

Gustave Cohen and the Modern Construction of the Medieval “Meneur de Jeu”

Gordon Kipling

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, a young student of French literature named Gustave Cohen was writing a book that would become one of our most influential studies of the medieval theatre; *Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre religieux du moyen âge* (1906). As part of his research, he naturally consulted Hurbert Cailleau’s somewhat enigmatic image of a man wearing a violet doublet with red sleeves, yellow stockings, a fashionably prominent codpiece, and holding a staff in one hand and a roll of paper in the other—the very image that adorns the SITM website. The great Petit de Julleville had examined the same image a quarter of a century earlier, and he offered the suggestion, with some hesitation, that “perhaps” the elegant young man might be “le maître du jeu” or one of the “originateurs” of the Valenciennes Passion Play.¹ Cohen, however, believed he knew exactly who this dapper young man was, and he felt no hesitation at all in describing him as the play’s “meneur de jeu,” even though, as we shall see, there was little evidence in the records and texts of the medieval theatre for such an office. He had no doubt that Cailleau’s miniature had captured not just an individual, but that it also portrayed a type of theatrical professional that he called “le régisseur toujours sur les planches,” the always onstage director. Cohn felt so confident of this identification, indeed, that he published Cailleau’s miniature in his *Théâtre en France au Moyen Age* and titled it “Le Meneur du Jeu.”² It is from this source, I believe, that the website image has been taken.

1 Louis Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* (Paris, 1880) 2.145, 2 vols. Petit de Julleville identified Cailleau’s miniature of a man with a roll of paper and a baton as “peut-être le maître du jeu ou l’un des ‘originateurs.’”

2 Gustave Cohen, *Le Théâtre en France au Moyen Age* (Paris: Les Éditions Rieder, 1928), 2 vols., plate 58.

Cohen's description of the duties and powers of the *meneur de jeu*'s office portrays him as a man of immense power and authority, and the incumbents of that office must have pursued their duties with almost Herculean energy:

in the wings he supervises those who are in charge of the "secrets;" he entrusts to certain men, in whom he has confidence, the duty of collecting the money at the entrance to the play; on stage, he is here, there, and everywhere: book in hand, baton raised, he serves as prompter and as stage manager; he is truly the "master of the play."

He readies the boys to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem. He signals the actors to move from one part of the stage to another and carefully regulates the speed of their march. He holds the book. As conductor of the orchestra, he both commands the musicians in Paradise to play a hearty "silete" and the devils to sound their formidable thunderings. As "protocole" he calms and silences the audience with unctuous and prudent words, reassures them of the orthodoxy of what they are about to see, advertises the marvels that are to come, and puts pre-chewed morsels of theology into their mouths. He speaks the play's prologues and epilogues, bids the audience to rest and eat between morning and afternoon journées, sends them home at night, and at last at the end of the performance, he leads them in intoning a "Pater Noster" or "Te Deum."³ One wonders whether the young man of Cailleau's miniature could possibly

3 "Enfin et surtout, il est le régisseur toujours sur les planches; dans les coulisses il surveille ceux qui sont préposés aux secrets; il confie à certains hommes, dont il est sûr, le soin de recueillir l'argent à l'entrée du jeu; sur la scène, il se multiplie: livre en main, bâton levé, il est vraiment le "mestre du jeu". Il met en ordre les enfants qui doivent saluer Jésus à son entrée à Jérusalem; il indique aux acteurs le moment où ils doivent passer d'un lieu de la scène à l'autre et il dirige soigneusement leur marche. Il est celui qui porte le livre. Chef d'orchestre, il commande aux musiciens qui sont en paradis les beaux 'silete' et aux diables les formidables tonnerres, par lesquels ils accueillent tous les triomphes de la foi. Il est aussi le 'protocole', celui qui, par d'onctueuses et prudentes paroles, apaise la voix du public qui se place et se presse pour mieux voir et mieux entendre. Il appelle l'attention sur les grandes merveilles qui lui seront présentées, sur la portée religieuse et la parfaite orthodoxie des

muster the authority, charisma, intellect, gravitas, and energy to perform all these functions.⁴

Cohen's immense reputation has made the *meneur de jeu* familiar to subsequent generations, and we find this very passage echoed again and again in more recent works that describe the *meneur de jeu* as an onstage director. One modern commentator thus imagines him "standing boldly forth among his actors, vigorously gesturing with his baton, and with the prompt-copy open in his other hand" while another envisions him waving his staff about to direct his actors "rather in the way a present-day conductor controls an orchestra."⁵ But

paroles qu'il va entendre; il lui interprète l'avance toutes les hautes vérités qui ne tarderont pas à se déployer par personnages et il lui met de petits morceaux de théologie tout mâchés dans la bouche. Enfin, il adjure le populaire de faire 'bonne silence' pour honorer Dieu et ses saints.

Il reprend souvent la parole à la fin de la matinée pour inviter assistants et acteurs à prendre un peu de relâche et à se restaurer. Au commencement de l'après-midi, il résume ce qui a été joué dans la matinée, et il fait de même le lendemain. Quand le crépuscule tombe, il reprend encore une fois la parole, mais c'est pour remercier le public et promettre pour le lendemain des merveilles plus grandes encore que celles qui ont été vues et ouïes, et enfin, il invite chacun à entonner avec lui un formidable 'Pater Noster' ou un retentissant 'Te Deum'." Gustave Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en Scène dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* ([Bruxelles]: [Hayez], [1906]) 173-74.

4 Cohen somewhat doubtfully adds to the gravitas of Cailleau's young man by characterizing the flat cap on his head as that of a "doctor" or theologian: "sur la tête un bonnet de docteur ayant la forme d'une tiare." In this, he perhaps was influenced by Maurius Sepet, for whom see below. Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en Scène dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* 174.

5 William Tydeman, *The Theatre in the Middle Ages: Western European Stage Conditions, c. 800-1576* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) 214-15. This view of the *meneur de jeu* "with a text in one hand and a baton in the other," who "acted as a kind of director-cum-stage-manager" and who "would often conduct the performance from on stage" has become conventional, as in David Whitton, *Stage Directors in Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987) 1-2. Compare with this Graham A. Runnalls, *Études sur les mystères* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1998) 379.: "It is obvious that these features [of an *abregiet*, a producer's manuscript] were designed to make the work of the *meneur du jeu* as easy as possible. It is assumed that the producer used the *abregiet*, both during rehearsals and perhaps during the performance itself, rather in the way a present-day conductor controls an orchestra. An example of such a producer at work, using his *abregiet* (and a baton) may be seen in Jehan Fouquet's miniature of the *Martyre de Sainte Apolline*." See also Grace Frank, *The Medieval French Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) 170., V. A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford: Stanford

just how well-founded is this now widely-popular view? On what authority did Cohen draw upon to document the existence of his all-powerful director? How did the idea of the medieval *meneur de jeu* develop? From what materials did Cohen construct this figure? How do we know that a single figure performed all the functions that Cohen ascribes to him? And how do we know that he directed his play while standing boldly forth among his actors, waving his arms about like an orchestra conductor? Why then did Cohen settle on this term? To answer these questions, I propose to undertake here a study of the growth and development of the idea of the *meneur de jeu* as it developed in nineteenth-century French scholarship and as it culminated and flowered in the work of Cohen, where it achieved its final and most influential form.

The Meneur de Jeu in Marcadé's *La Vengeance Jhesucrist*

What is a “meneur de jeu” anyway? Cohen uses the name as if it had undoubted historical and lexical validity. As a matter of fact, however, the term “meneur de jeu” is

University Press, 1966) 27., Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) 84. and Henri Rey-Flaud, *Le cercle magique: Essai sur le théâtre en rond B la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) 287-88. for further representative references to the *meneur de jeu*. Even A. M. Nagler, who wisely dismisses so many of the shapes and phantoms that continue to bedevil our conceptions of the medieval theatre, finds himself trying to decide whether the bits of verse which connect the scenes of the twelfth-century *Seinte Resurreccion* “are to be regarded as stage directions, or were spoken by the *meneur de jeu*.” He then continues, “if we lean toward the notion of a ‘demonstrative’ director,” Nagler continues, “then this ‘epic’ technique can appear to us to be a prefiguration of what Thornton Wilder so successfully undertook in *Our Town*, where he had his stage manager not only introduce the public to the *loca* (indicated only in a symbolic way) of a small town in New Hampshire, but also gave him the task of establishing the connections between the various scenes” A. M. Nagler, *The Medieval Religious Stage: Shapes and Phantoms* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976) 5. The “more recent commentators” would include Philip Butterworth, *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. Alan Hindley, *Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe 1* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999) 231-47, and Runnalls, *Etudes sur les mystères* 379.

extremely rare in the records and texts of the early French theatre. Those who exercised what we might call “directorial” office in early plays are usually called “originateurs” and “superintendents” in the records, as they are in the Valenciennes contract.⁶ Not only is it difficult to find the term “meneur de jeu” in the records of the early drama, but it is in fact extremely difficult to find any reference at all to the noun *meneur* in a theatrical sense before the late-nineteenth century.

La Curne de Sainte-Palaye’s *Dictionnaire historique* (c. 1880) was probably the first to define the “meneur du jeu” as a theatrical term for a fifteenth-century “Directeur de théâtre” and “entrepreneur de spectacles.”⁷ All other more recent dictionaries follow La

6 The Valenciennes contract names thirteen “superintendents” and three “originateurs” Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 2.145-46.; the Mons *abregiet* names two “superintendents” and four actors who also served as superintendents Gustave Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur et le Compte des Dépenses pour le Mystère de la Passion joué B Mons en 1501* (Strasbourg: Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Strasbourg, 1924) lxxiii.

7 Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Dictionnaire historique de l’ancien langage françois* (Paris: L. Favre, 1875-82) 7.330, 10 vols.: “Directeur de théâtre, entrepreneur de spectacles, comme les anciennes comédies de la Passion. Ce mot est souvent répété dans l’imprimé de la ‘Vengeance de Jésus-Christ par Vespasien, B personnages,’ en vers, édition de Vérard, 1493.” Writing in the late-eighteenth century, La Curne de Saint Palaye (who ceased work on his *Dictionnaire historique* about 1765 and died in 1781) was unlikely to have compiled this particular portion of the definition of “meneur.” Rather, such a definition more plausibly reflects the newly-important role of the director in the late-nineteenth-century theatre. This part of the definition thus more likely derives from the “care” of Louis Favre, who edited, expanded, and prepared La Curne de Sainte-Palaye’s *Dictionnaire historique* between 1875 and 1882, and who published vol. 5, with its definitions of “meneur” in 1880. Usually Favre identifies editorial changes by enclosing them in square brackets. He thus makes several such interventions in his article on “Meneur” (such as the second sub-meaning, “Tuteur”), but the definition in question is not so identified as an editorial insertion. Nevertheless, in defining the “meneur de jeu” as a Directeur de théâtre” and “entrepreneur de spectacles,” the writer clearly uses a term that would probably not be recognizable to readers c. 1775, but would be to readers c.1880. Indeed, La Curne de Sainte-Palaye’s own definition of *Directeur* is a case in point. In the *Dictionnaire historique*, the word is practically non-existent; the writer merely directs the reader to consult the entry for *Conduire*, where no theatrical usage of this word is to be found. The editors of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye’s *Dictionnaire historique* may well have taken their inspiration, as well as their reference, from Louis Paris.

Curne de Sainte-Palaye's lead. More importantly, all dictionaries cite exactly the same source to justify this definition: Antoine Vérard's edition of *La Vengeance nostre Seigneur* (1491).⁸ From this single source as well derives the claim, often made by modern scholars, that the *meneur de jeu*, as the play's director, often spoke the prologues and epilogues of medieval mystères, apparently as a kind of *droit du rHgisseur*. On this basis, for instance, we are sometimes told that the *meneur de jeu* delivers the prologue to the *Jeu d'Adam*, although there is no evidence whatsoever as to the identity of that expositor—or even that the prologue in question is actually meant to be spoken to an audience.⁹

What strikes one most about consulting the dictionaries is not only the absence of any other appearance of *meneur de jeu* outside of Vérard's text, but also the curious absence of any theatrical meanings of the noun *meneur* before the nineteenth century. Godofroy, for instance, records the dominant meanings of the noun *meneur* during the fifteenth century as *tutor* and *procurer*, and he does not record any specific theatrical senses at all.¹⁰ Louis Dochez's mid-century *Nouveau Dictionnaire de la langue française* only recognizes a "meneur" as someone who leads or conducts, and omits any specifically theatrical usage at all.¹¹ Nor is there any evidence that the verb "mener" was used to refer specifically

8 See, for instance, *Trésor de la Langue Française*, s.v. Meneur.

9 See, for example, Marius Sepet, *Le Drame Chrétien au Moyen Age* (Paris: Didier et Cie, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1878) 43., who thinks that the "prologue" to the *Jeu d'Adam* is "récité par le lecteur ou meneur du ju," or Gustave Cohen, *Le Jeu d'Adam et Ove, mystère du XII^e cle* (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1936) 7: "l'ingénieux systHme de la mise en scHne simultanée des mystHres tell qu'elle nous est exposée par le meneur de jeu." Probably the authority of these dictionaries, based upon a mistaken understanding of the expositor's roles in Marcadé's play, explains why Cohen's "meneur de jeu," rather than Petit de Julleville's formulation, "maître de jeu," became the term most often cited by twentieth-century theatre historians as the "medieval" name for play director.

10 Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX^e au XV^e siHcle* (Paris: F. Vieweg and E. Bouillon, 1881-1902)., s.v. *meneur*.

11 Louis Dochez, *Nouveau Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: Librairie

to play directing in the fifteenth century, or that either the verb or the noun had any specific theatrical meaning whatsoever. Other dictionaries find references to a *meneur de ours* (a bearward) who “les fait voir et danser en public”—certainly a reference to performing if not a theatrical reference *per se*.¹² No dictionary lists a specific theatrical meaning for the verb *mener*, but some hypothesize that it may originally have referred only to the conducting of animals, and then little by little it extended its usage to its many other meanings which refer to all sorts of conducting, governing, and leading activities in a variety of senses.¹³ In this larger, though unspecific, context it would be surprising if a theatrical reference of some kind did not pop up somewhere. Petit de Julleville thus cites just such an unspecific reference to a priest of Dijon, Jehan Montbeliard, who is described as “meneur et conduiseur” of a 1447 performance of the mystère, *Saint Éloy*, at Dijon, where the term merely identifies the troupe of actor’s most important member or “leader.”¹⁴ Beyond these dictionaries, not a single performance record uses the term “meneur de jeu” to refer to a play’s “originator,” “superintendent,” or (as Cohen would have it) “le régisseur toujours sur les planches.”¹⁵ All lexical roads, in short, lead directly to Vérard’s edition of the *Vengeance nostre Seigneur* and

Ecclésiastique et Classique de Ch. Fouraut, 1860)., s.v. *meneur*.

12 *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française*, s.v. *meneur*; *Trésor de la Langue Française*, s.v. *meneur*. The first of these does not give a reference or date; the second supports this reading with a citation from Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1898), which may suggest a rather late occurrence of this meaning.

13 *Encyclopédie du bon Français*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions de Trévisé, [1972]), 2.1585; Alain Rey, ed., *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française*, 2 vols. (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1993), s.v. *mener*.

14 Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 1.348. He provides no reference for this citation, however.

15 The same is true of the noun, *directeur*; this word is unrecognized as a theatrical term until very late in the nineteenth century. I use the term “record” here to refer to documentary material referring to performances, not including dramatic texts (play scripts). I will discuss below a single textual use of the term “meneur de jeu.”

to nowhere else. The term simply does not exist anywhere else.

Except, that is, for one other, closely related, text: Eustache Mercadé's briefer and earlier version of the same play: *La Vengeance Jhesucrist* (c. 1415), which is lesser known because it remains in manuscript. Our investigation properly begins here, because in this as yet unpublished mystère a speaker described as "le meneur du jeu" appears for the very first time in the history of the drama. In it, he delivers a prologue to each of the play's three *journées*.¹⁶ Vérard's printed text, it transpires, is an expanded and revised version of Mercadé's manuscript play,¹⁷ and once again, a speaker named "le meneur du jeu" serves as an expositor in this version. Although he is closely modelled on Mercadé's original, he serves a somewhat different purpose than he does in the original manuscript version. Nevertheless, in these two plays we have at least found undoubted references to a "meneur du jeu" who performs some sort of role on stage. And here the story begins, because it is in

16 Marcadé's manuscript consistently styles this speaker "Meneur *du* Jeu" (cf Eustache Mercadé, *La Vengeance Jesucrist*, I^{ère}, III^{ème} journées, ed. Andrée Marcelle Fourcade Kail, diss. Tulane U., 1955, l. 174 (first journée), l. 9317 (third journée), and p. 432 (cast list); Eustache Mercadé, *La Vengeance Jesucrist*, II^{ème} journée, ed. Adele Cornay, PhD. Diss, Tulane U., 1957, l. 4529. These will hereafter be cited as Marcadé, *Vengeance*, J.1, 2, or 3 as appropriate. These dissertations are available in the form of microfiche included in Stephen K. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem*, Studies and Texts, 89 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989). Nevertheless, despite Marcadé's consistent preference, Wright's excellent discussion of Marcadé consistently refers to this speaker as the play's "meneur *de* jeu." As we shall see below, this distinction may be more than a trivial one.

17 According to Stephen Wright, "every surviving example of the *Vengeance of Our Lord* in France is based directly on Marcadé's text." The expanded, printed version, *La Vengeance de Nosre Seigneur par parsonnages*, as printed Vérard in 1491, "calls for 177 speaking parts in the course of a four-day performance" and "represents an expansion of Marcadé's text by nearly half its original length." Seven editions published by five different printers (Jehan Petit, Jehan Trepperel, Alain Lotrian, Jehan Hehannot, and Vérard himself) appeared between 1491 and 1539. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* 112-13. In discussing these versions of the "Vengeance of Our Lord," Petit de Julleville mistakenly opines that these texts are entirely independent of one another: "on ne le confondra pas d'avantage avec un autre *Vengeance*, également dramatique, mais qui est l'oeuvre toute différente d'un auteur connu, Eustache Mercadé" Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 2.460.

these plays that Cohen's all-powerful director was born.

We may even have visual evidence of his existence of this prodigious birth. In the 1830s, Louis Paris, a French librarian and scholar, discovered some intriguing tapestry sketches that he connected with a performance of the longer, revised text that he thinks was staged at Reims in 1531.¹⁸ The first of these sketches is thus titled “La Vengeance Nostre Seigneur”—which is the title of the Vérard version—and an inscription further informs us that it represents “le mistere de la vengeance de la mort . . . Jesuchrist.”¹⁹ The sketches are very vigorous and convincing as representations of the play *text*. The connection between printed text and tapestry sketch, indeed, is clearly demonstrated by a glance at Vérard's page headers that define for the reader the segments of action. Four of these headers dominate Vérard's presentation of the first journée: “De la mondanite du peuple de Syon” (a2v-A4r), “Comme les sages reprenoient les enfans de Syon” (A4v-A5v), “Le proces de paradis” (A6r-B4r), and “Des signes qui apparuerent en hierusalem” (B4^v-C2^v, D1^r- F6^v). Although the sketch omits the little heavenly drama of the Four Daughters of God, the other three headers define precisely the subject matter that the artist chooses to depict:²⁰ on the square before the Temple of Jerusalem, the children of Sion dance away the holy day; the Raby Moyses and Joseph the sage reprehend them for their “mondanite” while the prophetic fool, Jesus Anay,

18 Louis Paris, *Toiles peintes et tapisseries de la ville de Reims ou la mise en scIine du théne du théâtre des confrIIres de la passion*. (Paris: Le V^{te} Hyp. de Bruslart, 1843), 2 vols. and atlas of 32 plates designed and engraved by Casimir Leberthais. Paris' discovery includes not only the sketches illustrating *La Vengeance de notreseigneur* but also others that he connects with performances of a *Passion* staged at Reims between 1450 and 1490.

