

# THE MODERN SYNTHESIS OF JOSEPHINE BAKER AND CARMEN AMAYA<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract:**

African American dancer, Josephine Baker, and Spanish Gitana dancer Carmen Amaya, synthesized various identity categories in what I call modern synthesis, an idea expanded on from Monica Miller's article, "The Black Dandy as Bad Modernist." Expanding on various scholars including Brenda Dixon Gottschild, I argue Baker emerged from a tragic/comic context of African American performance which developed from slavery to vaudeville while Amaya came from flamenco, which, according to William Washabaugh in his *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture*, exhibits simultaneous opposition as it simultaneously exists within various identity categories and qualities in flamenco culture. Emerging from these dissonant traditions, Amaya and Baker merge male and female stylization into hybrid-gendered performances in successful transatlantic careers that suggested possibilities beyond what was acceptable for women of color in their era.

## **Keywords:**

Modern Synthesis, Josephine Baker, Carmen Amaya.

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### Resumen:

La bailarina afroamericana, Josephine Baker, y la bailarina gitana (española), Carmen Amaya, sintetizaron varias categorías de identidad en lo que yo llamo “modern synthesis” (síntesis moderna), una idea que retoma del artículo de Monica Miller, “The Black Dandy as Bad Modernist”. Elaborando a partir de las teorías de varios académicos como Brenda Dixon Gottschild, sostengo que Baker emergió de un contexto trágico/cómico de *performance* afroamericana que se desarrolló desde la esclavitud hasta el vodevil, mientras que Amaya vino del flamenco que, según William Washabaugh (en su “Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture”), exhibe oposición simultánea, ya que existe simultáneamente dentro de varias categorías de identidad y cualidades en la cultura flamenca. Surgiendo de estas tradiciones disonantes, Amaya y Baker fusionan la estilización masculina y femenina en actuaciones de género híbrido en exitosas carreras transatlánticas que sugirieron posibilidades más allá de lo que era aceptable para las mujeres de color en su época.

### Palabras clave:

Síntesis Moderna, Josephine Baker, Carmen Amaya.

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## INTRODUCTION

African American performer Josephine Baker (1906-1975<sup>2</sup>), and *Gitana* (Roma) flamenco dancer Carmen Amaya (1918<sup>3</sup>-1963<sup>4</sup>), are two of the most iconic dance figures of the twentieth century. Living around the same time, both women experienced transatlantic stardom, Amaya in the U.S. and Baker in France. Both women complicated binaries and identity categories in their performances.

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<sup>2</sup> Biography.com Editors, “Josephine Baker Biography,” A&E Television Networks, last modified January 16, 2019, accessed April 7, 2019, <https://www.biography.com/people/josephine-baker-9195959>.

<sup>3</sup> Scholar Montse Madríguez argues that Amaya was born in 1918 although this date has been disputed in the past. Montse Madríguez, “Carmen Amaya, 1947: The (Gypsy) Beloved of America Reconquers Europe,” in *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. K. Meira Goldberg, Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, and Michelle Heffner

<sup>4</sup> Hayes (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 178n1, 184-185n1.

Through their synthesis of identity categories in performance, I argue that Baker and Amaya created a new alternative modernity which is reminiscent of Monica Miller's idea of subversive dandyism.<sup>5</sup> The dandy is a figure of modernity<sup>6</sup> that exhibited border crossing whether it be through traveling across the Atlantic or traveling across lines of gender, race, and sexuality.<sup>7</sup> Miller explains that the dandy is a "figure of paradox created by many societies in order to express whatever it is that the culture feels it must, but cannot, synthesize."<sup>8</sup> Carmen Amaya and Josephine Baker seem to demonstrate similar qualities as they were transatlantic stars that synthesized paradoxical categories.

Therefore, I expand Miller's idea of synthesis in subversive dandyism to include a wider discussion of synthesizing paradoxical identity categories by proposing a new terminology for this idea; modern synthesis. Modern synthesis is a synthesis of various ideas and identities which support a modern fluid identity. I view modern synthesis as a political and artistic tactic which supports fluid identity and the dismantling of categorization and structures that support hierarchy. Amaya and Baker inspire me as figures of modern synthesis.

The following research will first examine how Amaya and Baker were figures of modernity that challenged identity categories. Inspired by various scholars including Brenda Dixon Gottschild and William Washabaugh, I will look at how Baker came out of a tragic/comic context of African American performance and how Amaya came out of flamenco, which Washabaugh argues is an ironic art form exhibiting simultaneous opposition.<sup>9</sup> Emerging from these traditions, Amaya and Baker forged and synthesized new modern identities through hybrid-gendered performance. Out of the traditions of African American performance and flamenco which seem to exhibit the duality of an ironic<sup>10</sup> or satirical<sup>11</sup> existence,<sup>12</sup> Amaya and Baker continued this legacy through a modern synthesis of

<sup>5</sup> Monica Miller, "The Black Dandy as Bad Modernist," in *Bad Modernisms*, ed. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 180-181.

<sup>6</sup> Jessica Feldman, *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) **quoted in** Monica Miller, "The Black Dandy as Bad Modernist," in *Bad Modernisms*, ed. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 184.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, "The Black Dandy as Bad Modernist," 183.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Washabaugh, William. *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 38-39; William Washabaugh writes, "There are moments in which flamenco is simultaneously Andalusian and non-Andalusian, Gitano and non-Gitano, resistant and compliant. Embodying as it does these simultaneous opposites, flamenco should be described as an ironic musical style." Washabaugh, William. *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture*, 38-39.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Brooke Baldwin, "The Cakewalk: A Study in Stereotype and Reality," *Journal of Social History* vol. 15, no. 2 (1981): 210. EBSCOhost.

<sup>12</sup> Washabaugh describes flamenco as ironic, Washabaugh *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture*, 38-39; Brooke Baldwin describes African American music as having a quality of satire,

opposing binaries. These women became a “catalyst” of modernity<sup>13</sup> and modern pioneers “of paradox.”<sup>14</sup> This work will discuss the irony that flamenco and African American performance, which struggled with being viewed as modern,<sup>15</sup> actually defined modernity itself<sup>16</sup> with assistance from artists like Amaya and Baker.

