

Introduction

The city of Metz lies in a verdant valley in which low mountains frame a horizon often hazed by clouds. Amid fields and forests of green, two rivers converge upon this ‘common stage’ constructed of yellow stone.¹ In the fifteenth century, stout walls and towers defended its inhabitants – numbering more than 25,000 people – against the armies that ravaged the lush countryside of the Lorraine, repelling frequent assaults upon the city’s riches and political independence. Yet, despite ongoing wars and repeated outbreaks of sickness, the atmosphere within was energised: a constant stream of performances animated streets crowded with the homes of bourgeois citizens, lavish parish churches, international marketplaces, and Carolingian-era cloisters. Messine performance permeated and connected these spaces and the lives of the women and men within; for the inhabitants of Metz, performance was a necessary aspect of daily experience.

Performing women explores the ways that four local women – three Catherines and a Claude – employed performance to transform this world into their stage. In Metz, public performance offered influence, agency, and audience: communal processions circled among religious houses, representing the union of patrician families or seeking an end to devastating rains. Monumental civic theatre such as the *Mystère de la Passion* and the *Mystère de Saint Clément de Metz* stirred women and men from their beds to secure seats before dawn. Trading centres were transformed for extravagant entertainments that included jousts as well as avian-themed song and archery contests. Confraternity members gathered within their chapels to honour patron saints and the dearly departed; merchants and bankers voiced oaths and impressed their personal seals during legal ceremonies that structured formal relationships. Collective or personal, these performances were rarely ‘private’: local audiences of artisans, tradespeople, labourers, clergy, friars, and patricians were joined

by visiting nobles, merchants, pilgrims, and soldiers, each pausing to watch the scenes unfold.

Performing women emerges from a single event, plucked from this dense landscape of performance activity: a moment when two women publicly staged the life of a saint within Metz. Dramatic productions were commonplace in the city during the later Middle Ages; more than twenty-five are recorded by civic chroniclers of the era. However, in the spring of 1468, a special *jeu* – probably taking the form of a theatrical representation in verse – was mounted in the open courtyard of the Dominican convent, on the south side of town. This performance portrayed the life of Saint Catherine of Siena, a charismatic urban visionary and reformer who had been canonised just seven years before. Two living women shaped the *jeu* as well, however, both of them also called Catherine: an actor who played the saint, and a patron who sponsored the performance.

The Saint Catherine *jeu* and the Catherines together represent a supposedly atypical instance of women's contributions to the medieval theatre, yet their example illuminates the elusive figure of the female performer in far-reaching ways. In imagining Metz – or other francophone cities – as a public stage, it is all too easy to translate modern assumptions about women's limited dramatic roles to medieval urban performance as a whole. How often do we visualise female actors or bankers as active players? Substantial female participation seemingly is rare in pre-modern French drama, and scholarship implicitly frames this performance culture as being dominated by male activity, with occasional incursions by women.² Yet the Saint Catherine *jeu* and its female creators suggest a contrasting picture in which women were not relegated to the background, embroidering costumes or whispering with other members of the audience. Instead, the Catherines represent a different paradigm: women forming the heart and core of urban performance practice and culture.

Four performing women anchor my study: 1) the actor, a Metz resident of humble origins; 2) the patron, a wealthy and well-connected member of the Messine patriciate named Catherine Baudoche; 3) Catherine's stepmother and local *éminence grise*, Catherine Gronnaix; and, 4) Claude d'Armoises, an actor who permanently assumed the role of Joan of Arc, 'la Pucelle de France'. These women represent a broad sampling of the local population, with social backgrounds that range from the actor's carting family to the polished lineages of the Baudoche and Gronnaix moneylenders.

Claude even claimed aristocratic status, through her marriage to a local noble. All of these women play a part in my story, with their intertwined histories standing in for the performing women of Metz as a whole.

Of these four figures, the actor and patron are most familiar to scholars of medieval drama, having inspired many questions and few answers. Awareness of the Catherine actor and Catherine Baudoche is common, yet the relevance of each and their Saint Catherine *jeu* to broader histories of performance remains obscure. Very little is known concretely about the production. Despite a general willingness to learn more about the individual contributors, the actor and patron are largely anonymous. Only chronicle texts document the event, and no written script or financial account has been identified previously that supplements those narratives. Moreover, the best-known chronicle sources – composed in the sixteenth century – have been shown to be unreliable. Jody Enders has destabilised this evidence by tracing the literary creation of a romance centred on the actor in later accounts.³ Within these texts, the Saint Catherine *jeu* and its participants become the stuff of urban legend, an expression of the lurid passions that lurk between ‘theatre’ and ‘reality’.

The confluence of Enders’s influential work with the narrow evidence base has resulted in widespread citation of the Saint Catherine episode, but little in-depth study. Reference works frequently include the *jeu* and the Catherines to illustrate ‘women in the theatre’, yet the isolation of this example from other literary and historical evidence frames the event as an unusual occurrence.⁴ Such representations position the *jeu* and its participants outside mainstream historical narratives, while also stripping away the social and cultural contexts of the performance in Metz. Ultimately, traditional approaches to the Saint Catherine *jeu* have limited our comprehension of the actions, identities, and lives of its participants.

