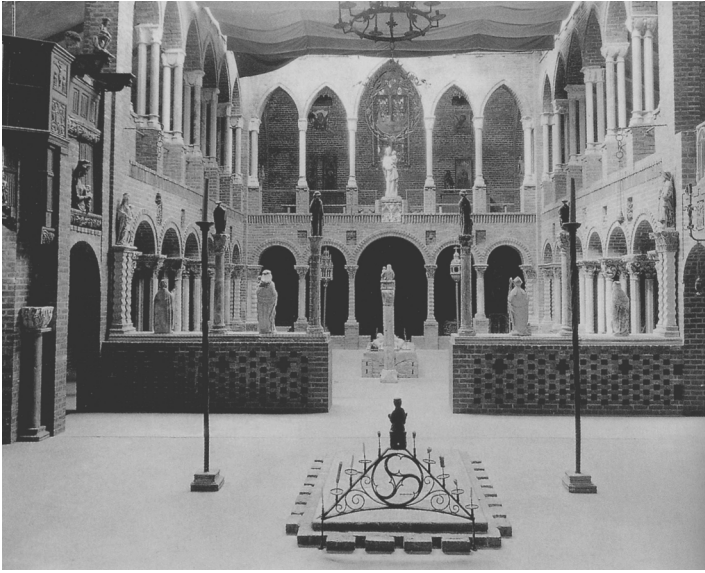


FIGURE 11. Interior view of Barnard's Cloisters, with Virgin and Child overlooking the central courtyard. Photograph, ca. 1925. Photographer unknown.

Beyond the Gothic of nature, the United States commanded two further forms. Original edifices were despoiled in Europe and transported to America in whole or part. The most considerable salvage operation along these lines resulted ultimately in The Cloisters, the medieval branch of the Metropolitan Museum. Figure 11 captures its first manifestation in Manhattan, while still in the hands of the popular sculptor and private entrepreneur George Grey Barnard (1863–1938), before being uprooted again to its present location.<sup>8</sup> America built another flavor of Gothic from scratch, which leads back to the Smithsonian. The architect James Renwick, Jr. (1818–1895) submitted two medievaesque designs. One was picked for the 1855 museum (Figure 12); the other served for Trinity Episcopal (Figure 13). Although the church that jutted upward from 1849 at the northeast corner of Third and C Streets NW fell to the wrecking ball in 1936,<sup>9</sup> Washington, DC, is still bracketed by medieval houses of prayer, two of its three highest inhabitable buildings. To the west, the National Cathedral stands above Georgetown. To the northeast, the visitors' eyes light upon the National Shrine.

<sup>8</sup> For context, see Elizabeth Bradford Smith, "George Grey Barnard: Artist/Collector/Dealer/Curator," in *Medieval Art in America: Patterns of Collecting, 1800–1940*, ed. Elizabeth Bradford Smith (University Park: Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University, 1996), 133–42.

<sup>9</sup> James M. Goode, *Capital Loss: A Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 233–35.



FIGURE 12. The Smithsonian Institution ("The Castle"), Washington, DC. Photograph, ca. 1860–1880. Photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection.



FIGURE 13. James Renwick Jr.'s Trinity Episcopal Church, Washington, DC. Photograph by George N. Barnard, 1862. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection.

For most of its life, the third of the three tallest buildings has been referred to as the Old Post Office Building, completed in 1899 (Figure 14). Although towering only by DC's low-rise standards, it belongs loosely to the category of skyscraper Gothic. Structures of this sort are sprinkled across the country. The manner held outsized significance as builders pivoted from the horizontal layout of classical basilicas and temples to the vertical thrust of burgeoning cities. A postcard of the Brooklyn Bridge with the Woolworth Building in the background (Figure 15) renders Manhattan medieval and brings home the suitability of Gothic to early 20th-century U.S. modernism. Before leaving Washington, peek at the consummately Victorian Gothic Healy Hall that looms over those approaching northwestern DC from the Virginia riverbank (Figure 16). This hulk, erected between 1877 and 1879, is the central monument of Georgetown University.

