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Christy Pichichero, *The Military Enlightenment: War and Culture in the French Empire from Louis XIV to Napoleon*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017. xi + 301 pp. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$49.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781501709296.

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Christy Pichichero has taken on a tremendous task with her debut monograph, *The Military Enlightenment: War and Culture in the French Army from Louis XIV to Napoleon*, both in terms of scope—the long 18th century, a rich time of military reform—and in terms of its theme, the until now under-defined but widely assumed Military Enlightenment. Of course, military themes and concerns have long been grist for the Enlightenment mill. Historians of the old regime such as Jay M. Smith, Rafe Blaufarb, David A. Bell, Arnaud Guinier, and Hervé Drevillon have acknowledged the dialogue between Enlightenment thinkers and military reform in intellectual and cultural studies of the army during this period.[1] The term “Military Enlightenment” itself has been bandied about for some time. Scott N. Hendrix, professor at Cuyahoga Community College and reviewer and editor at H-War, had considered editing a volume on the European Military Enlightenment with Brill Press in 2011, and, in 2010, there was a lively thread on H-War about the Military Enlightenment, including trying to figure out who first introduced the phrase (the going theory was John A. Lynn) and what authors had engaged with this idea (contributors cited Azar Gat, Christopher Duffy, and Ira Gruber, among others).[2]

While the Military Enlightenment has been invoked, referenced, and assumed by many historians, Pichichero attacks the concept head-on, giving it shape and definition and plenty for historians to engage with. She combines her knowledge of the French army, her understanding of French Enlightenment texts, and her thorough grasp of the voluminous literature on the subjects; all of this expertise is enhanced by the author’s background in French literature. The result is a brave and gutsy book: solid and workable, but, by its very nature, not incontestable. Such a book, one that seeks to encompass a movement or theory characterized by multi-faceted and uneven change over a long period of time, will inevitably invite criticism. But more than that, it will certainly invite further questions and debates, and it will open areas ripe for further research. Our conversation on the Military Enlightenment will be better-informed because of Pichichero’s book.

Pichichero argues that while war and Enlightenment may seem like contradictory and antagonistic concepts, they are in fact “inextricably connected” (p. 2). Since war was an “inevitable scourge,” according to Voltaire, it was best to see that it was conducted as perfectly and humanely as possible (p. 5). The resulting Military Enlightenment included both active military men and “a far greater public” of civilian *philosophes*, artistic writers, and men of letters, who contemplated the “nature of war and its rightful conduct,” along with its practical, technical elements (p. 3). Within this broad and encompassing scope of material and massive cast of *philosophes militaires*, Pichichero chooses to focus on what she calls “the culture of moral sentiment,” which seems to have parallels with the more modern concept of “primary group cohesion” (p. 10).

The “culture of moral sentiment” dominates Pichichero’s presentation of the Military Enlightenment, and

each of her chapters examines an aspect of it. One considers the emotions and bonding between military men, pre-dating Revolutionary fraternity and Napoleonic brotherhood; another discusses the concept of human rights within the army; yet another describes the process of democratization and concepts of egalitarianism within the army and the larger public. In each chapter, the author ties conversations between and about military men of letters to larger trends within the broader Enlightenment. The result is a vision of the Enlightenment that has a stronger connection to the army than previously assumed, and an army (she touches on the navy, but the army is the principal focus of her study) that seems to flow seamlessly with broader society. The book ends with another survey of the literature on Revolutionary and Napoleonic war to show where some concepts of the Military Enlightenment continued, and others ended.

Chapter one gives an overview of some of the major institutions (such as the *école militaire*) and assumptions (like universalist theories) at work in the Military Enlightenment. Pichichero breaks the *philosophes militaires* into two categories—those interested exclusively in military concerns, and those who wanted to comment on extra-martial affairs, such as society, government, and works of men of letters (p. 39). Throughout the chapter (and the book), Pichichero addresses greater France, including French colonies and their inhabitants: Native and colonial Americans, as well as the Nawabs and sepoy of India, for example. In observing and analyzing these peoples, she argues, some military men even became amateur ethnographers and naturalists (pp. 45-51). Her attention to regions outside of France provides a fuller understanding of the business of war for France, including how the people in these regions influenced decision-making back in the metropole. Overall, the first chapter is an excellent historiographical essay on the state of the French army, punctuated by meaningful works of art and poetry. Pichichero illustrates some of the more poignant aspects of the secondary literature and introduces, often through analyses of Jean-Antoine Watteau's paintings, the attention that eighteenth-century armies paid to mercy and humanity.

With chapter two, Pichichero moves into her own research and looks at the close relationship between military men that predated Napoleonic troops' "group solidarity" (p. 66). She dates this concern from the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, which left the French army in material and moral crisis (p. 70). In the wake of this crisis, officers began to empathize with their troops and to see their soldiers as fellow human beings. The author points to the sequestering of troops in barracks as helping them form closer relationships, and how officers found a sense of brotherhood through the masonic temples, where many held membership. The highlight of this chapter, though (and perhaps even of the book), is the discussion of Maurice de Saxe and his use of theater to motivate and bond his troops. Here, Pichichero's prose shines, as she recounts the *opéras comiques* in question, the actresses who stoked the troops' desires, and this practice's relationship to "philosophical medical discourse of the period" (p. 92). Drawing on her extensive background in French literature, she breathes life into these texts and demonstrates how comic plays provide a key insight into the mindset of the mid-eighteenth-century French officers and soldiers.

