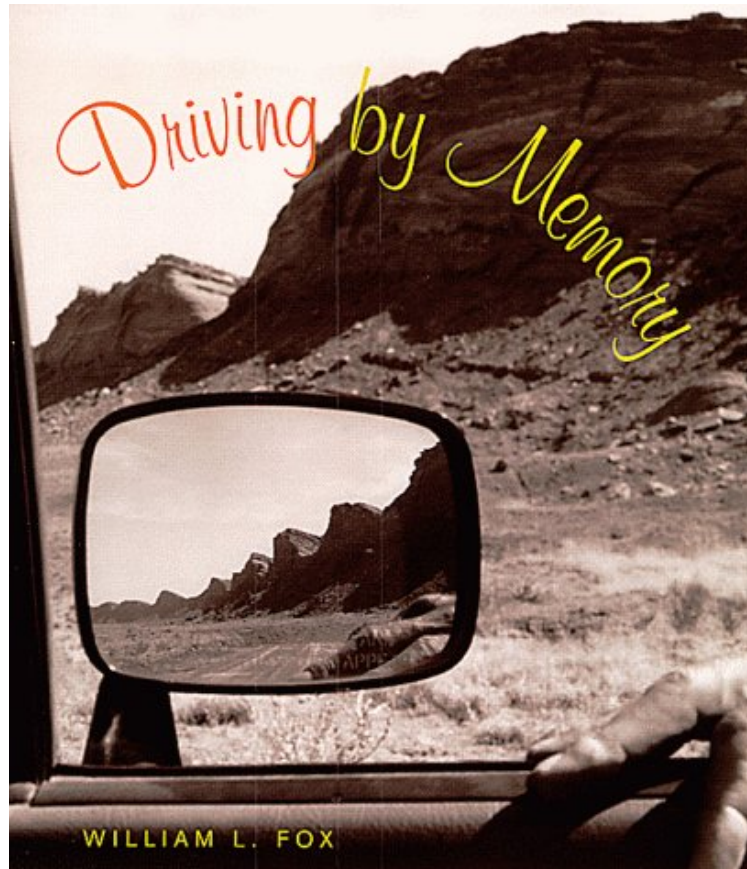


Driving by Memory

William L. Fox

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William L. Fox : Driving by Memory before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Driving by Memory:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Three Road Trips to Vegas By Delite Rancher In "Driving by Memory," William L. Fox writes about three road trips to Las Vegas. Fox drives to his destination from three cities: Santa Fe, Los Angeles and Reno. In addition to documenting three particular trips, the author draws on the memories of many previous drives to Sin City. In the introduction, the author writes about his first trip to Nevada. At nine years old, he left his home in Santa Barbara to spend six weeks in a Reno divorce ranch. This experience was the beginning of William L. Fox's love affair with the Silver State. The first of the three main road trips is from Santa Fe. While driving through Arizona's Painted Desert, Fox discusses one of his recurring themes: the historical basis that influences how we mentally convert land into landscape. The author also has many interesting observations on the nature of the interstate itself. Earthworks are another recurring topic for Fox. In particular, the Roden Crater Project is just off the highway. James Turrell's Roden Crater is an artistic creation carved out of an actual crater. Before getting into the car, the second third of the book begins with a good deal of family background on the author. It becomes clear that the goal of driving to Vegas from three cities isn't just an excuse to write a book. Partly fueled by nostalgia, the

