

Mediatized Image Politics of an ICE Raid, Staged in a Midwestern Idyll

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Abstract: This article shows how constitutive news media displays of contrasting chronotopes (i.e., peopled time-space imageries), both major and small, engendered an interpellative politics to channel white virtue while also flipping the script of U.S. imaginaries constructing who belongs within small-town Midwestern America. It examines the mediatized image politics of internal immigration border enforcement back when the Bush Administration was scaling up militarized tactics and experimenting with expedited legal procedures that sought to erase the lines dividing immigration from criminal law. It weighs in on cross-disciplinary debates of visual cultural practices depicting migrant (in)visibility in so-called new immigrant destinations, located in rural places across the Midwestern United States. The analysis unpacks heterogeneous cooccurring indexical signs in a mainstream AP broadcast news feature and a subsequent documentary film that compose image-texts of a raid on a purported idyllic town. Both mediatized image-texts of continuing coverage were oriented to multiple publics and made an example of a large-scale Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid on an industrial meat processing and packing facility in 2008. News agents along with the active participation of migrant laborers and members of a humanitarian coalition co-operatively fashioned these productions to achieve different and multiple ends.

Keywords: chronotopes; immigration; ICE; raid; migrant labor

Introduction

On May 12, 2008, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents mounted a spectacularly staged raid in Postville, Iowa, a meat-packing town with an estimated population of 2,500 people. The raid involved more than 900 agents to apprehend, detain and oversee the *criminal* (and not immigration) proceedings of unauthorized migrant laborers employed at Agriprocessors Inc., a local family-owned business that was, at the time, the world's leading producer of fresh kosher beef. As was made clear by information contained in the application and affidavit for a search warrant, ICE had intended to apprehend 695 of the estimated 900 employees at the plant. This would have resulted in the removal of over a quarter of Postville's population in a single raid. In most news media accounts, the final tally of the detained numbered 389 people. A majority were people from Kaqchikel Mayan ethnolinguistic communities originating in Guatemala.

Initial state and national news media coverage of the raid on the surface seemed tightly calibrated to a breaking-news crime story framework, with footage and headlines of "Claims of ID fraud lead to largest raid in state history" (*Des Moines Register*, May 12, 2008) and "Iowa immigration raid largest ever in the U.S." (AP, May 13, 2008). As is typical of U.S. news craft, the headlines interdiscursively profiled the perspectives of elite voices (Cotter 2010; Briggs 2007), animating (Goffman 1981) representatives of the enforcement arm of state power. These voices underscored both the size of the operation as well as the historic significance of the event. Journalists working for daily newspapers in the region likewise initially developed storylines emphasizing the record-breaking size of the raid, as well as its impact on different members within the community, including businesses reliant on the plant.

Storylines with critical appraisals of why the raid happened and how it was handled eventually followed in national news stories and documentary films. Some journalists and artists used their medium within a continuing coverage framework to question what criminal acts had exactly been committed, who bore the consequences of those acts, and what those impacted thought should be done about the circumstances shaping the conditions of their (im)possibility. These took shape as features and profiles of different members of an interfaith coalition, a group of faith leaders, educators, and residents from surrounding counties, that operated out of the Hispanic Ministry at St. Bridget's in Postville. Many members of the coalition welcomed this kind of coverage as it helped to draw attention to their humanitarian efforts in support of resident Guatemalan and Mexican family members directly impacted by the raid.¹ As will be clear from the analysis that follows, both mainstream news coverage and documentary films that were critical of the raid mobilized pastoral images of "small-town" America under siege, not by brown migrant labor, however, but by federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. This shift in perspective from hegemonic racializing discourses of idyllic, white rural America—

which were at play, if implicitly, in mainstream coverage (e.g., breaking news stories)—is important. It invited and inspired alternative forms of uptake even as it preserved and invited white perspectives which rely upon a visual iconography of rurality and Christian virtue in emphasizing migrant suffering (Wright 2002; see also Toffoli 2018). Such texts, in other words, contested breaking news stories as well as other mediatized genres, like travelogues, that are infamous for producing racialized others through the pervasive patterns of racializing iconicity used to conjure affective social relations, not just between characters in a story world, but also with the imagined audience engaging the mediatized image-text (Stasch 2011:9; Nakassis 2020).

In this article, I provide an ethnographically informed, multimodal semiotic analysis of two critical image-texts. In particular, I track how some news agents and a filmmaker, guided by those impacted by the raid, were engaged in co-operative action for differentiated social and political ends, and how this manifested in the aesthetic and metapragmatic form of such texts. Co-operation here does not just mean mutual assistance with a common goal, but also denotes a progressive reworking of fragments of complex constellations of signs “shaped by a consequential past, while remaining contingent and open-ended” (Goodwin 2017:3). Co-operative action, thus, is open to the possibility of the differentiated, even divergent, end goals of its participants. Indeed, many who participated in these image-texts did so initially for their own pragmatic reasons. For some, it was to recruit different members of imagined publics to get involved (e.g., to send in a donation in support of the humanitarian effort). Others additionally advocated on behalf of immigration reform. And others used such texts as opportunities to contest the authoritarian exercise of state power. The result was a co-operative multimodal politics of the image which decomposed and reused pre-existing constellations of multimodal mediatized signs in the amplified relay of alternative images of the raid and the town. What united these divergent projects into these image-texts, however, was their deployment of before-and-after narrative sequences (Reyes 2021) that framed the raid as an inciting event disrupting the lifeways of this otherwise peaceful Midwestern town. The contrasting chronotopic imagery of these image-texts thus depicted Postville as a refraction of a Midwestern Idyll (Bakhtin 1981). Finally, in comparing a mainstream news media example to a political documentary film, I reveal the different forms of social accountability and relationality that materialized through these co-operatively produced mass media image-texts, inviting critical assessments about why the consequences of raid were still newsworthy (and to whom) even two years after the event.

Affective Images and the Midwest as Chronotope

Like other contributors to this issue (Barker and Nakassis 2020), I adopt a social-semiotic approach to the image. Here, the image is a type of likeness or resemblance that is not bound to any single medium and which manifests metapragmatic functions that make

demands on those who would engage with them. In his essay exploring press photography, “The Photographic Message,” Barthes (1982) observes that while the press photographic image might be initially considered a mechanically produced type of “message without a code,” the fact that its display is part of a genre (i.e., a news article) means that it co-occurs with different kinds of text (a caption, a headline, the subsequent article). Such co-textualities produce complex interpretive effects. This is due, in part, to *how* textual genres metapragmatically frame images, providing both tacit and explicit information about how to interpret the social functions being performed by the imagery. Paralleling observations made earlier by Bakhtin (1981, 1986), Barthes also acknowledged that sociohistorical, artistic, and professional practices (ideological and ethical) shape the production of image-texts just as much an individual’s personal experience shapes their apperception. There is, thus, nothing inherently neutral or objective about the mechanically produced iconic content displayed within a press photograph. It makes perceptual, cognitive, ethical, and socio-ideological demands of those would interact with the image displayed. And these, critically, are mediated by the genres that frame such images. Such genres, further, are characterized by how they construct, and people, the time-space of their emplotted representations, what Bakhtin (1981) called *chronotopes*.

In the United States, since the post-Civil War era, chronotopic imagery of a region constructed as “the Midwest” became a major staging ground for the reclamation of Whiteness as virtue. Halvorson and Reno (2022) note that by the early 1900s, particular figures of settler colonial farmers and agrarian pastoral landscapes had come to be depicted in—and in some cases, across—novels, landscape painting, and film. The paintings of Grant Wood—such as his *American Gothic* (1930) and his *New Road* (1939)—famously deploy a regionalist style of landscape painting that would have been evocative to descendants of rural settler colonials, conjuring hope for prosperous times beyond The Great Depression. *New Road*, in particular, depicts an especially idealized scene of intersecting gravel roads cutting through rolling hills under cultivation, connecting two family farms with windmills.² These farms are located five miles from the town in which I grew up in Iowa. My parents gifted me a print of *New Road* in the 1990s to remind me of home, years after I left for graduate school. Images like those of *New Road* have had a long social life. They endure and recur in print and broadcast news media into the present, and are continually deployed to affectively intensify political debates over national belonging.

