

YALE UNIVERSITY
BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY
MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE MANUSCRIPTS

MS 841

Eastern France, s. XIV/XV

Miracle plays of Saint Nicholas, in French

Restricted material. May not be seen without the permission of the appropriate curator.

1. ff. 1r-4r Sequitur ludus sancti Nycholay. Et primo locando gentes debent tubicinare mimi. Sequitur electio sancti Nycholay. Loquitur primo angelus: Sillete, sillencium habete. Loquitur primus canonicus Petrus: Oy, segnour, grant deconfort, / Ly evesques de Mirraz et mors, / Porvyer nos fat atre segnour. / Sy en regardyn vyer loz mellour ... Respondet 3us episcopus Nycholao: Se syreys certes sy vos playt, / Quar Dyus lo vout et se lotreyt. Tunc eligatur et capiatur per manum ab episcopis et ducatur intus dicendo Te Deum laudamus cantando et mimi tubicinent simul cum Te Deum laudamus.

A play about the election of Nicholas as bishop of Myra. The roles are for four canons (Petrus, the prior, Dinus and a fourth), a messenger ("nuncius"), three bishops and St. Nicholas.

2. ff. 4v-5r Sequitur ludus seu miraculum pueri ferventis in cacabo. Loquitur angelus: Sillete, etc. Loquitur mulier mater pueri nuncio transeunti illac: Dites moy, vos qui ley passatz, / Quel novel az en la cyta, / Quel solles et quel deduyt / Ley demeynont yl cretuyt ... Et non pas vyes sy la manyryz / Coment il bout en la choudyryz. Finis. DeTurre [these two words by another hand]. Tubicinent mimi.

A play about a mother whose child was miraculously saved by bishop Nicholas from death in a kettle with boiling water. The roles are for the mother and a messenger.

3. ff. 5r-6v Sequitur ludus navigantis supra mare. Loquitur angelus: Sillete, etc. Loquitur demon in specie mulieris [these three words above the line] Romipetis navigantibus: Dites vos, qui alés sy devant, / Ou alés vos sy coytesemant, / Dyte moy per vostra lyuta / En qual pays vos vos valat ... Preyés Diu loz rey Jhesu Crix, / Qu'yl nos guyet en nostrout pays. Recedunt naute. Et finis miraculi. Mimi debent tubicinare.

A play about pilgrims sailing to Myra who are endangered by the devil in the disguise of a woman. The roles are for the devil/woman, a group of pilgrims ("Romipete", "naute") and Saint Nicholas.

4. ff. 7r-11r Sequitur ludus Iudei qui prestitit argentum sub fide beati Nicholai. Loquitur angelus: Sillete, etc. Loquitur mutuator Iudeo: Jacob, je te priozy chyerement / Que me preta cen mars d'argent, / Quar j'en ey grant neccessita: / Deys ay bella mullyer juraz ... In nunt du Parez et du Fyl, / De Syteygaz, mollyes seyt yl. Ponitur aqua supra caput. Et finis miraculi. Tubicinent mimi.

A play about a Jewish money-lender. The roles are for the borrower Girart (“mutuator”, “Christianus”), Jacob the money-lender, a messenger, Saint Nicholas and a priest. The borrower falsely swears before the altar of the saint never having received the money from the Jew and falls down dead; Jacob begs Saint Nicholas to perform a miracle, Girart is resuscitated by the saint and the Jew is converted.

5. ff. 11r-14v Sequitur ludus burgensis. Loquitur angelus: Sillete, etc. Loquitur pater filio: Or par ta fey, bes fyc leys, / Va par la cyta de Parys, / Tous compagnons tu somondres, / Y avoy te los amyneres ... Or nos pensyn tuyt alegrar / Et grant fetaz et joy mynar. Coreant pater et filius et clerici invitati. Mimi tubicinant. Et sit finis miraculi.

A play about a young man whose father organizes a banquet for the feast of Saint Nicholas and orders his son to go through Paris and invite his friends; the boy is captured by Muslims and taken overseas to serve the Sultan, but is the next year miraculously liberated by Saint Nicholas. The roles are for the father, the son, the friends (“clerici”), the Sultan (“soudanus”), his men (“gentes armorum”), a messenger and Saint Nicholas.

6. ff. 15r-17v Sequitur ludus puellarum. Angelus: Sillete. Loquitur pater: Las, je suy de grant lignaiez, / Pobros suy, sye demagez, / Je n’ey a beyre ny a mangier, / De que je suy mont corrocysés ... [ends incomplete:] Loquitur sacerdos marito: Or set apars bel fic Jaquin, / Pren ly la man se la tetyn //

A play about a poor father with three daughters, whom thanks to the intervention of Saint Nicholas he can give in marriage to noble husbands. The roles are for the father, the daughters, Saint Nicholas, the husbands and a notary.

