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Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc

Edited by
Bonnie Wheeler
Charles T. Wood



Fresh Verdicts
on Joan of Arc

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

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THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

BONNIE WHEELER

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For

Régine Pernoud



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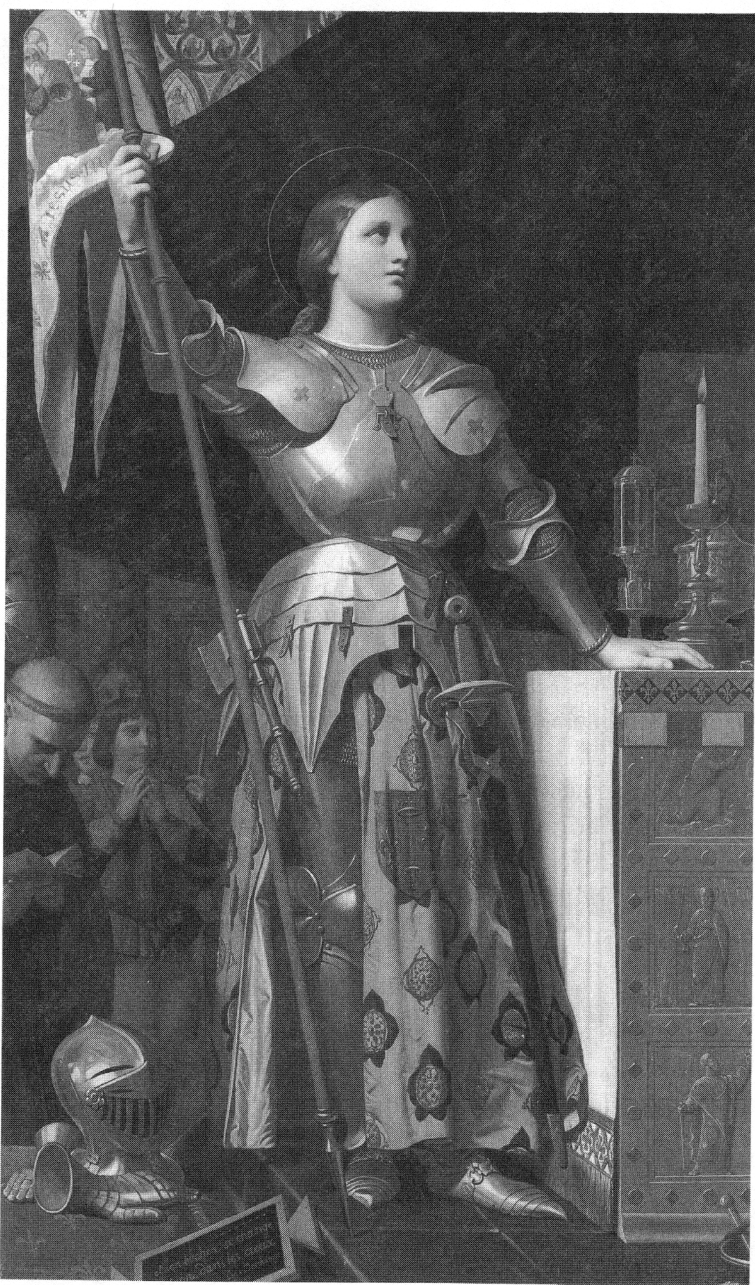
PREFACE

In 1970, when I first touched on the topic of this book, I could only wonder at the challenges involved. “No one can hope to explain Joan of Arc,” I wrote, “and possibly we should not try: in mystery lies the secret of her appeal.”¹ A quarter century later, however, I would stress a different point, the extent to which that very mystery spurs new explorations and the kind of fresh verdicts to be found in the essays that follow. For in them readers will discover evidence explaining why, even after the passage of more than twenty years, reminiscing veterans of her military campaigns still found Joan to have been a remarkably gifted commander; why so many of her contemporaries or near-contemporaries, churchmen and poets alike, found it possible to accept the validity of her mission and voices; why modern politicians and artists both literary and cinematic have been so quick to adopt her as the symbolic vehicle for their own visions; and why, on the very eve of her twentieth-century canonization, Devil’s Advocates were still worrying whether chance male glimpses of what the duke of Alençon had solemnly testified were her beautiful breasts should deny her all hope of formal sanctification. Indeed, one of the editors of the so-called “new Quicherat” will even make clear how more accurate manuscript transcriptions, minor though the changes often are, open the door to new insights.

Nevertheless, Régine Pernoud is undoubtedly correct in her concluding essay when she claims that, for all our new insights, the fundamentals of Joan’s story remain remarkably unchanged. She is, after all, still the maid whose mission proved the salvation of her people, the maid whose love of chivalry ended the age of chivalry even as it ushered in a new age, the outcome of which is not yet known. If Mlle. Pernoud is right (and she has wrestled with Joan’s story far longer than I), what that means, in turn, is that even though much of the mystery I saw in 1970 stays mysterious no longer, all of the wonder remains.

Charles T. Wood

1. Charles T. Wood, *The Age of Chivalry* (London, 1970), p. 150.



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Joan of Arc at the Coronation of Charles VII, 1854. Courtesy of The Musée du Louvre, Paris.

JOAN OF ARC'S SWORD IN THE STONE

Soo in the grettest chirch of London—whether it were Powlis or not the Frensshe booke maketh no mencyon—alle the estates were longe or day in the chirche for to praye. And whan matyns and the first masse was done there was sene in the chircheyard ayenst the hyhe autler a grete stone four square, lyke unto a marbel stone, and in myddes therof was lyke an anyvld of stele a foot on hyghe, and theryn stack a fayre swerd naked by the poynt, and letters there were wryten in gold about the swerd that saiden thus: “WHOSO PULLETH OUTE THIS SWERD OF THIS STONE AND ANYVLD IS RIGHTWYS KYNGE BORNE OF ALL EN[G]LOND.”¹

In early March of 1429, between the time that she was validated by her dauphin, later Charles VII, but before she started her battle march to Orleans, Joan of Arc sent a man, an unnamed armorer of Tours, to collect a sword that she said would be found buried below or behind the altar of the church of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois. The sword was located immediately and brought to her swiftly. Almost exactly two years later, on February 27, 1431, the judges at her condemnation trial asked her how she knew there was a sword to be found there. She answered:

That sword was in the earth, rusted, bearing five engraved crosses; she knew that the sword was there by her voices and she had never before seen the man who went to look for the aforesaid sword and she wrote to the men of the church of that place asking if it might please them that she might have this sword and they sent it to her. That sword was not deeply buried in the earth and the men of the church, rubbing it on the spot, made the rust fall off.

