

# World Literary Anecdotes

A Compendium of 1,200 Stories and Bon Mots About

Writers and Writing, Books and Publishers

from the World's Non-English-Speaking Nations



Robert Hendrickson

# World Literary Anecdotes

Robert Hendrickson



**Facts On File**

*New York • Oxford • Sydney*

## *For my granddaughter, Erin*

### **World Literary Anecdotes**

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## INTRODUCTION

While various books of American and British literary anecdotes have appeared over the years it is hard to think of one book in English collecting literary anecdotes from other nations of the world. In fact, with the exception of a number of much-repeated French anecdotes, most dating back to the age of Voltaire, and some stories of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and several other literary giants, very few stories about non-English speaking (or writing) authors have appeared even in general anthologies. This book, the result of over ten years of combing hundreds of millions of words, is an attempt to correct that situation and is probably the first of its kind. In it the reader will find not only the bon mots of great literary wits from Austria to Zaire, but oddities and curiosities of world literature and touching stories as well. However, while these pages provide a unique and extensive introduction to the literatures of the world, the scope of the anthology is so wide that some readers will doubtless find omissions, which I would be glad to add in future editions if brought to my attention.

The basic ground rules for this collection are the same as for its companion volumes, *American Literary Anecdotes* and *British Literary Anecdotes* (which covers writers from countries belonging to the Commonwealth). First, I've scrupulously tried to exclude either anecdotes of living writers or anecdotes of deceased writers that could hurt living friends and relations. Writers and their relatives have troubles enough and John Aubrey is generally right, I think, when he says of his marvelous "rude and hastie collection," *Brief Lives*, that before literary anecdotes are "fitt to lett flie abroad" the "author and the Persons...ought to be rotten first." Second, I should say that my collection too is "rude and hastie," though I hope hastier than rude; in any case, I tried to be as brief as possible with each entry so that there could be more entries. This meant sometimes condensing or paraphrasing what I could have preferred to quote at length, but I hope that in most cases I've managed to get the essence of the author and anecdote. Third, I've tried to indicate when a story is doubtful, or when it

has been told about several writers, though I doubtless missed some anecdotes I should have labeled apocryphal (despite checking one or more biographies for most stories). Finally, I've tried to include stories and very brief sketches of all the major world literary figures and represent all the noted literary wits among them with an ample selection of their quips, but I haven't hesitated to include literary anecdotes concerning people who weren't writers, or to include authors noteworthy or remembered solely today for one good story regarding them, such as a few remembered just for their last words or epitaphs. I hope in the last case that the stories may lead readers to the forgotten work of some very deserving writers.

It should be added that this book, which ranges from prehistoric to present times, is arranged alphabetically by authors but has a name and place index, which includes writers mentioned in these pages who haven't an entry to themselves, as well as a topic index enabling readers to find one or more anecdotes about certain subjects, such as accidentally destroyed manuscripts, literary hoaxes, love affairs, hard-drinking authors, strange deaths etc. etc.

My thanks to my editor, Gerry Helferich, and copy editor, Gloria McDarrah, both of whom made valuable contributions to this work. I would also like to thank the many people, too numerous to mention here, who suggested anecdotes to me through the years, particularly those correspondents who wrote from all over the world (including one from Saudi Arabia whose address I've lost and can't write to thank) providing me with more literary hors d'oeuvres after my *The Literary Life and Other Curiosities* was published in 1980. But, of course, all of the errors herein are my responsibility. I can't even blame them on my wife, Marilyn, who worked as hard on this book as I did but who would be she who hung the moon and stars to me if she neither worked upon nor even read a word of my deathless prose.

Robert Hendrickson  
Far Rockaway, New York

### **Ivar Andreas Aasen (1813–1896)**

Aasen, a Norwegian philologist and lexicographer, is the only person known to have created a national language. The author had collected all of his country's difficult regional speech for the books he had written on Norwegian dialects. Out of these he fashioned a popular language, or *folk-maal*, which replaced the Dano-Norwegian his countrymen had previously used, to enable all the nation's different dialect users to understand each other. Aasen has been hailed as having "an isolated place in history as the one man who has invented or at least selected and constructed a [national] language." In order to do this, he not only constructed the new composite language but also wrote poems and plays in the *folk-maal* to help popularize it. (See also VUK STEFANOVITCH KARAFICH.)



