

Miley, What's Good?

Nicki Minaj's Anaconda, Instagram Reproductions, and Viral Memetic Violence

Aria S. Halliday



Abstract: Images on popular social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter that are the most entertaining are loaded with memetic power because their value is based on cultural attitudes that already constitute our lives in the everyday. Focusing on memes appropriating the artwork from Nicki Minaj's single, *Anaconda*, I explore how popular memetic culture is fueled by Black women's creativity yet positions Black women's bodies as the fodder for potent viral images on social media platforms and in everyday experiences; Black girlhoods, at this level of representation and in lived experiences, are rarely awarded the distinction from womanhood that many other girlhoods enjoy. Thus, Black feminist discourses of desire which speak to both girlhoods and womanhoods inform my argument that social media has become a site of reproduction and consumption—a technological auction block where Black women's bodies, aesthetics, and experiences are vilified for viral enjoyment.

Keywords: appropriation, Black women, consumption, popular culture, social media, symbolic power



On social media, the number of people or, rather, IP addresses that distribute a video, an article, or an image constitutes its popularity. Usually, the spreading of these items—their virality—is based on shock value. In a discussion of virality and imperialist logics, Lisa Nakamura (2014) explains that the memetic quality of images is based on centuries-old racist logic that “depict[s] the black body in abject and bizarre poses and situations . . . that spreads using user and audience labor” (260). Nakamura points out that the memetic power of images or, more precisely, the desire for the image to be shared and replicated with new captions and contexts is based in the peculiar and spectacular; this desire to replicate a bizarre image provides its viral value. Put another way, the more bizarre an image, the more likely it is that it will be circulated for consumptive enjoyment whether in disgust, humor, or in some assemblage of these. Thus, symbolic power not only illustrates which images become popular in any US cultural context, but also which



bodies, including those of girls, constitute US cultural ideologies of the bizarre and the abject.

The sharing of these images over and over, usually out of context and with little framing of their original referent, becomes part of the ever-growing databases that Twitter, Facebook, and other applications use algorithmically to associate an emotion or idea like excited, angry, or tired predominantly with Black¹ people for the ease of what Lauren Jackson calls “digital blackface” (Jackson 2017: n.p.). Yet, concepts such as love, sadness, and happiness are visually carried by the associative algorithmic connections to whiteness (Ngai 2005; Noble 2018). The movement of these memes (and gifs) is based in “memetic power” or “the power to amuse or garner ‘likes’ from friends sharing a social networking service or image boards” (Nakamura 2014: 261). Beyond friends sharing on social media, global conversations and attitudes towards popular ideas are also fueled by the constant sharing of images digitally; issues built on globalization such as immigration, global health or disaster crises, and tourism are led by what I call the image economy on social media sites. I contextualize the term image economy and its particular relationship to visibility principally through the scholarship of Deborah Poole (1997) and Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011). Poole (1997) pushes against the familiar discourse of the gaze, positing instead that ways of seeing are built on ideological and political constructions of individuals and groups of people against white, European ideals. This reconsideration of discourse as the construction of what is seen through the lenses of power and privilege is what Mirzoeff (2011) refers to as “countervisuality” (24) in his work.

Memetic power is imbedded also in logics of racial and gendered violence that predate enslavement and yet have “infected” (Nakamura 2014: 269) the ways in which we engage with each other online through symbolic power. In many ways, viral images on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and the now-defunct Vine are caustic reminders of the discourses of a postracial and postfeminist United States in the twenty-first century; successfully fortified and spread in political, economic, and legal spheres, these viral images further constitute ideas around race, gender, sex, sexual expression, ability, religion, and nationality. To use a phrase from Limor Shifman’s (2014) article title, the “cultural logic” of virality, the ideals that maintain white supremacist, anti-black, homophobic, and misogynist attitudes that are maintained in the exchange of popular images, are built into the memetic power proved by the very lack of context these images have (Kanai 2016). The images, including those of girls, that we find most appalling, entertaining, and problematic are circulated and recirculated because the cultural attitudes that

already constitute our everyday lives reinforce our ideas of disgust and abjection in the realm of images on social media platforms.