19 For those unable to find a copy of Louis Paris, there is a reprint of the image available in Nagler, *The Medieval Religious Stage: Shapes and Phantoms* 83.

20 Except for the scene of “le conseil des Juifs” in the upper right hand corner of the sketch. As Louis Paris points out, this council scene, in which the Jews discuss their guilt for the death of Jesus Christ, takes place in a later journée. Paris, *Toiles peintes et tapisseries de la ville de Reims ou la mise en scIine du théne du théâtre des confrIIres de la passion*. 656.

utters his warnings unheeded. Terrible signs appear in heaven; a fiery chariot and a sword. As an artist's textual illustration, this lively sketch tells us a great deal about how a sixteenth century reader may have visualized V  rard's printed text. Its value as an attempted representation of a *performance* of that text, however, is quite another matter. Modern scholarship has simply not been able to endorse Louis Paris' enthusiastic views and has generally found these sketches so impractical as to be worthless for this latter purpose, except possibly for the study of costume.²¹

One of the figures who crowd the stage in this scene, however, has been widely identified as our *meneur du jeu*:

In the center of the commotion stands an isolated figure carrying a short staff and wearing a flat cap instead of the turbans and conical headdresses of the Jews. He is surely meant to be the *meneur de jeu*.²²

If not a representation of a *meneur du jeu* captured in the act of performing his role in an actual performance, might this enigmatic figure not be a *meneur du jeu* whom the artist imagined must have been on stage plying his trade in full view of the audience?

Significantly, Louis Paris did not himself make this suggestion. Rather, such an identification of this stick-wielding figure at the center of the tapestry sketch occurs entirely post-Cohen. Moreover, those who make this identification never explain the grounds of this identification. Superficially at least, the stick-wielding man from Reims does resemble the

21 Nagler, *The Medieval Religious Stage: Shapes and Phantoms* 78-82 concludes that "they have no value" as an actual pictorial record and that Louis Paris, motivated by "enthusiasm . . . no doubt fired by local patriotism . . . went too far, no question about it" (82). Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* 146, concludes that "the apocalyptic power of the Reims tapestry designs is undeniable, but they shed little light on problems of practical stagecraft."

22 Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* 144.

Valenciennes supervisor a good deal, and I expect that this supposed resemblance has a good deal to do with identifying him as a *meneur de jeu*. Both, for instance, wear similar flat caps and short coats, and both even wield their sticks in the same hand. But there are crucial differences as well. The man from Reims, for instance, holds neither book nor “rollet.” If he were indeed the play’s *meneur de jeu*—particularly the sort of *meneur* that Cohen imagines—wouldn’t he have to carry some text in order to do all—or even some—of the tasks that Cohen has assigned to his “always onstage director”? Isn’t the *meneur du jeu* supposed to have “porté le livre B tous les jours q’on a joué ledit Mistère”?²³ Certainly the stick-wielding man from Reims seems to be someone of authority, but exactly what authority does he wield? He is, after all, not the only such figure depicted in the sketch; just behind him another man, stick laid over his shoulder, seems to be walking offstage, and the Jewish authority presiding over “le conseil des Juifs” in the upper right also holds a similar wand.

We have so far, of course, been discussing the *meneur de jeu* of Mercadé’s play as if he were the sort of onstage director that Cohen describes. Does the play itself, however, support such a construction? To answer this question, we must examine the role of the “meneur de jeu” in both the manuscript and print versions of Mercadé’s play. As for the manuscript *Vengeance Jhesucrist*, Stephen K. Wright points out that Mercadé innovatively divides the “traditional role of the *expositor ludi*” between “two separate speakers, the Prescheur and the Meneur de jeu,” whose speeches reflect “two mutually incompatible value systems.” Let us consider how these two “value systems” characterize the roles of these two expositors.

On the one hand, the Prescheur is exactly the same expositor who appears in Mercadé’s other mystère, the so-called *Passion d’Arras*. To judge from his character and

23 Marcel Couturier and Graham A. Runnalls, *Compte du mystère de la Passion*,

function, he might well have stepped directly from the one play to the other. In both plays, he thus delivers prologues as well as epilogues, and these are invariably presented as sermons. He invariably begins with a line or two of biblical text that he calls his “theume,” and then preaches on that theme, applying it to both the action of the journée that he is introducing and to the lives of the members of the audience. He ranges widely through the psalms and gospels for these themes. He thus chooses Luke’s announcement that “the Lord is risen indeed” as his sermon for the prologue to the fourth journée, which stages the Resurrection, and he wittily selects the same verse from Psalm 18 as his sermon theme for both the first prologue and final epilogue: “His going out is from the end of heaven, And his circuit even to the end thereof.”²⁴

In the manuscript *Vengeance*, the Prescheur presents himself as a bookish man deeply learned in “les escripts / Et les livres de sainte Eglise / Ou nostre matere est comprinse” (4288-90). His prologues and epilogues also take the form of homiles based on scriptural “theumes.” Where the Prescheur of Mercadé’s *Passion* selects these “theumes” from a variety of biblical texts, however, the Prescheur of the *Vengeance* selects his exclusively

Châteaudun 1510 (Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, [1991]) 162.

2⁴ [Eustache] Mercadé], *Le Mystère de la Passion, texte du manuscrit 697 de la Bibliothèque d'Arras*, ed. Jules-Marie Richard (Arras: Société du Pas-de-Calais, 1891). Le Prescher’s sermon theme for both the opening and closing of the *mystère* is Psalm 18:7: “A summo caelo egressio eius; et occursum eius usque ad summum eius” (“His going out is from the end of heaven, and his circuit even to the end thereof”). In the prologue to the third journée, his theme is Ps 17:5-6: “circumdederunt me dolores mortis . . . conturbaverunt me dolores inferni circumdederunt ” (The sorrows of death surrounded me . . . The sorrows of hell encompassed me”). In the Prologue to the fourth, he selects Luke 24:34 as his “theume:” “Surrexit Dominus vere” (“The Lord is risen indeed”), although Mercadé incorrectly cites “M^c ulltimo.” as the source of this verse. To open the second journée, the author substitutes John the Baptist “vestu de la peau d’un camel” for Le Prescheur, and the Baptist himself delivers the prologue sermon, appropriately citing Matthew 3:2 (and 4:17) as his theme: “Penitentiam agite, appropinquabit enim regnum celorum” (“do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”). Le Prescheur delivers only brief, formal epilogues for the first and third journées, but as mentioned above, he closes the play with a full sermon. The second journée has no epilogue.

from the opening six lines of the second psalm (“Quare fremuerunt gentes, et populi meditati sunt inania?”), an appropriately vengeful passage that envisions the princes of the earth rising up against the Lord and his Christ, and the Lord responding with derisive laughter, anger, and rage.²⁵ Le Prescheur asks the audience to understand the Psalm as a “prophezie de David” about the Jews’ conspiring to crucify Christ and—when they do not repent—the Lord’s angry revenge upon them through the destruction of Jerusalem. He constructs moral and theological lessons from the play’s action, exhorts his listeners to apply these lessons to their own lives, and “admonishes” them “to practice the virtues of prayer, penance, and righteousness.”²⁶ He begins the first *ournée*, for instance, by citing Psalm 2.2: “The Princes met together against the Lord and against his Christ.” In preacherly fashion, he then draws out the spiritual meaning of this “theume” as a warning against the “envie” and “folle erreur” of those who would deny their Saviour, and then introduces the play itself as a fulfillment of David’s prophecy.²⁷

The Meneur du jeu, on the other hand finds no corresponding expositor in Mercadé’s earlier *Passion*. He makes his first appearance as an expositor in Mercadé’s *Vengeance*. As

25 “Why have the gentiles raged and the people devised vain things?.” The opening lines of Le Prescheur’s prologue to the first *ournée* (36-42) announce Ps 2:2 as his theme: “Principes convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus Christum ejus” (“The princes met together against the Lord and against his Christ”). He then closes the first *ournée* with a sermon that reprises Ps 2:2 (cf. Ll. 4305-18). He “proposes” Ps 2:4 as his “theume” for his prologue to the second *ournée* (ll. 4423-30): (Qui habitat in celis / Irridebit eos et dominus / subsanabit eos et cetera” (“He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them and the Lord shall deride them, et cetera”). In opening the third *ournée*, he offers Ps 2:5 as his “theume” (9277-90): “Tunc loquetur ad eos in ira sua et in furore suo conturbabit eos” (“Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his rage”), and in his epilogue he reasserts the same theme (14430-40).

26 Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* 161, 171-74. was the first to make a distinction between the “prescheur” and “meneur de jeu” as theologian and historian respectively.

27 Andrée Marcelle, “La Vengeance Jesucrist, II^e, III^eme journées,” diss., Department of French, Tulane University, 1955.

the play's second expositor, he instructs the audience from an intellectual viewpoint distinct from, but complementary to, Le Prescheur. Where the Prescheur "advocates the path of Christian renunciation and the *gloria passionis*," as Wright puts it, the Meneur by contrast "celebrates the achievements of individual heroism in the realm of secular politics."²⁸ A historian rather than a preacher, he speaks only once in each journée, just before the play starts and immediately after his clerical colleague has delivered his moral homily; he never appears at the end of a journée to deliver an epilogue. To distinguish their roles the more sharply, Mercadé even gives him a little joke to make at the expense of the longwinded Presscheur who has just left the stage:

Messeigneurs, pour nous abregier
 Sans vous trop longuement preschier,
 Et pourtant que ceste matere
 Est a ung chascun assés clere,
 Nous passerons legierement
 Au regard de ce preschement²⁹ (4529-34)

Taking a didactic, even academic approach, the Meneur de jeu avoids scriptural exegesis and embraces a more academic discourse. Instead of preaching homilies on biblical "theumes," he delivers his prologues as if he were addressing a classroom of students by lecturing to the audience on the chronology, history, and politics of each day's action. He thus grounds his lectures on "pluseurs escrips / Et pluseurs notables histoires," specifically mentioning Paulus

28 Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* 161.

29 "Messeigneurs, in order to hurry ourselves along without preaching too long to you, And because this matter is clear enough to each and every one, we will pass lightly on in regard to this preachment"

Orosius' *Historiarum adversus paganos libri VII* (177-8, 224, 9372-77).³⁰ “Even when the *meneur de jeu* finally arrives at the description of the siege of Jerusalem,” as Steven Wright has demonstrated,

he makes no attempt to portray it either as a moral exemplum or as a preordained link in the vast pattern of salvation history. On the contrary, it is characteristic of the *meneur de jeu* that he discusses the central event of *La Vengeance Jhesucrist* solely in terms of historical chronology and political cause and effect.³¹

In so doing, he provides the essential historical context that the audience needs to know if it is to understand the play's action.³²

The point of adding a historian-expositor should now be clear. Marcadé expects them to be familiar with the basic religious narrative, but expecting his audience of commoners to be familiar with Roman history involving the campaign of Titus and Vespasian against Jerusalem is another matter. As a consequence, he calls upon a figure of scholastic authority who can instruct the largely unschooled audience in the relevant historical narrative and who can also integrate the familiar biblical narrative within this larger, and less familiar, historical context.

30 However, Le Prescheur points out in the epilogue to the third journée that he, too, is familiar with the report of “Paul Orose” that “xi fois .C. mille” Jews were killed in the destruction of Jerusalem (ll. 14387-95). From his point of view, however, this fact merely offers “historical” confirmation of his “theume” of the extent of God’s anger and vengeance.

31 Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* 173.

32 As for the *meneur du jeu*'s specific reference to Orosius, Wright correctly observes that “Orosius’ brief account of the destruction of Jerusalem had no discernible influence on the dramatic tradition in general or on Marcadé's *Vengeance* in particular. Marcadé apparently names the famous historian more for the sake of his prestige than because of any specific contributions to the play.” However, the *meneur du jeu* does not draw upon Orosius for any of the events of the play, but instead cites him for general historical context. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* 171-72.

Cohen, however, did not know of the manuscript version of Marcadé's play with its sharply delineated expositors. For him—as for his predecessors Valet de Viriville and Petit de Julleville—only the expanded, printed text was readily available in the Bibliothèque nationale, and it was from this version alone that they may have encountered the “meneur de jeu” (as Cohen calls him) at first hand.³³ But many scholars of Cohen's era did not bother to wade through Vérard's text at all. Instead, they eased their research burden a good deal by consulting the comprehensive prose précis of the Vérard text that Louis Paris published in his two-volume study of the Reims tapestry sketches (1841).³⁴ La Curne de Sainte Palaye undoubtedly consulted a copy of the Vérard text, but it may well have been Paris' book that called the attention of the lexicographers to our Meneur in the first place. For the most part, Paris' two-volume monograph provides a very able, 300-page summary of what is, after all,

33 Vallet de Viriville first brought the Arras MS to the attention of scholars of the early drama Auguste Vallet de Viriville, "Notice d'un mystère par personnages, inédit, du xv^e siècle, tiré de la Bibliothèque d'Arras," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* 5 (1843-44): 37-58. Curiously, although he surveys the contents of Mercadé's *Passion* at some length, he spends only one short paragraph on the *Vengeance*, in which he says nothing substantial about the play at all, because he thought the latter *mystère* “ne le cède en rien pour l'intérêt de celle qui précède. . . . Je reviens donc à notre Passion” (47). Although Petit de Julleville describes the manuscript (*Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 2.415-18), he probably did not actually consult the MS itself. Instead he seems to have taken his information entirely from Vallet de Viriville's essay, cited above, with a few extra details gleaned from the published MS catalogue of the Bibliothèque d'Arras. Thus he mentions only those facts about the MS that Petit de Julleville mentions; in describing Mercadé's *Passion*, he gives only those details and cites only those speeches that Petit de Julleville publishes. Tellingly, he omits all discussion whatsoever of Mercadé's *Vengeance*, just as Petit de Julleville had done.

34 Paris, *Toiles peintes et tapisseries de la ville de Reims ou la mise en scène du thème du théâtre des confrères de la passion*. Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en Scène dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge*. lists Paris's *Toiles peintes* in his bibliography, although he also consulted the Jehan Trepperel-Jehan Jehannot edition of *La vengeance et la destruction de Jérusalem, par personnages, exécutée par Vaspasien et son filz Titus* (1510) that he consulted in the Musée Condé, Bibliothèque de Chantilly. He does not quote any lines from the text, however, that do not also appear in Louis Paris.

an exhausting text, and he supplies lengthy and abundant quotations as well.³⁵ In doing so, however, he made a fundamental error that continues to mislead scholars of the early drama: he represented the “meneur du jeu” as the play’s sole expositor. In so doing, he made him seem a far more powerful and important person than he actually is.

No one has yet noticed that the expanded, Vérard version of Mercadé’s play employs the same two sharply-distinguished expositors that distinguish the earlier manuscript version. Both Le Prescheur and “Le meneur du jeu” thus once again provide complementary interpretive frames for the play, but their appearances are orchestrated somewhat differently in this longer version. In general, Le Prescheur now introduces each of the play’s four journées while Le Meneur de jeu provides the epilogue. In this respect, the play both simplifies and alters the roles of the two expositors by assigning each a specific expository function and eliminating the double prologues that characterized the earlier version. There are, however, two exceptions to this rule. First of all, the Meneur makes a single appearance in a prologue, just after the Prescheur’s sermon at the opening of the second journée. In this case alone, however, the reviser has simply imported the original speeches into his expanded text, and in doing so he apparently found it necessary to include not just the Prescheur’s contribution to the prologue, but the Meneur’s as well. In every other case, he has entirely rewritten the Prescheur’s sermons and the Meneur’s lectures so that he could maintain the new pattern of their appearances.³⁶ Secondly, the fourth journée begins without any prologue

35 In examining the *Vengeance*, Paris found the text of the original Vérard editions preferable, but “trifles - rares,” so he based his description on an edition more available to him, that of Jean Petit edition (c.1499-1500). The text, however, is substantially identical to the original Vérard prints. For the dates of these editions, see Mary Beth Winn, *Anthoine Vérard, Parisian Publisher 1485-1512. Prologues, Poems, and Presentations*. (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1997) 440-41.

36 For the most part, the speeches of the Prescheur and the Meneur are merely textual variants of one another except for the last few lines of the Prescheur’s sermon. Cp. *Vengeance Jesucrist* 4523-4665 and *Vengeance nostre seigneur* a1^r-a2^v.

at all. The abruptness of this opening, however, may merely suggest that the Prescheur's usual prologue has been lost. And finally, the printed text identifies the speaker of the play's final epilogue as "Le meneur du ieu ou vng predicateur le quel que on veult," although, as we shall see, the reviser has clearly written it to be spoken by the Meneur, not the Prescheur.

In expanding and simplifying the roles of these two expositors, the reviser has carefully preserved their original intellectual differences. Once again, the Prescheur provides the audience with a homiletic and religious context for understanding the play. Like his predecessor, he preaches throughout on the first four lines of Psalm 2: he thus opens the first journée with a sermon on Ps 2:1 (A.ii.^r), the second from Ps 2:4-5 (a.i.^r), and the third from Ps 2:2-3 (aa.i.^r). He once again refers in self-consciously preacherly fashion to his "theumes", and indeed Vérard emphasizes the homiletic nature of these sermons for his reader. The second journée thus begins with this typographical point of reference: "Prologus. Theuma. Qui habitat in celis. &c." In much the same fashion, the reviser constructs the Meneur even more elaborately as the voice of historical *auctoritas*. Where his predecessor makes do with a single reference to "Orosious," the revised Meneur thus bristles with historical citations from a variety of "livres en substance": Josephus, Egesippus, Peter Comestor, Eusebius, Jerome.³⁷ In this new and expanded version of the *Vengeance*, each journée begins with one voice of medieval *auctoritas*, a preacher who places the action of the play in a religious context, and it ends with another, distinctly different, voice of medieval *auctoritas*, an academic lecturer who summarizes and frames the action of the play in a historical context.

