Toward a Critical Archaeology

by Mark P. Leone, Parker B. Potter, Jr., and Paul A. Shackel

Critical theory, essentially an effort to explore and add to Marx’s insights into the nature of knowledge of human society, is increasingly being applied to the human sciences. Archaeologists are invited to consider critical theory by evidence that archaeology in some environments is used to serve political ends, and by the growing controversy over the ownership and control of remains and interpretations of the past. The claim of a critical archaeology is that seeing the interrelationship between archaeology and politics will allow archaeologists to achieve less contingent knowledge. The way in which critical theory can be applied to archaeology is here illustrated by an analysis of data from a citywide project conducted in Annapolis, Maryland—a project aimed at demystifying the way a past is constructed.


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Critical theory is a set of varied attempts to adapt ideas from Marx to the understanding of events and circumstances of 20th-century life that Marx did not know. It began with the Frankfurt school of philosophy in the 1920s and was in large part an effort to explore and add to Marx’s insights into the nature of knowledge of human society. Members of the Frankfurt group include Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, and Marcuse; Lukacs and Gramsci, although not representatives of the school, are also important. Critical theory has been applied to a variety of human sciences and humanistic disciplines and is now having an impact on archaeology in Britain and the United States.

An important issue in critical theory is epistemology. As Geuss [1981:1] argues, Marx’s theory of society, if properly construed, does clearly give us knowledge of society, but does not easily fit into any of the accepted categories of “knowledge.” It obviously isn’t a formal science like logic or mathematics or a practical skill . . . yet neither would it seem to be correctly interpreted as a strictly empirical theory like those in natural science. . . . Rather Marxism is a radically new kind of theory; to give a proper philosophic account of its salient features requires drastic revisions in traditional views about the nature of knowledge.
Critical theory aims at "producing enlightenment... enabling those who hold [it] to determine what their true interests are." Its goal is emancipation from coercion, including coercion that is self-imposed. To this end, it is "reflective" [Geuss 1981:2].

Critical theory has had substantial impact in law [Unger 1976]; it has been applied in history [Eagleton 1985–86; Lowenthal 1985; Wallace 1981, 1984], the decorative arts [St. George 1985, Sweeney 1984], literature [Caravetta 1984], geography [Hay 1979; Peet 1975, 1977; Peet and Lyons 1981], and museum studies [Baramik et al. 1977] and, of course, has been a part of the history and philosophy of science [Brammigan 1981, Feyrerabend 1970, Latour and Woolgar 1979]. Almost invariable, one of the reasons given for employing critical theory is to describe and deal with factors—social, economic, political, and psychological—that have been observed to influence conclusions and their social uses but that, under many ordinary rules of scholarship, should not be present.

Archaeologists are invited to consider critical theory by, for one thing, the fact that archaeological interpretations presented to the public may acquire a meaning unintended by the archaeologist and not to be found in the data. Leone's (1981a, b) analysis of the use of archaeology and history at Colonial Williamsburg and at Shakerstown is part of a body of work [Clarke 1973, Gero et al. 1983, Handsman 1981, Handsman and Leone n.d., Kehoe 1984, Landau 1984, Lowenthal 1985, Melzter 1981, Perper and Schrire 1977, Wylie 1985] showing that, in contrast to the general perception among American archaeologists, archaeology in some environments in the United States is used to serve political aims. A further encouragement to explore a reflexive epistemology is the growing controversy in archaeology over ownership and control of remains and interpretations of the past. The rebural of human remains and "repatriation" of some artifacts to native groups may be a political issue as well as a scientific one, as may be the use of preservation, including archaeology, to change the value of property in towns and cities in connection with changing the locales of different wealth and ethnic groups. Beyond these, and both less visible and more complex, is the effort by archaeologists in federal and state agencies in the United States to control the use and preservation of archaeological remains in ever greater areas, including private land. Ostensibly a neutral effort to protect a resource uncritically regarded as valuable, this inevitably raises concerns about monopolizing access to data and interpretations. It is clear, then, that the practice of archaeology is affected by political, economic, and social decisions. The claim of a critical archaeology is that seeing the interrelationship between archaeology and politics will allow archaeologists to achieve less contingent knowledge.

A central concept for addressing the relationship between knowledge of the past and the social and political context of its production is ideology. Critical theory uses "ideology" in many senses [see Geuss 1981]. We use it as it has been employed by Althusser (1971a) and introduced into anthropology by Barnett and Silverman (1979). Ideology in this sense comprises the givens of everyday life, unnoticed, taken for granted, and activated and reproduced in use. It is the means by which inequality, bondage, frustration, etc., are made acceptable, rationalized, or hidden. Ideology serves to reproduce society intact; knowledge, or consciousness of ideology, may lead to illumination or emancipation.

The concept of ideology has been employed in archaeology by Tilley (1982), Miller (1982a, b), Shanks and Tilley (1982), Shennan (1982), Miller and Tilley (1984), Shanks and Tilley [n.d.], and others in describing inequality. Inequality implies the alienation of labor—the use of goods or services without a full return of value to their producers. One word for this asymmetrical relationship is exploitation. Ideology hides and masks exploitation or rationalizes by naturalizing or supernaturalizing it. Ideology acts within a stratified or class society to reproduce inequality without serious resistance, violence, or revolution. In various senses, the term "ideology" has been applied to the Bronze Age of northwestern Europe by Shanks and Tilley (1982) and Thorpe (1981), to the Inca by Patterson (1984), to 18th- and 19th-century western Connecticut by Handsman (1980, 1981, 1982), to the Harappan civilization by Miller (1985), and to 19th- and 20th-century industrial communities in Binghamton, New York, by McGuire [n.d.]. All these examples are stratified societies with changing relations of wealth holding. In all cases, the resulting analyses order the data in a novel way and account for aspects that have sometimes been overlooked or considered puzzling.

Ideology, presupposing as it does contradiction, potential conflict, or periodic violence in society, is part of a set of assumptions that may be strongly at odds with the finished products of functionalism, systems theory, and much of ecological theory. The concern is not smooth functioning per se but how conflict and contradiction are masked or naturalized. The reconstruction of ideology in prehistoric, protoliterate, or extinct societies is possible, and it is valuable for addressing some archaeological data heretofore unexplained. Ideology is relevant to class stratification, wealth holding, and power relations, and, in general, its study may illuminate what is already known of past societies. We argue that this is an extension into archaeology of critical theory.

Critical theory asks of any set of conclusions from what point of view they are constructed. The question is intended to help establish their degree of validity. To require that studies of the past provide knowledge of current circumstances or illuminate obscure relationships today would risk the subordination of the past, but Lukacs (1971) does provide useful instruction on bridging the gap between historical knowledge, often disembodied, and his vision of the historian's obligation within the framework of critical theory. As he sees it, the task of the historian is to illuminate the roots of modern ideology—to identify the mystified relations between classes and agents, to show how that mystifica-
tion is maintained through ideology, and to give a history to the ideas used in its maintenance. These ideas include, for example, the idea of an objectively separate past and the idea of the person as an individual or as possessing personal freedom. Ideas like these have active power. Once they are seen as ideological, notions of the past, of the individual, or of personal freedom can no longer be taken as timeless givens. They can be given a history, placed in context, and shown to be politically active, and this procedure may produce illumination. We feel that this logic can be worked out in a convincing way for some of historical archaeology, whether it can be done for prehistory is an open question.

A critical archaeology retains and reaffirms the discipline's commitment to understanding the past, but what past to construct becomes a matter of conscious choice that inevitably involves an understanding of context and meaning. These terms, now so much used in symbolic anthropology and by Hodder [1982, 1984, 1985], do not mean the same thing to everyone. For the critical theorist, ideology provides much of the meaning in a society, although not all meaning is necessarily ideology. Because it is not epiphenomenal, a mere reflection of other realities, but central to maintaining the status quo in stratified societies, it is considered active or recursive, analogous to language in its formative qualities. This may add an important dimension to the New Archaeology's definition of material culture. Critical theory is materialist, but our use of it rejects the ranked order of causal relationships of White, Harris, and Vayda. The philosophers who initiated critical theory sought to integrate the notion of consciousness into epistemology and thus to create both a convincing and an active link between material reality and an awareness of it.

Our exploration of a critical approach takes place in the context of a broader understanding of the role of positivism in the discipline. Positivism, an approach that seeks more reliable knowledge of the past by stressing the relationship between scientific statements and their testing, has come under criticism for frequently producing knowledge so narrow as to seem irrelevant [e.g., Hodder 1984, 1985; Wylie 1985b]. For Wylie, whose lead we tend to follow, positivism is not therefore to be abandoned but rather to be adjusted to the realities of archaeological data. We acknowledge that positivism and critical theory in archaeology have not yet been synthesized, and we do not attempt a synthesis here. We do suggest that a critical archaeology may produce more reliable knowledge of the past by exploring the social and political contexts of its production.

