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“CONVICTION AND COURAGE”: FROM JOAN OF ARC TO THE CONTEMPORARY
WOMAN SOLDIER

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ABSTRACT

To any passerby the story of Joan of Arc might be straightforward: She was a medieval woman that led the French army against England while cross-dressing —guided by the voices of saints — and eventually burned at the stake for heresy. However, Joan’s story is a far cry from simple, and her legacy is found in many different directions. In his Independent article, “The 600-year Struggle for the Soul of Joan of Arc,” John Litchfield says, “She belongs to all of us.” Litchfield expresses how Joan’s undertaking in the individual consciousness is fundamental in western modernity. I seek to answer what Joan of Arc’s death connoted to her contemporaries, and what her life signifies for women today. I will decipher if Joan’s military legacy meant something for future women of the world. One way to do this is through a cross-cultural analysis of France and the United States, two of the world’s strongest military forces. I will compare the French cross-dressing soldier to the American cross-dressing soldier and address the similarities and differences of these versions. I define Joan as a proto-feminist because her story is often thought of as the first recorded account of a woman successfully commanding a male-dominated sphere. This analysis of Joan leads into an investigation of the contemporary woman soldier and the ways in which she is depicted in popular culture across oceans.

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INTRODUCTION

Women's comprehensive integration into society has been met with conflict at every turn. Today, women will get paid less for the same job, they will be victims of sexual assault cases where the perpetrator might receive minimum punishment, they will be subjected to misogynists, women will not become president though more qualified, and they will face pregnancy or menstruation discrimination. The military is a microcosm that highlights the problems of women's integration and presents the facts in a shocking way that entices anyone to pay attention. Military women go back centuries, one prominent example being Joan of Arc. This feminist thesis uses a cross-cultural analysis of military women in the U.S. and France in order to study the differences and similarities from varying geographic and cultural spheres. While Joan of Arc is a national icon, Deborah Sampson, who arguably did the same thing in the U.S.—that is, cross-dressed and joined forces—is virtually unknown. Answering why this discrepancy exists leads into a reading of the contemporary military woman by questioning how far she has come and unearthing her current conflicts. Her struggles are important because it exposes how women, throughout the world, have not achieved the same treatment or inclusion as men.

In Chapter 1, "The First Glimpses of Military Women in France and the U.S.," readers are introduced to Joan of Arc and Deborah Sampson with their histories followed by a comparison investigating why they have not received the same recognition in their respective countries. This leads into Chapter 2, "A Look at the Contemporary Woman Soldier in the U.S. and France," where the struggles of the French and American militaries are voiced. One shared

barrier is the prominent sexual violence enacted against serving women, which connects with their need to cross-dress, just like their predecessors. This chapter questions why women continue to have a part in the military despite their mistreatment. Finally, Chapter 3, “The Figure of the Female Soldier in Popular Culture,” reveals the perceptions of military women by civilians. This chapter suggests why military women are so misunderstood and why their disputed addition to male dominated militaries continues to be an uphill battle. By connecting these three themes together, the thesis creates a nexus that uncovers the path of military women starting from the beginning and ending with 21st century topics through cinema to see the woman soldier’s journey to acceptance and representation. I ultimately show that the figure of Joan has bearings nearly six centuries later.

Chapter 1

The First Glimpses of Military Women in France and the U.S.

Joan of Arc's History: A Cross-Dressing French Warrior

Joan of Arc was born around the year of 1412 to a peasant family who resided in the small village of Domrémy in Lorraine on the border of eastern France. Joan, illiterate and uneducated, was raised to be extremely pious, but was born into a chaotic era. At the time of her birth, the French Royal family was divided into two opposing parties: the “Orleanist” or “Armagnac” faction led by Count Bernard VII of Armagnac and Duke Charles of Orleans, and the “Burgundians” trooped by Duke John-the-Fearless of Burgundy. While The Hundred Years’ War, which was caused by a succession dispute to the French Throne, had already been going on for approximately seventy-five years, France and England were in a truce at this time. However, because of the internal disunity in France, and the fresh expiry of the truce, England invaded and succeeded in the devastating battle of Agincourt. The English continued with this behavior in 1417 and in 1420 England gained the support of the Burgundian Duke, Phillip III, who denounced Charles VII to the French throne, the exact man that Joan of Arc believed to be the proper heir (Williamson).

Around 1425, when Joan was thirteen, she began hearing voices from two female saints and an archangel encouraging her to be good and regularly attend church. By the third instance she believed that the voices were sent to her by God. The angels told her of “the great misery that was in France.” They urged her to visit the Dauphin, Charles, and assist him in taking back

France from the English, despite Joan insisting that she was just a poor girl who “knew neither how to ride nor lead in war” (Williamson). Two to three times a week, angels, specifically St. Michael as Joan later revealed in her trial, told Joan to leave her home and provided her with specific directions on how to go about her mission. Some skeptics argue that Joan’s revelations were hallucinations; she may have suffered from a mental illness. However, there is no evidence from her trial record —where her friends and family were even interviewed— to suggest a psychotic break. Furthermore, “she was quite unlike the medieval ascetic mystics who, after long fasts, went into trances; nor was she like the educated mystic nuns who had visions of paradise or prophesized doom for unrepentant sinners.” Joan’s visions were of this world, not the hereafter and she never claimed to have supernatural powers. Some other critics have agreed that Joan’s voices were the “inner promptings of her conscience.” However, young and poor, Joan had never been interested in politics before the voices came to her (Brooks 24). While some scholars then might think of Joan as a “religious zealot,” “aristocratic wanna-be,” or a “demented teenager” rather than a visionary, the true nature of Joan’s revelations will never be known (Wheeler, Wood 3). For the sake of this thesis, I accept her visions the way she described them —messages from God, because “Whatever they were and whatever their source, they were very real to her and gave her extraordinary courage and conviction” (Brooks 25).

Throughout the 1420s, France’s identity as the ‘most Christian’ kingdom “had been challenged by the bloodletting of civil war and overwhelming defeat from the English” (Castor 5). In medieval times war was always ascribed to divine will. Joan’s proof of God’s intervention in war politics made her an object of fascination (6). She claimed God supported Charles as France’s rightful king. It was not until Orléans, the last French stronghold, was besieged in 1428 that Joan actually acted on the voices’ proposals (Barstow xvi). Joan secretly went on this divine

mission to raise the siege on Orléans. At the command of the voices, she first went to Lord Robert de Baudricourt of Vaucouleurs to secure an armed escort across enemy lines to Chinon. After three attempts, Joan was given Baudricourt's consent. She gained supporters by telling them her godly duty. In the first instance of cross-dressing, Joan disguised herself as a man and cropped her hair to avoid being noticed, as it was not customary for women to make this type of journey. Joan claims, "I was in man's clothes, holding in my hand a sword which Robert de Baudricourt had given me and without other arms, with a knight, an esquire, and four servants" (Pernoud 39). Soon enough, the image of the maid in male clothing, sporting a sword, a horse, and armed accompanies, would make her a sort of mascot to the French cause. It was Joan's passion for France and promises of victory that allowed men to tolerate her unique dressing habits.

Upon arriving at Chinon, Joan had to prove that she was legitimate before seeing the Dauphin. One witness remembers, "...she presented herself before his Royal majesty with great humility and simplicity, an impoverished little shepherd girl, and...said to the King: 'Most illustrious Lord Dauphin I have come and am sent in the name of God to bring aid to yourself and to the kingdom'" (Williamson). Eventually, Joan demonstrated her orthodoxy and gained the confidence of Charles, his astrologer, his theologians, and some of his court. The accounts specify that Joan told Charles the contents of a private prayer he had conducted and assured him that he was the true successor to the French throne. Another eyewitness says that "After hearing her the King appeared radiant" (Williamson). After Charles provided Joan a suit of armor "made exactly for her body," and a personalized banner, he allowed her to lead the Armagnac army in taking back Orléans. Utilizing religion, Joan began to reform the army, which offered hope to a very defeated military unit (Williamson).

Finally at Orléans, Joan, in full armor, prepared to lead an attack against an English-held fortified church, Saint Loup. Since Joan claimed she did not want to harm anyone, accounts specify that she rode into battles with her banner, not weapons. She encouraged troops with this courageous act; she put herself in the same danger. Every Englishman from Saint Loup was either captured or killed. After this first attack, the nobles and captains, without Joan, met often to discuss other possible schemes to run the English away. She still was not fully trusted because of her gender. However, she knew what was said in each meeting: “You believe, gentlemen, that because I am a woman, I do not know how to conceal a secret. For your information I know every detail you have discussed. Here I give you my pledge —I will never reveal plans which are to be kept secret” (Rankin, Quintal 24). After this declaration, Joan was given more freedom to decide the attack plans and battles; her role was to lead, guide, and command the army since “all things she has undertaken have been brought to a happy ending,” and the remaining English positions fell swiftly (Rankin, Quintal 25). In a last effort, Joan ordered the troops to assault the forts in the vicinity of Saint Laurent on the other side of the river, but the enemy was just as determined to win as the French. The next morning, Joan ordered soldiers to storm The Tourelles, where the enemy had retreated the night before. She gave them her pledge that on this same day the English would be conquered and chased out. About four or five hundred English died there. Joan and her company audaciously reentered the city. Lifting the siege on Orléans in 1429 was a turning point in the history of the Hundred Years War. Joan gave such a fine performance that this marked the beginning of her great renown (Rankin, Quintal 26-30).

After this, Joan and the Dauphin had an emotional reunion at Loches. One witness stated, “...Then the young girl bowed her head before the King as much as she could, and the King immediately had her raise it again; and one would have thought that he would have kissed her

from the joy that he experienced” (Williamson). Joan encouraged the Dauphin to take an army to Reims to be crowned. However, Reims was in enemy territory, so the journey would be difficult. Patay was the main city that had to be revived in order for the Dauphin to safely make it to Reims, and Joan announced that this would be the Charles’ greatest victory yet. In a bout of confusion on England’s end from France’s surprise attack, Patay was easily taken over by the French, with total casualties at over two thousand from the English (Williamson). As a result of this overwhelming defeat, many other fortified towns nearby pledged their allegiance to the King (Rankin, Quintal 34).

Finally, the Dauphin’s army reached Reims, with only few interruptions along the way. On July 17th, 1429 Charles VII was anointed and crowned King of France. Joan was present holding her banner. One source articulates that Joan “wept many tears and said, ‘Noble king, now is accomplished the pleasure of God, who wished me to lift the siege of Orleans, and to bring you to this city of Reims to receive your holy anointing, to show that you are the true king, and the one to whom the kingdom of France should belong’” (Williamson). All those who saw Joan were “moved to great compassion” (Williamson).

Following disappointing outcomes in Paris (after which the army was disbanded “and thus was broken the will of the Maiden and the King's army”), Saint-Pierre-le-Moutier, and Le Charite-sur-Loire Joan’s military victory would now come to a close, albeit not her determination and devotion to France (Williamson). Around Easter of 1430, Joan’s saints informed her that she would be captured “before Saint John’s Day” (June 24); this is why on different occasions Joan had revealed that capture and betrayal were her biggest fears. She was unsure of who to trust (Williamson).

Around this time, the Burgundian army was showing defiance despite peace treaties, and Joan needed to protect the city of Compiègne, arriving there with three to four hundred reinforcements. Two boys who had been among a group of children watching Joan pray at a church in Compiègne later disclosed that a troubled Joan told them “pray for me, for I have been betrayed” (Williamson). Later that day, Joan, refusing to surrender, was captured during an ambush by Burgundian forces. One Burgundian chronicler wrote that “the Armagnacs were devastated by Joan's capture” while the Burgundians were “overjoyed, more so than if they had taken 500 combatants, for they had never feared or dreaded any other commander... as much as they had always feared this maiden up until that day” (Williamson). It is said that she was betrayed due to her social prominence —most likely by an exclusive group within the Court— but this was never proven. It is proven, however, that Charles VII and the Armagnacs had done “everything in their power” to have Joan released, tacking threats and offering ransom to the Burgundians (Williamson).

Joan was sold to the English and was to be charged with “sorcery, idolatry, the invocation of demons, and other offenses, all contrary to our belief and against the Faith” (Rankin, Quintal 43). When Joan was passed along to the city of Rouen to begin her trial, which was organized by crooked Englishmen, she continued to wear male attire. This became a huge issue throughout her prosecution. The French found it easier to ignore Joan’s clothing preferences because of the good she did for the nation, while the English refused to accept the uniqueness of her style. Claiming that she needed this clothing for protection from the prison guards who on occasion tried to rape her, Joan refused to put on a dress as her virginity was important to protect. At one point, Joan recanted her earlier abjuration of the voices who guided her, alarmed by the thought of the stake. However, three days later she was caught again wearing men’s clothing. Reverting back to

this behavior proved to the English that there was no veracity in Joan's initial confession and she would not conform to the court's rules. Joan was then considered a relapsed heretic, a person who repudiates the Church's doctrines, and received a sentence to burn at the stake on a cross-dressing charge. A biblical verse from Deuteronom viewed dressing male as heretical, thus the trial carried a heavy religious intonation (White). Because many of the English believed Joan to be a witch, her punishment consisted of burning at the stake, despite the English not being able to prove her said sorcery.

On her final day on Earth she "wept and cried out in bewilderment, so that she moved the people and all those present to tears of compassion" (Rankin, Quintal 54). Many high people of England, such as Jean Tressard, Secretary to the King of England, expressed indignation: "We are all ruined, for a good and holy person was burned" due to the corrupt court that was driven by "...manifest malice against the Roman Catholic Church, and indeed heresy" (Williamson). Joan was exonerated nearly twenty-five years later when the French held a nullification trial to restore her name. After this, Joan became France's heroine and a woman for the future to remember (Castor 2).

Through her own words, readers can determine for themselves who exactly Joan was as a person, mystic, and soldier. I have established Joan as a proto-feminist because Joan achieved respect and adoration despite the restrictions of her gender. After convincing the French Dauphin to afford his troops to her, she successfully commanded an entire army without any experience, and was renowned for her connection to God. Her spirituality was incredibly esteemed by her followers. Joan also bravely stood her ground during the brutal trial. She did not falter in the many attempts made to break her down. Most importantly, Joan publicly endorsed a righteous cause that was important to her—France's salvation—even accepting death as a result of her

fierce passion. My incantation of Joan portends a directed line of feminism for young women from Joan's time period to today. She embodies the figure of the woman soldier, garnering respect and admiration for her bravery, but also ire for her cross-dressing. We will see in chapter two how these two factors can coincide in the female soldier. Joan of Arc inspires a sense of pride for France. To them, their idol is "a hero to nationalists, monarchists, liberals, socialists, the right, the left, Catholics, Protestants, traditionalists, feminists, Vichy and the Resistance" (Castor 1).

