

Introduction

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Across two pages of a book, a pair of black-and-white photographs meet at the binding and fill nearly half the spread. They are wider than they are tall, “landscape orientation,” as word-processing software calls it. The image on the left is taken from the middle distance, the frame nearly bisected. On one side is a van, headlights toward the photographer; on the other, a canoe, sawn in half and crookedly propped against a tree. The half-canoe is a sign, the bottom of the boat covered with painted lettering advertising the services of a business in Sauk City. “Paddle the Wisconsin River,” it enjoins. The sign promises canoe rentals, shuttle services, sandbar camping, and another, presumably discontinued service, covered by duct tape. The single word “Blackhawk” arches above “River Runs” at the top of the sign.

The adjacent photograph is a detail of what appear to be canoes, stacked upside down for storage. A decal near the tip of one of the boats links this image, and the canoes it depicts, with the business shown on the other page. “Blackhawk River Runs,” the decal reads, and it lists the same phone number as the sign in the facing photograph. Very close framing of the image makes the canoes fill the frame, suggesting an abundance, but the photographer focuses on the decal, where a nineteenth-century Indian perches on his scalp lock, his familiar chiseled features confirming that he is, indeed, the renowned Native American leader and the canoe-rental business’s namesake. The caption below the image reads, “Sauk City, WI.”

Beneath these photographs, a section header acts as an alternate caption: “‘Kill the Indian, Save the Man’: A Boarding School Story.” The text that follows tells how six-year-old Richard Ackley came to attend the Lac du Flambeau Indian School in the late 1920s, a story that sounds for all the world like an abduction. The quotation comes from the May 2007 Lac du Flambeau tribal newspaper *Inwewin*, which ran two articles in that issue describing the boarding school from a first-person or

tribal perspective. The text makes no explicit or implicit mention of Black Hawk, canoes, or Sauk City; the photograph betrays no evidence of Richard Ackley or Lac du Flambeau. Yet their position juxtaposed on facing pages places them in dialogue—or confrontation—with one another. Reading conventions in which images illustrate texts and words contextualize photographs press the viewer to make sense of the juxtaposition. What do Richard Ackley and the Lac du Flambeau Indian School have to do with Blackhawk River Runs canoe rental? What links the experience of two men—Black Hawk and Richard Ackley—from different tribal nations, separated by more than a century and hundreds of miles? What, really, does Black Hawk have to do with Blackhawk River Runs anyway? The image-text pairing prompts these questions but does not answer them. By placing Black Hawk, a canoe rental service, the Lac du Flambeau Indian School, and Richard Ackley in proximity, it suggests that they are related. The spread—itsself in dialogue with other such pairings—leaves it to the viewer to sort out what that relationship is, or rather, what it could be.

Black Hawk was really Makataimeshekiakiak, and his most famous “river run” was at Bad Axe.¹ It involved no canoes. Instead, the starving, exhausted remnants of a band of Sauk Indians that he had led through Illinois and Wisconsin in search of food and allies streamed into the Mississippi River. They were desperate to make it back to what remained of their land in Iowa after months of dodging and skirmishing with government forces. Women held children on their backs or above their heads and tried to swim across. Old people, frail from three months of foraging and marching, waded into the powerful current. U.S. soldiers and state militiamen fired on them from a steamboat patrolling the river and from the tall bluffs rising from its banks. Hundreds of men, women, and children perished in the massacre, with soldiers scalping most of the dead and cutting long strips of flesh from others as souvenirs. Makataimeshekiakiak fled the scene of the massacre and turned himself over to the army a few days later, a prisoner of war in his homeland.

For years, the slaughter at Bad Axe was described as the final “battle” of the Black Hawk War, which was in turn known as the last Indian war east of the Mississippi. However, to call Bad Axe a battle—or the conflict a war—is problematic given the military’s disproportionate use of force. The events of August 1–2, 1832, are more aptly named the Bad Axe Massacre. Moreover, Makataimeshekiakiak’s intention to return home with his people might be seen more accurately as an act of love than war. Framing the Black Hawk War as the “last Indian war east of the Mississippi” is equally problematic. It implies closure: the war is over, mission accomplished. This designation is another instance of the “phenomenon of lasting,” which Jean O’Brien identifies as a “rhetorical strategy that asserts as a fact the claim that Indians can never be modern.”² Although its status as the last Indian war *east* of the Mississippi is technically correct, the Black Hawk War was obviously not the last Indian war nor was it the last conflict over settlement in the Midwest. It wasn’t even the last Black Hawk War. Ironically, the “longest and most destructive conflict between pioneer immigrants and Native Americans in

Utah history,” which occurred thirty-three years *after* the conflict in Illinois, is also commonly referred to as the Black Hawk War (1865–1872).³

In light of this historical context, the decision to name a river recreation business Blackhawk seems not merely politically incorrect but also distinctly ill-advised. If the historical precedent were taken seriously, the name portends a less than happy ending for a leisurely paddle, analogous to naming your new seaside community Guantánamo Bay. So it is probably fair to assume that the business owner did not think about the Bad Axe Massacre or the bloody process of Western expansion when choosing Black Hawk’s name and image, nor did she believe that vacationers and day-trippers from nearby Madison would make the connection either. And why should they? Along the route roughly traveled by Makataimeshekiakiak and his band in 1832, Black Hawk’s name and image promote fitness clubs, subdivisions, churches, butcher shops, and used car dealerships—not to mention the municipal streets, parks, schools, and mascots that bear his name. In parts of Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin, it may seem like an easy way to name your business while expressing regional pride.

