# JEAN FOUQUET'S 'MARTYRDOM OF ST APOLLONIA' and the Medieval French Stage

*Graham Runnalls*

Jean Fouquet's miniature illustrating the 'Martyrdom of St Apollonia', from the Etienne de Chevalier *Livre d'Heures*, usually dated between 1452 and 1460, has probably attracted more attention from theatre historians than art historians. Together with the two virtually identical paintings by Hubert Cailleau of the stage allegedly used for the 1547 *Passion de Valenciennes*, it is reproduced in most histories of medieval drama; these paintings are generally held to be two of the most important pieces of iconographical evidence casting light on medieval theatres.[1] However, they are in most respects contradictory and, not surprisingly, their interpretation has given rise over the years to passionate debate. The Cailleau painting appears to show a linear stage, with a number of separate, constructed, and labelled sets placed side by side; the Fouquet miniature seems to depict a play performance taking place in the centre of a large open-air theatre in the round. The first has been cited as evidence that medieval stages were linear; the second is often taken as proof of the existence of theatres in the round. It is a fact, however, that, of the two, the Cailleau painting is inevitably the less informative guide as to what complete medieval theatres were like, since what it appears to show is simply a stage; there is no theatre building and no audience. Moreover, thirty years separate the date of the painting itself (1577) from the date of the performance portrayed (1547), which is already late for anything that can be called medieval. Rey-Flaud[2] sets out a number of other arguments which cast doubt on the value of the Cailleau painting as evidence relevant to the medieval stage.

The Fouquet miniature, however, it is claimed, reveals the full theatre building, with a large number of spectators of various social classes watching a score of actors playing a scene in which St Apollonia is being tortured by four men, one of whom is ripping her teeth out with a massive pair of pincers. The theatre appears to be in the round, a circle of scaffolds built around a central playing area. Most of the audience are standing on raked terracing around the central playing area; other spectators are in scaffolds built one storey high, partly overhanging the standing spectators. Some of these first-floor scaffolds, however, are occupied by actors and are,

in effect, stage sets. To the left of the painting can be seen Heaven and its angels, and next to it a scaffold occupied by musicians; to the right is a Hellmouth with its devils. We only see just over half of this hypothetical complete circle, since the artist has painted what he saw as if he were sitting in the front row of part of the theatre.

This, at least, is the way many theatre historians have interpreted the painting. Rey-Flaud, in particular, has examined the Fouquet miniature in great detail and used it as a major piece of evidence in his thesis that most medieval drama was performed in the round. It has also been similarly invoked by other critics arguing in favour of the theatre in the round, in particular Richard Southern.[3] A few critics have been more circumspect. Elie Konigson[4] simply sees it as one of many forms of medieval theatrical space, whereas Natalie Crohn-Schmitt[5] questions why the arrangement of the actors is, in her view, so strongly linear, if Fouquet's intention was to depict a performance in the round.

Nevertheless, in spite of a few doubters,[6] the majority view has always been that the Fouquet miniature does indeed illustrate the performance of a scene from a French mystery play dramatising the martyrdom of St Apollonia, taking place in an outdoor theatre in the round. There are a number of factors external to the painting itself that can be cited to support this interpretation. Jean Fouquet, who came from Tours, where he spent much of his life, was an internationally famous painter;[7] he was also a well-known theatre producer and stage designer and is known to have taken part in the organisation of several contemporary Royal Entries.[8] Moreover, one of the reasons given in the past for doubting the 'authenticity' of Fouquet's miniature must now be put aside. Critics had pointed out that, in spite of the fact that the texts of almost 230 French religious plays have come down to us and that information survives about performances of hundreds more,[9] no reference had ever been found to a *Mystère de Sainte Apolline*. However, the title of such a play was recently discovered in the catalogue of a bookseller dating from the end of the fifteenth century.[10] The catalogue consists of a list of about 260 book-titles, mostly manuscript but some printed, which the bookseller was offering for sale. Mystery plays consitute a separate sub-group in this list; one of these *mistaires* is called *saincte apoline*. Another coincidence which helps to confirm the link between Fouquet and this *Mystère de Sainte Apolline* is that the bookseller in question lived in Tours, Fouquet's home town. Since the existence of a mystery-play manuscript almost certainly attests to the performance of such a play,[11] we can be reasonably sure that, during the second half of the

fifteenth century, a *Mystère de Sainte Apolline* had been performed in the Tours area, and that Fouquet, as an active stage-designer, would have known about it.

However, the traditional interpretation of the Fouquet miniature has recently been called into question. In a substantial, well-documented and coherent essay, first read as a paper at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds in July 1997 and now published in *Medieval English Theatre*, my friend and colleague Gordon Kipling, of the Department of English Literature of the University of California, Los Angeles, has argued that critics have misunderstood the miniature and are wrong to see it as evidence of a real medieval theatre in the round; instead, Kipling offers a strikingly different interpretation. In spite of Kipling's advocacy, I disagree with his conclusions, and the aim of the present article is to attempt to show why.[12] However, whether this kind of discussion can ever finally settle the issues involved remains uncertain: Kipling and I each have our own different standpoint, and it is no doubt through this distorting prism that we each view the evidence.

A brief résumé of Kipling's argument is essential before I can present my own reactions. In essence, Kipling maintains (i) that Fouquet is depicting not a medieval theatre but a Roman theatre — or rather what Isidore of Seville and other writers thought Roman theatres were like; (ii) that the Apollonia narrative on which Fouquet based his miniature is not the 'Alexandrian legend', as is usually thought, but a different one, 'the Roman legend'; and (iii) that the moral function of the miniature is not simply to offer a conventional devotional image, but to depict a imaginary scene of a pagan spectacle, which serves to demonstrate the negative moral and spiritual significance of the theatre.

