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► To cite this version:

Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec. “Go West Young Joan!” Mark Twain’s Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc (1896). *Perspectives médiévales*, 2016, *Le Moyen Âge en Amérique du Nord*, 37, 10.4000/peme.9625 . hal-01861854

HAL Id: hal-01861854

<https://hal.science/hal-01861854>

Submitted on 26 Aug 2018

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Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/peme/9625>

DOI : 10.4000/peme.9625

ISSN : 2262-5534

Éditeur

Société de langues et littératures médiévales d'oc et d'oïl (SLLMOO)

Ce document vous est offert par Université de Caen Normandie



Référence électronique

Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec, « “Go West Young Joan!” Mark Twain’s *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896) », *Perspectives médiévales* [En ligne], 37 | 2016, mis en ligne le 01 janvier 2016, consulté le 26 août 2018. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/peme/9625> ; DOI : 10.4000/peme.9625

Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 26 août 2018.

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"Go West Young Joan!" Mark Twain's *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896)

Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec

- 1 Mark Twain's historical novel *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* by The Sieur Louis de Conte was serialized in 1895, then published in 1896¹. To the surprise of the public who discovered only belatedly that the text was not what it said it was – Jean-François Alden's translation into contemporary English of the medieval French testimony of The Sieur Louis de Conte – the greater shock was that the author, an avowed skeptic, could portray so religious a subject. Accustomed to the comic talent of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, the general reader was not yet aware that Mark Twain had been enthralled by the story of Joan of Arc as an adolescent. Only toward the end of his life did she rise to the visible surface of the author's preoccupations, with his public declaration of admiration in the 1903 essay "Saint Joan of Arc" (first published in *Harper's Monthly* in December 1904).
- 2 Twain's late-revealed interest in Joan must have been a bit of a surprise. During the Dreyfus Affair Twain and Charles Péguy were both composing literary works about Joan of Arc that reflected their own political and social commitments. Both writers supported Dreyfus and those who took a stand to defend him such as Zola, and for Péguy, Bernard Lazare. Like the published volume in 1896, the earlier serialized version of Twain's version of Joan in *Harper's Magazine* (beginning April 1895) never mentioned Twain's name. Perhaps Péguy had heard that an American had started writing about Joan of Arc, but no one knows for sure – if so, would that have stimulated his own work? Both Twain and Péguy depict Joan as an example for a country and a people in troubled times: whether in the medieval days of the hundred years war or the period contemporary to those writers, the so-called Belle Époque which was also the time of savage American Expansionism. In Europe, the Dreyfus Affair was one culminating event in a prolonged period of anti-Semitism (where Drumont and Maurras invited their followers to meetings

around statues of Joan of Arc). In contrast, Joan's love of her country was an example to be followed, because she was, as Twain put it, "the genius of patriotism".

- 3 After being serially published, the collected volume of Twain's Joan, published in 1896 appeared as part of the *Collected Works of Twain*, but in both cases, multiple artifices were used to mask the identity of the real author, as well as to promote the credibility of the narrative. Before the narrative even begins, the reader must work through layer upon layer of artifice: 1) the title page: "Personal Recollections of/ Joan of Arc/ by The Sieur Louis de Conte/ (Her Page and Secretary)/ Freely Translated out of the Ancient French into Modern English from the Original Unpublished Manuscript in the National Archives of France/ by Jean François Alden", 2) the Translator's preface, 3) the Translator's note, and 4) the Sieur Louis de Conte's address to his great-great-nephews and nieces. There is also a list of "Acknowledgements, Authorities examined in verification of the truthfulness of this narrative", which are presumably those used by translator Alden. These include Quicherat, Wallon, Michelet, and the published transcription of Joan's trial².

- 4 The historical veracity of the narrative seems established beyond doubt by the credibility check in "The Translator's preface":

The Sieur Louis de Conte is faithful to her official history in his Personal Recollections, and thus far his trustworthiness is unimpeachable; but his mass of added particulars must depend for credit upon his own words alone (p. 23).

- 5 And the narrative itself begins with similar insistence on veracity:

This is the year 1492. I am eighty-two years of age. The things I am going to tell you are the things which I saw myself as a child and as a youth" (p. 27).

- 6 So the beginning is quasi-biblical, similar to an evangelist establishing credibility for a gospel (see John 20:30-31, Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-2). It is a bit of a surprise to find Mark Twain, Samuel Clemens, the avowed atheist, using such biblical conventions. But perhaps this is also the explanation for the artifice. If the reader had known the author's identity it could have encouraged an ironic reading of the text, whereas nothing could be further from Twain's intention³. The invented Sieur Louis de Conte is given the privileged position of an eyewitness narrator, who also happens to be a Christian, and he finally puts the events down on paper in 1492. No reader of Twain's would ignore that this was the year that Columbus discovered America, particularly since Chicago's World Columbian Exposition had been organized to commemorate the event in 1893⁴. To a group of historians gathered at the Fair in Chicago, Frederick Jackson Turner spoke about the American Frontier, which had been proclaimed closed by the American Census Bureau in 1890. Turner chose to define the specificity of the American Spirit with the traits of its frontiers, saying that "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development" such that "The frontier is the line of most rapid Americanization." Rightly or wrongly Turner felt that a rugged frontier-inspired individualism had been operative and had contributed to making American Democracy democratic.

