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Spiritual Woman Warrior: The Construction
of Joan of Arc in Contemporary
Children's Literature

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A Thesis

in

The Department of History

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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL WOMAN WARRIOR: THE CONSTRUCTION OF JOAN OF ARC IN CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

by Melanie J. Fishbane

Studying history helps to create and reinforce a collective historical consciousness within Western society. Certain historical figures become consistent characters in the creation of our understanding of our humanity, which is then reintegrated into the historical consciousness. Literature for children is one of the ways in which society reinforces important historical figures and western society's perceptions of our historical past. Non-fiction, historical fiction and biographical writing are the three genres writers of children's literature use to teach children history. Joan of Arc has been manipulated by historians, writers and artists to become whatever was necessary for the particular society to believe in at the time. The consistency of Joan of Arc in the historical consciousness and her popularity among writers for children is not a coincidence. The fact that her personality and physical image is intangible and, therefore, a mystery, makes it easy for writers to make Joan into the person that they wish her to be. Currently, in our historical consciousness, Joan symbolizes patriotism, medieval chivalry, pop feminism, spirituality and heroism. The popularity Joan of Arc in contemporary children's literature is a result of and indeed part of the continual creation and re-interpretation of Western society's historical consciousness.

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INTRODUCTION: JOAN OF ARC AND THE HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

On one hand the Girl in popular culture is an endangered species in her own house as well as on the streets, vulnerable to rape, abuse, violence inflicted by others and subject also to self-inflicted violence through diet pills, illegal substances, eating disorders and self-mutilation. Yet on the other hand, girlish vulnerability is simultaneously being reinscribed as Girl Power by bands, zines and films that acknowledge the culture's violence but portray girls as active perpetrators and self defenders rather than passive victims.¹

Saxton's observations about the construction of the "girl" in contemporary fiction is quite useful when discussing the image of Joan of Arc and other female historical figures in children's historical fiction literature, because the authors' protagonists are often young people. Joan is the perfect protagonist because not only is she a strong female figure who is an "active perpetrator" and "self defender," but she is also a "girl." Since before her death, Joan of Arc has been a figure about whom writers, artists, politicians, and the public questioned, discussed and marveled. No one can answer the perplexing question of how this peasant girl of seventeen led France to victory. Many people have tried placing her into a particular category. Joan has been called a warrior, a martyr, a witch, a saint and a heretic. The language we use, however, constrains us and we have yet to find that one word that encapsulates her personae. The following thesis will analyze how certain "buzz" words and clichés used to describe Joan in contemporary children's literature aid her permanence in western historical consciousness.

¹ Ruth Saxton, ed., *The Girl: Constructions of the Girl in Contemporary Fiction by Women* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) , xxi.

The story of Joan, a peasant girl who hears the voices of angels and decides that she must save France, has a wonderful fairy tale quality. In her own time, Joan was a legend. In our time, she has become mythical and an icon. For the children's writer of historical fiction and biographies, Joan becomes accessible, changeable and exciting. Joan is accessible to children's literature because she is so legendary. Legends liberally borrow historical facts, which are then manipulated into a story where the historical facts become submerged and thus one cannot distinguish what is real and what is not. Myths also work on archetypal imagery that stems from a particular social consciousness. It would seem that these lines become blurred with Joan, because although we know that she did exist, and we can construct certain historical facts about her, there are a number of mythical archetypes that dominate her personae. For example, historians and writers of children's books often compare Joan to a "Warrior Maid," or "Amazon Women" of the ancient world. These words conjure up a number of images: a strong woman dressed in the clothes of a knight, sometimes with flowing hair in the wind, a woman sometimes standing tall and courageous; and sometimes riding gallantly through the fields during a battle. Interestingly, there is no contemporary picture of Joan except for a little sketch drawn in the margins in one of the trial transcripts by a clerk who was not even present at her trial. These images are used to describe Joan, and none of them are accurate.

In a day where academics are trying everything and anything to get children interested in history, what we write for children is becoming even more important. The construction of a person's image is often used to characterize them. As I shall show, Joan of Arc's image is directly related to how we perceive her. I argue that the media is certainly responsible for providing us with some of these images. In the last five years, three movies have been made

about Joan where the directors and writers decide how to construct Joan's personality.

American popular culture adores Joan. Luc Besson's *The Messenger* tries to examine Joan's confusion between what she believed her voices to be and what they actually were. There is also an upcoming film with Mira Sorvino in 2003 or 2004 directed by John Maxwell.

In the last eight years, more than ten books have been written about Joan for children in North America. Also, the amount of literature on the Middle Ages and Arthurian Legends that has emerged in the last ten years is staggering. Tamora Pierce's series *The Lioness Quartet* is the story of a girl who dresses up like a boy just to learn how to be a knight. T. A. Barron's series describes the early years of Merlin. Karleen Bradford has also written a series of books on Merlin, Arthur and the crusades, as well as a fictional biography of Lady Jane Grey entitled *The Nine Day Queen*. The Medieval period is certainly popular for younger readers.

Another element that I believe is an important aspect of popular culture's interest in Joan is the public's fascination with the Middle Ages. Stores, music, theatre, and art are focusing more and more on this time of chivalry, royalty and great costumes. Why is there still this intense obsession with King Arthur and Camelot or Robin Hood and his Merry Men? Both men are possibly historical but mythologized and legendized in books and films to the point where historians since the nineteenth century have been researching their possible existence. However, the difference in Joan's case is that we are certain that she did exist. The current popularity of Joan of Arc in contemporary children's literature is a result of, and, indeed, part of, the continual creation and re-interpretation of Western society's historical consciousness.

For feminists who wish to reclaim Joan as an important female figure in “herstory”, her physical body, transvestism and public personae have become imperative. Joan did not advocate for the rights of women, nor did she ever suggest that other women join her in combat. Yet, she has become a symbol of what the medieval woman could accomplish in women’s history. Gender historians and other historians in Johannic studies often ignore the fact that Joan began her quest at the age of seventeen. Although all historians comment on the miraculousness of achievement for such a young person, there is a lack of understanding of what it meant for Joan to be seventeen, or even nineteen, in the Middle Ages.

In *Young Medieval Women*, Katherine J. Lewis, Noel James Manuge and Kim Phillips propose to look at a body of academic literature which not only looks at women in the Middle Ages, but at the specific nature of what it meant to be a “young” and female during the period. Lewis *et al* recognize the efforts of other historians, such as Barbara Hanawalt’s study on the different experiences of young men and women within the English peasantry, but stress that although work has been done on women, the issue of the influence of gender identity upon youth has not been a focus.² The specific nature of Joan’s age and its potential effects upon how she may have been viewed by her contemporaries, as well as its usefulness in popular historical literature for children, makes this argument incredibly useful when analyzing how historians and biographers of children’s literature have interpreted her gender.

There is also a distinct link between the rise of the “girl” in contemporary fiction for adults and the usefulness of the young heroine in children’s historical literature. The women characters chosen by authors and publishers coincide with the rise of the “girl” archetype

² Katherine J. Lewis, Noel James Manuge, and Kim Phillips ed., “Introduction” in *Young Medieval Women* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), xiii.

described above by Saxton. As we will see in Chapter Seven, historical figures other than Joan of Arc, such as young Princess Elizabeth and Princess Mary, are part of this rise of the active female heroes who not only are aware of the dangers of their society, but choose to embrace their struggles with courage and determination.

This discussion will be broken into nine chapters. The approach is multi-disciplinary as I have examined not only what the historians are saying about Joan, but popular cultural theories on gender, the body, and children's literary theory. *Chapter Two: A Version of the Life of Joan of Arc* has a brief synopsis of Joan of Arc's life and the current historiography from the last twenty years. *Chapter Three: Children's Literary Criticism: History, Theory and Debates* and *Chapter Four: Children's Literature: Ideology, Debates and the Primary Sources* provides a general description of the sources, a brief history of the field of children's literature and discusses the three categories in which these books fall. *Chapter Five: Medievalism and the Pursuit for the "Truth" about the Middle Ages* discusses this particular field of history and literary studies which analyzes popular perceptions of the Middle Ages. *Chapter Six: Joan of Arc: "The Girl" in Contemporary Children's Literature* defines "Gender" in the Medieval context and how this pertained specifically to young women.

Chapter Seven: Legend of Knights and Ladies: Joan of Arc and The Construction of the Hero in Contemporary Children's Literature compares popular notions about Joan of Arc and how these conform to western society's idea of the hero. *Chapter Eight: Following a Divine Purpose: The Construction of Joan of Arc's Spirituality in Contemporary Children's Literature* provides an analysis of how Joan's spirituality is defined in the primary sources, specifically pertaining to her voices and popular French legends of her period. *Chapter Nine: The Modern Joan of Arc* reviews the

discussion giving particular attention to how Joan of Arc influences Western historical consciousness.

Chapter 2

A VERSION OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOAN OF ARC

When I was thirteen years old, I had a voice from God to help me govern my conduct. And the first time I was fearful... It is usually a great light. When I came to France, often I heard this voice...The voice was sent to me by God, and, after I had thrice heard this voice, I knew that it was the voice of an angel. This voice has always guarded me well and I have understood it clearly...The voice told me, twice or thrice a week, that I, Joan, must go away and that I must come to France and that my father must know nothing of my leaving. The voice told me that I should go to France and I could not bear to stay where I was. The voice told me that I should raise the siege laid to the city of Orleans. The voice told me also that I should make my way to Robert de Baudricourt in the fortress of Vaucouleurs, the Captain of the place, that he would give me people to go with me. And me, I answered it that I was a poor girl who knew not how to ride nor lead in war.¹

Standing in front of her accusers, at her trial in February of 1431, Joan of Arc stated what she saw as her divine mission.² It is quite an undertaking to provide a brief biography about Joan of Arc when it is evident that most of what is known is marred with speculation and intrigue. This chapter is called a “version of the life” because as with all narratives, a biography is indeed one interpretation of the facts that are available to the writer. As I read the countless biographies, both academic and for younger audiences, I found that Joan’s personality became more and more convoluted. As we will see in the following chapter, although it is relatively simple to write the narrative of Joan’s life, it is the specific nature of her

¹ Régine Pernoud *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses* (Lanham: Scarborough House, 1969), 30.

² Joan of Arc was called “Jeanne.” Please see Pernoud’s book *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 15. Other sources have Joan’s name spelled with an “h”, so that “Jeanne” is spelled “Jehanne.” For the purpose of continuity (unless quoted from a primary or secondary source), the spelling of Joan’s name will be anglicized.

mission and image that challenges the writer. This chapter also provides a brief overview of the political and social circumstances during Joan's life. The first half will discuss the Hundred Years War and the second will shed some light on the enigma known to us as Joan of Arc.

Joan of Arc's mission was inspired by the war between the English and the French called the Hundred Years War.³ The historiography of the war is divided between those historians who provide a biased survey of the events, and those who wish to show the military and political conduct from the point of view of both the English and French. In *The Hundred Years War*, Desmond Seward provides the reader with a general narrative that sympathizes with the English. Seward states that the "Hundred Years War was medieval England's greatest achievement."⁴ Conversely, in *The Hundred Years War: England and France c. 1300-1450*, Christopher Allmand states that

War should be studied through those who take part in it, so that the attitudes and human reactions of those involved may be appreciated, and the phenomenon of war may thus come to be better understood.⁵

Allmand criticizes writers like Seward who write surveys of the war with a bias towards one side. Allmand's initial goal is to see how the war over the 150-year period affected the developments and changes in England and France. Another historian who wishes to provide a general narrative of the war is Jonathan Sumption. *Trial By Battle: The Hundred Years War*, surveys all aspects, social, political and economic, from before the death of Charles IV in 1328

³ For further information, please see Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300-c.1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Jonathan Sumption, *Trial by Battle: The Hundred Years War*, Volume 1 (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1990). Sumption's book is volume one of a three volume survey on the war of which the first two have been published. The second one is entitled *Trial by Fire: The Hundred Years War*, Volume II (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991)

⁴ Desmond Seward, *The Hundred Years War: The English in France, 1337-1453* (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 17.

until the Siege of Calais in 1347. Although meticulous in detail, Sumption admits that “with rare exception” he ignored certain historical debates to suit his narrative of the war.⁶

Although there is some debate among historians as to when the Hundred Years War began, historians traditionally put the time line in the 1330s when Edward III of England and Philip II of France disputed over the land rights of the Duchy of Aquitaine, the succession to the French throne and trading rights in Flanders. Historians such as Allmand, recognize that there were issues dating back to the eleventh century when the duke of Normandy became the King of England. The first major battle of the war was fought on August 26, 1346 at Crécy-en-Ponthieu when, on his way through north-eastern France, Edward III was challenged by Philip VI's French army. However, Edward's forces won.⁷ This was not the end of Edward's military achievements as he led his English army to victory at Calais on August 4, 1347 and Poitiers mid-September, 1356.⁸

According to Allmand, The Treaty of Brétigny, drawn up by Edward III and John II in May 1360, was the first time that both sides decided to stop fighting and have it formally recognized on paper.⁹ However, this did not mean that there were not French and English domestic disputes over territories. During the 1370s, the French were able to reoccupy certain areas, such as Aquitaine, when the English were preoccupied with other issues. Due to religious political issues, such as the Great Schism, and domestic troubles, such as the Peasants' Revolt in England in 1381, the French and English once again formally sought peace

⁶ Allmand, 4.

⁷ Sumption, x.

⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁹ Ibid., 18.

during the 1380s. Between 1380 and 1413 there was a period of relative peace between the two kingdoms as each struggled with its own domestic issues. In the French case, the mental instability of its king, Charles VI, became a focal point that would eventually lead to further struggles with the English.

By 1420, France was in a precarious position. The bouts of civil war in the region forced the Burgundians and the English to forge the Treaty of Bourges in 1412 which was signed by King Henry IV and the dukes of Berry, Bourbon and Orléans and gave the English king rights over Aquitaine as well as the right for the king to defend his lands.¹⁰ This gave the new king Henry V the position he needed to take back the lands that had been lost to the French and he did so on 25 October 1415, when his army defeated the French at Agincourt.¹¹ Queen Isabeau, Charles VI's wife, had tried in 1417, with the support of the Burgundians, to overthrow Charles VI and failed. By the summer of 1419, Henry V, having returned to England to properly prepare for war, was able to return to France and successfully take control of Normandy.¹² That same year, the new Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, wanted to control France by dividing the northern part of France between Burgundy and England.¹³ At first Philip believed that he would be left alone to rule, but soon realized that Henry V had other plans. Believing that it was in his best interest, Philip aligned himself with Henry in December and tried to negotiate a treaty with Charles VI. However, due to Charles VI's bouts with mental illness (and Queen Isabeau's previous attempts at power), Henry and Philip negotiated with Queen Isabeau of France in Troyes, Champagne.

¹⁰ Allmand, 27.

¹¹ Ibid, 28

¹² Ibid, 29.

Allmand argues that the Treaty of Troyes was one of the most significant and important treaties of the Hundred Years War because it ended the sixty year domination of the Treaty of Brétigny. The treaty stated that when Charles VI died, Henry V was guaranteed the throne of France because Queen Isabeau claimed that her son, the future king of France Charles VII, was a bastard.¹⁴ Henry would also marry Charles VI's daughter, Catherine, whom he had tried to marry a number of years before.¹⁵ The treaty, however, still kept the two countries as separate entities, each with its own laws and identity.

This solution was short lived because in 1422, within six weeks of one another, both Henry V and Charles VI died, leaving the infant Henry VI (son of Henry V and Catherine de Valois) as heir to England and arguably to France, and the Dauphin Charles the effective ruler of the areas of France that were not still under English control.¹⁶ This Treaty made Charles' position difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. Historians often describe him as a lost soul, conniving and insecure. Historian Edouard Perroy had described him thus

Physically and mentally, Charles was a weakling, a graceless degenerate. He was stunted and puny, with a blank face in which scared, shifty, sleepy eyes, peering out on either side of a big, long nose, failed to animate his harsh, unpleasant features.¹⁷

¹³ Seward, 181.

¹⁴ Ibid., 182.

¹⁵ Allmand, 30.

¹⁶ Seward, 188.

¹⁷ Seward quoting Edouard Perroy, 214.

Charles was also afflicted by strange fears and was so seriously traumatized by his mother that he seriously considered abdication.¹⁸ It was during this period of political instability in France, that Joan of Arc went to Charles and offered him her help.

As stated above, it is difficult to write an accurate account of Joan of Arc. This is particularly true regarding Joan's early life because most available information comes from her Rehabilitation Trial, the purpose of which was to overturn Pierre Cauchon's ruling in 1431 that Joan of Arc was a "relapsed heretic according to law and reason."¹⁹ The trial, however, was held twenty years after her death and one must therefore read all testimony with caution. Most of these witnesses were relying on a memory that was now cluttered with twenty years of propaganda about Joan.

The original 1431 records, the Trial of Condemnation, are also problematic because except for the Poitiers Conclusions, they are the only records that we have. At the end of each day, the proceedings in Rouen were reviewed by the notaries who wrote their findings in French. This means that there were various versions combined into one record. Four years later, the record was translated into Latin and put into official form by Thomas de Courcelles, a University of Paris master who took part in the trial, with the aid of the chief notary, Guillaume Machon. Machon kept the original French record among his personal papers, but sent French copies to England's King Henry VI, the Inquisitor General of France and Pierre Cauchon. Three of the five copies of the official Latin records are still in existence and the original Machon manuscript has disappeared. However, the two manuscripts believed to be copies have survived and are located in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the

¹⁸ Seward, 214.

Bibliothèque Municipale of Orléans.²⁰ The Rehabilitation trial also has some problems with translation and authenticity. Three copies of the record have been preserved and there was a single deposition made in absentia in Latin. How many of the witnesses actually spoke Latin is questionable and thus the testimony was almost certainly translated. Historians consider some of the testimony contradictory because there are disagreements about when events took place. In addition, the witnesses were limited to a list of topics that were designed to rehabilitate Joan. Both trials are written in the third person. Only occasionally are Joan's answers directly recorded. The only complete text of the Condemnation Trial is in Latin and the existing French minutes are incomplete.

According to a letter written by Perceval de Boulainvilliers to the Duke of Milan on the 29 June, 1429, Joan of Arc, or Jeanne la Pucelle (Joan the Maid), was born on the 6 January, 1412 in Domrémy, France. The actual date is questionable, as no one else during the Rehabilitation trial mentioned the feast of Epiphany. During the 1431 Trial of Condemnation, Joan said that she was "nineteen or thereabout."²¹ Thus we can say that Joan was born in 1412.

Joan's relationship with her family was often called into question by her contemporaries and historians alike. While the witnesses at the Rehabilitation Trial chose to show their relationships as close, the judges at her first trial and some historians have argued to the contrary. Her parents, Jacques d'Arc and Isabelle Ramée, were well respected in the community and were described by one of their neighbors, Jean Moreau, as being "faithful

¹⁹ Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 224.

²⁰ Frances Gies, *Joan of Arc: The Legend and the Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 2-3.

²¹ Régine Pernoud & Marie-Véronique Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story* Jeremy Duquesnay Adams rev. & trans (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 265.

Catholics” and “hard workers.”²² One of Joan’s childhood friends, Hauviette, said that they were “honest and decent farmers and true Catholics of good reputation.”²³ Isabelle taught Joan her prayers and had done a pilgrimage to Rome. Joan’s sister Catherine married and left when Joan was about thirteen. Her two brothers, Pierre and Jean, joined Joan when she went to fight for Charles in Orléans. After Joan’s death, it was Isabelle who tried for years to get the ruling that Joan was a relapsed heretic and idolater changed. This displays the family’s loyalty and dedication to Joan.

Many biographers have tried to create a sense of tension between Joan and her family based on her deliberate disobedience of her parents when she left Domrémy for Chinon without permission. When she began to hear the voices, they told her that when it was time, Joan would have to leave her home and go to Chinon to help crown Charles as Dauphin, the King of France. As it was tradition in France, Charles would have to be crowned at Rheims but it was currently being controlled by the English.

Joan did not tell anyone about this. Although the voices did not forbid her, she “feared greatly to reveal it for fear of the Burgundians, lest they prevent my journey; and above all I greatly feared my father, that he might prevent me from making my journey.”²⁴ Joan states that “whilst she was still with her father and mother she was often told by her mother that her father spoke of having dreamed” that she would leave Domrémy dressed as a man-at-

²² Testimony of Hauviette from the Rehabilitation Trial in Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 17.

²³ Ibid., 16 -17.

²⁴ Ibid., 31.

arms; this troubled him greatly.²⁵ However, months after her departure, Joan wrote them a letter and they forgave her, thus maintaining her close ties with them.

Joan also took a vow of celibacy that included a life-long commitment to God. The trial records indicate that in 1425, Joan's father had a marriage arranged for her. Joan refused to marry the boy and he took her to court in the city of Toul charging her with breaking a promise of marriage. Joan defended herself and was acquitted of the charge.²⁶

On July 1428 when the Anglo-Burgundians pillaged Domrémy, her family was forced to stay with friends in Neufchâteau.²⁷ When her family returned home, Joan began to plan how she could leave Domrémy. Joan asked her parents if she could stay with family friends in Vaucouleurs to help with the birth of her mother's cousin's child. Her parents agreed and in January or February of 1429, Joan left Domrémy for Vaucouleurs. While she was there, Joan asked her mother's cousin, whom Joan affectionately called "Uncle", Durand Laxart, to take her to see Robert de Baudricourt to get permission to see the Dauphin. How Joan convinced Laxart to take her to see de Baudricourt is subject to debate. The most popular explanation is that she referred to Merlin's prophecy.²⁸

Some historians attribute the origins of this prophecy to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*, in which he states that Merlin had prophesized: "Out of the [oak wood] will be brought forth a maid. A virgin will descend on the back of the archer, and the

²⁵ W.P. Barrett trans. *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc: a Complete Translation of the Text of the Original Documents* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1931), 102.

²⁶ Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 23.

²⁷ Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 41-42.

²⁸ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight.

virgin flowers will be darkened.”²⁹ The prophecy was reaffirmed by a mystic named Marie Robine, known as Marie of Avignon, the “oak wood” interpreted to mean the Bois Chenu region of Lorraine.³⁰ Marie told Charles VI that at one point in her life, she was afraid that she would have to put on pieces of armor, but that her own voices told her that she had nothing to fear, for it “was not she who would have to wear that armor, but that a Maid who would come after her would wear it and deliver the kingdom of France from its enemies.”³¹ Although there is some debate as to Joan’s awareness of the popular legend, most biographies argue that she believed that she was the Maid of Lorraine. Indeed, Laxart states in the Rehabilitation trial that she stated, “Was it not said that France would be ruined through a woman, and afterward restored by a virgin?”³²

It was during her visit to Vaucouleurs that Joan changed from wearing her peasant woman’s dress to the clothes of a knight. Laxart states that he accompanied Joan to the house of Lord Charles, Duke of Lorraine, who gave her four francs with which she bought “hose, leggings, and all that she needed. And myself (Laxart) and Jacques Alain of Vaucouleurs,

²⁹ “Ad hec ex urbe canuti memoris eliminabitur puella ut medele curam adhibeat. Que ut omnes artes inierit, solo anhelitu suo fontes nociuos siccabit.” In *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth, vol. i*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1984), 78. The Penguin translation by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 177, reads, “However, from a town in Canute’s forest a girl shall be sent to remedy these matters by her healing art.”