Gothic was a recommended idiom for religion, museums, education, and tall edifices. These kinds of constructions are easily dismissed as faux. But bear in mind that tourists typically mistake the modern for medieval across the Atlantic, too. Notre-Dame de Paris was largely finished by 1260. Yet its stone gargoyles (Figure 17), which define the city as much as the wrought-iron Eiffel Tower that was completed in 1889, date not from the Middle Ages but from the mid-19th-century renovation overseen by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879). Across the Channel we find such fixtures as the Palace of Westminster, the foundation stone for which was not laid until 1840, and Tower Bridge, not finalized until 1894.

Now let us tack back to the story, which endured through the late Middle Ages but then went dormant. Reformers would not have abided a narrative about monks and Marianism, especially since iconoclasm was the order of the day: first pan back for a full view of the oil painting of King Edward VI (1537–1553), England's first monarch raised as a Protestant, with its subversive treatment of Pope Julius III (1487–1555) (Figure 18), and then zoom in on the backdrop in the upper right corner, where an effigy of Mary is being dismantled (Figure 19). Meanwhile, Counter-Reformers could not accept a layman holier than clergy, who sidestepped the hierarchy and made a beeline to the Virgin, not using Latin and, in fact, not even employing language at all. And so, the tale trail runs cold. The story of the story resumes after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. A Romance philologist in present-day Austria chanced upon a codex of the poem.<sup>10</sup> By good luck, his discovery turned out eventually to be the best of the five identified

10 The article containing the edition was published under the name Wilhelm Foerster, but the scholar in question was known otherwise as Wendelin Foerster (1844–1915): "Del tumbeor Nostre-Dame," *Romania* 2 (1873): 315–25.



FIGURE 14 (Left). Postcard depicting the former Post Office Building, Washington, DC (Baltimore: I. & M. Ottenheimer, date unknown).



FIGURE 15 (Right). Postcard depicting the Brooklyn Bridge and Woolworth Building City (New York: H. W. Haberman, ca. 1928).

manuscripts. He submitted his edition to a brand-new journal, co-founded by France's preeminent Romance philologist. This Gaston Paris (1839–1903) talked up the tale wherever he could.<sup>11</sup>

Through Paris, the *trouvée* drew the notice of the elite. A succinct story by Anatole France (1844–1924), first printed in 1890, converted the jongleur into his cousin, the juggler, and attached a name to the narrative, *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*.<sup>12</sup> His retelling, incorporated into a bestselling collection of his short fiction in 1892,<sup>13</sup> enjoyed an enormous vogue, especially in France and the Anglo-American world. It accorded well with Gothic revivalism. After the humiliating defeat by the Germans, France had to remake itself. It underwent wrenching

11 Most influentially in Gaston Paris, *La littérature française au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Hachette, 1888; 2nd rev. ed. 1890), 208.

12 Anatole France, "Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame: Conte pour le mois de mai," *Le Gaulois*, 3rd series, no. 2811 (1890), first page.

13 Anatole France, *L'Étui de nacre* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1892), 93–96. The French title means *The Little Box of Mother-of-Pearl* in English.





FIGURE 16. Healy Hall, Georgetown University (O St. NW & 37th St.) (New York: Artvue Postcard Company, date unknown).

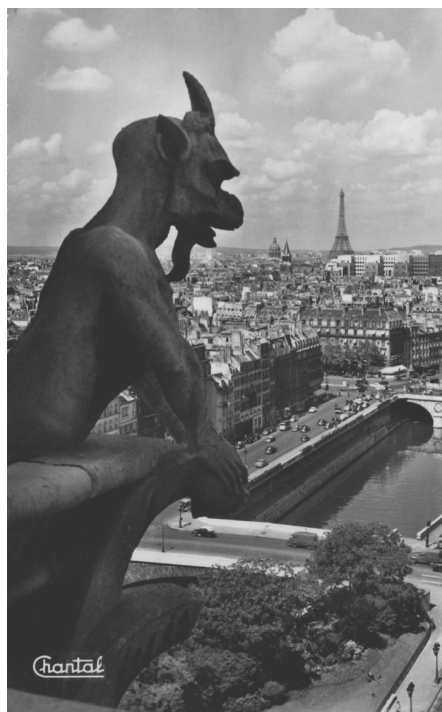


FIGURE 17. Postcard depicting a Notre-Dame gargoyle and the Eiffel Tower (Paris: Chantal, date unknown).