Sociologists and anthropologists who conduct ethnographic research on immigration in this region all acknowledge the importance of tracking and undercutting such imagery in news media, as when used to advance white supremacist nostalgia for small-town lifeways (Allegro and Wood 2013; Dick 2011; Halvorson and Reno 2022; Keller 2019; Longazel 2016; Reynolds and Didier 2013). Jamie Longazel’s 2016 ethnography about

Hazleton, Pennsylvania, for example, opens with a critique of an episode of *60 Minutes*, which profiled mayor Louis Barletta's rise to national prominence in 2006 for his hardline stance approving local ordinances to make immigration illegal.³ As a primetime CBS news magazine, with its televised broadcast of long-form stories, Longazel (2016) identified how the segment uncritically reproduced dominant divide-and-conquer racializing discourses which simultaneously degraded Latinx immigrants, rendering them faceless figures who have no place in small-town USA (Cacho 2000; Chavez 2003, 2008). In semiotic terms, such images sublimate mediatized chronotopes of idyllic, pastoral life.

The historic precursors of such idyllic imagery, however, go farther back than nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, to encompass a range of Western European expressive forms (Bakhtin 1981; see also Williams 1973). "The Idyll," in fact, was a major chronotope that Bakhtin traced across different Western genres of writing, from poetry to fiction. *Chronotope*, as a concept, enjoys widespread analytic purchase in linguistic anthropological studies. It provides a framework for how people individually and/or collectively unify time and place in literary representations as well as other genres, infusing them with ideals of personhood and agency (Agha 2007; Lempert and Perrino 2007). Bakhtin originally theorized how recurring formal linguistic features as well as other sign forms were assembled as literary motifs to compromise chronotopes of various kinds. Such semiotic sketches of peopled, pastoral worlds are not restricted to fictional representations, as we have seen, however, and travel across media and modality. They are frequently redeployed as part of quotidian discourse practices, as well as in news reportage. Chronotopes are always set within participation frameworks oriented to particular courses of action that exceed the events in which they are entextualized (Goodwin 2017:1–2). That is, chronotopes are continually brought into interdiscursive alignment with other acts or events of semiosis as part of scale-making processes "that have immediate consequences for how social actors in the public sphere are mobilized to think, feel and act" (Agha 2007:324; also see Dick 2010; Stasch 2011; Divita 2014; Blommaert 2015; Chávez 2015; Wirtz 2016; Karimzad and Cathedral 2018).

The performativity of such interdiscursive, chronotopic alignments are particularly apparent in mediatized news reportage, which, as mass mediated texts, function to ideologically interpellate and delimit the subject positions of some thereby hailed public (Briggs 2007, 2018). Yet if Althusser's (1971) original Marxist formulation of interpellation too easily presumed that individuals hailed by powerful civil society proxies of state-power (like the news media) are transformed into particular kinds of subjects, scholars empirically grounding interpellative acts (Briggs 2007; Butler 1993; Deumert 2019) have pointed out how acts of hailing "may succeed or fail; and, when successful, [their] success is a degree notion" (Agha 2011:168). Further, "any response to a hail invariably recontextualizes the act of hailing by itself being an act" (ibid.) In other words, to analytically recognize that

someone has been hailed does not mean that the person accepts the role as formulated. This is why even as broader relations of power are evinced in such encounters, an individual's "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001:112) in taking up and reworking a contextually relevant image-text and its chronotopes is always possible (Briggs 1997, 2007; Rosa 2016). It requires the careful work of ethnography to help disentangle how these dynamics operate, differentially impacting people as fully embodied social actors within and across institutional assemblages, as we see in the chronotopic analysis of the metadiscourses surrounding the Postville raid.

Postville as an Ethnographic Site for Media Discourse Analysis

The ethnographic research grounding this study began long before ICE raided the plant. Postville had become a place I knew well because it was part of a multi-sited project that I started in the mid-2000s to follow up with Guatemalans who resided there. These new immigrants self-identified as indigenous and came from the central highlands. I first met some of them before they migrated, when conducting fieldwork in Guatemala during the late 1990s. In fact, even though I am originally from eastern Iowa, I learned about the existence of Postville from nonmigrant family members of my Guatemalan interlocutors, when they asked me if I knew what the town was like. They were concerned about the well-being of their in-law, Serapio (a pseudonym), who had settled there in November of 1998 after surviving a harrowing journey through Mexico and Texas. At that time, I could not assuage their fears, as I had no recollection of ever having visited there.

When I eventually travelled to Postville to meet Serapio in 2000, I noted that it was like many other eastern Iowan towns, partly populated by people with acknowledged Northern or Eastern European immigrant pasts whose livelihoods were oriented to different agribusinesses. In that region of the state the agribusinesses included a mix of dairy farming, monocrop corn, and soybean production as well as industrial meat production. Towns where meat processing plants were in operation, however, comparatively exhibited more ethnoracial diversity. These industries characteristically had high rates of labor turnover and constantly had to recruit migrant labor, both domestic and transnational, to keep production going. This was true for Postville as well. Indeed, this theme recurred across interviews I conducted before the raid with white Iowans who served as cultural brokers between town residents and the international migrant labor force. Several emphasized that Postville was flourishing, unlike other small towns across the rural Midwest which have declining and ageing populations, only because of the presence of migrant labor. Social relations in town were fraught by an ambivalent white "embrace" of the diverse migrant laborers, which included the plant management, among them.⁴

While Postville's migrant laborers initially came from ex-Soviet republics (Bloom 2000), by 2005, the plant's workforce was predominantly indigenous Guatemalan. Like other U.S.

scholars interested in exploring the so-called new immigration to rural destinations, I wondered how the experiences of these postmillennial migrants might be qualitatively different from earlier generations of Mayas living in the diaspora who had left Guatemala during the Civil War and settled in urban gateway cities. To that end, I conducted short and intensive periods of ethnographic fieldwork between 2006–2008, before the plant was raided.

Importantly, this research coincided with Bush Administration efforts to scale up the operational size of single site raids and removals in the interior of the United States. The raid on Agriprocessors in particular, was an executive branch response to legislative failure when the U.S. Congress backed away from passing *The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act* in the face of the 2006 May Day mass immigrant mobilizations against it. The Postville raid as a mediatized event, thus, was a political move by the Bush Administration to prove to American citizens that the reorganization of federal executive power through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had effectively transformed into an efficient policing force able to realize anti-immigration advocates' dreams of 100% removal, as promised in DHS's Operation Endgame (Camayd-Freixas 2013; De Genova 2007, 2009, 2010).

The raid occurred four months after I had left Postville to resume teaching obligations. I learned about it via email correspondence with another anthropologist who had also worked in Postville, Caitlin Didier. From that moment onward, I obsessively read news media coverage from Iowa state and regional sources in addition to the Associated Press coverage that was picked up by other news agencies. I also set up Google notifications to receive email notices of all news and weblog coverage with the keywords "Postville" or "Agriprocessors." From this, I created a database of online print news media coverage, as well as some broadcast news media reports (e.g., segments that were posted on YouTube) spanning more than a ten-year period.

My first opportunity to return to Postville occurred in late July 2009, a few months after the one-year commemoration rally when representatives from the interfaith coalition (described below) and town residents, in solidarity, demanded comprehensive immigration reform. It was during that trip when I heard from my Guatemalan contacts that several documentary films and theatrical productions were underway, including one by a Guatemalan filmmaker of some renown. I reached out to the academics and artists involved and leveraged my role as faculty member to organize campus visits to give public talks and screen their works in progress at the University of South Carolina.

