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Caroline Smith, *Crusading in the Age of Joinville*. Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006. 216 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, and index. \$94.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-7546-5363-3.

Review by Philip Daileader, The College of William and Mary.

Since roughly the end of the 1980s, interfaith relations and cross-cultural issues, especially as they figured in the history of Mediterranean regions, have moved to the forefront of medieval studies. One consequence of this shift has been a resurgence of interest in the crusades, viewed not purely as a military confrontation but more broadly as an episode in Christian-Muslim acculturation. This increasingly intense study of the crusades, in turn, has led to a reappraisal of crusader motivation and thinking. *Studies such as Marcus Bull's Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970-c. 1130*, published in 1993, and Jonathan Riley-Smith's *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131*, published four years later, argued that the participants in the earliest crusades took up the cross not because it was in their economic interest to do so, but because familial ties and the particularities of their religious experiences and mentality compelled them.[1] Bull's book especially generated great interest and discussion because he based his findings on an examination of sources whose relevance to crusading history, while recognized at a certain level, had not been so fully demonstrated before: charters, in this instance drawn from the records of monastic houses located in southwestern France. Riley-Smith, in building upon Bull's work, drew upon European charter evidence too.

"This study concerns the way in which thirteenth-century laymen...may have perceived crusading, and how they involved themselves with the crusading cause" (p. 1). Caroline Smith, in her *Crusading in the Age of Joinville*, tackles the issues of crusader mentality and motivation, but for a later period than the one on which Bull and Riley-Smith focused, and using different sources. Smith suggests that "it is unlikely that charters could provide the basis for an extended study of crusade recruitment and motivation in the thirteenth century because the methods of financing crusades had by this time become more institutionalized and the need for individual crusaders to make sales or pledges in order to fund participation had diminished" (p. 45). To achieve her goals, Smith turns instead to a variety of sources--indeed, the first two chapters of her book are given over entirely to a discussion of those sources. The first chapter introduces readers to crusade songs, the poetry of Rutebeuf, epic songs (*chansons de geste*), and sermons, all insofar as they pertain to the study of what Smith defines as the "idea" of crusading. Additionally, Smith examines crusade narratives and chronicles, which reflect the "practice" of crusading. The second chapter focuses on a single thirteenth-century crusading narrative: the one embedded in Jean de Joinville's *Vie de Saint Louis*. One of Smith's goals is to demonstrate that Joinville's narrative has a "unique value" (p. 2) for her project, because "the full potential of John of Joinville's *Vie de Saint Louis* as a source for the motivation and experiences of crusaders in the thirteenth century has not been fully exploited" (p. 11).

Although the first two chapters are introductory, Smith's extended consideration of Joinville's *Vie de Saint Louis* is more than a synopsis; it tackles the problematic nature of the text and stakes out positions on a number of important issues relating to it. Smith argues that 1) Joinville did not compose the *Vie de Saint Louis* all at once, but rather wrote his account of the Seventh Crusade and the biographical sections devoted to Louis IX at different times, subsequently incorporating the crusading narrative into the royal biography; and 2) Joinville's *Vie de Saint Louis* contains more literary artifice than has generally been recognized. Reading the *Vie de Saint Louis* gives the impression that its author is a gossipy octogenarian with a great memory but an inability to focus. Although conventionally pious and

devoted to Louis IX, Joinville comes across as less personally invested in crusading per se—which would explain why his crusade narrative eschews the heroic, idealized glorifications typical of the genre—and instead strings together, seemingly more or less as they pop into his head, observations and episodes that are vivid but loosely connected. Smith, however, points out how some passages in Joinville’s narrative echo others found in works not written by him. The sadness that crusaders felt when saying good-bye to their families; the image of the sea covered with white sails for as far as the eye could see; the first impression made by the enemies’ flashing armor and dinning horns; the holding of a private conversation in the nook of a recessed window: all of these figure prominently in Joinville’s narrative and, as Smith points out, read similarly to passages in earlier crusade narratives, in the epics that comprise the Old French Crusade Cycle, and in the most famous *chanson de geste* of all, the *Chanson de Roland*. Smith does not argue that Joinville, in employing these literary topoi, fictionalizes his work. Rather, Smith posits that Joinville draws upon literary imagery in ways that have not been sufficiently recognized by historians, and that he does so to make his narrative more compelling.

Having assessed her source material in the first two chapters, Smith presents her analysis of that material in the remaining three. The third chapter, “The Presentation of Crusades to Potential Participants,” examines how the themes of “pilgrimage, service, the past, the dangers of crusading, martyrdom and the value of suffering” are present in those sources dealing with the “idea” of crusading (p. 75). Though its purpose is largely to serve as a foil for the two chapters that follow, this chapter notes differences between the ways that leading crusade preachers (for example, Jacques de Vitry and Humbert de Romans) depict the crusades, on the one hand, and the ways that poets depict them, on the other. Some of these differences are not surprising (preachers tend to hearken to the biblical past when speaking of the crusades, while poets invoke previous crusades and the imaginary past), but others are a bit more unexpected (preachers and poets both address the potential crusader’s fear of death by drowning or in battle, but the poets also acknowledge the fear of being captured in battle).