The way in which critical theory can be applied to archaeology may be illustrated by an analysis of 18th-, 19th-, and 20th-century data from a citywide project conducted in Annapolis, Maryland. From its inception, this project, called "Archaeology in Annapolis," aimed at demystifying archaeology, teaching about how a past is constructed, and discovering how the past was used locally so as to understand local ideology and identify the aspects of it that need illuminating.

Critical Theory and the Ethnography of Annapolis

When "Archaeology in Annapolis" began in 1981, as a collaboration between the University of Maryland and Historic Annapolis, Inc. (a private, state-chartered research-oriented preservation organization founded in 1952), it was recognized that Annapolis was not just an old and well-preserved city but also a historic one. Because Annapolis had considered itself historic since at least the 1880s, it was possible to do an anthropological analysis of its histories, and this effort has shown how political factors have been embedded in the city's presentation of itself over the last 100 years. Given this, we assumed that archaeological findings would not exist in a vacuum but would be assimilated into the community's understanding of its own past. For this reason, and because of our critical approach, the research program and the associated museum program2 had to be rooted in the interests and conflicts of the community in which they were to take place. Consequently, the project has had an ethnographic component from the outset.

The ethnographic research, conducted by Potter, flowed from the assumption that, for as long as it has considered itself historic, Annapolis has structured a past for itself that aids and legitimizes its contemporary activities. Potter's first step was an examination of a wide variety of presentations of the past in Annapolis.3 Particular attention was paid to the separations [Barnett and Silverman 1979] imposed on the past that were treated not as constructs contemporary with the composition of a history but as given or quasi-natural categories. Many of these separations play strategic roles in underpinning the balance of power in Annapolis today.

2. "Archaeology in Public," the program of public interpretation for "Archaeology in Annapolis," consists of four elements, in four media, which may be experienced in any order: (1) "Annapolis: Reflections from the Age of Reason," a 20-minute, 12-projector, computer-synchronized audiovisual production, (2) Archaeological Annapolis: A Guide to Seeing and Understanding Three Centuries of Change [Leone and Potter 1984], a 24-page guidebook to one part of the Historic District of Annapolis, [3] a 15-minute tour of a working archaeological site given by an archaeologist, and (4) three small archaeological exhibits located in museum buildings around the district. The audiovisual presentation is about ways of understanding the increasing segmentation and standardization of material culture in 18th-century Annapolis as these are related to profit making. The guidebook leads the reader to eight spots and at each shows how historical interpretations in Annapolis have changed—and continue to change—with changing political concerns. The site tour, discussed in detail below (and see Leone 1983; Potter and Leone 1986, n.d.), focuses on archaeological logic or method and on the connections between the aims of the archaeological work and political issues in Annapolis today. The artifact exhibits [see n. 13] display our understanding of material culture as recursive.

3. Potter's ethnographic database includes 4 book-length histories of Annapolis, 20 historical guidebooks and picture books, a half-dozen major historical reenactments and special tours, two dozen historical talks, tours, and minor events, a half-dozen formal interviews, the products of participant observation in the downtown Historic District for over three years, and several hundred hours of informal but intensive and engaged interaction in the local historical preservation community.
Annapolis is a small (pop. ca. 32,000) but complex city. It has a municipal government, is the seat of Anne Arundel County, is the capital of Maryland, and is the location of the United States Naval Academy, a federal institution. Its economy revolves around state government, the Naval Academy, tourism, and yachting categories that are not mutually exclusive.

The city was founded around 1650, Maryland itself was founded in 1634. The capital of Maryland was removed from St. Mary’s City, in the southern part of the colony, to Annapolis in 1695, and the city was chartered in 1708. It experienced what it calls a “golden age” of wealth and fame from about 1760 until the end of the American Revolution. During this period it was the social, political, and economic center of the Chesapeake Bay. The end of its “golden age” coincided with two events that took place in the Maryland State House at Annapolis: on December 23, 1783, George Washington resigned his command of the Continental Army (a move designed to subordinate military to civil authority), and on January 14, 1784, the Treaty of Paris with Britain was ratified, officially ending the American Revolution. After the Revolution, Annapolis remained the capital but became a regional market town as many of its wealthiest residents moved to Baltimore and invested in that city's rapid expansion into an international commercial and industrial port.

In 1845 the United States Naval Academy was founded in Annapolis, but for the most part throughout the 19th century the city was in what one writer termed “gentle eclipse” (Norris 1925). The 1950s saw the beginning of a commercial revival based on yachting, tourism, and new highways that made Annapolis an attractive suburb for Washington, D.C., less than 30 miles away. Historic preservation has played a major role in Annapolis’s commercial renaissance. It is this basic outline, or part of it, that is conveyed to the public by tour guides, guidebooks, and historic-house museums as the history of Annapolis.

Potter’s initial lead was his sense that the history of Annapolis as presented to tourists in the city today is a series of fragments. History is recounted by a wide range of groups and institutions, some overlapping, some in competition, some in cooperation. More important, there is no history of Annapolis that demonstrates how all the different parts of the city fit together. The city is presented as a collection of unconnected units (time periods and institutions). Left unconnected are the black and the white populations, on the one hand, and the city and the United States Naval Academy, on the other.

In Annapolis, black history is presented separately from white history. By segregating the races temporally (white history is 18th-century history and black history is 19th-century history), history in Annapolis, written almost exclusively by whites, imposes a frame of reference that ignores the principal historical relationship between blacks and whites in Maryland and the rest of the southern United States: slavery. This in turn makes it difficult for slavery to be seen as antecedent to relations between the groups today. It also prevents blacks from using slavery as a reference point in comparing their present with their past.

The same kind of logic works with the relationship between the city and the United States Naval Academy. There is ample basis for presenting the city and the academy either as historically connected or as historically separate. The choice of the city’s historians is made clear by the title of one influential history: Annapolis: Its Colonial and Naval Story (Norris 1925). The mixing of categories in the title is instructive. Norris’s subtitle could have been Its 18th- and 19th-Century History or The History of the City and the Naval Academy. By mixing temporal and institutional terms, he reinforces the identity between city and 18th century, academy and 19th century. Detailed analysis shows a consistent presentation of the city as 18th-century (or, as its residents say, “ancient”), brick, small, slow, evocative, and associated with white residents and the academy as 19th- and 20th-century, granite, fast, scientific, and associated with the white transients who are its students and the black residents it employs. Against these separations are the extensive historical and contemporary connections between the city and the academy, among them the city’s economic dependence on the academy and the academy’s numerous expansions into the city.

Separations represented as accurate historical interpretations of the past are presented to residents and visitors as data about the past, but they conceal politically live conflicts between institutions and groups in the contemporary city. It is our hypothesis that these conflicts, should they be discovered in the historical presentations and used as a basis for action, would pose threats to competing political forces: city government, Naval Academy, preservationists, and minorities. These forces and the separations that hide their real relationships are important and meaningful to contemporary Annapolis.

To summarize, the major separations in Annapolis are 18th-century:19th-century, white:black, Historic District:Naval Academy, residents:visitors. An overarching separation which unifies the rest is insiders:outsiders. This separation, too, is grounded in history. The history of the city’s relationship to the outside world is one of self-imposed subservience. Annapolis worked hard to
have itself made the capital of Maryland [Riley 1976 [1887]:57]. It tried and failed to become the permanent capital of the United States just after the Revolution [Riley 1976 [1887]:198–200]. The Naval Academy was founded there after the city had carried on a 20-year courtship to get it [Riley 1976 [1887]:264]. In the late 19th century the city mounted a largely unsuccessful campaign to lure business and industry to Annapolis [Riley 1976 [1887]:323–24; 1897, 1901, 1906]. Finally, Annapolis in the 1980s works to promote itself as a yachting and tourist center, a part being played in this by the historic preservation movement. In each of these cases, Annapolis has invited outsiders in and profited by doing so while presenting itself as a stable, historically significant resource not especially dependent on outsiders.

While the analysis of the white/black and city: academy separations is based primarily on how history is presented in Annapolis, the analysis of the resident: visitor separation depends more on what is presented. Much has been made of George Washington’s 20-some visits [Baldridge 1928; Historic Annapolis, Inc. n.d.; Norris 1925:191–224; Riley 1976 [1887]:200–207, 218–20; Thomas 1952], and in presentations of his connections to the city Washington the Father of His Country is overshadowed by Washington the horse fancier, patron of the arts, and partygoer, in short, Washington the tourist. Potter’s hunch is that from the example of Washington visitors learn how Annapolis wishes them to conduct themselves during their stay in the city. They should be wealthy, fashionable, considerate, and social, and they should return home leaving just enough of their “aura” to attract others like themselves. Washington is a model of the perfect outsider.

