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# THE CINEMA OF GERMAINE DULAC, OR LA VIE EN ARASBEQUE

## O CINEMA DE GERMAINE DULAC, OU LA VIE EN ARASBEQUE

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**Abstract:** La "Princesse Mandane" was Germaine Dulac's last big-budget commercial film. Shot at Billancourt in 1928, it is her adaptation of Pierre Benoit's novel, L'Oublié, first published in 1919. In Benoit's tale, it is also early 1919. His story opens as the young French brigadier Étienne Pindère ventures on horse back across Turkey. Finding brutal confusion—are Armenians massacring? or being massacred? –Pindère's commander dispatches him further in reconnaissance. In 1928, Dulac replaces Benoit's satellite war of British and French troops with a more current topic. Dulac's Pindère rides on eastwards alone on a colonial project of electrification. He departs the military map for a remoter state in Central Asia, Migrélie, where princesses govern with ivory telephones, where tartars, machine guns, and gold lamé reign. Dulac described her adaptation as entirely transforming the Benoit work; if she had retained his adventure plot, she had transposed it as comedy, rewriting Benoit's hero as une victime du cinéma.

**Key-words:** Germaine Dulac; Princesse Mandane; cinema

**Resumo:** A Princesse Mandane foi o último grande filme comercial de Germaine Dulac. Rodado em Billancourt, em 1928, é uma adaptação do romance de Pierre Benoit, L'Oublié, originalmente publicado em 1919. A estória de Benoit passa-se também no início de 1919. Sua estória se inicia com as viagens do brigadeiro francês Étienne Pindère no lombo de um cavalo pela Turquia. Tomado por grande confusão (os armênios estão massacrando ou sendo massacrados ?), o comandante de Pindére o envia a fim de obter conhecimento da situação. Em 1928, Dulac substitui a guerra de Benoit entre as tropas britânicas e francesas por um tema emergente. O Pindère de Dulac segue rumo a leste em um projeto colonial de eletrificação. Seu destino é um estado remoto na Ásia Central, Migrélie, onde princesas governam com telefones de marfim, onde tártaros, metralhadoras, e lamé de ouro reinam. Dulac descreve sua adaptação como algo inteiramente transformador em relação ao trabalho de Benoit ; se ela tivesse mantido o esquema da aventura, teria a transposto para uma comédia, reescrevendo o herói de Benoit como une victime du cinemà.

**Palavras-chave:** Germaine Dulac; Princesse Mandane; Cinema.

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La "Princesse Mandane" was Germaine Dulac's last big-budget commercial film. Shot at Billancourt in 1928, it is her adaptation of Pierre Benoit's novel, L'Oublié, first published in 1919. In Benoit's tale, it is also early 1919. His story opens as the young French brigadier Étienne Pindère ventures on horse back across Turkey. Finding brutal confusion—are Armenians massacring? or being massacred? –Pindère's commander dispatches him further in reconnaissance. In 1928, Dulac replaces Benoit's satellite war of British and French troops with a more current topic. Dulac's Pindère rides on eastwards alone on a colonial project of electrification. He departs the military map for a remoter state in Central Asia, Migrélie, where princesses govern with ivory telephones, where tartars, machine guns, and gold lamé reign.[1] Dulac described her adaptation as "entirely transforming" the Benoit work; if she had retained his adventure plot, she had transposed it as comedy, rewriting Benoit's hero as "une victime du cinéma."[2]

Dulac was already familiar with an earlier film adaptation of a Benoit best-seller, Jacques Feyder's lauded L'Atlantide (1921).[3] In this broadly similar story--itself a cousin of H. Rider Haggard's She (1886)--two officers trespass through the southern Sahara onto a world lost to cartographers where a beautiful, cruel empress, Antinea, holds them captive. The franco-russian Stasia Napierkowska played the mesmerizing Antinea. This celebrated dancer-turned-screen star had been the lead character in Dulac's third film, Vénus Victrix (1917), three years before Feyder cast her, and had there stolen her affections from Dulac's partner of the time, Dulac's screen-writing collaborator Irène Hillel-Erlanger.[4] Among Napierkowska's still earlier film roles had been the oriental potentates of Cléopâtre (1910), Au Temps du Pharaon (1910), and Semiramis (1911). In L'Atlantide, Antinea introduces herself to the officers as a veritable Cleopatra, news they may have inferred from the snake uraeus protruding from her brow.

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Further working associations had bound Dulac to the cinema of chartless territories and lavish design by the time she came to film La Princesse Mandane in 1928. Ivan Lochakoff, who had been set decorator for Dulac's Âme d'artiste (1925) was among the key Russian émigré artists working at Ermolieff-Albatros. This studio, founded in Paris in 1919 in the wake of the Russian revolution, was renown for monumental oriental schemes following the success of Lochakoff's sets for Victor Tourjansky's Les contes des milles et une nuits (1921).[5] Lochakoff himself made the reference to Haggard in Âme d'Artiste by prominently including neon Piccadilly theater lights for Haggard's The Moon of Israel in his scenery. In 1928, Alexandr Volkoff of Albatros, with whom Dulac had co-written the scenario for Âme d'Artiste, was himself making Geheimnisse des Orients (Shéhérezade) at UFA in Germany, again with Lochakoff. The previous year he had directed Casanova (1927) in Paris, starring Mosjoukine, the actor blinded in the clips from Michel Strogoff (1926), directed by Tourjansky, that Dulac will excerpt for a cinema-going outing in La Princesse Mandane. To cut an already convoluted story short, the Orient coursed high through Dulac's filmmaking world in 1928.[6]

We might respond—so what? Was this not inevitably part of the cultural life of Paris of the 1920s? How could Dulac have avoided it?—the orientalizing style so often dismissed as the politically compromising but widespread colonial disease of the era? Why note it in Dulac's case?

For nearly fifty years, two--or at the outside three--titles have comprised our picture of Dulac's oeuvre: La souriante madame Beudet (1922); La coquille et le clergyman (1927); and, perhaps, L'invitation au voyage (1927). While Beudet was one of the Museum of Modern Art's circulating Film Library's earliest acquisitions, added between 1935 and 1937 during first curator Iris Barry's tenure, Coquille first appears in a circulating

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Film Library catalog in 1969.[7] These are the only two Dulac films the Museum holds, and the accessibility of Dulac's films has been no wider in Europe.[8] The two works, hitched to a handful of reprinted Dulac articles in English, have until now chiefly defined the output of this artist.[9]

In the semi-autobiographical La souriante madame Beudet Dulac fashions a stiffling account of contemporary provincial middle-class marriage. She finds cinematic language for the daily criss-crossing of emotions of the drama's characters: husband, wife, maid, and the husband's business partner. Arranging images of landscape, flowers, light, and water, Dulac invests her camera and editing above all in the soul of the desperate Mme Beudet, who, as the film closes, returns to quotidian oppressiveness, having even taken hesitant steps to murder her cloth-merchant husband.

The second film, La coquille et le clergyman, based on a scenario by Antoine Artaud (who also planned to act the part of the cleric before a falling out with Dulac), is often counted as surrealism's first film. Here Dulac stacks dislocated chains of repeated images, of cleaning maids and beakers, of empty mazed rooms and cascading liquids, of milk and breasts and strangulation (she splits a face cinematically in two). It is via formal graphical echoes across bizarre sequences--the senseless pouring of liquid from the seashell into a series of flasks, and then the breaking of them on the floor—that Dulac asks us in La coquille et le clergyman to grasp the priest's tormented erotic struggle as he lurches between vows of celibacy and obsession for an officer's woman. Through these compositions Dulac poses the hypocrisy of the church, entwining French daily life, the city street, the confessional, and the bubbling up of sexual desire.

Made within the context of the French ciné-club movement, of which Dulac was of course a key player, these were inexpensive, experimental works.[10] Typical screenings

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Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

would have been accompanied by other short films, and by a lecture, many notes for which survive in the Dulac archive in Paris.[11] In running for less than an hour, these films' unconventional lengths fell well short of the typical feature format. They evidence a filmmaker deliberately seeking out the unique capacities of moving film: the possibilities of super-imposed images and double exposure, stop motion and slow motion, dissolves, distorting lenses, abrupt shifts of viewpoint. They retain some skeletal sense of the idea of character—a priest, a housewife--but as a springboard to rendering "l'âme" on the screen, and giving this interior life priority over any clear, narrative exposition.[12]

The absence of access to any of Dulac's more profit-oriented films, let alone her most abstract films of 1929, not to mention the documentary cinema of her late career, has necessarily narrowed our fuller understanding of her oeuvre.[13] In her ciné-club lectures, Dulac frequently asserts her general artistic hopes for the cinema as a distinct and sophisticated medium of motion, and her disgust at "the miserable little stories we make it tell."[14]

While these aspirations are evident in La coquille et le clergyman and La souriante madame Beudet, we have trouble tallying such notions to the witty extravagance of a feature like Mandane, or to the striking photo-journalistic evidence of Dulac cavorting with her two stars as they wrap up work on that very film.[15] Dulac's inclined posture, liveliness, and wide smile buck the typical image we have of her. Though she wears the severe, masculine suit recognizable in most of her publicity photographs[16] . Where is the customary, serious--if shy--working demeanor? Equally unfamilar, since alongside Dulac, are the attitudes of the two glamorous flanking performers, Edmonde Guy and Ernest van Duren, a former dance pair now acquitted as film stars.[17] Guy wears a svelte, sequined gown and skull cap bridged with elaborate pom-poms; van Duren matches her slinkiness

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issn 1679-9100

with pomaded hair and the leanness of a tuxedo. There is a lilt in all three bodies, an air of pleasure and joshing. Did Dulac really inhabit this world? Doesn't this Cinémagazine photograph suggest Dulac's relish of the luxurious texture and fabulous style of commercial cinema?