Performing women reclaims the Saint Catherine *jeu*, actor, and patron, by situating them within a constellation of female performers and performances in Metz.⁵ By broadening the focus from ‘drama’ to ‘performance’ – the scripted actions of a material body within a historical, physical space – women’s dramatic practice is revived as an historical artefact that may be interpreted in relation to other artefacts. Beginning with the Saint Catherine *jeu* and then expanding outward, I use a wide range of evidence to trace connections among the activities of the actor, the patron, their female family members, and peers. During the fifteenth century, the women of Metz enacted

varied kinds of performance that included and extended beyond the theatre. Decades before the actor represented Catherine of Siena in the *jeu*, for example, Claude used a series of ceremonies to successfully and permanently assume the identity of Joan of Arc. Contemporaneously with the *jeu*, Catherine Gronnaix founded a memorial liturgy that visualised her ongoing physical presence in front of the altar she had made to honour the Assumption of the Virgin. The same Catherine took on the role of ‘vassal’ in homage ceremonies, participated in confraternal celebrations, and initiated a procession that mapped her family history. Within her parish church, she and other female worshippers publicly caressed images of the Virgin and knelt at her feet during conspicuous ‘private’ devotions. *Performing women* situates all these practices within the physical spaces, contemporary events, and local histories of Metz. Examined within this framework of ubiquitous female performance, the 1468 Saint Catherine *jeu* and its contributors are revealed to be exemplary, not exceptional.⁶

As the following chapters reveal, dynamic modes of practice characterise the performances of the Catherines and Claude, offering access to overlapping urban spheres that included the theatre, religion and devotion, law, and economics. Embodied participation – as living saint, as witness to the Incarnation, as controller of a financial legacy – facilitated the empowerment of these women as social, political, and cultural agents.⁷ Viewed together, the performances of the Catherines are ‘impossible to dismiss ... as either occasional or exceptional’.⁸ Instead, they reveal patterns of practice that interacted across varying domains to produce shared systems of meaning. The Catherines, Claude, and their peers created networks of performance that were expressive, performative, and transformative. Gendered public performance offered roles of expansive range and depth to the women of Metz and positioned them as vital and integral contributors to the fabric of urban life.

Methodology and historiography

Performing women develops an approach that I term ‘performance history’: the use of performance methodologies to study and write cultural history.⁹ The vocabulary of performance now permeates the field of medieval studies, and scholars have adopted its methods widely.¹⁰ This book appropriates select concepts, however, in service of a narrow definition in which the term ‘performance’ is restricted in its uses. My usage centres upon the scripted and

iterative actions of the physical body, produced within a material environment at a specific historical moment. Each of these elements is subject to construction in the instant and across time, by participants, audiences, and the written and material record. This version of performance includes acts that are not necessarily mimetic, and those that are repeating or distributed in space and time.¹¹ Thus it incorporates the recurrent legal ceremonies by which Catherine Gronnaix bound herself to the dukes of Lorraine, for example: in these events, Catherine ‘played’ herself through scripted interaction with the dukes and with the documentary evidence itself. As this instance suggests, performance is fundamentally dynamic: critical theory based in cultural anthropology positions it as having transformative functions.¹² My examination of the *jeu* and the broader practices of the Catherines thus focuses upon performances that consist of bodily acts and which emerge from a corporeal context; through these, women staged an interplay of persons, objects, and settings that produced specific and overlapping effects.

The individual performances of the Catherines and Claude unfolded meaning through the juxtaposition of varied practices, requiring a broad approach to the evidence and its contexts. Catherine Baudoche, for example, forged a distinctive public self through the intersection of her Saint Catherine *jeu* with her reception of visiting Burgundian allies. Viewed together, these performances position Catherine Baudoche as an arbiter of devotional trends and political access within Metz. Yet since the documentation for her activities is claimed by separate academic disciplines, Catherine’s influence has remained unexplored. Moreover, modern expectations about scribal practice and genre have obscured the identification of her performances beyond the *jeu*, such as the reception.¹³ In Metz, female performance is depicted in local chronicles and listed in household accounts, but also exists in less familiar formats: parish sculpture and windows, monastic histories and cartularies, and formal written correspondence. These records testify to women’s participation in multiple public spheres, which joined the ‘theatre’ with confraternities, cloistered devotional communities, and ‘feudal’ institutions. Like their performances, these groups interacted with each other as they were constructed over time.¹⁴ Thus, my broad approach to the Catherines integrates varying areas of female experience – personal devotion, impersonation, and economic enterprise, for example – by examining the complex programmes of performance that these women developed.

Framed in this way, performance activity implicates the Catherines and their peers in the creation of personal, cultural, and political meaning. Kirstin Hastrup writes that, ‘the body is not only a vehicle for collective social memory but also ... for creative action and cultural transformation’.¹⁵ By employing the body, female performers could engage in a fruitful, productive endeavour that used experience and memory to shape cultural narratives. With the Saint Catherine *jeu*, for example, the Catherine actor and patron jointly created a representation of the sacred Catherine that pooled their bodily, economic, political, social, and spiritual resources. The *jeu* shared and promoted a vision of urban, female sanctity and authority that was created by and accessible to women of varying social and economic statuses.¹⁶ Such embodied performances made and transmitted meaning, and enabled forms of agency, expression, and power.