FIGURE 18. Unknown artist, *King Edward VI and the Pope*, ca. 1575. Oil on panel, 62.2 × 90.8 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery. © National Portrait Gallery, London. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 19. Inset from the top-right corner of *King Edward VI and the Pope*. © National Portrait Gallery, London. All rights reserved.

social debates in the Belle Époque. The medieval period furnished a safe space. French culture of the Middle Ages contributed loser heroes, foremost among whom were the legendary male lead from *The Song of Roland* and the real female saint Joan of Arc. The juggler became a minor divinity in this pantheon. To confirm the last point, we need look no further than one publishing house. In 1906, the French artist who called himself Malatesta (Henri Malateste, 1870–1920) profusely calligraphed and illustrated France's short story in the guise of a pseudomedieval manuscript retailed to connoisseurs.<sup>14</sup> Not two decades later, Maurice Lalau (1881–1961) redid the mini-masterpiece for the same publishing house in 1924, but this time in the full swing of art deco (Figure 20).<sup>15</sup>

Anatole France's few pages might have halted the ascent of *The Juggler of Our Lady*. Few other authors would have dared to redo the little gem after he won the Nobel Prize in 1921. They might have been further discouraged after his oeuvre earned an extra fillip of notoriety from being inscribed on the Catholic Church's Index of Forbidden Books in 1922.<sup>16</sup> But creative agents in other media did not labor under this anxiety of influence. Jules Massenet (1842–1912), the most commercially successful French composer of his day, concocted an opera on the subject of the story: his *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* premiered in 1902.<sup>17</sup> After opening in Monte Carlo, his smash hit soon had runs not only throughout Europe but also in North Africa and the Americas.

In the United States, Massenet's musical drama soared courtesy of both Oscar Hammerstein I (1847–1919) and the soprano around whom the impresario formed the Manhattan Opera House to compete with the Metropolitan Opera. This diva was Mary Garden (1874–1967), born in Scotland, bred in the United States, and trained in France (Figure 21).<sup>18</sup> After she took Paris by storm, Hammerstein prevailed upon her to try her fortune in the Big Apple. Though forgotten today in comparison with other celebrities like French actor Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923) or the American and French dancer Isadora Duncan (1878–1927), Garden did more than anyone for the

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

15 Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, illus. Maurice Lalau (Paris: Librairie des amateurs, A. & F. Ferroud, 1924).

16 *Index librorum prohibitorum* (Rome: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1922).

17 On his life, see Demar Irvine, *Massenet: A Chronicle of His Life and Times* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1994). On his career, see Christophe Ghristi and Mathias Auclair, *La belle époque de Massenet* (Montreuil, France: Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2011).

18 The standard biography is Michael T. R. B. Turnbull, *Mary Garden* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1997).

