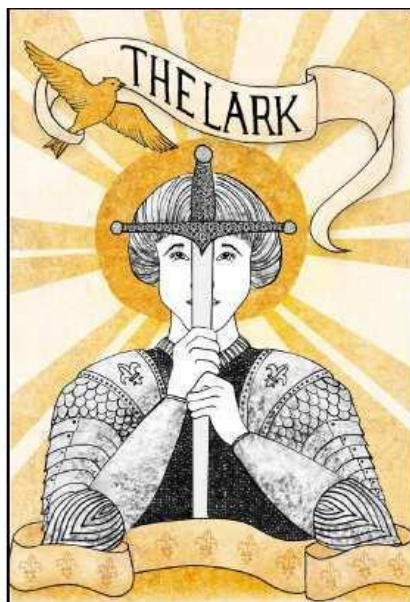




by Jean Anouilh
1952

The Lark

Jean Anouilh , Lillian Hellman (Translator)

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Chapman, writing in the New York News called The Lark: "a beautiful, beautiful play It is always the story of a simple girl who became an inspired warrior and then was tried by the church but there have been several ways of telling it. Anouilh's way, and Miss Hellman's, is to try to tell the story from two viewpoints. One of them is how we look at the tale now as a piece of history, with our knowledge of how the girl's blundering captors unwittingly created a martyr who became forever a symbol of courage and faith. The other viewpoint has been to try to imagine what it must have been like to be Joan herself. Both approaches to this legend of the Martyr of Rouen have been splendidly realized by the technique of divorcing the drama from the confinements of time, sequence and space. Until the last moment a thrilling and uplifting one of Joan's greatest earthly triumph, the coronation of the worthless Dauphin for whom she fought there is no scenery in the usual sense, merely a few levels of steps and platforms, and lights. With this freedom, the story of Joan of Arc can move backward or forward without an interruption, without a jar. It begins with Joan's trial, and her tale of the voices which prompted her one day to set forth and save France from the English. And as she tells her listeners the cold Inquisitor from Spain, the politically cynical Earl of Warwick, the deeply religious but ineffectual Cauchon and all the others of what she heard and what she did, her story comes alive."

The Lark Details

Date : Published January 1st 1999 by Dramatists Play Service (first published 1952)

ISBN : 9780822206347

Author : Jean Anouilh , Lillian Hellman (Translator)

Format : Paperback 72 pages

Genre : Plays, Drama, Cultural, France, Fiction, Theatre

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From Reader Review The Lark for online ebook

Victor Morosoff says

Une pièce assez dense au parfum de l'époque, dont la morale semble être l'impossibilité de toute ascension de l'homme honnête dans un monde corrompu et vil, si ce n'est pour l'échafaud. En échange, ce qui reste, c'est la dignité humaine. 3,8/5

Alanna says

As with most plays, this is something that needs to be seen rather than read. There are moments in which the show is quite eloquent even from the page--usually when the words are taken from transcripts of Joan's trial--but in general the text is rather halting and does not flow in the same way that Shakespeare and some other playwrights' works do when merely read. That said, it is a beautiful and thought-provoking play when done well, and the intentional ambiguity with regard to time and interpretation adds a layer of realism to a story whose political realities made for much ambiguity in the telling and evaluation of the story.

Ivi says

3,9*

Dony Grayman says

Obras de teatro de Anouilh. Colección Livre de Poche.

Marsha says

The trial of Jeanne D'Arc, aka Joan of Arc, aka the Maid of Orleans, has been imagined by a few playwrights, directors and writers. Most people know little of the details: the names of the other players in the courtroom, the statutes read against her, the questioning to which she was put, etc., have all been lost to historical documents that appeal little to those who prefer drama and tragedy.

This play is a brilliant re-imagining of those moments as various men weigh in on Joan's innocence, the credibility of her voices and the distaste aroused by her continual wearing of men's clothing. Their viewpoints reveal as much about themselves as they do about Joan as no two of them can even agree on what basis her case should be tried. There are the men who pity her as a victim caught in the cogs of fate, those who see her as a dangerous heretic and those who are merely impatient to deal with a nuisance that has cost the state far too much time and money.

Of course it is Joan who shines, Joan who is as much an enigma as the men who tried her. Is she mad, bedeviled, proud or simply delusional? She insisted that she resisted the persistent voices that plagued her for three long years before she succumbed to their demand that she go to the King of France and demand an

army, armor, sword and horse to fight the English. How many other people could have held out so long against voices in their heads without therapy and medication?

Told in straightforward prose in an adaptation by Lillian Hellman, "The Lark" is a frank and bitter treatise about the politics of war, the terrifying scope of religion and the fumbblings of all-too-fallible men who are as apt to destroy a miracle as to espouse it.

Marion says

Ja Herr, [der Mensch:] ist sündhaft und widerlich. Doch plötzlich, keiner weiß warum, stürzt es aus seinem schmutzigen Freudenhaus und verstellt einem scheu gewordenen Pferd den Weg, um ein unbekanntest kleines Kind zu retten. Dann liegt er da, mit gebrochenen Gliedern, und stirbt, ergeben in sein Schicksal, der gleiche Mensch, der mit so viel Aufwand seine Sündennacht vorbereitet hatte. [...]

Er stirbt rein und verklärt, und lächelnd empfängt ihn unser Gott. Denn er hat zweimal wie ein Mensch gehandelt, indem er das Böse und das Gute tat. Und gerade für diesen Gegensatz hatte ihn Gott erschaffen.

Jack says

Ok, I'll admit I read this 20 years ago so it's a bit distant and I'm not a young'un any more but I remember loving it! Really well told and great dialogue. Haven't read Shaw's Saint Joan so can't compare it but this would definitely be in my desert island suitcase.

