

# The Literary Image of Joan of Arc: Prior Influences

By Deborah Fraioli

Scholars have preferred the accounts of Joan of Arc's career in chronicles and in the reports of her trial to other contemporary sources from the realm of poetry and literature.<sup>1</sup> Literature offers, however, what history often does not: the *image* of Joan of Arc in her own time.

The chronicles contain the events and chronology of the Maid's life, but they have little to say about the meaning of her unusual accomplishments as understood by her contemporaries — interpretive comments about Joan's mission by the chroniclers are infrequent and naive. The literary sources, on the other hand, influenced by literary models, themes, and traditions, attempt to explain the meaning of Joan of Arc's career and often to justify it. The early poetry and ecclesiastical treatises are thus a rarely tapped source of contemporary commentary that may be studied to supplement the "facts" about Joan of Arc. Far from obscuring the historical reality of Joan of Arc, literature reveals more of that reality than can be determined from the facts alone. In certain cases literature seems even to shape the historical reality.

Two themes in the literature about Joan of Arc are particularly important. The first of these is the association of Joan with biblical heroines. The churchmen who first investigated the validity of the Maid's mission cited Esther, Judith, and Deborah as precedents for what Joan of Arc promised to do. Using biblical models to lend authority to an argument was common practice in secular as in religious writing, and it is not surprising to find fifteenth-century poets like Christine de Pizan also comparing Joan of Arc to these biblical heroines.

The second theme that marks the literature about Joan of Arc is prophecy. When Joan arrived on the historical scene, she became associated almost immediately with prophecies and prophetic-sounding patriotic literature that had been in circulation before 1429, the year she left Domremy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A shorter version of this paper was presented at the Colloque d'histoire médiévale held in Orléans, France, in October 1979 under the direction of Mlle. Régine Pernoud. The publication of that talk, undertaken by Jean Glénisson, director of the Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, is forthcoming. I am most appreciative of the assistance of Paul Archambault, Kenneth Pennington, Nathaniel B. Smith, Charles Wood, and Luke Wenger, whose corrections and comments were of great help.

<sup>2</sup> I have used the terms "patriotic literature" and "patriotic poets" in this paper to refer to the poetry of Robert Blondel, Eustache Deschamps, and Charles d'Orléans. Although "patriotism" and "patriotic literature" were still ill-defined concepts at that time, concern for France's future as a country is a predominant theme in these authors. Furthermore, their poetry was not only a lament about current ills; it was intended to stir people to action to save France.

Joan was understood to be the fulfillment of these prophecies: she was the long-awaited woman who would intercede on behalf of the French to drive out the enemy and restore the monarchy. There were also overtones of a still broader mission awaiting Joan after her initial objectives were met. Some ascribed to her a role in the Last Days, and she herself at times hinted at an all-encompassing Christian mission.

The association of Joan of Arc with biblical figures and with prophecy lent authority and legitimacy to her mission. The tendency to provide her with an eschatological role may have begun as little more than the customary workings of medieval exegetical practice. In the long run, however, the fact that Joan was explicitly linked with both the past (the biblical heroines) and the future (her implied connection with the Last Days) may have spelled the difference between her becoming "just another visionary" and her being accepted as the restorer of France.

Very soon after Joan's arrival at the court of Charles VII at Chinon on February 23, 1429, word of the "miracle" of Joan of Arc spread through Armagnac-held France and beyond. Whereas there is truth to the modern assertion that Joan was most influential within a relatively small circle of intimates and local devotees,<sup>3</sup> first reactions to the news of the Maid as it travelled through Armagnac and Burgundian territory and even outside France ring unmistakably with the sound of awe and wonder.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps Joan of Arc's contemporaries were struck with a sense of miracle at her arrival in part because leading Armagnac churchmen, convoked at the king's request to investigate her claims, saw fit to approve her mission.<sup>5</sup> It is in their investigation that Joan of Arc first seems to have been associated with biblical heroines. The first official inquiry into the Maid was conducted in March 1429 by Charles VII's most renowned prelates. Since the text of the

<sup>3</sup> See Edouard Perroy, *The Hundred Years War*, trans. W. B. Wells (1945; repr., New York, 1965), p. 280.

<sup>4</sup> One of many Armagnacs to express wonder at the Maid's intervention is Christine de Pizan, who calls Joan's mission "chose sur toute merveillable." *Diité de Jehanne d'Arc*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty, Medium Aevum Monographs, n.s. 9 (Oxford, 1977), p. 29. All citations are from this edition. The text is also found in two articles by Kennedy and Varty, *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1974) and 19 (1975), which form the basis of the 1977 edition. Jean Le Fèvre of Saint-Remy, a Burgundian, begins his account of Joan of Arc with these words: "Or, couvint-il parler de une aventure qui advint en France; la non pareil que, comme je croy, y advint, oncques." Jean Le Fèvre, *Chronique*, 2 vols., Société de l'Histoire de France (Paris, 1876-81), 2:143. The correspondence between Pancrazio Justiniani in Bruges and his father in Venice shows surprise at each new piece of information on Joan: "Je pourrais encore vous rapporter des faits bien étonnants; je pourrais vous dire que par le moyen de cette Pucelle LE DAUPHIN A EU UNE VISION; ce qui nous tient en suspens moi et tous les autres." Trans. Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Ayroles, *La vraie Jeanne d'Arc*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1890-1898), 3:574. As an indication of Joan's widespread reputation less than ten years after her death, see Jean Nider's *Formicarium*: "Virgo, Johanna nomine, tam prophetico spiritu, quam miraculorum potestate, ut putabatur, clarens . . . mira talia perpetrabat, de quibus nedum Francia, sed omnia christianorum regna stupebant." Jules Quicherat, ed., *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1845-49), 4:502-3.

<sup>5</sup> See the *Poitiers Conclusions*, ed. Quicherat, *Procès*, 3:391.

proceedings of this body, known as the Poitiers commission, has been lost, it is impossible to say whether anyone actually used the examples of Esther, Judith, and Deborah to support Joan of Arc's claims. If the *Commentaries* of Pope Pius II are to be trusted, despite their being written well after the events and from secondary sources,<sup>6</sup> the story of Judith at least was cited.<sup>7</sup> In the same period, Jean Girard, president of the parlement of Grenoble and a close associate of the king, cited Deborah, Judith, and the sibyls as precedents for Joan of Arc in his correspondence with Jacques Gelu, the archbishop of Embrun, the purpose of which was to gain Gelu's approbation of the Maid.<sup>8</sup> By May of 1429 three treatises had been written about the case; all three cite the example of biblical women to support the Maid's claims.

Probably the earliest of these is the treatise beginning *De quadam puella*,<sup>9</sup> once attributed to Henry of Gorckum but now regarded as the work of Jean Gerson.<sup>10</sup> Gerson states that "it is congruent with the Scriptures that God should have made blessed salvation manifest to the peoples and kingdoms of the world *per fragilem sexum et innocentem aetatem*."<sup>11</sup> He refers to the biblical principle according to which God uses the weak to confound the strong.<sup>12</sup> As

<sup>6</sup> One of Pius's sources was a speech given by Jean Jouffroy at a congress in Mantua in 1459, in which Jouffroy, then in service to Duke Philip of Burgundy, harangues about Joan of Arc. See Ayroles, *La vraie Jeanne d'Arc*, 3:536–38.

<sup>7</sup> "The matter was discussed in council for some time with various opinions. Some said the girl was crazy, others that she was bewitched, others that she was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and these last recalled the fact that Bethulia [Israelite town saved by Judith] and other cities had in the past been saved by women; the kingdom of France had often been aided by Heaven; it might be that now too it was defended by a maid sent by God and that the task had been committed to the weaker sex that the French with their accustomed pride might not be over-confident of their own powers." Trans. Florence A. Gragg, "The Commentaries of Pius II — Book VI," *Smith College Studies in History* 35 (1951), 437–38. Pius does not mention Deborah, although Jouffroy in his speech in Mantua asks: "Faut-il penser que, comme la Débora des Ecritures, elle a fait renaître l'espérance au coeur des Français?" Trans. Ayroles, *La vraie Jeanne d'Arc*, 3:537.

<sup>8</sup> The correspondence between Girard and Gelu is summarized and partly transcribed in Marcellin Fornier's sixteenth-century *Histoire générale des Alpes Maritimes ou Cottiniènes*, ed. Paul Guillaume, 3 vols. (Paris, 1890–92). Unable to obtain Fornier's text, I refer to an analysis by Ayroles: Jean Girard and Pierre l'Hermite, both intimates of the Dauphin, wrote to Gelu announcing the arrival of Joan of Arc, saying that she had already been examined by three professors of theology and that their reaction was most favorable. Girard, writing at the king's command to obtain Gelu's opinion, supported his case by citing the examples of Deborah, Judith, and the sibyls (Ayroles, *La vraie Jeanne d'Arc*, 1:3).

