

JOAN OF ARC'S GUNPOWDER ARTILLERY

in Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan the Woman* (1916)

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Joan of Arc is a ubiquitous figure in popular culture, and it is easy to find statements that “there are more original sources” regarding Joan “than exist for any other medieval figure.”¹ As a result, “No person in the Middle Ages, male or female, has been the subject of more historical studies than Joan of Arc.”² Cinema has responded in kind, as “the number of Joan of Arc films is only exceeded by those depicting the life of Christ.”³ Yet, with all these available sources, studies, and films, the focus on Joan of Arc’s military career has not been well-rounded. As Kelly DeVries points out, “few words have been devoted to her capabilities as a military leader, despite this being the central reason for her fame or infamy.”⁴ This lack of martial focus traverses to film as well, and in the more than 40 feature-length films about the Maid, only ten of these depict any sort of battle scene and even fewer depict gunpowder weaponry of any kind (Table 1).⁵ This is a remarkable marginalization of Joan of Arc’s military experience, as every one of the sieges she participated in featured gunpowder weapons. In fact, DeVries has identified two of these sieges as featuring the most gunpowder artillery up to those points in history.⁶ Furthermore, only one film—Cecil B. DeMille’s silent film *Joan the Woman* (1916)—depicts Joan providing any sort of direction to gunners.⁷ This marginalization of Joan’s leadership

¹ Larissa Juliet Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior: The Life and Death of Joan of Arc* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xix-xx. See similar statements in Nicholas Haydock, *Movie Medievalism: The Imaginary Middle Ages* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 113; Donald Spoto, *Joan: The Mysterious Life of the Heretic Who Became a Saint* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), xi-xii; Polly Schoyer Brooks, *Beyond the Myth: The Story of Joan of Arc* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 159.

² Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 2. A similar statement is made in Ellen Ecker Dolgin, *Modernizing Joan of Arc: Conceptions, Costumes, and Canonization* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 7.

³ Robin Blaetz, “‘La Femme Vacante’ or the Rendering of Joan of Arc in the Cinema,” *Post Script* 12.2 (1993): 63. A similar statement made in Pamela Grace, *The Religious Film: Christianity and the Hagiopic* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 121.

⁴ Kelly DeVries, “A Woman as Leader of Men: Joan of Arc’s Military Career,” in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood (New York: Garland, 1996), 3. DeVries has also been one of the most active historians trying to rectify this situation with more than a dozen papers on Joan, as well as a full-length book aptly titled *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader*.

⁵ For a recent survey on Joan of Arc films, see Kevin J. Harty, “The Lady Is for Burning: The Cinematic Joan of Arc and Her Screen Avatars,” in *Medieval Women on Film: Essays on Gender, Cinema, and History*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson: McFarland, 2020), 181-192. For the breadth of English-speaking scholarship on Joan of Arc films, see Scott Manning, “Joan of Arc on Screen: An Annotated Bibliography,” *Historian on the Warpath*, July 28, 2018, <https://scottmanning.com/content/join-of-arc-on-screen-an-annotated-bibliography/> (accessed April 5, 2021).

⁶ See statements on Orléans (1429) and Compiègne (1430) in Kelly DeVries, “The Use of Gunpowder Weaponry by and against Joan of Arc During the Hundred Years War,” *War and Society* 14 (1996): 8; Kelly DeVries, “Calculating Profits and Losses During the Hundred Years War: What Really Forced Philip the Good from the War?” in *Money, Markets and Trade in Late Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of John H. A. Munro*, eds. Lawrin Armstrong, Ivana Elbl, and Martin M. Elbl (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 193.

⁷ *Joan the Woman*, directed by Cecil B. DeMille (1916; Burbank, CA: Blackhawk Films Collection, 2015), DVD.

should be just as surprising, as multiple eyewitnesses attest to Joan's ability to place and direct cannons, and a surviving letter signed by Joan demonstrates that she understood and valued the necessary ingredients for gunpowder.⁸

Given this anomaly in the cinematic tradition of Joan of Arc, this paper focuses on what influenced DeMille to depict gunpowder artillery as he did in the film. The inclusion of gunpowder artillery was a mid-production decision, and DeMille's aesthetic mimicked what was readily available to him through Joan of Arc exhibitions and ephemera from the Ringling Bros. Circus, both of which distributed and even copied the works of Louis-Maurice Boutet de Monvel.

Cannons in Joan the Woman

The preparation and ultimate siege of Orléans takes up a large portion of *Joan the Woman*, featuring a charge, a battle in the trenches, and at least eight cannons. Once at the siege, French troops position the cannons and themselves behind mantelets, or wooden shields. The cannons are not merely atmospheric, but they are necessary for the plot, as Joan pantomimes instructions the gunners to target a spot on the wall of an English tower. A hole forms, growing larger and larger, as cannonballs continue to strike at it, eventually creating a breach (Figure 1). Joan climbs a ladder and charges through the breach, suffers an arrow wound to the chest, and is almost captured.⁹

The shooting script, written by Jeanie McPherson, is explicit in its use of gunpowder artillery if not the mantelets. It mentions "gun men" or "gunners" five times, "cannon" or "mortars" nine times, and "cannon balls" three times. There is one vague reference to "artillery" in scene 317, but the very next scene clears up any possible confusion with "mortars."¹⁰ In addition, the script explicitly describes Joan "directing mortars which swing up and into place," and then "she is directing the fire of the mortars – to make a breach in the wall of one of the Towers."¹¹ Joan's leadership is clear, as "she gives order to courier to take the gunner – pointing back toward mortars – indicating what she wants."¹² The script also describes these cannons as "Joan's mortars" twice and as "Joan's fire" once.¹³ Anyone who worked on or watched *Joan the Woman* would have seen the cannons featured prominently with Joan directing the gunners.

⁸ See testimonies by Jean Dunois and the Duke of Alençon in Régine Pernoud, *The Retrial of Joan of Arc: The Evidence for Her Vindication*, trans. J. M. Cohen (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 143, 157, 160, 161. Text of letter available in Craig Taylor, trans., *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 130-31.

⁹ *Joan the Woman*.

¹⁰ Scenes 248, 317-318, 320-323, 325, 327, 330, 332-333, 325, and 349 in *Joan the Woman* script, Cecil B. DeMille Collection MSS 1400 Box 1228 Folder 3, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

¹¹ Scenes 317-318 in *Joan the Woman* script.