Deborah Sampson: U.S. Cross-Dressing Soldier

In order to gain insight about Joan as a trans-cultural icon and proto-feminist, one should be familiar with Joan's American counterpart, Deborah Sampson, to see how Joan's work affected Deborah's experience. For this reason I will juxtapose Joan's life and legacy with her counterpart from over 300 years later, who was only five years older. While Joan's mission was religiously based, Deborah craved adventure and the independence of acting as a man in the world. As the reader will see in the proceeding section, Joan and Deborah also were two very different kinds of soldiers. Nonetheless, these two women are worth comparing despite their overarching differences because their unique stories show alternative forms of feminine resilience in acute patriarchal societies, encompassing useful background information as to the evolution of the contemporary female soldier that we will see in chapters two and three.

Deborah Sampson was recently mentioned in the 2016 Democratic National Convention by Meryl Streep. Streep addressed Sampson while commemorating women of grit and grace: "Deborah Sampson was the first woman to take a bullet for our country. She served, disguised as

a man, in George Washington's Continental Army. And she fought to defend a document that didn't fully defend her. 'All men are created equal,' it read. No mention of women. And when she took a blast in battle to her leg, she was afraid to reveal her secret. So she took out a penknife, she dug out the musket ball, and she sewed herself back up again. That's grit" (Al-Sibai). I intend to compare the adoration of Joan of Arc to the virtual anonymity of Deborah Sampson through the concept of feminism, the cultural import of these women in their respective times and later legacy, and the implications of their representation.

Deborah Sampson was born into a poor family in a small farming village, Plympton, around the year 1760. When Deborah's father was betrayed out of the family inheritance he set out to sea to try and retrieve his share, "from whence he was not heard for some years" and "her mother was informed he had perished in a shipwreck" —although records indicate that he merely moved to Maine and fathered a new family there (Mann, H. 39). Nonetheless, Deborah's mother could not take care of her children by herself and separated them into different families. Deborah first lived with a distant relation of her mother's, Miss Fuller. Here, she learned gender specific roles, such as spinning, weaving, baking, and even the alphabet. After Miss Fuller suddenly became ill and died, Deborah was unhappily sent to live with eighty-year-old Mrs. Thatcher and became a caretaker and house manager at just eight years old (McGovern 14-15). Her situation changed again about two years later when she was sent to live with the Thomases as their servant for the next ten years. She cared for five Thomas boys, and although not treated badly, she was not allowed to go to school with them because it was not typical for girls to go to school at this time as some people thought "too much reading gave girls brain fever" (McGovern 18). Deborah constantly wanted to know what the boys learned in school and had a hunger for education, but

instead “she became acquainted with almost all kinds of manual labor,” and even that was not typical work for a female (Mann, H. 44).

Deborah was born into a time where many people were traveling to America and settling in the thirteen colonies along the Eastern coast. The King of England, who heavily taxed the colonists and implemented unfair rules on how they should live, ruled these colonies. In 1770 when Deborah was ten years old the King of England began sending “redcoats,” also known as the British army, to assure his rules were being practiced by the Americans. The Americans did not agree with this scare tactic and in 1773 carried out what we refer to now as the Boston Tea Party to rebel against taxed British tea. A year later, Deborah was planting extra corn on the Thomas’ farm to help feed the people of Boston, who were severely punished by the King. In 1775 the first battle of the Revolutionary War was executed. Many men and boys, referred to as minutemen, because they had to be ready for battle on short notice, had been training for this moment for a while. Deborah had watched them prepare in her village. Many villages had secretively collected guns and powder. One night, as British soldiers were preparing to attack Concord and confiscate weapons, colonists discovered their whereabouts. It was on this fateful night that Paul Revere and William Dawes warned that “The British are coming,” and the minutemen were able to bombard the redcoats at Lexington (McGovern 24). In 1776 George Washington, a farmer from Virginia, was chosen to lead the American army. In the same year, the Declaration of Independence made its debut to the first Congress, stating that all men were created equal and that America has a right to be a free country. On July 4th 1776 the document was ratified. When Deborah turned eighteen in 1778, France came to support the cause and helped in victories, but the toll of war affected everyone. Deborah had to begin saying goodbye to the Thomas boys as they headed into war (McGovern 22-25).

Since Deborah, now eighteen, was no longer indentured to the Thomas', she worked as a weaver in the winter and a schoolteacher for two summer sessions. These occupations allowed her to live "masterless," or non-dependent. Between the years 1779 and 1782 she was a woman on her own with a private income, an almost foreign concept in early America (Young 42). Deborah was also not interested in marriage, especially because the law declared she would belong to her husband and she could not own anything. Instead, Deborah wanted to travel and experience life. Poor men often joined the army for adventure and traveling opportunities; Deborah wanted this for herself, and began to think of this secret idea as a reality. When Deborah was twenty-one General Washington implemented a new plan: soldiers would enlist in the army for three years at a time. This was to avoid indecisive men that would fight for a short period of time and then return back to their farms. The new prototype soldiers were called Continental Soldiers and many men were participating since America was beginning to have issues with Tories (Americans fighting for England) (McGovern 34). Deborah was becoming impatient with the war. She began weaving male clothing to see if she could pass as a man; it helped that she was already "tall, muscular and very erect" for her sex (Young 43). After making the final decision to enlist in Boston, Deborah postponed the journey until the weather would be nicer. While waiting, she practiced male-like tendencies and during spring, she finally walked the entire thirty miles to Boston, albeit feelings of fear and doubt along the way (McGovern 35).

Deborah Sampson transformed into Robert Shurtliff on May 20, 1782 when she joined the army as a Continental Soldier in Captain George Webb's Light Infantry Company, Fourth Regiment, Massachusetts Continental Line. People thought he must have been around fifteen because he had no beard; Deborah was called "Blooming Boy" for this reason. In one of her first trials as a soldier, Deborah had to make a long and tired trek to West Point in New York with

fifty other men. She fainted from exhaustion while resting in a tavern, and when she came to she was relieved that her secret remained unrevealed. Upon arrival at West Point, Deborah received a uniform, a gun, and a knapsack for her belongings and supplies. Deborah participated in the army as any normal soldier, going on many raids against the Tories. The adventure of war soon dissipated as she realized the horrors: cries of pain, death, starvation, lack of supplies, sores, and blisters (McGovern 41-43). Although often lying low, Deborah remained steadfast and was appreciated by the other soldiers for this attitude.

Deborah faced a near-death experience as she continued with her masquerade. The incident happened when Deborah volunteered for action against the enemy: “she, with two sergeants, requested leave of their Captain to retaliate on the enemy, chiefly refugees and Tories in the New York for their outrageous insults to the inhabitants beyond their lines.” After some convincing, the captain agreed and around twenty or thirty soldiers traveled south where they waited to ambush the enemy. Later on, two boys took the group to a cave “stored with provisions such as bacon, butter, cheese, crouts [sauerkraut?], early scrohons [scones?], and jars of honey” (Young 126). The soldiers ate without restraint and later set up camp nearby. During the night, the enemy, on horseback, discovered the pack of soldiers and “a severe battle ensued.” Deborah and the others quickly mounted on their horses as they were being shelled. Deborah soon realized she was wounded; terrified of discovery, “she had always thought she would rather die, than disclose her sex to the army” (128). However, two comrades brought her on horseback to “an old hospital” at the French encampment where she was treated by a French surgeon. After the French doctor addressed her flesh wound to the neck, Deborah knew she could not reveal her severe wound of the thigh, for her gender would be discovered. In extreme pain, Deborah took from the hospital “a silver probe with a little curve at the end, a needle, some lint, and some of

the same kind of salve that had been applied to the wound in my head. I found that the ball had penetrated my thigh about two inches, and the wound was still moderately bleeding. The wine revived me, and God by his kind care watched over me. At the third attempt, I extracted the ball...” (129).

While still weak from her gunshot wound, Deborah nevertheless had to perform soldierly duties and participate in a march. She marched next to another hurt soldier, Richard Snow, who eventually stumbled and fell down, unable to finish the journey. Deborah “requested to be left with a sick soldier...mostly because she was unable to do duty with the army” (Young 131). It was dangerous for the whole regiment to stop because they were in a Tory country. The pair stayed in the attic of a farmer named Van Tassel, shortly discovering that he was, in fact, an active Tory while his daughter was a patriot. Snow died after ten days, whereas Deborah’s leg became stronger. Robert Shurtliff returned to camp and went back to the house with a squad of soldiers to capture a group of Tories gathered there (132).

On April 1st General Paterson selected Robert Shurtliff to be his orderly, which was a high honor. The General had heard about this “quiet, brave soldier” (McGovern 49) and “had previously become acquainted with her heroism and fidelity” (Young 139). Deborah wrote, “I was given a good horse and Fine equipment...I no longer slept on straw on the damp, cold ground, but on a good feather bed.” The paramount bonus was that she could finally take her clothes off and bathe in private. Around June of 1783 Deborah was sent to Philadelphia on a mission, but caught a severe fever that raged in the city; “Death itself could scarcely have presented a more gloomy prospect.” Deborah was taken to the hospital and at one point was presumed dead until she “once more rallied...and gave signs of life.” Doctor Binney in the midst of checking Deborah’s pulse put his hand on her chest and discovered a waistcoat compressing

her breasts. Deborah was moved to the matron's apartment and "treated with all the care that art and expense could bestow." The doctor did not disclose to anyone, including Deborah, that he knew her real sex. In fact, the doctor made Deborah a "welcome guest" in his family where she could recuperate and spend time doing activities with the family (146).

After this, what happened to Deborah's discovery is uncertain. Dr. Binney found out his patient was a woman sometime in the summer of 1783, and she was honorably discharged on October 25th, 1783 after a year and a half of service. The only source of evidence as to what happened in the months in-between is from Sergeant Munn who, following Deborah's stay in the Philadelphia hospital, wrote "she was after that protected by the officers who she served under, discharged and sent home to her friends." What most likely occurred is that General Paterson was in the Philadelphia area during this time and Dr. Binney eventually revealed his discovery to the general in person. After Deborah fully recovered, she rejoined Paterson and continued as his servant until he arranged her discharge (Young 152). Patterson and a few senior officers that knew of the secret, like Colonel Jackson, assured Deborah of her protection. She was fearful for the repercussions of her actions. Not only was it a violation of the law in Massachusetts if a woman cross-dressed, but military punishments could be really brutal. It was fortunate that Deborah's identity was discovered after the war was officially over on September 25th —the nation was in a triumphant state (160), and by this time not many soldiers were around to see or hear about her story: "Most had gone home, including her regiment. It was not as if thousands of soldiers had witnessed Joan of Arc on the battlefield" (164). Furthermore, her true gender was revealed after she had proven herself in military action (159).

In spring of 1785 Deborah met and married a farmer, Benjamin Gannett. Although Deborah could not do a lot of work around the farm due to her thigh that had not healed properly,

the pair lived comfortably in Sharon, Massachusetts and eventually welcomed children.

Interestingly enough, Deborah shifted from the masculine sphere of war to the feminine sphere of domestic life. After the formal disbanding of her regiment in November 1783, Deborah probably did not have many options of where to go from there. As said by a descendant, her family “was not at all proud of her escapade but did respect her for keeping her secret intact and retaining her virtue...” (Young 168). She eventually made her way to rural Sharon and stayed with her mother’s sister. So why did she choose to marry instead of remaining a “masterless woman?” It is known that she was slow in the decision. There was an abnormal interval of time that passed between her engagement and wedding, which could hint at some uncertainty (171). However, realistically speaking, it would have been nearly impossible for a single woman to economically thrive in the New England countryside if she had no inheritance. “Old maids” could live with their families or a sibling or relative, but Deborah probably did not want to do this after a childhood of being passed along to different living arrangements (172). Specifically marrying Benjamin Gannett was a smart decision that may have even been calculated because “He was the son of one of the most prosperous and respected men in town, a leading patriot.” She was set up for a nice style of living —“the class of prosperous middling sort of farmers” (175).

When Deborah was forty-one, she wanted more adventure. Her amazing story was popular and had been featured in several newspapers after she was discharged from the army. People still wanted to know more about her masquerade. In the 1790s she came forward to share her story (Young 164). Deborah began traveling and speaking to audiences. She was one of the first women in America to travel alone and publicly speak for an income (McGovern 60). Deborah also launched a public campaign for pensions. In 1805 the government voted to

recompense injured veterans, thus Deborah received eight dollars a month until her death on April 29th, 1827 (62).

Joan of Arc and Deborah Sampson: A Comparison

Did Joan's story influence Deborah's choices? It is important to question whether Deborah would have accomplished her military experiences if it had not been for another female to undertake the challenge roughly three hundred years before. In retrospect, she might not have. Despite her labors on the Thomas farm, Deborah interestingly enough found time to read chapbooks of adventure, heroism, and war, such as *The Maid of Orléans*, about Joan of Arc. Her avid reading "contributed to her sense of empowerment as well as to her aspirations" (Young 37). Deborah encountered Joan's adventures and she craved the same opportunities. Like Joan, Deborah was poor and had a void to fulfill, albeit not a religious one, but one that she cared about nonetheless. The young women secretively carried out their plans and escaped their homes that would not have initially supported their causes, eventually receiving due recognition for their duties. Joan provided Deborah with proof that she had a chance to military access and gender liberation in a male-dominated space.

Feminism and military service can coincide with each other. I contend that it is feminist to work among men as a woman defending your country because of the sheer fact of defying typical gender roles. As a woman entering a male space, a woman's individuality, and uniqueness could be at stake because they must conform to their standard peers. But is it feminist

to hide your womanhood from fellow soldiers and fight under a false disguise as a man? Is it defying typical gender roles when one is not actually acting as a woman? Maybe not. This question leads to another one: While both Joan and Deborah challenged the status quo by entering a “man’s world” where they were both successful to a certain degree, why has Joan of Arc’s legacy been that of a feminist icon, while Deborah Sampson’s legacy in women’s liberation has scarcely been talked about or largely forgotten? Deborah is an oddity instead of being foregrounded like Joan. We can prove that Joan was ordained to her duties, while Deborah desired adventure and wanted to travel. Although the fact that Deborah sought to explore in the first place bends the social norms of her time, it is perhaps difficult to see her in the same light as Joan. This is not to discredit any of Deborah’s efforts, for she certainly did not embody a typical woman of the 18th century. In her speech at the Federal-Street Theatre in Boston 1802 she expresses, “I am indeed willing to acknowledge what I have done, an error and presumption. I will call it an *error* and *presumption*, because I swerved from the accustomed flowry paths of *female delicacy*, to walk upon the heroic precipice of feminine perdition!” (Moore, Brooks, Wigginton 347). Deborah’s actions are what influence feminism, not her voice. The action words she utilizes “swerved” and “walk upon” can justify this interpretation; she carried out the soldierly duties, marched, went into battles, fought, but all of these actions did not affect her thoughts or influence on feminism. While Deborah was doing something that most women did not do, she did not unite anyone to her cause; she did not persuade others to join forces with her. Completely masquerading oneself, bearing a false identity, and seemingly rejecting oneself as a woman might not have the same effect as claiming outright that you are a woman, here to protect your country and engage in battle regardless of your sex. A feminist consciousness would mean that Deborah was cognizant of the inequality that women faced, which she had to have been

acutely aware if she fully pursued her enterprise as Robert Shurtliff, and was determined to challenge aspects of it. The latter part is where inconsistencies arise. Deborah did not challenge women's rights later in her life. For example, despite obstacles that she could have overcome with determination, she got married and had children, taking her fated place as a farmer's wife.

