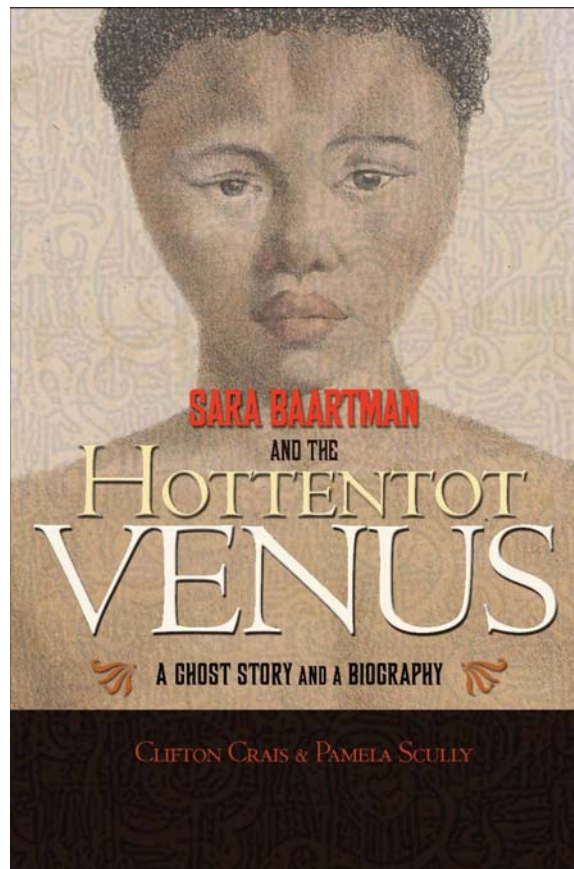


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ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

RESEARCH GUIDE

ATLANTA-FULTON PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

Celebrating Saartjie "Sara" Baartman



**A Selected Bibliography of Sources
in the Auburn Avenue Research Library**

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March 2009

INTRODUCTION

The issue of trafficking in human beings, particularly women and children, is not a new development by any means in Southern Africa. Like elsewhere in the world, it has a long and complex history. The present research survey, undertaken by IOM¹ over a relatively short period uncovered graphic details of how pervasive and dangerous this trade can be... [T]he most hidden aspect of this trade in bodies, regardless of origin or of gender or the purpose of the trade, is that within these bodies reside human beings with hopes, dreams, emotions, and ambitions—and even a sense of justice; justice, which so often eludes them when it matters most.

In the complete aforementioned International Organization of Migration (IOM) 2003 report, the organization's apparent mission was to inform the world that the global scourge of human trafficking (a modern euphemism for what amounts to chattel slavery) has not ended and continues in the 21st Century. The irony of this report was that its primary research data was gathered in contemporary Azania the land of former president Nelson Mandela and Saartjie Baartman. While President Mandela suffered his share of dehumanizing acts (and this comparison is no attempt to make light of that), it is the atrocities against the African female body as represented in the experiences of Saartjie Baartman, in all its forms that is the focus here.

Today, Saartjie Baartman symbolically represents the ongoing debate and controversy surrounding what Janell Hobson calls “the larger historical context of the attitudes toward the exhibition of the African female body.” This history—a history of enslavement, colonial conquest and ethnographic exhibition—variously labeled the African female body “grotesque,” “strange,” “unfeminine,” “lascivious,” and “obscene.”² This ongoing controversy is further compounded by the underlying debate on questions of who (determines) and what constitutes “beauty”. In our contemporary world the “grotesqueness” of the African woman's body, like that of Ms. Baartman's earlier, is highly politicized in the extraordinary focus on the buttocks. Today, the once defiled “buttocks” of African women, like the thick lips of African people world wide, has now become the new underground aesthetic of beauty. One only has to look at the world of Western cosmetology and its obsession with the altering of the female body and one would see the ghosts of many Saartjie Baartmans. This unfortunate irony is one of the many cases of Western cultural chauvinism clashing with the “other.” What is even more ironic and unfortunate is the cost to all humanity.

~ Abayomi Manrique, Library Associate, AARL

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) Regional Office for Southern Africa Report: *Seduction, Sale, and Slavery: Trafficking in Women, and Children for Sexual Exploitation in Southern Africa* by Jonathan Martens, Maciej ‘Mac’ Pieczkowski and Bernadette van Vuuren-Smyth (Pretoria, South Africa, May 2003, pps. 1-89).

² Hobson, Janell. *The “Batty” Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body*. *Hypatia*. Vol. 18, No. 4. *Women, Art, and Aesthetics* (Autumn-Winter, 2003), pp. 87-105.

A poem for Sarah Baartman
By Diana Ferrus

“I’ve come to take you home –
home, remember the veld?
the lush green grass beneath the big oak trees
the air is cool there and the sun does not burn.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white
and the water in the stream chuckle sing-songs
as it hobbles along over little stones.

I have come to wrench you away –
away from the poking eyes
of the man-made monster
who lives in the dark
with his clutches of imperialism
who dissects your body bit by bit
who likens your soul to that of Satan
and declares himself the ultimate god!

I have come to soothe your heavy heart
I offer my bosom to your weary soul
I will cover your face with the palms of my hands
I will run my lips over lines in your neck
I will feast my eyes on the beauty of you
and I will sing for you
for I have come to bring you peace.

I have come to take you home
where the ancient mountains shout your name.
I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
your blankets are covered in buchu and mint,
the proteas stand in yellow and white –
I have come to take you home
where I will sing for you
for you have brought me peace.”

Source: www.southafrica.info/about/history/saartjie.htm
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This South African government news service is published by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS).

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Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women & Children. 15 March 2009.

<<http://www.saartjiebaartmancentre.org.za>>.

Cape Town, South Africa.

"Our vision is the creation of a safe and secure society and a human rights culture where women and children are empowered to exercise their full rights."

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