

# BLACK ANALITY

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In her foundational article “Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality,” Evelyn Hammonds analogizes black women’s sexuality to a “black hole,” a space that appears empty but is actually “dense and full.”<sup>1</sup> If black female sexuality is a complex and “full” site, it requires critical practices that “make visible the distorting and productive effects these sexualities produce in relation to more visible sexualities,” and that insist on black female *wholeness*.<sup>2</sup> Hammonds’s work also references another meaning of “black hole,” the specter of black female genitalia, the fictive space that has long marked black female sexuality as deviant. How, she asks, does black female sexuality become imagined as a site of difference, as *the* site of difference, and how does the “black hole” become the location of imagined difference?

This essay attends to the “other” black hole—the one that is both overdetermining and undertheorized—and asks how black sexualities generally, and black female sexualities particularly, become tethered imaginatively, discursively, and representationally to the anus. In other words, I ask how the black female anus acts as a significant space through which black sexual difference—and blackness more generally—is both imagined and represented. In this essay, I develop the term *black anality* to describe how black pleasures are imagined to be peculiarly and particularly oriented toward the anus, and thus as peculiarly and particularly attached to *anal ideologies* including *spatiality*, *waste*, *toxicity*, and *filth*. While I am interested in the production and circulation of anal ideologies and how these ideologies limit black sexual freedom, I also examine moments where black female bodies can attach themselves to these ideologies in ways that engender delight in blackness itself. That is, this essay is not simply an exposé that reveals how anal ideologies constrain and violate black female bodies. Instead, I examine how black women can strategically deploy anal ideologies to expose the kinds of pleasures black subjects can take *in* blackness—its hyperboles and painful

fictions—or to expose anal ideologies themselves, revealing how blackness is constructed and produced alongside (and inside) the anal opening.<sup>3</sup>

My interest in examining the centrality of the anus to conceptions of black female sexual difference, and to conceptions of blackness more generally, both builds on and departs from black feminist scholarship. Black feminist theory has long argued that the buttocks are *the* location of imagined black sexual difference: black women's sexual excess is thought to be located in their spectacular buttocks, and black male desire for the buttocks is often taken as evidence of what Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman calls a "cumulative and widespread racial and cultural retardation."<sup>4</sup> This interdisciplinary body of scholarship is indebted to Sander Gilman's "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature." Gilman argues that Saartjie Baartman, the so-called Hottentot Venus, became the preeminent symbol of racial-sexual difference in the nineteenth century and that her buttocks were imagined as *the* loci of racial difference.<sup>5</sup> He writes, "When the Victorians saw the female black, they saw her in terms of her buttocks and saw represented by the buttocks all the anomalies of her genitalia. . . . Female sexuality is linked to the image of the buttocks, and the quintessential buttocks are those of the Hottentot."<sup>6</sup> Gilman reveals the metonymic work of Baartman's buttocks: Baartman's buttocks represented Baartman, the buttocks represented excessive black sexuality, and Baartman represented all black women.<sup>7</sup>

Baartman's body, which Gilman revealed to be a "master text" of difference in the nineteenth century, has again become a "master text," one that black feminists use to theorize the continued violence that the dominant visual field inflicts on black female flesh.<sup>8</sup> Black feminists—in varied ways—have drawn on Gilman's work to dispel the notion that the buttocks are merely a neutral body part and to show that, as Patricia Hill Collins argues, "a simple Google search of the term *booty* should dispel doubts—many of the websites clearly link Blackness, sexuality, and African American women."<sup>9</sup> These scholars emphasize that the buttocks overdetermine conceptions of black female sexuality and that the butt remains, as Deborah E. McDowell notes, "the most synecdochical signature of the 'black female' form."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, scholars including Collins, Janell Hobson, Lisa Collins, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Deborah Willis have all, albeit in very different ways, traced contemporary cultural preoccupations with black women's buttocks to "a history of enslavement, colonial conquest and ethnographic exhibition—[which] variously labeled the black female body "grotesque," "strange," "unfeminine," "lascivious," and "obscene."<sup>11</sup> Scholars regularly draw connections between Baartman and other black women whose buttocks have func-

tioned as objects of cultural fascination, including Josephine Baker, Lil' Kim, and more recently, Jennifer Lopez (who, despite being Latina, is interpreted through the lens of the Hottentot Venus).<sup>12</sup> This body of scholarship has produced certain analytics that now predominate in the study of black female sexualities: *spectacularity*, *excess*, *grotesquerie*, and *display*.<sup>13</sup>

Even as the buttocks act as an analytic centerpiece of black feminist theorizing on sexuality, visual culture, and sexual politics, many black feminist scholars suggest that the complex cultural meanings attached to the black female buttocks require “further investigation” and remain understudied.<sup>14</sup> Abdur-Rahman notes, “There is a dearth of research on the particular significance of black women’s asses in popular media culture. . . . Very little attention is paid to the implication of this ass-centricity on wider conceptions of black sexuality and identity, including for black men who are pathologized for desiring black women’s purported excessive asses.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Hobson notes, “the meaning assigned to this aspect [the buttocks] of the black female body has a long and complex history, a history worthy of further investigation.”<sup>16</sup> Yet I argue that rather than focus more attention on the buttocks—attention that often serves only to reify the buttocks as a material site of difference—black feminist theory can productively shift *inward* toward the black female anus, interrogating the meanings generated in and through this space, and exploring how black sexualities are imaginatively and representatively linked to the anal opening.

Indeed, considering black anality—and how “black” and “anal” are often rendered synonymous on black female flesh—opens up a set of new analytics for black feminist theory: *waste*, *toxicity*, and *filth*. Moreover, considering the *spatiality* of the anus allows black feminist scholars to consider how black female sexuality is imagined to be rooted in (and perhaps generative of) certain kinds of filthy spaces, particularly the ghetto. Importantly, these new analytics open up ways to understand black sexualities that prevailing analytics focused on excess cannot fully theorize: how black sexuality, for example, is imagined as dirty (and here, I mean not just metaphorically but literally); how black sexuality is posited as a formation akin to the ghetto: toxic, filthy, and nonreproductive; and how black sexuality is imagined as wasteful. Moreover, these new analytics produce a shift away from a black feminist preoccupation with the visual register, a location that has been imagined to function as the preeminent site of violence, as the locus of the incessant tethering of black female bodies to conceptions of excess.

