



TRANSNATIONAL TRAILBLAZERS OF EARLY CINEMA

**SARAH BERNHARDT,
GABRIELLE RÉJANE,
MISTINGUETT**

VICTORIA DUCKETT

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Transnational Trailblazers of Early Cinema

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Transnational Trailblazers of Early Cinema

Sarah Bernhardt, Gabrielle Réjane, Mistinguett

Victoria Duckett



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In memory of my father, Tony Duckett
“I do not know much, but what I do know, I know very well.”

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Introduction

Three Transnational Trailblazers

More than a century after the French actresses Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), Réjane (Gabrielle Charlotte Réju, 1856–1920), and Mistinguett (Jeanne Florentine Bourgeois, 1875–1956) consolidated their theatrical renown by appearing in silent films, attention is newly focusing on their contributions to the early film industry. These actresses were leading stage performers, as well as international businesswomen and creative entrepreneurs. They helped grow mass audiences for cinema, while expanding the international reach of French theater through their pioneering involvement with film. This study explores the emergence of their reputations as movers and shakers in England and America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their border crossings from Paris into England and America and their renown across live stage performances and early film helped each actress to become a cultural beacon and global theatrical leader in the transitional decades of the two centuries. As we will see, the accomplishments of this trio helped to ensure that ties between countries, continents, and cultures were developed and even strengthened in these pivotal years of change.

The actresses I explore shared transnational theatrical acclaim. They also all emerged from a shared, marginalized background on the cultural (and at times geographic) periphery of Paris. Emerging from lower social classes that did not claim economic, political, or cultural power in France, they became successful by defying and breaking free of social, cultural, artistic, and gendered expectations and norms. Sarah Bernhardt was the daughter of a Jewish courtesan; she chose to leave the prestigious Comédie-Française and the Odéon Theatre to forge a new career with a company of her own. Adopting the lead part in famous French roles (*Phèdre*, *Doña Sol*, *Marguerite Gautier*), she also commissioned spectacular

historical plays (*La Tosca*, *L'Aiglon*) and, in this way, defined contemporary tragic theater for international audiences.

Réjane and Mistinguett also emerged from the margins of Paris to enjoy theatrical success abroad. Their careers were, however, widely divergent. Réjane established prominence in the legitimate comic theaters of Paris (in the Théâtre des Variétés and the Théâtre du Vaudeville). During her rise to renown at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, Réjane worked with her husband, Paul Porel, a respected theatrical manager and director who had enjoyed success as an actor and then director of the Odéon Theatre. Réjane excelled in roles that used physical play to caustically expose class and sexual differences (most notably, in Henri Mielhac's *Ma Cousine* and Victorien Sardou and Émile Moreau's *Madame Sans-Gêne*). Celebrated as a trailblazing comic actress in London, Réjane never achieved Bernhardt's American success. In the New World, the nuance of her spoken French was considered too difficult to understand, her performance was seen as unacceptably risqué, and her works were too morally outrageous for female and family audience members to enjoy.

Mistinguett is the youngest and most "cinematic" of my three chosen case studies. She established herself in the popular Casino de Paris, the Moulin Rouge, and the Folies-Bergère—the very theaters that featured the sexualized, popular performances that Réjane was famous for satirizing in her comedies. Eventually also working her way into legitimate comic theaters such as the Gymnase Theatre and the Ambigu Theatre in Paris, Mistinguett was quite different from her compatriots. She did not regularly tour abroad, remaining largely within Paris. Here, she performed song and dance acts that were built into spectacular revues that were famous for incarnating the joyous abandon of *la ville lumière*. The acclaim of these ephemeral and changing variety spectacles enabled Mistinguett to gain coverage in English and American newspaper reports. Later, she consolidated international success through her wide-ranging work in silent films.

This trio helped change the relationship between the late nineteenth-century French stage, the emerging film industries, and English-speaking audiences in England and North America. In this respect, Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett are more than case studies because they reveal the importance of the French actress at a point in which the Old World of Europe was giving way to the dominance of the New World of America. An identifiable yet adaptable figure, the actress helped facilitate border crossings through geographical space, cultural spheres, and class divisions, as well as through the interconnected and rapidly changing media landscapes of her time. Charting transnational performance histories, my study follows each actress as she moved from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth and from Paris to England and then on to America. My aim is to refute the bias that has removed the late nineteenth-century actress from the cinematic century that was to emerge and to give evidence of the cultural clout that actresses enjoyed with English-speaking publics abroad.

THE ACTRESS AS TRANSNATIONAL PIONEER

Although I explore just three Parisian actresses, my overarching contention is that the French actress has been historically overlooked in the flourishing film industries of early twentieth-century England and America. If the French actress is considered in discussions of media industries, film history, or creative entrepreneurship today, it is within the context of celebrity studies or as a grounding figure in debates about American twentieth-century feminist performance practices. Rarely is discussion of an actress's theatrical success joined to a discussion of the galvanizing impact her work had on early film, particularly in relation to attracting popular audiences to the cinema in England and America. The actress's theatrical professionalism and business nous is also rarely offered as an explanation for international renown. In my view, although Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett's achievements emerged on the stage—where they performed in French yet still engaged the enthusiasm of English-speaking publics—they also drew these foreign audiences to film. Their international success is not so much lost to history as it is hiding in plain sight.

Jane Gaines uses the phrase “lost in plain sight” in the introduction to her book *Pink-Slipped: What Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries?* Gaines employs the phrase to highlight the invisibility of female achievement in early film and (in particular) to highlight the film actress's contradictory and ironic invisibility. As she explains, “Pearl White” (an American actress celebrated for her stunt and action work in serial films in the teens) was preceded and followed by the stage and screen work of French, Indian, Chinese, and US actresses. Urging us to consider these lost histories of female performance, Gaines states: “One high-circulation female image stands for—but also stands in the way of—many others who, in a sense, underwrote the first one.”¹

I face a similar conundrum, complicated further by the fact that my high-circulation female images (“Bernhardt,” “Mistinguett”) loom as theatrical and revue celebrities, not as cinematic stars. I demonstrate that Bernhardt's involvement with the French theater informed the range of her work abroad. Although Réjane and Mistinguett did not achieve Bernhardt's celebrity (and so illustrate Gaines's point about female histories being lost in the shadow of a single star), Mistinguett's music-hall fame has eclipsed discussion of her involvement in early film. As I explain, however, the French film industry dominated global markets in the pre-World War I period. Only after this period could America claim to represent the cinematic culture of the twentieth century, and even then, this dominance was merely a conjecture (or a possibility) during the period under discussion. As Stéphanie Salmon explains in *Pathé, À la conquête du cinéma, 1896-1929*, the Pathé-Frères company was the leading film company in the world prior to the First World War, thanks to the business acumen and entrepreneurial ambition of the Pathé brothers. Working with a talented network of French financiers and industrialists,

Pathé made French silent film a global, prestige brand.² The films that Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett made in the period leading into the war were largely produced by Pathé-Frères or its affiliate companies (Le Film d'Art, La Société cinématographiques des auteurs et gens de lettres [SCAGL]). Pathé's distribution networks, expanding across England and America in the teens, ensured global audiences for the actresses' films.

Contextualizing the tremendous impact of this cultural expansion through film, Richard Abel explains that French film was so available, and such an important part of American popular entertainment in the early years of film's emergence, that it is difficult to maintain distinctions between early French and early American cinema. In *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* he asks, “Can anyone writing about the cinema's emergence in the United States, especially before 1910, ignore the fact that French films dominated the American market and so determined, in part, what would become an ‘American’ cinema?”³ I contend, in turn, that the French stage actress, because of her involvement with the Pathé company (and its affiliated distribution and exhibition networks), was part of nascent film industries in England and America. Following Abel, I ask: Can anyone writing about the cinema's emergence in England and the United States, especially before the end of World War I, ignore the fact that the French actress was famous in both the English and American markets? Can we ignore the fact that she consequently helped to model and build the extraordinary global enterprise that these cinemas would become?

From a consideration of the actress and her transnational importance in the late nineteenth century, I look forward, into her involvement in French films circulating transnationally in the teens. I am not alone in proposing that the nineteenth-century French stage actress was financially and culturally astute in recognizing film as an opportunity and resource. In his article “Conversions and Convergences: Sarah Bernhardt in the Era of Technological Reproducibility, 1911–1913,” Charles Musser explains that Bernhardt's work in the 1910–13 period capitalized on the opportunities that mechanical reproduction enabled. Musser states that Bernhardt “mobilized interrelationships and convergences among cultural forms that had certainly existed, but not in that way or to that degree.”⁴ Musser's focus is a brief period of crossover between Bernhardt on the live stage and the reproductive media of the phonograph and film. This study amplifies and develops his argument. I demonstrate that Bernhardt's commercial and cultural convergences were initiated decades earlier, when she toured abroad on the transnational stage. I further argue that even into the First World War, Bernhardt continued to develop and capitalize on her work in film. She did not see film as a medium that replaced the theater but one that existed alongside it, expanding its reach and developing new and changing relationships to audiences across the globe.

I develop Musser's focus on technological reproducibility because I also consider Bernhardt's achievements alongside a consideration of the achievements

of Réjane and Mistinguett. My argument hinges on the generational impact that these actresses enjoyed in a period in which the French actress (and, with her, the French theater) was prime among global arts and cultural industries. If we return to the 1880s—to the formative decades of the French actress's emergence as a global star—and examine the actors who worked on stage and screen through to 1918 (that is, to the end of the First World War), then these three actresses can be identified as leaders of a largely matriarchal generation of celebrity performers. Together, these performers helped develop the commercial reach and cultural impact of French culture abroad. Even into the war years, when the exuberance of the Belle Époque had expired, Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett continued to make films and to draw audiences in England and America. As I argue, the late nineteenth-century French actress did not disappear with the onset of World War I; she was not immediately replaced by younger, born-nitrate American performers. Rather, in the transitional war years, Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett commercialized the theater anew, instrumentalizing film as an international tool of French propaganda and military diplomacy.

HEROINES OF THE AMERICAN STAGE: LES PARISIENNES

The significance of the French actress in turn-of-the-century Paris was heralded through the large entryway to the international Paris Exhibition of 1900. Redirected from the Eiffel Tower—which had served as the gateway to the 1889 exhibition—the entrance to the exhibition at the opening of the twentieth century was a hundred-foot stone statue on the Champs-Élysées made by Paul Moreau-Vouthier. Instead of the expected statue of the traditional figure of Marianne, Moreau-Vouthier based his work on Bernhardt.⁵ Called *La Parisienne*, Bernhardt was not just “queen of the decorative arts” and queen of Paris but a celebrity performer whose statue rose far above the exposition, welcoming international visitors. Paris was thereby defined culturally and financially by the actress standing, as Louis Cheronet explained, as “a sort of Queen of Queens, balancing on a ball.”⁶ At the same time, the Parisian actress was celebrated as a generational force abroad.

In his 1915 book, *The Heroines of the Modern Stage*, the American theater critic and author Forrest Izard focused on ten contemporary actresses and their achievements. At the time of his publication, just one year into World War I, most of the actresses Izard celebrated were middle-aged and still acting on the global stage. Introducing his study with five international actresses, Izard identified Bernhardt, the Polish actress Helena Modjeska, the English actress Ellen Terry, Réjane, and the Italian actress Eleonora Duse as women of particular repute. Izard then dedicated individual chapters to five American actresses: Ada Rehan (who died the following year, in 1916), Mary Anderson, Mrs. (Madden) Fiske, Julia Marlowe, and Maude Adams. Why and how did Izard choose his case studies? Explaining that all female

actresses were “modern,” in the sense that women were not traditionally permitted on the theatrical stage, Izard opened his work with the statement: “The following pages give some account of those actresses who stand out today as the most interesting to an English-speaking reader. The Continental actresses included are those *who gained international reputations and belonged to the English and American stage almost as much as to their own* [emphasis added].”⁷

Izard’s book was published as the third iteration of a new Modern Heroines book series launched by the New York publisher Sturgis and Walton in 1912. The series targeted a young female audience. As the foreword to the first *Heroines* book stated (this was *Heroines of Modern Progress*, its foreword written by Ellen M. Henrotin, the “Hon. president of General Federation of Women’s Clubs in America”), females were pioneers who broke the bonds of conventionality and actively contributed to all aspects of modern industrial life.⁸ In the preface that joined Henrotin’s inauguration of this female-focused book series, Warren Dunham Foster highlighted the importance of women in the world more generally, arguing that “modern society, to a very great extent, is a woman made society.” As Dunham explained, the target audience for his Heroines series was “the young woman of twelve to thirty years old.”⁹ Returning to Izard and the female legacy that his book proposed, we can recognize a generation of thinkers, writers, and activists in America celebrating the achievements of the theatrical actress, with Bernhardt and Réjane firmly within this fold. Significantly, and uniquely through Réjane, readers were also offered theatrical comedy—the comedy of manners, domestic comedy, and sex comedy—as an explanation for American fame. As I have mentioned, Izard’s *Heroines of the Modern Stage* came third in the Modern Heroines Series (following *Heroines of Modern Progress* and *Heroines of Modern Religion*): the actress was an international cultural beacon, unique to the twentieth century as a woman who championed both social and artistic progress.

“L’ÂGE DE LA FEMME”:
THE ERA OF THE (MIDDLE-AGED) ACTRESS

In an important essay on actresses and early noncomical “first wave” film stars, British scholar Ian Christie argues that we must recognize the importance of women—particularly, the importance of French actresses—to the development of global screen industries. Tabulating the careers of the most famous twenty-two early female film stars in Europe, Christie notes that these celebrities were often “the earliest in their respective national film industries.” Listing actresses such as Gladys Sylvani and Chrissie White from Britain and Henny Porten and Lil Dagover from Germany, Christie states that France is an anomaly, “the notable exception,” since this nation boasts “three older French actresses (all already famous).” These three older actresses—Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett—are therefore quite different from “the most typically successful of the youngest cohort, those born in the

1890s . . . [who] had no stage experience at all before they were ‘discovered’ by filmmakers, and quickly recognised as favourites of the cinema-going public.”¹⁰ When France dominated world film markets in the pre-World War I period, it was its leading and established stage actresses who helped to draw audiences to the cinema.

In an article published in 1912 in *Gil Blas* entitled “L’Âge de la femme,” the age of Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett was discussed as a computational fact and as a nod to the leadership of theatrical performers in France.¹¹ While Mistinguett (unlike Bernhardt and Réjane) was still young when this article was published, in 1926 Colette published an article reflecting on the consolidation of Mistinguett’s fame during her years of physical maturity. Identifying the 1940s as a decade of particular importance for actresses in France, Colette argued that “the woman of our country [France] is not, physiologically, precocious. . . . A foreigner, who seems to know about these things, assures me that France is, *par excellence*, the country of the dangerous quadragenarian. On this account, the music hall, like the theatre, is an exceptional climate, maturing quadragenarians without end.”¹²

Although Mistinguett entered film in her early thirties, Bernhardt and Réjane were (respectively) in their early sixties and late fifties when they began acting in films. At this point, Bernhardt and Réjane were also actress-managers of their own theaters and headline performers on the variety stage in England and America. Their renown involved a process of transnational self-making through theater and film.¹³

CONSIDERING SARAH BERNHARDT’S CELEBRITY ABROAD

A study that engages a trio of leading Parisian actresses and traces their success into England and America must also engage with the issue of celebrity culture. In her book *The Drama of Celebrity*, Sharon Marcus demonstrates that celebrity emerges from a tripartite relationship between media producers, members of the public (or, rather, publics), and celebrities themselves.¹⁴ Marcus uses a wide range of sources and materials to examine these three interactive and contested entities that ground her theory of celebrity culture. Significantly, Sarah Bernhardt and her fame in America is Marcus’s central focus. Describing Bernhardt as the woman who helped to produce modern celebrity culture, Marcus’s work engages deeply with Bernhardt’s international celebrity, and it intersects richly with theater history and art history. Marcus’s work also generously reveals a wealth of primary materials—press clippings, photographs, illustrations, and historical ephemera—relating to the ever-shifting, and even at times contradictory, aspects of Bernhardt’s fame and reception abroad.

Although my study similarly draws on primary materials, it is focused on the differences between Bernhardt’s reception in England and America. I do not

mirror the temporal nor conceptual breadth of Marcus's scholarship. Rather than build links between the emergence of modern celebrity over a century ago and celebrity culture today, I focus on specific moments of transnational emergence to highlight what we can still learn from a generation of globally significant female performers. Because I am aware of the importance of film to the expansion of Bernhardt's international success, I also explain the spread and consolidation of her twentieth-century celebrity through a focus on this new media. Consequently, when I discuss Bernhardt, I differentiate her success in England from the success she enjoyed in America, I include a discussion of her involvement with the variety stage and with film, and I demonstrate the range of her pioneering work across different genres and forms of film.

Examining inaugural moments of Bernhardt's career—her first performances abroad on the legitimate stage, her first appearances on the variety stage of London and New York, her involvement with a wide range of films—I contextual national differences in the emergence and growth of her fame. While Marcus (in my view, mistakenly) claims that film scholars “assign credit to individual stars when they discuss case studies, mistakenly assigning success to a single source,” I demonstrate that work in film history is informed by the same tripartite exchange between producer, publics, and performer that she identifies in her own scholarship and that we establish difference in reception contexts.¹⁵ Moreover, I prove that Bernhardt was not, as Marcus states, “an early adopter of film, [who] also made hundreds of movies, most now lost,”¹⁶ but a creative pioneer who astutely recognized the many opportunities that film afforded. As I demonstrate, Bernhardt's involvement in film allowed her to forge new audiences and to enjoy a myriad of commercial and creative possibilities abroad. I contend that early film—ironically, overlooked in most discussions of Bernhardt's twentieth-century celebrity—helped to sustain her renown well after her death, well into the heady years of the Hollywood studio system in the mid-twentieth century. My work asks, in other words, that the longevity of Bernhardt's success be explained by the fact that early film expanded her global visibility greatly and renewed intergenerational interest in her. Finally, and more methodologically, I contend that film history's use of select case studies expand, rather than restrict, our understanding of female achievement, transnational theatrical culture, and the making of modern celebrity cultures.

Marcus is not alone in framing Bernhardt's celebrity as a mainspring for a consideration of female stardom and power at a transitional moment in cultural history. Scholarly articles and books, particularly those written by cultural feminists in the past two decades, have mined Bernhardt's life and achievements to explore the galvanizing momentum of her celebrity appeal. In *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France*, Mary Louise Roberts explores the New Woman's challenge to what she terms “regulatory norms of gender” in fin de siècle France.¹⁷ Focusing a chapter on Bernhardt's career, Roberts argues that the actress destabilized fixed notions of womanhood. A key argument in Roberts's book is

that theatrical “acting up” cannot be dismissed as a form of social and cultural eccentricity.¹⁸ Rather, Bernhardt must be considered alongside female journalists and writers as an important prong within the multifarious emergence of the New Woman in fin de siècle Paris.

Alongside Bernhardt, Roberts examines Marguerite Durand (the founder of the female-run newspaper *La Fronde*), Séverine (the first female reporter), and Gyp (the journalist and right-wing novelist). No mention is made of film or its capacity to disseminate Bernhardt’s celebrity differently (but also synchronously) to audiences, both locally and abroad. As I have stated, however, my study focuses on Bernhardt’s disruptions in England and America. While I agree that Bernhardt’s theatrical performances challenged cultural conventions, my interest lies in Bernhardt’s capacity (and here I will use Roberts’s own metaphor) to “expose” herself through theater and film to audiences abroad. With this question of exposure in mind, I ask: What can we learn from three very different French actresses who ensured that theater and film centralized Paris as a global capital of culture?

Susan Glenn’s *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* positions Bernhardt as a New Woman whose spectacular celebrity helped audiences in America redefine feminism in the period between 1880 and 1910. Glenn’s study confirms the tremendous impact Bernhardt had on feminist performance, female celebrity, and self-driven publicity in early twentieth-century America.¹⁹ Glenn also joins the emergence of the New Woman in America to what she terms “New Journalism”—that is, the development of “journalistic spectacle that served the theatre and the press.”²⁰ Where Roberts links Bernhardt’s feminism to journalistic developments specific to France (the *frondeuses*—that is, the female staff working for *La Fronde*), Glenn sees a symbiotic relationship between the spectacle of Bernhardt on the stage and the “stunt-journalism” of the new metropolitan press in America.²¹

I similarly explore newspapers, as well as the related histories of film publicity, promotion, and management, to evidence the overlap between historically distinct fields of study. My methodology and focus is guided, however, by Richard Abel’s study *Menus for Movieland: Newspapers and the Emergence of American Film Culture, 1913–1916*.²² Abel explores the myriad relationships between journalism and early film, amplifying our enmeshed understanding of popular print culture, the emergence of film criticism, fan reception, and film’s contribution to early twentieth-century American culture. Significantly, he opens new directions in feminist cultural history by identifying New Women as exemplary film writers and editors.²³ In his recent *Movie Mavens: US Newspaper Women Take on the Movies, 1914–1923*, Abel confirms that women were authors and agents in cinema history, their journalism and editorial work helping to develop mass audiences for film, an array of lenses through which to regard film stars, and a rich language for the “new motion picture field.” Including Mae Tinée’s 1917 review of Bernhardt’s film *Mothers of France* (*Mères françaises*, Louis Mercanton and René Hervil, Éclipse,

1917)—and explaining that Tinée was the movie page editor for the *Chicago Tribune*—Abel demonstrates that Bernhardt’s celebrity overlaps with new directions in film history, expanding views of American print culture, and a renewed appreciation of the gaps we still need to fill in women’s history.²⁴

FILM FESTIVALS AND CELEBRITY CULTURE:
“1910 AS THE END OF ANONYMITY”

Although my research for this book included repeated film viewings at the Archives françaises du film (Bois d’Arcy), the British Film Institute, the Cinémathèque française, and the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (Melbourne and Canberra)—as well as online viewings through the Gaumont Pathé archives, the Internet Archive, personal links sent to me by archivists, and YouTube—it was at established international festivals such as Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna and Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (Pordenone Silent Film Festival) in Pordenone that I was first given access to works featuring the late nineteenth-century actress on silent film. My programming of a retrospective of Bernhardt’s extant films at Cinema Ritrovato in 2006 and my recent programming with Richard Abel of a body of Mistinguett films at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (2019) allowed me to see a corpus of actress-driven films projected in a cinema surrounded by audience members and accompanied by live music.²⁵

Mariann Lewinsky’s 2010 Cinema Ritrovato programming opened my eyes to the idea that French actresses can be studied collectively to illuminate new ways of thinking about film history. Providing evidence of the range and depth of Mistinguett’s screen career in her “A Hundred Years Ago: European Films of 1910” program and her contemporaneous “Albert Capellani: A Cinema of Grandeur” program, Lewinsky demonstrated that the *ciné-vaudeville* of Louis Feuillade and Musidora included Mistinguett and her work with pioneering film directors Albert Capellani, Georges Denola, and Georges Monca.²⁶ In the “A Hundred Years Ago” program Lewinsky described Mistinguett as a star who generated audience engagement in film.²⁷ Relating Mistinguett’s involvement in film to Pathé’s 1910 opening of its Comica Studio in Nice (where celebrity series such as the *Rigadin* series emerged, drawn from the theater’s most famous music-hall comics), Lewinsky argued that the traditional characterization of 1910 as the year that marks the end of the short film and the birth of the long film is artificial and incorrect. Rather, 1910 saw the emergence of the cinema star. As she explained, “Among cinema-goers’ new favourites were some of the most successful stars of the Paris vaudeville stage, such as Mistinguett and Charles Prince, alias Rigadin.”²⁸

It was Mistinguett appearing on film, rather than the arbitrary length of a given film, that Lewinsky considered significant to film history. She explained that “too many long films were made before 1910 and too few longer films dated 1910 are known for us to continue to assert this demarcation.” The historical transition Lewinsky identified was “1910 as the end of anonymity, 1910 as the first year of

names. Name[s] of actors, names of directors. Not all made their debut in 1910—many had been in films for some time—but what was new and would remain with us was the stream of names which from now on accompanied the films. The names of 1910: Falena, Feuillade, Novelli, Bertini, Perret, Jasset, Denola, Monca, Capellani, Napierkowska, Mirval, Sylvestre, Numès, Fabre, Guillaume, Lepanto, Robinne, Delvair, Maggi, Fromet and so on, and so on, and so on.”²⁹ As Lewinsky highlighted, by 1910, actors were billed as stars on film, and directors were also beginning to be acknowledged. Of the names Lewinsky listed, Capellani, Denola, and Monca worked with Mistinguett. Between 1909 and 1913, these men made (between them) an estimated twenty-eight films featuring Mistinguett at Pathé’s SCAGL.³⁰

As I have noted, Abel and I recently curated a program of Mistinguett films at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto. Thanks to the support of festival director Jay Weissberg, we showcased a program of films focusing on Mistinguett as a standout female star working in the early French film industry. Because of the recent restoration work undertaken by the Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée, our program featured two of French-Algerian director André Hugon’s works, *Chignon d’Or* (*The Gold Chignon*, Films Succès, 1916) and *Fleur de Paris* (*Flower of Paris*, Films Succès, 1916) alongside Capellani’s more familiar *L’Épouvante* and *La Glu*. I write this book still awaiting confirmation that Hugon’s 1917 *Mistinguett détective I* and *Mistinguett détective II* (Hugon and Louis Paglieri, Les Films Succès, 1917) have been similarly restored and made available for a second program of films. In consequence, I am aware that, as a film historian, I work in a field where histories are changing through restoration work in archives, coupled with initiatives in festival programming. As this study demonstrates, an ongoing, evolving, and fresh presentation of historical evidence in the film festival context invites us to insert the actress differently into celebrity histories and to propose new ways of thinking about the renown and impact that the French actress enjoyed.

THE UNIVERSAL FEMININE: THE FRENCH THEATRICAL ACTRESS ABROAD

Although theater scholars do not typically consider film history in their discussions of nineteenth-century actresses, they confirm the renown that French actresses established when they performed abroad. In *Female Performance Practice on the Fin-de-Siècle Popular Stages of London and Paris*, Catherine Hindson explains that between the mid-1880s and 1910, actresses “rapidly became visual representations of metropolitan commodity culture: icons of their time. Simultaneously, they were creative, autonomous professional performers: products and active agents of the fin de siècle’s burgeoning entertainment industry.”³¹ Elaine Aston interprets this dual role of the actress in her article, “‘Studies in Hysteria’: Actress and Courtesan, Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs. Pat Campbell.” Here, we learn that Bernhardt was capable of reinterpreting and adapting an existing drama to suit her own celebrity performance style. Her performance of Alexander Dumas’s young courtesan

Marguerite in *La Dame aux Camélias* was at once sexual and redemptive. As Aston argues, Bernhardt's performance—characterized in terms of “a histrionic, visual ‘acting out’ of extreme feminine suffering that bore a close resemblance to the female patient as hysteric”—was understood by English audiences to represent a shared, global reference point of “the universal feminine.”³²

In John Stokes's important study *The French Actress and Her English Audience*, Bernhardt and Réjane's theatrical prowess is placed within a broader dynastic line of celebrity French actresses performing in England between the early nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth. Stokes focuses on eight French actresses: Mademoiselle Mars, Rachel Félix, Madame Plessy, Virginie Déjazet, Aimée Desclée, Réjane, Bernhardt, and Edwige Feuillère. Bernhardt and Réjane are integral to a female lineage that represents a significant “golden age of acting.” Stokes contends that the impact the French actress has exerted on English culture has been underappreciated and misconstrued. In his view, that influence was a long-lasting phenomenon that provided creative stimulus for “artists of every kind.” The French actress provoked and generated the creative work of novelists, poets, and essayists, just as she inspired comparisons between “past and present, as well as between contemporary performers . . . as one dazzling performance lit up another.” Collectively, he contends, “the French actresses constitute a myth of a golden age of acting—a myth for which we have, as Henry James might say, ‘a good deal of evidence.’”³³

Stokes takes the significant step of acknowledging the French actress as a transnational performer who inspired English audiences abroad. Stokes makes no effort, however, to include film in his discussion of the spread and consolidation of this fame. Given that Stokes identifies Réjane's Madame Sans-Gêne, the comic washerwoman in Sardou's *Madame Sans-Gêne*, as “her most celebrated and long-lived role,” this is unfortunate. Indeed, Stokes's elision of Bernhardt and Réjane's success on film—and, I would add, his elision of the London variety stage—means we are offered a very rich, but also a rather restricted, view of English audiences engaging in French performance abroad. Particularly in the case of Réjane, her link with *le peuple* “as they might be popularly imagined” is never materialized beyond the subject matter of her plays.³⁴

Similarly, theater historian Jacky Bratton does not consider early transnational film when she discusses popular theater in nineteenth-century England. Her research nevertheless reminds us that the nineteenth-century actress must be examined in an intertextual—or, in what Bratton calls an “intertheatrical”—way. In her celebrated study, *New Readings in Theatre History*, Bratton includes working women, the nonliterary, as well as the popular, as foundations for theatrical case studies. As Bratton explains, the theater playbill reveals much about the material conditions and historic practices of the theater.³⁵ My exploration of theater history follows Bratton's lead in using theater playbills, pamphlets, reviews, commemorative booklets, and posters, but I have done this to insert actress-driven histories into the discussion of early film.

ENABLING AN ACTRESS'S "CINEMATIC" CAREER

Film history has a long, complex, and changing relationship with theater history. As film historians are aware, the relationship between the two fields was determined early on by the complexities of film's emergence and integration into the arena of arts practice and criticism. From the opening decades of the twentieth century, a wide range of cultural, industrial, and critical activists waged continuing debates about film—both hostile and celebratory.³⁶ These debates explored and contested what film represented and what its relation to theater was or should be. From these widespread encounters, expressed through popular opinion and critical judgment, there arose a division between theater and film historians.

Each author, critic, historian, and activist was arguing for stakes that were intertwined with possibilities for government funding, educational recognition, and institutional acceptability. For early film critics like Vachel Lindsay and (later) Nicholas Vardac in America, as well as for the educated film enthusiasts (such as the *Close Up* people in the UK, as well as those who followed them), the struggle was to have film recognized as a separate and unique art, distinct from, not an adjunct to, theater and other performance arts. This aim became even more important for getting film into higher education in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s as a distinctive discipline separate from English, theater studies, and art history. The hurdles faced by advocates for film studies included the claim of film on publishers' finances, art gallery and educational budgets, and curriculum spaces.³⁷

It was not until the 1990s that scholars began to argue passionately for a revision to our inherited theatrical bias. The theater historian David Mayer has provided an important contribution to programming in film festivals and to our understanding of the relationship between the nineteenth-century theater and early film. A leader of what might loosely be called the "post-Vardac" group of scholars, Mayer has significantly shifted how we approach considerations of the theater, and the theatrical actor, in early film.³⁸ Eric de Kuyper is also a key figure who helped shift the relationship between two previously distinct histories. With the authority and experience gained, in part, from his role as deputy director of the Dutch Film Museum, de Kuyper explained that film historians need to learn more about the popular stage of the late nineteenth century to appreciate what they see in films of the twentieth century's teen years. De Kuyper's point was that the early cinema did not struggle to free itself from the yoke of the theater but rather formed a constituent part of popular entertainment.³⁹

Heide Schlüpmann's pioneering work on early German dramatic film framed arguments about the importance of theater to early film within the context of the actress Asta Nielsen. In *The Uncanny Gaze: The Drama of Early German Cinema*, Schlüpmann argued that Nielsen's playful performances influenced the development of early film and that female viewers likewise contributed as audience members to the meaning and enjoyment brought to the new medium. As Schlüpmann

explained, the social appeal that Nielsen's films offered female audience members was linked to the social and cultural versatilities that the cinema newly mobilized outside the home.⁴⁰ Other groundbreaking studies—less central to my focus on transnational film but equally important to our growing acceptance that theater history is intrinsic to film history—include James Naremore's *Acting in the Cinema*, Yuri Tsivian's *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Culture Reception*, and Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs's *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film*.⁴¹

On the heels of this collective work, a new generation of scholarship is developing the ways we think of convergence between the late nineteenth-century stage and early twentieth-century film. Key works include Jon Burrows's *Legitimate Cinema*, Christine Gledhill's *Reframing British Cinema, 1918–1928*, Maggie Hennefeld's *Specters of Slapstick and Silent Film Comediennes*, Matthew Solomon's *Disappearing Tricks*, and the far-reaching collection focusing on film and melodrama by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, *Melodrama Unbound*.⁴² Not all of these studies look specifically at practices of or performance on the live stage, not all are concerned with actresses, and none are concerned with the actress on the late nineteenth-century stage or questions of transnational cinema. Nevertheless, they are all written or edited by film scholars who bridge the gap between theater and film history and who keep a firm eye on the issue of film context (that is, on the changing historical conditions of film's emergence, reception, and circulation).

Because my study is focused on female performance cultures and practices that originated on the stage, Mary Simonson's *Body Knowledge* is particularly important. Arguing that performing women in early twentieth-century American culture reveal an intermedial aesthetics that allowed them (and audiences) "to imagine and experiment with new ways of being in the modern world," Simonson highlights interdisciplinary performance contexts, lost and overlooked female theater histories, and the importance of creative women to early twentieth-century culture. Simonson frames her research in an urgent and unequivocal way, stating that she "brings to light networks of performers who have frequently fallen through cracks of musicological narratives." Focusing on what she calls the "intermedial practices" of female performers, Simonson contends that female performers and fans experimented "with new ways of being in the modern world, both onstage and onscreen, and as economically influential 'arbiters of American taste.'"⁴³

While Simonson's scholarship explores women in American popular culture, the work led by Martin Loiperdinger and Uli Jung into Asta Nielsen in their edited collection *Importing Asta Nielsen* demonstrates the global spread of the European actress through silent film, as well as the connection between the rise of an actress's fame and the introduction of new business models in the film industry. Loiperdinger and Jung state that "more than two dozen film scholars scrutinized the role Asta Nielsen films played in different film markets of various countries, in distribution and exhibition practices, in the competition between local cinemas, in the innovation in film marketing and film advertising, in short, in the establishment of a new basis for the film markets in many countries around the world."⁴⁴

Although Asta Nielsen was an actress who made her name a brand “nearly unrivalled in many countries in the years 1911 and 1912,”⁴⁵ she was not particularly successful in America. My study therefore joins Loiperdinger and Jung in focusing on the establishment of actress-driven brands abroad but departs from them in focusing on England and America. I demonstrate, for example, that the marketing of a Bernhardt film in England was different from the marketing of a Bernhardt film in America. Moreover, I explore three separate but contemporaneous celebrity careers emerging from a single capital of theater (Paris).

In *Women in the Silent Cinema*, Annette Förster contends that the consideration of an actress’s career is best understood as a “careerography.” In the same way that Shelley Stamp argues in *Lois Weber in Early Hollywood* that a filmmaker’s career must be considered as “the nexus for a larger investigation,” Förster calls for the consideration of an actress’s combined career on stage and screen.⁴⁶ As Förster explains: “Careerographies’ are multilayered and interdisciplinary, as well as affirmative and non-hierarchical; they do not necessarily privilege cinema over other disciplines and media and they reflect the spirit of the times in professionalism, entrepreneurial practices and shifts within and among a range of discipline and media.”⁴⁷ Following de Kuyper, Förster argues that cinema did not struggle to set itself free from the theater. Instead, it operated in a productive and dynamic relation to it.⁴⁸

Taking three different but related case studies, Förster examines the careers of the Dutch actress Adriënne Solser, the French actress Musidora, and the Canadian actress Nell Shipman. Förster demonstrates that these actresses learned “their métier in practice” before acting in, producing, and directing film. Förster carefully contextualizes the popular theater in discussion, explaining that at the turn of the century, popular entertainment included *variété*, revue, and cabaret theaters, as well as cinema. As Förster explains, the *variété* theater—known as music hall in France, variety theater in England, vaudeville in America, and *Spezialitäten-Programm* in Germany—joined short, varied stage performances with film screenings imported from across the world. In other words, theater and film were not mutually exclusive; the theater embraced the cinema, often making it part of an evening’s entertainment.⁴⁹

CONTEXTUALIZING MY TRANSNATIONAL CASE STUDIES

Unlike Förster, I explore transnational “careerographies” developed in England and America. In my first chapter, I argue that Bernhardt’s capacity to adapt herself to shifting national theatrical environments helped establish differences between her English and American fame. By the late 1880s in London, Bernhardt was criticized for vulgarizing her acting in order to draw English crowds to London’s West End Lyceum Theatre. In America, Bernhardt was billed as a prestigious “high-class” actress who, even when later appearing in large, popular Vaudeville

forums, is discussed in terms of elevating theatrical art. These national differences were transnational divisions, specific to local audiences, communities, and cultural contexts.

National differences in marketing and interpreting Bernhardt were continued when she entered film. Her first feature film, *Queen Elizabeth* (*Les Amors de la Reine Élisabeth*, Henri Desfontaines and Louis Mercanton, Histrionic Film Company, 1912), was a respected and legitimate drama screened in prestigious theaters. When it was released, the film was considered novel in America. Women and notable local families attended screenings. This audience began, for the first time, to celebrate film as a legitimate form of entertainment, helping to make Bernhardt's film culturally respectable. In England, *Queen Elizabeth* was affectionately renamed *Queen Bess*. The film attracted middle-class audiences—again, also women and families—who celebrated its depiction of their famous national monarch as an emotional and loving woman. As the film demonstrated, Queen Bess was human; she could (and did) make professional and personal mistakes. Five years later, when Bernhardt made *Mothers of France* (in 1917), she launched one of the earliest and most successful propaganda films produced by the French government. When we consider Bernhardt's films in relation to expanding audiences for film, as well as in relation to the expanding support for participation in a global war, we understand that Bernhardt saw film as a resource, one that could claim new audiences and that opened the theater to a myriad of performance possibilities.

An absence of scholarship about Réjane, the actress I discuss in my second chapter, is linked to the comedy that she played on the stage, as well as to the difficulty in finding and watching the few films that she made. Réjane was famous for intentional, physical play; her performances focused on the comedy of domestic drama and social class. I argue that this form of comedy reminds us of the numerous ways women (particularly French actresses) chose not to fit themselves into the bedrooms and drawing rooms of upper-class, or even bourgeois, mannered society. In this context, Réjane asks that we regard her as a bridging figure, not only in the context of emerging transnational entertainment industries but as a bridge between generations of performers who ensured the visibility of feminist fun. While American audiences were not particularly enamored of Réjane, finding her choice of roles and performances morally questionable, English audiences relished her theatrical play. In my view, Réjane is an Old World (French) precursor to those many women, discussed in Maggie Hennefeld's *Specters of Slapstick and Silent Film*, who use their more obvious "female slapstick corporeality" as provocation for social change.⁵⁰ During the war years, Réjane replaced this provocation with the patriotic film *Alsace* (Henri Pouctal, Film d'Art, 1915). No longer incarnating the popular humor of Paris, Réjane became a lightning rod to the changed historical, social, political, and military aims of France.

I discuss Mistinguett, my third and youngest Parisian case study, in chapter 3. A showbusiness legend affectionately known as “La Miss,” Mistinguett did not travel abroad extensively in the pre–World War I period; nevertheless, she helped Paris to consolidate its fame as the global theatrical capital of the Belle Époque. A much-commented upon contributor to the music halls and revues of Paris, Mistinguett incarnated the theatrical variety and cultural hybridity that came to characterize the city. Drawing attention to Paris as a locus of action and intrigue, Mistinguett made more than forty films between 1908 and 1917. Through film, Mistinguett circulated before audiences who could not attend her live performances and who were not, therefore, part of the tumult that characterized popular theatergoing in Paris. I demonstrate that cinema made Mistinguett a film star in England. Parisian street views, the physicalized shows of the theatrical sketch, the showcasing of nineteenth-century French literary achievements, and investigative crime fiction became shared points of cultural reference.

World War I brought a significant transformation in the global film industry. This included changes to the ways in which the transnational French actress was marketed and received by audiences abroad. As my fourth and final chapter explains, when Mistinguett’s films circulated in Britain and America during these years, they engaged viewers in a vision of France that largely predated the war: they revealed Mistinguett performing in Parisian streets; attending theaters, cafés, and houses; and visiting tourist resorts that appear untouched by the war. Although some of her films included military or espionage themes—for example, *La Double Blessure/The Temptations of Life* (Milano Films, 1915) and *Mistinguett détective I and II*—Mistinguett’s physical but lighthearted intrigues stand in stark contrast to the territorial nationalism of Réjane’s first feature film, *Alsace*, and the fervent patriotism of Bernhardt’s *Mothers of France* (1917). These two older actresses—each cast as a mother figure in their patriotic films, and each fervently promoting themselves as a transnational *porte-parole* to English-speaking audiences abroad—were lightning rods in the French effort to empathize, engage, and rouse the national fervor of mothers, lovers, sisters, and daughters in Britain and America through film. Bernhardt’s *Mothers of France*, in particular—released in America eight weeks before Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917—that demonstrates the robust networks and genuine affection that the transnational actress enjoyed in America. At an advanced stage of her career, and as an elderly performer who had suffered the amputation of one leg in 1915, Bernhardt ironically emerged as a still agile actress, cleverly using film to address British and American audiences about events as they were unfolding.

Bernhardt traveled to Britain and America during the war, becoming in each country a symbol of French courage and fortitude. Although Mistinguett did not perform abroad during the war, her series of films made during the war showcased her physical agility and focused on the themes of espionage and subterfuge. In

this way, and particularly through the series of films she made with André Hugon between 1915 and 1917, Mistinguett emerged in this transitional period as a defiantly plucky Parisienne screen actress. As my opening chapter explains, however, in the prewar period, Mistinguett formed part of a generation of groundbreaking transnational actresses active on both stage and screen, with Bernhardt at their helm. These women were ambitious in their vision and extraordinary in their achievements. They sallied forth, projecting French theater and film into new territories and new contexts.

Sarah Bernhardt

Transformative Fame in Britain and America

This chapter discusses the different and changing relationships Bernhardt established with English and American audiences abroad through her theater and film. Exploring, first, the emergence of Bernhardt's theatrical fame, I argue that Bernhardt's success on the stage emerged differently in London than it did in New York. Second, I argue that these initial distinctions in Bernhardt's theatrical reception were later (separately) incorporated into the different advertising materials and producing practices used to promote her films in England and America. Rather than discuss Bernhardt's celebrity as a single, coterminous event—so that England is a stepping-stone to America, or so that film illustrates a previous stage success—I contextualize the emerging spread of Bernhardt's reception abroad. I do this to highlight both local and national differences in the development of Bernhardt's appeal. I also illustrate how theater and film can be newly connected through the interrelated histories of stage and screen. In this context, I build my argument using materials drawn from what Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk describe as “the rapidly growing accessibility of paratextual source material, data and films themselves, as a result of the massive digitization efforts around the world in the past decade.”¹ This chapter uses newly available materials to develop what we know of Bernhardt's international celebrity. Because our access to historic materials has changed so significantly over the past decade, so, too, has our capacity to understand recent phenomena. Newly able to explore Bernhardt, we can also reexamine aspects of the historical relationship between stage and screen and the fugitive nature of early twentieth-century celebrity culture.

I begin this chapter by returning to Bernhardt's inaugural success on the London stage in the 1879–80 period. Discussing the thrill and novelty of her acting before sophisticated London audiences, I explain that her performances were embraced by an avant-garde culture that shifted, in the 1880s, when London audiences

railed against her tours and partnership with playwright Victorien Sardou, finding her acting “vulgar”; I compare this to Bernhardt’s reception in America, where she was considered “high class” and continued to be praised for her performances. My focus then moves into Bernhardt’s 1905–6 challenge to the Theatrical Syndicate in America and her subsequent move onto the variety stage in England and America. This is an important moment, revealing Bernhardt’s involvement in a key debate in early twentieth-century American theater (opposition to and enforced theatrical Trust). The variety theater—known as the music hall in England—also illustrates Bernhardt’s changing involvement in popular theater. Finally, I explore Bernhardt’s engagement with film. I look at her narrative feature films, made in the 1910s, as evidence of an art nouveau aesthetic she had already popularized on the theatrical stage. I argue, moreover, that the reception of these films was different in Britain than it was in America. As I explain in chapter 4, these transnational reception contexts help to explain why theatergoing publics were motivated to support a cultural, emotional, and military investment in the Allied cause during World War I.

Although I structure my discussion chronologically, I do not believe that Bernhardt’s success in rousing American sympathies for participation in the Great War was inevitable. In my view, it was her willingness to repeatedly tour America, to reach successive generations of audiences across a thirty-year period, that explains why she could eventually be celebrated on film as a “mother” of France. Cleverly growing her international visibility through theatrical and technological change, Bernhardt demonstrates her skill as a theatrical entrepreneur, manager, performer, and businesswoman. *Mothers of France* ends my discussion because it indicates, more than any other work that Bernhardt undertook during this time, the custodianship she claimed for the theater and the importance she saw of its role in the new century. No longer a young actress willfully freeing herself from the hierarchical policies and procedures of the Comédie-Française, she was now a spokeswoman in the New World, using the technology of film as a lightning rod in the global fight for social, political, and (above all) military change.

A NOTE ON THEATRICAL MARGINS

The actresses I explore share a city (Paris), a profession (the theater), a historical period (the Belle Époque), and transnational fame (across England and North America). The three also share dubious and modest personal backgrounds, as well as an involvement in theaters that can be considered geographically and culturally “marginal.” Bernhardt, the daughter of a Jewish courtesan, was also the mother of a son born out of wedlock (Maurice Bernhardt, born in 1864). Notwithstanding her social and cultural marginalization, Bernhardt catapulted herself to international fame and respectability. The first actress to establish a theater in her own name in Paris (the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, which was the former Théâtre des Nations in the fourth arrondissement, at the Place du Châtelet), Bernhardt concluded her

career while still an actress-manager of this symbolically central city landmark. Before examining how she achieved this extraordinary fame, however, we might consider some of the theaters where Bernhardt performed.

Trained in the French Conservatoire between 1859 and 1862, Bernhardt made only a few, inconsequential appearances at the Comédie-Française on her graduation in 1862 before a dispute forced her departure.² This theater, described by James Brander Matthews as “a republic, protected by the state,” was supported by an annual subvention from the French government. Until 1867, it had the “exclusive privilege of playing the pieces of the classic authors” (that is, by playwrights such as Molière, Racine, and Corneille).³ A departure from this theater meant some years of insecure work. When Bernhardt did perform in a role that brought her Parisian success, it was in a second-tier theater of Paris, the respected Théâtre de l’Odéon (considered a “stepping-stone” to the Comédie-Française).⁴ Here, however, Bernhardt gained fame in the provocative, cross-dressed role of Zanetto, the title character written by the young poet François Coppée in his first 1869 play. The role was considered important enough to be photographed by the respected London studio photographers, W. & D. Downey (fig. 1), although we do not know whether Bernhardt visited England on this occasion, if the Downey’s visited Paris, or if the photograph is correctly dated. In 1872, Bernhardt again achieved success at the Odéon, playing the Queen in *Ruy Blas*. Bernhardt’s celebrated performance in this famous play written by Victor Hugo also marked the return of Hugo to Paris after twenty years of political exile. When Bernhardt was invited back to the Comédie-Française in 1872, she returned as a junior member of the theater but also as one who was clearly unafraid to publicize theatrical exile, marginality, and difference. As we will see, after Bernhardt’s inaugural success in London in 1879, she chose to leave the Comédie-Française. Voluntarily removing herself from this renowned seat and symbol of French theatrical tradition, Bernhardt returned the following year to London with her own troupe of performers, newly playing her own choice of roles.

Where did Bernhardt perform in Paris when she returned from her first tour abroad? In the early 1880s, Bernhardt was in charge of the Théâtre de l’Ambigu on the Boulevard Saint-Martin. Known as the “smallest and least pretentious” of the important theaters devoted to drama and spectacular pieces in the city,⁵ this theater was failing before Bernhardt took it over. In her role as an actress-manager, Bernhardt became “the Director of public opinion, favor, and fame, the media publicist, the great hypnotist of a time that she has captivated and that submits irrevocably to her charm.”⁶ The second theater that Bernhardt managed was the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, which seated a medium-sized audience (two thousand). This theater was, as Ernest Pronier reminds us, located in the east of Paris, at the entrance of the “popular suburbs.”⁷ Geographically marginal, the theater was also a historically controversial site, as James Brander Matthews explains: it was the “scene of many a pitched battle” between “the young blood which was



FIGURE 1. Sarah Bernhardt in *La Passant*. W. & D. Downey, 1869. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8438716n>.

called Romantic and the old school which called itself Classic.”⁸ At the Porte Saint-Martin, Bernhardt worked with the playwright Victorien Sardou, who wrote spectacular works for her, often featuring a death scene. In this period, for example, Sardou wrote *Théodora*, *La Tosca*, and *Cléopâtre* for the actress, each concluding with a spectacular death. Bernhardt subsequently managed the Renaissance Theater (1893–99), which is located beside the Porte Saint-Martin. Once more, this was a theater that was located in theatrical “exile” in the tenth arrondissement. At the Renaissance, Bernhardt commissioned the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha (then little known) to make posters for her theater productions. She continued to employ Sardou as a playwright and invited international celebrities to perform alongside her in the theater; for example, the Italian actress Eleanora Duse performed *La Dame aux camélias* there in 1897.⁹ Years before appearing on film as

a headline French actress, Bernhardt asserted herself visibly and vocally on the margins of Parisian theatrical endeavors.

A THEATRICAL REPUBLIC:
THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE IN LONDON, 1879

When Bernhardt initiated her visits to London in 1879 as a *sociétaire* of the Comédie-Française (and thus as a shareholder in the company), she was already a well-known actress within France. As mentioned above, she had established success a decade earlier at the Théâtre de l'Odéon in roles that were socially and politically provocative. What was unique about Bernhardt's fame was the support she drew from a group of youthful admirers who became known within Paris as *les Saradoteurs* (the "Sarah-doters"). A novelty in Paris, this fan group consisted of students, artisans, and young female *midinettes*—young apprentices working in new industries such as the fashion houses on the Left Bank—who were drawn to Bernhardt's idiosyncratic songlike voice, her sinuous physical movement, and her tendency to break established performance rules onstage. Bringing these new "simple folk" into the legitimate theater in France, a traditionally male upper-class space of culture and national achievement in the arts, Bernhardt was the impetus to broader theatrical change. An important part of this change was the rise of the actress in the late nineteenth-century theater as a visible, successful, and respected leader of creative endeavors. As the *New York Times* and the *London World* declared in 1894, the significance of women in the theater in the late nineteenth century made it "the age of the actress."¹⁰ Already, two decades prior to this statement, Henry James had discussed Bernhardt's celebrity as the pinnacle of female achievement. As he observed, "It would be hard to imagine a more brilliant embodiment of feminine success."¹¹

Bernhardt's trip to London in 1879 was her first tour abroad. Because of this, she did not have an identity that was independent of her association with the Comédie-Française. Traveling as a member of this nationally celebrated company, she was part of a group contracted to perform "42 representations, 36 nights and 6 Saturday afternoons" in London between June 2 and July 12. This was a collective effort on behalf of the actors to recoup the money spent on reconstructions needed at their theater in Rue Richelieu, Paris.¹² Importantly, when the English manager of the Comédie-Française, M. M. L. Mayer, contracted with John Hollingshead (the lessee and manager of the Gaiety Theatre), to have "the whole of this distinguished company" perform at the Gaiety Theatre, no actor was promoted above any other. Instead, the cover of the inaugural London program boldly stated, "COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE 1680. GAIETY THEATRE 1879."¹³

It was the longevity of the French company and its link to a respected and contemporary English West End venue that was highlighted on the cover of the Gaiety program. Inside the program, details of the company were offered. On the opening pages, every actor and actress was listed, appearing in capital letters under their

surnames in separate male and female columns. These columns were determined by an actor's length of service (most to least), and headed by the titles "Sociétaires" or "Pensionnaires." The Sociétaires were actors chosen by the Comédie-Française company and were appointed by the French Ministry of Culture when an opening became available through retirement or death. This group was listed ahead of the Pensionnaires, who were in a probationary stage of their career. In the program, there was a hierarchy of gender and roles that theater historians will not find unusual: actors preceded actresses (even in the minor roles), and main characters of a play were listed ahead of minor ones.

As though to emphasize the ensemble nature of the Comédie-Française—where actors worked within a network of carefully balanced relationships—the opening evening at the Gaiety Theatre was carefully choreographed. As the program explained, "M. [Edmond] GOT, as *Doyen* of the *Comédie-Française*, will open the performance by delivering an address written in verse by [the French poet and writer] M. JEAN AICARD. The whole of the Company, on this occasion, will be assembled on the stage."¹⁴ The participatory and inclusive nature of this opening event—as well as the fact that the most senior and longest serving actor of the Comédie-Française delivered this verse—was important. This was an initiative offered by the theater company to a London audience. Moreover, Aicard's lines focused on the reciprocal respect that the French and English theater shared (and that English and French performers and theatergoers, in their turn, held for each other). Entitled "Molière to Shakspeare" [*sic*], Aicard specifically wrote this work for the Gaiety opening. Standing before a bust of Shakespeare and Molière, and addressing first Shakespeare and then Molière, Got celebrated the achievements of both men.¹⁵

Reports of the inaugural evening performance were glowing. As the *London Evening Standard* reminded readers, London theatergoers were familiar with Parisian actors, particularly those from the Comédie-Française, considered the most prestigious and respected theatrical company in the world. The reviewer made a clear case for the sophistication and outward-facing nature of local London audiences, as well as for the cosmopolitanism of the city:

We cannot for a moment consent to regard our distinguished visitors from the Comédie-Française as in any sense strangers. The famous house in the Rue de Richelieu, the brilliant capital of the widely-spreading theatrical republic, is accessible and convenient, and the enjoyments so richly provided there are too tempting to be resisted by Englishmen who are interested in dramatic art. The majority of those who will witness the representations which Mssrs. Hollingshead and Mayer have been able to provide are more or less familiar with the artists they will see as they are accustomed to appear in their own home; and visiting the Gaiety Theatre will be rather renewing friendships than making acquaintances.¹⁶

The opening night program was particular because it did not feature a single play but, instead, presented evidence of French theatrical achievement. Excerpts from

French comedy (Molière's *Le Misanthrope* and his one-act *Les Précieuses ridicules*) and French tragedy (Racine's *Phèdre*) were performed. In a certain sense, therefore, the leading house of French actors was making a case for French theatrical primacy in both comedy and tragedy. Who the Comédie-Française chose to perform these roles was telling. Molière's works were performed by Louis-Arsène Delaunay and Benoît-Constant Coquelin; the former was already Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur, and both were respected long-term members of the theatrical company. Reports state that the cast of *Le Misanthrope* was "worthy of the task" and Coquelin in *Les Précieuses ridicules* worthy of "high praise." It was, however, Bernhardt (a far younger and newer company member, and the only actress praised in reviews of the evening) who was celebrated. Playing the second act of *Phèdre*, in which Phèdre reveals her love for her stepson Hippolytus, she provoked such fervor that "a scene of enthusiasm such as is rarely witnessed in the theater" followed the fall of her curtain.¹⁷

Spectators responded to a variety of factors in Bernhardt's performance. In the first place, she was remarkable for her pliable physicality. Reviewing Bernhardt's *Ruy Blas* in 1872, French theater critic Francisque Sarcey explained that Bernhardt used the half-turn, a spiraling motion of the body, to arrange her costume around her when she moved. When she transitioned on and off the stage, and as she moved from a seated to a standing position, Bernhardt used the spiral as a gestural motif. Moreover, Sarcey describes Bernhardt's voice as "languid and tender, and well-paced; her diction is so perfect that you do not lose a syllable." Going on to explain Bernhardt's vocal singularity, Sarcey explains that "her voice spreads around [the script's] incises, like oil spreads and envelopes [*sic*], without dropping any detail within the ensemble. . . . With fine and penetrating inflections, she marks certain words with extraordinary value!"¹⁸ At her London debut seven years later, English commentators were similarly struck by Bernhardt's expressive use of her body and voice: Bernhardt performed *Phèdre* with "an intensity of passion and a depth of dramatic feeling [that was] positively startling."¹⁹

It was Bernhardt's ability to perform a range of conflicting emotions in a single scene that was particularly noted at her London debut. The leading stage authority, Percy Fitzgerald, described the "sudden burst" of the actress onto the stage and the extraordinary impact she had on audiences. He singled out her expressive versatility in her performance of *Phèdre*: Bernhardt made his "very pulses quiver" as she transformed from a frail and piteous figure to one of seduction, self-repulsion, and (finally) fiendish despair.²⁰ With the exception of *Phèdre*, Bernhardt's repertoire otherwise contributed to what was considered, in England, a very modern program of plays. This program included *Le Passant*, as well as works by playwrights considered audacious and morally challenging outside Paris (for example, Alexandre Dumas *fil*s).

