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Morgan Monroe 4/17/2014

Mixed Messages: An Analysis of Correspondence and Representations of Josephine Baker

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Abstract

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The Josephine Baker Papers offer new revelations into the personal life and correspondence of an enigmatic star. Exploring these unprocessed archives opened a window to the mind and inner workings of the star during the latter half of her life not many have accessed. Seeing how Baker spoke to her closest colleagues, friends, and business acquaintances helps shape the narrative on the beautiful star outside of her professional life. In the letters ranging from the years 1938 to 1968, we witness the trajectory of the star from extravagance to financial demise.

This thesis combines archival, photographic, and cultural elements to analyze the complex and at times ambivalent images of Baker. Each of the chapters is enhanced by an analysis of photographs or images of Baker. A close interpretation of these images adds a new layer of depth to our understanding of the inherent contradictions in the star's representations. We see Baker as the ultimate sex symbol as well as a figure of the Resistance; as a famous fashion icon as well as a destitute; as a socialite of high-society as well as an outsider at the fanciest establishments; as an exotic animal as well as a demure mother of twelve. The two sources of my research, the Emory University archives and cultural representations of Baker intersect to provide a novel analysis of the star's image.

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Chapter

Introduction : Letters as a Lens

Je puis bien vous dire la vérité: je n'ai qu'un seul Amour, mon pays; ce pays, c'est le vôtre, le nôtre, La France. Evidemment, je n'en connais pas encore tout de la France; Mais elle m'offre chaque jour la joie d'une nouvelle révélation.
-Josephine Baker (Je n'ai qu'un seul Amour 3).

The Josephine Baker Papers offer new revelations into the personal life and correspondence of an enigmatic star. Exploring these unprocessed archives opened a window to the mind and inner workings of the star during the latter half of her life not many have accessed. Seeing how Baker spoke to her closest colleagues, friends, and business acquaintances helps shape the narrative on the beautiful star outside of her professional life. In the letters ranging from the years 1938 to 1968, we witness the trajectory of the star from extravagance to financial demise.

Josephine Baker's instability was rampant throughout every stage of her life. She either had money in excess or a severe lacking of funds. During her early years in the slums of St. Louis, Baker and her siblings lived in a shanty house. Fondly called Tumpy, Josephine moved from house to house providing labor in exchange for room and board. Baker decided to drop out of school at age eleven and tour the country dancing the Charleston. She used her comedic qualities to earn a spot at the end of the chorus line, and then became the highest paid chorus girl in the country, earning over $100 per week in 1922. The young dancer earned a ticket to Paris to be featured in La Revue Nègre in 1925. From here, she catapulted to stardom and amassed an immense fortune. As her career progressed, Baker became the highest paid female dancer of her time. This excess in wealth translated to expensive couture outfits, large apartments, partying, and exotic pets. Baker had moved from a space of extreme poverty, to one of abundance in the period of eight years. This rapid ascent to stardom may have been the cause of her instability. Baker's decline into

financial hardship took much longer than her ascent to wealth. The decline was postponed by frantic attempts by Baker to keep her estate and raise funds to pay back her debts. This scrambling was due to inadequate accounts to pay for her excessive lifestyle.

Baker's instability and excess was a trend in her love life as well. Baker married four times during her life, starting at age fourteen and ending at age forty-one. Coupled with her long-standing relationships and extra-marital affairs, Baker's lovers were numerous and unstable. Baker's first two husbands were in the United States and she did not speak to them again once she moved away to Paris. Her first husband was not legal due to her young age, and she did not formally divorce her second husband before moving to France. Her third husband was Jean Lion, whom she stayed with for about one year's time. After these three, she had a long-standing relationship with her manager Count Giuseppe Abatino ("Pepito") before marrying her last husband, Jo Bouillon. Baker stayed with Pepito for about ten years, and with Bouillon for about thirty years. These constants in her life seemed to ground her physically, but she still had lovers outside of these relationships. Baker tried to cope with the rampant instability in her life by acquiring collections of all types. Her lovers were a group that she could not entirely control, but were a collection nonetheless.

Baker also gathered collections of animals and children. Josephine Baker accumulated a menagerie of animals throughout her life. Her taste for animals grew more extravagant as her finances grew more flexible. She acquired exotic animals such as cheetahs, monkeys, birds, and snakes. This fabulous collection gave Baker a sense of power and purpose. At the time, they stood in for Baker's desired children. She was able to care for the animals as if they were her own kin. Eventually, Baker realized her dream of a large

family. Josephine Baker's Rainbow Tribe was a collection of children she adopted from various corners of the world. She legally adopted a total of twelve children who lived with her at Les Milandes, a chateau she owned in Dordogne. These collections gave Baker a sense of fulfillment. She spent a great deal of her time and finances taking care of them. For a person whose life was so uncertain, accumulating these beings helped Baker pin herself down. Baker felt the need to possess in large quantities. She brought her excessive attitude into every arena of her life. "Having" or lacking in large quantities plagued Josephine Baker. She coped with this instability by acquiring collections of lovers, animals, and children.

In my first chapter I explore how Baker's excessive wealth affected her racial categorization. As a minority, Baker's blackness had separate effects in America and Europe. Baker was trapped by her skin color in America, while in France it catapulted her to stardom. "Black, White and Green" explains the implications of race in Baker's performance as well as how it affected her treatment off-stage. Her wealth troubled the usual treatment of an African-American woman because she transcended the confines of this category. On the other hand, Baker never moved into the category of being White. This chapter seeks to explain how Baker became "green." I use the term "green" to define an epi-racial category that came with its own set of rules.

Baker's finances were greatly influenced by her romantic relationships. My second chapter explains how Baker's love life helped the star reinforce her autonomy by breaking convention. In each of Baker's long-standing relationships in France, she refused to conform to the traditional role of housewife or mother. She exercised her individual agenda throughout these relationships, reinforcing her independence. Not only did Baker claim her independence in her stable relationships, but also in her extra-marital affairs. These

romantic relationships outside of her marriages helped Baker escape the confines of heteronormative practices in Paris at the time.

In the third chapter, I analyze how Baker's accumulation of the Rainbow Tribe changed the image of the star from a sexual savage to a caring mother. Josephine Baker began her family in 1953 when she brought home two boys from an orphanage in Japan. From here, her adoption rate grew exponentially until she had acquired eight children in a period of two years. The public quickly became reinvested in Baker the mother, following her to each country she travelled and speculating on who the next child would be. This shift in focus led to a new labeling of Baker as a mother. This chapter tries to explore the implications of Baker's new image and its roots.

Baker's public image was at the core of her career's success. The fourth and final chapter discusses the dynamic between images created for Baker by external forces and which ones she internalized. After her *danse sauvage* in 1925, Baker was continuously compared to an exotic animal. Reviews of her work in newspapers and scholarship constantly make references to Baker being an animal on stage. These correlations were mirrored by Baker's collection of foreign animals. Many of the animals she was compared to in media representations ended up in her collection. This chapter tries to reconcile the internal and external images forced onto Baker during her life.

The methodology used to complete this work was mainly archival. The Josephine Baker collection at Emory University ("Josephine Baker Papers, 1938-1968," Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library, MARBL) was unprocessed the summer of 2013 when most of my archival research was accomplished. The collection had not been organized by date or subject, and there was still much cataloguing to be done. The collection was

assembled into a series of nine boxes. The collection was mainly comprised of letters to and from Baker from the year 1958 forward. The letters were mostly handwritten in French. The correspondence covered personal life issues concerning Les Milandes and its management. There were also many letters between Baker and her friends discussing their personal lives and plans to visit her at her chateau. The large majority of the letters concerned Baker's unstable finances during the last ten years of her life while she was trying to save her estate. There were photographs and posters of Baker and her family at Les Milandes, as well as photographs of Baker from her time in Parisian dance halls. The Papers also included newspaper clippings and magazines featuring Josephine Baker.

Even more so than previous scholarship, this thesis puts a strong emphasis on how Josephine Baker's wealth, or lack thereof, penetrated every facet of her life. Using the personal correspondence from Baker opens a window into her personal thoughts. We can observe her failed and successful attempts at fundraising for Les Milandes. We can also see the daily workings of caring for the Rainbow Tribe. Previous scholarship has not relied as heavily on Baker's personal correspondence to fuel conclusions. The archival research conducted at Emory University's MARBL distinguishes this thesis from its counterparts by using Baker's personal letters to ground its analysis of her life.

This thesis combines archival, photographic, and cultural elements to analyze the complex and at times ambivalent images of Baker. Each of the chapters is enhanced by an analysis of photographs or images of Baker. A close interpretation of these images adds a new layer of depth to our understanding of the inherent contradictions in the star's representations. We see Baker as the ultimate sex symbol as well as a figure of the Resistance; as a famous fashion icon as well as a destitute; as a socialite of high-society as

well as an outsider at the fanciest establishments; as an exotic animal as well as a demure mother of twelve. The two sources of my research, the Emory University archives and cultural representations of Baker intersect to provide a novel analysis of the star's image.

This thesis concludes that Josephine Baker's thirst for stability was only partially quenched by her vast collections --of material possessions, animals, lovers, and children. Her need to acquire in excess never reached fulfillment. In the case of her lovers, animals, and children, Baker was obliged to cap her collection at a certain number. Real world restraints such as finances or practicality reigned over Baker's acute sensibility for collection.

However, there is still much to be explored about this enigmatic figure. The archives are limited to materials covering the latter part of Baker's life. Personal correspondence from the star's first arrival to Paris to her early ascent to stardom, would offer even more material to analyze her mindset. Although these papers give the reader a deep sense of who Baker actually was in daily life, they cannot serve as a substitute for a diary or personal memoirs. The letters and photographs contained in the archive covered what Baker was comfortable projecting outward. More insight could be gained from analyzing what this very public figure kept for herself, such as her relationships with women and other insecurities, and would not share with the public or even with friends in written correspondence.

Chapter One: Black, White, and Green

Josephine Baker was an African-American woman who found her home in Paris, her heart with Caucasian males, and her money in entertainment. Many scholars point to her performance and acceptance in the Parisian spotlight as a transcendence of racial boundaries. This assessment of Baker's racial perception fails to encompass the true root of Baker's racial motives. The allure that fueled her initial success was her comedic quality. When her humorous recognition in America earned her a ticket to Paris with *La Revue Nègre*, her outstanding quality became her "chocolate," athletic body. Shifting from cutesy chorus girl to sexualized savage, Baker captured her audiences with new appeal. With this distinction, she quickly became the star of the Parisian dance scene, earning more money than any dancer that came before her (Dalton 1998; 911). The press and reviews in Paris continuously commented on the duality between civil and savage her image conveyed. On stage she seemed to be an uncontrollable fit of energy while off-stage, she was a poised socialite. Her appearance off the stage directly contradicted her apparently uncontainable performance in the theatre. While Baker's body was a topic of racial scrutiny throughout her career, she used her mouth to advocate for racial tolerance across the world. Thus Baker was not simply black or white, but transcended racial categorization. Josephine Baker was born legally "black," and many believed she yearned to be white, but above all, Josephine Baker was green.

I argue that Baker was green in the sense that she seemed to transcend the static dimensions of racial binaries and stereotypes. Baker first transcended into a green status by living outside of normal boundaries of blackness and second, by troubling her classification with her immense wealth. She transplanted herself into a nebulous space that

managed to escape social confines. Green is an outlandish color that belongs to no predetermined race. One can see being green as an epidermal condition that would transcend racial categories. If an individual had green skin, it would shock and disturb those who saw them. Upon sight, it would be difficult for people to ascribe racial attributes to a green individual. Society was not able to comprehend or classify Baker because of the privileges being green affords her. Baker did not operate within any predetermined racial category; rather she crafted her own epi-racial space. This green classification removed Baker from the static dimensions of being black or white. Baker's body was the root of her performance and she used it to move into the green category.

Indeed, in addition, green is the color of American currency. Although Baker was paid mostly in francs, green has been universally recognized as a symbol for currency. The color of dollar is simply recognized as the color of money in twentieth century popular culture. Being green equates Baker's body with the international symbol of currency. The money that she earned using her body fueled her green categorization. This association of Baker's body with wealth grounds her in this "epi-racial" category [I am coining this term as a new way to see Baker's race, similar to the way "epi" is used in the word epigenetic]. Epi-racial denotes a space escaping the traditional classifications of race. Baker moved into this category as she accumulated more wealth. When she started travelling at a young age, she was trapped in her legal race of being black. She was able to transcend these confines as her social and economic status grew.

Baker's move into what I call her "green status" was facilitated by not abandoning her blackness. She was continually outspoken about minority rights, and she also participated in various interracial marriages. She did not live within the social confines

predetermined by race; therefore she was able to rise above these categories. Baker was able to have experiences as early as the 1920s of what very few other black women would be afforded. Baker was continuously outspoken about the unequal treatment of people of color. She called attention to the disparities between her treatment as a celebrity and that of her less famous peers. Baker's civil rights activism contributed to her green classification because it maintained the link between Baker and her legal race. This passion for activism kept Baker from simply moving into the category of being white. However, Baker was afforded privileges that were deemed outside of her blackness.

Baker did not reside within the established limits of her race, nor those .of the more privileged one. Her wealth identified her to the world as a symbol of entertainment. Baker's wealth played a large role in creating her identity. Her body was a commodity on the market. This physically placed Baker into a separate category of being green. Baker's fame and wealth was founded by placing her body on display. Her body and voice were for sale on stage and on screen, accumulating large sums of currency. She expanded the boundaries of the black woman, for instance, by shopping in couture fashion houses, staying in expensive hotels, and having private audiences with distinguished officials. Although she was afforded the privileges of white women at the time, she never conformed to this racial category either. Baker's physique became her wealth, turning her into green.

Baker first started as a chorus girl in all-Black productions before she transcended to her status of green. Josephine Baker's funny flair in shows such as *Chocolate Dandies* (1924) and *Shuffle Along* (1921) gained her recognition amongst black and white audiences in the United States. These audiences were segregated and the dancers in *Shuffle Along*

performed to either all whites or all colored people.[1] During this time of her life, Josephine Baker had little to no control over her performances. To earn a spot on *Chocolate Dandies* and *Shuffle Along* troupes, she traveled as their dresser and quietly learned the songs in her down time (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 25). When a dancer took ill, Baker stepped into her place and added comedic relief to the chorus line. She instantly lit up a stage with her goofy antics. Audiences responded with loud applause when Baker wore blackface[2] and acted as an out of place dancer who barely knew her choreography. While she had been constantly rejected for being, "too dark, too thin, too young" to perform, these aspects became her defining features (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 27).