Laura says

How does one explain Jeanne d'Arc? Touched by God? Was she the village idiot who heard voices in her own brand of crazy? Or was she merely a lark singing in the sky as suggested by this play, l'Alouette.

Here is how the author describes her in the introduction to his play... "You cannot explain Joan, any more than you can explain the tiniest flower growing by the wayside. There's just a little living flower that has always known, ever since it was a microscopic seed, how many petals it would have and how big it would grow, exactly how blue its blue would be and how its delicate scent would be compounded. There's just the phenomenon of Joan, as there is the phenomenon of a daisy or of the sky or of a bird. What pretentious creatures men are, if that's not enough for them."

Manuel Sanchez says

The complete text of one of Broadway's most distinguished hits, adapted into English by Lillian Hellman. Copyrighted 1956 but presented at the Longacre Theater in New York City on Nov 17, 1955 with iconic actors Christopher Plummer, Boris Karloff and Julie Harris (as Joan or Arc). The play covers the trial and execution of Joan, but has a twist. Joan recalls significant highlights in her life as she is being questioned, and is later condemned to death. However, just as Joan is burning at the stake, her judges recall that they have not allowed her to re-live the coronation of Charles VII of France. The fire is extinguished, and Joan is given a reprieve. The actual end of the story is left in question.

Genevieve says

Read this a few days before the election and loved it - Anouilh's recreation of Joan of Arc is a pre-modern Obama.

Ludmila Marton says

It's supposed to be a tribute to Joan of Arc whom I love and admire greatly. I was curious about this play but it strikes me as one of those works of our modern society when we take something from the past we don't understand or don't seek to understand and squeeze it into frame and proportions to which we are used to and are comfortable with. I'm sure the author didn't want to rewrite anything or claim a faithful account; it was merely his artistic viewpoint to provide a statement to various different things. Nevertheless it was not to my liking. I love Joan for her determination, purity, innocence, her brave fight with her weaknesses and her loyalty to the truth she had felt and this play didn't do her (not just her as a person but her life as well) justice in my opinion, although it was certainly trying.

Sketchbook says

Lil Hellman rewrites Anouilh : Anouilh dares to suggest that Joan dies chiefly to avoid middle age. LOL. Hellman's version slashes Anouilh so that his meaning(s) are entirely lost.

Here's the Lillian Hellman "version" as performed on Broadway. Christopher Fry did the adaptation that was produced in London. I have no feelings about Joan. She's having tea Up There with Mother Teresa. Two lumps of sugar, please. Where's Hellman at the moment ? Don't ask.

Keith says

This is a review of the Lillian Hellman adaptation. You can see my review of the Christopher Fry translation (which I assume hews more closely to the original Anouilh) here:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

As you'll see in my earlier review, I think The Lark is very good, but a bit long winded. I like the way the story unfolds, mixing commentary from Joan's trial with the re-enactment of the key events. It is a very engaging presentation. However, the long philosophical speeches are a bit of a put off.

Hellman puts Anouilh's original play under the knife. I did not carefully analyze the differences – it's been about 7 months since I read the full Fry translation. However, I immediately noticed that the play moved at a brisker pace and there were fewer philosophical/religious rabbit holes.

I did miss the scene where Joan identifies Charles as the king though he pretends to be a courtier. And Lavenue's compassionate part was considerably reduced. But there are probably a thousand ways to cut the play.

Overall, though, I think Hellman did a fantastic job pruning this play. She removes the chaff yet stayed closely aligned with Anouilh's vision and message. I highly recommend it.

Lark says

If you're going to retell the admittedly somewhat exhausted story of Joan of Arc, you've really got to be inventive to keep it new and interesting. Making it a play with somewhat interesting stage directions and character names doesn't really cut it in my book. It was definitely good for my French, though.

Adam says

A very confusing and tedious read of the rise and trial of Joan of Arc, confusing in the sense of its dramatic style; it's not quite straight narrative and it's not quite the Pirandello-esque it wants to be, leaving the plot and language to become a big muddle.

Emily says

Jeanne d'Arc hat einen an der Waffel, aber die meiste Zeit hat sie keine Angst. Die bösen Inquisiteure, Richter und Adligen, sind Witzgestalten. Nicht so tragisch, schwarz und romantisch wie Antigone, aber Anouilh hats drauf...

Akemi G. says

It must be tempting for French authors to write about Joan of Arc, adding a bit of his insight. As he did in Antigone, Anouilh takes a famous story, and with meta-fiction approach, almost turns it around, only to arrive at the well-known ending.

Not bad at all--I just think it lacked sufficient surprises. But then, this was written in 1950s, and it probably was shocking enough back then.

Read in Five Plays: Vol 2.

Ronald Wise says

An abstract portrayal of the heresy trial and execution of Jeanne d'Arc with many flashbacks to the events leading up to her rise to fame in France. This book provided no background about the characters, and having no previous knowledge of the details of her demise, I'm sure I missed the significance of many statements. The arguments, however, were interesting and though I was too lazy to research the people involved, I feel the read was worth my effort. I learned of this play through a birthday tribute to the Anouilh on Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*.

LadySofia says

An interesting telling of Jeanne D'arc's trial. Since I'm fascinated by her, and hear stubborn bravery, it was a great read.

A solid 3.5.

I got a bit confused with who was who at the beginning, but that sorted itself out at the end.

Manny says

Anouilh's beautiful tribute to Jeanne d'Arc, by all accounts one of the most inspiring and lovable people in history. We arrested her on trumped-up charges and burned her alive when she was only nineteen. Funny how often that kind of thing happens.

We? Oh, I don't know. The British. The ruling elite. Men. People.