But Black Hawk is not simply plucked from thin, if collective, air. Or rather, the collective air is pretty thick. As recent work in critical toponymy has demonstrated, naming is an inherently political act.⁴ Naming is claiming.⁵ Because the Black Hawk conflict is popularly known as the last Indian war east of the Mississippi, the constant repetition of his name positions this sleepy sliver of the Midwest as central to the nation’s foundational narrative of westward expansion, even if most people remain a little hazy about the details. Often paired with an image of a stoic, traditional Indian, the Black Hawk name evokes the same noble resistance that nineteenth-century Americans romanticized as soon as actual Indians no longer posed a threat to their territorial ambitions. The historical markers erected over the decades represent the evolution of white America’s psychic investment in the conflict at least as much as they accurately describe the actual events that took place. The commercial and municipal uses of the name Black Hawk chart another kind of changing investment in the past as an admixture of myth, fact, illusion, ideology, possession, and convenience. Yet their overall impact marks an absence—the supposed pacification and removal of Native Americans, reiterated by historical markers, artisanal breweries, and credit unions alike. These practices weave an unreliable, highly ideological tapestry of collective (mis)memory through the surveyed, sectioned, and settled midwestern landscape.

RE-COLLECTING, RE-ASSEMBLING, AND RE-ASSOCIATING BLACK HAWK

The meanings of landscape, whether historical or for the future, are never simply there, inherent and voluble. Instead, they are made to speak, invited to show themselves, and that invitation is the process of practicing landscape which always places landscape in a present moment. This presentation is a crucial one and a political one, for it disrupts accounts of landscape which seek to ground certain claims and identities in a self-evident earth. Landscapes are always perceived in a

particular way at a particular time. They are mobilized, and in that mobilization may become productive: productive in relation to a past or to a future, but that relation is always drawn with regard to a present.

MARK DORRIAN AND GILLIAN ROSE,
*Deterritorialisations . . . Revisioning Landscapes and Politics*⁶

Re-Collecting Black Hawk is an extended image-text essay exploring the cultural and political landscapes of the Midwest. It brings together roughly 170 photographs of historical markers and monuments, organizations, sports teams, consumer products, businesses, parks, subdivisions, and other places that reference the nineteenth-century Sauk leader Makataimeshekiakiak. These photographs are arranged geographically and organized into chapters by state (Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin). Each image is paired with an appropriated text drawn from sources as wide ranging as press releases and scholarly histories, government reports and advertisements, and poetry and recipes published in tribal newspapers. Interwoven throughout are contributions by and interviews with activists, scholars, and tribal officials, who, in some cases, reflect on the image-text strategy and, in other cases, ground it in specific, current struggles around decolonization, self-determination, and cultural revitalization.

On the most basic level, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* is both a call and an attempt to practice landscape differently. It proceeds by staging a series of encounters between image and text, each with different implications in the realm of political imagination. The purpose of staging these encounters is to call attention to relationships or the lack thereof, as the case may be. These juxtapositions highlight disconnect—or what Elizabeth Povinelli might call “dead dialectics”⁷—but also, in a more speculative manner, propose *living* dialectics that are grounded in and accountable to collective visions of justice. The encounters operate on multiple levels, suggesting a range of possible relations within pairs and also between pairings. Together they produce a deeper map of the territory,⁸ which necessarily entails the “decolonization of our spatial imaginations.”⁹ The encounters represent, therefore, a modest and regionally specific contribution to the larger project, described by Jodi Byrd, of “imagining an entirely different map and understanding of territory and space: a map constituted by over 565 sovereign Indigenous nations, with their own borders and boundaries, that transgress what has been naturalized as contiguous territory divided into 48 states.”¹⁰ The book’s title suggests this approach and holds a double meaning. In the most literal sense, it connotes the remembering of something past. The hyphen, however, hints at another, more active meaning. To re-collect is to gather again or to collect anew in the present. Or, following Bruno Latour, to re-collect is to reassemble Black Hawk in a manner that accounts for the disconnection between past and present, absence and presence.¹¹ With this in mind, the small sign posted above a row of trashcans at Black Hawk State Park in Lake View, Iowa, could refer to more than just an environmentally responsible way to handle glass, plastic, and metal. “Help Black Hawk Recycle,” appeals the

sign. Putting aside for a moment its more obvious meaning, the sign can also be read as an invitation—to campers, fishermen, birdwatchers, or anyone else who happens upon his eponymous park—to help Black Hawk re-collect, re-assemble, and re-associate his name, image, and legacy.

Re-Collecting Black Hawk is more about the present, less about the past. The history of the Black Hawk War is important. This book, however, is not primarily about the war, nor is it about the person for whom the war is named.¹² Rather, it is about the various and conflicting ways the history of that war and the memory of that person function in the present. It is an argument for the importance not only of remembering and forgetting—present tense practices—in shaping both history and the landscape but also recognizing the power geometries within which these contemporary mobilizations of the past are situated. In an encounter between existing and evolving political temporalities, settler practices of commemoration—depicted through photographs—allude to history and our colonial past. “That happened there,” the monument declares. In contrast, the texts speak to our colonial present.¹³ They refuse to be contained by the past tense.¹⁴ “This is happening here,” insist activists blockading the route of an oil pipeline through sovereign tribal lands. As opposed to confronting a monument in the landscape or happening upon a provocative activist news release, encountering the monument *and* the news item in close proximity encourages us to reflect on possible relationships. Or, if nothing else, it calls attention to our unwillingness or failure to do so.

