

Book Review

Laura A. Macaluso (ed), *Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, hardback £75.00, pp. 300.

Monuments are markers of identity, community, history, and place. Manifested in multiple forms with manifold meanings, monuments establish interpretations of the past and present whilst attempting to shape the future. Whether celebrating and commemorating, or claiming and constructing, monuments advance multiple agendas, ideologies, and regimes in different contexts.

In *Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World*, cultural studies scholar Laura A. Macaluso explores the global dimensions and diversity of monuments. The volume's range of coverage and perspective is indeed impressive. The coverage describes disparate kinds of monuments, from traditional physical monuments made of stone and bronze to social media monuments made of bits and bytes in digital formats. The perspectives are provided by an assortment of interdisciplinary scholars exploring the complexities and nuances of these objects and their associated purposes and uses. By drawing together these variegated cases from disciplinary approaches, methodological practices, and literary styles, Macaluso supplies a compelling collective statement about the shared intentions of monuments in sundry settings worldwide.

The volume is structured by five main sections anchored by opening and closing chapters. The opening chapter examines the vagaries of the meanings bestowed upon monuments, whilst the closing chapter posits possibilities for future monuments. The five main sections, meanwhile, are thematically arranged according to five broad motifs, namely identity, community, history, and place; trauma, violence, reconciliation, and reparation; migration and identity; beyond traditional monuments; and strategies and actions. It is important to note that the first motif of identity, community, history, and place arguably functions as the foundation for all other motifs, and hence sections, since these phenomena, to varying degrees, intersect with all other matters and issues surrounding monument culture. The chapters featured within the five sections not only approach their respective motif from distinct positions, but also reveal the underlying interconnections and concerns with identity, community, history, and place.

Specifically, the first motif analyzes how monuments are designed and deployed to shape identity, community, and history via the physical landscape and place. The second motif studies the twinning of trauma and violence with reconciliation and reparation in monument culture. The third motif investigates the role of migration in monument culture, including the effects on identity and history when monuments are moved, as well as the ways in which human migration (re)configures monuments and their meanings. The fourth motif looks beyond traditional monuments by embracing new and different kinds of monument culture, such as social media monuments, protest and counter monuments, and walking memorials. The fifth motif outlines strategies and actions for dealing with monuments possessing controversial or difficult histories.

One of the most interesting chapters is Ingo Heidbrink's discussion of monuments in Antarctica. Indeed, few people know there are monuments on this remote continent, yet numerous structures, such as busts, plaques, and even accompanying museums, have been erected by several countries, including Argentina, Chile, the United Kingdom, and the former Soviet Union, across this icy landscape. But the number of visitors to these monuments is

negligible. Heidbrink probes the purposes of these, and by extension other, monuments beyond their visitation statistics. Monuments do not necessarily need to be visited and viewed by large numbers of people; indeed, visitation and viewing are not the primary purposes of Antarctic monuments. Instead, their 'mere existence... is enough to make or support a political claim' (32). Presenting various examples of Antarctic monuments, he states that they share similar hidden agendas for which their existence is more important than anyone ever actually seeing them. In this sense, Antarctic monuments make 'a calculated political action' (32) insofar as they have not been built to be visited per se, but instead to 'claim a certain part of Antarctic history [and therefore territory]' and, consequently, support political goals of establishing sovereignty over parts of this continent.

Perhaps the most intriguing contributions concentrate on unconventional monuments, specifically illegal, social media, and future monuments. Illegal monuments are analyzed in Nauskiaä El-Mecky's chapter entitled 'Illegal Monuments: Memorials between Crime and State Endorsement'. Illegal monuments 'challenge who and what we commemorate and say as much about the past and the future' (186). These monuments are usually set up to serve protest movements and/or challenge and contest formal, legal monuments. Suggesting that 'they may be impossible to define' (177), El-Mecky states that the meanings and interpretations of these monuments constantly shift and may even harbour many contradictions, thereby permitting space for their reconsiderations when needed or necessary.

Social media monuments are introduced in Johnny Alam's chapter entitled 'Transnational Social Media Monuments, Counter Monuments, and the Future of the Nation-State'. Presenting Facebook's 2015 French flag filter as an example of a social media monument, Alam explains it was 'perceived as a gesture for commemorating the victims of the Paris [terrorist] attacks... and a token of support for the principles of Western democracy and human rights' (191-2). Provocatively, yet accurately, he emphasizes the shared ephemerality of all monuments and their meanings, whether digital or physical.

The temporal perspective shifts from the past and present to the future in Evander Price's 'On Creating a Useable Future: An Introduction to Future Monuments'. Future monuments, rather than showing the past or present, are fabricated to commemorate an imagined or hoped-for future. These objects are meant to project forward but, in so doing, 'are subject to a medley of temporal metaphors jockeying for prominence. They show us how much future there is imagined to be. They inherently betray the aspirations and anxieties of the cultures that built them' (254). They are, in other words, circumscribed by their circumstances and contours, caught in a contradictory liminal place between foresight and myopia. Nevertheless, for better or worse, they rarely succeed; in fact, when the future does not materialize as expected, future monuments 'become tombstones for alternate histories, for parallel worlds that were imagined but never realized' (254).

Ultimately, *Monument Culture* makes a strong intervention on the growing scholarly literature and media coverage related to monuments. This intervention is particularly welcome as the approach is truly international in scope, emphasizing the global nature of this culture and its complexities in diverse contexts across seven continents. This volume will therefore be of interest to scholars and students of cultural heritage studies, museum studies, library and information science, history, art and architecture. It should also be of value to individuals concerned with or working in public policy arenas, particularly policies pertaining to public space and culture.

It is illuminating to close by mentioning the underlying questions connecting these chapters, namely how should monuments be interpreted and what should be done when these interpretations invariably change over time? Carmen S. Tomfohrde, in the chapter entitled 'Implications of Erasure in Polynesia', offers arguably one of the most impactful remarks in the volume addressing these questions. Specifically, 'each generation must do its own work of remembering histories it never lived through, deciding which elements to retain and in what manner' (22). After all, monuments, like identity, community, history, and place, are in constant flux.