

CHAPTER 1

MAID OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Some general readers may first have heard of Joan as one of a trio of famous women in history, which included also Elizabeth Fry, the prison reformer and Grace Darling, of lifeboat bravery. Or she may have first featured for them in an illustrated children's story, or remembered from a likeness in a stained glass window in a country church, clad in armour and brandishing a sword. Again, one may have read of her in a Saint's Life, or she may have been the subject of a discussion; was she or was she not: a saint or a witch, young girl or young boy, a peasant or a royal bastard?¹ Did she actually exist? Was she a victim of her own imagination, or of a neurological disorder or brain tumour.² So much has been said and written about the Maid - about the known stages of her short journey of life, from peasant with a divine mission to canonised saint of the Catholic Church. She has continued to be treated down the centuries, in peace and in war, across the world, in the hands of such diverse scribes, and her image has inevitably undergone much change and distortion. Most of her story is well known and well documented in the now published records of her Trial and Rehabilitation. The additional beliefs and legends that surround her history, which began to be confused even with her contemporaries, have transformed her into a folkloric figure.

She had spent her childhood in Domremy in Lorraine and with her brothers, she grew up in the shadow of the English occupation of France. She was an extremely pious child. At an early age she heard 'Voices', which she later claimed were those of Saints Michael, Catherine and

¹ J. Bosler, 'Was Joan of Arc Charles VII's Sister?' *The Cambridge Journal*, Vol. VII, No. 12, September, 1954, pp.756-769. c.f. R. Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: By Herself and her Witnesses*. p.24-29. This reputable author refutes this theory, which first appeared in 1805 in the work of a dramatist, P.C. Caze. She explains her reasons in a careful analysis.

² J. and I.A. Butterfield, 'Joan of Arc: A Medical View' *History Today* Vol. VIII. No. 9, September 1958, pp.628-633.

Margaret, and who instructed her that she would free the country from the intruders and lead the Dauphin to Rheims to be anointed. As she grew older, her 'Voices' grew more insistent, and when she was seventeen, against the wishes of her father, but with the help of an older relative, she at last persuaded Beaudricourt of Vaucouleurs to lend assistance for her journey to Chinon and the Dauphin. When Charles was convinced of her sincerity, trustworthiness, Christian faith and virginity, she was given arms and men, and she proceeded to Orleans where she was successful in raising the siege. The acclamation of the people followed her, as she retrieved many cities from the English and at last was present at the anointing and crowning of Charles VII.

Some months after the coronation, Charles and Joan failed to agree on points of war strategy. It was the Maid's policy to attack and surprise, and to follow success by further attack. Most of the army had been disbanded, perhaps because of the lethargy of Charles and a brief truce with Philip of Burgundy, or more simply the onset of winter may have called a royal halt to the hostilities. Joan and a small force insisted on an attempt to take Compiègne, then held by the Burgundians. She was captured, whether by ill-fortune or by treachery, imprisoned by John of Luxemburg and eventually sold to the English. She was tried at Rouen, by representatives of the Inquisition and other doctors of the Church, the majority of whom were English supporters from the University of Paris. At first charged with sorcery and heresy, she was convicted of the latter, on the grounds of disregarding the authority of the Church, of wearing male clothing and having excessive pride.³

Her story has been told and retold in prose and verse, in drama and song, in painting, sculpture and, in recent years, in film and television. Many notable and famous people have attempted to explain her advent and

³ Pernoud, *op. cit.*

meteoric rise, and her ignominious death. Several significant writers have featured her in different works, with the central area of interest depicted in various ways, often fictionally. A recent detailed study of the life of Charles VII throws some light on the mystery of the King's ingratitude and indifference to her fate.⁴ Modern writers cloak her image with the ideas, values, expectations and solutions of their own environment and person. Since 1920, Joan has been a saint, and as such is a fascinating and incomprehensible subject. It is perhaps a natural human tendency which persuades one to devalue or to fantasise that which cannot be understood. To the people of her own times, she is a wonder and a miracle, or perhaps a confounding tool of Satan. The people of the fifteenth-century were more attuned to wonders than are those of the twentieth, and they had a lively fear of the devil.

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The greatest wealth of detail concerning the Maid is, of course, to be found in the documents of the two trials. In these, the sincerity and simplicity of the Maid's recorded words are ever evident. However, the documents were collected and translated at a much later date than the trials, and for different reasons: the first to show how and why she was condemned in the trial of Condemnation; and the record of the Rehabilitation to prove the invalidity of the first. The sketchy chronicles, when they do, in fact, mention Joan, scarcely conceal the religious and political opinions of their writers or of their patrons. Vile opinions of Joan may have germinated from the letters written on behalf of the young King Henry VI to justify Joan's death, and that of Bedford to the King on the same subject.⁵ There are other contemporary authorities, including

⁴ M.G.A. Vale, *Charles VII*. London 1974. p.42. The innate cynicism and cruelty of Charles is emphasised.

⁵ H. Thurston, S.J. 'Blessed Joan of Arc in English Opinion' *The Month*, Vol. CXIII, May 1909. p.449. This writer points out that the letters, while they name her as a sorceress and a heretic, do not include the suggestion of Joan's pregnancy or impurity.

churchmen and poets, and their work may have influenced later writers.

The attitudes of this fifteenth-century group towards Joan range from the cautious or non-committal to the frankly admiring and exalting. The first poetical work based on the wonder and courage of Joan of Arc is by a near contemporary, and is the *Ditie* of Christine de Pisan written in July, 1429.⁶ This work is of value to historians, to scholars whose interest is in poetry and the French language, to Joanine researchers and to feminists. The writer had already reached a ripe age at the time of Joan's appearance, and her poem celebrates the welcome revival of French activity and integrity, and her own emergence from retirement. It was to be her last work. The *Ditie* is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving structured around three interwoven planes.⁷ Christine praises God and gives thanks for Joan's mission. Patriotically she praises Charles for his victories over his enemies. Because Joan is a woman, she gives praise to God for the exaltation of womanhood as a whole.

The poem proclaims that Joan is divinely sent and inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is full of commendation for the King, who has been crowned and anointed, and is now ready and eager to use his majesty and power, 'wearing spurs of gold.'⁸ She condemns the enemy and their Burgundian allies, and warns them that, no matter what their plans may be, they will be vanquished by French superiority. The treacherous people within the cities, particularly the city of Paris, are mentioned scornfully, and they are advised to ask the pardon of the King, who, with the encouragement of Joan, will magnanimously forgive them. Joan's youth is stressed; it is a supernatural event when 'a little girl of sixteen' bears the weight of armour without notice (XXXV). She is called in turn, 'Maid', 'young Virgin',

⁶ A.J. Kennedy and K. Varty. *Ditie de Jehanne d'Arc*, of Christine de Pisan. 1977.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁸ Kennedy and Varty, *op. cit.* Translation of the *Ditie* V.p.41.

'woman' and 'servant of God'; one who will restore harmony in Christendom and in the Church (XLII).

Christine associates Joan with Esther, Deborah and Judith⁹ three biblical women of great courage and piety, whose heavenly guidance brought about their ascendance over their evil enemies.

I have heard of Esther, Judith and Deborah, who were women of great worth, through whom God delivered His people from oppression, and I have heard of many other worthy women as well, champions of everyone, through whom He performed many miracles, but He has accomplished more through this Maid.¹⁰

Through this association of Joan with the holy women, Christine establishes the Divine mission of the Maid, her links with prophecies, the possibility of miracles, and the superiority of her achievements because she is a maid. But it is through the comparison of Joan with the Old Testament prophets, Moses, Joshua and others, and the classical heroes, Achilles and Hector, that the poetess identifies herself as the champion of womankind.

Castles and towns, she wins them back for France,
And France is free again, and this her doing!
Never was power given as to her lance!
A thousand swords could do no more pursuing.
Of all staunch men and true she is the Chief,
Captain and Leader, for that she alone
Is braver than Achilles, the brave Greek.
All praise be given to God who leadeth Joan!.¹¹

This exaltation of Joan by the poetess strikes an ambivalent note

⁹ The Jerusalem Bible, Popular edition, London, 1974, Esther, 4, 5. Queen Esther, by her virtue and truth, persuades King Ahasuerus to follow justice and mercy. Judith, a devout widow of Bethulia, after time in prayer, goes to the camp of Holofernes, and with a 'beguiling tongue, encourages his wine-drinking'. When he is besotted she beheads him and leaves the tent with the head in her bag. Judges 26:4. Deborah was a judge and prophetess who, when ordered by Yahweh, led Barak to save Israel from Sisera, the king of Canaan.

¹⁰ Kennedy and Varty, *op. cit.* XXVIII, p.45.

¹¹ Christine de Pisan, *Hymn to Jeanne d'Arc*, paraphrased by Alice Kemp Welch. *Of Six Medieval Women*, p.146. in Blanche I. Dow, *The Varying Attitudes towards Women in French Literature of the Fifteenth Century: The Opening Years*. N.Y. 1938, p.263.

when compared with the ideas expressed in an earlier work of hers. In her biography of Charles V, Christine clearly shows her admiration of him as a peerless king and knight.¹² But since the time of Charles V, in whose court she had previously lived with her father, the monarchy has been found to have fallen far short of her ideals. She is a defender of women, because she realises that some men, as well as the present King, are ineffectual. Therefore, if men are unable or unwilling to fulfil their social and political duties, competent and deserving women should be encouraged to take an active role in shaping a new social order.¹³ In Christine's defence of the natural ability of woman, her cause is just but it is not aggressive; in her work on the advisability of the education of girls, she advocates equal opportunity for the same merits. She does not suggest that women should be involved in the governing. Her longing for order and a lasting peace had prompted her long before¹⁴ her retirement, to appeal to the Queen for intervention.¹⁵ Her disappointment at the Queen's indifference has a positive answer in the *Ditie* when she refers to Charles as 'the rejected child of the rightful King of France'. (V). When she courageously attacks the sentiments expressed in the *Roman de la Rose* of Jean de Meun - which she considers are disguised to deceive gullible readers - she has a two-fold purpose: to expose the underlying view of woman as a mere vessel of procreation, and to condemn de Meun's lack of moral responsibility to the public.¹⁶

Christine was already a poetess of some repute when this three year dispute took place (1401-1404), but she found an ally in the learned and

12 N. Margolis, 'Christine de Pizan: The Poetess as Historian' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Volume XLVII, Number 3, 1986, p.372.

13 N. Margolis, *ibid*, p.363.

14 Blanche I. Dow. *The Varying Attitude towards Women in French Literature of the Fifteenth Century: The Opening Years*. N.Y.(1938). p.252.

15 Kennedy and Varty, *op. cit.* 'Are you asleep?' she asks.

16 Margolis, *op. cit.* p.366.

esteemed Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. That pious scholar had a slightly different reason for his objection to this very controversial work. While he supported Christine in her attack, his general views of chastity and of the value of celibacy may have stirred his ire against Jean de Meun's work, which, he said, celebrated carnal lust.¹⁷ Thus we may suppose that Gerson exalts Joan for her virginity, whilst Christine admires her mainly because she is a woman who succeeds in a masculine world.

Joan is associated with the prophecies of Merlin, Bede and the Sybil, (XXXI) which link her with the past, with the future of France and with her own role as a prophetess. It is suggested elsewhere that these associations were deliberately rediscovered by her contemporaries and designed and re-interpreted to fit Joan's appearance.¹⁸ Christine admonishes Charles to be just and to cast away pride, (XVIII) and she reminds him that his Kingdom has been restored by God through Joan (XXXVI). Christine, ambivalently implores Charles never again to wage war to the death (XVII), but that if someone does not hand over to him what is rightly his, he is justified in recovering it by force and bloodshed. (LVIII). She cites Joan the maiden, as one who nurtures France 'with the sweet nourishing milk of peace' (XXIV) which links her with the Virgin Mary. Ironically she cries 'And you Blessed Maid, are you to be forgotten...?'(XXI).

The *Ditie* of Christine de Pisan, has an excited, if repetitive ring which encompasses the personal and the patriotic themes of the praises. Christine does not specifically mention Joan's social status: that of a peasant. During her sad experience when the mob violence terrified Paris,

¹⁷ B.W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror*, (1978). p.480.c.f. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, Penguin Books, 1955 (1924),p.118.

¹⁸ Fraioli, D., 'The literary image of Joan of Arc', *Speculum*, 56, 1981, pp.817-18. This author confirms that there is no mention of such a prophecy in the writings of eighth-century Bede; the prophecy in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Merlin* refers to Winchester, England and not to France; that Quicherat *Proces*, 3:422-68 asserts that the first mention of Joan of Arc being heralded in sibylline literature was made in the summer of 1429.

her anti-democratic views germinated and grew.¹⁹ Repeatedly, at this time of stress, she expressed the opinion that although she recognised the value of the common people, their manners and courage were inferior to those of the nobility, and they should remain in the inferior state in which they were born. Her writings show that she associates the uprising of 'the diabolic common people' with the terror of civil war.²⁰ The *Ditie* is written in the moment, for the moment, and because of what was soon to happen to the Maid, there is a certain pathos and naivete in some of the verses. Christine de Pisan died probably in 1430 and so was unaware of the scheming which preceded the burning of Joan of Arc.

