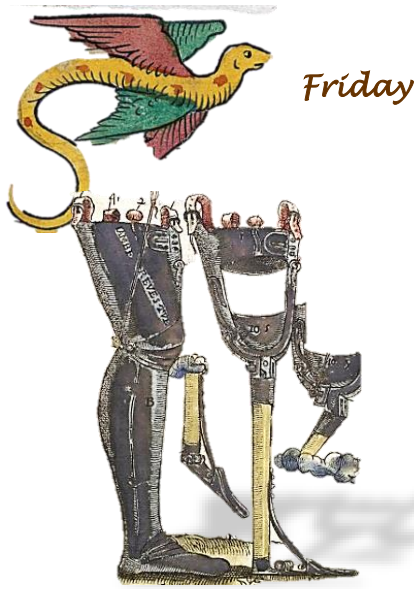


# Friday



May 12, 2020



“I didn’t steal that bike: I took it for a joy ride” was saying Mr. van Tcheluk to Bombònica and Sister Chiara, blowing out puffs of smoke from his smuggled Ukrainian cigarette.

They were sitting in the Sisters’ herb garden, for the winter had been an unusually mild one, and spring had come early to our part of the world that year. It (the spring, I mean) was in the air; and so were the countless, diminutive winged dragons already back from distant lands: joyfully batting their bi-colored wings they were chanting their favorite Gregorian chants; in doing so some showed a marked preference for those in Mode 1 (also

known as Dorian); a few opted for Mode 2 (Hypodorian), and even a lesser number seemed to like melodic lines belonging in Mode 8 (Hypomixolydian).

Traditionally the remaining five modes seemed to be in disfavor with those miniscule winged dragons who returned to our area year after year. Some folks speculated the dragons regarded themselves as remote descendants of the enormous *barabombosaurians* once populating in abundance the palm tree forests on the surrounding hills. But nothing was ever scientifically proven; besides, that’s another story, and it happened millions of years ago.

“Granted,” thought Bombònica “the resulting sonorous effect is rather cacophonous, but a discerning ear could identify the individual chants with no problem.” She then turned to Mr. van Tcheluk:

“OK, we have no reason to disbelieve what you’re saying, but what, for God’s sake, has happened to your leg?”

Mr. van Tcheluk’s right leg was encased in shiny metal all the way up to the area above the knee. In the brilliant late February sunshine that part of his body shone resplendently, and although it was a somewhat disquieting sight, it did not lack a certain dignity, and had a touch of noblesse: Mr. van Tcheluk looked like one quarter of an armored knight, and Bombònica could tell he felt pleased with his new accoutrement.

“Nothing much, really. I fell from the Bishop’s bike and at first I thought I nearly broke my leg; I am telling you, that bike is a contraption straight from Hell: first of all, it’s a wicker bike—please note that if you change the final ‘r’ to ‘d’ the word becomes ‘wicked,’ and that couldn’t possibly be too angelic, could it?; second, and on that very account, it cannot be maneuvered as one would wish and desire. I tried to make it go uphill and it wouldn’t budge; I tried to make it adopt a curvaceous trajectory, and it refused to do so; what is more, it shook me off and I fell to the ground on Garlic Creek Bridge by *Friar John’s*. I bumped my knee against the pavement—and ladies, I assure you, it is very painful.”

“We’re sorry to hear that,” intervened Sister Chiara “but what’s the story with the metal encasement?”

“Well Friar Ambrose from the Carthusian house on Flower Hill was passing by; he helped me get up, took me to his smithy, and found this splendid metal casing (it’s a prosthetic leg, by the way) which he inherited from his ancestor, Mr. Ambroise Paré (the illustrious French doctor, if you recall). I don’t think I need it, for the bruise is not serious, and truth be told wearing a metal



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leg covering is bothersome enough, but I like the looks of it as an ornamental object. I find it aesthetically pleasing, and I like to think I'm making a fashion statement."

"And where's the bike now?" inquired Bombònica, refraining from commenting on Mr. van Tcheluk's taste in fashion.

"I left it with Mrs. John."

"So now, because you can't use that much the encased leg (I must admit, it is rather incommodious and I hope you'll give it up by the time *sumer is icumen in*), you probably feel like one of those Ethiopian guys Sir John Mandeville talks about in his *Travels*: 'In Ethiopia there are many diverse people; and Ethiopia is called Caussie. And in that place there are people who only have one leg; and they walk so fast that it's a marvel, and this leg is so big that he [the sciopede] makes from it a shade against the sun for the entire body when he lies'," concluded Sister Chiara. "For several centuries we've had a manuscript of that work in our library, but to this very day no one can tell whether the gentleman known as Mandeville was a real-life character."

