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Texts and Teaching

Apocalypse Then, Apocalypse Now:

Rethinking Joan of Arc in the Twenty-First Century

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Joan of Arc has stood alone among legendary figures of the Middle Ages in her capacity to be appropriated and employed for a host of modern noble causes. However, a fresh examination of Joan's words and deeds reveals that her aims and objectives were not the universal "greater goods" of modern activists who have used her story to craft their own narratives. I propose that Joan's continued attractiveness as a cultural icon now faces two major obstacles. First, in the wake of the rapid secularization of modern western society and the evolution of social mores related to gender identity and sexuality, the piously motivated gender-bending career of this androgynous "virgin crusader" might lose its popular appeal. Second, in the post-9/11 world of global terrorism, the apocalyptic nature of Joan's political agenda and her passionate call to arms are especially problematic. The modern geopolitical landscape is plagued with religiously inspired acts of terror and sectarian violence. Joan's conflation of her political agenda with God's will, and the violent rhetoric and methods that she used to accomplish her mission can no longer reasonably serve as a guide for cultural or political discourse, either in domestic or international politics.¹

Introduction

No figure from late medieval European history has generated as much modern popular interest, scholarly ink and as many cinematic portrayals as the illiterate "Maid of Lorraine," Joan of Arc.² A key player in the final stages of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453),

1 A version of this article was presented at the New York State Association of European Historians Conference at the State University of New York, Albany (October, 2016).

2 In her own tongue, her name was Jhenne, Jehanne or Jhanette. Joan also called herself "la Pucelle" ("The Maid"). As Warner notes, pucelle is a complex term denoting both "virginity" and "nubility." Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 22-23.

Joan's short yet spectacular life (1412-1431) provides rich opportunities to analyze the conflicts of social class, gender identity and religious conformity that her career embodied.³ As Robin Blaetz⁴ has shown in her trenchant analysis of the many "faces" and "uses" of Joan, the martyred saint has had a long afterlife as a cultural icon and as the dramatic subject of the stage and screen.⁵ In the last century, Joan has also found her rightful place in the serious and critical scholarship of academia.⁶

This article is a reflection upon my recent experiences teaching a new class titled, "Joan of Arc: Myth, History and Representation." This undergraduate course primarily focuses on Joan's portrayal in the medium of mainstream film, since as with most historic figures, this is how she is primarily known to modern audiences. The first part of the semester is dedicated to a rigorous historical inquiry into the travails of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century France and the devastation of the Hundred Years War that framed Joan's brief career and fueled her anti-English passion. The second half of the semester

3 The bibliography for Joan of Arc studies is voluminous and multilingual. This article is directed to a broad audience, including non-specialists in the field of medieval studies. I have mostly limited my references to texts that are readily available in English or translation.

4 Blaetz, *Visions of the Maid*. Another important work on the theoretical underpinnings of modern Joan studies is Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire*. More specialized works on Joan in dramatic film include, in chronological order: Bordwell, *Filmguide to La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*; Lerner, "Joan of Arc: Three Films;" Aberth, *A Knight at the Movies*; Rosentstone, "The Reel Joan of Arc;" Benson, "Oh, What a Lovely War! Joan of Arc on Screen;" Bernau, "Girls on Film: Medieval Virginity in the Cinema;" Finke and Shichtman, "The Politics of Hagiography: Joan of Arc on the Screen." For a broad analysis of Joan's reception in literature and film, see Goy-Blanquet, *Joan of Arc: A Saint for All Reasons*. For Joan's fictive reconstruction among important modern literary figures, see Astell, *Joan of Arc and Sacrificial Authorship*.

5 David Byrne, the lead singer of the pop band, The Talking Heads, recently premiered a rock opera called, "Joan of Arc: Into the Fire," in March of 2017. This opera features a spirited performance by Jo Lampert, who plays the musical role of Joan (see note 71). Ron Maxwell, director of the well-known Civil War films, *Gettysburg* (1993) and *Gods and Generals* (2003), has been laboring on an epic Joan of Arc trilogy for more than two decades. His film has the working title, *Joan of Arc: Virgin Warrior*. As of this writing, it is difficult to find any current information on the state of this project (Maxwell reportedly has had difficulty funding it).

6 There is also a vast religiously focused literature on Joan. In this article I generally have not included references to works whose primary purpose is the cultivation of personal piety, devotion or spirituality.

focuses on the historical record of Joan's life, her enduring popularity as a cultural icon and her portrayal in select mainstream dramas. Since she is the most depicted female character in the history of cinema, I narrowed the time frame and selected some of the best known film portrayals of Joan, beginning with Carl Theodor Dreyer's classic silent movie, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928),⁷ and ending with the most recent work of Philippe Ramos, *Jeanne Captive* (2011).⁸

As I researched this course, I began to wonder if the bloody historical events of the early twenty-first century would force a paradigm shift in the popular image of Joan as the heroic cultural icon who has been appropriated for a number of seemingly noble causes since the end of the nineteenth century. Beginning with the catastrophic terrorist attacks on U.S. soil on September 11, 2001, there has been a new wave of religiously motivated violence on a global scale that has yielded disturbing levels of "divinely inspired" bloodshed and mass killing.⁹ In the past few years, it has become a tragically familiar media narrative that terrorists wielding assault rifles, suicide

7 Dreyer's silent film, which features the legendary performance of Maria Falconetti, is one of the greatest films (silent or spoken) of the twentieth century. Focusing on the trial and death of Joan, it combines attention to historical detail with the highest levels of spiritual and aesthetic discourse. As David Bordwell argues, Dreyer's movie played a critical role "in changing people's attitudes about cinema, particularly because of its decisive demonstration that film could be an art in its own right;" and Dreyer's film "convinced many viewers that cinema could be intellectually respectable." Bordwell, *Filmguide to La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*; cited by Harty, "Jeanne au Cinéma," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 245. Most scholars and film critics concur that Luc Besson's well-known film, *The Messenger* (1999), features one of the worst interpretations of Joan, here played by Besson's wife, Milla Jovovich. For a critical assessment of the most famous Joan movies, including Dreyer's and Besson's, see Finke and Shichtman, "The Politics of Hagiography: Joan of Arc on the Screen," *Cinematic Illuminations*, 109-155.