¹² Scene 330 in *Joan the Woman* script.

¹³ Scenes 321, 323, and 325 in *Joan the Woman* script.

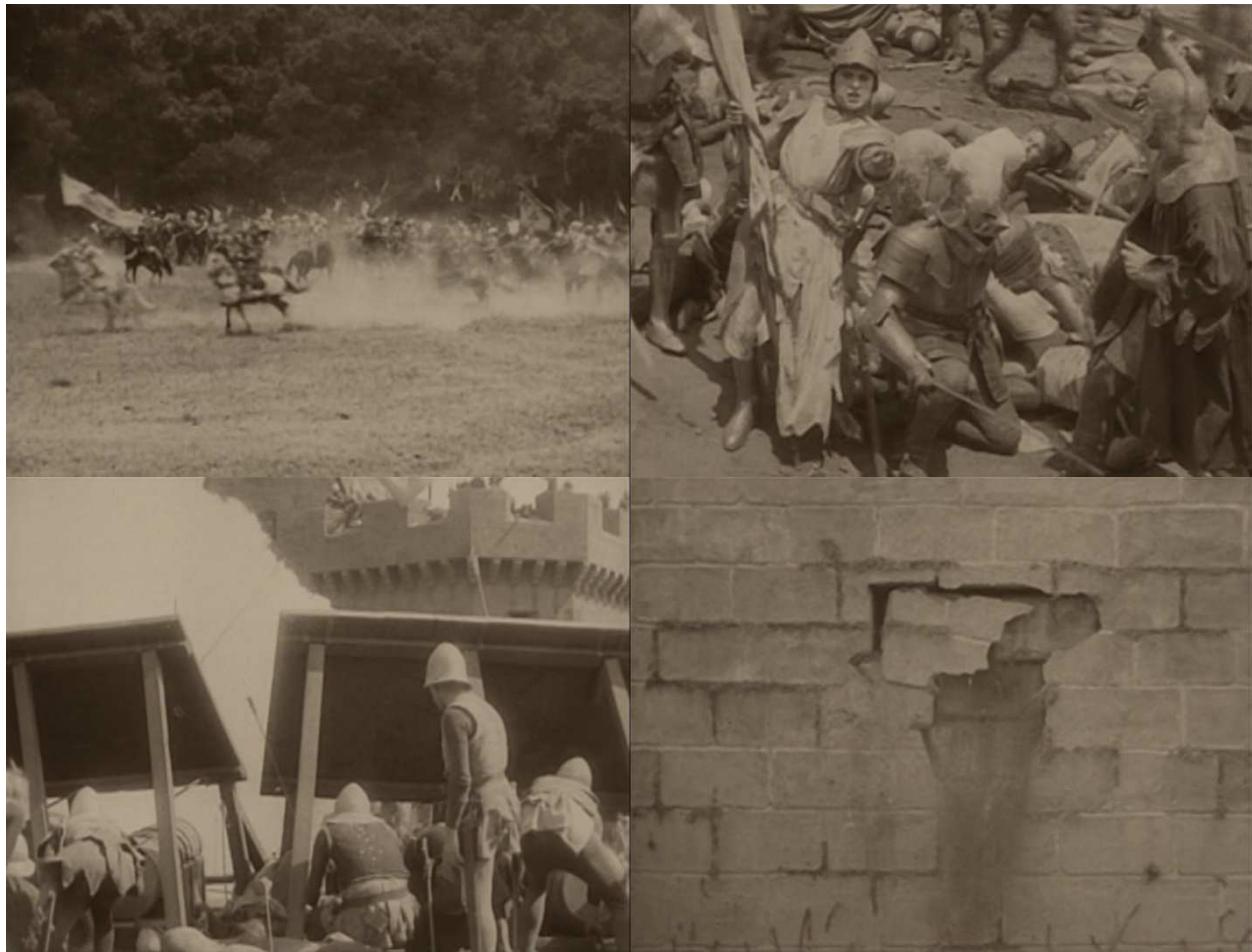


Fig. 1. Joan of Arc leads a cavalry charge to relieve retreating French who had failed to capture the Tourelles outside Orléans. Joan arrives and directs gunners to target a spot on the wall. Stills captured from *Joan the Woman* (1916). Movie in public domain.

This, however, was not the original plan. The production company behind *Joan the Woman* initially envisioned two shorter films, both with the star power of Geraldine Farrar and only one of which was to feature Joan of Arc. After seeing the unprecedented success of G. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and with rumors percolating about Griffith's highly secretive production of *Intolerance* (1916), producer Jesse L. Lansky contacted DeMille in the early stages of production, telling him they were "making a mistake in doing two pictures of Farrar" and DeMille should instead "do just the one subject 'Jeanne D'Arc' in about ten reels."¹⁴ In a follow-up letter, Lansky emphasized, "You ought to

¹⁴ Jesse L. Lansky to Cecil B. DeMille, May 29, 1916. Cecil B. DeMille Collection MSS 1400 Box 238 Folder 14, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Historians have been split on what sort of impact *Intolerance* had on the production of *Joan the Woman*. Robert S. Birchard points out that DeMille's production was "well underway before *Intolerance* was released" and it was "unlikely that *Intolerance* had any significant influence" in *Cecil B. DeMille's Hollywood* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004), 91. More recently, Kevin Brianton recognizes that *Joan the Woman* "was part of a cycle of historical epics that were in vogue in 1915" in "Hollywood's First Auteur: Cecil B. DeMille and the Battle for Reputation," *Film & History* 50.2 (2020): 25. The late John Kobal was more definitive on the impact *Intolerance* rumors had on Lansky and DeMille in the post humorously-released *The Lost World of DeMille* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019), 105. The exchanges between Lansky and DeMille reveal that

make every effort to make this feature important from the point of spectacle.”¹⁵ DeMille responded that he was “tickled pink” and planning “a big spectacle, as per your recent communications,” especially in the battle scenes with “one hundred knights in armour and seven hundred fighting men, bowmen, spearmen, pikemen, etc., and eight pieces of old artillery throwing round-stone balls. This array is against two hundred English, defending the Castle.”¹⁶ He added that “of course, the French will be lead [sic] by Farrar,” and he was confident these scenes would make the audience “sit up and take notice.”¹⁷ This exchange reveals that when DeMille was challenged to produce a full-length film with more spectacle, he answered the call with hundreds of soldiers, cannons, and Joan of Arc at the helm, but where did he find the inspiration for his aesthetic, especially for gunpowder artillery?