Baker managed to evolve her epi-racial category by conveying different messages to varying audiences with the same performance. The knock-kneed, cross-eyed girl goofing along at the end of chorus lines gained the favor of black and white audiences. But how did these different audiences view Baker? To the whites, she fulfilled their stereotypical views of minstrel activity. Baker depicted a clumsy, uneducated Negro who was lost in her performance. Baker's wild, savage dance was an action that only primitive black bodies could accomplish. Janell Hobson writes in "Venus in the Dark" that Baker's white audiences "viewed [Baker] this time with admiration while still maintaining an air of mockery" (2005; 95). White audiences received her portrayal of the Negro as an accurate representation of

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[1] During the early 1920s through the 1950s, segregation in America was legal and enforced in public places such as buses and theatres. The "Jim Crow" laws kept minorities separate from whites (National Museum of American History 2014; 1).

[2] Merriam-Webster defines "blackface" as makeup applied to a performer playing a black person especially in a minstrel show; *also***:** a performer wearing such makeup. This was a common practice, even for black actors, in theatres during the 1920s. Blackface originated during the 1820s with Thomas D. Rice's song *Jump Jim Crow* earning large success. Blackface often included wearing wooly wigs and rags to completely transform into a stereotypical Negro character (Ivey 2001; 2).

black culture. For blacks, what did they admire most about her? Above all, her comedic quality captured their hearts. Laughing at the stereotype that whites so wholly embraced gave black audiences a sense of power over the caricature (Hodson 2005; 96). These audiences saw the inaccurate portrayal of themselves on stage as comedic. Baker's fame was grounded on exploiting the controlling gaze whites placed on her body. Author and philosopher Michel Fabre writes, "what made Baker's success exceptional was, on the one hand the magnitude of its economic rewards (of which blacks had been traditionally been deprived)," (Fabre and O'Meally 1994; 128). Regardless of race, her audiences knew of her immense salary. However, her Black audiences realized how momentous it was for Baker to earn such a vast salary capitalizing off of her skin's stereotypes. Black audiences recognized Baker's signifying of black sexuality in the beginning stages of her career as a well-paying joke.

Various interpretations of blackface performance stem from the multiple purposes of wearing vaudeville makeup. Black entertainers sought to penetrate the theatre realm and capitalized on their opportunity with blackface. The easiest way onstage in mainstream theatres was to wear blackface. Some actors believed that the caricature they played was in many ways authentic, but others scoffed at the simple view mainstream whites had of them: "It is for the sheer joy of the joke; sometimes to challenge those who presume to know his identity… The motives behind the mask are as numerous as the ambiguities the mask conceals" writes Ralph Ellison, an African-American scholar, in "Change the Joke, Slip the Yoke" (Ellison 1963; 110). The performers and consumers of blackface had multiple perceptions of the show; at least some saw the caricature as insight to the ridiculous view

white America had on black culture and identity. This helps to explain the divergence between audiences of Blacks and Whites.

Baker's performances in blackface were before segregated all white or all black audiences. As this was the very beginning of her career, she did not have much input in her performance style. She performed as a clown in blackface during 1924 while she was in "Chocolate Dandies[3]" at the end of the chorus line. Black paint was smeared over all of her exposed skin then accented with bright pink to exaggerate her lips. Wearing blackface was tradition in white-owned theatres because the audience would assume the actors were actually white. It was widely assumed that black actors would not need black makeup to portray minstrel activity (Jules-Rosette 2007; 58). This dichotomy is complex. The white audiences preferred to have other fellow whites parody blacks through stereotype, while the black audiences in attendance knew that the performers under the makeup were other people of color. I posit that the black audiences enjoyed the minstrel performances due to the ridiculously widespread stereotype believed by whites. In short, they laughed at the laughers. It was comical seeing such a dramatically fabricated reality played onstage. Baker's minstrel performance filled different purposes for black versus white audiences. She was not pigeonholed into serving one audience. Being green allowed Josephine Baker to transcend racial boundaries with her performance.

American media reception helps to establish Baker's green identity. The American press about Josephine Baker's performances reveals the overall perception by her home country. There are vast differences between the articles written by the mainstream press and the African American press about Josephine Baker. The mainstream press centered

[3]*Chocolate Dandies* was one of Baker's first shows. It was a production by Sizzle and Blake in 1924 that toured the United States.

their attention on the racial and sexual attributes of Baker. The press focused primarily on Baker's thin, black body and downplayed her mental capacity (Regester 2000; 27). It is to be noted that the mainstream press did not cover Baker as a story until she had reached a paramount amount of fame overseas during the late 1920s. *Time* magazine constructed her in the gaze of the public by making her inseparable from her savage imagery. White journalists and reviewers used words like "refined savagery" and "negro wench" to describe Baker's performances (Regester 2000; 30). The terms "refined savagery" qualify Baker as being wild despite her wealth or financial status. This paradox makes her even more mysterious and desirable. Calling her a "negro wench" degrades her to her sex and blackness. "Wench" implies her sexual availability to the readers. The majority of consumers readily accepted the stereotypical portrayal of Baker as a gyrating sex symbol and nothing more but entertainment. Once Baker began her singing career, she aimed to be seen as well rounded and less overtly sexual. However, the mainstream American press focused on equating her image with a nude body. Writers and critics would detract from her various accolades to focus on her physique.

During the Second World War, Baker decided to lend her talents to entertain the Allied troops. A review on her performance in North Africa for a military camp included "Her first number was an American ditty as sly and insinuating as the curves … of the dusky 'vedette' herself" (Regester 2000; 28). The song was seen as embodied in the performer herself. The words "sly" and "insinuating" imply that Baker's body is cunning and suggestive. This reminds the reader of her sexual tendencies in the beginning of her career. The term "vedette" literally means a mounted picket that gives signals or warnings of danger to a main body of troops (Merriam Webster 2014; 1). Comparing Baker to a vedette

means that her body harbors coded messages. This message was her sexuality as potential danger. Baker's performance to the Allied troops conveyed signals of hope and entertainment. The idea of Baker's body being embedded in her song shows how the physical aspect was inextricably intertwined with her music. The eye of the reviewer could not refrain from connecting the sounds of the song to her body. Instead of focusing on the charitable component of her performances, the press chose to show her previous claim to fame of sex and race.

Baker's wealth helped her transcend to the green category. Ironically, her wealth was partly due to her being black. In France being a woman of color distinguished Baker from her competitors. Baker's skin in France was used for various exotic roles such as film portrayals of North African, Caribbean, and Indian characters (Hobson 2005; 96). Baker was able to make herself into a caricature and capitalize on others obsession with her exoticness (Royster 2009; 141). In America, her skin color held her back from such success; however, in France this same skin flung her into the spotlight. During the 1920s, the United States vehemently defined whiteness to include only Caucasian people. Caucasian was a category constructed in America to encompass whites and to exclude minorities. Creating a division between those of colored descent, immigrants, and whites in America distinguished a hierarchy. Anti-miscegenation laws reaffirmed the racial boundaries written into laws and practiced around the country (American Anthropological Association 2007; 2). Obsessed with race, America held to discriminatory beliefs that followed Reconstruction at the turn of the 19th century. Baker used her fame to project her voice and spoke out against racism, particularly in the United States.

Baker's activism showed that she straddled racial boundaries instead of abandoning her less privileged counterparts because of her wealth. Josephine Baker refused to perform to segregated audiences, which limited her shows in the United States. In Atlanta, she did not perform because she was denied hotel accommodations even though the National Association Advancement of Colored People hosted the event (Regester 2000; 37). Baker took racial segregation as a serious offense due to the personal attacks she endured from being black. Even further, she managed to integrate a hotel in Las Vegas to allow her and other blacks accommodations (Regester 2000; 37). Baker was no stranger to discriminatory treatment, and she constantly spoke out against it instead of modeling her life around it. She confronted the board members of the Illinois Central Railroad and the Oakland Key System Transit Company for their segregated practices leaving African Americans and people of color in separate compartments (Regester 2000; 37). Baker drew much media attention whenever she visited a city not only for her performances, but because every appearance had the potential to be racially charged. In 1951, Baker challenged the unfair treatment she received at the New York Stork Club. After being seated for her meal, she was not given any silverware with which to eat. Although she had ordered her food, more than two hours went by without her being served (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 178). Baker was furious with the Stork Club and other patrons whom she knew well not challenging her unfair treatment. She decided to use her fame as a weapon. The result was a public battle with journalist Walter Winchell in the newspaper about the distaste she felt for the establishment. Due to the widespread publicity, Baker was able to get the NAACP to boycott the establishment (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 180). This outcome

reinstates Baker's green identity because it exercises a power that most other colored women could not.

Baker continuously fought for the ideal that people were created equal and deserved universal respect. Throughout her life she remained at the forefront of racial equality despite its potential to interfere with her earnings. For her first appearance in Miami, she made it a point that she would not sign any contract that did not allow for an integrated audience to see her perform. Her manager offered many different compensation packages, but they were not agreed upon until he convinced the venue to hold desegregated shows. This allowed for African-Americans, Haitians, Cubans, and whites from a severely divided Miami to come to her show under the same umbrella of respect (Baker and Chase 1996; 293). Her intolerance towards segregation in America fueled her permanent relocation to France.

Illustration One: Josephine Baker as Black Venus, 1929. Photo by Heorge Hoyningen-Huene.

The image of a nude Baker staring commandingly into the camera lens reveals the strong personality of the entertainer. Baker holds a single piece of fabric to her chest, barely covering her breast. The photograph is in black and white making the ornate fabric that covers the pedastal mesh seamlessly with the fabric Baker drapes in front of her body. The fabric covers Baker's feet and most of her calves, creating the image of a statue. It does not appear that Baker is simply standing on a stage because the fabric is draped around the platform while covering the lower part of her legs. Baker is grounded in the platform,

seemingly growing out of the ground itself. Closer to a sculpted trophy than a human, Baker is transformed into an object. She is a piece of art crafted for the audience's gaze. As a decorative piece, Baker is embellished by other expensive treasures. Large gold hoops hang from her ears almost touching her shoulders to meet three gold chokers around her neck. Pearls drip from her hands and fingers all the way down past her knees. The string of pearls inside of her thigh casts a thin line of black shadow around her hamstrings, accentuating the athletic curve of her quadriceps. Her hip flexor is indented with a shadow, making the viewer focus on the light that shines on her thigh. These ornaments are the only materials covering Baker in addition to the fabric, making her skin a focal point of the photograph. The lighting of the picture plays a role in accentuating her curves.

The lighting of the image makes the fabric in the middle of Baker's body the main focal point, but it also illuminates her face and hair. Baker was known for her signature hair being slicked down close to her scalp. In this photo, the light reflects off of Baker's hair in direct contrast with her smoky, dark makeup. Baker wears a profound, matte lip color on her pout and heavy shadow around her eyes. The lighting on Baker's face paired with her make up has her nose casts a striking shadow and exaggerates her facial features. Baker's stare is direct as if she is acknowledging the audience on the other side of the lens. The stare is inviting as well as challenging. Baker is seducing her audience through the lens with her focused gaze. Her stare seems to tell the viewer to devour her with their eyes, while hinting that they may be consumed by her. There is a goddess-like aura to Baker in this photograph.

This photograph of Baker bears resemblance to a grounded statue much like the painted figure in Botticelli's *Naissance de Venus*. The subtle reference to this painting is

given by the curve of her legs mimicking those of Venus in her open shell. Furthermore, the way Baker clutches the fabric to her chest resembles how Venus graps her long tresses to cover her most private areas. Making this reference clues the viewer to the nuanced ideals of the goddess Venus. Linking Baker to the goddess of love and beauty makes her appeal almost omnipotent. Baker's body and performance earned the term the "Black Venus." The title "Black Venus"evokes the power the goddess of love, seduction, and beauty posesses. This power is rooted in Baker's physicality. Her body has the power to command desire and control sexual appetite. Baker's influence grew with her fame into various realms far beyond singing and dancing.

Josephine Baker transformed her image throughout her career. She moved from a dazzling sex symbol to a more conservative, activist role after the peak of her initial career. Although she was fighter for equality throughout her career, her voice was better received once her fame had been established. Furthermore, many of the times Baker stood up for minority rights seemed to be at the forefront of the Civil Rights movement. Baker took her activism full circle when she spoke at the 1964 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. She was one of the only female speakers at the event and gave remarks during the preliminary ceremony. Her speech embodies her personal civil rights tactics over the years:

> I have walked into the palaces of kings and queens and into the houses of presidents. And much more. But I could not walk into a hotel in America and get a cup of coffee, and that made me mad. And when I get mad, you know that I open my big mouth. And then look out, 'cause when Josephine opens her mouth, they hear it all over the world (Goldstein 2011; 3).

This speech displays the stark contrast between how Josephine was treated as a star versus an ordinary black female. This duality is the very essence of what it means to be

green. She experiences visits with royalty and high government officials, then returns to a banal reality in the United States. Her prestige afforded her countless opportunities that transcended her race; once she stepped out of the realm she returned to being a black woman discriminated against. The stage held her a few degrees above her civilian counterparts, but Baker was painfully aware of the constant prejudices against her. In this speech she uses her past experience of race intersecting with fame to magnify the injustice in America. Looking back to when she was denied hotel lodgings in Atlanta, or refused service at the Stork Club, Baker channeled these past aggressions against her race into an inspiring speech.

During the second half of her speech, Baker touches on the power she gained through fame. The tools she was able to use against racism were her widespread voice and name. Baker used her body to combat the prejudices placed on her skin. She channels power from the exploitation of her physique by redirecting the message she sends. Instead of gyrating or singing on stage, she is speaking out for civil rights. She uses her organ of speech, her "big mouth," to speak in lieu of her hips to seduce. Baker takes control of her body by shifting the focus from sex to her skin to her eyes then her mouth. She is taking advantage of the public's obsession with her body. By saying that she could use her fame as a megaphone, Baker turned her success into activism.