8 The most recent portrayal of Joan in a mainstream drama is by Clémence Poésy. Directed by Philippe Ramos, *Jeanne Captive* (2011) subtly positions itself in the post-9/11 world of Joan studies. Far from being a religiously inspired icon of female courage and fortitude, Poésy's Joan appears to be a despondent, suicidal girl who is driven to despair by her captivity. Aside from a dramatic opening, the film loses its focus early on and meanders without any convincing spiritual or aesthetic vision.

9 The connection between self-proclaimed jihadists who commit these atrocities and mainstream Islam is a hotly disputed topic. Many of the victims of these terror attacks are themselves Muslims, living in predominantly Muslim countries that are war-torn or racked with political, cultural, and sectarian strife. A recent, nuanced analysis of the roots of modern terrorism is Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

vests, or knives shout, “God is great,” and then unleash their apocalyptic violence on victims whom they identify as the enemies of their righteous cause. The terrorists also invariably perish in the carnage they create, achieving the status of martyrdom in the eyes of their sympathizers. It is a horrifying irony that two ISIS-inspired terrorists beheaded eighty-four-year-old Roman Catholic priest Jacques Hamel while he was celebrating Mass in Rouen on July 26, 2016. His murder took place in the very city where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake almost six centuries ago.

Mindful of these terrifying events, I began to reflect critically upon the popularly accepted representation of Joan as the divinely guided, courageous warrior for a noble cause who met an unjust, tragic end. Will this image survive the renewed scrutiny of historians who will compare recent acts of religiously inspired violence to Joan’s fanatical quest to tip the scales of history?¹⁰ While I cannot offer a definitive answer to this question, I can put forth some challenges for future research and offer some exploratory insights into where Joan studies might collide with the social, cultural and religious realities of the early twenty-first century.

I propose that Joan’s continued attractiveness as a cultural icon now faces two major obstacles. First, in the wake of the rapid secularization of modern western society and the evolution of social mores related to gender identity and sexuality, the piously motivated gender-bending career of this androgynous “virgin crusader” might lose its popular appeal. Second, in the post-9/11 world of global terrorism, the apocalyptic nature of Joan’s political agenda and her passionate call to arms are especially problematic. The modern geopolitical landscape is plagued with religiously inspired acts of terror and sectarian violence. Joan’s conflation of her political agenda with God’s

10 For a good recent attempt to understand western (i.e., European and American) conceptions of warfare and how they are linked to Christian theories of regenerative violence and holy war, see Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror*. A compelling study of the religious roots of modern terrorism can be found in Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11*. But a very different approach to this subject is taken by best-selling author Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*. Armstrong argues against the assumption that religion is the root cause of modern violence.

will, and the violent rhetoric and methods she used to accomplish her mission can no longer reasonably serve as a guide for cultural or political discourse, either in domestic or international politics.¹¹

The Life and Death of Joan

The volume of academic literature related to Joan is staggering, covering a variety interconnected topics: the Hundred Years War;¹² the life of Joan;¹³ her military exploits;¹⁴ and her trial, including the surviving records of her original trial in 1431, and the so-called “nullification trial” that exonerated her in 1456.¹⁵ While scholars continue to debate various aspects of Joan’s career, the basic facts of her brief and tumultuous life are not in dispute. Born to a peasant family in Domrémy (1412), Joan had a conventional childhood

11 The stunning, decisive victory of political newcomer Emmanuel Macron in the French presidential election (May, 2017) serves as an example of the futility of using Joan as a political rallying point. The opponent whom Macron defeated, the ultra right Marine Le Pen, ran on a platform of ardent French nationalism, and she frequently deployed stadium-sized images of Joan of Arc at campaign rallies.

12 One of the most basic histories of the war is Seward, *The Hundred Years War*. For a more recent, exhaustive treatment, one should consult Villalon and Kagay, *The Hundred Years War: A Wider Focus*. One cannot adequately grasp Joan’s career without placing it within the context of Henry V’s (r. 1413-1422) renewal of the war and his famous, bloody victories on French soil. See, for example, Barker, *Agincourt: Henry V and the Battle That Made England*. The most complete biography of this English king is Allmand, *Henry V*.

13 Castor, *Joan of Arc*. Castor’s new biography has become one of the best known interpretations of the life of Joan in the English language. But another recent work that should be consulted is Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*. The pioneering work of Pernoud also continues to be relevant: Pernoud and Clin, *Joan of Arc. Her Story*. Though dated, Warner’s *Joan of Arc* is still an extremely valuable resource, presenting both a traditional biography and an analysis of Joan’s cultural significance. For a collection of important essays on various aspects of Joan’s life, see Wood and Wheeler, *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*. For an analysis of Joan’s relationship with the political and ecclesial structures of France and England, see Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III*.

14 DeVries, “A Woman as Leader of Men: Joan of Arc’s Military Career,” in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 3-18; DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader*.

15 The original Latin manuscripts were first edited into a modern form by Quicherat, *Procès de condamnation de Jeanne d’Arc*. For the nullification trial, see Pernoud, *The Retrial of Joan of Arc*.

until around the age of twelve or thirteen, when she began to have visions and “hear voices” from God.¹⁶ She claimed that these voices implored her to go to the exiled and disinherited Dauphin,¹⁷ Charles Valois (1403-1461), with the message that he was the rightful king of France. About four years later, Joan abandoned her family and enlisted the help of Robert Baudricourt, the captain of a local garrison loyal to Charles to gain an audience with the Dauphin. She eventually embarked, with an armed escort, on an eleven day journey of several hundred miles that was as unlikely as it was dangerous. Joan’s persistence led to a memorable audience with Charles in Chinon. Joan disappeared for a private meeting with him and impressed the Dauphin with some mysterious revelation about his legitimate right to the throne. Soon thereafter, she had to submit to a gynecological exam to prove her virginity, and then she was subjected to intense questioning by learned theologians in Poitiers¹⁸ to prove her orthodoxy. Only then was she allowed to accompany an army that would march with her to liberate Orléans.¹⁹

16 Sullivan makes a convincing case for ambiguity on the part of Joan on the precise nature of her visions and voices. She spoke of receiving voices “from God” and declared herself to be “God’s messenger” early in her career. It was only during her condemnation trial that her inquisitors pushed her into specificity on the identity of her visions and voices, that they came from Saints Margaret, Catherine, and Michael. Margaret of Antioch (c. 289-304) and Catherine of Alexandria (c. 287-305) are apocryphal saints that were honored in the medieval Church as virgin martyrs who rebuffed marriage proposals by pagan Romans. St. Michael is the angelic warrior who was patron of the famous Norman abbey that was never captured by the English in the Hundred Years War, Le Mont St. Michel. Sullivan, “I Do Not Name to You The Voice of St. Michael,” in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 85-111. The cult of all of these saints was extremely popular and widespread in Joan’s time. See Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 132-133.