Although the text clearly divides the two expositor's roles in this way, the

37 He mentions "la vengeance comme iosephus la escript" (i.e., Flavius Josephus' *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities*), "Egesippus" (i.e., "Joseph ben Gorion," the "lesser Josephus," author of the *Yosippon*), "lystore ecclesiastique" (i.e., Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*), "et aussi de la scolastique" (i.e., Petrus Comestor's *Histoire scolastique*), and "hieremye" (i.e., probably St Jerome's translation and extension of *Chronicon Eusebii Caesariensis*). [Eustache] Mercadé], *La Vengeance nostre Seigneur* (Paris: Anthoine Vérard, 1491) r5v.

presentation of the text in Vérard's edition has confusingly obscured this pattern. On the one hand, the printer always identifies our historian—both in speech prefixes and in page headers—as “Le meneur du ieu.”³⁸ On the other, however, the printer's speech prefixes and page headers identify our clerical expositor not as “Predicateur” (as he is referred to in this play) but rather as “Prologus” or “Prologue.” To make matters worse, the printer also uses page headers to characterize segments of the play's action: “Comme galbe sceut que neron estoit mort” (hh.1^r), “Comme galbe alla a rrome pour estre empereur,” (hh2r), “Comme vitelle sceut que neron estait mort (hh2v), Comme vitelle propose en soy davoit l'empire (hh3r), and “Comme galbe demande ayde aux germains” for example. The page headers for the prologues and epilogues are also treated in this fashion, with the added complication that the printer sometimes (but not always) uses the word “jeu” or “geu” to mean “journée.” For the first journée, the printer's page header reads “Le prologue,” thus referring ambiguously either to the speaker (the Predicateur) or to his speech.³⁹ Because the second journée uniquely begins with appearances of both expositors, the speech prefixes clearly identify the speakers—first “Le prologue”(a1^r) and “Le meneur du ieu” (a1^v-a2^r) as these two expositors make their appearances and speak their lines. But when the Meneur appears at the end of the second journée, the page header reads “Lepillogue du geu,” by which the printer apparently means “the epilogue to the second journée,” and the Meneur himself is identified as “Le meneur du ieu” in his speech prefix on the same page (g4^v). When the Predicateur makes his appearance to open the third journée, the speech headers read “Le prologue du ieu,” and the printer confirms this by identifying the Predicateur's speech itself as “Le prologue la tierce iournee

38 Alternatively he is styled “Le meneur du geu”(F6^v, g4^v) or “Le meneur du gieu” (gg4^{r-v}).

39 Because the Meneur du jeu's first epilogue is so brief, occupying only part of one column of text, neither he nor his speech figures in the page header (F6^v).

de la veng~ce de nostreseigneur” (aa1^{r-v}). The printer next identifies the close of the third journée as “Lepylogue du gieu” in the page header, while identifying the speaker as “Lepylogue. Le meneur du gieu” (gg4^{r-v}) in the speech prefix. Finally, the printer’s page header at the end of the fourth journée is perhaps only marginally less confusing by announcing “lepylogue du ieu.” Presumably this means the “epilogue of the “jeu” (meaning either the play or only the fourth journée) because the prefix to the final speech of the play tells us that it can be spoken by either “Le meneur du ieu ou vng predicateur le quel que on veult” (rr3^v).⁴⁰ No wonder Louis Paris, and Petit de Julleville after him, found these speeches so confusing.⁴¹

However, as noted above, the sermons of the preacher and the lectures of the historian are revised and elaborated versions of those to be found in Mercadé’s original. The text assigns the final speech of the play, it is true, to either “Le meneur du ieu” or “vng predicateur,” but this expression of ambivalence at least makes clear that there are two expositors in the play and gives us the identity of “Le Prologue.” If one judges the speeches by their contrasting intellectual viewpoints rather than by these somewhat confusing page headers and speech prefixes, furthermore, then their identities are clearly and consistently differentiated. We may well wonder why Vérard’s text makes it possible for “ung

40 The speech header clearly identifies him as “Lepylogue. Le meneur du gieu.”

41 Louis Paris obviously struggled with these confusing page headers and speech prefixes. Concluding that the Meneur must be the play’s only expositor, he thus twice misassigns the Predicateur’s speeches to him (pp. 617 and 769), and he plainly doesn’t know what to do about the opening of the second journée, where both the Predicateur and the Meneur appear one after the other, so he fudges. In discussing the Predicateur’s prologue, he avoids hazarding a guess as to the identity of the speaker, merely telling us that “Le sujet de ce prologue est tiré d’un des psaumes du Roi-Prophète.” He then more confidently moves on to a discussion of the Meneur’s prologue: “Le meneur du jeu se présente ensuite aux spectateurs” (682). Petit de Julleville either silently endorsed Paris’ misconception or made the same error. He thus tells us that “La troisième journée s’ouvre par un prolouge oü le meneur de jeu annonce et admire la vengeance que Dieu va tirer des Juifs” Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 2.457. In fact, it is the preacher who

predicateur” to deliver an epilogue that is so obviously a product of historical rather than preacherly authority. Certainly this last epilogue was written to suit the Meneur, not the Predicateur. Does this deliberately ambiguous speech prefix respond to the absence of a prologue that should have been spoken by the Predicateur at the opening of the fourth journée? One of the two expositors, after all, will not appear at all on the fourth day, and the Meneur has enjoyed an “extra” prologue in the second journée. This ambivalence, thus, seems an expression of a practical matter: the fourth journée as written might seem to value the Meneur’s expository talents more than the Predicateur’s. By offering this option, the text thus leaves it possible for Predicateur to make a final appearance on the last day, take the final bow, and restore the balance between the expositors. Nevertheless the casual alternatives proposed in this final speech prefix—historian or preacher, “lequel que on veult”—should tell us at once that the Meneur is no powerful director-cum-stage manager come to take his proprietary bow as the superintendent of this mammoth production; rather he is merely one of two quite interchangeable expositors who might equally well bring the production to a gracious close.

If we now look at the examine once again the man with the stick from the Reims tapestry, it seems extremely unlikely that the artist means him to represent the play’s “Meneur du jeu.” The Meneur of the play only appears to speak a brief epilogue at the end of the play’s first journée. The tapestry sketch, for the most part, conflates the two major scenes of dancing that take place earlier in the play. In both scenes, the children dance at the behest of “Pillate le preuost” (represented in the center foreground), to celebrate a “solennite grande.”⁴² Raby Moyses and Joseph le Sage (depicted in the lower right of the sketch) inveigh against the frivolity and dissolution of the children who dance on a holy day. The

speaks this prologue.

42 Mercadé, *La Vengeance nostre Seigneur* A3v.

prophet-fool, Jesus Anay cries his warning, “Vox, vox, vox” unheeded. Prodiges appear in the heavens—a fiery chariot and a sword—that are ignored by the dancing children. If anything, the drawing represents the earlier of these two scenes because Jesus Anay has been imprisoned by the second dancing scene and he has to shout his warnings from his prison cell.⁴³ Our man with his stick stands apart from, but is oriented toward, the dancers. Who might he be?

Sabin “varlet de pillate” (i.e. Pilate’s *valet de chambre*) is the most likely candidate. Pilate charges him with the responsibility to proclaim the “solennite grande” to the “enfants” of Jerusalem, and Sabin does so with a formal “cry”:

Or ouez iuifz et entendez
de par pillate le preuost
dedens quatre iours ouplus tost
la feste annuelle sera
celebree/ et co(m)mencera
chascun a la solenniser
pillate vous faict auiser
que fil ya nul tant soit hault
qui a ce iour face deffault
et ny soit personnellement
pugny sera tresrudement
pourtant seigneurs pensez a vous
et y venez toutes et tous

⁴³ Louis Paris believes, however, that the sketch represents the second of the two scenes of dancing and aerial prodigies Paris, *Toiles peintes et tapisseries de la ville de Reims ou la mise en scIIne du théne du théâtre des confrIIres de la passion*. 653-56.

affin que nen ayes reproche. (A3^v)

A man of importance, a trusted intimate of Pilate, he carries out many of his master's orders throughout the first journée. He takes Jesus Anay to prison, for example, and he convenes meetings with Annas and Caiphas. But the tapestry sketch here represents him in most important role as Pilate's "crier" who formally sets in motion the dance that represents "la bobance et dissolution des juifs et habitans de Jherusalem," as the legend above the scene puts it. For such a role, a staff would properly symbolize his authority as a representative of the Pilate the Grand Provost. In the end, therefore, he is only one of many actors who crowd this scene. Like the other characters who surround him on stage, he has a role to play, not a play to direct.

But if Mercadé did not mean to employ one of the play's "superintendents" as an expositor, what did he mean, after all, by calling him "Le Meneur de jeu?" To answer this question, I think we shall have to rely on what are after all the primary meanings of the noun *meneur* in the fifteenth century. As we have seen, Mercadé carefully distinguishes between the "Prescheur," who delivers homilies to the audience, and the "Meneur," who lectures the audience on the historical topics. The Meneur, in short, serves the audience as its lecturer or tutor; he is the Meneur or Instructor of the play. Moreover, as Mercadé originally envisions him, he introduces the play. His is the last expository voice before the play begins. As such, he may be said to conduct or lead the audience into the action of the *mystIre*. Thus his function as a history tutor and (in the original version of the play) as an introducer play upon the dominant fifteenth-century meanings of the verb *mener* and of the noun *meneur*. He is thus the audience's tutor.

But the question is not so easily answered as that. If Mercadé designs him merely as the audience's historian and lecturer, why does he call him "Le Meneur *du jeu*"? He might

have named him, after all, “Le Meneur” or even “Le Tutor”? In that case, his title might even sharpen more neatly the intellectual distinction between the religious evangelist, “Le Prescheur,” and the academic historian, “Le Meneur.” Does the title “Meneur *du jeu*” then tell us that Mercadé has reserved this role for the “meneur et conducteur” of the performers of the play like the priest, Jehan Montbeliard, who is so described in the performance record that Petit de Julleville turned up?⁴⁴ Perhaps.

But if Mercadé has cast the “meneur et conducteur” of the performance in the role of “Le Meneur de jeu,” he has reserved a curiously non-prominent role for the company’s most important member. He is, after all, only one of two expositors, and of the two he is by far the less dominant, especially in the original manuscript version of Mercadé’s *Vengeance*, where he gives only one performance for each journée while Le Prescheur gives two. Le Prescheur, not Le Meneur du jeu, opens the play each day, and he alone gives the final speech in the play and takes the final bow. Moreover, if Mercadé has written a role so that the Meneur can appear in his own person as a leader of the company, he curiously make very little of his status. True, he sometimes bids the audience to be quiet so that the play might begin:

Faictes paix, Seigneur et ami.

Pilate, parlés après my. (Journée 1, 354-55)

But Le Prescheur performs the same sorts of audience direction and often at a much greater length.⁴⁵ The speeches written for him simply do not characterize him as the avuncular leader

44 Above, n. 14.

45 Compare, for instance, the beginning of Le Prescheur’s epilogue to the first journée:
 Messeigneurs, icy finerons,
 Et demain, au plaisir de Dieu,
 Revenrons en ce propre lieu
 Continuer nostre pourpos.
 Il fault prendre ung peu de repos.
 Trop lokngue chose n’est pas bonne.
 Elle ennoie a mainte personne,

of the troupe come to mediate between audience and players rather like a medieval version of Thornton Wilder's Stage Manager. Rather he is fully characterized, as we have seen, as an academic lecturer, a historian. Why would the playwright, one wonders, want to characterize him as such an academic, but then expect the audience to see him not in that role but in another, as the leader of the company? If he wanted the "Meneur du jeu" to be recognized not as an historian but as the "leader" of the company, why does he not design his speeches accordingly? On the whole, then, the title, "Meneur du jeu," in Mercadé's *Vengeance* seems far more likely to identify a role to be played than a member of the playhouse staff.

Nevertheless, Louis Paris' little error had begun the transformation of a historian-expositor of Mercadé's play into a very grand and powerful theatrical figure. Paris himself does not actually examine the possible meanings of *meneur du jeu*. For him the Meneur is simply the name of the play's expositor. But in mistaking the Meneur as the play's only expository voice, he made him seem far more significant than perhaps he is—more like Wilder's Stage Manager than a history lecturer who shares the expository duties with a *Predicateur*.

The *meneur du jeu*'s singleness, coupled with his evocative name, suggested a central authority in control of the play's production. The difficulty with all the well-documented names for authority figures on the medieval state—"superintendents," "originateurs," "organisateurs" and "conducteurs" among them—is that they all come in multiples: there are thirteen "superintendents" (who are also called "organisateurs" and "conducteurs") and three "originateurs" in the Valenciennes contract, as we shall see. The term *meneur de jeu*, by

Mais nulz ne se doit anoir
 D'oler reciter et traictier,
 En temps et heure convenable,
 Chose qui lui est pourfitable
 Pour son ame et pour son salu. (4268-79)

contrast, suggested a single authority, a presiding directorial figure who imposed his stamp on the play and who, apparently, stepped on stage to deliver prologues and epilogues. For these reasons, *meneur du jeu* became the name not just of a character in one obscure text that almost nobody read (except in Louis Paris' prose summary), it became the single most often used term to refer to a medieval play director.⁴⁶

Marius Sepet and the Valenciennes Superintendent

Just as *meneur du jeu* was escaping his limited origins in the revised text of *La Vengeance nostre Seigneur*, the portrait of the fashionable young man from Valenciennes took on added significance. Marius Sepet was probably not the first to declare Hubert Cailleau's miniature to be an actual portrait of a *meneur du jeu*, but he certainly was responsible for popularizing the idea, and he did it in a form that demonstrably influenced Cohen. Though he never achieved the status of Petit de Julleville as an authority of the early French theatre, Sepet was a protégé and disciple of Gaston Paris, one of the most important literary scholars of the generation before Cohen. His did his most important work on the earlier drama; his *Les Prophètes du Christ* (1878) is still regarded as one of the seminal studies of the origins of the medieval theatre in France.⁴⁷ In 1868, however, he wrote a popular account of how he thought a *mystère* was conceived, produced, and performed for the *Revue du monde catholique*. His "Sketch of a Dramatic Performance at the End of the

⁴⁶ To some, indeed, he is not just a *meneur du jeu* but a *maître du jeu*, a title for which the records provide no warrant whatsoever, but which neatly expresses the extraordinary significance placed upon him by theatre historians in *fin de siècle* France. Cf. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 2.145.; Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en Scène dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* 173.

⁴⁷ It was published first as a series of essays in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* in 1867-77).

Fifteenth Century” defined the late-nineteenth century view of the *meneur du jeu*.⁴⁸ Sepet then republished his “Sketch” in a collection of his essays, *Le Drame Chrétien au Moyen Age* (1878), where it became an important reference for scholars of the early theatre.⁴⁹ In this form, it strongly influenced Cohen’s own view of the “always onstage director.”

Sepet’s “Sketch” follows the activities of the *meneur du jeu* from the time he is commissioned to write and produce the play, to the moment when he gives the epilogue to the performance and takes his final bow. A group of local “entrepreneurs,” drawn from the ranks of the rich bourgeoisie, decide that since it has been ten years since the performance of the last *mystIIre*, the time is now ripe for producing a new one. They first commission a script from a “religieux et scientifique docteur,” who modifies and alters some older plays and presents the manuscript to the entrepreneurs. Although Sepet never names the French town in question or the *meneur du jeu* who writes and produces the play, he clearly models these respectively upon the performance in Angiers in 1486 of a *Passion* composed by Jean Michel, who is described on the title page of the printed version as a “trIIis éloquent et scientifique docteur.”⁵⁰ Sepet follows his “scientifique docteur” as he casts the principal roles, hires a master carpenter to construct the scenic scaffolds and invent the play’s “secrets”

48 It was subsequently republished in the form of a pamphlet—essentially an offprint—by the founder and editor of *La Revue du monde catholique*, Victor Palmé: Marius Sepet, *Esquisse d'une représentation dramatique B la fin du quinziIIme siIIcle* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1868).

49 Sepet, *Le Drame Chrétien au Moyen Age* 227-82. So popular did Sepet’s “sketch” become that it was closely imitated—almost to the point of plagiarism—by Theodore Child, “A Christmas Mystery in the 15th Century,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* December 1888: 59-77.

50 Like Michel, whose text is based on Greban’s *Passion*, Sepet’s *meneur* doesn’t compose the play freshly, but merely revises older texts. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les MystIIres* 1.324-27, sums up what was known about Michel in the late-nineteenth century, and identifies him as a medical doctor who prepared royal entry pageants in Angers for Charles VIII (1488). The published play, Petit de Julleville thinks, may well represent a performance of Michel’s *Passion* in that city in 1486.

(special effects). The entrepreneurs, meanwhile, now take on themselves the roles of “superintendents” and proceed to act as producers of the play. He imagines the Meneur organizing a grand procession of entrepreneurs, actors, supervisors, and town officials to advertise the play, and he envisions the Meneur himself riding prominently among them, “attracting all eyes,”

alone, on a horse adorned with a caparison, having a scroll in hand, bearing on his visage that air of proud modesty that characterized, in the fifteenth century, an author jubilant and full of a good opinion of himself, the scientific doctor, creator of the *mystère* and *meneur du jeu*.⁵¹

As the preparations proceed apace, the Meneur presides over meetings of the entrepreneur-supervisors. He negotiates with a troublesome actor who is perfect for the role of Judas but wishes to resign. When a fire burns down the almost-completed scenic scaffolds, he begins construction anew. On the day before the performance of the *mystère*, he leads the actors in formal procession into the theatre where they perform a farce designed to whet the interest of the audience. The next day, as the players take their places on scaffolds between seven and eight AM, our Meneur appears as “Protocole, that is to say as director, but as director playing in the drama, and he begins the prologue of the first journée in verse.”⁵² He steps out onto the

51 “Seul, sur un cheval garni de housses, tenant un rouleau B la main, portant sur son visage cet air d’orgueilleuse modestie qui caractérisait, dès le quinzième siècle, un auteur triomphant et plein de la bonne opinion de soi-même, le scientifique docteur, facteur du *mystère* et *meneur du jeu*, attirait tous les regards.” Sepet, *Le Drame Chrétien au Moyen Age* 238.

52 The “scientific doctor,” Sepet imagines, “remplissait lui-même le rôle de Protocole, c’est-à-dire de régisseur, mais de régisseur jouant dans le drama, et il commença le prologue en vers de la première journée.” Sepet, *Le Drame Chrétien au Moyen Age* 249. Sepet here apparently thinks that “protocole” means the prologue of the play. The Greek roots of the word apparently mislead him: *protos* (first) and *kálon* (skin, hide), designating page of a book, so that the person who delivers the prologue or “first page” of the text is also called a “protocole.” In fact, “protocole” seems to be the name for a prompter, for which see

“parloir,” the platform that runs in front of the scenery scaffolds and that permits the actors to circulate rapidly between one and the other. Here

the meneur du jeu dressed as Protocole, wearing a violet doublet, red sleeves, yellow codpiece, trunk-hose, and stockings, black shoes, on his head a small, flat, black hat, and a sword at his belt, holding in his right hand a baton of the length of a small cane, and in the left a roll of paper, he promenades during the performance, encouraging, guiding, reprimanding the actors, addressing necessary explanations to the spectators, demanding their silence, and ceaselessly repeating to them in a piercing voice:

Silete! Silete! Silentium habeatis

Et per Dei Filium pacem faciatis!⁵³

He then inaugurates the performance with a long sermon in verse, and after having very devotedly recited an *Ave Maria*, he turns to the actor who represents God the Father, and signals him to begin. He next delivers the prologue to the second and final journée, then at the end of the production, he delivers a final sermon, and leads the audience in intoning a *Te Deum* to bring the performance to a close. Finally, Sepet imagines his *meneur de jeu* so

Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Adam Islip, 1611), s.v. “Protecole.” Couturier and Runnalls, *Compte du mystère de la Passion, Châteaudun 1510* 42, correctly point out that the terms *porthecolle*, *protocolle*, *portitor libri* and *celuy qui porte le livre* are very common in the records, but it is not quite correct, I think, to imply that these are all entirely synonymous terms. A prompter presumably must carry a book, as does the holder of the Mons *abregiet*, but these are quite different books and their holders are performing quite distinct tasks. And neither the prompter nor the holder of the *abregiet*, as I hope to demonstrate, is necessarily depicted in Fouquet’s miniature. For further discussion of this point, see n. 87 below.

5 ³ “Cest sur cette plate-forme, appelée proprement *parloir*, que le meneur du jeu vAtu en Protocole, portant le pourpoint Bjaquette violet, les manches rouges, la braguette, les bouffants et les chausses jaunes, les souliers noirs, sur la tAtte la petite toquette noire et plate, et l’épée B la ceinture, tenant de la main droite un bâton de la longueur d’une petite canne; et de la gauche un rouleau de papier, se promenait pendant la représentation, encourageant, guidant, gourmandant les acteurs, adressant aux spectateurs les explications nécessaires, leur demandant le silence, et sans cesse leur réptant d’une voix percante: Silete! Silete! silentium habeatis / Et per Dei Filium pacem faciatis!” Sepet, *Le Drame Chrétien au Moyen*

impressing the citizens, that they commission him the following year to give a three-hour address to the King who was paying a visit to the city.

This imaginative account of the *meneur du jeu* in action is cobbled together from a variety of sources and a good deal of imagination. He takes his name, of course, from Vérard's edition of *Le Vengeance nostre Seigneur*, and he delivers the prologues and epilogues of the *mystère* because Sepet concludes from Louis Paris' little error that delivering such speeches was one of the Meneur's ordinary functions. The bourgeois entrepreneurs and the poet-director that they hire he takes from a published description of a procession organized by the Confrères de la Passion in Paris to advertise their performance of the *Actes des apôtres* in 1541. A group of four "entrepreneurs" thus lead the procession: François Hamelin, practitioner, François Poutrain, tapissier, Léonard Chobelet, butcher, and Jean Louvet, grain-merchant and florist. These are clearly the inspirations for Sepet's bourgeois "entrepreneurs" who determine to stage a *mystère* in his unnamed French town. The procession also includes a number of "poetes, orateurs, / Vrays precepteurs d'eloquence amateurs," who rode in the procession, and describes them as "directeurs de si sainte entreprise." Although this passage only seems to mean that the poets, orators, teachers, and lovers of eloquence were "directors" in the sense that they collaborated on writing the text of the play, Sepet turns this crowd of rhetoricians into a *meneur de jeu* who both writes the text singlehandedly and directs the performance of the text he has written.⁵⁴ These Sepet

Age 257.

