

CLCV 211: Laughing Matters: Satire and the Limits of Free Speech in Ancient Greece and Rome
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By submitting this essay, I attest that it is my own work, completed in accordance with
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“The Good Samaritan is Going to the Carnival Tonight:” Morality in Carnavalesque Literature
By Jared Brunner

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“*There is no Slander in an Allow’d Fool,*”
(*Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, I.V.94*)

As one of the most perennial forms of festivity across cultures, the carnival and the literature it has produced has become essential for the theory of comedy and literature. Mikhail Bakhtin first conceptualized the carnival in his *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* as a space which momentarily flattens hierarchies to create a dialogue between the sacred and the grotesque. He understands the function of the comedy in such literature as delimiting a license for radical social critique against accepted moralities. To present an alternative view which recognizes the ways in which carnivalesque literature mocks the inversion of established norms, I will examine two forms of carnivalesque literature in the *sermon joyeux* or mock-sermon written for medieval and Early Modern Christian holiday festivals and the Menippean satires written for the Roman festival Saturnalia. Specifically, I will place alongside one another the sixteenth-century Middle Dutch *Spotsermoen over Sint Niemand* or “Mock Sermon on Saint Nobody” and Seneca’s first-century *Apocolocyntosis* so as to illuminate the ways in which two radically different hierarchical and moralistic social contexts are reinforced by their respective carnivalesque literatures. In mocking the inverted norms of the carnival and its fool-practitioners, the carnivalesque texts reveal and reinforce the implicit moral structures that they comedically transgress.

I. Laughter as Inversion

On the Bakhtinian reading, carnival operates as the delineated space of transgression. In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin looked to historical carnival traditions from the Roman Saturnalia and the commonplace medieval and Renaissance festivals to grasp the essential qualities that unite them. In Bakhtin's reading, the common folk would unite in the carnival to laugh, blaspheme, profane the sacred, and engage in a public space "permeated with a pathos of change and joyful relativity" (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 132). Bakhtin thus sets the carnival against its various cultural contexts as a delineated space for transgression. They violate the official order of the elite to create a "completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 5-6). Ritualistic laughter becomes a tool of resistance for the subjugated lower classes to rebel against the sober moralizing of their oppressors. As the folk translates the carnival's transgressive qualities into text, in the process Bakhtin terms *carnivalization*, we see the birth of a motley of seriocomedic generic traditions, including the Socratic dialogue, the Menippean satire, the *sacra parodia*, and the *sermon joyeux*. Thus if we turn to examples of carnivalesque texts from different cultural contexts, we should recognize this transgressive potential within them. We will now analyze the extent to which transgression through the inversion of norms does operate within these texts.

In parodying the ecclesiastical form of hagiography, the *Spotsermoen over Sint Niemand* introduces a comedic dialogue between the sacred and the profane of early modern Christian society. At the center of the piece, the sermon invokes a hagiography, the medieval genre in

which one narrates the idealized life of a saint so as to teach specific imitable virtues. Following such forms, the sermon begins with an explicit moral instruction followed by a sensational story of martyrdom. Against all sensibilities and norms typical for an early-modern Christian context, the sermon calls for its audience to indulge and imbibe without temperate restraint:

And to return to the theme of my speech:
 Only drinking will put Heaven in reach.
 Drink till you're cross-eyed, from your wine or beer jug,
 You free a soul from purgatory with each glug. (*Spotsermoen* 49-52)

The sermon imparts this debauched theme with a sober moral significance, calling upon sinners to heed its words, follow its instruction for the sake of redemption, and even threatens that the “Pope will curse” (*Spotsermoen* 55) anyone who doubts its veracity. The subsequent hagiography of the fictional Saint Drincatibus further exacerbates this contradiction between sacred form and profane content with its progressively grotesque narrative:

[Saint Drincatibus] lived with Bacchus, a man holier still,
 Who taught him to drink without reaching his fill.
 He drank so much that all sin he forgot,
 And then at the last he choked on his snot.
 ...
 He drank so much, many authors admit,
 That daily he filled his pants with shit.” (*Spotsermoen* 76-83)

The saint is placed alongside Bacchus—the Roman god of wine and intemperance—as a man of enough holiness and reverence that many authors in history have recorded the events of his life. If we are to follow the generic norms surrounding hagiography, Drincatibus earned having his life painstakingly inscribed on expensive vellum for no deeds lesser in greatness than his own lethal self-defecation. The humor of the sermon lies in the incongruity it establishes between its sacred form and profane content. Much like the standard two-liner joke with a set-up and a punchline, the sermon will draw us into a serious hagiographical narrative, only to subvert our expectations of the moral content the genre demands. Transgression is then not just limited to the

anti-Christian norms espoused, but also their relationship to the rigidly Christian form in which they are presented.