Performing women’s narrative of widespread, productive female performance in Metz cannot be fitted neatly into traditional accounts of drama, patronage, and piety in the Middle Ages; happily, these histories are being rewritten. A new consensus has dispatched old assumptions that women were barred from the pre-modern stage: recent studies show women to have been active contributors to dramatic culture throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, in numerous capacities. Since the turn of the millennium, a wave of scholarship focusing on Britain has swept away the stereotype of the ‘all-male stage’ and begun to interrogate its implications.¹⁷ These efforts have evolved in two ways: the documentation of the involvement of women in multiple aspects of theatrical practice, and the demonstration of the influence of women upon the ‘all-male’ canon of the commercial stage.¹⁸ These approaches preserve ‘drama’ as an organising concept while expanding the category to include festive and ‘traditional’ culture.¹⁹ Scholars now are detailing the broader picture of women’s contributions to drama, rewriting this history through innovative narratives that go beyond the insertion of select female examples.²⁰

Although much of the pre-modern work on women and performance has centred on the early modern era, and Britain in particular, the wider Middle Ages nonetheless represents a formative and critical period for the subject. Attention has been intermittent: medieval female actors formed the focus of essays by Lynette Muir and Clifford Davidson in the mid-1980s, with Muir pointing to possible differences in practice between northern and southern France.²¹

The following decades produced works on representations of women in drama and female authors such as Hrotsvit of Gandersheim and Hildegard of Bingen, as well as the wide-ranging archival efforts of the University of Toronto's Records of Early English Drama (REED).²² Included in these are studies that consider the impact of women's embodied contributions to dramatic representation in both England and France. Katie Normington and Nicola Coldstream consider medieval women and drama in the contexts of spectatorship and production, for example, while Susan Udry investigates the dual impact of gender and age.²³ James Stokes has pioneered an archival approach to female performers; his work bridges the late medieval and early modern divide, contrasting the positions of female performance in pre- and post-Reformation England.²⁴ He conclusively demonstrates that, 'women were major, indeed co-equal contributors [to performance culture] ... a presence that can be documented at almost every level of society'.²⁵ Viewed collectively, the trailblazing studies of Stokes and others point to a need to reexamine medieval drama and reconceptualise its roles for women.²⁶ The 'hidden tradition[s] of female performance' in the later Middle Ages must be reframed as 'customary and unexceptional' and their larger significance acknowledged.²⁷

A rigorous assessment of medieval women's roles and the paradigms of performance demands a recognition of the varied categories of female performer. During the fifteenth century, women demonstrably participated in local performances as actors, audiences, labourers, and patrons. Yet the two latter categories of contributors – those who worked with their hands or their finances to shape productions – often are undervalued or overlooked.²⁸ Although scholarship readily credits actors and audiences as being parties to the creation of drama, patrons and skilled crafters are less frequently envisioned as holding formative or influential roles. Nonetheless, revisionist art histories have repositioned women as 'makers' of material and devotional culture; these assert that patronage and fabrication were vital creative modes and sources of agency for medieval women.²⁹ For the Catherines, this reframing of patronage permits their financial support for the *jeu* and the liturgy to be interpreted as strategic interventions that engaged them in material and bodily ways with specific performance practices. In a performance context, the 'maker' approach frames the women who sponsored plays and endowed liturgical celebrations as possessing forms of influence more typically assigned to 'playwrights' and

‘actors’.³⁰ It positions female patrons as performers and thus as historical agents exerting control over practices that were generative and influential.

Performing women brings together female patronage with acting, and joins them with other areas of performance, such as devotional practice, performative legal actions, and bodily impersonations. In situating this wide spectrum of female performance within a network of cultural expression, it also draws upon scholarship that links individual forms of female piety with social practice. Women’s pilgrimages in late medieval England, for example, were often inspired by personal faith, yet nonetheless functioned through public acts.³¹ In the Low Countries, beguine spirituality took part in a wider textual culture that contained performative aspects.³² Similarly ‘private’ devotional performances were enacted in communal spaces and visible to mixed audiences in Metz, by women who caressed the nursing Christ or elevated a book of hours. Donations to churches also situated women within these ‘public and social space[s]’, simultaneously signalling presence and identity.³³ Like Catherine Gronnaix’s altar and liturgy for the Assumption of the Virgin, performance created visibility both before and after death. Women interwove drama, art, and spirituality in their construction of devotional programmes; similarly, the Catherines joined theatre to liturgy, visual culture, and architectural spaces for pious purposes.³⁴ Drawing upon these models, *Performing women* integrates a range of textual, archival, and visual material to investigate the meanings of living women’s embodied spiritual practice. It paints a detailed portrait of the Catherines by investigating the full extent of their performances in depth, using performance history as a lens for studying the broader lives of women.

Such gender-based explorations of women and performance remain rare for francophone subjects overall. As in Metz, archives in France, Belgium, and the Low Countries preserve a rich body of dramatic texts and records. In the absence of funded research initiatives such as REED, however, no systematic inspection or publication has taken place.³⁵ Although Katell Lavéant, Matthieu Bonicel, and Marie Bouhaïk-Gironès have demonstrated that there is a need for fresh approaches to actors and drama in the French-language archives, few monographs have appeared that make a broad-based examination of French theatre grounded in social history.³⁶ Moreover, despite the mainstreaming of gender and power as methods in the francophone Middle Ages, women infrequently form the subject of French early drama studies.³⁷ *Performing women*

merges the ‘groundbreaking but disparate studies’³⁸ of medieval theatre and women’s history in France by situating female performance culturally and socially within a local, French-language context.