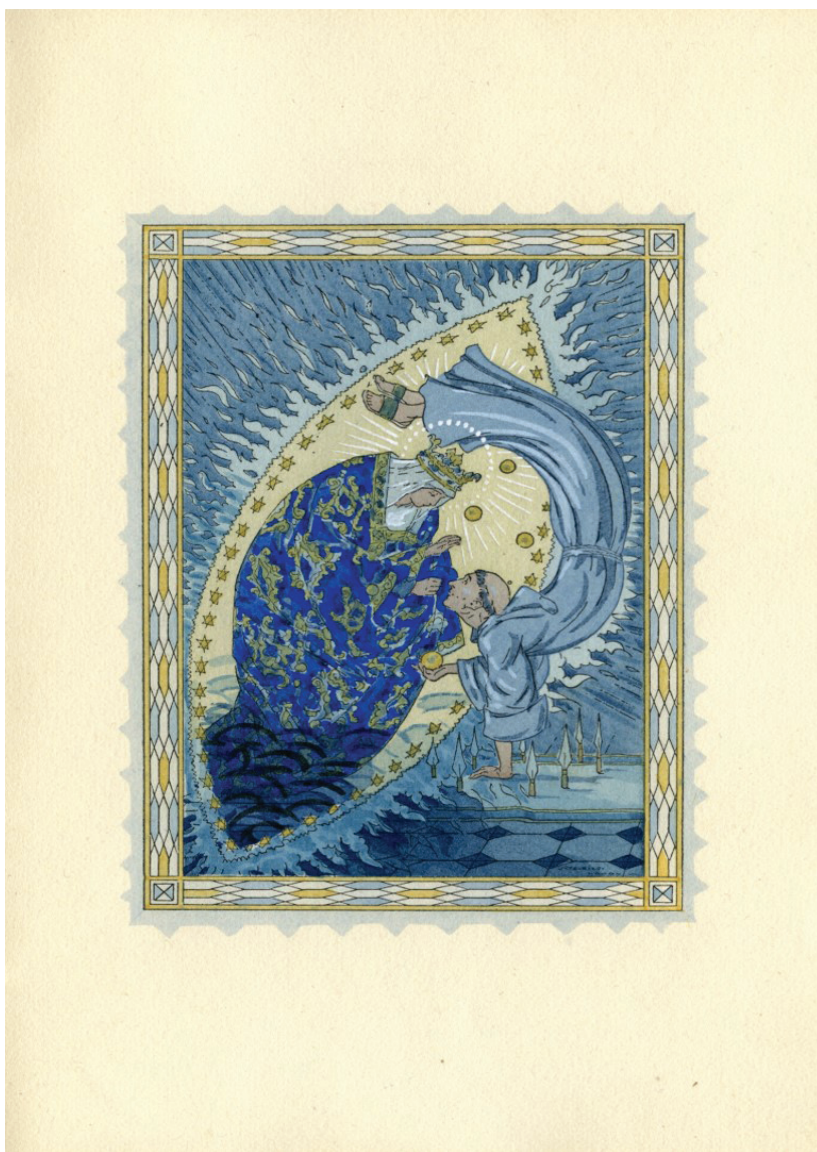


FIGURE 20. The Virgin descends to bless the juggler. Illustration by Maurice Lalau, 1924. Published in Anatole France, *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame* (Paris: A. & F. Ferroud, 1924), 23.





FIGURE 21. Mary Garden. Photograph by Herman Mishkin, before 1905.

story's subsequent success in the United States. The result impressed spectators hugely. Performances and adaptations passed into radio and audio recordings (Figure 22), dance (Figure 23), and movies. In the early 1950s, the bandleader Fred Waring (1900–1984) included it annually as Christmas fare in his TV variety show.<sup>19</sup> In 1960, the Hollywood star Tony Curtis (1925–2010) produced his own take on it in a made-for-television movie (Figure 24).<sup>20</sup> Of the films that have been made, the best is a short released in late 1957 by the otherwise undistinguished animation studio Terrytoons.<sup>21</sup> It animates, with voice-over by the English actor Boris Karloff (1887–1969), a book by

19 *Fred Waring's America* ran on the CBS network from 1949 to 1954. The program offered performances of "The Juggler" in at least four years (1950, 1951, 1952, and 1953). Kinescope recordings of these segments, lasting roughly 15 minutes each, are held by the Fred Waring's America Collection, The Pennsylvania State University in University Park, Pennsylvania.

20 *The Young Juggler*, produced by William Frye, written by Joseph Stefano, and directed by Ted Post, had Tony Curtis playing the juggler. For further information, see Tony Curtis and Barry Paris, *Tony Curtis: The Autobiography* (New York: Morrow, 1993), 178, 341.

