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Author(s): Charles O'Brien

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# Rethinking National Cinema: Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and the Academic Aesthetic

by Charles O'Brien

*Placing Dreyer's La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc in historical context raises questions about the tendency of film historiography to reduce major film styles of the 1920s to counter-Hollywood avant-garde practices.*

The public, which prefers that it be served what it expects, will perhaps reproach the film for its severity, nudity, and reduced line. Certainly it will not find the entry of the maiden into Orléans, the coronation of the king, and any of the other images from the History of France that the schoolbooks have engraved in its memory.<sup>1</sup>

This article locates Carl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928) within certain historical contexts in order to argue for revision of the established historiography of national cinema. Of special concern are notions of film style implicit in critical commentary on *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and also on *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, a competing superproduction. In contrast to later moments in the history of the reception of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, critics in France in 1928 and 1929 discussed the film's unusual style with reference to a "national" film aesthetic derived from the academic art of the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding the basis for the claim that Dreyer's film implies a rejection of Hollywood style, critics in France located the film's transgression in an abandonment of a painterly aesthetic that although regarded as "classical" was by no means equivalent to the classicism that critics since the Second World War have attributed to the Hollywood cinema. The circumstance raises questions concerning the tendency in film historiography to reduce the major national film styles of the 1920s to the most apparently counter-Hollywood of avant-garde practices (in which the French cinema is equated with Impressionism, the German cinema with Expressionism, and so on). It seems that major currents in film style in France during the late 1920s acquired significance within a range of stylistic alternatives that escaped the Hollywood/avant garde binarism. For instance, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was recognized as a challenge to an official film style that Hollywood had apparently superceded and that the avant garde had explicitly rejected. An additional issue concerns the status of the notion of "classical cinema." As is suggested by the rhetoric that distinguished Dreyer's international modernism from the national aesthetic of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, the notion of classicism acquired particular significance within a cultural field that refracted social tensions relating

Charles O'Brien is a Chateaubriand Fellow and assistant professor of film studies at Carleton University.

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to the new and important role that émigré filmmakers had come to play in France by the mid-1920s.

**A Transnational Classicism?** The formulation of historical issues of film form in David Bordwell's detailed analysis of Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* exemplifies key assumptions of the current historiography of national cinema.<sup>2</sup> Situating *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* with reference to the stylistic norms of classical narrative filmmaking, Bordwell construes this "bizarre, perceptually difficult" film as a challenge to Hollywood's conception of narrative cinema. Essential to the line of argument is a broader claim—developed by Bordwell elsewhere, as well as by other critics—that the film industry of the United States functioned after the First World War as a kind of colonial power with respect to other film-producing nations.<sup>3</sup> Flooding markets in other countries with highly popular films, the Hollywood studios had a powerful impact in shaping audience expectations throughout the world.<sup>4</sup> As early as the late teens and irrevocably a decade later with the standardization introduced by the conversion to sound, Hollywood had established a conception of the ordinary narrative film whose effect on film style was transnational. The circumstance was nowhere more evident than in the major film-producing countries of Europe, where a Hollywood mode of narration seemed to have served as an inevitable standard for both artistically unambitious commercial directors, whose efforts are assumed to have been essentially imitative (e.g., the "French westerns" starring Joë Hamman), and radical auteurs like Dreyer, whose experiments in film form and style could occur only in conflict with Hollywood's classicism.

Concerning the latter, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* would seem exemplary. It was produced by the Société Général de Film (SGF), which had been financed by the Westi Consortium of Berlin, one of the first pan-European alliances formed to produce "superfilms" that would compete with Hollywood on the world film market. Thus *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was preeminent among the major productions of the 1920s designed to showcase a European culture defined in opposition to American mass entertainment.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Dreyer, to whom the SGF had given complete artistic control, proclaimed his antipathy to the producer-dominated studio filmmaking developed in Hollywood and imitated in his native Denmark and other European countries.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, while the peculiar style of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* is understandable with reference to a European resistance to Hollywood, a Hollywood conception of narrative cinema was by no means a principal reference in coverage of the film in the French trade and popular press. In fact, accounts of the film that addressed issues of style typically contrasted *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* not to Hollywood cinema but to an iconography of Joan of Arc linked to the work of Ingres and other nineteenth-century painters. The iconography had been widely reproduced in France beginning in the 1880s and directly informed the mise-en-scène of the variety of films about Joan of Arc that had been made in France since the turn of the century.<sup>7</sup> As I argue below, it seems that for France's film culture

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*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* posed a challenge less to Hollywood entertainment than to an academic film style that itself departed from the norms of the Hollywood cinema. Essential to this style were tableau compositions modeled on paintings and statues that had served for decades as the prototypes for numerous reproductions in a variety of media.

Because the powerful symbolic status of Joan of Arc in France during the 1920s ensured that the academic aesthetic would weigh heavily on the production and reception of a major film about the heroine, certain changes in plans concerning the production of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* are noteworthy. The initial project had been to make a historical epic about a French heroine that would complement Abel Gance's monumental *Napoléon* (1926), whose production the SGF had taken over following the collapse of Westi. Nevertheless, after the contract had been signed, Dreyer broke from the agreement by rejecting the script by novelist Joseph Delteil, allegedly because of unease concerning Delteil's romantic conception of Joan of Arc.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, reports indicated that instead of following through on the plan to produce a heroic spectacle, Dreyer had undertaken a highly unusual approach to filming. Indeed, critics would describe the completed film largely in terms of an absence of what they had expected. The change of direction had antagonized the directors of SGF to the point that they threatened to abandon the project. In March 1927, the duc d'Ayen, the SGF administrator who had supported Dreyer, founded a new company, Ominium Films, whose purpose was to allow the production of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* to continue. Coinciding with these developments were announcements of the production of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, a "grand film populaire et national" that drew attention as the national alternative to the international *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (figures 1 and 2).

**"Un film national."** Invocations of national identity in criticism directed against the Dreyer project suggest that the rivalry between the two productions gave expression to social and cultural divisions within the film community. Indeed, stylistic differences between the two films might be taken as an illustration of the extent to which notions of national difference informed the range of stylistic options available to filmmakers. A major cover story on Dreyer in *Cinématographie Française* is typical in its emphasis on Dreyer's international stature. Noting that Dreyer had directed films in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Germany and that he hoped to work next in London or Vienna, the article proposes that Dreyer "is international in the most elevated sense": "of Danish nationality and formation but Swedish ancestry, Carl Dreyer does not derive from the cinematography of any single country but instead belongs to a school of directors who make up a more generally human cinema, international in its accessibility to all people, of whatever race, people, class, or condition."<sup>9</sup>

In direct contrast to such descriptions of Dreyer, Jean-José Frappa, the scenarist and de facto publicist of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, had defined his project by asserting an exclusivist cultural identity. Citing notices that Dreyer,



Figure 1. A poster for the Natan/de Gastyne super-production

a Dane, had been hired to make a major Joan of Arc film and, moreover, that he had intended to ask the American actress Lillian Gish to play the title role, Frappa proclaimed the situation scandalous. Demanding a film with “French” financing, script, director, writer, and star, Frappa indulged in a nationalist rhetoric that had become pronounced within film culture in France by the late 1920s.<sup>10</sup> In January 1927, within a few months of Frappa’s first statements against the Dreyer project, Bernard Natan’s company announced a Joan of Arc production to be written by Frappa and directed by former set designer and Prix de Rome painter Marco de Gastyne. Far from a routine product of France’s commercial industry, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d’Arc* became the most ambitious production of Natan’s organization. Crowning a series of Natan films that had established big-budget film production as the central activity of the Pathé conglomerate, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d’Arc* would become the showcase French film of early 1929. At the film’s release in April 1929, within weeks after Natan began assuming