Because of this use of risqué and morally challenging content, the Gaiety's Comédie-Française season indicated the freedom the French enjoyed when

choosing a nationally representative theatrical program. As Ignacio Ramos-Gay explains in an article that focuses on the challenges that this French company presented to London audiences in 1879, the program “included a few subversive modern plays by Émile Augier, Alexandre Dumas *fils*, Jules Sandeau and François Coppée that dealt with unsettled up-to-date problems such as infidelity, divorce, and the progressive disintegration of the bourgeois family.” The Lord Chamberlain, granting the Comédie-Française permission to play these works, positioned the company as “a sort of ambassador, a diplomat entitled to all legal benefits as long as it confined its power of action to the actual, physical space that was reserved for the representation of plays: the Gaiety Theatre.”²¹

Although the Comédie-Française was given special leave to perform roles no other company was permitted to perform in London, Bernhardt was reluctant to perform the “unhealthy” and “perverse” role of Mrs. Clarkson (of Dumas’s *l’Étrangère*). As an article in *The Times* explained, Bernhardt was sensitive about her local reception to Dumas’s “repulsive, illogical, truthless” role. She was particularly concerned about “the opinion the English will form of her.” This concern, expressed before her departure to London, articulated a desire to fit within the moral codes of the “sober and serious public” of London.²² Bernhardt’s concern to perform more challenging modern roles also indicates that she was aware what it meant to perform in a transnational context.²³ Indeed, the fact that Bernhardt wanted to first appear in *Phèdre*, *Andromaque*, or *Zaïre* indicates that a compromise must have been reached: appearing on opening night in a single act of *Phèdre*, she made her first full-length theatrical appearance in *l’Étrangère* on June 3, the second night of the Gaiety program. Bernhardt appeared as Doña Sol in Victor Hugo’s *Hernani* on June 9 and as Phèdre again on June 13: it took ten days for her to finally reappear in the full play of *Phèdre* in her own, chosen role. In this context, it is important to remember that Bernhardt first arrived in London as a noted player in a hierarchical company that was structured like a family business. Excelling in the performance of classic tragedy (and in a role with which London theatergoers were already familiar, thanks to Rachel’s fame as Phèdre a generation earlier), Bernhardt did not push the bounds of morality on the stage but, rather, was a young avant-garde actress challenging performance tradition and making her own mark on the transnational stage. As commentators argued, “A grander and more tragic performance has not been seen by the present generation.”²⁴

“THE ICE IS BROKEN”:

BERNHARDT AND THE THEATRICAL AGENT

When Bernhardt arrived in London as part of the Comédie-Française’s theatrical *ensemble* in 1879, she differed from her fellow players in one key respect: she had acquired a theatrical agent for the visit.²⁵ This agent—Edward Jarrett—had contacted with her in Paris and organized appearances and activities in England. News of this professional relationship spread fast: Edwin Booth, writing to theater

critic William Winter in July 1879, explained that Jarrett, “as good as any [manager] . . . is to have Bernhardt.” Concluding with the comment, “So much for England: the ice is broken,” Booth suggested that he was aware of the promotional and popularizing function Jarrett would serve.²⁶ Booth’s comment was premonitory. As Bernhardt explained in her *Memoirs*, “what was really fine, and a sight I shall never forget, was our landing at Folkestone. There were thousands of people there, and it was the first time I had ever heard the cry of ‘Vive Sarah Bernhardt!’”²⁷

Building audiences and organizing visits, booking her for matinées and private drawing room performances, Jarrett also helped to organize an exhibition of Bernhardt’s paintings and sculptures in “a spacious atelier at 33, Piccadilly.”²⁸ These works gave Bernhardt a visibility beyond that which could be gained on the stage alone. Percy Fitzgerald, reflecting on Bernhardt’s tour two years later, stated that “one of the most singular incidents of the visit of that strange artiste, Sarah Bernhardt, was the somewhat naive exhibition of her talents in other directions. Securing a public room in Piccadilly, she invited all the notables and connoisseurs to an afternoon reception, to come and admire her powers as a painter and sculptor. For two or three hours there streamed in here a crowd of all the curious, and the ‘fine fleur’ of all that was distinguished in London.”²⁹

The painter John Everett Millais, the poet Theodore Martin, the Swedish opera singer Cristina Nilsson, the composer Julius Benedict, the journalist George Augustus Sala, the novelist and journalist Edmund Yates, and Charles Dickens attended the event. As the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* stated, the reception was attended by literary and artistic London, who regarded the actress herself (and not her artworks) as “the great attraction of the Exhibition.”³⁰ This reception was depicted in a sketch by the French artist René Lelong, showing the actress talking to the British prime minister, William Gladstone (fig. 2). The celebration of Bernhardt as an actress who could bring together creative and political leaders contrasts with her reception as an artist in France. For example, when she entered the Paris Salon of 1874, Auguste Rodin charged her not with eccentricity but with *saloperie* (rubbish, filth).³¹

Bernhardt’s decision to bring artwork to London at the same time that she performed in the city indicates that she knew and appreciated the medium’s unique cultural context. When, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Britain became the world’s leading industrial and commercial nation, London “quickly emerged as the world’s principal and commercially most attractive market for contemporary art.”³² Tapping into this market, Bernhardt was aware of the British taste for contemporary art (as opposed to Old Master paintings from the continent). By keeping a focus on French themes and people in her works, she indicated an awareness of this market demand. The art galleries in Bond Street, for example, were divided between the German Gallery, the Dutch Gallery, the Continental Gallery, the Japanese Gallery, and the French Gallery. Ensuring her performances at the Gaiety Theatre remained in the public eye, her work also included a bronze bass-relief entitled *Art Crowning Shakespeare and Molière*.³³



FIGURE 2. Sarah Bernhardt Conversing with William Gladstone at Her London Exhibition of 1879. Oil on canvas board. Rene Lelong. Image courtesy of the Art Renewal Center, www.artrenewal.org. www.artrenewal.org/Common/Image?imageId=9504.

In 1878, the famous Belgian art dealer, Ernest Gambart, purchased a sculpture of Bernhardt's called *La Mère du pêcheur*. This was exhibited at his famous villa in Nice. Bernhardt's ties to Gambart, the foremost dealer of French art in London and the founder of the French Gallery (the first commercial art gallery in London), did not escape the notice of public.³⁴ As Pamela M. Fletcher explains, we can understand the importance of Gambart when we appreciate that "in establishing the French Gallery, Gambart drew upon the legitimizing authority of the Academy, while laying the groundwork for its displacement."³⁵ In my view, Bernhardt used the legitimizing authority of the Comédie-Française in a similar way, capitalizing on its international renown to subsequently generate audiences for her own French theater abroad. John Hollingshead, reflecting on Bernhardt's opening season in the *Gaiety Chronicles* some decades later, confirms this view. He states that as soon as she realized her commercial value to audiences in London, Bernhardt "offered to come back the following year and bring with her a selected company."³⁶

NEW AND VULGARIZED: BERNHARDT IN THE 1880s

When Bernhardt returned to London in 1880 with her own company, she was part of the “French Season of plays” that opened on May 24 at the Gaiety Theatre. No longer a member of a prestigious ensemble company, she was now an independent attraction in an annual summer event. Opening the first two weeks of an eight-week program presenting “50 pieces, old and new,” she was advertised under the heading “FRENCH PLAYS.” The Gaiety program stated that Bernhardt would appear every evening with M. COQUELIN [of the Comédie-Française] “supported by Mesdames JULLIEN, JEANNE BERNHARDT, DEVAYOD, KALB, &c., &c.”³⁷ In Bernhardt’s first “Gaiety Programme,” the title of the play was given precedence, as it had been with the Comédie-Française, heading the page. Male actors were again also listed ahead of females. Moreover, Bernhardt’s name appeared in the same size font as all other players; there was no effort to distinguish her as a unique attraction. It was not until 1887, when Bernhardt performed in another West End theater, the Lyceum Theatre, that the format of the program changed. Still publicized within a “Season of French Plays,” she was now listed as a celebrity attraction in all-caps (fig. 3).³⁸ Moreover, she was advertised presenting a “Special Performance” for the public (act 2 of *Phèdre* and acts 4 and 5 of *La Dame aux camélias*). Bernhardt was evidently aware of the draw of specific “emotional” scenes and was now famous enough to claim individual billing.

Records show that Bernhardt appeared in London in a variety of West End theaters—usually those with the most seating and therefore available audiences—before the end of the nineteenth century. She performed in the French Season at the Gaiety Theatre (1879–86), Her Majesty’s Theatre (1886, 1890), the season of French Plays at the Lyceum Theatre (1887–89), the Royal English Opera House (1892), Daly’s Theatre (1894–95), the Comedy Theatre (1896), Adelphi Theatre (1897), Lyric Theatre (1898), Fulham Grand Theatre (1898), and the Adelphi, Fulham Grand, and Comedy Theatre in 1899.³⁹ Increasingly, Bernhardt was billed separately from the “French season,” had her name highlighted and visually differentiated on theatrical programs, and gradually changed her performance style. As early as 1887—just seven years after her first independent tour of London in 1880—criticisms were directed at her acting. A review of her performance in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* stated: “The French playgoing public in London is limited, and especially the public prepared to pay old-fashioned opera-prices for the privilege of seeing a foreign ‘star’ supported by an indifferent company.”⁴⁰ Perhaps it was in relation to this difficulty of attracting an implicitly elite and wealthy “French playgoing public” in London that Bernhardt’s performance style began to change around 1888, during her tenure at the Lyceum Theatre. While it was accepted that physically she had become “more matronly and less pliable” (Bernhardt was then forty-four years old), it was her acting—deemed “less artistic”—that caused comment. As one reviewer wrote in the influential *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, Bernhardt’s long tours and journeying had “induced



FIGURE 3. Cover of Lyceum Theatre program, August 3, 1887, showing Bernhardt as a feature attraction.
Source: Author's private collection.

a careless and indifferent tone—a scrambling, hurried method of delivery, and evident signs of weariness that are much to be deplored.” Without the discipline of the Comédie-Française (“alone and uninfluenced”), she forgot that refinement and dignity were essential to her art.⁴¹

The vulgarized method of acting, “deliberately adopted by the actress,” was associated with Bernhardt’s new partnership with the playwright Victorien Sardou.⁴² Reflecting on the premiere of *La Tosca* in 1888 (and recalling that this was a play written specifically for Bernhardt by Sardou), a review in the influential weekly London paper *The Graphic* stated that Bernhardt “seems now under M. Sardou’s inspiration to have given up her genius to melodrama of the picturesquely harrowing kind; and, if the end and aim of the histrionic art is to afford satisfaction to the play-going public, she is abundantly justified.”⁴³ In my view, Bernhardt’s annual engagement with London theaters saw her identity as a French theater actress change and adapt. Rather than limit French theater to a determined summer season in a specific theater, Bernhardt drove commercial and cultural change. When we realize that the Lyceum could seat around 2,800 people—as opposed to the 1,126 of the Gaiety Theatre or the 1,319 of Her Majesty’s—we realize that Bernhardt’s changing theaters, programs, and acting styles coincided with the emergence of larger audiences for her West End productions.⁴⁴ Her broad physical gestures onstage—similar to the gestures we see on film, particularly in the use of her outstretched, supplicating arms in the death scene of *Queen Elizabeth*—were developed and honed in theaters like the Lyceum. These large venues

accommodated huge audiences and used theatrical space in different ways. On the *Queen Elizabeth* film, we see a frontal fall that could only be broken by a cushioned floor. In *Camille*, we see a spiral that spins her nightdress around her as she dies. In these ways, film framed and captured the phases of Bernhardt's large theatrical movements developed on the international stage. Moreover, Bernhardt developed new commercial opportunities for the theater that included (but were not limited to) her involvement in film. Challenging what Richard W. Schoch describes as "the mid-Victorian theatre's self-conscious emulation of the cult of the gentleman,"⁴⁵ Bernhardt helped forge an international market for French theater that was separate from playwrights such as Molière, performance traditions of the Théâtre Français, and the focus on *ensemble* productions.

ACTING IN AMERICA: CHANGES IN BERNHARDT'S APPEAL

Bernhardt's relationship to American audiences differed from the relationship she had with the theatergoing public of West End London in the 1880s. First arriving in New York in 1880, on the heels of her first independent Gaiety season, she was not introduced as a member of the Théâtre Française. Instead, Bernhardt was an individual actress and French theatrical celebrity. With Henry E. Abbey as her agent, she tapped into and profited from an emerging network of transnational business relations. As Michael Bennett Leavitt, in his book *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management*, explains, Abbey used the American Marcus R. Mayer, "one of the best business managers at the time," to assist in the organization of Bernhardt's trip from London.⁴⁶ Abbey was already partnered with John B. Schoeffel; the two leased and managed theaters in New York, Buffalo, Boston, and Philadelphia. Although there are no records of the financial terms of these relationships, it is evident that Bernhardt's promotion in America was distinct to the avant-garde eccentricity that first marked her renown in London.

Bernhardt's American appeal was promoted through the prestigious crowds she had drawn in London and across Europe. As Booth's inaugural theater program stated, in London "the most distinguished men in art and letters, the proudest and wealthiest of England's most exclusive nobility—even Royalty itself," had paid homage to her. In the capital cities of Europe, Bernhardt had been feted "as never was an actress before." Booth therefore brought the actress to the American public as an incomparable *artiste*; she was a theatrical celebrity of the new generation.⁴⁷ Reiterating that Bernhardt arrived in New York on the heels of Parisian and London success ("the two greatest cities of the world"), the program anticipated that "the general verdict of France and England will be cordially and unanimously sustained in America."⁴⁸

The triangulation of Bernhardt's success in Paris, London, and New York—the cultural capitals of the Western world—was an important aspect of Bernhardt's

appeal in America as the New World. Bernhardt arrived from the Old World of London, the global capital of commerce, where her transnational celebrity was formed thanks to the enthusiasm of the city's elite, theatergoing audiences. Originating from Paris, Bernhardt boasted roots in one of the oldest and most prestigious acting companies in the world. Reports of Bernhardt's inaugural opening at Booth's Theatre in New York on November 8, 1880, indicate that audiences welcomed the actress as a celebrity, even before she appeared on the stage. On her opening night, for example, one thousand sightseers packed the street. The crowd of ticketholders (fifty-plus yards deep) was so tightly packed that no one could move within it, and tickets were bought at triple or quadruple prices. The *New York Times's* review of Bernhardt's opening stated that her reception was extraordinary, even for Bernhardt herself: "A gentleman who was present with her at her receptions in London and Paris says that last night's demonstration, in unanimity and enthusiasm, far surpasses anything in Mlle. Bernhardt's previous experiences."⁴⁹

The most obvious difference between Bernhardt's London and American reception can be seen in the playbill used to promote her New York debut. Appearing in Booth's Theatre on November 9, 1880, she was a single headline act—"The Great French Artiste"—whose national origins were reiterated in the spelling of the word *artist*. Playing in a "Specially selected company, from the Parisian theaters, under the management of Henry E. Abbey," Bernhardt was presented through the intermediary of an agent. Drawing on actors from Parisian theaters, and not a specific national theater, Bernhardt is framed as a headline celebrity. As the playbill stated, Bernhardt was accompanied by "The Grand Orchestra" playing excerpts of well-known, contemporary music. In this way, the program was French but filtered through familiar auditory references. For example, Bernhardt's performance was accompanied by excerpts from *The Pirates of Penzance* (first shown in New York on December 31, 1879), American Rudolph Aronson's 1880 "Sweet Sixteen Waltz," and a selection from Edmund Kretschmer's 1874 opera *Die Folklinger*.⁵⁰ Clearly, while Bernhardt was a Parisian celebrity, she was also a contemporary performer whose work accommodated New York musical trends and fashions.

The advertisements accompanying Bernhardt's performance at Booth's Theatre indicate how the actress was localized and commercialized for New York audiences. Rather than appear in a simple list of players, Bernhardt was presented as a celebrity embedded in commercial culture. In a practice typical of the period, advertisements in the program implicated neighborhood shops and businesses in the theatrical play, stating (for example), that "the furniture used in the plays are from the warerooms of Lowenbien & Son, Fourteenth Street."⁵¹ Moreover, advertisers adapted Bernhardt for their own use: there were the "Latest" Sara [*sic*] Bernhardt Crimps" from Stiebel's (an importer and manufacturer of human hair goods that are "Warranted Naturally Curly"), "Ed Pinaud's SARAH BERNHARDT EXTRACT for the Handkerchief," "MAX WATERMAN'S EXCLUSIVE

Sarah Bernhardt GLOVES,” and “BERNHARDT DRESSES” from Jerseys Latest fashions.⁵² Outside the theater, Bernhardt’s New York fame was translated into commercial goods that could be purchased by a general public that did not necessarily have to attend the theater in order to enjoy Bernhardt’s presence in the city. It was reported, for example, that New Yorkers had given Bernhardt’s name to “every imaginable article of everyday life.” This included the marketing of Sarah Bernhardt bonbons, hats, boots, plates, and portraits. Moreover, when she visited the Park Theatre to watch Clara Morris perform, she was “enthusiastically received by the audience, who rose as she entered, while the orchestra played the ‘Marseillaise.’”⁵³

This spread of Bernhardt’s image and name across quotidian objects, as well as the spontaneous and direct association between Bernhardt and the national anthem of France, illustrates the depth of the embrace that the New York public offered Bernhardt. Whereas a highbrow and theatrical Paris-London exchange best characterizes Bernhardt’s first tour to England, in America her New York reception was nationalized, generated by a mass of people who were not necessarily regular theatergoers, and commercialized to an extent that provoked comment, even in the American press.

In New York, Bernhardt represented the theatrical leadership of the Old World, as well as the capacity of emerging manufacturing industries in America. Prime among these industries, particularly in cities like New York (which had increasing numbers of women with available wages to spend), were items marketed for female audiences and use. These included beauty products (such as hair goods and lotions for handkerchiefs), as well as fashion (such as shoes, hats, and dresses). It also included collectible prints, autographs, and music. Indeed, on a program for the Globe Theatre in Boston (dated Dec. 18, 1880), Bernhardt was theatrically and commercially promoted on the program. In the playbill, patrons were advised that music such as the “Quand Meme Polka” will be played. This polka was dedicated to her by one A. Spencer and clearly drew inspiration from her famous motto, *Quand même* (meaning “even though,” “notwithstanding”). The Globe program also announced that “the only Correct and Authorised Librettos of Mlle. Bernhardt’s Plays” are now “illustrated from designs made expressly by M’lle. Bernhardt, and their genuineness is certified to by the artist’s autograph signature.” Joined to this was the announcement that “photographs of M’lle. Sarah Bernhardt, taken from life in this country by [Napoleon] Sarony, are for sale by the Libretto Boys in the theater.”⁵⁴ A reproduced signature or image, available as a novel item of merchandise that was sold by a team of young salesmen in the theater, indicated the changed purchase that American audiences had on Bernhardt’s theatrical celebrity.

When Bernhardt subsequently traveled (on this first tour to America) to McVicker’s Theatre in Chicago in 1881, an art exhibition was publicized on the theatrical program. As it announced, “The Sarah Bernhardt Art Exhibition” at

O'Brien's Gallery was an event "visited by throngs of fashionable people (nearly 50 000) in New York, Boston and Philadelphia."⁵⁵ Instead of connecting Bernhardt's works to a French Gallery, as they were in London, or linking her to famous art dealers like Gambart, Bernhardt's exhibition was part of a commercial touring show. The increase in people who could access her artworks, now traveling alongside her theatrical tour, was significant. While Bernhardt's first Gaiety appearance was successful, and while her Grafton galleries show drew the literary and artistic crowds of London, her first American tour gave her access to a public that did not necessarily attend galleries, go to the theater, or understand French. As a commentator remarked, Americans were "making still more of their talented guest than did her London admirers two years ago, which is saying a great deal for Transatlantic enthusiasm."⁵⁶

CONTRASTS AND COMPARISONS: ACTING ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR

The choice of Bernhardt's opening role in New York—Eugène Scribe and Ernest Legouvé's *Adrienne Lecouvreur* (1849)—focuses on the French actress as a theatrical subject. Adrienne Lecouvreur was a renowned French actress of the early eighteenth century, a member of the Comédie-Française, known for her "natural" style of acting and famous for her mysterious death (attributed to poisoning). In adopting this role, Bernhardt self-referentially played an actress from the Comédie-Française playing the role of an actress. *Adrienne Lecouvreur* also allowed Bernhardt to perform a death scene, now a signature aspect of her theatrical repertoire. For audience members in New York, the role of Adrienne Lecouvreur was particularly significant because it allowed Bernhardt's acting to be compared to other French actresses in the same role. In this respect, it functioned as *Phèdre* did in London, in terms of enabling a generational Bernhardt/Rachel contrast. As the *New York Times* explained, "Many in the audience were, fortunately, able to compare their impressions of her [Bernhardt's] acting with that of other famous artists who have performed with success in the same part, notably Rachel, Avonia Jones, [Fanny] Janauschek, [Marie] Seebach, [Adelaide] Ristori, and [Helena] Modjeska."⁵⁷ Because the play was written for Rachel by Scribe and Legouvé, and because the part was considered one of Rachel's most powerful, Bernhardt's performance highlighted the emergence of a new generation of French theatrical prowess. Her performance of Adrienne's death (celebrated for being "full of truth and beauty"), as well as her unique voice, attracted commentary. Bernhardt was described as having a startling effect on the audience; her voice, considered a "perfect art," boasted an enunciation so distinct that "each whisper is heard with the sharpness of a bell struck suddenly."⁵⁸

Bernhardt's subsequent return to America in 1887, after a tour of South America, again saw her perform in New York. This time, however, her tour was

organized by Henry E. Abbey, who was now joined by Maurice Grau and John B. Schoeffel. Performing more than 250 times, this was one of the most successful tours of America ever undertaken by a European star.⁵⁹ Abbey, Grau, and Schoeffel formed a management partnership—known as Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau—on the heels of this success. The partnership of “three progressive and energetic managers, with years of experience, familiarity with the people of the various countries to whose people they propose to cater”—Grau for Europe, Abbey and Schoeffel for South America and North America—was “a novelty in theatrical enterprise.” The first company to “cater to the amusement of the people of two continents,” Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau evidence Bernhardt’s transnational appeal.⁶⁰ Indeed, it was Bernhardt’s capacity to build publics and audiences for her performances abroad, particularly in America, that motivated and put into place their focus on marketing and managing tours of European theatrical stars to North and South America. The French actor Coquelin and the Italian opera singer Adelina Patti were later signed to this management company; Bernhardt completed her “Farewell Tour” of America under their management in June 1887.

Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau not only organized tours of European stars to America, they also managed theaters for these tours. The theater where Bernhardt appeared in New York in 1887—the (appropriately named) Star Theatre—was managed by the trio from August 1887. When Bernhardt first appeared in the Star Theatre between March and June in 1887, she was appearing in an established venue that had been renovated and renamed just four years earlier. In addition to offering gaslight, new velvet carpets, fresh décor, and a newly painted domed ceiling, it boasted “the best practical stage in America,” constructed by the master mechanic Mr. Dorrington. As it was explained, “anything that can be done on a stage can be done on this, without tearing it to pieces.”⁶¹ In this context, it is important to remember that Bernhardt led changes in theatrical management and business practices in America, just as she appeared in theaters and contexts that associated her with modern development. She was an actress from Paris, but this did not mean that she was tied to rigid and tired traditions or practices.

Bernhardt performed *La Dame aux camélias* in the Star Theatre on her opening night in March 1887.⁶² Reviews of her performance speak of the merits of her acting; we are told that “Her art has no blemishes.”⁶³ Bernhardt’s subsequent performance in Sardou’s *Fédora* was similarly celebrated. For the first time, this role was performed in French for American audiences, and the impact was tremendous. As the reviewer in the *New York Times* stated, Bernhardt “is still the greatest of living actresses, accomplishing startling results with seeming spontaneity and perfect naturalness. . . . Her art has today reached its zenith, and in finish and force her acting is seen at its best.”⁶⁴ The attention given Bernhardt’s “naturalness” alerts us to the contextual specificity of what was “natural” on the late nineteenth-century stage. Here, the difference between a New York audience celebrating Bernhardt’s artistic return, and critics in London (in the same year)

lamenting Bernhardt's theatrical vulgarization, indicates the extent to which Bernhardt was promoted and interpreted differently by audiences abroad.

MODERNIZING MOVEMENT:
BERNHARDT IN AMERICA

When Bernhardt traveled in America, she did so in fitted train cars and later (in 1905) in her own "Sarah Bernhardt Special" train.⁶⁵ A published itinerary from her tour of America in 1905 and 1906 shows the railways she traveled, the times that she departed and arrived in cities and towns, and a photograph of the train she used. Entitled "The Sarah Bernhardt Special Reducing the Time between New York and Chicago on Its Record Run November 20, 1905," the image documented Bernhardt breaking modern speed records. Calling the train a "marquee in motion," Sharon Marcus explains that "this metonym for the actress, a container identified with and advertising the star it contains, endows the words 'Sarah Bernhardt' with the modernity of speed, the evanescence of smoke, and the propulsive momentum of an object moving at a record-breaking pace toward the beholder."⁶⁶ I add that the easily calculable times (listed above the photograph of the train) proved that Bernhardt had a personalized train and itinerary. Unlike most actors who relied on resources such as Harry Miner's annual *America Dramatic Directory* for programming their theatrical season, Bernhardt was in the unusual position of having no need to negotiate railroad timetables, distances, or census tables.⁶⁷

Moving with speed between cities, Bernhardt was also able to choose the venues for her productions. Particularly after the turn of the century, during the era of "the Trust" (the theater syndicate comprising Al Hayman, Abraham (Abe) Lincoln Erlanger, Charles Frohman, Marc Klaw, Samuel Nixon, and Frederick Zimmerman, formed in 1896), this ensured her ongoing presence on the American stage. Indeed, on her 1905–6 tour, Bernhardt was in contract with Lee Shubert, who had declared independence from the theater syndicate. This meant that Bernhardt could not perform in the chain of theaters (roughly five thousand legitimate theaters) running across America that the Trust controlled. When Bernhardt first appeared in New York, she appeared in the Lyric Theatre, which was at that time leased by the Shubert brothers. But because of Shubert's later independence from the Trust, Bernhardt was forced to perform in more unusual venues. As Stephen M. Archer explains, she performed in "conventional halls, skating rinks, a combined swimming pool–auditorium in Tampa, a summer theater five miles outside Little Rock, [and] a boathouse in St. John, Missouri."⁶⁸ In *Stagestruck Filmmaker*, David Mayer notes that Bernhardt was not just forced into these new venues; she also defied the syndicate. Consequently, she hired and appeared in a Barnum & Bailey circus tent during her 1905–6 tour.⁶⁹ Photographs of this tent, which had the capacity to hold six thousand people, were taken by one Geo. R. Lawrence Co. on April 30, 1906 (fig. 4). Captioned the "Sarah Bernhardt Tent," the photograph also



FIGURE 4. *Sarah Bernhardt Tent, Chicago*. Gelatin silver print. Geo. R. Lawrence Co., 1906. Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

shows the tent advertising an Earthquake Relief Fund Benefit. Because the San Francisco earthquake had occurred two weeks earlier, on April 18, we have evidence that Bernhardt used her celebrity to engage charitably in American current affairs. In this way, she both challenged monopoly industry and presented herself as a celebrity who invested in national infrastructure and regeneration.

Bernhardt's ability to meet the Trust with a cultural and financial challenge of her own indicates her awareness of the theater's audience. In bringing her performance to a variety of venues across America, Bernhardt broke free of the limitations of the legitimate theater. Quite literally, Bernhardt performed the same plays but did so in changed circumstances. The step between this form of theatrical adaptation to the popular music hall in London and variety stage in America is not great. It should therefore come as no surprise that just four years after she challenged the Trust, Bernhardt agreed to perform in the London Coliseum.

CELEBRITY CHANGE: BERNHARDT AT THE LONDON COLISEUM, 1910

The London Coliseum was a music-hall venue boasting the largest seating capacity of any theater in the West End (2,359). It was best known for its variety acts and was a draw for popular audiences. Programs from the Coliseum indicate that Bernhardt was newly marketed to London audiences in the 1910s. While I have identified an initial separation in London between the 1880 Gaiety theatrical program and Bernhardt's self-promotion through artworks in a Piccadilly gallery, a generation later, Bernhardt associated herself with the West End. Promoted as a celebrity act in a mixed single-act Coliseum program, Bernhardt was advertised alongside a host of businesses. A note in the Coliseum program indicates that of the thousands of buyers of the programs, "one or two" were critical of this mixing of the theatrical program with advertising. As readers were told, "by spreading the names throughout the booklet, value is added to the advertisements, the revenue from which enables the Programme to be sold at one penny instead of sixpence."⁷⁰

This explanation indicates not just that the Coliseum was seeking to make its program affordable to a popular audience but that some of those who might have sought out Bernhardt on this stage were habituated to another form of theater (the legitimate theater) and were not used to seeing an order of program spread between pages promoting local businesses.

In his article “Conversions and Convergences: Sarah Bernhardt in the Era of Technological Reproducibility, 1911–1913,” Charles Musser speaks, in a related context, of new forms of publicity joining Bernhardt’s theatrical stage appearances. Focusing on the recording contract Bernhardt signed with the Edison Phonograph Company in 1910, Musser explains that there was a “new seriousness and a new effort to coordinate them [records] with her Anglo-American stage career.” As Musser shows, the English paper *Lloyd’s Weekly News* advertised Bernhardt records that could be shipped from America to arrive in London in time for Bernhardt’s appearance at the Coliseum.⁷¹ As the program for the Coliseum indicates, these records were also advertised to the public attending the Coliseum show. Captioned “Thomas A. Edison,” the advertisement reads: “Tonight you will hear that greatest of actresses SARAH BERNHARDT in some of her famous parts. It will doubtless be for years a pleasing memory; but how much more so would be a souvenir of the occasion in the form of a perfect reproduction of her marvelous voice on an EDISON RECORD.” Stating that Bernhardt had refused to make records for any other company, the promotion elides her ongoing engagement in the phonograph industry.⁷²

Moving into emerging media while forging ways that the theater could be enjoyed at home, Bernhardt multiplied the ways she could reach audiences. This placement of the Edison advertisement within Bernhardt’s Coliseum theater show was novel; it indicated the ways the variety stage was expanding audiences through promotion of emerging commercial industries. Because many of these Coliseum advertisements focused on female personal care and hygiene, they can also be compared to the advertisements that accompanied Bernhardt’s earlier appearances in America. For example, a “unique and exclusive Complexion Specifics known as ‘de la Reine’” was advertised to London audiences: “Ladies are now given the opportunity to test them,” and this “only extends to Madame Bernhardt’s Season.” A product called Icilma Natural Water was presented in a full-page advertisement featuring a photograph of Bernhardt wearing the opulent headdress from *La Princesse Lointaine*. Announcing that they had “the pleasure in presenting a facsimile of the handwriting and autograph of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt” Icilma Natural Water promised to restore beauty to so many complexions.⁷³

These advertisements were aimed largely at young women, who constituted a newly visible part of the modern industrial workforce. Women also needed to be convinced that they could bring themselves and their families to a music hall and be respectfully engaged by a theatrical program. Bernhardt was a good choice in this regard: associated with the legitimate theater and with Paris as a global capital

of art and culture, Bernhardt was known to speak to foreign publics in her native French. If, in 1888, critics in London were speaking of Bernhardt's acting being "vulgarized" by her trips abroad, some twenty years later Bernhardt promised London audiences a short and very much abbreviated and spectacular view of her work as a theatrical attraction on the variety stage.

The performances that Bernhardt presented at the Coliseum were taken from her most famous roles, presented as single-act excerpts from her most engaging scenes. In 1910, for example, she presented the third act of Sardou's *La Tosca* (summarized as "Torture Scene"); in 1911, her program included *Théodora* (act 3, the death scene), *La Dame aux camélias* (act 5, the death scene), *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* (act 2, the trial scene), and *Fédora* (act 3, the revelation scene). Each of these famous acts involved Bernhardt performing death or featured her in an emotionally tense and engaging scene. For example, a review of *Fédora* written more than twenty years earlier (in 1887) isolated the third act of the play as being "the most impressive passage in the performance" with the climax of the act—when Vladimir's villainy is revealed—as "such an exhibition of passion as few other actresses would dare to attempt, and none could present so successfully as Bernhardt."⁷⁴

The Coliseum program offered these sectional, isolated glimpses of Bernhardt's performance across successive nights and weeks. Bernhardt did not present an evening of extracts; each week she presented just one act of a single play. A scene that might hold a particular affordance for English audiences (for example, *Queen Elizabeth*) ran for two weeks.⁷⁵ A special sheet was offered in the 1910 Coliseum program with a printed explanation of what Bernhardt's play was about and what would occur in the scene in which she was performing. In *La Tosca*, for instance, we are told where we are (Rome, 1800), who rules (the Minister of Police, Baron Scarpia), and who Mario Cavaradossi, Floria Tosca, and Cesare Angelotti are (a revolutionary, a great singer, and the republican leader). The background to the scene is described, and then the action in the scene is relayed like a story. Using clear and simple language ("In vain she [Maria] begs") ensures that audiences will understand the emotions and motivations of each character.⁷⁶ This background and introduction to Bernhardt's work also indicates that while she was featured on the music-hall stage as a special attraction, a degree of narrative explanation and context had to be set in place for London audiences.

In 1911 and 1912, large and specially printed programs of the "Sarah Bernhardt Season" were available for three cents (fig. 5). These elaborate programs included longer synopses of each play, highlighted sections of the Coliseum's single acts, and page-size photographs of Bernhardt in her role taken by photographers of global repute (e.g., by "Bert, Paris" and "Downey, London").⁷⁷ The introduction to the 1911 Sarah Bernhardt Season program opens with a discussion titled "Madam Bernhardt and the Variety Stage." Arguing that the 1910 appearance of Bernhardt in the Coliseum drew the attention of leading newspapers in England, Europe, and America, it called the program an "epoch-making event" with "far-reaching

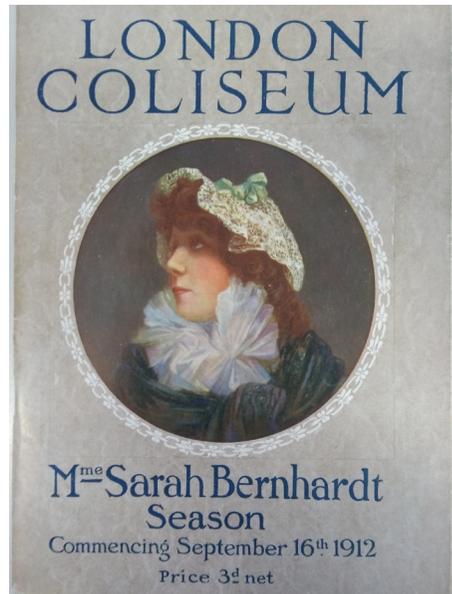


FIGURE 5. Cover of the Bernhardt Season, London Coliseum, 1912. Courtesy of Special Collections, Exeter University.

effect upon the entertainment world.⁷⁸ The inclusion of Bernhardt as a globally renowned theatrical actress performing alongside attractions such as Loie Fuller,⁷⁹ or “the famous Madame Yvette Guilbert Diseuse,” “Eight Lancashire Lads, Wonders in Wooden Shoes,” one “Fred Barnes, Descriptive Vocalist,” and “The Bioscope, Illustrating Interesting Incidents”⁸⁰ indicates the changing scope of the music hall in London and the widening of Bernhardt’s popular celebrity. Marketed to family and evening audiences, she appeared daily at the 2:30 p.m. matinee and at the 8 p.m. show six days a week (the theater was not open on Sundays). Bernhardt was therefore a performer whose fame reached mothers and children and who prompted legitimate theatrical practices to flow into the popular stage via the association of a lead actress with her own titled season, the printing of specially colored tribute programs, the naming of playwrights in program details, the specification and naming of the performed acts, the availability of translated and theatrical synopses, the use of theatrical portraits to illustrate a role, and the encouragement of audience members to involve themselves in paratheatrical initiatives. For example, in 1912 the Coliseum invited the public to sign their own copy of the “National Tribute to Mme. Sarah Bernhardt” on the occasion of her sixty-eighth birthday, encouraging the inclusion and involvement of anonymous theater attendees in recognition of her acting.⁸¹ The Coliseum also offered the *Bernhardt Birthday Book* for sale from attendants, which included photographs and “quotes for every day of the year from Mme. Bernhardt’s repertoire of plays and other sources.”⁸² Again, this was a product that could be used by everyday audiences, who were invited to list their own family and friends within a Bernhardt-inspired year.

These new ways of engaging the London public in Bernhardt's fame might also be considered within the context of the Coliseum's theatrical show itself. Placing Bernhardt as the eighth or ninth act (in a program of around thirteen or fourteen attractions) meant that she was the first act after intermission. We might guess that this placement ensured that audiences remained for the full show (since doors were shut during performances). Appearing after the interval also indicates that Bernhardt's act might have taken more effort to mount and stage; possibly, time was needed for this. Moreover, because the program was two or three acts shorter in the second half than the first, we might surmise that the length of her performance was longer than other attractions. But while the music hall included film as an attraction, the title and subject of the films screened were not listed. It is therefore the bioscope itself, the film projection machine, that is featured as a theatrical attraction on the Coliseum program.

If considered as a theatrical attraction, the bioscope takes the spectacular display of mechanization on the stage to its extreme (that is, in the removal of live performance and in its dependence on the workings of a machine as a theatrical attraction in itself).⁸³ We might consider, in this context, the fact that the bioscope is listed as displaying "interesting incidents" and not featuring specific people, events, or theatrical scenes. Moreover, just as Bernhardt always opened the second half of the music-hall show, so, too, did the bioscope also always close it. It is difficult to determine whether we should see this final program item as a clearing space—that is, as a moment signaling the end of the program, when patrons might begin to exit—or as an attraction that audiences would eagerly await. In either instance, we cannot deny that it was the spectacle of the theatrical variety show before a large audience in central London that is significant. In other words, both Bernhardt and the bioscope are part of theater history and film history in the kaleidoscope of theatrical attractions that constitute popular entertainment in early twentieth-century London.

I, TOO, SAW SARAH BERNHARDT: VARIETYDOM IN AMERICA

Just as London was the first city in which Bernhardt realized her potential as a French theatrical star, so, too, did Bernhardt's successful season at the Coliseum prompt her to expand "varietydom" to include the Vaudeville stage in America. On her American tour following her first Coliseum appearance (the American tour was undertaken from 1912 to 1913), Bernhardt appeared in an Orpheum Circuit vaudeville tour facilitated by Martin Beck. As Charles Musser comments, most biographies about Bernhardt focus on her career in the legitimate theater and give scant coverage of the 1910–13 period. As he argues, rather than view these years in terms of decline and approaching old age (Bernhardt was in her late sixties), we might instead appreciate that Bernhardt "not only embraced a series of important

innovations that were of cultural and political significance, she understood how different media forms could be made to converge in ways that produced maximum impact and synergy.”⁸⁴

When Bernhardt entered American vaudeville programs, she was positioned as a French actress bringing legitimate French theater to popular audiences. Like the Coliseum program in 1911 explaining that Bernhardt had impacted the entertainment industry by making herself affordable to popular audiences on the variety stage, the Palace Theatre in 1912 explained in its preface that Martin Beck had convinced Bernhardt “that to appear at moderate prices” was “a duty she owed the public.”⁸⁵ Rather than present Bernhardt in her own season accompanied by a range of theatrical attractions, in America Bernhardt was marketed through the management of Martin Beck. As the program read: “Martin Beck offers Sarah Bernhardt in Vaudeville.” Replacing Bernhardt’s status as an independent and famous actress with the aspirations of Martin Beck, audiences were told that Beck worked to make vaudeville “parallel the achievements of the most notable epoch of the drama” and that the inclusion of Bernhardt was the “crowning success of a career filled with achievements.”⁸⁶ In addition to framing Bernhardt within the context of Beck’s entrepreneurship, the details of Bernhardt’s plays were different from Bernhardt’s London appearance. While she was marketed through a program featuring single acts taken from her most famous plays—*La Dame aux camélias* (act 5), *La Tosca* (act 4), *Théodora* (act 3)—Beck did not focus on the action within each act so much as the synopsis of each play. The act numbers and names of the performers were provided in small type in the margins of the page. Moreover, on the Beck program advertisements were replaced by unattributed photographs of Bernhardt in theatrical roles.

In advertisements for Bernhardt’s Palace Theatre program, publicity focused on the availability of her live performance. As one announcement stated: “It is the desire of Mme. Bernhardt and her management that before her departure for France she plays a metropolitan engagement so that none need remain away, nor deny themselves the delight of seeing this most famous of the world’s players because of the price of seats. It is for this reason that a scale has been determined so generous in its provisions that each may say in future days ‘I, too, saw Bernhardt.’”⁸⁷ Unlike Edison records, sold in London as records of a significant event and included in theatrical publicity, patrons were told that Bernhardt must be seen to be remembered. In this announcement, there is again emphasis on Beck as her manager and agent.

After the launch of Bernhardt’s Palace program, her appearance in the variety theater included many popular acts. A May 1913 repertoire listed, for example, “NAT M. MILLS ‘The Happy Tramp,’” “VON HOVEN ‘The Dippy Mad Magician,’” “THE STANLEYS In ‘Shadowgraphs,’” and “EDISON’S MARVELLOUS TALKING MACHINES.”⁸⁸ Similar to the Biograph films that completed Bernhardt’s London Coliseum program, film was integrated into the variety show as a

theatrical attraction. Evidence of this integration of stage and screen is confirmed by Julius Cahn's *Official Theatrical Guide*, which, by 1912, included both variety theater and film. Published in New York, the guide materialized the "radical changes" that swept through the American theater industry in the early teen years. Newly expanded to include vaudeville theaters, theatrical agencies, acts and performers, as well as moving picture houses and picture exchanges, Cahn's guide modernized its list of theaters, hotels, newspapers, railroads, express companies, theatrical managers, producers, agents, plays, and attorneys.⁸⁹ While the theater was in a process of expansion and change, Beck's patrons were assured that nothing had changed in Bernhardt's performance. The emphasis on her continued legitimacy as a French actress stood in contrast to the publicity that first accompanied her tour in America. In an interesting reversal, the young actress who provided the opportunity to market anything from hair crimps to furniture in 1880 was, by 1913, a respectable attraction presenting French theatrical culture to the American masses. Again in an interesting contrast, Bernhardt was integrated into "the people's palace" (the Coliseum) almost contemporaneously in London. There, she promoted commercial products for women and leveraged new business around her reproduced voice and image.

FRAMING FILM

Bernhardt entered film in 1900, when she made a brief excerpt of the fencing duel and death scene of *Hamlet*. Part of Paul Decauville's Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre program at the Paris Exhibition, the work is notable for a variety of reasons. First, it featured her cross-dressed in a Shakespearian role that she had recently (and famously) made her own by commissioning a translation of the work into French.⁹⁰ Second, she appeared on a variety program that was shown in an international context (the Paris Exposition). This joined the phonograph and film and featured famous excerpts of performances from the contemporary French stage. Alongside Bernhardt, the program boasted "Coquelin aîné" in the duel scene from *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Gabrielle Réjane in the mime scene of *Ma Cousine*, Little Tich (Harry Relph) in his Spanish dance, and Cléo de Mérode in her Javanese dance. Today, this program seems to suggest the recorded version of the variety or music-hall programs that were to come. As such, the initiative puts theater at the intersection of reproductive technologies, while promoting film as a French product ripe for commercial experimentation and export.

Following this experimentation into recorded theater, Bernhardt's entrance into narrative film is difficult to trace. We know that she made a lost film, *La Tosca*, directed by André Calmettes for the French company Le Film d'Art in 1908. For unknown reasons, *La Tosca* was not released in America until 1912.⁹¹ We can hypothesize that Bernhardt helped select the role—*La Tosca* was one of her biggest successes on the American stage—but we do not know why it was released

several years after its original production. We also do not know why it did not join the release of *Sarah Bernhardt at Home* (1912) and *Madame Bernhardt in Her Adaptation for the Cinema of Adrienne Lecouvreur* (1912) in the UK.⁹² Indeed, there remains little record of these films' transnational circulation or impact. In 1916, *La Tosca* reappears in the trade press, advertised along with "all kinds of advertising matter, including three styles of posters, heralds, posters and slides."⁹³ In this context, *La Tosca* joined other media to commercialize Bernhardt's presence in America. In consequence, it is *La Dame aux camélias*, directed by André Calmettes and Henri Pouctal for Film d'Art in 1911, that allows us to address Bernhardt's transnational impact in film.

INAUGURATING THE CELEBRITY DOUBLE-FEATURE FILM

La Dame aux camélias (renamed *Camille* for American audiences) was released with Réjane's *Madame Sans-Gêne* in America as a combined theatrical program on February 18, 1912. A five-reel program—marketed as a "Complete Evening's Entertainment of about Two and One Half Hours, Presenting the Divine Sarah, the World Renowned Emotional Actress, and Mme. Réjane, Famous French Comedienne, at Their Best"⁹⁴—was offered to exhibitors in February 1912 as advertised in *Moving Picture World*. Promoted as "one of the largest money-makers since the discovery of motion picture art" for state rights in America, Canada, and Mexico, the film was offered in the context of a touring theatrical road show.⁹⁵ Moreover, with Bernhardt headlining a bill with Réjane, another contemporary French actress who could also boast "her own [theatrical] company," the program represented the success of the French actress-manager. With state rights sold through the French-American Film Co. and copyright protection guaranteed through lawyers listed in New York and Paris, Bernhardt was again associated with the legitimating efforts that Beck had earlier promoted in vaudeville. As an advertisement explained beneath the title "Why" (and note the way in which the Bernhardt train is now cast as cumbersome and unwieldy): "Instead of a train-load of people to carry and tons of scenery in presenting the world's greatest emotional actress before the public you require only a machine and a picture screen in giving a production of merit of the highest class. An entertainment for all classes. You come again and again" (fig. 6).⁹⁶

An emphasis on the booking agent, the efficacy of the touring road show, and the capacity to enjoy repeat viewings of the actress's performance enabled Bernhardt to reach American theatergoers. Whereas she first arrived in America with customs to negotiate, a theatrical syndicate to challenge, and a middle-class audience to engage, Bernhardt was now an industrial product, enmeshed within commercial exhibition and distribution networks. Her awareness of the ways in which exhibitors selling *Camille* capitalized on her theatrical road show is evident

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One must have an idea of justice to "steal."

One should remember and work on the principle and the protection of one within the protection of all.

ATTENTION: SOCIAL GARGASIAN, 8 N. HERRON, NEW YORK, ALBERT HAYES, PARIS.

To State Right Buyers

Reasons

SARAH BERNHARDT IS CALLED IN THE GREATEST CHERISHED MAKING MOVIES OF THE MOVING PICTURE. Her name is heard in every part of the world. Her art is unapproachable. Her pictures are not only dramatic but also artistic. Her "Camille" which shows every idea of acting in the world.

Why

WOULD YOU MISS AN OPPORTUNITY LIKE THIS A CHANCE WHICH YOU HAVE EVERY ADVANTAGE TO GET IN ON A SUPER BARGAIN? Remember!

Handled in a method and manner which gives you the greatest pleasure and satisfaction. The quality of the pictures is guaranteed. The price is reasonable. The service is prompt. The delivery is sure. The pictures are guaranteed to be the best. The price is reasonable. The service is prompt. The delivery is sure.

THESE TWO SUBJECTS BERNHARDT AND REJANE COMBINED, ARE AN EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT AT THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF ABOUT TWO AND ONE HALF HOURS.

THEODORE'S Comedy --- An Incident in French History During the Reign of Napoleon Bonaparte.

FOR STATE RIGHTS

FRENCH-AMERICAN FILM CO.

403 TIMES BLDG., NEW YORK

FIGURE 6. Advertisement featuring Sarah Bernhardt and Réjane in the first double-feature bill in America. *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 17, 1912.

in an interview Bernhardt gave to Jean Levêque of *Le Journal* in 1914. Reflecting on the capacity of film to reach large audiences through its cheap prices (and remembering that this film toured America at the same time that Bernhardt entered Vaudeville), she stated:

I remember that, in a recent tour I made in America with *La dame aux camélias*, our troupe was followed by a cinema company. Everywhere I stopped, and frequently in a theatre right next door to where I was playing, the movie version of *La dame aux camélias* was also showing. It so happened that the posters for the two events were sometimes put right up next to each other. However, every night both theatres were full—but in the one you paid only fifteen or twenty sous while in the other it cost fifteen or twenty francs.⁹⁷

A MANIFESTLY MODERN AFFAIR

Marketed by the French-American Film Company, the two French feature films were distributed in America by a company whose name reiterated Bernhardt and Réjane's transnational appeal. Located in the Times Building in New York, the French-American Film Company was also modern. The Times Building sat geographically block-bound by Broadway, Forty-Second Street, and Seventh Avenue and was a new steel construction (built in 1904) that was linked to the New York subway.⁹⁸ The Bernhardt-Réjane program demonstrated that the company was "new, artistic and thoroughly up-to-date in the way of the feature film."⁹⁹ Part of this appeal lay in the films' use of kinemacolor, a new development in film technology that was introduced by George Albert Smith in 1906 and that was subsequently exploited by the Anglo-American entrepreneur Charles Urban.¹⁰⁰ When the Bernhardt-Réjane program was released, the French-American Film Company (through its president, Mr. A. Anderson, a former theatrical manager) highlighted

the theatrical genesis of the films: they were made with the “famous Society Film d’Art, of Paris,” and the original cast of the first productions of these plays on the French-speaking stage were employed as cast members.

Reinforcing theater-film connections, the use of famous players in famous Parisian plays was called a “motion picture revival.” As revivals, the two films circulated in much the same way that plays were also said to be revived generationally in the theater, once successful.¹⁰¹ Moreover, film was discussed as the single region of the theater that Bernhardt had not yet explored. In this sense, film was regarded in terms of theatrical outreach rather than as a separate artistic or technological field.¹⁰² Furthermore, it was stipulated that the reels (five in all: two for *Camille*, listed as 2,275 feet, and three for *Madame Sans-Gêne*, listed as 3,050 feet) were offered together as a single evening’s entertainment and should only be exhibited in first-class theaters.¹⁰³ In addition, “appropriate music” was prepared for the film screening, and a “fine line of advertising” was offered buyers. Because of the quality of these French films and the materials that supported their exhibition, it was argued that “their appearance will set a new standard in the motion picture exhibition business and give a wonderful impetus to the feature picture in America.”¹⁰⁴

The publicity that accompanied the double-feature bill was organized by Walter J. Kingsley, the publicist for the French-American Film Company in America. Known as a “newspaper man of long experience”—Kingsley had worked for the *London Daily Express*, the *London Daily Mail*, and the *Yokohama Daily Advertiser* in the US—he was also a theatrical press agent for Bernhardt, Forbes Robertson, George M. Cohan, and Raymond Hitchcock. In addition, Kingsley was the personal press secretary for the Countess of Warwick, had served as press agent for the Folies-Bergère Music Hall, as well as for the Japanese government in the build-up to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, and had worked closely abroad with the famous theater entrepreneur Michael B. Leavitt.¹⁰⁵ Kingsley was a good advocate for the *Camille/Madame Sans-Gêne* initiative, believing that film was “the best field for advertising enterprise.”¹⁰⁶ As such, he led the campaign that promoted Bernhardt and Réjane’s program across the US. He offered four-colored billing for both films, as well as “photographs, cuts, booklets, press matter. Perfect publicity everywhere.”¹⁰⁷ Kingsley’s advertisements in trade presses were the first to offer a double-bill feature-film program running (like a theatrical production) for two and one-half hours.¹⁰⁸ Kingsley was also the first publicist to reproduce autographs of a celebrity actress (Bernhardt) in his advertisements¹⁰⁹ and to flaunt the success of the states-rights distribution system, selling prints to distribution companies across America.¹¹⁰

In addition to Kingsley’s promotions, a special lecture series was developed by W. Stephen Bush of the *Moving Picture World’Art* to assist audience reception of the two Film d’Art films. Bush noted in March 1912 (in his initial review of Bernhardt and Réjane’s works) that *Madame Sans-Gêne* needs “an explanatory lecture, otherwise much of the charm and [a] considerable [amount] of the meaning of the

story will be lost upon the average audience.”¹¹¹ He went on to sell his “Lectures on Special Films,” using the Bernhardt/Réjane lecture to headline his advertisement (he also sold “How to Put On the Passion Play,” “How to Put On the Crusaders, or Jerusalem Delivered,” and “Key and Complete Lecture for *Dante’s Inferno*”). Significantly, Bernhardt and Réjane are the only actors listed in his advertisement; offered together for \$1.00, his typescripts were copyrighted and sold from New York.¹¹² Although we do not have a record of what was written in these lectures, they appear to be reminiscent of the theatrical synopses offered in the variety theaters of London and New York. Through initiatives like these, Bernhardt and Réjane enabled publicists to develop the services they offered American audiences. Transnational film was not only making French theater available to early twentieth-century audiences in America; it helped Americans rearticulate why the Parisian actress was uniquely important to the development of the mass medium of film.