In the wake of Edward Said`s Orientalism, many critics have pondered whether European art and scholarship of the late colonial era was inevitably doomed to the monolithic reproduction of Orientalism's prejudices. In this climate of political correctness, Orientalism can have, and has had the cramping after-effect of damning all efforts by European and American artists at rendering non-Western cultures as inherently retrograde and inevitably permeated by social inequality. Such a knee-jerk reaction against Dulac's Orientalism, for example, would discourage any further reflection on it, and may partly explain why it is still entirely unknown.

This article builds on revisionist scholarship of the field of art history which argues that oriental style subtends a less rigid set of meanings and that its consequences can be as much radical as reactionary. As Ali Behdad puts it, Said's approach "leaves no room for the possibility of differences among the various modes of orientalist representation and in the field of its power relations."[18] For Henri Matisse and Paul Klee, among many other painters, modernism and Orientalism—both the practice of representing the Orient, and an interest in objects imported from the Orient--were not world's apart, this scholarship claims, but were realms sharing a preference for non-figurative visual language. This head-on reconnection of their artistic work to their interest in the Orient restores to the former a part of its cultural laboratory of development. We similarly need deliberately to associate Dulac's avant-garde film practice—which is better-known to us and more academically respected--with the Orient she assembled on the screen in her more

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issn 1679-9100

commercial projects such as La princesse mandane, with the like-minded goal of sharpening our perception of the fermention of her cinema.

Roger Benjamin has written of Henri Matisse's practice of packing the exotic and academic "conventions of anecdotal and picturesque orientalist painting" with him on his trips to North Africa, but then channeling the attention these academic artists paid to color and decorative detail towards his own abstraction.[19] Significantly, as Benjamin notes, vanguard critics rejected academic orientalist painting as too implicated in the political traffic of French colonialism. In their reviewing, therefore, they consciously separated the first exhibition of Matisse's Moroccan output in 1913 from the abundant, detailed renderings of non-Western scenes exhibited yearly at the Salon of the Société des Peintres Orientalistes since its founding in 1894.[20] The latter works could never harmonize with these critics' radical ambitions. In related research which reveals a similar fraughtness attendant on oriental motifs, Peter Wollen has highlighted how prejudices against decoration and ornament nevertheless marginalized Matisse, placing him strangely to the side and in his own category in the establishment of the canon of early twentieth century modern art.[21]

A comparable divorce between the fashion for the Orient and the effort of artistic experimentation has pertained in the way that Dulac has come down to us.[22] Dulac's least realist works circulate, while her narrative films, including those brimming with anecdotal Orientalism, have sunk without trace. Holding the latter works once more in view, we perceive that Dulac's interest in non-Western and particularly Islamic sources threads it way throughout her cinema and even thematically links the worlds of the Cinémagazine photograph to her avant-garde endeavors.

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issn 1679-9100

Orientalism was one of the force-fields through which Dulac built a bridge between the worlds of commercial and experimental cinema and took seriously the desires of her greater public.[23] But she may have been speaking to one pocket of the public in particular. Michael Moon and Emily Apter are two further scholars who have questioned Orientalism's orthodoxy. Writing on independent film of the 1960s and turn-of-the-twentieth-century French literature respectively, they have interpreted the flourishing of Orientalist styles within gay urban milieux as a route to insisting on political and visible existence under the reign of heterosexual presumption—Oriental style as part of working out a role on the artistic and sexual fringes.[24] As Apter puts it, "nonconformist sexual identity must perform itself into existence, more often that not through the transformation of originally conservative models."[25]

Apter and Moon, Wollen and Benjamin restore to us some of the complex erotic and aesthetic interrelationships fueling interest in the arts of Islam. Paying attention to Dulac's Orientalism widens our sense of the range of attitudes she held towards the cinema's opportunities, and especially towards cinematic mise-en-scène. Dulac enthusiastically took up the contemporary fashion for Orientalism, but in a manner that insisted on it as a thriving facet of modern French life rather than as an exotic, other world. (It is revealing in this regard that, unlike Matisse or Klee, she never traveled to North Africa or Mingelia in search of a source.) Her very precise integration of this material into her work invites us indeed to recall, among other matters, the preference for Oriental fashion in stylish Parisian lesbian circles of the era. In the hands of a lesbian filmmaker, we must speculate that this vocabulary encoded a gesture to that audience, a gesture which, in a pair of Dulac's film projects, including La princesse mandane, becomes quite open and explicit.

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Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

To put flesh to the bones of this argument, we need to revisit Dulac's Paris, a city drenched in Eastern fascination. The protectorates of Tunisia (from 1881) and Morocco (from 1912) had joined Algeria (a colony since 1830) in a new period of French imperial expansion. This military surge brought new horizons of art: as Benjamin shows, a new generation of orientalist painters, including, for a time, Jean Renoir, sprang forth in the late 1880s from this geo-political shift.[26] Novelists Pierre Loti and Pierre Benoit wrote abundantly of overseas adventures. Les conte des mille et une nuits, that cornerstone of Western interest in Middle Eastern literature was refreshed with a new translation in 1899, and then again in 1918, while a translation of Kismet had been playing on stage for several seasons.[27]

Impressario Sergei Diaghilev had established a permanent company of the Ballet Russes in Paris in 1909, taking the city by storm with Cléopâtre in the first season, following on with five more oriental ballets by 1912 including Le dieu bleu in which Dulac's Napierkowska danced.[28] As Cleopatra, Ida Rubinstein, bare-bellied and wreathed in the shredded, flying silks of Leon Bakst exemplified the dynamic expressiveness of Fokine's startling choreography. The explosive color and pulsive corporeality of the Ballets Russes bulldozed classical ballet's chaste domain of pastel shades and discrete attention to hands, feet, and face.[29] The Russian emigré filmmakers at Albatros later brought their own brands of Orientalism to Paris, but in any event, as François Albéra argues, an Orientalist mise-en-scène was, by 1919 when Albatros was founded, expected of Russians on account of the Ballets Russes.[30]

Older captivations had already served to cultivate this taste in France . Napoleon's and Champollion's Egyptian hauls, the latter inaugurated at the Louvre in 1826, are usually ascribed the role of re-boosting the trend within the arts in the French colonial era. The

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Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

painting careers of 19th century giants Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Eugène Delacroix, and Jean-Léon Gérôme all fell under its spell. As a young reporter for the feminist journal La française, Germaine Dulac researched one strand of this lineage.[31] In January 1907, at the age of 23, on detail to record biographies of important women, Dulac interviewed the aging Judith Gautier, daughter of Théophile. (Théophile was author of the short story Une nuit de Cléopâtre, part of the inspiration for Fokine's Cléopâtre, and Le roman de la momie (1858), a tale with multiple descendants on the screen including elements of Dulac's own La cigarette (1918).)[32] The eccentric Judith was famous in her own right, as a music critic and passionate defender of Richard Wagner, an intimate of Victor Hugo and friend of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, a god-daughter of photographer Maxime du Camp, and as a commentator on art and copious drafter of oriental adventures, as someone who could wear a lizard on her head for outings, or sheath herself in gold and disguise herself as a buddha to playact silently, cross-legged on her piano, until all her party guests had arrived.[33] Numerous private and published reports describe the dense, exotic furnishings of Gautier's apartment. Her cat, "an indifferent sphinx" arranged itself on the grand piano before "a window adorned with stained glass with Turkish arabesques."[34] In her own account, Dulac lists Chinese tzatschkes, portraits of Wagner, and the spirits of Flaubert, Leconte de Lisle, Gautier senior, and others.[35] Judith wore a Chinese gown with bell-sleeves for the interview while a black cat with green eyes, "mysterious, fantastic and beautiful" disposed itself on the back of her chair as if on a piece of porcelain japonaiserie. "I'm a throwback," announced Gautier to Dulac, "living in my apartment as if in a harem." [36]