I would like to start by dealing with the second of these points, since I believe that it is central to the debate. Kipling states the 'most commentators have attempted to understand the performance depicted in Fouquet's painting by briefly considering the account of St Apollonia's martyrdom made familiar by Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and by Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*', which 'describes the martyrdom of Apollonia, "an admirable virgin" of Alexandria, who died in a persecution "during the reign of the Emperor Decius". Because of the widespread availability of this version, it has become commonplace to refer to the virgin martyr of Fouquet's painting as St Apollonia of Alexandria and to identify the regal figure in the centre of the picture as the Emperor Decius'.[13] However, Kipling argues that there are several inconsistencies

between the *Golden Legend*[14] version of the life of St Apollonia and the scene in Fouquet's painting:

a) the *Golden Legend* describes 'this Egyptian saint as an old woman "well along in years", whereas Fouquet depicts Apollonia as a relatively young woman';

b) in the *Golden Legend*, Decius remains in Rome and plays no part in the saint's martyrdom, which takes place 'at the hands of a mob urged on by "a man named Divinus"';

c) in the *Golden Legend*, Apollonia's teeth are lost 'as a result of mob action', not as a kind of judicial torture at the command of the Emperor;

d) the climax of the *Golden Legend* version is not the removal of Apollonia's teeth, but when she 'leaps into the pyre of her own free will';

e) there are a number of characters in Fouquet's miniature which do not figure in the Alexandrian legend: e.g. the devils and angels.

Kipling concludes that the version of Apollonia's martyrdom that Fouquet depicts is not the one in Jacques de Voragine's *Golden Legend*. He does admit that there are several later, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century versions of the Alexandrian legend which correspond more closely to Fouquet's miniature — a young girl, tortured by her pagan father, who orders the executioners to rip out her teeth — but the existence of these later versions does not alter his main conclusion, since in these later texts Apollonia is always martyred tied to a column, whereas Fouquet has Apolline on an *eculeus*, a kind of rack (the Middle French word would be *chevalet*). A printed Italian *sacra rappresentazione* dramatises this version, and includes a woodcut of Apollonia attached to a column and having her teeth removed.[15]

Kipling maintains, however, that Fouquet would have been familiar with a quite different account of Apollonia's martyrdom, the so-called 'Roman legend'.[16] This Apollonia, the daughter of a Roman senator, suffered the same dental torture as her Alexandrian counterpart, but under the personal supervision of the Emperor Julian the Apostate. Moreover, this Apollonia was tortured on an *eculeus* and not tied to a post. Kipling claims that this 'script' (I borrow his useful term) fits Fouquet's painting much more closely than the *Golden Legend* version, and accounts in great

measure for the actors and actions we see on stage. For example, it explains why the Heaven and Hell scaffolds are place at opposite ends of the stage: 'the two poles of the theological world, which the play invokes'. It also tells us exactly at what juncture in the play the events depicted occur; what we see is the following episode. The apostate Emperor is controlling Apollonia's final torments; as the executioners set to work, she is looking up to see the heavens open and 'the Son of God, sitting in a throne with a multitude of Angels'. The demons worshipped by the Emperor can be observed in the entrance to the Hellmouth. Kipling suggests that the dog-faced devil at Fouquet's Hellmouth is the demon in the shape of a dog who, in the Roman version of the legend, has previously strangled Apollonia's mother. Kipling admits that the Fool (the *sot* or *fol*) with his bauble (his *marotte*) at stage right 'who audaciously bares his backside at both the tortured saint and the viewer' is a distinctively medieval figure, but explains his presence in demonstrating 'the theatrical performance as a moral image of faithlessness'.

Kipling prefers to see the Roman legend, rather than the Alexandrian legend, as Fouquet's source text, but not simply because it corresponds more closely to what we see in Fouquet's miniature. It also has the advantage of providing a Roman text, to accord with Kipling's view that what we see is a Roman theatre; to paraphrase, 'a Roman tragedy of a Roman saint takes place in a Roman theatre'.

Although the above arguments are undoubtedly coherent, in my view the problems that Kipling tries to account for by invoking a different version of the narrative Apollonia legend can more easily be dealt with by seeing the miniature as reflecting a contemporary play performance. As Kipling rightly stresses, we must not lose sight of the primary purpose of Fouquet's miniature, namely to paint a devotional image which must play its part in Etienne Chevalier's Book of Hours and, in particular, to provide an image accompanying a prayer for the intercession of St Apollonia. The large initial 'B' in the placard held up by the two wild men is the first letter of the prayer *Beata Apolonia*. The text is not provided in *Etienne Chevalier's Book of Hours*, but it appears in many others and is quoted in one of Kipling's footnotes. It begins:

> Beata Apolonia grave tormentum pro domino sustinuit; primo tyranni extraverunt dentes eius cum maleis ferreis et cum esset in illo tormento oravit ad dominum Iesum Christum: ut quicumque nomen suum devote invocaret malum in dentibus non sentiret. Ora pro nobis, beata Apolonia.

> 'The blessed Apollonia suffered serious torture for the Lord: first, tormentors took out her teeth with iron hammers, and while she was in that torture she prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ that whosoever should devoutly call on her name should not feel pain in their teeth. Pray for us, blessed Apollonia.'