Source Material for Joan the Woman

Film historians and medievalists have scoured through much of the apparent source material for *Joan the Woman*, and it is worth briefly surveying these to demonstrate how little they played into DeMille’s aesthetic for the cannon scenes.¹⁸ Although there were at least eight Joan of Arc films before *Joan the Woman*, only one remains nearly complete—Georges Méliès’s *Jeanne d’Arc* (1900).¹⁹ Méliès’s film consists of 12 tableaux, one of which depicts the Siege of Compiègne where Joan is captured. The scene is just a few minutes long but represents a large portion of the roughly fifteen-minute film.²⁰ During the siege, soldiers jump down into a trench, raise ladders, and scale the walls of a painted backdrop of a castle. From the backdrop of the besieged castle, there are what appear to be guns, firing off puffs of smoke across the screen.²¹ Joan is captured in the fray and at the very end of the scene, a large blast of smoke shoots across the view, initiated off camera from the right. This was clearly meant to depict a cannon shot, but it also served to close the scene and transition to Joan in captivity, the smoke perhaps a foreshadow to Joan’s ultimate demise.²² Regardless, it was a far cry from the use of cannons and Joan’s leadership depicted by DeMille.

something pushed them to make a longer, more spectacular film and certainly the rumors of D. W. Griffith’s follow-up to *Birth of a Nation* played a key role.

¹⁵ Jesse L. Lansky to Cecil B. DeMille, June 9, 1916. Cecil B. DeMille Collection MSS 1400 Box 238 Folder 14, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

¹⁶ Cecil B. DeMille to Jesse L. Lansky, June 17, 1916. Cecil B. DeMille Collection MSS 1400 Box 238 Folder 14, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

¹⁷ Cecil B. DeMille to Jesse L. Lansky, June 17, 1916.

¹⁸ Some of the in-depth studies on production, promotion, and reception of *Joan the Woman* include Robin Blaetz, “Cecil B. DeMille’s *Joan the Woman*,” *Studies in Medievalism* 6 (1994): 109-122; Sumiko Higashi, “The Historical Epic and Progressive Era Pageantry: *Joan the Woman*,” in *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 117-141; Leslie Midkiff DeBauche, *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War I* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 5-34; Birchard, *Cecil B. DeMille’s Hollywood*, 90-102.

¹⁹ All other films prior to *Joan the Woman* are lost entirely or only exist in a few fragments. Robin Blaetz, “Joan of Arc and the Cinema,” in *Joan of Arc: A Saint for All Reasons: Studies in Myth and Politics*, ed. Dominique Goy-Blanquet (Surrey: Ashgate, 2003), 145. Relevant filmography in 165-166.

²⁰ Although the surviving copy is not complete, it appears to be only missing the opening tableau, intertitles, and credits. Blaetz, “Joan of Arc and the Cinema,” 145.

²¹ This is nearly impossible to discern in online versions, but it is very evident in a higher resolution version available as an extra titled “*Joan of Arc (1901)*,” directed by Georges Méliès, *Joan of Arc at the Stake* (Video Dimensions, 2011), DVD. The DVD erroneously dates the film as 1901.

²² *Jeanne d’Arc*.

Several historians have connected the screenplay of *Joan the Woman* as an adaptation of Friedrich Schiller's 1801 play *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, particularly the aspect of a love interest for Joan.²³ Yet, there are stark differences between the play and film, such as Joan dying in battle in the former as opposed to the latter. In addition, in Schiller's play cannons are never visible and characters only mention them through exposition: "thousands of cannon balls," "the cannon's roar," and the death of the Earl of Salisbury struck by "a ball from Orleans."²⁴ Joan does not direct any gunners, and the cannons do not breach a wall, as explicitly described in the script for *Joan the Woman*.

Those who worked on *Joan the Woman* later bragged that they formed the first research department of any film studio. It was modest at first, featuring only "a set of National Geographic Magazines and a Webster's dictionary."²⁵ DeMille also emphasized the need for research later in life, reflecting, "Especially when the subject is historical or biblical, accurate research must precede and accompany every stage of production."²⁶ Reflecting on his Joan movie, DeMille bragged that he was not just an "A" student in history, but "even a double 'A' student."²⁷ However, DeMille could not have constructed his scenes of Joan's artillery from a stack of *National Geographic* magazines and a dictionary, neither of which featured relevant entries. Thus, it is necessary to look at the dominating images of Joan of Arc in battle available at the time.

Artistic Depictions of Joan of Arc's Artillery Prior to Joan the Woman

One of the most remarkable aspects of Joan of Arc's artillery is how few images there were depicting it prior to the making of *Joan the Woman*. The rarity of such depictions becomes clear in the lavishly illustrated 1898 tome *Jeanne d'Arc racontée par l'image d'après les sculpteurs les graveurs et les peintres*, which translates roughly from French to *The Image of Joan of Arc: According to the Sculptors, Engravers and Painters*.²⁸ In more than 300 paintings, drawings, statues, etchings, coins, medallions, and stained glass windows, some dating all the way back to the fifteenth-century, there are only 41 that depict some sort of battle or siege, regardless if Joan is in the image.²⁹ These 41 images are action shots and exclude those of Joan simply on horseback, riding triumphant into Orléans, outside of combat. Of these, only

²³ Nadia Margolis, *Joan of Arc in History, Literature, and Film: A Select, Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1990), 395, item 1470. One example of the love interest angle in Kevin J. Harty, "Warrior not Warmonger: Screen Joans during World War I," in *Magistra Doctissima: Essays in Honor of Bonnie Wheeler*, eds. Dorsey Armstrong, Ann W. Astell, and Howell Chickering (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), 138.

²⁴ Anna Swanwick, trans., *The Maid of Orleans*, in *The Works of Frederick Schiller: Historical Dramas, Etc.* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), 1.3, 1.11, 5.1. References are to act, scene.