Dulac's vignette of a legendary woman enclosed within a dusty orientalism would undoubtedly have appealed to her readers. Indeed, on another assignment in 1907 Dulac reported on another grand-dame meeting the Orient: cult soprano Mary Garden, whom

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issn 1679-9100

Debussy had chosen to début as his troubled Mélisande in Pelléas et Mélisande in 1902 (this remained her more famous role) was now shaking the American opera scene as Richard Strauss' unbowed Salomé.[37] But Dulac's journalism simultaneously evidences her own penchant for this world, along with the buddha that sat in her own living room, and the mélange of siamese cats ("Nelly" and "Syn"), antique world maps, lit aquaria, tropical fish, carvings, ogives, and stained glass windows which diffused "une lumière des temps passés" across her office.[38]

As far as we know from surviving materials, Dulac's predisposition will first surface on the screen in the setting of the lost Vénus Victrix (1917), in which Napierkowska plays Djali, a bewitching young dancer "from the Orient where" she "dances dances not known" in Paris.[39] Dulac's actual start in film occurred two years earlier, in 1915. Her chance came with the labor shortages of the First World War--where her husband was away fighting, at Verdun. Dulac had transferred to become drama critic for La française in 1909 (having been a biography-writer until then), and in that position had taken more and more interest in the cinema—in 1909 she describes elements of the staging of a Sarah Bernhart play as cinematic.[40] In 1914, Napierkowska had invited Dulac with her to Rome where she was shooting Caligula, to assist in production. In Dulac's words, "C'est près de la belle artiste qui est Napierkowska, et grâce à elle, que j'appris les secrets de l'art cinégraphique.»[41]

The plot of Vénus Victrix, written by Hillel-Erlanger, revolves around a playwright, Bernard Belmont, and his wife, the successful actress Régine. In vengeance for Régine's rejection of his love overtures, the Marquis de San Silvio, theater owner, hires Djali to seduce Regine's husband through her dancing. "As a charmer of serpents, I know only too well how to bewitch a man," Djali assures de San Silvio. Her success wins her the lead in

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Bernard Belmont's latest play, La reine de saba, one of the tales of Les contes des mille et une nuits, scenes from which seem to have been enclosed within Dulac's film. [42] . Surviving production stills show Napierkowska semi-veiled in dangling earrings and an off-the-shoulder, wrap-around, patterned sari. A massive curtain of Arabic lettering and arabesques forms a backdrop, cushions lie about her feet, while Djali's stares from a studded, canopied throne inlaid with mother-of-pearl and webbed with wooden latticing in the North African style. A second still appears to show the seduction scene, in which Djali perches on a tiger-skin divan, in a tiered, diaphanous skirt, her naked arms bent up at the elbows and supporting horizontal hands in the hallmark gesture of the oriental dancer. Black men, naked from the waist up and attired as ancient Egyptian slaves surround Djali, perhaps to carry her out on her fur chaise.

(The still's juxtaposition of smart, dinner-jacketed party-goers with entertainers in oriental apparel more generally evokes the era's fashion for fancy dress soirées. Judith Gautier had attended one such event, as Cleopatra, in the winter of 1887-88, an evening that held her first meeting with Pierre Loti, dressed as Pharaoh. Thereafter, the two of them corresponded "entirely in hieroglyphics."[43] Dulac herself later stages one on screen in Ame d'artiste; a reviewer described this masked ball as having a décor worthy of Les Contes des Mille et une Nuits."[44] This juxtaposition similarly echoes a standard procedure of Orientalist painting, practiced by Gérôme, Renoir, and others, of costuming European men and women in Eastern garb in the studio before painting them as part of an Oriental milieu.)

Dulac's mise-en-scènes of the Orient continue in another lost film of the same year, Âme de fous (19 17), from which survive languid stills of actress and dancer, Eve Francis lounging on leopard skins and bolsters in the pose of the Rokeby Venus.

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In this six-part serial, written by Dulac, Eve Francis (wife of critic and filmmaker Louis Delluc) plays a scheming South American golddigger, Lola, pursuing the fortune of the Sombreuse family. In Part Five, the Sombreuse heiress, Irène, fleeing Lola, who is her new step-mother, and her corrupt step-uncle, spontaneously accepts a job in Marseille with a dance troupe travelling to Egypt. Judging from production stills, her new Cairo career brings textile hangings, cushions, and carpets, ankle bracelets and the choreography of angled limbs.[45] Irène becomes the celebrated "danseuse égytienne" and, in Part Six, makes her début back in Paris under a stage name. She relinquishes her dancer's identity in the denouement, after Gérard, her first sweetheart who had given her up for dead spots her on stage.

In the year following Âme de fous Dulac filmed a May-December marriage plot, La Cigarette (1918). The husband is Emeritus Curator at the Museum of Oriental Art in Paris, currently deciphering the history of a newly-acquired ancient egyptian mummy. The Orient does not remain within the museum, however, but spills into the film's home interiors (as sideboard pharaonic statuettes and wall papyri), and even into the décor of the bohemian pad set up by the friends of the curator's young wife Denise. We watch a trio of modern women—Denise, her trendy mate Irène de Tramont, and the latter's sister—pinning up an Orientalist shrine for guests; they transform Irène's new pied-à-terre with drapes, plumped cushions, perfumed lilies, and a tiger-skin divan. The result, with its two-storey layout, balcony and oriental décor, is strikingly reminiscent of the vamp's lair in A Fool there Was, an extremely successful film of four years earlier which had launched Theda Bara's career.)

La belle dame sans merci (1920), the lead character is a famous actress (and seductress), Lola de Sandoval. Her name carries its own brand of exoticism, connoting a

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non-French, perhaps Spanish, Moorish source. Theda Bara had established the vamp's exotic filmic lineage with A Fool There Was (1914), and indeed, Lola glares confrontationally into the camera in her three-quarter length opening shot with an expression and make-up reminiscent of Bara's. Lola arrives before us as an on-screen vignette of Cleopatra replete with black slaves, as if to suggest a stage role for which the Lola character was famous, like Bara (in her film Cleopatra of 1917), Rubinstein (in the Ballet Russes' Cléopâtre of 1909), and Napierkowska (in Pathé's Cléopâtre of 1910) before her.[46] Later, townswomen gossip about the slaves that they imagine serve her. Dulac visualizes these thoughts for us, showing four men in egyptianizing loin cloths symmetrically draped around Lola on a staircase. When Lola, on tour, reaches the provinces, she orders her hotel room decked with furs, japanese prints, suites of cushions, and other orientalist props of seduction. She holds court in this boudoir of rugs and ominously gigantic flowers (veritable "Fleurs du Mal"), and in a later scene slips half-naked down the steps of her pool à la Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's The Tepidarium (1881).

Her endless divan-lounging odalisques and snake bracelet leave no final doubt as to her Eastern allegiance.

The invitation to spot Oriental mise-en-scène continues to be rewarded, in the armleted and bikinied dancer of Dulac's lost film Malencontre (1920) which treats the theme of miscegenation, and in the seduction scene of Âme d'artiste (1925), in which theater sponsor, Lord Stamford, lures Helen into his persian-style loggia, a "cosy corner" of sofas, exquisite weavings, and a mummy sarcophagus (recycled from La cigarette). The air is thick with the trailing smoke of a perfume burner, loaded by Stamford with Eastern powders.

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(Figure 11, Production still of Helen, played by British actress Mable Poulton, under the influence of the incense burner in Âme d'artiste (1925)).

"This is the little corner where I live out my oriental voyages," explains Stamford, stimulating a cut to travelling camera images of deserts and palms, visions in Helen's incense-filled head.[47] "The sand of Egypt will captivate you," he continues, as if promising her the subsequent moving shot of the sphinx and pyramids.

Surviving documents suggest Dulac contemplated other juicy oriental film projects: the Three Apples tale from Les contes des mille et une nuits, with Shéhérazade recounting

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issn 1679-9100

the narrative on the banks of the Tigris in Bagdhad and Basra; La Femme du Harem, with its character Sultan Mustafa, who kidnaps the young bride Jane for his harem, who is in her turn aided in her escape by Sapho, a woman of the harem; and a project on Salomé. The exotic environment of La Princesse Mandane of 1928, stems, we can conclude, from a long and thorough Parisian immersion in the stuff.