The city of Metz, and its seemingly singular Catherines, thus provides a useful test case for the exceptionality of late medieval female performance. Deeply interconnected with communities across northern Europe through trade and politics, Metz’s particular circumstances also mirror the structural and cultural conditions of many late medieval, mercantile urban centres. Since the late Antique period, when the city served as a staging point for Roman troops heading to the Germanic ‘frontier’, Metz has been a place of convergence. As an independent city that dominated a territory called the *pays Messin* within the Lorraine – the former ‘Middle Kingdom’ – Metz formed a crossroads of languages, kingdoms, trade networks, and cultures.³⁹ Despite an early political orientation towards the Empire, the inhabitants spoke French, linguistically orienting it towards the west and south.⁴⁰ The city conducted trade along two rivers (the Moselle and the Seille) and two major roads, bringing together the Lyon and Trier route with Reims and Strasbourg, as well as the Rhône, Saône, and Rhine rivers. As a self-governing republic from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, Metz negotiated not only between the Empire and France, but also among the Low Countries, Luxembourg, and the Burgundians. By the later Middle Ages, its citizens were exerting their wealth and political power over a large sphere of influence, travelling broadly, and commissioning manuscripts and luxury objects. The city also contributed to the late medieval flourishing of the *mystères*, with numerous productions during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as well as an original script set in Metz entitled the *Mystère de Saint Clément*.⁴¹ This vibrant local activity created connections with a theatrical culture that spanned Europe and included Britain.⁴² Moreover, Metz preserves extensive archival records stretching back to the Merovingian era and a manuscript culture of nearly the same duration that document these enterprises.⁴³ It thus offers a rich vein of unexamined material for women and performance, permitting a deep local study that is nonetheless relevant to research on urban centres across the Continent and Britain. Taking Metz as a sample case, the ‘unique’ Saint Catherine *jeu* is instead revealed to be exemplary: the Catherines represent the tip of the proverbial iceberg for women’s performance in the later Middle Ages.

Chapters and contents

Chapter 1: Acting as Catherine: writing the history of female performers

Female actors exist in a shadowy and illusory state, fashioned as such by history. The ‘traditional male interests and perspectives’⁴⁴ of the medieval chronicle systematically exclude women such as the Catherines, inhibiting our understanding of them as actors in Metz and beyond. Yet the performing women of the 1468 Catherine of Siena *jeu* staged an interplay among personal devotion, political affiliation, and gendered notions of urban sanctity; this multiform, tangible, and cohesive undertaking becomes visible when new archival, manuscript, and visual material is triangulated with familiar narrative evidence. I first juxtapose an unstudied contemporary account of the *jeu* with the sixteenth-century sources to uncover changing depictions of the Saint Catherine actor and the distorting effects of written ‘histories’ upon constructions of female performance. The archives and material culture reveal, however, the hidden family identity and social status of the actor. The Saint Catherine role transformed its player permanently, positioning her as the living symbol of the saint within Metz. Catherine Baudoche emerges as a distinct figure as well, who used the *jeu* to secure a profound and lasting connection to the saint. Her staging referenced a chapel that she founded at the Dominicans, dedicated to Saint Catherine, and a family history of institutional largess. At the same time, this multimedia effort aligned her with an elite group of regional women who promoted Catherine of Siena through liturgy, architecture, and manuscript illumination. Seen in this light, the Saint Catherine *jeu* situates the actor and patron amid a community of practice that depicted women at the forefront of shared devotions to Saint Catherine and modelled active female participation in the urban, public sphere.

Chapter 2: ‘I, Catherine’: biography, documentary culture, and public presence

Catherine Baudoche’s versatile patronage illustrates that, in Metz, female performance fed broader currents of cultural patronage and financial agency. I continue my multifaceted portrait with the biographies of Catherine and her stepmother, Catherine Gronnaix, revealing a family history that positioned these women at a nexus of social and economic power. Through ceremonial practice and

entertainments, these two Catherines forged connections with local and trans-regional elites that reinforced those created by the Saint Catherine *jeu*. Moreover, at multiple points in their lives – early childhood, youth, marriage, widowhood, old age – the Catherines took part in financial transactions that put them at the centre of performative legal acts. Catherine Gronnaix, for example, enacted her vassalage to the dukes of Lorraine through a combination of spoken oath and physical sealing. Such performances served as a sign and representation of identity that was affirmed through public rite. Personal wealth enabled the financial power that supported acts of dramatic and liturgical patronage. Yet economic ownership and agency also positioned the Catherines to represent themselves in seals, legal language, ceremonies, and household performances that established them as full participants in the Messine legal and political spheres.

Chapter 3: Performance and the parish: space, memory, and material devotion

Individual women employed performance in parish settings as well; in Metz, such practices permitted female performers to ‘write’ fresh meanings upon the histories of existing bodies, objects, and spaces. Catherine Gronnaix made sizable foundations at her parish church of St-Martin and at a nearby Celestine monastery; together, these formed an integrated programme of liturgy that represented Catherine in the context of personal, family, and public memory. These acts and their record activated the interior spaces of chapels and the public areas of the city by prescribing processions that moved between these places. The resulting performances mapped social and spatial geographies onto the buildings and streets of Metz in ways that connected the various family identities that Catherine could claim. Confraternal devotion and material culture played equally vibrant roles in the parish performances of women, however. Catherine not only participated in two religious associations at St-Martin, but also founded masses to be celebrated in their chapels. My analysis brings together these collective practices with surviving late medieval elements of the church itself: sculpted images of the Virgin and Child, murals depicting the life of the Virgin, and a large window series depicting the same. Building on recent work that positions devotional images as active objects within performance, I trace the impact of female ‘matter’ and personal practice upon a shared sphere. At St-Martin, bodily performance

situated women within privileged places and integrated them into a larger environment of memory, while distinguishing individuals through social and devotional hierarchies.

