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A SEMIOTIC APPROACH TO VISUAL ANALYSIS OF DRESS: SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION OF CLOTHING COLOR, CUT, AND COMPOSITION THROUGH THE FRENCH FILM COSTUMES OF ANAÏS ROMAND

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**A SEMIOTIC APPROACH TO VISUAL ANALYSIS OF DRESS:
SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION OF CLOTHING COLOR, CUT,
AND COMPOSITION THROUGH THE FRENCH FILM
COSTUMES OF ANAÏS ROMAND**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of French Studies

by
Leigh Danielle Honeycutt
B.S., Louisiana State University, 2004
August 2021

Pour mes enfants, Evangeline et Jules, you are never too old to find the path.
To my husband, mon amour pour toujours.

Fashion is a Language. Some know it, some learn it, some never will – like an instinct.

- Edith Head, Hollywood Costumer Designer-

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In Fall of 2020, I had the pleasure of enrolling in Professor Yeager's French literature course on Colonial Vietnam. At his encouragement, I conducted an analysis of fashion in the famous French film, *Indochine*, as one of my class presentations. That project became the inspiration and motivation for this Thesis. Dr. Yeager, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to tailor my work in your course around Barthes' theories on semiotics (the study, interpretation and use of signs and symbols), clothing and the sign of an image. The research begun in your course formed the roots of this Thesis and I hope to have satisfied your recommendations and advice here. I am truly grateful that you agreed to serve on my committee and assist my studies from a literature perspective.

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or accomplish, she was always there. Mawmaw, thank you for being the trailblazer, I follow with pride the path that was already laid for me, the one that you forged. I also owe a great deal of gratitude to my parents, Leo and Jackie Honeycutt, for their constant encouragement and listening ears. My father, a writer himself, had many useful techniques and tricks of the prose trade to offer. And my mother, the ultimate encourager, answered all of my frantic and frazzled phone calls, skillfully bringing me back from the edge more times than I care to admit.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the communicative role of clothing in film. Using the skillful costume canvas of French designer Anaïs Romand, we explore the possible visual messages and potential cultural and linguistic meanings that clothing choice conveys. This analysis uses Roland Barthes' Theory of the "Five Codes" from his book *S/Z* as well as psychological sources about color analysis as its methodological basis. Images from each of the five period piece films were chosen and analyzed using semiotics. The costumes in all five films chosen for analysis were designed under the direction of Anaïs Romand and were all either nominated for, or awarded, a César award in the best costume category in France.

While there are many studies on the various symbolic aspects of French film and equally as many on French fashion, this research centers on one designer across genres and time periods to draw conclusions about costume and, particularly, about its symbolism within cinema. Through Barthes' five code framework, we observe, in detail, the ways in which dress serves to be a vital communicator. And by exploring the linguistic essence of each garment, each costume, and each color choice, we are able to draw meaningful symbolic and cultural conclusions. This thesis expands the literature on clothing and costume design from a semiotic standpoint and highlights the significant role fashion and dress play in film.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF RESEARCH

1.1. Introduction

Costume and the body are often neglected in academic analysis, with existing literature focused on the interpretation of fashion trends, production and consumption, but rarely on the embodied aspects of dress (Entwistle, 2015). Yet dress is a fundamental daily practice found in every historic and modern society (Tortola & Marcketti, 2021). Scholars have studied human motivation and the reasons we cloth our bodies but found many differences of expression among cultures. Some cultures use dress for protection, others for modesty and still others to denote social status (Tortola & Marcketti, 2021). However, decoration was found to be the one universal driver of dress and was observed as a motivator among every civilization, past and present. To decorate the body, therefore, is an essential human practice and clothing the body thus evolved out of this basic and innate desire (Tortola & Marcketti, 2021).

Film is a prime example of how the body can be decorated in diverse and interesting ways to set a scene, convey a mood, create a context, or even *steal* the show. In the book “Fashion in Film,” Adrienne Munich insightfully notes “the fashion parade that opens the Oscars not only adds to the ceremony’s buzz but nearly trumps it in hype.” (Munich & Stutesman, 2011, p. 1). Costumes are, therefore, a powerful example of using bodily adornment for the purpose of communicating symbols, messages, emotions, and situation. Throughout the viewing of a film, an observer is flooded with visual images of clothing, color, texture, and makeup that have the aim of sending or solidifying information about the story being told and its characters. In “The Presentation of Self,” Erving Goffman identifies these visual clues as “sign vehicles” and asserts they allow the observer to apply their previous experiences and stereotypes as a means of predicting current and coming behavior (Goffman, 1975).

There is an art to telling these textile tales and few have earned repeated recognition for their ability to communicate through clothing. One of these esteemed few is *costumière* Anaïs Romand, whose work in French film has earned her five César nominations and three wins for best costume design (Académie des César, 2021).

This thesis explores the semiotic nature and signifying implications of costume design on the female body using Romand's accomplished and applauded body of work. This analysis will focus on period piece films with primary female lead characters released in the past ten years: *L'Apollonide* (2011), *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre* (2015), *La Danseuse* (2016), *Les Gardiennes* (2017), and *La Douleur* (2017). We find within these films, the powerful ability of clothing to communicate messages of innocence and maturity, exhaustion and excitement, strength and grief, and countless others. Costumes are constantly working in tandem with the film's context and storyline, saying important things to the spectator, often times on a subconscious level. The spoken messages of a film are only a small piece of the overall picture. Fashion is a language, too, and can be translated as a communicative work, using the body as an informational vehicle, the eyes as message receivers, and the mind as interpreter.

1.2. Aim of Research

The goal of this thesis is to illustrate where consistent and clear messages are being communicated using dress in film. The clothing analyzed is limited to the female body. The chosen French films were all lauded for their visual accomplishments in the field of costume design and the content is focused on a singular costume designer. My research will center around the question: *how are symbols communicated to the observer of the film through clothing on the female figure?* To accomplish this objective, I will analyze the cut and lines of the clothing, the

color of the costumes and makeup, and the composition of bodily adornments and their relation to surrounding scenery.

The qualitative research draws on Stuart Hall's concepts of representation and Roland Barthes' five semiotic codes. I intend to provide answers to four important questions:

What codes are embedded in the cut, color, and composition of a garment?

How do these costumes speak semantically and what are their symbolic connotations?

What cultural and linguistic messages are conveyed through clothing about females and female bodies?

This research dissects the anatomy of a clothing image to understand, more deeply, the role that costume design plays in the meaning, message, and symbolism of a film. The study does rely on the researcher's observations and is naturally influenced by personal perspective. But as a spectator delivering this analysis to another body of spectators, who by way of like geography, language, and environment, share a similar system of cultural values, social beliefs, and linguistic symbols, I trust this research will be accepted as viable and credible.

An essay within *The Language of Fashion* on Barthes' work summarizes perfectly the reason for which an analysis of this nature is important, "For an understanding of fashion – if taken as a language – this suggestion is crucial: we are innately *obliged* to narrate clothing forms either verbally or mentally; if we do not do this when thinking about clothing, especially fashion, then a magazine, an advert, a friend, a shopworker, [a film], whatever, will do it for us" (Barthes et al., 2018, p. 122). And in Barthes' own words, 'It is impossible to consider a cultural object outside the articulated, spoken and written language which surrounds it' (Barthes et al., 2018, p. 122).

CHAPTER 2. DEFINITIONS, CONCEPTS, & DESIGNER BACKGROUND

2.1. Film Character

Costume plays a vital role in the visual definition of a character. In effective costume design, the costume will be able to put a character in a certain time and space, establish the character's age and possibly gender, relate rank or social status of the character, convey the character's personality, and communicate changes in any of these elements over the course of the film (Cunningham, 2020). The historical context of a character will affect its point of view and, through costume, can convey the ambience or mystique of a particular period. For establishing the age of a character, a costume can vary the length of its hem, type of sleeve, shape of the neckline, or the use of hairstyle and makeup (Cunningham, 2020). Costume also has the authority to establish a social status, rank, or personality of a character. Opulent fabrics, excessive embellishment, bold colors, and refined tailoring are examples of costume components which conjure words like *rich*, *master*, or *nobility*, whereas simple garments made from light linen or simple cotton, with little support or structure in and in one colorway, often bring to mind words like *poor*, *servant*, or *peasant* (Cunningham, 2020, p. 4). Finally, any changes to status or personality that a character might undergo can be greatly aided by the use of costume. Any new or different costume worn by a character can visibly indicate an invisible change has occurred. Sometimes these costume changes can be dramatic or sometimes subtle like in the opening of a blouse, loosening of a tie, or washing of a face. Ultimately, costume is used to visually define a character in often subliminal or subconscious ways (Cunningham, 2020).

2.2. Film Audience

To build on the idea above, costume designers must never underestimate the subconscious awareness of their audience. Viewers can instantaneously assign contemporary meanings and values to the costume they are seeing and what messages they convey (Munich & Stutesman, 2011). Additionally, in film, costume details and elements are of utmost importance since a viewer can interact with the image in a more intimate way than is possible in other media such as stage theatre. This additional aspect of clothing for film, as opposed to theatre, is often referred to in costume design as, “surface truth” and is essential to ensure that the viewer believes what he or she is seeing (Cunningham & Cole, 2020, p. 279). The audience should always be the primary consideration of the costume designer when developing the film’s dress. Indeed, a viewer’s belief, or disbelief, can profoundly affect the intentions, themes, and stories a costume seeks to convey.

2.3. Film Costume

Without question the concept of film costume finds its roots in stage theatre and, before theatre, inspired probably by the use of animal skins, heads, and decorative masks in ancient ritual practices and dances (Cunningham, 2020). Technically, a costume can be defined as anything worn on a stage, including clothing, makeup, accessories, or even held objects or attached décor. To be effective, however, a costume must speak to the subconscious awareness of the audience with its visual appeal sending subliminal support to the character and overall theme of a story (Cunningham, 2020).

As technology birthed the big screen and theatre production expanded into film, costume design was faced with more changes and challenges. In *The Magic Garment*, Holly Cole likens

this evolution to “moving from a small town to a big city” where a designer has to “think and move faster” (Cunningham & Cole, 2020, p. 275). In film, the costume designer must now consider the script’s *Point of View* notation to know if scenes will be shot close-up or full-length, for example. Thanks to continued advancements in sharpness and quality of cameras, the costumes must be designed to even the finest of details. If the camera has a character in focus, the fit must be proper, the quality must be believable, the accessories must be appropriate, and the time period must be accurate.

We also need to make the distinction between terms such as fashion design and costume design. While they do share similar traits in their use of fabric and tailoring, there are differences, mainly that costume design has the purpose to serve a film and not simply serve a style. In fashion design, the expression *is* the outfit. But in costume design, the expression is the *message* that the outfit sends and thus clothing here is a basic movie element of communication (Munich & Stutesman, 2011).

2.4. Costume Designer

The role of the costume designer of feature films is to conceptualize and create all garments for the production. In the beginning stages, the costume designer begins by studying the script to garner basic information such as the number of characters, the time period, the setting, the storyline, and mood or style of the film. A costume designer then typically collaborates with the director(s) and/or writer(s) to discuss and determine key ideas, effects, concepts, and images that the costume design will seek to communicate. Once a creative plan is approved, the designer begins rendering costume sketches and starts the process of choosing fabrics and procuring garments. Some films, especially those more conceptual in nature (e.g.,

films set in a distant future or alternate galaxy), require that the costume design team build each costume from a blank slate. Other films employ a hybrid of both, some combination of original garment construction coupled with clothing commercially produced and acquired (Cunningham, 2020).

As introduced above, according to Drake Stutesman in *Fashion in Film*, the role of costume designer is distinguished from that of a fashion designer by having the purpose of serving the film and not just the style. He further explains that a film's costumes must "express something far beyond the outfit" and asserts that costume design is an essential element of the film by its ability to appeal to our "deepest responses to clothes and all their aspects" (Munich & Stutesman, 2011, p. 20). These aspects include shape, color, texture, cut, pattern, and composition and serve to augment or stand in for our thoughts on sex, authority, comfort/discomfort, and stature (Munich & Stutesman, 2011). Furthermore, the costume designer works in minute details to create an emotion or feel of a costume and must approach characters from both the perspective of the storyline and their individual body types (Munich & Stutesman, 2011).

2.5. Costume Designer Anaïs Romand

Anaïs Romand was born in December of 1956 and originally began her career as a restorer of fine art. Between 1976 and 1979 she was trained in art restoration in Rome. Once back in Paris, Romand worked with a team to restore Italian paintings and was introduced there to Ezio Frigerio and Franca Squarciapino, Italian decorators, scenographers, and costumers for Opera theatre (Anaïs Romand, n.d.). It was this dynamic theatre duo who afforded her a start in costuming, and under their guidance, Romand found her creative calling (Dryef, 2018). From

theatre, she expanded her craft into film and is now regarded as one of the most esteemed and successful French costume designers of the 21st century. Romand has been lauded especially for her approach to period piece cinema, collaborating closely with directors and actors to effectively evoke the “époque”¹ of a film. But Romand’s method sets more than just the mood of a historic film, in her words, “...faire un film d’époque, ce n’est pas copier exactement les costumes de la période. C’est toujours inventer des personnages, comme pour un film contemporain”² (Lasbleis, 2012). Furthermore, Romand has proved prowess in her ability to fuse costumes to the film’s message, particularly its cultural message which Romand equates to *the* role of costume design, “Faire des costumes, ce n’est pas de la fringue, c’est de la culture”³ (Perault, 2015).

As mentioned, before her career in costume design, Romand studied painting and art history (Thach, 2014). This background afforded her an ideal context for creating historical costume and dressing the body in period piece. The Musée D’Orsay has published a series of videos entitled “L’Art du Costume” in which Romand explains to viewers the role of art in her creation of costume. She thinks of a painting like the setting of a film scene, “La façon dont les peintures....ont intégré des matières, la lumière qui place dans les végétaux qui s’arrête sur un ruban, sur un détail de coiffure, sur la rigueur de la mousseline d’une robe....à quel point comme tout ça participe de la même vision, le costume ne se détache pas”⁴ (Anaïs Romand, 2013).

¹ Translation: “era” or “period”

² Translation: “....to do a period film, it is not to copy, exactly, the costumes of the period. It is still to invent the characters, like for a contemporary film.”

³ Translation: “To create costumes, it is not clothes, it is culture.”

