1
Introduction

1
An archaeology of ruins

Þóra Pétursdóttir and Bjørnar Olsen

Modernity is rarely associated with ruins. In our everyday comprehension, ruins rather bring to mind ancient and enchanted monumental structures; an archaeological dream world featuring such celebrities such as Machu Picchu, Pompeii and Angkor Wat. Yet never have so many ruins been produced; so many sites abandoned. Since the nineteenth-century, mass-production, consumerism and thus cycles of material replacement have accelerated; increasingly larger amounts of things are rapidly victimized and made redundant. At the same time processes of *destruction* have intensified, although largely overlooked when compared to the research and social significance devoted to consumption and production (González-Ruibal 2008). The outcome is a modern ruin landscape of closed shopping malls, abandoned military sites, industrial wastelands, derelict amusement parks, empty apartment houses, withering capitalist and communist monuments. A ghostly world of decaying modern debris that for long was omitted academic concerns and conventional histories – and also considered too recent, too grim and too repulsive to be embraced as heritage.

Recently the situation of neglect seems to have changed, though, and modern ruins, and processes of decay and ruination, have become the subject of new attention, both inside and outside academia. Some scholars even speak of a 'turn to ruins … that is analogous to the craze for romantic ruins in the Victorian era' (Edensor 2011: 162). Genuinely, though of course somewhat programmatically devoted is the fast growing field of the archaeology of the recent or contemporary past, where studies of the ignored and marginalized have become a hallmark (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001b; Burström 2007; Holtorf and Piccini 2009; Harrison and Schofield 2010). However, the scholarly interest in modern ruins is much wider, and now engages scholars in a number of different disciplines (cf. Edensor 2005; DeSilvey and Edensor 2012), as evident, for example, in the array of recent books and papers exploring the theme of ruins in literature, philosophy, films, the visual arts, etc. (e.g. Yablon 2009; Hell and Schönle 2010; Dale and Burrell 2011). An artistic concern with modern ruins is also discernible, especially as manifested in the number of photographic works depicting modern decay and abandonment (e.g. Andreassen *et al.* 2010; Romany 2010; Jörnmark and Von Hausswolff 2011; Margaine and Margaine 2009; Elíasson and Ásberg Sigurðsson 2004, 2011), a record moreover multiplied in the proliferating online ruin imagery (Pétursdóttir and Olsen, in press). The deindustrialization and conspicuous ruination recently experienced in many of of modernity's most prosperous places, such as Detroit, has similarly attracted news media and led to TV documentaries and other journalistic explorations. Yet another contributor to the impression of this new *Ruinenlust* is the more or less non-academic urban explorer community, which has been a driving force in making modern ruins an issue in popular culture (Ninjalicious (Chapman) 2005; Rowsdower 2011; Garrett 2013).

Nevertheless, despite its undeniable impact on certain areas of academia, art and alternative culture, the political concerns for the social and economic causes and consequences of ruination, modern ruins themselves still play a very marginal role in the political economy of both the past and the present. Largely left out of heritage charters and concern they are mainly considered as an environmental and aesthetic disturbance, representing a dismal and unwanted presence to be eradicated, or transformed, rather than something to be cared for, or accepted, in its current state of being. Thus, as there was hardly any general craze for ruins in the Victorian age, it was in fact, a very selective and elitist dedication, the curiosity for, and interest in, modern ruins is still a relatively marginal phenomena. The general attitude towards modern ruins is largely negative, making them easy targets for ever more effective campaigns to clean up and restore land- and cityscapes, in order to comply with environmentalist programmes and public aesthetic conceptions.

As indicated by these varied and often conflicting attitudes and responses, modern ruins are an ambiguous and controversial phenomenon within current discourses and practices. These diverse attitudes and responses trigger a number of questions with which this book is concerned. Why have the ruins of our own time been so devoid of value – historically, culturally

Figure 1.1 Lodging house for female workers at an abandoned herring station at Eyri
Photo: Bjørnar Olsen

and scientifically – compared to their ancient counterparts? To what extent, for example, does this bias reflect aesthetic preferences that also impinge on their academic and public reception? And why have modern ruins, despite this long lack of interest, recently re-entered social and cultural discourses and what has caused their current allure? Given this changing attitude, and their own ever more proliferating self-presencing, it is moreover timely to ask to what extent this attention may affect disciplinary perspectives and territories, heritage programmes and practices, and lead to alternative ways of mediating and presenting the recent past, including more *artistic* ones? Furthermore, recognizing that this new interdisciplinary interest in modern ruins concurs remarkably with the so-called 'turn to things' in the social and human sciences (e.g. Brown 2001; Domanska 2006; Trentmann 2009; Olsen 2010; Bryant 2011; Bogost 2012), what also needs to be explored is in what way it affects – and is affected by – this 'new materialism', and how it more generally impacts on our conception of things. This also raises the question of what role archaeology, the master discipline of things and ruins, plays in relation to these twists and turns that currently affect its traditional and devoted fields of interest. To what extent do these changes testify to an 'archaeological moment', a new and dedicated concern with *real* things, broken and soiled things, that will significantly impact on studies of materiality, aesthetics, and the contemporary past itself?

This book addresses these topics and questions and in this introduction we shall start exploring some of them by focusing on four partly overlapping issues. First, we shall briefly discuss some possible causes of the largely negative reception of modern ruins as compared to more ancient ones; second, we shall look closer at their role in remembering and how things, abandonment and ruination may challenge current conceptions of memory; third, we shall explore how modern ruins and thing-oriented perspectives may help rethink heritage in relation to aesthetics and ethics, and, finally, we shall more explicitly discuss the role of an archaeology of the contemporary past in relation to some of these issues. Hopefully our preliminary explorations will help setting the agenda for the book and the chapters to follow. However, rather than complying with the common introductory trope of edited volumes, where the editors synthesise and summarize – and often thus pre-interpret – the contributions, tying them together to form an evidently tight, focused and consistent whole, we choose to leave open such scrutiny. This also because we acknowledge that things – ruins – do not bow to any one approach. We therefore embrace the great differences among the contributions and avoid any attempts to mould them together. Instead we could say that what truly unites them is a deep concern for ruins and the richness of their materiality. As follows, this introduction ought to be read first and foremost as a reflection of the editors' opinions and their views on the matters discussed. We do not propose, nor do we expect, that these are necessarily shared by the other contributors.

Ruins old and new

For centuries, classical and Gothic ruins inspired poets, artists and scholars, motivated philosophical mediations and served as instruments of contemplative and aesthetic pleasure. Later they became the concern for national care and legal protection, anchors for identity and belonging, and today they are even considered holders of universal cultural significance and human values. The unsettling qualities of the modern experience have been seen as instrumental in bringing about much of these concerns fuelling a desire for roots and a stable identity in an increasingly unstable world (Lowenthal 1998). The fact that the modern condition also produced its own derelict monuments and ruins, its own conspicuous heritage, was, however, far less spoken about. Being modern *and* ruined, made modern ruins ambiguous and even anachronistic, and their hybrid or uncanny state made them hard to negotiate within established cultural categories of waste and heritage, failure and progress. They became matter out of place – and out of time.

Thus, when trying to explore in more detail their fate in modern discourses and practices we should at first note that there is an effective history of norms, values and distastes involved. For one thing modern ruins lacked the qualities that were thought to distinguish *real* ruins and were thus deprived of 'ruin value'. While connoisseurs of ruins always have favoured stone, the preferred building material of the archetypical ancient civilizations (Yablon 2009: 8; Cnattingius and Cnattingius 2007: 10), modern ruins are made of iron, glass and concrete, materials which through their very fabric prevent them from fulfilling the aesthetic expectations associated with a proper ruin and graceful decay. Throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth-century, architects, artists and other intellectuals felt a growing concern for the use of these inauthentic materials and the architecture they afforded, as expressed for example in arcades, exhibition halls, factories and bridges (Buck-Morss 1989: 127–9; cf. Benjamin 2002: 33). One argument used to denounce these constructions was that they were unable to produce gentle ruins of the kind left us from classical antiquity (Yablon 2009: 8); the constructors did not have true command over their 'modes of decay' (Ruskin 1849/2001: 68–9). Later and more infamously the notion of ruin value was claimed have developed to a 'theory' (and even a 'law') by Nazi architect Albert Speer. Unable to age and ruin in a refined way, Speer claimed that modern materials and constructions were unsuited to form the wished-for 'bridge of tradition' that could inspire future generations. It was 'hard to imagine that rusting heaps of rubble could communicate the heroic inspirations which Hitler admired in the monuments of the past' (Speer 1970: 56).

