# WASTE

## Desperdicio

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**ABSTRACT** Critical Theory was first used in historical archaeology in the 1980s as a way of commenting upon the ideological character of modern global capitalism. At the time, neither the work of Walter Benjamin nor Slavoj Žižek were integrated into archaeology. Their work can be combined to form a complementary understanding of rapid consumption and disposal in modern culture, forming a new basis for excavation in historical archaeology. Benjamin concentrates on wide-scale discard, connecting it to ever faster cycles of consumption and production. Žižek analyzes the world of objects, both three-dimensional and psychological objectifications, to understand the inability of modern humans to see the difference between their creations and evanescent meanings. This paper takes these definitions and applies them to slave quarters in Maryland, and spent shell casings from a labour massacre in Pennsylvania, making frequently dismissed remains into images showing how modern societies constantly make and dispose of meanings.

**Key words:** Historical Archaeology, Critical Theory, 19th Century, Wye House, Frederick Douglass, Lattimer Massacre, Walter Benjamin, Slavoj Žižek, Coal Mining, Labour.

**RESUMEN** La Teoría Critica se usó por primera vez en arqueología histórica en los 80 del siglo pasado, como una forma de opinar sobre el carácter ideológico del capitalismo moderno. En aquel momento, los trabajos de Walter Benjamin y Slavoj Žižek no se integraron en arqueología. Su trabajo se puede combinar para una comprensión complementaria de los modelos de consumo y desecho en la cultura moderna, formando nuevas bases para la interpretación del registro en arqueología moderna. Benjamin se centra en el desecho a gran escala, conectándolo con ciclos más rápidos de consumo y producción. Por su parte, Žižek analiza el mundo de los objetos tanto materiales como sus objetivaciones psicológicas para entender la inhabilidad del ser humano moderno para ver la diferencia entre sus creaciones y sus significados evanescentes. Este artículo aplica esas definiciones a las cuadras de esclavos de Maryland, así como a las cáscaras sobrantes de una masacre obrera en Pensilvania, convirtiendo en imágenes los restos desechados para mostrar como las sociedades modernas desechan constantemente también los significados.

**Palabras clave:** Arqueología histórica, Teoría Crítica, siglo XIX, Wye House, Frederick Douglass, Masacre de Lattimer, Walter Benjamin, Slavoj Žižek, minería de carbon, trabajo.

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Fecha de recepción: 29-03-2016. Fecha de aceptación: 19-05-17.

## INTRODUCTION

There are two kinds of waste. Throughout the 20th century, slave quarters, shanty towns, and work places were torn down all over the United States. The cabins, dormitories, warehouses, sheds, workhouses and other places associated with work that were not needed, could not be reused nor maintained, became derelict. It was waste. It was torn down, buried or disassembled, and forgotten. The waste we see in the ground is there in the first place because it had become spent, empty, and useless; garbage that could not even be reused. This is one kind of waste or ruin.

The second kind of waste is a casting off of out-of-date, inconvenient, or irreconcilable notions: things which no longer seem to have a social or mental place. Like its material component, it is a kind of "making way" for new ideas, structures, or practices. This kind of disposal is mental discard. Removing or replacing something no longer current requires the strategic act of forgetting or repression. This form of waste serves to shed the present, certainly in the United States, of thoughts of slavery, racism, social inequality, and class struggle, in the past and the present.

Both kinds of waste render objects for archaeological research: ruins, the forms or traces of shapes disconnected from their functions, meanings, and authorship. Both kinds of waste can be made into social critique by archaeology. By understanding waste, critical archaeology can serve to challenge modern society on one of its most pervasive ideologies: progress. Our argument here is that the ideology of progress creates both kinds of waste, and that archaeology can link our understandings of both.

Records of waste represent both rupture, and "moments of change and transition in the flow of social life… new landscape[s] built on an old one" (Lewis, 2010:8). When progress creates the illusion of a present better than the past, there is little to see that has been left behind. This not only causes the abandonment of things and ideas, but obscures how past inequalities persist in our present. It hides slavery, violence, and class struggle today, as well as their origins.

The theoretical work of Slavoj Žižek and Walter Benjamin provides ways to account for the dissonance between pasts and presents, ruins and concepts, remembrance and forgetting, and materiality and representation. Moreover, we argue that through their recognition of the fallacy of representing the past only through signification and language, they provide archaeologists with both the impetus and the perspective to effectively use things, objects, images and texts in critically apprehending the social production of history.

Both begin their theories on a recognition that the fundamental antagonism of social life is characterised by a mutability between meaning and things, which always produces a trauma or a gap. Along these lines, Marx's concept of commodity fetishism is central to both of their work, not simply to explain the drawing of profit from commodities, but rather as an analogy for the nature of all relationships under capitalism, including those between people and materials, nonhuman entities, histories, and built environments. Through these associated processes —fetishism, signification, value— they explain how the materials of the past are produced through loss, waste, gutting, reconfiguration, reinvention or simulation.

Žižek recognises that the process of making meaning is dynamic, but grounded "in an excessive fixation," to a presentation of the past or an ideal made from things, including texts (1997:95). Central to such a construction is the element of forgetting inherent in the act of what psychoanalysts term *fetishistic disavowal*, a conscious or semi-conscious refusal to recognise elements, dimensions, or implications of an event that might interfere with the symbolic efficiency of a particular ethical stance (Žižek, 2008:51-54). For Žižek, this forgetting is integral to all positive formations, underlying the solidity of things such as identity, nationhood, ethical positions and constructions of heritage.

Instead of focusing on the flexibility and adaptability of the human capacity to remake and recycle meanings, Žižek pinpoints the instability of the process. "Interpretation," he writes, is, "…a violent act of disfiguring the interpreted text" (Žižek, 1997:121). Behind the constant or dynamic interplay between words and things is the fear of uncertainty. He borrows the autobiographical experience of trauma to analogise the universal experience of a feared loss of meaning.

In Freudian psychoanalysis, trauma means an early personal event of shock or harm that remains embedded in the personality, forming the underlying or epigenetic cause of modern reactions to circumstances which should be free of it, but which, without psychoanalysis, cannot be. Signifiers like *democracy* or *history* are devoid of concrete meaning and must have their meaning specified again and again in a dynamic process. That dynamism can happen only when pushed against *some thing* (something) that appears to solidify it naturally, i.e., empirically. There is a constant search for an original *core* or *kernel* which would give the quest for meaning a needed result. Objects, things, the natural world, or artefacts from the past form the other side of this quest and are essential to its success because they appear to ground the dynamism of meaning somewhere.