⁴ Translation: “The way in which the paintings....have integrated materials, the light placed in the plants which shines right on a ribbon, on a hairstyle detail, on the precision of the muslin of a dress...to the point which all of this participates in the same vision, the costume is not separate.”

Once the research has been conducted and inspiration shaped, Romand gets to the work of codifying the costume. She acknowledges the importance of her role in taking abstract language and turning it into an actual, tangible thing to be worn on the body. She states, “Le vêtement véhicule beaucoup de codes, lesquels veut-on garder, lesquels va-t-on comprendre sur un corps et des gestes contemporains, dans un langage moderne? Tout est dans le dosage. Le costume ne doit pas non plus devenir le premier personnage, il faut éviter le décoratif”⁵ (CNC, 2018). And while Romand recognizes this linguistic code of costuming, she also admits that her approach might not always include a close reading of the text. She confesses, “J’aime le fait de pouvoir décider de leurs rôles, d’écrire et d’inventer leurs personnages sans texte, juste en choisissant de leur attribuer tel costume”⁶ (CNC, 2018).

Whatever the method, without contest, Romand has been recognized as a master of creating costumes that communicate an era, a mood, an opinion; costumes that possess an intimate understanding of the character’s personalities and physical forms; and costumes that use material and color to evoke emotion and connection. A body of work so rich in message and cultural insight is worth examining.

⁵ Translation: “Clothing conveys a lot of codes, which ones do we keep, which ones do we understand on the contemporary body and gestures, in a modern language? It is all in the application. The costume should not become the main character either, the decorative should be avoided.”

⁶ Translation: “I like being able to decide their roles, to write and invent their characters without text, just by choosing to assign them such and such a costume.”

CHAPTER 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For this project, we consulted numerous theoretical sources including Roland Barthes' *Système de la Mode* and his elements of vestimentary code, Alison Lurie's *The Language of Clothes*, Eva Heller's *Psychologie de la Couleur*, and Stuart Hall's theory on *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. After determining the scope and direction of my analysis, Roland Barthes' The Five Codes framework, originally introduced in his book *S/Z*, and Rebecca Cunningham's *The Magic Garment* emerged as the most appropriate academic resource from which to draw my methodology. The following sections address all academic sources considered followed by a detailed discussion of the methodological aims of this analysis.

3.1. Roland Barthes' *Système de la Mode*

In order to properly examine Barthes work and fully understand the contributions he made to studying fashion as a language, we must first look to Ferdinand de Saussure who is credited as one of the forerunners of semiotics. It is Saussure who originally developed the concept of *Sign*, *Signified*, *Signifier*, asserting that a linguistic *sign* is the resulting product when a concept and sound-image unite (Saussure, 1959). Echoing this first formulation of Saussure's sign system, Barthes' developed a rhetoric of fashion which is often referred to as the "poetics of clothing" (Barthes, 1983, p. 264). Using the same terms as Saussure, his system includes three codes. First, the *signifier*, which Barthes' classifies as the garment or article of fashion. Then, the *signified* which represents the world or the culture surrounding the signifier, and, finally, the *sign* commonly considered the intersection of the two and often cited as the "reason" behind fashion (Barthes, 1983, pp. 264-270). Barthes' describes this system of fashion as a "work in reverse" and theorizes that the act of dressing is always an answer to a question, a question of *being: the*

who or a question of *doing*: *the what, when, or where* (Barthes, 1983, p. 277). The former is a question of identity (who) and conjures the statement, “If you want to be this, you must dress like this.” The latter addresses matters of circumstance or activity (what, when, where) and sounds something like, “If you want to signify what you are doing here, dress like this” (Barthes, 1983, p. 278). The final step in Barthes’ vestimentary code is the *sign* or union of clothing and the world surrounding it. Since fashion does not directly declare its reasons, Barthes’ asserts that it uses rhetoric to communicate the relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified*. Since clothing did not evolve as a coded system like that of grammar, the quest for its meanings lies in its “functions, distinctions, oppositions, and congruences” (Barthes, 1983, pp. 293-295).

3.2. Alison Lurie’s *The Language of Clothes*

While not a perfect “sign system,” Alison Lurie makes an ambitious attempt to codify the commonly accepted rules of fashion by connecting them to language. Because her research was performed more recently than that of Barthes, she was able to speak to the shrinking of the world as a stage for fashion (Lurie, 2000). Of course, cultural differences still, and will likely always, exist. But visual accessibility to dress in all corners of the world can only soften and blur the lines of associated symbolism. A key element in Barthes’ vestimentary system relies on the basic premise that a culture possesses similar reasoning and understanding. This crucial step in his rhetorical approach came with the caveat of a shared world with similar perceptions. With the world now considered a smaller place, these cultures will inevitably experience a merging and consolidation of ideas, opinions, and tastes. Lurie’s work on clothing as a sign system takes this into account.

In her theory, Lurie assigns a form of vocabulary and grammar to fashion as a communicator. She elaborates with examples of casual speech that tend to give way to casual dress, which is often loose, relaxed, and colorful. She also examines “vulgar” speech and claims that it commonly seeks attention and can be represented in a torn or unbuttoned shirt or uncombed hair. She even equates trimmings and accessories to clothing as the “adjectives” and “adverbs” of the fashion language (Lurie, 2000, pp. 4-11). As for the use of color, Lurie compares it to the “tone of voice” of the fashion language, claiming color can alter the meaning of what is being said. The base of her color wheel includes white, black and gray, these colors symbolizing ideas of purity, innocence, status; gloom, guilt, sophistication; and modesty and mystery (Lurie, 2000, pp. 184-192).

3.3. Eva Heller’s *La Psychologie de la Couleur*

During the viewing of Romand’s films, the color blue was noted as a common thread throughout. This discovery prompted research of color usage in costumes and films and ultimately led to the comprehensive studies of German scholar Eva Heller. In her book, translated into French, *La Psychologie de la Couleur*, Heller details the quantitative and qualitative results of a psychological study of color. She found 160 emotions connected back to color and the effect that color has on human feelings like sadness, love, pain, hate, and so many more (Heller, 2009). Each chapter is devoted to one color and presents the data in both numerical and descriptive ways. While Heller’s theory alone was not enough to address the semiotic nature of this study, her findings assisted in analyzing each image from a color perspective. It was not surprising to discover that blue is the hue which Heller highlights within the manual. She offers

scientific statistics on the color blue and its role to communicate notions of morality, femininity, religion, order, respectability, passivity, and confidence (Heller, 2009).

3.4. Stuart Hall's *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*

Stuart Hall's idea of representation also proved useful in this research. In his book of cultural representation and signifying practices, Hall details reflective, intentional, and constructionist approaches to representation and makes distinctions among the three. Within reflective representation, language or image is seen to "reflect" a meaning already established or accepted in the collective world of objects, people, and events. For intentional representation, the question becomes whether what is expressed, written or shown, is what was intended by the sender (in our case the costumer). The constructionalist approach takes a more subjective stance and claims that meaning is constructed in and through words or images (Hall, 1997). For Hall, a language is defined as, "any sound, word, image, or object which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning" (Hall, 1997, p. 19).

Similar to the Barthes' system triad of *signifier*, *signified*, *sign*, Hall also uses three elements to create his concept of representation. The first system of representation enables the examiner to assign meaning through a set of correspondences or "conceptual maps" between people, objects, events, abstract ideas, and so on (Hall, 1997, p. 19). The second section of Hall's system relies on creating a set of signs from these correspondences and, ultimately, connecting them and forming the final step in the system, which is representation (Hall, 1997). Culture plays an important role in this system by assuming shared conceptual mapping and shared language systems to create the code (Hall, 1997).

Since a two-dimensional image or frame, like those of film, is not a real, tangible, touchable thing, it is always considered a sign (Hall, 1997). This is how the reflective approach, by mirroring the meaning as it already exists in the world, makes a symbol of the object, person, costume, or idea seen in film (Hall, 1997). As for the representational intent of a film, costumes and setting can serve us with many symbols to convey a director's objectives. But the fact remains, viewers have their own linguistic lens through which they interpret information. This is why the third approach, constructionist, would be the most appropriate for our analysis as it recognizes that "neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning" (Hall, 1997, p. 25). Humans, therefore, construct meanings by using representational systems like concepts and signs (Hall, 1997).

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Method of Analysis

I began this project by first constructing a matrix of all French films which were nominated for César awards in the category of “Meilleurs Costumes.”⁷ Within the matrix, I also included the costume designers for each nominated film. Once the comprehensive list was developed, a trend emerged: a handful of costume designers were repeatedly recognized for their costume design achievements. One of those designers was Anaïs Romand. As I reviewed the corpus of her work, I noticed Romand’s impressive ability to fuse costumes to the film’s message. This made her an appropriate and ideal choice for conducting a semiotic analysis.

Her design career spans many decades and has covered almost every genre and era in recent history. When looking at commonalities or congruencies among these works, I discovered all seven of her costume design nominations or wins were for period piece films. Because an analysis of seven films was outside the scope for this thesis, I needed to narrow the focus. Looking closer, I found five of the seven films featured female centric casts and characters. Conducting an analysis of five films was more feasible and so I decided to study Romand’s use of costumes on strictly female bodies. This decision then removed the 2015 film *Saint Laurent* which chronicled the life of famous couturier Yves Saint Laurent and the 2019 film *Un Peuple et Son Roi* with a majority of the main characters being male historical figures of the French Revolution such as Louis XVI, Jean-Paul Marat, Maximilien de Robespierre, and others.

The five films which remained for analysis included: *L’Apollonide* (2011), *Journal d’une Femme de Chambre* (2015), *La Danseuse* (2016), *Les Gardiennes* (2017), and *La Douleur* (2017). I conducted three viewings of each of the five films, each time with a different goal. For

⁷ Translation: Best Costumes

the first viewing, I watched as a normal individual would, not overly conscious of any minute details nor trying to draw any conclusions about costume or design. I wanted to grasp the bigger picture of the film's context, its characters, and its overall tone and let costumes play the secondary role they do for the average spectator. For the second showing, however, I took the opposite approach and spent a great deal of time with each frame of a scene and the costumes observed therein. I captured screenshot images with each costume change occurrence and took copious notes of the action in each shot. This yielded 108 images for *L'Apollonide (2011)*, 106 images for *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre (2015)*, 112 images for *La Danseuse (2016)*, 125 images for *Les Gardiennes (2017)*, and 122 images for *La Douleur (2017)*. Before the third viewing, I spent time culling through the images amassed for each film and narrowed the list for analysis down to a handful. These curated images were the best representations of the film's costume design from a clothing, character, and storyline perspective. Then, I viewed each film for a third time, focusing closely on the action and language surrounding each snapshot. I notated the stories that were unfolding in each of these scenes as well as the linguistic messages heard by the viewer leading up to, during, and immediately following the capture of each image.

Once this step was completed, I conducted an analysis of each image using a framework of theory explained in detail below. I began the analysis by noting just the straightforward, visual component of each costumed image, essentially, what any observer could see contained within the image, without any answers given or opinions made about the costume's role. I then detailed the action surrounding the image and explained the context in which the image found itself during the film. After that, I constructed a list of semes (a linguistic sign) and possible connotations associated with the article of clothing, accessory, hairstyle, or makeup effect. I finished by drawing symbolic and cultural conclusions based on these observations and listed the

linguistic message from each scene that was working in tandem with the image. With the assistance of Dr. Dubois, I composed English translations of each quote or reference and included them as footnotes within each section. To further understand how this framework was developed, an in-depth explanation of each methodological theory implemented is detailed below.

For this analysis, the term *cut* will refer to the shape or form that is created by clothing or accessories on the body. For example, we can observe in later images, the use of corsets in *L'Apollonide* gave the actresses hourglass shapes, displaying overtly the curves of each body, whereas in *La Danseuse* the designer clothed the main character in an oversized sheer gown that hid the body underneath almost entirely. The term *color* will refer to both the color of individual garments, but also overall hue themes found within each film and across the catalogues of these films as a whole. This *color* section will also cover the use of makeup when relevant to the communicative aspects of costume. The term *composition* for this study will comprise the textile and texture features in the films. This will include aspects such as fabric choice, patterns and motifs, ornamentation, opacity or transparency, and design details.

4.2. Roland Barthes' *The Five Codes* from the Book *S/Z*

Building on elements of Barthes' *signifier/signified/sign* model and Hall's constructionist approach aforementioned, this study will also survey the chosen scenes using Barthes' theory of *The Five Codes*. *The Five Codes* were originally presented in Barthes' book *S/Z* and grouped signifiers into categories for assigning meaning. The five codes consist of (Barthes, 1974):

1. Hermeneutic Code (“observations without answers”)
2. Proairetic Code (“actions”)
3. Semantic Code (“connotations”)
4. Symbolic Code (“symbolism”)
5. Cultural Code (“communication”)

Barthes describes and then assigns each code a “voice” for further clarification of each concept. For action (proairetic), he classifies it as the “Voice of Empirics,” for senses (semantic) as the “Voice of the Person,” for cultural (cultural) code, the “Voice of Science,” for hermeneutisms (hermeneutic), the “Voice of Truth,” and for symbol (symbolic), naturally, the “Voice of Symbol” (Barthes, 1974, p. 21).

The hermeneutic codes of an image are the parts which raise questions for the viewer without answers being immediate or obvious. The hermeneutic code can be compared to the unfolding of a murder mystery where the observer witnesses a murder and then uses clues given throughout the rest of the scenes to reconstruct the story in the end (Felluga, 2011). For this analysis, the hermeneutic code will consist of taking certain frames, describing them at face value, and observing their photographic “clues” that will later be used to make connotations or draw conclusions. This code of an image can be referred to as making observations without having answers or drawing conclusions.

The proairetic code represents the action taking place within an image. These first two codes are described as being “within the constraints of time” and are thus temporal in nature. Furthermore, hermeneutic and proairetic code seem to work sequentially and represent “the revelation of truth and the coordination of the actions present” (Felluga, 2011). In this thesis, to satisfy the conditions of the proairetic code, the action of each scene will be detailed. This

includes the events leading up to the image, any action unfolding at the time the shot is captured, and any relevant activity that follows the scene.