The ethnography just summarized serves as a guide to what an archaeological program based on critical theory should teach the 5,000–10,000 people a year who visit the open archaeological sites in Annapolis. Since 1982, “Archaeology in Annapolis” has addressed two of the separations identified through archaeological excavations open to the public.

In the spring of 1985, archaeologists conducted a tour of the State House Inn site. The purpose of the excavation was to gather fine-grained information about the city’s 390-year-old street pattern, called the Nicholson plan, and the history of changes in it. Participants in the tour were told, to begin with, that there are two ways of looking at the city’s baroque street plan of two circles and radiating streets laid out by Governor Francis Nicholson in 1695: as a work of art, an unchanged relic of the 1600s, or as continually altered and adjusted to meet the needs of people living and working in Annapolis over the centuries. The reason for digging at the State House Inn, it was explained, was that comparisons between the earliest known map of Annapolis [the Stoddert survey of 1718] and modern maps showed that State Circle, on which the inn was situated, had been reduced by 30–60 feet without any record of the changes. The archaeological evidence for the shrinkage of State Circle was then pointed out: two cuts into the natural subsoil that may represent edges of earlier, larger circle diameters and a row of postholes near one of the cuts that may have been the line of a fence serving as a boundary between a larger State Circle and a yard [Hopkins 1986]. It was suggested that data from the State House Inn site would be combined with information from other sites around the circle, such as the Calvert House site [Yentsch 1983], to produce a more complete and cumulative picture of all the small alterations that have added up to a wholesale difference between the 18th-century State Circle and the State Circle of today. From small-scale alterations to the Nicholson plan such as this one, the presentation went on to a description of the largest alteration to the 18th-century street pattern, which was made by the United States Naval Academy in 1906 when it walled itself off from the rest of the city and created its own street plan. It was pointed out that roads and town plans carry information intended to direct the behavior and thought of people who use them. The academy’s replacement of the 18th-century elements of the city with a plan of its own was part of a larger attempt to make the academy appear separate from the rest of the city while in fact there were many powerful connections between the two. The tour showed how one may see the streets of Annapolis as ideology, as masking a significant and potent reality.

To illuminate the separation between residents and visitors and at the same time to process archaeological data in a way that revealed the details of 18th-century life, materials from the Victualling Warehouse site, the Hammond-Harwood House site, and the Thomas Hyde House site [193 Main Street] have been analyzed6 and incorporated into the presentation at the last, an 18th-century work and domestic locale. We hypothesized that the increasing variation found in the ceramic assemblages at the 18th- and early 19th-century sites in Annapolis is a reflection of increasing participation in the culture associated with mercantile capitalism. A colonial city characterized by importing, exporting, merchants, planters, manufacturing, and consumption of a wide range of mass-produced goods should be character-

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6. The Victualling Warehouse site was excavated under the direction of Constance A. Crosby [University of California, Berkeley] during the summers of 1982 and 1983. The excavations at the Hammond-Harwood House site were supervised by Richard J. Dent [University of Maryland, College Park] during the spring of 1983, and the spring of 1984, assisted in the second season by Robert C. Sonderman. Excavations of the Thomas Hyde House site in the winter of 1983–86 and in the summer of 1986 were directed by Paul A. Shackel, assisted by Dorothy Humpf [Pennsylvania State University] and Lynn Clark [State University of New York at Binghamton] during the summers of 1986. The measurement of ceramic sherds on which the analysis was based was done by Raymond Tubby, Diana Kehne, and Theresa Churchill [University of Maryland, College Park].

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5. Excavations at the State House Inn site were supervised by Joseph W. Hopkins, III [University of Maryland, College Park], assisted by Donald K. Creveling [University of Maryland, College Park] and Paul A. Shackel. The site tour was conducted by Pamela Henderson and Kristen Peters for more than 4,300 visitors between April 22 and June 1, 1985.
ized by increasing segmentation and standardization of many aspects of daily activity [Braudel 1979a:207; 1979b:377-78; Deetz 1977, 1983; Detweiler 1982:24-25; Smith 1937(1776):3-13]. We postulate that the growth of mercantile capitalism that we know characterized Annapolis in the 18th century [Carr and Walsh 1986, Papenfuse 1975, Middleton 1953] is associated with the standardization of life’s domains, on the one hand, and the increasing interchangeability of things, acts, and persons, on the other. We argue that segmentation and standardization in ceramic use in Annapolis accompany an etiquette associated with the accumulation of profit. Both segmentation and standardization will be reflected in the material culture used in many aspects of daily life, including the table and its setting, as people are incorporated into the life of capitalism [Braudel 1979a:203-9].

Deetz [1977] and Carr and Walsh [n.d.; Walsh 1983] have argued that during the 17th century people in Anglo-America lived a less differentiated way of life, one characterized by mechanical solidarity in Durkheim’s sense. Eating, sleeping, and other activities tended to occur in a single room. Members of a family would eat sitting on beds, chests, or benches drawn up to a table. One trenched or one mug was used by several persons. Table forks, spices, and imported ceramics were luxury items seen only in wealthier households. In the 18th century the parts of everyday life became more differentiated from each other, with performance being defined by place, rules, tools, and audience. New rules for behavior that separated people developed and were written down [Braudel 1979a; Deetz 1977, 1983; Glassie 1975]. Braudel [1979a:203-9] cites Les delices de la campagne [The Pleasures of the Countryside] by Nicholas de Bonnefons, published in 1654, as one example. It recommends that places at the table be spaced at a distance of a chair’s width and specifies the number of courses to be served, the changing of plates at the end of each course, and the replacement of napkins after every two courses. This trend is observed in probate inventories of 18th-century Annapolis [Shackel 1986a]. Items of dining defined by rules that segmented the dinner table into many parts [salad dishes, tureens, dish covers, plate warmers, pudding and custard cups, bottles or cruets for serving condiments, butter boats, and wineglasses] occurred exclusively among the wealthy until the third quarter of the 18th century. At this point, consumption patterns changed drastically (Carr and Walsh 1977:32-33; Walsh 1983:111), and many segmenting items began to be used on all wealth levels except for the lowest.8

Segmentation of tasks, standardization of products through mass production, and standardization of productive behavior through rules came to permeate everyday life in Annapolis in the course of the 18th century. Archaeologically, we know that work was first separated from domestic activities in the home space, then moved to a different building or area, then transferred to an entirely different part of Annapolis by the early 19th century. Braudel [1979b:377-78] suggests that such segmentation accompanies a profit-making order. We argue that greater variety in sizes and types of dishes, which measures both segmentation of people while eating and segmentation of food in courses and by type, is also a measure of the larger process at work in mercantile society.

The three sites we examined varied in socioeconomic characteristics. The Victualling Warehouse site was a middle-wealth-group commercial-residential structure, the Hammond-Harwood House site an upper-wealth-group home, and the Thomas Hyde House site a merchant’s business and home, owned by a man who had climbed from the lowest wealth group in the 1740s to the upper wealth group by the third quarter of the 18th century.9 To determine whether a new order of behavior was visible archaeologically, we examined the variety of recovered ceramic types and plate diameters over time.10 The formula |type-sizes/types|[sizes]| = index value was developed to quantify the variation in each ceramic assemblage. “Types” is the number of standard ceramic

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7. This inventory of elements of leisurely dining was compiled by Lorena Walsh of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Its use in Shackel’s analysis was suggested by Lois Green Carr of the St. Mary’s City Commission.
8. These changing consumption patterns were products of improved transportation, marketing, and technology [Carr and Walsh 1977; Walsh 1983:113] as well as a new, routinized type of labor.
9. The Victualling Warehouse site lies within the commercial district of Annapolis close to the harbor. From the middle of the 18th century until 1790, the site contained two structures used for commercial and residential purposes. Both structures burned on January 21, 1790. One was rebuilt shortly thereafter, while the other was demolished at about the same time (Crosby 1982:1-3). The fire provided a firm chronological control for our analysis.
10. Our analysis is both experimental and preliminary. Because minimum vessel counts have not yet been done for these sites, the data are in terms of sherd counts. Ezra Zubrow (State University of New York at Buffalo) helped write the formula that measures variation.