<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Wayman, "The Chancellor and Jeanne d'Arc," *Franciscan Studies* 17 (1957), 273–305, which includes an edition of *De quadam puella*. Wayman believes *De quadam puella* was written between late March and early April 1429 (p. 281). Her date should be preferred to Quicherat's June date (Quicherat, *Procès*, 3:411), offered before the treatise's true author was known.

<sup>10</sup> Wayman, "The Chancellor and Jeanne d'Arc," pp. 279–95.

<sup>11</sup> "Sacris consonat litteris per fragilem sexum et innocentem aetatem exhibitam] a deo fuisse populis et regnis laetam salutem." Wayman, "The Chancellor and Jeanne d'Arc," p. 299.

<sup>12</sup> In his *codicille*, after citing the line from Judges, "Cessaverunt fortes in Israel et quieverunt donec surgeret Delbora," Guillaume Bouillé gives this gloss on the text: "Dicitque ideo: 'Nova

examples of this principle Gerson names Esther, Judith, and Deborah, who "obtained salvation for the people of God."<sup>13</sup>

The second treatise, written in May 1429 by Archbishop Jacques Gelu, a trusted advisor to Charles VII, cites the same biblical principle as Gerson to argue that there is nothing surprising in God's using a woman as the instrument of his power. God is able to bring about victory even through the intervention of a woman, "as is demonstrated in the case of Deborah."<sup>14</sup> Further on, in discussing how God sometimes uses men rather than angels to destroy the enemy, Gelu names Moses, David, and Judas Maccabaeus as examples. He then adds: "By the divine will, even women have exercised vengeance, as did Judith and Esther."<sup>15</sup>

In the third treatise, *De mirabili victoria*, believed written in May 1429,<sup>16</sup> Deborah and Judith are again mentioned, although Esther is omitted. Once ascribed to Gerson, this treatise now appears to be someone else's confused expansion, perhaps from memory, of *De quadam puella*, for it contains numerous errors unworthy of Jean Gerson.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it supports the position of the other two treatises, comparing Joan with the "no less miraculous" examples of Deborah, Saint Catherine, Judith, and Judas Maccabaeus.<sup>18</sup> The association of Joan of Arc with biblical women surely had a powerful legitimizing effect on her mission. To my knowledge, no other prophetic of the many known at the time was likened to a biblical heroine.

Chronicle writers do not take up the analogy between Joan of Arc and the biblical heroines that is found in the treatises.<sup>19</sup> Christine de Pizan, however,

*bella elegit Dominus,' per infirma forcia destruens, per feminam superbos hostes prosternens, ut ostendatur miraculum Dei, quod factum est duce femina.*" P. Doncoeur, S. J. Lanhers, and Y. Lanhers, eds. *La réhabilitation de Jeanne la Pucelle: L'enquête ordonnée par Charles VII en 1450 et le codicille de Guillaume Bouillé*, Documents et recherches relatifs à Jeanne la Pucelle (Paris, 1956), p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> "Hinc exemplariter procedendo legitur de debbora, hester et judith impetratam fore populo dei salutem." Wayman, "The Chancellor and Jeanne d'Arc," p. 299.

<sup>14</sup> "Attamen in Dei potentiam relata nullam admirationem inducere debent, quic in paucis veluti in multis, victoriam etiam sexus muliebris interventu aequaliter praestare potest, ut in Debbora factum exstitit." Pierre Lanéry d'Arc, ed., *Mémoires et consultations en faveur de Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris, 1889), p. 572.

<sup>15</sup> "Mulieres etiam, ut Judith et Esther nutu divino etiam vindictam exercuerunt." Lanéry d'Arc, *Mémoires*, p. 578.

<sup>16</sup> Wayman has challenged the May 14, 1429, date of *De mirabili victoria* (pp. 286-87), but her conclusions cannot be accepted without further investigation.

<sup>17</sup> See Wayman, "The Chancellor and Jeanne d'Arc," p. 285 and pp. 292-93, with a 1514 edition of the text transcribed on pp. 296-303.

<sup>18</sup> "Exempla possunt induci de Debbora et de sancta Katharina in conversione non minus miraculosa . . . , et aliis multis, ut de Judith et de Juda Machabeo." Pierre Duparc, *Procès en nullité de la condamnation de Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris, 1979), 2:37. Although Johannes Knoblauch's 1514 edition of the *Opera gersonii* gives "barbara" instead of "Debbora," Wayman believes this to be a printer's or editor's error, the substitution of the popular St. Barbara being a logical one for the times (p. 292). Quicherat, basing his reading on Bibliothèque nationale Latin manuscript 5970, and Duparc, from the consultation of that and other manuscripts, both give "Debbora." This seems the logical reading since Gerson's *De quadam puella*, the probable model for *De mirabili victoria*, cited Deborah, not Barbara, in connection with Joan.

<sup>19</sup> The one exception in chronicles contemporary with Joan of Arc is the *Chronique de Tournai*,

makes use of the same comparison in her poem, the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*. In stanza 28 of the *Ditié* Christine names Esther, Judith, and Deborah, "dames de grant pris, / Par lesqueles Dieu restora / Son pueple."<sup>20</sup> She aligns Joan of Arc firmly with this tradition, declaring in the last line of the stanza that the Maid's accomplishments surpass even the accomplishments of these illustrious women.<sup>21</sup>

The presence in the *Ditié* of the same analogy that is found in the treatises may be fortuitous. On the other hand, it is possible that Christine de Pizan, writing in 1429, was influenced by one of the treatises. She and Gerson had become friends through their common stand in the "Querelle du *Roman de la Rose*," and she may have known Gerson's *De quadam puella*.<sup>22</sup> Of the three treatises, only *De quadam puella* lists Esther, Judith, and Deborah together as a group, as Christine does. This is significant since the differences between Esther, Judith, and Deborah make them a less than obvious group for citation in the same context.<sup>23</sup>

A new point of view emerges in Christine's *Ditié*, however. Unlike Gerson, Christine leaves no doubt that it is precisely the Maid's triumph in a masculine world that makes her so worthy of praise.<sup>24</sup> It is her belief that Joan of Arc was made more of the stuff of a Deborah than of an Esther or a Judith. Gerson had suggested that some found Joan's transformation into a secular man-at-war indecent and her methods inferior to the more feminine methods of Esther and Judith.<sup>25</sup> Christine de Pizan glorifies the very image that Gerson found potentially indecent: the image of the female warrior.<sup>26</sup> Al-

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whose author seems to know the arguments used in the religious treatises. He makes the same point that God "anima et enhardi ung fueble et tendre corps féminin" to show that "toute force vient de lui." Further on he mentions that "anchiènement femmes avoient fait merveilles, comme Judith et aultres." J.-J. de Smet, ed., *Recueil des chroniques de Flandre*, Collection de chroniques belges inédites 4,3 (Brussels, 1856), 406.

<sup>20</sup> *Ditié*, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> "Hester, Judith et Delbora, / Qui furent dames de grant pris, / Par lesqueles Dieu restora / Son pueple, qui fort estoit pris, / Et d'autres plusers ay apris / Qui furent preuses, n'y ot celle, / Mains miracles en a pourpris. / Plus a fait par ceste Pucelle." *Ditié*, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> The *Ditié*, dated July 31, 1429, postdates Gerson's *De quadam puella*, which gives internal evidence of a May date and whose author, Gerson, died on July 12, 1429.

<sup>23</sup> Another similarity seems to link the *Ditié* with *De quadam puella*. In *De quadam puella* Gerson mentions Joseph, Moses, and Gideon as other biblical examples. In the *Ditié* Christine cites Moses, Joshua, and Gideon followed by Esther, Judith, and Deborah, the name of Joshua having perhaps been substituted for Joseph. Gelu, on the other hand, speaks of Deborah separately from Esther and Judith and mentions David and Judas Maccabaeus, examples not used by Christine.

<sup>24</sup> Textual evidence is found in the following stanzas: 25, lines 198-200; 26; 34-36. Details from Christine's personal life make her admiration of Joan's physical and moral strength understandable: widowed at age 25, she was forced to fend for herself in a masculine world and thus espoused the cause of feminism. Her feminism, while limited from today's standpoint, is pronounced in the *Ditié*, as has been signaled recently by Thérèse Ballet Lynn, "The *Ditié de Jeanne d'Arc*: Its Political, Feminist and Aesthetic Significance," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 1 (1978), 149-55.

