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The Eye of the Beholder: Julia Pastrana, Saarjie Baartman, and the Social Anxieties that Surround Women who Cannot be Controlled

A Thesis in Theatre Arts

By

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"This is just what human beings do— turn objects into people, people into objects. Back and forth. Tit for tat."

-Chuck Palahniuk, *Haunted*

"Do Monsters really exist?
Surely they must, for if they did not, how could we?"

-Jeffrey Cohen, Monster Culture (Seven Theses)

Abstract

This paper explores the lives of two female freaks who were exhibited during Victorian Era London and nineteenth century France: Julia Pastrana, "The Ugliest Woman in the World" based on her beard; and Saarjie Baartman, the voluptuous, large buttocked "Hottentot Venus." Both women were unable to fit into the proper gender and racial norms of the societies they were exhibited in and could only survive as objects to be gazed upon. This paper looks into the lives of both Pastrana and Baartman and explores the gender and racial norms of the Victorian Era as well as nineteenth century France to highlight their otherness. Using textual analysis of two plays written on Pastrana and Baartman as well as discuss of Bertolt Brecht and his Epic theatre, Pastrana and Baartman's stories can continue to influence the way present day society look at their otherness as well as formulate opinions on their own gaze onto bodies of otherness. Even though Pastrana and Baartman are gone, the social anxieties that surround women who defy social norms still exist in present day American society. This paper hopes to create a dialogue on how we view feminine bodies of otherness and what this says about us as a society.

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I. Introduction: Power through Display

In the fall of 2013, I decided to take a course called "Humanism in the Period of Enlightenment," which explored the European age of Enlightenment through art and philosophy. Throughout the course, my classmates and I worked to better understand politics of power, particularly rulers' struggle to maintain their power once they achieved it. My classmates and I read through Moore's *Utopia* and Macchiavelli's *The Prince* and attempted to define the best policy to govern masses of people without the rulers abusing the power given to them. The one day that still remains present in my memory, however, was when we looked at images of medical curiosities, creatures that were considered "other" in European society. At first, I was shocked at why these provocative images were even shown: What did these images of plants and deformed faces have to do with obtaining and maintaining power?

The Period of Enlightenment was an age where knowledge was power: ideas of power were shifting from religion to the hands of the everyday man, inviting man to question God, nature, and humanity (Duignan 1). Many men, specifically nobles, were interested in obtaining the most bizarre items to house in cabinets of curiosities to show friends and fellow nobles. These exhibitions fulfilled multiple roles "including the promotion of inquiry, education… as well as entertainment"; the materials shown at the exhibitions ranged from precious stones from another country to sketches of hermaphroditic genitalia. The exhibitions grew to include appearances of different species of humans from outside of the country and monsters, "category violations or grotesque hybrids" (Da Costa 37). Being curious in the bizarre "was considered a

praiseworthy attribute… and the pursuit of curiosities was seen as a valuable endeavor" in gaining knowledge and power (Da Costa 138). It was only after this lecture that I found my interested peaked and soon began to see how the "grotesque" were manipulated in the interest of maintaining power. The power and taming of the "grotesque" allowed the nobility to gain the recognition of their peers on two accounts: first, these exhibits satiated viewers' interest in the bodies of the uncivilized, as these curiosities were new to their European eyes. Second, the exhibitors impressed spectators with their ability to tame these grotesque bodies that defy the norms of both society and nature. By putting them on display the exhibitors demonstrate their ability to control these abnormal human beings, who have been stripped of their humanity and reduced to a collectable object. My interest grew further during our next lecture, when my professor gave me the Arts section of the *New York Times*, which contained an article entitled "An Artist Finds a Dignified Ending for an Ugly Story." The article went into further detail of a Mexican woman named Julia Pastrana who was exhibited in Europe beginning in the early 1850s as "The Ugliest Woman on Earth" due to the excessive hair on her body. After she died she became very much like the objects exhibited by rulers during the Enlightenment: a mere curiosity preserved in formaldehyde in a museum for others to gaze upon in awe. It was only in 2012, the year in which the article was published, that she was given a proper burial. This article, which still hangs on my wall, led me to find one of the two stories that inspired my interest in this work. I was taken aback by the connection between cabinets of curiosities and freak shows like the one which showed Pastrana.

Since the end of that Enlightenment course and with the constant reminder of *The New York Times* article, I have always found myself questioning why we deem certain human tendencies or physical bodies as "freakish," specifically in regards to the category of gender. What gives a society, especially the male inhabitants of a patriarchic society, the right to determine what is considered "normal" for women? Two cases of female freaks that have sparked my interest deal specifically with the display of bodies that challenge socially acceptable femininity: Julia Pastrana (1834-1860), the woman from *The New York Times* article known for defying gender norms with her bearded face and Saartijie Baartman (1789-1815), a woman also known for defying gender norms, specifically for her large buttocks and genitalia which supposedly expressed an overtly sexual nature. Saartijie Baartman intrigued me because unlike Pastrana's masculine body, Baartman's sexual body was seen as freakish for being too feminine and representing hypersexuality in a female; her body represents something completely opposite of Pastrana's yet it is still "grotesque." Baartman was also objectified long after her death in the early nineteenth century, and like Pastrana, she wasn't given a proper burial until the early 2000s. These delayed burials allowed society to continue to view Pastrana and Baartman's bodies, suggesting a continued interest in gazing at these specific cases of women who didn't conform to society's standards. Using the stories and images of Julia Pastrana and Saartjie Baartman, I will be looking at the feminine bodies of "otherness": the voluptuous, curvaceous and over-sexualized woman and the ape-like, hairy bearded woman. As mentioned earlier, these women were unable to fit into the nineteenth century European gender norms. In looking at both of these women's stories, I will be

using Rosemarie Thompson's *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* to justify the otherness of their bodies through a feminist disability theory, along with other feminist theorists that discuss the power of the gaze on female forms.

In addition, both of these women were objectified due to their race. Very much like how rulers during the Enlightenment would obtain objects and beings from other countries to display, these women were taken from their respective homes in Mexico and South Africa to be displayed in Europe. This idea of colonization and taming the uncivilized is present in both of their stories, further separating them from European society and further pushing into the category of exotic objects.

Using these theories, I will prove that both Pastrana and Baartman were put on display as a means of asserting a colonialist and patriarchal power over bodies that did not fit into European social norms; moreover, although these women may have participated in their own objectification they had virtually no other means of making a living and were manipulated by men who exploited them to gain personal wealth and fame. Moreover, both of these women's bodies were commoditized; as I will discuss further, the respective men who exhibited Pastrana and Baartman financially profited from these spectacles.

In addition to examining published images of these women during the nineteenth century, I will also be exploring two modern day scripts written about Pastrana and Baartman: *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World* by Shaun Prendergast (2002) and *Venus* by Suzan-Lori

Parks (1996). Both of these plays demonstrate how men exhibited these women as freakish objects for the audiences of their time in order to deal with the anxieties surrounding the social construction of femininity. However, both playwrights also compel contemporary audiences to confront their own voyeurism as they watch the play, asking them to consider how the narratives of these women apply to the physical and sexual categorization of women today. Both of these works use the theatrical techniques of Bertolt Brecht to encourage modern audiences to create connections between the nineteenth century and the present day. To fully address the question of how these narratives still exist today, I put my research on its feet and directed scenes from both plays for an audience at Drew. In directing these scenes, I hoped to restore the humanity of both Pastrana and Baartman, who have been objectified long past their deaths.

Gender Norms in the Victorian Era

In looking at Pastrana and Baartman and comparing their freakish bodies to the social gender norms of the time, I will be using the social standards specifically during the times they were alive and displayed: the Victorian era and nineteenth century France. At this time in Europe, women who were valued were "sexually repressed, modest, and innocent," which reflected a "social gentility and refinement… Women were expected to be 'ministering angels', creatures of more 'heavenly endowments'" (Hale 42). Anyone who deviated from that societal expectation could easily be deemed unladylike and unable to function as a proper lady. Women who didn't abide by these norms, whether intentionally or by their very physiology, were arguably seen as threatening to a male-

dominated society that demanded they stay in their rightful place: as demure, innocent "ministering angels." The proper Victorian lady was expected to abide by gender roles that were opposite of the Victorian male's, so the male could remain in control. The Victorian female was considered an important part of helping the Victorian male "achieve manhood, with all its… connotations of manliness, chivalry, self-control, and patriarchal authority… [The Victorian woman] became the means for making the male self" (Garton 46). Additionally, Victorian males were not interested in a female spouse who was equal to their own intellectual and independent standing. They wanted a "more conventional idea of a wife… someone to support, delight and complement male subjectivity" (Garton 47). If a woman was independent, intelligent or displayed any other attributes that went against the feminine gender role of the time, she was considered a threat to the patriarchal society.

Because Baartman was displayed not only in England but also in France, I want to also explore the French gender norms of the nineteenth century and compare them specifically with her body. Looking at Susan K. Foley's *Women in France since 1789: The Meaning of Difference*, Foley addresses the expectations for French women, specifically society's restraints on their sexuality and presence in the public sphere. In France, sexuality was deemed improper for the public sphere "because it was governed by emotional expressiveness and personal needs, rather than by self-constraint and consideration for the public good" (Foley 6). Foley addresses how women's bodies were linked with sexuality; the female body was called "'the sex' as though men were not sexed beings" (Foley 7). Because women's bodies were linked to sexuality, woman and

the public sphere didn't mix. The absence of the woman from France's public sphere allowed the "rational male… [to govern] his own sexual conduct" rather than be enticed by the sexual female form (7). Very similarly to the Victorian era gender norms, the ideal male was meant to be control over the female form and demanded a more secluded, chaste wife in order to remain in control (8). If a woman entered the public sphere or was too sexually arousing, she was deemed threatening to men who may not be able to control their sexual urges.

Looking at both Victorian era gender norms and nineteenth century French gender norms, both wanted a more chaste, domesticated woman. If a woman deviated from these norms in their respective societies, she was deemed problematic for her society and needed to be controlled. In order to preserve the social norms of the time and promote who has power over a society, these women were displayed as "freaks" for all of society to see. Not only could members of society gaze upon the grotesque in a safe environment, but they could also be reaffirmed of their social normality. At the same time, the men who exhibited these freaks demonstrated their ability to manipulate them.

Taming the Racial Other in the Colonial Era

Another reason why Pastrana and Baartman were displayed as freak is due to their respective races. Both women were taken from their homes, Pastrana from Mexico and Baartman from South Africa, to be exhibited in Europe as exotic curiosities, representatives of their races their viewers had never before encountered. This encountering of an "other" female body and figuring out how to manage it harks back to

ideals of colonialism. The Caucasian male saw women of different races as a threat, specifically a sexual one, and therefore needed to be controlled (hooks 33). As mentioned in Lisa Farrington's article *Reinventing Herself: the Black Female Nude*, there are major differences in gazing upon a white female body versus gazing upon a female body of color. The bodies of colored women, like Baartman's, were stigmatized with animalistic characteristics; since the 1700s, African women were painted as sexual animals "only fit for breeding" (Farrington 16-17). Because of this promiscuity linked to these women's bodies, they were a direct threat to males and therefore only ones to blame for their effect on these males: "the white male attribute that was projected upon the black woman was uncontrollable sexual desire… [black] women were nonetheless classified as the wanton and licentious ones" (Farrington 17). Pastrana's body is also linked to an animalistic being, but a less sexual one than Baartman. Pastrana's dark body coupled with her hair appearance creates a link to the uncivilized body of baboons and bears (Thompson 73). This connection to uncivilized animals and the body of a Mexican female creates another threat to the patriarchal society: the potential threat of the uncivilized people and how to control the unknown and undiscovered, very much like the curiosities during the Enlightenment period. The displays of both Baartman and Pastrana arguably provided viewers a safe way to gaze at bodies that prompted both fascination and fear. Spectators could be assured of their own normality for not having such deformities as well as their superiority for being able to tame and control these freaks of nature.

Contemporary Relevance

The freakish bodies of these women and the anxiety they cause still exist in our society today, evident in hair removal processes for women and society's constant gaze at women's rear ends. In their article "Gender and Body Hair: Constructing the Feminine Woman," Merran Toerien and Sue Wilkinson discuss the need for women's bodies to be altered in order to be accepted, pointing out how "hairlessness is the appropriate condition for the feminine body" (Toerien and Wilkinson 333). In order to find a mate, present day women in America are taught that they must remove facial, underarm, and leg hair; one woman described being a woman as "'wanting to shave your legs at twelve and being agonized when your mother won't let you; being agonized at fourteen because you finally have shaved your legs and your flesh is on fire… [and] tweezing your eyebrows/bleaching your hair/scraping your armpits…'" (Toerien and Wilkinson 334). In Mona Chalabi's article "The Pubic Hair Preference of the American Woman," 1,677 American women were interviewed in 2011 and were asked why they "groomed" their pubic hair; the largest response that 1,229 of them gave was "for a neater, cleaner look" (Chalabi 1). Looking at this response suggests that women are still catering to societal ideas of female attractiveness. This suggests that women are objects that need to please the male gaze or else face social consequences.

At the close of 2014, the annual NBC New Years Eve special "A Toast to 2014" dubbed this year "the year of the rear" (NBC). 2014 found America gazing at the behinds of some of the most curvaceous female celebrities, from Jennifer Lopez and Iggy Azaelia's music video "Booty" to Meghan Trainor's "All About that Bass" to Nicki

Minaj's "Anaconda" in which all three songs are inspired by these women's behinds. But one of the more provocative moments of 2014 was Kim Kardashian's appearance on the cover of *PAPER Magazine*, in which she exposed her rear end in attempts to "Break the Internet" (Telusma 1). Even though Kim Kardashian failed to break the Internet, her cover shoot did cause a stir. According to *The Street*, Kim Kardashian's social media stunt "earned… 578,000 mentions on Twitter" and her "Instagram butt shot accrued more than 833,000 likes" (Van Grove 1), which further proves our society's fascination with voluptuous rear ends.