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Figure 2. Among a series of posters used to advertise Dreyer's film

duties as chief executive of Pathé, reports in the trade and popular press hailed *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* as proof of the capacity of the French film industry to withstand competition from Hollywood.<sup>11</sup>

Official endorsement ensured that *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* had a profile that extended well beyond the realm of film culture. The production received the consecration of a *comité d'honneur* headed by President Raymond Poincaré and comprised of eminent politicians, celebrities, clergymen, and members of the diplomatic corps.<sup>12</sup> The government also provided the kind of material support that directly translated into symbolic value. Making good on a promise to aid "Productions Natan in realizing a great historical fresco by putting at its disposal the greatest possible number of material and moral resources," Poincaré commissioned four regiments of the French army to serve as extras in crowd



scenes.<sup>13</sup> In addition, government officials arranged that de Gastyne receive permission to film scenes at historical locations. Critical for its significance as a symbol of postwar reconstruction was the cathedral in Reims, which had been recently rebuilt after severe bombing during the war. The original site of the coronation of Charles VII (the event commemorated in Ingres' widely reproduced painting of Joan of Arc), the cathedral was the location for the film's elaborate staging of the coronation. Official endorsement extended to the film's reception, with the premiere in late April coinciding with spectacular celebrations marking the fifth centenary of Joan of Arc's liberation of Orléans. Linked to events such as a major festival held in Paris was a gala screening at the National Opéra, attended by parliamentarians and other celebrities, including Gaston Doumergue, the new president of the Republic, and the film's actress, Simone Genevois.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning perhaps with the writings of Jean Mitry, who distinguished between the international modernism of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and the *arrière-garde* national style of films such as *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, the two films have been cited as examples of opposed styles associated with two major groups within the French film industry of the 1920s.<sup>15</sup> While *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* exemplifies the work of established filmmakers linked to Pathé and to Paramount's Paris studios, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* suggests an opposing tendency in narrative filmmaking evident in the work of a community of artists comprised mainly of Russian émigrés associated with Albatros Films and Franco-German companies like the SGF. For instance, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* seems typical of the preference of *arrière-garde* filmmakers for dramas centering on familiar episodes and heroes from French history and legend. Also, like other *arrière-garde* productions, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* was filmed on location at famous historical sites and used a script written directly for the screen. Such practices differed from those of émigré filmmakers such as Alexandre Volkoff and Victor Tourjansky, who adapted the work of Dumas, Maupassant, and other recognized literary figures and specialized in costume romances set in Imperial Russia and other Slavic countries. Most fundamentally, the émigré filmmakers substituted baroque studio reconstructions for naturalistic locations and drew on backgrounds in the Ballets Russes and other premier theatrical troupes to develop a distinctly modern approach to set design.<sup>16</sup> Instead of the familiar trompe l'oeil stagecraft, expatriate set designers such as Boris Bilinsky, Andrei Andréjew, and Alexandre Lochakov combined actual architectural spaces (made from glass, metal, and other hard materials) and state-of-the-art optical printing to create unprecedented effects of spectacle.<sup>17</sup> The results were especially evident in various films starring the actor Mosjoukine, such as *Kean* (A. Volkoff, 1923), *Michel Strogoff* (V. Tourjansky, 1926), and *Casanova* (A. Volkoff, 1926).

The rivalry between the two groups of filmmakers suggests a situation that Pierre Bourdieu describes as a struggle to define the "field of cultural production." In an analysis of literary and artistic culture in France during the 1880s, Bourdieu argues that debates over aesthetics ultimately concerned the degree of autonomy of artistic and literary culture with respect to extra-artistic sources of

legitimation.<sup>18</sup> For Bourdieu, the activities and concerns of artists, critics, dealers, and other participants in the artistic field implied alternative conceptions of the relation between artistic and other forms of practice. That is, the promotion or denigration of particular genres, styles, and types of expertise suggest attempts to set the boundary between artistic culture, with its distinctive standards and forms of consecration, and external spheres defined by nonartistic forms of validation. Indeed, according to Bourdieu, the new cultural field of the late nineteenth century entailed a dynamic that was the reverse of that of the ordinary capitalist economy. Because the cultural field rewarded those who respected its relative autonomy, participants in the field could achieve symbolic profits linked precisely to a refusal of economic gain. A general principle is that those most endowed with uniquely artistic capital had an interest in defending the field's autonomy, while those least in possession of such capital gained from opening the field to extrinsic forms of validation.

Evidence supporting the relevance of Bourdieu's thesis to the film culture of the 1920s can be found in the extent to which divisions that had defined the field of painting beginning in the 1880s seemed to have reappeared within the film community. Examples include the emergence of prominent film movements that referred to precedents in painting, such as Impressionism, naturalism, and surrealism, and the entry into film production of artists with backgrounds in painting and other traditional arts. As if in imitation of certain schools of painting and literature of the late nineteenth century, currents within avant-garde cinema explicitly rejected extra-artistic criteria of legitimation. Among examples are the *cinéma pur* of Fernand Léger and Henri Chomette, or the attempt on the part of Germaine Dulac and others to assimilate the cinema to music, the most "spiritual" of the arts. Such projects were facilitated by a new infrastructure of cultural institutions that included a network of cine-clubs that served as a distribution outlet for experimental films and a variety of film journals that encouraged appreciation of the cinema as an art. In effect, for the first time, the cinema in France acquired an "autonomous subfield of production" and thus came to display the kind of structure integral to the nineteenth-century artistic fields analyzed by Bourdieu.

The autonomous subfield made possible Dreyer's radical refusal of the conventions of film spectacle, which was a rejection of the authority of both the commercial film industry and the state-endorsed aesthetic of the historical genre. Like other highly visible émigré artists, Dreyer had credentials that distinguished him from native-born members of the film community, who often had entered the film industry through trades rather than the fine arts.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, the position of Frappa illustrates Bourdieu's point that rejections of commercial culture on behalf of art can take two forms.<sup>20</sup> That is, in addition to the aristocratic affirmation of art's transcendence (echoed in Dreyer's disdain for studio filmmaking), there is a second elite position that rests on the temporal authority of the state. The latter position is implicit in the pronouncements of the producers of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*. Like Dreyer, Frappa refused the merely economic legitimacy of Hollywood. Unlike Dreyer, however, Frappa challenged the autonomy of the



artistic field by declaring a commitment to national identity, thus invoking a political rather than strictly artistic standard of legitimacy.

A consideration of the place of the two films within the relations of force of the cultural field raises questions concerning the tendency within the established historiography to define national cinemas in terms of an opposition between Hollywood entertainment and European art. If Europe is equated with the international art cinema (and, conversely, Hollywood with mass entertainment), how are we to account for films such as *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*? Although a popular film, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, with its official endorsements, occupied a place within French film culture that clearly differed from that of a commercial film à la Hollywood.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, an academic film such as *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* could not imply a more deliberate rejection of the international avant garde. However important to the French film industry, spectacles like *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* seem to be an anomalous if not impossible object of study, neither modernist enough to qualify as an avant-garde alternative to Hollywood nor sufficiently international in commercial appeal to stand as entertainment.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that major “national” films such as *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* played a key role in defining the range of stylistic options available to filmmakers, as accounts by Mitry and others suggest. According to Richard Abel, notions of a French narrative cinema, advocated in works like Diamant-Berger's *Le Cinéma* (1919) and Henri Fescourt and Jean-Louis Bouquet's *L'Idée et l'écran* (1925–1926), were a seemingly inescapable reference in the film culture of the 1920s, acknowledged even in pronouncements by proponents of an abstract *cinéma pur*.<sup>22</sup> The importance of *arrière-garde* productions in setting a normative style was perhaps in no case more imposing than concerning *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, an “international” film about the most popular of national heroines who as recently as 1920 had been canonized as a saint and made the subject of a national holiday.

