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*Memorials Matter: Emotion, Environment, and Public Memory at American Historical Sites* by Jennifer K. Ladino (review)

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(Review)

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## Reviews

Jennifer K. Ladino, *Memorials Matter: Emotion, Environment, and Public Memory at American Historical Sites*. Reno: U of Nevada P, 2019. 320 pp. Cloth, \$99.95; paper, \$29.95.

“How do you feel about that?” is the question Jennifer Ladino poses for her analyses of six public memory sites located in the US West. Much of public memory scholarship focuses on physical locations as well as rhetorical arguments and political implications; Ladino, however, argues that how a memorial makes visitors feel is the more salient question. She uses ecocriticism as the primary lens for her critique, defining ecocriticism as recognizing the agency in “both built structures and nonhuman nature, including things like landscape, nonhuman animals, and weather” (21). She rightly argues that recognizing the landscape’s agency privileges narratives of place and nature. Ladino also relies on a variety of nature writers, public memory theorists, and her experience as a National Park Service (NPS) ranger to argue that how a memorial makes visitors feel is essential to understanding its impact.

The six sites chosen for her book are Coronado National Memorial, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, Golden Spike National Historic Site, WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument, Manzanar National Historic Site, and the Buffalo Soldiers’ cemetery at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. These locations in the West represent their history with an emphasis on issues of diversity. In the first chapter on the Coronado National Memorial (an NPS site interpreting the Francisco Vázquez de Coronado expedition in 1540), Ladino makes the important point of identifying the social construction of fear and observes its depiction in the memorial’s isolated location next to a barbed wire fence. She argues that the fear communicated at this memorial concerns anxieties “more about our budgets than our borders, or more about global weirding

than the shade of our neighbors' skin" (75) and calls for a reevaluation of the US perception of immigrants in its commemoration.

The second chapter on the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site uses the concept of dreamscapes to analyze this 1864 massacre site's affect. Ladino finds the location at odds with the history because the stunning landscape "mitigates any guilt the non-Native visitor may feel" (97), thus creating "affective dissonance" (99). She offers the experience of compassion as a response to affective dissonance and hopes that compassion would produce concern in non-Native visitors. Ladino observes that this site refuses intellectual history and the binaries of rationality and emotionality in favor of a prosocial response that recognizes suffering and motivates visitors for its reduction in the form of eco-patriotism. One of the challenges of this chapter is Ladino's claim about visitor response without conducting surveys of actual visitors. I am comfortable with her point of view, but quotations from other visitors' reactions are needed here to substantiate her claim.

Ladino examines the Golden Spike National Historic Site at Promontory Summit, Utah, in chapter 3 and observes that the wide open desert landscape contributes significantly to the site's definition of patriotism. She encounters a "sense of timelessness, the feeling that not much has changed in the last century and a half" (137) in the desert location and notes that western landscapes do not depict how "nonhuman nature sacrifices itself willingly for the cause" (147) of human progress. In this chapter and the next on the WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument, Ladino alludes to the politics depicted at the sites and how the landscapes mute these messages. This is perhaps the strength and weakness of ecocriticism because clearly the location and environment contribute significantly to the messages communicated at these national sites of public memory; however, they are not the only messages conveyed. At the WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument there has been significant organizing to include representations of Hawaiian Asian Americans' patriotism in the visitor center. Even though the beauty of Pearl Harbor may affect this message, it took years to address this representation's absence.

The final two chapters on the Manzanar National Historic Site

and the Buffalo Soldiers' cemetery at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area address more directly the politics of Japanese internment and racism in the US military during WWII. Ladino sees Manzanar's desert location communicating internment as jail and notes that the well-hidden cemetery for the WWII Buffalo soldiers represents the military's resistance to properly recognizing their patriotism. She is optimistic that the NPS can improve its interpretive work to include the complications of racism and environmental losses in its memorialization while allowing visitors still to feel "awe and wonder" in these amazing landscapes (243). My fingers are crossed that she is right.

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Annette Angela Portillo, *Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories: Native American Women's Autobiography*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2017. 216 pp. Cloth, \$65; e-book \$65.

*Sovereign Stories and Blood Memories* refreshes decades-old scholarly debates about Native American autobiographical discourses. With a focus on Native American women's life stories, Portillo applies new theoretical approaches to canonical nineteenth-century autobiographies by Zitkala-Ša and Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins and pays due attention to underexamined contemporary life stories by Delfina Cuero and Leslie Marmon Silko. Portillo's most novel intervention, in her penultimate chapter, is her examination of Native women's use of social media and "communo-biographies" to internationalize Indigenous rights movements and social justice activism. This interdisciplinary study expands the canon of western literary and cultural production by including lesser-known works of Native women's autobiography and making a case for reading Indigenous women's cyberactivism as a digital-age extension of Native autobiographical traditions.

Portillo's introductory chapter reviews scholarly discussions about Native American autobiography and Indigenous sovereignty, her definition of "sovereignty," a contested term in Native American