<sup>25</sup> See Wayman, "The Chancellor and Jeanne d'Arc," p. 304.

<sup>26</sup> Earlier, Christine had urged Isabeau de Bavière to seek peace, as Esther had, by peaceful mediation. In a letter to the queen in 1405, Christine saw her as "moyennerresse de traictié de

though Deborah did not actually engage in combat, she did ride into war with Barak, and her strategy called for physical action rather than the use of her femininity. Christine's image of Joan of Arc as a virgin warrior may also have been affected by knowledge of the pagan female warriors of classical literature, especially the Amazons. In 1405 Christine had written *La cité des dames*, a collection of the biographies of famous women, and on the example of her source, Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*,<sup>27</sup> she included biographies of female warriors, notably Semiramis, Camilla, and Penthesilea.<sup>28</sup>

The *Ditié* contains a number of reminiscences of the biblical account of Deborah beyond the obvious parallels in the stories. The tone and, in one important instance, the imagery of the story of Deborah (Judges 4–5), especially Deborah's hymn of victory, are echoed in Christine's poem.<sup>29</sup> Both the hymn of victory and the *Ditié* are marked by joy, by thankfulness to God for the victory that is to come, and by enthusiastic anticipation of the enemy's annihilation.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Deborah and Joan of Arc are seen alike in two-fold fashion, as strong leaders and as nurturing mothers to their people. Judges 5.7 states: "The valiant men ceased, and rested in Israel: until Debhora arose, a mother arose in Israel." Similarly, Christine writes that Joan of Arc is the one "A qui Dieu force et povoir donne / D'estre le champion et celle / Qui donne à France la mamelle / De paix et douce norriture."<sup>31</sup> This parallel seems especially significant since the image of Joan of Arc as nurturer is not found elsewhere, to my knowledge, in the contemporary literature. Also important in both works is the emphasis on the role of women, in stated contrast to men, in bringing about the victory.<sup>32</sup>

paix . . . si comme la vaillant saige royne Hesther." Raimond Thomassy, *Essai sur les écrits politiques de Christine de Pisan* (Paris, 1838), p. 136. The queen's total indifference to the role and the appearance of Joan of Arc caused Christine to shift towards Deborah as the ideal biblical prototype.

<sup>27</sup> Boccaccio is established as Christine's source in A. Jeanroy, "Boccace et Christine de Pisan, le *De claris mulieribus*, principale source du *Livre de la Cité des Dames*," *Romania* 48 (1922), 93–105.

<sup>28</sup> Boccaccio did not include biographies of Esther, Judith, or Deborah, all of whom Christine added in *La cité*. See Maureen Curnow, "The *Livre de la cité des dames* of Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition," University Microfilms International (Ann Arbor, 1979).

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Fabre also noticed this similarity in *Procès de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, 2 vols. (1888; repr., Paris, 1913), 2:330–38.

<sup>30</sup> Note the aggressive tone in the following lines. Judges 5.12: "Arise, arise, O Debhora, arise, arise, and utter a canticle." Judges 5.31: "So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love thee shine." *Ditié*, pp. 35–36: "Si rabaissez, Anglois, voz cornes / Car jamais n'aurez beau gibier! / En France ne menez voz sornes! / Matez estes en l'eschiquier. / Vous ne [le] pensiez pas l'autrier, / Où tant vous monstriez perilleux; / Mais n'estiez encour ou santier, / Où Dieu abat les orgueilleux. // Ja cuidiés France avoir gaingnée, / Et qu'elle vous deust demourer. / Autrement va, faulse mesgnié[e]! / Vous irés ailleurs tabourer, / Se ne voulez assavouer / La mort, comme voz compagnons, / Que loups pevent bien devourer, / Car mors gisent par les sillons!"

<sup>31</sup> *Ditié*, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> Judges 4.9: "She said to him: I will go indeed with thee, but at this time the victory shall not be attributed to thee, because Sisara shall be delivered into the hand of a woman." The *Ditié* emphasizes Joan's sex in stanzas 25, 26, 34–36. I quote stanza 34, which is the most striking: "Hee! quel honneur au femenin / Sexe! Que Dieu l'ayme il appert, / Quant tout ce grant pueple

Both works are fervent in their aggression towards the enemy and their expectation of its annihilation.<sup>33</sup> Finally, both works conclude by describing a time of peace to follow.<sup>34</sup>

When the examples of Esther, Judith, and Deborah were first cited in *De quadam puella*, it was not to reinforce a particular image of Joan of Arc but merely to provide examples of women whom God had used to serve their people. If anything, Gerson prized Esther and Judith — whose service to their people employed rather than denied their femininity — more highly than Deborah. Christine de Pizan, on the other hand, by adopting the tone and imagery of Deborah's hymn of victory, constructs a specific and pointed view of Joan, casting her in the masculine role of the warrior.

The second tradition with which Joan of Arc was linked was that of prophecy. She was herself viewed as a prophetess,<sup>35</sup> but more important for the present analysis was the belief of her contemporaries that she was the fulfillment of previously existing prophecies. In the latter part of the fourteenth century, France witnessed a resurgence of interest in prophecy. Many self-proclaimed prophetesses made predictions about the schism and the war, and the prophecies of Bede, Merlin, and the sibyls were revived and reinterpreted in the light of current events. General similarities between certain prophecies in circulation and the mission of Joan of Arc gave rise to the belief that her appearance had been prophesied. Many prophecies were even tailored after Joan's arrival to look like "heralding" prophecies from an earlier date; the prophecies of Marie Robine and Bede are examples.<sup>36</sup>

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chenin, / Par qui tout le regne ert desert, / Par femme est sours et recouvert, / Ce que C<sup>m</sup> hommes [fait] n'eussent, / Et les traictres mis à desert! / A peine devant ne le creussent" (*Ditié*, p. 34).

<sup>33</sup> See above, no. 30.

<sup>34</sup> Judges 5.31: "And the land rested for forty years." *Ditié*, stanzas 42–43 (p. 36): "En Christianté et l'Eglise / Sera par elle mis concorde. / Les mescreans dont on devise, / Et les herites de vie orde / Destruira, car ainsi l'acorde / Prophecie, qui l'a predict, / Ne point n'aura misericorde / De lieu, qui la foy Dieu laidit. // Des Sarradins fera essart, / En conquerant la Sainte Terre. / Là menra Charles, que Dieu gard! / Ains qu'il muire, fera tel erre. / Cilz est cil qui la doit conquerre. / Là doit-elle finer sa vie, / Et l'un et l'autre gloire acquerre. / Là sera la chose assovyé."

<sup>35</sup> See J.-B.-J. Ayroles, "La vénérable Jeanne d'Arc, prophétisée et prophétesse," *Revue des questions historiques* 79, n.s. 35 (1906), 28–56.

<sup>36</sup> The prophecy of Marie Robine, in Quicherat, *Procès*, 3:83–84, is not to be found in the *Livre des révélations et visions de Marie Robine*, a copy of which exists in the MS 520 of the library of Tours. See Noël Valois, "Jeanne d'Arc et la prophétie de Marie Robine," *Mélanges Paul Fabre: Etudes d'histoire du moyen âge* (Paris, 1902), p. 456. According to Jean Barbin, a witness at the rehabilitation trial of 1456, one Jean Erault, professor of theology, mentioned at the Poitiers hearings that Marie Robine had had visions of a large quantity of military arms. She was afraid she would have to take up the arms, but a voice told her not to fear; they were not destined for her but for a virgin who would come after her and deliver the kingdom (Valois, p. 452). Nor can one find any trace in the eighth-century writings of Bede of a chronogram that was attributed to him, supposedly relating to Joan of Arc and yielding the date 1429. See Léon Dorez and Germain Lefèvre-Pontalis, *La chronique d'Antonio Morosini*, 4 vols. (1898–1902), 4:319. The view that Joan of Arc had been heralded in sibylline literature was not articulated until the

Not all the prophetic pieces that spoke of a virgin warrior who would fight the English were obviously contrived after 1429. In particular, two of the Merlin prophecies, by virtue of their lack of any direct allusion to the Maid, appear to have predated her and to have been unrelated to her mission, although Joan's contemporaries persisted in mentioning them as having heralded her appearance. The shorter of the two prophecies, "Ascendet virgo dorsum sagittarii / Et flores virgineos obsustabit," is accompanied in one manuscript by a free translation in French: "Que vne virge sera qui cheuachera en armes contre le dos des anglois archiers et son sexe et la fleur de sa virginite tendra secrez."<sup>37</sup> The second prophecy tells of a healing virgin who will come "ex nemore canuto." This virgin, who on approaching fortresses would dry up the sources of evil with her breath, would cry rivers of tears from her eyes. She would "fill the island with a terrible clamor" and eventually be killed by the ten-antlered stag.<sup>38</sup> This prophecy, attributed in 1456 by Jean Bréhal to the *Roman de Brut*,<sup>39</sup> in fact originated in the *De prophetiis Merlini* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, where reference is to Winchester, England, rather than to France.<sup>40</sup> The version

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summer of 1429 in a treatise written by a cleric of Speyer, entitled *Sibylla francica*: Quicherat, *Procès*, 3:422-68.