This brief survey isolates props as the central markers of Dulac's Orientalism. Performance style contributes (dances, the valence of a pose such as the odaliqsue), as do minor plot elements (the staging of Cleopatra), while location is strikingly insignificant as a source. Dulac takes us briefly to a Cairo interior (in Âme de fous)--as far as we can tell from surviving materials--and to Mingrelia (actually shot in the Midi), but otherwise unfolds her Orient entirely in indoor, urban, contemporary France. Unlike her contemporaries the Orientalist painters Etienne Dinet or Gustav Guillaumet, or Matisse and Renoir, or photographers Beato or Maxime du Camp, or filmmaker Feyder, who shot his L'Atlantide in Algeria, Dulac did not pursue the intensity of North African light as a laboratory for visual creativity.[48] Nor was she drawn to the splendor of the region's architectural offerings, nor the Orientalist project of ethnographic documentation or accuracy, nor indeed direct, on the spot contact with the East; she was not among the notable woman travellers encountering arab life first-hand, that is for example, not among her peers Gertrude Bell, Agatha Christie, and Lucie Delarue-Mardrus. (Though we would want to know what topics she treated in her now forgotten documentary cinema of the 1930s.)

Oriental themes were so abundant on the French screen by the early 1920s that one critic, René Jeanne, could describe "une pluie de films orientaux" storming the Parisian market.[49] Orientalist painting had by now an established, standard iconography,

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Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

one expanded and adapted to suit Universal and Colonial expositions where the Société des Peintres Orientalists furnished murals and friezes as well as easel painting displays. Such exhibitions included the Muslim Art Exhibition of 1893 in the Palais de l'Industrie, the 1906 National Colonial Exposition in Marseilles, several carpet exhibitions in 1917, 1919, and 1923-24, and the Exhibition of Decorative Arts of 1925, postponed from 1915 on account of the War.[50] The lustrous interiors of the colonial pavillions with their grand scenery, gigantic displays, and abundant Oriental furnishings were kin to Lochakoff's spectacular designs while the iconographic range of Orientalist easel painting also fed directly into cinematic mise-en-scène.[51]

>In his article, Jeanne itemizes the Oriental film's iconography: palm-ringed villas, harems, cushions, fezes on brown heads, sparkling fountains, cortèges of slaves, glittering water tanks, shadowy divans, belly dancers and sensual bodies. He also recognizes the diffusion of this world through French couture, hats, toiletries, hairstyles, jewellery, and furniture, and the so-called "petit coin" or cosy corner.[52] It is this second dimension of Orientalism that Dulac exploits. She certainly partakes of Jeanne's iconographic list, and in that sense plays on the generic character of Orientalist painting and film, but omits its exterior elements: we find no moorish architecture or sub-tropical vegetation. Dulac's Orient did not arrive at vast cinematic images of desert openness, unlike Feyder's. Her fictional desert, when present, is not a recuperative place of recovery, as it was for so many (from Florence Nightingale to Auguste Renoir) who sought its dry air for lung complaints. Instead, Dulac's desert, in La mort du soleil, is diseased and seething with TB victims. She figures it as an Old Testament-style, apocalyptic nightmare, imagined in the mind of her plot 's character, Dr. Faivre.

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Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

Was it purely budgetary constraint that accounted for Dulac's omission? Certainly this must be part of the answer. But recognizing her tendency towards imported costume and décor over on-location landscape and architecture, and her preference for Oriental interiors over exteriors helps us to specify the Orient's value for Dulac more precisely.

Unlike Matisse, Klee, or Kees van Dongen, who made painting expeditions to North Africa to refresh their craft, Dulac learned Oriental styles second or third hand. She encountered them on gallery walls and in Albatros films, on stage, in the bazaars and emporia of the Place Clichy, in universal expositions, and ultimately and above all, in the Paris prop shops.[53] Dulac's Orient grew and was filtered within local European cultures--it came through deracinated encounters, invented and resituated within the Paris milieu severed from original geographical contexts and meanings. Her iconography arose through visits to Judith Gautier's livingroom, through the umpteen colonial importations and popularized representations, and through illustrations and the rhythms of modern dance fashions. Judith Gautier, master of several Eastern languages as well as author of multiple oriental novellas stated late in life that she would never go to the actual East for the risk of becoming disenchanted; Dulac also stayed home.[54]

The specific brand of Dulac's Orientalism raises the question of her estimation of film décor in general, for while she could fulsomely praise her designers Lochakoff and Savigny (designer for La princesse Mandane), she could also write manifestos on the studio-free filming of nature.[55] Indeed, her expressed views on setting ranged through at least three positions in the 1920s.

She argued, in an interview of 1924, that cinema produced its own décor, through its various devices of slow motion, superimposition, and distortion--its thousands of plays of light. A film might need some basic background architecture, Dulac would grant, but

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Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

the guiding principle should be to build décor through cinematic means, and thus develop a new relationship to décor than that offered by the theater.[56] Dulac's guarded views of expressionism, a sister branch of the filmic avant-garde, are revealing: Caligari is good, and "yet, the décor of that film for me was a bit too well fixed and concrete. Too precise for the imagination of a madman."[57]

Dulac's second, more radical position (an extension of the first) is a desire to be "libérer du décor" in the service of a propless "cinéma pur," filmed outdoors and away from commercial stages.[58] This view, the one most familiar to us today on account of its central role in her avant-garde credo, underlay the filming of her three experimental works of 1929, and her six short films of 1930.[59]

Dulac third outlook on mise-en-scène relates to her general distaste for the division of labor in the studio, and her plea for full control to lie with the director.[60] She described in interviews the care she took with every iota of the mise-en-scène; she even penned an entire essay on costume and its material importance in transfering aesthetic and moral data via the screen.[61] Reporters similarly described Dulac's meticulous attention to detail: "there is no element of scenery, no cushion, no flower, that is not positioned by her; this feminine, and artistic dexterity reveals itself in the tiniest detail of the whole."[62] Mme. Beudet's repeated off-centering of the table vase in La Souriante Mme Beudet comes immediately to mind (in contrast to her husband's simple centering of the object) as an autobiographical expression of this attentiveness.

In the same interview of 1924 cited above, Dulac chose the term "animateur" to suggest that her approach to directing was one of creating, and to distinguish it from that of the "metteur en scène" who arranged, combined, and executed.[63] With this in mind, let us return to Dulac's animation of Oriental props.

CISC
Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

Immediately striking is her self-reflexive highlighting of the manufacture of the Oriental mise-en-scène—her concern to signal her screen Orient as an engineered iconography and environment. Using her character Lola in La Belle Dame, for example, Dulac itemizes the work of building an Oriental ambience; when Lola arrives in the provinces she orders an Oriental boudoir to serve her as a set of social and erotic tools. We see the props carted in. In opening the same film, Dulac equates Orientalism with performance: Lola poses on stage as Cleopatra. The later scenes of slavery, imagined by the townswomen, directly cite Dulac's earlier film, Vénus Victrix, placing the Orient in a cinematic and iconographic lineage rather than in any historical or geographic context. Through these moments, the film transcends the story of the cruel woman, and asks us to reflect on cinema's construction of personas and settings in general, and on the ways in which a modern woman might inhabit roles and stage scenarios in living contemporary life. Âme de fous (1918), in which Irène, the French heiress, temporarily adopts the persona of an egyptian dancer to escape brutality opens a similar question, as does the already mentioned furnishing of an Orientalist pied-à-terre by fledging young women in La Cigarette.

Dulac's Orient was always applied, never natural. It was not about sand, wind, and light, but about anklets, strewn cushions, and exotic dancers. Further, none of the plots of her films, pace La princesse mandane unfold in a distant and imaginary land. Dulac's are not costume pictures of the L'Atlantide or Michel Strogoff ilk, or immersive bible pictures or adventure stories such as The Thief of Bagdad, taking place on the banks of the Tigris.[64] Instead, her Orient sprouts in the hotels and drawing rooms of modern France. In the most extreme case, La Princesse Mandane, Orientalism exists as a fashion of the screen, of the Russian-Albatros brand—Dulac's protagonist falls asleep, and dreams an

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

Oriental adventure prompted by having watched Michel Strogoff. It arises from a fictional cinema outing.

Though perhaps surprising, these observations tally with priorities in Dulac's filmmaking more generally. She preferred to anchor her plots within a distinct social reality, to deal, for example, with feminist independence, oppression, class status, or racial integration. This is even in the case in L'Invitation au voyage, her short film based on Baudelaire's poem, the latter about journeying through the tropics, itself a landmark text of French exoticism. Half way through Dulac's interpretation of the voyage, the fetching man in the bar ceases flirting with the female protagonist-- he has noticed her wedding ring and turns away from her. An image of the woman's son at home appears to her, fused over the medallion she holds; the responsibilities of motherhood are intruding visually into her evening adventure. A few moments later we glimpse the shabby wings of a film studio stage through one of the bar's porthole windows.