It is reasonable to suppose that Fouquet's initial intention was simply to illustrate the legendary episode referred to in this prayer, i.e. the scene when a number of *tyranni* (in Middle French *tirans*) torture Apollonia by tearing out her teeth[17] with metal pincers. The secondary question then arose as to what particular approach or idea Fouquet was to use in depicting the scene. Kipling argues here that 'Fouquet's theatrical image represents less an object to be recorded than a subject to be explored for its religious significance and affective powers'; in the Roman context in which it appears the theatre 'remains an emblem of apostasy and faithlessness' and 'powerfully raises the question of how one should respond to such an emblem'.

It is at this point that the different standpoints of Kipling and myself determine how each of us looks at the miniature. My own view here is that Fouquet, a well-known *homme de théâtre* who was probably familiar with a recent mystery play on the life of St Apollonia, made the original decision to use his theatrical memories and experience as the backdrop for his illustration of the *Beata Apolonia* prayer. His primary source text was the Latin prayer; his secondary 'script' was a familiar fifteenth-century French mystery play of the life and death of Sainte Apolline.

This is clearly at odds with Kipling's conclusion and brings us back to the question of sources and legends. Kipling claims that the Alexandrian narrative in the *Golden Legend* does not fit the miniature as well as the Roman one. On the surface, some of his arguments seem convincing. But a close analysis suggests otherwise. Indeed, I would argue that Kipling exaggerates the significance of the alleged differences between the miniature and the *Golden Legend* version. (i) The age of the victim in the miniature is not obvious; even after staring for some time at a blown-up reproduction of the original, I still could not decide whether we see a young fair-haired girl or a white-haired old woman. (ii) The identification the king-like figure who directs the torturers as Decius is not explicit. (iii) The *Golden Legend* states that 'the executioners beat out all her teeth'; this does not constitute 'mob action', as Kipling puts it. (iv) There is no reason to assume that the scene shown is the climax of the play.

It is also relevant to point out that, if the miniature were based on a written source, the *Golden Legend* version would have been much more easily available to Fouquet than the others. According to Brenda Dunn-Lardeau,[18] more than a thousand manuscripts of the Latin *Legenda Aurea* and scores of manuscript copies of the Jean de Vignay French translation were in circulation before the middle of the fifteenth century. Moreover, as Kipling himself points out, there were several versions of the life of the Alexandrian Apollonia, other than the one in the *Golden Legend*, which do correspond closely to the miniature in at least four of the five crucial details mentioned above. The main difference relates to the *eculeus*, which I will come back to later. There seems to me to be no compelling argument to find the narrative source in the less well-known Roman legend, rather that in the *Golden Legend*.

In any case, none of the narrative legends corresponds exactly to the scene in the miniature. Indeed, I would argue that it is an error to seek the source-text for Fouquet's miniature, the 'script', in any surviving narrative text, whether in Latin or French. If one sees the 'script' as a scene from a mystery play, most of the problems which one encounters in trying to find the most exact narrative source disappear.

If Fouquet sought to use a mystery-play performance as his backdrop for the illustration of the *Beata Apolonia* prayer, then the 'script' would be a mid-fifteenth-century French mystery-play manuscript. However, although we can be confident that such a manuscript did exist at the time, to the best of our knowledge it has not survived to the present day. But that is not the end of the story. Anyone familiar with medieval French mystery plays, and especially with those dramatising the life and martyrdom of a saint, will know that they all follow a very similar pattern. Narrative saint's lives already contain a large number of structural and episodic resemblances; it would not be difficult to describe the 'morphology' of the typical narrative saint's life. But one could argue that saint's plays, in late medieval France, were even more homogeneous than their narrative counterparts. Thus even if the original *Mystère de Sainte Apolline* is lost, we can easily guess what it would have been like, without running the risk of being accused of fanciful reconstruction.

About 60 saint's plays survive from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries in France, though most come from the fifteenth and sixteenth. The majority are preserved in manuscripts, though some are printed editions. Almost all have received critical editions in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Another score of performances of saint's plays whose

text has been lost are recorded by Petit de Julleville.[19] By the fifteenth century, medieval religious drama in France had developed a rich tradition both in performance practice and in the 'art of writing mystery plays'. In particular, saint's plays, whether long or short, simple or complex, had evolved, if not a uniform structure, at least a type of narrative in which a considerable number of stock characters and popular episodes were expected to be included. Within the eternal conflict between Good and Evil, between God and Lucifer, between Heaven and Hell, and between the angels and the devils, the souls of men and women, especially those of exceptionally virtuous ones, are the chosen battleground. Whether it is Vincent or Christopher, Barbara or Agatha, Fiacre or Quentin, the career of the saint follows a consistent pattern. The future saint proclaims his/her new-found Christian faith, usually under the influence of another Christian, in spite of the protestations and threats of parents and/or rulers, spreads the faith amongst the unbelievers, is captured and punished, refuses to recant, is tortured in increasingly gruesome ways, until the wished-for death arrives, at the moment of his/her (and God's) choosing. Their miraculous ability not to feel pain and their refusal to yield to the direst punishments drives their tormentors, often Decius or Maximilien or Rictoviaire, aided by their *tirans*, to fury, if not to suicide. God and his angels welcome their souls to Heaven, as the devils rage at their helplessness; the latter are nevertheless rewarded with the souls of the pagans and the *tirans*. The saint's success wins converts; the setting-up of a sanctuary in his/her name leads to miracles, cures, and the start of the cult and reputation. Several of these features are not exclusive to drama; but many are. Moreover, some of these theatrical features are also found in other French religious drama, like Passion plays and Old Testament plays.

