

Review

Re-Collecting Black Hawk: Landscape, Memory, and Power in the American Midwest. By NICHOLAS A. BROWN and SARAH E. KANOUSE. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 2015. Pp. 279. \$39.95 (HB). ISBN 9780822944379.

As the authors of this volume point out, naming is an inherently political act. There is no better example of this than the ubiquitous use of the name and image of Black Hawk so liberally sprinkled throughout the Midwest. That name, *Black Hawk*, is a colonial settler cipher for a real person, the nineteenth-century Sauk leader Makataimeshekiakiak. *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* documents the popularity of the name *Black Hawk* for the built environment of the Midwest (banks, apartment buildings, fitness clubs, colleges etc.), and in doing so witnesses a strategy of colonial settler appropriation and diminishment of Native Americans.

The book is an “extended image-text” essay that examines, through photographs, the “settler landscape of commemoration” and, through texts, the “Indigenous landscape of resilience or *survivance*” (5). The photos and the texts do not relate in the usual way, with the text accompanying the photos in explanatory glosses. Their pairing is more complex. By placing photos of businesses, street signs, banks, parks, and schools bearing the name and images of Black Hawk next to a wide variety of texts that privilege Native voices, Brown and Kanouse “stage a series of encounters” meant to jolt readers out of their complacent readings of the Midwestern landscape and to challenge “the casual racism that cuts through the landscapes and practices of commemoration” (15).

Simultaneously blunt and subtle, the striking photos throughout the text unsettle the reader. Their black and white coloration, along with their framing and angles, relentlessly evokes the violent annexation of Black Hawk, intentionally so: “[O]ur photographs of Black Hawk’s appropriated name and image perform the same conceptual violence that the original appropriations do to him” (7). The choice of texts amplifies this effect by denying the reader the comfort of narrative. By creating surprising and at times disturbing juxtapositions between image and text, the authors leave the reader “to sort out what the relationship is, or rather, what it could be” (2).

Neither a self-serving lamentation nor a historical excavation of Makataimeshekiakiak, the book offers something much more valuable and more difficult. Focusing on concrete and contemporary sites throughout Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin, the authors refuse to accept the “pernicious colonial paradigm that continually relegates indigeneity to the cultural domain” (11). In fact, the volume upends that ongoing colonial logic by showcasing Midwestern uses of Black Hawk as the cultural products of commemoration and then putting them in conversation with the political reality of Indigenous resistance, creativity, and ongoing presence in the region.

Re-Collecting Black Hawk reflects the authors’ theoretical commitments to collaboration and “the politics of listening” (10). Not only is the book a collaborative project between two scholars, but also it clearly began as a collaboration among artists, activists, and officials, and among descendants of Europeans and Natives. In addition, Brown and Kanouse used the apposition of image and text to enable the reader likewise to listen to “the polyvalent voices and presences that ... constitute the Midwestern landscape” (5). Collaboration and listening are also evident in the organization of the volume. After an introductory essay that explains the book’s organization, aims, purpose, and theoretical commitments, together with a statement from a descendent of Makataimeshekiakiak, the book unfolds geographically, with chapters on Iowa, Wisconsin, and

Illinois. In between these chapters are essays from and interviews with Natives about Natives from those regions.

The hyphen in the title *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* is the key to understanding its ultimate aim, which is to gather from the surrounding area materials by which to re-consider, collect anew, re-assemble, and re-associate in a way that “accounts for the disconnection between past and present, absence and presence” (4). The purpose of the book is to generate new ideas and possibilities, as well as to provoke profound questions about the appropriation of the name *Black Hawk* and the mystification and obfuscation it generates. The design of the book, its subject and methodology, gracefully and forcefully demonstrate how the study of place names might be done.

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