21 "The Juggler of Our Lady," 9 minutes, released in December 1957 by Terrytoons in Technicolor, produced by Gene Deitch, directed by Al Kouzel, based on the book by R. O. Blechman, with original music by Philip A. Scheib.

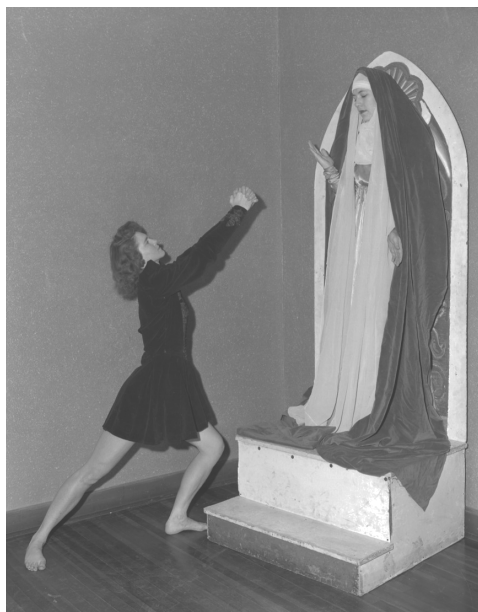
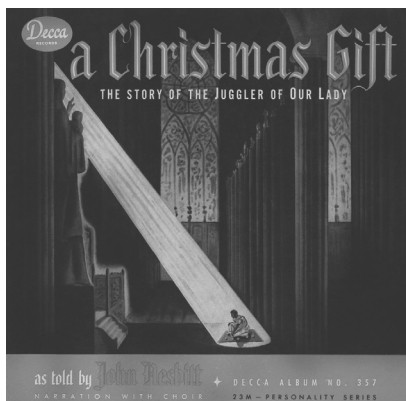


FIGURE 22 (Left). John Nesbitt, *A Christmas Gift: The Story of the Juggler of Our Lady*, *Narration with Choir* (Decca Records, no. 357, 23M Personality Series, 1943).

FIGURE 23 (Right). An Orchesis dancer performs in “The Juggler of Notre Dame” at the University of Oklahoma. Photograph, 1947. Photographer unknown. Norman, OK. Image courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, OUPS 27144. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 24. Tony Curtis contemplates the Madonna in *The Young Juggler*, dir. Ted Post (1960). Photograph, 1960. Photographer unknown.



American artist R. O. Blechman (1930–) often considered the first graphic novel (Figure 25).<sup>22</sup>

Two big questions have dogged the story since the 20th century: is it intrinsically religious or not, and is it best targeted at young readers or not? The tale has commonly become quarantined in children's literature. An American woman initiated the practice in 1917 with *The Little Juggler*, which made the protagonist a young boy (Figure 26).<sup>23</sup> Over the past century, the fiction has sometimes been reduced to triviality, as in a pop-up from 1991.<sup>24</sup> More often, it has elicited loving creativity.

The same year in which the three-dimensional book appeared, a Swiss German author teamed up beautifully with a Czech-Italian illustrator (Figure 27).<sup>25</sup> To return to the United States, two-time Caldecott Medalist Barbara Cooney (1917–2000) brought out her iteration in 1961 (Figure 28). Tomie dePaola (1934–2020), a rock star among the knee-high set, wanted the juggler as his inaugural volume but, because of Cooney's crowding of the market, had to wait until 1978.<sup>26</sup> American brothers, author Mark Shannon (1958–) and illustrator David Shannon (1959–), embraced the theme in 1999 (Figure 29),<sup>27</sup> and Swedish author Helena Olofsson (1957–) followed suit in 2000 (Figure 30).<sup>28</sup>

Not for youths but for the young at heart is a miniature crafted in 2003. Its creator fashioned a unique homage when her son, American actor Timothy Hutton (1960–), married a French children's book artist, Aurore Giscard D'Estaing (1966–). Adapting the dos-à-dos format, she used the same cycle of illustrations twice, in one direction for an English account of the story in the voice of an omniscient narrator and in the other for a French first-person recital of events by the very youthful juggler himself (Figure 31).