A feature which is more typical of French saint's plays, as opposed to narrative saint's lives — though it is more a matter of degree than of kind — is the emphasis placed on the sequence of tortures which every martyred saint undergoes. These scenes always take up a major proportion of the play; at times one feels that the tortures are even its raison d'être. The mystery plays on the lives of St Vincent and St Christopher are typical examples of this tendency.[20] The latter is a relatively short play of about 2500 lines, performed in Paris in 1541. The hero's life until his capture by the king (Dagus here, Decius in some other versions) occupies the first 800 lines; his tortures take up the remaining 1700. This apparent imbalance can be accounted for at several levels. One explanation may be the culture of cruelty often attributed to the medieval period. A more

plausible one, however, is simply that tortures are good theatre; they are striking, emotive, and essentially visual. Moreover, they give the producer and the special-effects man scope to demonstrate their talents and to win the plaudits of the spectators.

Visually, the tortures were the high points of any mystery play based on a saint's life, as was the Crucifixion in a Passion Play. The ways in which medieval producers achieved these special effects are well-documented.[21] Audiences were accustomed — indeed they even expected — to watch flowing blood, beatings, dismemberments, beheadings, breasts torn off, the application of burning coals or red-hot metal helmets, etc. For many of the most gruesome (and technically demanding) tortures, the victims were laid out on a *chevalet*, a kind of horizontal rack. One of the recognised techniques for some of the most dramatic effects required a swivelling plank, with a probably *papier-mâché* human being underneath; at the crucial moment, say of the decapitation or dismemberment, the plank on which the actor was lying was revolved and a headless or otherwise tortured body was revealed. Such effects, *feintes*, were a major attraction in saint's plays. It is, in my view, such a 'privileged moment' that we see the Fouquet miniature. No doubt, for the modern dentist, the extremely long pincers, the *tenailles*, used by the torturer to remove Apolline's teeth, would appear a most inefficient and awkward way of removing teeth; for a stage-manager, they would be highly attractive.

Many other theatrical *topoi* are also apparent in Fouquet's miniature; and they can account for almost all the differences between the miniature and any possible narrative Latin sources. There is no need to have recourse to any of the Latin narrative legends of St Apollonia in order to account for the positional symbolism of the sets of Heaven and Hell. This is a commonplace of medieval French mystery plays; Konigson[22] deals with this matter in some detail. On a linear stage, they are at the opposite ends of the row of sets, Heaven to stage right, Hell to stage left; in a theatre in the round they are at opposite sides, usually with Heaven oriented towards the East and Hell to the West. It is the latter disposition that we see in the Fouquet miniature. Heaven is always raised and associated with luxury, beauty, hosts of angels and prophets, and celestial music of trumpets and other instruments. Hell, though in theory lower than Heaven, always contains at least one upper level, sometimes associated with Limbo or Purgatory, and with a *parloir*, so that Lucifer can eye God as he rages at him (and *vice versa*); this is a theatrical rather than narrative tradition. Lucifer is not allowed to leave Hell, but his minions can and do run

through the world, sowing panic and encouraging sin. In the miniature it is just possible to see the legs of one such devil urging on the evil deeds of the torturer to the left of the picture. There is, as Kipling points out, a dog-like devil at the gate of Hell. But I doubt if he is the dog-like demon in the Roman legend who has just strangled the mother of Apollonia, as Kipling suggests. He is almost certainly Cerberus, one of the regular members of the teams of devils found in most mystery plays. Cerberus traditionally looked like a dog and his job was to guard the gates of Hell.

The Fool at stage right baring his bottom at Apollonia troubled Kipling: 'Why ... should a Fool be present at an execution? To the best of my knowledge, such performers were not part of the usual entertainment at medieval public executions'. Perhaps not, but they were stock characters in medieval French religious drama, their function being to act as a bridge between the audience and the 'historical events' being dramatised. They would comment, often in scatological language, on the spectators themselves as well as on the event they were witnessing.[23]

What I am arguing is that it is not really possible to account for all the fine details of the Fouquet miniature unless one sees it as an attempt to portray a performance of a medieval French mystery play. If one tries to compare it with written Latin or French narrative lives of St Apollonia, one inevitably has problems. Seeing the miniature as a mystery-play performance solves these problems.

Hitherto, I have been discussing the Fouquet miniature in terms of possible written sources — narrative texts of mystery-play scripts. But the interpretation of Fouquet's painting as a performance taking place in a medieval French theatre can also be supported by reference to several well-documented theatres and to information about staging practice found in manuscript stage-directions and in the financial accounts of play performances. For the purpose of this essay, one or two examples must suffice, but others could be provided.[24] Our knowledge of the *Mystère de Saint Martin* by André de la Vigne,[25] performed in Seurre-en-Bourgogne in 1496, is based on two substantial documents: the manuscript of the three-day, 10500-line text which contains numerous revealing stage directions; and the nine-page *procès-verbal* describing the theatre and the performance. The theatre and action that emerge from a close reading of these documents correspond closely to Fouquet's theatre.[26] Some of the scaffolds (*eschaffaulx*) were used by the actors and others by spectators. The actors had to come down from their scaffolds into the playing area and walk around before speaking and playing their rôle; they subsequently

returned to their *eschaffault*. The major sets,[27] including Heaven and Hell, as well as the scaffolds occupied by the main groups of characters, were part of the main theatre structure, thus juxtaposed to other scaffolds for the spectators; they were not separate elements. As the events of the play unfurled, other less substantial sets were brought onto the stage and taken off as required, in order that the central playing area was not always full of sets and props, and so that sight-lines were not blocked.

