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1521 The poet Merlin fed macaronic by Muses Tp34.jpg
Folengo Macaronic Works 1521

Descriptions of Woodcuts (I may be able to restore an earlier version with descriptions matched to each woodcut print; for now just a start)

1521 1a Merlin fed macaroni by Muses Tp34

Here we see the plump poet Merlin being fed macaroni by his Muses so that he will write an epic poem (Baldus, Book 1.62-3). Later, Merlin jumps into the action of his poem to save his heroes. He explains how he was raised at public expense to be the greatest poet ever, vastly superior to Homer and Vergil, (22.1-132).

1521 1b Guidone victorious in joust Tp36

Number one! At the royal joust in Paris, Guidone shows us that he is the greatest (1.370-71). But unfortunately for him, his battles on the field are nothing compared to the battle in his heart -- Guido is in love! And not with just any girl, but Baldovina, the King's only daughter. After a magnificent feast in his honor, Guido overcomes his previous indifference to love and snatches the princess and flees with her to Italy where their son Baldo will be born (1.146-390).

See too the 1692 engraving of the King urging Guidone not to bow to him.

1521 2 Guido and Baldovina elope Tp41r

Still in their fine clothes, the knight Guidone and the French princess Baldovina elope. Later donning rags to elude bounty hunters, they cross the Alps into Italy. The king is beside himself. He sends out armed parties and spies to look for his daughter and Guidone; he sends out heralds to make dire proclamations against anyone who helps them escape, but they are not to be found. Poor King! “Quo desperatus sese ammazzare volebat, seu scannare gulum ferro, seu rumpere lazzo” (2.44-5, In his desperation, he wants to kill himself, either by slashing his neck with an iron blade or by snapping it with a noose).

Passing through Mantua, Guidone and Baldovina continue on and happen upon the modest hut of a courteous peasant named Berto. Not to be missed are the marvelous description of Berto's welcome, and of the meal that the three of them prepare together -- Berto even places the bottom of a box under the wine carafe so that it won't leave red stains on the table!: 2.131-333. And shortly, witness Baldo’s birth, 2.433-97.

1521 3 Young Baldo kills Lancelot/Slanzagnoccus Tp44r

Here, the young Baldo is set upon by a brute and is forced to stab the huge man in self-defense (3.356-68). Baldo is feisty even as a toddler -- his name means bold, hardy. What precipitates this first act of man slaughter is Baldo's prowess in boyhood games -- because he wins all their money, a rich boy and his friends ambush our young hero. Baldo leaves one boy on the ground, not dead, just knocked out. However, since this lad is the son of a count, the gigantic Lancelot attacks Baldo to avenge him.
Baldo is later arrested for this murder but then manages to speak so eloquently in his own defense, that he is remanded to the care of a famous knight (3.456-88).

1521 4a Baldo and friends - Cingar and giant Fracasso Tp50r

Baldo turns into a young thug with a curious assortment of loyal friends. Here we see him with the giant Fracassus, and the trickster Cingar -- his name may be from Zingaro, Gypsy, 4.81-106.

1521 4b Tognazzo gives Zambello advice Tp73r

Here we see the beleaguered peasant Zambello receiving much needed advice from Tognazzo, a town elder (4.264-365). Poor starving, flea-bitten Zambello is the son of the peasant, Berto, who raised Baldo as his own son. Thus, Zambello is the legitimate heir to Berto's possessions -- not Baldo, and yet it is Baldo who takes control of everything. Baldo and his wife force Zambello to work all day in the fields, then take his money, feed him almost nothing, and beat him soundly with clubs; Baldo spends Zambello's money in taverns on lavish feasts, (4.160-79). Tognazzo denounces Baldo at the courthouse in Mantua. This will lead to Baldo's arrest and imprisonment, but also to Tognazzo's abject humiliation and eventual death.

1521 5a Baldo beats Tognazzo in the town hall Tp57r

After being tricked into entering Mantua, Baldus is assaulted on all sides by armed men (5.188-245). Tognazzo thinks that he can best Baldo, but our hero gives him a mighty thrashing and kicks him down a flight of stairs (5.246-300). Hunchbacked Tognazzo survives the fall and will figure below in woodcut prints 6a and 7a, before being lanced to death by Baldo's closest friend, Cingar, in 9c.

1521 5b Baldo faces Gaioffo in the town hall Tp61r

After fighting against a throng of armed townspeople for more than six hours, Baldus is captured at last and led before Gaioffo, the tyrannical mayor of Mantua (5.420-37). Gaioffo insists that Baldus be sentenced to death and has him chained in the depths of prison to await execution. Although Gaioffo has the upper hand now (his name means scoundrel), later he will meet a very painful demise at the hands of Cingar (see woodcut 11b). Doesn't it look as though the man to Baldo's right is impressed with our hero's codpiece. The 1613 and 1692 versions of this scene are quite different, and no codpiece.

1521 6a Tognazzo restrains Zambello from women Tp64r

Zambello's first look at ladies! While Tognazzo leads him to the court house in Mantua so he can testify against Baldus, Zambello spots city women for the first time. "Oh, wow!" he exclaims, "Do you see those beauty queens, Tognazzo? Why are they so sparkly? Who gives a shit about the stars now! When I look at our own women it is like looking at frying pans," (6.135-8).

1521 6b Lena attacks Berta Tp66r
Cat fight! With a torch made of burning flax Lena, Zambello’s wife, chases Berta, Baldo’s wife. But it was Berta who attacked first: after Baldo is condemned to life in prison, all his goods are given to Zambello and Berta is evicted from their home with her twin sons (6.225-9). In a rage against Zambello, Berta takes a heavy club and goes to find him, but finds Lena instead. A vivid fight ensues (6.256-350). And don’t miss the war of words which follows! First Tognazzo rails against women, and then Berta convincingly defends her fair sex (6.350-544). A fresh take on the question des femmes.

1521 7a Cingar baits Tognazzo at town dance Tp73r

See Cingar show off his dance moves in the town square! Tognazzo on the far right is being hoodwinked by Cingar into believing that Berta is in love with him [in the final version, it’s Berta, not Lena, as in the woodcut]. This is part of Cingar and Berta’s revenge scheme to pay Tognazzo back for getting Baldo arrested and imprisoned. They get Tognazzo to make a fool of himself dancing, and then they make his pants (and underwear) come off in front of everyone (7.256-383).