The double-feature film was a boon for legitimate theater revenue in the quieter summer months in America. Hence, in New York the films were screened in Frohman’s Lyceum Theatre, and in Illinois the films were screened for the first time in another legitimate theater, the La Salle Theatre, on Madison Street (a report explains that they were projected onto the theatrical curtain).¹¹³ Similarly, in Boston, moving pictures were shown for the first time in Steinert Hall (the hall was usually reserved for “first class musicians”).¹¹⁴ In the same way, in Washington they were screened in the Columbia Theatre. This first-class release of the films allowed audiences to see the actresses appear as they did in the flesh: when the program traveled to Canada, it was explained that they were touring as though they “were exploiting Mme. Bernhardt herself.”¹¹⁵ The use of first-class theaters boosted summer revenue, when theater audiences for more expensive venues were scarce. Indeed, in an article by Robert Grau, “Theatre Men in Pictures,” it is explained that Frohman was impressed “when the exclusive and fashionable Lyceum Theatre, after housing failure after failure, was kept open several months in the mid-summer, profitably, with moving pictures.” Frohman’s use of kinemacolor film productions gave him a profit of \$10,000 for one week; the combined profits of three other theaters did not amount to half that sum.¹¹⁶ While we do not know if the films in question were indeed those of Bernhardt and Réjane, we might presume as much. This is because they were released in the summer of 1912, were screened at the Lyceum Theatre, and (as Grau argues) “the greatest incentive provided for the theatrical producers was the amazing debut in filmdom of the greatest living exponent of dramatic art—Sarah Bernhardt and her most distinguished confrère, Gabrielle Réjane.”¹¹⁷

The cheapest seats to watch Bernhardt’s live theatrical performance when she was on tour in America was \$2.00, in the “peanut gallery.” Film instead offered a seat to performances at anything from ten to fifty cents. Although prices did vary—in the La Salle Theatre they were only offered from twenty-five to fifty cents, for example—it was the higher costing fifty-cent seats that were in greatest

demand.¹¹⁸ Such demand indicates that Bernhardt and Réjane's first-class theatrical release attracted literary, artistic, and wealthy patronage. In some theaters, however, efforts were made to democratize access and the availability of these films. Hence, a report in *Moving Picture News* stated that a vaudeville house operated by one Tom Moore in Washington, DC (The Plaza), exhibited the Bernhardt/Réjane program for just five cents. As the article explains: "Think of it! These costly pictures, which diplomatic, social and educational Washington has been flocking to see at the Columbia Theatre for fifty cents, were placed before the public for five cents. Many who regretted their neglect or inability to see these two French actresses in motion pictures in previous exhibitions, but who under other circumstances would have scorned a five-cent show, could not resist this opportunity."¹¹⁹

Moore went on to install kinemacolor in the Plaza, exhibiting two reels a week alongside black-and-white films. While we can speak of emerging middle- and upper-class American audiences for the cinema being encouraged by the debut of Bernhardt and Réjane in a double-feature bill, we might also recognize popular audiences emerging thanks to the broad appeal of these two French actresses on film.

An article that discussed the appearance of the Bernhardt and Rejane program in America is clear about the program's impact. "Do you know what it means?" Robert Grau asked readers in 1912. Casting the two actresses as avant-garde, in terms both business and creative, Grau states that the Bernhardt/Réjane program was

merely the avant courier for the highest stampede of stars and celebrities of the speaking stage that the world has ever known. It means also that the film manufacturers are face to face with the problem of meeting the increased demand for a better output from their clients; . . . [patronage] can only be held fast in this era of great competition by bringing into the theatre of cinematography the stars of the regular stage, so that the precedent established by Bernhardt and Rejane will quickly be followed by a galaxy of potent stars whose names will prove so compelling that the movement will result in that "new era of the picture play" so often predicted by the present writer. . . . Moreover, it is the intimate relation between the audience and the picture play that has created the "intimate theatre" movement now spreading all over the world. . . . But this is not all; the day is not far off when instead of the Frohmans and the Erlangers and the Shuberts controlling the new plays of the famous writers of to-day these important factors in the scheme of theatricals will be signed up by the large capitalized film manufacturers, and this will mean that the three-reel photo-play will predominate, and it won't be called a feature film—just an ordinary release, under new conditions created by the vogue of the splendid productions that are to come in the next few months.¹²⁰

Three months after the Bernhardt/Réjane feature was sold in America, some of Grau's predictions were realized. This is particularly true of the movement of established actors onto screen. As Margaret I. MacDonald explained in an article

entitled “Nat C. Goodwin to Star in the Silent Drama,” Bernhardt and Réjane startled the world when they entered film. The two actresses exhibited “nothing short of the most astonishing condescension” when they made *Camille* and *Madame Sans-Gêne*; as a result, one of the greatest stars of the American stage, Nat C. Goodwin, was now similarly entering film. Because the Bernhardt/Réjane program was seen as the herald of new business and artistic practices, Goodwin’s engagement was secured by a Mr. H. A. Spanuth, “the young and enterprising president and manager of the General Film Publicity and Sales Company” in New York City.¹²¹

LEGITIMATE FILM: *QUEEN ELIZABETH* IN AMERICA

The film that most often marks Bernhardt’s importance to film history is *Queen Elizabeth*.¹²² Released soon after *Camille*, in August 1912, *Queen Elizabeth* is a good example of the transnational interests that shaped early film production. As I noted in my introduction, the work was produced in London, financed by Americans, and made by Bernhardt. J. Frank Brockliss, the European representative of the American Lubin Company, produced the film.¹²³ The production company was Bernhardt’s own, the Histrionic Film Company. As the credits for *Queen Elizabeth* state, Bernhardt used the “Dresses, Armor and Furniture from the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre, Paris.” The cast, too, was French, featuring those who were in Bernhardt’s original theatrical production at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt in 1912: Lou Tellegen as Essex; Mlle Romain as Arabella, the Countess of Nottingham; and Max Maxudian as Howard, the Earl of Nottingham. Uncredited, but nevertheless in the original production, is Jean Angelo (who remained Seymour), and Albert Decoeur (who remained Drake).¹²⁴ Funded with help from New York exhibitor Adolph Zukor, Bernhardt ensured that the film remained a European production.¹²⁵ Given that London was “the centre of European film trade, the clearing house through which all films passed,” there is a logic in this choice.¹²⁶ Indeed, a generation after she left London for New York on her first American tour, Bernhardt again departed London as a leading actress in a high-class feature film, debuting before a select audience in a legitimate Broadway theater.

Queen Elizabeth was produced with money provided by Adolph Zukor; in exchange, he released the film in North America through the newly formed Famous Players Film Company. This company, established in collaboration with the New York theater impresarios Charles and Daniel Frohman, was organized to have *Queen Elizabeth* as its headline attraction and to sell the film on a states’ rights basis. The film was screened to a select audience in the Lyceum Theatre in New York on July 12, 1912, and Frohman adapted American theatrical language and practices to advertisements for the film. In a manner similar to Martin Beck’s promotion of Bernhardt’s vaudeville initiative, *Queen Elizabeth* was released under a banner stating: “DANIEL FROHMAN PRESENTS SARAH BERNHARDT IN THE PHOTOPLAY ‘QUEEN ELIZABETH.’” Discussing this promotion of the

actress, Zukor commented: "I designed posters with large photographs of Sarah Bernhardt, following the pattern of stage posters rather than gaudy movie bills."¹²⁷ The film was subsequently released through an arrangement with Marcus Loew to the Loew theaters in New York.¹²⁸

This effort to bring *Queen Elizabeth* a high-class cultural status is evident in the Chicago souvenir program, available on the film's general release at the Powers' Theatre, on August 12, 1912. The film program, presented with no publicity or photographs, is reminiscent of legitimate theater programs of the late nineteenth century. It lists all characters and players and is headed by Bernhardt, whose name is differentiated in bold capital letters. Instead of the play dividing into acts, we are told that the "photo-play" is in four parts. The choice of these words ("photo-play," "parts") associates a legitimate theatrical play and film. The lists of supernumeraries traditionally placed at the bottom of theatrical programs is also repeated on Bernhardt's program when we are told that *Queen Elizabeth* features "Executors, Courtiers, Soldiers, Attendants." Finally, *Queen Elizabeth* was advertised as a "HISTORIC PHOTO-PLAY OF THE PASSION AND PATHOS OF 'QUEEN ELIZABETH.'" Instead of being described as a romance or melodrama, the film was associated with terms traditionally used in descriptions of fine art. The biography and discussion that preface this page reiterated the legitimacy of Bernhardt's newest endeavor. Hence, *Queen Elizabeth* was "the crowning triumph of her brilliant career" and ensured "Bernhardt's art and fame will be sustained by history."¹²⁹ Tellingly, the newly established *Photo-play* magazine—one of the first magazines to engage film audiences in the US—featured *Queen Elizabeth* on its September 1912 cover. This shows Bernhardt as Queen Elizabeth surrounded by her court while Lou Tellegen (as Earl of Essex) kneels to swear allegiance to her.¹³⁰

Advertisements in the film trade press reinforced the legitimating claims that Frohman and Zukor made. In one ad, published in *Moving Picture World* a few weeks before the film's release, *Queen Elizabeth* was not called a photo-play but a "Photo-Pantomime." Reassuring viewers that action was legible through a focus on the pantomime, the advertisement also stated that the film was not "a sensational masterpiece" but "an immortal epic of human frailty and futility." The film provided a "series of moving paintings" that included priceless documents surrendered by the English government from the British Museum to provide "the last convincing detail in a thrillingly realistic production." Explaining that the film was "artistically tinted and toned," the advertisement claimed that it is "a half mile of Rembrandt." Discussions and comments about the film reiterated this high-class billing in America. As another article explained, "The exhibition will be billed like a high-class legitimate road attraction and will be presented with special music and lecture."¹³¹ We know that seats were sold on a reserve-seat basis, as was the practice with legitimate dramas, and that music was written for the film by Joseph Carl Breil. Audiences also paid an increased film admission, with prices between



FIGURE 7. Penzance Pavilion Pictures program cover revealing the localization of Bernhardt's global media empire. Courtesy of the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, Exeter University.

twenty-five cents and a dollar.¹³² It is therefore hardly surprising that the *Chicago Post* reported that “there is a new sort of picture audience” watching Bernhardt’s film, one that was “quiet, attentive, and very well dressed.”¹³³ Confirming this, Zukor stated that Bernhardt’s film helped break the “prejudice of theatrical people [that is, cultured, upper-class Americans] toward the screen.”¹³⁴ The success of the film drew other famous theatrical actors to film, helping to inaugurate the longer playing feature film. In this way, *Queen Elizabeth* became a significant precursor to a new category of spectacle in the cinema.

LOCALIZING *QUEEN BESS*

When *Queen Elizabeth* was released in Britain, the context of Bernhardt’s appearance shifted. The legitimate theaters and theater managers from the country’s major cities did not monopolize the film’s release. Nor did entrepreneurs band together to control the rights to the film across regional or county zones. Instead, *Queen Elizabeth* was engaged in an ad hoc manner by theaters already involved in the screening and promotion of film. For example, a program published by Penzance Pavilion Pictures, Cornwall, promoting a three-day special screening on December 2, 3, and 4, 1912, proclaimed *Queen Elizabeth* “THE GREATEST PICTURE PROGRAMME OFFERED IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND!”¹³⁵ Renamed *Queen Bess: Her Love Story*, the film presented both a popular romance to regional audiences and a national claim to the celebrated Tudor Queen (fig. 7). Stating that the film was “The acme of perfection,” “the finest thing ever attempted and ever produced in the Cinematograph World,” the ad offered patrons a vision of Bernhardt entering a new media. The film was no longer advertised as a photo-play

or photo-pantomime but as a “thing” produced in the global context of French filmmaking (“the cinematograph”).

Significantly, the Penzance Pavilion Pictures program was a locally produced booklet rather than a series of advertisements published in national trade presses or a special souvenir edition published for a famous theater. Moreover, Penzance Pavilion Pictures was a newly built site that opened in 1912, offering a public space in which to enjoy film screenings. In keeping with the inclusive nature of the screening, the film was billed a “Great Attraction at Popular Prices,” with children listed at half price (three cents). A “Special Early Performance of the ‘Queen Bess’ Picture [is offered] each Evening at 6” and “will last one hour”; presumably this was an effort to reinforce the family-friendly nature of both the film and the venue. A longer program, running for two hours, followed this screening, offering Bernhardt’s work in “plenty of other fine Pictures, each Evening at Eight.” Rather than being ‘a series of moving paintings,’ the work emerged in a familiar and familial variety format.

Without any listing of cast members, and mention only being made of a “renowned company,” it was the story of *Queen Elizabeth* that the program focused on. Offering a five-paragraph synopsis of narrative action, we follow “the gallant Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex,” “the young and beautiful wife, Lady Nottingham,” and the queen, a “broken-hearted and grief-stricken woman.” This description of the film’s story was also employed in the Bernhardt souvenir programs that the London Coliseum offered its audiences in 1911, 1912, and 1913. Yet while short and clear synopses of the play contextualized the single-act excerpts that Bernhardt would perform, in the Penzance program the description of the film contextualized all theatrical action.

Unlike the souvenir program offered to audience members at the Powers’ Theatre, photographs illustrated the synopsis of the film. The same photograph used by Frohman and Zukor to advertise *Queen Elizabeth* in their poster is one of the seven shots included in this booklet to describe the film. Whether these photographs (and possibly slides) were standard supplies used to promote the film, we do not know. What is interesting is that English theatrical photographers were included in the program. On page 2, a full-page photograph with the caption “A recent portrait of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt” is therefore provided, “Copyright Dover Street Studios” (fig. 8).¹³⁶

Bernhardt’s appearance in this “Queen Bess” picture was also used to promote local businesses. In one example, we see Bernhardt dressed as Queen Elizabeth on a cigarette card. On the rear is a description of a gown she wore in this role, its Spanish style, and an advertisement for draper Geo. T. Gunner of “High St. Tonbridge” in Kent.¹³⁷ This attention to Bernhardt’s use of couture in theatrical costume becomes a business offering local services to residents interested in contemporary textile and fashion. Moreover, Bernhardt was associated with cigarettes, a product available on a mass scale and intimately associated with modern



A Recent Portrait of
Madame Sarah Bernhardt

FIGURE 8. A Recent Portrait of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, "Copyright Dover Street Studios," inside Penzance Pavilion Pictures program, 1912. Courtesy of the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, Exeter University.

urban culture. Again, while we do not know when this portrait was made, we can assume that Bernhardt entered film in order to remain circulating and relevant to the English public. In this context, her commercial adoption by local English salespeople reflects her growing celebrity and the ongoing spread of her contemporary relevance.

In a separate English program, this time printed "By Arrangement of The Gaumont Film Hire Service," *Queen Elizabeth* is again localized. With a blue cover showing a heraldic profile of Bernhardt surrounded by a golden wreath ("Copyright Dover Street Studios"), the program includes a longer six-page introduction to the film (fig. 9). Again, photographs illustrate key scenes; the film is titled "Queen Bess Her Love Story"; and—in a departure from the Penzance program—the five key players are listed. What is interesting is the way Bernhardt is incorporated into national history. As the opening page states, Queen Elizabeth and Bernhardt "possess many mental characteristics in common. . . . [Bernhardt] is representing a personality very akin to her own." Moreover, the film depicted a period—the Elizabethan Age—that "abounded in individual greatness. It was the age of Shakespeare, of Spenser, of Raleigh, of Drake and of Philip Sidney . . . and it was amidst the varied activities of these great characters that English literature burst forth into its most vigorous form." Highlighting the importance of global supremacy, it is explained that "the repulse of the Spanish Armada marked

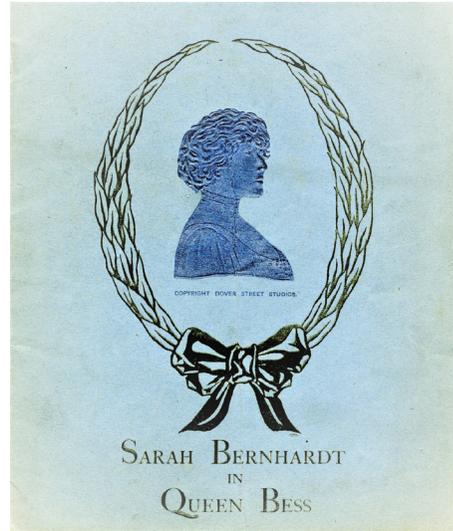


FIGURE 9. *Queen Bess*, cover of a 1912 film program showing the renaming of Bernhardt's *Queen Elizabeth*. Courtesy of the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, Exeter University.

the period in Elizabeth's reign when the national spirit rose to its highest point. England, which had long been weighted down by doubts and fears, then first awoke to consciousness of her true position."¹³⁸

Allowing empathetic engagement with a queen who was traditionally conceived as cold and calculating, audiences were promised that the work would "touch the heart." Bernhardt, a foreign celebrity, was presented as a passionate performer, enabling local audiences to revisit their relationship to the longest serving (at that time) and most powerful woman in the history of England. Here we return to Max Pemberton's articulation of Bernhardt's womanly charm and sympathy. Instead of efforts to ennoble Bernhardt and make her a "high-class" legitimate attraction, she was an emotional woman performing a romantic drama. This affective engagement with history and the theater links the film to its audience and Bernhardt to the British people. This capacity for the film—and even the film's narrative—to move viewers in an emotional or meaningful way is lost today. Ironically, it is American business and management strategies, seen through figures such as Martin Beck, Adolph Zukor, and Daniel Frohman, that shape our interpretation of Bernhardt's film. Bringing British and American families to French films in local movie theaters, believing and investing in new technology, ensuring that emotional affect is not lost in the mechanization of live performance, and ensuring audiences for the theater expanded as new media evolved—these are the genuine achievements of a sixty-eight-year-old French actress continuing a global career.

My exploration of pivotal moments in Bernhardt's career has highlighted many differences between England and America. These differences include the reception of her films, changing formats for her stage performances, the use of wildly

shifting venues to perform within, as well as her involvement in an ever-changing range of commercial and cultural initiatives. My decision to discuss Bernhardt in terms of the changing contexts of her celebrity in England and America was motivated by my aim to join theater history to film history; I want to bring a fresh awareness of our need to look more broadly at early theatrical films and the women we see within them. In arguing that Bernhardt's importance to the theater included her involvement in film, I am suggesting that the late nineteenth-century stage and early silent film were separable but mutually sustainable industries, with financial, creative, and (above all) public leisure and pleasure overlap. Bernhardt had the optimism, vision, and fortitude to see a creative future in early film. In my next chapter, I demonstrate that she was not alone in envisioning the future as a harbinger of theatrical possibilities. As we will see, Gabrielle Réjane was her Parisian contemporary, a professional partner to many of Bernhardt's initiatives. Réjane, too, was a late nineteenth-century actress who set audiences alight with enthusiasm. She illustrates the ways in which theater history can also enrich and illuminate a lost body of comic film. In Gabrielle Réjane's case, therefore, it is not tragedy and grand emotions that characterize an elided and often misinterpreted actress but the galvanizing performances of one who knew how to shake things up through sexual and class comedy.

Gabrielle Réjane

The Comedy of a Celebrity Commoner

On the centenary of the comic actress Gabrielle Réjane's death in 2020, there was no recognition of her achievements as the leading comic actress of her generation. Her once-famous fashions, costumes, plays, portraits, sketches, and films were absent from public discussion. It might come as a surprise to find that in 1901 the important drama critic and impresario Jacob Thomas "Jack" Grein claimed that Réjane was "greater than Sarah Bernhardt" and "a ruler of men."¹ John Stokes helps us understand the significance of Grein's claims to theater history. In *The French Stage Actress and Her English Audience*, Stokes dedicates a chapter to Réjane and her achievements in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century London. Referencing her performances in Edmond de Goncourt's *Germinie Lacerteux* (1888), Henri Meilhac's *Ma Cousine* (1890), Georges de Porto-Riche's *L'Amoureuse* (1891), Daudet's *Sapho* (1892), Henry-François Becque's *La Parisienne* (1893), and Victorien Sardou's *Madame Sans-Gêne* (1894), Stokes argues that Réjane's idiosyncratic celebrity was built on wit, low-class vulgarity, and a deft, spontaneous physicality.² She brought *le peuple* [French commoners] to educated theatrical audiences in London. Here, I focus on the gradual emergence of Réjane's late nineteenth-century fame in London, the divergence between her theatrical success in London and her failure on the stage in America, and the establishment of the Théâtre Réjane and her entrance into silent film after the turn of the century. I contend that Réjane has been largely lost to history because she was a legitimate comic stage actress who did not appear in rowdy, slapstick films transparent in their physical humor, which are still enjoyed by global audiences today. In addition, film historians routinely discuss the "theatrical film" in terms of its technical and theatrical anachronism (the static camera, the intertitles announcing narrative action, broad physical gestures, and so on) and consequently remove an important thread of film history from view.³ I instead propose that we revive the celebrity of

an actress who challenged mores of sexual propriety through her comedy and who used all available means (including the theatrical film) to agitate for class advancement, female divorce, and her own creative independence.

I begin this chapter by examining Réjane's first appearances in the late nineteenth-century London press. I explore the avant-garde artists that she inspired early on when she toured the city and the differences between her English and American fame. I then discuss the building of her theater in Paris. I bring a fresh set of eyes to the context and spread of Réjane's celebrity, demonstrating that she was an actress whose advocacy and agitation—for women in the theater's creative expansion, for the actress's commercial importance, for *le peuple* and their visibility on the stage and screen—often accompanied, overlapped, and even preceded Bernhardt's own tremendous achievements. In my view, Réjane is therefore both an overlooked celebrity and a tenacious and enduring link to the comic self-awareness and assertive physicality that women in the late nineteenth century were beginning to enjoy.

RETURNING TO THE MARGINS

Like Bernhardt, Réjane emerged on and in the margins of Paris (fig. 10). Born in 1856, roughly a decade after Bernhardt, she was from a modest social background. Her father died when she was a young child; Réjane was raised by her mother, who resisted her entry into the theater. Even so, Réjane went on to secure theatrical celebrity—albeit relatively late, in her mid-thirties—when she established her place as Paris's leading comic actress in the 1890s, after nearly two decades of performance work. Réjane achieved her first success in a theatrical role in 1890 in Henri Meilhac's *Ma Cousine*, at the Théâtre des Variétés. Her performance thrilled audiences because in this play she danced the high-kicking, popular dance the cancan. Significantly, this dance offered a rare and risqué glimpse of the music hall on the legitimate French stage.

The Variétés was a respected comic theater in the second arrondissement in Paris, nominated by James Brander Matthews as being within the “fourth class of the theaters of Paris.”⁴ Réjane's performance drew attention to the new thrills of sexual display and theatrical developments in Paris (the presentation of music-hall sexuality in the legitimate theater, the willingness to take risqué performers such as the Moulin Rouge's Mademoiselle Grille d'Égout as a shared cultural reference, the gleeful use of the theater as a platform for change in female mores and behaviors). Réjane's next major success was as Catherine, the washerwoman, in Sardou's 1893 *Madame Sans-Gêne* (fig. 11). This role, which returned her to the first theater she had performed in after her graduation from the Conservatoire (the Théâtre du Vaudeville), associated her with a comic theater considered equal in status in Paris to the Odéon. Brander Matthews speaks of the Théâtre du Vaudeville as the theater featuring “the proper all-round presentation of comedy.”⁵



FIGURE 10. Réjane in *Ma Cousine* at the Théâtre des Variétés, 1890. Photograph: Atelier Nadar. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b5316381ot>.

At the Vaudeville, Réjane was managed by her husband, Paul Porel. Porel was a respected actor from the Odéon Theatre whom Réjane married in 1893; he was also the father of her two children. In 1905, when Réjane divorced Porel, she followed Bernhardt in establishing her own theater in Paris, the Théâtre Réjane. This theater, the home of the former Nouveau-Théâtre, was located outside the city center, on Rue Blanche, in the ninth arrondissement. Although Réjane was a famous actress-manager and the director of her own theater, her theater was not centralized geographically within Paris (as the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt was), nor did Réjane share Bernhardt's global renown. Nevertheless, Réjane demonstrated that a legitimate Parisian actress could achieve celebrity through comic roles and that hard work, resilience, and the ability to grasp opportunities as they arose could lead to theatrical success, also later in life. In the early twentieth century, when Réjane divorced Porel, established her own theater, managed her own affairs, and entered narrative film, she continued to explore the myriad opportunities that the theater offered.



FIGURE 11. Postcard of Réjane as Catherine. Caricature by ZIM. Author's private collection.

STARTING SMALL IN ENGLAND

Réjane first appeared in the English press in 1875, soon after her graduation from the Paris Conservatoire in 1874. It was her debut at the Théâtre du Vaudeville that generated comment. She appeared in a play called *La Revue de deux mondes*, a play that took its name from the famous Parisian literary, cultural, and current affairs monthly magazine. Her performance was mentioned in the “Foreign Theatrical and Musical Intelligence” column of the conservative *London Morning Post*, where she was described as having “the arch and sprightly air of a Parisian grisette, a flexible voice of an agreeable tone, and perfect self-possession.”⁶ The famous French theater critic Francisque Sarcey, reviewing Réjane’s theatrical debut in the Parisian newspaper *Le Temps*, similarly praised her performance. Sarcey described her as a “Watteau” who boasted, among other attributes, a “petulant and malicious mouth.”⁷ Réjane performed the prologue for *La Revue de deux mondes*, providing a comic introduction to a three-act satiric revue that parodied contemporary Parisian cultural and artistic life. The play’s narrative followed the director of the *Revue de deux mondes*, accompanied by a female reporter, in his search for the best French literary work of the year. *La Revue de deux mondes* was considered particularly successful in its parody of the Parisian theater. Sarcey tells us, for example, that “Saint-Germain [the famous comic French actor François Victor Arthur Gilles

de Saint] reproduced in the funniest fashion the physical tics of Mounet-Sully [as G erald in Henri de Bournier's *Fille de Roland*]," a play that had been performed the previous month at the respected Com die-Fran aise.⁸

La Revue de deux mondes was written by playwrights Abrahams Dreyfus and Louis-Fran ois Nicola e, famous for their comic skill. Dreyfus, a young journalist and playwright of twenty-seven, was known for his skill in inserting *causerie* (chitchat) into theatrical dialogue. Nicola e, writing under the nom de plume *Clairville*, was a celebrated vaudeville actor and a decorated author of burlesque revues, satires, parodies, and ribald songs. In Sarcey's view, the two failed to make use of the liberties afforded vaudeville theater as a genre of popular theater that mocked French tradition and social mores. While the *Morning Post* reported that R jane's opening verse announced "the intention of the management to return to the special kind of performance which made the reputation of the theater at the time when it had taken for its device the famous line which is printed daily on its bills—"Le Fran ais, n  malin, cr a le Vaudeville [The French, born clever, created Vaudeville]"—Sarcey argued that this intent to revive the satiric verve of the vaudeville stage was never fulfilled.⁹ As he explained, Dreyfus and Nicola e were too embarrassed by the popular and lowbrow reputation of the variety theater to strip their work of literary solemnity. Sarcey quipped that *La Revue de deux mondes* failed "to throw the old man out with the bathwater."¹⁰

One year later, in 1876, R jane was again mentioned in the English press in a brief article that discussed her performance in a new comedy entitled *Perfide comme l'onde*. A single-act work by the satirical playwright Octave Gastineau, *Perfide comme l'onde* was performed at the Vaudeville Theater. The casting of R jane is of interest here: she played an English maid, Juliette, who comically plays the role of an upper-class English lady. *Perfide comme l'onde* is noteworthy in that it was an all-female cast that caustically explored the mores of proper feminine behavior.¹¹ It focused on two wealthy Parisian women avenging themselves on each other. While one tricks the other into consorting with a "fashionable man-milliner" (that is, a scandalous *bon vivant*), the other asks her servant (Juliette, played by R jane) to impersonate an "English Milady" at a fashionable concert. Therefore, Juliette, a servant, performed the role of an English lady of social rank. The play's action revolved around Juliette (as an upper-class English Lady) accompanying her employer's unwitting acquaintance to Salle Hertz (a respectable concert hall, established by Hector Berlioz in Paris some decades earlier). Wit and humor revolved around the comedic depiction of class difference. Once the ruse between the two women was discovered (after the visit to the Salle Hertz), the two agree to a hostile truce. As the *Morning Post* concluded: "Madlle R jane, charming in her part of soubrette counterfeiting the English lady, came forward at the end to announce the name of the author, since no person of the male sex appears in the work. Loud applause followed the announcement."¹²

Perfide comme l'onde is important because it was a play performed solely by women. In 1889, accordingly, *Perfide comme l'onde* was presented in a second edition in a series entitled "Théâtre des Dames." This "female theater" series was constituted by single-piece acts with no male performers, promoted as "easy to play in society."¹³ *Perfide comme l'onde* gave Réjane central billing and focused its humor around a comedy of class. In this way, her role of Juliette can be linked to Réjane's later success as the gauche laundress Catherine Hübscher in *Madame Sans-Gêne*. *Madame Sans-Gêne* was first performed by Réjane in 1893; she was resoundingly successful as Catherine, where, as the Duchess of Danzig, she reprised the hilarious performativity of the upper class.

Perfide comme l'onde illustrated a Parisian needling of English class and traditions on the late nineteenth-century stage; the English class system was clearly a familiar subject of humor in Paris. We can see the familiarity that Parisian audiences had with the English through the subject matter and script of *Perfide comme l'onde*. In the play, Réjane was instructed to speak French with an English accent, and she mixed English words into her theatrical dialogue. When Juliette is asked, for example, if she wants sugared tea, she states: "Oh yes, excessive-ment sucré"; when asked if she likes music, she states: "I like it so much; j'adore la musique."¹⁴ Dialogue was also peppered with self-reflexive banter that indicated that the playwrights understood that Réjane would be a good comic draw on the Parisian stage. For example, when Juliette is asked by her employer if she would willingly participate in the ruse, Réjane (widely known to have gone against her mother's wishes in choosing a theatrical career) retorted: "Madame can be assured that I am well-disposed to playing comedy. I even wanted to enter the theater, but my family was opposed to this."¹⁵

Perfide comme l'onde was performed by Réjane in London in 1877. A quiet affair, its performance was marked by a few advertisements in the press announcing the French Plays at the Gaiety Theatre.¹⁶ Réjane did not, therefore, enjoy the celebrity that Bernhardt commanded in London a couple of years later, when she first arrived in 1879. Nevertheless, the fact that Réjane traveled with the Vaudeville company to London in the summer season of 1877 (when the theaters closed in Paris), and performed in a theater managed by John Hollingshead, cannot be overlooked. It indicates the appeal of French class comedy to late nineteenth-century London audiences, particularly class comedy that allowed a Parisian *grisette* to mirror the performance of the English upper class to themselves. Réjane's appearance in London also reveals that Hollingshead promoted topical French plays in the summer theater season even before he had secured the Comédie-Française as an attraction, in 1879, and well before Réjane and Bernhardt were globally celebrated actresses. Indeed, it was in May 1877 that Hollingshead first committed to a summer schedule of French plays. These later became an annual event. Significantly, it was at this inaugural launch that Réjane first traveled to London.¹⁷

Although Réjane appeared in London before Bernhardt and broke new ground by appearing in Hollingshead's inaugural French season of plays, Bernhardt and Réjane were part of a larger movement to make Parisian theater increasingly available on the late nineteenth-century London stage. As Ignacio Ramos-Gay explains, "The proliferation of seasons [in the 1870s and 1880s] during which the leading London theaters staged French plays performed by French actors in their native language before an essentially upper-class, Anglophone audience, attests to the reverence that many in the business felt towards the artistry and expertise of French actors." Because France was considered "the fountainhead of the world's drama," many theaters specialized in staging plays in French. The French Seasons emerged from this reputation and included theaters such as the Royalty Theatre, the Holborn, the Gaiety, and the Princess's Theatre.¹⁸ In this context, Réjane was not a lone pioneer when she performed early on in London. Moreover, neither she nor Bernhardt represent the female equivalent of the Great Man in theater history: they did not individually pioneer new forms of theatrical celebrity but were part of a generation of Parisian actors that began to travel to London and capitalize on the opportunities that a geographically close locus of commerce and culture offered. Each actress invigorated foreign audiences with the skill and thrill of emergent trends and opportunities from Paris.

RÉJANE'S LONDON DEBUT

As a young actress performing in respected comic theaters in Paris in the 1870s, it is significant that Réjane debuted in London at the Gaiety Theatre. The Gaiety was a relatively new theater, constructed in 1868. It attracted an audience that understood that going to the theater involved more than seeing a theatrical play. As Catherine Hindson explains, the Gaiety Theatre was "a self-consciously modern entertainment space, a product of the theatre-building boom of the second half of the nineteenth century. Occupying a prime site on the Strand, at the heart of London's fashionable social centre, the Gaiety was a landmark of the capital's new commodity culture."¹⁹ Audience members attended the theater to see new plays but also to eat in its restaurant, mix in its foyer, and be seen by like-minded protagonists of fashion, art, and culture.²⁰ The Gaiety Theatre also pioneered the use of electricity in London, turning "night into day." As an 1878 "London Gossip" column in the *Wrexham Advertiser* (a Welsh paper) explained, the electric light came from Paris to London, symbolizing the modern metropolis: "The electric light now gives a signal beacon nightly in the Strand from the Gaiety Theatre which plainly shows what the light of the future will be."²¹

Although Réjane performed in a Strand theater that headlined Parisian theater and French commercial opportunities, the extent of her celebrity at this early point in her career is unclear. For example, in 1883, when the Gaiety Theatre next featured Réjane in its French summer program, the *Morning Post* was unaware

that she had already performed in the city. Discussing Jules Claretie's *Monsieur le ministre*—a “Parisian novel” adapted to the stage by M. Dumas *fils*—the newspaper explained that Réjane, “who has not previously been seen [in London], and who is specially sympathetic to the English public, makes her first appearance and shows herself an admirable comedian.”²² The *Pall Mall Gazette* stated that Réjane is “a young actress who has always been warmly welcomed in England, and who has now ripened into an admirable comedian.” Promoted as the “chief feature” of the play, it is also explained that *Monsieur le ministre* otherwise focuses on the state of politics in France and so has “naturally but a moderate interest for an English audience.”²³ In either case—whether Réjane was considered a newcomer to the London stage or recognized as an established part of the London annual French season—her emergence as a celebrity in England was a gradual affair.

LONDON AND THE CIRCULATION OF “EVENTS IN FRANCE”

It was not necessary for Réjane to perform every year in the Gaiety's summer season of French plays in order for her to achieve celebrity in London. Réjane's English reputation grew through reviews of her performances in the English press, published regularly in the 1880s and 1890s. Discussed in newspaper columns that focused on the Parisian theater—these columns were variously entitled “French Plays,” “Events in France,” or “The Foreign Theatrical and Musical Intelligence”—Réjane's name became familiar to a reading public. As Ramos-Gay explains, the familiarity that French actresses enjoyed in the late nineteenth century in London was not unusual. Because in England there was a taste for “alternative, extra-British forms of theater,”²⁴ French theater was regularly discussed in the English press. Among these forms of theater, the Parisian stage was central. Ramos-Gay illustrates the availability of the Parisian theater in the English press: “Sections such as ‘In Paris’ (*The Theater*), ‘The Stage in France’ and ‘French Literature’ (*The Saturday Review*), ‘Notes from Paris’ (*The Athenaeum*), ‘The Drama in Paris’ (*The Era*), ‘Theatre Abroad’ (*The Illustrated Review*), ‘The Parisian Stage’ and ‘The Paris Theatres’ (*Pall Mall Gazette*) evince how leading Victorian publications (both of general readership and specialized in the theater) acknowledged the exclusivity of French—and particularly Parisian—cultural life.”²⁵

MA COUSINE: CHOREOGRAPHY AND THE CANCAN

Although Parisian performers and performances were discussed regularly in the late nineteenth-century English press, Réjane's 1890 performance in Henri Meilhac's three-act comedy *Ma Cousine* at the Théâtre des Variétés triggered an unusual number of responses. Focusing on the comedy that ensues when a baroness (a member of the upper class) implores a famous actress (Riquette, a member

of the lower class) to assist in repairing her marriage, the play was a domestic satire and a self-reflexive pantomime. In the second act of *Ma Cousine*, Réjane's pantomimic satire of a contemporary Parisian play (*Le Piston d'Hortense*) was considered a highlight, particularly because Réjane's physical comedy included a satirical performance of the popular cancan dance. A reporter in the *Horse and Hound* stated that notwithstanding the success of the play, it would be "a difficult matter for an English version to be sufficiently modified to suit even our modern *risqué* tastes."²⁶ The *London Standard* elaborated, giving details not only of Réjane's thrilling and versatile performance as the dancer Riquette but also of Réjane changing the physical choreography of her role. Under the heading "Events in France," The reviewer explained that Réjane had, in the character of Riquette, to dance a relatively "sober measure." Deciding instead to adapt and use the cancan dance (known as the *chahut*, which translates as raise an uproar),²⁷ permission was obtained from M. Baron, the manager of the Variétés Theatre, and the playwright M. Meilhac. Readers were told that "after witnessing Mdlle. Réjane's performance [of the cancan] he [Meilhac] understood it would certainly be one of the great attractions of his piece."²⁸

Mdlle. "Grille d'Égout" (the pseudonym for Lucienne Beuze, translating roughly as "sewer grill") was a famous dancer at the Moulin Rouge, the Parisian cabaret that had opened just one year earlier in the popular district of Pigalle. Renowned for performing the cancan with La Goulue (Louise Weber) at the Moulin Rouge, Réjane sought d'Égout's expertise to help choreograph her own dance for *Ma Cousine*. To engage d'Égout, Réjane first approached Charles Zidler, a cofounder of the Moulin Rouge, and asked for a private audience. As Alfred Capus states in the Parisian journal the *Revue Bleue* (in an article appropriately entitled "Chronique Parisien"), Réjane's initiative was reported in local presses. Struck by the "grace, decency, and chic" of d'Égout during her requested exhibition dance, Réjane hired her to choreograph and teach her the *chahut*.

As Capus makes clear, the *chahut* was a spectacle of both movement and clothing. Citing Réjane, Capus writes that the aim of the dance was to raise the leg and retract the foot, so as "to show a jumble of lace."²⁹ What was difficult was not just the raised leg but finding "the petticoats necessary for the exhibition of a lace display." As Réjane lamented, "I had a world of trouble sourcing a petticoat similar to that of Mdlle. d'Égout."³⁰ Adapting her dress and incorporating the cancan into *Ma Cousine*, Réjane was willful, innovative, and provocative; she pushed the bounds of acceptable dress and performance in a comic act on the Boulevard stage. Réjane also acted as a lightning-rod for the wider dissemination of d'Égout's cancan dance overseas. As Capus explained, "The enormous success of *Ma Cousine* has placed Grille d'Égout among our [most famous] national illustrations."³¹ Réjane and d'Égout illustrated not only the rich intersection of legitimate female comedy with cabaret performance but also the feminist demands Parisian women were making through the creative industries. As *The Standard* commented in its 1890 review of *Ma Cousine*, the introduction of the *chahut* into M. Meilhac's play indicated

the strength in Paris of what was called the *fin de siècle* movement. As the review explained, feminist women took center stage in this movement. Their demands included a push for rational dress that would enable women to enjoy a more physically active and healthy leisure time:

Women . . . are no longer content to dress, as their mothers did, in modest garments, nor even in the rich and showy costumes adopted in recent years. A great many of the fair sex would like to walk about the streets in tight-fitting trousers. With the object of satisfying that ambition a League for what is called the Reform of Female Attire and the Liberty of Dress has been formed. A notice just published in the *Citoyenne*, the organ of the League, says:—"The Leaguers undertake to modify their costume in a rational manner, and gradually, or suddenly, to transform their feminine attire."³²

The lead Réjane took in determining her own behavior and dress on the stage remained, at least in 1890, reported in an "Events in France" column. Réjane's audacious *épater le bourgeois* (to shock the middle class) was not, however, motivation for feminist change in London. Indeed, throughout the 1880s and at least until 1894—when Réjane returned to London on the heels of her success in *Madame Sans-Gêne* in Paris in 1893—the English press advertised Réjane's costumes in terms of respectable dress and contemporary civilized fashion. Hence, in an article published across at least eighteen different papers on October 15, 1887, the autumn season fashion included reference to the "very French-looking" Réjane hat, recently "seen at a race meeting." Describing it as a broad-rimmed hat with upturned sides and a feather reaching across the left rim to rest on the wearer's hair, Réjane's hat marks a fashion-setting accoutrement for a female journalist (May Kensington) writing under the conservative heading, "A Lady's Letter."³³

"HAVEN'T WE FOREIGNERS ENOUGH?"

When Réjane returned to London in 1894, she did so during a summer season that also saw Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt perform successively at London's new Daly's Theatre (opened in 1893). In the opinion of the *Morning Post*, the appearance of Duse and Bernhardt confirmed London "as a capital which can command such a succession of histrionic luminaries." The presence of the two actresses also indicated that London audiences were sophisticated enough to appreciate "artistic contrasts."³⁴ The English theater critic Clement Scott, writing an article in the *Illustrated London News* about the programming of two continental actresses, playing consecutively in the same London theater, made their contrasts clear. Scott characterized Sarah Bernhardt as "an emotional actress" and Duse as "a cold and calculating artist." Opening his discussion with a reflection on the riches offered London society during the theater's season, Scott also included mention of the "newer" actress, Réjane: "what with the constant chatter of comparison between the Divine Sarah and the new Duse and the still newer Réjane, not one of whom can in any possible way be compared to the other—what

with matinées and melodramas and music, that curious world known as London Society scarcely knows which way to turn.”³⁵

Réjane’s return to London in 1894 represented something of a high point in late nineteenth-century French-English theatrical exchange. A summer season, in a globally important commercial and theatrical capital, featured some of the most important international actresses in the world. Significantly, the importance of the continental actress as a new, international phenomenon received much attention in the press. The *New York Times*, citing the *London World*, called the era “the age of the actress.” Noting that “more than ever before in the history of the drama woman has ‘taken the stage,’” it asked: “Who have been the leading figures of the present theatrical season in London?” Significantly, the paper mentioned once more the “still newer” Réjane: “Four women, beyond all question—Ada Rehan, Eleonora Duse, Sarah Bernhardt and Réjane. No male performer, English or foreign, has held so large a place in the public eye, or, indeed, has done such remarkable work as these four ladies. And all of them, be it noted, come to us from abroad.”³⁶

It was not just the contrast between Bernhardt and Duse but between Bernhardt and Réjane that drew particular comment. The satirical London paper, *Moonshine*, jibed: “Sarah is to have a rival this year. Good gracious! Haven’t we foreigners enough? No, the company of the Paris vaudeville will occupy the Gaiety stage for a time, and at least one actress of high ability will be seen, the attractive Mdlle. Rejane, who is to appear in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, by Sardou, a play which they say requires the utmost finesse and finish of French art to make palatable to British tastes.”³⁷ Réjane’s low comedy was contrasted to Bernhardt’s emotional tragedy; the two actresses revealed the range of theatrical genre and celebrity that Paris could boast. Moreover, and unlike the program of plays that Bernhardt presented at Daly’s, Réjane appeared for the season in a single work, *Madame Sans-Gêne*.³⁸ As the Gaiety program announced, Réjane’s play was “A New Play in Four Acts,” written by Victorien Sardou and Emile Moreau, and advertised “As produced at the Theatre de Vaudeville, Paris, October 27th, 1893.”³⁹ In the mid-1890s, Réjane was therefore characterized as an actress whose recent success in Paris catapulted her back onto the London stage.⁴⁰ Advertisements reiterated this, stating that *Madame Sans-Gêne* was “the great theatrical success of the Paris season,” carried directly from Paris to the London stage.⁴¹

MADAME SANS-GÊNE: POPULARIZING THE NAPOLEONIC EMPIRE

Catherine, the washerwoman nicknamed “Madame Sans-Gêne” (Madame shameless), drives most of the action of Sardou and Moreau’s play. Married to Marshal Lefebvre in the days of Napoleon I (and based, anecdotally, on Lefebvre’s wife, Catherine Hubscher), the story traces her life as she moves from being an anonymous laundress for Napoleon (who, at the time of their first encounter, is an

impecunious, unknown soldier) to a duchess (the Duchess of Dantzig), tasked with dressing and performing appropriately within his Imperial Court. The second act, in which, as an ennobled laundress, the duchess takes lessons in deportment and receives the queen and princess, is the most obviously farcical and underscored Réjane's capacity to excel in a comedy of class. The climax of the story revolves around the actions Catherine takes when she is faced with losing her husband and her position, as well as the clever diplomacy she employs to save the life of Count Neipperg. It is at this moment that she reminds the emperor that she was once his laundress and had sheltered him from his enemies. When Réjane played this role, she expressed the comic humanity and "honest vulgarity" of a *blanchisseuse* (common washerwoman). As a reviewer in the *Morning Post* reflected, while the scenes were "trite and slight"—the script was "an example of theatrical cookery"—the mastery of Réjane's comic performance held the work together.⁴²

So *Madame Sans-Gêne* tells the tale of a washerwoman who remains true to her common origins, even when she has reached a position in Court. The play's focus on the female protagonist as a genuine representative of "le peuple," comedy as a theatrical genre worthy of critical attention, and the ability of court gossip and domestic anecdote to drive a narrative about the Napoleonic era was significant. Whereas in *Ma Cousine* Réjane was making Parisian cabaret (the cancan in particular) visible to London audiences, in *Madame Sans-Gêne* she centralized a female commoner and exerted feminist demands from the margins of official history. Shifting focus from Napoleon to a duchess, from a soldier to a washerwoman, and from political power to a wily performance of upper-class graces, the play asked audiences to focus on the overlooked history of working women, as well as the overlooked history of the female point of view. As Réjane explained in *The Sketch*, "When acting, I have but one ambition . . . that is, to reinterpret, to re-incarnate, if possible, a woman's soul, a woman's individuality."⁴³

Not all reviews of Réjane's performance of Catherine were positive. A discussion of *Madame Sans-Gêne* in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* argued that the work was unable to "lift history above gossip." *Madame Sans-Gêne* was lambasted for the domestication and historical diminishment of Napoleon and for the way in which he was "Kodaked through the keyhole." Stating that "it is as though the *valet* had dictated the play," the reviewer reminded readers that Napoleon was a strong and important global leader. Hence, "when we find him [Napoleon] revived in a drama we expect to be moved by his force and not merely amused—if we are amused—by his pettiness."⁴⁴

The narrative focus of *Madame Sans-Gêne*—the Napoleonic legend—was a fashionable topic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Michele Majer explains in her article, "*Plus Que Reine: The Napoleonic Revival in Belle Époque Theater and Fashion*," interest in Napoleon was renewed between 1890 and 1914, largely because 1899 was the centenary of Napoleon's *coup d'état* (an event that made him head of a new consular government in France). Reflecting this surge of

enthusiasm for Napoleon in 1893, the same year that *Madame Sans-Gêne* debuted on the Vaudeville's stage, there were other, contemporaneous works that explored Napoleon's life—for example, Alphonse Lemonnier's *Madame la Maréchale*, Leopold Martin Lay's *Napoléon*, and Charles Grandmougin's *L'Empereur*.⁴⁵ These plays were similar to *Madame Sans-Gêne* insofar as they emphasized the private man—Napoleon as a son, lover, husband, and father. According to Venta Datta, the focus on Napoleon's personal history demonstrates the capacity of *fin de siècle* theater to bridge the past and the present through “popular, democratic history.”⁴⁶ In this context, we might remember the uniqueness of Réjane's role as a laundress in *Madame Sans-Gêne*. When Henry Fouquier discussed *Madame Sans-Gêne* in the special 1900 edition of the French journal *Le Théâtre*, he observed that the personal life of Napoleon held universal appeal. In *Madame Sans-Gêne*, however, French audiences particularly enjoyed seeing Napoleon “struggling with a woman who is at once a refined Parisian with a very delicate spirit, yet who retains her working-class air.” Alluding to the quiet diplomacy the duchess exerts to prevent the execution of Count Neipperg at Court, Fouquier concluded that “it is the triumph of our noble tradition that a good-hearted *grisette* with a charming humor is, for an instant, the good angel of a hero.”⁴⁷

“A NOTHING CAPABLE OF EVERYTHING”

Réjane's 1894 Gaiety season was a resounding theatrical success. Hailed as a “new comic actress of the first rank,” Réjane had “introduced” herself to London.⁴⁸ Discussion of the celebrities who attended her London performances confirm this public appeal. The actors Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, Geraldine Ulmar, Florence St. John, and Fanny Bernard Beere attended her opening night. So, too, did the drama critic and writer J. Comyns Carr, as well as Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley.⁴⁹ Two days later, it was reported that the Prince and Princess of Wales, accompanied by the princesses Victoria and Maud of Wales (“and suite”) had visited the Gaiety to watch Réjane perform.⁵⁰ Actors (from a range of theaters), as well as young avant-garde artists and English royalty, joined to confirm Réjane's newfound celebrity abroad.

Comparable to Bernhardt's foray into shows in reputable art galleries and headline charitable events, Réjane's visibility in London in 1894 was not restricted to her Gaiety appearances. There are reports of her undertaking many initiatives during her stay, each of which indicates the range of networks (including both people and institutions) she was able to build and enjoy. Réjane joined, for instance, a range of popular artists headed by the chief tenor from the Paris Opéra-Comique (Edmond Clément) in a concert held at St. James's Hall.⁵¹ Réjane was also the guest of honor among four hundred guests at a garden party hosted by the (then reputable) playwright and publisher Frederick William Horner and his wife. More significant, Réjane joined Bernhardt to headline a six-hundred-strong benefit reception for

the French Hospital at the Grafton Galleries. This event was assisted by short recitations and performances from celebrities such as Irving, Terry, the Canadian soprano Emma Albani, the composer and pianist Léon Delafosse, actor Lucien Guitry, and others.⁵² Attended by an illustrious audience (including royalty and members of the political establishment), the benefit recognized Réjane and Bernhardt as leaders of the season's theatrical events.⁵³

Because the Grafton Gallery was a cutting-edge gallery in the exclusive area of Mayfair that had opened the previous year, Réjane and Bernhardt's event was charitable and fashionable. Hosted in a forum that showed a "Summer Exhibition" headlined "Fair Women," the venue also promoted female initiatives in the arts. Indeed, with the Princess of Wales as the exhibition's "Patroness," and boasting an all-female "exhibition committee" comprising nineteen titled or otherwise powerful women, the Grafton Gallery provided an especially suitable space from which to make Bernhardt and Réjane international leaders of art and philanthropy. While Bernhardt was featured in two of the 575 works exhibited (in a portrait by Walter E. Spindler and a marble bust by Prosper d'Épinay), they were both implicitly a Grafton Gallery "Fair Woman."⁵⁴ Explaining that a "Fair Woman" took into account achievement and endeavor rather than beauty alone, the preface to the gallery program stated: "As there are included certain pictures of Women possibly more celebrated for their historical interest, their influence, or their wit than for their beauty, some exception has been taken to the title of the Exhibition."⁵⁵

Although Réjane's fame was too new to be included in the wide-ranging survey of artworks shown in the "Fair Women" exhibition, an image and a discussion of her fame circulated in the new London quarterly, *The Yellow Book*. Associated with the British Decadent art movement—*The Yellow Book's* title alluded to French novels, wrapped in yellow, a practice that alerted readers to their risqué content—the first four editions of the journal were edited by a young Aubrey Beardsley. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given Beardsley's renown for challenging middle-class mores, *The Yellow Book's* content launched "new" challenges to its readers. These challenges can be seen both in terms of the journal's bold, visual design and in terms of its celebration of "new" women. As Bridget Elliott explains in her article "New and Not So 'New Women' on the London Stage: Aubrey Beardsley's *Yellow Book* Images of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Réjane," of the thirty-one images illustrated in the journal, twenty-seven were women. In the view of critics, these women "bore disturbing signs of corruption, sexual decadence, and emancipation. Most were drawn from categories of females whose very existence challenged middle-class feminine ideals of the dependent wife and mother, categories ranging from actresses and masqueraders to prostitutes and lesbians."⁵⁶ Beardsley's sketch of Réjane (shown in a clear outline as Catherine in *Madame Sans-Gêne*), was topical yet did not cause a stir. As Elliott explains, French actresses were accepted as new women and therefore judged by different moral standards from those of their English counterparts. Furthermore, the stylistic association of Beardsley (as

a Francophile artist working in a Decadent style) with Réjane (as the leader of French theatrical comedy) connected the moral challenges of the new woman with French, not British, subject matter.⁵⁷

The article about Réjane in *The Yellow Book* clearly expressed the terms of French (particularly, Parisian) cultural difference. Entitled “Madame Réjane,” and written by the poet (and, later, historian) Dauphin Meunier, the article introduced Réjane through a single, descriptive sentence that was almost half a page long. Mentioning the actress’s name for the first time, the sentence concluded: “. . . beauty without beauty, immorality without evil: a nothing capable of everything: such is Woman at Paris: such is the Parisienne: and Madame Réjane is the Parisienne, is all Parisiennes, incarnated.”⁵⁸ Later, mentioning Réjane’s association with the new woman featured in the avant-garde theater of Ibsen, Meunier spoke of how “the seekers after strange novelties, the fanatics for the mists of the far north, the vague, the irresolute, the restless” will also remember Réjane’s appearance as Nora in *A Doll’s House*. In a Meunier’s view, however, “most of us, loving Réjane for herself, probably prefer to this vacillating creation, the firm drawing, the clear design, the strong yet supple lines of Madame Sans-Gêne.”⁵⁹ Helping to describe in these last words Beardsley’s simple “portrait of Madame Réjane” in the same *Yellow Book*, Meunier deftly articulated the centrality of the actress to a generation of aesthetic, cultural, and social change in London.

AN AMERICAN DEBUT: PERFORMING “THE RED SASH OF MME. SANS-GENE REPUBLICANISM”

Like Bernhardt, Réjane traveled to America on the heels of her first successful season in London. Taking the transatlantic steamer *La Champagne* from Le Havre, this ambitious actress sailed with her Parisian vaudeville company, arriving in New York on February 24, 1895.⁶⁰ Her arrival in America was celebrated as offering the possibility for New York theatergoers to see a famous Parisian actress in a role that had also been fêted in London. Audiences were promised a famous Parisian performer, as well as her supporting cast and scenery. As the *New York Times* reported in an article published roughly a week prior to Réjane’s arrival:

Next to Sarah Bernhardt, Mme. Réjane, who is now on her way to New York to present the French version of “Mme. Sans Gêne” at Abbey’s Theatre next week, is perhaps the best known actress in France. In comedy, her particular line, she may be said to hold an equal position in the French theatrical world with Bernhardt herself. For ten years she has been the pet of the Parisian public, and her fame has been steadily growing, until it reached its climax with her acting in the part of Mme. Sans Gêne, the washerwoman of Lieut. Bonaparte and the lady of the Court of the Emperor.

