

Reconnecting Text to Context: The Ontology of “French Medieval Drama” and the Case of the *Istoire de la Destruction de Troie*

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Jody Enders’s essay “Medieval Stages” in the November 2009 issue of *Theatre Survey* serves as a particularly apt introduction for this article. Enders identifies three fissures in the contemporary critical landscape surrounding medieval performance: (1) history vs. literature; (2) continental vs. British; and (3) religious vs. secular.¹ These divisions in the field have acted like smokescreens, often obscuring important data and frustrating efforts to penetrate the gloom. This is especially true in Anglophone scholarship, which understandably tends to emphasize English-language drama and records, but therefore helps underpin the “Continental vs. British” polarity above. But even in other languages—and the example of Francophone drama is most relevant to the case I present here—divisions into religious and secular, sacred and profane, persist, influencing the bibliographic practices in French drama and, hence, structuring how basic reference information might be accessed. I share both Enders’s frustration with the durability of these binaries and her optimism about the future of medieval performance studies and its potential to inform the modern and postmodern critical and historiographical landscape. But there is a dichotomy at work here as well. On the one hand, specialists are no doubt aware of scholars, such as Jelle Koopmans, Darwin Smith, Carol Symes, Jody Enders, Pamela Sheingorn, Elina Gertsman, Donald and Sara Sturm-Maddox, and others, who have been using French examples to articulate a far more complex and nuanced view of medieval performance culture and its relationship to extant records.² What is more, work over the last decade by Darwin Smith’s *Groupe d’études sur le théâtre médiéval* at the Sorbonne on digitizing critical editions of texts such as the gigantic *Mystère des Actes des Apôtres* and creating the thoroughly indexed and user-friendly database *Théâtre et performances en France au Moyen Age*, and Jesse Hurlbut’s similar efforts with *DScriptorium*, represent unprecedented advances in accessibility.³ On the other hand, the strength and interdisciplinarity of this work notwithstanding, the new perspectives have not penetrated very far into mainstream discussions of theatre history or into the journals most often read by theatre and performance studies scholars. I embark, therefore,

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on a two-fold mission: to provide in this venue a critique of the historiography of “medieval French drama” that has led us to neglect one example of a fifteenth-century dramatization; and to suggest several ways in which this example sheds additional light on some of the most important cultural formations of the period. I do not intend to be comprehensive in this analysis here, but I do hope to demonstrate what we might gain if we revive interest in the documents that lay hidden behind the received history of medieval theatre and drama.

The misapprehended evidence in this case is a fifteenth-century dramatization of the legend of the Trojan War, *L’Istoire de la Destruction de Troye la Grant* (“*Story of the Destruction of Troy the Great*”). It has survived in a remarkable number of examples: thirteen manuscripts, two with colored illustrations, and thirteen print editions, spanning nearly a century of circulation in book form.⁴ Sometimes familiar to scholars of medieval French literature, and far less frequently familiar to scholars of theatre and drama, this particular work has suffered widespread critical neglect since the late nineteenth century. The existence of the *Istoire*, however, has long been known. The first scholarly descriptions appeared in the monumental work of the brothers Parfaict, who first attempted to catalog and summarize examples of medieval French drama conserved in libraries and archives throughout France.⁵ Louis Petit de Julleville also included the most up-to-date bibliographic information on the work, its author Jacques Milet, and its various textual incarnations in his two-volume survey *Les Mystères*.⁶ In 1883, a German scholar, Edmund Stengel, published a critical edition of the first print edition (1484) of the *Istoire* (the original of which is now lost) in a copperplate transcription accompanied by line drawings that presumably traced the original engravings.⁷ Stengel’s edition, the only copy of the play’s text available in general circulation, has served as the primary document cited by virtually all later scholars of the *Istoire*. Indeed, Stengel’s edition enabled the play to become the focus of a series of doctoral theses at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, mostly from German universities, though at least one dissertation, T. E. Oliver’s analysis of the play’s source material, appeared in English.⁸ The major surveys of medieval drama in English by Chambers, Wickham, and Tydeman make no mention of the play.⁹ Since 1978, the only articles published on the play that I am aware of have been those of Marc-René Jung, an emeritus professor at the University of Zürich and an international expert on medieval Troy legends.¹⁰

On the one hand, it is not at all surprising that a particular example of medieval drama has received so little focused attention. A glance at the “Index of Plays” in Ronald Vince’s *A Companion to the Medieval Theatre* reveals 611 different texts, of which *Istoire de la Destruction de Troye* is only one.¹¹ In addition, new texts are discovered every year, adding to the amount of documents needing critical attention.¹² And although increasing numbers of French-language plays have become available in critical editions in recent years, the lack of English translations and a

tendency to focus on the most familiar works (*The Play of Adam*, *The Play of Saint Nicholas*, *The Play of the Bower*, etc.) may have the consequence of hampering interest in, and scholarship on, more obscure texts.¹³ But the lack of in-depth analysis of the *Istoire* does not mean that the play has been completely left out of secondary material. Indeed, the play appears in almost all of the major surveys of medieval French drama, several reference handbooks, and in a handful of more specialized theatre studies.¹⁴ With this list of many of the major works in this area, I seem to be proving the opposite of my point: that the major players in the field of medieval French drama have, indeed, taken the play into account, dutifully including the *Istoire* in their lists and descriptions and bibliographies. If, however, performance scholars are analogous to birdwatchers, the play's presence in a dozen surveys acts more like a hedge around a meadow than a set of binoculars. Put another way, like the spectators in Plato's cave, we don't know that reading these surveys about the *Istoire* is like watching the shadows on the wall, which both signal and belie the truth of what casts them. To understand precisely what I mean, we must examine the ontology of "medieval drama" itself.

The Ontology of "French Medieval Drama"

The foundations of today's confusion about the *Istoire* are intertwined with the creation of the category "medieval drama," which, as Carol Symes notes, "is essentially an invention of modern philology, which drew upon the models of classical literature, evolutionary biology, ethnography, and nationalism for its constructions of the medieval past."¹⁵ In the forging of "medieval drama," *Istoire de la Destruction de Troie* was severed from its historical and cultural framework and received a paradoxical new identity: as a play classified both as an exception within the matrix of accepted dramatic genres, and as a kind of fossilized closet drama, most recently labeled by Graham Runnalls as "un mystère qui n'est pas un mystère" ("a mystery play that is not a mystery play").¹⁶

Let's examine just a few assessments made in the general surveys that precede Runnalls's final-sounding declaration. In Grace Frank's *Medieval French Drama* (1954), still one of the first places many researchers go for an overview on theatre in medieval France, a positivist framework provides this synthesis of the period:

As the Middle Ages waned before the dawning Renaissance, dramatic pieces pullulated and with certain notable exceptions they tended to become stereotyped. In this book, therefore, although many plays of the later Middle Ages are considered, it is the more significant earlier periods that have received most detailed attention. . . . Whatever the Middle Ages knew or did not know about the comedies and tragedies of antiquity, they fashioned their own serious drama, not from the ashes of the

past, but from the warmth of their faith and the desire to give it a visible, dynamic expression.¹⁷

Frank's evaluation of the *Istoire*, occurring in Chapter 19, "Serious Non-Religious Plays of the Fifteenth Century" (a category that includes only the *Istoire* and one other play, the *Mistere du siege d'Orléans*), grants that "it would seem that the play was exceedingly popular, even though no certain records of its performance survived" but stipulates that "for all its faint hints of the coming Renaissance, the play is essentially medieval."¹⁸ An interlocking series of assumptions implies a clear message: the *Istoire*, a product of the less-important later period of the waning Middle Ages, fits awkwardly into the categories that structure our discussion, and despite its unaccountable popularity, doesn't meet the definition of "true drama," that is, enactment before an audience. Frank's cursory treatment and summary judgment of the *Istoire*, seen in the light of her overall project to survey a wide range of diverse material, seems altogether justified. It must also be said that Frank's inclusion of the play in her book ensured its place in the canon of "French medieval drama." Yet her evaluation of it delivers the impression that no more needs be said about this odd exception to the medieval dramatic rules.