Swords identify, authorize, and authenticate medieval warriors in fact and in legend. Roland's sword Durendal contained relics: St. Peter's tooth, St. Basil's blood, St. Denis's hair, and even a bit of the Virgin's cloth²; that sword was so crucial to Roland's Christian identity that the poet of the *Chanson de Roland* tells us the dying hero whacked it against a stone in a vain attempt to destroy it so that it would not fall into the hands of pagan scavengers. Charlemagne with his sword Joyeuse returned to wreak vengeance for Roland's death against the

Saracen Baligant, who had absorbed the strategic uses of identity-bearing swords from Charlemagne: “Par sun orgoill li ad un num truvet/Par la Carlun dunt il oït parler” (“In his perversity, he found a name for it:/After Charles’s sword, which he has heard about”).³ In the *Poema de Mio Cid*, the hero Ruy Diaz, Mio Cid de Vivar, gained the famous swords Tizon and Colada as battle booty; he flattered his sons-in-law by including these swords in his daughters’ dowry, but the Heirs of Carrion proved themselves cowards unequal to the honor of their weapons. The young Arthur in Malory’s late fifteenth-century version of the Arthurian story (quoted above) is legitimized by his capacity to remove the sword magically secured in the stone that appears in a London churchyard backing up to the high altar. This is only one of King Arthur’s three notable swords, the most famous of which was his gift-sword Excalibur, whose scabbard magically protected its bearer.

Like the King Arthur and Cid of legends, Joan of Arc had several swords, each of which marked a particular aspect of her identity. First, she had a gift-sword from her early sponsor Robert de Baudricourt, received when she was on the road to Chinon to meet the dauphin. This was her craft-sword, identifying her as a warrior by profession. Later, she took a “good sword of war, made for giving and taking good blows,”⁴ as a prize from a Burgundian, and she may have had at least one additional war sword. These are her prowess-swords, identifying her as champion. But for her contemporaries, the sword from Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois must have had special resonance, as it does for us, since it so neatly yokes Joan’s spirituality and bellicosity.

Fierbois itself replicates that yoking of war and religion in another famous sword. When she passed through Fierbois on the final stage of her journey to Chinon, Joan may well have heard the famous story of Charles Martel’s sword, which he left there in the chapel of Sainte-Catherine to commemorate his victory nearby over the Saracens in the autumn of 732. Is it more than happy coincidence that swords of these famous champions, each of whom exercised profound claims on the French imagination as saviors of the country’s core identity and ideologies, were allegedly housed in one country chapel? Legend later identifies Joan’s sword as that of Charles Martel. In *La Pucelle ou la France delivrée*, Jean Chapelain claims that the great Carolingian *chef de guerre* buried the sword behind the altar so

that it would be found in time of need by another liberator of his people. Neither Joan nor her supporters allege that her sword from Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois was the sword of Charles Martel, but all were fully aware of the connection of Fierbois with another renowned champion, Maréchal Boucicaut, that model of Christian chivalry at the end of the age of chivalry, who became a benefactor of the chapel when it was rediscovered in the late fourteenth century.

The sword of Roland contained relics, but it was not a mystic object. The swords of Charlemagne and Mio Cid conveyed the quality of these champions' superb military prowess, but not their religiosity. Remarkably, it is King Arthur's mythic sword in the stone that most closely approximates Joan's actual sword from Fierbois: both swords are connected with a church, even an altar, and each is mysterious in origin, mysterious in appearance. These liminal objects map the juncture of the material and spiritual worlds. The sword of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois authorizes Joan's mission as French captain and champion just as the sword of the London churchyard authenticates Arthur's mission as king. The London townspeople, according to Malory, accepted the authority of the sword in the stone (whether its appearance was due to miracle, magic, or a mirage created by Merlin), and after a year of patient waiting for the nobility to agree, they demanded finally that Arthur be named king. No such patient procrastination marked the people of Fierbois, who, according to Joan and the trial witnesses, validated Joan's mission when they sent her not only the sword but a precious sheath to hold it: "For their part, the men of the church of Saint-Catherine-de-Fierbois gave her a sheath, as did the people of Tours; she had therefore two sheaths, one of vermeil velvet and the other of cloth-of-gold, and she herself had one made in heavy leather, very strong." Joan's basic disposition is practical; for her, strong leather replaces richly decorated velvet and lavish gold. Joan's basic disposition is seen also in the paratactic simplicity of her recorded language ("That sword was in the earth, rusted, bearing five engraved crosses; she knew that the sword was there by her voices"); for her, saintly voices lead to her material sword as cause leads to effect: this is logical, practical, and unassailable.

The trial judges poke continually into Joan's body, clothing, and possessions. They investigate and reinvestigate her body to see if a nonvirgin, therefore necessarily an impure liar or heretic, can be

found lurking there. They are endlessly curious about her things, including her personal war equipage, especially her design for her standard and banner, whose symbolism the judges find potentially subversive. They require full details about her suit of armor, and, of course, no subject fascinates or repels them more than her choice of wardrobe and her cross dressing. The trial records show the interrogation spiraling around these matters, obsessively returning to them in attempts to locate and demonstrate Joan's purported deviance. It is therefore especially notable that these judges query Joan about acquiring the remarkable sword from Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois only once.

Why do they not pursue the story of Joan's vision-sword? Why do they not look more deeply into the potential sacrilege of disturbing the sacred space of the church and altar of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois? Why do they not argue that only witchcraft could have caused the sword's encrusted rust to fall off with one mere rubbing? Why do they not inquire more deeply into the sword's current whereabouts? Why do they not probe more deeply its connection to Fierbois, to the gift-sword of Charles Martel?

