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Keith Woodward
Book Review

*The Sexual Citizen* is an attempt to think through theorizations of sexual—but more particularly queer—citizenship as it has emerged over the past few decades. In doing so, Bell and Binnie endeavor to provide a radical reformulation based upon the complexities of sexual citizenship that emerge within its key contexts: the political, global, urban, social, economic, marital, and martial. As the authors understand it, "*all citizenship is sexual citizenship*" (10), but they also adamantly remind us that citizenship is always falling victim to problems of uneven development. Their project, therefore, is concerned with developing an account of sexual citizenship that responds to its articulations by both the Left and the New Right, providing a picture of sexual citizenship as immanent to its own complex situatedness rather than as a product of heteronormative, often homophobic, essentialisms.

The first two chapters of this work provide a dialogical review of recent theoretical engagements with the topics of sexual and queer citizenships. Bell and Binnie draw upon works from a variety of disciplines and topics (most notably AIDS citizenship) to create a field of engagements with the problem of the heterosexualization of citizenship. The chapters themselves are merit worthy simply by virtue of the number of texts covered, each of which receives an argument summary, making them extremely valuable for the neophyte and the undergraduate. Bell and Binnie have taken care to engage both the more radical articulations of queer citizenship and the conservative strategies of assimilation that have emerged within queer politics (conservatism and the New Right is largely the topic of chapter 2). Although their own position often remains under-articulated in these first chapters, it nevertheless emerges through their responses to other critical works, both conservative
and radical, as a form of political utopianism aimed particularly at queering citizenship in ways that resist pragmatic compromises with heteronormativity (52).

The remaining chapters of The Sexual Citizen consist of the major project of the text: to root out the complexities of queer citizenship that emerge within contextualized instances on the ground. In other words, to trouble theoretical attempts to capture queer citizenship by pointing to a number of instances in which the situatedness of the queer citizen (and the ways that citizenship is constituted by its situatedness) creates ruptures in the ways that citizenship and sexuality are commonly understood and articulated. To accomplish this, Bell and Binnie challenge claims that queer studies fall strictly under the umbrella of cultural theory (the politics of representation) and have little to do with social theory (the politics of redistribution). Rather, both of these theoretical areas, with the added dimension of spatial theory, must be combined in order to account for the ways in which mobility and class, for example, inform the development and articulation of sexual citizenship and rights. Neglecting such considerations often results in the perpetuation of homophobic constructions of queer citizenship as a totalized class modeled upon the white, male middle class. Bell and Binnie caution that "utopian formulations of sexual citizenship envisaged in accounts of sites for public sex and queer consumption must address questions of social and economic inequality as they map over those sites. It is not a simple question of an affirmation of shopping and fucking in a time of reaction and family values" (81). Their discussions of the relations of sexual citizenship to the city (chapter 5), to the so-called Pink Economy (chapter 6), and to global tourism (chapter 7) all call for a revised picture of the queer citizenship based upon those who are made invisible because they fall out of the purview of the privileged class position that is assumed in readings of queer citizenship as that which accesses to those sites.

The most engaging chapters of this work are those dealing directly with the spatialization of queer citizenship. In the chapters dedicated to the city and to the global, there is a challenge put forward that complicates understandings of these sites as the particular sites in which queer citizenship finds its purchase. While acknowledging the city as the "prime site for both the materialization of sexual identity, community and politics, and for conflicts and struggles around sexual identity" (83), they also treat the city as a "place of many places" (89), suggesting that the materialization of sexual identity depends largely upon the particularities of the city in which it develops. Although cities are often assumed to be sites friendly to queer citizenship, Bell and Binnie note that regional and provincial cities, as well as those involved in "clean-up" movements, such as Giuliani's New York, often reveal the "presence of the homophobic gaze" and "the uneven development of sexual citizenship in space" (91). The variation in formulations of sexual citizenship from city to city and the growing mythology around global queer cities presents the problem of poverty and restricted mobility as primary to sexual citizenship. At the global scale, this problem emerges through the sealing of national borders against queer migrants and the development of new problems of passing that invoke forms of assimilationism reminiscent to those of conservative queer theory (121).

