Marked, Unmarked, Remembered: A Geography of American Memory by Andrew Lichtenstein and Alex Lichtenstein (review)

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Marked, Unmarked, Remembered: A Geography of American Memory. Andrew Lichtenstein and Alex Lichtenstein. Foreword by Edward T. Linenthal. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2017. Pp. ix+181, black & white photographs, notes. $34.99, paperback, ISBN 978-1-943665-89-1.

Marked, Unmarked, Remembered: A Geography of American Memory is not a typical book. It fits somewhere on the continuum between a coffee table book, a scholarly read, and a piece of art. I am still trying to figure out its position myself, as I think you will be, too. The book traces a handful of tragic and other places and their roles in American history, geography, and memory, mostly through the excellent black-and-white photography of Andrew Lichtenstein. Most sites selected for this book focus on African American (Nat Turner, Greenwood), American Indian (Sand Creek, Bear Butte), and Asian American (Manzanar) civil rights. Several also touch on labor rights (Pullman, Ludlow, Flint) and other socioeconomic culture wars, including the California Water Wars as one noted example. The authors chose an excellent set of samples to explore the questions of how we remember traumatic punctuations of social injustices in the United States.

As implied in the name, this book is really about the tension between the presence and absence of memory on the American landscape. A foreword by Edward T. Linenthal sets the tone of the book by focusing lightly on this. Historian Alex Lichtenstein's introduction, however, serves as the lengthier primer to what we are seeing in the following photographs and reading in their accompanying descriptions. Lichtenstein's work continues the discussion of presence and absence in how we do or do not memorialize trauma. Secondary to presence/absence, sense of place plays a recurring role here. Those memorial landscapes evoke, to some extent, a sense of place amongst those people who live near, or visit, the sites.

One concern for this book is the minimal inclusion of geographic scholarship, despite the title and focus on landscape and sense of place. For example, as the main academic text in the book, Lichtenstein's chapter lacks any reference to a geographic work aside from our friend and colleague Kenneth Foote's *Shadowed Ground* (University of Texas Press, 2003). While Lichtenstein acknowledges a wealth of other scholars in the field of memory studies—Pierre Nora, John Bodnar, Marita Sturken,

and Erika Doss in particular—the presence of one geographer in the entire book struggles to do that subtitle and his theoretical focus justice. I think referencing scholars such as James Tyner, Joshua Inwood, Richard Schein, Derek Alderman, Karen Till, or others would go a long way in better justifying that title and emphasis. This said, the introduction serves its purpose. As Lichtenstein says himself, it is the geographies of presence and absence that guide not only the mission of the book but also its organization. In this sense, the geography runs deep. Historical geographers will simply need to insert citations of their own favorite geographic studies to complete it.

A paragraph-length explanation of each site accompanies its photograph. The strength of the book, however, is a selective collection of larger discussions on a number of sites that come at the end of their respective chapter ("Marked," "Unmarked," "Remembered," as the title makes explicit). A group of scholarly contributors—almost exclusively historians such as Scot French, Michael K. Honey, and Christina Snyder—play their role at these points by further cementing the importance of these sites on the American landscape. The "Marked" section highlights several sites that are mostly subtly memorialized on the landscape but that have more meaningful residues in their everyday appearance. The "Unmarked" section haunts with explorations of tragic locations that remain empty of the commemorative presence we may expect from such sites. The final "Remembered" section features events that have been recently, or are actively, commemorated through ceremony. Foote's framework from his *Shadowed Ground* comes in handy at this point and is a clear point of focus for the work as a whole, as the introduction projects. Marked sites are dedicated and remembered sites are sanctified, bridging these typologies.

Unmarked sites offer a challenge, however, in merging these systems, and as such merits an expanded discussion here. As Foote suggests, many egregious sites are obliterated out of existence, perhaps eventually rectified to a previous use. Unmarked sites, however, lack even this much acknowledgment from their community. This book should be applauded for finding such sites. Proving the absence of a memorial site can be a rabbit hole of constant questioning of worthiness and personal interest. The Lichtensteins provide a set of unmarked sites that match the social justice theme of the book perfectly. Their descriptions validate their selection, and the deeper discussions at the end of the chapter—on

Denmark Vesey's church by Douglas Egerton, Harriet Tubman's Raid by Stephen Kantrowitz, and on Nat Turner's Cabin Pond meeting site by Scot French—illustrate why these sites are important beyond their locations and memories. They go beyond their immediacy and represent persons, histories, and places that need to be learned from. Yet the fact that they continue to go unmarked speaks volumes to their critical teaching potential—they upend a larger national narrative. A fourth inclusion in these lengthier profiles is the Trail of Tears by Julie Reed. While the removal of the Cherokee is well memorialized in both Oklahoma and Georgia (as well as North Carolina and Tennessee), its inclusion shows that more could be done. The removal was not about these beginning and end points. Thousands lost their lives in between, along a trail that stretched for hundreds of miles. Thus, as Reed makes clear, neither should the dispossession's memorialization be boiled down to its beginning and end points—it remains truly unremembered.

Like many nongeography books I read on the commemorative landscape, I came away slightly disappointed by *Marked, Unmarked, Remembered* and its inability to dive into the work that a wealth of geographers have done on memorialization, the presence/absence dialectic, and sense of place. But this book will stick with you. Its existence between a popular press coffee table book and a more scholarly endeavor will keep you thinking. You will come up with new projects, questions, and endeavors for yourself. You will connect the theoretical dots and perhaps come away with new ones. Its photography will keep you intrigued, in some cases haunted. Finally, what I keep going back to is this book's questioning of what is present and what is missing in our memorial landscapes. We serve ourselves as individuals and as a society to understand our pasts—what we got wrong, what we got right, and how the inscribed *and uninscribed* memory of those pasts remain with us. Nope, the past's not dead.

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