The answer, I think, is that judges intent on condemning Joan could gain nothing by this exchange. The judges had plotted a line of questioning—from the rituals of the fairy tree in Domrémy to the voices to the sword and then to the standard; clearly, they were trying to provoke Joan into some admission or slip that would indicate witchcraft practices. Instead Joan stated simply that she knew of the sword's existence only "per voces."⁶ Since the judges shared with Joan a belief in the liminal world whose barriers heavenly saints could transgress, the judges could not in theory deny the possibility that Joan's "voices" were those of God's saints. Furthermore, the judges could not suggest that the sword itself was polluted without suggesting that it had polluted the very orthodoxy of the church in which it was found. Joan especially loved that sword because it was found in the church dedicated to St. Catherine, the saint who was one of her "voices": "Item dicit quod bene diligebat illum ensem, quia repertus erat in ecclesia beatæ Katharinæ quam bene diligebat."⁷ The *Journal du Siège d'Orléans* provides a different version of the story, a variation in which Charles VII interrogates Joan about the sword.

Le roy luy voulant doner une belle espée, elle luy pria qu'il luy pleust luy en envoyer querir une, qui avoit en la lemelle (2) cinq croix emprez la croisée, et estoit à Sainte-Katerine du Fierboys. Dont le roy fut fort esmerveillé, et luy demanda s'elle l'avoit oncques veue. A quoy elle respondit que non; mais toutesfois savoit qu'elle y estoit. Le roy y envoya, et fut trouvée celle espée avecques autres, qui là avoient esté données le temps passé, et fut aportée au roy, qui la fesit habiller et garnir honnestement.

[The king wishing to give her a fine sword, she asked that it might please him to send for one which had five crosses close to the hilt on the blade, and was at Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois. Whereat the king marvelled greatly amazed, and asked her if she had ever seen it, to which she answered no: but nonetheless she knew that it was there. The king sent there, and that sword was found, along with others which had been given there in time past. And it was brought to the king, who had it honorably dressed and furnished.]⁸

There are additional early versions of the story, such as that told by Greffier de la Rochelle, in which Joan asked the dauphin to send to Fierbois for the ancient sword from a coffer in front of the high altar. Such variations enhance the sword's spiritual and cultural associations.

Had Joan's trial judges pursued their original queries about the sword, they might well have provoked or enhanced associations dangerous to their own cause. If they had pressed her any harder on this point, they ran the risk of converting that identity-sword into a sign far more potent than its physical self: from being a blade with antiquarian interest, it might easily be turned into a talisman of the delivery of Christian France, a "relic" of Charles Martel and of the Hundred Years War, or an object like the Holy Grail, with mystic as well as historic associations.

Readers of this story are always impressed by the flat factuality with which Joan speaks of her sword. She is accustomed to receiving information through her voices, just as she is accustomed to bearing arms. She therefore evinces no surprise about the discovery of the sword: it was where it should have been. What delights her and spurs her to confide for a moment in her judges is not any connection the sword might bear to a grand past, but the connection of the sword to St. Catherine and the promise of an everlasting future. In the face of that innocent serenity, the judges fell silent.

The studies in this volume touch among other things on that blending of bellicosity and spirituality in Joan of Arc, on her keen, compelling simplicity of speech, on her mythic reception. The essays are arranged chronologically from investigations of Joan in her own time to Joan in our time. They interrogate the accuracy of Johannine texts and provide fresh views of such especially contested sites and issues as Joan's body, her voices, her tranvestism. Though the essays represent widely differing views of Joan and her mission, they produce a collective image of a Joan whose identity—her understanding of her own past—is transformed by her verbal interactions with her judges as much as by her experience of childhood, war, prison, or a faithless dauphin. These studies suggest that the volatile perception of Joan by her contemporaries is matched by the volatile and hyper-charged reception of Joan in subsequent centuries. Joan of Arc remains raw in our cultural imaginations.

No historian in our century has done more to return us to the Joan of documentary history than has Régine Pernoud, *chartiste*, to whom we dedicate this volume. Her Joan of Arc glows through the documents then and analysis now as a figure of resistance and a resistant figure: the “mystic, wonderful” Joan who proves that self-confidence and independent judgment are qualities so rare and suspect, especially in women, that they are sure to be punished, sometimes by death.

Bonnie Wheeler

1. Thomas Malory, *Works*, ed. Eugène Vinaver (Oxford, 1971), p. 7.
2. Pierre Tisset, ed. with Yvonne Lanhers, *Procès de condamnation de Jeanne d'Arc*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1960–71), vol. 2, p. 76.
3. *La Chanson de Roland*, ed. Gerard Brault (University Park, 1984), ll. 2345–48.
4. *Ibid.*, ll. 3144–45.
5. Tisset, 2.76.
6. Jules Quicherat, ed., *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc dite La Pucelle*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1841–49), vol. 1, p. 76.
7. *Ibid.*, 1.77.
8. *Ibid.*, 4.129. My translation.

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A WOMAN AS LEADER OF MEN: JOAN OF ARC'S MILITARY CAREER

Kelly DeVries

Joan did not offer her soldiers terrestrial possessions; she offered them religious possibilities, even salvation. Though she was radically different from other contemporary military leaders, her troops followed her with a loyalty unsurpassed by any other late-medieval captain.

No person of the Middle Ages, male or female, has been the subject of more study than Joan of Arc. She has been portrayed as saint, heretic, religious zealot, seer, demented teenager, profeminist, aristocratic wanna-be, savior of France, “turner-of-the-tide” of the Hundred Years War, and even Marxist liberator.¹ And yet in all of these analyses, few words have been devoted to her capabilities as a military leader, despite this being the central reason for her fame or infamy.²

Born in Domrémy, in Lorraine, on January 6, 1412, of comparatively wealthy peasant parents, she led a normal life until the fall of 1428, when she approached the castle of Vaucouleurs with her now famous tale of having heard heavenly voices. Their message, spoken to her in the wind and in the village church bells since childhood, was that she was to seek out the dauphin of France, Charles, and that he would give her an army with which she would deliver France from its English occupiers. Why Robert de Baudricourt, the castellan at Vaucouleurs, did not turn her away or place her in the “insanity wing” of the local hospital is one of the great mysteries of history, surpassed only by the mystery of why later at Chinon the dauphin, having been introduced to Joan by Robert de Baudricourt, actually provided her with the desired army.³

It is not my purpose here to dwell on these questions. There is another less frequently asked question that is more crucial to Joan's

military accomplishments in the Hundred Years War than either her success with the castellan of Vaucouleurs or with the dauphin: why did the soldiers of France follow Joan? No troops of the Hundred Years War had ever followed a woman into battle, for whatever reason, and those few occasions in earlier medieval history of women leading soldiers were not well known, were thought to be mythological, or were, at best, a distant historical memory.⁴ Often, too, the rumor of a woman leading an opposing army had been used by leaders to incite their troops against the obvious heresy, sorcery and immorality of their opponents. Indeed, in this instance it was so used by the English army: the anonymous bourgeois diarist of Paris writes that one English soldier referred to Joan as a “bloody tart.”⁵ And Joan’s page, Louis de Coutes, recalled at the retrial of his mistress that as Joan addressed the English defenders of Orleans, one opposing soldier, identified as the Bastard of Granville, asked Joan “whether she expected them to surrender to a woman” or to her soldiers, who were, in his words, “unbelieving pimps.”⁶