. . . In it Rejane made the great success of her life. The play has been presented there ever since [October 27, 1893], with the exception of a short season in London, until it was withdrawn recently to allow Rejane and her company to come to this country, where they will appear at Abbey’s Theatre.⁶¹

An English version of *Madame Sans-Gêne* (tweaked as *Mme. Sans-Gene*) was contemporaneously performed by American actress Kathryn Kidder under the direction of Augustus Pitou at the Broadway Theater in New York. The *New York Times* headed its article about this performance “The Original ‘SansGene.’” First performed in Washington at Albaugh’s Opera House on November 5, 1894, this English version of *Madame Sans-Gêne* opened to New York audiences on January 14, 1895. With scenery that “duplicated” that of the Vaudeville Theatre, and Kidder promoted as an actress who had seen Réjane perform in both Paris and London (and who reportedly met to discuss her production with the playwright Sardou), the American performance of *Madame Sans-Gêne* attracted much comment.⁶² Audience familiarity with Réjane’s performance in the play was assumed: as the review of the opening night’s performance stated, the work “was familiar by name and story” to the audience of the packed Broadway Theatre. As readers were also reminded, “We get our new plays from abroad after the gloss is worn off of them. Probably two-thirds of last night’s audience knew every incident of Sardou and Moreau’s play called ‘Mme. Sans Gêne’ before they went to the theatre; knew about the furor of Rejane’s portrayal of the principal role, the washerwoman of the first republic, who became the Duchess of Dantzig of the first empire, had created in Paris and London.”⁶³ Described as “an excellent preparation for something better,”⁶⁴ the American translation of *Madame Sans-Gêne* confirmed the international celebrity of Réjane’s particular performance of class comedy.

Advertisements for Réjane’s American debut in Abbey’s Theatre on Feb. 27, 1895, highlighted the Paris-London trajectory of her fame (fig. 12). *Mme. Sans Gêne*, readers were told, was “expressly written for Mme. Rejane, and performed by her for over 400 nights in Paris and 40 nights in London.”⁶⁵ As this advertisement indicated, Réjane could command the attention of an international playwright and enjoyed celebrity in the cultural capitals of the world. The play ran at Abbey’s Theatre for three weeks, its success aided by Réjane’s renown, Kidder’s contemporaneous American *Mme. Sans-Gene*, and a more general American interest in the Napoleonic era. As in France, *Mme. Sans-Gene* could be seen alongside a range of related plays that focused on Napoleon.⁶⁶ As one commentator argued, “the days of the first Napoleon . . . [have] been exciting almost as great an interest in America as in France.”⁶⁷ This focus on the First Empire was evident in other areas of creative industry. For instance, the International Exposition of Costumes, which opened in Madison Square Garden during Réjane’s appearance as Catherine, included displays of costumes from the Napoleonic period, as well as dresses based on this era.⁶⁸ Perhaps more tellingly, Réjane’s *Madame Sans-Gêne* was interpreted in America within the context of its own national history. Considered “a legitimate part of the revolutionary revival and the present Napoleonic cult in France,” the play represented a capacity to move between social classes, as well as the capacity of the lower classes to claim a public and political voice. Indeed, when Réjane departed for New York, the *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed that she sailed with “her red sash of Mme. Sans-Gene republicanism—both French and American.”⁶⁹



FIGURE 12. Cover of the French and English “Argument of the Play,” published in America for *Mme. Sans-Gêne* (Madame Free-and-Easy), 1894. Author’s private collection.

Réjane followed her performance of *Mme. Sans-Gêne* at Abbey’s Theatre with *Ma Cousine*. These were the two roles that introduced Réjane’s comedy to American audiences. The reception of *Ma Cousine* was, however, comparatively mute. Réjane’s performance was commended; particular note was made of the way that she conducted the first act while lying on a couch. Nevertheless, the morality of the play was questioned. As the *New York Times* reflected, “the piece is one of those curiously-confusing productions of French genius in the presence of which the Anglo-Saxon observer must struggle between two impulses—one to denounce it with vigorous indignation for outrageous disregard of conventions that should be universal, and the other to praise it unreservedly for ingenuity and wit, leaving any questions of morality to be settled in the land of its origin.”⁷⁰ When *Ma Cousine* was followed a week later by Réjane’s performance as Nora Helmer in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, audiences did not come. Ibsen, readers were told, “draws a very small audience in New York, whether his interpreters are English, German or French. . . . The house was barely half full.” Although Réjane’s acting was technically noteworthy, she was considered no Ibsenite but “simply a remarkably fine actress.”⁷¹

Réjane’s decision to headline the risqué comedy of the Parisian boulevard in *Ma Cousine* and the new woman of Ibsen’s *Doll’s House* did not appeal to American audiences. When Réjane continued her American tour (she played in

Philadelphia, New Orleans, Chicago, and Boston), it was *Madame Sans-Gêne* that attracted crowds. As the *Boston Herald* recounted, with the exception of *Madame Sans-Gêne*, attendance at Réjane's vehicles was "exceedingly 'light.'" Because of this, discussion about her Boston engagement opened with the statement: "The old saw about leading a horse to water might be applied to Mme. Rejane's Boston engagement, for, though she has been brought hither, it is the public that refuses to do the drinking."⁷²

"PRODUCTIVE OF LITTLE SAVE DISAPPOINTMENT":
RÉJANE'S REJECTION IN AMERICA

Réjane's 1895 American debut was considered a failure. The reasons were many. Under the heading "Mme. Rejane's Tour Unsatisfactory," the *Chicago Daily Tribune* explained that Americans, once drawn to French plays (specifically, those with Bernhardt's elaborate costumes), now prefer "native companies better." Rival performances, like Kidder performing *Madame Sans-Gêne* in English, in New York and in the same year, drew a competing public. Although this allowed Réjane's French performance to be translated and therefore understood, it also meant, as the *Tribune* pointed out, "the star often played before pits and boxes with yawning voids. The imitation article drew crowds." Furthermore, American women supported theatrical matinées, soirées, readings, receptions, lectures, and souvenir presentations. Arbiters of taste, they determined the success or failure of a play. Men, devoted to business, "were too tired to find pleasure in what costs each moment a mental effort to understand."⁷³ Réjane's comedy, regarded as morally, culturally, and linguistically challenging, was therefore neither embraced nor well understood. In 1896, Bernhardt confirmed the difficulty of transporting legitimate French comedy to America. Addressing Réjane's failure in America, Bernhardt stated that emotion and larger passions can be understood across languages and cultures. In contrast, "in comedy one must have the lines *absolument*. That is why Rejane, a great comedienne, failed."⁷⁴

Réjane toured America again in 1904, on the heels of her growing celebrity in Paris and London. This was a decade after she had risen to prominence through *Madame Sans-Gêne* and a period in which she was separating from her husband, Georges Porel. Porel was a powerful and respected director and manager of Parisian theaters (in 1904 he managed the Vaudeville Theatre, a role he had enjoyed for more than a decade). Porel had granted Réjane legal permission to sign engagements without his consent as her manager. This permission, now withdrawn, was contested in the courts. While a decision was found in Réjane's favor, a three-month tour to America (appearing in the same cities—New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans) provided an opportunity for the actress to take control of her own business affairs. Réjane's very public divorce, combined with her willingness to advocate for her rights as an independent actress-manager,

indicated to audiences that she was a woman who was willing to take risks, to negotiate business dealings of her own, and to define her celebrity on her own terms.⁷⁵ Consequently, before departing from Paris to New York, there were reports that Réjane was “considering a proposition to remain in New York for a long time, in connection with the establishment of a dramatic conservatory similar to the French Conservatory.” As her American manager, George C. Tyler, of the New York-based Liebler & Co., confirmed, “We have gone so far as to make arrangements for control of a theatre for Mme. Réjane in case she should decide to try the plan, if even for one season only. In this theatre what would amount to a stock company would be established.”⁷⁶

Réjane opened her American tour in New York at the Lyric Theatre on November 7, 1904. For this opening night, she presented a one-act boulevard burlesque entitled *Lolotte* (Meilhac and Halévy) and an “intensely emotional drama” entitled *Amoureuse* [*Lover*] (Georges de Porto-Riche). Likened to “the opening night of the grand opera season in the presence of wealth and fashion,” Réjane’s return was much anticipated.⁷⁷ Reviews of her performance, however, were critical of the moral chasm that separated France from America. Recognizing that Réjane was “the most talented exponent of the comedy of manners,” the *New York Times* reviewer nevertheless explained that “now, as then [on her first tour in 1895] she is hampered by the moral bias of American audiences, and by the fact that the manners she so searchingly studies and exquisitely depicts are exotic—foreign alike to our sympathies and our experience. We loop-the-loop and bump the bumps of our native drama with hilarious joy; but to loop the angles of the triangle of French love brings a moral jar which we endure at best with inward discomfort.”⁷⁸

Réjane’s presentation of *Amoureuse* was considered particularly shocking. In this play, Réjane performed Gabrielle, a wife who has an extramarital affair and then returns to a chastened and dishonored husband. The narrative was criticized for its immorality and Réjane for her bawdy, realistic performance of a woman who, as a commoner, was of a lower class than the actress herself. It was observed that “there were moments when Mme. Réjane revealed somewhat too much the traits of the woman of the boulevards, frankly Parisian and Bohemian though Germaine was supposed to be. The gauche stride of the heels, the lifting of the skirts, the shrugging of the shoulders, the throwing out the elbow, the smile that twisted itself up toward one ear, all seemed at times ill to accord with the manner of the highbred Frenchwoman.”⁷⁹

Criticisms also emerged when Réjane played another work, *La Passerelle* (Fred de Grésac and Francis de Croisset), during her second week at the Lyric. So morally outraged were New York audiences that readers were told that it was “a play to which no careful girl will take her mother.” The incongruity between Réjane’s age (she was then in her late forties) and her “kittenish heroine” motivated particular concern. As one observer wrote: “The *poudre de riz* [white powder] on her forehead is thick and slab [caked or blocked on]. The carmine [bright red

colorant] on her lips invades the corners of her mouth, making it, in its mobile mimicry, sensual and leathery, as one imagines the mouth of Circe.”⁸⁰ On this program, Réjane also appeared as Yanetta, the wife, in Eugène Brieux’s *La Robe rouge*. Here, audiences struggled with the technicalities of the theme of French law and were unable to follow Réjane’s French language and expression, with its “finer shades of wit and satire.”⁸¹ It was also noted that little care was given to her theatrical sets. For example, Réjane’s *Sappho* was disparaged as “pathetically inadequate” from a scenic point of view.⁸²

When Réjane traveled to the other cities on this second American tour, criticism of her program, style of play, and scenery were repeated. Although she was introduced in Chicago as “one of the ‘great’ of the world,”⁸³ observers were frank in their disdain. Summing up her tour, one reviewer stated that “Mme. Rejane’s fortnight engagement at the Grand Opera House has been productive of little save disappointment for all concerned. The business has been noticeably light, the work of the star and her company has not proven of the high grade of excellence anticipated, and the plays offered have been not only immediately unpleasant but have left a most unfavorable and disagreeable impression as to the dramatic art and stage literature of France.”⁸⁴ Unlike Bernhardt, whose advancing and theatrical artistry were rarely criticized in America, Réjane’s comedy of manners, class, and domestic affairs did not align with what audiences considered appropriate behavior for her age nor with what they considered legitimately “theatrical.”

THE ENGLISH EXCEPTION: CELEBRATING RÉJANE IN LONDON

Although Réjane did not achieve success in America, she did enjoy growing success in London. Returning from her 1895 tour of New York to scheduled performances at the Garrick Theatre, Réjane secured the same manager that Bernhardt engaged (a Mr. C. J. Abud as business manager, working for Henry E. Abbey and Maurice Grau).⁸⁵ On this occasion, Réjane was also billed for the first time as a lead attraction. Hence, unlike her earlier Gaiety appearances, where she had been listed under the title of a given play, at the Garrick she headlined the theatrical program. The Garrick Theatre presented a “Mme. Réjane’s Season” under the direction of Messrs. Henry E. Abbey and Maurice Grau, beginning July 1 for twelve nights and four matinees.⁸⁶

We can best determine the difference between New York and London audiences by contrasting reception given Réjane’s performance of *Ma Cousine*. In contrast to the rebuke and criticism Réjane’s performance received in America, in London *Ma Cousine* was described as a “vastly clever piece” that Réjane’s acting saved from the charge of coarseness.⁸⁷ Réjane’s following performance—a reprise of *Madame Sans-Gêne*—was also received with enthusiasm. Celebrated as the play that first “captured the suffrages [feminists] of Metropolitan theatre-goers,” it was a play that

asserted female visibility, both in terms of a central and assertive female role on stage and through the female audience that was attracted to Réjane's performances in London.⁸⁸ As Sardou explained, the play advocated for democracy and glorified sexual equality. Local papers in London also explained that *Madame Sans-Gêne* was welcomed for the "overwhelmingly excellent reason that it is amusing."⁸⁹ In this acceptance of Réjane's comic theater as a platform for female agitation and feminist change, a subtle but significant step was made toward recognizing the actress as a performer capable of forging new publics and audiences abroad.

Réjane's 1897 return to London confirmed her status as inimitable theatrical celebrity. Unlike the production of *Madame Sans-Gêne* in America, where Pitou's English production diverted audiences away from Réjane's original French play, the English production of *Madame Sans-Gêne* in 1897 confirmed Réjane's star status. Performed by Henry Irving and Ellen Terry at the Lyceum Theatre, and adapted by J. Comyns Carr, the work did not generate the accolades that Réjane's performances maintained. It was noted that Terry, although performing with *bon-homie*, was not a Parisian *blanchisseuse*; Irving, performing Napoleon, was physically unconvincing and unable to conceal his own idiosyncrasies of performance.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the willingness of leading English actors to essay a role that was so famously Réjane's indicated that Réjane was an active member in a network of global celebrities, as well as a key reference point for the reinvigoration of the comic theater in London.

A few months later, when Réjane once more played the role of Catherine at the Lyric theater, reviewers spoke of "the singular excellence of her study" and of the fact that in London, "she has continued to grow in favour." A triumph for the actress and a delight for spectators, *Madame Sans-Gêne* was so successful that Réjane was forced to add another three concluding performances of the play to her program.⁹¹ These comic performances replaced her proposed performance of *A Doll's House*: the "new woman" that audiences wanted to see, and that defined Réjane's success, was instead a Parisian woman of the street, not a Northern woman of Ibsen's drama. In a sense, then, Réjane exported to London the woman that she knew best: the Parisian *blanchisseuse*, a working-class woman who might mix in upper-class and powerful circles but who never lost sight of her popular and powerful origins.

By the end of the 1890s, Réjane had joined Bernhardt as a headline attraction in London charitable events and was well known enough to take her theatrical company on tour to the English provinces.⁹² A 1901 article, entitled "Paris in London" (and printed in the widely circulating *Le Figaro*), paid attention to this theatrical fraternity between London and Paris. Stating that "London contains a large slice of Paris," the journalist and writer Ludovic Naudeau seemed genuinely surprised at London's thirst for French theater. As Naudeau observed, London theater companies could not overrun Parisian theaters in the summer season in the same manner that Parisian troupes occupied London theaters and programs.

Significantly, Naudeau isolated Bernhardt, Coquelin, and Réjane as leading examples of the London taste for French theater, and he explained that these celebrities often appeared simultaneously in the city. Although the theater in which Réjane had most recently played—the newly built Coronet Theatre, in Notting Hill Gate—was not as distinguished as Bernhardt and Coquelin’s engagement at Her Majesty’s Theatre, her appearance at the Coronet was equally important. This is because the theater made the unusual gesture of flying a French flag during her theatrical residency and was known to serve the rich and powerful residents of West London (Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park). Here, again, is evidence of Réjane’s ability to build networks of important people in London and of the intimate yet also very public way in which this was done.

Interviewing the three actors individually, in a front-page spread, Naudeau highlighted the difference between French theatrical reception in America and England. Bernhardt, who opened his article, explained the difference between the two different audiences. She observed that the English were “charming, welcoming and intelligent.” English audiences were full of warmth and sympathy for the French and expressed their fondness through the enthusiasm with which they clapped the French flag ahead of any other on the stage. As Bernhardt stated, the English public was “more serious than the American public. The American public only goes to the theater to amuse themselves, while the English go to reflect, compare, educate and instruct themselves.”⁹³

Coquelin’s reflections were comparatively abrupt, and they focused on the way the English public informed themselves about the French plays before attending their performance. He highlighted the sophistication of theatergoers and the willingness with which they educated themselves so that they could better understand French theater. Réjane’s concluding conversation was longer and more reflective, focusing on the successful reception of *Madame Sans-Gêne* in London. She reasoned that the English taste for Napoleon (seen also in Bernhardt’s successful and contemporaneous performance in *L’Aiglon*) was a “supreme tribute, more or less conscious, to the memory of [Arthur Wellesley, the First Duke of] Wellington, the iron duke, the ‘saviour of Europe.’” Focusing on Europe, Réjane then stated that her success was due to the theatergoing public in London, who “have a lot of curiosity. . . . They are very intelligent, and have a depth of tolerance and liberalism.” She continued:

Nevertheless, I am certain that, of one hundred well-dressed gentlemen and bejewelled ladies in attendance at a given French theatrical production, there are no more than ten who are capable of following the entire French dialogue, and no more than twenty-five who can discern, without having already read a translated preamble, the general sense of a play. The others come to see the performance of reputable actors; they come to satisfy their curiosity, and to improve their rudimentary knowledge of French. And then there are also the snobs, yes, the inoffensive, excellent snobs, here in their land of birth, and who teem in England more than in any other country. . . . I

would also note that, when I perform, the bursts of laughter, all audible mirth in the theater, emerges from the “pit,” where a seat does not cost more than two shillings six pence. The pit, literally invaded by the French, is filled with artisans from all over France. These artisans live in London by the thousands.⁹⁴

Naudeau concluded his article with a brief statement confirming that it was London’s many French immigrants who “joyously and patriotically” brought the *claque* (the organized cheering and vocal support for a stage performance) to both Bernhardt’s and Réjane’s performances.⁹⁵ While Réjane highlighted that a London audience was itself diverse and composed of a range of people from different classes and countries, her celebrity was nevertheless part of a dialogue about the success of Parisian theater as a contemporary cultural export.

ATTRACTING AMERICANS IN PARIS: FOUNDING THE THÉÂTRE RÉJANE IN 1906

When Réjane divorced Porel in 1905, she left the Vaudeville Theatre in Paris. At the Vaudeville, Réjane had been managed for thirteen years by her husband. Given that Porel could determine her roles and was known as a forward-looking businessman, this was an arrangement that worked in her favor. Porel was considered “modern” in the sense that he kept abreast of current changes in the running of a theater. On Réjane’s first tour to America, Porel was therefore introduced as her husband and as “the most modern and enterprising manager in Paris.” Readers were told that Porel “is the only theater-man in the French capital (unless we except that grand hermaphrodite, Sara Bernhardt) who bravely attempts to introduce some of the latest foreign mechanical improvements . . . [into] that somewhat antiquated world known in general as the Parisian theater-house.”⁹⁶

Within a year of her separation, Réjane became the manager of the Théâtre de Paris (at the time, called the Nouveau-Théâtre). This was a progressive theater in Rue Blanche, in the ninth arrondissement, that had been under the direction of Lugné-Poe. Lugné-Poe, famous for staging challenging, modern dramas, brought works by Maurice Maeterlinck and Henrik Ibsen to the Parisian stage. When Réjane was granted a ninety-nine-year lease, she renamed, renovated, and renewed this “new” theater. In this way, she took over the tasks that her husband had once undertaken for her and forged a name for herself as an actress-manager and forward-looking director in her own right. Assisted by the financial support of the theater’s owner, the powerful journalist and magnate Alfred Edwards, the Théâtre Réjane was highly praised. As Édouard Noël and Edmond Stoullig recounted in the 1906 *Annales du théâtre et de la musique*:

Who does not have their own theatre? . . . Sarah Bernhardt has her own, Guitry, Coquelin, Antoine and Gémier have their own. “Why can’t I also have my own?” asked Mme. Réjane. And she has one. . . . It is herself who was in charge of this idea, and not her proprietor, M. Alfred Edwards, since she certainly did not skimp on expenses.

It is charming, this theatre, quite simply the prettiest in Paris, with its orange and pink decoration, its exquisite ceiling by [Philippe] Chapron, its brilliant yet soft lighting, its cozy salons, its comfortable 900 seats, its female staff, all uniformed in their reddish-brown silk dresses, its mahogany cloakrooms, large armchairs and folding seats, its rim a veritable museum—with smoking rooms, reading rooms and restaurants, gypsy musique between entr'actes, as well as vast and numerous foyers.⁹⁷

It was not just the newly decorated interior of theater that was praised but the work Réjane instigated for developing its exterior. A postcard advertising the A. W. Andernach industrial company featured, for example, the theater's new rooftop, shot from the terrace of an adjacent building. As the company proudly announced: "The roof plates are largely provided by the Maison Gruin company using the volcanic cement of the 'Andernach' factory."⁹⁸

Inside the theater, Réjane's interior decorating was carefully planned. Her stated aim was to allow visitors to see the stage as clearly as possible and to maintain the intimacy of a Boulevard theater in a modern building.⁹⁹ More than one hundred electric lights rimmed the theater's high ceiling; walls were white, seats upholstered in pale yellow, and the theater boxes and balconies were pink. Records show that the inaugural program visually matched this décor (see fig. 13). On the theater's opening night, December 14, 1906 (at the midway interval of a debut performance of Max Maure's *La Savelli*), Réjane asked her assembled guests to remain seated, stating that she wanted to have them photographed as a durable record of her launch.¹⁰⁰ This focus on interior design, a modern color palette, and electric lighting, as well as the turning of the camera back onto her spectators in order to document their place in theater history, demonstrates Réjane's creative business acumen.

Réjane managed her theater with an eye to the changing tastes of local audiences. She adopted the new business practice of selling tickets to dress rehearsals. Traditionally, in Paris, critics and patrons were issued free invitations to dress rehearsals in the expectation that they could provide critique as well as publicity for a play. Réjane's decision to sell these tickets to rehearsals opened her public up, increased theatrical revenue, and allowed her to access what she termed "genuine critique" before a play premiered. Stating that it was important that she was available, between acts, to mingle and welcome observation, Réjane considered her own managerial role as a collaborative one.¹⁰¹ Aware that Americans flocked to Paris in the summer season, Réjane redecorated her theater in a style and with comforts that they would appreciate; she also cast herself in roles that appealed to an American audience and reprised internationally favorite plays like *Madame Sans-Gêne*. In March 1907, and with an eye to seasonal American audiences, Réjane shrewdly elected to appear as a breezy American in a play called *Paris and New York*. A comedy by Emmanuel Arène and Francis de Croisset, *Paris and New York* focused on the comedy of an American girl who bartered her millions for a French title.¹⁰² As an article in the *Los Angeles Times* reported, "Mme. Rejane has a special



FIGURE 13. Cover of Réjane's inaugural theater program at the Théâtre Réjane, matching her pink and white décor, 1906. Author's private collection.

comedy, 'Paris and New York,' written expressly to attract American dollars to her theatre, built according to American ideas of comfort." Forming part of the six "American months" of the Paris theater season, the play was part of the larger Parisian effort to capitalize on the boon of American travel to France. American flags, American-style comforts, as well as the reservation of the largest American hotel suites for American travelers joined the curation of special theatrical programs (such as Réjane's) to ensure the enjoyment of an expected two hundred thousand American tourists to Paris.¹⁰³ Even though Réjane was not successful in America, she did her utmost to engage this audience in Paris. Although the Théâtre Réjane became known as "always a favourite resort of Americans," Réjane returned to acting in 1910, beset by financial losses. As the *Chicago Daily Tribune* tactfully reported, "Mme. Réjane has won the reputation of being almost too amiable as a manager. . . . Amiability and economy are not always compatible."¹⁰⁴

AT THE VANGUARD OF THE VARIETY SHOW

After Réjane left America in 1905, she headlined her own “Madame Rejane’s Season” in London’s newly renovated Terry’s Theatre on the Strand (in June 1905).¹⁰⁵ Some of her roles focused satirically on the emerging rights of women; for example, she played *La Passerelle*, a 1902 comedy about a sham wedding that, the program explained, was “The Original of ‘The Marriage of Kitty,’” as well as Sardou’s 1880 *Divorçons*, a bedroom farce about the impending passage of France’s first divorce laws. Other plays in the “Réjane repertoire” wittily presented passion and female age (through the first performance of Dario Niccodemi’s *L’Hirondelle* in London), as well as the comic performance of a strong, errant wife and her ridiculed husband (in Meilhac and Halévy’s *La Petite Marquise*). When *Madame Sans-Gêne* was presented for a week in mid-June, the playbill guaranteed audiences “New Scenery and Costumes.”¹⁰⁶ With the promise of a fresh vision of a familiar play, as well as a focus on strong female advocacy and largely new (or at least recent) theatrical work, Réjane kept herself at the forefront of developments on the comic stage. The prices for admission varied between the more expensive £3 3s and £1 1s for a box, down to 2s 6d in the pit and 1s 6d for the gallery. In this way, a wide net was cast for her possible London audience. An upper-class audience (with the ability to understand spoken French) was not a prerequisite to the appreciation of Réjane’s wile and wit.

The following year, in 1906, Réjane opened her own theater in Paris. She was subsequently billed for the first time on the London variety stage as the manager of her own theater and, in April, 1910, as an actress who had headlined successive summer seasons of plays that reached a broad audience in England. Réjane’s appearance in the London Hippodrome, a theater located in Leicester Square that had been established in 1900 and newly decorated and refurbished in 1909, can be seen in the context of her concern for modern cultural relevance. Réjane was also an actress aware of her commercial celebrity: she needed not only artistic accolades but also the funds to offset her theater’s financial losses in Paris. Her appearance at the Hippodrome accorded her the highest salary yet recorded in the variety theater (£750 a week).¹⁰⁷

The music hall in London in April 1910 functioned for Réjane in the same ways that—as I discussed in my previous chapter—the music hall did for Bernhardt some five months later, in October. The variety stage kept Réjane visible in London as a celebrity actress of Parisian repute; it allowed her to reduce a play to its most engaging and idiomatic act, and it placed her in a large forum (with matinee and evening performances) that attracted new audiences. The Hippodrome made much of securing Réjane. It mimicked the legitimate theater in offering “Box Plans” that could be booked in advance. It also mimicked legitimate programs by including a full-size (and copyrighted) Reutlinger photograph of the actress on the program’s opening page and by opening, in bold red print, with the statement: “AN ENGAGEMENT OF EXTRAORDINARY INTEREST THE BEAUTIFUL

GIFTED AND FAMOUS ACTRESS MADAME RÈJANE [*sic*].¹⁰⁸ This program replaced the traditional Hippodrome program, which opened on an image of the theater itself, as well as a paragraph explaining that the London Hippodrome had been opened on January 15, 1900, and had closed only for the funeral of Queen Victoria and for refurbishments in 1909 (readers are told it boasted a global record of 5,782 uninterrupted performances, staged twice daily). The theater was celebrated as a “leading attraction of the artistic world,” where, audiences were informed, Réjane would present “Short Selections” from her repertoire. Capable of adapting her theater to suit changing trends and emerging markets, Réjane was notable because she interrupted the Hippodrome’s own marketing and managerial practices and was considered a celebrity whose comic theater could bring new and untested publics (notably, women and families) to a popular variety show.

In the same way as “The Bioscope” was an item on Bernhardt’s music-hall program, so, too, did Réjane’s appearance at the Hippodrome feature “Animated Pictures.” Again, we do not know which specific films were featured in the music hall nor (in contrast to the Bioscope at the Coliseum) which company filmed the works on display. But film again concluded the second half of each program, allowing time for audience changeover and the promise of a spectacular mechanical end to the variety show. Réjane was advertised alongside musical, comical, and unusual acts. She appeared, for example, with the Bellclair Brothers (athletes); Sgt. Brennan, the “World’s Champion Diabolist”; and “The Twelve Fezzans, Natives of the Sahara.”¹⁰⁹ Advertising “The Star Russian Dancers” (the Ballets Russes) as a coming attraction, and with fellow Parisian Yvette Guilbert “coming soon,” Réjane was part of a renowned international network of spectacular shows that internationalized and broadened the appeal of the music hall.¹¹⁰

Réjane’s billing as the thirteenth attraction in a fifteen-act program was the clear highlight of the Hippodrome show. Similar to Bernhardt appearing after intermission, she ensured audience presence and attention. Moreover, the practices of the traditional stage were adapted to this newer popular context. Again in parallel to the Coliseum program providing special narrative descriptions of Bernhardt’s plays, the April 4 Hippodrome program provided a “Special Slip” to audiences that gave a synopsis of her play (Meilhac and Halévy’s single-act 1879 comedy, *Lolotte*). This slip provided a three-hundred-word description of the play’s plot, describing how Réjane, performing the role of a jealous actress (*Lolotte*), instructs a baroness to perform for an amateur parlor show, only to discover that both she and the baroness are amorously pledged to the same man. While this pamphlet helped non-French-speaking people understand narrative action onstage, the comedy was not entirely new in England. *Lolotte* had been performed in English as *The Lesson*, by Mrs. Bancroft, at the Haymarket Theatre in 1881 and subsequently, by the French actress Céline Chaumont, in 1890, at St. James’s Theatre.¹¹¹

Reports of Réjane’s reception in London, a city she regarded “as her second home,” were glowing. Playing two shows each day, she was “incomparable,” a

“popular Parisienne” who received “a truly British welcome” to London.¹¹² As *The Tatler* also reported, *Lolotte* was a choice play, since it “gives Madame Réjane every opportunity to display her charming gift of comedy and her infinite sense of the humorous.”¹¹³ A following appearance at the Hippodrome featured the actress in “an excerpt from Sardou’s celebrated play—*Madame Sans-Gêne*.”¹¹⁴ Again, a “Special Slip” (this time a little longer, roughly five hundred words) offered “full particulars of Cast and Synopsis,” ensuring audience members understood what Réjane would perform onstage.¹¹⁵ The single act presented was act 3 of the play, in which the duchess revealed herself to be the former washerwoman to Napoleon. Applauded for being particularly appropriate to the vaudeville format, the act foregrounded a member of the working class moving within upper-class settings through the exposure of bawdy, physical humor. As the *Music Hall and Theatre Review* explained, this was the role in which “the saucy wench of the washtub reminds the now all-powerful and ill-tempered Napoleon of certain services rendered him when he was an officer of small importance in Paris.” The same review stated that Réjane, “the most popular of French actresses,” was playing a famous role and that this “goes to show how largely the music hall is attracting to itself the best the theatre has to offer.”¹¹⁶

Réjane, like Bernhardt, returned to perform in the London music hall in 1911. Significantly, she also used the London Hippodrome to raise funds for charity events. In October 1911, she organized a matinée with more than fifty performers at the Hippodrome to support the survivors and families of the *Liberté* battleship fire, an event that killed 286 crew. Drawing on the patronage of the royal family and the Diplomatic Corps, Réjane used “society beauties” as program and flower sellers.¹¹⁷ Discussed in papers as “The Rejane Matinee,” the event foregrounded Réjane’s networking skills, her commercial celebrity, and her ability to capitalize on the cultural and diplomatic goodwill between England and France. After her season ended, she was debated in Parliament when the Liberal politician (and agitator for censorship) Robert Harcourt asked whether the Hippodrome had a license to stage her plays. In Harcourt’s view, her work breached good manners, decorum, and public peace. Significantly, Winston Churchill defended Réjane, stating that there were more urgent matters to consider before the House.¹¹⁸

A FORAY INTO FILM

Réjane’s engagement in a variety program in a London music-hall theater came at a time when actresses, musicians, and dancers were working across both the legitimate stage and popular theaters. Her willingness to be part of the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre program at the Paris Exposition of 1900 indicates, even before the variety theater began to adapt itself to changing possibilities a decade later, an awareness of film’s potential to intersect and overlap with the French theater and to draw international crowds. Appearing in a short, filmed excerpt in the

Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre program, Réjane was one act alongside other short films with legitimate stars drawn from the French stage. At this point, Réjane had not yet established the Théâtre Réjane and had toured North America only once. Nevertheless, she was an actress of renown, featured alongside leaders of the Parisian stage, and clearly aware of the importance of appearing in a new experimental mixed-media show in the World Exposition.

Réjane's choice of role for the 1900 Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre was telling. Echoing Bernhardt's decision to film an excerpt from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (whose duel with Laertes spectacularly presented both masculinity and death),¹¹⁹ Réjane appeared as Riquette in *Ma Cousine*. In this way, she audaciously danced the boulevard *gaminerie* of the *chahut* in the Baroness d'Harnay la Hutte's home before an upper-class, noble audience. This presentation of a popular dance allowed Réjane to perform a spectacle from the Parisian boulevard. The scene also self-reflexively highlighted Réjane's capacity to bring the thrilling spectacle of Grille d'Égout's lace and black silken hosiery to the interior of a respectable *salon*. As viewers were aware, Réjane was an actress playing at being an actress, who had a part to act in real life. Arthur Symons, reflecting on this scene, stated that Réjane "summarize[d] the whole art of the Moulin Rouge" when she played the pantomime and did so in her own, particularly audacious, way.¹²⁰

Réjane was a late addition to the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre program. She appeared in September 1900 rather than at its launch on April 9 of that year. As a note in *Le Gaulois* stated, her debut was a sensational addition to the successful program implemented by the artistic director of the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre, Marguerite Vrignault. Transforming the program into a "new triumph," Réjane opened the show and was described as adding "spice" to it. Applauded "in her famous dance scene in *Ma Cousine*, where she dances her famous naturalist *quadrille* (*quadrille naturaliste*)," Réjane proved an enormous success. Parisian as well as provincial and foreign visitors were drawn to this fashionable establishment, which also featured "our great Sarah [Bernhardt], with her elegant and svelte figure, with such sober and dramatic gestures."¹²¹

At the same time that Réjane appeared in the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre, she also appeared in roles in the Théâtre du Vaudeville (the theater that had made her famous in Paris), most notably in *Madame Sans-Gêne*. As Édouard Noël and Edmond Stoullig state in their *Annales du théâtre et de la musique*, Réjane appeared in her five hundredth performance as Catherine Hubscher, in Paris on July 31, 1900; her six hundredth performance was presented with fanfare on October 30. Réjane's play *Madame Sans-Gêne* was chosen with the exposition's international audiences in mind: no play was better suited to "fill a room with foreigners and draw crowds to the theater."¹²² A special edition of the journal *Le Théâtre*, dedicated to the actress in June (and reading very much like a theatrical equivalent of a catalogue raisonné), feted Réjane as the most famous comic actress of the epoch.¹²³ The Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre operated in dialogue with Réjane's renown. It offered proof of her capacity to reemerge as a new and appealing attraction, even in the context of a star-studded Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre program.¹²⁴

THE BRITISH BIOSCOPE

Given the enormous success of *Madame Sans-Gêne*, it is perhaps unsurprising that when Réjane entered narrative film more than a decade later (in 1911), she did so in this play. It was *Madame Sans-Gêne*, more than *Ma Cousine* or any other comic role, that had made her famous across the globe. As Paul Porel and Jules Huret stated in the special issue of *Le Théâtre* in 1900, *Madame Sans-Gêne* played successfully in Belgium, England, America, Germany, Holland, Russia, Austria, Romania, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. The play “restored the fortunes of the theater, made the name of Réjane penetrate further into the deep mass of the public, [and] it definitively consecrated her popularity.” The play was translated into different languages and performed across theaters of Europe, and readers in France were told that “furniture, fabrics, jewelry, sweets, paper, even dishes” were available in the style of *Madame Sans-Gêne*.¹²⁵

In England, French global dominance in the moving picture industry at the opening of the twentieth century was attributed to the unusual willingness of the French theater industry to embrace and recognize film as a theatrical and commercial opportunity. Considered a “new department of the modern drama,” film was supported by celebrated French actors. Precisely because in France—where “the bioscope is far more recognised than here [Britain]”—actors such as Le Bargy, Réjane, and Bernhardt “are not ashamed to pose for the moving picture camera.” Aided by (the late) Victorien Sardou, Alfred Capus, Henri Lavedan, and Edmond Rostand, playwrights also readily furnished scenarios for this “new sort of stage.”¹²⁶ It was recognized in the English press that theatrical celebrity saw the establishment of companies such as the French Film d’Art. This recognition gave “new life” to an instrument (the cinematographe) formerly looked upon as “little more than a vehicle for vulgar peep shows in penny gaffs.”¹²⁷ Theater-film companies, “getting films of famous dramas with famous actors in their famous parts,” ensured potential viewers that future generations “will be able to see (and probably hear) Sarah Bernhardt in ‘La Tosca,’ Coquelin in ‘Chantecler’ (if he ever produces it), and Rejane in ‘Sans Gêne.’”¹²⁸ Embracing the foresighted move of French theater stars into film, *The Bioscope* celebrated the French theater’s flexibility, adaptability, and entrepreneurship: “We are a great people. The history books of the future will be found among the playthings of to-day.”¹²⁹

The opportunities that French actors and playwrights saw in the future of film was accompanied by a respect for the theatrical professionalism of the emerging French film industry. As an article entitled “Foreign News. France” explains, French actors were employed in the film industry in terms that were similar to those of the traditional theater: they were “regularly employed to pose for these pictures, just as they might be engaged to act in a theater.” A stage manager directed filmed scenes, carrying the manuscript for the play in his hands, as he might in the theater. Furthermore, and again in parallel to the theater, rehearsals were scheduled. Rather than perform without practice for the camera, “over and over they [the actors] are drilled.” In this way, film became “as lifelike as any stage

setting ever can.”¹³⁰ Rather than regard the French theatrical film as unnecessarily theatrical, outdated, or irrelevant, the “bioscope” (as it was often referred to in the British press) succeeded because it was treated as a creative opportunity for theatrical developments in France.

RÉJANE’S FEATURE FILM IN ENGLAND

Réjane first played *Madame Sans-Gêne* in London in 1894. In January 1912, when this role was first released in London as a 3,133 ft. Film d’Art film, she had toured *Madame Sans-Gêne* four times in the legitimate theater and twice (once in 1910, again in 1911) on the variety stage in England. Reports that the film had been released in Paris on November 10, 1910—and was playing in more than thirty theaters in the city, its publicity aided by Film d’Art’s “magnificent posters”—indicate that London received the film in the same manner as it habitually hosted Réjane: as a Parisian comic celebrity.¹³¹ She was a celebrity actress who brought new work to London in the season following its Parisian debut. The first full-page review of *Madame Sans-Gêne* in *The Bioscope* emphasized, therefore, that Réjane had created the title role and that she was joined on film by [Edmond] Duquesne, her “original” Napoleon. In this sense, the work was not new; film was instead a novel form of revival, promising English audiences access to a Parisian production anew.

Réjane’s *Madame Sans-Gêne* was marketed in England by the production and distribution company Jury’s Imperial Pictures. Réjane was therefore marketed by a London-based company that leased films to British theatrical exhibitors. Headed by British businessman William Frederick Jury, Jury’s Imperial Pictures was famous for providing bioscope films to popular venues and was accordingly advertised as being “direct from the Crystal Palace.” Part of this renown was driven by the successful and varied programs Jury’s furnished variety theaters such as the Alhambra Theatre in London (where an exhibition agreement had been entered into in August 1908).¹³² Bringing programs to popular venues throughout the English provinces, Jury’s Imperial Pictures provided “an incomparable series of up-to-date animated pictures” in cities such as Manchester, Sheffield, and Birmingham.¹³³ In this context, Réjane’s film emerged as a “special photoplay” and a “stand-alone attraction” that brought the actress’s *pièce de resistance* to local audiences (and was therefore leased at the higher price of £7 per week, or £3 10s for three days).¹³⁴

The language used in the publicity for Réjane’s film was similar to the language used in the promotion of the Bernhardt/Réjane program in America. Réjane was “The Greatest Box-Office Attraction of All Times” and “The renowned Parisian actress.”¹³⁵ Promoting Réjane’s capacity to be “as clever in mimicry as she is as a comedienne,” the film promised audience engagement and intelligibility.¹³⁶ Publicized in terms of financial gain and business opportunity, Réjane also spearheaded a new development in film—the emergence of the 3,000 ft. subject.¹³⁷ When exhibitors in Bradford falsely claimed that their exhibition of *Madame Sans-Gêne* was

Réjane's pioneering film, Jury's Imperial Pictures was quick to prosecute. As the public apologies published by Alton Electric Theatre Company and The Farnham Picture Palace confirm in the May 30 edition of *The Bioscope*, Gaumont's 1912 film of the same name wrongfully advertised Réjane, and they will "not again advertise or exhibit any films purporting to represent Rejane as 'Sans Gene' or any colourable imitation thereof."¹³⁸

When Bernhardt's *Camille* was added to Jury's "exclusive" offerings in February 1912, it was considered "quite in the order of things." As the *Kinematograph* reflected in February 1912 (and note that the films were marketed together only in March, well after they had been released as separate feature films): "this enterprising firm [Jury's Imperial Pictures] have managed in a very short time to acquire films with the two leading French artistes M^{de} Sarah Bernhardt representing tragedy, and M^{de} Rejane the admitted premier exponent of comedy appearing in their most favoured parts. Surely this is unique in the history of the trade, and M^{ssrs} Jury deserve every success for their spirited enterprise."¹³⁹ Réjane's and Bernhardt's ability to exploit film for new business opportunities spearheaded Jury's own achievements in England. Programming the cinematic equivalent of the theater's Comedy and Tragedy masks, the company adroitly publicized film as the vehicle through which popular audiences could access, from within their own cities and neighborhoods, the international celebrities of the stage.

GLEEFUL GAMINERIE: "SOMEHOW THAT TOUCH
OF LESSER REFINEMENT BELONGS TO HER"

In England, Réjane was famous for her capacity to play the role of an unrefined woman. As I noted in my introduction, the British drama critic Jack Grein stated that it was Réjane's ability to be vulgar, exuberant, and uncontrollable onstage—a capacity he equated with spontaneity and versatility—that made her a greater actress than Bernhardt, the Italian Eleanora Duse, or German actress Agnes Sorma. As Grein explained, in Réjane "there is an undercurrent of vulgarity, the vulgarity of the 'gamin' of Paris, the kaleidoscopic being. . . . Somehow that touch of lesser refinement belongs to her; she is a child of the people."¹⁴⁰ How do we see this vulgarity manifest in *Madame Sans-Gêne*? In the first place, there is a busy play with costuming that is comic and prompts the desired laughs from the audience. For example, Réjane arrives to present Napoleon with his washing bill in a fine dress, cape, and jewelry. Before sitting, she drops her cape unceremoniously on a stool, hitches up the top of a sleeve, straightens her necklace, and hoists her bodice. Presenting Napoleon with his unpaid bill, she proudly retrieves it from her cleavage, flapping it to gain his attention.

It is Réjane's full-bodied and physical play that we see in this film. In this scene with Napoleon, where she presents him with his unpaid bill, she enters his office walking heavily, her flat heels stomping an ungainly passage to his desk. When

she then curtseys, Réjane does this in a noticeably perfunctory bob. She does not attend to the elegant hitching of skirts and deep fall into the pose (with one foot outstretched in front) that, by comparison, Napoleon's refined sisters immediately display. When these two women depart, Réjane raises her elbow as if to jab them. Later, while telling Napoleon that she will not divorce her husband, she sits busily tapping her toes. Her arms are bent, both hands are on her thighs, and her elbows protrude defiantly outward. She then knocks three times on Napoleon's desk to command his attention as he writes, standing to give him his unpaid bill. We see her watching him insouciantly with a hand on her hip as he reads the bill; she then signals her joy when Napoleon recognizes who she is by bending forward in convivial glee, rubbing her gloved hands in satiric anticipation of payment, and pantomiming the process of washing clothes, asking for payment, and being denied. The three coins Napoleon hands her are quickly slipped back inside her bodice: she might be a duchess but she certainly knows how to keep money safe from theft and what it means to be paid for services rendered. When we then follow Réjane through the more dramatic scenes of the play—by the end of the film, she cleverly foils the execution of Count Neipperg—it is her play of comic vulgarity in Court that signals her honest roots as a hardworking laborer. Still today, Réjane's performance is enormously funny. It's efforts to mimic the linguistic and physical play of upper-class mores can be viewed as a precursor to the comedic role of Eliza Doolittle, appearing just two years after Réjane's film, in the 1913 production of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

A FIRST SUCCESSFUL TOUR: FRENCH FILM IN AMERICA

Three years before *Madame Sans-Gêne* was made (in 1908), the American trade press discussed French theater on film as an improvement to American film content. Comparing an example of American comedy on film—described as “a lame attempt to make a farce,” “bordering on the indecent,” and “disgusting”—to the “perfect satire” of a French production, French theater and, in particular, French actors were regarded as elevating the stature of film. Film, it was argued, offered uneducated American people access to “real French art.” Citing Réjane, it was explained in *Moving Picture World* that “through the picture film, those of us who speak no French learn why Rejane is better than Leslie Carter, why Jack London limps after Guy de Maupassant.”¹⁴¹

Other reports in the American press explained that the greatest living dramatists in France were collaborating with publishers of moving pictures, securing artists of Bernhardt and Réjane's caliber, and replacing music-hall and circus productions with “cinematograph shows.” Accompanied by an excellent orchestra (“or at least an ‘orchestration’”), sometimes even a chorus of fifty or more voices or the use of a phonograph, the recording of Parisian actors on film allowed them to

appear “simultaneously in theaters all over the world.”¹⁴² In the American trade presses, Réjane appeared quite differently than she did on her failed theatrical tour. Instead of being a risqué or immoral actress, she was an exemplary French actress who elevated the content of American film. Even within the regular daily newspapers—where she had been criticized for flaunting French sexual permissiveness in front of American audiences—her involvement in film was celebrated for enabling the democratization and cultural elevation of the film industry. Hence, the *Los Angeles Times* stated that “Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and Mme. Gabrielle Réjane, the two glories of the French stage and two of the world’s greatest actresses, whose art has delighted theater-goers in every country in the world, have found immortality in the motion pictures.” Bernhardt played “her greatest dramatic success before the motion camera”; Réjane produced “her greatest comedy creation.” Placing “two of our greatest actresses within the reach of everyone,” the newspaper predicted that the French actress on film will “establish a new standard for the motion-picture field in general.”¹⁴³

The failure of Réjane’s 1904–5 stage tour in America was not a consideration in her reception on film. Réjane was an *avant-courier* of new business practices in entertainment industries in America. Accordingly, American reports speak of how Bernhardt’s and Réjane’s feature films prompted Maude Adams to negotiate with the French-American Film Company to make *Joan of Arc* after her successful performance of this at the Harvard Stadium in 1909. Although this film project was never realized, it is significant that a French subject and play was considered suitable for film and that a female actress was to be featured in a leading role. As the report predicted, Bernhardt and Réjane’s initiative will “completely revolutionize this important branch of entertainment.” In this context, *Madame Sans-Gêne* helped a Parisian celebrity enter film, a French film enter legitimate American theaters, and young American entrepreneurs find new ways to market and sell celebrity. In turn, audiences of all classes and generations became participants in the expanding world of the motion picture industry.

I have documented the celebrity and successes of an actress whose class comedy and ongoing social agitation have been overlooked by film historians. My overriding argument is that we need to include legitimate comedy as a space for feminist agency in early film. I also contend that Réjane’s initiatives (both in the music hall and on film) evidenced her commercial and creative foresight. With Réjane, however, we face a difference that was not part of our discussion of Bernhardt: whereas Réjane was successful in London, she never really enjoyed celebrity in America.

In my next chapter, I examine Mistinguett, an actress whose music-hall celebrity in the interwar years linked her to the groundbreaking work that Bernhardt and Réjane had earlier undertaken on the variety stage. I believe that our current focus on Mistinguett’s celebrity in the interwar years ignores the foundational work that she earlier undertook on the stage and screen. Drawing on primary materials, I trace the emergence of Mistinguett’s remarkable physicality on the

Parisian stage. When Mistinguett made films at the opening of the twentieth century, she used this physicality to drive short dramatic films, initiate action-packed serials, and comically develop the French feature film. In my following exploration of this singular performer, I return to these lost records of Mistinguett's achievements. I establish her English and American celebrity years before she rose to global prominence on the glamorous 1920s and 1930s music-hall stage.

Mistinguett

The Making of Modern Cinema

Mistinguett was born in 1875, three years after Bernhardt had begun to enjoy notoriety in her performance of *Ruy Blas* at the Odéon Theatre and the same year that Réjane was first mentioned as a comic actress in the English press. The youngest of my three case studies, Mistinguett points forward, to the postwar era of sound film, as well as toward the decades in which female performers staged revues around their spectacular renown (fig. 14). During these interwar decades of the twentieth century, when performers such as Josephine Baker, Florelle, and Jane Marnac joined Mistinguett as *meneuses de revue* (revue stars) at the Folies-Bergère and the Casino de Paris, Mistinguett enjoyed global notoriety as the “Queen of the Paris Music Hall,” “Queen of the Paris Night,” and “Music Hall Miss.”¹

This chapter focuses on the decades that preceded this tremendous interwar renown, when Mistinguett established her presence in the lively entertainment world of early twentieth-century Paris. Mistinguett’s theatrical celebrity was quite different from Bernhardt’s and Réjane’s. She did not rise through the elite theatrical training school of the Paris Conservatoire, nor did she generate critical attention performing in theatrical works by famous Parisian playwrights in the leading theaters of France. Rather, Mistinguett gradually gained renown before a broad mix of local and international audiences in short song-and-dance acts on the popular music-hall stages of Paris. She was celebrated for the freshness of her comic verve, for her joyous physicality and her extravagant use of costumes. Mistinguett’s performances were ephemeral, fast-changing responses to contemporary trends and interests. Her trailblazing performances introduced new styles of dress, movement, and behaviors to the revue. Later, Mistinguett also brought her athletic and comic performances to film. She was an extraordinarily versatile actress who made more than forty films in the prewar period.



FIGURE 14.
Mistinguett
postcard, n.d.
Laurence Senelick
Collection (copy
held in author's
private collection).

Beginning with a discussion of Mistinguett's debut as a teenager at the Casino de Paris in 1893, this chapter concludes in early 1914, before the start of World War I. My work is therefore focused on the early period of Mistinguett's life, which has been largely overlooked by scholars.² Just as Mistinguett's engaging verve, spectacular shows, and theatrical versatility helped expand her transnational audiences in the opening decades of the twentieth century, so, too, was she flexible and engaging in her embrace of silent film. She appeared across a range of film genres (drama, legitimate comedy, slapstick comedy, detective films, and action films) and across a range of film forms (the short, the serial, and the feature film). Through these varied works, she reached audiences in England and America. Later, in the 1920s

and 1930s, Mistinguett developed her skills exclusively on the Parisian music-hall stage, appearing in just one sound film (*Rigolboche*, Christian-Jaque, 1936). Film, in this subsequent interwar period, was therefore no longer central to her professional practice. Rather than disappearing altogether, she brought her experience and knowledge of film to live performance. In the 1920s and 1930s, Mistinguett was famous for her physical and verbal responsiveness to live audiences and for her extravagant costumes, as well as the use of colored lighting and appealing kick-lines. In my view, the Queen of the Paris Night had learned from her formative years of work onstage and onscreen and had perfected the art of engaging audience attention through the spectacle of a live show.

MISTINGUETT ON THE MARGINS

In my previous chapter, I discussed the work that went into modernizing the Théâtre Réjane. This theater, newly and luxuriously decorated, backed onto the Casino de Paris, in rue de Clichy, in the ninth arrondissement. The Casino de Paris was a well-known café-concert, one that required only a *consommation* (refreshment ticket) for entry but that staged spectacular and risqué music-hall style shows to international visitors and pleasure-seeking local audiences.³ An unknown young performer whose working-class origins were well-suited to the licentious tumult that characterized the casino's nightly shows, Mistinguett debuted here in the margins of Paris in December 1895.

Born in Enghein, a northern Parisian suburb, Mistinguett grew up in the northern province of Soisy-sous-Montmorency. As a performer, Mistinguett moved incrementally and peripatetically through Paris's music halls. She first gained notoriety in short variety sketches at the Eldorado, a luxurious fifteen-hundred-seat café-concert in the tenth arrondissement (on the large and newly built Boulevard de Strasbourg). These popular, rowdy, smoke-filled venues are mentioned in J. Brander Matthews's discussion of Parisian theaters under the telling title—"Other Places of Amusement."⁴ Among the venues in which Mistinguett appeared was the Moulin Rouge (at the end of rue Blanche), the Folies-Bergère, and the Olympia Theatre (newly opened in 1893). Mistinguett was eventually contracted to the Théâtre des Variétés in 1911; at this point, she enjoyed increasing attention as a respected and highly successful performer.

INITIATING TRANSNATIONAL FAME

Mistinguett first appeared on the variety stage in England in 1907, in a dance entitled the "Pi-Ouit." At this time, she was described in *The Era* as "a Parisian dancer and singer, who, with Miss Lawler, has scored a success in the Revue at the Moulin Rouge, and whose style is somewhat reminiscent of the entertainment presented some years ago by Anna Held."⁵ Held, a risqué performer from Poland, was at the time married to Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. and associated with the new

revue, the Ziegfeld Follies. This parallel between Mistinguett and Held suggested to knowing readers the style of Mistinguett's performance at the Palace Theatre in London: a willingness to display her legs, the risqué use of song, and youthful Parisian vivacity.