Runnalls's conclusion that the *Istoire* is not a "true" mystery, set next to Frank's, reflects the same kind of thinking. Frank's 1954 evaluation of the play, it seems, has stood the test of time, and laid the foundation for today's scholarly consensus on the play. Charles Mazouer, in *Le théâtre français du moyen âge* articulates a conventional Francophone position in a chapter entitled "La floraison du théâtre édifiant au XV^e siècle" ("The Flowering of Morally Instructive Theatre in the 15th Century"):

L'Istoire de la Destruction de Troye la Grant . . . écrite en vue de la représentation, comme le prouvent les nombreuses et longues didascalies latines et françaises, elle n'a probablement jamais été représentée; s'il en utilise la technique, ce texte reste très éloignée de nos mystères.

*"The Story of the Destruction of Troy the Great . . . intended for performance as proved by the numerous and lengthy Latin and French stage directions, was probably never performed; although this text uses the techniques of the mystery plays, it remains quite distant from them."*¹⁹

Grouped in with mystery plays and morality plays—the "morally instructive" genres—the *Istoire* seems even more out of place, described as "la première et la seule pièce à chercher sa matière chez Homère" ("the first and the only play to

treat a Homeric subject”).²⁰ In the context of morally instructive drama, the only play dramatizing a story from antiquity appears by definition as an outlier, not the norm, and “distant” from other mystery plays.

Not everyone has always agreed with this characterization of the piece. Marc-René Jung published an article in 1983 on the *Istoire* using the stage directions and several manuscript illustrations to hypothesize a possible *mise-en-scène*.²¹ This is virtually the only analysis of the illustrations that I have found—yet there are nearly five hundred illustrations spread over two manuscript examples.²² The absence of any substantial analysis of this formidable corpus of visual material—by theatre scholars or, indeed, any kind of scholar—is a particularly concrete demonstration of how much these documents have been neglected. It is possible that Jung might have more to say about the illustrations, as he did assert in 1996 that he was close to completing a critical edition of the play.²³ That edition, however, has not yet appeared in print. Like Jung, Lynette Muir also objected to Runnalls’s assertion that the *Istoire* was never performed, citing nineteenth-century references to performance documents contradicting Runnalls.²⁴ This makes Jung and Muir, to my knowledge, the only scholars after 1950 to go on record as taking the *Istoire* seriously as a cultural artifact and as a performance text. Despite this, however, Jung apparently later changed his mind, agreeing with Runnalls in a “*communication privé*” (“private communication”) that “il ne fut jamais joué” (“it was never performed”).²⁵ The *Istoire* seems to suffer on two counts. For Frank and Mazouer, its subject matter and its treatment thereof place it on the margins of commonly understood play genres. For Frank and Runnalls, and I suppose Jung, its questionable performance life disqualifies it as a “real” play.

Is it a play, or isn’t it? The question is a vicious circle, an *ouroboros*, defining the evidence in externally constructed terms and then castigating that evidence for failing to fit the definition. This cyclical reaffirmation of the category of analysis is, indeed, a consequence of the endurance of “anachronistic paradigms that judge these plays (adversely), either with respect to the Aristotelian model of classical antiquity or the walled theatre building of the era after 1576.”²⁶ That is, the generic and temporal containers we inherited from our scholarly forbears now matter more than the evidence we’re trying to stuff into them. The preponderance of recent scholarship on medieval performance shows, moreover, that the traditional designation of a text as a “play” has very little to do with whether or not that particular text served as a template, record, or inspiration for performance.²⁷ Additionally, if the chief task of a scholar examining a text is merely to refine that text’s relationship to literary genres, the side effects of such an effort include separating the text from its cultural context: its connections to other kinds of stories, material and embodied practices, ways of thinking, and its embeddedness in social, political, or economic matrices. This is what Enders is talking about when she critiques the fissure between literature and history in medieval drama studies. And the consequences, at least

for this particular text, are profound: The *Istoire* has disappeared from sight as an object of study for theatre scholars.

The Mystery of the *Istoire*

The vital facts are these: *L'Istoire de la Destruction de Troie la Grant*, a 30,000-line work completed in 1452 by a known author, Jacques Milet, survives in 13 hefty manuscripts from the last half of the fifteenth century, and 13 print editions created between 1484 and 1544.²⁸ As we have seen, the work has been categorized as a French “mystery play,” a type of performance usually defined as focusing on incidents from Christ’s life, the Bible, or the lives of saints. In the category of French “mystery plays,” however, two originate from stories outside of religion: *Istoire de la Destruction de Troie la Grant*, and the *Mistere du siege d’Orleans*.²⁹ The first recounts the story of the second destruction of the city of Troy by the Greeks, and the second dramatizes the events surrounding the lifting of the siege of Orléans in 1429, and the subsequent demise of that victory’s heroine, Joan of Arc. Both written around the middle of the fifteenth century, these two plays stake out two ends of a long continuum of history—one retells ancient history, and the other retells recent history.

Despite my belief that the historiography surrounding the *Istoire* fundamentally misapprehends the play’s cultural significance and obscures its presence in the documentary record, there is some logic behind these two works’ inclusion in the “mystery play” category. The determination rests on diachronic and formal grounds. Both appeared as manuscripts around the middle of the fifteenth century, contemporaneous with a great many other examples—in manuscript and print—of French “mystery plays.” In addition, the *Istoire* and the *Mistere* share many formal characteristics with these other examples of “mystery plays,” consisting largely of dialogue amongst a large (usually ten or more) cast of characters, and extending over thousands of lines.³⁰ Like the other “mysteries,” these two works do treat their topics seriously (instead of comically or farcically), and often provide voluminous, explicit directions outlining spectacular staging requirements.

Yet the modern term for this category, “mystery” (*mystère* in French), obscures the more ambiguous naming conventions of the period before print encouraged standardization. The two examples above, labeled an *Istoire* and a *Mistere*—show how late medieval writers and audiences were not as interested as later scholars were in establishing a consistent set of terms and characteristics in order to describe the myriad kinds of texts recorded in manuscripts. We know that the conventions used to record performance—musical, theatrical, or otherwise—were in flux for much of the Middle Ages. Thus, apparent inconsistencies among manuscripts of dramatic or quasidramatic content can be partially attributed to variations in local practice. Some locations at the forefront of innovation found ways to rubricate and otherwise record aspects of a text’s performance dimension, while other locations

did not.³¹ In addition, textual variations—whether on the title, or portions of the content—represent examples of Paul Zumthor’s concept of *mouvance*, wherein “texts” represent different, yet no less valid, versions of “works.”³²

The term *istoire*, which meant both “story” and “history,” depending on context (just as its modern French counterpart *histoire* does), referred not only to long dramatizations like the *Destruction de Troye* but also to brief scenes staged as part of processions, entries, or festivals, as well as narrations of the past—such as the *Histoire ancienne jusqu’à Cesar* (“*Ancient History up to Caesar*”), or the *Histoire de Charles Martel* (“*History of Charles Martel*”). It could also mean “statue.”³³ But *mistere*, which was spelled in a variety of ways (*mystere*, *misterres*, for example), could *also* mean short pantomimes performed at festivals and celebrations, as well as longer-form plays produced as stand-alone events, such as a *Mystère de la Passion* (and hundreds of other examples). *Mistere*, in fact, referred to a wide variety of performance- and non-performance-related phenomena, such as: a mystery (that is, something hidden); ceremony; entertainment at a festival or banquet; religious service; craftsman’s skill; work of art; an object created out of disparate elements; and manners or morals.³⁴ What is more, even the most cursory search of accessible primary documents from the eleventh through the sixteenth centuries reveals an astounding variety of terms that meant people pretending to be other people: *actus*, *comédie*, *devotione*, *esbatement*, *histoire*, *jeu*, *ludus*, *mistere*, *monstre*, *moralitez*, *personnages*, among others.³⁵ Any overreliance on the precise title, or linguistic description in an *incipit*, of a given work is bound to mislead the contemporary reader.