17 The French word, *Dauphin*, means “dolphin” in English and was the term used to designate the heir to the French throne, beginning in the mid-fourteenth century. Charles the Wise (r. 1364-1380) was the first crown prince to use that designation before he became king. The heraldic symbol of the crown prince was a dolphin and the fleur-de-lis, the traditional symbol of the French monarchy.

18 The interrogations of Joan at Poitiers were lengthy and detailed, lasting about three weeks (March-April, 1429). She referred to the answers that she gave in Poitiers several times during her condemnation trial a few years later. Regrettably, this important record, referred to as the “Book of Poitiers,” has not survived. It was likely destroyed after Joan was convicted of heresy and executed. Wood believes that Charles VII himself might have been behind its destruction since Joan’s original “mission” might have only referred to the liberation of Orléans, not his coronation in Reims. Wood, “Joan of Arc’s Mission and the Lost Record of Her Interrogation at Poitiers,” in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 19-29. See also Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*, 45-54.

19 This examination may have been designed not only to determine her virginity but her gender as well. If she had been found not to be a female virgin, as she claimed, her “visions” would have been immediately discredited in the eyes of Charles’ court.

Convinced of her rectitude, orthodoxy and virginity, the Dauphin and his court equipped her with armor, a horse, a banner that she designed and a sword. In May of 1429, “The Maid of Lorraine” lifted the seven-month siege of Orléans, within about ten days of her arrival. And despite being seriously wounded by an arrow from a crossbow, the seventeen-year-old Joan celebrated an unlikely victory over the English army, which to date had scored multiple lopsided victories over the demoralized French. Within a few months, she made the dangerous trek with the Dauphin through enemy occupied territory to the cathedral of Reims, the traditional site for the consecration of French monarchs.²⁰ Dressed in a full suit of armor, clutching her famous banner, and armed with her sword, she witnessed his solemn coronation as King Charles VII, on July 17, 1429. Joan was the only female in the retinue who stood in the immediate presence of the king when he was crowned. She had reached the apogee of her career.

Joan’s impatience with the slow pace of Charles VII’s diplomacy with the Burgundians and English soon led her to make impetuous decisions that cost her life. Having gained the crown of France, the new Valois king seemed to have lost all interest in continuing the war; he would rather engage in subtle negotiations than wield a sword. But the fact that Charles lived in exile from his capital city of Paris, which was occupied by his Burgundian enemies, was more than Joan could bear. In her divinely sanctioned zeal to drive every last Englishman from France,²¹ Joan continued to prosecute her own

20 According to legend, this cathedral was also the original site of the baptism (496) of the first Catholic Merovingian King of France, Clovis (r. 481-509). The bishop who baptized him was St. Remigius (also known as Remi or Remy). The cathedral also possessed the Holy Ampulla, a glass vial that contained holy oil used for the consecration of French kings since the twelfth century.

21 Joan’s deep animosity towards the English and Burgundians must be situated within the full context of the Hundred Years War. This conflict produced its own share of atrocities against civilians and non-combatants by marauding English and Burgundian armies. As Seward notes, English commanders often used the tactics of “total warfare” to bend the will of the French monarchy and princes of the blood, whom they could not always engage in the open field of battle. The French term, *chevauchée*, describes a scorched earth policy employed by English commanders that led to the burning of villages, the pillaging of churches and food stores, and the rape and murder of civilians. Such actions were done in violation of medieval Christian codes of warfare and certainly would qualify as war crimes in any modern western tribunal. Joan’s own village had been subjected to such a terror raid by the Burgundians in 1428. Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 84-85; 172-179.

war with a dwindling army, while her enemies in the King's court grew in strength. She led an embarrassing, failed siege of Paris in which she was seriously wounded, and suffered a very public and humiliating defeat (September 3-8, 1429).²²

Joan was eventually captured by the Burgundians, after making another disastrous calculation, when she attempted to lift the siege of Compiègne (May 23, 1430). Her defeat and imprisonment took the luster off Joan's brief military career and allowed her enemies to challenge the miraculous nature of her political claims and military exploits.²³ The pattern of catastrophic military failure after the "Miracle of Orléans" now embarrassed the Valois court and undermined her credibility as God's Messenger. When she was captured, Joan may have had the naïve belief that she was a prisoner of war, and that she was therefore entitled to some sort of ransom.²⁴ But she was eventually abandoned by the man whom she had made king, Charles VII. When the Burgundian Duke, Philip the Good sold Joan to the English,²⁵ she must have realized that she was not being held hostage as a soldier but would face inquisitorial justice in a politically motivated English trial.

From January until May of 1431, Joan stood before an ecclesiastical tribunal in the Norman city of Rouen. After months of inhumane

22 This outcome was all too predictable since Charles VII had reluctantly given her a nominal army and only one day to capture a large, heavily fortified city. Known for his weakness and vacillation, Charles was, however, rightly concerned that he lacked the financial and logistical resources to mount a successful campaign against the capital city.

23 As Gordon perceptively notes, Joan spent more time in prison than she did as a soldier. Gordon, *Joan of Arc*, xxi.

24 Joan was initially held by the Burgundians in Beaufort Castle. She made several attempts to escape, including a jump of more than seventy feet from a castle tower. This incident is the opening scene of Philippe Ramos' movie, *Jeanne Captive* (2011). It is something of a miracle that she did not die from that fall. It is also possible that this was a failed suicide attempt (as Ramos' movie implies). When she recovered, Joan was then moved to the town of Arras and transferred from the care of Jean de Luxembourg (a member of Philip's council) to the English when they delivered payment for her.