However, Deborah certainly invokes modern-day inspiration to a young generation that should not go unnoticed. There are several accounts of this. For example, Theresa Ramppen Gaydos, who reenacted Sampson in uniform at the New Windsor encampment, expresses, "She has shown me a side of myself I never knew existed... While portraying Deborah I present a strong and determined sense of self worth. By taking Deborah's part I draw a part of her strength and courage as my own." Any present-day women who admire Deborah Sampson probably do not care whether she be considered a feminist by definition, or not. In many ways, Deborah then is a feminist in spite of herself (Young 306).

Joan's actions *and* voice comprise her feminist impacts. Joan is a feminist icon because she did not acknowledge an earthly masculine form of authority; she was her own leader. In fact, she was the one that led men into battles. I say "earthly" because one could say that God, a male, was her form of authority. However, God was everyone's authority in medieval France —men and women alike. Also, Joan additionally took direction from two female angels. I additionally argue that Charles VII was a man she heavily respected, but did not necessarily follow or take commands from. She rather told him what she was to do, and oftentimes he conceded. Deborah, on the other hand, was more of a subject in the army. Whereas Deborah wanted to blend into the army, Joan wanted to stand out, and she was respected for projecting her cause: "[Soldiers] seemed to have welcomed the holiness that she represented, and in fact some marveled and even relished the spirituality of their own existence when with her. They seemed to draw nearer to her

when fighting by her side, and after death, they remembered her military activities with a legend-building fealty” (Wheeler, Wood 12). Deborah knew that she had to prove herself as a soldier to deflect any suspicion of her gender, while Joan, as a woman, was more of an influential leader who revived the troops. The men received a new and fresh outlook on an otherwise lost cause, commemorating this future saint as their leader.

In her later life, Deborah Sampson spoke against war and explored the helplessness she often felt while serving. Trying to understand warfare she said, “My young mind wanted to understand why men should rage against his fellow man, to butcher or be butchered” (McGovern 60). She seemingly describes herself as naïve in her undertaking. Deborah enjoyed the looks of disbelief in her audiences as she retold her histories (60). “Despite her experiences, or perhaps because of them, Sampson went on to praise motherhood and encourage women to raise children and leave wars and politics to men” (Danyluk). She did not rise to become a public advocate for women; she obeyed the patriarchal system. Since she made claims of supporting gender-specific roles, I believe she did not fundamentally change her feminist outlook, but this does not completely negate her exploits as a Continental Soldier. Joan, on the other hand, continued with her movement until the very moment she died. As she burned, eyewitnesses remembered her pleading “...in a loud voice the holy name of Jesus, and implored and invoked without ceasing the aid of the saints of Paradise” (Williamson). She died proclaiming her own truth and was given the highest form of punishment while still remaining authentic to herself. The fundamental legacy of Joan’s life becomes then that “women must not assume that their truth is acceptable in the world of male values;” this is much like a warning (Barstow 132). Deborah’s legacy might be more complicated. She has made proto-feminist claims, specifically in her aforementioned public address, saying “I cannot contentedly quit this subject or this place without expressing, more

emphatically my high respect and veneration for my own sex,” offering “her most sincere declaration of friendship for that sex,” which “neither in adversity or prosperity could I ever learn to forget or degrade” (Young 223). However, before she began giving speeches she never explained that she enlisted to prove her gender; she was rather interested in escapade and independence. Young mentions two biographers who have claimed Deborah to be “America’s first official woman soldier,” America’s first heroine,” and “America’s first feminist” citing how she “she volunteered to fight as the nation’s first feminist, to prove women had the courage to wage war on behalf of their country by the side of men” (304). Young’s rebuttal, and one that I agree with, explains that Deborah was none of these firsts. He says that these problematic descriptions assign her “a motive not on her mind: going into the army on behalf of a cause to prove a principle” (304). I do not view Deborah as a proto-feminist because I do not think she even thought of herself as that. If she did, wouldn’t she have raised her voice and done something further for the feminist community, such as fight for gender inclusion within the military? I believe that Joan did see herself as a feminist, however. For example, she outwardly asserted her gender to doubtful men, like we saw on page six of chapter one. She also called herself “The Maid;” she was proud of her womanhood and virtue. Deborah’s legacy is perhaps to fight for a cause before it beats you.

Another approach I take in determining the discrepancies between the women’s marks on history is through their cultural import. I question why Joan’s cultural import has been more successful than Deborah’s. I define cultural import as the aspects of Joan and Deborah’s histories that have left an imprint on societies. The world knows more about Joan of Arc than any other woman who lived before the modern age. Her Trial Record presents an authentic voice for this wise teenager who remains the topic of a plethora of studies and books (Brooks 159). As for

Deborah, there is less published work on her. It is curious as to why two women who had similar accomplishments are not viewed with the same objectivity and investigations in their respective countries.

The first aspect I will probe is the idea of legitimacy. Herman Mann, Deborah Sampson's biographer, has been criticized for presenting Deborah with inauthenticity, as he was an inexperienced writer who wrote with strain and an agenda: "Mann had a penchant for invention; he also did not know when to leave a good story alone" and is described as "maddeningly untrustworthy" (Young 114, 147). Wanting to secure a place in history, Deborah chose Mann to write about her since they were friends, and she recounted the details of her life nearly a decade after the war—apparently with clear memory and speech "deliberate and articulate," although historians agree that there is bound to be flaws in a memoir written years after the occurrences, even more so because it was written through a second voice (13). Mann wrote and published Deborah's memoir in 1797 named *The Female Review*, and went on to do the same in 1802 for her public address. Finally, in 1827 he revised the memoir after Deborah's death, but left it jumbled and unfinished because of his own passing. Mann thought of his work as "a novel based on fact" (14). Since there is little information on Deborah Sampson, historians cannot dismiss Mann's publication altogether, and discovered that probably more than one fourth is written in truth. For the untrue parts, Mann most notably liked to portray Deborah as a heroine who was an extraordinary soldier and above average in her achievements: "At the end of the book he fantasized a series of improbable adventures for her among western Indians, and could not resist embellishing her likely prosaic military episodes in the Hudson Valley" (13). He also imagined "lurid sexually titillating scenes" to add a sense of romance to the young heroine's story. In Deborah's recovered diary and letters her voice is different from the way Mann projected it:

“Her style suggests a self-educated woman who knew that by virtue of her unusual experience as a soldier she commanded attention, yet who was aware that she could not speak with authority of either a man of degrees or a man of affairs,” different from the audaciousness Mann described (245).

While historians and others are left to question fact vs. fiction regarding Deborah Sampson’s life, there is no question in the legitimacy of Joan of Arc’s biography. This is because everything was manually documented during her trial thoroughly enough that “the men who condemned Joan never would have dreamed how valuable her Trial Record would be to posterity” (Brooks 159). Even more is that “whatever the political purposes to which the minutes of Joan’s interrogations were put, clerics participating in her trial made clear that they were intended to be read as a pure representation of what Joan said and, by extension, as a pure representation of what she believed” (Sullivan xiv). At the end of the last century, the Trial Record was translated into modern French and was presented to the world. Joan’s character becomes conspicuous through these meticulous archives, and much of what we know is through her own sincere words. We also hear real-life accounts of Joan through witnesses. There is tangible evidence of her voice, the way she presented herself, and her experiences: “...in the well-worn out pages of her trials there are unexpected moments that catch the humanity, the violence, and the transcendence of her story” (Castor 7).

Deborah and Joan’s cultural import, then, becomes a matter of trust. Can America trust Deborah as a national heroine from her disordered history? Joan became a national heroine for France because people saw her veracity and restored it. She died nearly 600 years ago, yet her symbol is continually used for a variety of different causes. The image and meaning of Joan changes with the changing times. She has been the topic of literature, music, opera, drama,

dance, and art—a reward for singlehandedly turning the tides in the Hundred Years War. For example, Orléans remembers the heroine with parades every May—the Fêtes de Jeanne D’arc; Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’ 1854 oil on canvas—*Jeanne au Couronnement de Charles VII*—is on display at the Louvre and depicts Joan at the crowing of Charles VII; Denis Foyatier’s 1855 infamous bronze equestrian statue of Joan stands in Orléans; and Mark Twain’s 1896 “Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc” is one of his most unique pieces. School children know her name and she is recognized nationally (Brooks 160). Deborah has never achieved the conviction that Joan did.

Most people in American society probably would have thought of Deborah as somewhat ordinary. In reality, she was not the only woman to secretly enter the army during the Revolution, and she lived a very normal life after serving. In order for her to have become a crusader she would have needed more recognition from the women of her time. Unfortunately, there was no women’s movement in her day to uphold and protect her accomplishments. In other words, “the country was not ready for her” (Young 320). To become a symbol for America, Deborah also would have needed more recognition for her achievement as a soldier. However one veteran, Joseph Plumb Martin, describes poor soldiers as “being turned adrift like old worn out horses.” In frank terms, being a low-class soldier was a thankless job and “Americans have forgotten” the work that the soldiers of this era accomplished by breaking free from Great Britain (319). In her time, she sold her life story by participating in speaking engagements, adopting an image as “the celebrated Mrs. Gannett” (317). We can consider Deborah Sampson more of a local heroine than a national heroine. She is well known in her birthplace of Plympton; one can see her on the town flag, on patches of police uniforms, and in a room dedicated to her by the historical society. Her cultural import as a heroine has been not of receiving profound admiration

like Joan, but rather receiving recognition only when it is needed. For instance, Deborah's memory surfaces when America summons ideas such as patriotism, like during the last quarter of the century when efforts to remember the colonial era, the "founding fathers," and New England as a profound topic in American history became imperative to protect. Or, for Women's History Month in March 1999, president William Jefferson Clinton claimed Deborah as one of "the countless women" who "have shaped our destiny and enriched our society" (295). Joan will always have a spot in history, while Deborah needs to be beckoned.

The last topic I will discuss regarding the disparity between the universal admiration of Joan and the oddity of Deborah is through their representation and the implications attached to their representation. Both women wanted to be valued like men. Both of their worlds, albeit centuries and an ocean apart, did not support women's rights. Women were a mere product of men and never to achieve high respect or acknowledgement. Joan and Deborah reevaluated gender norms and took on a male façade because they had to in order to move in society. However, their representations as "becoming" male differ in some ways.

In Joan's time it was forbidden for women to preach, to teach, to bear arms, to absolve, to excommunicate," but she denied these rules (Taylor 46). Joan assumed male roles first practically by becoming a warrior and then symbolically by adopting male clothing. This allowed Joan a level of power denied to her gender. We can look at Joan as not only needing to dress masculine, but wanting to dress masculine. It is the way she wanted to be seen and allowed her power and security. Although Joan was condemned as a relapsed heretic for cross-dressing in her trial, she liked to epitomize male identity even before then. In the *libelle d'Estivet*, clerics recounted that Joan was staying in Vaucouleurs to persuade Robert de Baudricourt to grant her an escort to Chinon. The clerics description of Joan's choice of wardrobe and hairstyle supported

their convictions that the young woman presented herself in such a way because she wanted to, not had to: “she used all of the styles and clothes which the most dissolute man are accustomed to assume, having rejected all womanly modesty and being contrary, not only to womanly decency, but to that which is common to honorable men.” They believed she took pleasure in her masculine garb. While she departed from Vaucouleurs in fairly standard male clothing, she wore far richer garments later in career (Sullivan 47).

The women depicted different categories of a soldier, which caused a discrepancy in their representations. Deborah embodied a poor drudge soldier, while Joan was a highly ranked leader. Deborah cynically claims, “I indeed left my morning pillow of roses, to prepare a couch of brambles for the night: and yet I awoke from this refreshed, to gather nought but the thorns of anguish for the next night’s repose—and in the precipitancy of passion, to prepare a moment for repentance at leisure” (Moore, Brooks, Wigginton 347). Deborah had to suffer through war and face the hardships that normal soldiers had to go through —disease, a critical injury, and rough conditions. Joan, on the other hand, was respected and rewarded with finery, such as nice armor. As stated, Joan had a refined taste in male attire and appreciated the toilette. When captured outside Compiègne, Joan sported a vermillion-and-gold brocaded surcoat adorned with fur or lace. She also adopted a bowl-cut and possessed a liking for slashed robes, and ornate surcoats. These add-ons were considered very fashionable for young men. Joan’s outfits suggest that she did not wear these clothes out of pure convenience for performing male tasks; they rather insinuate that she took delight in dressing up (Sullivan 48). Her rich taste subtly mocks the average uniform worn by Deborah. Despite dressing as the opposite sex, Joan was still known as her genuine identity, often referred to as the Maid. People knew her still as a woman. Her adventures emblazoned her name on them; Deborah cannot say the same.

Deborah instead had to completely disguise herself as a man and pass for one. Her true identity, stifled by her masquerade, was lost for some time. There is perhaps less cogency in her accounts as a soldier, then, because Robert Shurtliff personified all of Deborah's responsibilities while she served. It might be difficult to put weight behind the idea of Deborah as a soldier since she had a male persona that functioned and that was believed. Deborah was known for having masculine and feminine qualities. She stood around five foot seven, very atypical for a woman of her time, and looked somewhat severe. But, she was well aware of the role clothing had in her lifetime and its impact on masking her other side. Serving as a private was not a high rank, but the uniform of the light infantry allowed to pass as member of the army's elite corps and as the General's orderly. After the war, Deborah took on her role as a woman, yet needed to embrace her feminine attributes so as to avoid the perceptions that she was masculine. Her wardrobe choices from her wedding gown on suggest that Deborah wanted to be viewed as a woman who "married *up*," a "would-be lady" (Young 318). There was an imposing separation from her male and female roles through clothing, thus a separation from her soldier and non-soldier embodiment ensued, whereas Joan's identity remained the same as she was regarded as a woman in male clothing.

Understanding Joan of Arc and Deborah Sampson's histories as cross-dressing female soldiers, who leapt through the gender constraints of their times, adds a concrete background to their dynamic characters. It is crucial to understand their lives —their achievements, their struggles, and their legacies— to properly see them through a feminist lens and define the discrepancy in their cultural imports. I contend that while Joan of Arc is a proto-feminist, her American counterpart did not fully reach this status, despite initially being enthused by Joan's journey to begin her own. In that way alone, Joan did some work for Deborah. Deborah

additionally did not reach the same level of cultural import for America that Joan did for France because of notable discrepancies in their representations. Nonetheless, their histories inform contemporary military women of the 21st century in the U.S. and in France.