"Johannes Marignolli (that's the Bishop of Bisinia for you) once told me that although he (I mean the Bishop) didn't know Mandeville personally, he (I'm still referring to the Bishop) was positive that man Mandeville was a cheater and a liar," completed Bombònica.

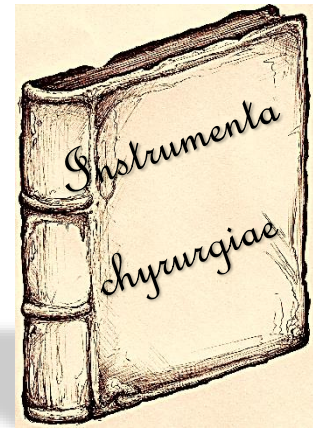
"Excuse me for a minute," said Sister Chiara, getting up from her chair. She went into the shop and returned with a smallish book, which she opened to folio c.vi. "It's called *Instrumenta chyrgiae et icones anathomicae*, published in 1564 (you'll notice the place of publication is unknown): it's a hand-drawn, hand-colored book containing only the illustrations from Dr. Paré's *La manière de traicter les playes faictes tant par hacquebutes que par fleches*. Another copy is kept at the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine in London. We got ours from an anonymous donor, a longtime benefactor of our Order, who also left a large amount of money for the purchasing of rare books and manuscripts."

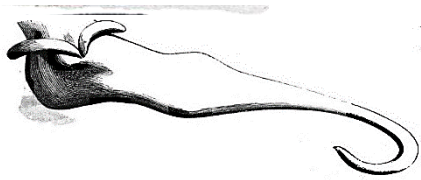
The particular illustration Sister Chiara was referring to showed Ambroise Paré's designs for prosthetic metal legs; Mr. van Tcheluk's right-leg encasement was a perfect reproduction of the drawing to the far left.

"Excuse me again," apologized the Sister and went back into the shop, returning with a larger tome which she carried in both arms. The book was covered in tooled leather over wooden planks and must have weighted anywhere from four to six kilos; the *fleur-de-lis* ornaments were in the best of taste, and the clasps were of finely worked metal.

"This one is Master Paré's *La manière de traicter les playes faicts par hacquebutes, et autres bastons à feu: composée par Ambroise Paré, maistre Barbier et Chirurgien: nouvellement reuue et augmentée de plusieurs additions et figures de diuers instrumentz*; it was published in Paris by Veuve de J. de Brie (that means the widow of J. de Brie) in either 1551 or 1552."

She opened the book to folio 69v, and showed them another drawing :





“It looks like the good doctor was a thoughtful person, since he devised not only sumptuous metal legs for the rich, but also more modest wooden legs for the low-class

people, as one can plainly see here: ‘*iambe de bois pour les vulgaires*’ ... Oh, Good morning, Bishop.”

“Good morning, Sister, and may your garden attain its full splendor once the spring truly sets in,” said Johannes Marignolli, dismounting his bike.

They had not seen him coming, for although made of wicker, his bike was apparently one of those silent exemplars Mr. Marty Cappella had recently begun selling at his bike shop on Vineyard Bridge, following a City Ordinance which required all citizens of medieval ancestry to conform to twenty-first century standards by giving up their habitual noisiness and general disregard for public peace and quiet (especially nocturnal). It was in the same ordinance, paragraph two, that *charivaris* and the pointed shoes known as *poulaines* were completely banned—and that provision was understood to apply to the town proper as well as the whole of the surrounding area.

Men and women of Renaissance descent were not subjected to any restrictions, and that was regarded as discrimination by the Association for the Protection of the Middle Ages Amongst Us (APMAAU), which was the organizer of a series of well-attended protests in and out of town. The main characteristic of such populous manifestations was the holding, waving, and parading of large multi-colored banners bearing hand-written slogans such as “Let people freely serenade!” and “Freedom to wear *poulaines* NOW!,” and the singing of Gregorian chants, especially those in Mode 5 (Lydian)—which included an augmented fourth, also known as *diabolus in musica*, meaning ‘the devil in music.’

The Bishop of Bisinia wore an enchanting smile on his lips, his eyes were luminous, his face radiant, and his leather leggings shining—for he had just applied a fresh layer of castor oil on them.