If *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* is more about the present, less about the past, it is also more about presence, less about absence. Taking present presence as its baseline, and thus establishing certain horizons of possibility, this book considers the unevenness of presence, the legibility of presence, and the potential for just and sustainable co-presence. The materiality of the built environment—business signs, historical markers, and other ephemera—is contrasted with the corporeality of Indigenous sovereignty and the everyday life circumstances of Indigenous peoples living throughout the region.¹⁵ In an encounter between existing and evolving political geographies, a settler landscape of commemoration—evoked through photographs—is juxtaposed with an Indigenous landscape of resilience or *survivance*—evoked through texts.¹⁶ Despite the really real (and really ongoing) processes of dispossession and colonization in the region, there remain robust and evolving Indigenous political geographies that have never been extinguished. Eschewing the task of recuperating Indigenous voices, restoring aboriginal presence, or giving the gift of liberal multiculturalism,¹⁷ *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* instead calls attention to the polyvalent voices and presences that always already constitute the midwestern landscape, as well as the traditional and emergent practices of “critical individual and collective self-recognition” that continue to reshape our understandings of the region.¹⁸ “Black Hawk’s story ultimately is not about disappearance but survival,” argues Mark Rifkin, as it “draws attention to traditional (regional) social formations alternately ignored and assaulted by the United States and insists on the meaninglessness of a rhetoric of Indian assent

in the absence of a substantive reckoning with the self-understandings and lived topographies of native peoples.”¹⁹

The act of re-collecting, re-assembling, and re-associating can be understood as a methodology of sorts—a means without ends that is aligned, conceptually and practically, with ongoing processes of decolonization. As outward manifestations of this methodology, the staged encounters found throughout this book function partly as a way of interrogating the denial of relationships and asking critical questions about the continuity of colonial logics. A particular pairing of image and text may elicit the question, How is it possible to commemorate the Battle of Stillman’s Run without reflecting on the contemporary politics of repatriation in Illinois? Another pairing might provoke the reader to ask, How do present-day tensions around blood quantum and citizenship in Tama, Iowa, inflect our historical understanding of the shifting intertribal alliances at the time of the Battle of Wisconsin Heights? In contrast, other juxtapositions may prompt more general questions or meta-level reflection. What allows denial to endure? And whose interests does disconnection serve? In the words of Sandy Grande, “What is gained from the proliferation of essentialist portrayals of *whitestream* domination and Indian subjugation?”²⁰ Alternately, what are the consequences of remaining trapped in a “dialectics of genocide”?²¹ Encountering these encounters, and the range of new relationships and horizons of possibility they suggest, readers may ultimately ask, What is to be done? This vital question reflects a growing desire to move beyond the “economy of equivalence” and to grapple in a substantive manner with the political consequences of social difference. Instead of simply asking about the function of commemoration, we begin to speculate about how we might commemorate or mobilize the past differently, in a manner that promotes justice and prefigures habitable worlds.²²

RE-IMAGING BLACK HAWK

There is never a single approach to something remembered. The remembered is not like a terminus at the end of a line. Numerous approaches or stimuli converge upon it and lead to it. Words, comparisons, signs need to create a context for a printed photograph in a comparable way; that is to say, they must mark and leave open diverse approaches. A radial system has to be constructed around the photograph so that it may be seen in terms which are simultaneously personal, political, economic, dramatic, everyday, and historic.

JOHN BERGER, “Uses of Photography”²³

The photo-essay that forms the core of *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* revolves around the complex relations between image and text, past and present, presence and absence, and colonialism and resistance that have long been co-implicated in the modes of photographic representation. Edward Curtis’s iconic images of unsmiling nineteenth-century Indians continue to echo in contemporary stereotypes of

“authentic” Indigenous people as noble, stoic, and doomed, if not already extinct. But the ideological work of photography—and what Raymond Williams terms the “structures of feeling” it supports—operates not just at the level of image but also of medium.²⁴

While its indexical relationship to reality has made the photograph a prized documentary form, photography itself is suffused with absence. What is captured photographically can be forever revisited but is understood to be gone. Roland Barthes famously claimed that the photograph always speaks of death because it eternally presents a past state of being—the image is “here now,” in a material sense, but also, inescapably, a record of a “having been.”²⁵ The eternal past of Curtis’s portraits is not just a function of age, lighting, printing, subjects, and staging; the photographs reinforce in their very temporal structure cultural assumptions about the essential, if regrettable, pastness of Native Americans. In addition, photographs decontextualize as well as de-temporalize. Wrenched from context, images become scattered and fragmentary observations, deprived of the meanings that motivated them. Early portraits of Native Americans establish an aura of “authentic Indianness” because the specific significance of items of dress, dwellings, and activities depicted within them are unclear and therefore removed from the flow of history and cultural reinvention. As John Berger wrote, photographs “offer appearances—with all the credibility and gravity we normally lend to appearances—prised away from their meaning. Meaning is the result of understanding functions.”²⁶

