The Evidence of Things Not Seen: Carl Theodor Dreyer's The Passion of Joan of Arc

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La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (The Passion of Joan of Arc), starring Renee Maria Falconetti as the inspired young peasant woman warrior, directed by Denmark's Carl Theodor Dreyer (1889-1968), is a black-and-white silent film that has long been acclaimed a classic. Dreyer's film is based on the actual transcripts of the trial of Jeanne d'Arc, adapted by Dreyer and Joseph Delteil. It is often interesting to see a work considered a classic and to ask, Why? Are the values that established its worth still applicable today? Are the pleasures or profundities it offered yesterday still available today? I was lucky enough to see the film at a free screening in the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, on a recent cold February evening. The film was accompanied by the music of composer Richard Einhorn, performed by The Ensemble Sospeso, Anonymous 4, The New Amsterdam Singers, and four vocal soloists, including Susan Narucki, Janice Meyerson, Mark Bleeke, and Kevin Deas, all conducted by David Hattner. It was one of those casually elegant events that Manhattan does very well. The Winter Garden, with its

glass atrium, tall palm trees, portable black seats, and green garden seats built for three, was host to a few hundred people who had come for the film, or the music, or both. I had, in about the seventh row from the front, an aisle garden seat, shared by an older married couple, and my sight lines were clear (some viewing was obscured by the palm trees). Various introductions were made by people associated with the music production, such as WNYC Radio's John Schaefer, who curated the event as part of a series called New Sounds Live, and also the music composer Richard Einhorn. We were told that the film had been made in 1927 (I'd read it was 1928. Is that the difference between when it was filmed and when it was first shown?). We were told that the original film had burned in a warehouse fire, and that Carl Dreyer reconstructed it from negative outtakes but that version too was destroyed in a fire. Subsequently, decades later (1981), a print of the original film was located in an insane asylum, in a janitor's closet, and a copy of that print is what we would be seeing. It was also mentioned, rather irrelevantly I thought, that both Dreyer and Falconetti had spent time in a madhouse, and Dreyer's was named for Jeanne d'Arc. Being mad, like being demonic, which Jeanne d'Arc was accused of, often means simply that one cannot become reconciled to other people's sense of reality or value. It's more important to note that Dreyer's films include Mikael (Michael), Vampyr, Day of Wrath, Ordet, and Gertrud, and each is of these is considered important in the history of cinema, with La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc considered the central masterpiece in his oeuvre.

The history of Jeanne d'Arc, as I understand it: Jeanne d'Arc (1412-1431), also known as Joan of Arc, an uneducated French peasant girl, began to hear what she claimed were voicesand believed were the voices of saints Catherine, Margaret, and Michael. Her lack of education and her devotion to religion may have meant that her thoughts were filled with religious matter and meaning, and these she heard as voices. France and England had been at war for about a hundred years. The so-called One Hundred Years' War would last from 1337 to 1453, and was begun over the countries' involvement in each other's economies and cultures, including the production of cloth and wine, and England's dependence on France's wine country for its wealth. The English king was the duke of France's Aquitaine region; and the English were claiming the right to the French throne. The reality of France's domination by the English was Joan's context (her family and townsmen fled from raiders), and when seen through the eyes of a religious perspective, that may have influenced Joan's sense of mission. Joan said that the saints' voices compelled her to fight for France against the English who then controlled much of it. She, about seventeen, traveled from where

she lived in northern France, in Domremy, to see in Chinon the deceased French king's son, the dauphin, Charles, who had her tested by theologians before he gave her the authority of his army. He gave her a sword and white armor. How persuasive she must have been; or how superstitious must have been everyone else. Orleans, about eighty miles from Paris, had been under siege for eight months, but in eight days she broke that siege, inspiring her men with her courage; and thus she became known as the maid of Orleans. She was able to capture, in northern France, the town of Reims (also: Rheims), where French kings were traditionally crowned: and the dauphin was crowned king. The king then decided to negotiate, though Joan wanted to fight until the English were defeated. Joan, during a subsequent battle, was captured by Frenchmen involved with the English, the Burgundians, and they sold her to the English. (The Duke of Burgundy wanted himself to be king of France or to gain property. The University of Paris, also, welcomed her capture, according to historian Regine Pernoud.) The English refused to believe that a girl could have defeated them and decided that she was some kind of sorceress. They wanted her to renounce her voices and her soldier's clothing. She signed a statement she could not read, a statement that was used as evidence against her. Abandoned by the French king whose crown she had won, Joan was tried by a church court as a heretic and witch and was burned at the stake. It is believed that Charles later had her name cleared of the heresy accusations to protect the legitimacy of his own reign. Thirty years after Joan's death, the Pope decided she had not been guilty of any religious crime; and she was finally canonized as a saint herself in 1920 for her conviction that she followed divine orders. One of the fascinating and useful things about western culture may be the inclination, no matter how delayed, for self-criticism and self-correction, especially as some cultures insist on tradition and being wrong despite various kinds of arguments and evidence.