### **Abbad al-Motadid (d. 1069)**

This great figure in Spanish Mohammedan history was a noted poet and patron of the arts, but a drunkard, poisoner, and treacherous warrior as well. He killed with his own hand a son who rebelled against him. Another time he tricked his Berber enemies into visiting him at Seville and smothered them all to death in a steam room of the palace. As was his custom, he used the skulls of the poorest of these dead men as flowerpots, and put the skulls of the richest to use as containers for his gold, jewels and poems.



### **Shah Abbas I (1557–1628?)**

The Persian ruler, accomplished poet and magnanimous patron of the arts, despised tobacco and tried to trick his courtiers into abandoning their smoking habits. Drying some horse manure, he substituted it for the tobacco kept in the palace tobacco cans and told them it was a rare, costly blend presented to him by the vizier of Hamadan. However, his courtiers relished it. "It smells like a thousand flowers!" one poet exulted. Replied Shah Abbas: "Cursed be that drug that cannot be distinguished from the dung of horses!"



### **Peter Abelard (1079–1142)**

Abelard was a French philosopher hired by Fulbert, a canon at Notre Dame, to educate his brilliant niece Heloise. When Abelard fell in love with the girl and instructed her in the arts of love, making her pregnant, Fulbert took his revenge. He hired a gang of toughs to assault Abelard on the street and emasculate him with their knives. After this the philosopher became a monk, living for another 25 years, and Heloise became a nun.

**Bernardo Accolti (1465–1536)**

Sometimes called Unico because of his great skill as an improvisational poet, Accolti's unequaled prowess in impromptu poetry was rewarded lavishly by Pope Leo. The Italian *improvisatore* earned so much in fees from the pope that he was actually able to buy the little duchy of Nepi.



**Achiacharus (5th century B.C.)**

The Eastern sage's wise sayings became proverbial in many languages, and the legend of his life influenced much world literature. Achiacharus is said to have been a magician who built castles in the air and made twisted ropes out of sand. His fables, in which he employed animals and birds, anticipated Aesop's.



**Uriel Acosta (c. 1591–1647?)**

Born into the Roman Catholic faith, to which his Jewish family had been forced to convert, the Portuguese author converted back to Judaism, exchanging his baptismal name of Gabriel for Uriel. But he found no satisfaction in either religion, switching back and forth all his life—he was twice excommunicated from the Catholic church and twice readmitted to the synagogue at Amsterdam. Finally, he recanted his severe criticism of Judaism, a criticism that did not take into account the persecution of the Jews over the ages, and was required to do penance. After being scourged, Acosta was made to lie across the doorway to the synagogue, and the congregation, including his brother Joseph, who had strongly condemned him, all stepped over him on the way out. It is said that Spinoza, then a boy of 15, may have watched his humiliation. In any case, Acosta went home and again bitterly denounced his religion in his intellectual autobiography *Exemplar Humanae Vitae*, which he wrote in several days and nights. Having finished the book and seeing nowhere to turn, he decided to commit suicide. After loading two pistols, he waited by the window until his brother passed. He fired at Joseph, missed him, and then turned the other pistol on himself. His autobiography, first published 40 years after he committed suicide, became the basis of K. F. Gutzkow's tragedy *Uriel Acosta* (1847).



**Arthur Adamov (1908–1970)**

In a 1962 speech at Edinburgh the brilliant playwright of the Theatre of the Absurd advised: "The reason why most Absurdist plays take place in No Man's Land with only two characters is mainly financial."



**Alfred Adler (1870–1937)**

One evening the Austrian psychiatrist and author, an associate of Freud, was lecturing about his theory that people's handicaps lead to their choice of work. Stutterers often become actors, he maintained, fat boys distance runners, visually deficient people painters, etc. "Dr. Adler," someone asked after his lecture, "wouldn't your theory indicate that weak-minded people tend to become psychiatrists?"

**Aeschines (c. 390–314? B.C.)**

The famous Athenian orator and unsuccessful rival of the great Demosthenes was a tragic actor before he turned political speaker. Though a highly regarded thespian he very nearly didn't live out his career, performing before audiences who expressed their displeasure by throwing olives, figs or stones at actors. One time he appeared in a play that the audience regarded as highly offensive and was almost stoned to death, which is perhaps why he turned to oratory.

**Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.)**

One of the few great writers who was also a great war hero, the founder of Greek drama fought as a soldier in the war against Persia. He saw action at Marathon, Artemisium, Salamis and Plataea, and his brother Cynaegirus, fighting beside him at Marathon, was killed while attempting a conspicuously gallant act. The Athenians revered Aeschylus as a war hero as well as a great tragedian, placing portraits of the brothers in the picture that served as the national memorial of the battle in Athens' *Stoa Poecile* (pictured porch). In his epitaph, probably written by himself, the poet is represented as fighting at Marathon

Aeschylus is said to have been acting in one of his own plays when a reference to Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, was made and the audience accused him of revealing the secrets of that "earth mother," who had the power to make the earth barren. The audience rose up in fury, cursing the poet and charging toward him. Aeschylus saved himself only by fleeing to the altar of Dionysus in the orchestra, which even the angry crowd respected as an inviolable sanctuary. Later, when tried for his crime, he pleaded that "he did not know that what he said was secret" and was freed, probably largely because of his heroism as a soldier at Marathon.

Though he came from a noble family, bravely fought for his country, and was noted for his dignity, sublimity and eloquence, Aeschylus died a quite undignified death far removed from the themes of utmost grandeur that he chose for

his plays. According to legend, at least, the Greek poet was killed when an eagle dropped a tortoise on his bald head, mistaking it for a rock to break its meal upon.



### **Aesop (c. 620–c. 560 B.C.)**

Stories abound about Aesop, who may be a legendary figure. The author of the noted animal fables is said to have been the freed black slave of Iadmon of Samos who was killed by the people of Delphi as a sacrifice when a pestilence came upon them. The reasons suggested for Aesop's offending the gods included his insulting sarcasm, the embezzlement of money entrusted to him by King Croesus, and the theft of a rare silver cup. One account describes him as an ugly, deformed man, and it is said that during the reign of Peisistratus he told his fable of "The Frogs Asking for a King" to persuade the people not to change Peisistratus for another ruler. But of Aesop's life only the fables are known to be real.

In the first issue of his magazine *Le Festin d'Ésope (Aesop's Feast)*, published in 1903, the French writer Guillaume Apollinaire reprinted this old anecdote about the Greek fabulist:

His master, Xantus, who was giving a banquet for his friends, ordered him one day to compose a meal of the best ingredients he could buy. Aesop served a banquet in which every dish, from the soup to the dessert, was made of tongues prepared in various ways. When Xantus reproved him, Aesop replied that he had followed his orders to the letter, since the tongue (French *langue*) being the organ of language, is also the vehicle of truth, reason, science, social life and all things that make life precious. The next day Xantus ordered Aesop to prepare a meal consisting of all the worst ingredients. Aesop again served the same dishes, explaining that the tongue, as the organ of language, is also responsible for all the worst things in the world—quarrels, dissensions, lawsuits, strife, war, lies, slander, blasphemy and all manner of things evil.



### **Clodius Aesopus (fl. 1st century B.C.)**

Aesopus, a Roman tragedian and friend of Cicero, was considered as great an actor as the comic player Roscius, his artful facial expressions and gestures said to be unrivaled. The old tale about Cleopatra dissolving an expensive pearl in vinegar may have as its origin a story about Aesopus taking a pearl from the earring of Caecilia Metella and dissolving it in vinegar so that, according to a British writer, "he might have the satisfaction of swallowing £800 at a gulp."

**Denis Auguste Affre (1793–1848)**

The French Catholic archbishop and author, who wrote a noted study of Egyptian hieroglyphics, among other works, tried to restore peace during the riots of June 1848. Despite warnings he mounted the barricades at the entrance to the Faubourg St. Antoine in his robes, waving a green branch as a symbol of peace. But the insurgents, hearing shots in the distance, believed they had been betrayed, and opened fire wildly—a stray bullet killing the archbishop.

**Alexander Nikolayevich Afinogenov (1904–1941)**

*On the Eve* (1941), the Russian dramatist's final play, depicted a German attack on the Soviet Union. A month after its first performance he himself was killed in a German air raid on Moscow.