Baker decided that she was going to combat racial boundaries internationally for all with the personal privilege she gained as a star. She states that her words are heard "all over the world" as a way to comfirm her activism not just for blacks in America, but for minorities around the world. She was quoted in an interview with the Argentine Newspaper Critica as lashing out against the harsh racial conditions in the United States.

“The United States is a barbarous land where persecutions are more shocking than before WWII with lynchings, condemnations without trial and electrocutions the order of the day.” (Critica Newspaper 1960; 1).

Illustration Two: Josephine Baker, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 1963

In Illustration two, looking at Baker walking up to the podium to give her speech, we see a stark contrast between the “Black Venus” Baker and Baker the activist. Josephine Baker wears her full military uniform and thick glasses. The front of her uniform is heavily decorated with her awards from military service. This outift commands respect while speaking to her importance in the allied efforts in the second World War. Her hair is not molded tightly to her head, but coiffed in a fluffy bob framing her face. Her hairstyle looks more business appropriate than sexy or provocative.The uniform transforms Baker into a distinguished official instead of a seductive songstress. This outfit is for a new stage, a new

performance. This is a costume Baker earned through her military service. Baker served alongside the French Resistance in occupied France by smuggling messages in her sheet music and transporting military personnel as part of her musical entourage (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 200). After finishing her service, Baker wore this uniform to receive her French Medal of Resistance and the Légion d'Honneur. Baker fits the role of a high ranking military official at a high profile event such as the March on Washington. Baker's civil rights activism is framed by the distinguished company she was in at the March. Speakers also included John Lewis, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks (Nammour 2003; 2). Baker is displaying her strong connection to African-American inequalities in the United States by speaking out against racial discrimination. In the background of the photo, we see the crowd expanding behind Baker as far as the lens can see. Baker is in the foreground on the left hand of the picture, taking a commanding lead of her procession. The other people in the foreground of the picture are facing her back as if following her lead out of the frame. Perhaps this speaks to the path Baker forged in the global fight against racism. Her early efforts during her brief stints in America during the 1940s shined a global spotlight on race relations in the United States.

Josephine Baker's wealth and fame pushed her beyond strict racial categories into being green. Baker's green status afforded her the ability to transcend racial boundaries set before her. Throughout her career, she served separate ideals for different audiences. The image of the sexualized savage attracted the white and Parisian spectators, while some black audiences appreciated a woman of similar color prospering on stage. For most African-Americans, Baker was not an exoticized savage, but a success story. Certainly there were other people of color who viewed Baker as a sell-out and an uncouth character

because of her performances. Many women of color had come to Paris before her and acted in line with the white standard of entertainment. However, none of these predecessors were as successful as Baker. Most of them were not able to move into the category of being green because they were not as distinguished and wealthy as Baker."Often overlooked, however, is her clever use of the performative strategies of assimilation and image construction to surmount cultural barriers" (Jules-Rosette 2007; 71). Baker was cunning and deliberate in her efforts to become green. Her ability to conquer cultural barriers was beneficial to her career. Baker played the role of each audience's desires to advance her favorable reception. Off-stage, Baker claimed her heritage of being African-American and expanded her civil rights fight across the globe for equality. Her focus was not only on race relations in the United States, but also equality for the world. Baker hopped racial boundaries in her marriages and performances but capitalized on all of the categories placed upon her. Baker's romantic relationships allowed her to hop over more than just racial barriers.

Chapter Two: Losing at Love

Josephine Baker's passion was clearly seen in every aspect of her lifestyle. She sported extravagant pets, couturiers designed her outfits, and her stage set-ups were even more fabulous. Baker's taste for the excessive carried over into her romantic relationships as well. Baker refused to conform to traditional, static romantic or domestic set-ups even while she was married. Baker's relationships from the time she was in Paris during 1926 to her settling in Les Milandes in 1947 helped to mold her career and advance her fame. Baker's stable relationships contributed to her career advancement while showcasing the star's independence. She was able to maintain unparalleled independence and financial stability during her four marriages and extra marital affairs while simultaneously using her partners to further her professional career.

Baker continuously stepped outside of her "main" relationships while still being publicly committed. She was very overt in displaying her main relationships with men such as Jean Lion, Pepito Abatino and Jo Bouillon, but understandably discreet about her extra-marital affairs. Although Baker's publicized relationships were always with men, she was alleged to have many romantic relations with women such as Clara Smith and Ada "Bricktop" Smith. Baker bent gender roles by being the primary breadwinner and choosing female partners. Many of Baker's relationships were purely sexual and did not see long tenure.

Baker married her third husband, French businessman Jean Lion, in 1937, which earned her a permanent place in France. In this marriage, instead of conforming to the traditional role of a housewife, she maintained her autonomy by keeping her separate space, continuing to tour, and pursuing affairs with other people while she was on the road

(Baker and Chase 1993; 224). The largest benefits she gained from her marriage to Lion were her French citizenship and increased public attention. Baker capitalized on her marriage to Lion by claiming to leave show business for the domesticated lifestyle: "I want to become a housewife and have at least six children," Baker proclaimed to the press (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 113). Surely this boosted attendance at her shows since her multiple motherhoods would most likely introduce an extended break in Baker's performances. This publicity stunt, along with the short timeline[4] of her marriage, make one question the seriousness of her relationship with Lion. Josephine Baker was a woman with her own wealth, and no children from the marriage. The star used the idea of being a mother and wife as a threat to her audience, prompting them to catch her on tour while she was still available. Baker clung to her independence during marriage by pursuing her career just as vigorously as she did when single.

Pepito Abatino was crucial to Baker's career growth and continued success. Giuseppe "Pepito" Abatino previously served as a second lieutenant in the Italian army and met Josephine through a mutual friend while he was vacationing in Paris (Baker and Chase 141). When the pair met, Abatino was twenty-eight years old and Baker was eight years his junior. After returning home on holiday, Abatino and Baker exchanged letters about their mutual attraction (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 68). One night, Pepito surprised the star backstage and proclaimed that since he could not live without Josephine he would be taking the role of her manager (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 68). Baker was so elated that Pepito would be joining her in Paris that she did not voice a single doubt about his qualifications. Her biography recounts no instance of Baker asking Pepito about his

[4] Baker married Lion in 1937, separated from him about one year later, and divorced officially in 1941 (Sheldon Concert Hall 2014; 1).

experience managing talent before accepting him as her manager. For Baker, her romantic relationship with Pepito was enough to bind them together in business: "It was thus that Pepito entered my life for good…we were inseparable… Pepito took charge of my life" (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 68). The star was more concerned with having her current love interest in her life than with the guarantee he would advance her career. Fortunately, Pepito succeeded in his efforts to take Baker's career to new levels.

Pepito Abatino aided Baker in expanding her dance performances into a complete personal brand including singing, film, and products endorsed by the celebrity herself. Pepito coaxed Baker into new avenues of performance. While in Vienna, he advocated for Baker to challenge audience expectations of her act: "Thanks to his encouragement, I [Baker] screwed up my courage and began performing a few blues numbers nightly" (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 74). Simply due to his advice, Baker proceeded into a realm of performance completely foreign to her. Instead of appearing nude and dancing, she wore a long gown with a high neckline and sang a blues song (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 75). Blues singers during this time often sang about loves lost and immense loneliness. Baker projected the image of an instable couple with her song "Pretty Little Baby." This fits well with her real life relationship experiences and puts a twist on the conventional melancholy of the female blues singer.

This performance opened a new stream of revenue for Baker and helped with her career's longevity. Although the German *Der Tag* newspaper stuck to calling Baker a "jezebel" in their review the next morning, Baker's show sold out every night the entire month she performed (Baker and Chase 1993; 157). This jezebel imagery was pinned to Baker despite her demure costume and new show. As discussed in Chapter Three:

"Rainbow Tribe and Financial Demise" it would take much more time and effort to create Baker into a new image. Even then, her sexual image would outlive the star. Baker's sexual savage dancing was absent from her final performances at the Bobino Theatre in Paris, but her most noteworthy act continues to be her *danse sauvage* from *La Revue Nègre.* Pepito guaranteed Baker a show during her last decades in the dancehalls. Her transition into avenues outside of dancing allowed for a long-term career.

Feeding off of Baker's continued success in song, Abatino helped to launch her into film as well. Pepito arranged for Baker to star in *La Sirène des Tropiques*[5] (1927). This would be the first of three films Abatino procured for Baker to play in. Pepito also created Baker's character in *Zou Zou* (1934) specifically for her (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 94). As discussed in "Beastly Treasures," *Zou Zou* propagated the well-known Baker to her audiences and helped broadcast her image across the globe to people who could not attend her shows. Baker had done many tours around Europe to cities such as Copenhagen, Munich, and Oslo, but she had not yet returned to perform in the United States (Sheldon Concert Hall 2014; 1). Appearing on screen allowed Baker to become more prominent in the United States, where Hollywood was the Mecca of film. These accomplishments were greatly due to Abatino's efforts. He garnered additional revenue for Baker when he arranged a European tour during 1928 to stop in places such as London, Stockholm, Denmark and Scandinavia (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 77). At twenty-two years of age, Baker was not experienced enough to handle contracts and arrangements for a tour this magnitude. She undoubtedly relied on her partner to execute these business dealings and

[5]*Maurice Dekobra produced La Sirène des Tropiques in 1925*. The script was written specifically for Baker to showcase her dancing on screen. Baker was unsatisfied with the character she portrayed in the film (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 73).

monitor her profits. Further, Pepito was responsible for the creation of "Bakerskin" and "Bakerfix[6]" hair pomade that promised the slick, molded look Baker sported during her time in Paris. Baker would eventually gain more revenue from this product than any endeavor other than her performances (Baker and Chase 1993; 171).

Illustration Three: Bakerfix Ad

Although Baker was never married to Abatino, she gained tangible assets from her relationship with him. Abatino was also responsible for teaching Baker the ways of Parisian life in terms of dinner etiquette, language, and social cues (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 74). These lessons helped Baker excel as a socialite once her performances at Parisian dancehalls gained traction. Through this partnership, Baker was groomed into a socialite knowledgeable of business dealings in entertainment. Josephine's next husband was more instrumental in her personal life than her professional career.

Baker's marriage to Bouillon in 1947 allowed her to form the family she had always envisioned. Being legally married allowed the couple to adopt children and create Baker's

[6] See Illustration 3

"Rainbow Tribe" (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 153). As discussed in Chapter Three, "Rainbow Tribe and Financial Demise," the children the couple adopted bound them together while simultaneously driving them apart. Strained finances created friction between the couple and Bouillon left Les Milandes for life in Argentina (Baker and Bouillon 1976; viii). In a letter to mutual friends of the couple, Baker explicitly requests the couple does not bring Jo along on their visit (Letter to Mme. Jacquet 1958; 1). Bouillon and Baker were engaged in a custody battle over the children once they legally separated (Letter to Bern Salonger 1958; 1). Baker protested to Jo taking the children for long vacations (fifteen days) in Paris "*de les exposer à droite et à gauche, dans une ambiance qui n'était pas pour les enfants"* (Letter to Bern Salonger 1958; 2). The possibility of the Rainbow Tribe running rampant in Paris made Baker uneasy because she wished to protect them as her children, and preserve them from the show-business lifestyle she herself led.

Baker exchanged correspondence with Henri Chatillon who was helping her with her quest to adopt an Indian child in this same year. In April, Chatillon said that procuring a child from India would be more difficult than her previous adoptions (Letter from Henri Chatillon 1958, April; 1). In Baker's next letter from Chatillon, he is congratulating her on being back together with Jo and moving forward with the adoption plans (Letter from Henri Chatillon 1958, October; 1). It seems that the stability of Baker's relationship provided solace to the orphanage she was attempting to adopt from. However, Baker and Bouillon would be divorced one decade later in 1968.[7]

The situation between Baker and Bouillon differs greatly from her previous romantic relationships. What kept Baker so invested in her relationship with her fourth

[7] This is the same year that Baker was evicted from her Les Milandes.

husband? Past evidence of her short lived marriages in America and to Lion support that Baker would swiftly move to another relationship once she saw herself as incompatible with her current partner. She reversed the role of a wife typically staying to care for the children while the husband traveled to earn money for the family. She kept Bouillon around until she had formally adopted all of her twelve children. It seems that Baker remained in the relationship for the sake of her Rainbow Tribe. She continued to adopt children even after she and Bouillon were estranged.[8] Further, the only correspondences the archives hold between the couple concern the welfare of the children and her estate. It seems that they were closer to business partners than husband and wife.

Baker's freedom from convention was exercised through romantic relationships with the same sex. Her well-publicized relationships with males provided the added benefit of hiding her homosexual romances. It is often alleged that Baker began having sexual relationships with women during her adolescence and continued throughout her adult life (Strong 2007; 2). Baker was only public with her heterosexual relations; her autobiographies and memoirs do not detail her having sexual relations with any of her close female friends. However, Baker did acknowledge intimate relations she had with male colleagues such as Paul Colin (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 50). This leaves scholars searching for hints in Baker's words and the words of the star's lovers for confirmation of lesbian relations. The first woman who authors such as Jean-Claude Baker and Lester Strong agree Baker had relations with was Clara Smith, as singer Baker's first gig *Shuffle Along* (1922). Jean-Claude Baker discusses this affair in the beginning of his autobiography of his adoptive mother (Baker and Chase 1993; 37). Lester Strong only mentions the sexual

[8] Baker adopted Mara from Venezuela in 1958 and Stellina from Morocco in 1964 (Sheldon Concert Hall 2014; 1).

relations between the two women briefly in his short synopsis on Baker's life (Strong 2007; 3). Clara Smith was an African-American blues singer who made her debut as a teenager on the vaudeville circuit, much like Baker. Her sweet voice gained her the title, "Queen of the Moaners" and her discography includes features with Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins and Bessie Smith (Red Hot Jazz 2014; 1). Bob Russell was the manager of the show and recounts how he was forced into hiring Baker after Clara saw her waiting tables in a club in *Josephine Baker: A Hungry Heart*. "She had become Clara's protégée, you know, her lady lover as we called it in those days" (Baker and Chase 1993; 38). While Baker is the younger performer learning valuable lessons from Smith as a "protégée," labeling her as Smith's "lady lover" highlights the sexual aspects to the relationship. Qualifying the label "lady lover" with "in those days" reveals the socially taboo nature of Baker's relationship with Smith during the twenties. Baker was married to William Baker at this time. Though she was only a teenager at the time she started working in *Shuffle Along*, this marriage would later give Baker plausible deniability to her affairs with Clara Smith. When Baker moved to Paris, she continued her sexual relations with women.

