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ANATOLE FRANCE, *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*

In French, illuminated manuscript on parchment

France, 1925-1926.

Illuminated by Robert Lanz (1896-1965), with the *carte de visite* of the illuminator (see below)

26 bifolios, parchment, folded right over left, and functioning as 13 loose folios, unbound, numbered in pencil lower right corner, 1 to 13, most likely complete, written on 19 lines in a dark black ink in a (neo)Gothic script, some letters in burnished gold leaf, rubrics in red, with many 1- and 2-line initials in colors and goldleaf, numerous line endings, 14 large illuminated initials, 10 extensive border decorations, all in a late Gothic French (Parisian) style, full illuminated title page with border decoration and three large illuminated initials, 3 FULL-PAGE PAGE MINIATURES, loose and housed in a beautiful bluish-black silk chemise and rigid paper case. Dimensions 200 x 170 mm.

Anatole France's charming reinterpretation of an anonymous French medieval poem is here written and illuminated by an extremely gifted, though little known, Franco-Swiss artist, Robert Lanz. Lanz's remarkably expressionistic full-page illuminations in an Art Nouveau style accompany his skillful calligraphy and gothicizing illumination on creamy parchment bifolios. Long believed to be lost, the rediscovery of this manuscript presents a tour-de-force of neo-Gothic art and adds an important example of Lanz's art.

PROVENANCE

1. Transcribed and illuminated by Robert Lanz for Louis Barthou of the Académie française, completed on 2 January 1928, one of two copies illuminated by the same painter, the other for Jacques André. Accompanied by an illuminated greeting card of Robert Lanz depicting a thirteenth-century stained glass window from Notre-Dame in Paris, and his address 25, rue Myrha in Paris. 18^{ar}. The location of this manuscript was unknown to Ziolkowski in his monumental multi-volume study on the transmission of the *Jongleur du Notre-Dame*.
2. European private collection.

TEXT

f. 1. Half-title, in red, "Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame/ par Anatole France"; conjoint leaf blank;

f. 2, Title, in red, "Anatole France"/ in black, "Le/ Jongleur/ de/ Notre-/Dame";

ff. 3-13, incipit, "Au temps du roy Louis il y avait en france un pauvre jongleur ... Amen, repondirent les anciens baisant la terre," [Followed in red ink; right justified], *Explicit du jongleur de Notre-Dame*

f. 13v, [in red], "Ce Conte a ete transcript et enlumine par Robert Lanz pour Louis Barthou de l'Academie Francaise/ 1925-1926/ et n'a d'autre replique qu'un exemplaire identique transcript

et enlumine pour M. Jacques Andre/ Rob. Lanz" (This story was transcribed and illuminated by Robert Lanz for Louis Barthou of the Academie Francise in 1925-1926, and there is only one other identical exemplar transcribed and illuminated for Monsieur Jacques Andre. Robert Lanz).

Carte de visite: [Folded, 165 x 130 mm.; front cover], incipit, "Notez l'adresse de ..."; [on the reverse, a stave of musical notes followed by], incipit, "pauvre je suis et dans/ le travaux de ma jeunesse/ ... parole/ de saint/ jean de/ la croix/ Hymne de la.";

Enclosing a card addressed: "Robert Lanz adresse à Monsieur Louis Barthou à l'occasion de la nouvelle année ses meilleurs vouux pour 1028 et l'expression de ses sentiment les plus distinguées, 2 Janvier 1928."

The "Jongleur de Notre-Dame" (or the Juggler of Our Lady) is the name of a short story by Anatole France, based on an early thirteenth-century poem in Old French. France's charming story features Barnaby, an acrobatic juggler, who performs with gold balls and knives of the streets of towns in northern France. He "was a good man, God-fearing, and devoted to the Virgin Mary." One day, when rain prevented him from juggling, as he was wandering about looking for a dry place to sleep for the night, he met a monk. Walking along in conversation, the monk convinced Barnaby to join him in the monastery. As a monk, Barnaby passed his days in the monastery surrounded by fellow monks talented in many arts: several wrote and illuminated manuscripts illustrated with images of the Virgin; one carved statues of Our Lady; others wrote poems and hymns honoring Mary. "Alas," Barnaby bemoaned, he had no such talents to serve the Virgin Mary: "I am a coarse and artless man." The days went by, and Barnaby was mysteriously absent from life in the monastery, disappearing into the chapel of the Virgin. Finally, the monks peered into through cracks in the door of the chapel, and they discovered him juggling for hours on end. Horrified by this sacrilege, they prepared to toss him out of the chapel, when they saw the Virgin Mary herself descend from the altar to wipe the sweat from his brow. The story ends, "blessed are the simple, for they shall see God." (for the translation, see France, 2018; and Ziolkowski, 2022, pp. 239-242).

Anatole France's short story has its origin in an anonymous French poem of 342 rhyming couplets or 684 octosyllable lines composed in Picard French around 1240 and known as "Our Lady's Tumbler" (*Del Tumbleor Notre Dame*). Although sometimes incorrectly attributed to Guillaume de Coigny (or Coinci), the author remains unknown, and a similarly anonymous Latin version of it exists from forty years later written in two lines of prose as a medieval exemplum. (For a translation of the French version, see Ziolkowski, 2022, pp. 13ff.). The poem survives in five French manuscripts. Modern interest in the poem dates from the nineteenth century, when a French philologist, Gaston Paris, first restudied it in 1884, and it was through him (not the medieval manuscripts) that Anatole France discovered the poem and composed his own version of it.