Dulac's political engagement was evident throughout her career, from her early reporting on the feminist newspaper, through her anger and shame at the failure of French women to win the vote after the First World War, through her anti-fascist pronouncements in the late 1920s as well as through her efforts to transform cinema. How is this commitment to addressing contemporary life aided by seizing umpteen opportunities for Orientalism, be it on stage (La belle dame and Âme de fous), in a museum, or fashionable studio (La Cigarette ), or in the loggia of a British mansion (Âme d'artiste)? It was the pleasure of the Islamic as a visual and cultural code, transformed through recyclings within contemporary French urban culture that fascinated Dulac. It assisted her in her recorded ambitions to encounter, reach, and educate a diverse and popular public.[65] Through film she could consciously and directly demonstrate

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

Orientalism as a contemporary fashion, imported, sold, worn, enacted, and enjoyed by those metropolitan audiences (as opposed to the dominated colonies) which sustained its cycling. (As Marianne x commented at the 2002 Frankfurt Dulac workshop, the bourgeois Dulac embraced the trash of her day. )

In La Cigarette, Dulac contrasts two contemporary instanciations of Orientalism: the earnest, academic scholarship of a professor and his newly-received mummy; and the fashionable tastes of modern Parisian women who play golf. In terms of the outcome of the plot, which she herself scripted, her verdict comes down hard on the side of the latter, of youth and energy, leaving the ancient pharaonic East of death and desiccation banished from the marriage. But it is La princesse mandane, Dulac's concluding feature film that most explicitly analyses her public's lust for the Orient, for, as mentioned above, the entire East emerges explicitly here as a fantasy of the cinema—cinema itself is to blame for the whole Mingrélie adventure. How is this so?

In her adaptation of L'Oublié, Dulac installs a frame narrative that opens with two young employees of a French electrical factory rather than with soldiers en route to Trebizond, as in Benoit's original. This affianced couple, a young stenographer, Annette, and her boyfriend Étienne Pindère (Ernst van Duren) live upstairs and downstairs from one another. The devoted Annette moons across her office typewriter out of the window, hoping to glimpse her engineer Étienne as he supervises cables, insulators, and capacitors.[66] In this extended, new introduction, Dulac opposes the practical and frugal Annette (who knows how to select the best leeks off the grocer's stall after work), to the "vain and self-infatuated" Étienne, whose studio-bedroom, plastered with film stars proves fertile ground for his bold imaginings. On his way home from work, Étienne lingers by a book stand rather than a vegetable one, and later imagines his famous scientific

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

inventions: “Digitigrades” and “Plantigrades.” Back in his room, “peuplé des rèves,” as the intertitle puts it, Étienne lounges in his undershirt with a film magazine. But the hyper-organization of mass manufacture punctuates his and Annette’s dreaming; close-ups of the clock and factory whistle circumscribe both his fan- imaginings and Annette’s musing. The cinema also regulates their lives.

On Saturday night the pair settle down to Victor Tourjansky’s Michel Strogoff (1926), mentioned earlier, a prominent French adventure film of a couple of years before, based on Jules Verne’s celebrated novel and starring the inimitable Ivan Mosjoukine in the title role. The travails of Strogoff, the Tsar’s messenger, captured and apparently blinded by Tartars, enthral both Annette and Étienne. Enraptured, they earnestly take to heart a screen intertitle on the need for heroism in the face of a beloved’s anxiety; gripped, they watch potentates in silk robes, rhythmic drummers beating, and Michel’s lacerated flesh, as, tied at the stake, he awaits the enemy’s burning poker.

Shortly after their movie outing, Étienne stops to read a factory flyer calling for workers to electrify northern Mingrélie. Consulting a map, he imagines, through a short sequence of inserted shots, energetic dancing and women in pantaloons. He announces his decision to enlist and travel there, for, he tells Annette, perhaps, “I will have the chance to experience adventure, like Michel Strogoff.” “Among Tartars?” responds his alarmed girlfriend, whose contrasting memory clip, also embedded cinematically by Dulac, recalls Strogoff’s torture.

A train takes Étienne away, but after his boss, a few shots later, sends him alone on reconnaissance in the high, dry, Mingrélian peaks, Étienne falls asleep in the straw of a mountain refuge, awaiting his comrades. Dismissing his fiancée’s lovingly-packed box of chocolates, Étienne dozes off to find the adventure that, as Dulac’s intertitle puts it, “his

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

soul had long wanted." For most of the rest of the film he assumes the role of a swashbuckling ambassador come to rescue the fabulous Mandane, under house-arrest in her own kingdom. It is only now that we have joined the Benoit tale.

Dulac's substantial frame separates the Orient we are about to enjoy from the daily life of a working-class pair, our surrogates as cinema-goers. We enter the Orient with this self-awareness. As if this were not education enough, however, as we start "dreaming," Dulac inserts another transitional scene, one which delights in exposing the procedures for adopting a screen character. As Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, Étienne ( in his sleep, of course) sheds his overalls and springs about in a fabulous tiled bathroom in underpants, socks and garters. This is, for all the world, the studio dressing room, with its glaring light bulbs and multiple mirrors. Step by step Étienne dons the penguin suit of the publicity photograph described earlier, and from here his dream opens fully onto the excesses of thorough-going exoticism: in a wide shot we now gaze upon indoor reflecting rectangular pools, a parrot on perch, a monkey, poufs, saluki hounds, zebra skins, plus women in harem pants and bra tops.

Étienne glimpses Femina, the Parisian women's magazine, lying about on a side table—a tongue-in-cheek Dulacian reference to the way in which this Orient subsists as a part of Parisian fashion rather than as a part of Mingrélie.[67] As the Princesse Mandane herself enters, in glinting spangles, her double trains slinking across the set, her name flashes up on screen over her image, in the style of the film's title, simulating Étienne's flash of recognition that he is, indeed, entering a film.

Other eruptions of metropolitan Paris, à la Femina moment, entwine modern life with this Orient. Mandane has a direct Mingrelian connection to the (brand new) radio antenna on the Eiffel Tower, which broadcasts that the factory employee Pindère has

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

gone missing.[68] Despite her remote location, she has a fast car, and a type of "mirror" through which she can spy on her guards and hear contemporary dance music—as she and Etiènne dine, a superimposed image of van Duren and Guy in their off-screen identities as dancers floats over the receiver. The film's own network of roots in modern life parcel up its Orientalism, reiterating the structure of the audience's own appreciation.

We can claim Dulac's self-conscious Orientalism as a key vector through which her engagement in contemporary life combined with her sense of alternative scenarios of practical living, and reached the screen. Recalling Behdad's complaint about the limitations of Said's Orientalism, we might surmise that notions of the harem and their legendary sexuality, or the lives of politically accomplished heroines such as Cleopatra or Salomé might have had a different value for a feminist, lesbian filmmaker living in Paris than for a male artist or public for whom, it has often been claimed, the East connoted weak femininity, homoerotic forays, and unresisted erotic conquest.[69] Participants in the 2002 Frankfurt seminar perceived in Dulac's films a thematic longing to loosen the ties of heterosexuality, as opposed to any explicit presentation of a lesbian world. Characteristic for Dulac instead, for example, is the open ending of La mort du soleil with its ménage of two men, a woman, and child, bound through careers, love, and rivalry. Or the unexplained but prominent use of model ships in her in mise-en-scènes (in La princesse, L'Invitation, La mort), icons of sailing to other shores. Granted, Baudelaire's poem quoted at the outset of L'Invitation au voyage with its reference to sisters and women may have attracted Dulac for writing of love between women, shown in the two women dancing together in the film. And a possible lesbian rescue scenario is implied in Dulac's unrealized La femme du harem with its characters Jane and Sapho mentioned

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Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

earlier. But it is only at the conclusion of Etiènne's dream that a moment of Dulac's rare lesbian commentary openly erupts between main characters.

Etiènne expects to depart galantly with the princess he has just rescued. Instead, with a smile, she suddenly pairs with her female bodyguard and drives off with her in pleasure, leaving him alone by a stream in the landscape, now bereft of Oriental trappings. The rocks, rivulets and trees of Mingrelia surround him; gone are all tropical fauna, sequins, and marble. He awakes to find Annette in his hut, urging him back to the non-cinema, non-dream world of the Paris banlieu.