In what follows, I first examine a typical mainstream broadcast news media feature. The original messaging of this feature was firmly anchored in a hegemonic point of view

predicated on Whiteness, even if it did not explicitly participate in recirculating a narrativized manifestation of white injury caused by a “Latino threat” (Cacho 2000; Chavez 2003, 2008; Santa Ana 2002). Indeed, the news agent in the AP broadcast segment strove to tell an empathetic story of migrant and community suffering by profiling the voices and bodies of people who endured the social and economic consequences of the raid. I argue that despite their critical stance, the multimodal imagery co-operatively refashioned between migrants, members of the humanitarian coalition, and news agents relied upon an idyllic timespace that assumed the viewpoint of settler colonialism to manage crisis, in addition to playing upon liberal politics of migrant (in)visibility. In the next section, I analyze the image-texts, also co-operatively fashioned, within a documentary film directed and produced by a Guatemalan American artist and filmmaker. I detail how the filmmaker collaborated with participants in the humanitarian coalition to produce a feature that amplified a transgressive multimodal poetics to reshuffle the regimentation of mediatized discourses about migration enforcement in the U.S. interior. Specifically, I track how the filmmaker’s interactions with members of the public during post-production screenings helped him hone a final cut of a documentary film wherein major-minor chronotopic contrasts are reassembled. The result was a differently configured Midwestern Idyll than the news reportage. It was a film where the multimodal poetic structuring, while appealing to white virtue, co-operatively amplified heterogeneous image-texts in counterpoint to highlight *gaps* in the otherwise tightly calibrated, conservative, mass-mediated image politics of immigration enforcement in the American heartland (Tauxe 1998; Halvorson and Reno 2022).

Broadcast News Depictions of Postville as Midwestern Idyll Impacted by Militarized Internal Border Enforcement

The day of the raid, among the hundreds of federal agents on the ground and in the air piloting two Black Hawk helicopters, were also news agents and photojournalists. KCRG broadcast Channel News 9 shot aerial footage from their news helicopter above while journalists from state and regional daily newspapers like the *Des Moines Register* and *The Waterloo-Cedar Falls (WCF) Courier* were on the ground to cover events as front-page hard news stories. The detained were eventually bussed to Waterloo to be processed and arraigned in a temporary federal criminal courthouse erected within the National Cattle Congress fairgrounds. This imagery became archival material recirculated in other print and broadcast news features and documentary films.

Despite the federal government’s crafting of political message to highlight allegations of criminal activity by the labor force, not all news agencies followed suit in adopting that framing in subsequent coverage. Hamann and Reeves’s (2013) study provides an analysis of cultural scripts within regional news media coverage of ICE raids spanning 2006–2008. They found that regional news outlets printed storylines that humanized the personhood

of migrant workers emphasizing their other social identities as mothers, Christians, and students. Some also framed ICE enforcement tactics during worksite raids as problematic incursions, causing collateral damage to local families, schools, churches, and businesses. This was the case even when ICE spokespeople emphasized shifts in policy to not deport migrants who were primary caregivers during interviews and in press releases. Hamann and Reeves (2013) found very little explicit evidence of the “Latino Threat Narrative” and its corresponding ideology of white injury that dominated mainstream coverage in major media outlets from the 1990s (Cacho 2000; Chavez 2003, 2008; Santa Ana 2002; Suárez-Orozco 1998). Instead, they suggested that these regional mainstream news agencies were channels of “Heartland resistance” in affirming forms of community cohesion and neighborliness, which moved beyond national scripts of pro- and anti-immigration scripts (Hamann and Reeves 2013:219). While this may indeed be the case, by invoking the chronotope of the Idyll that emphasized small-town lifeways which, as discussed above, are directly linked to settler colonial imaginaries of Whiteness, such news reports did *not* entirely disrupt the presumption of Whiteness. This becomes clear when one attends to the multimodal poetic forms used to frame community affirming storylines and their uptake.

I begin first with an example from an AP broadcast of a nationally oriented news feature with the headline “Postville, Iowa Struggles on After ICE Raid” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7zCQH9Lgg>). It originally aired on August 17, 2008, three months after the raid, and was a typical example of continuing coverage (i.e., news stories that do not break news but continue coverage on some already circulating story). I focus on an example of continuing coverage rather than breaking news because it seemed to be less constrained by a crime-story framing. Members of the interfaith coalition by this time had also gained some experience in how to anticipate what journalists would ask. They deployed tactics of strategic essentialism as a form of “anticipatory interpellation” (Carr 2012) in how they located themselves as co-producers of mediatized images of the town and the raid (Briggs 2007, 2011). Importantly, the AP feature aired after the expedited federal criminal proceedings targeting the detained migrants had concluded, but while the federal and state criminal investigations of plant management were still underway. Different participants within the humanitarian coalition wanted to keep Postville in the public eye as the costs associated with supporting the return of deported migrants to provide testimony during the trials were hefty. In sum, there was more room for mediatized maneuvering on the topic of immigration where members of the humanitarian effort and migrant laborers were co-interlocutors with journalists as a mass-mediated Goffmanian (1981) “platform party” of sorts.

The journalistic voice-over text in this news feature deployed a conventional delayed lead that was prefaced with visual imagery and contrasting chronotopic framings of Postville as

a rural Midwestern Idyll (Figure 1). The first shot is tightly focused on City Hall, located on a main street of Postville. A color combination of red-white-blue recurs across all first five shots of the segment. The triad of colors from the federal flag is an obvious symbol of American patriotism, but it also instantiates the qualia of summer-time rural Iowa. Footage features agrarian landscape shots composed of blue skies, white clouds, and the land radically altered by human productive activities indexed through the imagery of infrastructure (red barns, silver and blue silos, as well as white farmhouses). All buildings shelter or store the means and modes of capitalist intensive monocrop agriculture, in order to produce a fourth color, the verdant green fields of row-crop corn that Iowa is known for. Additionally, the bright red AP logo appears in every frame.

Recall that use and composition of these exact same agrarian images were first formalized for depicting the region in the 1930s and 1940s landscape paintings discussed above. Indeed, Rich Matthews, the narrating reporter, even quips that these scenes, which feature no human beings, are a fitting subject for the late American master painter and illustrator, Norman Rockwell. The invocation of Rockwell cooccurs with the image of a foregrounded billboard, sporting yet another patriotic stylized-flag display of love for God and country set against the background of another family farm. Calling up longer interdiscursive histories depicting the Midwest as Idyll (e.g., in regionalist paintings as well as on the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*), this combination and composition of text and digital moving images indexically telescopes a rural here-and-now to an American national imaginary of bygone days and white lifeways filled with optimism and idealism. In short, the editing and mis-en-scène in this eight-second segment is tightly calibrated to match longstanding stereotypic, mediatized representations of the Midwest as a homogenous, white, Christian landscape that square with a U.S. national imaginary and which would not be offensive to many of the residents from the region.

Video Imagery

Journalist Rich Matthews
narrates in voice-over:



Postville, Iowa has all the makings of a prototypical American small town.



Surrounded by corn fields



white houses

(Long shot of two-story white farmhouse.)

Video Imagery

Journalist Rich Matthews
narrates in voice-over:



(Long shot of a red barn and blue silo. Other farm equipment also visible.)

and red barns.



It begs Norman Rockwell to
paint one more picture.

Figure 1. Segment 1: Chronotopic audio-visual display of Postville as “prototypical” small-town America. Screen shots from moving image sequences appear in the left column along with descriptive commentary. Voice-over audio-narration (and translation) along with synchronously recorded audio-visual tracks from interviews are rendered into text in the right column.

In Iowa, while corn may still be king amongst dueling agribusinesses, it was industrial meat-production at the kosher slaughterhouse, and not intensive family farming, that provided many Postville residents with a steady income. In addition to the visual contrast made between vegetal versus meat-based food production, the angle of this unfolding journalistic display of Postville suddenly shifts to a decidedly *different* and *contemporary* Midwestern Idyll figured not by images of the kosher plant, but by its workforce. The non-

peopled, “natural” timespace of this feature thus switches to a *peopled* timespace through a sequence of long shots. It displays groups of ethnoracially marked residents strolling down sidewalks, away from the camera in the form of Lubavicher Hasidic Jewish men—a majority of whom were shochtim (i.e. butchers trained in ritual slaughter) employed at the plant—clad in white shirts, black slacks, black long-coats and large brimmed black hats or Muslim Somali women in pastel-colored hijabs.⁵ The only close-up shots are of store fronts of grocery stores and restaurants serving the “Christian Hispanic” residents in town from Guatemala and Mexico.⁶ The chronotopic recalibration of this new Midwestern Idyll was one which incorporated urban ethno-religious diversity into rurality (although none of the shots convey intimate connection between residents). At the same time, the trope of America populated with God-loving people is shared by both rural idyllic audio-visual contrastive sequences. These sequences are deeply racialized and project stereotypic images of the Idyll along axes differentiating white lowans (descendants of settler colonial agriculturalists) from non-white “new lowan” town residents (i.e., “new immigrants” both domestic and transnational). The opening sequence thus depicts Postville as racialized Midwestern Idyll which true to idyllic motifs from the European novels that Bakhtin analyzed (1981), provide only a general image of people as diverse “folk” united by the rhythms of rural lifeways.