Benjamin recognised the experiential dimension of commodity fetishism in the temporality of progress expressed in the landscapes, objects, and texts of early 20th-century Paris. In the phantasmagoria of consumer society, Benjamin recognised that, "exchange value no less than use value lost practical meaning, and purely representational value came to the fore… Moreover, when newness became a fetish, history itself became a manifestation of the commodity form" (Buck-Morss, 1989:82). In this dialectic, Benjamin identified the process of inversion in which history, as the unfolding of events through time, was no longer the *terra firma* staging the evolution of material life, but quite the opposite: the temporality invested in materials came to *construct* history. In the radical materiality of modernity, history becomes practically epiphenomenal of the fashion cycle. Benjamin recognised these processes in the drastic rearrangements of Paris starting in the mid-19th century. In efforts to memorialise historic events, he foresaw a process which, contradictorily, ensured the erasure of their reality from memory.

Benjamin also recognised that memory, forgetting, and the creation of waste are fundamental processes that shape our experience of the present. Experiencing the dawning of late modernity and a matured industrial capitalism, he became acutely aware of the "extreme temporal attenuation" of style, fashion, and commodity life

cycles which resulted in, "for the first time, the most recent past becom[ing] distant" (Benjamin, 1972:1250). The suppressed memory of the recent past, manifested in fashion's constant fleeing from "the outmoded," provides the unconscious source of desire for the present, the feared "loss of meaning" described by Žižek.

Benjamin recognised the social uses of history, which weave an illusion of seamlessness into the present. At the intersection of modernist ontology and material production, he defined two major temporal categories: the recent past and the Ur-past. The Ur-past is not synonymous with ancient or classical history. Nor does it represent, exclusively, a primordial geological or naturalistic past. Rather, it is any past that occupies a temporal or social distance from the present, placing it in a state of semiotic ambiguity, or representing an aesthetic form accessible to appropriation. Along these lines, he questioned why "[Early 19th-century] architects use pillars that mimic Pompeiian columns; factories mimic private villas, as later the first railroad stations are modelled on chalets" (1972:46). He offers a political and psychoanalytic response to these questions in suggesting that these references mask the recent past with false continuity, or reflect a wish in the present to return society to a "natural" or utopian golden age.

In the early part of the 20th century, Benjamin characterised the instability of the recent past as manifested in the suppressed antagonism between the aims of technological or social progress, and the lived material realities of the present. Benjamin witnessed the beginnings of the machinic modes of mass production, brought on by the second industrial revolution. Ironically, Benjamin could see that in his time, this very material overproduction which represented an idealised solution to the problem of inequality with its potential for material comfort and accumulation for all was failing to ameliorate these conditions rather, it only served to exacerbate them.

However, in the mass-produced goods of this machinic mass consumerism, Benjamin could envision both the "dreaming" of society for a better future, and also the antagonism of its loss and the emptiness of its promise. For Benjamin, each object or ruin retains the potential of this dialectical reading as a sort of critical index to understand the prehistory of each moment. This is the key to Benjamin's notion of the *dialectical image*.

In a challenge to the totalising epistemology of modernity, Benjamin favoured the use of images, fragments, and objects to advance his critique (Frisby, 1996). Benjamin applied his theory to ruins, a category that he develops to embrace objects/ commodities, landscapes, texts and images which have been forgotten by society and freed from the semiotic order. Benjamin sought to recover these objects, disassembled from commentary, and arrange them intellectually in such a way that they disrupt the smooth functioning of progressive and linear time, dependent as it is on assumed continuities, repression, and disavowal. Such a practice by Benjamin strikes us as akin to the work of critical archaeology, defined by the subversive use of the rational tools of modernist understanding, observation, analysis and classification, to construct a new language of theory *out* of materials, landscapes and objects (Buck-Morss,1989:55).

## TEMPORALITY AND THE STUDY OF WASTE AND RUINS

This paper studies the subjects of slavery and labour, arguing for an archaeology that confronts the loss of fixity and certainty. We use the concept of the ruin in such a way that it need not be defined as a physical object, but rather as a monadic historical instance, object, image, text or landscape, a "dialectic at a standstill" that reenters the semiotic terrain of the present from a condition of waste. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (2010:6) outline the ontology of ruins:

> The ruin is a ruin precisely because it seems to have lost its function or meaning in the present, while retaining a suggestive, unstable semantic potential. The ruin has blurred edges in more ways than one. As an aesthetic and conceptual category, it is uniquely ill-defined. Where does the ruin start, and where does it end?

We have two ruins we are trying to interpret. We have the ruins of slavery at Wye House Plantation on Maryland's Eastern Shore, most famous because it was where Frederick Douglass was enslaved, and where all of his abolitionist work begins. The slave quarters, a village which held up to 168 enslaved people in 1840, exists materially only below ground in ruins. We also have the archaeological remains in northeast Pennsylvania of shanties, in which marginalised immigrant workers lived. And not far from these, bullets from a massacre in which nineteen such immigrant labourers were killed by a sheriff and his posse, justifying their violence as defence of their right to exploit this racialised "not-entirely-white" labouring underclass.

Our question is: how does archaeology at these two sites form a social critique and a critical archaeology? Critical archaeology destabilises a sense of progress while taking discarded pasts and revitalising their function. Democracy is a signifier that gains and loses meaning constantly. It gained meaning through the Civil Rights movement, through the empowerment of African Americans, women, gays, and Native Americans, filling a signifier while also destabilising it, by making the meaning of the term look impermanent and negotiable.

Democracy's loss of meaning occurs, for example, when we recognise that statistically we are experiencing a sharp increase in economic inequality in the United States, a system of incarceration for African Americans which targets their voting rights, and a conflicted dependence and marginalisation of an underclass of expendable immigrant workers. Constant citation of such facts gives the signifier of democracy a traumatic loss of meaning for the political left and the right. Therefore, progress through democracy as a signifier is unstable.

The primordial trauma, the wish —usually guilty— for retrieval beneath the fear of loss, is with us forever, because it is constantly relived when meaning shifts. The primordial trauma is something hypothesised, usually only available through psychoanalytic reconstruction. The desiring gaze for the retrieval of the lost object, the starting point of Freud's psychoanalysis, is shifted by Lacan to reflect the world of signifiers. For us, we recognise it in culture and in the existence of things, objects, and archaeology of all kinds. This shift to the concrete is caused by the need for an

original object to provide fixity to the quest for the almost always emptying signifier. We suggest that critical archaeology, which focuses upon present politics as the source of its questions, in combination with more than a century of methodological and scientific development, can make use of this ambiguity.

## FREDERICK DOUGLASS AND THE HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ENSLAVED

Here is one context in which our concept of archaeology finds purchase. Frederick Douglass was born and raised in Talbot County, Maryland on the far, or Eastern, shore of the Chesapeake Bay. He was born into slavery. Around 1820, he was walked to Wye House Farm where, according to his autobiographies, sometime between ages six and seven, he realised that he was a slave. He lived in Talbot County through his teens, then left for Baltimore and freedom in the North. Eventually he made himself a central figure in the abolitionist movement. Douglass led a writer's life, had a friendship with Abraham Lincoln, and received an ambassadorship to Haiti. In the 1880s, he finally returned to Wye House with a welcome from his former owners with whom he made peace. All this is recorded in the three autobiographies he wrote about his life. Outside of his own life narrative is the long struggle of African Americans on the Eastern Shore of Maryland to overcome slavery, segregation, and racism.