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| Table 1 | Variation in a Hypothetical Ceramic Assemblage |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ceramic Type | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Porcelain |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |
| Pearlware |  |  | x |  | x |  |  |
| Whiteware | x |  |  |  | x |  |  |
### TABLE 2

Variation in Ceramic Assemblages from Three Annapolis Sites, Early 18th to Mid-19th Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Early 18th</th>
<th>Mid–Late 18th</th>
<th>Late 18th–Early 19th</th>
<th>Mid-19th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victualling Warehouse</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>3.6 [n = 572]</td>
<td>12.0 [n = 1,698]</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammond-Harwood House</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>2.0 [n = 122]</td>
<td>27.0 [n = 926]</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Hyde House</td>
<td>1.0 [n = 22]</td>
<td>2.0 [n = 37]</td>
<td>24.5 [n = 76]</td>
<td>73.1 [n = 368]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types (e.g., porcelain, pearlware, creamware), “sizes” the number of different plate diameters (rounded to the nearest half-inch), and “type-sizes” the number of type-and-size combinations represented. Therefore, in the hypothetical assemblage of Table 1, with a 7-inch and a 9-inch pearlware plate, a 4-inch and a 9-inch whiteware plate, and an 8-inch porcelain plate, there are three types, four sizes, and five type-sizes. According to our formula, \(r = \frac{3 \times 4 \times 5}{6} = 20\) or 6.67 as a measure of variation. Values of this kind from different sites or different strata at the same site can be compared to measure changes over time and differences between wealth groups. A value close to 1.0 indicates low variation, greater values increasing variation. The data from the three sites were divided into early-18th-century, mid-to-late-18th-century, late-18th-to-early-19th-century, and mid-19th-century, and the indices of variation calculated for each set suggest that the residents of all three sites were participating increasingly in a standardized and segmented way of life (Table 2). The greater variety of dish sizes and wares in the archaeological record reflects a new etiquette, an increasing segmentation at the table that served both as a training ground for the new order and as reinforcement for it.

### An Archaeological Site Tour Informed by Critical Theory

Visitors to Annapolis interact directly with archaeologists involved in excavating materials related to the past. Not all of the sites being excavated in Annapolis (about 20 since 1981) are open to visitors, but those in the heart of the tour area (6 since 1982) have been. Tours of some sites are given on demand, with as many as 40 per day on a busy day at a busy site, and the average number of visitors per tour is about five. The tours are intended to teach participants how to question and challenge their guides and others who create, interpret, and present the past. Each open site has its own presentation. In consultation with a media expert, the following basic structure has been developed: [1] welcome, [2] introduction of the archaeologist-guide, [3] introduction of the archaeological team, [4] introduction of the project, including sources of funding, [5] introduction of the specific site, [6] discussion of archaeological techniques, [7] anthropological content or argument, [8] conclusion, and [9] question period (see Leone 1983; Potter and Leone 1986, n.d.).

During the summer of 1986, excavations were conducted in a parking lot on Main Street to the 1930s had contained the two-and-a-half-story house of Thomas Hyde. The argument at the site was as follows: Now that I've told you about who we are and how we dig, I'd like to tell you about why we're digging here.

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, one important class of archaeological finds is ceramics. Most ceramic tableware used in this country through the first half of the 19th century was made in England, and since we know when these items were made, we can use fragments of them to help us date archaeological sites.

But ceramics are useful for more than dating. There was a revolution in the manufacture and marketing of English earthenware ceramics led by Josiah Wedgwood in the middle of the 1700s. Wedgwood and others developed materials and techniques that allowed the mass manufacture of relatively inexpensive tableware in matched sets. Before the middle of the 1700s ceramic items usually didn't come in sets and were generally used communally, several people eating from one vessel and sharing another for drinking. The Wedgwood revolution changed all that. Wedgwood introduced plates that allowed each diner to have his or her own plate identical to those of the other diners. He also created sets of dishes which included many different sizes and shapes of vessels for different courses. A proper set of dishes had soup plates and breakfast plates and dessert plates and butter plates, in addition to regular dinner plates. And so on.

10. The public program at the Thomas Hyde House was directed by Patricia A. Secreto (University of Maryland, College Park) and Christine Hoepfinger (University of Pennsylvania). Along with Samuel T. Brainerd, Lynn Clark, Teri Harris, Bill Helton, and Anne A. Tschirgi, they conducted the tour there from July 10 through August 16, presenting it to over 3,800 visitors.

11. The media consultant is Philip Arnoul, director of the Theatre Project in Baltimore.
We feel that the use of a fully elaborated set of dishes, then as now, was not simply a matter of manners, unconnected to the rest of life. In the elaboration of sizes and shapes of dishes is a dual process of both segmentation and standardization. Separate plates separate the diners at a table from each other along with the use of proper manners—using the “right fork” and so on. Manners and dishes provided clear rules and divisions which told and showed individuals how to relate to each other. The meal became segmented here by 1750, and the rules for eating segmented society by separating people.

Meanwhile, the process of segmented labor and mass production which standardized dishes standardized many other kinds of manufactured goods as well. The plates whose sherds we are digging up here served to regularize the eating behavior of those who used them, and at the same time the regularity was the product of both a regulated manufacturing process and a regulated life for the workers who made them. Much of material culture was being standardized, and much of human behavior. These ideas are worth our attention because, while they were new in the middle of the 1700s, many of them are still with us today and are taken for granted as ways we assume the world has always operated. And if we take these things as givens, we forfeit the opportunity to understand their impact on us or to change them. This is how we think about the ceramics we dig up.

These ideas about segmentation don’t just have to do with dishes. Just as individual plates and specialized serving dishes separated foods and diners, houses came to have more and more rooms, with different activities being performed apart from each other in separate rooms. Before 1700 many work-related and domestic activities took place in the same room of the house. By 1750 people were building houses with separate rooms for eating, sleeping, cooking, and working. And the richer folks, like those in the Paca and Brice Houses, carried this even further with music, card, and ballrooms. Dishes and eating were segmented; houses and domestic life were segmented; the life was segmented into work, social, and family life. In the early 1700s work and domestic activities usually all went on in the same place. By 1800 in Annapolis people divided work from home life by preferring shops, taverns, and offices in separate buildings from their homes. Houses like this one we are excavating were used only for domestic life by 1800. By the time large-scale manufacturing began in Baltimore in 1850, work was located far from home, and the distance got greater and greater.

We think that people learned how to divide their lives and accept the divisions and the rules for division at home at the table and at all the other tasks which were also becoming separate.

So far I’ve talked about several different separations beginning to enter American life in the 1700s. I would like to turn to one final separation, between work time and leisure time. This segmentation of time creates the possibility of something that many of you may be involved with right now, a vacation. Bear in mind for the next few minutes, if you would, that this particular cultural invention, the idea of a vacation, only entered American life about 100 years ago, about 100 years after Thomas Hyde built his house on this site.

Vacations and tourism are a major industry and a big issue in Annapolis, as in many other small historic towns. Each year over 1,000,000 people visit Annapolis, a city of only about 32,000 people, so it is easy to understand the city’s interest in paying close attention to tourism here; the city works hard to protect the things about it that attract visitors. As I said, the need to control a large influx of visitors is not at all unique to Annapolis. What is unique is one part of Annapolis’s solution to this potential problem.

In some very subtle ways, Annapolis attempts to use George Washington to guide visitor behavior. For as long as the town has considered itself historic, local guidebooks and histories have included many references to George Washington and his 20 or so visits to the city. In many of these accounts there is a strong emphasis on the social and domestic aspects of Washington’s visits to the city: his trips to the race track, the balls he attended, the plays he saw, and the family members and friends he visited. The picture of Washington that emerges is very similar to the profile of the kind of visitor Annapolis has very publicly said it wants to attract, the “quality tourist.” As defined during a local election campaign and since then in the local papers, a “quality tourist” is one who spends some money in town without disrupting anyone or anything or leaving a mess behind. The effect of presentations of Washington that make him look like the kind of visitor that Annapolis tries to attract today is that Washington ends up as a model tourist or a model for tourist behavior. What makes this subtle and unaware portrayal of Washington as a model tourist so interesting is that tourism and vacations were not even invented until 80 years or more after Washington died. George Washington could never have been a tourist because tourism as we know it, apart from the Grand Tour, did not exist during his lifetime.

In the last 15 minutes I’ve tried to do two things. By discussing the origins of some taken-for-granted aspects of contemporary life, separations and segmentation, I have tried to show that our way of life is not inevitable; it has its origins and its reasons, and it is open to question and challenge as a result. The second thing that I’ve tried to do, through the George Washington example, is to show ways in which history is often made and presented for contemporary purposes. The next time you see a presentation of history, visit a museum, take a tour, watch a television show about the past, or whatever, you can ask your-
self what that version of history is trying to get you to do. 13

This is the kind of presentation given at each of the six open archaeological sites in Annapolis. 14 Each presentation ends with a statement about the relevance of the past to the present by addressing one of the separations, such as insider-outsider, that was uncovered by the ethnography of uses of the past in Annapolis. Each presentation also includes a statement of our hope that the tour has helped people become more critical of presentations of the past. This fulfills one requirement of a critical archaeology: illuminating elements of daily life that are normally concealed. Whether illumination should lead to social action to address the contradiction masked by ideology is an open question.