## PART I: JOSEPHINE BAKER

### TRAGIC/COMIC HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

In her *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*, Brenda Dixon Gottschild defines five Africanist aesthetics in African American performance, one being high-affect juxtaposition, an extreme contrast.<sup>17</sup> As an example, Gottschild writes about how Anatole Broyard was appalled by a jazz singer’s transition from *Strange Fruit*, a song about lynching, to a love song.<sup>18</sup> Gottschild’s example of the jazz singer’s dissonant song selection highlights the ironies of blackness in the United States historically. Expanding from Gottschild’s theory, I argue that there is a tragic/comic existence in African American performance, from which Josephine Baker emerged.

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Baldwin, “Cakewalk,” 210; Washabaugh *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture*, 38-39; Baldwin, “Cakewalk,” 210.

<sup>13</sup> Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 27; “Le ‘secret de Joséphine Baker,” *Volonté*, December 10, 1929 **quoted in** Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101n10 **quoted in** Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 27; Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, “Black Dandy,” 183.

<sup>15</sup> Eva Peiró Woods, *White Gypsies: Race and Stardom in Spanish Musical Films*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 108.

<sup>16</sup> Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, “Spanish Artists in Love and War, 1913-1945: Meditations on Female Embodiment and Populist Imagination” in *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. K. Meira Goldberg, Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, and Michelle Heffner Hayes (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 194; Robert Farris Thompson, “African Art in Motion,” *African Forum* 2 (1966) quoted in Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, “Spanish Artists in Love and War, 1913-1945: Meditations on Female Embodiment and Populist Imagination” in *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. K. Meira Goldberg, Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, and Michelle Heffner Hayes (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 194

<sup>17</sup> Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Aesthetic in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 14-15.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

I argue that this tragic/comic existence began with African American slavery in the United States. William Wells Brown wrote about his life as a slave and his position as a slave assistant that would take care of slaves for sale under Mr. Walker.<sup>19</sup> Brown assisted the transformation of slaves into desirable purchases by removing their gray hairs<sup>20</sup> and making them dance, even if they had been crying previously.<sup>21</sup> Brown explains that:

Before the slaves were exhibited for sale, they were dressed and driven out into the yard. Some were set to dancing, some to jumping, some to singing, and some to playing cards. This was done to make them appear cheerful and happy. My business was to see that they were placed in these situations before the arrival of the purchasers, and I have often set them to dancing when their cheeks were wet with tears.<sup>22</sup>

I argue that the idea of crying/dancing slaves seems to be the beginning of a tragic/comic legacy in African American performance and entertainment.

This legacy continued into blackface minstrelsy, a performance genre that made fun of African Americans and was at one point the singular venue open to African American performers.<sup>23</sup> The only way for blacks in the nineteenth century to have a stable career as entertainers and performers was to work in minstrelsy.<sup>24</sup> With limited options, African Americans were faced with the duality of either comedic entertainment in minstrelsy or the tragic ““extended servitude of the emancipated,””<sup>25</sup> as after the emancipation most blacks continued to be employed in Southern manual labor until around 1910.<sup>26</sup>

African Americans were placed into the role of a jester-servant by Euro-Americans. Scholar Robert Toll argues that the need for a racialized Other for comic relief has English roots, a role which was previously played by Irish.<sup>27</sup> In the United States, Irish Americans displaced their jester-role onto African Americans, as some Irish immigrants used minstrelsy as a way to solidify their white status.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown: A Fugitive Slave* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 39-40, 41.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>23</sup> Gottschild, *Digging*, 84.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 216.

<sup>25</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9 quoted in Elizabeth de Martelly, “Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy’s ‘Golliwog’s Cakewalk’” *Current Musicology*, no. 90 (Fall 2010): 10.

<sup>26</sup> Jay R. Mandle, “Continuity and Change: The Use of Black Labor After the Civil War,” *Journal of Black Studies* vol. 21, no. 4 (1991): 416-417.

<sup>27</sup> Toll, *Blacking Up*, 28.

<sup>28</sup> De Martelly, “Claude Debussy’s Golliwog’s Cakewalk,” 9; Toll, *Blacking Up*, 28.

Therefore, the legacy of a tragic/comic dichotomy originated through situations created by European immigrants in the United States, such as slaves being forced to appear as a cheerful commodity,<sup>29</sup> which stemmed from the desire of a comic figure of low status.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, I stress that this theory of a tragic/comic existence is not an essentialist quality of African Americans but is due to the historical situations that African Americans found themselves in. This duality of a jester-servant against the harsh reality of slavery gave birth to African American art that reflects a paradoxical existence in the United States.

I argue that for African American performers, comedy has been nestled uncomfortably within tragedy historically. During blackface minstrelsy, a constant negotiation of balance existed between playfulness and tragedy.<sup>31</sup> Later transmutations of minstrelsy included vaudeville and variety shows, which continued the African American legacy of comedic entertainment within the tragic context of racism stemming from slavery.<sup>32</sup> This clarifies the context in which Baker found herself in; performing stereotypes for white audiences.

### JOSEPHINE BAKER'S EARLY CAREER:

In 1906, Baker was born in the slums of St. Louis in the United States, where lynching of African Americans was occurring in the South and race riots were occurring in the North.<sup>33</sup> As a child, Baker witnessed a race riot<sup>34</sup> and described the event in an interview with Henry Louis Gates Jr.: "All the sky was red with people's houses burning. On the bridge, there were running people with their tongues cut out. There was a woman who'd been pregnant with her insides cut out."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> I first learned of black bodies as commodities from Nora Chipaumire's lecture at Colorado College in 2016, Nora Chipaumire, "Portrait of myself as my father," accessed May 6, 2019, <https://www.companychipaumire.com/touringwork>; Brown, *A Fugitive Slave*, 45-46, Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5 quoted in Elizabeth de Martelly, "Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy's 'Golliwog's Cakewalk'" *Current Musicology*, no. 90 (Fall 2010): 13.

<sup>30</sup> Toll, *Blackening Up*, 28.

<sup>31</sup> Gottschild, *Digging*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 4-5; Brown, *A Fugitive Slave*, 45-46.

<sup>33</sup> Wendy Martin, "'Remembering the Jungle' Josephine Baker and Modernist Parody," in *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, ed. Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 310, 317.