“My dear Sister,” he said “I am happy to inform you I found my bike: it was left at *Friar John’s* by ... oh, Mr. van Tcheluk, you’re here ...”

“Good morning, Bishop. I hasten to confess ...”

“No need for that, I completely understand. You did not steal my bike—Mrs. John told me so—she said you simply wanted to take it for a joy ride. I am so sorry about your leg ...”

“I am glad it wasn’t my hand ...”

“Oh, that wouldn’t have been a problem” intervened Sister Chiara, with a generous smile, which in turn allowed her dimples to show to great effect “Master Paré also thought of that. Look what he says (it’s printed on folio 68r): ‘... and it will be advisable to heal or [re]make the flesh and achieve the cure of the ulcer; when this is done, the patient will be able to have an iron hand, if





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he suffered hand amputation, or a wooden leg [if this is the part of his body that has been cut off], like one of these which are here depicted; through these [artificial members], by use, he will be able to provide little by little the action of those members he will have lost'. I suspect Friar Ambrose the Carthusian inherited some prosthetic hands as well.”



“As a man of the Church,” began the Bishop “I am thoroughly familiar with the miracle performed by Ss. Cosmas and Damian, patron saints of physicians and surgeons: according to legend, the saints cut away the putrid flesh in a man’s thigh and replaced the amputated portion with an identical but intact one, taken from the fresh cadaver of an Ethiopian. I recommend you read Jacobus de Voragine’s version of the event as relayed in the *Legenda aurea*—I’m sure the Sisters have a copy in their library ...”

“Perhaps that’s why those people in Ethiopia Sir John Mandeville wrote about only had one leg: they might be descendants of the deceased man, the accidental donor of the leg. Genetics is a funny thing,” thought Bombònica.

“Oh, Bishop, please! There isn’t any question about my leg being amputated, I was just telling Sister Chiara and Bombònica that the bruise was nothing much, and that I was wearing this prosthetic leg just for kicks.” Mr. van Tcheluk was so upset, he extinguished his cigarette and threw away the stub, missing the street garbage container the City Fathers had provided for the clientele of *Chez les Poor Claires*. The container was usually filled with leguminous roots and rotten flower petals, bits of thorn Latin and Anglo-Norman recipes and, sometimes but not often, half-empty bottles of medicinal syrup.

Sister Chiara, who was standing by her chair put Master Paré’s book on the table, bent to pick up the stub, straightened herself, leaned backwards, turned slightly to the right, and with a dexterous movement of the hand she threw the object in the container.

“There,” she said with satisfaction, “that’s how you’re supposed to do it.” Then she took her place on the chair, sighed softly, rearranged her vestments and head cover, showed her dimples, and said:

“I don’t know if this is the right time or place, but I just want to tell you that before I took my vows I used to live in Orvieto (that’s a city in Italy, you know) with my cousin, *signorina* Ugolina. She was a descendant of the much celebrated Ugolino of the same city, who was a music theorist of repute ...”

“Of course,” cut in the Bishop “you are talking about Ugolino of Orvieto (c. 1380-1457), a noted philosopher, mathematician, canonist, and music theorist who was also the archpriest of the Ferrara Cathedral chapter from 1431.”

“Cannonist? Meaning someone connected with the artillery?” inquired Mr. van Tcheluk. “I didn’t know they had cannons then ...”



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“Canonist,” corrected the Bishop. “A doctor of canon law.”

“Oh, right. I didn’t know doctors were involved with cannons and military regulations ...”

“Canon, with a single ‘n.’ Canon law is church law.” Apparently the Bishop was about to lose his patience: the hairs in his beard became agitated and his leather leggings looked as if they were about to lose their luster.

“Indeed,” reprised Sister Chiara. “Well my cousin said this Ugolino wrote a book, the *Declaratio musicae disciplinae*, in which he asserted that one of the musical modes, if improperly used ‘can be compared to a biped animal of which one leg was amputated, and to which (it naturally possessing two eyes) an additional eye would be grafted or imprinted artificially on the forehead’.”

“I find that gruesome,” said Bombònica, shivering. “Anyway, how did we get to talk about such things?”

“It was Mr. van Tcheluk’s iron leg.”

“I don’t have an iron leg, and my natural one has never been amputated. This is getting out of hand ...”

“Well I think we had enough of that,” intervened the Bishop. “Miss Bombònica, I was told you’re friends with a woman in town who is known as the Sunday Lady.”