The film, La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, now distributed by Gaumont, begins by mentioning documents found in the Chamber of Deputies in Paris, the transcripts of the trial conducted by church clerks. This reference to documents is made itself through written texts or film titles, which will be interspersed throughout the film, and will include some of the film's dialog (though it is possible at times to read the lips of the actors, especially regarding simple words, such as "oui" for yes). We are told that the documents portray Jeanne (Joan) as a simple woman who died for her country after being subjected to bigoted theologians and practiced lawyers, which raises the question, at least for me, of what is meant by simple. Next, there's a Rouen church court scene, with few furnishings, a reading of a procla-

mation, apparently charges, and Jeanne is brought in chained, wearing leg irons. The Corsica-born Renee Maria Falconetti (1892-1946) as Jeanne has short hair and is wearing pants, and her look is less boyish than sexlessand beleaguered, soulful. She is made to swear on a holy book, and says that she is known as Jeanne in France, but in her village she is known as Jeannette. She says she thinks she's nineteen, an uncertainty that amuses the clerics. (Many people then did not track their age closely.) The lead inquisitor is a bishop, Pierre Cauchon (Eugene Silvain), an associate of the duke of Burgundy and an agent of the English court. When asked who taught her the Lord's Prayer, she says her mother, with tears in her eyes. Jeanne (Joan) says that she was born to save France, that this was a mission she received from her god (God). She is asked, Does God hate the English? "I do not know." She is asked about the form of the saint that came to her, Michael; but she doesn't answershe looks as if she is remembering a vision. Asked what she expects from her quest, she answers the salvation of her souland is spit upon and called a blasphemer by a prosecutor. One man present says he thinks she is a saint. We see on the faces of the assembled clerics a seriousness that is extraordinary and recognizable: there is contemplation, doubt, anger, disgust, disbelief. That is how men respond when taken up with a matter they consider important but vexing. Joan's feeling has drawn their feeling, and her authority challenges their authority; and they treat Joan to taunting questions.

Not everyone has felt that the film's focus on the specifics of the trial and the people involved was an unquestioned success in terms of providing drama or utilizing the resources of cinema. The film theorist Rudolf Arnheim made comments that indicated he perceived a relative failure of drama and technique rather than the presentation of a new kind of drama and experimental technique. "A hearing in dialogue form, painful for the accused and for the viewer, stretches out over many hundreds of feet of film. But the camera is busy: it photographs the wonderfully soulful face of Mademoiselle Falconetti from below at an angle, aims straight for her chin, shoots her prettily head-on fifty times, gazes into the church judge's nostrils, travels hastily on rails toward his forehead, gets him once from the front, then from the side during the questioning, paints tonsures, fat necks, vulture eyes against a white backgroundwonderful portraits in alarming numbers, but all at the cost of dramatic effect. A court procedure is not a picture gallery. There is almost never a grouping of images or a movement of the camera which is derived from the meaning of the action," wrote Rudolf Arnheim about Carl Theodor Dreyer's La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc in "Accusations Against A Good Film" (1928), republished in *Film Essays and Criticism*

(Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1997; 140-141). Of course, since Arnheim wrote his response, the courtroom drama has become a traditional form; as well, spiritual journeys are a subject many films have taken up. Dreyer, with his photographer Rudolph Mate and art director Hermann Warm, simply created a model.

