The "Trafalgar Square Conservation Area": Deconstructing Spatial Narratives with/in a Collective Framework

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Abstract:

(Key Terms: Collective Framework, Rhetorical Theory, Trafalgar Square, Spatial Narratives)

This thesis is a rhetorical examination of language as elicited in spatial narratives. In doing so, it examines the various symbols that public spaces employ in order to rhetorically speak to us, move us, and make us act certain ways. More specifically, it addresses Trafalgar Square as a problem space, deconstructing the various spatial narratives leading into and within the square. In deconstructing these narratives, it attempts to find implicit meaning in what is explicitly inscribed into the land, and to examine this meaning alongside the social narrative that its occupants hold. This constructed narrative is explored through three frameworks: that of the physical framework of the square, those spatially enacted frameworks leading into it, and the larger collective framework of the city to which the square contributes. It finds that the frameworks of public space generally work toward establishing and authorizing a unifying ideological connection between the present society and societies of the past. However, these narratives are dependent on individual agents participating in the space’s various frameworks; the meaning of a space is obfuscated by a society’s current participant’s usage of the space. In addition to this obfuscation, it discovers that the past role of a space can obfuscate the present meaning and role of the space in the overall framework, and that the present meaning can in turn obfuscate how individuals relate to and interpret the past.
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THE “TRAfalgar SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA”: DECONSTRUCTING SPATIAL NARRATIVES WITH/IN A COLLECTIVE FRAMEWORK

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

TRAFALGAR SQUARE AS A PROBLEM SPACE

The contribution of land uses to the character and appearance of a conservation area is of importance. This will not only have a direct influence on the building typology or make-up of an area but also on the nature and use of the public spaces and streets. Particular uses may be of historic or national importance and will have dictated the evolution of an area.

—The City of Westminster Trafalgar Square Conservation Area Audit “CHARACTERISTIC LAND USES”

Walking into the public space of Trafalgar Square—what the City of Westminster’s audit calls the “conservation area”—one is immediately confronted with an onslaught of buildings, landmarks, memorials, and thoroughfares. How does the individual as a rhetorical agent make sense of these very different social structures, or navigate through these spatially confined environments? One might enter through the newly formed upper square—an elevated pedestrianized walkway occupied by opportunistic buskers connecting the National Gallery and National Portrait Gallery to the square—and engage in the exciting lively experience of that space. Or one might step into the more casual, albeit no less populated, space of the lower square, reading the various busts, memorials, and plinths, and attempt to construct meaning out of their narratives alongside this lively experience. Eventually, the openness afforded to the space may cause one’s eyes to wander over any of the several iconic architectural structures that visually spill onto the site, such as the enormous Admiralty Arch, or the neoclassical St Martin-in-the-Fields (See Fig 1.1), or the instantly recognizable Elizabeth Tower, part of the Houses of Parliament and home to the Big Ben bell. Nearing the front of the space, there is a panel. On this
panel, three components of the designated framework are officially put forth: a breakdown of its surrounding space, a location within a larger official framework, and a definition of the spaces roles.

**Figure 1.1:** A group of visitors read the Trafalgar Square memorial sign, which outlines the surrounding landscape, details the Queen’s Jubilee Walk through London, and summates the Square’s present role, past role, and commemorative function. St. Martin-in-the-Fields spills onto the site in the background, and is accessible via the newly pedestrianized upper square.

First, the center of this panel locates and situates the individual agent within the landscape of a number of identified buildings and thoroughfares, while others exist unrecognized. In addition to including and excluding various buildings and thoroughfares, the panel outlines the official “Jubilee Walkway route,” pinpointing the location of the individual agent within the larger official framework and inviting him/her to embark on its pathway, which “encircles the centre of London, embracing many historic buildings and views.” Immediately, these two spatial pointers affect one’s engagement of the space—does one take the Queens commemorative walkway, or venture down the highlighted paths to identified architecture, or perhaps consciously ignore these identifiers and wander the city freely? Moreover, as one navigates through these public spaces, is the agent continuously guided or left to his/her own
devices? Finally, the panel defines the roles of the square, first noting its current role as “the centre for national rejoicing and assemblies and rallies of various causes,” second noting its past use of the space, “It is on the site of former Royal Mews and stables dating back to the days of Edward I,” and finally, noting the square’s commemorative purpose, “The square commemorates the famous victory of Admiral Viscount Nelson…The Nelson Column, on top of which is a statue of the Admiral, is one of London’s most famous landmarks.” Thus, the panel assigns meaning with/in the Square in order of its popular social functions, followed by the space’s past history and societal role, and, finally, its commemorative purpose—which emphasizes its role as a “famous landmark” rather than a memorialization.

Figure 1.2, 1.3: The Memorial sign maps the surrounding landscape, helping to direct the viewer’s attention to areas of the landscape they find strategically beneficial to the social collective framework (each of which is confronted in my project)
Is there really such a thing as a locatable collective framework of key moments, people, and places that frame a nation’s narrative? Regardless if it exists, there is definitely a physical embodiment in public space which functions as a construction of this mental framework. This rhetorical construction is experienced through a sociospatial process along a nexus of signifiers, which influence an individual agent’s engagement with/in spatial narratives.

The very notion of a system of signifiers directing the individual agent’s attention toward certain narratives is rooted in rhetorical theory, specifically the work of Kenneth Burke in his
two essays, “Literature as Equipment for Living” and “Terministic Screens”. In the former, he examines and categorizes everyday language (proverbs), ultimately finding that man, the symbol-using agent, utilizes language as “strategies” that are “for dealing with situations” (297). Burke makes clear that his aim is “to take literature out of its separate bin and give it a place in a general ‘sociological’ picture” (296). Examining language as employed in societies, Burke finds that certain terminologies are not simply a reflection of reality, but also a selection and therefore deflection, “directing the attention” toward this field and, consequentially, away from that one (“Terministic Screens” 45). Importantly, how one’s attention is directed also determines how one observes everything that follows: “Many of the ‘observations’ are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made” (46). Thus, one’s experience with any form of textuality is directed by the terminology, or rhetoric, being employed\(^1\). Because of this fact, what we perceive as “reality” is “but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms” (46). In order to ensure that individuals read these spaces according to their screens, spaces employ rhetorical “tautologies” throughout their landscape: “insofar as an entire structure is infused by a single generating principle, this principle will be tautologically or repetitively implicit in all the parts” (55).

Derived out of Burke’s work on language, this project is a rhetorical examination of language as elicited in spatial narratives. More specifically, this project addresses Trafalgar Square as a “terministic screen” which employs a nationalistic “tautology” through repeated symbols and narratives of the Royal Monarchy and military victory and sacrifice, which is then directed to an inclusion of the common people engaging the space. It examines how these

\(^1\) Burke uses religious rhetoric for two examples: “Believe, that you may understand” is a strategy that asks the reader to first believe (have faith) in order to understand (have reason). If one believes, then one may understand. Or the Bible’s use of the term “God” in the first sentence, which is a strategy that solves the rhetorically situated need to have God be the implicated, observed cause: “[F]rom this initial move, many implications ‘necessarily’ follow” (47).
narratives rhetorically speak to us, move us, and make us act a certain way when engaging their spaces. My project, then, is quintessentially rhetorical, serving as a discussion of how terministic screens work to make us complicit. In doing so, it is also an attempt to build theory that might aid viewers in resisting the multitude of narratives that are spatially enacted onto them in the public realm.

In Burkean fashion, the definitions used as this project's operational terms need first be examined, as procured from The Oxford English Dictionary: “space” is defined as an “extent or area sufficient for a purpose, action, etc.; room to contain or do something,” while the “memorial” “preserves the memory of a person or thing; often applied to an object set up to commemorate an event or a person” and the “monument” exists as an incarnation of the aforementioned effort to commemorate, the physicality (the “object”) of the memorial: “a statue, building, or other structure erected to commemorate a famous or notable person or event”. Thus, the memorialization of moments, people, and places is located in the physical embodiments of monuments, which exist in pre-determined memorial spaces.

However, Greg Dickinson, Brian Ott, and Eric Aoki argue that memorials should be read as “diffuse texts,” which are not confined to space or time, as the definitions suggest, but “part of the texture of the larger landscape.” They continue: “the experience…does not begin at their entrances. Visitors must travel to these sites, which are often surrounded by other historical or tourist sites…in addition to being part of a larger physical landscape, historical and cultural sites are also part of a larger cognitive landscape” (29). In reading sociocultural sites such as monuments as physical and cognitive landscapes, they find that “the experiences and meaning of the larger landscape spill over into specific sites” (29). This is a unique challenge—in thinking of these memorials as terministic screens, how do spaces which spill and are spilled onto by other
landscapes coalesce to create meaning? Moreover, if physical landscapes continue to exist in the
dreamscape as cognitive landscapes, how is one’s attention directed elsewhere as one leaves one
space and enters another? Clearly, the meaning of these spatial screens help to shape and are
shaped by their modes of access and physical surroundings. The first question, then, is who
visualizes and manages these spaces, and are their locations really rhetorically situated in order
for the individual agent to be able to make—and not make—certain spatial connections, and
interact with surroundings in a certain way? Perhaps this process is organic, but, then again,
perhaps it is socially, politically, or nationally suspect. It certainly warrants a closer reading.

Dr. Kirk Savage points to the 19th century as the starting point for the physical
construction of memory, and with it, the rhetorically directed inscription of suspect narratives
into architecture, noting an “increasing tendency in the 19th century to construct memory in
physical monuments—to inscribe it on the landscape itself,” was “symptomatic of an increasing
anxiety about memory left to its own unseen devices” (qtd. in Dresser 186). Through ingraining
history into public space(s), the dominating collective memory practice of society hinges its
shared narrative onto physical landscapes. The application of a narrative onto physical space
posits several physical constraints and limitations, especially in London, where an entire nation’s
narrative is inscribed into the locality of the capital. This brings forth the question: why force a
collective narrative, something members of society look to for collective meaning and identity,
onto something as dynamic and open-ended as social space? The complexity of the issue is
enormous, but one factor seems to be that history as inscribed onto social architecture carries an
inherent quality of authenticity—even when no such authenticity exists. Dwyer and Alderman
discuss the problem of authenticity: “they often communicate seemingly authentic and
unproblematic representations of history. In reality, authenticity is not an inherent quality or
condition, but a notion open to social control, negotiation, and contestation.” (“Memorial landscapes” 168).

Such “social control,” in the case of London’s Trafalgar Square, comes in the form of The Greater London Authority (The GLA) and City of Westminster coauthorship of the area. The GLA is the administrative authority over all of Greater London, consisting of the directly elected Mayor and a 25-member London Assembly, who together manage the Square. Similarly—yet distinctly separate—the City of Westminster manages the space surrounding and leading up to it. Together, these administrative bodies are tasked with deciding what is recognized as part of London’s official and intended narrative and what is not, as is clear in the official website of the GLA, which defines its role as “the strategic authority for London,” whose goal is to “contribute to the Mayor’s strategic objectives” through its four corporate roles: “spending money wisely,” “maintaining high standards,” “governing the organization,” and “electing the Mayor and Assembly.” This process of selection necessarily includes certain individual/group pasts, or aspects of it, as it excludes others; memorial spaces are clearly not organic experiences. In identifying which social memories are to be collectively recognized, the GLA and City of Westminster create a memory framework, which helps to establish the City narrative. Thus, any collectively practiced and shared social narrative is a construction that warrants deconstruction. Through this process, the agent can locate what particular reading of the past is being propagated. Importantly, s/he can also reflect on what is being caused through this relationship with the past, which is created by, and located in, the constantly shifting present moment. If the process of reading in the present necessitates—or at least necessarily affects—a particular reading and relationship to the past, then the GLA’s strategic treatment of Trafalgar Square as a part of the collective whole of rhetorical bodies—all of which contribute in a

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2 Whenever “city” is capitalized, it is alluding to the City of London.
meaningful way to a particular reading of London’s past—is to be expected, especially concerning points of the past which are problematic to the City of London’s ideals and values, as well as its self-image.

My rhetorical engagement with the public spaces (1) leading up to, (2) surrounding, and, (3) within the confines of Trafalgar Square lead me to believe that the constraints of social space—chiefly, the limited available area to construct and connect meaning to a larger framework—are turned into narrative advantages. This is done by rhetorically constructing an all-encompassing umbrella framework throughout public space that encourages spatial associations and connections. As space is constructed, a collective framework which embraces the shared narrative emerges, causing a rhetorical reading of historic individual agents as proponents of a socially shared narrative rather than as individuals, whose stories contribute to it. This is done through the memorialization of various accomplishments and occurrences, which read and hierarchize all past events—and, consequentially, those men and women involved in said events, whether the individual, a subgroup, larger body, or entire nation—according to the event’s (and its participants) contribution to the collective body.

Through generalizing various particular roles and directing the attention toward the frameworks those roles contribute to, various public inscriptions modulate the reading of past narratives, molding separated acts back into the indistinguishable collective framework that real memory once provided. This occurs even when particular acts in the framework were not so all-encompassing, or as relevant to the real memory practices of that particular society. The correlation of events in the collective framework might actually provide causation to the current narrative if it were not for the framework’s focus, which tends to champion the narrative being proposed. Because of this Burkean directing of attention, it is difficult to locate the inner-
workings of a city’s narrative and make his/her own judgments about meaning and meaning makers. James E. Young discusses how monuments and memorials tend to lack descriptive qualities that may aid the agent in recalling or understanding past events: “Monuments may not remember events so much as bury them altogether beneath layers of national myth and explanation” (qtd. in Nicoletti 53). In short, if the memorial space is the ideal public platform to inscribe vague rhetoric that champions shared narratives, it should come as no surprise that London, the capital of England, is filled with them, helping to construct a celebratory national narrative.