Chapter 4: Negotiated devotions and performed histories: laywomen in monastic spaces

Two male monasteries – and their roles in the religious observances of laywomen – illuminate another facet of the relationship among gender, devotion, and performance in Metz. I first revisit the Celestine community, deepening the findings of Chapter 3 by examining the institution that housed the family chapel of the Gronnaix and the burial place of Catherine Baudoche. Its spaces reveal a culture of performance that was grounded in women's material contributions and spiritual needs; contemporary institutional histories construct a performance 'edifice' that depicts the partnership of laywomen and the Celestine brothers. A second Messine religious community documents an alternative perspective on the role of women in long-term history-making and performance practice. Through liturgical performance, the monastery of St-Arnoul had claimed a past that tied Carolingian-era imperial identity to female sanctity and patronage. Catherine Gronnaix's foundation of masses at St-Arnoul took place during the decline of this institutional narrative, however, when the preservation and appropriation of older traditions of female performance had lost their appeal. In distinct eras, the cloistered spaces of the Celestines and St-Arnoul – both permeated by the presence and remains of laywomen and their devotions – sheltered collaborative performances that intertwined monastic and familial aspirations.

Chapter 5: 'Call me Claude': female actors, impersonation, and cultural transmission

The figure of the actor returns to the fore in my final chapter, as I examine the performances of the young woman who claimed to be Joan of Arc – 'la Pucelle de France' – and the implications of her role for other female actors.⁴⁵ In the spring of 1436, just five years after Joan's execution in Rouen, an enigmatic young woman appeared to the citizens of Metz. Representing herself as the Pucelle, this actor spoke with the gathering audience and, after explaining that the rumours of her death were false, asked them to call her by

the name Claude. In the following days and weeks, Claude publicly assumed the Pucelle role through performance. Local authorities staged a series of ceremonies in which she was formally recognised as 'Joan': she accepted and mastered gifts that symbolised the Pucelle identity, such as military equipment, and produced signs and prophetic utterances. Interpretations of Claude's 'playing' of Joan have been dominated by histories – both fifteenth-century and modern – that read her actions as being the 'false' gestures of an impostor. My analysis approaches the Pucelle role afresh, however, by sidelining questions of veracity and dishonesty. Instead, I consider embodied methods of performing and contemporary reception to investigate how and why Claude persuaded her audiences to embrace a new iteration of Joan. This actor, the first of many who 'impersonated' this polarising figure, reveals a larger performance scenario centred on the Pucelle role. During the mid-fifteenth century, multiple female actors used a shared corpus of embodied and material performance techniques to store and communicate Joan's identity and its associated body of knowledge. Although historians have struggled to position Claude and women such as the Catherine of Siena actor within larger narratives of the past, Claude's example reinforces our understanding of their practices as representing the visible face of poorly documented, yet widespread performance strategies.

Conclusion

Although the Catherines and Claude slowly passed from memory, their performances and those of the women around them continued to represent their interests. I conclude with an integrated portrait of women's performance in fifteenth-century Metz that emphasises four significant themes: the production of history, collaboration, material and bodily practice, and continuity. My discussion traces interactions among the actions of the Catherines and Claude and explores the echoes of their practices over time. From a Pucelle character in the fifteenth-century *Mystère de Saint Clément de Metz* to a modern depiction of Joan of Arc at the church of St-Martin, female performance remained relevant to local constructions of identity and history. I close by suggesting that *Performing women*, having transformed female performance from 'rare' to representative within Metz, offers a model for discovering the hidden histories of other urban centres and regions.

Notes

- 1 The use of the ‘common stage’ phrasing to describe the interaction of urban life and dramatic practice is most fully developed in C. Symes, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).
- 2 Lynette Muir argued for the pervasiveness of female actors in France more than thirty years ago in ‘Women on the Medieval Stage: The Evidence from France’, *Medieval English Theatre*, 7 (1985), 107–19. My intent is not to suggest that urban performance was unique to women; as my chapters show, specific practices and the gendered roles they entailed were often shared by women and men. Rather, I focus on female performers to produce a holistic, detailed portrait of their activities.
- 3 Jody Enders devotes a chapter to the Saint Catherine actor and patron, examining oft-cited chronicle versions of the episode that date to the early sixteenth century. Her enquiry recognises the fundamentally superficial positioning of the actor within these texts, calling into question the evidence of Philippe de Vigneulles and Jacomin Husson. See chapter 1 in *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 17–28.
- 4 See, for example, the entries in C. Sponsler, ‘Drama’, in M. Schaus (ed.), *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 232–3, W. Tydeman (ed.), *The Medieval European Stage, 500–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 347.
- 5 Walter Benjamin’s concept of the constellation offers a way to interpret seemingly abstract connections – such as those among varied women in fifteenth-century Metz and their performances – concretely, using contemporary and historical perspectives to identify patterns of meaning that are invisible to modern viewers/readers. For the application of this aspect of Benjamin’s work to the medieval period, see R. R. Trilling, ‘Ruins in the Realm of Thoughts: Reading as Constellation in Anglo-Saxon Poetry’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 108:2 (2009), 141–67.
- 6 The shift against exceptionalism in the study of medieval women has been ongoing, recently being addressed at the 2015 ‘Beyond Exceptionalism’ conference at Ohio State University and in T. Martin, ‘Exceptions and Assumptions: Women in Medieval Art History’, in T. Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as ‘Makers’ of Medieval Art and Architecture*, 2 vols, *Visualizing the Middle Ages 7* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 1–33. For exceptionalism in the Metz region, see the chapter by Michel Margue, ‘L’Épouse au pouvoir: le pouvoir de l’héritière entre “pays”, dynasties et politique impériale à l’exemple de la maison de Luxembourg (XIII^e–XIV^e s.)’, in É. Bousmar et al. (eds), *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du Moyen Âge et au*

cours de la première Renaissance (Paris: de Boeck, 2012), pp. 269–310, esp. 271–3.