In an environment where today’s genre labels seem to constitute destiny for medieval dramatic texts, however, it appears that the word *istoire* does not signal “this is a dramatization” with the same force as other kinds of labels. In Colette Beaune’s *The Birth of an Ideology* (1991), for example, she quotes lines from the *Istoire* as evidence for the Troy legend’s use as an allegorical and political cautionary tale. Referring to it first as the “*History of the Destruction of Troy*” and then later by the short title “*Mystery*,” with its many possible meanings, Beaune does not once mention that Milet’s work is designed as a dramatization.³⁶ This is despite the fact that Milet himself makes his purpose clear in the play’s Prologue:

. . . ce que bien je savoye
 quautre fois a estre escripte
 en latin et en prose laye
 Jay voulu eviter redicte
 Sy ay propose de le faire
 Par pesonnages seulement

“ . . . I well know

that other times it has been written
 in Latin and in French
 I wished to avoid repeating
 So I decided to do it
 Using characters only”³⁷

And as Lynette Muir has pointed out, the final words of the play reinforce this idea that the play was designed for performance, as the character Diomedes addresses the audience:

Si vous pryons treshumblement
 Que recevez d’entente saine
 Noz ditz, car sans chose villaine
 Avons joué l’esbatement.

“We beg you, most humbly,
 to receive with sound understanding
 our words, because without offense
 we have played this entertainment.”³⁸

The nomenclature of the *Istoire*, thus, muddies our contemporary perspective, as scholars fail to flag it as a dramatic rather than narrative retelling of the Troy legend. Such fundamental confusion about exactly what the work is, how it might have reached readers or spectators, and what they might have understood from it, is the practical consequence of our acceptance of the characterization that the *Istoire* is somehow outside the mainstream, distant from its formal cousins, the “morally instructive” mystery plays.

It is worth asking at this point why the *Istoire* did not rate its own category. Why not have many different categories of French medieval drama and ensure that the *Istoire* is considered on its own terms, or at least on terms that don’t cause it to suffer by comparison? The answer lies again in the ontology of the “French medieval drama” label itself. As others have observed, since the late 1970s French medieval drama has usually been divided into “religious” and “comic” subgroups. Graham Runnalls and Alan Hindley, no doubt intending to encourage rather than hamstring the study of the subject, instituted this structure in the highly useful “Reviews of Recent Scholarship” they wrote for *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama (RORD)*, subtitled, respectively, “General Surveys of Religious Drama” and “Comic Drama.”³⁹ Despite later efforts to refine or critique this conventional division, the categories have remained largely in place. Consequently, in order to study a particular text, a researcher must first know whether it is “religious” or “comic.” Otherwise, it’s much more difficult to uncover the books and articles that

discuss that text. In those articles for *RORD* that outlined for Anglophone scholars the durable contours of French medieval drama, for example, the play *Istoire de la Destruction de Troye* did not appear in either Runnalls's analysis of "religious drama" or in Hindley's analysis of "comic drama." By 1980, then, the *Istoire* had already slipped out of sight between the category boundaries.

Alan E. Knight's *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama* (1983) attempted to ameliorate the restrictive bipolarity inherent in Runnalls and Hindley's formulation by suggesting a new rubric. Knight created two major categories—historical and fictional—which broke down further into subcategories like Biblical history, saints' lives, and personal or institutional moralities.⁴⁰ The historical vs. fictional divide, which Knight argues was also alive at the time, depended on "a distinction between works referring to historical, or reputedly historical, events and works invented by the poet for instruction or pleasure."⁴¹ Knight's concept of genre, thus, allows him to account for more kinds of material by creating eight generic categories instead of two. This fracturing of the original binary, however, reinforces the traditional cladistics of French medieval drama while simultaneously expanding its range. That is, we have created more specific terms to name ever-greater numbers of genus and species, but we have not fundamentally altered the criteria by which such determinations are made. Now classed as "profane history," to distinguish them from "Biblical history" or "saints' lives," *Istoire de la destruction de Troye* and the *Mistere du siege d'Orleans*, nonetheless, continue to cohabit a subcategory of "mystery plays." How much has really changed since Grace Frank wrote her chapter on "Serious Non-Religious Plays" in 1954? Even in its stated attempt to "propose . . . a generic paradigm . . . based on a shift in perspective that will enable it to account for more of the known facts about the plays," Knight's reconceptualization justifies the continuing marginalization of works that do not meet certain generic standards. In *Aspects of Genre*, for example, Knight spends twenty-four pages distinguishing historical works from fictional ones; the rest of the 174-page book is devoted to parsing the fictional genres, especially the morality plays. The historical plays are, therefore, cast as easier to explain and less in need of scholarly exegesis.

More than a generation of scholarship has done little to alter the organization of the field of French medieval drama, especially as that field is articulated in Anglophone scholarship. The overarching categories of "religious" and "comic" have continued to hold sway, and as any dramatic literature anthology will attest, the poles of "sacred" and "secular," as well as the genres "mystery," "morality," and "miracle" play an outsized role in explaining the theatre, drama, and performance of the Middle Ages. Consequently, the history of medieval French theatre and drama is still very much inseparable from, and circumscribed by, its ontological and historiographic origins. Aside from examples like Carol Symes's re-examination in *A Common Stage: Theater & Public Life in Medieval Arras*—which has received

well-deserved acclaim for demonstrating the benefits of joining theoretical sophistication with attention to archival detail⁴²—and some re-editing of the earliest vernacular play texts, early drama in French remains mightily influenced by progressive historical narratives, dependent on conceptions of genre that continue to structure historical and literary inquiry, and “measured and shaped by critical tools fashioned in later eras, beginning with the advent of print, with the result that valuable clues . . . have been obscured, further deepening the mystery surrounding the circumstances of their composition, performance, and preservation.”⁴³ It is (the pun is unavoidable) the mystery surrounding the *Istoire de la Destruction de Troye la Grant* that I am seeking to penetrate, in part, with this essay.

By shedding light on the *Istoire*, I believe that we will learn some new and potentially surprising things about the relevance of late medieval French theatre and drama to its social and political contexts. I also hope that the pleasure of these discoveries might motivate and inspire us to undertake the important, complex, and necessarily collective task of revising theatre history in this period. For as long as we peer through the hedges of tangled historiography, we are missing the full picture painted by the remnants of medieval performance practices. And perhaps—here I crave the reader’s indulgence—in undertaking this historiographic project, we may even be able to see connections to the present, if Zrinka Stahuljak is right in suggesting that the “globalization and fragmentation of nation-states today suggest an emergence of neo-medieval models: by going global, we are getting medieval, again.”⁴⁴ The existence and utility of those models depends on how well—and how completely—we understand the past.