To study the conflation of “black” and “anal,” this essay performs a close reading of contemporary digital black pornographies, a site where the language of “black holes”—“White Poles in Black Holes,” “White Schlongs in Black Holes,”

“Dicks in Black Holes,” “Black Holes for Black Poles,” and “Black Hole Gets Worked”—is omnipresent, and where “black” and “anal” shore each other up both discursively and representationally. The market in black pornographies includes an abundant traffic in images of black anuses, particularly black female anuses.<sup>17</sup> In a pornographic marketplace where both “black” and “anal” are popular genres, the merger—or, as I argue here, synonymy—of black *and* anal is fertile representational ground. Indeed, the question that animates my inquiry is how do black heterosexual pornographies visually combine black and anal, representing a preeminent and understudied racial fiction, the notion that black sexualities are distinctively attached to the anal opening? And what are the racial meanings produced in pornographic texts that insistently return to the black female anus as a critical site of pleasure, peril, and curiosity?

Though I use an archive of contemporary black pornographies to explore the representation of black anality, my claim is *not* that black anuses are the only ones represented on the pornographic screen, nor is my investment in asking how black anuses are represented differently than other anuses on the pornographic screen. That is, the essay is not a comparative treatment of how anal pleasures and perils are represented. Instead of presuming that pornography treats black female bodies—or anuses—*worse*, a term that Angela Harris critiques, I ask about the specific strategies that black pornographies deploy to shore up the synonymy of black and anal, and suggest that tracing these strategies is crucial for understanding how “black” and “anal” are linked outside the pornographic lexicon, and for understanding how conceptions of blackness are produced and reproduced in and through black female anuses.<sup>18</sup>

If my work pushes the borders of black feminist scholarship, it also engages queer theory, which has, in varied ways, emphasized the queerness of blackness.<sup>19</sup> While I draw on an interdisciplinary body of work that has marked the queerness of blackness, I depart from that tradition, instead drawing on Abdur-Rahman’s insight that “notions of an ass-centered or generally anal sexuality haunt *even heterosexual desiring and coupling* between black people.”<sup>20</sup> I read the construction of black anality alongside the spectacular discursive heterosexualization of anal sex while considering the role that racialized pornography has played in both shoring up the heterosexualization of black sexualities *and* unsettling it.<sup>21</sup> I situate the pornographic representation of black anality alongside a veritable industry in heterosexual anal pedagogies: texts instructing heterosexual women on how to enjoy anal sex, texts instructing heterosexual men on how to enjoy being anally penetrated by their female partners, texts instructing black women on how to enjoy the “backyard boogie,” and popular articles normalizing heterosexual

anal sex.<sup>22</sup> My claim is not that heterosexual subjects have only recently started pleurably practicing anal sex; rather, I argue that the discursive and representational regimes surrounding heterosexuality newly and insistently include anal sex, emphatically claiming the practice as part of a normative heterosexual repertoire. My investment in considering the construction of black sexualities as anal is situated in a moment where anality is attached to heterosexuality—and to black heterosexuality—in newly emphatic ways.

This essay unfolds in two parts: first, I place my work in conversation with other anal theorists, showing how my investment in black anality both builds on and departs from existing scholarship. The second part of the essay mobilizes the theoretical framework I develop to perform close readings of images from the digital black pornographic archive. My close readings focus on two representational modes through which blackness and anality become tethered: the production of anal space as analogous to ghetto space, and the representation of black sex as wasteful.

### Theorizing Black Anality

In constructing a theory of black anality, I use what Gayatri Gopinath terms a “scavenger methodology”: I track the ghosts of black anality that haunt the scholarly archive and forge continuities between theoretical traditions still constructed as separate, namely, black feminist studies and queer theory.<sup>23</sup> In doing so, I strategically pull from the work of several anal theorists—Leo Bersani, Darieck Scott, Richard Fung, and Kathryn Bond Stockton—to heed Abdur-Rahman’s plea that we develop a rigorous understanding of the mechanisms through which black sexuality is posited as “generally anal.”<sup>24</sup> My work, though, is not simply a weaving together of the strands of various scholarship; instead, in this section of the essay, I draw on this varied interdisciplinary scholarship to fashion a theory that can analyze how “black” and “anal” are imagined as synonymous representationally, discursively, and ideologically. It is this theory—one attentive to the particular ways that “black,” “female,” and “anus” align—that informs the close readings in the essay’s second half.

Bersani’s “Is the Rectum a Grave?,” perhaps one of the most canonical pieces on anality, both examines the profound stigmatization of gay men’s imagined enjoyment of anal sex and reveals the potentially redemptive aspects of the anal opening. Bersani argues that the pathologizing of gay male anal sex is analogous to the pathologizing of prostitution and asserts that “the public discourse about homosexuals since the AIDS crisis began has a startling resemblance . . . to

the representation of female prostitutes in the 19th century ‘as contaminated vessels, conveyancing ‘female’ venereal diseases to ‘innocent’ men.’”<sup>25</sup> In both cases, gay men and prostitutes are imagined to “spread their legs with an unquenchable appetite for destruction.”<sup>26</sup> Gay men, Bersani asserts, are representationally and ideologically feminized, since the state of being penetrated, and the state of being open to penetration, is culturally and ideologically equated with female “powerlessness,” with a willingness to “abdicate power.”<sup>27</sup> What Bersani shows is that, as Janet Halley notes, “in misogyny, in anti-gay-male homophobia, *and* in gay male erotic longing, the vagina and the anus are figured as sexually insatiable and as animated erotically by a desire for annihilation.”<sup>28</sup>

If Bersani reveals that gay men are culturally feminized, he also positions the (male) anus as an entry point into a kind of productive and redemptive passivity. He writes:

Gay men’s “obsession” with sex, far from being denied, should be celebrated—not because of its communal virtues, not because of its subversive potential for parodies of machismo, not because it offers a model of genuine pluralism to a society that at once celebrates and punishes pluralism, but rather because it never stops re-presenting the internalized phallic male as an infinitely loved object of sacrifice. Male homosexuality advertises the risk of the sexual itself as the risk of self-dismissal, of *losing sight* of the self, and in so doing it proposes and dangerously represents *jouissance* as a mode of asceticism.<sup>29</sup>

Bersani proposes an anal ethics where the imagined location of gay male shame—the anal opening—is a site of productive and transgressive self-shattering, and where the rectum acts as a grave where ideas of selfhood are productively—and perhaps pleasurably—buried. Of course, the kind of redemptive and promising self-shattering that Bersani traces seems exclusively attached to gay men’s anuses, and the possibility that female anuses could also be locations of this transgressive self-shattering remains untheorized.