Josephine Baker was suspected to have been romantically involved with a female friend named Bricktop[9] (Strong 2007; 10). Ada "Bricktop" Smith was a hostess and club-owner in Paris in 1925. She was one of the most popular black, female entertainers in Paris at the time. Bricktop garnered her name from her fiery red mane. This nickname made perfect sense in relation to the brick red hair at the top of her head. Bricktop was a very successful businesswoman who opened nightclub locations around the world in Rome,

[9] Emory University's Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library contains a Bricktop Papers Collection that includes photographs of Bricktop at various nightclub locations and business transactions about her nightclubs.

Mexico, and a second France location in Biarritz as well. Baker frequented the nightclub and her apartment in Beau-Chêne was near Bricktop's Paris location. Jean-Claude Baker, an adopted son of Josephine, claims to have been told from Bricktop herself that she had an affair with Josephine: "I'd heard rumors of a long-ago affair between Josephine and Bricktop, and the rumors, it turned out, were true. Bricktop told me so herself, after Josephine's death" (Baker and Chase 1993; 120).

Illustration Four Josephine Baker (left) and Ada "Bricktop" Smith (Right) at Club Bricktop's in Paris, Date Unknown, MARBL Archives, Emory University

In the photograph above (see Illustration four), Baker and Bricktop are at Bricktop's Paris nightclub location. Bricktop and Baker were life-long friends after their first encounter in Paris during Baker's twenties. Bricktop was more than ten years her senior, but outlived the seemingly resilient Josephine Baker. The date of the photograph is unknown, but Baker was frequently photographed sporting this hairstyle in her later years. In this picture, Baker seems to be handing Bricktop a piece of paper or correspondence. The two are exchanging material in their hands, which are closely clasped together. With her left hand, Bricktop touches Baker's wrist while she takes the paper with her right. This exchange connects the two women in the photo. Baker's eyes are on Bricktop as the hostess looks into the camera.

Bricktop's face seems to be caught off-guard that her photo is being taken. This seems peculiar for a nightclub hostess who has been photographed in her club for countless years greeting her guests. The hostess seems surprised, not upset, that her image is being captured. Bricktop is not smiling at the camera lens. The photograph feels spontaneous because the audience witnesses a casual, unplanned interaction between the two celebrities. These two women are both ornately dressed. Baker wears a plush fur with large sleeves while Smith sports a flashy shawl with fringe around its edge. Interestingly enough, the ladies are not wearing jewelry or extravagant hair. Neither woman has on a bevy of makeup products. This shows that Baker and Bricktop were indeed long term friends and frequently spent time together partying and socializing in nightclubs. This photograph in no way solidifies any romantic relationship between the two women, but it does give concrete evidence to the stories of the pair spending time in private nightclubs in Paris.

It is worth exploring how Baker's intersectionality[10] of being African-American, a woman, and possibly bisexual, affected her reception by the public. Feminist author and sociologist C.J. Pascoe defines intersectionality as multiple overlapping identities that influence each other and can create multiple axes of oppression. Navigating this space of being socially oppressed on triple fronts, being a female, an African-American, and a lesbian, made Baker break free from these confines. She was forced to combat society's predetermined stereotypes in all of these arenas. Baker's actions fought against being deemed below males, Whites, and strict heterosexuals. Being bisexual allowed Baker to deftly navigate these oppressions in her personal life. As discussed in Chapter 1, Baker found a way to transcend her racial category with her wealth. Perhaps moving across heteronormative confines allowed her to accomplish a similar feat with her sexual orientation as well.

Baker's homosexual activity liberated her from the heteronormative practices deemed appropriate for women during this time. "Heteronormativity" refers to the "widespread belief that heterosexuality is the normal or preferred sexual orientation"(Oxford Dictionary 2014; 1). It also refers to the institutionalization of this belief in society. For example, schools are a prime example of how people are socialized into believing heterosexuality is the natural orientation. Schools divide dress codes by gender, designate differing outfits for each gender's yearbook photos, and chose Kings and Queens for large dances. These heterosexist and homophobic rituals promote heterosexuality while suppressing and ignoring homonormative practices (Pascoe 1974;

[10] Kimberlé Crenshaw coined intersectionality in 1989 in her writing, *Mapping the Margins*: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against women of color. The theory had been widespread in sociological and gender studies before Crenshaw used the word.

12). In the 1920s, the climate for lesbians in America was not favorable, to say the least. Many hid their lesbian relationships in their lyrics for fear of being thrown in jail for their sexual and romantic preferences (Hix 2014; 2). Baker's homosexual activity went against the predetermined actions for women by society.

Josephine Baker rarely subscribed to society's definition of acceptable. When Baker pushed boundaries of acceptable sexual behavior in her stage performances she portrayed various genders to her audiences. Baker performed various genders by taking actions deemed appropriate for only men during her time. Gender performativity is accomplished through day-to-day interactions of sexuality (Pascoe 1974; 13). Scholar and philosopher Judith Butler, who theorized the performative qualities of gender, writes that, "the body is figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related" (Butler 1990; 8). Baker was able to use her body as a tool to convey the cultural codes of a variety of genders. Society deems certain actions appropriate for each gender and forces individuals to "manage their conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (Pascoe 1974; 13). Baker played both roles during her career. The performer used cross-dressing to express her departure from gender norms. Baker was frequently photographed in tuxedos or menswear. This stark contrast to her nudity on stage exudes a certain empowerment because she portrayed a masculine image completely opposite of what gained her fame. As she claimed what society deemed a man's coveted sex while pursuing affairs with women, she also took over their gender performances with their dress. Baker's nudity revealed her vulnerable self while "cross-dressing pulls the fragments together again by constituting an alternatively empowered self" (Gonzales 2006; 20). Baker pulls from spaces of male and

female gender performativity in her costuming. She breaks through the gender barrier of being a woman by adopting practices traditionally She straddles the line between the two genders with her bisexual activity, gender performance, and dress.

While each one of her husbands helped advance her publicity and relevance off-stage, her individualistic attitude pushed past gender boundaries that made women dependent on their male counterparts. Baker's relationships with Jean Lion and Jo Bouillon helped Baker's personal life stay rooted in France by granting her citizenship and allowing her to adopt the Rainbow Tribe. Her years with Pepito were fundamental to evolve her career. However, her relationships with women allowed Baker to further expand her autonomy. It cannot be definitely known if Baker engaged in sexual relationships with women since the star herself did not affirm allegations. Many blogs and websites[11] state Baker's relationships with women as fact instead of conjecture; however there have not been many scholarly writings on the subject. It is clear that Baker used her body to push past traditional categories of how women should act. Baker's performed intersectionality of being a woman and being black was astounding for the time. Would coming out as bisexual have been too much for her image to handle? The Black Venus was the symbol of sex itself, but she closeted her homosexual relations. It is safe to say that Baker felt her image would not benefit from overtly declaring her bisexual affinities so she kept quiet about these affairs. The outcomes of Baker's romantic relationships were various, yet her most prized possession came from the accumulation of her Rainbow Tribe with Jo Bouillon.

[11] Blogs about lesbianism in the past point to public figures such as Baker, Smith, and Frida Kahlo to explore how women navigated the taboo of being homosexual (McEwen 2012; 1).

Chapter Three: The Rainbow Tribe and Financial Demise

> We adopted these children as an example and a symbol of universal brotherhood and to prove that people so different in color, continents, and creeds can live together in harmony and that with tolerance, understanding and love there can be a better future for our world (Letter to Taub 1959; 2).
>
> -Josephine Baker

Josephine Baker assembled a group of children through adoption and named them her "Rainbow Tribe." Josephine Baker's "Tribe" served as a realization of a familial ideal. The star's physical inability to have a child translated into her adopting a bevy of children to complete her family. She wished to have children of all colors from across the globe live together in one household. This would prove that people from opposite ends of the color spectrum could love each other as family. Baker believed that by adopting such an array of children, she could prove to the world that racial and religious intolerance was unnatural and manmade. Baker's quest to create the perfect family blinded her to the financial strain she would encounter. Twelve children presented as a testament of tolerance and inclusion pushed Baker from a sexual icon into a figure Patricia Hill Collins describes as a "welfare mother." As the Rainbow Tribe grew larger to encompass more of her ideal, Baker led her family into deeper financial demise.

Baker's ideal of the Rainbow Tribe was to prove that people of all races could live and love harmoniously. She planned to adopt a variety of children with different backgrounds to build her "Village du Monde" to live as a model for worldly brotherhood. Baker planned to raise all of her children to speak their native languages along with French, while being well versed in their respective religions (Letter to Taub 1959; 1). This would require tutors for each language other than French and English, as well as multiple nannies to supervise the children while Josephine was on stage and her husband Jo was managing

the estate of Les Milandes. All of the children lived with her at the chateau in Dordogne, making a large living community necessary for her vision. Baker adopted the following children:

Akio, Korean

Janot, Japanese, Buddhist

Luis, Colombian, Catholic

Jari, Nordic, Protestant

Jean-Claude, French, Catholic

Moses, Israeli, Jewish

Koffi, Ivory Coast, Fetishist

Mara, Indian

Brahim, Algerian, Muslim

Marianne, Algerian, Catholic

Noël, French, Catholic

Stellina, Moroccan (Gonzales 2006; 24).

The name Baker used to name her family invokes a "primitive" and colorful image of a close-knit group. Baker used the word "rainbow" for the French "arc-en-ciel." Both translations of the French word relate to Baker's purpose for her family. A rainbow blends seamlessly together encompassing the entire color spectrum. It is void of clear separation or distinct categories. Baker's children, who had varying skin tones between brown and beige mimicked the blending unity of a rainbow. The literal English translation of the French word, "arc in the sky" labels the Tribe as a beacon in the sky for the world to see.

The family was a symbol visible to the world that tolerance was attainable. Rainbow, connected with the word "tribe," made the Bouillon family seem like a herd.

Designating her family as a tribe commemorated the many different lineages represented within. Tribe is defined as "a social group comprising numerous families, clans, or generations together with slaves, dependents, or adopted strangers" (Merriam-Webster 2014; 1). This term offers inclusion to a variety of peoples into one group. This is fitting for Baker's family as they ranged from four different continents and practiced more than five different religions. Scholars such as Bennetta Jules-Rosette have commented on the correlation between the many different races Baker portrayed throughout her career and the various ethnicities seen in her Rainbow Tribe (Lahs-Gonzales 2006; 24). As discussed in previous chapters, Baker portrayed characters from the Caribbean, North Africa, and even Asia. Her embodiment of all things exotic is reflected in her adoptions. The French translation of tribe, *tribu* is defined by Le Robert as a "groupe social et politique fondé sur une parenté ethnique réelle ou suppose … [une] grande et nombreuse famille" (Robert 2006; 1361). Baker's "tribu arc-en-ciel," as she signed correspondence from Les Milandes, encompasses both of these aspects. Certainly they were large in number while also having a fabricated relationship or link through their adoptive mother.

Despite having been married four times, Baker only proceeded to build a family with her last husband, Bouillon. Baker would have wished to have a family with Pepito Abatino, but Abatino preferred that she focus on her career instead (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 94). Once Baker married Bouillon, they were legally eligible to adopt children. The role of Baker as mother presented a drastic change from her previous roles as a dancer, singer, and socialite. The publicity of Baker's adoptions followed to each country she travelled.

Headlines in newspapers focused on the possibility of Baker adopting a child in every country she visited. She traveled across the globe to adopt children but never expressed interest in adopting a child from the United States. Was America not exotic enough to fit her criteria for worldly brotherhood? Despite her exclusion of the United States, Baker encompassed many countries on her quest to build her tribe. Her excessive practices fueled the public's interest in her growing family along with her shows. This shift in her personal life garnered significant media attention across the globe.[12]

Media outlets played a crucial role in molding a renewed, motherly Baker. During the 1960s, Baker decided to adopt her eleventh child whom she named "Noël" as he was found in a trashcan around the Christmas holiday. On the front page of Sunday news, Jean Dietrich wrote a story headlined, "She's a mellow, motherly Josephine now" (Dietrich Newspaper Clipping 1960; 1). Dietrich made a point to note that Baker was much more demure than in her past, keeping her wild, savage image at bay to become a prestigious mother figure. In the article, Dietrich mentions how Baker used to wow crowds "singing in the Follies Bergère for years, clad in a girdle of bananas, plumes on her head, and not much else" (Dietrich Newspaper Clipping 1960; 1). The reference to her past juxtaposes Baker's sexual temptress imagery with actions she is seen taking as a mother. Baker addresses this duality herself by translating the link of bananas in the past to her present use. In response to Dietrich's reference to the younger Josephine, she quotes "Yes, I have no bananas. Only thing I have to do with bananas today is feed them to my children" (Dietrich Newspaper

[12] Many media outlets covered Baker's adoption of children in each country she visited. Adding children to her family became a public event at each orphanage she visited. (I.e. 1960 Prévost wrote "Pour ajouter à sa collection d'enfants, J. Baker veut un bébé canadien" also Dietrich wrote "She's a Mellow, Motherly Josephine now" and Le Soir published a story headlined "Josephine Baker c'est une dame qui aime beaucoup les enfants…elle en a de toutes les couleurs" (Josephine Baker Papers 1960; 1).

Clipping 1960; 1). The bananas that used to be exciting phallic symbols around her waist are owned by Josephine and transformed into a new image. Instead of holding bananas on her hips, she holds them in her hands. It is apparent that Josephine sought to take charge of how she was perceived by media audiences. Being a mother humanized Baker to these audiences and changed the narrative on her personal life.