The delayed lead to this news feature displaying resident suffering finally appears in foreshadowed form as meta-commentary attributed to Paul Rael (Figure 2).⁷ This is a segment from an interview with him where he is labelled a “Community Leader.” In fact, he was the director of the Hispanic Ministry for St. Bridget’s Catholic Church. A statue of Mexico’s patron Saint, la Virgen de Guadalupe, is also prominently on display in the shot composition and Her immanence would have been culturally salient to Mexican Americans who might have watched the clip. Here, Mr. Rael emphasizes the immeasurable damage done to the town and its social fabric, though we are not told by what. At this moment, the inciting event in this storyline finally arrives: the ICE raid. Matthews narrates the who, what, when, where, and (implied) why via a single, compact sentence laid-over an edited sequence of four moving images from the day of the raid depicted.

Video Imagery

Interviewees & Journalist Voiceover



Paul Rael: “We can’t even measure the amount of damage that we see.”



Matthews: In May, agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement



raided Postville’s largest employer, food processing plant



(KCRG mid-range shot of police cars passing through a gated entrance to Agriprocessors.)

on the edge of town. 389 illegal immigrants were arrested. Hundreds more fled in fear.

Figure 2. Segment 2: Delayed lead of migrant suffering juxtaposed with stock images of the raid

The multimodal display includes KCRG 9 aerial footage to visualize the scale of the federal operation, while the ground-level shots reveal the level of cooperation with state troopers and area police. The migrants being detained cannot be visually differentiated beyond the tiny figures either grouped or channeled into a single file line in the aerial footage. Here, as well as in the wrap-up statement to the clip, Matthews deploys the original governmental messaging of criminality to justify the massive raid.⁸ This differs from much of the regional coverage produced by *Des Moines Register* staff writers, who strove for balance and neutrality of coverage and avoided use of the word “illegal,” unless it could be attributed as a direct quote from a source.

Aside from the unattributed use of the word “illegal,” the news feature devotes the remaining two minutes and 21 seconds of the broadcast to sympathetically visualize the impacts on the migrant families, small businesses, and especially the detained caregivers. In addition to interviews with Paul Rael and St. Bridget’s pastoral administrator, Sister Mary McCauley—both of whom coordinated local efforts to provide sanctuary to migrant residents in the aftermath of the raid—the feature deploys translated clips of interviews with a Guatemalan small business owner and an anonymized Guatemalan migrant mother detained in the raid and placed under house arrest. The latter is shown with a GPS device on her ankle (Figure 3), a recurrent motif of print and broadcast media from this time, which without fail included images of the GPS devices on detained women. In the AP feature, the GPS device is displayed using extreme close-up and zoomed-in shots while

she engages in domestic work. In the last shot of her interview, her hands too are displayed clasped, thumbs twitching as she recalled the events from that day.

Video Imagery

Journalist Rich Matthews narrates in voice-over:



The future may be unknown; the present is devastating. This woman who is afraid to show her face says

Close-up shot. Camera angle shifts position, now off to the woman's right side. More of her body is shown, as she reaches for clothing in the basket.

her husband was arrested and has already been deported.



She can't leave cause ICE placed a tracking bracelet on her ankle.

Shot of woman's midsection, placing another piece of clothing into the washer. CAM pans down to capture both feet on screen. Camera zooms in and down to a close-up of the GPS bracelet.

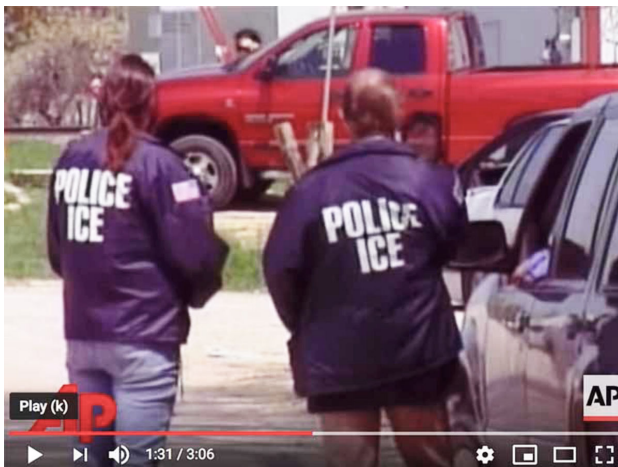
She can't work because the bracelet marks her as illegal.

Video Imagery

**Journalist Rich Matthews
narrates in voice-over:**



Woman's voice: Lo que viví en ese día nunca [no lo voy a olvidar.
(‘What I lived through that day, I will never ever forget.’)
Matthews' voice-over overlaps: [“I’m scared,” she says.



Saying she thinks about the raid all the time.

Figure 3. Segment 3: Profilmic visual metonymic display of female migrant suffering

Despite AP news agents' efforts to anonymize this woman's identity by avoiding her face, I instantly recognized her voice. I had once been a co-resident of her in-law's extended household back in Guatemala and visited her in Postville. By the time this news feature was shot, she had already allowed herself to be filmed and identified in other broadcast news features. Her detainment and the ongoing surveillance marked her unauthorized presence, and paradoxically elevated her status as a newsworthy participant within the conventions of news craft. She was thus temporarily granted a public stage to voice a political grievance (Paz 2018). And in this instance, where she refused to disclose her identity, she availed herself of the right to privacy. It is a moment when a socially bracketed existence achieves partial public recognition when the news media fulfills its role reporting on the facts detailing the impacts of state exercise of power on the populace.

At the same time, visual displays that follow professional and ethical principles of broadcast news media can also produce ambivalence and alienation for those encompassed and made visible. The shackled foot acts as a metonym for the abject subject-position produced through the humiliating tactics of technologically mediated forms of police surveillance. When I was finally able to visit her one year after the raid, she disclosed how emotionally exhausting it was to occupy the abject subject-position for public spectacle. Everyone wanted to see the GPS tracking device, as also reflected in the third and fourth shots in Figure 3, where the voice-over text directs the audience what to see: “She can’t leave cause ICE placed a tracking bracelet on her ankle. She can’t work because the bracelet marks her as illegal.” Although this edited sequence engendered ethical journalistic practice to protect a source who wished to remain anonymous, it nonetheless, heightened focus on a migrant woman’s disarticulated body, and especially foot as a form of voyeurism. This, in turn, sharpened the alienation that she and other detained women were feeling at that time, which is why she did not want to have her personal identity disclosed in this broadcast feature.⁹

This news feature both constructs and deconstructs a white rural Idyll where non-white bodies are still figured as outsiders by being displayed as unauthorized presences prompting a massive state response. At the same time, the voices that received journalistic attribution are of those who must cope with the consequences: small-town civil society organizations, businesses, and especially the migrant families. Like similar news-media displays from this time and their mass-mediated participation frameworks, this feature helped to channel different forms of support to the humanitarian effort. Sister Mary McCauley, in an oral history interview conducted by a student from the University of Northern Iowa, acknowledged that with the help of print and broadcast media coverage, the interfaith coalition collected and distributed charitable donations from 49 of 50 states. This was vital as an average of \$80,000 per month were needed to support the families in the wake of the raid. In fact, this was why members of the humanitarian effort carefully crafted their messages to stimulate within the communities of coverage white, Christian virtues (as well as possibly libertarianism) to do their pastoral part in restoring a local order.

