Iconoclastic Carl Theodor Dreyer (1889-1968)

- Filmography
- Entry into film
- Discussion of Selected Works
- Dreyer's Style
- The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928)
- Cinematic and Cultural Significance

Selected Filmography (Of 14 Total Films)

- The President (Præsidenten) (1918)
- Leaves from Satan’s Book (Blade af satans bog) (1919)
- The Parson’s Widow (Præsteenken) (1921)
- The Passion of Joan of Arc (La Passion de Jeanne D’Arc) (1928)
- Vampyr (1931)
- Day of Wrath (Vredens Dag) (1943)
- Ordet (The Word) (1954)
- Gertrud (1964)

Entry into film 1912-1926

- Early career in journalism at Ekstra bladet
- 1913-1917 works in script department
- 1915-1917 works in editing department during the winters with W. Stæhr
- 1917 Dreyer granted permission to make The President

Leaves from Satan’s Book (1919)

- Griffith’s Birth of a Nation (1915) and Intolerance (1916) at Nordisk
- Four episodes
  - Jesus Christ
  - Spanish Inquisition
  - French Revolution
  - Finnish Civil War
- Small, human details figure large events
- “Naturalism” above all
- Tyrannical Dreyer
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<tr>
<th><strong>The Parson’s Widow</strong> (Præsteenken, 1920)</th>
<th><strong>Vampyr</strong> (1932)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Made for Svensk filmindustri</td>
<td>Film-Productions Carl Dreyer financed by Baron Nicolas de Gunzburg</td>
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<td>Folk comedy adaptation</td>
<td>Opposite of Joan of Arc</td>
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<td>Hildur Carlberg</td>
<td>German expressionist influences</td>
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<td>▪ Sjöström’s <em>Sons of Ingmar</em> (1919)</td>
<td>▪ Filmed north of Paris in buildings and a castle rented by Dreyer</td>
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<td>▪ Died after filming</td>
<td>▪ Financial failure</td>
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<td>▪ “Dreyer’s Fin”</td>
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<td>▪ Malhaugen setting</td>
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<td>▪ Costume</td>
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<td>▪ Two Films Criticism</td>
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<td>▪ Comedy</td>
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<td>▪ Heavy drama</td>
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<th><strong>Day of Wrath</strong> (Vredens dag, 1943)</th>
<th><strong>The Word</strong> (Ordet, 1955)</th>
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<td>Return to filmmaking after financial disasters</td>
<td>Dreyer's adaptation of Kaj Munk play</td>
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<td>▪ Palladium Films</td>
<td>▪ Intersection of faith, tradition, and belief in rural Danish setting</td>
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<td>▪ Financial failure</td>
<td>▪ The “everyday” and the “miraculous”</td>
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<td>▪ Medieval story of faith, superstition, belief, intolerance</td>
<td>▪ Compression</td>
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<td>▪ Witch-hunt allegory drives Dreyer to Sweden</td>
<td>▪ Abstraction</td>
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<td>▪ Dreyer's perfectionism on display</td>
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Dreyer’s Style

- No overarching and consistent style
- Attention to detail
- Films made as required by narrative material
- Total control of production process
- Naturalism
  - Full set
  - Non-professional actors
  - Exceptions: Once upon a time, Vampyr
- Iconoclasm
  - “Telling aside”
  - Often humorous visual allusion, which although unnecessary creates full world
- Attention to detail
- Humanism as a thematic focus
  - Suffering
  - Individuality

The Passion of Joan of Arc (La passion de Jeanne d’Arc, 1928)

- Dreyer’s version of trial of Joan of Arc
- Popular topic at the time
  - Other adaptations
    - G.B. Shaw
    - Bertold Brecht
    - Canonized 1920
- Following success of Master of the House, Société Général des Films offered contract
- Dreyer enjoys total control

Joan of Arc Production

- Dreyer meticulously prepared the script by compressing court proceedings of Joan’s trial
- Dreyer’s casting
  - Warwick, English general, a café-owner
  - The comedy actress Renée Falconetti chosen as Joan
- Rudolf Mathé returns as cinematographer
- Costumes by Valentine Hugo
- Sets by Hermann Warm
- Pink medieval town “Rouen” constructed outside Paris
- Chronological shooting schedule May-October 1927

Release and Premiere

- Censorship by French church in French release
- Negatives destroyed
  - German copy in UFA vault 1928
  - Reconstructed copy destroyed in 1929
- Gaumont copy in 1949
- Copy found in Oslo mental hospital closet in 1981
- Reissued copy
Dreyer’s Significance

- Transcendental film
- Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film*
- ‘Naturalism made divine’
- Genius without followers
- Crystallization of historical moment in use of cinematic form
- Unique synthesis
- Form dictated by material
- Cinematic Innovator