In the film La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, Joan is asked if she is in a state of grace, and is warned by one of the assembled, monk Jean Massieu (Antonin Artaud), that it is a dangerous question. She answers that if she is in such a state she hopes to remain, and if not she hopes to be granted it. Frustrated, the clerics decide to be "crafty" with her, which means they will try to deceive and trick her into betraying herself. Joan is taken to a small room, a cell, in which she is kept and she sees on the floor the shadow of the window's bars have formed a cross, which gives her comfort. One of the guards takes a ring off her finger, but it is returned by the cleric who plans to deceive her, Nicolas Loyseleur (Maurice Schutz), whose shadow on the floor obliterates the cross. Loyseleur (also spelled Loiseleur)born in 1390, was younger in life during Joan's trial than he appears in the film, in which as a false confessor he claims pity for Joan, and he has had a letter to Joan forged with the French king's signature. "I cannot read," she says. (Not being able to read would mean that her introduction to and reception of religious teaching had been oral/aural: and the voices she hears could be, in part, an echo of that.) The forged letter claims that the French king, Charles, is planning an attack on the town where they are, Rouen, and is sending a faithful priest to help her, Loyseleur. (Isn't deception a bad thing to a religious man?) Joan says to her inquisitors, with some prompting from the priest she thinks to be her king's messenger, that her god promised her freedom and salvation. She is asked, "Have you no need of the church? Are you in a state of grace?" She looks around for a clue as to how to answer and it is obvious to her she is alone; she is tormented.

Joan says she wants to go to mass; and the clerics ask her to give up men's clothesas if there is a choice to be made between the two. They are revolted by her wearing men's clothes, one of them calling the practice an abomination. Unable to intimidate her with their numbers, their questions, or their mockery, they decide to bring her to their torture room. They tell her that her revelations come from the devil. They look pleased with themselves: amused, superior.

The critic Pauline Kael made much of the attention to the faces in the film, and what they revealed. Pauline Kael, in a brief note in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* , wrote that La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc is "simply one of the great films; fear, betrayal, suffering are seen in a new way." Kael remarked on the

filming of the "grueling cross-examinations" as being akin to the stations of the cross of Jesus. In the physicality of its presentation, "No other film has so subtly linked eroticism with religious persecution. Falconetti's performance is one of the greatest performances ever photographed. Silvain is Cauchon; as Massieu, the young Antonin Artaud is the image of passionate idealism" (Little Brown, 1968; 329). While I could see occasional delight in the interrogating clerics, I did not identify that with eroticism, but with pleasure and relief at Joan's weakness, her inability to outwit them consistently, which confirmed their institutional and moral authority. In fact, the only look in the entire film that I might mistake for sensual or erotic was near the end when Massieu (Artaud) approves of Joan's dedication. Antonin Artaud's faceattentive, brainy, handsomeis the most attractive male face in the film, and his response to Joan the most sympathetic, so it's an understandable confusion. Finally, while Renee Maria Falconetti's portrait of Joan is one of courageous commitment and sincere sorrow, impressively so, and impressive for its austerity, for the things she does not do, for the gestures of artificial pride and sentiment she does not make, her performance included too many heaven-ward and half-mad gazes for my taste.

The focus on faces in the film, like the presentation of architecture in what is in many ways a chamber play, was found by Paul Schrader, the critic and film director, to be akin to the expressionist tradition of distortion, and he thought that seemed intended to create pity and fear in the viewer.

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (SGdF 1928)

Paul Schrader in his book *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* wrote that "Yasujiro Ozu in Japan, Robert Bresson in France,

to a lesser degree Carl Dreyer in Denmark, and other directors in various countries have forged a remarkably common film form. This common form was not determined by the film-makers' personalities, culture, politics, economics, or morality. It is instead the result of two universal contingencies: the desire to express the Transcendent in art and the nature of the film medium. In the final result no other factors can give this style its universality" (Univ. of Calif. Press, 1972; 3). Transcendent art, rather than expressing or illustrating holy feelings, expresses the holy itself. However, Schrader felt that in suggesting the possibility of psychological and social causes and interpretations, rather than purely spiritual or divine ones, and for allowing the viewer to experience a certain ambivalence, Dreyer is not strictly following a transcendental style. It is, of course, these nuances that make Dreyer's film about Joan of Arc more believable and compelling. Joan lived and acted in the world, not in a purely spiritual realm, and there hardly can be a more human or worldly endeavor than a contest between nations, war. Transcendental style, more primitive than classical, affirms the irrational over the rational, the abstract over the optical, and two-dimensional vision over three, for example. (Schrader also does not seem to recognize a fundamental problem, if not flaw, with most art that assumes a religious theme or meaning: the improbable existence of divinity. How can art, character, practice, or meaning be authorized by a source that cannot itself be corroborated?) Schrader himself notes the evocation and power of the everyday in the film. Schrader writes, "Joan reacts emotionally to her hostile environment, but she also reacts spiritually to an external dimension. She does not only see her inquisitors as political pawns or demonic gorgons (as the camera sees them), but she also considers them representatives of the other world sent to torture and test her. She accuses them of being emissaries of the devil" (125). Conflict is a fundamental trait of Dreyer's vision, and comparable to gothic architecture in its tensions, its balance of nature and style, its lights and shadows, angels and gargoyles (138-147).