The final step in making the project one of critical archaeology is assessment of the impact of the tours on participants. There are many informal measures, mostly adapted from museum evaluation procedures, of the degree to which messages are understood. One of these is the number of questions asked by visitors at the end of a tour. We record visitors’ questions and comments, thus treating the open archaeological site as an ethnographic context. It is not at all uncommon for visitors to return to sites a second, third, or fourth time, demonstrating their understanding of the sites as continually changing educational environments. Visitors sometimes return to a site with friends for whom they act as guides; such visitors have certainly been enfranchised.

Since 1982, a one-page evaluative questionnaire has been distributed to visitors at the end of a tour. Respondents are self-selected, and the sample is about 10% of the visitors to any one site, a large sample compared with those used in most museum evaluations [Zannieri 1980:7]. In addition to questions that visitors answered

simply by selecting responses from a list, we have asked questions requiring short written answers. One such question, used in our evaluation form at the Shiplap House site, 15 that generated many informative responses was “What did you learn about archaeology that you did not know before you visited the site?” Responses to this question fall into three broad categories:

1. Responses that show visitors realizing that archaeologists dig to answer questions, implying an understanding that archaeological data, like any historical or scientific data, are collected from a particular point of view—one of the most important and most accessible insights of critical theory.

2. Responses that show visitors recognizing that archaeology is about more than excavation, discovery, and artifacts. Someone who claims to have learned about the “connection of archaeology to behavior” may well have learned how to challenge the traditional popular perception that archaeology is about objects. The ability to challenge a taken-for-granted understanding is the very ability we hope to cultivate in visitors and have them apply to other aspects of their lives.

3. Responses that show visitors understanding archaeology as relevant to today. At one level, such responses are like those previously discussed in suggesting an ability to challenge the idea that archaeologists dig up old things unconnected to today by anything other than their curio value. However, in the context of our tour of the Shiplap House site, which deals with the origins of some typically unexamined aspects of contemporary life, acknowledgment of archaeology’s relevance to today may indicate a willingness to challenge the inevitability of some of the foundations of contemporary life.

These characterizations of visitor responses to our tours are extracted from over 1,000 evaluations we have conducted in two seasons. Several broad conclusions may be drawn from this body of data. First, we do not have to talk down to visitors; we can discuss ideas rather than trowels, stratigraphy, potsherds, or holes in the ground. In addition, that a surprising number of visitors are willing to write long and detailed responses to questions on the evaluation form means that people see the site as an educational setting and are willing to let us teach them rather than simply entertain them. Moving from the practical to the theoretical, it seems clear that visitors see historical archaeology as able to teach them about the roots of contemporary life. However, when visitors say that archaeology is relevant to today because it shows “the continuity of evolution into our own day”

13. In addition to the tour at the Thomas Hyde House, visitors in 1986 were invited to visit three archaeological exhibits, to which they were directed by a flyer. Archaeologically recovered toothbrushes were on display in the Historic Annapolis, Inc., tour office in an exhibit designed and written by Paul A. Shackel. The exhibit was intended to demonstrate the increasing standardization of the manufacture of toothbrushes during the 19th century while at the same time explaining that increasing use of toothbrushes and other items of personal hygiene signaled an increasing self-regulation and adherence to rules for behavior on the part of Annapolitans. In addition to toothbrushes excavated in Annapolis, this exhibit contained three toothbrushes on loan from the Baltimore Center for Urban Archaeology. A second exhibit, designed and written by Christine Hoepfner, focused on tea wares excavated from Annapolis sites. A third exhibit, also mounted by Christine Hoepfner, contained ceramics from the Thomas Hyde House site and was a demonstration of the ceramic analysis just described. Visitors were directed from any one exhibit to the others by a series of fliers designed and written by Christine Hoepfner. Each of these fliers also served to reinforce the message of the exhibit at which it was available, rephrasing it and presenting quantitative data that could be examined later.

14. For the purposes of this essay, the site interpretation is presented as an archaeologist-guides were the only source of information; in fact, it was split between an oral presentation and four 400-word placards posted on the site.

15. Excavations at the Shiplap House site were supervised by Donald K. Creveling, assisted by Paul A. Shackel. The site tour was directed by Nancy J. Chabot [State University of New York at Binghamton], assisted by Kristen Peters. They, along with Simon Coleman, Matthew Johnson, Barbara Lichock, Barbara Ray, Ellen Santonge, Patricia A. Secreto, Helen Sydavar, Raymond Tubby, and Patricia Walker, gave tours to over 5,800 visitors. Along with the tour, an eight-page brochure, designed and edited by Nancy J. Chabot and Parker B. Potter, Jr., was used to present the interpretation of the site.
they demonstrate, in addition to the dawning of critical awareness, the strength and embeddedness of the concept of evolution as a cultural metaphor for long-term change. Because the concept of evolution makes change seem inevitable and its direction beyond human agency, providing histories for separations may not be enough to make local ideology challengeable. To bring about the kind of enlightenment aimed at by critical theory, we need to pay attention to how people think and not just what they think. From visitor evaluations we have learned both about the possibility of imparting to visitors a critical perspective and about the obstacles to their embracing it. We have not yet solved all the problems of mounting a public program based on critical theory, but the demonstrated willingness of visitors to let us teach them and their ability to learn constitute an invitation to keep on trying.

Comments

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The relations drawn between increasing ceramic variation and standardization, the creation of new table manners or “rules and divisions which told and showed individuals how to relate to each other,” and the broader social divisions and alienation created by capitalism elegantly demonstrate the value of a partially Marxian paradigm. Similarly, the dichotomies of city:academy, black:white, resident:visitor that emerge from the critical analysis of Annapolis “history” by Leone, Potter, and Shackel show how divisions continue to be reflected and socialized to those ends.

I question, however, whether these results are very far from conclusions based on hypothesis testing and replicability. Closely related dichotomies have been shown in the historical depictions in the state museums of nearby Delaware and the national museums in Washington, D.C. [Blakey 1983, 1986]. There, the contextually disconnected histories of blacks, whites, and Native Americans obscure exploitative class and ethnic relations. As Annapolis history “strengthens” white-resident “claims to local political power,” the depiction of Delawareans and Americans as definitively white is claim-jumping on the state and national levels.

My criticism of “Toward a Critical Archaeology” is that it does not accomplish what it sets out to do in more powerfully Marxian terms. As I view Marxian theory, “emancipation,” if you will, is made possible by enlightenment with regard to class interests and exploitation previously hidden by a “false consciousness.” It assumes that these interests are also being played out by scientists themselves. I doubt that the authors have revealed those class interests or exploitation in their guided tours. They seem to assume that tourists will discern their own [individualistic!] “true interests” simply on the basis of their new knowledge that segmentation is being created and that archaeology can demonstrate it [in fact, selling archaeology to the public seems to have been more important than raising sociopolitical awareness]. Will the tourists recognize that these alienating processes serve to sustain the profit of those who own means of production and the more efficient exploitation of working people? I do not think so. Why should they not attribute segmentation to “modernization” or Spencerian evolution? Indeed, the authors suggest this weakness in their concluding comments, but I think there is much more to this problem than inadequate attention to “how people think.” The neglect of class dialectics, leaving the role of the capitalist class unexposed, undermines the attempt at “emancipation.”

The problem may also be embedded in underlying assumptions: the approach [in keeping with Althusser 1969 and 1971b; also see Schwartzman and Siddique 1986] is fundamentally positivistic, aiming at knowledge that is apolitical or neutral, and consequently produces results ostensibly stripped of their political meaning. Althusser falsely opposes science [self-critical, open-ended, and capable of producing real knowledge] to ideology [dogmatic, closed, and capable of obscuring reality]. Yet intrinsic to science are unnoticeable assumptions, closed to critique precisely when they appear most objectively and self-evidently “real.” One could say that adherence to empiricism or positivism has at times been ideological, although nonetheless scientific.

Critical archaeology, rather than showing “real relationships” or producing “less contingent knowledge,” can only be expected to yield differently contingent knowledge and relationships. How one defines “emancipation” will be reflected in the kind of awareness one produces by research intended to create it, and the sociopolitical perspective of the researcher influences that definition.

This article demonstrates the usefulness of critical theory under these constraints. It does not follow through with a formulation of clear political implications that might break the bonds of a pervasive bourgeois ideology. Critical theory, furthermore, should foster continuing criticism on the part of its own practitioners. Science is most materialistic, I would argue, when it is most critical, that is, when it is understood as subjective in meaningful ways and when, therefore, the partial subjectivity of a fact can be explored and stated. This is not encouraged by claims to abstract emancipation or the objective procedures required to produce it. Critical archaeology would be profoundly critical if it came to grips with the meanings and applications of intrinsic subjectivity in scientific knowledge. However, I agree with Wylie [1986] that a means of obtaining objective truth in the absolute remains a persistently intriguing ideal that we should continue to explore.
There is no reason to quarrel with the main conclusion of this paper, that archaeological interpretations of the past and in particular their presentation to the public are influenced by the beliefs and attitudes of those proposing them. This has been obvious from the history of the subject and from the social settings in which it emerged as an independent discipline [cf. Kristiansen 1981]. Critical theory provides a more rigorous background to this work, but the basic perspective is not entirely new.