<sup>34</sup> Wendy Martin, "'Remembering the Jungle,'" 317.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Louis Gates Jr. *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*. (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 560, [https://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Henry\\_Louis\\_Gates\\_Jr\\_Reader.html?id=qKzdCRcGPxcC](https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Henry_Louis_Gates_Jr_Reader.html?id=qKzdCRcGPxcC); <https://search-ebscohost-com.libproxy.unm.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=452263&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

In this tragic context of racial unrest, Baker set out on a comedic career by joining a vaudeville group that went to New York.<sup>36</sup> By fifteen years old, Baker had married and left two men, her second husband being a railroad porter who gave Josephine Baker her last name.<sup>37</sup> Baker worked with Clara Smith and the Dixie Steppers and was a chorus girl in the 1921 *Shuffle Along* and the 1924 *Chocolate Dandies*.<sup>38</sup> Baker used the “gestural strategies of a picaninny in the chorus line” from her work with Clara Smith and the Dixie Steppers in “her solo debut” in “Land of the Dancing Picaninnies,” where she wore the minstrelized attire of blackface and clown shoes.<sup>39</sup>

Baker transitioned into another historical and cultural space in 1925<sup>40</sup> when Spencer Williams and Caroline Dudley offered her the opportunity to perform in *La Revue Nègre* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in France.<sup>41</sup> While Baker initially played awkward minstrelized roles in the U.S., she transformed into a glamorous star in France. After her performance *La Folie du Jour*, which entailed her dancing in a banana skirt at the Folies Bergère, her popularity and income exploded in Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Baker grew beyond a chorus girl into an international star because interests in primitivist modernism and colonialism were brewing in French society and propelled Baker into stardom. Because many Europeans were disillusioned with European civilization after the disastrous consequences of World War I,<sup>43</sup> there was a desire to return to “the primitive origins of mankind.”<sup>44</sup> African culture was set as a focal point for primitivist modernism.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Martin, “Remembering the Jungle,” 310.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Ralling, *Chasing a Rainbow: The Life of Joséphine Baker*. 1986. YouTube video, 1:19:36, posted by “JosephineBakerTube,” November 17, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHnOfKwAga0&t=1427s>.

<sup>38</sup> Sianne Ngai, “Black Venus, Blonde Venus,” in *Bad Modernisms*, ed. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 149; Samuel S. Brylawski, “Baker, Josephine | Grove Music,” Oxford Music Online, January 20, 2001, accessed February 9, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.47016>.

<sup>39</sup> Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 206.

<sup>40</sup> Brylawski, “Baker, Josephine.”

<sup>41</sup> Ngai, “Black Venus, Blonde Venus,” 149.

<sup>42</sup> Biography.com Editors, “Josephine Baker Biography.”

<sup>43</sup> Beyad and Roshnavand, “the Black ‘Other,’” 22.

<sup>44</sup> Houston A. Baker Jr., “Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance.” *American Quarterly* vol. 39, no. 1 (1987): 86 quoted in Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 22.

<sup>45</sup> Beyad and Roshnavand, “the Black ‘Other,’” 22-23, Robert E. Washington, *The Ideologies of African American Literature: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Nationalist Revolt: A Sociology of Literature Perspective* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 32 quoted in Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 23.



It was believed that Negroes danced with passion and “European civilization was in dire need of Negroes whose blood could recultivate the ‘long-since dried-up land that can scarcely breathe.’”<sup>46</sup> This idea that Europe required a blood transfusion from African culture<sup>47</sup> was highlighted in *Volonté* (1929) which praised Baker by stating:

you who are the basis of life...continue to dance to the rhythms of primitive dances. All the metropoli of the world bow to you to learn about the secret that would impede them from dying from the weight of civilization.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, through the pessimism of the devastating effects of World War I that left Europe parched and blood-drained, Baker became a symbol of rejuvenation for Europeans that wanted to redefine themselves.

In addition to a fascination with primitivism, France was also in the midst of colonial expansion. American minstrel show tours across the Atlantic coincided with European colonial expansion in Africa.<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth de Martelly analyzes Jayna Brown’s 2008 *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* by noting that African American minstrel shows which “simulated African-American slavery” perpetuated European beliefs of blacks as natural manual laborers.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Baker, who

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<sup>46</sup> Ivan Goll January 15, 1926 quoted in Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 95 quoted in Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013):25; Beyad and Roshnavand, “Primitivist Modernism,” 25.

<sup>47</sup> Gottschild, *Digging*, 39.

<sup>48</sup> “Le ‘secret de Joséphine Baker,” *Volonté*, December 10, 1929 quoted in Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101n10 quoted in Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 27.

<sup>49</sup> Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) quoted in Elizabeth de Martelly, “Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy’s ‘Golliwog’s Cakewalk’” *Current Musicology*, no. 90 (Fall 2010): 14.; Jayna Brown *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Modern Body* (Durham: Duke University Press) quoted in Elizabeth de Martelly, “Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy’s ‘Golliwog’s Cakewalk’” *Current Musicology*, no. 90 (Fall 2010): 14.; Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: White Man’s Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876-1912*. (New York: Avon Books, 1991) quoted in Elizabeth de Martelly, “Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy’s ‘Golliwog’s Cakewalk’” *Current Musicology*, no. 90 (Fall 2010): 14.

<sup>50</sup> Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Modern Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) quoted in Elizabeth de Martelly, “Signification, Objectification, and the Mimetic Uncanny in Claude Debussy’s ‘Golliwog’s Cakewalk’” *Current Musicology*, no. 90 (Fall 2010): 15.



had performed slave stereotypes in her early career in the United States<sup>51</sup> was easily able to transition into performing similar stereotypes for European audiences craving colonialism.<sup>52</sup>

### JOSEPHINE BAKER: MODERN SYNTHESIS:

Navigating the complex demands of performing as an African American for French audiences, Josephine Baker used modern synthesis in her career by creating a fluid identity. Scholar Wendy Martin explains that “Josephine Baker used the modernist concept of self-construction as well as the modernist interest in primitivism to create a series of dramatic personae that both parodied and challenged notions of essentialism in the arenas of race, class, and gender.”<sup>53</sup> While Baker challenged various categories, I will focus on how Baker used modern synthesis to complicate the binary of gender through a performance of attraction/repulsion through her hybrid-gendered performance in her banana skirt act.