The widespread practice of using Black Hawk’s mystique to name parks, decorate car washes, or anoint a new subdivision effects the same abstraction. Complexity is flattened into icon. Even more responsible settler practices—like consulting with tribes before erecting historical monuments—must radically simplify, first by rendering into narrative, then by shortening that narrative to fit on a sign. Makataimeshekiakiak, a human being with all the contradictions and complexity that entails, becomes literally dimensionless—a flat image printed on a sign or invoked through Roman letters spelling the English translation of his name. Far from summoning his enduring presence, the constant citation of Black Hawk underscores his absence and, by extension, the supposed pacification and removal of Native Americans. At the level of the image, our photographs of Black Hawk’s appropriated name and image perform the same conceptual violence that the original appropriations do to him. Each image is stripped of particularity and transformed into a signifier of settler colonialism. A geographically dispersed phenomenon is condensed into a book; a mom-and-pop business full of family memory and neighborhood lore is reduced to a four-by-six snapshot. A practice of appropriation that is no doubt in flux and someday may end is arrested at one moment of its development. Though this strategy could be read simply as turning the camera on the colonizer, it goes beyond mere documentation and can be seen as a hopeful gesture of decolonization. Our images operate in what Judith Butler calls the photograph’s “future anterior.” She writes, “The photograph relays less the present moment than the perspective, the pathos, of a time in which this will have

been.”²⁷ The fact that we chose to take the photographs in this book thinks forward to a time when businesses like Blackhawk River Runs will be renamed, not from pressures of political correctness but rather because today’s colonial relations will have been transformed.

Jodi Byrd calls for images that cause “people to acknowledge, to see, and to grapple with lived lives and the commensurable suffering” of colonial violence.²⁸ Channeling Butler, she describes this as a process of “grieving,” as opposed to the sentimental lamentations of salvage portraiture, à la Edward Curtis. Given the structural limitation of photography to depict both the passage of time and social context (as Bertolt Brecht observed long ago), the image must be re-grounded in text.²⁹ Responding to Berger’s charge in the epigraph to this section, this book creates a “radial system” for our loosely documentary images through texts, juxtapositions, and accumulations. If the Black Hawks represented in the photographs are floating signifiers or empty signs, as some have suggested,³⁰ one of our goals is to reassociate and anchor them in the dynamic and evolving Indigenous political geographies represented by the texts. In short, we aim to connect absence with presence. Or, borrowing Gerald Vizenor’s language, one of our goals is to link “indians”—the “simulations of the tragic primitive,” which insinuate the “ruse of colonial dominance” and “an overseas enactment that has no referent to real native cultures or communities”—to “postindians,” “the storiers of an imagic presence.”³¹ Failing to make these connections, the empty signs and the “obvious simulations,” which proliferate under the banner of settler commemoration, will continue not only to resuscitate dead dialectics but also to cultivate a deadening dialectic. The disconnection, in other words, extends beyond our understanding of the historical and present-day lives of Native Americans to include future lives as well. The empty signs that circulate in the landscape diminish our capacity to imagine alternative futures.³² They inhibit the development of new forms of recognition and solidarity,³³ reduce the possibility of “sustainable self-determination,”³⁴ and prevent us from creating “a truly post-colonial relationship of peaceful co-existence.”³⁵ Deeply invested in the future tense, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* therefore scrutinizes the foreclosure of “futurity” in both the past and present.³⁶

Like the work of groundbreaking visual essayists such as Victor Burgin, Martha Rosler, and Allan Sekula, who used serial imagery and original and appropriated text to both de- and reconstruct images, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* is a true image-text. This tradition runs counter to received conventions of the framed print as art object. Images are often appropriated (as in much of Rosler’s work) or are relatively unremarkable aesthetically, as in early photo-essays like Dan Graham’s *Homes for America* (1965), Ed Ruscha’s *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), or Allan Sekula’s *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972). The use of a relatively amateur aesthetics, rather than “wow factor” verisimilitude, understands the photograph as an aspect of the material social process of ordinary culture, to use Raymond Williams’s terms.³⁷ In this way, the image-text shows rather than tells, channeling Walter Benjamin’s literary essayism and Allan Pred’s performative geography.³⁸ Neither illustrated essays nor captioned photographs, image-texts play up the

inherent intertextuality of photographic interpretation to build, invent, or negotiate an environment in which they take on new, self-reflexive, and potentially decolonial meanings.

This visual essayist approach resonates with that thread of contemporary art where we locate this project: critical art practice. If, as the influential philosopher Jacques Rancière argues, the realm of the sensible—what can be seen, felt, and experienced—delimits the space of political imagination and action, then all art is inherently political, even when it is not overtly “about” politics.³⁹ *Critical art practice* brings an awareness of art’s capacity to frame perception by asking probing questions about politicized content or by politicizing a topic by posing questions strategically. It is better understood as a method rather than a style or genre, a way of inquiring into social and political phenomena by making and assembling visual, spatial, or experiential notes about them. In contrast to what is typically described as activist artwork, a critical approach often explores “structures of feeling” rather than communicating a definitive position on a single issue. This is not to say that critical artists lack a position or pull their punches, though the current (relative) art world success of this work has prompted some soul searching.⁴⁰ Yet as the skeptical practitioner Martha Rosler acknowledges, “art continues to have a mapping and even critical function in regard to geopolitical realities. Artists have the capacity to condense, anatomize, and represent symbolically complex social and historical processes.”⁴¹ Concerned in equal parts with social and political conditions “out there” in the world *and* with the complex ways concepts, practices, and images are dialectically bound up with them, critical artists pursue their investigations self-reflexively, recognizing that there is no outside position from which to critique or intervene. At their best, critical artworks are sites where maker and spectator both grapple with their expectations and find their sense of the world changed in the process. Critical art therefore asks much more of the viewer than passive aesthetic contemplation. It demands attention simultaneously to the ostensible content of the work, the methods by which it is presented, the shifting positions of producer and spectator, and the spaces of political and aesthetic possibility it opens up.