25 Philip had little reason to show Joan any mercy since the Dauphin whom she helped crown as Charles VII was complicit in the treacherous and brutal murder (1419) of his father, John the Fearless, the previous Duke of Burgundy.

confinement and relentless interrogation, Joan was convicted of heresy and apostasy. The penalty was death by burning at the stake. Before the sentence could be carried out, her chief inquisitor, bishop Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais (1371-1442), gave her one last chance to recant and put her mark on a formal statement of abjuration. This she did on May 24, renouncing her visions and promising to wear women's clothes.²⁶ She now received a life sentence in prison. This twist of fate must have enraged the English. When they brought her back to her cell, they supposedly stripped her of her female garments and subjected her to some form of sexual abuse. Four days later, Joan was found wearing the men's clothing that the English had thrown in her cell after stripping her of her dress. She then told Cauchon that she regretted the abjuration; that in rejecting her "voices" she had in effect damned herself to save her life.²⁷ Cauchon was now compelled to put her to the fire. According to contemporary estimates, as many as eight-hundred English soldiers witnessed her horrific execution on May 30, 1431. The fire was briefly extinguished so that the crowd could see that her charred, dead body was actually that of a female.²⁸ A reignited fire obliterated her earthly remains.²⁹

26 Joan's abjuration continues to attract rival interpretations. There are a number of possible explanations. They include her fear of being executed in such a horrible fashion, or her being tricked into signing a false statement that promised her better conditions in prison which was later amended with more damning admissions of guilt after she was killed.

27 Pernoud and Clin, *Joan of Arc. Her Story*, 133. Joan held Cauchon personally accountable for the abuse she endured at the hands of the English after her abjuration and her condemnation to the stake. A Dominican friar named Jean Toutmoillé witnessed the last conversation she had with Cauchon, where she declared: "Bishop, I die because of you." Pernoud, 134.

28 Meltzer sees this final degradation of Joan's body as emblematic of her entire public life: "No part of her body or mind, in other words, was safe from the eyes and hands of the authorities. It is as if her *occulta*—mental and physical—were constantly being dragged into the light and violated..." Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire*, 201.

29 A box of ashes found in Paris in 1867 was revered as containing relics of Joan's burning in Rouen; the box was transferred to Chinon in 1876 and became an important part of the memorabilia of the Joan of Arc museum. But DNA testing in 2006-2007 proved that the ashes belonged to an Egyptian who was mummified almost 2,000 years before Joan was born. Coll, "How St. Joan of Arc Was Sniffed Out."

How Joan died is as important if not more important than how she lived. Her dying words, as a cross was thrust above the smoke and flames of her pyre—“Jesus! Jesus!”—even gave pause and elicited sympathy from some of her enemies who had eagerly sought her death. As one eyewitness at her nullification trial recalled, “[O]nce in the fire she cried out six times and more, ‘Jesus!’ and even with her last breath she called out so loudly on Jesus that all those present could hear her; almost everyone wept with pity.”³⁰ Her piercing cries of faith and her reduction to ashes after her tragic death began a process of backformation that soon rehabilitated her from condemned heretic to martyred saint. Joan’s final earthly moments—following a well established trope in medieval hagiography—were turned into a lasting testimony of the purity and righteousness of her entire short life, and inspired the French historian Jules Michelet to view her as a female Christ figure.³¹

Having witnessed her pitiable end and the genuine sorrow felt by the throng that watched her die, Joan’s chief prosecutor and judge, Pierre Cauchon, still seemed confident that he followed proper procedure and rendered a just verdict at her trial. To that end, he ordered the creation of five official copies of its transcript (three of which survive to this day in Paris).³² In fact, her trial is one of the best documented legal proceedings in all of medieval history.

30 Pernoud, *The Retrial of Joan of Arc*, 252. Multiple eyewitnesses who testified for the nullification tribunal remembered the details of her death in roughly the same way. Even her executioner declared, later that day, that he feared that he had damned himself to hell. Pernoud and Clin, *Joan of Arc. Her Story*, 136.

31 Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire*, 202. Astell provides a detailed analysis of 19th-century literary reconstructions of Joan in her chapter on Mark Twain’s novel, *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896). She links Twain’s vision of Joan to Michelet’s earlier work from 1841. Astell, *Joan of Arc and Sacrificial Authorship*, 77-108.

32 It is important to note that Cauchon had a long history of service to the English monarchy that preceded Joan’s trial. And Joan’s successes threatened to undo all of the work Cauchon had done to establish a lasting peace between the English and the French. For example, he helped to negotiate the Treaty of Troyes (1420), which arranged a marriage between the French princess, Catherine Valois and Henry V of England. Their son, Henry VI, would then be King of both England and France and the Dauphin Charles would be formally disinherited. But the death of Henry V, and Catherine’s father, Charles VI (both in 1422), provided an opening for the Dauphin to pursue his claim to the crown of France.

But despite the meticulous care with legal protocol and the scrupulous record keeping of Cauchon, Joan's heresy trial has long been viewed by the general public as one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in western history. As her own mother Isabelle Romée lamented in her testimony for Joan's nullification trial, Cauchon's inquisition was a "perfidious, violent and iniquitous trial, without shadow of right."³³ The depredations and abuses of her imprisonment, the violation of the seal of her confession to a priest, the lack of bona fide legal counsel during the proceedings and the likelihood that she was sexually assaulted by her English captors shortly before her death cast a long shadow over the whole sordid affair in Rouen.

Modern scholars continue to debate the legal validity of the process to which Joan was subjected. In addressing some of those criticisms, Daniel Hobbins argues that the trial was anything but a slipshod affair and that Cauchon was exceptionally fastidious with following canonical procedure.³⁴ On the other hand, Henry Ansgar Kelly constructs a compelling argument that Cauchon went out of his way to create the *appearance* of an impartial process: "He disguised the fact that he and his English paymasters were mortal enemies of Joan, and that he did not allow her any counsel or support from her allies."³⁵ But even if the impossible had happened—that Joan was found not guilty by Cauchon's inquisition—the English would have immediately taken possession of her and put her to death.

33 In perhaps the most moving episode of the nullification inquiry, Joan's mother Isabelle Romée (1377-1458) made the journey to Paris with a group of citizens from Orléans to address a delegation of prelates who represented the pope. As Regine Pernoud describes it, on November 7, 1455, this elderly peasant moved the crowd to pity with her words. She described her daughter's impeccable piety and orthodoxy as a child and then declared that "certain enemies...betrayed her in a trial concerning the Faith, and...without any aid given to her innocence in a perfidious, violent and iniquitous trial, without shadow of right...they condemned her in a damnable and criminal fashion and made her die most cruelly by fire." Pernoud and Clin, *Joan of Arc. Her Story*, 156-157.