Significantly, the "Revue" that *The Era* briefly referenced for its English readers was *La Revue de la femme*. Written by Lucien Boyer and Henri Bataille, with sets designed by the celebrated Belgian scenographer Albert Dubosq and music specially composed by the famous composer Gustave Goublier (the pseudonym for Gustave Conin), *La Revue de la femme* was a "grand spectacle." Performed in a big show format, it consisted of two acts and eight *tableaux*, or scenes. Considered a resounding triumph, this was the most successful Parisian music-hall show that the Moulin Rouge had ever staged.⁶ As commentary in *Gil Blas* confirmed, "Never, since its foundation, has the Moulin Rouge experienced each evening the affluence that presses along Place Blanche to the opening of its doors; never, moreover, has the music-hall enjoyed such success as that which it now merits in *The Women's Revue*."⁷ The show earned 133,753 francs in just twenty performances, and reports foregrounded its all-female cast of performers, noting, in particular, "the exquisite [singer, Juliette] Méally, the frenzied Allems, the fanciful Mistinguett, [and] the pretty Lawler."⁸

While Mistinguett helped to showcase the importance of women on the Parisian popular stage, she also helped to secure the cultural reach of French film abroad. Making an estimated forty-five films between 1908 and 1917, she circulated before audiences who could not attend her live performances in Paris and who were not, therefore, part of the ferment that characterized theatergoing in Paris. Making many of her films for SCAGL (La Société cinématographique des auteurs et gens de lettres), a Pathé production company founded in 1908 with Albert Capellani as its head from 1909 onward, Mistinguett joined other music-hall artists who were entering film. As Kelley Conway explains, the engagement of well-known theatrical performers helped redefine early French cinema because it attracted a more bourgeois audience (including women) and lengthened films; this "slowly led to the standard practice of including a feature film among a company's releases." Unfortunately, not all of Mistinguett's silent short films survive. Nevertheless, across those works that still exist, we can see the way how her image as "a cheeky urban sprite" on the music-hall stage was later elaborated and developed in her work on film.⁹

Mistinguett gained her first taste of fame not through comic performance, however, but through popular song. Newspaper reports indicate that by 1907 (the same year that she performed in the London summer season), her songs were imitated and repeated by street hawkers, "singing, shouting [her songs] out loud, on the main [Paris] crossroads and the boulevards."¹⁰ Because Mistinguett also circulated through gramophones and phonographs, her fame reached provincial audiences as well as more distant audiences abroad.¹¹ Comparative to the way in

which Bernhardt moved very differently into the living rooms of the emerging middle-class home through the Edison and Pathé phonograph, Mistinguett was an identifiable revue actress within the publicity and products circulating in this new era of technological reproducibility. Following Musser's argument—that emerging forms of technology and publicity promoted Bernhardt as a leading global actress in the early twentieth century—we can recognize how the phonograph and other reproductive media helped spearhead Mistinguett's commercial versatility. As Conway explains, Mistinguett's renown as a popular singer reached its apotheosis in the music hall near the end of the war and throughout the 1920s, when she starred in the revues at the Casino of Paris, the Folies-Bergère, and the Moulin Rouge. Here, she “created her most famous numbers”: “J'en ai mairre” (I'm fed up) (1921), “En douce” (Quietly) (1922), “La Java” (1922), “Ça c'est Paris” (That's Paris) (1926), and “C'est vrai” (It's true) (1935).¹²

In addition to circulating through film and song, Mistinguett received regular attention in English and American newspapers. Her continued presence in the foreign press ensured that international news about French actresses was not confined to performers like Bernhardt and Réjane, appearing on the legitimate stage. Mistinguett was discussed across a range of comic, dramatic, and physical “action-hero” roles in trade journals such as *The Bioscope* and *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* in England, and *Moving Picture World* and *Motography* in America. As I explain below, these articles described her leaping onto and from moving cars, pushing criminals into the Seine, and athletically climbing down the facades of buildings. Mistinguett was also frequently discussed in English newspaper and trade press columns dedicated to events in Paris. Her music-hall performances appeared regularly in the London-based *American Register's* “Gossip from the Gay City,” *The Observer's* “The Week in Paris,” and Meg Villars's anonymous and lighthearted weekly letter to her “uncle,” entitled “Priscilla in Paris,” which was a dedicated feature of England's fashionable *The Tatler*.

Although Mistinguett's stage and screen performances in these prewar years were never promoted or publicized in the manner and to the degree that Bernhardt and Réjane enjoyed, the attention paid to her by Villars is significant. Villars was a young English author who was also a former actress; as such, she was well-placed to highlight the impact of Mistinguett's performances in Paris for English audiences. Making it clear that it was not only in high-class theaters that the world was witnessing “the age of the actress,” Villars described how Mistinguett overshadowed her male partners onstage. In her discussion, for example, of Maurice Hennequin and Pierre Veber's variety sketch *Tais-toi mon cœur*, performed at the Palais-Royal Theatre in Paris in April 1910, Villars's pseudonymous Priscilla gushed:

Mistinguett plays the leading rôle, and makes a big hit. I really can't tell you the plot; it is very gay, very French, and very amusing. Mistinguett has a gavroche [street urchin] part which suits her down to the ground, and [Adrien] le Gallo, the mere male man star, has a le Gallo part also. I like Mistinguett, so would you uncle; she isn't

very pretty but she has such nice light brown hair, all short and curly like that of Polaire and [Eve] Lavallière and Meg Villars and la Colette and a few other actresses in the Gay City. And oh! Such pretty legs, which she manages to show a great deal in the play. She dances awfully well; indeed, she created the Apache Dance with Max Dearly although people now say it was Polaire.¹³

I describe the Apache dance below and discuss its appearance in film as a feature of *The Red Hand* (*L'Empreinte ou La Main Rouge*, Le Film d'Art, 1908). Aptly, Villars wrote about Mistinguett with a light tone that mirrored the light humor that characterized Mistinguett's live performances. In her words, Mistinguett outshone the "mere male man star." Foreign readers were thus reminded of the cultural and social upheavals Mistinguett helped initiate as a female headline performer on the early twentieth-century French variety stage.

"LA REINE DU MUSIC HALL"
IN THE SALLE CHARRAS, 1908

Although there is ample evidence of Mistinguett circulating in newspaper reports, on the phonograph, and through film, existing scholarship does not explore her nascent fame. The most important and comprehensive study of Mistinguett's career—Martin Pénét's biography, *Mistinguett: La Reine du music hall*—is focused on the music-hall stage in Paris. As Pénét states, Mistinguett's life can be read across an excavation of the "splendid yet ephemeral existence" of this unique form of popular theater.¹⁴ When we learn that Mistinguett traveled abroad to London in 1903, 1907, 1914, and 1916, there is consequently scant detail provided about her transnational appeal. For example, when Pénét discusses Mistinguett's 1903 tour, he states that Mistinguett was engaged by "Dickson," "the director of the Alhambra theatre, [who was] passing through the Eldorado theatre."¹⁵ In 1903, however, the lessee of the Alhambra was Henry William Woodford. Whether Pénét was therefore referencing William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson, the Scottish inventor, cinematographer, and director who was (at least until 1902) resident at the Palace Theatre of Varieties, we do not know.¹⁶

Pénét's brief discussion of Mistinguett's involvement in early film indicates, however, that the music hall was finding new international audiences via film. When he discusses the Film d'Art's inaugural and famous "Visions d'Art" première on November 17, 1908, in the Salle Charras in Paris, Pénét highlights that the program included *L'Assassinat du duc de Guise* (1908), *Le Secret de Myrto* (1908), and *L'Empreinte / The Red Hand*, a film based on a pantomime entitled *Conscience*. As Pénét explains, *L'Empreinte* included a scene featuring Mistinguett's Apache dance with Max Dearly, named *La Valse chaloupée*. Stating that this dance section of the film is lost, Pénét argues that the film must have made an impression on its audience because within months, it "opened the doors of the Pathé studios to her [Mistinguett], where she would play comedy, drama and burlesque for some years."¹⁷

Pénet includes Mistinguett's significant presence in this joining of theater ("Art") with film when he states that after Mistinguett's involvement with Pathé, her apprenticeship as a celebrity actress in Paris was complete:

It is thanks to this creative restlessness that she became capable of facing any audience, no matter where and when. . . . Later, she would thus define [her talents]: "I sing, I dance, I make people cry, I am an acrobat, I play comedy. One could say that I am universal. There are no other women who do what I do. But it did not come of its own accord, nor all at once. It was because I wanted to break from my round of 'Café Concert' songs that I launched out into comedy. I found, thanks to my temperament, that the mix of these two ended up defining the music-hall."¹⁸

In Pénet's view, Mistinguett's creative restlessness facilitated and explained her work on film. Film was not a separate undertaking for Pénet but a marginal undertaking initiated at the beginning of an illustrious music-hall career.

ARRIVING IN ENGLAND

Mistinguett's presence on film followed the establishment of her international reputation as a music-hall actress who was known, above all, to English audiences. While she was first briefly mentioned in the French press in 1893, when she began to work at the Casino de Paris, in England she was first mentioned in 1895, when she was discussed in relation to an ardent fan's suicide. Under the heading "Another Typical Paris Tragedy," it was explained that Mistinguett, a "music hall star, of lesser magnitude, however than the 'Belle Otero' has, like her, been the innocent cause of a suicide."¹⁹ Cast as "typically" Parisian, Mistinguett was a star but of lesser importance than Otero. "La Belle Otero" (the beautiful Otero) was the stage name given to Caroline Otero, a dancer and performer noted for her exotic beauty and for being one of the *grandes horizontales* of the Belle Époque.²⁰ Seven years later, in July 1902, mention was again made of Mistinguett in the English press. In this instance, Mistinguett was impersonated by Robert Berin, the leading French impersonator of *divettes* (stars) on the Parisian stage. When he performed in the Oxford Music Hall in London, one reviewer explained that while the singer Yvette Guilbert and the Spanish dancer and singer La Tortajarda (Consuelo Tamayo Hernández) were "well known to Londoners," Mistinguett was not; therefore, Bertin's performance of her repertoire was "less understood."²¹ While music-hall goers could compare Bertin's impersonation of La Tortajarda to La Tortajarda herself—she was appearing in the London music hall the following week—Mistinguett was considered a performer specific to Paris, whose fame at that time was not easily translatable abroad.

The *American Register*—a newspaper published in London and Paris that focused on French and Anglo-American news—gave the titles and listings of Mistinguett's music-hall shows to readers in 1903 and 1904, but it was not until 1907 that Mistinguett garnered further attention in the English press as a dancer

and vocalist performing locally on the music-hall stage.²² Mistinguett debuted at the Palace Theatre of Varieties in London (under the direction of Alfred Butt) at the end of August and performed into the first week of September 1907. This was where audiences were introduced to Mistinguett's *Danse de pi-ouit*, a dance act excerpted from *La Revue de la Femme*.²³ Performed a week after the show's summer closure in Paris, *Pi-ouit* was fashionable, topical, and "*parisienne*."²⁴ Mistinguett was billed at the Palace Theatre alongside the local singers Louie and Courtice Pounds (performing the light musical sketch *Charles, His Friend*, by Keble Howard [John Keble Bell]). The two locals were famous for their work in musical comedies, notably with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. This program also featured the "droll American raconteur" Mr. Walter C. Kelly in *The Virginia Judge*, as well as Miss Lillian, the Palace Girls, and the bioscope showing "Motor Grand Prix," "Naval Review," "Cowes," "&c. &c."

These acts indicate that the Palace program publicized Mistinguett as a French attraction in the English variety show. As we have seen in relation to the later music-hall programming of Bernhardt at the Coliseum and Réjane at the Hippodrome, film was the concluding attraction in a program that joined international stars and famous local performers. Mistinguett appeared in the program without the publicity and fanfare, however, that her famous contemporaries attracted: she was a topical French dance act given the same attention as, for example, the Palace Girls (and this group, in contrast to Mistinguett as a single attraction, was a Tiller chorus who performed disciplined yet revealing kicklines).²⁵ As reports reveal, Mistinguett's dance was considered unusual. An "active, vivacious Parisienne," she sat down on the stage "at intervals in her gyration." Regarded as "neither a remarkably attractive nor a specially 'alluring' exercise in the terpsichorean art," Mistinguett's performance was nevertheless spectacular. As one reviewer stated, her dance was "sensational."²⁶

In her second and final week at the Palace, the program changed. Mistinguett and Louie and Courtice Pound appeared alongside the Scottish Jean Alwyn from the Gaiety Theatre; the popular comedienne Simeta Marsden; "Mr. Coleman's collection of performing dogs, cats, and birds"; and the entertainer and female impersonator Malcolm Scott as Nell Gwynne (the mistress of Charles II), who presented "novel sidelights" and "furious laughter" on topics drawn from English history. The bioscope completed the program with "exciting pictures of a recent motor race, [which] sustained interest to the very end."²⁷ In this changed program, Mistinguett was therefore joined with Alwyn—a legitimate actress experimenting with her first appearance in the variety theater—as well as to a comic cross-dresser, an animal act, musical comedy, and film.²⁸ Although Mistinguett was not the headline act of the Palace show, she was noted. In this second week, it was explained, for example, that in addition to her "Pi-Ouit" dance, Mistinguett "also sings two songs, one in broken English and the other in her native French."²⁹ Did Mistinguett sing in broken English for comic effect? Or did she want to engage local audiences

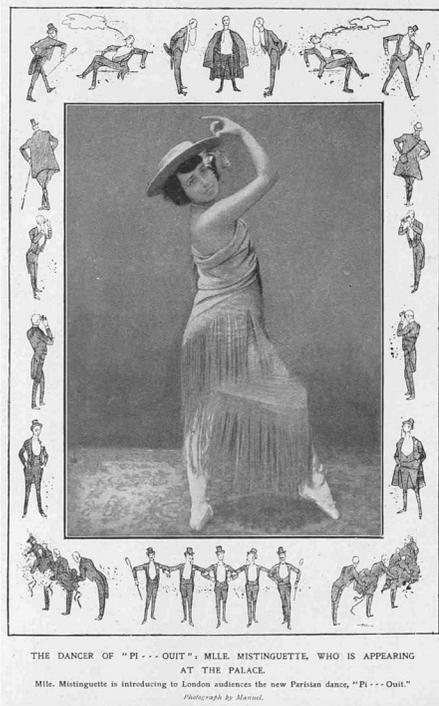


FIGURE 15. First picture of Mistinguett in the English press. Sept. 4, 1907, *The Sketch*. © Illustrated London News / Mary Evans Picture Library.

in the meaning of her words? We do not know. But while she incorporated song into her act, it was dance that defined her initial English fame.

Evidence of the centrality of dance to Mistinguett's performance at the Palace can be seen in the way in which her "Pi . . . Ouit" dance was referenced in a photograph by the Parisian photographer Henri Manuel in *The Sketch*. This image—the first that I found of Mistinguett in the English press—showed her wearing ballet shoes, a tasseled wrap (exposing her back, arms, shoulders, and stockinged legs), and a hat cocked jauntily upward (fig. 15). Standing sideways on a patterned carpet, and turning her head with its short, dark hair bobbing out beneath a flat-rimmed hat toward us, Mistinguett provided the focus of the image and stood out against an otherwise flat and plain backdrop. The indoor plants, elaborate jewelry, heavily detailed costume, and busy domestic interiors (so familiar to us in Bernhardt's and Réjane's photographed images) were here stripped away. Described simply as "the dancer appearing at the Palace," Mistinguett was framed in the context of introducing a "new Parisian dance" to London.³⁰ Clearly, Mistinguett's appearance at the Palace placed her at the forefront of recent trends. These included the foregrounding of contemporary dance as a new form of spectacular show, as well as the headlining of women in excerpts from legitimate plays and popular stage acts on the music-hall stage. Because of the inclusion of bioscope

views into the music-hall program, we can also speak of the expanded modernity of the variety playbill. Indeed, when Mistinguett appeared in the Palace program at the end of August 1907, the bill concluded with a film of “a recent motor race.” Representing speed, industry, and a widening definition of what popular theater might include (an international car race, a film, a local variety program), this race was probably a record of the French Grand Prix, which had taken place a month earlier, on July 2, 1907.

EMBRACING THE ENGLISH IN PARIS

Mistinguett did not return to London until March 1916, when she accompanied Raphaël Beretta, the director of the Olympia Theatre and the Folies-Bergère, on a tour of the music halls of London.³¹ At this point, she traveled in a managerial capacity and did not perform for local audiences. In 1918, she made a third trip to London, reportedly to purchase hard-to-find cloth and leather for costumes to be presented at the Casino de Paris. Unlike Bernhardt and Réjane, Mistinguett did not boast a theatrical tour to London to confirm her music-hall renown.³² Instead, hers was a fame built at a distance from Paris. Much of this distance was bridged by the English press that reported on her performances in Paris. In 1908 we learn in *The Sporting Times*, for example, that the highlight of *La Grande Revue du Moulin* (a two-act and twelve-*tableaux* revue, playing between July and August in 1908 at the Moulin Rouge)³³ was a dance by Parisian actor Max Dearly with Mistinguett. As readers were told: “The ‘clou’ of the Revue is a dance by Max Dearly, as an Apache in black, and Mlle. Mistinguett, as his girl, also in black, with a rose, Spanish fashion, held in her teeth. It is very clever and very brutal.”³⁴

As I stated earlier, a film of this dance was included in one of the films that helped to launch the Film d’Art in Paris in 1908. Known as *La Main Rouge*, it was first billed in English as *The Impression* and then *The Red Hand*.³⁵ Before we trace the significant emergence of Mistinguett as a “kinema star” in England, however, we need to understand that the prewar period saw a fertile theatrical exchange between England and Paris. An actress like Mistinguett need not leave the city; she could perform in the popular theaters of Paris and effectively have London come to her. Indeed, in 1912, one English reviewer recommended that the Variétés management in Paris “run excursion trains at special rates from London to the Boulevard Montmartre. All London will be coming over to see [Mistinguett in her] naughty little play.”³⁶ A year later, *The Sketch* noted the new six and a half hours that it would soon take to get from London to Paris by train and therefore from London to a performance by Mistinguett: “Verily now Paris is next door to London. People go over for week-ends. . . . Women went to shop, men to do business; between these two excursions travellers need the English press to tell them ‘whether there is an Autumn Salon or not, or where he will find that incomparable droll, Mistinguett.’”³⁷

While Mistinguett was a lure for tourists traveling to Paris, this period (the opening decade of the 1900s) also saw “the triumph of the English girl in Paris.”³⁸ Indeed, it was announced in the *Sporting Times* that Mistinguett was the only Parisian performer who danced as well as her English contemporaries on the variety stage. Hence, while a decade earlier the English girl was “drawn in the French comic papers as a thing with rabbit’s teeth and a straw hat,” French theatergoers were now learning that English girls “could laugh and kick.”³⁹ Moreover, in a new trend ignited by the Tiller Girls, theater audiences understood that Mistinguett was unique in Paris precisely because she combined the capacity to act and dance on the variety stage. As English readers were told, Parisians knew “the British musical comedy actress has a freshness all her own; that she is good looking and jolly; can sing quite sufficiently well, and dances excellently. That an actress should dance was quite a surprise. Mistinguett is about the only Parisian actress who really dances well. The divette of the Revues is only expected to wear charmingly the scraps of clothing which form her costume; to smile beautifully, and to make the best of a tiny singing voice.”⁴⁰ This celebration of the English musical comedy actress came at a time when the Parisian music-hall stage was newly populated by English performers. In the Folies-Bergère’s *Vieux Marcher* revue, for example, it was reported that three of the principals were English and that there was a troupe of “Flip-flap Girls” who hailed from Manchester (from where the Tiller Girls emerged and were trained). Moreover, “with two exceptions, all the actresses in the Revue wear wigs ranging from flaxen to chestnut to give them the admired British appearance. As a compliment to England, no doubt, the authors of the Revue have introduced a black and white Pierrot moonlight scene similar to the one in ‘Our Miss Gibbs.’”⁴¹

In this context—where the reception of the English actress on the Parisian stage was shifting—*La Grande Revue du Moulin* included not only Mistinguett and Dearly’s “Apache dance” but also a dance that featured Fred Wright Jr. and Mistinguett (fig. 16), as well as a host of English music-hall performers. Wright, listed as the “celebrated English comedian” (who, with Max Dearly, “topped the bill”), was also joined on the program by an English song-and-dance troupe called “The 12 Manchester Babies.”⁴² At the end of 1911, in Mistinguett’s debut at the Folies Bergère, forty Tiller Girls also formed part of the *Revue*.⁴³

In addition to English music-hall performers becoming a recognized part of Mistinguett’s Parisian revues and “English” hair motivating the fashion for lighter-colored wigs in French popular theaters, reports also attributed Mistinguett’s decision to play in the comic (and legitimate) Gymnase Theatre in Paris, which evidenced an English theatrical influence. Hence, readers of *The Sporting Times* were told that Mistinguett “has followed the example of our English heroines of musical plays by deserting to the comedy stage, and she is making a big success in ‘L’Ane de Burindan’ [*sic*] at the Gymnase.”⁴⁴ The following year, when Mistinguett appeared in *Tais-toi mon cœur* at the Palais-Royal Theatre, she was



FIGURE 16. Mistinguett and English performer Fred Wright. Laurence Senelick Collection (copy held in author's private collection).

described as a star of the *café-concert* moving into a *théâtre classé* (a legitimate theater).⁴⁵ Mistinguett was not unique in moving onto the legitimate stage. As *The Observer* argued, this was a regular occurrence in Paris: Polaire had moved from the café concert to the Vaudeville, Dranem from the music hall to the Odéon, and in 1911 Mistinguett had newly signed with the Variétés theater. What separated Mistinguett from these performers, however, was her physical traits: her short hair, show of ankles and legs, and incessant high spirits. Mistinguett, we are told, was called “Miss” “because she looked so English”; this signpost of Englishness was incorporated into her name.⁴⁶

Mistinguett's peripatetic skill in moving among theaters, audiences, and genres of theatrical comedy explained, at this early point in her career, her idiosyncratic celebrity. As Nozière enthused in *Gil Blas* in December 1908, “One must follow attentively the performances of Mlle Mistinguett. At the Moulin Rouge she recently made us thrill, dancing *La Valse Chaloupée* with the admirable Max Dearly. Aux Bouffes [Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens], in the [*Aux Bouffes on pouffe*] *Revue*, she was, last year, a tragic young woman whose ugliness keeps the satyrs away. [In 1907, s]he launched herself with a rascal spirit, through a song that became popular called *le Petit Frère à Fernand*. Effortlessly, she moves between buffoonery and drama. Mlle Mistinguett is an artist.”⁴⁷

Some of Mistinguett's buffoonery in the Paris music hall incorporated her comic impersonation of English characters and stars. In her enormously successful 1909 performance at the Comédie-Royale entitled *Chauffeur . . . rue Caumartin*, for example, she played the role of an English suffragette teaching the *valse chaloupée* to students. As a reviewer stated: “She sings, she dances, and, dancing and singing, makes the crowd hysterical.”⁴⁸ The following year, in *La Revue de Marigny*, Mistinguett's parody of the English comedian George Grossmith Jr. was considered “the best number in the revue.” As we can see in a photograph that appeared in *The Tatler*, she was dressed “in clothes reminiscent of George Grossmith, jun.” (fig. 17). Her costume consisted of a light-colored bowler hat; a light-colored,



FIGURE 17. Image showing Mistinguett parodying English comedian George Grossmith in *The Tatler*, Jan. 4, 1911. © Illustrated London News / Mary Evans Picture Library.

tailored, pin-striped jacket that fell in a relaxed way over her hips; dark riding pants with a black rim running down the sides; and shiny leather black, knee-length riding boots in this role.⁴⁹ The program was criticized for reaching out to English-speaking audiences since it was “*Translated Into Careful English* for the benefit of visitors who know no French.” The gesture, reviewers contended, was not particularly helpful since “the third tableau, ‘L’Avenue du Bois,’ is rendered ‘The Avenue du Bois de Boulogne,’ ‘Le Chanson et La Danse’ is translated ‘The Songs and Dances,’ and ‘La Jaconde’ is rendered ‘The Jaconde,’ which tells you all about it, doesn’t it?”⁵⁰

We can see in these music-hall programs a fertile exchange between London and Paris, English and French, the music hall and the legitimate stage. In this context, the early transnational appeal of Mistinguett was attached firmly to her location in Paris and in relation to what she could achieve from within this city. Unlike Bernhardt and Réjane, who arrived in London as theatrical stars and subsequently moved onto the music-hall stage and into film, Mistinguett was a performer who negotiated—even enabled—the intersection of popular theater and mass audiences in the fecund performance culture of early twentieth-century Paris. Mistinguett’s films were a successful and important part of this culture. Accessible and varied, they provide the record of an actress who did not ask foreign audiences to first understand the French national theater, the meaning of French conservatoire training, the status of a given playwright, or even the narrative arc of famous French novels in order to understand contemporary Parisian theater and popular entertainment.

TOUTE MA VIE: ABSENCE AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Mistinguett’s autobiography, *Toute ma vie* (1954), was published just before Mistinguett’s death, in 1956. It includes mention of early film, as well as reflections on Bernhardt and Réjane’s entrance into silent film. Mistinguett writes: “The cinema was beginning to work its havoc and many actresses, Réjane and Bernhardt among them, made films of unbelievable imbecility. The veterans of the theater would only condescend to film for very substantial salaries and could not see that the cinema was something other than photographed theater. Film technique was as yet rudimentary, and they were pained and indignant to find themselves disfigured on the screen. When Sarah Bernhardt saw herself in ‘The Lady of the Camellias’ she fainted.”⁵¹ Writing from a reflective distance of some decades, Mistinguett was careful to distinguish herself from Bernhardt and Réjane. When she discussed her own engagement with the film industry, her views were different. Lamenting the loss of a live audience, Mistinguett stated, for example: “I do not like films very much. I do not know how to act for the camera, for a machine that will not let itself be won.”⁵² A loss of agency, a forced detachment from the audience, and an inability to project into the live, spatial environment of an auditorium were all aspects of live stage performance that Mistinguett missed on film.

In *Toute ma vie*, Mistinguett described her involvement in the cinema anecdotally. When she discussed her entrance into the cinema, it was in very general terms drawn from a hazy memory: “My beginnings in the cinema go back to 1913, when I made six or seven films, most of them melodramas, with such titles as ‘Pavement Lily,’ ‘The Eyesore,’ ‘The Lawyer’s Mistake’ and ‘The Trap.’”⁵³ Below, I explore several of these and other titles, explaining that Mistinguett appeared in works by pioneering film directors such as Georges Monca, Albert Capellani, and Georges Denola. I have mentioned above the range of genres and forms of films she made and have given some indication that her work was important for the development of global cinema. If we return to Mistinguett’s inclusion in the Film d’Art and its first public showing in Paris, we can appreciate this significance, particularly if we reflect on the Film d’Art as an initial step toward the international spread and popularity of “art films.” In other words, Mistinguett’s autobiography might very well have underplayed, elided, or even rewritten the extent of her involvement in film. Yet *L’Empreinte* was part of Pathé’s inaugural push to promote film as a socially acceptable and culturally endorsed global French product. Her debut in that film provides confirmation of the appeal Mistinguett enjoyed as both a music-hall spectacle and a confident, border-crossing performer capable of launching herself into a new medium.

HER FIRST FOREIGN FILMS: MISTINGUETT ARRIVES IN LONDON

After appearing at the Palace Theatre in 1907, Mistinguett did not return to perform in London until forty years later, in 1947. Between 1908 (when she first appeared in *The Red Hand*) and 1917 (when she starred as an English detective in *Mistinguett détective I* and *II* [Films Succès, 1917]), her transnational fame was largely enabled through film. In this context, however, we should not lose sight of Mistinguett’s ongoing performance on the music-hall stage and her growing celebrity across Paris. These are two related frameworks through which we can view much of her work in film. For example, English reports of her 1907 Apache dance (cited above) preceded her appearance in this same dance the following year in *The Red Hand*. Similarly, her 1916 film *Fleur de Paris* contains a poignant scene in which Mistinguett enters a theater as a star performer and is misidentified by a woman outside the theater as her daughter. Contemporary viewers would have been aware of the comic overlap between this moment on film and a much-reported and similar occurrence a few years earlier, when a provincial woman watching Mistinguett on film similarly identified her as her long-lost daughter. The woman filed a judicial claim for financial support, and papers in England discussed the event under striking headlines: “Case of Mistaken Identity,” “Actress’s Two ‘Mothers’: Comedy of Rival Claimants.”⁵⁴ Even Mistinguett’s dog—making frequent appearances in her later film *Chignon d’or* (1916)—was known as the “notorious mutt,” widely reported as accompanying Mistinguett to the Variétés theater in 1912.⁵⁵

While we can trace Mistinguett's appearance in *The Red Hand* to her music-hall partnership with Max Dearly in Paris, the film was built largely around the work of Parisian music-hall actor Gaston Séverin and his fame in F. Duret's play *Conscience*. A four-act "mimo-drame" with original music by Colo-Bonnet that debuted at the Olympia Theatre in 1902, *Conscience* was first presented in the theater as the ninth and final act in a variety show comprising dance, comic acts, animal acts, magic, and film.⁵⁶ In 1907, Séverin brought *Conscience* to the Palace Theatre in London. Described in the English press as "a famous pantomimist" presenting a "wordless play,"⁵⁷ the press proclaimed that Séverin's pantomimic acting "is a magnificent example of acting speaking louder than words."⁵⁸ In this context, the play was accessible as a piece of French drama to audiences in the Palace Theatre and already implicated in a variety format. When the Film d'Art included *The Red Hand* in its opening program at the Salle Charras on November 16, 1908, it programmed Mistinguett's dance within its original variety stage format.⁵⁹

We can learn how (or whether) *Conscience* was adapted or changed for film by exploring reports of Séverin's stage show. As these recount, the play featured Séverin as a "Parisian loafer" blackmailing a murderer only to save the innocent and appropriately named working-class man "Travail" from wrongful conviction. When *Conscience* was performed in London, it required "much judicious cutting, particularly the murder and blackmail scenes."⁶⁰ While we have no details about these changes, we do know that when it was adapted to film, *Conscience* was once more changed. As *The Observer* commented:

At a "private exhibition," yesterday afternoon, Messrs. Pathé Frères, in conjunction with the management, showed on the cinematograph three wordless plays from Paris. The first was a much fuller and slightly different version of the gruesome little story of murder and blackmail which M. Severin acted at the Palace not long ago. On the cinematograph we saw not only the murder, and the blackmailing scene in which humour strove so hard with horror, but glimpses of the life of the cafés, grand and humble, the confrontation of the guilty parties, the reconstruction of the murder, and all sorts of other thrilling things, including a *danse d'Apache* by Mlle. Mistinguette [*sic*] and a man. All these, of course, not in the flesh but on film, while the orchestra played M. [Fernande] de Borne's music. Next came a version of *L'Arlésienne*, which is to go into the evening bill on Monday, and finally *The Murder of the Duke of Guise*, a play specially composed for this kind of performance.⁶¹

This screening of *The Red Hand* in London was seen not as an attempt to develop Séverin's pantomimic mastery of film but as part of a broader initiative to develop public acceptance of the new medium. This included engaging known and legitimate actors as headline acts. Here, film also showcased, to foreign audiences, the cultural diversity of France.

Citing *The Red Hand* as an example of the breadth of material available to exhibitors, *The Westminster Gazette* joined Mistinguett to Bernhardt and Réjane in its discussion of the development in contemporary French film:

The most ambitious attempt that has yet been made at “living picture” display has taken the form of the reproduction of several French dramatic performances. In France a special theater has been built and equipped for the purpose of obtaining “films,” and authors and actors—Bernhardt, Réjane, [Charles] Le Bargy, [Benoît-Constant] Coquelin, and [Gaston] Severin, among others—have combined to assist in the work. Some wonderfully fine series of pictures have thus been prepared; and Pathé Frères and the Alhambra management have arranged to stage them for the delectation of a London audience.

When the pictures made their début the other day, a wide range of subjects was chosen. What is frankly described as a “morbid drama,” entitled “The Red Hand,” showed modern Paris at its lowest, with Severin, Max Dearly, and Mistinguette [*sic*] as its most interesting inhabitants; and the “reconstitution” of a murder and a vivid, fascinating reproduction by Mistinguette of an Apache dance were the most noteworthy features of the play.⁶²

It is telling that the Alhambra Theatre of Varieties partnered with Pathé Frères just four days after the Film d'Art was given its official launch in Paris. Indeed, the reciprocal exchange I traced above between the music hall in Paris and the dramatic sketch in London, as well as the variety format of film's early emergence on the music-hall stage, is here repeated in the cinema. Moreover, the program was given in a “private showing” to a select audience in much the same way that Réjane and Bernhardt's double-feature bill subsequently premiered before respectable audiences in a legitimate theater in New York. *The Era* accordingly listed “the privileged audience” of ladies and gentlemen, representing “household words in literary, artistic, theatrical, and society circles” in its page-long discussion of this event.⁶³

In parallel to theatrical practice, particularly that of the legitimate theaters in Paris, the press and critics were given a preview on which they could publicly comment. Consequently, *The Observer* explained to its readers that one of the “wordless plays from Paris” (*L'Arlésienne*) will be “in the evening bill on Monday.”⁶⁴ Because *L'Arlésienne* was the first film directed by Capellani for the SCAGL in 1908 (it debuted on October 1, more than a month before the Film d'Art's showcase at the Salle Charras),⁶⁵ we can determine that the Alhambra showcase of French film was a national showcase of creative talent in London. It announced French artistic leadership through film. Indeed—and as *The Era* reported—*L'Arlésienne* was drawn from Alphonse Daudet's eponymous play and performed by actors from the Odéon Theatre.⁶⁶

The films featured in the Alhambra program also exhibited novel (theatrical) prestige through their use of accompanying music. Reviews of the event state that the Alhambra orchestra (directed by the theater's musical director, George W. Byng) played Georges Bizet's incidental music during the screening of *L'Arlésienne*; this was a theatrical score composed originally for Alphonse Daudet's 1872 play, when it debuted at the Vaudeville theater in Paris.⁶⁷ In contrast, *The Red Hand*—like *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, with its famous accompaniment written by

Camille Saint-Saëns—featured a score written by Fernande Le Borne expressly for the purposes of theatrical exhibition.⁶⁸ The actors performed onscreen as they would in the theater (to live music, authored by a named and identifiable French composer), their movements and gestures synchronized to sound. This accompaniment developed (and even enabled) the film’s narrative, aesthetic, and spectacular appeal. As Laurent Guido explains, Le Borne isolated the dance tableaux of *The Red Hand* (that is, the “Valse Apache” tableaux, four of the film’s eleven tableaux) as scenes to be projected to the public at a slower speed. Guido states that the precision of Le Borne’s written indications on his published manuscript evidences that he was writing to images already shot and that he was thinking of the technical needs for the projection of the film itself. As Guido adds, Le Borne was “concerned for precise synchronism between the music and the gestures represented on the screen, not only on the semantic level, but also on that of the rhythm.” The score begins with a “note for the performance” which insists on the necessary establishment of an isochronous temporal flow: “The Cinematograph will have to turn at 120 revolutions per minute, except for the Valse Apache where it is necessary to shoot a little slower, around 100 revolutions per minute.”⁶⁹

The impact of this decelerated image, where dance, accompanied by a live orchestra, could be watched as a separable filmic attraction, was palpable. As *The Observer* reported, Mistinguett’s dance was one of the “thrilling things” of *The Red Hand*. Moreover, it was Mistinguett, a star performer, who drove comment about this tableau. In contrast, Dearly was anonymously implicated simply as “the man” (fig. 18).

The attention that English observers gave Mistinguett’s dance in *The Red Hand* highlights the fundamental relationship between music and silent film. The expressive complicity between film and music was also visualized in this scene. On film, we see a man playing an accordion, his leg casually swung across a ticket-collector’s table. Standing directly behind Mistinguett and Dearly as they dance, this musician swings his head in time to his playing while the rhythmic sway of his accordion visibly traces a record of the sound onscreen. We are indoors, in a simple, enclosed space. There is no decoration or mirrors on the walls, no windows, and only a low archway behind the spectators on the left of the image, indicating the modesty of the working-class venue. The couple dance on a bare floor, watched by a diversity of Parisians. There are men of the lower classes, marked by their caps, loose jackets, wide belts, and cigarettes. There is a man in a bowler hat, accompanied by a woman wearing the white apron of a city salesgirl. Finally, on the right of the screen, there are also men in shiny black top hats and monocles, sporting dinner jackets, white shirts, walking canes, and pocket handkerchiefs; beside them, we see a woman in evening dress, wearing an elaborate hat and carrying a hand-muff. The latter provide the image of the French aristocracy or upper classes. As one English review stated: “This is a popular view of Parisian ‘slumming.’”⁷⁰ Clearly, the Apache dance was a spectacle that might have taken place in a working-class venue, but

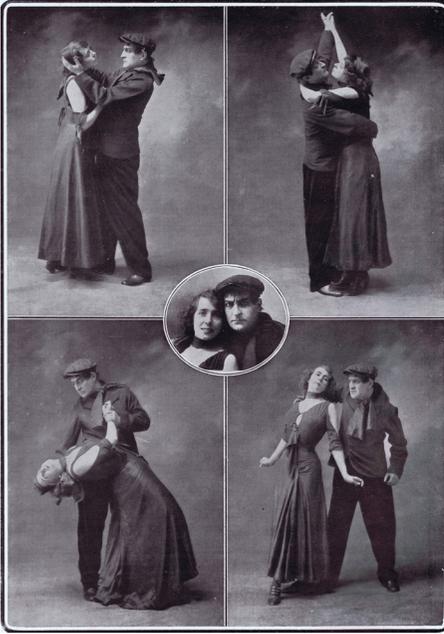


FIGURE 18. The Apache dance presented by Mistinguett and Max Dearly, Paris 1908. © Jazz Age Club / Mary Evans Picture Library.

(like the cinema and the music hall itself) attracted an appreciative audience of men and women from varying social classes.

Presented as a spectacular attraction in *The Red Hand*, the Apache dance was considered a Parisian spectacle, an exotic representation of Parisian lower life. When Dearly brought the Apache dance to London's Empire Theatre of Varieties in January 1909, the dance was accordingly described as one "that no Englishman could have invented, and no Englishman could dance."⁷¹ On film, however, commentators described Mistinguett and Dearly's dance as a "weird evolution of the terpsichorean art."⁷² We see in their twisting and turning movements, at times closely pulled together and at others flung wildly apart, an erotic yet violent exchange between Mistinguett, as an anonymous *gigolette* or prostitute, and Dearly, her pimp and local gangster.⁷³ Mistinguett—in a simple, low-cut, shiny black dress that exposes her arms, shoulders, and some of her back—is the only woman whose flesh can be seen onscreen. Her exposed limbs and torso, as well as the whiteness of her skin, contrasts with the completeness with which Dearly is covered: he wears a dark hat, jacket, and scarf, and we see only his angry, staring face and his clenching and clasping hands as he directs Mistinguett violently across the floor. The dance unwinds eclectically and spectacularly, each phrase of movement a revolving expression of violent masculine control over a lithe (and equally athletic) responsive female body. We see Mistinguett pushed backward and then forward in a tight, arching embrace; Dearly then clutches her to his side

as they theatrically promenade slowly forward. Dearly spins Mistinguett furiously away, only to grab her again in a tight, possessive hold. He locks onto her hair, pulling and pushing her into a weaving, painful embrace. After a series of staccato turns, Dearly propels Mistinguett through a single, straight-armed clasp that locks itself ominously around her bared neck. The dance ends with an abrupt release: Mistinguett is suddenly (and unexpectedly) shoved violently forward. Her fall breaks the proprietorial hold—at once erotic and volent—that Dearly has over her gyrating, supple body.

The Red Hand was screened at the Alhambra in its December program, debuting on Boxing Day 1908. It was the third of three films that Pathé and the Alhambra management negotiated to present to English music-hall audiences. Shown as “a morbid drama of Montmartre,” it sat alongside dancers (in “The Two Flags,” Lenora Ewer in “Nacisse,” and the Alhambra’s newly appointed “premiere danseuse,” the Danish ballerina Britta Petersen in “Paquita”), as well as the Max Wessely Troupe of jugglers, the Ten Ji Japanese magicians, and an African American vocal quartet known as “The Four Black Diamonds.”⁷⁴

When *The Red Hand* was first exhibited outside this variety format at the Alhambra, it was presented as a “new Kursaal development” at the famous amusement park in Southend-on-Sea, Essex. One of the world’s first purpose-built amusement parks, opened in 1901, the Kursaal started on January 18, 1909, to show “cinematinees” comprising “light subjects for children” followed by “Entire Plays by Great Actors in Bioscope Pictures.”⁷⁵ With Pathé’s Alhambra initiative now presented within the context of the British bioscope—and with new audiences sought in this changed exhibition context—it is not surprising to find Filson Young’s recently published novel, *Sands of Pleasure* (1905), now referenced as the “great moral story” revealed in *The Red Hand*. This association of popular, racy English literature with contemporary French film emerging from Parisian music halls was far from obvious. Young’s novel traces the adventures of an unwitting civil engineer (a lighthouse-builder) traveling from Cornwall to Paris to learn about lenses but then innocently falls in love with a demimondaine. This narrative seems far removed from a film about bribery, murder, and the capacity of man’s conscience to correct criminal wrongs. Young’s descriptions of respectable men consorting with women in the Latin Quarter of Paris, however, can be paralleled to the Apache dance scene of *The Red Hand*, where the French upper classes are implicated in the seedy world of the demimondaine.⁷⁶ In both contexts, Paris is presented through a heady mix of realism and romanticism. As the anonymous journalist discussing the Kursaal’s bioscope initiative remarked, Mistinguett “of the Ville Lumiere” appeared “in the realistic dance called the ‘Apache Dance,’ in which all the tenderness and brutality of the population of the Barrières is shown in a very impressive manner. This is one of the most sensational things ever done.”⁷⁷

Promoted within the context of an English author (Young), and implicated in developments in popular English culture (the bioscope, the Kursaal), *The Red*

Hand was also seen as an entertainment of brutal realism and violent passion that was “by no means a music hall item.”⁷⁸ In this assertion, made in May 1909, we can begin to trace the gradual separation of film from its popular theatrical histories and, ironically, Mistinguett from the very Paris she was meant to represent.

MISTINGUETT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ENGLISH MOTION PICTURE POPULARITY

Newspapers such as *The Tatler*, *Sporting Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Sketch* continued to report Mistinguett’s music-hall celebrity in Paris to English readers from 1908 onward. As mentioned above, topics of focus included Mistinguett’s parody of English comic George Grossmith Jr. in *La Revue de Marigny* (this was still being discussed in 1911),⁷⁹ the performance of her first major comic role in a legitimate theater (as a *midinette*—an “apprentice,” “swotcher,” or “small hand”—in *Les Midinettes* in the Variétés theater in 1911), and the legal action she took this same year against the Marigny Theatre for breach of contract when Dearly was billed in larger type than herself.⁸⁰ Reports also included Mistinguett’s capacity to disguise and change her appearance on the stage and gossip about a possible marriage to singer and comic performer Félix Mayol.⁸¹

It was through film, and not through these sporadic discussions of English performance culture, music-hall success, or defensive legal actions, however, that Mistinguett’s transnational fame was developed in England. In February 1912, for example, *The Bioscope* stated that Mistinguett “is probably known to more people on the screen than on the ‘boards.’”⁸² In 1913, *The Globe* made no mention of Mistinguett’s status as a music-hall and theater actress when it referred to her as a “Cinema Actress” in a headline title.⁸³ Why and how did Mistinguett become so famous onscreen? While I cannot discuss all the films Mistinguett made in the decade between her “Apache dance” and the beginning of the First World War in 1914, there are a few films that we can access today that reveal her comic humor, physical agility, and performance versatility. If we look across these roles, we can appreciate that a woman who was associated with the spectacular music hall of the interwar years was, at least at this midpoint of her career, very much a cinema star in England. Indeed, in a 1914 discussion of the war being waged between the legitimate theater and cinemas for audiences in France, *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* associated Mistinguett with the cinema, naming her “a very popular kinema artiste.”⁸⁴

Mistinguett’s popularity as a “kinema artiste” in the early years of her involvement in film can be associated with the successful weekly Rigadin film series, produced by Pathé Frères and directed by Georges Monca. Starring Charles Prince (or Prince Rigadin, the pseudonym for the French celebrity comic vaudeville actor Charles Petitemange), this comic series circulated from 1909 to 1914 and was translated as “Wiffles” in Britain and the United States. The films in this series

consisted of short comedies (around five hundred to eight hundred feet) that made lighthearted fun of traditional bourgeois drama, contemporary social concerns, and class mores. Mistinguett's ability to physically partner with other comic actors on the popular stage can help explain why she was enlisted to join Prince in some of the series' first films. For example, in the earliest surviving Rigadin film, *Les Timidités de Rigadin* (*A Shy Youth*, SCAGL, 1910), Mistinguett is cast as an enterprising housemaid who initiates havoc in her household when her employers, the Flumkins, go out one evening. Encouraging the group of domestic staff to join her in dressing up and performing the mannerisms of their mistress and master relishing festivities at home, Mistinguett gleefully transforms a bourgeoisie parlor into a theater of absurdity. Servants bow and curtsy with exaggerated grace, ludicrous headdresses decorate the couture of the female staff, and the male staff (now dressed in suits and bow ties) circulate alcohol and howl with glee at their activity. In this bustle of movement, Mistinguett is the ever-engaged hostess, seating guests and constantly introducing one to another. Their fun is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of a timid Rigadin, who bears a formal letter of introduction, a large bunch of flowers, and the belief that Mistinguett is the wealthy daughter he intends to court. Mistinguett invites her coworkers back into the parlor, and festivities continue. In the scene with Rigadin, Mistinguett characteristically makes visual play of her famous legs, repeatedly resting her exposed ankles across his lap. Mistinguett, also characteristically, performs a comic dance, gleefully and determinedly turning, kicking, and flapping her arms in what appears to be a parody of a ragtime waltz.

The film concludes when Mistinguett decides that her guest will perform the Knight in Richard Wagner's popular opera *Lohengrin*. Retreating to the kitchen to creatively dress a now-inebriated Rigadin for his performance, Mistinguett adorns him with a funnel (for a helmet), cheese graters and a stove pipe (for armor), and a skewer and lid (for his sword and shield). They return to the parlor and, with Mistinguett busily conducting, Rigadin joyfully bellows his tune. His show is interrupted by the sudden return of the Flumkins. Rigadin is now alone, dressed in his tin-pot attire, and innocently presents his letter of introduction—only to be booted out of the house by an indignant Mr. Flumkins. It is Mistinguett who triumphs in the film: unlike the now-morose Rigadin, she remains a quick-witted, vivacious, working-class housemaid. Mistinguett is not only the party ringleader, hostess, musical conductor, and director of the parlor “play” but also has outwitted both Rigadin and the Flumkins and kept her job while orchestrating an enjoyable evening at home.

When *A Shy Youth* was released in England, in September 1910, there was no mention of Prince or Mistinguett's name in advertisements or discussion of the film. Rather, the film's comic plot was outlined in a brief paragraph in *The Bioscope*, with commentary focusing on Wiffles (the only named character).⁸⁵ Mistinguett's name, however, followed Prince's on the opening title card of the film; they were

the only two performers mentioned as actors in the “comic play.” Evidence also suggests that this Rigadin film continued to circulate in the 1910s and that Mistinguett went on to become a familiar female foil to Wiffles’s innocent antics in the Rigadin series.⁸⁶ Indeed, in the subsequent Rigadin film, *La Doctoresse* (*The Lady Doctor*, SCAGL, 1910), Mistinguett is again listed alone as an “artiste” in the title card with Prince and once more plays comic complement to him. Her efficient professionalism contrasts with Rigadin’s innocent incapacity to balance books or organize household affairs. We see Mistinguett examine her patients with efficient speed and farcical confidence and then watch, in contrast, Rigadin’s childish petulance and then his physical foolishness when he amuses himself at the circus. Dropping a weight on his foot, he is injured; when Mistinguett arrives as the doctor to treat him, she comically faints when she sees his injury. Agreeing that she now must forgo her career, she drops to her knees to exaggeratedly beseech him. While the comedy of this film appears to be driven by the denigration of contemporary suffragist aims, its resolution is emphatically farcical. The film ends not with a scene of marital bliss but with Mistinguett instructing Rigadin toward the office door as she grabs a large marble bust of Pasteur and dashes it to the floor.⁸⁷

The Lady Doctor was released by Powers England in February 1911. Advertised as “one of our Special Powers’ comedies,” the French film was localized as a short amusement that would appeal to regular, pleasure-seeking patrons. It had the “right” acting that “goes with a swing and secures all the laughs.”⁸⁸ At the same time that Mistinguett circulated on film in England as a lighthearted complement to Prince, she also drove action and intrigue on film. In this way, film developed Mistinguett’s physically comic character while also identifying her as a youthful daring, action heroine. Paris became, in films that localized Mistinguett in the city, a capital teeming with dangerous criminals and violent intrigue, as well as a global center of theater, fashion, industry, technology, and political activity.

In *L’Épouvante* (*Terror Stricken*, Pathé Frères, 1911) we see, for example, Capelani’s fluid, outdoor camera, his capacity to use dramatic deep focus, and his succinct and clever framing of robust physical action. The film begins on the pavement outside a theater, watching Mistinguett—self-referentially performing as a theater star—exit a theater and slip into a car; she arrives in her bourgeoisie upper-floor townhouse apartment with a maid in attendance and enters her bedroom with a balcony overlooking the city; a team of policemen arrive to chase a burglar who has frightened her and who then clammers back into the bedroom for safety. Throughout, it is Mistinguett who defines action, invites police participation, and motivates camera movement. Hence, in the famous bed scene, in which Capelani reveals to us that Mistinguett is aware that a man is hidden beneath her bed, we first see Mistinguett smoking (fig. 19). A modern and urbane woman, she is dressed in the long, flowing white nightdress of a theatrical heroine while she rests alone in her bed. In behavior that reveals a comic refusal to inhabit the performance traditions of this gendered role, however, she abruptly tosses her reading to



FIGURE 19. Mistinguett smoking in her bed in *L'Épouvante* (1911). Screen shot courtesy of EYE Filmmuseum.

the floor, pulls her hands (and not a brush) through her short hair, and lights a cigarette, nonchalantly tossing the match to the floor. Our view is from Mistinguett's perspective, framed from above. In other words, we join Mistinguett in watching a man's hand reach out, from under the bed, to extinguish the flame on the rug; we are then the onlooker, when she turns her face toward us, to register her horror. This complicity between her gaze and our own implicates us in the drama's unfolding. It is not only Capellani who cleverly invites us to look through windows, across rooftops, or into the streets of Paris but Mistinguett who signals to us that she knows that we know that she is acting.

In this film, we see Mistinguett with new technologies and expensive props: she is transported in a large new car from the theater; her maid turns off an electric light in the kitchen before lighting a candle for the evening; and in her bedroom, Mistinguett draws a cigarette from a box (which is possibly the new *Gitanes* cigarette brand, launched in 1910). Fashionably exiting the theater, Mistinguett carries a special matching bag within which her dog sits, his head peering comically out as she readies, on the pavement, to enter her waiting car. Later, at home, Mistinguett prominently carries her dog into her lounge, attended by a friend and maid. Kissing the dog, she sits him on a chair to watch her take off her coat and hat. As a comment in *The Bioscope* later reported, "Mistinguett has a great fondness for dogs and her pet, 'Auguste,' frequently appears with her on the screen."⁸⁹ This scene allows audiences to engage in a familiar motif in her films; it brings warm light-heartedness to a moment where we are then shown Mistinguett parading in a new Parisian fashion. Standing to face us, as though in a fashion show, and displaying a dress to an audience, Mistinguett releases her elegant cloak, its thick white fur lapels and shiny silk lining visible as her maid collects it from her. As her couture hat is passed to the maid, we are reminded that Mistinguett famously decked herself in new hats, both onstage and off. Viewers might have known that she annually participated in a fashionable hat competition organized by the popular magazine *Madame et Monsieur* and held in theaters across Paris.⁹⁰

In *L'Épouvante*, we also see how Mistinguett was circulated by popular media through the Parisian streets. The film depicts, for instance, Mistinguett with her



FIGURE 20. Mistinguett poster, Daniel de Loursques, 1911. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90162145?rk>.

famous short hair in a dress that has the same high waistline, deep open neck, three-quarter length sleeves, hanging tassel, and long, straight hemmed skirtline that we see in the famous Daniel de Loursques poster of 1911 (fig. 20). In this poster, where Mistinguett is holding a rose behind her, in a field with a single house, chimney, and smoke rising in the background, her shoes are also identical to those we see in the film: there are the same black stockings, elegantly tapered heels, and the shine of two simple, rectangular buckles. Headed with the simple title, “Mistinguett,” the revue which Loursques’s poster promoted, was familiar to local Parisians. As *Gil Blas* indicated in January 1912, “For some days now the streets of Paris are adorned by a new poster that has made a sensation in front of which onlookers station themselves. It is thanks to the pencil of the talented de Losques [*sic*], and represents Mistinguett in her ebullient creation, *Woman of Paris*, in the Folies-Bergère Revue.”⁹¹

Another detail of *L'Épouvante* that might also have been familiar to audiences in Britain is the comic inconsequentiality of the French officials depicted. When

four officials burst into her room, we see that two are dressed in the identifiable cloak and hats of French policemen and that another wears the bowler hat and loose jacket of a detective. Failing to open (or even notice) the windows onto the balcony, the officials uselessly run around the bed, look under it, and then busily depart. When they return, they follow each other along the tight balcony; turning back, they bump into each other. Subsequently on the rooftop, there is a final choreography of classic slapstick comedy as they rush to look below, one man almost slipping over, all parodying an earnestness of official intent (rather than professional ability) in their pursuit of the burglar. It is Mistinguett, still dressed in a white nightdress, who will have her jewelry returned and then, unlike the troupe of incapable policemen, grant the burglar his freedom. Alone in her room, Mistinguett hears his distressed cries. Showing the wherewithal (and social conscience) to drape a curtain over the balcony railing to rescue him, Mistinguett dramatically saves a life while comically restaging a familiar maiden-in-the-tower fairy tale.

In the final act, we remain in Mistinguett's bedroom. It is the thief—not Mistinguett, the distressed heroine—whom we see reaching for a white handkerchief and wiping his brow in a state of disheveled distress. Seeing her jewels fall out of his pocket, he places them back on the small side table where he found them. Throughout this scene, Mistinguett is fearful yet never meek: she clasps a fist and then both hands to her face; she maintains a careful physical distance from the intruder; she responds to their conversation; and she visibly directs him to leave. Her modern woman is a self-sufficient, wage-earning professional who is fashionable, quick-thinking, and capable of defending herself from urban dangers. In contrast, men are comic interlopers, unable to complete a given task.

LES MISÉRABLES:
EXPORTING FRENCH HERITAGE TO ENGLAND

In the early teens, Mistinguett was also implicated in a collective showcase of French literary and theatrical culture through her realistic, if very brief, appearance as Éponine in Capellani's *Les Misérables* (SCAGL, 1912). The significance of Mistinguett's involvement in this long, episodic film (presented in four episodes and running, at thirty-five hundred meters, for nearly four hours) was the unprecedented length of the work, the representative breadth of its cast drawn from across Parisian theaters, and the fact that this was the first time Victor Hugo's 1862 novel was adapted for film. Richard Abel argues that *Les Misérables* is the "culmination of the French historical film," revealing Capellani's representational flexibility while exploiting "the cultural capital of the French literary heritage in a highly exportable commodity on the world cinema market."⁹²

When *Les Misérables* was first discussed in *The Bioscope*, in October 1912, four pages were given over to the outline of the film's narrative content. This discussion, entitled "Les Miserables, Mssrs. Pathes Gigantic Production," gave authorship to

Pathé (there was no mention made of Capellani as director). A list of fourteen actors preceded discussion of the film's narrative, each associated with his or her role and Parisian theater of "origin." In a practice that mimicked a theatrical bill, actors were listed ahead of actresses, with their theatrical association noted beneath their name. Henri Krauss from the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre headed this playbill in the central role of Jean Valjean. Krauss was followed by Henri Étievant, from the Porte St. Martin, as Javert; Léon Bernard, from the Comédie-Française, as Bishop Myriel; and so on. Nine actors were highlighted, followed by five actresses: Marie Ventura, from the Odéon, playing Fantine; Mistinguett, from the Variétés, playing Éponine; Delphine Renot, from the Ambigu, playing Mssr. Thenardier; and Maria Fromet, from the Réjane Theatre, and Marialise, from the Michel Theatre (sharing the role of Cosette). Here, Mistinguett was neither a music-hall actress nor a cinema star but a member of the respected Théâtre des Variétés.