Such incidents, and many more like them, did not, however, deter the French soldiers from following Joan. Why? If one locates the military history of Joan of Arc amid the history of other military leaders during the Middle Ages, one is struck by the absence of military qualities shared by her and the noble generals. Instead, one notes Joan’s greater similarity to the leaders of the Free Companies, those mercenary captains who were then quite numerous. One finds such men as John Hawkwood, Robert Knolles, Albergio da Barbiano, Werner of Urslingen, Albert Sterz, Ettore Manfredi, John Fastolf, Conrad of Landau, Jacques de Lalaing, Castruccio Castracane, Hannekin Bongarten, Bertrand de la Salle, and Ambrogio Visconti leading armies of mercenaries. Skilled warriors fought loyally and often successfully for these captains, who rewarded their services with booty and other payments. Finally, all these captains were well remembered, even made into myths, by their soldiers long after their death.⁷

Joan fulfilled the first and third parts of this description; her warriors seemed to have been the best, most skilled soldiers of France, and they rewarded her with frequent victories, at least in comparison with victories achieved by the French army before her arrival. These troops, too, fondly remembered her and her martial talents long after her death. This latter point refers directly to Joan’s rehabilitation

trials of the 1450s and the testimony of so many of her military colleagues there. Most modern authors have discounted these testimonies of events in Joan's life owing to the distance of time and to the fact that France had by the 1450s almost completely driven the English from their lands. This study does not seek to describe what happened to Joan *historically* but only why soldiers followed her—in other words, what emotions they felt that tied them to her leadership—thus the testimony of these recollections, whether or not the events to which they testify occurred, provides a basic source of crucial information about responses to Joan in her own time.

What of the second part of the description of a late-medieval mercenary captain? What did Joan offer her troops when, despite the Bourgeois of Paris's belief to the contrary, she refused to allow them to loot or pillage captured lands or towns?⁸ Joan did not offer her troops terrestrial possessions; she offered them religious possessions, in particular salvation. And in the fifteenth century, in an age of flourishing popular religion, personal devotion, mysticism, and adherence to several living saints, especially to *mulieres sanctae*, Joan's gift to her troops was sufficient to entice them to follow her with a loyalty unknown to any French noble leader of the time, or even to the dauphin himself.⁹

Before establishing this thesis, let me outline Joan's military career.¹⁰ After Joan approached the dauphin in the spring of 1429, and passed examinations of her virginity by the queen and other ladies in the court and of her "divine mission" by court officials, Charles gave her some troops and assigned her to the army then attempting, without much success, to relieve the English siege of Orleans. Joan joined this army in April 1429. It was a demoralized force, led by Count Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans, who had led his troops only two weeks before to an embarrassing defeat at the battle of the Herrings. Dunois was reluctant to attack the English in their well-fortified siegeworks; instead, he wanted to retreat from Orleans, leaving it to the English. Joan would have none of this, for her voices had told her that a victory at Orleans must precede the crowning of the dauphin. A new strategy was undertaken, with the French attacking several of the forts surrounding the town that were held by the besiegers. Finally, on May 6, Joan herself led her soldiers against the best-fortified and best-armed fortress held by the English, the Tourelles, which guarded the bridge and main gate leading into the

town. Despite a formidable English defending force and an unusually large number of gunpowder weapons guarding this boulevard, Joan prevailed, with little loss of life. With the fall of Tourelles, the siege was raised. The first dictate of Joan's voices had been accomplished.

From Orleans, Joan's troops moved against the towns of Jargeau, Meung, and Beaugency, all of which stood in the way of a coronation at Reims and all of which she took with relative ease. The English were not accustomed to such defeats, and their army, led by the capable captains John Fastolf and John Lord Talbot, was determined not to let this trend continue. They decided to face the French in open battle, outside of the town of Patay. On June 17, 1429, this battle was fought, and the French again were victorious; Joan again was present.¹¹ This defeat was as embarrassing to the English as the prior defeat of the battle of Herrings was to the French; Talbot was captured, and Fastolf, believing it unsafe to go against the French with his depleted force, retreated to the safety of Paris's walls. On July 17, 1429, the dauphin was crowned King Charles VII of France at Reims. Joan was by his side, accomplishing the second charge of her voices.

Joan's mission was technically over, but Paris was still in enemy hands, and Joan's voices now added a new charge to her duties: she must recapture the French capital, at that time under the control of a sizable English army, led by John, duke of Bedford. Before the year was out, and after fending off a few relatively minor and bloodless skirmishes with Bedford's force, Joan attacked the Parisian suburb of St. Denis. Here, she met her first defeat, for she was unable to capture St. Denis and was wounded in the leg with a crossbow bolt. But she returned the next spring, attacking north of Paris at the towns of Senlis and Melun.

Once more, she met with less success than she wished, for these towns did not fall; but her persistence was enough to irritate the duke of Bedford and to drag Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, into the fray. In April 1430, the Burgundians attacked the French-controlled town of Compiègne, north of Paris, driving Joan to move her troops there to defend against a Burgundian takeover of the town. On May 23, leading a sortie out of Compiègne, Joan was captured by the Burgundians, sold to the English, and on May 30, 1431, burned as a heretic.

