As I write these words in May 2006, construction is soon to begin in lower Manhattan for the World Trade Center Memorial, a monument that will commemorate the destruction of the trade center's twin towers and the deaths of nearly 3,000 people at the hands of al-Qaeda terrorists on September 11, 2001. Everyone agrees there should be a monument, but there has been little consensus as to the specific form the monument should take. What should the monument look like? Should the monument be under or above ground? How much of the original World Trade Center Foundations should be preserved? Should the names of those who perished on 9/11 be incorporated, and, if so, in what order? Should there be a museum, and, if so, what texts, objects, and other representations should it contain? These issues and others have been at the forefront of a great deal of emotional controversy among factions that include survivors, relatives of the deceased, historians, architects, businessmen, politicians, and developers. At stake is the collective memory of the events of 9/11. Behind the struggle over the appearance and content of the monument lie deeper conflicts—which aspects of that event will be remembered, and which forgotten? To what ends (political, commercial, emotional, aesthetic?) shall these memories be used?

Memory involves the selective preservation, construction, and obliteration of ideas about the way things were in the past. A contemporary fascination with memory is rooted in larger cultural phenomena, including postmodern dislocation, nostalgia for an imagined past, millennial angst, and struggles over interpretations of global events (see, for example, Lowenthal 1985; Nora 1989; Schama 1996). The discipline of archaeology is itself one way in which our own society constructs memory for contemporary social and political ends. Archaeology is frequently to be found in the service of nationalist or other political agendas (Bender 1998; Dietler 1998; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998; Trigger 1984). Recently, archaeologists have turned attention to the ways in which past peoples viewed, interpreted, memorialized, utilized, and obliterated their own, more distant pasts.

Memory is closely integrated with place and landscape (Bachelard 1964; Casey 1987; de Certeau 1984; Nora 1989). Landscapes are meaningfully constituted physical and social environments, and meaning is inscribed on landscapes through experience. As humans create, modify, and move through a spatial milieu, the mediation between spatial experience and perception reflexively creates, legitimates, and reinforces social relationships and ideas (see Bourdieu 1977;
Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996). Places, meanings, and memories are intertwined to create a “sense of place” that rests on, and reconstructs, a history of social engagement with the landscape and is thus inextricably bound up with remembrance, and with time (Basso 1996; Feld and Basso 1996). Place might be defined as the intersection of memory and landscape.

The construction of memory frequently leaves material traces, so memory can be accessed archaeologically through the study of monuments and shrines, or burial practices, or successive remodeling events, or life histories of specific artifacts, for example. Memory studies have helped archaeologists to think about “how and why things changed as they did as active processes of adoption and/or rejection of ideas, and not as inevitable outcomes of social or environmental circumstances” (Yoffee 2007: 4). These studies have emerged out of several related strands of theory, all of which share the recognition that the negotiation of human reality is an experiential, relational, and altogether messy business. In this chapter, I review the concept of social memory and summarize current archaeological studies that employ landscapes, monuments, and other aspects of material culture to study the “past in the past.”

Some Ways to Think about Memory: Theory and Method

Most memory studies in archaeology are grounded in the work of Durkheim’s student Maurice Halbwachs (1925, 1992). Halbwachs moved the discussion of memory beyond the Freudian bounds of the individual, arguing that memory is a social phenomenon. Collective memory is historically situated, as people remember or forget the past according to the needs of the present. Halbwachs also recognized the spatial dimension of memory, using the term cadre matériel to refer to the topography, architecture, and ruins that carry meanings about the past.

There are multiple ways to think about the passage of time. Braudel (1969) distinguishes between the longue durée, or the passage of deep social time, and the immediate history of events. Gell (1992) contrasts the linear construction of past, present, and future with a relational perspective that locates time with reference to a particular event. Ingold (1993) explores the ways in which traces of human activity in landscapes link past and present. Following these authors, archaeologists have recognized that memory can involve past, or it can involve more general links to a vague mythological antiquity, often based on the reinterpretation of monuments (Gosden 1994; Gosden and Lock 1998; Thomas 1996).

