controversy. Not unlike those who tepidly defended Cox, some of the critics and writers who spoke out in support of Jackson did so with skepticism, arguing that her publicity ploy was an attempt to reignite her diminishing career. For example, Frank Rich, in a tongue-in-cheek essay in the *New York Times* entitled "My Hero, Janet Jackson," writes:

You can argue that Ms. Jackson is the only honest figure in this Super Bowl of hypocrisy. She was out to accomplish a naked agenda—the resuscitation of her fading career on the eve of her new album’s release—and so she did. She’s not taking much remorse, either. Last Sunday she refused to appear on the Grammys rather than accede to CBS’s demand that she perform a disingenuous, misty-eyed ritual “apology” to the nation for her crime of a week earlier. By contrast, Justin Timberlake, the wimp who gave the English language the last gift of “wardrobe malfunction;” did as he was told, a would-be pop rebel in a jacket and a tie, looking like a schoolboy reporting to the principal’s office. Ms. Jackson, one suspects, is laughing all the way to the bank.49

Cox’s transgression was one that disrupted dominant religious narratives. Too, Jackson’s breach was sacrilegious as she was seen as disrespecting the rituals and etiquette of the sports industry’s and advertising industry’s most sacred moment—one that mixes religion, patriotism, and masculine competition for international audiences. More important, Jackson was discussed in similar terms as the attacks on Cox. Both were seen as black women who strategically and willingly used visibility as tools for the promotion of their careers.

The Hip-Hop Music Video and Technologies of Excess

While there are many similarities between the Cox and Jackson controversies, I am more interested in the differences between excess flesh enactments in various arenas of cultural production. In the example of Janet Jackson’s performance for an audience of many millions, she must deny her performance and is punished for the enactment. The role of Timberlake and the display of interracial intimacy animated the fury over the performance. In black popular culture, excess flesh enactments are often read as culturally specific. They are contained as the excesses of black popular culture for black audiences. This is most clearly evidenced in the hip-hop music video genre of the 1990s and early 2000s where the shiny, bouncing, minimally clothed black female body is ubiquitous within the form. It is a black female body in motion as hypersexed vixen that brands this otherwise male-dominated cultural production.

The hip-hop music video genre, popularized by notable black music video directors Hype Williams, Little X, and Paul Hunter, to name a few, has been applauded for technological and aesthetic innovation while at the same time thoroughly criticized for portraying black women in some of the most over-the-top and explicitly reductive representations in contemporary popular culture. The salience of these images has led to a system of classifying character tropes in this genre with women as extras referenced as “video vixens” and “video hoes.” The music video has become the symbol of black female undervaluation as individual subjects, and overrepresentation as surplus populations within black cultural representation. These performers exist in a precarious relationship between being and enacting excess flesh. They exist in multitudes. The commonly used fish-eye lens of many of the videos that emerged in the mid 1990s—mid 2000s frames body parts: large butts accessorized in lingerie, shiny legs, navels, cleavage; faces are often excluded or blurred. The dance, too, is excessive. They bend over and fully expose their buttocks to the camera. Their fleshy thighs and jiggly buttocks captivate the camera. They are autoerotic, driving themselves to inappropriate levels of ecstasy. They appear in various manifestations of excess flesh surrounding the iconic male rapper. Often the lyrics dissect these figures. “Back that ass up,” “I like it when you do that thang,” “Shake that thang,” and “Is there any room for me in those jeans” are just a few of the lines from popular rap songs.

The music video serves as a medium for the continual circulation and “global touring” of the black female performing body, in historical referentiality to Baartman.50 Through analogic and digital video, the bodies multiply, reproduce, and perform continuously. These videos show the distinctions between excess flesh enactments in mass culture and black popular culture. While MTV commonly runs videos of male rappers, BET has created special programming that broadcast explicit or uncut versions of the more tame versions that air on MTV. BET’s late-night show *Uncut* airs the hybrid genre where music videos and pornographic videos merge.51 Mireille Miller-Young looks at the burgeoning industry of hip-hop pornography, in which some well-known male rappers, like Snoop Dogg Dogg, capitalize on the popularity of black women as excess flesh in music videos and culture at large. Miller-Young looks at how softcore hip-hop music videos and hardcore hip-hop porn rely on the reproduction of black women’s sexualized bodies to authenticate the masculinity of black male rappers and
porn actors. While these videos and performances reproduce in most cases heteronormative and misogynistic codes, Miller-Young argues that "black video models and sex workers mobilize their sexualities in the marketplace of desire for their own interests of access, opportunity, mobility, and fame."53

