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**Daniel Hobbins, trans. and intro.,** *The Trial of Joan of Arc*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2005. xii + 251 pp. Appendices, notes, further reading, index. \$24.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-674-01894-X.

Review by Larissa Juliet Taylor, Colby College.

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Although Joan of Arc's time on the historical stage was only two years, the original sources for her life, death and contemporary reception are among the most extraordinary documents available for the Middle Ages in both quantity and quality. Contemporary chronicles from France and across Europe, poems, theological treatises, and the trial and nullification proceedings provide an extraordinary window into the life and times of Joan of Arc. They shed light on ecclesiastical and inquisitorial procedures, the Hundred Years' War, attitudes toward women and gender, and life of the peasantry in late medieval France. Yet remarkably—until now—few of these sources have appeared in modern translation. For Joan's 1431 trial, scholars can go to the French and Latin originals, but for teaching purposes, most professors have had to rely on W. S. Scott's 1956 *The Trial of Joan of Arc, Being the Verbatim Report of the Proceedings from the Orleans Manuscript* or the more reliable 1932 version by W. P. Barrett (*The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc translated into English from the Original Latin and French Documents*). Online scanned versions ([www.stjoan-center.com/Trials/](http://www.stjoan-center.com/Trials/) and [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/jean\\_darc/](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/treatise/jean_darc/)) lack the necessary critical apparatus (modern introductions, extensive notes based on recent research, and suggestions for further reading) and suffer from the typical problems of scanning (non-recognition of accents and misspellings).

The entire scholarly community will welcome two new books that offer English translations of many Johannine sources—Hobbins' trial translation and introduction, reviewed here, and Craig Taylor's forthcoming *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester University Press, 2006), a collection of fifteenth-century sources including the trial and the nullification proceedings. Even those who do not work directly on Joan of Arc have long recognized the value of these records for classroom teaching. With this excellent new translation and commentary, Hobbins has completely succeeded in his goal: to "...enter into the spirit of the trial, its text and its procedures, and by extension into the political, cultural, and legal world of the people who produced it" (p. 2). He refers to it as a "journey toward Joan", because the study of Joan of Arc must begin with her statements about herself and her beliefs, as expressed at the trial.

Hobbins' introduction is brilliant, revealing the inadequacies and errors in many popular conceptions about Joan of Arc's trial. He begins by pointing out that the transcript we have is not a verbatim record, as the title of Scott's translation suggests. Instead, it was a compilation of each day's proceedings, with some questions left out and some of Joan's answers mixed together. Because the interrogation was conducted in French, the original record was called the "French minute." The Latin transcription, on the other hand, had at its core the French minute, but also included much fuller records of those in attendance at each session, deliberations, letters, appointment of officials, and articles of accusation.

Some scholars have questioned both the date and the accuracy of the Latin text. Hobbins proves once and for all that the record could only have been compiled in the days and months immediately after the trial, not in 1435 as some scholars and translators still maintain. Those who suggest a 1435 date use it to contend that the Latin transcript is inaccurate, a retrospective version intended to make the judges and assessors look better and Joan worse. If so, it failed miserably. Joan's voice is strong and convincing,

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even through the layers of reporting, translation and re-translation, as she talks circles around theologians who try to trap her and pin her down on factual and doctrinal issues. Hobbins asserts convincingly that the translation was made in order to reach the large international audience that had been closely following Joan's career. Indeed, Bishop Cauchon was proud of the exemplary trial he had conducted, and the compilation of the trial texts was a "...conscious attempt at self-justification" by Cauchon (p. 9). It is evident when reading the entire Latin text, that "...if anything, Pierre Cauchon seems to have been obsessed with correct procedure," believing the text would vindicate his role in the trial (p. 18). That he had every reason for concern is evident from the later nullification proceedings (1450-1456), when witnesses recounted threats of imprisonment, exile or other punishment when they voiced opinions that appeared to favor Joan. But Joan's trial was *de facto* political in nature, its conclusion foregone since the English reserved the right to take Joan back into custody if matters did not proceed as they desired. Perhaps blinded by the not-so-behind-the-scenes politics, Cauchon did not reckon with the mixed reception the trial—and Joan—would get in both the fifteenth century and ensuing times. Three decades after Joan's execution, the humanist Pope Pius II wrote a commentary lauding the exploits of "that astonishing and marvelous maid".[1] He did so five years after the nullification proceedings, which overturned the verdict of the earlier trial on procedural grounds. But the proceedings were not intended to, and did not, restore Joan's name. Yet for many, even popes, they did not need to.