If, as Symes asserts, our critical tools are as much at fault as the difficult-to-interpret evidence, we must approach medieval documents with some different tools. To begin with, I want to suggest a new way of looking at the data we have on Francophone dramatic texts. My analysis, of course, must use the available bibliographic data, which is divided into “religious” and “comic” subgroups.⁴⁵ Since the *Istoire* is classed as a “religious” work, that is the category of information I deploy. The following graph shows the usual way of breaking down the category of French “religious” drama (see fig. 1).⁴⁶ The vast majority of the corpus of “religious drama” in French includes mysteries focused, as Knight would say, on Biblical history and saints’ lives. The *Istoire de la Destruction de Troie* and the *Mistere du siege d’Orléans*, accounting for only one percent of the category, seem insignificant compared to the large numbers of plays on religious topics. Displaying the data in this way—according to the accepted notions of genre—seems to justify a certain amount of neglect. It makes no sense, this reasoning goes, to study one percent of something; better to focus attention on the seventy-five percent.

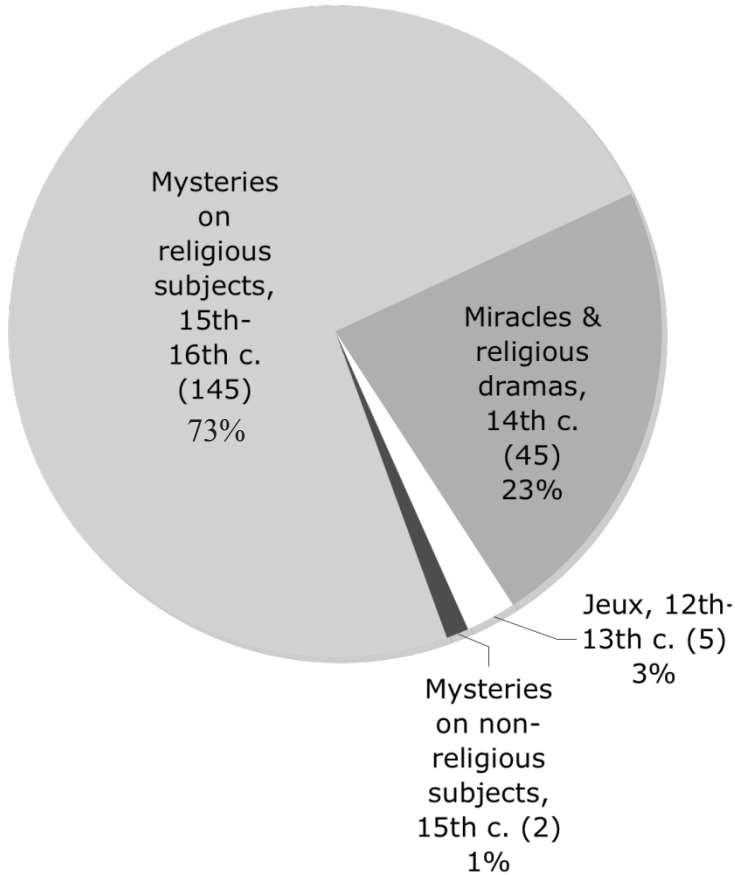


Fig. 1. Extant Canonical French “Religious” Dramatic Texts, by Genre and Topic.

How, on the other hand, would such reasoning fare when applied to our own time? Let’s say, for the sake of argument, we were interested in understanding what twenty-first century Americans were most interested in reading, circa 2010. Let’s further assume, for the sake of simplicity, that the main medium for consuming information remains print—books in particular. To follow the above model, we would need to obtain a list of topics, and the numbers of titles associated with those topics, in order to analyze what the most ubiquitous *topic* was. But important information is left out of this analysis: what about number of copies sold? There is no doubt a vast array of topics in print in contemporary US society, but without a sense of what are the most popular titles, explained by the sales figures of those particular works, our hypothetical project would fail to pinpoint what most Americans were buying in the bookstores and, presumably, reading. Both the knowledge of the most common topic and the knowledge of the most popular titles would be needed to explicate a complete picture. Researching popular novels in twenty-first

century America is, of course, a very different proposition from understanding the potential cultural impact of a particular example of medieval Francophone drama. To begin with, the intervening centuries have winnowed the available examples, so that what remains extant today is necessarily a small subset of what actually circulated. Examining what *is* extant, though, might get us closer to what titles circulated in the greatest numbers. Surviving texts likely did so because they had a greater chance of survival: that is, the more extant copies that exist today, the more likely that it was a popular text then. Extant texts are, thus, an imperfect proxy for a work's popularity over a period of time. Examining what is extant is, moreover, the only way to begin the inquiry—we have to look at what we actually have. Let us redraw our figure to account for the number of extant copies of various titles of Francophone medieval drama (see fig. 2).

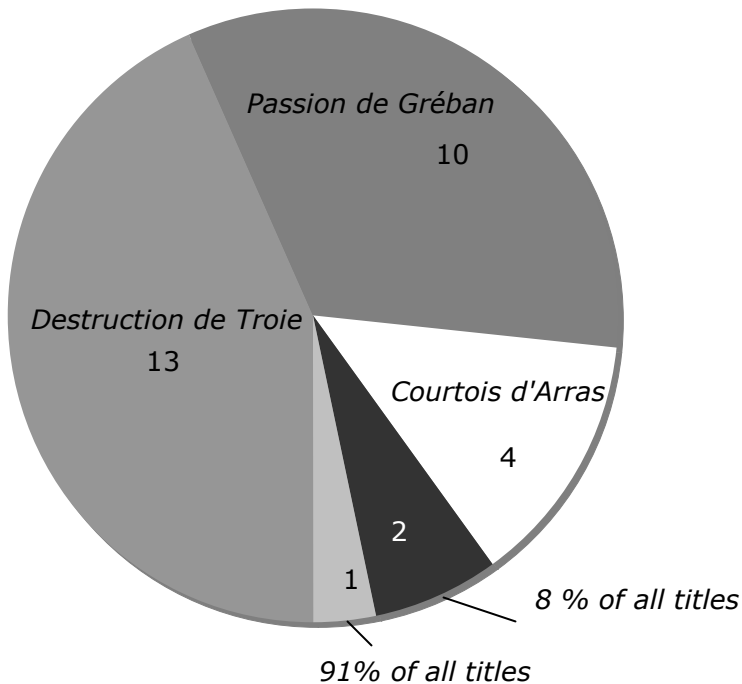


Fig.2. Extant Canonical French “Religious” Dramatic Texts, by Number of Surviving Manuscripts.

It is apparent from Figure 2 that most extant examples of medieval Francophone drama exist in only one or two manuscript copies. Ninety-nine percent of the total number of known titles having survived in manuscript form, then, have left us only one (ninety-one percent of titles) or two (eight percent of titles) copies. Only three

titles have survived in more than two copies: *Courtois d'Arras* (four copies), the *Passion* by Arnoul Gréban (ten copies), and the *Istoire de la Destruction de Troye* (thirteen copies). The *Istoire*, in fact, represents the single largest collection of manuscripts of any known medieval Francophone dramatic text.⁴⁷ Organizing the data in this way, as Figure 2 does, seems to call for an alteration in the priorities of what should be studied. A focus on plays that exist in only one or two copies (which is ninety-nine percent of the total) has the effect of possibly overemphasizing the cultural importance of singular performance texts or events—even though there are more of them—while minimizing a play that has shown considerable endurance over the centuries to have survived, comparatively speaking, in many copies. It is not that studying plays on religious topics is wrong; but ignoring, isolating, and minimizing the *Istoire* can only provide an incomplete picture of fifteenth-century performance and its related contexts.