³⁰ Angus J. Kennedy and Kenneth Varty, “Literary, Historical and Linguistic Notes,” to Christine de Pisan, *Dirigé de Jehanne d’Arc*, ed. Kennedy and Varty (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1977), online at <http://www.smu.edu/jas/cdepisan/Notes2.html> (1999; accessed March 5, 2003).

³¹ Gies, 31.

³² Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 33.

bought her a horse for the price of twelve francs at our own expense.”³³ One of Joan’s allies, Jean De Metz, however, states, that Joan changed clothes upon his suggestion.

Then I asked her if she wanted to go in her own clothes. She replied that she would rather have men’s clothes. Then I gave her clothes and hose of my servants that she might don them. And that done, the inhabitants of Vaucouleurs had men’s clothes made for her and shoes and all things necessary to her and delivered to her a horse which cost about sixteen francs.³⁴

In her own trial, Joan claimed that she did not put on “man’s dress by the advice of any man whatsoever; she did not put it on, nor did she do aught, but by the command of God and the angels.”³⁵ As we will see in Chapter Seven, Joan’s change of dress has been the subject of debate not only among her contemporaries, but historians as well.

At first de Baudricourt refused to see Joan. But Joan’s presence in Vaucouleurs accompanied by her change of clothes caused a stir in the community. When de Baudricourt finally agreed to see her, she told him that she was sent by God and that he was the one who would help her get to Chinon. Eventually, for reasons still being questioned today, de Baudricourt agreed to send Joan to Chinon, giving her a sword and men to accompany her. Joan arrived in Chinon in late February or early March 1429, and publicly told the court of France that she was the Maid of Lorraine, sent by God to crown Charles as king. Joan had someone write a letter and bring it to court and thus Charles was aware of her arrival. Charles decided to play a trick on her and pose as a regular member of the nobility. He believed that if Joan was who she claimed to be, she would immediately see through his disguise. Joan

³³ Testimony of Laxart from the Rehabilitation Trial in Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 34.

³⁴ Testimony of de Metz from the Rehabilitation Trial in Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 35.

immediately recognized Charles. Later, in her trial, Joan claimed that it was her voices that told her who he was. One of the eyewitnesses of the event, Raoul de Gaucourt, testified that Joan had stated to the King, “Very noble Lord Dauphin, I am come and am sent by God, to bring succour to you and your Kingdom.”³⁶ To prove to Charles that she was the Maid, Joan showed him a sign from God. During her trial, this sign was debated at great length. At first, Joan refused to tell her persecutors the nature of the sign. “I have always told you that you will not drag this from my lips,” she stated, “Go and ask him.”³⁷ Later Joan relented, and said, “the sign was that an angel assured her king by bringing him the crown and saying he should possess the whole and entire kingdom of France, by the help of God.”³⁸

Understandably, Charles asked his bishops to question Joan and provide recommendations as to her legitimacy. In her recent book, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate*, Deborah Fraioli analyzes what now is known by historians as the Poitiers Conclusions.³⁹ The minutes of this interrogation, the “Book of Poitiers,” are now lost and thus any information must be taken from its conclusions of this interrogation.⁴⁰ Eighteen ecclesiastics gathered to examine Joan, led by the Archbishop of Rheims, Regnault de Chartres. At first Joan was met with opposition from the clergy who were worried that she might be a heretic. The Poitiers Conclusions indicate that the theologians were required to validate Joan by using two forms of

³⁵ Barrett, 70.

³⁶ Testimony of Raoul de Gaucourt from the Rehabilitation Trial in Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 48.

³⁷ Barrett, 81.

³⁸ Barrett, 107.

³⁹ Please see Deborah Fraioli, *Joan of Arc: The Early Debate* (Oxford: The Boydell Press, 2000), 47.

⁴⁰ Fraioli mentions that the absence of this record encouraged some to believe that political discontents overruled the hesitations of the clergy and forced the approval of Joan’s mission, 46.

inquiry: through the examination of her life and by demanding a sign.⁴¹ Regarding the first of these two forms, the authorities concluded that Joan was a symbol of “goodness, humility, virginity, devotion and simplicity.”⁴² The second form was never proven, but the doctors concluded six weeks later that due to this length of time, that they had “found in her ‘no evil.’”⁴³ Thus, Charles, finding that Joan was who she said she was, gave her an army and sent her to Orléans.

From the 29 April to the 8 May, Joan and her army fought against the Burgundians to save Orleans.⁴⁴ Marina Warner is one of the historians who argue that Joan was not in direct command of the troops, but was there for moral support. During the battle of Orléans, she was not consulted when Dunois, the Bastard of Orléans, ignored Joan’s advice to take the right bank entrance to the north of the city. When the army arrived, Dunois realized that Joan was right because now, being on the left bank, they were stranded and vulnerable to the English.⁴⁵ On the tenth day of the siege, Joan encouraged her troops to scale the walls of the city, and claim their victory.⁴⁶

Throughout the summer, Joan continued to fight in a series of successful battles, such as the Loire Campaign and the Battle of Patay. It was after these victories that Joan encouraged Charles to go to Rheims and be crowned. As Joan predicted, the party met with no resistance and the Dauphin was crowned on the 17 July.

⁴¹ Fraioli, 50.

⁴² Fraioli quoting the Memoirs of Pius II, 52.

⁴³ Fraioli, 53.

⁴⁴ Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 104.

⁴⁵ Warner, 64.

⁴⁶ More detailed information about the siege of Orléans can be found in Warner, 64-66.

After his coronation, Joan was asked to stay at court. As he was now king, Charles VII felt more secure and was thus slow to fight any more battles. Joan, however, was restless. She did not wish to sit around at court and told Charles VII on more than one occasion that “I shall last a year, and but little longer: we must think to do good work in that year.”⁴⁷ Finally, Charles relented and Joan and her troops went to Paris on the 8 September and failed. By the end of September, Charles disbanded the army. But Joan was persistent and, although her army was smaller, she continued to fight throughout the winter. However, most of these battles ended in defeat. On the 23 May 1430, Joan was captured by the Burgundians at Compiègne.⁴⁸

Joan was sent to stay with John of Luxembourg, where the Demoiselle of Beaurevoir supported her. While staying there, it is uncertain whether Joan attempted to escape or to commit suicide; it is recorded that she threw “...herself from the battlements.”⁴⁹ When the Demoiselle died, the Duke of Burgundy sold Joan to the English who turned her over to the Inquisition.⁵⁰

Joan was tried in Rouen from the 9 January to 30 May 1431. Pierre Cauchon, a man who was supportive of the English cause in France, and Jean Lemaître, vicar of the Inquisition at Rouen, were her judges. Other theologians would be present, but their attendance was inconsistent. Joan was charged with suspicion of witchcraft, idolatry, and the wearing of

⁴⁷ Willard Trask, trans., *Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words* (New York: Books and Co., 1996), 27.

⁴⁸ Warner, 5.

⁴⁹ Barbara A. Hanawalt and Susan Noakes, “Trial Transcript, Romance, Propaganda: Joan of Arc and the French Body Politic,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 51 no. 4 (December, 1996): 612.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 612.

“immodest garments belonging to the male sex.”⁵¹ Joan answered the questions in riddles and with humour. She attempted to keep her voices sacred as well as her honour. It is her wit and stubbornness during her trial that has given her the reputation as a strong heroic figure. Joan did not have a lawyer and was kept in a public prison. Her request to be moved to a church prison and allowed to attend mass was denied on account of her refusal to change her clothes.

After her recantation, Joan was burned as a heretic on 30 May 1430.⁵² Numerous apocryphal tales revolve around her death: that she cried “Jesus” while the flames burned through her; that a nearby Englishman stood aghast and said, “We have burned a saint;” that Joan’s heart was left among the ashes and thrown into the river⁵³.

Joan’s life is interpreted in many ways. It is important for us to determine what factors contribute to the various versions of her life in children’s literature. Thus, the next two chapters will outline the theoretical background to the field of children’s literature with an introduction to the primary sources.

⁵¹ Barrett, 19.

⁵² Warner, 5.

⁵³ Warner, 28.

Chapter 3

CHILDREN'S LITERARY CRITICISM: HISTORY, THEORY AND DEBATES

Consciousness is never the product of truth or reality, but
rather of culture, society and history.

John Fiske¹

Although there is still a feeling among theorists that children's literature is considered "secondary" in the field of English literature, more academics are becoming interested in the literature's history and cultural influences. In his article "Ideology and the Children's Book," Peter Hollindale states that the debate among children's literary theorists falls under two categories: the "book people" and the "child people." The "book" critic is primarily concerned with the literary quality of the text in question, while the "child" critic is interested in the child's reaction to the book.²

Hollindale's theories do not go far enough; the division is actually between those academics who are more concerned with the theory, history and debates, and the academic who focuses on how the literature will influence the reader. Although sometimes the former is familiar with some of the theory, s/he is less interested in the history and debates and would rather look at the social implications of the book in question. The following two chapters will describe how I have constructed a model that will allow us to interpret the primary sources based on some of the contemporary children's literary criticism. This chapter will describe

¹ Tony Watkins quoting John Fiske, "Cultural Studies, New Historicism and Children's Literature," in Peter Hunt ed, *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 175.

² Peter Hollindale, "Ideology and the Children's Book," in Peter Hunt ed. *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, 21.

“Book” criticism and Chapter Four will incorporate one “child” critic’s model of inquiry with the primary sources.

Jack Zipes argues that not only are children not reading what academics deem as worthy literature, but that the industry of children’s literature is part of the cultural homogenization of society.³ Despite the condescending tone of Zipes’ book, his general observations are indeed accurate. Zipes criticizes corporations who use advertisements, films and merchandising gimmicks to “minimize and marginalize the value of critical and creative thinking, and with it, the worth of an individual human being.”⁴ Currently working in publishing myself, I am aware of the decreasing quality of contemporary children’s books. Although there are some exceptions, most of the literature that is published for children is part of a series, a spin-off from a television show or is reflective of something that has become popular in the media.

Samuel Pickering Jr. writes that criticism should provide more insight into the human experience and thus examine not only the text, but also what functioned around it.⁵ He suggests that historical literature would be useful in helping to critique children’s literary abilities and also to enable the critics to put the genre into a cultural perspective. It is not only important to provide a sense of history to the body of literature itself, but also to see how the literature has influenced the reader.

³ Jack Zipes, *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children’s Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 74.

⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁵ Samuel Pickering Jr., “The Function of Criticism in Children’s Literature,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 13, (Spring, 1982): 13.

Most of the time, however, those who critique children's literature and those who read it do not communicate with one another. Joshua Brown warns children's writers and critics that:

children's history books constitute a peculiar pedagogical ghetto: They address a large audience that academic historians never reach, and yet such books are largely unrecognized and rarely discussed in professional historical circles.⁶

Peter Hunt argues that although widely accepted institutionally, children's literature "has tended to remain uncanonical and culturally marginalized," which has produced a paradox in which writers and critics of children's literature work within the academic/educational worlds, while in some cases, the audience for which these books were originally intended are rarely considered.⁷ Hunt states that in order for this paradox to change, it is vital for the writer to work across disciplinary and cultural boundaries with the recognition that the interaction between the audience and the text is essential.⁸

This becomes difficult, however, when the academic and the reader are divided by age and experience. Adrienne E. Kertzer writes in "Inventing the Child Reader: How We Read Children's Books" that it's not the literature itself that is distinct from adult literature, but how we read the children's book that differs. She says that some texts do not allow the adults to read them as children's books because they surpass our (adult) expectations. Kertzer argues that children's writers "construct a particular definition of a child reader, one based on many social and personal factors, and grounded in their own time and place. And readers again

⁶ Joshua Brown, "Into the Minds of Babes: Children's Books and the Past" Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Baker and Roy Rosenzweig ed. *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 68.

⁷ Peter Hunt. "Introduction," *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, 21.

based on their own experiences, respond to that definition.”⁹ By exploring the history of children’s literature, Kertzer shows how those books that have exceeded our expectations are the ones that not only entertain the child, but the adult reading with the child as well. Although she does not directly state this, she is guilty of separating the adult and child reader by claiming that the child reader will not question what they are reading, while an adult would.

Other critics, like Robert Protherough, have studied the ways in which children respond to what they read and determine that adults are uncomfortable with children’s responses to literature because it is emotionally based. “As adult readers we know that our judgments of a book and our judgments of the experience we get from it are not necessarily identical.”¹⁰ Protherough says that there are three broad stages of a reader’s development. During the elementary level, the reader’s judgment was based upon their personal responses to the text. For example, if they liked it, it must be good. As they got older, their verdict was based on what effect the story had and began to understand that there was a relationship between the reader and the book. The third stage was an awareness that judgments are to be described in terms that other readers can discuss and that there should be some objective justification in the verdict.¹¹

Mitzi Myers, Tony Watkins and Penelope Lively discuss not only how children read, but also how the literature that we read as children influences our perceptions of the world. Myers and Watkins advocate using popular ideas in the field of Cultural Studies, such as New

⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁹ Adrienne E. Kertzer “Inventing the Child Reader: How We Read Children’s Books,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 15 (1984): 13.

¹⁰ Robert Protherough, “How Children Judge Stories,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 14 (1983): 4.

¹¹ Ibid., 7.

Historicism, while Lively concentrates on the continuity of a collective memory shared by members of a particular society.

In her article, "Missed Opportunities and Critical Malpractice: New Historicism and Children's Literature," Myers argues that not only should children's literature be studied within its own context, but that the

new historicism of children's literature would integrate text and socio-historic context, demonstrating on the one hand how extra literary cultural formations shape literary discourse and on the other how literary practices are actions that things happen- by shaping the psychic and moral consciousness of young readers but also by performing many more diverse kinds of cultural work.¹²

She said that most literature for the young is didactic and concludes with some kind of moral value. By paying particular attention to the conceptual and symbolic lines denoting a text's time, place, gender, and specific ideological mechanisms, the critic becomes more aware of how a particular book could have influenced, or was a product of, its period. Myers argues that most writers of children's historical literature organize their material based within preconceived patterns which imply an evolutionary view of historical progress, whereas the new historical orientation could change this by looking at how culturally bound the text is.¹³ As we shall see in the next chapter, it is this didactic approach that is most commonly used by writers of children's historical literature.

¹² Mitzi Myers, "Missed Opportunities and Critical Malpractice: New Historicism and Children's Literature" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 13 (1988): 42

¹³ Ibid., 42

Indeed, Myers' observations led many historians of children's literature to look to the New Historicism for answers. In "Cultural Studies, New Historicism and Children's Literature," Watkins argues that New Historicism is one of the best models one can use because it attempts to cross disciplinary boundaries, including history, anthropology, art, politics, literature, and economics. He believes that reality can only be seen through language or other cultural systems that are embedded in history and that therefore, the truth must be understood in how it is made, when it was constructed and for whom.¹⁴ By exploring how this language is communicated, one can explore the meanings children and adults actually make, or appear to make, of the texts that they read and view.¹⁵ Watkins, for example, explores how the language used in children's classics, such as *The Wizard of Oz*, mythologized a sense of nationalism and cultural identity.

How the writer explains the idea of history to children is also an issue. Joshua Brown writes in "Into the Minds of Babes: Children's Books and the Past," that "historical insensibility only grows worse as we march further back in time."¹⁶ He says that the biggest problem with children's non-fiction is that educators spend too much time focusing on its utility in the classroom and not enough on the quality of the writing. Brown argues that there tends to be oversimplifications made by authors of children's history texts because historians do not read or discuss children's non-fiction.¹⁷ This thesis is most likely one of the few analyses of children's historical literature written by a person who is in the historical field. Most criticism is written by academics of children's literature or children's writers.

¹⁴ Watkins, 175.

¹⁵ Ibid., 177

¹⁶ Brown, 68.

Penelope Lively and Joan Aiken are children's writers who believe that the writer can teach the child about history by exploring the past through a collective social memory of experience. In "Children and Memory," Penelope Lively argues that it is the continuity of history, a collective memory, which sustains society. She wants to "talk about the past in a personal as well as in a collective sense and about the part continuity plays in imaginative development."¹⁸ Lively is concerned with how we write history books for children and how the writer provides that sense of linear time to the reader. She says,

We are all, collectively or individually, sustained by memory...We are what we have been. Societies collapse when their cultural roots are destroyed. This is obvious as adults, but not at all so to the child. To be aware of a sense of continuity is to be affected by a kind of paralysis of the imagination.

Thus by using images and symbols that are used in popular culture, the writer for children can help maintain a particular historical and social continuity that will carry the reader into their adulthood. Lively applies English folklore to her historical fiction because she wanted to use the English landscape as a channel for historical memory. Instead of writing directly about the past, she prefers to create the idea of memory by fusing both past and present. Lively argues that it is important for children to come into contact with the older generation because it is through the oral tradition that they will be shown that we live in a world that "reaches away, behind and ahead of us and that the span of a lifetime is something to be wondered at, and thought about and that people evolve during their lifetimes."¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 78

¹⁸ Penelope Lively, "Children and Memory," *The Horn Books Magazine* (August, 1973): 400.

¹⁹ Ibid., 407.

Similarly, in her article, “Interpreting the Past,” Joan Aiken argues that children must keep reading and have knowledge of their own family history if they are to have a sense of their own personal history.²⁰ While writing her historical fiction, she became aware of the overwhelming presence and importance of the past. The past “like the subconscious, lies around us; [and] like the subconscious, we ignore [it] for ninety percent of the time.”²¹ Aiken says that there is a distinct difference between knowing about the past and understanding and feeling it. She argues that as our society is more inundated with new technology and visual images, our connection to the past becomes more remote than before. She believes in the importance of teaching history because “the historical past forms a mass unconsciousness, and so is the contributory cause of all and any actions taken by anybody.”²² Thus, Lively and Aiken promote the importance of teaching history to children and the idea of a linear progression of time because it is this history that helps contribute to the memory and consciousness of society.

Frances Clarke Sayers claims that the merging of the social studies with history will provide the child reader with a sense of appreciation for the world. Sayers states that the “facilitation of daily life through the ages and the connection between past and present become intimate and full of human meaning.”²³ She even admits that there are certain periods in history, such as “primitive man,” “the feudal period,” and “the age of great discoveries,” that appeal to children because they are inspiring.²⁴ Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter Five,

²⁰ Joan Aiken. “Interpreting the Past,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 16 (1985): 74.

²¹ Ibid., 68.

²² Ibid., 68.

²³ Frances Clarke Sayers “History Books for Children,” in Jo Carr, ed., *Beyond Fact: Nonfiction for Children and Young People* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982), 96.

²⁴ Ibid., 96.

many history books for children follow the day-to-day lives of people in order to provide the child with a sense of his or her history.

Jo Carr and her followers are concerned with the literary quality of nonfiction, and believe in the importance of allowing the reader to come to his or her own conclusions. Carr argues that “A fine nonfiction writer... is teacher and artist most of all.”²⁵ Carr criticizes history texts for instructing their readers instead of allowing them to explore the facts and come to their own conclusions.²⁶ The author must respect the intelligence of readers and stimulate their curiosity at the same time.

In his article, “Writing the Literature of Fact,” Edward Barrett agrees with Carr that it is important to recognize that one must write literature that will help the reader to think for him or herself. He states that not only are Carr’s theories useful for children’s literature classes at the college level, but also for setting a standard that other writers of nonfiction should attain.²⁷ Barrett says that it is useful for critics to understand how one defines “nonfiction”, but it is also important to recognize their own limitations and how this may be affecting our perceptions of what is considered “good”.²⁸ Barrett warns that the danger in nonfiction is that teachers and librarians will think that a book is useful because it contains information without considering the literary quality of the text that they are reading. Critics of history books for children are concerned with maintaining a sense of historical continuity, creating a literary standard of quality and encouraging the development of critical thinking. Thus literary critics

²⁵ Jo Carr, “Writing the Literature of Fact,” in her compilation, *Beyond Fact: Nonfiction for Children and Young People*, 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷ Edward Barrett, “Writing the Literature of Fact,” *The Lion and the Unicorn* 6, (1982): 93.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

of children's nonfiction are concerned not only about how one teaches the idea of history to children, but also what would be the most appropriate approach.

Children's writers and theorists have debated over what would be considered appropriate techniques when writing biographies for children. When considering the line between history and historical fiction, it is important to recognize that both genres tell us much about our own past. When writing about the impact of the American children's writer, Laura Ingalls Wilder, on American popular history, John E. Miller writes that "Historians are constrained by fact and must rely upon traces of past events, but the fiction writer possesses creative license to imagine characters, settings and events and to develop them in myriad ways, so long as they remain within the limits of plausibility. Both must perform an interpretive task."²⁹ Indeed, the author of historical fiction will be in conflict between these two genres.

David L. Russell believes that there are two approaches to biographical writing for children,³⁰ although I would argue for the addition of a third category, Russell's Fictionalized biography, represents the first group; which are those books that claim to be based upon a true story, but are fictionalized accounts of an historical person's life. His definition of the Authentic biography makes up the second group, books that make an attempt at writing a factual account of the person. The third group, which is my own category, is comprised of fictional biographies in which the historical person is not the protagonist but his or her story is told by a contemporary. In all three groups, the author tries to educate his or her reader to embrace the historical figure as a person that s/he can emulate.

²⁹ John E. Miller, *Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little Town* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1994), 1.

³⁰ David L. Russell. *Literature for Children: A Short Introduction Second Edition*. (New York: Longman, 1994) ,150-151.

Russell defines biography as “a nonfictional work describing the life-or part of the life-of an individual.”³¹ Some biographical writing bases itself primarily on constructing role models for its readers, as Marilyn Jurich argues, the problem is that it is hard for the writer to stay objective when there may be particular aspects of a person’s life that would not be specifically admirable. Jurich states that “hero worship is wrong because it creates a falsehood” and could possibly lead to a child’s lack of self-esteem when he or she cannot live up to the standards that s/he has idealized based upon what s/he has read.³² Carr concurs when she writes that most biographies are hagiographic, didactic, oversimplified and propagandized, rife with “sentimentality, unwarranted fictionalization, lack of solid documentation and distortion of history.”³³ Lillian Hallowell writes that “a good biographer neither distorts nor suppresses; he may give partial life, but he portrays his subject truthfully, noting both virtues and shortcomings.”³⁴ Among critics, therefore, there is no question as to the issues of what is problematic in biographical writing for children; the debate emerges as to how one constructs a “good biography.”

As we saw above, there is a fine line between the narrator’s skill as a storyteller, the ability to provide all of the facts and being able to put the reader within the context of the period. Peter Hollindale stresses in “Ideology and the Children’s Book” that because there is a

³¹ Ibid., 150.

³² Marilyn Jurich, “What’s Left out of Biography for Children” in Francelia Butler ed. *The Great Excluded: Critical Essays on Children’s Literature* (Storrs: Children’s Literature, University of Connecticut, 1972), 143.

³³ Jo Carr, “What do we Do About Bad Biographies?” in her edited book *Beyond Fact: Nonfiction for Children and Young People*, 119.

³⁴ Jurich quoting Hallowell, 144

pre-determined socially constructed ideology, the critic needs to focus on what children read, not how they read.³⁵ Hollindale highlights that a particular historical period

will differ in the forms of social growth they [the child readers] cherish, but it is an article of faith that the current period will be wiser than its predecessors. The child audience, by some ideological sleight of hand, will be virtually identical or at the very least compatible with the preferred social objectives,³⁶

such as anti-sexism, anti-racism and anti-classism, which may or may not work within the period of the book.