Chapter 2

A Look at the Contemporary Woman Soldier in the U.S. and France

America's Struggles with Women in Combat

It is crucial to discover the work, if any, that Joan of Arc and Deborah Sampson do for women soldiers today in order to corroborate their legacies as women soldiers. Consequently, I question how Joan's influence works in France and the United States. It is suitable to use the U.S. military to analyze Joan's said legacy because it is a world-renowned force; former President Obama referred to it as "the greatest military on Earth" and claims, "Nobody even comes close." Despite a level of respect that the French and American militaries have established, I contend that they are not in any way a feminist organization, which means there remains work to be done. Many nations have not yet disentangled crucial gender-related quandaries; for example, feminism is based on the idea of equality, yet women have not ever been forced to sign up to the US military draft. But, most all militaries still realize the macro-social and legal pressures to include women. France and the United States are nations that encounter the obstacles that exist in allowing women full integration. How are these two nations taking care of their military women and addressing their issues?

With more women participating in the military, efforts must exist and be executed to improve the status of women in the military. Although women are no longer being looked at as objectified and sexy battlefield nurses with the little outfits, there still remain contemporary issues of women in the military. On September 28th 2016 President Barack Obama held a

conversation in Fort Lee, Virginia with the military to discuss the most pressing issues facing the United States at present. He was asked questions regarding the role of women in the armed forces. Captain Lauren Serrano, an active duty Marine who earned a Bronze Star for her service in Iraq, probed the efficacy of mixed gender combat units:

A study by the Marine Corps revealed that mixed gender combat units performed notably worse and that women suffered staggeringly higher rates of injury. Just one of those statistics showed that mixed gender units took up to 159 percent longer to evacuate a casualty than all-male units. As the wife of a Marine who deploys to combat often, that added time can mean the difference between my husband living or dying. Why were these tangible negative consequences disregarded and how does the integration of women positively enhance the infantry mission and make me and my husband safer? (Transcript: CNN Presidential Town Hall: America's Military and The Commander and Chief)

President Obama answered Captain Serrano's concerns by reinforcing the qualities that women bring to the military: "...as a consequence of women serving in our military and opening up what used to be closed situations to them, we've gained a lot of talent. We've gained a lot of incredible soldiers, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen. I want to make sure that our starting assumption is if you can do the job, you should be able to get the job" (Transcript: CNN Presidential Town Hall: America's Military and The Commander and Chief). The Commander in Chief focused on the idea of performance, highlighting the value of picking the best person for each job —whether it be male or female: "It may not involve physical strength or how many pull-ups you can do, it may involve the precision with which you can operate and you being able to keep your cool or you being able to carry out a task with a low error rate. And it may be that in those situations, a woman can perform better than a man" (Transcript: CNN Presidential Town Hall: America's Military and The Commander and Chief). He passionately admits that he does not "want a military, an institution that starts with the premise that women can't do something." He says, "If it turns out they can't do something, then we'll deal with that specific situation. But

I don't want to start off with that assumption" (Transcript: CNN Presidential Town Hall: America's Military and The Commander and Chief).

Even with Obama's strong, modern-day feminist convictions on women in the military, his assertions have not been borne out in practice. This may be because the United States is simply not ready for full women's rights, just as America was not yet prepared to take on a female president, as observed in Hilary Clinton's upset in the 2016 presidential race. During Clinton's campaign, she knew that she would have to "...challenge the Republicans on defense and security; she famously voted for the Iraq war and is spending, as one commentator put it, 'hours mastering military arcana,' as she must if she is ever to persuade Americans to take her seriously as commander in chief" (Walter). At least one reason for her loss may have been because Americans could not picture a female as head in warfare and war politics.

Oftentimes underrepresented, misunderstood, and targeted within this time-honored institution, women's rights within the military have improved throughout history, albeit never reaching full potential, which I will dissect later on this chapter. Nevertheless, I speculate that with the new administrative change, history might rewind. While Obama is a feminist, President Donald Trump's public anti-woman bent puts him at an opposite stance. Obama's position on women in the military has been all inclusive, but I believe President Trump's position will be more narrow, given that he seems fixed on undoing all of Obama's policies and legacies. President Trump could reinstate a ban on women in combat (as of this writing there is nothing official, yet). While former Secretary of the Army, Eric Fanning, believes it would be difficult for President Trump to undo "Obama-era" orders enabling women to serve in military positions that have been previously closed off to them because "It's hard to roll these things back...A lot of work has been put in place, and you already have service members serving," other public

figures have a different opinion. For example, Trump's Defense Secretary, Gen. James Mattis, "has questioned whether it's in the military's best interest to place women in the most dangerous posts." Furthermore, some of Trump's surrogates, such as Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Alpine, have encouraged Trump to overturn Obama's "social engineering" policies (Ashton). Military women's full inclusion is an issue to pay attention to during Trump's presidency.

France's Struggles with Women in Combat

France confronts similar issues. The United States holds a larger military force than France, but the latter, like the U.S., remains one of the most women-inclusive militaries in the world with 15% of women making up the participants. Additionally, French women account for 13% of officers, 17% of non-commissioned officers, and 13% of non-commissioned members, which represents the members that are anything but officers. Although women have achieved full formal inclusion through legislation and policy in the many services and corps, full acceptance of gender diversity has not solved the problem of women's participation and concerns in France's military. The image of the fighter with "les pieds dans la boue, le fusil sur le dos, prêt à partir au combat" leaves a predominately masculine impression¹ (Chadenat). A study reveals that French women perceive their acceptance, both formal and informal, "to be grudging rather than full-hearted" (Pinch 12). Gender issues within the walls of the French armed forces revolve around integration and conflict. Even further, women that surpass the already near immovable boundaries and enter the non-traditional military roles are stigmatized. That is to say, women do not have to be restricted to the traditional roles of administrative, clerical, and medical services,

¹ "Feet in the mud, gun on the back, ready for battle."

but when they move away from these roles, they face struggles “simply because they do not have those socially legitimate qualities that define soldiers” (78).

According to Dr. Katia Sorin, who has undertaken research on gender integration in France and Canada and on leadership roles, the reforms in France’s defense establishment, such as the expansion of women’s roles, threaten the image and “raison d’être,” or the purpose, of military service for male soldiers. For male soldiers, their participation in the military is most often seen “as the most important phase in a young man’s progression into manhood” while women are often questioned for their commitment (Pinch 12). She believes that this is the case for most nations regarding the military.

Nearly all women aim to be “regarded as soldiers in every respect” and to “establish good healthy, professional relationships with their male colleagues” (Pinch 14). This idea interposes on identity. Integration relates to women’s efforts in gaining acceptance as “full, professional members of the French armed forces” (15). This military organizational perspective is more proposed than actually assumed because the military is often hostile to women. Women are generally not adapting to the armed forces as easily as men because they face “rejection, isolation, and unhealthy attitudes held mainly by men” (15).

Sorin finds that because women have not been granted “willing” access to military academies, it is harder for them to receive positions of responsibility: “the pathway to high command is still held to a very large extent by male hands” (Pinch 87). The increase of women’s roles is not deemed an egalitarian trend in the French forces. Discriminatory practices are discovered through “differential work assignments” for men and women and the “internal gender-determined structuring of occupations” (88). Women are also placed at a disadvantage elsewhere. At Saint-Cyr, the major military academy of France, women are unquestionably the

minority. The male-female relations are described as mainly antagonistic and unfriendly. Women here are treated as “outsiders, as invisible; they are otherwise scorned, demeaned, insulted, and subjected to sexual jokes and innuendos” (14). This battle between the sexes stems largely from the females’ disdain of male superiors who fail in punishing inappropriate military peers, which I will address in “National Epidemics: Sexual Assault in the American and French Militaries.”

Sorin outlines how men and women often inherently respond differentially to “service conditions, social arrangements/events, and the on-going integration process in general.” For instance, women can have opposing reactions to offensive caricatures or pornographic material that are largely considered a factor of the male military environment (Pinch 91). In terms of culture and social spheres, this additionally provides a divide between men and women in the military. Women have further conflict with balancing their military and feminine identities. Some prefer to emphasize their femininity to stand apart from men and highlight the differences between the genders, others want to focus on their professional military identities while leaving their personal feminine identities behind, and some women seek a balance between their personal and professional identities. These preferences commonly vary because of differences in age, rank, experience, and family status (14). A woman’s specific choice can provide a coping mechanism in dealing with the military environment for that individual. One example of the variances is in terms of rank. Women in the French military are largely absent from more senior ranks, and are more likely to be on contract status, which means they are assigned in areas away from “heavy symbolic operational content” (87). This could be because women have not been granted “willing” access to military academies, which are necessary in order for promotion to positions of responsibility. If a woman had aspirations to obtain a position of power, she would only want to emphasize her professional military identity. Furthermore, perhaps young women in

the military choose to embrace their femininity by wearing minimal makeup since a 2004 poll by Mintel showed that 47 percent of French women wear foundation; 70 percent of French women use lipstick, and 43 percent use blusher (Sciolino).

The adversity that women face in entering the military affects them mentally and emotionally. Because they cannot achieve a valid place in this organization, they are constantly reminded of their “otherness” and “different” status. They remain “continually on their guard, on the defensive; they can take nothing for granted—everything must be fought for” (Pinch 14). Women thus have thoughts of doubts, inadequacy, and failure in becoming proportional to male’s participation and worth.

National Epidemic: Sexual assault in the U.S. Military

Women in the military are simply not foregrounded or idolized as iconic war heroes. One could say they are rather invisible, while male soldiers garner almost all of the public discourse of the hero. The male soldier’s visibility contrasted with the woman soldier’s invisibility results in the woman soldier occupying this hero’s opposite —the victim. The only time military women are cited and revealed is not through their heroism, but rather from their abundant rape cases. So often stigmatized as sexually promiscuous and weak, the sexual violence perpetrated onto women serving is a national epidemic. The statistics are staggering, such as in 2011 when 3,192 sexual assaults were reported, but only 191 military members were actually convicted. This does not take to account the 80 percent of sexual assaults that go unreported within this institution (O’Toole). For women, the result of reporting will most likely end their military careers. If they are found to be falsifying, as they are often portrayed as liars, women could lose their rate, rank,

and school. The “professional retaliation in their chosen careers” and intimidation tactics do their job in preventing women from coming forward (Tourjee). Thus, women struggle with full integration in the military because of the men in positions of authority who rape them and get away with it. However, women who have been raped in the military have a PTSD rate higher than men who have been in combat. One in four women who seek medical attention at the VA claim that they have been sexually victimized in the military. These women live with Military Sexual Trauma (MST) (Tourjee).

The Invisible War is a documentary directed by Kirby Dick released in 2012 about the secretive world of rape and sexual assault in the military, accompanied by emotional real life accounts from the women who lived through some of the most violent cases. Today “a female soldier in combat zones is more likely to be raped by a fellow soldier than killed by enemy fire”; this results in 20 percent of active duty female soldiers being sexually assaulted while serving. Rape has even been ruled an occupational hazard of military service (Dick).

The first scene in the documentary shows a black and white film reel with some of the first American women soldiers marching uniformly. An announcer states “The value placed by the Women’s Army Corp on meticulous grooming and feminine grace is one of the first lessons learned by the recruit.” Is it possible that this early statement had the capacity to place a certain ideology on women in the military that would last for decades and cast them as weak? This statement enacts a kind of essential femininity that all women were expected to possess. I see this as extremely problematic because the generalization of women as adhering to a form of femininity does not take into account that not all women perform their femininity in the same way. Already, in the earliest years of emancipation, women were subjected to weaker efforts in the military, such as being trained in “feminine grace” instead of receiving proper preparation in

warfare, strategies, and logistics because of their gender. The next scenes are more contemporary in nature, honing in on the still diluted paradigm shift of women's place in the military. Former call-to-action ads claiming that only performance matters in the military, not gender, are presented in commercials. One female soldier is quoted in an ad saying, "It's a lot of hard work, but it's totally worth it." This propaganda is utilized to appeal to women to join the action, but what that woman probably has not yet discovered are the heinous rapes in which the speakers throughout the documentary say caused them to regret their decision to enter the military and serve the United States in the first place.

One victim, Ariana Klay, was highlighted throughout the documentary. Her story is particularly interesting because it shows that such an esteemed naval woman can also be brutalized by an unethical system. Just one mile from the US Capitol Building sits Marine Barracks Washington. It is the most prestigious and oldest unit there is in the Marine Corps where "the best of the best go." Priding itself on history and tradition, no one would expect the shameful acts that occur there. To put this into perspective, the filmmakers of *The Invisible War* contacted five female marines who were all assaulted by an officer while serving at the Marine Barracks Washington. Quite shockingly, four of the women were investigated or punished after they reported, while no officer was punished or even held accountable.

Klay is a woman who barely survived the aftermaths of her attack, which occurred while serving at this most admired unit. When Klay first checked in at the Marine Barracks Washington, she was immediately told that if she wore makeup the marines would think that she wanted to sleep with them all, which she thought was ridiculous. The senior officer in her command even told her, "Female marines here are nothing but objects for the marines to fuck." For Klay, the sexual harassment became progressively worse. The marines made mockery of her

regulation length skirt and even her running shorts. She relates that a lot of female marines were too humiliated to come to work.

One duty of the Marine Barracks Washington is a ceremonial drill. The evening parades are presented to the public via the news, and the sound drill platoon and president attend these events. When the parades finish, all officers are required, often ordered, to attend Center House at Marine Barracks Washington for a night of drinking. One anonymous soldier admits that there was a partying and drinking culture that was almost inescapable. Klay's boss told her that these events were mandatory and Klay further points out that these drinking events inspired the senior officers to drink heavily—to the point where they were peeing in their pants or passing out on lawns. This was “the norm.” Klay tried to seek help. She told the battalion Executive Officer about the humiliation and the comments that she dealt with daily, but he simply said “you know what you should do, what a marine officer should do, and that's to ignore it and move on.” Her husband, Ben Klay, discloses that he had many sleepless nights wondering what he could do to get his wife out of this situation.

Not surprisingly, in August 2010 a senior officer and his friend raped Klay after a weekly drinking event. Klay was additionally threatened: “He said that if I told anybody that he was going to have his friend Marve from Indiana kill me and throw me in a ditch, because that's how they took care of things in Indiana.” One can see that the men performing these acts of rape are not confused about what they are doing; these men are serial rapists. In fact, Captain Greg Rinkey says, “If it's an officer, it's an officer that has habitually, in the past, preyed on an enlisted. They would do it once, they would get away with it, and then they think ‘wow, this is pretty easy, I'm going to try it again.’” Cases involving alcohol where consent becomes a blurred line are not the core crisis here. Explicit rape is perpetuated by men looking to exert their power,

sex-drive, and authority. Klay explains that the actions of her seniors in the assault and the ensuing investigation absolutely destroyed her, resulting in suicide attempts and a long and difficult road to recovery. She “cannot recommend anyone to join with the way the organization is set up now.” Anyone who joins will have to accept rape and the destruction of her life as a possibility.

