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FIGURING COLONIALISM - REFLECTIONS ON BANANA'S SOCIAL USE

FIGURANDO COLONIALISMO - REFLEXÕES ACERCA DO USO SOCIAL DA BANANA

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ABSTRACT

During the first half of the 20th Century two women danced with bananas hanging on their bodies. Carmen Miranda wore a *tutti-fruit* hat on her head; Joséphine Baker carried a *banana skirt*, their costumes marked and transformed their lives but the bananas also signified a profound political and cultural relationship that was being built at that time, the former between French and some African countries, and the latter between Brazil and United States. As we know from the historical records, this period is marked by cultural colonizations and also social segregation in United States. Given these historical and social framework as the provisional inquires to guide this exploratory data analysis, which I intend to use as part of my doctoral dissertation, are related to the visual image use of the bananas costumes and how is their system of symbolism and representation. I hope this investigation provide me a insights to their cultural patterns of similarity or difference.

Key- words: Banana. Colonialism. Costumes. Visual Culture. Representation.

RESUMO

Durante a primeira metade do século XX duas mulheres dançaram com bananas sobre os seus corpos. Carmen Miranda usou em sua cabeça um chapéu de frutas e Joséphine Baker portou uma saía feita de bananas. Tais figurinos marcaram e transformaram a vida das dançarinas, entretanto, as bananas também significaram a relação política e cultural que estava sendo construída na mesma época; Joséphine Baker entre a França e alguns países da África e Carmen Miranda entre o Brasil e

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os Estados Unidos. Por meio de registros históricos, sabemos que este período foi marcado por colonizações culturais e também por segregação social nos Estados Unidos. Diante deste quadro histórico e social, formulo perguntas preliminares para orientar uma análise de dados exploratória, a qual pretendo usar como parte de minha tese de doutorado, onde pretendo observar o uso da imagem visual dos figurinos de bananas e como é seu sistema de simbolismo e representação. Espero que esta investigação forneça idéias para observar se existem entre as duas dançarinas padrões culturais de similaridade ou de diferenças.

Palavras-chave: Banana. Colonialismo. Figurino. Cultura Visual. Representação.

1. INTRODUCTION

For me bananas were a fruit, a delicious fruit, rich in calcium and potassium, dressing a yellow thick jumpsuit, and when time passes, black dots come up and if you do not eat the fruit it will end up being thrown away. Leaving the field of materiality and going to the symbolic field, in Brazil there is a popular expression about calling people *a banana*, if you name somebody *a banana* this means that you are trying to undermine power, autonomy and the knowledge of that person. Yet, since the kids cartoon “Bananas in Pyjamas” was released in Brazilian television calling he/she a *banana in pajamas* also became a cute and ironic way to underestimate intelligence. But these meanings were not always so. In the decades of 1920 and 1940 came up Portuguese-Brazilian Carmen Miranda's *tutti-frutti hat*, and then the African American-French Joséphine Baker's *banana skirt* and they seemed to embody power and colonialism power.

Considering this idea of banana emanates power, I found that in dreams banana may symbolize happiness and love in life, if yellow is associated with happiness and gratification but if green it may express new horizons or a new time will arrive. Indeed, an other banana meaning is its shape often associated with penis, a phallic object, masculinity force, also representing sensuality, sexual pleasure and fertility.

As I have noticed through this first banana costume research is that by its appearance several topics about representations and functions might be raised, and one my questions is - what is the meaning associated with banana through the image of these two dancers? How is the artistic narrative (musical or movie) that empower these costumes?

2. THE CARRIES OF BANANA COSTUMES

“A world picture [...] does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture.” (Heidegger, 1977:130, Figures 1 e 2):



Figure 1: Carmen Miranda - Tutti-Fruit hat
Source: Vogue Vittles (2011).



Figure 2: Joséphine Baker - Banana Skirt
Source: Joséphine Baker - Deviante Art. (2001).

At the moment I looked at these women visuals, paying acutely attention at the banana costumes, and the way they were carrying them on their bodies to support the dance movements and their character embodiment, in such a (Figure 1) powerful and colorful paradise or (Figure 2) in a weak, gray jungle scenario inspired myself to explore their visual culture and representation and how it might have cultural patterns of similarity or difference.