The photos also raise questions around the racial implications of her image. As Blue Telusma states in her article on the topic, Kardashian was posed exactly like an older image of a black nude woman balancing a champagne glass on her behind from a book entitled *Jungle Fever* (Telusma 1). Not only does Telusma address the unsettling connection between Kardashian's photos and an older, more racially suggestive image, she also connects the two to Saarjie Baartman; all three images display these women's rear ends and further remind the author of "centuries of racism, oppression, and misogyny" that continue to be relevant today (Telusma 1). This strongly suggests the linkage between race, sexual desire, and the display of female bodies that are more voluptuous than others. These bodies literally cannot be contained. Moreover, they are sexually arousing which can be disarming for men who lose control over their own bodies as they physically respond to these images. The sexual potency of these bodies is therefore threatening and must be controlled. By turning voluptuous women into objects, the men become subjects who act upon the women, rather than the other way around.

Even so, there still remains a question of complicity of the women involved in this objectification. Looking specifically at Kim Kardashian's photos, Kardashian seems proud of her body being portrayed this way. Kardashian specifically tweeted, "And they say I didn't have talent… try balancing a champagne glass on your ass" (Kardashian 1). Kardashian wasn't forced to take these images of herself or forced to become a sexual object; she agreed to be photographed. There is arguably nothing wrong with a woman wanting to put herself on display like Kardashian did, but there is something wrong with how society views women who choose to do this. As I will discuss in more depth, one of the main critiques of Kardashian was that she had no right to display herself in a sexual manner because she is a mother. How can women be seen as fully fledges human beings, not merely objects? Moreover, Kardashian has not escaped the system of the commoditization of women's bodies. Her talent, as she herself notes, is her body itself, and while Kardashian may be the one selling herself, she remains a product. I hoped to challenge my audience with my staged adaption of this issue and encourage them to rethink how we see "freakish" women, or women defy social norms today.

The first two chapters of my thesis examine the exhibitions of Julia Pastrana and Saarjie Baartman. Although Pastrana was born nearly twenty years after Baartman's death, I chose to begin with her story as she embodies the overly masculine female. As a "bearded lady," she represents the more common association with freak shows; by contrast, Baartman may not be as readily perceived as defying gender norms—for she was clearly identifiable as female. However, her overly large buttocks and genitalia

paradoxically rendered her a freak because she appeared to have an exaggerated femininity—to be too female.

Looking at gender and then race theory, I will analyze how these two bodies were depicted in the nineteenth century. I will then discuss how Shaun Prendergast and Suzan-Lori Parks utilize the theories of Bertolt Brecht to situate these historic figures in a contemporary context. The third section of this thesis talks about my attempts to put these theories into practice by staging excerpts of these two plays. I will discuss how my research influenced my directorial approach and offer an evaluation of the impact of these plays on a contemporary college campus.

II: Julia Pastrana, "The Ugliest Woman in the World"

I first encountered images of Julia Pastrana's body in a *New York Times* article from 2013, entitled "An Artist Finds a Dignified End For an Ugly Story." She was well dressed in a colorful dress that showed off her womanly curves but as my eye moved up to her head, I was greeted with a face that was covered almost entirely in dark hair. Even though chronologically Saarjie Baartman lived before Pastrana, I will be approaching my research looking specifically at their freakish aspects; first, the overly masculine freak and then the overly feminine. In this chapter, I will discuss the life of Julia Pastrana and show how her bearded appearance made her a freak in the eyes of Victorian society; she defied gender and racial norms, which made her the object of spectacle. I will also be using images from Pastrana's adverts and textual analysis from Sean Prendergast's *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World* to show how she was presented to audiences and how that presence reflects an anxiety towards a feminine other, both in Victorian society and today.

i. Julia Pastrana's History

Julia Pastrana was born in 1834 in Mexico in an indigenous tribe and was abandoned as a child (Stern 201). Pastrana suffered from "generalized hypertrichosis langinosa, which covered her face and body in thick hair, and gingival hyperplasia, which thickened her lips and her gums" and gave her the appearance of a gorilla or orangutan

(Wilson C5). After she was abandoned, she was taken in by the governor of Sinaloa as a working girl but was convinced to join a freak show in the 1850s and toured parts of Europe. During her period of exhibition, Pastrana was advertised as "The Bear Woman," "The Baboon Lady," and "The Ugliest Woman in the World" (Stern 201). Despite these animalistic titles, Pastrana was said to be "normal in all aspects but that of appearance" (Stern 201). In Francis Buckland's *Curiosities of Natural History*, he recalls encountering Pastrana and explains her appeal:

> Her features were simply hideous on account of the profusion of hair growing on her forehead, and her black beard; but her figure was exceedingly good and graceful, and her tiny foot and well-turned ankle… perfection itself. She had a sweet voice, great taste in music and dancing, and could speak three languages. She was very charitable, and gave largely to local institutions from her earnings. I believe that her true history was that she was simply a deformed Mexican Indian woman. (Buckland 41-42)

Because of her physical deformity coupled with her numerous talents, Pastrana captivated audiences and brought in quite a profit for her manager.

Pastrana soon fell in love with her second manager, Theodore Lent and the two were married in 1858. It is unclear of whether Lent was truly in love with Pastrana or whether he was interested in the financial gain to be made by displaying her, but many sources say Lent wanted to make sure her profits came only to him (Stern 201). In 1860, Pastrana became pregnant with Lent's child; she ultimately gave birth to a son who inherited her congenital traits. Both died shortly after, but that didn't take Pastrana away from a paying audience. After his wife and newborn son's deaths, Lent originally intended to sell their bodies to be displayed in Moscow's Imperial University's anatomical museum, but when he figured he could still exhibit not only his wife but also

her freakish son, he bought back their bodies, embalmed them, and continued to tour them (Stern 201-202). This "second phase" of Pastrana's fame continued into the 1970s; Pastrana made it to the United States with the traveling Million Dollar Midways, another sideshow group (Stern 202). Pastrana's body and the body of her child ended up in a storage room in the basement of the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Oslo; it was only in February 2013 that Julia Pastrana was given a proper burial in Sinaloa, Mexico. As for her husband, Theodore Lent married another bearded woman and advertised her as Pastrana's sister alongside Pastrana's embalmed corpse. Lent ultimately had a mental collapse, in which he ran naked in the streets of St. Petersburg, tearing bank notes and throwing them into the Neva River (Stern 202). His death followed shortly after this outburst.

ii. Julia Pastrana and Feminist Theory

Julia Pastrana's story presents the reader with a woman who was unable to be categorized within the gender norms of her time. As mentioned before, Victorian era women were expected to represent an ethereal body that would "complement male subjectivity" (Garton 47). Even more explicitly stated, the perfect woman was "nobly planned to warm, to comfort and to command [by a male counterpart]" (Garton 47). The ideal Victorian woman would balance out her Victorian male counterpart, allowing him to discover himself while she remained passive (Garton 46). Comparing Pastrana to these ideals, it was painfully clear she didn't fit these ideals. She was a female with masculine

physical features; she was a woman who had an excess of body hair, specifically on her face that very much resembled a beard. Because Pastrana embodied male qualities, there was no way she could balance out a male counterpart's qualities with her feminine ones; her body housed physical traits of both men and women. Because of the gender duality that came with her body, she was deemed unfit to function in society as a proper Victorian woman, becoming an "other" being. This otherness robbed Pastrana of her humanity and turned her into an object that was gazed upon long after her death.

Before I delve into Julia Pastrana's story, I want to define the term "other" and "freak," which will be used frequently in this paper. In defining these terms, I will also be discussing a theory mentioned in Rosemarie Thompson's *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, which outlines a feminist view that deals heavily with disabled female bodies. In Thompson's *Extraordinary Bodies*, she argues that disabilities can extend outside the medical field and into the humanities; she defines the disabled body to be an "attribution of corporeal deviance… as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do" (Thompson 6). Thompson feels that society determines what bodies are allowed to succeed and what bodies are destined to fail; the use of "perpetual standards as 'beauty,' 'independence,' 'fitness'… and 'normalcy' exclude and disable many human bodies while validating and affirming others" (Thompson 7). This notion of society creating what isn't an acceptable body allows society to gaze upon said unacceptable body and within this gaze, "assures the onlooker that [he or she] is deemed normal" (Thompson 17). Thompson's discussion of the development of social norms is developed by society bares similarities to symbolic

interaction theory. This sociological theory puts forth the idea that people develop ideas of different groups of people based on "what [they] believe to be true about people, given what they look like" (Crossman 1). If a woman deviates from the social norm, it is easier for society to deem her freakish (she must be abnormal because she looks that way). Thompson specifically discusses the female body as disabled, referencing Aristotle's perspective of the female gender: "The first beginning of deviation [of Nature] is when a female is formed instead of a male" (Thompson 19). According to Thompson, a female body is automatically deemed disabled and "deviant" just by being a female at birth in a male-dominated world (27). But disability goes deeper than just gender; a female's disability can become more inhibiting based on how she responds to the demands of the patriarchal society in which she exists. Women must be able to look and function the way society wants them to, specifically as "the narrowly prescribed opposite of the ideal male" (Thompson 28): "if [the ideal male] is… strong, active, larger, hirsute, hard, then she must be weak, passive, small, hairless, soft" (Thompson 28). Any woman who exists outside these norms is deemed other, or "one considered by members of a dominant group as… threatening, or inferior," because she is breaking out of social norms developed to preserve masculine power (Merrium Webster 1). In turn, because she is "other," there is no way she can exist in a society that values feminine bodies that oppose masculine male bodies outside of being a freak, or "one that is markedly unusual or abnormal," for society to gaze at and objectify (Merrium Webster 1).

As mentioned in her history, Julia Pastrana was known for her masculine, bearded appearance, which was, and still is, highly unusual for a female. But instead of being

marketed as solely masculine, Pastrana was put in clothes that emphasized her womanly curves and feminine body. "A 19th-century image of Julia Pastrana, touring as 'the ugliest woman in the world'" (see Image 1.1), shows her posed facing profile in an ornate dress with jeweled and gold detail (Wilson C1). Her hands rest on a tiny waist and her dainty feet are pointed under a pink and white skirt, heightening her femininity. Pastrana's jewelry and headpiece further heighten her femininity. Despite the fact that she is bearded, Pastrana is portrayed as a feminine, young lady in the image, creating a physical duality to her gender. She was a physical embodiment of a woman who had both masculine and feminine qualities; because she did not fit easily into her assigned gender role, it was harder to understand how to control and manage a masculine woman such as Pastrana. According to Mark Albert Johnston's "Bearded Women in Early Modern England," "the presence of a beard [on a male] heralded both the socioeconomic and sexual viability of its host," presenting them as a strong mate for marriage and reproduction (Johnson 2). If one uses the same connotations of having a beard on a female host, it suggests that a woman has the sexual and economic prowess of a man, an "economic and erotic independence" (Johnson 5). This is a direct threat to men, as mentioned in Thompson's theory; if a woman were sexually and economically independent, she would have the same rights and power as a man would. A bearded female "threatened the gendered economy of patriarchy with economic and sexual castration," destroying the patriarchy and providing men and women with sexual and economic equality (Johnson 6). Society, especially men, was not ready for this equality and had to figure out a way to tame masculine women such as Pastrana. Because these

women were not only masculine but also animalistic in appearance, they were almost unable to function properly in society. If these women couldn't function properly in their gender, how else could they exist? Moreover, while Pastrana most likely agreed to be displayed because it afforded her a means of earning a living, she never gained economic independence. It was her husband who ultimately benefitted from organizing these exhibits.

Before I further discuss Pastrana's otherness as a means of objectification, I want to look at feminist theories surrounding the male gaze on the female body, specifically linked to spectacle. In Laura Mulvey's *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Mulvey specifically examines the practice of gazing at the female body, particular in cinema. Firstly, she maintains, a woman has no real meaning on her own: she merely "symbolizes the castration threat by her… lack of a penis… [and] raises her child into the… signifier of her own desire to possess a penis" (Mulvey 14-15). Once a woman has done this, her duty is done. This puts weight on the argument that women are constantly jealous of the power of men yet are still bound to the patriarchal society; they must create yet have no meaning, only their male counterparts are allowed to take on meaning. As Mulvey states, "Women stand in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" (15). Furthering this argument of men's control on the bodies of women, Mulvey then discusses the term "scopophilia," or pleasure in looking at the human form; firstly onto the male's own body to learn identification and then onto the

female form (16). Very much like the gender norms discussed by Thompson, the male is the active looker and the female is passive in being the object to be gazed upon (19). But in gazing upon this woman, the male viewer is reminded of her lack of a penis which can imply "a threat of castration and… unpleasure [for the male viewer]" (22). Because of this constant threat to his position of power, specifically the removal of his penis, the male viewer must reassert himself and regain his sense of power, either by demystifying the woman, specifically sadism, or "devaluating, punishing or saving of the guilty object," specifically termed "fetishistic scopopilia" (22). But what if the female body the male is gazing at defies gender norms? What if the female body is deemed "other"?