For the semantic code, an image can suggest meaning by way of connotation (Felluga, 2011). Barthes identifies semes as the words or images with “flickers of meaning” that we wish to indicate (Barthes, 1974, p. 19). To connect this code with Barthes’ theory on vestimentary code, the seme is associated with unit of the *signifier* (Barthes, 1974). Examples of semes include signifiers such as femininity, emptiness, practicality, sophistication, confidence, passiveness, and passion. In this study, I have made a list of each garment, accessory, hairstyle, makeup feature, or color story for each analyzed image. I then offer commonly accepted or culturally recognized connotations associated with each element. This semantic coding was derived from analyzing the psychological aspect charts discussed in greater detail under heading 4.3. of Rebecca Cunningham’s *The Magic Garment*.

Symbolic code is then taking the semes and creating an organized system of meaning. This system speaking to a “deeper” principle that organizes semantic meanings (Felluga, 2011). This code acts on a broader level, arranging the semes into sets of meaning. Often times, Barthes notes that there is a contrasting element to the symbolic code. This comparison of semes speaks to their polarities, evoking themes like “male and female,” “night and day,” “good and evil,” and so on (Barry, 2007, p. 42).

The final code is cultural and suggests the shared knowledge of the observer (Felluga, 2011). The *sign*, in Barthes’ rhetoric of an image, is synonymous with cultural code. Cultural code considers a viewer to have a certain level of prior understanding, common knowledge, or preexisting images easily accessible (Barry, 2007). For this project, I have taken the hermeneutic, proairetic, and semantic data, amassed and analyzed the data, and then drawn

symbolic and cultural conclusions. These conclusions are the messages sent to a viewer through costume cut, color, and composition choice.

These last three (semantic, symbolic, and cultural) do not rely on constraints of time and are not subject to an irreversible order (Barthes, 1974). These three are thus tabular and not linear as are the hermeneutical and proairetical codes.

4.3. Rebecca Cunningham's *The Magic Garment*

Within each the section of the five codes, physical and psychological aspects are taken from *The Magic Garment* by Rebecca Cunningham. In this book, the author presents the principles of costume design for film and theatre as an instructional framework, drawing largely on the deeper meaning and subconscious context of creating costumes. The textbook offers comprehensive directives to designers on the evolution and creation of the garments from before filming starts to after ending credits roll. Cunningham's theory also expertly organizes the cut, color, and texture of costumes according to physical and psychological effects with numerous tables and matrices throughout the book. These are included below and served as points of reference for the analysis of each image (Cunningham, 2020).

4.4. Physical and Psychological Aspects Charts

Table 1. Physical and Psychological Aspects of Line

BOX 4.A Aspects of Line

Aspect	Physical Effects	Psychological Effects	Ways to Use
Path			
Straight	Emphasizes angularity, tends to conceal body contours	Stiffness, directness, tension, stubbornness, masculinity, self-assurance, austerity	Seams, darts, hems, pleats, belts, stripes, geometrics, tucks, ribbons
Straight variations (zigzag)		Sharpness, abruptness, instability, nervousness, excitement	Garment edges, trim
Curved	Emphasizes roundness	Flexibility, grace, femininity, fluidity, ease, subtlety, youth	Seams, garment edges, scallops, patterns, draping
Width			
Thick	Adds weight	Forcefulness, self-assurance, aggressiveness, masculinity	Borders, trims, cuffs, fabric patterns, belts
Thin	Minimizes weight	Delicateness, daintiness, gentleness, serenity, passivity, subtlety	Seams, darts, pattern, trim
Continuity			
Unbroken	Smoothness, emphasizes bumps and curves	Constancy, elegance, smoothness, grace	Seams, pleats, gathers, trim, draping
Broken	Emphasizes irregularities	Less rigidity, playfulness, informality, casualness, busyness	Trims, buttons, edgings, pattern
Sharpness			
Sharp	Emphasizes contours it follows	Assertiveness, boldness, precision, hardness	Seams, darts, edges, trims, stripes
Fuzzy	Softens contour, gently increases area, reduces definition of edge or shape	Softness, indecisiveness, femininity, gentleness, ease	Fringe, fur, feathers, patterns, translucent fabrics, trims
Contour			
Smooth	Reinforces smoothness or accents shapes	Straightforwardness, simplicity, boldness, assertiveness, hardness, definitive precision	Seams, darts, edges, trims, stripes
Shaped	Effect varies depending on elements of shape	Complexity, informality, deviousness	Lace, trim, pattern
Consistency			
Solid	Advances boldly	Smoothness, self-assurance, strength	Stripes, binding, piping, braid, belt, borders
Porous	Does not advance, may recede	Openness, delicacy, weakness, refinement, uncertainty	Lace, crochet, fringe, eyelet trim
Length			
Long	Emphasizes its direction, smooths and elongates	Evaluation relative to figure, stress on continuity, grace	Seams, darts, trims
Short	Breaks up spaces	Possibly busyness, agitation	Any of the above
Direction			
Vertical	Lengthens, narrows	Dignity, strength, poise, elegance, superiority, grandness, alertness, austerity	Any of the above
Horizontal	Shortens, widens	Tranquility, repose, calmness, serenity, passiveness	Any of the above
Diagonal	Near vertical—lengthens Near horizontal—widens 45 effect—influenced by other factors	Dramatic, vivacious, unsettled, active, unstable, dynamic	Any of the above

Source: *The Magic Garment*. (Cunningham, 2020, pp. 74-75).

Table 2. Major Color Associations of Western Cultures

BOX 4.6 | Major Color Associations of Western European and American Cultures

Color	General Appearance	Associations
Red	Brilliant, intense, enlarging, masculine, active, opaque, dry	Fire, heat, strength, love, passion, power, danger, primitiveness, excitement, patriotism, sin, fierceness, sacrifice, vitality, loudness, impulsiveness, blood
Red-orange	Intense, bright, dry, enlarging, masculine	Autumn, energy, gaiety, impetuousness, strength, spirit, boldness, action, warmth, loudness
Orange	Bright, luminous, dry, enlarging, masculine, glowing	Autumn, warmth, cheer, youthfulness, vigor, exuberance, excitement, extremism, earthiness, satiety, loudness, charm
Yellow-orange	Bright, radiant, dry, enlarging, masculine	Autumn, happiness, prosperity, hospitality, gaiety, optimism, openness
Yellow	Sunny, incandescent, radiant, feminine, enlarging, dry	Spring, brightness, wisdom, enlightenment, happiness, kindness, cowardice, treachery, ill health, warmth, sunlight
Yellow-green	Tender, bright, enlarging	Spring, friendship, youth, sparkle, warmth, restlessness, newness
Green	Clean, moist, reducing	Summer, youth, inexperience, growth, envy, restlessness, newness, quiet, naturalness, wealth, coolness, water, refreshing, ghastliness, disease, terror, guilt
Blue-green	Quiet, clean, moist	Summer, quietness, reserve, relaxation, faithfulness, smoothness, discriminating, rational
Blue	Transparent, wet, deep, reducing	Winter, peace, restraint, loyalty, sincerity, youth, conservatism, passivity, honor, purity, depression, melancholy, sobriety, serenity, gentleness, innocence
Blue-violet	Deep, soft, reducing, moist	Tranquility, spiritualism, modesty, reflection, somberness, maturity, aloofness, dignity, fatigue
Violet	Deep, soft, dark, misty, atmospheric, reducing	Stateliness, royalty, drama, dominance, mystery, dignity, pomposity, supremacy, formality, melancholy, quietness, mourning, loneliness, desperation, profundity, art, philosophy
Red-violet	Deep, soft, dark, warm	Drama, enigma, intrigue, tension, remoteness, intensity
Brown	Warm, dark, deep	Autumn, casualness, friendliness, naturalness, earthiness, tranquility, honesty, security, substance, stability, humility
White	Spatial, light, deep	Winter, snow, youthfulness, virginity, joy, purity, cleanliness, honesty, hope, innocence, spiritualism, enlightenment, forgiveness, worthiness, delicacy, love, day
Black	Spatial, dark, deep	Night, mourning, ominousness, death, formality, sophistication, gloom, uncertainty, evil, mystery, dignity, sorrow
Gray	Neutral, misty	Calmness, dignity, serenity, versatility, resignation, death, ghostliness, obscurity, penitence

Source: *The Magic Garment*. (Cunningham, 2020, p. 93).

Table 3. Physical and Psychological Effects of Textures

BOX 4.H | Effects of Texture

Texture	Physical Effect	Psychological Effect (Mood)
Smooth, crisp	Sharp silhouette, much reflected light	Refined, hard, cheerful, perky, sophisticated
Smooth, soft	Sharp silhouette, much reflected light	Sensuous, relaxed, luxurious
Velvety soft	Enlarging, but less defined, dense, less reflected light	Rich, luxurious
Fuzzy	Enlarging, but less defined, dense, less reflected light	Luxurious, cuddly, primitive, untamed
Rough	Softer silhouette, less reflected light	Sporty, natural, uncouth, coarse, primitive, casual
Coarse	Enlarging, less reflected light	Uncouth, earthy, uncivilized
Medium (regular)	Neutralizing, medium reflected light	Businesslike, mature, stable, conservative
Medium (irregular)	Neutralizing, medium reflected light	Stable, active, warm

Source: *The Magic Garment*. (Cunningham, 2020, p. 97).

Table 4. Expressing Age in Costume Features

BOX S.A | Expressing Age in Costume Features (Subject to Period and Personality)

Feature	Old Age	Maturity	Youth	Childhood
Cut				
Skirt/pant length	Long	Long	Short	Shortest
Sleeve	Long	Medium to long	Long or short	Long or short
Neckline	High or medium	Low or high	Low or medium	Medium or high
Hair				
Female	Coiffed (outdated) or frazzled	Coiffed, specific	Loose	Long, loose, or braided
Male	Balding, frazzled	Tightly controlled	Freer style	Loose, longer
Colors	Low intensities, low values	Secondaries, lower intensities	Stronger pastels, primaries, secondaries, high intensities, high values	Pastel or primaries
Fit	Body fitting or sagging	Body fitting, relative to period	Neat, but may be loose	Loose, not figure fitting
Silhouette	Complex or simple	Most complex	Simple to medium complex	Simplest

Source: *The Magic Garment*. (Cunningham, 2020, p. 121).

Table 5. Expressing Rank or Social Status in Costume Features

BOX
S.B

Expressing Rank or Social Status in Costume Features (Subject to Period and Personality)			
Feature	Rich	Middle Class	Poor
Cut			
Skirt length	Longest	Long	Shortest
Style	Most complex	Simple to complex	Simple
Color	Vibrant, intense	Lower intensity, lower value	Low intensities, low values
Fit	Proper fit	Neat, proper fit	Poorly fitted
Silhouette	Fashion silhouette	Not latest silhouette	Outdated silhouette
Texture	Smooth, shiny, napped	Medium textures, low shine	Rough, bold textures
Condition	New, clean	Worn, clean	Worn, ragged, dirty

Source: *The Magic Garment*. (Cunningham, 2020, p. 121).

Table 6. Expressing Personality in Costume Features

BOX
S.C

Expressing Personality in Costume Features (Subject to Period)		
Feature	Extrovert	Introvert
Cut	Lavish, low neckline, shorter skirt, bare arms, or short sleeves	Modest, high neckline, longer skirt, long sleeves
Fit	Body revealing	Body concealing
Texture	Hard, shiny	Medium to fine
Hair	Loose, bold style	Tight, close to the head
Colors	Warm colors, high intensities, high values (See also <i>Color</i> in chapter 4)	Cool colors, low intensities, low values
Silhouette	Simple and dramatic or complex	Simple
Line	Exaggerated curves, zigzags, diagonals	Gentle curves, straight lines

Source: *The Magic Garment*. (Cunningham, 2020, p. 122).

Table 7. Expressing Character Traits in Costume Features

BOX
S.D

Expressing Character Traits in Costume Features (Subject to Period)						
Feature	Loving	Sensuous	Innocent	Evil	Miserly	Severe
Cut	Open, flowing, modest	Full cut, open, lavish	Full cut, modest	Tight, straight cut	Tight, straight cut	Tight, straight cut
Fit	Body revealing	Body revealing	Body concealing	Body revealing	Body revealing	Body revealing
Texture	Soft, fuzzy	Soft, shiny, smooth	Soft, fine	Harsh, rough, hard, shiny	Hard, rough, or medium	Hard, rough
Hair	Soft, generous volume	Elegant, generous volume or severe, sexy	Soft, loose	Severe or frazzled	Severe or frazzled	Severe, tight style
Colors	Warm, medium intensity, high or low values	Warm, medium intensity, high or low values	Cool, medium intensity, high value	Warm, high or low intensity, low value	Cool, medium or low intensity, medium to low values	Medium or low intensity, medium to low values
<i>see also Color in chapter 4</i>						
Silhouette	Round or oval shapes	Round or oval shapes	Round or oval	Straight shapes	Straight shapes	Straight shapes
Line	Wide curves, soft edged	Undulating lines	Gently curved lines	Hard, straight, or zigzag lines	Hard, straight lines	Hard, straight, or zigzag lines

Source: *The Magic Garment*. (Cunningham, 2020, p. 122).

CHAPTER 5. THE FACETS OF FEMALE FIGURE IN FILM

5.1. *L'Apollonide*: Female Figures: Innocent, Unprotected, Exhausted, Disguised

5.1.1. Background

The first film that we will explore by Romand was set in a Parisien Brothel around the turn of the 20th century. In a 2011 *New York Times* interview, director Bertrand Bonello and his cinematographer wife Josée Deshaies, described this period piece as a return to the “heart” or “cliché” of France. However, they did not want the costumes to read as such. Both cite the costume design of the film as a main focus with the goal of dispelling the “pageantry” past seen in brothel films and instead “to give the feeling of something contemporary...to show the details, to show the weight of things” (Lim, 2011). For this film, Romand herself admitted that her aim with the costume design was not actual period authenticity (Romand & Laverty, 2012). Instead, Romand aspired for an authenticity with the *characters* and designing costumes in the way the girls would have lived in them (Romand & Laverty, 2012). The filmmaker entrusted this work of “dressing their nudity” (Anaïs Romand, n.d.) to Romand’s capable hands and the result was as thought-provoking as it was titillating.