Influenced by the shift from modernism’s autonomous art object to Umberto Eco’s open work, or from Barthes’s readerly text to the writerly text, the forms of intellectual and political engagement prompted by critical art resonate with a broader struggle for cultural decolonization.⁴² The Transnational Decolonial Institute, a loose group of artists, critics, and scholars, recently formed with the aim of devising a properly intercultural and decolonial aesthetics that recognizes the centrality of colonialism to modernity. Their statement of purpose explains, “Within different genealogies of re-existence ‘artists’ have been questioning the role and the name that has been assigned to them. They are aware of the confinement that Euro-centered concepts of arts and aesthetics have imposed on them. . . . They are dwelling in the borders, sensing in the borders, doing in the borders, they have been the propellers of decolonial transmodern thinking and aesthetics.”⁴³

The methods and aesthetics of these projects may—indeed must—look different depending on the operative colonial contexts, but art can play a vital role in any case. Recognition of its unique capacities is implicit in notions such as “intellectual sovereignty,” “cultural sovereignty,” and “sovereign Native spatial discourse.”⁴⁴ The significance of cultural production vis-à-vis sovereignty and self-determination is more explicit, for example, in the recently ratified Constitution of the White Earth Nation, coauthored by the Anishinaabe poet, novelist, and critic Gerald Vizenor. Chapter 3, article 5 of the Constitution reads: “The freedom of thought and conscience, academic, artistic irony, and literary expression, shall not be denied, violated or controverted by the government.”⁴⁵ Those of us working with a Euro-American colonial heritage must consider not only how settlers can act in solidarity with Indigenous intellectual self-determination but also how settlers can decolonize our own cultural imagination. Recent examples of anticolonial aesthetics include Gaye Chan’s *Waikiki: A History of Forgetting and Remembering*, Drex Brooks’s *Sweet Medicine*, and Robert Adams’s *Turning Back*.⁴⁶ Like *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*, these photographic books arise from the dense, fraught, and layered territory of history, memory, and cohabitation that is our colonial inheritance, implicating the reader in the labor of weaving together these fragments and conceptual disjunctions and leaving it up to us—readers, writers, image makers, Natives, and non-Natives—to make something like justice of it.

UNEQUIVALENCE AND THE POLITICS OF LISTENING

If “culture” is the matter of difference, then how is one to listen to and understand the particular “difference” of Indigenous peoples and their particular nationhoods? Both “aboriginality” and nationhood are constituted (and constitutive of) political postures, experiences and discourses and these processes are inextricably joined to culture. As they are joined they are articulated through the apparatus of history, power and experience. The very notion of an Indigenous nationhood, which demarcates identity and seizes tradition in ways that may be antagonistic to the encompassing frame of the state, may be simply unintelligible to the western and/or imperial ear. Or is it not?

AUDRA SIMPSON, “Paths toward a Mohawk Nation”⁴⁷

Although it conveys a sense of the tremendous diversity of intellectual, political, and social life in and around “Indian Country,” *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* is not principally about the contemporary lives of Indigenous peoples throughout the upper Midwest, just as it is not explicitly about the history or commemoration of Black Hawk and the Black Hawk War. Instead, its primary concern is the nature of the relationships between these things. The image-text strategy upon which this book relies attempts to counteract the denial of relationships and the perpetuation of colonial logics that denial enables. By exploring how the *cultural* landscape of settler commemoration, appropriation, and projection intersects with the *political*

landscape of Indigenous survivance, ongoing resistance, and evolving presence, this image-text essay inverts a pernicious colonial paradigm that continually relegates indigeneity to the cultural domain. Following Maureen Konkle, this strategy recognizes that “Native peoples’ connection to land is not just cultural, as it is usually and often sentimentally understood; it is also political—about governments, boundaries, authority over people and territory.”⁴⁸ A substantive engagement with the *politics* of indigeneity, which is emphasized throughout *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*, entails active participation in the “politics of thick life—in which the density of social representation is increased to meet the density of actual social worlds.”⁴⁹ Engagement, moreover, requires a degree of receptivity to individual and collective transformation—a willingness to be unsettled, literally and figuratively, by the political implications of indigeneity. Engagement necessitates that we “reassess [our] place within an Indigenous nation,” and take seriously the call to “assimilate the newcomers”⁵⁰ through “an Indigenous checkerboarding of American political space.”⁵¹

The politics of indigeneity, as characterized by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, functions as an ontological disturbance.⁵² In the most general sense, it profoundly unsettles what Bruno Latour calls the “modern constitution,” “the ontological presuppositions that underwrite modern society’s self-understanding.”⁵³ It destabilizes, in other words, the meaning of foundational concepts such as landscape, space, place, environment, citizenship, sovereignty, and property. Framed by the politics of indigeneity these concepts are rendered historically, socially, and spatially contingent, and also implicated in enduring systems and structures of colonization.⁵⁴ According to Sarah Whatmore, ontological disturbance occurs at the moment when “the things on which we rely as unexamined parts of the material fabric of our everyday lives become molten and make their agential force felt.”⁵⁵ *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* attempts to track this disturbance as it ripples across the molten landscape, particularly as it rubs up against and contests the logic of settler colonialism. In this sense, the politics of indigeneity (and the disturbance left in its wake) is conceived as a constructive and generative force, especially in relation to movements for justice and peaceful coexistence. It has the capacity to “undo hegemonic signifiers, affect their usual semantic chemistry to produce new valences, and thus reconfigure indigeneity itself opening it up to the acknowledgment of historical contemporaneity and radical social justice.”⁵⁶ Writing about its generativity as an analytical and geopolitical category, Mary Louise Pratt suggests that we conceive of indigeneity “not as a configuration or a state, but as a force that enables, that makes things happen.” It is a force, moreover, full of possibility and potential that operates across the continuum of time. “Unrealized possibilities of the past remain available to the present,” Pratt argues, “and unrealized possibilities in the present remain available to the future; they are part of the fertility or potency of thinking and knowing through (i.e., by means of) the Indigenous.”⁵⁷