Milton Meltzer thinks that the biggest problem for the biographer is that in order to write an accurate portrayal, s/he must somehow identify with his or her subject. In doing so, however, s/he must be careful not to shape the subject in his or her own image for,

The biographer's image is not reality itself. The reality is the ceaseless flux of that life, with its billions of moments of experience. That reality is the raw material from which the biographer works. In that reality countless events succeeded each other in the order of time.³⁷

The biographer must be interested in all aspects of his or her subject's life, even if it does not fit into the image that the biographer has constructed, yet have the "full freedom of novel

³⁵ Peter Hollindale. "Ideology and the Children's Book," in Peter Hunt ed. *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, 24.

³⁶ Ibid., 26.

³⁷ Milton Meltzer "The Designing Narrator," in Charlotte F. Otten and Gary D. Schmidt, ed., *The Voice of the Narrator in Children's Literature: Insights from Writers and Critics* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 334.

writing.”³⁸ As we will see in the following chapter, Meltzer puts this idea to use in his book, *Ten Queens*.

Similarly, Margery Fisher proposes a combination between the techniques of non-fiction and fiction writing because the biographer needs the imagination of the novelist in order to reach the younger reader. The goal of the biographer is to show the child reader that this person really existed. She argues that it is difficult to follow André Maurois’ view that,

Under no account has the biographer a right to invent a single fact. He is writing history, non-fiction and witnessing under oath. He cannot even say that the writer, on such and such a day, was good or bad, if he has no evidence for it. He should not put into his hero’s mouth, nor attribute to any character, sentences they have not spoken...But never indulge in imagination. Once you cross the line between biography and fiction, you will never be able to retrace your steps³⁹

because to draw the line between fact and speculations so thinly would deny the reader a sense of the subject’s experience. The idea of a person’s life for a child is more about an account of deeds rather than an interpretation of character. Fisher believes that “Biography is an illusion, a fiction in guise of fact”⁴⁰ and that myth and reality are constantly at war with one another, and thus by merging the two, there may be a better understanding of the person for the reader.

Carr and Robert J. Whitehead developed certain techniques to help the critic determine what would be considered a “good biography.” Carr argues that no historian can be completely objective because the facts will be chosen in accordance with “the orientation of profound beliefs, but the discipline and scholarly tradition of historiography place a limit on

³⁸ Ibid., 335.

³⁹ André Maurois quoted by Margery Fisher, “Biography,” in Jo Carr, ed., *Beyond Fact: Nonfiction for Children and Young People*, 132.

the degree of subjectivity in the historian's interpretation of the facts."⁴¹ Therefore, the texts written for children are condescending and overtly judgmental. Although she urges writers to stay away from the didactic approach to historical and biographical writing, Carr still feels that the writer should be writing from some kind of personal inspiration.

Whitehead argues that a "good biography" is one where the writer is well informed and can sustain the interest of the reader. The facts, setting and cultural order of the given historical period are written accurately and the dialogue or descriptive language of the book is appropriate to the historical period in question. The author should be writing about the character objectively, displaying the subject's weaknesses and strengths, achievements and failures and the events in both the person's public and private life. Like Carr, he argues that the writer should refrain from making any interpretations as to what was motivating the person's actions.⁴² It is clear that critics of biographical writing for children are torn between which narrative to choose that would not only allow the reader to become interested in history, but provide them with accurate information.

Brown correctly states in "Into the Minds of Babes: Children's Books and the Past," that "historical fiction is probably the major literary form through which most children are exposed to history."⁴³ Russell defines historical fiction as a story set in the past, usually realistic, which "seeks to recreate the aura of a time past, reconstructing characters, events movements, ways of life, and the spirit of a bygone day."⁴⁴ According to Russell, unlike history,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 130.

⁴¹ Carr, "What do we do about Bad Biographies?" 120-121.

⁴² Robert J. Whitehead, *A Guide to Selecting Books for Children* (London: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1984), 153.

⁴³ Brown, 74.

⁴⁴ Russell, 145.

historical fiction depends heavily on a believable and reasonably accurate setting that often includes historical figures.⁴⁵ Russell suggests that a good piece of historical fiction:

tell a story, conveys the flavour of the historical period, authentically captures the people of the period, their values and their habits, uses dialogue to make the characters sound authentic, but not artificial, faithfully uses historical knowledge to avoid distorting history, fairly sensitively portrays different sides of the compelling issues of the period and gives us insight into contemporary problems as well as helps us understand the problems of the past.⁴⁶

Patricia Clapp agrees with Russell, because in any era, how one writes will be different from how we speak today. Clapp thinks that historical novels have a more lasting impression on the memory than the impersonal reporting of history books because the reader can relate to a character's experience.⁴⁷ Indeed, Lively says that the best historical novels are ones which function simply as an account of the "human experience within an historical framework." In order for the reader to learn about history and become part of the historical framework, Lively argues that the text must show an accumulation of experience and of the progression of time. By using a fictional character, the writer can write through his or her memories and thus show the idea of linear time to the child.⁴⁸

Carr argues that the problem with historical fiction lies in the fact that the novelist has more freedom to interpret the facts of history. The main characters may not actually be from

⁴⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁷ Patricia Clapp "Letting History Speak for Itself," in Charlotte F. Otten and Gary D. Schmidt, ed., *The Voice of the Narrator in Children's Literature: Insights from Writers and Critics*, 272.

⁴⁸ Lively, 403

history and the plot can focus more on their experiences than what really happened.⁴⁹

Although Carr agrees that certain “truths” can be revealed by imaginative fiction, it is important to teach young readers the difference between “the figurative truth of fiction... [and] the verifiable truth of history.”⁵⁰

Aiken thinks that just by writing about the past, the author can provide the reader with some semblance of their historical past. Aiken, a writer of historical fiction, wishes to interpret the past and make it visible, intelligent, and coherent. Although Aiken would agree with Carr that “one can’t learn all one’s history through fiction,” she does think that “fiction-the fact implanted in a story- does have a way of becoming knit into the mental processes much more easily, much more permanently, than facts on their own, unrelated ever can.”⁵¹ Like Lively, Aiken is concerned with how children learn to understand the past in the context of their own experience. Aiken thinks that historical fiction will encourage children to keep diaries and speak to their ancestors and by doing so will begin to understand the history and their place within it.

The debate over historical fiction, therefore, is complex. Authors are not only concerned with the factual evidence, but the importance of history, memory and narration as well. Although authors critique the popularity of the didactic approach in children’s historical literature, they cannot completely distance themselves from it.

⁴⁹ Jo Carr, “History: Factual Fiction or Fictional Fact,” 93.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 93.

⁵¹ Aiken, 77.

Chapter 4

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: IDEOLOGY, DEBATES AND THE PRIMARY SOURCES

To care for good reading, to keep on with good reading because you care for it, means that little by little this background takes on sustenance in the mind, and unconsciously every new subject contemplated, studied, or enjoyed enlarges and enriches it. From every book invisible threads reach out to other books; and as the mind comes to use and control those threads the whole panorama of the world's life, past and present, becomes constantly more varied and interesting, while at the same time the mind's own powers of reflection and judgment are exercised and strengthened.¹

The influence of the written word is made clear by this 1950 statement by Helen Haines. Not only is reading important for our own intellectual evolution, but it enables us as a society to maintain a global commonality of experience. How this global experience is interpreted in children's literature has many layers. As Jo Carr explains, children often "assume that history, being factual, is therefore dull. Because they feel this way they never really give history a chance."² Thus, children's writers have to find a variety of ways to attract the reader's attention. As we saw in Chapter Three, authors must do two things: one, make the reader realize that the time in which the figure lived is located in the "past", and two, make the figure somehow relevant to the child's present.

¹ Helen Haines, "Living with Books: The Art of Book Selection" quoted by Jo Carr ed. *Beyond Fact: Non-Fiction for Children and Young People*, np.

² Jo Carr, ed., "History: Factional Fiction or Fictional Fact?" in her edited book, *Beyond Fact Non-Fiction for Children and Young People*, 91.

To refresh, Peter Hollindale recently observed that children's literary critics are divided into two categories: "Book People" and "Child People." The "Book" critic is more interested in the literary quality of the book than the reader for which it was written.³ The "Child" critic, however, is concerned with the reader and the "propagation through children's books of a 'progressive' ideology expressed through social values."⁴ Although varying in perspective and technique, critiques of children's literature fall into these two categories. Much of what will be discussed in the following chapters will involve some of the ideas described in chapter three with the additional framework of how I plan to organize the primary sources. I am merging theories from both schools of criticism so that we can appreciate the analytical aspects of children's literary criticism and how this may help us understand how history books create and reinforce the historical consciousness.

Hollindale argues that the "child" critique is indifferent to high standards of literary achievement and prefers to focus upon three political missions, namely anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-classism. He admits that "ideology is an inevitable, untarnable, and largely uncontrollable factor in the transaction between books and children," and is concerned that if the critique becomes more concerned with the ideology than the text, the study of the genre will become more restricted. He concludes, nonetheless that the priority should be to understand the ideology behind the book in question.⁵

Robert Sutherland wants to lay the groundwork for a methodology of studying children's books, for he believes that one's ideology promulgates one's values. He argues that

³ Peter Hollindale, "Ideology and the Children's Book," in Peter Hunt, ed., *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, 21.

⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁵ Ibid., 27.

“sending a potentially influential book into public arenas already bristling with divergent, competing and sometimes violently opposed ideologies is a political act.”⁶ He argues that a methodology

whereby inherent ideologies may be recognized and identified would be useful not only to students at all levels, but also to teachers, parents, librarians and historians of children’s literature; it would make possible a deeper esthetic appreciation of the complexity of literary works and the precise nature of the author’s achievements.

I propose to analyze the primary sources by categorizing them within Sutherland’s methodology while using the larger categories of the “child” people identified by Hollindale. Within this framework, I will divide the sources by the three categories of children’s historical literature previously mentioned in the introduction of this thesis: fictional biographies, biography and historical fiction.

Sutherland divides his methodology into three categories: Politics of Advocacy, Politics of Attack and Politics of Assent. Writers who write from the first perspective are “pleading for and promoting a specific cause, or upholding a particular point of view or course of action as being valid and right” and are completely aware of what they are promoting.⁸ In the category of Politics of Attack, the characters are usually pompous, cheap, dishonest, and selfish and usually come from specific social institutions that are under scrutiny and “tend to express their ideological assaults against targets of a more generalized or ‘universal’ nature.”⁹ In the

⁶ Robert D. Sutherland. “Hidden Persuaders: Political Ideologies in Literature for Children.” *Children’s Literature in Education* 16 (1985):143.

⁷ Ibid., 144.

⁸ Ibid., 145.

⁹ Ibid.,150.

Politics of Assent, authors are passively accepting the established ideology of a society by promoting sexist, racist or classist ideas, without much consideration of what they are doing.

Sutherland's categories are divided between those who either support American left wing or right wing politics. Although he has issues with the way writers may leave out certain aspects of a person's life to promote their image of the person, he is also critical of those who promote certain attitudes towards a particular ethnic group. The first category includes writers who use simple phrases and "buzz words" and writes with a particular political awareness. The second category contains books that use humour to teach history. I placed books that continue to perpetuate certain images about the Middle Ages and Joan of Arc in the third category.

The problem with these categories is that it is difficult to determine what the specific author's intentions were when writing the biography. Speaking with children's author Karleen Bradford helped to provide some indication as to how one writer comes to terms with the questions concerned with biographical and fictionalized history. During one of my discussions with her in which we were speaking about an author's politics, she says, "the writers' own values and concerns will definitely be expressed in the books that they write. Sometimes unconsciously, sometimes deliberately." For herself, Bradford chooses to "write about the effect that wars have on the innocent and the young, whatever the cause of them, and [she] also tr[ies] to show that there are usually two sides to every conflict."¹⁰ Yet, later she told me that she does not consider her audience very much because she is primarily concerned with the characters she has created and how they deal with the situations they are placed in. As well,

¹⁰ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, June 10, 2002.

Bradford resists any attempt to categorize her writing because the characters “are all always different, always changing, and I often don’t know what they [her characters] are myself until I’ve written the book and discovered what’s going on.”¹¹ She admits, however, that she has told children who have asked “if [she] ever put [her]self in [her] books, that if they read enough of [her] books they’ll soon know what [her] values and beliefs are.”¹² Although Bradford says that she prefers to tell stories rather than promote a specific political agenda in her anti-war novels, the fact that she is a pacifist means that she will be advocating that in her novels. Thus, even if it is not the writer’s original intention to write with a clear political agenda, the fact that he or she may hold a particular point of view will influence how he or she writes.

When writers write, are they are thinking of the audience, or the subject they are writing about? Depending upon who one speaks to, the answer will be different. What seems clear is that writers will write from their experience and sometimes that experience will drive them to write with a particular perspective.

There are two forms of biographies in the Politics of Advocacy category, books that are written as traditional biographical writing and those that fall under the heading of historical fiction. The following books are collections which fall under this category because these authors advocate publicly active and influential women: Milton Meltzer’s *Ten Queens: Portraits of Women of Power*, Rebecca Hazell’s *Heroines: Great Women Through the Ages*, Dawn Chipman, Mari Florence and Naomi Wax’s *Cool Women: The Thinking Girl’s Guide to the Hippest Women in History* and Kathleen Krull’s *Lives of Extraordinary Women: Rulers and Rebels (and What the Neighbors*

¹¹ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada , June 13, 2002.

Thought).¹³ With the exception of Hazell, who only has the first two women on the following list, Meltzer, Chipman et. al. and Krull's biographies contain descriptions Eleanor of Aquitaine, Elizabeth I, Isabel of Spain, Cleopatra, Catherine the Great, and Christina of Sweden (among others). Although Joan is included in every other collection, not being a Queen, she is not in Meltzer's book. The specifics of how these women are described will be investigated later on in the thesis, for now it is important to recognize the possible political agenda implicated in these books. I will use Eleanor of Aquitaine because she appears in all four of these collections.

All of these authors tell the reader at the beginning of their books why these particular people are chosen. Like Joan, Eleanor of Aquitaine was a public politically influential figure. In his preface, Meltzer states that the

queens in this book were not chosen because they were heroines or saints. No, but because they were women who held power in their own hands and used it. Most had qualities to be wished for in any person, male or female: intellect, courage, independence.¹⁴

Even if Meltzer was not particularly looking for figures that would be considered "heroic," the characteristics that he used to describe them are all things that society deems worthy in a heroic figure. Similarly, Hazell explains in her introduction that history is full of people and events that are "astonishing" and she wants to share them with "us", the readers. She says that

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Milton Meltzer, *Ten Queens: Portraits of Women of Power* (New York: Penguin, 1998); Rebecca Hazell, *Heroines: Great Women Through the Ages* (New York: Abbeville Publishing Group, 1996); Dawn Chipman, Mari Florence and Naomi Wax ed. *Cool Women: The Thinking Girl's Guide to the Hippest Women in History* (Chicago: Girl's Press, 1998); and Kathleen Krull's *Lives of Extraordinary Women: Rulers and Rebels (and What the Neighbors Thought)* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 2000).

¹⁴ Meltzer, x.

these women were “brave, kind, or visionary, and sometimes all three. They experienced life fully, and they contributed to the world around them.”¹⁵ Hazell is therefore interested in publicly active women who influence society.

Meltzer’s method is to provide a lengthy biographical description of the figure’s life including illustrations of what the person may have looked like, historical events and maps. He describes Eleanor of Aquitaine as a woman who

exerted great influence on the course of human events in Europe. So different was her behavior from the inferior role ordained for her sex that men who could not tolerate such independence spread the story that she must be a demon.... She did as she pleased, no matter what others said. Great as her impact was on politics, she also shaped the literary and artistic life of her time, as well as the ideals and codes of chivalry. A modern-day historian calls her, “the sex symbol of her age,” for she was as beautiful as she was regal, and universally admired.¹⁶

Hazell’s style is to provide a one-page biography with a corresponding painting of what the figure might have looked like on the facing page. In her study on Eleanor of Aquitaine, Hazell describes her involvement in the creation of the “gentleman” and ends the biography with the following statement: “She had ruled as well as the strongest monarchs of her time, and we still feel her influence today. Whenever a man stands up to greet a woman or opens a door for her, he is one of Eleanor’s ‘gentlemen.’”¹⁷

In the chapter called, “Righteous Queens,” Chipman et. al. place Eleanor of Aquitaine alongside Christina, Queen of Sweden. Eleanor is described as a “modern woman.”

¹⁵ Hazell, 7.

Let's face it-any woman who combines royal lineages with a renegade character is certain to be cool...Take her participation in the second crusade: When princes, dukes and warriors set out on a military campaign to liberate the Holy Land, Eleanor donned her sexist armor and rounded up her best girlfriends. Mounted on chargers with axes and spears at their sides, they scoured the country calling for volunteers to join the crusade.¹⁸

The authors continue to describe Eleanor's political altercations with her two husbands, but never discuss the literary and social influence she had on courtly life. It is clear that Chipman et. al. are placing Eleanor's actions into a specific category of the politically active, sexually-charged heroine.

Krull says that Eleanor's life was "One Shock After Another: Eleanor of Aquitaine" and writes, "As Queen of France as well as England, [she was] Europe's legendary central figure of the Middle Ages."¹⁹ Krull credits Eleanor for changing the status of women in the Middle Ages as well as giving birth to the chivalrous tradition. Each chapter is also prefaced with an illustration of the political figure in her most well known action in which her head is larger than her body, like a caricature done by a street vendor. Eleanor holds a book in her hand and rides a horse over a map of England and France. The picture is used to further illustrate Eleanor's political influence. Clearly, biographical collections are used to provide various examples of heroic figures for readers and thus have a political agenda.

Normally, general historical texts tend to be didactic, too general and lacking in content. However, Andrew Langley and Andrea Bachini write for publishers whose priority is

¹⁶ Meltzer, 43.

¹⁷ Hazell, 16.

¹⁸ Chipman et. al., 74-75.

¹⁹ Krull, 15.

to provide solid non-fiction materials for younger readers and as such their texts tend to be more solid than other general texts which I have placed in the Politics of Assent category. Langley's book on the Middle Ages is part of the popular reference *Eyewitness Books* series for children ages eight to twelve. He is limited by the standards outlined by the series editor. *The Eyewitness Books* are very visual, broken down into chapters that span two pages each and provide the reader with both general and specific information. Langley is quite good at providing children with accurate information, and has pictures of various artifacts from the period in order to give readers a clearer understanding of the period. Langley's pictures of people dressed in medieval dress are more characteristic of the *Eyewitness Series*, which uses this technique to make the subject more real for the reader.

Similarly, Andrea Bachini's *The Middle Ages* is the best general historical text that I have seen thus far for younger readers. This is most likely because he is writing for Barron's, a publisher whose primary concern is educational materials. Bachini's audience is pre-teen and thus he has more freedom to elaborate on certain aspects than authors of books geared to younger readers. He provides the reader with an index as well some acknowledgements regarding where he has derived his information. Bachini's text is dense with visuals, including medieval and hand drawn maps. Bachini may not have a specific political agenda, but unlike the general texts we will see later on in this chapter, he makes the reader understand that the Middle Ages took place over a 1000 year period and that it had many facets. The only issue with Bachini's text is that he writes a progressive view of history. This is evident in his last statement when he discusses how the Spanish, English and French explorers into North and

South America were the beginnings of what would be a global economy and thus “The modern era was in the making.”²⁰

Diane Stanley’s *Joan of Arc* and Polly Schoyer Brooks’ *Beyond the Myth: The Story of Joan of Arc* are biographies in which the authors are aware that they are providing the reader with a particular perspective. Unlike the authors mentioned above, Stanley is not being overtly political. Sutherland argues, however, that authors who are aware of what they are doing fall under the Politics of Advocacy category. When Stanley explains to the reader that depending upon the particular point of view, one can interpret Joan’s voices in three ways and that sometimes “in studying history, we have to accept what we know and let the rest remain a mystery,”²¹ she is telling the reader that she is aware of the historical arguments surrounding the life of Joan of Arc, but that sometimes when writing a narrative we write what we know and leave the rest behind. Thus sometimes the Politics of Advocacy can be used to perpetuate older ideas about a particular person, rather than argue for political and social change.

Brooks’ biography is a wonderful combination of narrative and fact. Although there are no footnotes, she does provide a bibliography, and index. Brooks recognizes the mythological and “fairy tale” quality that characterizes Joan’s life and persona. She acknowledges that although Joan is one of the most popular women in history, she “remains an enigma with many questions about her still unanswered. This is part of the fascination of writing about her- trying to break through the layers of myths and legends in order find the real Joan.”²² Brooks’s bias emerges when she writes that Joan “is and deserves to be France’s most

²⁰Andrea Bachini, *The Middle Ages* (New York: Barrons, 1999), 118.

²¹ Diane Stanley, *Joan of Arc* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1998), 40.

²² Polly Schoyer Brooks, *Beyond the Myth: The Story of Joan of Arc* (New York: Lippincott, 1990), 159.

popular heroine and saint.” She also decides that it is important to make Joan as human as possible and describes how scared Joan was of fire. For Brooks, “The fact that Joan had to struggle to overcome some human weaknesses makes her, for me, all the greater as a human being, and makes her achievements all the more remarkable.”²³ Thus, biographers who depend solely upon historical documents will create particular political points of view to make their story more accessible to the reader.

Historical Fiction is possibly more effective in the Politics of Advocacy category because although the author is relying on historical documentation, s/he has more freedom to create political and social motivation for their character, as well as dialogue. One of the best ways to combat traditional stereotypes of women is to construct a character that goes against the society’s norms. Sharon Stewart’s *The Dark Tower* uses the fictional unedited journals of Marie Thérèse Charlotte, daughter of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI of France, to construct a situation in which she is forced by revolutionaries to write her story. Marie begins her story in this way;

...and I am a princess. I suppose I’m not the usual sort of princess. For one thing, I am not charming. Princesses are supposed to be, of course. Beautiful and charming and accomplished. Well, I am none of those things, and I know it.²⁴

She says that her “sorrows” are not being born a boy and not having the love and affection of her mother. It is clear from the above quotation that Marie sees herself as anything but the

²³Ibid., 164.

²⁴Sharon Stewart, *The Dark Tower* (Toronto: Scholastic Books., 1998), 1.

traditional princess stereotype. Thus Marie's lack of royal attributes helps to create a less "feminine" character.

Carolyn Meyer's award winning *Young Royals* is a series based on the lives of Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I. Both books work as companions to the other, written in the first person and taking place during the monarchs' teen years before they were queens. Meyer concludes both books with an historical note in which she outlines when the princesses became queen and includes some personal anecdotal information. Throughout *Mary, Bloody Mary*, Meyer discusses Mary's constant battles with illness and the lack of companionship, and this is brought once again to the reader's attention when she describes that when her husband Philip left for the Netherlands, Mary was "alone and lonely."²⁵ Meyer concludes her biographical note by saying, "While Mary has often been described as a gentle, merciful person, because of the brutality of her reign-although no more brutal than those of many European monarchs-history remembers her as 'Bloody Mary.'"²⁶ In *Beware, Princess Elizabeth*, Elizabeth is described as "Vain and ruthless, headstrong and witty, beautiful and hot tempered..." Meyer adds: "Queen Elizabeth never married,"²⁷ and describes the rumors of her various lovers. Meyer creates strong heroines by stressing the relationship between the princesses and their court.