Aside from the sheer number of manuscripts—which, given the number of lines of the play, amounts to literally thousands of pages—*Istoire de la Destruction de Troie* is also exceptional in other ways. The play is one of the few to announce its own author (the *Passion* of Arnoul Gréban being another), and the date and location of composition: Jacques Milet, 1450, Orléans. The play was among the first of the multiday, 25,000-plus line cycle plays to appear in written form.⁴⁸ In addition, the date of the first printed edition of the *Istoire*, 1484, makes the play one of the first French plays to appear in print (the first printed edition of *Maistre Pierre Pathelin* appeared in 1464), and it certainly was the first play to appear either in manuscript or print that dealt with the history of antiquity, instead of biblical history, hagiography, or farcical subjects.⁴⁹ It also spent more time in book form than any other dramatic text from the Middle Ages, spending thirty years as a manuscript and sixty years in print.⁵⁰ Finally, out of the thirteen extant manuscripts, two contain full-color illustrations. One manuscript contains nearly four hundred illustrations, and the second contains nearly one hundred, adding almost five hundred illuminations to the corpus of images associated with medieval dramatic texts.⁵¹ To my knowledge, the only analysis of any of these images appeared in Jung's 1983 article on the play's *mise-en-scène*, where Jung reproduced three of them as tracings of the originals found in the P4 manuscript.⁵² We have, thus, a nearly unexamined trove of information about the visual register of a play text. The number of images is by far the largest associated with any Francophone dramatic text, and I hope to contribute to the discussion on these images' possible meanings in due course. I trust that, at this point, I have demonstrated the extent of what we, as theatre scholars, have been missing in the historical record. In the next section, I hope to suggest a few ways that the remnants of the *Istoire* amplify fifteenth century Francophone culture and its contexts.

In from the Margins: Writing, Reading, and Performing Ideology and Genealogy

A full accounting of this work's meanings and significance for theatre history specifically, and for cultural history in general, must await a larger venue. It is, however, possible to sketch some of the possible manifestations and uses the author and consumers (readers or spectators) of the *Istoire* may have had in mind. In drawing this sketch, I am placing some limits on the discussion. I am, for example, consciously avoiding any kind of codicological or manuscript analysis that would necessitate my engagement with the current divergent perspectives on the typology of medieval Francophone play manuscripts. The overriding concern of those analyses seems to be to determine whether or not a given text is an "original"—that is, used as a basis for a particular production in a specific location.⁵³ I am less concerned with determining whether or not any of the *Istoire* manuscripts served as a medieval promptbook or director's script, and more with demonstrating the play's cultural currency; that is, its participation in a variety of cultural formations, some ideological and some material, and all proximate to some of the most important trends and events in the Francophone domain during the last half of the fifteenth century. Given the constraints of this forum, I will focus on the play's ideological and genealogical implications, and its author's stated goals and objectives for the work.

One possible starting point for a discussion of the *Istoire*'s cultural currency—a starting point inflected with irony, given how the preoccupation with topic and genre has marginalized this work—is, in fact, the play's topic: the legend of Troy. The Troy story first surfaced in Europe between the fourth and sixth centuries CE in Latin versions purporting to be based on eyewitness accounts. The story was retold in Latin verse several times, and by the twelfth century, had emerged in many European vernaculars.⁵⁴ For our purposes, the appearance of the *Roman de Troie* by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, occurring contemporaneously with other *romans antiques*, marked "the decisive entry of classical subject matter into French literature."⁵⁵ The process of translation from Latin to the vernacular, however, was not a simple matter of exchanging one language for another. Instead, vernacular authors both interpreted the classical stories and creatively infused them with elements taken from local literary traditions, folklore, and myth. It is more accurate, therefore, to describe the transformation of classical stories into vernacular literature. In this new medium, these stories reached new courtly and aristocratic audiences by the second half of the twelfth century.⁵⁶ But Latin still served an important role in circulating the Troy story, even after vernacular versions appeared. One hundred years after Benoît's *Roman de Troie*, for example, a judge from Messina, Guido delle Colonne, wrote a prose Latin translation of the *Roman*—*Historia Destructionis Troiae*—that aimed to "transcribe the truth of this very history" and remove the "fanciful inventions"

of poets who preceded him.⁵⁷

Guido's *Historia* (240 extant manuscripts) and Benoît's *Roman* (fifty-eight extant manuscripts or manuscript fragments)—the former viewed as history, the latter as romance—thus played a large role in disseminating the Troy story throughout France and Western Europe during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.⁵⁸ Jacques Milet, who earned a Master of Arts at the University of Paris and a degree in law at the University of Orléans, likely encountered both works as part of his scholastic and legal education.⁵⁹ In creating the *Istoire de la Destruction de Troye*, however, Milet exclusively consulted Guido's *Historia*.⁶⁰ Where Guido differs from Benoît, Milet follows Guido; and in no case where Guido omits an event included in Benoît does Milet include it.⁶¹ Scholarship thus confirms what the play's colophon tells us—that it was “translatee de latin en francois” (“translated from Latin into French”).⁶²

We find, moreover, the play's author engaging in an activity shared with many other writers and translators of his period—the transformation of classical stories into vernacular literature. In France, we know of between fifteen and twenty versions of the Troy story, extant in 350 separate manuscripts, which circulated in virtually every corner of the country for literally hundreds of years.⁶³ One of the reasons for this robust production, according to Colette Beaune, was the pervasive and continuing utility of the Trojan myth in “preserving the unity and continuity of the French race.”⁶⁴ What emerged over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were “myths and symbols of nationhood and the discourses people constructed around [them]” that “did more to shore up the unsteady trusses of the state than any institution.”⁶⁵ The Troy story became an origin myth for the French-speaking peoples, providing the stability of a shared noble and illustrious lineage, as well as the flexibility to accommodate changing circumstances and evolving emphases. The myth also included seemingly paradoxical internal components. On the one hand, the Trojan story placed the origins of the French in a distant and famous land; on the other hand, the story also connected the Trojan refugees strongly with their newly adopted territory, allowing the French people to claim to be indigenous. The articulations of the Trojan myth in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries demonstrated how

the myth of origin of a territorial state became a myth about the ennoblement of a collectivity. As little by little this most Christian kingdom gained an eminent position among other kingdoms, it felt the need to find its superiority in the story of its national origins.⁶⁶

Both God and history itself, therefore, endorsed France as first among nations, her status bolstered by an enduring connection to the ancient Trojan royal house.

Milet's *Istoire de la Destruction de Troie* in many ways embodies this movement to make manifest the connections between the ancient royal family of Troy, and the nobility and people of France, resurgent and renewed in the mid and late fifteenth century. He was not the first author to make these connections. Christine de Pizan, for example, wrote the *Epistre d'Othea* ("Letter from Othea") in 1400 in order to instruct four political figures of her time in how to benefit from the experience of the Trojan prince Hector.⁶⁷ Beaune refers several times to sections of Milet's play to illustrate both the Trojan's myth continuing influence in general, and the myth's accommodation of changing circumstances. What Milet and others, including the Burgundian chronicler Georges Chastelain, emphasized was the fulfillment of Troy's promise for rebirth as demonstrated by the rejuvenation of the French crown and people. And despite Beaune's contention that "during the second half of the [fifteenth] century, these comparisons disappeared," we know that Milet's play circulated in both manuscript and print form well into the sixteenth century.⁶⁸ Thus, the attraction of imagining France as a uniquely gifted beneficiary both of Troy's ancient chivalric pedigree and the hard lessons learned in Troy's destruction continued to generate interest among patrons of the book trade well into the crises of the early sixteenth century. And with performances directed to aristocratic and urban audiences dating from the late fifteenth through the early seventeenth century, the play and its meanings resonated over the long term in more than one medium.⁶⁹

The inclusion of other works by Jacques Milet with manuscript copies of the *Istoire* provides additional evidence about the play's creation, its intended audience, and its purpose. The Prologue, included in part or in whole with every manuscript copy, appears to have been regarded as an integral part of the play. In much the same way that prologues to other medieval plays and, indeed, other literary works, both anticipate the text and orient audiences to it, so Milet's Prologue provides a frame for understanding the form and purpose of the *Istoire de la Destruction de Troye*. The *Istoire* is, of course, in no way dependent on its Prologue in order for readers and audience members to comprehend the play proper. But the Prologue does offer additional information about the author's orientation toward his work. In the most elaborately decorated and illuminated manuscript, P4, the Prologue begins with its own *incipit*, underlined in red ink:

Sensuit le prologue de listoire de troye
 auquel est contenu larbre de la lignee
 de france. . . .