Costume is an imperative accessory in any visual media such as, musical shows, movies, theaters, photographs or television programs and must match with several components that composes the spectacle, if there is a difference between the “proposals of the scenery, lighting, light effects, spatial arrangement, articulation of artists, costumes, soundtrack, makeup and interpretation tends to jeopardize the success and credibility of the artistic manifestation.” (Puls et al., 2010:1)

Costume function as rhetoric of the narrative, its elements are intentional and aid the audience to form the character awareness. Costume, as said Landis (2012), and “characters come first” and their relationship matters for the entire play proposal. Costume and characters are crucial elements of the show and their relations cooperates to comprehend the time at the symbolic space, and characters psychological profile, once it all arranged, will reach the narrative goals. Baker and Miranda's costume are in these line. Although, the Carmen Miranda costume was created to be portrayed in an American film and Joséphine Baker in a French dancing show, the way they were photographed and has been remembering share social and political symbolisms which curiously

ended up depicting and reviling the European and American perception towards to African. In Carmen Miranda's costume the African symbolization is represented in layers, overlapping first by Latin American impressions

Turning out the idea of costume function as rhetoric of the narrative, and in these both cases are represent through an object – banana, which is inserted in visual media that sells an idea of space and a society type, my approach to understand that is via Barthes (1998:72) concept about *rhetoric of the image*. In his studies on the advertising image he says that “in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed *a priori* by certain attributes of the products and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible.”

Considering the appearance and the name – *banana skirt* and *tutti-frutti hat*, of these costumes and its historical period I would say what occurred is clearly an understanding formed *a priori* which matched and reverberated the meaning and effects of Carmen Miranda and Joséphine Baker characters.

In Joséphine Baker *banana skirt* made of 16 bananas, French were still colonizing some countries in African which commenced during the 1870. At that time according to the narrator of “*Joséphine Baker: The 1st Black Superstar*” (Phillips, 2006a:60) documentary “it was desire a part of French to embrace all things Africa”. (Phillips, 2006a:60) agreed with this assumption “the French were colonizing Africa at that time, and the majority of people genuinely believed that were doing good things. It is so *Negro Art* it was very popular.”

Thus the success of Joséphine Baker *banana skirt* was formed containing the colonialism signals required for its acceptance in Parisian society. Indeed, when Joséphine Baker arrived in Paris in 1925, to be in the *La Revue Nègre*, by Paul Colin, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, news about the play appeared in several newspapers in the city, but only one, the *Comedia Arts and Leisure guide* mentioned the African-American dancer, highlighting “Josephine Baker is not just a pretty Negress, she is a dancer who has a lot to spirit in her legs and remarkable sense of caricature.” (Haney, 1981:58)

At the evening of October 2nd artists and intellectuals, merchants, nobles and dandies were one of those notables in the audience to enjoy Josephine Baker's first appearance in the *City of Lights*. As Haney (1981:60) pointed out “most in the crowd sensed a tenderness behind her grimaces and mocking styles, saw her desperate clutch for fame. But some spectators, weaned on suave nineteenth century music, feared a new barbarian invasion was swooping down on Paris”. The criticism and culture shock were due to the last scene which made Josephine Baker famous *La*

Revue Nègre (Figure 3), a play composed of a fiery *pas de deux* – the dance of the savages, memorialized the *banana skirt* costume and her image. Indeed, this scene brought her to enlightenment of fame. The New Yorker news paper reviewed her as “magnificent dark body, a new model to the French, proved for the first time that black was beautiful” (Haney, 1981:60)



Figure 3: Joséphine Baker - *La Revue Nègre*
Sour: Miranda (2013).

The review for Joséphine Baker's character was in accordance to the audience expectations within a colonial context, her exoticism and primitivism was clearly there. If she was still living in North America, as *Brenda Dixxon* mentioned in the documentary “Josephine would never have gotten anywhere with their *La Revue Nègre* in 1925 New York, as it turned Paris, on his head!” (Phillips, 2006c:60). But the social scene still not perfect, differently of being racial segregated as in New York, the new city, the new nation added in her image exoticism and primitivism reveling through that the hierarchal and subaltern relation with its African colonies.