Thus, a city’s administrative authority works to tie the proposed values, ideals, and identities shared by a collective framework into the specific, finite experiences of the individual as engaged with/in societal structures. Because a society’s narrative of its past does not exist as a finite, locatable thing, but instead as a continual process of meaning-making within the individual, it remains vulnerable to rhetorical construction, which attempts to tie the larger,
constructed framework into the everyday practices of individual members. In this process, individual memory is not willfully or negligibly forgotten by the individual or attacked by the framework—but it is affected by it, becoming increasingly familiar with its habitat and its inclinations. Those inclinations usually have two primary tendencies: first, to only include events and persons which can be utilized toward the structuring of an all-embracing equivocal collective framework, and second, to focus on that collective framework rather than the particular contributor being memorialized or commemorated. Such tendencies and inclinations of the framework are difficult to identify and locate, and being cognizant of a framework at all is challenging. This is due to the process of institutionalized awe—any member of any society, regardless if one is visiting the particular society and framework or living within it, has engaged in this process since their inception into society, typically at birth. In his essay, “Mediated Memory: The Language of Memorial Spaces,” L.J. Nicoletti points to this process, noting that from youth, members of a society are given the collective narrative on-site in memorial spaces, introducing from an early age the components of the particular framework, and consequentially, the components of their collective memory and meaning. Notably, this process typically excludes counter narratives or anterior memory, as Nicoletti professes: “we are raised to respect and trust the rhetoric of monuments and to embrace their stories as our own…But in the face of awe-inspiring memorial architecture, and given the absence of an on-site counter narrative, who can remember?” (53) Indeed, who can remember? Perhaps the more telling question would be who has the duty to remember—the individual or the society? In the individual’s voluntary engagement with/in collective frameworks, s/he doesn’t practice memory, but embraces the representation of memory practice. Constructing a collective framework is an ambitious project set forth by a society, especially one as culturally diverse as London; the dominating narrative is
no more my past, or his past, or her past, than that of the dominated. And yet, it inevitably becomes mine. This is a result of a meaning-making process—a sociospatial construction which is equally dependent on the existence of collective frameworks and the individual agent’s voluntary engagement with/in them. Thus, it is important to locate this collective framework in order to more soundly understand how meaning is conceptualized, constructed, consumed, and redistributed.

**COLLECTIVE MEMORY, FRAMEWORKS, AND MEANING**

Situated within the context of collective memory, memorials, and public space, Trafalgar Square exists as a rhetorically rich process of engagement that inevitably ties together British national values in the close confines of the City of London. This is done primarily through its location and rhetorically purposed openness. Centered within the heart of London, Trafalgar Square provides visual access to a number of cultural and historical areas of importance. While venturing within these spaces, a viewer’s visual and physical points of access are more rhetorically constructed than they might realize, as the epigraph, part of the 2003 City of Westminster Department of Planning and City Development conservation audit for the area of Trafalgar Square, suggests. Of course, this can only occur because past is a process rather than a prologue; the past does not rest safely in its perceived place within the individual’s memory, but exists as a mode of thought, a process, which takes its cues from present circumstances. Present rhetorical cues in the form of physical landscaping instruct not only what the individual agent knows, but how s/he knows it, occupying the various public spaces in which traffic is frequent and public functions are many. Thus, the past is in a constant process of transformation in accordance with the current dominating narrative and ruling class of a particular society. In his 1950 posthumous book, *The Collective Memory*, Maurice Halbwachs posits that personal and
collective memories are shaped by the processes of reconstruction, which occur in the mind, and yet are dependent on collective frameworks—which occur, or are encountered, in society:

The collective frameworks of memory are not constructed after the fact by the combination of individual recollections; nor are they empty forms where recollections coming from elsewhere would insert themselves. Collective frameworks are, to the contrary, precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society (Halbwachs 40).

Halbwachs makes important theoretical claims here. First, he asserts that collective frameworks—initiators of what and how we collectively remember—are neither a combination of various individual personal memories, nor a haven for memory that gains meaning through interaction and contribution. Instead, Halbwachs calls on a “collective framework” found in society, an “instrument” which instructs “collective memory” through constructing “the predominant thoughts of society.” Halbwachs’s focus lies not in denouncing those in charge of societies for manipulating memory, but rather, in delineating how the memory process, which constructs the beliefs about one’s past, becomes dependent on this process of collective construction. This occurs as one comes in contact with a society and its frameworks:

“[M]emories are repetitions, because they are successively engaged in very different systems of notions, at different periods of our lives, they have lost the form and appearance they once had…” (47). As this process is repeated, one’s personal memory and identity is not forgotten or even supplanted by a society’s collective memory, but is fundamentally changed in scope. This causes the individual to associate his/her primary role in society to the collective memory, becoming a contributor who recalls and remembers according to the framework, rather than an
individual who sustains the particulars of one’s unique individual narrative; the latter may actually allow meaning-making to occur via real memory practice.

What does this say about a city with monuments and memorials on every corner, such as London and the specific area of Trafalgar Square—that its past, or the selected framework of its past, is more suspect than others? Not necessarily, but it does give an indication of how intricately woven and rhetorically complex a city’s perception and performance of its past is. Of course, this perception and performance relies on the individual’s embrace of frameworks, in the broadest sense: “[T]he individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory” (ital. added, 47). Thus, while the collective memory process is necessarily reliant on these frameworks, the individual’s willful occupation and engagement with/in them makes each individual partly responsible for social dependence on overarching frameworks of meaning.

This does not just occur; the individual’s dependence, reliance, and placed trust in frameworks of meaning reveals just as much about the individual as it does about society and its frameworks—especially in the 21st century, where technology invades the scene through a variety of portable smart devices. Fueling this phenomenon is The Cloud, the UK’s recently re-released free public WiFi network, which has quadrupled its network to extend over the entire area of London, allowing individuals to explore the nexus of paths and link themselves to larger City and national narratives with the aid of hypertext and the internet.

SITES OF MEMORY: MEMORY-MAKING THROUGH THE PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL REALM
In French historian Pierre Nora’s *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire*, Nora posits that memory is no longer exercised in the everyday experience because it has been confined to fixed sites of memory practice: “there are sites, lieux de memoire, in which a residual sense of continuity remains. Lieux de memoire exist because there are no longer any milieu de memoire, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience.” (Nora 1). First, it need be understood that lieux is not solely the “memorial space”—it includes archives, anniversaries, festivals, parades, celebrations, eulogies, authentic documents, etc. As it pertains to social function, a move from milieu to lieux de memoire marks a fundamental shift in the collective memory processes of a society, and Nora provides justification for this claim through the careful deconstruction of French history and historiography, developing the view that holds real memory, an open process, and history, a closed past, as distinctly separate ideas: “Memory is life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution, subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting…History is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer” (3). This is always true, though in current society it is not always considered. In past societies containing milieu de memoire, the practice of collective memory was a shared process, an internalized sequential connecting of past events and present existence. Thus, the individual considered the past and overarching history of a society to be part of his/her past, an integral part of his/her present meaning and role in the current society—as opposed to the severed and separated events which one must reconstruct today, as Nora contests, “[in real memory] we find an integrated, dictatorial memory…a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors to the indifferentiated time of heroes origins and myth” (ital. added 3). Through directly linking the individual, his/her ancestors, and an “indifferentiated time of heroes origins and myth,” the social practice of real
memory (*milieu de memoire*) prevented the fragmentation of a social narrative—and more importantly, the perceived fragmentation of a social memory by its individual members.

However, real memory is still selective, still “integrated,” still “dictatorial,” and, thus, still a framework: “[Memory] only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic” (3). In this sense, the collective, internal practices of real memory reveal themselves to be biased to the individual, subgroup, or entire society that practices them. Conversely, history “belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority… Memory is always suspect in the eyes of history, whose true mission is to demolish it, to repress it. History divests the lived past of its legitimacy” (3). History’s mission is problematic for societies, because in its righteous seeking of truth it disrupts the delicate inner workings of the *milieu de memoire*, exposing its inherent subjectivity through revelations made possible by historiography—“Historiography begins when history sets itself the task of uncovering that in itself which is not history, of showing itself to be the victim of memory and seeking *to free itself from memory’s grip*” (5). Replacing real memory with what Nora calls “a generalized critical history,” history inadvertently disrupts social meaning by stripping societies and/or subgroups of their real memories, leaving in their wake a now disjointed past-present connection (5). It is for this reason—to construct a real memory for a particular society out of its overarching history—that the practice of memory, the *milieu de memoire*, has been constrained to confined sites, *lieux de memoire*.

The historians embrace of historiography, which has worked to separate history from memory—“to free itself [history] from memory’s grip”—has caused conflicting outcomes for modern societies. As truths emerge which conflict with currently held social beliefs, members of

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3 Nora also questions history’s “righteousness” for “truth,” positing that it might possess similar prejudices for similar social reasons.
society are confronted with the prejudices of “real memory” practices, and left with a massive
general history as their only reserve of cultural memory to make meaning out of. Thus, the
internal, naturally occurring collective practice of “memory” is relocated, resituated, and
redefined in the external, constructed collective practices in “memory sites.” Memory sites, then,
are the holders of memory—“Places, lieux de memoire, become important even as the vast fund
of memories among which we used to live on terms of intimacy has been depleted…[lieux de
memoire] are fundamentally vestiges, the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative
consciousness that survives a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it” (6).
Thus, the removal of a society’s “cult of continuity,” that is, “the confident assumption of
knowing to whom and to what we owe our existence” fundamentally changes a society’s
interpretation of, relation to, and role within the history of that society (7).

In addition to making current meaning out of a now disjointed past history, a given
society now also has to deal with the disturbing idea that eventually, the “real memory” of a
particular time period in society will be washed away by the temporal effects of generalized
history. In order to deal with this, modern societies have sought to capture and confine real
memories, as is evident in the embrace of archiving (Nora’s “archive-memory”), researching
one’s own individual histories (“duty-memory”), and various attempts to re-coagulate past
heritage narratives with the larger history of civilized society (“distance-memory”). Nora’s
exploration of these attempts points to a collective anxiety inherent in modern society: how can a
given society’s real memory exist unperturbed, long after one is gone, in the wake of history’s
impending supersession? Lieux de memoire is modern society’s answer. Unfortunately, it is the
wrong one. Or rather, it has been handled poorly; the modern form of real memory adapts to the
presence of history by recording everything: “Modern memory is, above all, archival. It relies

entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image.” (8). Thus, individuals have become acquainted to roles which alleviate the collective anxiety about real memory’s disappearance through history by recording *everything*. This new role doesn’t relegate memory back to its original role, but rather, dumps it into archives, in case it need be recovered. The issue with this continued depository memory practice is that it makes the notion of recovery increasingly difficult and altogether unrealistic. Thus, what was once a shared but internal process of meaning-making between the past and present *through memory* has become an external process of writing and archiving.

This process could still prove to be a meaningful one for memory synchronization, but with the help of technology and mass media—which has traversed the process into tape recording, video recording, and, in 2014, the always-accessible recording by cell phone—it has become an empty process of record and discard, without any actual practice of memory taking place, whence Nora’s testament, “Its new vocation is to record; delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering” (9). As individuals repeat the process of record and discard, “delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering,” they do very little for their real memory, as not only are they neglecting the productive aspect of this real memory process—that is, the *remembering*—but they are placing the duty of delegation in the hands of fate—or more accurately, the hands of whoever has access to the archive, now and forevermore. As historiography has uncovered its faults and technology has diminished its productive qualities, real memory practice, the *milieu de memoire*, has been supplanted by memory sites, *lieux de memoire*, which attempt to reestablish a collective identity through picking and choosing the aspects of a society’s severed history that best represents the current social ideology. This helps a society reconstruct a deconstructed past, but also places the new memory process, the
constructed site of the *lieux*, in a position to be readily shaped by whatever dominating narrative emerges in a changing society.

**FUTURE REVELATIONS OF THE PAST: CONSIDERING CONTEXTS OF MEMORY**

Memorialized individuals and events often contain controversial narratives which complicate the relationship between current memory practices in the *lieux*, the past practices of the space, and the memorialized individual or events overall contribution in establishing the current dominating narrative. However, is this complication of memory practices bringing history and memory together or further pulling them apart? How does the existence of controversial narratives in public space affect the practices that *have been* established or *will be* established in the space of *lieux*?

In Madge Dresser’s examination of statues relating to slavery in London, she embarks on a quest of charting rhetorically charged, politically suspect presences in monuments, finding a wealth of statues that, in fact, do not serve the current memory practices held within the collective framework of London. In rhetorically deconstructing memorials and monuments, she notes that it is imperative to consider, “the particular context in which each specific public monument was conceived, sponsored, and placed on view” (Dresser 164). Similar to the historiographical efforts of Nora’s “generalized history,” Dresser’s emphasis on the context in which various narratives came into the framework underlines an attempt to delineate history and memory, to analyze the effects of history on local memory inscription—as Nora poignantly puts it, “historiography sows doubt; it runs the blade of a knife between the heartwood of memory and the bark of history” (Nora 5). At the same time, Dresser acknowledges that “[A]udiences and associations change,” and that statues “live” and “die” in the current memory practices according
to the current context of memory, or collective framework: “the resurrection of ‘dead’ statues into living popular memory is dependent on the specific historical and political context” (Dresser 164). In other words, the existence of “dead statues” in public space does not demand their current existence in “living popular memory”—though it does mean they have played some contextual role in the “living popular memory” of past inhabitants of a given society. In this way, their prolonged existence helps to demand a reading of their context, which links the memory practices of a society, and reveals much about its history.