Finally, Bell and Binnie present their account of the sexual politics of intimacy and friendship (chapter 8). This portion of their project speaks largely to heteronormative conceptions of the family as the State-sanctioned site for particular formations of rights (and rites) in sexual citizenship that are particularly structured to promote anti-homosexual strategies. Combating such formations must take form in ways that resist simply occupying an essentialized Other position, leaving friendship and intimacy as radically open sites that promote a variety of relations. Drawing upon utopianism that pervades Foucault's later interviews on the topic of sexuality, Bell and Binnie explain that by creating "as yet unforeseen kinds of relationships"—which can begin to rework what we mean by love, what we mean by family, what we mean by friendship—we might be able to rethink from here what we mean by citizenship, or, perhaps, what we mean by at yet unforeseen kinds of citizenship" (140). Such reformations draw upon the importance of seeing sexuality and citizenship from the perspective of multiplicities in order to create new accounts of sexual citizenship that can speak to variation amongst socio-economic and spatial contexts. However, while Bell and Binnie see such formations as sites of liberation from heteronormative and homophobic readings of sexual citizenship, it is important to note that these new kinds of citizenship are only relatively open, and will themselves develop new forms of corresponding ascessis that will require a continued vigilance against the formation of new essentialisms around citizenship (Halperin 78).

In a recent review of Felix Driver's Geography Militant, Anne Godlewska approached and avoided her subject by making the rather ambiguous observation that, "This book is either good or not so good depending on what you expect from a book" (Godlewska 121). The Sexual Citizen requires a similar qualification. Broadly speaking, this is a relatively open text, its project consists largely of rethinking the development of critical thought on sexual citizenship and, as such, it often asks more questions than it answers. Bell and Binnie might best be understood here as reintroducing the subject in terms of the sites that they feel remain largely under-addressed. Part of the result of this is an in-depth review of the literature on sexual citizenship that has emerged since the advent of queer theory. This review, which occupies the first third of the text, consists largely of summary and is only peppered by critical commentary, leaving the larger direction of the text sometimes unclear. The length of the review and the duration of the deferral of Bell and Binnie's thesis may, therefore, leave some readers bothered. As Godlewska says: it depends upon what you expect from a book.

The remainder of the book, particularly those chapters that focus upon the spatiality of sexual citizenship, is often rewarding, consistently developing a series of lines of flight from the heteronormative order of citizenship. Throughout, the text is readable and engaging, and, because it provides both a thorough review of literature and a variety of engagements on the ground, it could prove to be a valuable supplement to both undergraduate and early graduate courses. The argument that surfaces through the latter portion of the text also serves as an important reminder to students of social theory (embodied in Bell and Binnie's examples of uneven development) that chasing the multiplicity does not consist simply in the search for new ways of being, but in teasing out the complexities that we may have missed in the world that surrounds us.
**Works Cited**


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**Jonathan Vincent**

**Book Review**


*Stealing Innocence* is a book in two parts. The first is a critical exposé of American consumer culture and the way that it exploits an ideological mythology of childhood innocence. The second section, which the title does not make clear, is an outline of a program to reconfigure education around models articulated in the works of Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, and Stuart Hall. Where the first three chapters work to disclose the methods and practices that a conservative, market capitalism deploys to restrict and contain child agency, the final three chapters function as a prescriptive methodology for revitalizing education around notions of critical citizenship and an active public sphere.

At the outset, Giroux articulates a need to dispense with the mythologies of childhood and innocence as innately “pure and passive” natural states. This definition, he claims, obstructs the way in which corporate culture (as well as conservative theorists like Neil Postman) crystallize child identity as a fixed entity and, as a consequence, a marketable entity. We must understand, he contends, the “politics of innocence” as a construct that is intensely racialized, commercialized, sexualized, and gendered, normalizing a version of authentic childhood as “nostalgic, white, middle-class, static, and passive.” What essential definitions of innocence condition, more dangerously, are reactionary conservative panics about pornography, pedophilia, drugs, and working mothers as “corruptions of morality.” Giroux argues that these reactionary reflexes fail to recognize the deep structural sources of “violence perpetuated by middle-class values and social formations such as conspicuous consumption, conformity, snobbery, and ostracism that produce racial, class, and gender exclusions” (16-17).