The hip-hop music video has been a familiar target of critique by black public figures, scholars, and cultural critics who have focused on the representations of black women in the genre. In particular, black feminist scholars and cultural critics have examined the precarious positions of black females as audience, artists, and objects of desire/disgust in hip-hop music and videos.54 In When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost, cultural critic Joan Morgan considers the representation of black women in hip-hop in relation to heteronormative intimate relations between black women and men. Considering the power relations and the specter of violence and domination that color black heterosexuality, Morgan asks how a young black woman steeped in hip-hop can emerge with a feminist conscious and a body politic that sees the self as anything other than aberrant. Morgan works to articulate a position that she describes as hip-hop feminist, a position that claims "the powerful richness and delicious complexities inherent in being black girls now—sistas of the post-Civil Rights, post-feminist, post soul, hip-hop generation."55 It is a position that she acknowledges is replete with contradictions and describes her own feelings of being seduced by the lyrics of many male rappers, lyrics that in the end often reduce black women to be spayed out, prepped, and ready for penetration.

Inspired by the excess flesh of the "video ho," artist Ayana Moor created a photographic series entitled Still. Through the series, Moor dissects the music video by capturing still images of the "video ho" from popular music videos. In Still, the excessive performances of female video performers are framed as discreet photographic moments. The women performing as eye candy take center over the male rapper. The series consists of four digital still images titled: Clap, Face, Lean, and Glow. In Lean, a young female dancer is captured in the midst of a dance in which she leans backward with her legs spread apart. Her arms are outstretched and her midsection is bare. She stares at the camera with her lips pursed. She is caught in a moment of extraordinary feat where her midsection seems suspended in space. Behind her, we can see the headless bodies of others who cheer her on. Glow, another still, is a close-up of the face of a video performer as she looks out with her mouth half open. Her face, hair, and shoulders are made radiant by the light frozen at this moment. Behind but darkened by her light are others dancing and partying. Moor, in an accompanying statement, writes:

Captured frames imply moments unintended by the larger music-video narrative. Compositional choices reduce the depiction of once-dominant male performers to supportive background visuals, if they are represented at all. The images' focus exclusively on women offers a second look at the so-called music-video vixen. Formerly images based in time, the video characters, now frozen, permit unconventional portraits. . . . Within the feminist critique of hip-hop, is there room to consider women's embrace of sexually provocative performance forms?56

Moor's take on portraiture mirrors art historian Powell's assertion about the ways in which black artists create disruptive portraits of black subjects through seversing, splicing, and cutting black figuration from dominant representation. Moor's process of generating the still image from the video performance is a component of her interventionist strategy in which she takes a photograph of video in real time as it plays on a television. For Moor, it is an attempt to frame a moment of dialogue between video performer and the artist as audience member and consumer.57 In some sense, it is a contemporary form of Pittsburgh photographer Charles Harris's attempts to capture the sidemen and audience as opposed to photographing the black iconic entertainer (see chapter 1). Moor questions the possibilities of
the “video ho” to engage and perform sexual pleasure that does not simply and solely reinforce her overdetermination as always already hypersexed being. This reading is critical in moving cultural discourse away from the pejorative reading of the music video form and the reproduction of black female performing bodies as aberrant. Moor visualizes these bodies not as a state of being but as one of enacting, offering new possibilities of seeing pleasure and play in the hip-hop music video, even while attending to the ways in which excess performance plays into dominant conceptions of racialized sexuality.

Aynah Moor’s video Baby Got Back (2004) takes us back to the earlier reference of Sir Mix-a-Lot’s rap song, “Baby Got Back” and Cox’s similarly titled Baby Back. Moor’s video is quite striking in how it deviates from the music-video form while adhering to the song’s lyrics. The video is minimalist in its composition of a close-up frame of a black woman in a black t-shirt and a white background. The woman recites Sir Mix-a-Lot’s lyrics rapidly and with emphasis on references to body parts and features. As she demonstrates lyrical dexterity (rapping with more speed and precision than the original version of the song), she expresses pleasure and desire with smiles and hand gestures. In one part, the rapper slows down and enunciates each

word to emphasize her deviation from white beauty aesthetics: “When it comes to females, Cosmo ain’t got nothing to do with my selection.” Along these lines, Tricia Rose writes that Sir Mix-a-Lot’s song expresses “both an explicit desire for black women’s protruding behinds and at the same time mock[s] the fashion industry for celebrating anorexic-looking white women.”79 In remixing Sir Mix-a-Lot’s song, Moor cites and queers the heteronormativity of its lyrics while still rendering the black female back a fetish object. Moor comments on her position in an artist statement:

In contrast to MixAlot’s rap and lively musical arrangement, I revisited the tune via an a cappella rendition. The gender politics of this humorous ode to the derriere shifts when recited by a female narrator. Just as MixAlot enthusiastically blurs the line between objectification and celebration of black woman’s bodies, the new gendered speaker playfully inserts queer identity into hip-hop’s hyper masculine aesthetic. Often criticized for misogynistic lyrics, the change of commercial rap’s male face expands such critiques to a larger American society whose women continue to confront sexism and fight for gender equality. In this work I invoke additional popular modes of performance and representation: the global popularity of karaoke and the tension it evokes when compared to drag performance. Equally I welcome associations with the genre of documentary, when the work is viewed as an impassioned confessional. Feminizing the orator in this video work both queers otherwise heterosexual lyrical content and offers praise of the representation of black women’s bodies in mainstream media.80

Moor considers the spectatorial position of black female audiences of hip-hop music and videos. Do black women identify with the male rapper or the multitudinous women who adorn the rapper as body parts for his consumption? And how do black queer women negotiate and express desire in these heteronormative and masculine sites? In considering these questions, Andreae Clay writes that oftentimes when queer women participate in hip-hop it is through a performative restaging (a concept that she borrows from Jack Halberstam) where “black masculinity is changed in that these women are exploring their masculinity in relationship to the women that they love and have sex with.”81 For Clay, it is a claim for legitimacy and an expression of desire not afforded through dominant popular culture and public space. Excess flesh in this context serves as an intervention in heteronormative and hypermasculine black popular culture where desire is expressed among bodies marked as such through an appropriation of black masculinity.
What happens when the video vixen is the object, subject, and author of the video such as in the performances of sexually explicit rappers like Lil’ Kim? In the late 1990s/early 2000s, Lil’ Kim served as both an example of hip-hop’s degradation of women and of hip-hop female empowerment. Not unlike Jackson, Lil’ Kim participated in a televiral moment that centered her exposed breast. In 1999, during the MTV Music Video Awards broadcast on the cable channel, the rapper arrived with an outfit that exposed one of her breasts. A purple star covered the nipple of her exposed flesh. While presenting an award with legendary soul singer Diana Ross, Ross noted the rapper’s outfit; Ross then reached out and bounced Lil’ Kim’s breast to see if the star was secure. I believe that this occurrence did not receive the outcry and level of anger expressed about the Jackson incident because instead the Kim incident circulated in entertainment news as evidence of her outrageousness and overdetermined excessiveness. Also, her breast while touched by another woman remained partially covered by the star. Furthermore, the social breach did not involve white entertainers. Instead it was the older black female star—one known as a crossover sexual icon—examiner the hypersexual body of a younger generation of black female celebrity.

Lil’ Kim’s raps are known for appropriating the masculine language of sexual conquest, domination, violence, and the power of the penis. Playing on the terms of masculinity, she blends rap narrative structure, at times substituting references to her sexual organs for the lingo of penis common in rap. In her rap “Suck My Dick” (2000), Lil’ Kim positions herself as a pouch with a penis and penetrating “nigga” in hip-hop who performs the bottom. Lil’ Kim raps, “Niggas love a hard hetch / One that get up in a / niggas ass quicker than an enema / Make a cat bleed then sprinkle it with vinegar.”

She penetrates until he bleeds. Her acts of domination produce pain and pleasure in multiple audiences: “Kim got him in a zone beating they dicks / Even got some of these straight chicks rubbing their tits.” Her role play in this song shifts between a woman queering heterosexual intercourse in which she as woman penetrates the man and occupying another queer position where her sexual identification is unclear but the object being penetrated is enacted forcefully: that is, the black masculine figure who in heteronormative relationships sexually dominate and exploit black women.