**Jean Louis Rodolphe Agassiz (1807–1873)**

The Swiss-born naturalist, author and educator taught for 25 years at Harvard, and in that time had more offers to give public lectures than he had time for without detracting from his scientific studies. One lyceum repeatedly asked him to speak, and when he kept refusing, assured him that he would be very well paid for his lecture. "That is no inducement to me," Agassiz replied. "I cannot afford to waste my time making money."

At the start of each year at Harvard, Agassiz would tell his classes: "Gentlemen, the world is older than we have been taught to think. Its age is as if one were gently to rub a silk handkerchief across Plymouth Rock once a year until it were reduced to a pebble."

**Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (c. 62–12 B.C.)**

The Roman general and author of a lost autobiography was convinced by the emperor to take the promiscuous Julia as his third wife. According to a traditional tale, when Julia was later asked why despite all her adulteries each of her five children resembled Agrippa, she replied, "I never take on a passenger unless the vessel is already full."

**Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892–1927)**

The author of *Rashomon*, perhaps schizophrenic, killed himself with an overdose of sleeping pills after an attack of severe paranoia. It is said that the Japanese

author felt guilty of plagiarism for basing his fiction on traditional tales, even though they dated as far back as the 10th century.



**Alcaeus (fl. c. 600 B.C.)**

A nobleman who fled from battle after losing his shield in the war against the Athenians, Alcaeus was forced into exile by his political enemies. Many of the lyric poems written by this inventor of Alcaic verse were drinking songs. According to Alcaeus and other Greek writers, literary cocktail parties in ancient Greece were more lively than their present-day counterparts. In one game, called *cottalus*, the object was for the recumbent player to drink most of his wine and cast the remainder from his drinking cup in such a way that it would sail through the air as one intact mass and hit a mark, making a distinct noise. In one of many variations, shallow saucers were floated in a huge basin; the object was to cast the wine into the saucers and sink them, with the competitor who sank the most saucers receiving a prize.



**Marianna Alcoforado (1640–1723)**

When she was about 25 the lovely Portuguese nun met the Marquis de Chamilly, a handsome marshal of France then serving in Portugal's army. She fell in love with him and Chamilly, aided by his prestige and her naiveté, seduced her before clandestinely deserting to France when their affair was discovered and a scandal arose. Between December 1667 and June 1668 Marianne wrote to her lover the five short letters known as *Letters of a Portuguese Nun*, that have become a classic translated into many languages, including a German edition by Rilke. Only Rousseau doubted the epistles' veracity—he thought they were written by a man.



**Ulisse Aldrovandi (Lat. Ulysses Aldrovandus; 1523?–1605?)**

"Cock-and-bull" has its rightful place beside "fish story" and "pescatorial prevarication," but this scientist, not a sportsman, is responsible for the phrase. Aldrovandus had the profession of naturalist and an imagination as lively as any fisherman's. The phrase cock-and-bull derives from his story of the cockatrice, or basilisk: the mythical, crown-headed king of serpents. Aldrovandus swore that this creature, produced from a cock's egg hatched by a snake, withered plants and poisoned men by its look. The sound of crowing killed the monster, he said, and he persuaded many of his contemporaries to carry roosters with them when they traveled. Cynics, however, proved Aldrovandus wrong, and although the 16th century naturalist filled 13 or 14 folio volumes with a wealth of valuable material, he is remembered for the "big one that got away."

Aldrovandus was so ample on the subject of cock-and-bull and cockatrice, that a new phrase was added to the language. All rambling, gossiping tales of doubtful credibility have since been called cock-and-bull stories.



**Sholom Aleichem (Solomon Rabinowitz; 1859–1916)**

The Russian-born Yiddish author took his penname from the traditional greeting of Jews, meaning "peace unto you." Aleichem suffered from triskaidekaphobia, fear of the number 13, and his manuscripts never had a page 13. Ironically, he died on a May 13, but the date on his headstone in Mount Carmel Cemetery, Glendale, New York, reads "May 12a, 1916." According to one tale, Aleichem, called "The Jewish Mark Twain," chanced to meet Mark Twain in New York. "I am The American *Sholom Aleichem*," Twain modestly told him.

While a tutor of Russian to 12-year-old Olga Loeff, Aleichem fell in love with his pupil. Her wealthy father fired him, but he waited four years until he was 21, then married Olga. Her father soon died and left them a large fortune, much of which Aleichem used to encourage Yiddish writers.