To commemorate Douglass in Talbot County, a bronze statue was erected in 2011 on the front lawn of the county courthouse in Easton, Maryland, where the young Douglass was jailed in the 1830s. Two theatrical performances during the unveiling ceremonies expressed the notion that Douglass stands for the violence within slavery that served as the central reason for its abolition. A four-day ceremonial lead up to the dedication of the statue. On Friday evening and Saturday morning two actors portrayed Douglass, one at a banquet for donors and sponsors of the statue, one at the dedication itself. The scripts for both were similar, and were drawn from Douglass's descriptions of beatings, cruelty, sexual exploitation, and oppression from his childhood and youth at Wye House and other places in the vicinity. The descendants of the Lloyd family, whose overseer, Anthony Auld, owned Douglass, were honoured at the banquet because they were among the statue's sponsors—as well as sponsors of the archaeology reported here.

The two actors portrayed the imperative to abolish slavery, reflecting upon the common humanity of blacks and whites, and the need to reestablish a United States true to its democratic origins. The rhetoric was expressed in superb English: no dialect, no accent, no Southern or African American English. At some moments, there was no division between now and then. Sometimes you could not tell if it was June 18, 2011, or the very past which Douglass wrote of. African American culture in Talbot County was missing.

To make a critical archaeology, we reject the use of Douglass's portrayal of the violence as the only reason to celebrate him. In the waste and ruins is the African American past. The archaeology conducted by the University of Maryland at Wye

House has uncovered seven quarters in which enslaved Africans lived and worked. There are six below-ground ruins. A seventh is in the 1770s greenhouse at Wye House, the only standing, intact, 18th century greenhouse in North America. It too has a slave past, discovered through archaeology, and gives a different view of the African American past.

The greenhouse has three rooms, a south facing long room for holding plants in wintertime, a slave quarter for the family who ran it, and a furnace room. An archaeological team, including Matthew Cochran, Stephanie Duensing and John Blair, proved that the north facing room that had been identified earlier as a potting shed was occupied from 1775 to 1820, and contained not only inexpensive ceramics, but also pins, buttons, food remains, and parts of cutlery and sewing equipment often associated with domestic spaces. There is also a loft, windows, a hearth, a row of pegs, and a corner cupboard in the room. It was, they discovered, once a slave quarter.

Archaeologists identified a bundle associated with African spiritual practices at the only entrance to the quarter, centred just outside the threshold. In this location, two prehistoric projectile points and a disc were buried. This is a traditional West African bundle and one of a set of at least four such deposits found at Wye House. Archaeology not only added an African American presence to this National Register building, but also an African religious identity. These items answer a founding question our public archaeology forum has received from black descendants: "I would want to know about slave spirituality." This request came from the senior teacher at a nearby African American community of direct descendants of the enslaved families at Wye House. Such questions are the beginnings of the critique sought by Benjamin and made possible through archaeology.

Pollen remains found in the greenhouse are equally important for our argument. The pollen from stratified samples in the slave quarter shows bananas, plantains, analgesics and other medicinals, wild and domestic edibles, and rushes for sleeping and scouring. Stratified pollen samples from the south room show water lilies, hibiscus, palm, citrus, cereals, and wild edibles: strawberries, cranberries, and nightshades (tomato, eggplant, and tobacco), and some medicinals. Once one discounts ambient pollen from the local environment of fields and distant woods, there is more overlap than not between the two rooms in the greenhouse. But, there are more food plants in the quarter, as well as many more with medicinal properties.

There is also the presence of the bedding and cleaning rushes. The 85-foot long room of the greenhouse contained more tropicals and fewer medicinals. Because of the heat and light provided by the architectural environment, the living tropical plants had to be in this room. It is unlikely that many living plants were in the quarter, because there is not enough light. The pollen likely came in on clothes, fruit, or leaves.

Pollen diagrams (Trigg and Jacobucci, 2010) show edible and medicinal plants available in the growing room and the slave quarters (fig. 1) of the greenhouse at Wye House. Each bar represents the number of pollen grains up to 100. Levels F and G in the greenhouse are 1785-1790 and c. 1775, respectively. Level D in the Quarter dates to 1785-1820, and shows *Ambrosia* (ragweed), *Asteraceae* (sunflower

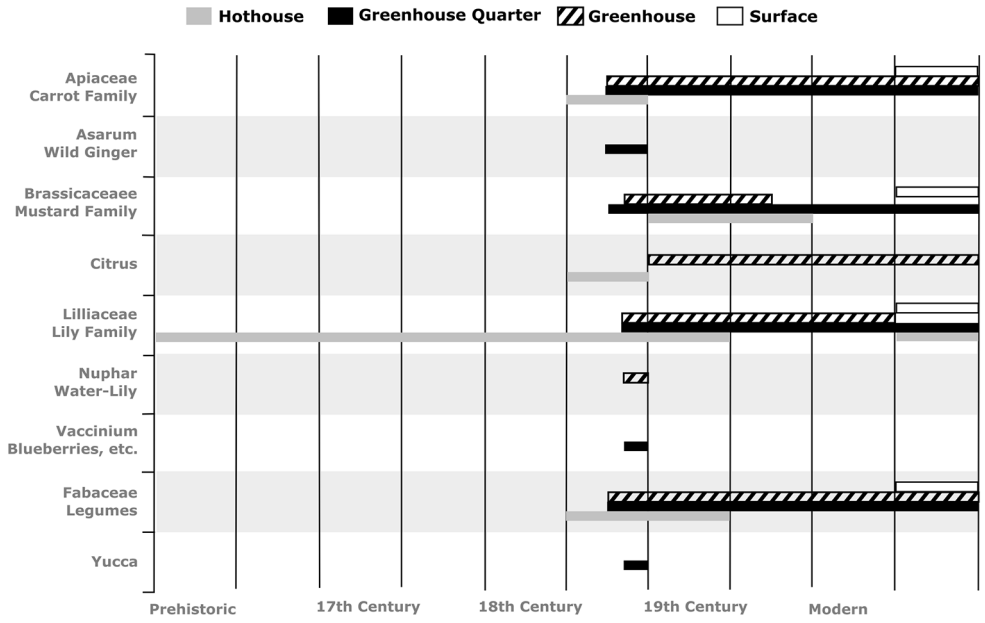


Fig. 1.—A selection of pollen comparing the environments of the greenhouse, greenhouse quarter, and hot house. The chart shows the presence or absence of the pollen types throughout time (Pruitt 2017:64, Figure 3.2). The original pollen report (Jacobucci and Trigg, 2010) shows more food and medicinal plant pollen in the greenhouse quarter than in the South facing main room of the greenhouse where no one lived.

and snakeroot), *Brasscica* (broccoli), *Musaceae* (banana or plantain), *Polygonum* (knotweed) and *Sagittaria* (arrowhead).