Deborah Gray White explains that there was a dual stereotype of black women slaves being perceived as either a hypersexual Jezebel figure or an “asexual” Mammy figure.<sup>54</sup> Interpreting Deborah Gray White’s chapter *Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Female Slavery*, Beverly Guy-Sheftall notes that black women juggled “paradoxical stereotypes—they were disgustingly lustful...but exceptionally unfeminine. They were alluring but unattractive; they attracted and repelled at the same time.”<sup>55</sup> Guy-Sheftall explains that during slavery, black women were stereotyped as “beasts of burden, workhorses and hypersexual” to legitimize their abuse sexually and manually “from sunup to sundown.”<sup>56</sup> The long historical context of slavery along with stereotypes of black women influenced the attraction/repulsion that Baker confronted in her career. However, Baker used attraction and repulsion for her own means through embodying attraction and repulsion through hybrid-gendered embodiment in her banana skirt act.

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<sup>51</sup> Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Josephine Baker: In Art and Life* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 58-59; Brown, *Babylon Girls*, 206.

<sup>52</sup> Jules-Rosette, *Josephine Baker*, 177.

<sup>53</sup> Martin, “Remembering the Jungle,” 316.

<sup>54</sup> Deborah Gray White, “Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Female Slavery,” in *Ar’n’t I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 28-29, 46-47, 49.

<sup>55</sup> Deborah Gray White, “Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Female Slavery,” in *Ar’n’t I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 27-35 quoted in Beverly Guy-Sheftall, “The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination” in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, ed. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 23.

<sup>56</sup> Beverly Guy-Sheftall, “The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination” in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, ed. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 23.

Equipped with full bare breasts and multiple yellow phalluses,<sup>57</sup> Baker used modern synthesis to create hybrid-gendered embodiment. Scholar Rebecca Schneider explains that a *woman with a phallus* was seen as unnatural, unattractive, and repulsive yet a *woman as a phallus* was seen as attractive.<sup>58</sup> To elaborate this idea, Schneider writes of the negative reaction to Shigeko Kubota's *Vagina Painting*, where she painted with a brush that was coming out of her vagina, versus the celebrated Yves Klein work, where nude women were used as phallic paintbrushes.<sup>59</sup> Schneider concludes, "Woman as artist's brush, woman fetishized as phallus was acceptable, even chic. But woman *with* brush was in some way woman *with* phallus and thus unnatural, monstrous, threatening, primitive-certainly not artistic."<sup>60</sup>

Baker heightens this idea as she is not a woman *with* one phallus, but many. For her time, some would consider this to be even more monstrous and unnatural, yet she balances this repulsion with two attractive sexualized breasts. Baker's phallus skirt evokes the Freudian ideology that men feared castration from women.<sup>61</sup> Baker pushed these fears to an extreme as she not only castrated one man but many, keeping evidence of this through her collection of "trophies" in her skirt.<sup>62</sup> Embodying attraction and repulsion as a seductive siren, Baker's bare breasts attracted her prey while her phallus skirt simultaneously repelled and gave warning of possible castration fears that were brewing in the minds of French men influenced by Freudian and heteronormative ideology of the times.

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<sup>57</sup> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) quoted in Alicja Sowinska, "Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation," *Michigan Feminist Studies*, no. 19 (2005): 58, 63; Alicja Sowinska, "Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation," *Michigan Feminist Studies*, no. 19 (2005): 58, 63. In New York, Baker was unable to dance with bare breasts, Alicja Sowinska, "Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation," *Michigan Feminist Studies*, no. 19 (2005): 65.

<sup>58</sup> Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 38.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) quoted in Alicja Sowinska, "Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation," *Michigan Feminist Studies*, no. 19 (2005): 58, Alicja Sowinska, "Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation," *Michigan Feminist Studies*, no. 19 (2005): 58, Sigmund Freud, *The Problem of Anxiety* (New York: Psychoanalytic Quarterly Press, 1936), Google Scholar quoted in William E. Block and Pierre A. Ventur, "A Study of the Psychoanalytic Concept of Castration Anxiety in Symbolically Castrated Amputees," *Psychiatric Quarterly* vol. 37, no. 3 (1963): 518.

<sup>62</sup> Sowinska, "Banana Skirt," 62.

Through her banana skirt performance, Baker proposed a synthesis of a modern “monstrous”<sup>63</sup> hybrid-gendered identity. Baker’s hybrid-gendered embodiment relates to Sanjoy Roy’s idea:

On medieval maps, the areas of uncharted terrain beyond the edges of the known world were imagined to be populated by strange creatures that could only be conceived as monstrous hybrids composed of elements that were already known—mermaids (half-woman, half-fish), griffons (half-lion, half-eagle), dragons (half-bat, half-lizard). In the modern age, that uncharted terrain is cultural, and those hybrids now appear not at the edges of the map, but at its very centre: the city.<sup>64</sup>

In Paris, Baker created a fluid-gendered persona that was perceived as monstrous because it laid on the periphery of categorical binaries. It is her complication of these binaries that form a modern identity that exists in the heart of the metropolis. Baker’s hybridity of a woman with many phalluses points to Roy’s idea that “We all, in fact, have plural identities that shift with context, place and time, often in contradictory ways; in short, we are all hybrids.”<sup>65</sup>

Baker was powerful because she played in between binaries,<sup>66</sup> and thus created dangerous contradictions.<sup>67</sup> Scholar Alicja Sowinska elaborates Baker’s contradictory embodiment:

If she embodied a savage on stage, she would behave like a lady on the street; if men were dying for her as a seductress, she would put on a man’s suit and bend gender boundaries; if she was called a “black Venus,” she would treat her head with a blonde wig. When the perception of her became too refined, she walked her pet leopard down the Champs-Élysées or crossed her eyes and made faces.<sup>68</sup>

Through modern synthesis, Baker rattled French society by becoming a catalyst for the primitivist modernism that was brewing in Europe.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, Baker’s modern synthesis supports the existence and negotiation of multiple hybrid identities in modernity.

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<sup>63</sup> Sanjoy Roy, “Dirt, Noise, Traffic: Contemporary Indian Dance in the Western City; Modernity, Ethnicity and Hybridity” in *Dance in the City*, ed. Helen Thomas (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 84.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>66</sup> Sowinska, “Banana Skirt,” 50.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>69</sup> Beyad and Roshnavand, “the Black ‘Other,’” 27; “Le ‘secret de Joséphine Baker,” *Volonté*, December 10, 1929 quoted in Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101n10 quoted in Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 27; Lemke, “Primitivist Modernism,” 101.