²⁵ Note from interviews on January 19, 1956 in Cecil B. DeMille Collection MSS 1400 Box 13 Folder 9, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

²⁶ This quote seems to have been left out of his posthumously published autobiography due to the lack of an accompanying anecdote. Cecil B. DeMille Collection MSS 1400 Box 13 Folder 9, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

²⁷ Note by Doris Turner, February 1, 1957. Cecil B. DeMille Collection MSS 1400 Box 13 Folder 9, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

²⁸ Albert Marie Léon Le Nordez, *Jeanne d'Arc racontée par l'image: d'après les sculpteurs les graveurs et les peintres* (Paris: Hachette, 1898), Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.

²⁹ Le Nordez, *Jeanne d'Arc*, 39, 90, 111, plate between 152 and 153, 153, 157, 159, 161, 164, 166, 167, 168, 169, plate between 170 and 171, 173-5, 177, 187, 197, 200-1, 203-5, 225, 234, 243, 245, plate between 254 and 255, 257, 264, 276-7, 281, 285-6, plate between 288 and 289, and 299.

seven arguably depict some sort of artillery.³⁰ Several of these only have a hint of smoke in the background by an unseen cannon, like the end of the siege depicted in Méliès's film.³¹

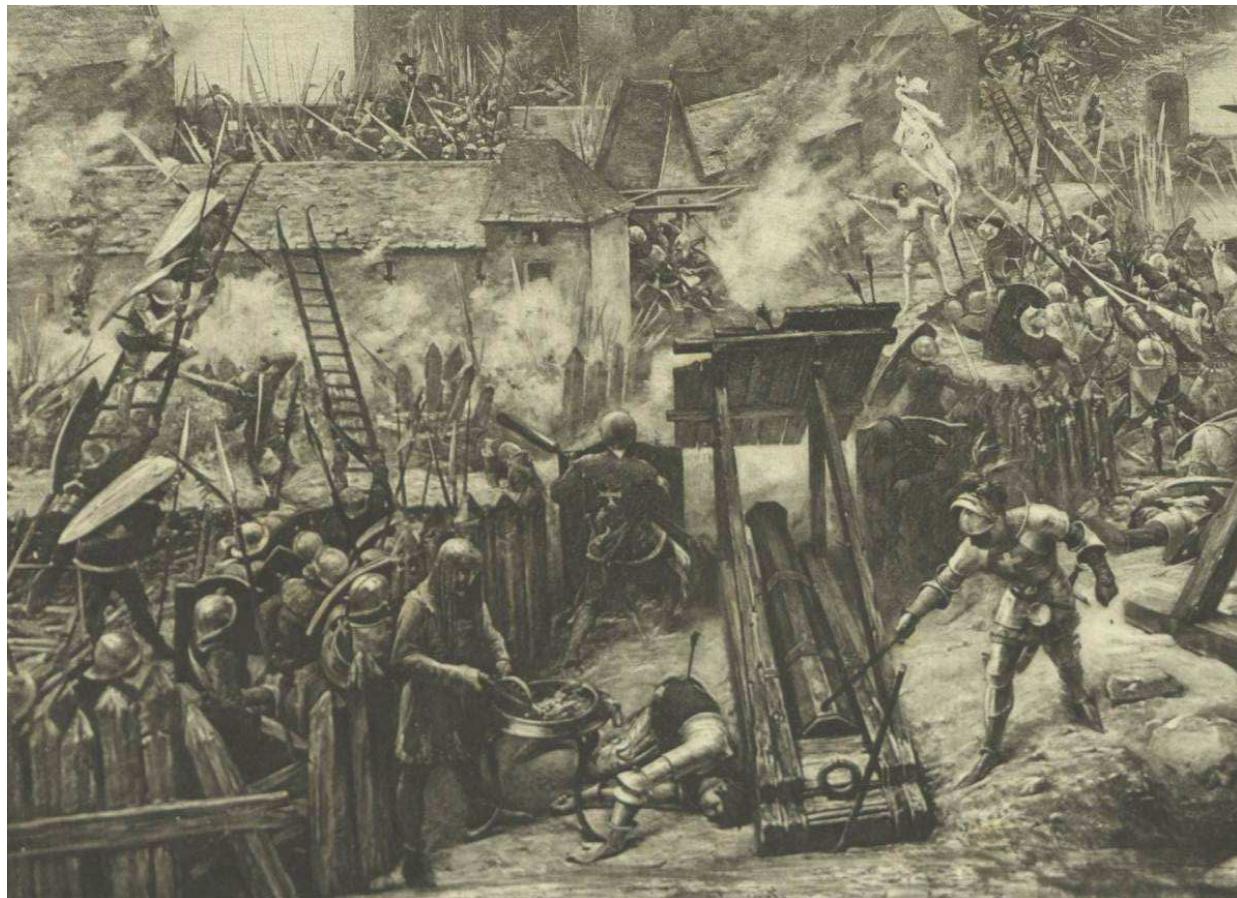


Fig. 2. Closeup of cannon under the protection of a mantelet. Painting by Pierre Carrier-Belleuse. “Orléans,” *La Mission Patriotique de Jean d'Arc* (1890). Photo courtesy of the Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library.

The only images visibly depicting artillery with Joan of Arc are two paintings by French painter Pierre Carrier-Belleuse.³² The small facsimiles in this book do not do justice to his work, as these paintings were part of a large panorama of eight separate scenes in the life of Joan of Arc. Each painting measured 15 m x 2 m and combined with other paintings for a display of 120 m x 12 m.³³ Carrier-Belleuse's paintings were on display in various locations in France throughout 1889 and 1890 with advertisements claiming it was one of the best panoramas, according to experts. A six-month exhibition bragged about the building's platform that could host up to 250 onlookers.³⁴ In addition, a

³⁰ Le Nordez, *Jeanne d'Arc*, plate between 152 and 153, 161, plate between 170 and 171, 243, 159, 255, and 299.

³¹ For example, Jules Eugène Lenepveu's painting of Joan of Arc at the Siege of Orléans. In the top right-hand corner is a puff of smoke coming from the tower. Le Nordez, *Jeanne d'Arc*, plate between 170 and 171.

³² Le Nordez, *Jeanne d'Arc*, 225, 299.

³³ Details on the size of the paintings in “Panorama,” *L'Est Républicain*, July 5, 1890. By way of comparison, the restored 1883 Gettysburg Cyclorama currently on display in the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum measures 115 m x 13 m. “The Battle of Gettysburg in art,” *National Park Service*, 2015, <https://www.nps.gov/gett/planyourvisit/cyclorama.htm> (accessed April 16, 2021).

