

Diversity Literacy Week 10 – Post-colonialism & Xenophobia

Film Exercise – The Life of Sarah Baartman (1999)

Directed by Zola Maseko

“THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SARA BAARTMAN is the fascinating story of this Khoi Khoi woman who was taken from South Africa, and then exhibited as a freak across Britain. The image and idea of "The Hottentot Venus" swept through British popular culture. A court battle waged by abolitionists to free her from her exhibitors failed.”

“Using historical drawings, cartoons, legal documents, and interviews with noted cultural historians and anthropologists, THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SARA BAARTMAN deconstructs the social, political, scientific and philosophical assumptions which transformed one young African woman into a representation of savage sexuality and racial inferiority”

Extracts taken from <http://icarusfilms.com/new99/hottento.html>

Please read the questions below before the film starts. Think about the questions as you watch the film and think about how it relates to the material we have covered in class.

1. What was known about Sarah Baartman? What was the central focus of this knowledge?

2. Who was responsible for creating or producing this knowledge?

3. What do you think were the real effects / consequences of this knowledge on / for Sara Baartman and for constructions of black womanhood?

4. Whose interests did this knowledge serve?

5. What was/is **not known** about Sarah Baartman? Why did/do we not know the above about her?

6. Name key aspects of the historical context that shaped this process of knowledge production about Sarah Baartman?