Richard Fung’s “Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn” also turns its attention to the cultural meanings of the anus, yet theorizes pornographic productions of racialized analities. Fung carefully traces the racialization of the “bottom” and argues that on the pornographic screen, “Asian and anus are conflated” such that pornography “privilege[s] the penis while always assigning the Asian the role of the bottom.”<sup>30</sup> In short, pornography feminizes Asian men—here, Fung sounds in the register of Bersani—such that Asian

becomes shorthand for “bottom.” Where Bersani sees anal penetration as a locus of productive self-shattering, Fung sees painful humiliation, racism, and the production of racialized economies of desire that “secure a consensus about race and desirability that ultimately works to our [Asian/American men’s] disadvantage.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Fung expands his critique of Asian men’s imagined femininity beyond pornography, treating sex itself as *both* “a source of pleasure” and “a site of humiliation and pain,” and calls for an “independent gay Asian pornography,” one that would contain an expanded and broad conception of the erotic. My work draws on Fung’s insights that the anus is racialized terrain, that it is a location in and through which imagined racial differences are produced. Yet unlike Fung, I ask how *women’s* anuses can become sites of racial-sexual meaning making, and examine how “black” and “anus” get conflated and rendered synonymous producing economies of desirability and degradation.

Like Bersani, Scott examines the productive and potentially pleasurable location of the bottom. For Scott, though, “bottom” refers to “*both* the nadir of a hierarchy (a political position possibly abject) and . . . a sexual position: the one involving coercion and historical and present realities of conquest, enslavement, domination, cruelty, torture, and so on.”<sup>32</sup> Bottoming, then, is not simply about an anus that is penetrated but also about social subordination, and quotidian and spectacular acts of racial violence. For Scott, the “bottom” is a site of black pain, but it is also a locus of a “counterintuitive black power,” and complex black pleasures.<sup>33</sup> His work carefully traces uncomfortable moments when black men take pleasure in bottomness—in both sexual and racial humiliation and degradation—and locate power in abjection.

For Scott, these bottom positions—what he terms the “special intimacy of blackness with abjection, humiliation, defeat”—are deeply gendered.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the “counterintuitive” black power that his book exposes seems to be one that black *men* can put to use. He notes the centrality of men to his study:

The abject as a mode of working with blackness need *not* necessarily privilege masculinity, vexed or otherwise, nor need it center male actors, subjects, or characters—though this study does both. It does both because it originates in a conversation with work in the fields of gay male and black queer studies, and with the study of black masculinity having its origins in black feminist critiques of masculinism, and also because of the usual essentially arbitrary limitations on project conceptualization (an arbitrariness that cannot but betray a masculinist tilt on my part, at least with regard to this project).<sup>35</sup>

Though Scott acknowledges that the bottom powers and pleasures he traces *could* be experienced by black women, they remain the largely absent subjects of his book.<sup>36</sup> If *fuckedness* is a location of both pain and redemptive possibility, Scott's book begs the questions: What are the ways that black women's sexualities and subjectivities are tethered to the anal opening, and what are the perils and freedoms that come from that attachment? What are the bottom pleasures, pains, and powers that black women experience? And in what ways is blackness constituted by black women's imagined "intimate" attachment to the anus? My work, then, takes Scott's investment in the messy nexus of power, pleasure, and anal politics and centers the subjects whom his book largely ignores, asking about the distinctive ways that black women's bodies become attached to anal ideologies.

If my close readings are informed by the work of three preeminent scholars of (male) anality who examine the pleasures and pains of bottom locations, they are particularly indebted to Kathryn Bond Stockton's work on the "switchpoints" among black, queer, and anal, and her investment in carefully tracing black anal sexual economies and examining the construction of black anal spaces. Stockton's project *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame* asks about the value of debasement and examines "why certain forms of shame are embraced by blacks and queers, and also black queers, in forceful ways."<sup>37</sup> My work is particularly indebted to her reading of Toni Morrison's *Sula*, which treats Morrison as an anal theorist (effectively placing Morrison in conversation with Freud) who draws connections between "the bias against queer anality (and against its pleasures)" and the "stigma of people who live at the bottom of an economic scale."<sup>38</sup> Stockton's point of departure is an analysis of the name of the neighborhood that is at the centerpiece of *Sula*: the Bottom. For Stockton, the Bottom links the imagined filth of both queer sex and black social and economic marginality. In short, the Bottom offers a theory of anality, one where the anus becomes a lens through which one can read "major patterns in black history, black labor history, black folks' migrations, signs of black gender, and the tender matter of racial castration," and one that links black space, black sexualities, racial and economic marginality, and queer pleasures.<sup>39</sup>

Like Stockton, I use the anus as a window through which one can theorize race-making and racial-sexual economies, and through which one can imagine and theorize the construction of racially marked space. I draw on her interest in the Bottom—or the anus—as space, as queer pleasure, as site of shame, and as locus of surprising power, yet my interest is in how a particular archive (digital black pornographies) *produces* the "switchpoints" that Stockton describes, how it representationally tethers "black" and "anal." In short, I ask how black pornog-



raphies represent the anus—the Bottom—as a passageway through which black pleasures, perils, and pathologies are made visible. Unlike Stockton, though, I am invested in treating race and sexuality as coconstitutive categories; while Stockton positions race and sexuality as two discrete structures that meet in historically contextual and dense “switchpoints,” my investment in black anality follows Scott’s call to “consider how the history that produces blackness is a sexual history.”<sup>40</sup> In short, my investment in black feminist theory, particularly intersectionality, leads me to read black anality as a site where race and sexuality are made and represented together.