This is what one sees in Fouquet. The major, most frequently used sets are part of the main theatre building: Heaven, Hell, the scaffold for the pagan Emperor and his retinue (empty, since they have come down to the playing area to torture Apollonia), and others that we cannot see since they are outside the range of vision of the artist. The minimal set in the central playing area is the *chevalet* supported by a trestle. It is probable that there were a considerable number of brief intervals while such sets or props were taken on and off the stage. This is almost certainly what happened in the case of the *Mystère de Saint Martin*. The stage directions show that there were frequent pauses, and information provided in the *procès-verbal* enables us to calculate that the performance proceeded at a slow rate of no more than 500 lines per hour.

In the previous paragraphs, I have been trying to demonstrate that the best way to account for the detail of Fouquet's miniature is to relate it to the performance of a fifteenth-century French mystery play. If I have succeeded, then I have shown that Kipling's second argument, namely that it is an illustration of a particular Latin narrative version of the life of St Apollonia, is ill-founded. I shall now turn to his other two arguments.

His third argument relates to the moral message of the miniature. He claims that Fouquet's painting depicts the world as a theatre, but not from the point of view of *un homme de théâtre*, of one who loves the theatre, but rather from the viewpoint of an Isidore, an Augustine, or a Hrabanus Maurus, one who regards the theatre as a sign of a sinful, fallen world that tests and torments the saints of the Lord. Kipling supports this interpretation with two sorts of evidence. First, he links his ideas about the Roman legend of Apollonia with the views of Latin writers hostile to the theatre. He quotes Isidore of Seville's ringing condemnation of drama, which urges the Christian to 'have nothing to do with the foolishness of the Circus, the immorality of the theatre, the cruelty of the amphitheatre, the atrocity of the arena, the lust of the show'.

Secondly, he notes that the vantage point from which the viewer of the miniature watches the play seems slightly elevated, so that we view the

action 'from above'; he concludes that 'this Olympian orientation is neither a mistake nor a feat of artistic licence. Rather, in the manner of the early theatre, this imagined performance is directed not toward all members of the audience equally, but is actually focused upon a chair set for some great prince or other nobleman'. This chair is not visible, since it is the one in which Etienne Chevalier is seated. It also provides us, who look at the miniature, with our view-point; thus, we are being asked what our attitude is to what we see.

Kipling's arguments here do not convince me. Given Fouquet's career as painter, stage-designer, and spectacle-organiser, it seems implausible that he would have shared Isidore's hostile attitude to the theatre in general, and used that hostility as the theme of his miniature.

The first of Kipling's three arguments, which I have deliberately left to last, relates to the theatre building itself; Kipling sees Fouquet's miniature as illustrating a Roman tragedy of a Roman Apollonia in a Roman theatre. In the preceding paragraphs of this essay, I have tried to show that what we see is not a Roman tragedy but a French mystery play, and not a Roman Apollonia but a fifteenth-century French conception of the saint.

Kipling's hypothesis that the Fouquet miniature shows a Roman theatre is developed in the following way:

(a) He claims that Fouquet, like Cailleau in the *Passion de Valenciennes* miniature, arranges his scaffolds from left to right, in a manner that is 'conceptually linear, instead of circular'; the reason why Fouquet 'bend(s) a line into a half-circle' is that he 'is attempting to illustrate an ancient Roman theatre instead of a contemporary medieval' (i.e. linear) 'one, albeit his representation attempts to create the Roman past out of the more familiar materials of the medieval present'. Fouquet's source of information about the way plays were performed in Rome would, according to Kipling, have been Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. 'Isidore, for instance, reports that Roman theatres were semicircular structures containing a scene (*scena*) and providing standing room for the spectators ... The *scena* ... was "built like a house with a platform (*in modum domus instructa cum pulpito*)", and here in this *pulpitus*, "which *pulpitus* was called the *orchestra*", the tragic singers performed and the *histriones* and *mimi* danced.' Kipling goes on to discuss the ambiguities of Isidore's description, and, in particular, the exact meaning of the terms *pulpitum*, *scena*, and *orchestra*.[28] He also analyses the interpretations of Isidore's theatre by Nicolas Trevet and refers to several well-known fifteenth-century miniatures illustrating the works of Terence. The purpose of this discussion is to show what scholars in the

fifteenth century thought Roman theatres were like. However, Kipling claims that Fouquet was 'working directly with Isidore's original text, rather than Isidore's ideas mediated by Trevet ... He imagines the *scena* not as a little house located in the centre of the stage but as a series of booth-like scaffolds located at the back of a semicircular orchestra ... Fouquet apparently interpreted Isidore to mean that the audience shared the *orchestra* or *pulpitum* with the actors, so he also mingles both on the semicircular stage in front of the *scena*'.

(b) Kipling also claims that the actors in Fouquet's theatre are performing 'in a recognisably Roman, as opposed to medieval, style. Isidore, for instance, thought that Roman plays were performed by poets who either read or sang their stories while *histriones* and *mimi* silently acted.' This Isidorean conception of Roman drama 'best explains the man in Fouquet's image who is holding an open book and pointing with a staff just stage left of the group of actors who are actually performing the play'. Kipling points out that this person is usually identified with the *meneur de jeu*, a sort of director-cum-master of ceremonies. However, he adds that, though such a figure undoubtedly existed in fifteenth-century France, he never appears on stage in any other account. Kipling concludes that 'if we realise that Fouquet is depicting a Roman theatre ... we will have no trouble in recognising Isidore's poet reciting (or perhaps singing?) his text while the actors mime their parts'.

