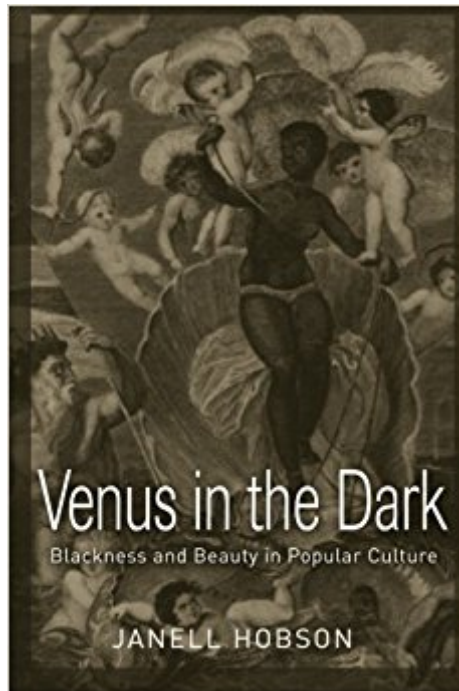




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# Venus In The Dark: Blackness And Beauty In Popular Culture



## Synopsis

Western culture has long been fascinated by black women, but a history of enslavement and colonial conquest has variously labeled black women's bodies as "exotic" and "grotesque." In this remarkable cultural history of black female beauty, Janell Hobson explores the enduring figure of the "Hottentot Venus." In 1810, Saartjie Baartman was taken from South Africa to Europe, where she was put on display at circuses, salons, and museums and universities as the "Hottentot Venus." The subsequent legacy of representations of black women's sexuality-from Josephine Baker to Serena Williams to hip-hop and dancehall videos-continues to refer back to this persistent icon. This book analyzes the history of critical and artistic responses to this iconography by black women in contemporary photography, film, literature, music, and dance.

## Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (July 17, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 041597402X

ISBN-13: 978-0415974028

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #248,231 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #56 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Feminist](#) #75 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Philosophy > Aesthetics](#) #103 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Women Authors](#)

## Customer Reviews

Janell Hobson is Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at the State University of New York at Albany.

I am very interested in this topic and this book is easy to read and contributes a lot to this area of study.

My students are engaging a full discussion of this book! Most of them read it in one sitting. Great book

In the sensual nudity of a truly liberated Black woman, Dr. Janell Hobson, unabashedly tackles the objective/objecting gaze of White America both past and present. In her book, *Venus in the Dark: Blackness and Beauty in Popular Culture*, she seeks to reclaim the beauty of the callipygian frame by allowing the full buttocks and breasts of zaftig Black women to unapologetically speak for themselves, unhindered by the voyeuristic gaze of the Other. Dr. Hobson not only allows the reader to examine the 'blaxploitation' inflicted upon women from science and artistic media, but she demands that we challenge contemporary transgressions. Sara Baartman, of the infamous Hottentot Venus exhibition, was paraded around in front of men who hatefully lusted after her unrefined curves. Is this emotional slavery somehow different from Janet Jackson's pierced breast appearing on the World Wide Web, far beyond her control, to further give White men the ability to gaze and critique the 'primitive' African body for which he has no appropriate perspective lens? Dr. Janell Hobson has gifted readers with an unpretentious book that is both accessible and thorough. Her articulation involving the constructs of modern racist misogyny is engaging, logical, and artful. Dr. Hobson's diverse panel of contributors include: rapper SirMixaLot, sci-fi Frankenstein creator Mary Shelley, director of Soul Food George Tillman, and African Portfolios photographer Elisabeth Sunday. This exceptional book, destined to be a pinnacle in African American critique of female objectification, will undeniably induce praise and most importantly, provoke discourse about a topic so often veiled.

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