- 7 While the frontier spirit as Turner envisioned it is best associated with lone male heroic figures (heroic tales of women in the West are not prominent – the notable exception of Calamity Jane notwithstanding), when Twain brought France's Joan of Arc to the American continent, he kept something of Turner's idealized lone figure of rugged individualism, but he also chose to emphasize her as an incarnation of female purity. In the context of his time, by the simple choice of a date, Twain made full use of Joan's traditional role as an exemplary figure resisting tyrannical governments, prefiguring,

with "1492", the American colonies' resistance to English rule and perhaps also the resistance necessary to the American government policies of Twain's time, in an age of unbridled expansionism.

- 8 But as readers opened the book, did they actually believe that it was a translation and an eyewitness account? Glancing at the title page, the reader who was aware of the artifice might have wondered if Twain was aiming at parody (how accurately would the old man as eyewitness remember the early days of his youth with Joan?). Nonetheless, every sentence of the book seems rather to indicate an earnest seriousness. Louis de Conte recounts:

"I was her page and secretary. I was with her from the beginning until the end. [...] I was reared in the same village with her. I played with her everyday, when we were little children together, just as you play with your mates" (p. 27).

- 9 Of course, the fact that the initials of the invented, but close to true, *Sieur Louis de Conte* coincide with Samuel Langhorne Clemens, provides a hint at Twain's identification with the character⁵. Twain was only sixty years old in 1895 when the text first began to be serialized, but his own life experiences helped him to flesh out his fiction. As Jason Gary Horn explains:

De Coutes was Joan's real page, and his memories of her were recorded during the process of her rehabilitation in 1450. He was with her from the start of her military adventures until their end at the gates of Paris; his recollections are on file in the official records of France⁶.

- 10 The slight name change from De Coutes to de Contes gave Twain the poetic license he needed, and added a touch of humor, not so much at the transcription error of an archivist, or the typographical error of a printer (changing the letter u to n), as from the word play: De Contes performs the verb *conter/raconter*, just as Twain had made his life's career as a story teller. But the identification may go further: the real-life De Coutes was not, apparently, employed as a scribe at Joan's trial in Rouen. Twain's de Contes was, essentially to capture the emotion the young Samuel Clemens had felt during adolescence, when the story of Joan may have inspired his career as a writer. He first encountered her during his apprenticeship as a printer in 1850 or so, when he was fifteen and accidentally read a page from a book about Joan of Arc concerning her persecution in prison. As Frances Gies describes the impact, Twain was highly motivated by Joan:

Querying his mother, he was surprised to discover that Joan was a real person. Subsequently he read everything he could find about her and about medieval history, and even taught himself a little Latin and French. He later claimed that the stray leaf from the book had opened the world of literature to him⁷.

- 11 A number of Twain's brief speeches make allusions of one kind or another to Joan of Arc. In a humorous toast to women, at the Newspaper Correspondents Club Banquet in Washington, D.C. on January 11, 1868, he names Joan of Arc among a list of other "noble names of history" including Cleopatra, Desdemona and Florence Nightingale⁸. At the 209th anniversary Festival of the Scottish Corporation of London, in November 1873, in a toast to the Ladies, the humor and irony were more highly developed:

The phases of the womanly nature are infinite in their variety. Take any type of woman, and you shall find in it something to respect, something to admire, something to love. And you shall find the whole world joining your heart and hand. Who was more patriotic than Joan of Arc? Who was braver? Who has given us a grander instance of self-sacrificing devotion? Ah! You remember, you remember well, what a throb of pain, what a great tidal wave of grief swept over us all when Joan of Arc fell at Waterloo. Who does not sorrow for the loss of Sappho, the sweet

singer of Israel? Who among us does not *miss* the gentle ministrations, the softening influence, the humble piety, of Lucretia Borgia?⁹