In drawing this first analytic section to a close, it should be clear that the co-operatively produced, chronotopic image politics on display in a typical AP continuing coverage news feature quintessentially enacted late liberal image politics of migrant (in)visibility. The archival news media imagery of the raid anchors the storyline as a turning point narrative setting up a contrastive image sequence. The imagery featured “before the raid” set up a faceless racialized folk, who occupied public space in a White Christian place. The slowly disclosed lead to the story contrastively emphasizes the collateral effects *catalyzed* by the raid—the agency of ICE is effectively elided. The imagery deployed in “after the raid”

images emphasized ethnicized migrant suffering still predicated on a racializing logic that would have been intelligible to a white listening public, with Guatemalan and Mexican migrant laborers remaining faceless and their bodies disarticulated which pointed to their abject positionality. If the image-politics of this AP feature manifests a form of “Heartland Resistance” as Hammond and Reeves suggest, it is the beating heart of white privilege. Members of the humanitarian coalition, like Mr. Rael or Sister Mary McCauley who were also interviewed in the feature, were critical of and yet accepted this dynamic as a form of strategic essentialism that was relayed with the co-operation of news agents, even if it was constrained by a semiotic ideology of news craft production which is authorized by claims of neutrality. In the next section, I analyze a documentary film whose before-and-after image sequences retain an emphasis on the collateral damage that was *caused* by ICE, and exploit the medium as a means to affectively counter and amplify an alternative political analysis.

abUSed: Documentary Film as Uptake Reformulation of News Media Coverage

abUSed: The Postville Raid (2010) is a 97-minute non-fiction documentary film directed and produced by independent filmmaker, and Guatemalan-American expatriate, Luis Argueta, who became an independent media agent affiliated with Postville’s interfaith coalition.¹⁰ Argueta was initially drawn to Postville after reading a feature in *The New York Times* which profiled the experiences and critical analysis of Dr. Erik Camayd-Freixas, an applied linguist contracted to interpret for the criminal proceedings at the National Cattle Congress Fairgrounds in Waterloo, Iowa (Argueta 2009b). Caught up in the tumult of the events and overwhelmed by the forms of solidarity he witnessed, Argueta realized that he simply “couldn’t leave Postville” as originally planned with just a 4-minute short of the Hispanic Caucuses Press event held at St. Bridget’s Church. He felt compelled to return time and again, and he filmed everything he was learning at Postville and other cities in Iowa, as well as in Guatemala and the Guatemala-Mexico border. In the process, Argueta helped rally youth who were deported to Guatemala and Mexico to secure visas to return and provide sworn testimony in state and federal legal cases against the employers and plant management.

Argueta’s film enacts a personal awakening to how the illegalization of migrant labor and the militarized tactics of deportability powerfully constrained and enabled migrant laborers. While the film uses the lens of investigative journalism to structure and visualize multiple sources of evidence in order to tell the story of the raid and its aftermaths as well as reconstruct the perspectives of migrants impacted by the raid, *abUSed* is an explicitly political project that uses many postproduction editing techniques that editorialize. In fact, during the postproduction production phase, which I describe below, Argueta tested which affects were afforded by specific techniques when he solicited public feedback at

different screenings. These events also served as consciousness raising/advocacy events at community-based organizations and liberal arts colleges and universities throughout the Midwest. When completed, his film was directly distributed on DVD through his company Maya Media Corp.¹¹

abUSed became the first of three films that Argueta eventually made featuring the experiences of Guatemalan and Mexican survivors of the Postville Raid.¹² It is a film which championed the efforts of all who took part in the relief effort long after the immediate needs of families were met. Perspectives of migrants and their advocates anchored the film. His film served to indict the federal government and incite the public to demand comprehensive and humane immigration reform. While different in tone, implied audience, and aesthetic style, the film was also very much like the AP feature described above in that it deployed idyllic imagery within multiple “before” and “after” scenes to track the temporal unfolding of different kinds of abuse that ensued from the ICE raid. The raid was thus invoked as inciting event within a typical trauma narrative which featured brown injury while also appealing to white virtue to help with mending the rupture.

Uptake Reformulation as Counter-Interpellation

Argueta’s Visual Display of Violent Rupture and His Version of the Multiethnic Idyll

In visually structuring a narrative for the film, Argueta tapped into hegemonic discourses of migrants as victims as well as Midwestern Idyllic imagery that reproduced white virtue while ceding no ground to the ideology of white injury.¹³ The visual images he deploys in the opening of the film are like the one from the AP feature, though his construction of stereotypical rural Iowa as Midwestern Idyll unironically presents a multiethnic community where immigrant neighbors are not illegalized, invisible labor. Woodie Guthrie’s song, “This land is your land” is used as the soundtrack, superimposed over a *mise-en-scène* road-trip to Postville. The sequence is first composed of moving-images shot from a car of Iowa’s agrarian landscape: blue skies and white clouds, corn fields, grain silos, and even a Mennonite horse-drawn carriage. Arriving at Postville, there is an extreme long shot down the middle of main street; the voice of Jeff Abbas, a community radio host identifies that the audience is tuned into roots Americana music in Postville, Iowa, serving the four counties. The next sequence includes close-up action shots of a Guatemalan man making bread at a local bakery, a large two-story home, the outside of St. Bridget’s Catholic Church, Hasidic men strolling down a shady sidewalk, a boy sporting baseball cap riding a bike approaching the camera, and more drive-by shots of cows grazing in an open field and the kosher industrial facility. Most of the people who appear do so in community scenes of a church service, a high school volleyball match, and office work, and feature people most directly involved in the humanitarian effort. They are framed in close contact with each other, laughing and enjoying each other’s company. A majority are mixed-ethnic

people of Latin American descent working and studying in a town that, like Guthrie's lyrics, was "made for you and me" where there was no Latino Threat and all was calm until ICE breached this idyllic landscape.

Visual techniques for displaying the raid as rupture in the Postville community reverberate throughout the first half of Argueta's film wherein he reconstructs the raid as well as the criminal proceedings that occurred at the Cattle Congress fairgrounds. I use the aural metaphor "reverberate" deliberately to depict how his profilmic multimodal imagery is poetically threaded throughout those sections of the film, like the pulsating soundwaves produced by the propellers from the helicopters that are almost always prominently featured in eye-witness accounts from that day. People heard the raid before they saw it.

The visual rupture is produced using a mix of footage that Argueta shot months after the raid to reconstruct the people, places, and actions that took place along with KCRG archival media footage of the raid itself. In his editing of sequences of shots, the grainy quality of the news media footage is amplified and accentuated, playing with contrast and sometimes using a filter. They stand in stark contrast to the brighter, clearer footage that he shot (compare Figures 4 and 5, that Argueta shot, as compared to the archival images in Figure 6. Before the rupture, we see a zoomed-in, cropped shot of the Postville water tower against a blue sky (Figure 4), a soundtrack of crickets and other prairie insects is overlaid the image before it fades to black, invoking the peaceful idyllic chronotope that was similarly deployed (if differently inflected with its cultural signifiers of white American small-town life) in the AP feature analyzed earlier.