Jean Chartier, writing between 1440 and 1450, remarks on the history of Joan of Arc: "It was a very strange thing to see a woman fight in such an army."¹² Yet there seems to have been no wavering

on the part of the soldiers she led, all of whom, again it seems, followed her without hesitation. The anonymous English author of *The Brut* believes that this was because Joan kept her troops in line by her “crafte of sorcerie,”¹³ while the Bourgeois of Paris claims that “all who disobeyed her should be killed without mercy.”¹⁴

But these were enemy commentators, trying in vain to rationalize the losses their side suffered against her. No French witnesses agree with their assessments of her ability to gain loyal military adherents. “Everyone followed her,” exclaimed one of the king’s squires, Gobert Thibault, at the trial of Joan’s rehabilitation.¹⁵ The anonymous author of the *Journal du siège d’Orléans* agrees: “All regarded her with much affection, men and women, as well as small children. And there was a very extraordinary rush to touch her, or even to touch the horse on which she sat.”¹⁶

Even before she arrived at Orleans, news of her appearance at the king’s court and the promise of leadership had reached her troops. But instead of dreading her advent, the troops seemed to have been pleased. As Jean de Mâcon, an eyewitness of the siege of Orleans, writes: “Only one derision was made . . . they all had great confidence in God and in the good justice of their king and their lord.”¹⁷ The *Chronique de Lorraine* adds: “All the army promised always to obey her.”¹⁸ Many even sought to copy her standard.¹⁹ Joan in turn promised them victory;²⁰ each victory motivated more loyalty and further victory.²¹

Though the soldiers loyally accepted Joan’s leadership, other leaders of the French forces seemed less willing. The Dean of the Collegiate Church of Saint Thibaud of Metz writes that some of the French captains met the announcement of Joan’s military role with “derision and mockery . . . murmuring against the king and his counselors,” and saying sarcastically, “Here is a valiant champion and captain to recover the realm of France.”²²

But like any successful nonnoble “mercenary captain” of the late Middle Ages, Joan ignored the comments of those she displaced in leadership and favor. She thought nothing of going against these proven inept captains. According to the retrial testimony of one of their number, Jean II, duc d’Alençon, she reassured her recalcitrant colleagues that “they would have no difficulty in attacking the English, for God was conducting their campaign. . . if she were not sure that God was conducting their campaign, she would rather keep her sheep than expose herself to dangers like these.”²³

At times, she harshly rebuked the French captains, especially the Bastard of Orleans. Dunois himself testified that when he defended a near-disastrous strategy for Orleans to Joan, which “he and others, wiser on this matter...believed the best and surest,” she replied,

... in the name of God, the counsel of our Lord God is surer and wiser than yours. You thought to deceive me but it is you who are more deceived, for I am bringing you better help than ever came from any soldier or any city, because it is the help of the king of heaven. It does not come through love for me, but from God himself who, on the petition of St. Louis and St. Charlemagne, has had pity on the town of Orleans and has refused to suffer the enemy to have both the body of the lord of Orleans and his city.²⁴

On another occasion, she even threatened the count. At the retrial, Joan’s squire, Jean d’Aulon, recalled these words from the later saint to Dunois: “Bastard, Bastard, in the name of God I command you that as soon as you hear of Fastolf’s coming you will let me know. For if he gets through without my knowing it, I swear to you that I will have your head cut off.” To this, the count “answered that he did not doubt that, and that he would certainly let her know.”²⁵

When none of these tactics worked, she simply disobeyed the orders of her noble superiors. Simon Charles, the president of the Chamber of Accounts, testified at the retrial that when the French captains felt, after capturing a few bastilles at Orleans, that they should not make further attacks against the English, even ordering a guard, under the command of the Sire de Gaucourt, placed at the gates “so that no one would go out from the camp,” Joan opposed this decision: “And against the will of this de Gaucourt, the soldiers left to make an assault on the Bastille des Augustins, which they captured with strength and violence.”²⁶

None of this bickering among leaders seems to have influenced the French soldiers to forsake their loyalty to Joan. In some cases, it may well have helped her, for in their eyes she brought action and victory, while older, noble generals had achieved nothing but inaction and defeat. Before long, the French captains began to agree with and even admire her; by the end of the siege of Orleans, the French leaders included her in their strategy sessions. Some, like the ever-faithful duc d’Alençon, frequently sought her martial advice.²⁷ Her acceptance by these leaders strengthened her favor among the troops.

Most witnesses claim that Joan was without dispute herself a good soldier. "Joan was very simple in all her actions, except in the conduct of war, in which she was altogether an expert," testified Simon Charles.²⁸ Marguerite la Touroulde, Joan's hostess at Chinon, agreed: "Joan was very simple and ignorant and knew absolutely nothing, it seemed to me, except the art of war."²⁹ Thibault d'Armagnac or de Termes, a knight and captain of Chartres, added:

Except in matters of war, she was simple and innocent. But in leading and drawing up armies and in waging war, in ordering an army for battle and motivating the soldiers, she behaved like the most experienced captain in all the world, one who had been educated in warfare for an entire lifetime.³⁰

"She could ride a horse wielding a lance as well as a more experienced soldier could," witnessed Marguerite la Touroulde,³¹ with the duc d'Alençon claiming that she was a skilled tilter.³² She seemed to have been especially adept at sighting the relatively new gunpowder weaponry that the French used in their sieges, something agreed to by both the Bastard of Orleans and the duc d'Alençon. As the duke testified:

... everyone marveled at this, that she acted so wisely and clearly in waging war, as if she was a captain who had the experience of twenty or thirty years; and especially in the setting up of artillery, for in that she held herself magnificently.³³

In battle, there was no equal to her. No less an important figure than Pope Pius II was impressed by her battlefield capabilities. He writes:

The woman was made the leader of war. Arms were brought to her, horses led; the girl mounted with defiance, and burning in her armor, her lance quivering, she compelled her horse to dance, to run, and in no way to turn from its course.³⁴

Yet others remember that, although Joan may have been adept in the military arts, she refused to use her sword in battle or to shed blood, preferring to carry her standard instead.³⁵ According to Jean d'Aulon, the latter is true, for Joan, he says, was unable to suffer the sight of spilled blood.³⁶

But this is not the legacy of Joan of Arc. Our impression of Joan is not one of her military skills; it is instead one of her religious devotion. Why should we think that the fifteenth-century impression of her would be different, even among her soldiers? The evidence

certifies that Joan during her life and especially at the time of her retrial was remembered for her spiritual devotion. She was considered by those who knew her to be a *mulier sancta*, sent by God to perform duties that no one else could: to lead the French army to victory and to ensure that the crown of France was placed on the head of its rightful heir. Her spiritual sanctity would rub off, and her soldiers would be able to participate in the salvation that was obviously hers.