(c) Kipling also claims that 'no record or stage plan offers an analogue for Fouquet's series of booth-shaped scaffolds, abutted to one another and arranged in a semicircle at the back of the playing area'. Fouquet's scaffolds 'consist of booths constructed of poles and drapes, and the artist places all these booth-like scaffolds cheek-by-jowl so that they form a kind of arcade structure'. In other documented performances, 'the individual *loci* are separated from one another in space and even distinguished architecturally from one another ... This configuration makes a great deal of sense, however, if we assume that Fouquet is not recording a real theatre but attempting to make sense of Isidore's somewhat difficult description of the Romans *scena*'.

I would challenge each of these three claims. Whereas I would say that Fouquet, an experienced man of the theatre, provides an accurate portrait of what we know some mid-fifteenth-century French mystery-play theatres and performances looked like, Kipling prefers an extremely complicated alternative. He argues that Fouquet has taken what he (Kipling) claims is a typical medieval linear stage, with separate mansions, and bent it into a

half-circle of juxtaposed booths, in order to make it resemble what Fouquet (but not all medieval writers) thought Isidore of Seville meant in his reconstruction of Roman theatres, showing a man reciting from a book directing miming actors. In other words, Kipling sees Fouquet's miniature as a visual gloss on a problematic passage in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*.

With regard to (a), Kipling is surely wrong to argue both that Fouquet's theatre is 'conceptually linear', and that 'the closest medieval analogue to the arrangement of the scaffolds seen in the picture ... lies in the Valenciennes platform stage'. Theatre historians have always seen the Fouquet and Cailleau miniatures as opposites, rather than analogues, the first showing a theatre in the round, the second a linear stage. Moreover, if one is going to cast doubt on one of these two as a source of information on medieval staging, then it is the Cailleau which is the less convincing, as Rey-Flaud has convincingly demonstrated.[29] The arrangement of scaffolds in both miniatures may well represent a 'tropological model of the world', but a linear (left-right, Hell-Heaven) arrangement is not the only one. Konigson[30] shows that many medieval theatres where the playing area was central adopted a circular configuration of sets, where West and East represented the two extremes, reflecting the orientation of many medieval towns and churches. To argue that what appears in Fouquet is really a linear stage, but bent into a circle to make it look like a Roman theatre, is perverse, apart from being unnecessarily complicated.

When Kipling expresses his opinion (b) that the actors in the Fouquet miniature are performing in a Roman, non-medieval, manner, the main evidence adduced is the presence of the person in the dark blue cloak, holding in his left hand an open book, and in his right hand a staff. Kipling suggests that this is the poet reading his own composition and that the actors are miming. It is not possible to disprove this. Moreover, it is true that there is no explicit evidence that the medieval *meneur de jeu*, as this individual is traditionally assumed to be, ever appeared on stage. On the other hand, there is no evidence that they did not. One of terms occasionally used to describe this person in French mystery plays is the 'book-carrier': *portecole*, *portitor libri*, *porterolle*, or simply *celluy qui porte le livre*.[31] This title could well suggest a task corresponding to that of the man in blue in the Fouquet miniature. But if the play being performed is a French mystery play, as I think I have shown, it is certain that the actors are not miming and that the director is not reciting the text.

With regard to (c), it is difficult to know what examples of stage configuration Kipling has in mind when he alleges that Fouquet's theatre is unusual. The theatre portrayed by Fouquet corresponds to several French theatre buildings that can be reconstructed from surviving documentation. I see no contradiction between Fouquet's theatre and those used for the *Mystère de Saint Martin* in Seurre-en-Bourgogne in 1496, for the *Mystère des Trois Doms* in Romans in 1509, or for the Châteaudun Passion Play of 1510.[32] A number of play prologues, which include descriptions of the stage sets, explicitly use terminology that suggest a central playing area surrounded by scaffolds. Rey-Flaud also describes several other similar ones. However, the imprecision of some of the documentation prevents us to know exactly how the scaffolds and booths were constructed or linked together. I am not claiming that all of these theatres were identical or that their reconstruction is unproblematic. But they all have in common a number of the features which are found in Fouquet, but which Kipling claims to be unusual: the playing area is in the centre of a number of juxtaposed scaffolds arranged in a circle, square, or horse-shoe shape. Some of the scaffolds (referred to variously in archives and stage directions as *loges*, *estages*, *lieux*, or *eschaffaulx*) are in effect sets, e.g. those for Heaven and Hell; others are occupied by groups of actors waiting before they move in to the playing area. The 'constructed symbolic locations' may be placed in the central playing area (the *parc*) as and when required.[33]

***

It is undoubtedly the case that the Fouquet miniature poses a number of problems, and that theatre historians must not assume automatically that its main aim was to produce a realistic painting of a medieval theatre at work. Questions such as artistic convention, perspective, context (i.e. the Book of Hours), and the natural imagination of the painter have all to be taken into account; in these areas the contribution of art historians could be invaluable. But even allowing for these factors, it is not unreasonable, in my view, to grant that Fouquet's miniature does cast light — if only coincidentally — on many aspects of French medieval theatrical practice. This view is strengthened both when we consider Fouquet's known activities as a stage-designer and when we compare the miniature to other sources of information about medieval French theatres.