Nancy Garden uses a popular technique in her novel *Dove and Sword: A Novel of Joan of Arc* in which a fabricated close family friend Gabrielle tells Joan's story. Garden writes that although Joan's dialogue is from the trial, she chose to write this story as historical fiction

²⁵Carolyn Meyer, *Mary Bloody Mary* (New York: Harcourt., 1999), 226.

²⁶ Meyer, *Mary Bloody Mary*, 227.

²⁷ Carolyn Meyer, *Beware Princess Elizabeth* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 214.

rather than as a biography, because she wants to use fictional dialogue which is more “frowned upon by many critics.”²⁸ Gabrielle’s first person account describes her childhood and how she eventually joins Joan’s army as a healer and observes Joan’s behaviour and actions. Garden clearly wants to show that in their own way, both Gabrielle and Joan are strong women. Where Joan refuses to marry and go to war, Gabrielle allows herself to fall in love, although she eventually ends up in a nunnery and is a pacifist. Garden describes Gabrielle’s reaction to Joan’s refusal to get married this way: “I smiled, and turned back my herbs, rejoicing secretly, for it cheered me to hear of a maid who refused to wed, whatever her reason.”²⁹ The above texts all fall under the category of Politics of Advocacy because these authors are not only constructing a heroic figure, but they are aware of what they are doing.

Sutherland’s second category, Politics of Attack, contains those authors who use satire and irony which runs counter to society’s perceived notions of right or wrong. Sutherland chooses Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* because it was a book that was censored for its language and was misunderstood by readers and society at the time of its publication. Terry Deary’s *Horrible Histories: The Measly Middle Ages*, is the only children’s book that comes close to this, as using cartoons and humour are used to describe the period. None of the other books used for this study fall under this category. Joan of Arc is characterized squinting, waiting in anticipation to be burned at the stake. When describing her death, Deary writes,

Her main crime? Wearing men’s clothes! The English lost the war in the end- which served them right for being so mean and measly to this 20-year-old young woman. She became known as Joan of Arc.³⁰

²⁸Nancy Garden, *The Dove and the Sword: A Novel of Joan of Arc* (New York: Scholastic, 1997), xiv.

²⁹ Ibid., 32.

³⁰ Terry Deary, *Horrible Histories: The Measly Middle Ages* (London: Scholastic, 1997), 90.

Although there is really nothing offensive in the book, if the language was taken the wrong way, people could be offended by the humour.

Sutherland's third category, Politics of Assent, affirms ideologies generally prevalent in society. Sutherland argues, "Most readers [who share this ideology with the author] will not recognize its presence in the work, for the work will reflect back their own assumptions about what the world is and simply reinforce them in their beliefs."³¹ These books are particularly problematic because these authors continually reaffirm the status quo.

J. Bradley Cruxton and W. Douglas Wilson's *Discovering Castle Days*, Ann McGovern's *If You Lived in the Days of the Knights*, and Jonathan Hunt's *Illuminations*, are general texts on the Middle Ages which are guilty of reinforcing popular perceptions not only of the Middle Ages but of gender stereotyping. Cruxton and Wilson's *Discovering Castle Days* is part of Oxford University Press's *Discovery Series*, and focuses on all aspects of medieval life. The authors use a standard practice for non-fiction in which each chapter contains different headings, each of which focuses upon one topic for two pages. Although the authors provide some information about historical practice and provide guidelines for discussion, their chapter on women only describes the opportunities available to noble women and prefers to construct traditional categories of gender.

A noblewoman was also expected to train young girls from other castles in the duty of running a household. Noblewomen also had the role in training young pages. Ladies taught pages to sing, dance and perhaps to play a musical instrument. They told boys exciting stories of knights and

³¹ Sutherland, 151.

heroes...From the women they [pages] learned to be courteous, well-mannered, and obedient.³²

By this claim, Cruixton and Wilson therefore place women in the traditional role of the “mother.”

Similarly, in Ann McGovern’s *...If You Lived in the Days of the Knights* and Jonathan Hunt’s *Illuminations*, the authors rely on stereotypical ideas of the Middle Ages. McGovern writes to the reader by using general questions and then directing her answers to the reader. For example, in one section she asks:

“Were your parents strict?” and answers, “Yes. If you didn’t obey, watch out! Boys were beaten to ‘get the devil out of them.’ Girls who didn’t follow the strict rules of behaviour could be punished for things like laughing too loudly, getting a sunburn, or wearing boys’ clothing.”³³

Although Nicholas Orme, a historian of medieval children, has indicated that corporal punishment was used often during the period,³⁴ McGovern implies that medieval parents were more strict than modern parents and thus makes it seem that she is more concerned about teaching the reader a standard of behaviour than the ways in which children were disciplined.

As we shall see in Chapter Five, one of the problems with the medieval history written for children is that the author will rely on popular ideas of fantasy, which incorporates medieval imagery with elements of mythology. In *Illuminations*, Hunt uses the alphabet to teach

³² J. Bradley Cruixton & W. Douglas Wilson, *Discovering Castle Days* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24.

³³ Ann McGovern, *...If You Lived in the Days of the Knights* (New York: Scholastic, 2001), 44.

³⁴ Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 84-85.

the reader about the Middle Ages. However, he makes references to things and belief systems which are often attributed to the period and does not distinguish between mythology and fact. Although he mentions that dragons are mythological figures, he writes, “These mysterious, winged serpents were reputed to spend most of their long lives guarding their secret hoards of jewels and stealing cattle from nearby farms.”³⁵ Thus Hunt uses a mythological figure within an historical context.

Biographies specifically about Joan of Arc fall on a very thin line between what could be considered as political action and preaching the status quo. These authors’ ideas about Joan are more consistent with other popular narratives because they focus on her spirituality and nationalism. Although sometimes these ideas come from the primary sources, it is important to recognize that sometimes these sources have been used to encourage a particular idea about Joan and her mission. Nancy Wilson Ross’ *Joan of Arc*, Susan Banfield’s *Joan of Arc*, and Tracy Christopher’s *Joan of Arc: Soldier Saint*, make certain generalizations about Joan and her beliefs which correspond to these popular notions which can be not only found in the historiography, but also in the various artistic representations of Joan herself. It is also important to recognize that Banfield and Christopher are writing for the same series but for different age groups and thus their perspective will be similar.

Although Ross never uses dialogue out of context, she stresses Joan’s psychic abilities when she narrates the legend of Joan’s sword of St. Catherine. When she was preparing to leave for battle, Joan “knew” that there was a sword buried in St. Catherine’s church because

³⁵Jonathan Hunt, *Illuminations* (New York: Bradbury Press, 1989), 4.

her “Voices” said so.³⁶ To suit her narrative, Ross does not debate the practical reasons why Joan would have known where the sword was, but prefers to stay with the standard explanation that she was divinely blessed with the gift of prophecy. In “Joan of Arc’s Sword in the Stone,” Bonnie Wheeler argues that the sword authorized and authenticated medieval warriors and thus Joan’s awareness that there was a sword buried at the Church of St. Catherine de Fierbois gave Joan’s mission authenticity.³⁷ Thus Ross is using the same tradition by maintaining that Joan’s mission was valid because she had been given a sword from God.

Banfield’s *Joan of Arc* is part of the *World Leaders Past and Present* series and thus is limited by the series’ philosophy that advocates strong leaders. Banfield’s Joan, therefore, is a naturally born leader, inspired by her voices and patriotic desire to save her country from the English. Joan “stood apart” from her childhood friends because she “would never stray from what she believed in her heart to be right and good, no matter what others might say.”³⁸ Similarly, Christopher’s *Joan of Arc: Soldier Saint* portrays Joan as follows: “Joan has been especially admired by people who have felt called to do tasks that are difficult or extremely dangerous. In her brief but valiant life they find the help they need to remain true, through whatever hardship or peril that comes their way, to the voice they hear within themselves.”³⁹ Banfield and Christopher’s language in both of these texts argues for a strong figure that is compelled by some higher cause.

³⁶ Nancy Wilson Ross, *Joan of Arc* (New York: Random House, 1981), 56.

³⁷ Bonnie Wheeler, “Joan of Arc’s Sword in the Stone” in Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, ed., *Fresh Vindictas on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland, 1996), xi, xiii.

³⁸ Susan Banfield, *Joan of Arc* (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), 20.

³⁹ Tracy Christopher, *Joan of Arc: Soldier Saint* (New York: Chelsea House, 1993), 71.

Similarly, writers of fictionalized biographies of Joan portray her as a pious young woman and a French nationalist and argue that Joan was divinely sent to save her country. In his book, *Joan of Arc*, Michael Morpurgo uses the same technique employed by Garden in which Joan's story is told from another person's perspective. Although Lucy Foster Madison's *Joan of Arc: Warrior Maid* was published eighty years ago, the language that she uses is consistent with modern books on Joan. It was also recently reprinted in 1995 and thus continues to be read by modern audiences. Like Ross (whose aim is to write a biography), Madison calls Joan "Daughter of God," and uses the voices to show that Joan was the Maid of Lorraine sent to save France.⁴⁰ Madison's book is also acknowledged by Diane Stanley and Nancy Garden and thus influences modern writers.⁴¹

Like Madison, Poole does not consider any of the historical explanations as to why Joan thought she heard Voices, or who they were, but simply states that Joan believed that her Voices came from God and that nothing could stand in her way.⁴² She creates a romantic image of Joan when she writes that after Joan's death it "...was not the end. A saint is like a star. A star and a saint shine forever."⁴³ This is also true in *Young Joan*, when Barbara Dana's Joan of Arc is also divinely inspired to fight for her country. "All was clear. God had chosen me as an instrument. I must honor His choice."⁴⁴

In Morpurgo's *Joan of Arc*, Eloise, a sixteen-year-old modern French girl whose parents have relocated her to Orléans, has always felt a close kinship to Joan of Arc because

⁴⁰ Lucy Foster Madison, *Joan of Arc* (New York: Avon, 1919), 43.

⁴¹ See Diane Stanley's bibliography in *Joan of Arc* and Nancy Garden's Author's Note in *Dave and Sword: A Novel on Joan of Arc*.

⁴² Josephine Poole, *Joan of Arc* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1998), 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁴ Barbara Dana, *Young Joan* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 256.

she has a portrait of her. There is a pageant at school to celebrate the liberation of Orléans from the Burgundians and Eloise wants to play Joan. She writes an essay about why she thinks that she should be Joan but when the part is given to another girl in the class, Eloise runs to a nearby stream and befriends a sparrow named Jacquot. It turns out that Jacquot is actually Belami, the same sparrow that watched and guided Joan all through her missions and he begins to tell his new friend her mentor's story. Belami witnesses the Voices in the garden and Joan's growth from a young girl into a knight.

When Eloise awakens and returns home her friends greet her and tell her that after everyone read her essay, they believed that she is the only person who could play Joan in the pageant.

I was Joan, Joan triumphant, Joan adored. I was in raptures....There was a ripple of laughter in the crowd, and they were pointing up at my standard. I looked up. There he was Jaquot, perched high on the point of it and singing his happy heart out. 'The sparrow and the saint,' came a voice from somewhere, from everywhere. A voice I knew so well, my voice from the river. 'The sparrow and the saint.'⁴⁵

Morpurgo parallels the two girl's experiences by blending history and fantasy. He maintains Joan's heroism by having a modern girl play her in a pageant, thus demonstrating her importance in the twentieth century.

The primary sources described above are multifaceted because the authors play with the various interpretations of the Middle Ages, gender and Joan's personality. Whether these authors are writing within the historical, biographical or fictional genres, they are all conveying

⁴⁵ Michael Morpurgo, *Joan of Arc* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 121-122.

a particular image. The question remains as to how much these authors are aware of what they are doing when they are writing. Writers who are advocating for strong female figures could be considered to be acceding to modern day ideas, while those who maintain that Joan was divinely ordained to lead France to victory could be considered to be advocating the old ideal of a society that functioned with primarily Christian values. Writers who explain their intentions seem to have more of an awareness of what they are doing and, if we return to Sutherland's original point, then we have to make judgments as to the writer's experience and intentions. Thus, we have three different genres functioning within three categories, Politics of Advocacy, Politics of Attack and Politics of Assent. Now we shall see how the sources within these categories work with Joan's gender, heroism, and spirituality.

Chapter 5

MEDIEVALISM AND THE PURSUIT FOR THE “TRUTH” ABOUT THE MIDDLE AGES

Arthurian words and images have yet to retreat from the language of western expression; in fact, they seem more powerful today-particularly in the realm of popular culture-then in any other time in this century.¹

Debra N. Mancoff argues that the Arthurian myth is an integral part of contemporary popular culture. From epic poetry to national monuments to comic books, board games and popular television and cinema, the legend continues to promote ideas of romantic nationalism, love and loyalty, faith and frailty. Mancoff writes that this

convergence of nostalgia, cultural pride, a desire for national identity, and the romantic imagination fueled the scholarly investigations and escapist inventions that characterize the early Gothic Revival. Arthur's legend was one of the many relics hauled out of the shadows of history and neglect for reconstruction and revivification.²

The field of Medievalism in western culture explores the various reasons why medieval art and literature are still part of contemporary popular culture and our historical consciousness. Medievalism is so immense that it would be impossible to discuss at great length here. Much of what will be covered in the following chapter is a basic introduction to the field and how it applies to our study of the medieval images found in contemporary

¹ Debra N. Mancoff ed., “Introduction” in *The Arthurian Revival: Essays on Form, Tradition and Transformation* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), xiii.

² Mancoff, xii.

historical literature for children. Indeed, the interpretation of the primary sources is linked to the medievalist tradition.

There are two schools of Medievalism. The first includes scholars such as Kathleen Biddick, Stephen Nichols, Howard Bloch and Umberto Eco who are interested in how historians have studied the medieval period.³ The second, which concerns us here, is the study of how certain medieval ideals have become part of western culture. This is divided into two groups: those scholars who concentrate on the rise of Medievalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and those who wish to see how the Middle Ages influence contemporary popular culture.

The rise of Medievalism in English speaking countries can be traced back to the writings of Lord Byron and Percy Shelley in the nineteenth century. Most medievalists argue that Britain's and America's infatuation with medieval ideas was due to the growing political, economic and social changes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In her study of the Romantics, Elizabeth Fay says that the reason why medieval philosophies were so attractive to these writers and artists was because they saw how the medieval concept of time had the potential for anachronisms.⁴ They were thus able to create a fantasy world where they

³ For more information about this particular school of Medievalism, please see Kathleen Biddick's *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998); Marina Brownlee, Kevin Brownless and Stephen G. Nichols ed. *The New Medievalism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991); Howard Bloch, "The Once and Future Middle Ages" *Modern Language Quarterly* 54 (1993); Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols ed. *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); and Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

⁴ Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History of the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Houndmills, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 12.

could apply what they liked about medieval ideas to what they did not want in eighteenth-century culture in an “idealized space” that was “connectively and presently available.”⁵

According to Alice Chandler, during the nineteenth-century, the Middle Ages “were idealized as a period of faith, order, joy, munificence, and creativity.”⁶ Medievalists were responding to the problems arising from the Industrial Revolution, as well as political and social difficulties resulting from the French Revolution and the post-Napoleonic period.⁷ Chandler observes that the nineteenth-century medievalist saw human beings as “fallible” and “selfish creatures” who were slaves to their emotions and that it was only through organized society that people were able to be civil to one another.⁸ She concludes that the Middle Ages became a way “of reorganizing man [sic] into a closely knit and organic social structure that could engage his [sic] emotions and loyalties with a wealth of traditions and customs.”⁹ The late-Romantic early-Victorian Medievalist used medieval images and ideas to create a picture of a person who was dynamic and generous and capable of heroic action.¹⁰

Similarly, in “Interpreting Victorian Medievalism” Charles Dellheim says that in a quest for a provincial, national, aesthetic, religious and political identity, nineteenth-century medievalism was a “social language composed of myths, legends, rituals, and symbols that was appropriated by Victorians both to criticize and to affirm their own times.”¹¹ He says that the

⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶ Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 1.

⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹¹ Charles Dellheim, “Interpreting Victorian Medievalism” in ed. Florence S. Boos, *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism* (London: Garland Publishing, 1992), 39, 54.

rise of medievalism during this period was because it was a “plastic language” that could take on many meanings by liberals, conservatives and socialists alike.¹²

In America, politicians, artists and writers also embraced medieval ideas. According to Kim Moreland, nineteenth-century Americans were going through a period of economic and social instability that was brought about by the civil war, the abolition of slavery and the ever-changing attitudes of the American identity.¹³ The New England intelligentsia and southern Aristocracy were obsessed with medieval architecture, literature and history. Mark Twain used the medieval setting in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* to not only mock nineteenth century medievalism, but to also show his appreciation of the Middle Ages.¹⁴ In the 1870s, scholars like Charles Eliot Norton and architects like Ralph Adams Cram were fascinated by Gothic architecture. William Gilmore Simms's *The Life of the Chevalier Bayard: The Good Knight, Sans peur et sans reproche* (1847) and popular periodicals like Harper's Monthly were typical vehicles for medievalist fiction often illustrated by the illustrator of the classic text *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883), Howard Pyle.¹⁵

Moreland argues that Americans did not believe that they were borrowing from history but “were rightfully reappropriating their own, despite the geographic and historical disruption from England occasioned by the American experiment.”¹⁶ As Thomas Bulfinch wrote in *The Age of Chivalry* (1858): “We are entitled to our full share in the glories and recollections of the

¹² Ibid., 54.

¹³ Kim Moreland, *The Medievalist Impulse in American Literature: Twain, Adams, Fitzgerald and Hemingway* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 1.

¹⁴ Anita Obermeier, “Antimedievalism in *A Connecticut Yankee*,” in ed. William F. Gentrup *Reinventing the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Constructions of the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1998,) 237.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

land of our forefathers, down to the time of colonization thence.”¹⁷ When the “New Jerusalem” failed in nineteenth-century New England, a different set of historical analogies emerged. For example, antebellum southern aristocrats claimed the first settlers of Virginia and the Carolinas were direct descendants of medieval knights.¹⁸

Indeed, according to Laura Kendrick, this rise of medievalism could have been a result of a precedent set by Thomas Jefferson. In “The American Middle Ages: Eighteenth-Century Saxonist Myth-Making,” Kendrick argues that the idea of the American western frontier is very much like the European Middle Ages because it is a fabrication, “like all stories of the past.”¹⁹ Although Jefferson wished to separate himself from England, he preferred using “Saxonist” philosophies. When proposing the emblems for the Great Seal in 1776, Jefferson proposed that on one side there would be an engraving of “the children of Israel in the wilderness, led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night” and on the other side, to provide a secular or legal justification to the above analogy, he proposed an engraving of “Hengist and Horsa, the Saxon chiefs from whom we claim the honor of being descended, and whose political principles and form of government we have assumed.”²⁰ She argues that Jefferson wanted to preserve the Saxon concepts of liberty and democracy because he believed they had been corrupted over

¹⁷ Moreland quoting Bulfinch, 5.

¹⁸ Moreland, 5.

¹⁹ Laura Kendrick, “The American Middle Ages: Eighteenth-Century Saxonist Myth-Making,” in Marie-Francoise Alamichel and Derek Brewer, ed., *The Middle Ages After the Middle Ages in the English-Speaking World* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 122.

²⁰ Kendrick, 125, quoting from *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed., Julian P. Boyd, 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 494-495.

the course of British history beginning with the imposition of feudal law at the Norman Conquest.²¹

Moreland argues that in modern American popular culture, the “contemporary evocation of medieval chivalry and courtly love in particular came to function as a standard against which modern American life was judged and found wanting.”²² This is because modern American “man [sic] did not measure up to his [sic] medieval predecessors in the martial realm since modern warfare offered fewer opportunities for glory than the rule-governed warfare of chivalry...”²³ Moreland cites John Fraser’s *America and the Patterns of Chivalry* (1982) where he argues that America has always exhibited a strong attachment to the medieval tradition of chivalry because of its vigor and emotional intensity. Fraser insists that this is not merely an escape from reality, but serves to shape American culture in various ways. For example, the idea of Camelot was used when John F. Kennedy was president.²⁴ Thus the medievalist tradition was influential in both England and America.

Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer argue in *The Return of King Arthur: Britain and American Arthurian Literature since 1900* that Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* was the most influential Arthurian text because Malory’s own interests naturally appealed to the Victorian reader. Malory’s devotion to the Round Table, his acknowledgment that people need to live up to an ideal and his perception of how conflicting human passions, like those of

²¹ Ibid., 126.

²² Ibid., 6.

²³ Ibid., 6.

²⁴ Ibid., 8-9.

Lancelot and Guenevere, could destroy a great institution, made his material very popular.²⁵

Also, the wonderful thing about these myths was their minimal demand for historical accuracy which gave the writer greater imaginative freedom.

According to Taylor and Brewer, the resurrection of Malory and Arthur can be largely credited to Richard Hurd, Thomas Percy, Thomas Wharton, George Ellis, Sir Walter Scott and Joseph Ritson. For example, Scott imagined a past age that was nobler and more picturesque, in which the medieval ideals of chivalry and honour thrived. His medieval novel *Ivanhoe* in 1819 is recognized for stimulating the medieval interests of the century because it grew out of nostalgia and the desire to freeze an essentially familiar way of life which was rapidly changing in the shifting political, social and economic climate.²⁶

The works of Scott, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Mark Twain, and Malory still influence popular notions of the Arthurian legend in the twentieth century. It lives on in the historical novels of Mary Stewart's *Merlin Trilogy*, and the fantasy literature of Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*. Marion Wynne-Davis argues that Mary Stewart's *Merlin Trilogy* (which includes *The Crystal Cave*, 1970; *The Hollow Hills*, 1973; and *The Last Enchantment*, 1979) is "a materialist version of the Arthurian tale, located self-consciously within its own historical context as well as being aware of the existence of early synchronic positions" by taking the reader through the life of the character Merlin in a combination of history and myth.²⁷ Marion Zimmer Bradley's bestselling *The Mists of Avalon*, often discussed by scholars of Medievalism, is a retelling of the Arthurian legend from a woman's perspective. Although

²⁵ Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Literature since 1900* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

Bradley is often dismissed as a producer of a “bestseller” or “historical romance,” Wynne-Davis argues that she was a catalyst for challenging a dominantly male discourse.²⁸ Brewster and Taylor argue that these newer approaches to the Arthurian myth are based on our struggle to explore and understand

our own natures more comprehensively, now often turning towards our evil impulses rather than to our nobler aspirations, the story of Arthur still remains a source of vital symbols, while it awaits another great author or artist to give it renewed life and fresh significance.²⁹

Thus, Arthurian legends in the twentieth century continue to be reinterpreted into the popular culture.

The chivalric code is one of the most widely discussed issues in Medievalism. Traditionally, the ideas surrounding chivalric conduct during this period is one of the most consistent mythmaking and legendary constructs used by historians and writers in the twentieth century. Indeed, according to Malcolm Vale, Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945), considered the late gothic art styles the “cult of chivalry” and the abundant images of religious thought during the late Middle Ages as “decadent.” Huizinga believed that both religious and secular thought had become confused with reality. He claimed that because knightly conduct in the late Middle Ages was in a stage of decline, the chivalric code was beneficial because it offered a touchstone of virtue for men to aspire to but never attain.³⁰

²⁷ Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature* (New York City: St Martin's Press, 1996), 167.