The narrative of *Les Misérables*—introduced in this first *Bioscope* article as "the greatest epic and dramatic work of fiction ever created or conceived"—highlighted its proletarian inclusiveness. As readers were reminded, the tale involved men, women, and a child; it was a narrative driven by the concern for (what Hugo termed) "social suffocation."⁹³ Relayed to English audiences, Hugo's novel became a serialized adventure relevant to all people, exploring the themes of brotherhood and redemption. Yet only a single paragraph, at the article's conclusion, mentioned the film. Described as a "colossal work" of twelve thousand feet, it was commended as being "on a remarkably high level," its photography, stage-management, and attention to detail acclaimed as "difficult to improve upon."⁹⁴

Les Misérables was first screened in London on January 16, 1913. Presented at the New Gallery Kinema on Regent Street, the event was an important affair. The Kinema itself, newly opened on January 13 by the famous actor-manager Sir George Alexander and his wife, Lady Alexander, was unique in having a Crown license for refreshments, tea rooms as well as a brasserie, and exclusive rights for the exhibition of *Les Misérables* in London. A supporter of the cinema, Sir Alexander did not regard film as competing with the stage but rather as "creating a new clientele" for drama.⁹⁵ This new clientele was created by positioning the film and its screening theatrically. Therefore, the event was billed as an "Exclusive West-End" performance. Presented as a matinee (held at 2:30 p.m. daily), the film was scheduled and exhibited through the language of legitimate theatrical exhibition. Again, comparable to the theater, attendance prices varied (ten shillings, sixpence for a private box [holding four people]; two shillings for a balcony stall; one shilling, sixpence or one shilling for a stall; or sixpence for a front stall). Seats, similarly, could be booked in advance by telephone, in libraries, or at the theater itself.⁹⁶

Significantly, when the *Westminster Gazette* discussed the New Gallery Kinema's inaugural presentation of *Les Misérables*, it referenced Mistinguett as an example of a renowned Parisian actor and noted that the labor involved in the production of the film was equal to that of a respected West-End theater. Readers

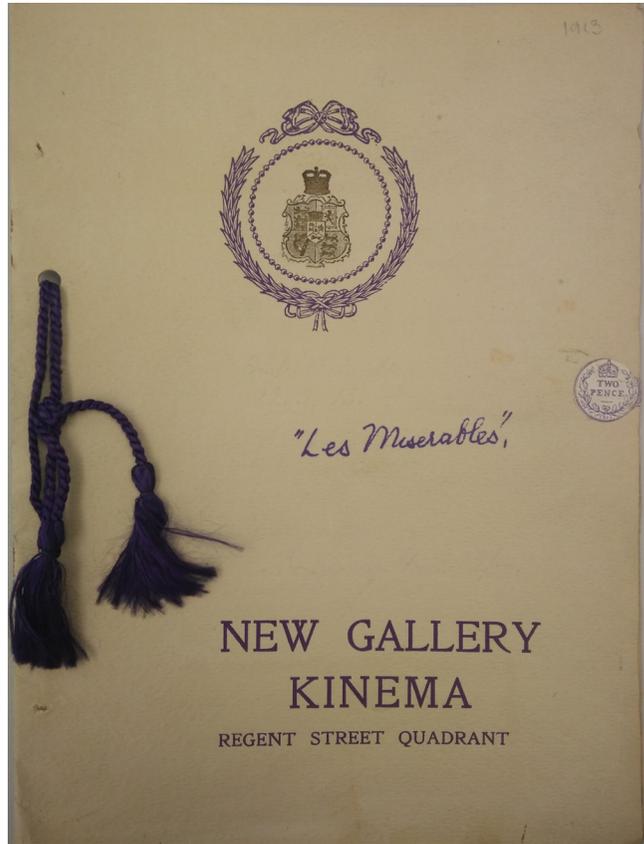


FIGURE 21. New Gallery Kinema program for *Les Misérables*, 1913. Courtesy of the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, Exeter University.

were informed that “the acting is perfect, and the artists who have posed for the films are the best that the dramatic world of Paris is able to supply. In substantiation of this assertion it is only necessary to mention that Mlle. Mistinguett, who commanded a salary of £100 per week when performing at the Palace, posed for the character of Éponine; whilst the film, which is declared to be the longest yet to be presented to the public, has cost fully £5 000 to prepare.”⁹⁷

Given this effort to promote *Les Misérables* as a legitimate theatrical event, it is not surprising that audiences could buy for two pence a special, commemorative program booklet that they could take home as a keepsake (fig. 21). At the New Gallery Kinema, this booklet was printed on thick cream paper held together by a royal purple tassel. With England’s royal coat of arms printed (in black and white) on the cover of the program, surrounded by a framing wreath of royal purple, the national and legitimating aspirations of the New Gallery Kinema are symbolically visible. Inside this booklet (and again in royal purple text), we read that “Every Evening at 8.30 The Management present Victor Hugo’s ‘Les Misérables’

Drama in Four Acts.” With the “Cast” listed (again, male preceding female and, alongside, their Parisian theatrical affiliation), we are also told that “the music for this production [is] especially selected, arranged, and composed by Mr. Geo. Pritchard.” This attention to the conditions of theatrical exhibition was supported, on a second page, by a six-line “Summary” of Hugo’s novel. Readers were told that the “essential theme of ‘Les Misérables’ is the power of kindness and brotherhood” and that the struggle between Valjean and Javert was “the keynote to the whole work.” Concluding with the reminder that this first adaptation of *Les Misérables* “has been produced by the special consent of Victor Hugo’s executors, with the object of presenting to the public the author’s immortal work in a memorable form,” English audiences were implicated in the effort to record, remember, and celebrate French cultural achievement as their own.⁹⁸

Les Misérables was extensively promoted and presented at venues across England in early 1913. Reports discuss the use of special orchestras accompanying the film’s screenings, as well as the ongoing national awareness of Mistinguett as one of the star actresses on the bill.⁹⁹ There is also evidence that other theater managers took the initiative to print special commemorative booklets and programs for the film. At the Academy Picture Palace in Brighton, for example, *Les Misérables* was screened three times a day as “A Film Play in nine parts,” with a sixteen-page booklet available to the public. Including a summative introduction, a list of the cast and their theatrical affiliations, a character description of Valjean and Javert, as well as a synopsis of each Epoch interspersed by photographs of key moments in the film, this material reveals that the New Gallery Kinema was not alone in bringing theatrical practices and promotional methods into film.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, at the Vaudeville Electric theater in Reading, a twenty-three-page booklet was offered to patrons for one penny as “A Screen Play.” On the frontispiece, we read:

“Les Misérables”
VICTOR HUGO
SCREEN PLAY
PATHÉ FRÈRES CINEMA LIMITED
By arrangement Mssrs. Jury’s Imperial Pictures, Ltd.
(Sole owners of the Exclusive Rights for the United Kingdom)
BATH:
HARDING & CURTIS, LTD., SOMERSET STREET.

This translation of Hugo’s literary work into an accessible, locally published and distributed English “Screen Play” was enabled by a partnership between Pathé and Jury’s Films (as we have seen, Britain’s leading renter and distributor of films). Mistinguett, a member of a large and respected cast, was no longer a sensational dancer from the music halls of Paris nor a celebrity actress, capable of transformation, as in an earlier comedy of male error and incapacity. Instead, she was a dramatic actress from a legitimate theater, realistically performing the nuanced

role of a rough, street-smart young woman, capable of cruel criminal acts but also of dying valiantly to protect the man she loves.

LA GLU ARRIVES IN ENGLAND: REFERENCING
RÉJANE AND BERNHARDT THROUGH FILM

The year after Mistinguett was celebrated as a cast member of *Les Misérables*, *La Glu* was distributed to cinemas in England. Written by the poet, novelist, and dramatist Jean Richepin in 1881, this popular roman-feuilleton was adapted into a theatrical drama comprising five acts and six *tableaux* in 1883. Following the same pattern as *Les Misérables*, Mistinguett was once more involved with adapting nineteenth-century French literature to film. As her first feature-length film (with a length of nineteen hundred meters), this work gives us some insight into Mistinguett's reception as a Parisian screen actress abroad.

Importantly, *La Glu* connected Mistinguett to the performance history of both Réjane and Bernhardt. Réjane first performed *La Glu* at the Ambigu Theatre on January 27, 1883 (the play's debut). Commentators explained that the play and Réjane, a courtesan "of the most poisonous species," achieved a triumph in this "new school of theater." As *Le Gaulois* stated, Réjane "accomplished a *coup d'Etat* or, if you prefer, a personal revolution. We only knew her very appreciable qualities, of which the drama or the comedy could make good use. Now here she is, a great actress." Comparing Réjane to Bernhardt, who was at the same time performing Sardou's *Fédora*, the reviewer told his readers that it was difficult to judge who was the better actress, since Réjane "delivered with as much power as truth the nuance of this figure of the courtesan, cold and supple like a snake, who finishes being crushed under the sturdy heel of the peasant woman."¹⁰¹

Réjane demonstrated that she was a great actress in *La Glu*. Interestingly, she came to this success in a theater managed by Bernhardt.¹⁰² As commentators wrote, Bernhardt also trained Réjane in this role. Therefore, *The Friend of India* reported, in 1895, "that tragedienne [Bernhardt] coached her in the part [of *La Glu*], and the result was a great triumph for the neophyte."¹⁰³ Auguste Vitu—criticizing Richepin for re-presenting (rather than rewriting) Zola's *Nana*, Daudet's *L'Arlésienne*, Frédéric Soulié's *La Closerie des Genêts*, and Emile Augier's *Mariage d'Olympe*—in *La Glu*, nevertheless celebrated the signs of Bernhardt that he saw in Réjane's performance. "From time to time," Vitu observed, she [Réjane] agreeably imitated Madame Sarah Bernhardt."¹⁰⁴ Another reviewer described the second act of *La Glu*: "Mlle. Réjane, in a very flirtatious white negligée, makes an appearance à la Sarah Bernhardt. Let's state right away that all of her costumes are equally inspired by those worn by the celebrated mother [Bernhardt] of her young director [Maurice Bernhardt, in whose name the Ambigu Theatre had been leased]. Further, at each entry, Mlle. Réjane's slenderness helped; the illusion was complete. Above all, one believed they were seeing the 'grande tragédienne' [Bernhardt]."¹⁰⁵

x. SUPPLEMENT TO THE BIOSCOPE, APRIL 23, 1914.

ALERTA EXCLUSIVE FILM Co., Ltd.



THE FILM

That will create Havoc
amongst your Patrons and
leave a great impression.

Fatal Enchantress

S. C. A. G. L. Masterpiece.

Featuring the world's famous Actors—M. KRAUSS, M. CAPELLANI,
and Mme. MISTINGUETT.

**SEE THE MUCH DISCUSSED
BEDROOM and ROCK SCENES.**

GET IN TOUCH.

No Fancy Prices.

Has been re-booked 4
times in many districts.



167-169, WARDOUR STREET, LONDON, W.

FIGURE 22. *The Fatal Enchantress* advertisement, showing Mistinguett descending a rockface and in “the much-discussed Bedroom scene.” *The Bioscope*, April 23, 1914.

THE FATAL ENCHANTRESS: A STUDY IN PSYCHOLOGY

When Mistinguett appeared in *La Glu* in England, there was no comment about Réjane’s earlier consolidation of fame in the theatrical role. Nor was there an apparent awareness that it was Bernhardt’s support for Richepin and Réjane as young artists at the Ambigu Theatre that enabled *La Glu* to be performed onstage. Released in April 1914, the film was first reviewed in *The Bioscope* as *The Fatal Enchantress* (fig. 22) and uniquely associated with Richepin as a novelist and member of the Académie Française. Describing Capellani’s film, therefore, as “essentially French in its conception and realisation,” the reviewer claimed that the work was foreign both because it was French and because it dealt with the *femme fatale*. Moreover, the work’s cinematic style was considered unusual. Described as a “visualisation” of a celebrated novel, it is “less a play, as regards conventional form, than a human document or a detailed study in abnormal psychology.” Showing “representations

of life as it is,” it paraded visual realism. The reviewer also attended to screen performance. Mistinguett, readers were told, “has every opportunity to render this study as complete and graphic as possible, since the film includes scene after scene more or less irrelevant to the action of the piece but introduced merely for the sake of character analysis.”¹⁰⁶

With *La Glu* culturally validated through reference to a celebrated French novel by a member of the Académie Française, its achievement lay in the film’s remarkable capacity to make us see landscape and character development “as it was.” This doubling of what realism on the screen might represent indicated that *La Glu* was visually and structurally “foreign” as a cinematic text: it revealed the wild coast of Brittany to foreign audiences, as well as the intimate recording of unusual character details. In relation to this outdoor landscape and a roving tourist gaze enabled by the mobile camera, we are presented with Fernande (Mistinguett) in a variety of settings. First, we see her in her home in a homestead in a township in France (Douai). Here, the setting is a two-story house in a large garden, surrounded by high fences and quiet streets, where horses still provide transport. We are also introduced to the calm idyll of the Scarpe River, where Doctor Cézambre (Henry Krauss) retreats when he contemplates suicide after discovering Fernande’s infidelity. In Paris, we see Mistinguett dance the Maxixe (a popular spirited one-step Brazilian polka) at the famous open-air café in the Bois de Boulogne, Le Pré Catalan, which had opened just eight years earlier.¹⁰⁷ In this scene, a Renault Coupé-Chauffeur replaces the horse and carriage of Douai, chandeliers hang ostentatiously in the café, and we see a neatly organized outdoor seating arrangement. Men are shown in smart suits and light summer hats, and women are shown in couture dresses, wearing elegant hats (as Mistinguett herself wore) with stylish, feathered trimmings.

Cézambre’s move from Douai, in the north of France, to Guérande, in Brittany, allowed audiences to enjoy the visual allure of regional France in *The Fatal Enchantress*. In this second of the film’s central locales, we watch Cézambre walk along a winding medieval city street and see the changed regional costume of local inhabitants. Slouched hats, white workmen’s coats, and checked aprons replace the fashionable display of Paris. Still later, in Le Croisic, a famous fishing town—and one of France’s most popular tourist towns, with a railway having recently opened in 1879—we see the traditional clogs, white lace headdresses, collars, and light aprons of the Breton costume; the men are similarly dressed in traditional white shirts, black trousers, and dark tunics or vests. In the town, we are also introduced to another mode of transport—the fishing boat—with its crews of men, cane baskets, and single lug sail, used for inshore shellfish fishing. In the distance the port of Le Croisic is visible, its tightly packed medieval buildings picturesque against the hubbub of fishing activity. Fernande arrives, incongruous in a chauffeured car, her city dress in contrast with the standardized working clothes of town dwellers. We see her on the coast of Le Croisic, in white shorts and shirt, agile as she

descends a rockface. Subsequently, she swims in a black, one-piece Annette Kellerman bathing suit, the camera panning to show stretches of jagged rocks, dark caves, and a distant fishing boat on the horizon.

These scenes of local beauty are joined to Mistinguett's spectacular and fashionable presence onscreen. In the interior scenes, there is no landscape to define or frame Mistinguett's wild, savage excesses as a young woman railing against social traditions, sexual mores, married life, regional customs, and moral codes. Instead, we see bourgeois interiors disrupted by Mistinguett's performance of female difference. She is a youth, agitating her hair and coyly caressing the back of a chair before cleverly realizing she will be better noticed if she performs female distress (so she cries melodramatically into a white handkerchief). Mistinguett is then a successful courtesan, her capacity to commercialize her appeal greatly abetted by an exuberant physicality. Throughout, a white negligée à la Sarah Bernhardt appears in emotionally climactic moments: when Mistinguett is pulled violently from her bed after her husband first discovers the extent of her infidelity and when she madly embraces Marie-Pierre (Paul Capellani) in her bedroom, urging him to hurl a potted plant from her balcony in defiance of his parents below. Finally, she wears the same long, white, flowing dress when Marie-Pierre is wounded in his delirium of jealousy at her house. In this scene, she performs a wide range of volatile emotions (defiance, shocked collapse, and teary repentance, as well as cunning contrition and hysterical outrage). In contrast, when she is abruptly but premeditatively killed in the final scene by Marie-Pierre's angry mother, she is dressed as a fashionable woman of Paris (a Parisian *mondaine*), collapsing wordlessly to the floor.

FINDING FAME IN AMERICA

Mistinguett was mentioned in major American presses such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Times*, and the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, much later than she was mentioned in comparable papers in England. Cited for the first time in the *New York Times* in 1910, she was associated with dance. Mistinguett had galvanized the "dance madness" overtaking Paris. Presented as the creator of the Apache dance, she was linked with Max Dearly and the Moulin Rouge.¹⁰⁸ The following year, a sequence of three photographs of Mistinguett dancing "the New Dance," the Tango, illustrated and introduced the novelty of this "celebrated Spanish dance" to American readers.¹⁰⁹ In 1911, *The Billboard* featured Mistinguett prominently in a photograph as "a favorite Parisian dancer."

At the same time that attention was given to Mistinguett's fame as an erotic and sexual Parisian dancer, *Moving Picture World* described her as a French actress. An advertisement for *Fleur de pavé* (*Her Dramatic Career*, SCAGL, 1909) stated that the story was "dramatically portrayed by Mlle Mistinguett of the 'Gymnase,' M. Prince of the 'Varietes,' [sic] M. Nunes of the 'Varieties,' and M. Vernoud of the

‘Grand Guignol.’¹¹⁰ In 1909, Mistinguett was indeed performing at the Gymnase Theatre in the comedy *L’Âne de Buridan* between February and July. Nevertheless, showcasing this theatrical association gave prestige to the short dramatic film, emphasizing the French theatrical origins of its players.

When *Her Dramatic Career* was reviewed a couple of weeks later, *Moving Picture World* was unequivocal in its praise:

The picture was dead still on the screen, the photographic quality of the film was perfect, and so soon as the picture started the shadowy figures commenced to act—act naturally—and they acted naturally right throughout the thousand and thirty feet of it. It was just for all the world as if we ourselves sat in the old Porte St. Martin Theatre in Paris, the chosen home of French melodrama, and were looking at one of those plays of passion so dear to the heart of the Parisian populace . . . not, perhaps, the most uplifting of stories and characteristically French, but how splendidly acted and photographed it is impossible for us to tell! As we have said last week, quoting a companion in the theatre, “These French people can act.”¹¹¹

The focus on Pathé—rather than Michel Carré, as a director—as well as natural French acting, was cited as evidence of a quality film. Mistinguett was not named here as the star performer. Whereas in England she was a celebrity, in America she was folded into a discussion about French film production.

When *Les Misérables* was released in America in January 1914, there was again no mention of Mistinguett as an identifiable actress performing in the film. The Carnegie Lyceum Theatre in New York, for the first time becoming a “regular photoplay house” with the projection of the film (previously, it had shown travel views in a variety show format), charged between thirty-five cents and one dollar for entrance. The film was seen as a test case for whether the cinema could break into Broadway territory with photoplay adaptations of standard theatrical or literary works.¹¹² In many respects, this launch at the Carnegie Lyceum Theatre, therefore, paralleled the inauguration of the New Gallery Kinema in London, with its location in the West End. Moreover, the Carnegie Lyceum similarly launched the film at a special inaugural screening. Reports state that “on the invitation of the Gordon Brothers Amusement Company, a large audience assembled in Carnegie Lyceum to witness the first showing in New York State of the nine-part Eclectic production of ‘Les Misérables.’ Present were a hundred ministers, many from Barnard College, and persons representative of all walks of life, as well as the newspapers. Richard Henry Warren, choirmaster of the Church of the Ascension, was at the keys of the specially installed Moller organ, and by his musicianly work added to the charm of this wonderful picture.”¹¹³

The attention paid to the Carnegie Lyceum as a theater screening film before a respected audience, with (as at a theatrical debut) newspaper professionals present, revealed the commitment that the Gordon Company was making to the film industry’s legitimacy. Previously, I highlighted the function that music played in the reception and framing of film, and again in this account—with a choir and a

special organ used for exhibition purpose—music effectively elaborated what was seen onscreen. Moreover, the American trade press similarly emphasized the educative and uplifting function of the film. Explaining not just the moral content of the film but also the educative function of film as integrative technology, uniquely capable of joining word and moving image, W. Stephen Bush advocated for the educational character of “filmed versions” of *Quo Vadis*, *Inferno*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, and *Les Misérables*. In Bush’s opinion, the motion pictures amplified our capacity for learning: “The combination of text and motion picture is the most effective method of reaching the human mind whether of the child or of the adult, whether of the learned man like our schoolmaster [discussed in the article] or just an ordinary mortal.”¹¹⁴

Les Misérables reached “ordinary mortals” because of its combination of text with quality acting on the screen. In America, however, it was Henri Krauss, in the role of Valjean, who was named as an actor in the film. I found only one short article that also mentioned Mlle. Ventura, La Petite Fromet, Mons. Étievant, “and other stars.”¹¹⁵ Discussion of the film did, however, foreground what was deemed “natural” (and preferable) in its acting and setting. This approach indicated that Pathé, Capellani, and the film’s actors were together seen as demonstrating a close link between theater and film. As *Moving Picture News* argued, the film presented acting that was “perfection in every sense”:

None of the exaggerated motions so common in foreign films, where the actors believe they must talk by moving the arms like the old telegraph signals. This most natural acting reminds any one of a representation at either the Comédie-Française or the Odeon of Paris. . . . The lack of exaggerated motions is replaced by the most correct facial expressions, and if you don’t hear the sound of the voice of Jean Valjean, you know what he says and what he thinks by following the motions of his lips, eyes, and other facial expressions.¹¹⁶

As this commentary revealed, actors were attuned to the appropriateness of gesture on film—the large, expressive gestures supported by orchestral music on the French theatrical stage were scaled down yet still heightened and therefore legible to foreign audiences following good actors performing on film. Moreover, the settings were realistic, with “every costume, every bit of furniture is of the proper epoch, even to the old style of the loaf of bread and to the then small size of the French newspaper.”¹¹⁷

Anonymously implicated in the realism of acting, setting, and props in *Les Misérables*, Mistinguett was also part of the Eclectic Film Company’s consolidation in America as a significant distributor of quality French films. Indeed, reports stated that the company, which “sprang into the limelight” through the success of *Les Misérables*, rented “the western half of the 10th floor” of the World’s Tower Building.¹¹⁸ A prestigious building—at the time, the highest office block in the world—the World’s Tower Building opened in spring of 1913. It represented the prestige and modernity of urban New York. The Eclectic Company installed

an “up-to-date comfortable and cool exhibition room with an approved system of ventilation” for business in the building.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the company began to expand into other states (such as New England), while also pursuing exhibitors who did not use the lithograph posters they contracted, designed, and printed for their films.¹²⁰ Again, in an arrangement that paralleled theatrical practices, the film company controlled the marketing and publicity of its “play.”¹²¹ Significantly, the Eclectic Company was a film exchange that incorporated “Paris–New York” into its trademark and had as its logo “The Cream of American and European Studios.”¹²² Max Alvarez, discussing the Film Exchange in America, reminds us that “in late 1913, France’s Charles Pathé took control of the U.S. distributor Eclectic Film Corp. and eventually renamed it Pathé Exchange.”¹²³

SELLING *THE SIREN* IN AMERICA

The Eclectic Film Company marketed and distributed *La Glu* to American audiences as *The Siren* in August 1914. Full-page advertisements in *Moving Picture World* and *Motion Picture News* partnered *The Siren* with *Nick Winter and the Lost Prince* (Paul Garbagni, 1914). Described as “a woman who senses to the full her power over men,” Mistinguett was identifiable in the three photographs that accompanied the description of the film’s plot. In one advertisement, she was shown in the sea at Le Croisic, her arms reaching out for help, as Marie-Pierre saved her. In another, Mistinguett was in her white nightdress as she leaned on a table, watching the emotional exchange among Marie-Pierre, his father, her husband, and Kernan des Ribiers (the father of Adolphe, another of Fernande’s amorous victims). A second advertisement showed the dramatic moment when Marie-Pierre’s mother raises a hammer, high overhead, to kill the unsuspecting Fernande.¹²⁴ In each example, the dramatic moments of legible story, rather than the psychological nuance of Capellani’s cinematography, came to the fore.

Reviews of *The Siren* identified Mistinguett as the titular antiheroine and celebrated her acting, physicality, and personality. As J. Burroughs Noell explained in *Motion Picture News*, it was Mistinguett’s capacity to perform her role with “just the right amount of impudent seductiveness and captivating heartlessness to make her ensnaring of so many sensible men entirely probable.” Moreover, her youth and “fine figure,” as well as her “indefinable something called personality,” helped to explain the success she enjoyed alongside such stellar supporting actors as Henri Krauss and Paul Capellani. Krauss, in particular, was known to audiences in America thanks to *Les Misérables*. As Noell writes, he will be remembered as Jean Val Jean in *Les Misérables*, had appeared in Sarah Bernhardt’s company, and was well trained before entering film. Moreover, Krauss was identifiably French and particularly suited to film, as he was gesturally expressive and spontaneous, talking as well with his hands as with his tongue.¹²⁵ In a front-page presentation of the film in *Motography*, this point was reiterated when readers were introduced to

the film as the Eclectic Company's "best feature since that masterpiece 'Les Misérables.'" In this ad, Mistinguett was not associated with *Les Misérables* but, instead, was introduced as "Mlle. Mistin Guett [who] plays the leading role as Fernande, the treacherous flirt."¹²⁶

The Siren was released in America a year after it was made in France and nearly two years before America joined the Great War. As my next chapter explains, *The Siren* and *Les Misérables* continued to circulate in America during the war, returning Mistinguett to the creative achievements of prewar Paris. In contrast, English audiences could watch Mistinguett in lighthearted comic works, dramatic films, and thrillers. In these feature films—in *The Temptations of Life* (*La Double Blessure / La doppia ferita*, Milano Films, 1915), *Chignon d'or* (*The Gold Chignon*, Films Succès, 1916), *Fleur de Paris* (*Flower of Paris*, Films Succès, 1916), *Mistinguett détective I and II* (Films Succès, 1917)—Mistinguett was a physically fit and enterprising protagonist, either pursuing or fleeing gangsters, criminals, and state enemies or self-reflexively performing in Parisian cafés and theaters. Offering a stalwart and defiant image of an unchanging Paris in the war, Mistinguett's films can be compared to Réjane's somberly patriotic *Alsace* (Film d'Art, 1915) and Sarah Bernhardt's cinematic war cry, *Mothers of France* (*Mères françaises*, Éclipse, 1917). In both instances, these two aged French actresses became national spokespeople for the war, urging transnational audiences of women—mothers, sisters, daughters, lovers—to join their battle against a common enemy. When we elide discussions of the relationship between the late nineteenth-century theater and early film, we not only overlook important histories of female leadership and entrepreneurship in the arts. We also presume that the nineteenth-century French actress was little more than a diversionary form of entertainment rather than a cinematic clarion call to global action.

The Filmic Front

Transnational Cinema and World War I

World War I brought tremendous change to the careers of Mistinguett, Réjane, and Bernhardt. When Germany declared war on August 3, 1914, cinematic production shut down entirely in France until the end of the year.¹ The Triple Entente of France, Russia, and Britain established prior to the war (formalized with the signing of the Pact of London on September 5, 1914) meant that my Parisian actresses were involved in the war—to different degrees and in varying capacities—from its outset until its conclusion (on November 11, 1918).² What is of interest to my discussion about this engagement is not so much that World War I marks the period in which American cinema replaced French cinema as the leading global producer and distributor of films.³ Rather, Mistinguett, Réjane, and Bernhardt remained involved in filmmaking, often standing at the forefront of the national effort to ensure French cultural and military visibility across the globe. Although each actress reached audiences in Britain and America differently, they collectively evidenced the important (and often overlooked) voice that the transnational actress brought to film in the fight for Allied allegiance and support. As Marcelline Block and Barry Nevin remind us, in a different context, but to the same effect, the role of film as a crucial intermediary medium during the war was significant since the stories movies told were not only behaviorally instructional but also “stimulated the cinema’s development from a mere amusement to an essential connection with the distant battle, dismantling the contemporary notion that films ‘were not meant to communicate serious information.’”⁴

A reconsideration of the role of the transnational actress and her changing relationship with film during the war also sheds light on the work that Mistinguett, Réjane, and Bernhardt undertook on the stage. Some of this work included charity fundraising events for war efforts, as well as the performance of patriotic plays. For example, Mistinguett adapted her music-hall work in Paris to showcase support

for the Allied cause. A 1916 cover of the British tabloid *The Bystander* featured Mistinguett performing in “The Lilies of France” at the Folies-Bergère. The magazine proposed that employing English girls in the chorus line as “lilies” made for what was “surely the prettiest presentment yet of the Ente [*sic*] that has become an Alliance.”⁵ The cover-page photograph was telling: Mistinguett prances before a field of female heads leaning on the exposed flesh of their folded elbows and upper arms, stark against a dark background. Visibly incarnating the French fleur-de-lis as a shared symbol of allied heraldry, the English chorus smiles in spirited solidarity with both Mistinguett and France.

During the war period, Réjane similarly chose patriotic plays that could engage foreign audiences. Below, I discuss the way in which she brought Gaston Leroux and Lucien Camille’s patriotic play *Alsace* to her Théâtre Réjane in 1913, eventually touring the play to Britain in 1915 and then adapting it as one of the first propaganda films. Notably, Réjane’s theater in Paris was also used for charity events during the war. There is a report in *The New York Times*, for example, that she hosted the Christmas fête for the Comité de Noël des Enfants Réfugiés Français et Belges (the Christmas Committee for French and Belgian Refugee Children) during Christmas, 1916. As American readers were told, the gifts distributed to needy children at the Théâtre Réjane included “dolls wearing the bodice and apron and great black headdress of Alsace, or proud little Marianne’s complete with pointed cap and red tricolor.”⁶

Bernhardt was similarly implicated in nationalistic efforts to shape and influence the “theater of war.” In 1915, for example, Bernhardt famously staged Eugène Morand’s poem *Les Cathédrales* (with music by Gabriel Pierné, replete with a 150-person chorus and orchestra) at her theater in Paris. She also provided a benefit performance for the French military.⁷ In January 1916, Bernhardt again performed this patriotic play at the Coliseum in London for a short season of two weeks. *Les Cathédrales* introduced an injured French soldier dreaming of seven, conversing iconic French cathedrals (including Notre Dame de Paris, and the cathedral at Rheims). In this largely female cast, Bernhardt symbolically embodied the Strasbourg Cathedral. Like Réjane, therefore, Bernhardt returned audiences to Alsace, a French territory annexed under German control during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870–71.⁸ Significantly, Bernhardt’s role also communicated across cultures: as the London Coliseum program explained, Bernhardt’s verse concluded with her speaking “of that brave Englishwoman cruelly murdered by a German Officer even while she proudly faced the enemy’s rifles.”⁹

Further patriotic plays—most famously, Bernhardt’s own *Du théâtre au champ d’honneur* (*From the Theater to the Field of Honor*)—were performed for British audiences in the London Coliseum’s January 1916 season.¹⁰ *Du théâtre au champ d’honneur* was a play describing the final moments of a young French soldier. Injured on a battlefield, the anonymous *poilu* is found by an English officer and is

supported, in his final moments, by a Red Cross dog and two British nurses. The play invokes the Germans (“Huns”) as a common enemy for British audiences. Concluding with the French soldier crying “Vive L’Angleterre! Vive la France!” (Long live England! Long live France!), the play reminded spectators of the strong military, cultural, and emotional bonds between their two nations.¹¹

The US Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917. This was well after Mistinguett, Réjane, and Bernhardt had begun to exhort allied audiences to embrace the sacrifices of war. By this time, the conflict had atrophied France’s once-dominant cinematic production capacities and global distribution networks. As Abel succinctly summarizes in *The Ciné Goes to Town*, “Pathé Frères could no longer play the same leadership role as [it had] before [the Great War]. For the rest of the decade and through the 1920s, the French would fight a valiant battle to resist becoming what Henri Diamant Berger accurately called “an American film colony.”¹² Although the American cinema began to claim economic and cultural supremacy, the French transnational actress weaponized her cinematic clout, sending proud, patriotic material to allied audiences abroad.

MISTINGUETT: THE SHOW MUST GO ON

A program touting Mistinguett as its star attraction in the annual *revue* show presented at the Théâtre des Variétés in Paris 1916 concluded with an act entitled “Vive Paris” (Long live Paris). In this final act, Mistinguett—listed in large, bold font—characteristically played “the Parisian.” Beneath this concluding act, “MISTINGUETT” was loudly printed above a commentary by “Roberto de Phlers” (the comic pseudonym for the playwright Robert de Flers). De Flers explained how important Mistinguett was to the morale of men fighting on the war front for France. In his view, her celebrated capacity to invoke laughter positioned her as a symbol of “the heart, the goodness, the gaiety, and the health of Paris.” Moreover, de Flers explained that Mistinguett was the most renowned comic artist across the nation’s concerts, cinemas, and theaters. French soldiers often talked about her, just as they frequently named their bayonets and cannons “Mistinguett.”¹³ Still associated (as she was before the war) with cheerful physical play, Mistinguett’s light humor now also represented national patriotism and defiance.

When Mistinguett returned to perform in the Casino de Paris in 1918, now with a young Maurice Chevalier as her partner, her renown was also reaching audiences abroad. As the fashionable English paper *The Tatler* reported (using a large, full-page photograph of Mistinguett in an extraordinary, high-couture dress): “Mlle. Mistinguett out-Gabys Gaby [Deslys, the internationally famous singer and dancer], and is at present playing at the Casino de Paris. She dances, plays and sings in her own inimitable style, and has the well-earned reputation of wearing the most beautiful stage clothes of any actress of the musical-comedy and revue world” (fig. 23).¹⁴ Clearly, Mistinguett’s reputation had risen by World War I



FIGURE 23. “Out Gaby-ing Gaby,” *The Tatler*, Feb. 5, 1919. © Illustrated London News / Mary Evans Picture Library.

to be reported to English audiences who might not attend her live shows in France. She was, as *The Tatler* suggested, one of the charismatic leaders of her profession. Moreover, the luxury of her dress indicated that she had the financial and cultural capital to invest in shows in a manner similar to her respected contemporaries, Bernhardt and Réjane. Mistinguett’s performance, now also reviewed within Paris by a respected theater critic such as Adolphe Brisson, writing in *Le Temps*, was said to reflect and incarnate her modest, outsider origins. Elegant yet gleefully working class, she became an insouciant model of wartime resilience. In Brisson’s words, Mistinguett symbolized “in her feeble person all the fugitive joys and miseries of the suburbs.”¹⁵

The narrative films that Mistinguett made during this period reinforce de Flers’s image of her as a cheerful yet fiercely patriotic Parisian actress. The first of these films, the four-reel *La Double Blessure* (*The Temptations of Life*, Milano Films, 1915), was produced in Italy. In this film, Mistinguett played a tomboy schoolgirl who escapes the confined atmosphere of a prim seminary for young ladies to find the excitement she desires at the announcement of war.¹⁶ Disguising herself as a Boy Scout, she “climbs high walls, escapes from the hold of a ship by means of a ventilator, plunges into the sea, and does all manner of intrepid and dangerous things.”¹⁷ Released in Britain in late 1915 (and playing in theaters until early 1916), the film was advertised in relation to the themes of “Army Mobilisation, Active Service, Espionage, Hotel and Domestic Life with a Romantic

Theme.”¹⁸ British audiences were thereby reassured that war did not diminish the possibility of seeing Mistinguett perform in a cheerful and sprightly manner. Released as a “Milano Melodrama,” the film presented “a thoroughly characteristic performance, full of dainty grace, quick sympathy and vivid expressiveness that have made her [Mistinguett] so popular.”¹⁹ Interestingly, the *Temptations of Life* was sometimes programmed in Britain alongside or immediately prior to Bernhardt’s still-circulating *Camille*.²⁰ In this way, a dichotomy of “temptations” would have been apparent to audiences. On the one hand, Bernhardt returned to the role of the nineteenth-century courtesan, her white nightdress wrapping around her as she pivots in a full-body fall to her death. On the other hand, Mistinguett heralded temptations of a new kind. She was spurred to adventure and followed intrigue precisely because modern women could now define their place through physical action in the world.

Mistinguett’s association with female espionage, physical agility, and romance was again evident in her following film, *Chignon dor*. In this first of four films Mistinguett made with André Hugon between 1916 and 1917, Mistinguett visibly transforms herself across a range of characters as she successfully pursues Parisian gangsters. Self-reflexively performing the role of a music-hall idol in Paris, she subsequently adopts the role of a *gigolette* (streetwalker) and then a *parigote* (a Parisian street kid), selling the Parisian boulevard newspaper *Le Journal* in local streets. What is interesting is not only Mistinguett’s music-hall versatility but also the shots of wartime Paris. We see Mistinguett spurring action across urban rooftops and streets that stand in for a city and culture that foreign audiences could no longer travel to or enjoy. Later, when Mistinguett performs the *parigote*, we also see the enduring warmth and humor of Parisians captured on film as they go about their business on the city streets.²¹

Chignon dor is fascinating because it also self-reflexively returns audiences to Mistinguett’s prewar films. It stages, for example, an Apache dance in the Lapin Blanc (White Rabbit) café, and it echoes *L’Épouvante* in showing the actress foil another theft of her jewelry while resting one night at home. In Mistinguett’s next film, *Fleur de Paris*, similar themes reappear: shot on location in and around Paris, scenes (as Abel has noted) look like French actualité footage.²² Mistinguett also self-reflexively performs herself as a popular stage actress and as a young, urban, working-class woman (she appears as a dressmaker and a flower-seller). Chasing romance, the film concludes with two contrasting scenes of romantic fulfillment: Mistinguett (as Margot the flower-seller) manages to ensnare the hand of an attentive, wealthy Frenchman, while Mistinguett (the music-hall celebrity) partners with a visiting American entrepreneur who will develop her fame tour abroad. The doubling of Mistinguett’s role within the film exposes her own rags-to-riches story and is also “fascinating in the context of the Great War as well as of her alleged work as a double agent [conducting espionage for the Germans while spying for the French].”²³

Mistinguett made two other films with Hugon during the war—*Mistinguett détective I* and *Mistinguett détective II*. While there is no evidence that these films circulated in Britain during the war, Mistinguett's work remained focused on espionage, the fight against foreign spies, and (in *Mistinguett détective I*, where she discovers a secret submarine base), the topical effort to vanquish enemy submarine attacks. In the single mention that I found in British papers about these two films, a short note explained that the "Mistinguett Detective" series was to be launched with a film entitled "The Submarine Base."²⁴

A PARISIAN IN AMERICA: THE CIRCULATION OF PREWAR MISTINGUETT

The war in Europe remained central to discussion about the circulation of French film in America and the reception of American film in France. When Joseph Monat (of Monatfilms), "one of the most important figures in French cinematographic circles," traveled to New York in November 1916 to buy American film and to sell French films, the war explained his arrival. Introduced to American readers as a man who had served on the front in the French army, suffered from shell shock and trench sickness, and had been "over the top" half a dozen times, Monat brought with him nine French film programs. Heading his sales list was a "Series Mistinguette [*sic*]," comprising *Chignon d'or* (Golden Hair) and *Fleur de Paris* (Flower of Paris), both five reels and both produced by André Hugon. There was also a "Series Musidora," similarly produced by Hugon, and a series entitled "Patriotic Film."²⁵ Mistinguett's work on film—and, particularly, her work with Hugon—was considered significant enough to justify her own series of films. When Monat was later interviewed in *Moving Picture World*, he made clear that it was a changed France that films were circulating within and emerging from.²⁶ On the one hand, Monat's message was that "our great France just now is a poor country, and affords only small opportunity for American film." Surprised at the sums asked for American pictures, he argued that Americans did not understand the impoverished conditions of wartime France. On the other hand, Monat was patriotically selling a program of French films to American audiences. As he stated, French productions "have never been so good as they are today." Most of the films he offered for sale were identified by the names of their directors and production companies. We read, for example, that Monat offered *The Anguish* (six reels, Hugon) and *Shackles* (seven reels, Hugon). In contrast, Mistinguett was given her own series.²⁷ The effort that Monat made to sell French film in America and to testify to the changed wartime conditions of France was not heeded. As Hugon lamented, it was cheaper for him to buy American films through third parties in London than to purchase American film from companies in New York.

These fraught market conditions help to explain why the films Mistinguett made during the war were not released in America. Mistinguett's prewar films,

however, continued to circulate throughout the war. When *The Siren* was promoted in Montana in October 1914, it was presented as the “Well Known Problem Play” with “an all-star cast” that had caused a sensation in New York.²⁸ A theater in Alaska, screening *The Siren* in March 1916, touted Mistinguett as Theda Bara’s “only rival.”²⁹ There is record, too, of *Les Misérables* circulating throughout the war. Mae Tinée, the nom de plume of the well-known writer Frances Peck, wrote an enthusiastic review of *Les Misérables* for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1917. Explaining that *Les Misérables*, “made fully four years ago,” demonstrates that “the old things are best,” she pronounced the film “a delight” and the foreign actors “marvellous.”³⁰ In 1917, *Les Misérables* was also promoted in Georgia as a forthcoming attraction. In this instance, Mistinguett was listed second after Kraus in the film’s “splendid cast”; *The Siren* was also cited as a film she had starred in “two and a half or three years ago.”³¹ With the exception of a brief discussion of Mistinguett’s successful effort to free Maurice Chevalier from German prison in 1917, Mistinguett remained circulating in America as a prewar cinematic celebrity. She remained, in this way, mobile testimony to the cultural capital and gay allure that France had once enjoyed.³²

PERFORMANCE FROM THE PROVINCES:
RÉJANE IN ALSACE

While Mistinguett’s plucky physicality was defiantly placed, during the Great War, into a rollicking military escapade and subsequently into Hugon’s series of urban gangster and espionage films, Réjane’s work on film was very different. Famous in the prewar period for legitimate class comedy, she became active in the making and promotion of a single, somber film: *Alsace*, directed by Henri Pouctal at the Film d’Art in 1915. Prior to the outbreak of the war, in 1913, Réjane had brought Gaston Leroux and Lucien Camille’s play *Alsace* to her own Théâtre Réjane. Performing the role of an Alsatian mother, Jeanne Orbray, who is exiled with her husband from Alsace to France for leading the patriotic singing of the Marseillaise with a band of equally nationalistic friends, the play revolves around the conflicts that transpire when her son (Jacques) falls in love with and marries Marguerite Schwartz, a German neighbor. Jeanne returns home after the death of her husband; when Jacques is eventually called up for military service with his German troupe, he is torn between his love of country (France) and love for his wife (Germany). Eventually resolving this conflict by patriotically supporting France, he dies on his provincial street after proudly shouting “Vive la France!” At the film’s conclusion, Jeanne grieves at the tombstone of her son, now remembered as a French patriot.

When Réjane inaugurated the play in Paris, *Alsace* was considered a patriotic work that endorsed the legitimate need to fight for French provincial independence

and liberty from Germany. In this way, *Alsace* was a lightning rod to displays of discontent about the German annexation of Alsace (Alsace became part of the German Empire after French defeat in the 1870–71 Franco-German War). The emotional impact of the play was compared to the quiet reflection motivated by the work of writers such as Maurice Barrès, René Bazin, André Lichtenberger, and journalist Paul Acker. Each of these authors differently espoused provincial—and often, Alsatian—patriotism in their novels. As Adolphe Brisson explained in *Le Temps*, reflecting on the emotive reception of the play, “the country [Alsace] where the action takes place in this new work [in the theater] no longer belongs to History; we have a part and a responsibility in its miseries; we cannot contemplate it with serenity.”³³

Alsace was licensed in England by the English Examiner of Plays on April 1, 1915. As the examiner’s report explains, the play was newly relevant to the First World War, particularly to the August 1914 Battle of Mulhouse (known also as the Battle of Alsace), an attack by the French Army against Germany at the start of World War I.³⁴ In this battle, the French recovered but then conceded the province of Alsace to the opposing Germans, because the second offensive launched by the French failed to gain the province with an army corps newly named the French Army of Alsace. While the Parisian reception of the play at the Théâtre Réjane highlighted the nationalist emotion that Alsace elicited in Parisian spectators, its reception in England was quite different. Considered a good example of the contrast of ideas and manners between the French and Germans, the focus in Britain became the conflict between Jacques’ German wife and his proud Alsatian mother. This conflict was not, however, considered particularly engaging.

Réjane’s performance as a mother fighting for the honor and patriotism of her son was applauded, but she remained a celebrity actress whose most famous and preferred role was the spirited, if now also aged, *boulevardier* washerwoman of *Madame Sans-Gêne*. Hence, when Réjane took *Alsace* from its debut at the Court Theatre in London to the Theatre Royal in Birmingham, it was “regretted” that she did not debut in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, since it “has long found favour in the sight of English audiences.” Describing *Alsace* as “a play of feeble and desultory execution,” this might have been a problem of national context since “we have no English theme of such national and patriotic significance.” As readers in Britain were reminded, *Alsace* was produced originally in Paris in early 1913, in an hour of popular enthusiasm: “at that time it would have been difficult for the English playgoer to conceive in his imagination the inveterate hatred of the French Alsatian for the arrogance of German oppression.”³⁵ Despite the subdued reception of Réjane’s performance of *Alsace* in England, she remained a bridging figure between the two countries during a time of war. In the Royal Court Theatre publicity for *Alsace*, it was therefore explained that there were “no frontiers” between France and England. As Réjane stated: “to come to England is not to quit France.”³⁶

ADAPTING ALSACE TO FILM

The film of *Alsace* debuted in Paris on Christmas Eve 1915 in the Théâtre Réjane. At the film's launch, Réjane addressed the audience, stating that the brothers and sons of France were claiming, by right of popular conquest, the land of Alsace and Lorraine. She was happy to give her theater over to the film because it showed "her beloved play that, thanks to the magic wand of cinema, has become a great novel of living pictures."³⁷ Applauded by cinematographic entrepreneurs (including the famous filmmaker and producer Jean Benoît-Lévy, the exhibitor and trade association leader Léon Brézillon, and inventor and film producer Léon Gaumont), *Alsace* was regarded as a profound study of the antagonism between the French and German people. Where the Germans proudly saw Alsace as an annexed part of empire, the French hoped that Alsace would return to the motherland. Réjane's noble work in bringing the role of a great maternal heroine to the screen was particularly noted. "What a beautiful maternal role Réjane was able to film!" *Ciné-Journal* exclaimed. If a young actress was instead employed, "she would, by dint of being too pretty, appear banal."³⁸

Alsace was released to six theaters in Paris a few weeks later, on January 16, 1916. As double-page advertisements announced, this was "The First Edition" of a "Great Patriotic Film."³⁹ The French tricolors, attached as inserted leaflets in *Ciné-Journal*, announced that the work was "the most moving of all patriotic films."⁴⁰ With only "Réjane" and *Alsace* listed on the inserts, Réjane seemed to be the author. This point was reiterated in an earlier issue of *Ciné-Journal*, where ALSACE! and REJANE! were the only two words featured on the journal's cover.⁴¹ On another cover of *Ciné-Journal* (Oct. 30, 1915), Réjane was featured in the distinctive clothing of an Alsatian woman, with "Mme REJANE DANS ALSACE" below and the playwrights' names in much smaller print. As posters for the film also attested (fig. 24), it was Réjane who was publicized as a celebrity French actress who was able to incarnate the motherland and the plight of Alsace.

ALSACE AND THE ENGLISH ALLIES:
A PICTURE THAT PLEASURES THE PUBLIC

When *Alsace* was released in England, the film was interpreted in relation to developments in the current war (that is, in relation to the German occupation in Belgium), not to the historic German-French Alsace conflict. As *The Bioscope* reported, "The German occupation of Belgium gives additional point to the strong patriotic feeling which permeates the play, which depicts with great power and conviction, and also with admirable restraint, the bitter indignities suffered by a conquered people even when not subjected to actual violence."⁴²

As we know, England entered the First World War when Germany invaded neutral Belgium, bound by the Treaty of London of 1839 (which protected Belgium



FIGURE 24. Poster for *Alsace* featuring Réjane. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btvib10109080b>.

in the event of war). Recontextualized in relation to the beginning of the war and Britain's involvement, the film, concluded *The Bioscope*, was "calculated to stir the finest feelings of patriotism, and as an incentive to recruiting should prove of the highest value."⁴³

In much the same way as *Madame Sans-Gêne* was earlier distributed in England by Jury's Pictures, so, too, was *Alsace* released to exhibitors as a prestige Jury's picture that would "please the public."⁴⁴ Reports show that, unlike the theatrical play, *Alsace* found popular favor. Publicized in early February 1916, it was described as a "great war picture" and "one of the finest patriotic films that has been inspired by the war." Exhibited by Tom Bogue (the manager of the Majestic Picture House in Hull) in March 1916, it was screened for a week and was considered "quite a topical interest, especially now that that part of France is so prominent in the public mind."⁴⁵ As late as 1918, there were reports in English papers of *Alsace's* circulation on film, particularly in relation to its ability to engage London youth in the war. Hence, in June 1918, "hundreds of schoolboys formed an audience at the Pavilion, Marble Arch, on Monday last, when, under the auspices of the 'French Official War films,' 'Alsace Awaiting' was exhibited. The acting of Madame Rejane excited intense enthusiasm, and quite a hostile demonstration occurred when the German schoolmaster appeared on the screen."⁴⁶ The fact that the film had been screened in the relatively new and "quality" theater the Marble Arch Pavilion and renamed *Alsace Awaiting* indicates the respect a London population still held for Réjane. Now a maternal French figure giving a national address that touched on qualities

that were very different from her role in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, she was again an actress who pushed boundaries, explored opportunities, and advocated for cultural and political change.

THE “EUROPEAN WAR”: ALSACE IN AMERICA

In America, where Réjane had not toured for more than a decade—and where audiences had never been introduced to *Alsace* on the stage—circumstances were different. Released in April 1916, the film was first mentioned in *Motion Picture News* in the “Film News from Foreign Parts” column by G. Kaczka in November 1915. Interviewed by Kaczka for the journal in Paris, Réjane made it clear that she previously made one other film (*Madame Sans-Gêne*) and that, while encouraged to make films, she had patriotically chosen to make this single title. Making no mention of the 1913 stage production of *Alsace* in Paris (nor her performance of the role in London in 1915), she asked: “Could I possibly refuse to play the interesting part of Madame Orbey in the marvellous patriotic scene? I could not resist such an invitation, and for the second time, I am facing the camera, this time in the costume of our dear and beloved ‘Alsace.’”⁴⁷ Featured on the page, Réjane is shown in an Alsatian costume, offering readers “the very first photograph of Réjane in ‘Alsace.’”⁴⁸

This focus on Réjane’s mediation through photograph and film in 1915 was replaced a couple of months later by a second “Film News from Foreign Parts” column recounting the opening of *Alsace* at the Théâtre Réjane. Noting that the cinema now performs “an official function,” the article underscored the fact that official government ministers and community leaders attended Réjane’s film and that *Alsace* was first introduced by a large orchestra playing the Marseillaise, followed by an introduction to the film by the actress on the theatrical stage. Translating Réjane’s introduction to the film from its original transcription in *Ciné-Journal*, *Motion Picture News* stated:

When first produced in 1913, I did not think the authors would prove such good prophets. Looking at the beautiful scenery representing the charming town Thann in our beloved Alsace, I never dreamed that only two years later Thann would be French again. Oh dear Alsace! O dear Lorraine! We never forget you. . . . I am very happy that this great film is shown to you for the first time, at my theatre, and what is more, the scenes you are going to see on the screen, are actually played just now by our Poilus, who are at Thann and who will soon lead us to victory.⁴⁹

Offered to exhibitors as a film in five parts by the Authors Film Company, *Alsace* was first screened on April 12, 1916, in a specially promoted “Trade View” event in the company’s dedicated projection room at 67 Madison Avenue, New York. As an advertisement flagged, trade screenings were scheduled in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Montreal.

Using bold red borders and text, the Authors Film Company publicity was unusual because it also featured a full-length photograph of Réjane as an Alsatian mother, looking solemn and majestic as she clasped a religious cross on an open cemetery gate. Associated with a provincial but important region of France (and remember that *La Marseillaise* was composed in Strasbourg by Rouget de Lisle in 1792 and known as *Marching Song for the Army of the Rhine*), Réjane heralds both life and death, battle and victory. Described as a “star of supreme achievement” who offered “the intensely inspiring, patriotic drama ALSACE,” Réjane represented global celebrity, religious piety, and patriotic courage.⁵⁰

This trade publicity highlighted the film’s changed reception in America. Rather than being patriotically screened in a nation’s capital city in an established theater with dignitaries and the actress on hand, *Alsace* was promoted as a trade screening to states-rights buyers who could ensure the exhibition and distribution of the film. In this context, exhibitors were given the opportunity to “judge for themselves” the impact that the film would have on box-office receipts.⁵¹ A subsequent advertisement for *Alsace*’s trade show screening declared: “Do you sit down quietly at a private showing and see the pictures yourself, booking only those that measure up best to the standard set by your patrons? The safe way is the ‘OPEN MARKET’ way.”⁵² The trade press therefore presented America as a nation fostering free enterprise and giving validation to the decisions made by exhibitors, who, with “first-hand knowledge,” built national theater programs. By this point, Réjane was being marketed (for the first time, with an accent aigu) in America as a French and not a Parisian national export: she is a “world-renowned dramatic artiste” presenting *Alsace*, the “master drama by Gaston Leroux and Lucien Camille.”⁵³ In another full-page advertisement, Réjane was also acclaimed within Europe, setting “all of France and England talking. Replacing live theater with film, and the class comedy of *Madame Sans-Gêne* with the patriotism of *Alsace*, Réjane’s performance of an Alsatian patriot and mother became “the crowning triumph of her career.”⁵⁴

When *Alsace* was reviewed by Peter Milne in *Motion Picture News* in April 1916, America had not yet entered the war. America was therefore officially and politically neutral. Mention was consequently made of the fact that “it is not a picture that we in America would call neutral; that is, judging it from the standards of neutrality laid down by our government.” Citing the success *Alsace* was enjoying in France and England, Milne called it an “unusually strong drama,” set against the backdrop of the “European war” and “the bitter hatred of the Alsations toward their Teutonic conquerors of 1871.”⁵⁵ Making an effort to avoid discussing politics, Milne reiterated Réjane’s relevance to contemporary events, stating that she presented a “vital topic” that had not yet been dramatized on film.⁵⁶

Alsace was released in America at a point at which popular sentiment had begun to support the French and British in their fight against the Germans. Germany’s 1914 attack on Belgium, its destruction of European art, as well as the unprovoked sinking of the liner RMS *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915 (in which 123 Americans died),

had shifted public opinion. An editorial in the inaugural issue of the *Scientific American*, in May 1915, reflected on the liner's sinking: "Has this ceased to be a war of army against army and degenerated into a war against civilians and women and children, no matter of what nationality? This is the first instance in the history of mankind where a regular transatlantic liner, filled with civilians of many nationalities, has been deliberately sunk on the high seas, and this act was committed, not after allowing innocent women and children to escape in lifeboats, but wantonly and wickedly without allowing the victims of the weapon of destruction any chance for their lives."⁵⁷

A film that focused on German cultural coercion in Alsace and highlighted the grief of a French mother for a son who died because he spontaneously shouted "Vive la France" in a German-occupied town was unusually topical. It was also groundbreaking in terms of film production and distribution: there existed no other French feature-length film set against the backdrop of the current crisis that was designed to promote patriotism and allied support for military action. Moreover, there was no other celebrity taking to the global stage and advocating for a revision of what both the French actress and Alsace stood for. No longer embodying spicy boulevard entertainments or the cultural supremacy of Paris, Réjane now incarnated the historical, social, political, and military aims of regional France. No longer performing the comedy of a washerwoman who hailed from Alsace, Réjane represented the intergenerational aspirations of a region associated with the founding of the French First Republic. When we elide discussions of the relationship between the late nineteenth-century theater and early film, we not only overlook important histories of defiant female comedy and physicality, but we elide and forget the many opportunities that Réjane generated in a period of enormous change.