**Jean d'Alembert (1717–1783)**

The brilliant French scientist and encyclopedist was the illegitimate child of Claudine Alexandrine de Tencin, a former nun, and artillery officer, the Chevalier Destouches. Having escaped from the nunnery in which her father had enrolled her 16 years before, Claudine hid in the bed of the chevalier, where the two of them soon produced Jean. When he was born, however, his mother abandoned him on the steps of the Church of St-Jean-le-Rond, where he was found and eventually adopted. His enterprising mother went from the bed of the chevalier to the beds of Matthew Prior and Lord Bolingbroke. Improving herself all the time, she added Richelieu, Fontenelle and the head of the Paris police to her long list of lovers. This interesting woman influenced history with her famous salon as well as her choice of beds, but she is best remembered for her romantic escapades. It is said that she became the regent's mistress by posing as a nude statue in his palace and coming to life when he touched her.

"You will never be anything but a philosopher," d'Alembert's adoptive mother once told him sadly. "And what is a philosopher? 'Tis a madman who torments himself all his life so that people may talk about him when he is dead."

While writing his contribution to the great French *Encyclopédie*, d'Alembert lived in poverty in a Parisian garret. On receiving a letter from Voltaire describing

a majestic view, he replied, "You write to me from your bed, where you command ten leagues of lake, and I answer you from my hole, whence I command a patch of sky three ells long."

▽ ▽ ▽

### **Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.)**

Legend says Alexander the Great always carried a treasured edition of Homer corrected by his tutor Aristotle, and that he put it under his pillow at night along with his sword. When Alexander found a golden casket studded with gems in the tent of Darius after he defeated the Persian king, he placed his edition of Homer inside and kept it there, whenever he wasn't reading it, for the rest of his life, frequently saying, "There is but one thing in life worthy of so precious a casket."

▽ ▽ ▽

### **Alfonso the Learned (1226?–1284)**

As Carlyle observed, nothing is remembered of the many sayings of this Spanish king and author except his remark about Ptolemy's astronomy: "Had I been present at the creation, I would have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe."

▽ ▽ ▽

### **Alphonse Allais (1854–1905)**

This French humorist and dramatist admired himself or pretended to admire himself more than history has admired him or pretended to admire him. "I have been asked to talk to you on the subject of the theater," he once said, in words that have also been attributed to Mark Twain, "but I feel that my talk will make you sad. For Shakespeare is dead, Molière is dead, Racine is dead, Marivaux is dead—and I am not feeling too well myself."

▽ ▽ ▽

### **Karl Jonas Ludwig Almquist (1793–1866)**

Almquist was a famous writer in Sweden when he fled to the United States in 1851 after being convicted of forgery and charged with murder. Nothing was heard of him for years, though it is now known that he settled in St. Louis. While on a journey through Texas the novelist was held up at gunpoint by robbers who stole all his manuscripts, including several unpublished novels of which he had no copies. Almquist appealed in person to President Lincoln for help in retrieving his manuscripts, but the robbers were never found. This was the author's only

punishment for his crimes, however; he soon left America for Germany, where he died the next year in Bremen while posing as a Professor Westerman.



### **Anacreon (fl. 6th century B.C.)**

A Greek lyric poet, Anacreon wrote light poems praising wine and love that were imitated by Jonson, Herrick and other early English bards. A drinking club in London used his name, and its club song, "Anacreon in Heaven," provided the music for Francis Scott Key's "Star Spangled Banner," the American national anthem.



### **Anaxagoras (c. 500–c. 430 B.C.)**

The Greek philosopher and scientist was brought a ram with a single unicornlike horn in the center of its forehead and told that a soothsayer had claimed the single horn was a supernatural omen. Anaxagoras killed the animal, cleft its skull and showed that the brain had grown upward toward the center rather than filling both sides of the cranium, thus producing the single horn.

On his deathbed a man of ill repute complained to the philosopher that he was dying in a foreign land. "The descent to Hades," Anaxagoras replied, "is the same from any place."

Anaxagoras was condemned to death in absentia by the Athenians on charges of impiety because he had described the sun as "a mass of stone on fire." When he was told of the condemnation, he replied, "Nature has long since condemned both them and me."