The poststructuralist concept of citationality can help archaeologists think about how memory is transformed over time. Citationality is derived from Derrida’s (1977) notion of iterability. Derrida’s classic example is a signature—because it has a recognizable form, a signature can be replicated, but it can also be counterfeited. A signature denotes authenticity, but at the same time it sets up the possibility for an inauthentic copy. Judith Butler (1990) applied the concept of citationality to gender theory, developing the idea of performativity, arguing that gender is a performance that cites all previous performances of gender (see also Austin 1962; Butler 1993; Hall 2000). Jones (2001) and Pauketat (2008) have employed these concepts to understand how past meanings were shared and transformed. Jones uses citationality to describe how similarities in design create connections among diverse categories of Bronze Age artifacts. Pauketat (2008) translates citationality as the construction of knowledgeable references to the past, and he contrasts citationality with more general, aesthetic references to antiquity that do not necessarily assume past meanings. Through a process of enchantment (Chapman 2000), citations lead to more citations, until the original meanings are lost or transformed.

Memory is an ongoing process that disguises ruptures, creating the appearance of a seamless social whole. Collective or social memory is often employed to naturalize or legitimate authority (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), or to support a sense of community identity (Halbwachs 1925, 1992). It is often easiest to see the top-down machinations of elite groups using memory to these ends, but memory is also employed in the service of resistance. Multiple and conflicting versions of events can coexist and can be wielded by marginalized genders, classes, ethnicities, or other social groups (Alonso 1988; Burke 1989; Laqueur 2000). Memory coexists with its alter ego, forgetting, as pasts are selectively reconstructed, obliterated, consumed, conquered, and dismantled (Forty and Küchler 1999; Küchler 1993; Mills 2008; Papalexandrou 2003; Pauketat 2008).

Monuments—Nora’s (1989) lieux de mémoire (places of memory)—are conscious statements about what to remember. As such, they are logical foci for archaeological investigations into memory (Ashmore 2002; Thomas 2001). But
memory leaves material traces for archaeologists to interpret. Memory is made through repeated, engaged social practices. Connerton (1989) distinguishes between inscribed memory, involving monuments, texts and representations, and embodied or incorporated memory, encompassing bodily rituals and behavior. Similar distinctions among prescriptive, formulaic, repetitive, and materially visible acts on the one hand and performative, mutable, transitory behavior on the other have been made by Bloch (1985), Sahlin (1985), and Rowlands (1993). It is perhaps most obvious for archaeologists to think about memory in terms of monuments, but incorporated memory leaves material traces as well.

Van Dyke and Alcock (2003: 4–5) subdivide memory’s materiality into several overlapping categories: narratives, representations, objects, ritual behaviors, and places. Where narratives are transmitted through texts or other verbal media, archaeologists have histories against which to contrast the material record. Representations such as rock art may depict ancient mythic events while locating them on the landscape (Bradley 1997; Taçon 1999). Following Kopytoff (1986), objects, including masks, plaques, figures, and other votive items, have life-histories that illuminate both memory and obliteration (R. Joyce 2003; Küchler 1993; Lillios 1999, 2003; Walker 1999). Ritual behaviors are materially visible in mortuary treatments (Chesson 2001; Mizoguchi 1993; Williams 2003), feasting (Hamilakis 1999; Prent 2003), votive deposition (Bradley 1990; Mills 2008), abandonments (Walker 1995), and procession routes (Barrett 1994; Tilley 1994: 173–200). Places can encompass not only stelae, shrines, and buildings but also landscapes, tombs, trees, mountain peaks, and caves (Alcock 2002; Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Bender 1993; Blake 1998; Bradley 1998, 2000; Holtorf 1998; Thomas 2001; Williams 1998).

Places—whether monuments, domestic structures, tombs, or natural features—may be repeatedly inhabited, modified, and imbued with changing meanings. Archaeologists working from diverse perspectives have recognized the potency of place for investigating social transformations across time. Schlanger’s (1992) “persistent places,” Barrett’s (1999) “inhabitation,” Bradley’s (1998) “afterlife of monuments,” and Ashmore’s (2002) “life histories of place” all provide ways in which to think about the intersections of social memory and monuments or other structures. A. Joyce (n.d.) has explicitly adopted a “life histories of place” approach for Monte Stonehenge is perhaps the best-known example of a monument with changing yet related functions and meanings reaching across nearly five millennia (Bender 1998).

