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Book Review: Settler Colonial City: Racism and Inequity in Postwar Minneapolis. David Hugill.

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Settler Colonial City: Racism and Inequity in Postwar Minneapolis. David Hugill. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2021. Pp vii+212, black and white illustrations, endnotes. \$25.00 paperback. ISBN 978-1-5179-0480-7.

David Hugill's historical geography of Minneapolis, analyzed through the lens of settler colonialism, deftly intervenes into major conversations of its time and place, including urban Indigenous experiences and racialized policing. With a preface that describes the author using their daughter's bedroom as a home office during COVID-19 lockdowns, and an epilogue centered on Ronald Reagan's 1988 visit to the Soviet Union, Hugill interweaves time, place, and politics in unexpected and illuminating ways.

The framework uniting Hugill's examination of a variety of sites and situations within post-war Minneapolis is "the predatory violence of settler colonization and its valorization of the territorial and social claims of Euro-Americans over and above those of the people they sought to replace as the rightful users and occupiers of the land" (p. 3). Hugill stresses that "neither do those accumulations belong to the past. Advantages acquired through dispossession endure as a dynamic force of economic and cultural power, even to this day" (p. 3). Each of the four chapters in this intriguing and insightful book focuses on a different element of Minneapolis history, read through a settler colonial lens.

Chapter one traces how suburbanization and urban renewal have limited the opportunities available to Indigenous people in Minneapolis, as well as how Indigenous social and political organizing gave rise to the Philips neighborhood as a center of Indigenous urban life in the decades following the Second World War. Chapter two examines non-Indigenous advocacy in Minneapolis during the same time period, illuminating the underlying assumptions, driven by settler colonial advantage, within liberal antiracism movements. Chapter three

highlights the impact of racialized, targeted policing on Indigenous communities, including the disproportionate number of Indigenous people arrested on minor charges. Chapter four examines the contested role of the Honeywell Corporation as a local employer – a “global technology giant” (p. 120) that, during the Second World War, began manufacturing a range of weapons technologies, at the same time offering jobs to unemployed or under-employed Indigenous community members through the Honeywell Foundation and Phillips Works initiatives.

Hugill theoretically links these four seemingly separate but interrelated cases, by demonstrating how they illuminate major features of settler colonialism in Minneapolis through the latter half of the 20th century up until the present day. Using a diverse range of examples, Hugill shows how settler colonial biases appear in sometimes unexpected places, as in the work of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota and the Training Center for Community Programs from the University of Minnesota, who worked hard to advocate for Indigenous communities in the city and yet betrayed stereotyped assumptions about the people in these communities and visions of change that ultimately remained rooted in the status quo.

Settler colonial cities are distinguished by their being “primarily oriented around the enrichment of localized settler constituencies” (p. 16), as opposed to colonial cities whose goal was the enrichment of a distant metropole. In addition, in settler colonial cities, the settler colonial relationship endures; as Patrick Wolfe famously puts it, “invasion is a structure not an event” (2006, p. 388). In important ways, Hugill’s work intersects with scholarship on racialized generational wealth gaps in the United States, highlighting how settler colonialism and

institutionalized racism continue to work hand in hand to deliver disproportionate advantages to settler colonial Americans, the majority of whom are white.

Hugill is careful to point out that settler colonialism, although pervasive, is not all-powerful: “as Audra Simpson demonstrates, colonialism endures in its settler mode but continues to fall short of its own objectives” (p. 8). Indigenous economies were thriving before settlers arrived and have been maintained in spite of settler colonialism. Indigenous peoples’ reactions and resistances to settler colonialism have shaped North American cities in ways that are often effaced in popular and academic discourse. Hugill asserts that “reservation” and “city” geographies are intrinsically linked, and that Indigenous occupancy of urban lands has been continuous up to the present day.

The book also stands by Hugill’s declared motivation “that settler colonial analysis must look beyond the borders of the modern nation-state” (p. 118), for example in its examination of work placement programs that, Hugill deftly argues, ensnare people living in poverty into working for a company that supports the production of military devices, which are then used to devastate Indigenous communities and people living in poverty around the world.

A critique of settler colonial studies is that focusing on the ways in which settler colonialism transforms itself can have the effect of making settler colonialism seem perpetual and inevitable. As Hugill puts it, it is important to avoid “overstating the stability and power of colonial projects” (p. 26). Another way to put this might be to say that it is important to trace the contours of the settler colonial present with an eye to Indigenous futures. Hugill does this by making reference to the literature on the resurgence of Indigenous law, economies, and political spaces. The author also highlights Indigenous activism, resistance, and community

building throughout the book, focusing on Indigenous leaders such as David Banks of the American Indian Movement, and emphasizing Indigenous peoples' roles in creating community spaces in the city. This is an area that could usefully be expanded on even farther in the book.

Hugill's focus on the shifting and elusive nature of settler colonial advantage troubles any easy assumptions that "racialized inequities in general, and those shouldered by Indigenous people in particular, [can] be addressed without challenging the basic structures of American social and political life" (p. 77). Rather, one of the book's major, if implicit, points, is that changes in these basic structures may be the only way to eliminate the inequities of settler colonialism within U.S. society. A wide-ranging examination of some of the ways in which settler colonial exploitation continues to act in contemporary Minneapolis, this book will be useful for graduate students and scholars interested in the where, why, and how of racialized and economic inequities in Minneapolis as well as in cities across the United States.

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