“The report is incorrect: I only met this lady a few times, and I must admit at first I was charmed by her angelic voice: she sounds like a silver bell, or at times like a flute ... at any rate, I gave her that nickname, and on my word I have no idea how it got around.”

“Are you talking about Wilhelmina Machault? She’s one of our loyal customers, just like Mrs. Bonaventure. Mrs. Machault is a professor of chemistry, which in my humble opinion puts her in a category related to apothecaries,” intervened Sister Chiara. “She’s also an amateur botanist, and something of a local literary figure, since she’s already published two volumes of poetry; they’re rather thin—no malice intended: they **are** tiny volumes, physically speaking—but full of fiery passion and some amount of doom. I think I heard Mrs. Bonaventure say Mrs. Machault was well acquainted with the Artist of the Sundial, and that’s to be expected from creative minds such as these two have been blessed with: great minds think alike. There are, among our customers, those who think she has retained some of her former beauty (Mr. MacRobius, may he rest in peace, used to be one of them), but I think too much consumption of vegetables and that weird type of meditation she practices, *omphaloskepsis*, didn’t do much for the preservation of the freshness of her facial skin. One should eat meat from time to time and drink wine.”

“At any rate it helped her keep her boyish figure,” remarked the Bishop.



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“Which doesn’t say much, coming from one who thinks Mrs. Bonaventure is a timeless beauty,” thought Bombònica. “Oh, but he was speaking of silks at the time,” she remembered. “Pardon me, my bad,” she said, addressing the Bishop, who was listening intently to Sister Chiara.

“What do you mean, your bad?”

“Nothing. I was just talking to myself, and it was something thoughtless, too.”

“Anyway,” reprised Sister Chiara “she has a finely chiseled nose.”

Mr. van Tcheluk, who was making desperate attempts to scratch his leg but was being prevented by the metal casing, put in:

“She walks in beauty, like the night.”

“Oh, no, that’s from Shakespeare, and we are supporting the APMAAU. Find something else,” cut him short Bombònica; then she went on: “Well I suppose a fine nose would be a job requirement for a professor of chemistry. I mean, she’d have to have a developed sense of smell to aid in the identification of various mixtures and concoctions she prepares ...”

“Hm,” said the Bishop, meditatively, “concoction is precisely the word I was thinking of. Excuse me, ladies (you too, Mr. van Tcheluk), I have to leave now. May you have a blessed day—and make sure you don’t have any meat for lunch or dinner, for it’s a fasting day.”

The Bishop walked his bike through the main gate of the Park, then onto the alley leading to St. Joseph’s entrance. He propped the bike against the iron fence and went into the church. The mid-morning light filtered through the stained glass windows caused his face to gradually turn red, then yellow, blue, green, and finally a subtle lavender hue; the latter was in chromatic agreement with the stylized floral ornaments on his embroidered shoes, which had been made by a shoemaker in Paris and were a replica of a pair Charlemagne used to wear. The Bishop felt gratified and congratulated himself once again on his sense of fashion.

Father Philippe was standing in front of the altar, but at the sound of the Bishop’s steps he turned around:

“Good morning, Bishop. I was sort of expecting you.”

“Good morning, Father. Here I am. I have come expressly to discuss with you a new development, which I find quite disturbing: I am referring, as you may have guessed, to Mr. MacRobius’s death. It has been suggested that the so-called Sunday Lady ...”



“Mrs. Machault, no doubt ...”

“Precisely. As I was saying, it is being insinuated that she was for a while very close to Mr. MacRobius—well, you know what I mean—and that, in fact, he was seeing two women alternatively: that actress of ill repute, and Mrs. Machault. Not that I normally lend an attentive ear to gossip, but I think the matter should be further investigated, since





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poor Mrs. Bacon is still in police custody, and we are in possession of what could be termed crucial information.”

“Well the police already have Teddy’s letter: we gave it to them yesterday. Who, by the way, gave you the information about Mrs. Machault?”

“It’s a letter I received from one Péronelle or Péronne or Péronette (I can’t make out her signature very well); someone placed it in my bike basket while the bike was still parked at *Friar John’s* following Mr. van Tcheluk’s mishap. I have it right here.”

The Bishop extracted a *vellum* leaf, 210 by 142 millimeters in size, from his leather purse and handed it to Father Philippe. The letter was written in brown ink, in a beautiful French secretarial hand, over an older text which the sender had made every effort to scratch out. Father Philippe put on his glasses and began reading aloud:

“*Le Livre du Voir Dict.*’ I don’t see ...”

“Go on,” said the Bishop.