²⁸ Ibid., 176. For more information about Bradley please see Wynne-Davies or James Noble's “*The Mists of Avalon: A Confused Assault on Patriarchy*” in Marie-Françoise Alamichel and Derek Brewer *The Middle Ages after the Middle Ages*, ed. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 145-153.

²⁹ Brewster and Taylor, 19.

³⁰ Malcolm Vale discusses Huizinga's influence in his book *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Autocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 4.

According to Malcolm Vale, those who followed Huizinga, such as R.L. Kilgour in *The Decline of Chivalry as Shown in the French Literature of the Middle Ages* and A.B. Ferguson in *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism*, began to construct the feudal knight as the ideal military and national modern soldier.³¹

From the literature of the Middle Ages, one can see the distinct difference between what Vale calls the chivalric “collective dream” and the reality of wartime France. Much of the literature of the period discusses the ideals of wartime conduct and codes of honour, but does not tell the historian what the actual battles would have been like. For the purpose of this study on Joan of Arc, it is important to look at how these ideas influence how she was perceived in the sources and eventually written about in the children’s literature. As we will see in chapters six, seven and eight, writers of children’s literature find it easier to rely upon the images and myths of the period than the reality. And these images are never more apparent than in the literature of the Middle Ages.

Honoré Boivet’s *L’Arbre des Batailles* (*The Tree of Battles*), and Christine de Pisan’s *Livres des Faïtes d’Armes et de Chevalrie* (*The Book of Feat of Arms and Chivalry*) are often referred to by historians as two of the best sources for observing the rise of chivalric codes of behaviour. Written by a Benedictine monk for King Charles VI of France during the last quarter of the fourteenth century, the *Arbre des Batailles* was very popular during the fifteenth century and by 1477 was translated into four different languages. De Pisan herself used it in legal disputes as a manual in the instruction of prospective heralds.³² According to N.A.R. Wright, historians

³¹ Vale, 9.

³² N.A. R. Wright “The ‘Tree of Battles’ of Honoré Boivet and the Laws of War,” in Christopher Allmand, ed., *War, Literature and Politics in the Late Middle Ages* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1976), 13.

interpret Boivert's book in two ways: either in the context of modern international law, or in terms of the ancient "Law of Arms."³³ G.W. Copeland said that "from the standpoint of the medievalist," the book was "not the rudimentary beginnings of international law, but a phase near to the declared and accepted end of an older system."³⁴ M.H. Keen, however, saw the book as an authority of a very ancient system of war theory and soldierly custom called "law of war" or "law of arms"³⁵ and R.L. Kilgour said that was a "working manual for the knight."³⁶

Boivert's book is divided into a number of parts that deal with a specific aspect of war. According to Wright, the book is not meticulous or consistent and is basically organized by themes. The first part discusses the history of war dating back to the biblical period and argues that war a natural state of human society. Boivert stresses that war must abide by the law of reason embodied in canon and civil laws and that God permits and encourages war to maintain order in society by fending off evil and injustice. Thus, the "Just war" was very popular in the Middle Ages as this idea helped to keep the social perception of the soldier in high esteem.

Other aspects of the chivalric debate discuss how the mythical elements of the Middle Ages influenced medieval perceptions of their heroes. Historians like Bonnie Wheeler believe that there is something important about Joan's "Sword in the Stone" when placing it in the context of medieval knighthood and chivalry. In early March of 1429 when she left Chinon for Orléans, Joan sent a man to collect a sword that she said would be found buried below or

³³ Wright, 13.

³⁴ Wright quoting Copeland, 14.

³⁵ Wright quoting Keen, 14.

³⁶ Wright quoting Kilgour, 14.

behind the altar of the church of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois; and so it was.³⁷ Lilas Edward says that medieval people thought that the sword was a symbol of righteousness and the holy pursuit of peace through war.³⁸ Other medieval warriors of fact and legend also had swords that had some sort of divine authenticity. Roland's sword of Durendal contained the relics of St. Peter's tooth, St. Basil's blood, St. Denis's hair and a bit of the Virgin's cloth. This sword was so crucial to Roland's Christian identity that the poet of *Chanson de Roland* tells us that when he was dying, Roland tried to destroy it by hitting it against a stone so that the pagans would not get their hands on it.³⁹ Wheeler also argues that King Arthur's sword in the stone is similar to Joan's sword from Fierbois, because both swords are connected with a church altar and their mysterious origin. The sword also authorizes their owners' status in society.

The medieval ideas and images discussed above are found in contemporary children's history textbooks. Eva Tappan's introduction to her 1911 textbook is reminiscent of the various themes that tend to be reintroduced in later textbooks on the Middle Ages.

Many of our thoughts and feelings and instincts, our very follies and superstitions, have descended to us from them, medieval people. To become better acquainted with them is to explain ourselves.⁴⁰

Tappan brings the reader inside the narrative to create an atmosphere of oneness with the people of the medieval past. This approach to children's historical literature is a tradition that reinforces the historical consciousness.

³⁷ Bonnie Wheeler, "Joan of Arc's Sword in the Stone," in ed. Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, xi.

³⁸ Lilas Edwards, "Joan of Arc: Empowerment and Risk in Androgyny," *Medieval Life* 5 (Summer, 1996): 4-5.

³⁹ Wheeler, xi.

⁴⁰ Eva March Tappan, *When Knights Were Bold* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1911), 365.

Many textbooks apply medieval imagery by using particular words that reminds the reader of the Middle Ages: Ann McGovern calls her textbook, *...If You Lived in the Days of the Knights*, Tappan's *When Knights were Bold* and J. Bradley Cruxton and W. Douglas Wilson, *Discovering Castle Days*. As well, these authors try to get their readers involved with their texts. McGovern uses the second person narrative to include the reader in the medieval experience. When discussing how one became a knight, she writes: "You swore to obey the knights 'code of chivalry,' to use your sword to defend the Church and protect widows, orphans and the poor. And, most important, to serve your lord in battle."⁴¹ In *Horrible Histories: The Measly Middle Ages*, Terry Deary writes:

You didn't sneak up on another knight and stab him in the back, even though that saves a lot of trouble and effort. You had to challenge your opponent to a fight and agree to the time and place. This may seem a bit strange to you or me.⁴²

Cruxton and Wilson create a fictional character named Godfrey who learns the chivalric code and promises to be loyal to his baron, Simon. "By the time Godfrey was seventeen, he was ready to go into battle. Godfrey fought bravely alongside Simon. He proved to be a fine and brave warrior."⁴³ This technique places the reader around the same age as the protagonist, which makes the events more believable and closer to the reader's experience.

These authors make a lot of references to some of the popular medieval chivalric clichés. Not only is McGovern's cover page a picture of two knights jousting, but she also writes "Being a knight was a great honor. It took many years of training," and one needed to

⁴¹ McGovern, 17.

⁴² Deary, 42-43.

⁴³ Cruxton and Wilson, *Discovering Castle Days*, 23.

show “great courage” on the battlefield. She also writes that there were “plenty of jousts and tournaments where knights could show off.”⁴⁴

Cruxton and Wilson list the points of the chivalric code and then as an educational exercise ask the readers to write a “code of chivalry” for their classroom. By doing so, the authors are encouraging the readers to use similar kinds of moral ethics and to think about them in their daily lives. For example, rule number one of the chivalric code is to be “loyal to his lord,” which can be translated into being “loyal to our teacher.”⁴⁵

Conversely, by showing that knights were told to be gentlemen, but that they did not always behave that way, Deary uses popular images only to discredit them. Deary writes that before they had read the stories of Arthur, knights were “big bullies” who battered British or foreign peasants. Then, after they learned to read and learned about Arthur they were told that, “Knights treated ladies with respect, but, weirdest of all, they treated their enemies with respect.”⁴⁶ Deary, however, recognizes that knights did not necessarily acknowledge this when he tells the reader to “Forget the fairytales about knights in shining armor battling boldly to win glory...or death. In truly horrible historical fashion, the most measly knights of the Middle Ages broke the rules. They cheated.”⁴⁷

In his book for preschoolers, *Illuminations*, Jonathan Hunt uses the alphabet to teach children about the Middle Ages. However, instead of using this technique to provide accurate information, Hunt relies heavily on mythical images from the Arthurian legends. For example:

⁴⁴ McGovern, 3, 49.

⁴⁵ Cruxton and Wilson, 22-23.

⁴⁶ Deary, 42.

⁴⁷ Deary, 43.

“E is for Excalibur,” “G is for Grail,” “M is for Merlin” and “U is for Unicorn” all refer to medieval myths.⁴⁸ As well when describing “G is for Grail,” he says: “Some of King Arthur’s knights dedicated their lives to the quest for the Holy Grail. This fabulous relic, however, revealed its greatest mysteries to only the purest knight in the world, Sir Galahad.”⁴⁹ Thus, Hunt is more interested in keeping with the popular ideas of the Middle Ages than using historical evidence.

Medievalism is therefore a useful technique to study the works of medieval history books for children. Although there are some improvements with the series put out by Barrons and Dorling Kindersley’s *Eyewitness Series*, most texts still use popular medieval images. As we will see in the following chapters, this technique is useful when interpreting how the Middle Ages and Joan of Arc are constructed in contemporary children’s literature.

⁴⁸ Hunt, *Illuminations*, 6, 8, 13, 15, 24.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 8.

Chapter 6

JOAN OF ARC: THE GIRL IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Virginity itself retains a mystique in present-day texts, as does the overly noted notion of woman as enigma.¹

This chapter will discuss the issues pertaining to the construction of Joan's gender by historians over the last twenty years with particular attention to medieval ideas about childhood and adolescence, and how this influences those books written about young women for a younger audience. Like the authors of *Young Medieval Women*, I

wish neither to lose sight of gender as a fundamental category of historical analysis, nor to imply that it is somehow of superior significance to other categories. Rather, it is recognized that gender identities are intermingled with and modified by other aspects of identity.²

Thus I will show that when gender historians investigate Joan's sexuality, especially her virginity and transvestism, there is an assumption that they are discussing a young woman, not a girl. In the literature for children, however, reference to Joan's sexuality is entirely absent, because she is not an adult, but a child in men's clothes.

The primary sources will be interpreted within the categories that were set up in Chapter Three. To remind the reader, the two standards set out by Sutherland were the Politics of Advocacy and the Politics of Assent. As we will discover, the writers of children's

¹ Françoise Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire: Joan of Arc and the Limits of Subjectivity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 10.

² *Ibid.*, xi.

books who construct Joan as a strong “girl” fall under the Politics of Advocacy category, while writers who try to ignore Joan’s sexuality fall under the Politics of Assent. The literature will also be discussed within the three subcategories: Biographies, Historical Fiction and Fictional biographies.

The study of young women in the Middle Ages is in its infancy. Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge, and Kim Phillips are interested in the construction of “maidenhood” and what was considered the age of majority for women in the Middle Ages. This study is of interest to us because understanding how women were socialized or viewed during particular points of their lives will provide us with a sense of how Joan’s actions were viewed by her contemporaries, as well as how these actions were then incorporated, either subliminally or purposefully, by historians of women and popular children’s authors.

In Philippe Ariès’s study of early modern France, *L’enfant et la vie familiale sous l’Ancien régime* (1960) (translated as *Centuries of Childhood* in 1962), assumed that the idea of childhood during this period was similar to the Middle Ages.³ Ariès concludes that children were a less distinguishable group from adults because while medieval parents might have cared for their children, they were more detached and less sympathetic than parents in the twentieth century.⁴ Ariès provides three reasons why this is so: children died young, they lived closely together with adults and they were sent away from home in their youth to schools.⁵

Conversely, Nicholas Orme and Kim M. Phillips argue that adults regarded childhood in the Middle Ages as a distinct phase or phases of life. Phillips says that childhood was

³ Orme, 4,5.

⁴ Ibid., 4.

recognized by society in late medieval England.⁶ Indeed none of the recent historical research on childhood during this period has found anything to support Ariès's claims.⁷ In *Medieval Childhood*, Orme provides an extensive review of the experiences of young people during this period. He argues that particularly after the twelfth century, medieval people had a concept of when childhood ended and began.⁸ Although both the Church and secular law accepted the idea that children were not yet adults and therefore required special treatment, both children and adults had equal rights under these institutions. Orme states that medieval thinkers were accustomed to think about the course of a person's life in stages. These "ages of man" were divided into three, four, five, six, seven or twelve periods.⁹ All of these divisions distinguished between childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

According to Orme, much like adolescence in the twentieth century, there was not a particular age during the Middle Ages in which an adolescent was considered an adult. He argues that it began when a child turned twelve when s/he would leave home to go to school or work. Sometimes, due to the death of a parent, the adolescent may also be considered an adult because s/he may have to be responsible for the home.¹⁰ It was also during their teens that their gender would become a major factor in the careers available to them. Peasant girls would often go into sewing or textiles, while boys would be sent to the fields to work or to

⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁶ Kim M. Phillips, "Maidenhood As the Perfect Age of Women's Life," *Young Medieval Women* with Katherine J. Lewis and Noel James Menuge, eds., 4.

⁷ Orme, 5.

⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹ Orme, 6.

¹⁰ Orme, 317.

town to learn a trade.¹¹ Adolescence ended when the person either got married or entered a trade formally.¹² Indeed the stages of childhood and adolescence were acknowledged during the Middle Ages.

Historians of Joan have argued that it was Joan's virginity and asexuality that accounted for her rise in status and acceptance among her peers. Before we delve into that debate, it is important to see the links between Kim M. Phillips's analysis of maidenhood and Joan's use of the term during her short presence in public life. Phillips defines the term "maidenly" as a young woman who does not have children, and is beautiful, virginal and unmarried.¹³ Phillips argues that the popularity of young female saints during this period demonstrates that the maidenhood" phase was viewed as the "perfect age of a women's life."¹⁴

For secular women, "maiden" was most often used by the English in the late thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to refer to a young unmarried virginal woman. Medieval canon law said that between the age of twelve and fifteen women were mature enough to decide whether or not to marry, because that was when they became sufficiently physically developed to engage intellectually and morally in procreation, and therefore, understand the bonds of marriage.¹⁵ Thus, women or girls who did not marry (and most did not until they were in their mid-twenties) were seen as sexually mature, but chaste. "The medieval maiden therefore, is a woman past childhood but not yet a fully fledged adult, and

¹¹ Orme, 307.

¹² Orme, 317.

¹³ Phillips, 1. Phillips's definition derives from Hans Kurath, Sherman Kuhn and Robert E. Lewis, eds., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, 1956-ongoing.)

¹⁴ Ibid., 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., 4.

one whose identity is bound to a certain tension.”¹⁶ As we are about to see, it is this sexual tension that plays a large part in the construction of Joan’s gender.

Orme argues that gender ambiguity could be hazardous and unpopular during the Middle Ages.¹⁷ He states that in the fifteenth century, words like “effeminate,” “feminine,” and “womanish” were derogatory for men and later Shakespeare refers to wild girls as “tomboys.” Boys were allowed to cross dress as a chorister or for a particular play, but it was not acceptable in every day life. Virgin boys could also be referred to as “maidens.”¹⁸ It is clear that there were particular gender codes of acceptable behaviour for both boys and girls during the Middle Ages.

Historians on Joan of Arc often debate the significance of Joan’s virginity. Marina Warner’s strategy was to focus on how Joan’s physical body was an important aspect in the construction of her image. Warner reports that Joan readily told her inquisitors that she was a virgin because it was a sign of her virtue. Lilas Edwards states that, “By the fifteenth century, virginity had acquired a special and honoured place within the Christian tradition.”¹⁹ In her rehabilitation trial, Joan’s virtue had become one of the most important factors in proving her innocence. Stories of Joan’s chastity are consistent throughout the second trial. For example, Warner quotes one witness stating that when a tailor had tried to touch Joan’s breast while making her a dress, she slapped him.²⁰ During her trial, Joan’s virginity was tested a number of

¹⁶ Ibid, 5.

¹⁷ Orme, 328.

¹⁸ Orme references Perceval in Arthurian mythology, who was called a maiden not because he was feminine but because he was chaste, 328.

¹⁹ Edwards, 3.

²⁰ Warner, 17.

times. Although this was quite common for the inquisition, Bonnie Wheeler suggests that “They investigate[d] and reinvestigate[d] her body to see if a non-virgin, therefore necessarily and impure liar or heretic, [could] be found lurking there.”²¹

Warner argues that the name Joan used, “Jeanne la Pucelle,” was important because the word means ‘virgin’. In the context of this period it referred to “...youth, innocence and, paradoxically, nobility”²² and in the Old French it was used most often when speaking about a young girl.²³

With an instinct for seizing an image of power, which Joan possessed to an extraordinary developed degree, she picked a word for virginity that captured with doubled strength the magic of her state in her culture. It expressed not only the incorruption of her body, but also the dangerous border into maturity or full womanhood that she had not crossed or would not cross.²⁴

Joan’s virginity, therefore, was a way for her to claim power among her soldiers and then again in her trial. Warner also touches upon the idea that by maintaining her virginity, Joan was able to remain in the hazy world between childhood and adulthood.

Similarly, Lilas Edwards believes that Joan was able to transcend her role in society by symbolizing “. . . something distinct from the accepted norms, both masculine and feminine,” through the power of her “female, virginal body.”²⁵ Edwards argues that by making her

²¹ Bonnie Wheeler, “Joan of Arc: The Sword in the Stone,” in *Fresh Perspectives on Joan of Arc*, ed., Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, xiii-xiv.

²² Warner, 22.

²³ Ibid., 22.

²⁴ Ibid., 23.

²⁵ Edwards, 3.

virginity part of her identity, Joan was able to distance herself from the negative stereotypes that had been associated with the female sex. One of the ways that Joan was able to do this was her “legendary amenorrhea.”²⁶

In the medieval period, menstruation was believed to be unclean, and thus, if Joan’s physical body could not produce “uncleanliness,” then she was able to distance herself from one of the negativities associated with womanhood. Although Warner suggests that modern science would indicate that Joan’s condition was due to her eating habits,²⁷ she is still able to project the impact Joan’s physical condition had upon her contemporaries. For them, her condition was “magically holy,” because, “To be a woman, yet unmarked by women’s menstrual flow, was to remain in a primordial state, the prelapsian state of Eve, before sexual knowledge corrupted her.”²⁸ For the medieval theologian this condition was not only a sign of innocence, but one of strength.²⁹

Authors of Joan’s biographies for children have a difficult time dealing with Joan’s sexuality. On one hand, they want to portray her as a virginal and perhaps an asexual woman, while on the other, they are uncomfortable with the idea that she could be asexual. In *Joan of Arc*, Diane Stanley makes an odd reference to the Duke of Alençon who helped Joan lead the army to Rheims where Charles would eventually be crowned. Stanley writes: “Joan admired him greatly, for his charm as much as his courage. She called him her *beau duc*, her “handsome duke.”³⁰ The small paragraph containing this remark is placed in between Charles’s making the

²⁶ Ibid., 4.

²⁷ Her soldiers mention in the trial records that Joan ate very little.

²⁸ Warner, 21-22.

²⁹ Ibid., 22.

³⁰ Stanley, *Joan of Arc*, 24

decision to proceed to Rheims and the impending march. Is it to give the illusion of a romantic interest that never was? The Duke of Alençon's testimony can be found in the second trial. Although it is of course possible that Joan said these things to the Duke, it is doubtful that she had a romantic interest. Joan is portrayed in the same record as asexual, and that the men in her army never looked upon her with desire because she was too pure.

This technique to "create" somehow the illusion that Joan may have had a romantic interest is often used in the popular media. In the last two films on Joan, one by Luc Besson and the other a television movie produced by Alliance Atlantis and directed by Christian Duguay for CBS, there is a primary male knight who has a personal connection to Joan. Indeed the caption at the end of the Duguay's film reads that after Joan's death, Jean de Metz never married.³¹ The significance of this statement suggests that the writers of the film wanted to create the illusion that there was an innocent romance between de Metz and Joan and had Joan lived, they would have married. Thus, perhaps Stanley's reference is indicative of current beliefs because she is claiming that somehow Joan had a romantic interest in Alençon.

The age of the audience determines how Joan's virginity is discussed. Books geared towards younger audiences will skim over the political implications of what it meant for Joan to be a virgin in the Middle Ages, while authors who write for older children will explain the significance of her virginity. Except for Diane Stanley's *Joan of Arc*, most writers, like Josephine Poole, Nancy Wilson Ross, and Tracy Christopher, ignore Joan's virginity and fall under the Politics of Assent category. Stanley's *Joan of Arc* is written for readers' eight to ten, and thus the issue of sexuality is less likely to emerge. In many cases, Joan's virginity is tied to

³¹ Michael Alexander Miller and Ronald Parker wrote the screenplay for *Joan of Arc*, directed by Christian Duguay. (U.S.A./Canada: Alliance Atlantis, 1999.)

Merlin's prophecy (mentioned in Chapter Two), that France would be destroyed by one woman and saved by another, a maid from Lorraine. (As we will see in Chapter Eight, the prophecy is also used by authors to give Joan a sense of agency.) Stanley writes that after Joan left Robert de Baudricourt's castle for Chinon, Joan began to refer to herself as *la Pucelle* or "the Maid," and explains to the reader that the word in French meant "maiden" or "virgin."³² Stanley hypothesizes that Joan chose to refer to herself as the maid in hopes of reminding people "of the prophecy of the virgin who would save France."³³ Thus, Stanley chooses to ignore Joan's sexuality and bring the reader back to the myth.

As stated above, Josephine Poole does not mention Joan's virginity or sexuality. This is most likely because the audience is around six or seven years old. The fact that Poole still refers to Joan as a girl maintains her protagonist's position as a child and, therefore, her virginity is a non-issue. Although Nancy Wilson Ross uses the term "Maid" to refer to Joan's persona she does not explain the origin except to say that it was what Joan's "own countrymen" called her and, like Stanley, she mentions the prophecy of Merlin.

Christopher never uses the word "maid" in the main body of her text, yet the word appears half way through the book as a caption to a painting depicting the Battle of Orléans. "The Maid from Domrémy leads the French Troops..."³⁴ says Christopher without explaining what the word means and why it is there. In this instance, Christopher is hoping that the audience is aware of the popular reference to Joan as "the Maid."

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Ibid., 11.

³⁴ Christopher, 30.

Another way that biographers mention Joan's youth is attributing an aspect of holiness to the use of the word "maid." Susan Banfield falsely states that when Joan decided to refer to herself as "Joan the Maid," it was because in the fifteenth century the word meant "serving girl," which is how Joan had come to identify herself as she served her voices and God.³⁵ She not only ignores the sexual significance of the word during the period, but attributes Joan's decision to something that Banfield has no way of knowing. Indeed, as has been shown above, except for Stanley, the word is most often referred to describe Joan's connection to legend, rather than her own choice to remain celibate.

Polly Schoyer Brooks' *Beyond the Myth: The Story of Joan of Arc*, however, is geared to readers over the age of ten. This means that she has more freedom to discuss sexuality than Stanley. Brooks cites Marina Warner in her bibliography and thus uses her to argue that Joan was quite aware of the importance of the status of her virginity. "Joan knew the value of her virginity and guarded it well."³⁶ When discussing Joan's examination in Poitiers, Brooks explains that her virginity was one of the major issues. Although Brooks simplifies her language, like Warner, Brooks explains that Joan made the decision because of her contemporary culture's spiritual beliefs.