<sup>37</sup> Charles de Roche and G. Wissler, "Documents relatifs à Jeanne d'Arc et à son époque," *Festschrift Louis Gauchat* (Aarau, 1926), p. 38. The prophecy originated in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, in book 7 of *De prophetiis merlini*: "Ascendet uirgo dorsum sagittarii. & flores uirgineos obfuscabit," Acton Griscom, ed., *The Historia regum Britanniae* (London, 1929), p. 397. Lewis Thorpe, trans., Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* (1966; repr., New York, 1976), translates the line as "Virgo shall climb on the back of Sagittarius and so let droop its maiden blossoms" (p. 184), a cryptic message aimed at the history of the Britons, but clearly without any connection to a virgin restorer in France. Mathieu Thomassin, in the *Registre delphinal*, however, says that when learned men thought about whether to place trust in the Maid "entre les autres escriptures fut trouvée une prophétie de Merlin," which is the prophecy under discussion here but with "descendet" substituted for "ascendet" and "obscurabit" for "obfuscabit." This prophecy, and another similar one beginning *Virgo puellares* (see below, n. 43), seem to have given Charles pause for thought, although Thomassin goes on to say that before placing faith in Joan, Charles "comme prince saige, mist en conseil ceste besongne" (Quicherat, *Procès*, 4:305).

<sup>38</sup> "Ex nemore canuto eliminabitur puella, ut medele curam adhibeat; que, ut omnes arces iniverit, solo anelitu suo fontes nocivos siccabit. Lacrimis miserandis manabit ipsa, et clamore horrido replebit insulam. Interficiet eam cervus decem ramorum, quorum quatuor aurea dyademata gestabunt, sex vero residui in cornua bubalorum vertentur, que nephando sonitu insulas Britanie commovebunt. Excitabitur Daneium nemus, et in humanam vocem erumpens clamabit: Accede, Kambria, et junge lateri tuo Cornubiam." Marie-Joseph Belon and François Balme, eds., *Jean Bréhal, grand inquisiteur de France et la réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris, 1893), pp. 70-71.

<sup>39</sup> See Lanéry d'Arc, *Mémoires*, p. 402.

<sup>40</sup> I reproduce here the original version of this prophecy found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De prophetiis merlini*, which constitutes a part of the *Historia* but which also circulated separately from it, with the parts that were omitted in the Bréhal version contained in brackets: "[Ad hec] ex urbe canuti nemoris eliminabitur puella. ut medele curam adhibeat. Que ut omnes sortes inierit. solo anelitu suo fontes nociuos siccabit. [Exin ut sese salubri liquore refecerit. gestabit in dextera sua nemus colidonis. in sinistra uero. murorum lundonie propugnacula. Quacumque incedet passus sulphureos faciet. qui duplici flamma fumabunt. Fumus ille excitabit rutenos. &



that Bréhal included in the *Recollectio* of the rehabilitation trial was edited to omit allusions connecting it unquestionably with the British Isles. But whereas Bréhal's version was contrived late in the day to add credence to the Maid's mission, knowledge of Geoffrey's version appears to have affected people's thinking about Joan of Arc from the start. When asked at her trial if she had ever heard it said in her youth that a virgin would come from the Bois Chenu<sup>41</sup> to perform admirable deeds, she said that she had, but she had never put any faith in it.<sup>42</sup>

The prophecies about a virgin who would destroy the English, like the association of Joan with biblical heroines, added legitimacy to Joan of Arc's mission. The peasant girl from Domremy had not only been elevated to the ranks of a Deborah or a Judith (and beyond), but now a number of disparate strands of the prophetic tradition converged on her, bestowing on her mission an ample feeling of authority, rightness, and inevitability. Although God did not figure directly in these prophecies, the implication in the fifteenth century was that Merlin and the other "seers" were revealing fragments of a greater divine plan. Furthermore, the prophecies offered additional prototypes for the female warrior. Marie Robine's voices told of a virgin who would bear arms, and the Merlin prophecies placed the virgin, armed and on horseback, in the middle of the fray. Thus the prophecies lent respectability to the idea of the virgin who actually engages in combat, going one step further than, but reinforcing, the military image derived from the biblical Deborah.

Nowhere is the effect of the prophecies on Joan of Arc's image more striking than in the widely distributed sixteen-line Latin poem that begins with the words *Virgo puellares*.<sup>43</sup> Here we find the Dauphin's official

cibum sub marinis conficiet.] Lacrimis miserandis manabit ipsa. & clamore horrido replebit insulam. Interficiet eam ceruus .x. ramorum. quorum .iiii. aurea diademata gestabunt. Sex uero residui in cornua bubalorum uertentur. que nefando sonitu tres insulas britannie commouebunt. Excitabitur daneum nemus. & in humanam uocem erumpens clamabit. Accede kambria. & iunge lateri tuo cornubiam. [& dic guintonie absorbebit te tellus."] Griscom, *Historia*, pp. 390-91. For a discussion of the political uses of the Merlin prophecies see the chapter "Merlin dans la littérature polémique et l'historiographie" of Paul Zumthor's *Merlin le prophète: Un thème de la littérature polémique de l'historiographie et des romans* (Lausanne, 1943).

<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, during the course of the trial "nemus canutum" was substituted for "nemus quercosum" to translate "le Bois Chenu." See Edmond Stofflet, *Le Bois Chenu de Domremy-la-Pucelle* (Nancy, 1913).

<sup>42</sup> See Pierre Tisset and Yvonne Lanhers, eds., *Procès de condamnation de Jeanne d'Arc*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1960-71), 1:67.

<sup>43</sup> The Latin text is given in the *Registre delphinal*, ed. Quicherat, *Procès*, 4:305: "Virgo puellares artus induta virili / Veste, Dei monitu, properat relevare jacentem / Liferum regem-que; suos delere nefandos / Hostes, praecipue qui nunc sunt Aurelianis, / Urbe sub, ac illam deterrent obsidione. / Et si tanta viris mens est se jungere bello, / Arma sequique sua, quae nunc parat alma Puella, / Credit et fallaces Anglos succumbere morti, / Marte puellari Gallis sternentibus illos, / Et tunc finis erit pugnae, tunc foedera prisca, / Tunc amor et pietas et caetera jura redibunt; / Certabunt de pace viri, cunctique favebunt; / Sponte sua regi, qui rex librabit et ipsis / Cunctis justitiam, quos pulchra pace fovebit; / Et modo nullus erit Anglorum pardiger hostis / Qui se Francorum praesumat dicere regem."

propagandists composing their own "prophetic" poem, modeled after the Merlin prophecies and capitalizing on the association, with the dual intention of increasing Joan's stature and launching her as a formidable opponent to the English. A very interesting statement in the *Registre delphinal*, which has been ignored until now, describes how this new prophetic poem, specifically referring to Joan of Arc, was fashioned out of the earlier Merlin prophecy. The author of the *Registre*, Mathieu Thomassin, states: "Clercs et autres gens d'entendement pensèrent sur ceste matière [whether to place trust in Joan], et entre les autres escriptures fut trouvée une prophétie de Merlin, parlant en ceste manière: 'Descendet virgo, [etc.]'" "Sur lesdiz vers," continues Thomassin, "furent faictz autres vers dont la teneur s'en suit cy dessous."<sup>44</sup> The poem *Virgo puellares* follows.

The image of the virgin warrior in *Virgo puellares* departs in obvious ways from the one in the Merlin prophecies. The primary concern of the Merlin prophecies was a campaign into England, but the preoccupations of *Virgo puellares* are solely French. Reference is made to the fleur de lis, the enemy at Orléans, and the virgin dressed in men's clothing who is currently "making preparations." Another new element is the notion of divine mission ("dei monitu") not present in the Merlin prophecies. Whereas *Ex nemore canuto* gained a pleasing mystical quality from its nonspecific Celtic allusions, *Virgo puellares* maintains the same air of mystery and authority by making Joan's mission an act of divine will. Nevertheless, the aggressive tone of the poem, with prospects for victory centering on the military action of a woman, is taken from the Merlin prophecies. Without the precedent of the Merlin prophecies it would have been almost unthinkable to portray Joan of Arc as a kind of feminine Mars even before she had left the Dauphin to raise the siege of Orléans.

