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Nora M. Heimann, *Joan of Arc in French Art and Culture (1700-1855): From Satire to Sanctity*. Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006. xvi + 215 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$99.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-7546-5085-5.

Review by Alia Nour-Elsayed and Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Seton Hall University.

Joan of Arc in French Art and Culture (1700-1855): From Satire to Sanctity follows the trajectory of Joan's representations in works of art, literature, and drama from the Enlightenment to the end of the Romantic period. Despite the enormous body of work dedicated to Joan of Arc and her legacy, this period, as the author informs us, has been rather neglected (p. 11). The book shows that the French medieval peasant girl who led the French king's army to several victories against the English was the sexualized subject of political satire in the eighteenth century before becoming an embodiment of piety and sanctity in the middle of the nineteenth. Heimann demonstrates that the political, religious and social changes (including conceptions of gender) that mark the period from 1700 to 1855 had a major effect on this radically altered view of Joan of Arc, which would ultimately result in her canonization in the early twentieth century.

Heimann argues persuasively that Joan of Arc's international fame was triggered by the Enlightenment philosopher François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire. Voltaire made her an instrument in his political satire by presenting her as a sexually alluring stable maid. The notoriety of his conception of Joan led generations of prelates, authors, artists, and politicians with different political, cultural and religious views to respond. As a result, for the next century and a half, Joan's portrayals underwent successive transformations from an icon of martial strength to one of humble piety and maidenly purity and from a symbol of the power of the people to one of the divine rights of kings. In the process, Joan's gender remained a focal concern and, indeed, played a crucial role in the transformation of her image from a figure in a quasi-pornographic satire to the personification of sanctity in a secular age.

In her introduction, Heimann traces the way the iconography of Joan of Arc was shaped in the centuries that followed her death. As early as the fifteenth century, images of Joan deviated from historical accounts, which emphasized her masculine attire and hairstyle. These inaccurate depictions are related to the following factors. First, the only known surviving image of Joan made during her lifetime is a small pen sketch drawn in 1429 by Clément de Fauquembergue, the Burgundian notary of the Parliament of Paris. While he never saw her, he depicted her with long, loose hair and clothed in a low-cut, tight-fitting dress, holding a sword and a standard. The Burgundians called Joan the "Harlot of the Armagnacs" and Fauquembergue's drawing clearly was the product of that hostile attitude toward the Maid. Second, for a long time, there was a lack of accurate historical information about Joan. Her trial records, which thoroughly documented her life story and appearance, were not widely known until the 1840s, when they were published by the French historian Jules Quicherat.^[1] Because of this, artists and illustrators tended to copy Fauquembergue's feminized image, which shaped the iconographic tradition throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Whether she was depicted as a soldier in battle, defendant in her trial, martyr at the stake, or a model of female virtue, she always conformed to the standards of feminine beauty of the time. Two images by anonymous artists may serve as examples: a full-length picture of Joan of Arc in Martin le Franc's *The Champion of Women*, an illuminated manuscript made in Arras in 1440 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale), and the so-called *Aldermen Portrait* of c.1581 (Orléans, Centre Jeanne d'Arc). The first shows Joan with long hair holding a lance and a shield, standing beside the biblical heroine Judith. The second, which influenced Joan's iconography from the

sixteenth through the mid-nineteenth century, portrays her with long unbound hair under a plumed hat, holding a sword in her hand, and wearing a gown with slashed sleeves in the style of the Renaissance (p. 8).^[2]

The first chapter provides a detailed analysis of Voltaire's epic poem *The Maid of Orléans* (1730-1762). Hardly known and largely ignored by scholars today, this mock epic in twenty cantos, first circulated in pirated manuscripts and later in clandestine printed editions, was widely read for over a century. The major literary sources for *The Maid* were Jean Chapelain's *The Maid or France Delivered* (1656), which was modeled after Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581) and Virgil's *Aeneid* (first century BCE). In Voltaire's epic, Joan is an illegitimate stable girl who is protected by a saint and his winged companion against many suitors and sexual assailants, including members of the Church and both British and French royalty. For Voltaire, Joan's most remarkable accomplishment was that she maintained her chastity for one year and thus guaranteed her country's protection: "You'll tremble at the feats whereof you hear/And more than all the wars she used to wage,/At how she kept her maidenhood--a year!" (p. 43).