“Many people believed that she had come from God,” writes Jean Chartier, “because her works and leadership demonstrated so.”³⁷ Almost all of Joan’s French contemporaries say the same thing; and most of her enemies, principally Burgundian and English witnesses, claim the opposite, that she was from the devil.³⁸ This is both the most essential and—perhaps especially for modern historians—the least understandable aspect of Joan’s attraction for her soldiers. But her time was one of mystical devotion to religion, where men and especially women of high sanctity, good morals, and honest Christian character testified to a special consciousness of God, and they gathered legions of adherents with their spiritual skills. They also frequently crossed the line of heresy, at least to some observers.³⁹

Joan was one of these. In his retrial testimony, Jean Luillier, a citizen of Orleans, averred

... that he and all the people of the city believed that, if the Maid had not come from God to help them, the inhabitants and the city would in a short time have been at the mercy and in the power of the enemy besieging them.⁴⁰

To many, she was like Deborah, Esther, or Judith from the Old Testament—spiritual women who brought their people relief because they followed their messages from God.⁴¹ To others she was the fulfiller of prophecy, from Merlin, Sibyl, and even Bede.⁴² Perhaps there is no more eloquent a witness than Christine de Pizan, who writes a message to the enemies of France before Joan’s death:

Oh, all you blind people, can’t you detect God’s hand in this? If you can’t, you are truly stupid for how else could the Maid who strikes you down dead have been sent to us?—And you don’t have sufficient strength! Do you want to fight against God?⁴³

Joan was striking in her display of morality and devotion. This especially impressed her soldiers, as testified to by Jean Barbin, doctor of law and advocate to the Court of Parlement: “The soldiers considered her a saint, for she behaved in such a godly way when with the army, both in words and deeds, that no one could have uttered a reproach against her.”⁴⁴

In particular, at her retrial Joan was remembered for her religious devotion and service. She attended confession often, devoted herself “assiduously” to her prayers, heard mass every day, and “frequently” took the eucharistic sacrament. She was especially devout to the Blessed Virgin. She also refused to fight on Ascension Day. As Seguin de Seguin, a Dominican friar and professor of theology, summarized: “She was never found lazy in her religious duties.”⁴⁵

Joan was also remembered as being charitable to all, but especially to the poor and destitute.⁴⁶ She was even merciful to her enemies; on one occasion, testified Louis de Coutes, when she encountered an English prisoner who had been “hit ... on the head” and left for dead by a Frenchman, “she dismounted and received the Englishman’s confession, holding his head and comforting him as much as she could.”⁴⁷

Joan set an elevated moral tone for her soldiers. Witnesses at the retrial recalled that she would not allow blasphemy⁴⁸ or gambling.⁴⁹ She would also not allow looting, even for food, and she refused herself to eat anything that might have been plundered.⁵⁰ Joan especially abhorred prostitutes, those “immoral women” who generally followed the armies of the Hundred Years War, offering their services to the soldiers. On one occasion near the town of Château Thierry, recalled Louis de Coutes,

when she saw the mistress of one of the soldiers, who was a knight, she chased her with a naked sword. She did not strike the woman, but she warned her gently and kindly that she must never appear in soldier’s company again, or she, Joan, would do something to her that she would dislike.⁵¹

Joan frequently, exhorted her soldiers to “confess their sins and give thanks to God” for their victories, and she thought nothing of scolding her troops “harshly” when she saw them doing what she thought “ought not to be done.”⁵² The threat was always present. If her troops would not follow her religious example, Joan told her confessor, Jean Pasquerel, “she would not stay among them longer, but would leave their company.”⁵³

She was also remembered for her “military” miracles. Joan had passed through almost all of enemy-held Burgundy on her route to the king, seemingly without hindrance.⁵⁴ She had raised the siege of the town of Orleans and had conveyed the king to his coronation at Reims, precisely as she said she would.⁵⁵ When the winds needed to change to allow the ships carrying provisions to the town of Orleans

to deliver their cargo, as Joan said they would, they changed.⁵⁶ When the town of Troyes needed to fall in three days, because Joan predicted that it would, it fell.⁵⁷

Perhaps the most impressive of Joan's "miracles" and evidence of her sanctity was her virginity, and the fact that they, as soldiers in the field, felt no sexual arousal when around her.⁵⁸ Even her nudity did not inspire arousal. This was recalled at the retrial by Jean d'Aulon, Joan's squire:

Although she was a young girl, beautiful and shapely, and many times when helping to arm her or otherwise he had seen her breasts, and other times when he was dressing her wounds he had seen her legs quite bare, and he had gone close to her many times—and he said that he was strong, young, and vigorous in those days—never, despite any sight or contact I had with the Maid, was my body moved to carnal desire for her, nor did any of her soldiers or squires, as he had heard them say and tell many times.⁵⁹

Did her own qualities and the restrictions she placed on normal soldierly activities divert the attention of her soldiers from Joan? Did this discourage her soldiers' adherence to her? In no way. They seemed to have welcomed the holiness that she represented, and in fact some marveled and even relished the spirituality of their own existence when with her. They seemed to draw nearer to her when fighting by her side, and after her death, they remembered her military activities with a legend-building fealty.

The fifteenth century was an age of change, "the prospect of Europe," in the words of Margaret Aston.⁶⁰ Joan was at the junction of two such changes. She was a *mulier sancta*, a holy woman who sought for her own spiritual and mystical experiences at the end of the Middle Ages. She was also the nonnoble leader of a "modern" army, similar in so many ways to the image of other late-medieval captains of mercenary bands. Unlike all others, however, she rewarded her soldiers not with booty, but with spiritual riches. For this, they followed her unfailingly. Simon Beaucroix in his testimony at her retrial summed up nicely the feeling of these soldiers, of whom he was one, that "he well remembered that when he conversed with her he never had a desire to sin."⁶¹

This essay is dedicated to Professor John Gilchrist, who was tragically killed in an auto accident during the Christmas break, 1992. He was not only a superb scholar and the outside examiner of my dissertation at the Centre for Medieval Studies but also a generous friend to all young scholars with whom he came in contact. *Requiescit in pacem.*

NOTES

1. An indispensable bibliography of original and secondary sources for the study of Joan of Arc is Nadia Margolis, *Joan of Arc in History, Literature, and Film: A Select, Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1990), which is complete to 1988. As evidenced by the additions found in the bibliographies of the *International Medieval Bibliography* and the *Annales de Bourgogne*, much continues to be written about this fifteenth-century French military leader.

2. Far more was written about Joan's military career during the nineteenth century than has been written about it during the twentieth. See Margolis, pp. 174–92.

3. Almost all of the numerous biographies of Joan contain a history of her life before meeting with the dauphin. The most accessible currently, although far from the best, is Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Harmondsworth, 1981).