Klay lastly expresses that most of her anger stems from the commanders that were “complicit in covering up everything that happened. The organization gives commanders an incredible amount of power. Ben Klay says, “I felt [the power] as a lieutenant in Iraq, it’s scary. You appoint the prosecution, you appoint the defense, you appoint the investigation, you’re in charge of the police force, you’re in charge of the community. You own everything. You are judge, you are jury, you are executioner.” The problem with this system of internal prosecution is that an individual commander does not have the proper education or training to determine what is appropriate in serious felony investigations.

This is why reporting sexual abuse in the military is “inherently unfair.” Colonel Don Christensen, a former military prosecutor who is now the president of Protect Our Defenders, a group that advocates for military victims of sexual assault, says “In the military, your rapists’ boss decides whether or not a sexual-assault allegation is investigated. This puts commanders in an impossible position.” He explains that the “culture” of the military is to always report everything to your commander, whether it is an illness or an assault. It can be extremely hard to make an off-base phone call to law-enforcement. The supervisor then has to evaluate the complaint’s legitimacy and determine if it should go further in the chain of command. However, this process does not happen swiftly, and by this point the victim might become hopeless.

Moreover, most sexual assaults occur in units, so the supervisor may be both the commander of

the victim and the perpetrator —an element that can further alienate the person who reported. Commanders often ignore assault or harassment allegations because they do not want crimes tainting their records. While it is a requirement to report rape, there are few consequences for commanders who are found to have ignored the victim’s claims. In fact, “Sixty-two percent of respondents in a 2014 RAND Corporation survey of all service members who reported assaults said they experienced some social or professional retaliation after making the claim, including a reduction in rank, a decrease in pay, or being forced out of the military entirely” (McLaughlin).

On May 7th, 2013 Donald Trump tweeted, “26,000 unreported sexual assaults in the military-only 238 convictions. What did these geniuses expect when they put men & women together?” At an NBC-hosted forum in September of 2016 during his presidential campaign, he stood by this comment, reiterating that sexual assaults should be expected “when they put men and women together” (Diaz). He adds that a court system should be set up in the military to better deal with what he called “a massive problem.” Aside from his aggressive and victim-blaming tweet, President Trump admits that this “massive problem” can be attributed to the fact that “Nobody gets prosecuted. You have reported...you have the report of rape and nobody gets prosecuted.” However, at the same time, Trump wants to keep the court system within the military and does not think it should be “outside of the military” (Diaz). There have been various efforts to address these issues through legislation, and “the concern about the reporting chain has been a rallying cry for critics for more than two decades” (McLaughlin). Rep. Jackie Speier recognizes the importance of these efforts. She has sponsored the Sexual Assault Training Oversight and Prevention Act (STOP) for several years. This promotes a “third-party oversight board” containing military personnel and civilians to regulate assault cases. According to her, we

“cannot condone a system that is designed to protect the perpetrators and punish the survivors”

(McLaughlin).

Stories like Klay’s haunt the documentary. The ending is bleak and offers little hope; filmcards reveal the happenings of each assailant. Only one was convicted, but not for rape—he was merely found guilty of adultery and indecent language. Some of the rapists have even gained reputable awards and promotions within the military since the assaults.

National Epidemic: Sexual Assault in the French Military

In France, cases of sex crimes are pertinent, too. Similarities exist between the French and American militaries in the vulnerability to sexual assault of women who enlist. Important to note is that there is not nearly as much information available on the subject of sexual violence and harassment in the military regarding France than there is for the United States. Sexual violence and women’s rights seem less talked about in France, more taboo, and conceivably even more secretive. This is not surprising, though. When I spent five months in France studying abroad I observed the lack of conversation surrounding feminism. In fact, I experienced awful forms of harassment on a daily basis, sometimes even multiple times a day that would have made any feminist want to rally. One such occurrence happened when I refused to talk to a man who endlessly tried starting a conversation with me with compliments and slurs. Because of my silence, this man threw his drink on me and proceeded to call me a “bitch” and “slut.” Fuming and hurt, I related the events to an elder who brushed it off as nothing and did not seem to understand my frustration. What shocked me, however, was the fact that I told a fellow woman, an intelligent one at that, and received this indifferent reaction. While I can assert that, generally

speaking, sexual harassment in France is worse in everyday, civilian life (disregarding geographic and demographic constraints), I cannot speak for women in the military because I am not a part of the American or French military. I can, however, present the facts.

The French military has not had such a powerful female presence in its armed forces since Joan of Arc. In her time, Joan was a solo military commander; nearly 600 years later there were 19 French women generals in 2014, but there is a risk of diminution. In 2014, the French army had 15.4% women in its ranks, twice more than in 1995. A figure indeed little elevated, but simultaneously allowing the French army to be the fourth most feminized army in the world, tied with that of Australia, just after Israel, Hungary and the United States (Chadenat). But even still, in France, the Army is composed of only 10% women. They mostly reside in health services, where they occupy 56% of positions, a mix yet at risk because in many areas, the small pool of women involved is shrinking. Today, for some positions, they only represent 12% of recruitment, “which could ultimately pose the question of maintaining the current rate of feminization” (Chadenat). This decline “does not reflect a desire to limit the role of women in the military,” says Françoise Gaudin, a senior official in equal rights of the Ministry of Defense, “it is a consequence of reforms which led (...) to eliminate open positions in the past to female military personnel, or not to entrust them to the military” (Chadenat). It was only after the 2015 Paris attacks in January that the number of initial female recruits with the Information Centers and Recruitment of the Armed Forces (CIRFA) was almost doubled since the previous decrease. Enlistment in the armed forces during this time was incited by patriotic fervor, yet most of these women are faced with gender inequality even when they have the same drive and protective instinct for their country (Pajon). Women in the military, regardless of numbers of involvement, face prejudice, and although the Ministry of Defense professes to fight against harassment, the

complaints of women soldiers who have been assailed say otherwise: their accusations too often remain stifled.

In 2014 two French journalists, Leila Minano and Julia Pascal, wanted to break “la grande muette,” or the great silence, on the reoccurring humiliations, insults, sexual innuendos and rapes. They lifted the veil on sexual violence committed in the French military with their investigative book, *La Guerre Invisible*, or *The Invisible War*, which references the aforementioned U.S. eponymous documentary about abuses suffered by women in the U.S. military. The journalists’ overarching claim is that there exists a serious and dangerous desire to conceal sexual violence in the military. Like the documentary, the public’s reactions to the book are that of disgust, the text described as terrible and appalling in its revelations of degradation and assault. The victims often have to leave the army, or are silenced, but still must live with the humiliation. The women are psychologically weakened while the aggressors remain employed, find other prey, and sometimes contact their victims. The investigation of these two journalists provoked a reaction out of the Minister of Defense, Jean-Yves Le Drian. He demanded the opening of an internal investigation shortly after the release of the publication, including fundamental advances such as the production of statistics of sexual violence that were previously nonexistent, and enrolling harassment in the Defense Code and Soldier Code of Conduct. However, Minano had reservations: “On sait que cette déclaration est un premier pas, certes, mais il trouve très très vite ses limites...C’est une investigation qui est menée en interne par des militaires en trois semaines pour traiter d’un sujet sur lequel l’armée n’a jamais travaillé...ça nous pose question”² (Baron). The co-author was right to have reservations, as there still remains

² “We know that this declaration is a first step, certainly, but it will reach its limits very, very quickly. This is an investigation that is internally conducted by the military in three weeks to process a subject in which the army has never worked through...this poses questions for us.”

the same problem in the military. She says that France has the most feminized military in Europe, but is among the last to address and take interest in the issue of harassment and sexual violence in its military.

Sexual Violence and its Relation to Cross-Dressing

For Joan of Arc and Deborah Sampson in their respective times, rape was also a significant anxiety. Joan claimed many times in her trial that it was necessary for her to dress in male clothing for protection. While Inquisitorial procedure ordered suspects to be detained in a Church-run prison, and female prisoners were to be guarded by nuns, Joan was not given this treatment. She was put up in a secular military prison since her religious beliefs were viewed as outlandish and threatening to the church and was supervised by English soldiers. Eyewitness accounts report that Joan protested how the soldiers tried to rape her on different occasions “for which reason she clung to her soldiers’ clothing and kept the hosen, hip-boots and tunic firmly laced and tied together” (Williamson). The reason that Joan was burned at the stake was not because of her intimidating war defeats or leadership skills, but it was rather because she was considered a relapsed heretic for dressing in male clothing. On May 24th, 1431, Joan had agreed to wear women’s clothing again and “obey the ecclesiastics”; however, four days later the clerics, wanting to confront rumors that she had relapsed into the heresy she had recently abjured, found Joan in her cell wearing “a tunic, a hood, and a doublet, even though, as the minutes state, she had earlier, on our order, put off these clothes and taken up again women’s clothes” (Sullivan 132). She explained in vain during interrogations that it was more appropriate for her wear men’s clothes when living in a secular prison among male guards: “Joan’s allusions

to the suitability of wearing men's clothes when living among male guards and to the sufferings that she endured in prison, sufferings so great that they made her long for death, may seem to suggest that she had been subjected to sexual assault, and the clerics' recollections at the rehabilitation of other, more explicit remarks she made that went unrecorded might seem to confirm this point..." (134).

Deborah Sampson's environment also left her prone to rape or unwanted sexual attention. Young female servants were often targeted by sexually aggressive men, in the form of their masters, their sons, or other men in the homes where they worked. Rape in the colonial era became even more common with the arrival of the British soldiers. Women's sexual fears were heightened. When war broke out, British troops were "penetrating with the greatest rapidity into the country, ravaging, plundering and butchering all before them" (Young 49). Rape was a demoralizing strategy to punish the enemy or soldiers and comfort women during wartime. It then was vital that Deborah protect her masquerade—if she was ever caught it would certainly mean a violation of her innocence "which she had been taught to revere, even as dear as life itself" (49). Deborah had to take extra precautions to conceal her true identity while traveling with fellow soldiers because many of them were sex deprived and could have taken this frustration out on her if she were ever discovered. Concealing her womanhood proved less difficult than expected. There were lax standards for hygiene; the soldiers were not expected to undress as they slept in their clothes and it was not custom to bathe one's entire body regularly. Deborah also had a better chance for privacy to relieve herself in the thickly wooded areas that her unit often traveled through. She probably took other safeguards such as avoiding close body contact with horseplay, or excessive drink that could promote loss of control (108).

Joan and Deborah needed to cross-dress for protection against rape and used it as a sort of drag. In modern terms, these women might even be considered drag kings who “are experiencing a resurgence from relative obscurity in the early 2000s and tearing up conventional gender norms” (Brune). Joan’s drag is more spiritually and gender-identity motivated. We saw in Chapter one how she enjoyed fancy male clothing and cropped hair. Deborah’s drag is more mercenary —she wanted to have the job. Joan was always referred to as “The Maid” and everyone seemed to know she was a girl, yet she seemed to present a blurring of the masculine and the feminine. However, even though Joan expressed courage, strength, and perseverance in a masculine context, she did not necessarily suppress her femininity. Her title, “The Maid,” was very important to her as it celebrated youth and virginity. During the trial, Joan at first claimed she wore male clothing because it was “necessary and convenient,” then claimed it was God’s will that she remain in male clothing. She provided no explanation for this shift. Whatever Joan’s personal reasons in performing this drag, her activity as a warrior and her male clothing definitely provided the girl with an air of masculinity and maleness, which permitted her to interrogate the constructs of gender (Taylor 52).

Deborah, on the other hand, did self-identify as a man, but seemed to take no pleasure in it. She did not want to occupy this masculine space more fully. Young believes that Deborah was aware that clothing was crucial in “masking” her other side. Deborah was also aware that after “becoming” a woman again she had to appear as feminine as possible in order to conquer the inevitable perception that she was masculine —since she had both masculine and feminine features to begin with. She used clothing to accentuate her femininity (Young 319). This is proven in “dresses from her wedding onward that made her a would-be lady, a sign that she had married *up*” (318). Young even believes Deborah to have an “emotional investment” in clothes,

citing “the gown she wore at her wedding celebration; the dress in which she posed for her portrait; the cape, bonnet, and she bought in Albany on tour” (319).

Jack (nee Judith) Halberstam, a scholar and queer theorist, wrote in his book *Female Masculinities*, “We encourage men to get in touch with their femininity, to think about how to become mothers, to become more nurturing. But there is no encouragement for women to express their masculinity, and that’s because masculinity is a site of empowerment. The beauty of the drag king performance makes you aware how much masculinity is performative and theatrical” (Brune). What Halberstam means is that because masculinity is associated with power, women have been denied masculine expression, which drag kings seek to change. The performance of the female soldier is necessarily masculine; this group of women performs masculinity daily as part of a job requirement.

According to a Marie Claire article, “Life as an American Female Soldier,” women have to face obstacles that men do not even think about. To verify this statement, Sergeant Stephanie James says, “In the military, they try to make things equal. Mainly, that means women are supposed to look like men. You can’t wear earrings. Makeup can’t be excessive...female soldiers deal with issues men don’t even think about. I took Depo so I wouldn’t have my period; I just didn’t want to deal with it overseas. My hair started falling out from the stress — coming out in clumps when I’d wash it” (McKelvey). What James experienced reinforces a recurring idea throughout this thesis —that a woman soldier’s greatest chance to feel inclusion in the military is to blend in. Captain Jennifer Errington concedes to this saying, “In the army, it’s hard to tell male from female when you’re wearing a helmet and combat boots, an M16 swung across your back, and a gas mask on your hip” (McKelvey).

Lastly, Jennifer Errington highlights the idea of sexual harassment as an inescapable factor of the military. She relates, “When it was too hot and we’d take off our jackets and wear just our T-shirts, the sexual remarks were endless. You’d hear, ‘Oh, my God, she’s got boobs’... Even if you don’t sleep with anyone, people will say you’ve slept with the whole unit” (McKelvey). When the women wore T-shirts, they no longer blended in—their breasts became visible, which lead to sexual harassment. Thus, performing the masculine drag and representing the soldier as necessarily masculine is safe and successful. You will not be harassed if you blend in. Errington even cites an incident with an assault when her master sergeant pulled over the car one midnight: “I had no idea where we were, and getting out of the car was as scary as staying in it. At some point, he placed my hand on his penis. I just looked out the window. You tell yourself, ‘It’s fine,’ so nothing worse happens.” Pullen adds “I slept with my back to the wall so if somebody reentered the trailer, I could protect myself. The chance of rape during wartime is high” (McKelvey).

The authors of *La Guerre Invisible* both agree that the key to women’s integration in the military is to go unnoticed. The first witness in the book, Alice, says, “J’en arrivais au point où moins je ressemblais à une fille, mieux je me sentais”³ (Baron). She relates that being a woman in the military is punishment. In regiments, promiscuity, the sexualization of the environment, and alcohol become grounds for violence against women. Besides bullying, and vulgar allusions, there are pornographic photo-montages distributed in the ranks. A humiliation that turns into “digital rape” occurs. For others, the aggression comes in the form of real rape, sometimes even suffered under the influence of a potent psychotropic popularly known as a “date rape drug.” The colleagues of the same rank are sometimes involved. Often it is also seniors who take young

³ “I came to the point where the less I looked like a girl, the better I felt.”

recruits and manipulate them (Baron). Ostracized, victims have very little support from the institution which, as the authors show, aims to stifle all discordant claims in its ranks.