The chapter concludes with an insightful discussion of Voltaire's emphasis on Joan's sexuality. While it enraged eighteenth- and nineteenth-century- and even some modern-day readers, Heimann comes to Voltaire's defense. She asserts that, for Voltaire, Joan's sexuality was a vehicle to criticize the corruption of the French monarchy and the Catholic Church. His emphasis on her sexuality moreover, reflects the ongoing concern with Joan's chastity, both by her supporters and her detractors. She suggests that Voltaire intended to challenge the notion that virginity was a sign of female virtue as well as its promotion as a "salvific virtue" by the Catholic Church (p. 41). To Heimann, Voltaire's ideas were ahead of his time, because in modern Western society, virginity has lost its importance, and the Catholic Church no longer advocates it as "a uniquely heroic virtue, superior to marriage or consecrated celibacy as a means of attaining sanctity" (p. 41).

One of the most influential responses to Voltaire came in *The Virgin of Orléans: A Romantic Tragedy* (1801) by the German poet and dramatist Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, which is the subject of the second chapter. Schiller's play created a new vision of Joan of Arc as a romantic heroine, which inspired a generation of French authors and artists. Like Voltaire, Schiller was not concerned with historical accuracy; he wanted to recount a more "poetic and pathetic" story (p. 62). He portrays Joan as a virgin inspired by God, who gives her a magic helmet to protect her from falling in love. At the beginning, she is a determined warlord (like Minerva, who was chosen by Schiller as the frontispiece to his first published edition), but, when she meets Lionel, an English soldier on the battlefield, Joan becomes helpless. However, she resolves to sacrifice this love in order to save her country and king. After she is captured, she frees herself miraculously, and dies on the battlefield gloriously before Charles VII and the assembled French knights and noblemen. Once more, as in Voltaire's poem, the Maid's military successes are less important than her sexual life, because she has to struggle to maintain her vow of chastity in order to accomplish her divine mission.

In an insightful analysis of the play, Heimann points out that this emphasis on Joan's personal emotional conflicts and sacrifice is an expression of Schiller's Romantic ideals. *The Virgin of Orléans* "can be seen as a dramatic illustration of the author's beliefs regarding the power of human suffering and the potential of moral and intellectual reason to temper and even ennoble the brute impact of suffering in life" (p. 70). Concomitantly, in the same chapter, Heimann offers a vivid account of the numerous theatrical productions and operas produced in France during the first half of the nineteenth century that were influenced by Schiller's play. Among the plays discussed are those by Jean-Guillaume-Auguste Cuvellier de Trie, and Alexandre Soumet, and operas by Jules Barbier, Giuseppe Verdi, and Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky.

During the Revolution, the Consulate, and the Empire (1789-1815), Joan of Arc emerged as a symbol of martial resolve and liberation. Chapter three focuses on Napoleon Bonaparte and the sculptural monument of Joan by Edmé-Étienne-François Gois . On May 8, 1804, Gois's *Joan of Arc in Battle* was dedicated in the Place de la République in Orléans. This bronze monument follows earlier depictions of Joan (going back as far as the *Aldermen Portrait*), showing her with long hair and plumed hat. She is clad in a long full skirt with a set of armor over her torso, arms, and feet. Joan is cast here as a powerful woman warrior recalling "Minerva, Bellona, the Roman personification for Fortune and Fortitude, and even personifications of Liberty and the Republic from the French Revolution" (p. 77).

In her discussion of Gois's *Joan of Arc in Battle*, Heimann demonstrates how nineteenth-century political and cultural forces as well as individual interests shaped both its initial success and subsequent obscurity. These forces and interests, as she explains, included the "town of Orleans's commitment to supporting civic pride and regional patriotism; the Catholic Church's desire to encourage the renewed recognition of a resonant, faithful figure in France; a young artist's ambition to garner whatever professional advancement he might gain by his work; and above all, Napoleon Bonaparte's desire to cultivate a cogent cultural symbol that fostered his own agenda" (p. 97). While Gois's sculpture was criticized by many within a few years of its erection, its reputation rapidly declined after the fall of Napoleon. By 1855, it was moved to a less visible location at the Place Dauphine on the southern shore of the Loire River.

With the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1815, a refashioned Joan of Arc emerged to suit the times. Instead of the image of a classical woman warrior with martial resolve that was promoted during the Revolution, Consulate and Empire, Joan came to be the embodiment of heroic and pious suffering. Her new representation in literature, sermons, and art, particularly in Paul Delaroche's painting, is the topic of chapter four. Joan had a high symbolic value for the restored monarchy and the Catholic Church, as she had helped bring a disinherited crown prince to the throne "with the help of divine intervention" (p. 99). Many sermons and panegyrics of Joan, praised her fervent faith and loyalty to the king, while pointing to "God's providential care for a faithful French people and their most Christian kings" (p.101).