4. Little has been written about women warriors in the Middle Ages. See Megan McLaughlin, "The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe," *Women's Studies* 17 (1990), 193–209. I have found no evidence of late-medieval women warriors other than Joan.

5. *Journal d'un bourgeois of Paris*, in *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc dite La Pucelle*, 5 vols., ed. Jules Quicherat (Paris, 1841–49) [hereafter Quicherat], 4:465: "Paillard! Ribaude!" The translation of this French expletive as "bloody tart" comes from Janet Shirley's translation of the Bourgeois of Paris's writings (*A Parisian Journal, 1405–1449* [Oxford, 1968], p. 240).

N.B.: In the final two volumes of Jules Quicherat's edition can be found a collection of all contemporary sources for Joan of Arc known to him. While there are in many instances better editions of these sources, I have used Quicherat's edition for its accessibility to readers.

6. In Quicherat, 3.68:

Cui Johanna quidam vocatus le *Bastard de Granville* dixit plures injurias, quaerendo ab eadem Johanna si vellet quod se redderent uni mulieri, vocando Gallicos cum eadem Johanna existentes "*maquereaulx mescréans.*"

(The translation of "*maquereaulx mescréans*" as "unbelieving pimps" is by Régine Pernoud, *The Retrial of Joan of Arc: The Evidence at the Trial for Her Rehabilitation*, trans. J.M. Cohen [London, 1955], p. 136.) See also the retrial testimony of Jean Pasquerel, in Quicherat, 3.108, 110; Mathieu

Thomassin, *Registre delphinale*, in Quicherat, 4.311–12; Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. Thibaud of Metz, *Chroniques de la noble ville et cité de Metz*, in Quicherat, 4.327; Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII*, in Quicherat, 4.353; Letter from John, duke of Bedford, in Quicherat, 5.136–37; and *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, ed. H. Nicolas (London, 1835), vol. 4, p.223.

7. On late-medieval mercenaries, see Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and Their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (Totowa, 1974), especially pp. 25–106; Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. M. Jones (Oxford, 1984), pp. 99–101, 150–65; Malcolm Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (London, 1981), pp. 151–57; Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c.1300–c.1450* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 73–76; and Fritz Gaupp, “The Condottiere John Hawkwood,” *History* n.s. 23 (1938–39), 305–21.

8. See, for example, Simon Beaucroix’s retrial testimony, in Quicherat, 3.81.

9. On the religious devotion of the age, see Francis Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1979), pp. 80–130; Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, 1980), pp. 73–135; Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study in the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Garden City, 1949), pp. 151–200; Margaret Aston, *The Fifteenth Century: The Prospect of Europe* (London, 1968), pp. 149–73; Denys Hay, *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed. (London, 1989), pp. 320–57; Richard Kieckhefer, “Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion,” in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York, 1987), pp. 75–108; and Alois Maria Haas, “Schools of Late Medieval Mysticism,” in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York, 1987), pp. 140–75.

On the late-medieval *mulieres sanctae*, see Caroline Walker Bynum, “Religious Women in the Later Middle Ages,” in Raitt, pp. 121–39; Brenda M. Bolton, “Mulieres Sanctae,” in *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. S.M. Stuard (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 141–58; Valerie M. Lagorio, “The Continental Women Mystics of the Middle Ages: An Assessment,” in *The Spirituality of Western Christendom, II: The Roots of the Modern Christian Tradition*, ed. E.R. Elder (Kalamazoo, 1984), pp. 71–90, 309–12; Michael Goodich, “The Contours of Female Piety in Later Medieval Hagiography” *Church History* 50 (1981), 20–32; Susan Dickman, “Margery Kempe and the Continental Tradition of the Pious Woman,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium III*, ed. M. Glasscoe (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 150–68. For Joan of Arc as a *mulier sancta*, see Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Joan of Arc: Heretic, Mystic, Shaman* (Lewiston, 1986), pp. 1–20.

10. On Joan's military career, see Régine Pernoud, *Joan of Arc by Herself and Her Witnesses*, trans. Edward Hyams (New York, 1964), pp. 70–164; W.S. Scott, *Jeanne d'Arc* (New York, 1974), pp. 46–99; Alfred H. Burne, *The Agincourt War: A Military History of the Latter Part of the Hundred Years War from 1369 to 1453* (London, 1956), pp. 225–71; Robin Neillands, *The Hundred Years War* (London, 1990), pp. 252–65; Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years War: The English in France, 1337–1453* (New York, 1978), pp. 213–32; Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 172–75; Hugh Talbot, *The English Achilles: An Account of the Life and Campaigns of John Talbot, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury (1383–1453)* (London, 1981), pp. 91–102; and Pierre Duparc, “La délivrance d’Orléans et la mission de Jeanne d’Arc,” in *Jeanne d’Arc: une époque, un rayonnement* (Paris, 1982), pp. 153–58.

11. Joan's influence at the battle of Patay is a matter of dispute. See Enguerran de Monstrelet, *Chronique*, in Quicherat, 4.372–74.

12. Jean Chartier, *Chronique de Charles VII*, in Quicherat, 4.70.

13. *The Brut or The Chronicles of England*, ed. F.W.D. Brie (London, 1908), vol. 2, p. 439.

14. Bourgeois of Paris, in Quicherat, 4.469: “... qu'il fust ordonné que trestous ceulx qui lui desobéiroient, fussent occis sans mercy.” This quotation is included in Joan's initial comments made to the dauphin, as noted by the Bourgeois of Paris, who was nowhere near the event at the time. For the complete speech of Joan to the dauphin, see pp. 467–74.

15. In Quicherat, 3.76. See also *Journal du siège d'Orléans et du voyage de Reims*, in Quicherat, 4.135.

16. In Quicherat, 4.153.

17. Jean de Mâcon, *Chronique du siège d'Orléans et de l'établissement de al fête du 8 mai 1429*, ed. André Simon, in *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 8 (1847), 503. See also *Chronique de la Pucelle*, in Quicherat, 4.213–14.

18. In Quicherat, 4.336–37. See also Jean Barbin's testimony at the retrial, in Quicherat, 3.84.

19. See Joan's testimony at her trial, in Quicherat, 1.97.

20. See Seguin de Seguin's testimony at retrial, in Quicherat, 3.204.

21. See Jean d'Aulon's deposition, in Quicherat, 3.213.

22. In Quicherat, 4.327. Most historians believe that Joan had little impact on command decisions at Orleans and was far from being “in command of the French army” there. As Marina Warner writes (p. 79):

There is no evidence at all, contrary to the popular story, that she was in command of the troops at Orleans in any official capacity. That she roused their loyalty and fighting spirit is refutable; but the king had not given her the command.