5.1.2. Scene I: Four Girls Seated: Codes and Messages



Figure 1. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Four Girls Seated in White Nightgowns. Source: Bonello

<i>L'Apollonide</i> : Scene I: Four Girls Seated	
Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	Four females who work in the brothel are sitting together. They are all dressed in a similar fashion. Their heads are either lowered or extending in a downward trajectory. Their brows are furrowed and lips hanging or drooping. Their bodies are limp and loose with shoulders slumped and hunched. The hair is long, unbrushed, and disheveled. Three of the four females are staring at something or someone behind the camera.
Proairetic Code “Actions”	The females are awaiting examination by a doctor for sexually transmitted diseases. The brothel’s madame has arranged the inspection. Looks of worry or concern would be a natural expectation for these frames but the action reads more like exhaustion, boredom, or sadness.
Linguistic Message	Le Docteur: “Allonge toi et je vais t’examiner. Montre bien.” La Fille: “Si je sors d’ici un jour, je fais plus jamais l’amour.” ⁸

⁸ Translation:

The Doctor: “Lay down and I am going to examine you. Show me good.”

The Girl: “If I get out of here one day, I will never make love again.”

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
White, Formless Nightgowns	private, covered, hidden, comfort
Lace Detail at Scooped Necklines	young, flirty, ladylike, revealing skin
Black, Leg-Covering Stockings	formalness, protection, etiquette, respectable
Long, Loose Hair not brushed	aloof, fatigued, rebellious, unkempt

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Here the cut of the garments is loose with characters dressed in nightgowns and stockings. The nightgown carries connotations of intimacy and privacy, and the formless nature of their construction might denote a desire to be unseen, without curves. The nebulousness of the nightgown allows the girl a break from the requirements of her otherwise shapely female physique. Stockings send a message of more mature or aged women. These leg coverings might conceal the lower portions of the female anatomy, but we know they offer no real protection given the prodding, poking, and probing witnessed in other scenes.

The composition of the garments is simple, featuring straight lines and gauze fabric, both characteristics of poor and meager dress. The lace details and ribbon ties remind the audience of the character’s youth and childlike nature. Also of note is the disheveled appearance of each girls’ hair. Their unbrushed locks, coupled with glum facial expressions, seem to convey exhaustion or indifference.

Color in this scene takes on the symbolic role of juxtaposing black and white. The white gowns symbolize the idea of innocence and purity. But it is then contrasted with stark black

stockings, a color often used to signal depression, sin, dirtiness, or despair. The irony is they are wearing black stockings as an attraction to the male who recognizes danger but, like a moth to a flame, chooses a form of self-destruction.

When considering the overall cultural message of this image, loss of innocence seems to stand out. White is worn at the top of the body, near the head and heart of the character, signifying a still innocent mind and immature nature. But the costume reaches the waist, the black stockings sit atop sexual organs now stained and offer only phony protection from outside forces.

5.1.3. Scenes II, III, IV, V: Rag Dolls: Codes and Messages



Figure 2. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Girl in Shawl Ascending Stairs with Doll. Source: Bonello



Figure 3. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Girl in Shawl Resting with Doll. Source: Bonello



Figure 4. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Girl as Automaton #1. Source: Bonello



Figure 5. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Girl as Automaton #2. Source: Bonello

***L'Apollonide*: Scenes II,III,IV,V: Rag Dolls**

Hermeneutic Code

“Observations without
Answers”

In the top left image, a woman ascends the stairs of the brothel in a floor length, white gauze gown trailing the floor, with long, bell sleeves. Her shoulders are wrapped in a blue, angular shawl. Her hair cascades down her back in a natural fashion. In her left hand, she carries a babydoll dressed also in white and blue. At top right, the same character is resting with the doll close, both daydreaming off into the distance. This close-up reveals the syphilis spots beginning to appear on the prostitute’s face. They are both surrounded by bed linens and decorative textiles. In the images below, a woman in white pointelle lace with cinched ribbon waist is being positioned and locked into a pose as if she was a marionette. A ribbon bow is tied up in her long, strawberry blond hair. Her gaze is fixed and empty. The male patron places the girl in his desired positions and then inhales his puppet at the nape of her neck. He dons a brown plaid vest and dark-colored trousers that seem to melt into the background. In contrast, the female in the

	foreground of this scene is excessively illuminated in light with her bright white dress nearly aglow.
Proairetic Code “Actions”	As the top scene opens, a letter is being narrated by a former male patron of the disease-stricken character. She has been diagnosed with syphilis and has fallen irreversibly ill. As she nears death, the girl begins to carry around a babydoll, holding and coddling it the way a young child would. Once she ascends the stairs and enters her bedroom, the character tightly embraces the doll and the two rest together. For the bottom scenes, a male patron is forcing his fetish upon another girl in the brothel. She is fulfilling his fantasy by pretending to be a doll-like automaton. Her movements are mechanical and calculated. This visibly and audibly excites the male behind her as the audience ponders the end of the narrated letter, “Les hommes ont des secrets mais pas de mystère.” ⁹
Linguistic Message	Narration of a letter by one of the male brothel regulars is being read for the duration of these two frames and then torn up by the madame of the house before its intended recipient can read it: “Tu sens bon ma poupée. Ma chère petite Julie, ma petite caca. J’ai bien de la peine d’écrire dans cette lettre parce que tu auras de la peine quand tu la liras. Tu es malade ma Julie. Ne crois pas que je t’abandonne. Je n’abandonne jamais les miens. Mais nos relations doivent changer parce que je ne veux pas attrapper ton mal. Les hommes ont des secrets mais pas de mystère.” ¹⁰

⁹ Translation: “Men have secrets but no mystery.”

¹⁰ Translation: “You smell good my doll. My dear little Julie, my little sweetie. It causes me pain to write this letter because you will be sad when you read it. You are sick my Julie. Don't believe that I'm abandoning you. I never leave those close to me. But our relationship has to change because I don't want to catch your disease. Men have secrets but no mystery.”

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
White, Long Gowns	purity, youth, bridal, virgin
Lace Detailing	adolescence, novelty, sophistication
Blue, Diamond Pointed Shawl	protection, comfort, warmth, old age
Babydoll in similar dress	innocence, nostalgia, play, joy
Ribbons in Hair and at Waist	girlish, juvenile, restrictive/restricting, tight/loose, ornament, decoration
Long, Flowing Hair	health, nourishment, youth, vitality

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

The cut of these costumes is long in length and flowing in nature. Long and flowy garments often signal characters in childlike states. Of note, however, is the addition of a shawl to the character at left. Shawls often conjure connotations of an aged or older woman. So, while this girl is still considered categorically young, a syphilis diagnosis has accelerated her aging. The shawl communicates an aged exterior while her white nightgown indicates she is just a juvenile.

The simple and cotton construction of the garments continues to reflect the poor roots of each girl at the brothel. With meager means, small details like lace trimming and ribbon accessories were ways to fake affluence. The smooth and soft aspects of each dress created a sensuous mood, almost inviting the viewer to reach into the screen and feel their comfort.

The glowing white color of each dress permeates the frame and brings a great deal of reflected light into the scenes. As mentioned before, white is the great communicator of youthfulness, virginity, purity, and of note for this scene, cleanliness. The costume designer keeps the disease-ridden girl in white for the remainder of her life in the film. Possibly to signify that physical innocence might have been stolen but the cleanliness of her spirit or soul will remain intact.

5.1.4. Scenes VI, VII, VIII, IX: Masked Faces: Codes and Messages



Figure 6. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Woman with Facial Scars in Brocade Jacket. Source: Bonello



Figure 7. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Woman with Facial Scars in Nude as Spectacle. Source: Bonello



Figure 8. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Masked Woman in Red #1. Source: Bonello



Figure 9. Image: *L'Apollonide*: Masked Woman in Red #2. Source: Bonello

***L'Apollonide*: Scenes VI, VII, VIII, IX: Masked Faces**

Hermeneutic Code	This is the same character in both sets of scenes. In the images on
“Observations without	top, the woman is first wearing a wine-colored corset over which a
Answers”	tight fitted blazer bodice is seen. The fabric is heavy and brocaded
	in a floral print. She wears a pearl necklace around her neck and
	her hair cascades down past her shoulders in voluminous tendrils.
	She stands in front of an armoire door with the mirror reflecting the

	<p>back of her head. Her face is powdered white and lips stained in red hue. Despite efforts to apply heavy makeup, the scars extending from each side of her mouth are still visible. Her hands are at the hips and her face features a pouty expression. Her eyes stare straight forward in a direct, yet droopy, gaze. Once at the party, her clothes are removed, and the one remaining pale undergarment blends in with her porcelain flesh. Her makeup is now more dramatic and pronounced with eyes accentuated in charcoals and blacks and lips and scars vividly painted in a bright rouge. The other guests remain clothed in formal gowns and tuxedos.</p> <p>In the images at bottom, the actress is dressed in a red, sheer chiffon gown with a loose drape and off-the-shoulder neckline. A white, expressionless mask now covers her scarred face and only the eyes are able to send the character's messages. Her eyes are staring to her far left, past the male patron in the right corner of the frame, who wears a similar mask. The woman's hair is pulled up and is coiffed at the nape of her neck.</p>
<p>Proairetic Code</p> <p>"Actions"</p>	<p>Up until the scene at left, Madeleine had secluded herself to back of house duties at the brothel. At the beginning of the film, one of the brothel's patrons brutally maimed Madeleine's face with a pocket knife by cutting a permanent and painful scar at each side of her mouth. The audience witnesses her character move from a highly desired, alluring woman of the night to a modest and apprehensive recluse. She assumes roles of cleaning the brothel, washing and ironing clothes, and assisting with food preparation. Towards the end, however, when these two pictured scenes unfold, we see her step back into public view and watch how this re-entry is received.</p> <p>In Images VI and VII the character is dressing for and then attending a job in which she has been hired as entertainment. She arrives at a lavish mansion and, at first, receives uncomfortable stares by a cohort of bourgeois attendees. But the stares quickly</p>

	<p>give way to curiosity and both the male and females guests begin to physically draw towards her theatrical appearance. The group proceeds to undress Madeleine until she is completely nude, wearing only the signature smile, living up to her growing reputation as “la femme qui rit.”¹¹ When asked her name, she only responds with her first name. Even when asked for her full name, she does not oblige the request.</p> <p>Images VIII and IX take place just following the above scene, at the end of the film’s masquerade fête. Here Madeleine’s face is completely covered with a blank, white mask. It is the first time she has returned to the courting floor and mingling with men. A new gentleman approaches and asks her who she is, to which she replies effectively, “whoever you want me to be.” A sincere and kind persistence by the man ensues and the two retreat to an upstairs room. The viewer observes the couple making love. With Madeleine having the protection of the mask, we see her giving in to the pleasure and honesty of the exchange.</p>
Linguistic Message	<p>Scenes VI and VII:</p> <p>“Comment tu t’appelles?”</p> <p>“Madeleine.”</p> <p>“Tu n’as pas un surnom?”</p> <p>“Non c’est tout.”</p> <p>Scenes VIII and IX:</p> <p>“Dessous t’es comment?”</p> <p>“Comme tu veux. Tu veux que je sois comment?”¹²</p>

¹¹ Translation: “The woman who laughs.”

¹² Translation:

Man: “What is your name?”

Prostitute: “Madeleine.”

Man: “You don’t have a nickname?”

Prostitute: “No, that’s it.”

Man: “Underneath, how are you?”

Prostitute: “As you wish. How do you want me to be?”

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Dark, Tight Fitting Corset	hard, stiff, rigid, restrictive, sex appeal, cinched, voluptuous breasts
Smooth, Thick, Red Brocade Blazer	rich, luxury, mature, confident, business, masculinity
Floral Motif	feminine, spring, rebirth, growth
Red Chiffon Sheer Gown	softness, fluidity, excitement, passion
Horizontal Neckline	calmness, passiveness, revealing
Pearl Necklace	wealth, luxury, rare, unique, adornment
White Porcelain Effect Mask	perfection, emptiness, no expression, blank, devoid, façade
Loose and Curly Long Hair	carefree, confident, health, vitality, youth, freedom
Styled and Upswept Hair	refined, rich, cautious, formal, sophistication

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Thanks to an interview, we are able to gain direct insight into Romand’s goals for these scenes and the color “red” for Madeleine’s character. Romand admitted that before the film, she made it a point to find and create each girl’s character and devise a plan to represent them visually. The choice of red, to counter the severe facial scarring of Madeleine’s character, “...was really to draw attention to her body claiming [longing] for love. She wears a mask and

the dress is very transparent. It's more a desire of liberation than vengeance" (Romand & Lavery, 2012). In covering her face and then liberating her body, the character frees herself from the prison of her shameful scars. Freedom from former self might also be a thematic device used here. In both scenes, Madeleine is asked questions of identity to which she either chooses not to reveal her full identity or metaphorically surrenders her identity to become whatever is desired by another. Visually, again, this is represented by the absence or presence of a mask, one of which is permanent, the other a costume accessory.

5.2. *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*: Female Figure: “Fake it ‘til you Take it”

5.2.1. Background

Set in Northern France around the turn of the 20th century, this film is based on Octave Mirbeau’s literary novel by the same name. The story follows a chambermaid as she adapts to life at her next post, one of many in a series of unsuccessful servant positions. The film often reflects back to prior assignments and seems to trouble Célestine with nostalgia and longing. Her current post is wrought with an angry wife and seedy husband as the heads of household. Whereas earlier adaptations of this story seemed to focus on Mirbeau’s anarchist views on social class, this version’s director, Benoît Jacquot, takes a more feminist approach to the storyline and likens the main character’s plight as “struggling to escape slavery” (Hopewell, 2015). In preparing the costume design, Benoît discussed with Romand his desire to depict Célestine as very different from an ordinary chambermaid (Danel, 2017). To this end, Célestine’s character often behaves and carries herself as above her social standing, which Romand reflects impeccably in costume choice.