In response to these questions, Rosemarie Garland Thompson touches upon a male gaze on a disabled female body and instead of calling it a "gaze." she deems it a "stare" (Thompson 26). Thompson states that if a normative female body is supposed to be a pleasurable spectacle for the male viewer, the disabled female form is specifically a grotesque spectacle and cannot be gazed upon. Thompson argues that "the stare is the gazed intensified, framing [the female form] as an icon of deviance… [and] is the gesture that creates disability as an oppressive social relationship" (26). Looking at women like Pastrana and comparing them to the gaze Mulvey suggests, the male viewer cannot employ the sadism technique because there aren't a lot of clear answers about how Pastrana came to be. The male would have to research and educate himself before even beginning to piece her "mystery," creating more work for the male spectator. On the other hand, the male can attempt to devalue and punish the disabled female subject but he won't obtain the same outcome of a reassuring feminine subject compared to a normative

female. The disabled female will still be threatening in a sense that she cannot be solved using gender norms. Using the example of Pastrana, no matter how much the male gaze will try to manipulate her to be reassuring, she still won't fit into the feminine gender norms. Therefore, a stare must be implicated, creating a further objectified subject because of her social deviance. In other words, she is being harshly viewed as a grotesque object. Pastrana's body cannot be fetishized or enjoyed, but when a stare is employed to look at her, Pastrana's freakish body can now be oppressed and reaffirm the male viewer of their normalcy.

iii. Julia Pastrana and Race Theory

Pastrana masculine appearance wasn't the only aspect that made her stand out amongst the society that surrounded her; Pastrana was also of a different race. As mentioned before, she was a Mexican woman who was taken from her home to travel in areas that were predominantly occupied by white Europeans. But just like Pastrana presented a duality in terms of her gender, a female with masculine features, she also presented a duality in terms of her race. Pastrana was an animalistic looking woman; because of the access of hair on her body and the dark color of her skin, she was sometimes advertised in flyers as "the Bear Woman" or as a "Digger Indian," who were described as "certainly the most filthy and abominable… with as little purpose as other Carnivorous animals" (Stern 213). Both of these titles bring about an animalistic, wild

image of Pastrana, yet when one sees images of Pastrana, she looks far from being a wild thing.

Before I delve into why Pastrana was not portrayed as an animalistic being, I want to discuss the Victorian ideals that surrounded supposedly inferior races. During the Victorian era, the colonization and civilization of natives was strongly pursued by European nations. According to *Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India*, a periodical launched in 1859-1860, "once [the natives were] civilized, it was argued the improved natives could do more for their fellow men 'than whole armies of English recruits and foreign mercenaries could obtain for the one-sided profit of Great Britain alone" (Nayer 161). This quote implies that once they had been tamed, the natives could potentially help expand the British Empire. In Pramod Nayer's text *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire*, Nayer opens one of his chapters with a very telling quote from the Resolution of the English Parliament:

> It is the peculiar and bounden duty if the Legislature to promote, by all just and prudent means, the interested and happiness of the inhabitants of India; and for these ends, such measures ought to be adopted as may gradually tend to their advancement in useful knowledge, and to their religious and moral improvement (Nayer 160).

This explicitly states that it is the duty of the government to help civilize the inhabitants of uncivilized areas outside of Britain, specifically in India; in doing so, Britain viewed their works with these uncivilized people almost as charity that would ennoble the Indian people. Through colonization, the British would not only be benefiting the lives of the uncivilized, they would also be able to extend their rule and beliefs onto more people.

To further explain the belief that one could cleanse the "inferior" races during the Victorian era, I am going to turn to Mary Douglas's notion of dirt. Douglas states, "Dirt… is never a unique, isolated event… Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (35). Douglas's metaphor becomes a little clearer when coupled with an advertisement from Pears' Soap, depicting two boys (See Image 1.3). In the top part of the advertisement, a white boy is giving Pears' Soap to a black boy in a tub, who seems to be fearfully peering into the tub of water (Stern 206). In the bottom, the black boy is gazing at his new appearance in the mirror; thanks to Pears' Soap, he was able to wash away the darkness of his race, making him white and pure from the head down. Looking at this advertisement coupled with Douglas's theory on dirt, it is clear that Victorian society realized that the best way to handle the other races was to clean this dirt up and make it pure. Julia Pastrana is other in terms of race and gender, yet she is portrayed as a civilized beast while she was on display, before and after she died. Colonial Europe thereby is celebrated as purifying this "unclean" primitive culture.

In the image "Miss Julia Pastrana, the Embalmed Nondescript" (see Image 1.2), Julia Pastrana's corpse stands in a glass display with a white Victorian couple gazing upon her in the background, "astounded… by [Pastrana's]… deformed hirsute body with all the graceful accomplishments of a Victorian lady" (Teukolsky 428). Pastrana wears a white dress and white stockings, taking away the "foreignness of her dark skin" and lightening her figure (Teukoldky 430). Because Pastrana is dressed in formal clothes and is the center of the image with "a respectable bourgeois couple" gazing at her, her status

is elevated from a mere animalistic freak. Pastrana's body becomes indefinable as a Mexican freak yet indefinable as a proper Victorian woman; she exists in both worlds, embodying both aspects. As Stern so aptly puts it in her chapter "Our Bear Women, Ourselves," "Pastrana offers a walking metaphor for disorder: standing at the crossroads of male and female, animal and human, savaged and civilized, Pastrana's body refuses to keep this from that" (Stern 206). Pastrana's body not only represents a deviance of sex and race during the Victorian Period, but also represented how the Victorian society tried to deal with the anxiety brought on by Pastrana's differences. Rather than portraying her as a scary beast, Pastrana is presented as a civilized monster in feminine attire, rather than portrayed as a beast in hopes to clean her up in Victorian society's eyes.

iv. Objectification and Display in Prendergast's *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World*

Before Pastrana's body was given a proper burial, British playwright Shaun Prendergast wrote *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana*, which premiered in London in 2000 and moved to New York in 2003. The play follows Pastrana's history; it begins when Lent is touring Julia and ends with Lent's psychological break down. Prendergast sets his play in a "CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE," and opens with a Showman addressing the audience about the horrors they are about to encounter: "We got Siamese twins and sheep with two heads/ And a boy with the face of a fish/… Will wonders ever cease?" (Prendergast 3). Coupled with

setting the play in a carnival, Prendergast employs a Chorus who take on the freaks in the show. These figures connect directly with the audience, repeating the language of the Showman throughout the first scene and in between scenes for the rest of the play. Immediately the fourth wall is broken and the audience is a part of this Victorian freak show as the voyeurs of this sad story.

One of the most telling theatrical elements of the script is the language that Prendergast chooses to employ. The script is written in a very lyrical and poetic manner that paints gorgeous pictures for the audience yet the audience soon learns how language can be also a weapon of power. In the first moments of the play, Lent tells the audience about the potency of language: "Some shows are nothing but words/… Words in the blackness, words to fill the bleakness… Hell, words'll hit you like spitballs" (Prendergast 4-5). Lent continues to use these weapons to address the star of the show and to tame her before she even enters: "The epitome of unsightliness/ The doyenne of disfigurement/… The girl gargoyle herself" (9). Very much like Thompson suggested with her theory of the stare compared to the gaze, Lent sets the stage to objectify Pastrana before she even enters with his dehumanizing language. Yet when Pastrana enters, she "has a beautiful voice, sweet and young, with a Mexican accent" (9). This "beautiful voice" challenges the audience to see past her deformities and see her as a lady rather than a beast. Her dialogue against Lent in scenes to come reinforces this idea by showing that the things she desires are human needs: "[I] want to see the world… to fall in love… to have a child" (11). Lent combats these human wants with language that deals heavily with money in order to seduce her to perform: "Love costs the earth, the wise man said... A

bar of gold buys a lot of toys" (11). Because of this language, Lent is portrayed to have a sole interest in Pastrana's monetary value, objectifying her for a profit. This hints at the impossibility of Lent and Pastrana ever being able to speak the same language; Pastrana desires to be treated like a real woman but Lent wants to treat her as a prized object and therefore speaks to her in monetary terms.

Lent isn't the only person to objectify Pastrana; the next scene involves Pastrana's mother discussing how simple her daughter is and how she must be protected; alongside this text is a Voice calling out prices (13). This exchange suggests a transaction that happened between Pastrana's mother and an unidentified, offstage Voice for the ownership of Pastrana's body. She has become a mere commodity.

As his prized possession, Lent controls both Pastrana's body and her image. Pastrana writes her mother a letter describing her time touring with Lent; she desires to explore but "[Lent] locks me in [darkness]… he says we can't spoil the surprise" (16). This treatment of Pastrana reminds the reader of a caged animal rather than a human being. Ironically, this scene is followed by a dance lesson for Julia to showcase during her performance, almost suggesting a civilized beast. During this scene, her instructor Frazer humanizes Julia, telling Lent "she's still a child at heart" (17). Lent immediately calls Frazer a "fuckin' freak" for thinking of Julia in that way, suggesting that anyone who humanizes with Julia could be deemed freakish as well (17). This also demonstrates society's hold on people's views towards bodies that deviate from the social norm: if someone were to empathize with a freakish body, they would also be deviating from the social norm in accepting this freakish body as human.

One character that does completely humanize Julia no matter what others say is the Countess, who comes to see her perform and afterwards desires to speak to Julia alone. When she does, the Countess asks if Julia is being looked after properly and if Lent is taking care of her. During their conversation, it becomes clear that Pastrana is menstruating and has no idea how to take care of herself. Instead of yelling at her, the Countess becomes extremely caring and offers to bath her and sing her to sleep (20). This scene of human compassion from another woman is an absolutely gorgeous one and contradicts how abrasive Lent is to Pastrana. Just like the beginning of the play, Prendergast follows this scene with a drunken Lent forcing himself onto Pastrana. Yet this sex scene isn't implied explicitly in the language; the language suggests that Lent is using money as a method of foreplay rather than Pastrana's body:

> LENT: Beautiful Julia, take the money… You know you want it
> JULIA: … Treat me gently
> LENT: Can't be gentle, cash is hard... Put your hand upon it. Hold it in your palm like a lover. (Prendergast 23)

This provocative scene ends with Lent explicitly stating that Julia is only good for her ugliness: "Most women find their future in their skirts/ a cunt's a purse/ but your fortune's in your face" (24). Prendergast not only objectified Julia sexually, but further objectifies her on top of that for the money she can make for Lent, creating a disturbing circumstance for the audience. Prendergast's technique of juxtaposing scenes underscores humanity and Lent's treatment of her as a commodity.

The next scenes involve Lent strengthening his hold on Julia as a commodity; He is shown refusing to sell Pastrana to the same Showman who opened the play, claiming

her for his wife. Based on their dialogue, there is an understanding that Lent's interest in marriage is based strongly on the money that will come with her performances. The Showman tells Lent how he sees the situation, "Now that's what I call a man with a head for business, even if the head in question belongs to his hideous wife" (27). The audience is then taken to the evening when Pastrana is expecting to deliver her first child; the audience sees Pastrana praying for a beautiful child while Lent is banking on a mutant child, which he calls beautiful for the money the act will bring in (29). This scene further proves how the language spoken between Lent and Julia will never be the same: Julia sees a beautiful child as being socially accepted child whereas Lent sees a beautiful child as some being that will raise his livelihood. After the baby is born, Julia asks "Is her beautiful?"; Lent replies, "He's as beautiful as you" (30). Immediately after the scene, Julia and her baby die. Again, Prendergast uses the technique of juxtaposition: Julia sees their child as a mother would—as a human being— while Lent sees the child as another commodity.

Immediately after the scene, Julia and her baby die, and the audience then sees Lent slowly unravel. As he denies his wife and child their humanity, he seems to lose his own. He first fights to preserve his source of income and has his wife and child embalmed, no matter what they do to the bodies; a Chorus member tells Lent that how they will be using ancient, grotesque methods to mummify Pastrana and her child. Not only does Lent objectify Pastrana while she's alive but he continues to do so after she dies. The next scene shows Lent presenting the now mummified Pastrana, with her commenting on her now perfectly mummified body: "My dead body is dressed in

ordinary exhibition costume used in life… My huge deformed lips remain exactly as in life… the beard and luxuriant growth of soft black hair are intact" (33). Pastrana's text for the rest of the play is the complete opposite from where she was at the beginning. She only speaks about herself as an object, exactly what Lent wanted her to be. Pastrana now discusses herself in the third person, separating her humanity from her body that Lent objectified to gain a profit. While Pastrana discusses the wrongdoings that were done to her body after death, the audience begins to see Lent's life unravel.

The play ends with a nightmare-like sequence, where Lent is visited by Pastrana in his dreams. In the sequence, Lent begins to go mad; his dialogue is bounced off of Pastrana's objectifying text about herself and the Showman and Chorus repeating "Madness" in between Pastrana and Lent's dialogue (35). As his dream becomes frenzied, Lent begins to strip off his clothes and tears his money, turning his death into an act in a freak show; he dares the audience "how will it be?... Use every superlative known to Mr. Webster. What kind of death will it be?" (36). As Lent tries to end the play as it started, a mere carnival spectacle, characters approach him and demand to know what happened to Julia: "What became of her and her baby?" (38). Lent becomes flustered and tries to play it off as mere objects being traded but Julia's voice remains strong as she tells the rest of her story:

> I am in Norway, in Oslo… I was found in 1976. I am in a locked room, in a glass case. I am in darkness. My skin is decayed. My right arm lies on the floor in front of me. My right eye is gone. No-one is allowed to see me. I am in darkness. I am alone. I was twenty six years old. (38)

Immediately after, Pastrana and the Chorus sings a Mexican Lament, a song that the show began with only to have the Showman cut them off: "That's all folks… kindly

leave the tent… next show in fifteen minutes" (39). This abrasive ending shows that Pastrana's voice, very much like the Mexican Lament, was silenced by those trying to profit off of her body. In giving her back her voice, the playwright allows Pastrana's humanity to triumph over Lent's objectification.

v. How Prendergast turns the Subject Matter on a Present Day Audience

Before I address how Prendergast makes a play about Pastrana and the Victorian society that objectified her pertinent to a present day audience, I want to discuss the ideas of twentieth century German theatre artist Bertolt Brecht who is known specifically for making socially and politically conscious theatre. Bertolt Brecht believed that theatre could create an active, thinking audience member that could question social systems rather than a passive audience member who gets lost in the world of the play. The form of theatre that challenges audiences is considered by Brecht to be Modern, or Epic, Theatre. In Brecht's essay "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," he compares the Epic Theatre structure alongside the Dramatic Theatre structure (Brecht 37). In the Dramatic form of theatre, the "plot" of a play "implicates the spectator in a stage situation" and "wears down his capacity for actions" because the play "provides him with sensations" (37). The audience of Dramatic Theatre experiences the play as a part of it because he is immersed in the story and wants to know the end, showing "man as a fixed point… thought determining being" (37). On the other hand, Epic Theatre creates a "narrative" rather than a plot that "turns the spectator into an observer… [and] arouses his capacity for action" (37). While the Dramatic theatre immerses the audience entirely in the play,

the Epic theatre sees the audience as an "object of inquiry… [and] is alterable and able to alter" based on the questions that they are presented with in an Epic theatre style (37). Epic theatre will "jump" outside of the Dramatic theatre's linear development, allowing the audience to see isolated scenes rather than a complete play (37). Epic theatre shows "man as a process" and how "social being determines thought" (37). With the use of Epic theatre, Brecht hopes that audiences will begin to see theatre as a reflection of the world that can be critically examined and changed rather than merely an experience in which audiences become emotionally invested and the conclusion seems inevitable.