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Jean Gerson was the first of the only two contemporary clergymen known to speak in favour of Joan and his treatise was probably written after the lifting of the siege of Orleans in 1429. Like Christine he was an Armagnac and a supporter of the Valois line; for some years before Joan's appearance at Chinon he was living in exile in Lyons, where he had fled from Paris when the Burgundians occupied the city.²¹ Like Joan he was concerned with ending the war and unifying France, and this was but equal to his wish to end the Schism and to unify the Catholic Church. When he refused the offer of Emperor Sigismund to make him Chancellor of the University of Vienna, he did so because he was a French patriot and a French priest.²²

The legitimacy and credibility of Joan's mission would be greatly enhanced by the cautious but favourable opinion of this famous theologian. In his treatise *De Quadam Puella*, a forgotten work for many

¹⁹ E. Mc Leod, *The Order of the Rose: The Life and Ideas of Christine de Pisan*, London, 1976, p.153.

²⁰ Mc Leod, *ibid*, pp.153-154.

²¹ D.G. Wayman, 'The Chancellor and Jeanne d'Arc, February-July, A.D. 1429' *Franciscan Studies*, Vol. 17, June-Sept. 1957, p.277.

²² Wayman, *ibid*, p.279.

years, he pronounced that he considered her 'to be of good life, truly inspired by God and that her leadership should be honoured by King and people'.²³ Gerson was not among the commission appointed to investigate the character of the Maid at Poitiers, nor is there any document to suggest that he was personally asked by the King for his opinion. Yet several of the clergymen who were convoked had been students of Gerson - like him living in exile from Paris - but in close proximity to the King. It is not impossible that one of these doctors of the Church may have asked Gerson for his support in the decision.²⁴ There is, of course, no record of Gerson's possible part in this enquiry - nor has there yet been found any record of the Poitiers enquiry itself.

The treatise of Jean Gerson²⁵ begins with a summary of the Maid's known story, and stresses her chastity and her dislike of violence. This is followed by six questions with arguments for her and against her. Unlike Christine's *Ditie, De Quadam Puella* has a sober, authoritative ring. The controversial areas of the Maid's life, her sex and extreme youth, her male clothing, the doubts about her supernatural mission - whether she is of God or the Devil - are all dealt with in a scholarly explanatory manner. As if Gerson anticipates her trial, he poses the questions and explores the possibilities of negative and positive response. While revealing his own support, he advises others to reflect and to decide according to conscience.²⁶

²³ Wayman, *ibid*, p.280. Some early writers have cited *De Mirabili Victoria*, the text read at the Rehabilitation, to be the only one by Gerson. (In the work by D. Fraioli *De Quadam Puella* is cited and in that by H.G. Francq there are attached appendices concerning the two named treatises). In this very thorough report, Mrs Wayman has examined both texts, has pointed out discrepancies and biblical errors in the first cited, and concluded that *De Mirabili Victoria* is a substitution. even possibly a forgery, perhaps perpetrated in order to circulate it and to send it to Rome with the idea of having both Gerson and Joan charged with heresy. As this work concerns the influences of contemporaries to later work, because the two do not differ greatly in essence but in style, *De Quadam Puella* will be used.

²⁴ Wayman, *op. cit.* pp.278-279.

²⁵ H.G. Francq, 'Jean Gerson's Theological Treatise and other Memoirs in Defence of Joan of Arc', *Revue de l'Universite d'Ottawa*, Canada, 1971, pp.74 - 77.

²⁶ Francq, *ibid.*, p.79

The treatise affirms her truly human nature, and with allegory and quotations from the early Fathers, Gerson asserts that, even after the coming of Christ, prophets may appear.

It is not considered a disgrace in the passage of time that from time to time certain persons are granted the Spirit of prophecy and directed towards the execution of miracles....(Third 'Propositio') p.76.

It is in harmony with the Holy Scriptures that God made use of the weak sex and of the age of innocence to offer people and kingdoms the happiness of salvation....(Fourth 'Propositio') p.76.

This establishes that in spite of her being a young girl, Gerson considers her to be a prophet. His long-held belief in chastity as an ideal state and his affinity for children²⁷ enhance his sincere admiration for Joan. He extends this by citing Deborah, Hester and Judith as women of prayer and piety who used their wit and femininity in the service of their people. Daniel and David are given as instances of two who, in their extreme youth, were called upon by God to perform great deeds. There is an asexual tone to these explanations of Joan's superiority. She is young, so she does not use her femininity; she is not yet a woman and so she may wear men's clothes; unlike the holy women she rides to the war with the men.

Gerson implies that her male clothing is part of Joan's sacred mission. When clad in men's clothing, she becomes wonderfully powerful, like a battle chief, and causes fear and despair among the enemy. But when she climbs down from her horse, she becomes gentle and feminine again, 'like a defenseless lamb'²⁸. In the negative sixth 'proposition', where it is suggested how her opponents might think, Gerson lists her two unlawful actions; her male dress and her shorn hair which transform her into a man of war. These are the deemed sins which may be brought to notice to her

²⁷ Huizinga, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Francq, *op. cit.* p.74.

discredit. In the positive sixth 'propositio', where the theologian shows how her cause may be defended, first he affirms her individuality among mankind and that she is sent on purpose by God to accomplish deeds by divine aid. He makes learned allusions to David and Moses and then ambiguously quotes from Gregorius: 'The Holy Spirit settles inwardly according to conditions found externally'. There are two circumstances which have been the source of comment of many critics and which some have claimed to be a mark of the marvellous individual. During her Trial at Rouen Joan was asked to which Pope she will appeal. Evidently she was unaware that there was more than one; she replies that of course she will appeal to the Pope in Rome. When asked about the verdict of the Church, she is reported to have said that one Church consists of all Christians with Jesus at its Head, and the other is concerned with money, territories, and possessions.²⁹ Her replies have a profundity of understanding not unlike those which the Chancellor may have made. These two answers, together with the 'propositions' in the treatise, so reminiscent of the Trial, link together the tempers of Joan and of the great Gerson.

This treatise, in its connection with Joan resuming feminine dress when not at war, suggests that it was written close to the time of the Poitiers enquiry, when she was in the company of other women.³⁰ Its learned arguments concerning the Maid's true mission, her virginity and virtue, and his ideas of her male battle dress, may well have inspired later writers' discussion of her.

Alain Chartier was a notary and secretary to the Dauphin from 1418. Like Christine and Gerson he was a patriot and an Armagnac, and when the Burgundians occupied Paris he followed his master to Bourges.³¹ Alain

²⁹ G. Hanotaux, *Jeanne d'Arc*, Paris, 1911, p.416 (Tr.) quoted in Wayman, *op. cit.* p.281.

³⁰ Wayman *op. cit.* p. 181.

³¹ E.J. Hoffman: *Alain Chartier: His Work and Reputation*, N.Y., 1942, p.13.

had sent a spirited letter to the University of Paris in protest against the Treaty of Troyes which aimed to disinherit Charles. He too was horrified at the ravages of civil war, but was totally against peace under a foreign power. To this end he called on the Burgundian and the Armagnac princes to stop their internal strife, as it benefited only the English, and instead to support their legal sovereign.³² During this time of intrigue and disloyalty he found life at court to be dangerous and full of jealousy and treachery. His personal writings on this subject, *De Vita Curiali*, contain cautionary injunctions to his brother and friends, which reveal also the integrity and patriotism of Chartier. He was present at a number of diplomatic missions, and sent a wordy discourse, in ponderous language, to Emperor Sigismund. This was an attempt to gain his political support for Charles, and his consent to act as a mediator in promoting peace between England and France.³³

His enthusiastic letter addressed to an 'illustrious prince' is a reply to a request for information about the Maid. Most references to this letter state the probability of the addressee being the Emperor Sigismund.³⁴ In a tone of lucid simplicity he tells of wonderful events up to the deliverance of Orleans. His prose reminds the reader that he is primarily a poet. He concludes with magnificent praise:

Here is she who seems not to issue from any place on earth, but rather sent by Heaven to sustain with head and shoulders a France fallen to the ground. O astonishing virgin! worthy of all fame, of all praise, worthy of all divine honours! Thou art the honour of the reign, thou art the light of the lily, thou art the splendour, the glory, not only of Gaul but of all Christians. Let Troy celebrate her Hector, let Greece pride herself upon Alexander, Africa upon Hannibal, Italy upon Caesar and all the Roman generals. France, though she count many of these, may

³² Hoffman, *ibid.*, p.205

³³ Hoffman, *ibid.*, p; 201

³⁴ Hoffman, *op. cit.* p.206. (and note No. 25 on this page.) This writer states that this is almost a certainty.

well content herself with this Maid only. ...³⁵

One of the charges levelled against Joan was her love of fine clothes and elaborate battle array. Chartier does not mention this with reference to the Maid, but he had earlier yearned, *ubi sunt?* fashion, for the time when social rank was clearly distinguished by dress, and decried a fashion which permitted a common varlet from dressing as a noble knight.³⁶

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Another voice from the Church in Joan's favour came from Jacques Gelu, Archbishop of Embrun. Perhaps he was initially afraid of airing his opinion, as it is suggested that he was one of the reluctant churchmen who at first withheld judgement on the Maid.³⁷ Gelu's treatise purports to be an answer to five questions put to the Archbishop by Charles VII in 1429, concerning the divine mission of the young girl.³⁸ This writing, of May 1429,³⁹ contains extravagant praise for the King, and the success of Joan at Orleans is reflected in his acceptance of her divine mission. It is to be believed that God would send aid to France by a woman, even 'a little flea bred on a dunghill'⁴⁰

He, too, claims that her active mission permits her to wear men's clothes and does not detract from her virginal modesty. Although both works were written not long after the victory at Orleans, there are several echoes of content, but not of style, of the work of Gerson in the treatise of Gelu. As a corroboration of the examination of Joan, Gelu states that it is necessary to test what spirit is leading such a divine messenger. He cautions

³⁵ Pernoud, *op. cit.* pp. 97 - 98. (Latin text in Quicherat v,131-136. c.f. Hoffman, *op. cit.*, who states that the letter tells of events up to the crowning of Charles VII at Rheims; the narrative stops at this point.

³⁶ Warner, M., *The Image of Female Heroism*, (1983), 1987. p.176.

³⁷ Fraiolo, *op.cit.*, p.829

³⁸ Francq, *op. cit.* Appendix II. pp. 72 - 73. It is stated that the 'dissertio' was published by Lanery d'Arc and considerably abridged in Quicherat, III, pp. 393-410.

³⁹ Francq, *op. cit.* p.74. A part of Gelu's text is translated by the French historian J. B. Joseph Ayroles.

⁴⁰ A.L. Barstow, 'Joan of Arc, Heretic, Mystic, Shaman', *Studies in Women and Religion*, 1986, p.111.

the King to seek the advice of the Maid even though this may not sound logical, and adds his hope that the Lord will make His the King's cause, and will lend the necessary inspiration to enable the Maid to achieve the desired end.⁴¹ When Joan was captured at Compiegne, he was not tardy in his appeal to the King to spare no efforts or funds for her ransom.⁴² His was the only voice raised; Christine de Pisan and Jean Gerson both died shortly after they wrote of Joan and Alain Chartier disappeared in 1429.⁴³

It was as Pope Pius II that Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini gave his views of Joan of Arc. She had then been dead some time and her Rehabilitation had taken place during the pontificate of his predecessor, Calixtus III.⁴⁴ His judgement may have been clouded by the gaps in time; when describing her appearance at the court at Chinon and subsequent examination he, too, affirms her chastity and honesty and that her examiners found no trace of guile or evil in her. He stresses the obstacle of her soldier's dress, which was forbidden to women. To this she replied that because she was a maid, either male or female dress was appropriate to her state. Like some of his contemporaries he compared her with Judith, and later, with Camilla, of Virgil's *Aeneid*.⁴⁵ He elaborates on various details which appear in a more sober fashion in other works. When Charles speaks of the difficulties in even reaching Rheims, because of its great distance, the besieged roads and the enemy occupation, lack of resources and absence of desire for his coronation, Joan calmly replies:

I make no empty promises. If you trust in God, trust in me also. I have come as his messenger. I will furnish you with arms by divine aid, and with an invisible sword I will open a

41 Francq, *op. cit.* p.73.

42 *Ibid* Note 50. c.f.

43 Hoffman, *op. cit.* p.

44 F.A. Cragg, Translator, 'The Commentaries of Pius II - Book VI, *Smith College Studies in History*, Vol. 35, 1951, p.437.

45 Cragg, *ibid*, pp. 437 - 38. This latter comparison is inspired by his colourful, if not quite accurate, account of Joan's battle prowess at Orleans.

path..⁴⁶

When all these things were discussed in council, the opinions were varied between the craziness of the girl, or her inspiration by the Holy Ghost, or her possible bewitchment. Those who thought she might be inspired recalled that Bethulia had been saved by a woman (Judith) and that France herself had in the past, received heavenly aid.⁴⁷ In the account of her receiving arms and 'mounting the most spirited steed, in her gleaming armour brandishing her sword like Camilla' there is perhaps more of the writer's enthusiasm for his past craft than his adherence to the facts as he knew them. The translator gives the opinion that Pius' account is at times critical and detached, and in others filled with admiration and wonder.⁴⁸ As this Book of the *Commentaries* was later than Joan's 'Rehabilitation', there is the possibility that Pius II used hindsight in his account of the Maid, and perhaps repeated the biblical references in the treatise of Gerson or of Gelu.

A more positive attitude towards the contribution of Pius II towards Joan is given by R.J. Mitchell.⁴⁹ He considers the passages on French history written by Pius, and especially the account of the part played by the Maid, to be among his best works.