5.2.2. Scenes I and II: Chic Chambermaid: Codes and Messages



Figure 10. Image: *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*: Chambermaid with her Master.
Source: Hopewell



Figure 11. Image: *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*: Chambermaid with Hands Interlaced.
Source: Fanpop.com and DarkSarcasm

Journal d'une Femme de Chambre: Scenes I and II: Chic Chambermaid

Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	Célestine is dressed in her daily chambermaid uniform. The dress is black with lace emerging from the neckline and at the wrists. A white apron covers the lower front portion of the dress from the waist down. In the first photo, Célestine is standing behind the seated wife of the house who is holding a book and wearing round sunglasses. Both women have strawberry blond hued hair which is drawn up into buns of a matching manner. The women are looking off to screen right with solemn expressions. In the second photo, Célestine is also standing but with her back to the audience. Her gaze is down, looking at the floor, and her hands are interlocked in the back below her apron ribbon. In both shots, the setting is her master’s home and features antique furniture, brocade fabric wallpaper, painted white trim, a chandelier, and other fine furnishings.
Proairetic Code “Actions”	The wife of the home is particular and demanding. She is constantly ordering Célestine around unnecessarily, often ringing a call bell incessantly before Célestine has had time to complete the prior task. Célestine has trouble holding her tongue with the wife but knows she cannot afford to lose the post. Having cycled through numerous other residences already, she has been told this is her last chance at long-term placement. Throughout the film, the viewer can feel the growing tension between the wife and Célestine. In addition to the wife’s many demands, she is also a bitter woman with a belligerent attitude. She nags her husband excessively and no task or order is ever done to her liking. Célestine, therefore, while wearing her work dress, is often shown with facial expressions of annoyance and animosity, as in these images.

Linguistic Message	<p>La Placeuse: “Mademoiselle Célestine, j’ai une bonne, très bonne place pour vous. Seulement il faudrait aller en province. Pas très loin.”</p> <p>Célestine: “En province? Je n’y cours pas, vous savez.”</p> <p>La Placeuse: “On ne connaît pas la province. Il y a d’excellentes places, en province.”</p> <p>Célestine: “Oh! D’excellentes places? En voilà une blague!”</p> <p>Employer: “Je vous demande pardon, mademoiselle Célestine. Il n’y a pas de mauvaises places.”</p> <p>Célestine: “Je le sais bien. Il n’y a que de mauvais maîtres.”</p> <p>Employer: “Non, que de mauvaises domestiques.”¹³</p>
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Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Long, Simple Gown	mature, conservative, poor
Black Gown	sadness, mourning, dignified
Maid Uniform	utilitarian, work, sex appeal, frilly
White Lace Detail	childlike, dainty, delicate
White Apron	functionality, protection, cleanliness
Red Hair	passion, power, Irish/Scottish, unique
Hair in a Bun	refined, reserved, holding back, high society

¹³ Translation:

Employer: “Miss Celestine, I have a very good post for you. Only, it will require you to go to the country. But not very far.”

Celestine: “To the country? I’m not rushing to get out there, you know.”

Employer: “We don’t know about the country. There are excellent posts in the country.”

Celestine: “Oh! Great posts?! There’s a joke!”

Employer: “I beg your pardon, Miss Celestine. There are no bad posts.”

Celestine: “I know that. There are only bad masters.”

Employer: “No, only bad servants.”

Lace Pointelle Dress	luxury, costly, time, detailed, feminine
Floral House Coat	leisure, comfort, ladylike
Small, Round Framed Sunglasses	recreation, relaxation, free time, protection

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

The main character, Célestine, is dressed in a classic, French maid costume of black dress with white lace. Popular infidelity folklore often conjures connotations of seduction or sex, but this film is careful not to send that same message. The viewer comes to see Célestine's plight as believing that she belongs to a social class higher than her current standing. She feels she is above working as a servant for perverted masters and bitter wives. To ensure that her signature maid uniform was not construed as provocative or stereotypical in any way, Romand constructed the garment out of a tightly woven modern cotton with honeycomb weave, gave it a conservative cut and even dyed the dress in Blue Prussia color to mute the traditional black (Danel, 2017). In this scene, we observe Célestine waiting on the difficult wife. This master, who is leisurely lounging in a fancy, floral robe and holding a book, perhaps her most laborious task of the day. While the viewer does see differences in dress between the two women, their sameness in hairstyle, matching porcelain skin, and tilted snobbish gaze seem to speak, more here, to their similarities. Célestine, through these small and unnoticeable actions in appearance and attitude, seeks to advance herself to the same level as her master. While around the wife, Célestine regularly asserts herself with a dignity and determination not typical of a chambermaid. But when alone, we see a shift, as in the Scene II image, when Célestine is left to her own emotions. The dress in Scene I at front possessing both qualities of hopeful white and sophisticated black

becomes the dress in Scene II, with back turned, of mostly dark and depressed and sunken into its frame with surrendered arms.

5.2.3. Scene III: Master not a Maid: Codes and Messages



Figure 12. Image: *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*: Woman near Train in Shiny Satin.
Source: Jacquot

<i>Journal d'une Femme de Chambre</i> : Scenes III: Master not a Maid	
Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	An elegantly dressed woman stands in front of a stopped train car. Her gown drags the ground and features a train of its own. Her hands are covered with short riding gloves and in them she holds an umbrella of nearly the same shade as her dress. On top of her head a straw boater hat is perched, decorated with ribbon around the brim and hanging from the back. A tan skinned man wears a white button up shirt with rolled sleeves, a dark colored three button vest,

	and matching straight leg trousers. Over his right shoulder, he braces himself to carry an oversized travel trunk. The man is glaring at the woman, while her expression remains matter of fact.
Proairetic Code “Actions”	Célestine arrives in Normandy, the location of her latest chambermaid post. The train that has carried her to the new town is still stopped in the background, loading and unloading passengers. Joseph, the farmhand of the estate, has been sent to retrieve Célestine from the train station and bring her home by horse and carriage. Joseph approaches the platform where passengers are descending from the train and recognizes Célestine as the new chambermaid. There is no exchange of pleasantries. He hoists her large trunk luggage over his shoulder and hurriedly rushes off to load it into the buggy. Célestine and Joseph travel to the estate on rough rural roads and are silent for the duration of the journey.
Linguistic Message	Joseph approaches Célestine at the Train Station: “Vous êtes la Parisienne?” Célestine: “Oui, c’est moi.” Célestine inner dialogue narration: “Il suffit qu’on me parle doucement. Il suffit qu’on ne me considère point comme un être en dehors d’autres et en marge de la vie, comme quelque chose d’immédiaire entre un chien et un perroquet...je sais aussi, par expérience, qu’il n’y a que les gens malheureux, pour mettre la souffrance des humbles de plain-pied avec la leur” ¹⁴ (Mirbeau, 1996, p. 142).

¹⁴ Translation:

Joseph: “Are you the Parisian?”

Célestine: “Yes, that’s me.”

Narration: “You just need to speak softly to me. Isn’t it enough that I am not considered a part of upper society and on the fringes of life, as something between a dog and parrot? I know from experience that only unhappy people put the suffering of the humble on the same level as theirs.”

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Shiny Day Dress	softness, richness, showy, stand out
Tafetta Silk Gown	luxurious, sensuous, prestige, high class
Lace and Ruffle Trimming	extra, romantic, flirtatious, elegant
Straw Boater Hat	sun shield, fashionable accessory, hides eyes, summertime
Ribbon Decoration	young girl, innocence, decorated, dainty
Matching Parasol	extra protection, preparedness, high maintenance
Light Day Gloves	proper, cultured, hands sheltered from work
White Button Up Shirt with Rolled Sleeves	ready to work, crisp, clean, simple, casual
Dark Vest and Trousers	concealing, utilitarian, practical, basic
Tan Skin	summertime, manual labor, poor, peasant
Fair Skin	snow, youth, privilege, upper class

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Célestine arrives to her new town looking more like a master than a maid. Her reputation precedes her as Joseph is able to spot “la Parisienne” without having to confirm her name or identity. Célestine is dressed in all scenes outside of her chambermaid post in more decorative and luxurious clothing than any of her common peers. You could say, then, that she uses clothing to will herself into the rank she “wants” rather than the rank she “has.” Feigning to be an upper

class, privileged woman in silk dress, day gloves, and shading accoutrements, the character seems determined to elevate her social status.

Joseph, on the other hand, reads as practical and solemn in his work shirt and simple vest and trousers. The viewer quickly senses Joseph as onto her high-class act and immediate expresses disapproval through facial expression and silence. He is annoyed at the size and weight of her clothing trunk and requires she keep up with his hurried and huffy pace to avoid being left at the train station. Predicting he has nothing in common with such a self-appointed prima donna, Joseph effectively ignores her on the ride to the estate and the two do not exchange a word.

The shade of their skin also speaks to the physical and metaphorical contrast of the aesthetic design within this scene. With Célestine's pale and protected skin, the common person of the period would take her to be the lady of a house, not bothered with work or subjected to excessive sun exposure. Joseph's complexion, however, counters her fairness with very tan and leather like skin. His face and arms tell the viewer that he is required to labor in the hot and unforgiving sun and does not know the luxury of a life indoors.

5.3. *La Danseuse*: Female Figure: Angelic, Ethereal, Divine, Original

5.3.1. Background

This biographical drama is based on a true story and centers around American choreographer Loïe Fuller of the late 19th century. Making it from the dusty ranch suburbs of Illinois to the epicenter of entertainment in Paris at the Folies Bergères, Fuller was a pioneer in interpretive and modern dance. The film follows the perseverance of Fuller and the development of her famous Serpentine Dance, which entailed the use of an elaborate silk costume and colored lighting to create dramatic effect (Loïe Fuller, 2021). Female director Stéphanie Di Giusto stressed the importance of contrast in this film as a central thematic element. She portrays Fuller with polarities of animal instinct and avant-garde art, clumsiness and lightness, these elements revolving around the role of costume which was central to her dance (Titze & Di Giusto, 2017). Here, too, Romand had to concentrate all costume efforts around the lighting of each scene as it was an integral and essential aspect of Fuller's choreography.

5.3.2. Scenes I, II, III: Technicolor Angel: Codes and Messages

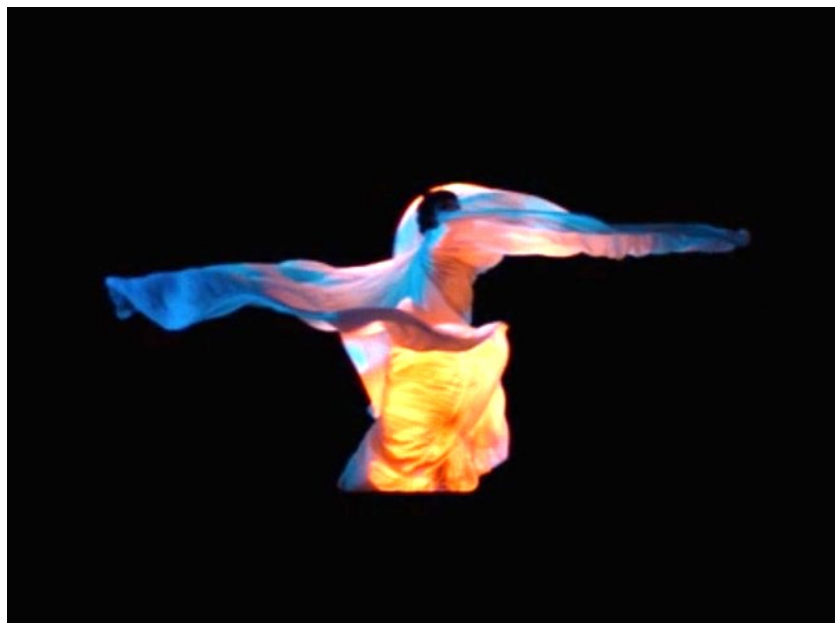


Figure 13. Image: *La Danseuse*: Dancing Woman Illuminated in Reds and Oranges.
Source: Di Giusto



Figure 14. Image: *La Danseuse*: Dancing Woman Illuminated in Blues and Violets.
Source: Di Giusto



Figure 15. Image: *La Danseuse*: Woman in White, Gauze, Pleated Gown.
Source: Di Giusto

La Danseuse: Scenes I, II, III: Technicolor Angel

<p>Hermeneutic Code</p> <p>“Observations without Answers”</p>	<p>Billowy fabric is illuminated and changes color from red and orange to violet and blue. The central character is in the vertical middle of the costume but only a small portion of her head is visible to the viewer. Long, wooden sticks, which are also hidden, are held in her arms and act as extensions of her body. They are used to push, pull, and direct the fabric into certain shapes for artistic effect. At times the garment is close to the actors body and in other shots is far reaching and conceals the dancer completely. The background of the shot is in total darkness and devoid of any material or movement. Upon conclusion of the act and behind the curtain where no one can see, the dancer remains, spent and exhausted, in the pure, white, pleated garment. Sweat pours profusely from her tired face and her hair is disheveled.</p>
<p>Proairetic Code</p> <p>“Actions”</p>	<p>The dancer begins in complete darkness with her oversized, heavy silk gown covering her petite frame. On musical cue with Vivaldi’s <i>Four Season’s Summer</i> symphonic sequence, the lights activate, and the costume begins to move, being directed by Fuller. The viewer is presented with a buffet of sensory pleasure. The audible rush of the music, the visual wonderment of the dance, the sound that the whipping and whooshing of fabric makes, combine in a way to entrance the spectators. There is an urge to actually reach out and try to feel the costume as it pushes and pulls into and out of the plane of the frame. The dance affects a space wider and higher than a single human could occupy and achieves movement of greater impress than a single body alone. Once the sounds and lights slow and the dance concludes, the character falls to her knees in utter exhaustion. She must be carried off stage, wrapped in the cocoon of her white garment.</p>

Linguistic Message	<p>Before the First Performance:</p> <p>Marchand: “Mais c’est quoi ces machines?”</p> <p>Fuller: “Ce sont des projecteurs électriques.”</p> <p>Marchand: “Exactement. Tout ça pour une danse?”</p> <p>Fuller: “C’est important la lumière. Il faut qu’elle soit bonne.”</p> <p>Marchand: “Oui, mais, moi, je vends le spectacle. Tu as deux semaines. Si ça ne marche pas, tous les deux vous êtes virés.”</p> <p>After the First Performance Review:</p> <p>Marchand: “Une floraison de rêves se tire réponse. Le poème anime et la fleur enchante. Fugitif et mystérieux. Et nous demeurons des coeurs les empoignés. De la beauté qui passe est supérieure de la vie. ”¹⁵</p>
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Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Long, Flowing Fabric	freedom, movement, unrestricted, liberation, grace, unbroken
Pleated, Gauze Dress	grandeur, excitement, angelic
Heavy, White Dress	monastic, aggressiveness, self-assurance
Bright Red and Orange	love, sacrifice, boldness, warmth, vitality
Vivid Violet and Blue	heaven, truth, cooling, tranquility, spiritualism, reflection

¹⁵ Translation:

Marchand: “What is this, these machines?”

Fuller: “These are the electric projectors.”

Marchand: “Exactly. All of this for a dance?”

Fuller: “The light is important. It has to be good.”