## PART II: CARMEN AMAYA

### CARMEN AMAYA: SIMULTANEOUS OPPOSITION:

Like Baker who emerged from a tragic/comic context for African American performers, I argue that Carmen Amaya emerged from a tradition of simultaneous opposition in flamenco, an idea from scholar William Washabaugh's *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture*. Washabaugh describes flamenco as exhibiting this quality:

There are moments in which flamenco is simultaneously Andalusian and non-Andalusian, Gitano and non-Gitano, resistant and compliant. Embodying as it does these simultaneous opposites, flamenco should be described as an ironic musical style.<sup>70</sup>

Washabaugh's idea of simultaneous opposition in flamenco can be applied to Amaya, whose simultaneous embodiment of opposing binaries created a modern synthesized identity that fluidly moved between categories. According to Michelle Heffner Hayes, Amaya seemed to avoid "pigeonholes even as she seemed to occupy them" and "her body threatened to move beyond the boundaries of what could be expected."<sup>71</sup> Therefore, I argue Amaya used modern synthesis through her complication of binary male/female stylization through hybrid-gendered performance.

Amaya was born into a Gitano family of great artists which included her guitarist father, El Chino, and her aunt La Faraona, who was one of the first women to dance *farruca*, a *palo* or flamenco form traditionally done by men.<sup>72</sup> Like Baker, Amaya was also born into

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<sup>70</sup> Washabaugh, *Flamenco: Passion, Politics, and Popular Culture*, 38-39.

<sup>71</sup> Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 150.

<sup>72</sup> Andalucia.com, "Flamenco - Carmen Amaya, Andalucia | Southern Spain."; K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 172; José de la Vega, "El baile flamenco en Cataluña a través del esplendor de Carmen Amaya," *Revista Cronopio*, no. 43 (September 9, 2013), <http://www.revistacronopio.com/?p=1123> quoted in Montse Madrdejos, "Carmen Amaya, 1947: The (Gypsy) Beloved of America Reconquers Europe," in *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. K. Meira Goldberg, Ninotchka Devorah Bennahhum, and Michelle Heffner Hayes (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 181; Diego Castellón, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, January 5, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 162; Diego Castellón, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, January 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 162; Alfonso Puig Claramunt, *El arte del baile flamenco* (Balma, 54, Barcelona 7: Ediciones Polígrafa, S.A, 1977), 42 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 162;

poverty<sup>73</sup> in Barcelona where she resided with her family in a cart with a canvas roof.<sup>74</sup> After beginning her training at only three years old on top of her family's cart, by the age four or five years old, Amaya began performing in the streets with her father in order to provide for her family.<sup>75</sup> Amaya's national debut was at Las Siete Puertas<sup>76</sup> and her international debut was at the Palace Theater in Paris with her aunt La Faraona.<sup>77</sup> In 1929, Amaya performed with flamenco legends such as la Niña de los Peines and Manuel Torre when touring with singer Manuel Vallejo.<sup>78</sup> As Amaya's talent gained her fame throughout Spain, she bought her family a house and danced at the prestigious *tablao* (flamenco bar) la Villa Rosa.<sup>79</sup>

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Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 188; Diego Castellón, "Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance," interview by K. Meira Goldberg, April 6, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 188.

<sup>73</sup> Marcel·lí Parés, Interview with Montse Madrideo. *¡Carmen! La capitana/documental biográfico de Carmen Amaya*, directed by Marcel·lí Parés, YouTube video, 1:01:06, posted by "Territorio Flamenko," Dec 21, 2013. Accessed April 7, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eB8RI0xWbCs&t=1041s>; "Andalucia.com," "Flamenco - Carmen Amaya, Andalucía | Southern Spain."

<sup>74</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 168; Ramon Garcia-Pelayo y Gross, *Diccionario larousse del español moderno*. (New York: Librairie Larousse, 1983) quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral diss., Temple University, 1995), 168; Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 168.

<sup>75</sup> Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 173; Alfred Mañas, "Carmen Amaya," *La Caña: Revista de flamenco*, no. 1 (December 1991): 14. Madrid: Asociación Cultural La Caña y España Abierta quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 173; Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 173.

<sup>76</sup> José Blas Vega and Manuel Ríos Ruiz, "Amaya Amaya, Carmen," in *Diccionario enciclopédico ilustrado del flamenco* (Madrid: Editorial Cinterco, S.A., 1988), 16 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, "Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance" (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 175; Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University,

However, the Spanish Civil War catapulted Amaya from a national Spanish flamenco star into an international one.<sup>80</sup> Many exiled flamenco artists such as Antonio and Rosario and sisters Pilar López and La Argentinita toured across the Atlantic because of the Civil War.<sup>81</sup> As one of these exiled artists, Amaya toured South America with great success,<sup>82</sup> as South America was interested in Spanish culture and refugees.<sup>83</sup> Through her success, Amaya eventually made her way to New York City in 1941<sup>84</sup> and worked with impresario Sol Hurok.<sup>85</sup>

Amaya ventured to New York with perfect timing, as the U.S. was still in the swing of “a Spanish craze” which lasted from 1915-1945.<sup>86</sup> The craze began after the Spanish dictatorship of Primo de Rivera when Spain expanded its tourism interests by including a bureau of tourism in New York.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, because of the turbulence in Europe from World War II, Hollywood shifted its interest to cater to Latin American audiences.<sup>88</sup> The U.S. also wanted to focus on Latino audiences because they wanted to align the Americas against the Axis powers.<sup>89</sup> Amaya was placed into a pan-Hispanic performer category in the U.S.<sup>90</sup> and was supported by an obsession of Spanish/Latino culture that flourished in the U.S. all the way through the 1960s.<sup>91</sup>

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1995),175; Bernard Leblon, *Gypsies and Flamenco: The Emergence of the Art of Flamenco in Andalusia* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2003) 88.

<sup>77</sup> José Blas Vega and Manuel Ríos Ruiz, “Amaya Amaya, Carmen,” in *Diccionario enciclopédico ilustrado del flamenco* (Madrid: Editorial Cinterco, S.A., 1988), 16 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 178; Domingo Alvarado, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, April 4, 1987, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 178 ; Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 178.

<sup>78</sup> Andalusia.com, “Flamenco - Carmen Amaya, Andalusia | Southern Spain.”; Blas Vega, José and Manuel Ríos Ruiz, “Amaya Amaya, Carmen,” in *Diccionario enciclopédico ilustrado del flamenco* (Madrid Editorial Cinterco, S.A., 1988), 16 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995),181.