There are many similarities in these works of Christine de Pisan, Jean Gerson and Alain Chartier concerning Joan. They all mention her chastity and her virtue, and the three, in true patriot fashion, are full of praise and thanks for the Divine help in saving France. All liken her to classical heroes. Gerson and Christine but not Chartier compare her to the biblical heroine/saviours. Chartier refers to Joan as 'the light of the lily' and the lily metaphor is used for France by earlier patriot poets and in a poem by Jean Gerson entitled 'Lilia Crescendat'. Jean Gerson, in his treatise noticeably

⁴⁶ Cragg, (trans.) *ibid.* p.437.

⁴⁷ Cragg, *ibid.*,

⁴⁸ Cragg, *ibid.*, p.437, Footnote 63.

⁴⁹ R.J. Mitchell, *Aeneas Sylvius, (1405-1458) The Pope (1458- 1464)*,1962, pp.199-200.

mentions her male attire, as does Jacques Gelu, and later Pius II. Did her contemporaries treat this, a subject of grave importance at her trial, too lightly? When one considers the acknowledged fear of Alain Chartier, the pre-empting of adverse criticism by Jean Gerson, and the strangely dithyrambic message of the originally reluctant Gelu, there may have been some possible coercion.

There can be little doubt that later writers were influenced by the works of Joan's contemporaries, and utilised many references to elaborate the imagery. The symbol of the Rose in the writings of Christine de Pisan and in her and Gerson's denunciation of the *Roman de la Rose* is captured in more modern works. The symbol of the Lily, the subject of some of the poetry of the patriots, is the emblem of France which is pictured in Joan's banner. This flower too is used in more modern imagery of Joan, and together with the Rose may be viewed as her double crown of virginity and martyrdom.

CHAPTER 2

LA PUCELLE AS A SORCERESS

More than one and a half centuries separate the burning of Joan of Arc from the creation of *The First Part of Henry VI*, the first of a tetralogy by Shakespeare.¹ The tetralogy as a whole is concerned with the civil dissension and jostling for power which preceded and surrounded the Wars of the Roses. The first play embraces also some events of the Hundred Years' War with France, which historically ended with the Treaty of Arras in 1435. The French Maid plays but a subservient and manipulated role in the play. Nevertheless, in a study of Joan of Arc literature, a work by William Shakespeare which mentions her, however marginally, cannot be overlooked. Literary critics have often been concerned with the doubtful authorship of the play, and this concern has, at times, stemmed from the unwholesome picture of Joan which emerges in the play.²

Brief, indifferent and perhaps biassed entries in the chronicles of Hall, Holinshed and others have furnished Shakespeare with some bare, arid details of Joan's story, but the dark hints about her character have been embellished and expanded by the playwright. There are critics who believe that the portrayal of Joan of Arc as a coarse, immoral creature was the one which was prevalent in England at that time. This assumption is refuted by some, but one eminent modern writer poses the theory that this unchaste picture of Joan was possibly circulated by the English, since it appears in English chronicles shortly after Joan's death by burning.³ Yet because the history of fifteenth-century England and France is superimposed upon, and

¹ W. Shakespeare, *The First Part of King Henry VI*, Arden edition, edited by Andrew S. Cairncross, London, 1962. Page Nos. in the text are references to this edition.

² Frederick S. Boas, 'Joan of Arc in Shakespeare, Schiller and Shaw' *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol. II, 1951, Foreword, p. 35.

³ M. Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism*, Penguin Books, 1987, (1983) p. 117.

interwoven into, the events of later years, and even of contemporaneous society, with its ideas of women and of witchcraft, Joan's characterisation by Shakespeare is viewed as a sore reflection of the times.⁴ One scholarly critic has ruefully praised Shakespeare's artistry in using Joan to define the inferiority of the French cause, pitifully opposed to the superiority of the English.⁵ Because of early opinions regarding joint authorship of the play, another scholar absolves Shakespeare from personal blame for the blackened image of Joan.⁶ More modern studies have acclaimed Shakespeare as the author and have credited the play with some worth. The thought that other writers had a hand in parts of it, or of the tetralogy as a whole, is also seriously discounted; yet unity is achieved throughout, not by plot, but by idea and design and imagery.⁷

Shakespeare was not a historian. In *Part I Henry VI* particularly, he plays tricks with history, moving events and compressing time, concertina fashion, so that the age of his protagonists, especially King Henry VI, appears out of kilter with the historical events. Yet these fantasy movements are made to suit the playwright's dramatic purpose. Nevertheless, his history dramas have done much to shape popular public opinion about certain periods in history.⁸ This brief study of the play is concerned chiefly with the imagery and the related ideas as they reflect the writings of Joan of Arc's contemporaries, and how Shakespeare's characterisation may have been highlighted, or glossed over, or his chronicle sources exploited, in some later works on the subject. The many references to Christian and classical

⁴ G. B. Jackson, 'Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc' *English Literary Renaissance*, Winter (1) 1988, p. 4.

⁵ G. Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, New York, 1960, III, p.41.

⁶ A. Gaw, 'The Origin and Development of 'King Henry VI', *University of Southern California Studies*, 1926, p. 168.

⁷ Shakespeare, Cairncross edition, *op. cit.*, Introduction, lvii.

⁸ W. Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard III*, Edited by Mark Eccles, N.Y., 1964. In this play, Shakespeare's exaggeration of Richard's villainy, (p. xxviii) has provoked widespread discussion even in modern times.

literature enhance the dramatic imagery, and reveal the essential polarity of ideas concerning Joan la Pucelle.

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The encircling condition of war and its attendants, 'Lean Famine, quartering Steel, and climbing Fire,' acclaimed by Talbot as if they are part of his personal armoury (Act IV, p.92)⁹ are naturally augmented by imagery of blood and death. In the play the power and glory of England are on the verge of rippling into nothingness following the death of Henry V; and his young inexperienced son is both unworldly and unkingly. He aspires to be an orator and attempts to be a peacemaker during discord between the nobles when the words of Exeter combine the ills of England:

'Tis much when sceptres are in children's hands;
But more when envy breeds unkind division:
There comes the ruin, there begins confusion.
(Act IV, Sc. i, p. 91).

The lofty words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Joan are a prophecy of hope for France and a message of doom for England:

Assign'd am I to be the English scourge,
This night the siege assuredly I'll raise:
Expect Saint Martin's summer, halcyon days,
Since I have entered into these wars.
Glory is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceases to enlarge itself
Till by broad spreading it disperse to nought.
With Henry's death the English circle ends;
Dispersed are the glories it included.
(Act I, Sc. ii, p. 19-20)

She looks forward to a time of her people's good fortune after one of disaster, when in a period of unseasonal calm, the French, like the kingfisher in

⁹ W. Shakespeare. *The Complete Works*, London, The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, (1958) 1970. The play *King Henry VI, I*, contains two references: 'Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire/Crouch for employment . . .' Prologue, p. 444 and after the siege of Rouen 'war's iii handmaidens . . . bloud, fyre and famine'.

halcyon days, will be able to build and restore their homes and cities. There is a half-hidden, even Christ-like, poignant allusion to the brief fierce time of Joan's glory, when she will be hailed triumphantly by the liberated people of Orleans and Patay.

The theme of the end of order and the beginning of chaos is heightened by the various swirls of internal sedition, which are more damaging to the stability of England than is even the force of France. The recurring quarrel between Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and Henry, Archbishop of Winchester, is the most enveloping. Not only is it a show of hatred between two men of close kinship, symbolic of the awful sign of the mark of Cain, but it highlights the division in England between the Church and the Crown, and the absence of any semblance of that brotherly love which is the hallmark of Christianity. It is a reflection of the Church of the 1450s, viewed by the English reformed Church of a later century.¹⁰ It distances France from England, and emphasises the indifference with which the English treat the burning of Joan. There is a hint of treason during an early brawl between the two when Winchester calls Gloucester a 'usurping proditor' (Act I, Sc. iii, p.30). Gloucester's reply:

Stand back, thou manifest conspirator,
 Thou that contrived'st to murder our dead lord;
 Thou that giv'st whores indulgences to sin:
 I'll canvas thee in thy broad cardinal's hat'
 If thou proceed in this thy insolence.
 (Act I, Sc. iii, p. 30)

displays his base regard for Winchester and his high Church office; the pair's unbridled insults and taunts, one to the other, reveal disorder at the highest level of the court. There is a further taunt of unsavoury behaviour in Gloucester's cry of 'Winchester goose' which is the name of a sexually transmitted disease (Act I, Sc. iii, p. 24, and note 33). After a protracted peace-

¹⁰ [This is one reason for the characterisation of Joan as an unholy person and one whose self-acclaimed virginity is not believed.]

shattering brawl, an officer and the Mayor, both presumably commoners, separate the two noble factions, but not before Winchester has warned Gloucester: 'Thy heart-blood I will have for this days's work'.(Act I, p. 25).

Another swirl of like discord takes place in the Temple Garden and is a potent vehicle of imagery which highlights inversion of the natural order and of the traditional order of court life. In an emotive manner the division of the nobles into two factions is suggested. An argument has begun inside the Temple, one of London's Inns of Court, and the participants later move outside as a token of decorum. The scene is a mark of the playwright's inventive brilliance. (Act II, Sc. iv, Note p. 147). The spilling over of the quarrel from inside to outside, from the hall of justice (originally a religious house) to the garden, is a sign that exalted words of legal appeasement may soon need to be supplanted by deeds of bloody violence. The scene is a symbol of the disquiet which has invaded the idyll of the garden of England.¹¹

The plucking of the white rose by Plantagenet indicates the truth of his claim to high nobility. Counter claims as to the truth are made by Somerset as he plucks a red rose, and as the group of aristocrats make their choice, the rose bushes become denuded. It is Vernon, a servant of Plantagenet, who makes it clear:

Stay, lords and gentlemen, and pluck no more
Till you conclude that he upon whose side
The fewest roses from the tree are cropp'd
Shall yield the other in the right opinion.
(Act II, Sc. iv, p. 48).

In the bandying of words the white rose is used as a sign of truth by those who choose it in the cause of Plantagenet, or as a sign of fear and faint-heartedness by those who choose 'bleeding' red roses as followers of Somerset. Plantagenet's rose is a 'pale and maiden blossom' and when

¹¹ Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, *op. cit.*, p. 473 In the final scene the Chorus sings the praises of the King; 'This star of England; Fortune made his sword/by which the world's best garden he achiev'd'.

Somerset is asked for his argument, he replies:

Here in my scabbard, meditating that
 Shall dye your white rose in a bloody red.
 (Act II, Sc. iv, p. 49)

There is strong emphasis on the internal strife which is growing in England and the quarrel that will 'drink blood another day' and 'will send a thousand souls to death' (Act II, Sc. iv, p. 52). The imagery of blood and the fragrance of the roses has an oxymoron ring; each protagonist seeks to prove the purity of his blood and the quarrel foreshadows the division between the future houses of York and Lancaster, which will end at Bosworth Field. The brawl involves a lawyer who gives his opinion and plucks his rose; the procedure for choosing and counting the roses has been suggested by Vernon, who is not of the nobility. This may imply another mark of disorder - a breakdown of the precedence of knighthood and of chivalry - with Vernon speaking up before others of greater rank and learning. Later Vernon carries the quarrel further, as he and Bassett take sides; Bassett for his lord the Duke of Somerset and Vernon for his noble Duke of York. Their quarrel may well symbolise their respective loyalty and homage to their masters, in a sort of *comitatus* fashion. This emphasises both the disloyalty of others of noble birth, and therefore the decline of chivalry. Moreover, the angry incident takes place in the Palace, traditionally a sacrosanct place, and a blow from Bassett sends Vernon to ask his Majesty to sanction a duel.

This scene deals with the disorder and disunity within the English Court. When Joan and the French nobles are next mentioned, their shattered state will appear even more dissolute and rotten. The imagery of the plucking of the roses and the shedding of blood has some reflections of the English internal Wars of the Roses, which ended in the Lancastrian victory at Bosworth Field. But like imagery of the blood and roses has sporadically appeared in much more recent literature on Joan.

* * *

The English generals are usually extremely brave and courageous in battle. This is emphasised by the cowardly behaviour of Sir John Falstaff who loses his Garter and his knighthood (Act IV, Sc. i, pp. 84-5), and the tardiness of the 'villain' Somerset who failed to send promised supplies to Talbot in his great need. Talbot is named 'brave Talbot' (Act IV, p.95), 'valiant Talbot', and is the terror and the 'bloody scourge' of the French (Act IV, p. 92). After the battle at Rouen when brave Bedford, 'undaunted spirit in a dying breast', is fatally wounded, the Duke of Burgundy commends Talbot:

Warlike and martial Talbot, Burgundy
Enshrines thee in his heart, and there erects
Thy noble deeds as valour's monuments.
(Act III, Sc. ii, p. 74)

Talbot is so hard pressed in the battle because of the non-appearance of help that Lord Lucy calls him 'bought and sold Lord Talbot' who 'drops bloody-sweat from his war-wearied limbs' (Act IV, p. 97). There is a Christian allusion in the continuation of the imagery; Christ is sold by Judas, and in his agony in the Garden of Gethsemene he sweat drops of blood.¹²

English bravery when faced with overwhelming odds is expressed by Shakespeare in imagery which suggests the attendants of war.