However, it is worth noting that the motherly figure Baker champions, once it fails, could also relate her to the figure Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill-Collins calls "welfare mother." We could see Baker's evolution from a dancehall star to an overwhelmed mother as a passage from the categories Collins calls respectively "Jezebel" and "Welfare Mother." Collins identifies the jezebel figure and welfare mother as two representations of Black women in modern society. The jezebel figure is the symbol of deviant sexuality. This image gives every black woman an extreme sexual appetite; her litter of children is an expected outcome (Collins 1999; 81). Baker's image during the early part of her career was primarily putting her physicality on display in a sexual manner. Her costumes, characters, and reviews all focused on how sexy and desirable her body was on and off the stage. As Baker started adopting children, she snowballed into the image of the welfare mother. The welfare mother is a "class-specific, controlling image developed for poor, working-class Black women who make use of social welfare benefits to which they are entitled by law" (Collins 1999; 80). The welfare mother struggles to take care of her many children with an inadequate salary. When this money is not enough, she turns to the government to aid her in feeding and clothing her children. The imagery of the welfare mother implies that Black women are reckless and naïve when procreating. It is irresponsible to have more children than one can afford on household income.

The welfare mother's framework can also be applied to Josephine Baker and her childcare. Baker accumulated children in a rapid and reckless fashion, just as the controlling image of welfare mother dictates. A welfare mother cannot control her fertility and her accumulation of children in a direct result. Although Baker was unable to have children of her own, her many adoptions help place her in the welfare mother category because she could not control her urge for adopting children. Baker fits the template of a "working-class" Black woman because she was forced back into performing to provide for her family. Baker hustled to keep her chateau in Dordogne afloat and keep all of her children under one roof. She returned to the stage in tours around the world to help fund her idealistic family. Despite the star's immense fortune during the 1920s through the 1940s, she found herself struggling to maintain her family. Here we see Baker trying to accumulate social benefits to which she feels entitled.

The ideal of creating a model of worldly acceptance and brotherhood may be interpreted as a gesture of empowerment, but the harsh financial realities Baker encountered backfired. Baker was trapped in yet another controlling image of the welfare mother that the media used to frame her actions. Baker moved almost seamlessly from a woman who could not control her sex, to a mother who could not provide for her children. The media's portrayal of Baker and her children reinforced this subtle image at every turn.

Illustration Five: Baker with her Rainbow Tribe 1960; MARBL Archives, Emory University

The Baker pictured above is engrossed in her children and their unity as a family. She meshes with her children and their various limbs as if they were one large body

functioning together. The children of different races and nationalities are huddled around their mother feeding the new infant sibling. All of the children are focused on the new sibling. They are peeking over the shoulders of their other brothers and sisters trying to catch a glimpse of the new Bouillon child, Noël. The children are densely packed into the frame, overcoming Baker. She is almost lost in the frame, overwhelmed by the children surrounding her. The frame can barely contain the abundance of children pictured. This references Baker's fate in reality. Her children were too much a financial burden to bear along with maintaining her chateau.

Baker looks down at her new child lovingly while feeding him while she wraps her arm around another child. She makes the effort to care for all of the children in addition to her new acquisition. Her arms overflow with children. She cannot balance all of the children in the frame because she only has two arms to care for them. She seems to be juggling all of the children in the photo while they vie for her attention. In actuality, they are vying for her resources. Her children are competing against the government demanding taxes and employee wages, the land taxes on the chateau, and Baker's salaried workers for resources (Letter from Minister of Finance 1963; 1). Since Baker could not provide enough money to maintain all of these luxuries in her life, they were forced to compete for resources.

Baker reaching out to her international contacts and wealthy comrades shows her personal plea for "welfare." She believed she was entitled to monetary assistance for her family because of the purpose that it served. In Baker's mind, her symbol of acceptance and tolerance warranted funding from her colleagues. Just as Collins details the welfare mother leaning heavily on government funds, Baker wished to have donations as a crutch. Baker's

welfare stemmed from a different source from Collins' welfare mother, yet it fits the mold of the welfare mother Collins analyzes. Baker subscribes to the welfare mother model through uncontainable adoption practice, her deficient budget not being able to cover her breadth of children, and her begging for monetary assistance from others. In many instances, it seemed that Baker was more invested in raising funds for the Rainbow Tribe than taking care of its members on a daily basis.

It was clear that Baker would be as extravagant in her adoption practices as she had been in other areas of her life. She accumulated her children quickly, without the consent or supervision of her husband Jo Baker. She was alone when choosing her first two children from an orphanage in Tokyo, which indeed surprised her husband. Baker recounts in her autobiography *Josephine*, "I stepped off the train, a child in each arm. I handed Jo first Akio, then Teruya [Janot]… 'Which one is it chérie?' 'Both,' I replied, and walked away" (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 195). She left the children in her husband's arms to carry while she simply walked away from the train platform to the car. One can assume that her luggage was to be taken care of by her valet or assistant. The mother is already placing responsibilities of the children on others while she continues with life as usual. In these first two cases, she does not seem to accept the reality of the responsibility she took on. Baker selected the children alone, but caring for them took a large staff that included her husband. Nevertheless, the couple continued to adopt children at a rapid rate, accumulating their first eight children in a period of two years (Lahs-Gonzales 2006; 24). Bouillon was the last name of all twelve children, yet the legal adoptive father had little to no input on who was adopted. Soon after the adoption of the first eight, Baker added the last four to her tribe. Jo's protests started long before the tribe reached maximum capacity. It was after the

accumulation of five children that Jo decided to talk to Josephine about the distressing state of their finances. Her answer was passionate and direct, “Once you begin something, you have to keep going!” (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 200). Her words show that she is committed to her ideal of children from all corners of the earth. She speaks as if she is putting on a show that many people are watching and she cannot stop before its completion. It is almost as if she feels adopting children in excess is expected of her. Baker was absorbed by her ideal of worldly brotherhood, despite the financial burden it put on the couple.

Most people Baker turned to during her financial struggles denied her monetary assistance. Baker used her fame to try to garner support for her Village du Monde. Baker reached out to her international connections trying to raise money for her property of Les Milandes. She begged high-ranking officials to support her vision monetarily. For instance, she wrote letters to the Ministers of Cultural Affairs in Sweden and the Netherlands only to be rejected. She wrote to French ambassadors across the globe in places such as the United States and Jordan to ask for funds to build the school (Letter to King of Jordan 1965; 1). The majority of places were not keen on offering Baker money to start her school, but everyone offered moral support. Regardless of the improbability of her completing her vision, Baker continued to plead for its realization. In a letter to Baron Edmond de Rothschild Baker wrote, “Cet appel n’est pas un appel ordinaire et banal, mais pour pouvoir continuer notre lutte pour le droit de l’homme et la dignité humaine” (Letter to Baron Edmond Rothschild 1966; 1). Her language is strong and idealistic. She frames her family needs as a human rights cause. For Baker, the Rainbow Tribe was comprised not only of her children, but also

her message of equality to the world. Eventually Baker would progress from simple requests to turning Les Milandes into a profitable tourist site.

Baker's effort to procure funds for Les Milandes increased with her accumulation of debt. Her chateau in Dordogne was always open to visitors, but Baker made the estate more of a tourist site during its later years. Baker ordered the construction of more lodging, a "J" shaped outdoor pool, and indoor and outdoor theatres for entertaining purposes (Chateau des Milandes 2014; 1). She transformed the castle into a space for tourist groups, which has remained a tourist site to this day. Baker had to expand her funding efforts as she sunk further into financial despair. After she received minimal funding from her request letters, Baker turned to extravagant fundraising. She placed her home on display in lieu of her children to raise funds for her ideal's future. She hosted a series of galas at Les Milandes to attempt to raise funds from donations of notable guests. She went so far as contacting the ambassador of Italy in Paris about procuring Italian artists to showcase. Baker involved herself in radio and television collaborations to promote her event, along with sponsorship from FIAT (Letter to Italian Ambassador 1965; 1). Baker performed at these events for her guests because she acknowledged that her name attracted the crowd. A private serenade at Josephine Baker's house was certainly worth a generous donation to her ideal. However, these galas were barely enough to keep her home out of foreclosure.

Baker turned to desperate measures to earn money for her Rainbow Tribe. Eventually she even considered producing a documentary about her children. She wrote to Carlton Goodlett and Pierre Lazareth to inquire about how to complete the movie in the best way possible while disseminating the film to the corners of the earth (Letter to Carlton Goodlett 1959; 1). This ideal was important enough to Josephine that she would

commercialize it to make sure it would succeed. However, Baker was not willing to compromise the basis of her work with the Village du Monde. She felt that most of the people who were looking to purchase her property in Dordogne had bad intentions. "Ce n'est pas un Village Culturel et Idealiste qu'il chereche, mais un lieu pour continuer ses exploits et exploitations" (Letter to Raphael-Leygues 1966; 1). Here we can observe that Baker realizes that her ideal could easily be corrupted and made into a despicable display of her children. Eventually, Baker abandons the idea of placing her children on display because she worries about how much control she would have over their portrayal (Jules-Rosette 2007; 195). Baker's defense of her ideal stems from how seriously she takes her message. Baker wrote in a letter to Stephen Papich, "I wanted the Milandes to be known and respected as a world village…I know that we are ahead of our time. That is why there has been so much confusion about me and about others who think as we do" (Jules-Rosette 2007; 207). In this quote, Baker acknowledges how outsiders who do not understand her message could contort its meaning. She continuously guarded her children and their portrayal from exploitation in ways she felt would be derogatory.

Baker addressed a letter to the minister of labor later in 1965 speaking about how she was unable to pay her salaried workers because her estate was "encore en période de difficultés" (Letter to Gilbert Grandval, Ministre du Travail 1965; 1). Baker only acknowledged her dire financial circumstances when they were too severe to ignore. In the many years leading up to Les Milandes' financial demise, Baker refused to accept its drastic state. Once she realized her home might be taken from her, she tried to control who would gain the estate. She wrote a letter to the King of Morocco looking for someone to take over the ongoing construction in Dordogne and references that she will most likely be evicted

from the property by the end of August on July 9th, 1966 (Letter to Hassan II, Sa Majesté le roi du Maroc 1966; 1).

Illustration Six: Baker Evicted from Les Milandes 1969, MARBL Archives Emory University. Josephine Baker collection

Baker was evicted from her chateau in Dordogne in 1969 (see Illustration Six). Baker's outfit in her eviction photo offers insight into her struggle in vacating the property. Baker wears her hair wrapped in a scarf and sunglasses on her face. She seems to have on a disguise. Without previous knowledge, the viewer would not recognize the famous La Baker. She dons a simple white long sleeve shirt with a blanket draped over her lap. A patchwork quilt covers her legs as she sits in a chair on top of the stairs. To cap it off, Baker's feet look as if she is not wearing shoes at all. The photo is in black and white, so it

may be that she is wearing a simple flesh-toned ballet slipper, even though it is almost indistinguishable to the viewer. It seems as if all of Baker's most basic possessions have been stripped from her. She appears to be hard on her times, and could easily pass as a homeless person.

Baker's eviction from her home in Dordogne was far from glamorous. After a long legal battle of finances and payment for the property, she was forced to leave the house. She had fought to raise enough money to keep her chateau, however she only succeeded in prolonging the inevitable. Baker's surroundings in the photograph look dismal and bleak. She sits on the steps of one of the entrances with what looks like trash littered around her. There are various glass bottles and cans with a box that overflows with paper. It is doubtful that these are articles Baker wishes to transport with her to a new home and it seems as if the photographer included these articles to show how far Baker has fallen from her wealth and riches. Instead of associating Baker with extravagant jewels and couture costumes, she is surrounded by trash and debris.

Baker is looking down at the mess instead of straight at the camera. It seems as if the star is ashamed of the predicament in which she has finally found herself. A deep realization must have come with the moment that she was leaving the house for the final time. Baker was devastated at losing her property and even more upset that he ideal would not come into fruition. Baker was a crusader for her cause of racial and religious equality. The fervor with which she pursued this ideal was her ultimate demise. Baker would rather have her dreams fail than have them perverted or tarnished. She could have sold Les Milandes to one of the various offers provided to her, yet she decided she would work herself as hard as she could to save it. In a letter to her friend and business partner in

America, William Taub, Baker writes, “work is my old way out, my only hope” (Letter to Taub 1959; 1). Baker returned to the stage until her death to provide for her children.

Baker’s aim to prove racial and religious harmony with her Rainbow Tribe was too large a feat to accomplish. Her son Akio Bouillon later stated, “Yes, the Rainbow family was a utopia, but that doesn’t mean that it was any less real” (Jules-Rosette 2007; 186). Was the short-lived example of her Rainbow Tribe enough to convince the rest of the world of racial and religious tolerance? Her dream struggled to exist because of financial realities, but put forth a strong argument for racial harmony. Baker’s testament to the world of different races living in harmony is a lasting legacy. Les Milandes’ revival as a tourist site is proof that Baker’s legacy of universalistic discourse lives on. This feat of adopting children in need from around the world is duplicated today by actresses such as Angelina Jolie, Michelle Pfeiffer, and many more. Although the Rainbow Tribe was not sustainable, Baker conveyed that racial and religious biases were man-made. Baker’s international adoptions bordered on children being instrumentalized for a cause. Wealthy superstar mothers such as Jolie, Pfeiffer and Baker do a large service to their children by placing them into a family, but must be wary of “westernizing” their new additions.

Chapter Four: Beastly Treasure

Josephine Baker was framed by the media as an animalistic savage at the height of her career through her film characters, stage performances and publicity actions. The links created by press and reviewers between Baker as a performer and untamed animals were recurring and blatant. Reviews of her performances categorized her as less than human; she was seen as closer to an otherworldly species than the human species. The perpetual "othering" of Baker led to her being regarded as outside of the human realm. One of her fellow dancers in *Chocolate Dandies* (1921) referred to Baker as a "tall, vital, incomparably fluid nightmare" (Regester 2000; 49). A London paper "London Thinks" published a review of her dancing stating it was "violent contortionism and primitive frenzy" (Regester 2000; 52). Widespread reviews such as these played a large role in placing Baker outside of the realm of humanity. Using an artistic representation, these types of reviews were just the beginning of transforming Josephine Baker's body into an animal. In addition, and perhaps paradoxically, Baker embraced this animal imagery and furthered the associations the public made between her and the animal realm by adopting a multitude of exotic pets.

