

Afterword

Drift & Surge, Root & Thorn: Travels in the Radical Midwest

NICK BROWN

Drift and surge. Root and thorn. As both nouns and verbs, these four words describe not only how we engage the Midwest, they also speak to how it engages us. How, in other words, we are radicalized by myriad histories and spaces of struggle in a region defined as much by change as by continuity. Since our last book project *A Call to Farms* was published in 2008, the Midwest has evolved, in some cases literally shifting beneath our feet. Asian carp, or Kentucky Tuna as entrepreneurial opportunists refer to the species, continue their steady push northward, up the Mississippi River, up the Illinois River, and perilously close to Lake Michigan and the great beyond. Meanwhile, tar sands oil from a ruptured Enbridge pipeline seeps into the Kalamazoo River, threatening Lake Michigan from the east. In contrast, some small portion of the topsoil on which we stood in eastern Iowa and central Illinois in 2008 has washed away, down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. It now mingles with chemical dispersants and tar balls in a growing dead zone that forces us to re-imagine how we define a watershed.

Drift and surge. Root and thorn. These words are suggestive of the various ways in which we engage the Radical Midwest. On screen-printed flags, the words drift, surge, root, and thorn are strung together and draped from the sides of a large tent used to create a temporary autonomous space during the 2010 U.S. Social Forum in Detroit. These words and symbols convey something of the open-ended specificity of our ongoing investigations in regionalism. They hint at the shifting intensities, both spatial and temporal, of our collective and individual curiosities, concerns, and commitments.

And to some degree they reveal how and why our interests have coalesced around places such as Detroit and Danville, topics like tar sands infrastructure and corn- and coal-sheds, and more abstract ideas, such as an ethics of scale, the petroleum-time-space continuum, and practices of mutual self-recognition.

These stories of arrival and departure are but a few examples of how the Midwest(s) of our imagination and our daily practices are being reconfigured. What you've just encountered are a few reflections on life in the Midwest Radical Culture Corridor.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit
amet consectetur.

Photos by Lorem Ipsum