7. ff. 18r-20v Sequitur ludus Iudey verberantis ymaginem sancti Nycolay. Sillete. Loquitur Iudeus: Que farey ge lamez che ycytz, / Quar je suy d’etranioz pays, / Hyen syt monduz je ne vey ren / Maque hompoz d’our et d’argent ... Par soz que Dyus me pardoneyt, / Et seyns Nycholeys que j’ubeyz. Recedant latrones et sit finis miraculi.

Play about a Jew whose treasure, which he had placed under the care of Saint Nicholas, is stolen by two thieves; he takes revenge on the statue of the saint; by order of Nicholas the thieves return the money to the Jew, who is converted. The roles are for the Jew, two thieves and Saint Nicholas.

8. ff. 20v-25v Sillete. Sequitur de clericis interfectis a macellario. Loquitur primo unus clericorum: Dez nos tres clers j’ey vont silvotroz / Tuyt anbanos dever veproiz, / Et j’ay comency a parler / Et l’armonaz ad demandar ... [ends incomplete:] Se vous avyset briemant / Que vous en faceys jugimant. Precepit iudex mistrali ut tendat quesitum macellarium et loquitur iudex mistrali //

Play about the three young men killed and salted by a butcher and resuscitated by Saint Nicholas. The roles are for the three young men (“clerici”), the butcher (“macellarius”), his wife, a messenger, a judicial officer (“mistralis”), Saint Nicholas, a judge and his clerk.

Artt. 1-8: eight miracle plays celebrating the life and miracles of St. Nicholas in verse, in French, with headings and stage directions in Latin. Each play opens with a call for silence by an angel (who may also have a role in the play) and begins or ends with the actors (“mimi”) blowing the trumpet. There are important corrections by the scribes themselves. It is not clear whether the words “de Turre” in art. 2 are a person’s (author’s or scribe’s) name. Through the intermediary of prof. Herman Braet, prof. Gilles Roques has been so kind as to study the language of the plays. According to him its forms belong to the Franco-Provençal area and have to be situated in the Lyonnais, Dauphiné, Savoy, Romance Switzerland or Franche-Comté.

9. Cover: Latin notarial document on parchment, dated 24 November 1371, issued in Salinum (Salins) by the imperial notary Thomas Champonis de Cleyraco, by which Stephaneta de Castellione (Châtillon-sur-Seine), widow of the knight Franciscus de Salino, appoints as her attorney in all her affairs “in tota Castellione seu terra Tharensi” Rudecus de Landrea; the witnesses are Petrus Bonivini, from Salinum, Iohannes filius Villelmi Plante de Montagniaco (Montigny-sur-Aube) and Iohannes Cloppet de Bellavilla (Belleville-sur-Saône). All places as far as identifiable are situated in or near Franche-Comté, i.e. the county of Burgundy belonging to the Holy Roman Empire.

Paper, ff. 25, 300 x 105 mm. Watermark: Crescent, var. Briquet 5175 (1393-1520; the papers recorded by Briquet were used in Geneva, Fribourg and Grandson).

I¹⁴ (ff. 1-14), II⁴ (-4, with loss of text; ff. 15-17), III¹² (-9, -10, -11, -12, with loss of text; ff. 18-25). Simple signatures “I”-“VII” are visible in the middle of the lower margins of the versos of ff. 1-7 (quire I).

Written in one column in campo aperto. The stage directions are written in the center.

Copied by two scribes writing Gothica Cursiva Currens: A copied ff. 1r-17v (artt. 1-6), B, writing a larger and more coarse script, copied ff. 18r-25v (artt. 7-8).

There is no decoration.

Undecorated original limp parchment binding (see art. 9; the text is at the inner side). At the top of the rear cover the handwritten contemporary title: “Papyrus ludi sancti Nycholay Peialbi?? (Petri Albi = Aubepierre-sur-Aube?)”.

Sotheby catalogue *Western Manuscripts and Miniatures*, 6 Dec. 1988, no. 44, with reproduction. Given in 1998 by Bronson Pinchot (Yale 1981) in memory of his grandfather Francesco Asta (handwritten note on f. 1v). Art. 5 was performed by Yale students in English translation in verse in the Beinecke Library on 6 Dec. 1999 under the title “The Play of the Burgess”.

Albert Derolez