In this article, I consider how social media reproduces the pleasures and miseries Black girls and women experience in the US through viral reification. Viral reification is a two-part yet intertwined process: the process of commodification through the recycling of demonizing ideas and concepts in digital spaces; and objectification through the denial of humanity in regurgitated racist and misogynist images. Regardless of age, Black women and girls are subjected to this process; via the history of capitalism, they are made into objects and sold. Thus, the sexualization of girls and women works in tandem to construct representations of Black female bodies in popular visual culture. Furthermore, Nicki Minaj as a pop culture icon is a feminized form of culture and thus her representation speaks to both girls' and women's culture, particularly in the ways in which she performs girliness as a distinct part of her persona. As Minaj herself plays with the blurred boundaries of girlhood and womanhood through Barbification, I problematize the distinction between childhood and adulthood for Black girls and women in US visual culture and consider the stakes of appropriation.

Focusing on memes appropriating Nicki Minaj's *Anaconda* cover photo and her public responses to these memes, I explore how popular memetic culture—at the intersections of discourses on Black women's bodies, feminism, sexuality, desire, and performance—positions these bodies as the most potent viral images on social media platforms. Constructed as hilarious, absurd, or disgusting, viral images of Black women and girls recirculate stereotypical characteristics (like loud, either asexual or hypersexual, intimidating, and aggressive) of Black women that Patricia Hill Collins described in 1990. Black feminist discourses of desire and Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) "symbolic power" (39) inform the ways in which I explore how memes promote the objectification and spectacularity of Black women's bodies to get likes, shares, and, eventually, money.² Although lacking an intersectional critique of how women of color are represented in mass media, Gaye Tuchman (1978), too, points to how tokenized representation has an impact on the overall symbolic power of representation. Sparse representations of Black women and girls in the mass media make Minaj's salience and appropriation that much more important to our understanding of the consumption of Black bodies in social media contexts in the twenty-first century. Through the symbolic meaning-making of virally circulated images, social media has become a site of reproduction and consumption, desire and misery for Black girls and women in the US—a technological auction block where their bod-

ies, aesthetics, and beliefs are accosted for the sake of viral enjoyment. These representational politics further compound the lack of distinction afforded Black girls in relation to Black women. I frame my understanding of symbolic power as it relates to meaning-making for analyzing Black women's bodies in memes online, the rise of what I have termed Nicki Minaj's "anaconda feminism" through her symbolic performances, and the use of her body online in the wake of her *Anaconda* song's popularity (Halliday 2017). I conclude with a discussion of both the pleasure and misery of Black girls' and women's lives digitally because of the implications of digital appropriation for their lives more broadly.

Making Images Mean

Through symbolic power, images illuminate latent ideologies that regularly circulate throughout society. This power "consists of the power to make something exist in the objectified, public, formal state which only previously existed in an implicit state," as well as "the power to make groups and to consecrate and institute them" (Bourdieu 1993: 14). The symbolic gains power through systems of interpretation in any society, while the relationships between systems of meaning allow for more complex interpretations—the making of meaning. Explained differently, the symbolic material (here, images) are given power in society by how they are interpreted, used, and reinterpreted by different people and over time. Images are made to mean through the constant referential work of language and the performance of media to associate images (or events) with particular words and ideas. Stuart Hall ([1982]1998) explains that this meaning-making work is intrinsically ideological and therefore the site of fraught struggle, especially for those who have power and those who do not. John Storey (2009) further explains that ideology constructs the purpose and interpretation of popular culture. Because ideology "conceals the reality of subordination for those who are powerless" (3–4), culture that is liked by the people or is widely circulated extends ideas of power, oppression, and subordination. The struggle for meaning—for example, understanding a black hoodie as a marker of degeneracy and violence rather than as a piece of clothing—is the main site in which Western societies are constructed and maintained.

Symbolic power, then, is constituted only in relation to the society in which the symbols exist. Symbols (such as images) receive and retain meaning in particular sociohistorical contexts and, therefore, construct groups

through the institutionalization of this meaning.³ The circulation of an image, detachment from the original context, and recirculation of the same image constitutes a new arena of meaning-making between the powerful and the powerless because of the possibility of these images being shared rapidly and globally. Hall (1992) notes that “it is only through the way in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are” (33). Popular culture, then, provides the area in which we learn our identities and how society constructs us based on those identities even as we may construct ourselves differently from those pop culture examples. Therefore, marginalized and oppressed people as well as those centered and celebrated find their place in society through the ways in which they are seen and not seen in popular culture.