Another serious defect of modern ruins is of course their immaturity. Their presence thus acts as a temporal disturbance, a noise that provokes our assumptions of time, history, progress and sustainability. In the dominant conception of them, ruins are *old*, they have an 'age-value' (Riegl 1903/1996) that also is imperative to their legal and cultural-historical appreciation as heritage (Cnattingius and Cnattingius 2007: 12). However, this 'untimeliness' (Yablon 2009) is not only provoked by their awkward timing but also by their wrong pace. Unlike classical ruins presumed to have decayed slowly and gracefully over centuries, modern ruins are often *fast* ruins, sometimes *too* fast. The financial crisis of the late 2000s has made such premature ruins conspicuous worldwide; abandoned construction sites, holiday resorts closed before the first guest arrived, apartment houses, and even entire towns that have bypassed the habitation phase and immediately entered the unanticipated distant future of ruination. Though age-value, according to Alois Riegl, is at first glance revealed 'in the monuments' outmoded appearance' (1903/1996: 72), value, he argues, does not increase in direct correspondence to age, but with the ruins' slow and uninterrupted 'growth into decay' (Riegl 1903/1996: 73). In other words, orderly decay should bear no signs of rupture or destruction and hence modern ruins' 'premature aging' is hardly any indication of value. The proper ruin, moreover, 'orders itself into the surrounding landscape without a break' (Simmel 1911/1959: 263); it expresses a peaceful and organic harmony whereby ruination appears as a natural state of becoming and not as an unnatural rupture from its authentic being, something which modern buildings, according to Georg Simmel, can achieve only 'as if in afterthought' (ibid.). Through their often abrupt ruination they pollute and disturb rather than merge with or complete a historical horizon, and will thus rarely be able to 'evoke the scenic mood' needed to proceed on to the 'category of ruins' (Cnattingius and Cnattingius 2007: 10).

Modern ruins, however, are also difficult to cope with, for other and perhaps more subtle reasons. One particular mode of their being may prove especially impeding, as reflected in the very term 'ruin' itself. This is indeed an equivocal concept, which can grasp 'both the claim about the state of a thing and a process affecting it' (Stoler 2008: 195). There is, accordingly, an inherent tendency to see the noun (ruin) as a frozen form, inert and passive, in contrast to the active and transient verbal form (*to ruin*). Our conception of ancient ruins belongs predominantly within the first mode (as for example evident in the words of both Riegl and Simmel quoted above). The ancient ruin is clean, fossilized and terminated; it is somehow ready-ruined. And it is in this stable and 'finalized' state that it is cared for, preserved, and admired as heritage. The ruins of the recent past, on the other hand, display themselves in the ongoing process of ruin*ing* – where ruination itself, the active process of withering and decay, becomes conspicuous and draws our attention. They are as if caught in a state of 'unfinished disposal' (Hetherington 2004), and it may well be that it is this transient state, their being in-between and not belonging, that makes the ruins of the recent past so disturbing.

Figure 1.2 Ruining. Dormitory with bunk beds in the rooming house for female workers at the abandoned herring station at Eyri

Photo: Bjørnar Olsen

Our reaction to the disintegration of the human body may provide an evocative parallel. The human body is attractive, pleasing – or at least tolerable – basically in two states of its being; either as a living, functional body (and preferably young, healthy and beautiful, of course) or as de-fleshed osteological remains, as clean bones (the latter moreover subjected to their own peculiar baroque and romantic aesthetics). This body, however, is usually not considered so attractive during its transformation between these two states, when the human fabric disintegrates, flesh decomposes and rots. Modern ruins are often in this 'fluid state of material becoming' (Edensor 2005: 16), they are ruins in their making, expressing and exposing what is usually not seen or sensed, and thus in a number of ways affected by the modern unease with such blurred and expressive identities. Deprived of their former useful and (sometimes) ideological value they seem unable to take on, or be granted, any other cultural significance.

And yet, what makes modern ruins unsettling and appalling can at the same time constitute some of their contemporary lure. This is perhaps most apparent among alternative groups, as exemplified by the urban explorer movement, where a 'shared marginality' may be a source of the fascination. In other words, the very uncannyness that prevents modern ruins from being enrolled in conventional conceptions of aesthetics, history or heritage, is also what is desired amongst those who are at odds with these hegemonic values. Without this otherness and marginality modern ruins would be less interesting as a fringe and underground phenomenon and, more seriously, also lose their greatest tangible assets with respect to infuse a critical discourse on these values. Tim Edensor has argued that the new interest in modern ruins is to a considerable extent due to current social and political unrest and a resistance towards the often naive assumptions of order and progress in the modernist projects (Edensor 2011); in other words, a rejection of grand narratives and big abstract plots through praise of the immediate but largely ignored residual by-products of these projects. This argument we find viable, and rather than seeing the ruins themselves as purely rhetorical devices or appropriate metaphors in a critical discourse on modernity, it suggests that their very material and ruinous being is a significant source and even a driving force in this critique. Through their very immediate and 'affecting presence' (Armstrong 1971: 26), they are actively part of an alternative 'discourse' about the past, about heritage and aesthetics. And moreover, if we understand their agenda correctly it is not one of domestication or normalization, but one of resistance and opposition. In fact, subjecting them to sameness would easily bring their own critical voices to silence.

Ruination, abandonment and material memory

Memory – *ruin memories* – is of course a central theme of this volume and *material memory* as the result of an engagement with, and the affordance of ruins and abandoned things is arguably a topic that, directly or indirectly, relates to all chapters in the book. How this is articulated, how materiality relates to memory, and moreover how both are seen to contribute or challenge dominant conceptions of the past or present may however vary greatly.

Memory has for the last decades been a central theme of study in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. A. Assmann 2004; J. Assmann 2011; Connerton 1989; Halbwachs 1997; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003; cf. Erll 2011; Tamm 2013). In most of these studies, memory is associated with a 'recollective' conception or, in other words, with memory as a conscious and wilful *human* process of recalling the past. This is also apparent in Pierre Nora's much referred to notion of *lieux de mémoire*, explaining how memory crystallizes into objects, sites or places, generating locales or *lieux* of *collective* remembering (Nora 1996). Despite the materiality of the *lieux*, what is nevertheless implied is that while places or things may be seen as projecting, inscribing or objectifying memory (cf. Connerton 1989), they are themselves not considered decisive for the act of remembering. The crucial issue is rather the past event, real or invented, and the will to remember it through subsequent site *embodiments* (the selection, appropriation, and/or construction of sites, monuments, memorials etc.) (Assmann 2011: 44–50). This also characterizes how memory, as a fear of forgetting, is largely conceived and articulated within the heritage sphere today (for critical discussion see e.g. Harrison 2013: 166ff.).

Evident in this discourse and in the enthusiasm for memorizing or deliberately commemorating (as reflected for example in heritage discourses and management), is the underlying modern conception of a break with tradition and, thus, of the past as something detached from the present (cf. Tamm 2013). Unlike pre-modern societies where the past lived on in 'tradition', the past is considered over and gone and thus also something that threatens to become inevitably lost unless deliberately reconstructed or recalled through historical inquiry or commemoration. In fact, Michel Foucault claimed that modern historicism was conditioned by this very loss of an 'implied' past; by a 'break' in which 'man found himself emptied of history' (Foucault 1989: 369). In a similar vein Pierre Nora argues (and despite asserting that memory is fundamentally different from history) that the modern urge to remember is due to the condition that we have lost our 'tradition of memory'. Deprived of the previous 'real *environments* of memory', in which the past was 'spontaneously' remembered, memory has to be deliberately constituted through staged and even 'fabricated' sites of memory (lieux de mémoire) (Nora 1989, 1996). Thus, as with Nietzsche's harsh diagnose of the 'illness of historicism', Nora declares that 'We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left' (Nora 1989: 7).

These assertions, however, are not uncontested. A number of theorists, ranging from Bergson and Benjamin to Serres and Latour, have countered this modern leitmotif of a gone past. In Henri Bergson's exposition of duration, for example, the past is claimed to be 'pressing' against the present, 'gnawing' into the future and 'swelling' as it advances (1998: 4, see also Bergson 2004). And things of course play a crucial role in this conception – it is their lasting material properties that allow the past to live on, gather and proliferate in the present. This material duration of the past moreover represents a form of memory (Olivier 2001: 61); a memory, however, that does not 'look back' from the present to the past, as with conscious, recollective memory, but is directed ahead of itself and works its way from the past to the present (Bergson 2004: 319; Casey 1984: 281). Thus, as Walter Benjamin asserted, the past has not budged; despite aging, decaying, fragmenting or dissolving, it actually piles up in front of our eyes (2003: 392). And contrary to what is asserted, the massive and enormously diverse and palimpsestal assemblages (e.g. Olivier 2001; Lucas 2010) of known and unknown, useful and discarded pasts that result from this gathering constitute *real* environments of memories. In other words, these are environments that enable alternative *material* and *involuntary* memories (Bergson 2004; Benjamin 1999, 2003) that may be fundamentally different from those related to controlled or deliberate recollection but which nevertheless secure the duration, or spontaneous transmission, of the past into the present.