Prendergast includes a chorus, who narrate the story, reminding the audience that they are watching a fictionalized rendition of events. Prendergast also presents this play in a way that breaks down the fourth wall to immediately include the audience from the beginning of the show. In thinking about other aids to help promote gaining knowledge on a subject, Brecht suggests breaking the fourth wall and having the audience "turn into a spectator," very much like how Prendergast creates the audience of his play to represent the audience of a Victorian freak show (Brecht 37). The play takes place as a Victorian freak show, beginning immediately with announcing what the freakish being the audience might see as paying customers. In doing so, however, Prendergast situates the present day audience (who of course have also paid to see this event) as voyeurs of this freak show.

As mentioned previously, Prendergast also employs dual perspectives perspectives on Julia's body, some characters see her sympathetically as a human being while others see her as a freak that can make them money. The one character that stands in strong opposition to the humanity of Pastrana is Lent. As mentioned before, Lent uses

language towards Julia that signifies that he sees her as an object off of which he can make a livelihood. Yet, in the final world of the play, Lent looses his mind and refuses to see his wife, a now mummified object, as a real woman whom he destroyed. Ending the play with Lent's insanity makes the audience question how sane his opinion was during the play and how much they can place their trust on his judgment. Because Prendergast doesn't directly tell the audience who to trust, it is up to the individual audience member to determine what they believe. Very much like the present day, society is going to tell us what to believe is correct or freakish, based on gender norms and racial norms, but ultimately it is up to the individuals themselves to decide what *they* believe. Even though Julia Pastrana's story is a couple hundred years old, the objectification of a woman that defied social norms remains relevant today. As audience members, we must force ourselves to think outside of the boxes we put "others" into and look towards their humanity. Pastrana's conclusion is not inevitable; it depends on the audience to decide how they wish to see the Other—as human being or as an object.

vi. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the story of Julia Pastrana, a woman objectified in life and in death. I've used both a feminist view and a racial view to show her otherness; because of her ape-like appearance, Pastrana couldn't properly fit into the Victorian gender norms or racial norms of the time. Pastrana was therefore displayed as an oddity to entertain and reflect a tamed "noble savage" to Victorian society, allowing society to safely gaze upon her and be reaffirmed of their normalcy. Pastrana's story is still

accessible today through Prendergast's play, which employs theatrical techniques that allow the audience to form their own opinions on the subject. Prendergast creates a sense of culpability that makes audience members question their voyeurism in present day society.

III. Saara Baartman, "The Hottentot Venus"

I first encountered images of Saarjie Baartman in an article written about reinventing and reclaiming the black female nude, but her biography wasn't what struck me in this article. Very much like Pastrana, I was taken aback by her image and the lack of a name other than "the Hottentot Venus;" her body was voluptuous and her most noted asset was her enlarged buttock. Looking at her curvaceous body compared to the masculine appearance of Pastrana, one might think that Baartman's body would be more socially accepted since it indeed was feminine, but Baartman was considered a freak for a reason on the opposite end of the spectrum. Baartman's enlarged buttock along with her curvaceous body suggested an overly sexual nature to her body. In this chapter, I will look at Baartman's history very much in the same way I did with Pastrana; I will show how Baartman's physical body embodies many elements that deem her as "other," specifically in the realm of gender and race. Because of these othering elements, she is objectified very much like Pastrana. I will also be using "The Hottentot" adverts and textual analysis of Suzan-Lori Park's *Venus* to lend some insight on how she was presented to audiences and how that anxiety her body created still exists in society today.

i. Saarjie Baartman's History

Saarjie Baartman was born in Eastern Cape in South Africa around 1789 and forced immediately to become a laborer for a Dutch family in Cape Town (Gordon-

Chipembere 6-7). Baartman was taken around 1810 to London by the brother of her Dutch master, Hendrik Cezar and his traveling companion, Alexander Dunlop. Dunlop became acquainted with Cezar because he was the surgeon on the voyage Dunlop and Baartman took to Europe. Both men developed a contract with Baartman that stated Baartman was "to be responsible for domestic duties" for the men as well as be exhibited in England and Ireland; after two years, she was to return to South Africa and receive a portion of her earnings from her exhibit (Mitchell 34). In London, she was exhibited in a flesh colored, tight fitting costume and was treated "like a wild beast… [and] was led by her keeper… being obliged to walk, stand, or sit as he ordered" (Gordon-Chimpembere 7). Because of her wild appearance, she was specifically displayed inside a cage and a *Times* in London review stated that her appearance "was highly offensive to delicacy" (Mitchell 34).

Despite her "offensive" appearance, people still flocked to see the Hottentot Venus on display to a point where authorities began to question the ethics behind Baartman's display. In November 1810, there was a specific court case, titled "The Case of the Hottentot Venus," that questioned whether Baartman was being held against her will (Mitchell 34). Despite the ambiguities regarding her purpose in England, Baartman seemed to agree with Dunlop's statement that she came on her own will but the transcript of the trial also states that "[Baartman] understood very little of the Agreement made with…. Mr. Dunlop" (Mitchell 35). Even so, Baartman remained on display and arrived in Paris in 1814. She was sold to an animal trainer named Réaux, who displayed her in a proper parlor along with a five-year-old male rhinoceros; "Parisians could view two

animals for the price of one," which could only be afforded by the bourgeoisie (Mitchelle 37). Baartman's exhibit inspired many creative productions, but one of the most successful was a one-act vaudeville sketch called "The Hottentot Venus or the Hatred of the French Woman" (Gordon-Chipembere 10).

Five years after her arrival to France, Baartman died in the home of Réaux in 1815. The cause of her death is still undetermined. After Baartman's death, her body was given over to scientists, and one scientist in particular, Georges Cuvier, led the dissection of her body. This group of scientists examined Baartman a couple of months before her death, but had also free reign of her body after her death, which led to the discovery of her enlarged genital region (Gordon-Chipembere 10). Cuvier created a plaster cast of Baartman's body and stored her brain and genitals in separate jars of formaldehyde (Gordon-Chipembere 10). Baartman's skeleton and body cast remained on display in the Musée d'Histoire until 1827, when her remains were moved to the Musée de l'Homme until the late 1970s. Afterwards her body was moved into a storage unit until she was ultimately buried on National Women's Day on August 9, 2002.

ii. Saarjie Baartman and Feminist Theory

Very much like Julia Pastrana, Saarjie Baartman embodied a feminine "otherness" but on a different side of the female trajectory. Whereas Pastrana represented a masculine female, Baartman represented an over-sexualized female whose proportions simply were not able to be contained. To speak more on this notion of the containment of

the female body, I turn to Mary Russo's *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*. In this book, Russo discusses the development of the female grotesque as an opposition to the "monumental classical, static self-contained male body;" very much like Thompson, Russo believes a female is deemed grotesque and deformed if she doesn't counter the active male (Sheiff 217). Therefore Russo paints the picture of the "grotesque female body" as "open, protruding, extended, secreting body… the body of becoming, process and change" (Russo vii). Looking at Russo's theory on the female grotesque, Baartman's own body fits the bill; her "protruding" body simply will not counterbalance a "self-contained" male body, making her existence in Victorian society as a socially acceptable woman near impossible. Baartman's "protruding" body is also threatening to the nineteenth century French society. As mentioned before, sexuality needed to be controlled in French society because it had the power to render men powerless to their sexual urges. Because of Baartman's uncontrollable, voluptuous body, her presence in nineteenth century French society would prove problematic for men.

Another problematic aspect of Baartman's sexuality was her enlarged genitals. Genitals are known to expose the sex of a human, whether it is a penis and testicles for a male or a clitoris and vagina for a female. It was only after Baartman's death when her sexual organs were properly and professionally examined by Cuvier. He described Baartman's sexual organs as so: "The famous 'Hottentot apron' [genital organs] is an… overdevelopment, of the labia minora, or nymphae" (Mitchell 41). By 1877, Baartman's genitals were discussed in gynecological books as a "congenital disorder involving a malformation of the clitoris associated with excessive sexuality that lead to lesbianism"

(Thompson 76). This overdevelopment suggests an overdevelopment of sexuality for Baartman, something that was unexpected and shocking for nineteenth century European society, reinforcing the animalistic notion of her body compared to that of socially acceptable females of the time. Her exposed and enlarged genitals made them impossible to ignore, further allowing the male gaze to fall on them and drive a male sex drive to grow. In making a male viewer lose control of his own body, Baartman's body becomes a hazard for the males that gaze upon her. Her oversized genitals also suggest an overly feminine sexuality, even a tendency towards lesbianism, which is a direct threat to the male gender. Very much like a male's exposed penis and testicles, her female genitalia took on a masculine form of display, hinting at a more active sexual desire rather than a passive one. Because of her exposed genitalia, Baartman's sexuality isn't as passive as Victorian society or nineteenth French society would like it to be. This uncontained sexuality furthers Baartman away from the societal norm for both Victorian women and French women, creating a bigger rift between her and both of the societies she was exhibited in.

Just like I used Mulvey and Thompson's feminist theories for Pastrana, I will also apply them to Baartman's body. Because of Baartman's uncontainable body, she cannot fit into the gender norms that would allow her body to be gazed upon; because of this, her body is subjected to a stare very much like Pastrana's. This stare allows male viewers to frame Baartman's freakish body as a form of gender deviance. Rather than allow that deviance to exist independent of men, her exhibition redefines her role in Victorian society as an object to please male viewers. In an image of Baartman that was used to

advertise her performance entitled "The Three Graces" (see Image 2.1), Baartman is placed between two women who were also on display, a midget women and an albino. Both of these women are clothed in dresses that accentuate their bosoms but the Hottentot Venus, who stands center, draws the most attention. The Venus stands naked and in profile, with her buttocks fully defined. Whereas the other two women stand facing the viewer, the Hottentot is displayed to mainly show her buttocks and the curves of her body. In images like this one, the Hottentot is gazed upon for her assets rather than her being, which objectifies her for her differences.

In discussing the stare onto Baartman's body, I want to look back to Mulvey's theory on taming the female subject for the male to gaze on. As mentioned before, when the male gazes at the female form, there is an initial threat, in that the feminine subject lacks a penis and implies "a threat of castration and… unpleasure" (Mulvey 22). The male subject can take numerous routes to deal with this anxiety, but specifically in Baartman's case, the male subject can easily turn her body into a fetish, so it becomes reassuring and pleasurable rather than dangerous. This route, specifically called fetishistic scopophilia, creates Baartman's body into a sexual object. Because her body expresses enlarged gentials and buttocks, her body already has a sexual connotation to it and the need to clothe Baartman would work against fetishizing her body. In this case, she is reduced to nothing more than her sexual parts.

But fetishizing the black female body was nothing new. According to Farrington's *Reinventing Herself: The Black Female Nude*, the bodies of colored women, like Baartman's, were stigmatized with animalistic characteristics; since the 1700s, African

women were painted as sexual animals "only fit for breeding" (Farrington 16-17). Because of this promiscuity inked to these women's bodies, they were a direct threat to males and the only ones to blame for their effect on these males: "the white male attribute that was projected upon the black woman was uncontrollable sexual desire… [black] women were nonetheless classified as the wanton and licentious ones" (Farrington 17). The easiest way to tame a body like Baartman's while allowing the male viewers pleasure and reinforcing their power was to put her on display.

iii. Saarjie Baartman and Race Theory

Another significant part of Baartman's story is her race and how her race intensifies her otherness from European society. As mentioned in her history, Baartman was taken from South Africa and displayed in England and France. Looking at Robin Mitchell's *Another Means of Understanding the Gaze: Sarah Bartmann in the Development of Nineteenth-Century French National Identity*, Mitchell sheds light on how the colonization of Baartman's body reflects France's involvement with Africa, specifically the need to dominate Africa as well as preserve racial, gender, and class boundaries in France (Mitchell 33). As Mitchel explains, during the early 1800s, the French found the African Americans completely uncivilized, barbaric creatures that needed to be enslaved in order to be tamed (Mitchell 34). Unlike Julia Pastrana who was "tamed" to be a proper woman, hence putting her in a dress, Baartman was displayed like an animal. Using the same theory about dirt used on Pastrana, Baartman's "dirty" body couldn't be cleaned. Looking specifically at the image used before, "The Three Graces,"

Baartman is surrounded by two white women clothed modestly in typical Victorian attire. Baartman is portrayed in very minimal attire that suggests her African home, creating an image that ostracizes her against the white bodies.

But what made black female bodies more threatening than white female bodies? In order to answer this question, I want to touch upon bell hook's book *Ain't I A Woman*, specifically the chapter "Sexism and the Black Female Slave Experience," as well as the Madonna-whore complex discussed in Lois Tyson's *Critical Theory Today*. In this chapter, bell hooks discusses the mentality of the colonizing Caucasian man and his hatred towards women based on his religion, which grew into the specific hatred of African American women. During colonial society, women and their bodies were seen as "the bringer of sin into the world" and white men "were merely the victims of [their] wanton power" (hooks 29). These views of all women as the white male's "moral downfall" were linked to fundamentalist Christian teachings, specifically the story of Adam and Eve. Eve tricked Adam into humanity's downfall; therefore all women were viewed to pose a similar threat to white men. It was only during the 19th century where these views began to change and white women were viewed as "'the nobler half of humanity' whose duty was to elevate men's sentiments and inspire their higher impulses" in the opposite sex (Hooks 31). It was also during the 19th century when the mass exploitation of black female bodies began and "society… was eager to impose upon the displaced African the identity of 'sexual savage'" (33). While white female bodies took on a more pure connotation that could help males rather than tempt them, black female bodies continued to be "designated as the originator of sexual sin… [and] the

embodiment of female evil and sexual lust" (33). Because of their evil and sexual power, white males were seen as the victims to black female bodies and in order to deal with the anxieties caused by black female bodies. Rather than the men being "morally responsible for the sexual assaults on black women" black women were to blamed for the lack of control over their evil bodies (33). Whereas the white female body was now considered holy and noble and able to be reformed, the black female body still retained a body linked to sexual evil and temptation and was harder to reform. Therefore, this sexual temptation needed to be controlled and contained as to be less of a threat to the patriarchy.