22 R. O. Blechman, *The Juggler of Our Lady: A Medieval Legend*, 1st ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953). The subtitle has varied in reprints: *The Juggler of Our Lady: The Classic Christmas Story*, 3rd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2015).

23 Violet Moore Higgins, *The Little Juggler and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman, 1917), 7–34.

24 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).

25 Max Bolliger, *Jakob der Gaukler: Nach einer französischen Legende aus dem 13. Jahrhundert*, illus. Štěpán Zavřel (Zurich: Bohem, 1991).

26 Tomie dePaola, *The Clown of God* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1978).

27 Mark Shannon, *The Acrobat and the Angel*, illus. David Shannon (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999).

28 Helena Olofsson, *The Little Jester*, trans. Kjersti Board (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren Bokförlag, 2002), 15.



FIGURE 25. On left: R. O. Blechman, *The Juggler of Our Lady: The Classic Christmas Story*, 3rd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2015); on right: R. O. Blechman, *The Juggler of Our Lady: A Medieval Legend*, 1st ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953). Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018.

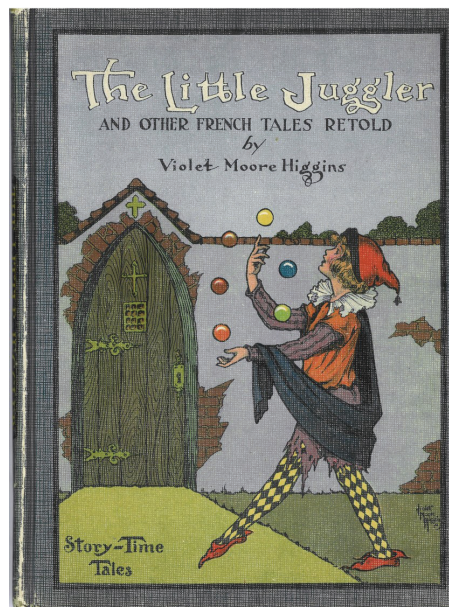


FIGURE 26. Violet Moore Higgins, *The Little Juggler, and Other French Tales Retold* (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Co., 1917).

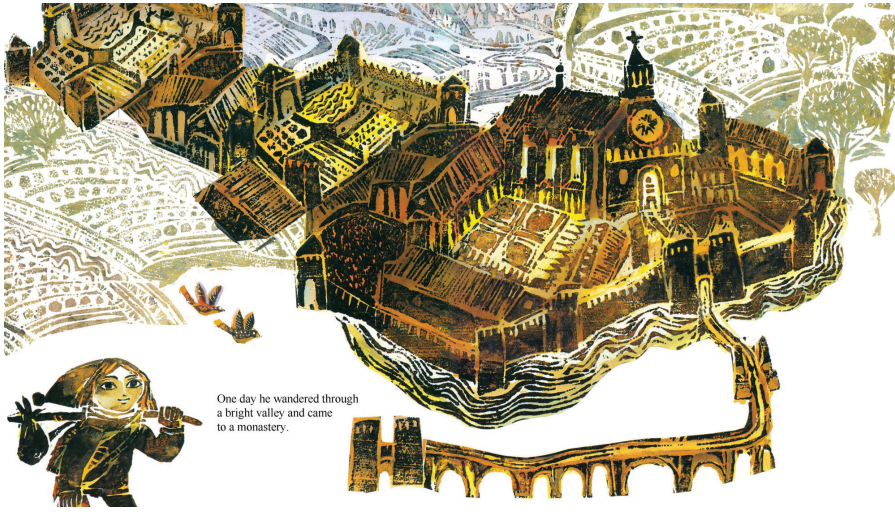


FIGURE 27. The juggler wanders through a valley. Illustration by Štěpán Zavřel, 1991. Published in Max Bolliger, *Jakob der Gaukler* (Zurich: Bohem, 1991), as now trans. Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Jacob the Juggler* (Trieste, Italy: Bohem, 2018), 8–9. © Heirs of Štěpán Zavřel. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 28 (Left). Barbara Cooney, *The Little Juggler* (New York: Hastings House, 1961). Image courtesy of Barbara Cooney Porter Royalty Trust. All rights reserved.