This material conception of memory, however, collides with the one fundamental to much of the memory discourse, and which contributors to this volume seek to problematize, namely the idea of memory as an ultimately cognitive and humanly implemented phenomenon. That is, even when associated with physical objects or sites, memory is seen as humanly/subjectively plotted onto them, rather than understood as afforded also by the things themselves and ignited

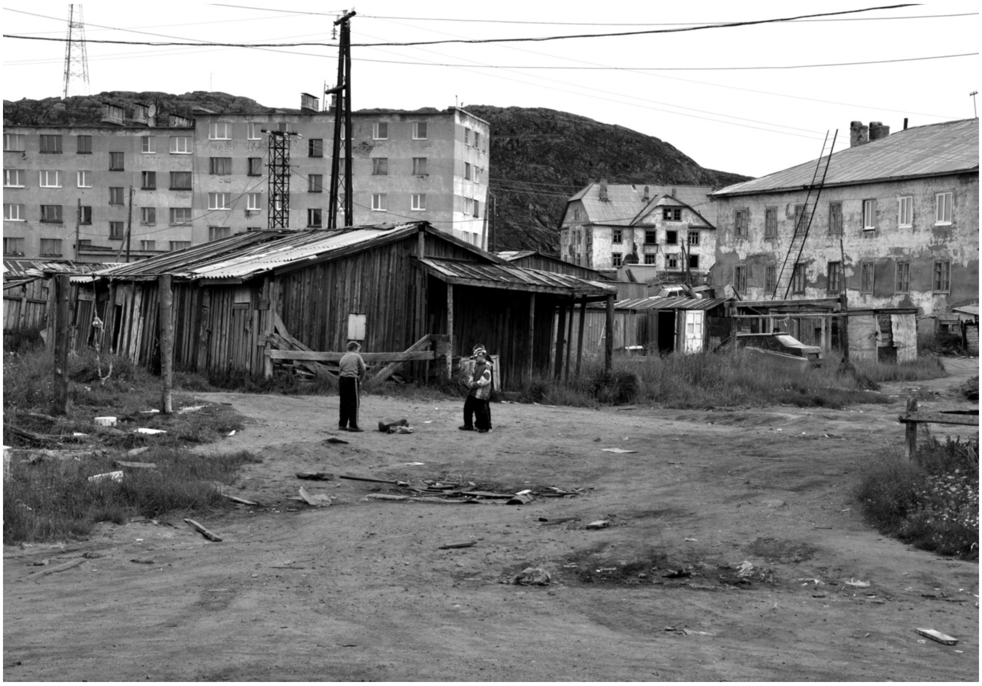

Figure 1.3 Village scene from Teriberka, Kola Peninsula, NW Russia
Photo: Þóra Pétursdóttir

in dialogue between mind and matter. Interestingly, however, as pointed out by Gavin Lucas (2010: 349–50), the materiality of memory is apparent in the most commonly used *metaphors* for memory, such as that of the relation between image and imprint used for example by Ricoeur, or in Freud's 'mystic writing pad', which had the ability to preserve earlier inscriptions though erased to make room for new ones, or indeed in his frequent archaeological allegories related to excavation, ruins and fragments (cf. Larsen 1987; Downing 2006; Gere 2010). As argued by Lucas these 'illustrations' of memory are considered metaphors merely on the ground of the persistent ontological division between mind and matter. If this metaphysics is not considered imperative, they may as well be seen as 'actual examples of memory' (Lucas 2010: 350), though of another kind than conventionally construed in memory discourses. The nineteenth-century geologist Charles Lyell, for example, considered the earth itself a holder of memory, recalling its own past through its stratigraphic layering (Lucas ibid.; see also Olivier 2011). The same can be said about things that through their current physiognomy may recall their own past, remembering the skill of the stonemason or boat builder, the qualities and resistance of the material, and the tools that were used in their production. Through wear and tear, they also remember their use and the matter they interacted with, and through their aging and decay what happened to them when they became redundant (Pétursdóttir in this volume). Interestingly, in the vocabulary of nineteenth-century English tailors, wrinkles and tears in clothes were commonly called 'memories'. Far from being intentionally embodied or inscribed, these wrinkles still 'memorized the interaction, the mutual constitution, of people and things' (Stallybrass 1998: 196).

This notwithstanding, to speak of *ruin memories* may of course sound like a conceptual contradiction. Ruination is conventionally understood as causing withering, loss and destruction, and thus as being negative to memory. And indeed, ruination often does inflict negatively on the mnemonic capacity of things, but not always or necessarily does it result in oblivion. Ruination can be seen also as a mode of disclosure or revelation, and thus a form of recovering or bringing forth new or different memories (DeSilvey 2006), including spontaneous and unforeseen ones. Quite literally of course, experiencing an inhabited and well-kept building may not reveal much about the way it actually works, the diversity of materials and technologies that are mobilized to construct and operate it. If not cunningly hidden by design and architectural form, these materials and implements themselves are often absorbed by their tasks, and thus disappear into usefulness and ready-to hand chains of relations. Abandonment, decay and ruination bring these relations to halt, they disrupt the routine and disclose things in their own unruly fashion, released from human censorship and order. Masked objects are unveiled, inside is turned out, new assemblages formed, bringing attention also to the trivial and reticent. Past layers of plaster expose changing tastes and affluence; collapsed walls, broken windows and open drawers expose intimacy and privacy, recalling to light the

Figure 1.4 Old news revealed. Peeling layers of wallpaper in abandoned apartment house, Dalniye Zelensy, Kola Peninsula, NW Russia

Photo: Bjørnar Olsen

previously hidden, forgotten or unknown (Edensor 2005: 109). Ruination thus becomes a kind of self-excavation that exposes layers of different memories; memories and meanings moreover that may perhaps only be grasped at second hand when no longer immersed in their withdrawn and useful reality.

Therefore, and of course without devaluing how things and sites can be and are consciously mobilized to act as vehicles for commemoration, or *lieux de mémoire*, we seek to stress how all things – also in the state of decay or ruination – in power of their durability, afford involuntary and spontaneous remembering. It is thus a memory that is mostly beyond our control, but granted or forced upon us through our constant and intimate encounters and engagement with things. In his notion of habit (and material) memory, Bergson suggested an existentially implicit act of remembering embedded in our bodily routines and ways of dealing with things; a form of memory that' …no longer represents our past to us, [but] *acts* it' (Bergson 2004: 93). Bergson, however, conceived habit memory as largely a function of adaptive value, meaning that only those aspects of the past that are *useful* or compatible with our present conduct become habitually remembered. But the material pasts budding in our present of course also include discarded and supposedly *abandoned* ones, pasts that may have ceased to be useful but which have not ceased *to be*. Despite their redundancy, these stranded pasts persist and continue to act their difference and *involuntary* remembering, and thus also to counter the articulated efforts to rise above them.

Modern ruins, all these redundant and abandoned things, thus survive and gather in tension to the habitually useful, ideologically correct, or aesthetically pleasing, giving face also to the outdated, trivial, and failed. As such they might be said to exercise a particular material 'care' for the victimized and superfluous often displaced both by recollective and habitual memory (Olsen 2010: 166–72, 2013). Just by stubbornly being (t)here the derelict fur farm, the abandoned home, the overgrown POW camp, the disconnected radio beacon, or the abandoned fish-processing site openly rebuke the conception of the past as sequenced, biographical and progressive, a projected stream of completed events left behind. Further, by often being conspicuous anomalies within the contemporary geo-political order, the ruins of the modern also hold on and make manifest alternative *geographies*. As several chapters in this book show, they bear witness to other cultural or economic landscapes; to past presences in strange places. Ruins of the recent past of course share their persistence and resistance with ancient ruins. However, being modern, and thus somehow closer and seemingly more familiar, and at the same time exposing their conspicuously othered and transient mode of being, they may enact this resistance – and ruin potential – more effectively than ancient ones.

There is, however, another way in which ruins and things become potential agents of disruption and 'actualisation' (Benjamin 1999), and thus enable involuntary remembering: When 'brought out-of-hand' (Pétursdóttir, this volume) through processes of abandonment and ruination, they also importantly recall the very mode in which they (and we) remember, and, indeed, the very nature of memory itself. That is, by being fragmented, broken and disordered they do not shun but commemorate the unique characteristics of all memory, including its incompleteness, its 'irrational' entanglement, non-linearity, and close relation to oblivion. They bluntly recall that memory is, as suggested by Augé (2004: 20), 'crafted by oblivion as the outlines of the shore are created by the sea'; that memory does not so much depend on the completeness of things left behind as on their thoroughly crafted and rough outlines, on their worn surfaces, on their very scars and absences, on mould, rust, and fragmentation. In other words, ruined things remind us, as archaeologists and students of things, to

Figure 1.5 Laboratory (still) life. Murmansk Marine Biological Institute's abandoned research station in Dalniye Zelensy

Photo: Þóra Pétursdóttir

acknowledge that they *do not* remember – or at least only reluctantly so – the cultural history, the linear narratives, we relentlessly have made them bear witness to (cf. Olivier 2011). Indeed, such appropriation of things and *fragments* from the past as 'historical witnesses' may also be seen as yet another aspect of their domestication (Pétursdóttir 2012); a conduct where things are made to serve as loyal contributors to a continuous past which, in reality, they are 'blasted' out of (Benjamin 1999: 474–5) and thus exist in opposition to.