Symbolic power is of particular use to my discussion of Black girls’ and women’s digital lives because Black women construct their identities with and against the grain of social media reproductions of Black female bodies and experiences as do Black girls (insofar as they are permitted to), while they are also constituted through these symbolic representations. The inherent harm of the “glass closet” (284–285)—the hypervisible containment of Black bodies in US society in search of homosexuality that C. Riley Snorton (2014) argues is used to surveil Black queer celebrities—is exacerbated by social media through the ways in which proximity to blackness (and therefore abjectness) is “proved” by its ability to be seen or applied whether queer or not. Posts on social media are highly invested in the visual markings of blackness, what Snorton calls “public panopticism” (284), and, in particular, how Black female bodies are displayed. Constant surveillance and search for Black girls’ and women’s abnormalities and abjectness become the basis for many of the social media conversations on Instagram and Twitter. This means, then, that viral images create and sustain viral power because of the perceived ability to “see” Black female bodies in ways that one cannot on a regular basis and outside of digital spaces. The quality of mimesis—the belief, in this case, that what we see as digital representation is wholly representative of marginalized people rather than a performance or individual act—that occurs on social media provides the bridge that connects economic, social, and political marginalization of Black women to misrepresentation and demonization of Black women’s bodies digitally. Because Hall (1992) points out that “there is no escape from the politics of representation” (30), I am interested in how particular social media platforms encourage users’ ability to create, distort, and disperse fabricated images of Black women and girls. Jacques Derrida’s (1988) construction of “play” (90) in

meaning-making is at work through the virality of images of Black women; play in this sense enhances our understanding of both popular culture and black femininity, while also framing the ways in which digital cultural attitudes affect the lived experiences of Black girls and women. Play in this sense is based on the ways in which the struggle for meaning and who wins that struggle construct the ability to shift the meaning of a sign. If the digital world constructs our meaning-making in the everyday and vice versa, what recourse do Black women have for the creation and distortion of their bodies, experiences, and knowledges?

Pink Wigs and Pinkprints: Nicki's Anaconda Feminism

As a real-life Barbie-Princess doll, Nicki Minaj is constantly interrogated about how her cultural products represent parts (or all) of who she is beyond her performances. Although I do not believe or argue that Nicki Minaj is an anomaly in her use of US American white supremacist and patriarchal ideals of femininity to launch her career, other musical icons of color like Mariah Carey, Brandy, Christina Aguilera, and Lil' Kim or even white icons like Britney Spears, Gwen Stefani, and Madonna have not been as successful in maintaining their alternative image associations, while also straddling musical genres, particularly hip-hop and pop. Minaj combines and manipulates the symbolic resonances of these other musical icons and recurring US American narratives of femininity that she closely associates with girlhood in her performance of herself as Barbie and her fans as Barbz, even though she does not fit the mold visually. Sara Baartman, from South Africa, was once one of the most popular of the African women who were taken to Europe for freak shows and human zoos; even after her death, Baartman's body was dismembered and displayed in jars in Parisian museums. Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" speech recounts the ways in which enslavement made objects out of Black women. As global representations of Black women through the relationship of colonialism to the commodification of Black female bodies, Baartman and Truth together contextualize Minaj's own display in US cultural spaces. Being a Black woman, whose large breasts and butt are constantly ogled, and her so-called complicated sexuality, and hip-hop bravado interrogated, and judged (not unlike what happened to Sara Baartman⁴ and Sojourner Truth), Nicki Minaj disrupts simple renderings of her popular imagery by scholars and music critics alike. Simply put, she has become iconic because of her asso-

ciations with these images and her ability to harness while also affirming their symbolic power.