### **Spectacular Anuses**

In this essay I treat the practice of searching for “black pornography” as a quintessentially ordinary practice, and the images that arise after searching for “black” (or “ebony”) and “anal” generate an archive of ordinary black pornographies. I am distinguishing these pornographies from the host of feminist and queer pornographies that scholars often examine, including pornographic work by Candida Royalle, Annie Sprinkle, Madison Young, and Buck Angel; of course, this body of feminist and queer pornographic work is significant. Yet my contention is that feminist theory and queer theory have often turned their attention to this archive rather than the archive of ordinary pornography to underscore how the genre conventions of the hard core can be imbued with feminist sensibilities. Instead, I look at the proliferation of black pornographies that have come to shape daily experiences of netscapes: I mine the archive of the ordinary to determine how “black” and “anal” get representationally tethered. The archive that I am drawing on is also ephemeral: new clips are uploaded and tagged, older ones are removed, websites change, viewer comments are added or flagged, and sites are edited and curated, changing even over the course of the day. I highlight the archive’s ephemeral nature both to underscore what affect theorists like Ann Cvetkovich have argued—that our understanding of an archive must shift to capture the fleeting, the transitory, the unstable—and to offer a sense of the digital universe my archive is part of, one where the web links that I cite in my footnotes might be disabled or removed long before this article goes to press.<sup>41</sup>

The clips that I analyze are all located on free websites that archive pornographic clips from myriad other websites. My archive includes two regularly updated websites, Pornhub.com, a site that archives pornographic clips from a host of other sites, and GhettoTube.com, which promises “Nasty ghetto bitches in free black porn & ebony sex.” New clips are added multiple times a day; viewers

rate the clips, and the site tracks the most commonly viewed clips (e.g., “Beauty Dior Works Her Phat Ass,” a clip uploaded on April 22, 2013, had 1,443,970 views on the day that I checked). I also reference Ghettopain.com, which promises “the most extreme free black porn” and houses 23,548 “extreme black sex movies”; tastyblacks.com, which reminds visitors that “our freaky black ghetto hoes will make your cock hard”; and pornebony.org, which promises “thousands of quality ebony porn videos with categories like ebony ass, ebony pussy, black lesbians, ebony amateurs, . . . ghetto ebony porn, ebony booty, and lots of others.”

This portion of the essay closely reads this archive to trace two representational modes through which black anality is reproduced. First, I examine how black pornography constructs the anus as a racialized space, one analogized to other racially marked spaces. In particular, I interrogate how the language of “ghetto,” which permeates black pornographies generally and black anal pornography specifically, is produced in and through the location of the anus. My emphasis on the anus and the ghetto as analogous racialized spaces indexes a larger argument: that analyses of black sexualities rarely attend to the spatial constructions of black sexuality and the host of ways that black sexualities are imagined to be pathologically related to spatial formations. Second, I examine how black sexuality is constructed as wasteful through its intimate connection with the anus. Here, I attend to how black sexualities are constructed as scatological and filthy, as nonreproductive, and as excessively capitalistic.

In a pornographic marketplace organized by race, the term *ghetto*—a term that permeates the digital pornographic archive—marks clips as part of a black pornographic market. “Fat Ass and Boobs Ghetto Fucking,” “Hot Ass Ghetto Sluts Rammed,” “Ghetto Hoe Riding with Big Round Ass,” and “Big Butt Phat Ghetto Afro Hoe Rammed” all use the language of “ghettoness” to signify blackness. Of course, the term *ghetto* is used in myriad pornographic films that do not represent anal sex; yet my claim is that in black anal pornographies, the anus becomes the material space that links “ghetto” and “black.” Black pornographies represent the anus—particularly the black female anus—as a racially marked *sexual-spatial* formation that both references other racially marked spaces, particularly the ghetto, and that allows an uninterrupted view of those racially marked spaces. Black women’s anuses become representational passageways—or what Hortense Spillers would term “vestibules”—through which viewers are allowed access to racially marked spaces.<sup>42</sup> The anus, then, provides an entry point into the fleshy materiality of imagined black space and uses black women’s anal openings as the vestibules through which black space—dirty space, toxic space, pathological space, nonproductive space—becomes visible.

In three nearly identical clips—“Ghetto Ebony Slut Pounded in Ass,” “Ghetto Fucked in Phat Ass,” and “Ghetto Asshole Upclose and Open”—black women’s anuses visibly become passageways through which the “ghetto,” and thus blackness itself, is made visible. All three films are structured by a logic of “upcloseness,” to borrow a term from one of the film’s titles, a logic where the view of the anus—glazed in lubricant, in saliva, or in ejaculate—constitutes the film’s money shot.<sup>43</sup> The revelation of the anus *as* money shot is unusual in a genre that has long privileged the penis streaming with ejaculate (often through the vehicle of fellatio, what Linda Williams terms the “most photogenic of all sexual practices”) as the climax of the film.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, as Williams suggests, the hard core has been marked by a kind of repetition compulsion; though it seeks the “truth” of female pleasure, the (relative) invisibility of female orgasm frustrates the genre, and instead, only male pleasure—in the form of ejaculate—can be represented on-screen. Thus, though women’s whimpers and moans often constitute the pornographic sound track, visual evidence of female pleasure is largely absent from the hard core.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, in these three “ghetto” anal clips, what is made visible to the viewer is not evidence of male pleasure but an uninterrupted view of the black female anus. Nowhere is this violation of hard core’s fundamental genre convention more apparent than in “Ghetto Asshole Upclose and Open,” a two-minute clip that shows a black woman sitting on a stool. The viewer sees the woman from the back, and the camera lingers on her smooth buttocks resting against the top of the stool. Indeed, the film’s story—at least in its opening seconds—is of texture: flesh against wood, softness against hardness. The film’s promise—the promise of seeing the anus “upclose and open”—is fulfilled, as the unnamed and unspeaking black female subject spreads her butt cheeks again and again. In what looks more like an examination than a pornographic film (though, of course, the two genres are mutually constitutive), the butt cheeks are pulled farther and farther apart, clearly revealing the anus to the viewer.<sup>46</sup> The film offers a view of what is otherwise concealed—the fleshy, dark, and hidden “truth” of black interiority—and shows that the buttocks obfuscate the *true* site of pleasure and curiosity; they have to be pried apart, spread, and opened to offer the viewer access to what would otherwise be unknowable.