- 12 But the tone of those speeches hardly reveals the intensive work that Twain would undergo to prepare his historical novel about Jeanne. He read Michelet and Quicherat's account of the trial, and probably used all of the other works he mentioned in the "Acknowledgements" (18). Francis Lacassin suggested that Twain made good use of his European trip (1891-95) to do the necessary background and documentary work, finding books that were not available in US libraries¹⁰.
- 13 Even more significantly, Twain became a direct witness of the turmoil in France during the Dreyfus Affair, where he was often present from 1894-7. He was residing in France as the affair broke, and as an active observer, wrote a letter of inquiry to get information about the affair to Mr. Wilson on February 11, 1895, apparently concerning an incident reported during Dreyfus's departure for Île de Ré, as told in *Le Petit Parisien* and *L'Éclair* (Jan 25, 1895), in which Dreyfus was intentionally wounded in the face with the handle of a sword by an infantry officer. By November of 1897, Twain was planning a book about Dreyfus, and had completed the first chapter by February 1898, although the project was not carried through to completion¹¹. He made his support of Emile Zola public, by cabling the *New York Herald Tribune*, January 14, 1898, on the eve of Zola's "J'accuse!" (which appeared in *L'Aurore* dated January 16): "Such cowards, hypocrites, and flatterers as the members of [French] military and ecclesiastical courts the world could produce by the million every year. But it takes five centuries to produce a Joan of Arc or a Zola"¹². Given the proximity of Twain's positioning regarding the Dreyfus Affair to Charles Péguy's support for Albert Dreyfus, one may wonder if they met or if either ever came into contact with the other's work. Both chose to use the figure of Joan of Arc as an example of civism during this troubling period: Twain in 1895-6, and Péguy (who was researching Joan concurrently), in 1897 with *Jeanne d'Arc*¹³.
- 14 Twain's narrative of Joan, as published in the popular monthly periodical *Harper's* produced by publisher Harper and Brothers in New York, was apparently aimed at a general public readership, and the opening pages allow large room for a young reader – not at all surprising when one is aware that the author read the manuscript to his family in the evenings, during composition. Indeed, the first intended public for the book was Twain's own daughter, Susy (Olivia Susan Clemens, March 19, 1872-August 18, 1896), on whom many of the characteristics of the child Joan are based. Susy wrote to a friend: "Many of Joan's words and sayings are historically correct, and Papa cries when he reads them"¹⁴. Twain was using fictional means to portray a highly researched and historical Joan, who was incarnated with hints of Susy's personality, as Ron Powers noted: "Susy could not know it, but her father was writing this novel for her, and, in certain idealizing ways, about her"¹⁵.
- 15 While Twain explored the mystery of the shepherd girl that rose to command the armies of a nation, Péguy was also hungrily reading Quicherat and Michelet about Joan. On November 7, 1895, he had checked out several books from the École Normale Supérieure Library: Henri Wallon's *Jeanne d'Arc* and Quicherat's *Aperçus nouveaux sur l'histoire de Jeanne d'Arc*. The following March, he borrowed the *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, as well as the *Jeanne d'Arc* by Lanery d'Arc¹⁶. In autumn of 1896 Péguy went to Jeanne's home town Domrémy, for a visit. Péguy's first work about Joan, *Jeanne*, was published in 1897, and delved into that same mystery that would again occupy him in 1910. Did either author have knowledge of the other's activity? Péguy's work was clearly

inspired by the Dreyfus Affair. Twain's Joan also had something to do with Dreyfus, as a phrase concerning the prison on St. Helena – where Dreyfus was also sent – may suggest, even if the reference apparently refers more directly to Napoleon. In the 1903-4 essay, "Saint Joan of Arc, An essay by Mark Twain", he wrote:

Great as she was in so many ways, she was perhaps even greatest of all in the lofty things just named – her patient endurance, her steadfastness, her granite fortitude. We may not hope to easily find her mate and twin in these majestic qualities; where we lift our eyes highest we find only a strange and curious contrast – there in the captive eagle beating his broken wings on the Rock of St. Helena (447).

- 16 But Twain's Joan was certainly also inspired by the problems he saw within his own nation: the continued racism that followed the end of slavery, expansionist American politics, and the behavior and propaganda of the United States at War. His attitude toward the Philippine war (1899-1902) – a war in which American soldiers brought home ears as trophies – was the following, as quoted by Howard Zinn:

We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields; burned their villages, and turned their widows and orphans out-of-doors; furnished heartbreak by exile to some dozens of disagreeable patriots; subjugated the remaining ten millions by Benevolent Assimilation, which is the pious new name of the musket; we have acquired property in the three hundred concubines and slaves of our business partner, the Sultan of Sulu, and hoisted our protecting flag over that swag.

And so, by these Providences of God—and the phrase is the government's, not mine —we are a World Power¹⁷.

- 17 Twain's and Péguy's sympathies coincide concerning colonization, expansionism, racism, Dreyfus, and Joan¹⁸. Both men were regular writers in *La Revue Blanche* within the same three year period: Some of Péguy's early essays were published there in 1898-99, before he founded the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* in 1900. Twain's 1872 novel *Roughing It* was translated in installments as "À la Dure" in volume 27, 1901-2. Twain was 65 by then, and Péguy was not yet 30: it is unlikely that they ever met, yet Péguy may have been aware of Twain's publications in the *Revue Blanche*. What is fascinating is that they were both writing about Joan of Arc at the same time, 1894-97.