In Dresser’s own case, she discovers that several proposals for memorializing the abolition of slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries were continuously rejected—such as the raw, honest depiction of a slave being whipped—in favor of commemorative statues of figures who were technically philanthropists for the City, but in fact more regularly operated as transatlantic slave owners, as Dresser notes, “Monuments conveying the image of a benign City, liberal in its sentiments and fond of freedom, were much preferable amongst the London elite…Commemorative statues were a way of grooming the image of the City itself” (168). Revealing a past history of the memory practices of a society benefiting from slavery, Dresser details the controversial lives and consequential commemorations of twelve men privately funded but publicly sculpted, finding that all twelve figures are linked back to slavery either through hands-on slave trading or financially. She details London’s past “culture of silence,” finding that the memory practices of society helped to establish and be established by a self-sanitized, or rather, self-sanitizing society: “The way these men were memorialized contributed to a culture of silence around the City’s collusion with slavery…Their representations convey a sanitized self-image which influenced the nation’s notion of itself” (169). The context in which they were created was the driving force in their inclusion in the public space of the lieux and the
memory practices that transpired. Yet they are not part of the current memory practices. Thus, they have grown into part of the landscape, part of the landmark, part of the history of memory practices and various narratives that have dominated society, but they are not part of the current framework of memory because they are not accommodating to the current dominating narrative.

Dresser considers the statue of Edward Colston, who, it was revealed in the 1990s, earned majority of his money through slave trade. Upon this conviction, many vandalized his statue in protest, while others furiously worked to get it cleaned and eventually protected. The fact that the public has debated and fought on both sides of a slave owner’s legacy suggests that “living” memory is not univocal, and the “dead” statues that once “influenced the nation’s notion of itself,” representing an entire framework, continue to carry meaning in a variety of ways for a variety of people in the current collective framework of meaning. Thus, while the statue may be “dead,” and the individual narrative may be forgotten by certain audiences, the continually changing context(s) of society insure its physical embodiment remains a part of the memory framework, as James E. Young explains in The Texture of Memory: “Once created, memorials take on lives of their own…New generations visit memorials under new circumstances and invest them with new meanings” (3). As a memorial or monument continues to exist through time, it is engaged by new generations under new circumstances, and takes on the various new meanings that members attribute to it, hence why Colston’s statue is considered an important part of London and its history—because in his memorialized new life, he carries different meanings to different audiences. A statue that was conceived to bury the prejudiced social practices of the current society, one that “generally marginalized the experience of enslaved Africans in favour of a self-congratulatory and nationally defensive political agenda” now reminds audiences of a controversial history, and reveals the suspect memory practices of London’s past society (164).
Dresser stresses that we must consider “how such statues and memorials have been received” as well as “what impact they have had on the public consciousness” (165). Some may view its existence as a continuation of a “culture of silence around the City’s collusion with slavery,” but others may note that the “culture of silence” has long since disappeared, and the statues prolonged existence in public space now stands as a testimony to the progress and evolution of that space, the memory practices that were held there, and London’s overall collective means of sustenance (169).

Alternatively, one may witness the current memory practices being held and note a contrast from the memory practices of its past—the historiography of memory, so to speak. As society progresses, memorials live on, reminding changing audiences of the temporal progression of local memory, history, and memory history. They come to embody multiple meanings, functioning as Barthes “endless signifiers,” that signify a multiplicity of narratives, each one appearing uniquely different according to the individual’s background of experiences. This process is made easier by smart devices, which allow for a seemingly endless amount of signifiers to enter into the physical embodiment through interconnected hypertext, links, and media. In the space of Trafalgar Square—a main cog in London’s collective framework, due to its central location around traffic routes and highly populated public spaces—certain memory practices invoke a diversified pool of audience members: according to the GLA Trafalgar Square events page, eight of its ten scheduled events for 2014 are held for minorities. Yet this same framework houses two highly controversial proponents of imperialism. What, then, is the current memory practice of the square outside of those events; do minorities maintain a part of the collective framework whole, as represented in the physical framework? Or is their “part” a temporal occupancy of a finite space—one given to them as a result of the history of past
memory practices held in the space? The collective framework leading into the Square presents a plethora of emblems, figures, and plaques emphasizing an interconnectedness between the Royal Monarch, the government, and the various individuals of the collective society, yet neglects to acknowledge minorities who have suffered from London’s past collusion, emphasizing the benevolence of a nation rather than the past controversies of its capital.

CHAPTER 2: LOCATING, IDENTIFYING, AND EXPLORING THE OVERARCHING COLLECTIVE FRAMEWORK OF THE AREA

“WITHIN THE BROADER CULTURAL LANDSCAPE”: THE CHARING CROSS TRAFFIC JUNCTION

The conservation area [of Trafalgar Square] extends to the north, east and south to include a number of areas of distinct character

—The City of Westminster Trafalgar Square Conservation Audit “Surrounding Areas”

Recognizing a memorial sites surrounding space as a key contributor to the experience within the space allows one to analyze the physical construction around the monument as *mental construction*. As the addition and subtraction of certain roads and buildings shape our accessibility, they also shape our observations—*what* and *how* we see on our way *to* and *from* the space within one’s *available routes and modes of transportation*. Mapping within the city and within memorial sites help viewers to anticipate and navigate a visual consumption of their surroundings. Establishing connections between sites is one way that viewers read their sociospatial landmarks. In the close-quartered urban setting of London, or as the City of London identifies it, “The Square Mile,” a wealth of commemorative memorials, monuments, and monumental buildings invade (each other’s) public space along these routes, adding to the
multiplicity of “new meanings” that “new generations” discover in memorials and the public spaces with/in which they exist.

However, the “new meanings” that can be made amidst this wealth of public inscription is rhetorically measured and, on the base level, limited. Professors Maoz Azaryahu and Kenneth E. Foote introduce this concept as “Poetics of Presentation”: “how historical stories and the temporal sequences that underlie them are arranged and configured in space” (ital. added, 179-180). This is clear in London’s landscape, where the individual’s field of vision is directed towards certain “historical stories” and “temporal sequences” that uphold British national values, while simultaneously being directed away from others that might damage this reputation.

However, this association between national values and local landscape is not unique to Britain, as the authors assert that “cultural productions, whatever their ideological suppositions, take
advantage of the common perception of history as being an intrinsic quality of the local landscape” (ital. added, 179). Thus, the interpretation and embrace of spatial stories and sequences as part of an “intrinsic quality of the local landscape”—rather than a quality that is shaped by its administrative bodies—marks an ongoing conception of space as an authoritative, authentic, unifying narrative. This is the offspring of acquainting “history” and “the local landscape” as two members of an intrinsically grown, organically formed relationship. In reality, they are “cultural productions of the past” (ital. added, 179). Thus, while the “Poetics of Presentation” really is nothing more than how “stories” and “sequences” “are arranged and configured in space,” the concept traces back to and underlines “the ways in which relationships of political and social power influence the representation of historical events in public spaces and historical shrines” (179). Landscape’s ability to appear authentic, or, rather, the awareness and use of this quality by “relationships of political and social power” spawns “cultural productions of the past” in the present, which “employ the agency of display to create an interpretive interface that mediates and thereby transforms that which is shown into a vision of history” (179).

This “interpretive interface” is unpacked further by Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki as “experiential landscapes,” as they highlight landscapes ability not simply to appear authentic, but to create “authentic” narratives: “Experiential landscapes invite visitors to assume (to occupy) particular subject positions” which, in turn, “literally shape perceptions; that is, they entail certain ways of looking and exclude others” (30). Thus, while a polyvocal perspective does exist, the constructed paths surrounding the square neglect to establish or support them en route to the square, deemphasizing their inclusion and role in the framework. While smart devices can help individuals link together narratives of a society as placed in public space, they cannot unpack or
link together narratives that are completely neglected. One might encounter Trafalgar Square on one of the eight minority festival days—in such a situation, the current memory practices clearly speak towards a polyvocal production and use of space. What, then, is one to make of the other 357 days of the year? Festivals are fleeting, and generally include a specific audience—yes they are “memory sites”—part of Nora’s lieux de memoire—but their ephemeral quality does little to insure their inclusion in the framework. Rather than embody multiple perspectives, the paths leading to the square seem to propagate a limited amount of contexts, giving the space a handful of intended meanings from which the individual can identify with. In essence, this nexus of symbols invoke a quintessentially grand British narrative, land marking the historically rich space and memorializing past events, people, and places that emphasize its location as the home of the Royal Monarchy and all of its sacred traditions.

Figure 2.2: As cars, buses, taxis, and walkers venture through the Charing Cross traffic junction, they are brought to the front and center of Trafalgar Square.
While London is wonderfully diverse, its history isn’t. Land marking and memorializing the actual histories of its minorities and subgroups runs the risk of acknowledging past collusion, which does not work well with Trafalgar Square’s epideictic functions, such as celebrating a diversity of holidays, London’s magnificent art collection in the National Portrait Gallery and National Gallery, and the various royal rituals that take place through it and/or are housed within it. In what ways can (and do) the GLA and the City of Westminster construct and propagate a particular reading and ideological association of the “conservation area” of Trafalgar Square in order to combat or cancel out readings of the space that might undermine its traditional available narratives? It is toward locating, identifying, and deconstructing these processes as they come to fruition in the surrounding of the square—locating and connecting ideologies—and within the square—building onto an unofficial, established connection of ideologies, or a ‘collective framework’ within the square—that this project situates itself.

Public commemoration is not simply about determining the appropriateness of remembering the past in a certain way; it also involves social negotiation and struggle over *where* best to emplace that within the broader cultural landscape (Dwyer and Alderman 168).

As Dwyer and Alderman suggest, the rhetorical consideration of memorial space’s “broader cultural landscape” i.e. its location, points of access, and surrounding elements, is not unique to academic studies, my project, or this Square, but rather, is a key proponent in the formulation of any memorial space. Stressing the importance of Trafalgar Square as an open space linking “a number of areas of distinct character,” The City of Westminster’s conservation audit cites bylaws which ensure the area’s many connecting spatial views are protected from obstruction. What areas that it refers to as “north, east, and south” are to be considered as part of
the “conservation area”—and why? Such consideration begins with the Charing Cross traffic junction, which is located directly in front of the square and brings constant traffic in through the joining of three major thoroughfares, as identified by the Trafalgar Square panel (see Fig 2.1). Behind the equestrian statue of Charles I—the first equestrian statue of its kind in England, sitting at the location of the original Charing Cross station, with its own plaque—lies an additional plaque laid by the Greater London Authority which designates the spot as the official and literal “center of London”: “On the site now occupied by the statue of King Charles I was erected the original Queen Eleanor’s Cross, a replica of which stands in front of Charing Cross station. Mileages from London are measured from the site of the original cross”.

Bringing the public space of Trafalgar Square into the attention of the public eye through its continuous flow of traffic, the iconic Charing Cross junction serves the public space of Trafalgar Square by connecting other important public spaces, most notably The Strand, Whitehall, and The Mall. In terms of connecting spaces and routes, it is these three thoroughfares that most actively contribute to the meaning held in the “conservation area” of Trafalgar Square. Saint Martin’s Place, Cockspur Street, and Northumberland Avenue notably provide additional pedestrian and traffic access into the area, but the Trafalgar Square panel only recognizes Northumberland Avenue in addition to the three main connecting roads (see Fig. 2.1). The City of Westminster’s audit echoes this notion, placing emphasis on these three roads as “main thoroughfares” which the Square links: “At the convergence of some of London’s main thoroughfares it links The Mall with both Whitehall and the Strand.” This appreciation for and protection of connecting spaces is not just for practicing ritualistic ties, such as “providing the Royal Ceremonial Route from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey,” but also for its
connections to Greater London, which cannot and should not be overstated, as the audit continues: “…and Parliament, and to St. Paul’s and the City of London respectively.”

**Figure 2.3:** This chart, part of the City of Westminster Conservation Audit, is a ‘Hierarchy of Streets and Space’, with orange highlighting the “Primary Route or Space,” green highlighting “Secondary” and yellow highlighting “Intimate,” showing just how rhetorically measured social space is to the City’s cultural and historical meaning.

The audit provides a visual chart for these claims in its “Hierarchy of Streets and Space” chart (see Fig. 2.3 above), showing clear rhetorical measurement in color coding the connecting roads in order of “Primary Route or Space,” “Secondary,” and “Intimate.” The chart shows how important the Square is to the collective framework, not only in its outline of primary routes to the square—which gives a visualization of the length of the Strand, key in its role of connecting Greater London to The City of Westminster—but in making clear how vast and visually open the “conservation area” of Trafalgar Square really is. This openness is crucial to the meaning of the space, helping to establish a visually appealing central hub from which individuals can embark on or take a break from the Royal Monarchy and nationalistic narratives which penetrate ostensibly any experience that can be derived out of these spaces. Rather than constructing a series of open signifiers from which a diversity of people could enter into the framework, these routes provide continuous signifieds of a royal, quintessentially British narrative. Equipped with
a smart device, the individual may be able to derive current memory practices out of space, but is no less neglected to be included in any meaningful way in the repetition of British self-congratulatory signifieds. This doesn’t necessarily force minorities out of a framework, but it does situate any group’s participation in the framework as one that puts the country and the Queen first and the particulars of the individual second—or, as often occurs in the square, not at all. Individual subgroups have their temporal events, and the collective framework welcomes these types of divergences from the norm. But the fact remains that the norm is not as concerned with unifying various narratives to each other as it is concerned with placing these now-unified narratives into a framework which stands under, bows down to, and celebrates its role under the Monarchy and the nation.

**THE STRAND: A LINK TO THE CITY (OF LONDON)**

**Figure 2.4:** The Strand provides direct access to the City of London, while The South Africa House (immediate left) and St. Martin in The Fields (furthest left) shape the west wall (looking south) of Trafalgar Square.
The Strand, spanning from its western end in Westminster at Charing Cross and Trafalgar Square to its eastern end in London at Temple Bar\(^4\) has historically functioned as the connecting road from Westminster to the City (i.e. from royalty to the common public). British historian Stephen Halliday outlines “The Temple Bar Ceremony,” which still goes on today, symbolizing the ongoing relationship between royalty and the general public that The Strand has established and continues to establish:

It has long been a custom that a monarch, newly enthroned, stops at Temple Bar before entering the City so that the Lord Mayor can offer the monarch the City’s sword of state as a token of loyalty. The sword is returned and carried before the sovereign’s carriage to signify that the monarch is in the City under the protection of the Lord Mayor (Halliday 24).