34 Hobbins, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, 18-19. Much to the anger of the English, Cauchon allowed Joan to recant and face a sentence of life in prison.

35 Kelly, "Questions of Due Process and Conviction in the Trial of Joan of Arc," in *Religion, Power and Resistance*, 92.

When a lasting peace was made (1435) between Charles VII and his nemesis the Duke of Burgundy, and the political fortunes of the English went into a downward spiral, Joan's official "rehabilitation" by a papally sanctioned ecclesiastical tribunal (1449-1456) was never in question. The original sentence of Cauchon and his associates was nullified in Paris in 1456. However, the nullification trial made no explicit theological judgment on Joan's voices, visions or clothing. It simply vacated the original verdict on mostly procedural grounds. By this point, the long and bloody saga of the Hundred Years War had already come to an end with the English capitulation of Bordeaux (1453). Had Joan been alive at the official conclusion of the war, she would have been about forty-one years old. More than five centuries later, the Roman Catholic Church solemnly declared her a saint (a holy virgin, but not martyr) on May 9, 1920.³⁶

Interpreting Joan

After reading through the transcript of Joan's trial, as well as some of the surviving letters that she dictated, many of my students are skeptical about the Vatican's declaration of her "sanctity;" instead, many question her sanity.³⁷ While rightly shocked by her treatment in captivity and the manner of her death, many of them think that Joan was on some level delusional, especially when she claimed that she could somehow know the will of God.³⁸ Others wonder if she became a victim of her own fantasy and celebrity, which propelled

36 For an excellent synopsis of the political and cultural forces that led to Joan's eventual canonization, see Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 237-275. For a meticulous analysis of the documents related to Joan's canonization and the forceful negative arguments made by its opponents, see Kelly, "Joan of Arc's Last Trial: The Attack of the Devil's Advocates," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 235-236.

37 Meltzer shows how fruitless the attempts to provide a medical diagnosis of Joan have been in academic literature. Some have been tempted to ascribe her voices to the auditory and visual hallucinations of schizophrenia, but aside from her description of voices and visions at her trial, there is nothing in her biography or the testimony of those who knew her that offers any convincing evidence to support such a claim. Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire*, 158, n. 61.

38 Article 33 of the Ordinary Trial states: "Joan presumptuously and rashly boasted and boasts that she knows the future, and that she foretold past events, and present events that are secret or hidden. Thus she attributes to herself—a simple and untaught creature—what belongs only to divinity." Hobbins, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, 138.

her from the obscure margins of medieval society (as an illiterate, adolescent female peasant) to the horses, weapons, battlefields and splendid dining halls of the aristocratic male elite. Perhaps the “fifteen minutes of fame” of the virgin liberator of France had gotten out of hand. Did Joan become a prisoner of her own fable (both figuratively and then literally); did she evolve into a vain narcissist or religiously inspired megalomaniac?³⁹ Conclusive answers to such questions continue to elude the modern scholar.

As we close out the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is hard to imagine that there is really anything “new” to be said about the historical documentary record of Joan’s brief appearance on the stage of French history.⁴⁰ And yet as an icon or artifact that has been manipulated and refabricated by pop culture and the mass media, Joan continues to command our attention.⁴¹ The traumatic circumstances of her trial and death have naturally inspired modern proponents of various noble causes to appropriate Joan as an icon of sanctity and heroic struggle for their own righteous agendas. She has therefore been deployed for almost every conceivable marketing campaign in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the crusader for temperance; the poster girl for recruiting Americans for the First World War; the patriotic symbol of French nationalism in WWI and WWII; the proto-feminist icon who paved the way for women’s rights; the virgin Catholic saint who suffered a martyr’s

39 In her lifetime Joan certainly had her detractors, but also she was ardently supported by such intellectual luminaries as Jean Gerson (1363-1429) and Christine de Pisan (1364-1430), who wrote impassioned defenses of the validity of her mission. For an excellent analysis of the contemporary literature of that sort, see Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*.

40 Wood says as much in a capacious collection of essays that he helped edit. Wood and Wheeler, *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, ix. Recent biographies of Joan offer new analytical insights but no new documentary materials.

41 The most broad-ranging analysis is by Robin Blaetz, *Visions of the Maid* (2001). See also, Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire* (2001). Meltzer offers perceptive analysis of what she identifies as post-modern nostalgia for the sacred as being one of the main drivers of the modern interest in Joan. It is, however, important to note that both of these titles were published in the very year of the spectacular terrorist attacks by Al-Qaeda on U.S. soil. If the authors followed the normal route of academic publishing, these books are reflective of the scholarship and insights of the respective authors that predate publication by two to five years.

death.⁴² Recently, even the medical community has adopted Joan as a model for comforting cancer patients.⁴³

Joan's "feminism" has undoubtedly had the most durable presence in the cultural discourse of modern western society. Her short yet dramatic military career, her defiant physical appearance (the haircut and clothing of a male) and her courageous and spirited testimony before a panel of learned male inquisitors have been taken as a protofeminist challenge to the patriarchal power structures of the Church and the State. This simple "reading" of Joan's life and trial is unquestionably problematic, but not without some merit. The records of her heresy trial reveal the fanatical preoccupation of her inquisitors with Joan's refusal to *dress and behave like a woman*, according to the tenets of medieval Christian society. As Susan Schibanoff notes: "Joan's transvestment was relentlessly scrutinized" by her inquisitors, being mentioned more than thirty times in the trial's transcript.⁴⁴ In summarizing the opinions of the theologians who grilled her at her trial, and who obsessed over her attire and physical appearance, the transcript states:

[S]he has insisted on wearing men's clothes in the fashion of men-at-arms, and she continually wears them for no good reason, against the honor of her sex. This is scandalous and against good and decent manners. She has also cut her hair round. All these things are against the commandments of God in Deuteronomy 22: 'A woman shall not be clothed with man's apparel.' They are against the teaching of the Apostle, when he says that a woman should cover her head.⁴⁵

42 It is important to note that the Vatican did *not* declare Joan a "martyr" but instead, a "virgin" saint. As the Devil's advocates pointed out in their case against her canonization, she did not die a martyr. She had signed an abjuration and then changed her mind after hearing her "voices" again. Kelly, "Joan of Arc's Last Trial: The Attack of the Devil's Advocates," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, 235-236.