**The Academic Aesthetic.** Although far less formal than cuts that state censors and the archbishop of Paris would demand of Dreyer, constraints imposed on de Gastyne were profoundly determinant due to the extent of the institutionalization of the academic aesthetic. As set designer Robert Mallet-Stevens had proposed, the historical film offers the viewer that vision of the past with which he or she is already familiar.<sup>23</sup> Such a project required that a film not only represent the past but do so by means of representational conventions that themselves belong to the past. Like other major historical spectacles of the 1920s that appear directly inspired by the iconography of the school curriculum, the national holidays, and other official sources, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* includes numerous citations of artworks in traditional media. Prominent among the latter were paintings and sculptures that had been widely reproduced on postage stamps, postcards, advertisements, war loan posters, and the illustrated calendars in city buildings. Consider, for instance, similarities among the following reproductions:

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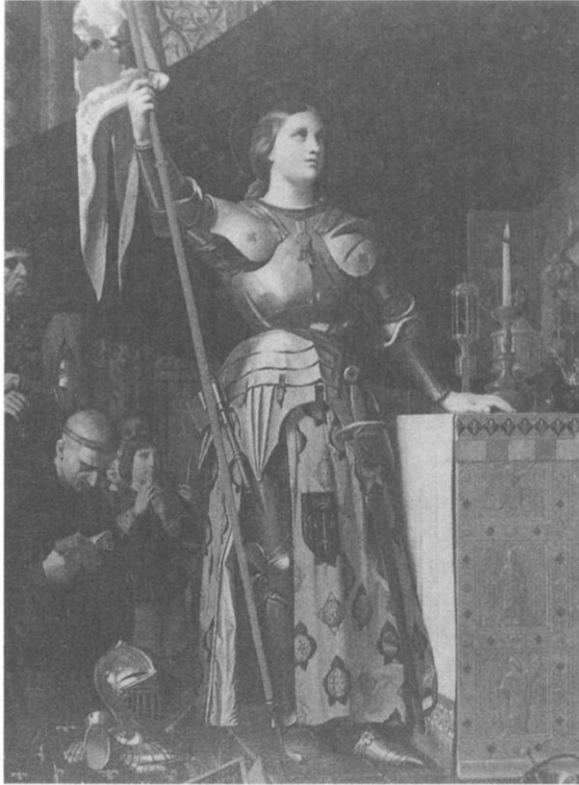
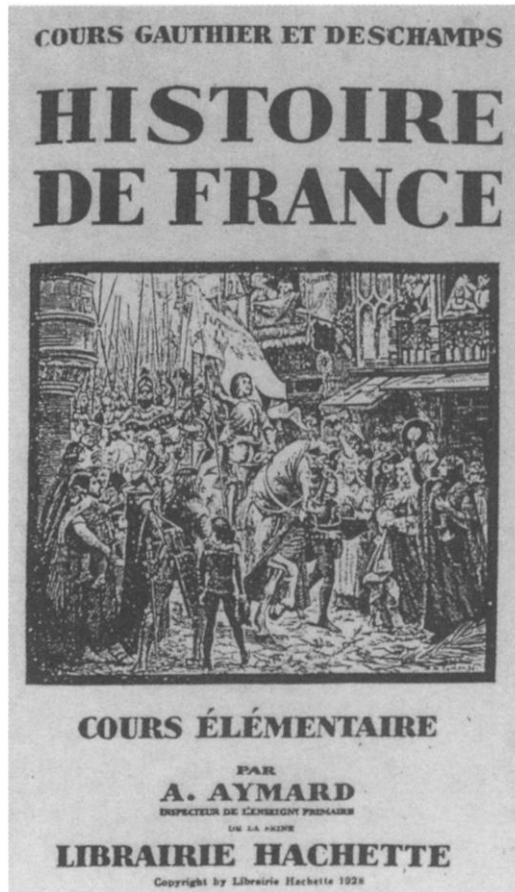


Figure 3. Ingres' painting of Joan of Arc, which has been widely reproduced in diverse media since the 1880s

the painting by Ingres, the cover of a 1928 schoolbook, and a frame enlargement from *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* (figures 3, 4, and 5).

The relevance of academic art to *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* was made explicit in routine mention in commentary on the film of Marco de Gastyne's credentials as a Prix de Rome painter and more subtly in references to de Gastyne's artistic "tact and measure," academic qualities that invited contrast to the "extravagant" and "delirious" work of the Russian and German filmmakers linked to companies like SGF.<sup>24</sup> The point is implicit in interviews in which de Gastyne described his tour throughout France in search of locations at Domrémy, Carcassonne, Mazamet, Aigues-Mortes, Mont-Saint-Michel, Pierrefonds, Metz, and Strasbourg.<sup>25</sup> De Gastyne's discussion of his travels suggests comparable accounts by nineteenth-century painters that had come to constitute a minor literary genre. It also drew attention to the film's landmark locations, which clearly differentiated *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* from the studio-bound *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. Precise geographical references established the film's authenticity



as a representation of the nation and also set expectations concerning style insofar as exterior locations were likely to push the filmmakers toward a rationalist treatment of space that would inevitably set the norm for the entire film, including scenes involving studio interiors.

Academic norms were imposing during the 1920s because of a major postwar “classical revival.” Art historians note that classical themes and naturalistic techniques pervaded postwar art, defining the work of even prominent figures within the avant garde such as Picasso.<sup>26</sup> Academic standards were particularly inescapable with respect to representations of Joan of Arc due to the history of conflict concerning the visual depiction of the heroine. Since the late nineteenth century, moderate republicans who aimed to assimilate Joan of Arc to the symbolic repertory of the Third Republic opposed Catholic and monarchist groups that pro-

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Figure 5. A frame enlargement from de Gastyne's *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc*

moted Joan of Arc as a counterrevolutionary symbol.<sup>27</sup> The reactionary construction of Joan of Arc as the opposite of the Republic's Marianne had a precedent in the radical Left's choice of the anthem "L'Internationale" in favor of "La Marseillaise" or its commemoration of the Paris Commune rather than the taking of the Bastille. Nevertheless, because both conservative and republican forces claimed Joan of Arc, the case of Joan of Arc was especially complex, with the iconography itself the object of political struggle. Critical in defining the terms according to which conflicts concerning iconography would evolve was the *guerre des manuels*, a debate over the school curriculum that arose following the passage in 1905 of the Law Concerning the Separation of Church and State. Centering on issues of visual representation deriving from contradictory interpretations of the Joan of Arc narrative, the "schoolbook war" led to a high degree of iconographic codification in which slight nuances in representations of the trial or of the voices that gave Joan her mission signaled ideological differences that had come to define electoral politics in France during the years before the First World War.<sup>28</sup>

In citing images of Joan of Arc produced by this history of iconographic contestation, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, true to the academic tradition, offers a representation thoroughly inscribed with narrative content. "A great page from our history of France," *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* was an eminently "readable" film. It not only reproduced familiar episodes of the primary school curriculum but did so in precise conformity with the established

iconography. The didactic quality of the film is manifest in the numerous expository intertitles, which are unusual for a film of the late 1920s, when the trend both in avant-garde cinema and in Hollywood filmmaking was toward a minimization or even absence of such intertitles. Intertitles in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* precede the characters or events that they introduce (“l’abjuration,” “la trahison,” etc.), thus further ensuring that the images will be understood as illustrations of an established narrative. Moreover, certain of the titles are remarkably lengthy, containing, in one case, nearly seventy words. Also noteworthy are the variety of scenes that center on characters engaged in the act of writing: the duke of Burgundy signs an agreement with the king of England, the secretary records the proceedings of the trial, and Joan of Arc signs a false confession.