“Ghetto Ebony Slut Fucked Deeply in the Butt and Loving It!” takes the examination trope even farther, embedding the revelation of the black female anus in an elaborate narrative. The clip begins when a black woman—clad in a tank top and a G-string—enters a young white male doctor’s office. The doctor nervously clutches his clipboard and asks the woman if she wants to be seated on

his examination table. After insisting that she prefers to stand, she confesses to the doctor that she “works in the adult entertainment industry” and has come for a checkup. The doctor proceeds to scrutinize her buttocks, asking her to bend, to “shake it around, back and forth as well, the whole thing in one motion,” and to “push it as hard towards me as you can nice and slow, and bring it on back down.”

The exam—and the film—takes a narrative turn when the doctor moves the exam *inside* (or in the logic of the anal genre, “upclose”), spreading the patient’s buttocks to expose the anus, and then inserting a butt plug into her ass. Once the anus has been exposed to the doctor (and to the viewer), the examination scene is transformed into a conventional pornographic one, beginning with fellatio, then anal sex, and culminating in a stream of ejaculate running down the woman’s buttocks. Even in the clip’s concluding seconds, the doctor again spreads the patient’s buttocks so the viewer can again see visual proof not only of his ejaculate but of the black female anus itself.

In both clips, black women’s anuses are called on to make themselves known and are offered as objects of examination (most literally in “Ghetto Ebony Slut Fucked Deeply in the Butt and Loving It”).<sup>47</sup> If, as Williams argues, pornography is a kind of *scientia sexualis*, one where bodies and their pleasures—particularly female bodies and pleasures—are called on to make their workings visible, these films are distinct in what they reveal. Yet what makes these “exam” clips particularly distinctive, and worthy of further investigation, is twofold: first, how the film’s narrative promise—the revelation of the anus—is embedded in the language of “ghettoness,” and second, how the black female anus acts as a kind of ur-text of anality, providing, I argue, both sexual pleasure for viewers and the clips’ male protagonists and offering a kind of anal education, literally making their bodies instructional texts.

In these clips, the “upcloseness” of the anus is always promised through the language of ghetto. Importantly, ghetto is not simply used as a synonym for anal on these websites but as a distinctive *spatial*, *economic*, and *sexual* location that viewers can see (and perhaps master) through screening clips on websites like ghettotube.com. Indeed, ghettotube.com includes a lengthy list of nonpornographic “funny” clips including a host of ghetto videos: ghetto fights, ghetto mess, and ghetto news. In short, the website is preoccupied with offering a kind of education in ghettoness, allowing the viewer sexual and comical access to this long-fictionalized space. If the fights, mess, and news offer ways to understand the ghetto, the anal clips offer another way and effectively construct the ghetto as a location marked by its own sexual logics. The incessantly spread buttocks, then, not only reveal the dark, fleshy interiority of black womanhood but also

provide access into that paradigmatic otherworldly racially marked space that is both always-knowable to those who inhabit a cultural milieu that incessantly links black bodies to ghettoness and also always-unknowable. Indeed, I argue that the film constructs as analogous the secret of the anus (that it is concealed) and the secret of the ghetto (that it is concealed); moreover, both are constructed as distinctively black hidden spaces. The labor of the black anal film, then, is to literally peel back what conceals black interiority and to lay bare the otherwise concealed “truth” of black interiority. What these clips do, then, is use the black female body as a kind of critical visual passageway through which the ghetto, the paradigmatic black space, can be viewed, accessed, enjoyed, rejected—and perhaps all simultaneously—without the viewer having to inhabit the material space of the ghetto. In other words, black women’s anuses provide the material space through which blackness itself can be seen; their spread buttocks offer an uninterrupted view—however brief—of an otherwise mythical dark world of difference.

If black women’s bodies become a vehicle through which blackness can be seen, then the black female anus acts as a kind of ur-text of anality. The notion of black women’s bodies as an ur-text, as a paradigmatic site for educating viewers on the workings of the body, is not unusual; indeed, some have argued that this can be traced back to Baartman, whose “Hottentot apron” and “steatopygia” provided an “education” to viewers who wanted to understand racial difference in the dawning of the nineteenth century. Unlike previous black feminist work that presumes that black women have been problematically and violently called on to reveal their imagined difference, I read the instructional labor that black women perform in the black anal genre differently, with an emphasis on the complex pleasures that can be engendered through becoming a pedagogical body. Indeed, I argue that there are complex and counterintuitive pleasures in displaying one’s body as a “lesson,” even as the labor of pedagogy means that the black female body acts as a metonymy—as an exemplar of all bodies—and even as one body part (the anus) is being used to stand in for the entire body.

My interest in considering the pleasures that emerge from acting as a pedagogical body invites black feminist scholars to discern the pleasures of instruction from the violence of pornotroping. *Pornotroping* is the term that Spillers uses to describe how racialization is, in and of itself, a pornographic process made on black female flesh. Pornotroping reduces black female bodies to flesh, subjects to objects, black female selfhood to an imagined “irresistible, destructive sensuality.” In short, it refers to the host of ways that black female flesh is put to work, violently subjected to meaning making and co-optation. For many black feminists, the concept of pornotroping accurately captures not only how hard core pornog-

raphy reduces black women to things (or to animals, as Alice Walker has argued) but also how race making is a sexual process that often hinges on fictions and fantasies about black women's bodies and pleasures.<sup>48</sup>

When black women's bodies are constructed as pedagogical sites—as bodies that make difference apparent—they often refuse to provide evidence of imagined difference, instead insisting on the fundamental sameness of all bodies. That is, if the black female anus can be the quintessential anus, and if that anus looks like all others, revealing that *black interiority* looks surprisingly racially unmarked, then black female bodies' pedagogical roles can pleasurably unravel the fictions of difference that the black anal genre rests on. Here, my understanding of pleasure is capacious—it is an understanding that includes, of course, erotic and sexual pleasure, but that also includes political pleasures, humorous pleasures, pleasures in transgressing, pleasures in making use of and then upending racial fictions. It is this broad understanding of pleasure that informs my reading of black women's pedagogical labor as a potentially pleasurable one, as one where the incessantly spread black female buttocks reveal not the “secret” of black interiority but a kind of profound corporeal sameness, a sameness that is all the more surprising because it is laid bare in a genre that incessantly promises the distinctiveness of black bodies.