The serial encounters of image and text may, in the most literal reading, suggest some sort of equivalence—one based primarily on visual cues. By simply occupying the same spread a certain degree of visual equivalence is established, for example, between the photograph of Blackhawk River Runs and Richard Ackley’s

written account of his experience as a student at the Lac du Flambeau Indian School. This formal equivalence is reinforced by reading conventions that shape our expectations of how images and texts are supposed to relate. Images illustrate; texts contextualize. *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*, however, frequently upends these conventions. At the very least, the staging of image and text is intended to preserve and expand dialectical tensions.⁵⁸ More poignantly, the staging frequently calls attention to *unequivalence* and also to the inherent “violence of equivalence.” Even though Ackley reflects in part on a more lighthearted aspect of his boarding school experience—being perplexed by the relationship between rabbits and Easter eggs—the excerpted text nevertheless casts the image in a different light, causing the name on the side of the canoe to appear much less benign. The text—and its omissions—overwhelms the image. And, in this case, the reality of intergenerational trauma stemming from the boarding schools shrinks the distance between Baraboo and Bad Axe.

The historian Boyd Cothran writes eloquently about *unequivalence* in relation to the Modoc War, which, coincidentally, is often referred to as “the last Indian war in California.”⁵⁹ Within the context of U.S.–Indian violence, “reconciliatory narratives,” “exchange of remembrances,” and “historical justice-making,” Cothran argues, form an “economy of equivalence” and a “multicultural marketplace of remembering and forgetting.” This economy or marketplace is problematic insofar as it obscures historical and contemporary power relations and the continuity of colonial logics that shuttle between past and present. In short, the market is “power-denying.” It contributes to the production of what Paul Carter calls “imperial history,” the primary object of which “is not to understand or to interpret: it is to legitimate.”⁶⁰ Like other supposedly free markets, this one conceals the various ways in which it is subsidized by the state and also through our individual investments—possessive and psycho-affective—in the land and the narratives that legitimize our ownership of it. The economy of equivalence, Cothran observes, enables the authors of reconciliatory narratives to “depart with no strings attached,”⁶¹ a simple way of describing liberal capitalist society’s fantasy of “convulsive competition purged of real conflict, social difference without social consequences.”⁶² Ultimately, Cothran calls for “unequivalent multivocal remembering” as a means of enabling participants to “sidestep the marketplace of remembering, stop trading stories with the dead and actually listen to the stories we are offered as gifts from the living.”⁶³ Following Cothran, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* calls attention to the unevenness and unequalness of social memory in the colonial present—the uneven and unequal ways that landscape is practiced and mobilized in the present by settlers and Indigenous peoples alike. Furthermore, it advocates a practice and politics of listening that sidesteps the marketplace of remembering and forgetting.

The notion of a “politics of listening” developed in Euro-American feminist theory to articulate how the work done in consciousness raising groups contributed to the formation and mobilization of radical and oppositional subjectivities. In contrast to European, patriarchal standards that valorize the individual speaking subject, what have been called “women’s ways of knowing” are said to

emphasize the intersubjective nature of consciousness, recognize the context and contingency of information, and attend to the affective dimension of experience.⁶⁴ Although the idea that a politics of listening serves as a necessary counterpart to the more familiar and celebrated politics of speaking has surfaced in rhetoric, media theory, art, trauma studies, and, as demonstrated by Audra Simpson's quote in the epigraph to this section, Indigenous studies, it remains underappreciated.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the notion of listening before speaking—or being willing to suspend speech altogether—takes on particular significance in the context of colonial encounters. In North America, the settlers have done most of the speaking and precious little listening—an asymmetry of communication that remained largely constant for hundreds of years and continues to plague efforts to “include” Native voices in historical accounts that usually remain, at their core, rooted in settler priorities and temporalities.

In an era of liberal multiculturalism, in which governments issue official apologies for past genocides, the settler's voice and actions—first violent, now contrite—remain central.⁶⁶ Adding settler apologies to settler historical narratives furthers Cochran's “economy of equivalence” and sidesteps the more unsettling consequences of dealing squarely with the legacy of ongoing, if never total, dispossession. *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* takes a different tack. In re-collecting and re-assembling what is already here in the colonial landscape, we must listen to it (and look at it and read it) deeply and at length. Our image-text strategy forestalls the transmission of a single message or the formulation of a clear demand in favor of continuing to perceive and examine conditions as they are now, in all their complexity. As the activist sound art collective Ultra Red writes, “*listening is a site for the organization of politics.*”⁶⁷ This work does not just lead to a more “correct” sense of the world out there, but rather it reconfigures the position of the perceiver in relation to the perceived. This change of subjectivity is necessary if we are ever to build an anticolonial solidarity not just around issues of mutual concern—as has happened so effectively and inspirationally around certain environmental campaigns—but also in matters where justice requires non-Natives to give something up. Cautioning about the ease of making demands, Ultra Red continues, the “capacity to privilege the demand must be constrained so that it may call us to the silence that is the condition for listening. . . . We hear beyond need. This remainder is the medium of intersubjectivity.”⁶⁸ It is only through working subjectively and intersubjectively—through relationships and through representation—that we will begin to understand what solidarity, and what justice, will look like.⁶⁹