- 18 Given the geo-political context, and the bellicose behavior of the United States in the 1890s, (such as the massacre of Lakota Indians at Wounded Knee in 1890, the suppression of the Haitian revolt in 1891, the suppression of the Silver miner's strike in Idaho in 1892, the annexation of Hawaii in 1893, the use of military force in Nicaragua in 1894, marine aggression in China in 1894-5, etc.¹⁹) the ending of *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* may explain much about the reason why it was composed:

I have finished my story of Joan of Arc, that wonderful child, that sublime personality, that spirit which in one regard has had no peer and will have none – this: its purity from all alloy of self-seeking, self-interest, personal ambition. In it no trace of these motives can be found, search as you may, and this cannot be said of any other person whose name appears in profane history.

With Joan of Arc love of country was more than a sentiment – it was a passion. She was the Genius of Patriotism – she was Patriotism embodied, concreted, made flesh, and palpable to the touch and visible to the eye.

Love, Mercy, Charity, Fortitude, War, Peace, Poetry, Music – these may be symbolized as any shall prefer: by figures of either sex and of any age; but a slender girl in her first young bloom, with the martyr's crown upon her head, and in her hand the sword that severed her country's bonds – shall not this, and no other, stand for Patriotism through all the ages until time shall end? (p. 437-8)

- 19 Perhaps this underlying message of reprisal at American policy within the narrative explains some of the less than fair criticism the book received. It is generally not acknowledged as an interesting work, although Twain considered it the most important thing he had ever written²⁰. But we will return to the critics in a moment, after a brief discussion of the narrative's characteristics.
- 20 Both Twain and Péguy based their account of Joan on the trial that had been published by Quicherat. In Péguy's 1897 play *Jeanne d'Arc*, the first section was "A Domremy", the second, "Les Batailles", and the third "Rouen." Twain's account by Louis de Contes had also offered three similar distinct parts: I. In Domremy, II. In Court and Camp, III. Trial and Martyrdom. Twain's intent seems to have been to provide the complex historical background in an accurate as well as easily comprehensible way. De Conte says "When I was five years old the prodigious disaster of Agincourt fell upon France" (p. 32). Writing with the first person, Twain is able to make the dangers of Joan's time more communicable, and make them seem closer to the present. In the same way he is able to set up religious and political conundrums in a few simple lines, such as this:

[...] when I was fourteen, and we had three Popes at once, nobody in Domremy was worried about how to choose among them – the Pope of Rome was the right one, a Pope outside of Rome was no Pope at all (p. 33).
- 21 Certain historical documents are reproduced within the text, given in their English translation, such as the declaration that Joan dictated at Poitiers at the end of April 1429, a message to the English beginning "JESUS MARIA, King of England, and you Duke of Bedford" (Book 2, chapter XIV, 165). Portions of the court trials are also quoted, as well as two testimonies from the Rehabilitation process, cited in book 3, chapter VI (p. 336).
- 22 The pseudo translator's footnotes also reveal Twain's attention to historical detail of Joan's time as well as at the time of composition in 1895. Jean François Alden gives the reader additional information about how Joan's memory was preserved in France (which is not always positive for the French). The notes do not occur until book 2, chapter 13 (p. 158, a reference to Michelet), but thereafter they are found at fairly regular intervals, and cover three main areas: 1) historical exactitude, often based on sources mentioned in the Acknowledgement at the beginning,²¹ 2) the situation in France since 1492 and up to the end of the nineteenth century,²² or 3) a translation issue, which provides Twain with an ideal opportunity to get some French into the text²³.
- 23 One of the funniest moments in the text, and in the accompanying footnotes is the passage alerting the English speaker that the name of the Bishop of Beauvais, Cauchon, allows for a very wide panoply of puns: "The difference between Cauchon and *cochon* was not noticeable in speech, and so there was plenty of opportunity for puns: the opportunities were not thrown away" (p. 393). Two footnotes on the same page explain that *cochon* is a hog or pig, and that the verb *cochonner* means "to litter, to farrow; also, 'to make a mess of'".
- 24 But most of the time, the text puts humor aside, even if Joan's personality was portrayed as one that enjoyed the odd joke. It is her purity of heart and purpose that is totally contrasted with the motivations of those currently in power in France, from the English King, to the French King, to the Duke of Burgundy and the powers of the Church. In all cases Twain exposes the faults of the powerful, as compared with the way Joan exercises authority.

- 25 One of the most revealing in the series of credibility checks, the addresses of authenticity to the reader begun in the prefaces to the narrative but that also continue throughout, is the long declaration in the third part referring to Joan's trial. Louis de Conte says the following, accompanied by the false translator's footnote:

I give you my honor, now, that I am not going to distort or discolor the facts of this miserable trial. No, I will give them to you honestly, detail by detail, just as Manchon and I set them down daily in the official record of the court, and just as one may read them in the printed histories. There will be only this difference: that in talking familiarly with you I shall use my right to comment upon the proceedings and explain them as I go along, so that you can understand them better; also I shall throw in trifles which came under our eyes and have a certain interest for you and me, but were not important enough to go into the official record*. (p. 325)

*He kept his word. His account of the Great Trial will be found to be in strict and detailed accordance with the sworn facts of history. – TRANSLATOR. (p. 325)