Like other hip-hop feminist theorists, my construction of anaconda feminism embraces the complicated relationship with the world that Black women inhabit as celebrities who make space for Black women's representation on global capitalist stages.⁵ I am concerned with how Minaj and performers like Beyoncé, Alison Hinds, and others in other musical genres, voluntarily inhabit a privileged performative space that capitalizes on their sexual allure even as Black women were sold previously as human chattel on similar stages and in similar near-nothing outfits. Through anaconda feminism, I aim to work through the ways in which Black women of spectacularity—Black women who are situated at the forefront of representation and yet are ogled for the ways in which, given their attitudes, their bodies and performances do not fit normative ideas of femininity—exist to create the popular representation that Black women and girls yearn for while also maintaining the interests of white audiences in neoliberal societies of the twenty-first century. Based on the promotion of Nicki Minaj's song *Anaconda* in 2015, anaconda feminism privileges the knowledges and experiences of Black women, while also working to understand the ways in which sexuality, sexual expression, femininity, gender, and blackness are constructed through popular representations.

As a persona who engages the real and the fantastic, the sexually explicit and the culturally wholesome, Nicki Minaj has emerged as a character who shapes not only Black women's experiences in the hip-hop and music industries but also the lived experiences of Black girlhood through discourses of sexuality, blackness, and femininity in the United States.⁶ Aimee Cox (2015) explains that there are four discourses of sexuality that frame how Black girls construct their identities: "sexuality as violence, sexuality as victimization, sexuality as individual morality [and] sexuality as desire" (165). Promoting the heavily silenced discourse of desire, Nicki Minaj affects the ways in which Black women and girls can understand themselves as sexual beings. Minaj's persona via character assemblages and resultant fandom helps construct different symbolic representations of Black femininity, sexuality, and girlhood/womanhood that then shape the cultural attitudes towards Black women and girls in the United States and abroad.

Even as Minaj may provide noteworthy representation for Black women and girls in her current stance as the most popular Black woman rapper since 2005, her following is not only Black women and girls. In 2017, Minaj boasted a following of 20.3 million on Instagram and 19.2 on Twitter, with

a Facebook public figure page toting 42 million likes. Beyond the benefit of having a Black woman in hip-hop spaces, I find that Nicki Minaj's social media popularity is one based in the racist fascination with Black women's bodies. Centering virality in the concept of blackness as spectacularity, Instagram sharing of Nicki Minaj's *Anaconda* cover illustrates how postmodern logics of colorblind racism and postfeminism sustain the spreading of racist imperialist interpretations and uses of Black women's bodies.⁷ Whether meme creators consider themselves fans or not, the use of Nicki Minaj's body for varying viral images illustrates the ways in which Black women's bodies hold no value in the US cultural imagination; represented by the mutilation of Nicki Minaj's *Anaconda* cover, Black women's bodies in the digital landscape of US social media are always already available means of entertainment and pastiche. In short, through viral Instagram memes, Nicki Minaj's body becomes a fragmented neoliberal commodity that anyone can claim and use as their own—putting their own head or those of animated characters on her body, making shower liners and wearable commodities such as t-shirts with her image, imposing it on famous paintings and popular culture scenes. These instances of memetic creativity use Minaj's body as a joke—a freakishly proportioned mannequin that can cause uproarious laughter. Ultimately, these uses of Minaj's body obliterate her face from her body, visually reifying her butt for viral memetic purposes.⁸

Show Me Your Neoliberal ASSets!

Thanks to the 19.6 million views within the first 24 hours of the release of the music video, *Anaconda*, Nicki Minaj's butt became the most watched item online. Shortly after her music video went viral, Minaj posted an image of herself on Instagram in which she is squatting backwards in a pink G-string and bra. She wears blue, white, and pink Jordan sneakers. Her eyes are focused intently on the viewer. As the audience takes in the fullness of her butt, she sees them watching and revels in their awe, pleasure, or discomfort. Above her head are pink words, Nicki Minaj Anaconda, referencing the video she recently released. Within a few weeks, Minaj began reposting memes in which she had been tagged in an attempt to maintain some popular resonance as *Anaconda* became dated in its pop culture context.⁹ Although she was amused by some of the images, there were others that she found problematic, as illustrated by a laughing or side-eye emoji. This relationship between Minaj's own image and the subsequent memetic