I know that some people, many people, see Joan's accusers as grotesque, as inhuman, but I do not. They are formidable in their focus and fury, and in their determination of her fate, but what makes them so terrible is that their logic is understandable, their suspicions not far from the usual suspicions society has of individuals who claim a great destiny, and their sacrifice of her for the maintenance of authority, doctrine, and communal peace is the typical rending of a scapegoat. Dreyer himself said, "In both Joan of Arc and Day of Wrath I have consciously tried to remain impartial. The clergy in the two films did indeed condemn Joan and the harmless old witch to the stake, but it was not because they were evil and cruel. They were only

caught up in the religious conceptions of that time. When they tortured their victims in order to force a confession from them, it was because the confession insured the accused eternal life" (Dreyer in *Double Reflection: Translation of Carl Th. Dreyer's writings About the Film* , Da Capo Press, 1991; 145).

In the film La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, in the torture chamber, the clerics present Joan with a confession to sign. She doesn't sign it. Massieu (Artaud) is pleased. The lead judges say that she will be alone; and she says, "Alone with God." They point to the torture devicesshocking instruments of cruelty, which raise all sorts of questions about the minds, spirits, and wills of men who could create or use such things then or now. The men demonstrate some of the devices. It is a sadistic display. "I'll never confess, and if I do, I'll say I was forced," Joan says, before fainting.

She is examined, is found weak; and one of the clerics says, "She must not die a natural death." She has a fever: "We'll have to bleed her." The suggestion seems one of ignorance, cruelty, and self-righteousness. They do bleed her, puncturing her armthe blood spurts out and is caught in a bowl (the blood is real, that of a stand-in), and the bleeding of Joan still seemsdecades after the cinema has produced an encyclopedia of crueltyone of the most painful things I have seen. (Yet that belongs to the barbaric history of medicine, not torture, and the bishop Cauchon himself would die while being bled by a barber-surgeon in December 1442.) Upon awaking, Joan could now intuit her coming death, and asks to be buried in consecrated ground. A cleric says the church is merciful, before recoiling from her touch. An altar is set up in her room, as if for mass. Again, they give her a document to sign, the confession, and insist she sign it before she is given the communion wafer: giving her a choice, sign the document and get the wafer or don't sign and forego it. Often in the film, the material and the spiritual are intertwined. A confusion of spirit with its symbols among men. Joan says the clerics were sent by the devil to persecute her. They are repelled by these words, and call for the executioner. They refuse her judgment of them; they cannot tolerate her authority or her judgment.

They carry her outside. A man, Guillaume Erard (Jean d'Yd), speaks from the podium, calls Joan's king a heretic; and Joan claims King Charles virtuous. Someone digs a grave, and a skull is tossed up onto the ground. Joan looks around at the flowers, at the skull, through which worms crawl. France has never seen such a monster, the podium speaker says of Joan. "If you do not sign the confession, you will be burned alive," she is told. "You have no right to die. Your king needs your help," she is told. "We all have great pity for you. Sign Joan," she is told. It is hard to resist the

temptation for relief while under great duress: it may be impulse rather than character that entertains temptation. With help, a weakened Joan signs the confession, which she cannot read; and she is condemned to imprisonment. That was May 24, 1431; the trial had begun months before, February 21. "This has been a good day," one of the clerics says.