The image of Joan of Arc in literature was subject to the influence of another kind of writing, a nascent genre in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries: French patriotic literature. Although not prophetic literature properly speaking, this poetry adopts a prophetic tone to present its ideas, and the line of argument is based, in large part, on medieval prophecy. Written before Joan of Arc's arrival on the historical scene, the poetry contains the elements of a program to restore the monarchy, a program remarkably similar to Joan's mission as she would later profess it. Furthermore, since the twelfth-century "Miracles de Notre-Dame" had identified the Virgin as a source of aid and an agent of divine intervention, the idea of aid coming from a woman already had contemporary plausibility. Although many poets expressed the ideas to be described here, most typical are Eustache Deschamps, Robert Blondel, and Charles d'Orléans.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Quicherat, *Procès*, 4:305.

<sup>45</sup> Alain Chartier also used his pen in service to his country, notably in the *Letter to the University of Paris*, the *Ad destestationem belli gallici*, the *Dialogus familiaris*, and the *Quadrilogue invectif*. See Pascale Bourgain-Hemeryck, *Les oeuvres latines d'Alain Chartier* (Paris, 1977). The *Quadrilogue* even urged the poet to serve his country by writing: "Et puis que Dieu ne t'a donné



French patriotic poetry emphasized that the French had been favored by God as His elect.<sup>46</sup> The evidence lay in the glory of France's early rulers, especially Clovis and Charlemagne,<sup>47</sup> but also in the belief, arrived at

force de corps ne usaige d'armes, sers a la chose publique de ce que tu pués, car autant exaulça la gloire des Rommains et renforça leurs couraiges a vertu la plume et la langue des orateurs comme les glaives des combatans." *Le quadrilogue invectif*, ed. E. Droz (Paris, 1923), p. 59. The same philosophy can be pieced together from Chartier's works: the French as God's elect, the past glory of the French monarchy, and especially, that French sin was the cause of France's ills, with repentance a prerequisite to redemption. However, Chartier's poetry lacks, and is even hostile to, the mood of "expectation" derived from medieval prophecy permeating the verse of Deschamps, Blondel, and Charles d'Orléans, with its hope for recovery focussed on divine intervention. Chartier called chiefly for reconciliation among human beings without recourse to a divine solution. Chartier is also different in his failure to stress monarchical symbols and their supposed divine origins. Nevertheless, to the degree that Chartier's poetry belongs to the discussion he is quoted.

I cite the poetry of Charles d'Orléans despite his imprisonment in England from 1415 to 1440 and the lack of contact that captivity implies. In fact, Charles had frequent letters and visits from household officers who might keep him up to date. It has even been alleged that poems written by Charles in captivity were "carried into France and spread about among as many people as possible" and that they were "intended to urge his allies and friends to fight even to the bitter end." Norma Goodrich, *Charles, Duke of Orleans: A Literary Biography* (New York, 1963), p. 168.

<sup>46</sup> Recent work done on the French as God's elect includes: J. R. Strayer, "France: The Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King," reprinted in his *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History* (Princeton, 1971); Gabrielle Spiegel, "The *Reditus regni ad stirpem Karoli Magni*: A New Look," *French Historical Studies* 7 (1971), 145-74; and idem, "The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship," *Journal of Medieval History* 1 (1975), 43-69. See also Pierre Virion, *Le Christ qui est roi de France* (Paris, 1949); Jean Leclercq, *L'idée de la royauté du Christ au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1959); and J. de Pange, *Le Roi Très Chrétien* (Paris, 1949). Gabrielle Spiegel and Sandra Hindman give valuable background on the history of the fleur de lis in "The fleur-de-lis Frontispieces to Guillaume de Nangis's *Chronique Abrégée*: Political Iconography in Late Fifteenth-Century France," *Viator* 12 (1981), 381-407, which the authors kindly lent me in typescript.

<sup>47</sup> Deschamps, in the ballad *Sur quels points doit durer ce royaume*, refers to the kingdom of France as "commencez par divine ordenance." "N'aray jà fin, tele est ma destinée," the kingdom of France proclaims, "Car Dieu de ce fist déclaration, / Au roy Clovis quant il prist sa créance / Par saint Remi, qui la sainte unction / Venant du ciel ou saint baptesme avance. / De ce sacre, sont tous les Roys de France / Oint et sacré, et non aultre lignée." Eustache Deschamps, *Poésies morales et historiques*, ed. G. A. Crapelet (Paris, 1832), pp. 46-47.

Charles d'Orléans, in "Complainte de France, 4," writes: "Quelz champions souloit en toy trouver / Crestienté: Ja ne fault que l'expresse: Charlemeine, Rolant et Olivier, / En sont tesmoings, pour ce, je m'en delaisse." *Les poésies de Charles d'Orléans*, ed. Pierre Champion, 2 vols. (Paris, 1923), 1:260.

Alain Chartier alludes to the divine origins of the French throne, saying that it was founded "par foy et en crainte de Dieu." He cites not only Clovis and Charlemagne but also Clothaire, Dagobert, and Pepin as rulers who "passerent les autres roys et princes de leurs temps en foy" and who were thus "les plus exaulsez de dessus la terre en majesté et en empire." Chartier also draws explicit parallels between the Jews and the French as God's "chosen" people: "Regarde comme notre Seigneur Dieu esleut jadis les Juifs en son peuple pecculaire, et leur donna sa benediction par dessus toutes autres gens et leur pardonna moult de foiz leurs iniquitez et pechez, mais finablement il luy en despleut tellement qu'il les habandonna et laissa perir en leurs mauvestiez, et de present sont vagabondes sur la terre et redigez en la servitude des autres

through the legitimization of legends,<sup>48</sup> that the symbols of the monarchy — the fleur de lis, the “cris de guerre,” and especially the coronation ceremony — were of divine origin.<sup>49</sup> Accompanying the idea of the French as God’s elect was the disturbing notion, supported by the prophecies of the sibyls and Saint Bridget of Sweden,<sup>50</sup> that France would experience a period of

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gens. Et nous François, qui sur tous autres crestiens avons plus receu des biens de Dieu, se nous en sommes ingratz et sans le doubter, nous rendons dignes de plus grant pugnicion.” Bourgain-Hemeryck, *Oeuvres latines*, p. 305.

<sup>48</sup> Marc Bloch explains the origins of these legends, which contributed to the idea of religious monarchy in France, in *Les rois thaumaturges* (Paris, 1924), pp. 224–45. Spiegel scrutinizes the special relationship between the French kingship and both the cult of Charlemagne and the cult of Saint Denis in the two articles cited above, n. 46. Ernst Kantorowicz also gives pertinent information on the spiritualization of the French state in *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957).

<sup>49</sup> See the example given above in note 47 from the poetry of Deschamps. Charles d’Orléans traces the origin of the symbols of the monarchy to God in the “Complainte de France, 4”:

“Souviengne-toy comment [Dieu] vout ordonner / Que [tu] criasses Montjoye par liesse, / Et qu’en escu d’azur deusses porter / Trois fleurs de lis d’or, et pour hardiesse / Fermer en toy t’envoya sa Haultesse, / l’auriflamme, qui t’a fait seigneurir / Tes ennemis; ne metz en oubliance / Telz dons haultains, dont lui pleut t’enrichir, / Trescrestien, franc royaume de France. // En oultre plus, [Dieu] te vout envoyer / Par ung coulomb, qui est plain de simplesse, / La unction dont dois tes roys sacrer.” *Poésies*, 1:259.

In Robert Blondel’s *Complanctus bonorum Gallicorum*, cited here in a medieval French translation, he describes the French shield, with its fleur de lis, as a gift of the Virgin Mary: “Car jadis la mere de Dieu / Eslut ce champ delicieux / Pour avoir en ycellui lieu / Beau service et melodieux, / Et en cellui champ azuré. / Sema les trois fleurs de lis d’or, / Tant bel et si bien mesuré / Qu’en cest mont n’a pareil tresor.” Farther on, he writes of the English enemy: “Destruire vouldist le tresor / Que la Vierge y donna jadis, / Qui sont les trois fleurs de lis d’or, / Des bannieres de paradis.” *Les oeuvres de Robert Blondel*, ed. Alex Héron, 1 (Rouen, 1891), 88 and 123.

<sup>50</sup> One finds the influence of St. Bridget’s prophecies from the beginning of the Hundred Years War through the Joan of Arc period. Although her first revelation regarding the war occurred after the battle of Crécy in 1346, Bridget’s great interest in the cause of peace between the two countries dated from the time of an earlier pilgrimage to Compostella. See Johannes Jørgensen, *Saint Bridget of Sweden*, trans. Ingeborg Lund, 2 vols. (New York, 1954), 1:195.