Emily Apter reminds us why the most explicitly lesbian instance of Dulac's oeuvre might occur within a dreamed Orient. As she points out, "French feminism mobilized Orientalist stereotypes" in theater productions, private theatricals, and salon appearances. It favored such historical figures as Cleopatra, Semiramis, and Thais for their political and sexual ambition. Further, these "orientalist stereotypes were used as a means of partially or semi-covertly outing Sapphic love."[70] Michael Moon makes similar arguments in relation to the gay community's staging of Schéhérazade parties--the exotic stereotype of Orientalist performance provided a substrate upon which gay and lesbian identity could take shape.[71] Apter cites Colette's performance with her lover, Missy, in Rêve d'Egypte, and Ida Rubinstein's performances as Cleopatra and Shéhérazade for the Ballets Russes. Here, "acting 'Oriental' becomes a form of outing, and outing is revealed to be thoroughly consonant with putting on an act."[72]

Apter's approach, like that of Roger Benjamin, chips away at the conceptualization of Orientalism as a uniform field. The performances she describes certainly tap Orientalism's schemes of tyranny, racism, and cultural superiority, but, by playfully channeling its highly pronounced and recognizable aesthetic codes, syphon these valences

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

off in the service of a minority enclave breathing within the capital itself, one which must invent its own passwords and vocabulary. Apter describes the ways in which Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, Renée Vivien, Cléo de Mérode, and others lived these orientalist personas in their daily erotic lives. Natalie Barney's salons, for example, were key venues for performing lesbian love through the image-repertoire of Orientalism. (It was Barney who paired in a five-decade bond with painter Romaine Brooks at the end of the latter's four year relationship with dancer Ida Rubinstein.)

Germaine Dulac's name resists easy attachment to this world, and indeed, it appears neither within Apter's pages, nor as part of the milieu Shari Benstock describes in her magisterial Women of the Left Bank.[73] Dulac reviewed plays by Colette, and her papers include a scenario after Colette's novel Chéri, as well as a brief letter from that author.[74] They also hold a short letter from Paris New Yorker correspondent Janet Flanner, congratulating Dulac on the launch of her journal Schémas.[75] There is also a hint of a link to Lucie Delarue-Mardrus, "orientalized doyenne of the lesbian elite" who, by the time of her divorce in 1914 was one of the most highly paid and sought after female novelists in France (and also reviewed in La Francaise , sometimes alongside Dulac's articles).[76] The Mardrus couple were neighbors of Georgette Leblanc and Maurice Maeterlinck, both of whom shared Dulac's world. (Like Dulac, Leblanc penned theoretical reflections on cinema. She acted the role of Claire in Marcel l'Herbier's L'Inhumaine (1924), a key film of the ciné-club movement, and, at the time of filming, was embarking upon a twenty-year relationship with another woman of the Left Bank, Little Review editor Margaret Anderson.[77] )

Delarue-Madrus' former husband, Joseph-Charles Mardrus, was possibly a model for the husband, playright and poet Bernard Belmont, in Dulac's Vénus Victrix, who has

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

written The Queen of Sheba which will be performed within Dulac's film. J-C Mardrus was an accomplished Arabist who had serialized his new translation of The Queen of Sheba in La Revue Blanche starting in 1899. In 1918 J-C Mardrus published his entire translation of Le conte des 1001 nuits.[78] His illustrator was Kees van Dongen, the Fauve painter, and Dulac was certainly contemplated filming sections of Les contes des 1001 nuits at about this time. Van Dongen's activities crossed the Dulac circle at many points, evidencing her proximity to this facet of vanguard and sometimes glamorous Paris. in 1919 he was also illustrating Irène Hillel-Erlanger's book, Voyage en Kaléidoscope; he designed paintings for Louis Delluc's lost film Fumée Noire in 1920 and costumes for Delluc's next film, Fièvre in 1921; and in 1923 collaborated with Stasia Napierkowska together with Blaise Cendrars on an evening of avant-garde performance, Fête Nègre. [79] His full-length standing nude of Edmonde Guy, completed a couple of years before she starred in La Princesse Mandane, hung at his home throughout the 1920s and was apparently a talking point at his many salons.

If this network of associations does not directly link the appeal of Orientalism for Dulac to specific members of the vibrant lesbian elite of Paris, her attraction to oriental dance certainly overlapped with that terrain. Dance, of course, had had a priviledged relationship to film from film's first outings—dance, the art of movement, promised perfectly to display and consummate the new medium's power. Dulac was therefore far from alone in regularly filming dance for the screen: Spanish dances in La Fête Espagnol; the "dance of seduction" in Vénus Victrix; the "dance egyptienne" in Âmes de fous; the belly dance in La Princesse Mandane ; the classical ballet of Thèmes et Variations; and others. The impact of Loie Fuller's performances on Dulac has often been remarked on, following Dulac's own enthusiastic recollections written in 1928.[80] Fuller's evenings had

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

taken Paris by storm in the 1880s, had been recorded on camera, and had inspired Symbolist poet Mallarmé to dedicated many lines to her.[81]

In "Trois rencontres avec Loïe Fuller," Dulac honors Fuller's art as an ephemeral one of music and light implying an association with Dulac's own "cinema pur" of the year following the Fuller article, 1929. But we need to set Dulac's avowed interest in fleeting movement and the abstractions of Fuller's flooding light and music, and her choice of a dancer in tutu en pointe in Thèmes et Variations (1929), against her interest in other styles of dance, as well as other facets of Fuller's performance, such as its serpentine, exotic structure. And indeed, set Dulac's remarks within the context of developments in modern dance unfolding around her.

The latter movement, increasingly saturated with eastern themes, was of incontrovertible aesthetic and erotic importance to her. Maud Allan was a key transitional dancer of this trend, whose controversial Salomé in 1906 was one of the first of many modern dances explicitly derived from Egyptian contexts.[82] (As previously noted, Dulac herself contemplated a Salomé film.) The dances of Sent M'ahesa (Else von Carlberg), Maud Allan, Ruth St. Denis, and others impelled the dancer towards the earth; the impulse was one of attachment to the floor, rather than the over-coming of gravity expressed on block shoes. It was a style which emphased the whole body as site of expression, as explored above all by Fokine.

Dulac's closest links to this world came through her lover Napierkowska. The latter had trained and was based as an "exotic dancer" at the Opéra-Comique, performed at the Follies Bèrgere, and was, as mentioned earlier, engaged by Diaghilev for Le dieu bleu in 1912, along with Mata Hari.[83] But before the development of her professional and private relationship with Napierkowska, and, indeed, before her move into filmmaking,

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

Dulac had already, as mentioned earlier, praised Garden's Salomé precisely for adding dance to the latter's expressive fields and thus serving the Wagnerian goal of uniting movement, gesture, words, and music.[84] A further element from the Dulac archive sheds still more light on the importance of modern dance and its exotic power for the filmmaker.

She reads Eugène Delacroix's 1847 journal in 1923. At one point, Delacroix reflects on the ephemerality of the art of singing (Delacroix's subject is cantatrice Maria Malibran), and prompts Dulac's own essay on the cinema as a recorder of performing arts.[85] Alighting on the controversiality of Ida Rubinstein, Dulac singles out, as in the case of Gardner, the remarkable synthesis of her art, which winds "the science of gesture, extreme in its expressive acuity . . . with a monotonous flow hostile to impulse, a monotonous chanting flooding continuously" over an orchestral plasticity of intense modulation. Dulac deciphers two highly contrasting forces structuring Rubinstein's choreography and song. Rubinstein represents for Dulac, she writes, a fundamentally avant-garde combination which pits society's polite, official face over the vibrations of our hearts. While Rubinstein's voice would elude registration, since the cinema was still silent, "her delicate yet haughty dramatic genius" would be delivered to future audiences, wrote Dulac, now that she planned to perform Phèdre before D'Annunzio's camera wearing Leon Bakst's costume and décor.[86]

This appreciation of Rubinstein, heroine of the lesbian elite, performer of Cleopatras and Phèdres, in conjunction with the roster of Oriental dancers of Dulac's films, and the numerous Oriental settings for female protagonists, suggests we would not be going out on a limb to read the lesbian coupling at the end of La princesse mandane within the framework Apter offers. Willingly drawn to the exoticism of Benoit's mise-en-

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

scène and to its powerful heroine, Dulac commingles his novel with modern France through her frame narrative. Through this frame she speaks directly to her local viewing audience (whose alternative worlds included performing lesbianism as Orientalism); through the central plot she reaches towards their non-conformist sexual identities spoken through Orientalism, creating her female pair at the last moment, just inside the dream. There is a layering of two staggered endings, the inner one resolved through lesbian union, the outer one through a drearier heterosexual coupling. Dulac had already sketched the possibility of varied options for viewing in her earlier cinema-going scene, comparing Etienne's and Annette's divergent responses to Michael Strogoff. There are differences in gendered reception, as well as in the selective and individual character of film consumption, she wants to say, such that no filmmaker can fully control exactly how their work will be perceived, remembered, and shape subsequent personal decisions. The two endings amplify deliberately the range that she proposes inevitably to be part of cinematic expression.