Marchand: “Yes, but I have a show to sell. You have two weeks. If this doesn’t work, you both are fired.”

Newspaper Review after First Performance: A blooming of dreams is being answered. An animated poem that the flower enchants. Fleeting and mysterious. Our hearts are gripped. A beauty greater than life.”

Dark, Short, Textured Hair	boyish, older than actual age, frazzled, chaotic
Faceless Head	anonymity, unimportant, egoless
Black Background	unknown, nothingness, void, infinite, mystery

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

The ethereal and nebulous nature of the costume lends itself to many interpretations. While the garment itself communicates a fluid and flowing gentleness, the dancer at its core must be tough and robust to carry its weight. The character's demeanor does possess a certain femininity, but one not quite the norm, which the director repeatedly described as a "not very smooth thing" (Titze & Di Giusto, 2017). It is this opposition that draws the audience in and encourages viewers to question their opinions on gender norms, sexuality, and physical ability.

Fuller is laser-focused and faithful to her dance vision and will not be deterred, even after life experiences and rejections that would have discouraged the average person. The dimensions of her body and the characteristics of her face fade as the dance begins, as if she becomes anonymous, even other-worldly. This freedom from ego or identity allows the audience to place themselves into the gown. The viewer becoming the dancer, feeling the passion and pain of their own dreams or obsessions.

Throughout all of the dance performances in the film, color is cast onto the garment and changes in an ombre fashion, a sequence like running through the arcs of the rainbow. This infusion of color being projected onto the costume also allowed the costume designer to send many supplemental messages. From the fiery reds of passion and love to the deep and moody tones of blue, the range of emotions seen and felt by the viewer was widespread. And then there was the stark contrast of the black background of each dance, as if the dancer had mysteriously

emerged from another galaxy or space or time or plane. This ethereal creature appearing from the abyss of darkness and despair brings light or is the light.

5.3.3. Scene IV: Divination of a Dancer: Codes and Messages



Figure 16. Image: *La Danseuse*: Woman in Dancing Gown at Center of Applauding Crowd.
Source: *Di Giusto*

<i>La Danseuse</i> : Scene IV: Divination of a Dancer	
Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	The dancer is at almost center and dressed in the iconic white performance gown. A large group of formally clad spectators surround her. The center of the frame is more illuminated than the fringes. This scene is shot in wide angle with faces feeling less like individuals and more like the sum of a collective and homogenous group of like people. There is a mixture of both male and female patrons, and they are dressed in luxurious, fashionable attire for the period. The group’s gaze is concentrated on Fuller. All hands, except Fullers, are in the applause position.
Proairetic Code “Actions”	Just before this final scene, Fuller is overwhelmed by her physical state. Her body is in poor condition and her eyesight is failing. Exhausted and spent, Fuller visits drug-addicted Louis and begs for

	<p>his help. Louis doses a cloth, of same weight, color, and fabric as her dancing dress, with Ether and places over Fuller's face who inhales deeply to gain its full effect. The next day she is carried to the Opera house and can barely stand. The Opera house managers are furious at her weakened state and threaten to cancel the show and ruin her career. Fuller is determined to perform and, in excruciating pain, limps to the stage. The performance is set up with more reflecting mirrors and illuminating lights than ever before. The dance begins and Fuller is fantastic, but just as it is about to conclude, a large light explodes and sends the dancer falling from the dance platform onto the stage floor. The curtain is lowered, and everything goes silent. Fuller, with crippled gait, begs to be let from behind the curtain to see her audience. The curtain is raised slightly, just enough for Fuller to emerge. Applause erupts. A standing ovation ensues. The spotlight follows her as she descends from the stage and makes her way exhaustedly through the crowd, streaming tears of joy.</p>
Linguistic Message	<p>Before the Last Performance: Fuller: "Sans ma robe je ne suis rien. Aidez-moi Louis." After the Last Performance: Fuller: "Ouvrez! Ouvrez! Je veux aller voir. Je veux aller voir." Audience: "Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!"¹⁶</p>

¹⁶ Translation:

Fuller: "Without my dancing dress, I am nothing. Help me, Louis." (Louis gives her a dose of ether)

Fuller: "Open it! Open it! I want to go see! I want to go see!"

Audience: "Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!"

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
White, Gathered Performance Dress	grandness, celestial, abundant, amorphous
Short, Frizzy Hair	masculine, beaten, frazzled, drained
Black Tuxedos	formal, masculinity, rich, uptight, rigid, special occasion
Ball Gowns	formal, luxurious, stiff, constricting, celebration
Elbow Length Gloves	sophistication, modesty, protection, poised
Updos in Women’s Hair	refined, mature, civilized, formal
Beards	turn of century style, intellectual, gentleman, worldliness
Bald Heads	aging, maturity, experience
Bright Spotlight	saturate, purity, spiritualism, spatial

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

In this finale, we see Fuller achieve a sort of divine or iconic status. The film shows her determination to power through real physical injuries and draw on a source of strength beyond human capabilities. After being further blinded by a pyrotechnic explosion and falling from the dance platform, the character is not worried about her own physical state, but instead, with superhuman strength, stands and begs to be connected to her audience. It is the crowd and their approval that gives her dance, and life, its energy and meaning. Before this scene, the costume was always illuminated in the bright and changing hues of projected color. But here, the general

public is given its first opportunity to see her, up close, in the foundational garment. The contrast of clothing is also of interest in this scene. The audience is clad in luxurious and expensive fabrics and jewels while Fuller's dress is not much more than a pleated bed linen. The viewer is left with the idea that worldly riches do not seem shine as bright as the dancer's simple, white gown. The purity of the white gown and its brilliance transform the character from artist to angel.

5.4. *Les Gardiennes*: Female Figure: Strong, Protectors, Resourceful, Hard Working, Collaborative, Togetherness in Grieving

5.4.1. Background

Les Gardiennes is a 2017 film based on Ernest Pérochon's 1924 novel of the same name. The women are left behind to tend the home and work the land as their men are drafted to fight in World War I. The story revolves mainly around one family, the Paridier family, who hires an orphaned young woman, Francine, to help on their country farm. Three of the family's men are away fighting in the war and return at various points during the film to demonstrate the depressing and dangerous effects of battle. One son falls in love with Francine during a visit home. They begin a relationship which results in an unplanned pregnancy and ends after a tragic misunderstanding. Ultimately, the film depicts this sobering moment in history when women began to assume new and different labor and household roles. This is a female-centric drama that speaks to a new world where all the men are either "gone or gone mad" (Mintzer, 2017).

Up to this point, in the aforementioned films, we observed the critical and central role costumes played, almost taking on their own character roles in the development of the story. Now, we shall see Romand's subtle shift with her costume designs serving a different purpose within the film.

5.4.2. Scenes I and II: Women at Work: Codes and Messages



Figure 17. Image: *Les Gardiennes*: Three Women in Field Dress Harvesting Wheat.
Source: Beauvois



Figure 18. Image: *Les Gardiennes*: Two Women in Milking Clogs Carrying Stainless Jugs.
Source: Beauvois

***Les Gardiennes*: Scenes I and II: Women at Work**

Hermeneutic Code

“Observations without
Answers”

Scene I: Women in layers of clothing working in the field. The women at far left and far right are reaping the standing stalks while the woman near the center-right foreground is baling the wheat. The women wear wide-brimmed hats, long sleeves, and long skirts to protect them from the elements. Scene II: A donkey is fixed to a

	<p>milk cart filled with stainless, liquid carrying containers. Two women tote the last jug towards the cart to load. The weight of the jug has forced each woman to counterbalance by extending an arm out. They are dressed in a similar fashion with matching Dutch milking clogs. Nature serves as background to both of these scenes. The top image boasts an endless field of golden, ripened grain and lush green trees, the bottom image, the flat earth and wet mud. A sturdy stone structure behind the action of the scene blends with both the silver of the milk jugs as well as the brown of the dusty ground.</p>
<p>Proairetic Code “Actions”</p>	<p>The women work from sunrise to sundown most days. By dawn the cows have been milked and the fresh product is being loaded for transporting. By mid-day animals have been fed, a load of clothing has been washed and hung to dry in the sun, and the community has come together to help reap this year’s harvest in the absence of much of the male labor. During the lunch break, few words are exchanged among friends and families for fear that any talk of missing loved ones will only result in tears or total meltdown. The film unfolds as one endless scene of hard and constant laboring. Yet, no character seems to mind, fearing that idle hands would likely drive their worried minds mad.</p>
<p>Linguistic Message</p>	<p>“Les Boches.^[17] C’est qui Les Boches? C’est des monstres sanguinaires? Mais Non. Les Allemands c’est des gens comme nous. Des ouvriers. Comme nous.”¹⁸</p>

¹⁷ “Boches” at this period was a perjorative term, translated as “krauts,” and used to refer to the Germans during World War I.

¹⁸ Translation: “The Krauts. Who are the Krauts? Are they bloodthirsty monsters? No. The Germans are people, like us. Workers. Like us.”

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Long Sleeve, Cotton/Linen Shirts	practical, sensible, lightweight
Wool Cardigan or Chest Wrap	warmth, security, comfort
Apron	convenience, shelter, vessel, maid
Wide Brimmed Straw Hat	nature, summertime, farmer, sunshade
Dutch Clogs	decorous, tradition, stability, function
Low Hair Bun	prudent, staid, wise, old age

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Manual labor is part of daily life on the Paridier farm and thus Romand takes a pragmatic approach to the cut of the costume design and flexes her creativity with expert use of color and texture. Here, she perfectly coordinates the main characters’ costumes with the simplicity of their surroundings. While the cut of most garments is straight and uncomplicated, the layer of textures adds comforting warmth, and the complementary colorways add visual richness. As the costumes blend with the surrounding environment, they become just as integral and critical a part of the farm as the machine that plows the land or the cow that provides the milk. The costumes do, undoubtedly, speak to the utilitarian needs of daily life, but they also connect the characters to their work as strong and capable female farmers. Romand ensures that everything used to costume their bodies has come from the land: the cotton used to make the shirts they wear, the wool used in their shawls and sweaters, the linen or flax used to create their protective aprons, and the wood and animal hide used to construct their clogs. The female and the farm will become synonymous.

5.4.3. Scenes III and IV, Codes and Messages



Figure 19. Image: *Les Gardiennes*: Women in Dark Dress Attending Church. Source: Beauvois



Figure 20. Image: *Les Gardiennes*: Congregation in Mourning Dress. Source: Beauvois

<i>Les Gardiennes</i>: Scenes III and IV: Women in Mourning	
Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	A frame full of female characters. Most wearing all black or predominantly dark colors. Solemn expressions all facing forward and concentrated on something or someone behind the camera’s

	<p>view. All wear jackets or sweaters which might signal a coldness or dampness to the room. Atop each character's head is a covering of some sort: hats, bonnets, veils. Their sizes, shapes, and colors vary. All actors are without makeup or any decorative accessories. They are standing in organized, horizontal lines with the angle of the camera allowing a staggered view of each person.</p>
<p>Proairetic Code "Actions"</p>	<p>Every Sunday the community gathers for a day of rest at the local church. As part of the weekly service during wartime, the priest stands at the front of the altar and reads aloud the name, rank, and military position of any recently fallen soldiers. In the first snapshot, the names are being read of other fallen soldiers in the community. In the second image, having now lost her own son, the matriarch of the Paridier family is present in full mourning dress to publicly mourn his death. While brief whimperings and silent sobs are presumed, overall, the church house remains silent and stoic, perhaps a sign of the collective strength the women must show in solidarity for all females in the town. Once the priest has read the names of those who have died, he invites the congregation to recite a common prayer and all voices join in a resounding "Amen."</p>
<p>Linguistic Message</p>	<p>Priest: "Lagorce, Lucien Jean Léon. Métayer. Soixante sixième régiment. Soldat de deuxième classe. Tombé au champ d'honneur. Marchandier, François Louis Gaston. Cantonnier de Legache. Soixante troisième régiment. Soldat de deuxième classe. Tombé au champ d'honneur. Rifaud, Jean-Louis Alfonse. Menuisier à Lalande. Cent trente huitième régiment. Soldat de deuxième classe. Tombé au champ d'honneur. Accueille-les Seigneur. Donne-leur le repos éternel et que sans cesse sur eux règne ta lumière. Amen." Congrégation: "Amen." Priest: "Prions. Vierge Sainte, dans votre séjour glorieux, n'oubliez pas les tristesses de notre terre. Jetez un regard de bonté sur ceux qui sont dans la souffrance, ceux qui luttent, et qui ne cessent de</p>

	<p>tremper leurs lèvres aux amertumes de la vie. Ayez pitié de ceux qui s'aimaient et qui ont été séparés. Ayez pitié de l'isolement du coeur, de la faiblesse de notre foi, des objets de notre tendresse. Ayez pitié de ceux qui pleurent, de ceux qui crient, de ceux qui souffrent, de ceux qui tremblent. Donnez à tous l'espérance et la paix. Amen.”</p> <p>Congrégation: “Amen.”¹⁹</p>
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Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Black/Dark Clothing	gloom, death, grief, penitence
Black Veil	hidden, shield, mourning
Dark Hats	respect, reverence, sorrow, uncertainty
White Bonnet	innocence, rural, untainted, forgiveness
Makeup Free, Ruddy Complexions	drained, weary, soiled
No Ornamentation	simple, poor, humility
Hair Up or Covered	unavailable, pious, devout, modesty

¹⁹ Translation: Priest: “Lagorce, Lucien Jean Léon. Sharecropper. 66th regiment. Second Class Soldier. Fallen on the field of honor. Merchant Francois Louis Gaston. Road worker of Legache. 63rd regiment. Second Class Soldier. Fallen on the field of honor. Jean-Louis Alfonse Rifaud. Carpenter in Lalande. 138th regiment. Second Class Soldier. Fallen on the field of honor. Welcome them Lord. Give them eternal rest and shine on them forever your light. Amen.”

Congregation: “Amen.”

Priest: “Let us pray. Holy Virgin, in your glorious state, do not forget the sorrows of our land. Take a kind look on those who are suffering, those who struggle, and those who always soak their lips in the bitterness of life. Have mercy on those who loved each other and were separated. Have pity on lonely hearts, on the weakness of our faith, and on the objects of our tenderness. Have mercy on those who weep, on those who cry, on those who suffer, on those who tremble. Give us all hope and peace. Amen.” Congregation: “Amen.”