43 Roseman, *If Joan of Arc Had Cancer*. While Roseman's work is therapeutic and devotional, she has done considerable historical research into the life and trial of Joan.

44 Schibanoff, "True Lies: Transvestism and Idolatry in the Trial of Joan of Arc," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 33. She cites the important work of Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross Dressing*.

45 Hobbins, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, 173.

This fury over Joan's attire is all the more remarkable when we consider, as Henry Ansgar Kelly notes, that before her trial, there is no known case of a woman being prosecuted and condemned for cross-dressing in any medieval ecclesiastical court.⁴⁶

An illiterate teenaged peasant girl who could barely sign her name had created a King of France, had courageously fought with his armies and now stared down over one hundred theologians and canon lawyers who had the power of life and death over her. To the misogynistic culture of medieval Christendom, that *was* a shock and a subversion of the divinely established natural order.⁴⁷ It was also the antithesis of the quaint image of the "pious female" who should be engaged in spinning or weaving, mirroring in sacrificial form, the Virgin Mary who silently and obediently tended to the domestic tasks of the good wife and mother.

In the early twentieth century Joan drew the attention of feminist authors precisely because of her defiant gender-bending clothing and behavior.⁴⁸ As Ann Astell notes, for nineteenth-century writers who were enamored with Joan's legend—all of whom were male—Joan's clothing was of little interest, "For they saw her as a definitively feminine heroine, whose beauty and virginity were protectively and temporarily sheathed in steel. For twentieth-century authors, by contrast, Joan's transvestism is a key issue, even as it was for her judges in Rouen in 1431."⁴⁹ That she dressed in male

46 Kelly, "Questions of Due Process and Conviction in the Trial of Joan of Arc," 84.

47 For an analysis of clerical misogyny and its sources, see Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*; Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*.

48 This topic is well summarized by Astell, *Joan of Arc and Sacrificial Authorship*, 147-184. Given the constraints of my article, I have not included references to the use of Joan as a populist, political icon. There is, however, important work being done on that subject. For example, see Orr, *American University Studies: The 'People's Joan of Arc'*.

49 Astell, *Joan of Arc*, 147. Joan's squire, Jean d'Aulon, testified at her nullification trial that he had seen her naked body parts, including her breasts and legs, when helping her dress or treating her wounds. He spoke of her physical beauty, while noting that he was never moved by carnal desires. His testimony survives in his original French dialect. See Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 17. This type of "immodesty" led the Devil's Advocates in her canonization case to argue against her sainthood. See Kelly, "Joan of Arc's Last Trial: The Attack of the Devil's Advocates," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 235-236.

clothing and wore armor on the battlefield is logical; she naturally wore the uniform required of a soldier engaged in combat.

However, Joan's insistence on wearing male garments and keeping her hair cut short, even when she was not deployed as a soldier, created a conundrum for her inquisitors, as it does for modern scholars. When discussing how her inquisitors confronted Joan about her male attire, Marina Warner observes that "[her clothing] ranked of equal significance for her with the truth of her voices."⁵⁰ In modernity, Joan's clothing and appearance have been expressly linked to questions surrounding her sexual identity, a contested topic since Victoria Sackville-West wrote her *Saint Joan of Arc* (1936).⁵¹ Sackville-West suggests that behind Joan's androgyny is "a potential homosexuality or bisexuality."⁵²

In the most recent academic literature, this debate continues with conflicting exegetical models that have yet to achieve a clear resolution. In my judgment, it is difficult to make declarative statements about Joan's sexuality. It is, however, quite obvious that she never intended to disguise her gender. She called herself "la Pucelle," or "the Maid," who was given a divine message to leave her home and to become a holy warrior for the liberation of "France." Echoing the conclusions drawn by Susan Schibanoff,⁵³ I can say with certainty that Joan identified *herself* as a female virgin who was divinely instructed to dress as a male soldier. This led her accusers to condemn her for idolatry, since as Schibanoff notes, Joan had made herself into a spectacle for false veneration and worship.⁵⁴ It remains a pos-

50 Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 241.

51 Sackville-West, *Saint Joan of Arc*.

52 Astell, *Joan of Arc*, 151. As Astell notes, Sackville-West was the first female author to treat the subject of Joan of Arc since the death of Christine de Pisan (c. 1364-1431).

53 "[U]nlike the holy transvestites, who totally disguised their sex, Joan had not concealed her anatomy or other 'marks' of her biological femininity. Intentionally or not, she had cross-dressed." Schibanoff, "True Lies: Transvestism and Idolatry in the Trial of Joan of Arc," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan*, 43.

54 Schibanoff, 47.

sibility that there were complex psychological or sexual issues associated with her clothing, physical appearance, or gender identity. But as a historian working from the extant documentary evidence, I think that such precise conclusions about Joan's sexual identity or sexual preference are beyond our grasp.⁵⁵

It is easy to see why a medieval female saint with a male haircut, male clothes, brandishing a sword, and who led armies to glorious victories could have an exotic appeal to a Victorian era crusader for temperance,⁵⁶ a suffragette, or a first or second wave feminist. But in the twenty-first century, where gender identity has been reconfigured and redefined to include gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals who are given legal protection in modern democratic societies, can such a "Joan" continue to capture the imagination of a modern audience?⁵⁷ In the last half century we have also seen prominent females rise to power in ways that were unimaginable when the suffragette movement made its first forays into politics (e.g., the first and second female British Prime Minister, the first female German Chancellor and the official nomination of the first female U.S. presi-

55 Hill's collection of interviews with the actresses who have played Joan (from the 1920's to the 1980's) in George Bernard Shaw's famous play, *Saint Joan* (1923), offers another interesting model for understanding this dilemma. A term that is frequently used by some of these actresses is "tomboy," to denote a female who wants to associate with the activities of "the boys" of her time. Laurie Kennedy (who played Joan in performances of the play in 1973 and 1976) states: "I was a tomboy when I was a kid. There was something freeing about being one of the guys. I had an older brother and I always wanted to be part of what he was doing rather than what my peers were doing...I would always try and outdo my brothers' friends, whether we were climbing poles or climbing mountains, and I sometimes did." Hill, *Playing Joan*, 173.