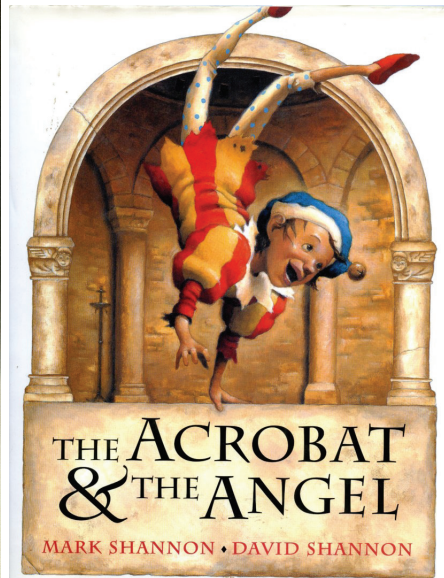


FIGURE 29 (Right). Front cover of Mark Shannon, *The Acrobat and the Angel*, illus. David Shannon (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1999). Image courtesy of David Shannon. All rights reserved.



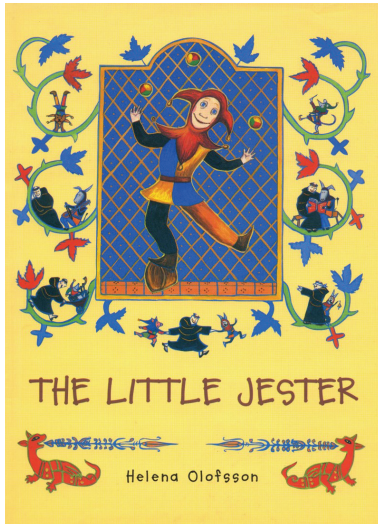


FIGURE 30 (Left). Front cover of Helena Olofsson, *The Little Jester*, trans. Kjersti Board (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren Bokförlag, 2002). Image courtesy of Helena Olofsson. All rights reserved.

FIGURE 31 (Right). Maryline Poole Adams, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame / The Juggler of Notre Dame* (Berkeley, CA: Poole Press, 2003). Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018.

The story's high-culture apogee was a ballad by W. H. Auden (1907–1973), which was illustrated by Edward Gorey (1925–2000) when it was first printed on the cover of the *New York Review of Books* Christmas issue in 1969. Four years later, the poem and artwork were reissued as a broadside for the poet's memorial service in the Gothic Revival splendor of St. John the Divine, the Episcopal Cathedral in Manhattan (Figure 32). In representational art, the motif was parodied by a French-American sculptor Arman (1928–2005). The statue, cast in 1994, belongs to a genre he labeled “transsculpture” (Figure 33). The most recent art is a magnificent panel of stained glass completed in June 2018 (Figure 34).

Cooney confessed that she “decided to name [her] next child, if it were a boy, after the little juggler.”<sup>29</sup> So she did, as I verified by searching online. Her son, Barnaby Porter (1946–), was very nice about what could have seemed a creepy inquiry from a cyberstalker. His main response was a heartfelt interrogative: “What does the story mean?” Even after years of investigation I cannot answer for sure. I do know that, despite its simplicity, it probes deep matters, such as anxiety of

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Cooney, *The Little Juggler: Adapted from an Old French Legend and Illustrated* (New York: Hastings House, 1961, repr. 1970, 1982), 5.