### **Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875)**

Never a healthy man (he died as a result of falling out of bed) and viewed as a lunatic by many in his early years when he wanted to become an opera singer, Andersen had little confidence in himself and always disdained his immortal fairy tales. The Danish fabulist was so ashamed of his body that before going out he would pad his shirt with newspapers to make himself appear more muscular.

Andersen didn't enroll in grammar school until he was 17 years old. He was over six years older and fully a head taller than the 11-year-olds in whose class he was placed.

The nightingale in Andersen's "The Nightingale" (1843) was based on Jenny Lind, with whom the writer fell in love early in her career when she was an unknown opera singer. The diva spurned his love, though she remained his friend, and later became famous as P. T. Barnum's "Swedish Nightingale."

While traveling in Europe, Andersen, still an unknown writer, met Victor Hugo and asked him for his autograph. A suspicious Hugo, afraid that his signature might be used as acknowledgment of a debt that might be inserted above it, signed "Victor Hugo" in the right-hand corner at the very top of Andersen's blank piece of paper.

Andersen submitted his immortal *Fairy Tales* to every publisher in Copenhagen. All of them turned it down and he was forced to publish the book himself.

In his *A Visit to Germany, Italy and Malta, 1840–1841*, the Danish writer told this story:

I was walking through one of the Munich streets and came to a bookshop where, among the books on display, I saw a German edition of my *Improvvisatore*...I went in and asked for it. A young man handed me a small volume, which comprised just the first part.

"But I want the whole novel," I said.

"It is the whole," he answered. "There are no other parts. I have read it myself, sir."

"But did you not think," I asked, "that it ends rather abruptly and that one really does not have a proper solution?"

"Well, yes," he said, "but it is like those French novels. The writer hints at a conclusion and one has to fill it in for oneself."

"But that is not the case here," I interrupted. "This is only the first part you have given me."

"But I tell you," he said, half angry, "I have *read* it!"

"But I *wrote* it!" I replied

The man looked me up and down. He did not contradict me, but I could see from his face that he did not believe me.

Before Andersen died, he arranged for a composer to write his funeral march. "Most of the people who will walk after me will be children," he instructed, "so make the beat keep time with little steps."



### **Jerzy Andrzejewski (b. 1909)**

The Polish author's *Gates of Paradise* (1962), a novel about the Children's Crusade, appears to be the longest literary work written without punctuation. The novel amounts to one long sentence with no punctuation for the first 40,000 words.



## Anonymous

No one knows how many authors have used the byline “Anonymous” or “Anon.” over the ages. A French dictionary published in 1822–23 alone listed over 23,000 anonymous entries. Often these were prominent authors forced to conceal their names for one reason or another.

Ancient Greek actors and dramatists were sometimes frightened off the stage by audiences who threw figs, olives or stones when they disliked a performance. One anonymous dramatist-actor, apparently a poor one, borrowed a supply of stones to build a house and promised to return the loan with the stones he expected to collect from his next performance.

The longest poem in the world is the *Mahabharata*, which tells the story of the descendants of the Hindu king Bharata. *Mahabharata* means “the great Bharata,” and the poem’s 110,000 couplets, or 220,000 lines, make it four times longer than the Bible and eight times longer than Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined. The Indian poem is really the combined work of many generations of anonymous writers, written between the years 400 B.C. and 150 B.C. Though its main theme is the war between descendants of Kuru and Pandu, it is a vast repository of philosophy and legend. The *Ramayana*, named after the god Rama, is another great Indian epic poem, containing 24,000 stanzas in seven books as we know it today.

In ancient times “word contests” were often quite literally wars with words. The most colorful examples of this were those poets who led pre-Islamic Arabs into combat, hurling curses at the enemy, who usually had poets who cursed back.

Only monks did more copying of manuscripts than the medieval private or professional scribes, who were hired by rich men or booksellers. Often the scribes ended their wearisome labor with strange or humorous requests on the last page—these colophons including:

This completes the whole;  
For Christ’s sake give me a drink.  
For the work of this pen let the writer  
receive a beautiful girl.

The *Missae ac Missalis Anatomia*, published in 1561, has been called the world’s worst printed book, its 172 pages including 15 pages of errata. In any event, its anonymous author claimed that Satan had soaked his manuscript, making it