



# Representation and Black Womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman

From Natasha Gordon Chipembere

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Sarah Baartman's iconic status as the "Hottentot Venus" - as "victimized" African woman, "Mother" of the new South Africa, and ancestral spirit to countless women of the African Diaspora - has led to an outpouring of essays, biographies, films, interviews, art installations, and centers, comprising a virtual archive that seeks to find some meaning in her persona. Yet even those with the best intentions, fighting to give Baartman agency, a voice, a personhood, continue to service the general narratives of European documentation of her life without asking "What if we looked at Baartman through another lens?" This collection is the first of its kind to offer a space for international scholars, cultural activists, and visual artists to examine the legacy of Baartman's life anew, specifically finding an alternative Africanist rendering of a person whose life has left a profound impact on the ways in which Black women are displayed and represented the world over.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Apart from examining archives on Sarah Baartman, the book functions as an archive itself. The inclusion of poetry, song, visual art, and building projects lend a depth to the articles by solidifying the idea of Sarah Baartman as being more than a subject of scholarly research. This book is important in that it affords the opportunity to look back, not only at Sarah Baartman, but at social and political traditions that characterise human behaviour, the discourses employed to make sense of it, and aspects of our various pasts that were found wanting, and in this way, chart the path forward to new discourses and understandings. The text is as much about a figure long departed as it is about those that are currently living." - Nwabisa Bangeni, Lecturer, Department of English, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

*"Representation and Black Womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman* is a provocative and timely collection of essays on Sarah Baartman. At the same time, this is a collection that has much to say about enduring discourses on Black women that find circulation today. Gordon-Chipembere and her contributors engage and expand the registers used to speak about Black women's bodies and subjectivities across epochs. It is a conversation on the discourses on Black women by scholars from across the globe, connecting areas of Black feminist scholarship that often speak past each other rather than in exchange." - Pumla Dineo Gqola, PhD, author of *What is slavery to me?: Postcolonial/Slave Memory in Post-apartheid South Africa*

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#### From the Back Cover

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asking "What if we looked at Baartman through another lens?" This collection, the first of its kind, offers a space in which international scholars, cultural activists, and visual artists examine the legacy of Baartman's life anew. It disrupts iconic, pop-culture narratives to seek an alternative Africanist rendering of a person whose life has left a profound impact on the ways in which Black women are displayed and represented the world over.

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