<sup>79</sup> Eugenio Cobo Guzman, “La Barcelona flamenca de los años veinte,” *La Caña: Revista del flamenco*, no. 1 (December 1991): 18-23, quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995),184; Leblon, *Gypsies and Flamenco*, 88.

<sup>80</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 192.



As a desire for Spanish art bloomed in New York, Spanish artists visiting or touring the city, such as La Argentina and Federico García Lorca, set the stage for Amaya.<sup>92</sup> And while New York audiences had seen Spanish dance artists previously,<sup>93</sup> Amaya was unique<sup>94</sup> as she capitalized on Spanish Gitana dance stylization.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, like the desire for black culture in primitivist modernism,<sup>96</sup> flamenco contributed to modernity and was integral to the modernist scene brewing in America.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Theresa Goldbach, *Fascism, Flamenco, and Ballet Español: Nacionalflamenquismo* (Master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 2014), 44.

<sup>82</sup> Hayes, "Conflicting Histories," 151; Madridejos, "The (Gypsy) Beloved," 178; Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 206.

<sup>83</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 195.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>85</sup> Lola Montes, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, May 24, 1989, tape recording quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 210-211, 217; Rita Vega de Triana, *Antonio Triana and the Spanish Dance: A Personal Recollection*. (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), 34 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 211n63, 432n63; Diego Castellón, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, April 6, 1989, tape recording quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 211; Rita Vega de Triana, *Antonio Triana and the Spanish Dance: A Personal Recollection*. (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), 32-34, 44-5, 45 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 211n64, 432n64.

<sup>86</sup> Bennahum, "Love and War," 197.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Carlos Cortés, "Chicanos in Film: History of an Image," in *Chicano Cinema: Research, Reviews and Resources*, ed. Gary D. Keller (Binghamton: Bilingual Review/Press, 1985), 99 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 148.

<sup>89</sup> Hayes, "Conflicting Histories," 146-148; Carlos Cortés, "Chicanos in Film: History of an Image," in *Chicano Cinema: Research, Reviews and Resources*, ed. Gary D. Keller (Binghamton: Bilingual Review/Press, 1985), 99 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 148.

<sup>90</sup> Hayes, *Conflicting Histories*, 148-149; Tom O'Sullivan, "The South American Way," *Boston Traveler*, June 17, 1941 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 148-149; "'Latin Americans' Torrid Music All the Rage on Broadway," *New York Post*, April 6, 1941 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 148-149.

<sup>91</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 195.



Considering this historical context, there were specific conditions and interests that supported Amaya's success. However, she came into contact with dichotomies that attempted to pigeonhole her so she formed a fluid modern identity of synthesis for a successful career by complicating gender.

## GENDERED AESTHETICS: CARMEN AMAYA'S MODERN SYNTHESIS

Amaya created a modern synthesized identity through her formation of hybrid-gendered stylization. Rather than performing *farruca* like her aunt La Faraona, who was one of the first women to dance this flamenco palo in the 1910s–1920s,<sup>98</sup> Amaya danced *alegrías* in pants, a palo that women had traditionally performed “at the turn of the century.”<sup>99</sup> Scholar Meira Goldberg explains that historically, “women had danced mainly variations of *alegrías* and *soleas* and men had danced forms of *zapateado* and *tangos*, [and that] forms such as the *farruca*, *seguiriyas*, the *bulerias* [sic], a Flamenco version of the older *jaleos*, and the ‘*chufas*,’ a burlesque form of *tangos* were staged.”<sup>100</sup> In addition to utilizing a traditionally female *palo*, Amaya juxtaposed this with incorporating aesthetics from old-style male flamenco dancers. According to dancer José de la Vega's observations, Amaya

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.; Chinoy, Claire. “La Argentina and the Spanish Dance” (New York: New York University, 1981), 2, 15 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 214; Bennahum, “Love and War,” 197.

<sup>93</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 213–214.

<sup>94</sup> Lola Montes, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, May 24, 1989, tape recording quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 212.

<sup>95</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 219, 223.

<sup>96</sup> Beyad and Roshnavand, “the Black ‘Other,’” 22–23; Robert E. Washington, *The Ideologies of African American Literature: From the Harlem Renaissance to the Black Nationalist Revolt: A Sociology of Literature Perspective* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 32 quoted in Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 23.

<sup>97</sup> Bennahum, “Love and War,” 196.

<sup>98</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 172.

<sup>99</sup> Miguel Espin and Romualdo Molina, “Bailar, siempre bailar,” in *La Argentinista y Pilar Lopez* (Bienal de Arte Flamenco (V e Baile), Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, Area de Cultura (Ed.), Sevilla: Suministros Graficos, S.A., 1988), 6–7 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 166–167.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

exhibited masculine stylization reminiscent of artists such as El Gato and Faico.<sup>101</sup> José de la Vega writes of Amaya's performance:

I have never seen anything like it. That dance had nothing to do with the bailaoras that I applauded in the 1940s. If Andalusian bailaoras promenaded in the *Rosas de la Alegrías*, which their characteristic bombast: *braceando hacia afuera* [opening their arms outward], *tronachás hacia atrás* [backwards cuts], tracing the righteous and exclusive arabesques of the feminine hand [...] Carmen Amaya's dance was completely the opposite. Carmen's dance was vertical, she moved her arms inwards, like the old-time farruca dancers like Faico, El Gato o los Pelaos.<sup>102</sup>

Vega describes typical female flamenco dance aesthetics for the time and how Amaya dismantled these through incorporating masculine aesthetic influence from Faico and El Gato. Goldberg explains that Faico and El Gato were important Gitano dancers of "the purest masculine style of dance,"<sup>103</sup> and Faico had even created the *farruca*.<sup>104</sup> Similar to her influence from La Faraona,<sup>105</sup> Amaya was likely influenced first-hand by El Gato and

<sup>101</sup> José de la Vega, "El baile flamenco en Cataluña a través del splendor de Carmen Amaya," *Revista Cronopio*, no. 43 (September 9, 2013), <http://www.revistacronopio.com/?p=1123> quoted in Montse Madríguez, "Carmen Amaya, 1947: The (Gypsy) Beloved of America Reconquers Europe," in *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. K. Meira Goldberg, Ninotchka Deborah Bennahum, and Michelle Heffner Hayes (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 181.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Diego Castellón, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, January 5, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 162; Diego Castellón, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, January 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 162; Alfonso Puig Claramunt, *El arte del baile flamenco* (Balmes, 54, Barcelona 7: Ediciones Polígrafa, S.A., 1977), 42 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 162.