As in the first films about Joan of Arc by Méliès (1900) and others, certain scenes in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* move toward moments featuring static tableau-like compositions in which the actors strike postures and attitudes in imitation of the *mise-en-scène* of a famous painting or sculpture. Examples include the scene of the visit of Saints Catherine and Marguerite, which features a shot whose composition reproduces that of a familiar schoolbook illustration, with the saints appearing in superimposition on the right of the frame (figures 6 and 7).

Given the static quality of such moments, it is no surprise that the sources for certain images were, in fact, statues. Consider, for instance, similarities between the pose of actress Simone Genevois during a scene set in her home in rural Domremy and the statue of Joan of Arc by Chapu (figures 8 and 9).

However anachronistically “theatrical” in comparison to the more dynamic, character-oriented style of the contemporaneous Hollywood cinema, tableau compositions opened formal possibilities of unique relevance to the historical genre. Most fundamentally, tableau compositions had a capacity to suggest alternative conceptions of filmic time. In integrating the viewer into the space of the dramatic action, the ordinary narrative film yields to what critics such as Christian Metz and Roland Barthes saw as the inevitable tendency of the film image to suggest the present tense. In contrast, the tableaux of the French historical spectacle exploit the phenomenology of silent-era spectatorship to produce effects of historicity. Note that figures in the tableaux of the films of the 1920s seem less to inhabit a three-dimensional space than to rest on the surface of a relatively flat image. A result is that moments in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* that feature tableau compositions tend to suggest an arrest in the movement of the narration, in which the viewer’s engagement with characters gives way to a mode of involvement that owes little to processes of story construction. In some cases, it seems that the intent is to prompt the viewer to recall the prototype of the image and thus find confirmation of the value of his or her own acculturation.

In certain cases, tableau images imply a superimposition of multiple temporalities. Consider, for instance, the moment in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* after the interrogation during which the judges conclude that Joan is a sorceress. A high-angle shot shows Joan sitting on a stool, where she remains motionless, with her head bowed and hands clasped. Meanwhile, soldiers and others who had





Figure 6. A schoolbook image illustrating Joan's communication with the saints

attended the hearing pass by while leaving the room. The contrast between the stylized immobility of Joan and the naturalistic movements of the other characters suggests a juxtaposition of temporalities like that proposed by Fernand Braudel, in which Joan occupies a *longue durée* that transcends the superficial “events” that constitute the quotidian time of political and ecclesiastical power. At such moments, Joan becomes a presence outside of the finite temporality that contains the actions of the other characters.

Certain temporal manipulations seem intended to invoke the official historiography of the Third Republic. Critics have noted that republican historiography entailed a tension between commitment to a notion of history as progress, in which the Third Republic marked a social and spiritual advance over earlier





Figure 7. A frame enlargement from de Gastyne's film that appears to cite the image reproduced in figure 6

regimes, and a logic of repetition, in which wars and other hardships of the official past figured as manifestations of the same ageless struggle.<sup>29</sup> Marcel Oms observed that in the French films of the 1920s republican historiography is adopted in ways that convey a sense of history as recurrence.<sup>30</sup> In effect, all battles depicted in the films of the 1920s restage those of 1914 to 1918. A striking illustration occurs in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* during a scene following the battle of Orléans, when Joan visits the grave of her childhood friend Remy Loiseau, who was among those killed during the siege. As Joan gazes at the tombstone, the inscription, which reads "Remy Loiseau, hommes d'armes, 1429," undergoes a series of changes; while the soldier's name remains constant, the dates and names of the battles and regiments change, producing a palimpsest that moves from Orléans 1492 to Rocroy 1643, Fontenoy 1745, Valmy 1792, Montmirail 1814, and, finally, Verdun 1916.<sup>31</sup> As if to illustrate Freud's thesis concerning the role of narrative reenactment in processes of mourning, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, like many French films of the period, reconstructs the past in order to reiterate in displaced form wartime experiences of loss and traumatic shock.

That *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* can be considered a remake of *Le Miracle de loups* (Raymond Bernard, 1924) suggests that the relation of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* to the historical genre is itself a reenactment. Just as academic painters had copied the work of the masters of the nineteenth-century canon, the producers of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* seem to have



Figure 8. A statue that features Joan of Arc in a definitive pose

attempted to produce another *Le Miracle de loups*, often cited as the most successful French film of the decade. Like the latter, *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* featured the involvement of Frappa as publicist and scenarist, Camille Vergniol as historical consultant, a premiere at the Opéra, an epigraph from Michelet, an epic-scale siege filmed at Carcassonne, performances by certain actors (Gaston Modot, Philippe Hériat, and Fernand Mailly), and as protagonist a fifteenth-century virgin warrior named Jeanne.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the siege of Orléans in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* largely reproduces the siege of Beauvais of *Le Miracle de loups*. In *Le Miracle de loups*, Jeanne Hachette defends a French city against foreign invaders led by an officer played by actor Gaston Modot, while in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, Jeanne d'Arc leads an army against a French



Figure 9. A frame enlargement from *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc* that reproduces the pose depicted in figure 8

city occupied by a foreign army commanded by an officer played, again, by Modot. Moreover, both scenes were filmed at the ancient city of Carcassonne and thus feature a *mise-en-scène* defined by the same architectural spaces, to the point, in fact, that certain shots from the two films are virtually interchangeable.

**A Documentary of Faces.** The relation of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* to the historical genre could not have differed more. In referring to *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* as an “anti-historical film,” Richard Abel reiterates an observation made by many of the film’s first reviewers, for whom the film was remarkable largely for features it did not display.<sup>33</sup> Critics listed and even described famous scenes that the film omits (“the voices, the departure from Domremy, the battles, Joan’s meeting with the king and the admirable coronation at Reims, all radiant and brilliant with the splendor of the flags on display”) or, likewise, commented on the absence of citations of famous paintings by Ingres, Lenepveu, Laurens, Flandrin, Boutet de Monvel, and others.<sup>34</sup> Contributing to the defamiliarization due to the absence of standard images was an emphasis on narrative material that was ordinarily marginalized or even wholly excluded. Most remarkable was Dreyer’s nearly exclusive focus on the trial, which was a highly sensitive topic because of the role of the religious and political establishment in the condemnation. In fact, Frappa, describing the trial and execution as “another story, entirely different,” claimed that he had initially planned to end the film with the coronation of

Charles VII and thus avoid controversy linked to the trial and subsequent events.<sup>35</sup>