³⁴ “Panorama,” *L'Est Républicain*, July 5, 1890.

large format 19-page book was released with black and white photos of the paintings for visitors to buy as a keepsake.³⁵



Fig. 3. Closeup of Joan of Arc having her wound tended. A double-barred cannon under the protection of a mantelet is visible in the background. Painting by Pierre Carrier-Belleuse. "Paris," *La Mission Patriotique de Jean d'Arc* (1890). Photo courtesy of the Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College Library.

Three of Carrier-Belleuse's paintings entitled "Orléans," "Paris," and "Compiègne" are of interest to this paper, as they depict Joan of Arc in sieges and gunpowder artillery. In each of the scenes, smoke can be seen from the fortifications and the besieging armies, giving clear indication of gunpowder. In addition, the "Orléans" and "Paris" paintings each depict at least one cannon shielded by a mantelet, reminiscent of what DeMille depicted in *Joan the Woman*. "Compiègne" depicts one cannon with no mantelet and several handheld guns. Carrier-Belleuse's paintings are of course artistic interpretations, and one may be unimpressed by the presence of a mere three cannons in three paintings, but this is still more gunpowder artillery than depicted in most paintings of Joan of Arc's sieges.

While there is no evidence that DeMille was in France to personally view Carrier-Belleuse's massive paintings, he had opportunity to see copies of them while living in New York City. In 1913, the Joan of Arc Statue Committee held exhibitions in Upper Manhattan from January 6 to February

³⁵ *La Mission Patriotique de Jean d'Arc: Panorama de Pierre Carrier-Belleuse* (Paris: Librairie des Imprimeries Réunies, 1890), Special Collections Department, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA.

8, and then at the Brooklyn Institute Museum starting on March 12. DeMille could have learned about these exhibitions from a variety of avenues including above-the-fold half-page spreads in the *New York Times* on January 5 and in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on March 28.³⁶ At the exhibition were copies of all eight of Carrier-Belleuse's paintings, including the three depicting Joan with gunpowder artillery and mantelets.³⁷

Jeanne d'Arc (1896) by Louis-Maurice Boutet de Monvel

Also present in the 1898 tome *Jeanne d'Arc racontée par l'image d'après les sculpteurs les graveurs et les peintres* are three images by French artist Louis-Maurice Boutet de Monvel.³⁸ His 1896 children's book *Jeanne d'Arc* was released two years prior and had not yet achieved the immense popularity it would achieve in France and in the English-speaking world. Heavily illustrated with his watercolors, it was translated into English in 1897 and reprinted before the production of *Joan the Woman* in 1907, 1912, 1915, and 1916.³⁹ Also in 1897, *The Century Magazine* translated an essay by Boutet de Monvel on Joan of Arc along with six of his watercolors.⁴⁰ In an introduction to the essay, the translator fawned over the artist, telling readers, "No artist has treated more sympathetically...the incidents of the life of Joan of Arc" and "it was a privilege to see recently, in his studio, the exquisite series of water-color designs."⁴¹ The next year, the same magazine would serialize an English narration of Joan of Arc's life across seven issues, each featuring two of Boutet de Monvel's watercolors.⁴² One of the artist's last works came about when New York Senator William Andrews Clark commissioned six Joan of Arc oil paintings, which he finished just before passing away in 1913.⁴³

³⁶ "Big Exhibit in Honor of Joan of Arc's Birthday," *New York Times*, January 5, 1913, 9; Front page of the Picture and Sporting section, titled "Joan of Arc's Life Show in Institute Art," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 28, 1913.

³⁷ *Joan of Arc Loan Exhibition Catalog: Paintings, Pictures, Medals, Coins, Stationary, Books, Porcelains, Manuscripts, Curios, Etc.*, spec. ed. (New York: The Joan of Arc Statue Committee, 1913), items 2, 32, 41, 42, 53, 54, 60, 76.

³⁸ Le Nordez, *Jeanne d'Arc*, 127, 199, 233.

³⁹ Isabella Nières-Chevrel, "In and Out of History: *Jeanne d'Arc* by Maurice Boutet de Monvel," in *The Presence of the Past in Children's Literature*, ed. Ann Lawson Lucas (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 38-39n1.

⁴⁰ Louis-Maurice Boutet de Monvel, "The National Hero of France: Joan of Arc," trans. Will H. Low, *The Century Magazine* 53, no. 2, November 1896, 119-130.

⁴¹ Boutet de Monvel, "The National Hero of France," 119.

⁴² Mary Hartwell Catherwood wrote each of the seven parts, titled "The Days of Jeanne d'Arc," *The Century Magazine* 53, no. 6, April 1897, 883-897; 54, no. 1, May 1897, 118-127; 54, no. 2, June 1897, 231-245; 54, no. 3, July 1897, 406-419; 54, no. 4, August 1897, 603-615; 54, no. 5, September 1897, 684-696; and 54, no. 6, October 1897, 910-924.

⁴³ Nora M. Heimann and Laura Coyle, *Joan of Arc: Her Image in France and America* (Washington: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2006), 54; Robin Blaetz, *Visions of the Maid: Joan of Arc in American Film and Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 23.