See also Warner, pp. 79–84; Pernoud, especially pp. 74–84, 107; Seward, pp. 218–19; and Neillands, pp. 259–60. Only Burne differs with this view,

implying that "official" command is insufficient to define Joan's leadership role at Orleans or elsewhere (pp. 236–71). In agreement with Burne, in a future publication, I shall seek to substantiate this implication.

23. In Quicherat, 3.95. See also Jean Chartier, in Quicherat, 4.59–60.

24. In Quicherat, 3.5–6.

25. In Quicherat, 3.212. See also *Chronique de la Pucelle*, in Quicherat, 4.218–19.

26. In Quicherat, 3.116–17.

27. See the retrial testimony of Dunois, in Quicherat, 3.10–11; the deposition of Jean d'Aulon, in Quicherat, 3.211; the *Journal du siège d'Orléans*, in Quicherat, 4.182–83; and Guillaume Gruel, *Chronique d'Arthur de Richemont*, in Quicherat, 4.317.

28. In Quicherat, 3.116.

29. In Quicherat, 3.87.

30. In Quicherat, 3.120. See also Perceval de Cagny, *Chronique des ducs d'Alençon*, in Quicherat, 4.30–31 and Mathieu Thomassin, in Quicherat, 4.309–10. According to the retrial testimony of Dunois, Joan also knew her military limits, in Quicherat, 3.16.

31. In Quicherat, 3.88.

32. In Quicherat, 3.92. See also the duke's testimony in 3.100.

33. In Quicherat, 3.100. See also Dunois's testimony, in Quicherat, 3.13.

34. *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae temporibus suis contingerunt*, in Quicherat, 4.510. See also duc d'Alençon, in Quicherat, 3.95; Jean d'Aulon, in Quicherat, 3.214; Mathieu Thomassin, in Quicherat, 4.306; the Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. Thibaud of Metz, in Quicherat, 4.322; Jacobus Philippus Foresti Bergomensis, *De plurimis claris sceletisque mulieribus*, in Quicherat, 4.523; and Edmond de Dynther, *Chronica nobilissimorum ducum Lotharingiae et Brabantiae ac regum Francorum*, in Quicherat, 4.426.

35. See the retrial testimony of Seguin de Seguin, in Quicherat, 3.205.

36. In Quicherat, 3.213. See also the retrial testimony of Louis de Coutes, in Quicherat, 3.68–69.

37. In Quicherat, 4.66.

38. See, for example, the account of Joan's exploits found in the *Journal* of the Bourgeois of Paris, in Quicherat, 4.461–74.

39. See above, note 10.

40. In Quicherat, 3.5–26. See also Dunois's testimony, in Quicherat, 3.3; Jean Chartier, in Quicherat, 4.69–70; Robert Blondel, *De reductione Normanniae*, in Quicherat, 4.347–49; and Martin Le Franc, *Champion des dames*, in Quicherat, 5.45.

41. See Thomas Basin, in Quicherat, 4.356–57; Christine de Pizan, *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty (Oxford, 1977), p. 33; and an anonymous Latin poet of France, in Quicherat, 5.35.

42. See Christine de Pizan, p. 34; Catherine Le Royer, in Quicherat, 2.446–47; Jean Barbin, in Quicherat, 3.82–83; the Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. Thibaud of Metz, in Quicherat, 4.323; Mathieu Thomassin, in Quicherat, 4.305; and Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, in Quicherat, 4.480–81.

43. Christine de Pizan, p. 37:

N'appercevez-vous, gent avugle,
Que Dieu a icy la main mise?
Et qui ne le voit est bien bugle,
Car comment seroit en tel guise
Ceste Pucelle ça tramise
Qui tous mors vous fait jus abatre?
—Ne force [n']avez qui souffise!
Voulez-vous contre Dieu combatre?

(The translation is by the editors and on p. 48.) See also pp. 36–39; Dunois' s retrial testimony, in Quicherat, 3.45; *Journal d'un siège d'Orléans*, in Quicherat, 4.127, 129; Mathieu Thomassin, in Quicherat, 4.309–10; Jean de Mâcon, p. 503; Guillaume Girault, *Note dur la levée du siège d'Orléans*, in Quicherat, 4.282; and a letter from Alain Chartier to a foreign prince, in Quicherat, 5.135.

44. In Quicherat, 3.84: “Dicit insuper quod armati eam reputabant quasi sanctam, quia ita se habebat in exercitu, in dictis et factis, secundum Deum, quod a nullo reprehendi poterat.” See also the retrial testimonies of Raoul de Gaucourt, in Quicherat, 3.18–19 and Louis de Coutes, in Quicherat, 3.67.

45. In Quicherat, 3.205. See also the testimonies of Bertrand de Poulengy, in Quicherat, 2.458; Gobert Thibault, in Quicherat, 3.76; Simon Beaucroix, in Quicherat, 3.81; Pierre Vaillant, in Quicherat, 3.14; Raoul de Gaucourt, in Quicherat, 3.219; Louis de Coutes, in Quicherat, 3.66; Jean Pasquerel, in Quicherat, 3.101–02; the duc d'Alençon, in Quicherat, 3.124; and Dunois; and the chronicle accounts of Thomas Basin, in Quicherat, 4.354, the Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. Thibaud of Metz, in Quicherat, 4.322; and Jean de Mâcon, p. 505.

46. See, for one, Marguerite la Touroulde, in Quicherat, 3.87–88.

47. In Quicherat, 3.71–72:

Dicit insuper quod ipsa Johanna erat multum pia, et habebat magnam pietatem de tanta occisione, quia, cum quadam vice unus Gallicus duceret certos Anglicos captivos, ipse qui eos ducebat percussit unum aliorum Anglicorum in capite, in tantam quod ipsum reddidit quasi mortuum. Ipsa Johanna hoc videns descendit de equo, et fecit eumdem Anglicum confiteri, tenendo eum per caput, et consolando eum pro posse.

48. See the testimonies of Seguin de Seguin, in Quicherat, 3.205–06, Reginalda, widow of Jean Huré, in Quicherat, 3.34–35, Simon