On the other hand, theatre historians should not seek to make excessive claims for Fouquet's painting, which was created at a precise point in time (c. 1460) and in a particular place (Tours, France). If one accepts that it does show a play performance, then it is that of a particular type of play, a French mystery play on the life of a saint, being performed in one (only) of the various types of theatre in which such plays were performed. Therefore, one should not conclude that all religious plays throughout the late Middle Ages and in all the countries of Western Europe were necessarily performed in a similar manner. There is absolutely no reason — and here I agree with Kipling — to assume that Fouquet's theatre should be similar — still less identical — to those used in England for *The Castle of Perseverance*, or in Cornwall, or Switzerland, or Germany, or even for other French examples, such as the *Passion de Valenciennes*, which was an enormous play 25000 lines long in 25 days) performed a century after Fouquet's miniature was painted, many hundreds of miles from Tours.

Fouquet's miniature, in my view, gives a very good idea of what some performances of medieval French saint's plays were like in the mid fifteenth century. But I would be wary of claiming any more than that.

*University of Edinburgh*

## NOTES

1. The Fouquet miniature is now in the Musée Condé in Chantilly, France; the Cailleau painting can be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, in either fonds français 12536 or Rothschild 1.7.3. Reproductions can be found in G. Cohen *Histoire de la mise en scène dans le théâtre religieux français du Moyen Age* (Champion, Paris, 1951); A.M. Nagler *A Source Book in Theatrical History* (Yale University Press, New York, 1959); H. Rey-Flaud *Le Cercle magique*, (Gallimard, Paris, 1973); G. Wickham *The Medieval Theatre* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1974); E. Konigson *L'Espace Théâtral Médiéval* (CNRS, Paris, 1975); W. Tydeman *The Theatre in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 1978); R. Hosley 'Three Kinds of Outdoor Theatre before Shakespeare' *Theatre Survey 12* (1971) 1–33; etc. For an art historian's approach, see H. Martin *Les Fouquet de Chantilly: Le Livre d'Heures d'Etienne Chevalier* (Verve, Paris, 1924); and C. Sterling and Cl. Schaeffer *The Hours of Etienne Chevalier: Jean Fouquet* (Braziller, New York, 1971).

2. Rey-Flaud *Cercle Magique* 199–218.

3. R. Southern *The Medieval Theatre in the Round* (Faber and Faber, London, 1975); see also J.W. Harris *Medieval Theatre in Context: An Introduction* (Routledge, London, 1992).

4. Konigson *Espace théâtral* 178–187; he also underlines the fact that *malgré son réalisme apparent cette peinture a naturallement une construction plastique précise, dont les normes sont picturales et non théâtrales*. He goes on, however, to reconstruct *la réalité par delà cette construction* in a series of diagrams, sketches, and measurements.

5. N. Crohn-Schmidtt 'Was there a Medieval Theatre in the Round?' in *Medieval English Drama: Essays Critical and Contextual* edited J. Taylor and A.H. Nelson (University of Chicago Press, 1972).

6. See also L.A. Callahan 'The Torture of Saint Apollonia: Deconstructing Fouquet's Martyrdom Stage' *Studies in Iconography* 16 (1994) 133, and Jonathan Beck 'Sainte-Apolline: L'image d'un spectacle, le spectacle d'une image' in *Spectacle and Image in Renaissance Europe* edited by A. Lascombes (Brill, Leiden, 1993) 232–44.

7. Though he spent most of his life in the Tours area, he visited Italy in 1445 to complete a commission to paint the Pope. According to H. Martin *Les Fouquet de Chantilly*, Fouquet frequently used, as backgrounds to his paintings, main subjects, buildings and places that were familiar to him, like the Tours countryside or the silhouettes of French towns like Paris.

8. See Rey-Flaud 113–136, and Konigson 181. The word *painctre* was the normal term used in accounts to described the stage designer of mystery plays; see M. Couturier and G.A. Runnalls *Le Compte du Mystère de la Passion: Châteaudun 1510* (Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, Chartres, 1991).

9. See L. Petit de Julleville *Les Mystères* (Hachette, Paris, 1880) for a list containing most texts and dated performances. For a complete list of all medieval French religious plays, see my on-line *Corpus du théâtre religieux français du Moyen Age*: http://www.byu/~hurlbut/fmddp/corpus.html.

10. G.A. Runnalls 'The Catalogue of the Tours Book-seller and Late Medieval French drama' *Le Moyen Français 11* (1982) 112–128, and 'The Catalogue of the Tours Book-seller and Antoine Vérard' *Pluteus 2* (1984) 163–174. The first of these is reprinted in G.A. Runnalls *Etudes sur les Mystères* (Champion, Paris, 1998) chapter 18.

11. See G.A. Runnalls 'Towards a Typology of Medieval Play Manuscripts' in *The Editor and the Text: Essays in Honour of A.J. Holden* (Edinburgh University Press, 1990) 96–113, reprinted in Runnalls *Etudes sur les Mystères* chapter 16.

12. G. Kipling 'Theatre as Subject and Object in Fouquet's *Martyrdom of St Apollonia*' *METh 19* (1997) 26–80. I would like to express my gratitude to Gordon for generously allowing me to have a copy of his essay before its formal publication, which has enabled me to respond so rapidly. (The final part of Kipling's essay deals with a second miniature attributed to Fouquet, also allegedly showing a performance in the round. I shall not discuss this second miniature in this article, as I am only concerned with the interpretation of the 'Apollonia' miniature.) Similarly, I showed Gordon my first draft of this article, which I then modified in the light of some of his comments. But ultimately, we have had to agree to disagree.