reproductions illustrates the relationship between neoliberal consumption in an age of social media—all images posted have the possibility of being used beyond the intention of the initial author. An image's value as a commodity, or its symbolic power on social media, is based on its ability to be used again and again and for a variety of purposes beyond the original context. In this way, Minaj's *Anaconda* promotional picture harnessed historical ideologies of Black women's bodies to make the image viral, thereby creating the boundaries within which her fans and other social media users would apply and exploit her image. By marketing her body as the basis for a discussion of Black women's bodies and sexuality (evidenced by the song and music video), Minaj seemingly emboldened others to use her body for other purposes on social media. These images worked with, for, and against Minaj's original articulation and illustrate not only the potential issues with proliferation of social media images, but also the ways in which the authorial intent and creativity of marginalized groups can be exploited for larger cultural consumption.

While this particular image drew ire and concern from some, Nicki Minaj and her entire career have been built on ideas of spectacularity. Constant scrutinizing of Minaj's body (such as the longstanding discussion on whether her butt is real) in the media and in quotidian conversations addresses the continued symbolic hold of race science and the physical disorder, steatopygia (excessive fat on the buttocks, a condition from which Sara Baartman, described as a Hottentot, was said to have suffered in the eighteenth century) on Black female bodies. The buttocks, in particular, act as a panoptic marker of Black femininity. Black women, like Serena Williams and Josephine Baker, have been marked by the visibility of their buttocks in public spaces as an obsessive desire on the part of white people to control what Nicole Fleetwood (2011) calls "excess flesh" (112). Snorton (2014) likewise confirms my argument that "Minaj's decisions to 'hottentot' herself ... cannot be explained as simply the desire to produce herself as commodity" (297) for her audiences. Minaj's blackness and femininity converge at the point of excess—excess flesh and "excess femininity" (Whitney 2012: 141)—creating a fragmentation reminiscent of the Barbie aesthetic she co-opts in her music. Her assets of plasticity, then, push the boundaries of acceptability and therefore allow the symbolic visual manifestation and representation of other sexual possibilities for Black girls and women in the US and abroad.

Despite the inspiration that could be read from Minaj's performance of Black women's sexual desire and agency in the *Anaconda* video and the sub-

sequent images that surfaced to market it, social media used the virality of the spectacle (Nicki Minaj's butt) to re-balance the scales of dominance. Moreover, creating and populating a monstrosity by dismembering Minaj and replacing her head with the head of Drake, Miley Cyrus, Lady Gaga, Kermit the Frog, Patrick Star, and Marge Simpson illustrates the Frankenstein-like fragmentation and cooptation of Black women's bodies that occur in US practices of consumption. Other cooptations show fans firmly grasping Minaj's butt or superimposing her image onto real and imagined monuments like Mt. Rushmore, the Statue of Liberty, and pride rock in *The Lion King*, or simply imposing other characters like SpongeBob SquarePants, who is shown licking her butt.

These acts of dismembering and sexually suggestive impositions are representative of the violence that the US cultural imagination allows against Black women. Alexander Weheliye (2014) explains that the pleasure derived from inflicting violence on bodies based on race distinguishes the full human from the not-quite-human and the nonhuman. The not-quite-human and nonhuman are always available for violence-induced pleasure from others. Rather than physically inflicting violence, as was typical during the enslavement and Jim Crow periods, the pleasure of domination in a social media landscape is enacted upon Nicki Minaj through her technological decapitation. Her beheading is an example of Christina Sharpe's (2009) monstrous intimacies, as "horrors, desires, and positions produced, reproduced, circulated, and transmitted, that are breathed in like air and often unacknowledged to be monstrous" (3). Additionally, the fact that this beheading happened in multiple viral images bolsters the idea that Black women's bodies hold no value on their own; they must be altered until almost unrecognizable to reveal their truly monstrous state. These implications were not lost on Nicki Minaj, particularly when Miley Cyrus superimposed her head on Minaj's body in the *Anaconda* image.