"Here follows the prologue of the story of Troy
 in which is contained the Tree of the Lineage
 of France"⁷⁰

The text immediately signals a primary concern for national genealogy: the creation of a lineage for a country. According to this titling, the prologue has two purposes: to introduce the story of Troy and to explicate a metaphor for French history—the “tree” of its heritage. Not every extant manuscript copy is as clear as P4—two manuscripts are missing ninety percent of the Prologue (P1, P2)—and many of the others simply begin with the Prologue’s first line, “En passant parmi une lande.” The material that does remain, however, is substantially the same. In later print editions, the *incipit* transforms into an image—of a tree at whose roots lay the weapons of the Trojans, and at whose crown hangs a shield bearing the royal fleur-de-lys of the Valois.⁷¹ We see in this formulation the connection not only to fifteenth-century French interest in the Trojan myth, but also the seeds of a later printer’s recapitulation for sixteenth-century book buyers.

The last print edition, created in Lyon in 1544, exemplifies the nostalgic appeal the Troy legend must have exerted on potential book buyers. Denis Harsy, the printer of this edition, included a dedication and encomium to the Dauphin of France. This epistle, we will see, is more similar to Milet’s mid-fifteenth-century *Épître épilogative* (“*Letter of Epilogue*”) than to any of the play’s other printers’ attempts to sell copies at the bookshop. Harsy expressly dedicates the book to the Dauphin (“de vous dedier & presenter ce liure” [“to dedicate and present to you this book”]) so that, when king, the Dauphin will remember the virtue of the great Hector:

... pource que la matiere y
 contenue est graue, plaisante & digne de Prince pour en tirer
 plaisir & recreation: & à
 celle fin principalement que sous vostre heureux regne les
 mirables & excellents
 faicts du Preux Hector (auquel estes conioinct par vertu &
 proximité de lignée Roy
 alle) fussent rememorés, & remis en lumiere.

“... because the subject herein contained is serious, diverting, and worthy of a Prince to get from it some pleasure and recreation: and to this end, principally to support your happy reign, that the admirable and excellent feats of the Worthy Hector (to whom is conjoined by virtue and proximity the Royal Family) were memorialized, and brought to light.”⁷²

In so many words, Harsy restates the purposes that Milet himself laid out in his *Épître*: to educate the Prince of his time. Even the heraldic blazons on the shields of the Tree of France in Harsy’s first image have been altered to reflect the new

addressee: the arms of the Dauphin of France now join the Royal Escutcheon and the arms of the Duke of Orléans. Harsy's edition, reoriented toward the rulers of his own day, therefore, sought to appeal to book buyers through their own interest in a productive national future founded on a heroic past. Harsy's decisions regarding this edition can be seen as an investment in that view. One aspect of this nostalgia was the choice of material itself: *Destruction de Troye* was nearly a century old by 1544, but its national mythmaking was obviously still resonant. These ideas had a long shelf life. Perhaps the threats to French nationhood and the very definition of "Frenchness" (e.g., the wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants in the early sixteenth century) increased people's desire to enter a fantasy world where the destiny of France—victorious and at the height of her powers—lay clearly defined within it.

Another text that accompanies the manuscript, the *Épître épilogative*, is appended to only three manuscripts—one we have just discussed (P4), and two others (P3 and R). The *Épître* does not appear in connection with any of the play's print editions, and only in P3 does the *Épître* appear complete. The text of all three manuscripts is extremely similar, however, even in R and P4 where it is significantly truncated, apparently left unfinished by the scribe.⁷³ Positioned in all three cases after the play text, the *Épître* outlines the identity and goals of its author in the most explicit terms:

En ensuyvant les honorables coustumes des anciens orateurs, dictateurs, et historiens, à la fin et accomplissement de ceste histoire, qui est appellee l'Istoire de Troye, je Jaques Millet, compositeur d'icelle, voulant et desirant de tout mon pouoir icelle histoire estre agreable, acceptable, convenable et recevable à toutes gens de tous estas, premierement toutteffois à la haultesse et sublimité des tresnobles princes de France . . .

"In following the honorable customs of the ancient orators, speakers, and historians, at the end and completion of this story, called the Story of Troy, I, Jacques Milet, adapter of this story, wishing and desiring with all my power that this story be agreeable, acceptable, convenient, and received by all people of all estates, first of all to the highness and sublimity of the very noble princes of France . . ."⁷⁴

Milet claims two kinds of authority here. First, he compares himself to one of the "ancient orators . . . and historians" who, he argues, had a custom of explaining themselves so that their work was received in the intended way. Second, he claims the title of *compositeur* of the story, giving him the ability to speak on behalf of

the story's purpose and intentions. *Compositeur*, which in modern French means "composer" (as in music) or "typesetter," in the fifteenth century also meant "mediator," or "moderator," one who resolves or regulates disputes or debates.⁷⁵ In this case, especially given the context of a translation from Latin to French, a *compositeur* mediates between the original content in Latin, and the resulting dramatization in French. In contemporary parlance, such an act reflects the intellectual work of adaptation: making the content suitable to new requirements or conditions. Here, the Latin narration of Guido's *Historia* becomes the French dialogue and stage directions of Milet's *Istoire*.

Milet's *Épître* deepens our understanding of his own mixed purposes and the diverse group of potential readers and audience members in the mid fifteenth century as well. The written *Épître*, included in only three manuscripts likely intended as gifts, was probably a document aimed primarily at the upper classes. The *Épître*, in other words, was targeted to the class most likely to be able to read and most likely to benefit from the political lessons that the letter highlights in the play.⁷⁶ Like Christine de Pizan's *Epistre d'Othea*, Milet's *Épître* is designed as a didactic text, seeking to point out what the discerning upper class reader or spectator might have missed. It is this articulation of the play's purpose that finds its echo, as we have seen, in Harsy's address to the 1544 Dauphin of France.

But Milet's mention of the lower classes—"all people of all estates"—might be puzzling in a written document of limited circulation that would have very rarely encountered any members of those classes. The quote above from the *Épître*, however, shows Milet singling out the lower classes for reception of the "Story of Troy" rather than the *Épître*. One of the only ways that the lower classes would have had access to such a long dramatization would have been through performance, as very few members of society at large could have possibly afforded a book the size and cost of a typical *Istoire de la Destruction de Troye* codex. From our point of view, Milet seems to be mixing up his forms and his audiences: he mentions the play and the lower classes in a letter supposedly aimed only at the upper class, a letter which the lower classes would hardly have been able to read and interpret. I believe this confusion dissipates in the context of an overall design that the play would have been performed publicly, while the Prologue and the *Épître* would have been mostly read by the elite consumers of the book copies created either before or after the public performance. Each of those elite consumers, then, would have taken delivery of a book created because of a performance. The references to the lower classes and their reception of the "Story of Troy," therefore, exist without confusion alongside more direct addresses to the purchasers of the codices themselves. The dual mode of address strengthens the idea that the manuscripts were predicated, at least in part, on public performances of the play. In the same way that Guido, Benoît, and Milet participate in a larger tradition of appropriation of the Troy story, Milet's Prologue and *Épître*, and Harsy's dedication nearly a century later, contextualize

the play's genesis and sketch its intended influences—concentric circles of cultural significance, emanating from the play and its source, traced by many extant texts, and punctuated by the periodic performances.