Looking deeper at bell hook's theory, there lies two potential identities for women: the reformed, pure body and the body riddled with sexual evil and temptation, which brings me to the discuss of the Madonna-whore complex. Tyson explains that women were viewed "only in terms of how they relate to the patriarchal order," or how able these female bodies could be controlled by the patriarchy (Tyson 89). The Madonna, or "good girl," was a female body that exhibited the female gender norms of both the Victorian era and nineteenth century France previously discussed: she "is modest, unassuming, self-sacrificing, and nurturing… all…virtues associated with patriarchal femininity and domesticity" (Tyson 90). On the other end of this spectrum is the whore, or "bad girl," who represents a female body that violates "patriarchal sexual norms" and is "sexually forward in appearance or behavior" (90). Because the whore is the opposite of the pure and nurturing Madonna, she is deemed unfit to become a proper wife and bare children. The whore is only good as an object that is used and then thrown away: "Men sleep with 'bad girls', but they don't marry them" (90). Because black women were

deemed "sexual savages" based on their race, they were forever subjected to be the whore and never the Madonna; their bodies were fit to be used sexually by white men and nothing more. Baartman's body, because it was a black body, was always going to be viewed as "savage" and a deviation from the social norm compared to the pure bodies of white females. Because of this she was treated as a whore rather than a Madonna. Looking again at how Baartman was displayed, specifically in a cage and in minimal clothing, she was depicted like an animal rather than as a woman. Because she was taken from her home and put on display in a society very different from her own because of race, Baartman became representative of an entire race. To quote Janell Hobson from her article "The 'Batty' Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body," "Baartman's [body]… cast an entire race in terms of its sexuality" (Hobson 93). Because of her race, Baartman was never going to be seen as a body that the patriarchal society of the Victorian era could contain; therefore she could never be seen as a woman suitable for marriage or motherhood. Baartman's body enforced a cultural and sexual festishization of black female bodies as animalistic; because of their animalistic, uncontainable qualities, they needed to be objectified in order to be considered contained, allowing viewers to gaze safely upon them. Like Pastrana, the Venus was a valuable object by which her male exhibitors could turn a profit. Because audiences were willing to pay good money to gawk at her, she too became a commodity.

iv. Objectification and Display in Park's *Venus*

Before Prendergast wrote his play on Julia Pastrana, Suzan-Lori Parks wrote *Venus*, a play that centers on Saarjie Baartman, specifically from when Baartman agrees to go to England up until her death. With her play *Venus*, Parks exposes multiple forms of objectification of Saarjie Baartman's body: as a sexual object, as a racial other, and a medical object exhibited long after her death.

Parks begins her play at the end; her scenes are created going backwards, the first scene being Scene 31 and the last being Scene 1 (Parks 5). The play begins with the cast introducing themselves as the characters, some of them playing multiple roles throughout the show. Immediately after these introductions, the Negro Ressurectionist informs the cast and the audience "that the Venus Hottentot iz dead" (Parks 11). In between the outrage displayed by the angry chorus, other characters describe how the audiences gazed upon Venus:

> "Shes thuh main attraction she iz. Loves thuh sideshows center ring… She gained fortune and fame by not wearing a scrap hiding only the privates that lipped in her lap… Thuh gals got bottoms like hot air balloons… An ass to write home about" (13-16)

As all the frenzy of the chorus' anger, their crude comments about Baartman, and the "hubba-hubbas" at Baartman's body reach a head, order is restored and the Negro Resurrectionist narrates what is soon to be the play the audience will see. The Negro Resurrectionist repeats a combination of lines of dialogue said previously by other characters, informing the audience how the play they are about to watch will in fact end: "that Venus, Black Goddess, was shameless… She gained fortune and fame by not wearing a scrap… When death met her Death deathd her and left her to rot… and rot yes she would have right down to the bone had not the Docteur put her corpse in his home"

(18). From the beginning of the play, the audience gets a sense of the sad life led by the Venus: Baartman allowed her body to be objectified to gain fame and fortune, which continued after her death when her body was preserved in formaldehyde and continued to be displayed. The fact that the show begins with this scene and this language, clearly demeaning Baartman's death, exhibits her little worth as a human being. Being told how this tale will end, the audience is encouraged to question how this situation came to be.

To further exemplify how little the Girl's body was valued, Parks creates scenes of sexual objectification that the Girl, the character for Baartman, endures. The scene after the opening shows two men discussing bringing over an African girl to fill the position of the "African Dancing Princess" for a freak show in England (23). When they ask the Girl to dance for them, the Man and the Brother hint to the Brother's sexual past with the Girl: "(I've grown a beard since then)," the Brother tells the Man (24). After the Girl agrees to come to England, the Brother finally has his moment alone with the Girl and the audience really sees why he brought her to England. The Girl recognizes him and he admits his main intention in bringing her to England to "love [her] properly" rather than make her an African princess (33). The Brother shows no disregard to the fact that he brought an African woman away from her home just so he could "love" her; he merely sees her as a woman who would be willing to be physical with him, no matter what the circumstance. This harkens back to Tyson's Madonna-whore theory: a woman whose appearance was openly sexual, very much like the Girl's curvaceous body, was only to be "used and then discarded because they don't deserve better" (Tyson 90). After the two become physical, the Brother leaves the Girl, and it is even hinted he sells her to the

Mother Showman so she can be displayed alongside a Chorus of Eight Wonders. The Girl doesn't receive the deal promised by the Brother and the Man, specifically that she would be famous and "like Cinderella"; she is just carted to the next owner who profits greatly on her freakish, sexual body (Parks 25). A member of the chorus explicitly tells the audience what was acceptable behavior towards the Girl, or soon to be Venus, when she is on display:

> They say that if I pay uh little more… I'll get tuh stand… off tuh thuh side… (And from there if I'm really quick I'll stick my hand inside her cage and have a feel if no ones looking) (15).

Despite going from the Brother to the Mother-Showman, the Girl remains a sexual object. It is only until the Mother-Showman sells the Venus to the Baron Docteur for a large sum, "A mint! A fortune! Fort Knox… My retirement!", that she even calls the Venus "[her] favorite child" (88-89). Again, very much like how the Brother used the Girl for sex, the Mother-Showman uses the Girl to gain a large profit and then gets rid of her when the opportunity arises.

The sexual objectification and commoditization continues with her last owner while she is alive, the Baron Docteur, who buys the Venus and takes her to Paris. Even though he claims to be "a friend… [her] biggest fan," the relationship that grows between the Venus and the Baron Docteur seems to benefit the Baron Docteur in more ways than one (89). In one scene in particular, entitled "In the Orbital Path of The Baron Docteur," the audience learns that the Venus' definition of love and the Baron Docteur's differ. While the Venus is happy to "have some love" and stay with the Baron, the Baron is married and shows no sign of preparing to leave his wife for her (106). He tells the

Venus, “You cant stay here forever you know… Ive got a wife” (109). When the Venus says she wants to stay despite that, the Baron Docteur turns away and masturbates, occasionally looking at the Venus and asking that she “don’t look [at him]… look off… eat [her] chockluts… touch [herself]” (110). Even though he knows he cannot be with the Venus the way she desires, the Baron Docteur still gets sexually aroused looking at her body while she receives no pleasure of intimacy in return.

After this scene, the sexual relationship between the Baron Docteur and the Venus continues, allowing the Baron to continue to use the Venus for his own pleasure. The Venus becomes pregnant, which results in the Baron Docteur wanting to terminate pregnancy. He says to the Venus, “Ive a wife... A career… A reputation… Ive got various equipments in there we could figure something out” (130). The Venus agrees to the abortion, yet their sexual relationship continues and creates a second pregnancy. Even though the Baron Docteur seems concerned about his wife and career when the Venus was pregnant the first time, he doesn’t seem to change his behavior after the termination of the first pregnancy. This suggests that the Baron Docteur continues to use the Venus for sex, further objectifying her as an object that could exist separately from his professional and familial life. Harking back again to Tyson’s Madonna-whore theory, because the Venus’ body is a deviation from the pure and noble body of a white Madonna, she can only be seen as a whore who doesn’t deserve better than to be treated like an object for the Doctor to play with. The Venus is only good to be used sexually; she is unfit to become a wife or mother, which is shown when the Baron Docteur refuses to leave his wife and suggests the Venus have two abortions.

One of the factors that ultimately leads the Baron Docteur to dismiss the Venus is her infection with the clap. The Grade-School Chum advises, "The clap?... 'Indecency'… we could clap her into jail for that" (145-146). The sexual relationship between the Venus and the Baron Docteur becomes tarnished for the Docteur, deeming her dangerous for his future sex life. Just like a broken object that cannot properly perform its task, the Docteur gets rid of her; the Venus is then "imprisoned chained like a dog in the yard" guarded by the Negro Resurrectionist, who waits with her until she dies (Parks 158).

As mentioned throughout the first two halves of this chapter, Saarjie Baartman isn't only objectified because of her "ass to write home about"; like in her history, Parks shows the link between Baartman's sexual body and the threat of her racial otherness (16). Throughout Parks' play, there is a play within the play, very much like the vaudeville shows shown in England while Baartman was being displayed in the early 1800s. This script presents the anxieties of a civilized man falling in love with a racially other body. The play in *Venus*, entitled "For the Love of Venus," shows a Young Man and a Bride-to-Be, specifically how the Caucasian Bride-to-Be is struggling to catch the Young Man's interest while he is fascinated with the uncivilized in Africa. The first time the audience sees them, the Young Man is discussing how becoming a man is linked with exploring uncharted worlds according to his notes he kept while he was in Africa: "The Man who has never been from his own home is no *Man*… Visit the world and *Man* he will be… then he sees his true I; not in the eyes of the Known but in the eyes of the Known-not" (36). This scene articulates how the "Known-nots" allow a civilized man to find himself. This link between the exploration of black female bodies and becoming a

knowledgeable male harks back to colonialism and exploring the bodies outside of European, Caucasian society just as colonialists explored (and conquered) other lands. As mentioned before through Robin Mitchell's "Another Means of Understanding the Gaze: Sarah Baartman in the Development of Nineteenth-Century French National Identity," African bodies were seen as savage and uncivilized, the very opposite of a white European male. In conquering an uncivilized, savage body, the white male was reaffirmed of his status as socially acceptable (Mitchell 36). This awareness that was only brought to fruition by conquering the black female body further objectifies the black female body as a catalyst that can change a man.

The next scene of this play within a play has the Young Man asking his Father and Uncle to acquire the Hottentot Venus, so that he can become a Man and "love… Something Wild" before he is married to his Bride-to-Be (Parks 58). The connection between becoming a man and sleeping with a racially other body furthers this idea that African bodies don't represent bodies; they are just objects that can create a man and need to be obtained to allow a Caucasian man to understand where he came from. Once the Bride-to-Be understands her fiancé is in love with a Hottentot, she is distraught and runs to the Mother of the Young Man, who describes the situation as so: "His head has turned away from your bright sun… He roams in the dark" (123). The falling apart of this soon-to-be marriage reflects the racial anxieties Parks portrays throughout the main plotline of the play, specifically how a Caucasian male could be so enamored and affected by an African woman to a point where he strays from the social norm—marriage to a white woman. In order to fix the situation, the Mother suggests getting the Bride-to-

Be to become more like the Hottentot, "make [her] look wild… and bring [the Mother's] Son to his knees" (125). The Mother's suggested solution creates an act within "For the Love of Venus" that is extremely offensive. The Bride-to-Be is presented to the Young Man as a "wild thing of [his] hearts desires from the darkest jungles" that "clicks and clacks" to communicate with the Young Man's Uncle to articulate her love for the Young Man (134-135). In the conclusion of this play, the Young Man admits to be smitten with the Hottentot, his Bride-to-Be in disguise. She then sheds her disguise and becomes his proper Bride-to-Be, a Caucasian woman suited to marry the Young Man, not a savage Hottentot. The conclusion of this play reaffirms the place of an African woman in the play's trajectory; an African woman isn't suited to be wed, only to be used by men as a catalyst that allows men to discover his masculine prowess through a lesser race of the time. This further promotes the racial objectification of the Venus throughout the main plotline of *Venus*. As "For the Love of Venus" suggests, the Baron Docteur will not leave his Caucasian wife for the Venus; he will use her to gain a sense of knowledge and manhood and then leave her.

On top of being a sexual and racial object for the French and English society, the Venus also becomes a medical specimen that was gazed upon even after her death. Before the Baron Docteur bought the Venus to examine, Parks foreshadows her medical objectification. The Negro Resurrectionist holds the Girl after the Brother leaves her, describing an autopsy report:

> "Her brain, immediately after removal, deprived of the greater parts of its membranes, weighed 38 ounces… her spinal chord was not examined, as it was considered more desirable to preserve the vertebral column intact… her stomach was of the unusual form" (37-38).

