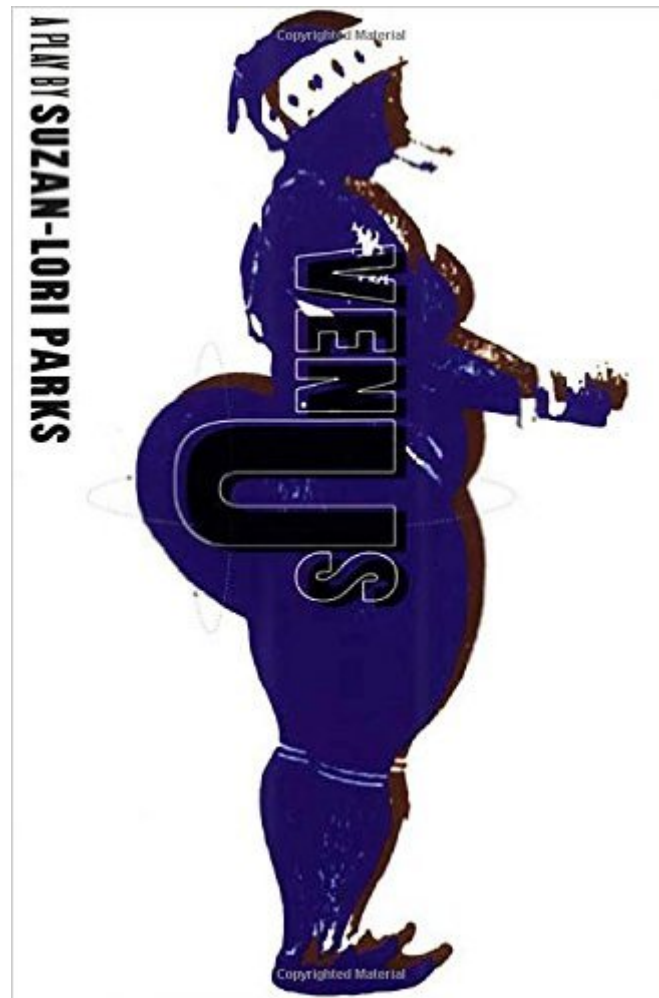


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# Venus



## Synopsis

Suzan-Lori Parks continues her examination of black people in history and stage through the life of the so-called "Hottentot Venus," an African woman displayed semi-nude throughout Europe due to her extraordinary physiognomy; in particular, her enormous buttocks. She was befriended, bought and bedded by a doctor who advanced his scientific career through his anatomical measurements of her after her premature death.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Early in the 19th century a poor wretched woman was exhibited in England under the appellation 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 most admired among her countrymen, the Hottentots."The awesome Suzan-Lori Parks here tells of Saartjie Baartman, a historical person, famous as The Venus Hottentot. Parks style reminds of vaudeville. Very stylized, fluid in the movement of actors from one character to another, in the direct connection with the audience, in the passage of time and in the presentational aspect of her stories. Through her style the play feels like a carnival show, with boasting and huckster cries, something that would work on a medieval wagon stage. Venus is about a young woman taken from her home where she was a servant in Africa in the early 1800's to England to be exploited as a sideshow freak/savage/heathen particularly because of her large butt. From there her fame and in some instances, fortunes grow until her death in 1810 in Paris. There is much in the way of historical referencing here, including what seem to be quotations

from medical, literary and personal journals of the day. But it seems Parks created this, because no bibliographic references are made. This is all the more impressive then, because Parks' spot on medical language denotes an era and an attitude. While her dialogue which is written in a sort of simple, phonetic, colloqueal style flows easily from the uneducated Venus and those witnessing her life, from The Negro Resurrectionist and the Chorus, to the educated Baron Docteur, whose double fascination (medical/sexual) with her gets the better of him and the worse of her.

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