Bizarrely, Joan's head is shaved (her hair is already very short: and certainly with it shorter she is even less typically womanlywhich seemed to matter so much to the men). There is a circus atmosphere surrounding the church court: a mime, a sword swallower, and a contortionist. Joan regrets her decision to sign the confession claiming her visions came from the devil; and she says, "Send for the judges. I repent. I lied." She tells them, "I denied God to save my life."

"This answer spells her death," says Massieu (Artaud). Several of the clerics look genuinely sad. Joan is prepared for death by the usher Massieu and an associate. Massieu asks, "How can you believe you were sent by God?" Joan says, "His ways are not ours." Massieu asks about her belief that a great victory and deliverance had been part of her mission, her reward. Massieu asks, "The great victory?" Joan answers, "My martyrdom." Massieu asks, "Deliverance?" Joan answers, "Death."

There is a procession to Joan's cell for a religious mass, and Joan receives the communion wafer and looks serene. She is taken outside, where a crowd has gathered. An old woman gives her water. Joan accepts a large cross; she accepts her death. She speaks to Jesus. She is tied standing up to a stake, and a fire is lit. People watch and cry. Joan's eyes are on the cross; and she dies. There's a riot in which the assembled crowd is abused. (We were told, before the film began that, in fact, there was no riot following the execution.) In the film, beyond the chaos of the riot, in the distance we see a hanged figure: the church has been busy. The film's closing text tells us that Joan's memory is honored in France.

In a comment on the film, still available online at the *Chicago Sun-Times* (February 16, 1997) web page featuring Roger Ebert's commentary, Roger Ebert notes some of the film's historyDreyer seeing Falconetti in a stage comedy and perceiving her soul, and doing a screen test and having that confirmed, seeing, as Ebert says, "a woman who embodied simplicity, character, and suffering." Ebert also reports some of the actual history of Joan and her twenty-nine cross-examinations before she was burned in 1431, and the significant budget and the screenplay Dreyer had been given for the film (the film was produced by Societe Generale de Films; and Dreyer did not use the screenplay). Like Rudolf Arnheim, Ebert remarks that there "is not a single establishing shot in all of The Passion of Joan of Arc, which is filmed

entirely in close-ups and medium shots, creating fearful intimacy between Joan and her tormentors. Nor are there easily read visual links between shots." Whereas Arnheim found this problematic, others, such as Ebert, see this as innovative, as Dreyer's way of achieving a psychological and spiritual dimension. "I think he wanted to avoid the picturesque temptations of a historical drama," posits Ebert. Ebert notes the rigors of Dreyer's on-set filmmaking as well, the demands for playing scenes again and again, for expressing and stripping away emotion. Falconetti, who died in 1946 in Argentina, never made another film. (That would sound suitably mythic, except that it has been reported that before her appearance in Dreyer's film Falconetti was in two obscure films of 1917, Le Clown directed by Maurice de Feraudy and La Comtesse de Somerive directed by Georges Denola and Jean Kemm, and following her appearance in Dreyer's film, she did return to producing stage comedies, and even appeared with the celebrated Comedie Francaise. During the last century's second world war, Falconetti left France for Switzerland and then Argentina, where she lived until her death.)

"To behold Falconetti's work in Jeanne is to participate in the interaction between human beings. It's a slow, painful dance of expression and emotional openness that has never been duplicated. Her physical eloquence is exquisite, a raw, naked window into not only the final hours of a hero's life, but also of the journey of self-discovery that Falconetti must have gone through during the arduous, 18-month shoot," wrote *TheFilmJournal.com* 's Rick Curnutte in the article "Divine Comedienne" (2002). Curnutte, after remarking on the film's use of the color white as synonymous with death and its atmosphere of mortality, asserts what he sees as the film's revelation: "As she prepares to die, she looks upon the crowd. She notices their faces, notices a mother breastfeeding a child. Falconetti shows Joan's sorrow for the future of the crowd. She doesn't hate them for being there. She mourns the reason why they're there. Her face, that angelic face, tells the tale that we must all learn: that we should live our lives in order to transcend our physical presence on Earth. That is, we cannot be defined, ultimately, by our bodies, but rather by the way in which we use our bodies to enhance the unity between ourselves and the people who make up the world we live in." Thatthe affirmation of spiritual valuemay be an acceptable religious and spiritual reading. Certainly, I think there are values other than grossly material onesthat the aesthetic, the intellectual, the political, the sensual, and the spiritual are important, but I do not think we should expect martyrdomfor ourselves or for others. That the truth costs something in the world, that paying the price is painful, is a principle to be remembered and negotiated: and it is this negotiation, with others and ourselves, that is the

whole endless trouble.