13. In fact, few scholars who have used the Fouquet miniature as a source of information about medieval theatres have spent much time on the question of its exact narrative source, and it is far from certain that they have all assumed that it is the *Golden Legend* version. The painting was 'discovered' by G. Bapst *Etude sur les Mystères au Moven Age* (Leroux, Paris, 1892). R. Lebègue, in a review of G. Cohen *Le Livre de Conduite du Régisseur et le Compte des Dépenses pour la Passion de Mons* (Champion, Paris, 1925), observes that *ce mystère* (i.e. the one in the Fouquet miniature) *qui n'a pas été conservé reproduisait une légende de sainte Apolline, et probablement celle que les bollandistes ont empruntée à un manuscrit d'Utrecht*; he does not specify the manuscript, but it is obviously not the *Golden Legend* version; see R. Lebègue, *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France 33* (1926) 448. Rey-Flaud, 53–4, appears to take Lebègue's view on board, though implicitly, since he does not otherwise discuss the narrative source. On the other hand, Konigson, 178, devotes one sentence to the question: *Apolline, vierge 'd'un certain âge', nous dit Jacques de Voragine (Légende Dorée) vécut son martyre à Alexandrie sous le règne de l'empereur Décie; la peinture de Jean Fouquet illustre ce moment central du mystère.*

14. Jacobus de Voragine *The Golden Legend* translated by W.G. Ryan (Princeton University Press, 1996); Jacques de Voragine *La Légende Dorée* traduction de J.-B.M. Roze (Garnier-Flammarion, Paris, 1967) *2* 331–2.

15. These other versions are discussed in G.B. Polenti *Il Martirio de Santa Apollonia: Studio Crittico sulla vita et sulle immagini* (Capelli, Rocca San Casciano, 1934); and M. Coens 'Une *Passio S. Apolloniae* inédite suivie d'un Miracle en Bourgogne' *Analecta Bollandiana 70* (1952) 143.

16. *Acta Sanctae Apolloniae virgo et martyr Romanae*, *Acta Sanctorum* (Antwerp, 1658) *2* 280–1.

17. Note the *dentes* in the prayer. For this reason, it is unlikely that the torturers are tearing out her tongue, a view suggested by Cohen.

18. See the new edition of a fifteenth-century printed French translation of the *Golden Legend*: Jacques de Voragine *La Légende Dorée. Edition critique, dans la révision de 1476 par Jean Batallier, d'après la traduction de Jean de Vignay (1333–1348) de la 'Legenda aurea' (c. 1261–1266)* edited by Brenda Dunn-Lardeau (Textes de la Renaissance 19: Champion, Paris, 1997).

19. 180–185.

20. *Le Mystère de Saint Vincent*, unpublished manuscript, Paris, BN fonds français 12538; *Le Mystère de Saint Christofle* edited G.A. Runnalls (Exeter University Press, 1973).

21 See especially P. Meredith and J. Tailby *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation* (EDAM Monograph Series 4: Medieval Institute Publications, Kalamazoo, 1983) 101-116, etc.

22. Meredith and Tailby *passim*; especially 280–282.

23. For the mystery play *fol*, see J. Koopmans *Le Théâtre des Exclus au Moyen Age: hérétiques, sorcières et marginaux* (Imago, Paris, 1997) 98–103.

24. Rey-Flaud *Cercle Magique* exploits many examples of this kind of evidence.

25. Andrieu de la Vigne *Le Mystère de Saint Martin 1496* edited André Duplat (Textes Littéraires Français: Droz, Geneva, 1979).

26. G.A. Runnalls 'The Staging of André de la Vigne's *Mystère de Saint Martin*' *Tréteaux 3* (1981) 68–79, reprinted in G.A. Runnalls *Etudes sur les Mystères* (Champion, Paris, 1998) 15.

27. I try to avoid using the term *mansion* which has gained unjustified currency; only two occurrences of this word with a possible theatrical sense have ever been found, and both come in just one of the two manuscripts of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Seinte Resurreccion*; see G.A. Runnalls '*Mansion* and *Lieu*: two technical terms in Medieval French staging?' *French Studies 35* (1981) 385–93, reprinted in Runnalls *Etudes sur les Mystères* chapter 22.

28. Several of these texts and the Terence miniatures are discussed at length and illustrated in Rey-Flaud 32–35, 90–106.

29. H. Rey-Flaud *Cercle Magique* 198–208.

30. E. Konigson *Espace théâtral*.

31. See M. Couturier and G. A. Runnalls *Le compte du Mystère de la Passion: Châteaudun 1510* (Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir, Chartres, 1991); and *Le Mystère de la Résurrection (Angers 1456)* edited P. Servet (Textes Littéraires Français: Droz, Geneva, 1973).

32. For the *Mystère des Trois Doms*, see Rey-Flaud and Konigson; and Couturier and Runnalls *Châteaudun*. In the case of the latter, to claim that the scaffolds are arranged in two facing lines is misleading; the reconstruction, based on the accounts and contemporary town plans, proposed that both lines were curved, thus making an oval-shaped theatre.

33. For terminology and types of theatre structure, see Runnalls '*Mansion* and *Lieu*' 385–93; and *Mystère de Saint Martin* 68–79; both reprinted Runnalls *Etudes sur les Mystères* chapters 15 and 22.