Setting in a gray jungle scenario, with palms, trees, cords and black guys are working and sitting on the floor. The sound of the tuba announced the arrival and the mystery, grabbing the audience attention setting their *eyes* on the scenario. A white man dressing a white uniform and wearing an expedition hat comes into the play, and he walks from left to right. On the right corner, there are two black guys, they were waiting for the white man in a white uniform, when he approaches he gives them his expedition hat, then lies down on the floor, and receives a pillow from the black guys. Meanwhile the beautiful savage woman appears on the scene, she is descending from the trees. The music beats changes exactly at the same time she bends forwards, and observe what is down there. The scene is cut and we see the white man asleep. Suddenly the beautiful savage woman appears again running from the right corner, playing and dancing on the floor,

lowers her head to reverence the white man. She simulates some defensive animal positions, gets up from the floor and then approaches to the man, but he is still asleep. Only the boys continue sitting on the floor and they are enjoying the dance but she is dancing for the white man. The dancer moves her hips, her legs, raises her arms and puts them in her head and smile. Her sensuality and the erotics movements make the awake boys happy. Then, the scene is cut and the white man appears awake and looking at the dancer, but the boys face expressions seem bored. The scene is cut again, for the first time we see the smiling dancer face, she still doing the legs movements, the camera moves and the audience gets the impression that the man is enjoying what he is looking at. Soon the dancer realizes the white man is looking at her, she turns quickly and rears the hips towards him. (Figure 4)



Figure 4: Interior decoration - *La Revue Nègre*, 1927
Source: Joséphine Baker from Africa American Studies (2014).

This description is from a recorded part of banana dance, in 1927. When we look at the photography without watching the footage, we lose parts, and the interpretation of *scopic regimes* comes into play because, as defined by Martin (1998:67). What we see through the consecrated banana skirt image in the picture does not contain the entire scenario where the objects disposition organize the scene, perception and emotion, this moment is already edited. This moment was materialized without seeing the black boys, a white man and the tuba sounds but the objects in the scenario and the costume still conveying this colonialist empowered image because this constructed landscape is still in accordance with the pre-notions of what might be Africa, or a black women dancing in a gray scenario for the French society. (Josephine Baker's Banana Dance, 2008)

This landscape shows there is a political visual culture, and the colonialist discourse reigns at her image, and it can be one of aspects of what Stam (2004:64) calls as a “constitutive role in “figuring” European superiority”. The banana costume and its components a small skirt, bra and

necklace beads, embodies Joséphine Baker in French discourse of empire through allegorical motifs, fitting her image in the discourse of race and in the another colonialist *animalization* aspects which “renders the colonized as wild beasts in their unrestrained libidinousness, their lack of proper dress, their mud huts resembling nests and lairs.” (Stam; Shohat, 1994:137)

Joséphine Baker image was created through this colonialist discourse, and in her image was added this oddity and an unsophisticated behavior that affects her body and make her dance madly.



Figure 5: Joséphine Baker, *Banana skirt dance*. Gif animation
Source: Rubell (2009).

As *Brenda Dixon* suggested that due the Art Deco Exhibition occurred in Paris, in 1925, the look they might have were “Josephine Baker was coming from the paintings, paintings was coming to life”. (Phillips, 2006b:60). Perhaps this manner that Joséphine Baker image was being materialized, and given this sense of the French perception towards to African society, it might suggest that dancer image was put into a materiality of colonialism and its ideas, being her body an object of that. In fact, her image became several products such as illustrations reproduced in note cards, dolls, hair pomade and women's magazines use to report her as primitive product.

It seems that Joséphine Baker (Figure 6) had worked at this commodification of her image, as *Nenno* (1997:157) stated, she:

actively intervened in the discourse of the primitive in creating her personae, using the modern media to further promote on herself. Capitalizing on the image of herself as a child of the jungle she imported a leopard, Chiquita, from hamburg and roomed in the streets of Paris.