Miley Cyrus's role in this technological beheading cannot be overstated; as a white female musician who has attempted to "blacken" and adultify her pristine Disney girl image and then remove her hypersexual image when no longer useful, Cyrus has constructed her career on Black women's bodies—particularly their butts. Miley Cyrus performs her adulthood through appropriating and adorning herself with Black womanhood, a luxury of privilege that Black girls do not have because they are always assumed to be adults. As early as her MTV Video Music Awards performance in August 2013, Cyrus used Black women's butts as prosthetic props. She performed alongside her personal twerk team and smacked her candy striper on the butt

before leaving them on rear stage to take what she saw to be her “rightful” place at the front of America’s viewing public, simulating having sex with Robin Thicke. Since that performance, Cyrus has continually excavated images from US Black cultural memory and posted pictures and videos of herself as Lil Kim, Kaia (popular for the song *My Neck, My Back*), and as shown, Nicki Minaj.¹⁰

Cyrus’s beheading of Nicki Minaj was actually the first illustration of “fan art” becoming popular once Cyrus posted it on her Instagram multiple times. Although generally accepting of fans’ use of her images, Minaj was particularly perturbed at Cyrus’s cooptation of *Anaconda* imagery for fun because of Cyrus’s history of using Black cultural productions—particularly Black women in hip-hop spaces—to popularize her own career. Minaj’s response on social media and subsequent questioning of Cyrus on stage at the MTV Awards in 2015 resisted Cyrus’s desire to “eat the Other” (hooks 1992: 369) to promote herself. The humorous or uncanny use of Minaj’s body is reminiscent and symbolic of the ritualistic reification of Black women in the United States since enslavement; bell hooks (1992) theorizes that white people’s open declaration of desire for the Other reenacts the process of colonization in what she calls an “imperialist nostalgia” (369). The symbolic power that Minaj harnessed through the *Anaconda* video and use of the *Anaconda* image on her Instagram was commandeered to serve as entertainment for Cyrus and her fans; this appropriation of symbolic power through the beheading of a Black woman’s body reconstituted white supremacy in a neoliberal market that counts all money the same. Cyrus’s use of Nicki Minaj’s *Anaconda* image illustrates what I call celebrity-to-celebrity scrubbing, or the use of another’s celebrity status to bolster one’s own.

In this way, Cyrus’s scrubbing of the *Anaconda* image as a white “Hannaconda” replicated everyday marginalization of Black women’s bodies and the cooptation of the hip-hop genre’s music and aesthetics in pop and rock music (Kopano and Brown 2014; Hess 2005). This symbolic death of Nicki Minaj because of Cyrus’s technological beheading becomes a representation of the erasure of Black people in post-slavery, what Christina Sharpe (2016) calls “the afterlife of property” (15). Digitally and through memetic power, the beheading is a regurgitation of old media representations “made real once again online” (Noble 2018: 32).

Because Black people are overrepresented in the use of social media, Black girls and women witnessed Cyrus’s technological hijacking of Minaj’s body for enjoyment, as Noliwe Rooks (2014) observed, in the very space that they use to find acceptance, community, and feminist confidence. Bear-

ing witness to the symbolic death of the most popular Black woman rapper in the early twenty-first century, like the ritualistic circulation of Black people murdered, symbolically and psychologically disrupts the space of humanity that Black people carve for themselves. Inundated with symbolic and actual deaths, Black women and girls are therefore encouraged to embrace the fragility of life, the inability to cast themselves as human and deserving of nonpatriarchal or racist love, and the regularity of state-sanctioned trauma. Despite how notably we might understand Minaj's image to be in popular culture because of its own viral qualities, we must remember Stuart Hall's words: we cannot escape from representation, and in this case cooperation, in a capitalist society built on the physical and symbolic labor of Black women and girls.

Conclusion

Although the US as a neoliberal, postracial society promotes the idea that money makes us all equal and, therefore, that Miley Cyrus's hyperracialized stunts are just fun and games, we must remember how the histories of subjugation, degradation, and subsequent stereotyping of Black women affect how Black women's bodies are made visible, invisible, and hypervisible in the media and online. Janell Hobson (2012) hails us to see how the "raced and gendered meanings" present on social media "support ideologies of dominance, privilege, and power" (8) for particular bodies. This struggle for meaning on social media platforms and in the media overall maintains the legacies of violence against Black women for capitalist gain and white enjoyment. In this way, Sara Baartman's life and posthumous dismemberment continues to haunt us in the US visual landscape because we have not come to terms with the symbolic power of her physical fragmentation and ideological demonization. Baartman's physical and symbolic presence in the global cultural imagination create, maintain, and restrict the possibilities for Black women's cultural production in popular and social media cultures.