Baker's association with animals stems from two sources. Baker displayed a strong urge to acquire animals and she was also being compared to them. Her love for animals explains why she sought to procure such an extensive pet collection throughout her life, yet what fueled this desire? There is a strong connection between her love for animals and her being framed as one of their kind. The animalization of Baker seems to be never-ending. Could she have succumbed to the public viewpoint of her being a savage by surrounding herself with animals? Or was her procurement of beasts a counter to critics reducing her to a lesser species? Baker's gathering of animals could be interpreted in various ways. She did

not reject the critiques of her being an animal on stage, nor did she make efforts to cease the close associations made between her and animals. Baker moved from acquiring normal household animals such as a dogs and cats, to beastly, exotic pets when she garnered immense fame. When she was performing at Les Folies du Jour, Baker acquired multiple parrots, white mice, a monkey, a pair of cats (male and female), as well as puppies (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 67). Baker kept all of these animals in her Parisian apartment. Baker's professional success broadcast the parallels made between the dancer and domesticated animals through posters, characters, and costumes. She capitalized on the animalistic association with her movie scripts, dancehall performances, and photo opportunities. Her control over these animals comforted her while doubling as a publicity stunt.

The development of Baker's personal association with animals can clearly be seen at different stages of her wealth. The connections Baker had with the animals she cared for throughout her life expand from her youth until her residence at Les Milandes. Baker's financial status allowed her to procure a variety of pets; as her finances grew her collection did as well. Baker's love for animals may have been a stand in for her failure to have children filling the void of motherhood (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 158). As discussed in Chapter Three, these animals may be seen as a precursor to the Rainbow Tribe of twelve children Baker acquired during her later years. Various objects filled Baker's quest for motherhood during her life. The animals Josephine procured were some of her most prized possessions and their upbringing reflects the star's increased finances.

Baker's love for animals originated at a very young age. In St. Louis, while her family was living in a shanty, struggling to provide food, she brought home two stray dogs she encountered on her way home (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 2). The dogs looked terribly thin

and in need of much attention, so the young Josephine decided to take care of them. Despite her lack of nourishment and adequate lodging, she prioritized the canines for a number of weeks. She shared her small ration of food with the puppies and allowed them to sleep in the bed she shared with her other siblings for warmth (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 3). The confines of her economic situation prevented young Baker from keeping the dogs for an extended period of time, in conjunction with her departure to tour the country dancing. These pets were the first of many animals Baker was to care for.

The public's association of Baker with animals was partially due to her publicity stunts with exotic pets. Baker showcased her pets as accessories and props during her life off-stage and made the public view her as closer to animals than she was to other humans. Her pet cheetah, lovingly named Chiquita by Baker, accompanied her down the iconic Champs D'Elysees to shop. Baker expressed her control over the savage realm with her treatment of Chiquita. When the cheetah was gifted to her, it was up to Baker to name him. Choosing the name "Chiquita" offers insight to Baker's thoughts behind acquiring such a bizarre pet. Chiquita is a Spanish name for "little girl." The name feminizes and infantilizes the savage male animal. Baker establishes dominance over the animal from the very moment she is presented with him. She transforms him into her cute, non-threatening pet with his name. This doubles the infantilization Baker experienced through her film characters, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, the name "Chiquita" makes reference to Baker's most famous costume.

Chiquita Banana is one of the largest producers of bananas in the world.[13] Baker's naming of her fierce, savage pet Chiquita symbolizes her control over her wild image. Instead of toting bananas around her waist, she leads Chiquita (a symbol of her bananas, her savage imagery, and her uncontrollable persona) behind her on a bejeweled leash. Baker purposefully made a reference to her *Revue Nègre* costume when naming her exotic pet. Baker's *danse sauvage* with a girdle of bananas around her waist is the identifying image of the star to this day. Her costume during *La Revue Nègre* was known across the world, perpetually associating Baker with bananas. Each time a picture was captured with Chiquita, and each time the pet was mentioned, audiences were reminded of Baker's catapult to stardom. Baker is asserting authority over Chiquita with his naming while also using irony to take control over the stereotype she reproduces.

Chiquita the cheetah played a vital role in relaying Baker's animal references to the public. He wore a jeweled collar with a long leash and accompanied Baker inside stores and transportation. This offered a "teasing metaphor for Baker herself" according to Anne Cheng, Professor of English and faculty member of the Center for African-American Studies at Princeton University (Cheng 2011; 86). The star's neck is duplicated on her pet as they both sport priceless jewels. Baker wore her stones in a necklace, while Chiquita wore them his on a collar. Henri Varna, the owner of Casino de Paris, gave Chiquita as a gift to Baker as part of a publicity stunt when she came to perform in *Paris Qui Remue,* a stage show in 1930 (Campbell 1999; 39). The cheetah was involved in numerous photo shoots with the

[13] Lorenzo Dow Baker founded Chiquita Banana in 1870. When asked to name a banana brand, more customers named Chiquita Banana than any other brand (Chiquita Banana 2014; 1).

dancer, as well as immortalized in the poster created by Zig for the show. (See Illustration 7).

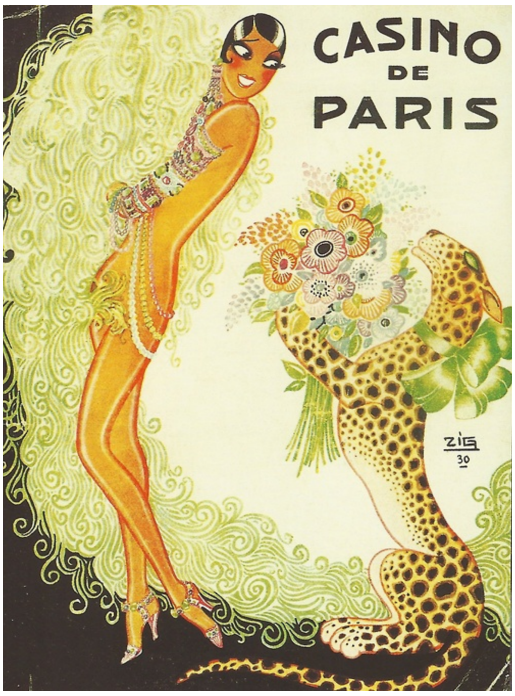

Illustration Seven: *Paris Qui Remue,* Zig, 1934

The poster stylizes Baker and Chiquita in tandem. The two bodies follow the same curvaceous line down the center of the image. Baker is depicted in only jewels for clothing; there is no fabric covering her body parts. Pearls draping over her derriere cover her anatomy and ornamental leaves cover her sex. An arm ornate with bangles up to her shoulder folds over her profiled bust, blending with her long, dangling earrings. After the jewels on the top half of her body, her completely bare legs reach down to the bottom of the poster. The jewels conclude on her feet, with sparkly heels capping her toes and encircling her ankles. Baker is dripping with jewels, making her an ornament.

Baker's frame is also made into a caricature. Her physique is much slimmer than in reality, with her thighs being in similar size to her arms. There is not much distinction

between the curves of calves and her thighs. Her physique seems doll-like and smooth because her limbs seem to be made from bendable plastic. Her musculature is severely downplayed; even her bottom is shaved down to only a slight hump barely protruding from her backside. This goes against the historic trend of exaggerated representations of black women's derrieres. From Sarah Baartman[14] to contemporary hip-hop[15], black women were notoriously praised for overstated backsides. Only her slick, shiny black hair, thin eyebrows, and large almond eyes identify Baker. What does it mean to have Baker's bottom slimmed on this poster? This rendering of Baker turns her into an object. She is stylized to the point that she is soon to be unrecognizable. The dramatic black eyeliner and elongated eyelashes mark the characteristic Baker maquillage. This makeup further transforms her into an object. Her makeup is so dramatic that she looks more like a cartoon than a person. Her body also mimics the shapes of the art-deco design bordering the poster. Here, although Baker is not animalized, she is still objectified. Instead of being crafted into a hypersexual exotic woman, she is now a decorative ornament.

Baker's companion mimics her form and styling on the poster. Chiquita wears heavily accentuated green eyes with a black rim and a slight smile on his face. He wears only one ornament outside of his stunning spots, a large green bow. The bow is tied around his neck to commemorate his purpose as a gift for Baker, and thus as a thing. He sits back on his hind legs in obedience, portraying his submission to Baker. She has tamed the beast

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[14] Sarah Baartman was a South African Khoikhoi woman who was taken from her homeland to be presented on stage in Europe for her very large derriere. She was known on stage as the Hottentot Venus and was ogled by various audiences practically naked to take in her dramatically curved physique (Holmes 2007; 58).

[15] "Video Vixens" in contemporary hip-hop music videos are objectified through a lens focusing on their intimate body parts and exaggerating their backsides. The most well known such as Melyssa Ford and Buffy the Body are praised for their posteriors being larger than their counterparts'.

with her profound beauty. Her power is not only over humans, but also wild animals. Chiquita looks up at Baker as if adoring her beauty. The interaction between Baker and Chiquita shows the duality of power and equality between the two figures. Each figure conveys power and submission on the poster. Baker maintains control over Chiquita, but he is still a wild animal. Chiquita is kept at bay with his posture and gesture towards Baker, but his animal instinct still lurks inside of him making him unpredictable. He poses a potential threat even though he seems to have submitted to her.

The Zig poster serves to not only publicize Chiquita as a gift to Baker, but also to confine Baker into her animalistic framework. Chiquita is personified in the poster while Baker becomes a suitable partner for the animal. The male cheetah offers Josephine Baker an extravagant bouquet of flowers as if begging to be her suitor. Baker looks coyly over her shoulder at Chiquita, blushing and smiling at his gesture. The blush seems to extend to the rest of her body and radiate out of her since the silhouette line is of the same red. She is turned almost completely in a total blush, desire, heat, and eroticism radiating out of her entire body. She is turned metonymically into a blush, manifestation of pure desire. She stands over him dominantly, but her facial gestures indicate her surprise and bashfulness. Her cheeks are flushed red and her mouth forms a nervous smile. She is transformed into a passive female receiving the action from Chiquita. Yet, she stands and looks from above. She therefore occupies an ambivalent position of being simultaneously a tamer and a tamed animal, of a figure of power and vulnerability. The presentation of flowers to Baker is a signal of an advance by Chiquita, making him the provoker. Baker is the subject of his affection; she has the power to accept his offer yet considering it dehumanizes her.

Chiquita the cheetah, a savage animal in real life is humanized in the representation, and Baker, the human, is his master. However, on the poster, Chiquita is elevated to being a possible romantic partner for Baker. Baker is degraded by this elevation of Chiquita because it supports the parallels between Baker and animals. Implicitly, she is described as a possible mate, romantic and sexual partner to the beast. She is made to seem worthy of an animal companion in lieu of another human. While Baker turns her back to Chiquita, her head turns around to consider his offering. It is almost as if Baker is so tempted by Chiquita that she cannot resist his offer.

The poster that circulated around the globe advertising Baker's show at the Casino de Paris helped spread the image of Baker being part animal, and part human. Baker was a way to glamorize primitivism (Brown 2009; 121). Glamorizing primitivism transforms a savage, untamed image into a beautiful exotic one. Instead of a dirty, untrained savage, Baker becomes a beautiful, outlandish creature. Reviews and critiques of Baker's show purported the idea of Josephine Baker being closer to an animal on stage than a human. During the height of her career the performer was primarily singing and dancing on stage in different dancehalls around Europe. Paul Colin often painted Baker. Colin was a visual artist from Nancy who saw Baker for the first time during her rehearsal for her *Danse Sauvage* (National Portrait Gallery; 1). He is responsible for the infamous banana skirt poster for *La Revue Nègre*.[16] *La Revue Nègre* was the first show that Baker headlined in Paris during the 1930s, which gained her instant fame.

[16] See Illustration Eight: Paul Colin Illustration of Baker

Illustration Eight: Paul Colin's drawing of Josephine Baker in *La Revue Nègre;* 1925

When Colin first saw the show, he said that Baker reminded him of a kangaroo (Dalton and Gates 1998; 914). Others saw her as a leopard, or a giraffe (Royster 2003; 9). Baker was always compared to an extremely exotic animal most people would never have encountered. Kangaroo imagery evokes Baker hopping around on stage while describing her as a giraffe makes Baker seem goofy and uncoordinated. These movements do not describe graceful dancers. Instead they make Baker akin to four legged animals teetering on unstable footing. Her association to leopards was a natural extension from her appearances with Chiquita; leopards were curvy and capable of quick actions like Baker on stage. She was likened to animals from various continents such as Africa and Australia. Baker was framed to not fully belong to any country or culture. This transnational exoticism preserved Baker's outlandish persona no matter where she traveled to perform.

Many people who went to see Baker had never seen such a large group of black entertainers together, and Baker's dancing was entirely new to the European audiences. The way she contorted her body while moving across stage was outside the realm of previous dancehall performances they witnessed. Baker's choreography in this show was described as "knees bent, feet spread apart, buttocks thrust out, stomach sucked in, cheeks puffed out, eyes crossed… shaking, shimmying, writhing like a snake, contorting her torso" (Dalton and Gates 1998; 914). Comparing Baker to a snake establishes a correlation to her not having bones. It seems as if she moves around without rigid inhibition on the stage. This explanation of Baker's movement dismembers her by atomizing her body parts. She is not a complete figure, only the sum of dismantled pieces that do not move in harmony. Her erratic movements were so distinctive that the only way the audience could comprehend them was to remove them from the human realm. They pushed her into the category of the "other" because of their narrow view of what the human body could accomplish on stage. Baker's movement was so dynamic that it pushed the boundaries of human performance, transforming her into an animal. To keep Baker from tainting the classic dancehall performance of white females, she was made into an animal that the world adored watching and wanted to keep contained as their object. As a result, audiences and critics placed Baker into a cage.

Baker's movies had a common thread of broadcasting her animalistic image in various facets. Films such as *Zou Zou* (1934) depict Baker as a human relying on by her savage, animalistic qualities. Once again, we see the animalized Baker waiting to be tamed. The recurring theme is simply reinvented with familiar elements (Royster 2003; 10). In this film produced by Marc Allégret in 1934, Baker plays a young woman named Zou Zou, a

former circus performer who works as a laundress for a dancehall. The name “Zou Zou” is an infantilizing of Baker’s character. It is cute nickname that makes her seem like a child instead of a grown woman. The sound of her name also evokes the image of an actual zoo. The link of her character and a place where exotic animals are trapped in cages is not a mistake. Later, I will analyze how Baker’s character embodies such animals. Zou Zou traveled with the circus during her younger years and became very close to another performer named Jean (played by iconic French actor Jean Gabin), whom she calls her brother. The two characters traveled in the circus together as children and were taken care of by the same elderly man. They lived in the same quarters and spent the majority of their childhood together. Currently, Jean works as the electrician for the dancehall. Although the pair calls each other brother and sister, Baker is secretly in love with Jean. Jean is wrongfully accused of murder and the entire film consists of Baker taking to the stage to make enough money to pay for his legal representation and jail fees. Zou Zou convinces her employer to afford her the opportunity to sing and dance onstage. She catapults to stardom from her stage skills and is eventually able to save her “brother” from life in prison.