Conclusion

The above sketch of the *Istoire's* connection to the ongoing ideological and national mythmaking in the Francophone domain, Milet's attempt to leverage the play and its accompanying works in the direction of cross-class audiences, and the apparent intention of this cluster of works to circulate in writing and as performance, seems to me to present a tantalizing glimpse of what Carol Symes has called a "medieval public sphere."⁷⁷ That is, a space, unconditioned (necessarily) by print, independent of modernity or premodernity, and infused with private subjects' concern and engagement with the relevant issues of the day. Like Alain Chartier and Christine de Pizan, two writers of French narrative in the fourteenth century who felt moved to comment on the vital struggles of the body politic, Jacques Milet and his dramatization likewise sought to enter a dialogue about what kind of country and what kind of future might be imagined. Theatre scholars need to take account of Milet's contribution and what it means for our collective understanding of "French medieval drama." Spectacular passion plays and ribald farces have an important place in cultural history. It is time that Milet's *Istoire* was accorded its place in the story of fifteenth-century Francophone performance—or "medieval French drama"—where it can expand our understanding of the ideologies and strategies used to participate in a public sphere.

Notes

1. Jody Enders, "Medieval Stages," *Theatre Survey* 50.2 (November 2009): 317-25.

2. The examples I list here are selections from a wider literature on French medieval drama, but these in particular demonstrate interdisciplinarity, concern for local circumstances and conditions, making connections between performance and the wider culture, and methodological sophistication. Jody Enders, *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002); Enders, *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998); Elina Gertsman, ed., *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008); Jelle Koopmans, *Le Théâtre des exclus au Moyen Age* (Paris: Editions Imago, 1997); Koopmans, "Genres théâtraux et 'choses vues': le cas du théâtre profane du Moyen Age," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 16 (1990): 131-42; Koopmans, "The World of the Parisian Farce," *New Approaches to European Theater of the Middle Ages: An Ontology*, eds. Barbara I. Gusick and Edelgard E. DuBruck (New York: Peter Lang, 2004) 139-50; Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox, eds., *Parisian Confraternity Drama of the Fourteenth Century: The Miracles de Notre Dame par personnages* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008); Pamela Sheingorn has written extensively on illustrations in French drama manuscripts and other aspects of performance and culture, see in particular her work with Robert L. A. Clark, such as "Performative Reading: The Illustrated Manuscripts of Arnoul Gréban's *Mystère de la Passion*," *European Medieval Drama* 6 (2003): 129-72. Darwin Smith is a globally renowned scholar of French medieval drama and performance who is currently heading a seminar at the Sorbonne that is leading many digitization projects, and supporting scholars currently conducting research in this vein. For an example of Smith's work, see in particular *Maistre Pierre Pathelin: Le Miroir d'orgueil*

(Saint-Benoît-du-Sault, France: Tarabuste, 2002). Carol Symes has written extensively on the earliest examples of drama in the French vernacular: see *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007) and “The Appearance of Early Vernacular Plays: Forms, Functions, and the Future of Medieval Theatre,” *Speculum* 77 (2002): 778-836.

3. Visit <http://lamop.univ-paris1.fr/spip.php?rubrique62> for information on Smith’s research team. The digital edition of *Actes des Apôtres* can be found at <http://eserve.org.uk/anr>. The database, which is free and requires user registration, can be accessed at <http://arnoul.vjf.cnrs.fr/theatre>. Hurlbut’s efforts can be found at <http://toisonondor.byu.edu/dscriptorium>.

4. For information on manuscripts, see Marc-René Jung, *La Légende de Troie en France au Moyen Age*, *Romanica Helvetica* 114 (Basel and Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1996) 602-05. The thirteen exemplars have the following sigils: A, B, E, G, O, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, Pe, R, and Y and span from 1452 through the early sixteenth century. For information on print editions, see Graham A. Runnalls, *Les Mystères français imprimés* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999) 126-31. The thirteen editions have the following sigils: a, b, c, d, e, f, g1, g2, h, i, j, k, l, and m and span from 1484 through 1544.

5. Parfaict, les Frères, *Histoire du théâtre français*, vol. 1, 1734 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967) 417-31.

6. Louis Petit de Julleville, *Les Mystères*, vols. 1 & 2 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1880) 315-17, 569-74.

7. Edmund Stengel, *L’Istoire de la destruction de Troie la Grant par Maistre Jacques Milet* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1883); for details on the 1484 edition, see Runnalls 127.

8. To my knowledge, the most complete bibliography of pre-1978 critical works on this play, including dissertations, can be found in Marc-René Jung, “Jacques Milet et son Épître épilogative,” *Travaux linguistique et littéraire et de littérature: mélanges d’études romanes du moyen âge et de la Renaissance offerts à M. Jean Rychner*: 16.1 (Strasbourg: Centre de philologie et de littératures romanes, 1978) 249-50.

9. E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903); Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987); William Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages: Western European Stage Conditions, c. 800-1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978).

10. A list of Jung’s works and the most recent list of extant *Istoire de la Destruction de Troie* manuscripts can be found in Jung, *La Légende* 602-05.

11. Ronald W. Vince, “Index of Plays,” *A Companion to the Medieval Theatre* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989) 399-407.

12. See, for example, Alan E. Knight, *Les Mystères de la procession de Lille*, 5 vols. (Paris: Librairie Droz, 2001-2011), a recently completed critical edition of a compilation of seventy-two plays discovered in a single manuscript.

13. Alan E. Knight, “France,” *The Theatre of Medieval Europe*, ed. Eckehard Simon (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 151-68. See especially 156-58.

14. The surveys of medieval French drama include: Grace Frank, *Medieval French Drama* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1954) 206-09; Alan E. Knight, *Aspects of Genre in Late Medieval French Drama* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1983) 9, 91; Charles Mazouer, *Le théâtre français du moyen âge* (Paris: Éditions Sedes, 1998) 242. The reference handbooks include: Eckehard Simon, ed. *The Theatre of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 161; Ronald Vince, *Ancient and Medieval Theatre: A Historiographical Handbook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1984) 145. And, finally, examples of the more specialized theatre studies include: Runnalls, *Les Mystères français imprimés*, 84-85, 126-31, 179; Lynette Muir, *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) 131-33; Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 134.

15. Carol Symes, “Toward a New History of Medieval Theatre: Assessing the Written and Unwritten Evidence for Indigenous Performance Practices,” Twelfth Triennial Colloquium of the Société internationale pour l’étude du théâtre médiéval (SITM). Lille, France. July 2-7, 2007. TS 1.

16. Runnalls, *Les Mystères français imprimés* 84.

17. Frank vii, 17.

18. 206, 209.

19. Mazouer 242. Author’s translation.

20. 242. Author’s translation.

21. Marc-René Jung, “La mise en scène de *l’Istoire de la Destruction de Troie la Grant par personnages* de Jacques Milet,” *Atti del IV Colloquio della Società internazionale pour l’étude du théâtre médiéval*, eds. M. Chiabo, F. Doglio, and M. Maymone (Viterbo, Italy: Centro studi sul Teatro Medioevale e rinascimentale, 1983) 563-80.

22. Jung, *La Légende* 602-05. The two manuscripts with illustrations are O, with ninety-seven, and P4, with nearly four hundred.

23. 602.

24. Muir 131. Muir relies in large part on the French theatre history pioneer Gustave Lanson. Lanson's scholarship was good. During my recent trip to archives across France, I was able to confirm and transcribe primary source documents attesting to late-fifteenth and early-seventeenth-century performances of the *Istoire*. I hope to publish these documents as part of my book on the play. For those interested in Lanson's original citations, see Gustave Lanson, "Études sur les origines de la tragédie classique en France," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 10 (1903): 224-25. For citations of the documents I uncovered, see note 73.