Outside of ceremonial traditions however, its reputation and significance have seemingly diminished with its changing role from the connecting road to royalty to the broader role of networking and unifying the inner London borough of Westminster to the rest of Greater London. But is this role necessarily a diminishing one because of its less royal, or more common, functions? In fact, The Strand is, if anything, only more accessible now, crucial to the Square in its continued outflow of traffic into the Charing Cross junction. Charles Dickens Jr. provides a description of The Strand as it stood from his view in the 17\(^{th}\) century in his 1879 unconventional travelogue *Dickens’s Dictionary of London,* hailing it as “one of the historical streets of London,” before noting that it has lost its initial prowess due to industrialization and progression of the City: “As the steamers have driven the watermen from the river, so the growth of London has swept away the palaces, and the names of the streets alone mark where they stood” (Dickens

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\(^4\) Temple Bar stands as the gateway to the City of London. At the moment, it adorns a Griffin, the official symbol for the City of London.
Jr. 243). In charting the City’s progression, Dickens Jr. points to parts of the remaining framework (street names) that, for Dickens, function as our only physical connection to The Strand’s original role: “the names of the streets alone mark where they stood.” His perception causes him to claim that, “there is no street of equal importance in any capital of Europe so worthy of its position” (ital. added 243). However, Dickens usage of an outdated framework may be the cause of such remarks, as he eventually outlines many positive aspects in The Strand’s transformation from, “ill-paved streets with the chance of being pushed aside into the deep holes that abounded by the numerous lackeys and retainers,” to, “an air of greater lightness and gaiety than is apparent in the City…more looking into shop windows, and an absence of that hurried walk and preoccupied look” (243). Thus, its current role and past role complicate each other in two ways: (1) it is being deemed “unworthy of its position” because of Dickens Jr’s considerations of past royalty and upper-class practices within the space, and (2) conversely, its current inclusion of multiple classes and perspectives highlights the present’s progression from that past. In its gradual progression, it has embraced shared space and the common public, and is worthy of a new position as that which uniquely joins identities and minimizes demarcations, as Dickens Jr. discusses its new role as “the connecting link between City and the West”: “Fashion seldom goes east of Charing-cross, and the great drapery shops of the West-end are consequently conspicuous by their absence; nor upon the other hand does business, in the City man’s sense of the word, come west of Temple-bar. Hence the Strand is a compromise.” (ital. added, 243).

Creating a shared space out of such a historically polarizing place, The Strand is crucial to the Trafalgar Square framework in its inviting multiple audiences to walk down the famous route to Westminster, bringing aspects of upper-class leisurely activity into the everyday realm, and encouraging coexistence—even an interlacing—of different classes. It encourages the
general public to engage in the sightseeing and activities of leisure of the upper classes, helping
to create a relationship of communal identity rather than disparaging intimidation. It also invites
the general public to take the same historic pathways and points of access that the Royal
Monarch does, encouraging an alignment of shared views and occupation of spaces. The Strand
is crucial to the shape(ing) of the area in its establishment of the point of access to Westminster
from Greater London. Aside from physically providing the route, this is constructed through
continuing the relationship of past memory practices and current ones, such as the ongoing lieux
of the “Temple Bar Ceremony” held as the Royal Monarch enters Greater London, or the number
of famous landmarks and remnants of past societies, which highlight the present progression
from previous inclusions and exclusions of classes. In these ways, The Strand is an active
contributor to the collective framework.

**WHITEHALL: NARRATIVES OF WAR(TIME)**

Along the principal route of Whitehall the frontages provide a break between the
formality of Trafalgar Square and the government buildings along Whitehall to
the south. The eastern side retaining a finer grain, the variety of styles and
material provides a rich landscape –The City of Westminster Trafalgar Square
Audit “Whitehall & Great Scotland Yard”

Whitehall, the half-mile road connecting Trafalgar Square to Westminster Palace, further
establishes the framework of the Trafalgar Square “conservation area” in its contribution of
national pride and military appreciation. Interestingly, it also provides an example of how certain
practices held within a space can complicate meaning that has been established through deeply
embedded past and present practices via its inclusion of the “Changing of the Horse Guard” daily
ceremony. British scholars J. M. Lee, G. W. Jones, and June Burnham analyze the biggest meaning-makers of Whitehall in their book *At the Centre of Whitehall*, calling it part of “the machinery at the heart of British government” that must be “demystified” (viii). They immediately direct the focus to war as part of this “machinery,” noting it as among the key factors which have “shaped the changes that have been made” (1). This emphasis on war and government occurs on-site as well; as the Trafalgar Square panel identifies Whitehall and its various “government offices and historic buildings,” the individual can then navigate through Whitehall’s “experiential landscape” and encounter eight successive memorials, seven of which memorialize war figures. Lee, Jones, and Burnham echo this sentiment, pointing to the first two world wars specifically: “At one level of interpretation the present system can be seen as the product of two world wars” (1). This interpretation cannot be understated, and the successive path of memorials helps to ensure that war remains a focal point on individual’s minds. The most prominent of these memorials is, “The Cenotaph,” which has long been the site of national and military celebration—temporarily erected for peace parades after the First World War, it was replaced with a permanent structure shortly thereafter, memorializing those who died. On VE day, Whitehall and “The Cenotaph” were again spaces of national celebration, and during the official London Victory Celebrations of June 8 1946, representatives of Britain and its various victorious allies marched down Whitehall in a symbolic military parade signifying the end of the war. It is now home to the yearly Remembrance Sunday Service, in honor of Armistice Day. Similar to The Strand, its past memory practices have continued into present day practices. The

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5 While only applicable to the “Changing of the Guard” ceremony at Buckingham Palace, there is an application on Apple’s App Store which, according to The Official Website of the British Monarchy, “aims to orientate, inform, and entertain people…and “includes an interactive map which locates the user…” (ital. added)

6 Victory in Europe (VE) day is the public holiday commemorating the end of the Second World War in Europe.
Official Website of The Royal Monarchy describes what this event symbolizes, as well as the parties involved:

Through the annual event on Whitehall, the nation pays homage to those who died in two world wars and in many other lesser conflicts from the twentieth century to the present…Her Majesty lay a wreath of poppies at the foot of the Cenotaph, followed by members of the Royal Family, representatives of the political parties…After the reveille and the national anthem, The Queen departs. The war veterans than march past the Cenotaph…—The official website of The British Monarchy

“Remembrance Day”

In addition to memory practices, Whitehall’s current military focus gains meaning if one is familiar with the spaces historic role during wartime London—the Foreign Office, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Defense, and the Cabinet War Rooms, all of which were central to London during the Second World War, are all located, landmarked, and accessible from Whitehall. Lee and Jones go as far as calling 10 Downing Street—the office of the Prime Minister—“the centre of the machine” (2). Thus, it is a historic space rich with narratives of war

Figure 2.5: Looking north from Whitehall toward Trafalgar Square, the visual access of Nelson’s Column directs the viewer toward the square
Figure 2.6: The view south of Whitehall from Trafalgar Square. Big Ben and the Elizabeth Tower are visually accessible from any view down Whitehall.
and wartime—from the Cabinet War Rooms where Winston Churchill planned and directed wartime London, England through the Second World War, to the various official and unofficial celebrations of military victory, and finally to the more solemn yearly Sunday remembrances, as well as the general memorialization of fallen military soldiers. As one walks through this wartime space, the theme of military sacrifice and pride culminates in Nelson’s Column’s iconic southward facing frieze, which depicts the image of Nelson dying for his country in the Battle at Trafalgar along with the inscription in bold capital letters: “ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY” (see Fig. 2.7) Times change, and duties too—the open signifier of “duty” can be directly interpreted alongside wartime narratives as a call to military service, or can be read as a more general and open-ended signifier that no matter what one’s “duty” is, England expects the individual to do it. Accompanied by the image of England’s dying General Nelson, it asks not that individuals “fight for what they believe!” or “stand for what is right”—attributions one could easily place under the image of Nelson—but, in the midst of a space which emphasizes military sacrifice, it asks “every man” to “do his duty,” bringing a strong sense of military pride and nationalism to the Square’s overall framework.
This primary role of Whitehall, which climaxes at Nelson’s southward facing frieze, is only experienced if one walks through the “experiential landscape,” reading its various wartime narratives as inscribed in its memorials and landmark locations. This experience is propagated by two visual icons of the City which are substantially taller than any other surrounding buildings, directing eyes toward themselves and the spaces they inhabit across any local view of the city skyline (see Fig 2.5, 2.6). From Trafalgar Square, the iconic Elizabeth Tower\(^7\), housing the Big Ben bell, lures individuals down Whitehall. Conversely, from the Houses of Parliament and the Elizabeth Tower, Nelson’s Column has similar enticing effects. However, because of these enticing effects, and Whitehall’s own admission of relaxed royal rituals in the form of House Guards Parade, in which visitors take pictures next to guards on horses, the intrinsic and heavily propagated wartime meaning of the space is obfuscated for a more lighthearted experience. Thus,\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Part of the larger Parliament Square area, managed by the GLA, who claims the area as having “significant historic and symbolic value to the British people” and states that it “encompasses the heart of contemporary British Politics”
while Whitehall is most crucial to the square in its contribution of serious wartime narratives, it also shows how cultural memory and the history of space can be complicated by certain practices, infusing important experiential landscapes with less meaningful experiences.

Clearly, the current memory practices held in the public space of The Strand and Whitehall are heavily influenced by past memory practices. At the same time, they are not *dictated* by them. The Strand has grown from a strictly upper-class experience into a class-unified public space, while maintaining its physical and symbolic function of linking The City of Westminster to Greater London. Whitehall has grown deeply embedded to its wartime functions, as the history of the space—both its past memory practice of postwar celebration and mourning and the spaces historic nexus of central wartime components—has helped to shape its public function. And yet, these embedded roles of the space seem delicate, being quickly obfuscated and partially obstructed by the spaces inclusion of horse guards. This, too, is a historic function, but has adapted into one that is a popular tourist site for visitors. Thus, the past role of the space has continued into the current role of the space, but in its commercial growth, it has obfuscated the experience of its surroundings.
Admiralty Arch separates the two spaces of Trafalgar Square and The Mall through its massive physical structure. In addition to its physical separation, its original occupation of government offices once connected the royal and government narratives of Whitehall and The Mall. However, it is now being built into a luxury hotel. This is not a natural process, but an
agreement reached in 2012. Because of this, it does not reflect a spaces unique change over
time—or does it? Surely not on at its base level, but the agreement made by The Westminster
City Council, the same ones who have innumerous bylaws against the obstruction of the area,
reflects the natural growth of Trafalgar Square from a strictly civic experience to a more
modernized utility of space.

In analyzing this space first at this base level, The Mall’s royal narrative(s) establishes a
strong royal presence in the “conservation area,” showing yet again how spatial parameters
affects the function of and associations made in a space. As one walks down The Mall, similar
connections between war heroes, civil servants, and the Monarchy are made in a wealth of public
memorials and monuments. This reflects similar neglect in opening the space to a lieu of
multiple narratives. The royal sphere of The Mall, however, seems more suitable for an
occlusion of multiple narratives and focus on British royalty. In fact, the nationalistic physical
embodiments and accompanying rhetorical inscriptions seem perfectly fit amongst the spaces
invitation to all audiences to reenact historical, spatial narratives of past societies and past and
current Monarchies. However, the revelation of Westminster City Council’s agreement to
transform Admiralty Arch into a luxury hotel obfuscates this reading of the space, turning a
historically rich, primarily civic arena into a modern practice of luxury hotels. It complicates the
inclusion of reenacting a royal narrative—which can only be reenacted, as the Monarchy is
exclusively accessible to bloodlines—by offering individuals the opportunity to occupy this royal
space at a cost. Perhaps this is good or perhaps this is bad—the point of interest lies not in
making such judgments, but simply in noting the attempt to transform symbols of the past into
utilities of the present and the future, while still holding onto the exterior symbols. Rather than
destroy this historic landmark and build a luxury hotel, a historic landmark is transformed into a
luxury hotel. These types of transformations carry the ability to obfuscate spatial meaning, as occurs with/in The Mall’s reenactment of the Royal British narrative.

The reenactment of the Royal British narrative in The Mall is a rhetorical construction. As one engages any public space, which is absent of a linear or temporal framework, one gradually replaces such a framework with one that is a result of a rhetorically navigated and experienced synchronization of events, people, and places. This is highly evident in The Mall, beginning with the demarcation of two very different spaces, or spheres, in Trafalgar Square and The Mall; as one walks beneath Admiralty Arch and into the space of The Mall, one moves from the public sphere into the royal sphere, as materialized in the concaved entrances/exits of the spheres (see Fig. 2.10). This separation actually connects two modes of existence in the spheres role as part of the “configuration of objects in the landscape” which can tie the very different narratives of royalty and common citizens through re/enacting “spatial narratives of history.” This can create a sense of inclusion in the royal narrative, rather than the usual idle role that passive witnesses are subject to in the royal rituals which occur outside of this space:
As a configuration of objects in the landscape, spatial narratives of history share some features with such narrative forms [as graphic storytelling], since historical chronology can be enacted by moving from place to place along a route or trail, or by showing sequential images (such as before-and-after photos and maps) at one place (Azaryahu and Foote 6).