There are certain difficulties in espousing this position. If all knowledge of the past is a product of its own time, it is hard to see how scholars whose work is informed by critical theory are to escape the hidden assumptions that affect other people. Are they in a position to test their ideas more convincingly than anyone else? If so, it is not apparent from their writings to date. If, on the other hand, they are making essentially political statements, they may differ from other investigators only in the frankness with which they admit to doing so. We need to be told quite clearly whether critical archaeology is a means of political action and, if so, what form it should take.

These problems are not resolved in the present paper, with the result that its tone seems a little patronising. Why should the visitors to Annapolis be such chronic victims of false consciousness, unable to think for themselves without the aid of archaeologists? Is everyone a dupe of ideology except the academic? The tone of the site talk is rather revealing. The account of George Washington’s visits to Annapolis is far too condescending, whilst the discussion of “segmentation and standardisation” is needlessly obscure to those who are new to theoretical archaeology.

This paper fails to convince the reader of the value of a critical archaeology, simply because the ideas that it expresses are hardly archaeological at all. They owe their origin to documentary evidence and to ideas from the great French historian Braudel, and it would have been revealing to see a case study which relied more directly on the archaeological record. In this paper archaeology is simply providing local colour for an interpretation that could be discussed perfectly adequately on the basis of written sources. There is a “credibility gap” between the grand theoretical framework and the display of historic toothbrushes. Historical archaeology has been described as “an expensive way of finding out what we know already.” That comment is usually unfair, but in this case it has some justification.

Leone et al. pay insufficient attention to the past or present conditions in which political power is exercised. In interpreting part of the archaeological record of historical Annapolis, they invoke developing industrial capitalism as a key structuring process. Their empirical work invites comparison with other bodies of evidence. For example, the local excavated material used to suggest a connection between a new pattern of domestic etiquette and cultural incorporation into capitalism needs supplementing with further historical data from Annapolis and elsewhere if we are to understand [and, in turn, generalise from] the way these two systems were articulated by specific social relations among different classes. Maintaining social control in the transition to a new form of economy affects people differently according to their occupational and other roles. In the pioneer case of northern England, it has been argued that control was achieved by blocking potentially subversive subcultures, with the effect of minimizing the sense of loss of control over their own labour, workers were saturated with the cultural values of their employers [Foster 1974:22–27]. In the absence of archaeological data on the working class of historical Annapolis to indicate how control was handled there, a more comprehensive view of how the capitalist order was established and maintained by appropriate channelling of political power requires an input from other sources.

The authors claim that present consumers of archaeological and historical information are encouraged to question assumptions about their own lives by perceiving the link between past changes in domestic culture [such as commensality] and the growth of capitalism. More pertinent to an understanding of historical Annapolis is how the local social control system worked. How it works today is equally pertinent to a contemporary strategy of disseminating new views of the past that can potentially subvert received ideology and thus help open up the kind of emancipation that the authors seem to favour.

Criticising what they see as ideological bias in the way capitalism has been obscured in standard representations of local history, Leone et al. substitute a bias of their own in their inadequate treatment of political power. They remark that in some environments archaeology is used to serve political aims but fail to show how deeply politics is embedded in archaeological and other cultural practices. This weakens their response to the ideological distortion of the past. It is relatively easy to demonstrate that particular representations of the past are distortions clearly or covertly serving sectional interests, deciding how to respond to this is more difficult. Since ruling-class interests are served by whole sets of categories as well as by specific arguments within them, it follows that countering distortions of the past entails a more comprehensive critique of the present organisation of knowledge and ultimately of the system of political power sustained by it.

Leone et al. recognise that a theory exposing ideological distortions of the past and situating them in a wider context amounts to an active social criticism. It is therefore subject to a criterion of relevance or actionability—
that is, a strategy for deciding how an otherwise exponential relativism can be avoided and specific goals attained. Introspective debate is unlikely to deliver much more than a new set of professional authorities whose radicalism confirms conventional notions of the advance of archaeological knowledge by successive paradigm shifts, while leaving unchallenged the contentious position of this and other subjects in the wider structures of society. For most of contemporary archaeology, what is treated as the relevant context for discussions about ideology is made up of theories claiming inspiration from Marxism, usually by way of revising or rejecting it, and representational practices aimed at a wider public. Except that it is divided by class and other criteria and that dominant power is exercised hegemonically in a Gramscian sense, the character of the social context in which archaeology is carried out is taken for granted rather than analysed in detail [Miller and Tilley 1984, Spriggs 1984, Leone 1981b].

This implicit definition of “relevance” evades the main problem of practising a critical archaeology, which is how to advance awareness of the past by changing the institutional framework that reflects the particular social classification of knowledge and its associated activities characteristic of late capitalism, while at the same time recognising that critical archaeologists cannot operate on ideas alone but need to be employed within that framework in order to project their arguments. This problem cannot be solved within traditional forms of scholarship. While agitation has off and on spiced the educational diet of academic archaeology over the years, the close integration of cultural, political, and economic life attained in advanced capitalist countries suggests that only in combination with more effective and conscious collective organisation can intellectual arguments acquire an appropriate impact on the political and economic power which impinges on the discipline.

Even within the framework of archaeology, devices like those described by Leone et al. to sensitise site visitors to the impact of capitalism on material life are feeble by comparison with the dominant media through which ideological views of the past are promoted both within the profession and among the general public. This is certainly not an argument for abandoning current efforts, but it does raise sharply the question of how even a thoroughly radicalized archaeology—let alone a minority tendency—might articulate with the larger social conflicts that envelop it.

Leone et al. claim that the Frankfurt school, Lukacs, and Gramsci are important to their concept of critical theory but do not say why. As to why they leave out Lenin, a clue is their opinion that adapting Marx to the circumstances of the 20th century “began with the Frankfurt school . . . in the 1920s.” This is certainly incompatible with the usual view of Marxism as a political movement as well as a current of thought. It would of course be unreasonable to expect the authors to set out in a short article their own programme for archaeology under present conditions, but that is no excuse for treating so sketchily the intellectual inheritance they claim, even if it helps account for the use they make of it in presenting apolitically what they argue are inherently political issues.

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The strength of this work is as a clear if abbreviated example of an application of critical theory to archaeology. Numerous other researchers, amply reviewed by these authors, have already pointed out a range of contextual constraints that impinge on the objectivity of archaeological reporting, and Wylie [1985] has offered a lucid account of the precepts of critical theory with their applications for archaeological reconstruction. This article supersedes earlier work by suggesting specific forms of archaeological analysis that yield “emancipatory” understanding and place our present lives in a new perspective and showing how archaeological research and the lessons derived from it can be used to reeducate the public, especially in regard to ways in which the past underwrites present-day ideology. In both regards, Leone et al. are successful, and this summary of their archaeological project provides enough references to more complete explanations of the theoretical and methodological aspects of the work for interested readers to be able to follow up on them.

The issue I would like to examine more closely here is whether ideas encompassed by a critical approach to archaeology are limited to historical archaeology. The basis for suggesting that perhaps only historical frameworks can be approached “critically” is the argument that studies of the past must provide insights into current circumstances or illuminate obscure relationships that obtain today, presumably, the logic and ideology of the current social system are too evolved or too remote from prehistoric contexts to be illuminated by them. This view ignores, however, the fact that the ideological relations which critical archaeology can illuminate and the knowledge it can produce do not emerge in any simple or straightforward fashion from an inspection of historical data. Rather, the results of such studies are constructed in the present, by contemporary archaeologists who match data with their hypotheses and interpretations. The past, then, can be used to restructure understandings of the present or to undermine prevailing ideology and indicate the interest groups best served by particular reconstructions only to the extent that contemporary archaeologists can free themselves from such ideology and formulate testable, convincing alternative reconstructions. Moreover, an illumination of present-day relationships, even in the most “emancipatory” framework, does not in and of itself constitute a criterion for validation of truth claims about the past, an aspect of critical theory that is left underspecified in this piece.

A radical reinterpretation of the archaeological past, especially one that points up control over interest groups
at different scales of operation, depends, then, [1] on the freedom from a dominant ideology that allows one to recognize other dimensions of social dynamics that are reflected in material culture and [2] on appropriate methodological and analytical archaeological skills. Neither prerequisite pertains better to historical than to prehistoric data. New directions in the analysis of prehistoric data such as the very belated identification of women and women’s work in prehistory and the redefinition of cultural complexity to include analysis of like constituent parts instead of focusing entirely on hierarchy must surely be recognized as applications of a “critical theory” to prehistoric archaeology.