25. Runnalls 85.

26. Symes, "Toward a New History" 2.

27. See Carol Symes, "The Appearance of Early Vernacular Plays: Forms, Functions, and the Future of Medieval Theater," *Speculum* 77 (2002): 778-839, especially 786-90. Others have written on the ubiquity of performance as a mode for the circulation of a wide variety of written and visual texts in the Middle Ages: Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence, eds, *Performing Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005); Laurie Postlewait and Wim Hüskens, eds, *Acts and Texts: Performance and Ritual in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007); Bruce Holsinger, "Analytical Survey 6: Medieval Literature and Cultures of Performance," *New Medieval Literatures* 6, eds. David Lawton, Rita Copeland, and Wendy Scase (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 271-311. For demonstrations of the performance of medieval narrative, see Evelyn Birge Vitz's website, "Performing Medieval Narrative Today," at <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/mednar/index.php>.

28. Jung, *La Légende* 603-05; Runnalls 126-31. See note 4 for details.

29. Frank 203-10; Runnalls 178-82.

30. The *Istoire* consists of 101 characters and 29,784 lines; the *Mistere*, ninety-one speaking parts and 20,536 lines. The longest "mystery play," the *Actes des Apôtres*, has five hundred characters and extends to 63,000 lines. For the *Istoire*, see Stengel. For the *Mistere*, see Vicki Hamblin, ed. *Le Mistere du siege d'Orleans* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2002). For the *Actes*, see Smith et al.'s digital edition, <http://eserve.org.uk/anr>.

31. Symes, "Appearance" 788-90.

32. Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992) 48 and *passim*. Originally published as *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972).

33. Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue Française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVIe siècle*. 10 vols. (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1880-1902): IV, 478; Louis de Gouvenain, *Le théâtre à Dijon, 1422-1790* (Dijon: Eugène Jobard, 1888) 8; *Archives communales d'Orléans antérieures à 1790*, CC 561; *Archives municipales de Lyon* BB 019, CC 0518 & 0638 1.

34. Godefroy V 348.

35. Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby, eds, *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1983) 296.

36. Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, trans. Susan Ross Huston (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) 229, 230. Originally published as *Naissance de la Nation France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

37. Jacques Milet, *La Destruction de Troye la Grant*. Western Manuscripts Collection, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. MS français 12601. f. 2v. Author's translation. Hereafter, I shall refer to this manuscript by its sigil, P4. This manuscript includes a complete copy of the play and it is the most lavishly decorated, featuring nearly 400 full-color illustrations. P4 also includes the entire Prologue, and two-thirds of the *Épître épilogative* ("Letter of Epilogue"). P4, therefore, represents the most complete copy of Milet's play and its accompanying visual and textual material.

38. Quoted in Muir 131; Stengel 434, ll. 27977-27980. Author's translation.

39. Graham Runnalls, "General Surveys of Religious Drama," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 21 (1978): 83-90, 22 (1979): 111-36; Alan Hindley, "Comic Drama," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 23 (1980): 93-126.

40. Knight, *Aspects* 91.

41. 21.

42. Carol Symes, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007). For details about this critical acclaim, see Helen Solterer, rev. of *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras*, by Carol Symes, *Theatre Survey* 51.1 (May 2010): 135-37. Jody Enders also reviews the book in *H-France Review* 9.26 (Feb. 2009): 105-09. Cornell University Press's web page on the book lists its awards: the American Historical Association's 2008 Herbert Baxter

Adams Prize; the Society for French Historical Studies' David Pinkney Prize; and the Medieval and Renaissance Drama Society's 2008 David Bevington Award for Best New Book in Early Drama Studies.

43. Symes, "Appearance" 779.

44. Zrinka Stahuljak, "Going Global, Getting Medieval," *UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies 2008-09* (Los Angeles: CMRS, 2008) 3.

45. I am also leaving out, for simplicity's sake, works not currently understood as plays, despite a preponderance of new and interesting scholarship on fifteenth-century performance culture, especially on courts such as Burgundy, Anjou, and Savoy, that valued, sponsored, and used performance. See, in particular, Andrew Brown and Graeme Small, *Court and Civic Society in the Burgundian Low Countries c. 1420-1530* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007) for English translations of Burgundian chronicles discussing spectacular performance events.

46. Data for Figures 1 and 2 is compiled from Runnalls, *Les Mystères français imprimés*. Though focused on print editions, he also provides a comprehensive list of extant play manuscripts of the French "religious" theatre.

47. Runnalls, *Les Mystères* 17, 178-82.

48. 126; Jung, "La mise en scène" 563.

49. Runnalls, *Les Mystères* 84-85.

50. 126-31.

51. Jung, *La Légende* 604.

52. Jung, "La mise en scène" 569.

53. Elizabeth Lalou and Darwin Smith, "Pour une typologie des manuscrits de théâtre médiéval," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 13. *Actes du Ve colloque international de la SITM* (July 1986): 569-79; Graham A. Runnalls, "Towards a Typology of Medieval French Play Manuscripts," *The Editor and the Text*, eds. Philip E. Bennett and Graham A. Runnalls (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1990) 96-113; Darwin Smith, "Les manuscrits 'de théâtre': introduction codicologique à des manuscrits qui n'existent pas," *Gazette du livre médiéval* 33 (1998): 1-10.

54. C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1980) 4; Mary Elizabeth Meek, trans., ed., "Introduction," *Historia Destructionis Troiae* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1974) xiii.

55. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and Its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 2.

56. 2-3, 15.

57. Guido delle Colonne, *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, Mary Elizabeth Meek, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1974) Prologue, ll. 17-19.

58. Meek xiv-xvi; Benson 4-6; Jung, *La Légende* 563-64.

59. Petit de Julleville I, 315; Henri Tivier, *Étude sur le Mystère du Siège d'Orléans et sur Jacques Millet, auteur présumé de ce mystère* (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1868) 189.

60. Jung, *La Légende* 602.

61. T. E. Oliver, "Jacques Millet's Drama, 'La Destruction De Troye La Grant'; Its Principal Source, Its Dramatic Structure," Diss. U of Heidelberg, 1899, privately published, 11.

62. This part of the colophon appears in all nine of the manuscripts I consulted.

63. Jung, *La Légende* 10.

64. Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology* 226.

65. 8, 11.

66. 227.

67. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, ed. *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997) xii, 29-30.

68. Beaune 230.

69. A. de la Grange, *Extraits analytiques des Registres des Consaulx de la Ville de Tournai 1431-1476*, Mémoires de la Société historique et littéraires de Tournai 23 (Tournai: H & L Casterman, 1893) 331; *Chronique d'Étienne de Cruseau* 2 (Bordeaux: Société des bibliophiles de Guyenne, 1879) 113; Frédéric Mireur, "Textes relatifs aux États Généraux de Provence de 1371 à 1383, et à des représentations scéniques à Draguignan aux XVe, XVIe et XVIIe siècles," Excerpt of *Revue des Sociétés savantes*, 6th series, vol. 3 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1876) 28.

70. P4, f. 1r.

71. The print editions including an image of this type include a, b, c, f, g1, g2, h, and m. See Runnalls, *Les Mystères* 126-31 for details on extant print editions.

72. Jacques Millet, *La Destruction de Troye la Grande* (Lyon: Denis Harsy, 1544). Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, Paris. Fol B822 réserve (1) f. 1v (print edition m). Author's translation.

73. For a critical edition of the *Épître* and a discussion of its primary parts, see Marc-René Jung, "Jacques Millet et son *Épître épilogative*," 240-58.

74. 251. Author's translation.
75. Alan Hindley, Frederick W. Langley, and Brian J. Levy, eds. *Old French-English Dictionary* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 138; Godefroy II, 211.
76. Marc-René Jung, "Jacques Milet et son *Épître épilogative*" 240-58.
77. Symes, *A Common Stage* 4.