- 7 I use the term ‘agent’ to designate a person exerting direct control over an activity. An extensive literature exists on theories of agency and its relation to power, authority, gender, patronage, and the law; for overviews, see J. Caskey, ‘Medieval Patronage and Its Potentialities’, in C. Hourihane (ed.), *Patronage: Power and Agency in Medieval Art*, Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers 15 (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 2013), pp. 28–9, C. P. Collette (ed.), *Performing Polity: Women and Agency in the Anglo-French Tradition, 1385–1620*, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 15 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), M. C. Erler and M. Kowaleski, ‘Introduction. A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages’, in M. C. Erler and M. Kowaleski (eds), *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 1–16, W. Johnson, ‘On Agency’, *Journal of Social History*, 37:1 (2003), 113–24, E. L. Jordan, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
- 8 J. Stokes, ‘The Ongoing Exploration of Women and Performance in Early Modern England: Evidence, Issues, and Questions’, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33:1 (2015), 15. Diana Taylor writes that there is ‘a politics behind notions of ephemerality, ... of thinking of embodied knowledge as that which disappears because it cannot be contained or recuperated through the archive’. D. Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 193.
- 9 My framing of ‘performance history’ transforms the traditional usage of this phrase, which can designate a chronology of performance for a specific play, playhouse, or company.
- 10 M. Carlson, ‘Space and Theatre History’, in C. M. Canning and T. Postlewait (eds), *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), p. 195. For the development of performance studies and its role in medieval studies, see M. Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2nd edn, 2003), S. Chaganti, ‘The Platea Pre- and Postmodern: A Landscape of Medieval Performance Studies’, *Exemplaria*, 25:3 (2013), 252–64, E. Gertsman (ed.), *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1–13, B. W. Holsinger, ‘Analytical Survey 6: Medieval Literature and Cultures of Performance’, *New Medieval Literatures*, 6 (2003), 271–311, M. Suydam, ‘Background: An Introduction to Performance Studies’, in M. Suydam and J. A. Ziegler (eds), *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), pp. 1–25.
- 11 Although I investigate the ways that women used performance practice to express and construct identity, the performative nature of identity

- (as per Judith Butler, for example) does not form a primary area of study. M. Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire*, p. 32.
- 12 K. M. Ashley (ed.), *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism: Between Literature and Anthropology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), R. Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 3rd edn, 2013), V. W. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986).
 - 13 The medieval *jeu* itself formed a broader category than the modern 'play', incorporating games, entertainments, and theatre. For the varying uses of 'dramatic' terminology in the Middle Ages and present, see L. Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 1–24, T. Coletti, 'Medieval Drama: 1191–1952', *Exemplaria*, 28:3 (2016), 264–76, S. Gaunt and S. Kay, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 10–12. Modern approaches to medieval scribal practice are critiqued in C. Symes, 'The Appearance of Early Vernacular Plays: Forms, Functions, and the Future of Medieval Theater', *Speculum*, 77:3 (2002), 778–831, Symes, *A Common Stage*, C. Symes, 'The Medieval Archive and the History of Theatre: Assessing the Written and Unwritten Evidence for Premodern Performance Practice', *Theatre Survey*, 52 (2011), 1–30.
 - 14 C. Sponsler, 'Writing the Unwritten: Morris Dance and Theatre History', in C. M. Canning and T. Postlewait (eds), *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), pp. 84–113.
 - 15 K. Hastrup, *A Passage to Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 78.
 - 16 The performances of the Catherines and their peers thus offer access to histories and bodies of knowledge that are otherwise under-represented and/or poorly preserved. My later chapters highlight the importance of social status as a factor in female performance, showing how performance history can amplify the voices of low-status and under-represented figures by focusing on individuals who are neither royal nor aristocratic. For the position of bourgeois women in the larger project of women's history, see C. N. Goldy and A. Livingstone (eds), *Writing Medieval Women's Lives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Kathleen Ashley argues that attention to context in dramatic analysis also permits the investigation of social roles and their shaping; see K. M. Ashley, 'Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors of Female Conduct', in N. Armstrong and L. Tennenhouse (eds), *The Ideology of Culture* (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 37–45. For embodied performance as making meaning, see M. E. Fassler, *The Virgin of Chartres: Making History through Liturgy and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire*.