“Right:

‘Monsignor Marignolli,

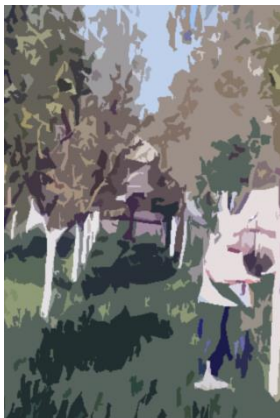
*My sovereign lady, a knight must have no calling or science other than: arms, lady, and conscience ...*’ Hmm ... *‘I send you my book, Morpheus, which they call La Fontaine amoureuse ...*’”

“You see that can’t be right. No one sent me any books; not now, not in the past, not ever.”

“Pardon me, I was reading a still legible line from the old document. As you know, the newer text goes like this:

‘I am writing to let your Eminence know that I find it my duty to *Roze, liz, prentans, verdure ...*’ oh no, that’s the old text. This is really annoying,” Father Philippe said and scratched his head. “I’ll give it another try: ‘... I find it my duty to let you know that I am in possession of information pointing to the fact that shortly before his untimely death Mr. MacRobius appears to have been involved in an intimate relationship with Mrs. Wilhelmina Machault. *Mais quant je voy de biauté l’umble flour assevis sui de tout si que par m’ame je voy assés, puis quie je voy ma dame*’ ... Damn! I did it again.”

“Let patience be your guide, Father. Please continue, and try ignoring the half-erased lines.”



“Very well: ‘It is widely believed that Mr. MacRobius’s most precious possession was a special kind of pear tree, the Beurre (or Beurrée) Hardy Pear tree (*Pyrus communis Beurre Hardy*), of which he is the sole grower in the nation. Some would kill for just one seed of the aforesaid variety of pear tree, and there are many who suspect Mrs. Machault, a noted amateur botanist, only agreed to be involved with Mr. MacRobius in the hope that he would make her the inheritor of the tree and all the seeds originating with its fruit (by extension, she hoped to also become the inheritor of the orchard). *De l’ymage que fist*





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*Pymalion elle n'avoit pareille ne seconde mais la belle qui m'a en sa prison cent mille fois est plus belle et plus monde ...”*

“I can’t go on like this,” he said, wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve. But he did go on: “I can assure you Mr. MacRobius was not going to leave her a single seed, let alone the tree itself and the surrounding orchard—and I have reason to believe he told her so. I beg your Eminence to give serious consideration to the possibility that an amateur botanist who is also a professor of chemistry would have both motive and the means to prepare a lethal concoction—which she was in a perfect position to administer to her unsuspecting lover. *Et que s’amour seur tout rien m’enflame je voy assés, puis quie je voy ma dame ...*” Oh, sorry.”

He took a deep breath, shook his head, adjusted his glasses, and went on reading: “Please accept the expression of my highest respect and consideration, and rest assured, Monsignor, that *I pray God that he may give you your heart’s desire and such honor as I wish you may have; and God give you solace and joy, such as I might wish for myself ...*” That fits in very nicely ‘... and that I remain truly and sincerely

Your most humble servant,

*Péronelle*

Sweet Mother of God! First Teddy’s letter from America, and now—this.” Father Philippe wiped again the perspiration from his forehead. “What are your thoughts, Bishop?”

“I don’t know what to think or say, and that’s why I came to see you. On the one hand, it could all be a shameless fabrication; on the other hand, some of what this woman says in the letter might be true. But since the leaf was placed in my bike basket it stands to reason the author should be one of the locals.”

“Should we give it to the police, like we did with Teddy’s letter?”

“Possibly. Constable Des Muris may like having a look at it, although it’s signed with a pseudonym and it shouldn’t carry too much weight with the police or anybody else.”

“Well then, let’s go,” said Father Philippe, handing back the *vellum* leaf.

The Bishop rolled it up and put it in his leather purse. Then the two men stepped out of the church and into the brilliant sunshine. There were no leaves on trees yet, but the genealogical tree on the right side of St. Joseph’s door was already bearing berries and open buds comfortably nestling Jessie’s descendants, including King David with a harp and the Virgin Mary with the Child. On the branches of the tree of consanguinity to the left, a whole group of characters related through blood perched like birds, waving their hands and singing French polyphonic *rondeaus*.