Saxe makes a reappearance in chapter three, where Pichichero examines officers' increasing care for soldiers' general well-being, exploring how superiors looked after their troops' health and spirits in ways that went beyond fostering camaraderie. In this case, Saxe warned his officers to be attentive to "combat emotion" among the troops, and avoid "futile, tiresome activities that would waste troops' physical and emotional resources" (p. 130). Pichichero argues for a connection between Saxe's and other officers' concerns and concurrent strains in medical philosophy. She finds another example of a new focus on humanity during the eighteenth century with deserters, who received more sympathy in published works, especially plays (p. 142). This chapter proves more complicated, because while Pichichero can point to a general trend of greater care for soldiers, there is "no linear trajectory" to the push and pull of reforms, published literature, and officers' and men of letters' opinions on the topic (p.149). Even with all the sympathy soldiers garnered during the eighteenth century, Minister of War St. Germain passed the controversial measure to discipline soldiers with blows with the flat of a saber. Again, Pichichero does not restrict herself to the hexagon, but looks at how this humanizing trend played out overseas, especially

with regards to slavery in the American Revolution and Saint-Domingue.

The final chapter discussing the Military Enlightenment during the old regime focuses on increasing democratization and even egalitarianism before the French Revolution. Pichichero begins with a discussion of the turning point between the “age-old cult of heroism,” restricted to officers, to “Enlightened heroism,” in which soldiers take part as well, during the War of the Austrian Succession (p. 157). Again, Pichichero is tremendously effective through her analysis of plays and operas in showing changing attitudes towards soldiers, who are celebrated as people worthy of taking equal part in heroism or even early citizenship. They appear onstage, and presumably in the public’s minds, as Figaro-like characters who save their civilian neighbors from bad marriages or false steps (p. 170). In these performances and publications, she argues that a “nation at arms [is] clearly present,” preceding any official steps towards an official creation of a citizen army (p. 172). Her notions of heroism engage scholarship on French patriotism discussed by Edmund Dziembowski, Bell, and Smith.[3] She also identifies, lurking in the background, a “national culture of militarism,” foreshadowing “total war,” as has been defined by David Bell (p. 157).[4]

With chapter five, Pichichero again masterfully synthesizes voluminous secondary literature to see how the Military Enlightenment fared in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. She argues that the Military Enlightenment persisted in some ways and combined with the Grande Nation to “create an expansive new culture of militarism and imperialism” (p. 217). Yet it seems that little of the promise of the Military Enlightenment carried over. Some of the groups that Pichichero dutifully traced in earlier chapters, such as women, never really found a place in the Military Enlightenment or the Revolutionary or Napoleonic army (p. 211). Nor did the feelings of fraternity first evident in the Old Regime armies reach perfect fruition in the Revolution as evinced by mutinies at sea and in the town of Nancy (p. 216). Napoleon’s attitudes towards people in the colonies, especially in Saint-Domingue, his view of women as passive creatures intended to satisfy his soldiers’ lust, his naked imperialism, and further “devastating violations of humanity” speak to the end of the Military Enlightenment as the Old Regime knew it and give a somber finish to Pichichero’s book (p. 229). But despite this gloomy final tableau, Pichichero ultimately argues for the broader continuity of the Military Enlightenment into the contemporary age, through the persistent themes of “psychology, emotion, camaraderie, and collective identity in war,” even as they are complicated further by efforts to combat terrorism with torture, and the use of dehumanized technology, such as drones (pp. 232, 238-9).

Pichichero has tackled a behemoth concept in this book, and it works best as a call to arms for other French historians to research, expand, and finesse her definition of the concept. Not only has she officially declared this topic open for further research and debate, she has almost made it look easy with her precise organization and luminous writing style. Despite the heady and often highly specialized nature of the topic, it is a smooth and comfortable read that propels the reader along its tight 240 pages. While I have focused my review on the elements of the book that I found the most compelling, Pichichero takes on just about every major applicable theory, historian, and Enlightenment thinker in this work, from Michel Foucault’s concept of docile bodies to Noam Chomsky’s “new military humanism”; she seems to have left no stone unturned in terms of literature and theory to engage.[5] Critics may point out that at times her treatment is too brief for such large connections, that perhaps she tries to say too much with a few, well-chosen examples, but again, she is to be praised for encompassing so much and making it so manageable. Historians will hopefully also follow her lead in considering the role of people outside of France, such as in India, the Americas, and elsewhere, and in examining their relationship to France. Scholars will also hopefully build on Pichichero’s analyses of the French ideas of race in the old regime and revolutionary era and consider these notions as a necessary to understanding French history.

Inevitably, the concept of Military Enlightenment, as well as Pichichero’s book will be pinched, stretched, attacked, praised, re-defined, nit-picked, wholly thrown out, wholly reconstituted, as is the fate of cornerstone books like Geoffrey Parker’s *The Military Revolution*, or concepts like absolutism, but

Pichichero has provided a fine basis for that ensuing debate, and we will be citing her book for years to come.^[6]

NOTES

[1] Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Rafe Blaufarb, *The French Army 1750-1820: Careers, Talent, Merit* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007); Arnaud Guinier, *L'Honneur du soldat: Ethique martiale et discipline guerrière dans la France des Lumières* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2014); and Hervé Drevillon, Pascal Briost, and Pierre Serna, *Croiser le fer: Violence et culture de l'épée dans la France moderne (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle)* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2002).

[2] Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987); and Ira Gruber, *Books and the British Army in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[3] Edmund Dziembowski, *Un nouveau patriotisme français, 1750-1770: la France face à la puissance anglaise à l'époque de la guerre de Sept Ans* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998); David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*.

[4] Bell, *The First Total War*.

[5] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

[6] Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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