

The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation. Translated by Jeannie K. Bartha, Annette Grant Cash, and Richard Terry Mount. Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2008.

Excerpt from Miracle 20: The Inebriated Monk

I would like to tell you about another miracle
that happened to a monk of a religious order:
the Devil wanted to frighten him severely,
but the Glorious Mother knew how to prevent it.

Ever since he was in the order, indeed ever since he was a novice,
he always loved serving the Glorious One;
he guarded against folly, against speaking of fornication,
but he finally fell into vice.

He entered the wine cellar by chance one day;
he drank a great deal of wine: this was without moderation.
The crazy man got drunk: he took leave of his senses;
until vespers he lay on the hard ground.

Then at the hour of vespers, the sun was very weak,
he awoke badly; he walked around dazed.
He went out toward the cloister almost senseless;
everyone understood that he had drunk too much.

Although he could not stand up on his feet,
he went to the church as he was accustomed to do;
the Devil tried to trip him up,
because, indeed, he intended to conquer him easily.

In the form of a bull that is raging,
pawing the ground with his hooves, with changed countenance,
with fierce horns, angry and irate,
the devil stopped before him.

He made bad faces at him, the devilish thing;
he would put his horns in him, in the middle of his entrails.
The good man took a very bad fright,
but the Glorious One, Crowned Queen, helped him.

Holy Mary came with her honored garment,
which no living soul could fail to esteem.
She put herself in between him and the Devil;
the oh-so-proud bull was immediately tamed.

The lady threatened him with the skirt of her mantle;

for him this was a very great punishment.
He fled and vanished, crying loudly;
the monk remained in peace, thanks be to the Holy Father!

Then a short time later, at a few paces
before he [the monk] began to climb the steps,
he attacked him again, making evil faces,
like a dog striking with fangs.

He came viciously, his teeth bared,
his countenance altered, his eyes open wide,
to tear him to pieces, back and sides.
“Wretched sinner,” said he, “grave are my sins!”

Indeed, the monk believed he would be torn to pieces;
he was in great trouble, he was badly disturbed.
Then the Glorious One helped him, that gifted one;
like the bull, the dog was driven away.

As he entered the church, on the highest step,
he attacked him again for a third time,
in the form of a lion, a fearsome beast,
bearing ferocity beyond imagination.

There the monk believed that he was devoured,
because in truth he saw a fierce encounter.
This was worse for him than all the past ones;
in his mind he cursed the Devil.

He said, “Help me, Glorious One, Mother, Holy Mary!
May your grace help me now, on this day,
because I am in great danger: I could not be in greater.
Mother, do not dwell upon my great madness.”

Scarcely was the monk able to complete the words,
when Holy Mary came as she was accustomed to come.
With a stick in her hand to strike the lion,
she put herself in the middle and began to say,

“Sir false traitor, you do not learn a lesson,
but I will give you today what you are asking for.
Before you go away from here you will pay;
I want you to know with whom you have waged war.”

She began to give him great blows:
the big blows drowned out the small;

the lion suffered greatly;
he never in all his days had his sides so beaten.

The good lady said to him: “Sir false traitor,
you who always walk in evil belong to an evil master:
if I catch you again here in these surroundings,
of what you are getting today, you will get even worse.”

The figure faded, it began to flee;
never again did it dare to mock the monk;
a long time passed before he healed;
the Devil was glad when she ordered him to go.

The monk who had passed through all this
was not fully recovered from the effects of the wine;
both the wine and the fear had so punished him
that he could not return to his customary bed.

The Precious Queen of precious deed
took him by the hand, led him to his bed.
She covered him with the blanket and bedspread;
she put the pillow under his head just right.