Dulac explained in an interview that behind her restructuring of Benoit's plot of La princesse mandane lay a moral intention, of bringing the hero by the end to the realization that, after his multiple adventures, he would "prefer to find happiness in simplicity."[87] She insists further that she has adapted the Benoit not to produce a reverie, of a fairy princess in a marvellous land, but to produce a fable, an exercise of the imagination.[88] Etiènne tries to abandon the life of the factory to run round the world, but, like cinema, Dulac implies, he will give up the desire.[89]

Dulac suggests the appearance of a cinema that abnegates sets and extravagance the following year. Her three purely avant-garde films of 1929 all but eschew Oriental aura. Instead of a Salomé or Cleopatra, Dulac casts a ballerina in a white tutu, intercutting

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Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

and paralleling her movements with the spinning perfection of machines for tooling, the kind indeed that Étienne supervises. In this particular film, Thèmes et Variations, composed mostly in medium shot, backgrounds are absent, blank, or out of focus. The only "props" are mechanical contraptions, nature itself, and the classical dancer--there are no furs, hangings, cushions, cisterns. This suite of films had been critically well-received, but one reviewer remarked that Disques 957 (one of the three) was anaemic. It had nothing more to offer than "une gentille petite culture en serre d'association d'idées," and he concluded that nothing but "un certain snobisme se nourrit ces confusions"[90]

We might have to agree. In inverting the relation of factory to Orient, by comparison with La princesse mandane—that is, by placing the dance of machinery at the heart of the film rather than at the edges, and by substituting the Oriental dancer for a classical one and utterly banning Islamic traces--we arrive at bloodlessness. What Dulac had gained was the balance of Purism. What she had strained out was the vigorous erotic confection of orientalism with its multiple ties to colonialism but also to the non-conventional and artistic worlds of contemporary Paris and the circulating, pulsing fantasies of their viewers.

Or has she replaced the representational orientalism her princesse with a theory of orientalism, that of the "arabesque"?

Note: I would like to thank Tami Williams for suggesting to me that Orientalism was amply present in the Dulac archive in Paris .

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

## NOTAS

[1] Mingrelia was an actual Black Sea region of western Georgia.

[2] John Camera, «Germaine Dulac Réalise L'Oublié, » Cinémagazine (8:8) 24 February 1928: 339.

[3] Maurice Tourneur adapted Pierre Benoit for Koenigsmark in 1935. La Chatelaine de Liban was adapted in 1956. Several of Benoit`s narratives had already reached the screen: La Ronde de Nuit in 1925, and La Chaussée des Géants also in 1925.

[4] Hillel-Erlanger, who had scripted Vénus Victrix, was also co-founder of Dulac's film company, D. H. in 1915, sometimes called Delia Film. Napierkowska was going to the cinema with Dulac from 1914 onwards. Tami Williams brought these biographical facts of Dulac's life to light at the symposium at Frankfurt of 2002. In an interview of 1925 Dulac recalled that her interest in working in cinema began in 1913, and that she studied in Italy and France, directing for Pathé and Film d'Art before commencing with her own company. See "Les Cinéastes: Germaine Dulac," Cinéa-Ciné-Pour-Tous 41 (15 July 1925): 10.

[5] Lochakoff also designed Jean Epstein's Le Lion de Mongols (1924). As François Albéra has pointed out, the scale and style of Albatros productions were part of a conscious strategy for combating Hollywood cinema.

[6] Although Dulac never made a film with Ermolieff-Albatros, two fellow-members of the Ciné-Club movement, Jean Epstein and Marcel L'Herbier completed feature films at this studio, finding the context congenial for forays into the world of commercial cinema similar to hers in La princess mandane.

[7] The early records of Iris Barry's collecting for the Film Library are lost. Ron Magliozzi`s research establishes that Beudet premiered at the Museum in the "The Film in Germany and France. The Film in France-The Advance-Guard" program on 7 March 1937. Films typically went into the circulating collection at the time that they appeared in a public program. Thus, probably early 1937, for Beudet. In any case, it appears in the circulating catalog published circa 1940. Regarding Seashell, 16mm prints were produced for circulation in 1968. This, and the evidence that it does not appear in the 1963 catalog, suggest Seashell began to circulate with the Film Library in 1969. I thank Ron Magliozzi for this information.

CISC
Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

[8] Light Cone, a distribution company in Paris holds many Dulac prints and is in the process of negotiating their re-circulation with Gaumont.

[9] A collection of Dulac's writings has appeared in French : Prosper Hillairet, ed. Germaine Dulac: Écrits sur le Cinéma (1919-1937) (Éditions Paris Expérimental: Paris, 1994).

[10] List Dulac's positions within ciné-club organizations. For the Ciné-Club movement, see Richard Abel, French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929 (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ): 251-257.

[11] These notes form the basis of many of Dulac's filmic writings.

[12] Two of Dulac's feature films are overtly about "l'âme": Âme de fous, and Âme d'artiste. It is also a favorite term in her writing about cinema. Wendy Dozoretz, in her Ph.D dissertation, summarizes the Symbolist connotations of état d'âme, which include the exteriorization of one's most powerful and private emotions, as well as a transference of those emotions to a reader or sepctator: 73-5. Such ideas formed a foundation for Dulac's writings on cinema. See Wendy Dozoretz, Germaine Dulac : filmmaker, polemicist, theoretician (Ph.D., New York University: New York, 1982): 73-5.

[13] Such one-sidedness participates in the overall schism between scholarly examinations of industrial and independent production, or indeed between fiction and non-fiction film, shaping so much writing on cinema history.

[14] Germaine Dulac, "L'éssence du cinéma: l'idée visuelle," Les Cahiers du Mois 16/17 (1925), translated Robert Lamberton and reprinted in P. Adams Sitney, ed. The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism (New York University Press: New York, 1978): 42.

[15] Dulac, Guy, and van Duren on the set of La Princesse Mandane (1928), from John Camera, "Germaine Dulac réalise 'L'Oublié," Cinémagazine (24 February 1928): 339.

[16] Illustration taken from René Manevy, "À propos d'Âme d'Artiste: Les idées de Mme Germaine Dulac," Ciné-Miroir 4 :75 (1 June 1925) : 178.

[17] Edmonde Guy`s career as a film actress had begun two years earlier, with Mon Paris (1927) and Klovnen (1926), which film also marked the beginning of Ernst van Duren`s film career. The pair had performed as dancers on film, in Gehetzte Menschen (1924) and were known for modern dance in which Guy appeared in semi-nudity. See, for example, her skimpy outfit for the Ronacher Theater, Vienna, photographed in Die Muskete (December 1923), p. II, film supplement. Kees van

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Centro Interdisciplinar
de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

Dongen had completed a large standing nude of Edmonde Guy in the mid-1920s. She was still best known for her nudity in the mid-1930s, according to a cover article in the journal Détective (1936).

[18] Ali Bedhad, "Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution," (Duke University Press: Durham, 1994): 11. For Bedhad, Said's orientalism functions as a "closed system." (See p. 11).

[19] Roger Benjamin, "Matisse in Morocco: A Colonizing Esthetic?" Art in America LXXVIII (November 1990):211. Benjamin calls this style Matisse's "modernist orientalism."

[20] Benjamin, "Matisse in Morocco"; 158. See also, Roger Benjamin, Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930 (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2003): 61, 69. Here Benjamin notes that the Society existed until the Second World War, with a peak of a thousand paintings exhibited in 1913.

[21] Peter Wollen, "Out of the Past: Fashion/Orientalism/the Body," Raiding the Icebox (Verso: London, 1993).

[22] In the 1920s, critics regularly referred to Dulac as that "l'éminente cinéaste" (she received the Office of the Legion of Honor in 1927) without regard for her sex. (See Georges Dupont, « Quelques Minutes avec Germaine Dulac, » Cinémagazine 32-33 (12-19 August 1927) : 295. A similar assessment would be that in « Ame d'Artiste, » Cinémagazine 3 July 1925: 19, in which Dulac is introduced as one of the most representative directors of the French style of filmmaking, again with no reference to her sex.) It is only more recently that she has become a "woman-director," a shift encouraged by absence of access to the full scale and history of her career, and one which in seeking out feminist commentary in her work in connection with modernism would have been uneasy with her relationship to the colonial style of orientalism.

[23] In the words of a contemporary: "Son grand mérite est de pouvoir concilier les partisans des théories d'avant-garde avec les légitimes désirs d'un public trop peu averti encore. See "Quelque minutes avec Germaine Dulac," Cinémagazine: 32-33 (12-19 August 1927): 295. In an interview of two years earlier, Dulac calls for the collaboration of her public in the development of the art of cinema. See "Les Cinéastes: Germaine Dulac," Cinéa-Ciné-Pour-Tous 41 (15 July 1925): 11. The theme of compromise between the world of commercial and avant-garde cinema in the work of Dulac appears in older evaluations of Dulac such as that in René Jeanne and Charles Ford, Histoire encyclopédique du cinéma I: Le cinéma français, 1895-1929 (Robert Lafont: Paris, 1947): 260. See also the brief discussion of the two Dulacs in Marianne Alby, "Germaine Dulac tourne Le Diable dans la Ville ," Cinéa-Ciné-Pour-Tous 13 (15 May 1924): 27.