### **Wasteful Anuses**

If black pornographies produce the black female anus as a passageway that reveals black spaces—particularly the ghetto—and makes known and knowable black interiority, they also incessantly connect black sexualities to waste. Here, I mean waste in (at least) two ways—wasteful in the sense of intimately tethered to the scatological (so much so that the refrain “let me see your pooper” appears in at least two of the clips I analyze), and wasteful as in recreational, excessively pleasurable, excessively absurd, excessively fun, and excessively consumerist. My reading of black sexualities as wasteful is, in some ways, a departure from a rich tradition of black feminist work—including Dorothy Roberts, Rickie Lee Solinger, Ange-Marie Hancock—that has studied how black female sexualities are representationally produced as hyperreproductive and hyperfertile, as jeopardizing the viability of the state and the heteronormative family. My analysis asks about how black sexualities are represented as *non*-reproductive through their peculiar and overly pleasurable attachment to the anus. Indeed, reading for black anality reveals another logic that animates constructions of black sexualities: that black sexualities are nonproductive and nonreproductive.

Black anal pornographies are filled with references to the scatological, including a proliferation of clips that explicitly reference the *pooper*—a term that appears regularly to tether black desires for the anus (either black male desire for anal sex or black female enjoyment of anal sex) to the scatological. In “Sunshine Slammed in the Pooper,” for example, a thirty-minute clip that begins with an interview with Sunshine, a young “half black half white, best mix in the world” woman and then transitions quickly to anal sex, the narrative is structured by Sunshine being anally penetrated and then performing oral sex on the penis that had penetrated her. This dynamic—between anal penetration and oral consumption—is highlighted by the barely audible whispers of the male actor “tastes good, doesn’t it?” and Sunshine’s ostensibly pleasurable moans indicating her desire to consume what has been inside her anus. This performance of anal-oral play (and Sunshine’s performed pleasure in it) epitomizes how black anal pornographies emphasize the scatological, insisting on a recognition that the “pooper” is part of what makes the anal scene sexy.

If black anal pornographies construct black sexualities as scatological, as distinctively and peculiarly drawn to bodily filth, they construct black sexualities in other wasteful ways as well. I am particularly interested here in how black sexualities are constructed as absurdly wasteful (and here, I connect the absurd to the wasteful, suggesting that the construction of black sexualities as nonreproductive, as nonprocreative, as invested in pleasure at all costs, is a way of marking black sexuality as at once comic, nonnormative, and deeply wasteful). Here, I want to distinguish between a treatment of black sexual excess and my own interest in black sexual absurdity; my interest is in examining how the black anus becomes a site that allows black sexualities to be produced and reproduced as comically nonnormative not because of excess but because of sheer silliness. In a moment where the pornographic genre is not particularly invested in narrative, how can we make sense of a set of idiosyncratic clips that take black female anality as the site of absurdity and that use the black female anus as a point of departure for the hyperbolic, the comical, the bizarre?

My point of departure is a series of eclectic clips whose investment in narrative—particularly absurd narrative—resembles pornography’s earlier eras, including the “golden age” (1970s), when pornographers self-consciously constructed elaborately ridiculous pornographic narratives that saved the genre from the category of the obscene. This investment is most evident in pornographic blockbusters like *Deep Throat* (1972) and *Behind the Green Door* (1972). Like *Deep Throat*, whose plot focuses on Linda Lovelace’s “discovery” that her clitoris is located in her throat and that only performing fellatio can lead to her own

orgasm, in the clips I analyze here, comic absurdity seems central to the film's erotic charge.

In "Juicy Ass Moon Bounce!" for example, two men in NASA costumes board a space shuttle. We hear the countdown as the men put on their helmets and blast into space. A few seconds later, we see the men looking down, ostensibly at a planet, and one says, "It looks beautiful down there, doesn't it? It looks like Earth a little bit, water and shit, let's check the atmosphere down there." When the spaceship lands and the men leave their spaceship to explore, they are greeted by black women clad in tiny bikinis. One astronaut exclaims, "Let's see that booty." He spanks the women and ushers them back to the spaceship. Once they board, the narrative focuses on two women who perform a blow job on an astronaut and then recline as the astronaut rubs, strokes, spanks, and shakes their buttocks, and then takes turns having sex—including anal sex—with each, asking the women to see "their poopers." As the film ends, the viewer hears yet another countdown, yet this time, as the astronauts shout "1," one astronaut empties a large forty-ouncer over three black women's buttocks. While this clip is certainly idiosyncratic, what interests me about it is that it is emblematic of a larger genre of absurd black anal films, clips including "Big Black Bitches Saved from Horny Zombies," "Super Nigga," and "The Booty Count Bounce," all of which embed black anal iconography in comic pornographic narratives.

What can we make of a clip that insists on the absurdity of black sexualities? And how do we understand this insistence in a moment where pornography is increasingly detached from the narrative? I argue that this clip, with its insistence on framing black sexuality as comic, uses the anus as a central site for this work. One way that this absurdity is constructed is by linking black female sexualities—and anuses—to waste. In the logic of "Juicy Ass Moon Bounce," black women literally inhabit another planet, one structured by a logic of corporeality, pleasure, and sensuality. On this unnamed planet, it seems, it is always time for the "juicy ass" to "bounce," and what makes this space distinctive is that it is structured around an economy of pleasure, including the scatological pleasure of revealing the "pooper." As the astronaut buries his face, his tongue, and later his penis in the space that he has specifically identified by its proximity to feces (made even more visible by the constant pleasurable exclamation of "oh shit!"), his pleasures and longings become intimately connected to the scatological. Indeed, the film explicitly suggests that the low, the bottom, the scatological, the toxic, is the location of black desire, that black subjects long for what the healthy body expels.

If black sexualities are tethered to a form of nonprocreative pleasure, to



an economy of sexuality that revolves exclusively around enjoyment, the clip also tethers them to waste in other ways. At the end of the clip, the black female butt becomes a site that literally houses waste; the beer that pours down the butt crack of three black women comes to symbolize ejaculate (which is always dripping from women's bodies in pornography) and the "maiden voyage" to new spatial and sexual territory that the astronauts have completed. Yet it also comes to symbolize black female bodies as a literal receptacle of waste. The act of pouring out the forty, ordinarily a way of showing respect for the dead, is transformed here into an exclusively erotic act that represents black female sexuality as a receptacle for waste, as a site that literally houses—and perhaps even luxuriates in—the wasteful impulses and desires of black men.