Though we are troubled by the ideological work done by settler appropriations of Black Hawk, we have chosen to listen to them, deconstruct them, and reshape them. We have not explicitly tried to present a more authentic or historically accurate picture. This important work has already been (and continues to be) done. In book form it exists, for example, in Makataimeshekiakiak's own *Life of Black Hawk*, which is a source of great pride to the present-day Sac and Fox Nation as the first published “as-told-to” autobiography of a Native leader.⁷⁰ As descendants of European settlers to this very region, we are interested in examining structures

of possession and how they are perpetuated and naturalized through the settler organization of space.⁷¹ It may not be our role to present Native voices—which are numerous, informed, powerful, and fully capable of presenting themselves. Following Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Native scholar sometimes questioned for her decision to focus on white possession, it is settler beliefs and practices that are the problem.⁷² As non-Natives, we are uniquely situated to address that problem. Any anticolonial project requires that non-Natives examine how our territorial claims, political processes, national narratives, and even senses of self are bound up first in genocide and then in the resurrection and use of phantom Indians.⁷³ However, this project cannot be undertaken in isolation from contemporary, flesh-and-blood Native people without unintentionally recentering the white narrative, such that coming to grips with colonialism remains “all about us,” as it were.⁷⁴ As many of the text fragments and long-form interviews that round out this book demonstrate, there are countless people working tirelessly across Indian Country to exercise tribal sovereignty, restore ecological balance, improve Native health, rebuild tribal languages and land bases, and address violence in all its forms. By juxtaposing appropriations of Black Hawk with texts pointing toward these efforts, we do more than gesture at the gulf between Native and non-Native experiences of these histories. We also offer a predominantly non-Native audience hundreds of paths to educate themselves about the tremendous diversity, energy, intellect, and dedication to be found in Indian Country—which is not just “over there” on the rez but also in our own backyards.

The contributions and interviews that round out this book detail specific Native efforts that put to lie narratives of pacification and extermination, and that make Makataimeshekiakiak’s legacy available to the present. We sought these texts in recognition that before Black Hawk was a symbol, he was a man, a father, a warrior, an elder, and a leader to his people. His life has enormous consequence—principally for the Sauk and Meskwaki people, who were punished for his actions, but also for anyone who lives or owns property, as we do, in the territory seized by the U.S. government in treaties both before and after the war. What this requires at the very minimum is a politics of listening, of recognizing that, while this project may not be “merely” about Black Hawk to us, there is nothing “mere” about Makataimeshekiakiak, whose spirit continues to live within the Sac and Fox Nation as surely as his name appears on their flag. For this reason, we sought the participation of representatives of the Sac and Fox tribes in Oklahoma and Iowa.⁷⁵ We spoke with three tribal officers involved in the preservation and transmission of Sauk and Meskwaki history, culture, and language: Johnathan Buffalo, historic preservation officer for the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa (Meskwaki); Yolanda Pushetonequa, former language preservation officer for the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa; and Sandra Massey, historic preservation officer for the Sac and Fox Tribe of Oklahoma (Sauk). These recorded conversations were transcribed and then jointly edited, resulting in the interviews placed between the three photo-essay chapters in this book. In addition, George Thurman, a direct descendant of Makataimeshekiakiak and current

principal chief of the Sac and Fox Tribe of Oklahoma, contributed a moving statement about Black Hawk's continued significance to a living and evolving Sauk people. Rather than providing a singular "Native perspective" (as if there were such a thing), these contributions counteract the narrative of disappearance and pacification suggested by the phrase "the last Indian war east of the Mississippi" and provide varied perspectives on the continued cultural genocide and historical erasure that proceed much less visibly than the Bad Axe Massacre but which appropriations of Black Hawk might be one part.

If the contributions by Sauk and Meskwaki officers contextualize the photo-essays in light of tribal perspectives and programs, the chapters by activist scholars place the image-text in another context. The Michif (Métis) artist and art historian Dylan Miner's contribution places the Black Hawk conflict in legal, political, and colonial history and contextualizes the image-text—and critical art in general—as part of decolonial praxis. Finally, in a coda suggesting links between Black Hawk and other colonial conflicts in the Midwest, the Dakota scholar and activist Waziyatawin describes and reflects on her involvement in contesting Minnesota's official sesquicentennial commemorations of statehood (2008) and the U.S.–Dakota War (2012). Her account demonstrates how deeply non-Native culture continues to use historical commemorations to shore up its legitimacy—which includes the adoption of a rhetoric of inclusivity, tolerance, and, in some cases, contrition. In contrast to both the settler appropriations documented in this book and our own image-text intervention, Waziyatawin discusses the "Take Down the Fort" campaign as a counter-memorial practice that bridges representational, discursive, and material strategies. She also speaks to the ugly response that often awaits those who challenge the casual racism that cuts through landscapes and practices of commemoration. She reminds us that, "in the context of justice, not all accounts of history are equal" and that the settlement and pacification of the Midwest can never be total and will never be complete.

BLACK HAWK IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

The figure of "impossibility" indexes something more than the limits of either practicality or constitutionality, pointing less toward a concern over native sovereignty per se than the articulation of a version of it not directly managed by the federal government. This "doctrine" seems to mark an anxious denial, a kind of primary repression not of a particular kind of governance so much as the possibility of an eruption of an autonomous political order within what the United States maintains is its own boundaries. In asserting a de facto right to superintend Indigenous territories and populations in perpetuity, though, the decision repeatedly describes . . . dispossession . . . as an "ancient" act, displacing and safely sealing it into a long distant past and thereby casting current conflict over the contours of U.S. legal geography as instead merely anachronistic Indian longing for what has vanished.