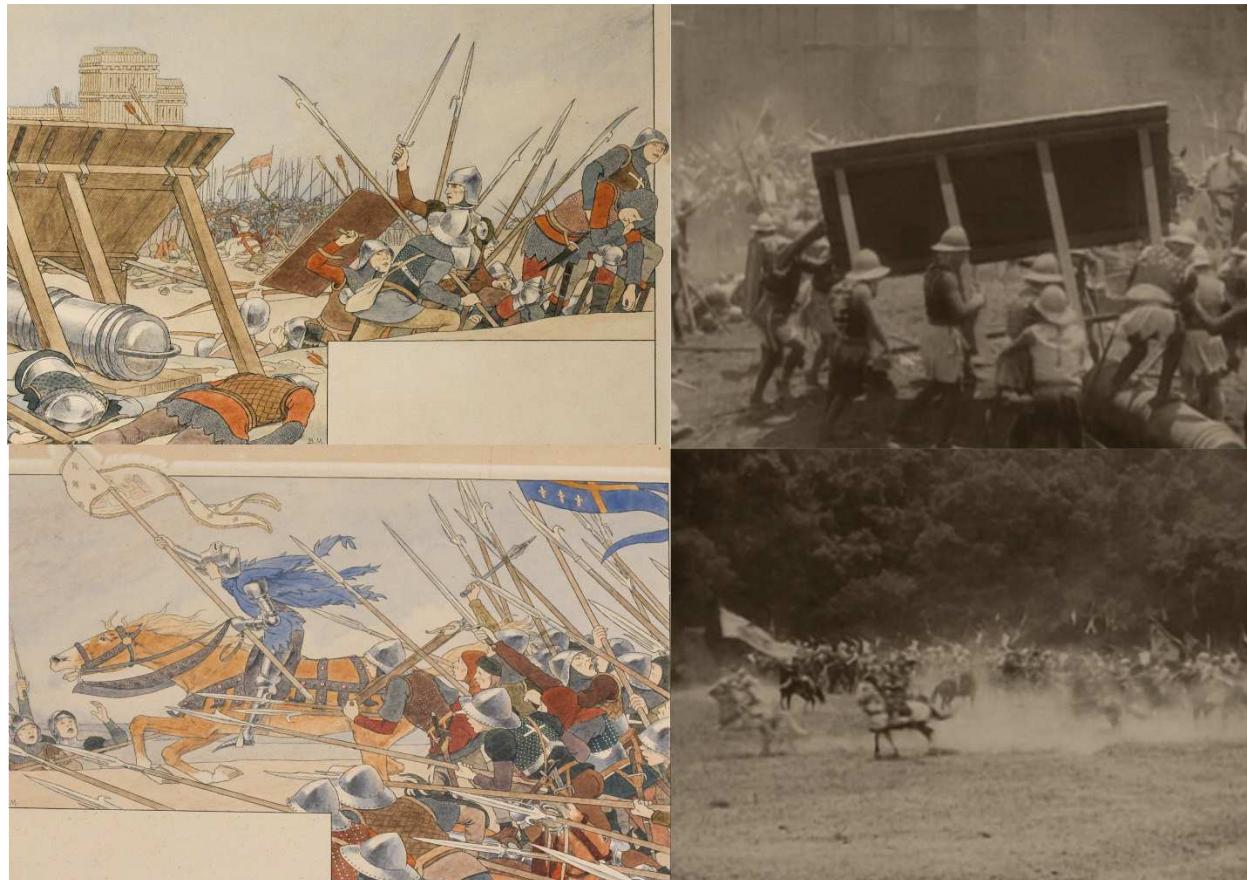


Fig. 4. Watercolors from Louis Maurice Boutet de Monvel, "Attack on the Fortress of St. Loup," *Joanne d'Arc* (1896): 8. Photo courtesy of the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester. Captured stills from *Joan the Woman* (1916), depicting French troops setting up a mantelet over a cannon outside Orléans with gunpowder artillery and Joan of Arc leading cavalry and artillery charge. Movie in public domain.

Pertinent to this paper is a two-page spread in Boutet de Monvel's book that looks like a storyboard for DeMille's deployment of cannon and cavalry charge led by Joan (Figure 4). Not only is there a cannon placed under a mantelet with the same four-leg structure, but the camera also captures the sequence from the same angle with the English tower in the upper left side of the frame. Joan of Arc leads her troops on horseback from the right of the frame. Boutet de Monvel's use of gunpowder for his depiction of artillery falls squarely in line with his fidelity to historical sources, as one historian points out that he cited trial records, the journal of the siege, and "the old chronicle."⁴⁴ Further, these "intellectual requirements saved him from the medieval gimmickry of the time which was fatal to his contemporaries."⁴⁵

At the 1913 Joan of Arc exhibitions in Manhattan and Brooklyn, DeMille would have been exposed to every 1897 issue of *The Century Magazine* featuring Boutet de Monvel's images, one of his oil paintings commissioned by Senator Clark, three copies of the children's book, and 18 of the original watercolors used in the book including the two-page spread featuring cannon and Joan of Arc leading the cavalry charge.⁴⁶ Joan of Arc as a leader of soldiers is emphasized in this nationalistic work, with

⁴⁴ Nières-Chevrel, "In and Out of History," 35.

⁴⁵ Nières-Chevrel, "In and Out of History," 35.

⁴⁶ *Joan of Arc Loan Exhibition Catalog*, items 639, 109, 115, 82, 226-243; the oil painting mentioned in "Big Exhibit in Honor of Joan of Arc's Birthday," *New York Times*, January 5, 1913, 9.

its cover, images, and accompanying text that all depict Joan at the helm in marches, charges, and sieges. The presence of Boutet de Monvel's work was emphasized in both the *New York Times* and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.⁴⁷ The latter placed more emphasis on Boutet de Monvel, who had just passed away two weeks prior to the story's publication, by printing a handwritten letter from the artist describing his admiration for Joan of Arc and illustrating her life.⁴⁸

Boutet de Monvel's work on Joan of Arc was so ubiquitous at this time that six mural copies of his watercolors made an appearance in the lobby of the premiere of *Joan the Woman* in New York City on December 25, 1916.⁴⁹ That DeMille was familiar with the French artist's work is without question, but it is worth tracing one more opportunity for exposure to the filmmaker, as it gave him yet another medium to see Joan of Arc utilizing gunpowder artillery.

The Ringling Bros. Joan of Arc Spectacle, 1912-1913

When Al Ringling selected Joan of Arc as the topic for the 45-minute spectacle that would open every Ringling Bros. performance in the 1912 and 1913 seasons, he initiated an advertisement campaign that included press releases, posters, heralds, and couriers that made the circus the biggest promoter of the story of Joan of Arc in the United States for the two-year period.⁵⁰ While most of the ads emphasized the size and pomp of the spectacle, several of the advertisements depicted and described gunpowder artillery. For these, artists naturally turned to the work of Boutet de Monvel.

In one Ringling Bros. advertisement in the form of a 10.5 in. x 28 in. herald, three images based on the French artist's work make an appearance, including the Siege of Orléans that looks like a storyboard for DeMille's film (Figure 5).⁵¹ Even more colorful and prominent is the 13.5 in. x 20.5 in. spread in a 1912 *Ringling Bros. Courier* distributed in towns leading up to the performance.⁵² Among much of the same promotional copy that filled local newspapers, the courier contains more martial details, emphasizing gunpowder. For example, there is the "Artillery and Implements of War built under the direction of Capt. Felix Dufard, of the French Army."⁵³ In addition, the courier describes

⁴⁷ "Big Exhibit in Honor of Joan of Arc's Birthday," *New York Times*, January 5, 1913, 9; "Joan of Arc's Life Show in Institute Art," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 28, 1913.