Moreover, it is the very conception of things as serving (cultural) history that leads to the common and disparaging conception of the archaeological record – of ruins – as incomplete and 'distorted', as representing loss, failure or defect, and therefore something we must correct by filling in the gaps in order to heal the material past as history. Things can of course be mobilized in historical reconstructions, but crucial to any serious reconsideration of things and modern ruins is to also acknowledge *how* archaeological things remember, and allow their way of remembering to infuse new and different approaches to pasts and presents. Not in order to complement culture-historical or other more conventional accounts of our past in order to correct or 'improve' them, but to contrast them with a different thing-oriented perspective, that also may challenge the sometimes all too well established conflation of the past with history in Western culture (cf. Nandy 1995). And indeed, as Laurent Olivier (2011) has argued, archaeology may find more in common with the trope of memory, for example fragmentation, discontinuity and oblivion, than with the continuous, linear narratives of culture-history.

The ethics and aesthetics of things and heritage

The differentiation of memory, between deliberate commemoration and involuntary material memory, is fundamental also to another theme addressed in this volume; the concept of heritage, has often rather elitist connotations and the very fragile dialectics between heritage and waste. We could say that the discussion of memory above recalls a tension rarely addressed between two different ways of conceiving heritage: on the one hand heritage as something discursively communicated, appropriated and consciously considered, and on the other, heritage as something lived with – as an existential and 'thrown' dimension of our being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962). Whereas the first, and the overwhelmingly dominant conception, relates to the kind of conscious memory politics at work on the heritage scene today, where decisions are constantly made as to what is selected and presented for commemoration and how, the second conception relates to the existential, *material* or *aesthetic* dimension of memory that is both unconsciously 'lived' and involuntarily ignited through our engagement with things. It is this latter dimension therefore that also more explicitly considers the involuntary and inevitable experience of living with a material past or heritage that is constantly accumulating around us.

Approached from different angles and articulated in different ways, a general concern of the volume is to argue for a broader or less discriminating heritage concept. Important to such a reconsideration of heritage is, we believe, to subject to greater scrutiny the two closely related issues of ethics and aesthetics: *ethics* in the sense of facing and taking seriously things in their otherness, and *aesthetics*, in the sense of considering as important their affective presence, the 'presence effects' (Gumbrecht 2004) released upon encounter. In short this implies allowing for the possibility that things, also as heritage, have an autonomy and integrity that affects our engagement with them, and which in turn, urges for a more thing-oriented heritage conception. The latter may indeed sound utterly outdated and even absurd considering that heritage definitions and practices lately have been highly criticized for being *too* thing-oriented (e.g. Ruggles and Silverman 2009; Smith 2006; Smith and Akagawa 2009), and even too archaeologically inclined (Waterton and Smith 2009), accentuating mostly physical remains and thus *tangible* heritage at the cost of *intangible* heritage. Upon closer inspection, however, this claimed bias of the dominant heritage discourse may, we argue, have less to do with things than with intangible human values (cf. Pétursdóttir 2013).

Generally speaking, when we think about our everyday dealings with things we tend to regard our relations with them as mostly 'use-driven'; things in our surroundings are important because they are *useful*, because they fulfil some functions or purposes, though not necessarily practical ones. Thus, things are often little but *things-for-us*, reduced to resources or what Heidegger termed *Bestand*; that is, where every*thing* awaits as 'standing reserve' to be called upon and put into use, rendering things significant only for our purposes and advantage (Heidegger 1993; see also Introna 2009 and this volume). In the same vein, utility also roots our ideas about the *value* of things. Things are not considered valuable in and of themselves but because they work properly, give us pleasure, can be appropriated and possessed, and therefore have use value for us; whereas waste, broken or destroyed things are, generally, value*less* and thus subjected to disposal and/or cleansed away from our appropriately functioning habitual surroundings.[1]

Heritage practices may at first be thought of as ideally suited for mediating this oppositional hierarchy, reflecting a care for and attentiveness to the useless and stranded. After all, heritage campaigns, practices and legislation have rescued an enormous amount of abandoned sites and things. Nevertheless, the rationale for protection, as articulated also in heritage legislation and policy, rarely refer to an *inherent value* of the respective ruined sites or things but to *our need* for, and *right to*, historical rootedness and belonging – and thus to their value as tools in identity construction, and/or by serving as scientific, socio-political or economic resources. In other words, heritage is mostly valuable because it is useful *to us*, crystallized most clearly in the concept of 'cultural *resource* management' (see Solli 2011; Harrison 2013; Pétursdóttir 2013 for further criticism). This at the same time also questions the novelty of the recent and much-acclaimed turn towards the intangible in heritage studies. Despite much well founded criticism of the emphasis on inheritance and possession in heritage definitions and conventions (Rowlands 2002a, 2002b), and the consequential notion of heritage as a 'recourse', the source of heritage value has arguably more or less consistently since the nineteenth-century been firmly anchored in human perception, experience and attachment, and percolated through *intangible* conceptions of history, identity and sense of belonging (Lowenthal 1998). We might therefore rather argue that the current emphasis on intangibility only makes explicit, and reinforces, what has always been the underlying rationale of heritage discourses. Moreover, by staging the intangible and tangible as hierarchical opposites, one precludes the more fruitful option of scrutinizing their role as possibly equally significant and interrelated constituents in heritage 'construction'.

This brings us to another important premise for a rethinking of heritage; namely that heritage has never been an all-inclusive category, a *democracy of things*. And despite its ongoing 'democratization' reflected in the struggle to involve the interests and concerns of marginalized others (e.g. through the introduction of *intangible* heritage), a similar care for seemingly subsidiary or othered *things* is usually not seen, unless fulfilling certain criteria of age and cultural importance. Heritage thus contains its own selective regimes of valuing and othering that reserve care, and thus a mode of being, only for those included. While walking among the well-kept ruins of, for example, Pompeii, Rome and Athens, may be an experience equally (though differently) affective to that of entering a recently abandoned building, the fact remains that the former is easily conceived of as heritage while the latter is generally not. And more important than their genuine 'oldness' in this relation, is the very fact that the former have been subjected to a particular curative care and a particular *aesthetics*, crucial to their current mode of being as styled, ordered and pleasant spaces where further decay is staved off through restoration and preservation. Arresting decay, preventing death, of course, has always been the imperative of heritage management, and as addressed above, a central paradox of such management (rendering the modern ruin ultimately out of place) is the simultaneous concern for *ruins* but absolute intolerance for *ruination*.

Valuing decay and ruination may sound contradictory both from a heritage and an archaeological perspective. In a paper on aesthetic experience and ruins, Linda E. Patrik (1986), however, argues that the effects of ruination, like fragmentation, overgrowth, disintegration and incompleteness, do not 'shock' or disturb the observer but contribute to the ruins being valued *as ruins.* In other words, and to some extent echoing earlier ruin enthusiasts such as Simmel and Riegl, that ruination and deterioration may add positive aesthetic value and sense of historical depth to objects and structures, and thus even render aesthetically pleasing objects that before were considered 'non-aesthetic'. While Patrik's genuinely positive perception of ruination represents an important perspective on these matters, she nevertheless does not discuss what the concepts/phenomena of *aesthetics* and *ruin/ruination* involve. Moreover, her examples all belong to a category of 'ready-ruined' classical structures, already safely incorporated into heritage

Figure 1.6 Corridor trail. Murmansk Marine Biological Institute's research station in Dalniye Zelensy
Photo: Þóra Pétursdóttir

management programmes, which means that her important argument does not in any way challenge the conception of the heritage ruin as, above all, aesthetically *pleasing*, enchanting and suitable for disengaged contemplation.