The greenhouse had at least one thermometer and a water pump. The heating ductwork went all around the south room at subfloor level and then up the side and back wall to a chimney. We hypothesise that microenvironments were maintained in the south room by careful control of sunlight, temperature, and watering. Period literature reveals that there could be hundreds of plants in contemporary greenhouses, not just a few dozen artfully spaced orange and lemon trees. Thus, we have both a domestic and domesticating environment. This pollen is the foundation for our archaeological critique of modernity as invoked by Benjamin.

Scientific gardening in early American agriculture involved virtually every kind of plant breeding, propagation, trading, and observation. Early gardening was virtually a worldwide endeavour, that was accompanied by manuals, journals, encyclopaedias, and personal correspondence carried on around the world. Not as known is the material world that accompanied scientific gardening, which made it possible. This includes the built landscapes of terraces, ponds, dams, garden beds and monuments, hot beds, garden pavilions, and greenhouses. Heated shelters for

plants included those warmed by the sun (hot beds), by piles of dung kept in them (garden pavilions), or by furnaces (greenhouses, also called orangeries or limonias).

Scientific gardening (Grove, 1995) took two forms, usually separated in our scholarship. One is ornamental gardening, which focuses on vistas, flowers, tropical plants, channelised streams, and clipped hedges. It is used to organise views and aromas. In both popular presentations and scholarship, this kind of gardening is associated with displays of wealth, power, as well as scientific, literary or philosophical knowledge. Scientific gardening was also motivated by profit. Enhanced productivity of cereals and hay, and disease and pest resistant fruit trees were all bred and traded for. Growers discussed, traded, appraised, and then ordered Asian, African, Pacific Island, and South American varieties of plants through a shared literature. Edward Lloyd and his Scots gardener used enslaved Africans to plant, water and cultivate the plants. They were engaged in the fields and in the groves, formal gardens, and the three greenhouses on the estate where they had to constantly monitor the temperatures and run the furnace to maintain the plants. They knew the plants in every way. At Wye House they embedded their West African religious tradition in the walls and in the ground. And they began —or continued— African gardening traditions in their own neighbourhoods. The traditions survive today and some are documented (Krech, 1968; Marks, 1982, 1987).

Plants lead our discussion to food, and our critique of the present. The Lloyds used enslaved Africans to produce crops that were sold, producing profit. Locally produced plants were cooked for food on the plantation. Two cookbooks survive at Wye House, written and used by four Lloyd wives and four African American women, each of whom is listed in them. The two cookbooks date to 1852 and 1881, respectively. Nearly all of the about 100 recipes are handwritten. There is no doubt from the stained pages themselves that the books were used in the kitchen of the main house, which is within —not separate from— the 1770s great house. There is a range of recipes including pickled tomatoes, fried eggplant, and preparations of medicinals. Many of the recipes are for roasted meats and desserts. All the plant foods in the cookbooks left pollen in the greenhouse.

Why is all this archaeology important? What are we finding that anyone would want to know? The larger question is the retrieval of a wasted but discoverable past for the purpose of reestablishing social equality: history with a punch now; or, as Benjamin would have it: how history explains modern life. The Lloyd descendent who commissioned our work is curious about the past, including the slave past on her property. She points out that nothing is known about it. The African American descendants want to know about slave spirituality and the Lloyd efforts towards granting their freedom. The details of plant life in the greenhouse and food in the kitchen begin a different history for Talbot County.

Žižek calls artefacts essential to human existence because they specify the empty and missing history and lessen its loss. Archaeology's job, in opposition to the object's role, is to open up the lost world behind the fantasy often associated with an imagined past, or the declaration that there wasn't one. Archaeology bursts the ideological fantasy and replaces it with an empirical presentation of the lives

of the enslaved: labouring lives, lower class lives, and real conditions of existence. Knowledge, denied to so many in capitalist fictions of equal opportunity, can be realised.

Pollen from stratified deposits at Wye House's greenhouse could not fit Benjamin's and Žižek's sense of artefacts better. Pollen is invisible to us, except with a microscope. When you see the many shapes, you can also know that they have morphology consistent with a species or genus, or at least, a plant family. They are materialisations of domestic environments which become eggplants, tomatoes, water lilies, and oranges. They are rushes to sleep on, pain killers, cures for indigestion, and the herbs and spices to add to otherwise unpalatable meals: botanical independence. The meaningless drudgery and pointless violence in the lives of the enslaved has a hidden counterpoint in the knowledge of hundreds of edible, usable, medicinal plants taken, propagated, prepared, and bred. Meaning comes to the pollen grains when we read the recipes kept in the Wye House cookbooks through which the pollen grains, yield to plants, and the recipes yielded food.

John Wennersten's *Maryland's Eastern Shore* (1992) shows how empty the history of the Eastern Shore is of and for African Americans. Initially, the book does not read as empty at all. There is a lot in it about slavery, lynchings, riots, and racism of the most extensive and worst kind, segregation, economic hardship, political disenfranchisement, and a full tenancy of oppression for African Americans. But there are no black people. No names, no stories, no quotes, no interviews, no memories, no personal knowledge. That is, except for Gloria Richardson, Matt Williams, and Euel Lee, the latter men both lynched well into the 20th century. There are no black people, or virtually none, compared to the hundreds of whites named in the book.

So the book has a story, but no black characters, just white players and processes moving African Americans along. Once we have both the artefacts, like the pollen, the recipes, the names of cooks, and the ruins in landscapes of quarters and a village for hundreds of enslaved Africans mentioned by Douglass, but almost never by name and neither by accomplishment, we have what Benjamin was looking for. We have the origins of modern life.

In these ruined landscapes we have broken dishes, pots, pans, animal bones, and bird and fish remains. We have tens of thousands of these, stratified, arrayed by building and deposited by enslaved people. They combine with the pollen, cookbooks, cooks, scientific farming, and African American gardening to show that over the course of 350 years at Wye House, people collected, propagated, experimented, worshiped with, cooked, ate, and tossed remains out while creating a particular cuisine closely related to Southern cooking. Southern cooking is usually presented as 19th century or colonial, and practiced by slaves but supervised by white women who wrote the recipes and managed the table. Archaeology demonstrates its African American roots in the cultivation and domestication of the local environment, in the cooking and cooperative replacements of English recipes with the regional food of today, and of local, black authorship.

This is how Benjamin and Žižek suggest we work. Meaning fills, like food. Then it is used up and hunger —need— happens again. Food is then once again

essential. The emptiness of a denied past must be filled. However, food and hunger are the same, existing for and with each other, for a lifetime. The same can be said with meaning. Ruins and waste are the source of need, the traces of past trauma, but also can be the objects of its satisfaction. The job of archaeology —all kinds of it— is to take waste and help society create a meaning out of it.

Douglass describes the violence of Wye House, which included murder. But we have found no bullets, gun parts, fish hooks, traps, knives, or any of the other methods of killing. So, the slave labourer's story is not told through the clock and gun at Wye House, but through the domesticated food people still eat and love. But labour's story still contains violence: second class citizenship, early death, and guns. Lattimer and its massacre are not removed from Wye House at all, despite the fact that the shootings are a generation after Emancipation. The Eastern Shore had plenty of lynchings —individual Lattimers.