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From Leone, Potter, and Shackel’s paper I have learned much about both the segmentation of people eating and the segmentation of food in courses and by type, less about three social strata in Annapolis in the third quarter of the 18th century, and nothing at all about the possibility of seeing a new order of behaviour from the point of view of [noncritical] archaeology. The description of the handling of visitors to open archaeological [?] sites is of great interest, but three lines about types and plate diameters over time are not enough. I think that we are not far from the period of gestation of a critical archaeology.¹

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The authors are to be congratulated for breaking new ground in the analysis of the ideologies used by archaeologists and for trying out new ways of presenting the past to the general public. Whether the approach they are using should be described as “critical theory” is perhaps unimportant, but it is worth pointing out that their definition of critical theory is generous. At times it seems to include most of contemporary Marxist theory, and in their assessment of participant responses to the tours the authors make three points with which most contemporary archaeologists and museum curators would probably agree. Whatever the approach should be called, it is a thoughtful and welcome one.

One problem that is raised, however, concerns the degree of self-reflexivity involved. An approach which examines the work of archaeologists as ideological might be expected to turn itself inwards and examine itself as ideological. In fact the authors prefer to avoid this issue, which is certainly difficult and head-spinning, and they grasp a materialism and positivism closely similar to that used by the New Archaeology. Certainly a new orthodoxy—one based on Marxism—is proposed, but to replace one set of “agreed-upon” criteria for another is hardly very critical. The ideological basis of the new Marxist orthodoxy is never exposed. It certainly does not seem to be laid before the Annapolis tourists.

The underlying issue is whether reality can be separated from ideology. The authors make their position plain in their commitment to materialism and to an “adjusted” positivism. They argue that archaeologists can move towards “less contingent knowledge”—that is, knowledge that is less politically motivated than much archaeological writing today. They discuss the degree of validity that can be attributed to the past. A proper evaluation of that validity constitutes enlightenment. In both the past and the present, ideology is seen as masking the objective reality. Thus, in the past, mercantile capitalism led to segmented and standardised eating behaviour, and in the present, the desire for a particular type of tourist at Annapolis has led to a particular presentation of George Washington.

But what is this objective reality? What is this sure basis against which ideology can be critically evaluated? If it is itself critically evaluated, it appears to slip away into the ideological. For example, the authors argue that the use by the U.S. Naval Academy of walls and streets was ideological in that it “appeared” to separate the academy from the rest of the city. In “reality” the academy and city were powerfully connected. Yet it is difficult to imagine anything more real than walls and streets. Perhaps they form the reality and the authors’ hypothesis of powerful connections is ideological?

Is it “really” the case that changes in eating etiquette can be seen as products of the rise of mercantile capitalism? The link is not immediately obvious, and one could argue for more complex relationships. Does the authors’ interpretation involve enlightenment, or is it simply a new ideology? Similarly, the notion that George Washington has been presented in Annapolis as an ideal model for the “quality tourist” is clever but perhaps far-fetched; it could easily be read as ideological.

The authors make no attempt to examine the historical basis of their own theories. Their work thus remains uncritical. They do not uncover the social strategies they are following in arguing for powerful connections between the various segments of Annapolis society. Why do they want to see contemporary customs and taken-for-granted linked to the rise of capitalism? Why do they wish to embrace materialism and positivism?

In an academic circle, the authors at least declare their allegiances, even if they do not examine them. But in the presentations to the public they appear to give no indication of “where they are coming from.” The on-site talk reads as a new orthodoxy, itself beyond criticism.

Fortunately, I would imagine that many tourists (perhaps more than their academic counterparts, who are caught within an established mode of discourse) will make up their own minds about what they are told. They will “read” the “real” events, including the on-site talks, in their own ways. Thus they may “read” the evi-

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dence of increased cultural and social segregation to reinforce a view that the contemporary world has escaped, by hard work, from an awful earlier communal socialism. Or they may even question that the use of standardised place settings is very different from the use of communal bowls. One may hope that they will be able to place the academic specialists in an ideological context—"saviors of our heritage," "reds," "clever scientists," "wallahs," or whatever. If they cannot, then the need for self-critical analysis is urgent.

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The first criticism that can be leveled at a critical archaeology is that it can be applied only to time periods for which we have written sources. It is in these that we can see or attempt to see something of the ideologies of the groups on which we are working. I cannot see how it could be applied to, for example, a group of American hunter-gatherers of 800, 1,500, or 10,000 years ago or even a Mochica group. In fact, I get the impression that the written datum is uncritically being considered "confirmed" by the archaeological one, without the slightest attempt to compare the two records. It seems to me that a critical archaeology cannot explain anything more than it chooses to see.

The guided tours and the questionnaires for participants are an interesting idea, but I suspect that there were many other responses that have been omitted here for reasons of space. Visitors' responses can often be very helpful, sometimes, perhaps without our wishing it, giving us ideas for our work. We must, however, keep in mind that in explaining the site in terms of a particular theory the tour guide is undoubtedly inducing the visitors to respond in similar terms, all the more so when the majority of participants in a tour may be little accustomed to theoretical discussion.

Adopting an approach such as Leone et al. propose in different studies might be interesting, bearing in mind the limitations that I have pointed out, but I do not see at the moment how critical theory can help us understand the past with which we are working directly. It can, of course, help us to understand certain events that are occurring today, especially in the countries of the Third World.

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Leone and colleagues challenge us to take archaeology seriously as a science of and for society. Their focus is on the human relations, meanings, and material objects that U.S. culture takes for granted. They probe a science of society by studying separations, including those found in Annapolis between Black and white, visitors and residents, and the city and the Naval Academy and the more generally interesting separation of the scientist from society.

In detailing material change in Annapolis, Leone et al. identify material patterns familiar in the record of historical North America—exponential increase in material culture and hierarchy and symmetry in the order of these objects. In short, historical archaeology has documented, in Foucault's terms, a disciplined growth in the material world. As well as adding Annapolis to the now familiar cases of Middle Virginia and New England, Leone et al. bring a distinctive interpretive angle. In the system of relations, meanings, and objects, objects are usually conceived as passive, the fallout from deep structures or the by-products of human behavior. For Leone et al., objects result from and, importantly, create meaning and behavior. That food is consumed in a disciplined manner and that travel proceeds in a well-ordered arena contribute to the creation of a new, binding overall sense of the world. This new sense also enables work to be disciplined and a different view of gender to emerge. Rather than stimulating resistance and cultural stasis, these new work routines and human relations make sense to people, and the result is compliance and cultural change. In short, Leone et al. have produced a serious theoretical and empirical study of American material culture and its relations to cultural change.

Two lines of further development come to mind. I would like to hear more about agents—dissenters and elites. The separations described seem to be those that the new elite would have liked to have made sense. Es-
especially in the early periods, when this order was not fully developed or manifest, there must have been dissent. What was the dissenters’ order, and how did they make use of (or abuse) material objects? A second thought concerns diversity indices; this article shows why we ought to use them and suggests that someone should take the time to review the significant literature in information theory and ecology so that we can avoid reinventing the wheel.

The most important separation for all anthropologists is the separation of social scientist from society. The naive notion that scientists stand apart from society, observing without participating, is still too prevalent and is especially discouraging when encountered in people trained in the holism of anthropology. Critical theory, as an approach to understanding how scientists interact with society, has the potential for producing an enlightened and empowered scientific community. Much in interpretive ethnography and symbolic and structural archeology recognizes this relation. What critical theory distinctively suggests is that a responsible scientist should seek to empower nonscientific members of society. Leone et al. neatly delineate how archeology in Annapolis can be used to empower the public regarding the construction and control of knowledge about the past and the present. Their carefully thought-out and implemented interpretation of archeology in Annapolis is a challenge to the profession to discover how to empower the public in other arenas. A liberating contract archeology or an emancipatory introductory archeology course deserves the same lengthy and careful thought that Leone et al. have given to museum work. By presenting this challenge the authors have contributed to a serious and self-conscious archeology that is for society as well as about it.

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In commenting on Leone et al.’s work, one cannot fail to emphasize that, through examples like this one, archeology acquires consequence and complexity of human outlooks that, in becoming not the past but events, assume relevance and force. This sense of archeology, which rigorously and methodically employed may lead to a different or at least an alternative way of doing science, is appropriately highlighted as one of the developments of very recent times. Critical archeology is indeed a current that may produce important contributions to the field of interpretation and application.