⁵⁴ *Le Cry & proclamation publique: pour jouer le mistere des Actes des Apostres, en la ville de Paris: faict le ieudy seiziesme iour de decembre lan mil cinq sens quarante, par le commandement du Roy nostre sire, françoys premier de ce nom et Monsieur le Prevost de Paris, affin de venir prendre les roolles pour jouer ledict mistere* (Paris: Denys Janot, 1541; Paris: Guiraudet, 1830).: "L'on y semond poetes, orateurs, / Varys precepteurs d'eloquence amateurs, / Pour directeurs de si sainte entreprise; / Mercuriens, et aussi cronicqueurs, / Riches rimeurs des barbares vaincqueurs, / Et des erreurs de langue mal apprise." This text was twice reprinted in the nineteenth century (1529, 1530); it is discussed in Petit de

transforms into his “scientifique docteur” who rides in proud, self-satisfied, modesty on his caparisoned horse. He also knew the Valenciennes contract, from which source he took the “superintendents.” Cleverly, he organizes all these into a hierarchy: entrepreneurs hire a “scientifique docteur” as their *meneur du jeu* in whom they invest the power and responsibility to write, produce, and direct the *mystIIre*; in turn, the entrepreneurs become “superintendents” performing subordinate production tasks under the direction of the Meneur.

Finally, at the climax of Sepet’s “sketch,” the Meneur at last steps on stage to deliver the prologue, and we recognize that he is describing Hubert Cailleau’s painting of a man of our man from the Valenciennes passion play, red tunic, yellow hose, codpiece, black cap, scroll, staff and all. Perhaps we also realize that this portrait of a man in decidedly secular attire has determined Sepet’s decision to characterize his *meneur du jeu* as a “scientifique docteur” rather than a cleric. Petit de Julleville, as we have seen, may well have hedged his bets a little and declared that the painting might “perhaps” be meant to depict the play’s “maître du jeu” or one of its “originateurs,”⁵⁵ but to Sepet he had to be the “scientifique docteur,” the play’s *meneur du jeu*.

But what does Cailleau’s painting itself tell us in its manuscript context? Is this man in fact a *meneur de jeu*? And does the painter mean to show him onstage, either delivering a prologue as Sepet imagines him, or even directing the play during the performance? On the one hand, we can probably respond to the first of these questions with a qualified “yes.”

Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les MystIIres* 1.364-67.

55 “Au-dessous une miniature représente un personnage jeune, blond, vAtu d’un pourpoint violet B manches rouges, avec bas et haut-de-chausses jaunes, souliers noirs, tenant de la main gauche une baguette et de la droite un rouleau de paper. C’est peut-Atre le maître du jeu ou l’un des ‘originateurs’” Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les MystIIres* 2.145.

Probably this man does indeed represent one of the play's "superintendents," although there is no evidence that he ever called himself a *meneur de jeu* (I shall return presently to this important matter of terminology). Although the portrait has no explanatory caption and thus does not specifically identify him as a superintendent, the textual context in which he appears does provide considerable support for this guess. The miniature is thus framed by the contract entered into by the thirteen "superintendents" who had been elected by the actors ("lesdicts compaignons joueurs") to be their "maistres" and "conducteurs." Just above the image stands a passage of text that details the powers of the thirteen "superintendents," including quasi-judicial powers to inflict punishments upon the actors if need be. Beneath the miniature, there then follows a list of the names of the thirteen superintendents.⁵⁶ The placement of the miniature in this contextual frame thus strongly suggests that it is to be identified as a representation of a "superintendent." But if so, which one of the thirteen is he? Why has Cailleau chosen to represent a group of thirteen with a single figure?

On the other hand, the miniature's depiction of this probable superintendent has absolutely nothing to tell us about whether he may have exercised his office on stage. Cailleau only shows him alone, not associated with the stage or actors. In addition to this small miniature, Cailleau thus painted no less than twenty-six illustrations of the Valenciennes stage. Although twenty-five these (one for each of the play's "journées") are populated with characters to represent various moments in the performance, none of the

56 After the superintendents there follow the names of three "originateurs" (these seem to have been responsible for the text, while the superintendents were responsible for the actual play production). There then follow the names of the actors, then the contract binding the actors, superintendents, and originators to perform their respective duties. For the original text, see Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 2.145-52.; for a summary of the document, see Elie Konigson, *La Représentation d'un mystère de la passion B Valenciennes en 1547* (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969) 17-21; for a convenient English translation of its essential portions, see William Tydeman, ed, *The Medieval European Stage, 500-1550, Theatre in Europe: A Documentary History*

thirteen superintendents ever appears on stage among the actors so represented.⁵⁷

The implements he carries—a short staff and a small roll of paper—may perhaps tell us something about his office, but they do not tell us where he performed his role. As far as I can tell, there is no iconography specific to a play superintendent in the way that, for instance, a halo is specific to a saint. Rather the staff and the roll define the nature and source of his supervisory authority. Cailleau thus provides him with a staff for the same reasons that a king is conventionally depicted with a sceptre, a bishop with a crozier, a bailiff with a tipstaff, and a schoolmaster with a ferule. The staff he wields symbolizes his authority over those subject to his rule and the power to punish transgressions against the authority vested in him. The contract that the actors sign, after all, creates the thirteen superintendents as “masters and leaders” of the company, and gives them the almost regal power to “punish and fine the said actor-companions for any misdemeanour without recourse to the magistrates.”⁵⁸

Cohen, even more insistently than Sepet, identifies the roll that our superintendent carries with the script that Cohen imagines the *meneur de jeu* reading from onstage, either prompting the actors or directing the performance “rather in the way a present-day conductor controls an orchestra.” Cohen, for instance, describes it as a “rollet,” although he

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 547-50.

57 For Cailleau’s twenty-six paintings (one of the “hourdement” alone, then one for each of the play’s twenty-five “journées” with actors), see Konigson, *La Représentation d’un mystère de la passion B Valenciennes en 1547* plates I-IX.

58 The said “compaignons [treize] superintendants eslurent en Valenchiennes que pour estre luers maistres et conducteurs, et pour les tenir en paix et unyon, se il y avoit aulcun divis ou debat entre eulx, et meisme pouvoient lesdicts superintendens corriger et mettre a l’amende lesdicts compaignons joueurs, se aulcune defaillance estoit trouvée en eulx, sans en inventer messegneurs de la justice” Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du Théâtre en France: Les Mystères* 2.145.; translation quoted from Tydeman, *The Medieval European Stage, 500-1550* 547.

nevertheless thinks it contains the play's "libretto."⁵⁹ Certainly such a small roll cannot contain the play's whole text (although presumably it might be large enough to contain an actor's part, something like the Mons *Book of Prologues*, perhaps).⁶⁰ I think this is a mistaken and impractical view, however. For one thing, the roll that Cailleau's superintendent carries seems too brief to contain enough text to either prompt or direct a play—could it possibly contain enough text for even one of the Valenciennes *journées*? For another thing, such a "rollet" strikes me as impractical if used on stage in the way usually imagined. One might just manage a book in one hand while waving a staff—though this would involve considerable juggling, but how can our supervisor convincingly hold a scroll open with one hand and brandish his stick with the other? Wouldn't the superintendent's "rollet" require two hands to manage? If so, how would the putative *meneur de jeu* manage to both unroll the scroll and point with his staff at the same time? A far better interpretative context for the roll that our superintendent carries, I would argue, lies in the Valenciennes manuscript itself. Our superintendent brandishes his roll and stick at us from the textual frame supplied by the contract. I would suggest that the best interpretation for the roll carried by our figure is that it represents contract itself. The roll and staff together thus defines the nature of the superintendent's power. The staff represents him as a man of authority, and the roll represents the contractual source of that authority. But this portrait certainly does not represent our superintendent as an on-stage director.

Our fashionable young man from Valenciennes is thus almost certainly meant to be a superintendent, a symbolic representative of the body of thirteen (or sixteen, if one counts the

5⁹ "Nous mettrons dans les mains des acteurs le libretto, le 'rollet' . . . ," Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en Scène dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* 9, 174.

60 Gustave Cohen, ed, *Le Mystère de la Passion joué B Mons en juillet 1501. Livre des prologues. Matinée IIIe*, ed. Gustave Cohen, Société des Bibliophiles Belges séant B Mons, Publications no. 44 (Mons: Gembloux, 1957). The manuscript that Cohen edits here,

“originateurs” as well) who are responsible for the production. Sepet, as we have seen, imaginatively places this body of superintendents under the overall command of a *meneur de jeu*, even though there is no warrant in the Valenciennes documents for the existence of such a directorial CEO, so to speak. Cohen, for reasons we shall shortly examine, accepts this organizational model as normal—indeed he elaborates and strengthens his imaginary role still further. This personage becomes so well established in the historical imagination that by the time Konigson publishes his admirable study of the Valenciennes play manuscripts, his presence had become undeniable, despite all lack of evidence for his existence. Konigson thus identifies the entire supervisory staff of the 1547 production, and he gives us considerable biographical information on each of the thirteen supervisors and three originateurs. Nevertheless when it comes to explaining Cailleau’s miniature of our fashionable young man, he describes him as a “petit personnage dressed in a violet tunic, yellow hose and a black hat who holds a roll and a staff and would seem to recall the *meneur de jeu*.”⁶¹ This despite the fact that such a personage does not appear at all in the records he has examined.

In the end, Sepet’s “sketch” has created a *meneur du jeu* that is almost a mirror image of a nineteenth-century director manager who has just coming into prominence. Arthur

however, is a codex, not a scroll.

61 “A la fin du livre est représenté un petit personnage vu d’une cote violette, de chaussures jaunes et d’une toque noire qui tient un rouleau et une baguette et pourrait rappeler le meneur de jeu” Konigson, *La Représentation d’un mystère de la passion B Valenciennes en 1547* 27. Tydeman, *The Medieval European Stage, 500-1550* 548-49, reproduces Cailleau’s image, but explain it with some degree of uncertainty. The image itself is correctly described as a “coloured painting of one of the Valenciennes superintendents,” and supports this inference by remarking that “the position of this picture in the midst of the document about the organisation makes the identity of this figure almost a certainty.” But the discussion of this image also describes him as “the director,” which may be intended as a synonym for the sort of directorial CEO described by the term, *meneur du jeu*. This is doubtful at best.

Pougin, who compiled what was perhaps the best and most authoritative general commentary on the nineteenth century theatre (1885), thus remarks that “the public is completely ignorant of the importance of the director general in a theatrical enterprise.”⁶² He then outlines a three-level directorial hierarchy consisting of a general director (régisseur général), a stage director (whom he alternatively calls “directeur,” “régisseur chargé de la mise en scène,” or “metteur en scène”) and his assistant (“sous-régisseur”), and actors. This three-level hierarchy thus corresponds closely to the one described by Sepet as embodied in the meneur du jeu, supervisors (to whom he seems to assign responsibility for rehearsals and direct management of actors), and actors.

Pougin’s description of the régisseur général’s duties, powers, and responsibilities thus corresponds very closely to those production responsibilities that Sepet (and after him Cohen) invest in the meneur du jeu:

Alter ego of the director, it is he who is charged with a task at once both artistic and administrative, and his authority is absolute over all the personnel. One may consider him to be like the prime minister of the sovereign, and his will is sometimes more powerful than that of the latter, because his responsibility is enormous, for he is involved in all the details of the theatrical machine, and that the director can do nothing without consulting him and taking his advice.⁶³

62 “Le public est complètement ignorant de l’importance du régisseur général dans une entreprise théâtrale.” Arthur Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s’y rattachent* (Paris: Librairie De Firmin-didot et C^{ie}, 1885) 642.

63 “*Alter ego* du directeur, celui-ci est chargé d’une besogne à la fois artistique et administrative, et son autorité est absolue sur tout le personnel. On peut le considérer comme le premier ministre du souverain, et sa volonté est parfois plus puissante que celle de ce dernier, parce que sa responsabilité est énorme, qu’il est mêlé à tous les détails de la machine théâtrale, et que le directeur ne saurait rien faire sans le consulter et prendre son avis.” Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s’y rattachent* 642.

He supervises everything in the theatre, commissions new plays, draws up the repertoire, and in the case of indispositions, unavoidable difficulties, and accidents, he makes the appropriate modifications in actors, staff, part assignments, repertoire, and so forth. He takes care of all complaints, occupies himself with preparations for debuts and auditions, deals with the office of the censor, and, like Sepet's Meneur who encourages, guides, and reprimands the actors, he follows closely the work of rehearsals, and presides over the performance to see that all is functioning well. Finally, in case of unexpected illnesses or other contingencies on the night of performance, he must mount the stage before the performance, speak to the public, and make whatever announcements may be necessary—just as his fifteenth-century predecessor, according to Sepet, was supposed to do.⁶⁴

In performing this last duty, indeed, the General Director of the theatre takes upon himself the one task most visible to the audience that Sepet assigns to the *meneur du jeu*: the onstage delivery of a theatrical prologue:

This last duty is not the least delicate, especially in the provinces, where, before a public almost always ill-tempered and of a quarrelsome humor, he needs much tact and finesse, much self-control and skill. It is precisely in the provinces that his theatrical function often receives the special designation of *régisseur parlant au public*.⁶⁵

64 “C’est le régisseur général qui organise et surveille tout le travail intérieur, qui, avec le directeur et les auteurs, établit la distribution des pièces nouvelles, arrête le répertoire et, lorsque survient une indisposition, un empêchement, un accident quelconque, modifie le spectacle annoncé; c’est lui qui reçoit toutes les réclamations relatives au service, qui s’occupe de la préparation des débuts et des auditions, surveille la marche de toutes choses, entretient les relations avec la commission de censure; enfin c’est lui qui suit le travail des répétitions, qui préside à la représentation pour s’assurer que tout fonctionne bien, et qui, le soir, en cas d’accident matériel, d’absence ou d’indisposition d’un artiste, est chargé de parler au public et de faire les annonces.” Pouglin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s’y rattachent* 642.

65 “Cette dernière partie de sa tâche n’est pas la moins délicate, en province surtout,

One can almost imagine this nineteenth-century General Director, as Sepet does his fifteenth-century *meneur du jeu*, raising a piercing voice to demand silence from these quarrelsome and ill-tempered townsmen, ceaselessly repeating:

Silete! Silete! Silentium habeatis

Et per Dei Filium pacem faciatis!

By the end of the nineteenth century, our meneur has thus transformed himself into a very powerful theatre manager at the head of a hierarchal organization. Hubert Cailleau, it was thought, had caught him at work, apparently showing him to be more of a secular than a religious figure, a “scientifique docteur” rather than a priest. In particular, Sepet interprets the Cailleau miniature as representing the *meneur de jeu*’s only on-stage appearance, “v\Atu en Protocole,” by which he apparently means “dressed in the costume of a Prologuer.” Although one does not actually find him mentioned in the records, a place is nevertheless made for him, even among the well-documented supervisors and originateurs of the Valenciennes contract. The supervisors and originaterus defer to him, as do the actors, and as Pougin might say, they can do nothing without consulting his advice. He chooses the play—indeed Sepet would have him write the play to begin with. His authority is absolute over all the personnel. Building upon the mistaken evidence of the *Vengeance nostreseigneur*, he enjoys a kind of theatrical *droit du seigneur* by which he may take the stage at the beginning of the play to quiet the crowd and introduce the performance, and he reappears to take the final bow on behalf of the company and dismisses the audience at the end of the performance. He may be responsible for the direction after the fashion of a nineteenth-century “régisseur général,” but so far as one can tell from Sepet’s wonderfully imaginative account, he does not yet stand on

oφ, devant un public presque toujours hargneux et de fâcheuse humeur, elle exige beaucoup de tact et de finesse, de sang-froid et d’habileté. C’est précisément en province que ce fonctionnaire théâtral reçoit souvent la qualification spéciale de *régisseur parlant au public*.”

stage, waving his wand and consulting his text like an orchestra conductor. He has not yet become Cohen's "always onstage director," but he is well-prepared for that final step, which depended upon the discovery of a visual icon that Sepet had not yet seen.

Cohen, Fouquet's *Martyrdom of St Apollonia*, and the Mons Abregiet

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Jean Fouquet's *Martyrdom of St Apollonia* lay unremarked in the private collection of the Brentano-Laroche family of Frankfort, who possessed 40 of the painter's miniatures, the so-called *Quarante Fouquet*. In 1855, the banker Louis Brentano privately published a descriptive catalogue of his collection that contained the first published reference to the St Apollonia miniature.⁶⁶ Intended as a handlist and guide for this privately-collected hoard of Fouquet miniatures,⁶⁷ it contributes the first, somewhat enigmatic, guess at the identity of our baton-gesturing figure. A brief reference identifies him not as a director of the play but a character in it, a "tribune."

Pougin, *Dictionnaire historique et pittoresque du théâtre et des arts qui s'y rattachent* 642.

6

⁶⁶ *Die Miniaturen des Jehan Foucquet im Besitze des Herrn Louis Brentano* (Frankfort, 1855). According to the great nineteenth-century French art historian, Auguste Vallet de Viriville, who reports visiting the Brentano collection, this pamphlet was composed by a protégé of the painter Eduard Von Steinle, who was then professor of history painting at the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt. Henri Delaunay, *Oeuvre de Jehan Foucquet. Heures de maistre Estienne Chevalier, Trésorier des Rois Charles VIII et Louis XI, Miniatures appartenant BMM. L. Brentano, Feuillet de Conches, Lady Pringle et A.*—*F Didot* (Paris: Henri Curmer, 1866-1867) 2.84, 2 vols.; *The Dictionary of Art*, trans. Jane Turner (Grove, 1996), 34 vols.

⁶⁷ "Cette description du livre d'Heures de Chevalier qu'en traduisant la notice détaillée des miniatures publiée sous les auspices de M. Louis Brentano, pour renseigner les personnes qui son admises chez lui B visiter les miniatures de J. Foucquet" Delaunay, *Oeuvre de Jehan Foucquet. Heures de maistre Estienne Chevalier, Trésorier des Rois Charles VIII et Louis XI, Miniatures appartenant BMM. L. Brentano, Feuillet de Conches, Lady Pringle et A.*—*F Didot* 2.84. Steinle had become Professor of History Painting at the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt in 1850. (See *The Dictionary of Art*).

While this little catalogue enjoyed only a very limited circulation among the visitors to the Brentano-Laroche collection, Fouquet's image at last made its debut to a wider, more popular public in 1867. In that year, the enterprising publisher Henri Curmer published one of the great coffee-table books of the nineteenth century, a collection of chromo-lithographic reproductions of the complete *Oeuvre de Jehan Fouquet* (as then known) with a brief commentary by the Abbé Delauney, who accepted and repeated the tribune identification.