56 In her discussion of Mark Twain's Joan of Arc novel (1896), Astell quotes the work of Skandera-Trombley, who sees an explicit link between "Twain's Joan" and the goals of the Women's Christian Temperance Union: "[Twain's] Joan of Arc espouses all the 'pet' causes of the WCTU: she is an adamant defender of children's rights, animal rights, dress reform, and temperance. Joan stops the troops from engaging in whoring, drinking, and swearing." Skandera-Trombley, *Mark Twain in the Company of Women*, 160-161; cited by Astell, *Joan of Arc and Sacrificial Authorship*, 98.

57 More than twenty years ago, a transgender activist invoked Joan as an icon for the movement. Feinberg declares, "Joan of Arc suffered the excruciating pain of being burned alive rather than renounce her identity. I know the kind of seething hatred that resulted in her murder—I've faced it. But I wish I'd been taught the truth about her life and courage when I was a frightened, confused trans youth. What an inspirational role model—a brilliant transgender peasant teenager leading an army of laborers into battle. Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*, 36.

dential candidate).⁵⁸ It is hard to imagine that the Romantic idealistic figure of Joan can sustain its exotic counterculturalism or “otherness” in the face such historic changes.

Joan’s improbable military career has also been the focus of considerable popular and scholarly attention,⁵⁹ but in the end, what was Joan *really* fighting for? Can her *casus belli* serve as a continued source of inspiration for other, “holy causes?”⁶⁰ When properly viewed within the context of the Hundred Years War in its entirety, and stripped of Romantic notions of a messianic mission by a virgin saint, Joan’s war becomes a *medieval war* that had the goal of undoing a century of political and military history in what is now France. While she rehabilitated and crowned a disinherited king in spectacular fashion, in her short career, dissolving the patchwork of fiefdoms and conflicting loyalties of Armagnacs, Englishmen and Burgundians was beyond her grasp. Joan’s crusade also represented a reality that she might not have fully appreciated: the medieval ideal of European Christendom was collapsing and the modern nation-state was being born.

Joan’s self-proclaimed holy war for the King of Heaven was a fight for the creation of a “France” that was devoid of Englishmen, even

58 Of course, there are also numerous examples of women assuming leadership roles in the United States government and military, including deployment in combat.

59 Joan’s military prowess continues to be debated. Seward dismisses the modern claims that Joan turned the tide of the war through her military command. She appears to have been some sort of talisman for French forces, but she played a marginal role on the battlefield. See Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 213-231. On the other hand, DeVries devotes an entire monograph to the study of her capabilities as a military commander. See DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader*. Another important work on Joan’s success on the battlefield is by Richey, *Joan of Arc: The Warrior Saint*. It is abundantly clear that Joan did, in fact, lead large armies at a startlingly young age; that she revitalized the Valois war effort when it was on the verge of collapse, boosting the morale of the troops who fought the English. She also did great damage to the morale of the English and Burgundian armies, who to that point seemed invincible.

60 Blaetz notes that the modern appropriation of Joan for various causes began in earnest at the turn of the twentieth century: “In the earliest years of the twentieth century, the widespread tendency to find advantage by associating one’s agenda with Joan of Arc coincided with both the First World War and the birth of the mass-produced image.” The cultural crisis of the Great War and its aftermath also provided a fertile environment for neo-medievalism and nostalgia for some lost chivalric order. Blaetz, *Visions of the Maid*, 13.

if they were fellow Catholics. In a letter that she dictated and sent to the English commanders at Orléans and the English King himself, before she lifted the siege, Joan used some of her most violent rhetoric. Speaking audaciously to the King she says:

I am commander of the armies [*je sui chief de guerre*], and in whatever place I shall meet your French allies, I shall make them leave it, whether they wish to or not; and if they will not obey, I shall have them all killed [*Et si ne veullent obeir, je jes feray tous occire*]. I am sent from God, the King of Heaven, to chase you out of all of France, body for body...If you do not wish to believe this message from God through the Maid, then wherever we find you we will strike you there, and make a great uproar greater than any made in France for a thousand years, if you do not come to terms.⁶¹

Philippe Buc characterizes this aspect of Joan's political ideology as being "dangerously relentless."⁶² He argues that her repeated use of bellicose language, and her threats of violence and death to cities that would not immediately surrender to her reveal an inability to engage in rational, diplomatic negotiations that could end the bloody war peacefully. Buc even goes so far as to argue that Joan's capture and execution were, in the long run, beneficial to the French kingdom: "For Charles VII, then, it may have been a good thing that the Maid was burnt before turning against him, like a mad shepherd."⁶³

Conclusion

From the Neo-Catholic revival and nostalgic medievalism of the nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, Joan of Arc has stood alone among legendary figures of the Middle Ages in her capacity to be appropriated and employed for a host of modern noble

61 Pernoud, *Joan of Arc*, 34. A transcription of the original French text is provided by Pernoud, 249-250. I have inserted some of Joan's original words (in their original spelling) into the English translation I have cited.

62 Buc, *Holy War*, 194.

63 Buc, *Holy War*, 195. It is hard to agree with this assertion, given that Charles owed his very crown and kingdom to this Maid. Perhaps Buc is engaging in a bit of hyperbolic sarcasm. But his view of Joan must be understood in the context of his lengthy study, which stretches from antiquity to modernity, and whose purpose is to critique Christian ideologies for armed conflict (and her career is often linked to the medieval crusades and the early modern European wars of religion).

causes. Her personal courage, tenacity and intellectual acumen during the grueling legal proceedings to which she was subjected are no doubt remarkable. The abuse she endured while imprisoned and her tragic death are also no doubt appalling. But the religiously fueled, ferocious language of Joan's holy war and the bona fide violence and bloodshed which she advocated and in which she personally participated were often minimized by her modern devotees when she was sublimated into other, more palatable "causes."