These notes are taken specifically from the Baron Docteur's notebook and shows the impending medical gaze that will come with staying with the Baron Docteur. This gaze is confirmed during the scene "In the Orbital Path of The Baron Docteur" when the Baron Docteur discusses his desire to become a great mind: "Most great minds discover something… In you… Ive met my opposite-exact… Now if only I could match you… You were a sensation! I wouldnt mind a bit of that" (107-108). Looking at the Baron Docteur's dialogue, there is a sense of jealousy for the Venus' fame for her unusual body, a fame that the Baron Docteur wants to match. What better way to gain the fame the Baron Docteur desires than to capitalize on the Venus' body? The next scene confirms this desire with the Negro Ressurectionist reading off another autopsy report, this time a much more detailed one using the same objective, medical language as before:

> "Her ears were much like those found in monkeys: Small, weakly formed… Her breasts she usually lifted and tightened beneath the middle part of her dress, but, left free they hung bulkily and terminated obliquely in a blackish areola about 1 and ½ inches in diameter pitted with radiating wrinkles…The wonders of her lower regions, will be fleshed out in greater detail at a later date" (113).

This language treats the Venus as a medical object to be examined for eternity, taking away the humanity of her body and turning it into an object that will exist forever whether she likes it or not. Not only is Venus a medical object, she is a medical object owned by the Baron Docteur, which brings *him* success. The Baron Docteur uses the Venus as a means to create a name in science for himself that will last forever, specifically because he categorized an uncivilized body that had never been discovered before. As mentioned in the beginning of the play by the Negro Resurrectionist, the character who ultimately abandons her dead body to the Grade-School Chum to preserve,

"When death met her Death deathd her and left her to rot… and rot yes she would… had not the Docteur put her corpse… pickled in a Science Hall" (18).

At the close of this play, the audience has witnessed the Girl/Venus become a sexual object, a racial other, and a medical specimen. But the audience is living in their own society, separate from the Victorian one where the play is told. It is easy for them to dismiss the objectification of the Venus as simply a thing of the past. In order to create a platform for the audience to see the connections between their world and the Victorian world of the play, Parks implicates the audience as voyeurs in hopes of showing that the objectification of the Venus and women like her isn't just a Victorian issue. As Carol Schafer states in her article "Staging a New Literary History: Suzan- Lori Parks's *Venus, In the Blood*, and *Fucking A,*" Parks "positions The Venus as Other… in order to privilege the audience as subjects… giving them agency and making them active participants in [her] objectification" (Schafer 187). The Venus is a commodity for the modern day spectators as well: The audience has literally paid money to see this play, entitled *Venus*, which in turn means they are paying to watch Venus, both the play and the character. The audience becomes "participants" who "consume… the objectification and colonization of the Venus" throughout the play. This makes the audience another group of characters that further objectify and colonize her body (Schafer 187). Because Parks creates *Venus* in a way that the audience is made to be a part of the objectification of the Venus, Parks suggests that this isn't a problem locked in a certain time period; the objectification of a body that deviates from the norm is still capable of happening today.

v. How Parks Turns the Subject Matter on a Present Day Audience

Looking at Brecht's ideas on Epic Theatre mentioned previously, Suzan-Lori Parks employs many of these tactics in creating the story of *Venus*, challenging audiences to see a connection between the world depicted on stage and the world in which they live. Parks employs an episodic structure her play and within that structure, creates characters that directly address the audience. Looking specifically at the first scene in the play, the first dialogue to be shared is the cast stating the roles they will be playing during the play: "The Chorus of 8 Human Wonders!... The Man, later the Baron Docteur!... The Negro Resurrectionist!" (9). This breaks the traditional Dramatic theatrical structure by taking the audience out of the play before it's even begun and brings them to a point of recognition that this is indeed a play (Brecht 37). The play also proceeds in a series of scenes and vignettes, which are announced by other characters once they change. This allows audience members to not be fully immersed in the play, which in turn takes away their capacity for action; instead, it challenges the audience to be objects of inquiry and see the play's trajectory in bits and pieces rather than an immersive experience. The audience isn't necessarily watching to see *what* will happen, but *how and why* it unfolds.

Parks also creates platforms for the audience to question and study the world of the play, rather than accept it immediately. Through the creation of her vignettes, Parks shows Victorian society outside of Baartman's story that can frame how we look at Baartman's place in that society. Parks goes beyond presenting a plot line solely based on the Girl/the Venus' character but also creates a subplot that displays the society she was

living in. The play within a play, "For the Love of Venus," shows the audience the threat of racial otherness and racial objectification in Victorian society. The scenes that are a part of "For the Love of Venus" allow the audience to view another lens into the attitudes of Victorian society and how this information can impact how we view Baartman's presence within it. In including this play within a play, Parks offers her audience another opportunity to see *Venus* as a play within a play of the society in which the contemporary audience lives. This allows the audience to see how this play can still present a social commentary that affects them rather than lock the play in a vacuum that doesn't give the audience an opportunity to form connections.

But in telling Baartman's story, Parks doesn't want the audience to immediately see one character as the "good" and another character as "bad"; that would allow the audience to view the issues on stage specifically as the individual problems of Baartman and the other characters. Just as Brecht wants the audience to see a larger picture of the world when they attend the theatre, Parks allows her audience to see a larger picture of the society of which Baartman is a part. Parks achieves this larger picture by creating the Girl/the Venus as a fully-fledged character that has human wants and needs and is therefore culpable in her life choices. In Carol Schafer's article "Staging a New Literary History: Suzan-Lori Park's *Venus, In the Blood*, and *Fucking A,*" she suggests that the Venus "is a subject who acts rather than an object who is acted upon or oppressed by others" and therefore is complacent in choosing her fate (Schafer 185). The Girl/Venus should not be seen as simply a body that was oppressed, because she chose that oppression to try to get what she wanted, whether it was money or love. When the Girl is

asked by the Brother and the Man to come to England, they don't force her to say yes; the Girl enjoys the sound of being rich and the prospects of being a princess: "A princess overnight… I would be rich… very rich. Big bags of money!" (Parks 25-27). This sense of the Girl/the Venus pursuing what she wants when she can continues through the play, whether she is negotiating her pay from the Mother-Showman or pursuing the love of the ultimately unattainable Baron Docteur. There are many scenes where the Venus is groped and poked at in her cage. Throughout these physical advances on her body, the Venus stands nobly, which "is also the Venus' attempt to gain the love of her audience" (Mitchell 186). Whether the outcome is good or bad, the Venus remains complacent to her fate. At the same time, by continually connecting her choices to money, Parks encourages the audience to see how people can become trapped by the very systems that oppress them. Like the others, the Venus is enticed to commodify her own body in order to make money.

But again, Parks avoids blaming one person for the downfall of her character, so she imbues all her characters with human wants and human desires; just like the Girl/the Venus, they are all characters that "act" and are affected by their personal objectives. One specific example is when the Baron Docteur is confronted by the Grade-School Chum when the Venus becomes sick. When the Grade-School Chum demands he get rid of the Venus, the Baron Docteur tries to explain his love for her: "Shes my True Love… She'd make uh splendid wife" (142). This scene between the two men creates a new lens into the character of the Baron Docteur as more than just a man who objectified the Venus' body; he's a man who loved the Venus. It's up to the audience now to determine how

"love" is constructed and what society considers good "love." If the Baron Docteur did love the Venus, he would be acting against the societal norms of his time: loving a black "whore" rather than a white "Madonna." The audience can see the social difference of the love between the Baron Docteur and the Venus through the outrage of his collegue, the Grade-School Chum. This in turn gives an emphasis on how society impacts the character's decisions and how characters are acting based on external forces. Because Parks' characters display the imperfect human wants in an active social environment, the audience is further challenged to question not just the characters but how society acts upon them. This can lead to an easier understanding of how powerful society really is, a challenge Brecht encourages in his idea of Epic theatre.

Looking at Brecht's ideas for Epic Theatre and Park's theatrical construction of *Venus*, it is clear to see how Parks was influenced by Brecht's ideas to create thought surrounding the life of Saarjie Baartman. But how does this allow a modern day audience to question our present day society? In order to safely look at the issues in our present society, Brecht employs a strategy called historification, which encourages audiences to make parallels between the society of the play and the present day society the audience lives in (Wilson and Goldfarb 379). Looking at a society that is separate from one's own in a play offers a new vantage point to see the social issues that are timeless and still need to be addressed. Parks uses this tactic of historification in *Venus* by creating scenes that take place in a reversed sequence. As mentioned before, the play begins with the end of the Venus' life, "I regret to inform you that the Venus Hottentot iz dead" (Parks 11). In telling the Venus' story this way, Parks creates "what is behind… a component of both

the past and the future… [creating a] backward and forward movement of time and history" (Schafer 184-185). Within each retelling of the story, the Venus is "brought back to life," which defies the laws of time and mortality; because the time line of Venus' story is moving both forwards and backwards, it enters a time period of its own. This creates the ability for audiences to safely critique and create social parallels between the play and their own society.

Looking now at Parks' *Venus*, the audience is encouraged to question how the objectification of a woman who exists outside of gender and racial norms of a society still exists today. As I mentioned before, the criticism of Kim Kardashian's "Break the Internet" photoshoot seems a direct parallel. Like Baartman, Kim Kardashian cannot be seen as both a sexually alluring being (whore) and a mother. According to Emily Tess Katz's article "The Context of Kim Kardashian's Paper Mag Cover Makes It Art," there was specific outrage from *Glee* star Naya Rivera who left a comment on Kim's Instagram, "you're somebody's mother" (Katz 1). Like Baartman, Kim's story raises questions as to how complicit she is in her own objectification. In this case, unlike the Venus, Kim is directly receiving the profits from her image. However, her ability to choose to objectify and profit off her body was made based in part on her coming from a family of wealth and fame. The Venus had neither of those things, so her choice, as Parks suggests was limited. Moreover, Kardashian's actions reinforce the fetishization and commoditization of the female body, particularly for women of color. Her choices therefore do not exist in a vacuum but impact other women. Is this photoshoot then a step forward for women or a continuation of history?

vi. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the life of Saarjie Baartman, an African woman who, like Julia Pastrana, was sexually and racially objectified in life and in death. I've employed the same feminist view and racial view used in my Pastrana analysis, only instead to view Baartman's oversexualized body. Because of the sexual connotations of her uncontainable body, Baartman couldn't function as a proper female in Victorian society. Looking more specifically at her barbaric race, Baartman was also considered to be untamable and was therefore displayed as such: naked and in a cage for audiences to gawk at. Suzan-Lori Parks' play *Venus* allows Baartman's story to be told to present day audiences and in employing Brechtian techniques, turns the subject matter onto the audience in order to create social awareness on how these social norms, whether racial or sexual, still exist today.

IV: Staging *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World* and *Venus*

As a senior theatre major, I have the opportunity to stage scenes from these plays for my Senior Capstone, an event all senior theatre majors take part in before they graduate. This event allows seniors to create short theatre pieces that exemplify their theatrical training throughout their four years at Drew. I am taking this opportunity to stage scenes from both Prendergast's *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World* and Parks' *Venus*. Because I am a part of a bigger festival, I must work within their restrictions for my piece: my adaption can be no longer than 20 minutes, minimal budget, and only have a small group of actors. In staging scenes from these plays, I hope to challenge a present day audience about why our society objectifies women that have deviated from the social norm. In using Brectian techniques, I hope to turn the subject matter on the audience and see how their voyeurism plays into the continued objectification of socially "freakish" women.

i. Why Now?

Even before I knew about the plays written about them, Pastrana and Baartman have stories I found compelling and needed to be told. Looking back on solely their histories, these women's lives are shocking, unbelievable and sadly true. When I started to read about both of them two years ago, I felt a strange empathy towards them. As a woman living in present day, I understand how women are being observed in more ways

than Pastrana and Baartman would've thought: Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, to name a few platforms of social media. If a woman chooses to deviate from the norm and expose too much skin or not shave and take on a manly appearance, she is considered freakish. As mentioned before, Kim Kardashian's "Break the Internet" had an uproar of social backlash on the celebrity for her exposure of too much skin, especially since she was a mother. Because she was a mother, Kardashian was expected to act "good" and cover her body when instead, she acted "bad" and exposed her body. This display of being both a Mother yet also a sex symbol created an uncomfortable duality over a set of photos that didn't even come close to breaking the Internet. Looking at Kardashian's story, I (along with an article Telusma's article "Kim Kardashian Doesn't Realize She's the Butt of an Old Racial Joke") found eerie similarities to Kardashian's shoot and the Hottentot Venus; both women's bodies were displayed for their curves, creating their sexual objectification.

But society isn't only concerned in controlling the bodies that appear too sexual; society is still very much concerned in patrolling female bodies that also appear too masculine. As mentioned in my Introduction, the demand for women to remove hair from their bodies is the social norm of our present day society. If women choose not to alter their bodies, they must face these consequences. Feminist writer, photographer, and artist Petra Collins had her Instagram deleted for posting an image of her in a bikini. But unlike all the other hundreds of bikini images on Instagram, Collins' bikini body was unaltered: her pubic hair was exposed at the top and bottom of her bikini. Collins comments on this image in her Huffington Post article, entitled "Why Instagram Censored My Body":

> I did nothing that violated the terms of use [of Instagram]. No nudity, violence, pornography, unlawful, hateful or infringing imagery. What I did have was an image of MY body that didn't meet society's standard of "femininity"… my own unaltered state—an unshaven bikini line. Up until this moment, I had obviously seen and felt the pressure to regulate my body, but never thought I would literally experience it. (Collins 1)

Because Collins' body deviated from the present day social norm for women, specifically altering their bodies and hair removal, her Instagram was deemed "horrible" and "disgusting" (Collins 1). Collins uses her experience to create awareness for the bigger issue at hand, specifically why society chooses to monitor women's bodies and silence them if they deviate from the social norm. This issue is one that was present in the Victorian Era for both Baartman and Pastrana, who experienced the same silence and same objectification for displaying "other" qualities outside the social norm. This proves that present day society hasn't outgrown the ways we objectify women, whether it's because their bodies are too sexual or too masculine.

ii. Adapting the Scripts

Looking at both Prendergast's *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World* and Parks' *Venus*, I have explained how both plays are still relevant today. Even though they show the two stories of women who lived during the Victorian period, the two authors make their plays less about Baartman and Pastrana and more about the society that ostracized them. Not only that, but both authors also employ techniques in their writing and staging of their works that break through the time barriers that comfortably separate a modern audience from the historical subject matter. Because of this timeless message both plays hold, I

believe that both of these stories need to be told to a present day audience. They both show different ways women who deviate from the social norm, whether their bodies are too masculine or too sexual, need to be controlled by society. As explained before, society's desire to control women is still relevant today and I think in staging these pieces, they have the power to challenge people in how they are complicit in objectifying and ostracizing women today and how they view present day social norms designated for women.