Around 1347 Saint Bridget sent Bishop Hemming of Åbo and Prior Peter of Alvastra on a mission to the courts of France and England in order to negotiate a peace to be solidified by intermarriage. They took with them some of Bridget’s revelations, particularly those occurring in Book 4, chapters 103–5 of the *Revelations*. Included there are the following remarks about sin, peace, and intermarriage: “Saint Dionysius spoke to the Virgin Mary and said: ‘You are the queen of mercy. . . . Have pity therefore on your France and mine. . . . They are just like two very wild beasts. . . . By these two wild animals is understood two kings, namely France’s [Philip VI of Valois] and England’s [Edward III]. . . .’ The Son speaks: ‘I am a king who brings fruits and honors. Therefore shall I for the sake of my mother’s prayers send them my word. I am the true peace. . . . If consequently both these kings, French and English, want to have peace, so shall I give them eternal peace. But true peace cannot be gained before love of truth and justice. Therefore it pleases me, because one of the kings possesses justice, that peace come through marriage; in this manner the kingdom can fall to its rightful heir.’” Christ concludes: “But if the king who now possesses the kingdom will not obey, he must know that he will not succeed in his undertakings. . . . On the other hand, if the king who has justice will obey, I will help him and fight for him. But if he does not obey he will not achieve his longed-for goal. . . . Nevertheless, the French kingdom, when its people approach true humility, will get the rightful

tribulation for her sins. It was understood that if these sins — the moral sins of sloth, cowardice, and luxury, as well as the sin of a divided France — were not corrected, they would ultimately result in the loss of the war and the destruction of the kingdom.<sup>51</sup> The imagery used to convey the pitiable state of the kingdom was the trampled lily; hope lay in the image of the regrowth of the lily.<sup>52</sup>

But in Judeo-Christian thought the notion of sin is accompanied by the notion of redemption, and the patriotic poets gave redemption a political interpretation. They promised that the recovery of France, like redemption from sin, was attainable. The way to political recovery was through a revival of the God-given symbols of the monarchy,<sup>53</sup> through action, and through

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heir and happy piece" (translated from *Den Heliga Birgitta Himmelska Uppenbarelser*, ed. Tryggve Lunden [Malmö, 1967], pp. 264–67).

It is interesting to note this plea for intermarriage so many years before the Treaty of Troyes and the union of Henry V and Catherine of Valois. Whether the Treaty of Troyes took into account Bridget's revelations is not known. As late as 1441, Walter Bower recalled Bridget's prophecy in the *Scotichronicon* with regard to Joan of Arc: "It must be remembered that Bridget of France [*sic*] heard Notre-Dame say: 'Never will France have a firm and sure peace, until her inhabitants, by great acts of piety and humility, have appeased God my son, whose anger and indignation they have provoked until now by many sins'" (translated from Quicherat, *Procès*, 4:481). By this time the notion of peace through intermarriage had been replaced by the single idea of the legitimate heir's atonement for his sins.

<sup>51</sup> The idea of French sin is more prevalent in the chronicles than in literature. However, the turncoat French are viewed as sinners in chronicle and literature alike. In the "Complainte de France, 4," Charles speaks of French sin in these terms: "Scez-tu dont vient ton mal, a vray parler? / Congnois-tu point pourquoy es en tristesse? / Conter le vueil, pour vers toy m'acquiter, / Escoutes-moy et tu feras sagesse. / Ton grant ourgueil, glotonnie, peresse, / Convoitise, sans justice tenir, / Et luxure, dont as eu abondance, / Ont pourchacié vers Dieu de te punir, / Treschrestien, franc royaume de France!" *Poésies*, 1:258.

Eustache Deschamps refers to French sin in the context of the prophecies of Sibyl, contrasting it to the predicted new era: ". . . et les dissencions / N'aront plus lieu, et nous esjouissons, / Car assez tost seront noz maux finé, / Les grans pecheurs et leurs intencions; / Qu'ainsis est il pieça predestiné." Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres*, ed. G. Raynaud, 1 (Paris, 1901), 184.

Chartier treats the theme of French sin in the *Ad destestationem belli gallici et suasionem pacis*, where he blames French pride, ambition, luxury, and softness for both the civil war in France and for France's vulnerability to the conquering impulses of Henry V, and in the *Dialogus familiaris*, in which he warns that God may withdraw his special favor from the French because of their sins. See Bourgain-Hemeryck, *Oeuvres latines*, pp. 231–32 and pp. 304–5.

<sup>52</sup> The image of the trampled lily is found in the following passage of the French translation of Blondel's *Complanctus*: "Les graines du champ sont pascues / Appartenans au cerf volant, / A rudes bestes deffendues / Qu'ilz ne les voient defoulant, / Et que par leur cruel morsure / Les fleurs, qui sont nobles et tendres, / Ne facent mourir de mort sure, / Autant les greignieurs que les mendres." *Oeuvres*, 1:90–91.

Similar imagery, including that of the regrowth of the lily, is found in the fifth stanza of a hymn, *Lilia crescant*, appended to one of Jean Gerson's sermons: "Lilii flores solito magis sunt / Inter urticas tribulosque spinis / Obsiti densis; miserante Christo, Lilia crescant." H. G. Franco, "Jean Gerson's Theological Treatise and Other Memoirs in Defense of Joan of Arc," *Revue de l'université d'Ottawa* 41 (1971), 65.

<sup>53</sup> The symbols of the monarchy had indeed lost some of their impact since the Treaty of Troyes, and in the case of the sacred coronation its importance had diminished in France from about the thirteenth century. Marc Bloch cites Jean de Paris, under Philip the Fair, and Jean

prayer. The Virgin Mary figures prominently in the patriotic poems as the agent of redemption, much as Joan of Arc would figure as the agent of recovery.<sup>54</sup> Finally, there is the promise of peace and tranquillity, resembling the promises of the sibyls and the book of Daniel.

It remains to be demonstrated that the images and expectations of the patriotic poets were in fact used in the contemporary literature about Joan of Arc. But first I should answer the potential objection that the program outlined above was not a program at all but rather the independent musings of isolated poets despondent about the deterioration caused by the war. There is substantial evidence to the contrary. It is perhaps enough to note that several authors reveal the intent to serve their country through their poetry; their poems were meant to be a "call to arms." Nowhere is this more evident than in Robinet's introduction to his French translation of Robert Blondel's *Complanctus*. Speaking to "France," Robinet declares: "Car li acteur [Blondel] et je aussi, / Et ou [en] latin et en cecy, / Par subjecte amour te servons / *De teles armeures qu'avons* / Desirans, dont Dieux est tesmoings, / Toy secourir a tous besoings / Et servir de cuer volontaire, / Se mieulz savions dire ou faire."<sup>55</sup>

Two pieces of literature written during the Maid's lifetime serve to show the influence of the themes, tone, and program of the patriotic writers.<sup>56</sup> In

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Gerson as some who felt the sacred coronation "nécessaire, en quelque sorte, à la perfection de la dignité royale, mais on est roi sans lui et avant lui." *Les rois thaumaturges*, p. 218. For changes in the importance of the coronation rite in England and France as related to the principle of hereditary monarchy, see Charles Wood, "Queens, Queans, and Kingship: An Inquiry into Theories of Royal Legitimacy in Late Medieval England and France," in *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer*, ed. William C. Jordan, Bruce McNab, and Teofilo F. Ruiz (Princeton, 1976), pp. 385–400. Wood's article points up the importance of the coronation ceremony for Charles VII in reaffirming the hereditary principle. In this context, Joan of Arc, succeeding by the grace of God, becomes validation of Charles's royal blood and his divinely-approved right to rule.