How are we parked and bounded in a pale-
A little herd of timorous English deer,
Maz'd with a yelping kennel of French curs!
If we be English deer, be then in blood;
Not rascal-like to fall down with a pinch,
But rather, moody-mad and desperate stags,
Turn on the bloody hounds with heads of steel
And make the cowards stand aloof at bay.
(Act IV, Sc. ii, p. 93)

The encompassing condition of war is further implied by the use of the huntsman's terms. English patriotism is further emphasised by the

¹² *Jerusalem Bible*, Luke, 22:6 and 22:44.

personification of their warriors as deer trapped by the cowardly French. The emphasis on English bravery and patriotism and the treachery of the French, may be seen as Shakespeare's cry of revenge to his public. History proved that even the death of Joan, 'the limb of Satan', did nothing to improve the long-term position of the English in France.

As Talbot meets his wounded son he implores him to fly from the enemy and so ensure that one of them will live to fight again, John refuses and finally the father calls his son Icarus, after the figure who in Greek and Roman myth dies after his wings are burnt by the sun. Talbot is assured by his son that they will fight together and die in pride.¹³

Into the clustering battle of the French;
And in that sea of blood my boy did drench
His overmounting spirit; and there died
My Icarus, my blossom, in his pride.
(Act IV, Sc. vii, p. 104).

The scene is fraught with the tender pride of parenthood, and of the son's pride in his family blood and of his brave father's battle achievements.

O, if you love my mother,
Dishonour not her honourable name,
To make a bastard and a slave of me!
The world will say he is not of Talbot's blood.
(Act IV, Sc. v, p. 99)

Young Tabot assures his father, and boasts that the sword of Orleans has had less effect on him than the words of his father, whose care, 'drew life-blood from my heart' (Act IV, p. 99). Play on the double meaning of blood is emphasised in Talbot's words as he reassures his son that he has avenged his wounds:

The ireful Bastard Orleans, that drew blood
from thee, my boy, and had the maidenhead

¹³ Icarus, son of Daedalus, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, viii, flew too close to the sun, his wax-fixed wings were loosened and therefore he fell to his death in the sea.

Of thy first fight, I soon encountered,
 And interchanging blows, I quickly shed
 Some of his bastard blood, and in disgrace
 Bespoke him thus: 'Contaminated, base.
 And misbegotten blood I spill of thine,
 Mean and right poor, for that pure blood of mine
 Which thou did force from Talbot, my brave boy'
 (Act IV, Sc. vi, pp. 101-102).

There is a further fiery allusion as Lord Lucy bears the dead Talbots away and hopes to raise a phoenix from their ashes. (Act IV, Sc. vii, p. 107).

* * *

In contrast to the best of English bravery and honour, the French are described with disdain as traitorous, disloyal and conjurers of base spirits. Their baseness is exaggerated, although many scraps of information, - as to: the lifting of the siege of Orleans, the joy and thanksgiving of the people, Charles' empty -voiced wish to share his crown with Joan, - are all mentioned in the chronicles.

Joan is one of three French women who are portrayed in *I Henry VI* and to her is given the most flamboyant role: all are temptresses, all are dominant and aspire to usurp the traditional world of men, but Joan is the most evil and dangerous. She transcends her sex in subtlety of wit and martial achievement and she describes how God's Mother with clear rays so transformed her 'That beauty am I blest with you may see' (Act I.Sc.ii,p.17). The messenger, in the manner of a Senecan chorus, impartially announces Joan de Pucelle as 'a holy prophetess new risen up' (Act I Sc.iv.p.30), but Talbot warns Charles and Joan in particularly gory fashion:

Puzzel or Pucelle, dolphin or dogfish
 Your hearts I'll stamp out with my horse's heels
 And make a quagmire of your mingled brains.
 (Act I, Sc. iv, p. 30)

Both are given names of ambivalent meanings: Pucelle a maid, and Puzzel, a

common drab; dolphin and dogfish, by some considered as the highest and the lowest in the 'chain of being' (Note 106, p.30). What is very clear is that Talbot speaks with expressions of complete disdain for the French; this is evidenced in his long speech where he promises to avenge the death of Salisbury, which he attributes to an 'accursed fatal hand/That hath contriv'd this woeful tragedy' (Act I Sc. iv). The city which first he saw as 'famished and enfeebled' he now threatens to watch burn and 'Nero-like, play on the lute' (p. 30).

Contrasting with Talbot's virtues and in spite of the impartial announcement of the messenger, Joan la Pucelle is described in increasingly vicious and questionable terms. Even when the Bastard brings her to Charles as a 'holy maid' it is in single combat that Charles wishes to test her. When he is overcome in this martial combat of the sexes, Charles applauds Joan:

Stay, stay thy hands; thou art an Amazon,
And fightest with the sword of Deborah.

Whoe'er helps thee, 'tis thou that must help me.
Impatiently I burn with thy desire;
My heart and hands thou hast at once subdu'd.
Excellent Pucelle, if thy name be so,
Let me thy servant and not sovereign be:
(Act I, Sc.ii, p. 18).

Charles' words sound empty and insincere nevertheless, especially when, as he and his captains leave for Orleans, his final words and those of Reignier are as negative and positive injunctions:

Reign. Woman, do what thou can to save our honours;
 Drive them from Orleans, and be immortaliz'd.
Chas. Presently we'll try: come, let's away about it:
 No prophet will I trust if she prove false.
(Act I, Sc.ii, p. 21)

Joan had claimed that Christ's Mother had helped her to defeat Charles in the combat, but in an ambiguous manner Charles gives his preference for mortal, not spiritual help. As Charles at the same time likens her to an

Amazon and to Deborah the scene is set for the contrasting behaviour of la Pucelle and for the French and English opinions of her. She is a rose with thorns. Amazons, although considered by some to be figures of courage and of fortitude,¹⁴ to others in the late Renaissance period, they were feared as being cruel and unwomanly.¹⁵ Deborah, on the other hand, was a judge and prophetess of the Old Testament who freed her people from tyranny. The juxtaposing of such dissimilar likenesses highlights the irony of Joan's title of 'holy' and 'divine'.

The three dominant women in *1 Henry VI* are referred to in terms which display their place in the scene of disorder and of the complexity of the Elizabethan thoughts on women who are not subjective to males.¹⁶ Charles refers to la Pucelle as like to the Christian mother of the great Constantine (who was also reputed to have been guided by a vision), and to Saint Philip's daughters, all virgins and prophets. Following their physical clash, it is natural for Charles to include an allusion to the mythological goddess of love and beauty: 'Bright star of Venus, fall'n down on the earth' (Act I, Sc. ii, p. 20). To Talbot she is a witch, who conquered by fear, not force and so she must be destroyed:

So bees with smoke, and doves with noisome stench
Are from their hives and houses driven away.
(Act I, v. 33).

Hannibal is credited with saving an army by having lighted torches tied to the horns of oxen, and the men followed under cover of the smoke. The fire imagery in hindsight, applied to Joan, is graphic. The recapture of Rouen, historically not accomplished in Joan's lifetime, is entered in a novel manner. In the guise of poor market folk, Joan, accompanied by soldiers, is

¹⁴ S. Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women*, The Harvester Press, 1981, p. 7. Feminine grace and fierceness, the common attributes of warrior women in literature are noted.

¹⁵ W. Schleiner, 'Divina Virago: Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon', *Studies in Philology*, 75, 2, (1978) p.163 and 167. c.f D. M. Bevington, 'The Domineering Female in *1 Henry VI*', *Shakespeare Studies*, II, 1966, p. 51.

¹⁶ G. B. Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

asked from inside the city: 'Qui la?' Her reply:

Paysans, la pauvre gens de France:
 Poor market folk that come to sell their corn.
 (Act III, Sc. ii, 69)

It is an amusing incident in which the word play is expanded when the soldier says that their 'sacks shall be a mean to sack the city' When la Pucelle and her 'practisants' are inside, she lights a torch as a sign to the others as to the best place to enter.

Puc. Behold, this is the happy wedding torch
 That joined Rouen unto her countrymen¹⁷

Bast. See Noble Charles, the beacon of our friend,
 The burning torch, in yonder turret stands,
 Chas. Now shine it like a comet of revenge,
 A prophet to the fall of all our foes.
 (Act III, Sc. ii, p. 70)

But Joan herself is the torch. By her fiery death at the stake she becomes synonymous with Rouen, although historically more than twenty years passed before Charles entered that city.

Nay, then I see our wars
 Will turn into a peaceful comic sport,
 When ladies crave to be encountered with.
 (Act II, Sc. iii, p. 42)

The 'comic sport' which Burgundy deplures as a lamentable interruption to the war is a humorous reflection of the women who historically followed the French army, and who were dealt with by Joan in a peremptory manner.

The playwright allows Joan 'with sugared words' to bring the Duke of Burgundy back into the bosom of the French, although historically this did not happen in her lifetime. First she uses flattery, then her words gradually become lyrical, and then logical, as she endeavours to win him for Charles.

Brave Burgunndy, undoubted hope of France,
 Stay, let thy humble handmaid speak to thee.

See, see the pining malady of France;
 Behold the wounds, the most unnatural wounds

Which thou thyself hast given her woeful breast.
 O, turn thy edged sword another way;
 Strike those that hurt, and hurt not those that help!
 One drop of blood drawn from thy country's bosom
 Should grieve thee more than streams of foreign gore

When Talbot hath set footing once in France,
 And fashion'd thee that instrument of ill,
 Who then but English Henry will be lord,
 And thou be thrust out like a fugitive?
 (Act III, Sc. iii, p. 69)

Her words, spoken aside, 'Done like a Frenchman - turn and turn again' (Act III, Sc. iii, p. 70), must have delighted Elizabethan and later audiences, but are incongruous from a Frenchwoman, especially after her 'haughty' words which have vanquished Burgundy. The remark mirrors another made by the enemy, English king, when he reminds his discordant nobles that they are now in France, 'a fickle, wavering nation'. (Act IV, Sc. i, p. 88)

The trio of women are all pictured as temptresses, who represent France, the enemy, and the feminine, discordant sex. Joan is the most disorderly because she is also a peasant who knows the language of men. The Duchess of Auvergne is invented in order to complete the Shakespearian scale of 'three', but her inclusion is an additional means of stressing, not the physical prowess of Talbot, but his virtue and self-control. The high-born lady, being a modest admirer of the mighty Talbot, invites him to her castle, but she has a devious plan to imprison him when once he is inside. Having heard of his dreadful deeds, she wishes to see if all she has heard is true.

Count. The plot is laid; if all things fall out right,
 I shall as famous be by this exploit,
 As Scythian Tomyris by Cyrus' death.
 (Act II, Sc. iii, p. 43)

Talbot 'winds his horn' in the fashion of Ariosto's Astolfo¹⁷ and proves his freedom to the tune of drums, the noise of artillery and the entrance of his soldiers. Unlike la Pucelle's joust with Talbot, when he like Charles was

¹⁷ L. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, (1968). Canto 15, p. 194. Astolfo is given magic horn by Logistilla, to ensure that he gets help when needed.

defeated, the Countess' contest ends as a polite exchange of words concerning his 'shadow and his substance' His virtue, which is part of his mind and shadow, allows him to resist temptation. Instead of having a prisoner, she entertains guests for refreshment. Although the Countess thinks that Talbot is as bloodthirsty as Cyrus and deserves a similar vengful death, when she is foiled in her plot, she now calls him 'victorious Talbot' and she is his 'fair lady who is honoured to feast such a great warrior in her house'

... that we may.
Taste of your wine and see what cates you have,
For soldiers' stomachs always serve them well.
(Act II, Sc. iv, p. 46)

This is one of the many references to 'appetite' or 'hunger' which may be naturally included in war scenes, and not likely to be associated with the playwright's own memories of starving in London¹⁸ The 'hunger' references include la Pucelle's words after defeating Talbot in combat 'I must go victual Orleans forthwith' and her reminder to her victim 'Go, go, cheer up thy hunger-starved men'. Most of the references seem to be deliberate elaborations of the war attendant, 'Leane Famine'.

The third dominant woman makes her appearance almost as Joan is led away in chains. The scene is a battlefield and as with the advent of the Countess of Auvergne, there is a sense of incongruity. Yet this lady does not wish to imprison anyone; she is already in the custody of the Duke of Suffolk. They engage in an amorous discourse, which is enhanced by the staccato sentences, one to the other, and which creates an atmosphere of breathless excitement:

¹⁸ J. B. Henneman, 'The Episodes in Shakespeare's I King Henry VI' *PMLA*, XV, (1900), p. 303.

Suf. She's beautiful, and therefore to be woo'd
She is a woman, therefore to be won.

...

Mar. What though I be enthralled? He seems a knight,
And will not any way dishonour me.

(Act V, Sc. iii, p. 117)

Suffolk informs Reignier, Duke of Anjou who is Margaret's father, and is fortunately in the vicinity, that he has 'with pain woo'd and won' his daughter, in order for her to be wedded to the King of England. This emphasises that the sedition among the nobles will be further exacerbated when Henry, in his weakness, is persuaded to accept Margaret of Anjou as his Queen and so dishonour his contract to marry the Duke of Armagnac's daughter.¹⁹ Margaret proclaims herself as a maid, who offers a 'pure unspotted heart' to the king. This is a humorous reaction to the very worldly dialogue in which she engages with Suffolk. Margaret has her place in history, but Shakespeare has brought her life forward by many years. She has a more prominent place in the rest of the tetralogy where her deeds sometimes prove to be far more dangerous to the English than the actual exploits of Joan. Historical records of Charles' reputed lack of action are the basis for Joan's admonishment to him:

Of all base passions, fear is most accurs'd.
Command the conquest, Charles, it shall be thine:
Let Henry fret and all the world repine.
(Act V, Sc. iii, p. 112).