## THE LATTIMER MASSACRE AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LABOUR, IMMIGRATION, AND RACE

In September of 1897, in a coal mining company town near Hazleton in northeast Pennsylvania, a company-endorsed posse killed as many as 19 striking immigrant labourers and injured scores more in an event known as the Lattimer Massacre. In the strike which preceded the event, the racialised underclass of new immigrants from Eastern Europe and Italy struck for fair working and living conditions. Though this moment of punctuated violence took place over only about five minutes in 1897, it is emblematic of the racialised class violence that characterised the industrial society of the anthracite coal region in the 19th century. Today, this history of discrimination is ironically echoed in residents' discriminative treatment of a recent generation of immigrants from the Caribbean and Central America.

For many residents, selective memory yields a narrative of the region's history that is not ironic or analogous in any critical sense: it does not disrupt a narrative of progressive advancement and democratic stability for all. The region's past is a fetishised Benjaminian Ur-past, which models a golden age of hard work and community, undone by outside forces which have risen up in the recent past. In this context, contemporary immigrants are scapegoated for the traumatic degradation of the local economy. The slipperiness of the empty signifiers of democracy, racial privilege, and citizenship remain unquestioned in this account. Archaeology of the massacre site and ethnic shanty enclaves reveals an abject history of racialised immigrant discrimination which has continued into the present.

### The history of the Anthracite Region

The industrial history of the anthracite coalfields of Northeast Pennsylvania reflects the region's particular historical, geologic and geographic conditions. Mining

operations required highly capitalised initial investment costs to mediate hazardous working conditions, including tremendous heat, flood waters, poisonous gases, explosions and wall collapses. Tied to the vicissitudes of the global energy market, the value of coal was invariably unstable. To provide for the steep investment costs of this fickle industry and mediate its unpredictability, operators maintained large, highly stratified, and expendable forces of both highly skilled and unskilled labour.

Labour was drawn from the major waves of immigration entering the country, first from Western Europe in the early to mid-19th century, and then Eastern and Southern Europe throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The extent to which companies controlled the character and inflow of migration to the region is controversial, though controlling interests undoubtedly benefitted from the destabilising competition new immigrants inspired among the labour force (Brooks, 1897-1898; Barendse, 1981:7-8,24-28). Maintaining this pool of surplus labour allowed coal operators the logistical flexibility to respond to the exigencies of an unpredictable market.

Through a variety of factors, racialised nationalities of each group came to occupy a place in a relatively-positioned hierarchy. As in other industries, the new immigrants were at first turned onto relatively less-skilled labouring roles, and therefore could be paid considerably less (Gutman, 1977; Dubofsky, 1996). In turn, the racialised differentiation of new immigrants was reified and exacerbated by companies through the hierarchicalisation of labour processes, the institutionalisation and reinforcement of particular spatial and material conditions, and through discriminatory litigation (Berthoff, 1965; Mulrooney, 1989; Novak, 1996). In the earliest period after their arrival, between about 1875 and 1910, new immigrant workers occupied shanty enclaves on the margins of the ordered space of the company towns. This social marginalisation was materialised in differentiated architecture and spatial patterning, consumer goods, and working and living conditions.

Within this context, the strike of 1897 led to a massacre. The economic depression of the 1880s led operators to cut the wages of new immigrant workers and their families. The new immigrant labourers struck in August of 1897. Supported for the first time by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), the strikers managed to shut down the collieries around the town of Hazleton by the afternoon of the tenth of September. Company management moved quickly to suppress the first signs of class solidarity in their new subjects. Determined to keep the Lattimer colliery in operation, the local coal company operators hired the local sheriff, who deputised a posse of local businessmen and armed them with Winchester repeating rifles. In the end, 19 of the miners marching into the town of Lattimer were killed on the spot and over forty injured. Many were shot at close range in the head or back, sometimes repeatedly (Pinkowski, 1950; Novak, 1996). Within a few days others died from their wounds and the death toll rose to around 25. A subsequent trial garnered national attention. In the end, the jury acquitted the police officers and the posse of any crime.

The Anthracite Region lives with the legacies of its harsh industrial history today. With a crippled local economy and a scarred postindustrial landscape of ruins

and environmental degradation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the social tensions of the past echo into the present. Like many parts of the world with long histories of single-economy extractive industries, many of the region's residents have turned to a right-wing populist political stance today in response to the destabilising effects of global capital and labour flows. Residents express condemnation and fear of present-day immigration, resentment of cosmopolitan urban elites, and feelings of abandonment and bewilderment at globalised economics.

Ironically, the descendants of these earlier generations of immigrant miners have sought to make their town inhospitable to recent immigrants from the Caribbean and Central America. In ethnographic interviews and popular discourse, residents blame these new immigrants for crime, a stagnant local economy, and unjustified privileged treatment by liberal government policies. In 2006, Hazleton was among the first cities in the United States to attempt to pass municipal laws designed to legislate immigration, including an ordinance to make English the official language, and a law barring employers and landlords from hiring or housing illegal immigrants (McKanders, 2007; Frantz, 2012). Though the legislation was ruled unconstitutional by the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals, ethnographic evidence suggests that their introduction served to legitimise white nationalist discourse into the realm of everyday discourse.

## The Lattimer Archaeology Project

An interdisciplinary project of the University of Maryland examines the material and social contexts of violence, race and class struggle in the region, using archaeology to bring attention to present social issues (Shackel *et al.,* 2011; Shackel and Roller, 2012; Roller, 2015; Roller, 2018). In 2009, archaeologists Paul Shackel and Michael Roller conducted a survey of the Lattimer massacre site in collaboration with community members and the assistance of Bravo, an organisation dedicated to battlefield archaeology. Archaeology conducted at the Lattimer Massacre site, along with excavations of the shanty town settlements occupied by new immigrant workers, materialises the moment of the massacre in juxtaposition with a domestic context of structural violence.

A systematic metal detector survey of the massacre site produced an archaeological account of the massacre. Bullets from the massacre were identified with the technical help of archaeologist Doug Scott and the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute. In the latter case, XRF or trace elements analysis was used to distinguish between artefacts from the event and the many rounds of ammunition that post-date the massacre. The recovered munitions associated with the first volley were all pistol rounds with a maximum effective range of between 25 and 50 feet (Barnes, 2006). Two of the bullets associated with the massacre were .38 calibre long or short rounds. Markings suggest they were fired from one or more Smith & Wesson revolvers. A heavily impacted .22 round was also identified within the cluster of period ordinance (Scott, 2011; Roller, 2015, 2018). These rounds were all

found at the location of the "massacre tree" under which the initial confrontation is recorded to have begun (Sivilich, 2011).