The Mommy Dilemma

Aside from being victimized through rape, military women are also seen as breaking up the family when they choose to serve and are subsequently blamed for ruining the family dynamic. The masculinity associated with the military does not coincide with the femininity attributed to French and American women in society —the femininity that they are expected to display. For this reason, motherhood is seen as incompatible with soldiering, especially in terms of the drag of it. American and French women alike have a substantial history of having to stay home and manage the household and children, a role often seen as submissive and vulnerable. Confronted with societal pressures such as natality and familialization, women entering the military are often thought of as ignoring these gendered concerns.

According to Dr. Peggy Drexler, research psychologist and gender scholar, “Freedom of choice does not necessarily mean freedom from stigma. Extended absence from children simply does not raise our judgmental hackles for a father the way it does for a mother. For a father, it is likely seen as providing for his family or sacrificing for his country. For a woman, there is that nagging perception that she...found something more important than her children” (Drexler). While women now have the choice to enter professions and are seemingly unlimited in their career paths, there still remain limitations in what she can actually accomplish. Dr. Drexler declares that although in today’s society fathers seem to have a more active role in raising the children and parenting, when a mother leaves for an extended period of time, it still raises the

question of “Who’s watching the kids?” —a question that does not console the mother who may be working to achieve her dream job, or patriotic duty (Drexler). Women experience feelings of guilt, then, because they are away for months at a time, leaving their children with their fathers or other caregivers. She highlights that when fathers are forced to be away from their families for long periods of time, they draw pity and approbation for their sacrifice, whereas for women the reaction is one of confusion and concern —mothers who selfishly abandon their children “to fate” (Drexler).

A study done on post-deployment readjustment in U.S. male and female First Gulf War veterans proves how concerns regarding family relationship disruptions significantly affect servicewomen more than servicemen. Research among U.S. Reserve and National Guard units additionally shows that a military woman experiences a sense of loss of her “military role and independence gained during employment, difficulty reassuming and adjusting to family roles and relationship boundaries, concerns regarding their child’s welfare, and challenges of reintegrating into the family unit” (Gewirtz, Youssef 76). Military mothers often find it stressful to leave their children behind during a deployment. They also struggle with leaving their children in the hands of someone else, even their partner. One reason for this stress is due to the social stigmatization of “leaving” —the “biological predispositions” specified to women provide grounds to assume that mothers should be the main caregiver (76). Thus, their deployment “violates the natural order of socially accepted traditional roles” (76). Because these gender-based perceptions are not given to men, a military mother internalizes the stigma that she is abandoning her offspring. When she returns, integration back into the family poses a fear of her ability to reestablish her role as a mother (77).

Specialist Jaymie Holschlag knows the struggles of restoring her role as a mother. After 12 months in Iraq, Holschlag returned home to her depressed and angry ten year-old son who was sixty pounds overweight, and her four year-old daughter who barely recognized her mother. In Holschlag's absence a new set of rules was implemented, and while trying to instill the old order, it was met with "tirades and tantrums." Holschlag, still recovering from the violence in Ramadi, often "snapped" at her children. She says, "All of us that were single parents, who came back to our lives, there isn't one of us who didn't say it was easier being in Iraq than coming back and picking back up" (Alvarez). Specialist Stephanie McCulley says even though her deployment in Baghdad made her husband a better father, she "always felt guilty" and is nervous about the long term affects she might have caused her children who now think she is always going to leave for an extended time: "any trip out the door — to the grocery store, to her Army base — prompts a flurry of nervous questions from the boys, who are 4 and 5: 'Where are you going?' and 'How long will you be gone?'" She explains, "They have paid a price. It will always affect them in some way" (Alvarez).

Women are pushed to feel inadequate in their status and role as military personnel when or if they become pregnant. "Challenge and Change in the Military: Gender and Diversity Issues" cites this feeling especially when women eventually may have to wear civilian clothes when they have command responsibilities —as part of the pride in being a soldier stems from wearing the uniform. Women are impelled to minimize the impact of pregnancy on their duties, but then often feel like these efforts are "unappreciated and futile." They struggle with not being "understood as individuals, but rather are assimilated into a gender-based group of women as defined and regarded by men" (Pinch 89). These military mothers-to-be refuse a stereotyped image of women, "especially one based on the pejorative language which suggests they are part

of a movement of self-deprecation of their gender” (89). This movement of self-deprecation of their gender insinuates that military mothers-to-be would be hurting the whole of their sex, and even offending others by not adhering to the stereotypical woman and mother —the caregiver and the homemaker. But even still, some feel like they have to choose “between family and duty,” and Army medic Amy Shaw says that the decision is “wrenching.” For servicewomen with newborn babies and young children, the dilemma between an all-consuming career or motherhood is especially difficult. While “all branches of the military give new mothers six weeks of maternity leave before they have to go back to work” this changes if they’re headed into a war zone and mothers could be required to deploy as early as four months after giving birth, depending on their specific branch of the military. Jessica Perdeu with the National Military Families Association believes the Pentagon must find ways to help military moms if it hopes to keep them in uniform (Mann).

Jessica Scott, Army First Lieutenant and author, emphasizes important concepts of military mothers and explores her own experience in “Mothers in the Military: Punishing Women Who Serve,” by bringing in a more morbid aspect. She says that working civilian mothers cannot comprehend a military mother’s harsher reality: “Since returning home, I’ve run the gamut of emotions...The mommy guilt eats at me and drives me to try and become better, to make events memorable because the day may come when I deploy and don’t come back” (Scott). Civilian mothers are not asked to leave their children for a year at a time, having to face that their child may not know them when they return. Moreover, Scott says that military mothers are punished for serving the nation. The bias against military moms means that civilian courts often take custody away from mothers who serve. In fact, it almost happened to her friend who nearly lost joint custody of her children. Her ex had remarried and the court believed that the children

were better off in that situation. However, according to Scott, no parent should have to choose either the military or her children. She contends that military moms are actually making their children's lives better by serving. This includes "better school opportunities, healthcare, and a community they might not have if they were to leave the military" (Scott).

Why Women Serve Despite Everything

Despite the multiple obstacles that military women endure, there still exist women who look past the shortcomings of the military and continue to enroll and fulfill their duties.

Questions arise: Do any military women feel respected? Are they feminists? Is the figure of female soldier a fraud? Are military women advancing feminism in any way? In order to work through these questions it is important to note what a female soldier is and how Joan and Deborah influenced this description.

What are the differences in reception between Joan and Deborah as feminist military icons in the communities of the soldier and the civilian? In Joan's time she was a renowned hero for the French and was probably known by French civilians, since some of her efforts were to protect such people. In the military world and the civilian world, Joan was probably thought of as a warrior. More reason for civilians and soldiers alike to admire Joan was her religious duty, as Catholicism was a major root in society. She was feared by the enemy and respected by her comrades. Since Deborah was positioned under the radar in her time, her reception in the military and civilian worlds was different. She became known only after the war and probably only by a handful of people. Few soldiers would have heard about her because by the time her reveal occurred in October 1783, most soldiers had already gone home, including her regiment

—“It was not as if thousands of soldiers had witnessed Joan of Arc on the battlefield” (Young 164). Within the civilian world, she received small fame sporadically from newspapers and with her tour. A contemporary female soldier might be a mix between Joan and Deborah’s receptions.

While they may be for their service like Joan, they also fall under the radar much like Deborah. When specifically pointed out for achievements, women will receive honors: “Two female service members have received the Silver Star. More have received the Bronze Star Medal, along with Purple Hearts and countless Combat Action Badges. Women have broken ground as pilots, military police, intelligence officers and, to a lesser-known extent, inside elite special operations units—all on the front lines and primarily while they were officially banned from ground combat” (Lemmon). However, they are generally forgotten in other areas. For example, Iraq veteran and author, Kayla Williams, says the lack of representation of military women in pop culture contributed to her feelings of alienation upon her return home: “Not seeing myself represented alongside the people I served with added to civilians not understanding that women are there, because they are responding in large part to the portrayals they see in pop culture. When they don’t see any women, it makes it easy to assume we’re not there or that we play these really limited roles” (Lemmon).

The problem of integrating women into a traditionally male domain lies with the culture of violence connected with both the practices of war making, as aggression and violence are perceived as masculine traits and practices, and also with rape culture, in which women’s bodies figure as collateral damage both on and off the battlefield. In modern history as the number of women in the military increased, “women’s movements lagged in taking up their unequal treatment” (Young 309). Women in the modern military find it difficult to see themselves as feminists, or have not commonly seen themselves as such. Although Captain Alison Weir freely

labels herself as a feminist, she has not found many other military women “willing to call themselves feminists...a woman doing a ‘male’ job can be threatening enough to men around her: why should she further the alienation to the point that she can be dismissed as a ‘feminazi?’” (309). What Weir expresses is extremely valid. Women are already seen as substandard and exceptional in the military. When they further this difference even more and outwardly claim feminist views, they risk isolating themselves from men and may even be seen as whiny, not as tough, and possessing invasive ideas that have not been the military’s mantra in the past. The word that Weir uses, “feminazi,” incorporating the term feminism and Nazi, is also interesting — as if expecting women’s rights is heinous enough to warrant being called an intolerant Nazi. Radical feminists often scare people, particularly men. Radical feminists in the military, then, are not welcomed or admired. Already feeling like they are invading primarily governed by and for men where they are outsiders, I do not believe that most military women are ready to call themselves feminists, albeit potentially possessing feminist values.

Jessica Scott believes that most women join the military for the same reasons men do: “opportunity, desire to serve and education” (Scott). Scott says she personally joined to see what lay beyond her small town in Maine. Scott rejects the idea that “women somehow bring something that is more nurturing or kind or softer to the military by intent or by design” (Scott). She believes that the military offers a variety of incentives that makes joining and staying in the army appealing for both men and women. Citing a study from the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services’ Annual Report for 2008, Scott reveals that the number one reason women stayed in the military was “their sense of job satisfaction and job performance” (Scott). Women also continued to serve because of access to health care, education, a sense of purpose, and being part of a team. She is quick to say that “The only reason

these responses were singled out as *female* responses is because they were collected as part of a gender study. Men might have given the exact same responses” (Scott).

Scott also relates that “in an ideal world, a soldier is a soldier and women bring nothing more than a body to fill a uniform, just like a man” (Scott). This coincides with the idea that women might be able to drag (cross-dress) their way into positions of power in hopes of changing the inroads of a centuries old culture of soldiering before becoming worn down, eaten up and spit out by the system as it stands. Military women espousing feminism and using it to rally a cause might help change these inroads; but, this might not be so easy in such a lockdown system. I maintain that if women asserted themselves as feminists in the military there might be less sexual violence within the institution and fewer stigmas placed on them because these women would adamantly join forces, fight, and not stop until there was sufficient change. However, I do not criticize them for this so-called inaction, for the military has proven itself as a dangerous place for women who wish to use their voices (note the victim blaming of women who present their sexual violence cases). As of now, configuring a contemporary icon of the woman soldier might look like a victim, betrayed by the very system for which she risks her life, while the goal is to picture her a warrior, side by side with her male counterparts.

While military women are hesitant to label themselves as feminists, I believe that women are advancing feminism by participating in the military, both in France and in the United States. One prominent example is the fact that as of 2013 and 2015 the U.S. and France respectively permitted women to serve on attack submarines, one of last major efforts for women’s rights within the institution. Military culture was designed for men, but that is beginning to be challenged as more women are joining the armed forces and have access to any combat role that was previously closed to them (Tourjee).

Specialist Ashley Pullen emphasizes that contrary to popular belief, a woman's presence is beneficial to the military: "I was in a convoy, patrolling an area called Salman Pak. We started hearing gunshots and explosions — then it was total mayhem...It's an adrenaline rush. People have this idea that women are fragile. That's bullshit. I saw a couple of guys who sat there looking stupid when we were under attack, and I never saw a woman do that" (McKelvey). For her, the backlash of combat women has become so intolerable that she ridicules men.

Contemporary French and U.S. soldiers have similar and different battles to face. While President Trump poses a threat for women's rights within the U.S. military as his administration may seek to reinstate a ban on women in combat, the "raison d'être" of France's military is at stake as a battle-of-the-sexes-like atmosphere takes precedence. However, in both militaries, women face severe sexual assault and harassment. Even though there is a lot less information on sexual assault within France's military, proof of rape and victim blaming have been revealed and the details are just as bad as in the U.S. Having lived in France, I suspect the lack of information on this might be because the country lags in women's rights in general. Furthermore, military women from the U.S. and France find it necessary to blend in with their male counterparts in order to go unnoticed and avoid unwanted sexual attention; their service becomes drag through cross-dressing. Like their contemporaries, Joan and Deborah used cross-dressing for safety, integration, and other gender-specific reasons. Although Joan's cross-dressing was spiritually motivated and Deborah's was more mercenary, they both used it as a way to protect themselves against sexual assault. This is one area where Joan and Deborah's lives portend and parallel that of the contemporary female soldier. Joan and Deborah may have strengthened women's moralities in providing services to their countries, but certainly did not pave the way for their value since there still remains an overwhelming lack of respect for military women.

Contemporarily, women's relative newcomer status and under-representation puts them at a greater risk for harassment and discrimination. When women put themselves in male territory, during any time period, they are subject to the punishing forces of an unwavering masculinity at odds with the cohabitation of the feminine.

Chapter 3

The Figure of the Female Soldier in Popular Culture

Military women face obstacles that make them feminists in spite of themselves. While in reality military women carry this prerogative, they cannot control their representations in pop culture and cinema. It is important to include the pop culture presence/figure of the female soldier in this study because of pop culture's prominence and influence in today's society to shape the way people think about women soldiers. Because society rarely hears about existent military women, many of our impressions come from movies, like war films. Both in the United States and France, there are few war movies that feature a heroine or female protagonist. Nonetheless, the images of contemporary military women that Hollywood or France's famous annual Cannes Film Festival provides us with sheds light on how the image of the new female soldier affects the way women soldiers are perceived by civilians and peer soldiers alike, and how girls encounter this woman in a man's world.

Gayle Tzemach Lemmon writes, "With women mostly absent from our war stories, Americans find it hard to understand the combat their servicewomen have seen. And the women themselves are loath to explain their experience to a nation that already struggles to connect with the less than one percent of the country that has fought its wars" (Lemmon). Excluding the woman soldier from valor movies is dangerous because the way in which society sees women in uniform matters both to the public and to the soldier: "At a time when so few Americans serve, movies often offer people's only exposure to combat, shaping the way they see who fights the nation's battles" (Lemmon). This makes a difference to men and women alike looking at these

movies as a source of inspiration. For France, war films are not a large part of their cinema as they are for other Western countries (“Best French War Films”). Thus, military women have even more of a chance to be forgotten in films. For this reason, exploring their limited representation is vital to examine the reception of the female soldier in France, too.