Imagine if I was dude and hittin’ cats from the back
With no strings attached

At the end of her fantasy play, Lil’ Kim dismisses: “Niggas ain’t shit but they still can trick / All they can do for me is suck my clit / I'm jumpin' up and up after I come / Thinkin' they gon’ get some pussy but they gets none.”60 Lil’ Kim reverses the pimp-ho dyad that circulates in hip-hop culture and heteronormative black popular culture. The rapper turns her male partner into one who functions for her sexual pleasure and whose pleasure she denies.

Lil’ Kim visually manifests her penchant for role playing and fantasy construction in her music videos that function as hyperreal, hypertexted exhibitions of excessive tropes. In the video to her rap, “How Many Licks” directed by Francis Lawrence (a well-known black male video director), Lil’ Kim is the prototype of a doll whose function is to provide ecstatic pleasure to male consumers. Lil’ Kim moves between various personas as she packages herself as a series of sexual commodities. She exchanges herself as a dominatrix in control of bringing her male audience to orgasm. Her male subjects in the video are framed as in the throes of a painful pleasure over which they have no control. Lil’ Kim’s proficiency at bringing them to orgasmic heights is a self-serving achievement, she declares. Their desire for her simply increases her power and her autoeroticism.

Figuring black female sexuality as technology, the first scenes of the music video show a state-of-the-art facility where a shiny object is being manufactured. In the corner of the video we see “MADE IN THE USA” with an American flag to the right. The following words flash in quick succession: “Back By Popular Demand,” “the original,” “realistic” “Anatomically Correct,” “Fully Edible.” Then we see the pieces of the commodity coming together, culminating with Lil’ Kim’s head being deposited on top of a petite manufactured body on an assembly line. Behind the assembled commodity are partially assembled Lil’ Kim dolls on their way to being fully manufactured commodities as they move along the conveyor belt. These dolls do not bleed nor do their parts have bone, muscle tissue, or sinews. They twist, screw, and pop together with ease, perfectly assembled to serve a precise function. The flesh of the corporeal Kim has become infinitely reproduced in plastic pleasure. We then see the name of the commercial product: “Lil’ Kim/Edible Dolls.”
Lil' Kim comes to life and marches down a runway. The words “Candy Kim” are flashed as she begins to craft a millennial narrative in which she frames herself as the international, multicultural lover/commodity good. Lil' Kim begins the first verse in typical rap braggadocio fashion:

I've been a lot of places, seen a lot of faces
Ah hell I even fuck with different races
A white dude—his name was John
He had a Queen Bee Rules tattoo on his arm, uh
He asked me if I'd be his date for the prom
and he'd buy me a horse, a Porsche and a farm
Dan my nigga from Down South
Used to like me to spank him and come in his mouth
And Tony he was Italian (Uh-huh)
And he didn't give a fuck (Uh-huh)
That's what I liked about him41

Lil' Kim invokes a top-bottom sexual dialectic and invokes dominant ethnic, racial, and gender tropes in describing her sexual exploits. The “Queen Bee Rules” tattoo that she references on one of her lovers is a homage to Lil' Kim, who also goes by the moniker Queen Bee. She brands John the “white dude” as her possession, referencing the complex history of slaves being named, branded, and raped by their masters. Later in verse one, she recalls another one of the men she conquered: “And this black dude I called King Kong/He had a big ass dick and a hurricane tongue.” Lil' Kim uses dominant racial tropes to her advantage as she performs in more excessive and dominant ways than the hypermasculine, hyper-hung figuration of the black male.

Of note is that the sexually ambiguous black male pop singer Sisquö (best known for “The Thong Song”) sings the refrain. Sisquö urges on Lil’ Kim’s stories of sexual conquest with his query:

So, how many licks does it take till you get to the center of the?
(Cause I’ve got to know)
How many licks does it take till you get to the center of the?
(Tell me)
How many licks does it take till you get to the center of the?
(Oh, oh)
How many licks does it take till you get to the center of the?
(Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh)

Sisquö’s question is unanswerable as there is no end in sight of the autotronic power of Lil’ Kim and her endless reproducibility. As Sisquö’s cries for more titillation and for relief at the same time, we see Lil’ Kim dancing with video vixens behind her. Lil’ Kim and the dancers are minimally dressed in silver metallic bikinis and knee-high black boots. They kick their legs open to the side and Lil’ Kim rubs her crotch. With each refrain, Sisquö intensifies his plea to know the limits of that which has no boundaries: Lil’ Kim’s sexually and corporeally enacted excesses.