⁴⁸ "Joan of Arc's Life Show in Institute Art," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 28, 1913.

⁴⁹ *The Joan of Arc Journal* dedicates an entire page with reprints of the paintings, telling readers they "were painted by Clifford F. Pember after suggestions contained in the illustrations by Boutet de Monvel." *Joan of Arc Journal*, 3. *The Joan of Arc Journal*, press book, December 15, 1916, Cecil B. DeMille File, George Eastman House, Rochester, NY.

⁵⁰ For details on the scope and contents of the advertising campaign, see Scott Manning, "Fit for Print: Not for Spectacle: Ringling Bros. and the Careful Exploitation of Joan of Arc," *Studies in Medievalism* 30 (2021): 232-240; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., "Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows: The 1913 Season," *Bandwagon: The Journal of the Circus Historical Society* 37, no. 2 (1993): 6.

⁵¹ Two heralds featuring the imitations of the Boutet de Monvel image survive and are viewable online at "CWi 6608 A-B – Ringling Bros. Circus," Circus World Museum, <<https://circus.pastperfectonline.com/archive/E5EC163F-5643-47C9-B55D-707028465576>>, last accessed April 8, 2021; "CWi 6607 A-B - Ringling Bros. Circus," Circus World Museum, <<https://circus.pastperfectonline.com/archive/C1B50A70-813D-41B8-9864-450768494840>>, last accessed April 8, 2021.

⁵² Four copies of two styles of couriers distributed in the 1912-13 seasons survive in the Circus World Museum including shows at St. Louis (April 29, 1912), Decatur, IL (August 28, 1912), Hartford, CT (May 25, 1913), and Okmulgee, OK (November 1, 1913).

⁵³ Ringling Bros. Courier for Decatur Show, August 28, 1912, Robert L. Parkinson Library & Research Center, Circus World. After searching through the archives and even census records, it appears that Capt. Dufard was merely a stage name. This was a common circus practice, especially for such a production that would benefit from the legitimacy of a French army captain. The details on stage names and theory about Felix Dufard was

how the story of Joan of Arc is “embellished with...the smoke of battle, the clash of artillery, the crumbling of great fortresses.”⁵⁴ Other promotional materials described “mechanical devices for producing such stage effects as thunder, lightning, storms, fires, and the sound of battle.”⁵⁵



Fig. 5. Section of 1912 Ringling Bros. advertisement. This two-sided 10.5 in. x 28 in. herald distributed in Freeport, IL. One side features three images based on images from Boutet de Monvel's *Jeanne d'Arc* (1896). Photo courtesy of Circus World Museum, Baraboo, WI.

The circus had a lengthy route across the United States and Canada, visiting 148 towns with 359 performances over the course of 215 days in 1913 alone.⁵⁶ While DeMille's whereabouts are not entirely known for every day that year, it is possible to place both him and the Ringling Bros. in Philadelphia on May 9, 1913. While the circus was near the end of its six-day run in the city, DeMille's play *The Reckless Age* was performing two miles south on Broad Street at the Grand Opera House.⁵⁷ True to circus promotional hyperbole, the spectacle itself did not feature any of the promised battle sequences or cannons.⁵⁸ However, in addition to having the opportunity to catch the first show of the

proposed by Frederick Dahlinger, now retired archivist at The Ringling Archives in Sarasota, FL. E-mail message to the author, June 19, 2018.

⁵⁴ Ringling Bros. Courier for Decatur Show, August 28, 1912.

⁵⁵ “Ringling Circus,” *Hancock Democrat*, April 18, 1912, 1.

⁵⁶ Pfening, “Ringling Bros. Greatest Shows: The 1913 Season,” 18; Manning, “Fit for Print, Not for Spectacle,” 232n13.

⁵⁷ “Ringling Circus Coming,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 30, 1913, 6; “The Reckless Age,” *Wilkes-Barre Record*, May 3, 1913, 24.

⁵⁸ A detailed description of the spectacle's contents available in Manning, “Fit for Print, Not for Spectacle,” 243-248.

circus that day, DeMille would have been exposed to circus ephemera and newspaper advertisements for the circus in the area, all featuring incarnations of Boutet de Monvel's battle scene from Orléans.

Medieval Gunpowder Artillery as a Means of Relevancy

While this paper has thus far dealt with *what* inspired DeMille to depict Joan of Arc with gunpowder artillery *how* he depicted it, there is still more to *why* he depicted gunpowder artillery at all. Much has been made by historians about the prologue and epilogue of the American cut of *Joan the Woman* taking place in the trenches of World War I, as it was "nothing less than a plea for America to become involved in the First World War and come to the aid of France."⁵⁹ Even contemporary reviewers noted how over the audience "swept a wave of true patriotism."⁶⁰ Geraldine Farrar, playing the titular role, later revealed that it was a move on the part of the producers to bring what otherwise "lack[ed] incentive for popular appeal."⁶¹ Farrar described how she was later moved by the story that one of the same knights who "fought" alongside her in the filming of Orléans later joined the war and died in the trenches of France, "having taken a machine-gun nest alone."⁶² Later in life, DeMille reflected that this approach was a mistake, as:

experience has taught me that if you put an audience back into the fifteenth century, or any other distant time, and then at the end snap them back to the present with modern scenes, you are likely to lose the emotional impact of the main story. The audience may think it was just a dream.⁶³

DeMille had not learned that lesson in 1917 when local distributors complained about the film's length and content, requesting to cut it themselves. The 13 reels were too much for some audiences and distributors requested to cut the film down to eight reels, eliminating nearly 40% of the original. The director acquiesced to these demands, but he insisted that the prologue and epilogue remain intact, ensuring that audiences would associate the film with the war in Europe.⁶⁴ As for the Siege of Orléans, the use of cannons had a more ominous connection to the modern world in 1916. The number one killer among soldiers in World War I was not machine guns or even chemical weapons, but artillery, accounting for more than half the casualties in the war.⁶⁵ Cannons from 1429 connected the medieval with the modern world in 1916.