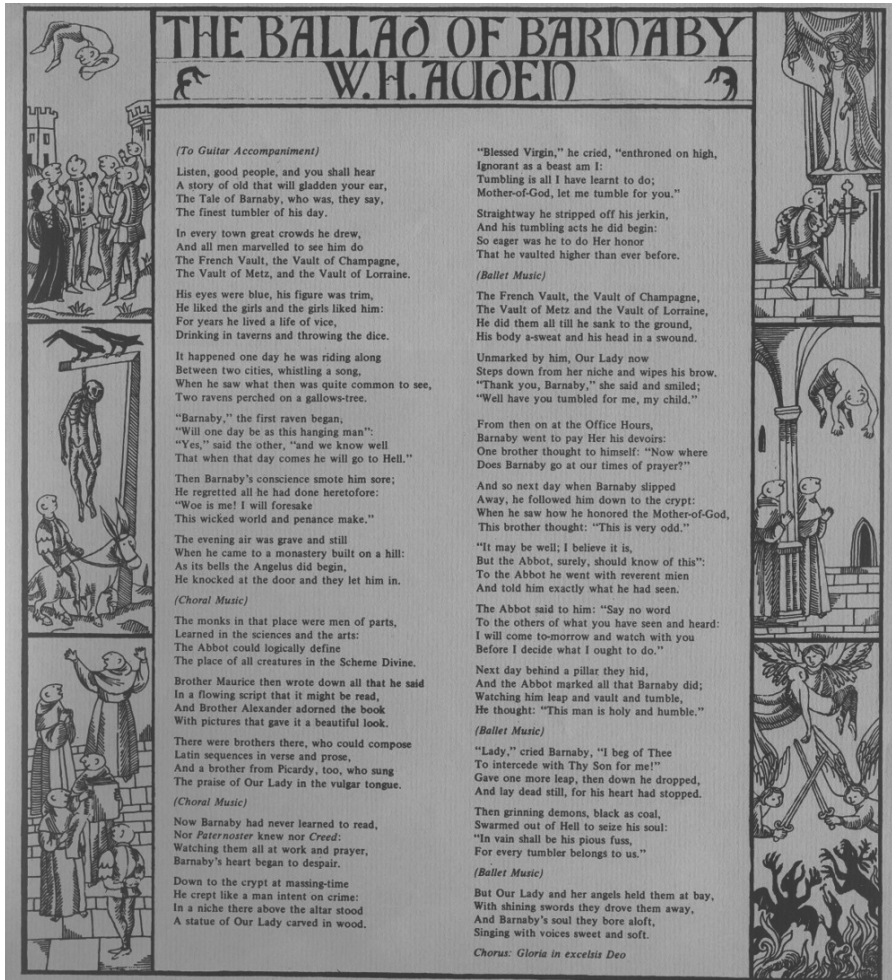


FIGURE 32. W. H. Auden, “The Ballad of Barnaby,” illustrated by Edward Gorey, 1972. “The Ballad of Barnaby” is copyright by the Estate of W. H. Auden; reprinted by permission.

gift-giving, insecurity of would-be artists about artistry, nature of prayer, and danger of hasty judgment. One additional factor risks sounding corny but here goes: the atmosphere nowadays is frequently tagged as toxic. Who would argue? In this type of environment, the tale can serve as an antidote. The intellectual and cultural engagement of learning from the past and participating in compare-and-contrast interpretation is inherently good. To revert to my opening suggestion, human beings are, by instinct, tellers and interpreters. In that spirit, you the reader may rightly claim the mantle of *homo interpretans*: what do you make of the juggler?



FIGURE 33. Arman, *Jongleur de Notre Dame*, 1994, cast bronze statue with light fixtures of brass and glass, 231 x 90 x 82 cm. New York, Arman Studio. Photograph by François Fernandez. Image courtesy of Arman Studio, New York. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 34. Stained-glass window created by Jeffrey Miller, Sarah Navasse, and Jeremy Bourdois for Atelier Miller, Chartrettes, France, 2018. Photograph by Courtney Randolph, 2018.