- 26 The reader of Twain's narrative will observe that Twain is only recounting the facts as he read them in Michelet and Quicherat, but from time to time, a certain American patriotism shines through. The revolutionary war with England was after all a mere 125 years past when the text was written, which may explain exclamations such as the following about Cauchon's puppet activity in favor of Henry VI²⁴:

So, then, the little English King, by his representative, formally delivered Joan into the hands of the court, but with this reservation: if the court failed to condemn her, he was to have her back again! (p. 318)

- 27 With so much material to engage with, why is it that this novel has received so little critical attention? Critics were unprepared for this style of narrative, no doubt. And while criticism has been justified in some details, given the whole picture the narrative presents, the most severe critics appear to be mistaken: they did not get the gist of the tale. Twain's whole business is to get the contemporary reader to understand the story of Joan of Arc with a heart-felt knowledge. That is, to make the first words of Louis de Conte a bit stiff, but to gradually show the reader that he/she can connect to the words of the man who was writing the year Columbus discovered America about an event that happened over 300 years before America gained independence from the English. By the time the narrative enters the trial (book III), the reader is fully at one with the emotions of De Conte. Twain managed to provide the detail necessary for that identification much earlier in the narrative. By the third chapter of book I, the simplicity of narration has already won the reader over to Joan's point of view. She is presented as many young American women of the frontier might be seen, in the context of a family gathering around a fire:

Often we gathered in old Jacques d'Arc's big dirt-floored apartment, with a great fire going, and played games, and sang songs, and told fortunes, and listened to the old villagers tell tales and histories and lies and one thing and another till twelve o'clock at night.

One winter's night we were gathered there – it was the winter that for years afterward they called the hard winter – and that particular night was a sharp one. It blew a gale outside, and the screaming of the wind was a stirring sound, and I think I may say it was beautiful, for I think it is great and fine and beautiful to hear the wind rage and storm and blow its clarions like that, when you are inside and comfortable. And we were. We had a roaring fire, and the pleasant spit-spit of the snow and sleet falling in it down the chimney, and the yarning and laughing and singing went on at a noble rate till about ten o'clock, and then we had a supper of hot porridge and beans, and meal cakes with butter, and appetites to match.

Little Joan sat on a box apart, and had her bowl and bread on another one, and her

pets around her helping. She had more than was usual of them or economical, because all the outcast cats came and took up with her, and homeless or unlovable animals of other kinds heard about it and came, and these spread the matter to the other creatures, and they came also; and as the birds and the other timid wild things of the woods were not afraid of her, but always had an idea she was a friend when they came across her, and generally struck up an acquaintance with her to get invited to the house, she always had samples of those breeds in stock. She was hospitable to them all, for an animal was an animal to her, and dear by mere reason of being an animal, no matter about its sort or social station; and as she would allow of no cages, no collars, no fetters, but left the creatures free to come and go as they liked, that contented them, and they came; but they didn't go, to any extent, and so they were a marvelous nuisance, and made Jacques d'Arc swear a good deal; but his wife said God gave the child the instinct, and knew what He was doing when He did it, therefore it must have its course; it would be no sound prudence to meddle with His affairs when no invitation had been extended. So the pets were left in peace, and here they were, as I have said, rabbits, birds, squirrels, cats, and other reptiles, all around the child, and full of interest in her supper, and helping what they could. There was a very small squirrel on her shoulder, sitting up, as those creatures do, and turning a rocky fragment of prehistoric chestnut-cake over and over in its knotty hands, and hunting for the less indurated places, and giving its elevated bushy tail a flirt and its pointed ears a toss when it found one – signifying thankfulness and surprise – and then it filed that place off with those two slender front teeth which a squirrel carries for that purpose and not for ornament, for ornamental they never could be, as any will admit that have noticed them.

- 28 The reader attentive to Charles Péguy will have noticed that young Joan's attitude (which surely also draws from Susy's personality) corresponds well to Péguy's utopian ideals, where animals which were to be given full consideration in the harmonious city²⁵. In the following paragraphs of this passage Joan will offer her food to the poor, a characteristic trait also in Péguy's portrayal of Joan in the opening pages of *Jeanne d'Arc* where Jeannette explains to her friend Hauviette that she gave her meal to two hungry children whose parents had been killed during the Hundred Years' War²⁶. In Twain's Americanized conception, the "road-straggler" also represents a refugee of the chaos that (contemporary, expansionist) wars bring. Joan's father suggests that the refugee work for his food, but Joan wants to feed him at once, because he is hungry.

Everything was going fine and breezy and hilarious, but then there came an interruption, for somebody hammered on the door. It was one of those ragged road-stragglers – the eternal wars kept the country full of them. He came in, all over snow, and stamped his feet, and shook, and brushed himself, and shut the door, and took off his limp ruin of a hat, and slapped it once or twice against his leg to knock off its fleece of snow, and then glanced around on the company with a pleased look upon his thin face, and a most yearning and famished one in his eye when it fell upon the victuals, and then he gave us a humble and conciliatory salutation, and said it was a blessed thing to have a fire like that on such a night, and a roof overhead like this, and that rich food to eat, and loving friends to talk with – ah, yes, this was true, and God help the homeless, and such as must trudge the roads in this weather.