There is a change in the battle fortunes and Joan shows her baseness as a witch who uses 'charming spells and periapts' and invokes the help of evil spirits. In the play these demons from under the earth appear on stage. These bizarre scenes give credence to the *Chronicle* record that the King of France had taken upon himself the name and dignity of king 'allured and intised by a deuilische wytche, and a sathanicall enchaunterese'.²⁰

¹⁹ The dalliance of Suffolk and Margaret is fictitious; there is a vague hint in the language of Hall's chronicle .

²⁰ A. S. Cairncross, Editor, *op. cit.*, (a) p. 191.

Another incident which Shakespeare has invented but which fits the pattern of ideas where Joan is the most discordant figure of three, is the denial of her father. After the tenderness and pride evoked by the incidents of the young Talbot and his father, and to a lesser degree between the Gunner and his Boy, Joan's refusal to recognise the peasant as her father puts her in the position of the most ungrateful child:

Puc. Peasant, avaunt! you have suborn'd this man
Of purpose to obscure my noble birth.
Shep. I wish some ravenous wolf had eaten thee,
Dost thou deny thy father, cursed drab?
O, burn her, burn her: hanging is too good.
(Act V, Sc. iv, p. 122)

This is not a statement of mere snobbery, but her claim to be of royal blood is a contradiction of the humility and modesty with which her history is surrounded. This repudiation of her natural father may be the precursor of the later works which claim to tell the truth of Joan's royal bastardy.

Not only does she offer her body as blood-sacrifice but she asks for leave to curse, and, in desperation, offers her soul. This is a sore contradiction of the Maid's history; even Holinshed's Chronicle, written some one hundred and fifty years after the event, stated that 'she had the name of Jesus in hir mouth in all hir businesses'.²¹ As *la Pucelle* alleges her pregnancy in order to delay the stake and confesses to unchastity, naming Charles and several French nobles as possible fathers for her unborn child, her image is completely inverted. These scenes in the play are considered by one critic to be an unforgivable insult to the memory of the Maid.²² Posed between such self debasing words, Joan is protesting her innocence and chastity, while enlarging on her 'noble birth' claim.

²¹ Cairncross, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

²² A. Gaw. *op. cit.*, p. 137.

. . . I never had to do with wicked spirits;
 But you, that are polluted with your lusts
 Stain'd with the guiltless blood of innocents,
 Corrupt and tainted with a thousand vices,
 Because you want the grace that others have,
 You judge it straight a thing impossible
 To compass wonders but by help of devils.
 (Act V, Sc. iv, p. 123).

York's enjoinder, when she has pleaded for the law's privilege because she is with child, is considered by some to be blasphemous: 'Now heaven forbend! The holy maid with child!' The remark may not have seemed so to Shakespeare but it reflects some of the religious turmoils of his times.²³ Her speech where she defends her innocence and her chastity and claims that her maiden blood 'will cry for vengeance at the gates of heaven' is a biblical allusion and has a prophetic ring. It also mirrors another speech; when she is brought before the Dauphin she declares her mission and she tells of the heavenly aid which is promised.

I Henry VI reveals narrow patriotism²⁴ and twentieth-century opinions would find it chauvanistic. By his expansion of his chronicle sources and by the inclusion of fictitious material, Shakespeare has devalued the French enemy nation and debased Joan. In this way he shows the flimsiness of the danger from outside the nation, when compared with the insidious dangers already rampant within England itself. As Joan is unceremoniously sent to the stake, unhistorically cursing the English who condemn her, the Duke of Gloucester and the Cardinal of Winchester are still at variance, whilst the other nobles connive to make a strange-sounding peace.

The ideas about Joan and the imagery are very prominent in the play and some of the departures from history are exploited in order to preserve artistic and patriotic unity. Joan's emphatic denial of her natural father strikes a bizarre note, as does the complete responsibility of the English for

²³ I. Raknem, *Joan of Arc*, p. 63.

²⁴ J.B. Henneman, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

her burning. Although Shakespeare's Joan has several faces and at times she does not resemble Jeanne d'Arc of Domremy, several later writers have focussed on the mode of her treatment in his work, if only to reject the Shakespearean image,²⁵ of her crude and magical passions and association.

²⁵ Keneally may even be a last, albeit unconscious, heir to such perceptions.

CHAPTER 3

VOLTAIRE - A MAID IN DANGER

Voltaire was a prodigious satiric and abrasive writer whose works included many genres, and a considerable mass of correspondence. He had many admirers and also a host of deriders and this latter group probably considered him to be a disciple of the devil. Therefore there exist many controversial criticisms concerning his works. And there are other factors which make difficult the gaining of a clear understanding of Voltaire's writings. Because of the diversity and number of his works, and the differing opinions of his critics, who sometimes overlook the special circumstance of time, mood, allusion and other pertinent variables,¹ a distorted picture must emerge.

The aims of his *La Pucelle d'Orleans*² and its effects upon the reading public are so sufficiently significant that it seems imperative to include it in a survey of the works on Joan of Arc. In several ways the contribution of Voltaire to the Joanine literature is unique. Notwithstanding its bawdiness, this mock epic is the only truly comic presentation of the story of the mediaeval maiden. The image of Joan projected by Voltaire is primarily intended not to defile her or to make her into a figure of fun but chiefly to be read as a weapon of satire with which to deflate the French historical tradition and the superstitions of religion,³ which together had made a pedestal of chaste reverence for Joan of Arc to stand on.

France in the eighteenth century had still some social and religious resemblance to France in the fifteenth-century. The peasants were still

¹ William F. Bottiglia, Editor. *Voltaire. A Collection of Critical Essays*, N.J. Prentice Hall, Inc. Introduction, p.2.

² Arouet Marie de Voltaire, *Oeuvres completes de Voltaire. T.9 La Pucelle d'Orleans*. A Paris, Chez Antoine Augustin Renouard. 1819. and the translation by W.H. Ireland, *The Maid of Orleans*. 2 volumes, 1822. The original or the English translation may be quoted according to which seems to be the most appropriate for the meaning to be conveyed. The respective titles will be abbreviated to *La Pucelle* and *The Maid*.

³ D.A. Aldridge, *Voltaire and the Century of Light*. Princeton University Press, 1975, p.230.

oppressed and burdened with heavy taxes, the Church was the largest landowner, corruption and intimidation were still sanctioned, and inhuman methods were still used to stamp out heresy.⁴ Voltaire was, according to a variety of accounts, a man of many capabilities, and it seems universally accepted that he was critical of the traditional intolerances of the Church and of the excessive authority of long-standing institutions. It therefore seems feasible that the legend of Jeanne d'Arc, with its facets of corrupt judges and an indifferent monarch, becomes trapped in his scathing net of ridicule, which Voltaire believed was the ideal method with which to fight tyranny.⁵ The literary target of the satire in *La Pucelle* is the epic tradition in general, and in particular the lengthy, but then widely-read, epic of Chapelain, *La Pucelle ou La France délivrée*. Ironically, this, like Voltaire's *La Pucelle d'Orleans*, has fallen into cultural and critical obscurity.

La Pucelle was begun c.1730, but it was not published in its entirety until 1762. It was passed from hand to hand in sections, often in an altered, sometimes unauthorised, version. The author himself rewrote and emended the Cantos, perhaps to confuse the authorities into whose hands the verses might fall. The Church and the monarchy were alike ridiculed. The reputation of the writer, rather than the popularity of the protagonist at this time, generated wide and curious interest; and the secrecy with which Voltaire surrounded this and some of his earlier work gave to *La Pucelle* a cloak of mysterious notoriety. The members of the elite circles in which Voltaire moved were anxious to read it. Probably at the time of first writing, Voltaire had not intended that it should become such a means of entertainment for his friends. Yet his editors state that 'it is not a moral

⁴ Voltaire, *Candide and Other Tales* translated by Tobias Smollett, Appendix by Christine North, p.357.

⁵ John E.N. Hearsey, *Voltaire*, London, Constable, 1976, pp.98 and 350. On one side of the sarcophagus of Voltaire are the words: 'If man has tyrants he ought to dethrone them'.

catechism, but a kind of epicurean song⁶. Nevertheless, his own recitals and the circulation of pirated versions ensured his continued popularity at social gatherings on the one hand, and his fear of prosecution on the other, by the authorities whom he ridiculed. Unauthorised circulation of the poem caused Voltaire on occasions to consider fleeing to Holland⁷. There is a genuine concern in Voltaire's words:

'My poor virgin' he lamented, 'becomes an infamous whore who is made to say gross and intolerable things' [5614]⁸

The portion which focuses on Joan of Arc - and there are many Cantos which have no mention of her - ridicules her virginity, and the importance which is attached to this state in the fate of France during the Hundred Years' War. Saint Denis visits a war council and when he discovers that France has suffered many calamities, including the siege of Orleans, he announces that he will search for a virgin to come to the aid of the country. The council thinks that his search will be fruitless - in fact, it considers his task to be impossible - a joke! Voltaire allows Le Richemont to advise Saint Denis of the uselessness of virginity as a weapon of war and adds that in Rome and Loreto there are fewer candles than there are saints in Paradise.

'Quand s'agit de sauver une ville,
Un pucelage est une arme inutile
Pourquoi d'ailleurs le prendre en ce pays?
Vous en avez tant dans le paradis! (T. 9, Chant I, p.25)

His satire continues in the same vein, with the lament that the officers and princes have stripped France of virgins, and that in spite of the saints in heaven, they have made more bastards than orphans:

⁶ *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, p.5.

⁷ *Hearsey, op. cit.*, p.94.

⁸ *Hearsey, op. cit.*, p.94.

Nos francs-archers, nos officiers, nos princes,
 ont des long-temps degarni les provinces.
 Ils ont tous fait, en depit de vos saints,
 plus de batards encor que d'orphelins. (Chant I, p.25.)

It is a reflection of Voltaire's own life-style, and, more generally, of the life style of many of the noble and affluent of Paris at that time, that he focuses in such a biting fashion on Joan's virginity. Her greatest task is to keep her maidenhood intact for one year. The time factor is of course an allusion to the one year which the historical Joan predicts that she will need to complete her mission.⁹

Voltaire is reputed to have modelled his mock-epic on Ariosto's style and this is only partially refuted when Voltaire 'insists that the bastard of Ariosto is not the bastard of Aretino'.¹⁰ Ludovico Ariosto has woven a romantic epic around the lives of Carolingian paladins in the struggles and the battles against the infidel, their loves and their chivalry (*Orlando Furioso*, p.21). Ariosto also mentions contemporaries and legendary characters of ancient Greece and Rome, as does Voltaire in *La Pucelle*, but his chief aim in the epic is to give delight to his readers.¹¹

The many battle encounters in his work refer to the campaigns of Charlemagne, but reflect the sixteenth century struggles between Venice and Florence. The vast tapestry of his poem is peopled by many characters, male and female, who possess vices and virtues which range from the very wicked, or magically evil, to the most heavenly virtuous, selflessly courageous or kind and charitable. Voltaire, perhaps in emulation of his model, introduces several other women into his bawdy presentation of *La Pucelle*. He was perhaps the first to bring Agnes Sorel, anachronistically, into Joanine literature. She, Dorothee and other women¹² of more worldly

⁹ Regine Pernoud, *Joan of Arc: by Herself and Her Witnesses* Trans. G. Edward Hyams, London, Macdonald, 1964, p.141.

¹⁰ Aldridge, *op. cit.*, p.230.

¹¹ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Barbara Reynolds, Introduction, p.1.

¹² c.f. Shakespeare's *I Henry VI*, where the three French women, Joan, the Countess of Auvergne and Margaret of Anjou are all females with varying degrees of dominance,

characteristics than Joan, act as foils, but their bizarre, amorous adventures, in Ariostoan style, also serve to accentuate the difficulties which the Maid endures in order to preserve her virginity for one year.

The English translation of *Orlando Furioso*¹³ gives the name of 'The Maid' to Bradamante, a Christian warrior, who possesses outstanding beauty, grace and valour, and is the equal of many knights in the ninth century jousts, which are featured in this sixteenth century romantic epic.¹⁴ She loves and is loved by Ruggiero, but during these Crusade encounters, the two rarely meet during their battle adventures, endless wanderings and separate, personal and heroic struggles. Like Joan, who in Voltaire's parody, loves Dunois, Bradamante faces the task of keeping chaste until her own marriage. So then, they are both virgins for a limited time. This durative factor, together with the manner of the assaults on the honour of Voltaire's Joan, reduces her virginity to a farcical and quirkish wonder.

Joan has three suitors in *La Pucelle*, a corded monk, a muleteer, and later Dunois. The monk, from Britain, begins to devise a scheme whereby he or the muleteer, depending on the toss of a dice, will be the first to act treacherously against her:

As he turn'd o'er his books of mystery
He found to England Joan would fatal be
That France and Britain's destiny she bore
Beneath her petticoat...*The Maid*, (p.40)

At the precise moment when the monk attempts to destroy Joan's virginity, Saint Denis arrives, and after awakening Joan from her narcotic-induced sleep, he gives her the armour of Deborah and the sword of Judith. These two virtuous Biblical heroines were not warriors, but saved their

but where the symbolic third does not succeed in restoring order to the conflict.

¹³ L. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, (*The Frenzy of Orlando*) Translated with an Introduction by Barbara Reynolds. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977.

¹⁴ L. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, Introduzione e note di Giorgio Petrocchi, Padova, Italy, 1968, p.41.

suffering countrymen from oppression, as Joan did.