Yet a close examination of Joan's words and deeds reveals that her aims and objectives were not the universal "greater goods" of modern activists who have used her story as a palimpsest onto which they write their own narratives. As I noted, the tragic circumstances of her trial and brutal death have overwhelmed the precise details of Joan's message, mission and its outcome. In reality, Joan's apocalypticism was very narrowly defined by the politics of fifteenth-century France. As Marina Warner observes, "[Joan's] career lies outside the main current of medieval mysticism because her consistent tendency was to prefer secular channels of power to religious ones."⁶⁴ Larissa Juliet Taylor goes even further in her description of Joan's piety: "Her religious activities, while notable, were not extreme. By contrast, her military, political and legal adventures were characterized by boldness, pride, and impetuosity."⁶⁵

As "God's Messenger," Joan was more of a political mystic and activist than a transtemporal spiritual teacher.⁶⁶ She generally eschewed the patronage of the clergy, had no spiritual director, and was biblically illiterate. She did not preach an eschatological message of universal repentance, personal conversion or devotion, reconcilia-

64 Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 93; see also Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III*, 146.

65 Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*, 37.

66 Taylor notes that in both the Old and New Testament, prophecy was "open to women as well as men;" she therefore sees parallels between the prophetic political activism of Old Testament women (e.g., Deborah) and Joan. Although Joan expressed no real interest in paradigmatic female prophets or warriors in Jewish scripture, some of her earliest supporters made that linkage. Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*, 18-19; Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*, 36-37.

tion with God or harmony within the tumultuous Church of the era of the Great Schism. Her voices and prophecies were consigned to French dynastic politics and the reconfiguration of the feudal order of France, England and Burgundy. Unlike the typical female mystics of the Middle Ages, Joan did not become a pious recluse who withdrew from the cares of the world. She did quite the opposite by adopting a very public career as a professional soldier, crossing gender boundaries and breaking into the ranks of the cultural and political elite.⁶⁷ As Deborah A. Fraioli observes, Joan's first appearance before the Valois court at Chinon revealed the essence of her political mysticism and its sharp contrast with the medieval tradition of female prophecy: "So it goes without saying that for Joan to arrive accompanied only by men-at-arms, with no confessor, envisioning for herself a military mission, based on the authority of her own word, we are witnessing a categorical deviation from the norm."⁶⁸

Combining an earthly political cause with a heavenly mandate, Joan believed she was a holy warrior in a cosmic battle waged on behalf of Jesus, the King of Heaven. She said as much in a letter dictated to the Duke of Burgundy on the day of Charles VII's coronation, imploring him to reconcile with the new king of France:

And I must make known to you from the King of Heaven, my rightful and sovereign Lord, for your good and for your honor and upon your life, that you will win no more battles against loyal Frenchmen and that all those who wage war against the aforesaid holy kingdom of France are warring against King Jesus, King of Heaven and of all the earth, my rightful and sovereign Lord.⁶⁹

We should remember, too, that Joan flapped a large white battle standard, inscribed with Christian icons and sacred names when she

⁶⁷ As Warner, so aptly puts it, "She showed that one did not have to be a nobleman to be a nobleman." Warner, *Joan of Arc*, 159.

⁶⁸ Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*, 50.

⁶⁹ Pernoud and Clin, *Joan of Arc. Her Story*, 67-68. Charles must have been shocked by this communication, since Joan neither consulted him nor told him about it until after it had been sent.

rallied her troops and led them into the blood and carnage of the battlefield.⁷⁰ Painted to her precise specifications, the banner depicted Christ seated in majesty, with the holy names “Jhesus Maria” prominently displayed. The blood that flowed under that banner was justified by Joan’s visions and voices; there could be no doubt, in her mind, that her political cause and her methods of achieving it were holy and just.

The narrowly configured political Manichaeism of Joan, and the certitude with which she rushed into armed conflict should give modern audiences pause.⁷¹ Joan’s idiosyncratic, black and white understanding of dynastic politics allowed for no negotiation or compromise; the forces of the good and gentle King Charles VII were locked in mortal combat with the blasphemers, *les Goddons*.⁷² In his analysis of the propaganda of the Hundred Years War, John Aberth sees new forms of demonization of one’s enemies that apply directly to Joan: “This was the essence of the new nationalism: to suffer and deal out death in the name of a country or a sovereign who can do no wrong, against a dehumanized enemy who is never in the right.”⁷³ And as Larissa Juliet Taylor notes, even though she claimed not to have personally killed anyone, “Joan’s strategic decisions and actions resulted in numerous casualties on both sides,” and as her military career progressed, “she was not particularly bothered by bloodshed.”⁷⁴

70 She also claimed that she loved her banner more than her swords, and that she carried the banner to avoid personally killing anyone. “Asked which she preferred, her banner or her sword, she said she was much fonder, indeed forty times fonder, of the banner than the sword. . . she carried the banner when she attacked the enemies, to avoid killing anyone; she says she never did kill anyone.” Hobbins, *The Trial of Joan of Arc*, 69.

71 Interestingly, in reviewing David Byrne’s rock opera, “Joan of Arc: Into the Fire,” Ben Brantley describes the Joan of this musical as being a fanatic: “I’m not sure the Joan embodied here by the gifted but ill-used Jo Lampert should be taken as a paradigm for today’s wearers of pink pussy hats. This is someone who proceeds without reflection or internal debate, and who knows she’s right no matter what anyone else says. She is, in other words, a fanatic, which is a scary thing to be these days.” “Review: ‘Joan of Arc’ and the Monotony of Sainthood,” *New York Times*, March 15, 2017.

72 This nickname was applied to the English on account of their reputation for blaspheming when they took the name of God in vain (“God damn” was truncated into the French neologisms of *les Goddems*, *Goddons*, or *Godons*).

73 Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse*, 53.

74 Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*, 11; 68.

Reflect again, for a moment, on the horror of recent religiously inspired terror attacks and their ghastly images of bloodshed that have been disseminated around the world. Now think of Joan's apocalyptic, supposedly divinely inspired crusade against the English, with its sanctimonious and belligerent rhetoric, that took the lives of hundreds of combatants, including her own. Might not Joan now begin to lose her appeal as some sort of Rorschachian ink blot,⁷⁵ with which any aggrieved constituency can craft its own narrative? Does modern western society really want to construct its political, religious and cultural identity by embracing a fanatical medieval warrior like Joan of Arc?

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⁷⁵ Astell has, in effect, devoted an entire monograph to the modern literary process of "reading into Joan" what the poet, playwright or novelist wants to see. Astell, *Joan of Arc and Sacrificial Authorship*.

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Jeanne in the protocol of the parliament of Paris (1429).

Drawing by Clément de Fauquembergue