

MYTHIC PASSAGES

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The Troubadour by Dahna Barnett

The Troubadour is Also Tom Foolery by Kathleen Bingaman
and Atlanta's Mythological Roundtable

Editor's Note:

Atlanta's Mythological Roundtable currently meets every month on the second Thursday evening at 8 p.m. at the Phoenix and Dragon Bookstore. The Atlanta Mythological Roundtable was established as part of a world-wide network of Mythological Roundtables encouraged by and created with the guidance of the Joseph Campbell Foundation.

(You may find a list of Mythological Roundtables around the world or the information to create a new Roundtable at the website of the [Joseph Campbell Foundation](#).)



*A circle of friends, colleagues, and kindred spirits meets regularly for discussions about mythology. The Atlanta Roundtable has viewed and discussed two series featuring Joseph Campbell's lectures, *The Power of Myth* and *Mythos*, as well as many other related films.*

Recently, Atlanta's Roundtable decided to experiment with discussions. In May, as our group was gathering opinions about future programs and direction, someone said that we could place a lawnmower in the center of our circle, and our group could find mythological meaning in the lawnmower! We were asked to bring objects to our next meeting to place in the center for discussion.

The first object placed in the center of the circle for discussion at our June Roundtable was an object brought by Kathleen and George Bingamen. We passed the small statue around our circle, and each of us described the statue as we saw it, from his musical instrument to his wedding band to the toadstool upon which he was seated, beginning the construction of a story about him. On the second round, one of our members, Dahna Barnett, slowly began speaking, creating, weaving a marvelous tale about this "Troubadour" as she imagined him.

Here we present, first, photos of the statue and second, Dahna's story created in the moment. Then, at the end, we present Kathleen's story of the meaning of the object, "Tomfoolery," to Kathleen and George, a meaning which we learned following Dahna's story!

The Troubadour
by Dahna Barnett

He was born on the dark of the moon. It was in southern France during the 12th century. Yet the boy had been conceived on the eve of the May, an enchanting night when mortal maids were drawn to a certain grove to meet with, and mate with, a god. The form was always masked so that none might know the offspring's paternal lineage. Children born of these unions were called "Merry-Be-Gots" and considered to be of singular importance.

The mother of one such child was of Judaic origin. Through dreams and portents, she knew it was her destiny to carry the boy. As he grew to manhood, she sang to him songs and told him stories about the old country.

It chanced that when this young man came of age, the Church of Rome launched a campaign to eradicate the old songs, and with them, the old ways. Known as the Albigensian Crusade, its soldiers burned their way through the French countryside, putting men, women, and infants to the sword. Especially sought by the bishops were the children known as "Merry-Be-Gots." Their very existence greatly threatened the church, for no priest's hand had sanctified these unions. They were therefore, according to the priests, abhorrent to God.

Hearing news of the crusaders' atrocities, the mother of the young man sent him to fetch a golden apple from the island of the Hesperides. The young man took a vessel sailing west in order to find the isle. Through long searching, he found a sliver of it, the last remnant of Atlantis.

On its crescent-shaped shore stood the one golden tree, and on its branch, the last golden apple. Joy overcame him as he plucked the apple from its golden bough.

Returning home, the young man could not believe his eyes. All lay in ruins. He ran for his mother's cottage, and to his horror, it was burned to a cinder. Foundations destroyed. Hydrangeas trampled. Stones scattered...

The young man dug frantically through the rubble, fearing to see, yet hoping to find, his mother's bones. They were nowhere. The young man was devastated. Had the elders not said that the bones were sacred? To be revered? To never destroy them for they contained the mystery of life and the secret to its re-creation? Without them, he lost hope of seeing his mother again.

Heartbroken, the young man went out into the world. To the wonder of those he met, he sang the old songs. With each singing, he remembered his mother's voice. The songs gave him comfort so he sang them often. Thus he became a troubadour.

The young troubadour was, in the custom of his time, greatly skilled in the art of weaving. It was a skill he had learned from his mother. It was she who had taught him

the making of fine garments and the way to dye them many hues. Thus the troubadour clad himself in purple and other bright colors.

As could be seen by the ring on his left hand, the troubadour was married. He had married many, many times. Yet over the course of his long life, each bride was destined to die in his arms. They, being mortal.

His musical instruments were fashioned from their bones. It was through them that he sang his mother's songs.

The chord that the troubadour played was the So chord. Its harmonic carried the sum of all notes on the scale. Through this one chord, these combined overtones, could be heard the voices of angels.

The troubadour was tall and lean because he was a vegetarian. Blood type A. Therefore no meat could be digested. Yet, how he loved an apple. Especially a golden one.

The troubadour wanders among us today, glimpsed from the corner of our eye. Sitting on a toadstool. Playing the bones. Singing the old songs.

If we listen very closely, his voice can still be heard — especially on the dark of the moon, or the eve of the May — for the troubadour is a "Merry-Be-Got," thus, he can never die. He remains with us always. The eternal...son...of Merry.

The Troubadour is Also Tom Foolery

*Now, as she and George told us verbally after the story,
Kathleen Bingamen writes several paragraphs about the origins of this statue:*

"The statue we brought to the June Roundtable is called 'Tom Foolery' after the man who inspired it. Herb Diehl was an extremely talented metal worker and musician who finally lost his fight with cancer in November, 2003. He and his wife Carrie were fixtures at the Georgia Renaissance Festival, which is where we met them and became friends. After Herb's death, Carrie decided to use her art to create a memorial to him, and by the 2004 Renaissance Festival she had completed the first of these statues. When George and I saw it, we ordered one, and ours was one of the first that Carrie made. Herb was a fun and joyful man. Even in the worst of his days, he could put on a smile and his 'Renn Attitude' to entertain the people who came by. He filled the world with joy and laughter just by being in it.



"After I volunteered to bring in a 'lawnmower' (an object for discussion) for the meeting, George and I spent a good bit of time trying to decide what to bring. We have lots of really unique things in the house. We wanted to bring something that would spark conversation and would challenge the Roundtable to prove to ourselves that we really can talk about anything. We decided to share 'Tom Foolery' with the group both because he's such a wonderful piece of art and because we wanted a chance to tell everyone about someone who truly followed his bliss and who was a shining light in our lives."