During the Restoration (1814-1830), Joan's long captivity and painful martyrdom became a predominant theme for politicians and the Church as well as for authors and artists. This theme occurred in numerous plays, poems, books and paintings produced around the 1820s. Among the literary works were *Joan of Arc in Rouen* (1819), a play by Charles-Joseph Loeuillard d'Avrigny; "The Death of Joan of Arc," a poem by Casimir Delavigne (in the series *Les Messéniennes* of 1819); and *The Truth about Joan of Arc, or Explanations Regarding her Origin*, a history by Pierre Caze. A number of paintings on the theme of Joan of Arc were exhibited at successive Salons by such artists as Auguste-Jacques Régnier, Pierre-Henri Révoil, Richard Fleury-François, and Paul Delaroche, several of which enjoyed immense success. Delaroche's *Joan of Arc, Sick, Interrogated in Prison by the Cardinal of Winchester* (Salon of 1824) portrays Joan in prison wearing female attire. She is cast as a weak and a humble figure, "with her huge eyes raised as if seeking deliverance through prayer" (p. 126). Heimann points out that Delaroche's portrayal of Joan in a way that suggests her spirituality, humility, and suffering influenced later treatments of Joan of Arc, such as those by the historian Jules Michelet and by the artists Princess Marie d'Orléans and Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, as well as the filmmakers Carl Dreyer, Robert Bresson, and Jacque Rivette (p. 131).

During the July Monarchy (1830-1848), Joan of Arc was elevated to sacred status by both conservatives and liberals. The fifth and final chapter surveys this new direction, particularly in the works of Jules Michelet, Princess Marie d'Orléans, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. In the fifth volume of his *History of France* (1841), the French historian Jules Michelet portrays Joan as a secular martyr who

redeemed France and declares her sanctity when he is describing her death: “whether considered religiously or patriotically, Joan of Arc was a saint” (p. 139). Princess Marie d’Orléans also portrays her as a humble, and pious maiden soldier praying to unify a divided nation in her popular sculpture entitled *Joan of Arc in Prayer* (ca 1837). In addition, this sculpture is the first attempt at an “accurate” rendition of Joan with her short boyish haircut, clad in medieval armor. Heimann’s final example is the painting entitled *Joan of Arc at the Coronation of Charles VII* (1854) by one of the most celebrated artists of the nineteenth century, Ingres.[3] In this canvas, Joan is depicted with long bound hair (historically inaccurate) and medieval plate and armor similar to the sculpture by Marie d’Orléans. However, in contrast to *Joan of Arc in Prayer*, Ingres’s painting includes many biblical symbols and images of the French monarchy. As “an artistic and political conservative, who allied himself with Orléanists, legitimists, and the Catholic Church,” Ingres wanted to emphasize at once Joan’s holiness, the ascendancy of the French monarchy, and the Catholic Church’s authority (p. 163).

Joan of Arc in French Art and Culture (1700-1855): From Satire to Sanctity contains much new and valuable information, proving that there is still more to learn about the reality and legend of Joan of Arc. The book helps the reader understand the multivalence of the image of Joan of Arc, who, even today, is embraced at once by the Catholic Church, feminists, and French neo-fascists. With its original insights, rich narrative detail, impeccable research, and pertinent illustrations, this study is of interest to historians of art and literature, as well as all who are concerned with feminism OR French history and culture. This is, however, a specialized study: it is written in an academic language that may not be easily accessible to the general public and the numerous footnotes, while a valuable resource, make it clear that this is not a book for leisure reading. However, for those interested in the way historical memory is shaped and reshaped by successive generations trying to make sense (or, make use) of the past in the context of the present, this book provides a marvelous case study.

NOTES

[1] Jules-Étienne Quicherat, *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc, dite la Pucelle, publiés pour la première fois d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque royale, suivis de tous les documents historiques qu'on a pu réunir, et accompagnés de notes et d'éclaircissements*, 5 vols. (Paris: J. Renouard, 1841-1849).

[2] In her overview of the iconographic tradition that influenced Joan’s posthumous images, Heimann might have referred to Marina Warner, who in her *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 212-213, links the origin of Joan’s long and wavy hair in sixteenth and seventeenth-century images to the figure of Clorinda in the Renaissance Italian epic of Torquato Tasso.

[3] Though not completed until 1854, Ingres’s painting was commissioned and conceived during the July Monarchy.

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