As the second verse begins, the words “Pin-Up Kim” flash across the screen with a glossy image of Lil’ Kim’s face underneath the words. She then begins to play out a fantasy of bringing sexual relief to my niggas in jail
Beatin' they dicks to the XXL Magazine (uhh)
You like how I look in the aqua green?
Get your Vaseline

Under the images of inmates masturbating to “Pin-Up Kim,” we see the words “Dramatization” and “Some Fantasies May Vary.” As Lil’ Kim brings alive a reimagining of the Jane Fonda Barbarella poster, the words “State and Federal Prison Approved” appear. We then see inmates gathering around the images of Lil’ Kim as the artist raps, “Stop, look and listen; get back to your position/Kim got your dick hard, startin’ fights in the yard.”
Like many male rappers who give “shout-outs” to black men in prison as a way of acknowledging the systemic incarceration and subjugation of surplus populations of black men, Lil’ Kim offers her own shout-out. Hers is one that acknowledges their desire for pleasure, sexual intimacy, and to be recognized through the look of another.

While the song is a playful take on the playa rap in which black male rappers detail their sexual exploits, Lil’ Kim frames herself as both conqueror and sexual object explicitly marketed as such for her own pleasure. In the final verse, we are shown a third commodity object expropriated from the corporeal subject, “Nightrider Kim.” We, as audience and consumers, are told that the commodity is much in demand with the words “Get yours while supplies last.” She rhymes:

After three bottles I’ll be ready to fuck
Some niggas even put me on their grocery lists
Right next to the whip cream and box of chocolates
Designer pussy, my shit come in flavors
High-class taste niggas got to spend paper
Lick it right the first time or you gotta do it over
Like it’s rehearsal for a Tootsie commercial

At the end of this verse as the song begins to wane, Lil’ Kim pulls up in a car next to an unsuspecting young black man. The door of the car opens and the man is sucked in as if zapped by a space machine. Next to his abduction we see, “She doesn’t satisfy you. . . You satisfy her.” One of our final images includes all three commodities with “Collect All Three/Taste the Difference.”

While performing inside the world of her own making, one in which she is infinitely reproducible, and in which she marks the beginning and end of sexual desire and pleasure, there are no restrictions on her performative excesses and the power she derives from sexual enactment as commodity form. Yet, in the realms of black popular culture and mainstream American culture, limits are placed on Lil’ Kim’s excess flesh performances. For one, Imani Perry points to the visual signs that construct Lil’ Kim’s fantasy play in the “How Many Licks” video. Perry notes that each of the dolls manufactured in the video is designed to imitate white standards of beauty. Perry writes:

The video stands as an apt metaphor for her self-commodification and use of white female beauty ideals. The video closes off its own possibilities. The doll factory image might have operated as a tongue-in-cheek criticism of image making or white female beauty ideals, but, instead, the video functions as a serious vehicle for Kim to be constructed as beautiful and seductive with blond hair and blue eyes. To be a doll in American popular culture is to be perfect, and she will satisfy many male fantasies as many times as she is replicated.

Perry’s critique raises an important question about Lil’ Kim’s performative utterances: are the visual signs of white female beauty and pornographic figurations the outer limits of Lil’ Kim’s excessive enactments? Perry points to Lil’ Kim’s transformation through plastic surgery, color contacts, and blonde weaves as mimicking not just any notion of white female desirability but specifically the pornographic body of a Pamela Anderson type. The phenotypic changes in Lil’ Kim occurred gradually as her celebrity status grew larger, and she moved, in some degrees, outside of hip-hop culture into wider spheres of American popular culture. Her facial features shifted as her nose became pinched and her cheeks sat higher; Lil’ Kim’s breasts became exponentially larger; and her hair extensions were longer and straighter, often blonde. Susan Bordo describes “cultural plastic,” a concept that she applies to popular performer Madonna, as “a construction of life as plastic possibility and weightless choice, undermined by history, social location, or even individual biography.” Through MTV appearances and fashion endorsements that often aligned her with a self-referential and camp aesthetic in the entertainment industry, Lil’ Kim appeared to be carving her figuration and in so doing carving out a place for herself in American popular culture as predictably shocking and even safe in the ways that she performed excessiveness. One example of this is Lil’ Kim’s endorsement of MAC Cosmetics’ Viva Glam campaign, which is a fundraising tool for MAC AIDS Fund, a position that aligned her with other former spokespeople including black drag queen RuPaul, Boy George, and Pamela Anderson. Might Lil’ Kim’s plastic surgery and performance be a version of what Powell describes as “cutting a figure” in black portraiture by using her body as the medium? Her practice, though not redemptive or resistant, nonetheless engages with play, ostentatious display, and historical narrativity, features discussed in Powell’s theory of black portraiture aesthetics.