Figure 6: Joséphine Baker, *animalization*
Source: Joséphine Baker - Deviante Art. (2001).

3. CARMEN MIRANDA IN UNITED STATES

The colonialist discourse, the commodification of image and “self exoticism” seems to appear in Carmen Miranda narrative as well.

Carmen Miranda arrived in the United States in May of 1939. She was a daughter of the musical show and film industry in Brazil. She collaborated in the Brazilian radio development era supporting the commercialization of popular music – samba. During the 1930's worked for foreign and national recording companies. Miranda had a breakthrough success and was considered the first national pop star in the country, during this period recorded approximately 313 songs.

In the films, Carmen Miranda showed her vocal gift and after appearing in five Brazilian movies, becoming also a film star. Her most remarkable film and the last in Brazil, and which will inspire Hollywood movie *The Gang's all Here* (Berkeley, 1943), was *Banana da Terra* (Banana of the Land), by Costa (1938). The plot is based on the lyrics of Caymmi (1938) *O que é que a Bahiana Tem? (What does the baiana have?)*. The opening image of the film introduces the statue of Christ the Redeemer, and sets the image of urbanized Rio de Janeiro streets, the following sequences Carmen Miranda singing in the center of the screen *What does the baiana have?* The lyrics describe every piece of the baiana costume, and Carmen Miranda is clothed as baiana – wearing a silk torso, gold earrings, a gold chain, cotton fabrics from the coast (of Africa), a lace smock, a gold bracelet, a starched skirt, decorated sandals, a golden rosary. (Figure 7)



Figure 7: Carmen Miranda, *Banana da Terra*
Source: Miranda (1938).

This lyrics represents a significant mark in the Brazilian society, it announces symbolic aspects of the baiana role in the Rio de Janeiro – Bahia society. These pieces of the traditional costumes of *baianas* represented through the Carmen's costume, is what Ligéiro (1998:28) pointed out as “the proud traditional of cotton fabrics (pano da costa) and design that the Fon and Yoruba brought to Brazil from Lagos [Nigeria]”. Although, it is not widely spoken, the Fashion literature tends to emphasize only the entry of the French and English products and fabrics as Brazilian clothing history, when by the of 19th century were imported each year approximately around 50,000 such as objects, fabrics and other objects. According to Stam; Shohat (1994:85) “black women in Bahia, some of them slaves, were long famous for their gala dresses and sumptuous jewelry”.

At that time, Brazilian society was immersed by foreign capital and investors, as the story goes, one day in the beginning of 1939, Lee Shubert, the Broadway owner and operator was in Rio de Janeiro watched Carmen Miranda *Banana of the Land* live show. Shubert considered that Carmen Miranda performance would be at New York World's Fair at the Brazilian Pavilion.

It is worth noting, Carmen Miranda who was always singing samba in an out of the screen began to have her image related to the samba expansion, a music style that was prohibited until 1930 by government law. Samba has its roots in the Brazilian slavery period and it was also a way to identity people coming from the working class. Thus “the expansion of the samba, and of Miranda's popularity, was greatly supportive of the refiguring of Brazilian nationalism during the regime of President Getúlio Vargas (1882-1854)”. (Kerber, 2006:3). Vargas who was aiming to build a nation and its national identity saw in the popular manifestations a way to organize the national symbols, and for this reason appreciated Lee Shubert's proposal. Indeed, what Getúlio

Vargas valued at most the invitation, it was the opportunity and advantages for entry of foreign capital in the country, so *a pequena notável* “would foster greater ties between Northern and Southern hemispheres and serve as an Ambassador of Brazil in the United States could benefit Brazil economically by increasing its share of the American coffee market”. (Clark, 2003:5)

Federal Government supported Carmen Miranda's tour and *Bando da Lua* band. In fact, Getúlio Vargas payed for the band their flight tickets, Lee Shubert had refused to pay for them claiming that in New York city she would have a new band. Carmen Miranda said it was outrageous and without her musicians she would not sign a contract. Consequently they made a new agreement, Shubert would pay the musicians to work in New York but would not pay their flight tickets. *Bando da Lua* band stayed with her until her death.

