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Stephen W. Richey. *Joan of Arc: The Warrior Saint.* Westport: Praeger, 2003. x + 175 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-275-98103-7.

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Joan, Warrior Princess

There are many books about Joan of Arc, some of them excellent examinations of the life and deeds of a fascinating woman and her context, such as Kelly DeVries's recent *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (1999). Many of them are hagiographies, nationalistic justifications, and romantic speculations. The same qualities of leadership, charisma, and fervor that motivated Joan's contemporaries continue to snare students, filmmakers, and authors. Stephen Richey's enthusiasm for his subject practically leaps off every page, beginning with the dedication. His previous research into Amazons and Xena, Warrior Princess, is a somewhat natural lead-up to this book.

But it is this very enthusiasm that is the problem with this work. Richey certainly gets all of the factual information right, and his narrative is lively and easy to be drawn into. Unfortunately, though drawing information from all the "usual suspect" sources, he falls short when it comes to pulling material together into a synthesis that tells us anything new about Joan or her times, or takes advantage of new secondary research to do anything but fill in background. There are also many speculative tangents based on Richey's own military experience and contemporary gender ideas rather than grounded in the norms or behavior of actual late medieval people.

This problem is most evident in a core idea Richey stresses throughout the text, that Joan's adherence to chivalry and the *bellum iustum* offered a contrast to the behavior of French nobles, who were losing the war by violating the rules that undergirded their martial society. Richey consistently conflates chivalry and the just war as a single idea, rather than two very different ones. DeVries pointed out cogently that by attending to the concerns of the common soldiers, who would not be ransomed, and whose lives were generally disregarded by the nobles, Joan won firm support from the body of the army, which was increasingly drawn from commoners after two generations of noble-annihilating warfare and the introduction of gunpowder. Joan's willingness to embrace the new technology as well as place a value on the lives of non-nobles (in the army and the towns) was not a chivalrous thing. It was a just war tradition written by St. Augustine when armies were still manned by commoners whose cooperation and participation were crucial to survival and who needed assurance that theirs was a righteous and proper cause.

Reading this work is a lot like seeing a jigsaw with pieces missing. I could feel the synthesis coming from all the pieces Richey assembled, but was left short when he skipped on to the next idea without pulling together anything significant. Places where this was especially evident were in the survey of historiography, when he fails to discuss Joan's role in the military history of twentieth-century France, or the parallel between Henry V's centralizing and nationalizing army and Joan's attempts to pull France together. Richey also misses any justification at all for Charles VII to refuse a military and social reform (Joan insisted on the nobles cleaning up their moral acts) that came from the bottom, before imposing a similar regime from the top. In a bit that actually made me laugh out loud, he includes a mention of Vita Sackville-West's *Saint Joan of Arc* (2001) without comment on why she might be writing about her. As the book is listed under V. Sackville-West, perhaps the connection was never made.

In the end, however, the book becomes too speculative and removed from research to be really useful to a scholarly reader. A last section comparing Joan's techniques to the modern principles of warfare veers into *Elizabeth I: CEO* or *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun* territory. Richey's prose is often clunky, with phrases that have an odd feel, like when Joan "got on her knees" before the Dauphin, or the repeated use of words like "airhead," "slimy," "ditz," and " teenaged farm girl." A single page over-uses "illiterate teenage girl" so many times that I gave up counting. Many of Joan's male mercenary

contemporaries were of doubtful or semi-literacy, making this phrase far less remarkable than Richey seems to think.

A catalog of Joan of Arc films added as an appendix is useful for Richey's critique of their historical accuracy, including how much script dialogue was pulled from primary documents, but falls down when he includes his personal take on how closely the actress playing Joan conformed to his own interpretation of how she would have acted or looked. This last point is particularly overplayed in another appendix where Richey insists that Joan must have appeared as a "teenaged Mia Hamm" with short hair, or a "fresh, healthy, girl-next-door" beauty. H-Minerva readers will probably take issue with his assertion that only young, attractive women can inspire or keep the loyalty of male soldiers, which I suspect might surprise Elizabeth I, Margaret Thatcher, and Indira Gandhi. There is something vaguely creepy about a paragraph debating whether Joan met the medieval standard of "small, firm, hemispherical, high-mounted" breasts.

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