MARK RIFKIN, *Manifesting America*⁷⁶

The critical questions generated through the juxtaposition of image and text can be read as a provisional response to Irene Watson's call for a "meditation on discomfort."⁷⁷ *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* is fueled by a desire to facilitate such a meditation to traverse the affective geographies of settler anxiety and move toward a more just landscape. A key aspect of this meditation concerns the efficacy of dispossession. If the photographs in this book reveal how narratives of dispossession, which reproduce old ideologies of extermination, pacification, and assimilation, are inscribed in the landscape, the accompanying texts do not describe the images so much as they refute their ideological certainty. The pairings of image and text—the crux of this project—speak of a failure to dispossess. They testify to the durability of Indigenous possession, the inalienability of land, and the refusal of settler recognition.⁷⁸ Collectively they challenge us to reconcile this failure with a commemorative landscape that exudes an "evasive melancholy of dominance."⁷⁹ By unsettling the "quietness of possession,"⁸⁰ the pairings destabilize normative settler cartographies that embody not only this evasive melancholy but also a palpable "anxiety of dispossession."⁸¹ More importantly, however, the pairings demand recognition of the dynamic and evolving Indigenous political geographies that have long refused containment by narratives of dominance and dispossession. And they compel us to move beyond the property paradigm in order to see, perhaps for the first time, land not simply as a resource but as "the nonfungible matrix of the community" and "the inalienable ground of the communal."⁸²

Refusing the rhetoric of pacification and contesting the efficacy of narratives of dispossession allow us to better appreciate the continuity of struggles that persist to this day. Arguably, the same sentiment that compelled Makataimeshekiakiak to return to Saukenuk in 1832 fueled the slow and deliberate efforts of the Meskwaki Nation to expand its land base in central Iowa by purchasing and collectivizing private property. It emboldened a group of Omaha Indians who occupied Blackbird Bend along the Missouri River in western Iowa in 1973 and again in 1975. It motivated Ojibwe tribes in northern Wisconsin to defend their treaty rights during the Walleye War in the late 1980s. And it was channeled by four women in Saskatchewan who in December 2012 launched the ongoing Idle No More movement in defense of Native sovereignty and ecological sustainability. The spirit of Black Hawk, in other words, is alive and well. It animates current campaigns by organizations such as Honor the Earth and the Indigenous Environmental Network to resist the expansion of pipelines carrying oil from the Alberta tar sands to distant markets, traversing reservations, reserves, and traditional aboriginal territories in the process. Makataimeshekiakiak's spirit energizes the anti-mining movement in northern Wisconsin and Michigan as it mobilizes once again to oppose new plans by multinational corporations to mine low-grade iron ore (taconite) in the Penokee-Gogebic Range, directly upstream from the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and to conduct metallic sulfide mining in the Upper Peninsula's Yellow Dog Plains, which includes Eagle Rock, a sacred site for the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and other Anishinaabeg peoples.

About a month after Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in May 2011, the 1491s released a video poem, “Geronimo E-KIA,”⁸³ which challenged the military’s conflation of a contemporary terrorist with the renowned Apache warrior. The 1491s, “a sketch comedy group, based in the wooded ghettos of Minnesota and buffalo grass of Oklahoma,” insisted that Geronimo—code name for bin Laden—had not been killed in Pakistan.⁸⁴ Nor did he die in February 1909.

Geronimo was not killed in Pakistan. . . . He is alive in the single mother from Tahlequah . . . who talks to her kids in Indian because she won’t give up . . . one . . . more . . . inch. . . .

Geronimo did not die in Abbottabad. . . . He is alive in Sisseton . . . living in the elder who refuses to die . . . that fluent speaker that shows up every day . . . saving the language one story at a time. . . . He lives in the lawyer from Black River Falls . . . who beats them at their own game. . . . He is alive in the domestic violence victim in White Cloud . . . who decided to fight back.

Although they describe themselves as “a gaggle of Indians chock full of cynicism and splashed with a good dose of Indigenous satire,” the 1491s had a serious message. Geronimo is “a college student in Lawrence,” “a civil servant from Gila River,” “a grant writer from Shiprock,” “a language immersion teacher from Browning,” and “the history teacher from Akwesasne . . . who knows that truth does not come in versions.” Geronimo, in other words, is everywhere. He is a part of every Indigenous person who resists colonization. “We chase his legacy, not his truth,” the poem concludes. “Neither will be caught, but one of them can be made up.”

The message of “Geronimo E-KIA” resonates on many levels with that of *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*. Indeed, it is easy to imagine the military using Black Hawk as an enemy code name had it not already been assigned to a helicopter. Ironically, the Navy SEALs used two modified Black Hawk helicopters in their raid on bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad.⁸⁵ Similarly, it is not a stretch to imagine the 1491s producing another viral video featuring Black Hawk in place of Geronimo. Geronimo is Black Hawk. And vice versa. The 1491s poem “isn’t about Geronimo” in the same way this book isn’t about Black Hawk. Like Geronimo, Black Hawk is alive in Lawrence, Gila River, Shiprock, Browning, and Akwesasne. There are many Black Hawks and many Black Hawk Wars. The relevance of these particular histories reverberates far beyond the upper Midwest.