Nobody said anything. The embarrassed poor creature stood there and appealed to one face after the other with his eyes, and found no welcome in any, the smile on his own face flickering and fading and perishing, meanwhile; then he dropped his gaze, the muscles of his face began to twitch, and he put up his hand to cover this womanish sign of weakness.

"Sit down!"

This thunder-blast was from old Jacques d'Arc, and Joan was the object of it. The stranger was startled, and took his hand away, and there was Joan standing before

him offering him her bowl of porridge. The man said:

"God Almighty bless you, my darling!" and then the tears came, and ran down his cheeks, but he was afraid to take the bowl.

"Do you hear me? Sit down, I say!"

There could not be a child more easy to persuade than Joan, but this was not the way. Her father had not the art; neither could he learn it. Joan said:

"Father, he is hungry; I can see it."

"Let him work for food, then. We are being eaten out of house and home by his like, and I have said I would endure it no more, and will keep my word. He has the face of a rascal anyhow, and a villain. Sit down, I tell you!"

"I know not if he is a rascal or no, but he is hungry, father, and shall have my porridge – I do not need it." (from chapter 3, book I)

- 29 Joan for Twain and for Péguy would rather skip a meal than see someone else go hungry.
- 30 How could the medieval child Joan be treated with such benevolence by religious skeptics (neither Twain nor Péguy subscribed to religion in the 1890s)? This at a time when, according to T.J. Jackson Lears, "Recoiling from the complexity of modern thought to an ideal of pre-modern mental simplicity, over civilized Americans hailed the 'big children' of the Middle Ages as models of naiveté"²⁷. (p. 149). Lears suggests that Twain's Joan had as motto: "Work! Stick to it!" and that her activism was a dominant feature of her character in *Personal Recollections*, such that she provided an example for "bourgeois revitalization"²⁸. Again, it seems that Twain's and Péguy's vision of Joan share common ground—especially in that she strives to promote the social good.
- 31 While Péguy's volumes of his first book, the 1897 *Jeanne d'Arc*, remained unsold, and were piled up (and sometimes used as furniture) in the Boutique des Cahiers (8, rue de la Sorbonne), Twain's novel *Personal Recollections* of 1896 was highly criticized. George Bernard Shaw was particularly vicious toward it, and called Twain's Joan "an unimpeachable American school teacher in armour" that "remains a credible human goody-goody in spite of her creator's infatuation"²⁹. Yet Shaw's play *Saint Joan* (1923) would also emphasize her goodness and her attention to the poor that she wished to feed, in a country ravaged by war. Speaking of John de Metz in Scene I, Shaw's Joan says: "Jack will come willingly: he is a very kind gentleman, and gives me money to give to the poor"³⁰.
- 32 Péguy would rework his *Jeanne* later, publishing *Le Mystère de la Charité de Jeanne d'Arc* in the *Cahiers de la quinzaine* in 1910³¹. Twain, despite the venom of critics, insisted that *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* was his best novel. Perhaps it was the one he had worked the hardest at, for all sorts of reasons (his affection for his daughter, his own early encounter with the story of Joan, his personal research in France and visits he made to places where Joan had been). In speeches he made after his identity as author was revealed, his admiration for Joan seems only to have intensified.
- 33 At the Society of Illustrators Dinner in New York, December 21, 1905, Twain's oration was intended to honor Daniel Beard who illustrated *A Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and as he began to speak a young woman dressed in armor and representing Joan entered the room, accompanied by a page boy carrying a banner. This Joan gave Twain bay leaves on a satin pillow, which deeply moved him³². It seems that the Society of Illustrators had managed to completely surprise Twain, and that he was at first speechless. When he gathered his wits again, before he continued his talk, he mentioned that he had studied "her history and her character for twelve years diligently"³³.

Wherever you find the conventional Joan of Arc in history, she is an offense to anybody who knows the story of that wonderful girl.

Why, she was – she was almost supreme in several details. She had a marvelous intellect; she had a great heart, had a noble spirit, was absolutely pure in her character, her feeling, her language, her words, her everything – she was only eighteen years old.

Now put that heart into such a breast – eighteen years old – and give it that masterly intellect which showed in the face, and furnish it with that almost godlike spirit, and what are you going to have? The conventional Joan of Arc? Not by any means. That is impossible. I cannot comprehend any such thing as that.