Before leaving the country Carmen Miranda had a press conference justifying and explaining her departure and the political circumstances:

My dear friends, in New York I'm going to show the rhythm of Brazilian music, the music of our land. I'm anxious and I feel it's a very big responsibility, but always remember me, and I will never forget you (...) I shall concentrate all my efforts on one objective: to take advantage of this chance to promote Brazilian popular music in the same way I popularized samba in the countries on both sides of the River Plate. What I want is to show what Brazil really is and change the wrong ideas existing in the United States about our country. (Clark, 2003:4)

Carmen Miranda seems to believed once that her music style, performance and costume would represent Brazilian political sign of development into North American society - she was the “Ambassador of samba”. However, what it had seen through her costumes, settings and characters rather than to convey and delivery how was Brazilian society, the performances, colors and movements denoted and represented a latinicity constructed through the American eyes, or rather, by the Hollywood look. Indeed, this representation was related to United States interests “to establish new economic and political relations, and Latin American became an object of desire” (Macedo; Sant’Anna, 2013:188)

The President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933-1945) developed the “Good Neighbor Policy” in order to prevent the advancement of European influence in America during the Second World War (1939-1945), seeking to “maintain political stability in the continent, and ensure the political and economic leadership of the U.S in this region.” (Tota, 2000:200).

Following this concern, in August of 1940 was founded the *Office of Coordinator of Inter American Affairs (OCIAA)* founded by Nelson Rockefeller, aiming to boost cultural and commercial

relations between the Americas. One aspect of the deal would be done by including Latin American artists in films. According to Antonio Tota (2000:100) the agency worked as “ideology factory”, organized through the films aesthetics a cultural production, in order to create empathy in the area of communication and information. Carmen Miranda is an example of this agreement, and was hired by 20th Century Fox in 1940.

In the musical film *The Gang's all Here* (Figure 8), directed and choreographed by Busby Berkeley, Carmen Miranda latinicity represents the relationship between Brazil and the United States and its political and cultural interests. (Miranda, 1943a)



Figure 8: Carmen Miranda, *The Gang's all Here*
Source: Miranda (1943a).

The scene began in a fine dinner restaurant room, the orchestra introduces a new musical spectacle. The camera goes through the air showing people wearing tuxedo and dress gowns people sitting on the tables. The camera focus goes on the organ grinder wearing a *ranchero* white suit, a cowboy hat, red ties and Mexican mustache, with him is a monkey wearing a white suit, they are playing around. The organ grinder let the monkey goes and climb on the yellow ripe bananas bunch, then the camera moves away and others monkeys are shown in sequence. The camera goes into the satin palm tree, the audience is entering in an exotic and unknown land, quickly the camera skims the *baiana* girls bodies lying on the floor under the green satin palm tree, they are wearing a short yellow skirt, a black top and a turban. A *baiana* girl stands up and the others follow her, they see and wave for something that the audience still expecting. In the background composed of green mountains, black men wearing *capoeira* pants bring a woman in a transport cart pulled by oxen which are loaded with bananas. A smiling woman is wearing a high bananas hat. It is Carmen Miranda. *Bando da Lua* band appears behind her and they are wearing yellow pants, striped shirt reminiscent of Muslims *abadás*, and a tied yellow turban tied on their head. The position of the

camera changes, the *baiana* girls are nearby and are close looking at Carmen Miranda. At this time, the viewer perceives the banana bunches that the dancer is bringing in the cart, the camera angle comes from above and is focused on Carmen Miranda's back dress, on her waist rhombus cut in nude color to give the impression of uncovered belly, the style of long skirt reminiscent of a flamenco dress, the accessories that come out of the hat are red strawberries. Then she began singing:

I wonder why does ev'rybody look at me
And then begin to talk about a Christmas tree?
I hope that means that ev'ryone is glad to see
The lady in the tutti-frutti hat.