While Curmer's edition at last made Fouquet's miniature widely available, theatre historians seem to have taken little immediate notice of it. The great Petit de Julleville, Cohn's predecessor at the Sorbonne, certainly did not; one reads in vain through his seminal *Histoire du théâtre en France* (1880) for any reference to the artist or to his now ubiquitous miniature. A quarter century was to pass before anyone else connected the St Apollonia image with the history of the theatre. In 1893, German Bapst at last happened upon the Abbé Delaunay's publication, recognized the importance of the Apollonia illustration, and congratulated himself on being the first theatre historian to recognize the importance of an image hitherto "unknown to the different authors who have written on the *mise en scène* of the Mystères." He even published an engraving of it in his *Essai sur l'histoire du théâtre* that is now endlessly reproduced and still celebrated as "the clearest available reproduction" of the Fouquet miniature.⁶⁸

In an attempt to demonstrate its importance to the history of the theatre, Bapst undertook the first substantial interpretation of the image. He was also the first to draw upon the *Legenda Aurea* version of St Apollonia's martyrdom to help him identify the characters

68 "Quelque importante et intéressante que soit cette figuration, elle paraît avoir été, jusqu'à présent, inconnue des différents auteurs qui ont écrit sur la mise en scène des Mystères" Germain Bapst, *Essai sur l'histoire du théâtre* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et C^{ie}, 1893) 30. A.M. Nagler, *Medieval Religious Stage*, p. ii, comments upon the clarity of the illustration.

in the play. He did not, of course, find therein a literary source for our figure, but Bapst saw no reason to dispute the “tribune” characterization he found in the Curmer-Delauney publication, although he preferred to regard him as a medieval rather than Roman figure. He thus characterized him as a “sergent B verge” in the courtly entourage of the Emperor Decius.⁶⁹ The baton he wields, Bapst thought, convincingly identified him as a court tipstaff—a bailiff or constable appointed to wait upon a court in session and who carried a staff as his badge of office. In the book was enrolled the sentence passed by the Emperor’s court, and as he read out the Saint’s sentence from his book, he gestured formally towards her with his staff of office.⁷⁰ For Bapst, our baton-wielding figure thus played an essential part in this little drama which distinguishes the corrupt and fallen law of man from the law of God, “the supreme judge,” who sits watching the miscarriage of earthly justice from “on high.”⁷¹

69 This identification was not entirely original, for the catalog privately printed by Louis Brentano (see n 3 above) to guide visitors around his collection had previously identified our figure as a “tribune,” and that description had found its way as well into Curmer’s book. Bapst found it a satisfying explanation, however, and he improved upon it considerably. I have not seen the original publication; I take my information from the French translation reprinted in Delaunay, *Oeuvre de Jehan Foucquet. Heures de maistre Estienne Chevalier, Trésorier des Rois Charles VIII et Louis XI, Miniatures appartenant BMM. L. Brentano, Feuillet de Conches, Lady Pringle et A.–F Didot 2.??*.

70 With some exceptions; Karl Mantzius, whose work preceded that of Cohen by three years, agreed with Bapst’s identification of our figure as a medieval bailiff: “Behind the stretcher on which St Apollonia is tortured, we see the emperor Decius and his suite; he seems to be dictating the torments, while an officer of justice, with a staff in his hand, reads out the sentence to the assembled people which crowds in the background” Karl Mantzius, *A History of Theatrical Art in Ancient and Modern Times* (New York: Peter Smith, 1903) 2.65. Thomas A. Pallen continues to share this opinion Thomas A Pallen, "Caveat Emptor: A Reinvestigation of Jean Fouquet's "The Martyrdom of Saint Apollonia,"" *European Theatre Iconography*, ed. Christopher Balme et al. (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002) 147.

71 “Elle représente le martyre de sainte Apolline; la sainte est étendue liée sur une planche; le bourreau lui arrache la langue avec des tenailles, deux de ses aides la ligottent, tandis qu'un autre, qui vient de se livrer B des actes d'une inconvenance grossiIre sur la martyre, remet ses braies; un sergent B verge lit la sentence, et un magistrat, en robe rouge, assiste B l'exécution. L'empereru Decius est prIIs de la patiente; des diables se tiennent

As far as I can tell, the first person to identify Fouquet's baton-wielding figure as a theatrical director rather than as a character in a play was the connoisseur and museum curator, François-Anatole Gruyer, who published an elegant new photogravure edition of the *Quarante Fouquet* in 1897.⁷² In the explanatory notes accompanying the St Apollonia miniature, Gruyer accommodates the Fouquet miniature squarely within the interpretative tradition popularized by Sepet—the fifteenth-century *meneur du jeu* as nineteenth-century manager-director. He abandons any attempt, indeed, to find a “medieval” name for our baton-wielding figure and settles instead for a tellingly nineteenth-century construction: he was, he thought, the acting troupe's “impresario.” Gruyer was no Petit de Julleville, Sepet, or Bapst; he made no attempt to find an historically accurate identity for our figure. Instead, he drew an apt parallel directly from the contemporary French theatre for the puzzling figure in Fouquet's painting. Since the man in the painting seemed to be dominating the production, Gruyer thought that he must be something like the actor-managers, régisseurs, and impressarios who then controlled nearly all details of play production at the end of the nineteenth century. He thus regarded Fouquet's miniature as a kind of family portrait “painted from life” of a theatrical *paterfamilias* and his family: “the impresario, his troupe and his machinery in the presence of the crowd that presses itself attentively toward this spectacle.”

derrière chacun des bourreaux, les excitant ‘B la méchanceté.’ He further describes God the Father, “puisque’il n’était pas acteur du drame, mais seulement le juge suprême, qui, de haut, assiste aux événements et don’t rien ne peut troubler la sérénité.” Bapst, *Essai sur l'histoire du théâtre* 30-31.

72 In 1891, the Brentanno collection passed into the collections of the duc d'Aumale, where Gruyer (whom the duke refers to as “mon excellent confrère et ami) served as one of the Keepers of the collection. The duke died in 1897, but his own manuscript catalogue was published by the new Musée Conde (which was established at his death in his will) in 1900. His tribute to Gruyer's “beau volume” must have been written shortly before his death. See Aumale, Henri d'Orléans, duc d', *Chantilly. Le Cabinet des Livres. Manuscrits*. 2 vols. (Paris, Plon, 1900), 1.76.

As for the theatrical function of Fouquet's baton-wielding figure, Gruyer gives us our first glimpse of the onstage director. To begin with, Gruyer describes his impresario pretty much as Pougin's *régisseur parlant au public* whose job it is to explain the play and its setting to the crowd: "As for the *impresario*, it is he who explains everything. Turning toward the audience, he reads the acts of the saint, and indicates with his white staff the six complementary tableaux, disposed like the leaves of a folding screen, into the setting that forms the background of the theatre." But then realizing, perhaps, that in Fouquet's miniature the impresario seems to be standing on stage not at the beginning of the play but in the midst of its climactic scene, he suggests that he must also be cuing the musicians: "The *impresario* points with his white staff: the heralds of arms, blowing their loud trumpets, with accompaniment of a portable organ, to proclaim the triumph of the heroic virgin."⁷³ For the next several decades, Henry Martin's popular guidebook, *Les Fouquet de Chantilly*, continued to popularize Gruyer's characterization of "the impresario, his booklet in one hand and his staff in the other," who "directs the scene and governs the music."⁷⁴

Both of these identifications are equally well-founded, or perhaps it is truer to say equally ill-founded. They equally depend upon a flash of inspiration; neither troubles to offer

73 "Il a peint sur le vif l'*impresario*, sa troupe et sa machinerie, en présence de la foule qui se presse attentive B ce spectacle. . . . Quant B l'*impresario*, il est IB qui explique toutes ces choses. Tourné vers l'assistance, il lit les actes de la sainte, et désigne de sa baguette blanche les six tableaux complémentaires, disposés, comme les feuilles d'un paravent, dans le décor qui forme le fond du théâtre. . . . l'*impresario* désigne de sa baguette: les hérauts d'armes embouchant leurs trompettes sonores, avec accompagnement d'orgue portatif, pour proclamer le triomphe de l'héroïque vierge." François-Anatole Gruyer, *Chantilly. Notices des Peintures. Les Quarante Fouquet*. (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1900), 147-49. I cite the second edition of Gruyer's study, which was originally published in 1897, as noted above, in an edition of 150 copies. Although dated 1900 on the title page, the new edition's dedication to the memory of the duc d'Aumale reads "Avril 1901."

74 "L'*impresario*, son livret d'une main et sa baguette d l'autre, rΠgle la scΠne et gouverne la musique." Henry Martin, *Les Fouquet de Chantilly: Livre d'heures d' Étienne Chevalier* (Paris: Henri Laurens, [1920]), 62.

much in the way of supporting proof. Each assumes that Fouquet means to render a “realistic” visual record of an actual fifteenth-century *myst/Tré* in the act of performance—an assumption that ought itself be questioned.⁷⁵ They then differ in their further assumptions, which are also unsupported. Bapst thus assumes our character is playing a role within the play while Gruyer assumes that he stands outside the drama itself and directs those within it. It is difficult for an unbiased observer to decide between these alternatives. Both seem equally plausible. We might well like to ask Bapst, for instance whether in fact court bailiffs in the fifteenth century carried tipstaves as badges of office, and did they read out sentences during executions? We might wish to ask Gruyer what evidence he has to offer that fifteenth-century directors did in fact stand boldly forth among the actors holding a prompt book in one hand while vigorously gesturing with a baton in the other.

When a young Gustave Cohen studied the Fouquet miniature, he was the inheritor of a formidable interpretative consensus handed down to him by Louis Paris, Marius Sepet, and Petit de Julleville. As a consequence, he found the choice between these alternatives an easy one. Though grateful to Bapst for bringing Fouquet’s miniature to the attention of theatre historians, he thought the elder scholar had missed the point by not recognizing the *meneur du jeu*. In particular, he thought that the resemblance between Calteau’s portrait of the

75 I have myself questioned the “reality” of *meneur de jeu* in Fouquet’s miniature. Briefly, I demonstrate that Fouquet is illustrating not a contemporary medieval theatre, but a “historical” Roman from the time of the persecutions of Julian the Apostate under whom the saint in the miniature—St Apollonia of Rome—suffered her martyrdom. As such, Fouquet depicts the sort of Roman theatre as described by Isidore of Seville, although the structures he depicts, though not their arrangement, are convincingly “medieval” in the same way that Fouquet usually depicts Romans in modified medieval costume. For the original statement of this thesis and the controversy that ensued, see Gordon Kipling, “Theatre as Subject and Object in Fouquet’s *Martyrdom of St Apollonia*,” *Medieval English Theatre* 19 (1997): 26-80., Graham A. Runnalls, “Jean Fouquet’s *Martyrdom of St Apollonia* and the Medieval French Stage,” *Medieval English Theatre* 19 (1997): 81-100., and Gordon Kipling, “Fouquet, St Apollonia, and the Motives of the Miniaturists’s Art: A Reply to Graham Runnalls,” *Medieval English Theatre* 19 (1997): 101-20.

Valenciennes and Fouquet's baton-wielding man put the latter's identity beyond dispute:

The painter Cailleau has left us the portrait of a meneur de jeu. Short leggings, violet tunic, small flat cap on the head, his *bâton de commandement* in the left hand, the "rollet" in the right hand, It is he who figures in the Mystère of St Apollonia, according to the miniature of Fouquet . . . where he seems to take his role less cavalierly than does his colleague of the sixteenth century; he is draped in a long, hooded cape, on his head a doctor's cap having the form of a tiara. He has the play book in the left hand, and his right, raised almost menacingly, seems to command with his baton the minstrels in paradise to play a loud "silete" from all the instruments of the play.⁷⁶

For Cohen, the chief importance of Fouquet's miniature was that it actually showed the *meneur du jeu* him performing his duties in hitherto unexpected ways.

Cohen regards his view of the Fouquet image as so self-evident, indeed, that he makes no attempt to support it with documentary evidence. Assuming that his identification is obviously beyond question, he uses the illustration itself as a source as the sole evidence for the *meneur de jeu*'s presumed on-stage duties. This method produces a remarkable circularity of argument that continue to characterize discussions of the medieval director: we "know" that the man in Fouquet's miniature must be a *meneur de jeu* because, thanks to Fouquet's miniature, we "know" that the *meneur de jeu* moved about the stage in full view of the

76 Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en Scène dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* 174.: "Le peintre Cailleau nous a laissé le portrait d'un meneur de jeu. Courts houseaux, tunique violette, petite calotte plate sur la tête, son bâton de commandement dans la main gauche, le "rollet" dans la main droite Celui qui figure dans le Mystère de sainte Apolline, d'après la miniature de Fouquet . . . semble prendre son rôle moins cavalierement que son confrère du XVI^e siècle; il est drapé dans une longue chape à capuchon, sur la tête un bonnet de docteur ayant la forme d'une tiare. Il tient le livre de scène dans la main gauche, et sa droite, levée presque menaçante, semble commander du bâton aux ménestrels du paradis un sonore "silete" de tous les instruments du jeu."

audience.

The miniature thus became a theatrical Rosetta Stone for Cohen, one that enabled him to interpret the records of the stage in new ways. Above all, the new image, which portrays the *meneur du jeu* mingling with the actors in the midst of a performance convincingly “proved” to Cohen that he exercised his authority on stage. He was not merely the General Director of Sepet’s “Sketch” who performs primarily administrative and production tasks—selecting the repertoire, hiring the actors, imposing his artistic vision upon the directors, disciplining actors and staff with the quasi-judicial powers accorded him by contract, looking after the ticket receipts, organizing the rehearsal, handling complaints, looking after the construction of the stage, and at last stepping on stage to quiet the crowd, cow the hecklers, explain the play, and deliver a prologue. Rather, Fouquet’s image proved to Cohen that the Meneur not only declaimed a prologue or two—as the evidence of the *Vengeance nostre seigneur* “proves”—but that he performed as well stage-directorial duties, and that he performed these activities on stage in full view of the audience. If the records describe a “book holder,” then Fouquet’s image not only identifies the Meneur as the play’s bookholder, but it shows him holding it open on stage and consulting it in front of the audience. The records refer to prompters in the *mystIres*. Very well, if Fouquet shows the Meneur consulting what must be the play script amidst the actors, he must be the one who prompts them. He organizes the children who greet Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem. He cues the actors to move from one scenic scaffold to another and carefully regulates their march. He acts as conductor of the orchestra commanding “silettes” and thunderclaps. “Finally and above all, he is *le régisseur toujours sur les planches* [the always onstage director]. . . On stage, he is here, there, and everywhere: book in hand, baton raised, he serves as prompter and stage manager;

he is truly the “master of the play.”⁷⁷ And so the *meneur du jeu* was born as on-stage director, prologue speaker, director, prompter, and stage manager.

Or rather, the *meneur de jeu* was born. It is unclear why Cohen chose this slight but significant alternation in the name of his *régisseur toujours sur les planches*, but it is the name that stuck. This form of his name, for instance, is the one that appears beneath the image of the Valenciennes supervisor on the SITM website. It certainly has somewhat grander implications than the form of words that comes to us from Marcadé’s *Vengeance*. As the *meneur du jeu*, he was merely the leader of a particular play. The slightly altered title, by contrast, seems to suggest a recognized, professional title, the indispensable organizer, supervisor, and—above all—onstage director.

It may seem natural for us to assume that Cohen’s “reading” of the Fouquet illustration and his construction of the *meneur de jeu* must have been informed by his research into the records of the Mons *Passion* of 1501, the great scholarly discovery of his life. In 1913, Cohen turned up a spectacular cache of three different types of manuscript survivals from the Mons *Passion*. (Or rather one should say that these three types survive as relics of *both* the Amiens *Passion* of 1500 *and* the Mons *Passion* of 1501. The extant Mons documents were all copied from originals borrowed from Amiens, but the Amiens originals have been destroyed.⁷⁸) They are remarkable series manuscripts, and they include the play’s

77 “Enfin et surtout, il est le régisseur toujours sur les planches; . . . sur la scène, il se multiplie: livre en main, bâton levé, il sert de souffleur et de metteur en scène; il est vraiment le ‘mestre du jeu’” Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en Scène dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* 173.

78 Graham A. Runnalls, “La Passion de Mons (1501): étude sur le texte et sur ses rapports avec la Passion d’Amiens (1500),” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 80 (2002): 1143-88. is essential reading on this point. The Amiens *Passion* was staged in four *journées*, each *journée* being divided into a *matinee* and an *apres-disner*. At Mons, the play was staged instead as eight *journées*, each of Amiens’ “half-*journées*” becoming the full performance for one day at Mons. Hence, the extant *cahier* of the full text served as the *matinee* of the third day at Amiens, while at Mons it became the full *journée* for the fifth day.

abregiet, the only example in French of what has been called a “producer’s copy,” a text, according to Cohen, “designed to make the work of the *meneur de jeu* as easy as possible.”⁷⁹ Would not his monumental study of the manuscript he was to call *Le Livre de conduite du régisseur* have taught him how to re-evaluate the Fouquet illustration and to construct more accurately the work of supervisors on the medieval stage?

In fact, however, the reverse is the case. The Fouquet illustration was Cohen’s Rosetta Stone, and it taught him to interpret the Mons *abregiet* in the way that he did. We must remember that he published his *Histoire de la mise en scène* in which he describes the *meneur de jeu* as the “always onstage director” in 1906, that he did not discover the Mons *abregiet* until 1913, and that he did not publish his magisterial edition of that text (along with records of the expenses of the Mons *Passion* of 1501) until 1925. By the time he discovered the Mons *abregiet*, in other words, he had already committed himself to his construction of the *meneur de jeu* based upon his study of the Fouquet illustration, and he therefore interpreted his discovery of the Mons *abregiet* according to his already well-formed interpretation of the man in the Fouquet St Apollonia miniature.

For Cohen, the Mons *abregiet* had to be the very book carried on stage in the hand of Fouquet’s “*meneur de jeu*.” He never considered any other possibility. In 1926, fresh from publishing his *Livre de conduite*, he thus returned once again to his now 20-year-old description of the “always on-stage director” and insisted that he had discovered in the Mons *abregiet* the very book that Fouquet’s *meneur de jeu* carries about on stage: “This book, it is the *Livre de Conduite* that I have had the chance to recover an example.”⁸⁰ Conceived in this

79 Runnalls, *Etudes sur les mystères* 379.

80 “Il est celui qui porte le livre. . . . Ce livre, c’est le *Livre de Conduite* don’t j’ai eu la chance de retrouver un exemplaire.” Gustave Cohen, *Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre religieux français du moyen âge*, Nouvelle édition, revue et augmentée (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1951) xxxviii. Although Cohen reprinted the main text of his *Histoire de*

way, the Mons *abregiet* must needs serve all the various on-stage purposes that he had assigned to the Fouquet figure in 1906: strolling about the stage, cueing the motions of characters, prompting, cueing the orchestra to produce “silettes” at crucial moments, cueing the thunderbolts which impress the triumphs of the faith upon the devils, speaking unctuously and prudently to the crowd to crave their indulgences, explaining theological points to them, and begging silence to honor God and the saints—among other on-stage tasks.⁸¹ This view of a text prepared to be carried and used by an on-stage director during performance, which derives from Cohen’s flash of inspiration in interpreting the Fouquet illustration, thus thoroughly colors his interpretation of the Mons *abregiet*. And it continues to dominate our own interpretations of the staging of *mystIIres*. Since Cohen’s time, it has become conventional to think of the *Livre de conduite du régisseur* as a “prompt copy” of the 1501 Mons *MystIIre de la Passion*—a text designed primarily to be used by a *meneur de jeu* on stage, “rather in the way a present-day conductor controls an orchestra.”⁸²

To some extent, the Mons *abregiet* seem to confirm some of these preconceptions.

Or perhaps one should say the Mons *abregies*, for there were originally two duplicate copies

la mise en scIIne without alteration in two later editions, he added a series of prefatory notes to the “Nouvelle édition, revue et augmentée” of 1926 in which he offered corrections and additions to the original text, and this latter text was in turn reprinted without further alterations in 1951.

81 Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en ScIIne dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* 173.