You must have a creature like that young and fair and beautiful girl we just saw. And her spirit must look out of the eyes. The figure should be – the figure should be in harmony with all that, but, oh, what we get in the conventional picture, and it is always the conventional picture!³⁴

- 34 Finally, in a speech made April 3, 1909 at a businessmen's dinner for Henry H. Rogers, the man who financed the completion for the 442-mile long Virginian Railway, Twain would offer sincere tribute. True to form, he began with some comical comments, but he soon turned to the heart of the matter: Twain's profound tribute to Rogers included his benevolence toward Helen Keller and a comparison of Keller to Joan of Arc:

There is one side of Mr. Rogers that has not been mentioned. If you will leave that to me I will touch upon that. There was a note in an editorial in one of the Norfolk papers this morning that touched upon that very thing, that hidden side of Mr. Rogers, where it spoke of Helen Keller and her affection for Mr. Rogers, to whom she dedicated her life book. And she has a right to feel that way, because without the public knowing anything about it, he rescued, if I may use that term, that marvelous girl, that wonderful southern girl, that girl who was stone deaf, blind, and dumb from scarlet fever when she was a baby eighteen months old; and who now is as well and thoroughly educated as any woman on this planet at twenty-nine years of age. She is the most marvelous person of her sex that has existed on this earth since Joan of Arc³⁵.

- 35 One could have hoped that the recent French translation of Twain's Joan would inspire new commentary. Ghirardi, the translator, in his note about the translated text says that he eliminated some of the anachronisms concerning the Medieval era,³⁶ which, although they slow down the English reader, were also part of the artifice the author built to hide his own identity, which today is of course no longer a mystery. With the twelve years of historical research that Mark Twain had invested, and nearly a lifetime of meditation on the subject, he had already done a fine job of giving the United States a pertinent portrait of Joan.

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NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented in a workshop session organized by Ronald Jenn and Bruno Montfort at the AFEA Congress "France in America" held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France May 24-27, 2007. The text was reworked for the workshop, "Le thème médiéval dans l'Amérique des XIX^e et XX^e siècles" organized by Delphine Louis-Dimitrov at the Catholic University of Paris, April 10, 2015.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authorities examined in verification of the truthfulness of this narrative: J.E.J. Quicherat, *Condamnation et Réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*. J. Fabre, *Procès de Condamnation de Jeanne d'Arc*. H.A. Wallon, *Jeanne d'Arc*. M. Sepet, *Jeanne d'Arc*. J. Michelet, *Jeanne d'Arc*. Berriat de Saint-Prix, *La Famille de Jeanne d'Arc*. La Comtesse A. De Chabannes, *La Vierge Lorraine*. Monseigneur Ricard,

Jeanne d'Arc la Vénérable. Lord Ronald Gower, F.S.A., *Joan of Arc*. John O'Hagan, *Joan of Arc*. Janet Tuckey, *Joan of Arc the Maid*. (p. 18)

3. But others provide different reasons for anonymity. Andrew Tadié in the introduction to the 1989 Ignatius Press reprint says: "Maintaining anonymity was also a way to prevent readers from rejecting the book because they expected a novel by Twain to be humorous" (p. 12).

4. Twain was in Chicago during the World's Fair but had taken ill with a bad cold and was unable to attend. He may have been staying at the Bryson Hotel at 4932 South Lake Park Avenue at the time. He made frequent trips to Chicago during this period, in particular to enquire after the 190,000 dollars he had invested in the failing Paige typesetting machine (see Northway, New City Lit blog).

5. The detail was noted by Jason Gary Horn, *Mark Twain and William James, Crafting a Free Self* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), p. 75.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

7. Frances Gies, *Joan of Arc, The Legend and the Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 254.

8. Paul Fatout (ed), *Mark Twain Speaking* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1976), p. 21.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

10. Francis Lacassin, "Le Mystère de la charité de Mark Twain" in Twain, *Le Roman de Jeanne d'Arc*, tr. Patrice Ghirardi, p. xi.

11. Dan Vogel. *Mark Twain's Jews* (KTAV Publishing House, 2006), p. 52.

12. Qtd. Vogel, *Ibid.*, 52.

13. Concerning Péguy's committed views see J. Kilgore-Caradec, "La bataille des mots: Charles Péguy et l'écriture de combat," *L'amitié Charles Péguy* 151 (2015) 210-223.

14. Qtd Frances Gies, *Joan of Arc, The Legend and the Reality*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 255.

15. Ron Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, (New York: Free Press, 2005) i-book, chapter 42. Susy died abruptly from spinal meningitis in August 1896, a few short months after the book was published in May. Twain's grief was overwhelming.

16. Gerd Leroy, *Charles Péguy, L'inclassable* (Paris, Armand Colin, 2014) i-book.

17. Mark Twain qtd. Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States 1492-Present* 1980, 1995 (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), p. 309.

18. Twain also wrote *King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule*.

19. These dates are taken from "A Century of U.S. Military Interventions," compiled by Zoltan Grossman, <<http://academic.evergreen.edu/g/grossmaz/interventions.html>> consulted September 2015.

20. Apparently Twain said: "I like Joan of Arc best of all my books: and it is the best; I know it perfectly well. And besides, it furnished me seven times the pleasure afforded me by any of the others; twelve years of preparation, and two years of writing. The others needed no preparation and got none." (quoted on back cover of 1989 Ignatius Press edition).