In those days everyone believed that a witch could not be a virgin because her pact with the Devil implied sexual relations with him, whereas a virgin could not be contaminated by the Devil. If it turned out that Joan was not a virgin, she would be proved a liar and perhaps even a tool of the Devil- in other words, she might be a witch.³⁷

³⁵ Banfield, 29.

³⁶ Brooks, 38-39.

³⁷ Ibid., 46.

By attributing the importance of Joan's virginity to medieval superstition, Brooks denies the significance of Joan's choice to remain a virgin which no longer belongs to Joan's physical body, but to her society. Like a child, Joan does not seem to have made a choice to remain a virgin; she simply is, due to her age and experience. By keeping her virginity public, Brooks obscures Joan's decision and thus she remains a child.

Joan's virginity and asexuality have been linked by some historians to her transvestism and military career. It is sometimes difficult for historians to separate these latter two issues because one cannot have the former without the latter. Yet, it is important to realize that the first issue is specifically referring to Joan's physical dress and that by denying traditional medieval gender codes, she had no other option but to have a public career. Thus, according to this argument, Joan's military career was in essence a result of her transvestism. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven when I discuss what were deemed her "heroic" attributes.

The main issue of Joan's cross-dressing was originally brought forward by Warner who argued that Joan's transvestism contradicted what was considered normal gender roles in the medieval world when ". . . she declared herself a maid but lived as a man."³⁸ She states that her inquisitors took Joan's cross-dressing very seriously by charging her with five different accounts of heresy pertaining to her transvestism.³⁹ The records indicate that they were uncomfortable with her dress: ". . . having cast aside all womanly decency, not only to the scorn of female modesty, but also of well instructed men."⁴⁰ This is in direct opposition to the

³⁸ Warner, 138.

³⁹ Warner, 141.

⁴⁰ Trial Transcript as recorded by Warner, 143.

popular medieval ideology of mystical transvestites because they were able to submerge their sex, while Joan did not. For example, one of Joan's own voices, St. Margaret of Antioch, dressed up as a monk so effectively that her true sexual identity was hidden until she was accused by a young woman of fathering her child. Margaret continued to hide her true identity until she realized that she was dying. Only when she decided to write a letter and reveal everything to her superiors was she recognized as a woman and made a saint.⁴¹ Margaret attempted and was able to maintain a "male" identity, while Joan assumed "male" dress but did not try to hide the fact that she was a woman.

Susan Schibanoff concurs with Warner's initial arguments in her article, "True Lies: Transvestism and Idolatry in the Trial of Joan of Arc." She argues that although there were biblical sanctions, transvestism was not treated as transgressive in the Middle Ages.⁴² The problem that emerged for Joan was that the female saints in legends who had disguised themselves as monks always went into seclusion. Not only did Joan's dress take her into the public realm, but unlike other holy transvestites, she did nothing to conceal her sex.⁴³

Similarly, in her article, "Clothing and Gender Definition: Joan of Arc," Susan Crane argues that although Joan's transvestism complicated her gender, she did not attempt to hide her sex. Crane, however, believes that the problem with Joan's transvestism was instead of

repudiating her womanhood in the manner of the
transvestite saints-who often supplement their cross-dress with

⁴¹ Warner, 151.

⁴² Susan Schibanoff. "True Lies: Transvestism and Idolatry in the Trial of Joan of Arc," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, 39.

⁴³ Ibid., 42.

the ability to grow facial hair, perform extraordinary penances
and hide their sex from everyone until their deaths,⁴⁴

she focused on her virginity.

One of the major debates is why Joan returned to wearing male dress after the signing of the “document of recantation” on 24 May.⁴⁵ One argument suggests that the clothes were left in her prison cell in order to tempt her. Another, taken from a witnesses’ testimony, states that her female dress was forcibly taken from her so that there was nothing else for her to wear.⁴⁶ Crane points out that according to a witness at the rehabilitation trial, one of Joan’s guards had threatened to rape her.⁴⁷ In fact, Joan’s testimony changes after her abjuration to reflect the conditions of prison life. This is evident when she states, “. . . that it was more suitable for her to resume men’s clothing, since she was among men.”⁴⁸

Schibanoff argues that when Joan returned to wearing male clothing on 28 May, the judges condemned her to death. She believes that Joan’s voices and her “male attire” are linked in the transcript of Joan’s final condemnation. Between February and May 1431, Joan’s transvestism was questioned in order to determine the cause of her visions.⁴⁹ Joan was very indifferent during the beginning of the trial as to why she dressed in men’s clothes and it was only towards the end that she stated that she wore men’s clothes because it was the will of God.

⁴⁴Susan Crane, “Clothing and Gender Definition: Joan of Arc,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1996): 305.

⁴⁵ Warner, 140.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁷ Crane, 303.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 303.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 32.

Like the historians mentioned above, writers of biographies of Joan argue that she changed into the clothes of man for one of two reasons: out of necessity, or, because God told her to do so. I will provide examples of how these authors describe Joan's attire, her decision to change her wardrobe and the contemporary responses to her decision. Although the approaches may change depending upon which genre the author chooses, writers from both the Politics of Attack and Politics of Assent categories use the above arguments and Joan's choice of dress is also similarly described in biographies, historical fiction, and fictional biographies. For example, Lucy Foster Madison writes that when Joan changed her apparel:

A complete suit of masculine apparel was bought, jerkin a cloth doublet, hose laced to coat, gaiters, spurs, a whole equipment of war, while Sir Robert gave her a horse. And Jeanne, with one girlish sigh at the sacrifice, took off her coif, let down her long dark locks, and gave a last look at them...[and] cut them round...⁵⁰

Similarly, Aileen Fisher writes that on her way to Chinon, Joan was "Dressed as a page, with her hair cut short,"⁵¹ and Tracy Christopher writes that "Joan exchanged her red peasant's dress for the clothes that a page (a boy training to be a knight) at the French court would wear: a black doublet, which is a close-fitting jacket, a short, dark gray tunic, and a black cap."⁵² In the above examples, the authors not only describe how Joan changed her dress, but continue to maintain the idea that she is still female and a girl. Madison's "girlish" sigh and Fisher and Christopher's reference to a "page" as opposed to a "knight" indicates that Joan's youth is still intact. Although she may be dressed differently, she is still a girl in boy's clothes.

⁵⁰ Madison, 153.

⁵¹ Aileen Fisher, *Jeanne D'Arc* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), 19.

⁵² Christopher, 24.

As stated above, writers of Joan biographies for children argue that she changed her clothes for two reasons: because it was more practical for her to do so or because God or her voices had wished it. In historical biographies, the authors use dialogue to inform the reader about Joan's decision. For example Madison writes that when Jean de Metz proposes that Joan wear men's clothes, "She had already given the matter thought, and perceived that if she were to live among soldiers she must change the dress she wore. So she answered promptly: 'I will willingly dress as a man. In truth, it would seem more seemly.'"⁵³ When Joan is at court and two noble women ask her about why she would not wear women's clothes, Madison writes:

"In the first place, your majesty," said the maiden simply, "'tis the only dress for fighting, which, though far from my desires or from the habits of my life, is henceforth to be my work; this being the case, I am constrained to live among men-at-arms, and such dress is therefore seemly."

"True," said the Queen thoughtfully; then presently she nodded an emphatic approval. "You are quite right, child. I see it. Others shall see it too."

"And too," spoke Jeanne smiling at the Queen, "the habit matters nothing after all. I must wear it to do as I am commanded."⁵⁴

Madison's dialogue shows the reader how the Queen understands why Joan would have to wear men's clothes, and reminds us that it was part of her mission to do so. As well, Madison's use of the words, "maiden" and "child," successfully keeps Joan as a young girl.

⁵³ Madison, 147-148.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 193.

Fisher also uses dialogue to explain why Joan wore men's clothes.

“Because among soldiers I must be a soldier,” she answered simply. “Even now, in prison, I am guarded by rough soldiers. If you put me in a church prison with women guards, I shall gladly wear the dress of a woman. All I have done has been by the command of God and His angels.”⁵⁵

Again we see that the author shows that Joan's choice of dress was not only out of necessity, but that God told her to do so. Fisher is also loosely basing Joan's dialogue on the historical Joan's own statements made in the Trial of Condemnation Transcript:

On Saturday, February 24th, asked if she desired a woman's habit, she answered: “If you will give me permission [to hear Mass], send me one. I will take it and go: otherwise I do not want one. I am content with this, since it is God's will that I should wear it.”⁵⁶

Biographers use straight text to explain Joan's cross-dressing and most likely take their explanations from the Redemption Trial records in which Jean de Metz and Durand Laxart state that it was under their encouragement that Joan changed into men's clothes. Ross writes that “Jean de Metz had encouraged her to wear the clothes of a boy on the long and dangerous journey. Her Voices had also told her she was to do this. The suggestion was a very sensible one, but it was to cost her dear.”⁵⁷ In this instance, Joan has permission not only from her male companions but from God as well. Ross is using the technique of foreshadowing to tell the reader that it would be this decision that would lead to her downfall. When Joan is captured, she writes,

⁵⁵ Fisher, 46.

⁵⁶ Barrett, 155-156.

⁵⁷ Ross, 36.

The other point of attack- and how unimportant it seems to us today- was the matter of her boy's clothes. This sensible outfit for a girl to wear who was riding every day, climbing walls, fighting, and living on equal terms with men became a special point of attack by her judges.⁵⁸

Not only does Ross return to her original argument that Joan's choice of dress was necessary, she clearly points out the ridiculousness of the issue during the trial. By saying that it would seem "unimportant" to the contemporary reader and that it was a "point of attack" to her judges, Ross places the medieval mentality at a disadvantage. As well, her referral to the clothes being for a "boy" and not a man maintains Joan's status as a young girl.

Similarly, Brooks writes that Joan's "faithful friend Jean de Metz" convinced her to put on men's clothes.⁵⁹ Taken directly from the Redemption Trial transcript, Brooks describes how Jean gave her his servant's shirt and leggings and provided her with a tunic, long hose and leather boots.⁶⁰ During the questioning in Poitiers, Brooks mentions that Church officials questioned Joan about her male clothes and reminded her that it was against the laws of the Church to dress in a manner that was against her sex. At this point in the narrative, Brooks does not provide a full explanation as to why Joan's cross dressing would have been an issue for the Church. She however explains that these officials did not spend too much time on it because they "agreed that it was the only sensible solution for a girl planning to lead soldiers to battle."⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 136.

⁵⁹ Brooks, 34.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 34. Please see Chapter Two for full citation of this testimony.

⁶¹ Brooks, 45.

Brooks is one of the few biographers who mentions the complications surrounding why Joan returned to her male dress after signing the recantation during her trial. Brooks writes that there are two versions. The first is described as an “act of treachery” when one night her guards put her male outfit in a bag and during the night removed her women’s clothes. Thus when Joan woke up and demanded her clothes and the guards refused to give her anything but the clothes that were left for her. The second, and this is the only writer who has chosen to mention this, is that Joan was raped by an English lord.⁶² Brooks’s decision to mention all historical arguments is a result of her research, which is plainly seen in the bibliography listed at the back of her text, and the fact that her audience is older. As well, in this instance, Brooks gives the reader the impression that we are talking of a young woman and not a girl because she refrains from using words like “boy,” “maiden,” and “girl.”

Susan Banfield takes a completely different approach when she discusses Joan’s decision to return to men’s clothes after the signing of her recantation. As we shall see further in Chapter Seven, Banfield is more concerned about constructing an heroic image of Joan, making Joan’s piety and faith a integral part of who she was. Banfield argues that Joan decides to return to men’s clothes when her voices tell her that she “damned” herself when she signed the recantation because she was afraid to die. Thus, in order to save her soul, Joan decides to return to men’s clothes.⁶³ Thus Banfield disregards all other historical arguments so that she can keep the idea of Joan’s faith and piety intact.

The construction of Joan’s virginity and cross-dressing in the historical literature is indeed complex. One has to keep in mind that the audience for whom the author is writing

⁶² Brooks, 144.

may influence how much information s/he may provide regarding the historical significance of the importance of her virginity and “decision” to wear men’s clothes. As we have seen, writers still have a problem dealing with Joan’s age. While some, like Ross and Madison, portray her as a young girl, others, like Brooks, prefer to maintain that she was a woman. The complexities of Joan’s age and her gender will be further reviewed in the following chapters when we discuss these influences on the construction of her persona and spirituality.

⁶³ Banfield, 97-99

Chapter 7

LEGEND OF KNIGHTS AND LADIES: JOAN OF ARC AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HERO IN CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The girls looked wistfully at the scarf or glove on his helmet, each one hoping that he who would someday wear her colours would be the bravest man that ever drew a sword. As for the boys, they could hardly wait for the day to come when they, too, could don glittering armor and sally forth into the world in quest of adventures.¹

In the above quotation from Eva March Tappan's children's history book, *When Knights Were Bold*, the gender roles of the boys and girls are clearly defined according to the popular ideas of medieval knighthood and chivalry discussed in Chapter Five. Tappan encourages readers to see themselves at the tournament by using illustrative language to place them inside the narrative. Tappan also assumes that this is how children would have experienced the medieval tournament, wishing and hoping that someday they would play the parts they had heard or read in chivalric romances.

The intricacy of the construction of the hero in contemporary children's literature is largely dependent on how the word is defined by society and the many assumptions that are made about who an historical figure may be. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s essay "On Leadership" introduces Susan Banfield's *Joan of Arc* because it is part of the *World Leader Past and Present* series. Schlesinger defines good leaders as those who have shaped history because

¹ Tappan, 1.

they were “effective in their own time.”² Schlesinger speaks of human rights and dignity and promotes a democratic society. He encourages the reader to understand that although no leader is perfect, “The signal benefit the great leaders confer is to embolden the rest of us to live according to our best selves.”³ It is my contention that the Schlesinger’s construction of the hero is representative of certain ideals that are present in contemporary children’s literature. As we will see, the “hero” is part of an ideal that has become such an integral part of western consciousness; that one has to take the pieces apart to find its worthiness.

This chapter will discuss the various ways in which the image of Joan conforms to our socially-accepted concepts of the hero. The first half will discuss the construction of the hero in contemporary children’s literature, with a particular focus on “the girl.” The second half will discuss how the medieval conceptions of the “knight” influence modern ideas about Joan.

As we explored in Chapter Three, children’s literary theorists are concerned about the construction of the hero in children’s biographies. I discussed the construction of the female hero and the possible influences of modern political and social ideas with Karleen Bradford. One of my main concerns was seeing if there was indeed a link between the political and cultural interests of the author and if this would influence the construction of the author’s protagonist. My discussions with Bradford caused me to reconsider many of the conclusions that I had made regarding the original intentions of children’s writers. The difference lies in the fact that there is a difference in approaches between the “academic” and the “writer.” While the academic begins with an outline and a question to answer, the author begins with a story or theme. Bradford says that although she can only speak for herself, “the story comes

² Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “On Leadership” in Susan Bantfield’s *Joan of Arc*, 8.

first with me. I want to tell a story that kids will be captivated by. All the rest is secondary.”⁴ When discussing why she wrote about Lady Jane Grey, Bradford wrote that her “primary motivation was to capture her story.”⁵

Bradford’s last book in her series on the Crusades focuses on the Muslim side of the conflict. Bradford says that even though she was writing it in the mid-90s with the Middle East in the news, the political situation at the time did not affect her story because “I was more concerned with the theme in general that all wars have two sides, that young people on both sides are affected equally, and that neither side is all right or all wrong.”⁶ Bradford believes that although she does not think that children’s authors write with the same political and moral ideology than they used to, she does think that the

writer’s own values and concerns will definitely be expressed in the books that they write. Sometimes unconsciously, sometimes deliberately. I choose to write about the effect that wars have on the innocent and the young whatever the cause of them, and I also try to show that there are usually two sides to every conflict...Perhaps what I am trying to say is that I feel the emphasis has shifted from teaching children morals, political rights and wrongs, to showing them what has happened, letting them know the facts. Perhaps we writers for children nowadays have more confidence in the ability of our young readers to come to their own conclusions and make their own decisions and value judgments?⁷

⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁴ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, 13 June 2002.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, 29 May 2002.

⁷ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, 10 June 2002.

There are other writers like Bradford who give the benefit of the doubt to their readers. In her biography about Joan of Arc, Rebecca Hazell tells the reader that “We will never know much about the real Joan. Was she a genius, a superstitious peasant, or a saint? Joan lived such a short time, changed history, and then died a terrible death.”⁸ It seems, however, that the majority of writers, specifically those who write the collections and series of biographies for younger audiences, prefer to overemphasize the specific talents of the historical figure in question. Although the following texts are not historical fiction, their style is similar to Bradford’s. In Kathleen Krull’s *Lives of Extraordinary Women: Rulers, Rebels (and What the Neighbors Thought)*, the author constructs a dichotomy between popular ideas about girls and women versus what they actually did. Krull writes that Joan thought of herself as more than a peasant girl and when asked “why she didn’t do more womanly duties, she [Joan] said, ‘There are plenty of other women to perform them.’”⁹ Although Chipman et. al.’s *Cool Women: The Thinking Girl’s Guide to the Hippest Women in History*, may want to take “our heroines down from their pedestals,” they still describe her as a “headstrong girl” who “was the most spectacular thing to hit Europe-prior or since.”¹⁰ Nancy Garden also realizes that she is working with limited resources, in *Dove and Sword: A Novel of Joan of Arc*, she wants to tell the reader about some of the “amazingly feisty women in Joan’s time,”¹¹ including Christine de Pisan. By the end of the novel, it seems that Garden just wanted to use any person she could to teach her reader about women in history. For example, Christine teaches the protagonist

⁸ Hazell, 30.

⁹ Krull, “A Blazing Light: Joan of Arc,” in *Lives of Extraordinary Women: Rulers, Rebels (and What The Neighbors Thought)*, 19.

¹⁰ Chipman, et. al. . np, 52.

¹¹ Garden, xiii.

Gabrielle how to read the works of Hildegard von Bingen. As we will see, the goal of most historical literature for children continues to be the creation of role models for young readers.

Bradford thought that the rise of interest in women in history is due to the lack of “press” before now.¹² She says that

All my female characters are strong characters, but I don’t think they are anachronistically feminist. I firmly believe that there have been strong women characters all throughout the ages. A strong character and unwillingness to accept unfairness is not a modern characteristic.¹³

She does admit, however, that the girl heroine has changed over the years. “They don’t have to be goody goody twoshoes anymore. They are allowed to have faults, to make mistakes, to be, as one reviewer called one of my heroines, ‘obnoxious.’ ”¹⁴ When I asked her to clarify, she said that “girls used to be more passive” and credits Nancy Drew and Anne of Green Gables for “breaking the mold,” from Heidi and Rebecca [of Sunnybrook Farm] who were angelic little girls.¹⁵

Another element of this argument, which has been discussed briefly by children’s literary critics, is the tomboy. The “Tomboy” chooses to stay away from dresses and skirts, plays sports and prefers the company of boys. Like Joan’s decision to become a knight, the girl who chooses to be the “tomboy” does not hide her sex, but is able to live in the male sphere. In her article, “‘I am no lady!’ The Tomboy in Children’s Fiction,” Linda S. Levstik

¹² Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, 29 June 2002.

¹³ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, 29 May 2002.

¹⁴ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, 22 July, 2002.

¹⁵ Karleen Bradford, interview by author, email discussion, Montreal/Owen Sound, Canada, 24 July, 2002.

looks at the emergence of this literary convention during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Levstik claims that Louisa May Alcott's Jo March paved the way for other "tomboys" because she broke the convention of the saintly child.¹⁶ The rise of the first wave women's movement and suffrage confused authors who seemed unsure of the female role in society. Levstik concludes that the dichotomy between the "saintly lady" and the "tomboy" continued to appear in children's fiction. By the 1930s, admiration grew for strong healthy women who were capable of enriching an economically limited life.¹⁷ By the 1940s, the tomboy heroine had it all, career, marriage and children as there always had to be a male supporting their efforts. As we will see, this tomboy image is still prevalent in today's literature and Joan's transition to a knight is much like being a tomboy in children's literature.

One of the techniques that is most often used in fictional biographies to create a strong female hero is the first person narrative. Renee R. Curry explores this in "I Ain't No Friggin' Wimp: The Girl 'I' Narrative in Contemporary Fiction." Curry argues that when authors use the "I" narrative, they are giving girls strong accurate voices. Curry cites writers such as Jermaine Kincaid and Dorothy Allison who write about strong young women who are passionate about themselves as victims of patriarchy.¹⁸ Writers of children's fictional biographies tend to use the first person narrative and project similar kinds of personality traits as described by Curry. Sharon Stewart's, *The Dark Tower*, Carolyn Meyer's, *Mary, Bloody Mary* and *Beware, Princess Elizabeth*, and Barbara Dana's, *Young Joan*, use the first person narrative to provide an inner dialogue with their historical protagonist and the reader. Marie Thérèse

¹⁶ Linda S. Levstik, "I am no lady!" The Tomboy in Children's Fiction." *Children's Literature in Education*, 14, 1 (1983): 14.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁸ Ibid., 97.

Charlotte de France's inner dialogue in *The Dark Tower* describes her disapproval of her surroundings and her dismay at being a girl.

Antoine and I had been playmates when we were little, but he had pretty much ignored me for years now, saying I was too young to be any fun, and a girl into the bargain. But recently he had begun to seek me out and pay me compliments. I didn't like it much. I suspected his papa had put him up to it. Maman said that Oncle Charles would like it very much if Antoine and I got married some day. Too bad! If I got married at all, it would be to a great king in some foreign country, not to boring old Antoine.¹⁹

In this monologue, the reader can see Marie's distaste for the social responsibilities expected of her. As well, she shows how disappointed she is that her childhood friend would no longer play with her because she is a girl and the only way he would speak with her is if he was courting her. Thus, Stewart uses the "I" narrative to describe her protagonist's anger towards her family and society.

Similarly, in *Mary, Bloody Mary*, Meyer describes Mary's resentment towards her father, King Henry VIII, for disowning her.

As my father ranted on, I kept my face as blank as a stone. Inside, however, I was in seething turmoil. *How he lies!* I thought, my anger boiling, though I dared say nothing. I knew enough to know that everything depended upon my silence and composure.²⁰

In the introduction of *Beware, Princess Elizabeth*, Meyer uses the same technique to describe Elizabeth's and Mary's precarious political situation as women. "Our father at times adored us

¹⁹ Stewart, 18.

²⁰ Meyer, *Mary, Bloody Mary*, 89.

but often shunned us and occasionally nearly forgot us. We were not the sons he desired.”²¹

In this instance, Meyer has the strength of vast amounts of historical information regarding this particular point in history. However, she freely uses the first person narrative in order to show the complicated relationships between the two sisters and their father.

In *Young Joan*, Barbara Dana uses the first person narrative to give Joan a sense of modern morality when she says:

In our town the law was that the wife was part of the household, belonging to the husband, and had to be “kept in line.” This is how they said it. The husband could beat his wife, but he could not kill her, a small difference at that point, if you ask me!²²

Not only does Dana use modern lingo like “kept in line,” but she is presuming that Joan would be aware of this law and disapproves of it. The above examples show that Curry is correct in determining that contemporary authors use the “I” narrative to give the protagonist a strong voice. As we have seen, this technique has also found its way into contemporary children’s literature as a way to construct a stronger female heroine.