We find that a reconsideration of aesthetics is crucial to the heritage discourse and may even prove fundamental to a broader heritage concept. In its modern conception aesthetics has mostly been associated with (good) taste and an *intellectual* cognitive assessment of beauty and art, where moreover the gazing observer is placed at 'a passive-contemplative distance from reality' (Jameson 2009: 594; Eagleton 1990). While more or less ignored in the current debate on aestheticizing, the etymological and philosophical origin of the concept is very different from its *humanized* and currently canonized conception. Deriving from the two Greek words 'aisthiticos' and 'aisthisis', referring respectively to 'that which is "perceptive by feeling"' and 'the sensory experience of perception' (Buck-Morss 1993: 125; see also e.g. Bale 2009), aesthetics in this archaic form thus relates not to representation but to *reality itself* in its diversity, and to an unmediated corporeal experience of it rather than denoting something tamed, inevitably beautiful or sophisticated (ibid.: Bale 2009). Moreover, and sharing grounds with both phenomenology and new material theories, this archaic conception also maintains that the aesthetic experience is conditioned by the very material reality encountered. Thus, and without ignoring the fact that it also requires human perception, this conception of aesthetics embraces its very interactive and tangible constitution. Or as argued by Terry Eagleton, aesthetics is about,

> the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world. The aesthetic concerns this most gross and palpable dimension of the human, which post-Cartesian philosophy, in some curious lapse of attention, has somehow managed to overlook. It is thus the first stirrings of a primitive materialism – of the body's long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical.
>
> (Eagleton 1990: 13)

The conventional aesthetics directing heritage management and conservation, however, have hardly favoured any physical engagement with the ruined and real. To the extent that people are encouraged to 'engage' with heritage, it is basically through acknowledging the deeper and largely pre-interpreted historical/contextual meaning of things and sites – and the conditions of experience are therefore mainly directed towards the imperatives of how the materiality of the sites can most adequately enhance this prescribed meaning or at least avoid disturbing it. Moreover, while heritage scholars have repeatedly encouraged an understanding of heritage as *process* (e.g. Smith 2006), that conception has never included its actual and tangible aspect, i.e. decay as a mode of being or becoming.

Allowing for a different and more corporal aesthetics, we assert, would also allow for a better understanding of how people engage with sites and things, and how the respective sites and things themselves are involved in the very processes of heritage constitution and value, and thus further facilitate a rethinking of heritage as such. This because it accentuates the affective aspect of things not as a supplementary, subjective veil of meaning that is added to them but rather as a positive affordance of things themselves, which rests in their very physique or thingness, and which is released upon our encounters with them. Such a materialized aesthetics thus acknowledges that things, sites and ruins hold an integrity that is neither replaced nor exhausted by the constant efforts to ascribe them meaning, for example through heritage processes, but actually resists any 'aggressive hermeneutics' whereby things' significance is rendered derivative of some allegedly more important, serious or honourable social projects (cf. Sontag 1966). Accordingly, contributors to this volume are not only occupied with the historical connotations related to the ruins or things in question. In addition to being engaged with the past, with what things may have constituted and with their varied trajectories and fates, they are also attentive to what things have become and to the way their present being affects them on encounter – the way they look, feel and smell and the way they interact with their environment, with plants and animals, with wind and snow, water and sun.

And this brings us to the other subject matter central to a reconsideration of heritage, namely ethics. This may sound strange since ethics is probably one of the most thoroughly covered and debated topics of the heritage discourse. Without exception, however, ethics in this context considers people, *human* rights and values – not things. Indeed, as stated by Silvia Benso (2000), the same holds for ethics in general; it is traditionally about people and *other* persons but not about things – 'If there is ethics, it is not of things; and if there are things, they are not ethical' (ibid.: 127–8). An ethics of things may therefore appear as both absurd and inconceivable. Disregarding this alleged illogicality, however, and bringing together or supplementing (in Derrida's notion) two philosophical strands, that of Heidegger's things and that of Levinas' ethics, Benso (ibid.: 127ff.) has bravely showed how their ideas may be furthered to infuse just that, an ethics of things. Because, while regarded fundamentally disparate, what nonetheless unites Heidegger and Levinas is the common concern for otherness – 'the desire *not to be oblivious to differences*' (ibid.: 132, emphasis added). And turning to things and taking things seriously requires precisely that; not to be oblivious of their otherness; in other words, to respect their non-humanity. Bringing ethics to our consideration of things may therefore help facilitating a more humble attitude of facing things as they are, here and now. Moreover, according to Levinas' it is only in the locus of ethics that the *Other* can enter philosophical concern, and a turn to *things* – understood as a turn to the complete other (or 'the other of the Other' as things are referred to by Benso 2000) or the 'third' (Introna, this volume) – should therefore be considered as essentially an ethical matter; or in other words, as an ethics extended also to our engagements with things (Benso 1996, 2000; Introna 2009, this volume, Olsen *et al.* 2012).

An ethics of things should, importantly, be thought of not as a belated invitation to inclusion (as sometimes alluded to in things' recent *re*patriation as *social actors*) – things have always been part of our world – but as an undemanding act of recognition of the very diverse ways in which things are part of this world; a recognition of our coexistence and contact but simultaneous owness and partly independence from each other. As argued by Introna (this volume) such attentiveness 'requires a comportment of active letting be', or what Heidegger (1966) referred to as *Gelassenheit* (releasement), as it requires an attitude that defies anticipation and calculation to instead 'respond to the provocations of the other, that is, to reach out and touch in order to be touched. One might say an active exposure that is nevertheless utterly passive – exposed, powerless and vulnerable' (Introna, this volume). A humbleness towards things 'that is always already 'listening in' – a subtle attunement to the touch of the provocative flesh of the other' (ibid.; see also Merleau-Ponty 1968: 133ff.).

This is important not merely because it is a morally correct move on our part to meet them as the things that they are, and acknowledge their right to *be* (be it in ruination, decay or not), but also because we cannot deny them a moral dimension when recognizing their agency, affordances and affect – also as heritage. As qualified constituents in our common 'society of monsters' (Law, 1991) things are never innocent beings, they are never just there as simple means towards our ends. We may enrol them and charge them with our values and meanings to give them substance and weight, and these inscriptions may be successful, but also unpredictable, because things are partly autonomous and because they *endure* and *outlive* us (see Latour 2002, 2012). And, moreover, rather than being a concern for good or bad, for abstract principles, or for making the 'correct' move, ethics is about being attentive to 'reality itself, its concreteness, the gravity of things' (Benso 2000: 131). In other words, it is about seeing and acknowledging things also as they are or express themselves on encounter, and not merely as conventionally explained, historically construed or otherwise made meaningful and useful for us.

Thus, while pushing heritage beyond anthropocentrism may be impossible – as it is inevitably something that *we value* – moving towards a broader heritage conception is absolutely viable. That is, towards a conception of heritage that is released from the imperative of domesticating things and ruins within the tropes of historical narration and identity building, and instead open to the possibility of appreciating them also in their otherness – and even encourages ways of embracing them – in this unfamiliar 'unuseful' state. This is a heritage conception, moreover, where the notion of process may encompass both tangible and intangible aspects, and the dynamic and interactive relations between them, and is thus capable of acknowledging also things' own contribution to the very hybrid act of *becoming heritage*.

Figure 1.7 Laboratory scene. Murmansk Marine Biological Institute's research station in Dalniye Zelensy

Photo: Þóra Pétursdóttir

Archaeology and the contemporary past

Much recent scholarly literature on modern ruins and ruination has been concerned with exploring the ruin trope in literature, philosophy and the visual arts, and how ruins provide convenient allegories for contemporary cultural or social phenomena and concerns (e.g. Woodward 2001; Yablon 2009; Hell and Schönle 2010; Dale and Burrell 2011). In these discourses ruins have indeed proved flexible and receptive entities that may embody and express both the wreckage and aestheticization of history, utopian modernist desires and anxieties, enchanting and traumatic pasts, as well as hopes and prospects for the future (cf. Hell and Schönle 2010). While this new theoretical concern with ruins and decay has yielded important insights and clearly led to an enriched understanding of ruins, they themselves hardly protrude as phenomena of interest in their own material respect. And while studies and analyses based on direct engagements with ruins and abandoned places also are becoming more numerous, those involving in-depth fieldwork and extended physical encounters are far less abundant.

This tendency of, so to say, keeping ruins and things themselves at arms' length is also a somewhat paradoxical feature of the much bespoken 'turn to things' in the humanities and social sciences during the last decades. Despite the claim of having replaced the textual and linguistic theoretical hegemony of the late twentieth-century, the objects actually dealt with are surprisingly often of discursive character. In other words, *textual* encounters still seem preferred to actual encounters with the masses of trivial, broken or soiled things gathering around us. Given the somewhat abstracted and 'hands-off' attitude characterizing many of the new approaches to ruins and things, archaeology clearly has the potential of making a crucial difference. Archaeology has a great – and in an academic context largely unrivalled – legacy in caring for things and at its heart is a set of disciplinary practices and understandings that also address their *different* non-human nature and significance. Fieldwork is, moreover, imperative to these practices and understandings, involving lengthy and intimate encounters with places and things. Archaeologists are trained to engage in meaningful and original ways with such stranded, fragmented and messy things, and possess skills and methods for documenting and analysing this material record. After all, as noted by Alfredo González-Ruibal (2008: 248) 'one of the peculiarities of archaeology is that it usually works with abandoned, ruined places – what we call archaeological sites'. Thus, the important difference that archaeology brings to the study of the recent and contemporary past, and to the study of things generally, is a greater confidence in and concern with the material itself, including things broken and soiled. A confidence we maintain is visible in contributions to this book, not only as reflected in the case studies presented, but also in its general orientation and take on things; that is, what it brings together is not necessarily a shared approach but a mutual concern for ruins themselves.