82 Lee Simonson, *The Stage is Set* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1932) 173. provides a good summary of Cohen’s position as it is widely understood: “in 1913 Professor Gustave Cohen, of the University of Strasbourg and the Sorbonne, discovered in the archives of Mons a unique document, the prompt-copy of a manuscript, *The Mystery of the Passion*, performed there in 1501, completely annotated by the stage-manager.” For Cohen’s approval of Simonson, see Cohen, *Livre des prologues* xi.n. 2. Similarly Runnalls, *Etudes sur les mystIIres* 379, echoes Cohen’s image of the *meneur de jeu* as “chef d’orchestre” (cf Cohen, *Histoire de la Mise en ScIIne dans le Théâtre Religieux français du Moyen-Âge* 173.).

of the entire *abregiet*. Each of these two *abregies* is divided into eight *cahiers*, so that there are in total two copies of each *abregiet* available for each of the play's eight *journees*.⁸³

Twelve of the sixteen original *cahiers* are still extant, and these form the basis of Cohen's edition of what he calls *Le Livre de Conduite du Régisseur*. Cohen hypothesizes that the *meneur de jeu* held one of the two *abregies*, while the conductor of the *secrets* (special effects) held the other. Presumably, the *meneur de jeu* and the conductor of *secrets* each carried the appropriate *cahier* about during the performance of each *journée* as they performed their supervisory functions.

The *Mons abregiet*, however, is manifestly unsuitable for all the imagined on-stage functions of the *meneur de jeu*, at least as Cohen had constructed those activities on the basis of the Fouquet image. To begin with, the *Mons* records contradict the very idea on which the idea of the *meneur de jeu* was founded, that he enjoyed the privilege of opening and closing the performance by delivering prologues and epilogues. Cohen was thus able to identify at least eight men named in the records who acted in supervisory roles, but none of them actually performed the prologues and epilogues. Instead, Sire Gille le Naing, prestre, was employed to deliver prologues and epilogues. He was, in short, a mere actor, cast to play his role much as the priest, Sire Jehan Lefranque was cast to play God.⁸⁴ Moreover, the *abregiet*

83 Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* xxv-xxix.

84 For the supervisors, see Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* lxxiii, 583.:Sire Jehan Bouchart, Maistre Estienne du Ponceau, Jehan Lamit, Collart Olivier, Gilles de Bievenue, Jaquemin Bolet, Jehan de Rocqueynies, and Godeffroy, curé de Bertaymont—some of whom also played a role in the play. Since Cohen identifies these merely because they, unlike the other actors and personnel are paid, there may well have been other supervisors as well. Surely Jehan Billet, for instance, exercised a supervisory role as well. The *Mons* expense book thus records a large payment to him for “48 journées de semonce B toutes assemblees de recourse fais depuis l'encommenchement dudit Mistere en la Maison de la Ville” (557-58). As Cohen himself points out, Billet may well have convened *more* than 48 days' rehearsals in the Town Hall. This expense record cannot refer to general rehearsals of the entire cast (the chamber in the Town Hall was not large enough for that), but probably involved platoons of actors who were performing in relatively defined portions of the entire *mise en scIthe*—Jerusalem, Heaven, Bethlehem, Paradise, and so forth. There must certainly

shows only a minimal interest in the text of the play per se. It records only the first and last line of each speech along with a numeral to specify the number of lines in each speech.

“Only the *mise en scène* counts here,” Elizabeth Lalou and Darwin Smith observe, “the text disappears almost completely.”⁸⁵ The *abregiet* thus records in detail the actions that must be performed, often describes how they are to be performed, and indicates the places in which the action should take place. Plainly, because the various *cahiers* of the *Mons abregiet* do not actually contain the text of the play, they cannot have been designed to serve as a prompt text (if by prompt text one means, as I do here, the prompting of speech), a fact which indicates strongly that the holder of this manuscript did not prompt the performance.

Prompters undoubtedly functioned on the medieval stage—two seem to have been required for the Chateaudun *Mystère de la Passion* in 1510, for instance; François Souef and his assistant, Pierre Jahan, were both paid for attending all the rehearsals as well as serving as prompter (“protocolle”), and carrying the book during each performance.”⁸⁶ To perform their

also have been “final” rehearsals on the stage itself, after it was constructed and before the performance. Surely Gabriel, for instance, could not have been introduced for the first time to the lifting mechanism that takes him up and down from heaven to earth on the day of performance.

85 Elizabeth Lalou and Darwin Smith, “Pour une typologie des manuscrits de théâtre medieval,” *Fifteenth Century Studies* 13 (1988): 570.

86 “Pierre Jahan . . . avoir assisté B chascun des jours que on a joué lesdits Mistères comme portecolle et guydier les joueurs depuis le commencement jusques B la fin. . . François Souef . . . avoir assisté B tous et chascuns des recors, servy de protocolle et porté le livre B tous les jours qu’on a joué ledit Mistère de la Passion” Couturier and Runnalls point out, Couturier and Runnalls, *Compte du mystère de la Passion, Châteaudun 1510* 162. By referring to these two men as having “servy de protocolle,” I assume that the record refers to their services specifically as *verbal* prompters, which they would exercise both in rehearsals, as the actors mastered their lines, and in performances. Such verbal prompting would seem to be the primary meaning of “protocolle” in early texts. Cf. For instance Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues.*, s.v. “Protecole”: “a prompter of one that makes an Oration, or also a Part, in publike;” Pierre Richelet, *Dictionnaire de la langue françoise, ancienne et moderne*, Nouvelle édition (Amsterdam, 1732), 2 vols., s.v. “Protocole:” “[*Susurrator.*] S’est dit autrefois de celui qui est derrière une personne que

function as prompters, however, they would naturally require full texts of the plays. The *Mons abregiet* thus makes clear that if the actors were prompted—either from on stage or off—someone else must have performed this task from a full script.

But Cohen's discovery also included references to other theatrical manuscripts relating to the performance of the *Mons Passion* of 1501. One *cahier* of the "livre original" (complete text) of one journée, survives, as does a *Livre des prologues*, essentially a specialized actor's part, but in book rather than roll form. Cohen published an edition of these in 1957.⁸⁷ The latter manuscript contains all the Prologueur's speeches for the entire eight journées as well as relevant stage directions. Its codex format suggests that Sire Gille le Naing, who served as Prologheur, may have carried this text on stage and read his speeches instead of delivering them from memory.⁸⁸ In addition to these, other texts were also used in the *Mons* performance, though none have survived. Scribes were thus paid for copying individual actors' parts out of the Amiens "livre original," and these typically take the form of rolls that might be used either in rehearsal or (since they might be rolled up and concealed) on stage during performance.⁸⁹ The *Mons abregiet* also refers to *billets de advertence* used

parle ftlineen public, pour lui suggérer au défaut de sa mémoire;" or Christofle de Bordeaux (fl. c. 1550): "Point ne me faut de protocole, / Car je scay mon rolle par coeur"quo. in Richard Holbrook, "A Fifteenth-Century Satirical Dialogue, Seemingly akin to the Species Known as *fatras* or *fatrasie*, and Dealing with Fools Called *coquars*," *Modern Language Notes* 20.3 (1905): 70-77., 74 n. 5. However, even should I be mistaken in this conclusion, and even if the Chateaudun records mean to refer to Souef and Jahan as prompters of action, the performance would still require a verbal prompter so that my point would remain essentially unchanged.

87 Cohen, *Livre des prologues*.

88 For the "Book of Prologues," see Cohen, *Livre des prologues*. The *Mons abregiet* provides the names of the actors who play each role. For Sir Gille le Naing, prestre, who was one of several clerics who took on roles in the play, see Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur*. Runnalls, "La Passion de Mons (1501): étude sur le texte et sur ses rapports avec la Passion d'Amiens (1500)," especially pp.1157-58 and 1171-2, is essential reading for understanding the *Livre des Prologues*.

89 For actors' roles, see Runnalls, *Etudes sur les mystIIres* 375-77, and for the *Mons* references in particular, see Runnalls, "La Passion de Mons (1501): étude sur le texte et sur

by the conductors of “secrets” and perhaps also the musicians to cue their interventions.⁹⁰

The format of the sole remaining text of the play tells us that it was almost certainly a production text rather than a merely literary or “register” copy. Like the *cahiers* of the two *abregies*, it was meant to serve its holder as a working reference during a single journée. Originally, the complete text must have been divided into eight *cahiers*, one for each of the play’s eight *journées*, presumably so that the prompter need only have the relevant portion of the play before him during the performance.⁹¹ In comparing the stage directions of these two Mons manuscripts, moreover, one will note that the stage directions in the “livre original” are many fewer and almost always briefer, almost perfunctory, while the *abregiet* stage directions, as we might expect, are much more numerous, longer, and generally much more detailed than those to be found in the full play text. And as we have seen, the *livre original* includes the full text of the *journée*, while the *abregiet* contains only the first and last line of each speech. These two main production texts are thus necessarily designed for complementary but incompatible uses. On the one hand, the *abregiet* cannot prompt speech. The few lines of text it contains serve only as a theatrical road map to orient one to the stage directions, which are its primary interest. On the other hand, the *livre original* cannot be

ses rapports avec la Passion d'Amiens (1500)” 1151-54 and Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* 474.

90 *Ramentevoir B ceulx des secretz des tonnoires de faire leur debvoir, en enssievant le contenu de leur billet de advertence, et que ilz ne oublient de faire cesser quand Dieu ara dit: “Cesse et face tranquillité”* (Remind those performing the thunder effects to do their duties by following the contents of their cue sheet, and that they do not forget to stop when God will have said, “Cesse et face tranquillité.” As Cohen points out, “cette curieuse didascalie . . . nous révèlle incidemment l'existence de programmes ou “rollets” spéciaux entre les mains des machinistes affectés au truc du “tonnere.” Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* 169.

91 For types of play manuscripts, see Runnalls, *Etudes sur les mystères* 367-89. In his invaluable “Typology of Play Manuscripts,” Runnalls distinguishes between the “livre original,” a fair copy of the entire play manuscript (Type B), and what he calls the “producer’s copy” (Type E).

used to cue action effectively because its primary interest lies in the text and the full set of stage directions are not inscribed in it.

Now, since the scribes have provided the production of two sets of the *abregiet*, we should consider that at any given moment during a performance, at least three theatrical texts—perhaps as many as four, if we take Chateaudun’s mention of two prompters to be typical—are in service: a stage-manager of some sort is consulting one of the *abregies*, the conductor of “secrets” the other *abregiet*, and a prompter (or two) are following the complete text in a third (and possibly fourth) book. Where, we might well ask, are all these people during the performance? If Cohen is correct about the “always onstage director,” should we not at least consider which of these—indeed how many of them—may be on stage at the same time, consulting their books and brandishing their batons in full view of the audience?⁹²

To Cohen, the detailed stage directions the Mons *abregiet* demonstrate that the *meneur de jeu* customarily used the text while on stage to cue action. But what do the stage

92 Runnalls, *Etudes sur les mystères* 395. raises precisely this startling possibility. Having discovered two “protocoles” amongst the Chateaudun records, he attempts to reconcile them with Fouquet’s miniature that he thinks, *pace* Cohen, must be a portrait of a *meneur de jeu* directing the performance on stage: “Nous avons affaire ici aux deux meneurs du jeu, qui ont non seulement organisé les répétitions, mais aussi “porté le livre”, lors des représentations même. Les termes *portecolle*, *portitor libri* et *celuy qui porte le livre* figurent dans les indications scéniques de plusieurs mystères. On peut voir un *portecolle* au travail dans la miniature du *Martyre de Sainte Apolline* de Jean Fouquet. Ce qui est curieux dans le *Compte* de Jehan Brehier, c’est qu’à Châteaudun, il y en avait deux, et nous ne savons pas s’ils travaillaient simultanément ou non. Mais ceci explique pourquoi il fallait des doubles des livres de chaque journée” [my italics]. See also the similar passage in Couturier and Runnalls, *Compte du mystère de la Passion, Châteaudun 1510* 42-43. The Chateaudun records, however, do not actually say that these two men direct the play from among the actors upon the stage; it merely says that they were present on each of the days that “one has played the said mystères” as “portecolle,” that one of them (François Souef) also “porté le livre,” and the other (Pierre Jahan) “guided” the players from the beginning to the end (see previous note for original text). It is not unlikely that rehearsal activity is being described in the passage in question as well as attendance at actual performances, and it is important not to confuse “carrying the book” (which one? where?) and prompting. There is no reason why these activities cannot have been “backstage” ones, similar to those performed by modern stage managers.

directions in the *abregiet* actually tell us about the nature and purpose of this interesting text? Can it indeed confirm Cohen's view of the "always onstage director"? Has it been designed expressly to aid the *meneur de jeu* to "conduct" the play on the day of the performance? Or is it designed for other purposes? What does the text itself tell us about its theatrical uses? Let us examine some representative stage directions.

The two Mons *abregies*, as we shall see, are designed for a variety of purposes. What we have to remember from the very beginning, however, is that these Mons texts have been copied from originals borrowed from the Amiens *Passion* of 1500. They came to Mons, in other words, a ready-made production texts, even if the Mons superintendents altered them (as they certainly did) in preparing their own play.⁹³ What this means, however, is that every entry in the *abregies* requires an act of interpretation on the part of the Mons producers. How shall we design and construct "Jerusalem"? How shall we construct Heaven? How does Raphael manage to travel from Heaven "up there" to Bethlehem "down here" for the Annunciation?

As we might expect from such a complex genesis, the Mons *abregies* provide evidence for a variety of theatrical purposes. At one extreme, for instance, they contain a number of "writerly" and descriptive "stage directions" that are aimed more at defining

93 Graham Runnalls has recently demonstrated that not only the "livre original," the actors' roles, and the *Livre des prologues*, but also the *abregies* themselves, were transcribed from the texts used in performing the same play in the Town of Amiens a year earlier: "La Passion de Mons (1501): étude sur le texte et sur ses rapports avec la Passion d'Amiens (1500)." The Amiens originals, however, no longer exist, a circumstance that makes difficult any comments upon what features of the Mons texts might be modified from the Amiens originals. His discovery is a crucial one, because, as he points out, "La possibilité que les manuscrits conservés B Mons soient en réalité amiénois n'a pas été envisagée par Cohen" (1148). Since staging requirements would not have been identical, however, this must have had some effect upon these texts (1157-58). One should therefore expect that some modifications may have been made in the *abregiet* to suit the specific requirements of the Montoise performance. One such obvious modification is that the Mons *abregiet* lists the names of the actors who performed the roles.

technical effects to be achieved in advance of the performance than in aiding the business of prompting action on the day of performance. Consider, for instance, the *abregiet*'s account of the descent of Jesus into Limbo:

Nota que en ce pas icy il doit avoir, au Limbe des Peres, grande clarté et melodie, et doibvent les portes d'Enffer trebuchier et la Divinité, qui est comme une ame en ung pavillon de vollette, doit lB apparoir, et deux Angles encenssans devant elle. (383)

(Note that at this moment one ought to have at the Limbo of the Fathers great brightness and melody, and the doors of Hell ought to shake, and the Divinity, who is like a soul covered in a tent of gauze, ought to appear there, and two angels censing before him.)

Presumably, I suppose, our supposed *meneur de jeu* might wave his wand somewhere to cue this action, but the main thrust of this stage direction is to define the costuming and special effects that will have had to be prepared beforehand. From the point of view of our hypothetical *meneur de jeu*, indeed, the description of the gauze tent is rather pointless. What does “a soul covered in a tent of gauze” look like anyway? That description poses an interesting challenge to the costume designer, perhaps, but what might its significance be to the prompter on the day of performance? Either the actor is in his costume when the doors of hell begin to shake or he is not. The prompter can't be expected to tell him which costume to select.

Perhaps the *abregiet*'s account of the Transfiguration provides one of the most detailed examples of this sort of “writerly” and narrative description:

Nota que icy Jhesus entre dedens la montaigne pour soy vestir d'une robe blanche et la plus blanche que trouver se poult, et une face et les mains d'or bruni et devera eslever ses mains; et soit deriere lui ung grant soleil, puis doit estre levIIIs en hault

par l'enghien ad ce ordonnét et tantost apres doivent aparoir Helie B dextre en habit de Carme et une tocque de prophete sur sa teste et Mołse B senestre tenant les tables; et tanedis que ces choses se preparont la Magdelaine doit parler et Jhesus ne se doit point monstrer jusques B ce qu'elle aura tout dict. (P. 177)⁹⁴

(Note that here Jesus enters within the mountain to dress himself in a white robe and the most white that can be found and [to have his] face and hands burnished with gold. And he should raise his hands and a great sun be behind him, then he ought to be raised on high by the machine ordained for this purpose, and then afterward ought Eli appear to the right in the habit of a Carmelite and a prophet's turban on his head, and Moses to the left, holding the Tables [of the Law], and while these things are being prepared, the Magdalene should speak, and Jesus should not show himself until she will have said this [her speech].)

Nothing in this long description is specifically marked for prompting. When Jesus goes into the mountain to see about his gilding and costuming, Mary Magdalene's conversation with her friends takes place ostensibly to demonstrate her "mondanité" before her conversion, but in fact it is designed to give Jesus time to prepare for his Transfiguration. As a consequence, the real anxiety on stage during this period is not that Jesus might speak too soon (as the stage direction seems to suggest), but that he will not be sufficiently transformed by the time that Mary and her friends finish their chat. Indeed, the *abregiet* marks a place, a page or so later, where Jesus must appear transfigured: "Cy doit Jhesus apparoir transfiguré," a stage direction that is in itself remarkably unhelpful: is this latter moment where Jesus is supposed to raise his hands with a sun behind him? If Jesus has to be prompted to "appear transfigured," shouldn't somebody prompt the conductor of secrets to fire up the "great sun"

94 Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* . Page references to this edition will

that is to illuminate Jesus at this moment? Who is going to “burnish Jesus’ face and hands? Presumably if the supposed prompter is going to prompt Jesus to put on his costume—is such a prompt necessary?—the prompter wouldn’t need to be told about dressing him in a white robe “the most white that can be found.” Wouldn’t that detail have been sorted out long before performance? In fact, the description is out of order from the point of view of a prompter: first Jesus appears with a sun behind him, but then he doesn’t appear until the Magdalene finishes speaking. Finally, what exactly is our supposed always onstage director meant to do with all this detail? Does he require all this detail to prompt Jesus to enter the mountain and change his costume?⁹⁵

Tellingly, this text has been copied directly from the *livre original* into the *abregiet*. It is by far the longest and one of the very few detailed “stage directions” to be found in the extant textual *cahier*.⁹⁶ That it has been transcribed into the *abregiet* testifies to its importance as a technical effect *to be achieved*. At the point that it has been inscribed into the *abregiet*, it hasn’t yet been decided how exactly the effect will be achieved. As such, it is primarily addressed to the producer or scene designer perhaps specifically to the designer of the *secrets*. It tells the defines the desired stagecraft effect, but it leaves the practical details of how to achieve this effect to the designer. When the *abregiet* later identifies the moment when this remarkable transfiguration effect is to take place, it does so with a remarkable

hereafter appear in parentheses in the text.

95 As Cohen points out, Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* 177, n. 3, this stage direction derives from a version of Jean Michel’s *Passion*, from which source it has been copied first into the Amiens *livre original*, and from there into the extant Mons copy: “Icy entre Jhesus dedens la montaigne pour soy vestir d'une robe la plus blanche que faire se pourra et une face et les mains toutes d'or bruny, et ung grand soleil B rays brunys par derriere. Puis sera levé hault en l'air par ung subtil contrepoys et tantost apres sortiront de ladicte montaigne Helye en habit de carme et ung chapeau de prophete B la teste, et Moyse d'autre costé qui tiendra les tables e sa main. Et pendant parlera la Magdaleine.”

96 Cohen, *Livre des prologues* 48-49.

vagueness—“here Jesus ought to appear transfigured”—because the technical details of this remarkable special effect have not yet been worked out. Furthermore, the *abregiet* envisions as well a very remarkable response to the Transfiguration, which similarly ignores the practical necessities of managing the stage during performance:

Lorz ilz cheent eneoers une fois sur leur fac[h]e et Helye et Moλse prenent congiet reveranment sans parler et s’esvanissent; et Jhesus retourne en sa fo[u]rme humaine (181) (Then they fall together at once on their faces, and Eli and Moses take leave reverently without speaking, and they vanish; and Jesus returns into his human form.)