The gentlemen, they want to make me say, "Si, si,"
But I don't tell them that, I tell them, "Yes, sir-ee!"
And maybe that is why they come for dates to me,
The lady in the tutti-frutti hat. (Berkeley, 1943)

While she sings the camera moves away from the *baiana* girls and the band goes along. When she stopped singing, black men pick her up and carry to the vicinity of satin trees. She is placed in the center of a large xylophone made of bananas, where she plays the chorus of the song, the music rhythm coordinate her time and her body. She stops playing the banana xylophone and it becomes beautiful, bright and yellow bananas trays parade. The transition of the scene focus on the feet and hands of the *baiana* girls. In line each *baiana* girl is carrying a banana and they make movements from top to bottom. Then they walk, and again each *baiana* girl is holding a banana but now towards for those who are holding strawberries forming a wheel, some *baiana* girls are standing and others are lying down, performing all together the choreography composition will suggest a vulva shape, the strawberries and bananas are opening and closing for around 20 seconds. The music rhythm decreases, the banana movements in the air seems blossoming. All the girls with their bananas dance. The camera returns to Carmen Miranda, she is back in the transport cart pulled by oxen and sings:

Brazilians señorita are sweet and shy
They dance and play together when the sun is high
But when the tropic moon is the sky ai ai ai
They have a different kind of time.
Even I forget the time
The lady in the tuti-fruitt hat. (Berkeley, 1943)

The *baiana* girls appear waving a goodbye to Carmen Miranda, and then returning to green satin palms trees shadows. The camera makes the movement of leaving and returning from the exotic land and passing through the green satins. Then the organ grinder shows up again and

removes a monkey from the bananas bunch. The viewer is back in the dining room, the camera passes between the barrel organs line and at in the middle of the scene is Carmen Miranda. She is singing:

Americanos tell me that my hat is high,
Because I will not take it off to kiss a guy;
But if I ever start to take it off, ay, ay!
I do that once for Johnny Smith
And he is very happy with
The lady in the tutti-frutti hat! (Berkeley, 1943)

Blaring the chorus of the music, the *tutti-fruit* hat grows, the viewer sees a multiplication of bananas, the camera starts moving away, increasing the image. Carmen Miranda is carrying bananas on her head and on the side strawberries are aligned.

The *gran finale* is accompanied by a chorus. Then bananas and strawberries grow and take the entire scene. Carmen Miranda is placed in the middle of the image became a little girl. (Figure 9)



Figure 9: Carmen Miranda, *Tutti-Fruit hat* in *The Gang's all here*
Source: Miranda (1943b).

The described scene has approximately 7:30 minutes and was shown in the first 22:56 minutes. The film plot began with *Aquarela do Brasil* (Barroso, 1939) following by Carmen Miranda lading ship from Brazil and with her tonnes of sugar and coffee bags; Of course, fruits and vegetables come down from the ship and entered into the scene by the Carmen's head.

The immigrant who just arrived from the boat in pantomime style, brought on her body silver and golden collars and bracelets, colorful cotton wad, and an orange – red long dress that on her waist had a rhombus cut in nude fabric, giving the impression of uncovered belly. Lavishing freshness, color, movement and singing *Aquarela do Brasil* (Barroso, 1939), Carmen danced

between the *Bando da Lua* band which are dressed as Mexican mariachi band. An American fanfare cross the scene and she is welcomed by American authorities, and met the sophisticated American women. At the end of the musical sequence, the immigrant delivers a coffee bag in the black chimney pot hat. The business man look at the coffee bag and says “Now I can retire. Thanks for the Good Neighbor Policy!”. (Berkeley, 1943)

As it was seen, the narrative is based on the American political and cultural approach to Latin America, and Brazilian culture barely is recognized it is just represented by the coffee bag. Whether once the “Ambassador of Samba” concern was to demystify the ideas that Americans had about Brazilian society, through *The Lady in the Tutti-Fruit* musical her concern was not effective. The musical reinforces the Latin American stereotype of laziness, undeveloped countries, producer of raw goods, and the feminine body as sexuality object.