Within the Bakhtinian framework of comedy and the carnivalesque, the *Spotsermoen* can be read as a parodic mocking of ecclesiastical authority and the hagiographical form. Parsons and Jongenelen illuminate the carnival occasion upon which such mock sermons, and *Sint Niemand* in particular, would have been performed. As the sermon shifts away from hagiography, it grumbles “Now I shall ask you to pray once again / For those held prisoner this Ash Wednesday” (*Spotsermoen* 104-105) before enumerating personifications of the different meats prohibited during Lent, such as “Peter Ox, Gerald Goose, / Giles Rabbit, John Capon, Peter Sheep” (*Spotsermoen* 109-110). Parson and Jongenelen argue that, “since the sermon is anticipating the ‘banning’ of some of these figures and their eventual devouring at Easter, it was evidently composed for Shrovetide celebrations” (Parsons and Jongenelen 96). In fact, they point out that many of the few extant mock sermons across different Christian cultural contexts can be linked to these Shrove Tuesday celebrations. Shrovetide is the pre-Lenten season in the Christian liturgical calendar which culminates in Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras, a carnival of excess and indulgence immediately preceding the season of penance which begins on Ash Wednesday. Evaluating this context from the Bakhtinian perspective, we can see the sermon occupying a delineated space of transgression for a Shrove Tuesday festival. Before the weeks in which the Church would especially crack the whip of its moral authority and domain over individuals’ lives, the common folk would momentarily unite to celebrate their remaining freedom and push back against the institution imminently threatening it. On this reading, the Church would see Shrovetide sermons as an affront on their moral authority, and would thus seek to discourage and prohibit them as much as possible. Before addressing the possible problems that this poses for a

Bakhtinian reading of this text and how to further elucidate the function of the sermon through a different interpretive lens, we will turn to the *Apocolocyntosis* to see how we can further tease out the strengths and limits of the Bakhtinian framework in a different carnivalesque cultural context.

Employing the same comedic incongruity as the *Spotsermoen*, Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* parodies the sacredness of Roman imperial historiography by bringing it into dialogue with the profanity of bodily death. Seneca begins with an invocation of space and time that stylistically calls upon the apparent sacredness of the narrative that follows, writing "I wish to give future generations an account of the events in heaven on the thirteenth of October of this new year of grace that inaugurated our present period of prosperity" (Seneca 1). He outlines his goals of writing for the sake of posterity and the lessons it can learn from his history, before engaging in an obsessive digression using astrological poetics to ascertain the exact day and time Claudius died. The god Mercury even steps in to urge Clotho (and by extension, Seneca and his audience) to "Let the astrologers be right for one: ever since he became emperor they've been burying him off every month of every year" (Seneca 3). Seneca gratuitously continues his digression into astrological ponderings and poetic exegesis in a way that builds up the suspense for that final moment, but by the time he gets around to narrating the actual death of Claudius, he mentions it as a sketchy and anti-climactic afterthought. The deified emperor merely stops to "gurgle out his last breath" (Seneca 4) without further explanation. As Seneca explicates the scene further, he illustrates the sacred moment of the emperor's dying breaths in the colors of the grotesque, writing "His last words on earth came after he'd let off a louder noise from his easiest channel of communication: 'Oh my! I think I've shit myself.' For all I know, he did. He certainly shat on everything else" (Seneca 4). By following up pages of built up tension with a few pithy lines of

crudity, Seneca stresses the incongruity between his sacred form and his profane content, much like the death of Drincatibus. Seneca's subject, however, is no fictional debaucher, but a recently-deceased political figurehead. In fact, the sacrosanct position that Claudius held in society gestures towards the politics that occupy the core of the work, so in further examining the context of that sacrosanctity, we can hope to better understand the moral function of Seneca's profanations.