Dreyer not only limited the narrative to the trial and execution but undertook an approach directly at odds with the stylistic principles that the historical film had inherited from academic painting. The potential for spectacle was radically diminished due to only the most minimal use of the expensive reconstruction of medieval Rouen, an expressionistic “Carcassone in cardboard” designed by Hermann Warm, who had achieved renown for his work on *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.<sup>36</sup> The spectacular quality of the set is evident only briefly, and hence emphatically, in the panning shots of the Rouen market just prior to the execution. Dreyer did, however, use camera placements that made the most of the set’s odd, forced perspective, which enabled an approach to space radically counter to the geometric naturalism of Gastyne’s locations. Scenes were filmed with characters against blank, white decors. Unusual, low camera angles accentuated the absence of spatial references, contributing further to the impression of an indeterminate space in which characters seem to circulate within a luminous vacuum.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, instead of establishing academic distance and impersonality, Dreyer’s approach to shooting involved an ethnographic emphasis on the brute facticity of the event recorded by the camera. Essential was a production process designed to lead the actors to recreate the experience of the original historical agents. “The cast and crew spent five months nearly living in the court and prison sets constructed in an empty Renault assembly shop next to the Billancourt studios and in the replica of medieval Rouen erected on the southern outskirts of Paris. The process of the trial was shot strictly in sequence and the actors spoke only the words of the transcript.”<sup>38</sup> Valentin Hugo, the film’s costume designer, noted a remarkable quietness during the filming and claimed that after the conclusion of each day’s work the actors seemed to continue to live their roles.<sup>39</sup> Reports indicate that the intensity of the experience was especially palpable during the scene when Falconetti had her hair shorn, an event that reduced crew and onlookers to tears and ended with a ceremony in which bouquets of flowers were delivered to the set. Commenting on the result of such an unorthodox production process, one critic noted that in contrast to the typical actor of the silent cinema Falconetti actually appears to enunciate the text of the intertitles.<sup>40</sup>

The impression of directness was also due to striking innovations in cinematographic technique. Cinematographer Rudolf Maté employed Agfa’s new panchromatic film stock, which, unlike the orthochromatic film then in standard usage, had a wide gray range that enabled the production of uniquely “photographic” images.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the carbon arc lamps of the Billancourt studios were supplemented with new “nitraphoto” floodlights fitted with Fresnel lenses, which vastly increased and diffused the level of light on the set.<sup>42</sup> A result of these measures is that the actors’ faces appear in extraordinary, nearly clinical detail, an effect enhanced by the absence of the customary makeup. The viewer cannot help but see skin grain, perspiration, tears, and spittle. The circumstance was especially striking in the context of the historical genre, whose actors often wore heavy,

masklike makeup and wigs. In addition, unusual for the times, release prints of the film had no color tinting, thus further stressing the absence of the customary mediation between viewer and spectacle.

The resistance in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* to the academic project of reducing the image to an illustration of a preexisting narrative suggests the relevance to the film of the "alternative pictorial tradition" of Northern Europe that Svetlana Alpers contrasts to the Albertian conception of the image that lies at the foundation of academic painting. The principal characteristics of the alternative tradition, exemplified by the seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of Vermeer, Van Eyck, and Rembrandt and also by photography and nineteenth-century Impressionism, are fragmentariness, arbitrary frames, and "the immediacy that the first practitioners [of photography] expressed by claiming that photography gave Nature the power to reproduce herself directly unaided by man."<sup>43</sup> Antithetical to the literary orientation of the dominant tradition in Western art, these characteristics correspond precisely to features of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* noted by critics in France.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, however compelling the similarities with Dutch art, the narration of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* goes beyond the task of description to put the image in conflict with the word. Essential here is that speech is conveyed through intertitles. Critics often comment that it is peculiar that *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* is a silent film, given that the narrative concerns a trial, a speech-oriented event.<sup>45</sup> All the same, the use of written titles rather than spoken dialogue is far from incidental insofar as it produces the disjunction between written language and literal imagery that suggests the often-noted ambiguity of the very word "history," which can refer either to the discourse produced by historians or to the historical past that such discourse posits as other than itself. The numerous intertitles in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, derived, the film indicates, from the trial transcript, contrast to the sensations and perceptual intensities of the image, which suggest realities that escape or precede the coherence and stability imposed by historical interpretation.

By all accounts *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* affected viewers at a visceral level. Typical is one critic's description of the film as "a tragedy heavy with anguish and nearly physically tortuous for the spectator," or frequent descriptions of the close-ups of faces as "too cruel" and "too true for sensitive viewers."<sup>46</sup> The judgment that the film was excessive in its perceptual intensity was echoed by censors, who required that certain "overly true" images be cut prior to the film's release in Paris in October 1928, among which were several from the bloodletting scene during which Falconetti actually gives blood.<sup>47</sup> The film clearly required that the spectator adopt something other than the ordinary form of engagement: "how does one identify with [émouvoir avec] characters whose skin is pitted by craters, mottled with freckle-like blemishes" of absurd proportions?<sup>48</sup> As one critic noted, "Joan suffers, but the spectator suffers no less."<sup>49</sup>

The significance of the peculiar impact that the film was said to have had on the viewer exemplifies Bourdieu's point that the academic aesthetic is not only



manifest in works of art but, due to acculturation through disciplinary processes, embodied in human beings in the form of schemata of perception and evaluation. The individual's practical relation to his or her milieu ensures that structures of the social world become incorporated in the form of categories of perception and appreciation, which in turn serve as instruments that organize the individual's perception of social reality.<sup>50</sup> In its thorough departure from academic convention, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* challenges the very *habitus* of the viewer, his or her ingrained disposition to see in certain ways. Countering "the images from the History of France that the schoolbooks have engraved in [the viewer's] memory," *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* engages the viewer in ways that rupture the customary ontological complicity between film form and the viewer's quasi-corporeal perceptual dispositions and skills.<sup>51</sup> In fact, the use of film techniques to produce perceptual sensations that escape the intentional structure that organizes ordinary film perception suggests an attempt to convert perception into a kind of physical trauma. In *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, images produce an immediacy and violence of sensation that affects the very eye and body of the spectator. As Dreyer later claimed, "Such was the role of these closeups: to move the viewers so that they would feel in their own flesh the suffering endured by Joan."<sup>52</sup>

The radical nature of the narration of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* becomes evident in de Gastyne's attempt to copy Dreyer's rendition of the trial. Instead of ending the film's narrative as planned, with the monumental battle of Orléans, de Gastyne and Frappa extended it to encompass the trial. They also included lines of dialogue taken from the same passages in the trial transcript and actors physiognomically similar to those of the Dreyer production. Lastly, they abandoned the painterly style in favor of a "photographic" cinematography, a relatively extensive use of closeups, and eccentric camera angles and framings. Thus certain of the images of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* entail compositions that are remarkably similar to those of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (figures 10 and 11). Nonetheless, even moments in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* that most suggest the style of Dreyer's film stop well short of an abandonment of establishing shots or violation of the 180-degree rule, the eyeline match, and other devices essential to Hollywood style.<sup>53</sup> That is, even de Gastyne's most Dreyer-like shots, however tightly or oddly framed, function within the "classical" spatial system that Bordwell associates with the Hollywood cinema. This is not to say that *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* is a model of Hollywood continuity. There are, for example, transgressions of the 180-degree rule during the scene of Joan's miraculous recognition of the disguised dauphin that create false eyeline cues that potentially confuse the central narrative event. Such moments, however, seem to be incidental flaws rather than deliberate and systematic transgressions like those that Bordwell attributes to Dreyer. Indeed, at times one has the impression that de Gastyne has remade certain scenes in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* but according to continuity principles, with the result that what were disconnected fragments in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* reduce to elements within shot/reverse-shot patterns. In fact, scenes in *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* that appear most indebted to





Figure 10. A frame enlargement from Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*

Dreyer evoke Hollywood style more so than do scenes that are organized around academic tableaux, whose flatness and stasis present a genuine formal challenge to the dynamism of Hollywood narration.

