



Reviews

NORA M. HEIMANN, *Joan of Arc in French Art and Culture (1700–1855), From Satire to Sanctity*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005. Pp. xvi + 215. ISBN: 0-7546-5085-5. \$99.50.

Thanks to the detailed court records from her trial and subsequent rehabilitation, Joan of Arc's life may well be the most-documented of anyone who lived before the twentieth-century, but as Professor Heimann's ground-breaking and fascinating study suggests there is still much to be learned about the Maid of Orléans. In five meticulously documented and always insightful chapters, Heimann surveys Joan's treatment at the hands of Voltaire, Schiller, Gois, Delaroche, Michelet, Marie d'Orléans, and Ingres. Supplementing the text of this study are sixty black and white plates, each carefully reproduced.

Heimann begins with a detailed analysis of Voltaire's infamous (in its day but now largely ignored) mock epic on Joan. (Joan and Voltaire both died on 30 May; she, in 1431; he, in 1778.) If nothing else, Voltaire's effort proves that it is possible for even a great author to be too clever by half. Originally circulated in pirated manuscript form and later in clandestine printed editions, Voltaire's work was 'banned, burned, and decried as poisonously profligate throughout Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'(13). In one version, Joan loses her virginity by coupling with an ass. But, as Heimann points out, Joan's virginity was an object of fetish in her own lifetime by both her supporters and her captors, and Joan's virginity was essential to her role as savior. What Voltaire lampoons is not Joan, but Catholic-inspired superstition and poppycock. Unlike many of Voltaire's contemporaries and early detractors, Heimann has actually read him—carefully—and she offers one of the best readings of an admittedly complex work too readily dismissed, if not banned, in the past as bordering on the obscene or the pornographic.

The notoriety of Voltaire's mock epic inspired Schiller to pen first in 1800 a poem and then in 1801 his more famous stage play about Joan, which can rightly lay claim to the distinction of establishing the early modern and modern fascination with the life and legend of la pucelle. In Schiller's hands, Joan's image is transformed from 'a manifestation of political ideals to an embodiment of romantic tragedy'(45). Again, as with her discussion of Voltaire, Heimann offers an insightful close reading of Schiller's play, which despite its importance and influence remains little performed today. Heimann supplements her discussion of Schiller's play with details about numerous lesser known plays about the maid by nineteenth century French dramatists who were clearly influenced by the German playwright and about the more well-known

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operas by Verdi and Tchaikovsky, each also influenced by Schiller.

Joan's admittedly at times conflicting centrality to French history is the focus of Heimann's discussion of Gois's public monument *Joan of Arc in Battle* dedicated in the Place de la République in Orléans on 8 May 1804. Crucial to the funding for this work was the support of Napoleon, who found Joan as useful to his agenda as had the members of the ancien regime and the committees of the Revolution to theirs. Indeed, Joan's ability to serve as spokesperson for almost any political agenda explains her continued popularity under the restored monarchy and in the drama it produced. Although the process of refashioning Joan's iconography to reflect Restoration sentiments took some time, that iconography soon became evident not only in literary works about Joan but also in works devoted to her exhibited at the Salon des Beaux-Arts. Indeed, the widespread popularity of Joan's image is attested to by the numbers of paintings, plays, books, and poems produced about Joan by 1820. Of the paintings, none was more popular or successful than Paul Delarouche's *Joan of Arc, Sick, Interrogated in Prison by the Cardinal of Winchester*, which was exhibited in the Salon of 1824. Delarouche's influence can be seen in subsequent treatments of Joan as diverse as those of the historian Jules Michelet and of the filmmakers Carl Theodor Dreyer, Robert Bresson, and Jacques Rivette.

Michelet's Joan and the Joans of Marie d'Orléans and Ingres are the subject of Heimann's final chapter, which discusses the ways in which images of Joan was used to support the July monarchy. Joan's canonization would not come about until 1920, but Heimann offers the first detailed account of Joan's shifting iconography over a century and a half that made that canonization possible. A Joan who had been a goddess of war, the personification of republicanism, and a royalist martyr could easily be embraced by the same church that sent her to the flames. And Heimann's remarkable book offers a key to our understanding of how today Joan can be celebrated by the Church, feminists, and neo-Fascists alike. Heimann ends her study by quoting André Malraux: 'Joan embodies and magnifies henceforth the great contradictory dreams of men' (176).

KEVIN J. HARTY
La Salle University