Because I find both Pastrana and Baartman's stories dealing with very similar problems, I have decided to create a hybrid script that allows both stories to be told together. Looking at both Prendergast and Parks' plays, both scripts employ similar techniques that can be easily work hand in hand to create a larger picture of society. Both Pastrana and Baartman existed in the Victorian Era and looking at both their stories together will create a more cohesive picture of what Victorian society found acceptable in terms of gender norms. If these stories were told separately, it would suggest that both women existed in two separate societies: one that found an openly sexual female body unacceptable and the other that found a masculine female body unacceptable. In working with these two scripts, I will be choosing scenes from both to stage with interludes that reflect the world of a carnival. I will be setting up for my piece and opening with the men interacting with the audience and discussing the freaks that they are going to see Both scripts are set within a Victorian carnival, which also implicates the audience and their voyeur role in both plays as Parks and Prendergast had originally in their respective pieces.

In adapting these two scripts to function as one, I have decided to pick dialogue and scenes that exemplify how their bodies were objectified, more specifically in scenes in which the women are seeking to be loved. When I reviewed each play in their respective sections, both Pastrana and Baartman's characters wanted love and chose to exhibit their bodies in hopes to receive it. But the two characters the Venus and Julia turn to for love, specifically the Baron Docteur and Theodore Lent, view the two women's bodies with a different kind of love in mind. In the beginning of *The True History of the Tragic Life and Triumphant Death of Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World*, Lent sees Julia's body as a moneymaking opportunity that he wants to seize for himself. When Julia tells Lent that "money doesn't interest [her]", Lent promises his love to her: "Love you, really love you!" (Prendergast 12-13). Pastrana agrees to stay with him but in another scene, Lent drunkenly encounters Julia and it is clear to see that Lent is enamored with the ideas of money rather than Julia. His dialogue to Julia pressures her to look at money in a very sexual way: "Take the hard cash, Julia… Hold it in your palm like a lover… Squeeze as hard as you can" (Prendergast 22). In *Venus*, the Baron Docteur sees the Venus as medical opportunity to lay claim on writing about her unusual body. While he begins his exploration of her body, the two become sexual and the Venus sees their activity as an indication of his love. The Venus constantly asks the Baron Docteur "Love me?" (Parks 106). The Baron Docteur confirms this love, but vocalizes how he wishes he could have a presence like the Venus: "You were a sensation! I wouldnt mind a bit of that" (Parks 108). This scene articulates that the love the Venus has for the Baron is a very different kind of love than the Baron has for the Venus.

Besides the scenes of "love" between the couples, I also wanted to include dialogue that dispassionately discusses both of the women. For Julia, her first monologue in the play is text taken from a real encounter of her body and adapted for her character to tell the audience about her deformity: "My true history is that I am simply a hideously deformed young Mexican Indian woman" (Prendergast 9). This provides context for the audience about her physical body based on a primary source written about her. For the Venus, I turned to the Footnote scenes, specifically one that is a "Historical Extract: Category: Medical" (Parks 112). It specifically gives a "Detailed Physical Description of the So-Called Venus Hottentot," which is also quoted from a primary source from Baartman's actual body (Parks 113). In Parks' play, the Negro Ressurectionist reads this specific monologue but I've specifically split this monologue in two for the Venus and the Baron Docteur to share. Allowing the Venus to share medical details of her body mirrors Julia's first monologue, but also allows the Baron Docteur's feelings towards the Venus' body to also be better articulated. Working with these two main sections for my adaptation, the objectifying language towards the women's bodies and the scenes of "love", I am able to work with moments that capture the objectification of the two women's bodies as well as honor the Capstone time limit.

iii. Directing and Staging the Adaptation

As for directing the scenes, I have organized my script in a way that it lends itself to a Brechtian style and plan on presenting the piece as such. As I've mentioned before, I want to turn the subject matter onto the audience to create a dialogue about our society

today and how we objectify bodies that deviate from the social norm. In my previous chapters, I have shown how Parks and Prendergast employ Brechtian techniques that allow the audience to become more than a spectator that is worn down and unable to take action, simply receiving sensations from a play that doesn't challenge them (Brecht 37). Using Brechtian techniques, I hope to force the audience to look beyond the characters and look into the Victorian society that objectified these women.

To further the audiences' awareness into the connections between the Victorian society's norms and today's norms, I want to work specifically with aspects of Brecht's alienation effect. The alienation effect was a Brechtian technique that worked in such a way "that the audience [is] hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play" and open up their conscious planes to process the play (Brecht 91). Brecht argues "a production should actually force the audience to remain emotionally detached- or 'alientated'… from the dramatic action" (Wilson and Goldfarb 378). Brecht used the German term "Verfremdung" which means, "to make strange;" in creating a work that is indeed "strange," it is harder for the audience to become emotionally invested and passively watch as the story progresses. In alienating the audience from the traditional dramatic form, the audience is forced to process the play differently and in a more conscious way. In working with the alienation effect, the actors work simply with the "lightness and naturalness" of performance; they aren't trying to disguise their bodies or working in the illusion of the dramatic theatre form (Brecht 95). In fact, the actors are observing their characters against the society they are personally living in; "the… performer is in no trance… he does not mind if the setting is changed around him as he

plays" (Brecht 95). Alienation "demands a considerable knowledge of humanity and worldly wisdom and a keen eye for what is socially important", which puts more of an emphasis on the human experience rather than the specific experiences of the characters of the play (Brecht 95). This way, audiences cannot comfortably separate themselves from the subject matter of the play so as not to become mere spectators. They are forced to think about the society of the play through observation of the characters' actions.

An extension of Brecht's alienation effect is his historification effect, which was mentioned earlier. This technique allows an easier paralleling of "contemporary events… [with] historical ones" (Wilson and Goldfarb 379). In setting a play in a time period separate from the audience's present day, the audience is distanced from the dramatic action of the play. But in order to challenge the audience to not just separate themselves from the dramatic action of the play but also see how issues from other time periods still exist today, I want to make the world of the play "strange." As a director, I am combining bits of our present day world into the costume design and set design of my piece, allowing both worlds to exist onstage in the duration of my piece.

The use of the alienation effect and historification effect in my adaption will allow audience members to create connections between present day society and the stories of these Victorian freaks. An example I have is for my costumes: I plan to combine small Victorian pieces with present day fashion, allowing both present day society and Victorian society to coexist on the stage during my piece. For Julia Pastrana's character, I hope to have a Victorian skirt that is reflective of the one Pastrana wears in many of the images I have used throughout my paper. In order to make her manly, I want

to look at what clothing makes a woman look too masculine today: specifically wearing men's clothing or clothing that diminishes her femininity. The same would go for the Venus: I am working with my costume designer to find pieces similar to how she was advertised to look like yet also consider what our present day society considers too sexual for women. This allows for my audience to make connections between the Victorian era and today as well as work with a lower budget for my staging.

In addressing how to stage the freakish parts of these women, specifically Pastrana's beard and Baartman's large behind, I am also going to rely heavily on Brechtian techniques and costuming. Through my research thus far, I have shown that because these women deviated from Victorian social norms, they were made and presented as freaks by the Victorian society to deal with the anxiety their bodies caused. Society labeled them as freaks and objectified them for their otherness. In order to stage Pastrana and Baartman's otherness yet also humanize them, I want to work specifically in portraying them as naturally as possible. Because Brecht suggests using the actor's bodies and not creating an illusion with it, I am not going to use prosthetics to enhance my Venus' buttocks or Pastrana's facial hair. I want to humanize these women; I want to work with the normal bodies of my two actresses to embody these women's very human souls. As mentioned before, I will be using clothing that is presently questionable for women to wear today. This will allow the audience a present day connection to how uncomfortable Pastrana and Baartman's bodies were in Victorian society also make connections to how society still tries to control the female appearance, either by stating how a woman's outfit is too masculine or that they need to cover up.

I have chosen to have my adaption staged in a smaller more intimate space, specifically the Acting Lab. This space allows for the audience to be closer to the action of the piece and also allows my actors easier access to connect with the audience before and during the piece. The more ways I can involve the audience during the piece and keep challenging them to think about what they're watching in relation to their lives, the better. The Acting lab also has access to mirrors on the wall facing the audience, which I plan to use. The use of mirrors will add to my "strangemaking" approach to the piece, specifically in blurring the boundaries of where the actors function and where the audience functions. The actors will exist onstage yet interact with audience members in their world but when the actors turn towards the mirrors behind them, the audience will also be reflected in the mirrors along with the actors. This creates the illusion that the audience is also onstage, interacting with the world of the play. This allows another extension of the present day society to exist onstage with Victorian society, creating a world of the play that is indeed made strange.

iv. Conclusion

Even though I have big plans for my adaptation, I realize that twenty minutes doesn't create a lot of time for audience members to understand these women's stories and may not immediately be able to create connections between the Victorian society and how society treats women today. Looking at my process now that my staging has been completed, I think I did create a dialogue amongst my audience members about how these women were objectified. I have received feedback on how jarring and unsettling the

staging was, specifically in the scenes of love I chose to articulate the objectification of both Pastrana and Baartman. I was definitely nervous about how those scenes would hit audience members but the audience's reactions were exactly what I wanted them to be. After each performance, audience members discussed those unsettling feelings with me and wanted to know more about these women. Even after speaking with me, I had audience members researching these women on their own and educating themselves about their lives and burials. Because the senior capstone did not have a dramaturgy board to display information about Julia Pastrana and Saarjie Baartman, I took to social media before the Thursday and Friday evening shows. I wrote small blurbs about both women's life, specifically their exhibitions and their delayed burials, and included an image of Baartman and Pastrana on my Facebook. After people saw the show, I had them telling me that those blurbs posted on Facebook helped a lot in clarifying my piece and providing historical context. The blurbs also helped encourage people to attend the show and add their voices into the discussion about Pastrana and Baartman's lives. If I had the opportunity to move forward with the piece or had more time developing it, I would want to strengthen the connection between Pastrana and Baartman's stories to current stories that have the same issues, specifically Kim Kardashian's "Break the Internet" photoshoot or Petra Collin's Instagram photo. I think audience members understood the stories about Pastrana and Baartman, but I didn't received a lot of feedback on creating connections between present day and the world of the play.

As a theatre artist, I agree with Brecht in that theatre can serve a bigger purpose than mere entertainment; theatre can allow audiences to rethink our world and where

we're headed. I believe that Parks and Prendergast's plays can make a difference for present day audiences in introducing two women who were deviations outside of the Victorian social norms in ways that are still relevant to women today. Both of these plays can raise awareness about these women's lives and the harsh realities that come with their stories. Even though these women finally received proper burials in the late 2000s, the objectification and control of women who deviate from the social norms still exist today. In order to change these social norms, we must keep creating dialogue that educates society and humanizes those who cannot be properly contained in a social norm. As Collins states at the end of her article, "Even if society tries to silence you keep on going, keep moving forward, keep creating revolutionary work and keep this discourse alive" (Collins 1).

V. Conclusion

Through this thesis, I have addressed the objectification of two female bodies: Julia Pastrana and Saarjie Baartman. Both women were taken from their homes and displayed as freaks in Europe during the nineteenth century. Both women were deemed freakish because of their deviations from social norms, specifically gender and racial norms, of the time. Looking at the Prendergast and Parks' scripts and the techniques they employ, present day audiences can see parallels to the objectification of freakish female bodies of the past to present day. The objectification of women who deviate from the social norm of a given time period is still relevant in present day society. With my staging of the adaption of the two scripts, I hope to encourage audiences to humanize rather than objectify female bodies that differ from the social norms.

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Images

Image 1.1: "A 19th-century image of Julia Pastrana, touring as 'the ugliest woman in the world'". New York Times, February 2013. Print.

Image 1.2: “Miss Julia Pastrana, the Embalmed Nondescript”, *Penny Illustrated Paper* 21 (1 Mar. 1862)

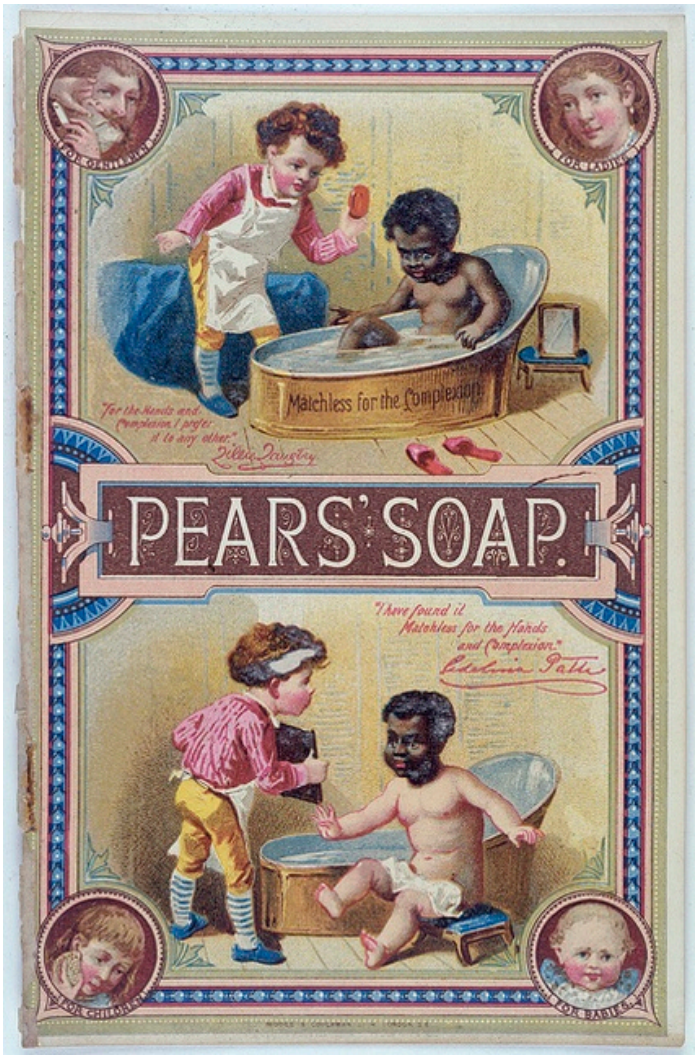

Image 1.3: Pear's Soap advertisement. Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, John Johnson Collection, Diptych of Black Boy and White Boy, Pears' Soap, Box 5

Image 2.2: William Heath, “The Three Graces”, hand colored etching, 1810

Copy of *Pastrana-Hottentot* hybrid script being used to Direct for
the community of Drew University, April 2015

POOR WOMAN.