<sup>54</sup> "Dieu a les bras ouvers pour t'acoler, / Prest d'oublier ta vie pecheresse; / Requier pardon, bien te vendra aidier / Nostre Dame, la trespuissant princesse, / Qui est ton cry et que tiens pour maistresse." Charles d'Orléans, "Complainte de France, 4," *Poésies*, 1:260–61. See also Blondel's *Complanctus*: "Quo genus herbarum, quo lilia summa virescent, / Que servare velis dea florum magna patrona! / Hactenus, ô flores, collati, virgo, pudoris / Servasti teneros clipeo; tu, protege semper!" Vallet de Viriville, "Notice sur Robert Blondel, poète, historien et moraliste du temps de Charles VII," *Mémoires de la société des antiquaires de Normandie* 19 (1851), 181. Vallet de Viriville finds this reference to "une vierge pudique et tutélaire" remarkable in view of the future mission of Joan of Arc. The contemporary French translation by Robinet demonstrates that this is a reference to the Virgin Mary. Robinet translates: "Que veuilles garder de perilz, / Vierge Marie, par ta grace! / Tu, mere de vierginité, / Deffend les lis de tout contraire / Et les tien en prosperité / Com aultresfoix as voulu faire." Blondel, *Oeuvres*, 1:148. At the end of Chartier's *Ad destestacionem* he invokes the Virgin — "Dei genitricem, gallice gentis patronam" — to bring peace to the realm (*Oeuvres latines*, p. 242). With Chartier, however, this invocation appears, at least in part, to be simply a conventional way to conclude the *Ad destestacionem*, especially when one considers Chartier's preference for human reform as against waiting for a divine solution. Ultimately, however, Chartier recognized that it was divine favor that would "reinstate" the French in their special position with God.

<sup>55</sup> Blondel, *Oeuvres*, 1:50. The italics are mine.

<sup>56</sup> Another extremely interesting poem following similar lines, although it does not mention

both works Joan of Arc is shown as the answer to France's needs, the fulfillment of the prophecies.

The first of these works is the prophecy *O insigne lilium*.<sup>57</sup> Apparently transcribed only once, in the *Recollectio* by Jean Bréhal, it is of virtually unknown origin. Bréhal himself ascribes it to a Hungarian princess named Engelide, who has not been further identified. Although the prophecy shows the influence of Celtic legend and the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, what is important here is its resemblance to the work of the patriotic poets. All the essential themes of the patriotic poetry are found in *O insigne lilium*: the legitimacy of the monarchy, its deplorable present state, the aid to be bestowed on it through a virgin, and the peace that will result. Moreover, the imagery is strikingly similar to that of Robert Blondel in the *Complanctus*, where the legitimacy of the monarchy is conveyed by the image of the lily planted by the divine "sower" in the "delectable" garden of France, and the ills of France are conveyed by the image of a suffocated and weakened lily. But unlike Blondel's poem, in which help will come from the Virgin Mary, *O insigne lilium* contains certain details that suggest that the virgin is Joan of Arc: an apparent reference to the Bois Chenu of her homeland ("a Puella oriunda, unde primum brutale venenum est"), the promise that the enemy would be expelled, and the promise that Charles would be crowned at Reims. It is Joan of Arc who fulfills the role of the *magna patrona*, Joan, not Mary, who arrives to intercede on behalf of France. Here, caught in the very process, is the transference of the image of the restorer from Mary to Joan of Arc.<sup>58</sup>

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Joan of Arc, is the *Ballade du sacre de Reims*, ed. Pierre Champion, *Le Moyen Age* 22 (1909), 370-77.

<sup>57</sup> "O insigne lilium, roratum principibus, agris pluribus a satore in virgulto delectabili insitum, immortale floribus et rosis mire redolentibus vallatum! Stupescat lilium, contremiscat virgultum: nam diversa brutalia, advenae alitaeque in praedicto virgulto, cornua cornibus adhaerendo, quasi penitus suffocabunt, et quasi marcescens rore privato, anguste et paulisper radices pene evellendo, aspidis anhelitibus vastare putabunt. Sed a Puella oriunda, unde primum brutale venenum effusum est, antecedenteque aurem retro dextram modico signo coccineo, remisse fabulante, collo modico, a virgulto triste exulabunt; fontes irriguos dicto lilio administrando, serpentem extra pellendo venenumque cuilibet notificando, lilicolam Karolum, filium Karoli nuncupatum, laurea Remis, non manu mortali facta, fauste laureabit. Subdent se circiter fines turbidi, fontes tremebunt, clamescet populus: *Vivat lilium, fugiat brutum, pullulet virgultum!* Ascendet ad campum insulae, classe classibus applicando, et ibidem plurima bruta jam clade peribunt. Multorum tunc pax efficietur, multorum claves ultro suum opificem recognoscent. Cives civitatis inclitae clade perjurii perimentur, singultus plurimos in se memorando, et muri plurimi ruent intrando. Tunc erit lillii virgultum sicut brutis aliquo modo et florebit tempore longo." Quicherat, *Procès*, 3:344-45.

<sup>58</sup> Other instances of the same phenomenon can be cited. According to a contemporary prophecy, France had been lost by an unworthy woman (Isabeau de Bavière) and would be restored by a virgin (Joan of Arc). At the rehabilitation trial Durand Laxart quoted Joan as saying: "Nonne alias dictum fuit quod Francia per mulierem desolaretur, et postea per virginem restaurari debet?" *Procès en nullité*, 1:296. The *Chronique de Metz* cites the prophecy without specifically referring to the first woman (Quicherat, *Procès*, 4:326). This prophecy appears to be a transference to Isabeau and Joan of Arc of the notion that the human race had been lost by

Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* was also heir to the ideas of the patriotic poets. In the *Ditié* the predominant theme of joy and thanksgiving to God derives from Christine's conviction that Joan of Arc is God's divine agent, sent to restore the French monarchy. The Maid is proof that the French are God's elect.<sup>59</sup> The *Ditié* always speaks of Joan of Arc in a religious context. Such statements as "Dieu t'a tant honorée," "Pucelle de Dieu ordonnée," and "Par miracle fut envoyée / Et divine amonition" demonstrate that Christine ascribes the Maid's accomplishments to divine intervention. This is in contrast to *O insigne lilium*, in which the description of the restorer virgin is essentially nonreligious; her role there as a servant of God is implied rather than stated.

The emphasis in the *Ditié* on the virgin, Joan of Arc, who saves through the grace of God, brings to mind more explicitly than elsewhere the Virgin Mary. It is surely no coincidence that Christine uses the term "beneurée" to refer to Joan of Arc. Furthermore, we know from a prayer to the Virgin written by Christine about 1414<sup>60</sup> that formerly she had seen the Virgin Mary as the intercessor between God and the French, as had Blondel and Charles d'Orléans. In this prayer Christine called on the Virgin to protect Charles from war and from his enemies before it was too late: "Pour le Roy de France te pri / Qu'en pitié tu oyes le cry / De ses bons et loyaux amis; / Paix et vraye santé descry / A lui ou livre l'escry / Où Dieu a tous ses eslus mis. Ave Maria."<sup>61</sup>

Christine's understanding of Joan of Arc's mission also has other components. Part of the *Ditié's* description of the Maid's mission shows the influence of that branch of medieval prophetic literature whose origins are more mythical than Christian. Christine believed that Joan of Arc's appearance was prophesied five hundred years earlier not only by Bede but also by Merlin and the sibyls. Furthermore, her understanding of the ultimate goal of the Maid's mission comes to her through knowledge of a prophecy, popular in France from 1382, called the Second Charlemagne Prophecy.<sup>62</sup>

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Eve but would be restored by Mary. Cf. these lines by Deschamps, *Ballade* 252: "Par Eve fut nostre perdicion, / Par Marie nostre recouvrement." *Oeuvres*, 3:79. The Joan of Arc of the prophecy is, in essence, a second Mary. A more clearcut example occurs in the *Registre delphinal* where Thomassin explains why he is including Christine de Pizan's *Ditié* in his discussion of Joan of Arc: "Et j'ay plus tost désiré de mettre icy le traictié de laditte Christine que des autres, afin de tousjours honorer le sexe féminin par le moyen duquel toute chrestienté a eu tant de biens: par la pucelle Vierge Marie, la réparation et restauracion de tout le humain lignaige; et par laditte Pucelle Jehanne, la réparation et restauracion du royaume de France." Quicherat, *Procès*, 4:310.

<sup>59</sup> "O quel honneur à la couronne / De France par divine preuve! / Car par les graces qu'Il lui donne / Il appert comment Il l'apreuve." *Ditié*, p. 30.

<sup>60</sup> For the date of this prayer see Raimond Thomassy, *Essai sur les écrits politiques de Christine de Pisan* (Paris, 1838), p. xxxvii.

<sup>61</sup> Thomassy, *Les écrits politiques*, p. 173.

<sup>62</sup> For writers at the time of Joan of Arc the source of this prophecy was probably a version dating from 1381-82. See Maurice Chaume, "Une prophétie relative à Charles VI," *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 3 (1947), 27-42. However, the tradition from which the Second Charlemagne



According to this prophecy, Charles, son of Charles, would expel the enemy from the kingdom, conquer Rome, and achieve peace as emperor of all Christendom. A blend of several different prophetic strains, this prophecy made promises that had little or nothing to do with Joan's mission as she announced it. It is Christine de Pizan who applied these promises to the mission of Joan of Arc. Using the very wording of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, she says: "Car ung roy de France doit estre / Charles, filz de Charles, nommé, / Qui sur tous rois sera grant maistre."<sup>63</sup> Because of this prophecy Christine believes that Charles will unify the Church and all Christendom, that Charles, in concert with the Maid, will retake the Holy Land and become emperor of all Christian lands.