In other words, the entrance to the royal sphere as signified by Admiralty Arch and The Mall’s signature red carpet road\(^8\) functions as part of the “objects in the landscape” which invite the individual into a “historical chronology” by “moving from place to place.” In one sense, they demarcate the line between common people and their world of work from the more royal narrative of leisurely sightseeing that one can do in The Mall, such as the first royal park, St. James’s Park, The Queen’s Garden, Buckingham Palace, etc. However, the space’s invitation into this royal space, and its panel’s encouragement to partake in the narratives of (royal) leisure, seems to bring the two very different existences together more than it pulls them apart. The Fig. 2.11 panel, FOR HIS MAJESTY’S PLEASURE: BIRDS, BOATS AND BATHINGS invites members of the public to occupy the same spaces as royalty, and in the same ways; any one can take the same walk on St. James’s Park as “the fun-loving King Charles II” did 350 years ago. Or, one can enter into “The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Walk” (see Fig. 2.12). The panel’s invitation to engage in the same casual day-to-day narratives as royalty once did, and still does, is linked to past social practices through accompanying images, displaying “sequential images at one place” in its depiction of the square as engaged by past members of royalty and government in the left image and of all of society in the right (Figure 2.11). Through aligning the peaceful, unified activities of past royalty and members of society to that of the present, this sign

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\(^8\) During his tenure as Minister of Works from 1951-1954, David Eccles instructed The Mall to be painted red, placing further rhetorical emphasis on the symbolic meaning of royalty in the road.
links past relationships and spatial occupations to those of the present. As they did, we invite you to do—just as we invited past members of society to do, and just as past members of society have done. In its description of the King’s daily activities it moves “from place to place along a route or trail,” inviting the public to visit the space where, “The King swam in the canal in summer and skated on the ice in winter. He spent many hours feeding his collection of water birds.”

![St. James’s Park’s Panel](image)

**Figure 2.11:** St. James’s Park’s Panel is crucial to individuals occupying the space, inviting them into a royal narrative experience. It describes King Charles II’s walk, which includes swimming in the canal and feeding the waterfowl, and provides two illustrations, one showing the process of the canal being built in 1798, accompanied by British soldiers, and another with it finished, being enjoyed by British citizens.

As visitors are brought into these proximities, they are brought into certain narratives, such as the bird tending by the King (see Fig. 2.13), reenacting an event which has unclear historical boundaries. Their experiences are dependent on the paths one takes, but these paths, while open-ended, are rhetorically designed by an interspersion of signs, memorials, and
repetitive symbolism, causing an association of ideals to be acquainted with a pleasant experience. The ongoing land marking of culturally significant events and places perpetuates an association and eventual synchronization of events, people, and places, as The City of Westminster’s audit’s “UNLISTED BUILDINGS OF MERIT” section exemplifies in its listing of sites that “may be considered for listing at a future date and are of local significance.” This is also noticeable in its chart of “RECOGNIZED AND UNRECOGNIZED BUILDINGS,” which color codes areas that have yet to be landmarked. Thus, the nexus of historical referents fall into a narrative: “Historical referents co-exist simultaneously in cityscape; with no linear thread of chronological order connecting them, temporality yields to synchronicity” (Azaryahu and Foote 6). Clearly, a collective framework requires a sociospatial process by the individual, as it does not depend on temporal, linear, or causal meaning, instead gaining meaning through public engagement, which causes synchronicity.

Figure 2.12: Similar to the Jubilee Walkway, The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Walk invites members of the general public to embark on a royal narrative.

Figure 2.13: Feeding and interacting with the waterfowl is part of King Charles II’s daily narrative.
Their usage of the term “synchronicity,” refers to a term founded by Swiss psychologist C.G. Jung that analyzes relationships of events caused not by causality, but by a larger societal meaning-making framework. Figure 2.15 provides such an example within The Mall: as one walks through Admiralty Arch, one passes under its waving Union Jack flag, the military statue of Captain James Cook, whose statue watches over those who enter the royal sphere, and encounters a pole holding the symbol of the British Crown, guarded by four physically ineffective but symbolically operative spikes. The close spatial approximation between the flag (the nation), past military efforts, and the Royal Crown are spatially experienced and, as this process is repeated through the landscape, increasingly spatially associated.

In addition to this type of constructed spatial association, the process of synchronicity also occurs through the repetitive nature of similar themes in very different functioning memorials and monuments. This process recalls Landow’s discussion of Barthes’ utopian text, in which individuals engage in “a galaxy of signifiers” that “are many and interact”—a utopian text which has partly come to fruition in the public realm through digital hypertexts inclusion in
public space. This inclusion promotes the identification of a “galaxy of signifiers” in physical hypertexts. In the case of The Mall and this project, a nautical theme referencing Britain’s naval prosperity can be traced through Trafalgar Square (Nelson’s column), Admiralty Arch (sculptures of “navigation,” “gunnery,” and the nearby memorial to Naval Captain James Cook—see Fig. 2.15), and the Victoria Memorial directly in front of Buckingham Palace (there are mermaids and mermen, and the allegorical figure Constancy holds a ship’s compass, see Fig. 2.16). Thus, these three pieces of architecture are unified in their British Naval commemorative quality, even though they represent separate fields within the collective framework—Nelson’s Column is commemorating his life and death (military sacrifice), Admiralty Arch, until 2012, housed government buildings (government and government buildings), and Victoria Memorial is dedicated to the late Queen Victoria (Royal Monarchy). Thus, The Mall contributes to the collective framework by connecting Her Majesty to Her Majesty’s Government and the golden Constancy and her gold compass to actual military figures such as the killed-in-action, one armed Horatio Nelson who occupies Trafalgar Square through the ornately designed Admiralty Arch. Through their location and point of access, Admiralty Arch and The Mall bring in royalty as a major concept within Britain’s larger collective framework, further infusing rhetorically specific British ideals through establishing an ongoing narrative of shared leisurely activities between the general public and the Royal Family—linking past memory practices with current memory practices—and the rhetorical placement of symbolic architecture, or aspects of it and themes within it.
CHAPTER 3: LOCATING, IDENTIFYING, AND EXPLORING THE PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK OF TRAFALGAR SQUARE

JUBILEE WALKWAY: AN OFFICIAL LONDON FRAMEWORK

**Figure 2.16:** The Victoria Memorial is centered in the roundabout around Buckingham Palace. Similar to Nelson’s Column, it references naval battle and is located at the center of a public space. Unique to this memorial is its gold allegorical figure “Constancy,” which reads as a more royal memorial when compared to Nelson’s granite, military themed memorial.

**Figure 2.15:** An example of spatially assembled narratives occurs above: as one walks out of Trafalgar Square and into the royal narrative the crown, flag, admirality arch, and James Cook.

**Figure 3.1:** The Jubilee Walkway route map, which shares panel space on Trafalgar Square’s Panel, notes the individual’s location amongst a larger physical “experiential” framework. The emblem located in the upper-right corner can be found embedded in the ground throughout London.
In Pierre Nora’s previously discussed essay, he focused on modern French society and its particular mode of remembering (archiving). However, his discussion can be applied to modern society in general, and, as the thoroughfares have made explicit, London provides a specifically interesting case in its extensive use of public architecture as symbolism. In an attempt to establish similar social unification to that of the real memory practices held within past societies, London exhibits a host of *lieux de mémoire* throughout the public domain. These work to create a nexus of open areas which encourage the practice of memory—what has become the construction of a narrative that all of society can embrace—within these sites. In addition to promoting the individual’s participation within confined sites—which might result in the embrace of only one aspect of the constructed framework—London promotes a connection of these separated narratives, a modern day reunification of memory and history, through constructs such as the Jubilee Walkway route, which, as the Trafalgar Square panel explains, was “designed and administered by a special Trust,” and “established to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth” in 1977. Promotion of partaking in the Walkway route, which the panel endorses as an embrace of history—“encircles the centre of London, embracing many historic buildings and view”—is disseminated in a number of ways, such as its inclusion on information panels for specific sites and embedded plaques across the city. Having shared space on these panels causes the individual to consider and consume the information of the particular space *in association with the larger collective framework*. Rather than a short reference to the Walkway, the panel contains a sizeable amount of information dedicated to the walk, including a route map, a paragraph detailing its inception, establishment, and role, and options for further information via leaflets, a phone number, and a website (See Fig. 3.1 of route map). Official inclusion to online counterparts is vital, as it brings into the space the use of
hypermedia, a crucial proponent of the framework, making available multiple interpretations and perspectives of the space. Concentrating, for now, on the physical aspects of the framework, of particular importance is the route map, which locates the individual within the route, ushering them into a spatial narrative they may or may not be voluntarily partaking in, or even conscious of. This ushering in is further propagated in circular walkway plates embedded in the ground throughout the route. Because this route really does “encircle the centre of London,” individuals are continually reminded of its existence, even when they are not attempting to partake in it. Through continually tying individuals back into the collective framework, Jubilee Walkway links disjointed histories into a spatial narrative that reminds individuals that the spaces they inhabit are, in fact, essential to their own identity as part of the collective memory of the society.

Written in 1996 as the general introduction to his three volume work *Realms of Memory*, Nora’s commentary on “the collapse of a central component of our memory” being a result of “globalization, democratization, and the advent of mass culture” is considerably outdated; in the digital age, much can change in 18 years (2). Strictly speaking on internal memory habits, the record, discard phenomena that Nora acquaints with the French *lieux* of archiving is only worsened in London’s *lieux* of public space, a product of technological accessibility and innovation; with today’s powerful smart devices such as smart phones, tablets, netbooks, etc., one can instantly record, store, and upload a seemingly infinite amount of data onto the world wide web, contributing to a plethora of free online archives, or the more personal, independent, and modern archiving world of live blogs, live tweets, and social networking sites. These are critical to the landscape for introducing hypermedia into it. However, they also encourage the superficial, disadvantageous process of “capturing” memory and “delegating” it to archives.
If in 1996 Nora recognized a decrease in real memory practice due to modern memory practices tendency to “rely entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image,” then the 2014 constellation of technological abilities only weaken any notion of a real memory process, as Nora argues for the direct causation between the correlation of growth in technology and decline in real memory experience: “What began as writing ends as high fidelity and tape recording. The less memory is experienced from the inside the more it exists only through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs” (ital. added, 9). As modern, informal archiving becomes more accessible, real memory practice diminishes, existing “only through its exterior.” Thus, in London’s lieux of public architecture, members may be encouraged to engage with/in “exterior scaffolding and outward signs,” but the meaning-making linkage between current society and fragmented narratives of the past that real memory practices, milleu de memoire, once provided is not secured by said “scaffolding” and/or “signs.” Memory sites—physical and digital memory holders—do not weaken the ability to remember, but rather, the exigence for remembering and the role of the individual as a remembering agent. This is done by supplying the memory for the individual through scaffolding and signs. In terms of social memory, then, this project finds itself in an age where collective memory has moved away from milleue towards lieux through three historically and temporally sequential components: (1) historical and historiographical research cause social anxiety about the previously believed synchronized and interconnected roles of history and memory, as various historical narratives are shown to be more disjointed than how the real memory practice presents them. Housing tension in conflicting narratives, memory and history are both revealed to be prejudiced in their ‘remembering’ of events. (2) lieux de memoire attempts to solve this social anxiety about a disjointed narrative through various “sites,” such as public space, which recreates them, and in
doing so, reconstructs a collective framework which unifies its members, hence Kirk Savage’s previous reflection that the “increasing tendency in the 19th century to construct memory in physical monuments...was symptomatic of an increasing anxiety about memory left to its own unseen devices.” (3) In 2014, London’s collective framework of public architecture is changed by technological innovation, which constantly improves the opportunities to engage in multimedia activity, such as social archiving while in these sites.

Thus, the individual’s literal role as holder of memory is weakened, or, rather, lessened, while his/her perceived role as part of the collective memory is strengthened through his/her inhabitancy within—and therefore occupational role in—the collective framework, as the Jubilee Walkway shows. While the modern social archiving process and creation of lieux de memoire relieves a collective society of social anxiety stemming from the disturbing dilemma of how memory and history can and will be connected, it does little to prepare them for—and in some ways, actually exposes them to—the prejudices of a constructed dominating narrative. However, the whole point of casting off real memory practices of old was to avoid such manipulation. Thus, both systems are revealed to be suspect to whatever dominating narrative is currently in place in society, leaving current historians and theorists to wonder, as Nora does, “Have we not sufficiently regretted and deplored the loss or destruction, by our predecessors, of potentially informative sources to avoid opening ourselves to the same reproach from our successors?” (8).

However, if one considers London’s lieux of public space, its series of “potentially informative sources” to be not a framework of signified inscribed messages but one of endlessly open signifiers, then “the same reproach from our successors” is much less likely to occur. With the help of technological smart devices, which bring hypermedia and hypertext into the field of vision—the same tools that lessen real memory’s role in collective frameworks—individuals can
interact with and engage in the framework in a way that allows multiple perspectives. This is done not only through linking the narrative of the individual agent to the larger collective framework, but also to the other individuals existing with/in this framework. Is this a product of the digital age or a product through the digital age? In other words, do smart devices create a new experience out of physical frameworks—or bring to the framework an experience which has long been emphasized in critical theory as the ideal experience of a framework, albeit one that is typically textual?

THE SOCIAL NETWORK: PHYSICAL SPACE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Before examining where smart devices might have taken the concept of polydimensional, polyvocal experiences, one must consider how they do such a thing. Having revealed the constructed framework of lieux to be no less suspect to adhering to a collective framework than that of its predecessor milieu, the examination of opportunities for the individual agent as a narrative shaper and a meaning maker in the 21st century must take place, for surely the embrace of such spaces by Londoners vast diversity of nationalities and narratives does not reflect a natural, spontaneous occurrence. As much as portable technological devices can take away from the individual agent’s memory experience, promoting a record and discard, archive-delegating society, they can also enrich it, allowing an open reading of space through the use of hypertext and media; the social movement towards remembering less does not necessarily affirm retaining less information or reading space according to one dominating narrative, and this is partly in thanks to the information smart devices can provide—and the ways in which they can provide it. Smart devices can help in the unification of a collective framework through centering the user as the guiding agent of seemingly fixed public spaces in a number of unique ways. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin explore the many ways in which various forms of virtual reality affect the
individual’s experience of both physical and digital realms in their 2000 study *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, which, among other things, discusses how augmented reality (“AR”) and ubiquitous computing (“ubicomp”) affects an individual’s experience with/in the real world.

In an augmented reality, the authors explain, “the user may wear special glasses or a headset that is not entirely opaque to the world of light… Instead of blocking out the world, the computer writes over the world and therefore comments on and colors what the user sees” (215).