THE FRENCH PROPAGANDA FILM: BERNHARDT ENTERS THE GREAT WAR

While Réjane significantly changed the terms of her renown in both Britain and America during the war, Bernhardt capitalized on her established celebrity as a French *porte-parole* to promote American engagement in the war. Although Bernhardt also made the social-problem film *Jeanne Doré* (1915) during this period, American audiences appeared more interested in the ability of the film to eliminate "evidences of the actress' lameness" (Bernhardt's right leg had been amputated earlier in the year) than in the narrative meaning of the work. *Mothers of France* (1917) was Bernhardt's second and final film made during the war and, unlike *Jeanne Doré*, its message proved unequivocal. As the famous poet, novelist, dramatist, and academician Jean Richepin explained when he introduced the film to the Union des arts in France in 1917, *Mothers of France* was filmed to make French propaganda palatable and legible across geographic distances, culture, and language.⁵⁸

Richepin's address to the Union des arts—an organization in France whose aim was the spread of French art and design through modern industry—was particularly appropriate in its focus on the capacity of the French actress to be militarily instrumentalized through transnational film. *Mothers of France* also illustrated Bernhardt's fervent patriotism and the significance of film to the ongoing relationship between France and America in 1917. Conceived as a work for American consumption, the film capitalized on the existing relationship between France and America. This included not only the established history between the two countries but also the national tours Bernhardt had undertaken on the stage, as well as the success of her previous appearances on film in America. As we know, *Camille*, *Queen Elizabeth*, and the documentary *Sarah Bernhardt at Home (Bernhardt à Belle Isle*, Hecla, 1915) had been released in the teens to national acclaim.⁵⁹

Significantly, the narrative of *Mothers of France* focused on the experience of womanhood and motherhood in regional France. At its center was a portrait of female endurance: the death of family members in war (in this case, a father and husband) and the impact that chemical warfare had on the health of community members (a schoolteacher returns to regional France blinded by his experiences in the trenches). The themes of grief and loss are explored, as is the dangerous work women undertake in their capacity as nurses and caretakers for wounded soldiers on the front, as well as the leadership they adopt in their local neighborhoods and towns. A film that examined personal pain, but that also projected fierce nationalism and optimistic fortitude (and that presumed the compassion and empathy of female audiences), *Mothers of France* was one of the earliest (and certainly the most successful) propaganda films commissioned by the French government during the war. Produced by Eclipse under the direction of the French Ministry of War working with the Service cinématographique de l'armée (the SCA), it involved not only Richepin as screenwriter but Louis Mercanton and René Hervil as directors.⁶⁰ In this sense, Bernhardt headlined a rousing propaganda film that combined government sponsorship, a leading French film production house, and renowned creative practitioners.

At the film's debut in Paris, Richepin argued not only that its message was transparent but also that *Mothers of France* would engage Americans in the realities and aspirations of the French government and people: "When they [the American public] will see what the horrors of the war are, even a war which is just and fair as the one which we are undertaking, then they will understand the symbols which it evokes; why we have undertaken it, why we have been obliged to undertake it, not only with the aim to defend ourselves . . . but to defend the ideas that are dear to us, that are sacred, that are the health of France and at the same time of Europe itself."⁶¹

How did Bernhardt perform for a work that was destined for foreign audiences during the war? The largeness of her earlier gestures on film—her spectacular falling deaths in *Queen Elizabeth* and *Camille*, for example—were replaced by smaller and more intimate physical movements. Often reaching to touch, caress,

or embrace another person (her son, another local mother, a wounded soldier), she was shown as being both physically and emotionally connected to her family, community, and the French military. Often clutching a white handkerchief, she wipes her brow, her cheeks, her eyes. When she beseeches the statue of Jeanne d'Arc, her patron saint, outside a sandbagged Reims cathedral one evening, she does not raise her arms; instead, she stands stationary, in profile, swathed in the long billowing habit of a medical nurse. Holding onto the rails that surround the statue with one hand, and with her other hand to her throat, she speaks quietly as she looks upward. Later, at the front line, she is filmed from above while she stands at the foreground of an uneven line of soldiers. She reaches her right arm onto the top of the trench as she ducks her head under enemy fire, then gesturing forward, she talks with a soldier. We do not, of course, see Bernhardt take a step or move through the trenches; she is always standing, seated, or traveling in a car. Her immobilization and these brief records of conversation and physical touch remind us that Bernhardt's right leg was amputated and that she was unable (as were many wounded soldiers) to walk or perform in the ways that she once enjoyed.

Richepin's belief that Bernhardt's film would reveal the war to foreign audiences as it was experienced in France, and that they would be moved by Bernhardt's performance, was borne out by the fervor that met screenings of *Mothers of France* in America. Released to great fanfare in New York, the film premiered at the Rialto Theater on March 11, 1917, and the World Film Corporation quickly secured American distribution rights (fig. 25). The corporation's first official announcement about this deal proclaimed that "against the determined competition of leading special feature producers, spurred by the knowledge that this was and is the most powerful and distinguished feature ever filmed, we have bought 'Mothers of France.'"⁶² The film was a popular success, circulating in America throughout 1917. It was programmed at benefit screenings for war causes and became a rallying cry for American participation and support for the war.

At the time of the film's release in March 1917, the US had not yet joined the war. Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, roughly a month later. While the film was not responsible for the nation's entry into the war, it helped to give impetus to public support for military engagement. As I noted above, this support had already been sought by Réjane, who had released *Alsace* in 1916. Focusing on the geographic region that launched the First World War in France, Réjane capitalized on her fame as a Parisian actress to international audiences. Bernhardt, though, nationalized her address; on film, she was not a mother in Alsace but a representative of all mothers in France. Accompanying her film with a tour across America, Bernhardt was a political spokeswoman both onscreen and off.⁶³ *Motography* reported that when the film was screened in Philadelphia in April 1917, Bernhardt appeared in person at the screening.⁶⁴ The impact that Bernhardt's film had on audiences in America is evident in a review that stated it "fans the fire of patriotism in a white heat. It is a call to duty that will not be denied."⁶⁵

2941 THE MOVING PICTURE WORLD March 31, 1917

The Triumph of the Year
World Film Corporation
Scores Sensational Success

Bought
for Franchise
Holders of
World Pictures
Brady-Made

**SARAH
BERNHARDT**
in her Greatest Triumph
"Mothers of France"

Announcement

Against the determined competition of leading special feature producers, spurred by the knowledge that this was and is the most powerful and distinguished feature ever filmed, we have bought "Mothers of France." This extremely important transaction was closed so late that we have not been able to prepare an announcement of the details of distribution.

WORLD FILM CORPORATION 130 West 46th Street, N. Y. City

FIGURE 25. Advertisement for *Mothers of France*. *Moving Picture World*, March 31, 1917.

The American reception of Bernhardt's celebrity was quite different from Bernhardt's reception in England. Indeed, in England *Mothers of France* was less a justification for war than evidence of what audiences already knew. As English advertisements stated, *Mothers of France* revealed "the heroic women of our glorious Gallic Ally," as well as "the debt we owe our womankind." Moreover, Bernhardt's film was marketed with no mention of Richepin as scriptwriter or of the film's director, Louis Mercanton. Rather, it was a demonstration of the power Bernhardt "still possesses to grip the attention and thrill the emotions of those to whom she plays."⁶⁶

Today, it is hard to understand the familiarity with which English audiences greeted Bernhardt as a suffering mother onscreen and the impact that *Mothers of France* enjoyed in America. Appearing old and theatrical on black-and-white footage, Bernhardt does not seem to represent the heroism of women on the front line, nor does she appear convincing enough to incite American women to send their loved ones into war (and possible death) in distant Europe. Yet her character's suffering, through the loss of a husband and the wounding of a son, likely reminded audiences of the star's own aging, suffering body.⁶⁷ We know that months after *Mothers of France* had completed its theatrical run, it was still circulating in benefit screenings, raising money and gaining supporters for the Allied cause. In this context, we can appreciate the celebrity that Bernhardt still enjoyed, as well as the importance of film as a transnational bridge to new audiences.

During the First World War, the rallying cries of Bernhardt and Réjane on film circulated alongside the cheerful defiance of Mistinguett's more lighthearted films. Together, the three actresses demonstrate a shrewd and effective understanding of the value of this new medium. French patriots in war time, they were versatile actresses who collectively placed Paris as an expanding horizon of female theatrical and military achievement. The transformative nature of these achievements is evidenced in the actresses' continued relevance during the war. Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett (if indirectly) helped to drive the allied call to military action. As my conclusion argues, the extent, range, and impact of Mistinguett, Réjane, and Bernhardt's transnational film histories are far from complete. Online data offers its own contemporary call to action. It multiplies our tools, materials, and access to historical content and suggests that the threads I have collected in my study might, one day, be expanded exponentially.

Conclusion

Difference and Diversity: The Expanding Horizons of Transnational Film

Bernhardt, Réjane, and Mistinguett emerged from the margins of Paris to blaze divergent yet connected pathways into English and American renown in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These leading French actresses used commercial and creative skills to connect with popular transnational audiences, who did not necessarily understand spoken French and who did not share their cultural and social backgrounds. Adapting themselves to the changing media landscape of the early twentieth century—most significantly, in terms of this study, to the changing transnational landscape of silent film—they bridged cultures, centuries, art forms, social classes, and even theatrical genres and styles, bringing a heady spectacle of French tragedy, comedy, drama, dance, and athleticism to Anglo-American audiences. From the emotional tragedy of Bernhardt to the sexualized comedy (and later, somber nationalism) of Réjane and on to the athletic charge of Mistinguett's proudly Paris-based films, these French actresses offer a generational and pioneering view of female achievements in the early film industry.

The involvement of the legitimate stage actress in the silent film industry was traditionally criticized for merely providing a record of live stage performance. Scholarship implied that the European actress was an anachronism on film: stylistically detached from the technical and creative developments that made film a young, fresh, and twentieth-century art form (the close-up, the mobile camera, and so on), the actress allegedly represented the high-class stage practices of elite European theatrical tradition.¹ As we saw in my introduction, recent scholarship focusing on Asta Nielsen and her reception abroad provides a fine example of an attempt to redress such reductive thinking. My study develops this work further, arguing that the French stage actress was a generational force who impacted the global development of film. This impact was not only attached to the actress's

individuated ability to uniquely and skillfully perform recognizable roles in new ways. It also was linked to her marketing, management, and business initiatives—all astutely changed and adapted for local reception contexts. Furthermore, my work demonstrates that if we take the French transnational actress as merely an “exception”—that is, an idiosyncratic celebrity who achieves unusual intercultural renown—we might also look generationally and culturally at other actresses and so-called exceptions emerging from the French theater. From this perspective, the French actress helps to locally and transnationally define theatrical achievement during the Belle Époque. She evidences the range and vitality of French theater, literature, art, innovation, and technology (“culture”) to audiences in Paris and to transnational audiences in the years leading up to and into the Great War. With the onset of war, the French actress became the face of military propaganda; she newly promoted a changed, more urgent, image of France to Allied audiences abroad.

SHIFTING BORDERS, CHANGING ARGUMENT:
NOTES ON LINGUISTIC AND GEOGRAPHIC LIMITS

The triangulated exchange between France, England, and America (largely circumscribed by Paris, London, and New York) defines the geographic and cultural reach of this study. My reasoning for this is pragmatic: English and French are two languages I have available to me. Another reason is cultural: France dominated the global film industries in the prewar period, and the century that was to follow was largely defined by American film production. There is a logic, therefore, in asking if we might see continuity and overlap (rather than rupture and separation) between the Old and the New, the Past and the Present, a prewar period of female leadership and an interwar period of male directors and Hollywood succession. But there remain questions that I do not pursue. These questions ask for work from scholars who can access and read materials from other countries and continents that I do not explore: Did the French actress enjoy the same impact in non-English-speaking countries as she did in England and America? What do we learn when we take into account her reception in non-Western cities, countries, and continents? A culturally and geographically complex regard might let us know whether the late-nineteenth-century French actress was indeed a global phenomenon or whether she was, instead, the product of a historically determined transnational exchange, filtered selectively through the creative industries of English-speaking nations.

Within the context of English-speaking countries themselves, we can nuance the discussion of transnational reception contexts if we focus regionally or, conversely, geographically further afield. I have discussed, for instance, Bernhard's films being screened in Penzance Pavilions, Cornwall. We might broaden discussion and identify and differentiate English regional reception or explore the significance of French film in relation to known theatrical hubs, such as Manchester.

A transnational bedding into regional difference can deepen our knowledge of local cinemas, enriching our knowledge about cultural exchange, cinemagoing, and “intrafemale” (that is, between actress and audience) contributions to early film. Moreover, if we explore transnational reception contexts further afield—if we move, for example, into a consideration of Australia—we might better understand the transnational spread and reach of the French actresses’ renown, particularly in its articulation through film.² An Australian reception context can also reveal the legacy and imposition of European (and not only British) culture in these important years of Federation. Julie K. Allen, in an article focusing on Asta Nielsen and Francesca Bertini’s reception in Australia in the 1910s, has begun some of this work. Allen argues that film gave these actresses “both opportunities for serious, meaningful engagement in the process of film creation and powerful role models for female emancipation and agency.”³ Can the French actress be added to this transnational discussion of Danish and Italian celebrity? Did the performance cultures of Paris also help to unite audiences across the geographic and linguistic distances in colonial Australia? Implicit in the questions I am posing is also a desire to unpack the coincidence between global first-wave feminism and the “Age of the Actress.” I look forward to scholarship that might explore overlaps between entertainment and politics and, significantly, transnational film and feminist activism.

TRANSNATIONAL FILM AND FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING TODAY

The film festival poses important questions for film history. It is the space where scholars, students, collectors, archivists, programmers, and musicians come together to celebrate important restorations. Because of this (often time-consuming and slow) process of restoration, these festivals function as a space for “practice as research.” That is, the film festival allows us to reassess and reconsider the narratives, biases, and materials that constitute our shared history through the very act of restoring, projecting, and discussing silent film. Introduced by program notes written by global leaders in film archiving and film history, silent films emerge as works that might have been “authored” by a given film director but whose significance is also alive and vital thanks to the collaborative work that went into choosing, restoring, and presenting a film anew to festival audiences today. At festivals, we are also afforded the unique experience of watching a projected film accompanied by live music. Musicians such as Neil Brand, John Sweeney, Gabriel Thibaudeau, and Maud Nelissen—professionals who are not only familiar with silent film but who appreciate the fundamental importance of music to the viewing and theatrical experience of film—have opened my eyes to the nuance of theatrical gesture on the silent screen.⁴ In this forum, film history is an emergent practice and narrative, driven equally by postscreening discussion and debate. What will our second, planned Mistinguett program at *Le Giornate del Cinema*

Muto reveal to us? What further insights will we learn about Réjane when her films are screened together for the first time? My discussion of each case study is, I acknowledge, partly provisional. I look forward to seeing the study of the actress amplified and accorded further festival resources so that we might better appreciate the importance of women to the global spread of film.

The vital work of feminist programmers, scholars, and archivists has begun, in this dynamic context, to offer alternate narratives of film history and what professional success within this history might look like. Scholars/archivists/activists such as Heide Schlüpmann, Karola Gramann, Annette Förster, and Mariann Lewinsky have demonstrated that women drove change in the early industry and that they did this through transnational films. Laura Horak and Maggie Hennefeld's "Nasty Women" programs at Pordenone (2017–) are recent examples of this hands-on, practice-driven archival outreach through a reconsideration of performance on film. Working with Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi, and circulating their work on Blu-ray and DVD, these scholars also ensure that new audiences are introduced to the spectacle of women's slapstick and trick films through viewing platforms that can be brought into the classroom or home. Similarly, this year Pam Hutchinson reintroduced British Film Institute audiences to the Danish actress Asta Nielsen with her curated program, *The ABC of Asta Nielsen*. Hutchinson's program confirms the place of the theatrical actress in our reconsideration of transnational film. It also indicates that the foundational work of Schlüpmann and Gramann continues, in other countries and before new audiences, to drive inquiry into the where, why, and how of transnational reception contexts.

DISCUSSING DATA

As a scholar who was trained in America in the 1990s—and who vividly recalls the limits placed on photocopies, as well as the difficulty of searching microfiche—I am grateful for the affordances research collections give us today. My database of smartphone images, collected over a period of seven years for this project, numbers in the thousands. The information I gained from residencies at the Harry Ransom Center (University of Texas at Austin), the Bill Douglas Museum (University of Exeter), the Cini Foundation (Venice), the Performing Arts collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Library (London), and the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris gave me the data I needed to turn into evidence and write. This database, recorded quickly on-site but studied at leisure once home, allowed me to describe transnational tours, film programs, and the influential networks that the French actress was able to build in cities that were not her own. These materials augmented the vast range of resources I accessed online. The Internet Archive, the Bibliothèque nationale de France's Gallica, the Media History Digital Archive, the newly expanded contents of the British Newspaper Archive, and materials available on YouTube (and, often, eBay) were fundamental to my research.

When I could not find materials, librarians and archivists came to my aid and were extraordinarily generous in their willingness to share materials online.

I have previously argued that microhistory is a historiographic tool that can allow us to question received narratives in film history.⁵ A recent article by Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk has confirmed this view, explaining that microhistory usefully champions more than a film-centered approach to film history.⁶ As Kessler and Lenk explain, the “new cinema history” (that is, the new history in film studies that focuses on the history of moviegoing as opposed to film as an aesthetic object) can use microhistory to embrace the study of “when, where and how” film was seen. As they observe, this joining of textual film history with the issues of distribution, exhibition, and reception emerges because of “the rapidly growing accessibility of paratextual source material, other data, and films themselves, as a result of the massive digitisation efforts around the world in the past decade.”⁷ In other words, access to new and searchable materials and data sets has opened possibilities for comparative and collaborative research. While Kessler and Lenk use my own analysis of a corpus of Bernhardt’s films (in *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt*) to help illustrate the changing relationship between film and cinema history, especially reception contexts, in this study it is the French actress, not her body of films, that I explore as a new corpus for film historical study. I could not have undertaken this study without the digital tools and searchable online resources that made film history newly available to me.

A 2015 talk by Carlo Ginzburg is useful because it self-reflexively highlights that the materials we find on the internet are important to the process of undertaking microhistory. Explaining that a global perspective is nothing new—globalization is a process “begun centuries ago”—Ginzburg notes that the internet has placed us in a series of cultural exchanges and networks that are new to us. He concludes his discussion with a focus on these networks: “We are submerged by data and the problem is how to deal with this enormous mass of data. How can we use the web, in order to exploit its potentialities? I’ve been confronted with this question myself, and I tried to teach my students to navigate in order to find something which, besides answering our questions, raises the possibility of asking new questions on the basis of unexpected findings. The web can be used as a tool for research; and research means looking for the unknown and finding the unknown.”⁸

A case-study-driven history that draws extensively on online data has allowed me to find answers to questions but also to pose some more of my own. One of these—the question of critical language, particularly of the ways we frame and talk about transnational renown—has come to the fore. We employ terms like *cinema pioneer* and *megastar* in our scholarship to convey female achievement on the screen. As my case studies reveal, however, philological anachronism can blind us to differences in cultural reception contexts. The French actress in London was not who she was in New York, and vice versa. Similarly, the French actress on film was not necessarily the same onscreen that she was onstage, and vice versa. By

refusing a superficial framing of the “French actress” on early transnational film, I have shown that English and American reception contexts need to be differentiated. Actresses need not only reveal the tired and ironic fact of their own gendered absence from film history. They can equally expose our ongoing need to remain mindful of the localized and contextual nature of “transnational” film.

NOTES

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

ABBREVIATIONS

BDCM	Bill Douglas Cinema Museum
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
HRC	Harry Ransom Collection
HRC SBC	Harry Ransom Collection, Sarah Bernhardt Collection
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum, Theatre and Performance Collection, Blythe House

INTRODUCTION

1. Jane Gaines, "Introduction: What Gertrude Stein Wonders about Historians," in *Pink-Slipped: What Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries?* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 11. Gaines discusses a process whereby actresses, in particular, are rendered historically invisible. As she argues in discussing "Pearl White": "Ironically, the high visibility of a single image could eclipse an entire world phenomenon" (11). Note that Gaines's awareness of performance work departs significantly from her earlier invitation, published for some years on the home page of the Women Film Pioneers Project, to regard women in the silent film industry as "silent-era producers, directors, co-directors, scenario writers, scenario editors, camera operators, title writers, editors, costume designers, exhibitors and more to make the point that *they were not just actresses.*" *Pink-Slipped* is therefore a timely reminder that the celebrity actress remains an overlooked and misunderstood figure in film history.

2. Stéphanie Salmon, *Pathé, À la conquête du cinéma, 1896–1929* (Paris: Tallandier, 2014).
3. Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xi.
4. Charles Musser, “Conversions and Convergences: Sarah Bernhardt in the Era of Technological Reproducibility, 1911–1913,” *Film History* 25, no. 1–2 (2013): 168.
5. See Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 5.
6. Louis Cheronnet, *A Paris . . . vers 1900* (Paris: Éditions des chroniques du jour, 1932), 12.
7. Forrest Izard, preface to *The Heroines of the Modern Stage* (New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1915), v.
8. Ellen M. Henrotin, foreword to *Heroines of Modern Progress* (New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1913), n.p.
9. Warren Dunham Foster, preface to *Heroines of Modern Progress*, n.p. Dunham was the son of Edith Dunham Foster, who was an educator and programmer for the Motion Picture Community Bureau and involved in the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. See “Women Oppose Censorship,” *Moving Picture World*, June 17, 1916, 2015.
10. Ian Christie, “From Screen Personalities to Stars: Analysing Early Film Fame in Europe,” in *Importing Asta Nielsen: The International Film Star in the Making, 1910–1914*, ed. Martin Loiperdinger and Uli Jung (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey, 2013), 376.
11. “L’Age de la femme,” *Gil Blas*, May 13, 1912, 5.
12. Colette, “Mistinguett,” *Bravo*, Dec. 13, 1929, 5.
13. See Christine Gledhill, “Introduction: Transnationalizing Women’s Film History,” *Framework* 51, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 275–82.
14. Sharon Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 3–4.
15. I will not go into the extensive scholarship that grounds discussions of celebrity in film studies, but I highlight, for my purposes, Richard deCordova’s *Picture Personalities* as a pioneering work in film history that used archival materials (newspapers, fan magazines, trade papers, fan mail collections) to explore the American star system between 1907 and the early 1920s. But while exposing the importance of seeing early film through primary materials that can furnish historical reception contexts, deCordova is singularly focused on younger film stars and early American cinema. As Corey K. Creekmur writes in the 2001 introduction to *Picture Personalities*, studies that emerged from deCordova’s work on film reception in early Hollywood include such groundbreaking books as Miriam Hansen’s *Babel and Babylon* and Gaylyn Studlar’s *This Mad Masquerade*. See Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America, 1907–1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), esp. viii and 8. See also Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); and Gaylyn Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
16. Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*, 132. Note that Marcus cites my own work, as well as the questionable scholarship of David W. Menefee’s *Sarah Bernhardt in the Theatre of Films and Sound Recordings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003) to buttress this view. See Marcus, 254n43.

17. Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siecle France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). See, in particular, her introduction and chapter 6, “The Fantastic Sarah Bernhardt.”
18. Roberts, 3.
19. Susan A. Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), esp. 25–28.
20. Glenn, 35.
21. Glenn, 34–35.
22. Richard Abel, *Menus for Movieland: Newspapers and the Emergence of American Film Culture, 1913–1916* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).
23. Abel eloquently frames questions specifically around gender, journalism, and the emergence of film:

What implications can be drawn from the fact that a good percentage of this newspaper discourse was written and edited by women? To what extent did they share the industry’s efforts to expand audiences well beyond those of the nickelodeon era and include more and more middle-class whites? And if they tended to target women readers, who exactly were these readers and how might they differ in class and age, depending on a newspaper’s “reading field”? Finally, along with other women finding professional and white-collar work in the industry (as Mark Cooper and Hillary Hallett have shown), could these writers and editors be seen as exemplary figures of the “New Woman”? (*Menus for Movieland*, 4)

24. Richard Abel, ed., *Movie Mavens: US Newspaper Women Take on the Movies, 1914–1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), 15, 67, 70–71. Note that a recent article by Mandy Merck entitled “Sarah Bernhardt’s Posthumous Celebrity” is unique in the discussion of Bernhardt’s celebrity because it also notes her work on film. Merck’s article is focused on a particular conundrum of Bernhardt’s fame—that she was celebrated, while living, for dying onstage. As Merck explains, Bernhardt’s most famous roles included Marguerite in Alexandre Dumas’s *Camille* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, both of which were adapted to film and both of which Merck discusses. Inviting readers to explore Bernhardt’s posthumous celebrity, Merck argues that twenty-first-century feminists (myself included) have tended “to play down the implications of Bernhardt’s death scenes.” Merck is correct when she states that I do not seek to define Bernhardt’s celebrity posthumously. I am instead concerned with moments of celebrity emergence because it is here (at the beginning of international tours, or when Bernhardt involved herself with the film industry) that I can demonstrate that foreign audiences engaged with the actress. See Mandy Merck, “Sarah Bernhardt’s Posthumous Celebrity,” *Women: A Cultural Review* 30, no. 4 (Dec. 2019): 387–410, 404.
25. See “Performing Passions: Sarah Bernhardt and the Silent Screen,” *Il Cinema Ritrovato 20 Catalogue*, Bologna, 2006, 55–60, <https://festival.ilcinemaritrovato.it/archivio/2006>. See also Richard Abel and Victoria Duckett, “French Stars: Mistinguett,” *Pordenone Silent Film Festival Catalogue*, La Cineteca del Friuli, Oct. 5–12, 2019, 152–62, www.giornatedelcinemamuto.it/anno/2019.
26. See Mariann Lewinsky’s note about Förster’s book and the ciné-vaudeville in “Part II: La Vase Apache: In honour of Afgrunden,” *Il Cinema Ritrovato 24 Catalogue*, 2010, 165, <https://festival.ilcinemaritrovato.it/en/archivio/2010>. See also Annette Förster’s discussion

in *Women in the Silent Cinema: Histories of Fame and Fate* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 192–210.

27. Mariann Lewinsky, “1910: Stars and Names,” *Cinema Ritrovato Catalogue*, 2010, 146.

28. Lewinsky, 146. The films Lewinsky screened to illustrate the emergence of Mistinguett’s stardom included (in the context of Capellani) the short film *Terror Stricken*, the feature film *The Siren*, and the serial feature *Les Misérables* (1912; this was Mistinguett’s first “dramatic” role as Éponine). The “Hundred Years Ago” program included the two short films *La Valse Chaloupée* (*Valse apache*, Film d’Art, Bourget, 1908, with Max Dearly; an extract from *L’Empreinte ou La Main rouge* [*The Red Hand*]) and *Les Timidités de Rigadin* (Monca, SCAGL, 1910). In addition, two other short films were shown in the context of Monica Dall’Asta’s contemporaneous program, *Fearless and Peerless: Adventurous Women of the Silent Screen: La Doctoresse* (Monca, 1910) and *La Fiancée récalcitrante* (France, SCAGL, 1910). The very versatility that characterizes the varied forms of Mistinguett’s early popularity onstage (through song, dance, and comedy) was visible in this festival programming. In a single Ritrovato context, Mistinguett consequently emerged as a reference to popular stardom, theatrical versatility, and feminist agency in the early twentieth century.

29. Mariann Lewinsky, “1910: Stars and Names,” 146–47.

30. See Martin Pénét, *Mistinguett: La Reine du music hall* (Monaco: Rocher, 1995), 737–44.

31. Catherine Hindson, *Female Performance Practice on the Fin-de-Siècle Popular Stages of London and Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 206.

32. Elaine Aston, “‘Studies in Hysteria’: Actress and Courtesan, Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs Pat Campbell,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress*, ed. Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 253–271, 257, 259.

33. John Stokes, *The French Actress and Her English Audience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1, 2, 4–5.

34. See “Madame Réjane in ‘Lolotte,’” *The Tatler*, April 13, 1910, V&A, Réjane Theatre Collection.

35. Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Bratton’s *Music Hall: Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1986), as well as a similar methodology evident in the second volume of that series, Peter Bailey, *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press, 1986).

36. See Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, “The Academy and Motion Pictures,” in *Inventing Film Studies*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), xi–xxxii, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1131921.4>.

37. See Richard Lowell MacDonald, *The Appreciation of Film: The Post-War Film Society Movement and Film Culture in Britain* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2016). I would like to thank Christine Gledhill for her helpful comments on my article “Theater Actresses and the Transition to Silent Film,” which clarified and articulated these points for me. See “Theater Actresses and the Transition to Silent Film,” Women Film Pioneers Project, ed. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall’Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2022): <https://doi.org/10.7916/b2jj-8714>.

38. See, in particular, Mayer’s early and willing support of the Griffith Project at Pordenone (1997–2008), which helped ensure that American filmmaker David Wark Griffith’s

significant use of the conventions and practices of the nineteenth-century melodramatic stage in his early Biograph films was properly and professionally contextualized to Giornate viewers. Headed by Paolo Cherchi Usai, and involving a generation of noted film historians and archivists, the Griffith Project remains the most thorough example of the new possibilities that film offered an American theater practitioner at the opening of the twentieth century. It still stands as a clarion call for the need to consider our relationship to theater history anew. It is perhaps unsurprising that after such a long and rich involvement in the Griffith Project at the Giornate, Mayer's *Stagestruck Filmmaker* emerged. See David Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker: D. W. Griffith and the American Theatre* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2009). See also Mayer's scholarship concerning the importance of theater history to early film, including "Acting in Silent Cinema: Which Legacy of the Theatre?" in *Screen Acting*, ed. Alan Lovell and Peter Krämer (London: Routledge, 1999), 10–24; "Learning to See in the Dark," *Nineteenth Century Theatre* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 92–114; and "'The Last Days of Pompeii' by James Paine," in *Playing Out the Empire: Ben-Hur and Other Toga Plays and Films, 1883–1908*, ed. David Mayer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 90–103.

39. Eric de Kuyper, "Le Théâtre comme 'mauvais objet,'" *Cinémathèque*, no.11 (1997): 60–72.

40. See Heide Schlüpmann, *The Uncanny Gaze: The Drama of Early German Cinema*, trans. Inga Pollmann (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010 [orig. 1990]). This was originally published in two volumes (the English publication is only the first half of the German edition) as *Unheimlichkeit des Blicks: Das Drama des Frühen deutschen Kinos*. See also my discussion of Schlüpmann's work (as well as my framing of film scholars engaging theater history) in my introduction to *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt: Performance and Silent Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 24–26.

41. James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Yuri Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception*, trans. Alan Bodger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

42. Jon Burrows, *Legitimate Cinema: Theatre Stars in Silent British Films, 1908–1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2003); Christine Gledhill, *Reframing British Cinema, 1918–1928: Between Restraint and Passion* (London: British Film Institute, 2003); Maggie Hennefeld, *Specters of Slapstick and Silent Film Comediennes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Matthew Solomon, *Disappearing Tricks: Silent Film, Houdini, and the New Magic of the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010; see also his *The Gold Rush* [London: British Film Institute, 2015]); and Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, eds., *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

43. Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2–3.

44. Martin Loiperdinger and Uli Jung, introduction to *Importing Asta Nielsen: The International Film Star in the Making, 1910–1914*, ed. Martin Loiperdinger and Uli Jung (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey, 2013), 2.

45. Martin Loiperdinger and Uli Jung, "About Us," Asta Nielsen Database, <https://importing-asta-nielsen.online.uni-marburg.de>.

46. Shelley Stamp, *Lois Weber in Early Hollywood* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 6.

47. Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*, 11. For a recent framing of this stage/screen overlap in the context of male celebrity, see Matthew Solomon's "From Screen to Stage and Back: Max Linder and the 'Cinematographic Sketch,' 1908–1913," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 48 no. 1 (2021): 30–43.

48. Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*, 12. See also Eric de Kuyper, "Le cinéma de la seconde époque: Le muet des années dix," *Cinémathèque*, no. 1 (1992): 28–35; and Eric de Kuyper, "Le cinéma de la seconde époque: Le muet des années dix (II)," *Cinémathèque*, no. 2 (1992): 58–68. See also de Kuyper, "Le théâtre comme 'mauvais objet.'"

49. Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*, 40.

50. Hennefeld, *Specters of Slapstick*, 3, 15, 26.

1. SARAH BERNHARDT

1. Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk, "When the History of Moviegoing Is a History of Movie Watching, Then What about the Films?," in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, ed. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (London: Routledge, 2019), 325. Discussing my book *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt: Performance and Silent Film*, Kessler and Lenk have understood that by using Bernhardt's films as case studies, I am interested in expanding what we know about Bernhardt's theatrical celebrity, the importance of theater to the institution of the cinema, and the cultural landscape (including reception) of early twentieth-century entertainment.

2. See Robert Gottlieb, *Sarah: The Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010) for a recent biography of the actress; see, particularly, chapters 1–5 for a good discussion of her early life. As I note in my discussion of this book, however, film is largely absent from Gottlieb's account (see Victoria Duckett, "Who Was Sarah Bernhardt? Negotiating Fact and Fiction," *Journal of Historical Biography* 10 [Autumn 2011]: 103–12).

3. James Brander Matthews, "The Theatres of Paris," *Art Journal*, Jan. 1, 1879, 267, <https://archive.org/details/jstor-20569403/page/n1/mode/2up>.

4. Matthews, 267.

5. Matthews, 268.

6. "La Vie à Paris," *Le Temps*, Nov. 24, 1882, 3. See also my article, "The Actress-Manager and the Movies: Resolving the Double Life of Sarah Bernhardt," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 45, no. 1 (2018): 27–55.

7. Ernest Pronier, *Une vie au théâtre: Sarah Bernhardt* (Geneva: Alex. Jullien, 1942), 259.

8. Matthews, "The Theatres of Paris," 268.

9. See Duckett, "The Actress-Manager."

10. "In the Theatrical World," *New York Times*, July 29, 1894, 19.

11. Henry James, "The Théâtre Français," in *The Oxford Book of American Essays*, ed. [James] Brander Matthews (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914), www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/40196/pg40196-images.html#page_368.

12. Ignacio Ramos-Gay, "The Comédie-Française in London (1879) and the Call for an English National Theatre," *Revue de littérature comparée* 345, no. 1 (2013): 5–16, www.cairn.info/revue-de-litterature-comparee-2013-1-page-5.htm.

13. Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre and Performance Collection (hereafter V&A), Gaiety Theatre files, July 1879.
14. V&A, Gaiety Theatre files, July 1879.
15. *Molière à Shakspeare: Prologue en vers . . .* / par Jean Aicard (Paris: de D. Jouaust, 1879), Bibliothèque nationale de France, département littérature et art, Z DE VINCK-352, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k96116621.texteImage>.
16. "The Comédie-Française at the Gaiety," *London Evening Standard*, June 3, 1879, 2.
17. "Comédie-Française at the Gaiety," 2.
18. Francisque Sarcey, "Chronique théâtrale," *Le Temps*, Feb. 26, 1872, 2.
19. "The Comédie-Française in London," *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, June 3, 1879, 2.
20. Percy Fitzgerald, *The World behind the Scenes* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), 155–56.
21. Ramos-Gay, "Comédie-Française in London (1879)," 3.
22. "Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt and the Comédie-Française," *The Era*, May 11, 1897, 3.
23. "Latest Intelligence (From Our Correspondent)," *The Times*, May 7, 1879, 7.
24. "La Comédie-Française at the Gaiety," *The Globe*, June 14, 1879, 2.
25. *The Times* noted that "London had the pleasure in witnessing in 1870 the performances of some of the most distinguished members and in 1871 of a large section of the company of what we are accustomed to call the Théâtre Française . . . but the whole of that world-renowned *troupe* has never yet appeared in London nor, indeed, on any stage within living memory but its own. . . . There is no company in the world the charm of whose performance consists so much in the perfection of its *ensemble*." "La Comédie-Française at the Gaiety," *The Times*, June 3, 1879, 5.
26. "Saratoga, July 27, 1879," *Between Actor and Critic: Selected Letters of Edwin Booth and William Winter*, ed. Daniel J. Watermeier (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 137.
27. Sarah Bernhardt, *My Double Life: Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt* (London: William Heinemann, 1907), 297.
28. "Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt's Sculptures and Pictures," *The Times*, June 16, 1879, 10.
29. Fitzgerald, *World behind the Scenes*, 135. See BnF, Rondel collection (RT 5892), for the *Catalogue des Oeuvres de Mlle Sarah Bernhardt (de la Comédie-Française) Peinture-Sculpture 1879* (Oxford: J. Miles, 1879).
30. "Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt's Pictures," *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, June 16, 1879, 2.
31. See René Lelong, *Sarah Bernhardt Conversing with William Gladstone at Her London Exhibition of 1879* (1881), www.daheshmuseum.org/portfolio/1166/#.XKreYOszbBI). Nicole Savvy, *Stars et Monstres sacrés* (Paris: Les Dossiers du Musée d'Orsay, édition de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux), 17: "L'accueil réservé aux œuvres de Sarah fut mitigé en France. Rodin traita de <<saloperie>> son buste de jeune fille au Salon de 1874. L'étranger fut plus respectueux: Londres organisa en 1879 une exposition de ses peintures et sculptures qui reçut la visite du prince de Galles et de William Gladstone; l'année suivante l'Union League Club de New York célébra 'Melle Bernhardt as Actress and Sculptor.'"
32. Jan Dirk Baetens, "The Belgian Brand: Ernest Gambart and the British Market for Modern Belgian Art, c.1850–1870," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 92, no. 4 (2014): 1279.
33. "Mdlle. Sarah Bernhardt's Sculptures and Pictures," 10.

34. H. D., "High Life," *La Comédie*, Jan. 1, 1879, 2–3, <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb327447686>.
35. Pamela M. Fletcher, "Creating the French Gallery: Ernest Gambart and the Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery in Mid-Victorian London," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2007), par. 4, www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring07/143.
36. *Gaiety Chronicles* (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1898), 371. News of this break was reported as early as June 30, 1879, in *The Times* ("Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt Has, We Understand—," Monday, June 30, 1879, 11).
37. V&A, Gaiety Theatre files, 1880.
38. See *Lyceum French Plays*, July 25, 1887, V&A, Theatre and Performance Collection (hereafter V&A).
39. See the handwritten list in V&A's Sarah Bernhardt files (n.d.).
40. "Lyceum Theatre," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, August 6, 1887, 22.
41. "The Playhouses," *Illustrated London News*, August 4, 1888, 7.
42. "The Playhouses," 7.
43. V&A, Sarah Bernhardt files, *Graphic*, July 14, 1888, n.p.
44. J. P. Wearing, "The London West End Theatre in the 1890s," *Educational Theatre Journal* 29, no. 3 (Oct. 1977): table 1, 321. Wearing is drawing on Gaiety Theatre and Her Majesty's Theatre statistics as recorded in Diana Howard, *London Theatres and Music Halls, 1850–1950* (London: Library Association, 1970), 88, 111.
45. Richard Schoch, "Theatre and Mid-Victorian society, 1851–1870," in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, vol. 2, 1660–1895 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 334.
46. Michael Bennett Leavitt, *Fifty Years in Theatrical Management* (New York: Broadway Publishing, 1912), 418.
47. Booth's playbill, Nov. 8, 1880, HRC SBC, box 3, folder 3.4.
48. Booth's playbill.
49. "The Advent of Bernhardt," *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1880, 1.
50. See Booth's playbill, HRC SBC, box 3, folder 3.4. See also the sheet music for Aronson's waltz at www.loc.gov/resource/sm1880.12960.o/?sp=1.
51. Booth's playbill, HRC SBC, box 3, folder 3.4.
52. See Booth's playbill, Nov. 9, 1880, HRC SBC, box 8, folder 8.11.
53. "The Bernhardt Craze," *Willesden Chronicle Daily*, Nov. 19, 1880, 8. Note that on Bernhardt's opening night at Booth's Theatre the "Marseillaise" was again played ("to the evident pleasure of Mlle. Bernhardt") by an orchestra, this time on the street outside the Albemarle Hotel, where she was staying on Twenty-Fourth Street. See "The Advent of Bernhardt," *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1880, 1.
54. *Quand même* (in any case, notwithstanding) was Bernhardt's personal motto and emblazoned across her initials on her letterhead. See Edouard Lièvre's standing mirror with her motto and initials as an example of this worked into furniture (1875, www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn_06/reviews/silv_03.html). See also HRC SBC, box 8, folder 8.2, Dec. 18, 1880. This same information was repeated on other December programs at the Globe Theatre. See HRC SBC, box 8, folder 8.11, Dec. 8, 1880.
55. See HRC SBC, box 8, folder 8.11, Jan. 10, 1881. See also Augustus Thomas in *The Print of My Remembrance*, where Thomas writes that Bernhardt exhibited "her little canvases and bronzes" at the St. Louis Sketch Club and that "she stood in the salon of our little club

to receive three or four hundred honoured with invitations” (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 102.

56. “The Bernhardt Craze,” 8.
57. “The Advent of Bernhardt,” 1.
58. “The Advent of Bernhardt,” 1.
59. “Theatrical Gossip,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1887, 8.
60. “Theatrical Gossip,” *New York Times*, April 2, 1887, 2.
61. “The Star Theatre,” *New York Times*, August 21, 1883, 8. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1883/08/21/106252175.pdf>.
62. See HRC SBC, box 3, folder 11, March 15, 1887.
63. “AMUSEMENTS,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1887, p. 1, col. 7. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1887/03/15/100901141.html?pageNumber=1>.
64. “BERNHARDT IN NEW-YORK,” *New York Times*, March, 15, 1887, p. 5, col. 3, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1887/03/15/issue.html>.
65. Note that on her first tour to America she traveled in the president of the Eerie Railroad’s private train. See John Collins, “Henry Abbey: Image Maker of the Flash Age,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 18, no. 3 (1966): 235, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3204945. Note also that Bernhardt’s association with the railroad and modernity was not unique to her: it was common for actresses to publicize their associations with railroads in America.
66. Sharon Marcus, “Salomé!! Sarah Bernhardt, Oscar Wilde, and the Drama of Celebrity,” *PMLA* 126, no. 4 (Oct. 2011): 1005.
67. See, for example, the wealth of information and detail in Harry Miner, ed., *Harry Miner’s American Dramatic Directory for the Season of 1884–’85* (New York: Wolf & Palmer Dramatic Publishing, 1884). I would like to thank David Mayer for bringing this publication to my attention.
68. Stephen M. Archer, “E pluribus unum: Bernhardt’s 1905–1906 Farewell Tour,” in *The American Stage: Social and Economic Issues from the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Ron Engle and Tice L. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 161.
69. David Mayer, *Stagestruck Filmmaker: D. W. Griffith & the American Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 48.
70. *London Coliseum*, Oct. 3, 1910, in V&A, London Coliseum programs.
71. Charles Musser, “Conversions and Convergences: Sarah Bernhardt in the Era of Technological Reproducibility, 1911–1913,” *Film History* 25 (2013): 160–61.
72. See London Coliseum program, Oct. 16, 1911, in V&A, London Coliseum programs. Note here that in addition to her tin foil recordings with Edison in 1880, Bernhardt had already made two cylinders for Gianni Bettini in New York in 1896, five Pathé cylinders in 1902, and records with the American Zonophone Company, as well as the Gramophone and Typewriter Company in 1903. In the instance of the latter—the only company based in Britain with whom Bernhardt made records—advertisements emphasized the ways in which the phonograph could replace the theater and allow Bernhardt into the home. For example, one stated: “Going to the theatre entails catching the last train. On the Gramophone you can hear in your own garden Sarah Bernhardt’s sympathetic and dramatic voice.” See Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897–1915* (Trowbridge, UK: Flicks, 1999), 237.
73. *London Coliseum*, Sept. 1911 program, University of Exeter, Special Collections, EUL MS 170.

74. “Bernhardt Acts Fedora,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1887, 1; see also *London Coliseum*, Sept. 19, 1910, in V&A, London Coliseum programs.

75. See the back cover of the Coliseum Program, Sept. 16, 1912, in V&A, London Coliseum programs.

76. Ibid.

77. See “Mme. Sarah Bernhardt Season,” *London Coliseum*, Sept. 1911 program, in V&A, London Coliseum programs.

78. “Madame Bernhardt and the Variety Stage,” *London Coliseum*, August 21, 1911, 10, in V&A, London Coliseum programs.

79. *London Coliseum*, Sept. 2, 1910; see also Nov. 21, 1910, in V&A, London Coliseum programs. Fuller appeared on Sarah Bernhardt’s program as the act just before the intermission and came “Direct from [the] Metropolitan Opera House, New York.”

80. *London Coliseum*, Sept. 9, 1910, in V&A, London Coliseum programs; *London Coliseum*, Oct. 7, 1912, in V&A, London Coliseum programs.

81. *London Coliseum*, Oct. 7, 1912, in V&A, London Coliseum programs.

82. *London Coliseum*, Sept. 30, 1912, in V&A, London Coliseum programs. See also E. M. Evors, comp., *The Bernhardt Birthday Book* (London: J. Miles, 1912), Exeter BDCM, <https://archive.org/details/bernhardtbirthdayaoeovor/page/n5/mode/2up>.

83. See Frank Kessler’s article, “A Trip to the Moon as Féerie,” particularly the sections entitled “The Féerie on the French Stage,” “The Féerie from Stage to Screen,” and “The Féerie as a Cinematic Genre.” These present a clear outline of the increasing distinction in France between dramatic art and spectacular delights onstage, as well as the movement of popular theatrical spectacle onto film. Although Kessler is talking specifically of the *féerie*, and of the adaptation of this to the cinema, what is interesting is the ways in which this genre of popular theater can be linked to the variety show, with popular early cinema emerging as an “attractional genre” within the program, a sort of *pièce à machine*. See Matthew Solomon, ed., *Fantastic Voyages of the Cinematic Imagination: Georges Méliès’s “Trip to the Moon”* (Albany: State University of New York, 2011), 116–28.

84. Musser, “Conversions and Convergences,” 158.

85. *The Palace Theatre Presents Madame Sarah Bernhardt in Vaudeville* (New York: Printwell, 1912), [5].

86. *Palace Theatre Presents*, [4].

87. *Vaudeville Palace Theatre*, May 5, 1913, 21, HRC SBC, box 4, folder 13.

88. *Palace Theatre of New York*, May 12, 1911, HRC SBC, box 4, folder 4.6.

89. For a fuller discussion of this, see “Tales from a Scenic Artist and Scholar. Part 615—Theatrical Guides—Cahn-Leighton Theatrical Guide,” <https://drypigment.net/2019/01/14/tales-from-a-scenic-artist-and-scholar-part-615-theatrical-guides-cahn-leighton-theatrical-guide>.

90. See Victoria Duckett, “Investigating an Interval: Sarah Bernhardt, *Hamlet*, and the Paris Exposition of 1900,” in *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*, ed. Vicki Callahan (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 193–212.

91. “Brevities of the Business,” *Motography*, Nov. 9, 1912, 377. See also “State Rights Now Selling Sarah Bernhardt in *La Tosca*,” *Moving Picture World*, Oct. 12, 1912, 109; and G. F. Blaisdell, “Sarah Bernhardt in *La Tosca*,” *Moving Picture World*, Oct. 19, 1912, 230–31.

92. See “Two fine Bernhardt films,” *Cinema News and Property Gazette*, Nov. 1912, 19.

93. *Moving Picture World*, Oct. 28, 1916, 626.

94. *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 10, 1912, 498–499.
95. *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 10, 1912, 498–99.
96. *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 17, 1912, 596–97.
97. Jean Levêque, “En écoutant ‘Sarah’ parler du cinéma,” *Le Journal*, April 17, 1914, 7, trans. Andrew Broan as “‘Sarah’ Talks to Us about the Cinema,” in *Red Velvet Seat: Women’s Writing on the First Fifty Years of Cinema*, ed. Antonia Lant, with Ingrid Periz (London: Verso, 2006), 597.
98. See, e.g., the image and text to “The Times Building, New York,” *Burr Macintosh Monthly*, June 1906, 21.
99. “French-American Film Co Bring Bernhardt and Rejane,” *Moving Picture News*, Feb. 10, 1912, 25.
100. See the mention of Bernhardt and Réjane (the only actors cited) being willing to appear in kinemacolor in an article about Charles Urban: “To-day kinemacolor is known throughout the globe as the marvel of the age. Bernhardt, Rejane, and other notables of the profession have expressed their willingness to pose for kinemacolor, that not alone form and expression but the real live tint of their skin my go filmed to the halls of fame for posterity to view.” Margaret I. MacDonald, “What Perseverance Did for a Man,” *Moving Picture News*, March 16, 1912, 10.
101. “Éclair presents Mme. Bernhardt in Pictures,” *Moving Picture World*, Nov. 11, 1911, 473.
102. See comments about F. G. Spencer purchasing the Canadian rights to the films: “Mr. Spencer will present the pictures in the high-class houses, touring in the same manner as though he were exploiting Mme. Bernhardt herself” “Spencer Gets Bernhardt-Rejane Pictures for Canada,” *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 24, 1912, 694.
103. “Bernhardt and Rejane,” *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 10, 1912, 468. See the two-page advertisement in this same issue for film lengths (498–99).
104. “Bernhardt and Rejane,” 468.
105. “New England,” *Moving Picture World*, May 11, 1912, 552.
106. “Appearance of Bernhardt and Rejane Milestone in Evolution of Moving Picture,” *Moving Picture News*, March 23, 1912, 12.
107. Advertisement, *Moving Picture News*, March 16, 1912, 55.
108. Advertisement, *Moving Picture News*, Feb. 24, 1912, 9.
109. See, e.g., *Moving Picture News*, March 16, 1912, 55 (advertisement).
110. By May 18, *Moving Picture World* was advertising the fact that the only states open were Kansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arkansas, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. See full-page advertisement, *Moving Picture World*, May 18, 1912, 445.
111. “Bernhardt and Rejane in Pictures,” *Moving Picture World*, March 2, 1912, 760.
112. See “Lectures on Special Films,” *Moving Picture World*, April 13, 1912, 176. See also, e.g., *Moving Picture World*, April 20, 1912, 280; April 27, 1912, 371; May 4, 1912, 478; and May 11, 1912, 570.
113. “Chicago Film Brevities,” *Moving Picture World*, June 8, 1912, 912.
114. “New England,” *Moving Picture World*, May 11, 1912, 552.
115. “Spencer Gets Bernhardt-Rejane Pictures for Canada,” *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 24, 1912, 694.
116. Robert Grau, “Theatre Men in Pictures,” *Moving Picture World*, Sept. 28, 1912, 1265.
117. Grau, 1265.

118. "Chicago Film Brevities," *Moving Picture World*, May 18, 1912, 612.
119. "Washington, D.C.," *Moving Picture News*, June 8, 1912, 19.
120. Robert Grau, "Will Vaudeville's Salary Uplift Itself in Picturedom," *Moving Picture News*, Feb. 10, 1912, 10.
121. Margaret I. MacDonald, "Nat C. Goodwin to Star in the Silent Drama," *Moving Picture News*, May 11, 1912, 7.
122. See Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema* (New York: Scribners, 1990), 204–5; Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 316; Musser, "Conversions and Convergences," 169 (note that Musser cites, in his turn, Terry Ramsaye, Georges Sadoul, and Adolph Zukor when he speaks of the "well-established milestone" of Bernhardt embracing the motion pictures through *Queen Elizabeth*), 155; Jean-Marc Leveratto, "Sarah Bernhardt dans *Queen Elisabeth* (1912), du théâtre (français) au cinéma (américain)," in *Théâtre, destin du cinéma*, ed. Agathe Torti-Alcayaga and Christine Kheil (Paris: Le Manuscrit, 2013), 25–43. See also Barbara Hodgdon, "Romancing the Queen," in *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), chap. 4, esp. 112–16.
123. Mention of Brockliss and his relation to the film is made under an image of Bernhardt in *Queen Elizabeth* entitled "Sarah Bernhardt as 'Queen Bess,'" in the files held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, *Sarah Bernhardt dans "La reine Elisabeth," pièce d'Emile Moreau: Documents iconographiques*, 1912, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84387335/f3.item.r=Sarah%20Bernhardt%20dans%22La%20reine%20Elisabeth%22,%20pi%C3%A8ce%20d'Emile%20Moreau%20%20documents%20iconographiques,%201912.zoom>.
124. Note that although the film gives a credit for Mlle Romain, she is sometimes cited as "Romani." See Bert's photograph in (screen 1), "*La reine Elisabeth*," *pièce d'Emile Moreau: Documents iconographiques*, 1912. See also the credits of the film given by the Cinémathèque française (CNC), <http://lise.cnc.fr/Internet/ARemplir/Parcours/10oans/juillet1913.html>. See also Leveratto, "Sarah Bernhardt dans *Queen Elizabeth*," 33.
125. Zukor bought the American rights to the film, paying US\$360 a day plus 10 percent of gross to Bernhardt, and he arranged a lavish opening at the Lyceum in New York. "A four reel film, it reconciled exhibitors towards the longer film and earned \$80 000 for Zukor on an investment of \$18 000. With this money Zukor was able to make a distribution deal with Paramount Pictures, which he eventually took over." Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, *The Divine Sarah: A Life of Sarah Bernhardt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 310.
126. David Robinson, "Some Remarks on French Companies in the London Market in 1913," 1895, *revue d'histoire du cinema* (1993): 187, www.persee.fr/doc/1895_0769-0959_1993_hos_1_1_1023
127. Adolph Zukor, *The Public Is Never Wrong* (London: Cassell, 1954), 47.
128. "Queen Elizabeth Presentation in New York," *Moving Picture World*, Sept. 7, 1912, 985.
129. Souvenir pamphlet, www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/vintage-sarah-berhardt-historic-photo-1726465402.
130. Sixty-nine consecutive covers of *Photoplay* have recently been published by the Network of Research: Movies, Magazines and Audiences; see www.normmanetwork.com/exciting-normma-news-photoplay-covers-1912-1980.
131. *Moving Picture World*, July 27, 1912, 311.