The sword which graced the lovely Judith's hand,
That fair so treacherous, whose daring pride
For heav'n committed cruel homicide,
By stealing to her sleeping love in bed,
And thus defenceless, cutting off his head. (*The Maid*, p.46)

Voltaire maligned not only Joan in this burlesque poem; Biblical heroines, monarchy and nobles of England and of France, heroes and heroines of classical literature, monks of the Church, all were subjected to the sharp edge of his scathing wit. The armour and sword of Deborah and Judith may be an allegorical reference to the armour of virtue with which the early Christians clothed themselves in the battles against their evil enemies. Legends of female virgins, much as are later featured in Old English poetry, are graphic examples where unblemished purity provides the armour by which they can withstand suffering, and remain unscathed after being physically assaulted. The heroine of *Juliana* by Cynewulf is a maiden whose preternatural brawn is a transformation wrought by her virginity.¹⁵

But when celestial Jack-ass, thus he found,
On flame descanting of Love's bleeding wound,
Dunois conceiv'd that he might speak in turn;
Sages sometimes forget themselves, we learn. (p.244)

In Voltaire's epic the 'celestial Jack-ass', which Saint Denis has procured as a steed for Joan, becomes possessed by the devil (who is Grisbourdin, the monk) and so he tries to seduce Joan. Many twentieth-century readers will consider that the use of the humble ass as a vehicle of Joan's temptation is a damning insult to her proven virginity. As Ariosto sought to bring delight to his readers, so Voltaire admitted his wish to

¹⁵ John Bugge, *Virginitas*, 1975, pp. 52-53. This work cites Judith a 'holy maid' and other heroines of Old English poetry, whose vigour and inviolability is derived from virginity.

entertain. The moods of the public to whom these two works are directed would be quite different from each other. The ass is often the butt for general laughter; in the manner that Voltaire uses the ass there is a reminiscence of Bottom's association in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.¹⁶ But centuries earlier than Shakespeare's fantasy and still earlier than 'the devil's walking parody' of G. K. Chesterton¹⁷, the ass has been linked, in folklore and mythology, with heavenly visions and supernatural insight. It is related to the gods, to Yahweh, to Christ, as the fulfilment of prophecies of the Messiah, as the 'simple of heart' sent among the pagans and Jews to guide them to the vision of Peace.¹⁸ The ass's character is stated as favourable; as a preserver of virginity an ass warned Hestia when she was in danger from Priapus, and asses were decked with garlands at Vestal feasts.¹⁹ An ass is also associated unfavourably with lust, to the Greeks as seductive females, and to Juvenal as being able to satisfy the frenzied lust of women if no man was available.²⁰ The ass is the symbol of humility and patient endurance and the cross on its forehead implies that it is humility which is needed to keep one close to God.²¹

Voltaire clearly uses symbol and allegory in his introduction of the ass as one of Joan's temptors. His use of the armour and sword of other virtuous women is an allusion to Joan's virginity as an allegorical weapon against her assailants. There is evidence of Voltaire's inclination towards

¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, London, 1958, p.147. Bottom, a weaver, transformed with an ass's head by Puck, meets Titania, queen of the fairies, and, bewitched, see wisdom, love and beauty in each other.

¹⁷ G.K. Chesterton (1856-1937), 'The Donkey'.

¹⁸ A. de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, North Holland Publishing Company, pp.26-27.

¹⁹ *ibid.* p.27.

²⁰ de Vries, *ibid.* p.28. The same work also gives the ass as an inversion symbol: the Duality of Christ/Satan seen as the Twin Sons of Yahweh, forming the Wholeness of the Unconscious; the conjunction of opposites; Heaven and Hell. (p.29).

²¹ Bailey, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, Vol. 1. London, p.48.

allegoric and/or symbolic invention²² in his early work *Henriade*, and in his utilisation of the Biblical garden of Eden in *Le Mondain* and in *Candide*, where there is an insistence on the 'cultivation of the garden'.

Ariosto introduces a hippogriff into his epic, and several characters ride steeds which possess supernatural or magical gifts. The hippogriff, which the author claims to be a product of nature, is seen as an allegory of uncontrolled impulses.²³ It is ridden by Astolfo, an English prince who, accompanied by Saint John, makes a long journey to the moon in order to retrieve Orlando's brains. The devil-possessed winged ass of Voltaire, has some semblance to the hippogriff of Ariosto, if we see it as an allegory of uncontrolled impulses.

In the distorted similarities between his *La Pucelle* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* Voltaire succeeds in his intention of devaluing the whole epic tradition, and in turning virginity into an inferior, undesirable state. There are instances of mistaken identity in *Orlando Furioso*, because several of the knights have twin sisters. As they are all warriors, amusing and puzzling situations result in cases of confused chivalry, and mistaken identity. Voltaire counters with an incident where Agnes, wandering in search of her king, borrows Joan's garb, and failing in this endeavour, she is imprisoned in a convent.

By his unsavoury description of the monk, Voltaire ensures laughter from his followers but courts the disapproval of the Church. The Franciscans, the corded monks, were mendicants and known for their life of prayer and austerity, rather than for their sensual indulgence, even in the

²² Bottiglia, *op. cit.* p.104. In his use of the Biblical women and the warrior maidens of mythology, there is a reflection of the writings of Joan's contemporaries and to Shakespeare's *I Henry VI*.

²³ L. Ariosto, trans by B. Reynolds, *op. cit.* Introduction, p.79. The translator recounts some of the changes in thought concerning the romantic epic, during the Counter-Reformation. 'Harington, one of the earliest translators, found in Ariosto much more allegory than the writer intended. Romantic epics had to undergo one of three processes: they could be exorcised, satirized or allegorized.'

eighteenth century. His jibes concerning their supposed carnal lust have the aroma of his own guilt inverted and directed against the clergy.

Such was the honour of this monk of grace,
On mission journeying from place to place,
A confessor, a preacher and a spy,
And more a learned clerk in sorcery. (*The Maid*, p.40)

This eighteenth-century French philosopher had a very poor opinion of virginity and of other forms of an austere life. He gleefully permits Joan and St. Denis to consume the remnants of a pie and drink copiously of rich wine which they find in the tent of a rich nobleman (p.49). He clearly considers chastity, whether of a man or a woman, to be selfish and of no benefit to society. He ridicules virgins who, like hermits in the desert, live for their own piety and bring no joy to others.

Mais quel en est le fruit? Quel bien fait il au monde?
Malgré la sainteté de son auguste emploi
C'est n'être bon a rien de
n'être bon qu'à soi²⁴

Not only does Voltaire ridicule virginity or chastity of any kind , but he considers it to be well-nigh impossible to remain in such a state. The opening lines of Canto XX are typical of his outlook:

Fragile is man and woman too, my Friend,
Wherefore take heed, on Virtue ne'er depend,
The vase tho' fair, is only form'd of clay,
'Tis easy broken; mend it faith you may;
The enterprise is difficult and rare;
This precious vessel, to preserve with care
Untarnish'd - is a vision: that believe,
Which none attains, witness the spouse of Eve;
(*The Maid*, Canto XX).

This principle of Voltaire's social conception of morality remained and reappeared throughout his works. Not only did he satirise the extreme of piety, as visualised by virginity, but also the extremes of cruelty and

²⁴ Bottiglia, *op. cit.* p.103. The quotation cited in this essay, is from Voltaire's seventh *Discours en vers sur l'homme* (1737).

hypocrisy of which he considered the Inquisition to be guilty. He was well aware that the state of virginity had meant power and worth in other societies earlier than those of mediaeval France. In his *La Pucelle* he mentions the feats of Deborah and of Judith but in a satirical, exaggerated manner. His statement on virginity is clearly one of derision hurled against a lifestyle which is long defunct.

Voltaire in his work injects the idea that his own reason and sagacity are far superior to the simple belief of the maid in his *La Pucelle*. Both the creator and the subject of this work have extreme traits of character. Voltaire is renowned for his self-indulgence, his vicious retaliation to those whom he considered had injured him, in particular Rousseau, with whom he maintained reciprocal enmity and suspicion. In the denial of authorship of many of his works, he lied and deceived in order to live and lie again.²⁵ His violence towards his enemies can only be contrasted by his care for those who had been persecuted, or those whom Fortune had dealt with very sorely. Examples of this other side of Voltaire's nature are his kindness and succour to the families of Protestants, Jean Calas and La Barre, who lost their lives because of the fury and insane brutality of the Inquisition, and the benevolence and generosity bestowed on those who became his protégés. Historically, Joan had great compassion and forgiveness - she even forgave those who betrayed her and sent her to the stake, she was diligent in prayer, had singular piety, and was fiercely loyal, and was never found to be other than the virgin she claimed to be. She was also tireless in battle, and possessed singular frugality.

Voltaire's characterisation of Joan is primarily an outrageously funny one; it is moreover a fitting accompaniment to a rollicking evening of wine and conviviality. First she is given a 'fiery' curate and a robust and hale chambermaid as parents. (p.38)

²⁵ Bottiglia, *op. cit.* p.18.

'Twas at an inn, her age not quite sixteen,
That Joan the stable there engag'd to clean; (p.38).

There is little of the historical Joan of Arc that emerges. Many treatments portray Joan as inspiring a reluctant and tired army, as was her role in history. Voltaire, however mirthfully, depicts her as a truly bloodthirsty warrior. After her donkey steed has confessed to being demon-possessed and has duly repented, the pair soar through the air towards Orleans. The siege is raised, as history has proved but Joan's share in the battle is one which resembles a violent combat of a Boadicea, rather than one of Esther or Judith.

On Britons, swift as lightning's flash he darts
Like forked fire, that with the thunder parts;
Joan flying, overwhelm'd the country round,
With streams of blood imbruing verdant ground,
On every side, of limbs dispers'd the wrecks,
While heap'd were seen by hundreds, slaughter'd necks

...The donkey's brayings loudly roar'd alarm,
Fierce Joan extended high her vengeful arm.
Pursu'd, cut, pierced, tore, sever'd, bruis'd, and rent
All force oppos'd to Dunois' bent,
While good king Charles at pleasure aimed aright,
Shooting all those, whom fear had put to flight.

There is nothing left of the virtuous maid in Voltaire's burlesque, *La Pucelle*. In defence of this treatment, his followers stress the lightheartedness of the work and claim that he has elsewhere treated Joan seriously and with the respect that is due to her. In a different work he certainly writes of her in a more serious vein, but he repeats the account of her work at an inn.²⁶

Cette Jeanne d'Arc, que le vulgaire croit une bergere, etait en effet une servante d'hotellerie, 'robuste, montant chevaux a poil, comme dit Monstrelet, ' ...

²⁶ Voltaire, *Essai sur les Moeurs* 11, Paris, 1878, p.48.

Her battle adventures reveal her as being excessively vengeful and her chastity is retained only by the intervention of Saint Denis. Charles is caricatured; the weakness and love of pleasure with which he is usually attributed are exaggerated to fit the burlesque qualities of the parody. But the poem ends with a gleeful proclamation of her virginity, a state which she fully intends to lose when she keeps her promise to Dunois.

History has had a hand in events in the after-lives of Voltaire and Joan of Arc. They share a death-date, 30 May. In 1878, after France was defeated by Prussia, violence broke out in the streets when the crowds, now fiercely in favour of Joan as a political heroine, turned against those revolutionaries who remembered Voltaire, for his radicalism and anticlericalism.²⁷ Biographies, with notes from the *Proces*, and fictional works alike report that it was not possible to burn Joan's heart and entrails after her remains and bones had all turned to ashes.²⁸ Voltaire was buried in the Pantheon in 1791, but when his heart, which had become the property of the nation, was placed in his tomb in the mid nineteenth century, the coffin was found to be ransacked and the body was missing. It was then that it was revealed that reactionaries, years earlier, had removed the bones and thrown them in a hole.²⁹ Voltaire's body was finally treated with ignominy as were Joan's ashes.

Voltaire's work on the life of Joan of Arc is irresistibly funny, perhaps obscene, but above all it is extremely clever in his use of symbol and allegory. But it tells little of the life of one who was then acknowledged in France as a holy woman. She was later sanctified by the Church whose doctrines Voltaire had so often assaulted, although he had supposedly deep

²⁷ Warner, *op. cit.* . p.236.

²⁸ R. Pernoud, *Joan of Arc*, p.233; c.f. V. Sackville-West, p.325.

²⁹ Hearsey, *op. cit.* p.353.c.f. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14, U.S. 1967, p.744, which gives the additional information that his remains were placed near to those of Rousseau.

religious convictions.³⁰ Perhaps the work reveals more of the writer, Voltaire and his times, than it does of the warrior maiden, Joan of Arc. Yet, in its fantastic treatment of the maid, it may have influenced some later writers, who sought to find some weak, though colourful, link in a short life of purity and glory.

³⁰ Peter Gay, *Voltaire's Politics*. The poet as Realist, N.Y. 1965, p.p. 240-241.

CHAPTER 4

A MAID RECLAIMED

The nineteenth-century was very new when Friedrich von Schiller wrote his *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*.¹ The form of this romantic tragedy owes much to the style of German Romanticism which reigned in 1801. Not surprisingly, the drama in its entirety did not survive in general popularity beyond this period, although certain elements were later imitated. Yet Schiller is acclaimed as the first dramatist to treat the medieval heroine with dignity and compassion.² This gentler presentation is probably a reaction to Shakespeare's *Henry VI 1* where Joan is pictured as an immoral creature, albeit a wonder-worker, and in reaction too, to Voltaire, whose long mock heroic poem parodies Joan's story in a burlesque, biting manner. After he had completed his *Die Jungfrau*, Schiller wrote the poem 'Die Pucelle von Voltaire und die Jungfrau von Orleans', in which he refers to Joan as the 'noble image of mankind'. This verse also contains the lines: 'Wit wages war on beauty/ And has no faith in angels and in God.'³ These sentiments indicate that Schiller was not only incensed by the degrading picture that emerged from the treatment of Voltaire's ribald wit, but that he was equally angered by Voltaire's debasement of the ideals for which Joan stood.