Born François-Anatole Thibault (1844-1924), Anatole France was a poet, journalist, novelist, member of the Académie Française and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature "in recognition of his brilliant literary achievements, characterized as they are by a nobility of style, a profound human sympathy, grace, and a true Gallic temperament." He became famous with the publication of his first novel, *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* (1881), whose protagonist was a medievalist student, and he returned often to medieval themes, setting the beginning of the *Ile*

des pingvins (1908) in the Middle Ages, and writing a biography of Joan of Arc (1908). In 1922 his works were placed on the Catholic "List of Prohibited Books," which he regarded as a "distinction." He would have died just before Robert Lanz undertook his project on the *Jongleur de Notre-Dame*.

Anatole France's *Jongleur de Notre-Dame* came out first as a short story in 1890 in a newspaper and again in 1892 in a fiction collection. There is a facsimile of the illustrated version produced with chromolithography in 1905, printed by F. Ferroud and illustrated by Malatesta (see Literature). Other versions were published through the first decades of the twentieth century, and these have been studied by Ziolkowski in his extensive five-volume work and his exhibition catalogue (2018, 2022). The story resonated with the French interest in the Middle Ages at the turn of the century, and a three-act opera by Jules Massenet of the story was first performed at the Opera Garnier in 1902. On France and medievalism, see also Hindman et al., 2004.

ILLUSTRATION

f. 2v, The juggler in a green body suit lies on his back juggling gold balls with his feet, on the street, before buildings swaying on the right, and the Virgin in the sky, her arms raised;

f. 6, Dressed in a green body suit, the juggler walks with a monk, dressed in a black habit, during a storm, leaves falling from the trees, and lightening in golden zig zags in the sky, a decorated post before them in the landscape and the trunk of a tree behind;

f. 9, Border illumination, depicting the Virgin and child (probably the statue that the monk-sculptor carves of Our Lady);

f. 11, Naked from the waist up, wearing green leggings, the juggler sits sprawled on the floor, his six golden balls in the air; the Virgin towers over him on the right, as do three candles; on the left, monks peer into the chapel behind a column, the lancet stained glass windows behind are curved, and an angel with long golden hair and green arms reaches out to the juggler.

Text and illustration are by the Swiss artist Robert Lanz (b. Paris, 1 July 1896; d. Geneva, 24 December 1965), a painter, illuminator, and illustrator. Born into a family of artists, his father Alfred Lanz an illuminator and his grandfather Edouard Kinkelin, a Swiss painter, Lanz converted to Catholicism and lived mostly in Paris. Between 1937 and 1953, he took refuge at an abbey just north of Paris, Saint Sulpice de Favieres, and it was there that he painted many of his works. Among his works are *La Vierge et l'Enfant dans l'art français* (1933-1934), *La Vierge, notre mediatrix* (1938), *L'Eucharistie dans l'art*, (1946), and Rimbaud, *Les Illuminations* and *Le Bateau ivre*, neither of which were published. Exhibited in 1954 at the BnF, Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations* is now in the Swiss National Library.

In 2018, Ziolkowski reported that Lanz wrote and illustrated two twenty-four page exemplars of *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame*, but that both were considered lost until a single leaf turned up (framed) and was exhibited in Tours in 2014 (see Bertaud du Chazaud, 2014). This leaf is the third of the series (identical to f. 11 above), illustrating the culmination of the story (Ziolkowski, 2018, vol. 5, p. 260, fig. 1.51). The detail of the naked juggler derives not from France's rendering but instead from the original poem where the juggler takes off his cloak and undresses before juggling in front of Our Lady. So too the angels swooping down come from the medieval

poem. As observed by Ziolkowki, Lanz's extraordinarily creative art fits into the style of Art Nouveau, bearing some resemblance to Viennese variants as seen in *Ver Sacrum*, as well as an awareness of Surrealism. It is likely that the second volume, the volume dedicated to Jacques Andre, was broken up because the single miniature (on a bifolio of text, no longer extant) was discovered as an isolated example.

LITERATURE

Bertaud du Chazaud, Guy. "Saint Léonard, par Robert Lanz," in Bertaud et al., *Sculptures en Touraine: Promenade autour de cent oeuvres. Catalogue de l'exposition, une exposition du Conseil général d'Indre-et-Loire*, ed. idem, Alain Ferdière, Jean-Marie Laruzac et al., Tours, Conseil général d'Indre-et-Loire, 2014, pp. 116–117.

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France, Anatole. *The Juggler of our Lady written out, illuminated, and historiated by Malatesta*, tr. Jan M. Ziolkowski, Washington, DC, 2018.

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Ziolkowski, Jan M. *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity*, 6 vols., Cambridge, UK, 2018.

Ziolkowski, Jan and Alona Bach. *Juggling the Middle Ages: October 16, 2018-February 28, 2019: Dumbarton Oaks* (exhibition catalogue), Washington, DC., 2018.

Ziolkowski, Jan M. *Reading the Juggler of Notre Dame, Medieval Miracles and Modern Remakings*, Cambridge, UK, 2022

ONLINE RESOURCES

Fonds Robert Lanz

<https://www.helveticaarchives.ch/detail.aspx?id=165090>

Un homme insolite (video of Robert Lanz explaining his illuminations of Rimbaud)

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