Children’s Films and Their Representations of Military Women

Mulan is a classic Disney animation set in pre-communist China that was released in 1998 (Pinsky 179). After ruining any chance she has for marriage, Mulan, an outspoken only child of a well-off provincial household, saves her father and China. The “Huns,” barbarian invaders, have stormed the Great Wall, and the emperor declares that each family must supply one soldier. Since Mulan does not have any brothers, her father, a middle-aged disabled veteran, must serve. However, she refuses to let this happen, and like Deborah Sampson, she is seen “cutting her hair, binding her breasts, taking her father’s sword and padded armor, and riding into the night with the family’s conscription notice,” escaping home and secretly cross-dressing to replace her debilitated father in the army (181).

Mulan’s ancestors are thus summoned for protection and guidance, but she has committed a huge scandal; one ancestor accuses her of being a cross-dresser and one warns that “traditional values will disintegrate.” Mushu, a small dragon, must guide Mulan on her journey “all because Miss Man [decided] to take her little drag show on the road.” During training at the military encampment, Captain Shang often refutes the recruits’ masculinity and calls them girls, a big insult. Mulan undoubtedly faces obstacles while training, like lack of privacy and the stress of maintaining her secret. The captain is especially hard on Mulan because she is the weakest

link. However, soon enough, the citizen soldiers progress, but Mulan excels because she not only works and trains the hardest, but she also uses her head. She must prove to herself that her womanhood should not inhibit her.

Mulan really proves herself in two different situations. First, the troops traveling to protect a village stumble into an ambush and are being defeated until Mulan disobeys Shang's orders and singlehandedly starts an avalanche that decimates the Huns. She then rescues her wounded captain while being wounded herself. However, her injury to the abdomen leads to a doctor discovering her true identify. It was a dishonor for Shang to be rescued by a female. About to be executed for dressing as a man, the captain spares Mulan and considers it a life for a life. She is expelled from the company and shunned. However, Mulan, resisting this ostracism, tries to warn the company that the Huns survived the avalanche and plan to attack the Forbidden City, but no one will hear her pleas. When the Huns begin their bombardment at Beijing's victory parade, Mulan thinks of a plan while the male soldiers stand perplexed. She tells the soldiers to dress as women and flirtatiously distract the barbarian guards. This allows Mulan and Shang to defeat the Hun leader and actually save China's emperor. Mulan is honored in front of the crowd and offered the barbarian leader's sword and royal medallion. While she is asked to join the imperial council, she instead decides to head home. This movie was "a serious attempt to present a belief system outside the Judeo-Christian tradition: Joan of Arc with a happy ending" (Pinsky 183).

Like Joan, Mulan was eventually revered in her country, and like Deborah, Mulan's cross-dressing was initially secret and something that could lead to severe punishment. While Disney's main reason for introducing this Chinese cross-dressing non-princess was to capitalize on China's lucrative market, children all around the world have witnessed this heroine fight

macho battles on the ladder to success (Pinsky 184). Here, “Disney takes a sledgehammer to the subject of gender stereotyping in a film that not only breaks the cross-dressing barrier but also ratchets up the violence level for children’s animation” (Maslin). It is possible that little girls look to this “bold female warrior” and picture themselves able to do the same thing: fight for a cause, despite their gender. And little girls have a good example of a woman doing this: “Reverent as it is in the depiction of Mulan as a woman warrior, the film presents most of its male characters as buffoons” (Maslin). This exaggerated gap between male and female behaviors was undoubtedly calculated to show that when a woman is not portrayed in the shadows of men, she is successful and treasured.

In *Cadet Kelly*, a 2002 TV movie originally made for The Disney Channel, a new angle is presented. A teen must move from New York City in order to attend an upstate prestigious military school at the directive of her new stepfather, a stern ex-military man. The easy-going girl must learn discipline, respect, and overcome the obstacles of embodying somebody who, at first, she is not. Unsurprisingly, she does not fit in at all and it takes a lot of time and dedication for her to satisfy her responsibilities. Although the movie presents important life lessons, like making essential life changes, teamwork, and compromise, it presents a delusion. Young viewers are confronted with the perception that only girls who are eccentric and need to be “reformed” belong in the military. However, I believe that the movie also imparts a strong argument through a feminist lens. The movie pits Kelly and her commanding officer, Jennifer, against each other as they fight for the attention of a male classmate. The two possess conflicting yet equally legitimate versions of womanhood and feminism. Kelly is more free-spirited, while Jennifer is a stickler for the rules. However, when challenged with different ideals, the two eventually learn to grow as individuals. When they have to compete together on the drill team for the betterment of

their school's reputation, they realize that together, they are stronger. The women essentially learn to dominate this very male-dominated world. In the end, the boy does not even matter and their bond rings louder.

Women Soldiers in American Popular Culture

According to Rikke Schubart in his book, *Super Bitches and Action Babes: The Female Hero in Popular Cinema, 1970-2006*, "In today's culture—news media, war movies— the combat soldier is predominantly male... Judging from their lack of representation in the media, female soldiers cannot bear the weight of nationalism and war" (Schubart 263). This idea becomes pertinent in the case of teenaged Jessica Lynch, an American Army soldier. On March 23, 2003 Lynch's company was caught in enemy territory and captured by Iraqi soldiers. Lynch was held captive for the next week at Saddam Hospital in Nasiriya, but was eventually rescued by U.S. troops. Schubart claims that this story reminded everyone how much more difficult it is to think about women coming home in body bags and "American politicians cannot afford to have dead female soldiers" (263). He goes on to explain that it is not a question of which life is more valuable, but what *kind* of value the life brings. By mythic standard, women are "emblems of love." Essentially, men are the strength of the nation and women represent "the home ground, regenerative forces, eternal values" (263). The argument the author makes, then, is that killing women would mean a loss of home ground.

The Jessica Lynch story caused so much controversy because of her representation in the media, or rather misrepresentation. She appeared on a slew of front-page news stories throughout the world when she was missing in action. Danish newspapers utilized her senior prom pictures,

childhood photographs, and her “innocent-looking army portrait,” while American media depicted young Lynch as a combative female war hero who had killed many Iraqi soldiers prior to her capture. English media laid down the truth: Lynch had in fact never fired her weapon and her knife and bullet wounds were from RTA (Road Traffic Accident) (Schubart 264). Schubart expresses that the Lynch story proves that a female soldier cannot become the image of a combative soldier. Lynch was, in fact, the All-American, blond hair, blue eyed innocent target of brute capture. She is the perfect illustration of the concept of home ground, not American invasion: “In her autobiography *I Am A Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story (2003)* Lynch was revealed as an innocent teenager, a daughter, and a rape victim with amnesia, and not as hero, a woman, or a soldier (despite the title of her book saying otherwise)” (264). While Schubart denies the woman soldier the right to equal representation, *G.I. Jane* questions this condemnation.

There are several other aspects to consider in *G.I. Jane* that deconstruct the image of the contemporary female soldier. Released in 1997, the movie begins with Senator DeHaven expressing concern and disapproval over women’s military image and the Navy’s lack of gender-neutrality (Schubart 252). This triggers a proposition: the Navy will begin a program that would allow the eventual full integration of women if the discrete test cases go well. Lieutenant Jordan O’Neil, who is deliberately picked because of her very feminine attributes, and not expected to last long, is the first to participate in the US Navy’s elite SEAL/C.R.T. selection program. When Jordan arrives on site, the men will not even sit with her in the dining hall. Jordan explains to her Commanding Officer, “Sir, I just want you to know, I’m not here to make a statement. I don’t want to make men look foolish. All I care about is completing the training and getting operational experience —just like everyone else.” Out of fear for being continually ostracized

and fear of the sexual politics involved, Jordan does not necessarily want to be the poster girl for women's rights, although she eventually does exactly that.

During intense and almost hard-to-watch scenes of naval training, Jordan continually excels, but is also harassed for being so determined. She is often bombarded with little jabs like "quit playing with your hair, O'Neil, and drop down," prompting her to buzz her whole head. She feels pressure to conform to a certain masculinity in order to fit in. Jordan also reaches a point of condemning any form of special treatment and expresses concern for the double standard. She asks her Commanding Officer, "How am I supposed to fit in when you've got me set up as an outsider? You've given me a different set of rules. The answer is, I can't." Jordan realizes that she must work twice as hard and spends outside time training to get mentally and physically stronger. Finally, the main character gains some respect after standing up to the Master Chief, Urgayle, during a simulation in which he was intentionally torturing and abusing her to the most severe extent, telling him, "suck my dick." The guys take her out drinking and approve of her slur towards Urgayle. Jordan receives this acceptance only after proving herself to be manly. The film mediates on the fact that a woman can only be successful in this male-dominated world by conforming a masculine set of rules.

It is then revealed that Jordan has outlasted 40% of her peers, which is dangerous because "no politician can afford to have women come home in body bags." DeHaven, a female herself, is a manipulating politician who is behind the false accusations that Jordan, the main character, is a lesbian. These accusations result in Jordan's removal from the SEAL program, but she eventually fights to become reinstated. Throughout the film, everyone encourages Jordan to quit. No one wants to see her success because it could change the SEALS forever, but this is what

motivates her the most. Like Schubart's views, DeHaven feared America's reaction to putting a woman in the same danger as a man, but Jordan soon proves that a woman can handle it.

Most powerful is perhaps the ending. Urgayle previously told Jordan that Israelis stopped using female soldiers in combat because the men "couldn't get used to the sight of women blown open. They'd linger over the wounded females, trying to save those that obviously couldn't be saved, often to the detriment of the mission." Jordan discovers that Urgayle received his Navy Cross by pulling a 240-pound man out of a burning tank and he questions if she would have been able to do the same. Towards the end, Jordan actually does: she saves Urgayle out of enemy fire during a mission in Libya by carrying him away after a gun shot wound to the leg. Urgayle had blown their cover after shooting an enemy who was uncomfortably close to Jordan while she was hiding. Interestingly enough, he, too, was probably scared to see Jordan get killed because of her womanhood. Since Jordan saved his life, this prompts him to gift her his Navy Cross at the end of the film in "mutual recognition of true soldier spirit: someone willing to risk one's life for a fellow soldier" (Schubart 265).

Another film worthy to note is *Courage Under Fire*, released in 1996 (Schubart 252). Lieutenant Colonel Serling must determine if Captain Karen Walden is worthy of being the first woman to receive a Medal of Honor. Serling is quite surprised after finding out that Walden is a woman. The problem that Serling encounters is that Walden's crew involved with the event in question all give different stories about who Walden was as a captain and what exactly happened, proving it difficult to determine whether or not she was courageous. Walden was on a mission to rescue the crew of an incapacitated Black-Hawk. On the way, her Medevac Huey destroys an enemy T-54 and subsequently their helicopter is disabled and they crash. The co-pilot, Rady, is severely injured. After the audience is taken through a slew of stories told by

different members of the crew and which take up most of the plot, Serling eventually determines the truth. Monfriez, who originally called Walden a coward in his version of the story and later committed suicide, wanted to flee the scene of the crash and leave Rady behind. Monfriez held Walden at gun-point because she ordered that the crew would stay until help arrived. When Walden shot an approaching enemy, Monfriez believed she was shooting at him and proceeded to fire back, shooting her in the stomach. The next morning, Walden let her men retreat as a helicopter arrived to evacuate the crew, distracting the enemy with an M16. She told Ilario to come back from the helicopter with a stretcher and more guns. However, Monfriez told the rescuers that Walden was dead, thus A10s dropped napalm over the entire area, which killed Walden in a friendly fire travesty. Walden upheld honor while serving as a captain, but could not gain the respect she was entitled to from her crew, which I believe is a direct result of her gender. If she were a man, the crew would have valued her judgment, but instead she is viewed as reckless.

According to Schubart, "In today's cultural imagination, a woman cannot represent the nation as a combat soldier. On a narrative level, the female war movie presents protagonists who break gender barriers. On a visual, psychological, and thematic level, however, she disturbs the gendered rules on which war, as well as war film, rests" (Schubart 268). Captain Walden is rough around the edges, referred to twice in the film as a butch. Again, the heroine must adhere to a certain masculinity. She is described as having this quality: "The heavier the pressure, the calmer she got. And she...you know, she put up with a lot of shit to become an officer. Had to work twice as hard as everybody else, be twice as good. She'd never let the guard down, show any sign of weakness. But she was tough. She could handle it." Although tough, Walden sheds a few tears after feeling pressure from Monfriez to leave Rady behind. He degradingly says, "Oh

great, the Captain is crying,” to which she angrily replies, “It’s just tension, asshole, it don’t mean shit.” Monfriez takes this “female sensitivity” as a sign of weakness and builds on his argument about why the crew should leave: “She is trying to get us killed! Do you want to die?” The rest of the crew is silent. He even calls Walden a “cunt.” “Female war movies play out scenarios of female struggle and male loss of control” (Schubart 267). Her death is the direct result of male collapse—where a man cannot express authority over a woman—in which she is arguably responsible for the said collapse, due to nothing but her gender. For civilians with no exposure to the female soldier other than films, it seems as though they would perceive women in the military as having to conform to masculine standards in order to be successful, as both Jordan and Captain Walden confront this issue.

Women Soldiers in French Popular Culture

In March 2011 the Guardian claimed that French cinema entered a *nouvelle vague* (a new wave) and saw a cultural upheaval in female influence within the making of French (Poirier). When the question arises, then, of whether their cinema is feminine or feminist, Laura Gragg, an American production consultant living in Paris, former deputy head of ACE, a network of European producers, says, “French women film directors hate the word feminist, although they are the most independent and the most driven women I know” (Poirier). French citizens are known for their refusal of gender distinction. Gragg continues, “If you ask them, they’ll tell you that they are just film directors and that there are no such things as women films, there are just films, bad or good. However, they do offer better and stronger parts to actresses, and their films have contributed to changing the way we consider women, not women as girls but women as

individuals” (Poirier). French films made by women are more likely to feature strong French actresses, a concept that France has not put a lot of emphasis on in the past. Thus, the weight of showcasing more female leads has picked up all throughout the country, and this cultural upheaval has been evident even when the directors are not women.

Les Combattants, or *Love at First Fight* was released the same year that the aforementioned Guardian article discussed the subject of female influence in French cinema, and it indeed encouraged audiences to think of women as individuals (Holden). It touches on social and sexual politics. The film centers around a budding romance between a laid-back carpenter and a fierce, hard-edged female who is convinced that the end of the world is coming and must become “combat ready” with the help of military training. To be more precise, Madeleine has to take a necessary preparation course that is “super hard, like you sweat your guts out. If you want to sleep you dig a hole. There’s physical combat. You have to swim with sixty pounds on your back. There’s an entrance exam. You have to eat a raw sardine.” Her life becomes an endless endurance test that constantly assesses her physicality and how far she can take things. For example, in one scene Madeleine pops a raw sardine in the blender and gulps it down as if it were a smoothie; in others, she opens beer bottles with her teeth.