- 17 The framework of the 'all-male' stage focuses on the commercial theatre, extending its presumed attributes to the playing of all female roles by male actors in the later Middle Ages. For the state of the field in late medieval and early modern female performance, see P. A. Brown and P. Parolin (eds), *Women Players in England, 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 1–22, M. J. Gough and C. McManus, 'Introduction: Gender, Cultural Mobility, and Theater History Inquiry', *Renaissance Drama*, 44:2 (2016), 187–200, C. McManus, 'Early Modern Women's Performance: Toward a New History of Early Modern Theater?' *Shakespeare Studies*, 37 (2009), 161–77, C. McManus and L. Munro, 'Renaissance Women's Performance and the Dramatic Canon: Theater History, Evidence, and Narratives', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33:1 (2015), 1–7, P. Parolin, 'Access and Contestation: Women's Performance in Early Modern England, Italy, France, and Spain', *Early Theatre*, 15:1 (2012), 15–36.
- 18 McManus and Munro, 'Renaissance Women's Performance', 2–3.
- 19 For the ways that modern formulations of 'traditional' culture diminish the significance of female performance, see N. Korda, 'Renaissance Women's Performance and the Dramatic Canon: Afterword', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33:1 (2015), 124.
- 20 See, for example, N. Korda, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
- 21 C. Davidson, 'Women and the Medieval Stage', *Women's Studies*, 11 (1984), 99–113, Muir, 'Women on the Medieval Stage', 107–19.
- 22 The scholarship on representations of women in medieval drama is too rich to cite here fully; for an example that integrates the topic with an investigation of spiritual expression and social climate, see T. Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
- 23 N. Coldstream, 'The Roles of Women in Late Medieval Civic Pageantry in England', in T. Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 175–94, K. Normington, *Gender and Medieval Drama* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), S. Udry, "'Putting on the Girls": Mary's Girlhood and the Performance of Monarchical Authority in Philippe de Mézière's Dramatic Office for the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*', *European Medieval Drama*, 8 (2004), 1–17. The Medieval Convent Drama project at the University of Fribourg examines cloistered women as actors, composers, and copyists in the late Middle Ages.
- 24 Stokes, 'Ongoing Exploration', 9–31, J. Stokes, 'The Wells Cordwainers Show: New Evidence of Guild Drama in Somerset', *Comparative Drama*, 19:4 (1985–6), 322–46, J. Stokes, 'Women and Mimesis in Medieval and Renaissance Somerset (and Beyond)', *Comparative Drama*,

- 27:2 (1993), 176–96, J. Stokes, ‘Women and Performance in Medieval and Early Modern Suffolk’, *Early Theatre*, 15:1 (2012), 27–43, J. Stokes, ‘Women and Performance: Evidences of Universal Cultural Suffrage in Medieval and Early Modern Lincolnshire’, in P. A. Brown and P. Parolin (eds), *Women Players in England, 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 25–43.
- 25 Stokes, ‘Women and Performance’, p. 25.
- 26 Stokes argues that female performance continues to be ‘hedged’ through a refusal to acknowledge its larger significance. Stokes, ‘Ongoing Exploration’, 9.
- 27 P. Parolin, “‘If I Had Begun to Dance’”: Women’s Performance in *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder*, *Early Theatre*, 15:1 (2012), 46, Stokes, ‘Ongoing Exploration’, 9, A. Thompson, ‘Women / “Women” and the Stage’, in H. Wilcox (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 103.
- 28 The undervaluation of this aspect of women’s contributions stems from a combination of factors that diminish the creative capacity of ‘craft’ and manual labour, as well as the systematic elimination of female patronage from narratives and histories. For a discussion of these issues, see J. N. Ghrádaigh, ‘Mere Embroiderers? Women and Art in Early Medieval Ireland’, in T. Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as ‘Makers’ of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 93–128, C. Schleif, ‘Seeking Patronage: Patrons and Matrons in Language, Art, and Historiography’, in C. Hourihane (ed.), *Patronage: Power and Agency in Medieval Art*, Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers 15 (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 2013), pp. 206–32.
- 29 See especially Jill Caskey’s chapter and Therese Martin’s introduction in, respectively, C. Hourihane (ed.), *Patronage: Power and Agency in Medieval Art*, Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers 15 (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 2013), pp. 3–30, T. Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as ‘Makers’ of Medieval Art and Architecture* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 1–33.
- 30 In its current connotation, the term ‘actor’ often signifies a ‘professional’ performer who appears on the commercial stage. I use ‘actor’ to indicate a person who plays an embodied character or scenario with scripted elements, and include actors within my larger category of performer, alongside impersonators and patrons (see Chapters 1 and 5 for further discussion). Just as recent scholarship has expanded understandings of women as ‘makers’ of art, this project redefines ‘performers’ to include those who assist in the creation of a performance through physical, material, and/or financial contributions. This broader scope permits a fuller picture of the many roles that women played in connection with medieval performance practice.