Place is a sensual experience, with the body, social identity, and shifting perceptions of society intersecting through daily, lived spatial experiences (Bourdieu 1977). The experiential nature of place provides one starting point to retrieve social memory. A phenomenological approach in archaeology (Gosden 1994; Thomas 1996; Tilley 1994) allows us to think about the ways in which landscapes and built forms were experienced, perceived, and represented by ancient subjects, working from the starting point of a contemporary body in the same space. In my own work (Van Dyke 2003, 2004, 2007), visibility and embodied spatial experiences are key to interpretations of place and landscape among Ancestral Pueblo Chacoan peoples of the North American Southwest.

Bourdieu’s (1977, 1990) recognition that meaning is embodied and transmitted through lived, daily practices is behind the concept of materiality—another jumping-off point from which some archaeologists have addressed memory. Materiality (R. Joyce 2000; Meskell 2004, 2005; Miller 2005) refers to the reciprocal interactions among humans and the material, embedded within a set of cultural relationships. Following Gell (1998) and LaTour (1993, 2005), agency may be extended beyond human actors to animals, buildings, and objects—these “secondary agents” may be perceived as animate and may cause actions with consequences (see, for example, Walker 2008).

Les Lieux de Mémoire (Places of Memory): Recent Archaeological Studies

Over the past decade or so, archaeologists have begun to discuss social memory as one dimension of larger investigations into landscape (e.g., Alcock 1993; Ashmore 2002; Barrett 1999; Zedeño 2000), rock art (Bradley 1997; Taçon 1999), mortuary ritual (Chesson 2001), heirlooms (Joyce 2000; Lillios 1999), and identity (Joyce and Gillespie 2000). A growing body of literature specifically directed toward social memory is currently emerging, much of it centered on monuments and places (Alcock 2002; Bradley 1998, 2002). Recent and forthcoming compilations have been edited by Bradley and Williams (1998), Williams (2003), Van Dyke and Alcock (2003), Yoffee (2007), Mills and Walker (2008), and
diverse methods and theoretical perspectives, but they are united in recognition of the potent role played by material remains in assigning meanings to the past.

In 1998, Richard Bradley and Howard Williams edited an issue of *World Archaeology* entitled “The Past in the Past,” the first collection of studies specifically directed toward the ways archaeological societies viewed time and appropriated more distant pasts. Some of these Old World authors examined the rather benign ways that landscapes are incorporated into memorials of real or imagined past events, some looked at the roles of monuments in identity formation over time, and still others focused on the role of memory in moments of rupture as new orders challenged old.

Bradley followed this edited journal issue with a book on memory in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe entitled *The Past in Prehistoric Societies* (2002). Drawing on Gell (1992) and Connerton (1989), Bradley postulated that past societies likely used both linear and relational time, and both inscribed and incorporated memory practices. He then employed these ideas in a series of case studies. Prehistoric Europeans constructed memory on the landscape through the creation of burial barrows, transformed the past through the reuse of passage graves, and obliterated memory through the destruction of votive objects. Archaeological landscapes are palimpsests—during the Roman and later periods, Bronze Age and earlier sites were repeatedly reinterpreted as societies engaged with the past for their own purposes.

Tombs and burial grounds are particularly potent loci for memory studies. Death and memory are the focus of *Archaeologies of Remembrance*, a recent volume edited by Howard Williams (2003). Mortuary rituals are often complex occasions involving memorialization as well as selective forgetting. As the dead are mourned, memories and identities are created. Tombs tie the living to ancestors and imbue specific places on the landscape with all that this connection entails (McAnany 1998). Bodies and grave goods may be buried—hidden from view and forgotten—while long-term visible markers such as stelae may be erected. Tombs and grave markers can be reinterpreted over time. Authors in Williams’s volume investigate the ways in which past peoples constructed memory through mortuary practices in European prehistoric and historic archaeological contexts, using such material remains as monuments, tombs, grave goods, and bog bodies.