Illustration Nine: Josephine Baker as Zou Zou in *Zou Zou* 1934

Baker's performance as Zou Zou establishes direct parallels to animals in captivity. Her most famous performance in the film involves her being lowered onto the stage from the ceiling in an extravagant cage (Illustration Nine). The cage is ornate and sizeable to encompass Baker swinging on a ledge inside. Her containment in the cage conveys her unpredictability to the audience. Animals inside of cages are seen as unpredictable because they are dangerous or may escape their owner's care. In this instance, the cage could allegorize the fact that Baker is under the control of the director of the film and the choreographer of her act. Baker's character was created for her, not by her. This was only Baker's second movie, so it seems that her contribution to the plot and stage details would

have been minimal. The songstress sings her entire debut number trapped inside of the cage before she is let out to roam the stage. This prolonged containment references the idea that she is a slave to her own animalistic image. She is physically confined to this representation and literally cannot escape it.

Just as Baker is locked into her animalistic imagery, Zou Zou cannot escape her cage either. Baker's song "Haiti"[17] is sung from inside of the cage and includes direct references to her discontent with confinement. Haiti, the first free black Republic, fought valiantly against French colonial rule to acquire freedom in 1804. Does the choice of the song "Haiti" Baker imply that she will break free from her cage? Or does it convey that she is a captive from the land she loves who lacks the power to return home? She sounds forlorn and stares dreamily into the rafters as she performs her ballad.[18] She sings "*la plus belle cage n'est qu'une prison…mon désir, mon cri d'amour c'est de te revenir un jour*." Baker sings the song as an address to her fictitious mother country of Haiti as a whole. She personifies the land as a long lost lover or friend she longs for. This personification makes Zou Zou belong to Haiti and vice versa. This is a similar model to Baker's most famous song, "J'ai deux amours" where she personifies America and Paris as lovers. She is in a relationship with geographical locations in the film, as well as in her song. Baker longs to be in Paris, and Zou Zou wishes to be back with Haiti. Baker is referenced to a strong attraction to land, just as animal is attached to their land they live off of. This connection to land further engrains the image of a wild animal. She sings as if she were an animal that was taken captive and put on display in a zoo, far away from all she holds dear and knows as home.

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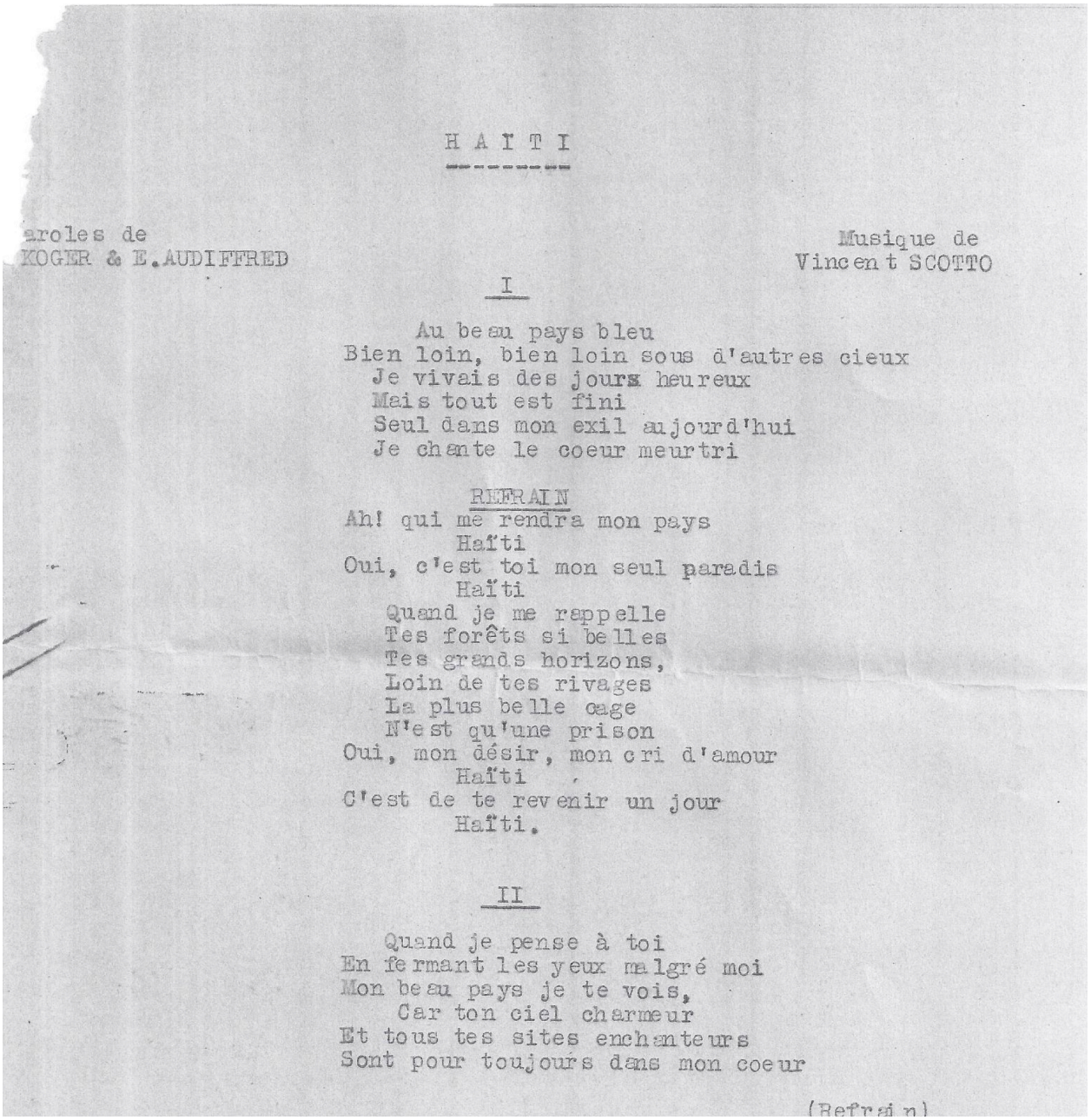
[17]See Illustration Ten: "Haïti" Lyrics

[18] See the video Clip of Baker performing Haiti in *Zou Zou:* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tmHGxHDLyw, consulted on March 17, 2014



HAITI

aroles de
KOGER & E.AUDIFFRED

Musique de
Vincent SCOTTO

I

Au beau pays bleu
Bien loin, bien loin sous d'autres cieux
Je vivais des jours heureux
Mais tout est fini
Seul dans mon exil aujourd'hui
Je chante le coeur meurtri

REFRAIN
Ah! qui me rendra mon pays
Haïti
Oui, c'est toi mon seul paradis
Haïti
Quand je me rappelle
Tes forêts si belles
Tes grands horizons,
Loin de tes rivages
La plus belle cage
N'est qu'une prison
Oui, mon désir, mon cri d'amour
Haïti
C'est de te revenir un jour
Haïti.

II

Quand je pense à toi
En fermant les yeux malgré moi
Mon beau pays je te vois,
Car ton ciel charmeur
Et tous tes sites enchanteurs
Sont pour toujours dans mon coeur

(Refrain)

Despite Zou Zou's beautiful new living arrangements in the film, she longs to return to her rightful home in Haiti. This can be seen as a metaphor for Baker's life experience. Baker was constantly searching for the home that she did not find in St. Louis when she

moved to Paris. Her nomadic tendencies throughout her early years[19] may have translated to a sense of longing during the peak of her career. She did not feel welcome in the United States, and she did not fully invest in a home until she purchased Les Milandes in Dordogne. Her love of animals did not falter during these stages of her career. While filming *Zou Zou* she was performing at Casino de Paris where she had just acquired Chiquita. She had also adopted one of the dogs she worked with on set and named him Zou Zou (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 266). The artist had a permanent connection with the beasts she encountered, perhaps because she was framed to be akin to them. Identifying with these animals was separate from her animalization by others. She endowed her animals with personally significant names, placing them in areas of high importance.

The song "Haiti" establishes a correlation between Baker and captivity. In Illustration Nine of Zou Zou trapped in her cage, Baker's costuming disguises her as a captured bird. She wears feathers around her waist and puffs of white quill cover her breasts. The costume of feathers makes Baker look like a bird ready to take flight. The tufts of feathers around her sexual parts obscure the most intimate parts of the body. Outlying the feathers Baker's skin is seen as a hide more than skin. The feathers look as if they emit straight from her skin because they mesh seamlessly with her brown body. She is exoticized and animalized in one stroke with her peculiar costume that makes her a hybrid of human and bird. The noises Baker makes resemble a soft coo as she sings *Haiti* on stage. The heartfelt love song she sings in her American accent trembles in a high pitch

[19] During Baker's early years in St. Louis she lived in a makeshift house in the slums. Once she started traveling with a dance troupe she lived on the road with the performers. She traveled to cities such as Philadelphia, New York, New Orleans, Boston, Milwaukee, Des Moines and Peoria before going back to St. Louis (Baker and Bouillon 1976; 30).

characteristic to Baker's voice. The color of Baker's skin paired with the feathering on her body makes her appearance stand out from other performers in the film.

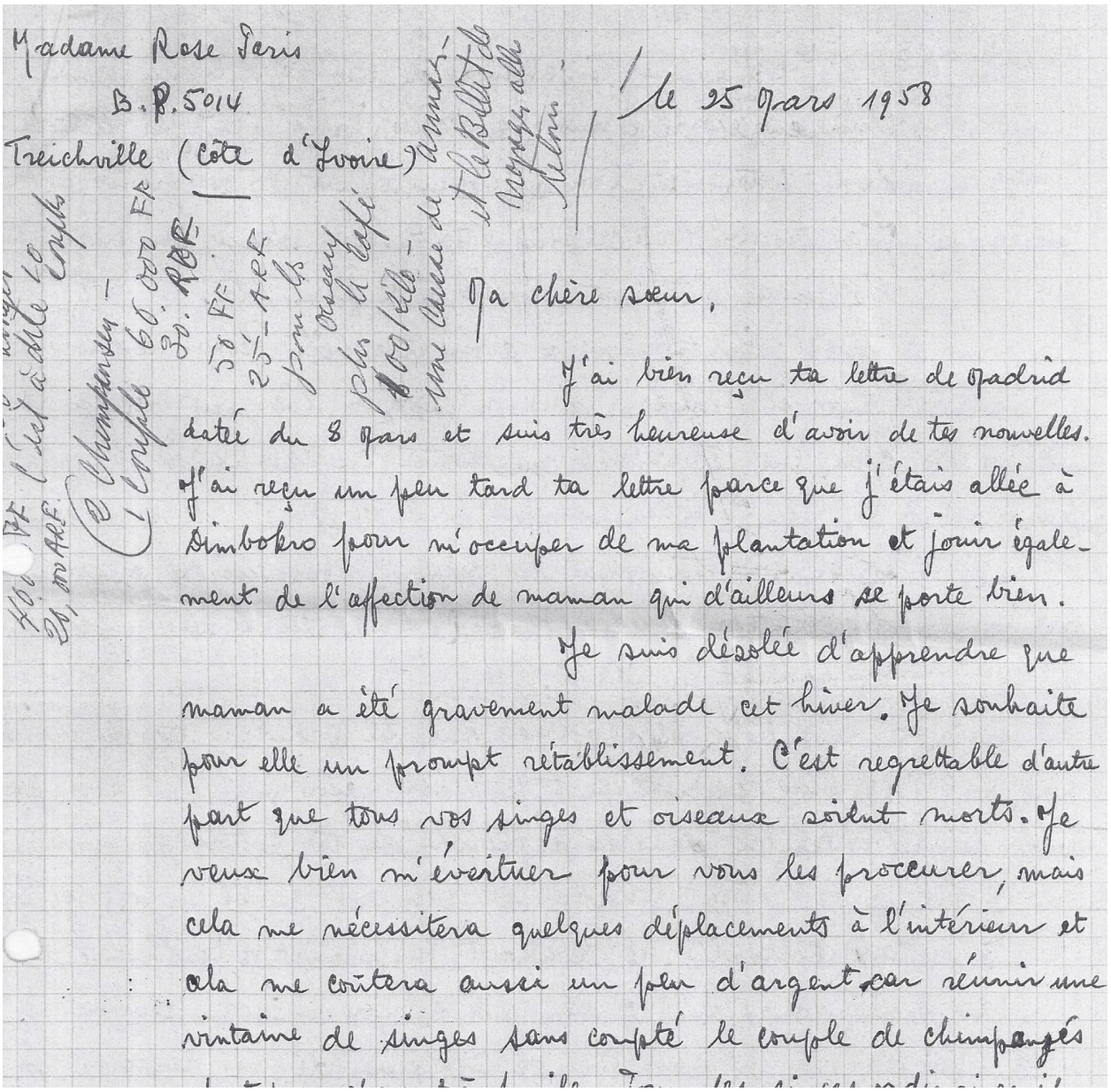
Baker's song choice deepens the parallels of a captive animal being contained in a cage. Baker sings "Haiti" from inside the cage, a song that recounts a story of homesickness from one's motherland. She swings back and forth on her perch singing about how she misses "*tes forêts si belles*" and the "*beau pays bleu*." The references to the flora and landscape of her fictional homeland make her seem more primitive and earthly to the viewer. It also confines the highly political place of the Haitian Revolution into the realm of nature, away from history and culture. In a way, Baker *is* Haiti: a political advocate, a political being stuck in a natural stage. She is captured in a similar way to how Haiti's Revolution was suppressed in Western scholarship. Haitian historian and anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued that representations of the Haitian Revolution in historical narratives excluded "the possibility of a revolutionary uprising in the slave plantations, let alone a successful one leading to the creation of an independent state (Trouillot 1995; 71). Although the nation had claimed its freedom, the narrative projected kept representing the Haitian people as "slaves." Baker is stuck in the same limbo as her character's home country. She is free to sing and dance on stage and earn large sums of money, however she is trapped inside of a cage waiting to escape.