This is not, however, all together unproblematic. Traditionally archaeology is of course a discipline concerned with the distant past, even a *pre*-historic past, and where the recent and contemporary has been considered something better left for historians, sociologists, ethnographers or others to explore. Archaeology's relation to the present has moreover involved

Figure 1.8 Floor object. Abacus in deserted mess hall, Dalniye Zelensy
Photo: Þóra Pétursdóttir

some unreconciled tensions. As a true offspring of the modern project (cf. Olsen and Svestad 1994; Thomas 2004) archaeology is rooted in a conception of the present as distinctly different from the past. Its disciplinary identity has therefore to a considerable extent been grounded on this temporal and yet ambiguous displacement from its subject matter, the past, which despite being understood as completed and left behind can only be accessed on the condition of its own material presence. The fact that this 'archaeological paradox' hardly was conceived as such, is most likely due to the concordant metaphysics of things as epiphenomenal outcomes of the social and cultural reality unfolding 'behind' them, thus rendering them as traces of a gone past rather than real members of an extended, present past.

Today much has changed. Things are back and widely considered important constituents of the social fabric they long were reduced to witnesses of, and the archaeology of the very recent or contemporary past is now counted among archaeology's recognized 'sub-disciplines' (Harrison and Schofield 2010; Harrison 2011). While the beginning can be traced far earlier, especially as seen by Bill Rathje's innovative Garbage project and related modern material culture projects within American 'new' archaeology (e.g. Gould and Schiffer 1981; Rathje and Hughes 1975; Rathje 1979, 1981, 1996), Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas' edited volume *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (2001b) has become somewhat iconic to the field. Moreover, by articulating both what can be seen as the prime archaeological virtues in dealing with the contemporary past and the objectives that since have become key themes (e.g. Burström 2007; Holtorf and Piccini 2009; Harrison 2011; Harrison and Schofield 2009, 2010), this manifesto may still be said to set the field's common agenda. In their introduction, Buchli and Lucas stressed that archaeology, through its skills in dealing with the non-discursive realms of human society, is capable of unveiling not only the 'unsayable' but also the 'unconstituted' and ineffable aspects of present or past events and realities, what lies outside discourse (Buchli and Lucas 2001a). In other words, it has the capacity to 'presence absence', to reach the subaltern, and give voice to other(ed) experiences and pasts, and thus supplement and challenge established historical 'truths' (Buchli and Lucas 2001a, 2001c).

Accordingly, one might argue that archaeology of the recent past from the outset emerged in opposition to text (or the dominion of text). An opposition that took inspiration from but also further underscored the conception of archaeology, in general, as '*pre*-historic' (Lucas 2004), in the sense that it is engaged primarily with things and not text. Nevertheless, despite its material and 'pre-historic' ambitions, the rationales most frequently asserted for the field's justification can still be said to allude to history as the common ground, emphasizing archaeology's ability to produce other *histories* and inform alternative *human* pasts. As pointed out by Ashis Nandy (1995), postcolonial and postmodern critiques of history have similarly more or less unanimously pointed to its democratization and 'self-correction' as the main remedy, by which history is made plural and open, providing space also for all those ahistorical others and their alternative histories. The problem, as Nandy argues, is that these critiques of history and suggestions of alternative approaches have nevertheless all been historical: they may be radical in their claims for alternative, other histories – but do never opt for something *other than* history (Nandy 1995: 53). In a similar vein it may be argued that the archaeology of the recent or contemporary past, despite its claims to an archaeological and thingly uniqueness, is preoccupied with this project of improving and restoring history. By illuminating the blind spots, revealing the ignored or marginalized, archaeology appears as an option where historical or other sources fail, rather than providing an alternative and radically different approach to (and conception of) the recent or contemporary past.

Recently, however, it has been asserted that the archaeology of the contemporary *past* should become more explicitly occupied with the present and the future, and thus to be re-casted as an archaeology *of* and *for* the twenty-first-century (Harrison 2011; Dawdy 2009). In his critique of the subfield, Rodney Harrison (2011: 142) has even claimed that the very term the 'contemporary past', by implying an archaeologizing of the present as past, precludes such concerns by actively creating a distance between the past and the present. However, despite being addressed as a critique of previous approaches the focus is here consistently on making archaeology relevant and useful to contemporary society; to allow it 'to take a central role in the development of innovative contemporary theory and social, economic and environmental policy' (Harrison 2011: 144). Or as noted by Shannon Lee Dawdy, archaeology should become more explicitly future oriented through an engagement with 'specific social and environmental problems of the present day' (2009: 140). It is noteworthy, moreover, that the role the past is asserted by the advocates of the present/future recast mainly becomes articulated through the trope of *usefulness*, and where the past itself is emphasized as something primarily created by us – *for us* – rather than being an inevitable and 'thrown' condition of any present:

> we have been involved in what seems like an unending production of the past which has led to the heterogeneous piling up of multiple, overlapping pasts in the present. Clearly, not all potential pasts are equally useful … we must be much more selective about the usefulness of these pasts we are implicated in creating.
>
> (Harrison 2011: 158)

This reduction of the past into something controllable, useful and, paradoxically, something 'optional', becomes even more explicit when the reorientation of the discipline towards the present and future is claimed to require 'a consideration of the past *only where it intrudes in this present*' (Harrison ibid.: 158, our emphasis). Actually, one virtue of the term 'archaeology of the *contemporary past*' may be claimed to be its resistance to such wishful modernist selectivity by *literally* showing the past as constantly and inevitably contemporaneous, always folding into the present and the future.

In our opinion, a reorientation of this archaeology – and archaeology as a whole – should rather consist of having more confidence in the archaeological project and its concern for things. Despite that excavation – and indeed archaeology itself – can lend itself to allegories and metaphorical uses it involves a real and intimate engagement with things. This engagement always requires (initially at least) confronting things here and now, *where* and *as* they show themselves, in their untamed bonding, as palimpsests of hybrid assemblages of artifacts, stones, bones and soil mixed together. As such, the archaeological excavation and fieldwork may be seen as an ideal way to meet things in their otherness. We may even claim that it actually brings forth a movement towards things; it requires the archaeologist to bring herself to proximity with them, to walk among them, or to kneel down towards the level where they will surface, to touch them and weigh them in her hand. Moreover, the always present factor of not knowing what will emerge may be argued to enhance this attentive and accommodating attitude, and also to bring forth an ultimate and sincere care for things *qua* things; a care that is implied even before they appears to us – and thus a care that is in a way unbound to any idea of them or their significance, beauty, value, etc. We might therefore argue that archaeology is an exemplary mode of becoming attuned to such an attentive attitude, to the sensibility, or 'naive empiricism' required to move beyond the turn to things prescribed by recent regimes of theoretical *thinking*.

Figure 1.9 Excavating trench 4 in the Storage house, Eyri, NW Iceland
Photo: Bjørnar Olsen

This archaeological difference, in our opinion, is grounded in a trust in and acceptance of how things are, also in their humble, fragmented and messy state of being. And bringing this difference to the study of modern ruins and the recent past is thus not only about emphasizing that things are inextricable parts of the wished-for 'social', but that they are of interest in their own respect; that they have an 'integrity' of their own. Though there surely are a number of good reasons, political as well as ethical, to sympathize with the human emancipating perspective dominating the archaeology of the contemporary past, it still tends to assign things and ruins an essentially derivative or epiphenomenal being. As with the recent turn in heritage studies, despite the many democratic pleas for the marginal and othered, things themselves hardly seem included in such concerns and continue to be regarded primarily as useful means to reach the deprived human agents they are supposed to bear witness to. These very things, however, make a difference to the world and to other beings; they are 'capable of an effect, of inflicting some kind of blow on reality' (Harman 2002: 21), which, moreover, causes a concern with how *they* exist, act and inflict on each other, also outside the human realm. And ruins provide an exemplary heuristic case in this respect. In their withering and crumbling, in their blunt disregarding of distinctions between the man-made and the natural, they make manifest their own ecology of *ruin* practices[2] (see Edensor 2005; DeSilvey 2007a, 2007b; Pétursdóttir 2012, 2013).