Our viral meme culture, today, illustrates how symbols continue to position Black women's bodies as always already available to be the freaks in social media freak shows. Representing the monstrosity, the caricature, the stereotype, Black women's representation digitally directly influences and is influenced by their experiences beyond social media. The imposition of sexual encounters and the beheading of Nicki Minaj's *Anaconda* single art is representative of the ways in which Black women's and girls' bodies

are castigated outside of digital platforms. In everyday interactions, as well, we have witnessed with shocking regularity how Black female bodies are defiled for what seems like the enjoyment of citizens and police officers alike. From Charnesia Corley who was subjected to a cavity search in a public parking lot and Renisha McBride who was shot in the head as she asked for help after a car accident to Sandra Bland who died mysteriously in police custody after a traffic stop turned into an arrest and the 14-year old girl who was body-slammed by a police officer leaving a pool in McKinney, TX, Black girls and women are subject to being searched, assaulted, and violently attacked. The murder of Nia Wilson by a white civilian man in July 2018, too, illustrates the ways in which Black girls and women are subjected to violence for simply existing. For and with Black girls and women, our politics digitally, in the classroom, and in the everyday must engage critically with ideas of sexual pleasure and agency, while also recognizing the symbolic erasure and degradation of Black female bodies on our social media platforms at the behest of neoliberal white everyday supremacist modes of domination.

ARIA S. HALLIDAY is Assistant Professor in Women's Studies at the University of New Hampshire. In her research, she explores contemporary U.S. and Caribbean representations of Black women and girls in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She specializes in representations created by Black women and girls that influence ideas of race, gender, sexuality, and consumerism in popular culture. Her work has appeared recently in *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* (2017) and *Journal of African American History* (2018) and is forthcoming in 2019 in *Palimpsest* and an edited volume, *Infrastructures of African American Print*, edited by Brigitte Felder and Jonathan Senchyne. Email: aria.halliday@unh.edu.

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Notes

1. I prefer to use the initial capital on Black since the word applies to a cultural group like Asian or Latino.
2. Kyra Gaunt (2015) engages with the value of Black girls' bodies online in relation to twerking videos. See her TedTalk on Black girls' net worth.
3. Although he did not discuss minority groups in his theory, Pierre Bourdieu has long been used to engage with media representations of racial and sexual minorities. See Paul Venzo and Kristy Hess (2013) for more on symbolic violence and gay advocacy.
4. See Nicole Fleetwood (2011) for more on Baartman and the cultural resonances of her story in the US and globally. Jaime Schultz (2005) further explains Baartman's legacy in her biography of Serena Williams as a Black woman athlete.
5. See Aisha Durham et al. (2013) and Treva Lindsey (2015) for more on hip-hop feminism, and Whitney Peoples (2008) for the ways in which hip-hop feminism grows from and beyond Black feminist theorizing and hip-hop culture.
6. Intentionally, I do not read Minaj's performances as representative of who Onika Maraj is off stage. I contextualize her persona—Nicki Minaj—as an avatar and therefore a constructed representation for consumption. See Uri McMillan (2015) for more on avatars and performances of Black women performers.
7. Sarah Projanksy (2014) further theorizes celebrity and spectacularity through the lens of girls who disrupt traditional notions of white celebrity.
8. See https://www.instagram.com/p/q1ZNUCL8do/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=1oxjvs9clbaxl
9. This act of reposting on social media platforms, principally Instagram, illustrates celebrity involvement with their fan base. Through the sharing of fan art or photos, most celebrities gain followers and therefore influence through the semblance of social intimacy with their fans as friends. These parasocial interactions online allow fans to have access to levels of intimacy with celebrities that were previously impossible. See David Giles (2002) and Alice Marwick (2015) for more on parasocial interactions and the semblance of intimacy on social media platforms.
10. See https://www.instagram.com/p/riQWLLr8bb/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=111alwethwhjf

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