Another aspect of “the Girl” is the connection between her body and how it can be used as a vehicle for social mobility. In her article, “The Battleground of the Adolescent Girl’s Body,” Brenda Boudreau argues that in contemporary fiction, the girl protagonist’s self-identity becomes closely linked with her physical body. The girl’s obstacle is that she desires

²¹ Meyer, *Beware, Princess Elizabeth*, 1.

²² Dana, *Young Joan*, 4.

autonomy and agency, but has to reconcile herself to the demands of a socially proscribed gendered identity which eventually leads to a physical disembodiment of the self.²³

As we saw in the previous chapter, Joan's body is linked to her virginity and transvestism. In this chapter, we will explore how historians link her transvestism to her military career and public image. By becoming a public figure, Joan had to conform to ideas about knighthood as well as perhaps accept that she lived in the foggy mist between what it meant to be male or female in her society. As we have seen, one of the reasons Joan decided to dress like a man was because it was safer. Indeed, by changing her clothes, Joan experienced the autonomy described by Boudreau. Yet, by doing so, Joan found herself imprisoned by what it meant in her society to be a transvestite. As well, Joan's social status was escalated when she became a knight.

It is important, however, to outline some of the other theories regarding Joan's transvestism and how this influences her status as a knight in the historiography. Vern Bullough argues that female cross-dressing is "... motivated by the desire for the social advantages of men."²⁴ Caroline Bynum, similarly, claims that "... cross-dressing for women was primarily a practical device."²⁵ But there was more to Joan's problem than just picking up a weapon: she had challenged the social class categories of medieval society. Knighthood in the Middle Ages was something a man was born into, not something to which anyone could

²³ Brenda Boudreau, "The Battleground of the Adolescent Girl's Body," in Ruth Saxton ed., *The Girl: Constructions of the Girl in Contemporary Fiction by Women*, 43.

²⁴ Crane, 308.

²⁵ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 291.

aspire. By changing her station, Joan personified social mobility because, as Marina Warner states:

she accepted neither her peasant birth, nor her female condition, none of the limitations society had provided for her circumscription. Instead, in an age of chivalry, she assumed its most successful guise and dressed herself and comported herself like a knight born to rule.²⁶

Edwards suggests that somehow Joan was so aware of the gender constructs of her day, that she purposely created an “. . . ‘androgynous identity’ by dressing herself in male clothing and symbols.”²⁷ She stresses that by “. . . donning male dress and equipping herself with knightly symbols, Joan was aligning herself with the powerful elements of her society.”²⁸

Crane, however, is not interested in how Joan’s “kighthood” influenced her social mobility. If social mobility was her only reason for using male dress, argues Crane, then it does not explain Joan’s military career. Crane states that Joan’s testimony about her military actions was not typical of most masculine warriors from her period. She points out that Joan was uncomfortable with killing when Joan said that she approved of the sword because it was ideal for “...good whacks and good wallops.”²⁹ Most accounts of medieval knighthood stress the amount of pillaging and looting that was a major component of military life. Joan’s behaviour was contrary to many of these characteristics of medieval warfare.

²⁶ Warner, 160.

²⁷ Edwards, 3.

²⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁹ Crane, 309.

Kelly DeVries, on the other hand, mentions in his article, “A Woman as Leader of Men: Joan of Arc’s Military Career,” that unlike most of her contemporary captains, “Joan had set a moral tone to her army that included no blasphemy, gambling, looting or prostitution.”³⁰ He also argues however that Joan had so many followers because her legendary military career is quite similar to that of mercenary captains whose exploits were turned into myths after their deaths.³¹ The emotional testimonies of men given at her rehabilitation trial indicate that Joan was remembered fondly by her troops.³² Although he mentions that Joan’s contemporaries thought she was a ‘natural soldier’, he argues that it was her religious virtue that drew men to her because she offered them religious salvation.

The complex merger of Joan’s military career and the construction of her as a tomboy in contemporary children’s literature takes on many forms. Joan is often seen as a strong-willed and active woman who can do whatever is asked of her in the male world. Her humanity is what distinguishes her from the other men, which is why she will often cry over the dead. In the fictionalized biographies in the Politics of Assent category there is often the conversation in which Joan discusses her desire to play or fight like a boy. Typical of the tomboy image, as an adult, Joan shows herself a competent leader, initially fighting and then gaining the respect of Charles and her colleagues in war. Again, this is part of the polemic of Joan’s life in the biographies and fictional biographies in the Politics of Assent and Advocacy categories. In both instances, authors writing in these categories tend to show that Joan is being patriotic or pious.

³⁰ Kelly DeVries, “A Woman A Leader of Men: Joan of Arc’s Military Career,” Wheeler and Wood, ed., *Fresh V’erdicts on Joan of Arc*, 11.

³¹ Ibid., 4.

³² Ibid., 5.

Lucy Foster Madison's *Joan of Arc: Warrior Maid*, sets up the reader with the understanding that Joan will one day seek to fight in battle. This is typical dialogue that can be found in one way or another in most of the fictional biographies on Joan. In this conversation, a boy wants to be a knight and Joan responds:

“Yes,” she cried eagerly. “’Tis what should be done. Oh! I would like to go too. Why do they stay in their own country?”
“You?” Colin began to laugh. “You are a girl, Jeanne D’Arc, and girls go not to war. They cannot fight.”
“I could.” A resolute light came into the maid’s eyes, and her lips set in a firm line.³³

In Aileen Fisher’s *Jeanne D’Arc*, when Joan’s brothers return with bruises after fighting with the Burgundian boys across the river, Joan says, “Next time let me go too. I can fight!” and her father responded with, “Quiet Jeannette! What kind of talk is that for a girl? Keep your mind on your spinning and tending the sheep. Fighting is for men.”³⁴ In another instance when Joan discovers the political situation in France, Fisher writes the following dialogue:

“Then why doesn’t someone rise up and unite France, Papa?” Jeanne would ask. “Why doesn’t someone rise up and make France a great nation?” She wished she were a boy like her brothers, so she could someday fight for France as Jean and Pierre planned to do.³⁵

In another twist, Nancy Garden’s protagonist, Gabrielle, a tomboy herself, experiences many of the things usually attributed to Joan in other books. Gabrielle says at the beginning of

³³ Madison, 45.

³⁴ Fisher, 9.

³⁵ Ibid., 5.

her story that, “My mother did not entirely approve of my playing with boys and some of the boys did not either, but she indulged me on the rare occasions when she did not need me.”³⁶ Gabrielle prefers to spend time with Joan’s brother Pierre rather than spending her “life spinning and cooking.”³⁷

Michael Morpurgo writes that Joan told Belami, her sparrow, that when she said to her father that “given half a chance (and if I weren’t a girl, of course) I’d go off and be a soldier, and I’d drive the English out of France once and for all. He looked at me hard and suddenly became very angry. ‘Don’t you ever speak of such a thing, Joan,’ he said.”³⁸ It is evident that the fictional biographies on Joan use a standard formula of dialogue to show the reader that Joan had the desire to fight and carried some of the characteristics that are found in the literary “tomboy.” From the examples above, it is also clear that writers in the Politics of Assent category also argue that Joan’s desire comes from her sense of patriotic duty.

The strength of Joan’s leadership during her military career is reminiscent of the historiography discussed above and the images of knighthood discussed in Chapter Five. As we will see in the following chapter, much of Joan’s image was based on the idea that she was on a divine mission. This chapter will discuss her physical description and the response of her contemporaries to her military career. The symbiosis of her knighthood and her desire to lead a moral army is present in the primary sources. As well, the illustrators’ use of medieval images helps to convey the image of a warrior.

³⁶ Garden, 7.

³⁷ Ibid., 9.

³⁸ Morpurgo, 28.

Fictional biographies of Joan from the Politics of Assent and Politics of Advocacy categories use physical description to convey the image of Joan's knighthood. Fisher writes that it was because Joan rode "her white horse in her shining armor, holding her standard firmly before her," that the French soldiers had the faith to "fight as they never fought before."³⁹ Fisher also discusses how Joan pressured her soldiers to say their prayers and stop swearing; which they did.⁴⁰ Other soldiers said that the reason they fought alongside her was because "above all, she liked a good fight. Never forget that. And she goes into battle with such faith and courage, our own hearts beat faster just to watch her."⁴¹

Madison writes that Joan's strength of character helped to convince her male colleagues to take her seriously. "Mad though they deemed the maiden, the men-at-arms and their Captain were impressed by the girl's gravity and noble bearing as she spoke."⁴² Whereas Morpurgo writes about how Joan's behaviour around her soldiers compelled them to treat her with respect.

Joan slept every night in her chain armor to get used to it. She ate with her soldiers and prayed with her soldiers, too...She let it be known that because her army was fighting in the name of God, there would be no swearing, no looting, no womanizing...She was fierce in this and would brook no argument about it from them nor from anyone else. Indeed, as they were all soon to discover, this seemingly sweet natured, simple country girl, once roused, could be fearsome in anger.⁴³

³⁹ Fisher, 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁴¹ Ibid., 40.

⁴² Madison, 107.

⁴³ Morpurgo, 59.

In the Politics of Advocacy category, Garden constructs a conversation between her protagonist Gabrielle and one of Joan's colleagues to show how her followers respected her. "Your Jeanette is too fierce for them, since she wishes to lead an army to crown the dauphin, and to fight! Though she is a woman, it seems to me she has a soldier's mind."⁴⁴ When she sees Joan for the first time after she has changed her clothes, Gabrielle observes, "She leaped from her horse, kicking aside the stirrups that encased her booted feet, and moved, awkwardly in her armor, clanking, toward us."⁴⁵ In this instance, Garden gives Joan a more human characteristic. She may have a soldier's mind, but she had to get used to her new station. Hence, fictional biographies that fall into both categories use similar medieval images with the understanding that Joan had that certain natural leadership quality that made people want to follow her.

Biographies from the Politics of Assent category continue to excite the same kind of imagery. Poole writes that Joan's "armor shone like silver, and she carried a little ax. A mighty host of captains and soldiers went with her- for now everyone wanted to fight with her, for France and the King."⁴⁶ When Joan was hit by an arrow, Poole writes that "She was frightened and cried bitterly...She undid her armor and stanchd the wound herself and then went on fighting."⁴⁷ This story, found in the Rehabilitation Trial transcript, shows Joan's bravery and willingness to fight.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Garden, 70.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁶ Poole, *Joan of Arc*, 17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁸ Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 90.

Writers in this category also play with the popular notion that fighting and riding a horse came quite naturally to Joan. Nancy Wilson Ross fictionalizes an event in which the Duke of Alençon teaches Joan how to ride and fight and is astonished to find how skillfully she is able to do these things.⁴⁹ In the Redemption trial Alençon speaks of Joan's skill and says that:

but in matter of war she was very expert, in the management of the lance as in the drawing up of the army in battle order and in preparing the artillery. And at that all marvelled, that she could act in so prudent and well-advised a fashion in the matter of war as might a captain of twenty or thirty years of experience have done...⁵⁰

From this quotation, it is clear that Alençon does not say that he taught Joan, but admired her skill. Thus Ross creates a scenario in which he could discover Joan's skill in another context other than when she is in battle.

Similarly, Christopher paraphrases Alençon's testimony and writes that the Duke is surprised that Joan

seemed such an expert in war. She could array armies for battle and find the best places for artillery. Yet she never had any military training.⁵¹

Banfield also describes how the men in Joan's command loved her despite the fact that she made them go to mass and would not condone poor behaviour. In addition, Banfield writes that Joan truly loved the soldiers as well and preferred being in their company. "She reveled in

⁴⁹ Ross, 54.

⁵⁰ Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witness*, 63.

⁵¹ Christopher, 37.

their kidding and roughhousing and telling of tall tales. In fact nowhere did she feel happier than in the company of soldiers. Joan was good but she was not prissy.”⁵² The last sentence is reminiscent of the tomboy character because like most tomboys Joan prefers the company of boys. Although she provides the “feminine” or “mothering” touch, Banfield makes it clear that this did not mean that Joan was not tough.

In the Politics of Advocacy category, being aware of the historical debates surrounding Joan’s image, Polly Schoyer Brooks’s biography does not concentrate on making Joan into the chivalric figure. Rather, she describes Joan’s attire and the fact that she preferred her personal standard because she did not want to kill anyone. One of the popular arguments is that Joan never killed anyone in battle, but protected herself. Brooks, however, throws the word “chivalric” around as if the reader would have a fairly good idea of what that meant. When describing LaHire falling under Joan’s “spell,” Brooks says that he was “more of a bandit than a perfect chivalric knight.”⁵³ Further on, when discussing the political reasons for fighting in Orléans, Brooks argues that the French considered the attack on the village as a “breach of chivalry because its rightful Duke was being held prisoner in the Tower of London and was not on hand to defend his own town.”⁵⁴ Thus, Brooks uses standard language to maintain certain images of the middle ages for the reader.

Lastly, the illustrations of a book will also help to maintain certain ideas about Joan’s knightly image. While Brooks, Banfield and Christopher use paintings, sculptures and stills from the various films based on Joan’s life, Diane Stanley chooses to illustrate her story. Many

⁵² Banfield, 35.

⁵³ Brooks, 48-49.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 53.

collections of biographies and the fictionalized biographies by Madison and Morpurgo also use this technique. The wealth of information found in these images is too abundant to discuss here, but it is important to recognize the importance of these illustrations. Thus, I will briefly look at pictorial representations of Joan in Diane Stanley's *Joan of Arc*.

Stanley drew the illustrations for her book and thus one can conclude that she had full control over what kind of image she wanted to create. In the tradition of medieval illuminated manuscripts, Stanley puts borders around her paintings, accentuating the top of the pictures. She also draws her people with the same slim, almost two-dimensional perspective that was popular during the Middle Ages. If we compare the following figures to the Limbourg Brother's *Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry: Mai (May)* (1412-1416) we will notice that these painting are similarly constructed. Like the nobleman centered in the middle of the painting, Stanley also situates Joan in the center when she and her army are being welcomed into Orléans. Not only is everyone in the picture incredibly clean and well dressed, but Joan is the only figure who does not have a helmet. She sits solidly on her grey horse which is fully dressed in splendid robes, and holds her sword high above her head. Her soldiers look on with admiration and respect, while her equal seems a little worried as to what will occur. The people of Orléans cheer and smile and a woman holds up her baby for Joan to see. The lack of gender definition in this picture is also telling. Joan's uniform not only protects her, but hides all aspects of her sex. By removing the helmet and showing her hair, Stanley maintains that Joan is still female.

The next painting shows Joan fighting with the English. It is unusual to see Joan actually fighting in combat. Normally, she is described being on the sidelines and as Brooks

stated above, Joan preferred her standard because she did not want to kill anyone. The timeline of this illustration is after Joan was wounded by an English arrow and pulled it out herself. Joan is not, however, striking the English soldier (who seems to be smiling sarcastically to himself), but protecting herself from his shield and holds her banner in the other hand. Once again, she is the only one without a helmet, distinguishing herself as female and separate from the other soldiers. As well, Joan is exactly the same height as the rest of the men fighting, which stresses her equality among them.

Stanley's illustrations use all of the images popular in the medieval knighthood tradition: well groomed and dressed horses, gallant knights in full uniform and the tournament. Joan is always strong, never waning under pressure, with sword in hand; even after she is wounded she continues to fight on. Without much explanation, the illustrations depict Joan as a strong leader commanding the respect of her soldiers. As well, by showing her full head of hair, Stanley is able to show Joan's maneuverability within the gender codes of her society.

The construction of the gallant hero in children's literature is complex. Not only are authors using popular character constructs, like the tomboy, they are interested in staying close to the idea of hero worship and appropriate role models for their readers. Joan is easily manipulated into this genre of literature because she is a girl who challenged the norms of her society and effectively did something useful in the political sphere. Like the heroic image discussed at the beginning of this chapter by Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in all of the literature, no matter if it falls under the Politics of Assent or Advocacy categories, or if it is defined as a biography, fictional biography or historical fiction, the image of Joan as the tomboy who grew

up to be a knight remains the same. The next chapter will describe how these authors use Joan's spirituality to complete the heroic girl image in the historical consciousness.

Chapter 8

HAVING A DIVINE PURPOSE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF JOAN OF ARC'S SPIRITUALITY

They said I jumped to kill myself, but this is not true. It is not my place. God decides when I am to leave this earth, and only God. Who am I to have a better idea? I jumped because I wanted to go and help all the poor people still fighting and giving their lives to save France.

My Saints told me not to jump. I did wrong to disobey them. They knew best, as they always do.¹

The above quotation is characteristic of how Joan's spirituality is interpreted by authors of contemporary children's literature. On one hand, Joan's voices motivate her to achieve her goals, while on the other; they give her actions a sense of divine purpose. When Joan does something controversial, like attempting suicide, the author will show that it was solely Joan's decision and not because her voices told her to do so. This chapter will discuss how Joan's spirituality is constructed in the primary sources. The first half will discuss the nature of her voices and how they are interpreted in the historiography and in children's literature. The second half will discuss the various ways Merlin's prophecy is used in the primary sources.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the "tomboy" image is a major part of the characterization of Joan in contemporary children's literature. The other and equally important component to this characterization is the "good girl" protagonist. The "good girl" is one who not only does what she is told, but whose actions are for the greater good. Joan's

¹ Dana, xi.

spirituality is used in the primary sources as a way to demonstrate her piety and self-sacrifice for the greater good. Joan's voices or saints are often used by writers as one of the reasons she decides to save France. Joan chooses to go because she is listening to her Saints and thus she does not make this decision on her own. The other component to this "good girl" construction is the incorporation of Merlin's prophecy.

One of the consistent characteristics in medieval women's hagiography is the mystic claiming that her words come from a divine origin. Shulamith Shahar asserts that female writers used this technique because for female mystics, communication with God was both recognized and honoured by their male contemporaries. She cites Thomas Aquinas who argued that even though a woman's biology forbade her from receiving the sacrament or ordination, because her soul was the same as a man's, it was plausible for a woman to receive the gift of prophecy. Thus, Shahar believes that feminine mysticism was so universally accepted that it allowed women who wished to pursue writing a way to do so.²

André Vauchez argues that the "richness of her [Joan's] personality and the impressions she left on the collective memory of the French" is because she was part of a group of politically active female prophets during the Late Middle Ages.³ Vauchez states that between 1350 and 1450, the religious climate in Europe was in such a state of disarray that women were encouraged to speak out.⁴ According to Vauchez, there were three women during or right before Joan's lifetime that were active in the public sphere and were inspired by prophetic missions. Through her revelation, Constance of Rabastens claimed that Christ told

² Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate* (New York: Routledge, 1983), 24.

³ André Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices* ed. Daniel E. Bornstein trans. Margery J. Schneider (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 256.

her that Urban VI was the authentic pope and not Clement VII.⁵ Jeanne Marie of Maillé (1331-1414), an aristocrat from the Loire Valley, predicted in 1395 that Charles VI would come to Tours.⁶ In 1398 she went to Paris and met with Charles VI and also spent a week with Isabelle of Bavaria (where apparently she chastised her for her excessive luxuries.) The third woman was Marie Robine or Marie the Gascon (†1399) who in 1398 had a vision in which a voice told her to go see Charles VI and “tell him to achieve the unity of the Church.”⁷ Although she never had an audience with Charles VI, she was admitted to see Isabelle who in turn gave Marie a message for Benedict XIII, telling him to resign.⁸ Vauchez concludes that the reason that Joan was able to see Charles VII was because there had been a precedent set out by Charles VI. As well, Joan’s claims that her mission was from God was also popularly accepted by her contemporaries because other women had used similar arguments during the Great Schism.

Conversely, Marina Warner explains that it is a mistake to place Joan within the tradition of mystical prophets found in the fourteenth century because her profile does not fulfill all of the basic requirements. According to her, “The role of the prophet needs support, not exactly from the church’s institutions, but from other traditions of goodness within Christianity: renunciation of the world in a convent, of the flesh in a celibate marriage.”⁹ Warner cites Bridget of Sweden who decided after her husband died in her thirties, never to marry again and later settled in a convent. Joan’s mystical visions, however, commanded her

⁴Ibid., 256.

⁵ Ibid., 257.

⁶ Ibid., 258.

⁷ Ibid., 258-259.

⁸ Ibid., 259.

to be socially active. By choosing a public life, such as the military, Joan contradicted the social norms of mysticism that demanded withdrawal from the public sphere.

In his book, *Joan of Arc and Richard III: Sex, Saints and Government in the Middle Ages*, Charles T. Wood argues that there are difficulties inherent “in trying to explain in purely human terms phenomena that many have long believed to have been divine.”¹⁰ Wood has psychoanalyzed the origins of Joan’s voices and argues that her testimony gives insight “into the process by which a young girl was transformed into the savior of her land.” Wood claims that because she heard these voices at the age of thirteen, they were a result of her adolescence.

Suddenly faced by the responsibility of adulthood, their own awkwardness and lack of self-esteem frequently intensified by parental assurances...many are those who have sought relief in the consoling counsel of dolls, pets and inner voices.¹¹

Wood also makes a vague claim that Joan’s experiences resembled those of other religious women, yet makes no indication to whom he is referring.¹² Certainly, there were many women in the Middle Ages, such as Catherine of Siena, who took a vow of celibacy at a young age, but there is no proof that this necessarily coincided with their adolescence. Nevertheless, Wood “hesitantly” uses Erik Erikson’s stages of development in order to argue that Joan went through a “. . . series of identity crises and that the siege of Orléans was but the last such crisis, the one out of which a strong sense of identity began to emerge.”¹³

⁹ Warner, 87.

¹⁰ Charles T. Wood, *Joan of Arc & Richard III: Sex, Saints and Government in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 143.

¹¹ Ibid., 131.

¹² Ibid., 131.

¹³ Ibid., 133.

Wood argues that Joan's identification with her voices is crucial for understanding the effect she had upon her contemporaries. He points out the coincidences between Joan's voices and popular religious culture, by analysing who her angelic voices might have been. It was only after hearing the voices three times that Joan said that she could identify them as St. Michael, St. Margaret and St. Catherine. He suggests that if Joan had begun her quest in the fall of 1428, in response to her flight to Neufchâteau, then the celebration dates of these three saints that same year are "far too coincidental"; St. Michael on September 29, St. Margaret on October 8 and St. Catherine on November 25.¹⁴ Wood argues that the attributes and problems that these saints experienced would have been central to the sermons held on these days. Joan, who was in conflict about her own maturity, could identify with them.¹⁵ Her recent experiences made it clear why the fall of 1428 would have had a tremendous impact upon her thinking.¹⁶ For example, like Margaret's parents, Joan's parents tried to keep her safe by imposing very strict guidelines. As well, her fear of their disapproval was the reason she left Domrémy without telling them.¹⁷ Joan, therefore, could have easily named these saints in her testimony because they were part of her reality.

Wood argues that the popular literature and mythology about these three saints also parallel Joan's statements and actions. In *The Song of Roland*, St. Michael is portrayed as a "guardian and patron who will save the Franks from the worst of their adversaries."¹⁸ The story of St. Margaret, a self-proclaimed virgin who dresses up as a monk, coincides with Joan's

¹⁴ Ibid., 133.