If the clip represents black sexuality as scatological, as pathologically pleasurable, as absurd, and as wasteful, there is one other peculiarity in a surprising genre that shores up the association of black sexualities with waste. One primary visual motif that pervades the black anal genre—including "Juicy Ass Moon Bounce!"—is the sneaker. The sneaker is particularly unusual in a genre where bodies are generally unclothed (though, it is important to note, the shoe is often used as a pornographic accessory, especially by female pornographic protagonists, who leave their stilettos or high-heeled boots on during a sex act) and particularly striking in the black anal genre where black male pornographic protagonists are almost always only partially visible (the viewer generally sees only a view of their lower backs and penises penetrating black women's anuses). Yet in these scenes, the sneaker, the designer object that has so long culturally signified black male pathology—an object of unusual longing, a fetish object, an object of black criminality (one need only think of the refrain that "kids are killing kids over sneakers"), takes center stage.<sup>49</sup> The ubiquity of the sneaker as an accessory of blackness, as a way to further racialize the black body, only furthers the connection among "black," "anal," and wasteful, shoring up the notion of black sexualities not only as nonproductive but also as wastefully (or improperly) consumerist, drawn to fetishize status objects, and improperly desirous of trivial signifiers of wealth.

### **Pleasures and Perils**

This essay has tracked two particular ways that black anality is (re)produced: through analogizing black women's anuses to other racially marked spaces, particularly the ghetto, and through constructing black anuses as emblematic of black sexualities' wastefulness. Yet these are only two of the ways that black anality is articulated, amplified, and represented. In tracing these two representational

strategies, my hope is that the analytics that black anality foregrounds might provide new strategies and reading practices for black feminists to consider the production of black sexualities as different, distinctive, pathological, or problematic.

While my interest is in the host of ways that black sexualities are constructed in and through the anus, I am also invested in the ways that the anus—and ideas of black anality—can be a space of play, pleasure, desire, and delight for black subjects. In mapping black anality, my impulse is *not* to offer a critique of yet another set of racial strategies used to police black bodies. Indeed, I think that black feminist work has given us sufficient tools to critique the violence of the visual field and to consider strategies for recovering black female flesh. Rather, I have traced the contours of black anality both to expose another way that blackness is produced in and through sexuality, and to consider the kinds of play, pleasures, and delight that black bodies can take up in the never-ending quest for sexual freedom. If black bodies are tethered representationally and ideologically to the anus, how might we consider making the anus a space that can also please, excite, and arouse, and also a locus where racial stereotype can be playfully performed and unraveled?

### Notes

1. Evelyn Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6 (1994): 138.
2. Hammonds, "Black (W)holes," 139.
3. I talk more about pleasures in blackness, race-pleasure, in *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
4. Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman, *Against the Closet: Black Political Longing and the Erotics of Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 14.
5. Sander Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 216. Zine Magubane's work offers an important critique of black feminist reliance on Gilman's work. See Magubane, "Which Bodies Matter? Feminism, Poststructuralism, Race, and the Curious Theoretical Odyssey of the 'Hottentot Venus,'" *Gender and Society* 15, no. 6 (2001): 816–34.
6. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies," 219.
7. Magubane problematizes black feminist interpretations of Baartman as black.
8. I discuss black feminist engagement with the Hottentot Venus in "Strange Bedfellows: Black Feminism and Anti-Pornography Feminism," *Social Text* 97 (2008): 51–76.

9. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 151.
10. Deborah E. McDowell, "Afterword: Recovery Missions: Imaging the Body Ideals," in *Recovering the Black Female Body*, ed. Michael Bennett and Vanessa D. Dickerson (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 306.
11. Janell Hobson, "The 'Batty' Politic: Toward an Aesthetic of the Black Female Body," *Hypatia* 18, no. 4 (2003): 87.
12. On Josephine Baker, see, e.g., Lisa Collins, "Economies of the Flesh: Representing the Black Female Body in Art," in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, ed. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 112. On Lil' Kim, see, e.g., Nicole Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). On Jennifer Lopez, see, e.g., Magdalena Barrera, "Hottentot 2000: Jennifer Lopez and Her Butt," *Sexualities in History: A Reader*, ed. Kim Phillips and Barry Reay (New York: Routledge, 2002), 407–16. Hobson argues, "Dominant culture came to celebrate Lopez's behind as part of a recognition of 'exotic' and 'hot' Latinas, women perceived as 'more sexual' than white women but 'less obscene' than black women. In this way, Lopez's body avoids the specific racial stigma that clings to black women's bodies" (Hobson, "Batty," 97).
13. On spectacularity, see, e.g., Tynisha Shavon Scott, "Chasing Afrodite: Performing Blackness and 'Excess Flesh' in Film" (master's thesis, University of Texas–Austin, August 2012); Sydney Fonteyn Lewis, "Looking Forward to the Past: Black Women's Sexual Agency in 'Neo' Cultural Productions" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2012); Carole Boyce Davis, "Black/Female/Bodies Carnivalized in Spectacle and Space," *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her Hottentot*, ed. Deb Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 186–98. My understanding of "excess" draws on Fleetwood's work. Hobson develops the concept of sexual grotesquerie.
14. Hobson, "Batty," 88.
15. Abdur-Rahman, *Against the Closet*, 161n30.
16. Hobson, "Batty," 88.
17. I borrow Linda Williams's definition of "hard core." See Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). For Williams, hard-core films are marked by a "maximum visibility" principle that includes the genre's "certain clinical-documentary qualities," which often come "at the expense of other forms of realism or artistry that might actually be more arousing" (48). For Williams, pornography's obsession with visibility, with making bodies' pleasures and imagined truths knowable, is most evident in the genre's obsession with the money shot, quantifiable and legible proof of pleasure.
18. For critiques of the rhetoric of "black women have it worse," see Angela Harris, "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory," *Stanford Law Review* 42, no. 3