In once again looking through the interpretive lens of the Bakhtinian theory of carnival, we are led to read the *Apocolocyntosis* as a transgressive work mocking the authorities of Roman civic religion. The Roman imperial cult treats the authority of emperors as divinely sanctioned and worshipped the men themselves as sacred. After Claudius died, the new emperor Nero and the senate almost immediately voted to grant Claudius apotheosis, elevating him higher to the status of a state divinity in a public rite. In the *Apocolocyntosis* (the name itself being a pun on the word *apotheosis* meaning, roughly, "pumpkinification"), Seneca plays upon this ritual in the aftermath of Claudius' death, depicting a divine senate of the gods debating his case for deification and ultimately rejecting it to send him to Hades. Underlying this passage is an underlying rejection of the deifying-ritual itself, with Father Janus declaring "This honor should not be granted to ordinary people. 'Once,' he said, 'it was a great thing to become a god. Now you've made it a farce—not worth a bean'" (Seneca 9). The Divine Augustus concludes the hearing bluntly, enumerating Claudius' crimes, making fun of his stutter, and finally asking "Who's going to worship him as a god? Who'll believe in him? While you create such gods, no one believe that you yourselves are gods" (Seneca 11). Seneca uses the voices of the divine senate to call the deification of Claudius into question, pointing to his crimes and aspect as so profane unbecoming of divinity that they denigrate the sacredness of apotheosis itself. On the

Bakhtinian reading, Seneca would be hiding behind the license of humor to criticize the established order and hierarchies in Nero, the senate, and the imperial cult. Of course, such a work would lack Nero's sanction, so this interpretation would rely on the hypothesis that the prevalence of Saturnalian references in the *Apocolocyntosis* indicate that it is itself a Saturnalian work and was allowed a certain license due to the festival's carnivalesque inversions.

Saturnalia's licensed transgression translates to Seneca's ability to transgress the norms of the imperial cult and criticize those in power. Comedy, in this framework, becomes primarily the honey-rimmed dressing that disguises true sociopolitical critique, and laughter simply allows for the license to soberly conceive of radical political possibilities. In taking up the inconsistencies with the Bakhtinian interpretation of the *Apocolocyntosis*, I hope to reveal the errors in the same view of the *Spotsermoen* and the carnival tradition at large, and gesture towards a different framework for understanding carnivalesque literature.

II. Laughter *at* Inversion

By reexamining the function of laughter in the text, we can better understand how the *Apocolocyntosis* actively reinforces the hierarchies that it parodically inverts. Perhaps the most conclusive case against the view that Seneca is critiquing emperor-worship is his lengthy hymn praising Nero and wishing him a long healthy life. The god Apollo sings,

Let him surpass by far a mortal span,
Image of me in looks and beauty as well,
In song and voice no less. To a weary folk
He brings glad times, to muted law a tongue. (Seneca 4)

In a work so focused on mocking Claudius' ailing, disabled body, the Neronian hymn can seem humorously overzealous. However, the content of the hymn does not exaggerate the norms of the imperial cult to hyperbole; Seneca wishing that a youthful emperor live a long life is nothing

more than a call for prosperity when the emperor is seen as the guarantor of political peace. Instead, the hymn is humorous because it so effectively illustrates the norms that the deified Claudius incongruously violates. The caricature of Claudius' apparent inversion of imperial Roman standards is not Seneca's call to reject those standards, but the fact that we are led to laugh at Claudius is an indication that we should believe those standards are important to upkeep. In this way, laughter is not a dressing for serious social critique, but is the critique itself. The incongruous inversion of norms is not to lead us to imagine new possibilities, but to make us laugh at the fool who steps out of line. From this framework, we can understand the function of carnival laughter as fool-making. As R. R. Nauta explains, in fool-making "a deviant individual is cast in the role of 'fool', made a butt of comic abuse, and stigmatized as the representative of what the group does *not* want to stand for" (Nauta 94). In effect, fool-making strengthens the solidarity of the group around certain moral norms and holds its members accountable to fulfilling those norms. To illustrate this further, we will look at the ways in which Seneca utilizes the Saturnalian tradition in the fool-making process.