<sup>104</sup> Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 188; Diego Castellón, "Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance," interview by K. Meira Goldberg, April 6, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 188.

<sup>105</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 168; Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 8, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 172; Elsa Brunelleschi, "The Amaya Tribe," *Ballet*, June 1952 quoted in K. Meira

Faico, as their families were already acquainted and Amaya had worked with El Gato and a guitarist relative from the family.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, it is important to note that there were previous female flamenco dancers that cross-dressed in male attire,<sup>107</sup> which is believed to have begun with Trinidad Huertas “La Cuenca.”<sup>108</sup> These artists contributed to Amaya’s unique blending of gender aesthetics in her dancing.

Although other artists had dressed as men previously, Amaya was still a pioneer as she emphasized male footwork when traditionally women danced with their upper bodies.<sup>109</sup> Historically, flamenco had a prescribed stylization for both genders, as men would typically emphasize footwork and women focused on upper body movement.<sup>110</sup> However, Gitano-style dance allowed for more flow of gender stylization,<sup>111</sup> which may have given Amaya more freedom to play with gendered aesthetics.<sup>112</sup> Amaya used stylization of both genders simultaneously and incorporated this hybrid-gendered style in her costume. Hayes explains

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Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 172n43, 421n43; Mario Escudero, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, September 28, 1991, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 172n43, 421n43.

<sup>106</sup> “Flamenco dancer,” *Time*, February 17, 1941, 87,88; K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 188, illustration 31; Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 188; Diego Castellón, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, March 29, 1987, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 188.

<sup>107</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 176.

<sup>108</sup> Fernando el de Triana, *Arte y artistas flamencos* (Madrid: Editoriales Andaluzas Unidas, S.A., [1935] 1986), 146 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 176.

<sup>109</sup> Andalucia.com, “Flamenco - Carmen Amaya, Andalucía | Southern Spain.”

<sup>110</sup> Cristina Cruces-Roldán, “Normative Aesthetics and Cultural Constructions in Flamenco Dance: Female and Gitano Bodies as Legitimizers of Tradition,” in *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. K. Meira Goldberg, Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, and Michelle Heffner Hayes (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2015), 214, 216-17.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 214, 219.

<sup>112</sup> Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya’s Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 174; Marisol Encinias, email correspondence with Justice Miles, March 23, 2019.

that Amaya performed with feminine-style shoes rather than boots when she dressed in a male costume.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, Amaya's hybridity through costume and style allowed her to simultaneously embody both genders at the same time.

While Amaya's *alegrías* in male attire was extremely popular in Spain before she toured the Americas,<sup>114</sup> Goldberg explains that Amaya's dances in male costume may have resonated well with American women who were beginning to wear pants.<sup>115</sup> During WWII, Rosie the Riveter came out to encourage women to go to work during the war when the men were away,<sup>116</sup> which coincided with Amaya who was dancing in pants. Boris explains that "During the 1930s, pants on women were unacceptable in industrial workplaces 'because of a possible production hazard in distracting male employees,'" while in the 1940s women were actually required "to wear slacks to avoid danger involved in working around industrial machinery."<sup>118</sup> Amaya clearly came at the right time to dance in pants in the U.S. from 1941 to 1945<sup>119</sup> as the U.S. did not enter WWII until after Pearl Harbor in 1941,<sup>120</sup> which propelled men to go to war and women to work male jobs.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Hayes, *Conflicting Histories*, 150.

<sup>114</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 189.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>116</sup> James Breig, "America Was Riveted by Rosie," *History Magazine* vol. 20, no. 1 (Oct-Nov 2018): 24. <https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=5&sid=1bd83a94-a18b-4309-9217-e1c09406a925%40pdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=edsgcl.556819167&db=edsggo>.

<sup>117</sup> Frank Elkouri and Edna Asper Elkouri, *How Arbitration Works*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Washington: Bureau of National Affairs, 1973, 1985), 768, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05987a&AN=unm.770467&site=eds-live&scope=site> quoted in Eileen Boris, "Desirable Dress: Rosies, Sky Girls, and the Politics of Appearance," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 69 (2006):124.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 217; Leonor Amaya and Antonia Amaya, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, October 12, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 248; "La Tribu de los Amaya." *Hispano americano: Semanario de la vida y la verdad* vol. 26, no. 670 (March 7, 1955): 38-9, 42 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 249; Diego Castellón, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance*, interview by K. Meira Goldberg, January 5, 1989, tape recording, translation by K. Meira Goldberg quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 249.

<sup>120</sup> "World War II (1939-1945)," The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, accessed May 19, 2019, <https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/world-war-2.cfm>.

<sup>121</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 235.

Furthermore, Amaya's performances lead reviewers to compare her to "non-human, violent forces, including machine guns and tornados."<sup>122</sup> Reviewer John Martin explained that "Amaya can make more noise [...] than half a dozen riveting machines."<sup>123</sup> Amaya's feminine agency dancing in men's attire fit with an era where women were called to work male jobs in male dress. Amaya's performances may have been celebrated in the U.S. as a way to convince women that it was acceptable to dress as a man and excel at a man's job.

However, this new female empowerment was a potential threat to patriarchal structures. It is interesting to note that during this era, a "bombshell" was used to describe a sexy woman that was "potentially destructive."<sup>124</sup> Even though Hurok's advertising of Amaya as a bombshell backfired,<sup>125</sup> Amaya was potentially dangerous, just as women working during WWII were viewed as a possible threat to men's jobs.<sup>126</sup> Amaya and the "Rosies" were dangerous women as they were pioneers of change because they challenged perceived limitations of what was acceptable for women to do. Amaya's hybrid-gendered performance pushed for a modernity that supported agency and fluidity within gender norms.

