

Making and Breaking Settler Space: Five Centuries of Colonization in North America. By Adam J. Barker. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2021. 298 pages. \$89.95 cloth; \$37.95 paperback.

Making and Breaking Settler Space is an expansive take on the history of settler colonialism on Turtle Island (North America) as a process, a socially and spatially produced phenomenon, and a self-perpetuating project. Adam J. Barker, a white Ontario-based settler, refreshingly approaches his 250-page text with an autoethnographic lens through which he rightly reflects and examines his positionality as a settler and his attempts to become a decolonial ally. It's a breath of fresh air to read a critical text about settler colonialism and feel resolved of any outstanding questions regarding the author's positionality, qualifications, and how both have been shaped by personal experience. The social and political context of one's identity matters, and Barker knows this. He infers that the systemic settler project is a geographical project, producing and denying Native spaces, and also a storied project that violently narrates erasure and denial. This storying of identities outlines what it means to be a settler *as well as* what it means to qualify as an Indigenous person as defined by the settler. By situating his personal stories as an activist and scholar, and by not only acknowledging when he's failed but encouraging other settlers not to allow the fear of failure to stop their own personal evolution, he helps to deny the perpetuation of settler practices throughout these pages. Barker is confronting his readers with the uncomfortable truth that settler colonialism "is not over, nor is it elsewhere" (44).

The first two chapters, out of a total of six, includes a thoughtful nod to social science's dependency theory, an early historical examination of European imperialism and colonization on Turtle Island, and prepares the reader for geographical concepts. He investigates how collective colonial projects initiated a particular up-for-grabs relationship with the land, an invasion that "remains unfinished" (67). Native land dispossession, as it began and as it remains today, is legitimized with the logic of *terra nullius*, or "territory without a master." This type of colonial space-making, Barker infers, correlates with the assertion of European imperialist's sovereign rights to take Indigenous land. Following the contextualization of various home-improvement settler projects, the second chapter establishes a theoretical framework for understanding spatial productions. For example, the author successfully deploys "anticipatory geographies," a concept introduced by Darby Cameron and further explored by Ben Anderson, which works to make sense of the ways that settler ideologies are equipped with an imagined yet anticipated space, or land, that is considered to be inevitable; therefore dispossession, initially and perpetually, is entirely justifiable (71).

Barker makes the case that forms of spatial production were physically, conceptually, and emotionally created for settlers to obtain a "natural" sense of belonging to

place. In this way, he argues that land, whether it be urban, rural, frontier, or wilderness, is always viewed by settlers as something to be made into something else. These endeavors are often accomplished at the expense of existing Indigenous place-based narratives; stories kept around only sometimes just to be reframed by settlers on their own terms, even if they are well-meaning. The fourth chapter begins by exploring Barker's experiences as a (more or less failed) activist and recalls stories told to him by Indigenous classmates. This part of the book begins to get at what I see as its greatest contribution to settler colonial theory and Indigenous allyship: the shortcomings of "anticolonial" initiatives and their adept ability to unknowingly perpetuate settler sovereignty. Barker makes a compelling case for this colonial feedback loop where leftist activist groups and individuals alike can wrongfully oversimplify the violence against Indigenous peoples. What is more important, it's often about settlers' avoidance of settler colonialism, or keeping it at arm's length in order to focus on a sort of imagined utopian future that becomes possible from their personal due diligence. The author sees addressing and working through one's part in settler colonialism as a necessary step toward empowering Indigenous resurgence. As he states, "Settler people, no matter how motivated, well-intentioned, or educated, have difficulty grappling with settler colonialism; it is a slippery and mammoth task, and it is often simply too uncomfortable to be so unsettled and still work productively in that state" (179). This productivity comes out of failure, and the author goes into the final two chapters of the book recalling personal experiences while investigating the geographies of shared space. What *should* a settler's role look like on the road toward decolonization and the reclamation of Native lands on Turtle Island? Barker asserts that among the steps necessary to move forward, one significant step includes that settlers must "accept their fear of never belonging" (250).

It's important to note that much of *Making and Breaking Settler Space* is situated in theoretical frameworks and primarily intended for scholars and graduate students working in the social and behavioral sciences—cultural geography, anthropology, history, environmental studies, critical race studies, and American Indian studies. I see activists and critical thinkers picking up this text as well; however, a particular maturity, educational level (beyond high school), or both may be required to fully unlock Barker's concepts. To this extent it's both a blessing and a curse that the author's theoretical contributions to particular disciplines and audiences are immense. Many of the people who should read the text—settlers who should learn how to disrupt and decolonize hegemonic spaces, Native people who may feel empowered by the author's solidarity with them—will probably never be exposed to it. Even if they are, the material could come across as inaccessible. This does not discount the applications this text can provide for interdisciplinary audiences. For example, Barker sees assemblage and affect as useful methodologies within settler colonial theory because they get at the complex relationships, including the physical and emotional, among the Indigenous, settlers, the more-than-human, and the land. He thoughtfully and deliberately references and empowers Indigenous scholars throughout the text and finds rhythm with his writing by fluctuating between personal storytelling, scholarship, and theory. A large takeaway from this book includes critically identifying your own positionality,

perhaps sharing with others Barker's own words: "The decolonizing settler self and society is not an *Indigenous responsibility*" (228). As a settler reader, know that Barker is expecting more from you. As a Native reader, I feel that I'm walking more firmly after getting a glimpse of some unsettled ground.

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