Additionally, archaeologists identified a .32 calibre round fired from a Smith & Wesson revolver in the middle of the field, near the projected location of the posse (fig. 2). While the possibility exists that this bullet was unrelated to the event, there are also a number of controversial interpretations. It may represent a bullet shot into the ground from a reluctant member of the posse, or return fire from the strikers. The latter possibility is controversial, given that most reports suggest the strikers were unarmed and defenceless. These findings reflect the value of doing archaeology, in presenting a materiality that precedes, and often disarranges, the construction of subsequent narratives.

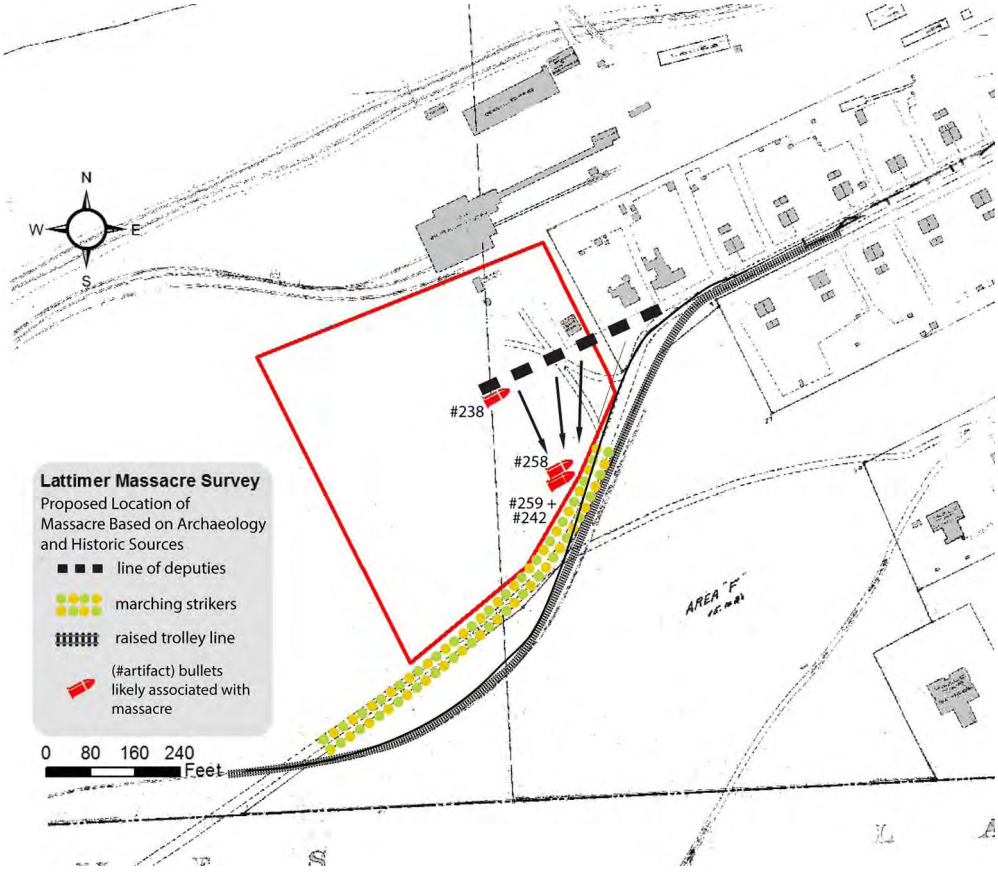


Fig. 2.—Results of a systematic metal detector survey of the site of the Lattimer Massacre by BRAVO and the University of Maryland, Fall 2011 (Figure by Roller).

## The Archaeology of Racialisation and Whiteness

Between the 1930s and the 1950s, the ethnic enclaves of shanties situated on the periphery of the coal company towns of Northeast Pennsylvania were demolished or heavily altered, concealing their marginalised origins. At this time, financed by jobs in the fleeting post-War economy and by federal entitlements such as the GI Bill, residents of these places began to leave the region or move into newly constructed suburban housing. As waste, these tightly clustered domiciles would have been a stark reminder for white ethnic Americans of an all too recent status as a foreign underclass. Reminders of such a history, so recent in memory, would be dissonant with an understanding of free market consumer democracy in which no social barriers can intervene with the advancement of individual entrepreneurialism.

However, up until the second quarter of the 20th century, the racialised differentiation of New Immigrants was reified and exacerbated by companies through the hierarchicalisation of labour processes, discriminatory litigation and the institutionalisation and reinforcement of particular spatial and material conditions (Berthoff, 1965; Mulrooney, 1989; Novak, 1996). This social marginalisation was materialised in differentiated architecture and spatial patterning, access to infrastructure, and consumer goods (Roller, 2015; Roller, 2018). By the end of the 1870s, the landscape and demographics of Lattimer Nos 1 and 2 reflected split racialised labour regimes of skilled and unskilled labour coordinated with mechanised production. Company houses along Main Street in Lattimer No 1 were occupied chiefly by families of Western European origin including those of English, Welsh, German and Irish descent, as well as a growing majority native-born by the late 19th century (fig. 3, areas A1, A2). The majority of the company houses in Lattimer No 2, were occupied by Eastern Europeans (fig. 3, area A3). On the edges of both towns, settlements of irregularly-shaped enclaves of new immigrants formed (fig. 3, areas C1, C2, C3, C4). In these areas, company land was rented to families who built their own houses, adding sections organically across the decades to meet the needs of economy. The organic floor plans and the proximity of these vernacular structures reflect intimate communal spaces strikingly at odds with the linear planning of the company homes.

## Archaeology of shanty architecture

Archaeologists from the University of Maryland investigated the forgotten landscapes and architecture of two separate enclaves in Lattimer Nos 1 and 2, separated by a stream valley.

The shanty enclave on Canal Street in Lattimer occupied a plot of land concealed from Main Street behind a large coal processing waste bank (fig. 3, area C2). Census records report that in the early 20th century, residents were Eastern European and Italian. Settled on about 1.8-acres of sloping land wedged between the bank and a drainage canal, the neighbourhood was the closest inhabited space to the colliery

