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| Meshes of the Afternoon (1943) |
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| *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), an experimental film by Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid, is considered an American avant-garde watershed. The husband-wife team played the parts of the unnamed man and woman and filmed in their Hollywood home. The film was originally silent but, in 1959, Deren added a score by her third husband, Teiji Ito. |
| File: meshes.pdf  *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), an experimental film by Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid, is considered an American avant-garde watershed. The husband-wife team played the parts of the unnamed man and woman and filmed in their Hollywood home. The film was originally silent but, in 1959, Deren added a score by her third husband, Teiji Ito.  In the fourteen-minute film, a woman sees a dark figure on the road before she enters her home. She falls asleep in a chair and dreams that she re-enters the home multiple times, each time encountering a double of herself. A man enters and wakens her, but the film ends with the same man entering the home to find the woman seemingly dead.  At the time the film was made, Deren and Hammid were socializing with expatriate European modernists who had fled Hitler’s Europe; this milieu likely strengthened Deren’s and Hammid’s pre-existent modernist orientation. The film uses the trope of the dream and deploys household objects in a surrealist manner, though Deren disliked being labelled a surrealist or a Freudian. Deren and Hammid used double exposures, hand-held framing, and abrupt matches-on action to complicate the divide between subjectivity and objectivity that conventional films try to keep separate. Doubling, mirrors, shadows, and evocations of violence in a domestic setting suggest that the film explores tensions surrounding identity and gender relations. |
| Further reading:  (Hodson)  (Geller)  (Millsapps)  (Nichols)  (Rabinowitz)  (Rhodes) |