132. Richard Abel, "Movies, Innovative Nostalgia, and Real-Life Threats," in *American Cinema of the 1910s: Themes and Variations*, ed. Charlie Keil and Ben Singer (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 83.
133. *Moving Picture World*, Sept. 14, 1912, 1036.
134. Zukor, *Public Is Never Wrong*, 47.
135. Advertisement for *Queen Elizabeth* as *Queen Bess*, BDCM.
136. Advertisement for *Queen Elizabeth* as *Queen Bess*.
137. University of Exeter Library, Special Collections, EUL MS 170. The census of 1891 confirms Gunner's status as a draper in Kent; evidently, there were possibilities of localizing references to *Queen Elizabeth* outside film theaters. For the census record, see <https://ukcensusonline.com> (search on "George F. [not T.] Gunner").
138. BDCM, held in EXEBD 18356, box 564.

2. GABRIELLE RÉJANE

1. J. T. Grein, "On Réjane as Sapho," *Sunday Special*, June 23, 1901, repr. in *The English Dramatic Critics: An Anthology, 1660–1932*, ed. James Agate (London: Arthur Barker, 1932), 258–59.
2. John Stokes, "A Kind of Beauty': Réjane in London," in *The French Actress and Her English Audience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122.
3. See Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 204–5; and Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 316.
4. Matthews, "The Theatres of Paris," 268.
5. James Brander Matthews, *The Theatres of Paris* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880), 69, <https://archive.org/details/theatresofparisoomattiala/page/68>.
6. "Foreign Theatrical and Musical Intelligence," *London Morning Post*, April 2, 1875, 6.
7. Francisque Sarcey, "Chronique théâtrale," *Le Temps*, April 5, 1875, 1.
8. Sarcey, 1. See also "Sarah Bernhardt dans 'La fille de Roland,' drame d'Henri de Bornier: Documents iconographiques," <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb39503214f>.
9. "Foreign Theatrical and Musical Intelligence," *London Morning Post*, April 2, 1875, 6. This epigraph was adapted from the poet Boileau's second work in his *Art poétique*, where, referring to satire, he states:

D'un trait de ce poëme, en bons mots si fertile,
Le Français, né malin, *forma* le vaudeville,
Agréable indiscret qui, conduit par le chant,
Passe de bouche en bouche, et grandit en marchant.

(Louis Désiré Véron, *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris: Comprenant: La Fine de l'empire* . . . [Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1856], 199)

10. Sarcey, "Chronique théâtrale," 1.
11. The play premiered on November 21, 1876. Note of this date is made on the half-title page of Octave Gastineau, *Perfide comme l'onde* (Paris: Tresse et Stock, 1889), <https://archive.org/details/perfidecommelondoogast/page/n5/mode/zup?view=theater>.
12. "Foreign Theatrical and Musical Intelligence," *London Morning Post*, Dec. 1, 1876, 3.

13. See the series listed opposite the title page in Gastineau, *Perfide comme l'onde*.
14. Gastineau, *Perfide comme l'onde*, 21, 22.
15. Gastineau, 14. See comments such as François Baudot's that detail this information: "Gabrielle is to become an elementary-school teacher, that's [her mother] Alfonsine's dream: teaching is a profession that offers knowledge and security, discipline and self-sacrifice, all of which are virtuous ideals for the French. "Fifty francs a month and free board; you're not going to decline an offer like that and make me the mother of an actress!" François Baudot, *Réjane, La Reine du boulevard* (Paris: Editions 7L, 2001), n.p.
16. See "Gaiety (French Plays)," *The Standard*, July 16, 1877, 4 (also July 18, 1877, 4); and "Gaiety, Paris Vaudeville Company," *The Times* (London), July 16, 1877, 8. *Perfide comme l'onde* was scheduled for 8:20 p.m., and *Le Procès Veauradieux (The Great Divorce Case)* at 8:45 p.m., for two evenings in July.
17. See John Hollingshead, *Gaiety Chronicles* (London: Archibald Constable, 1898), 360.
18. Ignacio Ramos-Gay, "Introduction: Performing, Translating, and Adapting from the French in Victorian Britain," *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 86 (Autumn 2017): <https://doi.org/10.4000/cve.3287>, par. 11.
19. Hindson, *Female Performance Practice*, 61.
20. Hindson, 61.
21. "London Gossip," August 24, 1878, *Wrexham Advertiser*, 7. See also John Hollingshead's account of this in Hollingshead, *Gaiety Chronicles*, 67–68.
22. "Gaiety Theatre," *London Morning Post*, June 20, 1883, 2.
23. "The Theatre," *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 22, 1883, 3.
24. Ramos-Gay, "Introduction," par. 5.
25. Ramos-Gay, par. 5.
26. "Town and Country Gossip," *Horse and Hound*, Dec. 13, 1890, 755.
27. Leo Spitzer, "Cavort," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 48, no. 1 (1949): 132–33.
28. "Events in France," *The Standard*, Nov. 4, 1890, 5.
29. Alfred Capus, "Chronique Parisienne: Grille d'Égout et son temps," *La Revue politique et littéraire*, Nov. 8, 1890, 604–5
30. Capus, 604–5.
31. Capus, 605.
32. "Events in France," 5.
33. "A Lady's Letter," *North London News*, Oct. 15, 1897, 7; printed in (for example) *Exmouth Journal*, Oct. 15, 1897, 3; *Buckinghamshire Express*, Oct. 15, 1897, 3; *Cornubian and Redruth Times*, Oct. 15, 1897, 5; and *Meath Herald and Cavan Advertiser*, Oct. 15, 1897, 3.
34. "Daly's Theatre," *London Morning Post*, June 19, 1894, 6.
35. Clement Scott, "Sarah Bernhardt in London," *Illustrated London News*, June 23, 1894, 775.
36. "In the Theatrical World," *New York Times*, July 29, 1894, 19.
37. "Feathers from the Wings," *Moonshine*, June 9, 1894, 275.
38. Bernhardt appeared in *Izejl*, *Les Rois*, *La Femme de Claude*, *La Tosca*, *La Dame aux camélias*, and *Phèdre* between June 18 and July 21, 1893, at Daly's.
39. V&A, Gaiety Theatre files, 1893.
40. *Madame Sans-Gêne* had played for a consecutive 230 nights before arriving in London. See "Gaiety Theatre," special edition of *Le Gaulois*, London Season, 1894, 1. V&A, Réjane files.

41. See advertisement, "Gaiety Theatre," *The Times* (London), June 25, 1894, 9; and "Madame Sans Gêne," *The Standard*, May 29, 1894, 4.
42. "Gaiety Theatre," *London Morning Post*, June 25, 1894, 6.
43. "Madame Réjane: A Chat during an Entr'acte," *The Sketch*, July 4, 1894, 20.
44. "Our Captious Critic: 'Madame Sans-Gêne,'" *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, July 14, 1894, 714.
45. Michele Majer, "Plus que Reine: The Napoleonic revival in Belle Epoque Theatre and Fashion," *Theatre Symposium* 26 (2018): 12.
46. Cited in *ibid.*, 11; Datta is writing in the book *Heroes and Legends of Fin-de-Siècle France: Gender, Politics, and National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
47. Henry Fouquier, "Réjane, La Reprise de Madame Sans-Gêne," *Le Théâtre*, no. 36 (June 1900): 6.
48. "Gaiety Theatre," *London Morning Post*, June 25, 1894, 6.
49. Sita, "Round the Town," *Sporting Times*, June 7, 1894, 2.
50. "Court Circular," *London Morning Post*, June 26, 1894, 5.
51. Participants included the singer Camilla Landi, operatic bass Pol Plançon, Dutch violinist Johannes Wolff, and Australian operatic soprano Nellie Melba. See "Musical Gossip," *Cheltenham Looker-On*, July 14, 1894, 10. See also the advertisement in *The Times* (London), June 30, 1894, 1, which stated that this "Grand Morning Concert" was conducted by Herman Bemberg.
52. The reception was held July 17, 1894, and began at the Gallery at 11 p.m. See "To-Day," *The Standard*, July 17, 1894, 3; and "Theatrical and Musical Intelligence," *London Morning Post*, July 16, 1894, 3.
53. As an article entitled "The French Hospital" in the *Morning Post* recounts: "Among those present were the Italian Ambassador and Countess Tornielli, Signor Andrea Corsini, Duc di Casigliano, Comte de St. Genys, Comte du Pontavise, M. Fabre Luse and M. E. Pelletier (of the French Embassy), Marquis Paulini di Calbotti, the Chevalier de Souza Correa, Baron de Knoop, Baron de Goltstein, the Marchioness of Carmarthen, the Marchioness of Queensberry, the Earl of Kilmorey, Lord and Lady Sherborne, Sir W. Rose, Sir Lepel and Lady Griffin, Lady Astley, Sir George Elliott, Lady Pontifex, Sir W. Pearson, the Hon. Dudley Campbell, Colonel Church, Colonel Montagu, Captain Fitz George, and Mrs. Bernhard Beere" (July 18, 1894, 5).
54. *Fair Women: The Grafton Galleries* (London: Grafton Galleries, 1894); see, respectively, pp. 52 (lot 233) and 133 (lot 574).
55. *Fair Women*, preface, n.p.
56. Bridget Elliott, "New and Not So 'New Women' on the London Stage: Aubrey Beardsley's *Yellow Book* Images of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Réjane," *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 1 (Autumn 1987): 33–34.
57. Elliott, 53–57, esp. 56. Aubrey Beardsley, "Portrait of Madame Réjane," *The Yellow Book*, vol. 2 (London: E. Mathews & J. Lane, 1894), 98.
58. Dauphin Meunier, "Madame Réjane," *The Yellow Book*, vol. 2 (London: E. Mathews & J. Lane, 1894), 197.
59. Meunier, 205–6.
60. "Rejane Sails on La Champagne," *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 1895, 16.
61. "The Original 'SansGene,'" *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1895, 28.
62. See, e.g., "Theatrical Gossip," *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 1894, 8; "Notes of the Stage," *New York Times*, Nov. 4, 1894, 10; and "Notes of the Stage," *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1894, 14.

63. "The Original 'SansGene.'"
64. "The Original 'SansGene.'"
65. "Abbey's Theatre-Rejane," *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1895, 7.
66. For instance, Richard Mansfield had appeared in Lorimer Stoddard's *Napoleon Bonaparte* in New York in 1894; Charles H. Hoyt's 1894 *A Milk White Flag* presented a burlesque of a "citizen soldier" who resembled Napoleon so much that he was made a chief officer; and Albert Roland Haven's *Josephine, Empress of the French* (1890) was a vehicle for Mlle. Rhéa. See "Napoleon Not a Success on the Stage," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 9, 1894, 36.
67. "The Week at the Theatres," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1895, 38.
68. "The Social World," *New York Times*, March 9, 1895, 2. See also how, in England, Réjane's dress also influenced fashion. In "Our Ladies Column" in the *Wrexham Weekly Advertiser* (May 25, 1896, 48), it is explained that at the wedding of Lady Katherine Beauclerc to Mr. Somers Somerset "several beautiful dresses were circled with wide jewelled and sequined belts, and one lovely gown recalled to me a dress worn by Madame Réjane at the Napoleonic reception in 'Mme. Sans-Gêne.'"
69. Henry Stuart, "Madame Rejane: The Famous French Comedienne of the Paris Vaudeville," *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1895, 24.
70. "Mme. Rejane Is Seen in a New Role at Abbeys," *New York Times*, March 19, 1895, 5.
71. "Mme. Rejane as Nora Helmer," *New York Times*, March 23, 1895, 4. See also "The Theatrical Week," *New York Times*, March 24, 1895, 13, for a short summation and reiteration of these views.
72. "Refined Art Doesn't Draw in Boston," *New York Times*, May 26, 1895, 17.
73. "Mme. Rejane's Tour Unsatisfactory," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 1, 1895, 6.
74. "Sarah at Her Best," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 3, 1896, 1.
75. See, e.g., "To Enjoin Rejane: Her Husband Takes Judicial Proceedings against Actress," *New York Times*, Dec. 13, 1903, 4; "Rejane's Wifely Rights," *New York Times*, March 1, 1904, 9; and "Rejane Defeats Her Husband," *New York Times*, May 17, 1894, 9.
76. "Rejane May Live Here," *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1904, 1. A stock company was a troupe of actors performing regularly in a particular theater. They had a repertoire of plays that they played, changing their production nightly. They were composed of dramatic "types" (tragedian, leading man, leading lady, etc.). See Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Stock company," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Nov. 5, 2008, www.britannica.com/art/stock-company.
77. "Madame Gabrielle Rejane," Nov. 6, 1904, *New York Times*, SMA5.
78. "Rejane in 'Amoureuse' and 'Lolotte,'" *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1904, 9.
79. "Rejane in 'Amoureuse' and 'Lolotte,'" 9.
80. "Rejane in 'La Passerelle,'" *New York Times*, Nov. 11, 1904, 9.
81. "Gabrielle Rejane in a Peasant Tragedy," *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1904.
82. "No Staircase Scene in the French Sappho," *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1904, 6.
83. "Playbills," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 4, 1904, C1.
84. W. L. Hubbard, "The Playgoer," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 18, 1904, C1.
85. "Theatrical and Musical Intelligence," *London Morning Post*, June 17, 1895, 6; advertisement, June 24, 1895, *London Morning Post*, 4.
86. See *The Garrick Theatre Programme*, July 1, 1895, V&A, Blyth House.
87. "French Plays at the Garrick," *The Standard*, July 2, 1895, 3.

88. "Garrick Theatre," *London Morning Post*, July 9, 1895, 3.
89. "French Plays at the Garrick," 3.
90. "Madame Sans-Gêne at the Lyceum Theatre," *London Morning Post*, April 12, 1897, 6. Irving announced he would present this at the Lyceum in 1895, when he said that *Madame Sans-Gêne* offered a "delightful opportunity" for Réjane's "gifted fellow-worker, Ellen Terry." See *London Morning Post*, July 23, 1894, 3.
91. "French Plays at the Lyric," *The Standard*, July 6, 1897, 5; "Theatrical and Musical Notes," *The Standard*, July 13, 1897, 5.
92. See, e.g., "University Intelligence," *The Standard*, June 24, 1899, 2, where it is reported that she joins Ellen Terry, Mrs. Kendall, Miss Florence St. John, and others at the Coronet Theatre, Notting Hill Gate, in aid of the Seaford Convalescent home; "London Theatre Events," *New York Times*, June 20, 1897, 16, where it is noted that Réjane joins Bernhardt, Irving, Edward Terry, Beerbohm Tree, and others at the Lyceum Theatre for a matinée to benefit the Queen's Commemoration Fund; "Portraits at the Grafton Galleries," *The Standard*, Oct. 14, 1898, 4, where Paul-Albert Besnard's portrait of Réjane was criticized for requiring "subtlety as well as audacity to catch her character"; and "Art, Music and Drama," *York Herald*, June 13, 1899, 3, for a note that Mr. Arthur Lewis is arranging for Réjane a "week of matinees in the provinces."
93. Ludovic Naudeau, "Paris dans Londres," *Le Figaro*, June 27, 1901, 1. This article was also reproduced in the English press.
94. Quoted in Naudeau, 1.
95. The clique was an employed group of audience attendees who were "salaried applauders of the theatre." See Matthews, *The Theatres of Paris*, 7–11, where Matthews explains that "the spectator in Paris is not called on to applaud. Never mind how much he may be pleased with the performance, he need not rend his gloves or make his hands tingle in the effort to express his approbation. He may rest sure that the salaried applauders of the theatre, detailed for regular service every night, will do their duty, and enliven the evening's entertainment with the regulation rounds of applause" (7).
96. "Madame Rejane," *Chicago Tribune*, March 3, 1895, 24.
97. Édouard Noël and Edmond Stoullig, "Théâtre Réjane," in *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1906), 267.
98. Postcard n.276, A. W. Andernach, Industriel, Anvin, copy author's own.
99. "La Saison prochaine au théâtre Réjane," *Le Figaro*, June 6, 1908, 4.
100. "Le Théâtre Réjane," *Le Temps*, Dec. 16, 1906, n.p.
101. "Rejane Wants Honest Critics: Will Sell Seats from Dress Rehearsals and Bar Flattering Guests," *New York Times*, Dec. 5, 1909, C4.
102. "Rejane as an American," *New York Times*, March 17, 1907, 9.
103. "Draws Custom by Old Glory," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1907, 18.
104. "Rejane to Quit as Manager," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 19, 1910, A2.
105. See Terry's Theatre, "Madame Rejane's Season," June 5–30, 1905, V&A, Rejane files.
106. Terry's second week repertoire, June 17, 1905, V&A, Rejane files.
107. *Luton Times and Advertiser*, April 8, 1910, 7.
108. Hippodrome program, March 28, 1910, V&A, Hippodrome programs.
109. Hippodrome program, April 4, 1910, V&A, Hippodrome programs.
110. See Hippodrome program, March 14, 1910, V&A, Hippodrome programs.
111. "Rejane at the Hippodrome," *The Era*, April 9, 1910, 22.

112. "Rejane at the Hippodrome," 22.
113. "Madame Réjane in 'Lolotte,'" *The Tatler*, April 13, 1910, V&A, Réjane files.
114. Hippodrome, Week commencing April 25, 1910, V&A, Hippodrome programs.
115. See "Special Feature on a London Hippodrome Programme for 1910," ArthurLloyd.co.uk, "Leaflet insert for 'No. 16,'" www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Archive/January2004/FrontPage.htm.
116. *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, Oct. 12, 1911, 11.
117. "The Variety Stage," *The Referee*, Oct. 1, 1911, 4.
118. "Réjane in Parliament," *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, July 20, 1911, 10.
119. See Duckett, *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt*, chap. 2, "Hamlet: A Short Film, 1900."
120. Arthur Symons, "Réjane," *Fortnightly Review* 108 (1920): 644–45; see also HRC, fol. 7A, 46.
121. P. R., "L'Exposition," *Le Gaulois*, Sept. 9, 1900, 2.
122. Édouard Noël and Edmond Stoullig, *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique* (Paris: Paul Ollendorff, 1900), 183–85.
123. *Le Théâtre*, no. 36 (June 1900). See, within this issue, Paul Porel and Jules Huret's article "Réjane," in which the authors quote from Meilhac's last letter to her, where he states: "It is incontestable, my dear Réjane, that you are the comic actress of the highest rank on the stage today" (28).
124. Note that the Phono-Cinéma-Théâtre toured abroad after the exposition. See the marvelous detail contained in Antti Alanen's blog: <https://anttialanenfilm diary.blogspot.com/search?q=phono+cinema+theatre>. Accessed January 21, 2021.
125. Porel and Huret, "Réjane," 30.
126. "Good Acting Perpetuated," *The Bioscope*, Jan. 10, 1910, 23. See also "Foreign News: France," *The Bioscope*, Jan. 21, 1909, 24, for mention of Rostand, as well as another mention of Bernhardt and Réjane acting in films.
127. "Art and the Bioscope," *The Bioscope*, August 19, 1909, 4.
128. "Foreign News: France," *The Bioscope*, Jan. 21, 1909, 24.
129. "Random Flickers," *The Bioscope*, Jan. 14, 1909, 14.
130. "Random Flickers," 14.
131. "Parisian Notes," *The Bioscope*, Nov. 16, 1911, 513.
132. See "Jury's Imperial Pictures," *The Era*, August 22, 1908, 23.
133. "Jury's Imperial Bioscope Company," *Middlesex Independent*, Dec. 20, 1905, 23.
134. "Jury's Imperial Pictures," *The Bioscope*, August 1, 1912, 322.
135. Advertisement, *Kinematograph Weekly*, Dec. 28, 1911, 32.
136. "Madame Sans Gene," *Kinematograph Weekly*, Feb. 1, 1912, 52.
137. "The Cinema Industry in 1912," *The Cinema*, Jan. 1, 1913, 3.
138. Advertisements, *The Bioscope*, May 30, 1912, 616.
139. "The Lady of the Camellias," *Kinematograph Weekly*, Feb. 15, 1912, 73. For an advertisement featuring Réjane's and Bernhardt's film together, see "Jury's Exclusive Productions," *Cinema News and Property Gazette*, no. 2, vol. 1, March 1912, 28.
140. Grein, "On Réjane as Sapho," 258.
141. "Moving Picture Shows as They Appeal to Our Critics—the Public," *Moving Picture World*, Jan. 1, 1908, 4–5.
142. "Noted Dramatists to Write Moving Picture Plays," *Moving Picture World*, March 28, 1908, 263.

143. “Rejane and Bernhardt: Great Actresses to Be Seen Next Week,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1912, sec. 3, p. 4.

3. MISTINGUETT

1. Richard Abel and Victoria Duckett, “Mistinguett,” *Pordenone Silent Film Festival Catalogue* (Pordenone: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto/Le Cineteca del Friuli, 2019), 152. See also Mistinguett’s own *Mistinguett: Queen of the Paris Night*, trans. Lucienne Hill (London: Elek, 1954); and Kelley Conway, “Music Hall Miss,” in *Chanteuse in the City: The Realist Singer in French Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 58.

2. See, e.g., Conway, *Chanteuse in the City*, esp. Conway’s introduction and chapter 2, “Music Hall Miss” (58–83). Conway charts the importance of the female realist singer in early twentieth-century France and explores her later emergence in French film of the 1930s. She explains that the realist female singer gave a subjective voice to the urban street-walker, the prostitute, and the poor. These people (usually women) are often ignored in discussions of the *flâneur* and late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Parisian street culture: “figures barred from the luxury of aimless wandering, distanced observation, and the excitement of shopping” (20). Conway argues that the music-hall actress therefore represents a nostalgic history in 1930s film. Accordingly, Mistinguett’s appearance in her single sound film, *Rigolboche* (Christian-Jacque, 1936), points us back to a time when she enjoyed power as a global celebrity on the live stage. Dudley Andrew and Steve Ungar reiterate this division in their *Popular Front France and the Poetics of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). Dudley and Ungar argue that “sound film troubled her deeply, as it did the entertainment form of which she was the queen. For here a recording would replace her most prized quality, her ‘presence’” (233). In these accounts, silent film was a lucrative reprieve from the demands of the music hall; it was not integral to Mistinguett’s expanding horizon of professional work. Moreover, Mistinguett’s involvement in the music hall and early film is cast as a difference between presence and recorded action. The spontaneity and versatility that Mistinguett brought to silent film is therefore elided.

3. See *Cassell’s Guide to Paris* (London: Cassell, 1901), 162. See also Matthews, *The Theatres of Paris*, 193.

4. See Matthews, *The Theatres of Paris*, 190–99, esp. 192.

5. *The Era*, August 24, 1907, 20, 22. See “Entertainments,” *Westminster Gazette*, August 26, 1907, 6, for the first week of her Palace program.

6. For details about the revue’s writers, scenographer, and musician, see Pierre Mortier, “Spectacles et concerts,” *Gil Blas*, August 3, 1907, 3.

7. “Spectacles et concerts,” *Gil Blas*, August 8, 1907, 3.

8. “Spectacles et concerts,” *Gil Blas*, August 17, 1907, 3.

9. Conway, “Music Hall Miss,” 67. Note that Conway is referencing film titles offered in Pénét’s biography of Mistinguett; at the time of her writing, she did not have access to the Mistinguett works that we can view today. The films listed were all films screened in recent years at Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna.

10. “Courrier des Théâtres,” *Gil Blas*, April 5, 1907, 3.

11. “Courrier des Théâtres,” *Gil Blas*, April 18, 1907, 3.

12. Conway, “Music Hall Miss,” 68.

13. "Priscilla in Paris," *The Tatler*, April 20, 1910, 66. The Apache dance features the "Apache" (a gangster dressed in clothes that signal he is from a Parisian neighborhood criminal gang; gang members wore an identifiable cap, dark jacket, and red scarf). The dance was usually between the Apache, who acts as a pimp, and his "girl," a prostitute. It is an erotic, brutal, and acrobatic dance that romanticizes the relationship between a prostitute and her pimp.

14. Pénet, *Mistinguett*, 21.

15. Pénet, 151.

16. For the list of theatrical lessees, see www.str.org.uk/resources/str-research-projects/theatre-music-hall-people/theatre-and-music-hall-licensees-individuals; see also Bryony Dixon, "How the Victorians First Saw Their Worlds on Film," www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/lff-62-victorians-imax.

17. Pénet, *Mistinguett*, 211–12. Pénet follows his mention of Mistinguett's 1903 visit to London with note of a 1907 return. On this trip, Mistinguett successfully re-presented her famous *Valse des voyous américains* (*Dance of American Gangsters*) to English audiences as *Le Cake-walk Parisien*. We are not told, however, where Mistinguett performed in London, the duration of her engagement, or whether she was already known to English audiences. In Pénet's index to Mistinguett's songs, performances, and films at the conclusion of his book (and this is useful precisely because it chronologically lists the names, dates, and places of Mistinguett's many and varied performances), a 1914 and 1916 visit to London is also listed. Again, there are no details beyond these dates. See 156, 717–56, esp. 719 ("12/1914: Miss joue à Londres") and 720 ("Fin 2/1916: Miss joue à Londres").

18. Pénet, 212.

19. "Another Typical Paris Tragedy," *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, May 31, 1895, 2; see also *The South Wales Daily News*, June 1, 1895, 7; and "A Love Tragedy," *South Wales Echo*, May 31, 1895, 2.

20. See Ian Graham, *Scarlet Women: The Scandalous Lives of Courtesans, Concubines and Royal Mistresses* (New York: St. Martin's, 2016), 11–14.

21. "The Oxford," *The Era*, July 19, 1902, 22.

22. "Music Halls & Various," *American Register*, Jan. 10, 1903, 4 (listing Mistinguett at the Eldorado); see also "Sunday in Paris," *American Register*, July 10, 1904 and July 31, 1904, 4. See "News in Brief," *London Daily News*, August 26, 1907, 9, which stated that "Mistinguette [*sic*], the famous vocalist and dancer, will make her first appearance in England at the Palace Theatre this evening, and will present her unique dance, entitled 'Pi-Ouit.'"

23. See Mortier, "Spectacles et concerts."

24. "Spectacles et concerts," *Gil Blas*, August 8, 1907, 3. I have not found descriptions of this dance, although it possibly comes from the vaudeville comedy in 3 acts *La Rousotte*, written in 1881 by Henri Meilhac, Ludovic Halévy, and Albert Millaud, performed for the first time on May 2, 1881, at the Théâtre des Variétés. See "Spectacles et concerts," *Le Temps*, Feb. 13, 1891, 4. See also Marie Vanoni's Songs, "Pi-ouit Chansonette," notated music (New York: A. Cortada, 1881), www.loc.gov/item/sm1884.03420.

25. See the advertisement "The Palace," *The Referee*, August 25, 1907, 6, for initial listings in Mistinguett's first week's performance at the Palace. For information on *Charles, His Friend* (which was then taken to the Tivoli Theatre to be performed in 1908), see <https://footlightnotes.wordpress.com/tag/courtice-pounds>.

26. "Music Hall Memoranda," *Weekly Dispatch*, Sept. 1, 1907, 10.
27. "Palace Theatre," *The Globe*, Sept. 3, 1907, 4. See also "The Palace," *Sporting Life*, Sept. 3, 1907, 4, for reference to Scott's subject for impersonation.
28. "The Palace," *Sporting Life*, Sept. 3, 1907, 4.
29. "Palace Theatre," *The Globe*, Sept. 3, 1907, 4.
30. "Heard in the Green Room," *The Sketch*, Sept. 4, 1907, 248. Note that Manuel was known for providing stock images to press agencies from 1910 onward through his "Agence universelle de reportage Henri Manuel." See Françoise Denoyelle, "Le Studio Henri Manuel et le ministère de la Justice: Une commande non élucidée," *Revue d'histoire de l'enfance 'irrégulière'* (April 2002): 127–43, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rhei.56>.
31. For the description of the dance see "French Revue Mission in London," *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, March 3, 1916, 2; for the note that it is "a sensational dance," see "Theatrical Items," *The Globe*, August 26, 1907, 2.
32. At her death, an obituary in *The Times* stated mistakenly that "London, which did not see her on its own stage until 1947, when she was certainly over 70, beheld with fascinated attention the spectacle at last of a personage whose music-hall reputation became for our week-ending fathers one of the symbols of Parisien [*sic*] gaiety." "Mistinguett: The Spirit of Paris," *The Times*, Jan. 6, 1956, 11.
33. Outlined in "Moulin Rouge," *American Register*, June 13, 1908, 7, where it is explained that this revue, "à grand spectacle," was by Victor de Cottens and Lucien Boyer, with new music arranged by Maurice Jacob.
34. "Independence Day," *Sporting Times*, July 11, 1908, 2.
35. See "Visions of Art," *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, Dec. 3, 1908, 747; and, subsequently, "Variety Gossip," *The Era*, Dec. 19, 1908, 24.
36. The play in question is *Le Bonheur sous la main*, in "Gossip from the Gay City," *The Referee*, Jan. 29, 1912, 2. The Tiller Girls were a troupe of popular dance girls, first formed in 1889 under the direction of John Tiller in Manchester, England. They created the "mass spectacle of the chorus line of eight to sixteen identically dressed dancers with uniform bodies." See Kara Reilly, "The Tiller Girls: Mass Ornament and Modern Girl," *Theatre, Performance and Analogue Technology*, ed. Kara Reilly (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 117–32.
37. Grant Richards, "The Wagging World," *The Sketch*, Nov. 12, 1913, 174.
38. "Á travers les villes," *Sporting Times*, March 20, 1909, 2.
39. "Á travers les villes," 2.
40. "Á travers les villes," 2.
41. "Á travers les villes," 2.
42. A. Geraud, "Moulin Rouge," *American Register*, June 13, 1908, 7. Note of Wright being a celebrated English performer in "Au Moulin Rouge," *Gil Blas*, June 7, 1908, 3. See also "La Revue du Moulin," *Gil Blas*, June 10, 1908, 4. Mention is made of the Manchester Babies both singing and dancing in "La Revue du Moulin," *Gil Blas*, July 4, 1908, 3.
43. See "Aux Folies-Bergère," *Gil Blas*, Dec. 1, 1911, 3.
44. "Á travers les villes," 2. This play, using the parable of Burindan's donkey to comically describe a man's incapacity to choose between disparate lovers, presents Mistinguett as an abandoned mistress replaced by an inexperienced tomboy.
45. "Du café-concert au theatre," *Gil Blas*, March 22, 1910, 3.

46. "The Week in Paris," *The Observer*, Nov. 27, 1910, 14.
47. Nozière, "Le Théâtre," *Gil Blas*, Dec. 31, 1908, 3. As I have mentioned, *La Valse chaloupée* was an Apache dance between a pimp and his prostitute. As the *Cinema Ritrovato Catalogue* of 2010 explains: "The number is animated by an explicit eroticism and violence: we see an apache pimp mistreating a prostitute-gigolette during a quarrel." Mariann Lewinsky, "La valse chaloupée," *Il Cinema Ritrovato 24 Catalogue*, 2010, 166, <https://festival.ilcinemaritrovato.it/en/archivio/2010>.
48. "A la Comédie-Royale," *Gil Blas*, Dec. 28, 1909, 3. See also *Gil Blas*, Dec. 31, 1909, 3.
49. "Mistinguett and Arlette Dorgère," *The Tatler*, Jan. 4, 1911, 12.
50. "Gossip from the Gay City," *The Referee*, May 8, 1910, 2; see also Meg Villars, "Priscilla in Paris," *The Tatler*, May 25, 1910, 102.
51. Mistinguett, *Tout ma vie* (Paris: René Julliard, 1954), 49.
52. Mistinguett, 89.
53. Mistinguett, 89.
54. See "Case of Mistaken Identity," *Irish Independent*, April 30, 1913, 6; and "Actress's Two 'Mothers': Comedy of Rival Claimants," *Manchester Daily Citizen*, April 30, 1913, 1.
55. "Son chien," *Gil Blas*, Feb. 19, 1912, 1.
56. See Laurent Guido, "'Quel théâtre groupera jamais tant d'étoiles?' Musique, danse et intégration narrative dans les attractions gestuelles du Film d'Art," *1895: Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze* 56 (2008): <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.4068>.
57. "Theatres and Music Halls," *Morning Post*, Dec. 2, 1907, 3.
58. "Pantomime and Burlesque," *The Referee*, Dec. 8, 1907.
59. See "Les programmes du Film d'Art à la salle Charras," *1895: Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze* 56 (2008): <https://doi.org/10.4000/1895.4056>.
60. "Les programmes du Film d'Art à la salle Charras."
61. "Alhambra Theatre," *The Times*, Nov. 21, 1908, 8.
62. "Cinematographic Drama," *Westminster Gazette*, Nov. 23, 1908, 12.
63. "Leading Actresses and Actors of the Comédie-Française and Odeon Theatres, at the Alhambra in a Cinematograph Entertainment," *The Era*, Nov. 28, 1908, 15.
64. "Alhambra Theatre," *The Times*, Nov. 21, 1908, 8.
65. See Christine Leteux, "The Société Cinématographique des Auteurs et Gens de Lettres," *Albert Capellani, Pioneer of the Silent Screen* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), chap. 4.
66. "Leading Actresses and Actors," *The Era*, Nov. 28, 1908, 15.
67. See "Round the Town," *Sporting Times*, Nov. 28, 1908, 2, where it is explained that "The Alhambra orchestra plays Bizet's music finely." See also "Leading Actresses and Actors," *The Era*, Nov. 28, 1908, 15, where it is mentioned that the music was "beautifully played" and added an "additional interest."
68. See Michelle Flowers, "Gold Rush: The First Original Soundtrack: A Look at Camille Saint-Saëns and His Music for *L'Assassinat de Duc de Guise*," *Film Score Monthly Online* 24, no. 1 (Jan. 2019): EBSCOhost.
69. Guido, "Quel théâtre groupera jamais tant d'étoiles?," par. 7.
70. "New Kursaal Development," *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer*, Jan. 9, 1909, 7.
71. "Empire Apache Dance," *London Daily News*, Jan. 10, 1909, 10. Dearly was dancing with Marise Damia of the Moulin Rouge.
72. "News of the Week," *Music Hall and Theatre Review*, Dec. 25, 1908, 425.

73. See the “Information” page on the film, which is held at the British Film Archive, restored by the Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée, marked KOK Pathé Frères: <http://collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web/Details/ChoiceFilmWorks/150023724>. I checked the issue of *The Sketch* but did not locate these images nor reports of Mistinguett and Dearly performing the Apache dance in London in 1908.

74. “Christmas Art [at] the Variety Theatres,” *Sporting Life*, Dec. 23, 1909, 1. See also Rainer E. Lotz for the identification of the Four Black Diamonds in “Black Diamonds Are Forever: A Glimpse of the Prehistory of Jazz in Europe,” *Black Perspective in Music* 12, no. 2 (Autumn 1984): 224.

75. “New Kursaal Development,” *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer*, Jan. 9, 1909, 7.

76. See Silvester Mazzarella, *Filson Young: The First Media Man (1876–1938)*, “10: The Sands of Pleasure,” <http://richarddnorth.com/archived-sites/filsonyoung/biography/part-3-grant-and-elisina-1905-8/10-the-sands-of-pleasure>.

77. “New Kursaal Development,” *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer*, Jan. 9, 1909, 7.

78. “Palace Theatre,” *Shipley Times and Express*, May 14, 1909, 12.

79. See the photograph of Mistinguett dressed as Grossmith with Arlette Dorgère in “Priscilla in Paris” *The Tatler*, Jan. 4, 1911, 12. See also “Gossip from the Gay City,” *The Referee*, May 8, 1910, 2. In “Paris letter,” *Sporting Times*, Feb. 11, 1911, 5, it is explained that “‘Les Midinettes’ is a very translatable play, so I expect ‘Mister Froman’ [sic] will shortly ‘present it’ in London or the States.”

80. See “Actress and Bills,” where it is explained that “Mlle. Mistinguett alleges that [when Dearly was secured for work at the Marigny Theatre] henceforward the type in which Max Dearly’s name was printed on the bills was larger than that used for her name. Hence a gross and flagrant breach of contract, and Mlle. Mistinguett has a clear case for damages, which she estimates at £400.” *Daily Telegraph*, March 13, 1911, 9. See also “Parisian Notes,” *The Bioscope*, Feb. 29, 1912, 619, where it is noted that Mistinguett won but was awarded only five hundred francs (£20), where she had sought £400; on appeal this smaller amount was upheld.

81. Mistinguett’s ability to disguise herself onstage focused on her capacity to make herself ugly. See, in particular, “Ugly Doctoring: Beauty Made Unbeautiful,” *The Sketch*, Dec. 20, 1911, 321; and “Dramatic Notes of the Week,” *The Sphere*, Jan. 20, 1912, 103. With regard to her purported marriage to Mayol, see “Priscilla in Paris,” *The Tatler*, Oct. 1, 1913, 12; and “In a Few Lines,” *The Globe*, August 13, 1913, 3.

82. “Parisian Notes,” *The Bioscope*, Feb. 29, 1912, 619.

83. “Cinema Actress Injured,” *The Globe*, July 10, 1913, 5.

84. “The Latest from France,” *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, April 2, 1914, 49.

85. “A Shy Youth,” *The Bioscope*, Sept. 8, 1910, 27.

86. “A Shy Youth,” *The Bioscope*, August 21, 1913, vi.

87. I appreciate that many of my colleagues see this ending as a caving-in to the demands of her husband rather than a farcical ending highlighting the illogical possibility of ending the comic play in this way. See Förster, *Women in the Silent Cinema*, 183. See also Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 184, for a discussion of Mistinguett in the Rigadin series (Abel details *Les Timidités de Rigadin*).

88. “The Lady Doctor,” *The Bioscope*, Feb. 23, 1911, 52.

89. *The Bioscope*, Nov. 18, 1915, 737.

90. “Priscilla in Paris,” *The Tatler*, June 22, 1910, 308.

91. "Aux Folies-Bergère," *Gil Blas*, Jan. 4, 1912, 5.
92. Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 321–26, 325.
93. "Les Misérables," *The Bioscope*, Oct. 10, 1912, 95.
94. "Les Misérables," 101.
95. H. R. S. P., "The Spread of the Cinema," *Daily Citizen*, Jan. 11, 1913, 7; see also "New Gallery Kinema," *Westminster Gazette*, Jan. 17, 1913, 5, for rights to exhibition.
96. See advertisement in the *London Evening News*, Jan. 9, 1913, 3. See also "Les Misérables," New Gallery Kinema booklet, BDCM, File EXEBD 18623.
97. "New Gallery Kinema," *Westminster Gazette*.
98. New Gallery Kinema booklet, BDCM, file EXEBD 18623.
99. "Hugo's Masterpiece," *Western Mail*, Feb. 1, 1913, 3. Discussing the film at the Olympic Palace at Cardiff, the reviewer notes that Mistinguett, as well as "a special augmented orchestra under the direction of Mr. Percy Wheeler, will play appropriate selections."
100. See "Les Miserables," by Victor Hugo, Exclusive Production for Brighton," BDCM, EXEBD 18615.
101. H. de Péne, "Les Premières," *Le Gaulois*, Jan. 28, 1883, 2.
102. See Duckett, "The Actress-Manager and the Movies," esp. 31, where I explain that Bernhardt bought the lease of the theater with her husband, Jacques Damala, in her son's name, as he was not yet twenty-one.
103. "Our Illustrated Letter," *Friend of India*, July 30, 1895, 8.
104. Auguste Vitu, "Premières Représentations," *Le Figaro*, Jan. 28, 1883, 2–3.
105. "La Soirée théâtrale," *Le Figaro*, Jan. 28, 1883, 3.
106. "The Fatal Enchantress," *The Bioscope*, April 23, 1914, 443.
107. See Richard Abel and Victoria Duckett, "La Glu," *Pordenone Silent Film Festival Catalogue*, (Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2018), 158. I would like to thank Catherine Surowiec for helping me identify this dance.
108. "Musical Comedy Poised on Dancers' Toes," *New York Times*, August 21, 1910, X5.
109. "The Different Figures of the Tango, the New Dance," *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1911, X9.
110. Advertisement, *Moving Picture World*, Nov. 13, 1909, 671.
111. "Her Dramatic Career (Pathe)," *Moving Picture World*, Nov. 27, 1909, 757.
112. "Observations by Our Man about Town," *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 7, 1914, 667. The Vitagraph Theatre was also opening "right in the heart of the White Way district," and similarly used the film to test audience commitment to the higher admission fee.
113. George Blaisdell, "At the Sign of the Flaming Arcs," *Moving Picture World*, Feb. 7, 1914, 679.
114. W. Stephen Bush, "Theories vs. Facts," *Moving Picture World*, March 28, 1914, 1652.
115. George Blaisdell, "At the Sign of the Flaming Arcs," 679. For the shorter article that mentions two other performers, see "Les Miserables' in Nine Reels," *Moving Picture News*, August 30, 1913, 23.
116. "Les Miserables," *Moving Picture News*, April 19, 1913, 14.
117. "Les Miserables," 14.
118. "Trade notes," *The Moving Picture News*, June 28, 1913, 23.
119. "Eclectic Film Company Removes," *Motography*, June 12, 1913, 31.
120. "Eclectic Opens Boston and N.Y. Exchanges," *Moving Picture World*, March 21, 1914, 1529.
121. "Use Authorized Posters," *Motography*, Nov. 15, 1913, 370.

122. See the half-page advertisement in *Motography*, May 2, 1914, 51.
123. Max Alvarez, "The Origins of the Film Exchange," *Film History* 17, no. 4 (2005): 443.
124. See, respectively, advertisements in *Moving Picture World*, August 15, 1914, 920; and *Motion Picture News*, August 15, 1914, 5. See also the full-page ad in *Motography*, August 15, 1914, 7.
125. "The Siren," *Motion Picture News*, August 15, 1914, 51.
126. "Siren's Charms Lead Her to Death," *Motography*, August 22, 1914, 257–58, 257.

4. THE FILMIC FRONT

1. Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 46.
2. See David French, "The Strategy of the Entente Powers, 1914–1917," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 54–55.
3. See Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 46–47, 58. Abel highlights that by 1911, "Worldwide, France's position as the leading producer and distributor of films began to slip" (46).
4. Marcelline Block and Barry Nevin, "Introduction: The Great War: History and Memory," in *French Cinema and the Great War: Remembrance and Representation*, ed. Marcelline Block and Barry Nevin (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), xiv. Block and Nevin are citing Pierre Sorlin, "Film and War," in *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 353–67, 362.
5. "The Lilies of France," *The Bystander*, August 9, 1916, cover page.
6. "A 'Wool Christmas' on Paris This Year," *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1914, 5. Catherine Hindson has written a fine history of celebrity charity that details the engagement of English actresses; see her *London's West End Actresses and the Origins of Celebrity Charity, 1880–1920* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016), esp. chap. 7, "The 'Comfoteers': Actresses and Charity Activity during the First World War."
7. See EUL MS 170, Exeter University Library, which holds the 1915 Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt program for the *Matinée au Bénéfice de l'Escadron de l'Union des Sociétés de Préparation Militaire de France*, complete with an image of a sketch of a cavalry officer by the artist Louise Abbéma (Bernhardt's lover) on the cover. The opening page states, under a photograph by the London photographer Dover (Alexander James Grossman), "Rentrée de Madame SARAH BERNHARDT." Presumably, this marks Bernhardt's return to Parisian audiences from transnational tours abroad. Interestingly, the copy is signed in English on the front cover: "With all my Heart, Sarah Bernhardt, 1915."
8. See a discussion of this performance in Leigh Woods, *Transatlantic Stage Stars in Vaudeville and Variety: Celebrity Turns* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 207–8.
9. London Coliseum Program, Jan. 3, 1916, V&A, London Coliseum programs, n.p.
10. See, e.g., "Du Théâtre au Champ D'Honneur: Examiner of Plays' Summary," Great War Theatre, www.greatwartheatre.org.uk/db/script/1037.
11. London Coliseum Program, Jan. 17, 1916, V&A, London Coliseum programs, n.p.
12. Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 58. See also Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xi–xii.
13. See *Représentation de Mlle Mistinguett du Théâtre des Variétés*, V&A, Mistinguett files, n.d. (I have dated this 1916 because of the mention made of her return from Italy and because Mistinguett was still performing at the Variétés in 1916).

14. “Out Gaby-ing Gaby,’ One Famous Parisienne Parodies Another,” *The Tatler*, Feb. 5, 1919, 153.
15. Adolphe Brisson, “Les revues: Chronique théâtrale,” *Le Temps*, August 13, 1917, 3.
16. “Beautiful Pictures Plus Plot,” *The Bioscope*, Nov. 18, 1915, 833. See also the similar plot outline in the *Leicester Mail*, Jan. 12, 1916, 5.
17. “Two X. L. Exclusives,” *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, Nov. 18, 1915, 27.
18. “Picture Theatres,” *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 21–22, 1916, 1.
19. “Beautiful Pictures Plus Plot,” *The Bioscope*, Nov. 28, 1915, 833. See also the advertisements for the *Temptations of Life* in the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, “The Picture House,” Feb. 10–12, 1916, 1.
20. See “The Leisure Hour,” *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, Feb. 18, 1916, 1; and “Star, Ecclesall Road,” *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Feb. 24, 1916, 1.
21. For a brief outline of the film, see Victoria Duckett, “Chignon d’or,” in *Pordenone Silent Film Catalogue* (Pordenone: La Cineteca del Friuli, 2019), 159–60.
22. See Abel, “Fleur de Paris,” in *Pordenone Silent Film Catalogue* (Pordenone: La Cineteca del Friuli, 2019), 162.
23. Abel, “Fleur de Paris,” 162. For a discussion of Mistinguett’s activities, see also Christopher Andrew and Julius Green, *Stars and Spies: The Story of Intelligence Operations and the Entertainment Business* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), chap. 9, “From Mistinguett to the Hush Hush Review.”
24. “Spanish Trade News,” *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, Oct. 11, 1917, 151.
25. “M. Monat, French Buyer, Arrives in New York,” *Motion Picture News*, Nov. 10, 1917, 3268.
26. “Monat Comes to Buy and Sell Films,” *Moving Picture World*, Nov. 24, 1917, 1153.
27. “Monat Comes to Buy,” 1153.
28. I thank Richard Abel for bringing this item to my attention. “Sexton. The Home of Paramount Pictures,” advertisement, *Great Falls Tribune*, Oct. 10, 1914, 12.
29. I thank Richard Abel for bringing this theatre advertisement to my attention. “Tonight at Thorne’s,” *Alaska Citizen* (Fairbanks), April 3, 1914, 4.
30. Mae Tinee, “Delights Eye and Mind like Rich Old Etching: Les Miserables,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1917, 10. See also Richard Abel’s contribution, “Frances Peck,” in the Women Film Pioneers Project, <https://wfpp.columbia.edu/pioneer/frances-peck>; and Richard Abel, *Movie Mavens: US Newspaper Women Take on the Movies, 1914–1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), chaps. 1 and 2 (“Women Writers Lead the Way, 1914–1916” and “Women Writers during the Great War, 1917–1918”).
31. “Les Miserables’ Coming,” *Americus (GA) Times-Recorder*, Oct. 1, 1917, 8. I thank Richard Abel for bringing this item to my attention.
32. See “Gets Chevalier Out of Prison,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), Sept. 5, 1917, 3. I thank Richard Abel for bringing this item to my attention.
33. Adolphe Brisson, “Chronique théâtrale,” *Le Temps*, Jan. 13, 1913, 1.
34. See “Alsace: Examiner of Plays’ Summary,” Great War Theatre, www.greatwartheatre.org.uk/db/script/982: “the mobilisation with which it ends refers to that after the affair of Nancy, but it fits in with the situation of last August and is appropriate now” (par. 1).
35. “Madame Rejane in ‘Alsace,’” *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 15, 1915, 12.
36. See “Alsace by Gaston Leroux and Lucien Camille,” Mary Evans Picture Library, the Michael Diamond collection, www.prints-online.com/alsace-gaston-leroux-lucien-camille-14403238.html.

37. "Alsace," *Ciné-Journal*, Dec. 25, 1915, 12.
38. "Alsace," 12.
39. "Alsace," *Ciné-Journal*, Dec. 25, 1915, 6–7.
40. "Alsace," 1.
41. See *Ciné-Journal*, Dec. 18, 1915, cover.
42. "Madame Rejane in 'Alsace,'" *The Bioscope*, Feb. 3, 1916, 464. This point about the German occupation of Belgium being evidenced in the film was reiterated in the American trade press. See "Sifted from the Studios," *Motography*, Sept. 9, 1916, 620–22.
43. "Madame Rejane in 'Alsace,'" 464.
44. "Jury's Pictures," *The Bioscope*, Feb. 24, 1916, 836.
45. "Hull and Coastal," *The Bioscope*, March 16, 1916, 1160.
46. "Gossip and Opinions," *The Bioscope*, June 20, 1916, 7.
47. G. Kaczka, "Film News from Foreign Parts," *Motion Picture News*, Nov. 20, 1915, 60.
48. Kaczka, 60.
49. "France Offers Chance for Pictures Made by American Producers," *Motion Picture News*, Jan. 29, 1916, 525. See also "Alsace," *Ciné-Journal*, Dec. 25, 1915, 9, 12.
50. Advertisement, *Motion Picture News*, April 15, 1916, back cover.
51. "Authors Film Company Gets Alsace," *Moving Picture News*, April 22, 1916, 802.
52. Advertisement, Authors Film Company, *Motion Picture News*, April 29, 1916, 2494.
53. "Trade Showings of 'Alsace' Attract Exhibitors," *Motion Picture News*, April 29, 1916, 2504. In all published versions of the play, and in theater discussions in newspapers, it is Lucien Camille who is noted. In the *Ciné-Journal* discussions and publicity, however, and on the poster illustrated here, it is Camille Dreyfus. In the US press, there is note only of Lucien Camille. I have looked extensively, and there is no further information on this apparent discrepancy. This suggests two possibilities: (1) Lucien Camille's name was indeed Lucien Camille Dreyfus (although I can find no evidence of this) and that in France, at the time, it made sense to use this name, as most would have known that Albert Dreyfus was an Alsatian Jew (so the name gives Camille Dreyfus Alsatian credentials that might not have been known or picked up by a public in the US). (2) Alternatively, and perhaps a little more far-fetched, the work that Camille Dreyfus, the chemist who worked with his brother on fire-safe emulsions (acetate lacquers) for film, and was supported by Pathé, was suggested by writing Lucien Camille's name in this way. Neither possibility can be confirmed as of this writing.
54. Full-page advertisement, *Moving Picture World*, April, 22 1916, 719.
55. Peter Milne, "Alsace," *Motion Picture News*, April 15, 1916, 2213.
56. Milne, 2213.
57. Dan Schlenoff, "Sinking the *Lusitania*, Part 1: Civilians Die in 'Wicked' Atrocity," May 7, 1915, *Scientific American*, May 15, 1915, <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/anecdotes-from-the-archive/sinking-the-lusitania-part-1-many-civilians-die-in-wicked-atrocity-may-7-1915>.
58. See J. Richepin, "Un discours d'académicien," *Le Cinéma*, Jan. 26, 1917, 1.
59. See my chapter entitled "Mothers of France: World War I, Film, and Propaganda," in Duckett, *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt for a more involved contextualization of this film*.
60. See René Hervil: *Réunion du 7 février 1948*, www.cinerecources.net/consultationPdf/web/a000/067.pdf. Hervil explains (p. 5) that the film was shot in a small Eclipse studio on Boulevard Victor Hugo and that he had done the editing himself. He also claims that the Americans asked the French to make a narrative film with a love interest involved in it, as the Germans did (p. 19).

61. Richepin, "Un discours d'académicien," 1.
62. Two-page advertisement, *Moving Picture World*, March 31, 1917, 2040–41.
63. "Red Cross Benefit at Wayne Opera House," *Moving Picture World*, Dec. 22, 1917, 1827. See also "'Mothers of France,' The Marseillaise Sung by American Artists at Unusual Society Showing in Philadelphia—Foreign Consuls Attend," *Motography*, April 28, 1917, 898.
64. This was also briefly recounted in *Motion Picture News*, April 21, 1917, 2505, where it is reported that Bernhardt was also expected to appear at the event.
65. Edward Weitzel, "'Mothers of France,' Sarah Bernhardt in Six-Reel Photoplay Made in France Contains a Powerful Appeal to Patriotism—Released by World Film Corporation," *Moving Picture World*, April 14, 1917, 284.
66. See the *Ealing Gazette and Middlesex Observer*, August 18, 1917, 3.
67. See viewers' awareness of this, evident in articles such as "Sarah Bernhardt in Real War Film," *New York Times*, March 12, 1917, 8.

CONCLUSION

1. See, e.g., Eileen Bowser's discussion in *The Transformation of Cinema*, 204–5, where she explains that Bernhardt presented "high-style acting" from the "legitimate theatre" in *Queen Elizabeth*. This same point can also be inferred from entries in encyclopedias. See, for instance, the Bernhardt entry in *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo* (Rome: Casa Editrice le Machere, 1954), 371, which states that Bernhardt's contribution to the American film industry through the success of *Queen Elizabeth* was "one of the most paradoxical cases in the history of the film industry."
2. See, e.g., Corille Fraser, *Come to Dazzle: Sarah Bernhardt's Australian Tour* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1998).
3. See Julie K. Allen, "Divas Down Under: The Circulation of Asta Nielsen's and Francesca Bertini's Films in Australian Cinemas in the 1910s," *Studies in Australasian Cinema* 11, no. 2 (2017): 59–76. See also Allen's *Screening Europe in Australasia: Transnational Silent Film before and after the Rise of Hollywood* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2022).
4. The importance of music to our understanding and reception of early film has been very well explained by Helen Day-Mayer and David Mayer in their essay "Performing/Acting Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), esp. 109–10, where they state that "music is to the stage or silent film actor what water is to the swimmer."
5. See Duckett, *Seeing Sarah Bernhardt*, 19–22.
6. Kessler and Lenk, "When the History of Moviegoing," 319–28.
7. Kessler and Lenk, 322.
8. Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory," *Serious Science*, <http://serious-science.org/micro-history-2893>. See also Ginzburg's recent *La lettera uccide* (Milan: Adelphi, 2021), esp. chap. 7, "Conversare con Orion," 135–42 (originally published in *Quaderni Storici* 36, no. 3 (2001): 905–13).

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