In invoking the Saturnalian tradition, Seneca makes a fool of Claudius as a parody of right and just rule. One notable ritual of the Saturnalia festival is the election of a *Saturnalicus princeps* or mock-ruler to promulgate laws which promote revelry in excess. Seneca alludes to this ritual at the council of the Gods, in which one god discusses the prospect of Claudius' deification, saying "if he'd asked this favour from Saturn, he wouldn't have got it, even though he celebrated his month all year round, a proper Saturnalian emperor" (Seneca 8). The god inverts our expectations by describing the real emperor as a mock-emperor, but the inversion is nonetheless proper. The norms of just rule had been inverted in Claudius' reign as in a mock-rule, so Seneca is only setting those norms right again by profaning what had been erroneously

thought to be sacred. Claudius' misdeeds are transformed into Saturnalia-licensed excesses which must come to a delineated end. As one citizen remarks to another at Claudius' funeral, "I told you it won't always be carnival time" (Seneca 12). Saturnalia in this case is not a license to laugh, but the object at which our laughter is directed. If we were to relish the freedom of the carnival in the way that Bakhtin suggests, we would have nothing at which to laugh; instead, we laugh at the obvious topsy-turviness of the inverted norms presented to us. Seneca makes a fool out of Claudius, and in laughing at the inverted world of Claudius' reign, we reaffirm that we know and agree with Seneca about what exactly constitutes right rule. As Linda Hutcheon puts it, "The recognition of the inverted world still requires a knowledge of the order of the world which it inverts and, in a sense, incorporates" (Hutcheon 74). Any time a norm is comedically violated in Seneca, we are reminded of the existence of that rule and it is thereby reaffirmed as a rule which is good and valuable. When we return to the *Spotsermoen* with this framework in mind, we are forced to reexamine our interpretation of the relationship between carnivalesque parody and its sociocultural referents.

In reexamining the function of laughter in the *Spotsermoen*, we can elucidate the conservative moralizing at the core of the Sermon's fool-making structure. If we are to take the essential quality of fool-making from our reading of the *Apocolocyntosis*, then the operative question we must ask is *who* we are making a fool in this work and *who* is in the group laughing at the fool. In other words, we must ask the question of where we draw the lines between the comedic in-group and out-group. Our initial answer to this question was that the common folk would use mock sermons to make fun of ecclesiastical and hagiographical authorities, but a reexamination reveals a more learned method behind the text than could be expected from this hypothesis. The sermon's rigid formal structure and thematic movement fit "firmly within the

overall schema of the late-medieval *ars praedicandi* (art of preaching)” (Parsons and Jongenelen 95) that would have been mastered only by an educated preacher. The author of the *Spotsermoen* would have had to have been very well acquainted with the theory of hagiography and how they are generally organized through text-invocations, allegories, and secondary moral arguments. The sermon also repeatedly invokes a parodic Latin verse that would require an author well-literate in the language. The sermon begins and repeats with the *thema* (the announcement of the referenced text), “*Non scriptum est in libro Nullorum / De uno Nullo Willecommorum / Capitulum nullo decimo sexto* [It is not written in the Book of Nothing / of one Nullo Willecommorum (Welcome-To-Nobody) / in the nothing-and-sixteenth chapter]” (*Spotsermoen* 1-3). The sermon supports the inverted morality it espouses with the authority of it being discoverable in no text, chapter, or verse. In a society in which every artful sermon’s normative content was drawn from the co-harmonious legitimacy of a primary and secondary text, claiming that one’s morality cannot be found in a single book would be saying that it is hollow and devoid of any theoretical backing. The sermon thus argues for a didactic message that it concomitantly claims no one could ever believe in or support. In this way, the *Spotsermoen* inverts conventional Christian morality not to make fun of the Church, but to make fun of the ridiculousness of the inversion itself. To further illustrate how the sermon reaffirms its referent, we will analyze the self-reflexivity of the its humor.

In its self-reflexive fool-making, the *Spotsermoen* brings its audience to laugh at the inverted normative structures of the carnival and reaffirm the conventional morality. As the sermon shifts towards asking for charitable donations from its audience, the preacher remarks that he had just encountered a prostitute before beginning his sermon,

There is another case I must mention,
Though I blush to bring it to your attention

I feel compelled. It is Gilly Youngwhore.
 She accosted me just now, outside the door.
 The young men seem to like her well enough,
 So please give freely, then I can pay her off. (*Spotsermoen* 122-7)

In the midst of engaging in a sermon that ought to moralize towards all who hear it, the preacher asks for help in financing his own flaunted immorality. On our first reading, we might read the sermon as satirizing the authority of all preachers, but this passage only registers as comic when we agree on common standards of how preachers should act. Namely, we must accept the very morality that this particular preacher is hypocritically violating. We laugh at the preacher because of his incongruous attempt to upend the traditional moral hierarchy. In a carnivalesque fashion, the sermon inverts virtue and vice to substitute conventional norms for its own radical ethic. In the laughter it inspires, the sermon makes a fool out of anyone who actually lives by the ethic it purportedly preaches, and thus creates a sense of in-group solidarity between all those who act upon the virtues of conventional morality instead. Like the *Apocolocyntosis*, the *Spotsermoen* does not take the laughter of the carnival as a license for radical critique of the moralizers in power. Instead, the sermon laughs *at* the carnival, mocking its joyful relativity and levelling of hierarchies as an empty ritual that is ultimately hollow and debased.