Although the original copy of the Latin compilation has been lost, five copies were made immediately, signed by the notaries and sealed by both Cauchon and the vice inquisitor, Jean Le Maistre. No original copy of the French minute is extant, but only two much later copies. Moreover, there are several historical bases for concluding that the Latin text is, on almost all points, an accurate and timely rendition of the trial. The trial notaries, Manchon and Boisguillaume, reported at the nullification proceedings in the 1450s that Bishop Cauchon had tried to intimidate them into making changes, but that they had refused. They also testified that the Latin text made by Thomas de Courcelles was, on the whole, a reliable account of the proceedings, which they approved. There are some omissions and differences in the French and Latin accounts, but as Hobbins argues, the "Latin text omits very little of substance from the French minute" (p. 11). Throughout the text, wherever there is a discrepancy between the Latin text and the French minute, Hobbins provides the latter in footnotes.

In the remainder of the introduction, Hobbins discusses inquisitorial procedure, the legal basis for the trial, the articles of accusation, Joan's appeals to the pope, her relapse, and Joan as a fifteenth-century woman. In the last, Hobbins rightly insists that "...[t]o cast Joan as a paradox or contradiction is to ignore the ways in which her career reflects some of the great trends in late medieval culture: the penetration of the Church into the lives of laypeople; the problem of ecclesiastical authority and who can determine the truth of contested theological claims, particularly those made by women; the drive for participation in the life of the Church and the challenges that presented; and a growing sense of regional and national identity" (p. 32). Too often, those who have written about Joan have unconsciously or purposely ignored the fifteenth-century context in favor of personal or modern agendas. Hobbins' translation is one of the first efforts to re-establish Joan and her trial where it should be, namely, in early fifteenth-century France and Normandy.

Hobbins bases his translation on the Latin text of Pierre Champion's *Procès de condamnation de Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris, 1920), supplemented by Pierre Tisset's 1960 translation of the same name. While Hobbins includes all of Joan's testimony, he has given summary accounts of some procedural letters and documents. He points the reader who wishes further detail on these matters to Barrett's *Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*. A direct comparison of the translations of Hobbins and Barrett is useful. While I have found no contradictions between the two, Hobbins' version is written in more clear and accessible English.

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The Appendices include “The Poitiers Conclusions”, the short fragment that is all that remains of Joan’s original examination by French theologians. It is followed by a brief chronology of Joan’s life, with special attention to trial events, and ‘Major Participants in the Trial.’ As a Johannine scholar, I wish Hobbins had expanded the list beyond thirteen political figures, notaries, judges and officials. However, the two-page list will be all most students and professors studying the trial will require. The notes are extremely helpful, expanding on contested points, problems with certain texts and interpretations, and relying on the most up-to-date scholarship on every aspect of Joan’s life and trial, including works in French, Italian and German. They also provide further information about figures, places, events and procedures.

A final section entitled “Further Reading” covers most of the significant recent works that deal with the life, trial, military campaigns, and perceptions of Joan of Arc.

Daniel Hobbins has provided an extraordinary service to the scholarly and educational community with this outstanding new translation of the Latin trial compilation. Equally important, his critical introduction and notes stand alongside the most valuable recent contributions to scholarship on Joan of Arc.

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#### NOTES

[1] Florence A. Gragg, trans., *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope: The Commentaries of Pius II, An Abridgment* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1959), p. 208.

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