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Carol Reardon, *With a Sword in One Hand and Jomini in the Other: The Problem of Military Thought in the Civil War North*. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2012. Pp. 177. ISBN 978-0-8078-3560-9.

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Carol Reardon (Penn State Univ.) has had a remarkably wide-ranging and influential career. She has written many books and articles on the Civil War and the Vietnam War, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory*<sup>1</sup> perhaps the best known among them, particularly for its innovative approach to the battle at Gettysburg and its aftermath. She has also bridged the still considerable gap between academia and the public with appearances on C-Span and PBS and membership on the advisory boards of several museums and Civil War battlefield parks.<sup>2</sup>

Reardon's latest book examines the place of military theory, specifically that of the Swiss thinker Antoine-Henri Jomini (1779-1869), in the strategic planning of the Civil War. Jomini was a soldier and writer who achieved fame among mid-nineteenth-century American and European military thinkers. As a young man, he had dreamed of winning military glory. His parents, who did not share that vision, pushed their son, after his brief stint in the Swiss army, into a civilian career. He might have remained a banker and a broker but for the upheaval and violence of the French Revolution and its long aftermath. His writings in the early 1800s on the campaigns of Frederick the Great attracted the attention of the Napoleonic marshal Michel Ney and, eventually, of the emperor himself. As an officer on Napoleon's staff, Jomini served during the Jena and Eylau campaigns (1806-7). Wanting a field command rather than a staff position, he resigned his commission and accepted a generalship in the Russian army. Although many French officers saw this as traitorous, Napoleon reminded them that Jomini was Swiss, not French, by birth. He served on and off in the Russian army until the late 1820s, when he retired and took up residence in Brussels.

Jomini thought deeply about military campaigns and strategy and, in 1838, published his most famous work, *Summary of the Art of War*.<sup>3</sup> Still widely studied by military officers and planners today, the book, according to the prominent military historian John Shy, qualifies Jomini as the "founder of modern strategy."<sup>4</sup> It mandates that, to achieve victory in war, commanders should follow a "small number of fundamental principles." In Reardon's words,

First, maneuver the mass of one's own army against decisive points in the theater of war, especially by threatening the enemy's lines of communication while protecting one's own.... Second, when closing on the enemy, maneuver in such a way that one pits the mass of one's force against fractions of the enemy army. Third, on the battlefield, focus one's primary effort on the most critical point of the enemy line. Finally, when all was in readiness, "engage at the proper times with energy." (5)

On these terms, war is a "science" and an "art" guided by doctrines that, properly applied, all but guarantee success.

This faith in immutable principles of warfare has brought Jomini both praise and blame from American historians. The prolific Civil War specialist T. Harry Williams argued that Jomini had a "profound" influence on the senior officers—both Union and Confederate—who served between 1861 and 1865;<sup>5</sup> many had

1. Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 1997.

2. Her achievements have earned her awards from, among other organizations, the Society of Military History, the Longstreet Society, the US Army, and the Civil War Education Association.

3. *Précis de l'art de la guerre*.

4. "Jomini," in Peter Paret et al., eds., *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton U Pr, 1986) 144.

5. McClellan, *Sherman, and Grant* (1932; rpt. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991).

studied Jomini's work as West Point cadets. The Union ultimately won the war by the better and more consistent application of the art of war. Other scholars, most notably David H. Donald<sup>6</sup> and Russell F. Weigley,<sup>7</sup> have excoriated the American military of the 1850s and 1860s for its uncritical acceptance of Jomini's dogmas; they point out that the former French and Russian officer formulated his famous rules based on his experience of European armies and conflicts, with disastrous results in the United States. Had high-ranking commanders been less committed to frontal assaults—"[focusing] one's primary effort on the most critical point of the enemy line"—the Civil War might have been much less protracted and bloody. Whether they endorse or reject Jomini's ideas, most scholars acknowledge his pervasive influence. Reardon's title derives from a remark made by Marine Corps Brig. Gen. J.D. Hittle in 1947: "It has been said with good reason that many a Civil War general went into battle with a sword in one hand and Jomini's *Summary of the Art of War* in the other" (1).