Furthermore, when Baker wishes to escape her cage in *Zou Zou*, men must come onto the stage to free her. Once the four white males open the door on stage, Baker leaps out of the cage into their arms. They catch her before presenting her to the audience before she skirts off stage right crouched over in an awkward body position. For the few seconds that Baker is in the air, she is in flight mimicking the action of a tropical bird. As *Zou Zou*

was one of Baker's most successful films, this imagery helped propagate the parallels between Baker and the animal realm.

Baker's fascinations with animals continued throughout her rise, and fall, from stardom. Her generous budget allowed for her to procure a wide variety of animals once settled into her home Les Milandes. During 1958, Baker put in an extravagant order to her friend Madame Rose to procure a group of animals totaling around 100,000 francs.

> J'aimerais que tu prennes un arrangement avec les chasseurs pour les singes, c'est-à-dire 10 couples de singes de différentes races, à trois mille francs français le couple, ce qui fera 30,000 plus le couple de jeunes chimpanzés de 6 à 8 mois à cinquante mille francs français le couple, plus 50,000 francs pour les oiseaux, de toutes les grandeurs, couples aussi, 25,000 francs pour tes déplacements etc.… (Letter to Rose Paris 1958, Josephine Baker Papers).



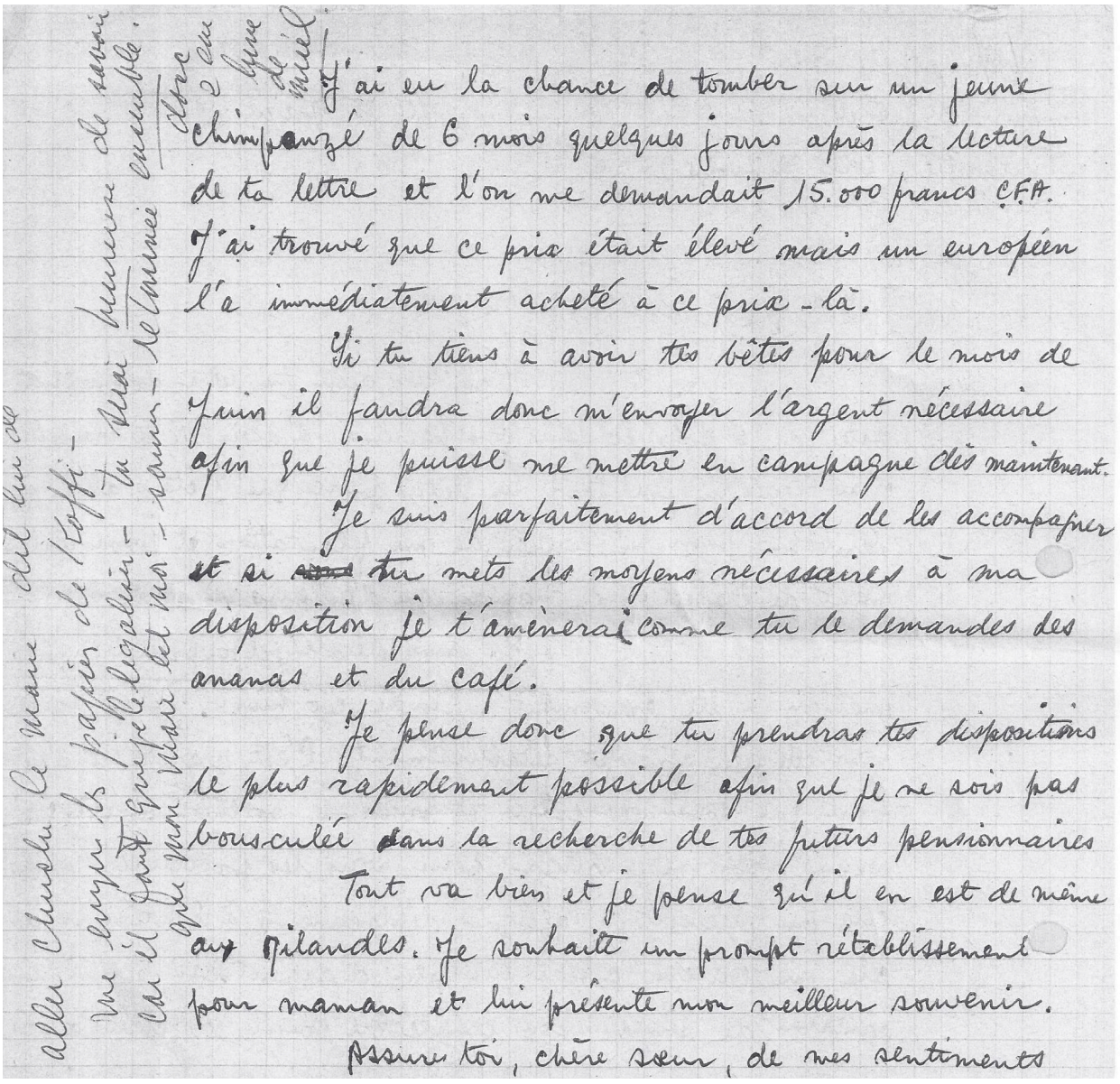
Madame Rose Paris
B.P. 5014
Treichville (Côte d'Ivoire)

Le 25 Mars 1958

Ma chère sœur,

J'ai bien reçu ta lettre de Madrid datée du 8 Mars et suis très heureuse d'avoir de tes nouvelles. J'ai reçu un peu tard ta lettre parce que j'étais allée à Dimbokro pour m'occuper de ma plantation et jouir également de l'affection de maman qui d'ailleurs se porte bien.

Je suis désolée d'apprendre que maman a été gravement malade cet hiver. Je souhaite pour elle un prompt rétablissement. C'est regrettable d'autre part que tous vos singes et oiseaux soient morts. Je veux bien m'évertuer pour vous les procurer, mais cela me nécessitera quelques déplacements à l'intérieur et cela me coûtera aussi un peu d'argent car réunir une vintaine de singes sans compté le couple de chimpanzés



J'ai eu la chance de tomber sur un jeune chimpanzé de 6 mois quelques jours après la lecture de ta lettre et l'on me demandait 15.000 francs C.F.A. J'ai trouvé que ce prix était élevé mais un européen l'a immédiatement acheté à ce prix-là.

Si tu tiens à avoir tes bêtes pour le mois de juin il faudra donc m'envoyer l'argent nécessaire afin que je puisse me mettre en campagne dès maintenant.

Je suis parfaitement d'accord de les accompagner et si tu mets les moyens nécessaires à ma disposition je t'amènerai comme tu le demandes des ananas et du café.

Je pense donc que tu prendras tes dispositions le plus rapidement possible afin que je ne sois pas bousculée dans la recherche de tes futurs pensionnaires

Tout va bien et je pense qu'il en est de même aux Gilandes. Je souhaite un prompt rétablissement pour maman et lui présente mon meilleur souvenir.

Assure toi, chère sœur, de mes sentiments

Rose Paris was Baker's long time assistant, whom the star often called her "petite soeur" (Letter to Rose Paris 1958; 1). The request detailed paying for Rose to make the trip, covering her food and lodging arrangements while she searched for two monkeys and a specific variety of birds[20] (Letter to Rose Paris 1958; 1). The animals that she amassed were reminiscent of roles she had played and representations of her body produced through media. Baker actively sought chimpanzees, the animals seen as the ones being

[20] See Illustration Eleven: Letter to Rose Paris from Baker 1959

closest to human animals, to exercise her control over them. Baker specifically asked that the chimpanzees would be young enough to train, yet old enough to be detached from their mothers. Also, she wished that there would be one male and one female representing each species of animal requested so that one would not get lonely without the company of the other. The specific request to have each gender represented could also reference Noah's Ark. Was Baker looking to play the role of God with her menagerie of animals entering her world two-by-two? Procuring all of these animals was a way for Baker to make her own small world at Les Milandes. With all of the animals at her castle, she created a personal haven of exotic animals under her care. Thanks to her wealth, Baker was able to collect these beastly treasures, but at what cost? Did Baker lose control of her personal narrative by conforming to her animalized persona?

Baker gained control of her animalistic image by adopting and caring for exotic animals. She was framed to be an uncontrollable savage onstage so she combats this imagery by maintaining control over savage beasts in reality. These two threads of Baker being associated with animals come from opposite outlets. External forces animalized her, but her acceptance and command of her animal imagery was internal. Baker posed in multiple photo shoots in animal poses to evoke such imagery (Jules-Rosette 2007; 20). She actively portrayed this image to her audiences. By internalizing the wild, beastly lens that was placed onto her stage performances, Baker was able to garner some control over her eroticized narrative. Baker's shows almost always included a primitive or animalistic reference that was crafted for her. She was able to parallel this correlation in her everyday life with her acquisition of pets. Through the naming and treatment of her animals, and acquisition of a menagerie, Baker established power over her animal imagery. While

othering Josephine's body, the spectators' eyes made strong correlations between her and animals. They sought to comprehend her gyrations, dancing, and contortions by placing her in a subhuman category. This imagery was reified through different outlets of Baker's career and personal life. Her appearance in *Zou Zou* created her likeness into a bird from exotic lands. Also, the image of Baker having connections to animals was immortalized in her poster for Casino de Paris after receiving Chiquita the cheetah as a gift. Baker's affinity for exotic animals walked a fine line between succumbing to a stereotype and gaining control over a caricature.

Conclusion: The Exotic Gateway

Josephine Baker's life sought to explode convention at every turn. Through her daily racial experience, she stepped outside of the confines of being a black woman. She broke with conventional attitudes toward marriage and sex with her multiple affairs with men and women. She constantly pursued independent activity while in committed relationships, making her autonomy prevalent. Baker was not simply a housewife or a mother. She shattered the traditions of adoption by acquiring twelve children of different races and religions. Lastly, Baker did not allow her image to simply frame her as an animal, but rather tried to take control of her exotic, savage imagery. Baker's success as a Black Venus that reveled in her colored skin made her one of the first black fashion icons of the time.

Baker was looked to as the standard of sex appeal and beauty due to the nature of her reception on and off-stage. White and Black women hoped to look like Josephine Baker using her hair and skin products. Baker's outfits were anxiously anticipated and catalogued from couture fashion houses. This space carved out by Baker would not be easily filled after her death. How then, does Baker's pioneering image resonate in 2014? What legacy did she leave behind? What way did she pave for the women star performers and fashion icon of African descent? One example that lets us explore her legacy can be found in the new image of beauty and fashion emerging in Hollywood, Lupita Nyong'o.

Lupita Nyong'o is a Yale-educated actress whose first role out of college earned her an Oscar for best supporting actress in the film directed by Steve McQueen *12 Years a Slave* (2013).

Illustration Twelve: Lupita Nyong'o for Forbes 2014

Nyong'o has luminous dark brown skin, very short, textured hair, and full lips. Kenyan by descent, Lupita has become a fashion icon after her role in the film. Her deeply colored skin is attractive for designers as she stands out on the red carpet amongst her Caucasian peers. She is anxiously anticipated on the red carpet, often photographed in striking, bold colors and simple face make-up. Illustration Twelve shows Nyong'o in a striking yellow dress, dangling turquoise earrings and a gold band around her finger. The outfit she wears is simplistic but daring. The color grabs the attention of the viewer because of its contrast with the actress's highly pigmented skin. The yellow seems to pop off of the page along with her skin. The conversation around her dress has made her one of the biggest fashion icons in Hollywood at the moment. Recently, Lupita has been chosen to be the face of Lancôme, a global makeup manufacturer (Wilson 2014; 1). Her spot in this

campaign will showcase the actress's skin as a focal point. This shifts public attention from her dress specifically to her skin. Nyong'o as a brand ambassador is the first-ever black ambassador for the company, following other Academy Award actresses such as Kate Winslet and Penelope Cruz (Wilson 2014; 2).

Baker and Nyong'o have garnered success from a seemingly primitive onstage performance juxtaposed to a styled, polished demeanor off-stage. In *12 Years a Slave,* Nyong'o plays a sexually abused slave named Patsy. Referred to as "Black Patsy" in the film, Nyong'o's character was the best cotton-picker on the plantation. She was even more productive than men. Her success in the field garnered specific attention from her master. Patsy evoked desire from her master due to her beautiful physical features that were so starkly different from her master's wife. Her closely cropped, curly hair and porcelain brown skin made her stand out from her female counterparts. Both Nyong'o and Baker were animalized in someone's eyes. However, while Baker was represented as primitive through representation, Nyong'o is presented as primitive because of her position as a slave, through the eyes of her master and his kind. Baker was capitalizing on a caricature to earn her initial success while Nyong'o performs the role of a historically accurate figure. Their skin is used to portray these characters in different ways. Baker uses her skin to fulfill a stereotype, while Nyong'o utilizes hers to fulfill facts of the past. Either way, it is this difference in skin that allows for the two women to be astoundingly successful in their careers.

Baker paved the way for stars such as Nyong'o to use their skin in a new fashion. Baker occupied the space of a burlesque figure and bared her skin to be the first black female to star in her own film. This allows for actresses today to play on historical facts

instead of simply using sex appeal or playing the part of stereotypical figures such as "mammies". There are some similarities between the reception of Nyong'o and Baker in their roles. Lupita Nyong'o was exotic to her master and his wife as Baker was to the majority of her audiences. Baker's foreign framing in various roles showed her skin as a beautiful commodity for consumers to revel in. Nyong'o represented a foreign beauty to her personal audience, her master. Baker's role in films such as *Zou Zou* and *La Sirène des Tropiques* represented a similar foreign beauty that was desirable.

These two aspects, the combination of a primitive role with a polished one, along with an exoticized filter of beauty, bind Baker and Nyong'o together. The two women fall prey to the gaze of their audiences. This gaze frames them as savage sexual beings on screen then shifts to a stylish demeanor in real life. It seems that this framework of a primitive, exotic beauty has been a way into the spotlight for Black women, who then transform this attention into revere. Baker paved the way for a vast progression of black women in film. Nyong'o, just like Baker, capitalizes on her primitive publicity and changes her image into a universal icon for fashion. Baker and Nyong'o commanded new images for their audiences. Moving forward, even more progress shall be made. African-American women will not need to rely on "exotic" or "victimized" beauty to be recognized. Hollywood will eventually notice them for their skill alone.

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