Conclusion

Our plea for assigning significance to things themselves is of course a common-place reminder that for some time has featured prominently on the agenda within many branches of the humanities and social sciences. Nevertheless, despite the avowed interest in the material, a conspicuous feature of this turn to things is also the repertoire of *positive* and largely wished-for *human* qualities and virtues consistently mobilized when underscoring their social significance (e.g. 'actor', 'agency', 'delegate', 'vitality', 'democracy', 'personality', 'biography'). That is, every*thing* of importance seems inevitably 'elevated *up* to the same status as humanity' (Bogost 2012: 7). Rarely, however, are actual and tangible 'thingly'[3] qualities like passivity and silence, fragmentation and decay, moulding and rusting, included among the virtues cited. By constantly emphasizing their socially and humanly pleasing faces, one is in fact running the risk of surrendering *difference* for *symmetry* and sameness – constructing things in *our image*. Importantly, to criticize this is not to deny that things do encompass their own genuine agency and vitality, of course, but to underline that a *turn to things* cannot avoid also facing the less humanly desirable otherness of things and the very specific 'agency' and 'vitality' that this difference brings forth. Thus, and with a hint of irony, we might say that the thing-human relationship must, to some extent, be allowed to remain *asymmetrical* (Benso 2000: 141).

It is precisely in this respect that we think engagements with modern ruins, and with the stranded and outdated more generally, may provide an important and alternative 'object lesson'. Facing things in their ruination, being confronted with and surrounded by masses of broken and soiled things, may indeed call for a rethinking of the imperatives of acclaimed humanistic values that somewhat paradoxically seem to have grounded their repatriation. And this also underscores the significance of actual engagements, real encounters, and thus the importance of *archaeology* as grounded in this particular material aesthetics. There is indeed a fundamental difference between reading Henry James' novels about things, contemplating literature on air pumps, technology and ruins, or watching Jane Campion's film *The Piano* – all in the comfort of pleasing and well-functioning material surroundings – and the experience of making your way through a dim-lighted abandoned building where things' haunting presence is nowhere to be avoided but everywhere to be felt, heard and seen – where every breath is saturated with their dampness and bodily stench. Modern ruins, inhabited by such redundant objects released from the constant toil of serving as extended humans or social actors, as delegated cogwheels tuned to our rhythms, thus have a particular potential of making us involuntarily aware of things in their otherness. Being out-of-hand, they suddenly 'appear' to us in ways never noticed, bluntly exposing some their own unruly 'thingness' (Pétursdóttir, this volume).

To recognize the otherness of things, however, requires both cognitive and sensual openness. Essential to such an attentive attitude is to overcome the imperative of *anaesthetization* (cf. Buck-Morss 1993) that has burdened modern academia and sciences generally, to make room also for experiences and expressions of *wonder* and affection (Bogost 2012: 113–34; Malpas 2012: 251–67; Stengers 2011). In archaeology, this means further developing our *archaeological sensibility*, which means acknowledging the significance of the vastly underrated archaeological field method of *being there*, which indispensable component is the bodily or aesthetic experience of being *present* at a site or place and being exposed to its rich portfolio of ineffable material impacts (Andreassen *et al.* 2010; Harrison and Schofield 2010: 69; Olsen *et al.* 2012: 58–78). Importantly, this aesthetics of presence should not be conflated with preconditioned subjective sentiments, though neither does it involve any downgrading or ignorance of such sentiments as little as it does of scholarly skills and knowledge. What it involves, however, is to take seriously also the moments of immediacy, the moments of intellectual innocence when the body 'rebels against the tyranny of the theoretical' (Eagleton 1990: 14) and thus give primacy to the *interactive* constitution of meaning. In other words, allowing for a primitive *aesthetic attentiveness*, as

Figure 1.10 Releasement. Centrifugal separators in the herring factory at Eyri
Photo: Bjørnar Olsen

discussed above, that is released from the constraints of having to see things merely as some*thing* 'for-the-purpose-of' to instead encourage ways of embracing them also in their unfamiliar, 'unuseful' state. Being attentive to and respecting their 'ruin effects' and the otherness that radiates from this self-presencing also involves acknowledging their right *not* to be meaningful in the dominant interpretative sense, without that rendering them meaning*less*.

Notes

1 A controversial fact is that waste has become the 'valuable' resource of a growing global waste-management/recycling industry.
2 Alluding to Isabelle Stengers' (2005) concept of 'ecology of practices', though applied in a liberal and *thingly* way.
3 And to be sure, these are in *reality* not at all thing specific qualities as in non-*human* qualities, hence the quotation marks.

References

Andreassen, E., Bjerck, H.B. and Olsen, B. (2010) *Persistent Memories: Pyramiden – a Soviet mining town in the High Arctic.* Trondheim: Tapir Academic Press.

Armstrong, R.P. (1971) *The Affecting Presence: an essay in humanistic anthropology*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Assmann, A. (2004) 'Four formats of memory: from individual to collective constructions of the past', in C. Emden and D. Midgley (eds), *Cultural Memory and Historical Consciousness in the German-Speaking World Since 1500*, Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 19–38.

Assmann, J. (2011) *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: writing, remembrance, and political imagination*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Augé, M. (2004) *Oblivion*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bale, K. (2009) *Estetikk: en innføring*, Oslo: Pax Forlag.

Benjamin, W. (1999) *The Arcaedes Project*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Benjamin, W. (2002) *Selected Writings, volume 3: 1935–1938*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Benjamin, W. (2003) *Selected Writings, volume 4: 1938–1940*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Benso, S. (1996) 'Of things face-to-face. With Levinas face-to-face with Heidegger: Prolegomena to a metaphysical ethics of things', *Philosophy Today*, 40(1): 132–41.

Benso, S. (2000) *The Face of Things: a different side of ethics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Bergson, H. (1998) *Creative Evolution*, Mineola, NY: Dover.

Bergson, H. (2004) *Matter and Memory*, Dover philosophical classics, New York: Courier Dover Publications.

Bogost, I. (2012) *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Brown, B. (2001) 'Thing theory', *Critical Inquiry*, 28: 1–22.

Bryant, L. R. (2011) *The Democracy of Objects*, Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press.

Buchli, V. and Lucas, G. (2001a) 'The absent present: archaeologies of the contemporary past', in V. Buchli and G. Lucas (eds), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, London: Routledge, pp. 3–18.

Buchli, V. and Lucas, G. (eds) (2001b) *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, London: Routledge.

Buchli, V. and Lucas, G. (2001c) 'Presencing absence', in V. Buchli and G. Lucas (eds), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, London: Routledge, pp. 171–4.

Buck-Morss, S. (1989) *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the arcades project*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Buck-Morss, S. (1993) 'Aesthetics and anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork essay reconsidered', *New Formations: The actuality of Walter Benjamin* 20: 123–43.

Burström, M. (2007) *Samtidsarkeologi: introduktion till ett forskningsfält*, Pozkal: Studentlitteratur.

Casey, E. (1984) 'Habitual body and memory in Merleau-Ponty', *Man and World*, 17: 279–97.

Cnattingius, L. and Cnattingius, N. (2007) *Ruiner: historia öden och vård*, Stockholm: Carlssons.

Connerton, P. (1989) *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dale, K. and Burrell, G. (2011) 'Disturbing structure, reading the ruins', *Culture and Organization*, 17(2): 107–21.

Dawdy, S.L. (2009) 'Millennial archaeology: locating the discipline in the age of Insecurity', *Archaeological dialogues*, 16(2): 131–42.

DeSilvey, C. (2006) 'Observed decay: telling stories with mutable things', *Journal of Material Culture*, 11(3): 318–38.

DeSilvey, C. (2007a) 'Art and archive: memory-work on a Montana homestead', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33: 878–900.

DeSilvey, C. (2007b) 'Salvage memory: constellating material histories on a hardscrabble homestead', *Cultural Geographies*, 14(3): 401–24.

DeSilvey, C. and Edensor, T. (2012) 'Reckoning with ruins', *Progress in Human Geography* (published online on November 27, 2012). Online. Available http://intl-phg.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/11/27/0309132512462271.full.pdf+html (accessed 12 March 2013)

Domanska, E. (2006) 'The return to things', *Archaeologia Polona*, 44: 171–85.

Downing, E. (2006) *After Images: photography, archaeology and psychoanalysis and the tradition of Bildung*, Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

Eagleton, T. (1990) *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Edensor, T. (2005) *Industrial Ruins: space, aesthetics and materiality*. Oxford: Berg.

Edensor, T. (2011) 'Comments to G. Gordillo: Ships stranded in the forest', *Current Anthropology*, 52(2): 161–2.

Elíasson, N. and Ásberg Sigurðsson, A. (2004) *Abandoned Farms*, Reykjavík: Edda.

Elíasson, N. and Ásberg Sigurðsson, A. (2011) *Hús eru aldrei ein – Black Sky*, Reykjavík: Uppheimar.