How does Jesus return to his human form, on wonders? Does he have to disappear into the mountain again, wash off all the gilding and change back into his street clothes? If so, why does the *abregiet* not prompt such a move? Once again, this is primarily a prospective and literary stage direction meant to set the agenda of the scene designer, and the special effects necessary to pull it off have yet to be devised. The passage is understandably not very interested in stage management during performance.

If “writerly” directions like these describe effects that are yet to be worked out in detail, still others record theatrical effects that have already been translated into practical stagecraft. Consider, for instance, the following four representative directions:

Cy doivent estre advertis ceulx qui chantent les motez en Paradis, de descendre de Paradis et eulx en aller au Limbe, pour chanter ung motet, quand on leur dira (340).

Here those who sing the motets in Paradise ought to be advised to descend from Paradise and take themselves to Limbo, in order to sing a motet, when one will tell them.

Lors s’en va Lucifer en Paradis terrestre en fourme de serpent. Et est Bnoter que le

personnage de Lucifer ne se bouge d'Enfer, jasoit qu'il ait dit cy dessus; mais est ung aultre personnage qui fait le serpent et doit aller B Eve; pour ce que Lucifer ne seroit point assez B temps mis en fourme de serpent (p. 10).

(Then Lucifer goes off into Paradise terrestrial in the form of a serpent. And it is to be noted that the actor playing Lucifer does not stir himself from Hell, until he has said this below; but it is another actor who performs the serpent and must go to Eve, because Lucifer will not have time to put on the costume of a serpent.)

Avoir regard que l'asne sur quoy Marie yra en bethleem soit prest, quant tempz sera, et ossi le beuf. Et doit avoir Elizchim une femme lez lui, que se femme representera sans mot dire. (62)

(Take care that the ass upon which Mary goes to Bethlehem is ready, when it will be time, and also the ox. And Eliachim ought to have a woman beside him, who will represent his wife without saying a word.)

Nota d'ycy advertir ung peintre de aller en Paradis pour poindre rouge la face de Raphaël (410).

(Note here to advise a painter to go to Paradise in order to paint the face of Raphael red.)

There is certainly evidence here for prompting of some sort going on. The singers of motets are to descend from Paradise and sing, not upon their own volition, but when directed to do so. Because Lucifer cannot leave Hell, get into his snake costume, and enter Paradise in time, a second actor will have to put on the snake costume and corrupt Eve. We need to have

an ass and an ox ready when it's time for the journey to Bethlehem, and we also need a wife for Eliachim, who will accompany the Holy Family. The painter is directed to go to Paradise and rouge Raphael's face considerably before Raphael needs to appear on stage.

On the whole, however, it is not always clear who is giving these warnings or on what occasion. A stage direction makes clear that singers moving between Paradise and Limbo should sing "when one directs them to do so," for instance, but it does not say who is appointed to direct them to sing. Whoever it is, however, seems to be someone else than the person who is in possession of the *abregiet*. Moreover, the vague reference to "one" who will prompt them to sing suggests that his identity has not yet been decided at the time that the stage direction has been written. So too the stage direction about providing a duplicate Satan in a snake costume is directed toward solving a practical problem of stagecraft; its solution is a casting problem, not really a prompting problem. Perhaps somebody needs to be cued to make the ass and the ox ready, but wouldn't this take place off stage? So too, the provision of Eliachim, "parent de Joseph" (23) represents a solution to another knotty stage problem: Joseph needs help in lifting the pregnant Mary onto the back of the donkey. When the time comes, Joseph indeed asks Eliachin for help with this task, a request that eliminates the need for a prompt, and in reply to Joseph's spoken request, *Lors ilz methent Marie sus l'asne et partent de Nazareth et s'en vont en Bethleem* (62). (Then they put Mary on the ass and leave Nazareth and go away to Bethlehem). At the same time, a female companion for Eliachin is provided, perhaps for propriety's sake, to accompany Mary and Joseph. The writer of this direction needed to record this requirement here because the actress, a mere supernumerary, speaks no lines and will not be visible in the *livre original* when it comes time to cast the play. This direction thus responds to a perceived casting necessity, not to a stage management problem. On the day of performance, it is irrelevant to tell the stage

manager that another actress is needed. By the same token, the provision of a painter to go to Paradise to paint Raphael's face red may be useful as a prompting aid (although surely the prompt would take place off stage), but the direction most obviously provides a solution to a stagecraft problem: how do we provide a quick change of face color for Raphael?

A great number of stage directions require such specific actions that they cannot be meant as prompting aids. Consider, for instance, the following series of stage directions that seem to micromanage Joseph's doubting encounter with his surprisingly pregnant spouse:

Ici soit advertie Marie de faire eslever son ventre pour demonstrier qu'elle soit enchainte. Silete (59).⁹⁷

(Here Mary must be advised to raise her belly in order to demonstrate that she is pregnant. Silete.)

Maria doit approchier Joseph, puis dit . . . (59)

(Mary must approach Joseph, then she says . . .

Non leissier oublier Joseph Bfaire ses admirations en regardant Marie enchainte (60).

(Do not let Joseph forget to show his astonishment in seeing Mary pregnant.)

As Mary prepares to pray,

Joseph s'n va ariere (60).

Joseph turns away.

Then after Mary's long prayer and Joseph's speech expressing doubt:

En la fin de ceste clause se doit couchier (60).

At the end of this speech, he ought to go to bed.

⁹⁷ Compare Elizabeth inviting similar attention to her own pregnancy: *Soit advertie Elizabeth de faire aparoir son ventre gros, so demonstrant enchainte. (P. 53).* (Let Elizabeth

Many of these stage directions are valuable precisely because they involve interpretations of actions that would be hard to prompt. How would an onstage director, for instance, prompt Mary to “raise her belly” at Joseph, or prompt Joseph to show astonishment upon beholding that Mary is pregnant? The *abregiet* wants him to turn away from Mary after her explanation, thus acting out his difficulty in believing her, but would he require prompting to do so? And does he require the wafting of an onstage wand to know he must go to bed after his last speech, particularly since he must be in that bed when Gabriel arrives to explain matters to him?

It is hard to imagine that an actor would have to be prompted on the day of performance for any of these actions. Once he has read and rehearsed his role, any conceivable actor of any ability would understand that he is supposed to show surprise when an obviously pregnant Virgin displays her belly to him. By the same token, the direction to say “O glorious Trinity” in a marveling tone of voice is a point to be imparted during rehearsal, not performance, as is the direction that he must kneel reverentially before the newborn Christ child. Such directions as these are most probably designed as directions to the actor for use in rehearsal.

The *abregiet* is full of what we might call “rehearsal advice” like this. After Elizabeth’s “Chambriere” speaks, the stage direction points out that “*Lors elle doit apointier l’enfant* (57), then she must swaddle the child. At the same time, Zachary performs a number of actions in pantomime that cannot be easily prompted in performance. *Ramentevoir B Zacharie de faire signe en hochant la teste, comme s’il fuist muet acertes.* (52). (Remind Zachary to make a sign by shaking his head, as he must effectively remain mute.) To give him a voice, if only a silent one, the *abregiet* prescribes, “*doit icy faire signe de demander une greffe et des tables pour escripre* (Zachary ought here make a sign to ask for a stylus and a

be warned to make her belly show, thus demonstrating pregnancy.)

tablet in order to write with), and then “*Zacharie prent les tables et escript dedens le nom Jan; puis il rebaille les tablettes (au premier parent)*” (58), (Zachary takes the tablets and he writes on them the name John; then he gives the tablets (to the first parent).” Similarly, this advice to Pilate offers direction as to how he should interpret his action. *Soit cy adverti Pilate de soy appuiier sur le coing d’un banc, comme penssif* (394), (Let Pilate here be advised to place himself on the corner of a bench, as if pensive.) One might, I suppose, prompt Pilate to go to that bench, but would you prompt him to sit only on a corner of it and then prompt him to look pensive? This episode from the Marriage of the Virgin sequence indeed records the expectation that such acting advice will indeed have been given in rehearsal, and then details how this scene must be staged: *Ossi advertir Abiud, Eliachin, Joram, Salem, et aucuns autres, se bon semble, de aller B l’offrande, sans parler, ayant leur verghe en main, comme instruit leur a esté; semblablement prendre garde que Joseph, devant ceste offertoire, die assez ariere ce qui s’enssieult et la verghe ne florira point lors. Silete*, (54) (Also advise Abiud, Eliachin, Joram, Salem and the rest, to gather themselves nicely, to give offering, without speaking, having their branches in hand, as they have been instructed to do; similarly take care that Joseph, before offering his [branch], keep as far behind as suitable, and that his branch does not yet flower. Silete.)

Many of the *abregiet*’s directions are cued to particular lines in such a way as to make prompting very difficult if not impossible. Joseph’s first approach to the newly born Christ child, for instance, is carefully cued to particular lines of his speech:

Joseph doit, B la IIIe ligne de [sa] clause, aprochier et, en soy esbahissant, dire: “O glorieuse Trinite” etc. [Et], en la fin d’icelle clause, oφ il dit: “Mon hault createur, mult createur, mon seul juge,” il doit los stre B genoulx devant l’enffant (70), (Joseph must, at the third line of his speech, approach and, in his astonishment, say say “O

glorious Trinity,” etc. And at the end of the same speech, where he says: “My high creator, my only Judge,” he ought then to be kneeling before the infant.)

Presumably our hypothetical *meneur de jeu* might simply count two lines, then wave his stick to prompt Joseph to begin his approach, but how could our supposed *meneur de jeu* use the following prompts to cue Abraham and Pilate:

Quant il a dit ‘Qui sans droit les avoit porté,’ lors il presente le disme B

Melc(h)isedech (30). (When he has said “Qui sans droit les avoit porté,” then he presents the tithe to Melchisadech”).

Quant Pilate dit: “Se le voeul examiner sus,” il doit rentrer dedens le Pretore et se assire sur le moyene Cayere et Jhesus devant luy (338)

When Pilate says: “Se le voeul examiner sus,” he must return withing the Pretore and he seats himself in the middle chair, and Jesus [stands] before him.

All our supposed *meneur de jeu* sees when he looks into the *abregiet*, after all, is the first and last line of these speeches and a Roman numeral representing the total number of lines in each speech. The holder of the *abregiet* only knows that the cue line comes at some undefined place within those limits. The Pilate direction especially seems to refer to how one learns a part, not to how one prompts a performance. How would one prompt Pilate both to respond to a line that will happen at some time in the near future, and to go at sit in a particular chair? Or how is he to prompt Veronica not once but twice as this direction seems to require:

Quant Veronne dit ceste ligne: “Si volray de ce coeuvre-chief,” elle le desploye, et, quant elle dit: “Et de present est difformée,” lors elle essue la face de Jhesus et le Veronnicque y appert; et le doit monstret au peuple (359). (When Veronica says this line: “Si volray de ce coeuvre-chief,” she takes it off, and, when she says, “Et de present est difformée,” then she wipes the face of Jesus and the Vernicle [i.e.,

Veronica' veil with the image of Jesus' face on it] appears on it; and she must show it to the people.)

In this case, our supposed prompter would know from the *abregiet* that Veronica's speech is 34 lines long, but he would have no practical way of anticipating that the Saint must take off her veil after precisely fourteen lines, and then she must then wipe Jesus' face three lines three lines after that.

Such directions—and the *abregiet* contains very many of this sort—strongly imply the presence of another text—either the full “livre original” or an actor's part—that must be used in connection with the *abregiet*. The lines of the speech must be consulted in the full “literary” text, while the stage action must be connected to that text in the *abregiet*. In turn, these two texts strongly imply the cooperation of two people—but not on stage during performance. From one book, the actor is learning to speak the lines of text; from the other, the holder of the *abregiet* tells him how to perform his role. “Now, somewhere during your next speech, you will say, ‘Si volray de ce coeuvre-chief.’ When you do that, you should take off your veil. Then later in the same speech, you will say, “Et de present est difformée,” you must wipe Jesus' face and display the Veronicle to the audience.” To my mind, it is this sort of rehearsal activity—attending the rehearsals, serving as “porthecolle” and having “guydé les joueurs depuys le commencements jusques B la fin” (guided the players from the beginning until the end)—among other services, that the tireless Pierre Jahan was most likely rewarded for in the Chateaudun records.⁹⁸

Many of the *abregiet* directions begin with the formula, “nota de advertir” or “estre advertir.” Because Cohen imagined that *abregiet* was designed specifically for onstage prompting, according to his interpretation of the Fouquet illustration, he set great store on this

98 Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* 162.

verb, which he construed as a directorial order delivered by the *meneur de jeu* to his actors, who were expected to execute them. Often, he noticed, the *abregiet* issued first a preliminary warning “designed to arouse the attention of the director”: *Nota de advertir Simon de passer aupres de Jhesus* (360), (Note to remind Simon to pass near Jesus). Then somewhat later, the *abregiet* would mark “in the most precise fashion the execution of the order:” *Il va vers Simon* (360), (he goes towards Simon).⁹⁹ The verb *advertir*, however, is amenable to a range of meanings, among them *tourner vers, faire attention, penser, réfléchir, aviser, apercevoir*.¹⁰⁰ In some cases, as we shall see, the *abregiet* probably does indicate prompting.

In many cases, however, when an actor is told to *advertir*, he is merely being told to understand, consider, pay attention to a point important for the performance of the play, before as well as during production. Consider, for instance, this fairly typical example:

L'on doit advertir Abiut en Jherusalem de parler aprIIs Lucifer, lors qu'il ora sa replicque: “comme feu de fournaise” (50).

One ought to warn Abiut in Jerusalem to speak after Lucifer, when he hears his line, “comme feu de fournaise.”

This direction prepares for a change of location as the action moves from hell to Jerusalem.

Eleven lines later, Satan will speak the last line of his speech in hell, and that line will be

99 Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* xliv.: “En feuilletant les *Abregiés*, on y observera presque toujours une double didascalie, la première destinée à éveiller l’attention du régisseur, comme: *Nota de avertir Simon de passer aupres de Jhesus* (p. 360), la deuxième marquant de la façon la plus précise l’exécution de l’ordre; *Il va vers Simon*. These curious citations seem rather ill chosen to illustrate Cohen’s point. Surely the first example is directed toward Simon. If the direction is used for onstage prompting, the hypothetical *meneur de jeu* must at this point tell Simon to pass near Jesus. The second example, however, records not Simon’s movement but Jesus’.

100 Cf. La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Dictionnaire historique de l’ancien langage françois.*, sv. “Advertir, verbe.” Similarly, Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues.*, sv. “Advertir,” lists the range of meanings as “to informe, certifie, aduertise; warne, admonish, aduise; to send word of; to signifie, give notice, or intelligence, vnto.” It was a relatively new verb in the fifteenth century, borrowed from the Latin *advertere*.

Abiut's cue to begin a new scene in Jerusalem. Since the actor playing Abiut will have Satan's cue line written into his actor's part; he already knows what his cue line is to be,¹⁰¹ and he has practiced it in rehearsal. The cue in the *abregiet* thus primarily refers to making the actor aware of this important line, and the creation of this awareness will take place first of all in rehearsal. True, the actor may still require prompting during performance to be ready for this transition, but in that case, the phrasing of the *abregiet*'s cue—*l'on doit advertir*—suggests that the holder of the *abregiet* is not necessarily the “one” entrusted with prompting.

Much the same can be said about the following, which seems to be directed more at solving a staging problem than actual prompting during performance:

Nota de, en ce pas, advertir Dieu, qui est desoubz la salle de Paradis, de faire apporter apres luy par deux anges, quand il retournera en Paradis terrestre, deux plichons qu'on aura preparé, pour les donner B Adam et Eve (12).

(Note that, in this place, to call the attention of God, who is beneath the room of Paradise, to have two *plichons* [fur pelts] that “one” will have prepared carried behind him by two angels, when he returns into the terrestrial Paradise, in order to give them to Adam and Eve.)

I do not mean to suggest that it has no significance for the management of the stage during performance, only that it has been written in the *abregiet* in the first instance to address a practical problem that needs to be solved *in advance* of the staging of the play. Here, God, who will be in a lower room hidden from the audience's sight (hence off stage) is asked to take fur garments with him when he enters Paradise to confront Adam and Eve after the Fall. In this way, they can then cover themselves with suitable garments when they are expelled

101 Except for the so-called *Livre des prologues*, no actors' parts survive from this particular play. However, Graham Runnalls points out that conventionally, such rolls of actors' parts consist of speeches (“*répliques*”) separated by the cue word in the last line of the previous speech. Runnalls, *Etudes sur les mystIIres* 376.

from the garden. But who is it who will be responsible for preparing the garments and getting them to the room where God will be awaiting his cue to enter Paradise? His identity has yet to be decided at the time that the stage direction was written into the *abregiet*. Perhaps the holder of the *abregiet* will be in a position to prompt God not to forget to take the fur pelts with him when he makes his entry—will he have to run off stage and down into the room beneath Paradise to do so?—but for the most part, this direction is about solving a technical problem and calling the attention of the actor playing God that the props he will need to perform the next scene will be waiting for him in that offstage chamber beneath Paradise.

So too a place is marked in the *abregiet* where the “deputies of the secrets” must make the Bethlehem star appear:

Soient ci advertis ceulx qui sont ou secret de l'estoille aux troix Roix de commenchier de le faire monstrer (74), (Let those who are to perform the secret of the star to the three Kings begin here to make it show).

Then a little later:

Avoir regard que l'estoille soit absconsée quand les III Roix seront pres de Jherusalem et lors que Joseph parlera ainsi (76), Pay attention that the star be hidden when the Three Kings will be near Jerusalem and when Joseph will speak thus.

And then later still:

Entendre que ceulx du secret de l'estoille fachent icdelle estoille aparoir, quand Melchior prenra congié d'Herode (79), see that those of the secret of the star make it appear when Melchior takes leave from Herod.

These actions, of course, may be prompted during performance, but primarily they are directed towards making the deputies be vigilant in responding to what is happening on stage. Each of these directions is directed at focusing their attention (hence the verbs, “soient ci advertis,” “avoir regard,” and “entendre”) on the actors, not on a prompter: “when you see this

happening, then you should respond in this way.” It is also meant to focus the attention of the deputies to find a way to make this effect happen. We even have evidence that the deputies, in this instance, understood the text primarily in this way. In the margin of the “secrets” *abregiet*, someone has thus sketched a small image of a hand moving a curtain to display the star. Problem solved.

As we might expect, stage-managerial prompting does indeed occur during performance, and the *abregiet* fully reflects this important function. The clearest indications of such prompting occurs when explicit signals are given to prompt action. As Noah closes the window of his ark, the *abregiet* directs:

Lors soit faict (le) signe aux deputéz aux secrez du deluge de laissier venir les eaues
(27).

(Then let there be made the signal to the deputies of the secrets of the deluge to let the water come.)

Alternatively, staff are sometimes directed to “summon” actors at particular moments in the text:

Estre cy adverti de semonre Adam au Limbe (339)

Be here warned to summon Adam to Limbo

Estre adverti de semonre Dieu le Pere (339)

Be warned to summon God the Father.

Estre adverti de aller semonre Progilla, femme Pilate (340)

Be warned to go summon Progilla, Pilate’s wife.

Such directions as these convincingly demonstrate that the *abregiet* was indeed used on the day of the performance.

What is not clear from the majority of even these directions, however, is who is doing the prompting or from where. The summoning in general seems more convincingly done

“back stage” than onstage. Actors are being summoned from the offstage equivalent of the modern greenroom to prepare for their entrances. Similarly, the deputies of the “secrets” who are to produce a deluge on Noah’s ark must be concealed where the audience cannot see them, so they too are probably prompted from backstage. Often, such prompting as may be necessary is put into the hands of the actors themselves:

Nota que l’Humain Lignaige doit dire ce couplet assez pres de Paradis; et se, d’aventure, il estoit loing quant il (le) commencherà, il doit, tousjours en parlant, approchier. Il se meth B genoulx lors qu’il dira: “O haulte et divine essence” etc.