I was reminded of how trouble does not end, and how easily the past is forgotten or made light of when I read about a film, Sophie Scholl: The Final Days, that explores the true-life story of a Munich University student and her brother and friends who try to fight the Nazis in Germany, following the German army's defeat at Stalingrad. The students pass out leaflets that ask people to resist and articulate a public demand for peace. Sophie and her brother are observed by a janitor, who aids in their arrest, and they are interrogated by the Gestapo. She is apparently offered a way out that would betray her values. I could see that the comparisons that could be made to Dreyer's film were clear; and so I was surprised when, as I neared the end of the Stephen Holden review in *The New York Times* (February 17, 2006), I read the line "Sophie is a heroine, but not one given to Joan of Arc-style theatrics." Was Joan theatrical? Is the public assertion of personal belief always theatrical? Holden asserts, about Sophie Scholl, that "she is the kind of decent, principled person we would all like to be." That assertiona banality; and a conclusion for which no studies were conducted and against which observation of social life might make a claimmisreads precisely what makes someone heroic: an awareness and transcendence of the ordinary and purely personal.

Institutions past and present often count on the ordinary, whether ordinary beliefs or habits, to defeat the heroic and disguise the evil. When the photographs were published of Iraqi men detained in Abu Ghraib prison by American authorities, as part of the Iraq war effort and the investigation into terrorist activities, men who were often held without specific charges, only suspicions, men who were tortured, those photographs of torture caused shock and scandal. How does an ordinary civilian mind think of those photographs? As documents of extreme action needed during extraordinary times? As a deviation from national and natural values? As an expression of cultural and military arrogance? As an indulgence in personal power and perversity? Without historical context, shock does not deepen into understanding and is soon forgotten. The recent dissemination of more photographs from Abu Ghraib prison, photographs that are brutal, humiliating, and pornographic, has provoked questions anew. It is obvious that what has been documented is organized and vast torture: and that torture is a repudiation of individuality, of humanity. The suspicions raised by the men who were detained were often raised only because of their being Iraqi or Muslim, in the wrong place at the wrong time, or having met someone who himself was thought to be suspicious. How can a man argue his innocence if his crime is never specified? Or if his crime is simply that he exists? If

centuries ago Joan had been charged as a military leader, verifiable evidence could have been brought against her. To accuse her of spiritual crimes, of consorting with the devil, what kind of verifiable evidence could be cited, for or against her? It is as if the men of Abu Ghraib are being accused of consorting with the devil and are tortured for it. Torture attempts to reach the mind and spirit by smashing the body. It can be refined to harass the spirit more directly, something attested to by Alfred W. McCoy's *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Metropolitan Books, 2006). Putting aside the beatings, cuttings, and shootings typically used to abase and manipulate prisoners, methods involving drugs, electroshock, hunger, isolation, noise pollution, sleep deprivation, and (so-called) self-inflicted pain are used to destroy the inner self.

One of the illuminatingand disturbingaspects of the Abu Ghraib photographs is the fact that the American soldiers in them look comfortable and relaxed as they torture. It is comprehensible that viewers would prefer to see such people as monstrousas acting out of depravity or ragerather than out of an accepted professional duty: how else to distinguish them from others? By their acts. The desire for an obvious sign of evil is the likely reason why viewers prefer to see the judges in Joan of Arc's court trial as "gargoyles," a term that Richard Alleva uses in his March 25, 2005 *Commonweal* article "Corruption and Transcendence: The Films of Carl Dreyer." It is interesting that Alleva recognizes Dreyer's desire to capture what is natural, "employing extreme close-ups of actors wearing no make-upto let audiences feel that Joan and her clerical prosecutors were real people who had once walked the earth." However for Alleva something else was achieved: "For me, the movie's greatness isn't a matter of realism but in the way it turns its characters into archetypes. The close-ups make Joan iconic and transform her antagonists into gargoyles." Alleva's explains: "If Sartre was right in saying that everyone gets the face he deserves, Joan's prosecutors are condemned by their own faces. Each crease, each line, crow's-foot, wattle, eyebag, and fleshly hollow seems sculpted by pride of learning and fear that that learning be challenged; by delight in controlling the freakish, upstart girl; and by outrage that the freakishness cannot be obliterated. Collectively, these men form a portrait of Institutionalism Rampant." Cinemaand much of western arthas often equated the beautiful with the good and the ugly with the evil. What that means is that the ambiguity of reality remains obscured; and the perspective with which the spiritual is seen is altered too. See Dreyer's film and think about this: conscience, energy, mission, and morality. If spiritual force could make itself articulate, and were received as divine, by Jesus, by