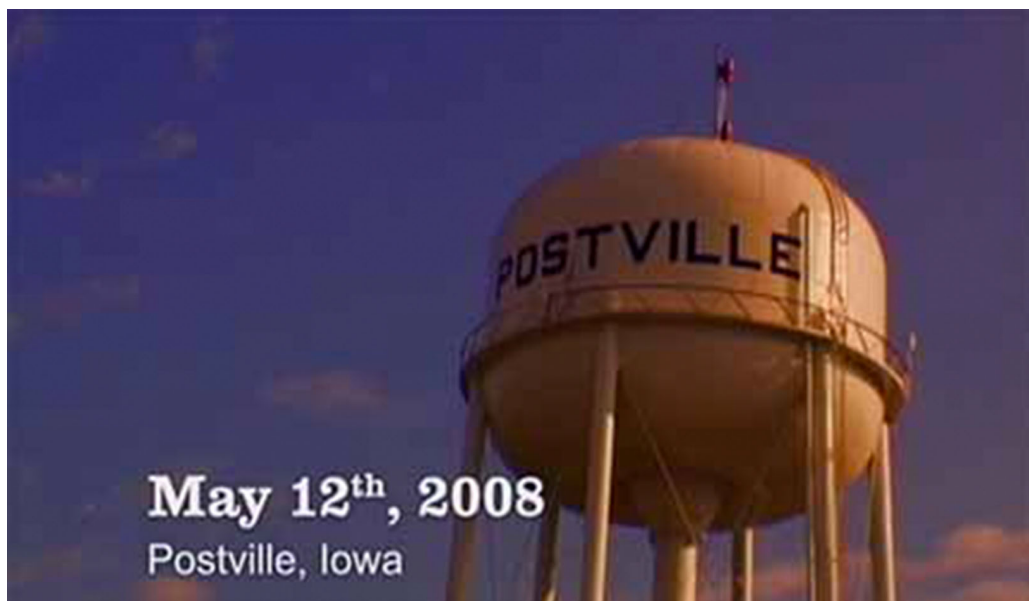


Figure 4. Screen shot from a film sequence featuring a major landmark, the Postville water tower, which Argueta also used as cover art to advertise the film.

The rupture is aurally broken by an ominous sound clashing with the crickets and a fade into a red dawn over the Postville Pirates football stadium (Figure 5). Next, the sounds of static from a police walkie talkie advises of the possibility of “shots fired,” coupled with the sound of helicopter propellers.



Figure 5. Red sky in the morning, shepherds warning of a human-made disaster

The image cuts to an interior shot of the elementary school of an empty hallway, represented in Figure 6. A broadcast journalist’s voice as omniscient narrator announces the breaking news as the ghostly images of two Mexican children appear running, then disappearing down a school hallway, evoking imagistically the literal disappearance of migrant labor in the raid followed by families who left town in the immediate aftermath for fear of being arrested in ICE house-to-house drag-net searches. The journalistic account dominates the first few seconds of the extended rupture sequence, which also includes two disoriented testimonies and an interview with a Supervisor from the regional Department of Human Services who received official yet ambiguous notification of the impending federal activities about to unfold. One eye witness was a local high-school teacher and EMT volunteer. She described to Argueta what she saw at the plant: “Lines and rows of Hispanic workers (pause) on their knees like *dogs*. And they were chained.”

Image

Voice-over Text/Sound Effects



Voice-over: radio/news broadcast of breaking news (woman's voice):
'Around 10 o'clock this morning'



Immigration agents surrounded the
Agriprocessors

Image

Voice-over Text/Sound Effects



plant in Postville. It's the largest kosher meatpacking plant in the country.

(Zoom to map (location of Postville))



At least 300 workers



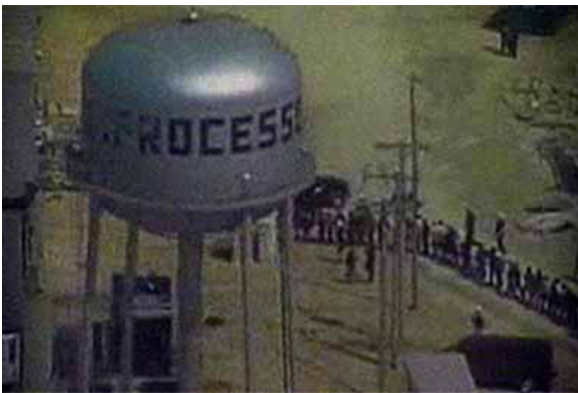
remain in federal custody tonight.

Image**Voice-over Text/Sound Effects**



((Sound of propellers, sirens))

(zooms out)



((Sound of propellers, sirens))

Figure 6. Segment 4: Argueta's first reverberated rendering of the ICE raid

In a later sequence, Argueta returns to the teacher's eye-witness interview. She characterized the ICE agents as a "sea of black, all you saw was bullet-proof vests, and black hoods."

Between the eye-witness's use of simile (migrants [treated] like *dogs*) and metaphor (ICE agents comprising a dark and massive body of water) and Argueta's stylized editing, the color qualia of saturation and brightness are enhanced within the news media archival footage to produce darkness. These scenes were also interspersed between close-up shots of interviews segments with both the targets of and first responders to the raid as it was unfolding at Postville. The sequences featuring ICE agents dressed in black or navy uniforms coordinating the response using portable two-way radios, searching vehicles departing Agriprocessors, and untangling chains to shackle migrants waiting in lines are all dark. Also featured in grainy footage were rows of buses waiting to whisk the detained away, close-up shots of a Black Hawk helicopter, and camera shots taken through chain linked fences at both Agriprocessors and Waterloo. In doing so, the machinery of militarization and its dehumanizing effects were on display. Finally, an ironic reading of the

voice of ICE closes out this extended rupture sequence. A regional Department of Human Services Supervisor reads aloud a fax, written in a technocratic register, which describes a hypothetical yet probable event of “criminal and administrative arrest of numerous foreign nationals, within your jurisdiction” paired with a request for support. Displayed in this way, the text is a dramatic understatement made to contradict the manner through which ICE plans were executed.

Figuring the Counter-Interpellative Multimodal Poetics of Brown Injury

It is at this point, immediately at the close of the rupture sequence, that the film’s title finally appears: *abUSed* (Figure 7). It is displayed using American Typewriter font and operates as leitmotif for the entire film. In fact, the title is a condensed version of the cooperative multimodal poetics of counter-interpellation at play and on display. Through it, Argueta, reflexively exploits the poetics and metapragmatics of titles, a phatic and affective microgenre akin to news media headlines. The title evinces and enacts Argueta’s uptake and reformulation of immigration news framings as crime story which are often infused with dominant discourses of white injury.

First, Argueta intercalibrated his title to migrants’ framing of events in Spanish as *abusivo / abusados* (abusive/abused), which include the multiple senses entailed in the Spanish and English concepts—(physically) violent, excessive, unjust and even illegal (Argueta 2009a). He also took the composition and display of the title a step further to visualize a transgressive poetic play on English word composition through the use and juxtaposition of font size (ALL CAPS versus small caps) and white, blue and red color coding against a black background (See Figure 4). In most edited versions, from the trailer to the film’s rough and final cuts, the title morphs in a series of intertitles from US (in white), to USed (white-blue), and finally to abUSed (red-white-blue). In so doing, Argueta visualizes dueling forms of position claiming, literally and interactionally calling forth as well as calling out patriotic U.S. discourses of white injury from a subject position of brown injury (see also Chávez 2015).