The slippage of excess flesh enactments arise in reading Lil’ Kim through such a framework as she increasingly manufactured her body on notions of eroticized white female bodies throughout much of the 2000s. Yet and still, there, in my estimation, is a curious appropriation of plastic surgery and visual signs of white femininity in Lil’ Kim’s refashioning of her facial
features and body parts. Her hyperbolic invocation of white pornographic
fetish parts—such as oversized breasts, blue contact lens, and exaggerated
hair length—point to her economic success, that is, the ability to purchase
implants so large that they distort the proportionality of her body. In part,
Lil’ Kim’s transformation is a sign of the boom period of the late 1990s–early
2000s that Christopher Holmes Smith describes that produced the hip-hop
mogul as a result of economic, cultural and technological shifts that led
to massive wealth accumulation for a few in historically underrepresented
groups. One could read Lil’ Kim’s refashioning of her body parts as signal-
ing the unnaturalness of white beauty, that is, the construction of beauty
standards and the technologies and industries that create and maintain
these standards. In so doing, Lil’ Kim’s enactment of excess flesh has trans-
formed into an entirely different performance of difference. It is a perfor-
ance that destabilizes the being of excess flesh and corporeal attachment
to one that turns race and gender into plasticity, highly manufactured and
purchasable goods. Lil’ Kim has relegated herself to a familiar spectacle who
is no longer spectacular.

While Lil’ Kim’s career has faltered throughout much of the last decade,
partly because of a criminal conviction in which she attempted to cover up
the criminal acts of a black male rapper, Lil’ Kim resurfaced in 2009 on one
of the most-watched network television shows of the year, Dancing with
the Stars. Lil’ Kim’s body and body parts often became the subject of dis-
cussion for the television show’s judges over her performance as ballroom
dancer. One judge coined her “the bionic booty.” After one performance,
the judge announced, “Your booty can do no wrong.” As in this respect, Lil’
Kim circulated in mainstream popular culture as the being of excess flesh,
a representation that overshadowed her performance on a performance-
driven television show.

As I have examined in this chapter, excess flesh enactments produce very
different results depending on the cultural realm of circulation and the po-

tion of artist/cultural producer vis-à-vis structural hierarchies of art, com-
mercial culture, or racialized popular culture. The different readings and
responses largely have to do with the relationship between performer/artist
and audience and the ways in which authorship is understood within those
various domains. In each instance, the black female body has been overde-
termined and these cultural practitioners have worked to differing impacts
to destabilize this overly familiar figuration. The examples of excess flesh
enactments here discussed have focused primarily on a fashioning of the
black female corporeal figure through nudity or exposure of body parts. In
the next chapter, I focus on the strategic deployment of the clothed black
male body in hip-hop fashion and advertising. Hip-hop fashion companies,
many owned by black men in the hip-hop industry, have turned the excess
associated with black masculinity into big business. They have done this
through turning the idealized and despised hypermasculine trope of black
heterosexual masculinity into a very popular marketable good, associated
with a wide range of fashion apparel and accessories.

Contemporary black entertainers attempt to perform (and articulate) the
ways in which black aesthetic practices have transformed dominant com-
mercialized popular culture in the United States and internationally. Black
male stars like Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Jay-Z, Russell Simmons, Kanye West,
and Pharrell Williams have ventured into new commercial cultural forms
meant specifically to deracialize explicitly the vestiges of blackness from
hip-hop. For example, hip-hop mogul Sean Combs’s most recent MTV
shows have focused on creating music bands with primarily white audi-
ces. Black women performers, however, have been positioned and have
positioned themselves quite differently in these cultural realignments. In
the early twenty-first century, black women continue to be marked by black-
ness rooted in a legacy of a racial past and their bodies continues to bear
these psychic and corporeal scars in dominant visual culture.