Immediately, Google Glass comes to mind, a pair of glasses currently on limited release to the public, which allow the agent to take pictures and videos of what s/he sees, upload them to the internet, display directions, send messages, and, most importantly, ask direct questions about the world as seen *through the user’s field of vision*, allowing one to read public spaces and engage with/in the collective framework in different, unintended ways that they might not have been previously aware of. The official Google Glass website presents the glasses with the captioning, “Welcome to a world through Glass,” emphasizing the glasses role not as makers of a new world of Glass—which would imply a convergence of the physical and digital realms—but of opening up the world *through Glass*, creating a revolutionary way of interacting with and engaging in the world. Bolter and Grusin reflect further on augmented reality, arguing that rather than *converging* two worlds, AR enriches the possibility of experiences in the physical world by admitting a digital presence into the realm of the *everyday experience*: “In laying icons, texts, and images over visible objects in the world, augmented reality frankly admits that it is a digital medium interposing itself between the viewer and an apparently simple and unitary physical world” (216). But what does the world through Glass provide that smart devices do not? Aside from inventing a new mode of consumption—one that diminishes the digital component of an augmented reality to glass frames—Google Glass provides essentially the same information that
current smart devices provide. Bolter and Grusin’s envisioning of a technologically saturated world has already come to fruition, one that is populated with and embraced by digital natives and digital immigrants\(^9\) alike.

The physical world is again examined in Bolter and Grusin’s analysis of virtual reality’s tendency to replicate the physical world, contemplating the effect of including personal computers and other media devices in the realm of virtual reality: “Once we let computers and other media into the space, what is to keep them from multiplying so that the user can consult them at any time for any purpose? The question becomes: If we can have computers everywhere, why do we need virtual reality?” (216) Through exploring the boundless possibilities of virtual reality, such as the opportunity to completely saturate oneself in hypermedia, Bolter and Grusin are able to highlight the trend in the physical world that has taken place with smart devices such as smart phones—individuals can and often do have these opportunities right now, in the real world. They discuss a possible world where “our data files, applications, and preferences follow us automatically from computer to computer as we move around our workplace”—again, smart devices can do this as well, through a multitude of transferable memory drives such as WiFi syncing and file transferring, Bluetooth sharing, QR codes, and Cloud storage devices such as Dropbox, Google Drive, and SkyDrive (217). Each of these creates this seemingly utopian vision right now, and not only in workplaces, but out in public spaces as well.

In fact, UK’s own The Cloud, which began offering free WiFi in a vast number of “hot spots” throughout London has partnered with The City of London, as its official website states, “The City of London and The Cloud have partnered to bring comprehensive outdoor public WiFi...”

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\(^9\) “Digital Natives” and “Digital Immigrants” are concepts posed by writer and speaker Marc Prensky. The former refers to “students today,” as they are “all ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games, and the Internet” (Prensky, 1). While the latter refers to “those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology...” (2).
coverage to the Square Mile, giving users greater freedom to use WiFi to access internet applications and business information, whilst on the move, using smartphones, tablet PCs and laptops.” The “Square Mile” nickname references the fact that the City of London is only one square mile, and, thus, implicitly emphasizes its existence as a shared space of inhabitants, with a sophisticated network that encourages use by “smartphones, tablet PCs and laptops.” They go on to celebrate the technology’s quadrupling in growth, making it “the largest gigabit WiFi network in Europe.” In other words, it further brings the collective framework together by encouraging users to operate under the singular “The Cloud,” allowing individuals within the city’s collective framework the opportunity to explore its physical components through available experiences not unlike the ubicomp and AR experience that Bolter and Grusin envision. Finally, they discuss the idea of “wearable computers” such as watches, hats, belts, and shoes which inform us as we go out into the world, reformers which are all “remediators of reality, who want to turn our physical world into a place where everything mediates something else” (218). Smart devices are providing this type of remediation. Thus, while London can be viewed through official and intended lenses—and are nonetheless aided by smart devices in their endeavors—the AR and ubicomp aspects of smart devices allow for a different kind of reality, one that is remediated by smart devices, allowing endless potentiality for agents to explore and expand their experience past what is available at the surface level, that “apparently simple and unitary world,” turning physically closed signifieds into digitally open signifiers. The digital world has become a faculty of the physical world, supplying the individual with the power to be the center of their own experience within the framework.

Viewing the world and reading its social spaces in this way is beneficial to the collective framework, as it opens up the breadth of available narratives, allowing for a diversified wealth of
available entrances into the framework. According to Bolter and Grusin, such an experience is
due entirely to personal computers: “Such a display of free-floating text and images could not
have been conceived prior to the windowed style in desktop computers of the 1980s” (215). But
this is, perhaps, a bit of an exaggeration. In George Landow’s *Hypertext*, he argues for a similar
type of experience in the evolving landscape of 21st century *literature*, which has—similar to
memory—been infiltrated and affected by emerging technological innovations in such a dramatic
fashion as to demand attention from theorists of computer literacy and critical theory alike. In his
analysis of the changing world of literature, one that is necessarily centered on the print-to-
digital phenomena, he channels the overlapping views held by proponents of critical theory, such
as deconstructionist Jacques Derrida and linguist Roland Barthes, and proponents of computer
hypertext, such as Ted Nelson and Andries van Dam. He finds that the utopian text for the
theorist—one held, in some cases such as Barthes work in *S/Z*, *before* the existence of personal
computers—is highly similar to that of computer hypertext: “All four, like many others who
write on hypertext or literary theory, argue that we must abandon conceptual systems founded
upon ideas of center, margin, hierarchy, and linearity and replace them with ones of
multilinearity, nodes, links, and networks” (Landow 3). Thus, not only is the experience made
available by smart devices a new and exciting one, but it follows the utopian text of critical
theorists.

Landow notes Barthes’ discussion of an ideal textuality that is remarkably similar to what
is encountered today: “text composed of blocks of words linked electronically by multiple paths,
chains or trails in an open-ended, perpetually unfinished textuality described by the terms *link*,
*node*, *network*, *web*, and *path* (ital. in original, qtd in Landow 3). Clearly, Barthes description of
the utopian text is remarkably similar to the mediated hypertext we find in electronic texts today.
Interestingly, it also brings to mind the ideal collective framework of public space—one that is remarkably similar to that of London: “the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds…we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one” (qtd. in Landow 3). From multiple networks and a galaxy of signifiers to authoritative equality, Barthes description seems to aptly fit into the physical framework of public space. As literature has become digital, it has taken on many of the interconnected aspects of the utopian texts of scholars past. Even more crucial, though, is that in its transition into the digital realm, which has recreated literature into complex systems of hypertext and hypermediated language, it has found its way into public spaces and collective frameworks. This is a product of hypertext and hypermedia becoming a portable, always accessible “thing” in the form of smart devices. Thus, the polyvocalism and multiple perspectives and narratives that digital hypertext and hypermedia link together is made possible in the physical texts of the collective framework.

SURROUNDING SPACE, SHAPING PLACE

The openness of Trafalgar Square and the number of converging primary routes allow for long views throughout the area. These focus on the rich historic fabric, much of which is listed and the numerous landmark buildings – The City of Westminster Trafalgar Square Conservation Audit, “LOCAL VIEWS”

Regardless of narratives made available through digital counterparts, the “converging primary routes” of The Strand, Whitehall, and The Mall set the foundation for which Trafalgar Square rests on, with each thoroughfare functioning as a primary mode of access for visiting tourists and the general public alike, invoking various aspects of British national identity through
a constellation of rhetorically placed government, military, and Royal Monarchy memorials, monuments, signs, motifs, and the unique opportunity to experience the traditional Royal Monarch customs within each primary route. The memorial re/constructions placed in these spaces have unending effects on the spaces they inhabit, often influencing their role, as seen with the Temple Bar in The Strand and “The Cenotaph” at Whitehall. Regardless of these lieux, the real historic functions of these spaces can also linger into their present role, complicating the meaning of the space, and the connections possible between past and present occupants. In other words, the past as constructed and the present as instructed can obfuscate each other because of their intervening uses of public space to construct themselves.

In both cases, invokers of British nationalism depend on the experiential process of an ephemeral collective memory as experienced in the finite, physical collective framework of architecture. In other words, those inhabiting the space are free to engage and consume the production of these public spaces and thoroughfares and make their own conclusions about meaning. As past and present intersect in the construction of public space, there are profound implications on the narrative one interprets. One possible outcome is that the individual embarks on the history of local memory practices, witnessing the emphasized links between the rich national narratives of Britain to the collective community of London. Or, one could embark on the history of London, and witness a series of landmarked events, people, and places that coalesce with the epideictic local memory practices which place focus on the national narrative of Britain. But here is what is at stake—the history of London should be more than land marking. The lieux of public spaces in London—and the current memory practices held within them—should highlight the local history that does not contribute to the larger, national narrative, and connect past narratives which do not tie the local memory to the national narrative. While
London is the capital of England; it undoubtedly has its own history and narrative separate from the nation. This neglecting promotes a reading of London’s space as emblematic of an entire nation. This is often beneficial for the City of London, for, as Dresser stresses, many of its figures who have heavily contributed to the shape of the City—generally through financial means—have also been seriously involved in imperial collusion and slave trade.

An attempt to locate and deconstruct such narratives—which might result in uncovering collusion and a “culture of silence” in society, as Dresser finds—is suaded by the unique openness of the Trafalgar Square “conservation area,” and the visual access to it as made available by the congregation of roads converging at the Charing Cross junction. The most important access such open space provides is to the daunting presence of the 170 foot Nelson’s Column, which visually reroutes individuals toward the central hub of the Square. This is an important aspect of the space, as Trafalgar Square is “one of the city’s most vibrant open spaces”

Figure 3.2: The allegorical figure “Navigation,” crafted between 1908-1913 by Thomas Brock, is a key part of the nautical theme of Admiralty Arch, tying it to Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square.

Figure 3.3: The symbol of the Royal Crown above “Navigation.”
and “a landmark in central London enjoyed by Londoners and all visitors alike” according to the official website of the GLA. Thus, a key contribution to the meaning of Trafalgar Square as a “vibrant open space…enjoyed by Londoners and all visitors alike” is the spatial invitation to Nelson’s Column as made available by the rhetorically engineered openness of the space, a product of The City of Westminster and the Greater London Authority. Thus, the spatial invitations and appeals to enjoy the city by visiting its rhetorically constructed sites and embarking on its rhetorically constructed royal narratives helps deter individuals from embarking on more revealing narratives of London’s past.

POLICIES IN PLACE: THE INSURANCE OF OPEN SPACE

Simply put, some public spaces are more privileged and protected than others. This is, generally speaking, a product of their unique rhetorical roles and social functions with/in a collective framework. The Conservation Audit’s “Local Views” section echoes the importance of openness and access in constructing meaning in spaces, claiming 28 views “from,” “of,” “down,” “north,” “east,” “into,” “out,” and “along,” Trafalgar Square and the iconic Nelson’s Column that are not to be affected by any type of landscaping and construction. To insure constructed meaning of the larger “conservation area,” these views in, of, and around the main hub are privileged with clearer access than others, as the conservation audit ensures through its citation of several strict policies; Policy DES9 (“permission will not normally be given for proposals which involve the demolition or partial demolition of buildings which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area”), DES14 (“to protect strategic views across the city”) and DES15 (“to protect metropolitan and local views”) forbid drastic development plans from coming to fruition, and often, as DES9 shows, from even being proposed. Thus, surrounding buildings in the area are prioritized according to their role in shaping the landscape
of Trafalgar Square, meaning that their individual functions—and any attempts that they may make in alteration or innovation of the space—are subordinate to the views they insure. Unless, as DES9 2 states, “it can be demonstrated that the existing building cannot be repaired or adapted so as to extend its useful life and that the proposed development will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.” In both instances of Policy DES9 the “proposed development” must “preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area,” emphasizing that in addition to being subordinate to the views of the space they allow, they are also subordinate to their appearance as one that must preserve or enhance the area. For example, Admiralty Arch is currently undergoing a transformation process from government building to luxury hotel—but its physical structure remains in its role as recognizable backdrop to the area, visually and physically separating the two social spheres since its inception into the space in 1912. This raises the question: if views and appearance are privileged over the internal practices and functions of a given building, how might those practices and functions—or the thoughts, memories, and/or contemplations that such buildings might signify or provoke—impact the reading of the overall space? In other words, do the individual narratives of buildings, much like the individual narratives of persons, complicate the general collective narrative(s) of a society as propagated in the space?

Within the conservation area there are buildings which are considered to be of landmark quality. This can be as a result of numerous factors including their siting and detailed design. They contribute significantly to the character and townscape of the area being focal points or key elements in view (The City of Westminster Trafalgar Square Conservation Area Audit “LANDMARK BUILDINGS” 28).
According to the audit, every building that is deemed historically significant by the City of Westminster must also maintain their “landmark quality,” even if it is a result of “siting” and “design” rather than its utilitarian or historic functions. For example, Admiralty Arch serves to separate two spheres physically, not just symbolically. It provides a beautiful backdrop in the south western corner of the area, as the conservation audit notes: “…the impressive admiralty arch forming the formal entrance to the mall…[is] an important enclosing feature to the south western corner of the square” (21). Hence, Admiralty Arch can internally change from civic to modern in its transformation from a historical government building to a luxury hotel, as long as this does not affect its physical contribution to the square. In fact, such internal changes from civic to modern may even be welcomed by the City of Westminster and London, allowing the city to progress while maintaining its historically rich physical infrastructure.