Amaya's hybrid-gendered form was met with some resistance because it challenged old-school gendered dance stylization.<sup>127</sup> In contrast to Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity, that gender is not natural but appears natural because of its repetitive performance,<sup>128</sup> there were many who believed that natural qualities existed for men and women. For example, American flamencologist Donn E. Pohren firmly believed that men and women should dance in specific ways stating, "The condition that men be men and women, women, or at least appear to be, is an absolute necessity in the *baile* flamenco if it is to be effective."<sup>129</sup> Pohren was against cross-dressing artists such as Trinidad Huertas La Cuenca, who began the "deterioration" of female flamenco dancing by incorporating male elements.<sup>130</sup> However, Amaya adopted more feminine dance aesthetics in her later years,<sup>131</sup> which was to the relief of Pohren who stated, "Carmen gradually began outgrowing her

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>123</sup> John Martin, "AMAYA GROUP SEEN AT CARNEGIE HALL: Dancer, Relatives and Partner Give Season's Only Concert Performance Here ANTONIO TRIANA FEATURED Numbers Vary From the Poetic 'Cordoba' of Albeniz to Low Comedy 'Herencia Gitana,'" *New York Times*, December 14, 1942, 18.

<sup>124</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 235.

<sup>125</sup> Carmen Amaya, "Scrapbook," *Dance Collection*, New York Public Library, 1943 quoted in K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 235; K. Meira Goldberg, *Border Trespasses: The Gypsy Mask and Carmen Amaya's Flamenco Dance* (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1995), 235, illustration 37; Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 235.

<sup>126</sup> Boris, "Desirable Dress," 129.

<sup>127</sup> Andalucia.com, "Flamenco - Carmen Amaya, Andalucia | Southern Spain." (andalucia.com).

<sup>128</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial and Sara Brady (New York: Routledge, 2016), 215.

masculine type of dance. As she matured she began altering her style, adding more elements of femininity, more ruffles, more flowing arms and hands, more tranquility, a more subtle fire and passion.”<sup>132</sup> Amaya’s return to the feminine was also a relief for La Meri who was pleased when ““Amaya gave up all her male flamenco dances which are traditionally done in male attire and wore *batas* that were proper for a grown woman.””<sup>133</sup> Both Pohren and La Meri viewed Amaya’s cross-dressing as youthful experimentation and were pleased that she settled into prescribed gender norms. However, they failed to note the genius of Amaya’s cross-dressing performance and subversive critique of gender norms. Amaya continued the legacy of female artists playing with gender and paved the way for incredible artists in the future such as male dancer Manuel Liñán who has done extensive choreographic work in *bata de cola*, a flamenco skirt with a long train traditionally worn by women.<sup>134</sup> Through her creation of modern synthesis of simultaneous opposition, Amaya complicated gender through a blend of gender stylization that has been an inspiration to future generations of flamencos.

## CONCLUSION

### THE IRONIC FORMATION OF MODERNITY THROUGH THE MARGINALIZED

Although the Spanish and African Americans have historically struggled with being perceived as modern,<sup>135</sup> African American arts and flamenco were ironically instrumental in modernity.<sup>136</sup> Scholar Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum notes that African American art forms/jazz and flamenco were important to the development of European and American modernism.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, ironically, the cultures which struggled with being viewed as modern ended up shaping modernity.

<sup>129</sup> Donn E. Pohren, *Lives and Legends of Flamenco: A Biographical History* (Seville: Society of Spanish Studies, 1964), 179 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 70.

<sup>130</sup> Donn E. Pohren, *Lives and Legends of Flamenco: A Biographical History* (Seville: Society of Spanish Studies, 1964), 216 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 72.

<sup>131</sup> Andalucia.com, “Flamenco - Carmen Amaya, Andalucia | Southern Spain.” (andalucia.com),

<sup>132</sup> Donn E. Pohren, *Lives and Legends of Flamenco: A Biographical History* (Seville: Society of Spanish Studies, 1964), 232 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 72.

<sup>133</sup> La Meri quoted in Donn E. Pohren, *Lives and Legends of Flamenco: A Biographical History* (Seville: Society of Spanish Studies, 1964), 231-32 quoted in Michelle Heffner Hayes, *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co, 2009), 153.

<sup>134</sup> EFE, “El bailaor español Manuel Liñán estrena bata de cola y nueva obra en Argentina,” *EFE*, June 9, 2018, <https://www.efc.com/efe/america/cultura/el-bailaor-espanol-manuel-linan-estrena-bata-de-cola-y-nueva-obra-en-argentina/20000009-3643977>.

<sup>135</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 129; Woods, “*White Gypsies*,” 108.



Amaya and Baker, dancers from these marginalized groups, became vessels of modernity. Goldberg explains that:

Amaya was in many senses an artist who appealed to a Modern sensibility: in the liberty which she took to costume herself in male dress and to pull the male movement vocabulary into her unique dance style, in her interest in improvisation, process and dynamic over polish, variety and balance, and also in the fact that she was Gitana.<sup>138</sup>

This could also be applied to Josephine Baker who was a modern “catalyst” with impeccable timing that fit the interests of France forming a new modern identity through primitivist modernism.<sup>139</sup> Both women created a modern synthesis of identity categories in countries that had political and international interests that laid a foundation for their transatlantic stardom. Although many artists contributed to modernity and the disbursement of African American arts and flamenco in the world, I argue Amaya and Baker aided the development of flamenco and African American performance being viewed as modern. Miller writes “modern identity is—if at all definitive—essentially ‘mixed.’”<sup>140</sup> Baker and Amaya fit the criteria of modernity as they both “‘mixed’”<sup>141</sup> binaries to create a modern identity that is a synthesis.

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<sup>136</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, “African Art in Motion,” *African Forum* 2 (1966) quoted in Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, “Spanish Artists in Love and War, 1913-1945: Meditations on Female Embodiment and Populist Imagination” in *Flamenco on the Global Stage: Historical, Critical and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. K. Meira Goldberg, Ninotchka Devorah Bennahum, and Michelle Heffner Hayes (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 194; Bennahum, “Love and War,” 194.

<sup>137</sup> Bennahum, “Love and War,” 196.

<sup>138</sup> Goldberg, *Border Trespasses*, 159.

<sup>139</sup> Beyad and Roshnavand, “the Black ‘Other,’” 27; “Le ‘secret de Joséphine Baker,’” *Volonté*, December 10, 1929 quoted in Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101n10 quoted in Maryam Beyad and Farshad Roshnavand, “The Instrumentality of the Black ‘Other’ in Primitivist Modernism: A Critical Analysis of Modern Dance and Modernist Language,” *Legon Journal of the Humanities* vol. 24 (2013): 27; Lemke, “Primitivist Modernism,” 101.

<sup>140</sup> Miller, “Black Dandy,” 200.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



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