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Here we see the effects of death on the female body. Not only are the women already weak from demanding physical labor and the responsibilities of farm life, but they are now stricken with the more painful trauma of a body in mourning. With shoulders slouched and heads lowered or hidden, the women grieve in stoic stillness, their black clothing a metaphor for the unspoken desire to also fade into darkness and join their lifeless loved one. The costumes, drab and undecorated, reflect the sober reality of loss and sorrow. The design effect here is not in each individual character costume, but rather in the collective significance of countless rows of darkly dressed, downtrodden women. They struggled together in the field before, now they share the cumulative burden of burying their men. Whether they have lost a loved one yet does not preclude the costume designer from dressing them in the mourning role. In solidarity for the collective female, all the women wear black.

5.4.4. Scene V: Coming of Age: Codes and Messages



Figure 21. Image: *Les Gardiennes*: Coming of Age Cleansing Ritual. Source: Beauvois

Les Gardiennes: Scene V: Coming of Age

Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	<p>The woman to far left, dressed in a simple white undergown, pats her face with a cotton hand towel. The woman at right is also participating in a cleansing ritual and wipes at her left neck and ear. She is clothed in a button-up, sleeveless white chemise and brown sack skirt. A light-haired young girl is seated at the table and occupying herself with an object or plaything. The young girl’s hair is braided and she, too, dons a thin, white top. The time of day is presumed to be early morning with fresh light from the window illuminating this washing act. Two blue basins are atop the wooden table and contain the cleansing water and soap. With the hearth behind and the table at middle, the refreshing ritual seems to be taking place in the dining and kitchen area.</p>
Proairetic Code “Actions”	<p>Following a gross misunderstanding by the matriarch of the Paridier family, Francine is let go and forced to find work elsewhere. She is hired by the Monette family to assist a wife and young daughter whose father is off at war. As she begins work at her new post, Francine begins feeling tired and dizzy. As the scene unfolds, Francine describes her recent symptoms to Monette who responds without question that this means Francine is with child. In this quiet moment, with a new day dawning and fresh face, Francine passes from young lady to expecting mother. With shocked expression, Francine pauses in denial and mentally calculates how she will manage the physical demands of carrying a child while carrying out her work obligations. As if reading her mind, Monette quickly retorts that with winter arriving, work will slow and there is no need to worry. When Francine asks how she will manage a child, understanding she will be alone in its rearing, the Monette responds, “Like everyone else.”</p>

Linguistic Message	<p>Francine: “Comment ça?”</p> <p>Monette: “Cherche pas ma fille. T’es enceinte. Fais pas cette tête. Ça tombe plutôt bien. L’hiver arrive. Il y a moins à faire.”</p> <p>Francine: “Et comment je vais faire?”</p> <p>Monette: “Mais comme tout le monde.”²⁰</p>
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Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Sleeveless, Thin Undergown	ease, gentleness, naked, foundation
White Dressing Gown	continuity, grace, purity
Sleeveless, Button-up Chemise	halfway, winter, innocence, worthiness
White Shirt	minimal, peasant, tradition, timeless
Brown Sack Skirt	autumn, naturalness, stability
White Linen/Cotton Hand Towel	satisfaction, absorbing, drying, remover, forgiveness
Brunette Hair Down	honesty, open-minded, accessible
Red Hair in Bun	practical, primitive, sacrifice
Yellow, Blonde Hair in Braid	youth, optimism, hope
Yellow Sunlight	universal power, loyalty, glory, openness

²⁰ Translation:

Francine: “What do you mean?”

Monette: “Don’t look any further girl. You are pregnant. Don’t make that face. It is going to be fine. Winter is coming. There will be less to do.”

Francine: “But how will I manage?”

Monette: “Like everyone else.”

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Even in a scene where costumes take a simplistic and more muted role, their effect is still felt and important to the message. We see Francine positioned within the frame strategically in the middle of the young child and the mature mother, symbolic of her being no longer a girl but not yet a woman. Her costume speaks to this female purgatory of sorts with the pure, white, virgin top whose breasts have not yet been used to feed an infant divided between the brown, dirtied skirt on her lower half, having already committed the adult sex act. As she absorbs the gravity of being pregnant, the washcloth in pure white is there to wipe, wash away, and cleanse her of any sin, shame, or worry. The yellow sunlight shining through the window brings the room a hope and comfort, an optimism that Francine will be able to do as Monette promises: survive the transition from young lady to single mother.

5.5. *La Douleur*: Female Figure: Distraught, Determined, Loyal

5.5.1. Background

La Douleur was inspired by the literary work of Marguerite Duras and her autobiographical account of living in German occupied France during World War II. The film progresses as a personal account of Duras' diary entries and narrated inner dialogues. The character is consumed by her husband's capture as a prisoner of war because of his resistance work against the German regime. She meets a German police detective and, because of their shared literary interests, develops a friendship through which Duras gains useful intel on her husband's whereabouts. The risky relationship ultimately pays off, and Duras' husband is found and brought home, barely more than skin and bones. The overall tone to the film is deeply emotive with a main character in the throes of wrestling her worry, fear, and hysteria of a loved one missing during wartime. As Duras draws the audience deep into her depressive state, the costumes, much like in *Les Gardiennes*, become fused to their environment and surroundings. Romand explained in an interview at the time of the film's release, "Il fallait que le spectateur se plonge un peu avec Marguerite dans sa vision, son attente, d'où 'une volonté d'effacement du costume'" (Agence France Presse, 2019)²¹.

²¹ Translation: "The spectators must immerse themselves in Marguerite's (Duras) point of view, her waiting, from which there is a desire to erase the costume."

5.5.2. Scenes I and II: A Woman in Waiting: Codes and Messages



Figure 22. Image: *La Douleur*: Woman Sitting on Couch in a Dreary Room. Source: Finkiel



Figure 23. Image: *La Douleur*: Woman Standing in Front of Couch in a Dreary Room. Source: Finkiel

La Douleur: Scenes I and II: A Woman in Waiting

Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	A woman is alone in her apartment waiting. At first, she is sitting on a couch with a white porcelain teacup in her grip and her head facing left. She is then seen standing with hands fallen to her side and gaze turned towards the door. The character is dressed in a dark, long-sleeved blouse and fitted bell skirt with wide pleats. A brown belt secures the skirt to her thin waist. The couch is laden with decorative pillows and patterned fabrics are draped about pieces of furniture. Miscellaneous items cluttered the tops of all flat and tabled surfaces: lamps, telephones, picture frames, vases of dead flowers, stacks of papers, and ashtrays.
Proairetic Code “Actions”	In these beginning frames of the film, the viewer hears off camera narration being read and observes Duras making her daily trek to the train station. Here she frantically searches for her husband in the hopes he somehow escaped and has found a train home. We do not see the act of her husband being taken by German officials, but we know by her narration that he is gone, and she fears, never to return. Once all trains have arrived and there is no sight of her kidnapped lover, Duras returns home and begins pacing about her Parisian apartment. For a moment we see her husband, dressed as a soldier, ring the front door and appear, embracing Duras and following her down the apartment hallway. We then realize this is a hallucination and he has not actually returned. The delusion comes with a confusing cadence of narration and quick camera cuts of the main character positioning and re-positioning herself throughout the room. This puts the viewer in her frantic state of mind. Duras looks to the window and the door repeatedly as if he will magically appear and end her nightmare. The character puts coffee to brew and prepares two cups, forgetting her lover is not there. She lights a cigarette but forgets to smoke it and is left with the stub of its butt

	almost burning her fingers. The action in these beginning scenes situates the audience into realities of anxiety and stress during wartime.
Linguistic Message	Pierre (best friend to her husband and fellow resistance organizer) to Duras: “À quoi êtes-vous attaché? À Robert Antelme [her husband] ou à votre douleur?” ²²

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Dark Green Long Sleeve Button Up Blouse	restlessness, envy, wealth
Khaki Knee-Length Pleated Skirt	desert, safari, conservative, uniform
Thin Brown, Leather Belt	tighten, hold, stabilize
Upswept Hair	busy, rushed, resigned
Paisley Textiles	luxurious, wrapping, pliable, delicate
Patterned and Fringed Pillows	tactile, comforting, soft, flexible
Caned Sofa and Chairs	antique, expensive, guests/people
Dark Room	despair, uncertainty, lonely, isolation

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

The director’s device of inducing a dreamlike state is used several times throughout the course of the film to bring the viewer into the trauma of war and loss. The confusion Duras is feeling matches the messy state of her surroundings. She is dressed in green and khaki, not typical mourning colors, but still conveying important messages, green to possibly signal

²² Translation: “What is it you are attached to? Robert Antelme [her husband] or your pain/suffering?”

restlessness or envy, jealous of those in her group who are still free and alive. Khaki could indicate a desire not to draw attention to herself when out of the apartment or to represent a type of self-selected uniform of her own army with a mission to bring her husband home. Regardless of the potential information we can garner from each individual article of the clothing costume, the overall picture being painted here is one of complete submersion into sad surroundings. With Romand having first been educated in Fine Art, it bears noting here the work of Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard. We see a similarity in technique between their art and this film. Bonnard and Vuillard were known for blurring the appearance of figures into the foregrounds (Saenger, 2019). In a 2019 article in *The Wall Street Journal*, Peter Saenger describes the style of Bonnard and Vuillard as, “works [that] tend to flatten out three-dimensionality and emphasize pattern and form over content” (Saenger, 2019). We observe Romand applying the same artistic device with the character’s body metaphorically melting into the background, as if becoming a feelingless fixture or lifeless form. Duras’ clothing also coordinates with the colors in the paisley printed fabrics, numerous pillows, and wood trimmed furnishings. Her skirt could be considered a couch cushion, her belt its wood piping, and her blouse a decorative pillow. She has spent so many hours and days in anxious waiting, her clothing tells us she has become a permanent fixture in own apartment.

5.5.3. Scenes III and IV: Seeing Red: Codes and Messages



Figure 24. Image: *La Douleur*: Woman with Headscarf and Red Blouse. Source: Finkiel



Figure 25. Image: *La Douleur*: Man in Brown Suit and Slicked Hair. Source: Finkiel

<i>La Douleur</i>: Scenes III and IV: Seeing Red	
Hermeneutic Code “Observations without Answers”	A woman waits at a restaurant table for someone. She is dressed in a red blouse and bold patterned head scarf and donning bright lipstick. Her hair is perfectly coiffed, curled and secured at the nape

	<p>of her neck with a horizontal barrette. Her eyes are lowered and almost appear closed as if sleepy or sorrowful. The guest arrives and is seated across from the woman. He wears a light brown suit with pale blue button up dress shirt and coordinating brown tie with diagonal striping. A pocket square barely peeps through the top of his left exterior pocket. His hair is combed back and held firmly in place with pomade or gel. The woman sips a glass of white wine and smokes a cigarette while the gentleman reads from a paper in his left hand.</p>
<p>Proairetic Code “Actions”</p>	<p>Duras has apprehensively befriended a German detective, Dionys, in the hopes she can obtain information on the location or condition of her husband. Their meetings usually involve the informant deflecting serious questions on her husband’s whereabouts and turning the topic to their mutual literary interests. This meeting, however, Duras determines to be different. She has collaborated with her community of French resisters and devised a plan to accost the German officer at the restaurant. Until now, Duras’ demeanor has been timid and fragile but, in this scene, she transforms into a daring woman resolved to finally getting the answers she seeks. As soon as Dionys is seated, she boldly asserts that German forces in France will soon be defeated. The rich restaurant patrons sitting nearby overhear Duras and recount a story of being inappropriately confronted at their home by German soldiers. They were fearful and refused to answer the door, their consolation being the armored steel entrance they had installed at the beginning of the war. When Duras asks Dionys if he has an armored steel door, he responds, “Moi, je n’ai pas peur.”²³ And for once, Duras is not afraid either. In her head she asserts, “Je suis son flic. Il a moins d’importance. Il n’a plus rien.”²⁴ It is in this scene that Duras realizes many of those</p>

²³ Translation: “Me, I am not scared.”

²⁴ Translation: “I am his cop. He is less important. He is nothing.”

	around her will be gone, dead within weeks or months. When faced with this mortality and shrinking escape options, she realizes her only choice is to reject the fear and find her strength.
Linguistic Message	“Je suis son flic. Je regarde sa chemise nouvelle, sa cravate sortie de son costume marron, un beige un peu doré. Ma peur m’a quittée. Il me regarde. La peur m’a quittée. Tous ces gens, tous menacés de mort dans quelques jours ou les semaines qui viennent. Ils le savent déjà.” ²⁵

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
Red Blouse	passion, patriotism, sacrifice
Head Scarf	dressy, decoration, covering ears, sound filter
Black and White Pattern	light vs dark, good vs evil, life vs death
Diamond Pattern	hard, strength, rock, rare
Red Lips	loudness, sex appeal, love
Brown Suit	middle class, boring, predictable
Blue Dress Shirt	peace, restraint, sky, light
Striped Tie	angle, sloping, tension, stubbornness
Slicked Back Hair	control, vanity, cautiousness, rigidity, severe

²⁵ Translation: “I am his cop. I see his new shirt, his tie peeking out of his brown suit, it’s beige a little golden. My fear leaves me. He looks at me. The fear leaves me. All of these people, all threatened to die in the coming days and weeks. They all know it.”

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Romand placing Duras in a daring red blouse with bold red lip was no accident. To illustrate the character's renewed confidence, she must be taken out of her drab and unremarkable dress and placed into something bright and attention grabbing. This costume change also seems to refresh her face and illuminate her eyes, both of which have, until now, appeared pale and dull. The silk scarf headband not only protects her ears by filtering any "untruths" Dionys is known to tell, but its diamond pattern also symbolizes strength and durability. The black and white contrast of the scarf could certainly be a play on the good versus evil at work in the film. To herself, Duras comments on the clothes of Dionys as she glares at him from across the table. His new and expensive suit no longer impresses or intimidates her.