Susan Alcock (2001, 2002) has employed the shifting, conflicting ideologies of factions of Greek (and Roman) society over time. Romans in Greece, for example, appropriated a Bronze Age tholos tomb called the “Treasury of Minyas,” converting it into a shrine to the Roman emperor. This not only helped legitimate the emperor through a direct link to Minyas, a legendary ruler in the local, mythic past, but it also generated community pride in local past grandeur. At the same time, however, the connection between Roman imperial rule and elite families of the past emphasized class distinctions within the local community, making the Romans targets for resistance. This careful consideration of the multiple, conflicting operations of social memory is one of the great strengths of Alcock’s work. In *Archaeologies of the Greek Past* (2002), Alcock expanded her examination of the Roman use of Greek antiquity; she also investigated the appropriation of the Minoan past by Hellenic Cretes and the ways in which Messenian slaves forged a common identity through creation of an imagined, collective past.

Alcock and I brought classicists and anthropological archaeologists together in a series of conference sessions on memory that culminated in *Archaeologies of Memory* (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). We organized case studies in the volume not along disciplinary lines but into literate and prehistoric contexts. This division reflected the more nuanced kinds of analyses undertaken by archaeologists with access to texts, versus those undertaken by prehistorians without such access. Our case studies spanned the globe, from India (Sinopoli 2003), Egypt (Meskell 2003), and Iberia (Lillios 2003), across the Classical world (Papalexandrou 2003; Prent 2003), to the New World (R. Joyce 2003; Pauketat and Alt 2003; Van Dyke 2005). Many of the case studies dealt in some fashion with the reuse or reinterpretation of monumental architecture to promote the interests of elites, as leaders seeking legitimacy created both real and mythic connections with pasts both remembered and imagined.

Other archaeologists similarly began to bring together groups of scholars working on memory issues in diverse archaeological contexts. Classical and anthropological archaeologists in Yoffee’s (2007) volume participated in a graduate seminar at the University of Michigan. These authors examine shifting identities, memories, and landscapes primarily in the ancient Mediterranean world. They use memory as an entry point for understanding social change and power relationships. The authors investigate the
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and at times erased to imbue landscapes with meaning and to further specific social or political ends.

Constructed, social memory is not only employed to bolster continuity—it may also be used to subvert the social order. Barber and Larkin’s (n.d.) forthcoming edited volume emerged out of a 2006 Society for American Archaeology session on this topic. Authors of a series of case studies focus on the roles of memory and tradition during periods of social transformation in ancient New World societies, from the Andes to the U.S. Southwest.

Mills and Walker (2008) have edited a volume on memory, based on an advanced seminar at the School of Advanced Research (SAR) and a subsequent American Anthropological Association conference session. Most of the case studies in this volume deal with New World societies, although Neolithic Britain and sub-Saharan Africa are also represented. Many of the authors in Mills and Walker’s volume explicitly use a practice-based approach, invoking the concepts of materiality and agency to exhume prehistoric memory from the material traces of ritual behaviors and depositional practices, as well as in the construction and obliteration of monuments.

Conclusions: Whither Memory?

Monuments and landscapes are potent material venues through which archaeologists can access social memory in the past. Memory studies can provide archaeologists with an innovative window through which to think about the creation, maintenance, and transformation of power and identity. Because multiple, mutable, competing pasts can coexist, memory encourages us to think about the relationships and negotiations among different social factions. However, “if memory is as pervasive as it is starting to seem, and if, more importantly, it can be used to explain just about anything, is there a danger that it can end up explaining nothing at all?” (Low 2004: 934).

Not all reuse of older sites is intended to create meaningful links with antiquity. For example, Blake (2003) demonstrated that Byzantine reoccupation of Bronze Age rock-cut tombs in Sicily had little to do with referencing the past but, rather, was part of the creation of a forward-looking, pan-Mediterranean identity. As archaeologists enthusiastically search for social memory in the past, we must take care to avoid circular reasoning. We need independent evidence—beyond just the simple reuse of a building, or the discontinuous memorialization or obliteration was intentional and meaningful to the participants. Otherwise, memory risks becoming merely a construct of the archaeologist’s gaze, devoid of any real explanatory power.

As archaeological memory studies begin to mature, scholars need to move beyond the simplistic recognition that the past was referenced in antiquity. Who was referencing the past, and what did they seek to accomplish? How was memory employed by different factions, to different ends? Who commemorated, who obliterated, and why? The contemporary struggles over the World Trade Center Memorial remind us that memories can serve different ends and advance different agendas for multiple social groups. Archaeologists studying social memory should first and foremost keep this question in mind: what does a focus on memory tell us about larger issues—identities, ideologies, power, class—that we would not otherwise know?

References

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