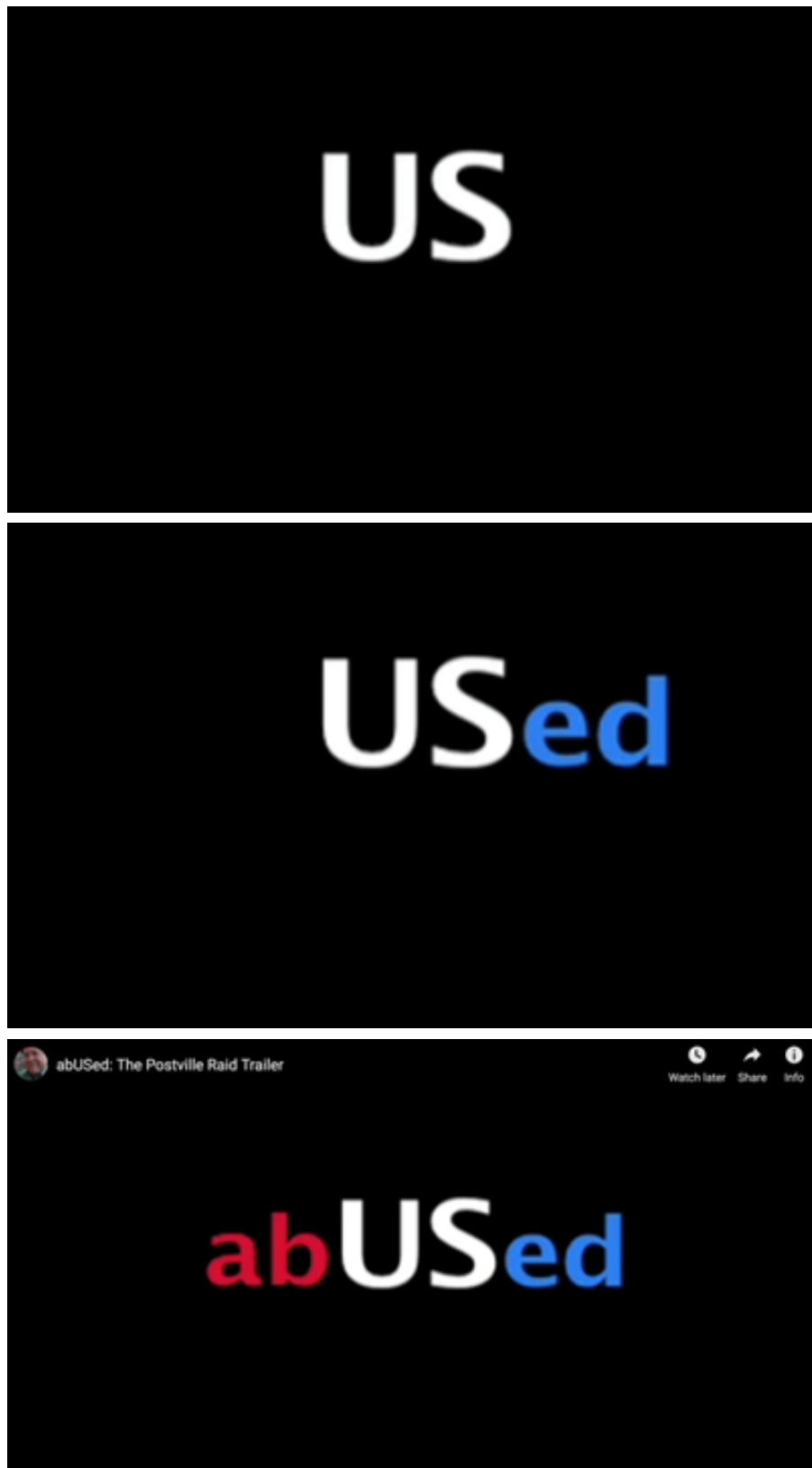


Figure 7. Slow disclosure of the film's title, using composition, font, and animation in a version of the trailer

When he answered audience questions at public screenings of the rough cut, Argueta made clear his intention to exploit the power of titles to pragmatically flip the script (Carr 2012) and reveal as hypocritical the stances taken by representatives of ICE whose

perspectives were originally animated in news media headlines. In the film and at least one version of the trailer, Argueta used extradiegetic cutting to contrast interview segments of Marcy Forman, an ICE representative providing sworn testimony to the Congressional Subcommittee on Immigration, with migrants' testimonies of suffering at the hands of ICE agents (analyzed in the final section of the article). Marcy Forman's testimony, spoken in a technocratic register consisted of sanitized statements, which claimed that ICE conducted the raid in a "lawful, professional, and compassionate" manner. Those statements in the trailer and in Argueta's final cut, were contradicted repeatedly and incrementally with different migrants and townspeople eye-witnesses providing *testimonio* (Cooley 2018), a genre of Latin American political, non-fiction literature. Finally, and importantly, the interpellative use of the first-person plural "us" encompassed migrant laborers' perspectives as part of the U.S. while being subject to abuses perpetrated by "us/US," refracting the conservative consensus through Argueta's activist lens.

The appearance of film's title, in addition to diagramming the film's critique as a whole, marks the beginning of multiple "after" sequences, textually rupturing the idyllic "before" of Postville with what follows. In subsequent reconstructions of the immediate impact of the raid, Argueta weaves together the workers' and children's memories elicited in narrative form, also through the interviews he conducted. He includes and clearly identifies the faces and names of Guatemalan and Mexican men, women, teens, and children, both those retained in the U.S. and those deported to Guatemala and Mexico.¹⁴ These sequences, depicting the aftermaths of the raid, effectively dwell upon the raid as a profane puncture, destroying lives and livelihoods.

All interviewed boldly spoke up about the kinds of physical and psychological abuses meted out by ICE agents. Within the narrating events of interviews with Argueta, many women and men vividly enacted their encounters with ICE.¹⁵ No one asked Argueta to be anonymized even though men and women disclosed how racializing and misogynist expressive forms were directed at them. For example, Laura Castillo, a Mexican woman who served a five-month prison sentence before being deported to Mexico, dramatized her encounter with an agent. Her interview appears to have taken place in a living room. Seated on a sofa, she uses her hands to pantomime a billy club that ICE agents carried and used to threaten and subdue fleeing workers. In spite of the threat of physical violence, Laura enacts how she stood her ground. Glaring almost directly into Argueta's camera, using direct reported speech within the narrated event she reconstructs their verbal exchange: "Yo no voy a correr ni nada pero no quiero que me toques. Y aquí está tu bata aquí está el casco aquí está todo pero a mi no me toques." (pause) Y dijo, 'cállate el hocico' (pause) Me dijo que me callera el hocico.'" In the film this was subtitled as, "I'm not going to run, but don't touch me! Here is the smock, the helmet and everything, but

don't you touch me.' (pause) And he said, 'Shut your trap!' (pause) He told me to shut my trap.'" Laura's constructed dialogue simultaneously enacts compliance and defiance confronting a coercive police presence. She asserts her right to bodily integrity before depicting how the agent responded with a dehumanizing bald imperative. The subtitles render her animation of the agent's words twice for emphasis, "Shut your *trap!*" which captures the illocutionary force of the speech act but erases the de-humanizing racialization which is indexically presupposed in Spanish, more literally translated as "Shut your *snout!*"

Argueta also included an ICE dramatization by Rolando Calicio, a male migrant returned to Zaragoza, Guatemala. In that interview segment, Argueta employs a technique for doubling the visual mode of address to reveal rather than conceal his process of sensemaking with the camera (Butchart 2013). He films himself getting a haircut at the barbershop where Rolando was working at that time and asks Rolando, who is cutting his hair, to recount how ICE agents addressed him and other migrant workers. Figure 8 provides screenshots of the technique as well as the English translation of Rolando's reanimation of the voice of ICE, "hijos de puta cabrones desgraciados" (Figure 8 – bottom).



Figure 8. Doubling the mode of address with taboo performative speech acts

The affective power of these and other migrants' eye-witness narratives is in how they exploit the poetic pragmatics of marked expressive forms in the narrating event, addressing proximal (Argueta and film crew) and distal audiences (imagined audiences at events of screening) while assigning to unnamed ICE agents both authorship of taboo words (in the narrating event) and principal responsibility for their inhumane treatment (in the narrated event). The uncensored curses in the Spanish original as well as the English glosses, are taboo performative speech acts whose illocutionary force would have been made a strong impact across Spanish-speaking viewing publics (Fleming and Lempert 2014). Argueta harnesses them within his audio-visual display of the ruptured Multiethnic Idyll to highlight the crudeness and passion involved in internal enforcement practices, which was otherwise concealed in the sanitized, technocratic enregistered speech focused on the "detention" and "removal" of brown bodies.

Conclusion

The Idylls of Bakhtin's comparative study were from early European novels, a particular form of mediatized text. Bakhtin (1981:225–27) argues that they constituted a particularly important major *restorative* chronotopic type. In this chronotope, rural people, their daily life rhythms, life cycle events, and natural events are seen as conjoined, emanating from a rural homeplace. For example, Bakhtin (1981:231) observes how Rousseau and those who emulated his style uphold an abstraction of the Idyll as a culturally valued model to strive for, and a norm against which to criticize the emerging political economic capitalist orders of eighteenth-century Europe. The Idyll thus served multiple purposes in crafting imaginaries of times supposedly gone by as well as utopian futures of a life closely connected to the land as livelihood.