5.5.4. Scenes V and VI, Codes and Messages



Figure 26. Image: *La Douleur*: Woman in Undergarments looking at Men's Ties. Source: Finkiel



Figure 27. Image: *La Douleur*: Woman in Navy staring at Hanging Suit. Source: Finkiel

***La Douleur*: Scenes V and VI: No One to Wear Them**

<p>Hermeneutic Code</p> <p>“Observations without Answers”</p>	<p>A woman opens the door of her clothing armoire to dress for the day. A string of men’s ties hangs from the interior of the opened door. Once dressed the woman is standing in front of a towering, mirrored armoire. A brown, men’s suit jacket and pressed pants hang from one of its doors. The woman wears a dress of dark blue with a belted waist, dark low-heeled pumps on her feet. She stands on an oriental rug and stares at a hanging men’s suit. Her hair is down at her shoulders and wavy. The window to the apartment is open, the drapes are spread, and the room is flooded with light. The dead and dried out flowers are still in the end table vase in the frame’s foreground.</p>
<p>Proairetic Code</p> <p>“Actions”</p>	<p>In preparation for the day, Duras opens the doors of their apartment’s armoire to make clothing selections. She notices the string of men’s ties, her husband’s ties, hanging on a cord attached</p>

	to the inside of the right door. There they stay, lying limp, not having been worn in months, a daily reminder of his absence. She gathers her undergarments and, as the camera follows her legs in an up-close and intimate shot, she pulls on the pantyhose. Once dressed, she takes her husband's best suit and hangs it on the exterior door in the hopes of his homecoming. Her hand caresses the flat and formless suit, feeling the texture of its fabric and dreaming about her lover being able to bring it back to life someday soon. She steps back and stares. The mirror reflects both her breathing and clothed body and the missing man and his lifeless suit.
Linguistic Message	Narration: “Je n’sais quoi faire avec la liberté. J’ai peur d’être tué. J’ai honte de vivre.” ²⁶

Semantic Code “Connotations”	
Cut, Color, Composition of Clothing	Connotations
White Bra	female, intimate, delicate, hopeful
Men’s Ties	work, business, uniform, male
Navy Blue Dress	reflection, deep, pensive, somber
Thin Leather Belt	quality, security, classic, centered
Leather Low Heels	dressy, plain, timeless, style, practical
Brown Suit Jacket and Matching Trousers	masculine, honesty, friendliness, successful
Thick and Wavy Hair	loving, elegant, healthy, strong

²⁶ Translation: “I don’t know what to do with my freedom. I am scared of being killed. I am ashamed of being alive.”

Symbolic and Cultural Conclusions

Variations of this scene take place throughout the film. Constant clothing reminders of her husband's agonizing absence. There is another version later, when a house guest, needing to busy her worried hands, takes to washing and pressing every item of clothing in the home. The guest then proceeds to hang the garments from the plumbing rafters around the apartment and the pair of women are forced to move about the space dodging dresses and trousers for days, creating unavoidable reminders of the missing person whose wardrobe is pressed and prepared for his return.

In this scene, Duras takes the time to touch and feel the arrangement of ties and the breast of the suit jacket, hoping that her caress will somehow cause her man to materialize. The scene unfolds with a deep level of intimacy and feels like an exchange between two living, breathing people. Her navy dress feels pensive as if swimming in the deep waters of longing and desire, which we find a common theme throughout many of Duras' works, especially her autobiographical novel *L'Amant* (Duras, 1984). The thin leather belt cinching her waist seems to be holding her together, as if keeping the two halves of her body from crumbling completely, the heeled pumps hoisting her higher in an act of forced confidence. His brown suit reads as large and oversized, almost bigger than it would appear on the body. Its vastness an indication of how gaping a hole his disappearance has left.

CHAPTER 6. COSTUMIÈRE TECHNIQUES THREADED THROUGHOUT FILMS

6.1. Blurring of Costume and Background

There are two notable threads throughout all the films contained within this research. The first of worthy mention is Romand's repeated merging of scene background and décor with the character's costumes recalling the aforementioned techniques of early abstract artists Bonnard and Vuillard (Saenger, 2019). Relying heavily on the coordination of color and pattern, the costume designer created powerful frames in which the actors fuse to their surrounding environments. In a 2015 interview for *Bande-a-Part*, Romand discusses how closely she worked with cinematographer Josée Deshaies in *L'Apollonide* from the onset to be a part of the sampling of colors, paintings, wallpapers, and setting fabrics to fashion the characters in terms of how they would stand out from their backgrounds or how they would merge with the setting (Danel, 2017).

In *Fashion in Film*, Giuliana Bruno analyzes the use of this device and calls it "textureology" (Munich & Bruno, 2011, p. 99). She explains this cinematic strategy as clothing becomes the "matter" of a scene. This involves taking the walls, decorative objects, floors, furniture, and surfaces and "clothing" them with texture or pattern to match the character (Munich & Bruno, 2011). In the following images, we see Romand activate these sartorial surfaces and expertly attach them to their character's clothing (Munich & Bruno, 2011). In effect, the walls, floors, and furniture are "dressed" in costume just as the actors, reminding the audience of how we are constantly connected to our physical and environmental surroundings (Munich & Bruno, 2011, p. 99).



Figure 28. Image: *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*: Célestine scrubs the floor. Her black and white uniform perfectly matched to the checkered floor. Source: Jacquot



Figure 29. Image: *L'Apollonide*. Madeleine's dress is cut from the same cloth as the silk draperies. Source: Bonello



Figure 30. Image: *L'Apollonide*. The prostitute and the woman in the painting behind her match in color, dress, hair style, and task. Source: Bonello



Figure 31. Image: *L'Apollonide*. The frill of the dress' neckline and the shape of the character's jewelry echo exactly the baroque decoration of the mirror. Source: Bonello



Figure 32. Image: *La Danseuse*. The ranchers, clad in dusty browns and faded blacks, seem to dissolve into the distant mountains behind, as if the characters were simply extensions of the dirty ground and the dark horizon. Source: *Di Giusto*



Figure 33. Image: *La Danseuse*. Fuller merges with her work. The paper thin gown is nestled among the parchment she is using to draw her iconic dance, the candlelight fueling her dreams of dancing in the spotlight. Source: *Di Giusto*



Figure 34. Image: *La Douleur*. A brown paper package, attached to a brown skirt suit, in a room with a brown floor and brown paneling, among ladies dressed in browns. Source: Finkiel



Figure 35. Image: *Les Gardiennes*. Francine's shirt blends in with the linens, fresh, neat, clean, and comforting. Her light brown skirt matching the wooden walls and furniture. Source: Beauvois

6.2. Blue: THE UNIVERSAL HUE

Romand's use of the color blue is widespread throughout the films. The repertoire of blue hues varied widely including: powder blue, cornflower blue, dusty blue, vibrant aqua, blue sage, deep turquoise, and many more. Within each scene, Romand expertly matches these blues to make one cohesive color statement. Romand even admits, "Dans ma tête, la couleur est extrêmement précise. La plupart du temps, je choisis des tissus blancs ou neutres dont je teins ensuite des échantillons dans plusieurs nuances, afin de trouver la bonne"²⁷ (Danel, 2017).

Romand also identifies color as one of the first and primary determining questions she asks as the costume design process commences. Her main three questions are: Who is the character? How will s/he dress? And what is the color of the film? (CNC, 2018). This act of assigning color the same weight as principle ideas, such as character development and dress personality, speak to Romand's belief in their communicative power. In *La Danseuse* (2016), variations of blue were thematically tailored to the few scenes in which the main character is not in her dancing costume. One of the only times the audience sees Fuller out of the signature white gown is when she dons a pale blue, off-the-shoulder fitted gown and matching blue hued spectacles to protect her eyes from the bright lights of her dances. The deep blue bruising of her overworked body is even woven into the story with Louis whispering, "C'est beau, toutes ces nuances de bleu,"²⁸ when noticing to her bruises.

²⁷ Translation: "In my head, color is extremely precise. Most of the time, I choose white or neutral fabrics of which I then dye samples in several shades in order to find the right one."

²⁸ Translation: "It is beautiful, all of these shades of blue."



Figure 36. Image: *La Douleur*.

A hallucination. Duras sees herself pacing about while seated, writing at her desk. The seafoam blue blouses in perfect harmony. *Source: Finkiel*



Figure 37. Image: *La Douleur*.

Women in blue wait in sadness. The navy hat and coordinating top might indicate her sorrow is deeper than the woman at right who is clad in a lighter shade, still hopeful enough to choose a floral print. *Source: Finkiel*



Figure 38. Image: *Les Gardiennes*.

A unique turquoise shade connects a mother to her son who is leaving for war. *Source: Beauvois*



Figure 39. Image: *Les Gardiennes*.

Blue hues from left to right fill the entire frame: a blue interior to the baby carriage, the store front painted a vivid aqua, and Francine's dress and overcoat, all varying shades of hope and harmony. *Source: Beauvois*

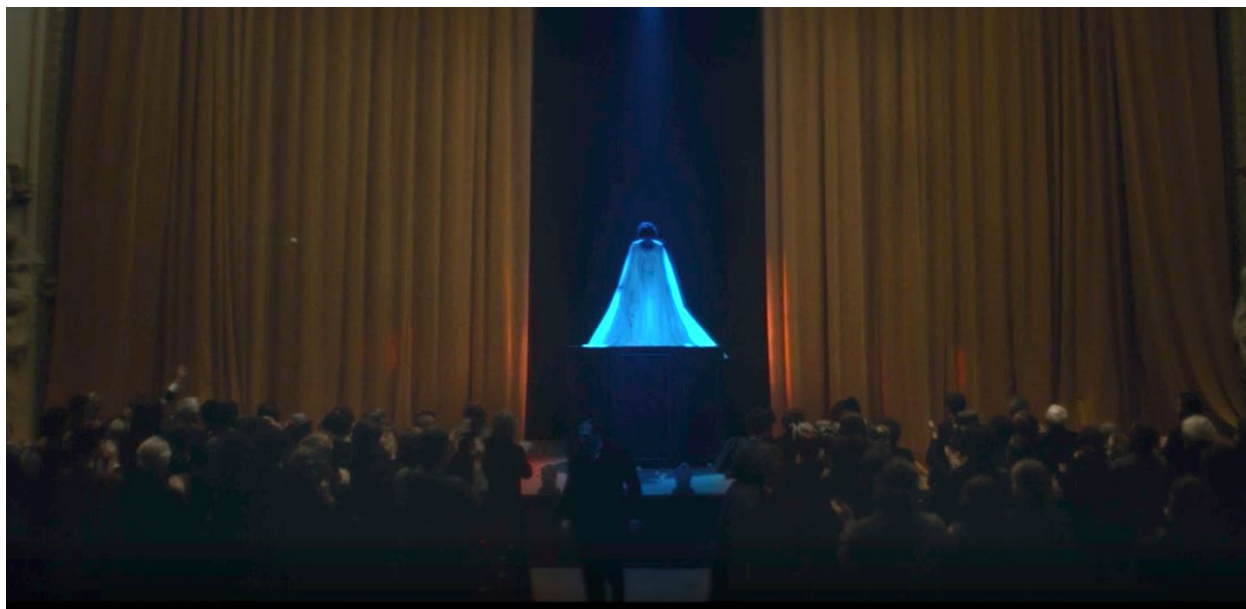


Figure 40. Image: *La Danseuse*.
Electric blue sets the stage for Fuller's vibrant dance. *Source: Di Giusto*



Figure 41. Image: *L'Apollonide*.
A sapphire shawl comforts a dying call girl while the newest addition to the brothel is healthy and safe in powder blue. *Source: Bonello*



Figure 42. Image: *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*.
Sky blue cabinetry is not enough to fly Célestine away from her demanding masters. She fades
into the fixtures that force her to fold, organize, store, and repeat. Source: *Jacquot*

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

This analysis has offered possible linguistic and semiotic interpretations for costume and clothing in film. By following the work of an accomplished and acclaimed designer, we were able to observe how language and ideas can be conceptualized into costumes and brought to life on the female body. These scenes highlighted the powerful symbols of dress by inspecting each garment and interpreting its physical, psychological, emotional, and environmental properties.

Ultimately, Romand's costume work on the female figure shows how women can truly take on any role. I refer here, not to a role in film, but rather to a role in life. With the help of dress, women in these films communicate desires, flaws, work ethic, social status, sexuality, dreams, spirituality, strength, charisma, and more. What also seems to set Romand apart is the fluidity and mastery she displays in these costume designs. She demonstrates fluidity by ensuring the palette of each scene is perfect, knowing how deeply color can appeal to the mood and emotions of a viewer. She also displays mastery over texture and pattern by often fusing characters with their settings or surroundings, thus allowing an inanimate thing to become a character and a character a part of the set.

By drawing on Barthes and his five-code framework, we were able to observe the ways in which dress becomes a symbol and a communicator. The benefit of Barthes' codification system emerges in the subtle and subconscious ways it dissects the details of each image. By distilling each garment, each accessory, each hairstyle, and each color choice to its linguistic essence, we were able to draw meaningful symbolic and cultural conclusions. With the hermeneutical observations of each image, we derived context and clues about the setting and clothing. Through the proairetic action of each image, we examined how circumstance and storyline affects clothing choice. And as a result of semantic codification, we were able to identify

possible connotations for each costumed item. Combining the information of these first three codes then allowed us to draw relevant conclusions about the role of dress and its significance within each film.

The Magic Garment also proved to be an invaluable tool for conducting the semantic, symbolic, and cultural portions of the codification process. For each image, I first created a list of connotations by drawing on my own personal thoughts and experiences. After, I compared them to the matrices from *The Magic Garment*, included in the chapter on methodology. This strategy proved most helpful. At times, the table contained exactly the same signifying words as I had found. In other instances, the tables identified additional meanings I had not explored, which I added to my inventory of connotations. A few times, I included additional signifiers that were not listed in the book but that I drew on from other sources, such as *La Psychologie de la Couleur*.

While these interpretations might be argued as subjective and could, no doubt, vary from viewer to viewer, this analysis shows how clothing can be socially and culturally coded. By breaking each garment down to its core and identifying the culturally and socially accepted connotations surrounding them, common themes emerged that were validated by linguistic theory, psychological analysis, and even interviews given by Romand and the film directors. Data that required meticulous extraction and detailed analysis, our brains do almost automatically and at lightening speed in the typical viewing of a film.

A future study might include a comprehensive analysis of the entire corpus of Romand's work, including those in more contemporary time periods or with male-centric casts. Another intriguing idea would be a study of multiple costume designers, to compare and contrast the different ways similar articles of clothing are used to send cultural and linguistic messages.

Clothing and costume are speaking to us constantly and in a variety of contexts. I hope this research has encouraged consumers of film or fashion to listen, perhaps with ears and eyes now a little more attuned, to the language it speaks.

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