

Questions/Summary	Notes ①
• Is Venus the documented name of the girl or is it given to her by the author? • Are we even able to recount the history of Venus and others like her when history has erased everything that makes them human? • Is writing and documenting history better than not knowing? • Should we leave the facts alone instead of bringing to light the worst experiences of Venus' life? • Is it unjust to tell only the suffering side of history without trying to figure out the human side as well? Short Summary: Throughout the article Hartman discusses how there are two ways of telling the same story depending on the point of view of the storyteller. She goes into more detail discussing the factual/ history side vs. the more "humane" side of the story.	• Venus is not known • Very little record of her • We can only know what happened to her based on a ledger • Her life serves as an example for many girls like her with little to no record left of them • Author wants to tell Venus's story w/o her own bias effecting the story • Author writing history in a present-day narrative in an attempt to replicate a "free state" • Attempting to free the slaves from how history remembers them • Their existence is based solely on the violence done against them • Narrating the story is hard because we tend to romanticize it in order to console ourselves to make up for the violence • History= facts+ archives+ evidence • Nothing recorded except violence • Their only factual identity is the cause and method of their suffering and death • Parameters of history: very strict • Archives of history come from a pace of violence and suffering • B/c we can't know what happened outside of the archives the truth behind the narrative is limited • By reconstructing the past, the author is trying to point out the violence that happens today

Summary/Reflection:

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The article "Venus in Two Acts" by Saidiya Hartman brings to light the experiences and hardships many enslaved women had to face. She focuses on the story of a girl named "Venus" to discuss the lack of archives and evidence regarding their lives. Hartman stresses the fact that there is little to no evidence recorded of Venus which results in her story being lost. The only documented evidence of Venus' existence reflects the violence and suffering she went through; therefore, Hartman expresses how she struggles to tell the story without her own bias clouding her writing. However, the author also explains how this is hard to do since writers tend to romanticize stories in an attempt to 'makeup' for the violence. Hartman then discusses how history has very strict parameters, therefore it is impossible to describe who Venus was outside of what she suffered through. Writing about the feelings Venus, and many others like her, experienced and explaining their strength would be classified as fiction; due to the fact that there is no way of proving the accuracy of those words. People who read the archives will never be able to understand the extremes the enslaved girls and women had to go through. Their suffering is forever etched into the archives of history and those are the only facts that they would later be remembered by. There are always two ways of recounting history depending on the point of view of the writer. How the subject is portrayed is based on the person describing it. Although history strives to be a collection of facts

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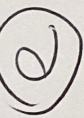
derived from evidence, there is inevitably a slight bias in the archives which stems from the fact history is written by the people in power.

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QUESTIONS/SUMMARIES	NOTES:
.. Thesis statement	- "In writing at the limit of the unspeakable and the unknown, the essay mimes the violence of the archive and attempts to redress it by describing as fully as possible the conditions that determine the appearance of Venus and that dictate her silence" (Hartman, 1). - The primary presentation in archives of Atlantic slavery and of black women's body is portrayed through the background and painful experience of a captive girl named Venus (however, there is not much information to support Hartman's complete interpretation).
- Key Point	- Black women bodies were constructed and treated as a commodity. This act is a white supremacy and exercise of racism and sexism for men to continue attaining their power and ownership of their slaves.
- Argument	- A History of Failure: Hartman realizes that it is beyond her ability to continue her research in history and narrative of slavery and in black women bodies because of the innumerable historical gaps, "Is it possible to exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive?" (Hartman, 11) - Hartman instead, focuses her attention on the boundaries in the unattainability of the complete historical record and indicates the archive in a lively and transitional process that is still shaping our history continuously.

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Summary/Reflection:



In Hartman's, "Venus in Two Acts", a discussion of the lost history that can't be completely disclosed due to the omission is explored and how writing about the previous history of the lives of slavery, black feminism, and diaspora, is like writing the impossible. Regardless of her approach, Hartman describes that it is a challenging pool to dive into and in order to engage deeply and acquire specific knowledge, it is practically an inevitable outcome that will contain the absence of accuracy in terms of representation. The content of 'A History of Failure' was very interesting and eye-catching for me because it further explains Hartman's limitation and annoyance to her inability to continue her story in how the play of power murdered Venus that prevents to incorporate a better understanding of the full picture to the scenes. It is unfortunate that histories are always lost, erased or censored, especially when it comes to the topic of women and people of color, however I appreciated Hartman's' viewpoint in examining this exclusion, not as a forgetfulness or negligence, but rather a method to approach in a different perspective to analysis and a process in scholarly interpretation in representing violence and rethinking the relationship of intersectionality, violence, racism, and black feminism.

QUESTIONS/SUMMARIES	NOTES:
-In the intro of the book, there is this statement of "we." Berry and Gross state: "Here we lift the chains...we spent much of our early childhoods...and we were reared in different kinds of families.." (ix). Who is the we? Just the authors? Black people, African-diasporic identifying individuals, African-Americans? -I'm a bit confused at their differentiations between terms regarding slave vernacular. Isn't the term "enslaver" part of the larger group of "enslavers"? Also, regarding "slaveholder," what does "someone who holds another person in slavery without the full power of a system to support the practice?" Meaning a system that has to accept slavery as a practice is the only way that term can be applied? Or is this more specific for the context of their book specifically? -I noticed that both chapters start with a story of some sorts. Was this done on purpose? If so, I enjoyed that as a stylistic choice!	-Begins book with a descent back into history; introduction scene feels reminiscent of a novel -States that "maria's challenge" is what drives the book -In the author's note, they tell a bit of back story as to who they left out and why; focused on including information from the voices of Black women -Authors want the book to be a "new kind of survey" of Black women's history, not their "the definitive history" (xi). -They explained their usage of the terms surrounding African-Americans, Black, slaveholders, enslavers, enslaver, and slaveholder -Starts with Nannie's story for the first chapter -The quote in the beginning was very intentional. I feel like it is part of the thread that weaves the whole book together: the strength of the modern Black woman will shine no matter what tribulations our ancestors had to overcome. -Authors are going to be using present examples to fill in gaps of history -There was a focus on how Black women were essential to the slave business and they economy; acknowledges the negativity and repercussions from history

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-There was mention of violence, did they choose not to expand on it? Are they going to expand more in the rest of the book

-The first chapter felt a bit disjointed which we mentioned in class. I think it's due to their desire to mash all the topics off the rest of the book in one chapter. I would have liked a little bit more explanation on their statements about things only briefly mentioned like violence, R. Kelly, and how criminalization and incarceration has affected Black women. I know they were introducing their topics, but I hope they expand on each and every point they mentioned because they were all too brief to be profound or thought-provoking.

-They do a great job of stitching in and connecting the dots in places I haven't thought of. I loved the mention of Grace Wisher as a young entrepreneur, paving the way for other Black girls.

-They continuously have the statement "told by Black women themselves" and I really like the idea of the primary sources they're using coming directly from the source they're talking about.

-They mention cultural appropriation and how the world's view of us is often skewed; we are

-They identify 7 central themes: "travel, motion, movement, and migration fundamentally underscore this history, as Black women's travails have...influenced cultural, political, and legal practices" (5).

-Focus on activism through resistance, entrepreneurship, the arts, and sexual practices

-First chapter concludes with the authors stating that they hope that their approach at a holistic display of Black women includes them taking advantage of historical and archival records online

-Near the end they note the gargantuan nature of a task such as this, especially because most archives are dominated by a lens of whiteness