**Conclusion.** That a “national” classicism rather than that of the Hollywood cinema was the dominant reference for the immediate reception of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in France raises questions concerning the tendency within film studies to understand the European cinemas that emerged beginning in the 1920s solely within the context of a reaction against Hollywood. If the European cinemas evolved in relation to a Hollywood model of film narration, then stylistic differences among and within these cinemas—sufficiently profound in some cases to render whole genres “inexportable”—suggest the repercussions on national film styles of indigenous cultural forms and traditions. Thus Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau, in their introduction to the anthology *European Popular Cinema*, caution against dismissal of the popular cinemas of Europe as “Hollywood in foreign dress.” They propose that such a dismissal too quickly discounts the effect on film style of national “cultural signs” such as “landscapes, language, gestures, clothing, kinds of heroes and heroines, what people find funny, the kinds of stories they tell, [and] whole and distinctive ways of thinking and feeling.”<sup>54</sup> Dyer and Vincendeau conclude that popular national films likely involved a narration in which a loose commitment to Hollywood standards concerning cinematography and editing existed in tension with formal requirements imposed by nationally



Figure 11. A frame enlargement from *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc* that invokes Dreyer's unusual framing

specific forms of mise-en-scène.

When one shifts the focus away from the sound films that are at the center of inquiry in *European Popular Cinema* and toward the cinemas of the late silent era, the formulation of generalizations concerning differences between Hollywood and European cinemas becomes considerably more difficult. Such is certainly the case with respect to the French cinema of the late 1920s, whose degree of stylistic diversity remains unprecedented in the history of film. As Alan Williams proposes, the political metaphor of the title of his history of filmmaking in France, *The Republic of Images*, is especially applicable to the cinema of the late 1920s, when, in contrast to Hollywood's "one-party state," the much less hierarchical French industry fostered the development of a remarkable diversity of competing stylistic schools, tendencies, and movements.<sup>55</sup> Among factors that contributed to such diversity was the continual circulation of personnel between the cinema and other forms of cultural production.<sup>56</sup> Artists who had trained in and continued to work in other arts and entertainments approached film production differently than did those who worked within relatively stable and insular factory systems such as that of Hollywood. The career of Marco de Gastyne, an academic painter who made a "natural" transition from set design to directing, is merely one example of the fluidity of the division of labor within the French film industry.<sup>57</sup>

Inquiry into the popular cinema of 1920s France suggests that the development of alternatives to Hollywood style was by no means restricted to the efforts of filmmakers of the avant garde. In fact, such filmmakers rarely pursued their

careers entirely outside the commercial industry. Thus modernist techniques appear in formally conservative films. Such is the case even with the deliberately anachronistic *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*. For instance, the scene of Joan's audition of the divine voices features multiple superimposed images, a technique that suggests the work of Impressionist filmmakers from Abel Gance to Germaine Dulac and Jean Epstein. Nonetheless, critics have long located the source of alternative approaches solely within the experimentation of a relatively small circle of Impressionist and modernist filmmakers, thus reflecting the same tendency to privilege the most apparently autonomous of artistic practices that Bourdieu traces to the literary and artistic culture of the 1880s.

My claim is that the international modernism of films such as *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* acquired significance in opposition less to the Hollywood cinema—itsself widely regarded as an international cultural form—than precisely to national popular productions such as *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*. Just as Bourdieu locates the “symbolic revolution” of artists like Manet within the context of an artistic field demarcated by academic institutions, inquiry into the modernity of the avant-garde cinema of 1920s France requires consideration of that cinema's antithetical relation to the academicism of the historical spectacle. Such an inquiry may open the way for alternative historiographies that challenge the assumption that the Hollywood cinema of the 1920s provided the classical standard for filmmakers in Europe. Perhaps the apparent validity of André Bazin's designation of the Hollywood cinema of the 1930s as “un art ‘classique’ ” has made it difficult to recall that for generations of European critics the Hollywood cinema, far from a classical art, represented nothing less than the most corrosive of modern challenges to traditional humanist culture.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, as with American jazz, with which it was often compared, the Hollywood cinema was likely attractive to certain European audiences precisely because of its incongruity with respect to classical traditions. Dramatic examples from French film history include the iconoclastic celebration of Hollywood in the 1920s by the surrealists and in the 1950s by the critics and filmmakers of the New Wave, both of whom contrasted the vitality of Hollywood to an ossified official cinema.<sup>59</sup>

The issue of the appropriateness of the classical label aside, there is little doubt concerning the importance of the role of Hollywood in establishing a transnational conception of the ordinary narrative film. Moreover, a historiography informed by a notion like that of Bourdieu's field is commensurable with a historical poetics that specifies ways in which *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* implies a refusal of Hollywood style. In fact, in analyzing *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in relation to Hollywood's system of stylistic norms, Bordwell might be said to show that the film's unusual style is understandable as the refraction at the level of the range of stylistic options of an antagonism between Dreyer's commitment to the autonomy of the artistic field and a Hollywood conception of art whose authority rested on economic success. It does seem, however, that an analysis open to issues of national cinema must locate the antagonism within the range of positions made possible by the cultural field. Critical in the case of 1920s France was a position

sanctioned by the schools and other national cultural institutions that provided the basis for a legitimate stylistic alternative to the international modernisms of both Hollywood and European auteurs such as Dreyer.

The cultural profile of *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* indicates that the national aesthetic had remained a viable stylistic option through the 1920s, however eccentric with respect to Hollywood notions of entertainment or retrograde in light of the avant-garde cinema. An explanation for the viability may lie in the commercial advantages that came from a film style whose properties matched the prereflective, quasi-corporeal perceptual dispositions of the national audience. In effect, the stylistic anachronisms that resulted from a commitment to the academic aesthetic enabled the French film industry to establish a privileged relation with the national audience. Such a relation was critical during a decade when international markets appeared largely inaccessible to even the most "international" of French films. Thus rather than the result of either an acceptance of the technical limitations imposed by the available plant and equipment or a simple disposition to resist change, the anachronistic aspects of the commercial cinema of 1920s France become understandable as an effect of adherence to a certain strategy of legitimation.<sup>60</sup> In the case of the historical spectacle, the nature of the source of legitimation is signaled in the very style of the films. Like the pomp and solemnity of ceremonies of state and church, the ostentatiousness of the academic aesthetic ensured that any given film would appear to address acculturated viewers on behalf of an authority greater than that of the vision of an individual artist. It is in this context that the nature of the challenge of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* becomes apparent. In aiming to affect instruments of knowledge and categories of perception, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* implied an alternative not only to established film styles but to the institutionalized authority behind such styles.

## Notes

I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers assigned by *Cinema Journal* for comments on an earlier version of this article.

1. Paul Achard, "Falconetti révélation du film," *Paris-Midi*, 27 October 1928. The translation is mine, as are other translations unless otherwise noted.
2. See David Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 66–92.
3. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 378ff. Comparable applications of the colonial metaphor can be found in Roy Armes, *Third World Filmmaking and the West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 46–49; and Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Screen* 30, no. 4 (autumn 1989): 33–46.
4. According to statistics compiled by Ginette Vincendeau, in 1927, the year *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* went into production, there were 82 French feature films shown in France, 368 American, and 130 from other countries (apparently mainly Germany). In G. Vincendeau, "France 1945–65 and Hollywood: The Policier as International Text," *Screen* 33, no. 1 (spring 1992): 51. One wonders how those who originally computed

these figures accounted for “international” productions such as *La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc*.