Text taken from

THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE TRAGIC LIFE AND TRIUMPHANT
DEATH OF JULIA PASTRANA,
THE UGLIEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD by Shaun Prendergast
And
VENUS by Suzan-Lori Parks

Adapted by Catherine Spino

CHARACTERS:

RING LEADER 1/JULIA
RING LEADER 2/VENUS
CHORUS MEMBER 1/ THEODORE LENT
CHORUS MEMBER 2/ THE BARON DOCTEUR

SCENE 1: An Empty Black Box,

RING LEADER 2/ VENUS: The Ring Leader, later the Venus Hottentot!

CHORUS MEMBER 2/ THE BARON DOCTEUR: Chorus member, later the Baron Docteur!

CHORUS MEMBER 1/THEODORE LENT: Theodore Lent, later the Chorus Member!

RING LEADER 1/ JULIA: Julia Pastrana, the Ugliest Woman in the World.

Scene 2: JULIA PASTRANA

JULIA: My eyes are deep black, and somewhat prominent, and the lids have long, thick eyelashes; my features are simply hideous on account of the profusion of hair growing on my forehead, and my black beard; but my figure is exceedingly good and graceful, and my tiny foot and well-turned ankle, *bien chausse*, perfection itself. I have a sweet voice, great taste in music and dancing, and can speak three languages. I am very charitable, and give largely to local institutions from my earnings. Mr. Lent invents wild tales about my past, but my true history is that I am simply a hideous deformed young Mexican Indian woman.

CHORUS MEMBER 2: What does it see when it looks in the mirror?

JULIA: I never look in the mirror

CHORUS MEMBER 2: The voice is so soft and beautiful, get it to sing for us Lent

LENT: Suppose she won't sing?

CHORUS MEMBER 2: Beat the ugly bitch, we wanna hear it sing.

LENT: Be not afraid Julia,
Draw closer, closer.
Look into my eyes, see yourself reflected there.
Look at your eyes, Julia
Like glass.
Your face as solid as a stone
What are your dreams, Julia?
What are the hopes you hope
For you alone?

JULIA: To see the world

LENT: Tickets don't come cheap, Julia

JULIA: To fall in love

LENT: Love costs the earth, the wise man said.

JULIA: To have a child.

LENT: A bar of gold buys a lot of toys.

JULIA: I want a house with solid walls
To keep the world away
Others hate to look at me
I hate to listen to them
I can hear them cooking
I can hear them eating
I can hear them crying
I can hear them laughing
I can hear them living
I don't want to listen to them
I don't want to listen to them.

LENT: Then listen to me
Money in the wind, baby, there'll be
Money in the very air we breathe.

Took one look at you
Knew we belonged together,
Adam and Eve
Money from the sky Julia.
Coming down like rain
Falling on your face
Like a kiss, like a teardrop
Isn't it insane?
Money in the air, Julia,
Money in the wind
All your dreams are bought by it, sold for it
All your hopes are pinned
On the pound and the dollar
On the mark, on the lira
On the rouble, on the kroner, on the franc, on the guilder, on the ruppee, on the…

JULIA: Money doesn't interest me Mr. Lent.

LENT: We'll see about that later… for now I'm offering you the best deal you'll ever get.

JULIA: I've been dealt with ever since I was born…

Beat

Can I trust you?

LENT: Can you trust me?
How can you not trust me?
I love you Julia.

JULIA: Love me?

LENT: Love you

Beat.

Love you, really love you!
Love you for your own sweet sake.

JULIA: Love me as a lady?

LENT: As a lady for your own sweet sake!

JULIA: Like a prince in a fairy tale.

LENT: A handsome smiling prince.
On a beautiful white horse.

Scene transition: CHORUS

CHORUS 2: We've got mind-readers and Zulu dancers
And the man with elastic skin

RING LEADER 2: And black girls joined at the hip, born into slavery
When Millie smokes…

CHORUS 2: Christine coughs
When Christine drinks

RING LEADER 2: It's Millie gets tight

BOTH: And no-one can imagine how they make it through the night…

Scene 3: LENT

LENT: JULIA
Talking to yourself in the dark, first sign of madness. Thought I'd get forty winks before the show tonight. Don't mind me. So what you doing?

LENT is a little drunk, he sullenly undresses.

JULIA: I was reading.

LENT: Reading? Shakespeare again? Your nancy-boy poets?

JULIA: A letter from my Mother. She says a contract would…

LENT: Huh. A piece of paper. Don't trust paper, sweetheart, nothing written down on paper
can't be written in the soul.

JULIA: What about your precious money?

LENT: Money isn't just paper! Jeezez honey, money has a life of its' own! Money is beautiful!

JULIA: Beautiful?

LENT: Beautiful, Julia.

JULIA: I like that name, beautiful Julia. Is money as beautiful as Julia?

LENT: You're a big girl now, why don't you find out.

Beautiful Julia, take the money
You know you want it

JULIA: I'm scared. Treat me gently.

LENT: Can't be gentle, cash is hard.
Take the hard cash, Julia
Put your hand upon it
Hold it in your palm like a lover

JULIA: You know I always hold a flower in my hand

RING LEADER 2: Poor woman

LENT: Give me the flower and I'll give you something better.
Close your eyes Julia, close your eyes, and sit there in the darkness and feel the silver dollar in your hand,
The milled edges
The eagle
Squeeze as hand as you can
You cannot kill the eagle
Hold it, hard, harder, till your hand hurts
How does it feel in your hot little hand?

JULIA: It's cold.

LENT: Hard cash, cold cash
Raise it to your
Squat nose
Your wide squat nose
Your enormous nostrils
Raise a bank-note and smell it
Breathe it deep
Like fresh ground coffee beans
Like a baby's head
Like cocaine

JULIA: I cant smell anything

LENT: Put it to your lips, Julia
Up to your prognathous chin
Rub it slowly ‘gainst
The hairs of your moustache
The coarse and nappy hairs of your moustache
The thick and spiky shinning bristles of the beard
On your brown leather- skin

JULIA: I can feel it.

CHORUS MEMBER 1: Her body, preserved in formaldehyde, is in Norway, in Oslo. She was found in 1976. She is in a locked room, in a glass case. She is in darkness. Her skin is decayed.

RING MASTER 1: Her right arm lies on the floor in front of her. Her right eye is gone. No-one is allowed to see her. She is in darkness. She is alone. She was twenty six years old.

LENT: Take it in your mouth and taste it Julia,
You’re lucky,
Most women find their future in their skirts
A cunt’s a purse
But your fortune’s in your face.

Scene transition 2:

RING LEADER 1/ JULIA PASTRANA: Ring Leader, formerly Julia Pastrana!

CHORUS MEMBER 1/ THEODORE LENT: Chorus Member, formerly Theodore Lent!

BARON DOCTEUR/ CHORUS MEMBER 2: The Baron Docteur, formerly Chorus Member!

VENUS/ RINGER LEADER 2: The Hottentot Venus

Scene 4: VENUS intro

VENUS: A DETAILED PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SO-CALLED VENUS HOTTENTOT

“Her hair was black and wooly, much like that of the common Negro, the slits of the eyes horizontal as in Mongols, not oblique; the brows straight, wide apart and very much flattened close to the top of the nose, but jutting out at the temple above the cheekbones;

her eyes were very dark and lively; her lips blackish, terribly thick; her complexion very dark.

BARON DOCTEUR: Her breasts she usually lifted and tightened beneath the middle part of her dress, but, left free, they hung bulkily and terminated obliquely in a blackish areola about 1 and ½ inches in diameter pitted with radiating wrinkles, near the center of what was a nipple so flattened and obliterated as to be barely visible: The color of her skin was on the whole as a yellowish brown, almost as dark as her face.

VENUS: Her movements had rapidity and came unexpected calling to mind well, with all respect to her, the movements of a monkey. Above all, she had a way of pushing out her lips just like the monkeys doo. Her personality was sprightly, her memory good. She spoke low Dutch, tolerably good English— She danced after the fashion of her own country and played with a fairly good ear upon a little instrument she called a Jew's Harp.

BARON DOCTEUR: She had no body hair apart from a few short flecks of wool like that on her head, scattered about her pubic parts.

The wonders of her lower regions, will be fleshed out in greater detail at a later date".

CHORUS MEMBER 1: She gained fortune and fame by not wearing a scrap
Hidin only the privates lippin down from her lap
Where Death met her Death deathd her and left her to rot
Au-naturel end for our hot Hottentot

RING MASTER 1: And rot yes she would have right down to the bone
Had not the Docteur put her corpse in his home.
Sheed a soul which iz mounted on Satans warm wall
While her flesh has been pickled in Science Halls.

Scene 5:

BARON DOCTEUR: Cinq
Quatre
Trois
Deux
Un.

It's dark in here. Spooky.
Lets have a light

VENUS: Keep it dark.
Are yr eyes closed?

BARON DOCTEUR: Theyre closed.
Hurry up. Im eager.

RING LEADER 1: “In the Orbital Path of the Baron Docteur”

VENUS: Voilá. Open yr eyes.

Beat.

BARON DOCTEUR: Too dark to see.
Lie here beside me, Sweetheart.
Mmm. That’s good.

VENUS: Love me?

BARON DOCTEUR: I do
Ah, this is the life.

“My love for you is artificial.
Fabricated much like this epistle.
Its crafted with my finest powers
To last through the days and the weeks and the hours.”

I made it up myself
Just this morning.
You like it?

VENUS: Mmmmm.

Beat.

BARON DOCTEUR: You know what I want more than anything?

VENUS: Me.
Lets have so love.

BARON DOCTEUR: After you. Guess what I want.

VENUS: More me.
Kiss?

BARON DOCTEUR: Im an everyday anatomist
One in a crowd of millions

THE VENUS: Another kiss
Mmmmm that's good.
Sweetheart, like back down

BARON DOCTEUR: You were just yrself and crowds came running
I was fascinated and a little envious but just a little.
A doctor cant just be himself
No onell pay a cant for that
Imagine me just being me.

VENUS: Hahahahahaha

BARON DOCTEUR: What a strange laugh.

VENUS: Lie back down.
Hold me close to you. It's cold.
Love me?

BARON DOCTEUR: I do.

Beat.

BARON DOCTEUR: Most great minds discover something.
Ive had ideas for things but.
My ideas r—
(You wouldn't understand em anyway.)

VENUS: Touch me
Down here.

BARON DOCTEUR: In you, Sweetheard ive met my opposite-exact
Now if I could only match you

VENUS: That feels good.
Now touch me here.

BARON DOCTEUR: Crowds of people screamed yr name!

CHORUS MEMBER 1/RING MASTER 1/ BARON DOCTEUR: "Venus Hottentot!"

BARON DOCTEUR: You were a sensation! I wouldn't a bit of that.
Known. Like you!
Only of course, in my specific circle.

VENUS: You could be whatshisname: Columbus.

BARON DOCTEUR: That's been done.

VENUSL Columbus II?

BARON DOCTEUR: Don't laugh at me.

Beat.

BARON DOCTEUR: Here. Yr favorite: chockluts. Have some.

Beat.

You can't stay here forever you know.

VENUS: Capezzoli di Venere.
The nipples of Venus. Mmmmm. My favorite.

BARON DOCTEUR: Ive got a wife. You've got a homeland and a family back there.

VENUS: I don't wanna go back inny more.
I like yr company too much.
Besides, it was a shitty life.

Beat.

VENUS: Whatre you doing?

BARON DOCTEUR: Nothing

VENUS: Lemmie see.

BARON DOCTEUR: Don't look! Don't look at me.
Look off
Somewhere
Eat yr chockluts
Eat em slow.
Touch yourself.
Good.
Good.

He's masturbating. He has his back to her. He sneaks little looks at her over his shoulder. He cumms.

VENUS: Whyd you do that?

BARON DOCTEUR: Im polite.

Beat.

VENUS: Love me?

BARON DOCTEUR: Do I ever.

VENUS: More than yr wife?

BARON DOCTEUR: More than my life.
And my wife.
She and I are childless you know.

VENUS: I know.
These are yummy.

Love me?

BARON DOCTEUR: Yes.
You don't want to go home?

VENUS: Not inny more.

Love me?

BARON DOCTEUR: I do.

VENUS: Lie down.
And kiss me.
Here.
And here.
And here.
And here.
And here, you missed a spot.
Dearheart.

BARON DOCTEUR: Dearheart.

VENUS: You could discover me.

Beat.

CHORUS MEMBER 2: "Early in the 19th century a poor wretched woman was exhibited in England under the appellation of THE HOTTENTOT VENUS. With an intensely ugly figure, distorted beyond all European notions of beauty, she was said to possess precisely the kind of shape which is more admired among her countrymen, the Hottentots"

RING MASTER 2: The year was 1810, three years after the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade had been passed in Parliament, and among protests and denials, horror and fascination Her show went on. She died in Paris 5 years later: a plaster cast of her body was once displayed, along with her skeleton, at the Musee de l'Homme.

BARON DOCTEUR: I love you girl.

VENUS: Lights out.

END