In this way, a city can maintain its lieux de memoire and the memory practices that are held within them, which, as Nora contends, are for a cultural connection to the past rather than for authentically remembering history, while its actual narrative moves forward. However, what happens when individual buildings complicate the narrative pitched? The Uganda, Canada, and South Africa embassies, which form the east, west, and southwest physical/visual barriers to the square, each contribute to the “landmark quality” of the area due to “their siting and detailed design,” but do little to propagate a British national identity framework like the thoroughfares coming into the square, and, to some extent, actually complicate them. Trafalgar Studios and the Charing Cross hotel carry much of the same function, and are listed among the “Landmark Buildings” section of the audit among buildings which are not to be replaced. Importantly, these are still aspects of the “Poetics of Presentation” which shape a narrative; every individual part of the framework significantly contributes to the whole, and sometimes this means providing a
physical framework rather than contributing symbolic meaning or signifying a historic aspect of the area. The audit explains this “interplay”: “The interplay between these buildings provides views of particular quality. The main landmark, Nelson’s Column, is a feature in many views from outside the conservation area and is an internationally known symbol of London” (28). Thus, Nelson’s Column signifies a space which combines past narratives of military struggle and victory with the current function of the hub as an open space for leisurely activity, viewing of art, social events, minority festivals, etc. It is clear that Trafalgar Square attempts to define itself through its current practices as an all-encompassing area in the wake of military and royal spatial narratives heading into the space. What is not as clear is the implicit tension that such an attempt causes; “the interplay between these buildings” can reflect tension between the past as presented and the past as occurred. Thus, their inclusion in the physical collective framework creates the opportunity for an open signifier to signify tension in the mental collective framework being constructed, and with it, the narrative of British nationality as embedded in the architecture. In other words, the secondary qualities—that is, their intrinsic meaning outside of physically providing the framework for the square—can positively contribute to the shaping of collective memory, or can signify tension in what is being propagated within, surrounding, and leading to and from the square.

DIFFERENCE(S) OF PERSPECTIVE(S): FORGETTING OR FORGIVING A TROUBLED PAST?

In the case of the South Africa and Uganda Houses, their individual histories complicate certain narratives pitched within the square. In an epideictic space brimming with architectural attractions, permeating with ornamental design, and laden with symbolism, the presence of the Henry Havelock and Charles Napier plinths in the square—and therefore inclusion in the
collective framework—might be read as a positive contribution to the meaning of the space. However, as the embassies may signify to certain audiences—each embassy represents a country which has faced British imperialism in the past—Britain’s past carries collusion, and the Havelock and Napier plinths are part of the imperial narrative rather than whatever narrative is reflected in the collective. There is no acknowledgement of what can be found in the Federal Research Division’s Library of Congress Country Studies concerning Uganda and South Africa, which recounts narratives such as the (re)occurrences of bloody conflicts and the heavy taxing of Ugandans by the British. Nor is there mentioning of Britain’s 68 year occupation and reign of Uganda under ‘The British Protectorate of Uganda’—led, at times, by Harry H. Johnston, one of Britain’s most influential “scramblers” in the “Scramble for Africa,” the global race for the colonization of Africa. Also on the FDR website is a description of Britain’s similar role in the colonization and subjugation of South Africa, including revelations such as Britain’s neglect to discontinue their expansion of land and slave trade, which only ceased when the pressure of British abolitionist parties culminated in the Slave Trade Act of 1807. In fact, it was not until the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 that they ended colonial slavery permanently.

None of this story is told in the space, or acknowledged near the embassy. In an area overstuffed with various inscriptions and relics acknowledging the smallest of cultural and historical facts and occurrences, the lack of commemoration to either the fallen British conquistadors or the murdered natives of Uganda and South Africa seems like a conscious decision. This is to be expected—after all, what nation acknowledges its own atrocities in a celebratory space? However, the atrocity of British imperialism is acknowledged in the space, through the inclusion of hugely influential imperialist generals, which, to some audiences, might be interpreted as drawing support for such acts. In their prolonged existence, they might at least
be interpreted as behavior that is tolerated—not only by the nation, but by the individuals who engage in these spaces. Of course, one could read their existence in the space in many ways, such as the refusal by England to ignore not only its imperial past but, perhaps, in its continued existence, its refusal to alter its disturbing past practices of memorializing proponents of imperialism. However, if atrocities are not acknowledged at the embassies, then how can one argue for the inclusion of the proponents of atrocities within the square? The London Councils demographics page states that the Black African population has now surpassed the Indian population as the biggest BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people) group in London. As the numbers of minorities continue to increase, and Black Africans continue to be the largest minority group, one might now expect Britain’s disturbing past to be rectified. Rather than acknowledge, confront, and accept the past as it actually happened, the City of Westminster and Greater London Authority choose to neglect this past in favor of constructing more championing remembrances of military heroes, a quality that is highlighted, as well as complicated, by its inclusion of Napier and Havelock in the “conservation area.”

This framework, albeit rhetorically selective, seems to work for the space of Trafalgar Square, propagating a collective memory that is rich with British nationalism stemming from the separate narratives of military heroics, British government, and the past and present customs of the Royal Monarchy. However, in moving into the physical confinements of Trafalgar Square in the strictest sense—focusing on only those monuments, memorials, and space within the square—one finds that the collective narrative, while still intact in terms of its intended collective framework, posits similar tension in the relationship between past as occurred and past as memorialized—and consequentially, past as remembered. That is to say, certain elements
within the square prove problematic for the rhetorician who deconstructs the square, or for the curious visitor who is willing to closely examine, for the neglect in some cases is obvious.

CHAPTER 4: LOCATING AND DECONSTRUCTING MEANING AND MEANING MAKERS WITHIN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

THE NAPIER AND HAVELOCK PLINTHS: PROONENTS AND PROPAGATORS OF IMPERIALISM

Memorials narrate history in selective and controlled ways—hiding as much as they reveal. Consequently, the social process of remembering is accompanied, simultaneously, by a process of forgetting—an excluding of other historical narratives from public consideration and recognition (168 Dwyer and Alderman).
The question of why leading proponents of imperialism are occupying this space still isn’t solved—surely they could more accurately embrace more quintessentially British figures within an emphatically essential British framework than Napier and Havelock. But there are reasons such frameworks are in place, if one is willing to consider historical contexts—and to dig beneath the façade of the collective framework. Because “memorials narrate history in selective and controlled ways,” one must consider what aspects of a memorialized event, place, or person are forgotten or neglected in certain spaces, and what aspects are remembered or acknowledged. Discovering what is (actively) remembered in a memorial space can undermine and underline what, specifically, is being forgotten, unearthing deeply embedded aspects of misrepresentation in pitched narratives. Often, as is the case in Trafalgar Square, researching the historical context of the memorial’s fruition reveals more behind the motives of why it is included in public space than the actual individual’s narrative. Knowing why it has been placed in the public framework often helps in identifying why it has been placed at its particular position within this framework, for its spatial placement amongst its associates often defines its own cultural interpretive meaning; space’s role in shaping meaning is seriously influential.

According to the memorial inscription of Charles James Napier, Britain is memorializing Charles James Napier by a name, years lived, the knowledge that the public agreed to support this memorial, and that (mostly) private soldiers made it happen. Of course, this inscription forgets his role in history—his legacy stands as that of the harsh ruling Commander-in-Chief who famously conquered the entire Sindh Province instead of following orders to only put down rebels, as Edward Rice writes, “Ignorant of India and the people, Napier was able to carry out his commission oblivious to the fact that several fair and sensible treaties forced upon the Sindhis and by the Company had been abrogated when greed demanded” (Rice 97). He goes on to
describe how thousands of Sindhis were “mowed down by Napier’s superior firepower” (98). In no way does the detainable information of the memorial summarize this narrative. In failing to acknowledge any qualities of Napier, the memorial is muted, and the legacy of Napier is seemingly undermined by this silence. However, the memorial remains.

The Henry Havelock plinth, located on the southeast border of the square (directly opposite of the Napier plinth) posits similar problems, commemorating the general for “THE CAMPAIGN IN INDIA,” using a quote from general Havelock himself: “SOLDIERS! YOUR LABOURS YOUR PRIVATIONS YOUR SUFFERINGS AND YOUR VALOUR WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN BY A GRATEFUL COUNTRY.” More is remembered than in Napier’s case, as his various staff members and roles are outlined: “volunteers, royal artillery, Bengal artillery, infantry…” But this inclusion is needless detail, taking space that could be used to more clearly point to the viewer what they are remembering. Still, the audience gets a clearer indication of who they are looking at—a man who fought in “the campaign in India” with various soldiers. Importantly, the motivational excerpt which initially was used to rouse his men into battle serves a new purpose to both British and foreign audiences, informing them that Great Britain is a grateful country that recognizes its soldiers “labours, privations, sufferings, and valours.” But in neglecting to say what those labours, privations, or sufferings are, the memorials conveniently forget these various acts of heroics. Thus, the plinth stands as a testament that Britain is grateful and does remember—or at least partakes in memory practices—even if the labours, privations, sufferings, and valours have long been forgotten.

Given his role in “the Indian campaign,” one can find that Henry Havelock’s legacy is similarly traceable, as that of a commanding general who fought against India in the first Anglo-Burmese War with such conviction that he was called to lead forces against the Indian Rebellion
of 1857, what has been called by Indian historian Amaresh Misra in an article by The Guardian’s Randeep Ramesh, “a holocaust, one were millions disappeared. It was a necessary holocaust in the British view because they thought the only way to win was to destroy entire populations in towns and villages. It was simple and brutal. Indians who stood in their way were killed” adding, “But its scale has been kept a secret.”

Such sentiments echo the mindset of Charles Napier regarding his Sindhi seize, who is quoted by Edward Rice as having said that, “We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful and humane piece of rascality it will be” (Rice 96). Henry Havelock oversaw and orchestrated the murder of waves of rebel forces throughout August of 1857, going on to decisively recapture the colonies of Lucknow (briefly) and Cawnpore (indefinitely) just before his death. Largely because of his actions, a British presence in India via the British Raj was able to supplant the British East India Company, continuing to enforce imperialism from 1858 until 1947. Given this history, it is easy to see why their actual pasts are neglected in favor of an unclear, ideological embrace of military struggle (“your labours, privations, sufferings, and valours”) one finds in Trafalgar Square today.

THE RHETORICAL JOURNEY: FROM COLONIZERS OF INDIA TO PROTECTORS OF TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Although not readily apparent on their surface, memorials bear traces of deeper stories about how they were created, by whom, and for what ideological purpose –Dwyer and Alderman “Memorial Landscapes”

In order to understand the rhetorical purpose of these plinths in the collective framework, one must look for the “traces of deeper stories” in the memorial such as “how they were created, by whom, and for what ideological purpose.” In other words, as Dresser similarly emphasized,
one must consider the context of its creation. In the case of the Napier and Havelock plinths, a quick analysis of the past as occurred reveals their cemented legacy as one championing Britain’s imperial success and sacrifice in India—their role in the square now is for those members of society who wish to embark on a univocal, official, and traditional narrative through public space. However, their roles were once more active in the construction of London’s framework, working to pacify certain aspects of the collective framework which might be disturbing to certain audiences.

Trafalgar Square opened to the public on May 1, 1844, housing only Nelson’s Column as a memorial/monument within the square. Considering contexts traceable from the Federal Research Division, one can find that in 1707, after the Mughal Empire started to decline, Britain’s East India Company began to expand over Indian subcontinents, creating a gradually larger presence over India from 1757 to 1857. In 1857, tension broke out and the Indian Rebellion took place. Thus, the decision to erect a public monument of Charles James Napier in 1855—just two years after his death and two years before the Indian Rebellion—with the same space as the honorable military hero Viscount Horatio Nelson as located atop Nelson’s Column is one which attempts to align the two British General’s military endeavors and sacrifices through spatial association. Charles James Napier’s contributions may be unclear to the viewer or reader of the space, but General Nelson’s Column surely is not—equipped with four, text-accompanied bronze friezes and two separate panels explaining his role and sacrifices in the shaping of Britain, the honorable General Nelson provides enough historical context to be passed around and disseminated among the Square’s lesser known narratives, as spatial association transforms over time into narrative association.
After reaping the benefits of the East India Company’s continued conquest over Indian subcontinents and their people, the British government may have sensed India’s increased frustration with the situation. In the 18th and 19th centuries, London’s collective framework had neither the technology to provide nor the social equality to demand a polyvocal platform containing multiple perspectives. The privileged, many of whom reaped the benefits of Britain’s colonial practices, had little reason to challenge Napier’s heroized narrative in the square, allowing his imperialist truth to reinscribe itself alongside the gallant actions of those neighboring memorialized figures. While Napier has been “set in stone,” very few of his words or actions have been. His prolonged placement in the Square insures his existence as an endless signifier within the framework, rather than guaranteeing a continued acceptance of imperialism. Thus, what better space to place him in than the new Trafalgar Square, to the immediate left of the honorable General Nelson? Yes, this casted positive light on past action, but it also served a more pressing function: in the event that conditions worsen and harsher methods were to be required in India, his existence in the square perceivably served the precautionary purpose of increasing public support in the midst of building tension from subcontinents leading up to the Rebellion. As we now know, the Rebellion did happen, the East India Company was supplanted by the similarly operated but substantially more powerful British Raj, and Britain was able to build an even more dominating position over India.

Clearly, its role was filled. What, then, does one make of its current existence? As previously noted, one might consider its existence as a testament to a previous narrative and a refusal to bury what was once practiced in public space. Or, it could insure that a particular narrative that was influential in the shaping of London—its imperial past treatment of particular subgroups and minorities—is not forgotten, or attempted to be hidden from minorities who now
live in Britain. Interestingly, its vague, open-signifying inscription allows it to surpass its contextual significance, allowing it to be read in a number of ways.

The history behind Henry Havelock reveals similar rhetorical underlining as to whom and for whom it is rhetorically purposed. Just six years after Napier’s plinth—and only four years after the Rebellion—another statue of an India-based colonialist was established within the square in the form of the Henry Havelock plinth. Similarly toting few details, this plinth offered a summative quotation from Havelock to his soldiers ensuring them of Britain’s continued gratefulness, as previously discussed. In 2014, this may read as the traditional narrative of past British efforts, but in 1861, four years after the Indian Rebellion, amidst ongoing occupation and extortion of India via the British Raj, its rhetoric was much more direct; those at home in Britain or visiting are “not to forget” (i.e. pay homage to) Britain’s current and ongoing “labours, privations, sufferings and valours” in India in their visit to the Square. However, as is reflected in the vague commemorative rhetoric, the true narrative of the British Raj, even by the standards in place in 1861, was likely considered too morally suspect to exist as occurred in the square. Stripping the plinths—and their national narrative—of any specifics, and filling them instead with nationalistic rhetoric and motifs, the real lives of Napier and Havelock, much like various specifics within the British narrative, are remembered very little by the “grateful country,” but celebrated very much.