III. Conclusion

In examining the function of laughter in two distinct carnivalesque works, I have argued against the view of the carnival as a license to laugh at established hierarchies in favor of an interpretation of the carnival as the object of parodic ridicule. This treatment was limited in its scope to two works from different cultural contexts, but I hope to have put forth a method for analyzing parodic works as a fool-making process that will illuminate the nature of comedy in other contexts. Still remaining is the question of to what extent parody *can* move and persuade

its audience to new moral horizons. In the interpretation I have put forth, parody's didactic potential remains limited as a matter of epistemology, given that one would need to mostly believe in the norms that these works reaffirm in order to laugh with them. Otherwise, comedy remains as a tool for the establishment of moral solidarity, and thus the double-edges of out-group bigotry and in-group social accountability. In the mocking of a fool outside of the bounds of the accepted morality, comedy calls upon its audience to live in accordance with affirmed normative structures, lest they be ousted for their misdeeds and made a fool for the rest to ridicule.

Appendix A.

“The Sermon on Saint Nobody”

Translated by Ben Parsons and Bas Jongenelen.

Non scriptum est in libro Nullorum

De uno Nullo Willecommorum

Capitulorum nullo decimo sexto.

Ille Nullus nonfuit curates

5 Nec etiam magistratus

In nullo prolegeorum.

Dreary beloved, gathered here today,

I pray listen well to all I have to say.

These words come from Latin: you must take care

10 To study the wisdom that they lay bare.

Imprint them on your very heart and soul,

In case they leak out through your asshole,

Because they reflect the noblest of men.

Without the aid of paper, ink, or pen,

15 He left us a message, honest and true:

The kingdom of Heaven shall open to you

If you drink yourself mad. I will interpret:

My brethren, lest your soul be forfeit,

Don't hoard up your goods for a rainy day,

20 Even if your children should waste away,

Always drink freely should the chance arise

And your soul will find its way to paradise.

We read in *capito nullo* of a thirst

That caused a man to drink till he burst.

25 What did he look like, you wish to know?

Like all angels—dressed in black, from head to toe.

I read that his soul then flew, quick smart,

To Heaven, to dwell in its darkest part.

Think of the bliss that was his to sample.

30 Children, let this man be your example,

From the scourge of light you will be freed.

Do it now, not later. I pray, take heed.

Non scriptum est in libro Nullorum

De uno Nullo Willecommorum

35 Capitulorum nullo decimo sexto.

Saint Drincatibus speaks of the holy ground,

Where the tomb of *Nullus Willecomme* is found,

So widely admired, as everyone knows,

That all doors were slammed shut on his nose,

40 From every corner with no drink he was plied.

Children, may great gulps down our throats slide:

In this duty *Nullus* never fell short.
 From his tomb indulgences may be bought,
 A *plena culpa* can be yours for a song.
 45 From this point I shall try to hold my tongue
 And to return to the theme of my speech:
 Only drinking will put Heaven in reach.
 Drink till you're cross-eyed, from your wine or beer jug,
 You free a soul from purgatory with each glug.
 50 Listen to what *Drincatibus* espouses:
 He who drinks till he dishonors his trousers
 Will receive absolution aplenty,
 Forty days of grace, minus two times twenty,
 With as many pardons as he is due.
 55 If you doubt this, the Pope will curse you.
 So make sure your absorptions are kept up,
 This summer you must fill and drain your cup
 Even if your cash should escape clean away—
 Not even that will keep scumbags at bay.⁶
 60 Heed my words! There is good in all I speak,
 Redemption can be yours this holy week.
 All that I say now is no ploy or jest:
 After tonight come eight nights without rest.
 I urge you to be joyful in spirit,
 65 And to pay these three churches a visit:
 They are empty, so there'll be room, don't fear.
 Then I will give the best command you'll hear
 To drink a certain water, three mugs or four.
 Even if your asshole starts to pour
 70 Ignore it, as long as your ribs are full.
 You may wake with cellar fever in your skull,
 But this precious liquid you must revere:
 It has traveled seven miles to be here.
 Saint *Drincatibus*, that devoted soul,
 75 Was the first who tipped it down his neck-hole.
 He lived with Bacchus, a man holier still,
 Who taught him to drink without reaching his fill.
 He drank so much that all sin he forgot,
 And then at the last he choked on his snot.
 80 This killed him dead, as the scripture makes plain,
 Not as a saint, but as a martyr to pain.
 He drank so much, many authors admit,
 That daily he filled his pants with shit.
 Think of the trials this man had to endure,
 85 With his asshole running wet with ordure.
 He often lay in filth—true hardship he knew—
 And when he stood it ran out of each shoe.