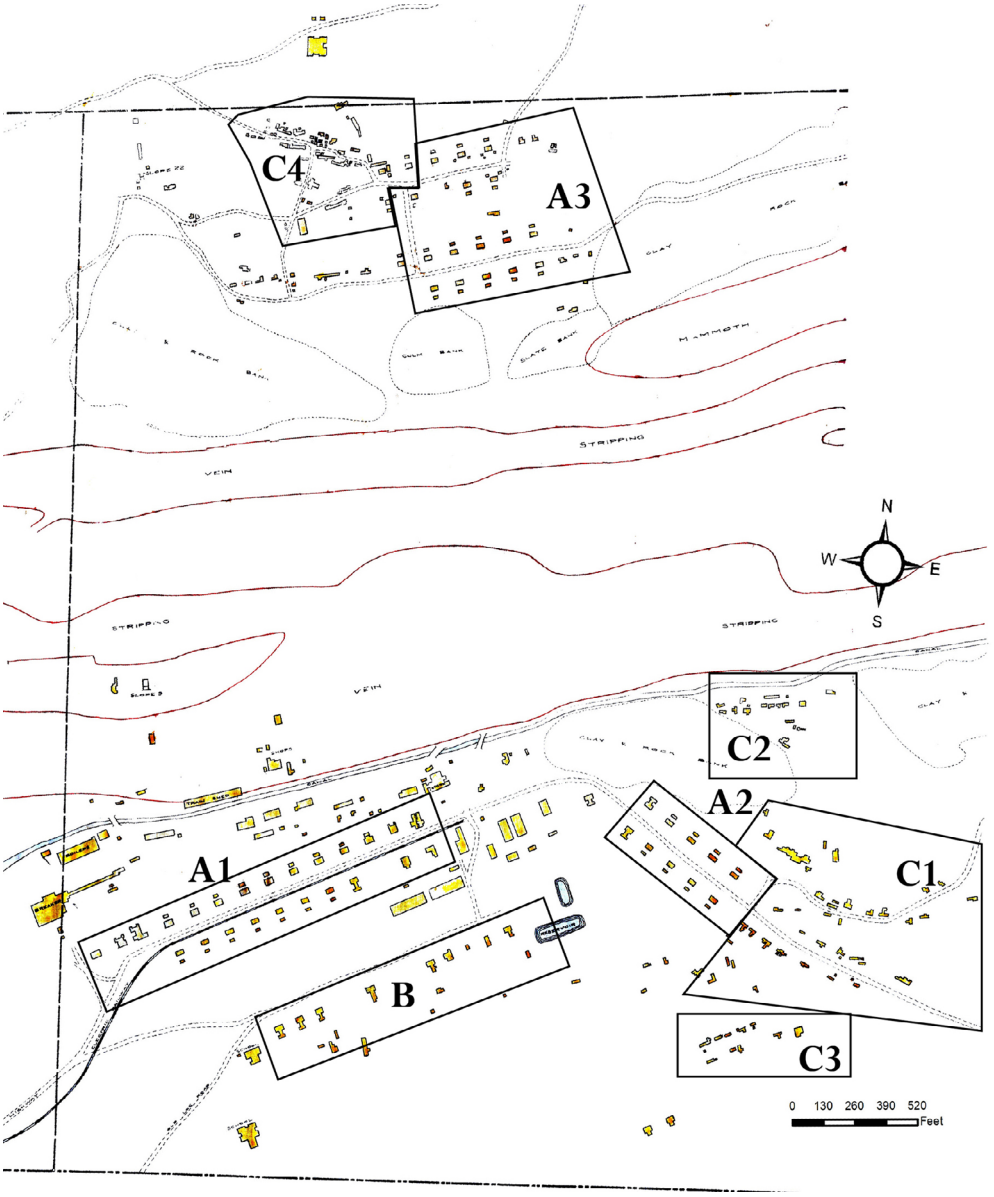


Fig. 3.—Map depicting the various districts of Lattimer Nos. 1 and 2, circa 1878-1920: A1, A2 & A3: company homes; B: Management enclave; C1, C2, C3 & C4: New Immigrant shanty enclaves (Map by Author; basemap: Altmiller Map, circa 1912).

operations. Archaeology and historic maps from between 1878 and 1941 reveal that between nine and 15 houses were clustered around a narrow alley. Privies, icehouses, storage shanties and coal sheds were also present.

Excavations on house lot #354 documented a total of 28 features related to the occupation of the lot, including architectural posts or piers, foundation remnants, and traces of landscaping such as animal pens, roof drip lines and post holes (fig. 4). Garden features, such as shovel scrapes, planting holes and fence and planting supports were also identified at the base of yard soils. More than 10,000 artefacts were recovered from a variety of stratigraphic contexts. A variety of architectural elements and hardware from different eras reflect a dynamic organic architecture of constant modification by its occupants. Architectural piers of dry-laid shale likely picked from the bank behind the house were identified for the northwest and northeast corners of the main body of the house. But other features such as a dripline, slot fence, post-holes and a later foundation for a rear addition reflect the constant adaptation of the space to meet changing needs.

To the west of the addition, mottled clay and silt-rich soils lined the base of a shallow trench used to collect waste or rainwater and direct it away from the house. A posthole excavated into the edge of the slope and filled with rocks and coal ash likely served to anchor a post supporting a roof overhang. Soils in upper strata indicate a later effort to fill and level this trench, perhaps as architectural features were replaced or demolished.

Sometime in the 1960s the settlement on Canal Street was abandoned and the structures razed. Two other similar settlements in Lattimer Nos 1 and 2 remain today, in much altered form. At the southeast corner of Lattimer No 1, an area described on a company map from 1913 as "Italian Dwellings," included a densely- clustered collection of buildings lining a small road or alleyway (fig. 3, area C3). Excavations were conducted in 2013 in an area to the northwest of Lattimer No 2, known today as Pardeesville (Roller, 2015). This area held the largest and densest ethnic enclave consisting of mostly Italian labourers and their families beginning in the 1880s. More than 40 homes were concentrated here around a T- intersection dominated by a Catholic church (fig. 3, area C4) and resembling, in essence, a tiny Italian village transplanted to the hills of Pennsylvania.

The ethnic enclaves excavated in Lattimer were similar to those the victims of the massacre occupied at the time of the tragic event. The archaeology revealed a structural violence engineered by company ownership to differentiate their split labour force, materialising their racialisation. In coal company towns throughout Pennsylvania, the feedback relationship between racialised ethnicity, labouring role, and housing set the material limits for economic movement for certain groups (Mulroony, 1989:135). During the Lattimer Massacre, the power over life and death hung delicately in balance in the hands of an armed posse of middle class businessmen. So, we ask: was this differentiation an excuse for a lethal response?

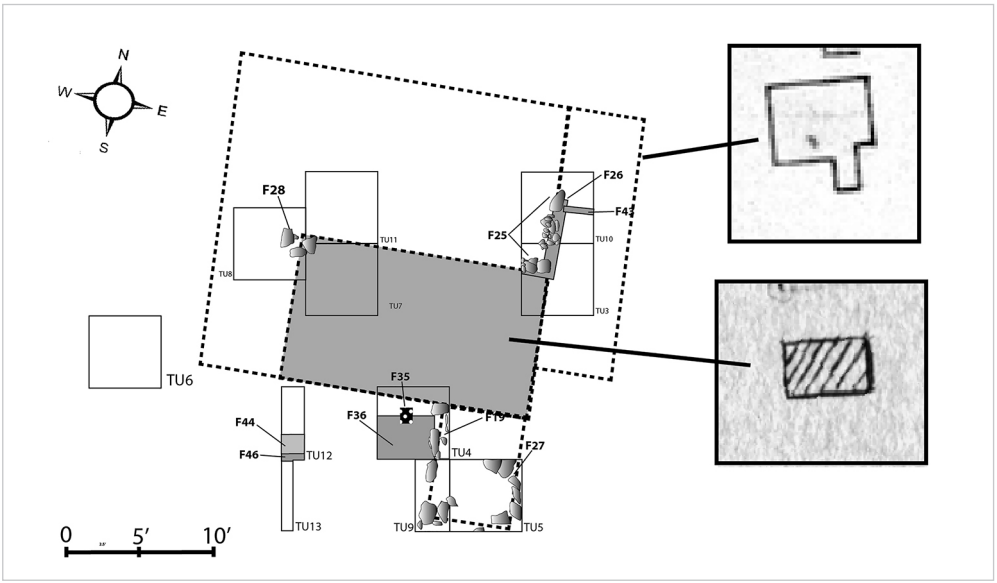


Fig. 4.—Figure depicting excavated features identified in the 2012 survey of Houselot #354 superimposed over its footprint from maps dating to 1885 and the 1920s.

