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Citizenship Porn within the Frame: Visualizing Techniques, Cyberspace, and the Production of "Undocumented"

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*Citizenship Porn within the Frame:*

*Visualizing Techniques, Cyberspace, and the Production of “Undocumented”*

This paper is part of a larger project in which I have been thinking through a pornographic fantasy that I call “citizenship porn”. Let me first describe what I mean by “citizenship porn”; I will then raise several questions to be addressed in this paper.

“Citizenship porn” is a pornographic narrative in which an ostensibly white (and occasionally Latino), heterosexual man seeks out and discovers an “illegal Latina”<sup>1</sup>, scams her into sex, only to deport her at the end. One website teases potential users with this promotional text:

“She wanted American citizenship...we told her that she'd get a green card too. This latina [sic] girl was going to have sex for a green card. She wouldn't get anything today! We fucked and left her. That's what she gets for wanting to have green card sex. To see more Latina girls getting tricked into having sex, click on the link below.”<sup>2</sup>

The narrative is constructed around the visual fantasy of sex between strangers. In many scenarios, several (ostensibly) white men are seen hanging out at home, bored. To ease their boredom the men leave to find an “illegal”, who is raced “Latina” through their dialogue<sup>3</sup>. According to the narratives, she could be found anytime, anywhere. For example, one story shows the men approaching “Christina Fuentes,” a naughty “Illegal waitress”,

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the inflammatory and racist sentiment that underlies this term, I will use it in this context in quotes to indicate that this is the terminology used at the websites themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Border Bangers, (26 October, 2005), “The original Latina hardcore site! Totally exclusive illegal Latinas getting banged or deported or both”, <<http://www.borderbangers.com/74066467/index.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> This racing is consistent with the dominant stereotype of the undocumented in the US.

“Christina Fuentes was working at a local restaurant. Well, that’s illegal and we will have to take her in. Man this girl was hot. This petite little chica sucked cock like it was going out of style, then got fucked. She took it like a good American girl. Hard!”<sup>4</sup>

Many of the places the “illegals” are “found” are consistent with dominant stereotypes of undocumented workers; for example, cleaning pools, working as a nanny, at the Home Depot, and at the 99 Cent Store.<sup>5</sup> In addition, some scenarios depict men clothed in a clearly marked INS uniform engaging in sex with his captive. “Guadalupe is posing as a moving worker. This bitch was really asking to get pumped with some border patrol cock! Watch this episode and see her gobble cock, get fucked and deported.”<sup>6</sup> In both scenarios, the woman is usually either promised a green card or not to be deported in exchange for sex. The seduction phase is always very short since the real visual feast is of the sex itself, which culminates with the male ejaculation. However, the narrative climax is only reached when reference is made to the subsequent deportation of the “illegal”, and the ensuing pleasure the men take in both the cunning they displayed during the seduction, as well as the reassertion of their citizenship privilege.

Citizenship porn lies at the nexus of gender, citizenship, race, and sexuality. It indicates much about power embedded in our body-making practices, as well as the ways in which differential value is produced. As such, in this paper I ask, what makes porn and citizenship compatible? How does citizenship porn produce epistemological value (embedded with hierarchy), and what value is produced through this union? To engage these questions, this analysis is developed in two parts. First, it is argued that as a

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.borderbangers.com/14315871/tour2.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.borderbangers.com/14315871/tour3.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.borderbangers.com/14315871/tour2.html>

visualizing technique, citizenship porn provides a frame through which the meaning of “undocumented” as a subject category is produced. The second part of the analysis considers what this epistemological value might look like. The “perverse body” is taken as an example. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the possibilities for this project in the future.

### ***Body as Resource***

Undocumented is not a consistent, stable, or an a priori subject category; rather it requires the constant re/production of its meaning. Citizenship porn, as a frame through which knowledge about the world is ordered, is a technology by which meaning is produced. Primarily a visual phenomenon, citizenship porn mediates a particular understanding of the undocumented subject (and, by extension, citizen subject) for the voyeur. Porn is a particularly productive site of knowledge production because the excessive visualization of the body provides a large surface area upon which meaning may be produced.<sup>7</sup> The act of watching allows the viewer to inhabit a disembodied gaze that segregates the subject from the object. However, the viewer is induced to partake in the production of meaning in citizenship porn through visual illustrations that consistently connect with the pre-rational forces of desire, fantasy, anxiety, and fear.<sup>8</sup> These forces engage and implicate the voyeur within the field of vision, calling upon the viewer to cross the screen/body divide. In porn, the viewer is induced to inhabit a particular subjectivity through the corporeal enactment of desire. In citizenship porn, in particular, anxieties and fears about national and racial boundaries also excite the

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<sup>7</sup> Butler, Judith, Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, New York: Routledge, 1990, 163.