Without a past narrative attached to their names, these dead statues are, as time passes transformed into heroes of Trafalgar Square, and fighters of tradition, becoming part of that irreplaceable landscape that the audit insists shapes meaning. This is evident in the public’s negative reception to then-Mayor of London Ken Livingstone’s 2000 attempt to remove them for statues that “ordinary Londoners would know”. Contesting that, “people on the plinths in the
main square in our capital city should be identifiable to the generality of the population,” Mayor Livingstone admitted that he himself has, “not a clue who two of the generals there are or what they did”. Paul Kelso wrote an article in The Guardian titled “Mayor attacks generals in battle of Trafalgar Square,” in which he heavily criticizes the idea, citing Member of Parliament Bernard Jenkin’s harsh accusation that Livingstone was “trying to erase a fundamental part of our nation’s heritage from the heart of our capital city” as well as Colonel Alastair Cumming’s contemplation: “And where do we stop?...This really is indicative of where we are going as a country isn’t it—consigning our history to oblivion.”

Kelso’s rather nifty title, which plays on the title of Trafalgar Square and the actual Battle of Trafalgar, reassesses Napier and Havelock as “generals in battle of Trafalgar Square,” showcasing the consequences of spatial coexistence and the new narratives they imply. In Kelso’s decision to group Napier and Havelock—“generals” (statues) currently in the “battle of Trafalgar Square”—with General Nelson, who fought and died in the actual “Battle of Trafalgar,” he reveals the logical misconception shaped by space. In existing as statues within the square, they are brought into the present, relieved of their specific roles in India—which are not acknowledged in the memorial—and introduced into new roles as silent defenders of a “fundamental part of our nation’s heritage.” As such, they are history heroes who resist the attempts of those who are “consigning our history into oblivion”—even when that “fundamental part” is being represented in ambiguous rhetoric.
Existing as empty signifiers *within the framework* gives these statues endless potentiality as to what they are contributing *to the framework*, allowing their meaning to surreptitiously fit into the current processes of memory as reflected in the landscape. Equipped with an inscription that provides very little, their legacy is able to surpass their own deeds and latch onto the larger legacy of Trafalgar Square. Thus, as we accept the sum of Trafalgar Square, we accept its individual parts. Consequentially, it is not the strong-handed General Napier, who once said to a rebel that “I will in a week tear you from the midst of your tribe and hang you” and to a fellow soldier that “the human mind is never better disposed to gratitude and attachment than when softened by fear” that we are accepting—what a reading of the space this quotation-as-inscription would cause!—but rather, the CHARLES JAMES NAPIER plinth, which, along with the HENRY HAVELOCK plinth, successive black posts, and the beloved Nelson’s Column, form the main entrance to Trafalgar Square (see Fig 4.3) (Farwell 29).

*Figure 4.3*: The Napier Plinth immediately to the right is linked to Nelson’s Column and The Havelock Plinth via a series of cement posts. This helps mark the entrance to Trafalgar Square.
CHAPTER 5: THE LIFE OF THE SQUARE: APOLOGIZING THROUGH INCLUSION

(THE BURIAL OF TENSION)

A CALL TO ACTION: MAYOR LIVINGSTONE’S 2003 RENOVATION OF THE SQUARE

The tension inherent in the relationship between the past as occurred and the past as remembered in a country’s physically constructed narrative does not just disappear, as the embrace of the whole square by various audiences may suggest—it relies on what Nicoletti calls “layers of national myth and explanation” i.e. the collective framework of the space. Inversely, these tensions are only discovered through new, or newly thinking, audiences and their willingness to consider a more nuanced depiction of history when reading deeper into public spaces—as Dwyer and Alderman previously posited: “how they were created, for whom, and to what ideological purpose.” However, a critical reading of Trafalgar Square is difficult to do, as it does not seem warranted—the life of the Square dominates any attempt to read it as a memorial space, helping to insure that its role focuses on current social functions rather than past decisions to include colonialists.

Since 2003 the square has undergone dramatic changes, all of which separately and collectively bring an undeniable liveliness to the square, with the biggest improvement decision being then-mayor Ken Livingstone’s decision to connect Trafalgar Square and The National Gallery via a series of improvements to the larger space, beginning with the removal of the northern road, which had previously acted as a physical divider between the two iconic locations. This resulted in a massive new pedestrianized walking space, expanding the square to the newly traffic-free accessible location—which, along with The National Gallery, include the adjoining National Portrait Gallery and The Sainsbury Wing, iconic gallery collections in their own right. However, it also caused all traffic to run through the Charing Cross junction, which, is centered
at the heart of the collective framework. This move is clearly rhetorical, as it ties together not only the spaces of, but the places accessible through the thoroughfares of Whitehall, The Mall, and The Strand. Rather than having to cross the street and walk across and around to the space of Trafalgar Square, visitors of the art collections now have no say as to whether or not they want to visit the square—they step immediately into it upon entrance and exit. Livingstone further unified the upper and lower spaces by demolishing the northern middle section of the wall, which previously delineated the road from the square. The addition of a massive set of steps leading down into the lower area of the square—which was previously the only square—was accompanied by the installation of two lifts and the newly opened restaurant, Café in the Square. Café in the Square is included on the GLA’s website, as they digitally direct the user’s attention toward the opportunity to “sit outside and watch the crowds enjoying the most famous square in the world,” as they enjoy British cultural dishes such as croissants, pastys, pastries, or crumpets with hot tea or coffee. However, Livingstone’s added space has most drastically changed the life of Trafalgar Square in its consumption: street performers now occupy the space, to the delight of masses of tourists.

A NEW SQUARE, A NEW READING (THE PRESENT LIFE OF THE SQUARE)

Unlike the once iconic feral pigeons—which in 2003 were banned by Livingstone in a series of measured attacks including multiple bylaws, increased fines, and bringing a bird of prey, a Harris Hawk, into the square—the street performers are not considered a nuisance and have not been asked to leave. It seems they are a welcomed presence, and a presence they are, bringing in a wealth of buskers in the form of street musicians, magicians, artists, cultural icons such as Spider-Man and Yoda, and other various talents such as bubble blowers, break-dancers, and illusionists. In Dwyer and Alderman’s “Memorial Landscapes” they posit various “lines of

10 Beginning at 50 pounds and currently sitting at 500 pounds
questioning” for different memorial landscapes, including the following for the memorial-as-performance: “How are visitors supposed to behave at this place? What kind of behavioral cues are embedded in the landscape?...” (Dwyer and Alderman 174). The inclusion of street performers suggests that this is a fun tourist destination. One does not need to sense a “behavioral cue” upon walking into the square—they can see and hear the performers and applause of the crowd, and surely sense that this is a place of celebration.

Dwyer and Alderman continue in this same line of questioning, “…Do benches and water suggest quiet contemplation?” (174). There are benches along the wall, but, as Fig 5.1 shows, rather than quiet contemplation, they are usually occupied by outdoor eating and working. There is water, but in 2009 the small pump which might “suggest quiet contemplation” was replaced by a powerful pump capable of spraying water 80 feet into the air, with a new LED lighting system that for the first time ever changed the appearance of the water to a revolving circulation of pink, green, blue, purple, orange, and red (see Fig 5.3). By day and night young couples flock to the fountains, sitting on their wide edges—the audit calls these edges part of the spaces “street furniture,” and does not list any policies in place to forbid their occupancy (see Fig. 5.2).

**Figure 5.1:** Visitors eat, talk, lounge, and work along the “street furniture” provided in the landscape within the Square.

**Figure 5.2:** Visitors—mostly couples—sit on the edge of the fountains and enjoy the day.
Nelson’s Column might have suggested “quiet contemplation” of the meaning of military sacrifice—its descriptive friezes each focus on the loss of individual British soldiers, culminating in Nelson’s own death at the south facing frieze. Rather than using a more positive depiction of these triumphant victories, the detailed and specific commemoration of loss is conveyed, paired with textual emphasis that every man is expected to sacrifice himself for Britain. But even the friezes face risk of obscurity through the physical occupancy of the base by visitors of the square (see Fig. 5.4, 5.5). Surprisingly, this does not appear to be a violation of the monument even though the small metal gate separating the monument from the larger space suggests otherwise. Regardless of the gate’s intention, it provides little more than an obstacle for visitors. If not quiet contemplation, Dwyer and Alderman ask, “Do stairs and alter-like risers lend to a sense of anticipation?” (174 ital. added). The stairs connecting the space of the lower square to the newly added space of the upper square certainly lend a sense of anticipation; as one ascends the steps, s/he begins to see and hear the street performers. Paradoxically, this causes a reading of stepping down into the lower square as descending into a relaxed space of leisure, where visitors can

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11 None of the patrolling “Heritage Wardens,” or working “contractors” who, according to the official GLA website, cover “cleansing, horticulture, stonework, and information on the square” asked those occupying the base to leave in my extended time with the Square.
inhabit and consume the space however they please—including eating, drinking, nuzzling by the fountain, and climbing on Nelson’s Column.

Thus the square, seemingly engulfed in penetrating British national frameworks and placed at the center of the overarching collective framework, allows users to engage the inner framework however they please—even when it seemingly undermines the role of the square. That users may engage the framework how they please is not to say that there is a “right,” “true,” or even “official” narrative that one either complicitly accepts or, having been made aware of, actively rejects according to their actions in the square. Rather, it is to say that the spatial theory I am building helps viewers to be rhetorically aware and educated in resisting the various ploys that “direct the attention” of the viewer toward various rhetorical readings. Through a scholarly lens this is not difficult, but it is much more difficult when in this space. As Burke points out, the
acts of defining and/or outlining terministic screens is a terministic screen in itself. Similarly, to physically engage and interpret these public spaces at all is to become part of this spatial narrative; there is no path that is void of rhetorical “directing of attention,” for any direction of attention towards “this” is a deflection of “that.”

Still, one can be made aware of the panel’s rhetorical action, which cites its current role as “the centre for national rejoicing and assemblies and rallies of various cause,” followed by its past historic role as the original home to the Royal Mews, and its commemorative purposes to General Nelson last. In this ordering of roles, the viewer is rhetorically called to read Nelson’s memorialization as a “landmark site”—in fact the Panel calls it one—in that it is dictated by its functional role in the space and framework, existing as “a focal point or key element in view” due to its 170 foot height and the areas rhetorically instructed openness.

For these reasons, Nelson’s Column’s primary role may be understood as one that contributes “significantly to the character and townscape of the area,” rather than one that memorializes Nelson. In such a view, it makes absolute sense why individuals are allowed to climb on the memorial, or why buskers can work around it—these are current practices of the current society, and the space’s role is subordinate to these practices rather than any memorialization role. Because the current memory practice embraces “national rejoicing and assemblies and rallies,” a wide variety of cultural and religious backgrounds are given the space: St. Patrick’s Day Parade for the Irish, The Passion of Jesus for Christians, Feast of St. George for Palestinians, four celebrations of the Vaisakhi Festival for Sikhs, Pride in London for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community, Eid Festival for Muslims, Diwali Festival for Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains, etc. into the square.
This is not by chance—as the GLA announces on its website, “The Mayor commissions a range of events on Trafalgar Square…to celebrate the culture and communities of London…As the strategic authority for London, we [the GLA] occasionally support non-GLA led events which we think will contribute to the Mayor’s strategic objectives” (ital. added). By introducing such customs into the framework, and neglecting to acknowledge Britain’s controversial pasts with various countries, the space buries the tension rather than acknowledge or accept it. Still, their inclusion in the space indicates their inclusion in current society. While the pasts of minorities may be neglected in order to shape a more positive collective memory of Great Britain’s ruling class past, at least now the pasts, traditions, and customs—that don’t affect the reading of Britain’s past—of those being forgotten in the memorialization within and surrounding the square can be respectfully recognized and remembered as part of the squares present day, ongoing role in society. In a sense, the plinths inclusion stands as a testimony to the evolution of a square from physical supporter of imperialism to active supporter of diversity, democracy, and protest, as seen in the GLA’s definition of its role as the “centre of national democracy and protest…on a range of political, religious, and general issues.” This evolution is only accentuated by the ongoing presences of suspect narratives such as Napier and Havelock, whose job is not to commemorate the past as occurred, but to construct a new past through construction of and, later, contribution to the overarching collective framework of London, England.
Appendix

**Figure A.1:** A yoda impersonator looks on, part of the “wall” of buskers occupying the entrance to the Gallery upon the upper square

**Figure A.2:** The line of buskers make any walk into the The National Gallery or Trafalgar Square a lively one.

**Figure A.3, A.4:** Breakdancers “Busking For Philippines” directly in front of The National Gallery. To their right (A.4, below), street artists draw a flag of every country. Rather than directly giving the artists a donation, individuals are to place their coins on their home country. Both of these types of “busking” flourish in a current memory practice that embraces minorities and subgroups.
Figure A.5 (left): Taken from the entrance of The National Gallery, the elevated space allows one to see even more elements of the landscape at once, as Whitehall and Big Ben are viewable to the south, and Admiralty Arch (with the Union Jack flag) and Big Ben in the right corner.

Figure A.6: The City of Oslo, Norway’s capital, gives a tree to Britain to be placed in the square each holiday season as a token for gratitude for assistance during the Second World War, an example of past and present—and transnational—connecting memory practices.

Figure A.7: Royal symbols are placed all over the physical landscape, such as this lamppost directly outside of the Square.

Figure A.8: A Jubilee Walkway plaque encountered leaving the area. The symbol ties together the crown to the iconic St. Pauls Cathedral.
Works Cited


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