- 31 S. S. Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety and Public Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).
- 32 Suydam, 'Performance Studies', pp. 1–25, M. Suydam, 'Women's Texts and Performances in the Medieval Southern Low Countries', in E. Gertsman (ed.), *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 143–59.
- 33 V. C. Raguin and S. Stanbury (eds), *Women's Space: Patronage, Place, and Gender in the Medieval Church* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), p. 1.
- 34 G. M. Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
- 35 Local approaches formed the focus of Jelle Koopmans's Regional Cultures and Local Subcultures: Worlds of Drama in France (1450–1550) project, funded from 2003 to 2007.
- 36 M. Bonicel and K. Lavéant, 'Le Théâtre dans la ville: pour une histoire sociale des représentations dramatiques', *Médiévales*, 59 (2010), 91–105, M. Bouhaïk-Gironès, 'Comment faire l'histoire de l'acteur au Moyen Âge', *Médiévales*, 59 (2010), 107–25, K. Lavéant, 'Back to the Source: Repositioning the Archive in Medieval French Drama Studies', *ROMARD*, 51 (2012), 61–7. Notable monographs include M. Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les Clercs de la Basoche et le théâtre comique* (Paris, 1420–1550) (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), K. Lavéant, *Un Théâtre des frontières: la culture dramatique dans les provinces du Nord aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles*, *Medievalia* 76 (Orléans: Paradigme, 2011). These scholars, working together with Jelle Koopmans and Véronique Dominguez, have spearheaded important new approaches to medieval French drama in the archives. For an overview of the field, see J. Enders, 'Medieval Stages', *Theatre Survey*, 50:2 (2009), 317–25.
- 37 For developments in the study of women and drama in early modern France, see P. Gethner and M. J. Gough, 'The Advent of Women Players and Playwrights in Early Modern France', *Renaissance Drama*, 44:2 (2016), 217–32. For an introduction to francophone scholarship on medieval women and power, see Bousmar et al. (eds), *Femmes de pouvoir*, pp. 4–5, D. Delogu, *Allegorical Bodies: Power and Gender in Late Medieval France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), pp. 3–18. For trends in the study of gender, see also Bousmar et al. (eds), *Femmes de pouvoir*, n. 1 and 2. For the growing body of work on female voice and agency in French-speaking regions, see D. Régnier-Bohler (ed.), *Voix de femmes au Moyen Âge. Savoir, mystique, poésie, amour, sorcellerie, XII^e-XV^e siècle* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006).
- 38 This quote refers to recent work on the medieval French theatre: V. L. Hamblin, *Saints at Play: The Performance Features of French*

- Hagiographic Mystery Plays* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2012), p. 3. Other than Enders, only a few publications have addressed the subjects of women, gender, performance, or personal devotion for late-medieval Metz and its larger territories. See M. Longtin, “‘Maistre Jenin le recouvreur pendus’ ou comment chanter en allant vers le gibet”, *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales et Humanistes*, 22 (2011), 171–80, C. Reutenauer-Corti, ‘La Vie culturelle à Metz (1380–1552)’ (thesis, University of Metz, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 160–293, 824–89, 1005–35, C. Reutenauer-Corti, ‘Le Théâtre à Metz à l’époque de François le Gronnais (env. 1450–1525)’, in M. Chazan and N. F. Regalado (eds), *Lettres, musique, et société en Lorraine médiévale: autour du Tournoi de Chauvency (Ms. Oxford Bodleian Douce 308)* (Geneva: Droz, 2012), pp. 357–98, J. Schneider, ‘Dans la société messine au XV^e siècle: Dame Colette Baudoche (vers 1380/5–1441)’, *Lotharingia*, 7 (1997), 67–76, P.-É. Wagner, ‘Notes pour servir à l’histoire des béguines de Metz du XIII^e au XV^e siècle’, *Histoire Médiévale et Archéologie*, 15 (2003), 13–24. For the difficulties encountered in studying women in pre-modern Metz, see E. Weber, ‘Les Femmes à Metz: la leçon des archives notariales’, *Annales de l’Est*, 59:2 (2009), 103–20, 264–5.
- 39 The liminal status of Metz has given it an uneasy position within the national histories of France and Germany, with rival claims to its ‘Frankish’ past creating a focus upon early medieval subjects. For the interaction of history and nationalism in France and Germany, see P. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), O. G. Oexle and J.-C. Schmitt (eds), *Les Tendances actuelles de l’histoire médiévale en France et en Allemagne* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002). Only recently has the city’s late medieval history been addressed in contexts beyond regional studies.
- 40 The linguistic boundary between Romance and Germanic vernaculars ran vertically through the Lorraine, passing to the east of Metz. Though its medieval residents interacted regularly with German-speakers, the city was not truly bilingual: excepting records in Latin, all civic records preserve a regional form of French, as do the documents and manuscripts of its citizens. For the linguistic boundary, see J. Lahner, ‘La Langue lorrain au moyen âge’, in *Écriture et enluminure en Lorraine au moyen âge: La plume et le parchemin* (Nancy: Société Thierry Alix and Musée Historique Lorrain, 1984), pp. 179–81.
- 41 See F. Duval (ed.), *Le Mystère de Saint Clément de Metz* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), L. Petit de Julleville, *Histoire du théâtre en France: Les mystères*, 2 vols (Paris: Hachette, 1880). The *Mystère de Saint Clément de Metz* represents the sole surviving dramatic text from the Messine tradition; the loss of the medieval manuscript in the late nineteenth century resulted in little attention being given to the local theatre prior to Duval.

- 42 R. Henke, 'Introduction', in R. Henke and E. Nicholson (eds), *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1–18.
- 43 The written tradition of Metz is not without its interruptions, some of them recent and devastating. In the last weeks of World War II, for example, a fire broke out in a German-controlled storage area that resulted in the loss of two-thirds of the manuscripts held by the Metz Bibliothèque-Médiathèque. For a list of the destroyed items, see R. W. Hale Jr. and L. MacKinney, 'Microfilms and Photostats of European Manuscripts', *Speculum*, 29 (1954), 337.
- 44 G. Dunphy, '*Perspicax ingenium mihi collatum est*: Strategies of Authority in Chronicles Written by Women', in J. Dresvina and N. Sparks (eds), *Authority and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Chronicles* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), p. 166.
- 45 Here and throughout the text, I use 'Joan' to indicate the historical figure of Joan of Arc, and 'the Pucelle' to refer to the role that Joan, Claude, and other actors performed. Used without capitalisation, *pucelle* represents the contemporary term, often signifying a young female virgin.