5. On the economic strategy behind consortiums like Westi, see Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), 111–18.
6. See the discussion of Dreyer’s “authorial legend” in Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer*, 10–18.
7. A survey of early films about Joan of Arc can be found in Pierre Leprohon, “Les Premières Images de Jeanne d’Arc à l’écran,” *Etudes Cinématographiques* 18–19 (fall 1962): 32–37.
8. On these developments, see Maurice Drouzy, “Une Oeuvre de foi ‘en l’art et la vérité,’” *L’Avant-scène Cinéma* 367–68 (January–February 1988): 9–10. Drouzy notes that after several months of indecision the SGF reassumed sponsorship of the film.
9. Jean Arroy, “Le Réalisateur Carl Th. Dreyer,” *Cinématographie Française*, 5 May 1928. This piece followed the world premiere of *La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc* in Copenhagen in late April.
10. See, for instance, Jean-José Frappa, “Une Jeanne d’Arc Americo-Danoist!” *Chantecler*, 1 January 1927; and “Un Film sur Jeanne d’Arc doit être entièrement français,” *Comoedia*, 19 November 1926. See also the exchange of letters between Frappa and the duc d’Ayen in *Le Courrier Cinématographique*, 19 March 1927, 1–2, 4–5. Frappa’s nationalism contradicted the reality that filmmaking in postwar France was obviously highly dependent on an international circulation of films, finance capital, and personnel. Thus Frappa’s own position was more complicated than the rhetoric suggests. In fact, in 1923 he had helped found the Société des Films Historiques (SFH) with financial support from Jacques Grinieff, the same Russian industrialist who in 1925 would found the Société Générale du Film. On the SFH, see R. Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915–1929* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 24–25. On the nationalism of late 1920s film culture, see Claude Beylie, “Les Cinéastes étrangers en France entre 1925 et 1929: Figures marquantes et insolites,” in Pierre Guibert, ed., *Le Cinéma français muet dans le monde, influences réciproques* (Perpignan: Institut Jean Vigo, 1989), 25–35.
11. See Richard Abel, “Survivre à un nouvel ordre mondial,” in Jacques Kermabon, ed., *Pathé: Premier empire du cinéma* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1994), 158–91.
12. Members of the committee included dignitaries such as war hero Philippe Pétain, Albert Sarraut (colonial administrator and producer of educational films), Cardinal Dubois (the archbishop of Paris), schoolbook author Monsignor Baudrillart, and Edouard Herriot, minister of education and fine arts.
13. *Mon Ciné*, 22 March 1928, 13. See also “Un Grand Producteur français, M. Natan,” *Ciné-Miroir*, 6 January 1928. Local politicians and clergy also assisted the production by making available historical locations and costumes. See here Yves Dartois, “A la gloire de Jeanne d’Arc,” *Comoedia*, 20 May 1927.
14. Concerning the film’s achievement with respect to Hollywood standards, see Charles Le Fraper, “*Le Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d’Arc* à l’Opéra: Brillant succès pour le film français,” *Le Courrier Cinématographique*, 20 April 1929, 1–3.
15. Jean Mitry, “Avant-garde et arrière-garde en France,” in *Histoire du cinéma: Art et industrie, III, 1923–1930* (Paris: Editions Universitaire, 1973), 342–95. For recent comparisons of the two films, see Abel, *French Cinema*, 196–99; and Alan Williams, *Republic of Images: A History of Filmmaking in France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 129–31. Useful surveys of the historical spectacle of 1920s France include Lenny Borger, “Spectacular Stories,” *Sight and Sound* 2, no. 2 (February 1992): 20–25; and Marcel Oms, “Histoire et géographie d’une France imaginaire,” *Cahiers de la Cinéma-thèque* 33–34 (fall 1991): 77–88.

16. See Constantin Dorokhine, "Les Emigrés russes à Paris et les films Albatros," in Guibert, ed., *Le Cinéma français muet dans le monde*, 125–37; and Lenny Borger and Catherine Morel, "L'Angoissante Aventure: L'Apport russe de l'entre-deux-guerres," *Positif* 323 (January 1988): 38–42. Dreyer's ties to Russian expatriates dated from the summer of 1921 and his work as director of the film *Love One Another*, which featured contributions from members of Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater. Dreyer's account of the experience can be found in C. Dreyer, "Parmi les artistes russes émigrés à Berlin" (1921), *Cahiers du Cinéma* 207 (December 1968): 20–21.
17. Cinematic representations of rural France that conformed to folkloristic images of the tourism industry gave local politicians reason to cooperate with filmmakers wishing to shoot on location. See, for instance, "Les Rapports du tourisme et du cinématographe en France," *Comoedia*, 5 April 1930, 6; and "Le Studio France," *Ciné-Miroir*, 17 August 1928, 535. That the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts set policies that restricted access of foreign filmmakers to historical sites and monuments was perhaps a condition for the reliance of émigré artists on studio reconstructions. A reference to the policies can be found in René Jeanne, "Ah! Nos beaux châteaux!" *Cinématographie Française*, 7 March 1925, 5.
18. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 29–73, 238–53.
19. The topic of differences in artistic credentials between French and émigré film workers is taken up in Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema, 1930–1960* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 160–62.
20. See, for instance, remarks on competing principles of legitimacy in Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, 50–51. Also relevant is the discussion of the difference between boulevard theater and vaudeville in Bourdieu, "Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works," in *ibid.*, 185ff.
21. Distinctions between official and popular art are difficult to draw because of the populist cultural policies of the Third Republic. Government-sponsored public spectacles and theatrical presentations celebrating the Republican designation of the people as nation were only the most prominent of a wide variety of efforts intended precisely to popularize official culture. An account of the official theater of the Third Republic can be found in Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theater and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 31–82.
22. In R. Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, Volume I: 1907–1929* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 329–32. On the topic of French narrative cinema, see, for instance, the extracts from Diamant-Berger's *Le Cinéma*, in *ibid.*, 183–88. Diamant-Berger contrasts the tableau approach of French cinema in which "each shot . . . unfolds without interruption in a single place, without any modification of the camera's field of vision" to the American preference for "an extremely rapid, nervous, tumultuous decoupage which is usually quite successful yet sometimes enervating." Rather than an advocate for Hollywood's classicism, Diamant-Berger, who in 1928 became artistic director of Pathé-Natan, seems to have affirmed a French "tradition of respect for the integrity of the shot." Concerning the latter, see Williams, *Republic of Images*, 126–27, 181–82.
23. Cited in Léon Barsacq, *Le Décor du film* (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1985), 124. Among Mallet-Stevens's projects were definitive historical spectacles such as *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (Diamant-Berger, 1921) and *Le Miracle des loups* (Raymond Bernard, 1924), and the modernist experiment *L'Inhumaine* (Marcel L'Herbier, 1924). Barsacq contrasts the "grand simplicity" of the work of Mallet-Stevens to the exoticism of Russian designers like Lochakoff and Bilinsky.