(39)

Note that Humain Lignaige ought to say this couplet when near Paradise; and if, by chance, he is slow when he begins, he should continue to approach while speaking. He kneels when he says, “O haulte et divine essence.”

Here Humain Lignaige is given leave to regulate his own approach to Paradise. If he finds it necessary, he should speak his lines while walking, but in any case, he should kneel as soon as he speaks the line, “O haulte et divine essence”—a line that cannot be prompted in any case because it is not in the *abregiet*. Satan, however, is on stage, and it is not clear where the prompter stands when he signals him to pass from one part of the stage to another.

Often, however, such signaling and summoning unambiguously happens from offstage rather than on. Consider how the *abregiet* arranges for Joseph to be offstage during the Nativity, for instance:

Lors Joseph fait sembland de leur donner B mengier, et puis s’en va ariere de Nostre Dame; et ne revient point devers elle tant que on lui fera signe, et n’est point B le Nativité (65)

(Then Joseph pretends to give them something to eat, and then he goes away from Our

Lady; and he does not return towards her until one will give him a signal, and he is not at the Nativity.)

The signal, as the *abregiet* makes clear, happens off stage. With Joseph offstage, Jesus is born, Mary kneels, and then, the signal having been given offstage, *Soit adverti Joseph de retourner devers Maria* (69), (Let Joseph be advised to return before Mary). Similarly, thanks to some theatrical slight-of-hand, a child actor, cued from offstage, is substituted for a doll at the Immaculate Conception:

Ici soit Marie nouvellement née ostée de la maison de Joachim et Anne; et ci se doit monstrier avec eulx Marie que on presente au temple (47)

(Here Mary newly born is taken from the house of Joachim and Anne; and here should be shown with them Mary that one presents to the Temple.)

There is not a single prompting direction in the entire Mons *abregiet* that clearly must be delivered from onstage. On the other hand, the *abregiet* includes many, such as these, that clearly refer to offstage prompts.

Perhaps the most informative record of how the *abregiet* was intended to be used during performance in prompting the play can be found in the *Livre des prologues*. This text, as mentioned above, is similar to an actor's part, but it is in codex form whereas actors' parts are formatted as scrolls. For this reason, Sire Gille le Naing, the priest who was cast in the role of "Prologuer" probably carried this book on stage with him, and he may therefore have read his part openly from the book rather than reciting his speeches from memory. He presents himself to the audience dressed in the habit of a doctor, perhaps deliberately reminiscent of the "scientifique doctor," Jean Michel,¹⁰² and he holds a "Regle de predication" (preacher's

102 His first prologue, as Cohen points out, is based closely upon the first prologue of Jean Michel's *Passion*, and a good deal of the Amiens-Mons is based upon Michel's work. Cohen, *Livre des prologues* 3n. Runnalls, "La Passion de Mons (1501): étude sur le texte et sur ses rapports avec la Passion d'Amiens (1500)" 1161-71.

staff?). He delivers his prologues, moreover, from “quelque montignete” (some height) or “en kayere de verité” (apparently an allegorical Throne of Truth). Throughout the first journée, Sir Gille le Naing remains sitting in his Chair of Truth, from where he serves as an expositor. He thus speaks a total of eight times in this journée to form transitions between episodes and to ensure that the audience will “mieulx apareiller les coraiges des auditeurs B oyr devotement ce qui par aprTIIs sera dit de icelle Passion” (better prepare the hearts of the auditors to hear devotedly that which after will be said about the Passion). The play thus constructs Sir Gille le Naing as a powerful figure of clerical authority.

But theatrically, he is not powerful at all. A stage direction written into the *Livre des prologues* reveals that he acts closely under control of someone more powerful than he. At the end of the opening episode of the first journée, Satan makes a very noisy exit as *Lors soit fait grant tempeste en Enfer* (13), (Then there shall be made a great tempest in Hell). Before Sire Gille can rise from his Chair of Truth and speak, he has to wait for the noise to die down. At this point, the *Livre des prologues* directs him as follows:

Nota.–Pour mieulx le Prologheur entendre B son II^e prologue encommenchie, il doit avoir regard B l’Homme commis B faire les scemonces enssuivant l’Abregiet de la Journée, lequel le debvera segniffier pour proferer lesdict prologue.¹⁰³

(In order for the Prologheur the better to understand when to begin his second

prologue, he ought to pay attention to the man appointed to give the warnings

according to the Abregiet of the Journée, who ought to signal him to pronounce the

103 Cohen, *Livre des prologues* 9; Cohen in this passage adds an *s* at the end of “lesdit” and “prologue,” thus transforming these words into plurals. Compare his shorter version of the *Livre des prologues*, where he transcribes these words accurately as singulars: Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* 458. He does this, I believe, because he imagines that the *meneur de jeu* (whom he refers to in this instance as the “Régisseur”) directs the priest in delivering his Prologues throughout all eight journées of the performance. Since this suggestion has no warrant in the text, I have not followed him in this transcription.

said prologue.)

Cohen seized on this passage, believing that it entirely vindicated his theory of the “always onstage director: “C'est-B-dire que LE PROLOGUEUR attendra le signal du Régisseur qui tient en main l'*Abregiet* et en fait observer les *semonces* ou avertissements”¹⁰⁴ (This is to say, that the PROLOGUEUR will await the signal of the Director who holds in his hand the *Abregiet* and observe its warnings or directions).

But let us consider this very interesting and significant passage more closely. Cohen’s gloss on this passage is after all not well supported by the text itself. Rather, it depends squarely upon his preoccupation with the “always onstage director.” You can only get it to mean what he says it does if you are trying to visualize this description, as he did, as reflecting his interpretation of the Fouquet image: the Man with the Book directing onstage. The language of the passage, however, suggests a disconcertingly less imposing figure than the “always onstage director” issuing orders to actors and moving about the stage waving his arms like an orchestra conductor. The text itself merely describes him as “the man appointed to give the warnings according to the *Abregiet* of the *Journée*.” Rather than an immensely powerful Director, the passage refers to him as a subordinate figure, an assistant of some sort, one of the army of anonymous stage crew entrusted with the details of the performance. That he is described as the man appointed to hold specifically *l’Abregiet de la Journée* strongly indicates that the task may well be committed to other men during other *journées*. He has merely been appointed to perform a task in the production, not to direct the whole performance. His description in this passage further begs the question of who appointed him. As far as one can tell, he is more of an assistant stage manager than a director. Nor does this passage establish that the “man appointed” must be standing onstage when he is

104 Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* 458n.4.

communicating with the Prologueur. He needs only be in Sir Gille's line of sight; he need not be visible to the audience. Moreover, Sir Gille, seated upon his Chair of Truth atop some high place, is particularly well-suited to look down for his cue into the backstage area that the audience cannot see. That there are such backstage, beneathstage, and belowstage areas is perfectly clear from the *abregiet* itself. We recall the chamber underneath Paradise, discussed above, where God picks up two fur pelts for Adam and Eve and awaits his entrance. So, too, we have seen Joseph retiring offstage, where he is invisible to the audience, and awaiting his re-entrance once the Nativity has occurred. Cain thus disappears backstage where he is invisible to the audience, but where he can receive signals to re-enter:

*Et quant Cayn a conclut, il s'en va muchier en quelque lieu et ne se fait plus voir
jusques atant que on luy fera signe (16)*

(And when Cain has finished [speaking], he must go hide himself in some place and not be seen any more until the moment when someone makes him a signal.)

So too, when Noah and his family enter into the Ark, the actors are told to disappear beneath the stage:

*et s'en doivent aller par les secrez de terre ceulx qui ne doivent plus parler pour ce
jour (26)*

(and those who ought not to speak any more during this journée ought to go out by means of the "secrez de terre" [hidden exit beneath the stage])

Finally, there is the matter of the *abregiet* itself. Presumably the man who is appointed to give the warnings must be consulting that document. But if you look into that text, you will find that the scribe has not troubled to enter the prompt into the *abregiet*.¹⁰⁵ The book actually

105 As Graham Runnalls has demonstrated, the *Livre des prologues* was written after the *abregiet*. Runnalls, "La Passion de Mons (1501): étude sur le texte et sur ses rapports avec la Passion d'Amiens (1500)" 1157.

helad by the “Man Appointed” makes no reference whatsoever to the prompt to which the *Livre des prologues* refers. From the point of view of the *abregiet* (and hence from the point of view of the Man Appointed), the prompt—and hence the prompter—seems not to have been very significant after all. In the end, Sir Gille himself was trusted to pick his moment to begin speaking.

To my mind, the *abregiet* is better understood as the chief means for controlling the production instead of a book to be used in prompting the performance. To understand what I mean by “controlling the production,” perhaps we need to consider together what it means to be responsible for supervising a medieval *myst/IIre*. The production of the Amiens-Mons *Passion*, after all, involved complicated and difficult problems of organization. Imagine, if you will, what it takes to perform a play that took either four long days to perform and was divided into eight *jours* (as at Amiens) or eight days of performance, one *jour* per day (as at Mons). Containing something of the scope of an English mystery cycle, it focused on the birth, life crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ, but it began with Adam and Eve and concluded with Pentecost. Since roles continuing from *jour* to *jour* were often divided between different actors; hundreds of actors may have been involved. Cohen estimates at least 150 actors were necessary to perform the roughly 350 roles. There were at least 48 rehearsals in the Town Hall, and since the space in that location must necessarily have been smaller than the outdoor stage, these rehearsals must have involved “platoons” of actors performing individual scenes. How does one, for instance, organize rehearsals for all these groups of actors and in doing so, keep the performance coordinated effectively?

Because of these problems, plays of this scope often employed multiple superintendents to organize the rehearsals and performances. The Valenciennes Passion Play thus required no less than thirteen superintendents to recruit, rehearse, and stage the show.

The Mons *Passion*, which was much shorter than the Valenciennes one, had at least four actor-superintendents, two conductors of “secrets, as well as the redoubtable Jehan Billet, who presided over all those rehearsals, and there may well have been more still (since we only know the names of those who were specifically paid in the Mons accounts).¹⁰⁶ In addition, four assistants were appointed to double and assist the four actor-superintendents in organizing, rehearsing, and running the performances. The use of multiple superintendents thus divided an impossibly complex job of organization into manageable portions.

The Mons *abregiet* is best understood, I would judge, as a way of bring coherence to all this activity. What happens, for instance, when one superintendent, who has been rehearsing one group of actors, has to turn his attention to another group of actors or to a problem with the constructions of the elaborate stage set? How is his assistant, or an alternate superintendent, to proceed? What happens when one superintendent stands in for another during rehearsals? What must he emphasize in rehearsing the actors? How does he know what has been decided about cues, entrances, points of acting interpretation. Will he know to make sure that Pilate has to sit down on that bench and look sad at that particular point in the play? Will he know that when Veronica says one particular line, she must take off her veil, and when she then says another particular line, she must wipe Jesus’ face? He will if he is monitoring the rehearsal with *abregiet* in hand. The composition of the Mons *abregiet* thus strikes me as more obviously intended as a way of ensuring consistency and of controlling the production of the play in production and rehearsal. You need to tell Joseph during rehearsal that he is to interpret his role by looking surprised when he sees the pregnant Virgin; it is rather too late to do so during performance. Wait a minute! How do we get those fur cloaks to Adam and Eve before they leave Paradise? Ah, this is what we’ll do: have two of God’s attendant angels bring them along when God goes back to Paradise to ask a few questions

106 See above, n. 84.

about an apple. We'll make somebody responsible for preparing the cloaks to give to the angel. Oops. What are we going to do about Satan? There's no time to get him out of Hell and into his snake costume before he has to appear in Paradise to tempt Eve. OK, how about this: we'll let Satan stay in Hell, and we'll get another actor to put on the snake costume. That should solve the problem. How do we get Raphael's face painted red before his appearance? We need to let the painter know in rehearsal when he is expected to go to rouge the face of the angel so that he will know during performance when to perform that task. Put that down in the book. Again, it is rather too late during performance to expect the superintendent to hunt down a painter and send him off to the angel. The *abregiet*, read in this way, tells more eloquently how the superintendents were preparing the play than it tells us how or who prompted the production on the day of performance.

I have no doubt that the Mons *abregiet* would be useful during performance, as a means of monitoring whether in performance the actors, painters, singers, and conductors were performing their roles as they were instructed to do so. Indeed, it was consulted throughout the when rehearsing actors, constructing the special effects, and building the sets, and in prompting when necessary, the actors during performance. For all these off-stage and pre-production purposes, it is admirably suited. The man—or rather men—who held the *abregiet*, however, were never Regisseurs, Directors, *meneurs-de-jeu*. The one clear reference so far found that gives us a glimpse of the holder of that book in the act of performing his duties describes him merely as a subordinate, “l'Homme commis B faire les scemonces ensuivant l'Abregiet de la Journée.” There is no evidence that the holder of the *abregiet* habitually stood on stage “conducting” the play in the manner of an orchestra conductor. It is far less obviously suited as a script meant to prompt the performance on the day of production. By inserting a wholly mythical character—the *meneur de jeu*—into the process, we have not yet

rightly understood the nature of this important text nor understood very well how it was used.

Conclusion

We began this study by invoking Cohen's *idée fixe*, the *meneur de jeu* as it was constructed by him and others. An immensely powerful person, he is deemed to be "here, there, and everywhere," always onstage, directing, prompting, delivering prologues and epilogues, the supervisor of supervisors, his uniform defined by the book he carries, identified by Cohen as the Mons *abregiet*, and the staff he wields like an orchestra conductor. In the end, our *meneur de jeu* disappears almost entirely, based ultimately upon nineteenth-century misconstructions of a character in a play by Eustache Mercadé, whose portrait was allegedly painted by Hubert Cailleau, and as interpreted by Cohen in the light of a miniature by Jean Fouquet. He it was, Cohen thought, who directed the Mons passion from onstage while consulting the Mons *abregiet*. In the end, however, when we come across a glimpse of the holder of that *abregiet* actually performing his tasks, he turns out to be a rather modest figure—the Man Appointed—and he is performing a function at the behest of somebody else.

If we look for it, however, there is undoubtedly an immensely important figure in charge of the entire production, from beginning to end. It is not a person, however, but a text. Or rather one should say *texts*. Texts are truly "here, there, and everywhere" controlling every aspect of the production. There is, of course, the full text of the play itself, from which derives the full text of each *journée* that can be consulted backstage during performance for prompting and other purposes. From this text, actors' parts are copied, and these may well be carried on stage in rolls, even perhaps stuffed up sleeves to be consulted when necessary. Then there is the *Livre des prologues*, a very specialized actor's part, but copied into a codex and perhaps carried ostentatiously on stage by a priest costumed as a "scientifique docteur;" in

this case, the codex serves both as a working text (the actor-expositor reads to the audience from it) and as an emblematic prop that further defines his character as a man of clerical authority. Then there are *billets de advertence*—cue sheets used by the musicians and by those responsible for sound effects.

But central to all of these other texts are the two series of *abregiets* that record stage effects to be constructed, points of interpretation thought to be important to the performance of each role, and so on. The same text, of course, will be useful for monitoring the actual performance. Is that supernumerary ready offstage to make her entry with Eliachim and the donkey for the journey to Bethlehem scene? Is the deputy of secrets ready to pull aside the curtain to make the Bethlehem star appear? Can somebody please see if the angels are ready in the room beneath Paradise. Has the white costume been placed inside the mountain for Jesus's fast change at the Transfiguration? In order to understand fully the significance of the *abregies*, in short, you have to imagine it in operation alongside the other texts. The *abregies* may be key texts in controlling all these operations, but they are not committed to the hands of a single man. Many consult it, and are thus governed by it throughout the production. It will be consulted by one supervisor in this rehearsal, and then perhaps by another supervisor in the next rehearsal. The directors of secrets consult its advice in devising stage effects. Musicians draw up their *billets de avertisence* from it. During the performance of one *journée* the *abregiet* can be committed to the care of one man; for the next *journée*, it can be given to another. In the end, the men are in the service of the text, not the other way around.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the *meneur de jeu* emerged as one of several competing identities for Fouquet's baton-gesturing man, and he became the most successful not because his identity was better attested than any of these other identities but because of the immense authority of Gustave Cohen, the great French scholar of the medieval theatre, who

first proposed this identity and assigned him his onstage duties. In a way, however, he did exist, and to see why, we must briefly look at the last of the building blocks from which Cohen constructed his immensely dominating and energetic Meneur. When Cohen published his edition of the Mons *abregiet*, he gave it the title, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur*. He did not himself invent the title, however. According to Cohen, shortly after discovering the Mons *abregies*, he showed them to the great French Régisseur, Firmin Gémier. As Cohen vividly remembered the moment, “my Gémier, contemplating with emotion the manuscript of his antique predecessor,” immediately baptized it with its present title.¹⁰⁷ Whether or not Gémier felt great emotion at this moment, Cohen certainly did. He never tired of re-telling the story of the great man regarding the manuscript with great emotion, and then baptizing Cohen’s edition.¹⁰⁸

Gémier, of course, was one of the larger-than-life figures of the French stage, a Titan of the theatre. At first a collaborator, he became a rival of Antoine, the other great Titan of the turn-of-the-century theater. Actor, Director, Producer, Theatre Manager, iconoclast, Gémier was a great populist. At nearly the same time that he was baptizing Cohen’s edition of the Mons records, he was forming the “Théâtre National Ambulant,” in which he packed not only actors, but the entire theatre itself aboard a train and went on tour throughout France. His populist approach endeared him to French medieval drama, which he saw as the true source of

107 “Le Livre de scène du *Mystère de la Passion*, ou plutôt, comme l'appelait devant moi Gémier, contemplant avec émotion le manuscrit de son antique prédécesseur, *le Livre de Conduite du Régisseur*, que les Montois avaient nommé l'*Abregiet*” Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* xxi-xxii.

108 Compare, for instance: “les *abregiets*, baptisés par Gémier: *Livre de Conduite du Régisseur*” Cohen, *Livre des prologues* xii., or an even more sentimental version of the tale: “Ayant réussi à emprunter ceux-ci, je pus les [i.e., the *abregiets*] montrer à Firmin Gémier, alors directeur de l’Odéon (c’était vers 1912), très ému en contemplant l’œuvre de ses lointains prédécesseurs et qui me dit: “Cela c’est ce que nous appelons: *Le Livre de conduite du régisseur*” Gustave Cohen, *Le Théâtre Français en Belgique au Moyen Âge* (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1953) 77.

the French theatrical tradition. He thus thought of medieval drama as “people’s theatre,” and he produced several notable productions from the medieval repertoire. In short, Gémier was precisely the sort of “always onstage director” that Cohen imagined the *meneur de jeu* to have been: a man of immense authority, whose flamboyant directing was as much a part of the performance as the acting itself.¹⁰⁹ You didn’t go to the “Théâtre National Ambulant” to see a production of Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, you went there to see Gémier producing and directing *The Merchant of Venice*.

Perhaps best to understand Cohen’s *meneur de jeu* as a “modern” rather than a “medieval” man of the theatre. Cohen thought he had discovered, in the *Mons abregiet*, “a unique document of incomparable value for dramatic history in general and for the history of our theatre in particular.”¹¹⁰ Cohen seems to have meant that observation in a very particular way. Like Gémier, he thought that of the medieval theatre as the true source of the modern tradition, and he himself formed his own company, albeit an academic one, to explore that tradition: *Les Theophiliens*. To a great extent, Cohen thus constructed the *meneur de jeu* in the image of Firmin Gémier, who defined for him the two poles—medieval and modern—of the French theatrical tradition. In the end, the *meneur de jeu* is very much a man of his time, but his time lay in the early the twentieth century, not the late fifteenth.

109 For a convenient study of Gémier, see Paul Blanchart, *Firmin Gémier* (Paris: L'Arche Editeur, 1954).

110 “En les lisant, je compris que j'étais en régence d'un document unique, d'une valeur incomparable pour l'histoire dramatique en général et l'histoire de notre théâtre en particulier” Cohen, *Le Livre de conduite du Régisseur* xxi.