21. Notes p. 158 Michelet, p. 250 Gower, p. 325 the trial "in strict and detailed accordance with the sworn facts of history".

22. Twain noted the fact that Orléans still celebrates Joan of Arc on the 8th of May (p. 211), that the remitted taxes for Domrémy lasted less than Charles VII's word "forever"; rather only 350 years (p. 273), and specified that "Nothing which the hand of Joan of Arc is known to have touched now remains in existence except a few precious guarded military and state papers which she signed...." (p. 314). But he did allow readers to speculate about whether or not strands of her hair might have been taken from the prison (p. 394).

23. Note p. 368: "What she said has been many times translated, but never with success. There is a haunting pathos about the original which eludes all efforts to convey it into our tongue. It is as subtle as an odor, and escapes in the transmission. Her words were these: 'Il avait été à la peine, c'était bien raison qu'il fut à l'honneur.' Monseigneur Ricard, Honorary Vicar-General to the

Archbishop of Aix, finely speaks of it ("*Jeanne d'Arc la Vénérable*," p. 197) as 'that sublime reply, enduing in the history of celebrated sayings like the cry of a French and Christian soul wounded unto death in its patriotism and its faith.'—TRANSLATOR." However, in the reprint edition (1989) most accents are not properly reproduced.

24. Henry VI founded the University of Caen in 1432.

25. Charles Péguy, *Marcel, Premier dialogue de la cité harmonieuse* (June 1898) in *Œuvres en prose complètes I*, ed. Robert Burac (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1987), p. 18, 65.

26. Charles Péguy, *Jeanne d'Arc* (December 1897) in *Œuvres poétiques et dramatiques*, ed. Claire Daudin (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 2014), p. 8.

27. T. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 149.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

29. Qtd. Frances Gies, *Joan of Arc, The Legend and the Reality*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 255.

30. George Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan*, 1924, (London: Penguin, 2001), i-book.

31. In fact, Jeanne is present in all of Péguy's mysteries, which were first published in the *Cahiers de la quinzaine* – *Le Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d'Arc* (January 1910), *Le Porche du mystère de la deuxième vertu* (October 1911), and *Le Mystère des saints innocents* (March 1912) – even if only silently and listening to M^{me} Gervaise who incarnates the voice of God.

32. *Mark Twain Speaking*. Ed. Paul Fatout. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1976), p. 472.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 472.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, p. 642.

36. "Afin d'éviter certaines incongruités qui risqueraient de faire sourciller le lecteur averti, j'ai gommé ces anachronismes et, par endroits, adapté un peu le texte en fonction de nos connaissances actuelles sur Jeanne d'Arc et son temps". Dans les dialogues, Mark Twain paraphrase parfois les véritables paroles de Jeanne d'Arc, telles que les procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation nous les ont transmises. Certains passages en sont même la traduction fidèle. L'auteur américain emploie alors un anglais un peu archaïque, proche du style adopté par les médiévistes français quand ils citent l'héroïne. Dans ces cas-là, il m'a semblé préférable de puiser à la source plutôt que de retraduire en français ce que l'auteur avait traduit dans le sens inverse." (Patrice Ghirardi, "Note à Propos de la traduction" in Twain, *Le Roman de Jeanne d'Arc*, tr. Patrice Ghirardi, p. xvii).

RÉSUMÉS

Les artifices qu'utilisait Mark Twain en 1895-96, pour publier anonymement son roman *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* dit de son page, Sieur Louis de Conte, ont mystifié ses lecteurs, non pas moins que sa fascination pour cette héroïne, alors qu'il était un athée déclaré. En fait, sa première rencontre avec Jeanne avait fini par faire de lui un écrivain, mais ce ne fut que vers la fin de sa vie que Jeanne devint visible dans ses préoccupations. Pendant l'Affaire Dreyfus, Charles Péguy et Mark Twain (qui ne se connaissaient pas, semble-t-il) décident de composer des ouvrages sur Jeanne, en lien avec leurs propres engagements, en faveur de Dreyfus et en faveur de la démocratie. Pour Twain, ses écrits et discours sur Jeanne montrent son admiration pour son

exemple de patriotisme, avec un biais anti-anglais propre à un américain. Twain arrive néanmoins à suggérer dans ce portrait une critique de l'impérialisme des États-Unis de la fin de siècle.

The artifices that Mark Twain used to publish his novel *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* by Sieur Louis de Conte in 1895-6 mystified his readers no less than the appeal of the heroine for an avowed atheist. Twain's earliest encounter with Joan, when he was 15 years old, while working as a printer, would influence his decision to become a writer, but it was only near the end of his life that she was to become a visible preoccupation. During the Dreyfus Affair Twain and Charles Péguy were both composing literary works about Joan of Arc that reflected their own political and social commitments. In Twain's case, later writings and speeches about Joan clarify his interest as well as a pro-American bias (Louis de Conte narrates in 1492!) that did not hesitate to also critique American policies.

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Keywords : Joan of Arc, reception, United States of America

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