- (1990): 581–616. The notion that black women are necessarily harmed by representation is something I take up more extensively in *The Black Body in Ecstasy*.
19. See, e.g., Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Ferguson, “Sissies at the Picnic: The Subjugated Knowledges of a Black Rural Queen,” in *Feminist Waves, Feminist Generations: Life Stories from the Academy*, ed. Hokulani K. Aikau, Karla A. Erickson, and Jennifer L. Pierce (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 188–96; E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
  20. Abdur-Rahman, *Against the Closet*, 14; emphasis mine.
  21. The emphatically heterosexualized discourse of anality circulates *apart* from AIDS (indeed, part of the labor of the heterosexualization of this discourse is to split anality apart from AIDS). That is, the analities that I study in this essay are representationally produced apart from the discourses of disease, illness, and death. Though I am interested in how black analities are tethered to ideologies of toxicity, the specter of HIV transmission through anality is not something that this essay takes up in detail. See, e.g., Linda Williams, *Screening Sex* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 11–12.
  22. See, e.g., Nina Hartley’s *Guide to Anal Sex* (dir. Nina Hartley, 1995) or the *Sex and the City* episode “Valley of the Twenty-Somethings”; *Bend over Boyfriend* (dir. Shar Rednour and Jackie Strano, 1998) and Violet Blue, *Adventurous Couple’s Guide to Strap-On Sex* (New York: Cleis, 2007); Ladyspeech Sankofa, “The Love Below: One Black Woman’s View on Anal Sex,” *Ebony*, January 15, 2013, [www.ebony.com/love-sex/the-love-below-one-black-womans-view-on-anal-sex-123#axzz2ZWPZN0XQ](http://www.ebony.com/love-sex/the-love-below-one-black-womans-view-on-anal-sex-123#axzz2ZWPZN0XQ); Em and Lo, “The Bottom Line,” *New York Magazine*, October 25, 2007, [www.nymag.com/nightlife/mating/25988/](http://www.nymag.com/nightlife/mating/25988/) (Em and Lo write, “Now, it’s anal sex—but according to the Centers for Disease Control’s National Survey of Family Growth, it’s rapidly becoming a regular feature of hetero couples’ horizontal activities”); and Ashlea Halpern, “Is Anal the New Oral?,” *Marie Claire Magazine*, May 3, 2011, [www.marieclaire.com/sex-love/relationship-issues/anal-sex-popularity](http://www.marieclaire.com/sex-love/relationship-issues/anal-sex-popularity). Halpern writes, “Once thought taboo, anal sex is now more mainstream than ever. So are more women having anal sex these days, or are they just more comfortable admitting that they do?”
  23. Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 22.
  24. Abdur-Rahman, *Against the Closet*, 14.
  25. Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?,” *October* 43 (1987): 211.
  26. Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?,” 211.
  27. Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?,” 212.

28. Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 151.
29. Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?," 222.
30. Richard Fung, "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 121.
31. Fung, "Looking for My Penis," 124.
32. Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 257.
33. Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 259. Importantly, Scott embraces paradox—including the paradoxes of pleasure—in his book. As he notes, "I am going to try to establish in this book that these paradoxes—luxury that is necessity, freedom that is imprisonment, and perhaps surprisingly, their correspondent vice-versa formulations—speak to the very core of what blackness is in our culture and how we embody it" (3).
34. Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 270.
35. Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 20.
36. Scott ends his book by turning attention to Gayl Jones's novel *Corregidora*, and he notes that "there is not a necessary connection between black masculinity or black maleness and abjection, since it is clear that women can be—and by the normative or traditional definitions of gender, often are or supposed to be— 'bottoms,' too" (*Extravagant Abjection*, 265).
37. Kathryn Bond Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where "Black" Meets "Queer"* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 2.
38. Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame*, 68.
39. Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame*, 68.
40. Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 8.
41. See Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
42. See Hortense Spillers, "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words," in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Here, Spillers is theorizing the black Atlantic and argues that black women's flesh became a kind of passageway, "the principal point of passage between the human and the non-human world. Her issue became the focus of a cunning difference—visually, psychologically, ontologically—as the route by which the dominant male decided the distinction between humanity and 'other'" ("Interstices," 155).
43. Though I do not discuss it in depth here, the pornographic discourse of "upcloseness" resonates with discourses of "realness" (and racial authenticity) that have circulated around blackness (and that have been analyzed and critiqued by scholars working in critical race theory). See, e.g., John L. Jackson, *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropri-*

- ating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
44. Williams, *Hard Core*, 111.
  45. See John Corbett and Terri Kapsalis, "Aural Sex: The Female Orgasm in Popular Sound," *Drama Review* 40, no. 3 (1996): 102–11.
  46. For more on the relationship between pornography and ethnography, see Christian Hansen, Catherine Needham, and Bill Nichols, "Pornography, Ethnography, and the Discourses of Power," in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, ed. Bill Nichols (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 201–28.
  47. In the layering of terms here, "ghetto," "ebony," and "slut" each lend meaning to one another and intensify the meanings of one another. That is, the subject position of *slut* is made in and through *ghetto* and *ebony*.
  48. Alice Walker famously noted, "Where white women are depicted in pornography as 'objects,' black women are depicted as animals. Where white women are depicted at least as human bodies if not beings, black women are depicted as shit" (*You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1981], 52).
  49. For some of this vast archive, see Rick Telander, "Senseless: In America's Cities, Kids Are Killing Kids over Sneakers," *Sports Illustrated*, May 14, 1990, [sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1136895/1/index.htm](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1136895/1/index.htm); "Son Killed over Air Jordan's Now Mother Raising Awareness," [www.myfoxboston.com/story/24277622/2013/12/20/son-killed-over-air-jordans-now-mother-raising-awareness](http://www.myfoxboston.com/story/24277622/2013/12/20/son-killed-over-air-jordans-now-mother-raising-awareness); "Sneak Attack: Fights Break Out at Shoe Stores across the Country," [www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CEMQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fnews%2Farticle-2527988%2FSneak-attack-Pandemonium-latest-Air-Jordan-sneakers-sale-fights-break-stores-country.html](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CEMQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fnews%2Farticle-2527988%2FSneak-attack-Pandemonium-latest-Air-Jordan-sneakers-sale-fights-break-stores-country.html) (accessed April 21, 2014).