[24] Emily Apter, "Acting out Orientalism: Sapphic Theatricality in turn-of-the-century Paris," in Elin Diamond, ed. Performance and Cultural Studies (Routledge: New York 1996): 15-34; Michael Moon, „Flaming Closets," October 51 (Winter 1989): 22-54.

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de Semiótica da Cultura e da Mídia

Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

[25] Apter, "Acting out Oirentalism," 24.

[26] Roger Benjamin, Orientalist Aesthetics: 7.

[28] These also included Les Orientales and Shéhérazade. Garafola, Lynn, Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance (Wesleyan University Press: Middletown, CT, 2005): 154.

[29] Couturier Paul Poiret promulgated Bakst's pantallooning harem pants in his designs, adding orient-inspired lampshade tunics and turned-up slippers in glowing hues.

[30] François Albéra, Albatros: des Russes à Paris, 1919-1929 (Mazzotta: Paris, 1995): 19.

[31] See GD 4492, p. 10, a scrapbook of Dulac's articles held at BiFI, from La Française , 31 January 1907.

[32] Need to list some films here, Film d'Art, The Princess in the Vase.

[33] Johanna Richardson, Judith Gautier: A Biography (Franklin Watts: New York, 1987): 231.

[34] Richardson, Judith Gautier: 208; 186-87. Gautier spent 17 days in Algiers in 1914.

[35] Maxime du Camp was Judith Gautier's godfather.

[36] See GD 4492, translation Antonia Lant.

[37] GD 4492. Dulac's article is pasted into the scrapbook undated and I have been unable to trace it, but it was probably published in 1907. The world premiere of Strauss' opera had taken place two years earlier, in 1905, in Munich. (check city.)

[38] The description of Dulac's office was written several years later, in 1926. See Michel Zahar et Daniel Burret, „Une Heure chez Mme Germaine Dulac, » Cinéa-Ciné-Pour-Tous 63 (15 June 1926) : 13. Tami Williams showed me this photograph of Dulac's buddha.

[39] See GD 367, script for Vénus Victrix, with Dulac's annotations . The film is also known as Dans l'ouragan de la vie.

[40] G. Delestang, "Le Théatre," La française, 10 October 1909.

[41] André Bencey, « Germaine Albert-Dulac," Cinémagazine 2:8 (24 February 1922): 233. I have not been able to trace the filming of the Caligula story Dulac refers to.

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

[42] GD 367, script for Vénus Victrix:8.

[43] Johanna Richardson, Judith Gautier: A Biography (Franklin Watts: New York, 1987): 151-152.

[44] „Ame d'Artiste," Cinémagazine 3 July 1925: 20.

[45] See GD 17, scenario for Âme de Fous.

[46] Hillel-Erlanger's scenario describes Lola as appearing on stage as Cleopatra at the opening of the film. GD 24.

[47] GD 4, page 60, scenario for Âme d'Artiste.

[48] Benjamin, Orientalist Aesthetics : 52.

[49] René Jeanne, « L'Orient et le Cinéma, » Cinémagazine 10 (25-31 March 1921) :29. This article is cited in Albéra, Albatros: 22.

[50] Benjamin, Orientalist Aesthetics: 62, 207, 210, 211, 213.

[51] Benjamin, Orientalist Aesthetics: 105.

[52] Jeanne, « L'Orient et le Cinéma, » : 27.

[53] See Benjamin, Orientalist Aesthetics: 86, for reference to Orientalist merchandize on the Place Clichy.

[54] See Richardson, Gautier: 225-6.

[55] For Dulac's appreciation of Lochakov (spelled Lochavoff) see René Manevy, "À propos d'Âme d'Artiste: Les idées de Mme Germaine Dulac," Ciné-Miroir 4 :75 (1 June 1925) : 178.

[56] In her later essay « la musique du silence, » of 1928, Dulac adds another variation, putting it in terms of a need for a « simplification of sets. »

[57] Duterme, « Que demandez-vous au cinéma ? : 106. Trans. AL.

[58] Zahar et Burret, „Une Heure chez Mme Germaine Dulac, »: 13.

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

[59] This position was always relative: a prop list survives in the Dulac archive in which Dulac painstakingly itemizes the cost of the bunch of anemones purchased to support her conception for her 1929 experimental film Disque 957.

[60] Hillairet, ed. Germaine Dulac: 58.

[61] GD 1335, " La Robe." I have not been able to establish whether this manuscript essay was published.

[62] "Germaine Albert-Dulac," Cinémagazine 2:8 (24 February 1922): 235. This observation is made during Dulac's filming of La Mort du Soleil.

[63] Marguerite Duterme, „Que demandez-vous au cinéma ? , » Cinémagazine 4 :29 (18 July 1924) : 106.

[64] For the lost films it is impossible to establish everything about location and mise-en-scène.

[65] See Dupont, "Quelques Minutes": 295.

[66] The shots of the mooning urban stenographer might remind us of the opening shots of Evgeny Bauer's discontented laundress in Child of the Big City).

[67] Antinea, in L'Atlantide, also receives news of French women's fashion and culture despite her Saharan outpost--Vogue and L'Illustration are delivered.

[68] This antenna, installed in 1922, represented the peak of modern communications and had already served the french avant-garde in Rene Clair's film Paris qui dort.

[69] See, for example, Ella Shohat, "Gender and the Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema," Quarterly Review of Film and Video (1991) 13:1-3: 52-53.

[70] Apter, "Acting out Orientalism," 24.

[71] Emily Apter, "Acting out Orientalism: Sapphic Theatricality in turn-of-the-century Paris," in Elin Diamond, ed. Performance and Cultural Studies (Routledge: New York 1996): 15-34

[72] Apter, "Acting out Orientalism," 19, 20.

[73] Shari Benstock, Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940 (University of Texas Press: Austin, 1986).

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

[74] G. Delestang, "Les Théatres," La française, 7 February 1909.

[75] For Colette's letter, see GD 1780. For Flanner's letter, see GD 1543, and for her article see New Yorker, 2 April 1927: 76. Schémas was launched in February 1927.

[76] Apter, "Acting out Orientalism," 29. For commentary on Delarue-Mardrus alongside Dulac see Mireille de Mongival, "Opinions sur les Femmes," La Française 28 October 1906.

[77] For this reference to the Mardrus' neighborhood, see Myriam Harry, Mon Amie Lucie Delarue-Mardrus (Ariane: Paris, 1946): 23.

[78] J-C Mardrus, Hassan Badredine el bass Raoul—Conte des 1001 Nuits illustrated by Van Dongen (Edition La Sirène : Paris, 1918).

[79] Louis Delluc, Ecrits cinématographiques III: Drames de Ciném, scenarios et projets de films (Cinémathèques Française/Cahiers du Cinéma: 1990: 286-87. Garafola, Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance: 122.

[80] See Tami M. Williams, "Germaine Dulac, du figuratif à l'abstraction," in Nicole Brenez and Christian Lebrat, eds., Jeune, Dure, et Pure ! Une histoire du cinéma d'avant-garde et experimental en France (Cinémathèque Française : Paris, 2001) : 78. Dulac honors the art of Loïe Fuller as an art of music and light in "Trois rencontres avec Loïe Fuller," Bulletin de l'Union des Artistes 30 (February 1928) reprinted in Hillairet, ed. Germaine Dulac: 109-110.

[81] Ref. Dozoretz.

[82] Maud Allan, My Life and Dancing (London: 1908), cited in M. E. Warlick, "Mythic Rebirth in Gustav Klimt's Stoclet frieze: New Considerations of its Egyptianizing Form and Content," Art Bulletin 74:1 (March 1992): 127.

[83] Garafola, Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance: 154, 163. The latter was a production to which Cocteau contributed.

[84] The Garden interview, pasted into a scrapbook and numbered GD 4492, p. 133, byline G. Delestang, from La Française , is undated, but must date from 1907.

[85] GD 1283. Manuscript dating from approximately 1923.

[86] Rubinstein had danced the part with Bakst's designs on stage in 1917 and 1923. The film was shot in 1923.

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Ghrebh-

Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Teoria da Mídia
issn 1679-9100

[87] Camera, „Germaine Dulac Réalise L'Oublié, » : 339.

[88] Camera, „Germaine Dulac Réalise L'Oublié, » : 339.

[89] Camera, „Germaine Dulac Réalise L'Oublié, » : 339.

[90] R. L., La Révue du Cinéma 2 :7 (February 1930) : 69. The reviewer unfavorably compared Dulac's film with Un Chien Andalou, which he found by contrast to be a work which "poured gushing out from the heart" and dealt with "living flesh," while Dulac's was "only pretentious research within the impasse of technical virtuosity."