## The abjection of the recent past

Today, the massacre is in a liminal state between recollection and forgetting; an empty signifier adrift amongst ambiguous or selective remembrance (Roller, 2013). In 1972, the United Mine Workers placed a monument at the site of the massacre, freezing the interpretation of the event as a tragic development along the path to class solidarity amongst immigrant workers.

At the time, however, controversy erupted between organised labour and ethnic heritage societies over its significance. Polish, Slavic, and Lithuanian descendent groups fought for ownership and control of the memory of the event, as part of an ethnic struggle for representation and acceptance. The two sides debated whether to describe the victims as miners, "immigrants," or to individually name the country of origin of each group represented. Further argument ensued over the accuracy of the ethnic spellings of the names of victims inscribed on the monument (Aurand, 2002).

Today, the hegemonic reach of these interpretive poles have also receded, as many residents have turned away from organised labour as antipathic overreach to free market economics, and young residents eschew their immigrant heritage. However, residents hold onto deep pride in the past, an idealised golden age of communal struggle and hard work. The desired return to this fantasy provides the sought-after wish fuelling populist right wing politics.

Many white Americans now subject their immigrant history to a repressive forgetting. Forgotten is an abject history of a racialised in-between status as a foreign

underclass and the consequent normalised violence justified by longer-established Americans to prevent their social advancement. Moreover, the empty signifier of immigrant history is not simply forgotten, but filled with the objects of a Golden Age of hard work and community. Lost from these narratives is 19th century racial politics.

In truth, an assemblage of external factors slowly erased the marginalised status of Eastern and Southern Europeans in the middle of the 20th century. Among them, the imperative of patriotism during the World Wars and the temporary halting of new immigration by legislation, such as the 1924 Immigration Act. Lastly, the discourse and, eventually, the sheer materiality of a social and material landscape of mass consumer democracy, ameliorated or at least concealed the racial differentiation so evident in previous eras. Ultimately, the 20th century yielded a hyperbolic Black-White racial divide in America, which hides the complexities of this earlier history.

Today, the region's residents are not haunted by the Ur-past of the days of the massacre. Instead, the trauma of its loss issues out of the ruination of the recent past. In the last few decades of the 20th century, the region faced economic challenges typical of post-industrial regions across the country, including a chain of interlinked causes and effects connected to the mechanisation of work, shifting markets, deskilling, unemployment, capital flight, aging demographics and depopulation (Rose, 1981, Dublin and Licht, 2005). By the 1970s, the only other industry that thrived in the region, the silk and textile mills which employed the wives and children of coal industry labourers, also left the region for cheaper labour markets in the "right-to-work" South or overseas (Sterba, 1996; Dublin and Licht, 2005:28-29). The region still identifies itself with coal mining, though by 2001 the industry employed less than one thousand individuals, far below its peak employment of 181,000 just before the First World War (BLS, 2001; Dublin and Licht, 2005:4).

More recently, its location at the intersection of two major highways brought a warehousing industry to the region, occupying redeveloped coal mines on the edge of town. These businesses often pay wages far below a sustainable living wage and manipulate their worker's schedules to avoid having to provide benefits or job security. These jobs attracted a large labour force of Central Americans and Dominicans, who had been priced out of gentrified neighbourhoods in New York and New Jersey, to take advantage of the low rent available in Hazleton's largely under-populated city centre. These migrants have been blamed for things such as bringing in crime and drugs, draining city coffers, accepting government handouts, and disrupting the peaceful atmosphere and aesthetics of the urban landscape.

We designed the public archaeology project in Northeast Pennsylvania to bring attention to the ironic resemblance of past and present immigrant discrimination in the region (Shackel *et al*., 2011). More specifically, we hoped to illuminate the precarious instability of democracy and the concealed limits to movement and self-determination always reserved in capitalist modes of production *for certain citizens at certain times*. More explicitly, we hoped to present a critical narrative of an abject history of regional and national economy depending wholly upon the exploitation of immigrant labour.

## CONCLUSION

The particular plasticity of late modern capitalism lends itself habitually to the acceleration or amplification of the capitalist cycles of destruction and remaking (Gonzalez-Ruibal, 1995). On the eastern shore of Maryland, agricultural environments founded upon slave labour gave way at first to a sharecropping system of tenant farming in which the social relations of the previous era were replicated. But by the early 20th century, a variety of economic, ecological and social changes transformed places like the Wye plantation into preternaturally nostalgic colonial revival environments. In many places such as this, if not torn down, slave cabins were romantically renovated as reconstructions to ornament pastoral landscapes.

In the Anthracite Region of northeast Pennsylvania, shanty enclaves marked the places where predatory capitalism produced a labouring immigrant underclass. Today, the removal of this landscape allows present day white descendants of these immigrants to disarticulate themselves from this past. The repression of this history and its ironic continuities facilitates the transition of an oppressed group to one of oppressors.

The taphonomic events that create our archaeological data are often accompanied by ideological processes: conceits, interventions, and ruptures. The contemporary landscapes we encounter in cities, plantations, historic sites and rural towns are the accumulated products of class struggle, a succession of "social crisis at multiple times" (Lewis, 2010:8). As such, each site is an assemblage of events, materials, forms and absences which might only have come to us after careening back and forth between obliteration and revival. Archaeology must be attentive to the active forgetting, censure and alteration the archaeological record can reveal.

Each archaeological site comes to us with the challenge of restoring the sequence and nature of these events. Perhaps decoding these taphonomic events are not simply obstacles to recovering whole pasts, but are the better part of what we do: to investigate, and more importantly, ethically and scientifically intervene in the social production of history.

With their nuanced analysis of how waste is treated in society, actively *produced not discarded*, Benjamin and Žižek affirm misrecognition, antagonism and forgetting as unstable processes that are central to the creation of meaning in society. Benjamin's commitment to an archaeological examination of material culture as a form of patterned evidence that may structure critique, arguably led to an attention to material history for the Frankfurt school, with whom he was acquainted before his death. In this point, we take seriously Shannon Dawdy's (2010:768) remark that Benjamin might be the first historical archaeologist. Furthermore, we suggest that he is also the first *critical* archaeologist.

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