This film’s comedic vibe is crafted through a female lens. In a New York Times article, Stephen Holden says, “Hardened, self-sufficient female characters are not uncommon in action-adventure and sci-fi films nowadays, but they are less frequently found in screwball comedies. Madeleine is the first character I can recall in a film not totally focused on zombies who believes the end of the world is at hand and without guidance has begun taking extreme measures” (Holden). Not only do we get a view of a slightly “off” woman that implores laughter when she does not even mean to be funny, but also a modern-day, aspiring militant. However, Madeleine

does not fit the typical mold. She does not feel she needs to prove herself as a woman during the military training —she does not lack that confidence. She more so wants the experience. Even though gender biases occur, she ignores them. When the recruits first arrive at camp, Lieutenant Schliefer asks the females to step forward, and they are hesitant to reveal themselves. Because there are no co-ed dormitories, he demeans them in front of everyone saying, “I want no problems with sex because of you.” With Madeleine, hardened as she is, this does not phase her. She intentionally pits other recruits against her and challenges a fight with anyone who displeases her. For this crass behavior she is told by the lieutenant that she “impresses no one with her big mouth and degrees,” and that she should shape up. While it may seem like Madeleine is deliberately making a feminist statement with her “loud mouth,” her personality is so eccentric that it is almost like she is a feminist in spite of herself.

Arnaud is intrigued by Madeleine and decides to enroll in the two-week army training course, too. France, economically stagnant, is a grim place for young people to find work during this time, so he decides that the military is not a bad idea. Slightly to Madeleine’s dismay, Arnaud excels, while she proves that she is not as tough as she thought, hung up on survivalist methods rather than any core military training. He finally questions her motives and puts them into perspective: “I’m saying it: you have no life. You don’t like people. You eat things that disgust you. When you do sports you look like you want to die. You fight to stay in the army, but you hate it. I’m sorry, life is the opposite of everything you do.” This prompts the two to escape the camp and test their survival skills in the forest.

The ending is quite happy, but there is also another, more bleak dynamic presented. While Madeleine is presented as self-sufficient throughout the film, her weak side prevails. She becomes violently ill after eating a fox that the pair found and cooked. It is up to Arnaud to save

her. He walks with her in his arms to a town abandoned because of an anticipated forest fire —“a mini apocalypse.” They are eventually rescued by patrol doing rounds there. All in all, a man saves the day, a notion that is so embedded in military films. Madeleine’s quirky behavior separates her as a unique individual, but in this film, the image of a female soldier is a fraud.

Female Agents, or *Les Femmes de L’Ombre*, released in 2008, creates a different and stimulating war tale —it “lacks fashionable cynicism and views the war as a just cause fought by brave, self-sacrificing people” (French). The film contains many exhilarating, well-staged action series. The first scene shows a woman, Louise Desfontaine starring in a night-time shoot-out in early 1944. She soon sees her husband, the leader of the group, killed in cold blood. This scene is followed by the opening credits that provide some historical credentials: “In 1940, Winston Churchill created a new kind of service, the Special Operations Executive, better known as SOE. One section was responsible for overseeing operations in France. In 1941, a new head appointed Colonel Maurice Buckmaster. In 1944, the SOE’s ‘French Section’ was dedicated, at a heavy human cost, to ensuring the success of D-Day.” These words are accompanied by a black-and-white montage of war photographs depicting women combatants, suggesting that French women had a lot of to do with the SOE. The plot picks up with its return to color, and Louise has just located her brother Pierre in London, a lieutenant with Colonel Maurice Buckmaster’s Special Operations Executive (SOE). The brother and sister have both taken a part in war efforts because they disapprove and are probably humiliated by their parents’ identities as submissive followers of Pétain.

The film follows Louise, who is involved with the French Resistance during World War II. She is recruited by a secret English spy organization, SOE, and must complete a series of missions with French servicewomen and resistance fighters of all different backgrounds who she

recruited and even blackmailed for her cause. The women need to extradite a British geologist who had been studying the soil of the beaches of Normandy for the approaching D-Day when he was captured by the Germans. Later on, the women have to lure and kill Colonel Karl Heindrich of the Germans who begins to have suspicions that the landing of allied forces will, in fact, be through Normandy. There were actual female resistance fighters during this time, so while the film is somewhat dramatized, there is a realistic feel to it, too. The film's goal, then, is to highlight a group of heroes forgotten by the media and who have disappeared through time. As some of the female agents in the film died during their operations, the film also pays homage to women fighters. While this particular film may not give us a glimpse into the contemporary soldier's image, it might offer an interesting exposé on how the women were cast to portray these agents, how they embodied their characters, and what a film like this did for modern the military. It is not often that a movie incases the plot around a five-woman task force.

This war film presents a new kind of military woman. Sly and beautiful, the agents use their intelligence and cleverness rather than physical strength to complete their missions, but are not hesitant to kill or fight back when necessary. The women are all strong-willed in their own way with different agendas. Louise wants to keep her late husband's cause alive; Jeanne, a prostitute who killed her pimp, sees the chance to escape execution; Maria, a wireless operator, is provoked because her family has been sent to death camps and she wants to fight for them; Gaëlle, an explosives expert, is driven by religious idealism and patriotism; and Suzy is the ex-fiancé of Colonel Heindrich who is disgusted by his political beliefs, and is even prompted to take off her uniform by Louise because she is "not worthy of it" for unknowingly loving a Nazi. Although the women fight, lie, and at times betray one another, *Female Agents*, explores just how strong women who ban together can be; despite numerous complications, the women were

successful in fulfilling their responsibilities. At one point, Gaëlle asks the women to light a candle at church when this whole ordeal dissipates. She later commits suicide to avoid being tortured by the Gestapo. At the conclusion, when the war has ended, Louise, who lost her faith after her husband's death, respects Gaëlle's request and places a picture of the agents next to burning candles with a slight smile of satisfaction. The women formed a sisterhood. Because of the somewhat recent release of the film, contemporary French women see the film and realize how powerful their duty would be if they enlisted together. The movie may serve as propaganda because it put a face on women's history that is so often neglected.

Contemporary French and U.S. Women Soldiers: Still Cross-Dressing?

A germane theme to investigate is the extraordinariness of some of the heroines featured in war films. Many of the characters feel the need to embody masculinity, and be risky or over-achieve because they constantly have to prove themselves in their field. Regarding *G.I. Jane* and *Courage Under Fire*, "the central female characters are tough and masculine-coded...these images of military women are normalized precisely through, and not despite or against, discourses of masculinity" (Schubart 264). The movies would have a different tone if Jordan and Karen were more feminine. Although they would have been more relatable to the everyday female audience, they would have been less successful. Both characters deliberately put themselves in harms way to save someone. These acts of heroism, which are normalized for military men, "othered" the females in the best way possible. Mulan had to completely transform into a man, throwing herself in the most danger many times. Certainly a successful soldier could not be a woman. She did not give up when all the men ignored her initial pleas about the

impeding attack of the Huns, and when she reigns victorious it is unbelievable that a woman saved China. Kelly in *Cadet Kelly* felt the need to over-achieve on the drill team. She did not want to be an ordinary member, but she decided to stand out and make a difference for the team. Madeleine in *Love at First Fight* worked hard to separate herself from female ideals. It was weird and uncomfortable for Arnaud to see a woman act like her and participate in risky behavior. Finally, the women in *Female Agents* participated in dangerous missions where some of them lost their lives. They were specifically recruited because of their gender and preconceived innocence that would deflect suspicion from their cause, but their gender was arguably their motivation to reach attainment. They wanted to prove themselves and demonstrate their abilities when it mattered the most. Every female character presented in the films needed to be outrageous in some way to arrive at the same level as men.

Through film analysis in both the U.S. and France, the cross-cultural figure of the woman soldier becomes clearer. Joan figures into these contemporary representations, but does not have an over-arching influence in their depictions. For example, in *G.I. Jane*, the commander grudgingly refers to Jordan's situation as "Joan of Arc meets Supergirl." And another wants to "just get it over with and call her Joan of Arc." Jordan was never expected to last more than a week in SEALs training, and when she does, it is only resentfully admired, as if being called a Joan of Arc is exasperating. In *Courage Under Fire*, Captain Walden, like Joan, is a leader of men. However, she cannot achieve the same regard that Joan did in her time. Her crew refused to follow her command, which ultimately resulted in her death. As for Joan's impact in French cinema, she seems present in *Female Agents* in that she was chosen for a duty and did it successfully, like the women in the film. Joan's sense of patriotism and responsibility resonates in these characters.

The U.S. woman soldier in cinema perhaps displays the importance of women's rights more than the French woman soldier. I say this because *Mulan*, *Kelly*, *Jordan*, and *Captain Walden* all deliberately said or did things to stand up against men. For example, *Mulan* protests with the recruiter that her incapacitated father should not have to serve, while he snaps back that a woman should hold her tongue and know her place. Despite the recruiter's aggressive response, it was unheard of for a woman to speak up like this. Additionally, *Jordan* addresses her Commanding Officer many times about the inequality she faces, at one point angrily saying, "Why don't you just issue me a pink petticoat to wear around the base?" *Madeleine* and the women from *Female Agents* did not have the same attitude. In fact, *Madeleine* did not have any rebuttal when men mocked her gender. While striking differences exist in the US and French film representations, all the military women portrayed in French and U.S. cinema are one in the same: they defy gender stereotypes, which is exactly what *Joan* achieved. However, regardless of this defiance, they are not completely free from the grips of men in regards to the perceptions of this figure.

It is not reckless to say that in pop culture, particularly in cinema, heroines have never been fairly or properly represented. Even in movies, the woman combatant is still an exceptional, standout figure. While it would be ideal to say that the figure of the female soldier has become so commonplace that we no longer see *Joan* in her, or need *Joan* to prove the veracity of women's service, this is not the case. The image of both the U.S. and French women soldiers in film is still one of the cross-dresser —women in drag playing at a kind of masculinity that they are still forbidden from inhabiting. The films offer some kind of corrective or inroads into expanding the notion of the soldier from one of masculine force to one of feminine force at least through the endings. Each film had an ending that showed the female soldier attaining some level of triumph;

although it would be presumptuous to say these happy endings occur in reality for the female soldier.

CONCLUSION

The goal of my thesis was to perform a cross-cultural analysis of the French military woman and the U.S. military woman in light of Joan of Arc's legacy, and to discuss women's rights within this institution. To start off, in Chapter 1 I compared Joan of Arc's popularity to Deborah Sampson's anonymity and found that Joan's history held up better as it was met with real life accounts. Joan could also be considered more of a feminist icon than Deborah, who did not die for a cause, but rather reverted back to small-town life and became a traditional wife and mother. Frankly, there is more honor and pride associated with Joan's story. The legacies of Joan and Deborah prove impactful, though in different ways, on the current construction and perception of the female soldier as a powerful masculinized woman or a feminine woman in necessary drag.

In Chapter 2 I explore Joan and Deborah's legacy as cross-dressers and the practices continuing importance in the role of the female soldier. Cross-dressing does not always mask the problems of sexual harassment and the "othering" of women combatants. The crisis of sexual assault within the military has turned into epidemics throughout the world. Nonetheless, I determined that women will continue to serve because they want to reap the same benefits of the military as men. Despite soldiering being seen as incompatible with mothering, military mothers want these benefits for not only themselves, but also their families.

Lastly, Chapter 3 proved that accurate representation of the contemporary female soldier in films is debatable. While American war films featuring a female lead adhere more to women's rights because of the characters' deliberate rebuttals to male authority than French films, Joan's

influence is microscopically visible in both versions since the characters still defy gender stereotypes. However, these fictional military women are still subjected to cross-dressing and must obey a certain masculine code in order to achieve a happy ending.

Delving into my research, I assumed that I would find many resources that supported military women and worked for change. However, this was not so much the case —advocacy for military women was not nearly as prominent as I expected it to be. What I found were forgotten, scared, and angry victims of this lockdown system. One area that really shocked me was the glaring sexual violence committed against women in the military, and the many forms that this brutality takes. This is not a problem of the past —the crisis is growing and evolving. In March 2017 the US Defense Departments investigated a secret Facebook page, “Marines United,” frequented by 30,000 current and former male marines, that exploited female marines through naked photographs and obscene comments. Rep Adam Smith, D-Wash., the ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, condemns the online activity as “degrading, dangerous and completely unacceptable” (Walters).

Yet his statement is only words —words that hold no weight. Something drastic has to change in the way societies across the world address women’s rights in the military or more Facebook pages, harassment, and rape are sure to keep occurring for our women fighters. In fact, “Abuse of women on social media has been a pervasive issue in the marines for some time, but their leaders have not made any serious effort to address it or discipline offenders” says Sara Darehshori, a senior counsel at campaign group Human Rights Watch (Walters).

The vital question of “what can be done” with all of this information is one that was not the focus of my thesis, as little research has been done on ameliorating the situation. One idea is perhaps the improvement of reporting strategies since “According to the December 2014 Report

to the President on Sexual Assault in the Military, in FY 2014, of the 3,261 cases within the Defense Department's jurisdiction that had outcomes to report, 36 910 (28 percent) had sex offense charges preferred (initiating the court-martial process); 496 (15 percent) cases proceeded to trial; and 175 (5.4 percent) were convicted of a sex offense" (Darehshori, Rhoad 30).

However, the problem of reporting has many intricate complications attached to it, such as the effects of retaliation. With more focus and research geared towards alleviating the struggles that military women are forced to face, fighting the issues presented in the chapters of my thesis can progress. It is vital to protect Joan's legacy because "She belongs to all of us" (Litchfield).

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Schreyer Honors College

Paterno Fellows member: Honors Program including advanced academic coursework, thesis, study abroad, internship, ethics study, and leadership/service commitment

Experience:

The Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General: Bureau of Consumer Protection (Intern)

State College, PA

August 2016 — December 2016

- Serve as a mediator between a consumer and business
- Manage approximately 40 cases at once, closing around 6 weekly
- Employ problem-solving techniques to find a solution between two parties
- Administer phone calls to consumers and businesses

Lion Line (Telefund Caller)

March 2014 — Present

State College, PA

- Execute phone calls to Penn State alumni to solicit monetary gifts towards their college or organizations associated with Penn State
- Communicate 10 hours a week to calling and talking to different prospects
- Raised approximately \$10,000 in gifts
- Contact prospects including Penn State Parents, Friends of Penn State, Senior Class Gift

Penn State Law (Explore Law Participant)

Summer 2015

State College, PA

- Learned about multiple fields of law and careers
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Valley Magazine (Writer)

Spring 2015 — Spring 2017

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- Contribute one article a week to the website
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Additional Experience

Upper Darby Recreation Program (Camp Counselor)

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Skills:

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