“Oh, don’t pay any attention,” said Father Philippe. “These are my ancestors, and they’re a rather annoying bunch—especially my *abavus* (that is, my great-great-grandfather, the one with the moustache). I mean, each of them taken individually is a nice enough person, and you can see *abava* (that’s my great-great-grandmother) was a real looker. But when you have to deal with the lot of them at once, day in, day out, in every season and every kind of weather, it becomes a real burden. I’ve sort of had enough of them, so let us go before they cause any more disruption and ruin my day completely.”



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Notes

*Sumer is icumen in* (Summer is coming in) is an English canon from ca. 1250: “*Sumer is icumen in/Lhude sing cuccu/Groweth sed/and bloweth med/and springt the wde nu/Sing cuccu;*” see MS London, British Library, Harleian 978, f. 11v.

For sciopodes see *Mandeville’s Travels*, ed. Letts, 2: 318: “En Ethiopie a moult de diuerse genz; et est Ethiopie appellee Caussie. Et y a de celle gent qui nont que vn pie; et si vont si tost que cest merueilles, et si est ce pie si large que il en font vmbre a tout le corps deuls encontre le soleil, quant il se couche du trauers.” My translation *supra*.

For the miracle by Ss. Cosmas and Damian, see Jacobus de Voragine, *Jacobi de Voragine Legenda aurea, vulgo Historia lombardica dicta*, ed. Theodore Graesse (Desdae et Lipsiae: Impensis librariae Arnoldianae, 1846), 636-9: “In hac ecclesia quidam vir sanctis martiribus seruebat, cui cancer unum crus totum consumserat. Et ecce dormiente illo sancti Cosmas et Damianus devoto suo apparuerunt unguenta et ferramenta secum portantes; quorum unus alteri dixit: ubi carnes accipiemus, ut abscisa carne putrida locum vacuum repleamus? Tunc ait alter: in cimiterio sancti Petri ad vincula hodie Aethiops recens sepultus est, de illo autem affer, ut huic suppleamus. Et ecce ad cimiterium properavit et coxam Mauri attulit, praecedentesque coxam infirmi loco ejus coxam Mauri inseruerunt et plagam diligenter ungentes coxam infirmi ad corpus Mauri mortui detulerunt (In that church a certain man served the martyr saints; one of his thighs was entirely consumed by ulceration. And behold, while he was sleeping, saints Cosmas and Damian appeared to their devotee carrying ointments and instruments. One said to the other: where do we find flesh so that we can refill the empty space when we excise the putrid flesh? Then the other says: earlier today an Ethiopian was buried in the cemetery of St. Peter ad vincula; we will take [flesh] from that one to supply for this one. And behold, he went to the cemetery and took the thigh of the Moor and, cutting off the infirm thigh they inserted in its place the Moor’s thigh, and, diligently anointing the wound, they returned the infirm thigh to the dead body of the Moor).” My translation.

For the iron hand, see Paré, *La manière de traicter*, f. 68r: “... et te servira de cicatrizer, ou fair le cuir, & paracheuer la cure de l’vlcere: laquelle parfaicte, le patient pourra auoir main de fer, s’il a souffert amputation de la main, ou iambe de bois (si icelle partie luy a esté coupée) comme l’vne de cestes cy figurées: desquelles par coustume il pourra supplier peu à peu l’action des membres qu’il aura perdu.” My translation *supra*.

For the monstrous musical mode resembling a creature with an amputated leg and three eyes, see *Ugolini Urbevitani Declaratio musicae disciplinae*, ed. Albert Seay, *Corpus scriptorum de musica* 7: 1-3 ([Rome]: American Institute of Musicology, 1959-62), *Liber primus* (CSM 7:1), 222: “quia hic tropus bipedi animali posset comparari cui unus pes esset excisus, et ipsi duos naturaliter oculi habenti alius ex artificio imprimeretur in fronte.”

For Guillaume de Machaut’s letter to Péronnelle d’Armentières, see MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 1584. *Le Livre du Voir Dict* (Machaut’s love affair with Péronnelle) is copied in this manuscript; it contains eight musical interpolations, monophonic and polyphonic: lais, virelais, rondeaux, ballades, complaints (unhappy love), and chansons royales. An English translation of the letter is in Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1984), 76-7.

For the genealogical tree, see MS Liège, University Library, Wittert 28, f. 21v; for the tree of consanguinity, see MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, *fonds français* 202, f. 15v.

Illustrations :

Angels presenting Ss. Cosmas and Damian with a leg reproduced from the visual collection at the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, London

Shoe on p. 57 from Lacroix, Duchesne, and Seré, *Le Livre d’or des métiers: Histoire des cordonniers*, insert after p. 30.