¹⁵ Ibid., 134.

¹⁶ Ibid., 136.

¹⁷ Ibid., 134.

¹⁸ Ibid., 134.

choice to change her dress from a peasant girl to that of a soldier.¹⁹ St. Catherine's tale of an eighteen year old girl who goes to the King in order to fight the beasts that had been sent to destroy her city, has the heroic quality that Joan could have understood in her own quest for France.²⁰ Wood suggests that St. Catherine had the most profound impact on Joan, because like her, she had not only rejected marriage but spoke to her leader with the same confidence that "... Joan was going to have to speak to hers."²¹

The problem with this analysis is that we will never know how aware Joan was of these popular stories; as Wood himself says: "Given the uncertain nature of the evidence, through, it is impossible to say just how much she knew of them prior to her arrival at Vaucouleurs and Chinon."²² He outlines what he perceives as three clear "facts." One, that Joan's voices appear to have never recommended a course of action that had not been suggested by some other human agent; two, that the voices, with the exception of her attempted suicide, never gave her advice that proved unavailing; and three, that when human expectations far exceeded Joan's capacity, the voices fell silent.²³ Wood, therefore, believes that "in her own person, she was far from being a prophet or a mystic,"²⁴ and that her explanations of her mystical visions were a product of her popular religious culture.

Karen Sullivan argues in her article, "'I do not Name to You the Voice of St. Michael': The Identification of Joan of Arc's Voices" that although the records do indicate that Joan

¹⁹ Ibid., 134-135.

²⁰ Ibid., 135.

²¹ Ibid., 137.

²² Ibid., 138.

²³ Ibid., 143.

²⁴ Ibid., 145.

called her voices by the names St. Michael, St. Margaret and St. Catherine, she believes that upon a second investigation into the testimony, these saints are named as a result of Joan's interrogation. Sullivan proves that Joan's inquisitors had a specific agenda in mind when they began to question her about her voices. She successfully argues that "the potential of an interrogation to create the very truth that it is purporting to represent" is quite possible in Joan's trial.²⁵ In other words, the examiners asked Joan questions expecting a specific response, and this is what they got. The root of Sullivan's argument stems from the hypothesis that the men of Rouen were most likely familiar with Thomas Aquinas' definition of angelic beings which claimed that they were not vague messengers of God, but distinct beings with the capacity for sin.²⁶ Thus, if medieval religious belief regarding angels was based upon Aquinas' writings, then Joan's angels were something that could and should have been defined and specified.

Sullivan makes the leap from voices to "angelic beings" perhaps because within the medieval world, the voices in one's head could be attributed to angels. Although St. Michael is an angelic being, St. Margaret and St. Catherine are not. Once Joan claimed that she had heard the "voices from God," the clerks would have wanted her to verify who exactly these 'voices' were.²⁷ Sullivan believes that the inquisitors did not think to question Joan's "inner experience of her voices," and therefore argues that the depositions that we have cannot provide a full account as to what they may have meant for her. Sullivan argues that it would seem unusual

²⁵ Karen Sullivan, "'I do not Know You the Voices of St. Michael': The Identification of Joan of Arc's Voices" in Wheeler and Wood, ed., *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, 104.

²⁶ Ibid., 88.

²⁷ Ibid., 85.

for the judges to have even considered Joan's inner experience because the church defined angelic beings as something distinct from how they were seen by Joan.

Writers of children's biographies in the Politics of Advocacy and Politics of Assent categories imply that there was a connection between Joan's experiences and her voices. Diane Stanley writes that "There was a statue of Saint Margaret in her parish church. St. Catherine was the patron saint of the village of Maxey, just across the river."²⁸ However, right before this, she explains that upon the third time of seeing these visions, Joan knew who they were. Although Stanley is not explicitly saying so, perhaps she is attempting to place some doubt in the reader's mind by explaining that it is plausible that Joan could only identify her voices upon seeing them a third time because her subconscious made the connections for her.

Other explanations are put forth by authors of historical fiction. Lucy Foster Madison says that Joan knew who these saints were because St. Margaret was highly honoured in France and was the patron saint of "...flax, spinners, nurses, vellum dresses and of bleachers of wool;"²⁹ whereas St. Catherine had a church in Maxey. Similarly, Barbara Dana mentions that Joan particularly loved the statue of St. Catherine in her church and would go and pray to it often. For a discerning reader, therefore, it would make perfect sense that Joan saw St. Margaret or St. Catherine because they were the Saints closest to her surroundings.

The characterization of Joan as the "good girl" is an important component to the construction of her spirituality in the primary sources. In all three genres, Joan's childhood is characterized by her devotion. This is a result of the testimony from some of Joan's childhood

²⁸ Stanley, 8.

²⁹ Madison, 73.

friends during the Rehabilitation Trial in which they would often speak of her spirituality. Her friend Hauviette (who is often found in the fictional biographies) states that

Joan was a good, simple and sweet-natured girl, she went often and of her own will to church the sacred places and often she was ashamed because of people remarking how she went so devoutly to church.³⁰

Another friend of Joan's, Colin (who also appears in the fictional biographies sometimes as a love interest) testified:

Joan, from what I saw, was a good, simple, sweet-natured girl of good behaviour. She went readily to church...went to the hermitage of Notre Dame de Bermont, bearing candles. She was very devout towards God and the Blessed Virgin, so much so that I myself, who was young then, and other young men, teased her.³¹

Tracy Christopher writes that "Joan's parents raised her to be a pious Catholic," and, true to the testimony found in the Rehabilitation Trial, says that "people of the village remembered that Joan went often to church to confession."³² Similarly, Nancy Wilson Ross says that it must have been difficult for Joan to keep it a secret that she had these visions from her friends Hauviette and Mengette because she "was a very religious girl and she had come to believe that the Voices were sent from God."³³ Polly Schoyer Brooks also writes about how

³⁰ Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and Her Witnesses*, 17.

³¹ Ibid., 18.

³² Christopher, 16-17.

³³ Ross, 8.

“one of her friends teased her for being too pious and told how Joan, out working in the fields, often kneeled to pray when she heard the church bells ringing.”³⁴

This element is also popular in the fictional biographies. Madison constructs a conversation between Mengette and Hauviette where they discuss Joan’s piety.

“Jeanne is so religious,” [Mengette] commented with a shrug of her shoulders. “She cannot even play without speaking of God. I wish that she were not so good. And you wish it too, do you not, Hauviette?”

“Wish that Jeanne D’Arc would not be so good?” exclaimed Hauviette, who was a staunch friend of Jeanne’s. “Why, she would not be Jeanne D’Arc if she were not good.”³⁵

An important aspect of Joan’s piety is her skill in recognizing her voices as Saints when she first sees them, which is in direct opposition to the original testimony. Christopher selects particular fragments from Joan’s testimony to prove that Joan knew who her voices were upon hearing them for the first time. Similarly, Stanley’s description of Joan’s first visions was that she saw these visions three times, and that upon the third she knew that it was St. Michael, St. Catherine and St. Margaret. Stanley makes it seem that Joan knew who these saints were immediately when she writes: “she saw through the light that it was St. Michael, the Archangel.”³⁶ Perhaps children’s biographers of Joan choose this technique because it is easier to name the saints first off, and then try to explain later who they were. It also makes the story more believable if Joan, being so divinely blessed, recognized a saint when she saw one.

³⁴ Brooks, 18.

³⁵ Madison, 14.

³⁶ Stanley, 8.

Other biographers, such as Josephine Poole and Brooks, stay a little closer to the trial transcript in which Joan recognizes the holiness but not the names of her voices. Poole writes that when Joan first heard the voices in the garden one morning, she was afraid until “she understood that these were voices from Heaven.”³⁷ Brooks recognizes the historical debates surrounding the reasons for Joan’s voices, argues that she was a “healthy, normal girl, full of common sense...Her visions were more of this world than of the hereafter, and she made no special claims to supernatural powers.”³⁸ When Brooks writes about Joan’s initial reaction to her voices, she says that it was only much later during her “trial for witchcraft,” that Joan said that one of the voices was St. Michael.³⁹

Similarly, in the fictional biographies, when Madison discusses Joan’s initial meeting with her voices:

“I come from God to help thee live a good and holy life,” it said. “Be good Jeanne, and God will aid thee.” That was all. The light faded gradually, and when it was gone Jeanne rose to her feet. “It was the voice of an angel,” she whispered in awed tones. “The voice of an angel, and it spoke to me.”⁴⁰

The testimony of the Rehabilitation Trial is largely responsible for the construction of Joan as the “good girl” in the primary sources. Joan’s friends Hauviette and Colin become representations of other friends or the general narrative which constructs Joan as a devout person. The difference is in how Joan identifies her voices. While some authors choose

³⁷ Poole, 3.

³⁸ Brooks, 24.

³⁹ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁰ Madison, 69-70.

instant recognition, others prefer to stay closer to Joan's original testimony. In both cases, however, there is no debate about whether Joan heard the voices. Indeed, it is accepted that she was divinely blessed with the ability to hear the voices.

Lastly, legends popular in French medieval culture have also influenced the construction of Joan's spirituality and the reason why she had so many followers. Merlin, the wizard popular in the Arthurian Legends, prophesied that France was to be betrayed by one woman and saved by another, a Maid from the region of Lorraine. Where this prophecy originates is difficult to say. Wood suggests that it was variously attributed to Bede, Charlemagne, St. Louis and the Sibylline oracle.⁴¹ Some have attributed it to Geoffrey of Monmouth's chapter on Merlin's prophecies, when he writes of a girl from the oak woods who would come to Britain to save it from a beast.⁴² Warner mentions the prophecy, referring to how it was often used by Joan's contemporaries in support of her efforts.⁴³ The lack of a clear source for this legend makes its influence on the narrative of Joan's life significant.

French popular culture took this legend and applied it to the political struggles of the day. From the literature on Joan it seems that the public believed that Isabeau of Bavaria had betrayed them when she signed the Treaty of Troyes. Domrémy, Joan's village, was on the border of the Meuse River in the Lorraine region. The prophecy was realized when Joan won the Battle of Orléans and crowned Charles VII king in Paris. For the French, therefore, it

⁴¹ Wood, 138.

⁴² Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 177-178. Please see footnote 29 in Chapter 2 for the original Latin text.

⁴³ Warner, 280. . Her sources come from secondary sources, such as Keith Thomas' *Religion and the Decline of Magic* and Rupert Taylor's *The Political Prophecy in England*.

seemed clear that Joan was the Maid about whom Merlin had prophesied and the Treaty directly influenced the public's perception on Joan's role in the world. In her introduction, she argues that France was in a state of disrepair because it was being ruled by a "young and inexperienced" king. Then, a "miracle occurred" when "an illiterate peasant girl, still in her teens, set out on a quest that would change the course of history."⁴⁵ In the introduction of her

As stated previously, Wood is uncertain about how much Joan was aware of Merlin's prophecy. He claims that after her death, historians began to argue that she knew everything from the start.⁴⁴ He argues that once Joan arrived in Chinon and learned more about the myth, she was able to incorporate it into her image. Joan's own life, proved- at least for the people of France- the truth of Merlin's prophecy. In essence, it could be argued that Joan's life was legend becoming fact and in any legend, things mystical are bound to occur. Thus it makes sense that in Joan's own life, her own mystical experiences would, or could, be real.

The usefulness of the legend is threefold. Authors of biographies and fictional biographies in the Politics of Advocacy and Assent categories write of Joan's mission as something miraculous or divinely blessed. Biographers tend to assume that Joan was aware of the legend and incorporated it into her image while authors of fictional biographies tend to describe how Joan would have learned about the legend. The legend is also used in both categories as one of the major reasons why Joan had such a strong following.

Stanley writes that Joan's "heroic" actions were divinely ordained. In her introduction, she argues that France was in a state of disrepair because it was being ruled by a "young and inexperienced" king. Then, a "miracle occurred" when "an illiterate peasant girl, still in her teens, set out on a quest that would change the course of history."⁴⁵ In the introduction of her

⁴⁴ Ibid., 138.

⁴⁵ Stanley, 2.

book, Brooks writes that the situation in France was so bad that “It seemed that only a miracle could save them. And a miracle was at hand, from an unlikely source.”⁴⁶

Similarly, in the Politics of Assent category, Banfield discusses that at the time when things seemed “hopeless,” there were rumors of the prophecy that France would be saved by a maid from Lorraine. Banfield sets up the narrative so that it would seem natural for the maid of Lorraine to be Joan. She writes:

Yet people began to look toward Lorraine and wonder, and perhaps hope. In 1412 a baby girl named Joan was born in the village of Domrémy, on the border of the province of Lorraine.⁴⁷

Christopher sets up the scenario by describing the political circumstances in France and the prophecy.

But who could be the maid from Lorraine who would fulfill the second part of Merlin’s prophecy? People would soon come to believe that Joan of Arc, a peasant born in the village of Domrémy in Lorraine, was the maid sent by God to save France.⁴⁸

However, Christopher does not say that she thinks that Joan was the Maid of Lorraine, but that it was how the people of France would come to see her.

Conversely, Ross opens her biography with a quote from the Old French prophecy, “Having been lost through a woman, (the kingdom of France) would be restored by a girl

⁴⁶ Brooks, 13.

⁴⁷ Banfield, 18.

⁴⁸ Christopher, 13.

from Lorraine.”⁴⁹ She also names the first chapter, “The Savior of France Is Born” and talks of how Joan’s parents never imagined that their baby girl was “destined to be one of the most remarkable girls in all history, Joan of Arc, the Savior of France.”⁵⁰ Thus, the biographies on Joan prefer to argue that Joan’s mission was somehow connected to Merlin’s prophecy.

In the fictional biographies on Joan in the Politics of Advocacy and Assent categories, the authors construct circumstances in which Joan hears about the legend which works to foreshadow the event when Joan realizes that she is the Maid of Lorraine and gains a new sense of purpose for her mission. In Madison, Joan first hears the legend from a weary band of soldiers who are traveling through Domrémy. Joan is present for this conversation, listening without reaction. The knights and Joan’s father, Jacques, begin to discuss France’s current political situation, and one of the knights, Louis, says, “Have courage Bertrand. Remember the prophecy of Merlin, the soothsayer: ‘Though a woman should lose France, from the Bois Chesnu in Lorraine, a maiden shall come to redeem it.’” Although Jacques laughs at the possibility of the prophecy being true, Louis responds, “Laugh if you will, God makes all things possible. As for me, I would be happy to see a woman come to aid of France.”⁵¹

Later, upon seeing St. Michael, Joan is told that she must go to Chinon and save the future King of France. Joan, shocked, says: “I, sir, I?” St. Michael responds: “You must travel forth into France to do this. Haven’t you heard that France, ruined by a woman, shall be

⁴⁹ Ross, title page. The brackets in this quotation are Ross’s.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 1,2.

⁵¹ Madison, 12.

restored by a maiden? You are the Maid.”⁵² Once Joan understands that she is the Maid, her self-esteem grows and she “was no longer the timid, shrinking peasant-girl, but Jeanne D’Arc, Maid of France, with her heart and soul dedicated to her country.”⁵³

Similarly, Dana writes a conversation in which Joan and her friends discuss the legend one day when they are having a picnic. When one of the companions is unfamiliar with the story, Joan’s friend Simon explains: “Nine hundred years ago there was a man named Merlin who said this: ‘France will be ruined by a woman and saved by a maiden from the oak forests of Lorraine.’”⁵⁴ While Simon is telling the story, Joan “feels a shiver,” as if she somehow knows that she is the maid of Lorraine.⁵⁵ As well, for dramatic effect Dana has Simon pause and ask: “But who is the maiden? Is it someone we know?”⁵⁶

Later, when she hears the legend again, Joan understands that she is the Maid of Lorraine. “Then in an instant all shifted, as if sliding off the side of a slanted roof without warning. St. Michael’s words filled my mind and heart. You must ride on to France. You must help the Dauphin...The girl from Lorraine was me.”⁵⁷ Joan gathers the courage she needs and arranges to go to Chinon to meet Charles. Once she realizes she is the Maid, she can believe in herself.

Authors of biographies, fictional biographies and historical fiction, in the Politics of Advocacy and Assent categories, also use the legend as a way to explain why Joan is so

⁵² Ibid., 43.

⁵³ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁴ Dana, 43.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 44.

strongly supported by her contemporaries. As we saw in Chapter One, Durand Laxart testified at Joan's Redemption Trial that he took Joan to Robert de Baudricourt because he believed her to be the Maid of Lorraine. Authors of the above categories use this often to explain why perhaps Laxart agreed to take Joan to see the official. In the Politics of Advocacy category, Brooks writes that although Joan confided her plan to Laxart and told him that she believed herself to be the Maid of Lorraine: "No one knows what Durand felt about going along with his young cousin's outlandish ideas or how he thought he could arrange an audience with the great Sire de Baudricourt. But he seems unable to resist Joan's compelling and persuasive personality."⁵⁸ Thus, Brooks prefers to argue that Joan used the legend to convince her uncle and it was her personality that eventually convinced him to help her.

Stanley, however, uses the legend to explain the growth of Joan's popularity. She says that after Robert de Baudricourt turned Joan away and sent her home, she was more determined to prove her case. Her stay in Vaucouleurs proved profitable as people were quite excited because they had heard of the prophecy and wondered if "this pious country girl was destined to save France?"⁵⁹ Stanley argues that two of Joan's supporters were soldiers who convinced de Baudricourt to send her finally to Chinon.⁶⁰

Likewise, Ross writes that one of the reasons Laxart agreed to take Joan to Vaucouleurs was because she reminded him of the prophecy.⁶¹ Morpurgo uses the same argument when he writes that Laxart agrees to help Joan because of the prophecy. "I once

⁵⁷ Dana, 191.

⁵⁸ Brooks, 31.

⁵⁹ Stanley, 10.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁶¹ Ross, 20.

heard a story, a legend if you like, about a young girl from these parts who would one day drive the English out for good and save France. Maybe, the story is a true one, a prophecy, and not a legend at all.”⁶² Writers of Joan’s life, therefore, have continued to recreate the influence of Merlin’s prophecy by stating that it was the motivating factor for convincing Laxart to take her to Vaucouleurs and for the growth of her popularity.

The construction of Joan’s spirituality is indeed complex. Much like our discussions on Joan’s gender and heroism, her spirituality is equally manipulated to disregard much of the historiography and promote the “girl” image. As with the interpretations of Joan’s gender and heroic nature, Joan’s spirituality is taken primarily from the trial records whose authors had their own agendas, but were in part responsible for many of the myths surrounding Joan’s life. Thus, the recreation of Joan’s piety in the literature maintains most of the popular representations of Joan: a spiritual woman warrior.

⁶² Morpurgo, 128.

Chapter 9

THE MODERN JOAN OF ARC

“That John Dark is one hunky taste of bitch.”¹

In this discussion we have explored the various ways in which Joan of Arc's personality has been interpreted in contemporary children's literature. Joan of Arc is the modern girl protagonist in this body of literature because she represents both the “tomboy” and the “good girl.” These images, however, are also present in other areas of popular culture. The countless films, television and musical references over the past twenty years prove that Joan of Arc's presence as an icon in contemporary children's literature is actually part of a larger cultural construction of the western historical consciousness.

The growth of the empowered heterosexual female protagonist who functions interdependently in patriarchal culture is one of these Hollywood trends. Joan of Arc fits perfectly into this role because she actively pursues a clearly defined mission within a male sphere. Like the modern heroines such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Xena Warrior Princess* and Sydney Bristol from ABC's *Alias*, Joan of Arc is called upon to actively return the world order back to a natural state of peace.

The quote above, from MTV's *Clone High*, is characteristic of some of the post-modernist takes on popular historical characters, such as Joan of Arc. The show's premise is that an evil scientist takes the DNA of historical figures and creates a new race of people. These people are now teenagers. In one episode entitled “Homecoming: A Shot in D'Arc,”

¹ Kentoff, Eric, “Episode 6: Homecoming A Shot in D'Arc” in *Clone High* (Hollywood: MTV, 2002.)

“Joan of Arc learns that the boys’ basketball team doesn’t allow girls or animals to play, she disguises herself as the male “John Dark,” and becomes the star player.”² When Cleopatra, who is portrayed as the town slut, meets this new “John” she is instantly attracted to the disguised Joan and hits on him/her.

This post-modern reappropriation of Joan takes her completely out of the historical context and yet maintains certain historical ideas about the character’s motivation. The desire to show the boys that a girl could play basketball is a play on a standard plotline that is not only found in countless teenage romantic comedies, but is reminiscent of the “tomboy” protagonist in literature. Indeed, Joan’s sexuality is ambiguous as she is a mix between the standard high school boy crush and erotic lesbian undertones. This is just one example of how the historical Joan is manipulated by popular culture is part of the historical consciousness.

Joan of Arc is indeed a cultural icon who is reintroduced into popular culture by historians, writers and artists because her image is similar to the Arthurian legends made so popular in the last three hundred years. Joan’s personality has all of the attributes that modern society finds worthy. She is a strong person who stands up for what she believes in and a loyal subject. She is pious and lives by a certain moral code reminiscent of the Arthurian chivalric codes. Her life story has elements of fiction and fact which allows the artist to recreate a piece of work or a narrative to suit their needs. By keeping Joan within the historical consciousness, children’s writers are helping to maintain a stable historical narrative in which people continue

² Ibid.

to appear and show attributes that reminds us of ourselves. Whatever we may decide about Joan's life, her own words seem to say everything we need to know: "I was born for this."³

³ William Tynan, *Joan of Arc In Her Own Words* (New York: Books & Co., 1996,) 19.

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Interview with Authors

Bradford, Karleen, interview by author, email discussions, Montreal/Owen Sound,
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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Writers

- 1) What do you think is the difference between writing historical fiction and other kinds of fiction?
- 2) I know that you have written some Canadian historical fiction, but what is your interest in Medieval and Early Renaissance History? Did you find any difference writing for specific time periods?
- 3) How much, and what kind of, research do you do before writing?
- 4) How much influence do current historical, literary and other academic trends have in your writing? How much influence do these circles have generally in the writing of historical and other kinds of literature for children?
- 5) Many literary critics argue that children's writers are often writing with either a political or moral ideology. Do you think that you do this when you write? And, if so, what ideals are you trying to convey to the reader?
- 6) When you are writing, are you considering your audience? And, if so, what kinds of audience do you have in mind?
- 7) What kind of techniques do you use in order to enhance the historical experience for the reader?
- 8) Will you sacrifice historical fact in order to enhance the plot or characters in your books?
- 9) How important are the facts to you when writing historical fiction?
- 10) What do you find more challenging, writing about a real person or a fictional character?

- 11) How much does the education system (ie. the parents and teachers) contribute to your work?
- 12) As a writer for children and young adults, do you feel that there is an “outside” expectation already in place before you even put pen to paper? If so, how does this influence your writing?
- 13) Do you think that the “girl” heroine figure has changed or not changed in children’s literature over the past twenty years?
- 14) What do you contribute to the growth of interest in writing about historical women figures?
- 15) How much does gender contribute to the construction of your characters? Are you considering the gender codes of the particular period in which you are writing, or today’s norms?
- 16) In the writing of biographies and other kinds of historical fiction for children, are you trying to create a role model for your audiences? How important is the role of the writer in contributing to this process?
- 17) In general, do you see more writing geared towards young girls or young boys?
- 18) In general, does the writing change depend upon the gender of the audience?