From what I have learned about Andean archeology, I agree with the authors about rejecting a ranked order of causal relations and about creating links between material reality and an awareness of it. Emphasizing the “how” and methodically investigating developmental processes is fundamental. However much information we have, as is the case in the Andean world, for example, for understanding from within the true cultural values of groups that are the depositories of a different experience, the relation between this creative or [in the authors’ words] “illuminating” contribution and any particular social and/or ideological action remains an open question. Therefore, this task must be very well understood as to its basic objectives. Explaining a cultural reality in terms of political and ideological aspects that originate outside it would tend to reduce the authenticity of the process, while managing to discover values and ideologies from inside it would contribute to an alternative explanation. Ideology certainly supposes contradiction, but to be creative it must be sought from within. It is, obviously, in the interpretation of the history of ideas that the future development of archeology and anthropolo gy lies, and Leone et al.’s article, with its example of Annapolis, contributes magnificently to the theory of the problem.

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Critical theory is construed in very broad terms in Leone, Potter, and Shackel’s discussion. It is not restricted to the “critical theory” associated with the Frankfurt school or, latterly, with Habermas. It encompasses any research program that adopts a critically self-conscious attitude toward its constituent presuppositions: as they describe it, “critical theory asks of any set of conclusions from what point of view they are constructed.” To press for such reflexivity is crucially important, but a number of important things drop out or are left unspecified when “critical theory” is construed this broadly. For example, what is the standpoint of the critical theorist, and to what criteria of acceptability is the exercise of unmasking answerable? What sort of commentary does the unmasking provide on contemporary contexts, and how is one to determine when it is accurate in what it reveals about the conditions and interests informing practice? Leone et al. stop at the point where the most interesting and difficult questions arise. This is not to fault their analysis or their recommendations but to suggest what seem some important avenues for development of their critical initiative that remain to be explored.

Leone et al.’s standpoint of critique turns on the rejection of objectivism in a very broad sense, along lines recently suggested by Bernstein (1983:8), among others: they centrally deny the plausibility of any position that presumes the existence of context-transcendent, ahistorical principles of rationality or acceptability in terms of which the efficacy of competing knowledge claims can be adjudicated. Bernstein characterises relativism as any position that, in rejecting objectivism, acknowledges a plurality of legitimate principles of method, rationality, or theory choice; relativism on this account would include his own hermeneutic option, which, he suggests, promises a way “beyond objectivism and relativism.”
He presses this conception of relativism in contradistinction to a narrow definition which presumes that the rejection of a categorial framework entails an anarchistic lack of any action-governing standards or principles of theory choice; this is the sort of relativist consequence that standardly fuels the search for foundations in the face of repeated failures suggesting the futility of any such enterprise.

Bernstein’s point and that of a number of commentators on the demise of Enlightenment projects is that abandonment of the search for absolute foundations does not preclude critical, even principled assessment of action and knowledge claims. It must simply be recognized that the validity of the principles involved is internal to a particular context and that they are themselves tentative, evolving, and a proper object of critical assessment. This seems to capture the position articulated in the present paper. Given it, Leone et al.’s proposals for practical action follow directly. Consumers of historical, archaeological accounts of the past must be made fully, explicitly aware that these are indeed constructs whose credibility is contingent on a particular frame of reference: standards of rationality, “interest,” “standpoint.”

But to stop with this is to leave archaeologists and, indeed, consumers of their constructs without any clear idea what broader [albeit, still context-specific, evolving] principles underpin the standpoint of critique. The analyses developed from this standpoint (e.g., of historic Annapolis) are not offered as arbitrary opinion, despite being open to reassessment. Leone et al. do not endorse the nihilism associated with the narrow definition of relativism, a nihilism that feeds political apathy as surely as it does dogmatism. They seem to respond to this concern when they suggest that critical practice engage in an “adjustment” of positivist standards to the “realities of archaeological data.” Positivism is, however, a theory of science and knowledge that is fundamentally objectivist and therefore antithetical to the critical, reflexive awareness of plural possibilities for constructing knowledge that Leone et al. endorse.

An alternative may be to appropriate some of the methods developed in the unreflexive empirical sciences that positivists have taken to define all legitimate scientific practice (analytic-empirical methods, as Habermas describes them) and press them into the service of critical, emancipatory objectives. This will not, however, leave such methods unaltered; if they are genuinely to serve emancipatory objectives, their own contingent status must be explicitly recognized, and they must be subject to revision, restrictions in scope of application, and correction in light of other (e.g., hermeneutic, historical) methods. The result will be a diversified, evolving form of practice inimical to positivist conceptions of science. If the methods of existing, analytic-empirical science are not to subvert the aims of reflexive practice, it would seem essential that the standpoint of critique—its tentative and essentially pragmatic objectives and criteria of adequacy—be clearly articulated. This would seem, in any case, a central requirement of the commitment to critical self-consciousness.

Reply

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We thank all of the commentators for taking our work in the spirit in which it was intended. It is not our goal to offer the last word on the application of critical theory to archaeology, and the comments—most supportive, all constructive—serve admirably to make the piece a starting point in the archaeological application of critical theory. In addition to acknowledging our pleasure with the positive tone of most responses, we would like to make several points.

Lanata doubts the utility of critical theory for prehistoric archaeology. We leave the matter an open question, and our clear preference is that it be resolved in the affirmative through the creation of critical prehistories. Gero provides a response to Lanata on this point, and to her arguments may be added the work of Handsman [1983, 1985, 1986] and Keene [1986], among others.

Lanata raises a second issue answered by a fellow commentator: he wonders whether visitors are able to respond to a presentation in any terms other than the ones used in it, suggesting that we create the possibility of our overestimating the learning that takes place. We agree that it is difficult to determine how much learning occurs when visitors simply repeat some of what they have just heard. But, like Blakey, we are far more concerned when visitors turn the information they hear into evidence for a position antithetical to the point of view that informs a presentation, which illustrates the power of late capitalism to absorb, transform, and use even a radical critique of itself.

An area of concern to Wylie, Hodder, Blakey, and Levy and Silberman is the relationship between critical archaeology and traditional positivist archaeology. Wylie discusses the relationship between relativism and objectivism while Hodder discusses ideology and reality. “Archaeology in Annapolis” is not positivist in the conventional sense, and it may not be so in any sense. Our conclusions are arrived at by techniques and methods that are continually available for examination. They can be challenged and deconstructed, and sometimes they are by the more articulate and resistant members of our audience. Thus the rationality of using a set of archaeological techniques to examine or “test” a set of descriptions or “hypotheses” about mercantile capitalism is tentative and has evolved over five and a half years. Challenges are as much a part of the growth of the project as are the methods for handling the data.

Both Wylie and Hodder comment on our broad definition of critical theory and its implications for a research program. We agree with them and acknowledge that our individual standpoints are often unspecified, that unmasking is not oriented to class interests directly, and that the apparatus of archaeological proce-
dure is relatively conventional. We are public about costs and sponsorship, academic statues, and the sometimes inconsequential archaeological results of our immediate work.

Paynter, Durrans, and Blakey all point out, correctly, the lack of a class analysis in our study of Annapolis. Russell Handsman has also made this point to us on several occasions in several different contexts. To push in the direction indicated by many critical theorists, the best start would be to analyze race relations in Annapolis. Annapolis has slavery as a part of its colonial heritage; Alex Haley’s ancestor Kunta Kinte was sold at the Annapolis City Dock. The city had in the 18th and 19th centuries a significant free black population. Within the last two years the city redrew its internal political boundaries to create an additional ward with a black majority. The city is still in litigation with black members of its police force over advancement and other issues. In early 1987 black employees of the Anne Arundel General Hospital in Annapolis staged a demonstration charging the hospital with racial discrimination in a number of areas. All of this is simply to suggest that the relation between blacks and whites is a locally political issue in Annapolis with a history stretching back to colonial days. The question is how to create an archaeology that illuminates significant facets of the history of race relations (and presumably white domination) in Annapolis, and for that question we have as yet no firm answer.

Finally, we find ourselves in Annapolis in an interesting position. While many academic commentators on “Archaeology in Annapolis” find our analyses, interpretations, and presentations “soft” when measured against the requirements of critical theory, some observers within Annapolis find what we have to say too strident and political. This brings up the crucial issue cited by Wylie, Paynter, Hodder, Durrans, and Bradley, namely, the matter of self-reflexivity. We agree that in the article we are not adequately self-reflexive. Durrans articulates quite clearly the position in which we find ourselves, dependent for employment on a system we wish to critique. Specifically, “Archaeology in Annapolis” is sponsored and partially funded by a local, private preservation organization with some opponents and detractors. That organization would neglect its own duties and interests if it did not keep a watchful eye on “Archaeology in Annapolis” to make sure that the project produces nothing of use to its opponents. On the whole, Historic Annapolis, Inc., is far more tolerant of self-criticism than most other well-known preservation groups and has a greater capacity to understand and sometimes even appreciate self-criticism. In needing to heed the circumstances in which it operates, “Archaeology in Annapolis” is not at all unique. Any project in critical archaeology—and in fact any archaeological project—is at the center of a set of contexts including but not limited to funding agencies and academic employers. The most pressing questions facing critical archaeologists are, as Durrans understands, questions of practice.

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