In the United States, as we saw, chronotopic idyllic imagery was formalized in a range of artistic genres to configure a region of the U.S. as "the Midwest" and "Heartland" as part of the long *durée* of settler colonialism during periods of crisis starting after the Civil War through the Depression Era to shore up whiteness as a virtue. Also during that time, observational photojournalists began to capture the crises of capital and how it impacted rurality. They used still photography to depict the plight of White Midwestern domestic migrants to California in the 1930s and then again later to depict the racialization of Mexican *bracero* migrant farmworkers in the 1950s and 1960s (Toffoli 2018). There is nothing idyllic in those images, though their cultural significance arguably presupposes the ideological valorization of rurality that they disabuse their viewer of. Midwestern Idylls, nonetheless, continued to abound in fiction, in film, in advertising, as well as in the news. As should be clear from the analyses laid out in this article, during our current era—defined by late liberal, restructured rural political economies that entwine Central America, Mexico, and the U.S.—multimodal poetic expressions of Idylls in both mainstream and independent documentary films are phatically redeployed to contest state power as well

as channel support from different publics through mediatized debates over internal immigration enforcement.

The AP segment uses highly conventional racialized chronotopic contrasts typical of the regional coverage of Postville and its raid. The multimodal poetics, and especially the journalist's name dropping of Norman Rockwell, draws explicit attention to this imaginary. Community leaders and migrants who were featured in the story are also positioned in ways that invoked this chronotope, even as they co-operated in its production by appealing to forms of white Christian virtue. Catholic community leaders placed themselves inside sites of sanctuary and next to the sanctified presence of the Virgin of Guadalupe. They emphasize impacts to hard-working people and the collateral damage impacting everyone after the large-scale raid. This feature aimed to compel all to donate and provide other kinds of support to detained migrant workers and their children. The focus was all on restoring community.

By contrast, Luis Argueta's documentary film reveals how the politics of migrant (in)visibility creates bracketed yet coeval spaces of existence for his rural proletarianized indigenous compatriots. It was their labor at Agriprocessors Inc. that enabled many Jewish Americans to keep kosher kitchens just as their unauthorized presence revitalized Postville, a town that was otherwise in economic danger of economic collapse. Argueta's 2010 documentary film is tightly tethered to multimodal image production inspired by print and broadcast news media aspirations and metapragmatic discourse to be the watchdogs of constitutional democracy (Peterson 2015). His displays of Postville as a Midwestern Idyll, thus, still upheld mainstream news media ideologies (Cotter 2010). The co-operative image-politics of Argueta and the interfaith coalition leaders he interviewed mobilized multimodal imagery of Postville as a multiethnic Idyll as part of a restorative as well as transformative political project against inequality and absolutism. In doing so, the politics of the image in *abUSed* depicted the raid as an act of violence, and not just technocratic professional procedure. These contrasts are metapragmatically mapped in the multimodal poetics of the film to amplify the power of solidarity in rural places, to contest state power, and confront the abuses of the raid as well as to enact Argueta's own political awakening. His ultimate goal, as he reported, was to embolden other activist efforts in the U.S., in Guatemala, and beyond, to keep up public pressure.¹⁶ While many members of Postville's interfaith coalition discussed in this paper (Pablo Rael, Sister Mary McCauley) hoped that the Postville would become a catalyzing case to compel comprehensive immigration reform, that goal has yet to be realized.

Endnotes

1. Faith leaders from St. Bridget's Catholic Church, St. Paul Lutheran Church, and the Presbyterian Church were all interviewed by a Master's student at the University of Northern Iowa, RaeAnn Swanson, about their participation in the humanitarian effort as part of a community-based Postville Oral History Project in 2015. The interview included a question about media coverage. All three leaders focused on the importance of having news media coverage even if the circumstances that led to the coverage were negative and fed into some of the negative dynamics that are also associated with journalism.↵

2. A description and digital copy of New Road can be found on the National Gallery of Art website. <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.61105.html>.↵

3. See also Hilary Parsons Dick's (2011) analysis of the anti-ordinance policy documents from Hazelton that interdiscursively aligned with federal immigration policies in the legal racialization of internal border enforcement strategies.↵

4. What made Postville unique among such agribusiness driven small towns, however, was the way that Agriprocessors, a family-owned local corporation, fostered and exploited patron-client relationships in the town. As a consequence, some of the residents perceived management to be corrupt and to act with impunity, a sentiment that was shared with journalists, much to the chagrin of some prominent local political and small business leaders (Bloom 2000; Reynolds and Didier 2013).↵

5. At that time, Somali families were new to the area. Plant management had recruited them from Minneapolis-St. Paul to keep production going. ↵

6. In this part of the Midwest, whites usually used the language of census to refer to anyone of Latin American heritage as "Hispanic." In this article I retain this hegemonic label when used to reflect news media usage within the community of coverage. For migrants whose national identifications are singled out, I use either Mexican or Guatemalan, following how they identified themselves.↵

7. Mr. Rael provided AP with the Anglicized version of his first name (Pablo) because he was oriented to a diverse yet mainstream English-dominant public. In the film that I analyze next, the filmmaker Luis Argueta identifies him as Pablo Rael, emphasizing the Spanish spelling of his first name. The film was edited for both Spanish and English-speaking publics.↵

8. This segment aired before Jonathan Rosa and Language and the Social Justice interest group were successful in their "Drop the I-Word" campaign, convincing the Associated Press to change its stylebook to not authorize the use of "illegal" as a neutral term in its news reporting.↵

9. She also later shared her name and story in a testimonial theatrical piece that was performed for community-based organizations and churches across the region during this time-period in support of the interfaith coalition efforts. By the time I interviewed her in 2009 she had stopped participating in all public events. She had been awarded a U-Visa for the workplace abuses committed against her and she was planning on moving away from Postville to start a new life.↵

10. In the immediate aftermath of the raid, in late summer and early winter 2008, two documentary films were produced, though they were not broadcast until two years later. The first was a 16-minute news feature that was distributed under two different titles, *Guatemala: In the Shadow of the Raid* and alternatively, *Guatemala: A Tale of Two Villages* (2010). It was shot and edited by Greg Brosnan and Jennifer Szymaszek, freelance journalists working within the constraints of the production format of the news cycle targeting a broad cross-section of the American viewing public who tune into FRONTLINE on PBS. The second was Argueta's *abUSed: The Postville Raid* (2010).↵

11. Starting in the 2020s the film was put on streaming on demand through his company website, New Day Films, as well as through Kanopy.↵

12. The other two films shot and produced by Luis Argueta are *Abrazos* (2014) and *The U Turn* (2016).↵

13. It was not a direct replica of the typical Christian visual iconography of general migrant suffering that reproduces the dialectic of migrant in(visibility) that other visual anthropologists are critical of (Wright 2002).↵

14. Most of the women and men he featured consented to interviews with him. Other testimonies were delivered in a public forum held at St. Bridget's Church for the Hispanic Congressional Caucus to learn about the allegations of criminal activities taking place at the plant (sexual harassment, employment of underage workers, shorted overtime pay, and other deductions for safety equipment) in addition to the lack of training and unsafe working conditions.↵

15. The raid also inspired several documentary theatrical productions, one of which was folded into Argueta's documentary. "The Story of Our Lives" was a joint project between students at Luther College (in nearby Decorah) and male migrants under house arrest who were returned to the U.S. to provide testimony in one of the federal trials. These men first drafted their experiences in narrative form. Students and migrants together selected segments of the narratives and edited the script to be dramatized as theatrical montage, a chorus of perspectives, individually and collectively depicting their lives before and after the raid. It was staged at the Postville High School in time for the first-year anniversary of the raid and Argueta was present to film it. Argueta's film thus subsumes many different testimonial genres that enable embodied enactments

of how the raid as traumatic rupture was experienced and represented by Guatemalan and Mexican workers. Argueta's camerawork of the play within the film zeros in on the embodied aspects of the raid in subjugating workers bodies more than their narrative re-enactments.↵

16. Some of the legal changes depicted in the film, but not described above, included how the Iowa state legislature enacted a different standard of proof in its labor laws to make it easier to prosecute instances of child labor given the large numbers of minors who were discovered working at Agriprocessors. Another victory also tallied at the federal level included the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Flores-Figueroa v. United States* which ruled that the same aggravated identity-theft laws used to coerce plea deals from Mexicans and Guatemalans detained in the 2008 ICE raid could not be used in the future.↵

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