Schiller did, however, portray Joan in some of the ways in which her contemporaries described her; as Amazon or virgin warrior, as prophetess, and additionally as a Virgin Mary figure, one who intercedes for France and helps to restore order from the chaos.⁴ Two contemporaries of Schiller praised this work most highly: Goethe was unrestrained in describing its

¹ Friedrich von Schiller, *Mary Stuart. The Maid of Orleans. Two Historical Plays*. translated by Charles E. Passage. N.Y.(1961) Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. Page Nos. in parenthesis will refer to this translation.

² Schiller, *op. cit.* Introduction, p.iv.

³ Quoted in Ingvald Raknem, *Joan of Arc in History, Legend and Literature*, Scandinavian University Books (1971), pp. 98-99.

⁴ Deborah Fraioli, 'The Literary Image of Joan of Arc: Prior Influences' *Speculum*, Vol.56, 1981, p.811 and p.825.

beauty and excellence, while Carlyle declared it to be one of the finest of modern dramas.⁵

As twentieth-century readers of Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans* are usually familiar with other works on the subject, and perhaps also with the translations of historical documents, it is easy for them to observe that the historical basis of the drama is almost non-existent. Many anachronisms bring historical characters to the scene years out of step with the actual time, while other characters are invented and battles and military encounters are ignored or misplaced. The exalted language of the drama includes: descriptions of the Divine and the supernatural and the Christian God; the gods of the ancient people and the associated magical elements. Although the playwright ignores some of the preliminary details, such as the visits to Vaucouleurs and the gaining of the confidence of Baudricourt, he anticipates the peace between Philip of Burgundy and Charles and makes the former a central and highly vocal figure in the drama.

Agnes Sorel is presented as the favourite at the Court of Charles, although in 1429 she was historically about seven years old. Isabeau the queen and mother of Charles, is also a warrior, and wears male clothing. Joan's father has been portrayed differently by various dramatists and writers, but Schiller gives him the task of publicly denouncing his daughter as a suspected sorceress on two occasions. Some maintain that the worst departure from history in Schiller's *Maid* is when Joan looks at and sees Lionel, and realizes that she too, like Agnes, is very vulnerable. It is the worst, not only in the sense of its flagrancy, but because it is in total disagreement with the (historical) legend. The sudden flash of shame and guilt results in Joan's unhistorical death on the battlefield.

The Prologue begins with Joan's father arranging for his three

⁵ Schiller. *Schiller's Maid of Orleans*, translated with an Introduction, Appendix and Notes by Major-General Maxwell. London, Walter Scott Ltd. pp. Introduction, vii and viii.

daughters' marriages, because 'in war every woman must have a protector.'(p.3) The war in France is horrendous and chaotic, and the country is split by the personal vengeance of the Duke of Burgundy and the vindictiveness of Isabeau who, together, have allied themselves with England, the enemy invader. One historian, at least, states that patriotism was evident in France at least in an earlier century, but nationalism was born much later.⁶ In this unnatural alliance, however, there is the sense of members of a family banding themselves in warfare against another; there is the picture of Philip of Burgundy, who is rich and prosperous, scheming to supplant his sick, mad uncle. And the crowning mischief in this misalliance is that of Isabeau denying her own son!

When Joan refuses Raimond, her suitor, a split in the family is created; Thibault, her father, regards this refusal as completely unnatural and is outraged as he reminds Joan:

...The flower of your body is in bloom,
 And still I wait but vainly for the flower
 Of tender love to break forth from the bud
 And ripen joyously to golden fruit.
 O, this can never please me, and it shows
 A serious aberration made by Nature! (Prologue p.5)

But Raimond, her Schiller-invented suitor, sees in Joan a woman beyond reproach, untroubled by the disturbed earth, as she gazes down from the mountains:

...And from the freedom of the heath she dreads
 Descent beneath the lowly rooves of man
 Where narrow cares are the inhabitants.
 ...She seems to signify some higher thing, and
 I often feel she comes from other ages. (Prologue, p.5)

These words of Raymond reveal that Schiller has made Joan a

⁶ Johan Huizinga, *Men and Ideas, History, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, London, 1960, p.238. This historian states that whereas patriotism was evident in France at an earlier date, Joan of Arc brought a new spirit, with her patriotic love, which, like her faith, was primitive.

combination of (folk-heroine) beliefs which stretch from ancient antiquity down to the nineteenth century.⁷ She is: fierce in battle; wise in her prophecies, as were some famous medieval mystics; and pious and charitable as was Joan historically. While Raimond points out that there is the peace of Heaven around the Fairy Tree, Thibault is adamant that his daughter has a sinful pride - the same pride for which the angels fell.(p.7). He has seen her in his dreams three times, sitting on the throne at Rheims with a diadem of seven stars and a sceptre with three lilies. This vision of Joan, which her father has had in three separate dreams, reveals her in an exalted position, filled with the pride which is associated with Joan's mission and its part-fulfilment. Thibault, her earthly father, feels cast aside and is filled with confusion. What he imagines is her sinful pride, perhaps associated with her glittering position at court, is in fact, an enactment of an important part of her obedience to the angel of God's command. The pride for which the angels fell, was rejection of, not obedience to God.⁸

Three is repeated in the drama, probably as a theological and spiritual symbol; Joan's father has three dreams of her richly adorned person, when she carries three lilies; the Virgin who gave Joan the message announces it three times, etc. In early numerology, three is the symbol of the synthesis of one added to two which are in conflict; i.e. the addition indicates the resolution of the discordant note.⁹ Besides being part of the emblem of France, the lilies indicate the purity of Joan, which will become essential to the attainment of the reunion of France with the rightful king.

The superstition and the 'grim horror'(p.6) of the spirits' realm, as displayed by Joan's father, is contrasted with Raimond's adulation. This is a

⁷ I. Raknem, *op.cit.*, p.116.

⁸ Joseph F. Delaney, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XII, N.Y. Robert Appleton Company(1911), p.405, Pride is one of the seven deadly sins, but satanic pride is not often verified in human beings.

⁹ J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, London, 1962, p.232.

reversal of the expected natural order, where the supposed loving father, intolerant of his daughter's piety, sees evil, whereas her rejected suitor sees only good. Significantly, Joan remains quite silent as she does when Thibault makes his second denunciation and accuses his daughter of having the mark of the devil and of dealing in hellish crafts (pp.102-3).

The driving force which spurs Joan to battle-glory is the Divine mission announced to her by the Virgin Mary, not by Michael the Archangel, as in the historical records. The announcement includes the need for chastity, with which her life must in future be guarded. Joan will become an Amazon figure, a Pallas Athena, whose martial valour is to be strengthened by a magic helmet, given to her by Bertrand, a local farmer, who in turn has had it pressed on him by a mysterious gypsy woman. Divine and magical elements, therefore, combine to be Joan's support during her adventures. The language of the drama also shows duality, where the Christian content is expressed in an exalted form reminiscent of Greek, or of early Germanic oral poetry.

The helmet which, when she first wore it, enabled Joan to speak with knowledge of the political and military situation, now affords her aid in battle. Intermingled with this magical help is her virginal dedication which turns her into a maid with a holy mission, and so able to prophesy. As she said farewell to the childhood scenes she holds dear, the final words indicate the blending of the Divine and the magical in her thoughts.¹⁰

God has vouchsafed to guide me by a sign,
He sent the helmet her, it comes from Him,

Its iron touches me with strength divine,
I have the courage of the Cherubim; (Prologue, p.15).

¹⁰ One may compare this with certain parts of T. Keneally's *Blood Red, Sister Rose*. Sydney, 1974, especially p.45 and p.49. When Jehannette first meets the 'confraternity' the author relates how the priest reads the Gospel of St. John each year over the Gooseberry Fountain, which is an ambiguous place. And later, after their little sacrifice, Bertrand reads the prophecies of Merlin.

Schiller eschews the harrowing trial scenes and Thibault becomes the substitute for the historical judges, as he initially issues warnings of her pride and offers prayers, and finally denounces in Joan the qualities which leads to her destruction.

Another departure from history reveals Joan as already a successful soldier, as she meets the King at the court at Chinon, where Charles, Dunois and members of the Council are despondent about the disastrous state of the war. The lack of funds to pay the Scottish troops, and the imminent surrender of Orleans, now that the stalwart Saintrailles has been killed, exacerbate their concern. Charles, and Burgundy, as we shall see later, have been painted by Schiller as much more amiable creatures than history allowed. A messenger announces that there has been a victory, that the tide of war has turned and Joan, the Amazon, approaches the castle triumphantly.

During this interview she appears as a prophetess and a seer. She reveals to Charles his inmost thoughts and private prayers:

Three prayers there were that you addressed to God,
 Mark well now, Dauphin, if I name them to you.
 You pleaded thus in your first prayer to Heaven:
 If property unjust clung to this crown,
 If any other grievous sin not yet
 Atoned and dating from ancestral times
 Had summoned forth this war so rife with tears,
 To take you as a victim for your people
 And to pour forth upon your head alone.(p.35)

Joan later asks leave to answer the herald who has been sent from the English to offer a compromise, in order to still the bloodshed. When the Herald is asked from whom he came and he replies that it was the British field commander, Salisbury, Joan cries vehemently: 'Herald, you lie! That Lord does not speak through you. Only living persons speak, not dead men'(Act 1, p.40). Joan tells the Herald that on his return journey he will

encounter the procession with Salisbury's corpse. When asked the nature of his commission, the Herald knowingly retaliates with:

If you are able to reveal things which
Are hidden, you know this before I tell it. (Act 1, p.41)

The legendary sword - with Arthurian overtones - is brought from the churchyard at Fierbois, after Joan has advised Charles as to its resting place. She tells him that it may be recognised by the three gold lilies engraved upon the blade.(p.39). Thus Joan is a 'seeress' as she has claimed:

...She calls herself a seeress and a God-
appointed prophetess, and promises
To save Orleans before the moon has changed. (pp.33-34)

Joan is simultaneously presented as a saintly seer and a follower of Diana. When she is graciously welcomed as a holy and most wondrous maiden, by the Archbishop(p.36) and by Dunois who 'trusts her eyes before her miracles'(p.38), and by Charles who says'...holy maiden be the leader of my army'(p.39), she gradually tells the story of how she left her home at Domremy. She recounts how the Holy One, dressed also as a shepherdess, but bearing a sword and banner, had told her that the Lord has called her to another mission. Joan claims her ignorance of battle combat, but is told:

...A virgin without stain
May bring to pass all wondrous things on earth
If she will but withstand all earthly love. (Act I, p.37)

When later Joan invades the enemy camp, the battle cry of her followers 'God and the Maiden' suggests that she, and they, have confused or conflated the Virgin, who appeared to her three times, with herself.

* * *

Schiller's *Maid of Orleans* has no mention of the Queen, the wife of

Charles, but Agnes Sorel, well ahead of her time, is installed as the King's beloved.¹¹ Because the country was in dire need of funds she was eager at that time to give her jewels and to pawn her castles to pay the soldiers. She is idealised by Schiller who has Charles say of her:

She is as nobly born
As I, the royal blood of the Valois
Itself is not more pure. She would adorn
The first throne in the world - but she disdains it.
She only wants to be my love and known
As such. (Act I. p.22)

Separately, the two, Agnes and Joan, have already become known to the audience in moments which reveal their individual and excellent qualities. The art of Schiller has created the characters of both as admirable. They have some likeness to each other, despite the dissimilarity of their aims, and of their station in life. Both are possessed by the fire of love; Joan by Divine Love, which includes her holy mission to which she is dedicated, and Agnes by the earthly love of the King.

In an English stronghold the English commanders, Lionel and Talbot, with Philip of Burgundy, are disgruntled by their recent defeat, and dismayed that they have been 'routed by a woman'(p.42). The atmosphere is one of disharmony and the Burgundian and the Englishmen each attempt to blame the other for the disaster. It seems that the bickering of the English will propel Philip of Burgundy back to Charles.

What am I doing, fighting here against
My country? If I must serve thankless people
I want to do so for my native King.(Act II, p.44)

Isabeau the queen mother appears as a peace maker, assuring each of the folly

¹¹ Janet Shirley, Translator. *A Parisian Journal. 1405-1449*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, pp.366-67. Under the date 1448, there is an interesting reference to the self-styled 'Fair Agnes' which is as follows: 'In the last week of April a young woman came to Paris who was said to be the acknowledged mistress of the King of France, clean contrary to all faith and right, and contrary to all loyalty to the good Queen he had married'.

of separateness. To support this idea she states her intention, stressing that the Dauphin, who was unable to obtain help from God, had enlisted the wiles of Satan.

A victory maiden leads the foeman's army,
I will lead yours, and I will stand you in
The stead of maiden and of prophetess.(Act II, p.46)

Burgundians and English join together in derision against Isabeau, as they find a common reason for their failure. Lionel's remark that they wish to fight with proper weapons, not with women, is followed by two more derogatory ones:

Talbot: Go! Everything has gone downhill since you
Came to this camp.No virtue is in our weapons.