In chapter 1, "Exorcising the Ghost of Jomini" (17–53), Reardon assesses the influence he had on the Federal high command. Surprisingly, she argues that his was only one of many voices that affected the Union war effort. Emil Schalk, a German immigrant well versed in the military literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, published two books<sup>8</sup> calling for a more rapid and decisive prosecution of the war than the Union high command had displayed in 1861–62. In 1863, John Watts de Peyster, a general in the New York militia, published a pamphlet arguing that the North needed to emphasize maneuver over pitched battle. Union war aims, however, were evolving under the pressure of new imperatives: after the Emancipation Proclamation, both the "Confederate army and the South's entire socioeconomic infrastructure that supplied its many needs—including the slaves in those areas of the Confederacy not yet under Federal control—could ... be considered legitimate military targets" (34). Jomini simply did not provide strategic guidance relevant to such initiatives.

The Union met the new military challenges through a concentration of effort. Under Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, its armies in 1864–65 began to press their enemy simultaneously along multiple fronts. Such a "concentration in time," prevented the Confederacy from easily shifting or replenishing its military resources.<sup>9</sup> The result was the destruction of the South's field armies, the capture of its major cities, and, by spring 1865, the collapse of its will to fight on. In the postwar era, Civil War veterans recognized the need to add to Jomini's thought a military theory "of American design" (53). For the campaigns of Grant, William T. Sherman, and other Union officers had shaped an American way of war that continued to evolve during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In her second chapter, "Who Shall Command?" (55–87), Reardon turns to the question of choosing leaders to devise and execute the strategic plans. Did command of Union armies require a genius or an intellect? A genius would possess innate leadership qualities that needed only the opportunity to emerge; the concept of a man of natural talent fit well with the stress on the self-made individual prevalent in the antebellum United States. An intellect, by contrast, would have been trained at West Point and have honed his skills through actual command experience. The notion of an educated talent foreshadowed the future of American society, with its professional schools and managerial seminars.

Proponents of both the genius and the intellect models found confirmation in Jomini's writings. The sheer magnitude of the Civil War, however, again outpaced theories. Character emerged as a more important leadership quality than either genius or intellect. A general required the moral courage to withstand the battlefield carnage—the "grim arithmetic," in Lincoln's words—that was the price of victory. Grant displayed such a character: "His modesty, simple habits (except for nagging rumors of a drinking problem), plainspokenness, and steadiness under stress suggested an inner strength to see the war through to victory" (82). Sherman, also, had the requisite strength of character, though for many northerners he dimmed his

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6. *Why the North Won the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: LSU Pr, 1960).

7. *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (NY: Macmillan, 1973).

8. *The Art of War* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1862) and *Campaigns of 1862 and 1863* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1863).

9. See James M. McPherson, *Tried by War: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (NY: Penguin, 2008) 214.

own star by crossing into the political realm in his surrender negotiations with Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston in late April 1865. (Lincoln, too, possessed strong character but, as Reardon notes, his skills were firmly ground in the give and take of the political world.)

The book's third and final chapter, "Lost in Jomini's Silence" (89–123), explores the human factor of Civil War combat. Jomini all but ignored the stresses soldiers endure in wartime, especially during active campaigns. For him, field officers and men were simply interchangeable parts, tireless and unfaltering. Civil War generals, including Grant himself, adopted the same attitude. After analyzing in detail the Overland Campaign of 1864, the bloodiest and most sustained operation of the war, Reardon concludes that the Army of the Potomac had fought itself out by midsummer. Soldiers were exhausted by almost continuous marching and fighting and terribly stressed by the fates of their dead and wounded comrades and officers. "The art of war, as senior commanders understood it, paid little attention to the welfare of the common soldier and did not consider the consequences to the army if the physical and mental needs of its soldiers went unmet. In this way, the silence of Jomini and his peers fostered a horrific legacy that scarred thousands of Union survivors of the Overland Campaign and filled many soldier graves" (93)

*With a Sword in One Hand and Jomini in the Other* is a fascinating and novel work. Some may quibble over its brevity and strict focus on the Union high command. But its concise and engaging style of presentation, cogent organization, and depth of research make it a very welcome contribution among the outpouring of publications marking the Civil War sesquicentennial. Well suited to undergraduate courses and graduate seminars, it will also provide much food for thought for anyone interested in the Union's strategic decisions and the formulation of military thought in democratic societies generally.