24. The profile of de Gastyne in Lucie Derain, "Les Bons Artisans du cinéma," *Cinématographie Française*, 29 October 1927, 18. De Gastyne began his career in filmmaking as a set decorator on the orientalist fantasy *Sultane de l'amour* (1919) and made the transition to directing in 1924 with *A l'horizon du Sud*. His association with Natan began with *La Châtelaine du Liban* (1926), one of Natan's first major productions.
25. Seé, for example, "La Réalisation de *La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*," *Ciné-Miroir*, 27 January 1928, 74.
26. On the classical revival, see David Batchelor, "'This Liberty and This Order': Art in France after the First World War," in Briony Fer, David Batchelor, and Paul Wood, eds., *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 3–86; and Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 89–105.
27. See, for example, Rosemond Sanson, "La 'Fête de Jeanne d'Arc' en 1894: Controverse et célébration," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 20, no. 3 (July–September 1973): 444–63; Martha Hanna, "Iconology and Ideology: Images of Joan of Arc in the Idiom of Action française, 1908–1931," *French Historical Studies* 14, no. 2 (fall 1985): 215–39; and Michel Winock, "Jeanne d'Arc," in Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux de mémoire: Les France*, 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 675–733.
28. On representation of Joan of Arc in the schoolbooks, see Christian Amalvi, *Les Héros de l'histoire de France: Recherche iconographique sur le panthéon scolaire de la Troisième République* (Paris: Phot'oeil, 1979), 141–67. Amalvi includes a quantitative analysis that shows that Joan of Arc was the historical figure most frequently depicted in the school manuals of the Third Republic, with the exception of Napoleon.
29. Victor Brombert, "Commemoration and the Themes of Revolution," in Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 806–13.
30. Oms, "Histoire et géographie d'une France imaginaire," 77–88. Dreyer's claim that he wished to go directly to the historical record and thus avoid the legend suggests a resistance to the official conception of history as repetition: "to treat the subject in the manner of the costume films might have allowed a description of fifteenth-century culture, but this would have only encouraged comparisons with other epochs." In C. Dreyer, "La Mystique réalisée" (1929), in *Réflexions sur mon métier* (Paris: Editions de l'Etoile, 1983), 35.
31. The scene is among several not included in versions of the film that I studied, two different restorations, by the Centre National Cinématographique and the Cinéma-thèque Française. My description comes from contemporary film reviews such as that in *Petite Illustration*, 24 November 1928, 14.
32. The film's heroine is the Joan of Arc-like Jeanne Hachette, who was also a popular schoolbook character. On *Le Miracle des loups* as a major French film, see, for instance, Jean Vignaud, "Une Date," *Ciné-Miroir*, 1 December 1924, 364. Vignaud credits Frappa with arranging the premiere at the Paris Opéra.
33. Abel, *French Cinema*, 198.
34. The quotation is from a review by Lucie Derain in *Photo-Ciné* (September–October 1927): 165. Concerning paintings the film might have cited, see G.-Michel Coissac, "Autour de *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*," *Cinéopse*, 1 October 1927, 859–62.
35. The interview in Dartois, "A la gloire de Jeanne d'Arc."
36. Carcassonne, a southern city with a medieval castle, was a center for tourism and a frequent film location. In fact, de Gastyne had used it for his battle of Orléans. Contributing to the attempt to encourage "realistic," nontheatrical performances, Warm's reconstruction of Rouen was actually made of cement and other hard materials, which

- contributed enormously to the film's cost. See H. Warm, "Le Décors de *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*," in Dreyer, *Réflexions sur mon métier*, 141–44.
37. See the analysis in Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer*, 67ff.
  38. Abel, *French Cinema*, 488.
  39. Valentin Hugo, "Un Chef-d'oeuvre d'horlogerie réglé sur les battiments du coeur," *Avant-scène Cinéma* 367–68 (January–February 1988): 22. The piece was first published in 1928 as a preface to Gallimard's novelized transcript of the film.
  40. André Levinson, "Un Mystère laïc," *L'Art Vivant* (November 1928).
  41. *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* would seem to be the ideal illustration of Jean-Louis Comolli's claim that the introduction into film production of panchromatic stock allowed filmmakers to meet standards of realism established by photography. In J.-L. Comolli, "Machines of the Visible," in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 131.
  42. See A.-P. Richard, "Étude sur le panchromatisme," *Cinématographie Française*, 25 August 1928, 23.
  43. S. Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), esp. 43–44, 243–44n.
  44. The terms in which Alpers discusses photography as an alternative mode of picturing also inform André Bazin's discussion of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* as a "documentary of faces"; see A. Bazin, "Theater and Cinema—Part Two," in *What Is Cinema? Volume One*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 109–10: "the work of Dreyer ceases to have anything in common with theater, and indeed one might say, with man. The greater recourse Dreyer has exclusively to human 'expression,' the more he has to reconvert it into Nature."
  45. See here remarks in Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer*, 91.
  46. The quotations are from reviews in *Cinémagazine*, 14 December 1928, and *Echo de Paris*, 26 April 1929.
  47. See "Les Censures," *Le Monde*, 3 November 1928; also Maurice Drouzy, *Carl Th. Dreyer, né Nilsson* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1982), 246–47.
  48. Albert-Flamant, "La Tragédie des grosses têtes," *Revue de Paris*, 15 November 1928, 467.
  49. Jean Fayard, "La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc," *Candide*, 9 August 1928, 163.
  50. For instance, P. Bourdieu, "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, 256–57.
  51. Achard, "Falconetti révélation du film."
  52. "Dreyer parle de son travail," *Avant-scène Cinéma*, 15. It should be added that my understanding of the relevant issues of film spectatorship is indebted to points made in Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
  53. Dreyer's violations of continuity are the focus of detailed analysis in Bordwell, *The Films of Carl-Theodor Dreyer*. Note that Dreyer's film—its genuine strangeness with respect to Hollywood style notwithstanding—does cite the relevant iconography. For instance, the character of the sympathetic young priest, played by Antonin Artaud, was common in schoolbook representations that sought to balance the portrayal of the Church's role in the condemnation.
  54. The introduction to R. Dyer and G. Vincendeau, eds., *European Popular Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 11.
  55. Williams, *Republic of Images*, 138.
  56. See C. Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema 1930–1960*, 147–73.
  57. Other directors who began in the 1920s as set decorators were Claude Autant-Lara, Alberto Cavalcanti, and Christian-Jaques. Accounts of the industrial conditions that enabled such career shifts include Kristin Thompson, "Early Alternatives to the

- Hollywood Mode of Production: Implications for Europe's Avant-gardes," *Film History* 5, no. 4 (December 1993): esp. 388–92. Note that Thompson's analysis suggests that the alternative practices in question were by no means uniquely the province of the avant garde but, in fact, defined filmmaking in France *tout court*.
58. An example is the highly dystopic account of Hollywood cinema in Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future* (Paris: Revue de Paris, 1930), 47–65. Duhamel's book reportedly went through 150 printings within five months of its initial publication. On *Scènes de la vie future* and the interwar theme of the threat posed by Hollywood to traditional humanist culture, see Jean-Philippe Mathy, *Extrême-Occident: French Intellectuals and America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 82–86. The quote from Bazin appears in A. Bazin, "L'Évolution du langage cinématographique," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 69.
59. Concerning the surrealists, note the highly schematic contrast between European cinema and Hollywood in Luis Buñuel, "Buster Keaton's *College*" (1927), in P. Hammond, ed., *The Shadow and Its Shadow* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1981), 64–65. Also relevant is the film criticism of Robert Desnos throughout the period from 1923 to 1929, in R. Desnos, *Les Rayons et les ombres: Cinéma* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 23–191. Desnos regularly directed barbed remarks toward *arrière-gardistes* such as Léon Poirier, Jacques de Baroncelli, and Jean Sapène.
60. An emphasis on limitations imposed on filmmakers by plant and equipment can be found in Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema*, esp. 90–104. The claim that filmmakers in France resisted technical innovation is advanced in Susan Hayward, *French National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 18ff.