Burgundy: Your presence can accomplish nothing good.
The warrior is scandalized by you. (Act II. p.46)

They each continue to berate her, claiming that their cause is honourable and worthy, and that her treatment of the Dauphin is unnatural and is to be deplored by both God and man. Isabeau despises them for hypocrites and deceivers, and her next words are even more revealing, because they are self-denunciatory:

I do have passions and warm blood like any
Other woman, and I came to live
As Queen, not just to seem one, in this country.
Was I to give up joy because the curse
Of destiny had yoked my vivid youth
Together with a madman of a husband?

...The sluggish blood flows thickly in your veins,
Of pleasure you know nothing, only fury.
And this Duke, who has hovered his life long
Between the parts of Good and Evil, can not
Hate from his heart, nor from his heart feel love.
(Act II, p.48)

Isabeau ends this tirade by asking for Lionel to accompany her to Melun,

because he is pleasing to her. His less than noble reply to this ignoble request is that they will send to Melun the handsomest French lads they can capture.(p.49)

The remarkable Joan has foils in the other two. The life of each of the three women is controlled by love; Joan has the love of God; Agnes has the love of man, in a natural, if an irregular union; and Isabeau is lecherous in her pleasures, unnatural in her male dress, (as is Joan), and has complete love of self. Lionel, Talbot and Burgundy turn to discussing how they will take the enemy by surprise at break of day. Talbot wishes to engage the devil of a maiden in a hand to hand encounter. Lionel himself intends to take the ghost alive. (Act II, pp.49 - 50) By doing so, without the shedding of blood, he hopes to dispel the terror which his soldiers have suffered when expected to confront the Maid and her forces. Lionel affirms that he will capture her and carry her 'for the troops delight, into the British camp.'(p.50) He will thus prove the Maid to be a woman and not a ghost. But sleep must come first, and already Joan, Dunois, La Hire and their men are inside the English camp.English soldiers flee in terror as they fear Joan as a thing from hell.

Who is she who is thus invincible
This terror-goddess who all of a sudden
Reverses battle fortunes and transforms
A shy and coward pack of deer to lions? (Act II, p.52)

These are Talbot's words; he can only conclude from her success and influence that Joan uses the devil's power. In this time of confrontation with the enemy, she assumes the full strength, courage and skill of an Amazon. Schiller's Maid does not then endure death by fire, but the imagery of fire is used in the poetry, particularly as the Maid reaches the height of her warrior ability and finds great joy in her physical powers. Montgomery is confronted and has nowhere to flee. He sees 'the awful Maiden dealing deadly blows about her like the fury of the fire':

O woe! What do I see? There comes the awful Maiden!
 Out of the flames there, darkly gleaming, she arises
 As from the jaws of Hell a spirit of the night
 Comes forth.-(Act II, p.52)

Joan scoffs as Montgomery pleads for mercy and begs to be ransomed, and her words savour of Homeric battle poetry:

For a dread and binding compact obligates me to
 The Spirit Realm, the Realm severe, inviolable,
 To slaughter with my sword all living things despatched
 To me death-consecrated by the god of battles. (pp.53-54)

After despatching Montgomery, the Duke of Burgundy appears, and La Hire and Dunois intervene. Joan has no wish for French blood to be spilled, so she now speaks diplomatically, with the hope of making peace. In exalted alliterative verse, she magnanimously offers to share with Burgundy, the 'lovely laurel's freshly gathered branches.'(p.58) Earlier, Burgundy had called her the 'wanton Circe'(p.57) who has shamelessly changed Dunois and La Hire, but now his heart gradually turns to remorse. He realises 'that the force of *magic* is of Heaven's kind' and, as the 'storm- cloud of his anger is melting from his brow as ears of dew'(p.60), they all embrace. Joan has now reached her Amazon heights and combined with this the art of peace weaver.

The peacemaking in which Joan so heartily engages is as extreme an undertaking as her pursuit of battle. Proof of this is her insistence that Burgundy, having become reconciled to Charles, must also forgive and accept Du Chatel, the supposed murderer of Philip's father. Like Shaw, who uses Dunois for this purpose, ¹² Schiller puts into the mouths of Joan and the Archbishop long speeches denouncing war and its evils. (pp. 67 and 71)

By Joan's skill and inspired powers of persuasion, Charles' kingdom is now whole once more, and, as he ennoble her with the emblem of the lilies,

¹² Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan*, Penguin, 1946, p.109.

the emblem alike of France and of purity, he voices his concern that she must choose a noble husband. Dunois and La Hire both declare their love for her; they are 'equal in heroes' virtue and the fame of war'. She refuses both and in answer to Agnes' solicitude, that she might wish to have a womanly discussion about her choice, Joan replies:

I have been summoned for a different task
Which no one but a maiden can perform.
I am a warrior of the highest God
And may not be the wife of any man. (Act III, pp.73-74)

Charles advises her that, when arms are at last put to rest, the Spirit may not speak to her, and that her heart, which Heaven now so completely occupies, will turn to an earthly lover. Joan is adamant that this will not be, that when her mission is complete, she will no longer have need to be at the Court.

Woe would betide me if I took my God's
Avenging sword in hand and in my vain
Heart bore affection for an earthly man
It would be better had I not been born! (Act III, p.75)

Joan is soon involved in the battle action as the enemy are once again advancing. The Black Knight warns her to leave her mission whilst she is still triumphant, to turn back even before the King is crowned at Rheims. As she seeks to engage him in fight, after he has delivered his unheeded warning, he disappears into the earth. She thinks he is 'some rebellious spirit/ Arisen out of the abyss of the fire' (p.82).

Her refusal to heed his warning presages her next hand-to-hand battle encounter which is the one that proves her undoing. She is quite unprepared for the assailing love she feels as she looks at Lionel. It wounds her to know, that she too, like Agnes in her love for Charles, and also like Isabeau in her self-love, can find deep pleasure in love. Therefore she falters and is ashamed and allows him to escape, because she cannot kill him.

Ilse Graham asserts that when Joan feels the pangs of love it is not the

germ of moral disease, as is implied, but the beginning of moral health.¹³ This may be rather too modern an assumption and not the one which Schiller intended. The suggestion that Joan found wholeness in her realisation of love may be contradictory. Joan is not an ordinary woman but a superior being who is idealised and romanticised by Schiller. Historically, she will become a saint. The suggestion that falling in love makes Joan a morally healthy person is to diminish her purity, which is also part of her legend.

Certainly she realises that for Agnes Sorel love is a unity of the particular and the universal and that for herself the elements pertaining to these various aspects of love are in conflict.¹⁴ It is indeed doubtful that her so-called rejection of earthly love, as asserted by Graham, would make her less whole. All accept that Joan is completely holy. A few centuries earlier, 'whole' and 'holy' were similar in meaning.¹⁵ It is perhaps her lack of understanding of herself and her absorption in her Divine mission which causes her to assume guilt and shame where there is only fleeting temptation. Her love of God includes earthly love, but she cannot allow earthly love to become separate and supplant the love of God.

Her feeling of guilt at the time of the coronation is of a two-fold kind. She imagines that she has been unfaithful to her vow, when for one fleeting moment she has allowed herself to glance, with love, at a man. For this she

¹³ Ilse Graham, *Schiller's Drama, Talent and Integrity*. London, Methuen and Co. Ltd. (1974), p.184.

¹⁴ I.Graham, *op. cit.* p.187.

¹⁵ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition, revised and edited by C.T.Onions. Oxford Clarendon Press, 1944, Holy; [O.E. hali;] A derivative of the adjective *hailo* O.E. *hal*, whole, hale. free from sin and evil, morally and spiritually unsullied, intact, saintly, etc. Vol. I. p.913. *Whole*; wh. appears first in 15th century. uninjured, unwounded, sound. O.E. *hal*, (see Hail, Heal). *ibid* Vol. II. p.2422. c.f. W.W. Skeat. *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, second ed. Oxford, Clarendon Press, MDCCCLXXXVIII, p. *Holy*, sacred, pure, sainted(E). This word is nothing but M.E. *hool* (now spelt whole) with suffix *y*... A.S. *hal* whole; with suffix *ig*; (Mod. Eng.-y). So the original sense is 'perfect' or excellent.

feels ashamed and bewildered. She is ashamed also, because the man is one of the enemy, whom she has allowed to escape. Joan has a double guilt: in addition to betraying her vow to God, she feels she has been a traitor to the King.

Her lack of self-understanding causes her to keep quiet during her father's tirade as when he accuses her of sorcery, of having dealings with the devil, and of deceiving the King. She shrieks his name as she perceives him in the crowd, and his denunciation appears to be even more deadly as it follows the acclaim and the praise of the King and his followers:

Yes, her miserable father
 Begetter of this wretched child, impelled
 By God's decree now to denounce my very daughter.
 (Act IV, p.102)

are his opening words. The horrible accusations are eventually believed, because Joan refuses to defend herself. This father-accusation is a far cry from history, it is true, but nevertheless Schiller uses an unhistorical event aesthetically. To make her father her judge, her accuser and the one who condemns her, is, some say, too much of a literary extravagance and a most unnatural happening. Yet it follows Joan's actual trial, in that it substitutes her natural father for the 'fathers' of the Church. History is followed also in the manner of the desertion, when all her friends and followers, excluding the faithful Raimond, to some extent believe in the accusation. Her silence, which is taken to be self-incrimination, has a parallel in the actual trial. When the English are afraid that Joan will escape death, Cauchon answers that she will condemn herself.

Joan's banishment and subsequent wanderings, accompanied only by the rejected Raimond, are reminiscent of similar happenings in Greek epics and in Anglo-Saxon and older Germanic poems, where exile and

banishment were dreaded forms of punishment.¹⁶ When Joan realises that even the peasant charcoal-burners are afraid of her evil presence, and especially when she discovers that Raimond, because of her silence, now considers her to be guilty, she is despondent.

Raimond: But Heaven too vouched for your guilt,
 Joan: The Heavens spoke and therefore I was silent.
 Raimond: What? With one word you could have cleared yourself
 And yet you left the world in dismal error?
 Joan: It was an act of Providence, no error.(Act V.p.110)

Joan's time of banishment in the wilderness is a time of purification of herself and her world, and she becomes assured of her destiny. Therefore she is quite ready to surrender herself to Isabeau in the English camp. With Lionel once more face to face she is now not a guilty, confused maiden, but Joan in chains, imploring God to break the chains as he did for Samson.

Joan's acceptance of her death, surrounded by her own people, is her final effort to help France and the King. She is again the Virgin Mary figure in the full sense. As the Maid she led the army to victory, but now, in dying, she gives her life for her people which is love for others in its truly whole sense. In her last heroic act, she transcends the gap between the human world and the divine absolute.

In Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans* there is a blending of the spiritual and the magical elements which is different from most other Joan presentations, but which is generally in harmony with the exalted language of the poetry. There are many departures from history which at times seem regrettable: Thibault's accusations against Joan; her falling in love; and her several suitors. These deviations detract from the Maid's noble character, and they are quite contrary to the legend. Other Joan works and the evidence

¹⁶ Major General Maxwell, Translator, *Schiller's Maid of Orleans*, Introduction, p.xi. This translator states that there are distinct traces of Homeric modes in parts of the drama, and that Schiller was known to have been assiduously reading the Homeric epics at the time he wrote his drama.

at the retrial give the impression that although Joan was not personally unbecoming, she had no sexual attraction. But Schiller was not writing history , and so his inventions and anachronisms were intended to enhance his artistic purpose. The language is in parts more Christian, while in others it indicates that Joan has affinity with the epic heroines of antiquity.

Bernard Shaw said that Schiller's Joan had 'not a single point of contact with the real Joan nor with any mortal woman'.¹⁷ Much of the Preface to Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* is written in order to explain and enhance the veracity of his own play. His confirmed opinion is summed up in his words to the reader: 'It contains all that need be known about her'¹⁸ The criticism and the commentaries that have emanated from Shaw's play and its Preface indicate that many hold differing opinions regarding various historical, religious and social issues. Amazons, biblical heroines, pious prophetesses, were the women on whom Schiller, and some of Joan's contemporaries, modelled their writings on Joan. In comparison with Shaw's Joan who is a rational child of nature, and succeeds because of her own uninspired genius, these earlier models may appear to be not mortal, but legendary and mythical. Schiller's introduction of the Virgin as Joan's early guide and mentor may have appeared unnecessary to Shaw. But the analogy to the Virgin's own Annunciation is striking, especially in the words:

A virgin without stain
May bring to pass all wondrous things on earth
If she will but withstand all earthly love. (p.37)

Shaw's accusation concerning Schiller's Joan is somewhat unjust and is governed by his personal opinion. Individual artistic taste is a great influence when characterising fictionally such a figure as Joan. One critic

¹⁷ Bernard Shaw, *op. cit.*, Preface,p.23.

¹⁸ Shaw, *op.cit.*, p.41.

suggests that it might be beneficial to reiterate Shaw's words:

...the fashion in which we think changes like the fashion of our clothes
... and that it would be impossible for most people to think otherwise
than in the fashion of their own period.¹⁹

It is, however, more than a mere change in fashion which makes the treatment of Schiller so different. In considering the works on Joan it may indicate a distinct division between realism and idealism, with the work of Schiller marking the extreme form of the latter. His work ignores the facts and probabilities as it probes for the hidden truth and the mythopoic function.

X

¹⁹ B. Shaw, *op.cit.* Preface p.40. and quoted in John J. Blanknagel, 'Saint Joan' and 'Jungfrau von Orleans' *J.E.G.P.* Vol 25, 1926,p.392.