<sup>8</sup> Robins, Kevin, Into The Image : Culture And Politics In The Field Of Vision, London ; New York : Routledge, 1996, 5.

spectator to inhabit certain subject categories, including undocumented/documented and citizen/noncitizen. Citizenship pornography thus frames the space for the disembodied abstraction, “undocumented” to take bodily form.

### ***Epistemological Value***

The body in citizenship porn is made to produce epistemological value. The “perverse body” is one such form of value. The “perverse body” narrative produces the undocumented body as virus, or a foreign body that has penetrated the national body. In citizenship porn, the white man symbolizes the internal space of the nation, while the Latina is his Other. Privacy, as a category of law and condition of property corresponding to the domestic sphere constitutes the boundary between proper and improper bodies, and limits the imagination of legitimate U.S. citizenship. The white man’s connection with the internal realm associates him with the domesticity of the nation, asserting his privilege and position as citizen and rendering “citizen” in the white and masculine image. However, the undocumented Latina’s presence within the national body signifies female penetration of the male space, representing a perversion of the normalized sexual order. Undocumented is here produced as a perversion that menaces not only the race order, but also the sexual order of the nation.

The Latina’s agency could also be considered a perversion of the naturalized gendered order of the public/private divide. Michelle Rosaldo argued the public/private divide is predicated on those activities of motherhood that cause women to be isolated from the public sphere, where men gain authority through greater access to instrumental

modalities.<sup>9</sup> In this case, the nation represents the domestic sphere. Outside the national space, the undocumented Latina cannot be disciplined for she falls outside of the sovereign power of the white male. Once retrieved into the domestic sphere, she is now subject to the rule of that territory. Within the domestic sphere, the symbolic nation, the undocumented Latina is constituted as no longer rights-bearing; she has been reduced to bare life. As transgressor and perversity, the undocumented Latina is now subject to discipline by the sovereign, in this case through her sexual domination. It must be recognized, however, that circulations of power in these images is complex, and even contradictory. While the white man demarcates and enforces national boundaries by disciplining the transgressor, the undocumented Latina actively instrumentalizes the sovereign's desire and pleasure (and by extension, the voyeur) to her own ends (i.e. to not be deported). Her sexual agency, as well as her manipulation of citizenship, represents the perversion of the public/private divide because in citizenship porn the white man represents the internal, sexualized space, while it is the Latina that accesses and instrumentalizes state regulatory modalities. That is, she has subverted the naturalized, gendered divide between the public and private through her sexual mediation of the man in the domestic sphere and her manipulation of male state institutions. Ultimately, however, the undocumented Latina's perversion of structured orders of power necessitates her deportation to reassert the sovereign power of the white male and to realign the power of the spectator.<sup>10</sup>

## **Conclusions**

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<sup>9</sup> Lamphere, Louise and Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, editors, 1974, Women, Culture, and Society, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.

<sup>10</sup> Agamben, Giorgio, Homo Sacer : Sovereign Power And Bare Life; Translated By Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1998.

Clearly, this paper only begins to consider the imbrications of gender, citizenship, race, and sex in citizenship porn- possible areas of inquiry abound. For example, an analysis of citizenship porn needs to be situated within its larger context of capitalism in order to identify its significance in terms of consumption and circulation. This also suggests the need to investigate the notions of alienation and the fetish, particularly in terms of visual representations of the body. Issues of performance and performativity are also crucial to analysis of citizenship porn; literature in film studies, as well as the growing literature on the body, would direct these inquiries.

Additionally, since I last looked (only several months ago), the narratives have morphed, somewhat. The depiction of Latino males is a new development that begs analysis through the lens of feminist and race theory. There was also significant narrative development around the types of employment the undocumented women were engaged in. The definitive stereotype of the undocumented worker has been male; undocumented women are more often depicted as wife and mother in both academic literature and popular culture. That alternative models of female migrants are developing in pornography merits consideration. Finally, this project demands an ethnographic component. Fieldwork may take shape, not only within the porn industry itself and among its consumers, but around identifying narrative motifs of citizenship and sex within other locales, such as the INS processing offices, the second inspection at the border, or within the INS detention center.

To conclude, I suggest that an examination of citizenship in pornography not only highlights nationalist anxieties, fantasies, and desires, but offers an alternative route by which to interrogate the narrative production of “undocumented” as a subject category.

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