While DeMille's self-proclaimed "double-A in history" might have helped him understand that the armies fighting in France during the time of Joan of Arc used gunpowder artillery, he found visual representations in the works of Carrier-Belleuse, Boutet de Monvel, 1913 exhibitions hosted in New York, and the advertising campaign of the Ringling Bros. The result was that the first feature-length film of Joan of Arc avoided "medieval gimmicky" in its depiction of artillery and it set a trend that later filmmakers would mostly imitate for the following 83 years.

These later films often included cannons in their battles even if they failed to depict Joan providing any sort of leadership among the gunners (Table 1). For example, Marco de Gastyne's *La merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc* (1929), Gustav Ucicky's pro-Nazi *Das Mädchen Johanna* (1935), Victor

⁵⁹ Kevin J. Harty, *The Reel Middle Ages: American, Western and Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Asian Films About Medieval Europe* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1999), 144.

⁶⁰ Review from the *New York Evening Journal* in *The Joan of Arc Journal*, 2.

⁶¹ Geraldine Farrar, *Such Sweet Compulsion: The Autobiography of Geraldine Farrar* (New York: Greystone Press, 1938), 172.

⁶² Farrar, *Such Sweet Compulsion*, 174.

⁶³ Cecil B. DeMille, *The Autobiography of Cecil B. DeMille*, ed. Donald Hayne (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959), 171.

⁶⁴ Higashi, *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture*, 119.

⁶⁵ Sanders Marble, "The British Artillery in World War I," in *King of Battle: Artillery in World War I*, ed. Sanders Marble (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 35.

Fleming's *Joan of Arc* (1948), and Jacques Rivette's *Jeanne La Pucelle* (1994) all feature major battle scenes with cannons, but Joan is rarely near the weapons and never provides any sort of direction to the gunners.⁶⁶ In *The Story of Mankind* (1957), there is a brief segment on Joan, focusing predominantly on her trial.⁶⁷ It includes brief battle scenes lifted directly from Fleming's *Joan of Arc*.⁶⁸ Although no cannons are visibly depicted, they are audible in the background.⁶⁹

This approach of marginalizing Joan of Arc's military skill with cannons relegates her to mere cheerleader or political tool, a position that may at least be tolerable, if only for a season. Historians and medievalists have concluded that the underlying message of most Joan of Arc films is that "women and war do not mix. Women are welcome to sacrifice themselves for the crusade, but the deeds of war itself and the attendant glory are reserved for men alone."⁷⁰ While there are many common approaches to driving home this message, a subtler method is to keep Joan away from gunpowder artillery, as achieved by all other films aside from *Joan the Woman*. An even subtler approach is removing gunpowder artillery in battle altogether, as achieved by Luc Besson's *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (1999). Although Joan rides by a cannon in one scene, it is easy to miss. When it comes to battle, the only artillery depicted is a trebuchet.⁷¹

As Jacques Darras instructs, "Let us not pretend, and do as if Joan had been no warrior."⁷² Unfortunately, as Larissa Juliet Taylor laments, "Few know more than what they have seen in films" and "even fewer know that Joan was a real soldier and military leader, wounded several times in battle before her capture and execution."⁷³ In this same vein, it would be impossible for filmgoers to appreciate Joan's understanding of gunpowder and her skills attested to by her companions-in-arms. Simply put, although there are roughly 10 major films that depict gunpowder artillery among the armies of Joan of Arc, Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan the Woman* stands alone in that it explicitly depicts the Maid giving direction to the gunners. By removing Joan from the cannons or removing cannons from Joan of Arc movies, filmmakers are negating the military experience and leadership of Joan of Arc.

⁶⁶ *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, directed by Marco de Gastyne (1929; René Chateau, la Mémoire du Cinéma français, 1998), VHS; *Das Mädchen Johanna*, directed by Gustav Ucicky (1935; Avondale, AZ: RAREFILMSANDMORE.COM), DVD; *Joan of Arc*, directed by Victor Fleming (1948; New York City, NY: Kino Lorber, 2018), Blu-ray Disc, 1080p HD; *Joan the Maid: The Battles; The Prisons*, directed by Jacques Rivette (1994; 1994; New York, NY: Cohen Media Group, 2019), Blu-Ray.

⁶⁷ *The Story of Mankind*, directed by Irwin Allen (1957; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros., 2010), DVD.

⁶⁸ Robin Blaetz, "Strategies of Containment: Joan of Arc in Film," Ph.D. diss, (New York University, 1989), 58.

⁶⁹ *The Story of Mankind*.

⁷⁰ Blaetz, "Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan the Woman*," 114. Also see Robin Blaetz, "Strategies of Containment: Joan of Arc in Film," PhD diss. (New York University, 1989); Margaret Joan Maddox, "Keeping Her in Her Place: The Perpetual Imprisonment of Joan of Arc," PhD diss. (University of Arkansas, 2004).

⁷¹ *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc*, directed by Luc Besson (1999; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2008), Blu-ray disc, 1080p.

⁷² Jacques Darras, "A Myth on Trial," in *Joan of Arc, A Saint for All Reasons: Studies in Myth and Politics*, ed. Dominique Goy-Blanquet (New York: Routledge, 2016), 121.

⁷³ Taylor, *The Virgin Warrior*, xviii.

Table 1: Joan of Arc's Cinematic Artillery

Year	Film	Director	Battle Scenes	Cannon	Cannon Smoke	Cannon Sound
1900	<i>Jeanne d'Arc</i>	Georges Méliès	X	X	--	
1916	<i>Joan the Woman</i>	Cecil B. DeMille	X	X	X	--
1928	<i>La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc</i>	Carl Dreyer		X	X	--
1929	<i>La merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc</i>	Marco de Gastyne	X	X	X	--
1935	<i>Das Mädchen Johanna</i>	Gustav Ucicky	X	X	X	X
1948	<i>Joan of Arc</i>	Victor Fleming	X	X	X	X
1957	<i>The Story of Mankind</i>	Irwin Allen	X			X
1994	<i>Jeanne La Pucelle</i>	Jacques Rivette	X	X	X	X
1999	<i>Joan of Arc</i>	Christian Duguay	X	X	X	X
1999	<i>The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc</i>	Luc Besson	X	X		