trips serve as therapy. The hope is that the author will come closer to self-realization as his past, present and future converge en route to Las Vegas. On the drive from Los Angeles, Fox offers interesting comparisons between LA and Vegas. Much of the drive takes place in San Bernardino County and Fox remarks on the military installations, natural areas, historical sites and towns along the way. Fox takes a side trip into Afton Canyon. Unfortunately, William L. Fox and his wife Beth only scratch the surface of the adventure contained there. Back on I-15, the author ultimately arrives in Sin City. There, observations are made on gambling and the uniqueness of Las Vegas. The last third of the book begins in Reno and runs along Route 95 from Reno. Possibly because this is the one trip that isn't on a homogenized interstate, this may be the most interesting chapter. Going beyond a simple examination of Reno, Fox makes some fascinating comparisons between Las Vegas and Reno. Always working art and especially architecture into his work, Peter and Turkey Stremmel's truck stop inspired home is examined. The author is accompanied by two companions as the trio drives through the weirdness that is Fallon, Hawthorne, Walker Lake, Luning and Mina. In this chapter, Fox has much to write about the militarized nature of Nevada. "Over 80 percent of Nevada is owned by the federal government." Anyone who has driven this road can appreciate that "the scale along this part of the drive is hard to grasp, almost hallucinatory, and twenty miles feels like an hour, as if we're crawling slowly through a still photograph." Fox reminds us of themes in "The Void, The Grid The Sign" when he writes of the difficulties that we have in perceiving the desert. "Driving by Memory" is not really about Las Vegas; it is about the experience of driving to the entertainment capitol of the world. That written, William L. Fox does finally unleash some of his wit on the largest city in Nevada. "Driving by Memory" is a good read with some potential issues. First, previously driving these three routes is greatly instrumental in appreciating the book. The title may be inaccessible to those who have not driven these particular roads. Second, the Santa Fe trip is the weakest chapter. As the initial drive, it has the power to turn off readers from what is otherwise a satisfying book. Fox spends a good deal of page time counting overpasses, truck initials, pedestrians, trash and even road kill. Many readers would do well to simply skip this third of the book or come back to it last. Third, a good deal of time is spent on the author's life story. Unless the reader is already a fan of William L. Fox, this may seem self-indulgent and uninteresting. Such sections are mostly necessary as the inspiration of the book is to help the author move towards self-realization by connecting himself to Vegas from three points. A final concern is that since the author took these drives in the 1990s, the book is always becoming increasingly outdated. In the end, the substance of the book is solid enough to be relevant for a very long time. Alas, "Driving by Memory," is a good read that combines personal desires with art, geography, history and science. 7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Much promise, little fulfillment. By A Customer What a letdown. Yes, the prose is decent, and the premise is undeniably attractive but, for anybody who holds the drive to Las Vegas close to their heart, these 3 separate tales of driving across the desert toward that glittery focal point called Sin City will all leave you feeling cheated. Why? Well, most of all, the author TURNS OFF THE HIGHWAY BEFORE GETTING TO VEGAS! How can you leave out the final 5 miles!? If you have to be dragged, kicking and screaming, into a casino, what in the world are you doing writing a book with Vegas at its center? Yes, the author shows that he knows the road, and what the various mountains are called, etc., but he obviously has no understanding of what compels most of us to take that road so many times in our lives. Skip this book and spend the money on a tank of gas yourself. This book has no Elvis. 5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Disappointing. By A Customer Last November, I flew into Las Vegas for the first time on a bright, sunny day. I had my nose pressed to the window most of the way, and was in awe of the what lay below. I followed the roads through the desert that led to Vegas and vowed to make the drive myself some day. I couldn't believe my luck when I happened across this book. But, the book left me bored and disappointed. Maybe I was expecting too much, but even the author's reader-friendly prose could not make this an interesting read.

Road trips to Las Vegas are the occasion for this entertaining meditation on the quintessentially American experience of driving across the desert. William Fox, successively exiled from California, Nevada, and New Mexico, has spent more time than most of us driving to Las Vegas--and he has taken notes on three recent trips, his own way of bringing cohesion to the vast and mind-numbing aspects of the freeway. Approaching the most postmodern city on the planet from three directions, he examines the landscape and what we do to it while also trying to figure out who he is, what that means, and the nature of the transformations of land into landscape through art and architecture, landscape design, and advertising. Fox's history of the region, both natural and cultural, highlights the creep of the urban supergrid across the most extensively traveled desert in the world. This is a profoundly personal, even idiosyncratic book about the most public of subjects--living in the postmodern West at the end of the millennium and what the cities, the freeways, the open spaces, and the billboards tell us about ourselves.

In weaving together his reflections on desert, highway, and city environments at the end of the twentieth century, Fox has given us a needed reminder of the extent to which we have commodified western lands. From the Inside Flap Entertaining meditations on Western places--Santa Fe, Los Angeles, Reno, and Las Vegas--and the vast spaces in between. About the Author William L. Fox is a writer and poet currently living in Portland, Oregon. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship, 2002-2003, for studies on the perception of space in the Antarctic and was the National

Science Foundation Visiting Writer to the Antarctic for the 2001-2002 season.