Christine appears to have drawn her details from written sources rather than oral ones, and from secondary accounts of the prophecies rather than the original sources. We know that she had at hand the poetry of Eustache Deschamps, whom she admired. Deschamps had been concerned about the future of France, and he spoke about prophecies in his ballads. In 1392, in a ballad entitled *Sur ce qui doit advenir*,<sup>64</sup> he expressed optimism about France's future, based directly on the Second Charlemagne Prophecy. He alluded to the line of the prophecy that speaks of "Charles, filz de Charles," although, because the Dauphin at that moment was named Louis, he wrote: "Fleur qui de fleur pure et nette descend." He spoke of a trip to Jerusalem where the French king would subdue the infidel and have himself crowned, and he looked forward to unity in the Roman Church and in all Christendom. It is easy to imagine how Christine could have conflated the promises of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy, which she found in the poetry of Deschamps, with the mission of Joan of Arc.

When one studies the literature written about Joan of Arc in her lifetime, one is struck by the realization that the literary image of Joan of Arc is only partly specific to the girl from Domremy. Unable or unwilling to relate a multitude of facts about Joan's life as many chroniclers did, these writers turned to previously existing literary models to shape their image of the Maid. To underline her military role, Joan of Arc figures in Christine de

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Prophecy derives is much older. In the early Christian era, certain church Fathers pointed to elements of the sibylline Books — the Greek and Egyptian theme of the "Savior-King," the predictions of Rome's ruin and a reign of persecution — that seemed to agree with the biblical prophecies in Daniel and Revelations. This material, along with the three hopes of early Christianity — universal conversion, universal peace, and Christ's return at the end of time — lie at the root of the Second Charlemagne Prophecy (Chaume, p. 40). The old oracle of the three C's (Chaume, p. 41) was thought at one time to refer to Constantine, Charlemagne, and a precursor of Christ at the time of the Second Coming. But by the fourteenth century the three C's were transformed into the phrase "Charles, son of Charles", to mean Charles V and Charles VI of France. At the time of Joan of Arc it was thought to refer to Charles VI and his son Charles VII, which is the form found in *O insigne lilium*.

<sup>63</sup> *Ditié*, p. 31. The *Ballade du sacre de Reims* also includes a reference to the Second Charlemagne prophecy: "Vecy venir le second Charlemaigne." Champion, "Ballade du sacre," p. 372.

<sup>64</sup> Deschamps, *Oeuvres*, 1:184.

Pizan's *Ditié* as a second Deborah rather than as an Esther or a Judith, but since Deborah was not an active combatant, Christine fleshed out her image of the warrior Joan by borrowing from antiquity the model of the "egregia bellatrix" as exemplified by such notables as Penthesilea, Camilla, and Semiramis. In addition, the early literature sees in Joan a second Mary and the fulfillment of certain prophecies. This reliance on tradition rather than fact, natural enough in an era that lacked precise distinctions between the two, is nonetheless surprising when one considers how well documented Joan of Arc is in comparison with most of her contemporaries.

But to rely only on the chronicler's "factual" truth is to miss what literature contributes of its own truth. That truth must now be measured for the challenge it offers to traditional interpretations of Joan of Arc. In other words, to what extent does the literary evidence correct or supplant some of the prevailing assumptions about Joan of Arc?

The discovery that the patriotic poets and the Maid spoke with one and the same voice, although the poets had raised their lily banner well before Joan of Arc, makes Joan's mission appear to be the logical sequel to the poets' outcries. Certainly the work of the patriotic poets is an important part of the context within which Joan of Arc's mission arose. There is such a distance between the well-lettered poets and the peasant girl who by her own admission could not tell A from B that the common thread between the two parties seems to have been overlooked. The poets, as they freely admitted, were propagandists (serving the kingdom "de teles armeures qu'avons"). This does not mean that their voices had reached and influenced the girl from Domremy, nor does it necessarily feed a conspiracy theory. On the other hand the existence in the patriotic poetry of a program for recovery is a caution against the dogmatism of those who insist on the singular insight and utter originality of Joan of Arc,<sup>65</sup> or of those who would deny any relationship between the content of Joan's voices and the temper of the times. A more balanced view requires the recognition that Joan of Arc was at least as much a creature of her time as she has previously been declared to be separate from it.

When Joan of Arc arrived at Charles's court at Chinon in February of 1429, the Dauphin's propagandists began to modify her image, enhancing it to the point of mythic distortion. As has been shown, the way this came about is largely traceable. France's situation in 1429 was urgent. In late 1428 the clergy had ordered weekly processions "pour la prospérité des armes du roi," and many had visited national shrines,<sup>66</sup> believing no doubt that an earthly solution was by that time out of the question. The Dauphin had nothing to lose by trusting in the Maid. His propagandists rewrote the Merlin prophecy *Ascendet virgo* and incorporated Joan of Arc in the new

<sup>65</sup> Jules Michelet calls Joan of Arc "éminemment originale" in his *Jeanne d'Arc* (1853; repr., Paris, 1962), p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ayroles, *La vraie Jeanne d'Arc*, 1:15.

version, *Virgo puellares*, a poem that was widely disseminated (it is extant in eight manuscripts ranging as far afield as Scotland and Germany),<sup>67</sup> often accompanied by the *Lettre aux Anglais* and the *Poitiers Conclusions*. Charles's own efforts to disseminate these documents cannot be ruled out.

Of course the church had to be consulted about the Maid. Certain criteria had to be met if a miracle was to be validated, and the Poitiers commission was assigned to investigate Joan of Arc's case. The commission's astonishing goodwill towards a girl who had not yet offered the "sign" required of a miracle can be largely explained by the phrase with which the conclusions of the commission begin: "Le roy, attendue [la] nécessité de luy et de son royaume."<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, pressure from royal magistrates was brought to bear on those Armagnac churchmen who didn't immediately approve the Maid. At least this seems to be the purpose of Jean Girard's correspondence with the initially reluctant Archbishop Gelu. Gerson's *De quadam puella* argues that faith in the Maid is a matter of personal choice, listing six reasons in favor of Joan and six against, and yet the between-the-lines message is nonetheless one of favor and support. Armagnac churchmen appear to have bent over backwards to justify supporting Joan of Arc, and the analogy of the biblical heroines became one of the often-repeated arguments used for this purpose. The biblical women were then adopted as models by contemporary writers such as Christine de Pizan. The literary image of Joan of Arc seems to have been molded by a collective propagandistic effort more than by the independent contributions of individual authors.

Beyond the efforts of interested individuals another major influence shaped Joan of Arc's literary image. Much of what Joan of Arc proclaimed agreed with a number of unorthodox medieval religious views which despite their irregularity appear to have been cherished by many of Joan's contemporaries. To the delight of everyone, Joan of Arc seemed to confirm that God would still intervene directly in human affairs, and this rekindled the treasured notion (possible in the context of the Old Testament but hard to reconcile with the New) that the French were God's chosen people. Then, too, the force of Joan's reputation was such that her word transcended other human statements such as Isabeau de Bavière's unpopular claim that Charles was illegitimate. If Joan was the virgin sent by God and announced in prophecy, only Joan's declaration of Charles's legitimacy mattered, as the accomplishment of a proper coronation proved. Joan of Arc gave expression to many secretly harbored but unorthodox hopes, and in so doing she brought these hopes to the surface. Soon Joan's image in literature could not be separated from them.

In conclusion, one might ask whether Joan's sense of her mission, conceived in the fields of Domremy, underwent its own transformation, parallel to the transformation of her image in literature, once Joan came in contact with the Dauphin and his supporters at Chinon. It is possible that Joan

<sup>67</sup> Jacques Cordier, *Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris, 1948), p. 177.

<sup>68</sup> Quicherat, *Procès*, 3:391.

originally believed that her mission was only to raise the siege of Orléans and effect Charles's coronation at Reims. Her later insinuations in letters and at her trial that she might lead a crusade to Jerusalem or release Charles d'Orléans from his English captivity may well have been new goals, bred from a desire not to disappoint the hopes that special interest groups such as the clergy and the house of Orléans had placed on her. Perhaps the efforts made here to unravel the traditions that went into the composition of Joan of Arc's literary image can also be applied with profit to Joan's image of herself, thus clarifying some of the apparent contradictions that have persisted about the Maid of Orléans.

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