Erll, A. (2011) *Memory in Culture*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Garrett, B.L. (2013) *Explore Everything: place-hacking the city*, London: Verso.
Gere, C. (2010) *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
González-Ruibal, A. (2008) 'Time to destroy: an archaeology of supermodernity', *Current Anthropology*, 49(2): (April 2008), pp. 247–79.
Gould, R.A. and Schiffer, M.B. (eds) (1981) *Modern Material Culture Studies: the archaeology of us*, New York: Academic Press.
Gumbrecht, H.U. (2004) *Production of Presence: what meaning cannot convey.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Halbwachs, M. (1997) *La mémoire collective*, Édition critique établie par G. Namer, Paris: Albin Michel.
Harman, G. (2002) *Tool-being: Heidegger and the metaphysics of objects*. Chicago: Open Court.
Harrison, R. (2011) 'Surface assemblages: towards an archaeology *in* and *of* the present', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 18: 141–61.
Harrison, R. (2013) *Heritage: critical approaches*, London: Routledge.
Harrison, R. and Schofield, J. (2009) 'Archaeo-ethnography, auto-archaeology: introducing archaeologies of the contemporary past', *Archaeologies*, 5(2): 185–209.
Harrison, R. and Schofield, J. (2010) *After Modernity: archaeological approaches to the contemporary past*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
Heidegger, M. (1966) *Discourse on Thinking*, New York: Harper and Row.
Heidegger, M. (1993) 'The question concerning technology', in D. Farell Krell (ed.), *Martin Heidegger: basic writings*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, pp. 217–38.
Hell, J. and Schönle, A. (2010) *Ruins of Modernity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Hetherington, K. (2004) 'Secondhandedness: consumption, disposal and absent presence', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22: 157–73.
Holtorf, C. and Piccini, A. (2009) *Contemporary Archaeologies: excavating now*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang.
Introna, L.D. (2009) 'Ethics and the speaking of things', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 26(4): 398–419.
Jameson, F. (2009) *Valences of the Dialectic*, London: Verso.
Jörnmark, J. and Von Hausswolff, A. (2011) *Avgrunden*, Riga: Livonia Print.
Larsen, S.F. (1987) 'Remembering and the archaeology metaphor', *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 2(3): 187–99.
Latour, B. (2002) 'Morality and technology: the end of the means', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 19(5/6): 247–60.
Latour, B. (2012) 'Love your monsters: why we must care for our technologies as we do our children', *The Breakthrough*, winter 2012. Online. Available http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/issue-2/love-your-monsters/ (accessed 8 June 2013).
Law, J. (ed.) (1991) *The Sociology of Monsters: essays on power, technology and domination*, London: Routledge.
Lowenthal, D. (1998) *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Lucas, G. (2004) 'Modern disturbances: on the ambiguities of archaeology', *MODERNISM/modernity*, 11(1): 109–20.
Lucas, G. (2010) 'Time and the archaeological archive', *Rethinking History*, 14(3): 343–59.
Malpas, J. (2012) *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: explorations in the topology of being*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Margaine, S. and Margaine, D. (2009) *Forbidden Places: exploring our abandoned heritage*, Versailles: Jonglez Publishing.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Nandy, A. (1995) 'History's forgotten doubles', *History and Theory*, 34: 44–66.
Ninjalicious (aka Jeff Chapman) (2005) *Access all areas: a user's guide to the art of urban exploration.* Toronto: Infilpress.
Nora, P. (1989) 'Between memory and history: les lieux de mémoire', *Representations*, 26: 7–24.
Nora, P. (1996) *Realms of Memory: the construction of the French past, Vol. 1, Conflicts and Divisons*, New York: Columbia University Press.
Olivier, L. (2001) 'Duration, memory and the nature of the archaeological record', in H. Karlson (ed.) *It's About Time: The concept of time in archaeology*. Gothenburg: Bricoleur Press.

Olivier, L. (2011) *The Dark Abyss of Time: archaeology and memory*, Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press.

Olsen, B. (2010) *In Defense of Things: archaeology and the ontology of objects*. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press.

Olsen, B. (2013) 'Memory', in P. Graves-Brown, R. Harrison and A. Piccini (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Contemporary World*, pp. 204–18, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Olsen, B. and Svestad, A. (1994) 'Creating prehistory: archaeology museums and the discourse of modernism', *Nordisk Museologi*, 1: 3–20.

Olsen, B., Shanks, M., Webmoor, T. and Witmore, C. (2012) *Archaeology: the discipline of things*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Patrik, L.E. (1986) 'The aesthetic experience of ruins', *Husserl Studies*, 3: 31–55.

Pétursdóttir, Þ. (2012) 'Small things forgotten now included, or what else do things deserve?', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 16: 577–603.

Pétursdóttir, Þ. (2013) 'Concrete matters: ruins of modernity and the things called heritage, *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 13(1): 31–53.

Pétursdóttir, Þ. and Olsen, B. (in press) 'Imaging modern decay: the aesthetics of ruin photography', *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology*.

Rathje, W. (1979) 'Modern material culture studies', *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, 2: 1–37.

Rathje, W. (1981) 'A manifesto for modern material-culture studies', in R.A. Gould and M.B. Schiffer (eds), *Modern Material Culture: The archaeology of us*, New York: Academic Press, pp. 51–6.

Rathje, W. (1996) The archaeology of us', *Encyclopaedia Britannica's Yearbook of science and the future 1997*: 158–77.

Rathje, W. and W.W. Hughes (1975) 'The Garbage Project as a nonreactive approach', in H.W. Sinaiko and L.A. Broedling (eds), *Perspectives on Attitude Assessment: surveys and their alternatives*, Technical Report No. 2. 47, pp. 151–67, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.

Riegl, A. (1903/1996) 'The modern cult of monuments: its essence and its development', in N. Stanley Price, M. Kirby Talley Jr., and A. Melucco Vaccaro (eds), *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, pp. 69–83.

Romany, W.G. (2010) *Beauty in decay: the art of urban exploration*. Berkeley, CA: Ginko Press.

Rowlands, M. (2002a) 'Heritage and cultural property', in V. Buchli (ed.), *The Material Culture Reader*, Oxford: Berg, pp. 105–14.

Rowlands, M. (2002b) 'The power of origins: Questions of cultural rights', in V. Buchli (ed.), *The Material Culture Reader*, Oxford: Berg, pp. 115–33.

Rowsdower, Z. (2011) Fresh rot: urban exploration and the preservation of decay. *Manitoba Anthropology. Journal of the Manitoba Anthropology Student's Association*, 29: 1–15.

Ruggles, D.F. and Silverman, H. (2009) 'From tangible to intangible heritage', in D.F. Ruggles and H. Silverman (eds), *Intangible Heritage Embodied*, Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 1–14.

Ruskin, J. (1849/2001) *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Cambridge: The Electric Book Company.

Simmel, G. (1911/1959) 'The ruin', in K.H. Wolff (ed.), *Georg Simmel, 1858–1918: a collection of essays, with translations and a bibliography*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, pp. 259–66.

Smith, L. (2006) *Uses of Heritage*, London: Routledge.

Smith, L. and Akagawa, N. (2009) 'Introduction', in L. Smith and N. Akagawa (eds), *Intangible Heritage*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 1–9.

Solli, B. (2011) 'Some reflections on heritage and archaeology in the Anthropocene', *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, 44(1): 40–88.

Sontag, S. (1966) 'Against interpretation', in S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, London: Penguin, pp. 3–14.

Speer, A. (1970) *Inside the Third Reich*, London: Sphere Books.

Stallybrass, P. (1998) 'Marx's coat', in P. Spyer (ed.), *Border Fetishisms: Material objects in unstable spaces*, London: Routledge, pp. 183–207.

Stengers, I. (2005) Introductory notes on an ecology of practices. *Cultural Studies Review*, 11(1): 183–96.

Stengers, I. (2011) 'Wondering about materialism', in L. Bryant, N. Srnicek, and G. Harman (eds), *The Speculative Turn: continental materialism and realism*, pp. 368–380. Melbourne: re:press.

Stoler, A.L. (2008) 'Imperial debris: reflections on ruins and ruination', *Cultural Anthropology*, 23(2): 191–219.

Tamm, M. (2013) 'Beyond history and memory: new perspectives in memory studies', *History Compass*, 11(6): 458–73.

Thomas, J. (2004) *Archaeology and Modernity*, London: Routledge.

Trentmann, F. (2009) 'Materiality in the future of history: things, practices and politics' *Journal of British Studies*, 48(2): 283–307.

Van Dyke, R.M. and Alcock, S.E. (2003) 'Archaeologies of memory: an introduction', in R.M. Dyke and S.E. Alcock (eds), *Archaeologies of Memory*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1–13.

Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (eds) (2009) *Taking Archaeology out of Heritage*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Woodward, C. (2001) *In Ruins*, London: Vintage.

Yablon, N. (2009) *Untimely Ruins: an archaeology of American urban modernity, 1819–1919*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.