Does this mystery not move your heart?
 Alas! They laid him on a muck-cart.
 90 No one would undress him, no one even tried,
 Since he was caked in shit on each side.
 His corpse fell on the ground, exposed to all,
 Snotty, shitty, covered in spittle and gall.
 Some women dragged him to a pigsty,
 95 They pulled a handkerchief out of his fly,
 And gave it to stray cats for their dinner-plate.
 Women! Do you see the suffering you create?
 Think about the evils you have performed!
 That poor wretched saint lies there all deformed,
 100 As if he was dredged out of a cesspool.
 Thus he was martyred, from your treatment cruel.
 My brethren, kneel down and join me in prayer
 For clerics and laymen everywhere:
 May they have long life, in tremendous pain.
 105 Now I shall ask you to pray once again
 For those held prisoner this Ash Wednesday,
 Since they will not be spared either way,
 And their souls must certainly be let loose.
 Hear their names: they are Peter Ox, Gerald Goose,
 110 Giles Rabbit, John Capon, Peter Sheep.⁷
 Sadness into their poor hearts shall creep
 As they try to open every lock and bolt.
 All who go to slaughter, through goodness or fault,
 From Ash Wednesday to Easter are disallowed.
 115 So raise your voices for them, clear and loud:
 May they make their way to a hungry gut.
 In the name of charity, your purses I must cut,
 For a poor sick boy, Martin Fields by name.
 His house contains such lack it is a shame.
 120 All his maid found in his pantry yesterday
 Was a dead mouse that had wasted away.
 There is another case I must mention,
 Though I blush to bring it to your attention
 I feel compelled. It is Gilly Youngwhore.
 125 She accosted me just now, outside the door.
 The young men seem to like her well enough,
 So please give freely, then I can pay her off.
 She has secret hardships, in no small amount.
 Well, now I am forced to give an account
 130 Of those we will host till Easter comes around,
 In each house at every hour they'll be found.
 I shall name them all, since I feel daring:
 There is John Cod, Peter Haddock, John Herring,⁸

Gerald Kipper, Giles Halibut as well,
 135 Peter Mullet, John Hake, Matthew Mackerel,
 At the fireside they have a special bench.
 Then there is Lance Carp and Finley Tench,
 George Salmon, John Pilchard. Even when ill,
 Even in bad times, you'll shelter them still:
 140 Until Easter comes, each one is our guest.
 A number of women must also be addressed,
 Such as Gretchen Greasepan and Claire Olivetwig,
 Claire Apple, Betty Raisin, Trudy Fig.
 Countless others into our kitchens will crawl,
 145 There are so many I can't count them all.
 In this empty church, hear now my commands:
 For four days you may rest your feet and hands,
 Then in this empty place you must reappear.
 Do not disturb the pardons heaped up here.
 150 Although they may be false and incorrect
 You fools must show them proper respect,
 Because there is nothing that is much worse
 Than finding yourself placed under a curse.
 This church warns masters and boys to take care
 155 Not to sleep in a barn in the cold night air.
 And you, women, and also your daughters,
 Must visit this empty place, take its waters,
 Fill up your bodies with the stuff we pour
 Or else you'll be virgins for evermore.
 160 *Absolvat vulgat*, or "your ass will start gushing":⁹
 A saying of Drincatibus, patron of nothing,
 You may reach where he lies, if you're imprudent.
 Bacchus once gave a blessing to his student
 (This is the last I shall say of these two)
 165 That same blessing I now pass on to you:
 May your shirt be wet at front and back too.
 Amen.

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