Given the economic and political framework, when the camera movement passes through the green satin trees suggesting that people in black tuxedo are going to know what has in the back lands where just monkeys have been, we would consider it as an opposition between tuxedo, dress gowns and the undressed women, men wearing *capoeira* pants, muslim abadás, Mexican *ranchero* style, monkeys and fruits, all these aspects set ideas of social class distinction and social types, on what a developed country is, and how Americans are civilized and the others still primitive. As said Ovalle (2010:50) “Miranda's representation in the Hollywood film illustrates the complex hierarchies of class, race, gender operating within both the United States and Brazil”.

The primitivism is shown by the monkeys climbing on the satin trees, although, the *baianas* girls are wearing yellow satin what could create a sense of sophistication as the women in the dinning room, the textile on their bodies written a dissonant behavior reference, demonstrating sexuality and fetishism. The spectacle of distinction through the fabric colors is constructed to create a “sexual imagery [that] may be fetishistic simply in the sense of being a heightening erotic - sexual surfaces” (Dyer, 2011:38) So cotton, satin, taffeta, fur, leather fabrics aid to increase viewers interests and desire which also “promotes the notion of woman as spectacle.” (Dyer, 2011:38)

The complexity of the interior decoration, the scene and their meanings go beyond Carmen Miranda material goods, the plot reveals the social position and political relations between North America and South America -- the Good Neighbor Policy that was represented by Carmen Miranda's body. Miranda's body expressed the colonialist vision, establishing the relationship between colonized and colonizer. Furthermore, the colonialism power and discourse that these costume embodied might be related to what Stam; Shohat (1994:138) says “colonized people are

projected as body than mind, much as the colonized world as seen as raw material rather than as mental activity and manufactured.”

It seems an insight to understand whether we go back to Caymmi (1938) lyrics *What does the baiana have?* (Figure 6). The *baiana* and the banana costume might represent a colonialism discourse that would characterize her as an *exotic vegetalization* (Stam; Shohat, 1994:138) symbolizing fertility goddess.

It is worth noting that *baiana* style was associated in Brazil to African roots and American society was immersed in black-white racial tension, so Carmen Miranda became a latina-non-black performer in Hollywood who slightly had blackness. She would be considered latina, and for this reason, it was not a matter, after all the Brazilian bombshell never had a role as leading actress. In the 1940's Latin rhythm should provide to American audiences, according to Sandoval-Sánchez (1999:32) “escapism, exoticism and potential for fantasy (...) primitivism, liberation of the instincts, and the body, pervasive sexuality.”

Carmen Miranda embodied latinicity and assumed the role of representation on the *Good Neighbor Policy*, and become an international commodity being “a key figure in advertising campaigns of the time, promoting clothing based on her own exotic style for Saks Avenue, along with various beauty products.” (Shaw; Dennison, 2005:137)

The colonialist discourse, the commodification and exoticism of image appeared in Carmen Miranda, as we saw in Joséphine Baker, both were portrayed as based on Colonial aspects. Even these two dancers went on completely distinct directions one for the North and other to Europe, the *old world*, the political and cultural boundary they cross, the representation of bananas and its meaning build a perspective of complexity of how objects not only materialize the character assumed by these dancers, but these objects - the bananas, became the dancer objects of themselves.

Carmen Miranda and Joséphine Baker's image were constructed by the *scopic regime* concept, their visual scheme were arranged by cultural and political frame which were offered as mosaic to the world, and established a perception of how to look at African-American and Latin American people.

These Joséphine Baker carrying her banana skirt and Carmen Miranda her *tutti-fruit* hatfunction as rhetoric of the colonialism narrative represented through the artistic manifestation and shown in American and European societies, teaching how they should see South American and African societies. After all, the costumes were created by them, and their messages contained several colonialism meanings such as, the women role, sexuality and eroticism, trade, subalternity

and power.

The similarities between *banana skirt* and *tutti-fruit hat*, indeed are not just on their accessories but in their cultural system production. They became women signs, a fiction of meanings and fantasies in the male political world. Carmen Miranda and Joséphine Baker were used to perform the symbolic and material strength of cultural colonization, their show were setting up in an space, a place, a time for a kind of people which values of “superiority” was the slogan.

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