Joan, and its breath spoke through them, but could not be heard then by others, not even by those of discipline and piety, how do we know it would be heard now by us, if it spoke through a person of humble birth and place? Could it be that the film reveals how frightening intense human emotion really is; and how alone, transformed, and unpredictable the person who feels deeply seems to others; and how alarming a group of volatile people can appear? Dreyer wanted technique to serve rather than deny what is human: in an article on "Swedish Film" (1920), Dreyer wrote, "In the long-shot the actor had to make use of gesticulations and large facial expressions. The close-up, which betrays even the smallest twitch, forced the actors to act honestly and naturally. The days of the grimace were over. Film had found its way to human representation" (*Dreyer in Double Reflection* ; 23-27).

Dreyer had been inspired to make the film by the canonization of Joan in 1920 and also by the treatments given the subject by Bernard Shaw and Anatole France. "What counted was getting the spectator absorbed in the past; the means were multifarious and new," he said (*Dreyer in Double Reflection* ; 50). Dreyer and his crew were informed by historical detailsincluding the use of metal helmets on English soldiers and fifteenth-century horn-rimmed glasses, a style of glasses also popular in 1927, and suggestions for scenery (144)but paramount were the actors and in Falconetti he thought he had found the "martyr's reincarnation" (50). Seeing the film in the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, I concluded that despite whatever trepidation I have about the religious theme, and what criticism others have made of the film's technique, the film La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc still seems a classic. For its subject, for its inventive technique, for its performances, and for the apparently timeless appeal of all these, the film is a superb standard. The explorations of history, law, and faith, of Joan of Arc's exalted participation in the war between the English and French, presented with Dreyer's inventive techniquethe different angles for Joan and her judges, the close-ups, and the occlusion of anything extraneous to the main action and content of the storyremain admirable. The performances of the actors and the illumination of contradictory human nature, with its high ideals and low actions, with the endless struggle between individuality and society, remain moving.

It is possible to see the gorgeous music that accompanied the film screening I attended as an unnecessary embellishment, as going against the spare quality that Dreyer seemed to want in his film, but Dreyer once said that "When the music really has meaning or an artistic intention, it will always be a plus for the film" ("A Little on Film Style," 1943, *Dreyer in Double Reflection* ; 141). Reviewing the Winter Garden's "Voices of Light"

program featuring Dreyer's film and Richard Einhorn's music for *The New York Times* (February 18, 2006), Anthony Tommasini noted the "wonderfully restored print" and wrote, "Voices of Light' has a libretto of Latin and French texts assembled by Mr. Einhorn. Anonymous 4 sing quotations of Joan's words from the transcript of her trial for blasphemy in 1431. The chorus and soloists sing a patchwork of writings from medieval mystics, mostly women. Mr. Einhorn's sensitive score deftly shifts styles from evocations of neomedieval counterpoint to wistful modal murmurings over droning pedal tones, from bursts of Minimalistic repetitions to moments of piercing modern harmony." The story of Joan, with its element of tragedy: the fulfillment of an individual's purpose leading to her destruction, when projected on a silent white screen, is lent by the musicand the rows of dark-clad singers and musiciansan evocation of church, opera, and performance art. The event has an aspect of ritual, but the film reminds us of an early sense of the word passionnot love or lust, but suffering. Often when a story, a work, or an artist, is well-known, one's knowledge becomes antagonistic: one's awareness of method and style makes impossible seeing what unfolds as the little accidents one might take for nature; then, instead of focusing on what is done, one has to consider how well it is done. The answer regarding Carl Theodor Dreyer's La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc and Richard Einhorn's music in "Voices of Light" is that it is done very well.

—Daniel Garrett