In chapter four, “The Practice of Crusading,” Smith addresses how her chosen themes figure in narrative sources, especially in Joinville’s *Vie de Saint Louis*. Taking those themes in the same order in which she addresses them in chapter three, Smith argues that “the ideas of crusading evident in sermons and secular literature do not reflect the complexity of crusaders’ attitudes and actions in practice” (p. 192). In the narratives, allusions to the past refer not to biblical or imaginary history, and not even to the First Crusade, but rather to the immediate, thirteenth-century crusading past. Depictions of captivity in sermons and poems are not nearly as graphic as those in the chronicles. The image of the fallen crusader as martyr, treated carefully in sermon literature and a bit more loosely in poetry, is invoked much more easily and loosely by chroniclers. Again, some of these findings might have been anticipated. It is not startling that the experience of captivity appears more prominently and vividly in a narrative written by a former prisoner-of-war than in a crusading sermon penned by someone who had never stepped foot in the Holy Land. Some of the author’s observations about Joinville in this context are noteworthy, though; as Smith points out, if Joinville is indeed using literary topoi drawn from epic literature, he is selective about it, because he does not refer back to the imaginary ancient or the Carolingian past that provide the settings for those epics.

Chapter five, “Crusading and Knightly Careers,” abandons the thematic approach of the previous two chapters and instead opts for a biographical one, so that the reader can get a sense of “the place of crusading in knightly careers as a whole” (p. 13). The careers of two knights are examined in detail: Jean de Joinville is one of them, and the other is Joinville’s French contemporary, Olivier de Termes, the subject of a recent biography upon which Smith draws.^[2] The reason for this pairing is that Olivier de Termes remained actively involved in crusading throughout his adult life, whereas Jean de Joinville did not (Joinville refused to participate in Louis IX’s crusade to Tunis after having served alongside, and eventually under, that same king in his crusade to Egypt). The juxtaposition of these two individuals—only in three brief concluding paragraphs does Smith directly compare the two—neither places them in a

very different light nor allows the author to move far beyond the point advanced at the outset to justify the comparison: crusading was more central to some careers than to others. Still, even in this chapter Smith's observations about Jean de Joinville reward the reader's efforts. In this case, the author's comparison of Joinville's account of his captivity in his *Vie de Saint Louis* with another account included in a little-studied work called *Credo*, which consists mostly of Joinville's examination of certain biblical prophecies and Christian doctrines, highlights the ways in which Joinville shapes his account of the Seventh Crusade in the *Vie de Saint Louis* for entertainment value.

In assessing *Crusading in the Age of Joinville* as a whole, there is room for both criticism and praise. That Joinville's chronicle has a "unique value" for studying thirteenth-century crusading is a belief that, whether right or wrong, is not novel. The text itself is familiar not just to professional medievalists, but to undergraduates—its English translation is a staple of most every undergraduate course on the Crusades, and it sometimes appears on the syllabi of general surveys of medieval history. There is no necessary contradiction between the author's contention that Joinville provides an account of crusading so personal as to be almost one-of-a-kind and her contention that Joinville uses attention-grabbing literary borrowings more often than has been recognized. However, it is worth pondering that the author's identification of these borrowings, if accurate, renders Joinville a correspondingly less transparent guide to crusading history. Historians should always discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their sources, but in chapter one and chapter two, the sixty pages given over to the discussion of the source material are perhaps too much of a good thing, especially considering that the subsequent analytical material comprises roughly 120 pages. Chapter five sits awkwardly in this book—the sudden appearance and prominence of Olivier de Termes is somewhat jarring, and this chapter's inclusion of a fair amount of incidental evidence drawn from French archival documents (most are located in the Bibliothèque Nationale, but some are in the much-less-frequented Archives Départementales de la Haute-Marne) likewise sets it apart from those chapters that came before. In sum, *Crusading in the Age of Joinville* would have benefited from more polishing and sharpening.

Some of these problems, and perhaps all of these problems, might well arise from this book's origins as a doctoral dissertation submitted and accepted in 2003. These days, having a firm book contract or a published monograph, once sufficient for getting tenure at most schools, has become increasingly necessary for getting just an on-campus interview. The result is that newly minted PhDs in history, if they are to be competitive on the job market, are under pressure to get their dissertations into print as quickly as possible. Under such circumstances, is it fair for a book reviewer who has tenure to chide, however gently, a junior scholar for failing to take a few more years before getting a revised dissertation published?

Probably not—especially when that junior scholar demonstrates admirable research skills and genuine insight. Caroline Smith is a careful and conscientious historian who handles her evidence well. Historians who have read Joinville's account of the Seventh Crusade innumerable times will find themselves approaching that narrative somewhat differently after reading Smith's *Crusading in the Age of Joinville*. In that sense, Smith's debut should be regarded as a success.

NOTES

[1] Marcus Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970–c. 1130* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095–1131* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). On the use of charters for the study of the crusades,

see Giles Constable, "Medieval Charters as a Source for the History of the Crusades," in Peter W. Edbury, ed., *Crusade and Settlement* (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), pp. 73-89.

[2] Gauthier Langlois, *Olivier de Termes, le Cathare et le croisé (vers 1200-1274)* (Toulouse: Privat, 2001).

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